PLAN SLATE BELT

• Bangor • East Bangor • Lower Mount Bethel • Pen Argyl •
• Plainfield • Portland • Roseto • Upper Mount Bethel •
• Washington • Wind Gap •

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Working Draft
November 5, 2019

REPORT PREPARED BY THE LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Plan Slate Belt: Issues and Opportunities Working Draft

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James Kresge

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David Hess
George Hinton

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PLAN SLATE BELT

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Mission

New Comprehensive Plan

Plan Slate Belt

Slate Belt communities have a rich history dating back more than 250 years, but for the first time ever, ten municipalities are partnering to build a bright future.

The purpose of the Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan is to enable the boroughs of Bangor, East Bangor, Pen Argyl, Roseto, Portland and Wind Gap and the townships of Plainfield, Washington, Lower Mount Bethel and Upper Mount Bethel to shape their collective vision for the future.

The Plan will be prepared in accordance with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Developing the Plan will gather all these communities together with private and non-profit sectors and the public to define shared objectives and collaborate on implementation. Along the way, each community retains its autonomy, while partnering with its neighbors on important issues that face the Slate Belt area.

Process

Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive planning is a process that determines community goals and visions, setting a clear path to where you want to go and how you want to get there. Ultimately, the outcome of the comprehensive planning process will be a Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan, called Plan Slate Belt, that will set public policy for transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, agriculture, education, housing and other local priorities.

The Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan will be a legal document guided by the direction and parameters set by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, but it's also about aspiring to create the future the Slate Belt desires.

The Plan will guide decisions, research, reports and funding as the official legal strategy influencing the growth, development and preservation of the Slate Belt's assets. The Plan will be designed to communicate through writing, as well as through maps, charts, graphs, tables, graphics and infographics, which can be shared through all communication platforms.

Through its accessibility to everyone, the Plan will serve as a tool that lets everyone be part of striving toward the future the area has chosen together.

Issues and Opportunities

The foundation of the Plan is the Issues and Opportunities report. This report collects much of the information we already know about the Slate Belt and consolidates it into an organized, easy-to-read document. The report covers the existing information on the communities, analyses about issues ranging from equity to the impacts of redevelopment, the first rounds of community engagement and the draft goals. This process builds a base of information about the communities and identifies community concerns.

The Plan Slate Belt will build upon this base to create a framework of policies, actions and implementation steps that will prepare the Slate Belt area to adapt to the changes of an evolving community.

Multi-Municipal Planning

Slate Belt Communities

- Bangor Borough
- East Bangor Borough
- Lower Mount Bethel Township
- Pen Argyl Borough
- Plainfield Township
- Portland Borough
- Roseto Borough
- Upper Mount Bethel Township
- Washington Township
- Wind Gap Borough

Introduction

PLAN SLATE BELT

Demographic Analysis

The Slate Belt is an area of 35,981 diverse people—young and old, wealthy and impoverished, working and non-working. Understanding the different types of people living in the Slate Belt communities is a key component in enabling Plan Slate Belt to identify their needs and how those needs could be addressed.

The Demographic Analysis paints a picture of who is living in the Slate Belt area and how many more people are projected to come by 2040. These demographic data points, once compared to the data analyses to follow, will enable Plan Slate Belt to formulate goals, policies and actions to drive investment and make decisions that best serve the Slate Belt communities.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Population

Age

The Slate Belt area is home to a population of diverse ages. Children under 18 make up about one-fifth of the population, and young adults ages 18-24 make up 10%, indicating that many leave for school or to start a career. The largest age group consists of adults between the ages of 45 and 64, and overall, the population of adults age 25 and above make up the vast majority (71%) of the population. The number of seniors (19.2%) is slightly higher than that of Northampton County (17.8%), suggesting a higher need for healthcare for older residents.

Growth

The Slate Belt is home to approximately 12% of Northampton County's population—a small percentage considering the size of the area. Despite minimal investment and slow population growth in recent years, the Slate Belt is anticipated to experience a 40% increase in population by 2040. Based on past and current trajectories of regional population growth, the Slate Belt's expected population increase is likely a result of proximity to the rapid growth of the overall region and development that is following the Route 33 corridor northward.

Birth Rate

The Slate Belt has an overall birth rate of nearly ten children per 1,000 people per year (9.4). This rate is about half that of the national birth rate (18.5 births per 1,000 population in 2016). While Bangor and East Bangor boroughs have relatively high birth rates for the Slate Belt area, indicating a younger community, Upper Mount Bethel Township has a birth rate significantly lower than all other Slate Belt municipalities.

Death Rate

The Slate Belt has an overall death rate of nearly 11 deaths per 1,000 people per year (10.4). This rate is 33% higher than that of the national death rate of 7.8 per 1,000 people per year (2016 data). With this factor being higher than the birth rate of the sub-region, all of the projected population growth is expected to be due to in-migration, rather than resident couples settling down to start a family. This prediction could change if the Slate Belt becomes a more attractive place for young families.

Population by Age

Municipality	Children (<18)	Adults (18-24)	Adults (25-44)	Adults (45-64)	Seniors (65+)	Median Age
Bangor Borough	1,191	539	1,346	1,018	1,123	37.9
East Bangor Borough	271	80	257	291	134	37.7
Lower Mount Bethel Township	511	165	654	1,159	591	49.9
Pen Argyl Borough	918	378	957	882	415	36.6
Plainfield Township	1,063	522	1,112	2,052	1,385	49.3
Portland Borough	80	41	118	131	82	43.0
Roseto Borough	443	128	560	370	280	36.8
Upper Mount Bethel Township	992	603	1,434	2,470	1,335	48.3
Washington Township	940	350	1,147	1,758	995	47.1
Wind Gap Borough	481	133	688	798	610	45.7
Slate Belt	**6,890**	**2,939**	**8,273**	**10,929**	**6,950**	**---**

U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2013-2017 (5-year Estimates)

Population Growth

Municipality	2017 Estimate	2040 Projection	Percent Growth
Bangor Borough	5,217	6,440	23.44%
East Bangor Borough	1,033	1,615	56.34%
Lower Mount Bethel Township	3,080	4,850	57.47%
Pen Argyl Borough	3,550	4,429	24.76%
Plainfield Township	6,134	8,935	45.66%
Portland Borough	452	834	84.51%
Roseto Borough	1,781	2,131	19.65%
Upper Mount Bethel Township	6,834	9,865	44.35%
Washington Township	5,190	7,526	45.01%
Wind Gap Borough	2,710	3,587	32.36%
Slate Belt	**35,981**	**50,212**	**39.55%**

U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2013-2017 (5-year Estimates) and Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

PLAN SLATE BELT

Education

Schools

The Slate Belt is served by three public school systems and two private schools. Only a small portion of students from Lower Mount Bethel Township attend the Easton Area School District—the exact number is unknown because the Easton Area School District does not report the portion of students from each community.

Student Food Subsidy

Approximately one-third of the student body within the Bangor Area and Pen Argyl Area school districts is eligible for Free Lunch.

Attainment

High school graduation is the highest level of education for a majority of Slate Belt residents, with about 48% of the Slate Belt population having at least some college education. Just over 20% obtained a Bachelor's Degree or higher, compared to 30% throughout Northampton County. About 9% have an Associate's Degree, and about 10% did not complete high school.

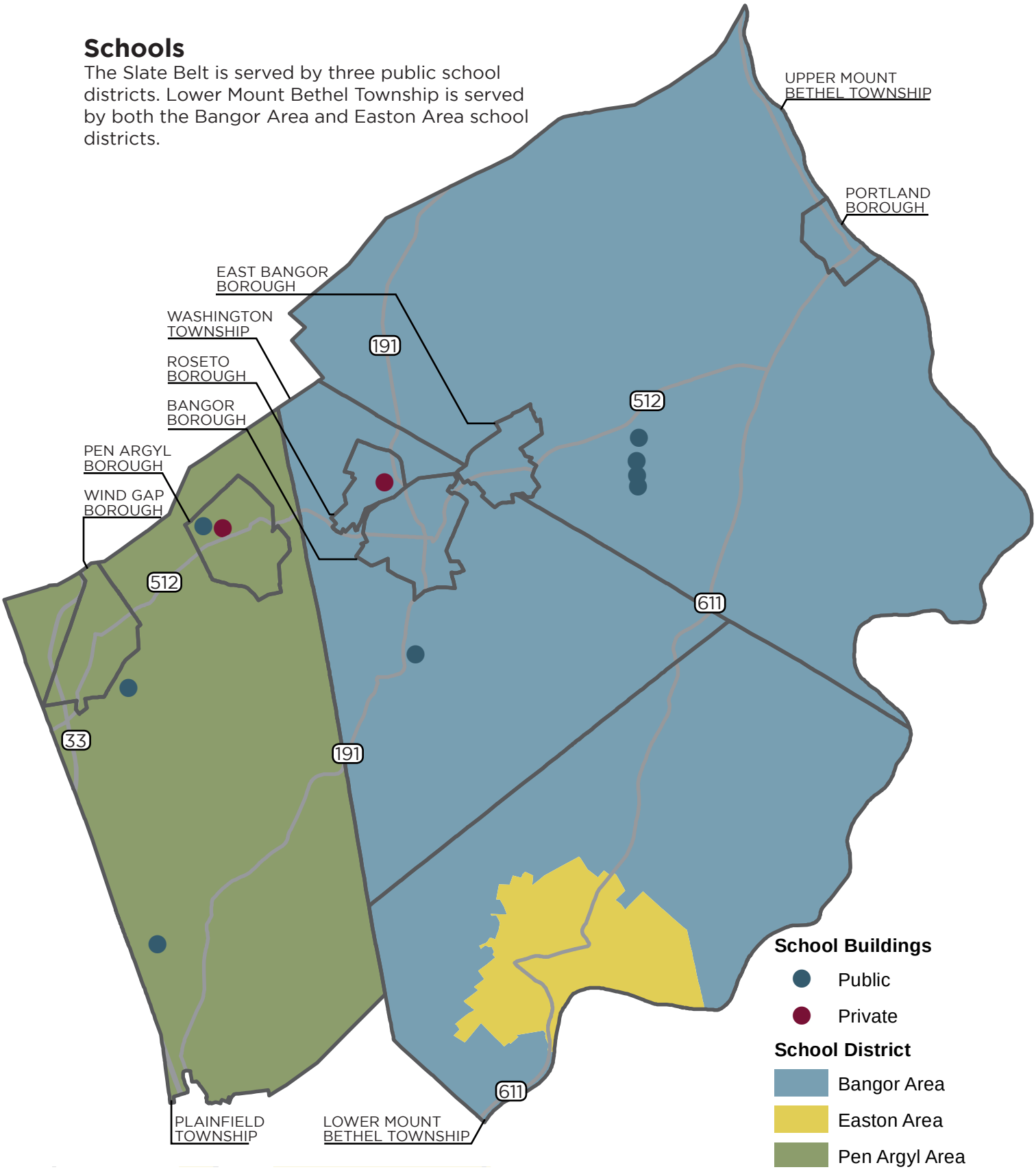
Educational Attainment for Population 25 and Over

Municipality	No High School Degree	High School Graduate	Some College	Two-Year Degree	Four-Year Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
Bangor Borough	531	1,515	594	236	463	148
East Bangor Borough	120	302	165	40	41	14
Lower Mount Bethel Township	169	939	546	197	456	97
Pen Argyl Borough	158	972	417	211	295	201
Plainfield Township	597	1,696	654	420	794	388
Portland Borough	25	143	51	26	48	38
Roseto Borough	102	456	278	150	164	60
Upper Mount Bethel Township	466	2,374	932	462	671	334
Washington Township	342	1,695	671	343	640	209
Wind Gap Borough	180	908	369	302	257	80
Slate Belt	**2,690**	**11,000**	**4,677**	**2,387**	**3,829**	**1,569**

U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2013-2017 (5-year Estimates)

Schools

The Slate Belt is served by three public school districts. Lower Mount Bethel Township is served by both the Bangor Area and Easton Area school districts.



PLAN SLATE BELT

Employment

Median Income is the middle value of a range of incomes when they are ordered from low to high. The median income means there are the same number of households above and below this income, providing a fair assessment of a "typical" income. Average income is not used because it can be distorted by uncharacteristically high or low incomes.

Income

The Slate Belt has an overall median household income of $63,379, close to Northampton County's median of $65,390. The median household income of Slate Belt communities ranges significantly from a low of $41,284 in Wind Gap Borough to a high of $77,241 in Washington Township. Median family income is higher than household income in every community, ranging from $50,668 in Bangor Borough to $91,389 in Washington Township.

The discrepancy between household and family incomes is caused by the makeup of the household. Family households have two or more people with incomes to support multiple people. Non-family households include single-person households and are likely to contain individuals that are very young or elderly, often with lower incomes than families. A community with a wide disparity between household and family income is likely to have a high proportion of non-family households. Lower Mount Bethel Township and the boroughs of Pen Argyl, Portland and Wind Gap all have relatively large household-to-family income disparities (greater than $15,000).

Poverty

While several Slate Belt municipalities have relatively low poverty rates, Bangor, East Bangor, Pen Argyl and Wind Gap boroughs all have poverty rates significantly higher than that of Northampton County (9.2%). The townships all have poverty rates significantly lower than that of Northampton County, and Portland and Roseto boroughs have lower poverty rates as well. The relation of poverty to certain geographies (e.g., density) may not indicate causation, though it provides information to municipal officials as to what areas may have the greatest need for investment.

Workforce and Employment

Labor force participation is fairly consistent among the Slate Belt communities, with a slightly larger percentage of Pen Argyl residents being of prime working age. The unemployment rate varies much more greatly between the communities, ranging from a low of 4.1% in Plainfield and Washington townships, to a high of 10.9% and 10.8% in East Bangor and Portland boroughs, respectively. Overall, the Slate Belt has 35.6% of the population not in the labor force, which is mostly made up of school-age people and retirees.

Income and Poverty

Municipality	Median Household	Median Family	Poverty Rate
Bangor Borough	$41,366	$50,668	14.8%
East Bangor Borough	$50,938	$51,979	14.5%
Lower Mount Bethel Township	$65,833	$80,873	3.5%
Pen Argyl Borough	$49,542	$79,417	11.3%
Plainfield Township	$61,540	$76,013	5.4%
Portland Borough	$56,667	$76,042	7.7%
Roseto Borough	$66,932	$75,500	6.9%
Upper Mount Bethel Township	$65,218	$73,289	4.1%
Washington Township	$77,241	$91,389	6.6%
Wind Gap Borough	$41,284	$64,286	12.0%
Slate Belt	**$63,379**	-	-

U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2013-2017 (5-year Estimates)

Workforce and Unemployment

Municipality	Labor Force	Participation	Unemployment
Bangor Borough	2,258	60%	9.7%
East Bangor Borough	443	64.4%	10.9%
Lower Mount Bethel Township	1,518	62.4%	6.6%
Pen Argyl Borough	1,816	72.9%	6.5%
Plainfield Township	3,311	66.4%	4.1%
Portland Borough	215	62.1%	10.8%
Roseto Borough	897	68.3%	4.9%
Upper Mount Bethel Township	3,437	64.6%	6%
Washington Township	2,633	63.6%	4.1%
Wind Gap Borough	1,293	59.9%	5.4%

U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2013-2017 (5-year Estimates)

PLAN SLATE BELT

Equity

Equity Data Points

Housing
- Homeownership
- Cost-burdened households
- Vacancy

Transportation
- Vehicle access
- Commute time
- Commute distance

Economics and Job Access
- Unemployment
- Concentration of jobs
- Poverty
- Labor force

Education
- Student poverty
- Educational attainment
- State test scores
- Preschool enrollment

Methodology

Equity refers to whether or not all people in various geographies have access to housing, education, employment and transportation resources that are essential for a high quality of life. An equitable community is more culturally vibrant and economically successful because there are more hands and brains contributing to the area.

An Equity Analysis was done in 2018 to identify what areas of the Lehigh Valley have high or low access to opportunity relative to the rest of the region. The analysis looks at 14 different data points related to housing, transportation, economics and job access, and education. Based on the scoring of these data points, each census tract is given a score from very low to very high access.

Slate Belt

The Slate Belt has moderate to high access to opportunity compared to the Lehigh Valley as a whole. However, that opportunity is not evenly distributed. Washington and Plainfield townships have the highest overall access to opportunity. Lower Mount Bethel Township has high overall access as well, with moderate education access. Bangor and Roseto boroughs have the lowest overall opportunity rate, due to very low Housing and low Education, Economics and Job Access categories. The southeast portion of Upper Mount Bethel Township was also found to have low access to opportunity, due to low levels of access to Housing, Transportation and Education. In comparison, the northwest portion of Upper Mount Bethel Township and East Bangor Borough also had moderate ratings in Economics and Job Access and Education, but high scores in Housing and Transportation opportunity.

Slate Belt Opportunity Scores

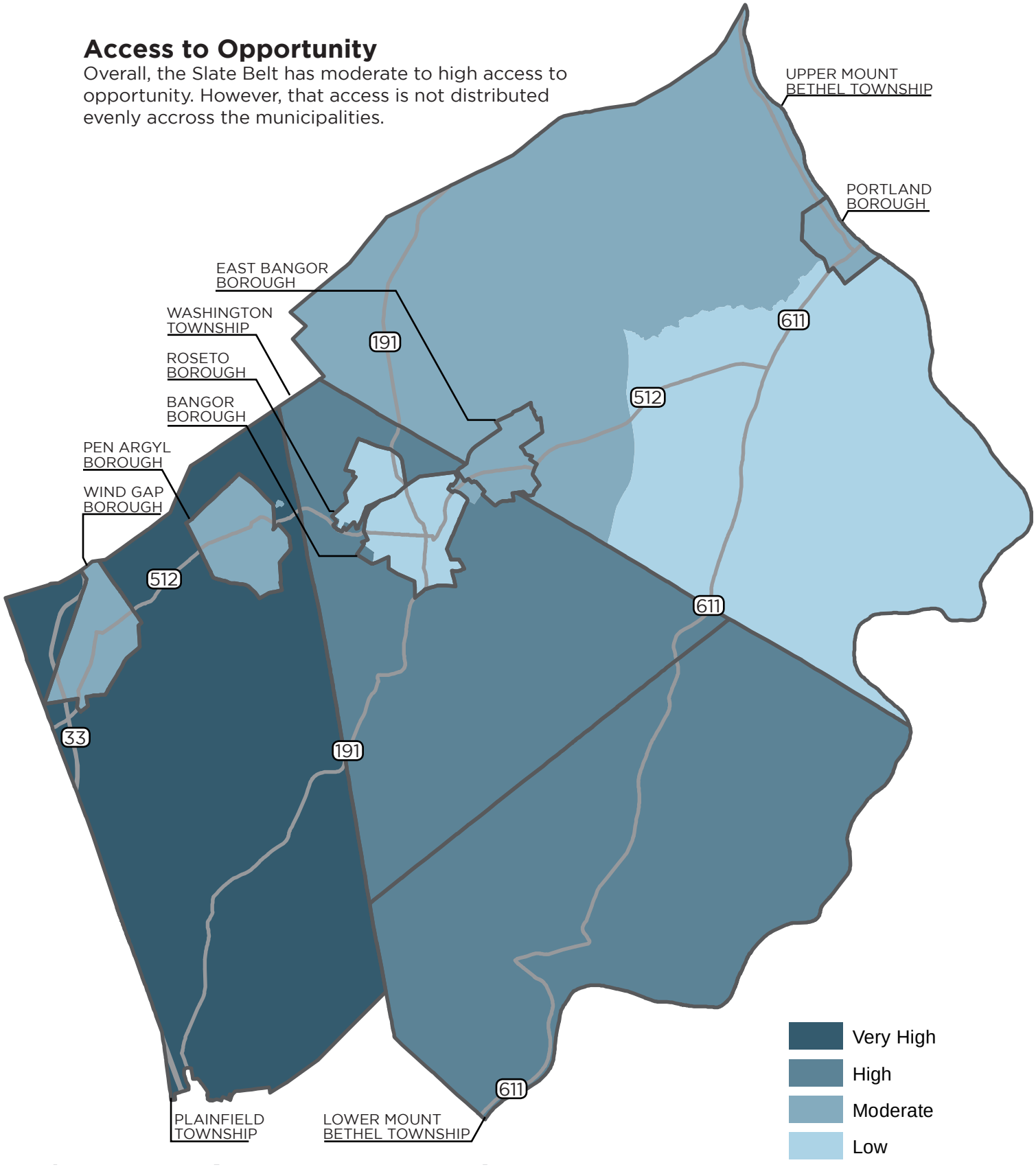
Geography	Overall	Housing	Transportation	Economics	Education
Bangor Borough	Low	Very Low	Moderate	Low	Low
East Bangor Borough	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
Lower Mount Bethel Township	High	High	High	High	Moderate
Pen Argyl Borough	Moderate	Low	High	Low	Moderate
Plainfield Township	Very High	Very High	High	Very High	Very High
Portland Borough	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
Roseto Borough	Low	Very Low	Moderate	Low	Low
Upper Mount Bethel Township*	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
Upper Mount Bethel Township**	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Low
Washington Township	High	High	High	High	High
Wind Gap Borough	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

*Northwest half of Upper Mount Bethel Township
**Southeast half of Upper Mount Bethel Township

Access to Opportunity

Overall, the Slate Belt has moderate to high access to opportunity. However, that access is not distributed evenly accross the municipalities.



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Demographic Analysis

Summary

The Slate Belt demographic data shows a wide range of incomes and educational attainment among the population. With a birth rate very close to the death rate, the future growth of the Slate Belt will likely be due to in-migration of young and middle-aged workers. The projected increase of 14,231 people by the year 2040 will further diversify Slate Belt residents.

Understanding who lives in the Slate Belt and the components of their lives is critical for Plan Slate Belt to develop goals, policies and actions for the betterment of the area. Providing equitable access to housing, transportation, education and jobs is vital to a more productive and sustainable region. While many portions of the Slate Belt exhibit moderate to high levels of access to opportunity, some denser areas require greater investment to increase access to opportunities for residents. Identifying areas of low opportunity alone is not enough to tell the whole story of the Slate Belt or to determine what investments are needed. However, when combined with the Housing, Land, Economic, Development and Transportation analyses to follow, the demographic data and analyses will yield a pathway toward attaining the desired Slate Belt of the future.

Introduction

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Housing Analysis

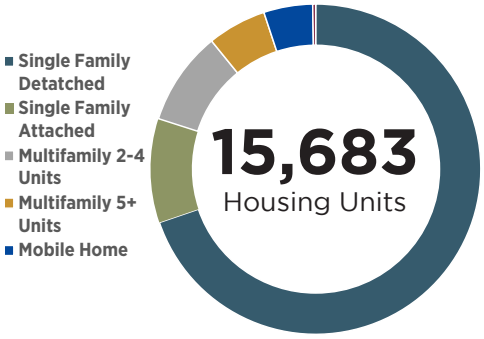
The Slate Belt has experienced minimal population growth over the last ten years, with only a few new small housing developments. However, population projections predict the Slate Belt will experience significant growth over the next 20 years. Accommodating this new population will require new construction, plus repurposing or restoring a large portion of the existing housing stock. Additionally, the Slate Belt communities have had growing concerns about housing attainability, with questions about whether the area has the right mix of housing for its current and future residents.

Plan Slate Belt will need to examine how best to balance growth and preservation—accommodating new people without losing the area's character and quality of life.

This Housing Analysis examines the current conditions of the housing stock and market in the Slate Belt. The analysis focuses on four main elements: current housing stock, recent construction and renovation, attainability and recent sales. These analyses were based on publicly available data regarding building type, age, occupancy, value and sales from the U.S. Census, Northampton County and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. The results were compared to local perceptions about history, attainability and market conditions to draw a better picture of the housing market in the Slate Belt.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Supply and Demand



72% Owner-Occupied

28% Renter-Occupied

9% Vacancy Rate

Current Housing Supply

The housing stock in the Slate Belt is dominated by single-family homes. The vast majority of these houses are detached, with a small number of twins, rowhomes, duplexes, apartment buildings and mobile homes. The area has a high percentage of home owners, and the limited number of apartment units means that nearly one-third of the relatively small rental market is made up by single-family homes. Boroughs have a higher percentage of rental housing, with townships having more owner-occupied units.

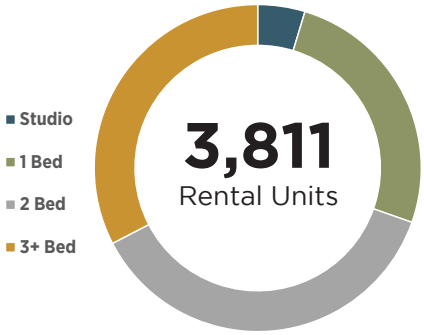
Overall, the Slate Belt has a vacancy rate of 9%, which is high compared to the Lehigh Valley overall, but not excessive. However, the vacancy rates of individual communities are much higher (Portland Borough 16%) or lower (Lower Mount Bethel Township 2.2%). Some of these rates have fallen while others have risen over the last ten years, with only Upper Mount Bethel Township having consistently high rates. These vacancy rates point to different conditions in individual community's housing markets and may be reflective of how many properties were for sale at the time, rather than long-term trends that need to be addressed.

More than one-third of the existing housing stock was built prior to 1939. While the Slate Belt saw consistent growth in its housing stock from the 1950's through the 2000's, there has been virtually no growth in recent years. Only one major development has been approved, with most of the new housing being in smaller developments or from individual property owners building stand-alone houses.

Building Permits - 2018

New Residential	Other Residential
25	159

Building permit data shows the number of renovation projects in 2018 far outpacing new construction. This data shows that some people are making significant investments in their homes.



The rental market in the Slate Belt is heavily weighted towards two- and three-bedroom units. Most of these units are priced in the $750-1,500/month price range. This supply works well for families who generally have two incomes. Studio and one-bedroom units make up the bulk of apartments below $750/month, but their supply is much more limited. This could indicate that there is a lack of housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and couples looking for a place they can afford—a common problem for both seniors and young adults in the greater Lehigh Valley.

Current Housing Demand

The household income data shows a fairly typical distribution in the Slate Belt, with most households earning just over or under the area's median income of $63,379. This means that households earning between about $32,000 and $76,000 per year are responsible for most of the housing demand, which makes the majority of the housing supply attainable to those households. However, the lack of housing for people below this threshold means that many lower- and moderate-income households are reaching higher into the housing market to be able to live in the area.

In looking at the percentage of households that are cost-burdened (those who spend more than 30% of their income on housing), we can see how a lack of lower-cost housing is making housing attainability difficult in the area. The limited supply of low-cost housing means that 70% of households making below $35,000 per year are spending more than 30% of their pre-tax income on housing alone. In effect, these households are taking up much of the supply for the next higher-income bracket. This forces people making $35,000-$50,000 per year and those making $50,000-$75,000 per year to reach even higher into the housing market, resulting in a high portion of these middle-class households being cost-burdened.

While relatively few households making over $75,000 are cost-burdened, many of them are also buying into the same middle-income housing market. By purchasing housing below their income potential, this group further restricts the availability of middle-income housing—turning an apparent surplus into a shortage. However, the apparent shortage of high-income housing has not translated into market demand for more expensive homes according to local realtors.

There are several reasons why there may not be as many higher-priced housing units in the Slate Belt. The age of the housing assessment data may be under-representing the true number of these higher-value homes. It may also be that more people in higher-income brackets choose to buy less expensive homes for financial reasons. This could be due to a lack of retail, social and cultural opportunities—an explanation that fits with comments from local realtors.

70%

of households making under $35,000 spend more than 30% of their income on housing.
This is also true of

40% making between $35,000 - 50,000,

31% making between $50,000-75,000 and

8% above $75,000 per year.

The 30% threshold is a widely accepted standard for how much of their gross income people should spend on housing to allow sufficient funds for other needs. Otherwise, they are referred to as cost-burdened. Many households choose to spend well below 30% of their income on housing, and many view spending anywhere near 30% of their income as being unaffordable. The 30% threshold is treated as the maximum households should spend on housing.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Housing Attainability Analysis

Methodology

The attainability analysis brings housing supply and demand together in a side-by-side comparison to determine whether there is a surplus or shortage of attainable housing units within each income level.

Property value assessments have not been updated recently and are significantly lower than market value. The assessed value of all properties was converted to a market value price to determine their realistic selling price.

While the model is representative of general housing costs in the Slate Belt, a new county assessment would significantly improve the understanding of current conditions in housing attainability.

The calculated market values of these existing homes were used to determine the maximum purchase price (not exceeding 30% of pre-tax income) of Fee Simple houses and condos, as well as the maximum rent price, for each income level. For Fee Simple Units and Condominium Units, a Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Mortgage was assumed for a 30-year loan at a rate of 4.6% interest. The factors of the calculation included a down payment, insurance, real estate taxes, and for Condominiums, an annual maintenance fee. Calculations were performed for income ranges expressed as a percentage of $63,379, the median household income for the Slate Belt, referred to as the Area Median Income.

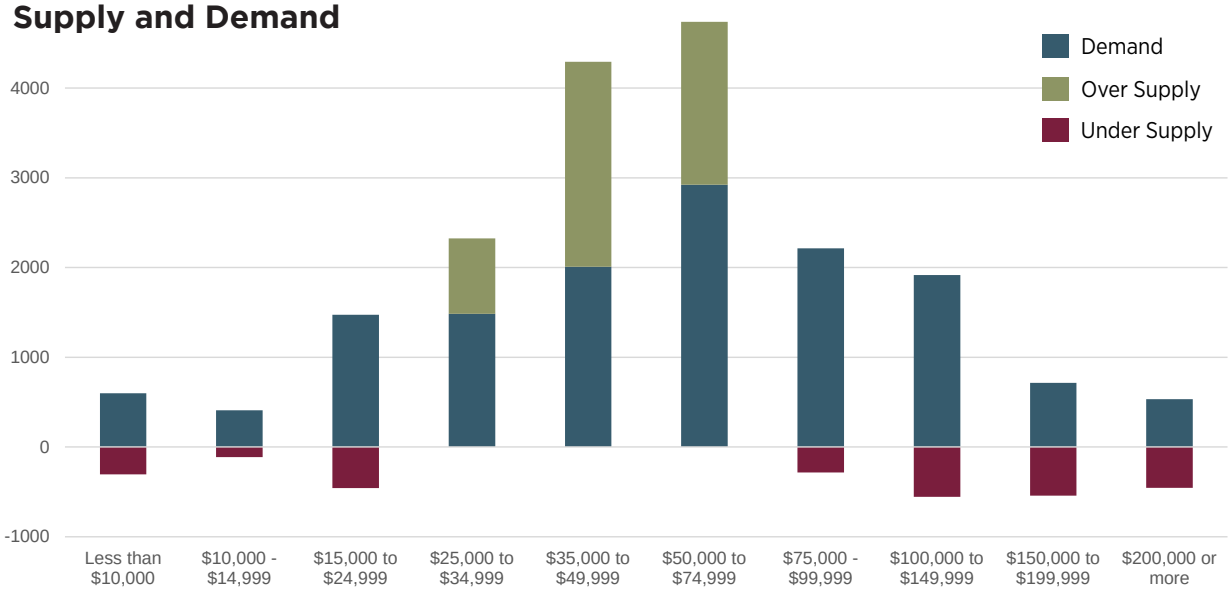
Finding Market Value

To approximate current market value, a multiplier was calculated to find the conversion rate between the assessed value and last sale price. Using all properties that have sold in the last five years, the median multiplier was calculated to be 3.11. The assessed values of all properties were multiplied by the median multiplier to find an estimated current market value.

Findings

Housing attainability for households earning below $35,000 and above $50,000 gross annual income is nearly an exact match in households and existing units. The majority of units appropriate for households earning under $35,000 are priced for households earning the upper part of the range between $25,000 and $35,000, indicating that many very low-income households are likely to be cost-burdened. The majority of units appropriate for households earning $50,000 and above are priced for households earning the lower part of the range between $50,000 and $75,000, indicating that many high-income households are likely to “buy down” into lower market levels, resulting in fewer housing options for lower-middle income households earning between $35,000 and $50,000.

Supply and Demand



Slate Belt Housing Attainability Analysis

Percent of Area Median Income (Max)	Maximum Income Level	Total Households	Fee Simple Units (FHA)	Condo Units (FHA)	Rental Units	Total Supply	Unit Surplus / Shortage
15.8%	$10,000	598	67	1	225	293	-305
Up to 23.7%	$14,999	408	26	0	270	296	-112
Up to 39.4%	$24,999	1,474	193	0	823	1,016	-458
Up to 55.2%	$34,999	1,483	681	0	1,643	2,324	841
Up to 78.9%	$49,999	2,009	3,461	22	810	4,293	2,284
Up to 118.3%	$74,999	2,922	4,558	2	179	4,739	1,817
Up to 157.8%	$99,999	2,213	1,907	0	23	1,930	-283
Up to 236.7%	$149,999	1,917	1,329	0	34	1,363	-554
Up to 315.6%	$199,999	715	174	0	0	174	-541
Over 315.6%	n/a	534	80	0	0	80	-454

Northampton County Assessment Data, U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2013-2017 (5-year Estimates) and Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

Maximum Housing Costs for Income Levels

Percent of Area Median Income	Maximum Income Level	Fee Simple Maximum Price	Condo Maximum Purchase Price	Rental Unit Maximum
15.8%	$10,000	$28,050	$11,200	$250
Up to 23.7%	$14,999	$42,100	$25,250	$374
Up to 39.4%	$24,999	$70,250	$54,400	$624
Up to 55.2%	$34,999	$98,400	$81,500	$874
Up to 78.9%	$49,999	$140,550	$123,700	$1,249
Up to 118.3%	$74,999	$210,850	$193,950	$1,874
Up to 157.8%	$99,999	$281,100	$264,250	$2,499
Up to 236.7%	$149,999	$421,700	$404,800	$3,749
Up to 315.6%	$199,999	$562,250	$545,350	$5,000
Over 315.6%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2013-2017 (5-year Estimates) and Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

PLAN SLATE BELT

Housing Market

Slate Belt Trends

Single-family housing has dominated recent sales in the Slate Belt. The median price for these sales has been squarely in line with the peak supply and demand for the area, at $160,000. This median sales price lines up nicely with the median household income and would be considered attainable. This alignment indicates housing sales prices are generally in line with what people are able to pay in the Slate Belt, although the more specific analysis by income range indicates attainability challenges for households earning $24,999 or less.

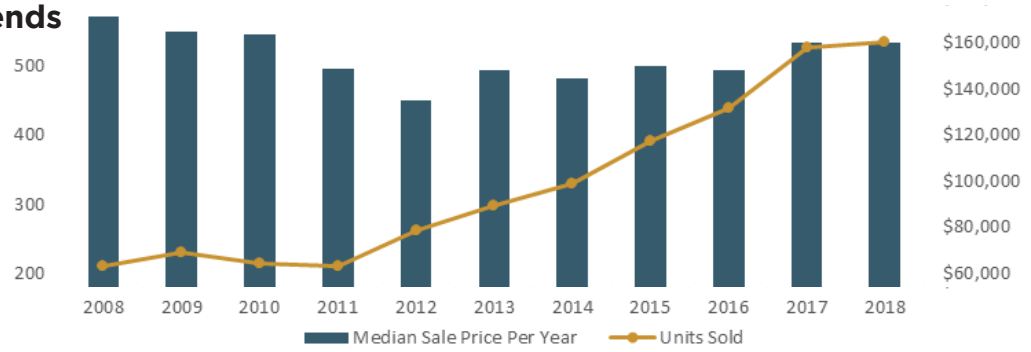
Overall sales have been steadily climbing since the recession, showing healthy demand within the Slate Belt. Housing values, however, have only recently come close to their pre-recession levels.

Municipal Trends

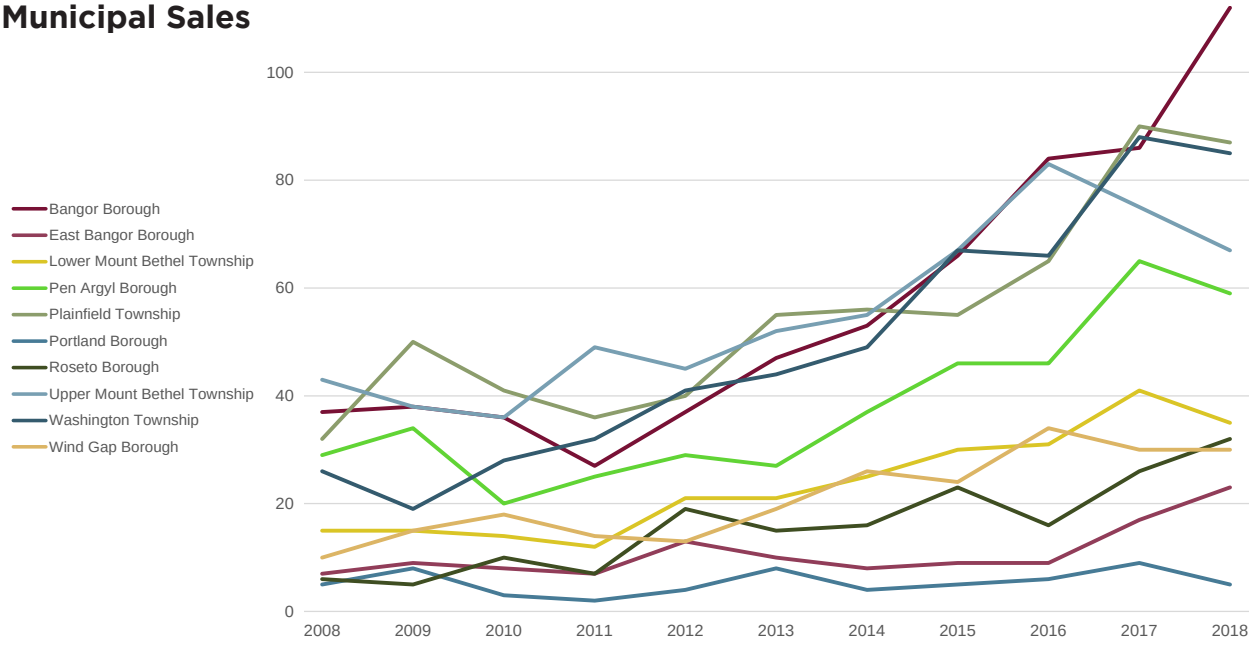
Individual municipalities have also seen a similar upward trend in sales volume over the last ten years. Bangor Borough and Plainfield and Washington townships have seen the most significant increase in sales, with more modest growth in East Bangor, Wind Gap and Roseto boroughs. Portland Borough is the only community to have a nearly consistent number of sales per year, which is likely due to its small size and limited housing stock.

Median sales values have been less predictable on the municipal level. While the overall area experienced a post-recession decline and resurgence, individual communities have risen and fallen significantly year to year. This lack of a pattern is likely due to each community's individual housing markets being relatively small so that their median sales value is more connected to which specific properties changed hands in a given year.

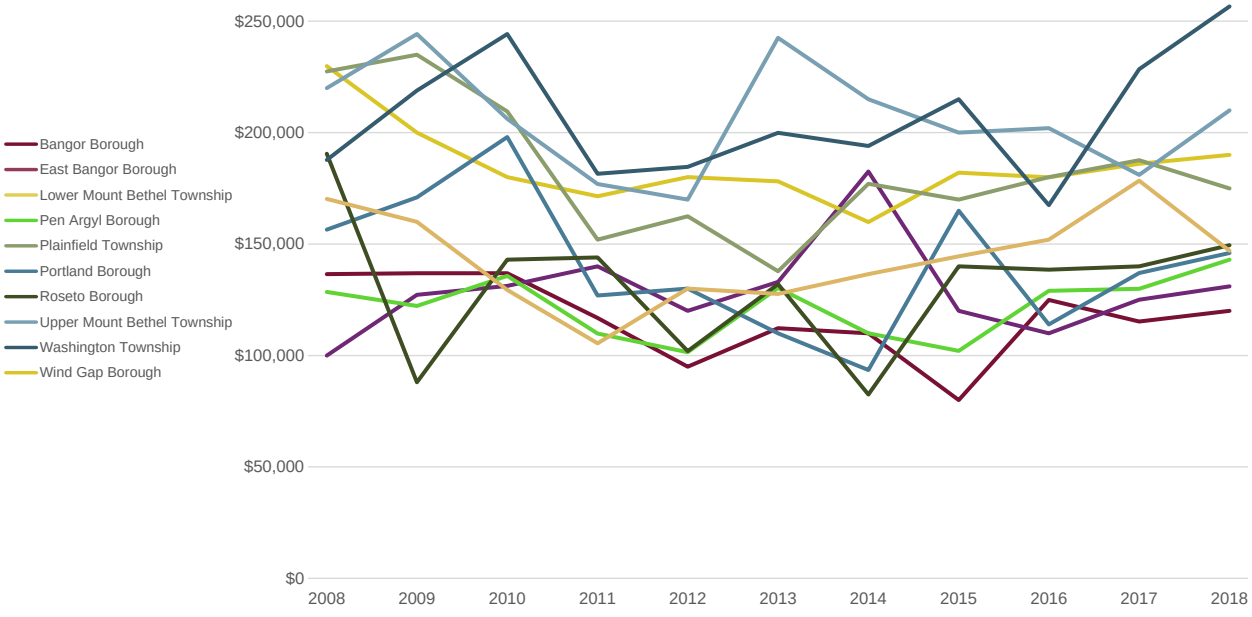
Slate Belt Trends



Municipal Sales



Municipal Price



PLAN SLATE BELT

Housing Market

Current Conditions

While the housing market for the Slate Belt overall is dominated by single-family homes, multi-family homes make up a larger percentage of the housing sales in the boroughs. This is likely due to an older and more diverse housing stock.

Median sales prices also vary significantly between individual municipalities. Bangor Borough has the lowest median sales price across each housing type. Washington Township has the highest median sales price for a single-family home, while Upper Mount Bethel Township has the highest median sales price for multi-family housing and condominiums. Plainfield Township has the highest median sales price for mobile homes.

Several of the municipalities, including Bangor Borough, Lower Mount Bethel Township and Upper Mount Bethel Township have higher median sales prices for multi-family housing than for single-family. While this may seem unusual, it is quite common in areas with strong demand for rental housing, as the extra income from the additional units can help pay for a higher mortgage. Significantly higher sales values of multi-family housing often indicate that rental prices are relatively high, demonstrating a greater demand for rental housing in the community.

Future Housing Demand

The Slate Belt saw virtually no population growth over the last decade. However, population projections show that the area will experience a significant population increase over the next twenty years. This increase is due to overall growth within the Lehigh Valley and less potentially developable land in areas that have accommodated growth over the last several decades.

This new population will require significant amounts of new housing in the Slate Belt. Using the current household formation rates (how many people per household on average) for each municipality, the Slate Belt is estimated to need 5,532 new housing units by 2040—nearly a 40% increase over the current housing stock. To meet that need, the area would need to add about 285 new homes per year for the next twenty years—a significant increase from recent development trends.

Percent Sold by Unit Type 2017-2018

Municipality	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Mobile Home	Condominium
Bangor Borough	89%	11%	0%	0%
East Bangor Borough	93%	3%	5%	0%
Lower Mount Bethel Township	97%	1%	1%	0%
Pen Argyl Borough	90%	10%	0%	0%
Plainfield Township	95%	3%	2%	0%
Portland Borough	100%	0%	0%	0%
Roseto Borough	93%	7%	0%	0%
Upper Mount Bethel Township	92%	4%	3%	2%
Washington Township	99%	1%	1%	0%
Wind Gap Borough	97%	2%	2%	0%
Slate Belt	**94%**	**5%**	**1%**	**0%**

Northampton County Assessment Data

Median Sales Prices 2017-2018

Municipality	All	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Mobile Home	Condominium
Bangor Borough	$115,950	$114,288	$141,500	-	-
East Bangor Borough	$128,692	$132,500	$125,000	$38,550	-
Lower Mount Bethel Township	$186,050	$186,050	$201,400	$40,000	-
Pen Argyl Borough	$131,300	$133,300	$96,000	-	-
Plainfield Township	$185,000	$185,875	$81,789	$63,000	-
Portland Borough	$141,500	$141,500	-	-	-
Roseto Borough	$148,500	$148,500	$145,000	-	-
Upper Mount Bethel Township	$200,000	$202,500	$220,000	$55,000	$127,500
Washington Township	$240,000	$245,000	$175,000	$40,000	-
Wind Gap Borough	$171,450	$175,450	$150,000	$38,000	-
Slate Belt	**$160,000**	**$160,000**	**$140,000**	**$42,500**	**$127,500**

Northampton County Assessment Data

Projected Household Growth

Municipality	2017 Households	2040 Households	Percent Household Growth
Bangor Borough	2,014	2,477	23%
East Bangor Borough	363	557	53%
Lower Mount Bethel Township	1,306	2,021	55%
Pen Argyl Borough	1,446	1,772	23%
Plainfield Township	2,529	3,723	47%
Portland Borough	176	321	82%
Roseto Borough	681	820	20%
Upper Mount Bethel Township	2,639	3,795	44%
Washington Township	1,885	2,688	43%
Wind Gap Borough	1,234	1,631	32%
Slate Belt	**14,273**	**19,805**	**39%**

U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2013-2017 (5-year Estimates) and Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

PLAN SLATE BELT

Housing Analysis

Summary

The Slate Belt has not seen significant growth or development in the last ten years. Lately, however, the median sales price and total number of sales have been on the rise—indicating a return to pre-recession demands. Population projections indicate that some communities could see their population increase significantly in the next 20 years. This growth will present challenges in preserving the region's rural character, but also opportunities that may enable Slate Belt leaders to shape the future they want.

At the same time, housing attainability is being pinched. Low-income households are having to stretch to meet their housing needs, while higher-income households are choosing to buy from the existing pool of middle-income housing, rather than build new or buy extensively renovated properties. This upward and downward reach is making it harder for middle-income households to find housing, despite much of the stock being valued in alignment with their income levels.

Older and aging housing stock that has not been well-maintained over the decades will require revitalization strategies to remain, or be brought to, good condition. Areas of distressed housing markets within the boroughs will require greater public and private investments to prevent further squeezing of housing at lower price points.

Determining the best way to accommodate this population and housing growth, where to put it and what kinds of housing will be needed will be key to balancing growth and preservation, as well as maintaining the quality of life for the Slate Belt.

Introduction

PLAN SLATE BELT

Land Analysis

The Slate Belt is well known for its varied topography, beautiful landscape and historic boroughs. These features—including natural areas and farmland—contribute significantly to the area's unique identity and quality of life. Many of these areas are already under pressure from growth and development, and could face increased pressure if population growth forecasts prove to be true.

Plan Slate Belt will need to balance growth and development with preservation and conservation to maintain the look, feel and quality of life that residents greatly appreciate.

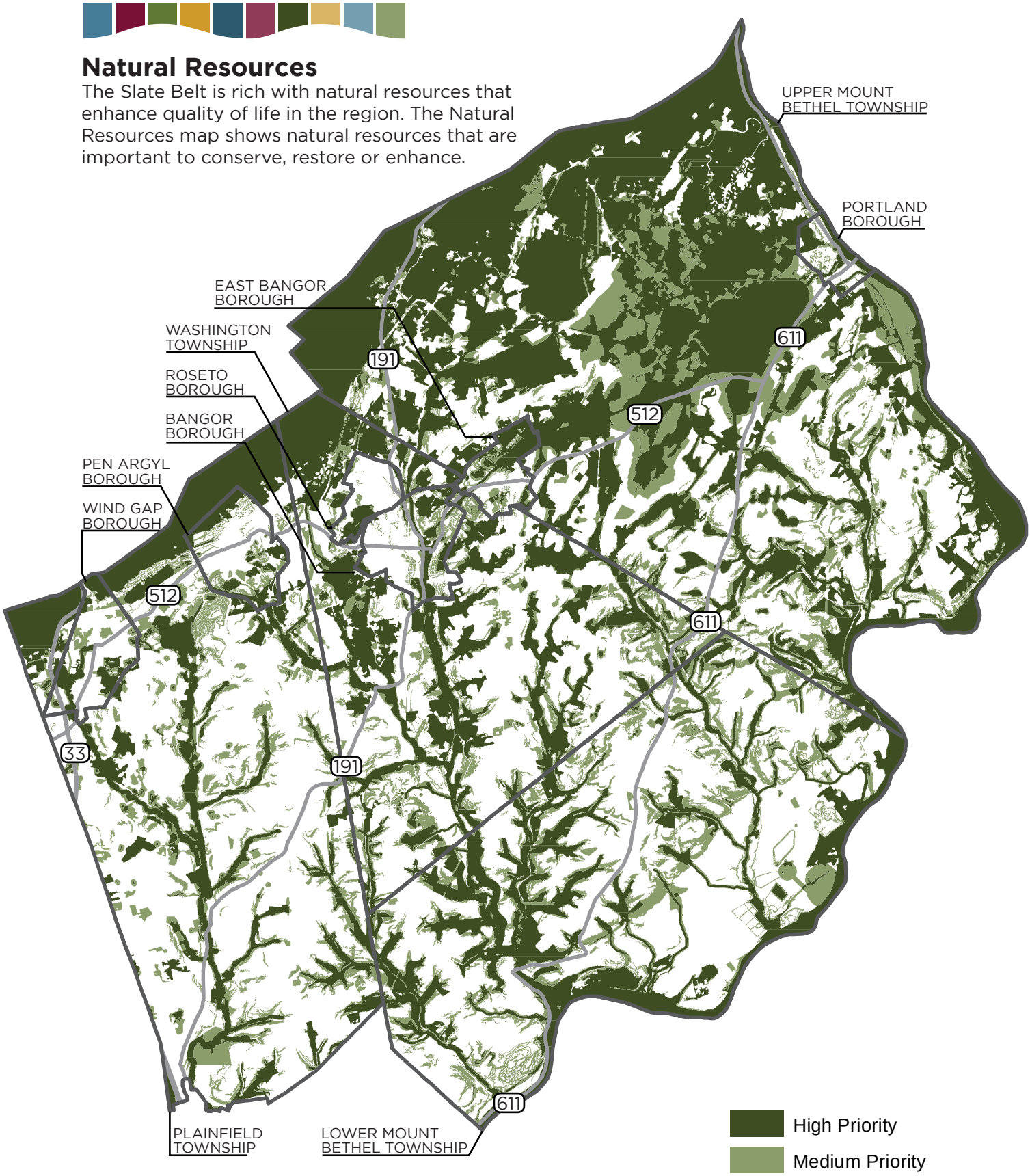
A Land Analysis was done to better understand some of the critical resources in the area and potential impacts of the current zoning. The analysis focused on two main elements: a review of the existing zoning for each municipality and calculation of the development potential of that zoning. These analyses were based on municipal zoning and land potentially available for development, which is land not currently developed, or protected lands such as parks and agricultural easements or natural resource lands. The results will be used to help guide development of policies, actions and implementation steps so the Slate Belt is able to get the kind and quality of development the area desires.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Existing Landscape

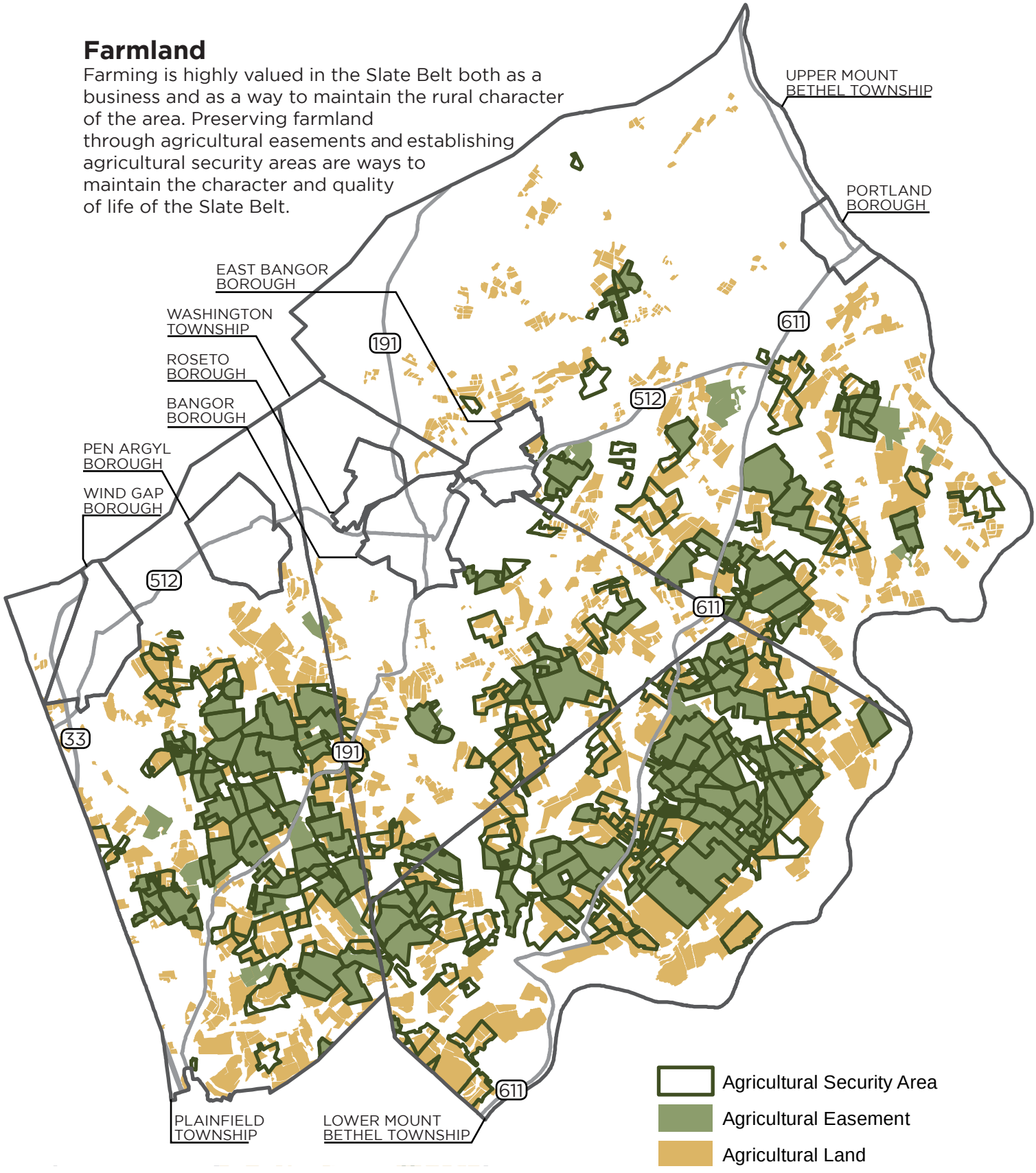
Natural Resources

The Slate Belt is rich with natural resources that enhance quality of life in the region. The Natural Resources map shows natural resources that are important to conserve, restore or enhance.



Farmland

Farming is highly valued in the Slate Belt both as a business and as a way to maintain the rural character of the area. Preserving farmland through agricultural easements and establishing agricultural security areas are ways to maintain the character and quality of life of the Slate Belt.

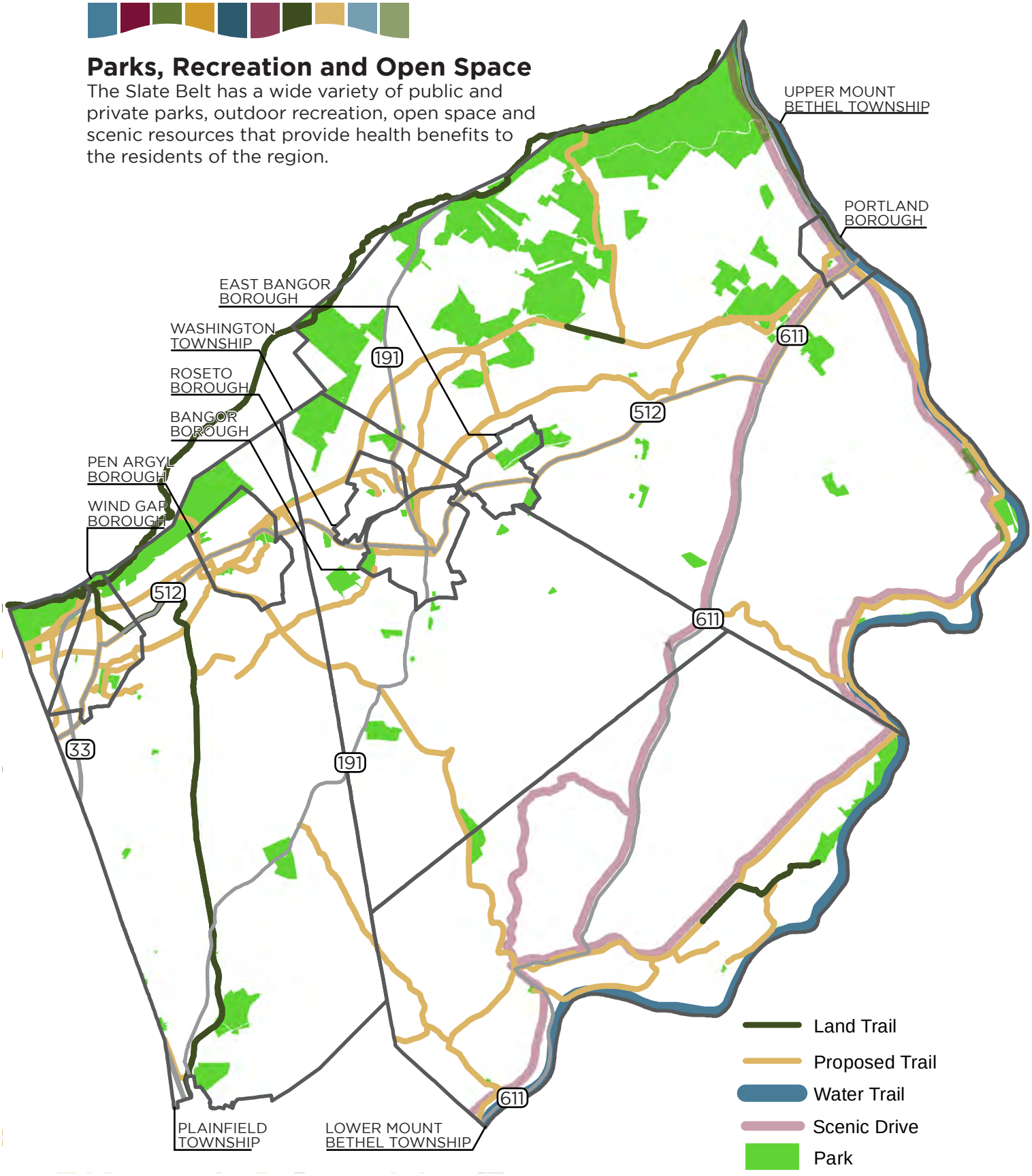


PLAN SLATE BELT

Existing Landscape

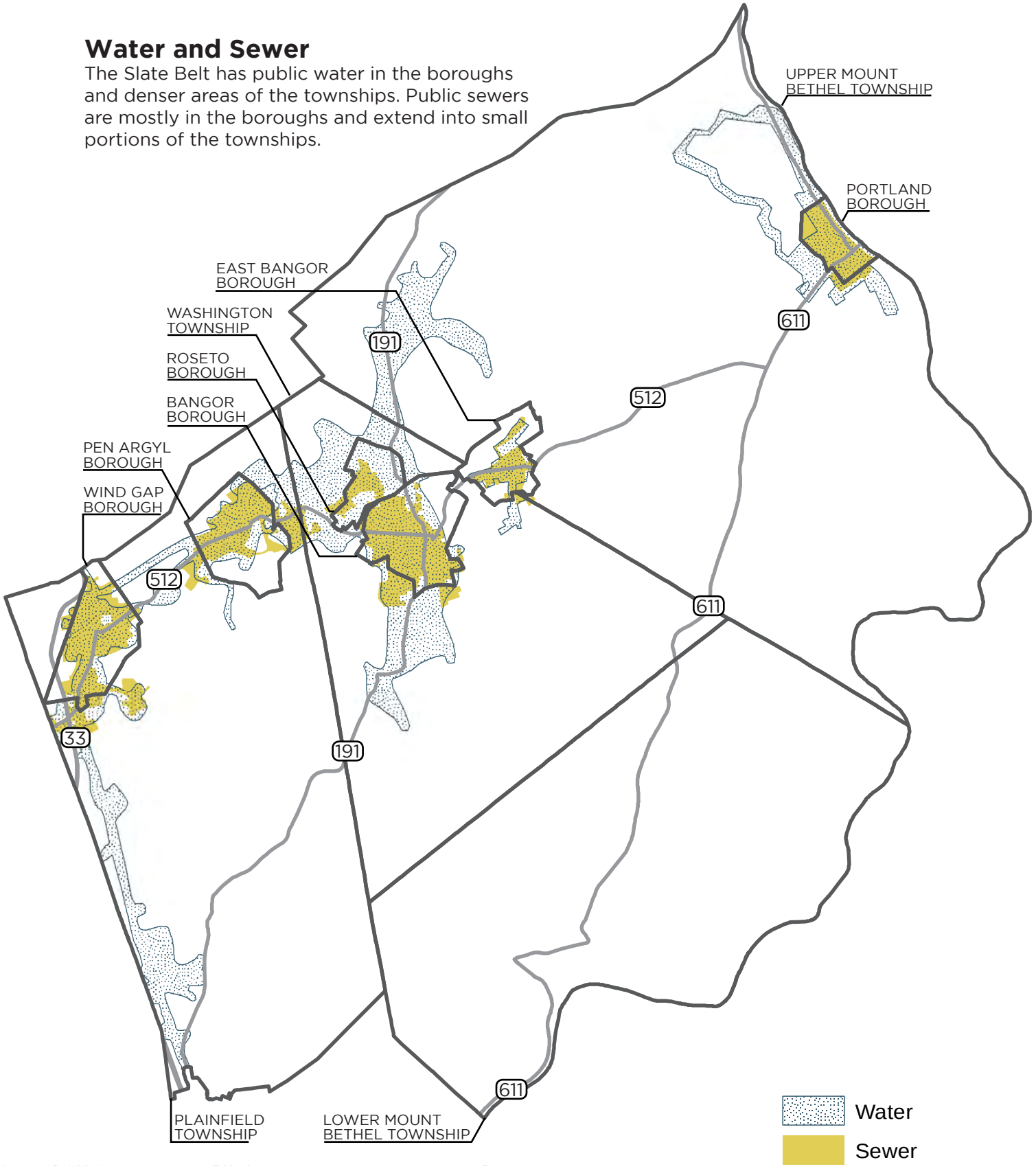
Parks, Recreation and Open Space

The Slate Belt has a wide variety of public and private parks, outdoor recreation, open space and scenic resources that provide health benefits to the residents of the region.



Water and Sewer

The Slate Belt has public water in the boroughs and denser areas of the townships. Public sewers are mostly in the boroughs and extend into small portions of the townships.

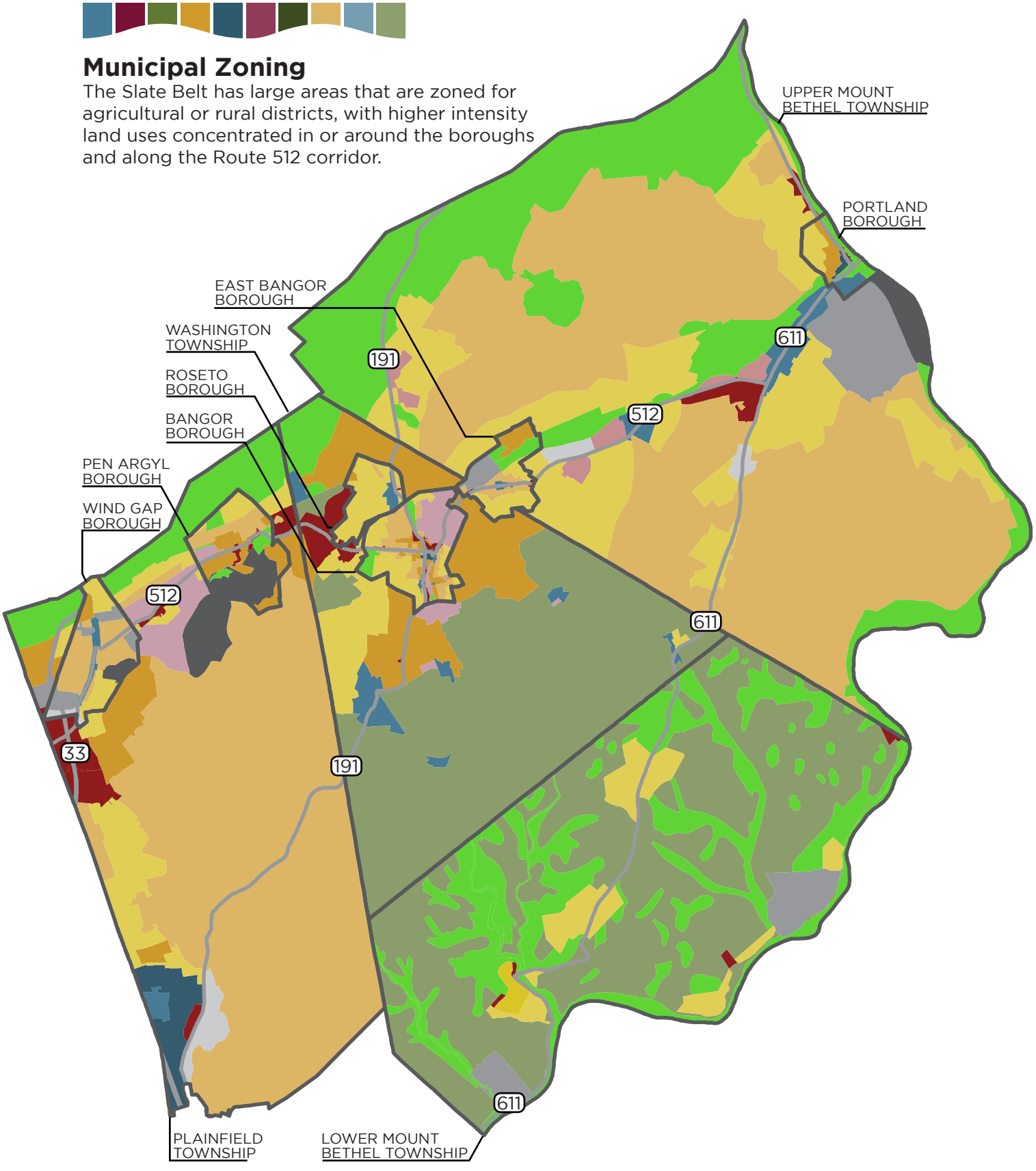


PLAN SLATE BELT

Existing Landscape

Municipal Zoning

The Slate Belt has large areas that are zoned for agricultural or rural districts, with higher intensity land uses concentrated in or around the boroughs and along the Route 512 corridor.



Bangor Borough
- A Residential
- B Residential
- C Residential
- Gateway Commercial
- High-Rise Apartment
- Industrial/Commercial
- Neighborhood Commercial Residential
- Open Space
- Town Center

East Bangor Borough
- Business Center
- Environmental Protection
- General Business & Industrial
- Higher Density Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Neighborhood & Highway Business
- Reclamation and Preserve

Lower Mount Bethel Township
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Conservation
- Floodplain
- Industrial
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential

Pen Argyl Borough
- Extractive Industry, Manufacturing
- General Business
- Light Industrial, Commercial
- Limited Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Special Conservation

Plainfield Township
- Blue Mountain Conservation
- Commercial Industrial
- Farm and Forest
- General Commercial
- General Industrial
- Highway Interchange
- Industrial/Business Park
- Planned Residential
- Solid Waste Processing & Disposal
- Suburban Residential
- Village Center
- Village Residential

Portland Borough
- Business
- Low Density
- Medium Density
- Mixed Commercial
- Recreation, Open Space Preservation
- Retail Service District

Roseto Borough
- Commercial
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Mixed Uses
- Mobile Home Residential

Upper Mount Bethel Township
- Agricultural Rural Residential
- General Commercial
- General Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Limited Commercial
- Limited Industrial
- Neighborhood Residential Development
- Open-Space Conservation
- Village Commercial/Residential

Washington Township
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Rural Center
- Watershed

Wind Gap Borough
- Community Commercial
- Extractive Industry
- Industrial and Heavy Commercial
- Industrial and Shopping Center
- Medium Density Residential
- Medium Density Single Family Residential
- Mobile Home Residential
- Single Family Residential

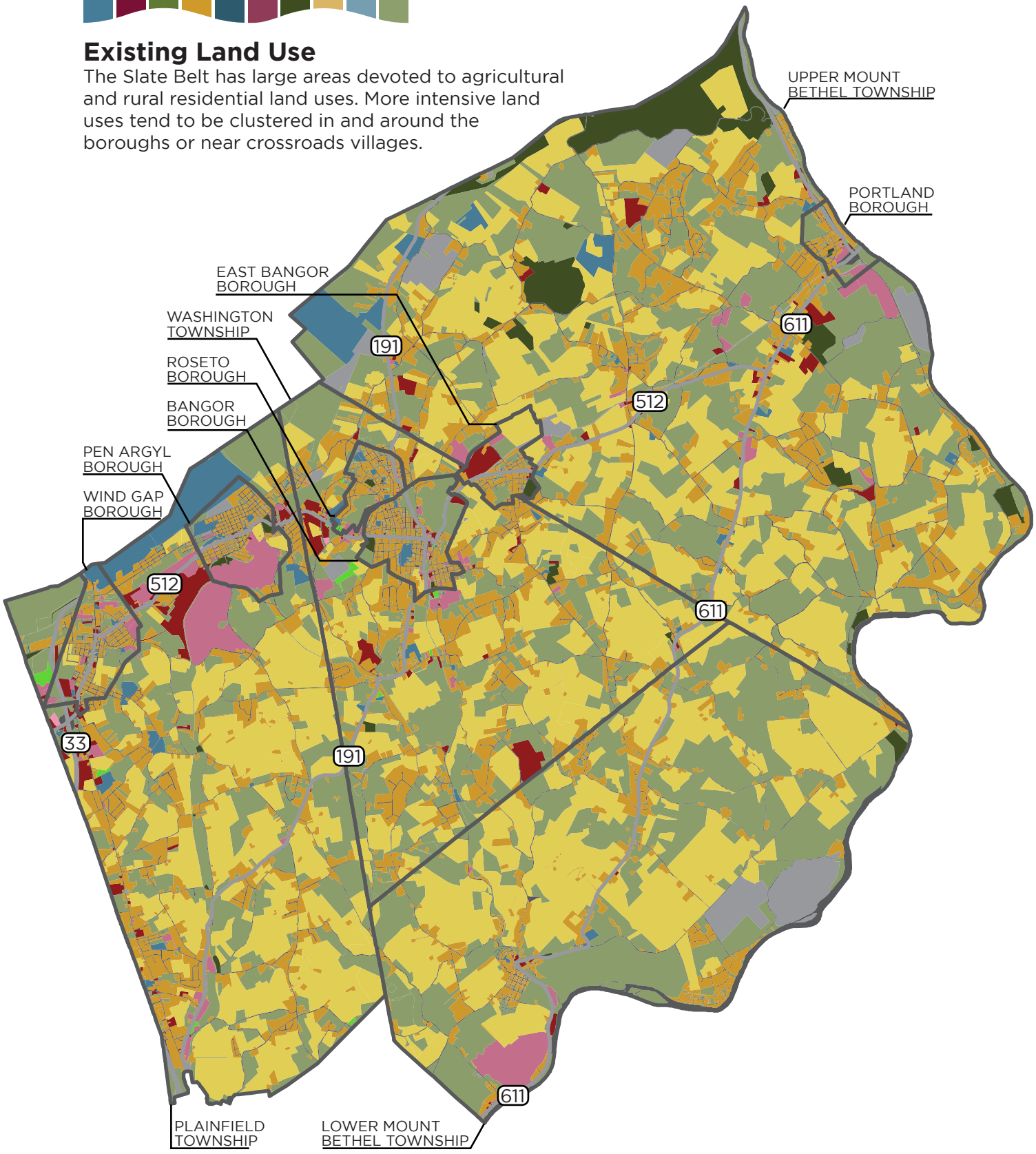
Colors are coded based on how municipalities named their districts, and do not reflect similarities between ordinances or potential development intensity across municipal lines.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Existing Landscape

Existing Land Use

The Slate Belt has large areas devoted to agricultural and rural residential land uses. More intensive land uses tend to be clustered in and around the boroughs or near crossroads villages.



Land Analysis

PLAN SLATE BELT

Zoning Review

Municipal zoning ordinances were analyzed to identify the districts provided for in each municipality and the uses allowed under each district. The ordinances contain a variety of districts. The number of districts per ordinance ranged from five to 12. Mixed-use development is generally encouraged in the ordinances. Most of the ordinances have been completed and/or amended since 2005. Roseto Borough has the only ordinance dated before 2005.

Land Analysis

The Land Analysis is based on the data collected for the Zoning Review and estimates the future development potential of the existing zoning. It shows whether communities have enough land to accommodate future population growth. It is likely that the actual development intensity would be below these thresholds.

Overall, the Slate Belt has more than enough available land. However, much of this land is in agricultural areas. Furthermore, many of the boroughs have limited available land, requiring growth to be accommodated through revitalizing underused buildings or replacing existing development with higher intensity land uses. The Slate Belt should consider what type of development they want to see in the area and write their zoning codes to support that type of development.

- Agriculture & Vacant
- Commercial & Retail
- Industrial and Manufacturing
- Office and Business
- Parks & Outdoor Recreation Facilities
- Public & Quasi Public
- Residential
- Right-of-Way
- Rural Residential
- Transportation & Utilities
- Warehouse & Distribution

PLAN SLATE BELT

Land Analysis

Methodology

The total land potentially available for development was estimated by taking the total area of the Slate Belt and subtracting natural resources, preserved farmland, roadways and existing development. These remaining areas were identified by their respective zoning districts, and the total area within each district was calculated in acres.

The maximum potential density for both residential and non-residential land use was researched for each zoning district within each municipality. These densities were multiplied by the amount of total land potentially available for development within each zoning district to estimate the maximum number of units of housing and square footage of non-residential development.

The maximum density of housing units specified in the zoning code was used when available. When maximum densities were not easily available (typically for mixed-use or apartment land uses), the total square footage of building per acre was calculated based on maximum lot coverage and building height. This square footage was converted to an estimated number of housing units, with 800 square feet (a two-bedroom apartment) used for a typical unit unless a larger unit size was specified in the municipality's zoning ordinance.

Maximum potential density was calculated based on total acres of available land within a zoning district, rather than available parcels. This method accounts for additions to existing buildings and accessory dwelling units, in addition to new development, but means that large developments may not work because the actual parcels may be too small.

The density of non-residential land uses was calculated using maximum building coverage and maximum building height to calculate buildable square footage. This square footage was converted to square footage per acre for each zoning district. Both residential and non-residential densities were calculated as if public sewer and water were available. While many areas do not currently have sewer or water access, the analysis assumes that access would be provided if development occurred at the highest possible intensity.

Because many of the zoning districts in the Slate Belt allow for both residential and non-residential land uses, the analysis was done with two scenarios: one that maximized housing units and one that maximized the square footage of non-residential development.

Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO)

Municipality	Zoning Adopted	Zoning Amended	SALDO Adopted	SALDO Amended
Bangor Borough	2018	-	2016	-
East Bangor Borough	2005	-	2009	-
Lower Mount Bethel Township	1972	2018	2013	-
Pen Argyl Borough	1997	2009	2007	2011
Plainfield Township	2000	2019	1991	2018
Portland Borough	2015	-	2015	-
Roseto Borough	1984	-	1995	-
Upper Mount Bethel Township	2004	2016	2001	2009
Washington Township	1997	2014	1995	2016
Wind Gap Borough	2004	2016	2004	-

PLAN SLATE BELT

Land Analysis

Bangor Borough

Zoning Review

Bangor Borough completed a comprehensive update of their municipal zoning in 2018. The ordinance is divided into four residential districts and five non-residential districts, and is heavily weighted towards encouraging mixed-use development. Nearly every district allows for higher intensity residential or mixed-use development, with the exception of the Open Space District. The current code is comprehensive, with many land uses being allowed in multiple districts under specific circumstances.

Land Analysis

Bangor nearly has enough available land to accommodate projected population for the municipality, but only if the average number of people per household remains steady and new housing is built at the maximum potential density. Additionally, most of this housing development would need to be in the Industrial/Commercial District, which could compete with non-residential development.

Bangor can accommodate a large amount of non-residential growth in its Industrial/Commercial District—especially if that development is multi-story. However, other non-residential districts have much more limited space and are only able to accommodate a limited amount of growth.

Bangor will likely need to use a combination of revitalization, redevelopment and new development to accommodate growth and economic development.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 463

East Bangor Borough

Zoning Review

East Bangor Borough completed its municipal zoning in 2005. The ordinance is divided into three residential districts and five non-residential districts. Most of the districts allow for higher intensity residential or mixed-use development, with the exception of the Environmental Protection and Reclamation/Preserve districts. The General Business and Industrial District does not allow any residential or mixed-use development.

Land Analysis

East Bangor has more than enough available land to accommodate projected population for the municipality. The community would not need to maximize potential density under its existing zoning, but would still need to develop available land at a relatively high density for the Slate Belt area. While the Low-Density Residential District has the most potential acreage, the Medium-Density Residential District has the highest potential for accommodating future housing units.

East Bangor can accommodate a moderate amount of non-residential growth in each of its zoning districts. The highest potential exists in the Low-Density Residential District and would compete with new housing. However, other non-residential districts have much more limited space and are only able to accommodate a limited amount of growth.

East Bangor will likely need to use a combination of revitalization, redevelopment and new development to accommodate growth and economic development.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 194

PLAN SLATE BELT

Land Analysis

Lower Mount Bethel Township

Zoning Review

Lower Mount Bethel Township completed its municipal zoning in 1972, and it was last amended in 2018. The Township is working on an updated ordinance. The existing ordinance is divided into two residential districts and five non-residential districts. Higher intensity residential or mixed-use development is allowed in only three of the districts. The Industrial District does not allow residential uses.

Land Analysis

Lower Mount Bethel Township has more than enough available land to accommodate projected population for the municipality and would not need to maximize potential density under their existing zoning. However, much of the potential housing could end up in areas zoned for agricultural use and undermine the rural character of the Township.

The Township can accommodate a high amount of non-residential growth in each of its zoning districts. The highest potential exists in the Agricultural and Low-Density Residential districts. While much of this area is restricted to agricultural-related businesses, high levels of non-residential development could significantly impact the quality of life and character of the community.

The Township will need to consider where and what kind of development it wants to accommodate growth, while maintaining its identity.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 715

Pen Argyl Borough

Zoning Review

Pen Argyl Borough completed its municipal zoning in 1997, and it was last amended in 2009. The ordinance is divided into three residential districts and four non-residential districts. Higher intensity residential or mixed-use development is allowed in four of the districts, maintaining separation of residential uses from the industrial/commercial districts.

Land Analysis

Pen Argyl is a well-developed borough with a relatively large amount of space available for development. The municipality has enough available land to accommodate projected population for the municipality, but would need to maximize potential density in key areas to meet future needs under their existing zoning. The highest potential exists in the Medium-Density Residential District, with smaller amounts of housing in other districts.

The Borough can also accommodate a moderate amount of non-residential growth. While the highest potential for non-residential also exists in the Medium-Density Residential District, the Low-Density and Limited Residential districts also have a relatively high potential for new development.

Pen Argyl will likely need to use a combination of revitalization, redevelopment and new development to accommodate growth and economic development.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 326

PLAN SLATE BELT

Land Analysis

Plainfield Township

Zoning Review

Plainfield Township compeleted its municipal zoning in 2000, and it was last amended in 2019. The ordinance is divided into three residential districts and nine non-residential districts. Higher intensity residential or mixed-use development is only allowed in four of the districts.

Land Analysis

Plainfield Township can accommodate a high amount of housing growth under its existing zoning code and does not need to maximize the density of its development to meet projected housing needs. However, much of the potential housing could end up in the Farm and Forest District, which is intended for agricultural use, and undermine the rural character of the township. The municipality's zoning ordinance contains multiple development scenarios and different strategies to help preserve farmland, but does allow for five-acre lot subdivisions on most agricultural land. The municipality also has a large amount of area in the Suburban Residential District that could accommodate a variety of types and intensities of residential development. The Village Center and Village Residential districts also allow for high-intensity development that could draw pressure away from agricultural areas.

The Township can accommodate a high amount of non-residential growth in each of its zoning districts. The largest potential exists in the Farm and Forest District, as well as the Planned Residential District. While much of this area is restricted to agricultural-related businesses, high levels of non-residential development in these areas could significantly impact the character and quality of life of the community. Large amounts of non-residential growth could also be accommodated in the General Commercial, Highway Interchange and Industrial Business Park districts.

Plainfield will need to consider where and what kind of development it wants to accommodate growth, while maintaining its identity.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 1,194

Portland Borough

Zoning Review

Portland Borough completed an update to its municipal zoning in 2015. The ordinance is divided into two residential districts and four non-residential districts. Higher intensity or mixed-use development is allowed in four of the districts. No residential development is allowed in the Mixed Commercial or Recreation/Open Space Preservation districts.

Land Analysis

Portland is a well-developed borough with a relatively large amount of space available for development, given its small size. However, the municipality does not have enough available land to accommodate projected population growth. The Low-Density District has the highest potential, but would only be able to provide approximately half the projected housing demand if it was fully developed at the maximum allowed density.

The Borough can also accommodate a moderate amount of non-residential growth. The highest potential for non-residential exists in the Mixed Commercial District, though development would need to be multi-story to reach the maximum potential square footage. This district does not allow for residential, so commercial development would not compete with housing. However, the Low-Density District also has a high non-residential potential, and development in the district could limit the municipality's ability to meet future housing needs.

Portland will likely need to use a combination of revitalization, redevelopment and new development to accommodate growth and economic development.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 145

PLAN SLATE BELT

Land Analysis

Roseto Borough

Zoning Review

Roseto Borough completed its municipal zoning in 1984. The ordinance is divided into three residential and two non-residential districts. Higher intensity residential or mixed-use development is allowed in nearly all of the districts, except the Commercial District.

Land Analysis

Roseto is a well-developed borough with a very small amount of space available for development. The municipality does not have enough available land to accommodate the projected population growth. The largest potential exists in the Low-Density Residential District, but the highest allowed density would only meet a quarter of projected population demand.

The Borough also has very little space for new non-residential growth. The space that is available is in the same Low-Density Residential District. Non-residential development in the district would compete with projected housing demands.

Roseto will likely need to use a combination of revitalization, redevelopment and new development to accommodate growth and economic development.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 139

Upper Mount Bethel Township

Zoning Review

Upper Mount Bethel Township completed its municipal zoning in 2004, and it was last amended in 2016. The ordinance is divided into three residential districts and six non-residential districts. Higher intensity residential or mixed-use development is not allowed in the non-residential districts.

Land Analysis

Upper Mount Bethel Township has more than enough available land to accommodate projected population for the municipality and would not need to maximize potential density under existing zoning. The highest potential is in the Neighborhood Residential District, which could provide enough housing to meet future growth under multiple development scenarios. However, much of the potential housing could end up in the Agricultural Rural Residential District and undermine the rural character of the Township. This issue is created by a regulation in the ordinance that allows for up to two-acre lots.

The Township can also accommodate a high amount of non-residential growth under its existing zoning ordinance. The highest potential exists in the Agricultural Rural Residential, Neighborhood Residential and General Industrial districts. While the first two districts have restrictions on types of land use, the General Industrial District allows for a variety of high-intensity land uses. High levels of non-residential development in these districts could significantly impact the character and quality of life of the community.

The Township will need to consider where and what kind of development it wants to accommodate growth, while maintaining its identity.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 1,156

PLAN SLATE BELT

Land Analysis

Washington Township

Zoning Review

Washington Township completed its municipal zoning in 1997, and it was last amended in 2014. The ordinance is divided into two residential districts and five non-residential districts. Higher intensity residential or mixed-use development is allowed in four of the districts, including the Agriculture District, which allows for residential development higher than one unit per acre.

Land Analysis

Washington Township has more than enough available land to accommodate projected population for the municipality and would not need to maximize potential density under their existing zoning. However, much of the potential housing could end up in the Agriculture District and undermine the rural character of the Township. This issue is created by a regulation in the ordinance that allows for up to 1.5 units per acre—a relatively high suburban density—that slowly diminishes rural areas. The Township also has a large amount of available land in the Low-Density Residential, Medium-Density Residential and Rural Center districts. Directing development towards these districts could reduce development pressure on agricultural areas.

The Township can accommodate a high amount of non-residential growth in each of its zoning districts. The highest potential exists in the Agriculture District. While much of this area is restricted to agricultural-related land uses, high levels of non-residential development in these areas could significantly impact the character and quality of life of the community. The Medium-Density Residential, Low-Density Residential, Rural Center and Commercial districts can also accommodate a significant amount of non-residential use.

The Towndship will need to consider where and what kind of development it wants to accommodate growth, while maintaining its identity.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 803

Wind Gap Borough

Zoning Review

Wind Gap Borough completed its municipal zoning in 2004 and last amended its zoning in 2016. The ordinance is divided into four residential districts and four non-residential districts. Higher intensity residential or mixed-use development is allowed in nearly all the districts, except the Industrial/Heavy Commercial and Industrial/Shopping districts.

Land Analysis

Wind Gap is a well-developed borough with a relatively large amount of space available for development. The municipality has enough available land to accommodate the projected population for the municipality, but would need to maximize density in key areas to meet future needs under existing zoning. The largest potential exists in the Medium-Density Residential District and Extractive Industry District, with smaller amounts of housing in other districts.

The Borough can also accommodate a moderate amount of non-residential growth. The highest potential for non-residential growth exists in the Industrial and Heavy Commercial District, with other commercial and industrial districts also having significant potential.

Wind Gap will likely need to use a combination of revitalization, redevelopment and new development to accommodate growth and economic development.

New Housing Units Projected by 2040: 397

PLAN SLATE BELT

Land Analysis

Summary

The Slate Belt has a large amount of natural resources and farmland that give the region its distinct character and quality of life. However, projected population growth could put development pressure on a number of these areas. Under the existing zoning, the boroughs would struggle to provide for their projected population growth. The townships are in a much better position to accommodate future growth, but much of this new development could end up in agricultural areas under the existing zoning.

The Slate Belt will need to work together on how to best accommodate future growth and development. While revitalization, redevelopment and development of remaining areas within the boroughs can accommodate some of this growth, most will need to be in the townships. Where and how this growth occurs will have significant effects on the character and quality of life of the area.

Introduction

PLAN SLATE BELT

Economic Analysis

The Slate Belt has experienced a declining industrial base and a lack of investment in new economic sectors. Combined with significant job growth in adjoining areas of the Lehigh Valley, the Slate Belt has become more of a bedroom community without a strong jobs base. Meanwhile, broader region-wide trends show both housing and industrial development following the Route 33 corridor northward. These trends could have a significant impact on the economy, development pattern and quality of life of the Slate Belt.

Plan Slate Belt will need to examine what kind of economy local leaders and community members want to see for their region and develop strong policies and actions to guide sustainable growth and development.

An Economic Analysis was performed to better understand the local economic conditions. The analysis focused on two main elements: Location Quotient and Shift-Share Analysis. These two analyses were compared to the community's perceptions of the local economy, additional data on the commuting habits of Slate Belt residents and recent development trends of neighboring areas.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Location Quotient

Methodology

The Location Quotient analysis measures the relative concentration of an industry in a given region by comparing employment in that industry to that of a larger reference area. In this analysis, employment by industry in the Slate Belt region is compared to Northampton County, the Lehigh Valley and the nation.

The analysis utilizes data categorized by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) three-digit code. The calculation is a relatively simple ratio between the percentage of local jobs in an industry sector out of total local jobs and the job percentage for the same sector at the larger geography. A score above 1.25 is considered high. A score between 1.25 and 0.75 is considered medium. A score below 0.75 is considered low.

Industries with a high location quotient and high employment numbers have a greater local concentration of those jobs compared to the larger geographies. This may indicate areas of specialization or surplus.

A medium location quotient and medium employment numbers indicate that a sector employs a similar proportion of people. Medium scores tend not to indicate much unless some other analysis is showing a potential for growth or decline.

A low location quotient indicates that there are far fewer people employed in that sector compared to the county, region or nation. Low location quotients can indicate potential areas for targeted economic growth if there is some type of local need or advantage that can help spur development. However, a low location quotient could also mean that the needs for that sector cannot be met in the area being analyzed.

The location quotient is limited because it utilizes data from a static year, 2016, and thus only captures a specific moment in time. The Shift-Share Analysis following the Location Quotient section looks at changes in industry employment over a ten-year period.

NAICs information is self-reported by the business to the federal government. This self-reporting can lead to businesses being placed into an industry that might not make sense to the general public. The difference between how a business identifies their industry and how community members view the business becomes more apparent when working with smaller geographies, smaller numbers of businesses or smaller numbers of employees.

For this reason, it is best to look at the direction or scale of the results rather than the number itself when looking at an area the size of the Slate Belt.

Location Quotient is the ratio of jobs in the area to those in the county, region or nation:

- High is above 1.25
- Medium is 1.25-0.75
- Low is below 0.75.

Results

The Location Quotient analysis for the Slate Belt shows a specialized economy, with concentrations of employment in certain blue collar industries, such as manufacturing, mining, farming and utilities. Several of these industries have a much higher concentration of employment in the Slate Belt than in the County or the Lehigh Valley as a whole, such as agriculture and mining, showing a local specialty within the region. Others are shown to be more concentrated than at the regional or national level, including utilities and waste management.

Manufacturing continues to be an important sector within the Slate Belt, with apparel, plastic and rubber, nonmetallic minerals and electronics all employing a higher number of people locally than at the regional or national level—even after many of these industries contracted in recent years. Industries that have experienced recent growth within the Lehigh Valley, such as transportation and non-store retailers (online shopping), are also significant local employers when compared to the national level, but not as concentrated as the Lehigh Valley as a whole. Surprisingly, several regional and national growth industries, including education and health-related industries, have extremely low location quotients, indicating very low local employment and a potential sector to strengthen in the area.

Other areas are also far lower than their potential. Despite the beauty and history of the Slate Belt, tourism and museum employment is far below that of the region or the nation. Also, base services, such as food, retail, restaurants and even gasoline stations are far below the average level for Northampton County or nation—indicating that many locals are going outside the region to spend their money. These are potential local growth sectors if more can be done to build on local assets and encourage residents to spend money within the Slate Belt.

The Slate Belt has nine industries that have a significantly high location quotient, eight industries that are comparable in scale to the County, and the remaining 63 industries are significantly smaller compared to the County.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Location Quotient

The Slate Belt has nine industries that have a high location quotient, and eight industries that are similar to the County. The remaining 63 categories are low.

Industry Code	Industry Code Description	Northampton County	Lehigh Valley	Nation
115	Support activities for agriculture and forestry	5.85	7.78	0.21
213	Support activities for mining	5.85	1.33	0.04
221	Utilities	3.45	0.97	2.08
562	Waste management and remediation services	2.65	4.10	5.01
315	Apparel manufacturing	1.86	4.06	14.75
334	Computer and electronic product manufacturing	1.60	1.66	1.62
485	Transit and ground passenger transportation	1.56	0.56	2.38
326	Plastics and rubber products manufacturing	1.38	1.30	1.62
312	Beverage and tobacco product manufacturing	1.25	0.20	1.21
488	Support activities for transportation	1.11	2.96	0.83
442	Furniture and home furnishings stores	1.04	0.52	0.40
327	Nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing	0.93	1.97	4.35
212	Mining (except oil and gas)	0.88	0.68	0.06
441	Motor vehicle and parts dealers	0.80	0.85	0.92
454	Non-store retailers	0.79	0.79	1.51
425	Wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers	0.77	0.31	0.19
447	Gasoline stations	0.75	0.83	0.75
813	Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations	0.72	0.82	0.79
238	Specialty trade contractors	0.72	0.78	0.69
424	Merchant wholesalers, nondurable goods	0.70	0.89	1.27
322	Paper manufacturing	0.68	0.48	1.49
445	Food and beverage stores	0.59	0.65	0.95
811	Repair and maintenance	0.58	0.61	0.70
333	Machinery manufacturing	0.57	0.72	0.84
332	Fabricated metal product manufacturing	0.57	0.56	0.60
522	Credit intermediation and related activities	0.55	0.48	0.35
561	Administrative and support services	0.54	0.58	0.45
532	Rental and leasing services	0.54	0.60	0.58
313	Textile mills	0.49	0.52	0.48
446	Health and personal care stores	0.46	0.51	0.58
325	Chemical manufacturing	0.44	0.59	0.69
236	Construction of buildings	0.43	0.45	0.35
711	Performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries	0.37	0.35	0.18
722	Food services and drinking places	0.35	0.39	0.35
624	Social assistance	0.35	0.33	0.37
444	Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers	0.33	0.36	0.30

High relative job concentration is above 1.25, medium is 1.25-0.75 and low is below 0.75.

Industry Code	Industry Code Description	Northampton County	Lehigh Valley	Nation
452	General merchandise stores	0.31	0.31	0.26
443	Electronics and appliance stores	0.31	0.21	0.26
519	Other information services	0.31	0.43	0.21
812	Personal and laundry services	0.29	0.25	0.29
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	0.29	0.31	0.31
484	Truck transportation	0.29	0.43	0.55
517	Telecommunications	0.28	0.30	0.20
423	Merchant wholesalers, durable goods	0.19	0.11	0.18
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, and book stores	0.17	0.13	0.14
331	Primary metal manufacturing	0.17	0.28	0.30
339	Miscellaneous manufacturing	0.17	0.25	0.65
713	Amusement, gambling, and recreation industries	0.17	0.18	0.15
511	Publishing industries (except internet)	0.14	0.09	0.05
323	Printing and related support activities	0.12	0.19	0.05
337	Furniture and related product manufacturing	0.10	0.10	0.13
321	Wood product manufacturing	0.09	0.16	0.12
493	Warehousing and storage	0.08	0.08	0.30
611	Educational services	0.07	0.09	0.10
524	Insurance carriers and related activities	0.07	0.07	0.07
721	Accommodation	0.06	0.11	0.06
311	Food manufacturing	0.06	0.08	0.07
448	Clothing and clothing accessories stores	0.05	0.03	0.03
518	Data processing, hosting, and related services	0.02	0.06	0.02
237	Heavy and civil engineering construction	0.02	0.02	0.01
551	Management of companies and enterprises	0.00	0.00	0.00
113	Forestry and logging	0.00	0.00	0.00
114	Fishing, hunting and trapping	0.00	0.00	0.00
211	Oil and gas extraction	0.00	0.00	0.00
314	Textile product mills	0.00	0.00	0.00
316	Leather and allied product manufacturing	0.00	0.00	0.00
324	Petroleum and coal products manufacturing	0.00	0.00	0.00
335	Electrical equipment, appliance, and component manufacturing	0.00	0.00	0.00
336	Transportation equipment manufacturing	0.00	0.00	0.00
481	Air transportation	0.00	0.00	0.00
483	Water transportation	0.00	0.00	0.00
486	Pipeline transportation	0.00	0.00	0.00
487	Scenic and sightseeing transportation	0.00	0.00	0.00

United States Census Zip Business Patterns 2016

PLAN SLATE BELT

Shift-Share Analysis

Methodology

The Shift-Share Analysis examines the job growth of industries in a given region over a ten-year time period and helps to identify how much of that growth is attributable to local competitive advantages versus national employment trends. In this analysis, industry employment changes within the Slate Belt region are compared to industry employment changes at the national level from 2007 to 2016, using data from the U.S. Census.

The Shift-Share Analysis is comprised of two main contributing indicators:

Expected Employment
The current-day employment in a given industry if, over the ten-year time period, local industries grew at the same rate as the national industries. This captures two factors of national employment growth: the overall growth rate* and growth rate within specific industries**.

The rate of the nation's overall employment growth is significant because it reflects the growth of the American economy. The growth rate of specific industries reflects changes related to specific industries. These two factors, when combined, show what employment would be within each Slate Belt industry if the local industries matched the national trends, and therefore indicates the overall effect of national employment changes on the Slate Belt's industries.

Regional Shift
How much growth or loss is attributable to local conditions. Regional Shift explains how much of the employment change in a given industry is due to some unique competitive advantage that the region possesses, because the growth or loss cannot be explained by national trends. This is found by subtracting Expected Employment from current employment.

*This factor is also known as "National Share".
**This factor is also known as "Industry Mix".

NAICs information is self-reported by the business to the federal government. This self-reporting can lead to businesses being placed into an industry that might not make sense to the general public. The difference between how a business identifies their industry and how community members view the business becomes more apparent when working with smaller geographies, smaller numbers of businesses or smaller numbers of employees.

For this reason, it is best to look at the direction or scale of the results rather than the number itself when looking at an area the size of the Slate Belt.

Results

The Shift-Share Analysis indicates some industries that have had significant growth independent of the influence of national employment trends. The local Wholesale Trade industry nearly doubled its employment, with a 94% increase compared to only 2.45% nationally. The Transportation and Warehousing industry experienced significant growth as well, at nearly double the rate of growth compared to the national level. This industry has become a major employer within the Slate Belt, which is confirmed by a high location quotient.

However, the Slate Belt area has experienced a significant employment decrease in many industries over the last ten years. The Utilities, Professional and Technical Services, Management, Educational Services, Arts and Entertainment, and Retail sectors all had a significant loss of employees despite increases at the national level, indicating that local conditions played a large part in influencing the decline.

The Manufacturing industry also had a significant loss of employees locally, at a loss rate of three times the national loss and despite an overall increase of manufacturing jobs in the Lehigh Valley during the same time period. This shift away from manufacturing is significant because the sector is still a major employer within the region, representing a large number of jobs and being one of the Slate Belt's few base industries. Further losses in the sector could have a significant impact on the local economy—especially without growth in other well-paying industries.

This shift in employment may be attributed to businesses leaving the Slate Belt and relocating elsewhere for improved network access or amenities for workers. The analysis indicates the likelihood that Slate Belt residents have shifted to commuting outside of the Slate Belt area for work, as employment rates and income levels have not fallen with the decline in industry or jobs in the Slate Belt.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Shift-Share Analysis

Industry	Employment (2007)	Expected Employment	Regional Shift	Employment (2016)	Employment % Change	Employment % Change
Agriculture and Forestry	3.0	2.8	0.2	3.0	0.0%	-6.8%
Mining	3.0	2.5	0.5	3.0	0.0%	-16.3%
Utilities	290.5	298.0	-107.5	190.5	-34.4%	2.6%
Construction	605.5	525.8	-55.3	470.5	-22.3%	-13.2%
Wholesale Trade	269.5	276.1	247.4	523.5	94.3%	2.5%
Information	50.0	50.7	-2.2	48.5	-3.0%	1.4%
Finance and Insurance	196.5	190.1	-21.1	169.0	-14.0%	-3.2%
Real Estate and Leasing	89.5	85.0	-8.0	77.0	-14.0%	-5.1%
Professional Services	329.0	353.9	-106.4	247.5	-24.8%	7.6%
Management	59.0	63.9	-62.4	1.5	-97.5%	8.3%
Administrative Support and Waste Management	874.0	1,018.0	-9.5	1,008.5	15.4%	16.5%
Educational Services	95.0	114.9	-64.4	50.5	-46.8%	21.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	785.5	922.9	-182.9	740.0	-5.8%	17.5%
Arts and Entertainment	62.0	71.4	-22.4	49.0	-21.0%	15.1%
Accommodation and Food service	610.0	722.8	-112.8	610.0	0.0%	18.5%
Other Services	475.5	473.7	29.3	503.0	5.8%	-0.4%
Not Classified	0.0	0.0	n/a	0.0	n/a	83.1%
Manufacturing	2,182.5	1,899.1	-559.6	1,339.5	-38.6%	-13.0%
Retail Trade	1,395.0	1,413.4	-128.9	1,284.5	-7.9%	1.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	360.0	387.4	23.1	410.5	14.0%	7.6%

United States Census Zip Business Patterns 2016

Commuting Patterns

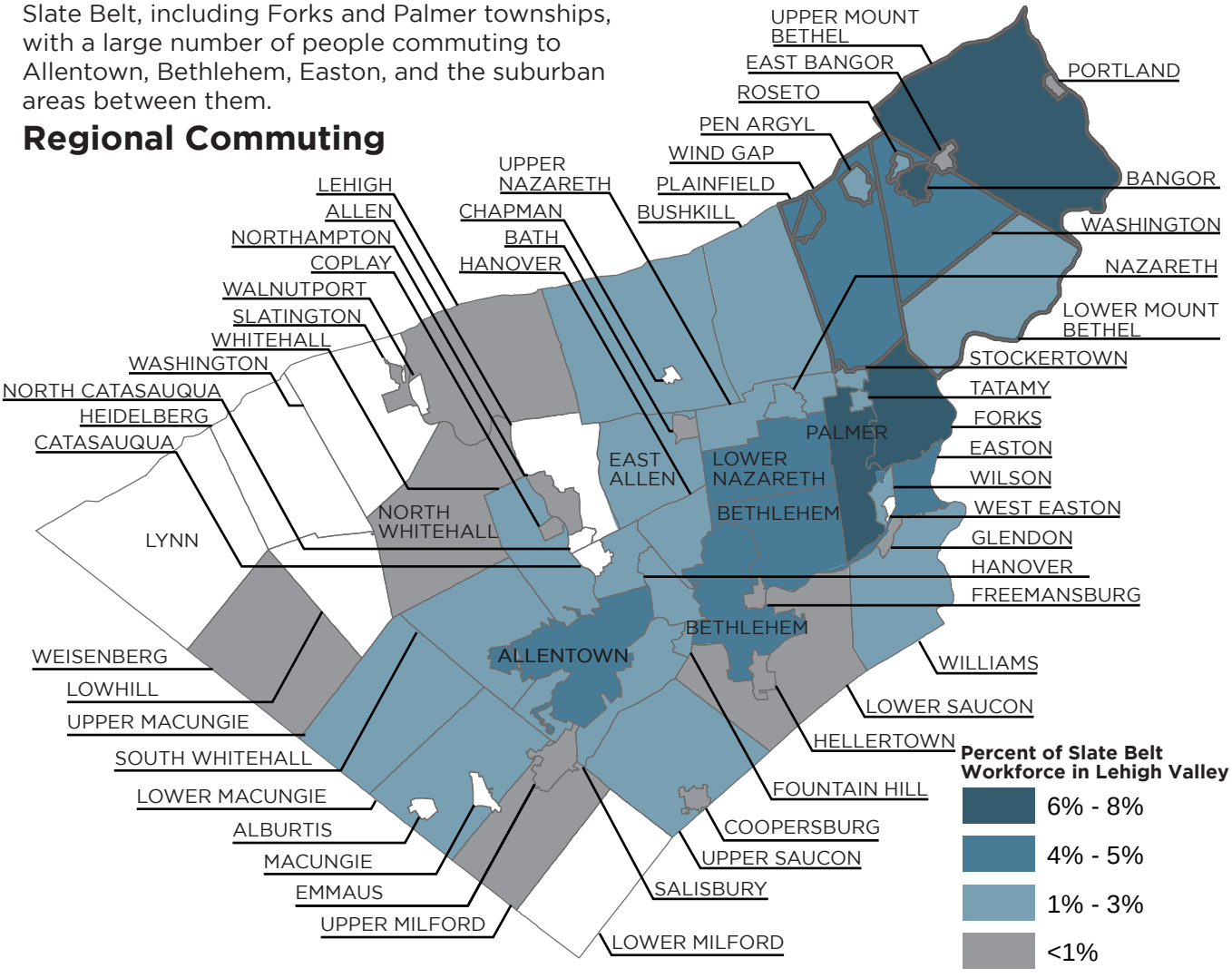
Regional

Both the Location Quotient and Shift-Share analyses indicate that there are not enough jobs in the Slate Belt for the local population. These numbers fit with local perceptions that the region has become more of a bedroom community in recent years. By looking at commuting data, we can see that this sense is correct—most people within the Slate Belt are commuting to outside areas for work.

Within the Slate Belt, areas of local employment include Bangor Borough and Upper Mount Bethel Township, with a number of people also working in Plainfield Township, Wind Gap Borough and Washington Township.

A large number of Slate Belt residents commute to areas of the Lehigh Valley directly outside of the Slate Belt, including Forks and Palmer townships, with a large number of people commuting to Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, and the suburban areas between them.

Regional Commuting



PLAN SLATE BELT

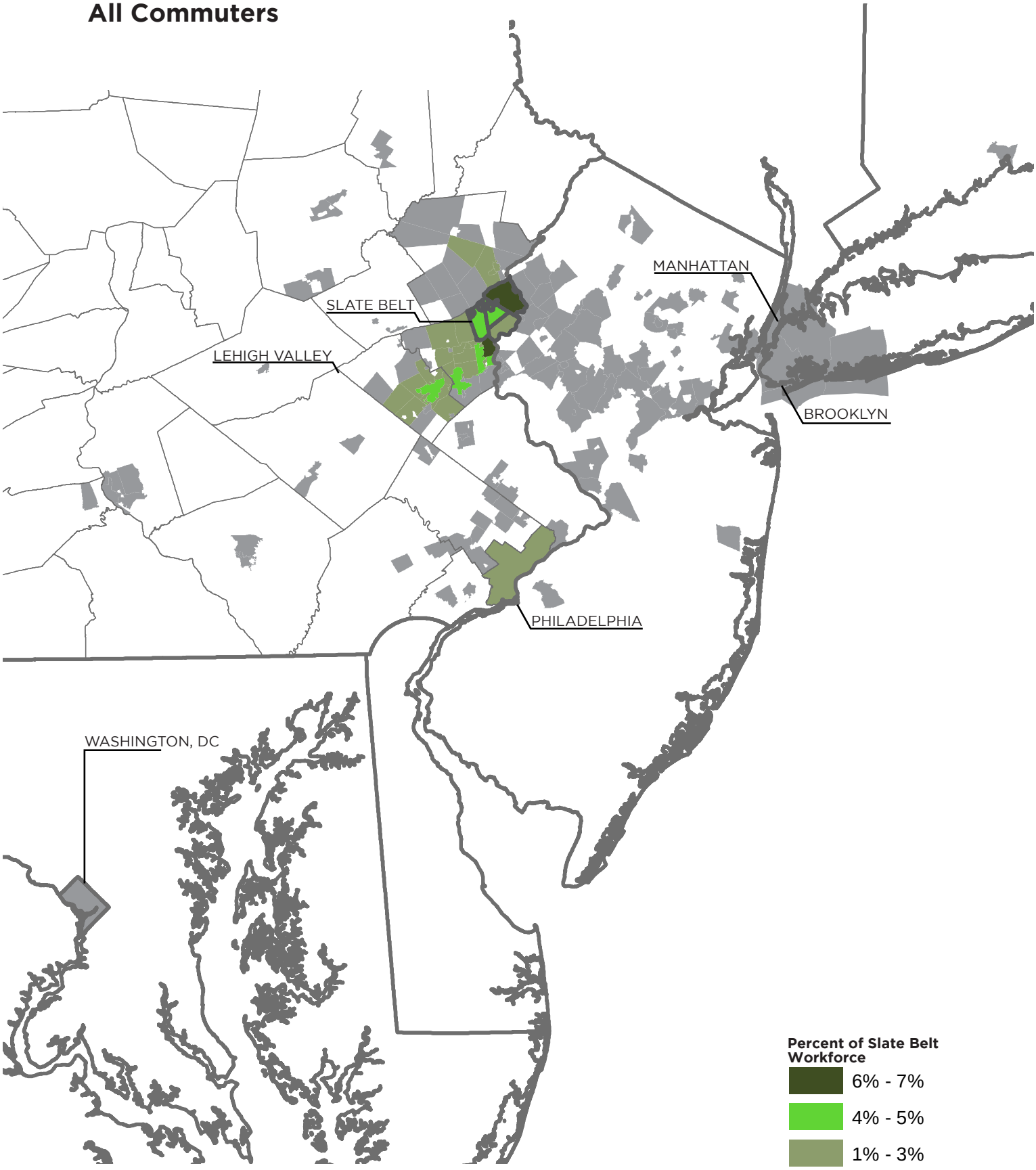
Commuting Patterns

All Commuters

Slate Belt residents commute as far away as Washington, DC and New Haven, CT. While some residents do commute all the way to New York City, many more work in areas of northern New Jersey or commute to the Philadelphia metro area—with between 1% and 3% of the population working in Philadelphia itself.

Extreme commuters travel more than 90 minutes to work, long-distance commuters travel more than 50 miles, and mega commuters do both. While some of these commuters work from home or only travel to their office a few times a week, many Slate Belt residents make these trips daily. This pattern shows that the area has a unique and attractive quality of life that people are willing to commute long distances, but may also showcase the lack of local jobs or a diverse economy. Many commuters may choose a more local job if the local economy diversifies.

All Commuters



PLAN SLATE BELT

Economic Analysis

Summary

The trends indicated by the Shift-Share Analysis and Location Quotient fit with local perceptions that the historic industrial base of the Slate Belt has been in decline and that most people have to leave the region for work, shopping, higher education and professional services. Even as new businesses or facilities, like medical or urgent care clinics, have opened in the region, they are now more efficient and employ far fewer people than older businesses in the same industries. Other potential growth areas, such as tourism, food service and local retail, have not seen significant growth, while sectors like transportation and warehousing have been growing even before major logistic centers in the area have been completed.

These economic changes have led to a broad sense that the region has become more of a bedroom community that supplies workers to neighboring areas and concerns that the region could be adversely impacted by further growth in warehousing and freight—both of which can be seen through mapping commuting patterns and recent development trends.

Plan Slate Belt will need to take these economic trends into consideration when developing policies to shape its economic future. These policies will need to anticipate future changes to manufacturing, retail and desired quality of life to take advantage of the area's assets and achieve the kind of balanced growth the region wants, while encouraging residents to work and spend money in their own community.

Introduction

PLAN SLATE BELT

Development Analysis

The Slate Belt municipalities were asked to identify a development, redevelopment and investment priority within their community. Development sites are areas that either have no or very little existing development. Redevelopment sites are areas that have existing development, but where the municipalities felt that they had greater potential. Investment sites are places where the municipality wants to see public investment, which generally include community projects, such as park and recreation improvements, trails, or sewer and water infrastructure.

A Development Analysis was performed on the locally identified development and redevelopment sites. This analysis focused on what might be the revenues and costs associated with higher-intensity use of the sites and was based around four scenarios: Existing, Average, High and Case Study. Projecting these different scenarios helps to show the financial impacts of different intensities of development without having a specific development proposal to test. The results are broken out for each of the development sites.

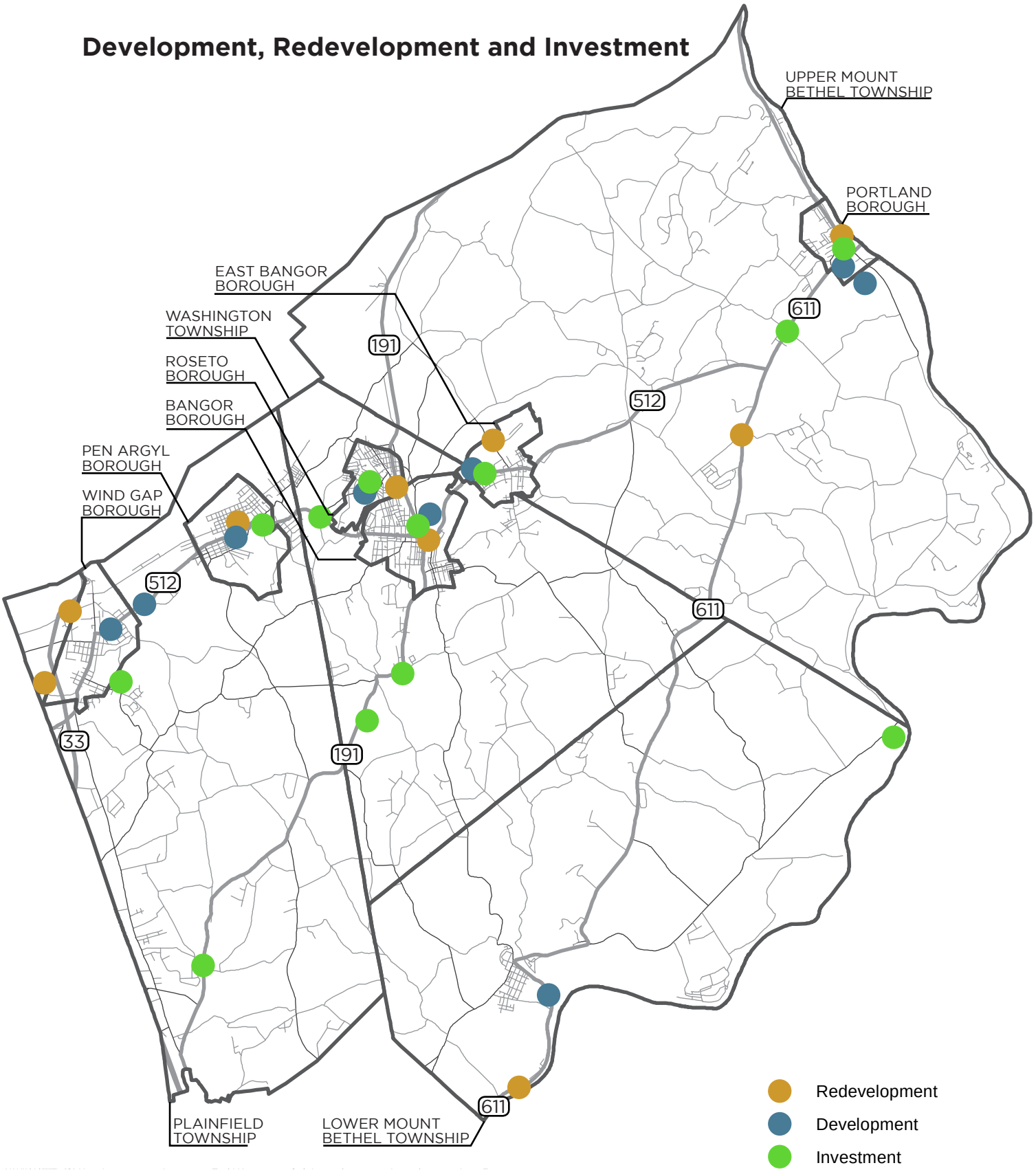
The investment sites were not included as part of the analysis, but will be important to developing the policies, actions and implementation steps of Plan Slate Belt.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Development Sites

Municipality	Address	Current Land Use	Future Land Use
Bangor Borough	North Main Street	Vacant	High-Density Residential
	Downtown Bangor	Mixed-Use	High-Density Residential
East Bangor Borough	Capital Boulevard	Commercial	Commercial
	Lakewood Drive	Industrial	Industrial
Lower Mount Bethel Township	Howell Road	Agricultural	High-Density Residential
	Lower Mud Run Road	Industrial	Industrial
Pen Argyl Borough	Downtown Pen Argyl	Mixed-Use	Mixed-Use
	21 North Lobb	Vacant	High-Density Residential
	412 West Applegate Avenue	Vacant	Commercial
Plainfield Township	905 West Pennsylvania Avenue	Vacant	Industrial
	593 Male Road	Industrial	Industrial
Portland Borough	102 Demi Road	Agricultural	Industrial
	Downtown Portland	Commercial	High-Density Residential
Roseto Borough	133 Front Street	Agricultural	High-Density Residential
	122 Roseto Avenue	Low-Density Residential	High-Density Residential
Upper Mount Bethel Township	Marshfield Drive	Agricultural	Industrial
	1560 South Delaware Avenue	Industrial	Industrial
Wind Gap Borough	231 North Lehigh Avenue	Institutional	High-Density Residential
	153 West 8th Street	Industrial	Industrial

Development, Redevelopment and Investment



PLAN SLATE BELT

Development Scenarios

Existing Scenario

The Existing Scenario models the revenue and cost currently generated by the property. This scenario serves as a baseline for comparing the other scenarios.

Average Scenario

The Average Scenario models what the tax revenue and cost would be if it had the same per-acre value as the average for that type of land use within the given municipality. This portion of the analysis helps us understand whether or not the property is currently underperforming, on par with or overperforming similar properties within the municipality.

High Scenario

The High Scenario models what the tax revenue and cost would be if it had a similar value to high-value property that already exists within the municipality. We used properties at the 75th percentile of value per acre to model High Scenario because properties with higher values per acre were generally smaller than the properties being tested as part of the analysis.

Case Study Scenario

The Case Study Scenario serves as a comparison to the High Scenario to see what the revenue and cost an improved property may have. This model uses similar recently completed projects in Northampton County that have been assessed to have similar development and redevelopment projects desired by the Slate Belt communities.

Limitations

Revenue

All the jurisdictions derive revenue from multiple sources, but it is difficult to model how non-property tax revenue, such as fees, grants, local sales tax or local income tax, would be affected by development. To keep the model clean and remove potential variables, such as trying to project the income of future residents, revenue was only calculated based on property taxes.

Cost

Unlike revenue, costs tend not to be greatly affected by a specific development or redevelopment project and can be, with certain limitations, modeled by averages. However, such averages cannot anticipate the impacts and associated costs from high-impact land uses, such as transportation, warehousing and logistics.

Municipal Property Tax Revenue Percentage

Municipality	Tax Rate	Percent of Revenue
Bangor Borough	1.63%	43%
East Bangor Borough	1.25%	45%
Lower Mount Bethel Township	0.51%	39%
Pen Argyl Borough	1.20%	39%
Plainfield Township	0.65%	36%
Portland Borough	2.00%	61%
Roseto Borough	1.15%	60%
Upper Mount Bethel Township	0.65%	40%
Washington Township	0.80%	45%
Wind Gap Borough	1.45%	49%

Fiscal Year 2019 Municipal Budgets

PLAN SLATE BELT

Development Scenarios

Methodology

The Development Analysis involves calculating the revenues and costs to determine the best estimate of how much the land in question is worth under different levels of development. The data used for this analysis were assessed land value, municipal tax rate, school district tax rate, county tax rate and acreage of land uses within each municipality.

The Average-Cost Technique using Proportional Valuation was employed. This method assumes that assessed property values are directly related to public revenues and service costs and uses average revenue and cost calculations to estimate the impacts of development proposals. Typically, this impact is calculated per unit of housing or square footage of building area. Because residential and non-residential land uses are recorded differently in local and regional databases, acreage was used as the common denominator to calculate revenues and costs for each type of land use.

The estimated revenue and cost for each land use was calculated for each municipality, school district and county. Costs were assumed to be the same regardless of the development scenario, unless the land use changed from what it is today. With the school districts, costs were adjusted based on the potential for development or redevelopment to include children.

Revenue Estimate

Current land use, property tax rate, total assessed value (assessed land plus assessed building value), land use codes and acreage were pulled from the county parcel data. The land use codes were grouped into eight general land use categories to simplify the analysis. This data was used to estimate revenue per acre.

For the Existing Scenario, the existing property information, including land use, acreage and assessed values, for each of the sites identified by the municipalities was collected and used to calculate estimated revenues for each property.

For the Average Scenario, assessed acreage and assessed values were totaled for each land use for each of the ten municipalities. Total revenue for each land use was estimated by multiplying the millage rate by total assessed value, producing an estimated revenue for each land use. The estimated revenue per land use was divided by the total acreage for each land use, producing an estimated average revenue per acre of land use. The resulting average revenues per acre were used to calculate the Average Scenario.

For the High Scenario, the total assessed value per acre was calculated for all the properties within each land use. The property with the three-quarters estimated total value per acre was selected to estimate potential revenue. At this threshold, 75% of properties within that land use had a per-acre value below the selected property, and 25% had a value above the selected property—providing a good sense of what a high value property might generate in revenue using the municipality's own data.

For the Case Study Scenario, properties were selected from around Northampton County that fit the development or redevelopment scenarios for each of the identified sites. These case studies were recently completed, high-profile projects that had updated property assessment data in the county's database. Similar to the Existing Scenario, the total assessed value and acreage of the case studies was used to calculate estimated value per acre. This value was then used to estimate revenue generated if development or redevelopment of the site in the Slate Belt would have the same per-acre value as the case studies used.

Simplified Land Uses

- Low-Density Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Mixed-Use
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Agricultural
- Vacant
- Institutional

Institutional land use was assumed to not generate revenue because it represents schools, churches and non-profit entities that do not pay taxes.

Cost Estimate

PLAN SLATE BELT

Development Analysis

The land use and acreage were reused from the Revenue Estimate and combined with information from the current fiscal year budgets to estimate average cost per acre.

For municipalities, total expenses were broken up into the general expense categories identified in the municipality's budget. These expense categories were sorted based on whether the expense would generally apply to each of the eight land uses, before being broken up into a per-acreage calculation for each general expense. These per-acreage calculations were combined to generate the estimated total expense per acre for each land use. This data was used to estimate municipal costs for each of the development scenarios.

The cost estimate for school districts followed a similar methodology that was modified to account for the number of students. The budget for each of the school districts was divided by the total number of students in the district. Because districts do not report the number of students for each municipality, an estimate was created based on U.S. Census information on number of people under the age of 17 living in each municipality. This estimate was made by creating a ratio between total population under 17 and number of students enrolled in the district. The number of students was proportioned based on the percentage of the population under 17 for each municipality.

Estimated total municipal expense was calculated by multiplying the estimated number of students by municipality and the average expense per student. This total estimated expense was divided up by land use for only the land uses that have residential populations (Low-Density Residential, High-Density Residential, Mixed-Use and Agriculture). The individual municipal costs per acre of land use were averaged to create an estimated cost per acre of land use for the school district as a whole. Averaging the cost per acre also had the benefit of accounting for population density of students, with higher-intensity residential development having a higher-estimated cost per student. This process was repeated for each of the three school districts and used to estimate the school district costs for each of the development scenarios.

Results

Existing and Average Scenarios

Nearly all land uses did not earn more than their cost under either the Existing or Average scenarios. These results are unsurprising because the municipalities and school districts in the Slate Belt, as well as Northampton County, all derive their revenues from a variety of sources. Property taxes usually make up the largest single source of revenue but do not, in general, earn more than their cost in either their Existing or Average scenarios, regardless of the type of land use.

The exceptions to this generalization are if a property has a particularly high existing value, such as Portland's downtown, or if a jurisdiction derives a higher percentage of its budget from property tax revenue, such as Roseto Borough or the school districts. Downtown Portland actually performed worse under the Average Scenario, showing that it already has a relatively high per-acre value when compared with other areas of the Borough. Both boroughs rely more heavily than the other municipalities on property tax revenue (approximately 60% versus an average of 44% for the Slate Belt communities), and performed much better than other communities in the Average Scenario_ indicating even middle-income housing will have a positive effect on municipal finances.

The school districts also brought in a much higher percentage of their budget from property taxes, and therefore, made money on most types and intensities of development. However, the school districts did struggle with agricultural land uses, likely due to low property values per acre, and therefore, lower revenue per acre than other land uses with students.

Nearly all communities saw an improvement under the Average Scenario, indicating most of the sites selected are currently low value and good locations for development or redevelopment from a financial standpoint.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Development Analysis

Results

High and Case Study Scenarios

All the sites showed a significant improvement in the High and Case Study scenarios. Interestingly, the High Scenario, which used data from the individual municipalities, showed the largest improvement. This indicates that Slate Belt communities could see significant financial improvement from bringing some of their existing properties more in line with their own high-value properties.

Municipalities saw their highest revenue come from High-Density Residential or Mixed-Use because of the high property value per acre and the relatively lower cost of providing municipal services to denser areas. School districts saw the highest revenues from non-residential districts, where the lower property value per acre was more than offset by the lack of cost from not having any residential population.

Several sites still did not have revenue that exceeded their cost under the Case Study Scenario. These sites included high-density residential development in Bangor Borough, as well as industrial development in Portland Borough and Plainfield Township. All three did see a significant narrowing of the gap between revenue from property tax and cost per acre, but improving each of these sites to meet their development scenario would require infrastructure improvements that are not currently reflected in the cost calculation. More detailed financial modeling should be examined associated with development of these properties.

Specific Land Uses

High-Density Residential

While high-density residential was good for municipal tax revenues, school districts had a harder time with these districts. Both are likely due to the density of the district, which allows for cost savings on the municipal side, but also means a higher number of people and larger number of children. However, the low number of children per household in the Slate Belt means that even most high-density residential areas made money for their respective school districts, making these areas an overall positive influence on the community's finances.

Vacant

Vacant properties have an extremely high cost to municipalities, school districts and the county. Their low property value compared to other land uses means that there is a significant loss of potential income. Because several of the vacant sites identified for this analysis are relatively large, this can have significant financial impacts. It is in everyone's best interest to return these properties to productive use.

Agriculture

All agricultural land has significant cost to municipal tax revenue, due to comparably low property values per acre and the large amounts of agricultural area in each of the townships. While the actual cost to service farms is likely much lower than this analysis predicts, because farms require fewer municipal services per acre than other land uses, residential development in agricultural areas starts to significantly increase the cost of providing municipal services in these areas.

Warehouses and Industrial Development

Municipalities generally do not make much money from warehouses or industrial development. These land uses typically have fairly low property value per acre and do not produce as much revenue as other potential land uses. Furthermore, the cost estimate used for this analysis did not take into account the additional infrastructure costs of industrial development, including road improvements and additional wear and tear on existing roadways. Detailed financial, infrastructure, traffic and other impact analyses should be conducted associated with any industrial or warehouse development so that communities have an accurate understanding of the costs associated with such development.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Development Analysis

Summary

The sites chosen by the Slate Belt communities for the Development Analysis are good case studies for the area. Most of them are currently under-performing on tax revenue when compared to the average for their type of development within each community. Developing or redeveloping these sites significantly improves the revenue-cost balance, with many sites potentially having significant positive effects on their municipal revenues. Surprisingly, high-density residential development tends to have the best impact on municipal revenues, while warehouse and industrial development underperformed expectations.

Slate Belt communities should carefully consider the financial impacts of different types of development when crafting the policies, actions and implementation steps for Plan Slate Belt.

Introduction

PLAN SLATE BELT

Transportation Analysis

The Slate Belt has experienced increased traffic and quality of life impacts from development in adjoining municipalities and along the Route 33 corridor. Many of the critical roads in the area are owned by the State and are not under local control.

Plan Slate Belt will need to examine current and anticipated transportation, travel, recreational and infrastructure needs to balance maintenance and investment to achieve a resilient system.

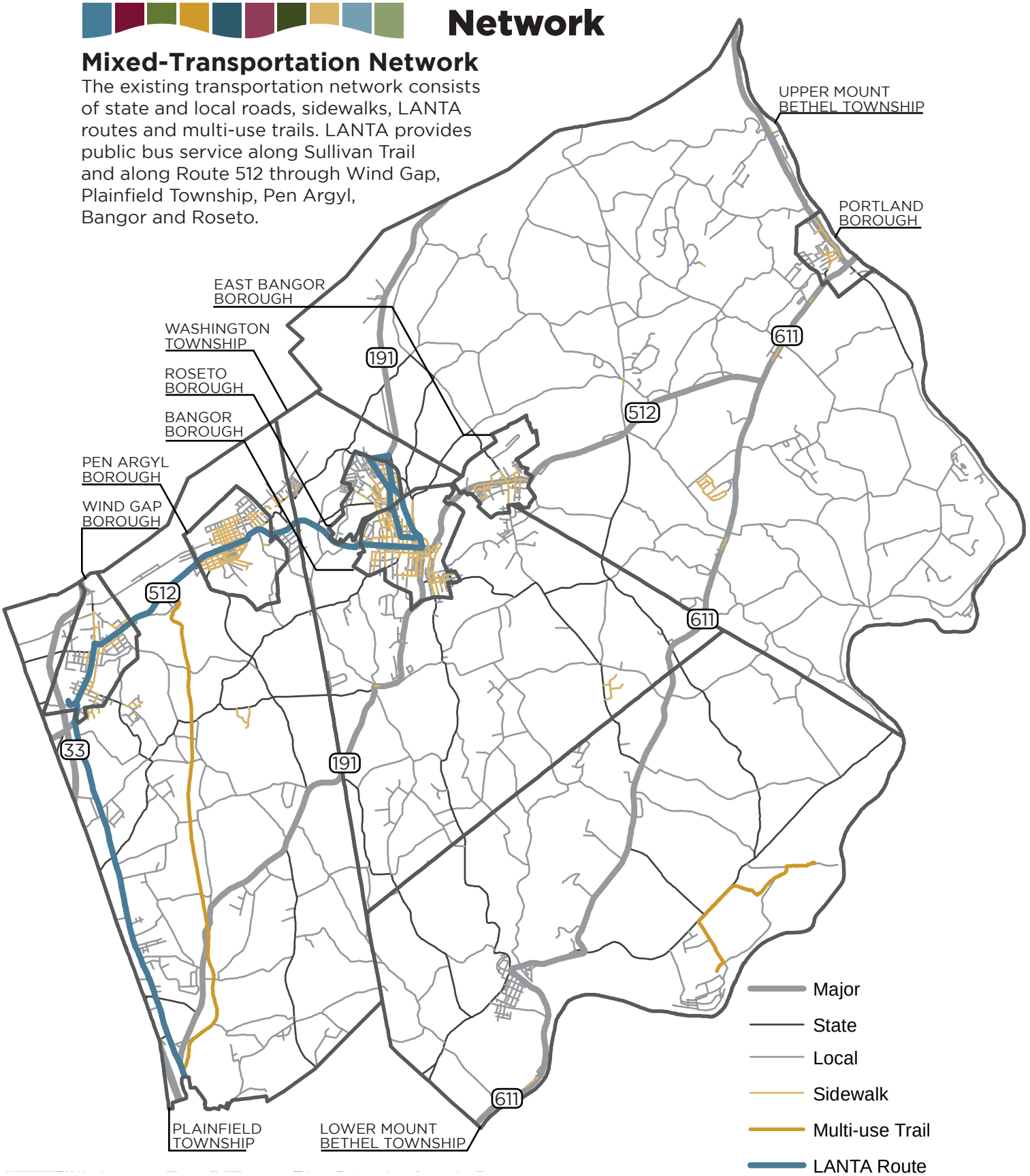
A Transportation Analysis was performed to examine current transportation infrastructure and operational conditions. Data was gathered on the existing transportation network, average daily traffic and crash patterns. The analysis consisted of comparing concerns identified by the community to the available data to identify other issues in the region.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Existing Transportation Network

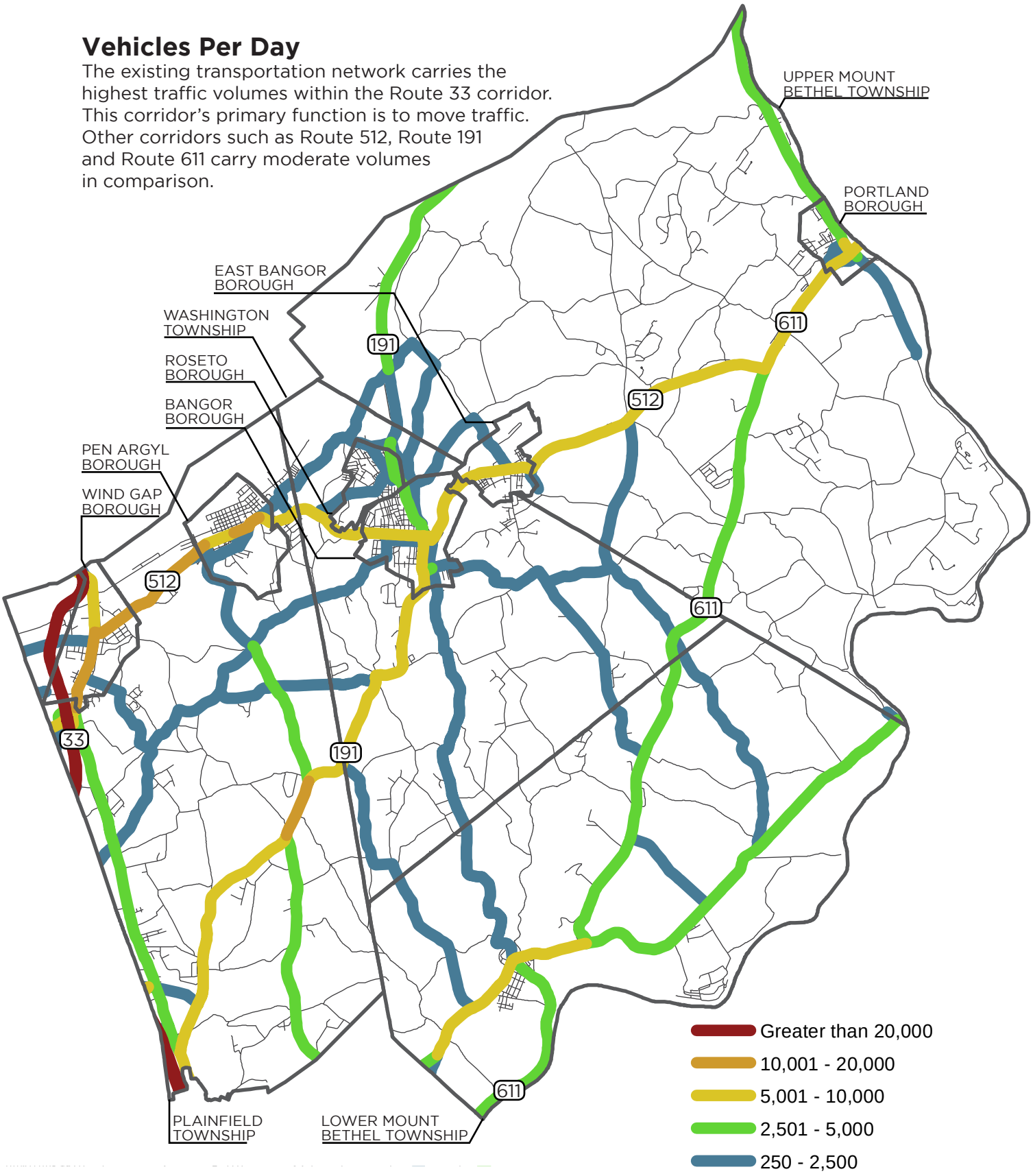
Mixed-Transportation Network

The existing transportation network consists of state and local roads, sidewalks, LANTA routes and multi-use trails. LANTA provides public bus service along Sullivan Trail and along Route 512 through Wind Gap, Plainfield Township, Pen Argyl, Bangor and Roseto.



Vehicles Per Day

The existing transportation network carries the highest traffic volumes within the Route 33 corridor. This corridor's primary function is to move traffic. Other corridors such as Route 512, Route 191 and Route 611 carry moderate volumes in comparison.

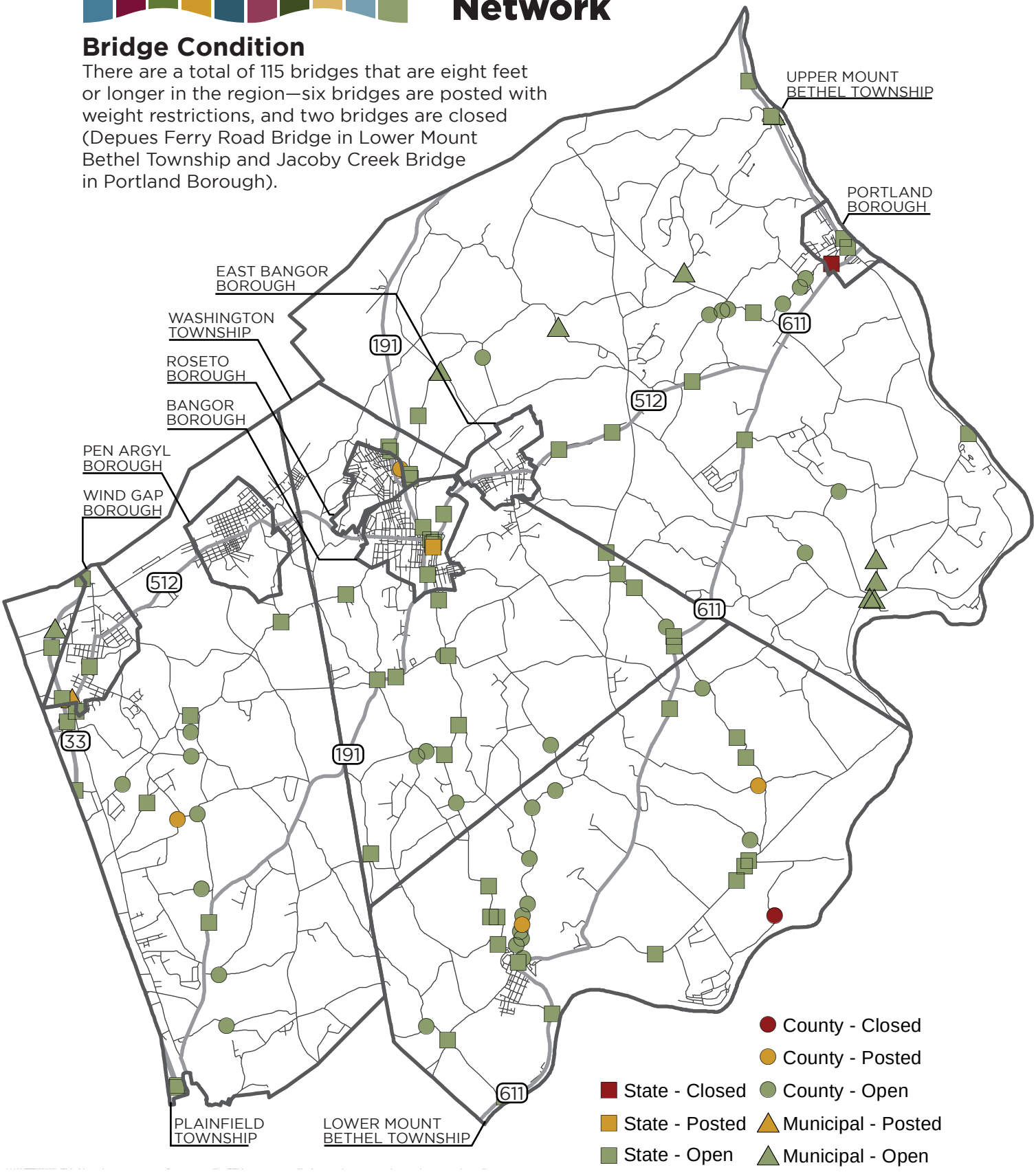


PLAN SLATE BELT

Existing Transportation Network

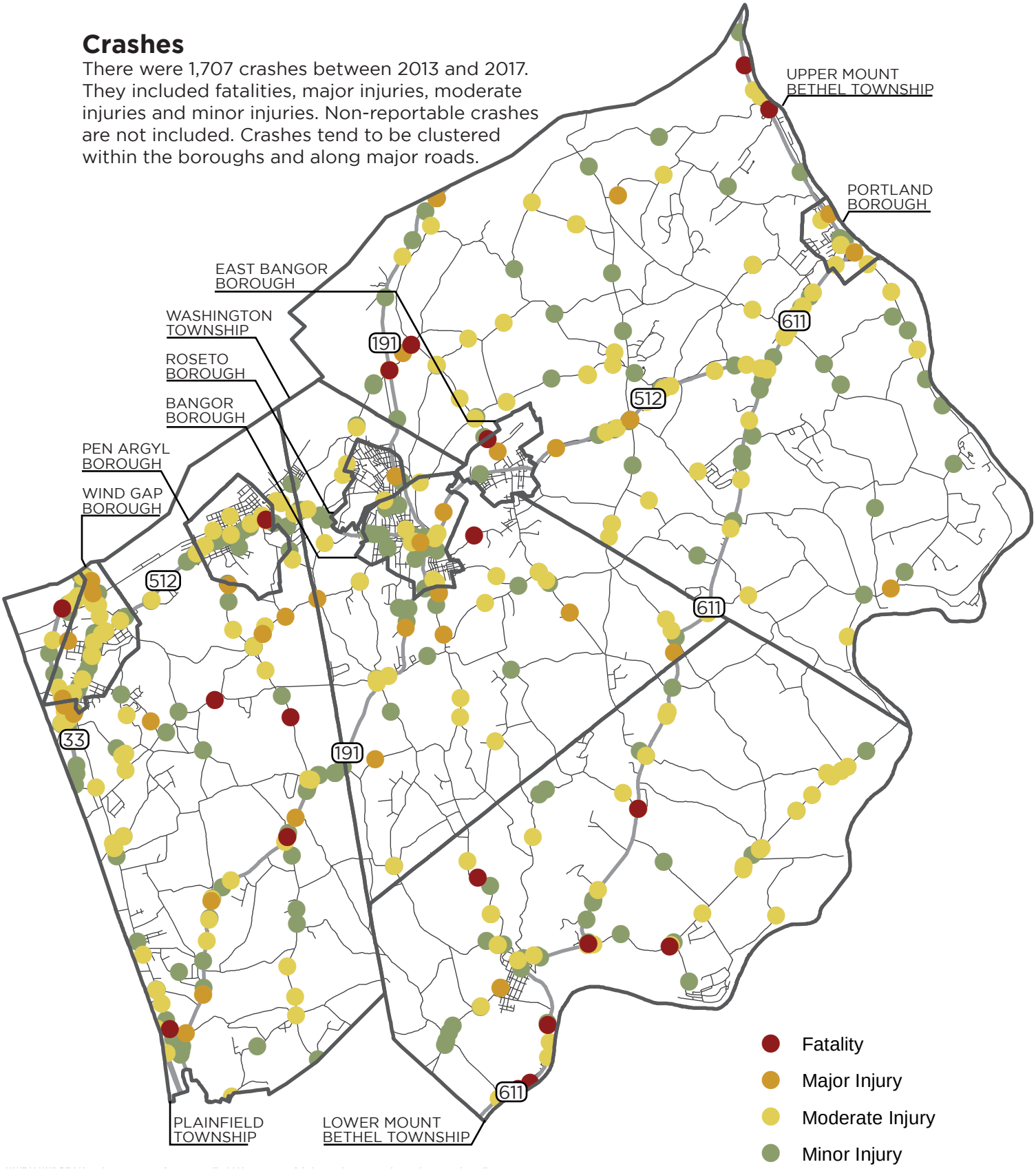
Bridge Condition

There are a total of 115 bridges that are eight feet or longer in the region—six bridges are posted with weight restrictions, and two bridges are closed (Depues Ferry Road Bridge in Lower Mount Bethel Township and Jacoby Creek Bridge in Portland Borough).



Crashes

There were 1,707 crashes between 2013 and 2017. They included fatalities, major injuries, moderate injuries and minor injuries. Non-reportable crashes are not included. Crashes tend to be clustered within the boroughs and along major roads.



PLAN SLATE BELT

Transportation Concerns

Municipal Transportation Concerns

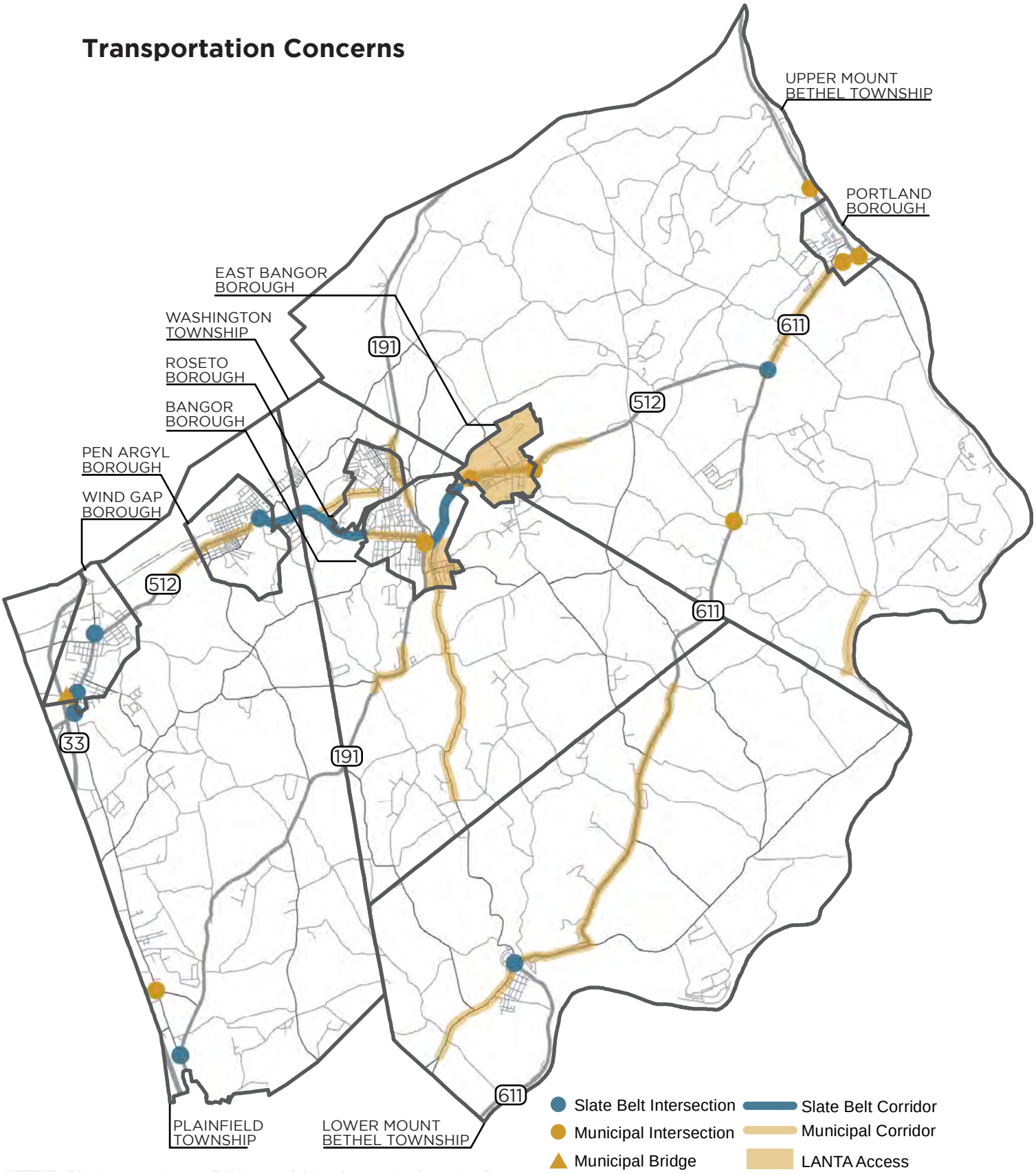
The Slate Belt municipalities were asked to identify the three largest transportation issues within their community. These locally identified issues were compared to crash report data, traffic volumes and congestion, and bridge status data collected by the LVPC, PennDOT and other agencies. The results show a strong correlation between local perceptions of transportation issues and available data, enabling Plan Slate Belt to have a better understanding of these transportation impacts. The findings are broken out by municipality below.

Slate Belt Transportation Concerns

Municipalities were also asked to identify their three largest transportation issues within the Slate Belt area. Together, the municipalities identified ten area issues—most of which aligned with issues identified locally by their respective municipalities. Municipalities also ranked their top three regional transportation priorities. These rankings were combined to create a regional ranking of the concerns identified.

The identified regional issues were compared to transportation information collected by the LVPC, PennDOT and other agencies to get a better understanding of the local concerns in context of available data. The results show a strong correlation between local perceptions of transportation issues and collected data.

Transportation Concerns



PLAN SLATE BELT

Municipal Transportation Concerns

Bangor Borough

Bangor Borough identified both the Route 512 corridor west out of downtown (to Weis Market), the Route 512 corridor east out of downtown (to Bill Scott Boulevard), and the intersection of Route 512 and Route 191 as having pedestrian safety, truck traffic and other transportation issues. These concerns were verified by the transportation data indicating a medium to high number of crashes along these two corridors. These safety issues are likely due to the high average daily traffic volumes in the area and the many turns the routes take through Downtown Bangor Borough.

The municipally also identified the lack of LANTA service to the south side (Third Ward) of the community as a transportation concern. LANTA service does exist along Route 512 and north along Route 191 into Roseto, but does not exist in the south side of Bangor. Sidewalk quality and topography could be an issue for people trying to reach LANTA from this neighborhood.

East Bangor Borough

East Bangor Borough also identified multiple traffic concerns along Route 512. Speeding was noted as a perceived issue in the Route 512 corridor (to Broad Street), and traffic data in this area shows high daily traffic volumes. The combination of these two factors is likely the cause of the medium to high rate of crashes along this corridor.

A truck issue was identified at the intersection of Route 512 and Capital Boulevard, caused by dump trucks going to the quarry. Traffic count data collected for this intersection in 2016 showed an average count of 578 trucks traveling through the intersection per day. This high volume of truck traffic in combination with the high volumes of daily traffic may be the cause of the medium to high rate of crashes reported in the area.

A safety issue was identified at the Route 512 and Park Road intersection, where a sharp curve and high daily traffic volumes may be the cause of the medium to high rate of crashes reported in the area.

The municipality also identified the lack of LANTA service to the Borough as a transportation concern.

Lower Mount Bethel Township

Lower Mount Bethel Township expressed safety concerns in and around the Martins Creek village center and along Route 611. These concerns are due to increasing freight-related truck traffic and were verified by the traffic count data showing that trucks made up 15% of the total traffic flow in 2015.

Data for the Route 611 and Front Street intersection and the Front Street to Abruzzi Avenue corridor indicated a low to medium crash rate, despite having high daily traffic volumes. Therefore, these areas will require further assessment to determine the traffic impacts.

Conversely, crash data for the Route 611 corridor through the Township reported a medium to high crash rate, despite having a medium level of daily traffic volumes.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Municipal Transportation Concerns

Pen Argyl Borough

Pedestrian safety was a reported concern at the Route 512 and Main Street intersection. This perception is supported by data showing a medium to high rate of crashes and very high daily traffic volumes. It is likely that increases in traffic in the area will magnify these transportation concerns in the future.

On North Lobb Avenue, freight issues were reported due to truck usage on the municipal road. Truck traffic counts are not available for this location, and therefore, further assessment is required to determine the impact of high amounts of truck traffic on the local roadway. General traffic data in this area shows low to medium reported crashes, despite very high daily traffic volumes.

Flooding and icy roads were cited as a concern at the intersection of Route 512 and South Main Street. This poses a safety hazard for the very high daily volume of traffic in the area and may be the cause of the medium to high rate of crashes.

Plainfield Township

Pedestrian safety was the main concern reported where Sullivan Trail intersects with Route 191, as well as the intersection at Belfast Road. These sentiments are supported by the medium to high rate of reported crashes.

Traffic congestion and bad sight distance were issues of concern at the intersection of Route 512 and Sullivan Trail. These concerns were verified by the medium to high rate of reported crashes, which are likely related to the very high daily traffic volumes.

Portland Borough

Portland Borough identified three intersections with safety concerns: Route 611 and River Road, the Route 611 Interchange, and the River Road and Delaware Avenue intersection. These intersections reported low crash rates, despite moderate to high volumes of daily traffic. Additional traffic concerns are two nearby bridges within Upper Mount Bethel Township on River Road. These two bridges have been identified as needing rehabilitation or replacement, posing a safety hazard to the increasing traffic in the area.

Roseto Borough

Freight traffic was identified as an issue at the Route 512 and Kennedy Drive intersection, as well as along the Route 191 corridor. Specific truck traffic data was not available in this area to verify local observations, so further assessment is required to determine the impact of freight on the roadway network. However, different sections of the corridor were found to have low, medium and high rates of crashes, with very high daily traffic volumes throughout the corridor.

Speeding was identified as an issue on the Route 512 corridor from Slate Belt Boulevard to Front Avenue. This is likely attributable to the low volumes of daily traffic in the area. As a result, this corridor has reported a medium rate of crashes.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Municipal Transportation Concerns

Upper Mount Bethel Township

Freight issues were the main concern at the Route 512 and Route 611 intersection, as well as along the Route 611 to Potomac Street corridor. Truck traffic data was not available to verify this assessment. However, the area was found to have a high rate of crashes, despite only moderate levels of daily traffic. Safety was cited as the primary issue along the Route 611 to Orchard Avenue corridor. This sentiment was supported by the reports of medium to high crash rates, despite only having low to medium traffic.

A steep slope located at the River Road and Riverton Road intersection is the cause of traffic concern and may contribute to the corridor having a high crash rate, despite only having low daily traffic volumes.

Washington Township

At the Route 512 and Kennedy Drive location, truck traffic related to freight movements was an issue of concern. Because truck traffic counts are not available for this location, further assessment is needed to quantify the impacts of freight on the roadway. A medium to high rate of crashes was reported at this location. The current daily traffic is considered moderate.

At the Lower South Main and True Blue Road intersection, stormwater was a cited concern. Water runoff during the winter freezes over and creates dangerous conditions for the moderate volume of daily traffic. However, no crashes have been reported in this area.

A safety issue was identified at the Route 191 and O W Road intersection due to a sharp curve with limited signage. However, no crashes have been reported in this area, and the average daily traffic volume is low.

Wind Gap Borough

Wind Gap Borough identified three congestion and safety concern areas: the intersections of Route 512 and Male Road, Route 512 and Sullivan Trail, and Route 512 and Broadway. These local observations were validated by all three of these intersections having reported high rates of crashes.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Municipal Transportation Concerns

Municipality	Location	Year	Vehicles Per Day	Trucks Per Day	Crashes*	Severity of Crashes
Bangor Borough	Route 512 west of Downtown Bangor	2019	7,788	769	High, Medium	Fatal, Major, Moderate
	Route 512 east of Downtown Bangor	2019	7,788	578	High, Medium, Low	Fatal, Major, Moderate, Minor
	Intersection of Route 512 and Route 191	2019	7,788	578	High, Medium, Low	Fatal, Major, Moderate, Minor
East Bangor Borough	Route 512 west of Downtown East Bangor	2019	7,788	578	High, Medium	Fatal, Major, Moderate
	Route 512 through Downtown East Bangor	2018	6,341	578	High, Medium	Fatal, Major, Moderate
	Route 512 east of Downtown East Bangor	2018	7,879	565	Medium	Moderate
Lower Mount Bethel Township	Route 611 near Front Street	2015	6,539	1,082	Medium, Low	Moderate, Minor
	Front Street near Abruzzi Avenue	2015	6,028	346	Medium, Low	Moderate, Minor
	Route 611 near Mount Pleasant Road	2019	2,711	639	High, Medium	Fatal, Major
Pen Argyl Borough	Route 512 near Main Street and Weona Park	2018	10,150	633	High, Medium	Fatal, Major
	Route 512 through Downtown Pen Argyl	2018	10,058	643	Medium, Low	Moderate, Minor
	Route 512 near South Main Street	2018	10,150	643	Medium, Low	Moderate, Minor
Plainfield Township	Intersection of Route 191 and Sullivan Trail	2018	3,818	489	High, Medium, Low	Fatal, Major, Moderate, Minor
	Intersection of Route 512 and Sullivan Trail	2019	4,844	398	High, Medium	Fatal, Major
	Intersection of Sullivan Trail and Belfast Road	2019	4,844	191	High, Medium	Fatal, Major
Portland Borough	River Road south of Route 611	2019	4,137	382	Low	Minor
	Route 611 Interchange	2019	8,888	118	Low	Minor
	River Road north of Route 611	2019	4,162	341	Low	Minor

Municipality	Location	Year	Vehicles Per Day	Trucks Per Day	Crashes*	Severity of Crashes
Roseto Borough	Route 512 near Kennedy Drive	2017	9,052	826	High, Medium, Low	Fatal, Major, Moderate
	Slate Belt Boulevard from Route 512 to Front Avenue	2019	2,374	133	Medium	Moderate
	Route 191 through Roseto	2019	2,374	226	High, Medium	Fatal, Major
Upper Mount Bethel Township	Intersection of Routes 512 and 611	2019	8,888	742	High	Fatal, Major
	Intersection of Route 611 and Orchard Avenue	2017	3,977	390	High, Low	Fatal, Minor
	Intersection of Route 611 and Potomac Street	2019	8,888	958	High	Fatal, Major
Washington Township	Intersection of Route 512 and Kennedy Drive	2017	9,052	826	Medium	Moderate
	Lower South Main near True Blue Road	2017	5,851	102	Medium	Moderate
	Route 191 near O W Road	2017	5,851	466	Medium	Moderate
Wind Gap Borough	Intersection of Route 512 and Male Road	2017	20,365	744	High	Fatal, Major
	Intersection of Route 512 and Sullivan Trail	2017	18,028	770	High, Medium	Fatal, Major Moderate
	Intersection of Route 512 and Broadway	2017	18,028	1,281	Medium, Low	Moderate, Minor

https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/tire
https://www.lvpc.org/data-lv-transportation.html

*Different sections of the same corridor can have High, Medium or Low crashes. The table reflects all the different crash conditions along the selected segment.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Slate Belt Transportation Concerns

Route 512 Near Broadway and Route 512 and Male Road

The Route 512 and Male Road intersection and Route 512 Broadway corridor are located in Wind Gap Borough. They are in close proximity to each other. Safety was identified as the issue due to traffic congestion, and the intersection was ranked #1 by the municipalities. The corridor was tied for #9 by the municipalities. Crashes are high at this intersection, supporting community perceptions. However, crashes along the corridor are in the medium to low category.

Route 512 and Route 611

This Upper Mount Bethel Township intersection was identified as priority #2 by the municipalities. Traffic related to freight movements was the issue identified. Although this intersection contains moderate traffic volumes, truck traffic is present. This intersection is stop-controlled.

Route 512 and Sullivan Trail

The Route 512 and Sullivan Trail intersection is located in Plainfield Township, just east of the Route 33 and Route 512 interchange. This intersection was ranked #3 by the municipalities due to traffic congestion concerns and poor sight distance. This intersection carries significant traffic, averaging 18,028 vehicles per day in 2017, as it is a primary gateway to the Slate Belt communities. A high to medium number of crashes have occurred at this intersection. Both support community perceptions at this location.

Route 512 and Main Street

This Pen Argyl Borough intersection was tied for #4 by the municipalities. Pedestrian safety was the identified issue. The intersection is stop-controlled. Sidewalks are present. LANTA provides public bus service through this intersection.

Route 611 and Front Street

This Lower Mount Bethel Township intersection tied for #4 among area transportation concerns. Safety related to freight truck traffic was the identified issue of concern. The intersection carried the second-highest volume of truck traffic in the region, nearly 1,110 trucks per day, despite having only 6,539 vehicles per day on average. The area has medium to low crashes.

Route 512 Near Weis Market

This Bangor Borough corridor was tied for #4 by the municipalities. Pedestrian safety issues were identified as an issue of concern. This concern is supported by a high to medium number of crashes. The corridor is also served by LANTA and may have increased pedestrian activity.

Route 512 and Kennedy Drive

This Roseto Borough intersection was identified as a Slate Belt priority, with freight traffic being identified as the issue. This intersection was tied for #4 among area transportation concerns. Traffic volumes through this intersection averaged 9,052 vehicles per day in 2017.

Route 191 and Sullivan Trail

This Plainfield Township intersection was ranked #8 by the municipalities. Pedestrian safety was reported as an issue. The area around the intersection experienced high, medium and low crashes, depending on the specific location, and moderate traffic volumes, with 3,818 vehicles per day as of 2018. The intersection lacks defined crosswalks, possibly contributing to concerns.

Route 512 Near Bill Scott Boulevard

This Bangor Borough corridor was tied for #9 by the municipalities. Pedestrian safety issues were identified. This concern is supported by high to medium crashes. The corridor is also served by LANTA and may have increased pedestrian activity.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Additional Transportation Concerns

Other Issue Areas

The available transportation data was also examined to identify other potential transportation concerns. The following concerns were added based on a Lehigh Valley Planning Commission crash data analysis. Each of the Additional Concerns had a high rate of crashes, with a majority of the average daily traffic being 2,501 to 5,000 vehicles.

Additional Transportation Concerns

Municipality	Additional Concern	Near	Type	Vehicles Per Day	Crashes*
Lower Mount Bethel Township	Route 611	Howell Road	Corridor	2,501-5,000	High, Medium
Lower Mount Bethel Township	Belvidere Highway	Richmond Road	Corridor	2,501-5,000	High, Medium, Low
Lower Mount Bethel Township	Main Street	Good Road	Corridor	250-2,500	High, Medium, Low
Plainfield Township	Route 191	Kesslersville Road	Corridor	5,001-10,000	High, Medium, Low
Plainfield Township	Pen Argyl Road	Grand Central Road	Corridor	2,501-5,000	High, Medium, Low
Washington Township	Delabole Road	O W Road	Corridor	250-2,500	High, Medium, Low
Upper Mount Bethel Township	Route 611	Mount Bethel Highway	Corridor	2,501-5,000	High, Medium, Low
Upper Mount Bethel Township	Route 512	Mount Bethel Highway	Corridor	5,001-10,000	High, Medium, Low
East Bangor Borough	Fox Gap Road	Creek Road	Corridor	250-2,500	High, Medium, Low
East Bangor Borough	Fox Gap Road	Lake Minsi Drive	Intersection	250-5,000	High
East Bangor Borough	Fox Gap Road	Creek Road	Intersection	250-2,500	High
Washington Township	Delabole Road	O W Road	Intersection	250-2,500	High
Plainfield Township	Delabole Road	Pen Argyl Road	Intersection	250-2,500	High

https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/tire
https://www.lvpc.org/data-lv-transportation.html

*Different sections of the same corridor can have High, Medium or Low crashes. The table reflects all the different crash conditions along the selected segment.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Transportation Analysis

Summary

Transportation infrastructure is aging in the Slate Belt. At the same time, the area is experiencing increased impacts from heavy truck traffic associated with both existing businesses and business growth. Sidewalk infrastructure is concentrated in the boroughs and only exists in small portions of the townships. Multi-use trails serve recreational and possibly commuter needs within Plainfield Township, but there is a strong community desire to expand the network and connect more areas of the Slate Belt. Public bus transportation service exists to a limited extent in the eastern and northern portions of the region. Investments to enhancing the mixed-transportation infrastructure in the region will not only improve resident mobility and safety, but quality of life as well.

Introduction

PLAN SLATE BELT

Community Engagement

Community input is vital in creating a comprehensive plan. The data and analyses outlined in this document serve to support and verify the observations, opinions and concerns of the community. Synthesizing the data analyses and community-identified issues will result in logical goals that shape the policies and actions of Plan Slate Belt. Therefore, community engagement is a key component of the Plan. Residents, business owners and officials alike all hold a stake in the area, and the community engagement efforts were directed at obtaining a mix of input from various parties.

Meetings of local stakeholders were held to obtain early input from community members. The priorities identified during these meetings were circulated via an online survey to gain additional input before creating the draft goals. A local event, called the Slate Belt Bash, was also attended to get further input from Slate Belt residents.

PLAN SLATE BELT

Community Engagement

Stakeholder Charrettes

- June 18, 2019, 8 am
  Plainfield Township Municipal Building
- June 18, 2019, 1 pm
  Upper Mount Bethel Township Municipal Building
- June 19, 2019, 7 pm
  Bangor Beehive Municipal Building

Listening Sessions

The Slate Belt Steering Committee invited a diverse group of community experts to attend a series of three listening sessions, or charrettes. Community experts, or stakeholders, invited to the charrettes included residents, business owners, farmers, emergency service personnel, municipal officials, state legislators, municipal and county representatives, among others. More than 60 stakeholders attended the charrettes.

Each session began with a brief presentation about the multi-municipal planning process and included current subdivision/land development data, demographics and transportation data specific to the Slate Belt region.

Following the presentation, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission facilitated hour-long group discussions by asking the stakeholders a series of questions on topics meant to spur open and active discussion. Through this process, all stakeholders were engaged in the dialogue and provided insight on community concerns, which will help inform the direction of the multi-municipal plan. At the end of the hour, each group was asked to prioritize the concerns based on the discussion and present them to the larger group. Each attendee was provided three votes to select their priorities from the combined list.

From the three charrettes, the 25 priorities were identified and refined by combining topic areas to create a short list of ten topics.

Charrette #1: Plainfield Township

Sustainable Farmers	14 votes
Regionalize Delivery of Public Services	14 votes
Infrastructure Linked with Desired Land Use	11 votes
Barriers to Housing, Farming, Business	7 votes
Technical Education	6 votes
Quality of Life: Safety, Infrastructure, Land Use	5 votes
Balance: Preservation, Industry, Growth	2 votes
Preserve Rural Character	2 votes
Preserving Heritage and Natural Resources	1 vote
Farming as a Business	1 vote

Charrette #2: Upper Mount Bethel Township

Redevelopment and/or Development in Key Locations	14 votes
Broadband	11 votes
Quality of Life: Slower Pace, Open Space	11 votes
Fiscal Sustainability	9 votes
Intergovernmental Cooperation: Local, State, Federal	3 votes

Charrette #3: Bangor Borough

Smart Growth: Right Kind of Growth, Balance, Maintain Character/Small Town Feel, Not Much Change	16 votes
Outdoor Recreation, Farmland and Open Space	12 votes
Transportation: Sidewalks, Bridges, Roads, Traffic Management	11 votes
Restrictions: Zoning, Business Development, Housing Affordability	10 votes
Business Development	9 votes
Unity and Municipal Cooperation: Shared Services	6 votes
Quality of Life: Safety and Security	5 votes
Resistance to Change/Negative Mindset	5 votes
Transportation Management: Traffic, Funding, Infrastructure	3 votes
History and Heritage	1 vote

PLAN SLATE BELT

Community Engagement

Community Survey

The refined list of priorities derived from the charrettes provided the basis for an online survey that was created for the Slate Belt Steering Committee members, identified stakeholders and charrette attendees. A link to the survey was emailed to approximately 160 people. The purpose for the survey was to further refine the list of ten priorities and identify any additional priorities that were not considered during the charrettes. Respondents were asked to rank each of the ten in order of priority. Additional priorities could be added and ranked as well. A 30-day response period was established, and the survey closed on August 4, 2019.

During the comment period, 62 people completed the survey. Rankings were determined by creating an average score for each priority and reordering the priorities from highest to lowest scoring. Average scores ranged from a high of 3.37 to a low of 6.74, indicating a relatively narrow spread of preference. The priorities were ranked based on their average score.

A number of unique comments were received. The topics mentioned most often in the comments included smart growth and shared services, while warehousing was mentioned only three times. The comments were similar to the top five priorities, so no new priorities were added to the original ten.

Survey Results

1. Balancing land preservation, development, redevelopment, industry and jobs.
2. Preserving the quality of life: safety, heritage, rural character, open space.
3. Improving governmental efficiency and reducing tax burdens.
4. Ensuring public schools prepare students for the future job market.
5. Sustaining farming as a business and way of life.
6. Improving municipal financial sustainability.
7. Reducing barriers to housing and business development.
8. Enhancing access to current and future technology infrastructure.
9. Managing social, economic, cultural and demographic changes in the community.
10. Enhancing transportation infrastructure.

Final Ranking

The survey results were presented to the Steering Committee at the August 7, 2019 meeting. During the discussion of the results, committee members expressed surprise that farming was ranked number five and transportation was number ten, since both had received a high number of votes at the charrettes. The top five priorities are the starting point to developing a vision and goals for the region. When asked if anything was missing, the committee resoundingly indicated that transportation and infrastructure needed to be included in the top five as its own stand-alone priority, and the fourth ranked priority—ensuring public schools prepare students for the future job market—should be moved to number six.

Top Six Priorities

1. Balancing land preservation, development, redevelopment, industry and jobs.
2. Preserving the quality of life: safety, heritage, rural character, open space.
3. Improving governmental efficiency and reducing tax burdens.
4. Enhancing transportation and infrastructure.
5. Sustaining farming as a business and way of life.
6. Ensuring public schools prepare students for the future job market.

PLAN SLATE BELT

What Do You Love Most?

- The nice environment
  - The parks
  - Lake Minsi
  - The Carousel
  - Farmland
  - Lots of wildlife
  - Architectural treasures
- Community
  - Community roots
  - Small town vibes
  - Kind people
- Just about everything
  - Safe
  - Peaceful
  - Beautiful
  - Quiet
  - Quaint
  - Unique
- Easy to get around

What Concerns You?

- Loss of Activity
  - Lack of stores
  - Fewer community events
  - Loss of services
  - Lack of grocery stores
  - Empty commercial spaces
  - No industry
  - New generation of farmers
- Becoming big
  - Big chain stores
  - Population Growth
- Community Facilities
  - Not enough for kids/young people to do
  - Maintenance
  - Weona Park Pool
  - No farmers market
  - Lack of bike trails
  - Lack of group homes
- The dump
  - Expansion of the industry
  - Sludge plant
  - Dumping in quarries
  - Turkey vultures
- Other
  - Drugs
  - Street lighting
  - Motorcycles

Community Engagement

Slate Belt Bash

The Slate Belt Bash was attended on September 29, 2019. The event was held at Weona Park in Pen Argyl Borough—a central location in the area. Community input was gathered through conversations and an interactive activity that collected comments on a large chalkboard cube. Two open ended comments were asked: what do you love most, and what concerns you? These comments were collected to help guide development of Plan Slate Belt.

Open space and quality of life were top things community members loved about the Slate Belt. The parks, the farmland, the wildlife and the architecture were all highly valued by participants. They also used a lot of positive words to describe the area, such as safe, beautiful and unique. Participants also loved the strong roots, small town vibe and kind people of the Slate Belt.

Economic conditions and community facilities were the top concerns highlighted through the activity. Many talked about the loss of mom and pop stores over the last several decades, as well as the decline in community activities and events. Participants were also concerned about the dump and potential loss of character due to future growth and development.

Future Vision

PLAN SLATE BELT

Draft Goals

The Slate Belt is a dynamic area of the Lehigh Valley with a unique quality of life rooted in its history and landscape. The legacy of manufacturing and farming runs deep and defines the character of its historic boroughs and rural townships.

The 21st century is bringing new challenges to the area. Population is projected to grow in the region, and new attainable housing will be needed. The economy is shifting away from manufacturing, and more people are commuting for work. Development in key areas can improve finances but will increase wear and tear of critical infrastructure.

Plan Slate Belt will confront these and many other issues, thoughts and concerns of the community. To help guide the development of the plan, the municipalities have agreed to six draft goals. While their final wording may change, they lay out a vision for the area that is balanced, high-quality, resilient, strong and prepared.

1. A **balance** between growth and preservation.
2. A **high** regional **quality** of life.
3. **Efficient** local and regional governments.
4. A **resilient** transportation and infrastructure network.
5. A **strong** farming community.
6. A **prepared** student body and workforce.

PLAN SLATE BELT

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To the many citizens, community leaders, municipal partners and stakeholders who have participated in the development of the Plan Slate Belt Issues and Opportunities report. This project would not have been possible without your time, commitment, input and passion for strengthening the Slate Belt.

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Ralph Frasca
Dave Friedman
Brian Fulmer
Elissa Garofalo
Kerry Gassler
Mike Gausling
Glenn Geissinger
Bill Godshalk
Matthew Goffredo
Robert Goffredo, Sr.
Lydia Gonzalez
Jane Gorman
Yvonne Gumaer
Marcia Hahn
Debra Harbison
Monica Harrison
Mark Hartney
Maryann Haytmanek
T. Hayward
Randy Heard
Judith Henckel
David Hess
Josephine Hildabrant
George Hinton, Jr.
Ryan Hoff
Melissa Hough
Adam Huber
Jason Huggan
Carol Hummel
Justin Huratiak
Stephen Hurni
Patricia Jackson
Cliff James
Alan Jennings
Patricia Johnson
Charles Kandl, Jr.
Frank Kane
Angela Kelly
Tammy Kemp
Bridget Kenna
Brooke Kerzner
Robert Kilbanks
Howard Klein
Andrew Kleiner
Terry Kleintop
James Kresge
Joyce Lambert
Ellen Larmar
Joseph LeDonne
Allyison Lehr
Paul Levits
Ray Mack
Dave Manzo
Stephen Marhevka
Diane Martin
Cathy Martino
Nicholas Martino
Heather Marzigliano
Ed Marzigliano
Susan Master
John Mauser
Dan McCarthy
Laura McClain
Hubert McHugh
Michael McNamara, Jr.
Jane Mellert
Altagracio Mercado
Mitchell Mogilski, Sr.
Don Moore
Taylor Munoz
Michael G. Nasatka
Sandra Newman
Ruth O'Connor
Robert O'Donnell
Michael Ortoski
Gail Pakosky
Scott Parsons
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Deborah Petraitis
Thomas Petrucci
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Catherine Poppiti
Derek Powell
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Leeann Prator
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Gail Putvinski
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Jennifer Reese
Stephen Reider
Carl Renna
Dacia Rhoads
Salanda Riddick
Courtney Robinson
Leila Ross
Sue Ruggiero
Peter Scarfaro, Jr.
Mario Scavello
Barry Schweitzer
Bettina Searfass
Jamie Severson
Jennifer Smethers
Tina Smith
Robert Smith
Randy Soriano
Ralph Stampone
James Steele
Stephanie Steele
David Stonehouse
Michael Sullivan
Robert Teel
Kenneth Tillman
Carl Tolino
Stephen Toth
Sandra Vulcano
Jeff Yob
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Christine Zubeck
Pete Zazulak

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