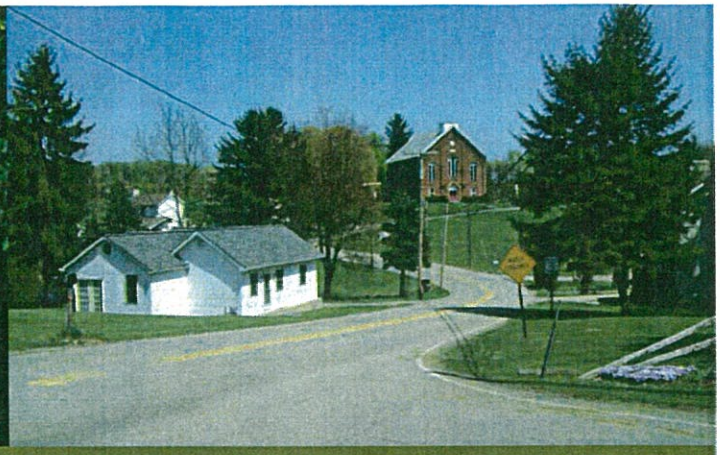

Robinson Township (Washington County) Comprehensive Plan Update

A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY GUIDE 2012

PREPARED BY THE ROBINSON TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

Acknowledgements

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Russell Dysert, Supervisor

Special thanks to former supervisors Gerald Runtas and George Lucchino, who assisted this project.

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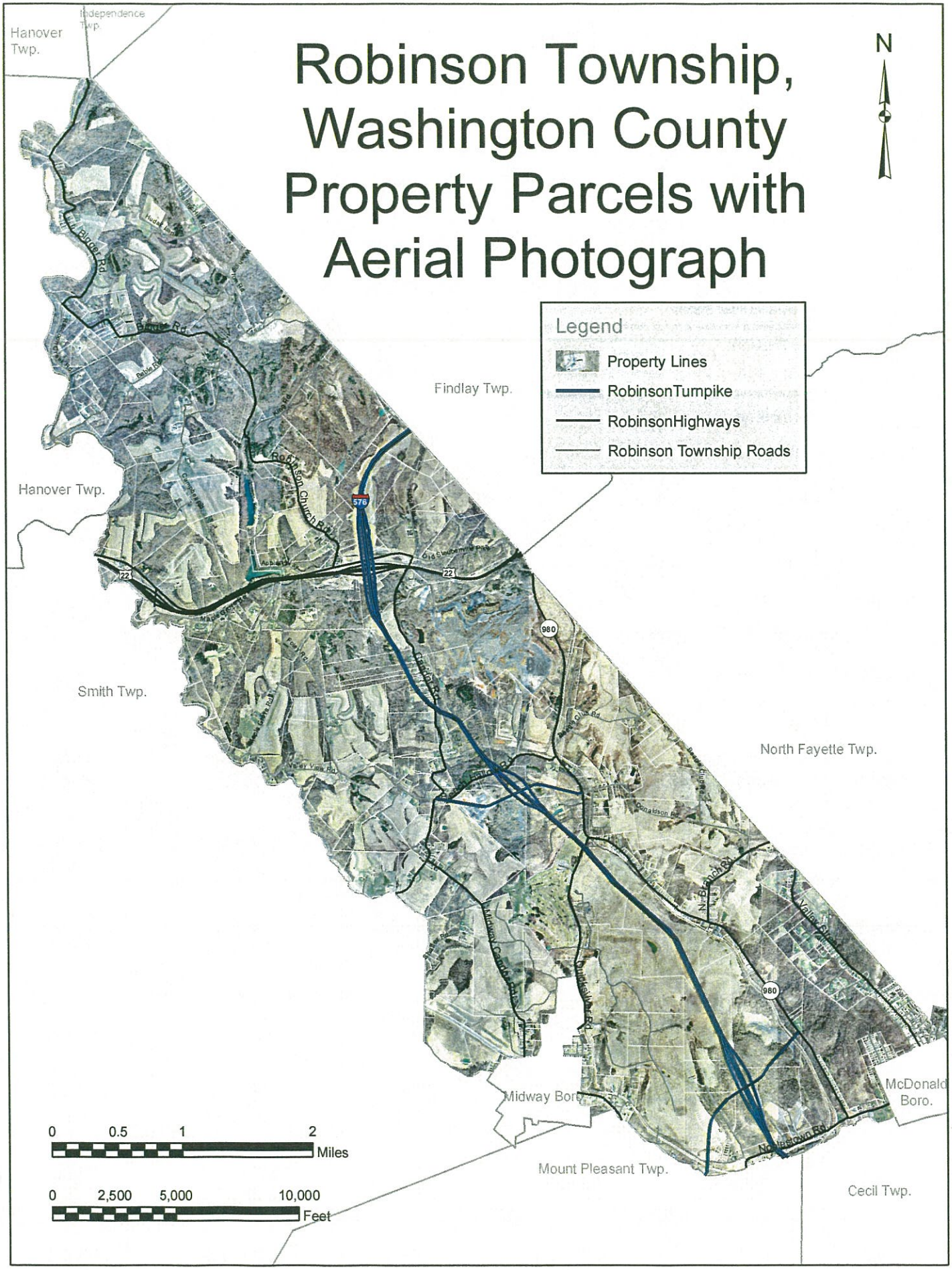
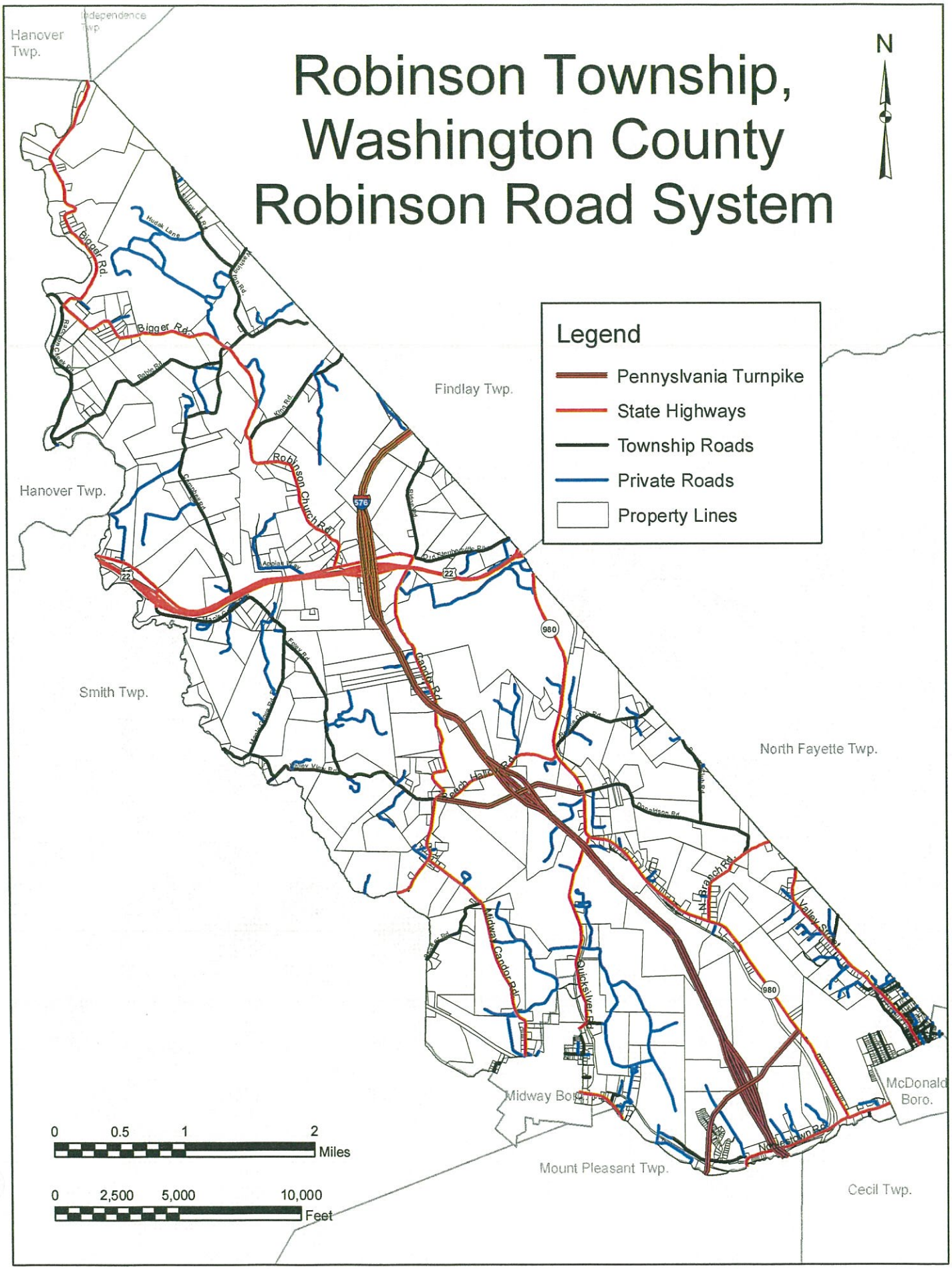
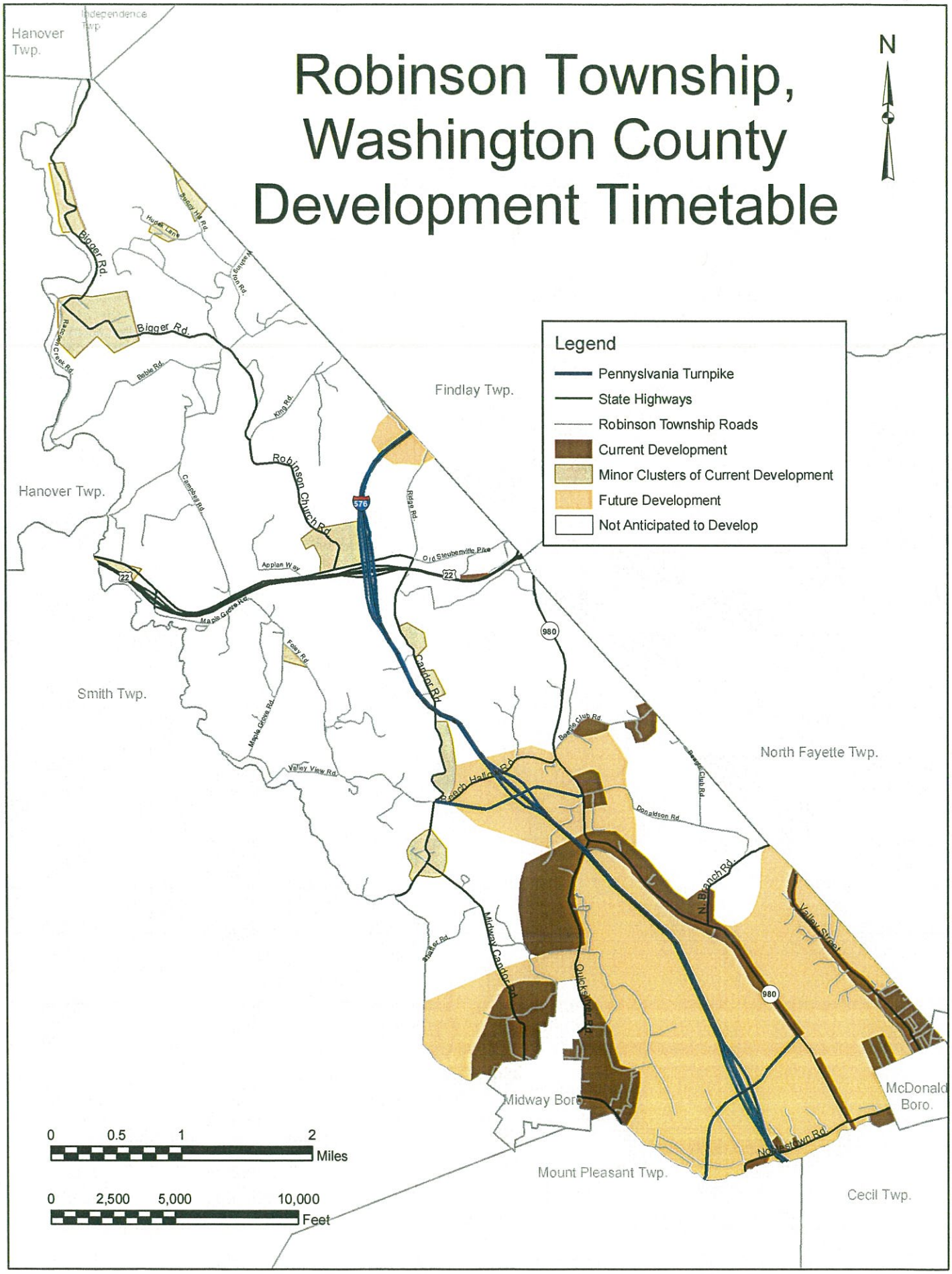
Robinson Township, Washington County Property Parcels with Aerial Photograph




Robinson Township,
Washington County
Robinson Road System
N
Legend
Pennyslvania Turnpike
State Highways
Township Roads
Private Roads
Property Lines
Hanover Twp.
Independence Twp.
Findlay Twp.
Hanover Twp.
Smith Twp.
North Fayette Twp.
Midway Boro.
McDonald Boro.
Mount Pleasant Twp.
Cecil Twp.
Bigger Rd.
Robinson Church Rd.
Candor Rd.
Midway Candor Rd.
Quicksilver Rd.
N. Branch Rd.
Valley Street
Hudak Lane
Washington Rd.
Kina Rd.
Reach Hallow Rd.
Donaldson Rd.
Valley View Rd.
Foley Rd.
Angina Way
576
22
980
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
0 2,500 5,000 10,000 Feet


Robinson Township, Washington County Development Timetable
N
Legend
Pennyslvania Turnpike
State Highways
Robinson Township Roads
Current Development
Minor Clusters of Current Development
Future Development
Not Anticipated to Develop
Hanover Twp.
Independence Twp.
Findlay Twp.
Smith Twp.
North Fayette Twp.
Midway Boro.
McDonald Boro.
Mount Pleasant Twp.
Cecil Twp.
Bigger Rd.
Robinson Church Rd.
Candor Rd.
Beech Hallow Rd.
Midway Candor Rd.
Quicksilver Rd.
N. Branch Rd.
Valley Street
Old Steubenville Pike
Applan Way
Maple Grove Rd.
Valley View Rd.
Foley Rd.
Campbell Rd.
Ridge Rd.
King Rd.
Beble Rd.
Raccoon Creek Rd.
Hudes Lane
Sunny Hill Rd.
Washington Rd.
Beagle Club Rd.
Donaldson Rd.
Shaffer Rd.
Nottestown Rd.
576
22
980
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
0 2,500 5,000 10,000 Feet

Robinson Township,
Washington County
Aerial Parcels
Detail 1
Legend
Property Lines
RobinsonTurnpike
RobinsonHighways
Robinson Township Roads
N
0
0.125
0.25
0.5
Miles
0
650
1,300
2,600
Feet

Robinson Township,
Washington County
Aerial Parcels
Detail 2
Legend
Property Lines
RobinsonTurnpike
RobinsonHighways
Robinson Township Roads
0 0.15 0.3 0.6
Miles
0 750 1,500 3,000
Feet

Robinson Township,
Washington County
Aerial Parcels
Detail 3
Legend
Property Lines
RobinsonTurnpike
RobinsonHighways
Robinson Township Roads
N
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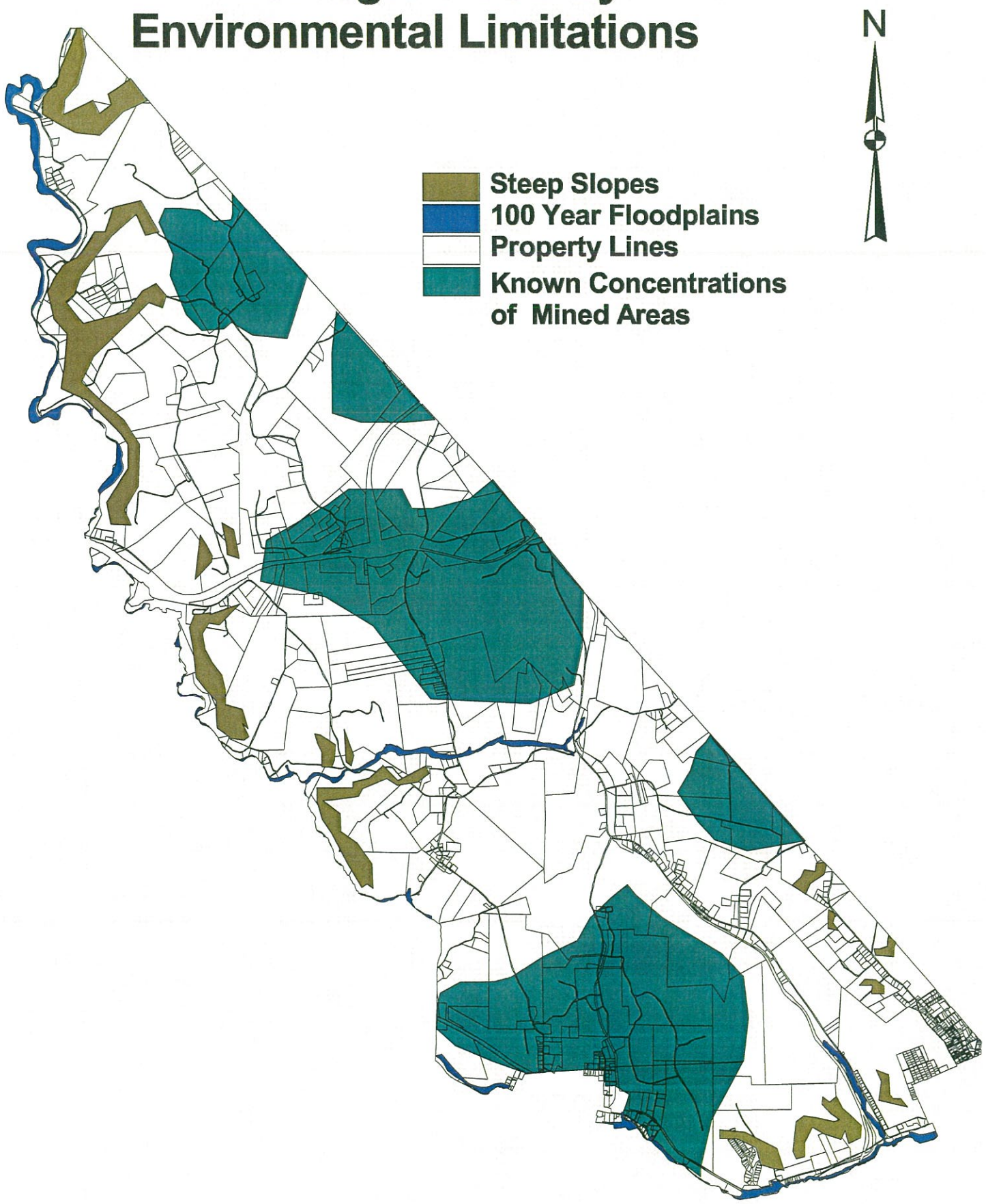
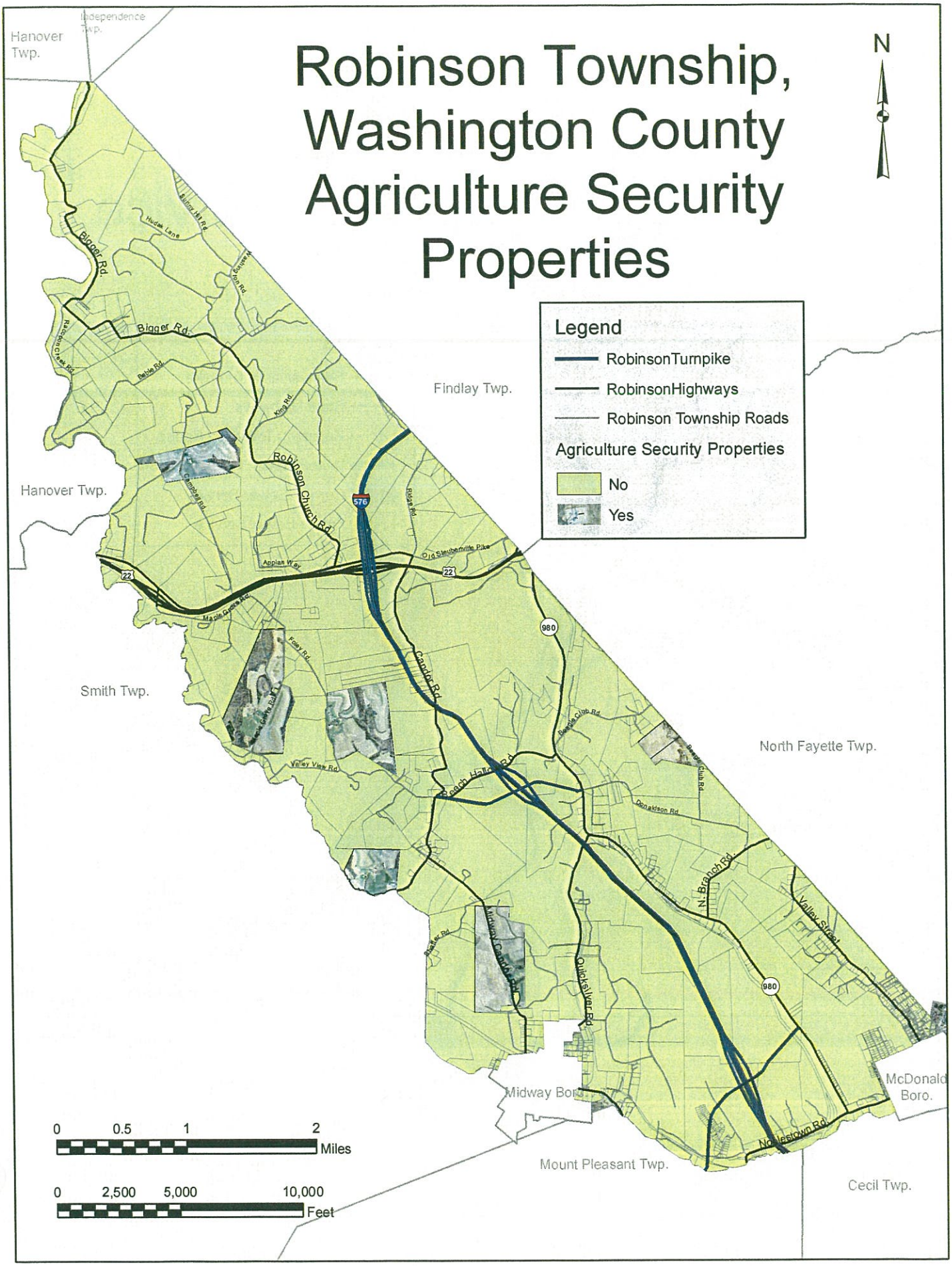
0.1
0.2
0.4
Miles
0
500
1,000
2,000
Feet

Robinson Township
Washington County
Environmental Limitations




Robinson Township, Washington County Agriculture Security Properties
N
Legend
RobinsonTurnpike
RobinsonHighways
Robinson Township Roads
Agriculture Security Properties
No
Yes
Hanover Twp.
Independence Twp.
Findlay Twp.
Smith Twp.
North Fayette Twp.
Midway Boro.
McDonald Boro.
Mount Pleasant Twp.
Cecil Twp.
Bigger Rd.
Robinson Church Rd.
Candor Rd.
Beech Hallow Rd.
Midway Candor Rd.
Quicksilver Rd.
N. Branch Rd.
Valley Street
Noblestown Rd.
Old Steubenville Pike
Applas Way
Maple Grove Rd.
Foley Rd.
Valley View Rd.
Beagle Club Rd.
Donaldson Rd.
Ridge Rd.
King Rd.
Bebie Rd.
Hudak Lane
Sunny Hill Rd.
Washington Rd.
Raccoon Creek Rd.
Campbell Rd.
Shaffer Rd.
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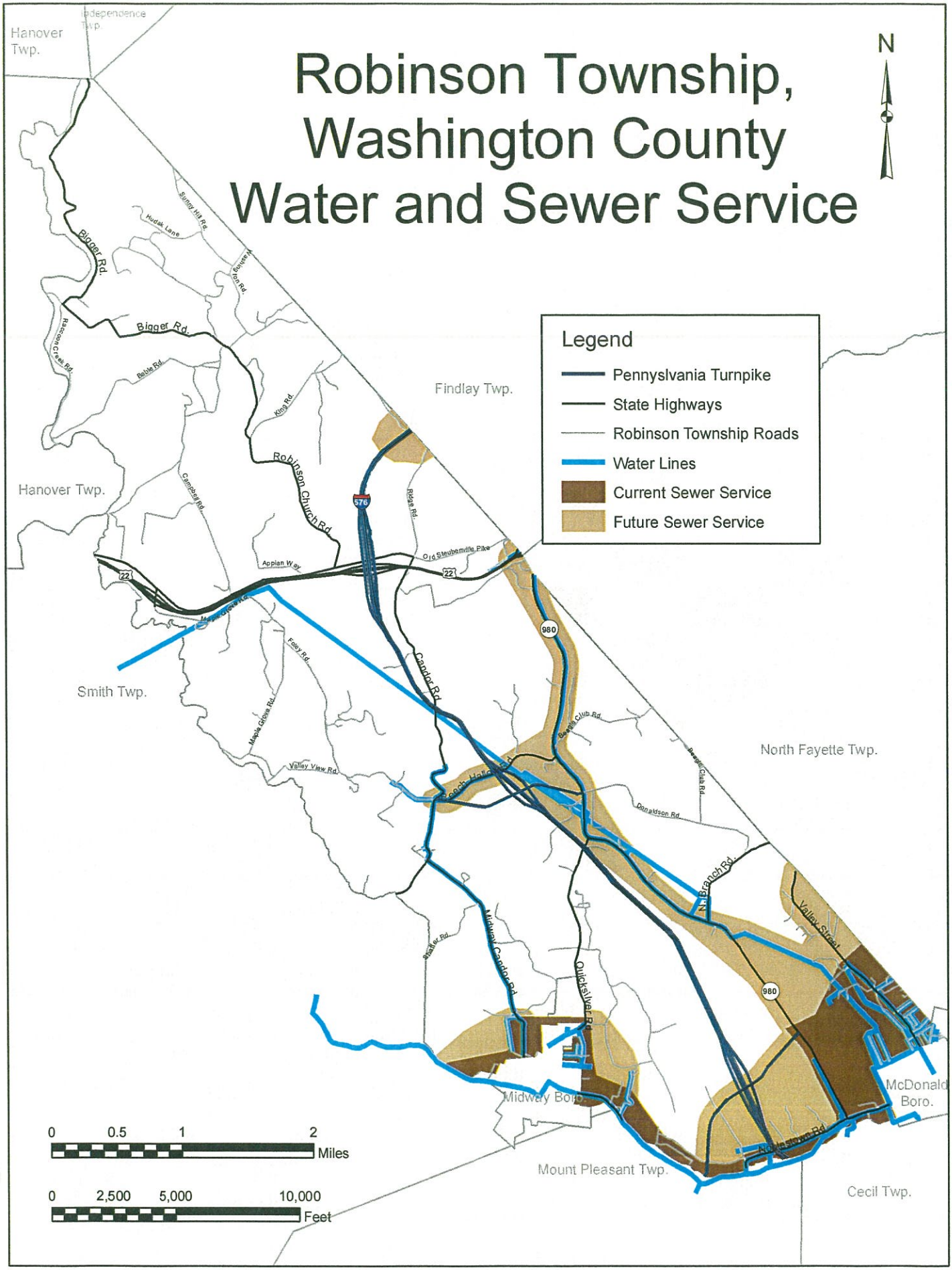
Robinson Township, Washington County Water and Sewer Service
N
Legend
Pennsylvania Turnpike
State Highways
Robinson Township Roads
Water Lines
Current Sewer Service
Future Sewer Service
Hanover Twp.
Independence Twp.
Findlay Twp.
Smith Twp.
North Fayette Twp.
Midway Boro.
McDonald Boro.
Mount Pleasant Twp.
Cecil Twp.
Bigger Rd.
Robinson Church Rd.
Campbell Rd.
Ridge Rd.
Old Steubenville Pike
Appian Way
Foley Rd.
Maple Grove Rd.
Valley View Rd.
Candor Rd.
Beagle Club Rd.
Donaldson Rd.
N. Branch Rd.
Valley Street
Midway Candor Rd.
Quicksilver Rd.
Shafer Rd.
Noblestown Rd.
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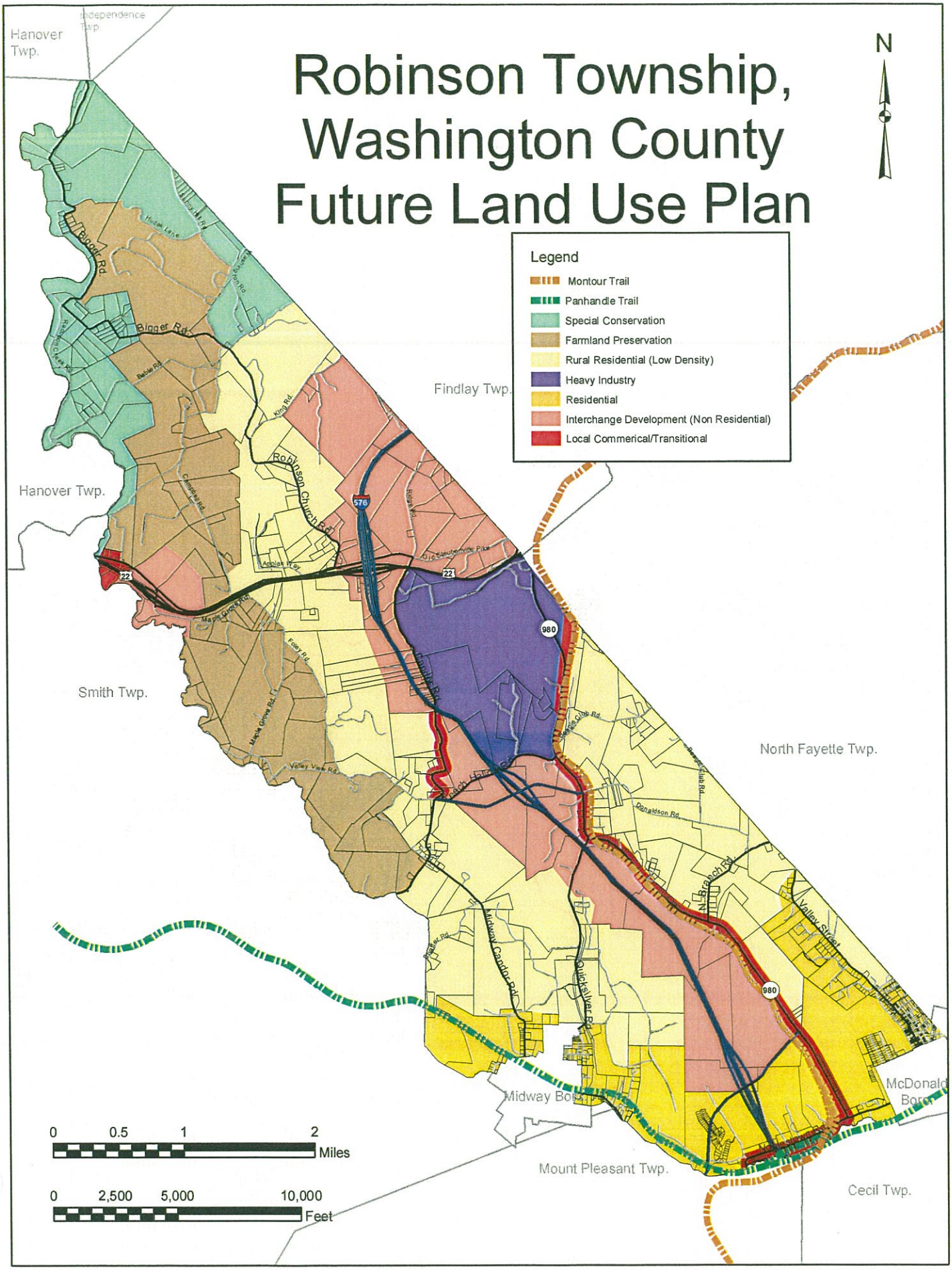
Robinson Township,
Washington County
Future Land Use Plan
N
Legend
Montour Trail
Panhandle Trail
Special Conservation
Farmland Preservation
Rural Residential (Low Density)
Heavy Industry
Residential
Interchange Development (Non Residential)
Local Commerical/Transitional
Hanover Twp.
Independence Twp.
Findlay Twp.
Hanover Twp.
Smith Twp.
North Fayette Twp.
Midway Boro
McDonald Boro
Mount Pleasant Twp.
Cecil Twp.
Bigger Rd.
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Valley Street
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Ridge Rd.
King Rd.
Campbell Rd.
Bable Rd.
Hudak Lane
Sunnyhill Rd.
Beaver Club Rd.
Eagle Club Rd.
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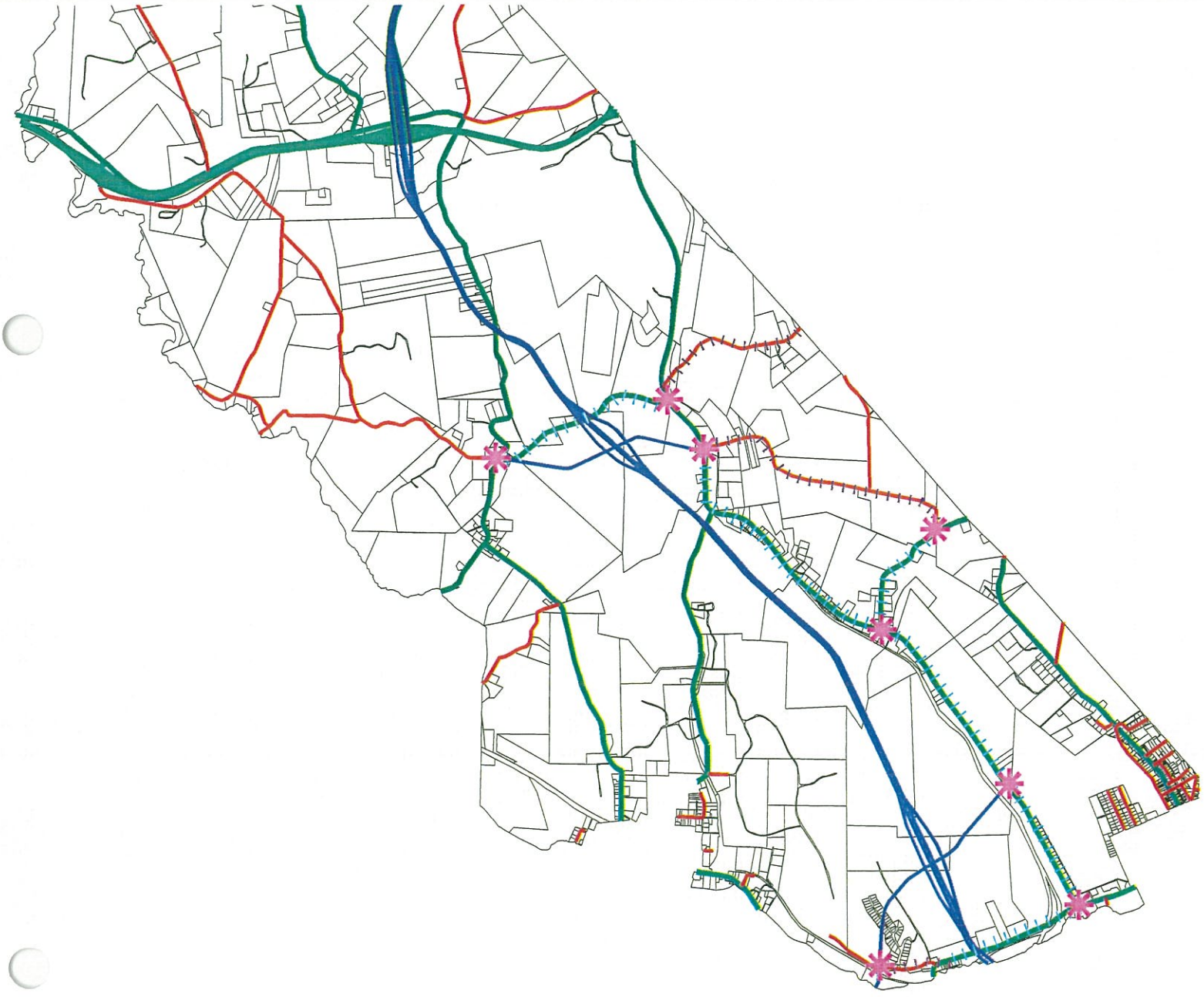
0 2,500 5,000 10,000 Feet

Robinson Township
Projected Areas of Traffic Congestion

- Future Stressed Intersections
- Projected Stressed State Roads
- Projected Stressed Township Roads
- New Southern Beltway
- Township Roads
- State Roads
- Property Lines



Robinson Township
Official Map Concept Plan

Concept Streets for Official Map
New Southern Beltway
Township Roads
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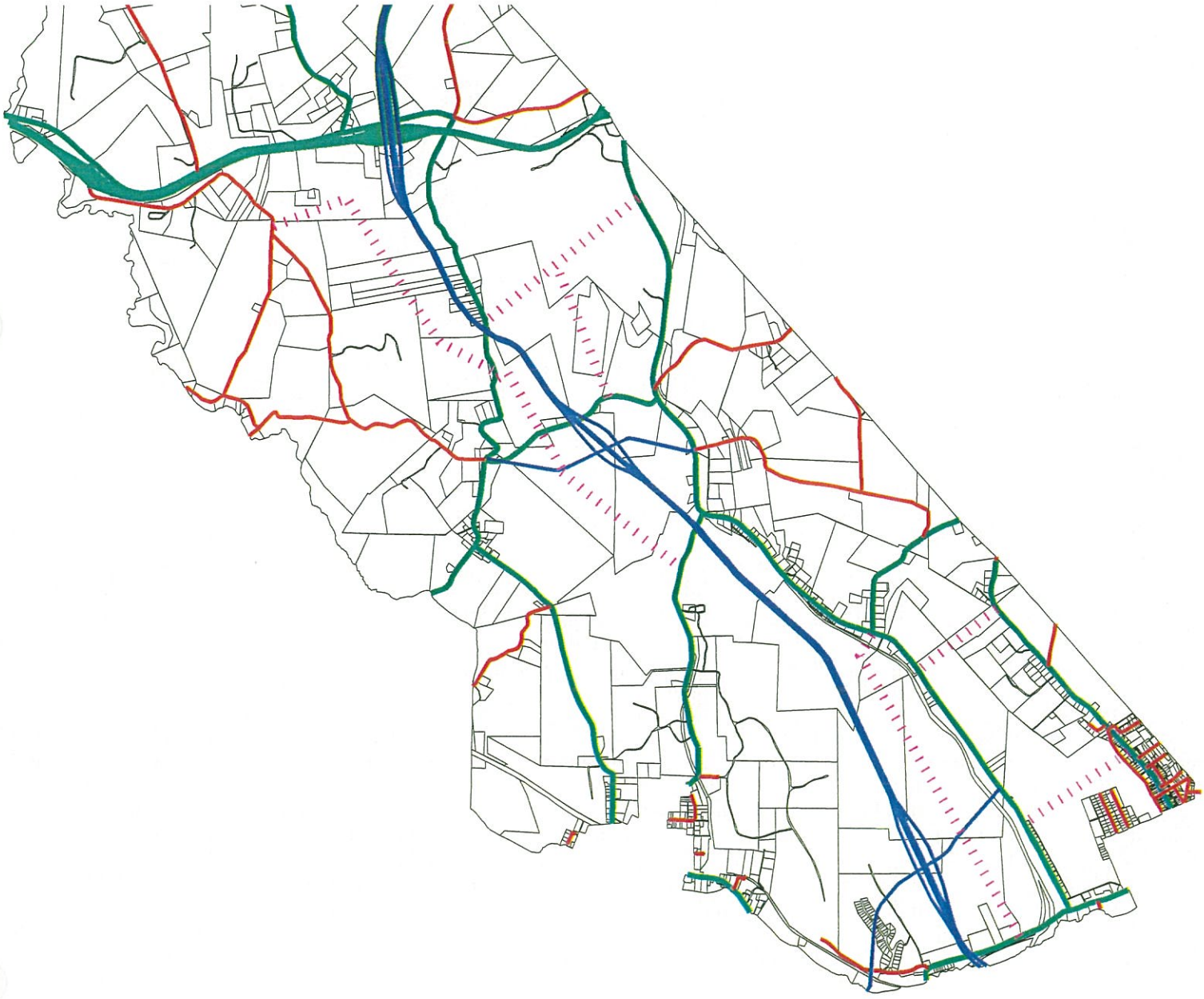
Property Lines



Robinson Township Comprehensive Plan Update

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is the official policy document of a Pennsylvania municipality, relative to growth and development. As such, it is a tool to both make decisions and a support for official local government policies, such as zoning or development ordinances. About half of Pennsylvania's 2500+ townships, boroughs and cities have an adopted plan. Once adopted, the plan serves as an official guidance for public investments (Such as streets, parks, or sewer lines) and provides support for local zoning ordinances. State agencies, such as the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and PennDot, are mandated to coordinate with local comprehensive plans when making decisions about grants or state permits. However, the Plan is not an ordinance, and has no innate weight of law. However, the Plan still has official uses, as detailed below.

The Township Offices, located on Noblestown Road.

How This Plan is Officially Used

Pursuant to requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, The Robinson Township Planning Commission will use this comprehensive plan as a document to advise the Township Supervisors on decisions relative to:

- Any rezoning of a property, or any amendment to the zoning ordinance, amendment to the subdivision and land development ordinance, or the creation and amendment of any official map.
- The location, opening, vacation, widening, narrowing, or enlargement of any street, public land, or watercourse in the Township
- The location, erection, demolition, removal or sale of any public structure in the Township
- The construction, extension, or abandonment of a water or sewer line or sewage treatment plant.
- The Planning Commission will also use this plan as required by Section 305 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to review any school district actions relative to the location, demolition, sale, or lease of any school district structure or land.
- The recommendations of the Planning Commission will be supplied to the applicable public body within 45 days as required.

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About Robinson Township

Robinson Township is a rural community lying just below the Allegheny County line in northern Washington County. The Township lies near the Boroughs of McDonald (Zip Code 15057) and Midway, Pennsylvania. The Township has about 21.3 square miles of land area and has nearly 2,000 residents (Census 2010 population 1,931).

The Township has no major village or population center. Development is clustered along major highways or near the neighboring Boroughs of McDonald and Midway. There are some small clusters of rural residential development. Traditionally, the Township has been primarily a coal mining and farming community. In more recent years, it has been transforming towards a bedroom community for the nearby Pittsburgh Metropolitan area.

The Township is comprised of rolling to steep topography. The land is drained by the Robinson Run or Raccoon Creek Watersheds.

The Township is part of the Fort Cherry School District, and home to a portion of the Montour Trail. Nearby attractions and landmarks include the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies, Raccoon Creek State Park, and the Pittsburgh International Airport.
In spite of significant growth and development nearby, the Township remains a rural community with small town character.

Interesting Township Facts

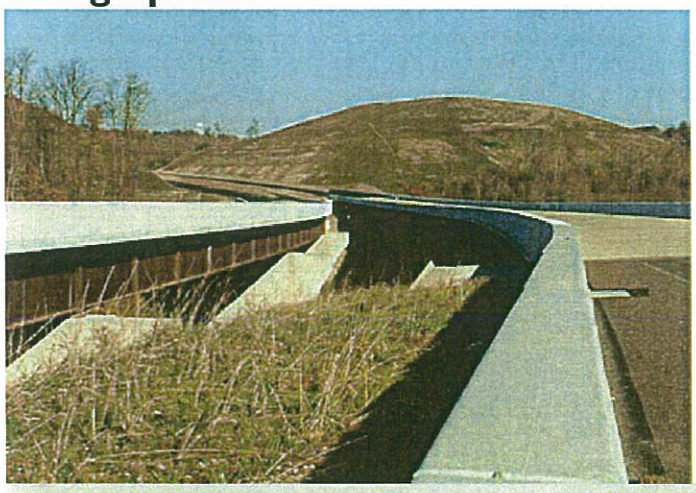
The Township's population has historically been stable. As of the last Census, 75 percent of residents had lived in their home for at least five years.

Robinson Township is one of the original thirteen Townships in Washington County (dating from 1781). The County currently has 66 municipalities.

Compared to the state as a whole, Robinson Township is solidly middle class, with fewer proportions of either very wealthy persons, or persons in poverty.

Why the Plan is being updated

Robinson Township last prepared a Comprehensive Plan and adopted it in 2000. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code does not mandate regular updates for Townships, but County Plans must be reviewed every ten years. Taking a cue from County practice, some high growth municipalities review and update their comprehensive plans on a ten year cycle. Other Townships only update their plan when they feel major changes to community development cause a need to reexamine policies.



This Comprehensive Plan update was precipitated by the new Southern Beltway extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike system, which will have a major effect upon development in Robinson Township (photo courtesy of Pa Turnpike Commission)

In the case of Robinson Township, The Plan was both a decade old, and major changes were on the horizon. The Pa State Legislature and Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission began prioritizing a new highway to connect Interstate 79 south of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh International Airport (and eventually the Mon/Fayette Expressway) in 1991. The likelihood of this was known during the preparation of the Comprehensive plan in 1999. In May of 2009 planning for this new four lane limited access highway was complete, and a final route was selected. As depicted upon the map in the gallery, this highway will have a significant impact upon both transportation and development patterns in the Township.

The Planning Update Process

The Township made the decision to update its Comprehensive Plan after the route of the new Southern Beltway through the Township was finalized. Funding was sought and obtained from the Pa. Department of Community and Economic Development, which has competitive grants for comprehensive planning, zoning and other community planning activities by municipalities.

Originally, the Township planned to only update its land use and transportation plan elements. The Planning Commission believed that these were the two chapters of the 2000 Comprehensive plan that would be most affected by the new highway.

After the consultant was retained, a pre planning assessment was conducted. This revealed a number of other issues that were incorporated into the scope of services for the proposed grant. These key issues are listed in the shaded box below. The consultant and planning commission also identified other issues, such as planning implications of increasing Marcellus shale drilling in the Township. The consultant also completed a full review of the 2000 plan. After presenting that review to the Planning Commission, It was decided to incorporate all relevant policy portions of the existing plan into this document, as a new plan, rather than an update. This document thus supercedes and replaces the 2000 Comprehensive Plan.

Key Issues

As previously mentioned, the update of the Comprehensive Plan was made possible through the financial support of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program. The process to update the Comprehensive Plan began with a "pre planning assessment". At the beginning of the Comprehensive Plan update, the Planning Commission identified some key issues and changes that the updated plan should consider. These important factors are listed below:

- The pre planning assessment also identified some other issues that would be included in the update project:
- Potential revitalization of villages in the Township
- Redevelopment of some deteriorated areas along major state road corridors
- Public service costs for this small rural township
- Portions of the zoning ordinance are overly complex for a rural Township. While there is a desire to retain high standards for development, the actual standards are difficult for citizens to understand.
- There is a need to revise the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to deal with small incremental development, and issues such as private lanes and shared driveways.

Why This Update is Different

The 2000 comprehensive plan included about 50 pages of demographic, housing, and economic data, with only about 10-12 pages devoted to policy recommendations. This was not unusual for plans developed before the availability of the Internet. Planners frequently had to spend the majority of their time gathering information and researching volumes of Census data and writing agencies for data on traffic or environmental conditions. The information had to be included in the document to make it accessible to planning commissions and interested citizens. Such data is now a mouse click away from the average American home, so common planning information is equally available to professional planners, local leaders and community residents. This equal access of data makes the publication of long planning documents unnecessary. A few basic data sources of data are listed below. This Plan includes only a small amount of the pertinent data gathered. It rather focuses on Community Development Objectives, Polices, and recommendations; so it is a more action oriented document.

The second way in which this plan is very different is in its format . The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code mandates that a Comprehensive Plan must contain certain content. The following major issues must be addressed:

- A statement of community development goals and objectives
- A plan for land use
- A plan for housing
- A plan for community facilities and public utilities
- A plan for the conservation of natural and historic resources.
- A plan for transportation
- A statement of interrelationships between plan chapters and interrelationships with neighboring municipalities.

Most comprehensive plans address this by placing each requirement in a separate chapter within the document. While each of these components must be contained within the plan, there is no statutory requirements to separate these topical plans by chapter. In fact, many of the issues of land use , conservation, housing, transportation and community facilities are intimately interrelated. Poorly planned growth and development can negatively impact natural resources, cause traffic congestion, and increase the cost of housing. Conversely, a community dealing with issues of decline will see greater amounts of vacant and deteriorated housing, and have more difficulty in maintaining its transportation and communities faculties systems.

The 2000 comprehensive plan included about 50 pages of demographic, housing, and economic data, with only about 10-12 pages devoted to policy recommendations.

Some Useful Websites for Comprehensive Planning Data

Other relevant data sources are listed in succeeding chapters, but here are a few important sources of planning information.

US Census Bureau
http://www.census.gov/

Robinson Township page at Citydata site
http://www.city-data.com/township/Robinson-Washington-PA.html

PennDot roadway video log
http://www.dot7.state.pa.us/VideoLog/Open.aspx

Penn State University online mapping services
http://www.pasda.psu.edu/mapping/default.asptp

Most citizens also do not compartmentalize their thinking about community planning issues. Citizens tend to think in terms of how public policy issues affect their daily lives. They usually express their concerns when in cases where poorly planed growth is impacting rural quality of life, or causing higher school taxes. Local leaders in Robinson Township believed that the plan document should communicate the interrelated issues that the community faces in a clear non- technical manner. So the plan document is arranged around large themes, rather than narrow topical concerns.

The chapters of this plan contain pertinent facts and trends, an overall vision, and more specific policies of planning for both growth and conservation. The text box below explains how these four chapters relate to the MPC requirements.

Robinson Township Comprehensive plan chapters content as it relates to Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Requirements.

Chapter Two: Existing Conditions and Trends

This chapter Meets Section 301.2. Of the Pennsylvania MPC, that states, *"In preparing the comprehensive plan, the planning agency shall make careful surveys, studies and analyses of housing, demographic, and economic characteristics and trends; amount, type and general location and interrelationships of different categories of land use; general location and extent of transportation and community facili ties; natural features affecting development; natural, historic and cultural resources; and the prospects for future growth in the municipality."*

This chapter also contains required natural resource analysis for a plan for conservation

Chapter Three: Community Development Goal and Objectives

This Chapter meets Section 301(a)(1) of the Pennsylvania MPC that states a plan shall contain , "*A statement of objectives of the municipality concerning its future development, including, but not limited to, the location, character and timing of future development"*

Chapter Four: Action and Policy Plan

This Chapter contains required content for a

- Plan for Land Use 301(a)(2)
- Plan to meet the Housing needs of current and expected future residents 301(a)(2.1)
- Plan for Community Facilities and Public Utilities 301(a)(1) , including Reliable Water Supply 301(a)(4)
- Plan For Transportation 301(a)(3)
- Statements of Interrelationships 301(a)(4.1)
- Plan for the Conservation of Natural and Historic Resources per 301(a)(6) , as well as planning for rural resources in the context of land use planning. This Chapter also contains required water statements of Section 301(b)(1) and 301(b)(2)
- Short and long range implementation activities and intergovernmental compatibility statements.

Using Information to Manage Community Change

It was previously mentioned that the planning commission is charged with undertaking a careful survey of trends before formulating a comprehensive plan. This survey of trends ensures that the actions and policies within a comprehensive plan are grounded in some basis of fact. The 2000 Comprehensive plan contained over fifty pages of various statistics and information about the township. In some cases, it is difficult for the reader to match this data to policies contained in that document. In meeting its obligation under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Robinson Township Planning Commission reviewed data relative to:

- Demographics
- Housing
- Land Use
- Transportation
- Community facilities,
- Environment and Natural Resources

The commission also had three educational sessions with the consultant, examining trends in planning and zoning, such as smart growth and transportation planning tools.

In keeping with the concept of an action oriented plan, it was decide to keep the information contained within the plan, succinct and relevant. this document only summarizes the major issues facing the Township.

A major part of this comprehensive planning update was the utilization of Better mapping data. The Township obtained electronic property line Geographic Information System (GIS) layers from Washington County and adding data from PennDot and other state agencies to create a series of new maps for this planning effort. The maps are an essential part of the comprehensive plan and are contained in the gallery of maps which precede this chapter. Where a map in the gallery is relevant to a section, it is referred to by name.

A Summary of Important Trends affecting growth and development in Robinson Township

The Township has not realized any population projections whether from the Census Bureau, the last comprehensive plan or the regional planning agency.

Tax base analysis has shown that the Township cannot absorb significant growth without jeopardizing ability of the municipality to maintain a consistent level of public services.

The Township still has a base of affordable housing, through existing structures.

The Township has some significant physical constraints to development. There remain significant areas or former strip mine lands, that have not been redeveloped.

600 Marcellus shale gas extraction wells have begun in Washington County, making it the "energy capital of the East". Four Marcellus shale wells have been completed in the Township.

The Southern Beltway Extension will likely be complete within the next ten years, significantly altering traffic patterns.

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Housing Trends 10

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Population Trends and Changes

For the past 15 years, various professional planners and analysts have been projecting significant growth and development for Robinson Township. However, none of these projections were ever realized and the Township actually has long term population loss.

The 2000 Comprehensive Plan was prepared and adopted prior to availability of Census 2000 information. Its growth projections, were based upon projections prepared by the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (www.spcregion.org). SPC is the transportation and planning agency for the 9 counties of southwestern Pennsylvania. SPC later updated its forecasts, which are compared to the Comprehensive Plan and Census data below. In general, projections and estimates for the Township have simply been overstated. This was confirmed when the 2010 Census was released during the preparation of this update.

Table One: Robinson Township Population Trends

Year	Census Count	Change
1960	2150	
1970	2073	-77
1980	1812	-261
1990	2160	+348
2000	2191	+31
2010	1931	-260

Source: Us Census Bureau and 2000 Comprehensive Plan

Table Two: Enrollment trends Fort Cherry School District

Year	Enrollment	Change
2003-2004	1325	
2004-2005	1315	-10
2005-2006	1236	-79
2006-2007	1207	-29
2007-2008	1186	-21
2008-2009	1168	-18
2009-2010	1155 (projected)	-13
2010-2011	1143 (projected)	-12
2011-2012	1173 (projected)	+30
2012-2013	1176 (projected)	+3
2013-2014	1167 (projected)	-10
2014-2015	1156 (projected)	-11

Total Change 2003-2009 -157
Total Projected Change 2003-2015 -169
Source: Pa Department of Education

The last comprehensive plan was planning for a Township population of nearly 2,500 person by 2010. This was reasonable based upon data available at the time. The Census Bureau estimate for the year 1994 was 2,321. SPC was projecting 2,472 by 2015. The exception to assumptions of growth has been the projection prepared by the Pa. Department of Education, which monitors enrollment trends for the Fort Cherry School District, and project future enrollment. While the District also serves the Boroughs of McDonald, Midway and Hickory, as well as Mount Pleasant Township, their analysis is based upon annual student counts, and are more frequently updated. PDE is projecting slow decline in the district, as shown in Table Two.

Robinson Township thus has a smaller population today than in 1960, and that small population gains from 1980 to 2000 have been more than negated by losses. The table on the next page represents the Consultant's population projection for the next ten years, based upon 2010 Census age distribution, likely birth rates, and likely mortality. The results project a loss of another 143 persons by the next Census. The most realistic policy implication of this trend is to plan for a stable to declining population, and hope to attract non- residential development.

Population Trends and Changes, continued

Will the Township Grow? If future growth is based on current population, the answer is "no". The table below breaks the 2010 population into five year age groupings and then applies standard mortality tables. The number of males would drop from 995 in 2010 to 808 by 2020. The number of females would drop from 936 to 790. This would be partially offset by birthrates. Based upon the number of females between 14 and 44, the Township might see 19 births each year. 190 births combined with the 1,598 persons expected to survive would result in a total 2020 population of 1,788 persons. This is a decline consistent with the previous School District enrollment projections

Age Grouping	Male 2010	Surviv-ability	Male 2020	Age Grouping	Female 2010	Survivabil-ity	Female 2020
0-5	39	0.99166	38.67	0-5	48	0.99369	47.70
5 to 9	63	0.99217	62.51	5 to 9	48	0.99548	47.78
10to 14	65	0.98696	64.15	10to 14	60	0.99369	59.62
15 to 19	62	0.98258	60.92	15 to 19	46	0.99151	45.61
20 to 24	55	0.98094	53.95	20 to 24	47	0.98915	46.49
25 to 29	59	0.97733	57.66	25 to 29	39	0.98528	38.43
30 to 34	49	0.96766	47.42	30 to 34	42	0.97873	41.11
35 to 39	61	0.94963	57.93	35 to 39	62	0.96819	60.03
40 to44	70	0.92037	64.43	40 to44	60	0.95248	57.15
45 to 49	84	0.87794	73.75	45 to 49	93	0.93037	86.52
50 to 54	72	0.82099	59.11	50 to 54	76	0.89756	68.21
55 to 59	73	0.74756	54.57	55 to 59	79	0.8484	67.02
60 to 64	83	0.65619	54.46	60 to 64	79	0.77375	61.13
65 to 69	64	0.52478	33.59	65 to 69	50	0.66104	33.05
70 to 74	35	0.40468	14.16	70 to 74	24	0.50629	12.15
75+	61	0.1807	11.02	75+	83	0.21782	18.08
	995		808.303		936	13.68343	790.08107

Tax Base Analysis

Without realistic prospects for demographic growth in the long term, it will be essential for Township officials to understand the relationship between development, and the fiscal sustainability of the municipality. The Township must provide public services, such as road maintenance, police services, code enforcement and general administration. Such services cost money, which is raised from taxes.

When general land use trends are examined, The most common land use in the Township is vacant land with no buildings or other improvements. Most of this is farm or forest land, with some abandoned mine land that has little tree cover. The most common form of developed land is single family homes. Based upon analysis prepared for Pennsylvania municipalities by agricultural economist Tim Kelsey, the land use patterns of a community have a real effect upon the ration of public services needed to taxes that can be expected. Each different form of development pays taxes to the township and school district. However, each also needs roads, schools, water, sewerage, and police. Each type of development costs the community to provide services for but may not cover these expenses in taxes paid. Kelsey analyzed municipalities from across the State to develop guidelines for municipalities. The matrix below applies this type of analysis to Robinson Township's current land use patterns and how new development of various types would most likely affect the Township's ability to meet residents' needs.

Type of Development (Tax/Service Ratios are from a Kelsey Study for Canton Township Washington County	Prevalence in Robinson Township	Expected Township Tax Base To Public Service Ratio	Policy Implication For Robinson Township
Single Family Dwellings Avg. $1.23 in service costs to $1.00 in taxes paid	Most Common improved or developed use of land	Generally neutral; will require as much in public services as taxes generated.	The Township has little prospect for major housing, and would have difficulty absorbing it without raising taxes.
Mobile homes and mobile-home parks NA	Declining, based upon the Census of 2010 counts, and known closure of one mobile-home park.	Generally negative, as taxable basis is mobilehomes is more modest.	New mobilehome parks are unlikely and not needed due to affordable existing housing.
Multiple Family Dwellings Avg. NA	No major concentrations, a few two family dwellings, scattered throughout Township	Negative effect as family occupied units have high numbers of school children per taxable basis and elderly housing generated little in earned income tax	The Township has little prospect for major housing, and would have difficulty absorbing it without raising taxes
Vacant Private land (farm, Forest, undeveloped) Avg $0.03 in service costs to $1.00 in taxes paid	Most Common Land Use	Generally positive, as undeveloped land requires few services However, the amount of taxes generated per acre is modest.	Must be maintained, unless significant commercial or business park development can be attracted.
Business Parks and Light Industry Avg $0.13 in service costs to $1.00 in taxes paid	No major business park, some scattered "heavy commercial" development.	Generally positive, paying school taxes but does not put children into the system. Demand on police services is lower than retail	May represent the best prospect for needed new development.
Commercial and Retail Development Avg $0.06 in service costs to $1.00 in taxes paid	Only local, small business in no great concentration	Generally positive, as commercial development pays school taxes but does not put children into the system.	After business park development, carefully planned commercial development would be very beneficial.

Housing Trends

In addition to losing population, the Township has lost housing units. The 2000 Census listed a total of 902 housing units. According to the 2010 Census redistricting release, this had dropped to 855 units. If these numbers are correct, the Township lost 47 housing units or an average of over 4 units each year.

If these numbers are correct, there may be several possible explanations. When housing statistics are compared to other demographic data, one likely trend is the link between the age of residents and the age of the housing stock. In 2000, over fourteen percent of the Township's population was over the age of 65. By Census 2010 This has risen to over 16 percent. As the Township has virtually no group quarters for senior citizens (such as large nursing homes or personal care homes) Some population loss occurs when these people either die or relocate. In some cases, the homes are going to be re-occupied by younger families, but in other cases they may become vacant. The most common form of vacant housing is a category the Census Bureau calls "other vacant" which mean the unit is not for sale or rent, or held for seasonal use. . Thus, many homes in the Township may have fallen into disrepair and been demolished (or in the case of mobile-homes, removed) anecdotal information from the Township confirms this trend. This trend may also be confirmed by examining the age of housing, when compared to the County. The Township housing stock is mostly comprised of older homes. The Township has little new housing, and it may also be said that Robinson Township is not in the "path of growth."

Housing in Robinson Township 2010 Census SF1

Total Housing Units	855
Occupied Housing Units	800
Vacant Housing Units	55
Owner Occupied Units	672
Renter Occupied Units	128

YEAR HOUSING UNIT BUILT Census 2000	Robinson Township	Robinson Township	Washington County percent
1999 to March 2000	8	0.9	1.4
1995 to 1998	26	2.9	4.0
1990 to 1994	57	6.3	4.7
1980 to 1989	110	12.2	8.3
1970 to 1979	169	18.7	13.7
1960 to 1969	92	10.2	11.1
1940 to 1959	139	15.4	24.7
1939 or earlier	301	33.4	32.2

The Township has little new housing, and it may also be said that Robinson Township is not in the "path of growth."

Physical Constraints and Natural Resources

Robinson Township consists of a high percentage of lands which pose some type of natural constraints upon development, be it from soil types, steep slopes, flood plains, or other natural limitations. Planning for intensive growth and development must be aware of these limitations. On a community wide basis, the strategy may be to steer development elsewhere, on a site planning basis, mitigation or other corrective measures may be necessary. The major environmental limitations in the Township are slope, floodplain and soils (some of which were mines, and some of which are inappropriate for on lot sewage disposal) A map of steep slope, floodplains and mines lands is included in the map gallery. The data was taken from the previous comprehensive plan.

Geology

No part of the Township was affected by glacial activity, thus providing for fairly consistent geological characteristics. The highest elevation occurs in the south central portion of the Township at 1329 feet above mean sea level, while the lowest part of the Township is along Little Raccoon Creek, along the northern boundary with Beaver and Allegheny Counties at 878 feet above mean sea level.

Drainage and Hydrology

Robinson Township is split by two of the largest watersheds in northern Washington County. The two streams are Chartiers Creek, with a drainage area of 277 square miles, and Raccoon Creek which covers 184 total miles.

Soil and Slope

Most Township soils fall into one of four general associations:

1.Dormont-Culleoka
2. Guernsey-Dormont-Culleoka
3.Dormont Culleoka Newak
4. Udorthants (areas where cut and fill have mixed subsoils and topsoil

Most soil associations have severe limitations for on lot sewage disposal. The Township has attempted to overcome this by extending public water and sewer services, as depicted upon map of services in the gallery.

Areas of steep slope are concentrated in the northern portion of the Township, but are scattered throughout. They are especially found near stream ravines and floodplains.

Mined Lands

One of the most significant and widespread environmental limitations is actually caused by human activity; the mining of coal. Mined soils may be either tailings from subsurface mines or backfill from strip mines. Mined land may be unstable, and there engineering characteristics are more difficult to discern without site testing. It is also highly probable that many surface mines were used for dumping of various kinds of household, commercial, or even industrial waste. The Township has no records of this activity since it was occurred illegally or before laws to prevent dumping were in place. Developers of previously mined land should proceed carefully (see sidebar),

Agriculture

Some of the Township's unmined soils are prime farmland or other soils of statewide importance. The Township supports the continuation of agriculture in those areas where is has been historically present. Pursuant to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code it also recognizes that commercial agriculture can effect water supplies.

The Township supports its agricultural base by the establishing of Agricultural Security Areas. As stated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Security Areas (ASA's) are intended to promote more permanent and viable farming operations over the long term by strengthening the farming community's sense of security in land use and the right to farm. The ASA is a covenant between farmland owners and the Township, where the Township promised not to restrict farming in those areas. Robinson Township ASA farms are shown in the map gallery.

Brownfields and Illegal Dumping

The plan notes that it is highly probable that many surface mines were used for dumping of various kinds of household, commercial, or even industrial waste. There are also formally designated brownfields within the Township. Brownfields are former or underutilized industrial and mining sites that are likely compromised by some past practice and may be prioritized by state agencies for land recycling to new uses or redevelopment. At present, the Township has perhaps 1,600 acres of known brownfields sites. The data available on each varies. It is crucial to note that brownfields represent various legal implication of owners and developers, as well as opportunities. More information is available from the PA DEP at http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/land_recycling_program/10307

Marcellus Shale

In 2003, a gas well was drilled in Washington County using new horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing techniques to reach trapped natural gas within the 5,000+ feet deep Marcellus Shale formation. By 2005 this well was paying off handsomely and a major energy boom began in Pennsylvania. Like the coal boom of the early Twentieth Century, Robinson Township is now finding itself at the center of a region which is supplying energy to the nation.

Marcellus gas well pad complex in the Township.

The Marcellus Shale industry in Pennsylvania has brought controversy from environmental groups, who have expressed concerns about the hydraulic fracturing process, and water quality. It has also had positive economic impacts, creating many direct jobs in drilling and support, as well as enriching landowners. Both industry supporters and detractors agree that it is making major changes to rural western Pennsylvania

A municipal comprehensive plan will not resolve these state and regional issues. The Pennsylvania Legislature has defined "minerals" in the Municipalities Planning Code and the definition includes natural gas. There is also mandatory plan content relative to mineral extraction. The code requires municipal comprehensive plans to include a statement that "Lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities." Plans also cannot exceed or duplicate state standards contained in the Oil and Gas Act. This provision of the MPC is explicit to comprehensive planning and includes eight other Pennsylvania Environmental laws as well (such as laws relating to surface mining of coal and non coal minerals and agricultural environmental impacts.

In general, a municipality should not attempt to regulate oil and gas extraction in the same manner as the Pa Department of Environmental Protection. Technical issues of drilling, such as well casing and grout materials, storage and treatment of fracturing water, or distance of gas wells to surface water should not be replicated or exceeded.

However, Marcellus Shale wells are a high impact land use, and often occur in rural areas where roads and other infrastructure are not suited to absorb traffic. The activities associated with extraction, and especially the industrial activity of processing natural gas produce light and noise. Light, traffic and noise are not the type of environmental issues regulated by other state agencies. These impacts can make gas extraction and processing an innate land use conflict with other less intensive uses, especially single family neighborhoods.

Above all else, the wells and other structures and buildings associated with Marcellus Shale gas extraction remain developments. It remains in the purview of Robinson Township to regulate all development within its borders to ensure orderly growth, protect public infrastructure, and minimize land use conflict.

The Southern Beltway and Transportation

One reason that Robinson Township has remained rural, and population projections have not been realized, is highway access. While the four lane portion of Route 22 passes through the Township the most accessible interchange is in nearby Allegheny County. From a regional perspective, Robinson Township is not within the heart of the transportation network, but rather the periphery. This will change as The Turnpike extension is completed., which is likely to receive Federal designation as Interstate 576. The New Southern Beltway/I-576 will be the largest change to the geographic direction of land use and growth patterns in the Township's history. It is projected that 36,000-40,000 vehicles per day will pass through the Township on this new highway. This is twice the traffic count for Interstate 79 south of Canonsburg.

Road Name	Count Location	Average Daily Traffic (Vehicles Per Day)
Route 22	At Township Line with Allegheny County	14,000
980/Robinson Highway	At McDonald/ Robinson Line	4,900
980/Robinson Highway	1 mile north of Noblestown Road intersection	2,500
980/Robinson Highway	Near Quicksilver Club	3,400
Noblestown Road	East of Midway	2,800
Candor Road	South of Route 22	300
Beech Hollow Road	West of 980	1,100
North Branch Road	East of 980	3,200
Valley Street	North of McDonald	2,400
Bigger Road	Northern most portion of Township	150
Midway Candor Road	Midpoint between two locations	200

The New Southern Beltway will be the largest change to the geographic direction of land use and growth patterns in the Township's history.

An idea of this level of traffic can be seen by comparing it to current traffic counts for various Township roads. The location of these roads is depicted upon the transportation system map in the gallery. With the exception of Route 22, no road is carrying more than 10,000 vehicles per day. Robinson Highway/Route 980 has the highest counts but these are well within the capacity of a two lane road.

Many Township roads have significant geometry limitations, due to winding around steep slopes. There are also many acute angle intersections. These are not a concern as long as significant traffic does not come through growth and development.

Reflecting the fact that traffic counts are low, There are few improvements scheduled for state roads in the Township. The only projects scheduled on the Twelve Year Transportation Plan (TYP) are bridge replacements for SR 4012 (Robinson Run) and SR 4018 (Cross Creek)

The Township also has one non highway transportation facility, the Montour Trail. The trail is a spur off the Great Allegheny Passage, the major rail trail that connects Pittsburgh and Washington DC. It also connects to the Panhandle Trail to Weirton, West Virginia just outside the Township. There has been interest in creating a spur to connect the Montour Trail to the Pittsburgh International Airport.
The route of the Montour Trail through the Township and the nearby Panhandle Trail are shown on several maps in the Gallery.

The Township's Vision for its Future

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PAMPC) states that a Comprehensive Plan shall contain, ***A statement of objectives of the municipality concerning its future development, including, but not limited to, the location, character and timing of future development, that may also serve as a statement of community development objectives as provided in section 606.*** (Sec 301a.1). These standards are among the most forceful requirements for a legal and complete Pennsylvania comprehensive plan. In order to meet this mandate, the Plan contains a Development Timetable map of the optimum location and timing of future development (See Map following Page 13). The narrative in this chapter contains the Township's goals and objectives for the character of this development.

The Development Timetable Map divides the Township into three main classifications. This map is an update of the map that was contained in the 2000 Robinson Township Comprehensive Plan. The changes are significant, due largely to the impact of the new Southern Beltway Extension, and the fact that 2010 census counts from the previous chapter reveal that the Township is not in the path of growth. For this reason, the Map show the extent to which this small community can accept and adequately plan for growth and change. Traditionally in an exurban community such as Robinson Township, growth would have followed major arterial highway corridors, and emanated outward from core communities like McDonald and Midway. This can be seen in the areas that are shown as "Currently Developed" on the Map. They have remained largely consistent since 2000.

The extension of a four lane, limited access highway through Robinson Township will alter the shape of historic development patterns. Limited access highways do not promote roadside development except at interchanges. Therefore, the Develop Timetable Map has been altered from the 2000 plan to reflect this reality. In general, The Township will utilize this map as a guide to rezoning and support of public investments in areas such as water and sewer extension and road improvements. Unique Policy goals and objectives for each of the areas follow.

This aerial photograph, with Township parcels superimposed, show how most current development grew naturally from McDonald and Midway Boroughs.

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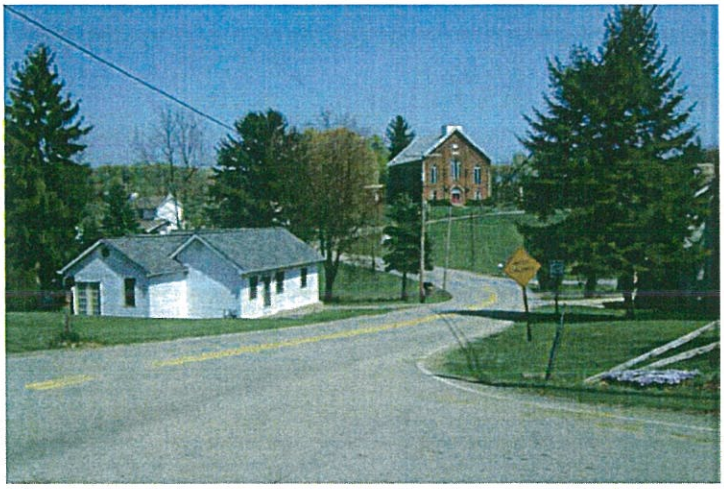
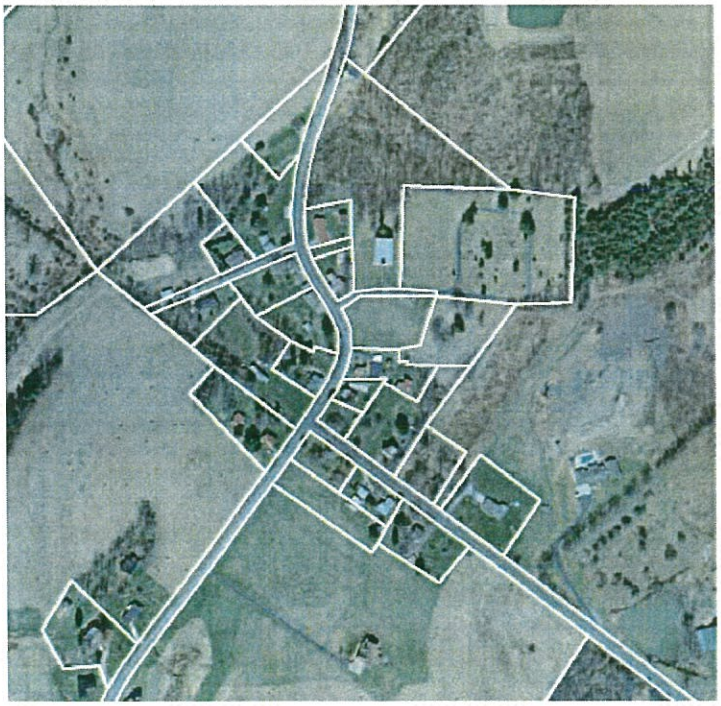
Currently Developed Areas

The Robinson Township Development Timetable map illustrates areas where the Township has already seen some development. Most development has occurred adjacent to either Midway and McDonald Borough or along major state highways. There are only scattered low density developed areas in the central and northern Portions of the Township, which the map refers to as " minor cluster of development" . It is believed that some of these small clusters were in existence during the preparation of the 2000 Comprehensive Plan, but were not mapped because of their inconsequential nature to overall planning.



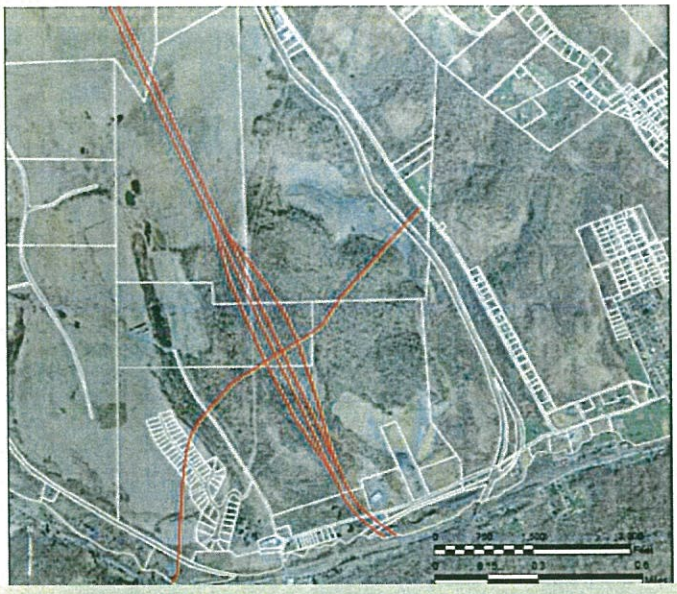
This crossroad hamlet is typical of minor clusters of development found throughout the northern two thirds of Robinson Township. Most lack sufficient size, density or resources to make planning for significant growth a realistic possibility. The aerial view of the same area shown below illustrates its rural context.



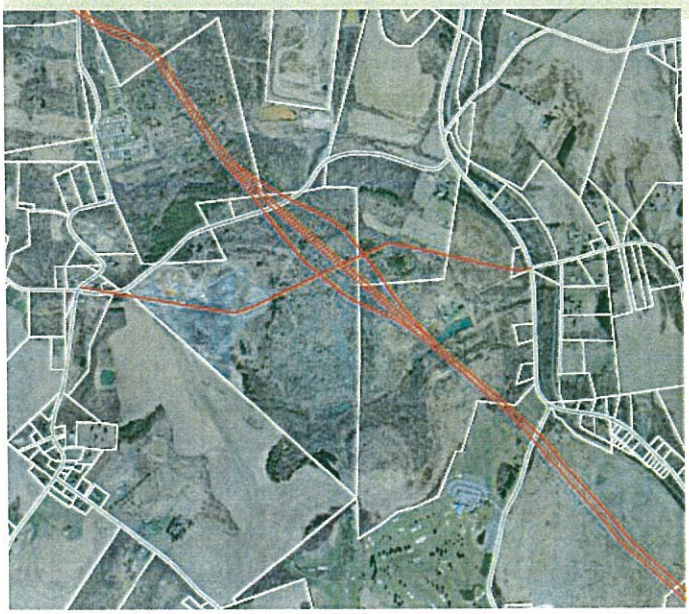
In general, the Township will support the protection of current clusters of single family homes from incompatible large scale nonresidential development. However, it will also seek to identify areas where traffic or land use conflict may be causing a devaluation of homes for residential proposes. In such cases, The Township may examine transitional measures. Where small-scale development is compatible with historic residential uses (Such as home occupations or neighborhood level retail) it will be supported. The Township will also continue a policy of working to extend public water and sewer to currently developed areas as finances permit.

Future Development Areas

The second category depicted on the development timetable map illustrates areas where the Township believes future development will happen. The Southern Beltway Extension will create opportunities for beneficial nonresidential development that will further diversify tax base and create new job and business opportunities. These will initially occur at the two interchanges where provision of water and sewer is most feasible. Extension of such infrastructure is a high priority for the Township. In these near term development areas, the Township will seek to maximize land utilization by promoting depth of development along the roads serving interchanges. This can provide land for larger scale development without unduly increasing traffic congestion. Areas of large scale nonresidential development that border current developed residential land uses should use mitigation, such as distance or screening, to protect the security of homeowners' property.

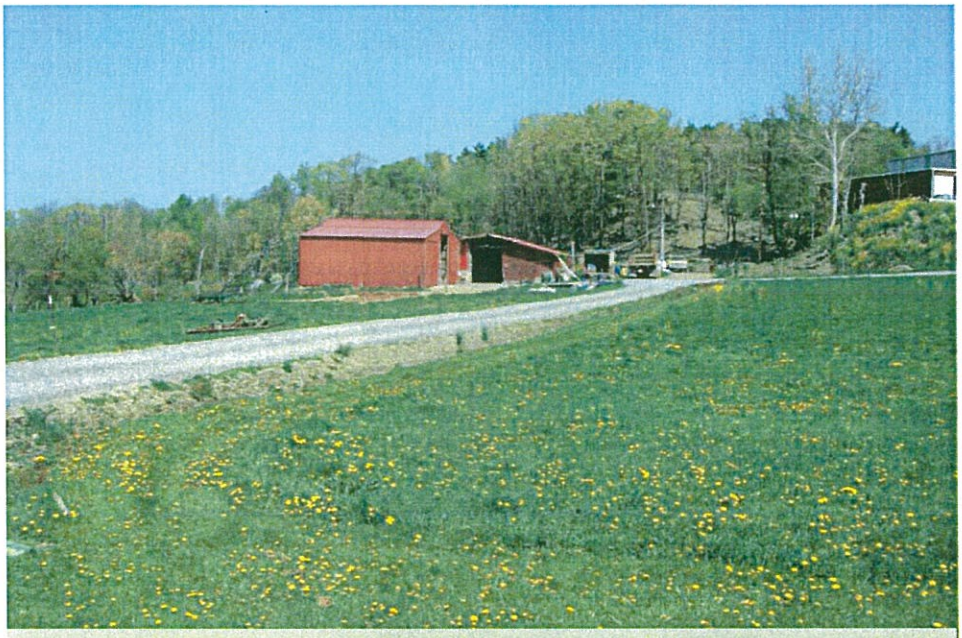


The detail above is the southernmost proposed interchange of the new I-576 Southern Beltway. It coincides with the Township's traditional growth area; near both McDonald and Midway Boroughs. The detail below is the second interchange area the Township believes is likely to develop. There are full pages of these details din the



Over the long term, the third and northernmost of the of three proposed interchanges may be developed. It will have excellent highway access but less immediate opportunity for provision of public utilities. There is also a history of intensive special purpose land uses in this area that may discourage such uses as retail or business parks. The Township will seek to manage change in this area by establishing standards to mitigate land use conflict. Other area of mid- to long term growth include areas that represent the extension of historic growth patterns. These areas can accommodate such diverse uses as well planned medium scale retail, and housing (if needed).

Areas Not Anticipated to Develop



The Township wishes to establish policies that will protect its rural areas for rural uses and features, such as agriculture.

The Township is planning for growth and development in about one third of its land area, which is significant for community not within the path of growth. The remainder of the Township is anticipated to stay rural and the Township would also wish it to remain rural. This desire will not happen unless there are planning policies to preserve and conserve rural uses and features.

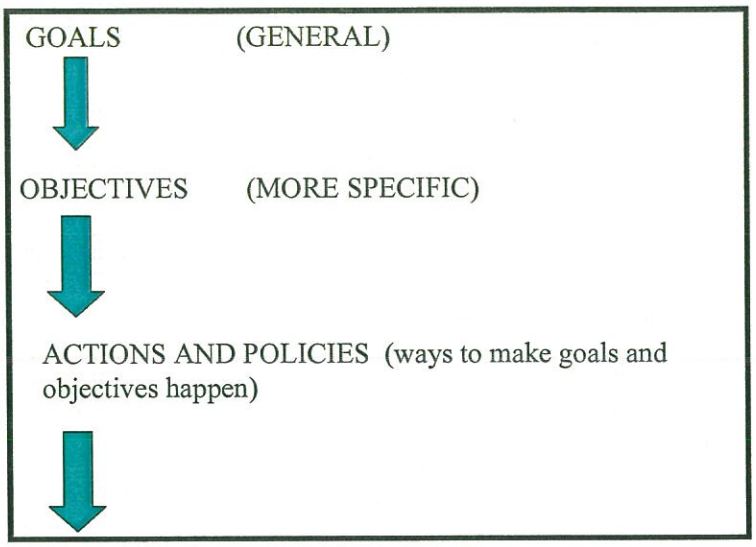
The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code has created a definition for a rural resource area that is a part of a County or multimunicpal comprehensive plan. The term describes Robinson Township's goal for its rural areas.

Rural resource area," an area described in a municipal or multimunicipal plan within which rural resource uses including, but not limited to, agriculture, timbering, mining, quarrying and other extractive industries, forest and game lands and recreation and tourism are encouraged and enhanced, development that is compatible with or supportive of such uses in permitted, and public infrastructure services are not provided except in villages.

In the spirit of the state planning code, The Township recognizes the primacy of agricultural endeavors and forestry in this area. Other rural uses, such as mineral extraction shall be permitted within the context of protecting natural agricultural and historic resources. Residential and business development may also be encouraged at very low densities or very small scale. It should be noted that no Township village lies within this area.

The Township will not attempt to extend utilities to the is area to hasten its suburbanization. It will develop public policy to protect these rural areas for rural uses and ensure that densities remain consistent with rural mixed uses and avoidance of the intensity that creates land use conflict.

The previous section establishes goals for the location and timing of future development in Robinson Township. The Township also must establish goals and objectives for the character of future development. When planners speak about goals and objectives, the term "goals" typically means more general and wide statements. Objectives are meant to be more specific ways to fulfill goals. Finally chapter four will address actions and policies, which are the demeans to realize the goals and objectives. The chart at left explains the relationships between these concepts.



Narrative of Robinson Township Goals and Objectives

Overall Goals

Monitor development policies to ensure that the rural character of the Township is protected.

The Township prioritizes the preservation of prime agricultural soils and protection of existing agricultural areas.

The Township wishes to ensure the protection of its natural environmental quality and significant land features throughout the Township.

New Development should improve the aesthetic qualities of the community.

The Township will seek to attract high quality nonresidential development in order to create a higher standard of living for current residents through increased employment opportunities as well as necessary diversification of the tax base.

The Township will seek to maintain current population levels and revitalize its residential areas by providing a wide range of services and protecting quality of life.

The Township encourages the preservation of cultural and historic properties.

Residential

Maintain low density residential development in rural areas, especially in the area North of Route 22.

Control location of high density residential development. to avoid overtaking limited Township fiscal resources and limited infrastructure

Continue to provide housing For all income levels, especially encouraging the re-use and rehabilitation of existing older homes as affordable owner occupied single family dwellings.

Agricultural

Encourage the preservation of active farmland

Encourage participation of farm owners in the Agricultural Security Area Program

Discourage the subdivision of farm tracts into small building lots.

Encourage farmers to participate in County state and federal programs which support and promote sound farming practices, such as surface water protection and erosion and sedimentation control

Economic Development and Land Use

Provide for Commercial and Industrial Development in areas where land use conflict is minimized with residential or rural uses .

Promote the development of a high quality business park as one of the Township's highest priorities.

Identify areas with adequate infrastructure which can support commercial and industrial development.

Provide for future economic development opportunities based upon infrastructure development.

Identify "Areas for Opportunity" for future development.

Create site development controls to protect adjacent properties.

Provide adequate opportunities to expand the tax base

Encourage brownfield development by assisting responsible developers in identifying opportunities.

Infrastructure

Ensure that existing facilities and services are maintained at a level which meets the needs of current residents and businesses

Maintain a development approval process that ensures that new public and private improvements are constructed to a high quality standard.

Prioritize the expansion of infrastructure to meet the objective of attracting a high quality business park.

Traffic and Circulation

Create a safe, well constructed road system within the Township

Promote opportunities for local connectivity to ensure the Township benefits from improvements to the Highway system.

Upgrade existing Township roads on an annual basis through the use of capital improvement programming.

Promote continued development of non-vehicular transportation systems, such as trails, as a means to enhance quality of life.

Encourage efficient land use development to minimize traffic congestion

Identify and protect rights of way for future public use.

Historic Preservation

Cooperate with other government agencies, property owners, and nonprofit organizations to promote the protection of identified historic sites.

Encourage new development to be compatible with existing structure or sites.

Recreation

Encourage adequate recreational opportunities for Township residents.

Ensure new residential development provides for adequate open space or recreational activities.

Consider a land or fee dedication program to ensure that new residential development will not result in a lowering of recreational levels of service.

Natural Resource Protection

Discourage development on, or in, identified environmentally sensitive areas.

Discourage disturbance of steep slopes ands soils prone to slippage.

Ensure that natural resource extraction activities do not create land use conflicts with other forms of development.

Promote the preservation and conservation of environmentally sensitive areas and natural resources.

The Future Land Use Map

Introduction

The goals and objectives previously mentioned are important to impart a community wide vision. However, without policies and actions they have little hope of actually being realized. This final chapter of the Comprehensive plan update represents the key to realizing Robinson Township's vision, goals and objectives. It accomplishes that by first dividing the Township into functional categories where the Township will plan for various community needs of both development and conservation. It then established official policies and actions. Policies represent the way the Township will respond to events in the future. For example, a request for rezoning will be reviewed against this document for determination if the action would be consistent. Actions represent things the Township will try to actively do to help realize the goals and objectives in the previous chapter. The heart of the Comprehensive plan is the future land use map, contained in the map gallery. It divides the Township into eighth functional areas. These areas are discussed in the following pages.

Special Conservation Areas:

This area has significant environmental limitations due to floodplain and slope. This area can accommodate only limited residential development and very limited non-residential development. Township policy centers on keeping this area largely as it is.

Ideal Land Uses: Forestry, Limited Agriculture, very low density housing. Small home based business or small tourism related business

Target Density: One dwelling unit or nonresidential building to 5-10 acres

Farmland Preservation Core

Vision and Policy summary: The Township would desire to see this area remain essentially unchanged. This area has the highest cluster of both productive farmland and agricultural security areas. While this area has development potential, improving infrastructure to support more development will create unfavorable tax base balances and change the character of the community. Township policy ill center on keeping this area low density, and reserved for rural resource uses .

Ideal Land Uses: Forestry, large scale and intensive agriculture, low density single family housing, farm related businesses, low intensity businesses, mineral excavation when isolated from residential clusters.

Target Density: One dwelling unit or nonresidential building to 5-10 acres, or 1-2 "net acres" (An acre clear of slope and floodplain)

Rural Residential

Vision and Policy Summary: This area can serve as a longer term future residential growth area (frankly beyond the period of this comprehensive plan, as the Township is not within the path of growth), as well as providing an opportunity for current and future residents who wish to build and have a home in a rural setting. The Township vision is for a mixed setting of farms, and housing, with only limited business development to serve the immediate area.

Ideal Land Uses: Single Family Dwellings, agriculture (not intensive), limited gas and oil development when isolated from residential areas

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The Future Land Use Map, Continued

Target Density: One dwelling unit to 2 acres. This lower density is necessary to prevent failed septic systems and unaffordable sewer extensions.

Heavy Industry

This area contains a historic development of regional impact and significance as defined by the Pa municipalities Planning Code. Because of environmental degradation, this area has the potential to host forms of development that would be inappropriate in other parts of the Township. However, buffering and impact analysis will be essential to avoid other development areas.

Ideal Land Uses: The ideal for this area is job creating, carefully planned heavy industry that would restore previously mined lands. Land uses that would create conflict elsewhere with less intensive uses should be targeted to this area as well.

Target Density: With large scale development, lot sizes are less crucial. The intensity is important. The Township should strive for one major development to 20 acres, 10- 20 percent building or structural coverage

Residential

While analysis has determined that Robinson Township is not in the path of growth, the township is still planning to meet the housing needs of the number of residents expected to reside in the community. The planned area for residential uses vastly exceeds the minimum acreage the Township anticipates to be needed. Public infrastructure is near these areas, though developers will largely fund its extension on a "pay as you go basis."

Ideal Land Use: Single Family Dwellings, Condominium Developments, with appropriate buffers between areas of different density

Target Density: Two to four single family dwelling per acre (with utilities), 4-6 multifamily dwellings per acre, and compatible businesses such as personal care homes, or institutions such as churches.

Interchange Development (Nonresidential)

This area is reserved for a mix of nonresidential development that is anticipated to include low impact light industry, business and professional park development. The development of this area is essential to ensure the Township's future prosperity. Extension of utilities to these areas is a major planning priority to add value to private land.

Ideal Land Uses: Corporate offices, light industry, warehousing and distribution centers. Careful planning of highway commercial uses might be possible if it uses full depth of development and does not create traffic congestion. Roadside or strip commercial should be avoided.

Target Density: Lot size can be flexible if buffered from surrounding development. Ideally, building coverage would result in 25-50 percent development.

Local Commercial/ Transition Areas

These areas include the Township's traditional nonresidential development areas. It is comprised of scattered commercial development mixed with residential uses. For vacant land in these areas, similar development is anticipated. It should be carefully planned to buffer disparities of scale and mitigate land use conflicts. Overall, its location also serves as a natural buffer between Interchange Development and residential areas.

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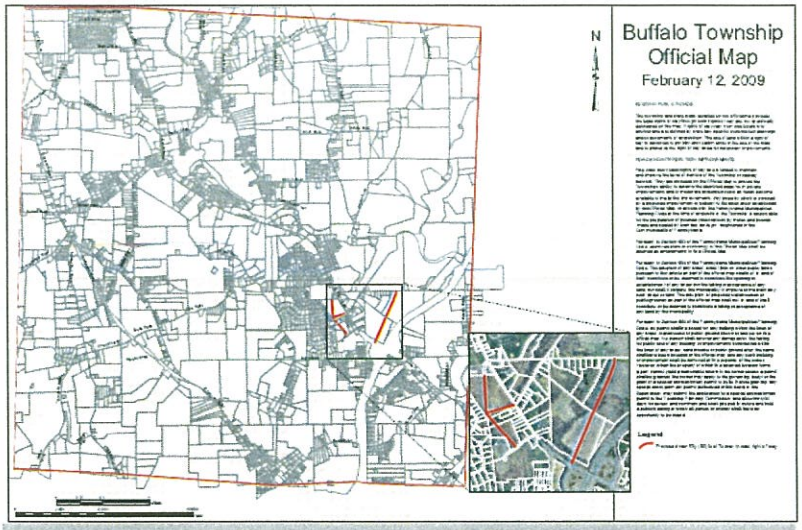
Ideal Land Uses: Convenience business, eating and drinking places, contractors offices and supply yards, professional and medical offices.

Target Density: As buffer areas, large scale and intensive development is less appropriate in these areas. One measure of scale is maximum building size, which should not exceed 20,000-30,000 square feet in these areas.

The goals and objectives previously mentioned are important to impart a community wide vision. However, without policies and actions they have little hope of actually being realized.

Transportation Implications

If the Township is able to attract desired growth and development, it will begin to encounter a new problem- traffic congestion. Because the Southern Beltway will be limited access, and bring over 35,000 new vehicles per day into the Township, it may concentrate traffic on a few roads near interchanges. This will create new 'choke points" for traffic. The roads, streets, and intersections that will be stressed by this congestion are identified on a map of stressed linkages in the map gallery. A three point plan is recommended to deal with these issues.



This is a reduced version of an official map adopted by Buffalo Township, Butler County. An official map is a map and text that allows a township to reserve crucial rights of way that will be essential to optimize future traffic flows. Developers may either build the system, avoid future rights of way, or the Township may acquire the rights of way.

Begin monitoring the impact of traffic from new development, and ensure that land developments pay for necessary improvements to adjacent roads.

The first step in planning for congestion is an understanding of how much traffic each type of development will generate. The table on the following page summarizes traffic impacts for different land uses. In general daily traffic will impact road capacity, and peak hour trips will affect congestion at intersection and whether signals are required. In general, 70 peak hour existing trips will require a signal.

Adopt access management standards along projected stressed roads

Continuous curb cuts, offset intersections on two sides of a major road, and an excess of new commercial driveways can all increase congestion. Robinson Township has a unique opportunity to plan for congestion before it happens. PennDOT has prepared access management standards for Township use that should be a part of both local ordinances and new land development approvals.

Considering adopting an official map to reserve rights of way for future streets to maximize land utilization and minimize congestion

Many parcels in the areas the township wishes to see desired non residential development do not have optimum highway access. More interconnected streets can both maximize development opportunities and minimize congestion. It is therefore a key recommendation of this plan that the Township consider preparing an official map and ordinance. An official map is not just a map of present streets. It is an ordinance adopted pursuant to Article IV of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. It allow the Township to identify where new public road rights of way should be placed If development of a property subject to an official map is proposed, it must either conform to the map or wait until the Township decides if it wishes to acquire a right of way. This is a powerful planning tool to develop a road system that both minimizes congestion and adds value to private land. A concept plan for official mapping is included in the map gallery.

Transportation Implications, continued

How Much Traffic Does Development Generate?
The Institute of Transportation Engineers constantly studies traffic flow from existing developments to best determine the impact of future development. While the Institute maintains literally thousands of counts on specific developments, the following are offered as some very general ranges:

Single-Family Dwellings 6 to 12 trips per home, per day
Apartment Dwellings 3 to 8 trips per dwelling unit, per day
Retail Stores 35 to 330 trips per 1,000 square feet of store area
Industrial Parks 52 to 140 trips per gross acre of land

The table below lists typical peak hour trip generation. Peak hour is normally late afternoon "rush hour" This table should be used as a guideline to monitor impact of new development.

Type of Land Use	50 or More Peak Hour Trips	100 or More Peak Hour Trips
Single-Family Dwellings	45 Dwelling Units	90 Dwelling Units
Apartments	75 Dwelling Units	150 Dwelling Units
Townhouses or Condominiums	90 Dwelling Units	180 Dwelling Units
Mobile Home Parks	90 Dwelling Units	180 Dwelling Units
Retail/Shopping Centers	3,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area	6,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area
Convenience Store/Gas Stations	3 Pumps	7 Pumps
Banks With Drive-In	1,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area	2,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area
Professional Offices	33,500 Square Feet Gross Floor Area	67,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area
Medical/Dental Offices	15,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area	30,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area
Research and Development/ Corporate Offices	35,500 Square Feet Gross Floor Area	71,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area
Light Industrial/Warehousing Distribution Centers	49,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area	98,000 Square Feet Gross Floor Area
Heavy Industry	72,750 Square Feet Gross Floor Area	145,500 Square Feet Gross Floor Area

Planning For Special Conservation Areas

Nearby Raccoon Creek State Park shows the value of planning for conservation., as it brings economic impact through visitors to the area. These visitors patronize numerous area businesses.

This area can accommodate only limited residential development and very limited non-residential development. There are four key actions and policies, all intended to protect natural resources here.

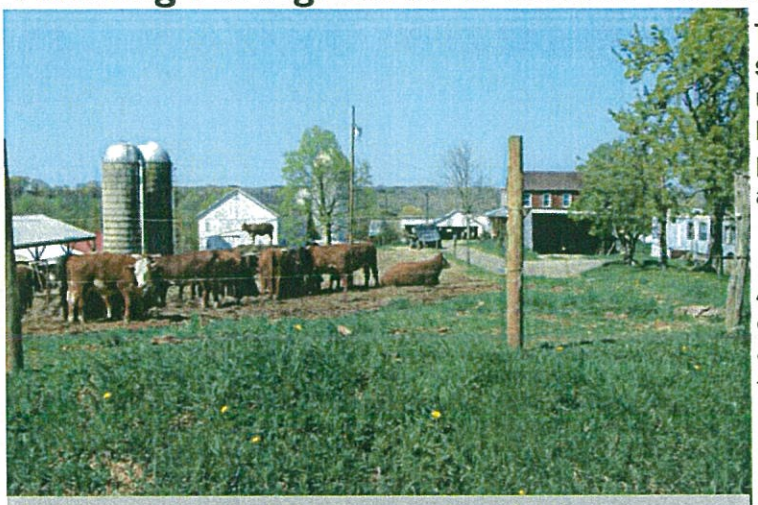
Action: Create a Conservation Zoning District that identifies this area as rural, non agricultural and environmentally sensitive The Conservation District should include a standard for "net lot size" (lots size, as defined, should be free of steep slope, floodplain and wetland). This will ensure that growth and development of this area does not create problems with stormwater runoff, or threaten water quality.

Action: The Township should carefully plan for future mineral extraction/drilling from this area, subject to limitations in Commonwealth Law. The limited road system and steep slopes in this area, contrasted with the intensity of Marcellus Shale well development could overwhelm this small portion of the Township. If new well pads are allowed in this area, it should be very carefully planned, and significant road improvements are a necessity.

Action and Policy: This area is a priority for Conservation Easements. Conservation easements are simply an agreement between a property owner and a non profit or local government to not develop land. Property owners voluntarily agree to the easement and receive either direct compensation or donation value for income tax purposes. The Township may wish to seek funding to buy conservation easements in this area to pay landowners to protect their land. Further information can be obtained from the Pa Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (www.conserveland.org)

Policy: Housing developments in this area should either be very low density, or a part of a conservation subdivision. Conservation Subdivisions can allow for increased destiny on a portion of a site, while preserving environmentally sensitive land on other parts of a site. Standards can be integrated into a zoning ordinance, subdivision and land development ordinance, or both. For Robinson Township, utilization of Planned Residential Development Standards would offer the best administrative approach.

Planning For Agricultural Conservation Areas



A family farm in the Township. Planning should seek to preserve and protect these farms.

The Township would desire to see this area remain essentially unchanged. This area has the highest cluster of both productive farmland and agricultural security areas.

Action: The Township should consider creation of a new Agricultural Zoning District. This district should recognize the primacy of agriculture in these areas and protect farms from land use conflict by residential development.

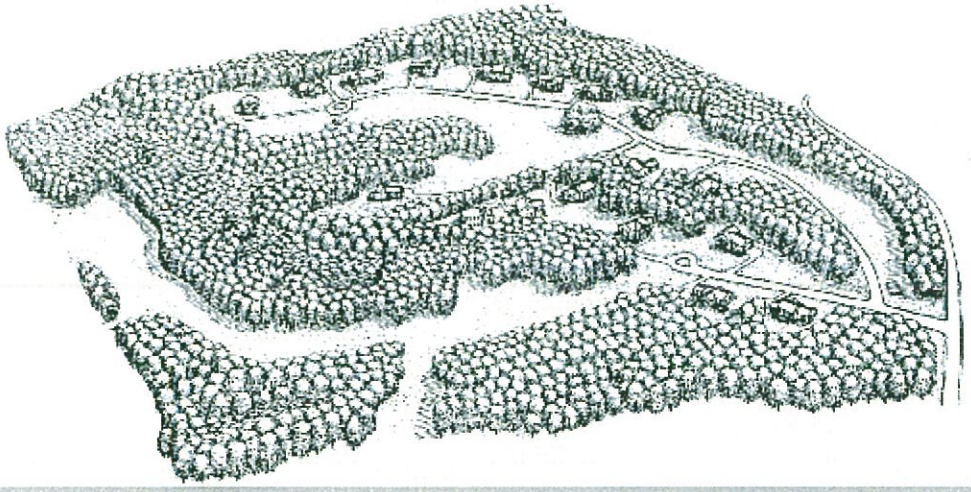
Policy: Density in this area should be low enough to discourage the breaking up of parcels into lots too small to farm. This approach also avoids future residential lot placed too near farms, as suburban housing conflicts with farm activities such as manure spreading and spraying. This can be done through conservation subdivision tools, or effective agricultural zoning, that Limits the number of times a parcel can be subdivided.

Policy: The Township should encourage Expansion of Agricultural Security Areas. This is a necessary precursor to the purchase of agricultural conservation easements, and also protect farms from conflict with suburban housing.

Policy: The Township should inform Washington County that this is its priority area for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements, as administered by the Washington County Farmland Preservation Program. It should be noted that oil and gas leases do not impact farmland preservation participation. Robinson Township landowners who already have oil and gas leases could also agricultural conservation donate easements to defer royalty income, thereby preserving both their wealth and their land for future generations. Donation of a conservation easement has an objective and tangible value, and is treated like a charitable cash donation from an income tax standpoint. Oil and Gas well development does not presently affect the ability to donate an easement.

Policy: Careful oil and gas extraction in accordance with all state and township regulations can be a part of future development in this area. Road network improvement may be necessary to ensure safe access, and land use conflict should still be minimized.

Planning For Rural Residential Development



This concept sketch of a conservation subdivision was prepared for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to promote the concept of better site planning. It represents the ideal of good residential development for the rural portions of Robinson Township. Lots are clustered around steeper slopes to preserve open space and rural character.

This area is established to allow a potential for more residential development than other rural areas, but is still intended to protect farming and rural uses. The Township does not expect to extend sewer and water in to this area within the time frame of this plan.

Policy: Agriculture is still encouraged in this area, and newer housing developments should be buffered to avoid conflict. Density standards are lower in part to maximize distances between future suburban housing developments and existing rural uses.

Policy: Careful oil and gas extraction in accordance with all state and township regulations can be a part of future development in this area. Road network improvement may be necessary to ensure safe access, and land use conflict should still be minimized.

Policy: In this area, conservation subdivision might not be required, but they should still be encouraged. Use of this tool could allow developers to reach higher density while buffering from other uses.

Planning For Heavy Industrial Development

This natural gas compression station, located elsewhere in Washington County, is typical of heavy industrial land use. While it is important economically, it is a high impact land use that must be carefully planned for to avoid land use conflict.

Because of environmental degradation, this area has the potential to host forms of development that would be inappropriate in other parts of the Township. However, buffering and impact analysis will be essential to avoid other development areas.

Policy: Support the cleanup of coal spoil piles in this area.

Action: Create a heavy industrial zoning district. The industrial zoning district should host all land uses that might create conflict elsewhere. The district can also allow commercial and light industrial development in this area, as well as the aforementioned more intensive heavy industrial use.

Action: It is essential to develop enhanced landscaping and buffering standards for this zoning district to prevent land use conflict. Any development of this area that abuts another land use planning area should have significant buffering to prevent spillover of light, noise, or other impacts.

Action: Undertake some traffic analysis for this area to determine what improvements may be necessary to support growth and development. Once this is complete, standards should be established to ensure that necessary onsite improvements are paid for by new development.

Planning For Residential Development

Robinson Township has a good stock of affordable single family dwellings, that somewhat negates the need for planning for large areas of multifamily development.

While analysis has determined that Robinson Township is not in the path of growth, the Township is still planning to meet the housing needs of the number of residents expected to reside in the community.

Policy: The highest priority should be the preservation of existing single family residential neighborhoods. Keeping existing single family dwellings as a viable housing choice is important to meet affordable housing needs. One means to do this is protect clusters of existing dwellings from land use conflict. Even a cluster of modest older homes might warrant R-1 Residential zoning, where feasible. Conflicts caused by developments such as new multiple family development should be avoided. Multiple family dwellings should be buffered and isolated from other dwellings and where possible, R-1 and R-2 districts should be drawn to buffer as well.

Policy: Dependent upon context, and the presence of community water and sewer systems, a number of smaller lots for single family dwellings could be accommodated. Target densities might range from 1/3 acre to 3/4 acre.

Action: As funding is available, the Township should strive to have complete public water and sewer service to this area.

Policy: Planned larger developments should pay for extension of water and sewer to serve their new developments.

Action: The Township has prioritized a community park in this area to serve current and future Township residents. Robinson Township will undertake an official recreation plan. This plan will establish a recreation level of service, and examine using the subdivision ordinance to ensure that new residential development provides land or fees in lieu of land for recreation facilities.

The ideal place for this park would be adjacent to the Township building on Township owned land. Based upon area demographics and community facilities analysis, the park should look at a playground, sports fields, a community center, and establishment of a short walking and bike path to the Montour Trail.

Planning For Interchange Development

This image of a Greene County business park, courtesy of the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission, graphically illustrates the hope for future nonresidential development in Robinson Township-Light industry and heavy commercial uses that are low environmental impacts and create good tax base and job opportunities.

This area is reserved for a mix of nonresidential development that is anticipated to include low impact light industry, business and professional park development. The development of this area is essential to ensure the Township's future prosperity.

Policy and Action: The highest priority in this area should be the provision of water and sewer to support more intensive development to create jobs and diversify tax base. The Township will need outside financial assistance in order to extend utilities to this area.

Policy: While nonresidential development is encouraged in these areas, buffering or screening of new development may still be required to soften the effects of development upon pre-existing residential areas.

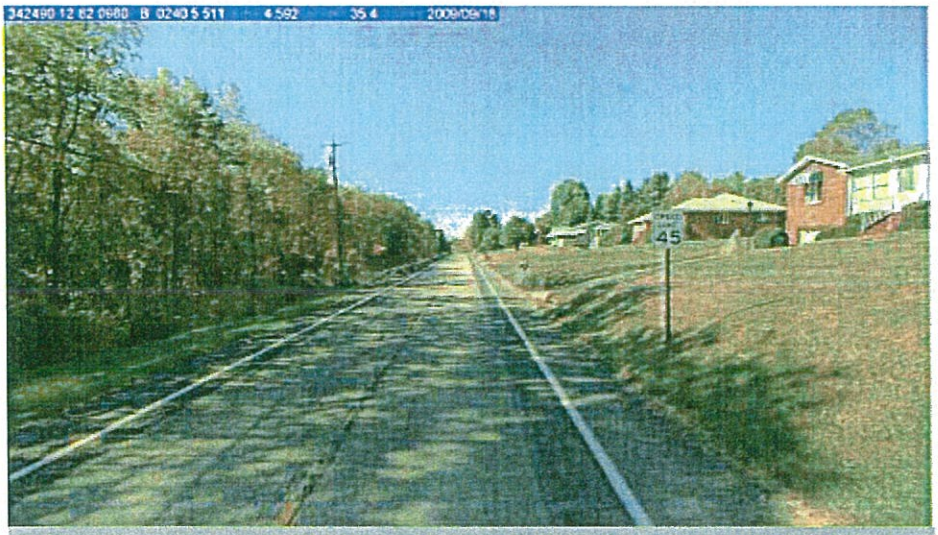
Action: Adopt access management regulations along major highways through zoning or amendments to the existing subdivision and land development ordinance (This can help coordinate new driveways, and connect future parking areas).

Policy: The Township favors business parks and light industry over highway commercial development. The former represents a better fit for the relationship between local land resources and unique highway configurations.

Policy: New development in this area should pay for needed onsite transportation improvements on abutting roads and streets (such as a new traffic light at an intersection).

Policy: The Township generally does not favor tax abatements. Consideration might be given to Tax Incremental Financing if the proposed new development met its goals and objectives and land use plan ideal for the area in question, and also would facilitate the extension of needed infrastructure.

Planning For Local Commercial and Transitional Corridors



This video log image from PennDOT shows the sensitivity of existing residential areas along Route 980. Commercial development must be undertaken carefully to avoid land use conflict .

These areas include the Townships traditional nonresidential development areas. It is comprised of scattered commercial development mixed with residential uses. For vacant land in these areas, similar development is anticipated. It should be carefully planned to buffer disparities of scale and mitigate land use conflicts. Overall, its location also serves as a natural buffer between Interchange Development and residential areas.

Action: To the extent possible, this area should be reserved for small and local business. Zoning regulations in this area should include a maximum building size to prevent large buildings from impacting neighboring homes.

Action: The Township should develop transitional zoning standards where homes remain along major highway corridors (adopting a zoning standard to protect homes). Standards should also plan the coordinated location of new business driveways for future signalization, encourage shared commercial access and preserve road capacity for pass-through traffic.

Policy: While protecting existing homes, zoning should discourage new homes in this corridor and encourage business

Policy: Driveway access should be carefully controlled for new commercial developments to minimize future traffic congestion.

Summary of Priority Actions and Policies

Create new zoning districts to protect agriculture and conservation lands.

Ensure the density of rural residential areas is low enough to avoid unsustainable sewer and water extensions.

Establish land development and zoning standards to buffer nonresidential and residential land uses.

Extend public water and sewer to the southernmost two proposed new Southern Beltway/I-576 Interchanges within the Township.

Attract business park development to the township.

Monitor the traffic impacts of new development and ensure that land developments make necessary onsite highway improvements.

Establish a Township park near the municipal building complex.

Carefully monitor and plan for the impacts of continued Marcellus Shale development to avoid land use conflicts.

Conclusion: Interrelationships

McDonald Borough would be a natural partner for Robinson Township in multimunicpal planning.

The main task of planning in Robinson Township will be monitoring development after completion of I- 576. The land use plan is based upon the development timetable map and is key to ensuring that growth comes in a manner that is sustainable for this small rural community with limited financial resources. The Township has strived to ensure that development is compatible with neighboring municipalities. Residential areas are near similar areas in Midway and McDonald Boroughs. Robinson Township's Conservation Areas are near similar ones in the Raccoon Creek Valley. The Township may approach neighboring municipalities to work to create a multimunicpal plan under Article XI of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. This would assist in establishing formal growth and rural resource areas on a regional basis. McDonald Borough may be the natural partner in such an endeavor, as they already cooperate with the Township in infrastructure and community services.

OFFICIAL
ROBINSON TOWNSHIP
RESOLUTION NUMBER 01-12

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF ROBINSON TOWNSHIP, WASHINGTON COUNTY, TO ADOPT AN UPDATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, Article III, Section 301(a) of The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act of 1968), P.L. 805, No. 247 as reenacted and amended identifies the required content in preparation of a Comprehensive Plan; and

WHERAS, Article III, Section 301(c) of The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires municipal comprehensive plan reviews at least every ten years; and

WHERAS, Article III, Section 302(c) of The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code authorizes the Board of Supervisors of Robinson Township, Washington County (the governing body) to adopt a comprehensive plan by majority vote,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of Robinson Township, Washington County, Pennsylvania, that the *Robinson Township, (Washington County) Comprehensive Plan Update (A Community Development Policy Guide 2012)* consisting of the following Maps and Chapters has been enacted on May 14, 2012 and becomes effective immediately:

Map #1 – Aerial Parcels (with route of new PA Turnpike)
Map #2 – Robinson Township Road System
Map #3 – Development Timetable
Map #4 – Aerial Parcel Detail One
Map #5 – Aerial Parcel Detail Two
Map #6 – Aerial Parcel Detail Three
Map #7 – Environmental Limitations
Map #8 – Agricultural Security Properties
Map #9 – Public Water and Sewer Service (existing and planned)
Map #10 – Future Land Use Plan
Map #11 – Projected Areas of Traffic Congestion
Map #12 – Official Map Concept Plan
Chapter One: Introduction
Chapter Two: Existing Conditions and Changes
Chapter Three: Community Development Goals and Objectives
Chapter Four: Action and Policy Plan

DULY RESOLVED THIS 14th DAY of MAY, 2012, by the Board of Supervisors of Robinson Township, Washington County, Pennsylvania in lawful session duly assembled.

ATTEST:

TOWNSHIP OF ROBINSON

By: _____

Brian Coppola
Chairman, Board of Supervisors