

The following table summarizes the major recommendations of this Plan. Certain items are recommended as high priorities. The timing of each recommendation is listed, as well as which agencies should have the primary responsibility to carry out the recommendations. Short-term timeframes typically are between two and four years and Long-term is about four to eight years respectively.

While all of these proposed actions are important for the continued vitality of the region it is of the utmost importance that all persons involved and/or interested in the future of the Northern Berks region read and understand this document. Local decision-makers should keep this plan available when evaluating future development proposals, service adjustments or public investments.

Abbreviations of Responsible Agencies/Groups

Governing Bodies = Borough Councils and Township Boards of Supervisors/Board of Commissioners

PC = Municipal Planning Commissions

ZHB = Zoning Hearing Boards

Adj. Mun. = Adjacent Municipalities

DA = Downtown Associations

ED = Berks County Economic Development Organizations

BCPC = Berks County Planning Commission

PennDOT = Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

PHFA = Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

PHMC = Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

SCTA = South Central Transit Authority

BARTA = Berks Area Regional Transit Authority

BCCD = Berks County Conservation District

BCRA = Berks County Redevelopment Authority

BCIDA = Berks County Industrial Development Authority

GRCA = Greater Reading Chamber Alliance

HASD = Hamburg Area School District

RBAR = Reading-Berks Association of Realtors

Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
Expand Agricultural Security Areas where applicable to make land eligible for agricultural easement purchase and to protect farmers against nuisance challenges.	Governing Bodies, PC, Property-Owners	Ongoing	
Adopt zoning provisions that preserve farmland and natural areas, particularly through promoting the optional transfer of density to more suitable lands.	Governing Bodies, PC	Ongoing	
In rural conservation areas, permit a range of activities that allow opportunities for supplemental income for farmers on large tracts of land.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
To protect water quality and fish habitats, carefully enforce State regulations on erosion control through on-site inspections.	Governing Bodies, PC, Property-Owners, BCCD	Ongoing	
Minimize unnecessary removal of trees during construction, and make sure temporary fencing is used to avoid damage to tree trunks and root systems.	Governing Bodies, PC, Property-Owners	Short-term	
Strengthen subdivision and land development regulations to protect the Region's state-designated high-quality and exceptional value streams and watersheds.	Governing Bodies, PC, Property-Owners	Short-term	X
Require professional wetland studies whenever development is proposed in suspect areas and establish a 20 foot building setback around wetlands to avoid intrusions by construction equipment. Require a building paving setback from all creeks. A smaller width is appropriate in more urban areas, while a larger width should be required in rural areas.	Governing Bodies, PC, Property-Owners	Long-term	
Use mandatory dedication provisions in subdivision ordinances to require dedication of open space or payment of recreation fees as part of major new residential developments.	Governing Bodies, PC, Property-Owners	Long-term	
Minimize potential impacts to core habitat areas. Development activities should be extremely limited in areas of known core habitat.	Governing Bodies, PC, Property-Owners	Short-term	X
<p>Protect important natural features, with a special emphasis upon the creeks, steep slopes and mature woods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continually work to avoid and address stormwater problems. - Continue to limit development in flood-prone areas. - Work with neighboring municipalities, State agencies and volunteer organizations to preserve important natural areas. - Maintain and plant thick vegetation along streams (riparian buffers) to protect water quality and fishing habitats, including carrying out Best Management Practices (BMPs) 	Governing Bodies, PC, ZHBs, Property-Owners, Adjacent Municipalities, BCCD	Ongoing	X
The municipalities should participate in the Berks County Source Water Protection Program in order to promote and educate residents of the importance of water resources and their protection.	Governing Bodies, PC, Property-Owners	Short-term	

Community Facilities and Services

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	
Improve existing parks and playgrounds to meet a wide variety of recreational needs.	Governing Bodies, Municipal Parks and Recreation, HASD	Ongoing	
Protect and/or promote the Schuylkill River/Bartram and Appalachian Trails as part of the Region's open space system.	Governing Bodies, Municipal Parks and Recreation, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	
Emphasize high-quality police, emergency medical and fire protection services. Promote continued cooperation between providers, including those in adjacent municipalities.	Emergency Providers, Governing Bodies, Adjacent Municipalities	Ongoing	
Explore ways to minimize local government expenses and increase revenues, including use of grants.	Governing Bodies, Municipal Staff	Ongoing	
Provide excellent water and sewage services, with regular investments to provide reliable services.	Municipal Authorities and Water Companies	Ongoing	
The municipalities should continue to work with the Hamburg Area School District to adequately plan for increased demands on the district caused by future large-scale developments coming into the region	Governing Bodies, HASD	Ongoing	
Plan a complete system of bicycle and pedestrian trails to provide vital links between existing recreation areas, commercial and residential developments, and school facilities.	Governing Bodies, Non-Profit Organizations	Long-term	
Maintain an up-to-date Sewage Facilities Plan (Act 537). This includes the continued enforcement of on-lot disposal ordinances that promote the maintenance of on-lot septic systems.	Governing Bodies	Ongoing	
Connect areas with malfunctioning on-lot systems, areas with contaminated water supplies, and small privately owned sewer and water systems to existing sewer or water systems where economically and physically possible.	Governing Bodies, Municipal Authorities and Water Companies	Ongoing	

Historic Preservation

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
Investigate alternative ways to preserve important historic buildings, such as requiring special zoning approval by the governing body or zoning hearing board before demolition is allowed.	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations, DA	Long-term	
Seek cost-effective ways of preserving historic buildings, including providing information and advice to property owners. Promote greater interest in the region's history and historic buildings.	Municipal Staff, Historic Organizations, DA	Ongoing	
Establish zoning incentives to promote the preservation of historic buildings. This could include allowing certain uses within restored historic buildings that otherwise would not be allowed in the zoning district. For example, a restored historic building in a residential district might be allowed to be used as an office or bed and breakfast inn.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
Promote historic preservation tourism to utilize the abundant historic resources of the Region	Governing Bodies, Historic Organizations, DA	Short-term	
Identify, mark, preserve, enhance and protect the remaining historic, architectural and cultural resources of the region.	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations, DA	Long-term	
Create a regional historic commission or a unified advisory committee in order to build effective partnerships among public and private partners.	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations	Long-term	
Determine the role municipalities should play in historic preservation through land use ordinances, incentives, and regulations, and efforts to create historic districts and historic overlay zoning.	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations	Long-term	
Create and adopt an official policy statement for the protection and preservation of the historical resources within the region	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations	Short-term	
Create an historic overlay district, historic overlay map, and zoning provisions to protect the region from inappropriate development that would destroy the character of the historic neighborhoods within the region, especially in the boroughs and villages.	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations	Long-term	

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures where appropriate and discourage inappropriate development in the historic areas of the region.	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations	Long-term	
Require impact studies for development near historic resources and require mitigation of any potential adverse impacts on historic resources.	Governing Bodies, PC	Long-term	
Develop an education outreach program to generate increased awareness of the historical and cultural resources within the region, and on the impact these resources have had in Berks County and the surrounding counties. Support the existing individuals and groups that already undertake such initiatives.	Governing Bodies, HASD, Historic Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations	Long-term	
Support the integrity of identified districts within the Northern Berks region.	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	
Create trails to link historic sites throughout the region.	Governing Bodies, Historic Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations	Long-term	
Erect informative markers and exhibits at historic and cultural resources.	Historic Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations	Long-term	
Promote Our Town Foundation and the historic walking tour of Hamburg and create other such tours in the Region.	Governing Bodies, PC, Historic Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations	Short-term	
Foster appreciation of the role of the Schuylkill River in the history and culture of the area and foster an appreciation of the Pennsylvania Dutch heritage.	Historic Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations, DA	Short-term	

Economic Development

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
Update zoning ordinances to make sure that all desirable types of businesses are allowed in appropriate business zoning districts. Hold requirements for special zoning approvals to a reasonable minimum and minimize setbacks between adjacent businesses. These steps are important to promote economic development and a wider choice of employment opportunities.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	X
Utilize the County's Economic Development Web Mapping Tool to identify appropriate sites to locate industrial and commercial development.	Governing Bodies, PC, ED, BCIDA, BCPC	Short-term	
Market high priority sites for economic development initiatives.	Governing Bodies, PC, ED, BCIDA, BCPC	Short-term	X
Prioritize infrastructure improvements associated with sites that are identified as potential locations for industrial development.	Governing Bodies, PC, ED, BCIDA, BCPC	Short-term	X
Support entrepreneurship and small business development and partner with higher learning institutions and technical schools.	Governing Bodies, PC, ED, Local Colleges, HASD, GRCA	Short-term	
Strengthen business districts to maximize revenue, including pedestrian amenities and transportation systems. Support reuse of existing buildings and infill development.	Governing Bodies, PC, ED, DA	Short-term	
Strengthen the quality and competitiveness of the Region's workforce. Partner with secondary and higher learning and workforce institutions.	Governing Bodies, PC, Local Colleges, HASD, GRCA	Short-term	
Position the Northern Berks region as a destination region. Partner with the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance, Pennsylvania Americana Region and arts organizations to promote arts, historical significance, culture, tourism, recreation and events.	Governing Bodies, PC, GRCA, Municipal Parks and Recreation, DA	Short-term	
Cultivate and attract a skilled workforce by providing access to attainable and high-quality housing options, well-maintained neighborhoods and amenities and ensuring high quality schools for families.	County Agencies, Job Training Organizations, HASD, Local Colleges, GRCA, RBAR	Ongoing	X
The municipalities should strive to keep their planning and permitting processes current and streamlined, eliminating excessive or obsolete requirements, with fee structures for planning services and permitting that recover no more than the actual costs to conduct such programs and reviews,	Governing Bodies	Short-term	X

Transportation

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
Work with PennDOT to resolve traffic congestion bottlenecks and traffic safety problems. Seek funding through the 12 Year Plan to resolve traffic problems in the region.	Governing Bodies, PC, PennDOT	Ongoing	X
Design residential streets (in new developments) to discourage use by through-traffic, limit truck traffic on residential streets where feasible, and improve major roads to relieve congestion so traffic will not be diverted to residential streets.	Governing Bodies, PC, PennDOT	Short-term	
Improve pedestrian and bicycle access and encourage greater use of public transit. Study the potential of expanded public transit service in the region.	Governing Bodies, PC, BARTA/SCTA	Short-term	
Development a regional trail/pedestrian/bicycle plan that provides guidance for an interconnected system of pedestrian improvements between the municipalities and to other regional trail and recreation systems.	Governing Bodies, PC, Municipal Parks and Recreation	Long-term	
The municipalities in the region should unify as one voice to vote or petition legislators for the benefit of transportation issues within the region and to communicate unified requests for improvement to the Reading Areas Transportation Study (RATS) through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).	Governing Bodies	Short-term	X
The municipalities should prioritize projects and pursue preliminary technical evaluation of identified priorities and share recommendations with the appropriate municipalities and agencies.	Governing Bodies	Short-term	
The municipalities should collaborate on a regional basis to focus limited funding on the most effective solutions and to maximize the potential for cost sharing and savings.	Governing Bodies	Short-term	
Review municipal ordinances, especially in the Boroughs, for parking standards and amend as necessary to ensure parking requirements are both appropriate and flexible.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
The municipalities should encourage areas of truck parking to reduce trucks parking in non-designated or unsafe areas. Consideration should be given to encourage developers to include an area of safe truck parking within the property they are developing for drivers that are servicing that location.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	X
Each municipality should implement low-cost safety improvements where such measures provide an immediate impact on safety.	Governing Bodies	Long-term	

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
The municipalities should ensure future development does not create detrimental access issues, increase congestion, or create safety problems.	Governing Bodies, PC	Ongoing	
Communicate with the operators of commercial and industrial facilities regarding issues with regular truck movements and designated routes.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
Ensure municipal subdivision and land development ordinances contain requirements for sidewalks in appropriate locations. Going forward, new land developments and subdivisions, especially ones served by public sewer and water utilities, should be encouraged to have sidewalks on one side of all streets when within two (2) miles of school, or half (0.5) of a mile of a greenway, park, shopping center, business complex, transit stop, or when there is an existing sidewalk network adjacent to the proposed development.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
Encourage the addition of sidewalks within the planning area especially where there are missing links or where sidewalks would facilitate appropriate connections to existing or future neighborhoods and destinations (such as schools, parks, recreation facilities, major job generators, or shopping centers).	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
Communicate with SCTA\BARTA regarding future bus routes, shuttles, and other transit opportunities. Municipal officials and developers should work with SCTA/BARTA early in the design process of a new project, rather than placing stops at later stages in construction, with considerations for pedestrian access, existing bus operations, and potential stop facilities.	Governing Bodies, PC, BARTA, SCTA	Short-term	

Land Use

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
Update, if necessary, each municipality's development regulations to carry out the Future Land Use Plan.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
Adopt and/or enforce existing municipal property maintenance codes to avoid blighted and unsafe conditions.	Governing bodies	Short-term	X
Utilize the County's Blighted Property Review Committee to review and eliminate blighted residential properties from neighborhoods so that they can be redeveloped into usable housing.	Governing Bodies, BCRA, BCPC	Short-term	
Help to link residents that are in need of assistance with the resources that are available, including housing rehabilitation and job training programs.	Municipal Staffs and Non-Profit Organizations, HASD, Local Colleges	Short-term	
Work to increase home ownership, including expanding programs to help persons afford closing costs of home purchases.	Co. Agencies, Financial Institutions, PHFA	Ongoing	
Review and/or update zoning ordinances to make sure that all desirable types of businesses are allowed in appropriate business zoning districts. Hold requirements for special zoning approvals to a reasonable minimum and minimize setbacks between adjacent businesses. These steps are important to promote economic development and a wider choice of employment opportunities.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	X
Make sure that local regulations and permit processes are as streamlined as reasonable, to avoid unnecessary delays and higher housing costs. This is particularly important for routine changes to existing homes and for new and expanding employers.	Governing Bodies, PC, ZHB, Municipal Staffs	Short-term	
Use zoning regulations to direct most housing away from areas planned for rural conservation and important natural areas. Provide moderate densities on areas that can be served by existing public water and sewage services - to minimize the total amount of land consumed by development.	Twp. PC, Property Owners, BCCD	Ongoing	

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority
Place an emphasis on zoning provisions that preserve farmland and natural areas, particularly through “Open Space Development” that involves clustering of homes in return for permanent preservation of a substantial part of the tract in open space. In the townships, promote the optional transfer of development rights that allows the number of homes that would have been allowed on an outlying tract to be developed on a more suitable tract, in return for preservation of the outlying tract.	PC, Property-Owners, BCCD	Short-term	
Consider requiring developers to install landscaping during a project. Proper installation and use of landscaping can provide habitat area for wildlife, create visual buffers from neighboring uses and residences, promote ground water recharge, and limit stormwater runoff. Overall, properly landscaped areas provide great benefit to communities who enact policies promoting the installation of landscaping as part of a development project.	Governing Bodies, PC	Long-term	
Review and/or update zoning ordinances to make sure that excessive setbacks are not required for routine additions to homes and for decks and pools. These types of improvements should not be overly regulated in order to encourage residents to invest in older homes, instead of moving to new homes in outlying areas. This policy is particularly important because excessive setback requirements can cause an administrative burden upon property-owners and the municipalities.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
Update zoning ordinances to carefully control the types and locations of intense business uses near neighborhoods. This particularly includes gas stations, 24-hour stores, adult uses and similar uses that may cause nuisances for neighboring homes.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
Provide density incentives for housing developments that are permanently limited to occupancy by older persons.	Governing Bodies, PC, ZHB	Ongoing	
Work with adjacent municipalities to ensure that compatible land uses and road patterns are in place.	Governing Bodies, PC	Short-term	
Emphasize code enforcement to avoid blight in neighborhoods. Consider a systematic housing inspection program for older rental units in the boroughs and villages.	Governing Bodies, PC, Adj. Mun.	Short-term	
Use this plan as a guide to direct development, both in terms of location and type, where and how you want it to occur.	Governing Bodies, PC	Ongoing	
Commit to regular meetings of the committee who developed this plan.	Governing Bodies, PC	Ongoing	X
Commit to updating this Joint Comprehensive Plan by 2031.	Governing Bodies, PC	Long-term	

The preceding tables plot an ambitious list of recommended activities. These tasks are vital if the Region is to optimally manage its growth and development and to plan and implement its “vision” for the future. The completion of many of these tasks should result in an improved quality of life within the Region.

Municipal officials are responsible to monitor and evaluate the implementation strategy aimed at achieving the locally-expressed objectives and resultant recommendations set forth in this Plan.

Cooperation among all administrative bodies and levels of government is an essential component to a streamlined and successful implementation strategy. The continued use of public participation is also a very important duty of municipal officials. If, for some reason, the recommendations of this Plan do not appear to address the, then, current conditions, municipal officials should not hesitate to amend portions of this Plan or any other policy to rectify those deficiencies.

This Plan holds a wealth of information, which is easily obtainable and understood. Its implementation can be equally understood so that all residents, businesses and visitors know the Plan is vital, and that the future of the Region is deliberate, and the result of considerable analysis and public scrutiny.

