

RECONNECTIONS

RECONNECTING MAIN STREET WITH THE RIVER

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The "Goal" of "Reconnections" is to reconnect the citizens of the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor with their river heritage. The "Purpose" is to induce community actions that will counteract the driving forces behind "suburban sprawl" and "urban blight". To achieve this goal and purpose we are proposing a concept and implementation measures designed to repair or restore the "walkable" linkages between neighborhoods, employment centers, community facilities, cultural features and the historic focus of the region's heritage of the Schuylkill River. In brief, we propose to "reweave the community fabric".

"Community fabric" is the term frequently used to describe the nature and pattern of community infrastructure. Prior to 1800, nearly all villages, towns and cities developed adjacent to rivers or other neighborhoods to the waterways, the principle means of transportation and commerce. Homes, shops, work places and public spaces were typically within walking distance of one another to streams, rivers or other bodies of water.

During the 1800's bicycles, horse drawn vehicles and railroads permitted people to travel longer distances but most development continued to be clustered close to transportation nodes and in close proximity to waterways. In the late 1800's the internal combustion engine and self-propelled vehicle were invented and the nation's transportation systems underwent a paradigm change. Cars and commercial trucks provided a greatly improved level of convenience and service over

greater distances. Development soon began to disperse and a far less tightly woven network of streets and thoroughfares emerged.

Streets designed to carry pedestrians, cyclists and horse drawn vehicles were widened and the ubiquitous "one way" traffic system was introduced. As these thoroughfares were gradually overwhelmed by burgeoning traffic, they were replaced by successive generations of "bypasses" and expressways. Formerly dominant transportation systems soon lost their competitive edge, river canal systems were abandoned, all but a few passenger railroads were discontinued and the continued existence of the nation's mighty rail freight system was threatened.

Following World War II, the nation's pent up wealth and desire for a "new car and life in a vine covered suburban cottage" led development to literally explode across the landscape. Stimulated, indeed required, by government programs and regulatory policies, we created the condition now commonly known as "developmental sprawl". We are only now beginning to accept the fact that developmental sprawl has consumed vast amounts of productive farmland, polluted our air and water, destroyed traditional neighborhoods and fostered community disintegration. We now recognize that the inevitable corollary of developmental sprawl is the condition we term "urban blight"

Just as we can't put Humpty Dumpty back together again, we cannot reverse the radical transformation communities have experienced during the past century. However we can, and we must, reweave the structural fabric of our older towns and cities with that of the surrounding suburbs and commit ourselves to rebuilding "walkable" communities that embody the time tested fundamentals of neighborhood and community design.

"Reconnections" will be available to all of the communities served by the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor, however, preference will be

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given to small boroughs and older settlement areas of townships that have limited financial resources and less access to technical expertise.

Consideration will also be given to the unique needs of under-served neighborhoods in larger communities.

Smaller, older communities often lack the expertise and resources to conceive, design and develop holistic solutions to problems that often transcend municipal boundaries and involve required actions by multiple governmental agencies. And, all too frequently, there are few incentives for these communities and their suburban counterparts to work cooperatively to achieve a broad community improvement.

The Schuylkill River Greenway Association, as an established regional organization serving the entire Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor has proven that it can effectively gain community consensus across jurisdictional boundaries and help form the vital public-private partnerships essential to accomplishing complex initiatives in a holistic manner. By employing its Heritage Corridor tools and its established relationships with local, state and federal agencies, SRGA can help older communities "reconnect" with the river.

INTRODUCTION

An impetus for this awareness was initiated out of a desire to provide a pedestrian connection to and along the Schuylkill River. Once the river trail is constructed, a new concern emerged, and that was one of getting folks to the river trail. The river was largely considered an industrial wasteland and an undesirable location to visit. Only in a few communities are parks or open space open along the river. As a result, industrial, warehouse and vacant land separates the "community" from the waterfront. Since no one had to go there except to work, sidewalks and pedestrian trails were not constructed, and development then shunned it. Tall buildings, built up to the road right-of-way, remove the pedestrian environment completely and targets a "vehicle only" environment. Large parking lots, tall chainlink fences and yards full of storage create a barrier between the river and the borough.

The car has impacted this social structure by interrupting a safe walking environment. Supporting walkable streets is critical to the survival of downtown. Making these connections clear and safe is paramount in bringing neighborhoods together. Going to school, stopping at the store, getting to work, mailing a letter, applying for a permit, and picking up a book are all simple tasks, provided they are within easy walking distance. Expecting people to walk, over using their car must be consciously addressed, by providing for their walking, just as a department of transportation does for vehicles.

Continuous routes, wide sidewalks, marked crosswalks, uninterrupted handicap access, and adequate streetscape amenities (benches, lighting, trash receptacles) are the key elements to formulating a safe and inviting experience. Convenience and safety are the primary issues reflecting walkability and connection. If going to the post office seems unsafe to someone, they will find an alternative

means of getting there, ie. the car. In the same respect, if the safest route takes a round about loop, then it too would be considered indirect and a "waste of time". In this age of demanding convenience, it should only be anticipated that perceptions of easy and safe access are paramount to a walkable town.

In northern Berks County, and particularly Hamburg, the downtown is thriving. People continue to live, work, and shop right in Hamburg. The lack of a large mega mall or super store has relinquished the shopping market to the individual shops of downtown or those within a walkable distance. Unfortunately, newer development has not addressed the pedestrian. As a result, sidewalks are not constructed or pedestrian crossings not maintained. A renewed awareness for the pedestrian needs to be started in order to prevent further deterioration of the local economy and an improvement of safety and convenience.

METHODOLOGY

This study identifies physical linkages required to strengthen connections within each town. Site reconnaissance, area analysis, recommendations, and connections were suggested for each town.

SITE RECONNAISSANCE

The consultant initially walked the streets of each town to become acquainted with the layout, present uses, and existing connections for reference. Photographs were taken for reference and illustration in the master plan.

AREA ANALYSIS

A street map of each town was used as a base for locating existing sites and districts. General comments about major uses and property types were made for each area, with the understanding that this was not a zoning plan or an accurate account of all uses within each area. Obviously, there are micro zones and anomalies within each area, the detail of which was beyond the scope of work.

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Physical linkages were identified on the plans. Public facilities, such as libraries, civic buildings, schools, parks and churches were identified as important elements. Shops, restaurants, places of work, and homes, although critical to connections, were delineated by district due to fluidity in locations over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations provide several improvements suggested to improve safety and re-connect the community.

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HAMBURG

LOCATION

Hamburg Borough is located in Northern Berks County bordered by Tilden Township to the west and Windsor Township to the east. I-78, a major east/west route crosses through northern Hamburg while Route 61, a major north/south route, passes through western Hamburg. I-78 links Hamburg to Allentown to the east and Harrisburg to the west. South on Route 61 from Hamburg is Shoemakersville, Leesport and Reading and to the north is Port Clinton and Schuylkill Haven. The State Game Lands Number 106, Weiser State Forest, Hawk Mountain and the Blue Mountains are within a few miles of downtown Hamburg. The Schuylkill River defines the western boundary of the town, providing a green corridor that is easily accessible by Hamburg's population. There is a connection to the Appalachian Trail in northern Hamburg from the Olivet Blue Mountain Camp.

HISTORY

The gap in the Blue Mountains has been a noted travel route for many decades. The Borough of Hamburg of settled in 1732 and incorporated in 1838 from Windsor Township. The Schuylkill River was a conduit for transportation in this region, and the development of the Schuylkill Canal became an impetus for growth of Hamburg, as services and goods flowed up and down the canal. The later development of the railroad contributed to the town's growth and prosperity. The crossroads of east-west I-78 and north-south Route 61 continued to make Hamburg a vital urban center.

The Borough now has a population of 3,859 and covers approximately 12.5 miles.



Figure 4.1 The old market building on the corner of Third and State Streets is an example of the interesting architecture found in Hamburg.

DESCRIPTION

Hamburg is the largest and most heavily populated of the four towns studied. The town is easily accessible by both I-78 and Route 61, which provides primary access into town. The heart of Hamburg is located along State and Fourth Streets



Figure 4.2 A view of Fourth Street and some of the ground floor businesses found along this stretch of road.

Hamburg plan

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where the majority of the commercial district is concentrated. State Street, also known as Old Route 22, runs east to Lenhartsville and west towards Strausstown.

State Street contains a unique collection of businesses and homes that lie side-by-side acting as the spine of the downtown. This mixed commercial and residential district is home to restaurants, specialty stores and numerous private businesses. Fortunately, Hamburg is devoid of chain stores which tend to homogenize the unique character of many communities. State Street is home to classic, turn-of-the-century architecture, making this street a visually stimulating and interesting place to explore. The old market building on the corner of State and Third Streets best exhibits this architecture.

The Hamburg Borough Hall, Police Station, Post Office and Library are all located within one block off Third Street. The Dove Christian Fellowship and the Bethany United Methodist Church are also found nearby on Third Street.

Wide sidewalks and on-street parking make the downtown district an easily accessible and pleasant place to wander. Proceeding east along State Street out of the borough, one passes the Hamburg Elementary School, the Hamburg Center (a state run institution), and Kaercher Creek Park.

The intersection of State and Fourth Streets is the main crossroads in Hamburg. Fourth Street provides access north to I-78 and south to Route 61. When traveling west on I-78, the first Hamburg exit brings travelers through a residential district on North Fourth Street. The second exit for Hamburg is to Route 61. From Route 61 northbound, Hamburg is entered by turning onto Industrial Drive at the traffic light. Industrial Drive snakes through a series of industrial and commercial buildings and eventually ends at Lowland Road. Lowland Road passes under the I-78 overpass and parallels the Kernsville



Figure 4.3 The landscape along the southern segment of Fourth Street is dominated by commercial buildings.



Figure 4.4 The Hamburg Borough Hall (foreground) and the Bethany United Methodist Church (background) are both found on Third Street.



Figure 4.5 The Hamburg Bicentennial Trail is accessible from Hamburg Park and runs along the alignment of the Schuylkill Canal. There are pleasant views of the Schuylkill River and remnants of the canal from the trail.

Impounding basin before intersecting with State Street. Turning left (east) onto State Street, it is then necessary to cross the State Street Bridge into town. From Route 61 southbound, the road flies over Hamburg and the Schuylkill River to the southern end of town. At this point, a lighted intersection provides a left turn onto Fourth Street Hamburg.

Fourth Street is predominately residential, mixed with first floor businesses. North bound on Fourth Street, the First Assembly of God and Salem Churches are passed. Port Clinton Avenue, a winding road that parallels the Schuylkill River, turns off to the northwest before passing under I-78, and continuing to the village of Port Clinton.

Located north of I-78, in northern Hamburg is the neighborhood of Hamburg Heights. Here single family homes are situated on grassy plots fronting each street.

Traveling south on Fourth Street, after passing the Union Number 1 Fire Station, the landscape takes on more of a commercial character. A large commercial center containing businesses such as a Dollar General Store, a wine and spirits store, and an auto retailer, exists as Fourth Street intersects Route 61. This busy intersection is described in further detail in the Hamburg to Shoemakersville route description.

At the lighted intersection of Pine Street and Fourth Street, Pine Street becomes a secondary route leading to the Hamburg Area High and Middle Schools and their accompanying sports fields and facilities. Saint John's Lutheran Church and cemetery is also located on Pine Street (the front entrance to the High and Middle Schools is further south off Windsor Street). There are no sidewalks along several sections of this road, and the roads narrows, making sharing the road with bicyclists and pedestrians unsafe.

The borough's connection to the Schuylkill River

is evident north of State Street. Hamburg Park, located on Peach Alley and between Franklin and Island Streets, fronts the river. This beautiful park serves the community of Hamburg with a variety of activities within a dense residential neighborhood. There is a well-maintained baseball field that is used by local athletic leagues. The Hamburg Pool is a popular place during the summer. A playground is also available for younger children. Also accessible from the park is the Hamburg Bicentennial Trail, a pedestrian route that travels along the old Schuylkill Canal alignment. Remnants of the Old Schuylkill Canal are visible from along this trail.

South of State Street however, the river is all but hidden. Large tracts of industrial lands, fence-enclosed and visually cluttered with assorted buildings and stored materials, block all but a few views. Visual and physical connections are all but made impossible. An elevated Route 61 further blocks the river from the borough.

Also found in northern Hamburg is the Armory and a picnic facility. This neighborhood's northern most boundary is Blue Mountain Road. The circuitous two-lane road follows a small valley stream. Found along Blue Mountain Road is the Olivet Blue Mountain Camp where a private trail leads to the Appalachian Trail.



Figure 4.6 The entrance to the Blue Mountain Camp.

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ANALYSIS

The downtown core of Hamburg focuses on the intersection of State Street and Fourth Street. The linkage Fourth Street provides between I-78 and Route 61 makes this road heavily used and developed. The downtown fabric remains tight and well developed, with building facades facing the street up to the sidewalk's edge. As one moves west along State Street to the Schuylkill River, the building façades are continuous. On the western section of State Street, just before the State Street Bridge, is the former railroad crossing that is still evident. The tracks have long been removed, but its mark in the streetscape is strongly evident. Sidewalks are continuous on each side of State Street up to and across the bridge over the Schuylkill River. Businesses and residences are mixed along this section. Where shops are present on the first floor, offices or apartments are found above. On street parking is provided on both sides of the street. The municipal buildings are located one block north of State Street, on Third Street.

Fourth Street also has a mix of commercial and residential uses. The northern end of the street terminates at ramps to I-78. Building facades uniformly step back from the street as one approaches the highway. Here, row homes and apartment buildings transition to twins and single-family detached homes. To the south, the buildings remain up to the sidewalk edge. Commercial and office uses, although scattered, are consistent. On street parking on both sides of the street is permitted and is used. It is only near the southern terminus of Fourth Street does the tight town fabric break apart with newer buildings set behind large asphalt parking lots. Shopping centers on either side and a automobile dealer break the uniform streetscape. The southern terminus of Fourth Street, where it intersects with Route 61, is awkward. A traffic light controls four lanes of Route 61 traffic and permits cross traffic.

The areas north and east of State Street and Fourth Street are primarily residential. The areas north of I-78 and south east of Fourth Street are more recently developed residential neighborhoods. These newer developed neighborhoods, have fragmented sections of sidewalk or in some areas, none at all. The high school, middle school and athletic fields are located above Hamburg to the east. There is no pedestrian connection along Pine Street, connecting the school to the rest of Hamburg.

The area west of Fourth Street and south of State Street is predominately industrial and commercial. Since the Schuylkill River was a working river, these industrial uses were located close to the river for transportation and power. The railroad and canal paralleled the eastern side of the river, expanding this industrial district. Large warehouses, narrow streets, open parking lots and fenced yards occupy much of the land. Remnants of the canal and rail lines are visible, but are slowly being obliterated by building additions and road improvements. There are no sidewalks in much of this area and in some areas buildings are built to the streets edge, precluding any pedestrian space.

FINDINGS

Most of Hamburg remains accessible along sidewalks and back alleys. A number of cross walks are not clearly delineated, or do not have accessible ramps. The more recent developments located to the north and west have incomplete sidewalk systems. The schools, located on the upper eastern areas of the town, are only easily accessible via sidewalks on Windsor Street, as Pine Street has no sidewalks and is narrow. The shopping centers on the southern end of town, near the intersection of Fourth and Route 61, are more difficult to walk to since one must traverse large parking areas to get to the front door.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Hamburg is located at the intersection of two major highways that make it vehicular access easy from all directions. This small town possesses a unique and interesting character in its downtown. A variety of local restaurants and specialty stores linked by wide sidewalks, and embellished by interesting architecture, make this self-sufficient community a destination location. However, there are some improvements necessary to improve Hamburg's pedestrian connections within town and to serve users of the proposed pedestrian and cycle routes to Strausstown and Shoemakersville

1. *Historic Walking Trail.*

Hamburg's interesting history and lively commercial district justify the establishment of a local interpretive trail highlighting historic sites, unique features, architectural and key destinations around the town. Signage should be developed to indicate the tour's route.

2. *Trail connection to Strausstown.*

There is a potential for a formal pedestrian/bicycle route linking Hamburg to Shartlesville and Strausstown. Signs directing trail users to these towns are necessary. These routes are further discussed in the trail matrix, chapter 2.

3. *Signage.*

The need for signage warning motorists of the existence of pedestrian and bicycle crossings is necessary at many locations.

4. *Improved gateways into town.*

Currently, the entrances into town from I-78 and Route 61 are unpleasant and do not enhance the town's image. Although major changes to these gateways may be long term improvements, the short term improvements would include signage and uniform street amenities such as landscaping and lighting.

5. *State Street Bridge improvements.*

State Street Bridge is a vital pedestrian/bicycle connection into Hamburg. The existing condition of the pedestrian sidewalks across the State Street Bridge is poor. Major improvements to the sidewalks to make them safe and usable by pedestrians and cyclists are needed. PennDOT is currently (June 2001) engaged in the design of repairs to the bridge. Provisions should be made to maintain the sidewalks and to add appropriate pedestrian scale lighting to this historic bridge.

6. *Sidewalks and Crossings.*

Sidewalks in many areas of town need to be repaired where cracked or broken. There are a few areas where sidewalks need to be added and are needed to complete some pedestrian connections. Crosswalks need to be maintained by clearly marking the pavement. In the heart of town, these crosswalks might be constructed of a paving material rather than by merely annually painting.

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HAMBURG TO SHOEMAKERSVILLE

LOCATION

The town of Shoemakersville is located approximately 1½ miles south of Hamburg. Route 61, a major north/south corridor, connects Shoemakersville to Leesport and Reading to the south, and Hamburg, Port Clinton and Schuylkill Heaven to the north. Route 61 passes on the eastern boundary of Shoemakersville, and is linked to the town by three access roads.

Centre Township borders the Borough of Shoemakersville to the west while Perry Township lies to the north, south and east. The Schuylkill River defines the western boundary of the township and the Miller Street Bridge provides the only link from Shoemakersville across the river to Centre Township.

HISTORY

Shoemakersville's history is deeply rooted in the industries that developed in Northern Berks County. Shoemakersville's industries thrived in the past, in part because of its location along the Schuylkill Canal and the Railroad.

Shoemakersville was incorporated in 1921 from Perry Township and covers 3.3 square miles. The town currently has a population of 1,372 residents.



Figure 4.7 The original railroad station in Shoemakersville continues to be occupied.

DESCRIPTION / ANALYSIS

Shoemakersville is a quiet, small town surrounded by expansive acres of agricultural fields. The landscape of the village strongly reflects its industrial history. The village is dotted with small factories and industrial buildings, some of which continue to function. The remnants of historic buildings, like the Shoemakersville Railroad Station and the old lock tenders house along the historic alignment of the canal, are still occupied.



Figure 4.8 A view north on Main Street.

shoemakersville plan

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The town is laid out in traditional fashion, with Main Street located at the heart of the town. Shoemakersville's current street layout is the result of organic growth, straying from the grid street pattern seen in Hamburg. Stemming from Main Street are a series of smaller roads lined with homes.

Main Street is a conglomeration of small businesses, industrial buildings and side-by-side private residences, all showcasing early 20th century architecture. The juxtaposition of buildings with mixed uses has given Shoemakersville a truly unique appearance, devoid of chain stores and repetitive architecture. Wide sidewalks line both sides of the street and provide access for pedestrians to local attractions. On-street parking also lines both sides of the street and provides convenient access for motorists. The streetscape lacks any street trees and is dominated by overhead telephone and electric wires.

Located on the corner of Main and 6th Streets is the Salem United Methodist Church, one of three churches in Shoemakersville. Saint Luke's Church is located between Fourth and Fifth Street on Franklin Street and Saint Luke's Union is located at the intersection of Franklin and Church Avenue, near the local fire station.

The Perry Township Elementary School occupies the entire block between Fourth and Fifth Streets, and Reber and Chestnut Streets. The school currently blocks Reber Street for students to play during recess.

Shoemakersville Borough Hall is located on Main Street and is within close proximity to the police station. Nearby is the Miller Street Bridge, spanning the Schuylkill River providing a route into Centre Township. Located at the northern tip of Main and Ninth Streets is Shoemakersville Park. This six acre beautiful park is extremely well maintained and provides play equipment for young children and one baseball field.

There are three access points to Shoemakersville from Route 61. Along this segment of Route 61, formally named Shoemakersville Avenue in the borough, lie a few more recently developed stores including a local market, drug store and gas station/convenience store.

FINDINGS

Much of the downtown is readily accessible along existing sidewalks and back alleys. The market and drug store face Route 61 backing the community. Connections to the River are limited, ironically since the river is located behind a single row of buildings facing Main Street. Although connections in town are provided, the roads leading from town do not provide any sidewalk or trail. More recent housing built north of "Downtown" has no sidewalk connections to the town.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The small town of Shoemakersville is an interesting example of a town with a history that continues to be part of the present day landscape. The unique character and the living history of the town provide opportunities to encourage local walking routes throughout the village. Fortunately, Main Street is already equipped with wide sidewalks that provide a safe corridor for pedestrians and give access to businesses. Shoemakersville's close proximity to the Schuylkill River would provide a unique opportunity for greater connections to the riverfront. The Miller Street Bridge, a unique structure in itself, should be highlighted by providing views of it from the adjacent banks.

1. Local Interpretive Trail.

Shoemakersville has a rich and interesting history, the installation of an interpretive trail can highlight

historic spots such as the railroad station, the old lock tender building and the old alignment of the Schuylkill Canal. Additionally, an interpretive trail could direct pedestrians and cyclists to key areas within the town.

2. Trail connection to Hamburg.

There is a potential for a formal pedestrian/bicycle route linking Hamburg to Shoemakersville. An interpretive route following the remnants of the Schuylkill Canal, along the Schuylkill River, or traveling up Main Street and Route 61 is outlined in the trail matrix. (See Chapter 2)

3. Sidewalks and crossings.

Sidewalks in most areas of town simply need to be repaired where cracked or broken. There are a few areas where sidewalks need to be added and are needed to complete some pedestrian connections. Crosswalks need to be maintained by clearly marking the pavement. In the heart of town, these crosswalks may be constructed of a paving material rather than by merely annually painting. As new development continues along Route 61 in Shoemakersville, pedestrian connections back to adjacent neighborhoods should be completed.

4. Waterfront connection.

Public access is restricted to the shores of the Schuylkill Rive at Shoemakersville. The Borough may consider acquiring waterfront property as an investment for future access to the river. These lands could include parcels to the north or south which are primarily farmed land. Another option is the land between the river and the railroad, across the Miller Street Bridge.

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SHARTLESVILLE

LOCATION

Shartlesville is located near the center of Upper Bern Township in Northern Berks County. State Game Lands number 110, Weiser State Forest and the Appalachian Trail are located about a mile north. Shartlesville is located along Old Route 22 (Hex Highway) which is also the main street passing through town. Mountain Road, located on the western edge of town, is an access road to I-78 and the mountains to the north. This main east/west route borders the town on the north and is the main entrance to the town.

HISTORY

Shartlesville was founded in 1765 in honor of a Revolutionary War hero, Colonel Peter Shartle. This small village has a rich history and a majority of the native inhabitants are direct descendants of



Figure 4.6 A view of Main Street, illustrating the unique character of homes.

the original Pennsylvania Dutch. In fact, many people within the community continue to speak the Dutch dialect. Among the well-kept buildings in town is Haag's Hotel, which has been owned and operated by the same family since the early 1800's.

DESCRIPTION

When approaching Shartlesville from either Old Route 22 or I-78, it is apparent that Shartlesville is surrounded by expansive landscapes of agricultural fields. In the near distance, the Blue Mountains and hilly terrain provide an impressive backdrop. This small town clings to Old Route 22 (called Main Street through town) and is only about one block deep on either side.

Main Street, Shartlesville reminds one of a typical "Main Street America", while still possessing its own unique character. Much like the other towns described in this section, businesses and private residences lie next door to each other. All of the buildings along Main Street have an individual character and are well kept. Many of the buildings are painted bright colors, setting themselves apart from each other. Lining both sides of the street are sidewalks and on-street parking.

ANALYSIS

Main Street (old Route 22) forms the backbone of the Shartlesville. As it parallels I-78, the town closely hugs this road, expanding only a block to the north and south. The Shartlesville Township building, post office, elementary school and fire-house are all located along Main Street. The Friedens Union Church is located just off of Main Street, on Creek Road. The northern terminus of Fourth Street is home to the Shartlesville Community Park. Within this park can be found a baseball field, playground equipment, covered stage, and support facilities. Located just north of

plan of shartlesville

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Main Street on Third Street, a collection of antique gas station artifacts are restored and well maintained for public view.

Mountain Road, located at the western limit of town, is the main intersection along Main Street. Currently, a dozen or more unique billboards are clustered around the intersection, pointing to various tourist attractions and landmarks. On the western corner, a small wine shop from a local winery has opened, selling its wines and other local crafts. Behind this small shop, is a service access road to a restaurant, hotel, shops and Roadside America. A local farmer's stand, selling fresh fruits and vegetables is located on the eastern side of the intersection. Visible just past the stand is the Shartlesville Hotel with its fluorescent sign and inviting front porch. Located on Mountain Road, north of I-78 is the Dairy Queen restaurant, two service stations, and the developing Shartlesville Industrial Park on this hill beyond. Further up the road are the Appalachian and Mountain Springs campgrounds at the base of the Blue Mountain.

Located on the western outskirts of town is Roadside America. This tourist attraction features a miniature-scaled model representative of the landscapes found throughout the United States. This unique attraction continues to draw travelers and tourists. A Pennsylvania Dutch gift shop, a hotel and a restaurant are also found along this small access road.

FINDINGS

Within the town of Shartlesville, the existing sidewalk configuration provides a narrow, but adequate pedestrian connection. However, there is no sidewalk connection from Main Street to the park. At the intersection of Main Street and Mountain Road, the sidewalks abruptly end. These two intersecting roads bleed into large gravel lots on either side, creating pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. Connections over I-78 to the Dairy Queen and neighboring industrial park do not exist. These areas of recent development have not provided a safe walkable connection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The town of Shartlesville has a unique character and it is an interesting place for pedestrians and cyclists to visit. There are multiple opportunities for trail users to stop, rest and grab a cold drink. There are existing sidewalks linking stores and hotels.

1. Local Interpretive Trail.

Shartlesville has a rich and interesting history. The installation of an interpretive trail will highlight historic spots such as the Haag's Hotel. Additionally, an interpretive trail could direct pedestrians and cyclists to key attractions and destinations within the town.

2. Trail connection to Hamburg and Strausstown.

There is a potential for a formal pedestrian/bicycle route linking Shartlesville to Hamburg and Strausstown. An interpretive route traveling along the Old Route 22 corridor is outlined in the trail matrix. (See Chapter 2)

3. Signage.

The need for signage warning motorists of pedestrian and bicycle crossings is necessary.

4. Sidewalks and Crosswalks.

Sidewalk connections to the village park are important in making this recreational facility safely accessible. Existing walks should continue to be maintained. The addition of pedestrian connections to the west of town to and along Mountain Road should be a priority. Reducing the number of entry points to the fruit stand and winery would improve this intersection and reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. Any improvements to the Mountain Road overpass should include bike lanes and sidewalks. Since Main Street is also Old Route 22, any crosswalks should be clearly marked and well signed.

5. Connection.

A pedestrian link to Roadside America and the adjacent businesses from town would link these areas and extend the length of visits to this small town.

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STRAUSSTOWN

LOCATION

Strausstown is the western-most area examined during this study. The Borough of Strausstown is surrounded by Upper Tulpehocken Township and is just south of the I-78 corridor. Eastern Strausstown is bordered by Route 183 (Bernville Road), which provides the main access to I-78 from town. Old Route 22 serves as the backbone of Strausstown and is a two lane road that parallels I-78 east to Shartlesville and Hamburg.

HISTORY

Strausstown is named after John Strauss who founded the community and designed the basic street layout. The Borough was incorporated in 1920 from Upper Tulpehocken Township. There are 353 residents in the Borough. The town covers approximately 1.2 square miles.

DESCRIPTION

Strausstown is the smallest of the four towns covered in this study. This community has no intense commercial or business district, and is home to only a few small businesses including a tavern and a bank. When entering Strausstown from the east on Old Route 22, one passes a Texaco Station (visible from Route 183) and then the intersection of East Avenue, the access road to the Strausstown Elementary School.

ANALYSIS

West of East Avenue there are sidewalks and on-street parking on both sides of the street. Old Route 22 is flanked on either side by private residences in turn-of-the-century architecture. Telephone lines, power lines and their accompanying utility poles line the street. The Borough Hall is also located on Old Route 22. Strausstown is only about one block deep on either side of Old Route 22.

Intersecting Old Route 22 is Walnut Street where Fire Company Number 1 is located. Across the street is the Post industrial building, the only industrial area in town. Walnut Road leads south to the Tulpehocken Area Junior and Senior High School.

FINDINGS

This community has sidewalks through the town, however there are no pedestrian connections beyond the immediate downtown. The lands adjacent to the intersection of Old Route 22 and State Route 183 is planned to be a new community park. Should this plan come to fruition, pedestrian linkages to town should also be part of park development. The church just east of Route 183 on Old Route 22 likely includes members from town. A safe crossing and connection to the church from town does not exist. At the opposite side of town, connections to the newer homes and small sheep skin shop should be developed.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Local Interpretive Trail.

The installation of an interpretive trail from town that connects to the Old Route 22 network can highlight historic spots and direct pedestrians and cyclists to key areas within the town.

2. Trail connection to Shartlesville and Hamburg.

There is a potential for a formal pedestrian/bicycle route linking Strausstown to Shartlesville and Hamburg. An interpretive route traveling along the Old Route 22 corridor is outlined in the trail matrix. (See Chapter 2)

3. Signage.

The need for signage warning motorists of the existence of a trail and indicating pedestrian and bicycle crossings is necessary.

IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The recommendations for each community are similar. The connection to the Schuylkill River trail in Hamburg and Shoemakersville and the Old Route 22 Hex Highway touring route in Shartlesville and Strausstown are important to strengthening regional identity.

Strengthening pedestrian connections within each town is important. Repairs to existing walks, re-establishing crosswalks and adding new sidewalks will greatly improve the safety and walk-ability of each town. Connections from residential neighborhoods to schools, parks and commercial and public resources should be on the top priority, since these are more commonly used by children. Creative yet simple additions to the pavement can be used to tell either a story about the town or point out significant features, sites, or routes. There is the potential to implement some type of medallion into the sidewalks in front of stores and other significant features. These medallions could resemble a horseshoe or some type of historic element that reflects the town's history. Businesses and the local government could purchase these medallions and install them into the sidewalks.

Crosswalks are one of the most critical elements, as this is the point where the pedestrian comes in direct potential conflict with vehicles. Clearly designating the crosswalk on the pavement can be accomplished a number of ways. Painting a walk across the asphalt is a common and low cost option. This does require regular maintenance and annual or semi-annual repainting. The delineation of the walk through a change in material is a more long term solution, with a higher initial construction cost, but a lower annual maintenance cost. Concrete, unit pavers, bricks, cobbles and other

materials can be used to delineate the pedestrian crossing area. In addition to the crosswalk, signage should be incorporated, especially if no overhead traffic signals are present and use of the crosswalk is high.

In areas where on-street parking exists, the sidewalk at the crosswalk should be extended into the street, narrowing the distance from curb to curb and removing parked cars immediately adjacent the intersection. The extended walk also provides for small pedestrian spaces to accommodate some site amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, information signs or community bulletin boards and vegetation.

Signage should be used conservatively at key locations. Too many signs will only add confusion and an undesirable clutter, taking away from store front signs and billboards. Marking an historic walking tour, pointing to civic buildings or parks, or identifying an important site or structure could be done with signage. These signs should be uniform in color, size and style, creating a vocabulary identifiable to that particular town. Again these signs should be kept to a minimum, as residents already know where to go. These signs are simply to inform visitors about unique aspects of each town.

The unique character of the four villages mentioned in this chapter needs to be preserved. Re-establishing and strengthening the pedestrian connections in each location will help to make each village a more attractive place to live and work will assist in each town's vitality, preservation and "livability".

RECONNECTIONS

PHASING

The timing for installation of new sidewalks and streetscape amenities will largely depend on funding and capital improvement budgets. Since the crosswalks are linked to roads, roadway paving projects should include installation and marking of crosswalks.

1. First Priority

The first priority should be to complete the missing or fragmented sections of sidewalk within each community. Finishing these connections will be a major step in making the entire community walkable.

2. Second Priority

The second priority should be to clearly delineate the crosswalks. Moving people safely across roads is a critical component to the connectivity of a town.

3. Third Priority

The third priority would be signage and sidewalk amenities. These items, although not related to safety, positively add to the overall pedestrian experience, in each village.