



# Perkasio

## Borough of Perkasio



## Comprehensive Plan Update (2014)

### Executive Summary

#### Regional Location

Perkasio Borough is located in Upper Bucks County and is situated about midway between Center City Philadelphia, 30 miles to the south, and the Allentown/Bethlehem urban area, 22 miles to the north. The 2.4-square-mile borough abuts Sellersville Borough and the townships of East Rockhill and Hilltown and a small portion of West Rockhill.

Perkasio has a significant Town Center/downtown area with a mix of residential and commercial uses. Residential neighborhoods are found on the periphery of the borough. The borough is known for its exceptional parks and recreation system that has grown into a regional attraction. Local civic and cultural events, such as the various seasonal events, are popular and well attended. The combination of Perkasio's established downtown, its parks and recreation amenities, and local cultural events all contribute to a distinctive and highly desirable small-town atmosphere.



#### How to Use the Plan

The *Perkasio Borough Comprehensive Plan Update* is intended to serve as a guide for borough officials, residents, developers, business owners, and other interested parties. The plan seeks to set forth a common Community Vision for the future of Perkasio and to coordinate, educate, and guide development and preservation in appropriate areas of the borough.

To make this Plan more user-friendly, a two-part format is provided. **Part 1, Present Conditions, Trends, and Future Potential** contains a detailed description and analysis of a host of important planning topics affecting the character and quality of life of Perkasio's residents and businesses.

**Part 2, Planning for the Future** contains the Land Use Plan, which is the central element, containing eight Guiding Principles, a Community Vision, and overall planning strategies and policies and providing key highlights and summaries from Part 1. The Future Land Use Plan and Map provide a blueprint for planning and development in Perkasio through 2024 and beyond.

## Plan Purpose

This Comprehensive Plan is an update to Perkasio Borough's previous comprehensive plan prepared in 1993, which was a response to the various issues specific to the borough at that time. Perkasio has seen important changes since the adoption of the '93 comprehensive plan and continues to face issues similar to other mature communities including: changing economic structures; pressure for infill development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse; need for adequate parking; balance of residential and nonresidential development; future capital investments; and desire for strategically located commercial uses that satisfy local market demands.

Over the past 25 years, Perkasio Borough has been proactive in planning for a variety of issues that are important to the community. These planning documents are incorporated into the comprehensive plan and should be used as guides when making community decisions on particular topics that have been studied in more detail. These planning documents include:

- *Market Conditions for the Restoration of Downtown Perkasio (1988)*
- *Perkasio Town Center, Plan for Restoration, Preservation, Development (1989)*
- *Perkasio Borough Comprehensive Plan (1993)*
- *Perkasio Borough Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan (1995)*
- *Perkasio Borough Market Analysis (1999)*
- *Perkasio Borough Open Space Plan (2010)*

These planning documents recommend physical improvements and policy and programming strategies designed to encourage restoration and revitalization of the borough and its Town Center, expand the tax base, and address park and open space needs. Key components of these planning documents have been incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan, but borough officials should refer to these documents as well when making community decisions. This Comprehensive Plan satisfies the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code while providing useful guidance on relevant issues through the duration of its 10-year planning timeframe, or through 2024.

## Public Participation Process

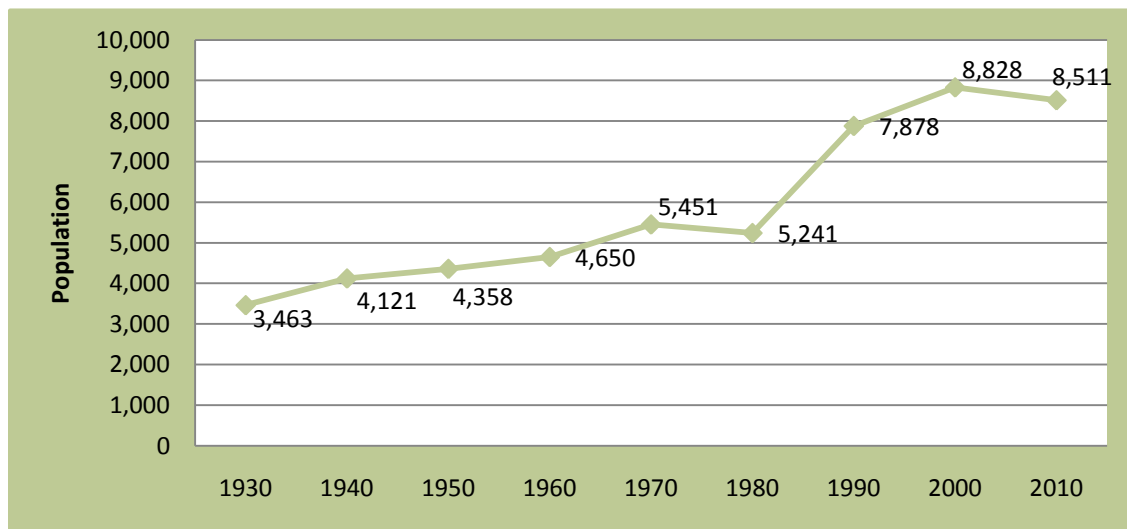
Obtaining the input of those who reside, work, or spend time in Perkasio Borough was a primary objective of this Comprehensive Plan. The public participation process has proven to be invaluable in understanding the priorities and preferences of residents, business owners, and other interested parties. The production of this plan included public input at two special meetings—a Community (Town Hall) Meeting and Economic Development Workshop—along with regular monthly workshops. Input was also obtained from separate resident and business surveys.



## Population and Demographic Trends

Perkasie Borough has experienced growth nearly every decade over the past 80 years with the exception of the ten years between 1970 and 1980 and between 2000 and 2010. The 2010 U.S. Census figures show that the borough lost 317 residents since 2000, a 3.6 percent reduction in population. There are several factors likely to have contributed to the borough's loss of population during this period. Among these factors are the impacts of the economic recession, the closing of some local manufacturing operations, smaller families, aging population, and shifts of population from boroughs to townships.

*Perkasie Borough Population Growth, 1930 to 2010*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

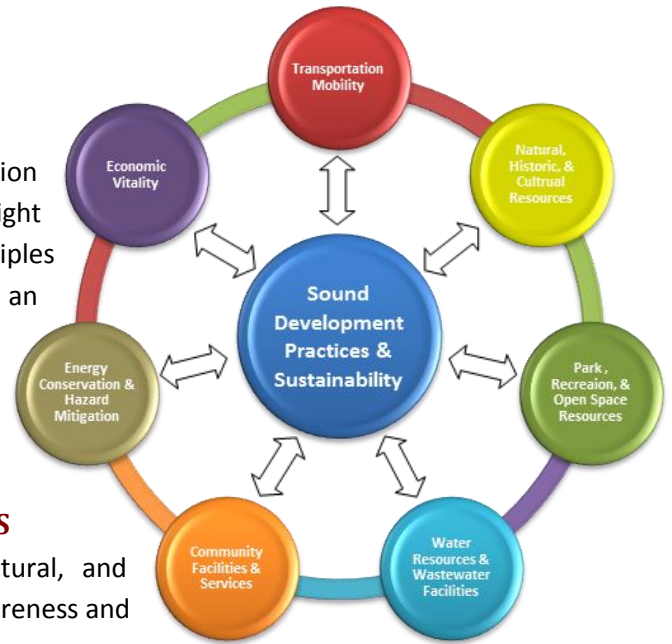
Between 2020 and 2030, Perkasie's population and housing are projected to increase by 349 persons (4.1 percent) and 134 dwelling units (3.9 percent), respectively.

Other population and demographic trends influencing growth and development in Perkasie Borough:

- **Baby Boomers** (persons born between 1946 and 1964) make up nearly one-third of the borough's population, impacting health care, housing, transportation, and social services.
- **Brain Drain** is the phenomenon that describes the trend of young professionals migrating to other areas with more options for education, employment, and housing. This trend affecting Perkasie, as well as the county as a whole, results in a slight decline in persons between the ages of 25 to 34 between 2000 and 2010. This is significant because these young workers are important to business and job development.
- **Households** are declining in size nationwide due to various factors: later family formation, declining birth rates, rising divorce rates, and more people living alone. The average household size in Perkasie in 2010 was 2.57 persons, down from 2.68 in 2000. This may lead to a greater demand for mixed-use development (residential and commercial uses) and small housing sizes.
- **Family Households without Children** have increased about 16 percent between 2000 and 2010, which have an influence on housing and retail marketing.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Based upon extensive public participation and discussion during the production of this Comprehensive Plan, eight Guiding Principles were established for Perkasio. All principles play an important role in the community but each has an interrelationship with the central overarching principle of this plan, which is to promote Sound Development Practices and Sustainability for future development and activities.



### NATURAL, HISTORIC, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Protect and enhance the natural, historical, architectural, and cultural resources within Perkasio and deepen public awareness and appreciation of these resources.



### PARK, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

Preserve and expand the borough's park and recreational resources along the East Branch of the Perkiomen Creek and Pleasant Spring Creek corridors. Continue to be proactive in the planning and land acquisition of open space resources to satisfy the future needs of borough residents.

### WATER RESOURCES AND WASTEWATER FACILITIES

Protect the borough's water supply sources by ensuring local regulations (i.e., zoning regulations, floodplain standards, and stormwater management regulations) continue to protect water quality and quantity. Ensure that adequate conveyance, treatment, and disposal facilities are provided for wastewater to satisfy current and future growth and to protect the quality and health of the natural environment.

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Provide high-quality community facilities and services that are consistent with the borough's land use planning in order to maintain a high-quality of life for residents.



### ENERGY CONSERVATION AND HAZARD MITIGATION

Promote the conservation of energy and the movement toward alternative sources of energy, thereby reducing dependence on non-renewable resources and contributing to a comprehensive approach to a sustainable energy future. Support proactive mitigation efforts to prevent or reduce the impacts of natural and man-made disasters.



### ECONOMIC VITALITY

Promote Perkasio's Economic Development Vision that focuses on creating a more dynamic shopping, dining, cultural, and entertainment experience throughout the borough's commercial areas. Foster a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use downtown while maintaining Perkasio's small town character.



## TRANSPORTATION MOBILITY

Enhance the borough's transportation system to accommodate vehicular and pedestrian traffic in a safe and efficient manner that is consistent with the needs of the general public and individual property owners, respects the historic character of the borough, and supports the borough's economic development efforts. Support for the future reactivation of passenger rail service to Perkasio Borough may provide various benefits to the community.

## SOUND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AND SUSTAINABILITY (OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE)

Sound Development Practices are coordinated, holistic policies of Sustainability, which in the context of comprehensive planning, includes thoughtful development that respects its surroundings. Sound Development Practices promotes a concentration of development and diversity of uses while preserving the inherent resources (e.g., natural, hydrological, historical) that give a community its identity and sense of place. By focusing on the provision of new residential and nonresidential development within areas already built up, public investment expenses for new roads, utilities, and amenities are greatly reduced providing significant cost-savings to businesses and residents. Sustainability is a pattern of resource use intended to meet human needs including economic vitality and healthy communities while preserving the natural environment, not only for the present population, but also for generations to come.



Source: Google Images

## COMMUNITY VISION

Community visioning is the process of developing consensus on the future of a community and then deciding what is necessary to achieve it. A community vision statement captures what residents and businesses most value about their community and the shared 'ideal' image of what they want their community to become.

### PERKASIE'S COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT (CONDENSED)

Perkasie Borough holds a special place in the hearts of many residents, business owners, and visitors alike. Perkasie's unique setting along a prominent ridgeline provides scenic views and vistas. The abundance of historic charm will be incorporated within future development, adaptive reuse, and expansion projects. Stream corridors contain a wealth of wetlands, riparian corridors, and natural habitat that will be preserved and enhanced for future generations. The borough will continue to provide high-quality community facilities and services to residents and businesses. The extensive sidewalk, trail, and path network provides connections from most residential neighborhoods to points of interest within the borough and throughout the region. Perkasie emphasizes a full spectrum of housing opportunities, appealing to residents of all ages and providing a life-long community.

Through its Economic Development Vision of **PlayShopDineUnwind** (active/healthy lifestyles), Perkasie will continue expanding economic development opportunities with neighboring Sellersville Borough and East Rockhill Township to benefit the entire region, fostering a thriving business climate that creates dynamic shopping, dining, cultural, and entertainment experience within the Town Center, and extending to all commercial areas in the borough, while preserving Perkasie's small-town character.

Perkasie's civic-minded nature will continue through the various large-scale community events and activities that attract thousands of visitors from around the region. Perseverance and due diligence from stakeholders, regional partnerships, and strong local officials will result in the realization of Perkasie's Community Vision for the benefit of existing and future generations.

*(For the full version, see Chapter 12, The Land Use Plan, Page 168.)*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION



Economic development is the manifestation of a community's fiscal, social, and physical resources as part of a long-term planning process aimed at preserving and improving the overall quality of life in the community. Economic development focuses on important aspects of a community that are provided by the private sector—employment opportunities, businesses serving residents, a stable and growing tax base, and business involvement as corporate citizens in a community's activities and decision making. Understanding the demographics of those who live and work in Perkasie as well as the overall local and regional retail markets helps to identify potential economic development opportunities.

The **PlayShopDineUnwind** (active/healthy lifestyles) vision capitalizes on one of Perkasie's greatest assets—its park and recreational facilities that attract residents and visitors from around the region. Creating a more dynamic shopping, dining, cultural, and entertainment experience, not only in Town Center but also in other commercial areas, is instrumental to this vision. Efforts toward downtown revitalization are intended to create a more vibrant, walkable, mixed-use environment while maintaining Perkasie's small-town character. Reducing the size of the Town Center District can provide optimum utilization and walkability within the district. Promoting an appropriate mix of retail, residential, entertainment, and cultural uses with assorted public spaces is consistent with this vision.



Key elements of this vision are to continue and enhance the borough's streetscape improvements in and around the redefined Town Center District to provide aesthetic appeal and continuity along major street corridors. These improved street corridors may function as conduits, drawing visitors and residents from the adjacent neighborhoods and the borough's park and recreation network to the downtown. Providing strategically located Town Center and wayfinding signage can bolster the identity of Perkasie's downtown retail district while guiding motorists to public parking lots (and potential future parking lots).

### *Photo Simulation at 5<sup>th</sup> & Chestnut Streets*



BEFORE



AFTER

The Commercial Centers (Perkasie Square Shopping Center and a portion of the Glenwood Shopping Center) provide a variety of goods and services serving the region. Undertaking various improvements (e.g., façade, landscaping, signage, outdoor dining) may infuse new life into these Centers and make them more appealing. Public and private investments in the borough's other commercial districts may improve the appearance and function of these areas.

The Industrial areas are extremely valuable to the community, and businesses in these areas provide taxes and electric fees that help the borough sustain its financial well-being. Fostering an environment ripe for start-up or incubator businesses to flourish through flexible regulations (mixed-use buildings, flex spaces, live-work units) may prove beneficial to Perkasie by creating a regional niche while filling vacancies in these districts.

Perkasie's trail and sidewalk network is part of a larger network (including the Liberty Bell Trail) that connects points of interest throughout the region, including Sellersville, East Rockhill, West Rockhill, and beyond. Improving and expanding this trail network may have a positive impact on the local economy by increasing access and improving the user experience for pedestrians and bicyclists patronizing the borough's retail shops, restaurants, and entertainment uses.

As part of Perkasie's Economic Development Vision, the promotion of Design Principles for Successful Downtowns and Downtown Retail Guidelines have been established for the Town Center.



### DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWNS

- ❖ **Architectural Design** – Design buildings and building façades to incorporate architectural features that reflect local architectural styles.
- ❖ **Building Placement & Access** – Locate buildings near adjacent streets to provide uniformity of building setbacks and visual continuity. Provide dual/multiple entrances (front, sides, and rear of buildings when feasible) to increase accessibility and aesthetic appeal around structure.
- ❖ **Building Scale & Massing** – Ensure buildings are not excessive in size and massing (length and width) so that they fit the context of the downtown.
- ❖ **Building Separation** – Provide periodic breaks or physical separation between buildings to incorporate pedestrian access and landscape materials.
- ❖ **Parking Placement** – Locate parking to the side or rear of buildings (whenever possible).
- ❖ **Public/Civic Spaces** – Incorporate public spaces/public amenities, pocket parks, and plazas for civic gatherings, interaction, and relaxation.
- ❖ **Streetscaping** – Provide streetscape features such as street trees, planters, period lighting, and benches to enhance downtown unity and identity.
- ❖ **Pedestrian Access** – Pay particular attention to the placement of sidewalks to provide convenient access and connections to points of interest throughout the downtown.
- ❖ **Landscaping & Buffering** – Provide ample parking lot plantings and appropriate landscape planting/buffering to provide 'green infrastructure' in the urban environment.

## PLAN ELEMENTS

There are eight plan elements within Part 2, Chapter 12 (The Land Use Plan) that examine issues and opportunities on a wide range of planning topics. Each Plan Element contains a summary of the detailed description and analysis found in Part 1. Implementation strategies and recommendations are provided that include various municipal actions such as potential rezoning, ordinance amendments, physical improvements, and marketing, partnering, and coordination efforts.

### PLAN ELEMENTS

- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Historic and Cultural Resources
- ❖ Natural Resources  
(Includes Air Resources and Energy Conservation)
- ❖ Transportation
- ❖ Park, Recreation, and Open Space
- ❖ Community Facilities and Services  
(Includes Borough Administration, Finance and Management, Hazard Mitigation, and Solid Waste and Recycling)
- ❖ Water-Related Infrastructure and Facilities
- ❖ Economic Development

## FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

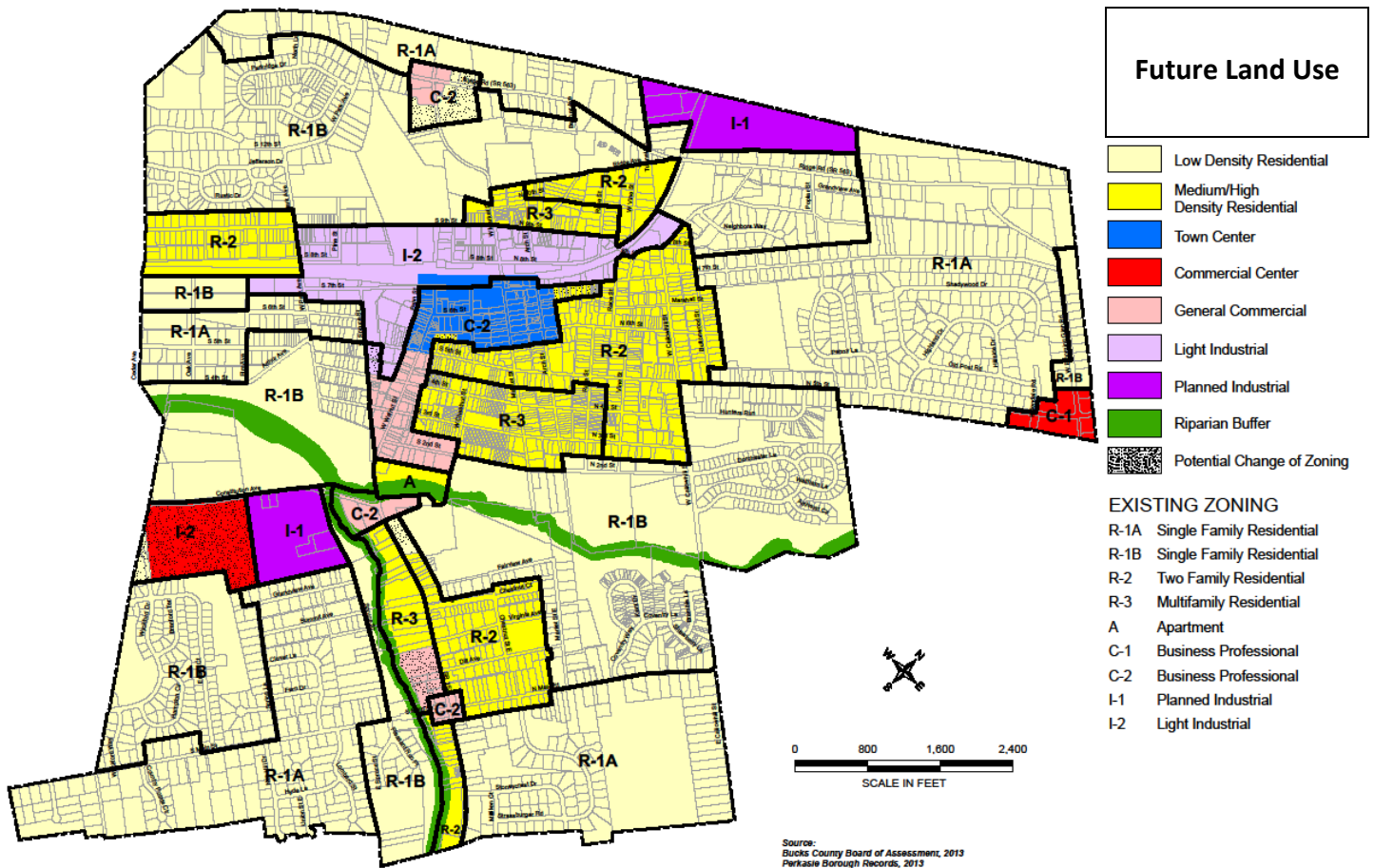
The Future Land Use Plan provides a framework for Perkasio's Guiding Principles and Community Vision and establishes a foundation for Perkasio's land use and planning policies through 2024 and beyond. It should be used as a means of coordinating and implementing local planning, preservation, and development initiatives and for evaluating future subdivision and land development proposals.

The Future Land Use map is meant to assist in the coordination and implementation of local and regional planning efforts. Borough officials will use the map as a guide to land use planning decisions such as rezoning. Each future land use category attempts to create an overall land use pattern that is both balanced and diverse with minimal negative impacts upon surrounding areas.

In general, the denser, more intensive land uses in Perkasio are located near the center of the borough and less intensive land uses are found toward the borough's periphery. Typically, the older development near the borough's interior is denser and more compact, with small lots and shallow yard setbacks. Newer suburban-style residential development on larger lots is located outside Perkasio's downtown.

In light of these conditions, Perkasio has been divided into eight future land use categories: Low Density Residential, Medium/High Density Residential, Town Center, Commercial Center, General Commercial, Light Industrial, Planned Industrial, and Riparian Buffer as shown in the Future Land Use map, and described below.





### **LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL**

This future land use category comprises traditional, single-family detached dwellings and surrounds the borough’s central core within the R-1A and R-1B Residential zoning districts. The purpose of this future land use category is to retain the lower density residential character as it now exists, while providing for the protection of natural resources and the preservation of permanent open space and minimizing the amount of impervious surface. The zoning ordinance allows for the development of either single-family residential areas or single-family clusters subject to performance standards within the R-1A zoning district. Development of single-family detached dwellings, single-family clusters, and the full range of residential dwelling types within a performance standard subdivision is permitted within the R-1B zoning district. No policy changes in zoning district boundaries or zoning district purpose are recommended.

### **MEDIUM/HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL**

The Medium/High Density Residential future land use category comprises a variety of housing types, including single-family detached dwellings, single-family attached dwellings (twin, duplex, townhouses), and multifamily units. The majority of the high density residential area is adjacent to the Town Center and the historic center of the borough within the R-2 and R-3 Residential and A Apartment zoning districts. The purpose of this future land use category is to retain and maintain the character and density of existing residential areas where a variety of housing types are permitted. Only minor policy changes are recommended in zoning district boundaries and no changes to the zoning district purpose.

The borough should continue to encourage development that provides for a variety of housing types within the areas of this future land use category.

## **TOWN CENTER**



Historically, Perkasio's Town Center has functioned as the hub of commercial and social activity of the borough, and this is the future intention as well. The Town Center future land use category is located southeast of the rail lines and generally comprises a 3- to 4-block area. The Town Center future land use category corresponds to a portion of the current TC—Town Center Overlay District. The current TC district is quite large and includes a significant number of residential and non-retail uses. The Town Center future land use category is a more refined, compact downtown

as discussed in the Economic Development chapter. While this reconstituted boundary reduces the area of the Town Center Overlay District, it encompasses the existing concentrations of retail uses and additional areas for redevelopment of underutilized properties.

The overarching policy of the Town Center is to provide a vibrant, mixed-use, walkable community with an appropriate mix of uses (e.g., retail, office, residential, dining, cultural, and entertainment) that are in scale with Perkasio's small-town character. The future development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse of buildings should adhere to Perkasio's Downtown Retail Guidelines and Design Principles for Successful Downtowns. When possible, the design and layout of buildings should reflect the local architecture (Victorian and Queen Anne) and provide for a mixed use (residential/office over retail) arrangement. Future site plans and improvements within the Town Center area should optimize the provision for public parking, pedestrian access and safety, and public (civic) spaces.

Various potential regulatory changes are suggested for the Town Center related to appropriate uses, building scale and massing, building setbacks, building height, parking standards, provision for public space, and design guidelines.

## **COMMERCIAL CENTERS**

The Commercial Centers future land use category encompasses the two shopping centers within Perkasio: Perkasio Square and Glenwood Shopping Centers. These shopping centers function as neighborhood shopping centers providing for the sale of convenience goods (e.g., food, drugs, and sundries) and personal services for the day-to-day resident needs of the surrounding region and are typically built around a supermarket as the principal anchor. The purpose of this future land use category is to provide areas for office, retail, personal services, and related uses.



The zoning ordinance provides a comprehensive set of design standards to promote the grouping of retail and service uses in the form of a shopping-center development within the C-1 Business Professional zoning district.

Various recommendations provided for the Commercial Centers include physical improvements, façade and landscaping improvements, signage, public access and amenities, rental rates/marketing strategies, and potential regulatory changes such as accommodating outdoor dining space adjacent to restaurants and eateries in the shopping centers.

## **GENERAL COMMERCIAL**



The General Commercial future land use category comprises four commercial areas within the borough zoned C-2 General Commercial District. The largest of these areas makes up the borough's central core, extending south along West Walnut Street, and then continuing east for one block along South 2nd Street. The land use composition of this area includes a wide variety of commercial uses, mixed-use buildings (residential and commercial uses), and a variety of residential dwelling types. The other three general commercial areas are commercial nodes located at

the intersections of Ridge Road and West Market Street, Constitution Avenue and East Walnut Street, and South Main Street and East Walnut Street.

The purpose of this future land use category is to provide for a wide variety of retail and personal service business uses that serve residents of adjacent neighborhoods and beyond while complementing, not competing with, businesses in the Town Center.

Potential improvements to General Commercial areas include the installation of gateway/wayfinding signage and streetscape improvements (e.g., period lighting, banners, and sidewalk improvements with brick edging) to signify that they are also part of the borough. Minor changes are suggested for the zoning district boundaries of the C-2 General Commercial District.

## **LIGHT INDUSTRIAL**

The Light Industrial future land use category has a diverse composition of land uses (e.g., commercial, industrial, single-family and multifamily residential, government, and institutional). The Light Industrial category is intended to provide for greater variety of industrial development, including office, retail, and personal service uses while including reasonable and flexible development standards. The Light Industrial future land use category corresponds to the portion of the I-2 Light Industrial zoning district that abuts the Town Center to the north and west. Given the diverse mixture of land uses and its proximity to the Town Center area, borough officials may wish to promote the Light Industrial area as a 'small business incubator' that may address the needs for small or start up businesses seeking reasonably priced and sized leasable space. Providing opportunities to use abandoned or underutilized buildings through renovation and adaptive reuse in the Light Industrial area may not only aid in filling current and future vacancies but also provide flexibility in how this area develops in the future.

Future development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse of buildings could capitalize on the Light Industrial area's proximity to the Town Center by providing a limited number of additional residential units (possibly as part of a mixed-use structure) that may increase patronage of the Town Center's restaurants and retail businesses located only a short walk away. Limiting the extent of retail businesses in the Light Industrial area may minimize the risk of competing with, or overshadowing the present and future concentration of retail businesses that is envisioned within the Town Center.

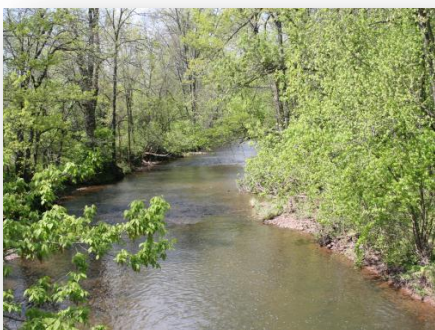


### **PLANNED INDUSTRIAL**

The Planned Industrial future land use category is located in two separate areas within the borough. One large vacant parcel is north of Ridge Road (Perkasie Development Enterprises, Inc.) adjacent to Pennridge Airport along the municipal boundary with East Rockhill Township, and the other parcel is located at the corner of Constitution Avenue and Spruce Street (Perkasie Industries). The Planned Industrial future land use category corresponds to the I-1 Planned Industrial zoning district.

Future development and/or redevelopment of the Planned Industrial area should consist of a high-quality, well-planned, well-landscaped industrial/business park campus character while minimizing land use impacts on surrounding areas. Future development and/or redevelopment of the Planned Industrial area should strive to satisfy regional market preferences. To better reflect the nature and appearance of future development/redevelopment in the Planned Industrial area, the I-1 district purpose statement will be revised.

### **RIPARIAN BUFFER**



This future land use category corresponds to areas in the vicinity of the East Branch of the Perkiomen and Pleasant Spring creeks. Both creeks have various wetlands, steep slopes, and significant natural habitat in proximity to their banks. Both creeks are located primarily within Perkasie's public park, recreation, and open space network; however, they also contain segments that abut lands owned by private property owners.

Providing stream corridor protection, in the form of riparian buffers, should be considered along the East Branch of the Perkiomen and Pleasant Spring creeks to stabilize the banks and reduce erosion, helping to control flooding, filter sediments, and prevent pollutants from entering adjacent streams. Preserving existing vegetation and planting new vegetated areas (trees and other plant materials) within these designated riparian buffer areas will also improve wildlife habitat and provide shade that cools the water and improves aquatic systems.