

## **Chapter 2**

### **Regional Setting and Adjacent Planning**

---

#### **Geographic Setting and Influences**

Penn Township, Bernville Borough, and Jefferson Township are located in western Berks County in southeastern Pennsylvania. Berks County lies along the edge of the Delaware Valley region, which is part of a growing urban corridor between New York and Washington, D.C. and one of the leading industrial and trade regions of the United States.

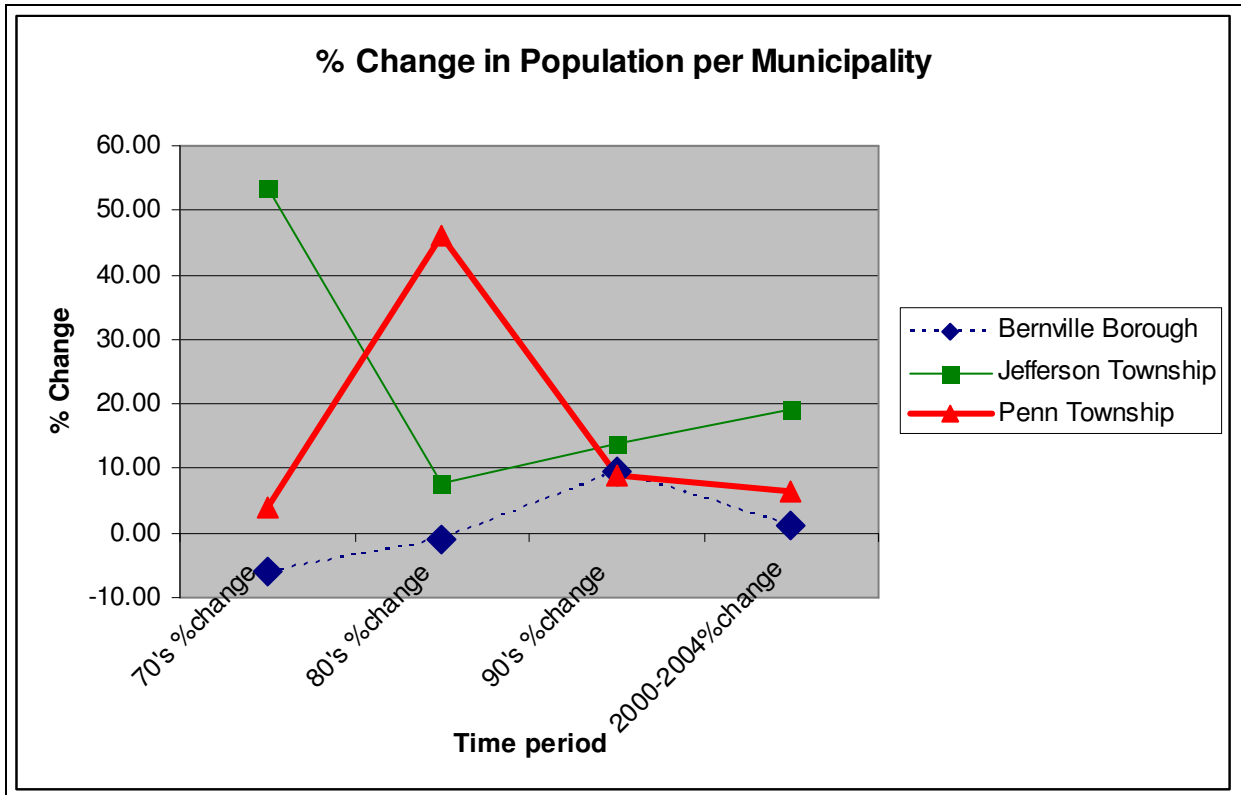
Penn Township, Bernville Borough and Jefferson Township are located approximately 7-12 miles northwest of the City of Reading along PA Route 183. The three municipalities are located approximately 5 miles south of Interstate 78. The Borough and Townships together comprise 35.6 square miles, 19.1 square miles in Penn Township, 16.1 square miles in Jefferson Township and 0.4 square miles in Bernville Borough.

Bernville Borough is a small, mature community with a mixed use Main Street area surrounded by older and newer residential neighborhoods. The Borough's housing stock is a mix of attached and detached housing types. Historic churches and other reminders of the area's unique heritage are found throughout both Jefferson and Bernville. Jefferson and Penn Townships are picturesque, rural communities consisting of farmland, single-family homes and some commercial development on PA Route 183. Hilly terrain, rolling farmland and scenic creek corridors are the primary features of both Penn and Jefferson's landscape. Currently, Penn Township and Jefferson Township are two of the County's least densely populated municipalities, however those numbers continue to increase as development expands along the PA Route 183 corridor.

Bernville is almost fully built-out with only a moderate amount of land left for new growth. Redevelopment of under-utilized property and appropriate in-fill uses are the Borough's primary land use concerns. Jefferson Township has vast areas of currently undeveloped land that is physically well suited for construction. Penn Township is limited in future development by steep slopes located in the area. Mt. Pleasant continues to be the largest population center of Penn Township. It is surrounded by State Game Lands and Blue Marsh Lake which limits future development.

The Region is bordered by the Townships of Upper Bern, Centre, Upper Tulpehocken, Tulpehocken, Marion, North Heidelberg, Bern, and a small portion of Lower Heidelberg. The largest growth according to the 2004 population estimate is in Jefferson Township with nineteen percent growth followed by Lower Heidelberg with almost fifteen percent. The previous decade of growth was significant in several of the adjacent municipalities with nine out of twelve of the municipalities experiencing ten percent growth or higher. The County has been relatively stable over the past 30 years. In the graph below you can easily see that the growth is occurring in Jefferson Township while Bernville Borough

has relatively no growth and Penn Township is less than ten percent growth per the County's estimates for 2004.



MUNICIPALITIES	1970	1980	% Change	1990	% Change	2000	% Change	2004*	% Change
Bernville Borough	848	798	-5.90%	789	-1.13%	865	9.63%	874	1.04%
Jefferson Township	854	1,310	53.40%	1,410	7.63%	1,604	13.76%	1,913	19.26%
Penn Township	1,205	1,254	4.07%	1,831	46.01%	1,993	8.85%	2,121	6.42%
Region	2,907	3,362	15.65%	4,030	19.87%	4,462	10.72%	4,908	10%

### Commercial Areas and Employment Centers

The Townships and Borough are considered “bedroom” communities because the Region lacks a substantial employment base and many residents commute to the surrounding municipalities for jobs. The average commute times for the Region are: 22 minutes for Penn Township and Bernville Borough and 27 minutes for Jefferson Township. Both the Borough and Penn Township are slightly less than the U.S. and Pennsylvania averages, 25 and 26 minutes, respectively, however Jefferson is slightly higher.

Most of the local commercial and industrial areas are located along PA Route 183 and in Bernville Borough. Commercial land makes up less than two percent (<2%) of the

Township's total land area. These activities include professional services and retail business, such as auto repair, shops, and restaurants.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING**

### **The Berks County Comprehensive Plan**

The Future Land Use Component of Berks County Comprehensive Plan has Designated Growth Areas in Penn Township, surrounding Bernville. There are additional Future Growth Areas in both Penn Township and Jefferson Township. Future Growth Areas and Designated Growth Areas are multi-purpose activity areas characterized by concentrated density and urban development. Designated Growth Areas are located in areas surrounding Existing Developed Areas. These areas are suitable for high density development in the immediate future due to the presence of the necessary public infrastructure services needed to accommodate growth.

Several factors affect the suitability of Designated Growth Areas for development; a few are:

- availability of sewer and water capacity
- proximity to areas of existing concentrated development
- transportation capacity and access

Future Growth Areas include areas outside of or adjacent to Designated Growth Areas where development at higher densities is appropriate, and public infrastructure services may or may not be provided, but future extension of infrastructure is planned to accommodate development of higher densities.

Development appropriate for Designated and Future Growth Areas include, but are not limited to:

- residential
- employment concentrations
- institutional or social services
- community and emergency facilities
- sewer and water capabilities
- cultural, entertainment, and recreational facilities
- transportation network development and maintenance

The benefits of establishing Growth Areas are to provide a logical basis for land use decision making, and will not only benefit the County as a whole but will benefit municipal planning efforts. The benefits of designating growth areas are summarized as follows:

- **Existing Communities** – through redirected growth will decrease the likelihood of communities merging together and losing a sense of community character and identity.
- **Community Facilities and Services** – Services, such as roads, water and sewer lines, schools, fire stations, and police protection, will become more cost-efficient, and service costs and property taxes will be minimized.
- **Transportation** – Coordination of transportation planning will allow a more concentrated pattern of development thus resulting in a reduction in the number and length of trips needed to reach destinations. Mass transit planning will also become more efficient with concentrated patterns of origins and destinations.
- **Housing** – Decreased public service costs will reduce housing prices due to lower land costs and development fees.
- **Agriculture** – Growth Areas minimize leap-frog development into agriculture areas which reduces the loss of farmlands.
- **Natural Resources** – A compact pattern of development reduces the threat of destruction to important resource lands. This will help to protect resources such as floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitats, prime soils, and steep slope areas.
- **The Economy** – Overall growth in specified areas will provide locations for commercial and industrial needs with the necessary infrastructure available. The farming community will also benefit through improved stability in farmland areas and less intrusion of urbanized uses.
- **Cooperative Planning** – Regional and County planning will be improved. Established regional growth areas will make municipal decisions more consistent, more predictable and simpler.

## **ADJACENT MUNICIPAL PLANNING**

The Region is bordered by the Townships of Upper Bern, Centre, Upper Tulpehocken, Tulpehocken, Marion, North Heidelberg, Bern, and a small portion of Lower Heidelberg. The following is a brief summary of the recommendations of the comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances of adjacent municipalities to the Joint Regional Comprehensive Plan.

### **Upper Bern Township**

Upper Bern Township is located northeast of the Region solely bordering Penn Township. It is 18.3 square miles and the population is 1,479 (U.S. Census 2000), which is all rural.

Land that is zoned Agricultural Preservation is proposed for the adjacent land use in Upper Bern Township. Land in Penn Township is low density Residential and Rural. This achieves consistency between the Townships.

### **Centre Township**

Centre Township is located east of Penn Township. The Township had a 2000 population of 3,631 (2000 census) and is 21.6 square miles. 21.4 square miles is land while the remaining .2 square miles is water. The Township is 86% rural and 14% urban.

The northwest portion of Centre Township is designated as Low Density Residential (R-1), which borders agriculture land in Jefferson Township. The southwest portion is Agricultural Preservation in Centre Township and Rural Conservation, Agricultural Preservation and low density residential in Penn Township. This achieves consistency between the Townships.

### **Upper Tulpehocken Township**

Upper Tulpehocken Township borders Jefferson Township to the North. It is a rural Township with 22.9 square miles. The population is 1,495.

The land use designation in Upper Tulpehocken adjacent to Jefferson Township is consistent. Effective Agriculture Preservation accounts for the largest area while Rural Preservation and Recreational-Commercial account for a small portion. Jefferson Township is mostly Agricultural Preservation with a small area of existing development that is adjacent to Rural Preservation and Recreational-Commercial.

### **Tulpehocken Township**

Tulpehocken Township is located west of Jefferson Township. The land area is 23.3 square miles with a rural population of 3,290.

The border of Tulpehocken and Jefferson is predominately Agricultural Preservation with a few areas for Rural Conservation. This achieves consistency between the plans.

### **Marion Township**

Marion Township is a small rural Township with a population of 1,064. It is located southwest of Jefferson Township. The land area is 14.8 square miles. The border of Marion and Jefferson Townships is predominately Agricultural Preservation on both sides. This achieves consistency between the plans.

### **North Heidelberg Township**

North Heidelberg Township is another example of a small rural Township. The population is 1,325 with a land area of 13.5 square miles. North Heidelberg Township is consistent with Jefferson Township and Penn Township.

North Heidelberg borders Jefferson Township in the southeast and acts as the western border for Penn Township.

The border between Penn Township and North Heidelberg is buffered by Tulpehocken Creek and Blue Marsh while Jefferson Township has Effective Agricultural Preservation next to Conservation and Agricultural Preservation.

### **Lower Heidelberg Township**

Lower Heidelberg Township has a population of 4,150 and is 14.9 square miles of land with .5 square miles of water. Unlike most of the other adjacent municipalities, Lower Heidelberg Township is 56% Urban and 44% Rural.

Lower Heidelberg has a very small border with Penn Township on the southeastern side of the Township. The Townships are separated by Blue Marsh Lake.

### **Bern Township**

Bern Township has a land area of 19.2 square miles with a water area of .8 square miles. The population is 6,758 with 58% of that being urban and 42% as rural.

Bern Township's Rural Residential, Institutional Residential, and Agricultural Business border Penn Township's Residential zone. A small area of Highway Commercial borders Penn Township's Commercial zoning. There is consistency in land uses between Penn and Bern Townships.

## **BERNVILLE BOROUGH QUICK FACTS**

**HISTORY:** Established 1851 (founded 1819)

**LAND AREA:** .4 square miles

**POPULATION (2000):** 865  
1990-2000 growth rates of (9.6%)  
Median household income is \$41,250

**GOVERNMENT:** Borough governed by a seven-member Borough Council. Boards and Commissions include the Planning Commission, Recreation Board, and the Zoning Hearing Board. The day-to-day operations are administered by a part time Borough Secretary/Treasurer.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: 11<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District and 129<sup>th</sup> Legislative District.

In the U.S. House of Representatives: 17<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Pennsylvania

**SEWER AND WATER:** (1) Municipal wastewater treatment systems

- Bernville Borough

(1) Source for water

- Bernville Borough Authority

**EDUCATION:** Tulpehocken Area School District – Public school for grades K-12. Comprised of one combined high school and junior high, and two elementary schools.

**BOROUGH OFFICE:** Bernville Borough  
6602 Bernville Road  
Bernville, PA 19506  
Phone: 610-488-1591  
Fax: 610-488-6425



## **JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP QUICK FACTS**

**HISTORY:** Established 1851

**LAND AREA:** 16.1 square miles

**POPULATION (2000):** 1,604  
1990-2000 growth rate of (13.8%)  
Median household income is \$51,532

**GOVERNMENT:** Township governed by a three-member Board of Supervisors. Boards and Commissions include the Planning Commission and the Zoning Hearing Board. The day-to-day operations are administered by a Township Manager.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: 48<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District and 129<sup>th</sup> Legislative District.

In the U.S. House of Representatives: 17<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Pennsylvania

**SEWER AND WATER:** Municipal wastewater treatment systems – (0)

Non-Municipal wastewater treatment systems

- North Heidelberg Sewer and Water Company – serves a limited portion of Jefferson Township
- Tulpehocken School District sewer system – serves a limited portion of Jefferson Township
- Private on-lot systems support the remainder of the Township.

Source for water

- North Heidelberg Sewer and Water Company
- Private Wells

**EDUCATION:** Tulpehocken Area School District. – Public school for grades K-12. Comprised of one combined high school and junior high, and two elementary schools.

**TOWNSHIP OFFICE:** Jefferson Township  
5 Solly Lane  
Bernville, PA 19506  
Phone: 610-488-7047  
Fax: 610-488-0562

## **PENN TOWNSHIP QUICK FACTS**

**HISTORY:** Established 1840

**LAND AREA:** 19.1 square miles

**POPULATION (2000):** 1,993  
1990-2000 growth rate of (8.9%)  
Median household income is \$55,000

**GOVERNMENT:** Township governed by a three-member Board of Supervisors. Boards and Commissions include the Planning Commission, and the Zoning Hearing Board. The day-to-day operations are administered by a Township Manager.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: 11<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District and 129<sup>th</sup> Legislative District.

In the U.S. House of Representatives: 17<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Pennsylvania

**SEWER AND WATER:** Municipal wastewater treatment systems

- Bernville Borough Authority – serves a small portion of Penn Township

Non-Municipal wastewater treatment systems

- Private on-lot systems support the remainder of the Township

Sources for water

- Bernville Borough Authority
- Private Wells

**EDUCATION:** Tulpehocken Area School District – Public school for grades K-12. Comprised of one combined high school and junior high, and two elementary schools.

**TOWNSHIP OFFICE:** Penn Township  
840 North Garfield Road  
Bernville, PA 19506  
Phone: 610-488-1160  
Fax: 610-488-0562