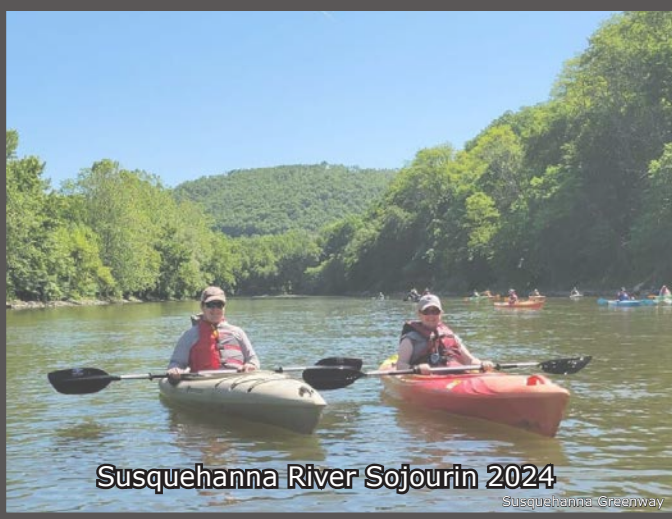


Oakland Susquehanna Comprehensive Plan 2025

Borough Mural
Meghan and Michelle Kiernan Artists



Funding and support provided by:



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**This Comprehensive Plan is funded in part by the
Pennsylvania Department of Community
& Economic Development**

Location Map

SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

These are the borders of Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot Borough.

The two boroughs, in northern Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, are immediately adjacent to each other, separated only by the Susquehanna River, and connected by the Exchange Street Bridge (SR 92).

Each municipality enjoys shared access to area public schools, local healthcare facilities, and the Susquehanna River. Two State Routes (highways) exist allowing travel to and from the greater region, while a railroad system continues to ship freight through Susquehanna Depot.

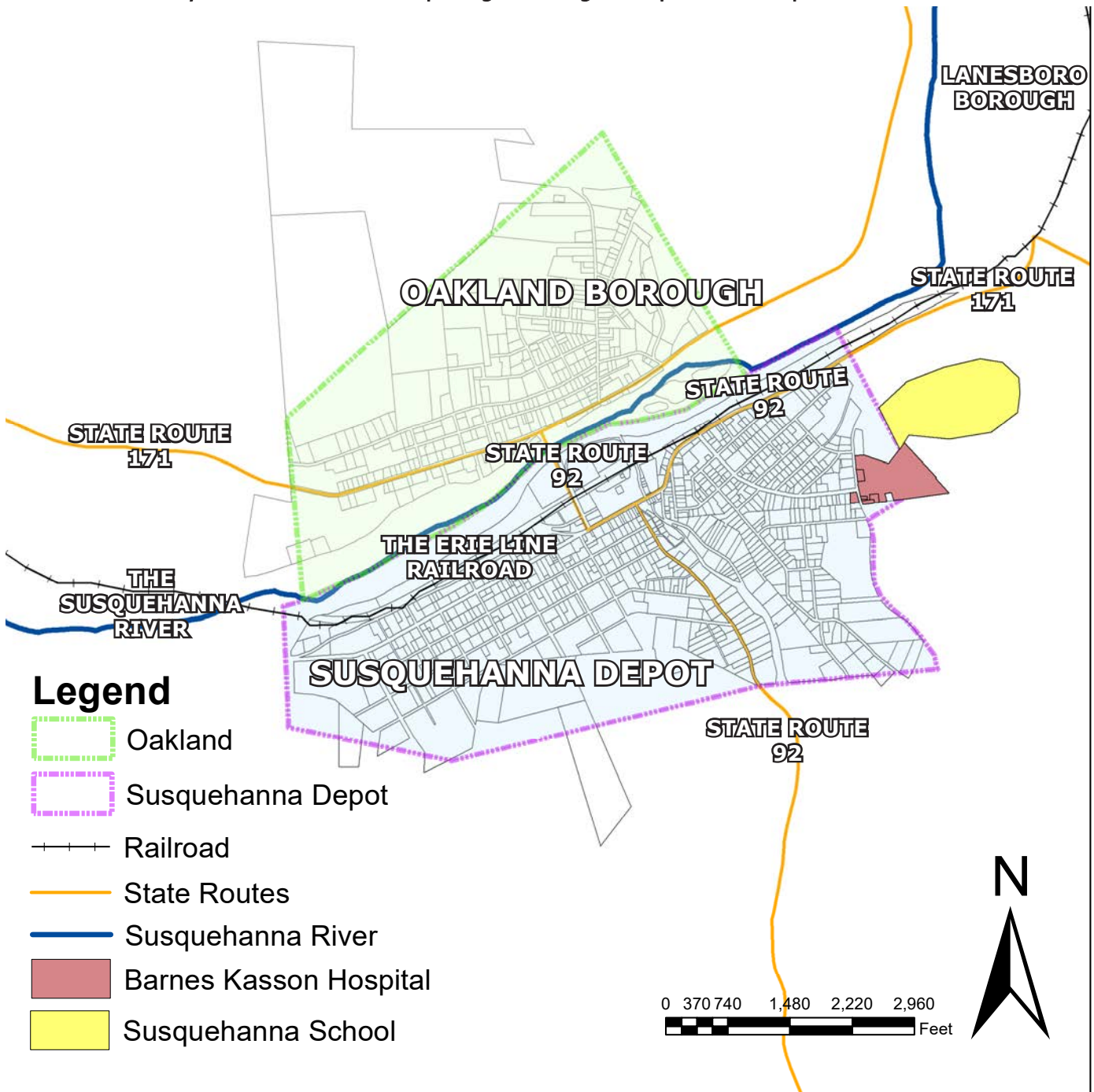


Figure 1.1 Comprehensive Plan Location Map

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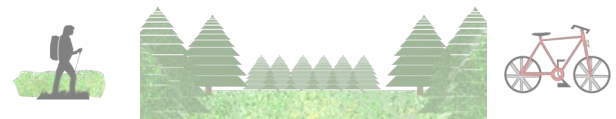


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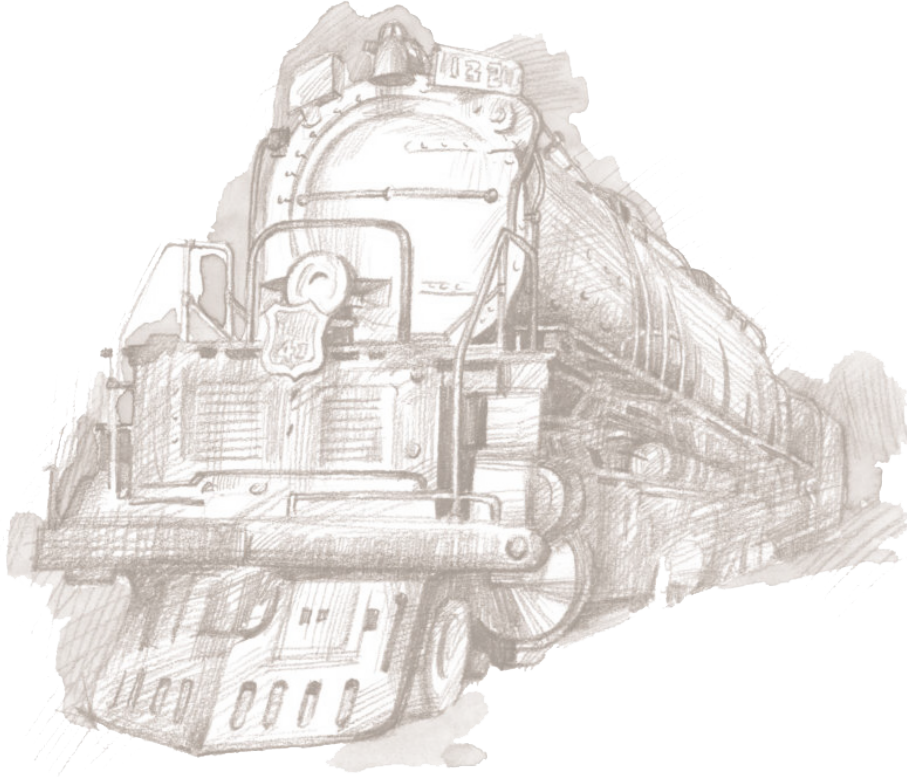
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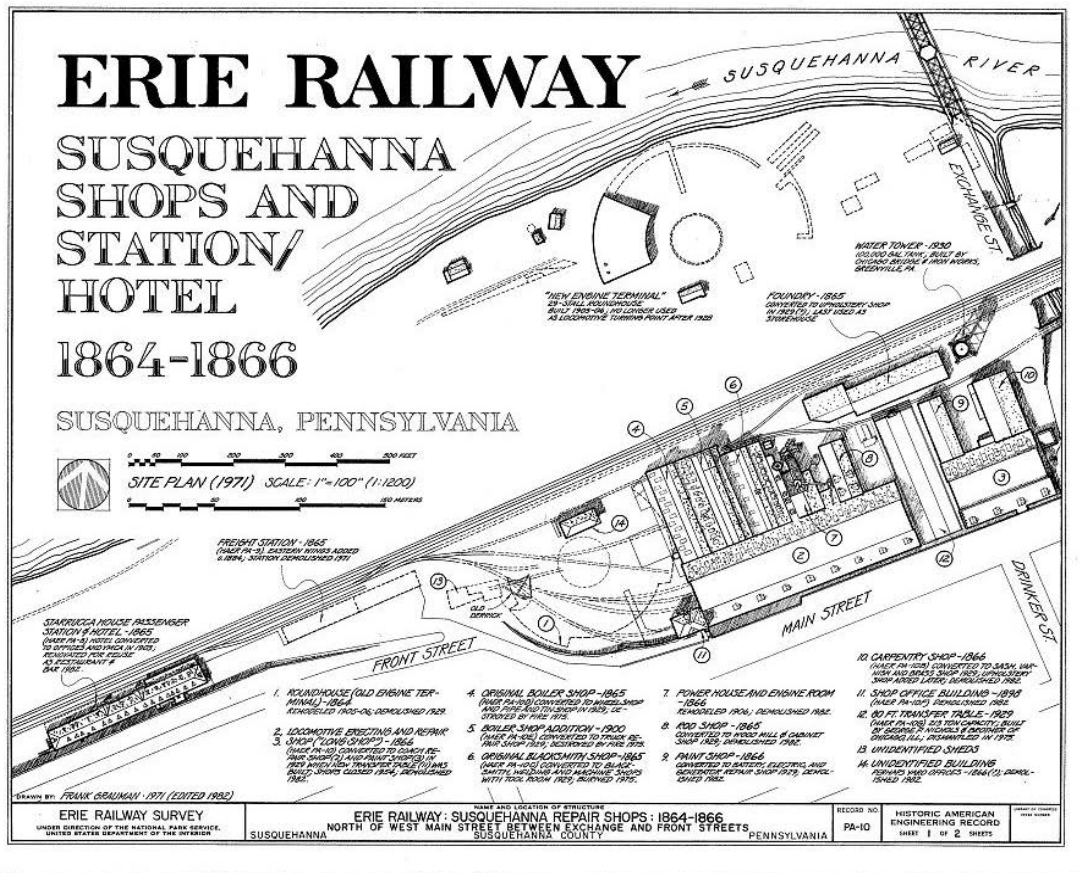
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I

Introduction



I-I. State Mandated Comprehensive Plan Review

Act 247, Article III, Section 301 of the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code requires local municipalities to review and update their Comprehensive Plan at least every ten years. The inclusion of this requirement emphasizes the value the Commonwealth places on planning at the local level. Over a ten-year period a variety of changes are likely to take place and issues arise. Even with this requirement, continuous review of Zoning and Land Use Ordinances by local leadership benefits communities the most.

Local planning within Pennsylvania is governed by the Municipal Planning Code (MPC). The MPC contains guidance and requirements for local officials to follow in order to correctly consider, plan, and create their comprehensive plan. Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot Borough recognize the benefits in reviewing their current condition(s) and desired path forward for the next ten years. This Comprehensive Plan was prepared and adopted in concert with the requirements contained in the MPC.

I-II. VISION STATEMENT

Oakland and Susquehanna Depot boroughs are two communities along the Susquehanna River in northern Pennsylvania that have become a welcoming regional destination, with a variety of employment and recreational opportunities for regional citizens and outside visitors. Renovations, the reduction of blight, and becoming a recognized “Outdoor Town” and “River Town” have made these communities highly desirable places to live. As the goals and outcomes of this Comprehensive Plan are achieved, the area was able to concurrently enjoy a 10% rise in population, \$5,000 sustained increase in the median household income, and enhanced quality of life for its residents – all while maintaining the area’s beautiful, scenic, and rural character.



Source: Google Earth 2025

I-III. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough, two communities along the Susquehanna River in Susquehanna County, have developed together, over the last century; relying on Susquehanna Depots shops, businesses, and rail line corridor, the Exchange Street bridge, and Oakland Borough's single-family homes where workers prefer to reside. Over the years, the population and economics of both communities have moved in lockstep as each have relied heavily on the Erie Railway for employment, goods, and influence from New York City and Binghamton, New York.

Today, the framework from early development remains, albeit with substantial blight and heightened economic need. Officials from both communities have reviewed the public requests made during the comprehensive planning process, inventoried infrastructure, and land uses, analyzed economic needs, and charted their course for the next ten years.

The resulting Comprehensive Plan includes achievable recommendations that support local economics, highlight the area's heritage, welcome young families, and new businesses, and promote renovations and development. High priority goals contained in the plan also include maintaining the area's rural character, remedying the imbalance between income and home ownership in the area by supporting renovations and construction of new homes, reducing the number of rentals owned by absentee landlords, creating additional assisted living facilities, offering educational opportunities beyond high school, and improving employment prospects by encouraging business growth.

The planning committee is also interested in promoting tourism by pursuing an "Outdoor Town" designation through the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, to further highlight the area's scenic beauty and outdoor activities and bolster a pedestrian connection to the D&H Trail system in Lanesboro.

Along with these large-scale changes, Officials from both Susquehanna and Oakland Boroughs must work together to ensure that they remain fiscally responsible, protect the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens, and guide growth so it has the best chance to be successful. The re-establishment of a local police presence, enhancement of emergency services, enforcement of local codes and ordinances, and welcoming needed amenities, like a hardware store locally, are additional keys to the area's revitalization.

-the Comprehensive Planning Committee



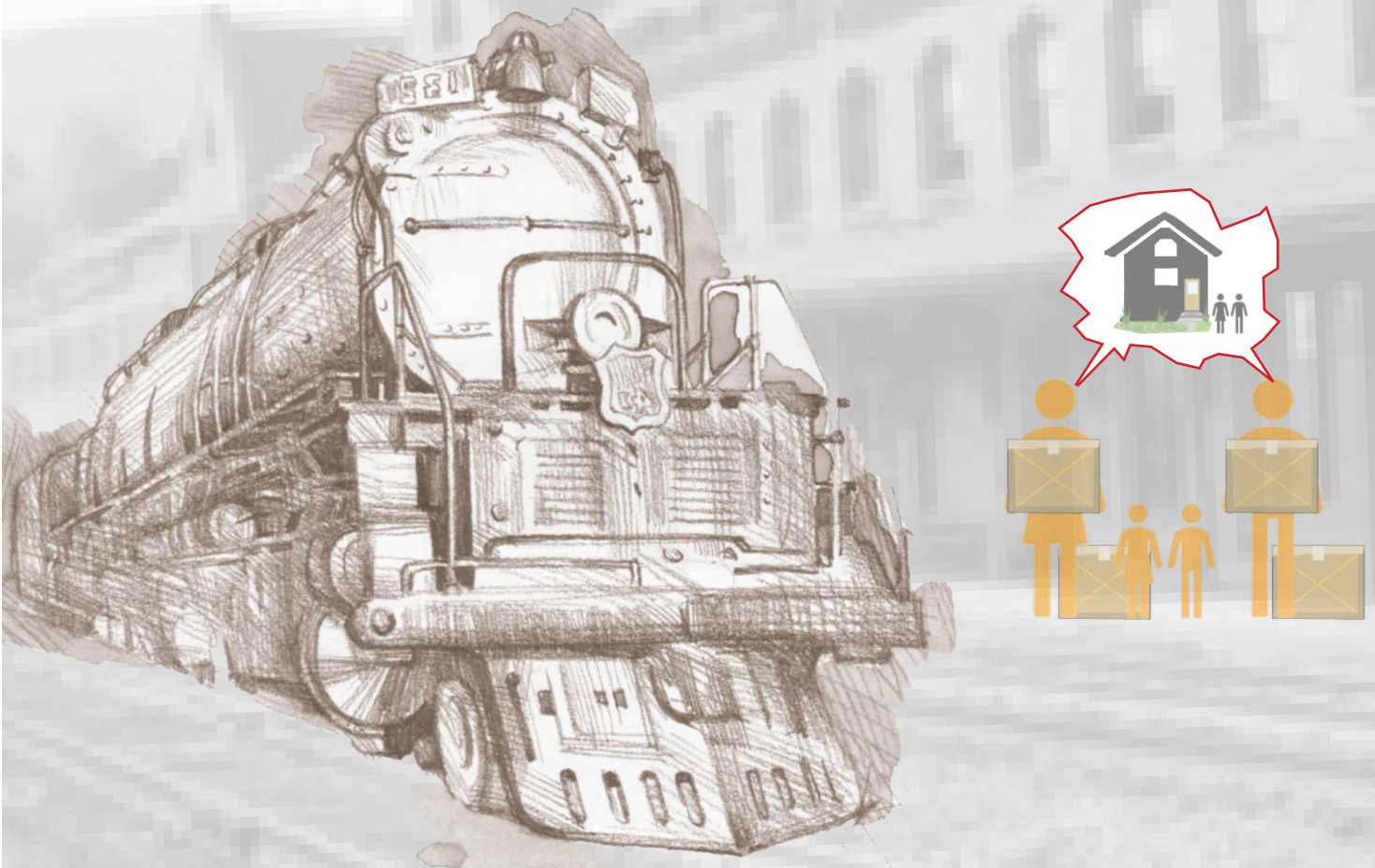
Source: Endlesmtnlifestyles.com

I-IV. THE ERIE RAIL LINE

The first New York and Erie Railways plans were developed and shared with the public in 1831. The planned route suggested cutting through Susquehanna County to reduce construction costs. With the recent completion of the Erie Canal (1825), local farmers held little interest in spending money to create the freight line, feeling the use of the Erie canal to transport goods worked well.

Fortunately, the terrain through the alternative routes proposed proved much more difficult and limited. The rail company would eventually construct along the more cost-effective route, through Susquehanna Depot along the Susquehanna River. Although, local citizens remained skeptical regarding the perceived future prosperity of the rail. They were not quick to establish right of way through their farms or sell their properties and leave the area. In total it took nine years for all rights-of-way and easements to be established.

Construction of the Erie Rail Line began in 1848 and concluded in 1851. Susquehanna Depot, a major contributor to the rail line's construction, became a Borough in 1853 with skilled mechanics, rail workers, and their families moving to the area throughout the decade. A spur of development at Susquehanna Depot's core, in the forms of machinist shops, schools, banks, and the Starrucca House (a hotel and train station) were built during this time too; with a wooden bridge connecting over the Susquehanna River to Oakland Borough where the majority of housing was established.



In 1890 4,000 immigrants came to the area in search of prosperity. These immigrants were mostly from the coal, bluestone quarry, and agricultural businesses. The Susquehanna-Oakland region saw their working population increase 1400%, and with it, productivity grew.

That same year electricity was established in the area (1903), the Starrucca House, the local passenger train station, featuring an opera house, hotel rooms, and other public amenities, closed, because new trains could travel twenty-four hours a day and required less stops.

From 1910-1945 the Erie Rail Line experienced a number of strikes and fell further into financial trouble. As a result, many workers and families began to leave the area in pursuit of work.

V. FREIGHT AND INDUSTRY



The area took another big financial hit in 1947 when trains began running on diesel fuel, a more efficient fuel than the coal used throughout the region. Population continued to decline and only a few shops remained.

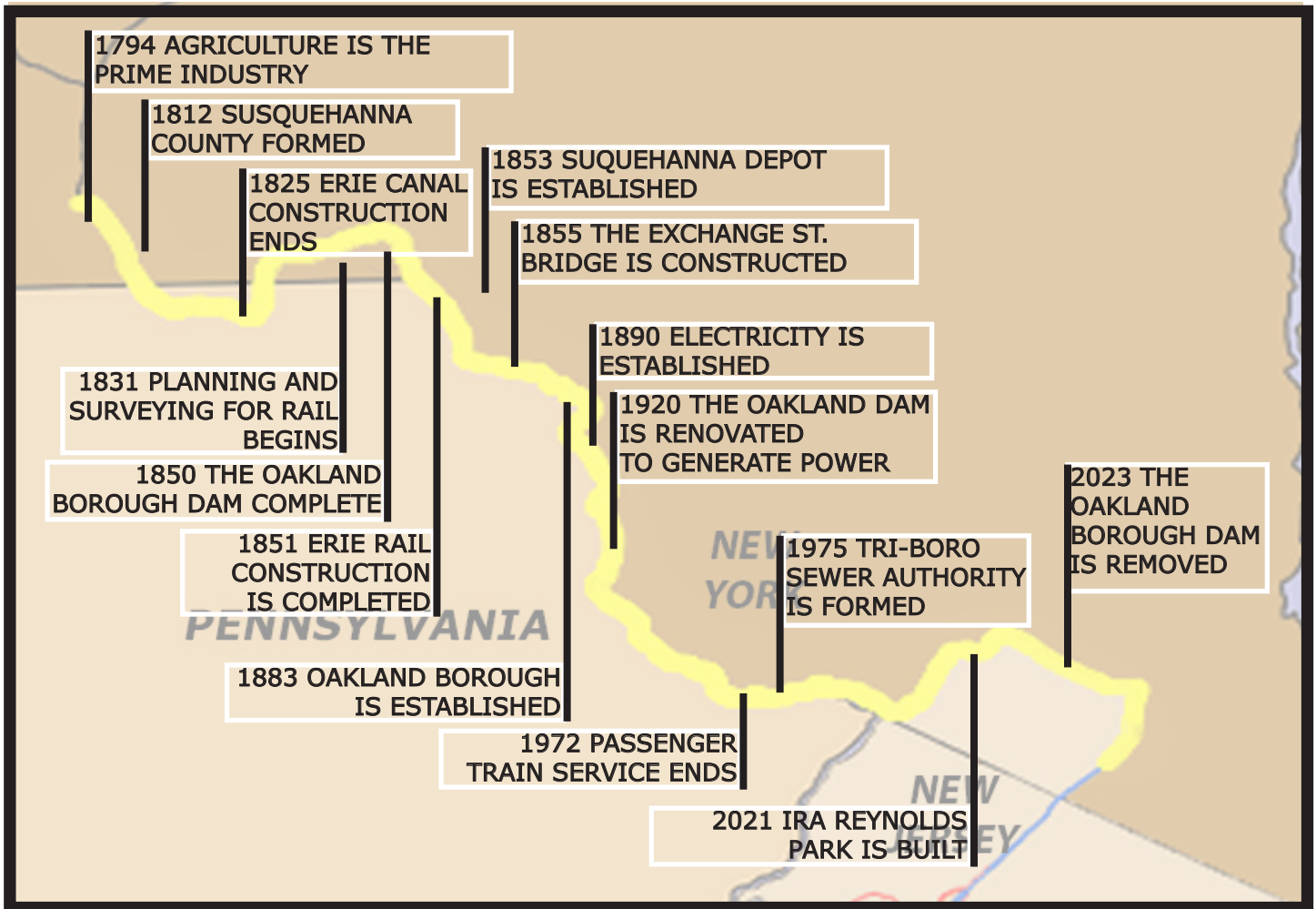
From 1950-1960 it is estimated that the workforce shrunk 90%. By 1960, with the automobile becoming America's primary mode of transportation, the Erie Rail Company began scraping and salvaging the remains of its business. With this, even more workers fled for better and opportunities.

In 1972 the last passenger train ran through Susquehanna. And four years later, the freight line stopped running. Today, the rail line is for freight only and no longer stops in Susquehanna Depot.



Passing between the two boroughs, The Susquehanna River is fundamental to the quality of life of citizens. It has been the region's primary source of water, transport, and food since the area was founded. Throughout the decades the river's banks and waters were manipulated to benefit area residents, including the construction of multiple bridges between the boroughs and a hydroelectric dam. Most recently, area residents recognize the river as a unique scenic attraction that has the potential to provide a variety of recreational activities and attract thousands of visitors each year.

I-VI. SUSQUEHANNA-OAKLAND AREA TIMELINE



Figures 1.2 New York Susquehanna Rail Line

I-VII. THE NEED FOR CONTINUED PLANNING

This Comprehensive Plan should not simply be considered a document on a shelf, but instead, one element of a community management process dependent upon the attitude and ongoing foresight of the public officials charged with the responsibility of guiding community growth.

A Comprehensive Plan is a starting point – a blueprint to guide the future development of a municipality and should be revised and updated regularly to reflect changing conditions, attitudes, situations, and the goals of the community.

The success of the planning program will be measured only in the form of accomplishment(s). The effectiveness of the Plan will be the responsibility of the area's residents and will require strong public support and positive actions by municipal officials.

II

POPULATION



II-I. POPULATION

Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough have always followed similar population trends throughout the years. Their populations have always been directly tied to local employment opportunities. Both boroughs have been on a steady decline since the closure of the rail line in the 1900's, which was the peak of their industrial history.

Although significant portions of Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough's housing and industry have fallen into disrepair, the area still maintains an attractive and preserved, scenic environment. This highly sought after, rural, and scenic environment continues to be a highly desirable place to live.

Similar municipalities in the Commonwealth are facing challenges like those found in Oakland and Susquehanna Boroughs today-- including unaffordable rents and mortgages and an increase in the number of vacant and declining buildings. If efforts can be made to improve the area's economics and local leaders achieve the actions contained in this report (securing new jobs and industry, remediating blight, supporting the construction of a variety of affordable housing types, and enhancing transportation opportunities, the population and quality of life will grow in concert.

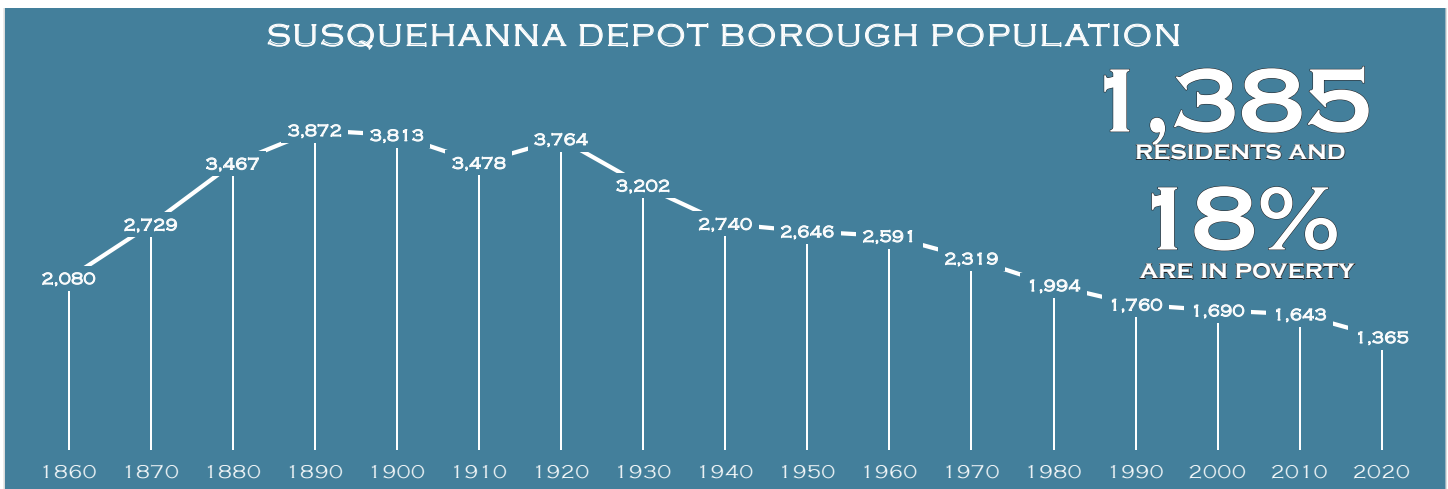
II-II. POPULATION SUSQUEHANNA DEPOT



Susquehanna Depot was once a bustling town filled with opportunity and new industry. The area’s primary industries included railroad-related work and agriculture. Over the last century, due to the deep connections with these industries, there were noticeable fluctuations in population that are in lockstep with the establishment of the rail line and its eventual reduction to freight only.

Although the structural remnants of past activities still exist (i.e. the Exchange Street Bridge, the Starrucca House, long machine shop buildings, and the water tower) many are in a state of disrepair and are no longer used.

Unfortunately, the population of the area, the area’s tax base, and the maintenance of these buildings are all reliant on local economics and have been affected deeply by the absence of railroad-related manufacturing. Today the Borough would greatly benefit from the establishment of new industry and associated employment opportunities. This combined with the beautiful rural character of the area, the Susquehanna River, and open land have the potential to enhance the quality of life for existing residents and welcome new families.



AVG. AGE
42.2

Age Break Down:

Under 18:	21%
18 to 64:	63%
65 And Over:	17%

51%
FEMALE

49%
MALE

Demographics

White:	97%
Black:	1%
Asian	1%
Other	1%

Figure 2.1 Susquehanna Depot Population

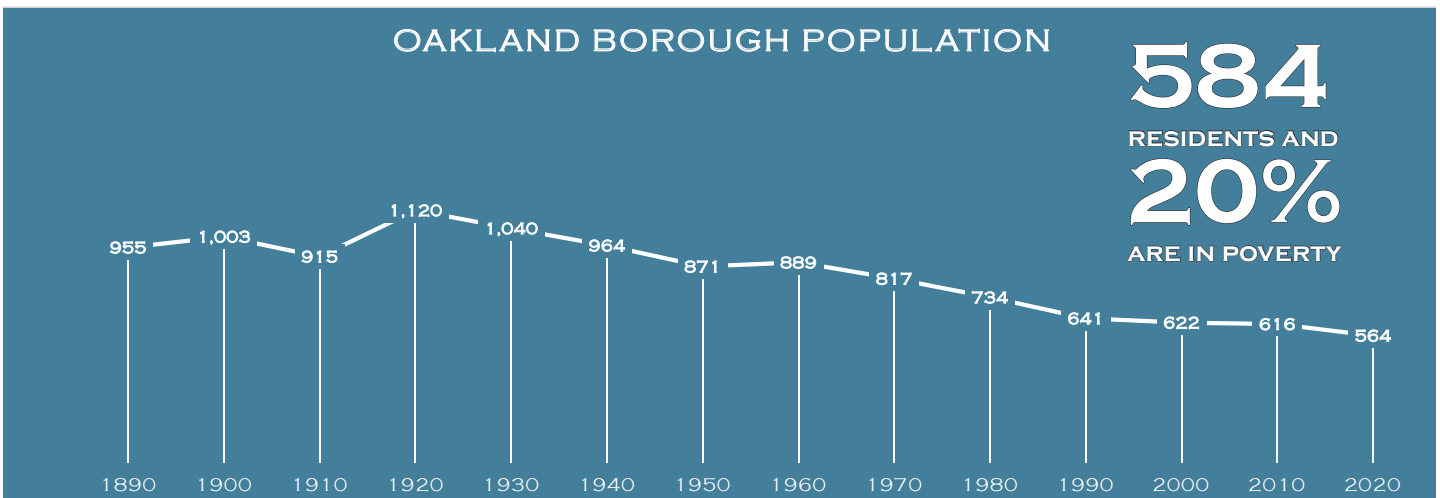


II-III. POPULATION OAKLAND BOROUGH

Oakland Borough has always featured a population that is slightly lower than its neighbor, Susquehanna Depot, yet it has had similar population fluctuations. Currently the Borough of Oakland features a population under 1,000 people, with a third of them under 18 years of age. This is a positive statistic to see, as it supports the idea that this rural and scenic area is a desirable location to live and raise children.

Both Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot can benefit from achieving planning strategies over the next ten years that will bolster housing availability and food for those within the prevalent poverty rate.

Oakland Borough enjoys a median age about ten years younger than that of Susquehanna Depot. The establishment of new industry, affordable housing, and the revitalization of dilapidated buildings and infrastructure will significantly benefit all area residents and families.



AVG. AGE
33.4

Age Break Down:

Under 18:	29%
18 to 64:	58%
65 And Over:	13%

47%
FEMALE

53%
MALE

Demographics

White:	95%
Hispanic:	2%
Other	3%

Figure 2.2 Oakland Borough Population

II-IV. SUSQUEHANNA EMPLOYMENT

56% BOROUGH EMPLOYMENT

62% STATE EMPLOYMENT

Occupation Sector

- Service occupations
- Management, Business, Science and Art occupations
- Sales and Office occupations
- Production, Transportation, Material moving occupations
- Natural resources, Construction and Maintenance occupations

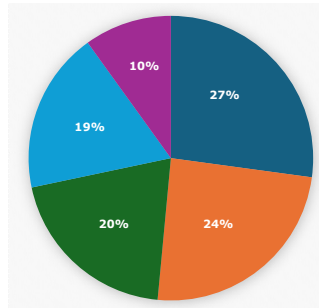


Figure 2.3 Susquehanna Depot Jobs by Sector

8%

SELF EMPLOYED

13%

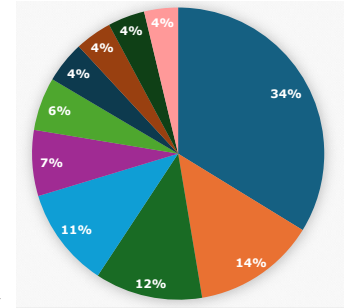
PRIVATE NON-PROFIT

19%

LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Local Industry

- Education services, Health care and Social assistance
- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Food service
- Manufacturing
- Transportation, Warehouse, and Utilities
- Construction
- Finance, Insurance, Real estate, rentals, and leasing
- Professional scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste management
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining
- Retail Trade
- Information



604

LOCAL EMPLOYEES

60% EMPLOYMENT VIA PRIVATE COMPANIES

There are limited employment opportunities in Susquehanna Depot. Historically, residents work outside the region to secure employment. Over 30% of the local workforce works in the local hospital or public school. The region would benefit from the development of additional job opportunities and commerce.

77% of employees in Susquehanna Depot drive themselves to work each day. Providing additional transportation options may be helpful. Establishing and promoting manufacturing entities with distribution via the adjacent freight line may also support commercial growth and, if passenger service is re-established, bring visitors to the area.

Due to the existing train line, large parcel tracts of undeveloped land, and dilapidated buildings in the commercial core, the community has multiple opportunities and strong potential to grow commercially and provide several modes of transportation in support of a higher rate of employment and jobs that offer family sustaining wages.

WALK TO WORK

DRIVE

CARPOOL

PUBLIC TRANSIT

WORK FROM HOME



4%



77%



12%



2%



6%

26 MINUTE AVG COMMUTE

II-V. OAKLAND EMPLOYMENT

49% BOROUGH EMPLOYMENT

52% COUNTY EMPLOYMENT

Occupation Sector

- Service occupations
- Management, Business, Science and Art occupations
- Sales and Office occupations
- Production, Transportation, Material moving occupations
- Natural resources, Construction and Maintenance occupations

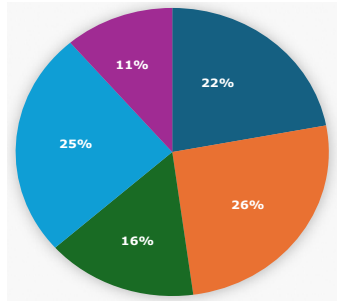
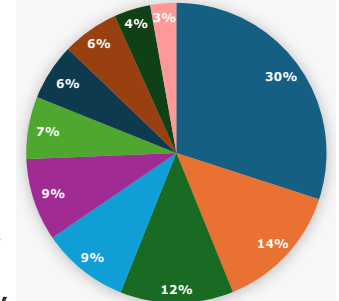


Figure 2.4 Oakland Borough Jobs by Sector

Local Industry

- Education services, Health care and Social assistance
- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Food service
- Manufacturing
- Transportation, Warehouse, and Utilities
- Retail Trade
- Professional scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste management
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining
- Construction
- Wholesale trade
- Other services, excluding public administration



11% SELF EMPLOYED
 25% PRIVATE NON-PROFIT
 4% LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

186 LOCAL EMPLOYEES

60% EMPLOYMENT VIA PRIVATE COMPANIES

Oakland Borough is facing similar employment issues as its neighbor, Susquehanna Depot. The visible differences, including total local employment, are due to the difference in total population. The people of Oakland Borough, based on the data, are more car-dependent than their counterpart. No Oakland residents have stated or replied that they walk, bike, or take public transport to work in the attached, Comprehensive Plan public survey. There are also, visibly, less commercial entities and shops within Oakland Borough.

Oakland Borough residents will undoubtedly benefit from multiple transportation options and businesses being developed within their jurisdiction; including bus stops and additional sidewalks and paths.

DRIVE



81%

CARPOOL



13%

OTHER



2%

WORK FROM HOME



4%

24 MINUTE AVG COMMUTE

II-VI. ECONOMICS

Susquehanna County

Susquehanna County has a median income of \$66,930; an employment rate of 52%; 6.8% of residents do not have health care coverage; and the average household size is 2.43 persons.

Susquehanna Depot

Susquehanna Depot has a median household income of \$57,560, an employment rate of 56%, and 11.4% of residents do not have health care coverage. The average household size is 2.62 persons.

Oakland Borough

Oakland Borough has a median household income is \$51,250, an employment rate of 49%, and 13.2% of residents do not have health care coverage. The average household size is 2.78 persons.

These statistics signify a strong potential for growth in the area. Household sizes are larger than both the County and State (2.35 people), suggesting a desire to live in these municipalities and begin families.

Although, median household income and employment rates are significantly lower than the County's and State's (25% lower). Other statistics showing financial issues include each Borough's employment rate; these are 5% and 10% lower than Pennsylvania's, respectively. Eighteen percent of Susquehanna Depot's residents live below the poverty line, while 20% of residents live below the poverty line in Oakland Borough. Each of these are double that of the County, State, and Country.

Migration

Migration to the area is an important attribute to consider regarding sustainably growing the population and welcoming young families to the area. When the population of a region is declining or stagnant, promoting migration is a significant strategy to bolster the workforce and grow business and commerce.

According to 2023 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, fifty-five people immigrated to Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough from within Susquehanna County; fifteen immigrated from a different county within Pennsylvania; and twenty-two people migrated from outside the Commonwealth.

Both Susquehanna Depot and Oakland can benefit from promoting the area as a scenic, beautiful, rural place to live and raise a family, with affordable housing, public amenities, and job opportunities that pay family sustaining wages. Action items (goals and objectives) are included at the end of this chapter and in the Implementation Matrix at the end of this Plan that, once achieved, can greatly support population and economic growth for these municipalities.

Susquehanna Depot		Oakland	
Households	497	Households	188
Houses on SNAP	22%	Houses on SNAP	22%
Total Families	336	Total Families	117
Avg. Household Size	2.62	Avg. Household Size	2.78
Avg. Household Income	\$57,560	Avg. Household Income	\$51,250
Avg. Yearly Expense	\$10,834	Avg. Yearly Expense	\$8,362

Figure 2.8 Economic Statistics

II-VII. TAXATION

Susquehanna Depot

Susquehanna Depot Borough generated \$638,243 in revenue in 2023 according to their PA DCED 2023 audit statement. This statement shows total annual capital expenditures, including annual insurances, liabilities, operations, public safety, and highway and street maintenance. The municipalities capital budget (revenues and expenditures) for the year showed a deficit of (\$14,876). This deficit signifies that the municipalities spending is unsustainable long term.

In the past, Susquehanna Depot had a local police officer. They continue to maintain vehicles and tools to support a police force, although another officer has not been hired. To bolster safety in the area, both municipalities see the benefit in hiring and maintaining a new officer.

Susquehanna Depot relies heavily on Real Estate taxes to cover their annual expenditures. They also receive substantial tax income (\$69,173) from the receipt of liquid fuels taxes from the State. Although, they continue to have issues with degrading streets and infrastructure.

In 2018, with guidance from the County, Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot considered regionalization of their emergency services and other infrastructure to reduce costs and ensure the rural area receives these services. Unfortunately, this never came to fruition.

During the creation of this Comprehensive Plan, Susquehanna Depot Borough stated that they have hired a new code enforcement officer and are willing to consider becoming a home rule municipality, creating an advisory planning board to review shared services and costs, and to evaluate and revise their annual taxes. By becoming a home rule municipality, the power, structure, and taxes of each municipality are re-organized and streamlined; while taxes can be reorganized into categories and proportions that cover specific expenditures rather than relying primarily on recently sold, renovated, or assessed properties.

Based on population estimate from the American Community Survey in 2023 of 1,365, tax revenue per person in Susquehanna Depot Borough was \$327.54.

Oakland Borough

Oakland Borough was able to generate \$362,581 in revenue in 2023 according to their 2023 audit statement. This statement shows total expenditures in their capital funds to cover annual insurances, liabilities, operations, public safety, and highway and street maintenance. This resulted in a deficit of \$3,185 in their general fund for the year.

During this planning process of this Plan, Oakland Borough was able to adopt rental and vacancy ordinances. These, combined with a newly hired code enforcement officer, have allowed them to accurately assess blight, have unsafe conditions at homes corrected, and assess the condition of the homes and structures. Oakland Borough has also expressed a willingness to obtain a home rule charter, reorganize taxes, and form an advisory planning committee to consider shared infrastructure. These can be particularly beneficial strategies for Oakland Borough as they rely even more on real estate tax millage for annual revenues than Susquehanna Depot does and are in a similar deficit.

Based on a population estimate from the American Community Survey in 2023 of 563, tax revenue per person is \$405.01.

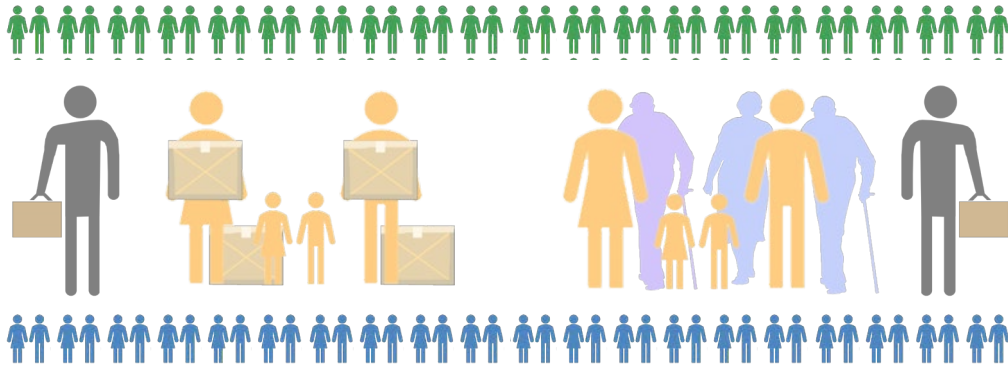
District	Real Estate	Act 13	Library	Boro	Special
Oakland Borough	12.5	-2	0.33	24.7	0
Susquehanna Depot	12.5	-2	0.33	25.7	0

Figure 2.9 Tax Millage 2025

POPULATION RECOMMENDATIONS

(GOALS & OBJECTIVES)

II



- 1. Make this document publicly accessible to all residents so they are able to clearly see the wishes of the community and the opportunities and constraints that exist.**
- 2. Pro-actively search for and welcome new businesses to the Oakland Borough/Susquehanna Depot area, sharing the benefits of the existing river, train system potentials for distribution, the area's scenic beauty, and vacant spaces that exist for development.**
- 3. Form an advisory planning committee to review and coordinate shared uses and infrastructure.**
- 4. Consider obtaining a home rule charter which will require a vote on a public ballot and, if successful, restructuring and reorganizing each municipal board as well as taxes.**
- 5. Consider current area cost of living expenses, Borough employees and personnel, capital budgets (revenue and debts), code enforcement, infrastructure degradation, and existing blight then adjust area taxes to ensure each annual budget is balanced.**
- 6. Consider hiring a joint police force for both municipalities to ensure all citizens are safe and receive adequate assistance when needed.**
- 7. Investigate regionalization potentials and costs for coordinated emergency services to ensure all citizens receive adequate care and help when needed.**

III

The Community Today



III-I. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Oakland-Susquehanna study area features a rich history that includes various uses of the Susquehanna River, a freight rail line, housing, housing, and large buildings for railway part manufacturing. If each municipality blighted and vacant structures are renovated to code, it is estimated that the area could accommodate double the current population comfortably. The largest challenge these Municipalities are facing is finding ways to develop local economics, reducing debt, and ensuring the local school, hospital, and infrastructure meet growing demand.

Additionally, statewide investments have been made in the Susquehanna River across Pennsylvania to create access by residents. These investments and subsequent construction are expected to continue over the next decade. This scenic, natural feature is a key fixture of the community that raises the quality of life in these communities. The return on investment for promoting and developing access and the use of it are positive.

III-II. EXISTING ZONING

Below are the existing zoning maps for Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Boroughs. Both utilize 4-5 different zoning classifications. Single Family (R-SF), Two Family (R-TF), Central Business (CB), and Park and Industry (P+I).

While Oakland Borough has codified several ordinances, they have not adopted a zoning map or ordinance. Ample land for development does exist throughout Oakland Borough, some of which lends itself to building out new industry and commercial entities. Susquehanna Depot has zoned the river's edge to allow for public recreation and for industry. This zone is strategic because of the zone's proximity to the river, rail, line, and the sewage treatment plant.

Forming an advisory planning committee who can consider the location of proposed large-scale industries, recommend zoning amendments and conditions for each Borough Council to consider, is recommended. This committee will support each Borough Council as it seeks to protect residents from conflicting and nuisance uses.

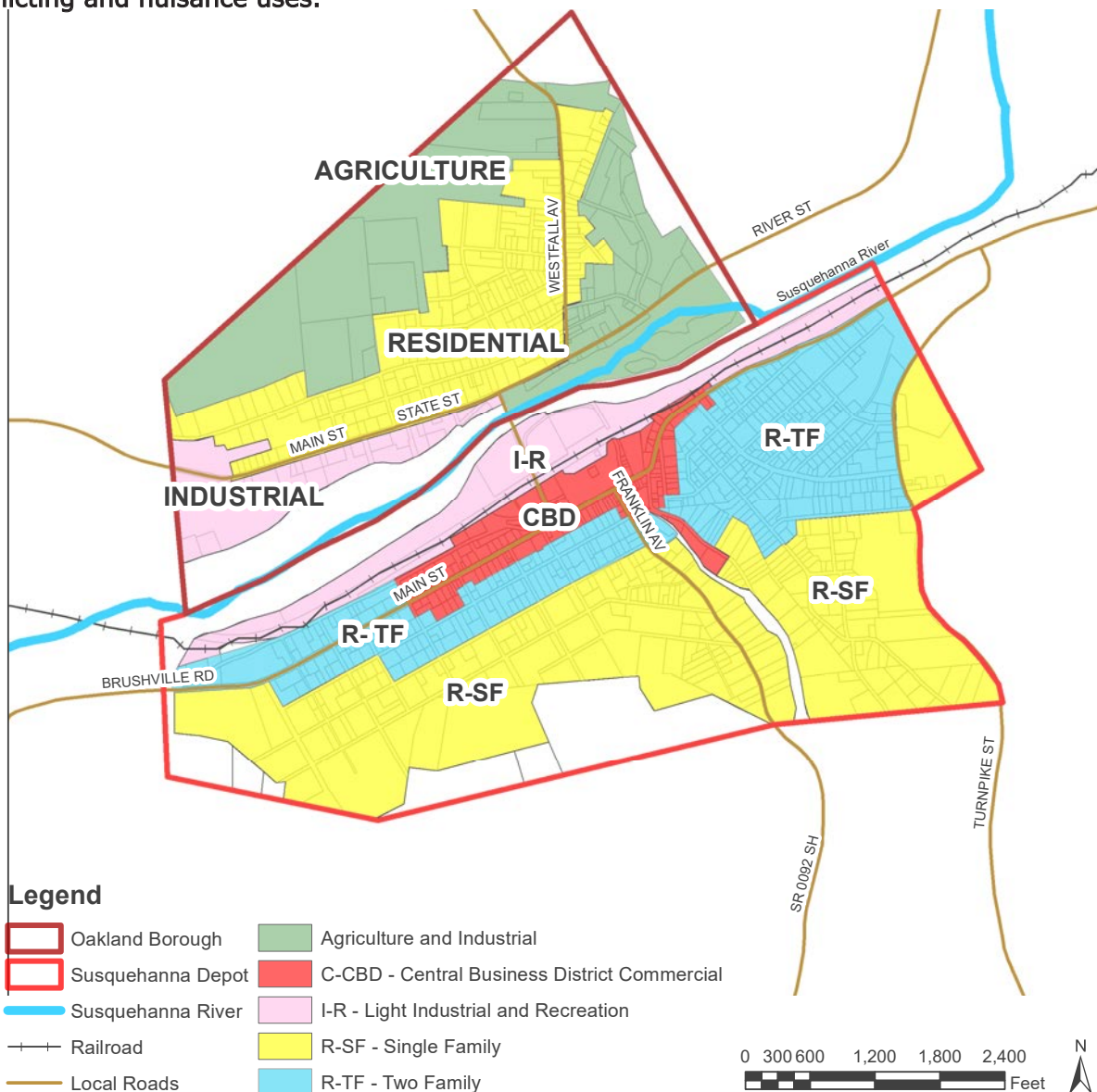


Figure 3.1 Zoning

III-III. EXISTING LAND USE

Below is a map highlighting the different land uses that exist in each borough. Please note the amount of open space each municipality has acquired and the amount of blight present in each.

Although there are many reasons why property owners are not full-time residents, each municipality has had issues with landlords purchasing rentals and not maintaining heat, water, and sewer for tenants. They also do not typically respond to code violations notices. There are several ways the code enforcement officer can work to alleviate landowner issues. These include violation notices, liens, and well-worded rental, vacancy, and quality of life ordinances.

Oakland Borough recently adopted rental and vacancy ordinances. These support a reduction in the renting of unsafe structures, allow additional control and removal of blight, and ensured water and sewer service are provided, uninterrupted, for renters as long as they are paid on time.

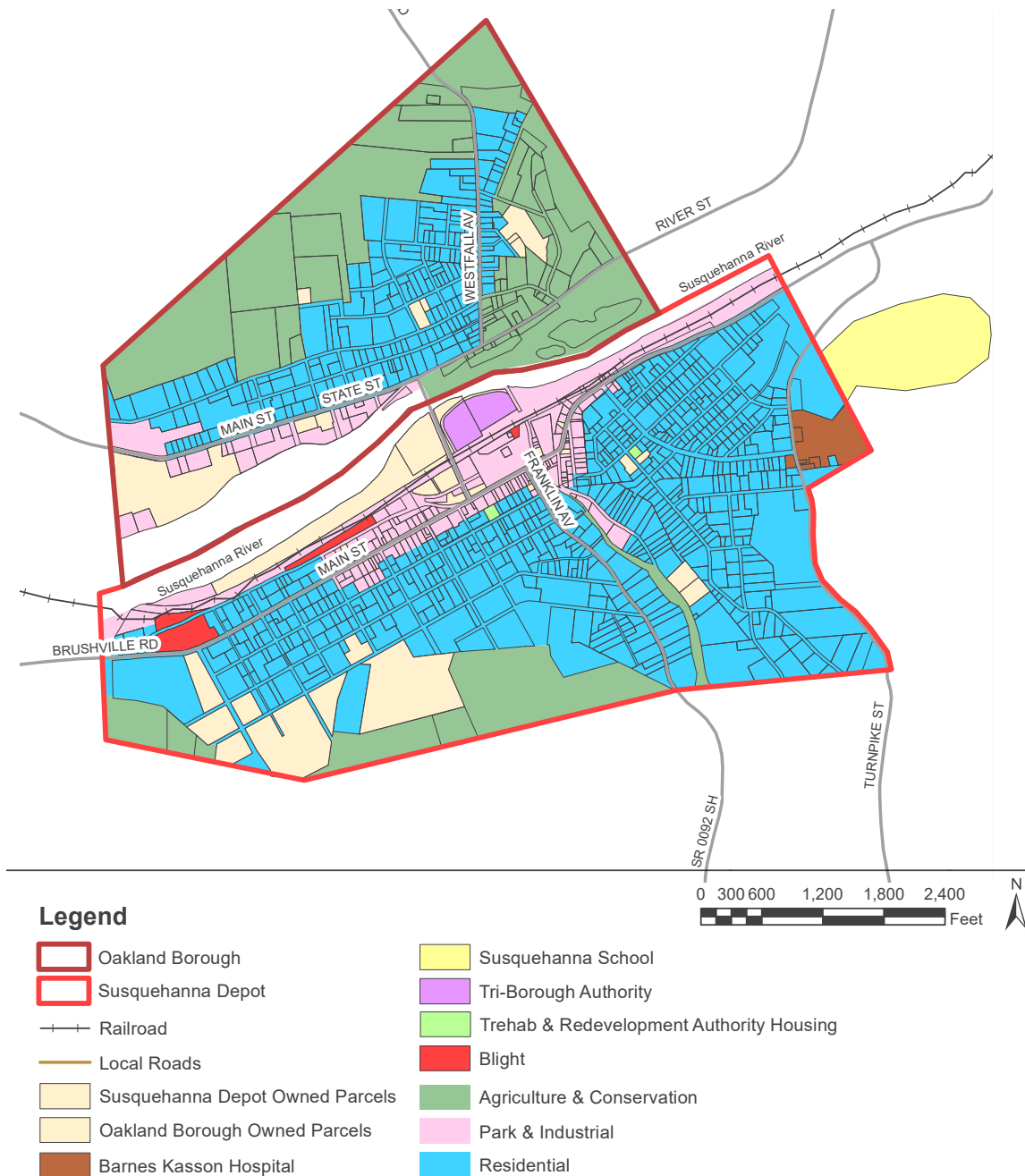


Figure 3.2 Land Use

III-IV. UNDEVELOPED PARCELS

There are thirty-three undeveloped plots of land in Oakland Borough, and fifty-nine undeveloped plots of land within Susquehanna Depot Borough. These undeveloped parcels are marked out in red in Figure 3.3 below, allowing local officials to see their location and consider how they might be combined, connected, or laid out in the most beneficial way for the community, should they be obtained by the municipality or deeded for public use.

There are several properties located in Susquehanna Depot's Industrial Zoning District that are prime parcels for new businesses. There are also undeveloped plots that could potentially connect roads via trails and greenways, offering transportation options for residents. We have provided more information on this subject in the recreation section of this Comprehensive Plan.

Susquehanna County's Housing and Redevelopment Authority is a great resource and has expressed a willingness to collaborate with both municipalities to accurately inventory and map vacant and blighted parcels as well as those in the County's repository. From this coordination, land banking and blight committees can be formed to continue to fight blight, bolster economic development, build additional housing, and otherwise determine the best use of parcels that are added to the land bank.

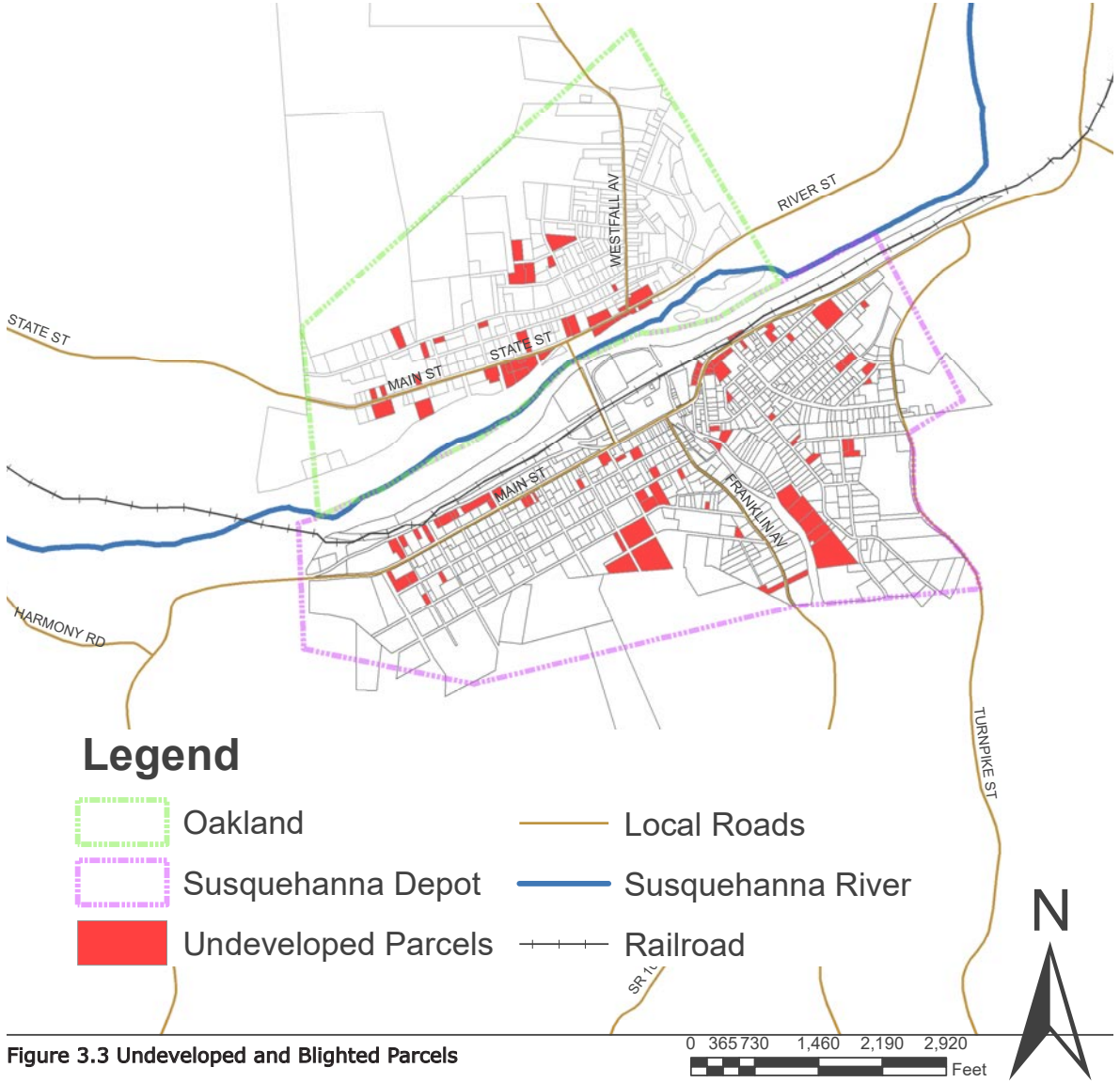


Figure 3.3 Undeveloped and Blighted Parcels

III-V. INFRASTRUCTURE (WATER AND SEWER)

Shown in Figure 3.4 the boroughs have separate water providers. Oakland, in red, has their own Water Authority, Oakland Water Authority. Susquehanna Depot, represented in yellow, receives their water service from Pennsylvania American Water.

Located in Susquehanna Depot, the Tri Borough Sewer Authority is responsible for providing sewage treatment services for Oakland Borough, Susquehanna Depot, and Lanesboro Borough to the east.

Existing water and sewer services are adequate by residents and the Comprehensive Plan committee. There have been no service extension requests made in the last 10 years. Recently the Tri Borough Authority applied for grant money that would be used to update and renovate their system, although they are able to maintain it in its current condition.

While the existing services are within carrying capacity for the current population, establishing funds for future expansion through impact fees and tax revenue to accommodate a growing population appears to be valid.

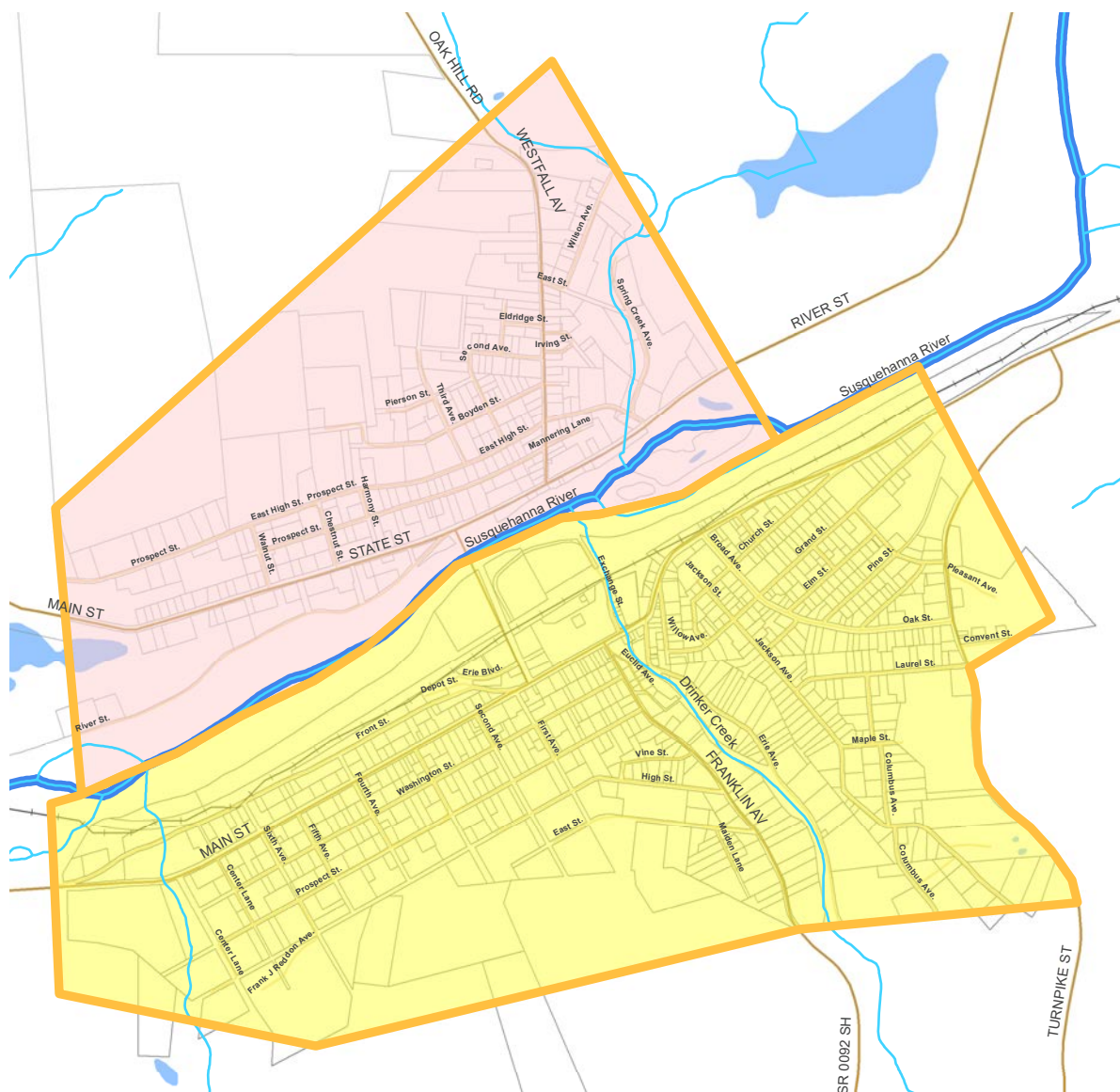


Figure 3.4 Water and Sewer Service Map

Legend

- Oakland Water Authority Service Area
- Pennsylvania American Water Service Area
- Tri Boro Sewer Authority Service Area

III-VI. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Of the ninety-two undeveloped sites within the Boroughs, thirty-seven of them appear to have high potential for future development. As confirmed in the community survey and focus group session, the greatest need in the area is affordable housing, which is safe for families, seniors, and those with disabilities. Once each borough collaborates with the County's Redevelopment Authority and Trehab to map all blighted and vacant parcels, the newly formed team can form a land bank and begin to maintain a list of parcels they jointly own and can develop into affordable housing or sell to landowners wishing to develop new housing, small businesses, or other commercial entities.

As the town continues to grow economically in lockstep with population and housing catches up with demand, the municipalities can begin to look at available open space to create recreational and civic public spaces. The connections, transportation modes, and walkability between amenities and homes can be enhanced to ensure it is simple and easy for residents to obtain goods and services within their community.

Because vacancies and dilapidation are prevalent in the study area, both municipalities appear to qualify for and would benefit from establishing tax incentive areas to encourage development. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development offers several types of designated zones-- TIF Zones (Tax Incremental Financing Zones), Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA), and KOZs (Keystone Opportunity Zones).

A TIF Zone utilizes projected tax revenue for a project to secure bonds to pay for a project's upfront costs (including infrastructure). Municipal officials can establish the current undeveloped taxes for the TIF area (base taxes) and once developed the property tax increase above that pre-determined baseline would be used to pay for infrastructure and continued construction in the zone.

A LERTA Zone reduces real estate tax or prevents it from increasing for a set period of time so that those developers willing to invest and revitalize the area can use the moneys to further their improvement efforts.

A Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) can offer state and local tax incentives and rebates for businesses and individuals economically developing and revitalizing the zone. This works well for blighted areas and buildings as it welcomes developers with discounted taxes until the KOZ is fully revitalized and the KOZ designation removed.

Suggested areas for KOZs and TIFs are outlined in Figure 3.5 on the next page.

III-VII. FUTURE LAND USE

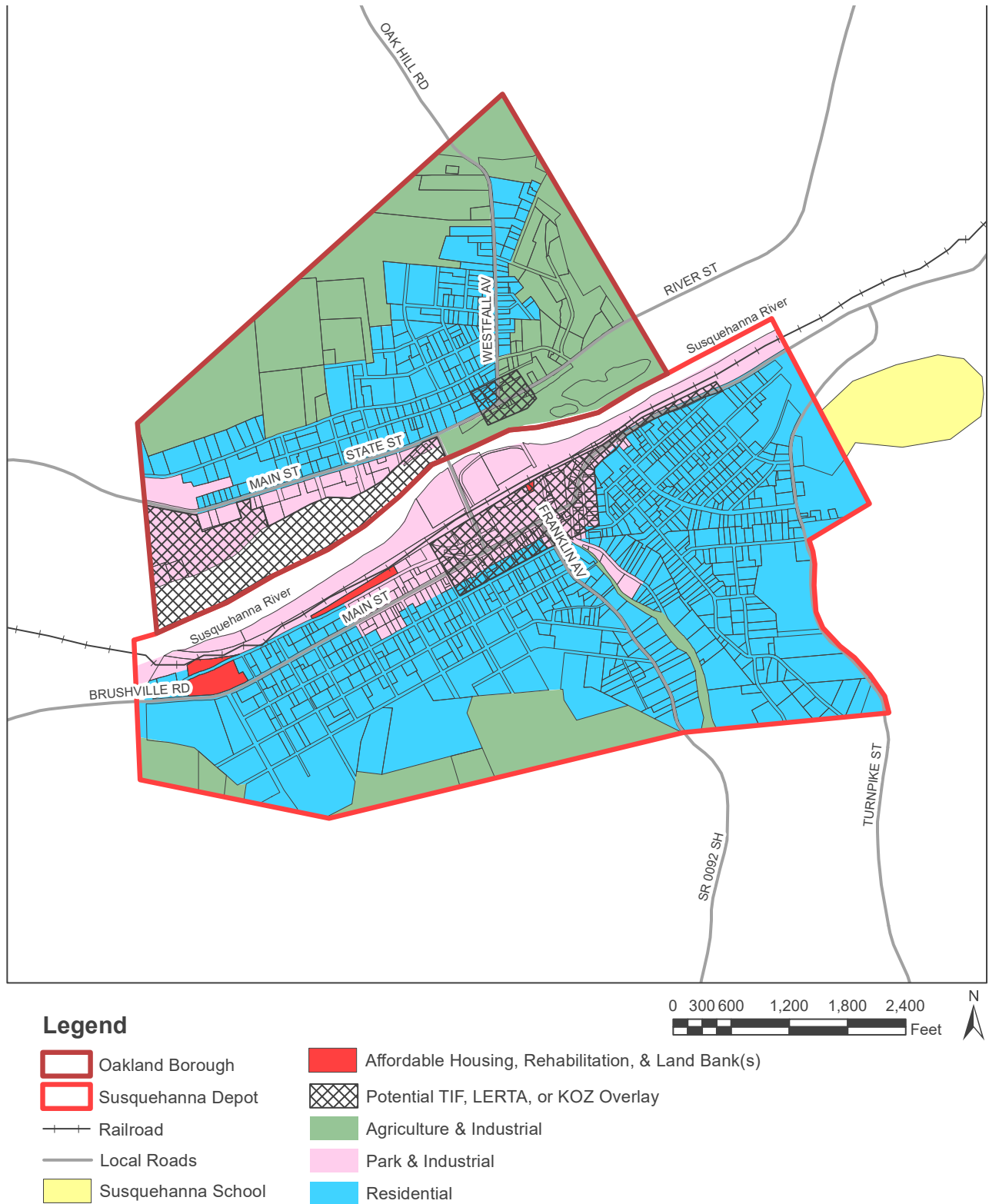


Figure 3.5 Future Land Use

III-VIII. LOCAL SERVICES

Beyond their obvious, physical border, both boroughs share a variety of services and amenities, including, but not limited to sewage treatment, a school, a hospital, and the Susquehanna River. Because both boroughs are in close proximity and already share these, it is recommended that they form an advisory committee who can review and study shared amenities and services and potentially reduce costs and bolster efficiencies through additional shared services and departments, such as police or emergency services.

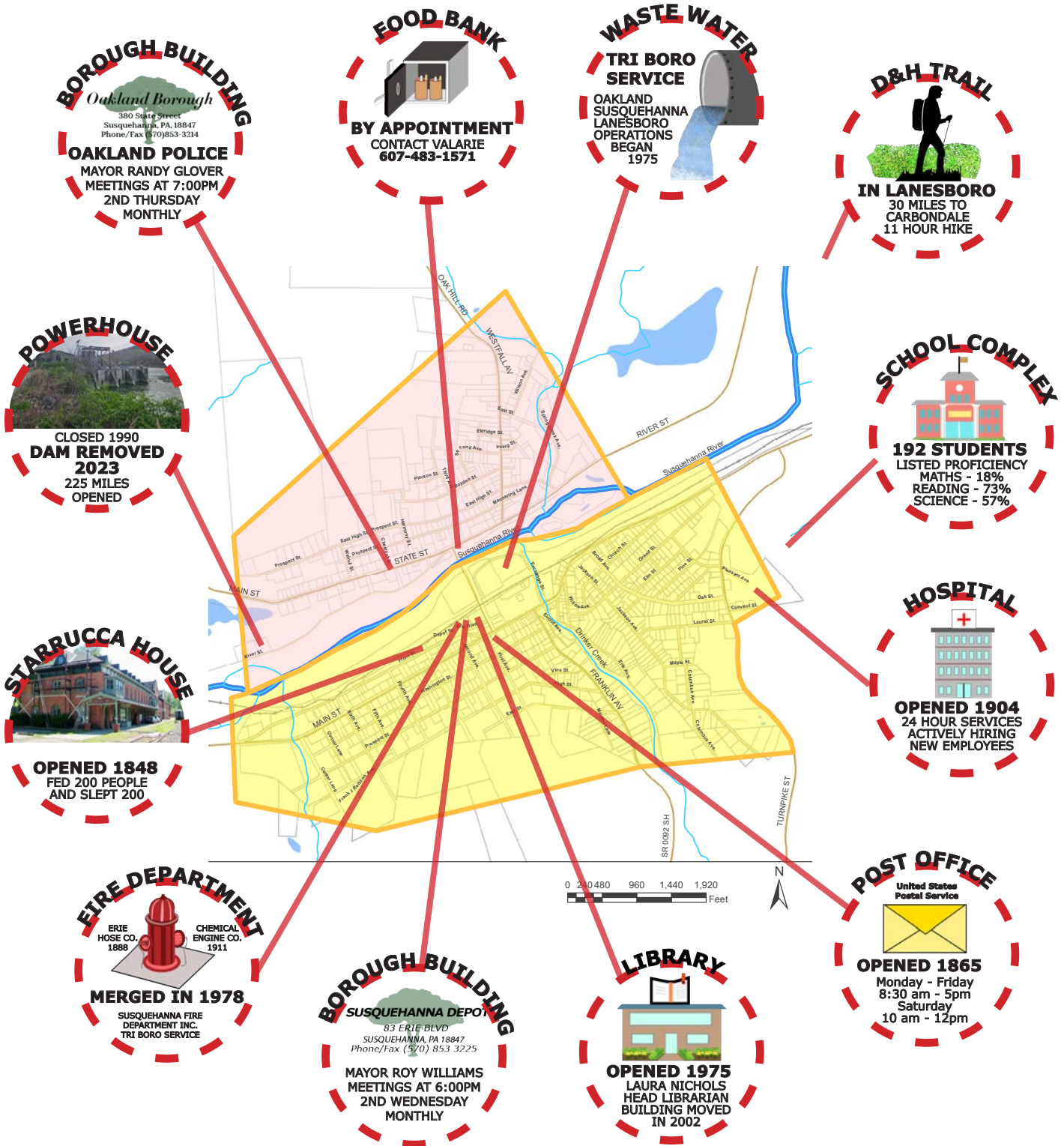


Figure 3.6 Local Service Map

III-IX. PUBLIC SURVEY

During the comprehensive planning process the planning committee created a public survey asking citizens to express concerns and hopes for the area's long-term planning efforts. The questions and the responses received are provided graphically over the next several pages.

A total of 106 participants took the survey, accounting for approximately 5% of total local representation. Overall, this feedback received from residents is unified and echoes the sentiment expressed by local officials and members of the planning committee—there is a severe lack of affordable housing for all income levels and ages, the area would can benefit from additional commerce and industry, the area's rural and scenic character is highly valued, safety and emergency service response times are a concern, and added amenities would encourage families and workers to stay in the area.

90%



**OF RESIDENCES
RESIDE IN SINGLE
FAMILY HOMES**

55 / 45

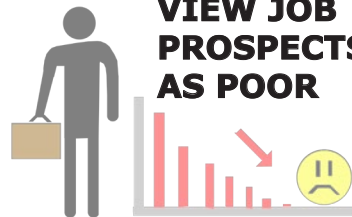


EX. FAMILIES

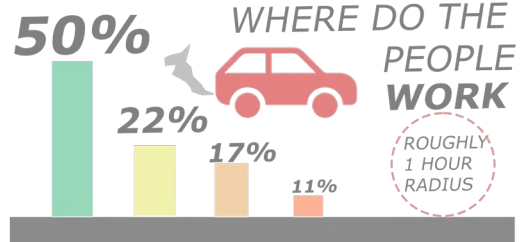


NEW FAMILIES

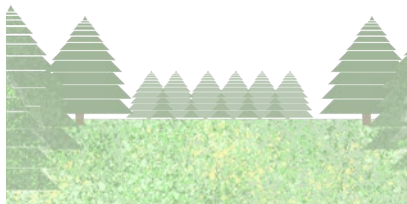
64%



**VIEW JOB
PROSPECTS
AS POOR**



88%



**BELIEVE IN
STRENGTHING
OPEN SPACE**

LOCAL
NEW YORK
SUSQUE COUNTY
OTHER COUNT.

50%



**OF NEW REQUESTS
HARDWARE STORE | RESTURANT | ENTERTAINMENT**

80%

**WANT TO SEE
IMPROVED ALTERNATE
METHODS OF
TRANSPORTATION**

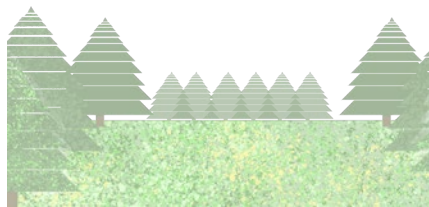


90%

**OF THE COMMUNITY
BELIEVES BLIGHT IS
A GROWING PROBLEM
AND REQUIRES
IMMEDIATE ATTENTION**

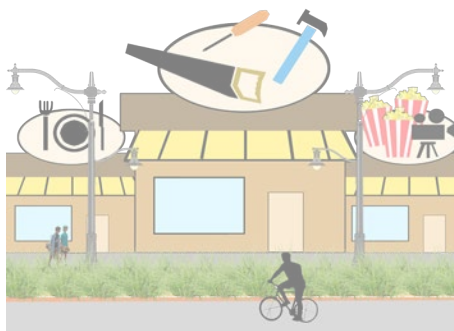


WHY WE STAY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

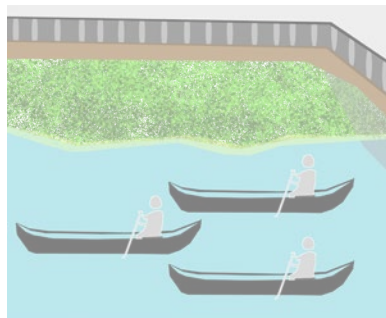


75%

WANT TO SEE THE AREA REVITALIZED AND IMPROVED



RESIDENTS PUT OUT ADDITIONAL REQUESTS, TO ADDRESS AND IMPROVE RESPONSE TIMES FOR PUBLIC BASED AMENITIES

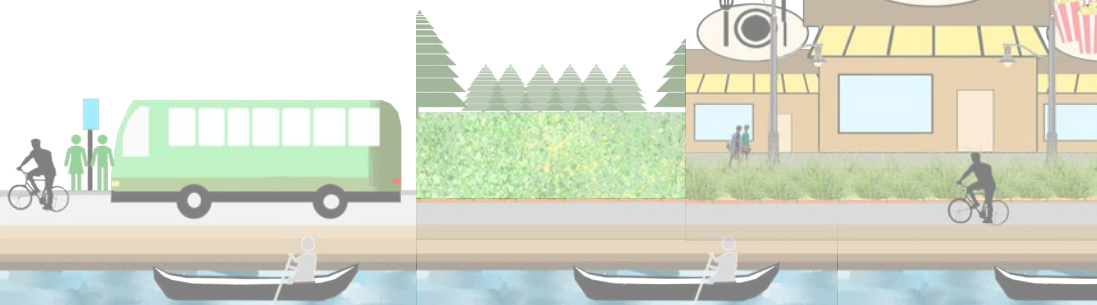


66%

OF RESIDENCES FULLY SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF BECOMING A RIVER TOWN



PEOPLES CHOICE: COMMUNITIES HIGHEST PRIORITY



PUBLIC SURVEY CONCLUSION:

Residents of both boroughs expressed a desire for economic development and revitalization in the area. Other takeaways from the public survey include a desire to maintain the region's scenic and rural character, a need to update and improve local infrastructure, a need for adequate emergency services, a desire to support and grow local businesses, and the need to build a variety of affordable single-family homes. If given the opportunity, strengthening connections and public transportation may be beneficial too.

III-X. FOCUS GROUP

A focus group of residents, officials, volunteers, and business owners formed and discussed the opportunities and needs of the community at the Susquehanna Depot municipal building on October 6th, 2025. This group reaffirmed much of what the planning committee and public survey expressed.

Each member of the focus group shared specific insight regarding housing, economics, and life in the area, based on their connection to the community and individual work efforts. The discussion even included details regarding how Trehab and the County's Redevelopment Authority continue to work to acquire blighted parcels, build housing on them, and rent them to local families and seniors, while maintaining affordable rent costs.

Key takeaways from the discussion:

- The community has an ardent desire to maintain the area's rural character, and scenic beauty. The focus group members believe doing so is integral to the area's quality of life.
- Community strengths that support economic revitalization in the area include the natural history of the area, the history of the power plant and earthen dam, significant industrial era architecture (the Starrucca House), the area's train tracks, and the significant Mormon religious sites adjacent. It was noted that tens of thousands of pilgrims come to the area to visit these sites each year and, although requested, it has been difficult to offer them lodging, food, and beverages. Most return the same day from their visit or seek lodging and food elsewhere.
- The focus group believes the highest priority economic development item that must be addressed is affordable housing. Employees of Trehab and the County's Redevelopment Authority described the significant amount of blight, difficulty procuring vacant parcels, difficulty obtaining grants to renovate, and the long list of residents seeking homes. Practical solutions to this issue include forming land bank and blight task forces.
- Focus group members expressed a need to obtain additional resources for the local hospital, emergency services, and to reform the local police force. Supporting these will alleviate concerns described by the community regarding safety and security in the rural area, which affects people's desire to live in the boroughs.
- The focus group also considered and discussed each municipalities taxes and financial stability; noting that DCED's STMP program may assist Susquehanna Depot in meeting their capital budget, reforming their police force, and establishing a blight task force and land bank. All agreed that transparent, revised taxes were appropriate to ensure solvency and proper maintenance of borough budget items.
- How to best welcome new families and workers was discussed with the focus group noting an imbalance in the price of newly renovated homes being sold. Most houses have been on the market for extended periods because their mortgage or rent costs exceed median family and senior budgets. Efforts to grow area businesses to pay family sustaining wages and to provide a variety of housing options at prices reflective of the area's cost of living can be beneficial in this instance.

- Due to the deep desire to welcome area families and bolster opportunities for area youth, the focus group cited a lack of amenities and services as the primary reason residents leave or choose not to move to the area. Establishing area daycare services, theatre groups, additional restaurants, an additional grocery, and a public gym can help correct this issue. An effective solution discussed was creating a local community center with daycare, stage facilities, a gym, and other activities was discussed.
- The focus group deeply supports the idea of bolstering recreation and tourism as they view these as “fundamental infrastructure”. Because of this view, they fully support obtaining “Outdoor” and “River-”town designations from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Susquehanna Greenways, respectively. They believe that creating a Comprehensive Park and Recreation Plan in the coming years and building upon the County’s Active Transportation Plan can benefit area youth and families. A trail through Susquehanna Depot to the D&H Trailhead was noted as a high priority.
- The focus group shared beneficial programming that they feel are positive and well attended by the community and can benefit from additional financial support and growth. These all annual include Hometown Days, the Homecoming Parade, Music at the Park, and Riverfest. Future hot-air balloon rides for residents to view their communities was noted as a potential, highly desired event too.
- Lastly, the focus group also expressed concerns about sharing their efforts with the community. Citing the “Social Media Effect” each member described the negativity, difficulties, and opposition they have faces when publicly posting on social media about new efforts, renovations, programs, tax increases, and construction. Removing the ability for public comment from social media posts and being very transparent at the municipal level with these projects can help reduce some of the negativity moving forward.

FOCUS GROUP CONCLUSION:

Overall, the focus group confirmed the desires expressed in the public survey and by the planning committee over the last eighteen months--housing reconstruction, the reduction of blight, and the development of recreational amenities in the boroughs are the keys to the community’s revitalization. Focus group members shared their willingness to continue their efforts, collaborating with the community, and working to meet critical needs. Simple changes, like forming a land bank and blight task force, transparently adjusting taxes, pursuing economic development programs, and building community involvement will go a long way toward enhancing the quality of life of the area as they seek to welcome families to live and work in the boroughs.

III

COMMUNITY OF TODAY RECOMMENDATIONS (GOALS & OBJECTIVES)



1. Form a blight and/or a land bank task force with Susquehanna County to develop land bank and blight remediation plans.
2. Inventory all vacant and/or blighted parcels within the two boroughs.
3. Appoint a multi-municipal advisory board that can review and make recommendations regarding shared services; including police and emergency services.
4. Improve emergency service response times.
5. Establishing a Tax Incremental Financing, Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance, or Keystone Opportunity Zone to reduce the tax burden for developers who revitalize buildings and parcels within these zones.
6. Review access and walkability throughout each borough to adjacent amenities, the hospital and the school. Improve transportation opportunities between these.

HOUSING

IV



IV-I. HOUSING

Although Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough have deep housing issues, they are all manageable. The focus group and planning committees consider a lack of affordable housing to be the primary problem facing the boroughs today. This section of the Comprehensive Plan features recommendations that seek to remedy the issue with support and direction from the County, the boroughs, and the State.

Unfortunately, the identification and removal of blight is a lengthy process that involves code enforcement, liens and citations, and the local magistrate(s). While State level judges are likely to issue notices of eviction and allow the municipality to remedy the situation, local magistrates have been reluctant to act, and it can take twenty-four months (or more) of back and forth to obtain approvals and monies for demolition.

Nevertheless, both boroughs have clearly identified the need to inventory the blight in the area, record vacant lots and those on the County repository, and create homes for area families. The need for housing in the area is already dire as the County Redevelopment Authority maintains a lengthy list of seniors and families looking to obtain homes of adequate size with rents within their means (rent costs no more than one third of their gross annual pay).

This chapter provides supporting information regarding the status, availability, and cost of housing, notes constraints from blight and incomes, supports the streamlined removal of blight, and supports new residential renovations and construction.

IV-II. SUSQUEHANNA DEPOT HOUSING

At the time this document is being written, Susquehanna Depot features 670 total housing units. 557 are occupied and 113 (17%) are vacant. This in stark contrast to the Commonwealth's demographics which show a vacancy rate of 8.8% (American Community Survey 2023); less than half that of Susquehanna Depot. Vacancy in the area appears to be due to a lack of inspected homes that are available for sale combined with the continued deterioration of blighted homes and parcels.



670
TOTAL UNITS

\$633 AVG RENT

8% RENTERS

113

VACANT UNITS

17%

OF HOMES
ARE VACANT



557 OCCUPIED

71% OF HOMES ARE
2-3 BEDROOMS

72% HOME OWNERSHIP

IV-III. OAKLAND BOROUGH HOUSING

Oakland Borough, at the time this plan is taking shape, features 238 total housing units; 222 of which are occupied. Oakland Borough can benefit from implementing home renovations programs and adjusting the tax burden on newly renovated or constructed homes. This is because Oakland Borough relies primarily on real estate taxes. Most tax revenues received by Oakland Borough come from recently renovated or newly constructed homes. Residents are not inclined to build new or renovate in the area as they view a new assessment and the resulting tax increase as cost prohibitive.

Working with the County's Redevelopment Authority, Trehab, and surrounding municipalities to renovate existing and construct a variety of house sizes and types can alleviate the issues plaguing the two boroughs (housing distribution, affordability, and a lack of homes).

Although both boroughs enjoy over 70% homeownership rates with only 8% of homes being rental units. The immediate need for additional homes that offer mortgages and rents within local means and budgets is clear. It is important to note, though that residents looking to own or rent a home in the area must secure employment that pays wages that can support ownership, long term rents, and other family sustaining costs. If new employment opportunities are not provided, it is likely that some families will default on loans and or be unable to maintain their homes, leading to additional blight conditions.



238

TOTAL UNITS

\$714 AVG RENT

8% RENTERS

222 OCCUPIED

80% OF HOMES ARE
2-3 BEDROOMS

72% HOME OWNERSHIP



16
VACANT UNITS

7%

OF HOMES
ARE VACANT

IV-IV. BALANCING HOME COSTS

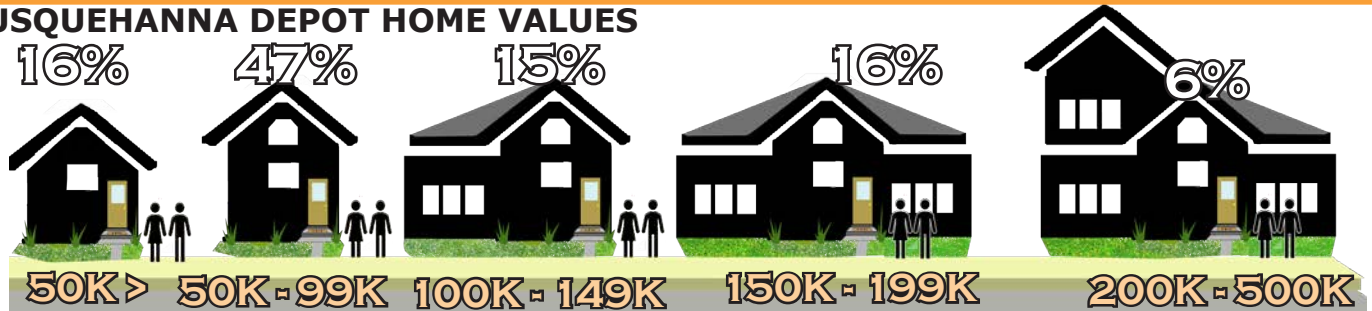
Based on the median household incomes in Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough, area residents who make this median amount can commit \$1600.00 per month, responsibly, toward their mortgage, monthly rent, and housing costs. This allows residents to purchase a \$500,000 home over thirty years. Unfortunately, the renovated homes and apartments for sale are priced well above these two figures.

Average home values in the area are between \$50,000 and \$99,000. Those that are for sale within this range are typically unsafe and uninhabitable.

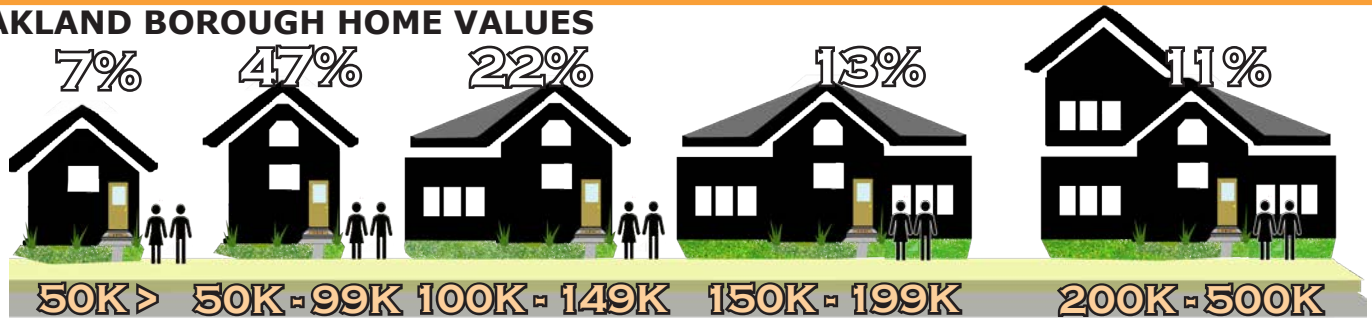
Ideally, home buyers would purchase a home that fits their family size and needs at a low cost to maintain a safe and healthy quality of life. Both the County Redevelopment Authority and Trehab have made strides obtaining vacant and blighted parcels and renovating them up to current code, then renting or selling them for set amounts (around \$2200 a month) for area families and seniors. However, they are unable to meet demand and recognize how long the process takes. Municipal support of their efforts may help efficiently move projects forward to meet demand.

Also worth noting is the rise in median household income from 2019 to now. Area residents now have more to spend on homes, but non-residents and businesses have come to the area, recognized the scenic beauty and low housing costs, purchased and renovated homes, and put them up for sale or rent well beyond the median household income. These homes are then purchased or rented to local families who then have to stretch their finances to remain in them or they are sold to other non-residents from outside the area.

SUSQUEHANNA DEPOT HOME VALUES



OAKLAND BOROUGH HOME VALUES



IV-IV. REVILATIZATION

The overarching goal of the planning committee and both boroughs is to connect with and encourage developers and home buyers to buy existing buildings and homes, renovate them, and have area families and workers live in them long term. Blighted and vacant parcels can be inventoried and a blight and land banking task force, in conjunction with County Redevelopment Authority, formed to efficiently fulfill this strategy. New homes can also be built as blighted homes are renovated, to efficiently meet demand and stabilize pricing.

With each home being reassessed, each municipality can adjust their tax base to specific capital expenditure, while not placing the local tax burden so heavily on real estate taxes.

Once these actions are taken, and a variety of housing options for families and workers are in place at affordable prices, the municipalities can move toward becoming a bustling "Outdoor" and/or "River" Town, as defined by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. The Council provides guidance for municipalities to celebrate the outdoors and rivers within them, promoting the communities as a destination for recreation and scenic beauty.

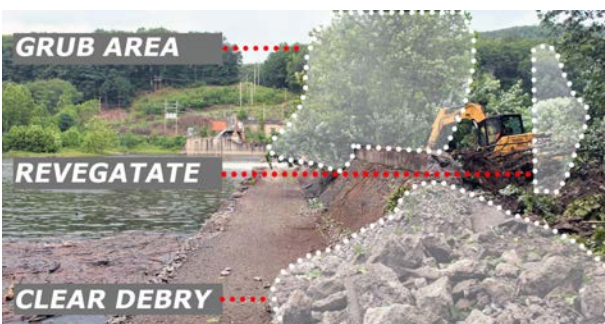
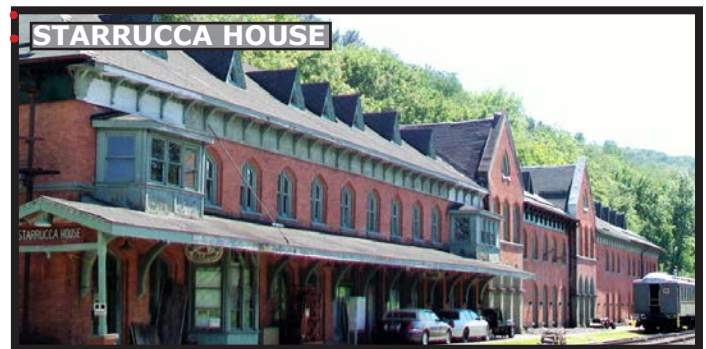
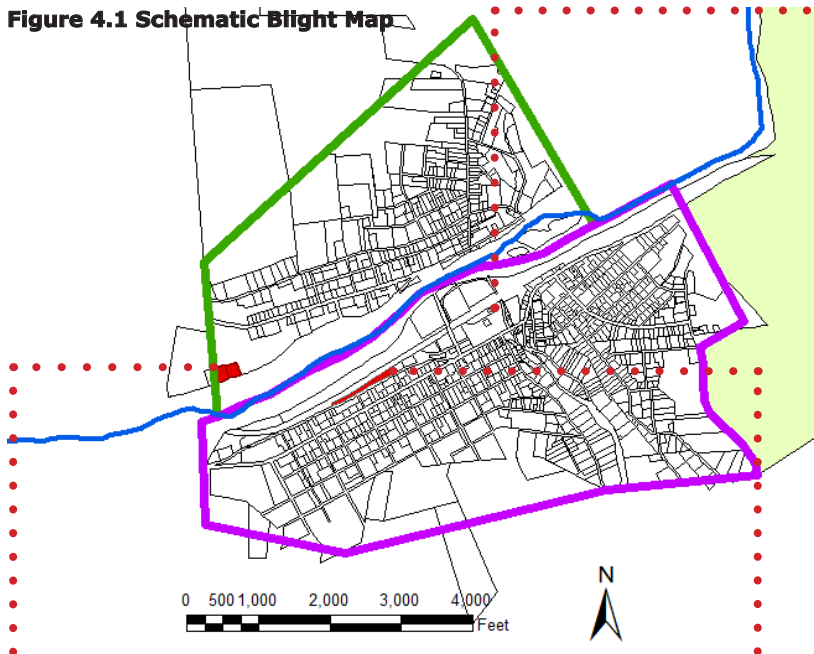
IV-V. BLIGHT

As previously described in this Comprehensive Plan, both municipalities have several vacant and/or blighted parcels that they would like to take corrective action on. Initial steps that can be taken to efficiently manage these are:

- Establish a blight and/or land banking task force that can collaborate with Susquehanna County's Redevelopment Authority and Trehab to inventory and analyze vacant lots, blighted parcels, and properties on the County's repository.
- Have the blight and land banking task force review and decide what each vacant or blighted parcel may be used for, with housing being the top priority.
- Develop and consider adopting a "quality of life ordinance" to create an efficient path for blight remediation in both boroughs.
- Develop and adopt rental and vacancy ordinances in Susquehanna Depot.
- Support the task force's endeavors with assistance from municipal code enforcement and the borough attorneys.

Please see the Implementation Matrix for additional steps to combat blight and bolster economics.

Figure 4.1 Schematic Blight Map



HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

(GOALS & OBJECTIVES)

IV



- 1. Form a blight task force and land banking committee with the County's Housing and Redevelopment Authority Office and Trehab.**
- 2. Identify dilapidated and/or vacant properties and create a blight inventory map.**
- 3. Decide what land use would be most beneficial for each blighted or vacant lot; knowing that additional housing is in high demand.**
- 4. Review, develop and adopt a "quality of life" ordinance for each borough. These can be used to establish code violations, fines, and solicit corrections from a landowner efficiently.**
- 5. Establish rental and vacancy ordinances in Susquehanna Depot.**
- 6. Work towards a balance of available and affordable home options at a variety of sizes for rent or purchase to meet growing demand.**
- 7. Pursue "Outdoor Town" and "River Town" designations from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, to showcase the area's scenic beauty, boost tourism, and welcome families and workers to live in the boroughs long-term.**

V

RECREATION



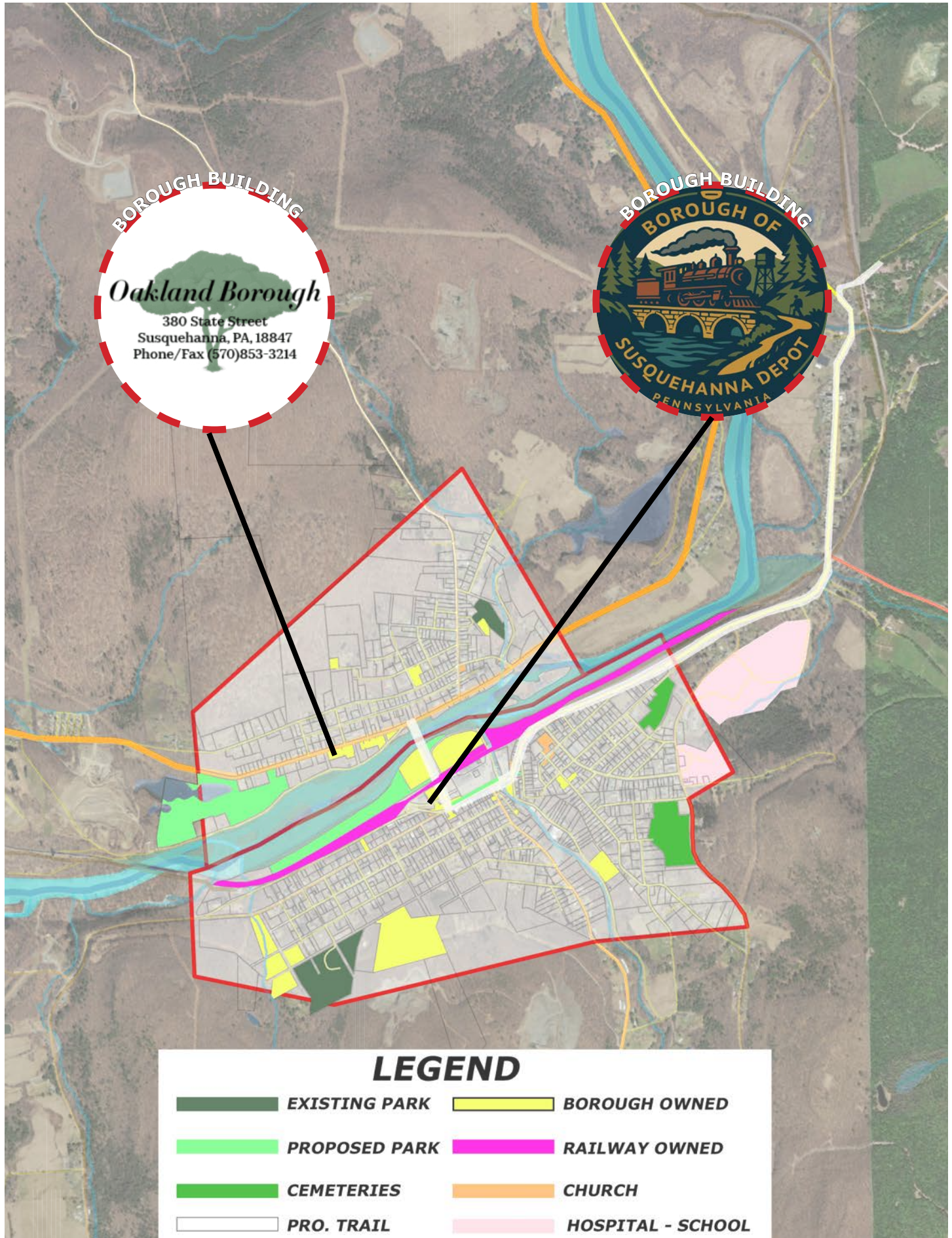
V-I. RECREATION

Recreation in Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot may be their most valued natural resource, as both visitors and residents find its rural character and scenic beauty a primary reason they choose to live (and stay) in the area. Although the area has set aside some open space and began to rehabilitate existing park spaces, citizens value their location along the Susquehanna River Water Trail and their proximity to the D&H Trail system.

The following chapter provides a comprehensive inventory of existing parks, recreational amenities, adjacent trail systems, and identifies several vacant open parcels and connections that, if acquired and developed, can support strong access to recreation and connections between communities.

A list of recommended goals is provided at the end of the chapter to guide citizens and officials in their pursuit of developing, renovating, connecting, and enhancing their area's recreation network. As described in the Pennsylvania Department of Recreation and Natural Resources' Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan, economic development and recreational development are intrinsically linked.

V-II. PARCEL DATA



BOROUGH BUILDING
Oakland Borough
 380 State Street
 Susquehanna, PA, 18847
 Phone/Fax (570)853-3214



LEGEND

	EXISTING PARK		BOROUGH OWNED
	PROPOSED PARK		RAILWAY OWNED
	CEMETERIES		CHURCH
	PRO. TRAIL		HOSPITAL - SCHOOL

Figure 5.1 Parcel Map

V-III. LAND BASED RECREATION

Oakland and Susquehanna Depot Boroughs have several public park spaces, share a border on a public water trail (the Susquehanna River), and are in proximity to the D&H Trail in Lanesboro Borough. As shown in Figure 5.2, each of these parks and trails lend themselves to be better connected.

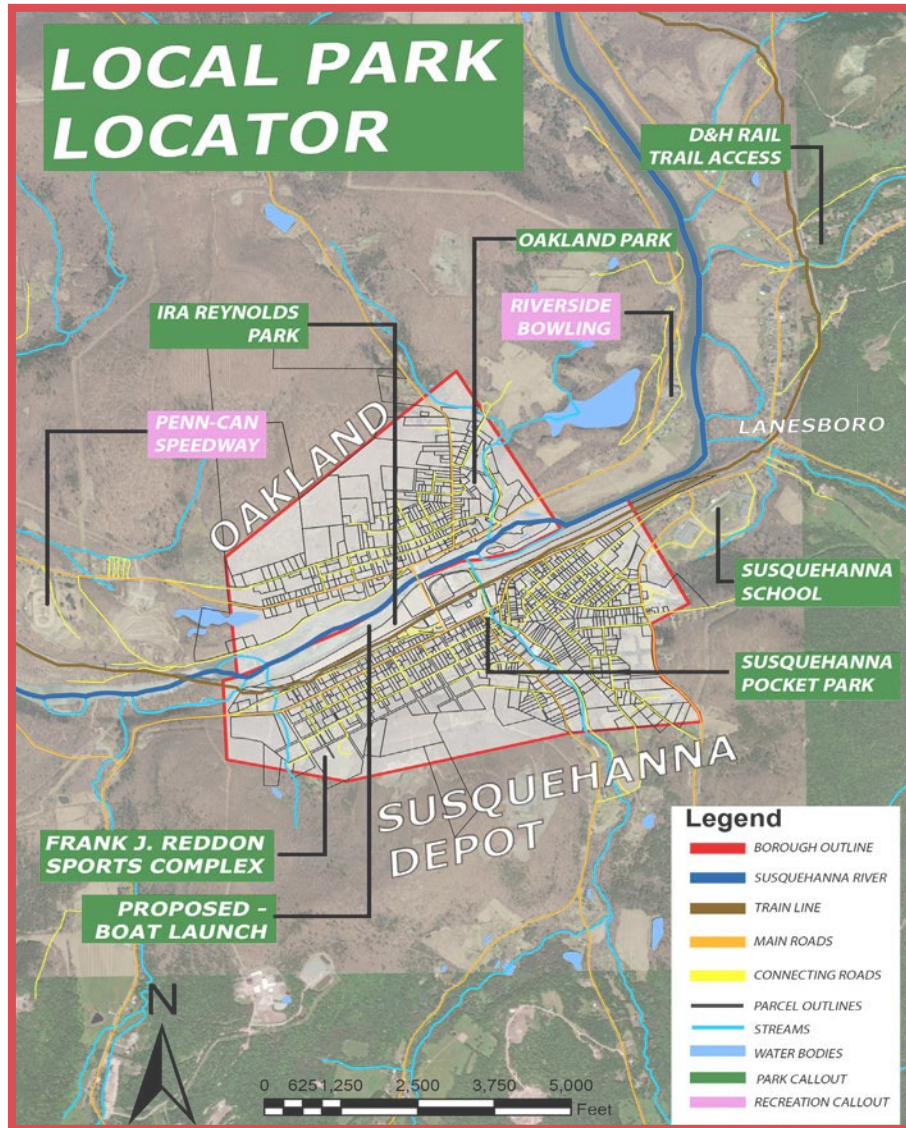


Figure 5.2 Local Park Locator

The Susquehanna River – a major public water trail through New York State and Pennsylvania.

Ira Reynolds Park – a local greenspace offering river access, a loop trail, and other amenities.

Susquehanna Depot Pocket Park – a public space with seating along E. Main Street and adjacent to a café. This park is planted with perennials and annually maintained by the local garden club, however, last year a retaining wall collapsed into the park space and the site is temporarily unavailable.

The Frank J. Reddon Sports Complex – a public park with multiple ball fields, trails, courts, and playground equipment.

The Susquehanna High School – a local public school sports complex with an accessible running track, football field, tennis courts, and ballfields.

Oakland Park – a public park with a ballfield, picnic area and pavilion, playground and parking.

Penn-Can Speedway – a privately owned dirt racetrack for a variety of motorized race cars.

D&H Rail Trail – a nearly 38-mile trail system built on a retired railway bed that runs from the New York State border to the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Trail north of Scranton, PA.

V-IV. WATER BASED RECREATION

Oakland and Susquehanna Depot Boroughs are located along the Susquehanna River Water Trail and enjoy thousands of feet of Susquehanna River frontage. With the Susquehanna River with five cold-water designated streams the municipalities provide excellent opportunities for water sports, fishing, and water-based recreation. The Susquehanna River provides connections to greater biological and water trail systems and has had significant work done to it over the last several decades, within this shared river section.

The Susquehanna River has always been a source of food, water, transportation, and enjoyment for the people of Oakland and Susquehanna Depot Boroughs. Despite being in the northern tier of Pennsylvania, the stretch of river bisecting Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot is strategically located along the Susquehanna River Water Trail and primed for additional use and access creation.

In 2017, with the support of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Endless Mountains Heritage Region, Inc., and others, Susquehanna Depot joined PA DEP's Brownfields to Playfields pilot program. Through this program they received funding to design construct Ira Reynolds Park; complete with earthen river accesses, trails, plantings, and parking, however, the municipality was required to "cap" the contaminated soils at the site that exist from previous industry. This would allow it to be safe for children and families to play on. The park renovation, completed in 2022, also includes wayfinding signage, a replica (scaled down) train display, and a pavilion with power for public events.

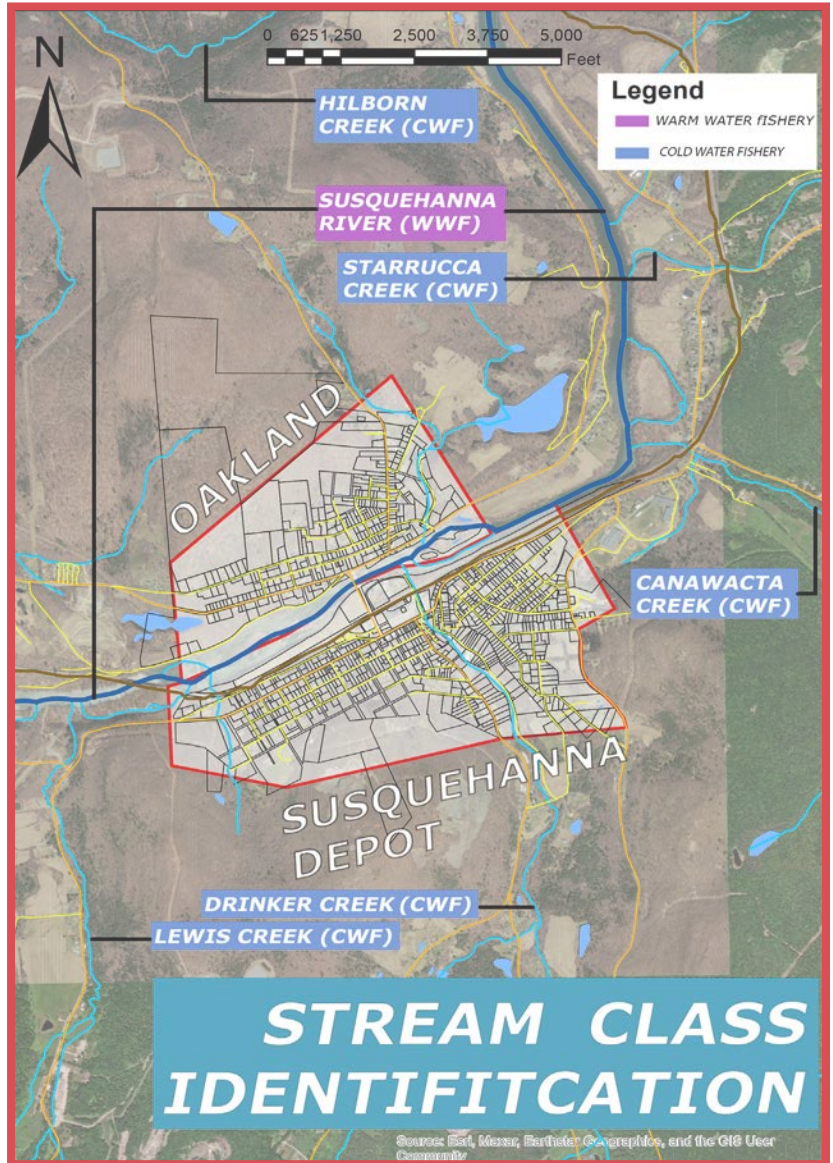


Figure 5.3 Stream Class Identification



In 2023, the Susquehanna Dam, a hydroelectric dam connected to a power plant on the Susquehanna River's edge in Oakland Borough, was removed. The power plant, in need of extensive repairs, was left in place, and, along with the surrounding land and a parcel to the north, are now owned by Oakland Borough.

Over the last year, Susquehanna Depot has pursued and been awarded funding to provide a river access and boat launch made of concrete, parking, and a composting restroom in Ira Reynolds Park in support of the Susquehanna River Water Trail. This will likely be installed in 2027. Adding branded wayfinding signage that matches those created by the Susquehanna Water Trail Association, coordinating non-motorized boat return shuttle services, and developing primitive camp sites for those enjoying the Susquehanna River Water Trail would be beneficial for these communities.

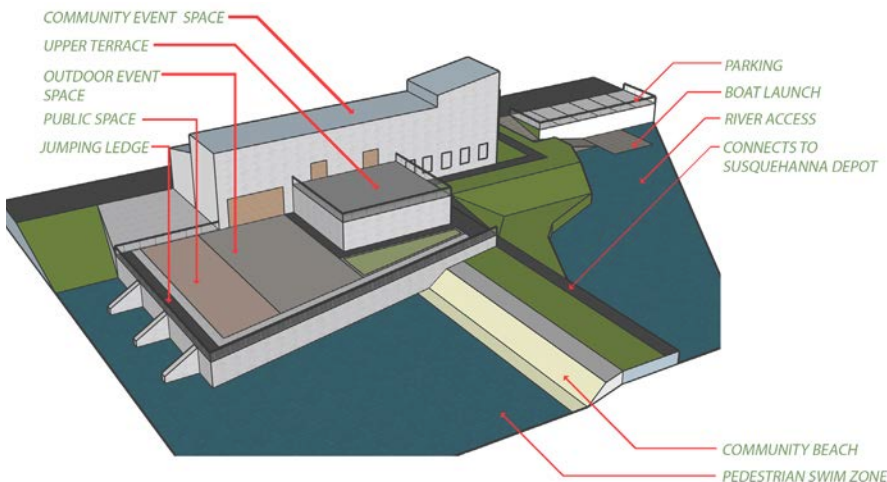
V-V. THE POTENTIAL FOR ADDITIONAL PARKS, TRAILS, AND OPEN SPACE...

Several publicly accessible green spaces and parks exist in Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough. Per the Park Locator figure, beyond Ira Reynolds and Irving Parks, there exists open spaces along the Susquehanna River, a potential connection to the D&H Trail along SR 171, and ballfields owned and maintained by the local School District.

Each Borough has applied for grant funding to renovate and rehabilitate their parks, including Irving Park, Ira Reynolds Park, and a feasibility study for a trail connection to the D&H Rail Trail in Lanesboro (Northern Tier Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2019 and the Ira Reynolds Park to D&H Rail Trail Connector Feasibility Study, 2022).

Recently, PennDOT announced a large “bifurcation” project with improvements, bridges, and widening started on Interstate 81 through Susquehanna County. Part of this project proposed widening State Route 171 near Susquehanna Depot. Although there were public meetings and construction began on the overall project in 2023, the planning committee believe that additional sidewalk and trail could be placed, as part of that project, to fully connect Susquehanna Depot and the D&H Trailhead in Lanesboro on State Route 171. A conceptual location for this is noted in Figure 5.8. Municipal officials and members of the public are encouraged to call their state representatives and PennDOT to request that these be added to these plans; fully connecting both municipalities to this world-class trail system.

The following conceptual designs are noted by the planning committee as high priority desires of each community. Each of these projects is warranted and each strongly support Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot’s pursuit of “Outdoor Town” and “River Town” designations from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, respectively.



The “Power House” can be made into an event space, river access, and park – providing pop-up restaurants, galleries, and temporary businesses in a beautiful setting. A non-motorized boat launch would provide a public connection to the river and on the acreage to the north, mountain biking, picnicking, and hiking opportunities.

Figure 5.4 Powerhouse Renovations



The existing Susquehanna Depot Pocket Park is in need of repair as a large retaining wall, boulders, and soil have collapsed into the park space. The space, during renovations, can be reimagined by the community to have contemporary amenities beyond the tables, benches, and flowers that previously existed.

Figure 5.5 Susquehanna Pocket Park Renovations

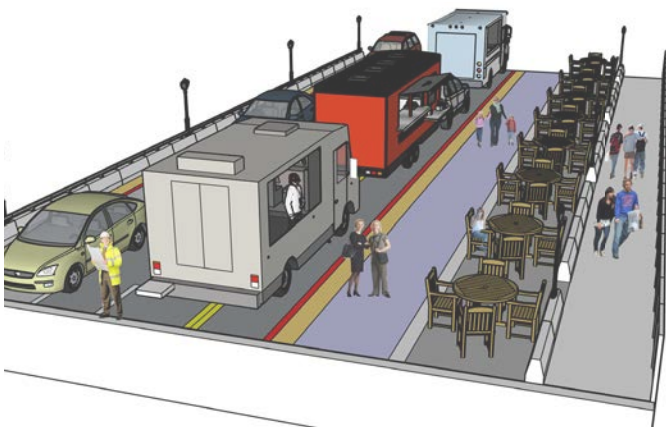


Figure 5.6 Exchange St. Bridge Renovations

Centrally located between and connecting both Boroughs, the Exchange Street Bridge provides ample space and beautiful views of the Susquehanna River and activities occurring in both communities. Municipal officials have expressed a desire to host a programmed annual weekend of events where the bridge is partially closed and opened up to pedestrians, vendors, and recreational enthusiasts to celebrate the region.



Figure 5.7 Lid Park Renovations

The Susquehanna Depot Lid Park – an existing space with parking along E. Main Street in Susquehanna Depot adjacent to an existing war memorial, grocery store, and W. Main Street (SR 92). Current conditions at the site worth noting are a failing retaining wall. Borough officials desire to turn this space into a promenade with seating an access to the street, grocery, and Exchange Street bridge.

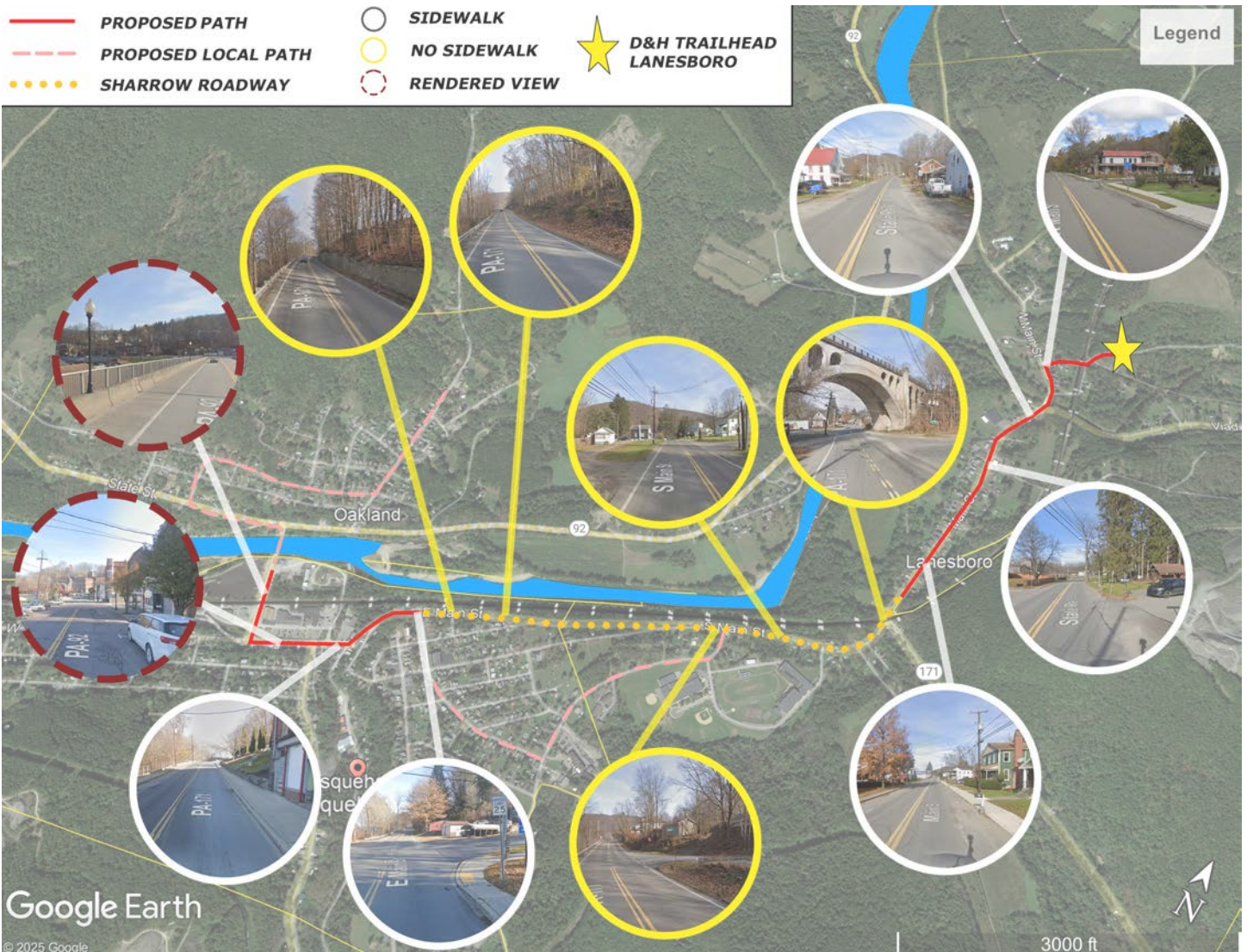


Figure 5.8 Trail Feasibility

V-VI. THE POTENTIAL TO BE AN “OUTDOOR TOWN”

“An Outdoor Town is a place that uses natural assets to bring people together to revitalize economies. Outdoor Towns are fun and welcoming, they invite all people to recreate outside, and they have easy access to recreation for hiking, biking, paddling, hunting, fishing, or wildlife viewing. Outdoor Towns embrace nearby parks, trails, rivers, lakes, and forests as valuable assets to be protected and enhanced. Ultimately an Outdoor Town is a vibrant community that connects people seeking outdoor experiences with places to eat, stay, and shop.”

*–Janet Sweeney, Vice President
Pennsylvania Environmental Council*

Becoming an “Outdoor Town” typically requires a local community to complete seven steps very similar to this Comprehensive Plan and/or a Comprehensive Recreation Plan:

- Step 1: Organize a Team
- Step 2: Identify Partners
- Step 3: Create Vision
- Step 4: Set Priorities
- Step 5: Implement Projects
- Step 6: Celebrate Success
- Step 7: Track Results

Available Resources

Additional information regarding the economic and wellness benefits the community would gain if designated as an “Outdoor Town” are available in the William Penn Foundation “Outdoor Towns Toolkit”:

<https://townsandtrailstoolkit.com/whatisanoutdoortown/>

V-VII. THE POTENTIAL TO BE A “RIVER TOWN”

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership currently offers the “The Susquehanna Greenway River Towns Program” designation for communities along a Pennsylvania River who meet and exceed their four-stage process:

Stage 1: Organize

Create a diverse team of community members interested in river programming and enjoyment on the river.

Stage 2: Discover

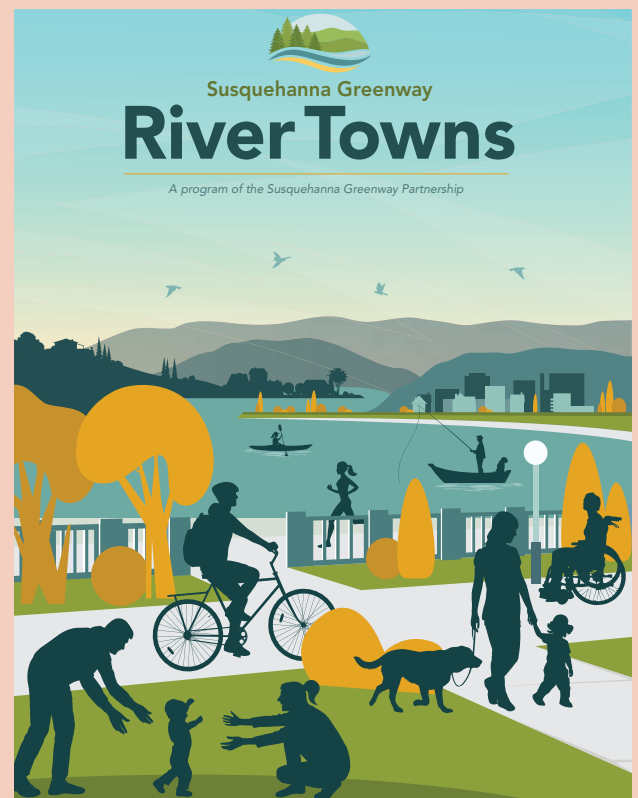
The freshly organized River Town committee will begin to work with the Susquehanna Greenways Partnership to inventory community opportunities and assets, conduct public outreach and envision programming, connections, and economic development centered on the adjacent Susquehanna River.

Stage 3: Strategize

Create an action plan or a list of prioritized projects and programming strategies to ensure the next steps for the committee and community are clear.

Stage 4: Designate and Celebrate

Once your action plan and report have been adopted by the municipality and approved by the Susquehanna Greenways Partnership, the community will receive a “River Town” designation from the Susquehanna Greenways Partnership. Although receiving the designation is beneficial, the economic growth, ecological restoration, and stronger connection with the river are the true benefits.



RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS

(GOALS & OBJECTIVES)

V



- 1. Contact both PennDOT and Lanesboro to coordinate constructing additional sidewalks and adding "sharrows" to SR 92 and 171, as part of PennDOT's bifurcation project to connect Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot to the D&H Trailhead in Lanesboro.**
- 2. Create a Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Comprehensive Plan to document and prioritize all potential recreation projects.**
- 3. Amend local tax codes to obtain money specifically for the parks and recreation capital budget.**
- 4. Contact PennDOT to obtain approvals to use the Exchange Street Bridge for an annual, one weekend long, community celebration event, appoint a committee composed of residents of both Boroughs, and develop programming for the event, including vendors, safety officers, and activities.**
- 5. Contact the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and coordinate and discuss Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough becoming an "Outdoor Town".**
- 6. Contact the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership to enroll to receive a "River Town" designation.**
- 7. Continue efforts to establish an accessible non-motorized boat launch in Ira Reynolds Park.**

VI

TRANSPORTATION



VI-I. TRANSPORTATION

Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough area development has always developed in conjunction with transportation to, and through, the region. From its very beginnings, residents relied on the Susquehanna River to move goods, connect with others by ferrying across it, built bridges over it, and placed an earthen dam to control it. Originally, the construction of the rail line along the river, with Susquehanna Depot centrally located along the route, cementing the area as a needed hub between Erie, Binghamton, Scranton, and New York City. Scenic roads would later give way to State Routes as well.

Both the construction of the concrete dam, hydro-electric power plant, and the modern Exchange Street Bridge were massive construction undertakings of their time. In the late 19th century, the railroad identified the area as a prime location to stage tracks because the landscape was easily traversable, adjacent to the Susquehanna River. In less than a decade the boroughs grew, with thousands of people building and working within three miles of their homes. The support of the rail system created a bustling economy and enabled the areas peak population to date. Today, the area is quite rural and population has declined, although its location, adjacent to cities, and the freight rail that still exist, bring people to and through the communities daily. Today, the automobile has become the chief form of transportation for area residents.

With the railroad no longer transporting people or goods from the immediate area, Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough's populations have stabilized at approximately one-third of what they were at their height. Many roads, sidewalks, crosswalks, and buildings have fallen into disrepair with vacant parcels blighted buildings prevalent.

By foot, the D&H hiking trail exists a short distance away in Lanesboro. A feasibility study has already been drafted expanding and connecting Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough to the network; currently no pedestrian or cycle infrastructure exists, and intervention can be beneficial. Utilizing a multimodal transportation model capitalizes on modern trends, fosters community, bolsters health and wellness, and reduces carbon emissions.

During the focus group meeting, it was noted by the group that there are several significant Mormon religious sites less than two miles from Oakland Borough, along State Route 171, in Oakland Township. The religious sites welcome tens of thousands of visitors a year, via bus, who visit the Priesthood Site Visitors Center, the John and Emma Smith home, and a baptism site along the Susquehanna River. These groups have routinely looked and requested transportation into Susquehanna Depot, accommodations, food, and beverages, but typically must bring items with them and either return the same day (day trip) or head to Binghamton to remain overnight. Providing passenger travel on the rail, buses, and walkable connections were all proposed, would fulfill these needs, and help build local economics.

VI-II. THE NORTH BRANCH SUSQUEHANNA RIVER

The Susquehanna River has long been a source of transportation for people from upstate New York through Pennsylvania to the Chesapeake Bay. Today the river offers the ability to boat, fish, and recreate for hundreds of miles, safely, throughout Pennsylvania.

The Susquehanna River Water Trail is supported by many groups and agencies, including the Alliance of the Chesapeake Bay, The City of Harrisburg, The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, The Pennsylvania Game Commission, The Susquehanna River Trail Association, The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, the Endless Mountains Heritage Region, and others. Since 2009, Endless Mountains Heritage Region personnel, with support from the groups and agencies listed above, have worked diligently to build accesses, amenities, and connections along the 146 mile long "Susquehanna River North Branch Water Trail". This section exists through "the Great Bend" where the river flows from Broome County, New York into Pennsylvania, through Oakland and Susquehanna Depot Boroughs, and then continues back into New York State, where it eventually bends back down into Sayre, PA.

Figure 6.1 below, the Section 1 Water Trail Map compiled by the Endless Mountains Heritage Region, Inc., shows several river access points adjacent to both boroughs. These allow visitors from all over the region to park, launch and retrieve their boats; however, some of these are earthen or otherwise not accessible to those with disabilities. Although the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PA F&BC) currently provides access points 3 miles upstream and 3 miles downstream of the boroughs they, with support from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR), both offer grant monies to develop boat launches and river accesses that meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards of access. Susquehanna Depot has applied for grant monies through these agencies and hopes to create a concrete, non-motorized river access ramp at Ira Reynolds Park, complete with ADA parking. Oakland Borough is encouraged to pursue the same access grants, should they have a location for one in mind, because connecting residents with the outdoors can be beneficial for the health and economics of their community too.

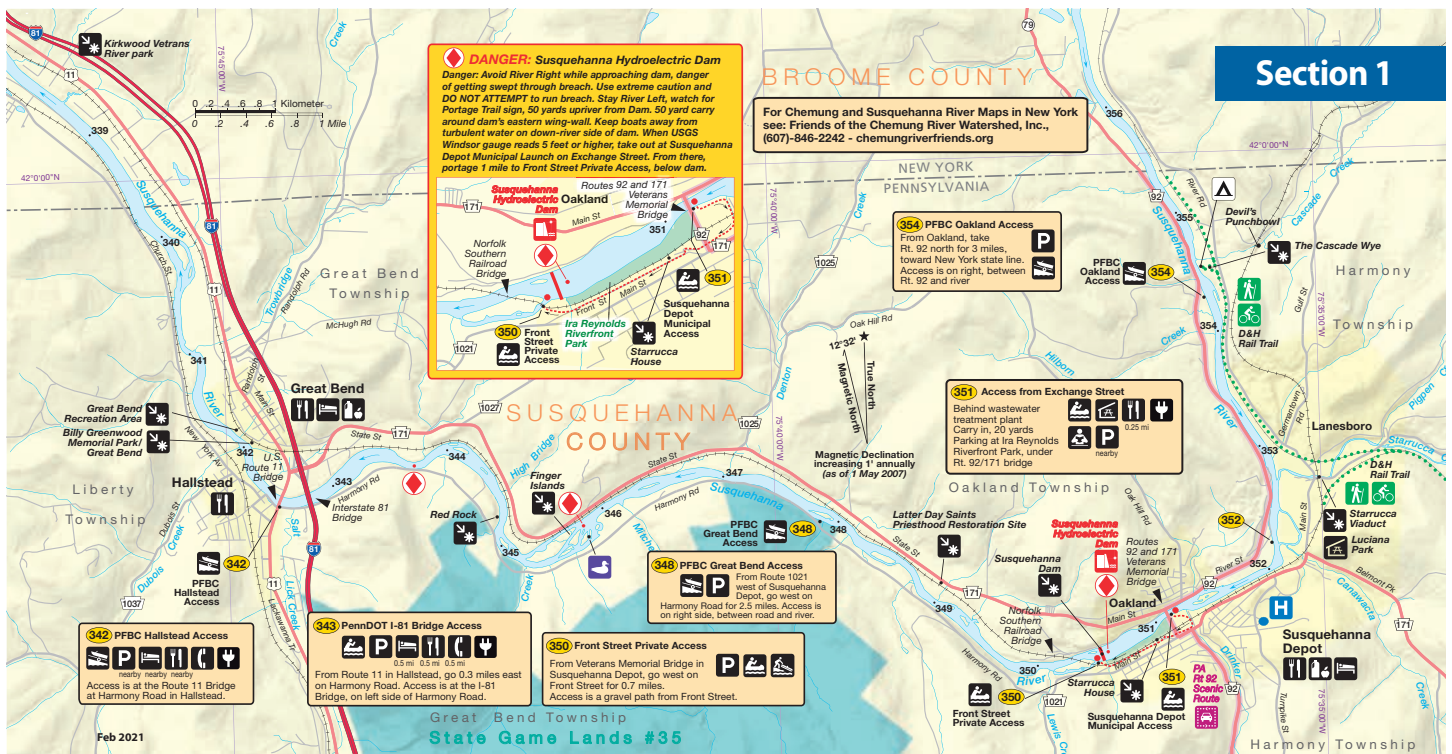


Figure 6.1 Susquehanna River (Great Bend) Section 1 Map (EMHR)

NEIGHBORING BOROUGHS

LANESBORO

5 MIN DRIVE

12 MIN CYCLE

HALLSTEAD

15 MIN DRIVE

1 HOUR CYCLE

ADJACENT CITIES

BINGHAMTON

32 MIN DRIVE

2+HOUR CYCLE

CARBONDALE

43 MIN DRIVE

2+HOUR CYCLE

SCRANTON

1 HOUR DRIVE

4+HOUR CYCLE

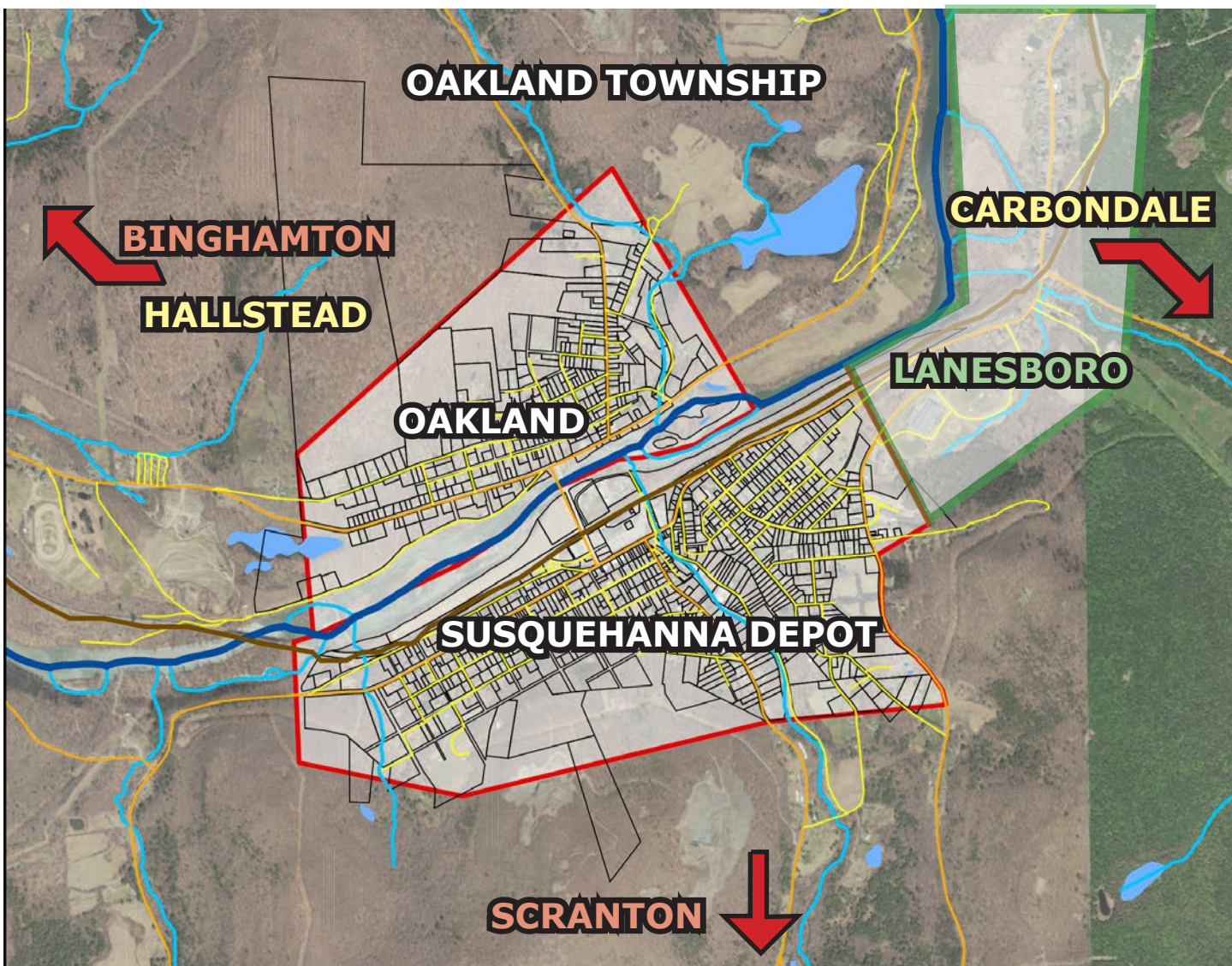
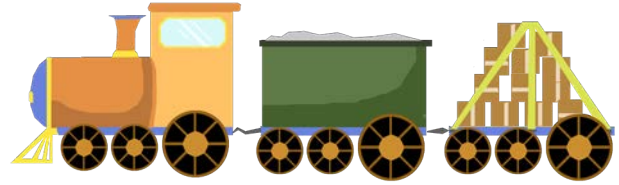


Figure 6.2 City and Borough Distance Tracker

VI-III. THE NEW YORK SUSQUEHANNA AND WESTERN RAILWAY



The New York Susquehanna & Western Railways is a passenger and freight train line. The tracks span primarily throughout New Jersey and New York State. This track system also goes through northern Pennsylvania. Although passenger service is limited, it still exists from Binghamton to Albany, New York. Residents and Visitors seeking to get to Oakland Borough or Susquehanna Depot from surrounding cities must rely on privately operated bus services or airports and automobile service. While once an important stop along the line, Susquehanna Depot no longer has a platform for passenger or freight service, rail cars simply pass through.

The opportunity to restore passenger service to the area can benefit both boroughs. Excursions as simple as bringing visitors from the Mormon religious sites in Oakland Township into Susquehanna Depot for food and accommodations can be made, while offering passenger service to Binghamton and New York City can be cost efficient (track rights are already in place) and reduce the reliance on personal vehicles and private bus systems.

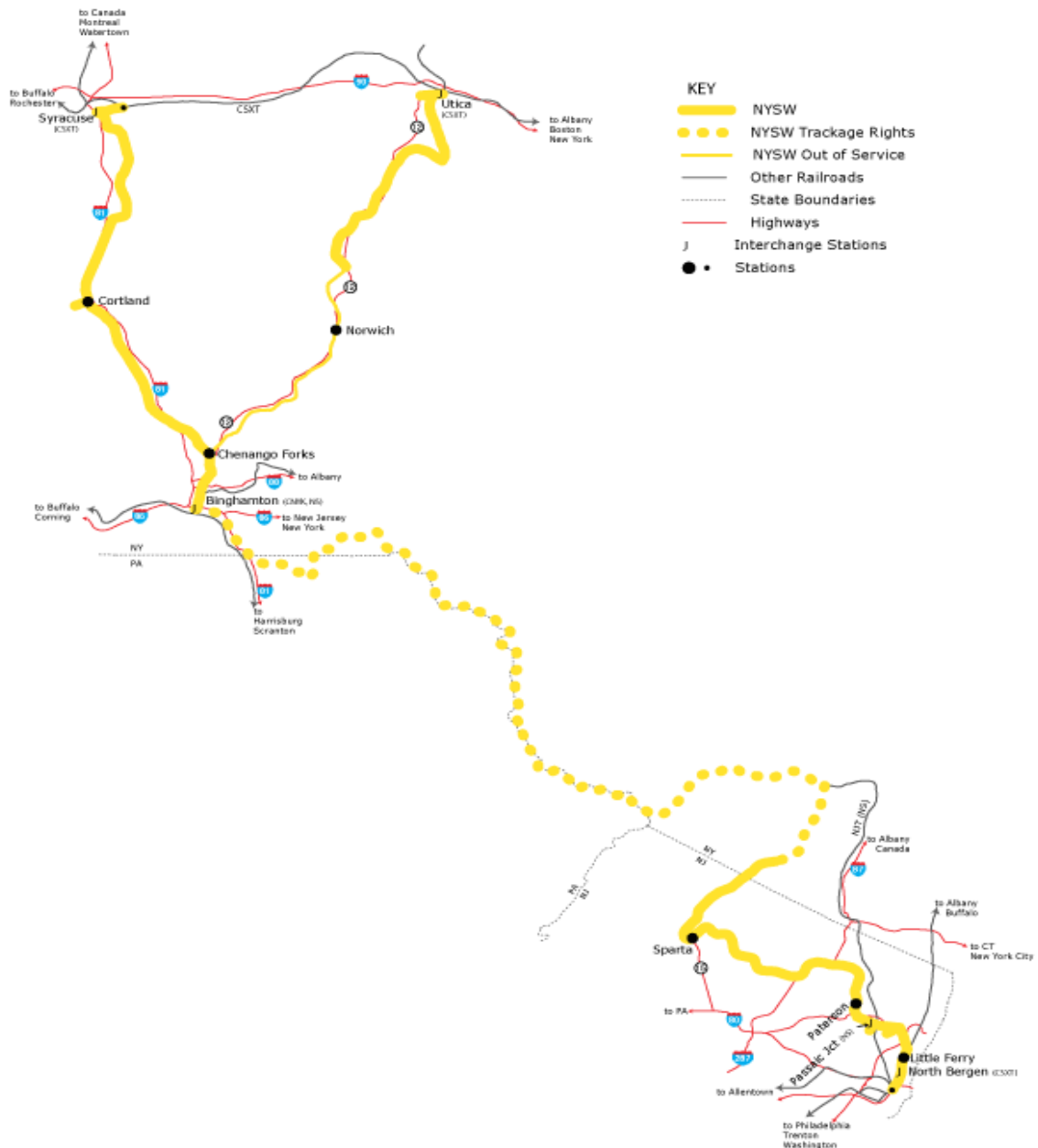


Figure 6.3 NYSW Freight and Passenger Lines

VI-IV. WALKWAYS, GREENWAYS, TRAILS, AND BIKE ROUTES

Without intervention both boroughs will remain reliant on automobile travel. The area can benefit from simple transportation alternative offerings. It is recommended that each municipality begin the transportation planning process in collaboration with Susquehanna County and each other by conducting walkability and greenway/trail studies.

Even without conducting a proper study, the potentials to provide “sharrows,” bike lanes, bike racks, crosswalks, sidewalks, wayfinding signage, and correcting broken walkways, are palpable.

Providing and promoting alternative modes of travel are themes directly required in “Outdoor Town” and “River Town” designations. These transportation alternatives, if investigated and constructed, will allow the scenic beauty of the area to be more easily viewed, and maintained.

VI-V. STREETS, ROADS, AND THE AUTOMOBILE

Both boroughs receive substantial funding each year from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation in the form of liquid fuels taxes to maintain their roadways. With the reduction of purchased fuel during the Covid-19 Pandemic and the more prevalent use of electric vehicles, the amount of liquid fuel funds, which are generated from added taxes on fuel at local gas pump stations, has decreased. Recently, Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough have pursued grant funding to repave roads that need resurfacing. Many of the roads have substantial potholes, stormwater issues, and are deteriorating. Unfortunately, Susquehanna Depot is unable to cover the costs of maintenance, repairs, and re-paving using only the funds received from liquid fuel taxes. As a result, reviewing and adjusting taxes is recommended. This can allow for the scheduling and repair of unsafe roadways and stormwater issues in a timely manner.

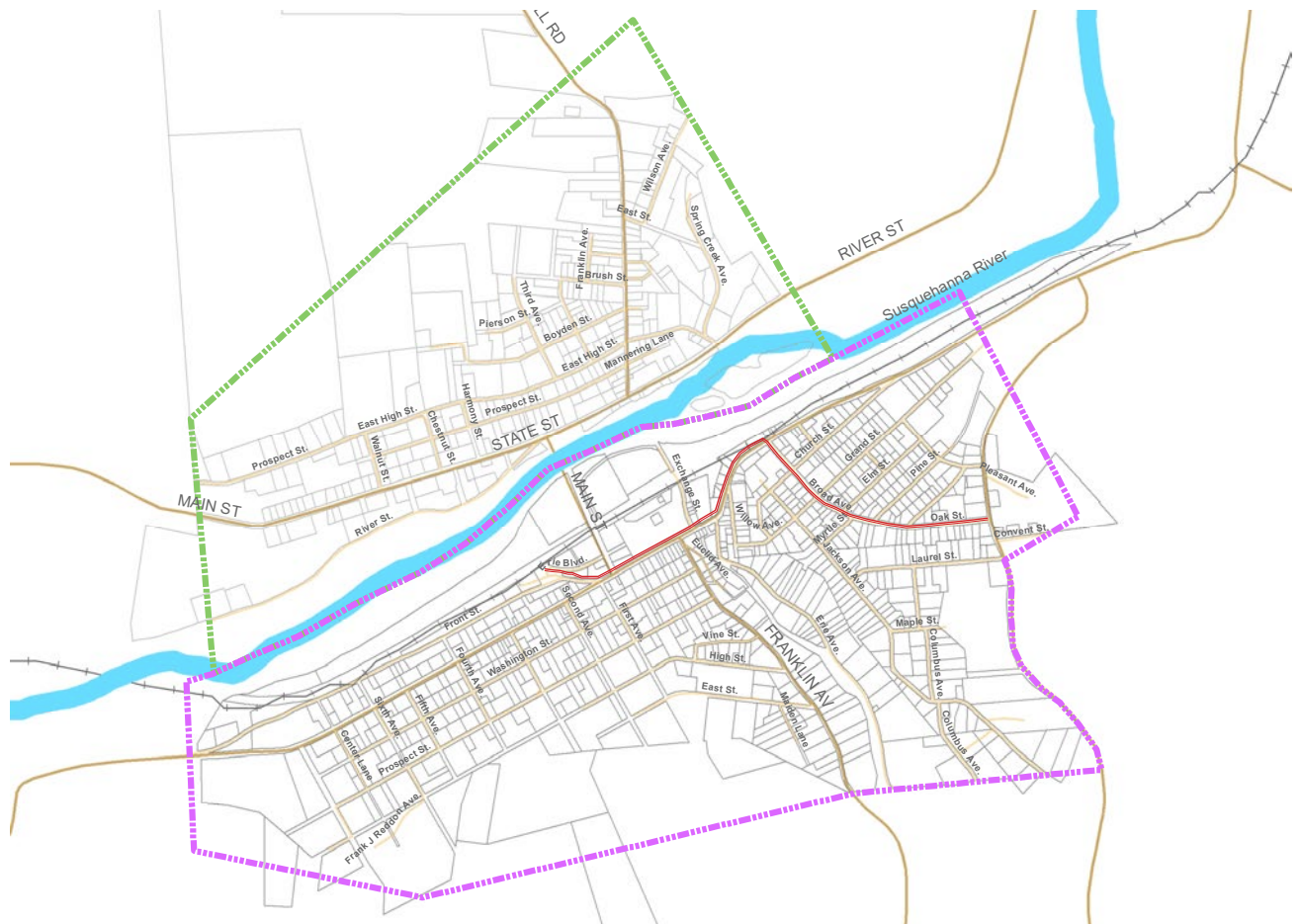
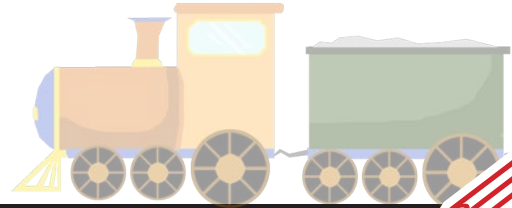


Figure 6.4 Oakland & Susquehanna Local Roads

TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

(GOALS & OBJECTIVES)

VI



- 1. Conduct a multi-municipal greenways, trails, and parks study, specifically considering access to amenities, the river, connections between communities, and transportation alternatives to the automobile for the area.**
- 2. Conduct an existing condition study of roadways, streets, and sidewalk walkability in the area; specifically noting conditions, needed crosswalks, lighting, amenities, and needed repairs, and budget estimates to renovate these.**
- 3. Collaborate with both boroughs, local religious officials who maintain the Mormon sites in Oakland Township, and willing rail operators to see if passenger service or a shuttle can be created between the religious sites and Susquehanna Depot with stops along Susquehanna River, Oakland, and the D&H Trailhead on State Route 171.**
- 4. Review the Susquehanna River Trail system mapping with the Endless Mountains Heritage Region and Susquehanna Greenways agencies and coordinate new access points, branded signage, and location mapping to match other communities along the entire Susquehanna River Water Trail.**
- 5. Review and adjust local taxes to ensure roadway and infrastructure repair costs are fully covered so that each municipality can make streets and walkways safe for all residents in a timely manner.**

VII

NATURAL RESOURCES



VII-I. NATURAL RESOURCES

Oakland and Susquehanna Boroughs feature beautiful rolling countryside and large parcels of woodland growth. Throughout their histories' housing and commercial development grew in small clusters, over several decades, allowing simple expansions of infrastructure to accommodate new homes and business growth while limiting negative effects to the river and large expanse of forest present.

Historically many of the surrounding, undeveloped, wooded areas in Susquehanna County are the site of natural gas extraction wells. Susquehanna County is located within the Marcellus Shale Formation which is a major source of natural gas in the United States. For those unfamiliar, the extraction of natural gas requires a drill rig and large flat stone pad so the Marcellus Shale Formation can be fractured deep below the surface. The natural gas then fills the void created and is pulled by pump to the surface. State regulations for this are quite strict and companies wishing to extract natural gas must obtain permits and approvals prior to establishing a natural gas well in an area.

Local officials must begin to consider a variety of proposed and potential land uses together with available natural resources and their extraction, transportation, and use. Forming a land bank and mapping vacant buildings and parcels will help efficiently and effectively remove blight and build housing to meet community needs. Accommodating and planning for known, beneficial natural resources, such as natural gas, and stormwater conveyance will benefit all residents as they work towards alleviating water and flood damage, clean runoff prior to it reaching healthy streams, conserve large tracts of forest, protect the area's scenic and rural character, and allow for natural gas to be extracted and sold.

It is recommended that each borough form a committee with adjacent municipalities, agencies, and the County's Housing and Redevelopment Authority to create a land bank which would allow properties to be obtained by the County or municipality, blight removed from those parcels, and the parcels either sold to a developer or made into affordable housing.

VII-II. OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION

Susquehanna County, in northern Pennsylvania, features the Marcellus Shale Formation, a formation in bedrock saturated with natural gas deposits formed millions of years ago. There are five natural gas wells within 5 miles of the study area.

Figure 7.1, the "PA Oil and Gas Map" obtained from PA DEP's ESRI mapping website, shows these wells as red dots. Many, if not all of these regional pumps are located in Oakland Township, all of them obtained drilling licenses between 2015 and 2019 and appear to have been fully drilled and installed.

- PUMP SITE
- RIVER
- OAKLAND
- STREAM
- SUSQUEHANNA
- ROADS

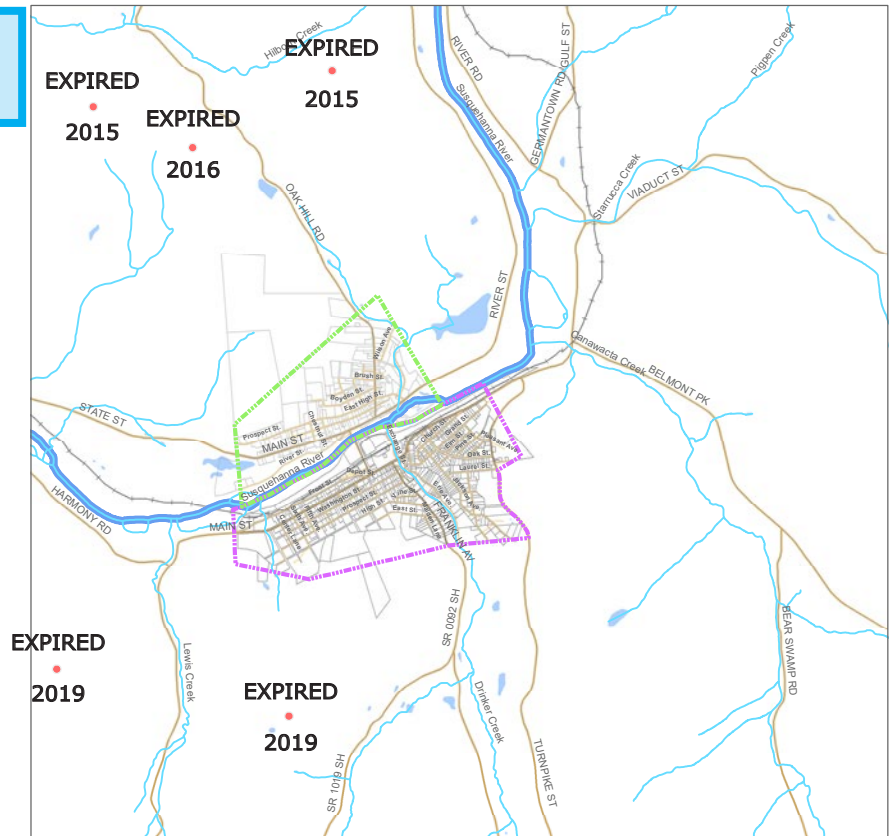
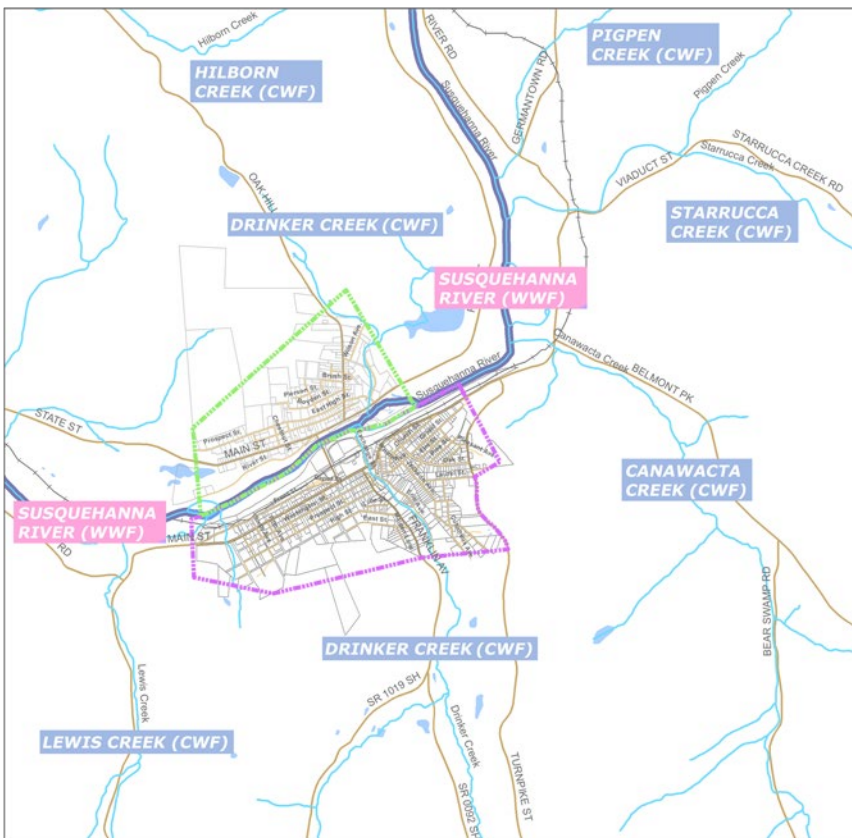


Figure 7.1 Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Map

0 625 1,250 2,500 3,750 5,000
Feet



- COLD WATER CREEK
- WARM WATER RIVER
- OAKLAND
- SUSQUEHANNA DEPOT

0 600 1,200 2,400 3,600 4,800
Feet



VII-III. RIVERS AND STREAMS

Shown in Figure 7.2 each borough has clear, beautiful waterways. The pollution and deterioration of these waterways would directly affect quality of life and local health.

Many homes in the area have basements that require sump-pumps. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), since the 1970s, has required stormwater treatment be included for any projects that are over one acre of earth disturbance.

Obtaining an organized record of the location and type of existing stormwater conveyance drop inlets, manholes, pipes, channels, and detention basins is extremely beneficial to these municipalities as they can record replacements and have each item sized correctly by an engineer.

Figure 7.2 Stream Locations and Designations

VII-IV. CONTIGUOUS FOREST

Both boroughs enjoy an abundance of undeveloped wooded parcels (Figure 7.3). Developing or disturbing these large, wooded tracts should be carefully considered by the current landowners and by each municipality (via ordinance adoption).

Many of them can provide beneficial public amenities, scenic views, hiking, cycling, boating, camping, carbon emissions reductions, and a variety of recreational activities. Additionally, these spaces can also be developed into needed housing sites, data centers, distribution centers, manufacturing entities, or fully preserved recreation network.

It is our recommendation that Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Boroughs review their current Zoning Ordinance and municipal code, respectively, to create amendments that provide acceptable locations and prescribe conditions to protect community residents from conflicting or nuisance uses and attempt to limit the large scale removal of these valued forests and lands.



Figure 7.3 Undeveloped, Wooded Parcels

0 625 1,250 2,500 3,750 5,000
Feet



NATURAL RESOURCES

RECOMMENDATIONS

(GOALS & OBJECTIVES)

VII



- 1. Begin conversations with the County's Housing and Redevelopment Authority to create a land banking committee.**
- 2. Review each borough's ordinances and codes and consider amendments condition proposed uses to better protect the scenic character of the area and the large, existing, wooded parcels.**
- 3. Review and adopt stormwater and erosion and sediment control regulations to better protect adjacent streams and waters.**
- 4. Have each borough's DPW and developers proposing new construction in the area document existing and proposed stormwater conveyance systems they are working on or installing so a record of the system and its condition can be established.**
- 5. Form an advisory multi-municipal committee who can make zoning ordinance amendment recommendations regarding uses not yet accounted for, such as data centers, large distribution facilities, and others, which have the potential to affect existing, large, undeveloped parcels.**



VIII

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX 0-2 Years Plan

This Implementation Matrix is a series of obtainable actions that local Municipalities can enact and develop to improve their communities over time. The actions are accompanied by measurable outcomes to help track and gauge the effectiveness of these planning strategies. Additional information regarding specific funding opportunities are attached to aid in achieving each goal in the right column of the Matrix and after the Matrix. The matrix suggests manageable planning strategies to be completed in groupings of 0-2, 2-5, and 5-10 year increments.

	ACTIONS	MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	FUNDING
1.1 Category: Population 0-2 Years	Publish this Comprehensive Plan on the Borough's and County websites and maintain paper copies at each location for ease of public access.	Developers and the public have a greater understanding of each community's requirements and have a deeper understanding of how area residents would like the town to develop over the next ten years.	DCED STMP
1.2 Category: Population Economics 0-2 Years	Annually review municipal capital budgets and adjust taxes to ensure that infrastructure, maintenance, code enforcement, parks and recreation, and police services are all adequately covered and the budget balanced.	Each Borough's budget has been balanced each year for the past decade, with minor adjustments to taxes taking place to ensure community needs are met adequately, including new full time police and a parks and recreation budget that can meet grant matching requirements so the communities can pursue additional trails and park amenities.	Funding N/A
1.3 Category: Population Economics 0-2 Years	Review vote on and pursue a home rule charter for each borough. In order to enact one, it must be added to a public ballot with the community electing to move forward with it.	By establishing a home rule charter, each municipality has much more control over their governmental structure, administrative operations, tax rates, and proposed developmental activities. This has allowed the boroughs to have balanced budgets and garnered clear control to establish a land bank, remediate blight, fix infrastructural issues, and reform its police force and emergency services.	DCED STMP
1.4 Category: Population Land Use Housing Economics 0-2 Years	Partner with the County Housing and Redevelopment Authority and TreHab to create a land bank and a blight task force to combat area housing deterioration.	With a land bank committee and blight task force formed a blight map and list of residents seeking affordable housing can be established and shared. Properties can be obtained and organized revitalization can take place.	Susquehanna County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, HUD, DCED, TreHab

ITEM	ACTIONS	MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	FUNDING
<p>1.5 Category: Population Land Use Economics 0-2 Years</p>	<p>Form a multi-municipal advisory planning committee that can review borough ordinances, provide recommendations for amendments that protect the area's scenic character, establish rental, vacancy, stormwater, and quality of life ordinances.</p>	<p>Both boroughs now have amendments in place protecting scenic views, prescribing locations for data centers and new proposed uses, and establishing efficient code enforcement procedures for rentals and maintenance of homes to ensure a reduction in nuisances.</p>	<p>Susquehanna County Planning Office, DCED, American Planning Association</p>
<p>1.6 Category: Population Land Use Economics 0-2 Years</p>	<p>Form a multi-municipal advisory planning committee that can identify the areas the boroughs would like to establish tax incremental financing (TIF), a Local or Keystone Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Area (LERTA), and or a Keystone Opportunities Zone (KOZ) in Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough.</p>	<p>Several zones have been established that temporarily reduce the tax burden for local developers and agencies revitalizing vacant lots and renovating blighted structures in the boroughs.</p>	<p>Susquehanna County Planning Office, DCED, American Planning Association</p>
<p>1.7 Category: Population Land Use Economics 0-2 Years</p>	<p>Form a multi-municipal advisory planning committee that can review and coordinate shared uses, adjacent uses, and shared infrastructure; including emergency services and the police force.</p>	<p>Both boroughs now consider shared uses and infrastructure upgrades together, ensuring well thought out upgrades, changes, maintenance, and extensions together. The boroughs have re-established their police force and offer emergency services with response times within twenty minutes.</p>	<p>Susquehanna County Planning Office, DCED, American Planning Association</p>
<p>1.8 Category: Recreation Land Use Economics 0-2 Years</p>	<p>Create a multi-municipal Parks and Recreation committee to pursue grant funding to create a parks, recreation, and greenways comprehensive plan for the area and to meet with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Susquehanna Greenways groups to pursue "Outdoor Town" and "River Town" designations, respectively.</p>	<p>Once funding is received a comprehensive recreation plan can be drafted that reflects the community's desire to obtain "Outdoor Town" and "River Town" designations.</p>	<p>DCNR, Susquehanna County Planning, DCED, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission</p>
<p>1.9 Category: Transportation Economics Recreation 0-2 Years</p>	<p>Meet with the train operator, bus-line operators, TreHab, and other agencies involved in transportation to provide residents with reliable transportation to area groceries, the jobs, and to boat launches along the Susquehanna River water trail.</p>	<p>Visitors now have several transportation options to get around the region. The boroughs have also developed a shuttle service for those using the Susquehanna River water trail, area parks, and the local Mormon religious sites.</p>	<p>Norfolk Southern, TreHab, FlixBus, Greyhound</p>

VIII IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX 2-5 Years Plan

ITEM	ACTIONS	MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES	FUNDING
<p>2.1 Category: Population Land Use Housing 2-5 Years</p>	<p>Develop a plan with the land bank and blight task force to remove unsafe buildings, maintain vacant parcels, and renovate and build affordable housing over the next ten years.</p>	<p>Each borough has worked to inventory blight and develop streamlined strategies to remediate it; including having representation on the County's land banking and blight committee, placing liens, and removing unsafe structures in two years or less.</p>	<p>Susquehanna County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, DCED, TreHab</p>
<p>2.2 Category: Population Land Use Economics 2-5 Years</p>	<p>Amend Susquehanna Depot's Zoning Map and Ordinance and develop Oakland Borough's Zoning Map and Ordinance to streamline blight removal and housing construction, bolster quality of life, and protect its residents from adjacent deterioration and unsafe conditions. Through cooperative planning, both boroughs can provide for all uses jointly.</p>	<p>Each Borough now has an organized, streamlined zoning ordinance that developers and residents can use to obtain needed permits and propose projects that are agreeable to adjacent neighbors. Local Code Enforcement Officers are able to quickly and clearly enforce the new ordinances. Four new housing projects have been constructed in each Borough over the last two years.</p>	<p>Susquehanna County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, DCED, TreHab</p>
<p>2.3 Category: Land Use- Housing Economics 2-5 Years</p>	<p>Establish a tax incremental financing (TIF), Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance, or Keystone Opportunities Zone (KOZ) in Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough in the area(s) recommended by the advisory planning committee.</p>	<p>Multiple developers have come to the area to renovate buildings for businesses and homes within the new economic revitalization zones because taxes are limited, freeing up monies that can be invested directly into their revitalization efforts.</p>	<p>Susquehanna County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, DCED, TreHab</p>
<p>2.4 Category: Land Use Recreation Economics 2-5 Years</p>	<p>Create a multi-municipal parks, recreation, and greenways comprehensive plan noting a desired connection to the D&H Trail, sharrows for cyclists on SR 92 and 171, renovations to the power plant, a community center, and renovations to the Susquehanna Depots lid and pocket parks, and a potential, annual festival on the Exchange Street bridge.</p>	<p>The Boroughs now have an organized clear plan to create construction plans, obtain construction funding, and renovate a variety of items to strengthen their recreational network and programming.</p>	<p>DCNR, Susquehanna County Planning, DCED, PennDOT, PA F&BC</p>

ITEM**2.5**

Category:
**Recreation
 Economics**
 2-5 Years

ACTIONS

Become a Pennsylvania Environmental Council designated, "Outdoor Town".

MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES

Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough have received an "Outdoor Town" designation from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, recognizing the area as a designation for outdoor events and amenities, recreational opportunities, and scenic beauty.

FUNDING

Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, PEC, DCNR, PA F&BC, PA DEP, DCED, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission

2.6

Category:
**Recreation
 Economics**
 2-5 Years

Become a Susquehanna Greenway Partnership "River Town".

Susquehanna Depot and Oakland Borough have obtained a "River Town" designation in Susquehanna Greenway Partnership's "River Town" program and have followed the various stage requirements to become designated as one. They now have installed branded signage matching signage along the Susquehanna Water Trail; are able to provide trail and recreational support; and are able to effectively promote the area as a recreational tourist destination.

Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, PEC, DCNR, PA F&BC, PA DEP, DCED, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission

2.7

Category:
**Land Use
 Recreation
 Economics**
 2-5 Years

Determine the desired location of and renovate an existing building into a municipal owned "Community Center", with programmed activities for families, educational events, and displays of local art and history.

A community center has been established with art, history, and theatre events, classes, and gatherings; all strongly meeting the community need described in the Comprehensive Plan's public survey.

Susquehanna County, Slanted Art Co-op and Gallery, DCED, PA Creative Communities

2.8

Category:
**Land Use
 Recreation
 Economics**
 2-5 Years

Create a Master Plan for Oakland Borough's "Power Plant" and surrounding lands and have the existing building structurally analyzed.

A Master Plan and budget have been established for the "Power Plant" and adjacent property. Local officials can now pursue funding and begin to renovate the space for public use for vendors, events, and gatherings.

DCNR, DCED, Susquehanna County Act 13, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission

VIII

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX 5-10 Year Plan

3.1

Category:
**Land Use
Economics
Population**
5-10 Years

Continuing to remediate and land bank blighted and vacant parcels in Oakland Borough and Susquehanna Depot so they can be sold to developers to create businesses and/or housing with the County's Redevelopment Authority, Trehab, and task forces.

The boroughs have substantially reduced their blight over the last ten years via a partnership with the Susquehanna County Housing and Redevelopment Authority and TreHab. Through the establishment and support of the County's blight and land banking committee, the removal of unsafe structures and remediation of blight has been streamlined with developers quickly purchasing properties from the land bank and creating needed housing and businesses.

**DCNR, DCED,
Susquehanna County
Act 13, Northern Tier
Regional Planning and
Development
Commission,
Susquehanna County
Chamber of Commerce**

3.2

Category:
**Recreation
Economics**
5-10 Years

Continue to welcome new businesses, including a community college or secondary education facility to enhance options high school graduates and area adults have to start a career.

Susquehanna Depot has partnered with a regional technical school to establish a building with faculty, evening courses and secondary technical education opportunities for its citizens; in turn bolstering the area's quality of life and the household median income as area residents are trained and begin local high-skilled jobs and careers.

**DCNR, DCED,
Susquehanna County
Planning, Northern
Tier Regional
Planning and
Development
Commission, PennDOT**

3.3

Category:
**Recreation
Economics**
5-10 Years

Renovate and replace dilapidated sidewalks and accessibility ramps to maintain walk and bikeability to area businesses, the hospital, school, and the D&H Rail Trail, per the findings of the parks, recreation, and greenways comprehensive plan.

Each Borough has worked to replace all broken up sidewalks, fill sidewalk gaps, and install accessibility ramps and crosswalks throughout town to enhance walkability and enhance safety and separation between automobile traffic and pedestrians.

**DCNR, DCED,
Susquehanna County
Planning, Northern
Tier Regional
Planning and
Development
Commission, PennDOT**

3.4

Category:
**Population
Land Use
Recreation
Economics**
5-10 Years

Renovate the "Power Plant" and surrounding lands as a public event, gathering, and recreational space; complete with a river access and non-motorized boat launch.

Oakland Borough has successfully renovated the "Power Plant" which now offers pop-up food and beverage options on weekends, local events, spaces for rent to local professionals, a river access and non-motorized boat launch, and a beautiful park space adjacent.

**DCNR, DCED,
Susquehanna County
Act 13, Northern Tier
Regional Planning and
Development
Commission,
Susquehanna County
Chamber of Commerce**

3.5

Category:
Land Use
Economics
Recreation
Transportation
5-10

Develop an annual festival on the Exchange Street Bridge; welcoming visitors and celebrating area food, businesses, and culture.

The annual "Exchange Street Bridge Festival" has been established, connecting the two sister Boroughs in an event that celebrates the areas history and heritage. Local artisans and food vendors are able to set up stands on the Exchange Street bridge for one weekend with activities put on by each municipality, the Greater Susquehanna County Chamber of Commerce, and the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, among others.

Susquehanna County, DCED, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, The Susquehanna County Chamber of Commerce

3.6

Category:
Land Use
Recreation
5-10 Years

Renovate Susquehanna Depot's Pocket and Lid Parks

Both spaces have been renovated and are now enjoyed by visitors, business owners, and residents as they walk along the shops on E. Main Street.

DCNR, DCED, Susquehanna County Act 13, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission



IX FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Population and Economics

PROGRAM	ACRONYM	TYP. SUBMITTAL DATE	TYP. MATCH REQs
Ben Franklin Partners https://dced.pa.gov/download/ben-franklin-technology-rental-challenges-guidelines/?wpdmdl=572897	(BFTDA)	December, Annually	50% Match
Business in Our Sites https://dced.pa.gov/governance/business-in-our-sites-grants-and-loans-brief	(BOS)	March, Annually	40% Match
Pennsylvania First https://dced.pa.gov/download/pa-first-guidelines/?wpdmdl=84679	()	December, Annually	Varies
PA Manufacturing Training to Career https://dced.pa.gov/download/manufacturing-pa-training-to-career-grant-program-guidelines/?wpdmdl=87122	(PMTTC)	July, Annually	\$3,000 Per Person
Public School Improvements https://dced.pa.gov/download/public-school-facility-improvement-grant-program-guidelines/?wpdmdl=123283	()	December, Annually	25%
Qualified Manufacturing https://dced.pa.gov/download/qualified-manufacturing-innovation-reinvestment-deduction-guidelines/?wpdmdl=83341	(QMIRD)	December, Annually	Tax Credit
Rail Freight Program https://dced.pa.gov/programs/rail-freight-program/	()	On-going	30%

Land Use

Community Development Bank https://dced.pa.gov/download/pa-community-bank-guidelines/?wpdmdl=58084	(PCD)	12/31/2035	50% Match
Industrial Site Reuse https://dced.pa.gov/download/historic-preservation-tax-credit-hptc-guidelines/?wpdmdl=82281	(ISRP)	__/__/__	25% Match
Main Street Matters https://dced.pa.gov/download/main-street-matters-funding-guidelines/?wpdmdl=124636	(MSM)	8/31/2025	50% MSM 10% - EMS
Mixed Use Revitalization Planning https://dced.pa.gov/download/mixed-use-revitalization-program/?wpdmdl=126865	(MURP)	8/31/2025	20% Match
Pennsylvania Strategic Investments https://dced.pa.gov/download/pennsylvania-strategic-investments-to-enhance-sites-program-guidelines/?wpdmdl=121837	(PA SITES)	12/31/2028	Varies
Sewage Facilities Program https://dced.pa.gov/download/sewage-facilities-program-sfp-guidelines/?wpdmdl=81389	(SFP)	05/31/----	50%

Housing

HomeInvestment https://dced.pa.gov/download/home-fact-sheet/?wpdmdl=114206	(HOME)	__/__/__	25% Match
Multifamily Weather Assistance https://dced.pa.gov/download/industrial-sites-reuse-program-isrp-guidelines/?wpdmdl=59834	(WAPM)	__/__/__	\$8,000 Per Unit
Neighborhood Assistance Program https://dced.pa.gov/download/neighborhood-assistance-program-nap-guidelines/?wpdmdl=86209	(NAP)	6/30/2035	Varies

Recreation			
Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Programing	(BOS)	__/__/__	40% Match
https://dced.pa.gov/download/greenways-trails-recreation-program-gtrp-guidelines/?wpdmdl=81379			
Historic Preservation Credit	(HPTC)	13/31/2035	TAX
https://dced.pa.gov/download/historic-preservation-tax-credit-hptc-guidelines/?wpdmdl=82281			
Local Government Capital Project	(LGCPL)	12/31/2035	2% Loan
https://dced.pa.gov/download/local-government-capital-project-loan-program-lgcpl-guidelines/?wpdmdl=57888			
Marketing to Attract Tourists	(MTAT)	7/1/2025	Varies
https://dced.pa.gov/download/marketing-attract-tourists-guidelines/?wpdmdl=65452			

Transportation			
All-Terrain Vehicle And Snowmobile	(__)	12/31/2035	No Match
https://www.pa.gov/grants/search/grant-details.dcnr1#overview			
Alternative Fuel Incentive	(__)	10/10/2025	50% Match
https://greenport.pa.gov/eLibrary/GetDocument?docId=9775452&DocName=ALTERNATIVE%20FUELS%20INCENTIVE%20GRANT%20PROGRAM%202025.PDF			
Multimodal Transportation Fund	(MTF)	07/31/__	30% Match
https://dced.pa.gov/download/industrial-sites-reuse-program-isrp-guidelines/?wpdmdl=59834			
Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside	(TASA)	10/31/2025	Reimbursement
https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/pennidot/documents/research-planning-innovation/planning/documents/tasa%20statewide%20program%20guidance.pdf			

Resources			
904 Recycling Performance	(__)	12/31/2035	Varies
https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/waste-programs/recycling-in-pennsylvania/municipal-resources/financial-assistance/recycling-performance-grants			
Orphan or Abandoned Well Plugging Program	(OAWP)	5/31/2025	50%
https://dced.pa.gov/download/orphan-abandoned-well-plugging-program-oawp-guidelines/?wpdmdl=81384			
PA Grid Resilience	(__)	8/8/2025	1 to 1
https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/energy-programs-office/pennsylvania-grid-resilience-grant-program			
Funding	(__)	__/__/__	1 to 1
Municipal Assistance Program	(MAP)	12/31/2035	50% Match
https://dced.pa.gov/programs/municipal-assistance-program-map/download/municipal-assistance-program-guidelines/?wpdmdl=114012			
Strategic Management Planning Program	(SMPP)	13/31/2035	50%
https://dced.pa.gov/download/strategic-management-planning-program-smpp-guidelines/?wpdmdl=91021			

X

CONCLUSION

Over the next decade, both municipalities can work to achieve the goals, recommendations, and actions contained in this Comprehensive Plan, towards the betterment of their community. The Implementation Matrix and funding source pages, as well as the recommendations at the end of each chapter, provide clear guidance and steps to facilitate positive economic change in the region.

The Oakland and Susquehanna area is home to a stunning landscape and charming character. Each municipality has shared observations, concerns, and issues over the last eighteen months, which must be remedied to bolster quality of life, grow the population, and revitalize both boroughs. Successfully completing each action item in the Implementation Matrix will help change local perception of the municipalities, begin to fulfill intrinsic needs, and enhance the local economy, while the communities later strive to obtain "Outdoor" and "River" -Town designations.

The primary desired outcomes described in this Comprehensive Plan include improving pedestrian accessibility and safety, improving local wages, and providing adequate housing, developing needed public amenities, all to welcome new workers and families to the area and raise the quality of life for all residents.

This Comprehensive Plan is just the beginning of efforts to grow, change, and reinvigorate these municipalities. With each action achieved, local officials must continue to celebrate each milestone and move local safety and economic improvements forward. It is the hope of the planning committee, local officials, members of the focus group, and surrounding citizens that these necessary actions, once achieved, will lead directly to the vision we all have of these municipalities in 2035 and beyond!

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Sources

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1. Oakland Borough, 2025
3. Susquehanna Depot, History, 2025.
4. Susquehanna Western Rail New York, History, 2025.

Graphics

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2. Woodland Design Associates, Logos, 2025.
3. Google Earth, 2025.
4. Endless Mountain Heritage Region, Ira Reynolds, 2021.
5. Susquehanna Western Rail New York System Map, 2025.



POPULATION

Sources

1. Borough, Susquehanna Depot, Historian, 2025.
2. U.S Census, American Community Survey, Susquehanna Depot, 2025.
Population | Age | Gender | Race | Poverty |
S.N.A.P | Health Care | Family Size | Expenses |
Income | Employment | Job Sector | Commute Times
3. U.S Census, American Community Survey, Oakland, 2025.
Population | Age | Gender | Race | Poverty |
S.N.A.P | Health Care | Family Size | Expenses |
Income | Employment | Job Sector | Commute Times
4. Borough, Susquehanna Depot, Council, Taxes, 2025.
5. Borough, Oakland, Council, Taxes, 2025.

Graphics

1. Woodland Design Associates, Logos, 2025.
2. Woodland Design Associates, Population Graphs, 2025.
3. Oakland and Susquehanna Depot Borough Tax records, 2025.



COMMUNITY OF TODAY

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2. Borough, Oakland, Zoning - Parcel Data, 2025.
3. Google Earth, 2025.
4. Susquehanna Depot Borough, 2025.
5. Oakland Borough, 2025.
6. Oakland and Susquehanna Depot Boroughs, Community Survey, 2023.

Graphics

1. Woodland Design Associates, Logos, 2025.
2. Woodland Design Associates, Maps, 2025.
3. Susquehanna County, Logo, 2025.



HOUSING

Sources

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- 2. U.S Census, American Community Survey, Oakland, 2025. Households | Rent | Occupied - Vacancy | Home Value | # of rooms

Graphics

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- 2. Google Earth, 2025.



RECREATION

Sources

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- 2. Susquehanna Depot Borough, Parcel Data, 2025.
- 3. Oakland Borough, Parcel Data, 2025.
- 4. NEPA Rail Trails, D&H Rail Trail, 2025.
- 5. Susquehanna River Greenways, Rivertown's, 2025.
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- 7. Delta Engineering, Trail Feasibility, 2022.
- 8. Pennsylvania Environmental Council Outdoor Town Toolkit, 2025.

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- 2. Woodland Design Associates, Maps, 2025.
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- 4. Google Earth, 2025.
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- 6. Susquehanna River Greenways, Rivertown's, 2025.



TRANSPORTATION

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- 2. Pennsylvania Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan (PA DCNR), 2025.
- 3. Susquehanna River, Endless Mountain Heritage Region, 2025.
- 4. Google Earth, 2025.
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- 4. Susquehanna River Greenways, 2025.
- 5. Susquehanna Western Rail New York System Map, 2025.



Natural Resources

Sources

- 1. PA DEP, Oil and Gas ESRI data, 2025.
- 2. Google Earth, 2025.

Graphics

- 1. Woodland Design Associates, Logos, 2025.
- 2. Woodland Design Associates, Maps, 2025.



ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Boroughs

Oakland Borough

<https://oaklandborough.com/>

Susquehanna Depot Borough

<https://susquehannaborough.com/>

Census Data

Oakland Borough

https://data.census.gov/profile/Oakland_borough,_Pennsylvania?g=160XX00US4256008

Susquehanna Depot Borough

https://data.census.gov/profile/Susquehanna_Depot_borough,_Pennsylvania?g=160XX00US4275568

Susquehanna County

https://data.census.gov/profile/Susquehanna_County,_Pennsylvania?g=050XX00US42115

Pennsylvania

<https://data.census.gov/profile/Pennsylvania?g=040XX00US42>

Funding

Department of Economic Development

<https://dced.pa.gov/>

Mapping Tools

Geographic Information Services

<https://www.esri.com/en-us/about/about-esri/overview>

Google Earth

<earth.google.com/web/search/Susquehanna,+PA>

Department of Environmental Protection

<https://gis.dep.pa.gov/PaOilAndGasMapping/OilGasWellsStrayGasMap.html>

Outdoor Towns

Pennsylvania Environmental Council

<https://pecpa.org/news/turning-towns-into-outdoor-towns/>

Outdoor Industry

<https://townsandtrailstoolkit.com/whatisanoutdoortown/>

Railroads

New York Susquehanna Western Rail

<https://nysw.com/>

New York and Erie Railroad

<https://susquehannaborough.com/history/erie-effects>

Susquehanna River

Endless Mountain Heritage

<https://emheritage.org/susquehanna-river-north-branch-water-trail/>

Susquehanna Greenway

<https://susquehannagreenway.org/about-the-greenway/north-branch/>

River Towns

<https://susquehannagreenway.org/river-towns/>