

# Sunbury 2035

## The City of Sunbury Comprehensive Plan

July 1, 2025

**Draft**

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## Appendices

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## Acknowledgements

### City Council

Joshua Brosious	Mayor
John Barnhart	Public Safety Director
Jim Eister	Parks & Public Property Director
Lisa Martina	Streets & Public Improvements Director
Nathan R. Savidge	Accounts & Finance Director

### Planning Committee

Pam Schlegel	Sunbury Planning Commission
Ryan McDonald	Sunbury Planning Commission
Joe Bartello	Sunbury Planning Commission
Jason Neidig	Sunbury Municipal Authority
Jason Bendle	Shikellamy School District
Justin Skavery	Northumberland County
Nathan Savidge	Alternate, Northumberland County
Emily Murphy	Sunbury City Housing Authority
Pat Mack	Northumberland County Housing Authority
Aimee Buehner	Sunbury Redevelopment Authority
Paul Brown	Sunbury Emergency Services
Ronald Rupp	Alternate, Sunbury Emergency Services
Andres Manresa	Sunbury Office of Community Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Julie Brosius	Sunbury Shade Tree Commission
Vince Cotrone	Sunbury Shade Tree Commission
Jody Ocker	Sunbury's Revitalization, Inc. (SRI)
Slade Shreck	Parks and Recreation Board
Derrick Backer	Sunbury Blighted Property Review Committee
Laurie Johnson	Interested Citizen
Meghan Beck	Interested Citizen
Christi Emel	Interested Citizen
Victoria Rosancrans	Interested Citizen
Mike O'Donnell	Interested Citizen
Seth Howard	Interested Citizen
Lindie Lloyd	Interested Citizen

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# 1 ♦ Plan Purpose & Use

A comprehensive plan articulates a vision for community and economic development and a strategy to achieve that vision over a 10-year planning horizon.

A comprehensive plan does the following:

- Assesses various development policy and system conditions, community and economic development,
- Updates or establishes a community's development goals,
- Recommends changes to regulations, infrastructure, services, and programs to help advance the City toward its goals.

The comprehensive plan is a policy plan, adopted by resolution. An adopted plan demonstrates that City officials and citizens agree upon the direction and degree of change needed to sustain or improve the quality of development and quality of life for the foreseeable future. As an adopted policy, the comprehensive plan remains the official guide and reference for development-related decisions and investments—even through changes in elected officials, appointed positions, and staff.

After adopting the plan, City officials implement the recommended regulatory updates, infrastructure projects, and community service and program changes, coordinating with local and regional partners, as beneficial.

As development conditions change or as the planning horizon approaches, City officials amend the comprehensive plan to make near-term adjustments or renew the comprehensive plan for the next 10-year period.

Sunbury's last comprehensive plan was adopted in 2012.

## City Planning Tools

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247 of 1968, as reenacted and amended, authorizes municipalities, individually or jointly, to plan for the future. It authorizes the use of several planning tools including the municipal planning commission, the comprehensive plan, the official map for planned municipal facilities and infrastructure, the subdivision and land development ordinance, the capital improvement program, the zoning ordinance and map, and the zoning hearing board.

Additionally, Act 148 of 1973, as amended, authorizes the establishment of Environmental Advisory Councils.

Finally, Pennsylvania's Historic District Act of 1961 authorizes local governments to regulate changes to buildings and structures in a certified historic district and specifies the appointment of an advisory Historical Architectural Review Board or HARB to review proposed changes that can be seen from the public right-of-way.

Sunbury has managed community and economic development with several municipal planning tools since the 1960s, as listed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Municipal Planning Tools Used by the City of Sunbury**

Planning Tools	In Use; Date Enacted
Planning Commission	Yes
Comprehensive Plan	2012
Official Map	No
Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance	1971, with amendments
Capital Improvement Plan	No
Zoning Ordinance & Map	Ordinance, 1984, with amendments; Map last amended in 2011
Zoning Hearing Board	Yes
Environmental Advisory Council	No
Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB)	1996; amended in 2006

Source: City of Sunbury.

## Preparation by City Representatives and Planning Consultants

A consultant team led by Gannett Fleming, Inc., of Camp Hill, PA worked with the City Planning Commission to develop the plan. City Council appointed members of various authorities, boards, commissions, and committees, as well as interested citizens to participate in the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee met five times to discuss their perspectives on housing, the local economy, and other local conditions and to suggest projects and actions.

The Planning Commission and City Council will each hear from citizens before adopting the plan and zoning ordinance.

## Citizen Engagement

Discussions with Sunbury's residents identified current community and economic development conditions and potential future improvements. The planning team spoke with attendees about quality of life at four community events in Fall 2023 and offered to extend conversations to other residents via an online survey. Themes from this engagement, cited in Chapter 2, and discussions with the Planning Committee helped shape this plan.



### Engagement Activities

**4 community events** attended to interface with Sunbury citizens

- National Night Out, August 1, 2023 at James R. Eister Youth & Community Center
- Diversity Multicultural Food Truck & BBQ Festival, August 28, 2023 on Memorial Drive
- Autumn Arts Faire, October 21, 2023 in Cameron Park
- Trunk or Treat, October 26, 2023 at Beiter's Furniture, 1189 North 4th Street

**720 estimated attendees**

- More than 215 individuals, including children and youth, engaged in 110 conversations

**Supplemental Online Survey, August 1-November 1, 2023**

- 287 survey promotion cards distributed
- 8 survey responses (3% response)

## Plan Review & Adoption

*[These paragraphs to be completed as the review process progresses.]*

The City Planning Commission published notice of the draft Sunbury 2035 plan and its availability for review, then held a public meeting to receive comments on the draft plan on (date). The Planning Commission reviewed comments made at the public meeting and submitted in writing, then determined if comments warranted a revision to the draft plan. On (date), the Planning Commission accepted the draft Sunbury 2035 plan, directed its distribution to Northumberland County, the Shikellamy School District, and adjoining Upper Augusta Township for required 45-day review and comment period, and forwarded the plan to City Council for consideration.

On (date, 2025), City Council held a public hearing to receive final comments on the draft Sunbury 2035 plan. On (date, 2025), the City Council adopted the plan by approval of Resolution (2025-#).

## Plan Implementation

Ordinance amendments and updates are a municipality's most direct and efficient tool for managing future development because they establish legal regulations. Upon adoption, all proposed development plans must comply with the code of ordinances to garner the governing body's approval, unless variances or waivers are requested and granted, as applicable.

The zoning ordinance manages the location of land uses, the scale and relationships of structures to the site. The zoning ordinance also manages the amount, timing, location and character of development. In urban communities like Sunbury, the zoning ordinance helps to ensure that new uses on a site, or redevelopment of a site, complements or strengthens the urban fabric—the physical patterns of the built environment.

Zoning ordinance and zoning map updates to implement land use recommendations and the future land use map in the comprehensive plan are expected to be complete within three years per state guidance.

The comprehensive plan may also make recommendations to amend or update the subdivision and land development ordinance, or SALDO, which governs the creation and adjustment of lot lines and establishes the standards for land improvements, or other planning tools that regulate or provide advice on the review of future development.

## 2 ♦ The City of Sunbury Today

The City of Sunbury is a small, rural city.

- It was incorporated as a city in 1920 at its peak decennial population of 15,721. One hundred years later in 2020, it was ranked the 36<sup>th</sup> largest of Pennsylvania's 56 cities with a population of 9,719. The City's population in 2023 was estimated at 9,643.
- It encompasses two square miles of land, as well as the Susquehanna River to its western bank and portions of the Shamokin Creek.
- Most of its land area was developed in a gridded pattern of blocks and streets prior to 1950.
- The City is separated from the nearby boroughs of Selinsgrove, Shamokin Dam, Northumberland by the North and West Branches of the Susquehanna River and from smaller urban areas to the east by the gentle mountains of Central Pennsylvania. Connections to nearby communities and distinct destinations are heavily reliant on state highways and access to a vehicle.

The existing land use pattern, shown in Figure 2, shows:

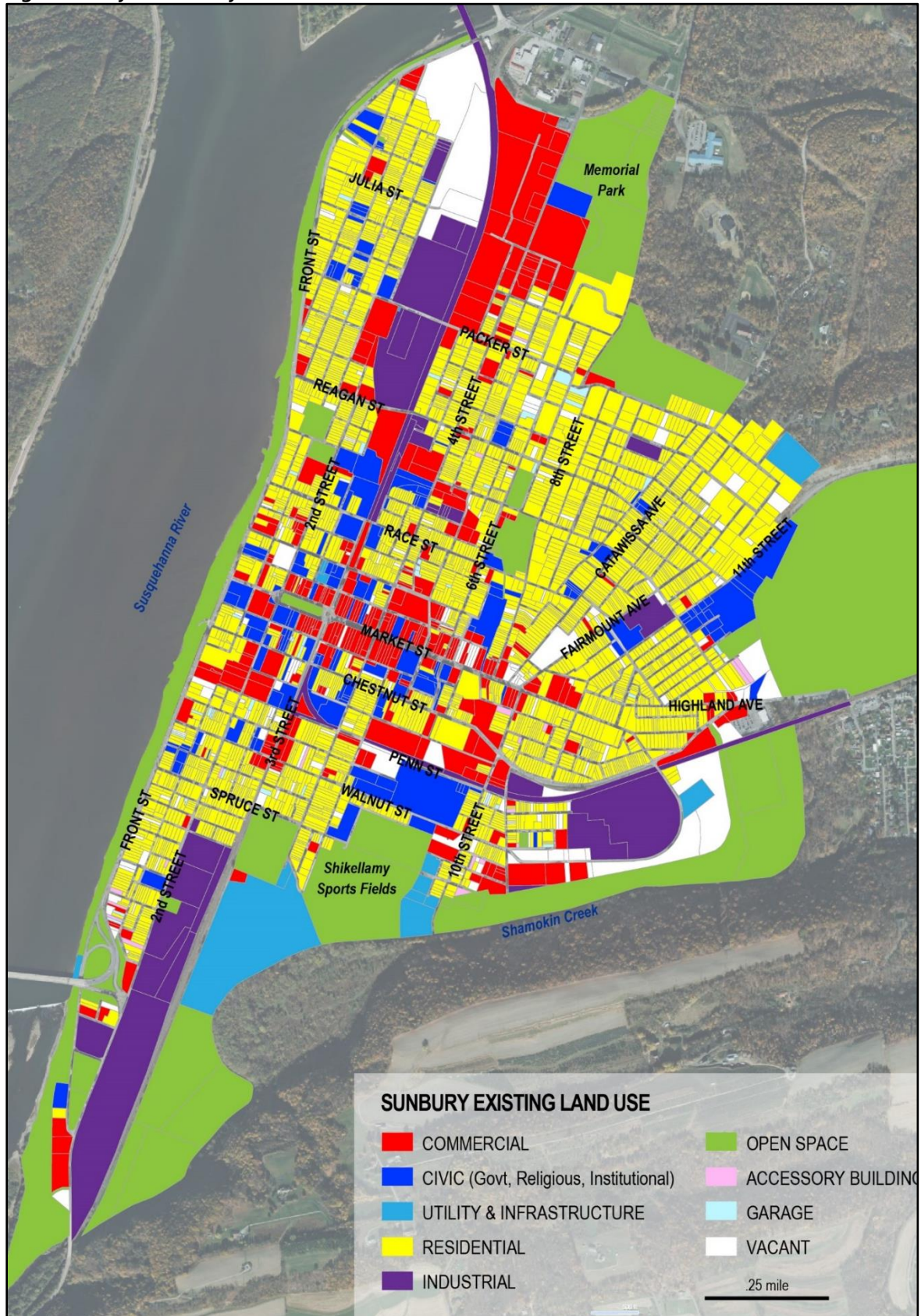
- A downtown core of commercial and civic uses centered on Market Street.
- Larger commercial and industrial parcels along the rail lines.
- Relatively strong residential blocks and consistently sized parcels with intermingled neighborhood-scale commercial and civic uses.
- Significant public sector and non-profit presence among civic uses and public utilities; government owners alone include the City, Sunbury Municipal Authority, Northumberland County, state and federal government agencies, and the Shikellamy School District.
- A nearly continuous greenbelt of large open spaces around the City—comprising Memorial Park, Pomfret Manor Cemetery, Municipal Authority lands, Shikellamy School District sports fields, (Spruce St) cemetery, and Riverfront Park—as well as smaller interior open spaces; public open space is available within one-quarter-mile of nearly every residential property.
- Individual vacant parcels of all sizes throughout the City with only two significant parcel clusters, one at the north end of Susquehanna Avenue and one along Walnut Street Extension.

Results from citizen engagements in 2023 showed that residents appreciate the City's small-town qualities, its recreational facilities and local library, and its cultural spirit expressed through community improvement projects and events. Residents specifically mentioned these City qualities:

- Ability to walk and bike due to the City's gridded block and street pattern, relatively flat landform, and low traffic volumes on most streets.
- The Riverfront Park and its walking trail.
- City parks, swimming pool, and playgrounds.



Figure 2. City of Sunbury Land Use, November 3, 2023



- The Degenstein Community Library.
- Family-friendly events.
- The mural on the building at 728 Market Street.
- Community projects like Sunbury Wetland Ecological and Educational Park (SWEEP).

Community leaders characterize Sunbury as a blue-collar city of low- to moderate-income households. In 2022:

- There were 1,038 resident workers (24.5 percent of the 4,235 resident workers) employed in goods-producing industries, i.e., agriculture, resource extraction, construction, and manufacturing. In the same year, 21.0 percent of county resident workers and 15.1 percent of resident workers across the state were employed in these industries.
- The City was home to only 407 local jobs in goods-producing industries (10.2 percent of the 3,992 local jobs), more than 630 fewer jobs than resident workers.
- The median household income was \$42,238, while the average or mean value was higher, \$56,639. Median and mean household incomes across Northumberland County were both higher, \$58,987 (40 percent higher) and \$76,850 (36 percent higher), respectively. Values for Pennsylvania's median and mean household incomes were even higher, \$71,798 (70 percent higher) and \$100,015 (77 percent higher).
- Nearly 2 in 5 households (1,622 of the City's 4,160 households; 39 percent) had a household income above the federal poverty line but below the amount needed to afford monthly expenses. These households are known as asset-limited, income-constrained, employed households or ALICE.

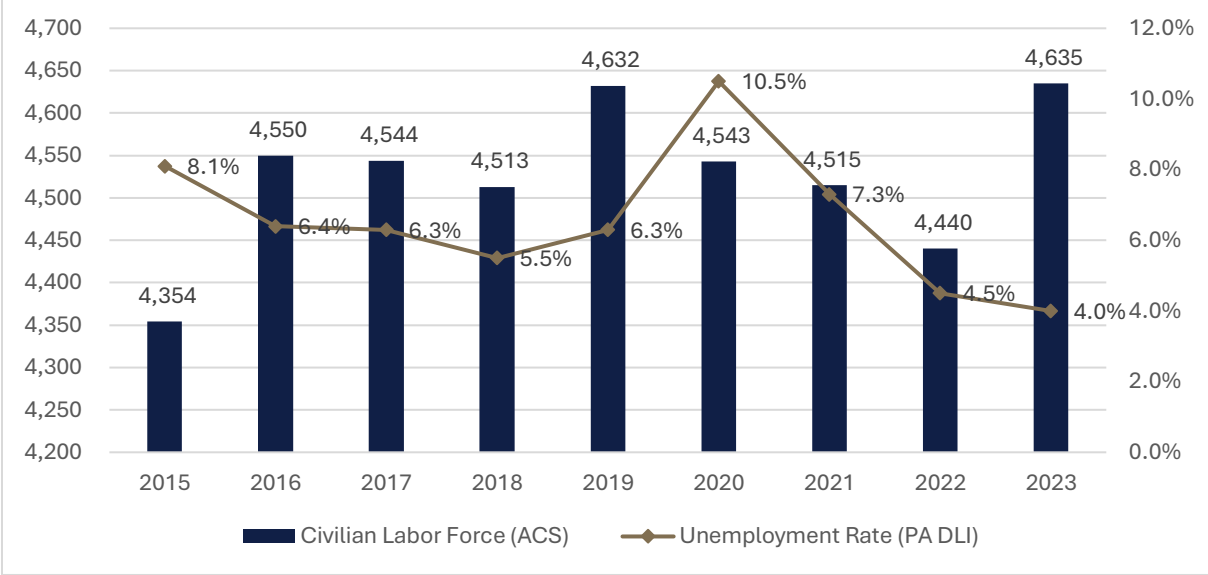
In terms of the local economy, closures of three manufacturing operations, the Sunbury Middle School, and the Sunbury Hospital have resulted in the loss of more than 400 jobs since 2008.

- Celotex, manufacturer of asbestos insulation and construction materials and located at 1400 Susquehanna Avenue, closed in 2008 following litigation over product materials, ending 88 manufacturing jobs.
- The Sunbury Middle School, located at 115 Fairmount Avenue, closed in 2012 as the Shikellamy School District consolidated grades 6-8 at the Shikellamy Middle School in Northumberland, ending approximately 40 jobs in education.
- Bimbo Bakery, located at 249 N. 11th Street, closed in 2017 as production facilities were redistributed across the U.S, ending 67 manufacturing jobs.
- Sunbury Silk & Textile Mill, located at 1150 Walnut Street Extension, closed in 2020 in the face of streamlined production and increased overseas competition, ending 110 manufacturing jobs.
- UPMC Susquehanna Sunbury Hospital, located at 350 N. 11th Street and locally known as the Sunbury Community Hospital, closed in 2020 as UPMC re-aligned the location of its facilities with the region's overall population pattern, ending 153 health care jobs.

The loss of these five major employers and the associated jobs has rippled throughout the local economy with further implications for the City and the community.

- According to the US Census Bureau, the city’s resident workforce has risen from a low of 4,354 in 2015 to a high of 4,635 in 2023, surpassing an interim high mark in 2019.
- Meanwhile, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry’s Center for Workforce Information & Analysis, the city’s unemployment has fallen from 8.1 percent in 2015 to 4.0 percent in 2023, with an interim spike of 10.5 percent in 2020.

Figure 3. Civilian Labor Force (Resident Workers) and Unemployment Rates, 2000-2023



Source: US Census Bureau 2000 decennial census and 2010 and 2015-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates and PA Department of Labor & Industry, Center for Workforce Information & Analysis.

- In terms of building occupancy, data collected for the Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. Community Needs Assessment for Northumberland, Columbia, and Montour Counties show that business vacancies increased from 1.20% in 2022-Quarter 1 to 3.63% in 2023-Quarter 2 then decreased to 1.71% in 2023-Quarter 3.

Table 1. Business Vacancy, 2022-2023

Postal Address Vacancy	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3
Vacant Business (#)	5	5	13	16	15	7
Vacant Business (%)	1.2%	1.19%	3.08%	3.61%	3.63%	1.71%

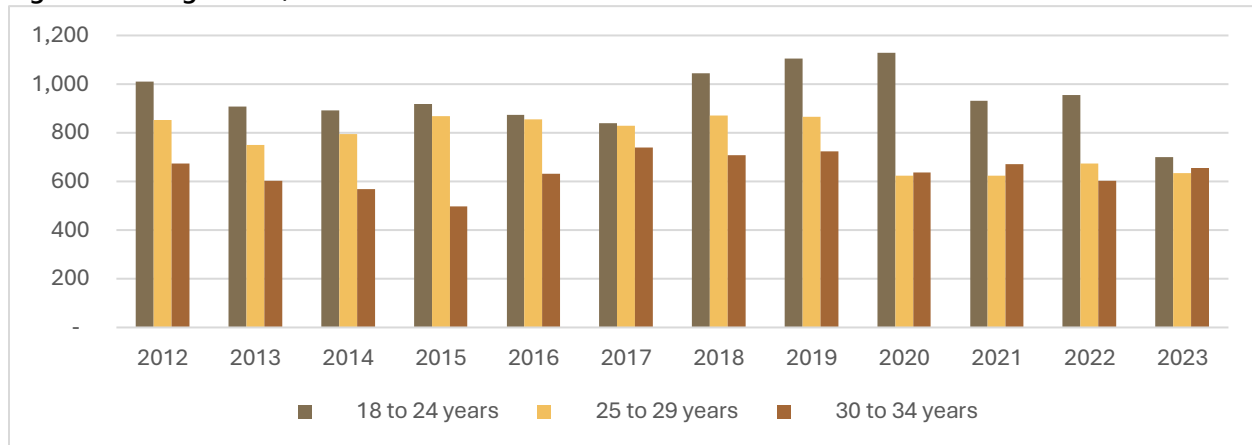
Postal Address Vacancy is an address where mail has not been collected (from the mailbox) for at least 90 days.

Source: Policy Map, as cited by the CSO 2025-2027 Community Needs Assessment for Northumberland, Columbia, and Montour Counties

- Fewer young adults ages 18 to 29 years lived in Sunbury in 2023 than in 2012 (Figure 4). Numbers of young adults declined by 550 and 21.7 percent over the period. The largest decline was among 18- to 24-year-olds (-313), followed by 25- to 29-year-olds (-219) then 30- to 34-year-olds (-18).

While losses among the 18 to 24 year cohort is common as high school graduates attend college or university programs, losses among older young adult cohorts indicate that these students of higher education are not returning and in fact, high school graduates who have remained in the City during their initial post-secondary years have departed likely seeking higher wages, better benefits, and better career opportunities than local employers offer, as well as affordable and desirable housing options.

**Figure 4. Young Adults, 2012-2023**



Source: US Census Bureau 2012-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates.

These conditions put particular pressure on low-income households. Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. (CSO), the non-profit community action agency for Northumberland County and eight other Central Pennsylvania counties, provides services and supports public and private sector decision-making and investment to meet the needs of low-income residents. CSO conducts a community needs assessment every three years to align its activities with the needs of low-income residents of the region. Its 2025-2027 Community Needs Assessment for Northumberland, Columbia, and Montour Counties identified three drivers of low-income conditions through the region:

- Lack of living wage jobs that provide sufficient income for monthly expenses.
- Lack of transportation access among homes, jobs, and essential destinations such as food stores, pharmacies, and social gathering sites.
- Lack of safe, affordable housing that doesn't compromise financial, physical, and emotional well-being.

Additionally, these drivers contribute to the other low-quality living conditions, which include:

- Poor quality housing.
- Homelessness.
- Food insecurity, such as not having enough nutritious food to eat on a regular basis and skipping a meal so that another family member could eat.
- Limited childcare access.
- Lack of social connections, particularly for financial reasons.
- Lack of mental health care.



Wages, transportation access, and housing are broad drivers of need across the region—present in all communities and varying in condition and degree from one community to another.

Community leaders acknowledge that civic pride in Sunbury has waned under unsteady economic conditions, noting that the physical condition of many private properties, both residential and commercial, has declined.

Challenges to housing conditions include:

- **Housing Age:** 48 percent of homes were built prior to 1939 and may be significantly out of date with current building codes. Additionally, more than 3 out of 4 homes (77 percent) in the City were built before 1970 and may contain building materials made of lead.
- **Housing Cost:** Nearly 1,200 City households allocate 30 percent or more of their monthly household income to housing and related costs. This is known as housing cost burden. Among the 4,022 owner-occupant households, 8.8 percent are cost burdened and among the 4,144 renter-occupant households, 20.4 percent.
- **Housing Loss:** Between 2012 and 2022, the number of housing units in Sunbury decreased by 425 units, an 8.2 percent decline.

Despite current conditions, long-term and new residents maintain a passion for the City. They recognize the City's riverside location, its history and architecture, its cultural foundations and programming as assets and amenities for a more prosperous future. They seek improved housing and neighborhood conditions, safe street and sidewalk conditions, and a greener city that fosters social connections and civic culture in both public and private spaces:

- More housing options, especially apartments.
- Quality housing, for sale and for rent, for a fair price.
- Better property maintenance by owners and tenants, and better code enforcement by the City.
- Additional and updated parks. A dog park.
- Better street surface conditions for vehicles.
- Better sidewalk surface conditions for pedestrians, including persons with disabilities.
- Safer conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- More travel and transportation options – within Sunbury and to other places.
- More trees and vegetation in public and private spaces.
- A stronger, more positive sense of community.

### 3 ♦ Issues & Opportunities

This chapter presents four priority issues in community and economic development, each paired with complementary opportunities for improvement. These pairings include:

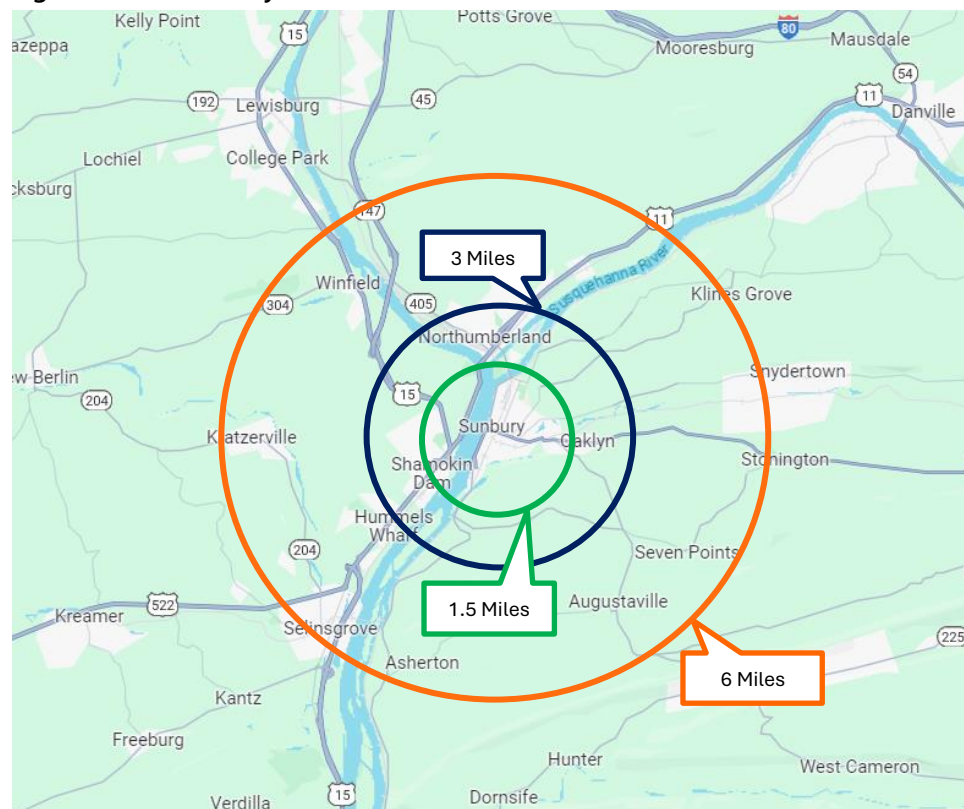
1. From Dwindling Downtown to Vibrant Core
2. From Vacant Industrial Sites to Productive Redevelopment
3. From Deteriorating Housing to Strong Neighborhoods
4. From Undervalued Riverfront Use to a River City Identity

## ✦ From Dwindling Downtown to Vibrant Core

## The Context

A 2023 Retail trade analysis in Sunbury shows that there is little to no opportunity for new retailers to succeed unless they can attract significant spending from outside the immediate trade area. The defined 1.5, 3, and 6-mile trade areas around Northumberland County Courthouse all show retail surpluses—indicating existing businesses already draw customers from beyond Sunbury—these surpluses mean the local market is saturated overall. However, despite the overall surplus, some specific retail categories within the 3- and 6-mile trade areas still exhibit opportunity gaps, suggesting that only niche or specialized retailers targeting unmet needs could potentially thrive.

### Figure 5. The Sunbury Retail Trade Areas Examined



Source: Google, Claritas, Urban Partners

Figure 6: Population Change by Municipality, 2010-2019

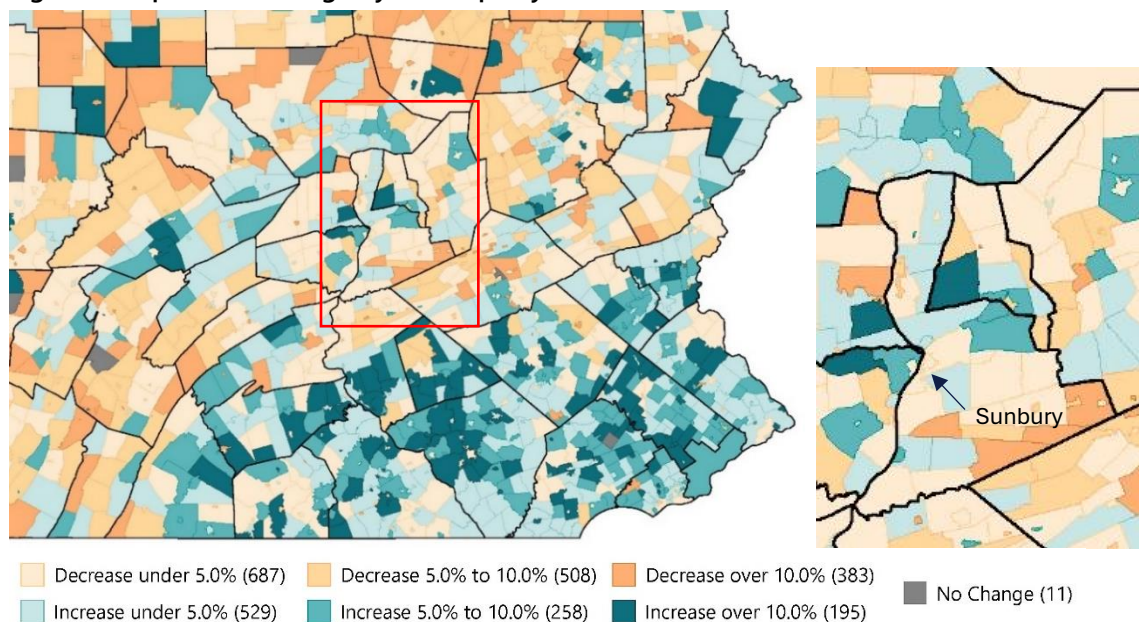
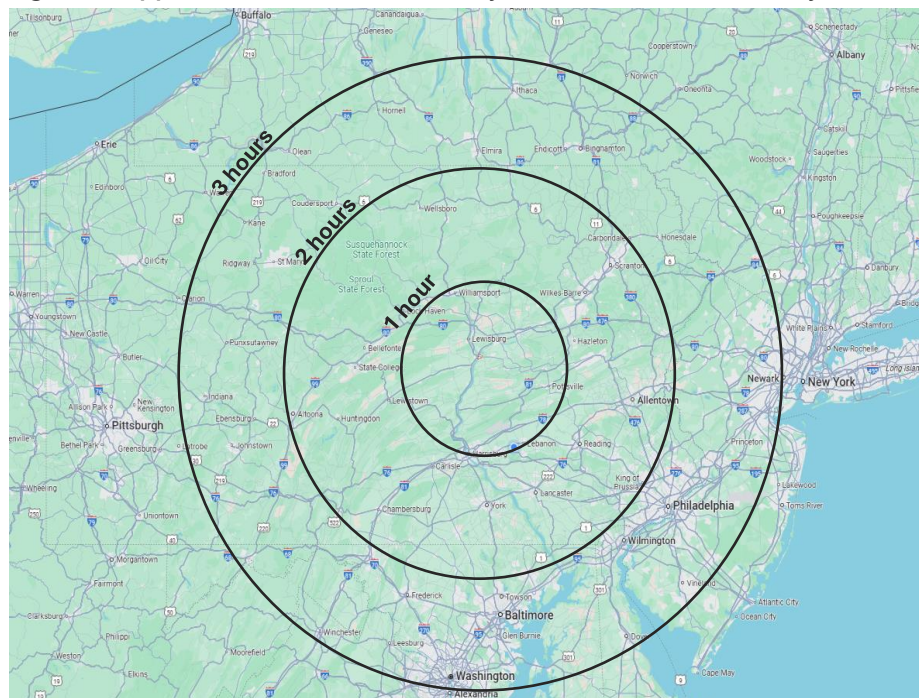


Figure 7. Approximate Travel Distance by Travel Time from Sunbury



Source: Google

More broadly, Sunbury lies within approximately 2 hours of southeastern and northeastern Pennsylvania's growing population centers, positioning it as an attractive destination for day-trippers, weekend visitors and remote workers. The city is also conveniently close to urban and metro centers, making it an ideal destination for education, training, and attracting teachers and experts. Additionally, Sunbury benefits from good transportation access, facilitating easy movement and connectivity for residents and visitors.

## The Issue

Sunbury's lagging downtown vitality can be characterized by:

### **1. Age of Building Stock vs. Modern Building Codes**

- a. Modernizing older building stock is challenging and expensive. Most buildings in downtown were constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, long before modern building codes began to regulate building egress for safety and accessibility for persons with disabilities.

### **2. Ground Floor Vacancy**

- a. Private business closures and relocations have led to vacancies and inactive ground floors. Increase in public service agencies, which have more clientele with less disposable income, has further contributed to more private business closures.
- b. Short-term vacancies make the downtown feel less lively and inviting, discouraging shoppers and casual visitors.
- c. When vacancies persist, empty storefronts suggest the downtown area is undesirable, and lead to the perception that downtown is struggling or neglected, further deterring potential investors and visitors.

### **3. Upper Floor Underutilization**

- a. According to local knowledge and anecdotal observations, many upper floors of commercial buildings are vacant or underutilized. This includes little to no use of rooftops, which can offer unique views over the city and into the surrounding landscape, whether to the river corridors to north and west and the forested hills to the east.
- b. Extension of ground floor uses may be impractical and separate retail and office uses are challenged by a lack of ground floor visibility and accessibility.
- c. Building age and condition influences the cost of renovation for residential uses.

### **4. Inflexible Property Ownership**

- a. Some building owners retain ownership of vacant or underutilized properties with little motivation or lack of resources to improve, develop, or sell, resulting in property stagnation.

### **5. Parking & Delivery Challenges**

- a. The perception of limited parking downtown and lack of awareness and use of the rabbittransit Stop Hopper service discourages shoppers and visitors from coming downtown.
- b. Lack of dedicated loading space constrains businesses requiring regular delivery.
- c. A focus on increasing parking can lead to the conversion of built land to parking lots, detracting from the downtown appeal.

### **6. Poor Walkability**

- a. Zoning ordinances permit the construction of auto-oriented designs in the downtown, detracting from the pedestrian environment.



- b. While there are positive features like sidewalk lighting, decorative flags, and flower baskets at major intersections, these are not consistent throughout downtown.
- c. Absence of benches or coherent street furniture is unattractive and discourages people from spending time downtown, limiting opportunities for social interaction and relaxation.
- d. Irregular tree spacing reduces pedestrian comfort and visual appeal.
- e. A mediocre pedestrian experience makes the retail streets feel more like a motorized travel corridor than a vibrant shopping destination, resulting in fewer people walking, lingering or supporting local businesses.

## The Opportunities

Sunbury has a number of favorable market conditions as well. These include:

1. **Diverse Commercial Options:** In January 2024, the city had a range of commercial properties available, including a historic former bank, turnkey coffee shop space, a renovated restaurant for event hosting, and properties suitable for manufacturing and retail. A historic bank has the potential to become an anchor for downtown activity offering unique architectural character and features for niche markets such as retail, dining or event hosting.
2. **Range of Sales and Rental Prices:** Sales prices for available properties vary from \$289,000 (601 Market Street) to \$400,000 (262-266 Market Street), offering opportunities for potential investors and businesses. Among the limited spaces available for rent, rates range from \$13.88/SF/YR (601 Market Street) to \$23.16/SF/YR (449 Woodlawn Avenue), making Sunbury a relatively affordable option for businesses seeking commercial space in the region.
3. **Adaptive use of Commercial Buildings:** Older commercial structures may be repurposed for housing, especially those built before the 1950s, offering potential future use for underutilized spaces.

### *A Traditional Main Street Approach to Building Retail*

A traditional approach to building retail is to invite new retailers to fill gaps in the retail market.

- The retail analysis identified opportunities for new retailers in the categories of food/dining establishments, clothing and apparel-related businesses, and selected miscellaneous retailing. The Committee suggested additional retailers, including outdoor sporting goods, a bridal shop, an office supplies store, a general store, and a modern department store.
- New diverse retail establishments could have a positive impact on Sunbury's economy, catering to residents and drawing visitors.
- The Historic District's built environment is a unique resource with commercial appeal that the City should continue to protect. The many smaller and unique commercial spaces favor smaller entrepreneurs and startup businesses.
- Commercial spaces can extend to upper floors, supporting office spaces, rooftop restaurants, and bars with views over the city.

- Modern residential units on upper floors in downtown buildings will appeal to residents looking to live within walking distance of stores, restaurants, service providers, cultural venues, and transit for regional shopping and services. These units can be owner-occupied or commercially owned and renter occupied.

### *New Economic Engines for the City and its Downtown*

Due to its location and access, downtown, and rural surroundings, the City is well-positioned to become a hub for arts, cultural, and communications products and services, aka the creative sector, as well as a gateway to recreation in Central Pennsylvania. Embracing local assets—both natural and man-made—would enable the City to define a new economic identity that spans a variety of industries that bring customers back to the City again and again.

### **Creative Sector or Creative Economy**

The Creative Sector encompasses activities that generate original intellectual property embedded in goods and services for the consumer or that contribute to the ideation, creation, production, distribution, and use/consumption of the goods and services, even if they are intended for public or non-profit use/consumption. The creative sector generates jobs, supports lifelong learning, and attracts and retains residents and businesses

Creative Sector industries include:

- Marketing – Advertising and marketing agencies & professionals
- Architecture – Architecture firms & architects
- Visual Arts & Crafts – Galleries, artists, artisans & makers
- Design – Product, interior, graphic, and fashion design firms and designers
- Film & Media – Film, video, animation, TV & Radio businesses
- Digital Games – Companies, programmers & individuals producing games.
- Music & Entertainment – Producers, venues, musicians & performers
- Publishing – Print or electronic businesses & content creators, editors & writers

According to the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account of the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, PA's creative sector added \$30.1B to the economy (a 6.8% increase over 2021) and employed more than 175,000 individuals in 2022. By these figures, PA's creative sector value ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation and its employment ranked 7<sup>th</sup>.

As awareness for the economic potential of the Creative Sector grows, local governments, states, and nations are increasingly embracing the creative sector as a driver of economic vitality and a well-rounded quality of life. The groundwork for a thriving creative economy is already in place in Sunbury.

- Several renowned artists live in Sunbury and display/perform their work in major cities.
- Susquehanna Valley Arts Council / Susquehanna Arts Society is a thriving regional organization, while community arts councils have dwindled.
- Albright Center for the Arts located at 450 Chestnut Street, provides a space for artists and creative individuals to develop and exchange ideas and present their work for public consumption.

- The Albright Center also offers event space for larger gatherings, presentations, and performances. There is an opportunity to tap into these resources and collaborate to revive the creative sector in the city.

Additionally, regular downtown events that appeal to a cross-section of Sunbury and regional residents and work with existing downtown businesses help reinforce downtown's perception as a fun, attractive place with interesting businesses and attractions, while providing businesses with increased visibility and customers. Regularly occurring events such as weekly closed-street happy hours, outdoor farmers' markets, lunchtime concerts, etc. that use Cameron Park or Market Street fix downtown as a known destination. Consider relocating or extending major annual events that occur on the riverfront or Memorial Park to Market Street, closing blocks to traffic as needed.

### **Recreational Tourism as an Economic Engine**

Central Pennsylvania is already a growing hub for trail-based recreation. Lewisburg and nearby communities are realizing economic benefits from the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail (9.5 miles). Clinton County is extending the Bald Eagle Valley Trail, make connections from Lock Haven to Jersey Shore (11.5 miles) and to Williamsport. These trails are part of a larger trail system within the Susquehanna Greenway, a 500+-mile corridor from the river's headwaters in western PA and southern New York state through central PA to Maryland and onto the Chesapeake Bay. Sunbury's Riverfront Park Trail is acknowledged as one of 10 existing land trails in the Middle Section of the Susquehanna Greenway.

Northumberland County and the Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area (AOAA) have master planned a similar multi-community recreational connector and attraction in the Northumberland County Non-Motorized Rail Trail. Conceived in 2019 and master planned in 2022, the proposed 35-mile rail trail would connect the Mount Carmel Area to Shamokin to the eastern edge of Sunbury along the former Philadelphia & Reading Railroad (

Figure 8 and Figure 9). Northumberland County is working with regional partners, like SEDA-COG, to fund trail design and development.

**Figure 8. Proposed Northumberland County Rail Trail (with key road intersections)**

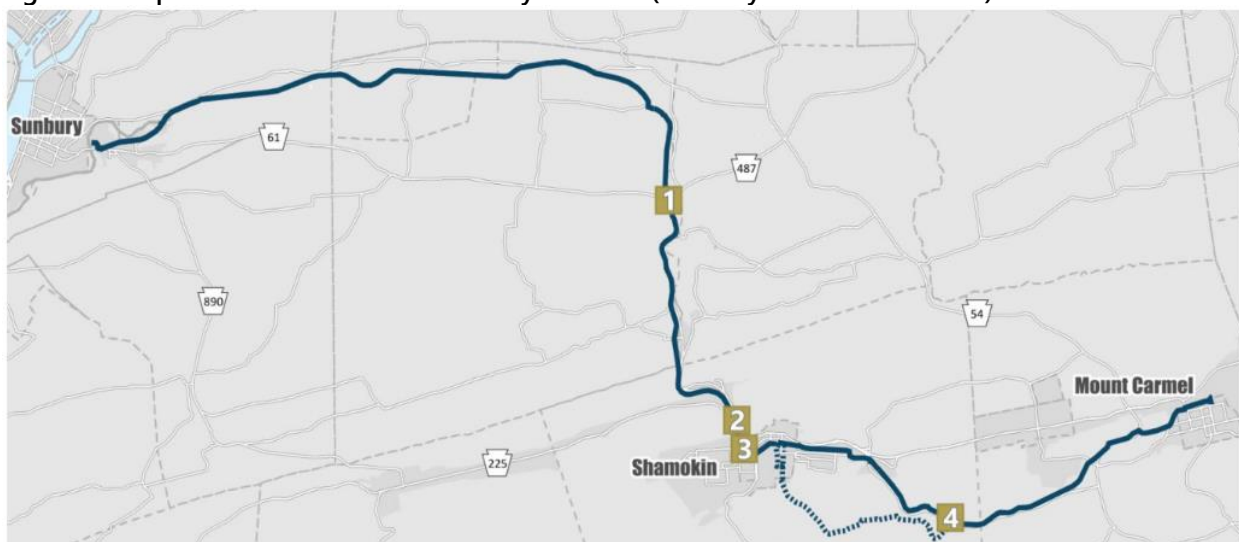


Figure 9. Proposed Northumberland County Rail Trail – Sunbury and Upper Augusta Segment



Source: Northumberland County Non-Motorized Rail Trail Master Plan

Sunbury’s 2023 Bicycle and Pedestrian Audit recognized Sunbury’s role as a community ‘hub’ on the Susquehanna Greenway and laid out a connection from the proposed rail-trail to the riverfront and downtown (the Red Route), as well as two other routes (corridors) for improved bike-ped connections or enhancement among business, educational, and recreational nodes. The Audit report states that “community leaders believe a desirable community that serves its residents and visitors includes having well maintained walking and biking facilities and routes” that connect important community destinations, accommodate residents of all ages and abilities, provides interesting amenities, and has few to no barriers. These connections will benefit residents as well as visitors with free or low-cost travel options and promote physical activity in lieu of local motorized trips and the associated environmental impact.

- ▶ The three bike-ped routes identified in the Audit are shown in

Figure 10. They include:

- ▶ **Northumberland Trail Extension Route (Levee Trail; the red route)** – This Route will create a signature trail system through the City. The Route is also intended to serve as the section of the Northumberland (County) Trail through Sunbury. It will connect City residents and visitors, and eventually regional users of the Northumberland (County) Trail, to Sunbury’s Riverfront Park. A linkage to the Shikellamy High School campus is also envisioned.
- ▶ **SWEEP Greenspace to the Recreation Complex Route (the pink route)** – This Route provides a designated pedestrian and bicycle connection through the northern edge of the City. This Route will extend from the Shikellamy High School to SWEEP Greenspace Route and will strategically provide a safe and reliable connection to park areas, recreation facilities and outdoor open space recreation areas.



- **Shikellamy High School to SWEEP Greenspace Route (the blue route)** – This Route designates a Safe Routes to School approach that connects neighborhoods in proximity to Market Street, S. 4th Street and S. 10th Street to the Shikellamy High School. This Routes also serves as a connection between the Levee Trail and the SWEEP greenspace.

Figure 10. Priority Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements (Routes) from the 2023 Bike-Ped Audit.



Source: City of Sunbury

## Potential Actions to Spark a Thriving Downtown

- Apply for Main Street Matters Grants by PA Department of Community & Economic Development.
- Revise development regulations to align with market opportunities and desired built form; supported with guidance, customer-friendly service and staff in both English and Spanish.
- Allow live-work maker spaces or live and work units in close proximity to one another and supported by commercial uses and public spaces where creative individuals can gather to exchange ideas and inspiration.
- Access overall city infrastructure, safety, parking and utility requirements to support downtown revitalization.
- Provide multiple safe, enhanced pedestrian, bicycle, and transit routes to the downtown. Integrate traffic calming measures where appropriate.
  - Explore expanded parking access through shared-use agreements and bicycle parking (bike racks).

- Support and partner with Sunbury's Revitalization, Inc. to implement community and economic development plans and activities including advocacy, small business support, community engagement, and marketing.
- Encourage investment in creative sector industries and creative economy in collaboration with local and regional partners.
- Partner with Sunbury's Revitalization, Inc. to implement the downtown revitalization strategic plan as developed by the Downtown Sunbury Team through the Blueprint Communities® program. The strategic plan uses the Main Street Approach, a proven model for community revitalization based on four factors: economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization.

## ✦ From Vacant Sites to Thriving Spaces

### The Context

As a result of the closure of major employers from 2008 to 2020, Sunbury has five relatively large vacant sites and underutilized buildings.

**Table 2. Facility Closures and Associated Job Losses**

Closed Facility	Site Size (acres)	Date of Closure	Jobs Lost
Knight-Celotex fiberboard plant	21.83 ac	November 2008	88 <sup>1</sup>
Bimbo Bakery	6.0 ac (estimated); 1.7 ac portion available	November 2016	67 <sup>2</sup>
Glen Raven, formerly the Sunbury Textile Mill	18.58 ac 200k sf total; 100k sf available	June 2020	110 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Manufacturing Subtotal</b>	<b>46.61 ac</b>		<b>2020</b>
Sunbury Middle School (grades 6-8)	2.7 ac	2012	40*
Sunbury Community Hospital	5.0 ac (estimated former total)	March 2020	153 <sup>4</sup>
First National Bank	0.23 ac; 20k sf total	N/A	relocated
Old Northumberland County Jail	1.07 ac	1980	relocated
<b>Civic/Institutional Subtotal</b>	<b>7.7 ac</b>		<b>193</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>54.11 ac (estimated)</b>		<b>193</b>

\* Estimated based on approximately 40 faculty and staff at Shikellamy Middle School per the staff directory at <https://shikbraves.org/en-US/staff>. Accessed 2/24/2025.

<sup>1</sup> [Fiberboard manufacturer Knight-Celotex dissolves](#), Daily Item, June 20, 2009; updated November 16, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> [Bimbo Bakery in Sunbury closing, 67 employees to lose jobs](#), Daily Item, 2016. Accessed 2/24/2025.

<sup>3</sup> [History, Drive Industry](#). Accessed 2/24/2025.

<sup>4</sup> [Concerns over Sunbury Hospital Closure](#), WNEP, January 21, 2020. Accessed 2/24/2025.

## The Issue

1. **Limited market interest in sites and buildings and nominal job creation:** A hemp processing company operates in a portion of the Textile Mill building; a religious organization occupies a portion of the former bakery; and portions of the former multi-parcel hospital site are currently used as commercial office space. Only the hemp processing facility has generated a notable job count and these smaller than full-size operations are unlikely to grow into full-scale occupancy within 10 years. Meanwhile, the buildings continue to age and require regular maintenance and repair that small operations are unlikely to afford.
2. **An increased outflow of workers and local spending:** The resident workers to jobs ratio in Sunbury remains high, with workers seeking opportunities elsewhere. Commuting to employment destinations outside the City encourages workers to shop for daily goods and services in other communities as they travel, rather than supporting existing businesses and the City's overall vitality. The commute time to/from work may also limit resident workers' time available for civic volunteerism.

Table 3. Resident Workers to Jobs in Former Major Employment Industries, Sunbury

Industry	Resident Workers, 2022	Jobs in Sunbury, 2022	Minimum Number of Resident Workers Working Elsewhere, 2022
Manufacturing	800	222	578
Educational Services	212	188	24
Health Care and Social Assistance	758	633	125
<b>Total</b>	<b>1770</b>	<b>1043</b>	<b>727</b>

Source: OnTheMap.

3. **Property Acquisition and Improvement Costs as a Barrier for Small Businesses:** Most available commercial spaces are listed for sale rather than for rent, reflecting a condition observed not only in Sunbury but also in neighboring communities such as Northumberland, Shamokin Dam, and Selinsgrove. Many entrepreneurs and small businesses cannot afford significant upfront property purchase costs, making it nearly impractical to launch and grow a business without a large capital investment.

Additionally, many properties require significant improvements to bring buildings up to code. Property owners/landlords typically expect the business tenant to make necessary upgrades, renovations, and repairs, raising the start-up cost for a new business.

## The Opportunity

1. **Network-served sites and buildings:** All five sites have utilities and services, including electric, natural gas, wastewater service, water service, telecommunications and fiber connectivity for any intensive use.
2. **Revitalization of an Industrial Marketplace:** Sunbury's industrial market is more extensive than its office space market, with over 500,000 SF available and more than 20 acres of vacant industrial land. Key industrial sites include the former UPMC

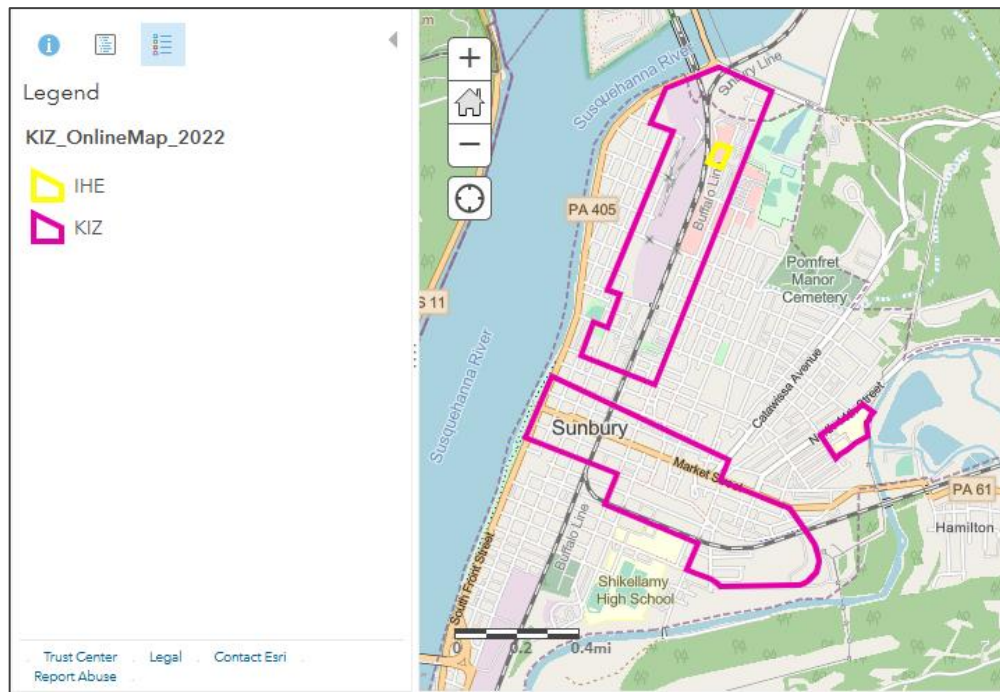
Susquehanna Sunbury Hospital, the former Sunbury Textile Mill, former Bimbo Bakery, and the former Celotex site, offering opportunities for new tenants and redevelopment. Industrial spaces range from 7,974 SF (249 Walnut Street) to over 147,000 SF (350 N. 11th Street), catering to diverse industrial needs. Noteworthy sales prices in early 2024 included \$2,700,000 for the former Bimbo Bakery site, and \$2,500,000 for the former Celotex vacant industrial land. The 249 Walnut Street property was available for rent at \$6.00/SF/YR. Potential opportunities for revitalizing the industrial economy in the city include:

- a. **DRIVE Industries Promotion:** Significant sites are promoted by DRIVE Industries and FOCUS Central PA, indicating a concerted effort to attract businesses to Sunbury, showcasing its potential as a desirable location for commerce.
  - b. **Develop Ancillary Uses:** Considering Sunbury's key employment sectors, such as Health Care, Public Administration, Management, Retail, and Manufacturing, the demand for traditional office space is minimal. Expanding the ancillary uses that support the primary employment sectors will help diversify the commercial landscape, create more economic opportunities, and enhance the attractiveness of the core industries for the workers.
  - c. **Growth of Small-Scale Manufacturing:** The City's existing infrastructure positions it well to capture the small light industrial businesses, such as artisanal food production, custom fabrication, artisanal products workshops, and small-scale manufacturing that supports the larger industries around the region. Such industries also support the expansion of Transportation and Warehousing sector, as more goods need to be stored and exported. These types of businesses can easily occupy vacant commercial spaces downtown, creating accessible and diverse jobs, drawing foot traffic and contribute to revitalizing downtown. The potential for reuse of existing commercial structures for housing must consider existing buildings conditions beyond the scope of this comprehensive plan.
3. **Reuse of existing buildings as live-work spaces for artisans:** Older commercial and industrial buildings may appeal to artisans if presented as live-work space, particularly with a shared retail sales space.
  4. **Redevelopment of sites and/or portions of sites for commercial recreation facilities:** Given the popularity of the City's indoor ice rink for youth and adult hockey leagues and the overall growth of year round youth and adult recreation services, the Celotex site and possible the unused parking/side yard of the textile mill could support commercial recreation facilities. Both are in close proximity to retail areas that already provide some hospitality services.



5. **Special Designation:** Three of the five sites are located in a Greater Sunbury Keystone Innovation Zone (GSKIZ), where qualifying companies receive tradable tax credits to offset tax liability or sell to fund growth. GSKIZ was established to foster innovation and expand opportunities for entrepreneurs by leveraging the resources of educational and healthcare institutions, along with public and private sector partners.

Figure 11. Greater Sunbury Keystone Innovation Zone (GSKIZ)



Source: Drive Industry.

## Potential Actions

- Update Zoning to accommodate a range of commercial and industrial uses for vacant and underutilized sites.
- Consider a housing market assessment specific to the potential reuse of commercial structures for housing and industrial lot for mixed use.
- Study impacts related to housing, transportation (walk/bike/scoot/drive infrastructure, signals/signs, or services), demand or quality of public/community services, etc.

## Former Celotex Site Profile



Source: Drive Industry; UP Development Planning

**Address:** 1400 Susquehanna Avenue

**Year Built:** N/A

**Available SF:** 20+ acres of land

**Sale Price:** \$2,500,000

**Description:** Industrial-zoned land with heavy infrastructure connection available including direct rail service by Norfolk Southern. North end of city with easy access to roadway network.

### **Site Features & Conditions**

**Historic Use:** A silk mill, a radio and surveillance technology manufacturer, and fiberboard manufacturer. Also soil and railroad tie recycling.

Environmental investigation conducted under oversight by the Pennsylvania Department of

Environmental Protection (PADEP) found soil and groundwater contamination. These conditions were mitigated by an engineered cap consisting of asphalt, concrete and buildings and open areas contained by a two-foot cap of clean soil and plant as well as a deed notice to restrict groundwater use to make the site safe for residential and non-residential uses per Pennsylvania's Land Recycling Act (Act 2), Title 25, and Chapter 250.

**Land Use Context:** State highway and river corridor to the north. Rail line and commercial uses to the east. Commercial and industrial uses to the south. Predominantly residential uses to the west.

**Transportation Access:** Highway, rail; highway, sidewalk, and microtransit for employees.

### **Potential Future Uses**

**Industrial Uses** – processing, production, warehouse/storage, or logistics; potential rail service user

**Large-scale Commercial Uses** – unlikely rail service users

- Retail and/or e-commerce facility/facilities
- Energy production, e.g. power plant, solar production facility
- Agriculture, e.g., intensive vertical farming
- Transportation/Logistics, e.g., trucking companies
- Technology, e.g., major data centers
- Sports/Entertainment, e.g., indoor/outdoor facility complex (a la Spooky Nook in Lancaster, PA for field sports)

**Institutional Uses** – government, educational, civic facility; unlikely rail service users

## Former Sunbury Textile Mill Profile



**Address:** 1150 Walnut Street Extension

**Year Built:** 1886; last major Renovation in 2019

**Available SF:** 100,000; divisible

**Lease Rate:** N/A

**Description:** Former Sunbury Textile Mill facility renamed the Sunbury Commerce Center; 100,000 SF available for lease with 20,000 SF available per floor.

Source: Drive Industry.

### ***Site Features & Conditions***

**Land Use Context:** Rail and residential uses to the north. Vacant and utility land to the east and south. Industrial use to the west.

**Transportation Access:** Highway (Walnut Street Extension) and North Shore Railroad/Norfolk Southern for freight – 1 block from SR 61; highway, sidewalk, and microtransit for employees

**Special Designation:** Located in a Greater Susquehanna Keystone Innovation Zone (GSKIZ), where qualifying companies receive tradable tax credits to offset tax liability or sell to fund growth. GSKIZ was established to foster innovation and expand opportunities for entrepreneurs by leveraging the resources of educational and healthcare institutions, along with public and private sector partners. See Figure 11.

### ***Potential Future Uses***

**Industrial Uses** – processing, production, warehouse/storage, or logistics; potential rail service user. Industrial uses may be able to reuse the existing structure.

#### **Large-scale Commercial Uses**

- Retail and/or e-commerce facility/facilities
- Energy production, e.g. power plant, solar production facility
- Agriculture, e.g., intensive vertical farming
- Transportation/Logistics, e.g., trucking companies
- Technology, e.g., major data centers

All of these uses are more likely under a redevelopment scenario than a building re-use scenario.

## Former UPMC Sunbury Community Hospital Profile



**Address:** 350 N. 11th Street

**Year Built:** 1951

**Available SF:** 147,018; divisible

**Sale Price:** N/A

**Description:** Former UPMC Susquehanna Sunbury Community Hospital available. The five-story, main building and five additional office-residential buildings sit on a 10+ acre parcel. The main building most recently operated as a +/- 70-bed hospital before closing in March 2020. The site includes generous parking fields.

Source: Drive Industry.

### ***Site Features & Conditions***

**Land Use Context:** Residential to the north and south. Shamokin Creek and Sunbury Municipal Authority (public land) to the east. Vacant former industrial parcel to the west.

**Transportation Access:** Highway (11<sup>th</sup> Street/SR 4012) for freight – 4 blocks from SR 61; highway, sidewalk, and microtransit for employees

**Special Designation:** Located in a Greater Susquehanna Keystone Innovation Zone (GSKIZ), where qualifying companies receive tradable tax credits to offset tax liability or sell to fund growth. GSKIZ was established to foster innovation and expand opportunities for entrepreneurs by leveraging the resources of educational and healthcare institutions, along with public and private sector partners. See Figure 11.

### ***Potential Future Uses***

**Institutional Uses** – government, educational, civic uses

**Residential Uses**, specifically multi-family housing

**Mixed-use**, e.g., small-scale commercial retail or services on the ground floor with multi-family or senior housing on upper floors.

All of these uses may be able to reuse the existing structure.



## Former Bimbo Bakery Profile



Source: Drive Industry.

**Address:** 249 N. 11th Street

**Year Built:** N/A

**Available SF:** 71,500; divisible

**Sale Price:** \$2,700,000

**Description:** Former Bimbo Bakery manufacturing/warehouse space available on a 5+ acre site. Property features high ceilings, 18 elevated dock doors, 4 drive-in doors, 2 recessed elevated dock doors, supply conveyor system in loading dock area, and +/-200 surfaced parking spaces.

### ***Site Features & Conditions***

**Land Use Context:** Residential to the north and south. Vacant former hospital to the east. Vacant former middle school to the west.

**Transportation Access:** Highway (11<sup>th</sup> Street/SR 4012) for freight – 4 blocks from SR 61; highway, sidewalk, and microtransit for employees

### ***Potential Future Uses***

**Industrial Uses** – small to mid-scale food or materials processing, production

#### **Neighborhood-scale Commercial Uses**

- Food retail: Small grocery stores, convenience stores, bakeries, fruit and vegetable stands
- Personal services: Hair salons, barbershops, nail salons, pet groomers
- Health services: Pharmacies, small medical clinics, dental offices
- Other retail: Dry cleaners, shoe repair shops, small hardware stores
- Food and beverage: Coffee shops, small restaurants, take-out places
- Professional services: Small accounting firms, real estate agencies, insurance brokers

**Institutional Uses** – government, educational, civic facility

**Residential Uses**, at similar or higher residential density compared to adjoining residential uses

**Mixed-use**, e.g., small-scale commercial retail or services on the ground floor in combination with multi-family or senior housing on upper floors.

## Former Middle School Profile



**Address:** 115 Fairmount Avenue

**Year Built:** N/A

**Available SF:** 2.7 acres

### ***Site Features & Conditions***

**Land Use Context:** Residential on all four sides with occasional small commercial uses.

**Transportation Access:** City Street (Fairmount Avenue) for freight – 1-3 blocks from SR 61/Market Street; street, sidewalk, and microtransit for employees

### ***Potential Future Uses***

**Industrial Uses** – small to mid-scale food or materials processing, production

#### **Neighborhood-scale Commercial Uses**

- Food retail: Small grocery stores, convenience stores, bakeries, fruit and vegetable stands
- Personal services: Hair salons, barbershops, nail salons, pet groomers
- Health services: Pharmacies, small medical clinics, dental offices
- Other retail: Dry cleaners, shoe repair shops, small hardware stores
- Food and beverage: Coffee shops, small restaurants, take-out places
- Professional services: Small accounting firms, real estate agencies, insurance brokers

**Institutional Uses** – government, educational, civic facility

**Residential Uses**, at similar or higher residential density compared to adjoining residential uses

**Mixed-use**, e.g., small-scale commercial retail or services in combination with other uses above

## First National Bank Profile



Source: Loopnet.com

**Address:** 400 Market Street

**Year Built:** N/A

**Total SF:** 20,495

### ***Site Features & Conditions***

**Land Use Context:** Commercial retail and services, and government/public services

**Transportation Access:** Market Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Street

### ***Potential Future Uses***

**Commercial Uses** that could leverage the building's unique architecture in the service experience

- Food and beverage: restaurants, take-out places
- Lodging services: hotel with food and beverage on the ground floor

**Residential Uses**, at similar or higher residential density compared to adjoining residential uses

Explore examples and lessons learned from historic building reuse, such as:

- The Old County Jail Museum in Jim Thorpe, Carbon Conty
- Stourbridge Project in Wayne County
- Antoine Dutot Museum & Gallery in Delaware Water Gap
- Mohican Farms in Blairstown, New Jersey
- Decades, a full-service restaurant & bar, six-lane boutique bowling alley, retro arcade, and events venue in Lancaster



## Old Northumberland County Jail Profile



Source: dailyitem.com

**Address:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Street between Market Street and Arch Street

**Year Built:** 1837; 1875

**Total SF:** N/A

### ***Site Features & Conditions***

**Land Use Context:** Edge of downtown; commercial retail and services, government/public services, and residential

**Transportation Access:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Arch Street

### ***Potential Future Uses***

**Commercial Uses** that could leverage the building's unique architecture in the service experience

- Food and beverage: restaurants, take-out places
- Lodging services: Small accounting firms, real estate agencies, insurance brokers
- Cultural/Tourism, particularly in combination with the above

See examples of historic building reuse under First National Bank profile on previous page.



## ✦ From Deteriorating Housing to Strong Neighborhoods

### The Context

About 50% of the housing units in Sunbury were built in 1939 or earlier and 100% of units were built before 1990. The resulting scale of repairs required, create excessive financial burden for low to moderate income homeowners. About 22% of housing units have owners with addresses outside of Sunbury, indicating they are likely rental properties. Although renters are expected to handle daily maintenance, they typically have little to no responsibility for the overall condition of the house, which leads to ongoing property neglect and deterioration.

### The Issue

#### 1. Aging Housing Stock and Lack of Property Maintenance

- a. Sporadic residential blight is evident in areas such as Church Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets, where properties appear rundown or abandoned.
- b. Common yard violations are prevalent, indicating widespread non-compliance with local standards.
- c. Many properties show signs of neglect, suggest a general lack of occupant stewardship by homeowners and renters.
- d. Lack of civic care. Residents frequently leave trash bins at the curb instead of returning them to the side or rear yard after collection.
- e. Poor and uneven sidewalk conditions in many locations—an issue that is the responsibility of property owners but remains unaddressed.

#### 2. Lack of Diverse Housing Options

- a. A lack of diverse housing options has contributed to a decline in the rental market, with the number of renter-occupied units decreasing by 7.8% between 2012 and 2022. Renters are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing.
- b. Limited new construction or renovated units.

#### 3. Deteriorating City Infrastructure

- a. City spent approximately \$10,000 only, on Street Maintenance and Repair in 2023. Additionally, there is no budget for sidewalk maintenance or street trees.
- b. Sidewalk conditions are in disrepair, some intersections are suspected to not meet ADA standards, although City has addressed some locations.
- c. Public complaints about street conditions. Street conditions (public complained of potholes; only one location mentioned Susquehanna Ave)
- d. Pothole complaints could be on local/neighborhood streets (as in example) and collector/arterial streets along neighborhood edges.
- e. Lack of street trees contributes to pedestrian discomfort and creates an uninviting urban/suburban environment. There is no data on the count and condition of street trees, making it difficult to assess their status or perform regular maintenance.

#### 4. Lack of ownership and sense of belonging

- a. Loss of long-standing business and community anchors has eroded the neighborhood identity and collective stewardship.
- b. Younger and working age population leaving for work opportunities elsewhere.
- c. Limited small-scale convenience retail within neighborhoods and lack of neighborhood gathering spaces make the city less attractive for current and prospective residents.
- d. Prevalent substance use among youth is causing social fragmentation, family instability, making it harder for residents to feel connected to their community.

### The Opportunity

- **Diversify Housing Types:** Encourage development of the missing middle housing (duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings, accessory dwelling units), to increase affordable options for renters and buyers.
- **Rehabilitation of Existing Housing Stock:** 39.3% home sales in Sunbury from 2019-2023 were investor/developer led. Support and guide developers in delivering projects that address the housing needs, repurpose blighted properties, and promote beautification of priority properties, especially downtown.
- **Mixed Use Housing:** Encourage existing rehabilitated properties or new development to have active ground floor spaces, such as a variety of retail units for rent or areas suitable for small-scale manufacturing and small businesses, with multi-family housing located on the floors above.
- **Improve Transit and Active Mobility options:** Make neighborhoods more accessible to a wider range of residents. Attract the young working population, who may not own a car. Improve accessibility issues by providing options for transit, biking and better walking paths, connecting people to jobs, services and downtown, without causing car congestion.
- **Street Beautification:** Invest in improved sidewalks, street landscaping, public art and well-maintained facades to attract new residents and businesses. Beautiful streetscapes not only create vibrancy and improve quality of life but also foster a stronger sense of community and ownership.

### Potential Actions

- Update zoning to:
  - Allow smaller apartments, aligning with International Building Code standards as used by others in the region,
  - Allow multi-family housing as a permitted use via overlay applicable to downtown as well as other targeted areas
  - Reduce barriers to adaptive reuse
  - Reduce or possibly eliminate the on-site parking requirement for habitable spaces, particularly those in transit-served areas, e.g., the Stop Hopper service area.
- With the Pennsylvania Governor making housing a top priority and a comprehensive statewide Housing Action Plan due in fall 2025, new legislation and programs are expected on the horizon to expand affordable housing, support home repairs, and address

homelessness—potentially bringing significant resources and policy changes for communities across the state

- Progressive code enforcement through proactive advisory could include simplifying code, make it easy-to understand, educate, issue friendly public notice, reminder of code/standards. Could be enforced citywide or prioritized by ward.
- Build in community buy-in and sustained enforcement by engaging local community organizations. These can include:
  - ▶ The Sunbury Redevelopment Authority (SRA), which was created to address nuisance, blighted, vacant properties in the City and to promote redevelopment of properties.
  - ▶ The Blighted Property Review Committee, which serves as an advisory body to SRA, helping to evaluate existing condition and making recommendations for SRA action.
  - ▶ The Historic Architecture Review Board that advises City Council on the issuance of certificates of appropriateness in accordance with Article XVIII, Historic District.
- Work collaboratively with property owners, educating them about healthy housing standards and connecting them to financial resources for repairs. Issue informal notice of observed violations, with no penalty. This approach leads to better compliance, as owners are more willing to make repairs when supported rather than threatened.
- Establish revolving funds or partner with local lenders to provide low-interest loans or grants to small landlords for critical repairs, especially when owners lack the means to invest in their properties.<sup>5</sup> These could include:
  - ▶ Northumberland County funds for blight demolition captured through real estate transfers.
  - ▶ Northumberland County's land bank.
- Refresh and actively promote the "Contact Us" feature on the city website and public works phone line, encouraging residents to report issues or request information about city services and street maintenance.
- Improve communication of annual street work schedule to residents and businesses.
- Coordinate closely with underground utility providers to ensure that all underground improvements are completed prior to surface repairs, following best practices to maximize efficiency and reduce rework.
- Enforce existing ordinances and prioritize the planting of new street trees along key corridors to enhance urban greenery, improve aesthetics, and provide environmental benefits. Resources could include:
  - ▶ The Shade Tree Commission advises City Council on planning, management and permitting shade trees on public land or public right-of-way. The Shade Tree Commission is responsible for development and maintenance of a Street Tree Management Plan and for review of subdivision and/or land development plans for conformity with the Street Tree Management Plan.

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<sup>5</sup> Healthy Rental Housing Policy Action Guide. <https://www.cityhealth.org/resource-center/hrh-guide/>

## ✦ From Undervalued Waterfront to A River City Identity

### The Context

The waterfront is one of the most distinct and valuable cultural assets of Sunbury City. The riverfront is significant to the region's native American History and has played a central role in the region's development, serving as a major travel from pre-colonial days to present, by means of land-side trails, rail and highways flowing along the river. The river's banks fostered the growth of Sunbury and neighboring towns, shaping the area's economic and cultural landscape.

Today, the River continues to enrich Sunbury as a scenic and recreational resource, offering fishing, boating, and striking views across Shamokin Dam and Northumberland. Riverfront Park, publicly owned and protected by an extensive levee and floodwall system, provides residents and visitors with access to trails, a boat dock, an amphitheater, and fishing pier. It is also a secondary water source for the Sunbury Municipal Authority water system/department.

### The Issue

1. **Limited Physical Access:** Front Street (PA 61 and PA 147) is a barrier to the riverfront/Riverfront Park access, with only limited marked crossings.
2. **Lack of Visual Access:** Floodwall blocks everyday visual access and connection to the river. Blocked vision also creates public safety concerns after hours.
3. **Lack of River City Identity:** Marginal physical and visual access limits engagement and active use of the river as a city asset, as a lever for river town identity, venue, and destination.

### The Opportunity

1. **Enhance Physical and Visual Access**
  - a. Improve pedestrian crossings and extend street grid, pathway connections to the riverfront.
  - b. Create more openings to the river by incorporating flood gates or removable barriers. Deploy passive flood barriers that provide full access under normal circumstances but automatically rise in response to rising water.
  - c. New signage and inviting entry points with clear signage and universal accessibility will create an inviting riverfront.
2. **Activate the Riverfront**
  - a. Expand recreational amenities like walking, biking trails, boat launches and fishing piers, to draw people to the waterfront for daily activities.
  - b. Partner with local businesses and create seasonal year-round programming like markets, festivals, events, fitness classes. Encourage pop-up cafes, food trucks and mobile vendors for activation.
  - c. Incorporate overlook, art, seating and gathering spaces at the street level to bring in activity along the dead floodwall.
3. **Connect Riverfront to Downtown**
  - a. Promote historic preservation and adaptive reuse of buildings along the riverfront.

- b. Prioritize riverfront development, promote mixed-use and commercial development near the riverfront to encourage foot traffic and build a vibrant river edge.
- c. Celebrate and integrate river history, beauty and related public art not just along the river, but throughout the downtown core through visual cues, signage, interpretive art.

#### **4. Flood Protection and River Health**

- a. Expand tree planting, native landscaping, and riparian buffers along the riverfront for shoreline stabilization while also providing shade, enhancing the riverfront's beauty, and improving wildlife habitat.
- b. Design parks, trails, and plazas that can withstand periodic flooding—using raised boardwalks, flood-tolerant landscaping, and movable furnishing.
- c. Incorporate bioswales, raingardens and permeable pavements to manage stormwater, reduce street runoff and filter pollutants before they reach the river.

### **Potential Actions**

- Seek Grants funding for river access points, floodplain restoration, and water trail development. These organizations could include:
  - ▶ Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)
  - ▶ PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
  - ▶ Community Development Block Grants
- Engage with Susquehanna Greenway Partnership and seek their expertise on riverfront revitalization to inform future projects.
- Partner with Shamokin Dam, Northumberland, and other Susquehanna River towns to align planning, funding, and marketing efforts for river programming and shared resources.
- Apply for Schuylkill River Restoration Fund-style grants for shoreline conservation.

## 4 ♦ The City's Plan for 2035

### Vision for 2035

By 2035, the City of Sunbury is a center of commerce, industry, tourism, and services for the Central Susquehanna Valley and a place for residents and visitors to embrace living along the Susquehanna River.

### Goal 1: Revitalize Downtown Sunbury

#### Objectives

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- 1.1. **Sustain the Urban Fabric.** The gridded pattern of streets, alleys, and blocks, wide sidewalks, nominal building setbacks, and multi-story buildings oriented to the primary street are the primary physical features of the built environment downtown. These elements should be protected in the existing development and sustained in any future development by the City's zoning ordinance.
- 1.2. **Improve Building Conditions.** Buildings need to be code-compliant and ready for occupancy. Owners need to be made aware and compelled to correct deficiencies to sustain the integrity of the structure and protect the safety of occupants. With the help of the State Historic Preservation Office, the City should make property owners aware of historic tax credits available to for-profit properties in the Sunbury Historic District.
- 1.3. **Increase Building Occupancy.** Occupied buildings draw employees, customers, and downtown residents, and prospective area residents to the downtown where they see and patronize other businesses. Available buildings and spaces need to be actively marketed to local businesses looking to expand and outside investors; long-term vacancy should be discouraged. Measuring building occupancy should consider ground floor occupancy and upper floor occupancy separately.
- 1.4. **Intensify Use of Downtown Buildings.** The mix of uses downtown should be flexible, guided by the zoning ordinance to manage use size and overall compatibility, but will ultimately be market-driven. Zoning should permit ground-floor uses, such as retail stores, restaurants/bars, creative maker spaces, and service offices that generate foot-traffic for one another, and upper floor uses, such as professional offices and residential purposes.
- 1.5. **Increase Downtown Jobs.** New industry increases jobs and employment opportunities. May also include training opportunities/programs.
- 1.6. **Optimize Accessible Parking & Loading Zones.** Customer parking and delivery zones are necessary in downtown and should complement, not displace, the urban fabric. Customers arriving on bike or by personal vehicle should find parking on the street and in nearby public parking lots and parking structures, if financially feasible. Business deliveries should be made primarily via Court Street and Woodlawn Avenue.

Before expending or pursuing funding for a parking structure or structures, the City should conduct a parking study. The study should estimate how much parking will be needed to serve a revitalized downtown, consider the feasibility of one larger facility vs. multiple

smaller facilities (e.g., 2-story parking decks), and determine suitable locations, including the opportunity to develop (or redevelop or infill develop) with a private commercial use partner. Locations factors should consider proximity to Market Street, the riverfront, and the Albright Center.

- 1.7. **Partner with SRI to establish a downtown management program.** Increasing the vitality of downtown Sunbury will require a sustainable downtown management program with staff, including a full-time downtown manager, at a minimum), ongoing training, equipment, and resources for effectiveness. A downtown management program will assist new and existing businesses attract and retain customers and foster business-to-business activity. The program should carry out activities that recruit new businesses and compatible development, help expanding and prospective businesses navigate available buildings and spaces, financial assistance and other resources, and the City’s business regulations. The City and SRI should also advocate for Main Street Designation through PA DCED's Main Street Matters program, administered by the PA Downtown Center.
- 1.8. **Expand Downtown Events.** Downtown events should appeal to a wide variety of audiences, inviting all to visit downtown Sunbury and increasing foot traffic for businesses. A portion of resources should be allocated for tools to measure effectiveness of downtown events.
- 1.9. **Establish a Local Anchor Store.** Whether free-standing or in combination with another retail store, maker-space, downtown visitor’s office and/or downtown management office, develop a retail location for locally made, locally branded products.

## Implementing Actions

A. Update the Zoning Ordinance & Map to sustain the urban fabric, allow a mix of uses appropriate to ground-floor and upper-floor locations, and address parking and loading requirements.
B. Strengthen code awareness and enforcement with a first focus on downtown.
C. Explore tools to deter long-term vacancy, e.g., vacant building registration.
D. Promote the tax benefits of eligible building improvements to profit-bearing properties in the Sunbury Historic District. Consider a local incentive, e.g., grant, revolving loan fund, or tax credit for building/façade preservation improvements in downtown.
E. Establish a Downtown Management Program.
F. Expand downtown events. Offer activities for a variety of interests, including local history and interpretation of the Sunbury Historic District. Encourage local businesses to promote the Stop Hopper service to access downtown for shopping and events.
G. Market available downtown buildings and spaces locally and via regional economic development partners entities. Ensure partners have complete and up-to-date information about the City’s community economic vision, its implementation progress, community amenities, and quality of life.
H. Establish a Local Anchor Store.



## Goal 2: Reactivate Opportunity Sites

The City's opportunity sites include the properties formerly operated as Celotex site, the Sunbury hospital, the Bimbo bakery, and the Sunbury Textile Mill, as well as the First National Bank and Old Northumberland County Jail. With the exception of First National Bank, each site is notably larger than its adjoining parcels. The hospital and bakery sites are located in residential neighborhoods. The Celotex and textile mill sites lie at the northern and southeastern edges of the City, respectively.

### Objectives

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- 2.1. Increase Use Intensity and Property Value.** The hospital, bakery, and textile mill sites are partially in use. The Celotex site has no active use. Higher utilization of these sites and property investment will generate additional tax revenue for the City. In order to support reuse or redevelopment of these sites, the City should:
- Update the zoning ordinance & map, 1) exploring desirable and undesirable uses, as well as potential buffering and screening techniques, with adjacent and nearby property owners and 2) assigning each site to a zoning district that accommodates a range of uses for the greatest marketability. Each district assigned should allow multiple uses on a single site and/or within a single structure. Supplementary use regulations should address unique aspects of specific uses, e.g., operational and environmental impacts to the community.
  - Establish Preferred Infrastructure Patterns and Design Standards for Reuse/Redevelopment in each site's specific physical context. These features can be referenced when negotiating with a developer or proactively permitted or installed to make each site shovel-ready or closer to turn-key. Larger sites might be subdivided and points of access (i.e., driveway locations) might best align with existing streets. Other considerations include the amount, placement, materials and/or specifications for signage, lighting, vehicle and bicycle parking, transit stops and shelters, where applicable, buffering and screening non-compatible adjacent uses (in addition to setbacks), and fencing.
  - If local funding is a barrier and site control is in public hands, the City, a City authority, or the County are typically eligible applicants for state or federal infrastructure grants in support of infrastructure improvements for planned reuse/redevelopment.
  - Market Sites Generally and to Targeted Investors. DRIVE and FOCUS Central PA can assist in marketing available sites and spaces through conventional techniques, i.e., online listings and networking. They should also be able to make connections with representatives of desired industries to explore site suitability for potential uses. Clean energy generation and a for-profit sports complex with supporting hospitality services, e.g., lodging and restaurants, were two use examples for the Celotex site discussed by the Steering Committee.
- 2.2. Increase Local Businesses and Jobs.** Active use at the opportunity sites is expected to reflect an increase in the number of business establishments and jobs in the city. The scale of this growth will depend on the types of uses.



Warehousing is noted as a potential use in the opportunity site profiles for the Celotex site, the textile mill site, and the bakery sites—all shown for potential industrial uses on the Future Land Use Map. None of these locations are ideal for high or heavy truck traffic. The Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway will likely draw the warehousing market to the other side of the river. Nonetheless, the City must accommodate the use, or arrange to share the use, with another municipality if the City is willing and able.

### Implementing Actions

A. Update the Zoning Ordinance & Map.
B. Determine preferred development conditions and address problematic and opportunistic site development conditions in advance.
C. Market sites generally and to targeted audiences.

## Goal 3: Foster Quality Housing & Neighborhoods

### Objectives

- 3.1. Reduce and Eliminate Blight.** Blight is reduced by determining the feasibility of building rehabilitation and subsequent action to rehabilitate or demolish the structure. Blight elimination, or prevention, is achieved through strong code awareness and enforcement and technical assistance toward corrective actions. Owners need to be made aware and compelled to correct deficiencies to sustain the integrity of the structure and protect the safety of occupants. Guidance, FAQs, tips, and checklists can present technical regulations in easy-to-understand language for homeowners.
- 3.2. Improve Housing Supply and Choice.** Each neighborhood, while unique, should offer a range of housing unit types and costs. The zoning ordinance provides the controls for the unit type, density, size, and location. Review and adjustment of residential uses provisions in the zoning ordinance could attract investors to construct modern housing units—small to large—as infill or redevelopment projects that would expand housing options. With the help of the State Historic Preservation Office, the City should make investors aware of historic tax credits available to properties in the Sunbury Historic District.
- 3.3. Stabilize Homeownership Rates.** Stimulating new construction with updated zoning could bring new owner-occupied units to market. Homebuyer assistance programs through local financial institutions and home modification assistance programs for seniors and persons with disabilities could bring homeownership within reach for some populations. At the same time, the City should limit single-family home conversions to rental units through the zoning ordinance to manage how many conversions are permitted citywide, by block, or by other specified area.
- 3.4. Integrate Convenience Uses & Public Spaces in Neighborhoods.** Neighborhood-scale retail uses and public spaces within neighborhoods provide opportunities for walkable and bikeable stores and services as well as casual places to meet and socialize with neighbors.

The zoning ordinance can manage the scale and location of these non-residential uses and state tax credit programs like the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) can incentivize these investments.

Priority locations for housing action include the following: Front Street, from Church Street south to Bainbridge and Pennsylvania Avenue north to Adam Street, and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, from Line Street to Lincoln Street. These corridors are high visibility corridors for City visitors and City residents.

### Implementing Actions

A. Update the Zoning Ordinance & Map to manage the number, location, and density of single-family home conversions and the size and location of neighborhood-scale commercial uses.
B. Maintain attention to blight reduction. Continue to identify, prioritize, and address blighted properties.
C. Enhance code awareness and enforcement to prevent future property deterioration, expanding from downtown to other commercial nodes and corridors and priority residential areas.
D. Promote locally available homebuyer assistance programs/services; consider partnership with a regional entity.
E. Initiate a home modification assistance program for seniors and persons with disabilities.
F. Improve awareness for development process/regulations, e.g. a “Guide to Development and Construction in Sunbury.”

## Goal 4: Enhance the Cultural & Economic Value of the Riverfront

### Objectives

- 4.1. **Improve Access to the Riverfront.** PA 61 is a real barrier to Merle Phillips Riverfront Park. Citizens and visitors should be able to safely cross PA 61 in multiple places to reach the reach the park, the Sunbury Amphitheater, and the waterfront.
- 4.2. **Improve Access to the River.** Additionally, technology improvements in floodwall design and operation now allow for openings in a floodwall to be closed more quickly and more easily than 1940s-era designs, enabling a community to have greater at-grade access to the river and riverfront lands on a daily basis. An opening in the floodwall with moveable walls (doors) aligned with Market Street would strengthen the City’s identity as a riverfront city.
- 4.3. **Increase Use & Activity at the Riverfront.** Event facilities and infrastructure for riverside events and park amenities for everyday use would increase use and activity at the Riverfront Park. A plaza with electricity, lighting, etc. could support a wide range of cultural

events. Shade trees and canopies could offer relief from the summer sun. Benches or other seating throughout the park could encourage informal and small group gatherings.

### Implementing Actions

A. Increase PA 61/Front Street crossings to the Riverfront Park.
B. Explore the technical, political, and funding feasibility of additional openings in the flood wall.
C. Conduct a recreational needs assessment for Riverfront Park; develop a master plan to align future facilities and amenities with needs and resources.
D. Update/Add facilities and amenities to riverfront park
E. Expand riverfront events.

## Goal 5: Modernize Physical and Cultural Infrastructure

### Objectives

**5.1. Improve and Expand Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities.** Sidewalks, trails, and bicycle facilities should connect citizens safely to daily destinations throughout the City. With a large network of streets and sidewalks, the City should prioritize corridors for pedestrian and bicycle assessment and improvement.

The City's bicycle and pedestrian audit identified three corridors for improved pedestrian and bicycle accommodation (Figure 10, page 21):

- Northumberland Trail Extension Route (Levee Trail) (Red Route).
- SWEEP Greenspace to the Recreation Complex Route (Pink Route).
- Shikellamy High School to SWEEP Greenspace Route (Blue Route).

These routes identify only the need for pedestrian and bicycle improvement. The City, in partnership with the SEDA-COG Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the region's transportation planning agency, and with multimodal funding support from PennDOT or the Commonwealth Finance Authority (CFA), should advance one of these routes for detailed design. A bike share program would make bicycles available to residents and visitors, e.g., for an hourly or daily fee, further promoting this active, low-cost means of travel.

Additionally, the City should consider prioritizing a few east-west corridors for pedestrian and bicycle accommodation, perhaps in conjunction with an additional or improved crossing of PA 61 to reach Riverfront Park.

Existing sidewalks require maintenance or replacement by the property owner from time to time. The City should make property owners aware of their sidewalk maintenance responsibilities, enforce these requirements, and explore funding opportunities to assist property owners in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The City should also consider adopting complete streets policy to reinforce the need to maintain safe, accessible pedestrian and bicycle travel paths during construction of public and private projects that impact the right-of-way. The SEDA-COG MPO has a model policy and checklist.

- 5.2. Refresh Civic Spaces.** Well-used civic spaces bring citizens together around celebration, care for the city, and care for one another. First and foremost, civic spaces are clean, safe, and accessible. They also offer facilities that meet citizens’ needs for socialization and recreation, features such as public art and interpretive historical or environmental signage, and amenities that make users comfortable.

Civic spaces include parks, playgrounds, community gardens and entrance plazas at public buildings. Among these, the City should focus first on parks and playground, assessing residents’ recreational needs and planning park improvements and additions to facilities, features and amenities.

- 5.3. Identify Opportunities for Indoor Community Space,** especially for teens. The local Blueprint Communities team found community interest in a teen center, specifically a safe space for youth to gather and game together. The City and SRI should explore this concept with citizens in its recreational needs assessment and with the business community as a potential provider (perhaps in combination with a retail use) or sponsor.

Priority locations for pedestrian improvements and amenities should include:

- Market Street
  - 4th Street to 10<sup>th</sup> Street – this section of Market Street squarely in downtown and part of the Blue Route.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to 4<sup>th</sup> Street – this one block section would make the connection to Cameron Park.
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Street from Walnut Street to Market Street – this is another segment of the Blue Route
  - Walnut Street – continuing to improve the Blue Route and connecting the high school and sports campus to the downtown.
  - 10<sup>th</sup> Street – to complete the “square” of the Blue Route and provide a complete circuit
- Front Street Crossings
- Blue Route Connector from Market Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street (Pink Route)

### Implementing Actions

- |  |
|--|
| A. Implement recommendations for priority bike-ped routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Northumberland Trail Extension Route (Levee Trail) (Red Route).</li><li>• SWEEP Greenspace to the Recreation Complex Route (Pink Route).</li><li>• Shikellamy High School to SWEEP Greenspace Route (Blue Route).</li></ul> |
| B. Adopt a complete streets policy.  |

C. Replace damaged, uneven and other poor-quality sidewalks, prioritizing sidewalks in low-income neighborhoods.
D. Establish a Sunbury area bike share program.
E. Support development of the Northumberland County Rail Trail beyond the City.
F. Maintain and expand tree cover in public spaces.
G. Explore the need and support for new indoor community recreational spaces and facilities.

## Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map (Figure 12) illustrates the City’s desired land use pattern. The map is a planning tool that considers current use patterns (Figure 2, page 9) and the City’s vision for revitalization and preferred use locations, typically at the block level, as it lays a foundation for a new zoning ordinance and zoning map.

The Future Land Use Map aims to:

- Foster commercial and civic uses that rely on pedestrian activity and access, and complementary residential uses, in the downtown.
- Maintain residential neighborhoods, complementing them with less intense commercial and civic uses.
- Sustain and grow automobile-oriented commercial nodes and rail-served industrial sites.
- Acknowledge civic anchors, public utility and infrastructure facilities, and open spaces.

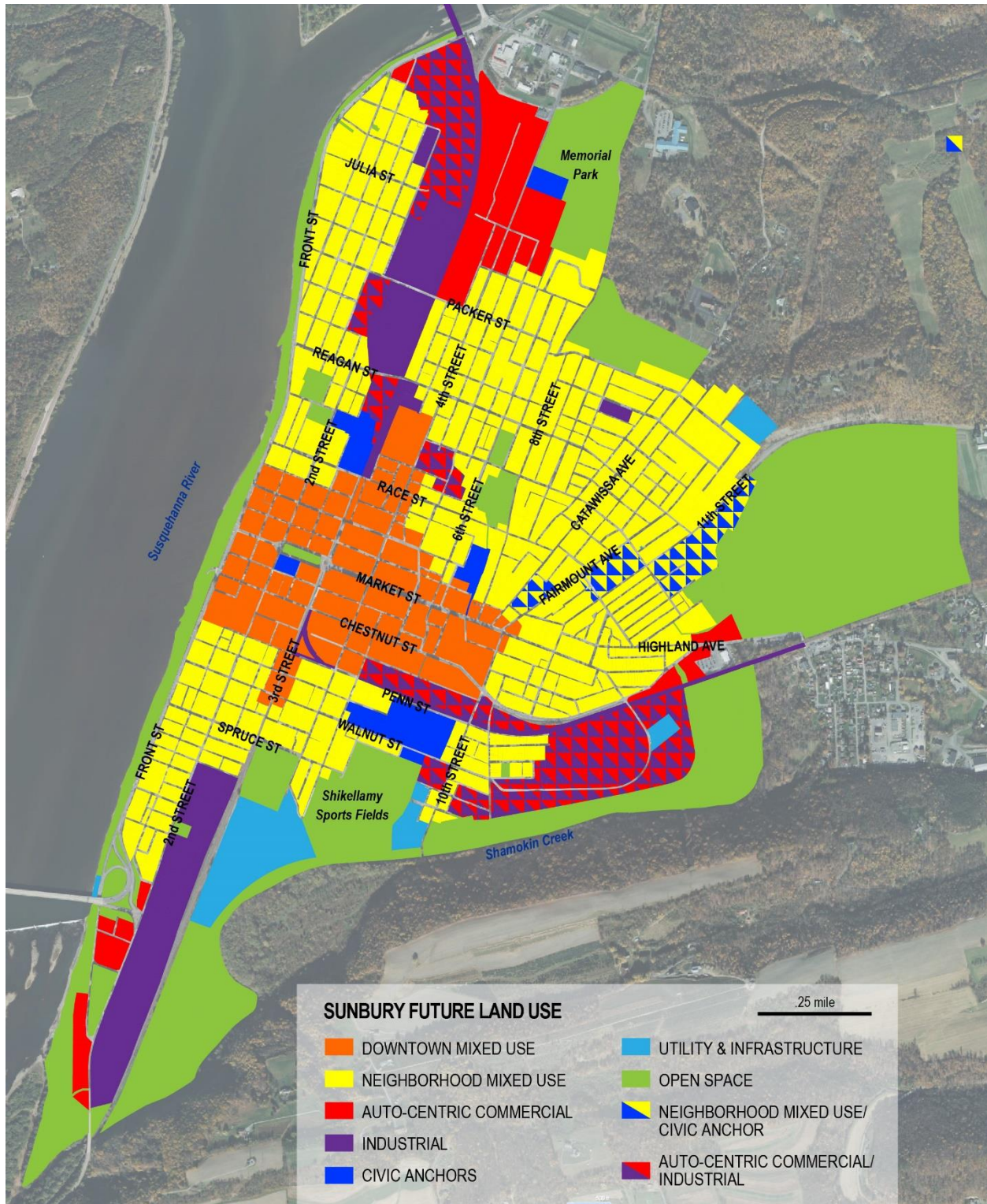
The Future Land Use Map uses nine land use categories, described below.

### **Downtown Mixed Use**

In the Downtown Mixed Use area, commercial, residential, and civic uses co-exist and complement one another in contiguous mixed use buildings and blocks. They include the highest density residential uses and most intense commercial uses in the City. Commercial uses dominate ground floor spaces. Upper floors house residential and other uses. Commercial and civic uses attract people from the City and its surroundings and require pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, transit infrastructure, and public parking facilities.



Figure 12. Future Land Use Map, Sunbury, 2025



### Neighborhood Mixed Use

Neighborhood Mixed Use areas comprise residential uses in small-to medium-scale unit types and densities. Single-family detached homes, attached or duplex units, townhomes, and small 3–4-unit apartment buildings dominate this future land use category, reaching a maximum height of three

stories. In these areas, neighborhood-serving commercial and civic uses are available within a walkable and bikeable street pattern. On-street parking and small private lots provide sufficient parking for visitors and patrons.

### **Auto-centric Commercial**

The Auto-centric Commercial Use area accommodates existing shopping centers, car dealers and automotive services, and other regional-scale commercial services. Uses that require vehicles carry goods, generate higher volumes of vehicular traffic, require larger loading areas, and offer drive-thru service or larger amounts of on-site parking predominate.

### **Civic Anchors**

Civic Anchors are clusters of government centers, schools, health care and social services providers, community institutions, and places of worship. These sites and buildings are often long-standing physical landmarks in the community, even if the occupant changes from time to time. Civic Anchors are home to essential services to the community and attract customers and clientele to their buildings and the nearby surroundings.

### **Industrial**

Industrial areas accommodate existing manufacturing, materials processing and recycling, and warehousing and logistics uses. These uses typically require large lots for expansive buildings or outdoor operations. Highway and rail access are valuable criteria for these uses that rely on trucking and/or rail service providers to move raw, processed, and finished materials in and out. In addition to truck traffic and depending on the specific use, industrial areas can have environmental impacts, which can be managed or mitigated by provisions in the zoning ordinance.

### **Utility & Infrastructure**

Utility & Infrastructure areas are sites for electric substations, water and sewage treatment facilities, and other municipal public works facilities or similar private facilities.

### **Open Space**

Open Space areas are lands protected for public benefit or use through public ownership such as City parks and recreation fields, school sports fields, cemeteries or in some cases through private ownership or easement. The City is nearly surrounded by Open Space lands from the riverfront and floodplains along the Shamokin Creek and the Susquehanna River to the Municipal Authority lands and Hamilton Field to Pomfret Manor Cemetery to Memorial Park and the sports fields surrounding the Eister Youth and Community Center. Smaller connections between larger sites could help create a greenbelt that serves local recreation and supports residential development.

### **Neighborhood Mixed Use/Civic Anchor Hybrid**

The Neighborhood Mixed Use/Civic Anchor Hybrid areas present opportunities for small-to moderate scaled mixed uses in existing buildings or through redevelopment of key sites along Fairmount Ave and 11th Street. Uses are narrower in range, i.e., more residential use permissions, smaller-scale commercial use permissions, than the Downtown Mixed Use area, and work in tandem, such as elderly housing and medical services.

### **Auto-centric Commercial/Industrial Hybrid**

The Auto-centric Commercial/Industrial Mix Hybrid areas provide opportunities for large-format commercial and industrial uses that require expansive buildings and sites, including a commercial indoor/outdoor sports complex. These areas are contiguous to existing commercial and industrial use areas to minimize the introduction of new conflicts.

There is no intensive agricultural or forestry activity in the City today and none is expected for the foreseeable future.

## **Land Use Planning Consistency with Upper Augusta Township and Northumberland County**

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires that each comprehensive plan include a statement “indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is compatible with the existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous portions of neighboring municipalities, or a statement indicating measures which have been taken to provide buffers or other transitional devices between disparate uses, and a statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is generally consistent with the objectives and plans of the county comprehensive plan.”

### **Consistency with Upper Augusta Township**

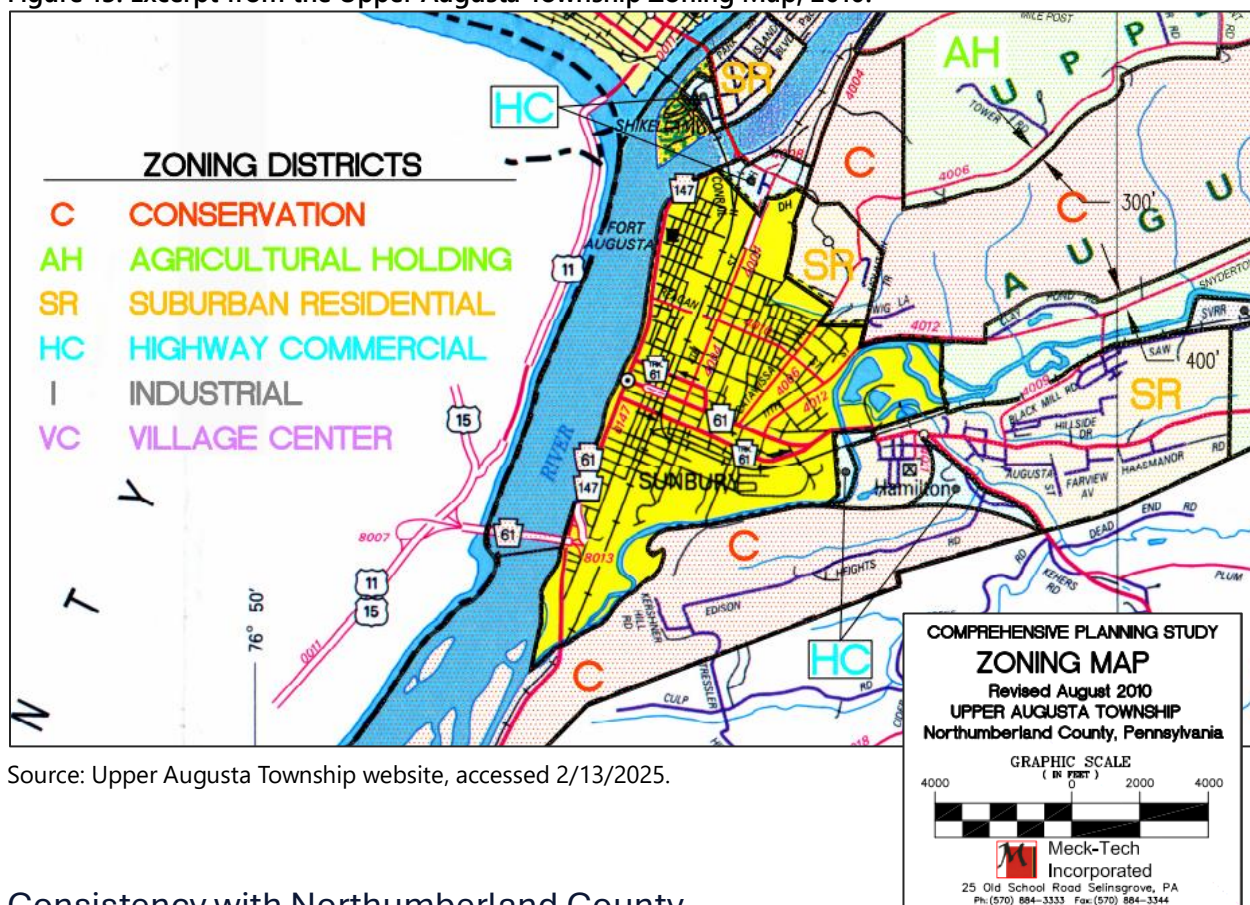
Like Sunbury, Upper Augusta Township’s existing land use pattern has remained relatively unchanged since the early 1900s. The largest developed areas are along the PA 61 corridor.

Upper Augusta Township’s zoning ordinance and map, both amended in 2010, aim to protect and sustain these patterns. An excerpt of the Township zoning map is shown as Figure 13.

The City’s future land use map (Figure 12) is consistent with the intent to sustain these land use patterns.



Figure 13. Excerpt from the Upper Augusta Township Zoning Map, 2010.



Source: Upper Augusta Township website, accessed 2/13/2025.

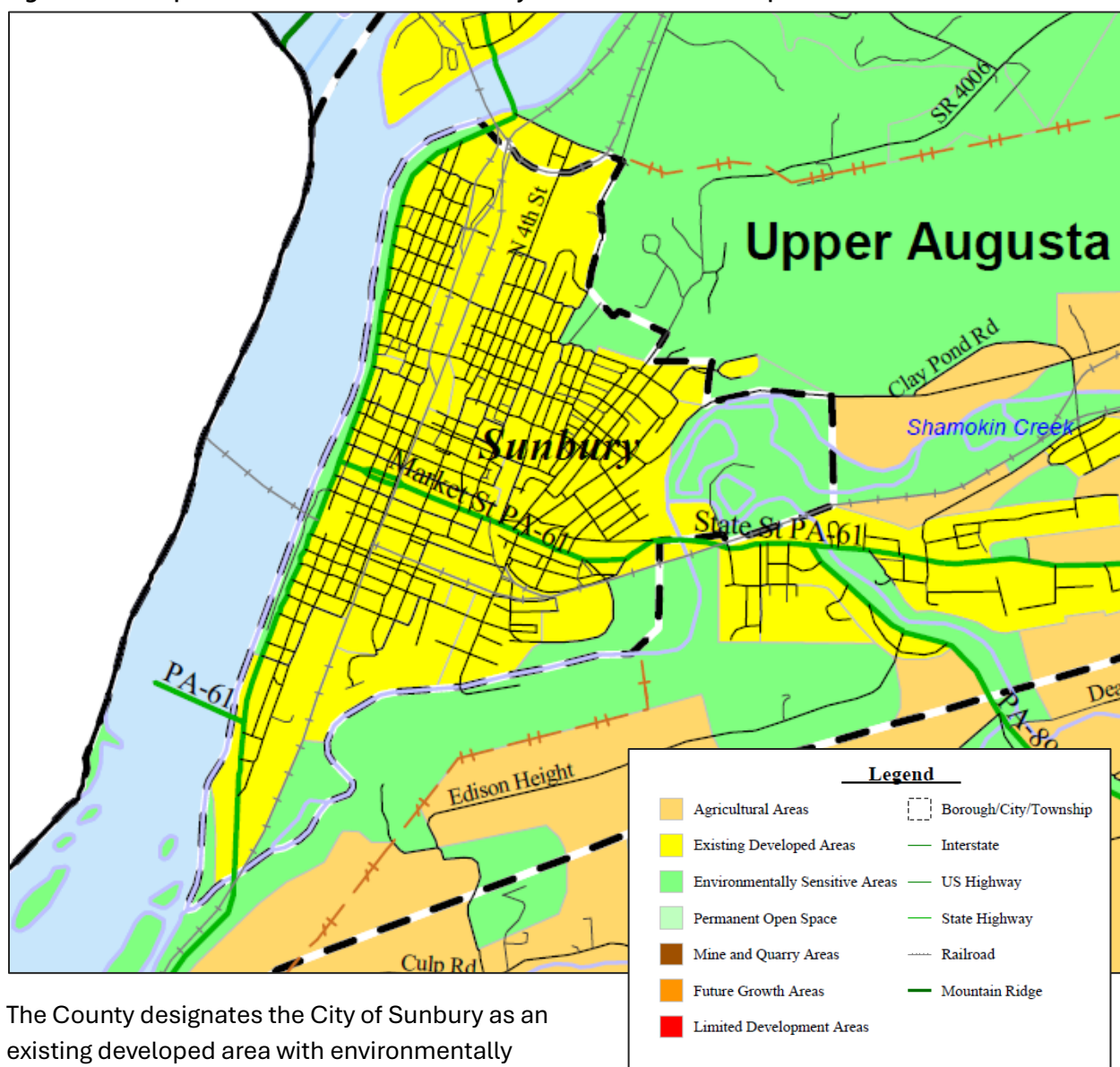
## Consistency with Northumberland County

The most recent Northumberland County comprehensive plan was adopted in 2000. The plan's general land use goal is to develop and adhere to a systematic, coordinated land use pattern that provides a variety of uses, recognizes land capacities, respects natural features and environmental and physical factors. The County land use objectives are outlined as follows:

- Direct new development to areas adjacent to existing development, with adequate sewer, water and transportation capacities.
- Maintain and rehabilitate existing urban areas.
- Integrate non-residential uses with the residential community ensuring the uses do not negatively impact the residential uses.
- Discourage development of areas lacking infrastructure that supports the use.
- Preserve agricultural land in order to maintain the agricultural economy and agricultural community.
- Provide sufficient, well located growth centers to provide employment, homes, and goods and services to County residents with emphasis on design, convenience, and safety.

The County's future land use map outlines seven broad land use areas: agricultural, existing development, environmentally sensitive, permanent open space, mine and quarry, future growth, and limited development.

Figure 14. Excerpt from Northumberland County's Future Land Use Map



The County designates the City of Sunbury as an existing developed area with environmentally sensitive areas shown along the riverfront and for Pomfret Manor Cemetery. The County's plan defines these designations as follows

- Existing Developed Area – an area appropriate for in-fill growth, rehabilitation, and revitalization efforts
- Environmentally Sensitive Area - steep slopes and prime forested land where development should be discouraged; also, wetland and floodplain areas that are inappropriate for development.

The City's future land use map (Figure 12) is consistent with these designations.



## Implementation of the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map provides the starting point for the preparation of a new zoning ordinance and zoning map. Each land use category may be defined as one or more zoning classes or districts, each with its own distinct lot size, building dimensions (bulk), impervious coverage, and permitted use provisions. District locations and boundaries may be refined but should remain generally consistent with the Future Land Use Map.

Per guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, a new zoning ordinance and zoning map should be enacted within three years of an adopted comprehensive plan.

Between an adopted comprehensive plan and an adopted zoning ordinance, the City may consider its Future Land Use Map in reviewing change of use proposals.

## Interrelationships of Plan Elements

The City needs to sharpen its focus on its economic direction, exploring, defining and targeting investment to and from selected industries. The Future Land Use Map indicates that the location of economic opportunity areas should remain relatively unchanged.

Given the steady yet slowing pace of population decrease, the housing focus of Sunbury 2035 is on housing stock maintenance and the development of additional housing units to complement the market's current offerings and the City's economic development direction. The City's Future Land Use Map indicates maintenance of its residential neighborhoods and potential future mixed commercial and residential uses.

As the City's population and job losses turn to stabilization, attracting new residents and workers, the City will need to continue to modernize its infrastructure and services and facilities.

Improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will better interconnect shopping, educational, and recreational nodes, provide safe, comfortable, and convenient passage for local travelers of all ages, abilities, and income levels, and improve access to Stop Hopper services.

Both for culture and recreation and as an economic asset, the City should leverage its open spaces—its Riverfront Park, Memorial Park, and potentially even its nearly 50 acres on the south side of Shamokin Creek—as venues for local and regional events and as attractions in their own right.

## 5 ♦ Implementation

### Primary Implementation Strategies

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires that each comprehensive plan include a discussion of short- and long-range plan implementation strategies, which may include new or updated development regulations, implications for capital improvements programming, and identification of public funds potentially available.

### Updated Development Regulations

The zoning ordinance is the City's strongest tool for managing land use activity as well as operational demands on public infrastructure, facilities and services. Updates to the zoning ordinance should be the first priority and completed within three years of comprehensive plan adoption.

Following a zoning ordinance update, other sections of the City Code of Ordinances such as the land development regulations may need revision to maintain consistency. Additionally, other administrative tools, such as a rental registration program and Improved compliance initiatives, should be explored and programmed.

### Capital Improvements

Capital improvement to City infrastructure and facilities demonstrate the City's commitment to modern reliable services and use. A capital improvement plan can be used to prioritize projects, track estimated costs, funding options, funding commitments, and projected expenditures.

### Community & Interagency Coordination Efforts

City Council will need to work with local and regional partners to implement the recommendations of the comprehensive plan. Strengthening partnerships with Sunbury's Revitalization, Inc., the Blueprint Communities® Downtown Sunbury Team, nonprofit and civic organizations, and businesses will lead to mutual understanding of aligned, common, or shared outcomes and the collective capacity required to reach those goals. The investment of time in cultivating these relationships will produce an immeasurable return as the City and its partners leverage their human and capital resources to tackle interim objectives and make progress toward goals .

### Education and Improvement Initiatives

Furthermore, the City may work through its cadre of advisory committees, community organizations, and volunteers to conduct short-term educational campaigns that encourage safe, positive, civic-minded behavior and action. Social media and other creative messaging campaigns can be conducted around topics of property maintenance, travel options to walk, bike, or ride the Stop Hopper, and new events. Faith-based, school, and scout organizations may provide additional volunteer time and donated materials for such initiatives.

## Implementation Schedule

As noted in Chapter 4, each action requires resources to initiate, advance, and complete the action. The implementation schedule below indicates the recommended timing of the actions across short-range, mid-range, and long-range periods by placement of a filled diamond (◆) in one or more of three time periods in the schedule below.

Not all actions are the sole responsibility of the City; some require participation or partnership in other organizations' planning or activity.

The implementation schedule should be reviewed annually prior to the City's budget preparation and priorities should be selected and supported with staff/volunteer assignment and financial resources, where needed.

Action	Priority/Timing			
	2025-2026	2027-2028	2029-2030	2031-2035+
<b>Goal 1: Revitalize Downtown</b>				
A. <b>Update the Zoning Ordinance &amp; Map</b> to sustain the urban fabric, allow a mix of uses appropriate to ground-floor and upper-floor locations, and address parking and loading requirements.	◆			
B. <b>Strengthen code awareness and enforcement</b> with a first focus on downtown.	◆	◆	◆	◆
C. <b>Explore tools to deter long-term vacancy</b> , e.g., vacant building registration.		◆		
D. <b>Promote the benefits of the Sunbury Historic District.</b> Consider incentivizes for building/facade preservation in downtown.		◆		
E. <b>Establish a Downtown Management Program.</b>	◆	◆	◆	◆
F. <b>Expand downtown events.</b> Offer activities for a variety of interests, including interpretation of the Sunbury Historic District.	◆	◆	◆	◆
G. <b>Market available downtown buildings and spaces</b> locally and via regional economic development partners entities.	◆	◆	◆	◆
H. <b>Establish a Local Anchor Store.</b>			◆	◆
<b>Goal 2: Reactivate Opportunity Sites</b>				
A. <b>Update the Zoning Ordinance &amp; Map</b> to guide the range of permitted uses and site design to be	◆			

Action	Priority/Timing			
	2025-2026	2027-2028	2029-2030	2031-2035+
compatible with adjacent areas and the City.				
B. Determine preferred development conditions and address problematic and opportunistic site development conditions in advance.	◆	◆	◆	
C. Market sites generally and to targeted audiences.	◆	◆	◆	◆
<b>Goal 3: Foster Quality Housing &amp; Neighborhoods</b>				
A. Update the Zoning Ordinance & Map to manage the number, location, and density of single-family home conversions and the size and location of neighborhood-scale commercial uses.	◆			
B. Maintain attention to blight reduction and prevention. Continue to identify, prioritize, and address blighted properties.	◆	◆	◆	◆
C. Enhance code awareness and enforcement to prevent future property deterioration, expanding from downtown to other commercial nodes and corridors and priority residential areas.			◆	◆
D. Promote locally available homebuyer assistance programs/services; consider partnership with a regional entity.		◆	◆	◆
E. Initiate a home modification assistance program for seniors and persons with disabilities.			◆	◆
F. Improve awareness for development process/regulations, e.g. a “Guide to Development and Construction in Sunbury.”			◆	◆
<b>Goal 4: Enhance Cultural &amp; Economic Value of the Riverfront</b>				
A. Increase PA 61/Front Street crossings to the Riverfront Park.			◆	◆
B. Explore the technical, political, and funding feasibility of additional openings in the flood wall.			◆	
C. Conduct a recreational needs assessment for			◆	◆

Action	Priority/Timing			
	2025-2026	2027-2028	2029-2030	2031-2035+
Riverfront Park; develop a master plan to align future facilities and amenities with needs and resources.				
D. Update/Add facilities and amenities to Riverfront Park.			◆	◆
E. Expand riverfront events.	◆	◆	◆	◆
<b>Goal 5: Modernize Physical &amp; Cultural Infrastructure</b>				
A. Advance recommendations for priority bike-ped routes to design and construction:				
Northumberland Trail Extension Route (Levee Trail) (known as the Red Route).		◆	◆	
SWEEP Greenspace to the Recreation Complex Route (known as the Pink Route).				◆
Shikellamy High School to SWEEP Greenspace Route (known as the Blue Route).				
B. Adopt a complete streets policy.	◆			
C. Establish a Sunbury area bike share program.		◆		
D. Improve sidewalk conditions, especially in low-income neighborhoods.			◆	◆
E. Increase shade tree cover, particularly along pedestrian routes throughout the City.	◆	◆	◆	◆