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INTRODUCTION

STUDY AREA

The project study area, located in the Blue Mountain Gap region of Northern Berks County, Eastern Pennsylvania, includes the five townships of Tilden, Upper Bern, Upper Tulpehocken, Windsor, Perry; three boroughs of Hamburg, Shoemakersville, Strausstown; and the village of Shartlesville.

The Blue Mountain Gap region of Northern Berks County presents a wide array of underdeveloped natural and cultural resources immediately accessible to the residents of the region via routes I-78 and Route 61.

Figure 1.1 Pennsylvania Location Map - Berks and surrounding counties

Figure 1.2 Berks County Location Map - Townships, Boroughs and Village in project area.
INTRODUCTION

STUDY BACKGROUND

This study was initiated by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association (SRGA) and the North Berks Recreation Corporation (NBRC) to assess the feasibility of:

- extending the planned Schuylkill River Trail from Hamburg to Shoemakersville;
- linking the towns of Hamburg, Shartlesville and Strausstown by establishing a pedestrian / bicycle and automobile touring route; and,
- utilizing state owned properties in and around the Kernsville Impounding Basin for recreational activities.

RECREATION

NBRC is interested in exploring ideas of how to responsibly utilize state-owned land adjacent to the Schuylkill River for multiple types of active and passive recreation. Interest has been expressed in implementing walking/biking trails, a boat launch, and athletic fields with support facilities. A goal of the plan is to carefully integrate public recreational facilities within the character of the river and surrounding landscape. Development of new public recreational facilities along the river corridor is permitted by the State, but it must adhere to guidelines set by the Pennsylvania Scenic Rivers Program, which address aesthetic and ecologic issues.

FUNDING

The NBRC invited Schuylkill River Greenway Association (SRGA), a trail and open space advocacy organization and a regional stakeholder (as owner/manager of the Bartram Trail - a segment of the Schuylkill River Trail) to provide assistance to NBRC. Early in the year of 2000, SRGA applied for and received a Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Heritage Park grant from the first round of "Growing Greener" funds to prepare a "North Berks Land Utilization/Reconnections Planning Study." The NBRC and the Hamburg Area Soccer Association (HASA) provided matching funds to the state grant.
Project Scope

This study assesses the opportunities to; utilize state owned properties in and around the Kernsville Impounding Basin and former DER campground for recreational activities; to assess the feasibility of extending the planned Bartram Trail from Hamburg to Shoemakersville; and to establish a pedestrian/bicycle and automobile touring route along Route 22, linking the communities of Hamburg, Shartlesville and Strausstown.

Additionally, the study recommends methods to enhance pedestrian connections within Hamburg, Strausstown, Shartlesville and Shoemakersville.

There are four project work areas:

Study Area 1. Bartram Trail Extension - This study examines potential routes for the Bartram Trail linking Hamburg to Shoemakersville.

Study Area 2. Hex Highway Touring Route - Old Route 22 (Hex Highway), an east/west route, connects the communities of Hamburg, Shartlesville and Strausstown. The study recommends roadway improvements to provide a separated bicycle touring lane and interpretive facilities.

Study Area 3. Kernsville Dam Impounding Basin Site - BAMR manages 252 acres of land adjacent to the Borough of Hamburg along the Schuylkill River. The site contains the Kernsville Dam, Impounding Basin, an abandoned campground, and a section of the proposed Bartram Trail. The study identifies passive and active recreational opportunities.

Study Area 4. Reconnections - The advent of the automobile has severed the “walkable” linkages between neighborhoods, employment centers, community facilities, and cultural features. The study analyzes existing pedestrian linkages and provides recommendations for improving pedestrian connections within Hamburg, Shoemakersville, Shartlesville and Strausstown.

Open Space

SRGA and NBRC were interested in exploring ideas to preserve state-owned land for wildlife preserve / wetlands / habitat. There are multiple parcels of state owned land located along the Schuylkill River in the Hamburg area that can be considered for open space / nature preserve. It must be understood that this segment of the Schuylkill River corridor is not a pristine, untouched landscape. It is land that has been shaped by the coal mining industry and a variety of other uses throughout the centuries. Although this land is not native, reserving its’ open space for future generations is important.

Berks and other surrounding counties have an abundance of existing preserved open space, parks, and campgrounds. There is a combined total of 121 state game lands, state parks, state forests, county parks and campgrounds totaling over 130,000 acres within a 30 mile radius of Hamburg. These state, county, and private facilities provide public access to protected natural lands and camping facilities.

Trends in the United States

Studies have proven the need for and benefits from trail development. A 1996 report titled The National Bicycling and Walking Study, prepared by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in Washington D.C. estimates that 131 million Americans regularly bicycle, walk, skate, or jog for exercise, sport, or recreation. Walking is the most popular recreational activity in the United States, with more than 100 million people of all ages walking for recreation from two to three times a week. In past years,
more bicycle owners say that there are few places near their homes where they can ride safely. In 1987, President Reagan’s Commission on the American Outdoors recommended that a national system of greenways (a network of natural and man-made corridors connecting communities, parks, and recreational areas) be established.

Individual organizations and communities like the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, continue to preserve linear greenspaces. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is preparing a state-wide greenway plan to weave these individual green threads into a larger green network.

**Project Scope**

This planning study is based on three broadly stated goals for exploring opportunities in land utilization and community reconnections as follows:

1. **Opportunities for utilizing the properties in and around the Kernsville Impounding Basin and former DER campground.**

Specific opportunities include:

- Utilization of part of the basin for the development of at least three soccer (athletic) fields and other desired recreational uses.

- Safe, convenient pedestrian / bicycle access to the active recreation and passive recreation areas from Hamburg and other North Berks communities is essential. This should include handicapped accessible connections to the maximum extent feasible.

- Vehicular access to the active recreation areas, including participant and spectator parking, and emergency and maintenance access.

- Development of support facilities for the active recreation components (i.e. restrooms, utilities, storage, security)

- Utilization of part of the basin and surrounding public lands to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat and protect wetlands.

- Utilization of part of the basin for future / continued desilting operations.

- Investigation of dam safety as it relates to water trail, canoe portage and access issues.
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INTRODUCTION

- Reuse potential for the former DER campground.

2. Opportunities to enhance, capitalize, and build on the variety of natural, man made and cultural resources in the North Berks and Blue Mountain Gap area.

Specific resources include:

- Appalachian Trail
- Hawk Mountain Nature Preserve
- State Game Lands No. 106 & No. 10
- Historic RR tunnel
- Schuylkill River Navigation System remnants
- Former RR grades / alignments
- Historic neighborhoods and architecture
- Area cultural institutions
- Scenic beauty
- Superior transportation access via the Highway node of I-78 and PA Rt. 61.
- Existing traditional neighborhood fabric of Hamburg, Shoemakersville, Strausstown and Shartlesville.
- The I-78 / Rt. 61 highway node has the potential to become a TOD (transit-oriented development).
- Although technically not a part of the study area, the Village of Port Clinton, located just north of the Berks County line in Schuylkill County on Route 61, must be considered in this study due to its proximity and the unique character of this former canal town.
- The Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad is located in Port Clinton, and offers unique steam railroad excursions at various times during the year.

3. Reconnections Concept.

Modern transportation routes such as I-78, State Route 61, and other streets and railroads have increasingly led to the isolation of neighborhoods. These "modern" transportation improvements have made pedestrian / bicycle circulation both circuitous and dangerous. Since 1992, changes in federal legislation and Federal Highway Administration and PENNDOT policies have given new emphasis to non-motorized transportation modes. Federal and state funding programs have followed legislative and policy changes to make funding more available for pedestrian/bicycle connections. This study identifies barriers to village connections, examines the potential for new links to regional trail systems, and recommends potential routes for non-motorized circulation.

Some specific reconnections under this goal include:

- Concept plan for the extension of the Schuylkill River Trail, Bartram Trail (by means of an off-road trail) south from Hamburg through Shoemakersville.
- Concept plan for a pedestrian / bicycle route connection from Hamburg - west through Shartlesville to Strausstown (probably via an on-road route - old Rt. 22)
- In Hamburg, Shoemakersville, Shartlesville and Strausstown - Inventory of the destination locations of major recreational,
INTRODUCTION

historic, cultural, natural and man-made resources, schools, and employment centers (current and future). Analysis of the potential pedestrian/bicycle connections between these destinations, barriers to making these linkages, and development of a recommended concept plan for reconnecting these destination locations.

Additionally, the project scope required that the plan address the "Project Evaluation Criteria" set forth in the Management Action Plan of the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor. These criteria include:

- Does the project show clearly an aspect of the corridor's themes as part of a system-wide story?

- Does the project build identity for the corridor?

- Does the project appeal to at least one of the target audiences - residents, corridor explorers, or tourists?

- Does the project generate visitation of more annual visitors?

An answer of "no" to any of these questions should eliminate a project, except for very special circumstances.

The next set of criteria applies to phase 1 projects:

- Does current ownership of the site allow the project to proceed?

- Does the project have funding or is it likely to be funded in the next two years?

- Does the project essential to happen in the in the next two years?

All projects, regardless of phase, should meet many of the following criteria:

- Does the project have the ability to create additional funding support, partners, or volunteers?

- Does the project encourage preservation and/or adaptive use of historic structures?

- Does the project contribute to sustaining important natural resources?

- Is there a sponsoring organization or partners with the capability of executing and managing the project?

- Do elements of the project exist now?

- Does the project enhance the accessibility of the corridor's river, recreational, historic and cultural resources?

- Does the project encourage movement from one attraction to another?

- Does the project advance the corridor's educational objectives?

- Does the project generate permanent jobs?

- Is the project's community impact positive?

- Does the project generate tax revenues from retail sales or from lodging in addition to ticket sales?

A series of "no" answers to these questions should either eliminate the project, or move it to phase 3 if answers are unknown.

The Management Action Plan defines three phases or stages for heritage development. Phase one targets corridor wide projects of advertising, market-
**INTRODUCTION**

The Bartram Trail extension and the Hex Highway trail are linear systems parallel and perpendicular to the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor. These projects fall into phase two and three of the Management Action Plan. The Kernsville Dam Recreation Area can be categorized as a phase two project being along the Schuylkill River. The “Reconnection” of the local community to the Heritage Corridor are site specific and fall into the third phase within the Agricultural Region.

**Project Partners**

**North Berks Recreation Corporation**
The North Berks Recreation Corporation was formed in response to a "Community Visioning" effort to serve as a recreation planning and implementation entity. The North Berks Recreation Corporation, comprised of representatives from the Hamburg School District and the five townships and four communities that make up the School District, was incorporated as a non-profit corporation to serve in this capacity.

**Schuylkill River Greenway Association (SRGA)**
The Schuylkill River Greenway Association's mission is to improve the quality of life by completing the Schuylkill River Greenway and leading the Schuylkill River Heritage initiatives. Since 1995, under its broader mission, the Schuylkill River Greenway Association has managed the Pennsylvania Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor, which encompasses much of the same 5-county region as the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. The Greenway Association has worked with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to bring $1.2M in direct Heritage Park funding to 30 different recipients, including five county governments, 11 local government entities, 13 non-profit organizations and a community college.

**Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**
The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) was established on July 1, 1995. DCNR partially replaces the former Department of Environmental Resources (DEP). The agency is charged with maintaining and preserving 116 state parks; managing 2.1 million acres of state forest land; providing information on the state's ecological and geologic resources; and establishing community conservation partnerships with grants and technical assistance to benefit rivers, trails, greenways, local parks and recreation, regional heritage parks, open space and natural areas. DCNR has provided funding for this project through its “Heritage Parks” program with money directed from the Commonwealth's Growing Greener program.

**Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)-Bureau of Abandoned Mines and Reclamation (BAMR)**
The Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation administers and oversees the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program in Pennsylvania. The bureau is responsible for resolving problems such as mine fires, mine subsidence, dangerous highwalls and other hazards which have resulted from past mining practices, and for abating or treating acid mine drainage from abandoned mines. BAMR is also charged with periodic dredging of the slackwater pools that have been created behind the various dams it owns on the Schuylkill River. These dams were created to prevent coal silt from migrating down river.
INTRODUCTION

Public
The North Berks area citizens were an essential part of the development and planning of a conceptual plan for the North Berks Recreational area. During a series of public meetings held by SRGA and the North Berks Recreation Corporation, the public contributed many ideas relating to the overall design of the site.

Simone Jaffe Collins (SJC)
Simone Jaffe Collins is a Landscape Architecture firm based in Berwyn, Pennsylvania. SJC was retained by SRGA as the consultant for this study. SJC has considerable experience with land planning projects and has worked on a wide variety of projects that are highly relevant to this SRGA project such as the Montgomery County Schuylkill River Greenway Stewardship Study and the Bartram Trail Development Study.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PAF&BC)
In the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has jurisdiction over waterways. The PAF&BC establishes and monitors regulations for recreational water use. Lands surrounding the water most often are private or public lands under a different state agency. The use of the pool above the Kernsville Dam is an active and important recreational facility for local residents.

Communities
Townships of Tilden, Upper Bern, Upper Tulpehocken, Windsor, and Perry were part of the study area. The boroughs of Hamburg, Shoemakersville, and Strausstown and the community of Shartlesville were also partners in the study.

Other participants
County Commissioners, Blue Mountain Eagle Hiking Club, Hamburg Area Soccer Association, Hamburg Area Business Association, Area Boating Association, Keystone Canoe Club, Blue Mountain Hamburg Little League, Berks Fishing Association, Berks County Historic Association, Berks County Conservancy, Hamburg Emergency Services, Berks County Federation of Sportsman, Audubon Society, and others.

Process (methodology)

Map Research
The planning process began with collecting basemaps of the project area. United States Geological Survey (USGS) topographical maps were obtained from the State of Pennsylvania, and were the main source for topographic and roadway information, as well as for identifying significant landmarks and waterways. Digital Orthophoto Quadrangles (DOQ) were also referenced in conjunction with the USGS topographical maps. DOQ’s are aerial photographs that are used as the base for the USGS topographical maps. These high-resolution photos are extremely useful for site inventory and developing an understanding and an accurate picture of the landscape.

Historical maps were also collected from various sources including the Berks County Historical Society and were useful in locating historic landmarks and features of the landscape that have been disguised or lost through time. The Berks County Mapping Office also provided tax maps that identify the legal boundaries of land parcels. This information aided in identifying state owned land and private property that revealed the opportunities and constraints to utilizing specific parcels of land. Current and accurate road maps of Berks County proved to be an invaluable resource for locating local roads and places of interest. BAMR provided several maps of the basin and adjacent lands.
INTRODUCTION

Reconnaissance

The consultant performed several field reconnaissance visits between the months of July and December 2000 to gain a comprehensive understanding of the project area. The project area was surveyed on foot and by car. Notes were compiled and many photographs were taken to aid in this study.

Site Analysis

The consultant surveyed substantial portions of the Northern Berks area by foot. State owned lands surrounding the Kernsville Impounding Basin along the Schuylkill River were thoroughly examined using USGS topographic maps and DOQ aerial photographs to record information about significant landscape features. Possible pedestrian routes from Lowland Road to the northern end of the project area just south of Port Clinton were walked and investigated to determine feasible alignments. Some of the main streets of Hamburg were also walked to develop a clear picture of the town. Many photographs were taken for later reference. The collected information was recorded and compiled in a series of site analysis maps that helped direct the design concepts.

The proposed Bartram Trail Extension from Hamburg to Shoemakersville and the proposed Hex Highway Trail from Hamburg to Strausstown were also surveyed on multiple occasions. Collected information was recorded and compiled in site analysis maps and matrices found later in this report.

Schematic Design

The schematic or preliminary design incorporates key programmatic features. The site analysis information was compiled and used to form a framework of opportunities and constraints. The consultant used the opportunities and constraints to identify where the specified elements of the program could be implemented.

Public Meetings

An important component of the design process is public participation. Four public meetings were held that had a combined attendance of over 150 participants. The first public meeting included an overview of the project goals and programming suggestions from the public and the consultant.

The second meeting featured a presentation of the site analysis along with the preliminary concepts for the Kernsville Impounding Basin. Preliminary routes from Hamburg to Shoemakersville and Strausstown were also presented. The public reacted to the preliminary concepts and voiced their ideas and concerns to the consultant.

The third meeting featured a presentation of the draft report. The draft plan was presented and questions were answered. Comments were also recorded in meeting minutes.

The fourth meeting entailed a summary of public comment received on the project and the notable changes to the plan.
INTRODUCTION

DRAFT PLAN AND REPORT

Based on comment at public meetings and programmatic development, the consultant developed a preliminary draft plan. Presentation of the draft plan provided opportunity for initial reaction from meeting participants. The draft report is a culmination of all the information collected during the planning study, including the draft plan. The public was given 30 days to review the draft plan and submit further input/comments. Copies of the plan were distributed to the organizations, local libraries and townships for comment. The draft report summarized the procedures leading to recommendations in the draft plan.

FINAL PLAN AND REPORT

After the public review period, final changes to the plan were based on comments received. The final plan satisfies the program elements provided by SRGA and the Berks County Recreation Corporation. The recommendations respond to information collected during the site analysis, issues raised by the public during public meetings, and comments received on the draft plan. The final plan was prepared and presented to the North Berks Recreation Corporation and the Schuylkill River Greenway Association. The final report provides a basis for future planning and development efforts.
# Project Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 20, 2000</td>
<td>Site Reconnaissance (basin, DER Campground, old Rt. 22, Rt. 61 south)</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 24 - August 7</td>
<td>Research Base Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 31 - August 7</td>
<td>Growing Greener Grant Application Preparation</td>
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<td>August 1</td>
<td>Meeting with DEP/BAMR</td>
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<td>August 7 - 21</td>
<td>Map Development / Preparation</td>
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<td>August 7</td>
<td>Historic Research</td>
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<td>August 11</td>
<td>Growing Greener Grant Submission</td>
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<td>August 14</td>
<td>Map Points of Interest</td>
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<td>August 17</td>
<td>Meeting at Kernsville Dam Boat Launch and Site Reconnaissance (island, canal section, trail reconnaissance)</td>
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<td>August 21</td>
<td>Site Reconnaissance (old Rt. 22, state lands)</td>
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<td>August 21</td>
<td>Site Analysis</td>
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<td>Public Meeting No. 1 Programming</td>
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<td>September 18 - 25</td>
<td>Develop Preliminary Design Concepts</td>
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<td>October 2</td>
<td>Prepare Concept Plans</td>
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<td>October 6</td>
<td>NBRC Meeting</td>
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<td>October 12</td>
<td>Public Meeting No. 2 Present Design Concepts</td>
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<td>October 16 - November 10</td>
<td>Prepare Draft Plan</td>
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<td>November 10</td>
<td>NBRC Meeting</td>
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<td>November 14</td>
<td>Site walk with Borough of State Forest Representative Service</td>
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<td>November 15</td>
<td>Public Meeting No. 3 Present Draft Plan</td>
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<td>November 10</td>
<td>NBRC Meeting</td>
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<td>Nov 13 - Dec 31</td>
<td>Public Review Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 3</td>
<td>Meeting with DEP/BAMR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan.-April, 2001</td>
<td>Prepare Final Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>Public Meeting No. 4 Present Final Plan</td>
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(57 attendees)  
(52 attendees)  
(64 attendees)  
(35 attendees)
Bartram Trail Extension
Hamburg to Shoemakersville

Overview

SRGA is working to provide a continuous recreation trail parallel to the river from its headwaters in Schuylkill County to its confluence with the Delaware River. The John B. Bartram Trail is the northernmost section of a 128-mile Schuylkill River Trail. This non-motorized recreational trail begins in Hamburg and travels north to Frackville and Morea. In July 1999, Schuylkill County in cooperation with Schuylkill River Greenway Association (SRGA) and Berks County, completed the John B. Bartram Trail Feasibility Study. Much of the route follows the old Penn Central Railroad Company right-of-way and is off-road. Some trail segments follow alternate routes, which are often on-road, as segments of the old railroad right-of-way were sold to others. The study identified many alternative routes along some challenging trail segments and provided maximum flexibility in trail implementation.

In advancing trail planning and implementation, this chapter explores optional routes to extend the Bartram Trail south from Hamburg to Shoemakersville.

Bicentennial Trail

In Hamburg, the Bicentennial Trail parallels the old Schuylkill Canal alignment along the eastern banks of the Schuylkill River. The trail runs north from Hamburg Park to the trail’s terminus just north of the Blue Mountain Road and Port Clinton Avenue intersection. At this point, the trail could link to the Appalachian Trail via Blue Mountain Road. Just east of this intersection on Blue Mountain Road, an off-road trail connects the Olivet Blue Mountain Camp Grounds to the Appalachian trail atop the Blue Mountain. This is an important connection to Hamburg, providing hikers the opportunity to use the services offered in Hamburg.

At the southern end of Hamburg Park, the Bicentennial Trail connects to the Bartram Trail at the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge. From this point, the Bicentennial Trail was planned to proceed south, following the shoreline of the Schuylkill River. Frequent flooding, easement acquisition and physical obstacles have prevented this section from being completed.

Trail Types

This study presents three trail options of off-road, on-road separated, and on-road shared.

Off Road

Off-Road trails are constructed to accommodate pedestrian, equestrian, and bicycle traffic only.

Figure 1.1 The Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge.
Hamburg to Shoemakersville

away from roads. These trails provide the safest routes and are most desirable. Off-road trails can be as simple as a compacted earth trail, wide enough to handle foot traffic to an optimal 10’ to 12’ wide paved trail of stone dust or asphalt.

ON ROAD ROUTE - SEPARATED

When land easements or topography restrict the development of off-road trails, existing road right-of-ways provide an alternative. These trails utilize expanded paved shoulders. Pavement markings delineate and separate the trail from vehicular traffic. When the trail crosses a street, it is important that both trail users and motorists be alerted of such crossings, through signage and pavement markings.

ON ROAD ROUTE - SHARED

The most inexpensive trail shares an existing roadway. These trails can often be implemented as “immediate” routes, and are used to complete connections, and get the trail up and running quickly. This trail type is sometimes seen as a temporary route, ultimately being replaced by a separated bike lane or off-road route.

Analysis

The proposed Hamburg to Shoemakersville section of trail connects the southern terminus of the Bartram Trail at Hamburg Park through Hamburg to Main Street in Shoemakersville (see Hamburg to through truss bridge section in Chapter 3 for more detail).

From Lowland Road to Hamburg Park, the trail has followed the former Pennsylvania Rail Road line.
However, once over the bridge, a building now obstructs the former R.R. grade. At this point the trail requires a new alignment. (See Chapter 3 - Kernsville Dam for more detailed information on the proposed trail from Hamburg North)

From the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge, the extension could follow a number of on-road or off-road alignments. Three different trail options are outlined:

**ROUTE OPTIONS**

**OPTION 1. OFF-ROAD ROUTE**

**Overview**

The off-road route primarily follows the towpath of the Schuylkill Canal. The State and property owners own much of the old canal alignment which has the potential to be developed into an off-road trail. There are many interpretive opportunities along this route to describe the history of the canal, the river, and the surrounding area. Also, because the majority of this route is off-road, it is the safest and preferred trail option.

**Route**

The Hamburg/Shoemakersville trail segment begins at the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge. From this point it will head south and cross State Street traveling along Front Street, a lightly traveled, wide street.

Many industries continue to operate in this section of Hamburg. For 800 feet, adjacent open lands owned by the Municipal Sewer Authority and Mid-Atlantic Canners Association could be used to accommodate the trail improvements up to the canal alignment. At this point the trail crosses Front Street at the intersection of Pine Street onto the old Schuylkill Canal alignment. The canal has been filled and is now a dense vegetative hedgerow. The trail will continue to follow the Canal alignment, owned by the Borough of Hamburg.

At this point the trail intercepts an inactive portion of the Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad (RBM&N). The Route 61 by-pass blocks the old canal alignment, so the trail turns to follow the railroad alignment. This upper segment of the rail line is not currently used. As the rail approaches Route 61, the RBM&N line accesses a railcar storage and repair facility. Coordination with the RBM&N will be necessary to route the trail around this facility to the west.
The railroad passes under Route 61, a busy four-lane highway. This is a key feature of this route because it allows the trail to remain off-road and avoids crossing a busy Route 61. The trail can share the service road on the west side through the underpass.

The trail reemerges on the southern side of the 4-lane highway and returns to the Schuylkill Canal alignment. At this point, the canal is watered. The South Hamburg Railroad Station is located between the railroad and the canal. This period piece of architecture has heritage, preservation, and interpretation opportunities.

South of Hamburg Borough, the trail could follow one of three alternative off-road alignments. One parallels the inactive railroad bed. The second retraces the canal towpath and the third follows the Schuylkill River shoreline.

The proposed off-road trail shares this RBM&N railroad underpass, avoiding an ongrade crossing of Route 61.

The trail briefly passes through Windsor Township and then enters Perry Township, intersecting Five Locks Road.

Figure 1.7 The intersection of State and Fourth Street.
An interim route could follow the currently unused RBM&N Railroad alignment. The RBM&N Railroad does plan to bring this line back into service, so this would only be a short term route. It may be possible to build a permanent trail parallel the rail line. This would require several miles of fencing and some grading. If the land owned by the RBM&N rail road is wide enough or if adjacent landowners agree, the trail could even be built parallel the rail line away from the active line.

The railroad and canal follow a more direct route for about a mile and a half to village of Five Locks, intersecting with Five Locks Road. The trail can continue along the former canal towpath. This route requires the permission from the property owner as well as clearing of overgrown vegetation.

A third route would closely follow the Schuylkill River. This route requires permission of land owners and clearing for the trail. This section would be located in the flood plain and be subject to temporary closures and occasional washouts.

After crossing Five Locks Road at the Five Locks Business Center, the canal, railroad and road closely parallel each other.

This segment of Five Locks road is quite beautiful, characterized by dense woods and lush vegetation flanking both sides of the road. This segment of road can be widened on the river side to accommodate a pedestrian/bicycle trail. Remnants of the Schuylkill Canal are visible on the eastern side of the road and provide the opportunity for interpretation. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission in conjunction with the Wildlife Conservancy owns and manages a boat launch between Five Locks Road and the Schuylkill River. Located a short distance down river from the boat launch, is the Peter Yarnell Canoe Launch.

At this point, all three options converge back to an off-road trail alignment. The trail continues south past Fisher Dam Bridge along Five Locks Road. To avoid a narrow railroad underpass at the intersection of Five Locks Road and Water Street, the trail will remain west of the railroad right-of-way, along the canal towpath.

The trail continues off-road along a vegetated corridor following the path of the Schuylkill Canal, parallel the railroad right-of-way. The trail follows the vegetated corridor, passing farm fields and providing occasional glimpses of the Schuylkill River. As the trail approaches the Shoemakersville Borough, the canal alignment disappears as residents have “reclaimed” this land.

At this point the trail turns onto a private gravel farm road that passes through agricultural fields. It
should be noted that this access road is privately owned and would require an easement and an agreement with the owner to allow public use of this right-of-way. The trail continues along the access road and terminates in the parking lot of the Globe underwear factory in Shoemakersville. A closer study of the parking area with the property owner will be required to define a safe trail route to Main Street. This connection could occur within the street right-of-way, if necessary.

**OPTION 2. ON ROAD-ROUTE**

**Overview**

This on-road route begins at the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge and proceeds through the town of Hamburg then heads South on Route 61 to Main Street, Shoemakersville. This route utilizes existing roads as the backbone of the trail. Road improvements and the installation of signage are necessary to make this a feasible trail route.

**Route**

This route begins at the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge, connecting to State Street. Proceeding east on State Street for approximately one half mile, the route passes through the commercial downtown district of Hamburg to the Fourth Street intersection (F.1.5). Local stores, restaurants, specialty shops and other small businesses on State Street provide various retail and service businesses for the local community. This well-preserved commercial district also features distinctive "Main Street" architecture from the 19th century including an historic market building on the corner of State and Third Street. This route reflects the rich architectural history of Hamburg.

At the intersection of Fourth and State Streets, the trail turns south on Fourth Street for approximately 5,500’ to Route 61. Fourth Street is mixed with residential and commercial uses and has sidewalks for the majority of its length. This section of road is heavily traveled by motorists, as it also provides a direct connection between I-78 and Route 61.

For the next half mile, as the trail approaches Route 61, both sidewalks and curbs disappear to undefined masses of asphalt paving. (F.1.6). This area is not pedestrian oriented. It would take substantial improvements to provide a safe corridor up to and across four lanes of traffic on Route 61.

A traffic signal controls the intersection of Route 61 and Fourth Street. The wide lanes and awkward road angles make this intersection a hazard to pedestrians and bicyclists. The intersection meets at an atypical 20-degree angle. Numerous driveways to adjacent businesses only add to the confusion. This is by far the most dangerous point on the route. It is absolutely necessary to provide a safe crossing for pedestrians across Route 61 at this point.

Once across Route 61, the trail follows the western shoulder of the highway south, towards Shoemakersville. As one approaches the top of the hill, the trail turns right onto Zion Church Road. This street quickly terminates at the intersection of Main Street and Hughes Hill Road. From here the trail proceeds south on Main Street.

Even though this on-road route loses the amenity of the river and the noise from Route 61 is audible, the street is lined with graceful mature trees and views open to fields that border the road. This road was the historical connecting road between Shoemakersville and Hamburg. The trail follows Main Street into Shoemakersville Borough. On street parking in town, will require cyclists to share the road in town, however reduced traffic speeds make this shared trail segment less of a concern.
Option 3. On-road route

Overview

The third trail option follows the same alignment as trail Option 2 up to the intersection of Route 61 and Hughes Hill Road. The route then turns west-southwest onto Hughes Hill Road to Five Locks Road traveling through Five Locks to Shoemakersville. Some segments of the roadway are not able to be widened making this route primarily ‘share the road’. The route requires crossing railroad tracks (now inactive, but potentially active in the future) at three different points. This route is indirect, traveling west-southwest through Five Locks, but it affords great views of the Schuylkill River and the surrounding agrarian countryside.
Chapter 1

Route

The first section of this trail follows the on-road (option 2) route from the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge through Hamburg and across Route 61. The trail would proceed south on 61, on the west side to the intersection of Hughes Hill Road. The trail turns right onto Hughes Hill Road, a narrow road which will be difficult to widened because of a steep embankment to the east and private property to the west. This is a safety concern for pedestrians and cyclists.

The route turns west onto Five Locks Road, heading toward the Schuylkill River. This narrow segment of road borders open farm fields to the north and south. The road crosses the inactive Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad (RBM&N) at an on-grade crossing just before making a sharp turn to the south. Here the road widens and the character of the landscape changes, entering a tunnel of tall trees. The road, canal and railroad parallel each other with the Schuylkill River a short distance to the west. This route passes the Pennsylvania State Fish and Boat Commission boat launch and the Fisher Dam Bridge.

Proceeding on Five Locks Road, the route turns sharply east this time passing under the railroad (Figure 1.8). This narrow underpass is a dangerous point along the route. Safety and warning signage are required to make this underpass useable. Five Locks Road then changes to Water Street where it continues to parallel the alignment of the Old Schuylkill Canal and the inactive railroad. This wide segment of road is expandable to accommodate a trail. Views of the open rolling agrarian landscape unfold. Some remnants of the Schuylkill Canal are visible, although most of the old alignment has been filled and is now a vegetated corridor. The on-road trail continues along Water Street. The road remains wide and portions of the Old Canal are again visible.

Two trail options into Shoemakersville are possible. The first option continues along Water Street, winding through residential neighborhoods which have sidewalks for pedestrians. This option crosses the inactive rail line for the third time and terminates at Main Street. The second option is to turn right onto Walnut Street and left onto a gravel access road, which is also utilized in trail Option 1. This access road continues through farm fields and provides beautiful agrarian scenery. The trail travels past the Globe underwear factory and intersects Main Street in Shoemakersville.
Hamburg to Shoemakersville

**Recommendations**

Option 1, the off-road route, is the recommended trail. Although coordination with several property owners is required, most of the trail follows former roads or paths. The construction of the trail will be the greatest expense.

**Improvements**

The following is a list of trail improvements to be completed for each trail option.

1. **Shoulder expansion.**

For on-road route options, the expansion of the shoulders to accommodate bicyclist and pedestrians are the most important improvements. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in the Development of Bicycle Facilities Guide recommends shoulder width on roads with speed limits greater than 50 mph should be expanded to at least five (5) feet to accommodate a dedicated pedestrian/cyclist route. The expansion of shoulders is most cost effective when built in conjunction with other road improvements.

2. **Traffic safety signage.**

Along the on-road routes and at off-road trail intersections with roads, there is a need to alert vehicles of pedestrians and bicycles that may be on the road. Additionally, warning signs posted along the touring route make the trail user aware of the upcoming intersection or railroad crossing. These signs should be posted on both on and off road trails. Also line painting the trail on-road will assist in delineating the trail and also alert motorists of the trail. Where the trail crosses an adjoining street, it is important this crosswalk be clearly marked.

3. **Interpretive signage.**

Interpretive and orientation signage should be installed at key locations between Hamburg and Shoemakersville. Interpretive signs provide an opportunity to tell the story about the region, its history and points of interest on or near the trail.

4. **Obtaining trail easements.**

Several off-road trail sections require easements through private lands. Land acquisition is not often feasible or necessary. An easement or permission for long term use is satisfactory. Developing an open and cooperation relationship with landowners is critical in making trail connections complete. When a trail follows an existing trail or other easement, such as a rail line, the addition of a paralleling trail has minimal impact. Screen planting or fencing may satisfy any privacy concerns.

5. **Off-road trail.**

The off-road sections of trail will require improvements to make them accessible. Those improvements include clearing existing vegetation, grading the surface for proper drainage and installing a trail surface. Construction of the trail should be sensitive to the surrounding landscape and adjacent land owners. It is recommended the trail be a minimum of ten feet wide.

6. **Control measures.**

The proposed off-road alignment parallels an un-used rail corridor in some locations. The future use of this line may change. Where the trail passes under Route 61 with the railroad, a 6’ high chainlink fence will separate the uses. The use of “pass through gates” at road crossings on the trail will eliminate unwanted vehicular traffic on the trail. These bollards must be removable to allow for emergency and service vehicles.
Cost Estimate

1. OPTION ONE - Off-Road Route

   Off-Road Section From Hamburg to Shoemakersville
   
   Total Cost $434,250.00

2. OPTION TWO - On-road Route

   Hamburg to Hughes Hill Road/Main Street.

   Subtotal $80,930.00

   Downtown Shoemakersville - Main Street

   Subtotal $11,500.00

   On-Road Section - Main Street
   Shoemakersville to Hamburg

   Subtotal $154,380.0

   Total Cost $246,810.00

3. OPTION THREE - Scenic Touring Route

   On-Road Trail: Route 61 to Five Locks to Shoemakersville

   Total Cost $296,433.00

Please refer to route matrix for a complete description of costs.
Hamburg to Shoemakersville
HAMBURG TO SHOEMAKERSVILLE

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Hex Highway Touring Route

Hamburg to Strausstown

Overview

The on-road Hex Highway automobile and bicycle touring route begins on State Street in downtown Hamburg. The route continues west on State Street/Old Route 22 (Hex Highway) through Shartlesville into Strausstown. The route travels through the countryside, giving way to magnificent views of the surrounding agricultural fields and mountainous landscapes. Working farms with hundred year old barns dot the landscape along Old Route 22, reflecting the rich agrarian heritage. Many of these historic barns are decorated with a unique Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Art design, referred to as hex signs or "Barn Art". These hex signs are a major attraction in the Northern Berks County area and they are prevalent along the Route 22 corridor.

The charming small-town character of Hamburg, Shartlesville and Strausstown also help define the character of the touring route. These historic towns have intriguing architecture and flourishing businesses that serve the community. Businesses and residences lie side by side, adding to the unique cultural fabric of the streetscapes and bringing life to the streets. Some of the businesses in these towns, like Haag's Hotel in Shartlesville, have been serving the public since the 1800's, and continue the traditions of their Pennsylvania Dutch-German heritage.

Analysis

The eastern terminus of the Hex Highway touring route begins on State Street in Hamburg. This street is home to Hamburg's business district, complete with specialty shops, dining, and assorted other small businesses. The architecture of the town reflects its historic rural and industrial roots. The old market building on the corner of Third and State Streets is a perfect example of this beautiful architecture. More detailed information about Hamburg can be found in Chapter 4 of this report, "Reconnections".

The Hex Highway touring route travels west,
across the State Street Bridge over the Schuylkill River. The bridge serves as the primary western entrance into Hamburg. The State Street Bridge is currently in a general state of disrepair, with dilapidated sidewalks and rusted light fixtures. Despite this, the State Street Bridge is an attractive architectural structure with classic features. From the bridge there are impressive views of the river. PennDOT is planning for the repair of this wonderful bridge. This bridge is also a very important pedestrian and automotive link from Lowland Road.

Once repaired, this bridge serves as a valuable and attractive passage into and out of Hamburg. The repair of the bridge’s sidewalks, and the widening of the shoulder along Lowland Road, would provide a pedestrian linkage between State Street to Lowland Road and the Hamburg/ Tilden Pedestrian Bridge.

West of Lowland Road, the wide shoulder along State Street provides the opportunity to create a route for the pedestrian/cyclist into West Hamburg. However, before traveling into West Hamburg, the trail passes under Route 61 and the Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad. The Route 61 underpass is a wide and high concrete structure that is wide enough to accommodate the trail. However, the railroad underpass is a narrow stone structure but does have a separated sidewalk on the eastbound side. This does require westbound pedestrians and cyclists to cross Old Route 22 before and after the crossing. Once through the underpass, the trail continues along West State Street through West Hamburg. This segment of the road has wide shoulders and sidewalks. Homes interspersed with small businesses line the street.

The route continues west through Tilden Township on Old Route 22/Hex Highway. After passing the West Hamburg Elementary School, residential neighborhoods dissipate into rolling farmland and distant views of wooded mountains. The trail gracefully follows the topography of the land along

Figure 2.3 The Route 61 underpass in the foreground and the Reading and Blue Mountain railroad underpass in the distance.

the shoulder of Old Route 22 passing over trickling streams and through rural landscapes. There are grand views of the Blue Mountains to the north. The road widens at one point for about ¼ mile to three lanes over a steep hill and then returns back to two lanes. The road then enters Upper Bern Township and soon turns into Main Street, Shartlesville.

The route enters Shartlesville on Main Street after passing the Upper Bern School and municipal building. Wide shoulders and sidewalks make implementing a pedestrian/cycle trail through the town of Shartlesville relatively easy. Shartlesville

Figure 2.4 Haag's Hotel and Restaurant is one of the local businesses in Shartlesville that caters to tourists and locals alike.
site analysis
is significantly smaller than Hamburg and is slightly more than a block deep on both sides of Main Street. Charming rural architecture is found throughout the town and businesses stand next door to residences. Restaurants, hotels, specialty shops, farm stands and other businesses can be found along Main Street. There are numerous opportunities for trail-users to stop and rest or shop at the local shops.

At the western edge of town, Mountain Road intersects Main Street. Billboards clutter the intersection, pointing the way to numerous local attractions (Fig.2.5). The I-78 interchange ramps onto Mountain Road, providing an easy on-off access. Near the I-78 interchange, gas stations, convenience store and Dairy Queen front onto Mountain Road. Further north on Mountain Road, are the Shartlesville Industrial Park, Mountain Springs Rodeo and Campground and the Appalachian Trail.

Continuing on Old Route 22, after passing Mountain Road, Main Street intersects Roadside Drive. Roadside Drive accesses to Roadside America, a tourist attraction showcasing the "worlds largest indoor miniature village". As the Hex Highway travels west it enters Upper Tulpehocken Township. The road is wide enough to accommodate the on-road trail until it is pinched by a narrow bridge that crosses a stream after Wagner Road. This narrow bridge needs to be widened for the safety of those using the trail. After crossing this bridge, the road widens again and passes the Hillcrest campground.

Traveling westward, the trail crosses streams, passes farms and reveals impressive views of the rural landscape. Near Power Drive, a narrow bridge eliminates existing shoulders. It is necessary to provide a continuous safe route for pedestrians/cyclists. Several stream crossings require widening to accommodate a separate bike lane.

After passing the Tilden Township maintenance building, the Zion Blue Mountain United Church
of Christ is located at the crest of a hill. This beautiful structure takes full advantage of the amazing view of Blue Mountain and the surrounding landscape. The Church’s large parking lot is perched high above a valley and provides the opportunity for an interpretation of these wonderful views.

After passing the Zion Blue Mountain Church, the trail continues westward to a traffic light controlled intersection at Route 183. This intersection is moderately busy and precautions should be taken to ensure the safe crossing by trail-users. The trail then passes the Strausstown Elementary School and enters Strausstown. Strausstown is similar to Shartlesville in character, but is even smaller in scale. Old Route 22 is flanked on either side by a single block of mixed residential and commercial uses. Homes and a few small businesses lie adjacent to each other, comprising the total extent of the town.

**Recommendations**

The existing Old Route 22 corridor provides the perfect backbone for an interpretive trail. The trail passes century old farms, and affords breathtaking views of surrounding agrarian and mountainous landscapes. The trail passes through historic towns and the trail derives its unique character from its surroundings. Although the foundation for this trail has already been laid, there are numerous improvements necessary to make this a safe and functional pedestrian and cyclist route. The formation of this route for automobile touring requires signage and promotion.

1. **Shoulder expansion.**

   The expansion of the shoulders along the Old Route 22 corridor and Lowland Road to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians is the most important road improvement. It is recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in the Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities that the shoulder width on roads with speed limits greater than 50 mph must be expanded to at least five (5) feet to accommodate a dedicated pedestrian/cyclist route.

   A majority of the touring route’s estimated construction cost is for paving of a bike lane. PennDOT might accommodate paving of the shoulder within budgeted maintenance improvements. Of the $1.029 million estimated cost, $935,000 relates to paving shoulders.

2. **Widen two bridges.**

   Although the overwhelming majority of the Old Route 22 right-of-way is wide enough to accommodate an on-road bike route, the road is pinched in two locations by narrow bridges. Therefore it is necessary to widen these bridges and provide safe passage for the bike lanes.

3. **State Street Bridge improvements.**

   The existing condition of the pedestrian sidewalks on State Street Bridge is poor condition. It is nec-

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**Figure 2.8** A view of downtown Strausstown from Old Route 22.
Hex Highway Touring Route

necessary to make major improvements to the sidewalks to improve the pedestrian link from State Street to Lowland Road and the western entrance into and out of Hamburg. Such improvements must include reconditioning of the sidewalks and light fixtures, resurfacing of the roadway and the addition of handicap access ramps to make them safe and usable by all pedestrians. PennDOT is currently planning improvements to this bridge. The borough should monitor the proposed improvements to ensure PennDOT is sensitive to the historic structure and makes accommodations for the pedestrian and cyclist.

4. Safety signage.

Along the Old Route 22 corridor, numerous roads will intersect the proposed route therefore requiring the need to alert vehicles of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. This necessitates the installation of signage along the trail warning vehicles of the presence of pedestrians and cyclists, and indicating dangerous intersections. The use of an ID sign will clearly delineate the trail route to both bicyclists and motorists.

5. Interpretive signage.

Throughout Hamburg, Strausstown and Shartlesville, as well as at key points between towns, it is suggested that interpretive and orientation signage be judiciously installed. These signs will disseminate information about historically significant points of interest and facility locations. Detailed recommendations for each town can be found in the "Reconnections" section of chapter 4 of this report.

6. Parking facilities.

In order to accommodate the needs of cyclists using the trail, it may be necessary to provide parking facilities for both bicycles and vehicles. In Hamburg, the existing parking lot at the park could handle this need. In Shartlesville, the municipal park could be used. In Strausstown, the parking lot for the Church is a possible location. The use of the church lot will need to be approved with the church.

Cost Estimate

Hamburg to Strausstown Route

Hamburg to Shartlesville Road

Subtotal $591,527.50

Shartlesville Road Through Strausstown

Subtotal $438,065.00

Total Cost $1,029,592.50*

* $965,167 for paving shoulders/bridge improvements and $64,425 for signage, pavement markings, etc.
OLD ROUTE 22 HEX HIGHWAY

Figure 2.9  A typical section of Old Route 22/ Hex Highway with proposed bicycle lanes.
HEX HIGHWAY TOURING ROUTE

plan 1
plan 2
Hex Highway Touring Route

detailed matrix
detailed matrix
Hex Highway Touring Route

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Kernsville Dam and Impounding Basin Area

Site Description

Location

The Center Turnpike, Route 22 and the Schuylkill Canal made Hamburg the gateway to Schuylkill County and to the Pennsylvania coal regions. By the early 1800’s Hamburg was positioned at the crossroads of major routes connecting the coal region to industrial centers on the East Coast. The railroad soon supplanted the canal in the 1850’s, further fueling Hamburg’s growing economy. Historic remnants of the Schuylkill Canal, and the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroads are visible in Hamburg and the surrounding area. Today, Hamburg easily accessible via I-78 and Route 61, major north/south and east/west routes.

Situated on the eastern bank of the Schuylkill River, stunning scenery and countless acres of State Game Lands, forested mountains, and agricultural fields surround Hamburg. Directly north of Hamburg is State Game Lands Numbers 106 and 110 and Weiser State Forest, which includes Blue Mountain and the Hawk Mountain Bird Sanctuary. The town of Port Clinton is a historically significant canal village located just to the north of Hamburg along the Schuylkill River. It is an important hub for the Appalachian Trail.

The Kernsville Dam spans the Schuylkill River near the boundaries of Windsor Township, Tilden Township and the Borough of Hamburg in Northern Berks County. The dam is located approximately 1 mile north of Hamburg and 1½ miles south of the Blue Mountain Gap in Port Clinton. The Kernsville impounding basin is located about a ½ mile below the dam between the western bank of the Schuylkill River and Lowland Road.

A service station, several restaurants and other industrial buildings in the Tilden Corporate Center are adjacent to the site, accessible via Industrial Drive.

The Kernsville facility encompasses approximately 252 acres of state-owned lands along the Schuylkill River. This area includes the Kernsville Desilting Pool, Impounding Basin, the area surrounding the Kernsville Dam and a former DER camping facility. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) manages this facility and the adjacent lands.

Access

The entrance to the Kernsville Dam and impounding basin is at the intersection of Lowland and Industrial Roads. These two roads connect State Street in Hamburg to Route 61 north of I-78.

The access road continues north on the western
Kernsville Dam Recreation Site

dge of the basin, then past the dam to its terminus near the former D.E.R. campground. Riddled with potholes, the road is in poor condition. The river’s steep bank on the east and the rising steep slope of the proposed Bartram Trail right-of-way to the west, narrow the road’s width at points.

The Bartram Trail provides the off-road connection from Hamburg Borough to the state owned lands in Tilden Township as well as to Schuylkill County and communities such as Port Clinton, Auburn, Landingville, and Schuylkill Haven. Crossing the Schuylkill River, the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge, a key link for the Bartram Trail, directly connects Hamburg Park to the state-owned lands.

An informal footpath parallels the river outside the impounding basin. This footpath is a potential alignment for a future pedestrian loop trail.

History of Dam / Impounding Basin

Northern Berks County and Schuylkill County have a rich history highlighted by the coal discovery of the late 1700’s. The Schuylkill River Valley coal mining industry impacted the River. The separation of coal from rock and earth, produces a by-product of very fine coal dust and rock particles. Stormwater flows carry this by-product overland to nearby waterways eventually reaching the Schuylkill River. The river became the resting place for up to three million tons of mining wastes. Over time, the build up of silt and other waste by-products began to choke the Schuylkill River and Canal with sediment. This build up of sediment was one reason for the closing of the Schuylkill River Navigation System.

Soon after World War II, Pennsylvania began the task of cleaning up the Schuylkill River. In the early 1950’s, the Commonwealth planned and constructed three dams and three desilting pools as part of the Schuylkill River Desilting Project.

In separate initiatives impoundment basins for disposal of dredged materials were built in 24 locations along the river. This $25 million project (approximately $475 million in today’s dollars) reduced maintenance dredging in the navigation channels below the Fairmount Dam, reduced flood heights and associated damages along the Schuylkill, and increased the river’s value as a natural resource. The Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) was established to maintain these facilities and remove the coal silt from the River.

Today, BAMR actively manages three sites along

Figure 3.2 A view of the dam facility access road, just below the dam.

Figure 3.3 There are numerous informal footpaths found around the desilting basin.
the Schuylkill River at the Kernsville, Auburn, and Tamaqua Dams. The Auburn and Tamaqua sites, located up stream from the Kernsville site, control a majority of the coal silt now flowing into the river. BAMR operates the Kernsville Dam as a "back-up" facility, catching any silt not contained by the other two locations.

BAMR, a division of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), also manages the land immediately surrounding the dam. The Kernsville Dam received its name from the area north of Hamburg formerly known as Kernsville. The $2 million project to build the Kernsville dam and impounding basin began in June 1948 and was completed in September 1949. The dam's spillway spans 600 feet and has a normal desilting pool area of 54 acres which holds approximately 190,000,000 gallons. The Kernsville dam replaced five older and smaller dams in the Kernsville area. Remnants of a canal lock gate still remain and are located just upriver from the dam on the east bank.

The Kernsville impounding basin, located about a mile south of the dam, is designed to hold the material dredged from behind the dam. The storage basin has a maximum capacity of approximately 750,000 cubic yards and covers an area of approximately 87 acres. The I-78 bridge delineates the basin area into northern and southern "sections" covering roughly 67 and 20 acres. The impounding basin is designed to separate the silt from the water, forcing silt particles to settle out while water is filtered by numerous french drains and allowed to percolate back into the ground and river. A large concrete control structure located on the eastern side of the basin controls overflows.

**DREDGING POLICY**

The Kernsville Dam was constructed to catch silt and mining by-products from a drainage area of 340 square miles of the upper Schuylkill River valley. The requirements of the federal cost-sharing agreement calls for the state to continuously maintain the project so that it provides the maximum benefits for which it was designed. A provision in the operations and maintenance plan calls for the state to remove sediment from the desilting pool when the capacity had reached 50 percent of maximum storage. The silt collected behind the Kernsville Dam is periodically dredged and the material is then hydraulically pumped to the impounding basin. The last dredging of the pool was conducted in 1973 when 250,000 cubic yards of silt were removed from the pool. In recent years, due to the reduced amount of mining and improved erosion control measures, only the pools at Tamaqua and Auburn have required active dredging.

BAMR periodically monitors the level of silt buildup in each facility to determine when to dredge a particular pool. Soundings are taken of the river, ascertaining the depth of water and depth of silt. The Kernsville Dam was last sounded in 1996 at which point the pool was approximately 35% filled with silt. Another sounding of the pool is scheduled in 2001.

BAMR currently operates one dredging crew. Each dredging operation takes several years. First the equipment is brought to the site and the piping is installed. A large barge "vacuums" the deposited silt from the river floor and sends it down the pipe to the basin, where it is spread. The impounding basin then slowly allows the water to filter back to the river. The dredging of the Kernsville pool will take 1 to 2 years. The basin may take an additional year to drain, depending on amount of water carried with silt removed and weather conditions.

**BAMR BOAT LAUNCH**

Located on the western bank of the river just above the dam is a BAMR storage building and a boat launch/ramp. The launch and storage facility were constructed and maintained to accommodate dredg-
ing activity in the pool. When the pool is not being actively dredged, its pool and ramp were open for public use. In 1999, BAMR closed the boat ramp to the public because it did not comply with the intent of the standards outlined in the recently released legislation PA house bill 10, 6/19/98. This legislation prohibits the construction or public use of any boat launch within 200 feet above the dam and 100 feet below the dam because of safety concerns. Although this dam does not technically fall under the legislation (low-head, run-of-river dam), BAMR chose to comply with the spirit and intent of this legislation, in the interest of safety.

Boaters became concerned with the ramp closing, as the BAMR boat launch is the only formal access point on the pool. Residents wanted to see the ramp opened for recreational use. Emergency access, is permitted under legislation.

The siting of a new boat launch is not easily accommodated in this pool. The natural flow of water deposits silt along the western shoreline, making the eastern shore more suitable. However, the eastern shore is steep, and has limited access to accommodate a boat launch. The area immediately above the existing ramp is narrow and steep, requiring that the new facility be further upriver. An area currently used by canoes and small boats is located on a projection of land just south of the former DER campsite on the west shore. This area is large enough to provide for a new boat ramp, boat parking and vehicle turnaround. This location, as any along the western shore will require periodic dredging.

During the course of this study, BAMR advised the consultants that the dredging equipment owned by BAMR was too large to use the existing boat launch and that a new boat launch must be constructed for the equipment to access the desilting pool. When this boat launch is constructed for dredging operations, it could become a permanent boat launch for recreational boating.

A smaller canoe dock/launch installed just upriver of the BAMR storage building would facilitate canoe portage around the dam. The location closer to the dam reduces trail maintenance for a relatively short canoe portage route.

**Siltation**

The Kernsville desilting pool has significant silt deposits. The silt deposits predominately on the western shore due to slower river flows. Silt creates a barrier to recreational boaters and fishermen. In calculating silt deposit, BAMR includes the entire pool in the calculation. The Kernsville pool starts at the dam and continues upstream approximately 1.25 miles to a point where Route 61 crosses the river.

At this time, BAMR is assessing the Kernsville Dam and Basin. Their current dredging at Auburn will be completed in 2001. They are scheduled to move the operation to the Tamaqua facility in 2002. This dredging is anticipated to take 2 years to complete, barring equipment down time or poor weather conditions. Based on these dates, the earliest dredging could occur at the Kernsville facility is 2004/2005.

The impounding basin was designed for one complete dredging of the pool. Once the basin is full, BAMR will need to decide where to dispose silt from future operations. Two options include: finding a new site to deposit the silt, or removing the silt via rail or road.

The health of the river should continue to be a priority. Even as the amount of coal silt decreases, the need to maintain the Kernsville pool will remain.
ANALYSIS

Bicentennial Trail

In Hamburg, the Bicentennial Trail parallels the old Schuylkill Canal alignment along the eastern bank of the Schuylkill River. The trail runs north from Hamburg Park to the trail’s terminus just north of the Blue Mountain Road and Port Clinton Avenue intersection. At this point, the trail potentially links to the Appalachian Trail via Blue Mountain Road. Just east of this intersection on Blue Mountain Road, an off-road trail connects the Olivet Blue Mountain Camp Grounds to the Appalachian Trail atop the Blue Mountain. This is an important connection to Hamburg, providing hikers the opportunity to use the services offered in Hamburg.

To the south, the trail connects to the Bartram Trail at the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge. The remaining portion of the Bicentennial Trail is planned to continue south, following the shoreline of the Schuylkill River. Frequent flooding, easement acquisition and physical obstacles have prevented this section from being completed.

Hamburg Park to Through-Truss Bridge at Kernsville Dam

The proposed Bartram Trail, connecting Hamburg to Frackville in northern Schuylkill County starts at the southern end of the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian Bridge in Hamburg Park.

A majority of the Bartram Trail will run along the former Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way, but there are a few sections where the trail must follow alternative routes due to out parcel sales. A mile section of proposed trail from Lowland Road (at the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge) north requires an alternative alignment. This is one location where former R.R. right-of-way is unavailable for use.

Lowland Road, heavily traveled by automobiles and large trucks, parallels the old railroad alignment. The Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge trail intersects with Lowland Road on a sharp curve and would be a dangerous location for a pedestrian crossing. Lowland Road is below the existing trail/bridge grade at this point and requires a ramp to be handicap accessible. At this point, the trail must proceed north on the east side of Lowland Road. On the western side of the road, the steep, vegetated embankment of the old rail right-of-way restricts road improvements. The paved shoulders on both sides of Lowland Road are narrow and could not safely accommodate a trail. On the eastern side, a grassy swale parallels Lowland Road, carrying stormwater. This swale is also at the base of the western edge of the dike surrounding the Kernsville basin. The basin berm parallels the road, 15 feet above the roadway elevation. This embankment, covered with trees and dense understory vegetation, could be an alternate trail route.

To the north, the I-78 overpass crosses Lowland Road. The overpass spans the road and the bridge
footings are adequately spaced, so as not to impede any potential trail improvements. Further north, Lowland Road ends at the intersection of Industrial Drive. From this point north, the dam access road completes the connection back to the former railroad grade. This section of road is in poor condition, riddled with potholes and fractured macadam. The road separates the Kernsville impounding basin from the former Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way. A large stone monument is located on the eastern side of the road which commemorates the completion of the Kernsville dam and basin project. This is the only vehicular access point to the Kernsville impounding basin.

**Figure 3.5** This view shows the intersection of Lowland Road and the Bartram Trail after descending from the Hamburg-Tilden pedestrian bridge.
analysis plan
Kernsville Dam Recreation Site

The southern section of the basin, below I-78 is surrounded by fifteen to twenty-five-foot high earthen dikes. These dikes are overgrown with mature woody trees and dense understory vegetation. The expansive area within the dike is filled with a sandy, silt loam soil that now supports the growth of dense grasses and scattered shrubs. Some areas appear to be in the early stages of successional growth. The southern basin section is approximately 20 acres.

The northern section of the impounding basin totals approximately 61 acres. The landscape of the northern section of the basin is characterized by a sandy, gravel silt loam type of material littered with the remnants of coal particles. This section of the basin is also surrounded by fifteen-foot dikes, which are densely vegetated with mature trees and understory shrubs. However, within the basin two very different types of landscapes can be observed. Scattered clumps of vegetation, small standing pools of water, and various types of ground cover characterize the southern part of the north basin. The northern part of the north basin appears to be an alien landscape. There is little to no vegetation covering the ground and the dark sandy soil is rutted and mounded, showing the scars of construction equipment operations. After the last dredging operation in 1973, sporadic removal and moving of dredged materials have shaped the “moon-scape” landscape.

A rich riparian buffer grows between the eastern berm of the basin and the Schuylkill River. This heavily wooded swath of land feels far removed from the neighboring landscape of the basin with sympathetic views of the Schuylkill River. The mature trees that stand tall along the banks of the river create a serene feeling very different from that of the basin. The rushing sound of water permeates the woods and adds to the attractive character of this area.

Figure 3.6 North of the I-78 overpass Lowland Road terminates at Industrial Drive which makes a sharp curve to the left.

Figure 3.7 The monument commemorating the completion of the Kernsville Dam and Basin lies amidst a sea of sand in the northern basin area.

Figure 3.8 This is a typical view of the northern section of the basin. Note the sandy, barren terrain.
Kernsville Dam

After passing the impounding basin, the access road continues north to the Kernsville Dam. The road enters a tunnel of vegetation. A dense riparian buffer hides much of the adjacent river. For approximately 1,000 feet, a sharp drop-off to the river on the east and a steep embankment on the west constrains the road. The road again widens as it enters an opening in the woodland near the dam.

About 1 mile north from the impounding basin, the access road enters a level opening in the landscape. The access road spills into a large parking/turn-around area. On the western side, a steel railroad trestle carries the Bartram trail over an active Northern Reading Blue Mountain Railroad line. To the east, an informal dirt and gravel parking area serves the BAMR facilities - a maintenance building, boat ramp and the Kernsville Dam.

Here, the Kernsville Dam spans the width of the Schuylkill River, and provides an intriguing vantage point. From the shoreline, expansive views of the desilting pool and distant mountains are revealed. A viewing platform on top of the dam provides a unique opportunity to view the pool, dam and shorelines. The shoreline near the dam and BAMR dock is open and devoid of vegetation.

On the down stream side of the dam there is an existing portage trail to a small wooden dock, located approximately six hundred feet down-stream from the parking lot.

Western Land Holdings

Just to the north, on the west side of the railroad tracks is an additional 30 acres of Commonwealth land. This area of state land is now heavily wooded, but once held stockpiles of topsoil from the construction of the Kernsville facility. This land is sloping, but has the potential to accommodate recreational uses. Use of this land for active recreation would require clearing of vegetation, substantial grading and improved access.

Access to this area requires either crossing the active rail line (from the dam area) or constructing a second entrance, from Lowland Road. A separate portion of Lowland Road that is off of Kiln Road and Industrial Boulevard. Lowland Road then terminates at an intersection with Route 61 just south of the Route 61 bridge over the Schuylkill River.

From Lowland Road, an easement into this area currently permits a driveway for an adjacent property owner. Adjacent to and just west of this area of state land exists a narrow ravine that is a former railroad “cut” that enters a privately owned historic railroad tunnel. Any access would either have to share this driveway easement or require a second road into the parcel.
DEP Campsite

The dam access road terminates in a small gravel parking area. An opening in the riparian buffer, provides a gentle landing for canoes, and other small boats.

North of this parking area, canopy trees are interspersed with a dense understory. A concrete structure and fire ring remain from the former campsite. People continue to use this area informally during the day. This level area provides opportunity for a number of recreational activities and uses.

Further north, as the river bends, beautiful rhododendron dominate the understory vegetation. From here, stunning views of the steep terrain on the opposite shoreline dominate the landscape. This very level area appears to be untouched by man, although at one time this area of land was engineered during the change in the alignment of the Schuylkill River. An informal footpath follows the banks of the Schuylkill River to the gap. State Route 61 crosses the Schuylkill and defines the northern boundary of the state lands. A large rock outcrop, on the eastern shore at the bend in the river is a popular (and unofficial) summer swimming hole.

Areas for Additional Study

Although the Kernsville Dam and Impounding Basin lands were the only areas examined for the implementation of athletic facilities, the public made suggestions for alternative athletic field locations. Some meeting attendees questioned whether the proposed areas near the Kernsville Dam were the best locations for sports fields. Other sites that were recommended by various members of the public for investigation include:

1. Belmont Avenue.

At the northern end of Belmont Avenue, Hamburg Borough and the State of Pennsylvania own two parcels of land. The combined acreage of these two plots of land is approximately 14 acres. This land could accommodate between two and four athletic fields, dependent on their size, with parking. A more detailed study of the grades in this area would be required in order to better determine the site’s suitability.

2. State Hospital Property.

The Hamburg Center, a state-owned institution located in Windsor Township and bordering Hamburg Borough on the west, may be a potential location for athletic fields. It is uncertain whether the state would be willing to lease this land or provide an easement. It is also unknown how much of the 95 acres of land included in this property would be available or usable for athletic fields.

3. Mid-Atlantic Canners Association Incorporated and Municipal Sewer Authority land.

The two parcels of land owned by the Municipal Sewer Authority and the Mid-Atlantic Canners industrial building north of Route 61 and near the banks of the Schuylkill River, totals approximately 30 acres. Again, it is unclear how much of this vacant land is currently utilized by the previously mentioned owners. However, this land is level, centrally located and easily accessible.

These sites need to be researched to determine the feasibility of incorporating athletic facilities. It is beyond the scope of this study to do so. It should be noted that this project received substantial local publicity and owners of the three above mentioned facilities did not come forward to suggest use of these lands.
Programming

SRGA and the North Berks Recreation Corporation provided a number of programming suggestions that the consultant considered in preparing conceptual plans for the Kernsville Dam Recreational site. Suggested land uses included passive and active recreational activities as well as wildlife and nature preserves.

The first of four public meetings focused on confirming a program with the general public for the site. The 53 people who attended generated many ideas. A complete list of programming suggestions generated during that meeting is contained in Appendix.

Studying the feasibility of utilizing part of the basin for the development of at least three multi-sport athletic fields (combination of soccer/baseball/football fields) initially, was a key component of the program. It was imperative to identify existing conditions and future plans for the impounding basin prior to examining the feasibility of alternative uses for this area. BAMR requirements for future desilting operations had to be thoroughly investigated to gain a clear understanding of feasible future uses of the basin.

Utilization of the Schuylkill River for recreational activities such as boating and fishing was another key programmatic element. Dam safety issues and current water use legislation as it relates to water use and access issues are key considerations. The development of support facilities to serve the active recreational components such as restrooms, utilities, storage and security must also be considered.

The demand for recreational use of the river is growing along the entire Schuylkill. The dams along the Schuylkill River were constructed either for watering the canals or for the dredging and maintenance of the river. Since the canal has long been out of use and the need to dredge the river for coal silt is lessening, the purpose and effect of the dams is changing. These structures have created pools of water utilized for recreation. The growing popularity of water activities invites the question as to who should continue to maintain these structures and their associated pools. The Schuylkill River Greenway Association in association with the PA Fish and Boat Commission is creating a continuous water trail on the river that is likely to increase future use.

Passive recreational elements are also potential components of the design concept. Nature trails and wildlife preserve/wetlands/habitat allow for many passive recreational opportunities. Such activities include walking, jogging, bird watching and fishing. A well-planned path system with interpretation of key features, such as history or natural characteristics of the site was also considered. The potential to reuse the former camping facility (or other state lands) for future camping use was also a possibility.

Pedestrian/cyclist access from Hamburg and other North Berks communities to the proposed recreation areas must be safe and convenient. The existing Bicentennial Trail and the Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge link Hamburg to the recreation

Figure 3.10 A view looking north on Lowland Road of the grassy shoulder and the western embankment of the impounding basin.
area. These routes should include handicapped accessible connections through environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands.

Vehicular access to the active recreation areas of the basin is essential. It will be necessary to improve and expand the existing access road to support such a facility. Improvements must include participant and spectator parking and emergency and maintenance access.

**Recommendations**

The areas previously described, including the area around the Kernsville Dam, the Kernsville Impounding Basin, and the state owned lands north along the Schuylkill River, have the potential to be utilized for passive and active recreational facilities. These proposed facilities can positively impact the Hamburg community while satisfying the recreational needs and desires of the people in the Hamburg area. Recreational improvements to the lands and the opportunities that they provide will enhance the quality of life of the region.

**Hamburg to Through Truss Route**

The existing Hamburg/Tilden pedestrian bridge provides the perfect opportunity to connect Hamburg to the Kernsville Dam Lands via a pedestrian/bicycle trail. This trail will begin where the existing trail terminates in Tilden Township at Lowland Road. Here, the trail will turn north, ramping down behind the existing sewage facility to Lowland Road. From this point there is an on-road or off-road trail option leading to the recreational site.

**Option 1.**

The off-road option must cross the swale on the eastern side of Lowland Road with a bridge and then must ramp up to the impounding basin dike. This route may impact the wetlands that exist in this low area. Mitigation of impacts to the wetlands would be required. This trail alignment would ramp up to the top of the dike surrounding the impounding basin. Interesting views of the basin create opportunities for interpretation points. The top of the dike is a narrow five feet and would require widening to twelve feet to accommodate the trail. This alignment provides an off-road pedestrian corridor that separates the trail from Lowland Road. The trail would eventually intersect the Schuylkill River Project monument area adjacent to Lowland Road.

**Option 2.**

The second option again connects the existing trail leading down from the pedestrian bridge and crosses the existing swale. From this point, the trail would follow an expanded and improved shoulder along Lowland Road, passing underneath the I-78 bridge. The two-way route would continue north to the Industrial Drive and Lowland Road intersection where the path would continue straight, following the dam access road and past the Schuylkill River Project monument.
sketch plan
Numerous improvements would have to be made to the shoulder of Lowland Road to create a safe and separate pedestrian/cycle lane. The shoulder would be improved to twelve foot width. In addition, a barrier, such as a guiderail, between the trail and the road should be installed. This route modifies the existing drainage swale and possibly requires some wetland mitigation along Lowland Road. Since BAMR’s use of the basin may be only a few years away, option 2, the trail along Lowland Road, is the recommended option. In the future, a trail on top of the impounding basin dike could be a fantastic loop trail.

The trail continues north, past the Schuylkill River Project monument area. This is the only existing vehicular entrance to the basin, and has the potential of being an interpretation point that identifies and describes the Schuylkill River Project. This sandy vacant site has an interesting history and an intriguing landscape. The parking area should be defined by either curbing or railing. The access to the basin should be gated. Interpretive signage will explain the importance of the dredging process.

From this point, the trail will cross the dam access road at a designated crossing. The trail continues along the Bartram Trail (former Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way) owned by SRGA, heading north toward the dam area.

The trail continues to the large steel through-truss bridge. The bridge provides great views of the dam and surrounding area. A ramp will be constructed down from the Bartram Trail just before the bridge to the existing grade of dam area. The trail route will parallel the road and will continue north from this point, to the proposed recreational fields along the river.

### Recommended Use of State Lands - Acreage and Percentage

The recommendations of this master plan will utilize the 252 acres of state land in the following manner:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Percentage of 252 acres</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-purpose fields (3)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking (170 cars),</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new and existing roads, boat launch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lands remaining undisturbed</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impounding basin</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total BAMR Lands</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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</table>
THE KERNSVILLE IMPounding BASIn

Initial concepts by both BAMR and the community for the recreational use of the state lands focused on using the impounding basin for sports fields. As this was investigated, however, it became apparent that this concept was impractical for at least the next five to seven years.

The Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation must dredge the Kernsville pool in the near future. Immediate use of the basin for sports fields is not recommended as any sports field use of the basin would be lost once the dredging process began.

One option to advance the use of the basin would be to alter the storage area. The construction of a new berm, parallel the northern side of I-78, would separate the basin. The southern basin could be filled with dredged materials from the north basin. This would elevate the southern area and increase storage capacity in the upper basin area. A topsoil cap would be required to provide a useable surface for recreational fields. The costs associated with the construction of the inner berm and drainage, as well as moving the existing spoils to the southern area, capping, and necessary vehicular access would make this option prohibitively expensive compared to other options.

BAMR has determined that dredging of the Kernsville desilting pool will occur in approximately four years. The dredging operation may require up to two years and the “settling” of dredge materials in the impounding basin may require an additional year. Regardless of the exact timetable, BAMR has agreed in principle that dredging will occur. For these reasons, use of the impounding basin in the next several years in not recommend-
ed. After dredging operations are complete and the impounding basin is filled to capacity (as per BAMR’s preliminary calculations), BAMR and the community may once again consider the development of sports fields or other uses in the filled basin.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

After thorough investigation, alternative solutions were developed for various sections of the Commonwealth lands. These alternatives were developed to provide the greatest flexibility to the state and the Hamburg community in utilizing these lands.

Recommendations include:

PASSIVE RECREATIONAL USES

Nature/Wildlife Preserves.

Most areas in the project area should remain as nature preserves. These areas include the island located on the Schuylkill River between the pedestrian and the I-78 bridges, the island just north of the northern tip of the desilting basin, the area just below the Kernsville Dam, and an area on the northern tip of the site, should be protected and managed as nature preserves. This plan calls for 165 acres of the 252 acre site to remain undisturbed.

Play/Picnic/Fishing Area.

Just north of the proposed boat launch, a multipurpose area including picnic facilities, a playground
and a dedicated shoreline for fishing is proposed. This area is strategically located near the proposed northern athletic fields giving parents the opportunity to supervise one child while their other children are participating in organized sports. A picnic pavilion with grills or barbecue pits is also recommended.

**Motor Boat Launch.**

A new boat launch facility is at the terminus of the dam access road. This area of land sufficiently accommodates a boat launch facility, vehicular turnaround and parking. In order to accommodate their new, large dredge equipment, BAMR must create a new boat launch site. It is recommended that BAMR build their construction access dredge launch at this location. Upon completion of dredging operations, the launch can be converted for permanent recreational boat access.

**Active Recreational Uses**

**Central Sports Area.**

Located just south of the Kernsville Dam and near the Bartram Trail connection there exists sufficient acreage to immediately construct a multipurpose athletic field with parking and support facilities. The current alignment of the dam access road must be moved slightly to the west to accommodate these changes. This should be the first field constructed.

**Future Multi-Purpose fields.**

The northern area of the site can accommodate up to five full sized athletic fields. These fields could be utilized for multiple sports including soccer, baseball and football. A gate at the southern terminus of this facility above the proposed new boat launch will control off-season use. Based on community recommendations, this master plan recommends that two athletic fields with associated parking be built at this location.

**Parking.**

The two proposed northern athletic fields and boat launch will require approximately one hundred and twenty (120) parking spaces to accommodate spectators and participants. A two-bay parking area will be located along the western edge of the site on both sides of the access road. The parking will parallel the active rail line, separated by a fence. Locating parking on the interior of the site will have little impact on views into the site from the river. A turnaround for drop-off is recommended at the northern terminus.

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<th>Estimated Parking:</th>
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<td>(3 fields x 50 cars/each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boat launch</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>170 cars</td>
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**Support Facilities.**

It is necessary to provide support facilities for the active recreation areas including men’s and women’s restrooms, a concession area, storage, utilities, and security. It is recommended that these facilities be built adjacent to the northern athletic fields.

**Native Plant Riparian Buffer.**

A native riparian planting buffers between the river and the sports facilities. Vegetation reduces soil erosion along the riverbanks and discourages geese.
migration onto the site. The riparian buffer will create a visual buffer between the fields and the river and create an intriguing setting along the river walk trail.

**Access and Linkages**

**Improved Access Road.**

The dam access road requires paving improvements that are absolutely imperative. Repaving the cartway width to twenty feet for the entire length will accommodate park traffic and emergency and maintenance vehicles. It will also be necessary to extend the length of the road to serve the proposed northern fields and boat launch facility. It is recommended that BAMR improve the road to facilitate dredging operations.

The dredge pipe must run from the desilting pool along the road to the impounding basin. Frequent high pressure leaks from the eighteen inch diameter pipe are common. BAMR should make provisions in the road widening to allow for the pipe and a temporary "jersey barrier" to protect those using the road from these leaks during the one to two years of dredging.

The dredge pipe will provide a temporary inconvenience at the Central Sports Area. A ramp / steps and interim parking along the road can accommodate this temporary condition.

**Woodland Interpretive Trail.**

An interpretive/woodland trail between the banks of the Schuylkill River and the impounding basin should be developed. The trail begins at the south end of the basin, linking to the pedestrian bridge with steps. It continues north between the edge of the basin and the Schuylkill River. The trail will eventually round the top of the basin, and then head back south to the Kernsville Desilting Project Monument. The woodland trail can incorporate interpretive information about riparian vegetation, successional growth, and the river.

**Canoe Portage Route.**

Due to the closing of the existing BAMR boat ramp, it is necessary to provide a new portage route for canoes. The boat launch must be located at least 200 feet above the dam and 100 feet below the dam. Above the dam, a new portage should be located just north of the existing maintenance building. Below the dam, a new portage route would be located at the specified 100 feet from the dam. The installation of a well-marked portage trail between the two launches will help guide boaters between the two sites.

**River Walk Trail.**

A loop walking trail links the park, connecting the central sports field with the portage route, as well as the new boat launch, northern play fields and parking area, and native plant garden. The trail loop around the northern athletic fields provides a jogging / walking trail that focuses on the great views along the river. The ten-foot wide trail will be located in or adjacent to the riparian buffer that is proposed along the length of the river.

**Appalachian Trail Connection.**

The existing Bicentennial Trail could be utilized to link Hamburg to the Appalachian Trail. From the terminus of the Bicentennial Trail, a new trail is recommended parallel to Blue Mountain Road to the Olivet Blue Mountain Camp. From this point, an existing trail runs up the mountain from the camp connecting to the Appalachian Trail.
Kernsville Basin Monument Interpretive Point.

The impressive monument dedicated to the completion of the Kernsville Dam project deserves a small interpretive area. Parking and appropriate signage describing the interesting history of the Schuylkill River Project and its importance to the continued health of the river will foster awareness and understanding of the site.

Vegetative Buffer.

A screen planting between the access road and the impounding basin will help block views of the scared landscape. The buffer should include the berming of earth at the north western edge of the basin where the dam access road closely parallels the basin.

Impounding Basin Uses.

Until the dredging of the pool is completed, the basin area may either remain in its present condition, or it could be seeded with warm season grasses to provide a minimum level of vegetative cover and enhance wildlife habitat.

Once dredging operations are completed, there will be several options that should be considered by BAMR and the community. These include:

- Additional active recreational fields / uses;
- Permanent seeding / planting of native species to establish cover and wildlife habitat
- Introduction of group camping or some other 'passive' use

It must be understood, future dredging of the Kernsville desilting pool may need to be completed at some future date (2030?, 2050?) and that uses in the basin may disrupted at that time.
**Recommended Sequence of Improvements**

**Immediate improvements:**
- Nature areas preservation
- Trail construction from Hamburg pedestrian bridge to through truss bridge
- Central sports area field and parking (adjacent to dam)
- Canoe portage route
- Dam access road improvements
- Basin vegetative buffer
- Kernsville basin monument interpretive area

**Intermediate improvements:**
- Woodland interpretive trail
- Native plant riparian buffer along river
- Northern athletic fields and parking & support facilities
- River walk trail
- Play area and fishing area
- Appalachian Trail Connection

**Long term improvements:**
- Motor Boat launch
- Basin uses

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**Cost Estimate Summary**

**Bartram Trail**

Subtotal $90,532.00

**Active Recreational Uses**

**Central Sports Area**

Subtotal $88,006.00

**Northern Sports Area**

Subtotal $463,555.00

**Access Road**

Subtotal $261,332.00

**Boat Launch**

Subtotal $29,400.00

**Canoe Portage and Launch**

Subtotal $22,000.00

**Total Cost** $954,825.00
Kernsville Dam Recreation Site

upper plan
lower plan
The Kernsville Dam Recreation Area Cost Estimate

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<th>Unit</th>
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<td><strong>Northern Sports Area (along river)</strong></td>
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<td>Native Plant Garden</td>
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<td>SY</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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### Central Sports Area (adjacent to dam)

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<tr>
<td>Clear and Grub</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>MSF</td>
<td>$150.00</td>
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<td>Grade fields area (6” depth)</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>CY</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
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<td>Add topsoil (SY x 6” = CY)</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>CY</td>
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<td>Storm Water drainage</td>
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<td>Seed 1 Athletic Field - H.S. Regulation (195’ x 330’)</td>
<td>64350</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>$0.06</td>
<td>$3,861.00</td>
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<td>Irrigation for fields (spigots for hose bibs/sprinklers)</td>
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<td>Parking (50 spaces - gravel)</td>
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### Canoe Launch

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<td>Wooden docks - two</td>
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### Boat Launch

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</table>

**Total cost**                                                        |     |      |           | **$954,825.00**|
MAINTENANCE

MAINTENANCE PHILOSOPHY

The Kernsville Dam Recreation Area will contain facilities for both active and passive recreation, serving all age groups year-round. Maintenance goals must strive to minimize any real or perceived risks of injury and provide residents with an attractive facility, all within a limited maintenance budget. "Best maintenance or management practices" should be implemented, assuring a quality facility and healthy habitat. As labor, equipment, and material costs continue to rise, so will the cost of maintaining the park. The Northern Berks Recreation Corporation must continually strive to achieve high quality maintenance with as little public funds as possible.

In addition to the Corporation upholding and increasing its efficiency in maintaining the park, local residents must also share this responsibility. The community can greatly assist by undertaking "clean-up" events, sponsoring planting events, and encouraging residents to keep the park clean and litter free.

ACTIVE FIELDS

The most intense and regular maintenance is required on the multi-purpose fields. In addition to frequency of use, seasonal and cyclic weather conditions will also affect the maintenance requirements of the fields.

The most important factor that the Corporation will have under its control is the quality of its maintenance efforts. Quality relates to using the correct equipment for the specific task, performing a task at the correct time, and closely monitoring conditions so that the maintenance schedule can be adjusted to react to use, weather, or other factors. Even with the best maintenance of the athletic fields, turf rehabilitation is periodically required.

One of the greatest concerns for safety on athletic fields is compaction. Hard playing fields can lead to increased injuries. Proper maintenance of the athletic fields should not be considered a luxury, but a matter of safety. Aeration, fertilization, and irrigation are the best prevention to field compaction, and should be completed several times a year.

RESTROOMS

Each facility should be checked daily when closed at dusk. Any problems should be addressed promptly. The restroom should be cleaned at least five times a week during peak use periods during the summer. Once or twice a week cleaning should suffice during the remainder of the year when it is open.

As a cost-savings option, portable toilets could be utilized until a permanent bathroom is constructed.

PLAYGROUND

The playground safety surface should be thoroughly inspected once a week for broken glass or other debris that might cause injury. The play equipment should be formally and closely inspected once a month for worn or missing parts or connections. Fencing should be inspected annually for proper and tight connections.

TRAILS

The stone dust trails will require yearly maintenance. During the spring and summer, vegetative growth, such as weeds and grasses should be controlled. The turf on either side of the trail should be maintained at a height less than 6". The stone dust will need to be supplemented and rolled yearly. Because the trail may be susceptible to occasional washing out, inspect the trail regularly, particularly after heavy storms and repair immediately as needed.
Reconnections

Reconnecting Main Street with the River

by Keith Swenson, AICP
Schuylkill River Greenway Association

The "Goal" of "Reconnections" is to reconnect the citizens of the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor with their river heritage. The "Purpose" is to induce community actions that will counteract the driving forces behind "suburban sprawl" and "urban blight". To achieve this goal and purpose we are proposing a concept and implementation measures designed to repair or restore the "walkable" linkages between neighborhoods, employment centers, community facilities, cultural features and the historic focus of the region's heritage of the Schuylkill River. In brief, we propose to "rewave the community fabric".

"Community fabric" is the term frequently used to describe the nature and pattern of community infrastructure. Prior to 1800, nearly all villages, towns and cities developed adjacent to rivers or other neighborhoods to the waterways, the principle means of transportation and commerce. Homes, shops, work places and public spaces were typically within walking distance of one another to streams, rivers or other bodies of water.

During the 1800's bicycles, horse drawn vehicles and railroads permitted people to travel longer distances but most development continued to be clustered close to transportation nodes and in close proximity to waterways. In the late 1800's the internal combustion engine and self-propelled vehicle were invented and the nation's transportation systems underwent a paradigm change. Cars and commercials trucks provided a greatly improved level of convenience and service over greater distances. Development soon began to disperse and a far less tightly woven network of streets and thoroughfares emerged.

Streets designed to carry pedestrians, cyclists and horse drawn vehicles were widened and the ubiquitous "one way" traffic system was introduced. As these thoroughfares were gradually overwhelmed by burgeoning traffic, they were replaced by successive generations of "bypasses" and expressways. Formerly dominant transportation systems soon lost their competitive edge, river canal systems were abandoned, all but a few passenger railroads were discontinued and the continued existence of the nations mighty rail freight system was threatened.

Following World War II, the nation's pent up wealth and desire for a "new car and life in a vine covered suburban cottage" led development to literally explode across the landscape. Stimulated, indeed required, by government programs and regulatory policies, we created the condition now commonly known as "developmental sprawl". We are only now beginning to accept the fact that developmental sprawl has consumed vast amounts of productive farmland, polluted our air and water, destroyed traditional neighborhoods and fostered community disintegration. We now recognize that the inevitable corollary of developmental sprawl is the condition we term "urban blight".

Just as we can't put Humpty Dumpty back together again, we cannot reverse the radical transformation communities have experienced during the past century. However, we can, and we must, reweave the structural fabric of our older towns and cities with that of the surrounding suburbs and commit ourselves to rebuilding "walkable" communities that embody the time tested fundamentals of neighborhood and community design.

"Reconnections" will be available to all of the communities served by the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor, however, preference will be
Reconnections

given to small boroughs and older settlement areas of townships that have limited financial resources and less access to technical expertise. Consideration will also be given to the unique needs of under-served neighborhoods in larger communities.

Smaller, older communities often lack the expertise and resources to conceive, design and develop holistic solutions to problems that often transcend municipal boundaries and involve required actions by multiple governmental agencies. And, all too frequently, there are few incentives for these communities and their suburban counterparts to work cooperatively to achieve a broad community improvement.

The Schuylkill River Greenway Association, as an established regional organization serving the entire Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor has proven that it can effectively gain community consensus across jurisdictional boundaries and help form the vital public-private partnerships essential to accomplishing complex initiatives in a holistic manner. By employing its Heritage Corridor tools and its established relationships with local, state and federal agencies, SRGA can help older communities “reconnect” with the river.

Introduction

An impetus for this awareness was initiated out of a desire to provide a pedestrian connection to and along the Schuylkill River. Once the river trail is constructed, a new concern emerged, and that was one of getting folks to the river trail. The river was largely considered an industrial wasteland and an undesirable location to visit. Only in a few communities are parks or open space open along the river. As a result, industrial, warehouse and vacant land separates the "community" from the waterfront. Since no one had to go there except to work, sidewalks and pedestrian trails were not constructed, and development then shunned it. Tall buildings, built up to the road right-of-way, remove the pedestrian environment completely and targets a “vehicle only” environment. Large parking lots, tall chainlink fences and yards full of storage create a barrier between the river and the borough.

The car has impacted this social structure by interrupting a safe walking environment. Supporting walkable streets is critical to the survival of downtown. Making these connections clear and safe is paramount in bringing neighborhoods together. Going to school, stopping at the store, getting to work, mailing a letter, applying for a permit, and picking up a book are all simple tasks, provided they are within easy walking distance. Expecting people to walk, over using their car must be consciously addressed, by providing for their walking, just as a department of transportation does for vehicles.

Continuous routes, wide sidewalks, marked crosswalks, uninterrupted handicap access, and adequate streetscape amenities (benches, lighting, trash receptacles) are the key elements to formulating a safe and inviting experience. Convenience and safety are the primary issues reflecting walkability and connection. If going to the post office seems unsafe to someone, they will find an alternative
means of getting there, ie. the car. In the same respect, if the safest route takes a round about loop, then it too would be considered indirect and a "waste of time". In this age of demanding convenience, it should only be anticipated that perceptions of easy and safe access are paramount to a walkable town.

In northern Berks County, and particularly Hamburg, the downtown is thriving. People continue to live, work, and shop right in Hamburg. The lack of a large mega mall or super store has relinquished the shopping market to the individual shops of downtown or those within a walkable distance. Unfortunately, newer development has not addressed the pedestrian. As a result, sidewalks are not constructed or pedestrian crossings not maintained. A renewed awareness for the pedestrian needs to be started in order to prevent further deterioration of the local economy and an improvement of safety and convenience.

**Methodology**

This study identifies physical linkages required to strengthen connections within each town. Site reconnaissance, area analysis, recommendations, and connections were suggested for each town.

**Site Reconnaissance**

The consultant initially walked the streets of each town to become acquainted with the layout, present uses, and existing connections for reference. Photographs were taken for reference and illustration in the master plan.

**Area Analysis**

A street map of each town was used as a base for locating existing sites and districts. General comments about major uses and property types were made for each area, with the understanding that this was not a zoning plan or an accurate account of all uses within each area. Obviously, there are micro zones and anomalies within each area, the detail of which was beyond the scope of work.

**Connections**

Physical linkages were identified on the plans. Public facilities, such as libraries, civic buildings, schools, parks and churches were identified as important elements. Shops, restaurants, places of work, and homes, although critical to connections, were delineated by district due to fluidity in locations over time.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations provide several improvements suggested to improve safety and re-connect the community.
HAMBURG

LOCATION

Hamburg Borough is located in Northern Berks County bordered by Tilden Township to the west and Windsor Township to the east. I-78, a major east/west route crosses through northern Hamburg while Route 61, a major north/south route, passes through western Hamburg. I-78 links Hamburg to Allentown to the east and Harrisburg to the west. South on Route 61 from Hamburg is Shoemakersville, Leesport and Reading and to the north is Port Clinton and Schuylkill Haven. The State Game Lands Number 106, Weiser State Forest, Hawk Mountain and the Blue Mountains are within a few miles of downtown Hamburg. The Schuylkill River defines the western boundary of the town, providing a green corridor that is easily accessible by Hamburg’s population. There is a connection to the Appalachian Trail in northern Hamburg from the Olivet Blue Mountain Camp.

DESCRIPTION

Hamburg is the largest and most heavily populated of the four towns studied. The town is easily accessible by both I-78 and Route 61, which provides primary access into town. The heart of Hamburg is located along State and Fourth Streets.

HISTORY

The gap in the Blue Mountains has been a noted travel route for many decades. The Borough of Hamburg of settled in 1732 and incorporated in 1838 from Windsor Township. The Schuylkill River was a conduit for transportation in this region, and the development of the Schuylkill Canal became an impetuous for growth of Hamburg, as services and goods flowed up and down the canal. The later development of the railroad contributed to the town’s growth and prosperity. The crossroads of east-west I-78 and north-south Route 61 continued to make Hamburg a vital urban center.

The Borough now has a population of 3,859 and covers approximately 12.5 miles.
Hamburg plan
where the majority of the commercial district is concentrated. State Street, also known as Old Route 22, runs east to Lenhartsville and west towards Strausstown.

State Street contains a unique collection of businesses and homes that lie side-by-side acting as the spine of the downtown. This mixed commercial and residential district is home to restaurants, specialty stores and numerous private businesses. Fortunately, Hamburg is devoid of chain stores which tend to homogenize the unique character of many communities. State Street is home to classic, turn-of-the-century architecture, making this street a visually stimulating and interesting place to explore. The old market building on the corner of State and Third Streets best exhibits this architecture.

The Hamburg Borough Hall, Police Station, Post Office and Library are all located within one block off Third Street. The Dove Christian Fellowship and the Bethany United Methodist Church are also found nearby on Third Street.

Wide sidewalks and on-street parking make the downtown district an easily accessible and pleasant place to wander. Proceeding east along State Street out of the borough, one passes the Hamburg Elementary School, the Hamburg Center (a state run institution), and Kaercher Creek Park.

The intersection of State and Fourth Streets is the main crossroads in Hamburg. Fourth Street provides access north to I-78 and south to Route 61. When traveling west on I-78, the first Hamburg exit brings travelers through a residential district on North Fourth Street. The second exit for Hamburg is to Route 61. From Route 61 northbound, Hamburg is entered by turning onto Industrial Drive at the traffic light. Industrial Drive snakes through a series of industrial and commercial buildings and eventually ends at Lowland Road. Lowland Road passes under the I-78 overpass and parallels the Kernsville
Impounding basin before intersecting with State Street. Turning left (east) onto State Street, it is then necessary to cross the State Street Bridge into town. From Route 61 southbound, the road flies over Hamburg and the Schuylkill River to the southern end of town. At this point, a lighted intersection provides a left turn onto Fourth Street Hamburg.

Fourth Street is predominately residential, mixed with first floor businesses. North bound on Fourth Street, the First Assembly of God and Salem Churches are passed. Port Clinton Avenue, a winding road that parallels the Schuylkill River, turns off to the northwest before passing under I-78, and continuing to the village of Port Clinton.

Located north of I-78, in northern Hamburg is the neighborhood of Hamburg Heights. Here single family homes are situated on grassy plots fronting each street.

Traveling south on Fourth Street, after passing the Union Number 1 Fire Station, the landscape takes on more of a commercial character. A large commercial center containing businesses such as a Dollar General Store, a wine and spirits store, and an auto retailer, exists as Fourth Street intersects Route 61. This busy intersection is described in further detail in the Hamburg to Shoemakersville route description.

At the lighted intersection of Pine Street and Fourth Street, Pine Street becomes a secondary route leading to the Hamburg Area High and Middle Schools and their accompanying sports fields and facilities. Saint John's Lutheran Church and cemetery is also located on Pine Street (the front entrance to the High and Middle Schools is further south off Windsor Street). There are no sidewalks along several sections of this road, and the roads narrows, making sharing the road with bicyclists and pedestrians unsafe.

The borough’s connection to the Schuylkill River is evident north of State Street. Hamburg Park, located on Peach Alley and between Franklin and Island Streets, fronts the river. This beautiful park serves the community of Hamburg with a variety of activities within a dense residential neighborhood. There is a well-maintained baseball field that is used by local athletic leagues. The Hamburg Pool is a popular place during the summer. A playground is also available for younger children. Also accessible from the park is the Hamburg Bicentennial Trail, a pedestrian route that travels along the old Schuylkill Canal alignment. Remnants of the Old Schuylkill Canal are visible from along this trail.

South of State Street however, the river is all but hidden. Large tracts of industrial lands, fence-enclosed and visually cluttered with assorted buildings and stored materials, block all but a few views. Visual and physical connections are all but made impossible. An elevated Route 61 further blocks the river from the borough.

Also found in northern Hamburg is the Armory and a picnic facility. This neighborhood’s northern most boundary is Blue Mountain Road. The circuitous two-lane road follows a small valley stream. Found along Blue Mountain Road is the Olivet Blue Mountain Camp where a private trail leads to the Appalachian Trail.

Figure 4.6 The entrance to the Blue Mountain Camp.
Reconnections

Analysis

The downtown core of Hamburg focuses on the intersection of State Street and Fourth Street. The linkage Fourth Street provides between I-78 and Route 61 makes this road heavily used and developed. The downtown fabric remains tight and well developed, with building facades facing the street up to the sidewalk's edge. As one moves west along State Street to the Schuylkill River, the building facades are continuous. On the western section of State Street, just before the State Street Bridge, is the former railroad crossing that is still evident. The tracks have long been removed, but its mark in the streetscape is strongly evident.

Sidewalks are continuous on each side of State Street up to and across the bridge over the Schuylkill River. Businesses and residences are mixed along this section. Where shops are present on the first floor, offices or apartments are found above. On street parking is provided on both sides of the street. The municipal buildings are located one block north of State Street, on Third Street.

Fourth Street also has a mix of commercial and residential uses. The northern end of the street terminates at ramps to I-78. Building facades uniformly step back from the street as one approaches the highway. Here, row homes and apartment buildings transition to twins and single-family detached homes. To the south, the buildings remain up to the sidewalk edge. Commercial and office uses, although scattered, are consistent. On street parking on both sides of the street is permitted and is used. It is only near the southern terminus of Fourth Street does the tight town fabric break apart with newer buildings set behind large asphalt parking lots. Shopping centers on either side and a automobile dealer break the uniform streetscape. The southern terminus of Fourth Street, where it intersects with Route 61, is awkward. A traffic light controls four lanes of Route 61 traffic and permits cross traffic.

The areas north and east of State Street and Fourth Street are primarily residential. The areas north of I-78 and south east of Fourth Street are more recently developed residential neighborhoods. These newer developed neighborhoods, have fragmented sections of sidewalk or in some areas, none at all. The high school, middle school and athletic fields are located above Hamburg to the east. There is no pedestrian connection along Pine Street, connecting the school to the rest of Hamburg.

The area west of Fourth Street and south of State Street is predominately industrial and commercial. Since the Schuylkill River was a working river, these industrial uses were located close to the river for transportation and power. The railroad and canal paralleled the eastern side of the river, expanding this industrial district. Large warehouses, narrow streets, open parking lots and fenced yards occupy much of the land. Remnants of the canal and rail lines are visible, but are slowly being obliterated by building additions and road improvements. There are no sidewalks in much of this area and in some areas buildings are built to the streets edge, precluding any pedestrian space.

Findings

Most of Hamburg remains accessible along sidewalks and back alleys. A number of cross walks are not clearly delineated, or do not have accessible ramps. The more recent developments located to the north and west have incomplete sidewalk systems. The schools, located on the upper eastern areas of the town, are only easily accessible via sidewalks on Windsor Street, as Pine Street has no sidewalks and is narrow. The shopping centers on the southern end of town, near the intersection of Fourth and Route 61, are more difficult to walk to since one must traverse large parking areas to get to the front door.
Recommendations

Hamburg is located at the intersection of two major highways that make it vehicular access easy from all directions. This small town possesses a unique and interesting character in its downtown. A variety of local restaurants and specialty stores linked by wide sidewalks, and embellished by interesting architecture, make this self-sufficient community a destination location. However, there are some improvements necessary to improve Hamburg’s pedestrian connections within town and to serve users of the proposed pedestrian and cycle routes to Strausstown and Shoemakersville.

1. Historic Walking Trail.

Hamburg's interesting history and lively commercial district justify the establishment of a local interpretive trail highlighting historic sites, unique features, architectural and key destinations around the town. Signage should be developed to indicate the tour's route.

2. Trail connection to Strausstown.

There is a potential for a formal pedestrian/bicycle route linking Hamburg to Shartlesville and Strausstown. Signs directing trail users to these towns are necessary. These routes are further discussed in the trail matrix, chapter 2.

3. Signage.

The need for signage warning motorists of the existence of pedestrian and bicycle crossings is necessary at many locations.

4. Improved gateways into town.

Currently, the entrances into town from I-78 and Route 61 are unpleasant and do not enhance the town's image. Although major changes to these gateways may be long term improvements, the short term improvements would include signage and uniform street amenities such as landscaping and lighting.

5. State Street Bridge improvements.

State Street Bridge is a vital pedestrian/bicycle connection into Hamburg. The existing condition of the pedestrian sidewalks across the State Street Bridge is poor. Major improvements to the sidewalks to make them safe and usable by pedestrians and cyclists are needed. PennDOT is currently (June 2001) engaged in the design of repairs to the bridge. Provisions should be made to maintain the sidewalks and to add appropriate pedestrian scale lighting to this historic bridge.


Sidewalks in many areas of town need to be repaired where cracked or broken. There are a few areas where sidewalks need to be added and are needed to complete some pedestrian connections. Crosswalks need to be maintained by clearly marking the pavement. In the heart of town, these crosswalks might be constructed of a paving material rather than by merely annually painting.
HAMBURG TO SHOE MAKERSVILLE

LOCATION

The town of Shoemakersville is located approximately 1½ miles south of Hamburg. Route 61, a major north/south corridor, connects Shoemakersville to Leesport and Reading to the south, and Hamburg, Port Clinton and Schuylkill Heaven to the north. Route 61 passes on the eastern boundary of Shoemakersville, and is linked to the town by three access roads.

Centre Township borders the Borough of Shoemakersville to the west while Perry Township lies to the north, south and east. The Schuylkill River defines the western boundary of the township and the Miller Street Bridge provides the only link from Shoemakersville across the river to Centre Township.

HISTORY

Shoemakersville's history is deeply rooted in the industries that developed in Northern Berks County. Shoemakersville's industries thrived in the past, in part because of its location along the Schuylkill Canal and the Railroad.

Shoemakersville was incorporated in 1921 from Perry Township and covers 3.3 square miles. The town currently has a population of 1,372 residents.

DESCRIPTION / ANALYSIS

Shoemakersville is a quiet, small town surrounded by expansive acres of agricultural fields. The landscape of the village strongly reflects its industrial history. The village is dotted with small factories and industrial buildings, some of which continue to function. The remnants of historic buildings, like the Shoemakersville Railroad Station and the old lock tenders house along the historic alignment of the canal, are still occupied.
shoemakersville plan
The town is laid out in traditional fashion, with Main Street located at the heart of the town. Shoemakersville's current street layout is the result of organic growth, straying from the grid street pattern seen in Hamburg. Stemming from Main Street are a series of smaller roads lined with homes. Main Street is a conglomeration of small businesses, industrial buildings and side-by-side private residences, all showcasing early 20th century architecture. The juxtaposition of buildings with mixed uses has given Shoemakersville a truly unique appearance, devoid of chain stores and repetitious architecture. Wide sidewalks line both sides of the street and provide access for pedestrians to local attractions. On-street parking also lines both sides of the street and provides convenient access for motorists. The streetscape lacks any street trees and is dominated by overhead telephone and electric wires.

Located on the corner of Main and 6th Streets is the Salem United Methodist Church, one of three churches in Shoemakersville. Saint Luke's Church is located between Fourth and Fifth Street on Franklin Street and Saint Luke's Union is located at the intersection of Franklin and Church Avenue, near the local fire station.

The Perry Township Elementary School occupies the entire block between Fourth and Fifth Streets, and Reber and Chestnut Streets. The school currently blocks Reber Street for students to play during recess.

Shoemakersville Borough Hall is located on Main Street and is within close proximity to the police station. Nearby is the Miller Street Bridge, spanning the Schuylkill River providing a route into Centre Township. Located at the northern tip of Main and Ninth Streets is Shoemakersville Park. This six acre beautiful park is extremely well maintained and provides play equipment for young children and one baseball field.

There are three access points to Shoemakersville from Route 61. Along this segment of Route 61, formally named Shoemakersville Avenue in the borough, lie a few more recently developed stores including a local market, drug store and gas station/convenience store.

**Findings**

Much of the downtown is readily accessible along existing sidewalks and back alleys. The market and drug store face Route 61 backing the community. Connections to the River are limited, ironically since the river is located behind a single row of buildings facing Main Street. Although connections in town are provided, the roads leading from town do not provide any sidewalk or trail. More recent housing built north of “Downtown” has no sidewalk connections to the town.

**Recommendations**

The small town of Shoemakersville is an interesting example of a town with a history that continues to be part of the present day landscape. The unique character and the living history of the town provide opportunities to encourage local walking routes throughout the village. Fortunately, Main Street is already equipped with wide sidewalks that provide a safe corridor for pedestrians and give access to businesses. Shoemakersville’s close proximity to the Schuylkill River would provide a unique opportunity for greater connections to the riverfront. The Miller Street Bridge, a unique structure in itself, should be highlighted by providing views of it from the adjacent banks.

1. **Local Interpretive Trail.**

Shoemakersville has a rich and interesting history, the installation of an interpretive trail can highlight
historic spots such as the railroad station, the old lock tender building and the old alignment of the Schuylkill Canal. Additionally, an interpretive trail could direct pedestrians and cyclists to key areas within the town.

2. **Trail connection to Hamburg.**

There is a potential for a formal pedestrian/bicycle route linking Hamburg to Shoemakersville. An interpretive route following the remnants of the Schuylkill Canal, along the Schuylkill River, or traveling up Main Street and Route 61 is outlined in the trail matrix. (See Chapter 2)

3. **Sidewalks and crossings.**

Sidewalks in most areas of town simply need to be repaired where cracked or broken. There are a few areas where sidewalks need to be added and are needed to complete some pedestrian connections. Crosswalks need to be maintained by clearly marking the pavement. In the heart of town, these crosswalks may be constructed of a paving material rather than by merely annually painting. As new development continues along Route 61 in Shoemakersville, pedestrian connections back to adjacent neighborhoods should be completed.

4. **Waterfront connection.**

Public access is restricted to the shores of the Schuylkill River at Shoemakersville. The Borough may consider acquiring waterfront property as an investment for future access to the river. These lands could include parcels to the north or south which are primarily farmed land. Another option is the land between the river and the railroad, across the Miller Street Bridge.
Shartlesville

Location

Shartlesville is located near the center of Upper Bern Township in Northern Berks County. State Game Lands number 110, Weiser State Forest and the Appalachian Trail are located about a mile north. Shartlesville is located along Old Route 22 (Hex Highway) which is also the main street passing through town. Mountain Road, located on the western edge of town, is an access road to I-78 and the mountains to the north. This main east/west route borders the town on the north and is the main entrance to the town.

History

Shartlesville was founded in 1765 in honor of a Revolutionary War hero, Colonel Peter Shartle. This small village has a rich history and a majority of the native inhabitants are direct descendants of the original Pennsylvania Dutch. In fact, many people within the community continue to speak the Dutch dialect. Among the well-kept buildings in town is Haag's Hotel, which has been owned and operated by the same family since the early 1800's.

Description

When approaching Shartlesville from either Old Route 22 or I-78, it is apparent that Shartlesville is surrounded by expansive landscapes of agricultural fields. In the near distance, the Blue Mountains and hilly terrain provide an impressive backdrop. This small town clings to Old Route 22 (called Main Street through town) and is only about one block deep on either side.

Main Street, Shartlesville reminds one of a typical “Main Street America”, while still possessing its own unique character. Much like the other towns described in this section, businesses and private residences lie next door to each other. All of the buildings along Main Street have an individual character and are well kept. Many of the buildings are painted bright colors, setting themselves apart from each other. Lining both sides of the street are sidewalks and on-street parking.

Analysis

Main Street (old Route 22) forms the backbone of the Shartlesville. As it parallels I-78, the town closely hugs this road, expanding only a block to the north and south. The Shartlesville Township building, post office, elementary school and fire-house are all located along Main Street. The Friedens Union Church is located just off of Main Street, on Creek Road. The northern terminus of Fourth Street is home to the Shartlesville Community Park. Within this park can be found a baseball field, playground equipment, covered stage, and support facilities. Located just north of
plan of shartlesville
Findings

Within the town of Shartlesville, the existing sidewalk configuration provides a narrow, but adequate pedestrian connection. However, there is no sidewalk connection from Main Street to the park. At the intersection of Main Street and Mountain Road, the sidewalks abruptly end. These two intersecting roads bleed into large gravel lots on either side, creating pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. Connections over I-78 to the Dairy Queen and neighboring industrial park do not exist. These areas of recent development have not provided a safe walkable connection.

Recommendations

The town of Shartlesville has a unique character and it is an interesting place for pedestrians and cyclists to visit. There are multiple opportunities for trail users to stop, rest and grab a cold drink. There are existing sidewalks linking stores and hotels.

1. Local Interpretive Trail.

Shartlesville has a rich and interesting history. The installation of an interpretive trail will highlight historic spots such as the Haag's Hotel. Additionally, an interpretive trail could direct pedestrians and cyclists to key attractions and destinations within the town.
2. **Trail connection to Hamburg and Strausstown.**

There is a potential for a formal pedestrian/bicycle route linking Shartlesville to Hamburg and Strausstown. An interpretive route traveling along the Old Route 22 corridor is outlined in the trail matrix. (See Chapter 2)

3. **Signage.**

The need for signage warning motorists of pedestrian and bicycle crossings is necessary.

4. **Sidewalks and Crosswalks.**

Sidewalk connections to the village park are important in making this recreational facility safely accessible. Existing walks should continue to be maintained. The addition of pedestrian connections to the west of town to and along Mountain Road should be a priority. Reducing the number of entry points to the fruit stand and winery would improve this intersection and reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. Any improvements to the Mountain Road overpass should include bike lanes and sidewalks. Since Main Street is also Old Route 22, any crosswalks should be clearly marked and well signed.

5. **Connection.**

A pedestrian link to Roadside America and the adjacent businesses from town would link these areas and extend the length of visits to this small town.
Reconnections

Strausstown

Location

Strausstown is the western-most area examined during this study. The Borough of Strausstown is surrounded by Upper Tulpehocken Township and is just south of the I-78 corridor. Eastern Strausstown is bordered by Route 183 (Bernville Road), which provides the main access to I-78 from town. Old Route 22 serves as the backbone of Strausstown and is a two lane road that parallels I-78 east to Shartlesville and Hamburg.

History

Strausstown is named after John Strauss who founded the community and designed the basic street layout. The Borough was incorporated in 1920 from Upper Tulpehocken Township. There are 353 residents in the Borough. The town covers approximately 1.2 square miles.

Description

Strausstown is the smallest of the four towns covered in this study. This community has no intense commercial or business district, and is home to only a few small businesses including a tavern and a bank. When entering Strausstown from the east on Old Route 22, one passes a Texaco Station (visible from Route 183) and then the intersection of East Avenue, the access road to the Strausstown Elementary School.

Analysis

West of East Avenue there are sidewalks and on-street parking on both sides of the street. Old Route 22 is flanked on either side by private residences in turn-of-the-century architecture. Telephone lines, power lines and their accompanying utility poles line the street. The Borough Hall is also located on Old Route 22. Strausstown is only about one block deep on either side of Old Route 22.

Intersecting Old Route 22 is Walnut Street where Fire Company Number 1 is located. Across the street is the Post industrial building, the only industrial area in town. Walnut Road leads south to the Tulpehocken Area Junior and Senior High School.

Findings

This community has sidewalks through the town, however there are no pedestrian connections beyond the immediate downtown. The lands adjacent to the intersection of Old Route 22 and State Route 183 is planned to be a new community park. Should this plan come to fruition, pedestrian linkages to town should also be part of park development. The church just east of Route 183 on Old Route 22 likely includes members from town. A safe crossing and connection to the church from town does not exist. At the opposite side of town, connections to the newer homes and small sheepskin shop should be developed.
Recommendations

1. *Local Interpretive Trail.*

The installation of an interpretive trail from town that connects to the Old Route 22 network can highlight historic spots and direct pedestrians and cyclists to key areas within the town.

2. *Trail connection to Shartlesville and Hamburg.*

There is a potential for a formal pedestrian/bicycle route linking Strausstown to Shartlesville and Hamburg. An interpretive route traveling along the Old Route 22 corridor is outlined in the trail matrix. (See Chapter 2)

3. *Signage.*

The need for signage warning motorists of the existence of a trail and indicating pedestrian and bicycle crossings is necessary.
IMPLEMENTATION

Recommended Actions

The recommendations for each community are similar. The connection to the Schuylkill River trail in Hamburg and Shoemakersville and the Old Route 22 Hex Highway touring route in Shartlesville and Strausstown are important to strengthening regional identity.

Strengthening pedestrian connections within each town is important. Repairs to existing walks, re-establishing crosswalks and adding new sidewalks will greatly improve the safety and walk-ability of each town. Connections from residential neighborhoods to schools, parks and commercial and public resources should be on the top priority, since these are more commonly used by children. Creative yet simple additions to the pavement can be used to tell either a story about the town or point out significant features, sites, or routes. There is the potential to implement some type of medallion into the sidewalks in front of stores and other significant features. These medallions could resemble a horseshoe or some type of historic element that reflects the town's history. Businesses and the local government could purchase these medallions and install them into the sidewalks.

Crosswalks are one of the most critical elements, as this is the point where the pedestrian comes in direct potential conflict with vehicles. Clearly designating the crosswalk on the pavement can be accomplished a number of ways. Painting a walk across the asphalt is a common and low cost option. This does require regular maintenance and annual or semi-annual repainting. The delineation of the walk through a change in material is a more long term solution, with a higher initial construction cost, but a lower annual maintenance cost. Concrete, unit pavers, bricks, cobbles and other materials can be used to delineate the pedestrian crossing area. In addition to the crosswalk, signage should be incorporated, especially if no overhead traffic signals are present and use of the crosswalk is high.

In areas where on-street parking exists, the sidewalk at the crosswalk should be extended into the street, narrowing the distance from curb to curb and removing parked cars immediately adjacent the intersection. The extended walk also provides for small pedestrian spaces to accommodate some site amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, information signs or community bulletin boards and vegetation.

Signage should be used conservatively at key locations. Too many signs will only add confusion and an undesirable clutter, taking away from store front signs and billboards. Marking an historic walking tour, pointing to civic buildings or parks, or identifying an important site or structure could be done with signage. These signs should be uniform in color, size and style, creating a vocabulary identifiable to that particular town. Again these signs should be kept to a minimum, as residents already know where to go. These signs are simply to inform visitors about unique aspects of each town.

The unique character of the four villages mentioned in this chapter needs to be preserved. Re-establishing and strengthening the pedestrian connections in each location will help to make each village a more attractive place to live and work will assist in each town’s vitality, preservation and “livability”.

CHAPTER - 4
Reconnections

PHASING

The timing for installation of new sidewalks and streetscape amenities will largely depend on funding and capital improvement budgets. Since the crosswalks are linked to roads, roadway paving projects should include installation and marking of crosswalks.

1. First Priority

The first priority should be to complete the missing or fragmented sections of sidewalk within each community. Finishing these connections will be a major step in making the entire community walkable.

2. Second Priority

The second priority should be to clearly delineate the crosswalks. Moving people safely across roads is a critical component to the connectivity of a town.

3. Third Priority

The third priority would be signage and sidewalk amenities. These items, although not related to safety, positively add to the overall pedestrian experience, in each village.