COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
for the
BOROUGH OF FREEDOM

Prepared by
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Pittsburgh-Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October, 1989
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BOROUGH OF FREEDOM

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I. Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan for the Borough of Freedom was financed through a planning grant from the Beaver County Community Development Program for the purpose of examining existing development patterns and future development opportunities on a community-wide basis.

The planning process began early in 1989 when a local advisory committee was formed and a consultant was selected to prepare an economic revitalization study that would be focused on the Borough's commercial core. The scope of the project began to take on larger proportions as the committee and the consultant began to examine a wide array of municipal problems and virtually all land use issues in the community. The decision was reached to proceed with the project in terms of an update of the community's comprehensive plan.

This document updates the previous comprehensive plan completed in 1975. While development patterns have remained largely intact during the past fifteen (15) years, a number of issues relative to future development within the community were of concern to Borough officials:

- Erosion of the commercial and industrial tax base, and the resultant heavy reliance on residential land uses to sustain the municipal budget.

- The image of the community to visitors and prospective investors.

- The physical deterioration of the core area of the community and the absence of adequate parking and convenience commercial establishments to meet the consumptive needs of Borough residents.

- Reuse opportunities for a 31 acre tract of municipally controlled land that has outlived its usefulness as a recreational facility.

- A strategy to maximize the positive impact of a new municipal complex
• Reuse opportunities for two former school properties

• The potential for riverfront development along the Ohio River

• The impact of several regional transportation projects on development patterns within the Borough

This document includes all of the traditional elements of a comprehensive plan as required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. In addition, emphasis has been placed on the formulation of a strategy that addresses the concerns of the advisory committee.

The comprehensive plan attempts to communicate a series of land use adjustments and physical improvements that when applied together, begin to define a direction for the Borough that will insure its viability well into the future.
II. Historical Overview

Like most of Beaver County, Freedom's history and development is closely associated with the rivers because of its strategic location, and the activities and opportunities associated with it.

The first settlers in the area that is now Beaver County were the Seneca, Shawnee and Delaware Indians. The first European settlers were of a Scotch-Irish descent. During the Revolutionary War, the Americans had to contend with not only the English, but the native inhabitants who were stirred to rebellion by the English. In 1800, the Pennsylvania State legislature carved eight new counties out of Allegheny County, which had until that time, encompassed all of the land in the state west of the Allegheny River.

The history of Freedom as a unified Borough is fragmented by both time and space; a function of the physical characteristics of the land and the process of growth and expansion. It is necessary to look as far back as the early 1800's and as far away as Germany to begin to comprehend the history of Freedom.

In 1831 Bernard Muller, known in Germany as Count Maximilian de Leon, emigrated to this country and established the Harmony Society with about 40 followers in the Village of Economy. Dissension ensued between Muller and the leaders of the society and he proceeded to break away from the Society and establish his own village. The Count purchased land in Phillipsburg. This required that the boatyard and manufacturing facility that were located on the purchased land be relocated. Stephen Phillips and Jonathan Betz, operators of this boatyard, determined that an area further downstream would be suitable for this kind of activity because of the great depth of the water and the amount of land that was available. The two men quickly purchased 101 acres on the Ohio River from General Abner Laylock, for $2,000 and established their boat-building business as Phillips and Betz and soon after as Phillips and Graham in 1832. The village that developed around the boatyard was incorporated as the Borough of Freedom on April 16, 1832 under the provisions of the Act of Assembly.

The original Borough included only the land north of Dutchman's Run along the Ohio River to what is now Rochester and East Rochester Boroughs. Before this, Captain William Vicary, a Philadelphia sea captain, established residence on a plot of land south of Dutchman's
Run. Construction on his now famous three story mansion began in 1826. It was constructed of massive stone bricks drawn by sledges to the site. Ramps had to be built in order that the huge stones could be dragged into place by workers who received a salary of $.25 a day plus dinner. In 1837, Captain Vicary surveyed the remainder of land that he owned between Dutchman's and Harvey's Run. This area was incorporated in 1867 as the Borough of St. Clair, named for General Arthur St. Clair. The southernmost section of the Borough, known as the Vicary extension was later annexed by the Borough of St. Clair. The two Boroughs existed as separate political jurisdictions until they merged on May 4, 1896, by a charter of incorporation issued by the Governor of Pennsylvania under the Act of June 6, 1893. The Boroughs had, since their original incorporation, maintained a single post office and almost identical social and business interests. At this time, their combined population was almost 1500.

During the 19th century the boat-building interest of the original firm of Phillips and Betz, or what eventually came to be known as the Freedom Boat Building Society, established itself as one of the largest boat builders in Beaver County. The prosperity of this venture prompted the growth of a variety of ancillary activities, the largest of which was that of John A. Baker and Company which manufactured steam engines, supplying the boat builders located along the Ohio River.

McKee and Company established a wagon manufactory in the Borough of Freedom, trading and selling their wares in the most western and southern regions of the nation. The company ceased business in the early 1880's, and the site was purchased by the Craig Manufacturing Company, what later came to be the Freedom Casket Company, in 1889. The firm specialized in the manufacture of cloth caskets, robes, casket lining, and other goods associated with the business of undertaking. It was located in the center of the Borough along the Dutchman's Run. In the early 1900's it expanded at this location and added 2 new buildings totaling 35,000 square feet. The company's products were sold in the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia.

The Freedom Oil Works Company, or as it is better known, the Valvoline Oil Company, was organized in 1879 by Stephen A. Craig and H.S. McConnel. It was incorporated in 1889 under the laws of Pennsylvania. The refinery employed many people and maintained
distributing offices that covered not only the State of Pennsylvania but West Virginia and Ohio as well.

The history of the Borough of Freedom is closely associated with the great number of churches, representing a variety of denominations, located within its bounds. The first to be established was the Methodist Church, organized in 1836 by the Rev. Joshua Monroe. Services were held in the schoolhouse until the church building was completed in 1842.

The history of Freedom in this century is inextricably woven to that of Beaver County. As industrial development flourished along the Ohio and Beaver rivers, Freedom became a link in the process of these manufacturing operations. Most of the residents of Freedom Borough found employment in one of these businesses or at the rail yards that traverse the flat land located along the Ohio River.
III. Location, Access and Transportation

Access to a place by automobile, efficient movement within it, and the ability to reach one's destination readily are commodities of high value in our society. Historically, access has always played a significant role in determining settlement patterns and defining centers of activity such as urban places.

It is important for any community to have access to other places, to maintain a logical and comprehensive system of travel within its bounds that serves its particular needs, and provide adequate and convenient parking facilities.

This section addresses each factor individually since they play separate roles in the Borough's development. The final part of this section will point out those issues that require attention and action in order to provide the most effective, efficient, and safe system of transportation and parking.

A. Location and Access

The Regional Location Map shows that the Borough of Freedom is located in the eastern quadrant of Beaver County along the Ohio River. It consists of approximately 416 acres of land that generally runs parallel in a north-south direction, to the Ohio River. It is bordered by the Borough of Conway on the south, New Sewickley Township to the east and the Boroughs of Rochester and East Rochester form its northern border. The Ohio River creates its western border as the Borough overlooks Monaca on the opposite side of the waterway.

A concentric 10 mile radius around the Borough includes most of Beaver County and western areas of Allegheny County and Butler County. The 20 mile radius encompasses the central business district of the City of Pittsburgh and border areas in the State of Ohio. Freedom is within 30 miles of Steubenville Ohio and Weirton West Virginia as well as areas to the west that include New Kensington in Westmoreland County.
B. Regional Transportation Network

The location of Freedom within the regional transportation network is depicted on the map that follows this page. The Borough of Freedom is characterized by its own network of roadways that provide internal access and egress.

- The dominant highway in the Borough is the Route 65 expressway. This roadway passes through the Borough, beginning at its southern tip and runs parallel to the Ohio River until it exits the Borough in the northwest. The Route 65 corridor has had both positive and negative impacts on the Borough but must be recognized as the means by which the greatest amount of vehicular traffic reaches the Borough. Route 65 provides the Borough with access to the region's largest market area, the City of Pittsburgh, and connects the Borough with other riverfront communities. Most of the highways and streets that connect Freedom with neighboring areas are accessed by the Route 65 corridor.

- This includes Route 18 which extends from Route 65 north to the Pennsylvania Turnpike and south to Pittsburgh.

- Route 18 westbound, provides access to Route 60, or the Beaver Valley Expressway. This highway provides the most rapid access to the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport and will, when its "missing link" is complete, reach the greater New Castle area.

- Route 68 is accessed from the Borough by Route 65 as it passes through Rochester. It provides access to much of Beaver County, areas east to Butler County and West through Beaver and Midland.

- Route 51, which runs parallel to the Ohio on its western shore, extends off Route 65 in East Rochester and in Rochester. Following a north south axis, Route 51 provides alternative access to
Pittsburgh and the airport and continues south to the points in Fayette County.

- **Route 228** which extends from Ninth Avenue east through New Sewickley Township provides indirect access to the northern areas of Allegheny County and to Butler County.

- The proposed **Crow's Run Expressway** project which would involve widening the existing Right-of-Way to 4 lanes at some points will provide excellent access to areas of growth and other transportation corridors. With its source in Conway Borough at Route 65, the expressway will link the Beaver Valley region directly to the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Interstate 79, Route 19, and the Cranberry Township area which is experiencing substantial rates of growth and development. A map depicting the proposed corridor location for the Crows Run Expressway follows this page.

C. Circulation Within the Borough

The previous discussion of transportation issues portrayed the means by which the Borough is accessed from outside points. This section is concerned with outlining the transportation network that exists within the Borough, the system of roadways and pattern of traffic circulation that characterize Freedom. This section will also evaluate the service and condition of this network.

The Borough's roadway system is organized in the typical grid-iron fashion. As a result of the Borough's orientation to, and reliance on the River, streets run parallel or perpendicular to the Ohio River. In general the streets within Freedom serve only local traffic. Only Second Street, Ninth Street, and Harvey's Run Road involve traffic volumes that indicate their regional service base.

The Borough's roadways are constructed of a variety of substances. The newer streets and those utilized by commercial and industrial traffic are generally paved with
PROPOSED CORRIDOR LOCATION: CROWS RUN EXPRESSWAY
DATA SOURCE: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
asphalt, but many of the right-of-ways along the hillside in the residential areas have a brick or stone surface. Some remain unpaved either as bare earth or covered by a sparse layer of rocks.

Freedom is beset by a number of issues that concern the efficiency and condition of its local road system. Most of the existing problems are a result of the topography of the Borough. The most significant issue is the obviously unadaptable nature of the existing grid-iron pattern to the terrain. Streets that are oriented perpendicular to the river climb directly up the hillside. In general, these streets provide difficult access because of the lack of consideration given to the topography their original design. In many cases automobiles must struggle to travel up the hill, and the effect of winter weather can only serve to magnify these problems. This pattern also contributes to the poor condition of many of the roadways as gravity inevitably takes its toll. In such instances rights-of-way are either closed or abandoned, a factor which adds to the inaccessibility of certain areas.

Another issue that influences the condition of local streets is the surfacing material used to construct the roadways in the Borough. It was mentioned above that a number of roads are constructed of brick. For many years brick was considered to be a good material for roadway surfaces because of its strength, and this is still true today. But unless the foundation is solidly based in cement or stone, a brick surface will warp and eventually collapse for lack of support. This has occurred in many places within the Borough of Freedom.

The pattern of circulation within the Borough is also impacted by the system of traffic movement induced by such controls as stop signs and signalized intersections. The grid-iron pattern suggests the existence of 4-way or 2-way required stops at intersections and signalization at those intersections where two corridors that sustain fairly high levels of traffic cross. The latter is not characteristic of the Borough of Freedom. Even at the 100% intersection of Third Street and Eighth Avenue, vehicular traffic is only required to obey a stop sign. At those intersection where a stop sign is appropriate other factors such as poor visibility often contribute to their danger.
D. Parking

Although it is important to be able to reach a place by automobile in the most efficient manner it is equally important upon arrival to be able to park one's car in a location that is within proximity to the final destination. This means that any community that generates activity and traffic must provide adequate parking.

Each land use within the Borough generates a certain volume and pattern of traffic and therefore has its own parking need. Residential uses in the Borough of Freedom typically meet their parking needs through the use of driveways or on-street spaces. Industrial parking, since the use is concentrated in areas along the river where land is available has never been an issue in the Borough of Freedom. Commercial land uses and community facilities typically present the greatest need for parking. Unlike residential uses, the demand for commercial parking is not constant. Commercial parking demand is typically intensive during certain times of the day or on certain occasions (during working hours, special events, or weekly religious services) and practically non-existent at other times.

The commercial area is served by two types of parking facilities. The first is on-street which represents the greatest supply of parking in the Borough. Within the commercial district, on-street parking is permitted on both sides of Third Street and Eighth Avenue. The second type is the off-street surface lot. Besides the facility that serves the Post Office exclusively, there is only one lot that is designed to meet the parking needs of the commercial area. This is the private bank parking lot located along the east side of Third Street between Fifth and Sixth Street. This lot contains approximately 30 spaces which are generally utilized by bank employees and others that work in, or frequent the commercial district. It is generally well utilized during working hours.

Parking supply is generally sufficient in most areas of the Borough. The only area where there exists a problem is along the Eighth Street corridor in the high density residential/commercial district and surrounding areas where residential uses, civic, and commercial uses operate within proximity to one another. Along Eighth Street are a number of
uses which create intermittent demand for parking. These include the Borough Fire Hall and two auto repair facilities that frequently make use of curb spaces because of a lack of internal space. These demands, combined with the constant residential demand create an unmet parking need in this area.

E. Planning Implications

The analysis of the regional and local transportation network and the local parking supply illustrates that the Borough has been given the potential to stimulate growth but at the same time it cannot undue past errors. The first part stresses the importance of the Route 65 corridor for the Borough of Freedom, it also points out the increasing potential for growth that will result from the improvements to various transportation corridors, such as the Crow's Run Expressway and even the completion of the Beaver Valley Expressway.

The local transportation network however cannot be said to be as well off. The Borough must deal with issues that have arisen as a result of topography and the imposition of a gridiron street pattern on such a surface. The Borough can only act to provide the necessary maintenance and repair to combat the existing and potential conditions. Recently the County Board of Commissioners approved a Community Development project in the Borough that would initiate such repairs. This project will improve the condition of existing streets that are in need of repaving and leveling. The Borough must control the current and future condition of its roadways in order to insure that the best service is provided and to mitigate the negative influences and insure that past mistakes are not repeated.

Intersection improvements are also required in some cases. This plan suggests that the Borough consider the various forms of traffic control that will insure safe, efficient traffic circulation. The intersection of Eighth Avenue and Third Street is of the highest priority since it sustains a high level of traffic passing through it each day. To improve visibility and control of movement at this intersection serious consideration to the signalization of the crossing or the elimination of on-street parking on the east side of Third Street must be made.
The parking supply in the Borough seems to be sufficient except in the vicinity of Eighth Street. This can be partially corrected through strict code enforcement which will restrict all commercial activity to their respective property. Generally the unmet demand is a result of the high density development and mixed-use nature of the area. For the future, the Borough can insure that any new development or change in existing uses will be supported by sufficient parking in order that this situation does not grow worse.
IV. Demographic Trends

A. Population and Households

The Borough of Freedom has been losing population in recent decades. The actual trend can be seen in Table 1. The total loss of population was 313 or 12% over the 16 year span from 1970 to 1986. This table also shows that since 1980, the Borough has been experiencing an aggregate growth in its population of 2.6%, according to population estimates prepared by the Southwestern Regional Planning Commission.

Table 1
Population & Household Trends
The Borough of Freedom 1970-1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Household</th>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>820</td>
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Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
Table 2 shows that the Borough's population is expected to continue on this path and expand into the next century. The number of households has been declining steadily since 1970 and is projected to continue to do so well into the first decade of the twenty-first century. The divergence between population growth and household decline at the same time can generally be attributed to new family formations where, because of changing social norms, households tend to incorporate fewer and fewer members.

Table 2
Population & Household Trends
The Borough of Freedom
Projected Growth, 1990-2000

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>10 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
Table 3 indicates that the age cohort between 25 and 34 expanded at the most significant rate during the decade between 1970 and 1980. Other age groups that experienced growth during this decade of overall decline include the youngest cohort, under the age of five and those between the ages of 65 and 74. The 20-24 age group experienced only a slight increase during this same time period.

Table 3
Population by Age Group
The Borough of Freedom
1970-1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Percent Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>(68)</td>
<td>(29.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>(98)</td>
<td>(45.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>(78)</td>
<td>(30.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>(36.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>(30.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 years</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(6.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74 years</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 + years</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(6.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2443 2272 171 (7%)

Median 29.2

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

An understanding of these trends as well as regional and national trends suggest that the 1990 census will reveal a substantially older population in the Borough of Freedom where the majority of the population is over the age of 55. This implies a consideration of the specific needs and demands of an older population, which are different than those of a younger population.

IV - 3
B. Education

The decade between 1970 and 1980 witnessed a significant increase in the percent of the Borough's population that has achieved a high school education, as indicated by Table 4. In 1970 only 40.6% of the Borough's population over the age of 25 had completed a high school education while by 1980 this proportion had increased to almost 60%. This trend can be compared to the proportion of the population over the age of 25 that has a college-level education. In 1970 barely 2% of those over 25 had received a college degree but by 1970 this percentage had more than doubled to 5.4%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of School Completed</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary: 0-4 years</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 years</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School: 1-3 years</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College: 1-3 years</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more years</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of High School Graduates</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
C Income

Table 5 seems to indicate that categorical incomes have increased. Fewer households are forced to survive on meager incomes. In 1988 less than one quarter (22.5%) of the households in the Borough earned less than $15,000 while in 1980 almost 45% of the population fell into this income classification.

Table 5
Income by Households
The Borough of Freedom
1980-1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1988</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than $10,000</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-$14,999</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000-$24,999</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000-$34,999</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000-$49,999</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 +</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
After accounting for the effects of inflation, it is obvious that incomes in Freedom have not increased substantially\(^1\). Table 6 shows that over one-half of the Borough's population continues to be considered of low or moderate income.

Table 6
Low and Moderate Income
The Borough of Freedom
1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2,266</th>
<th>1,150</th>
<th>50.75%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low and moderate persons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Families</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>47.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low and moderate families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

\(^1\) The overall rate of inflation for the United States during the period between 1980 and 1988 was 38.2%, or an average of 4.8 % per annum.
D. Employment

The Borough of Freedom, like Beaver County and the Southwestern Pennsylvania region generally, has experienced a significant change in its economic base in the last few decades. The most notable characteristic of the labor force is the high unemployment rate that plagues the Beaver County area as a direct result of the decline of the manufacturing industry, specifically the primary metals sector. Between 1970 and 1980 the Borough's unemployment rate increased by almost 10%.

Table 7
Civilian Labor Force
The Borough of Freedom
1970-1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>(93)</td>
<td>(9.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>(174)</td>
<td>(19.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>253.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unemployment Rate 3.4% 13.3%

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
The unemployment rate stems from significant shifts in the make-up of the local employed labor force as evidenced by Table 8. In 1980 almost 45% of the Borough's employed population worked in the manufacturing sector of the economy. The greatest impact of the decline of the steel industry has only been felt here since 1982. It is anticipated that by the inception of the next decade only 20% of the Borough's labor force will be employed in the manufacturing sector. Another 24.1% of the Borough's population was employed in the trade industries while almost one-third found employment in the professional and service fields.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th># of Persons</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Retail trade</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional &amp; Related Service</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>527</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
This shift has evidenced a regional trend toward an occupational base that is more white-collar in nature and that employs more people in the Service industries, Retail and Wholesale Trade, as well as the Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate industries. Table 9 illustrates this breakdown for the entire County.

Table 9
Employment by Industry
Beaver County
1975-1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>(165)</td>
<td>(63.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2,377</td>
<td>1,531</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>(1,162)</td>
<td>(48.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>40,252</td>
<td>30,851</td>
<td>10,980</td>
<td>(29,272)</td>
<td>(72.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCU</td>
<td>1,661</td>
<td>2,085</td>
<td>3,033</td>
<td>1,372</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>1,310</td>
<td>1,245</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>10,224</td>
<td>11,311</td>
<td>10,495</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE</td>
<td>1,596</td>
<td>1,834</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>7,904</td>
<td>10,106</td>
<td>10,533</td>
<td>2,629</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65,379</td>
<td>59,149</td>
<td>39,400</td>
<td>(25,979)</td>
<td>(39.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

Those economic sectors that have suffered substantial declines in employment such as Manufacturing, Mining and Construction will begin to level out during the next decade as the region moves towards a more balanced economic base. It is expected that regional trends will continue to determine the economic future of the Borough of Freedom, as they have done historically.
E. **Occupations**

Table 10 indicates that in 1980 the greatest proportion of the Borough's residents were occupied as operators, fabricators and laborers. This balance has been changing significantly in recent years. By the inception of the 1990's there will be fewer than 20% of the Borough's population who are occupied in these fields.

### Table 10
**Occupations**  
**The Borough of Freedom**  
**1980**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th># of Persons</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial and Professional</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical, Sales &amp; Administrative Support</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Forestry &amp; Fishing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision Production, Craft &amp; Repair</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operators Fabricators &amp; Laborers</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>739</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Source:** U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

The technical, sales, and administrative support occupations accounted for a substantial proportion of the Borough's employed persons in 1980. The service occupations are expected to show the greatest rate of growth in the next decade and employ a greater percentage of the Borough's population.
F. **Regional Economic Trends**

The characteristics of the Borough of Freedom, as noted in its historical development pattern and the various economic and demographic indicators, are to a great extent, a result of events and trends external to the Borough itself. Freedom is an integral part of a region that developed around the production and distribution of steel and its related industries.

A number of factors including, but not limited to labor problems, foreign competition, and the trends of the international market led to the decline of the steel production industry in Western Pennsylvania. It was forecast in the early 1960 that such a decline was imminent but generally conceded that it would only be a function of the overall cycle of the industry. By 1982 it became obvious that this downturn would result in fundamental changes in the primary metals industry. The preeminence of heavy industrial production in the Western Pennsylvania region had come to an end. This realization is still not complete although its consequences are. The region is now obliged to deal with the effects of these events in economic, social, physical and even psychological terms.

There is a new set of conditions that are emerging that must be contended with and taken advantage of at the same time. The Western Pennsylvania region is expanding as a center of business, education, service, and transport activity. New, smaller businesses are emerging from the ruins of the monolith steel making firms. The region's colleges and universities are rapidly advancing in the medical research and technology fields. Business and personal services are being demanded and met at an ever increasing rate. Finally new modes and networks of transportation are bringing travellers through the Greater Pittsburgh area at an ever increasing rate.

While it is necessary to contend with those consequences of the decline of the steel industry, it is also necessary to take advantage of new opportunities.
The Borough of Freedom has traditionally been significantly impacted by regional trends and although it is impossible to separate its future from outside economic influences, it is possible to identify regional development issues that will have an indirect impact on the Borough. These include the expansion of the Greater Pittsburgh Airport midfield terminal, the construction of the Crow's Run Expressway and the completion of the Route 60 (Beaver Valley Expressway) corridor. Each of these projects are expected to be completed in the early 1990's.

The airport expansion project will undoubtedly result in the creation of new employment opportunities, which should in turn result in a positive impact on unemployment in Beaver County. While Freedom may derive its fair share of the employment benefit, other more tangible economic benefits such as housing development and business development will probably be more focused on suburban locations with immediate access to Route 60. Freedom's residential real estate market may stabilize as a result of increased demand for affordable housing within 30 minutes drive of the airport.

The impact of the Crow's Run Expressway is more difficult to predict. PennDOT planners have yet to determine whether the project will involve an upgraded two lane highway or a major four lane limited access expressway. It is apparent, however, that any interchange with Route 65 will not be located within the Borough's boundary. The impacts of the Crow's Run Expressway are therefore expected to be secondary, i.e., spin-off market enhancement for the sale and improvement of existing structures due to improved accessibility. Even if the Crow's Run Expressway were to generate demand for development sites in the vicinity of Route 65, there is a shortage of raw land with moderate terrain in Freedom that is available for development.

The benefits from completion of the 16 mile "missing link" of the Beaver Valley Expressway will be even more remote in terms of impact in the Borough of Freedom. This project is geographically removed from the Freedom area. The major economic impact of this project is likely to be focused along completed sections of the highway and the New Castle/Sharon
area which will benefit from enhanced access to the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Growth and development in the region will unquestionably improve the quality of life for Borough residents. While the above described projects represent significant advancements for the region, their impact on the Borough's tax base will probably be indirect at best.
V. Land Use

This section examines the spatial qualities of the land located in the Borough of Freedom. Within the scope of this plan it is necessary to understand the natural and man made environment, the Borough's particular pattern of development and the role played by these in the overall community. This task is accomplished by analyzing the Borough's physical characteristics and the pattern of land uses that are found here.

A. Existing Characteristics

The Borough of Freedom consists of a total of .86 square miles. Geographically it runs in a linear fashion along the Ohio River except for a land area that juts in a north eastern direction from the center of the Borough. At its southern end, Freedom is bordered by the Borough of Conway, to the west by New Sewickley Township and Rochester Township and to the north by East Rochester Borough. As its history suggests, Freedom has generally developed in conjunction with the economic activities associated with the River. Its street pattern is also reflective of this orientation, running parallel and perpendicular to the Ohio River in the traditional grid-iron pattern. The Borough is traversed by Dutchman's Run which flows from New Sewickley Township through the center of Freedom and empties into the Ohio River below Eighth Street. The topography associated with this waterway creates a physical barrier that divides the Borough into eastern and western components.

By far the most striking characteristic of the Borough is its topography. The Borough lies along a hillside that rises from the base of the Ohio River. Much of the Borough is affected by slopes in excess of 10%. The area of the most excessive slope is the land that juts out from the center of the Borough into New Sewickley Township in the vicinity of Dutchman's Run Creek. The only land areas that have less than a 9% slope are the river bank and the land area in the center of the Borough. The excessive slope of the Borough has rendered a portion of land unusable and other land inconvenient and difficult for development and maintenance. It has also impacted the
condition and pattern of existing uses and will demand consideration in any future plans for the community.

Because of Freedom's orientation towards the Ohio River it is beset by the effects of its flooding. Although the bank of the river is only considered to be in the 500-year floodplain, more than a half-dozen serious floods have threatened the land area in proximity to the River. This is compounded by the flow of Dutchman's Run Creek into the Ohio which creates an even greater flood hazard. Environmentally sensitive land areas must be recognized in any plan for future development within the community.

B. Land Use Development Pattern

Land uses within the Borough fall under the categories of residential, commercial, industrial, and community facilities, each of which are a part of the fabric and life of Freedom the following analysis will examine the predominance, location, and function of these four different classes of uses that can be found in the community.

1. Residential

Like most communities, the greatest proportion of land in the Borough is devoted to residential uses. The predominance of such activities is even more pronounced in Freedom that in most municipalities. Most of the residential uses are single-family, detached dwellings. The second most predominant residential uses are attached dwelling units, or two-family homes. A final category of residential uses with the Borough is the multi-family, or multi-unit structure.

In the section of this report devoted to housing, an in-depth analysis is undertaken of the location and condition of residential structures. The purpose of this narrative is to stress the preeminence of residential uses in the Borough, and the range of types and condition that can be found within the boundaries of the Borough.
Residential uses are by no means confined to a single area within the Borough. They stretch continuously from one end to the other, interrupted only on occasion by another use. The only area within the Borough in which residential uses are not found is along the river front where the railroad tracks traverse the land. The housing analysis will stress the importance of maintaining and upgrading the current housing stock and the need to establish an appropriate mix of residential uses that will meet emerging market demand.

Planning theory suggests that efforts to retain a strong residential base in any community are well directed and necessary. In order to achieve a well balanced tax base, a variety of land uses that exist within a harmonious whole must contribute equally to the economic needs of the community.

2. Commercial

Commercial uses can be found in a concentrated area within the Borough that encompasses the northeast side of Third Avenue from Fifth Street to Ninth Street and along both sides of Eighth Street. This district consists of a few eating and drinking establishments, a number of banks, auto service centers, a neighborhood convenience store, and a parcel service and storage center. These uses are intermixed with residential structures, community facilities, and institutional uses to a great degree, prohibiting the establishment of a traditional commercial core "district".

This has not always been the case. The Borough had a thriving commercial district that extended along both sides of Third Avenue until the expansion of the Route 65 right-of-way forced the razing of most of the structures. The results of this have been devastating for the commercial environment of the Borough and the commercial district still suffers from its effects. The commercial uses that have been able to survive
barely meet the consumptive needs of Borough residents, much less attract consumers or visitors from surrounding neighborhoods.

Despite the obvious constraints, an effort must be made to renew the commercial area of the Borough. If the commitment to enhancing the commercial area is made, rebuilding efforts can be relatively simple. It must begin with the definition of a goal in order that the efforts be appropriately directed. The Borough's commercial area will serve a small market area that has limited means and limited demand. The natural function of such a neighborhood commercial area is to serve the immediate and particular needs of the citizenry. This suggests that such an area should not attempt to compete with other business districts or with more developed shopping centers, particularly malls, which function on a much greater scale and serve a substantially larger market area.

Specifically, because of the spatial limitations of this area, the Borough might consider devoting more land to commercial uses, but only where existing residential uses will not be negatively impacted and where such uses will add to the visual improvement of the core area.

3. Industrial

Industrial uses in the Borough of Freedom are generally concentrated along the Ohio River. Much of this land is consumed by rail tracks that serve the Conway Switching Station, but the remnants of industry can still be found along the riverfront. The Ashland Oil company which operated a refinery here has recently reduced its operations. The only remaining activity will be a small rust-proofing plant that employs between 20 and 25 persons while the refinery had employed over 200 persons at one time. The physical plant of the refinery will be completely demolished within the next two years. This will free up a great deal of industrial
space along the river bank. But this land area is accessible only through Rochester and East Rochester.

Another related industrial use in the Borough is the Ashland Chemical Company located at First Street and Fourth Avenue. The company does not produce anything at this location but distributes its industrial chemicals from this site to manufacturers in the region.

The activity of the rail lines that traverse the Borough along the riverbank has been reduced in recent years as freight passes through the Conway switching station with less frequency.

Because of its employment generating capabilities, industrial uses are generally considered to be a community asset. It is obvious, that for a number of reasons pertaining to the changing economic climate, the use of industrial land is the Borough of Freedom does not necessarily constitute the best and highest use of land. There is still a productive niche which the Borough can continue to serve but public action and attention to the use of this land must be served. The riverbank area is one of the Borough's greatest economic assets, a productive or industrial use may indeed be the most appropriate use for this land because of the existing constraints and options that are available but public action to retain or promote a certain activity can greatly improve the economic benefit of the land to the Borough. Gaining public control of the riverfront site is a practical alternative for insuring a beneficial future use on a transitional site.

With the proper enhancements, a great deal of activity can be generated by a waterfront amenity. The Borough of Freedom should take advantage of its location along the Ohio. Proposals for recreational boating or passive pedestrian recreation have been made, but the current uses
4. Community Facilities

The Borough of Freedom is home to a variety of uses and activities that are categorized as community facilities. They include educational facilities, religious institutions, municipal buildings, historical sites and recreation facilities. Community facilities also includes the provision of utility and public safety services which are also addressed in this section. The Community Facilities map which follows depicts the location of these amenities.

- Educational Facilities

The Freedom Area Middle School, which serves the combined district of Freedom, New Sewickley Township, and Conway Borough, is located in the southwestern quadrant of the Borough. The district has a total enrollment of 2037. There are four school facilities that function within this combined system. Two of these are located in New Sewickley (the High School and an Elementary) and one in the Borough of Conway. The Freedom School District originally merged with the New Sewickley Township system, and more recently added the Conway system. Since the merger, enrollment has remained fairly stable and only a slight decline is expected in the future. It is not expected that the decrease will be substantial enough to affect the need for facilities and none are expected to be abandoned.

There are two school buildings, in addition the Middle School, that are located in the Borough of Freedom, both of which had been part of the combined district with New Sewickley. The former Liberty Junior High School, at
Fourth Avenue and Tenth Street has recently been converted to a multi-family dwelling, and the former Freedom High School, which currently houses the Borough's public library. Both of these facilities require public consideration in order that the structures may continue to act as community assets.

• Public Buildings

Recently the old Municipal Building located on Eighth Street at Fourth Avenue was razed. Because of its condition and limited capacity, demolition was the only option. The community facilities map indicates the location of the new Municipal Complex along Third Avenue. It will house the municipal offices, the library, and the Freedom Fire Department. The new location and the proposed plan are very positive developments and activities for the Borough. High visibility of a civic use is an important contributor to community image. The re-use of the site of the previous building must be taken seriously by Borough officials to insure that it remains in scale with the existing environment and adds to the commercial viability of the core area.

• Public Safety

The Borough's police service is now provided by the Rochester Police Department. The Borough signed a contract with the Borough of Rochester, effective January 1, 1988 to provide public safety services. The Department employs a total of 8 full time and 9 part time patrolmen and maintains a fleet of 5 patrol cars. Since taking over Freedom's service in 1988 the Department has increased their manpower by 1 full time and 5 part time officers. The Rochester Police
Department is also responsible for public safety services in East Rochester.

- **Historical Resources**

The restoration of the Vicary House must be considered the most significant activity in the realm of community facilities planning in the Borough. The former home of Sea Captain William Vicary was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 after it was barely saved from demolition in the Route 65 expansion project. The structure is currently being restored to its original appearance while utilities and other functional needs are being met. When completed, the Vicary House will be home to the Beaver County Historical Foundation Office which will offer various displays and community activities intended to make residents aware of the County's history. The Beaver County Historical Society will maintain its reference library facility at this location. The restoration and reuse of this magnificent structure will contribute a great deal to the sense of place and history that is needed in the Borough. The new use will serve as an activity generator, and is expected to enhance the westbound entrance portal to the community via the Route 65 exit ramp.

- **Recreation**

The Borough maintains two public parks that serve the community as centers of pedestrian activity and as play areas for the Borough's youth. These include the playground adjacent to the Ashland Chemical Company, and the area of open space located above Fourth Avenue between Fifth Street and Fourth Street. This parcel was dedicated to the Borough on behalf of its original founders, Stephen Phillips, and Jonathan Betz. Besides
the grassy land area that runs along Third Avenue at the ramp of the Route 65 corridor, this is the only land in the Borough devoted to passive activity. It is necessary to encourage this type of land use because it not only serves a need in the community but contributes to a positive image of the Borough.

During the 1960's the Borough made an attempt to expand recreational opportunities for its residents by establishing a park on the land area at the northern end of Eighth Street that juts out from the Borough into New Sewickley Township. In 1969, the Borough received a $6000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs under the Project 70 Land Acquisition and Borrowing Act of 1966 to acquire land in this area and dedicate it to a recreation or conservation use. The land was eventually acquired and the Borough installed various recreation facilities, such as swings and play areas. A lack of financial and administrative organization, the impact of vandalization and public misuse, combined with the area's inaccessibility and topography, resulted in the failure of this project. This 31 acre resource has now remained underutilized for a significant period of time. Because recreational use of this property does not seem to be its highest and best use, consideration of an alternative use must be given, and unless substantial physical improvements are made, much of the land will remain unused, because of its steepness and inaccessibility. This realization has led Borough leaders to consider a reuse that will combine elements of commercial and recreation/pedestrian uses. Included in this plan is a map that proposes the subdivision of some of this land area into 5 development
parcels. This proposal will be outlined in more detail in the Development Strategy Plan.

- **Utilities**

An analysis of the capacity of local utility services is a necessary component in a plan of this scope since the provision and capacity of such services plays an important part in the future land use development of the Borough. Water and Sanitary Sewer Services are addressed below.

- **Water**

Water service is provided to the Borough of Freedom by the Beaver Falls Municipal Water Authority. The Borough itself is no longer required to pay any fees for the provision of this service from the Authority. The Borough is provided with water from its own 1 million gallon water tank. The Authority insures that water service will continue to be adequate for at least the next 20 year period.

- **Sanitary Sewer**

The Borough of Freedom is provided with sewage service by the Rochester Area Joint Sewage Authority. The Authority’s treatment plant is located in Rochester. It maintains a pump station in the Borough at the intersection of Eighth Street and Third Avenue. Service to the Borough and the entire service area of the Sewage Authority has not yet reached full capacity and new tap-ins are permitted on a continuous basis.
C Planning Implications

The analysis of existing land uses suggests a number of planning implications. Most importantly it illustrates graphically and verbally, the built-up nature of the Borough. This constrains opportunities for new development and even prohibits significant change in the existing environment. The land use analysis also points out the development problems that result from the Borough's topography and other natural features.

The only area that has experienced a new development in recent years are those land use activities characterized as Community Facilities. The most positive initiative that emerges from this analysis is the renewed interest the Borough has sparked in the preservation and restoration of its greatest historical asset, the Vicary House, and the opportunities and possibilities that the proposed reuse will stimulate. The plans for a new municipal complex are also an encouraging development in this area. The Borough is taking steps to resolve the land use issue of the Project 70 site by considering various reuse alternatives.
VI. Housing

It is important for any municipality to maintain a variety of housing types and options and to keep abreast of the condition of such structures within their bounds in order that market demand and supply are balanced and so that attention may be given to problems as they arise.

A. Existing Housing Stock

The bulk of land in most municipalities is consumed by residential uses, typically single-family homes. This is especially true in the Borough of Freedom. This indicates that the greatest share of the Borough's income is founded in the residential tax base. It is therefore necessary to understand the characteristics and conditions of housing in the Borough as well as the regional trends that impact the Borough in order to define the appropriate agenda and goals and the actions necessary to achieve them.

1. Characteristics

Since 1970, the aggregate number of housing units has declined by 3% or 24. This loss has occurred in those units typically offered for rent. The total number of renter occupied housing units fell by 36, a loss of 13.3%. The ratio of owner occupied housing units to renter units therefore has shifted even more towards those that are owner occupied since the number of such units actually increased during this decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11</th>
<th>Number and Tenure of Housing Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Borough of Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970 - 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Housing Units</td>
<td>873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Occupied</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
The total number of vacant units has also increased proportionately in the renter occupied units during this 10 year period. Table 12 shows that in 1970 the Borough maintained a "healthy" vacancy rate of approximately 4%. By 1980 though this rate had risen to almost 6%.

### Table 12
**Vacancy**
**The Borough of Freedom**
**1970 - 1980**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Vacant Units For Sale</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Price</td>
<td>$7,100</td>
<td>$26,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Rent</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Sale</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Rent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Source:** U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

Although it is important for a community to maintain a certain number of vacant units in order to keep the housing market fluid and meet future demand, rates in excess of 5% are not healthy since they infer a number of tax and income losses to the Borough.
Table 13 shows that the median value of a residential structure in the Borough was $24,300 in 1980.

Table 13
Value of Housing Units
The Borough of Freedom
1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than $10,000</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 - $14,999</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 - $19,999</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 - $24,999</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $29,999</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $34,999</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000 - $39,999</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $49,000</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $59,999</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000 - $79,999</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 - $149,999</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 - $199,999</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 +</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median $44,300

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

There was only one structure in the Borough that was estimated to be worth more than $100,000. The greatest percentage were worth between $25,000 and $29,999. Most single family homes are actually worth between $25,000 and $45,000 today, according to local realtors.
Other characteristics of the Borough's existing housing stock include the number of units per building and the age of these structures. Table 14 indicates that over three fourths of the buildings contain only one unit. Another 12% maintain 2 units in a single structure. Nine percent of the structures contain multiple units ranging from 3 to 49.

Table 14
Units in Structure
The Borough Freedom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of units</th>
<th># of structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 detached or attached</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 49</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 + mobile home/trailer</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

Except for the elderly housing complex located on Eighth Street, there are no large residential complexes within the Borough. Two percent of the total number of residential structures are either mobile units or trailers.
Table 15 shows that 61% of the Borough's residential structures were built before 1939. Another 26% were built before 1950.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Built</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979 - 1980</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 - 1978</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 - 1974</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 - 1969</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 - 1959</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940 - 1949</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939 or earlier</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
These figures indicate that in general the condition of the existing housing stock is a result of those influences that are attributable to the age of the structures and the high cost of maintenance and repair associated with older buildings.

The Borough's Zoning Ordinance identifies three categories of residential uses within Freedom;

- the "low density residential" district which is located in the southern portion of the Borough where most of the structures are detached, single family dwellings.

- a "medium density residential" district which is generally located between Eighth and Fourth Avenues from Harvey's Run to the Borough Line at East Rochester. This district consists of a concentration of structures that are occupied by 2 families and an average lot size that is substantially smaller than the former district. Also located in this district is a former school facility that has been haphazardly 'converted' into a multi-unit dwelling.

- The final category is referred to as "high density residential" and is concentrated between Third and Fourth Avenues from Harvey's Run to Fifth Street as well as in the vicinity of Eighth Street and Ninth Street. This district is composed of housing units that are attached or are located within proximity to others, and a 'high rise' elderly housing structure. This is an area that is typically referred to as a Mixed Use zone where residential uses are located adjacent to commercial, institutional and civic uses.

This district also abuts the business zone of Third Avenue and Eighth Street and a light industrial district on the upper side of Eighth Street.
The following section reveals that housing conditions within the Borough tend to diverge along the distinctions of these three zones.

2. Conditions

The condition of a residential structure can be evaluated by a number of factors. The lack of complete plumbing facilities for an occupant's exclusive use is just one indicator. The figures in Table 16 show that a disproportionate number of rental units exist in such a condition in the Borough and that since 1980 the status has worsened and currently includes in excess of 4% of the total rental units in the Borough.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Units Lacking Complete Plumbing</th>
<th>The Borough of Freedom 1970-1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total lacking complete plumbing</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Occupied</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, unoccupied</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Census of Population, Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission

The housing units in the Borough also suffer from a number of structural problems. These are generally a result of such factors as age of the units, frame construction, the topography of the Borough, and negligence. The problems that are typical to the existing housing stock range from slight defects such as cracking or peeling paint, broken gutters and downspouts, to intermediate defects where open holes and cracks are evident, where support
beams have warped or bent, or where bricks are loose or missing, to serious defects where such structures are uninhabitable because of their dilapidated state. The best housing conditions in the Borough are found in its southwest quadrant. The structures in this area are not only newer but have been spared many of the effects the excessive topography suffered by the rest of the Borough. Housing conditions in the Borough are generally poorest in the vicinity of Dutchman's Run Creek and the Fourth Avenue area where the effects of topography and age, combined with the impact of incompatible uses have taken their toll on residential land uses.

Another issue that concerns the condition of housing in the Borough is the utilization of the former Liberty School structure as a multi-family dwelling. In general the building is structurally sound but it is obvious that that conversion was not made in the most sensitive manner and certainly cannot be considered a benefit to the housing stock of the Borough of Freedom.

B. Housing Trends

Regional economic trends and conditions have contributed to the declining condition of the housing stock and market in the Borough of Freedom. A recent stabilization of the economic situation combined with regional growth trends have begun to change this.

At the inception of this decade the housing market in the Beaver County area was severely depressed with the decline of heavy industry, the resultant unemployment and the population losses characteristic of this region of the Country at that time. Since then the Western Pennsylvania region has experienced a significant shift in its economic base and is again beginning to grow. The Beaver County area, because of its strategic location adjacent to Allegheny County and the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport, has been in a position to benefit from this trend. In recent years, the market for housing
has improved as employment opportunities begin to return to the area and accessibility to neighboring counties is enhanced. This market trend will have a beneficial impact on the housing situation in the Borough of Freedom as it affects supply, demand and condition of housing units. Typical of many communities in this area, the Borough of Freedom is almost completely built up, allowing for limited new construction. In order for the Borough to maintain and improve its housing stock and take advantage of the opportunities presented to enhance the living environment of its residents, the Borough must take concerted action to encourage responsible home ownership and explore opportunities for multi-family rehab and redevelopment housing projects.

C Planning Implications

The characteristics of the housing stock in the Borough of Freedom combined with the regional trends in the housing market of the Greater Beaver County area imply that these steps towards maintaining and improving the housing stock must not only address current problems and needs but address considerations for demand and need in the future. Two courses of action are suggested here.

The first involves the rehabilitation of single family and two family homes. In general, exterior and structural conditions are relatively poorer than internal conditions. The Borough should take advantage of County State, and Federal funds and programs aimed at housing rehabilitation, specifically at owner-occupied housing units. Typically, these programs are combinations of low interest loans and grants that home owners can utilize to make improvements to their homes. The County's rehabilitation program, referred to as HIP (Housing Improvement Program) is its 15th year of operation. Each year approximately $1 million is budgeted for this rehabilitation program. Through direct application to the County Housing Authority approximately 100 housing units are rehabilitated each year. The Housing Improvement Program offers a no-interest loan that is completely forgiven if, after five years, the owner has not sold the home. The Borough's role
should be to promote and encourage the use of such funds within Freedom.

The second course of action involves the need to meet future demand for the emerging, smaller households, especially for one person household. In general, this type of housing involves units offered for rent rather than purchase. As indicated earlier, renter-occupied housing units and those that the Borough does maintain are in relatively poorer condition than those that are typically occupied by their owner. Recent demand for rental housing has been met through the conversion of the former Freedom Junior High School. Residential reuse of school buildings has been successful in a number of communities. In general, these structures are sound despite their age and deserve to be preserved. The old Liberty School is one of the finest examples of architecture in the Borough. It is not inappropriate for it to be converted into a residential structure, but such an activity should be accomplished with sensitivity not only in order to preserve and protect the building but to convert it to an attractive and safe living environment. It is apparent that the conversion occurred with little attention to rehab standards and off street parking needs. The Borough must therefore insure that if this kind of activity is to occur in Freedom, that rehabilitation standards are set and adhered to. The Borough should encourage the use of public funds for residential conversions as well as projects involving the rehabilitation of renter-occupied housing units.
VII. Opportunities and Constraints Analysis

Based on the analysis of existing conditions in the Borough of Freedom and in light of development issues and objectives defined during the comprehensive planning process, it is helpful to identify both the positive and negative influences that affect the quality of life and future development in the community. Positive features are referred to as opportunities or assets on which the plan for community improvement will be built. Negative elements are those constraints or liabilities which must be overcome in order for the community to progress.

Much like an accountant who examines the health of a business by preparing a balance sheet, planners often evaluate the viability of a community by preparing a summary of its assets and liabilities. Freedom's balance sheet reveals that while there are many inherent strengths on which to build the community's future, there are a number of liabilities that require attention.

**Freedom's Balance Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Liabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent access to regional transportation network</td>
<td>Declining housing stock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicary House, an important historic resource</td>
<td>Harsh visual influences of Route 65 and Railroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive residential areas, especially in the vicinity of the Middle School</td>
<td>Development limitations due to excessive topography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverfront and streamside location</td>
<td>Uninviting Eighth Street commercial environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeveloped land in adjoining communities, contiguous to Borough boundary</td>
<td>Underutilized recreation site at north end of Eighth St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasing architectural influences along Third Ave. Business district</td>
<td>Underutilized former school properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed municipal complex</td>
<td>Tarnished image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several attractive parks and parklets</td>
<td>Access limitations to waterfront area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing</td>
<td>Few examples of recent investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive commitment of Borough officials to community improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VII - 1
VIII. Statement of Community Development Objectives

This plan has been prepared in consideration of the character of the Borough, including existing land use patterns, the character of remaining undeveloped land and the capacity of the community's basic infrastructure to support additional development. Consideration has also been given to development activities and trends in areas surrounding the Borough. The purpose of the Plan is to guide future growth and development within the Borough in accordance with the following goals and objectives.

1. To achieve the best and most efficient use of land within the Borough;

2. To preserve the quality of life within the Borough's residential neighborhoods;

3. To stabilize the decline in the Borough's housing stock;

4. To preserve and expand the borough's residential tax base in a manner that is consistent with the density, intensity and environmental quality of existing residential development within and around the community;

5. To preserve and expand the Borough's business and industrial tax base in a manner that protects surrounding land uses and maintains a high degree of environmental quality;

6. To provide adequate community facilities and services to meet the needs of Borough residents and its business community;

7. To preserve the natural qualities of land that is unsuitable for development;

8. To encourage citizen participation in the land use decision making process.
IX. Development Strategy

The development strategy will attempt to define a series of actions that are designed to improve the physical environment and image of the Borough of Freedom. The strategy is comprised of actions that take advantage of inherent opportunities and measures to overcome constraints to development. Each of the actions described in the strategy is consistent with the community development objectives outlined in Section VIII. A series of maps accompany the narrative to graphically depict the various elements of the development strategy.

Entrance Portals

First impressions are lasting and are usually difficult to reverse. In terms of community planning, the urban designer must attempt to convey a positive initial impression of the community to the visitor arriving by automobile. The concept of an entrance portal refers to the feeling that is exerted by the visual environment as one enters the community. An orderly and attractive entrance environment will convey a positive perception and image of the community.

In Freedom, the primary entrance portals are the Route 65 exit ramps that lead to Third Avenue. The function of these entrance portals is to separate the motorist from the harsh and unnatural environment of the expressway and railyards and introduce the visitor to a small community with natural qualities and a human scale. The exit ramps should be viewed as transition areas that begin to erase the feeling of the fast paced expressway and convey of a feeling of environmental quality.

Each exit ramp leads to an intersection where the motorist comes to a stop and forms an initial impression of the community. Fortunately, the intersection of Harvey's Run Road and Third Avenue provides considerable potential for an attractive entrance portal. The visual backdrop of Vicary House conveys the feeling of a community with an historic identity and a commitment to preservation. The southbound exit ramp places the motorist in the vicinity of Third Street and Third Avenue. Although there are no prominent examples of urban form at this intersection, there is a hillside area above Third Avenue that could be improved to convey a quality landscaped environment.
Recommendations:

- remove existing visual clutter and install strategically placed entrance signage; quality design and construction of the signage are critical elements of visual interest

- retain a landscape architect to prepare a landscaping plan for both entrance portals; the plan should incorporate dramatic lighting and shadowing effects

- encourage the installation of signage for Vicary House that is consistent with entrance signage

- install street and sidewalk improvements furnishings as necessary to perfect the visual impression

Third Avenue Streetscape

Third Avenue serves as an arterial street which links traffic between Route 65 and the internal circulation system within the Borough. Because of the proximity of the expressway and the use of similar construction materials, the characteristics of Third Avenue tends to take on more of the feeling of a Route 65 than a local business community. From an urban design standpoint, it would be helpful to visually separate Third Avenue from the Expressway and begin to create a more traditional downtown appearance along the Third Avenue corridor.

Due to the acquisition requirements of the Route 65 expressway, only the eastern side of Third Avenue remains developed. Between Ninth Street and Harveys Run Road, the eastern side of Third Avenue is an irregularly shaped area of cleared land that represents the unused remnants of the Route 65 acquisition project. Between Tenth Street and Harveys Run Road, the depth of the cleared land is insufficient to permit development and efforts have appropriately been taken to introduce landscaping, a war memorial parklet and seating areas to the open space area.

A new municipal complex will be constructed along Third Avenue between Ninth and Tenth Streets. This facility will house municipal offices, a community library and the volunteer fire department. This
project is especially important to the Third Avenue streetscape inasmuch as it represents the first major new construction initiative in the Borough in decades. The vitality that emanates from the new municipal complex will serve to stabilize the Third Avenue environment and efforts should be undertaken to build upon this asset.

Between Ninth Street and Third Street, the Third Avenue environment offers a mixture of larger urban structures, smaller one story convenience commercial buildings, residential structures, open space, and an attractive parking lot of cut stone construction. It would be desirable to create a stronger urban feeling along this section of Third Avenue, and preservation/enhancement of the hotel, bank buildings and the private parking facility are considered essential elements of the development strategy. The transitional housing stock in this area may offer opportunities to undertake smaller scale site assembly activities in support of commercial expansion or new construction.

Recommendations:

- create a landscaped audio/visual buffer on the planting strip between Third Avenue and the Route 65 expressway

- reinforce the pedestrian linkage between Vicary House and the new municipal complex through the introduction of a passive recreational facility along Third Avenue; embellish the war memorial and update existing street furniture and landscaping; install dramatic lighting

- eventually acquire the two remaining residential properties that abut the municipal complex and devote this entire block to public use

- strengthen the pedestrian linkage between Eighth Street and the new municipal complex through the introduction of sidewalk enhancements, street furniture, and pedestrian scale lighting; offer facade rehab inducements to hotel and adjacent properties
- improve public safety at Third Avenue/Eighth Street intersection; install stop signs to slow the movement of traffic along Third Avenue; install pedestrian crosswalk areas; eliminate metered parking on Third Avenue between Eighth and Ninth Streets; install bus shelters on both sides of Third Avenue

- explore opportunities for a streamside amenity where Dutchman's Run passes under Third Avenue; acquire Pop's Disco property and construct pedestrian staircase or rampway to stream; encourage outdoor dining amenities at Pizza shop overlooking stream

- remove substandard housing and assemble small sites for commercial expansion/new construction

- upgrade Bank parking lot; install lighting and create a pedestrian seating area along center walkway area

- initiate a street tree program and pedestrian scale lighting program along the entire length of Third Avenue

Waterfront Development

A riverfront location normally connotes a variety of water amenities that add interest and vitality to the community. In Freedom's case, however, the Route 65 highway planners were unsympathetic to the need to provide public access to the waterfront. If it were possible to redesign the highway and railroad, it would be preferable to direct them underground through tunnels and maintain the unobstructed land above for river oriented development. Since the expressway and the railroad seem to be permanent barriers between the river and the community, our attention must be focused on more realistic alternatives.

The Eighth Street tunnel or 'subway' beneath Route 65 and the railroad offers two lane access to railroad property along the riverfront. The pedestrian sidewalk within the subway has deteriorated to the point where it has been closed to foot traffic. The subway is poorly lit and consistently damp and poorly maintained. The subway is controlled by Conrail, as is the land area along the
River. Not wishing to encourage trespass on its riverfront land, there is no compelling reason for Conrail to improve the condition of the underpass. Nonetheless, it is not unusual to encounter fishermen and other pedestrians who overcome the access barrier to pursue recreational interests along the riverfront. The Dutchman's Run outfall into the Ohio River is apparently a fertile fishing location.

Recommendations:

- create a small scale pedestrian attraction along the riverfront
- encourage Conrail's donation of riverfront land along Dutchman's Run to the Borough of Freedom
- initiate a public/private (i.e., Borough/Conrail) partnership to improve the appearance and condition of the subway; install high intensity lighting; improve pedestrian walkway
- create a passive river overlook area on donated property, including seating areas, fishing nodules, landscaping and lighting.

Eighth Street Development Strategy

Eighth Street is an area in transition. Several positive developments have occurred in this area during the past twenty years, including the construction of the Post Office and elderly housing facility. Visitors are attracted to Eighth Street in conjunction with social events and public meetings at the Fire Department meeting hall. The convenience store at the intersection of Eighth Street and Third Avenue serves as the sole source of groceries and convenience items in the Borough. There are several single family residential structures along Eighth Street that are fairly well maintained.

Eighth Street is not without its share of problems. A deficiency of off street parking space, several residential structures in a state of decline and commercial auto repair activities that tend to spillover into public sidewalk and street areas detract from the viability of the
neighborhood. Several visual influences negatively affect Eighth Street including the sewage pump station and the outdoor storage of municipal maintenance supplies. On the whole, the visual environment of Eighth Street is rather uninviting.

The activity generated along Eighth Street begins to define it as the nucleus of the community. Since the construction of the Route 65 expressway, the role of Eighth Street in terms of its overall function in the Borough has changed considerably. When Third Avenue functioned as the primary business artery, Eighth Street served as a supportive mixed use/service center. After the destruction of Third Avenue for highway expansion, Eighth Street (for lack of a reasonable alternative) has been gradually transformed into the business center of the community.

Consciously or unconsciously, the new role of Eighth Street became defined when the decision was reached to introduce the Post Office and elderly residential facility to this environment. These newer uses and their resultant impact on the role of Eighth Street are sometimes at odds with the older established service uses. The transition of Eighth Street is well underway and its direction is irreversible. The Borough must now arrive at a strategy to improve the visual environment of Eighth Street without sacrificing the tax base formed by some of the "less desirable" business establishments that were the legitimate initial occupants of the area.

When one is asked what single image or place comes to mind when thinking of Freedom, chances are good that Eighth Street will be mentioned first. In the minds of most area residents, Eighth Street symbolizes the essence of the community. Borough residents typically identify strongly with this image and repetitive encounters or trips to the area begin to instill a strong sense of "place". A community's identity and self perception represent one of its strongest assets. For these reasons, the Eighth Street Development Strategy is the single most important product of the planning process.
PROJECT 70 SITE

BEAVER COUNTY

ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN STAIRWAY AREA
- Lighting
- Landscaping
- Parklet along Eighth Street

IMPROVE EIGHTH STREET STREETSCAPE ENVIRONMENT
- Sidewalks
- Pedestrian scale lighting
- Landscaping

CONSTRUCT NEW SURFACE PARKING LOT
RELOCATE MUNICIPAL GARAGE TO PROJECT 70 SITE

CREATE STREAMSIDE PEDESTRIAN ATTRACTION IN CONJUNCTION WITH NEW COMMERCIAL FACILITY & OFF-STREET PARKING LOT

IMPROVE LANDSCAPED BUFFER AROUND SEWAGE LIFT STATION

RAILROAD UNDERPASS

CREATE A RIVERSIDE PEDESTRIAN ATTRACTION IN RAILROAD UNDERPASS
- Construct river overlook area with seating, fishing nodule, landscaping, & lighting

THIRD AVENUE / EIGHTH STREET INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS:
- Signalize intersection or install 4-way stop signs
- Provide pedestrian crosswalk with handicapped curb cuts

ELIMINATE CURBSIDE PARKING IN THIS AREA

ENCOURAGE RELOCATION OF AUTO REPAIR ESTABLISHMENTS TO PROJECT 70 SITE. ENCOURAGE REHAB / REUSE OR CREATE SURFACE PARKING AS INTERIM USE

ENCOURAGE REHAB OF HOTEL

ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THIS BLOCK

ASSEMBLE LAND FOR PUBLIC USE IN SUPPORT OF MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

ENHANCE SITE OF NEW MUNICIPAL COMPLEX WITH PEDESTRIAN SEATING AREAS & LANDSCAPING

INSTALL LANDSCAPED AUDIO / VISUAL BUFFER BETWEEN THIRD AVENUE & ROUTE 65

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO NEW MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
- Sidewalks
- Lighting
- Landscaping

CORE AREA DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
BOROUGH OF FREEDOM
BEAVER COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

PREPARED BY
MULLEN & LONDERGAN ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
BOROUGH-WIDE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Demolish substandard properties & lien property for cost of demolition
- Sell Borough own properties (i.e., demolition sites, etc.) to abutting property owners where no public reuse is planned
- Encourage widespread participation in Beaver County Housing Rehab Programs
- Enforce zoning standards to improve appearance of residential neighborhoods

BOROUGH-WIDE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BOROUGH OF FREEDOM
BEAVER COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

PREPARED BY:
MULLIN & LONERGAN ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

ENCOURAGE HIGH QUALITY RESIDENTIAL RESTORATION OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING...
ACQUIRE ADJACENT PROPERTY FOR OFF-STREET PARKING

ENCOURAGE WIDESCREEN PARTICIPATION IN RESIDENTIAL REHAB OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING...
BEAVER COUNTY HOUSING REHAB PROGRAMS
APPEARANCE OF RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS
ENFORCE ZONING STANDARDS TO IMPROVE ENTRANCE PORTAL IMPROVEMENTS
INSTALL UNIFORM ENTRANCE GRAPHICS & SIGNAGE
DRAMATIC LIGHTING
SUPPORT REHAB/REUSE OF VICARY HOUSE:
CURB/SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
OFF-STREET PARKING
PARKLET IMPROVEMENTS
DRAMATIC LIGHTING

ENCOURAGE HIGH QUALITY RESIDENTIAL RESTORATION OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING...
ACQUIRE ADJACENT PROPERTY FOR OFF-STREET PARKING

ENCOURAGE WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION IN RESIDENTIAL REHAB OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING...
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ENFORCE ZONING STANDARDS TO IMPROVE ENTRANCE PORTAL IMPROVEMENTS
INSTALL UNIFORM ENTRANCE GRAPHICS & SIGNAGE
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OFF-STREET PARKING
PARKLET IMPROVEMENTS
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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BOROUGH OF FREEDOM
BEAVER COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

PREPARED BY:
MULLIN & LONERGAN ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

ENCOURAGE HIGH QUALITY RESIDENTIAL RESTORATION OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING...
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DRAMATIC LIGHTING
SUPPORT REHAB/REUSE OF VICARY HOUSE:
CURB/SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
OFF-STREET PARKING
PARKLET IMPROVEMENTS
DRAMATIC LIGHTING

ENCOURAGE HIGH QUALITY RESIDENTIAL RESTORATION OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING...
ACQUIRE ADJACENT PROPERTY FOR OFF-STREET PARKING

ENCOURAGE WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION IN RESIDENTIAL REHAB OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING...
BEAVER COUNTY HOUSING REHAB PROGRAMS
APPEARANCE OF RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS
ENFORCE ZONING STANDARDS TO IMPROVE ENTRANCE PORTAL IMPROVEMENTS
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BOROUGH-WIDE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Demolish substandard properties & lien property for cost of demolition
- Sell Borough own properties (i.e., demolition sites, etc.) to abutting property owners where no public reuse is planned
- Encourage widespread participation in Beaver County Housing Rehab Programs
- Enforce zoning standards to improve appearance of residential neighborhoods

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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BOROUGH OF FREEDOM
BEAVER COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

PREPARED BY:
MULLIN & LONERGAN ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

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Recommendations:

- Relocate sewage pump station to a less obtrusive location and construct a corner parklet that makes a strong introductory statement to the Eighth Street environment; alternatively, construct an improved landscaped buffer to conceal pump station.

- Relocate the outdoor storage of municipal maintenance materials and construct a parking lot on the site occupied by the former Borough building; enhance the appearance of the lot through landscaping and lighting.

- Assemble a site for new office/retail development on the north side of Eighth Street across from the Fire Department Social Hall; construct a streamside pedestrian amenity at the rear of the site that meanders along Dutchmans Run and connects to Third Avenue.

- Create a parklet in the area of the Sixth Avenue pedestrian stairway.

- Find an alternate site for the automobile repair establishments; encourage rehab/reuse of the vacated structures or demolish buildings for off street parking or commercial/mixed use redevelopment.

- Improve the visual environment of Eighth Street in a manner that emphasizes a pedestrian scale; reconstruct sidewalks, introduce lighting and landscaping; strengthen pedestrian linkages between elderly housing and riverfront.

Project 70 Recreation Site

The Project 70 Recreation site is a 31 acre tract of land located at the extreme eastern terminus of Eighth Street. The property was acquired by the Borough in 1969 and a small area (± one acre) of the overall site was subsequently improved with recreation amenities including a basketball court, swings and a sliding board.
Due to its location and problems associated with access, the park remained underutilized and has gradually fallen into disrepair. The site has become a gathering spot for the evening recreational activities of adolescents. Unfortunately, the existing use characteristics of the site are a cause of concern to Borough officials since the area is difficult to patrol. It is generally agreed that the site has outlived its usefulness as a legitimate recreational facility.

In considering reuse alternatives for the site, several issues are worth noting. The primary advantage of the property is that it is located just four blocks from Third Avenue and Route 65 yet it is visually isolated from the Eighth Street commercial core area. Public ownership of the property is likewise a major advantage in terms of the Borough's potential to stimulate private development on the site. There are a limited number of sites in the Borough that could support new development of any magnitude, and most of these suffer from access and circulation constraints. The Project 70 property represents one of the more attractive and accessible development sites in the Borough.

The site is not, however, without its share of problems:

1. Although it encompasses 31 acres, most of the site involves slopes in excess of 20 percent. Given its topographical constraints, roughly a third of the site may be developable.

2. The entire site falls within the Dutchman's Run watershed and the land area located on either side of the stream is located within the 100 year floodplain.

3. Access to the site is partially impaired by the structure that formerly housed the casket making facility. At this point, Eighth Street narrows from a right-of-way width of 50 feet to a constricted width of 40 feet.

4. The existing bridge over Dutchmans Run is a narrow single lane facility that would prove inadequate to support a more active use of the site.
5. Utility infrastructure must be extended to the site, however, there appears to be adequate grade to support gravity flow of sanitary sewers to the Eighth Street collector line.

6. One final constraint to the commercial/industrial development of the Project 70 site involves the generation of truck traffic along Eighth Street. The primary objective in improving Eighth Street is to achieve a pleasing pedestrian oriented environment. The Project 70 strategy of improving the site for commercial/industrial development may seem somewhat at odds with the Eighth Street strategy, however, it should be noted that one motivation for exploring development potential on the Project 70 site was to induce the relocation of automotive service establishments from Eighth Street.

A prudent, profit motivated developer would not pursue the Project 70 mini industrial park project. The cost of extending infrastructure to the site would greatly exceed the resale value of the improved land. In order to effectuate this project, a public subsidy will be required equal to the difference between the cost of improvements and the resale value of the improved land.

Recommendations:

- Retain the services of a municipal engineer to prepare a preliminary cost estimate of site improvements including street improvements, bridge replacement, site grading, stormwater conveyance, bank stabilization along Dutchman's Run, and extension of utilities.

- Retain the services of a qualified real estate appraiser to establish the projected resale value of improved land within the park.

- Determine the amount of public subsidy required by calculating the difference between the above two sums.

- Meet with Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development (BCCED) officials to determine what portion of the required public subsidy could conceivably be contributed to the project in the form of grants, i.e., PA Department of Commerce Site Development Program, Business Infrastructure
Development (BID) Program and other state, federal or County programs.

- Apply for financial assistance under DCA's Housing and Development Program to acquire former casket manufacturing facility. Utilize appraiser to conduct a "windshield appraisal" of property for application purposes. Utilize Beaver County CDBG demolition funds as a partial matching fund requirement.

- Calculate the amount of local (Borough) cash that would be required to insure project feasibility; determine whether the Borough's investment could be justified in terms of future tax revenues, the improvement of the Eighth Street environment or other intangibles.

- Reserve space in the park for municipal maintenance functions, i.e., garage and outdoor storage of materials.

**Annexation Analysis**

During the course of the comprehensive planning process, it became obvious that raw land suitable for development is a rare commodity in Freedom. In an effort to expand the Borough's tax base, local officials have begun to look at neighboring communities in terms of land resources that could be made part of the Borough of Freedom through annexation.

Two sites were examined by the consulting team in terms of annexation potential. Primary emphasis was given to a site in the Mengle Heights section of New Sewickley Township. A more casual investigation was made of the Piccininni property known locally as 'Piccininni Flats' in Conway Borough.

Access to the Mengle Heights section of New Sewickley Township is provided by Mine Street in the Borough of Freedom. Mine Street is a steep narrow roadway with an acute hairpin turn that leads to Mengle Heights. The developed portion of Mengle Heights consists of nine single family homes on 25 acres of land. The undeveloped portion of Mengle Heights (Tax Map 69-164, Parcel 268) involves 35.8 acres of rolling terrain and farmland that is difficult to view in its entirety from the existing road network. The Mengle Heights
Annexation Map which follows this page depicts parcelization within the study area.

The only service provided to Mengle Heights by the Borough of Freedom is road access. Water is provided by the Beaver Falls Municipal Authority and all properties make use of septic systems. Public safety services (police and fire) are provided by New Sewickley Township, however, it is presumed that Freedom's Fire Department would also respond to an emergency.

The primary constraints to development of the 36 acre farm property include access and the absence of public sanitary sewer service. Given the quality of existing access to the site, it is unlikely that this property could be successfully marketed as a single family subdivision. Existing residents of Mengle Heights have no apparent desire to become a part of the Borough of Freedom and would probably oppose any form of development that detracted from the isolation of their neighborhood. All of these factors enter into the annexation equation.

Piccininni Flats is a 32.7 acre tract of undeveloped land (Tax Map 18-164, Parcel 276) in the Borough of Conway. Access to this site is provided by Nineteenth Street in the Borough of Freedom. The land is controlled by Mrs. Piccininni who presently resides in the State of Florida.

Access to the Piccininni property is along steep sections of residential streets in the Borough of Freedom. The site offers magnificent view of the Ohio River. It is presumed that utility infrastructure could be extended to the site from the Nineteenth Street area of Freedom provides no services to the site, other than access.

Municipal annexation is a complicated process that is prescribed by Pennsylvania Law at 53 Purdons §45411, §45416 and §45426. The annexation process is usually initiated by residents of a community who collectively feel that their neighborhood could be serviced more efficiently by the adjacent municipality. A petition executed by a majority of property owners must be presented to municipal officials in both communities, along with a plot plan showing municipal boundaries before and after annexation.
If the annexation is uncontested by both municipalities, the annexing community can annex the property by ordinance. In most cases, the Court of Common Pleas adjudicates the annexation request of the petitioners. The Court normally evaluates the propriety of the annexation request by considering the interests of residents, the interests of municipal government, the interest of school districts, the provision of municipal services, the impact on local zoning and physical characteristics of the site.

**Conclusions**

Absent a clear and compelling annexation request from residents of Mengle Heights and/or Mrs. Piccininni, there exists no grounds for an annexation initiative. It is recommended that the Borough of Freedom annex adjoining property only if such an action is not contested by New Sewickley Township and/or Conway Borough. An adjudicated annexation would be prohibitively costly in terms of legal expense, especially in light of the benefit to be derived. The two land areas considered for annexation are relatively small in terms of net developable acreage and suffer from poor to marginal access and considerable topographical constraints.

**Housing**

Since the Borough’s tax base is primarily composed of residential land uses, and since there are few sites that could support new development of any magnitude, it is critical for the Borough to stabilize any further decline in the existing housing stock. The housing strategy is comprised of four elements, as follows:

- **Homeowner Rehabilitation**

  Property owners should be encouraged to make needed repairs to single family homes. Financial incentives are perhaps the most effective measure that can induce the maintenance of residential property.

  The Beaver County Housing Authority operates a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funded program of
rehabilitation loans for homeowners. The Program operates under the name of Housing Improvement Program or HIP. Since demand for funding exceeds supply, the format of this program has recently been changed to a lottery. As of the writing of this report, the County has expressed an intent to participate in a multi county housing rehab bond issue which should dramatically increase the availability of below market interest rate financing for home repair.

Income restrictions and other programmatic guidelines apply to these programs and interested homeowners should be referred to the Beaver County Housing Authority. The role of the Borough should be to act as a conduit between the homeowner and the Housing Authority, making information available and encouraging participation through news articles and direct mailings.

Multifamily Rehabilitation

There are two former school properties in the Borough that would be conducive to multifamily residential conversion. One such property is the former Junior High School at Fourth Avenue and Tenth Street, which has already undergone conversion. Unfortunately, the project has been undertaken at minimal expense and the appearance of the building now detracts from the quality of the residential neighborhood that surrounds it. The structure is an impressive example of early 1900 architecture and the conversion project should be sensitive to the characteristics of the building, the site and the surrounding neighborhood. There is presently no off street parking provision for residents.

The second property is the former high school at Fourth Avenue and Sixth Street, presently occupied by the public library. This building will become vacant when the library in the new municipal complex is opened. The conversion of the former high school to residential use is probably the most practical function for this property in light of market conditions and neighborhood characteristics.
Normally, residential conversion of school properties requires an infusion of public subsidy in order to produce desirable, solid projects that contribute meaningfully to the community. Unfortunately, many HUD housing programs of the 1960's and 1970's have been dismantled. There are a few remaining incentives, such as the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency's Homes Program, HUD's Renter Rehab Program and the IRS Low Income Housing Tax Credit that can be applied to conversion projects involving elderly housing.

As in the homeowner rehab programs, the Borough's role in multifamily conversions is to act as the catalyst between the property owner and public agency officials or consultants that are familiar with the financial packaging of housing projects. At a minimum, the Borough should inspect these properties and encourage the voluntary cooperation of property owners in carrying out well defined, quality projects.

- Assembly of Sites for New Housing Development

There is at least one area in the Borough where the declining condition of housing could justify clearance and redevelopment. The rowhouses and vacant church building on Fourth Avenue between Fourth and Fifth Street would make an appropriate site for new townhouse development given the location of the park on the opposite side of Fourth Avenue.

Obviously, a prudent developer would be interested in this site only if a cleared tract of land could be conveyed at an attractive price. Again, a public subsidy would be required to underwrite this type of project. DCA's Housing and Development Program would be an appropriate funding source, and the services of the County's Redevelopment Authority may be required to assemble the site. The Borough's role in this type of project would again be interactive; identifying an interested developer and enlisting the support and technical services of the County's Community Development Program and/or a consultant to massage the project until it 'flies or dies'.

IX - 14
Uniform Enforcement of Building and Appearance Standards

Achieving a quality housing stock requires a combination of financial incentive, technical knowledge, persistence and a spirit of cooperation amongst local property owners. As a property owner, it becomes difficult to justify improving one's 'castle' when neighboring properties are in a severe state of disrepair and adjoining lawn areas are covered with debris and junked automobiles. These conditions contribute to a sense of hopelessness among well intentioned property owners who would otherwise be inclined to undertake home repairs.

The role of the Borough in this circumstance is more active. Severe deterioration should result in inspection by the Borough's building officer and follow up letters to the property owner on Borough letterhead which request voluntary compliance with BOCA code requirements. The Borough's zoning ordinance should be equipped to deal with the outdoor storage of materials, including inoperative vehicles. The Borough must be willing to enforce these requirements uniformly in order to instill a sense of community pride that results in conscientious maintenance of private property.

Public Property

The Borough of Freedom controls several parcels of property in various areas of the community that seem to have limited potential for development. Several of these properties were acquired as a result of the demolition of substandard buildings through public action. The Borough now has an obligation to maintain these properties, which adds considerable responsibility to the municipal workforce.

In areas where no public purpose is served in terms of public land ownership, it is recommended that the Borough attempt to sell these properties to abutting property owners. Even if the land were sold for the consideration of a dollar, such an action could be justified in terms of increasing tax ratables and reducing municipal maintenance expenses.
The Beaver County CDBG funded demolition program has been quite helpful in removing substandard properties from otherwise stable neighborhoods. It is the County's practice to lien the affected property for the cost of demolition. In certain circumstances, the County will release the lien after a set period of time in order to eliminate any disincentive for development. Once the lien is released, the County and the Borough sacrifice their respective positions of leverage to mandate property standards or approve of subsequent development. The Borough and the County may wish to consider releasing the lien only when a bona fide developer commits to improvement of the property in a manner that is consistent with municipal development objectives.

Zoning

Only one zoning district change would be required to support the objectives of the comprehensive plan. The Project 70 site is presently zoned as a conservation district. If the Borough wishes to pursue the development of the lower portion of this site for a small industrial park, the affected land area would have to be downzoned to a light industrial district. This change is depicted on the Proposed Land Use Map that follows this page.
PHASE I DEVELOPMENT AREA
4.27 ACRES

EXTEND WATER & SEWER ALONG ACCESS ROAD

INSTALL BANK STABILIZATION MEASURES (UTILIZE SITE GRADING SpoILs TO CREATE STREAM EMBANKMENT)

PHASE II DEVELOPMENT AREA
2.92 ACRES

EVENTUAL ACQUISITION AND CLEARANCE OF FORMER CASKET COMPANY

INSTALL BOX CULVERT

WIDEN & IMPROVE 50' R.O.W. ACCESS ROAD

EXCESSIVE SLOPE AREA TO REMAIN UNDEVELOPED

SUBDIVISION SKETCH PLAN
PROJECT 70 RECREATION SITE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
BOROUGH OF FREEDOM
BEAVER COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

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