

# Current Land Use

## Overview

The pattern and variety of land use in a community is a function of market forces operating within the controls set by government. In Kilbuck, development patterns conform primarily to natural constraints, covering the most suitable expanses of a landscape carved largely into wooded slopes and waterways.

This section summarizes current land cover within the township and local controls that impact land development within the township.

## Existing Land Cover

The existing land use inventory for Kilbuck Township consisted of land cover data from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, including satellite imagery combined with orthophotographs and verified with local field views.

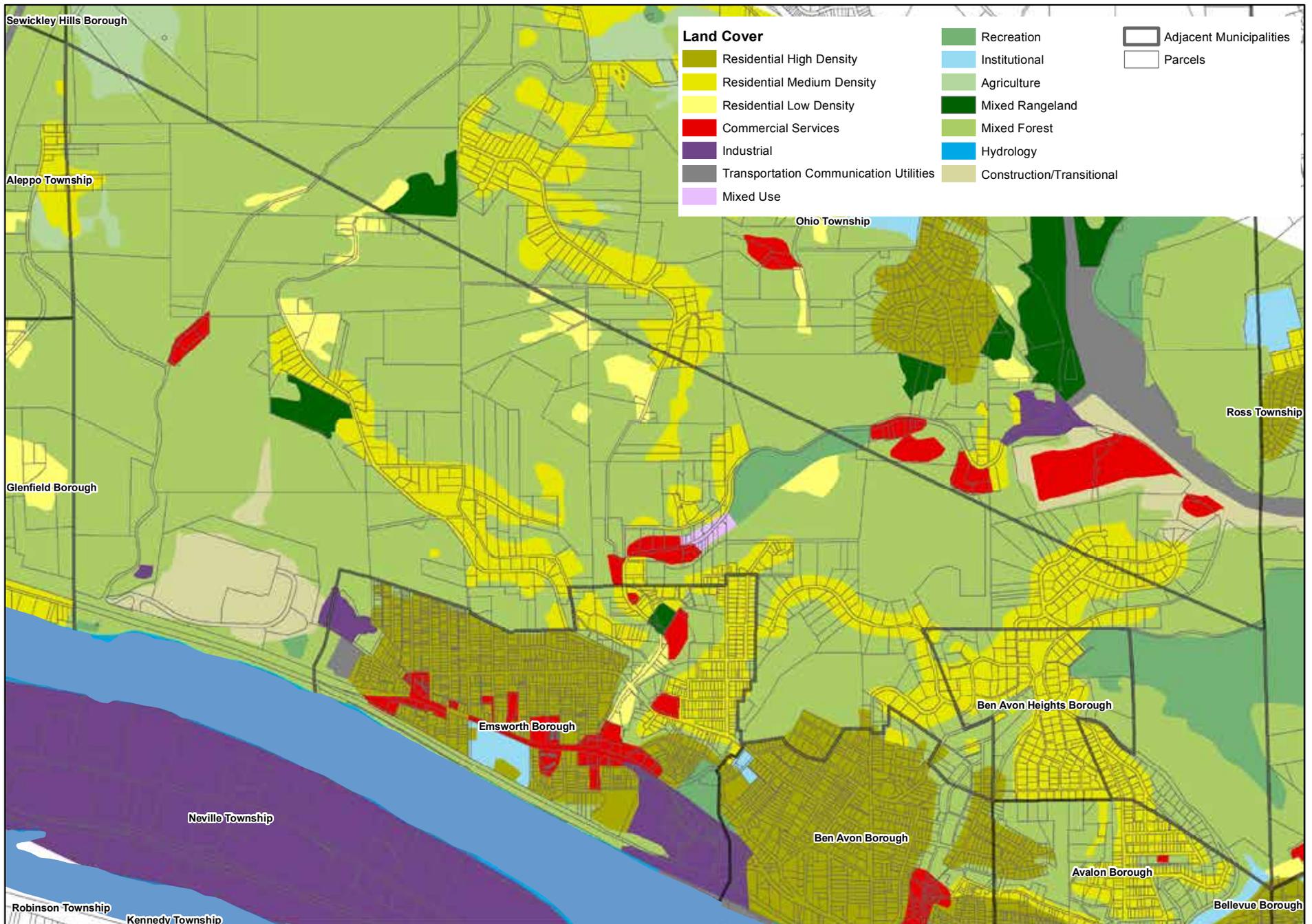
According to this source, 71.9% of Kilbuck's 1,660 total acres are covered in undeveloped natural areas, almost all of which are forested. The next largest land area is covered by residential lots of mostly medium density (by regional standards) followed by recreation. The land classified as construction/transitional is associated with the Dixmont site. Figure 25 is illustrated in the following land use map.

Figure 25: Township Land Use Classification

Use	Land Area (acres)	% Total Land
Undeveloped forest or rangeland	1,194	71.9%
Residential	254	15.3%
High density	12	0.7%
Medium density	202	12.2%
Low density	39	2.4%
Recreation	76	4.6%
Parks	21	1.3%
Golf course	55	3.3%
Construction/transitional	65	3.9%
Commercial and services	12	0.7%
Agriculture (fallow fields)	10	0.6%
Mixed use	4	0.2%
Industrial	2	0.1%
Institutional	1	0.1%
<b>Total land area</b>	<b>1,660</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission

# Map 7. Current Land Cover



## Local Controls

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provides authority for powerful land use controls to local governments. Municipal officials apply these tools to achieve their community's development goals and fulfill the vision established in the comprehensive plan. Such regulation is essential to maintain the orderly growth of a municipality. Land use controls include zoning ordinances as well as subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDO).

A zoning ordinance establishes regulations regarding the use of land and the intensity of development that may occur. A SALDO contains requirements for the creation of new lots or changes in property lines and ensures that new roads, water and sewer lines and drainage systems are constructed to municipal standards.

The Township conducted a zoning ordinance update in 2000 to achieve consistency with the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. The ordinance currently in effect divides the community into three

residential districts (single-family, general and multi-family) and districts for general commercial, special use, park and open space and conservation. Additionally, the ordinance includes an overlay district that applies to floodplains and areas with slopes of 25% or greater.

The majority of land area is zoned R-1, single-family residential. In addition to single-family detached homes, the district allows for residential cluster development. The R-2 district, located in three neighborhoods along the Township's southern border, additionally allows duplexes, townhouses and quadruplexes. The R-3 district, located along Old Camp Horne Road, allows all uses in R-2 in addition to multi-family dwellings, conversion apartments and individual mobile homes. Despite these allowances, only single-family detached dwellings exist in the Township.

The land area zoned commercial is largely built out, consisting primarily of retail and service establishments located along Camp Horne Road between Lowries Run and a slope. Other commercial development opportunity

currently exists in the special use district, a large portion of land encompassing and extending north of the Dixmont site. This district allows for both residential and commercial uses, in addition to light manufacturing and other more intense use types (such as highway freight warehousing, transportation and distribution).

The conservation district covers parcels owned by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for the Toms Run Nature Reserve. The ordinance allows single-family homes, seasonal homes and oil and gas wells in this area, in addition to agriculture, recreation and forestry.

# Map 8. Township Zoning Map

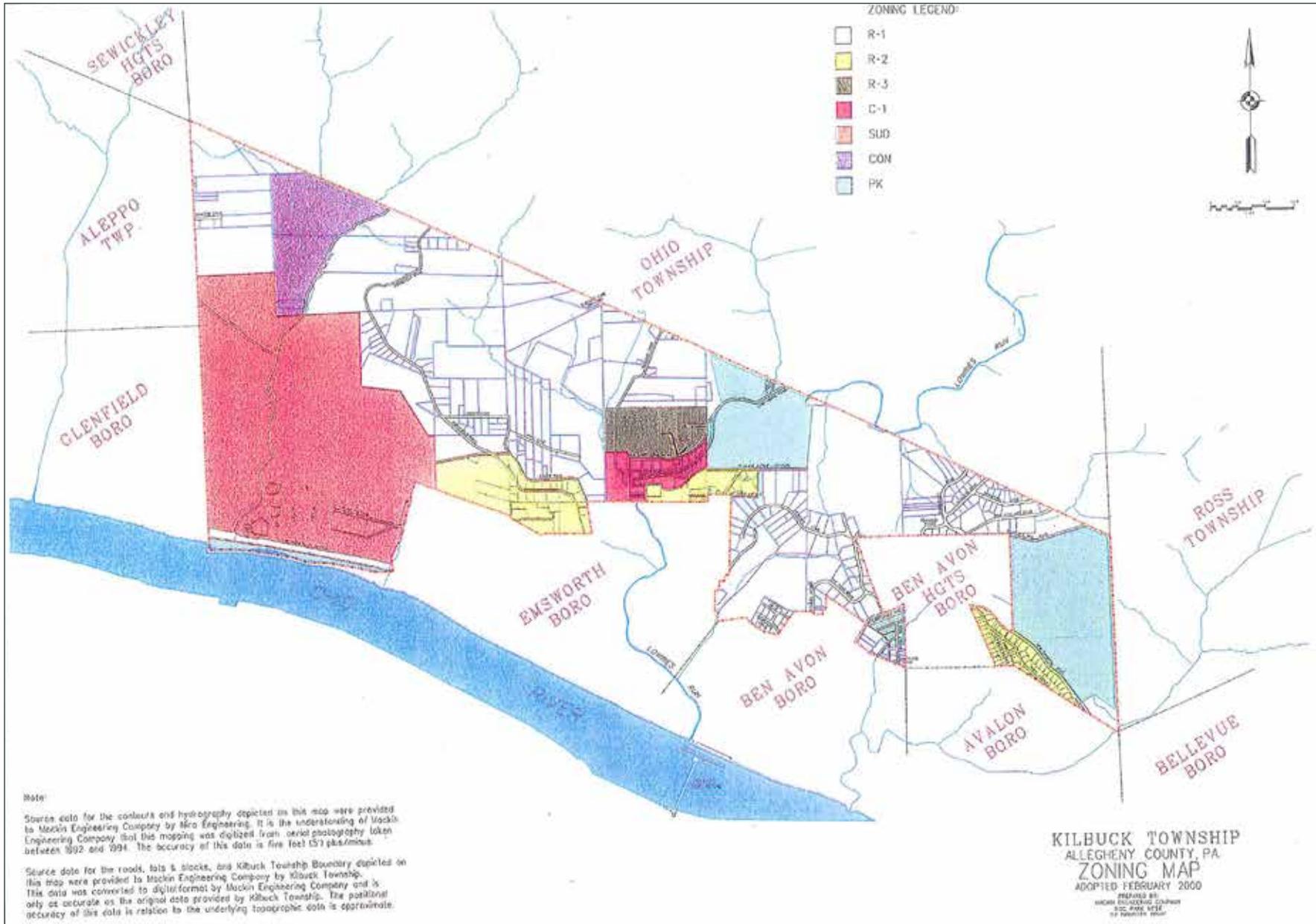
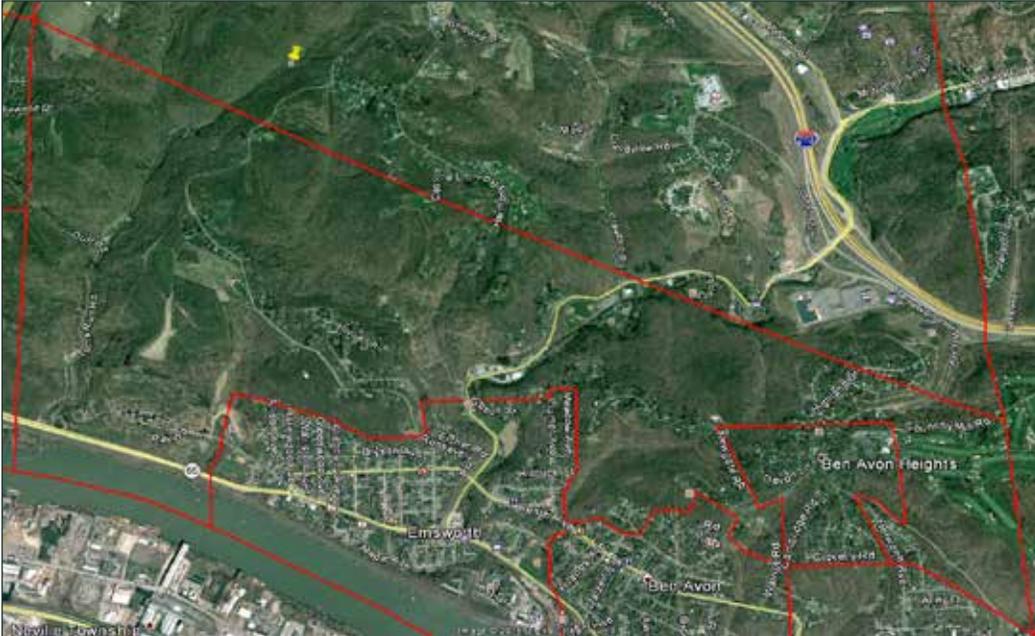
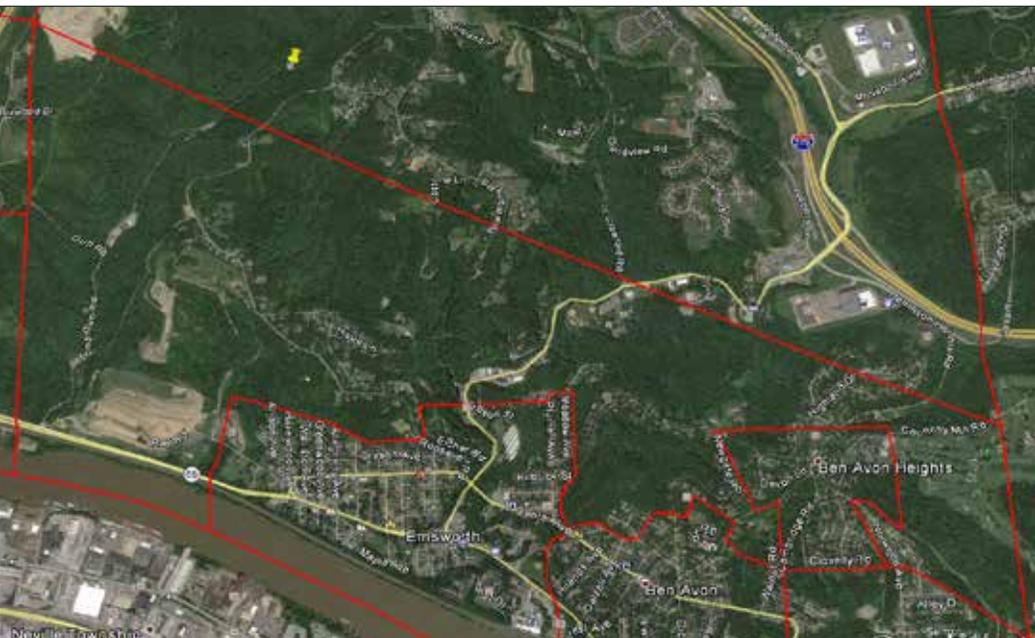


Figure 26: Township Aerial Photo, 2003



As the accompanying aerial photos illustrate, development patterns within the Township have not drastically changed within the last decade. With the exception of large-scale grading at the Dixmont site, changes to the landscape have occurred mostly at very local levels.

Figure 27: Township Aerial Photo, 2014



Source: Google Earth DigitalGlobe



# Future Objectives and Considerations

## Overview

The Comprehensive Plan creates a framework for land use and capital investment decisions by determining a preferred future vision for a community and establishing goals and objectives to make the vision become a reality. To make the process practical and increase the likelihood of implementation, a plan should consider the existing and future context within which development will (or will not) occur, including local opportunities and constraints as well as patterns that affect the supply and demand for housing, business and municipal services. This section presents context for future land use.

## Community Development Objectives

This Comprehensive Plan update builds upon a set of community objectives Kilbuck Township adopted in 2000 to guide its development. These objectives, updated where applicable, are the foundation of the zoning ordinance and continue to apply to each land use decision before the Township's supervisors and planning commission.

- To ensure that orderly growth and redevelopment of Kilbuck Township occurs by encouraging infill development where vacant land and public infrastructure co-exist
- To reduce conflicts between existing development, future development and the environment within the Township by protecting and preserving historic structures, green spaces, natural features and commercially viable lands
- To provide safe and adequate utility service to commercial, residential and industrial consumers and extend sanitary sewerage facilities where appropriate within the Township
- To preserve and provide adequate accessible community facilities and services to the residents of the Township and to develop recreational opportunities for all age groups and genders

- To provide a safe and well-maintained transportation system that serves vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians
- To build value in the local housing supply, promoting maintenance and a variety of options for households at all stages of life
- To promote business development and job creation and retention which will benefit the Township and the region

Infill development and adaptive reuse continue to be priority strategies to ensure that future development patterns take advantage of existing infrastructure investments. Concentrating development within certain areas can also help the Township to accommodate growth while preserving as much as possible of its scenic natural character.

## Conclusions from Background Studies

Earlier sections of this report that update demographic and housing market data reveal trends that may shape future development. In particular:

- Demographic and housing trends in Kilbuck Township between 2000 and 2013 were largely reflective of conditions across Allegheny County, including modest losses in residents and households, an aging population and diversifying household types, with fewer married families with children. Township residents tend to be well educated and employed in higher-earning industries.
- The Township's housing stock consists almost exclusively of owner-occupied, single-family detached homes at a variety of affordability levels. Only a handful of building permits have been issued during the last 10 years, a fact which – along with the general economic recession – was likely related to the stagnation

of home values since 2000. The Census estimated that 22 units were vacant as of 2013, though field work indicated that few vacant units impose an obvious blighting impact on neighborhoods.

- Because the Township is not heavily dependent on commercial development, remaining viable may involve considering ways in which the Township can match its housing stock to the needs and preferences of the buyers it hopes to attract. For instance, people nearing retirement typically give greater consideration to downsizing their residence while remaining close to family, friends and amenities. This suggests a need for affordable housing choice for this age cohort – meaning smaller housing units with fewer maintenance demands (such as the patio homes underway at Traditions of America development). As the Baby Boomer age cohort moves out of larger homes or passes away, the Township should expect an increase in for-sale single-family housing.

- Within the context of overall growth along the corridors leading north out of Pittsburgh, the Township's blend of scenic natural features, its proximity to major employment centers and its access to a high-quality school district and recreational amenities could position it to attract new residents.
- The Township's undeveloped land area represents growth opportunity, though much of it is constrained by environmental factors, whether it falls within an official conservation area, such as the Tom's Run Valley biodiversity area, or it involves proximity to steep slopes, water features or other conditions that make development more costly or infeasible.
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections are also constrained by natural landscape features, as topography and a narrow right-of-way would make it difficult to add multi-modal features to some existing routes. Nonetheless, the Township should anticipate increased demand for improvements that would not only increase the safety and efficiency of auto travel, but also incorporate features oriented toward meeting a broader array of mobility needs.
- The future land use plan will need to consider development patterns as they relate to flood hazard risk, in terms of incentive or disincentive relative to development in hazard-prone areas or by promoting policies that would slow the growth of impermeable surface area. The availability of water/sewer infrastructure gives the Township a natural way to control the location and intensity of development.

## Physical Constraints

Evaluating all proposed future developments should involve determining what constraints may exist. Physical factors such as geology, topography and public infrastructure determine the intensity and extent of development that is appropriate for a given site.

Development in the Township is impacted considerably by environmental factors such as steep slopes and flood risk and by geological characteristics such as clay-based soils, which do not allow for adequate percolation for on-lot septic systems. Areas with these features and without public sanitary sewer lend themselves naturally to a conservation or low-density residential use.

The Ohio River flood plain is the largest in the Township and the one most prone to flood events. Other than railways and Ohio River Boulevard, little if any development has occurred in this area. The Tom's Run valley is also flood-prone, but similarly little development exists in this area, which includes a few housing units and land held by the Western

Pennsylvania Conservancy. By contrast, a considerable amount of development exists within the Lowries Run flood plain in the lower portion of Camp Horne Road. This area was settled during the Township's early years and has experienced flooding in the past.

The Township's zoning ordinance defines steep slopes as land areas where slope exceeds 25%, as determined by on-site or aerial topographic surveys prepared with a two-foot contour interval. These areas, as well as flood plains, landslide-prone areas and undermined areas with less than 100 feet of overburden, are protected by an overlay district in the zoning ordinance. This district carries additional regulation to limit development in unsuitable areas.

Anyone proposing development on a slope of 25% or more must notify the Township in advance. The Township will require a geotechnical report if any evidence exists that the underlying geology of the site may be unstable. All land disturbance is required to comply with the Township's grading code (Part 19). These and other controls were in place prior to the 2006 landslide at the

Dixmont site, but "over 50 variances were granted" to make way for the project, according to the Allegheny Land Trust. The impact of the slide on the Township and region threw into sharp relief the importance of environmental considerations to development.

As described on page 59, the sanitary sewer system within the Township is limited primarily to its eastern side, along Camp Horne Road and in residential areas that extend from other communities. Sanitary sewer service is a necessity for any large-scale development to occur. Thus, any investments made in capacity expansion have the potential to change land use patterns. Costs associated with this infrastructure will be the responsibility of future developers and could be offset by the number of customers who would use the system.

# Site Assessment Summary

## Overview

As part of the planning process, the Planning Commission examined specific large parcels (or parcel groups) potentially suitable for development to determine various build-out possibilities and what effect they might have on the Township. Sites evaluated in detail included six that shared the following elements to various degrees:

- Sufficient area to accommodate subdivision or a development of considerable scale and impact
- Convenient connection to the Township's existing road system
- Proximity to existing public water and/or sanitary sewer service

- Absence of prohibitive environmental constraints, such as a large percentage of land area sloped greater than 25% or in a flood plain.

Each site profile described existing characteristics for the parcel, determined the maximum capacity for development given current zoning and explored any other use possibilities.

## Conclusions

The Planning Commission held a public meeting in June 2015 to review and discuss the site profiles and, more broadly, development objectives and future land use vision for the Township. While certain site-specific development possibilities exist that could accommodate

the siting of limited numbers of housing units, the overall consensus was that the analysis did not reveal the possibility for any large-scale development. Clusters of housing could fit onto certain sites with proximity to existing infrastructure, but the cost of connecting the homes to local systems could be prohibitive, given that there would be only a limited number of units across which the costs could be distributed. Additionally, the marginal taxable value of the number of homes that could be added would not dramatically impact the Township's financial sustainability. Thus, additional new construction -- while consistent with the Township's future land use vision in some configurations -- will not be the means by which the Township guarantees its future quality of life.



# Future Land Use Map

Comments received from officials and the public during the update to the Comprehensive Plan reinforce commonly held views on what is important about living in Kilbuck Township. The Township remains a scenic enclave tucked among rolling wooded hills, comfortable and private but with convenient proximity to the region's urban core and all the amenities it offers. The Township is rich in natural resources, including four waterways (Kilbuck Run, Lowries Run, Tom's Run and Spruce Run) and large, uninterrupted forested expanses. Its dramatic topography has been a major driver of development patterns. The local housing market is stable, consisting entirely of single-family homes that rarely turn over. In summary, the Township is a quiet and harmonious bedroom

community with an appreciation for its rustic natural setting.

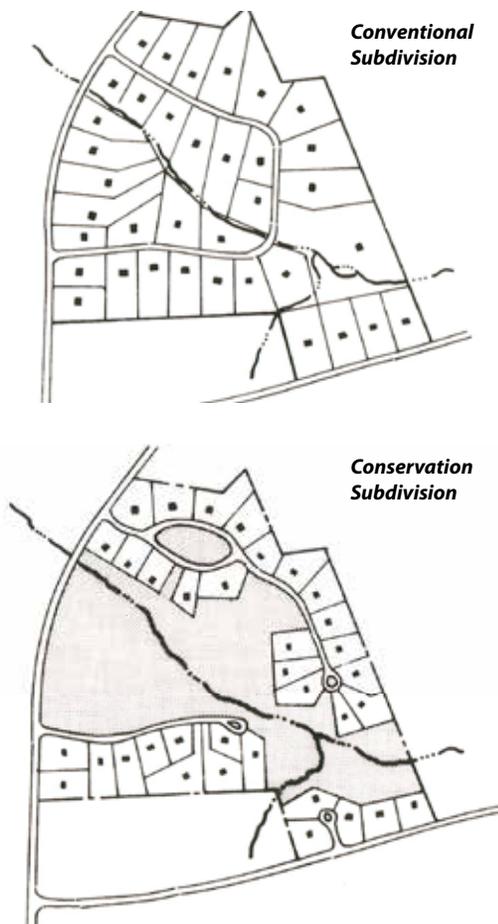
Thus, the future land use map does not represent a drastic departure from the current land cover map (p. 62). It envisions the following.

The Township's western half will remain sparsely developed, with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy properties and the former Dixmont site specifically slated as preserved open space. These areas are connected by Tom's Run and by a topographic ridge that appears to be well suited to conservation as a greenway. Almost all remaining property in the Township's western side is currently zoned for single-family residential and agricultural uses at a low density, which are appropriate given the

“*growing  
by staying  
ourselves*”

— Public meeting participant

Figure 28: Conservation Design



Source: Arendt, Randall G. *Conservation Design for Subdivisions: A Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks*. Washington DC: Island Press, 1996. p. 128.

natural resource constraints that exist in the area. Any future subdivisions planned for the Township's western half should consider conservation subdivision design (see figure at left), which reallocates overall density within a site to incentivize the creation of protected open spaces.

A handful of businesses currently operate near the intersection of Tom's Run and Duff roads. Topography and a lack of public utility service limit further expansion of such uses in the area.

The parcels south of the former Dixmont site along Route 65 are designated as "Corridor Context," with the expectation that any development should occur in ways that are compatible with the projected future use of that site -- conservation/open space, potentially with passive recreational amenities in the long term -- and with recommendations the Township expects will result from the Route 65 Master Plan, which is now in its beginning stages. The Plan will have land use and traffic implications for municipalities from Bellevue to Rochester, addressing issues including (but not limited to):

- Evaluating alternatives to address the greatest intersection needs and the potential for regional signal management,
- Evaluating access management issues and developing an ordinance adoption strategy, and
- Evaluating development and redevelopment potential and potential corridor impacts.

The intersection of Tom's Run Road with Route 65 (below) is currently considered to be dangerous, another factor that will be important to development in this area.

Figure 29: Route 65 Intersection



Source: Google Aerial Imagery, 2015

# Map 9. Future Land Use

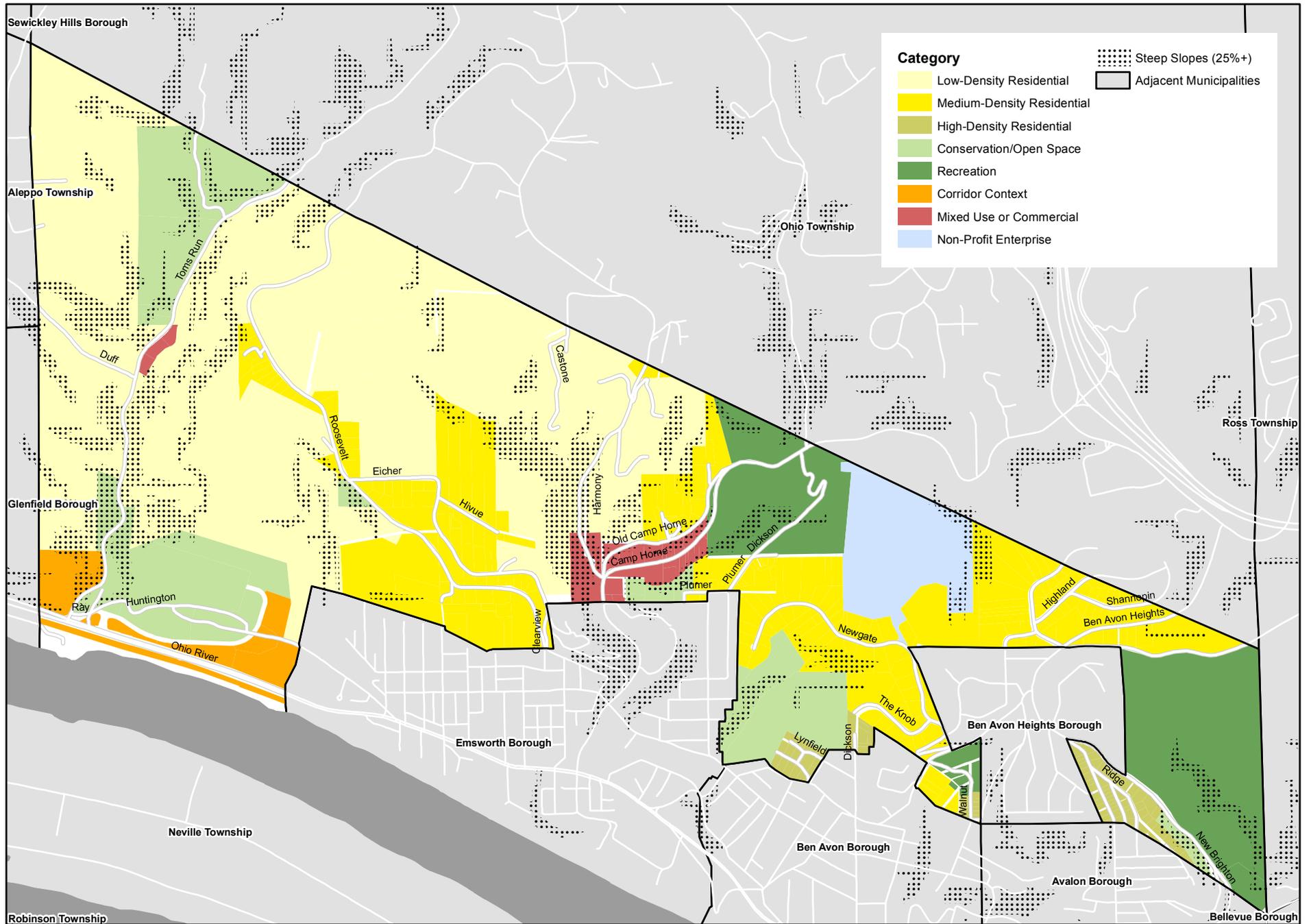
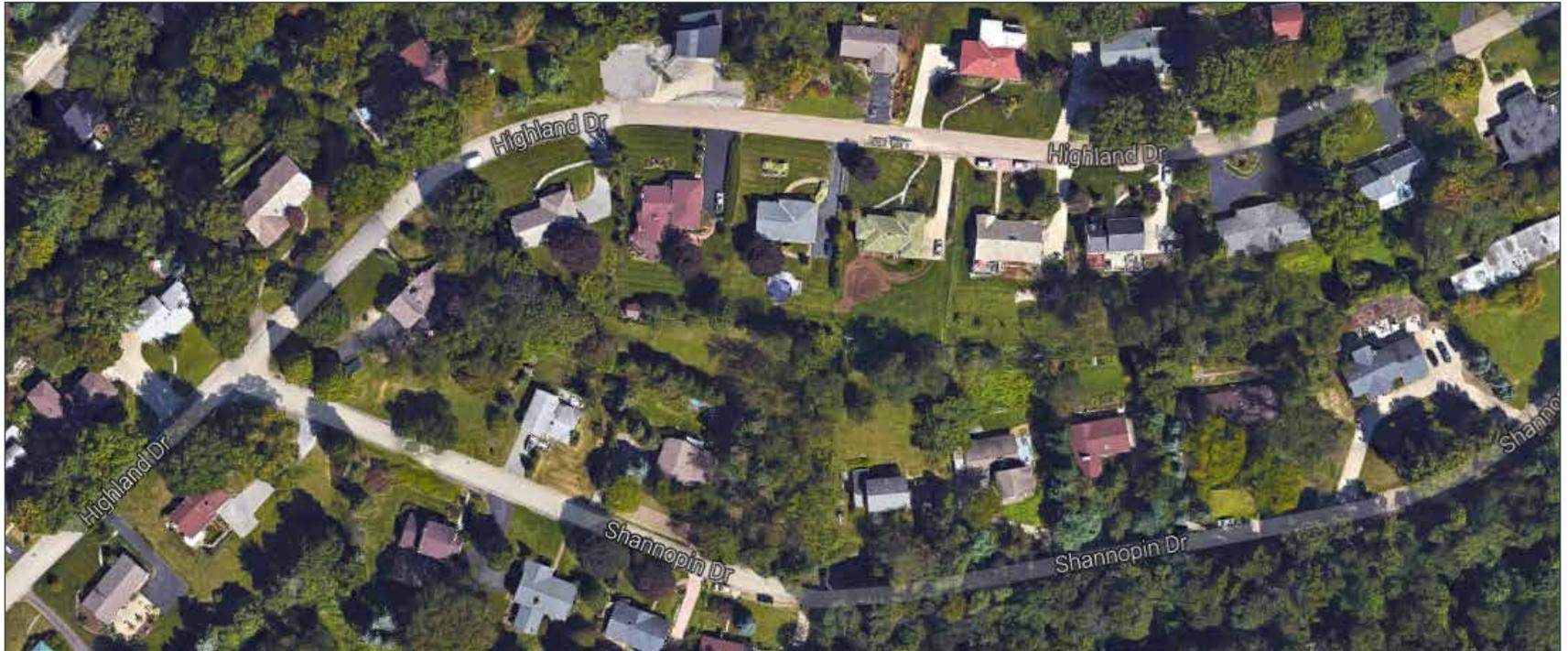


Figure 30: Medium-Density Residential: Shannopin Drive Area



Source: Google Aerial Imagery, 2015

Residential density increases in the eastern half of the Township, with areas along the southern border designated as high-density (relative to Kilbuck) and most of the residential land area taking the form of medium density, of which the neighborhood shown above is typical. These neighborhoods are mostly built out and in stable condition.

The Township's commercial center is Camp Horne Road, a winding stretch bounded by Lowries Run along one side and steep topography along the other. These constraints limit the geographic footprint of future development, though some opportunity exists to expand within the context of the residential and commercial uses already in place. There is a strong need to improve the safety of pedestrian and bike traffic along Camp Horne Road, which would improve residents' access to all of the public amenities at Avonworth Park and

increase the vitality of the neighborhood business district. Currently, pedestrians use the road's shoulder, which is made especially dangerous by limited sight lines around the road's many curves. However, as shown in Figure 31, a narrow right-of-way and nearby slopes add significant challenge and cost potential to any plan that would improve the multi-modal functionality of this road.

Otherwise, future uses are envisioned as generally consistent with current settlement patterns:

- Sites classified as “conservation/ open space,” aside from those for which it is now a currently official use, should be reserved from development due to environmental constraints, such as steep slopes or flood plain/runoff considerations. Slopes of 25% or greater are indicated on the future land use map due to their prevalence throughout the Township.
- The recreational facilities within the Township are great assets, providing value well beyond what is typically available to residents of municipalities this size. Efforts to enhance local recreational opportunities should focus on the maintenance of these facilities as well as the development of trail networks, ideally to connect destinations within and beyond the Township.

Figure 31: Camp Home Road Northbound near Avonworth Park



Source: Google Street View, 2015



# Consistency with Existing Plans

To develop an approach to the Comprehensive Plan update that would consider and incorporate the important planning work occurring in contiguous municipalities and the region, Kilbuck Township sought and reviewed the latest land use planning documents from the boroughs of Avalon, Bellevue, Ben Avon, Ben Avon Heights and Glenfield as well as the townships of Aleppo, Ohio and Ross. In particular, the Township focused on development plans, future land use designations and the handling of resources along its own borders to determine whether the plans or actions of any neighboring communities could impact Kilbuck Township or should guide the Township's own plans. Additionally, the public services section of Ohio Township's plan was examined in detail to

determine whether any long-range plans carried implications for Kilbuck's shared services agreement.

Development activity described in the plans is already known to the Township (Carey's Bluff, which would cross Kilbuck's border with Glenfield, and Traditions of America, which is being built in both Kilbuck and Ohio townships). The plans for contiguous jurisdictions did not contain intentions or actions considered to be inconsistent with Kilbuck Township's own plan update.

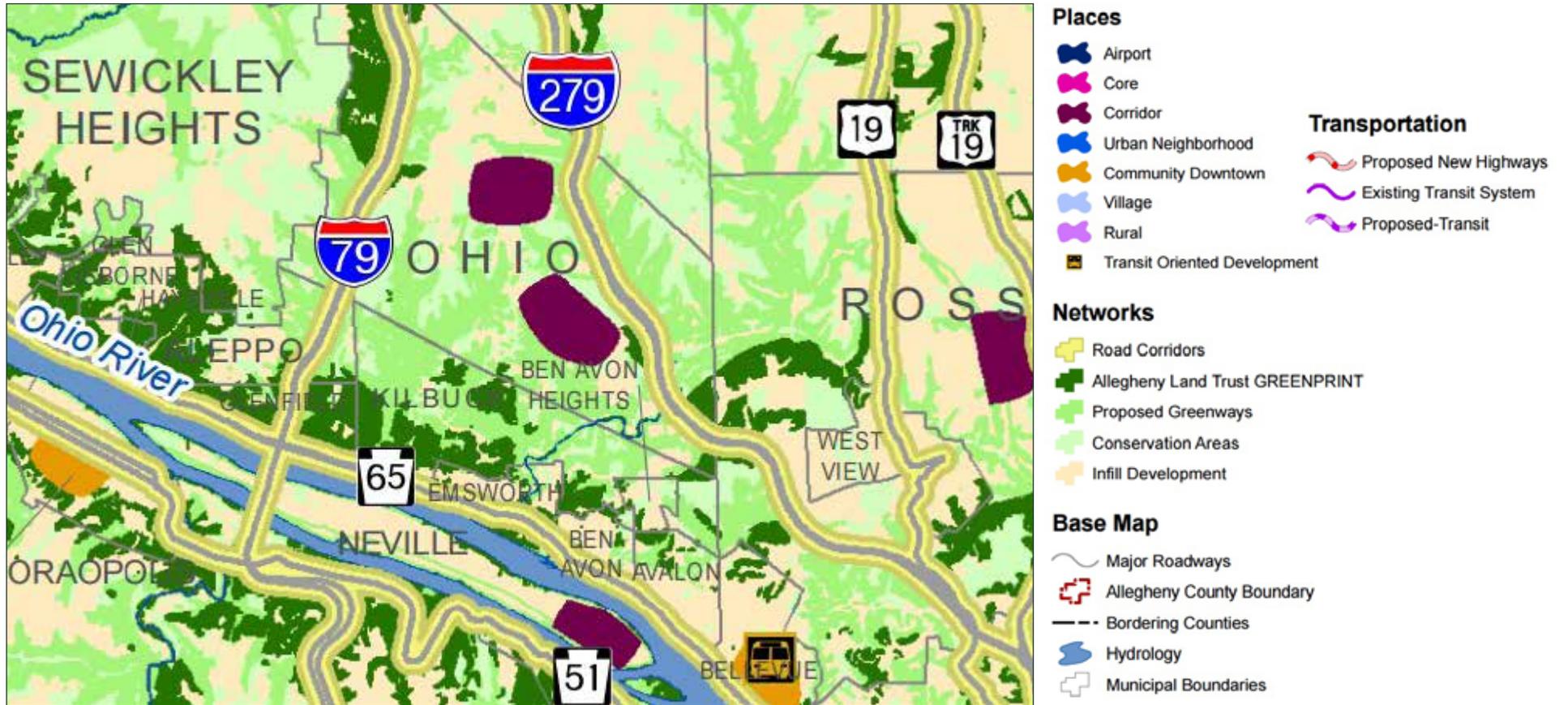
The multi-municipal plan for nearby boroughs was adopted in 2004, though it is currently undergoing an update. The Township will continue to coordinate with the Tri-Boroughs plan update to ensure that the two plans are consistent.

Aleppo's plan is a multi-municipal effort also adopted in 2007 by Sewickley and Osborne, and Ohio Township adopted its latest plan in 2008.

The existing plan with the greatest implications for the Township is Allegheny Places, the county comprehensive plan adopted in 2008. Allegheny Places established an overall future vision and a roadmap for its achievement, which involved recommendations built on the framework of "places," or settings targeted for major development.

As Figure 32 illustrates, none of the designated "places" are within Kilbuck Township. While Kilbuck may be impacted by future major development in the "corridor"-designated places in Ohio Township, the county's plan is consistent

Figure 32: Future Places Map: Allegheny Places



with the notion that no sites of major development priority exist at this point in the Township. In fact, the county's "future places" map covers Kilbuck Township nearly entirely with two categories:

- **Proposed greenways**, which it defines as corridors of open space that serve to link natural resource-based or manmade features using either public or private property, and
- **Allegheny Land Trust GREENPRINT**, which highlight areas with the highest priority for conservation, in terms of biological diversity, water management and landscape character. The Land Trust recommends that "large tracts of woodlands on steep slopes along the rivers" be preserved "to maintain their ecological services and maintain the county's unique visual appeal."

The county established the following guidelines for greenways:

- Linear systems that connect people, places and parks, and focus on one or more of these characteristics:

*Environmental* – largely undisturbed; typically along riparian ways; and primarily for the benefit of wildlife, plant life and natural systems

*Cultural* – more developed; may be as narrow as a trail or as large as a regional park

*Viewsheds* – largely undisturbed; typically vegetated hillsides or ridge tops

- Located along both sides of the Ohio, Monongahela, Allegheny and Youghiogheny Rivers and their major tributaries
- Lands meeting certain environmental criteria (such as steep slopes, woodlands, landslide-prone soils, wetlands and floodplains)
- Connect to the many municipalities and communities, providing access to the greenways systems
- Connect to the greenways of surrounding counties
- Connect to Places identified on the Future Land Use map

- Connect to the PA Greenways Network, which includes systems that are regional

Specifically, the county overlaid a greenways designation on areas that met any of the following criteria, which account for the vast majority of land area in Kilbuck Township:

- 40% steep slopes
- 25% steep slopes within woodlands of 10 acres or more
- 15% steep slopes within both landslide-prone soils and woodlands of 10 acres or more
- Conservation stream corridors with a minimum 50-ft. buffer
- Forested floodplains
- Wetlands of 1 acre or more with a 50-ft. buffer
- River frontage (buffered by a minimum of 100 ft.)
- Protected land – land trust properties and agricultural easement areas
- Parks – regional, state, community,

and municipal parks (12+ acres)

- Public golf courses

The following two figures display the county's greenways layers as they relate to Kilbuck Township. Because the detail is limited in the first, which is part of a larger, published map, the second includes the same data incorporated into a Township map with parcels and local streets.

The extensive greenway coverage of Kilbuck Township is consistent with the future vision for the Township that emerged as the plan update developed: the Township should retain its character as a scenic, stable enclave, a "hidden treasure" of rural life surrounded by rich natural resources located conveniently close to world-class city amenities. The land use analysis the Township conducted during its Comprehensive Plan update revealed no imperative development site prospects, given environmental and infrastructure constraints, and there is indeed no imperative to build out further -- the residents and officials who participated in the process expressed a desire instead for the community to achieve

sustainability (economic and otherwise) without fundamentally changing its character. Allegheny Places suggests that infill development is the most appropriate type in Kilbuck Township, and that assertion supported by many parts of this Comprehensive Plan update.

Township leaders will need to determine how much land-use authority it is appropriate to impose in ensuring that designated greenways are preserved as such. Consistency with Allegheny Places and the environmental considerations that factor into the GREENPRINT map provide a compelling legal basis for the Township to ensure that development does not negatively impact natural conditions. Protection can take a variety of forms, such as:

- Creating an overlay district to impose additional requirements in certain sensitive areas on top of the basic requirements of the underlying zoning
- Adoption of conservation or cluster development provisions that require permanent protection for a specified percentage of the site area to be

developed

- Conservation/preservation easement, which places permanent restrictions on land development
- Transfer of development rights, which would require transferring the development right from a greenway property to a specified area where it would be more suitable, or
- Land acquisition or donation.

The Township is not yet experiencing the development pressure familiar to some of its neighbors, but proactively establishing a strategy to preserve specified greenway areas could prevent the incompatible development of any sensitive lands.

Allegheny Places identifies Route 65 as a "transportation network" component. Accordingly, the future land use map in this document reserves the few parcels Kilbuck has along that thoroughfare as "corridor context" in use, recognizing the need to support the long-term use of the former Dixmont site as open space and the anticipated recommendations of the Route 65 Master Plan now underway.

Figure 33: Allegheny Places Greenways



**Networks**

-  Proposed Greenways
-  Allegheny Land Trust GREENPRINT\*

**Trails**

-  Open
-  Proposed
-  Under Construction
-  Water Trail

**Base Map**

-  Allegheny County
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Bordering Counties
-  Hydrology\*\*

**Roads**

-  Major Roadways
-  Proposed Roads

# Map 10. County Greenways

