

TRENDS REPORT



Comprehensive Plan
Penn Township
Butler County, Pennsylvania
August 2023

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INTRODUCTION

What is the Purpose of a Trends Report?

Before a community can grow toward a healthy and sustainable future, it is important to understand the conditions of the community today and how it evolved to get there. To summarize, a trends report is compiled to understand the existing conditions of the community and how it has evolved over time to get to where it is today. Understanding these conditions is important as it leads the community to grow and to be prosperous in the future.

The data collected for this report comes from the American Community Survey (ACS) annually. The survey is conducted by the U.S. Census and around 3.5 million residents participate. Unlike the Decennial Census, the ACS uses annual information from about 1% of the total U.S. population and therefore is a **prediction and not an official count** of socioeconomic characteristics in the country.

Unless otherwise indicated and for the purposes of this Report, the data represented throughout this Report is from the 2021 ACS 5-year estimates. However, in some cases, the 2021 data was compared to previous years of 5-year ACS estimates and those instances are labeled respectively.

The Trends Report is broken down into the following categories:

Demographics – Who lives in Penn Township? How has the population of residents changed over time? What types of neighborhoods have developed? How do we plan for the future?

Housing & Affordability – Are there enough places to live in Penn Township? Do more residents own or rent? Is Penn Township affordable and thereby economically attractive to newcomers?

Transportation – How do residents of Penn Township travel/commute? Where are traffic or congestion problems? How can we improve the current conditions for greater accessibility and safety? What currently is working to efficiently move people and what is not?

Economy & Development – What are the top industries in Penn Township? Are they sustainable? Are residents employed? Where are residents working? Are residents well-compensated? What was/is the impact of the pandemic?

Land Use – How does Penn Township balance residential, commercial, and industrial districts? What is the purpose of an overlay? Is there a need to change the zoning code for future land use?

Parks & Recreation – Does Penn Township provide ample green space given the number of residents? How is the space used? Do the current recreation facilities reflect the interests of current residents? What types of recreation attract current and future residents?

Public Facilities & Amenities – Who are the service providers in Penn Township? Are the needs of the residents met? Are providers prepared for growth? What improvements could be made to satisfy more residents?

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

QUICK FACTS



5,092

TOTAL
POPULATION



53.5

MEDIAN
RESIDENT AGE



\$80,156

MEDIAN
HOUSEHOLD
INCOME

regression model, following the most recent five years of data (ACS 2017 to 2021). This range is most representative of recent trends, including the impacts of migration related to COVID-19. Based on the regression analysis, the projections indicate that Penn Township's population will decrease by about 0.58%, to 4,944 over the next ten years. By 2041, it will decrease by another 0.64%, to 4,941 people. While this represents a decrease in population, it is a small decrease, that is not surprising given the Township's aging population. It should also be noted that the use of a linear regression means that known or anticipated future development is not directly factored into the projections, so these numbers should be considered as a reference and not a foregone conclusion.

Population

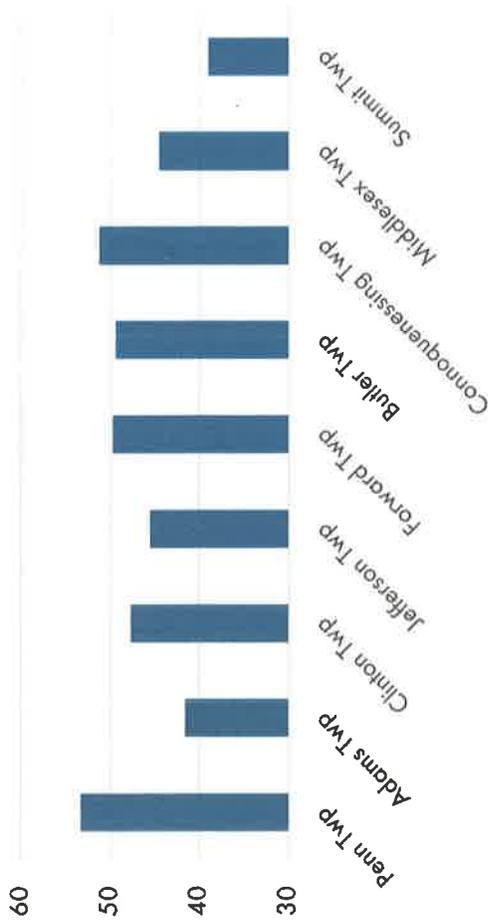
Since 2011, the Township's population has declined slightly. In 2011, the population was 5,092 residents, and by 2021 the population had decreased to 4,973 residents. This represents a 2.33% change from 2011 to 2021. During the same period, Butler County's population increased from 183,317 to 192,561, representing just over a 5% increase. The State of Pennsylvania's population also increased during that time, from 12,660,739 to 12,970,650, a 2.44% increase.

To plan for the Township, it is important to understand not only where the Township's population currently stands, but what might be expected in the future. To do this, population projections were developed based on a linear

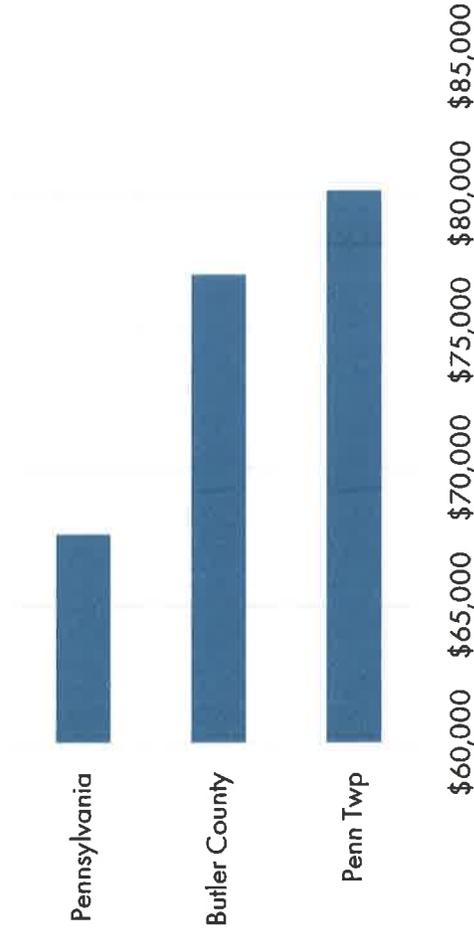
Age

The median age for Penn Township residents in 2021 was 53.5 years, which is higher than the median age for Butler County (43.5 years) and for Pennsylvania (40.9 years) at large. The greatest percent of the population included those between the ages of 65 and 74, who represented 16.1% of the Township's total population. The smallest percentage were those aged 20 to 24 with just 1.1% of the population. As compared to bordering townships, Penn Township's median age was the highest compared to the surrounding municipalities, followed by Connoquenessing Township (51.3 years) and Forward Township (49.4 years).

Median Age by Township



Median Household Income



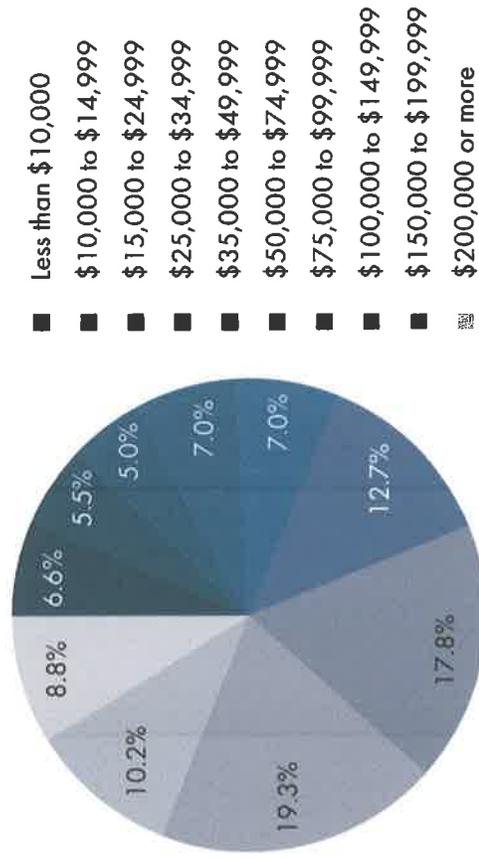
Households and Housing

According to the US Census, there were 1,916 households in Penn Township in 2011. Over the last few decades, the number of households has increased slightly. The 2021 US Census found Penn Township to have 2,096 housing units. The Census estimated that there are 1,487 total families in Penn Township with approximately 428 homes with children and teens under 18 years of age. In addition, 96.8% of residents are owners with the other 3.2% being renters. This is higher than Butler County with 78.7% of residents being owners and 21.3% being renters. Pennsylvania has estimated 69.9% of residents are homeowners and 30.1% being renters.

Median Household Income

The median household income in the Township was \$80,156 in 2021. Overall, median household income is higher in the Township than in the Butler County (\$78,146), and slightly higher than Pennsylvania (\$68,4957). Almost half (49.8%) of Penn Township residents earn between \$49,999 to \$149,999 annually.

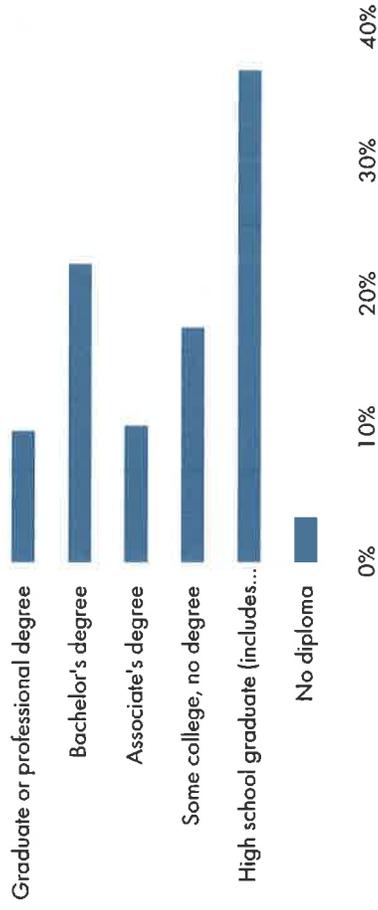
Income Distribution



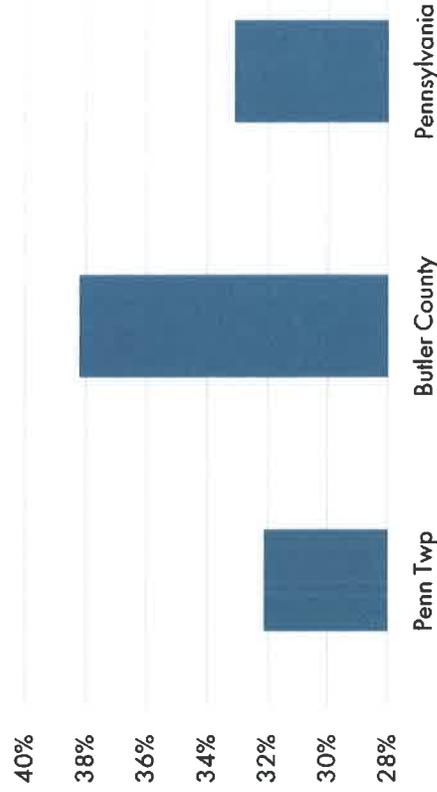
Education

Almost all residents 18 years or older (3,685) in Penn Township have a high school degree or better (96.6% of the total population). Butler County falls slightly below this mark with 95.5% of their total population having a high school degree or more. Even lower than this is the Pennsylvania percentage of residents with a high school diploma or higher (91.4%). Furthermore, 9.8% of Township residents have a graduate or professional degree while 22.3% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Educational Attainment in Penn Township



Bachelor's Degree or Higher



Knoch School District, Penn Township's primary public school district

HOUSING AND AFFORDABILITY

QUICK FACTS



2,029
OWNER-
OCCUPIED
HOUSES

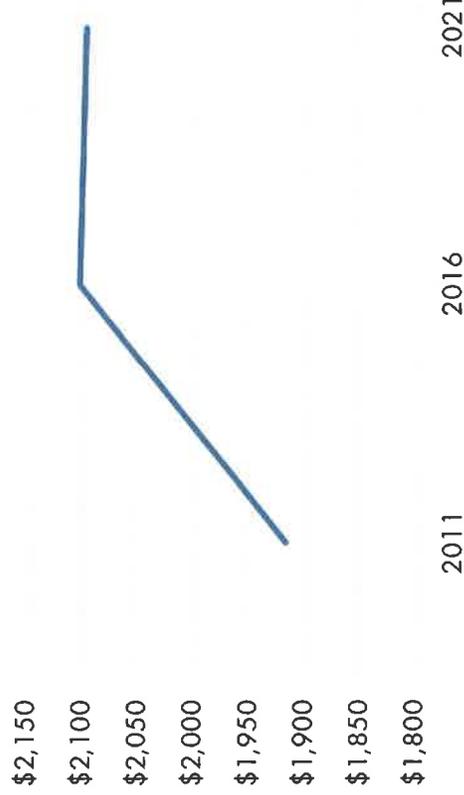


2,159
HOUSING
UNITS

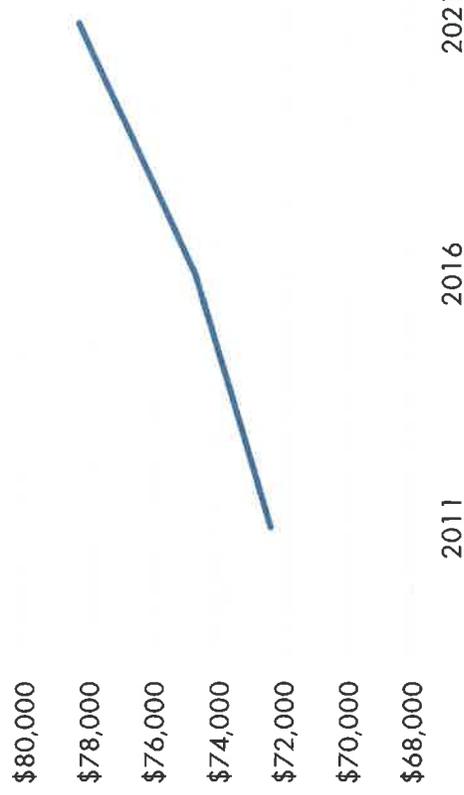


\$250,400
MEDIAN
HOME
VALUE

Penn Township Household Counts, 2011 -2021



Butler County Household Counts, 2011 -2021

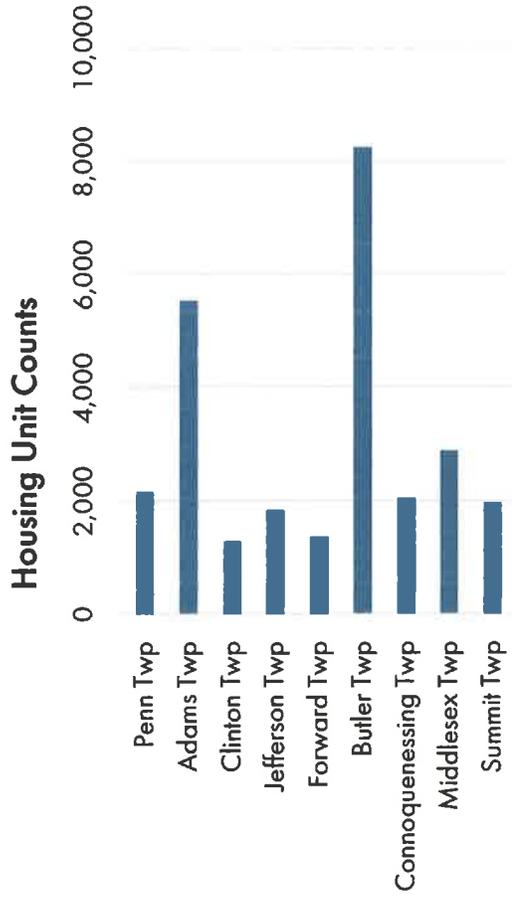


Households

The Township experienced an increase in the number of households from 2011 to 2016, with the ACS 5-year estimate changing from 1,916 to 2,102 households, a 9.7% increase. From 2016 to 2021, the household count remained nearly the same, from 2,102 to 2,096. As a whole, Butler County has experienced a steady increase in households from 2011 to 2016 and again from 2016 to 2021 (from 72,258 in 2011 to 78,365 in 2021 – an 8.5% increase during the ten-year period). The continual increase at the County level and not at the Township level may indicate that the major changes in household counts are occurring in other areas of the Butler County outside of Penn Township.

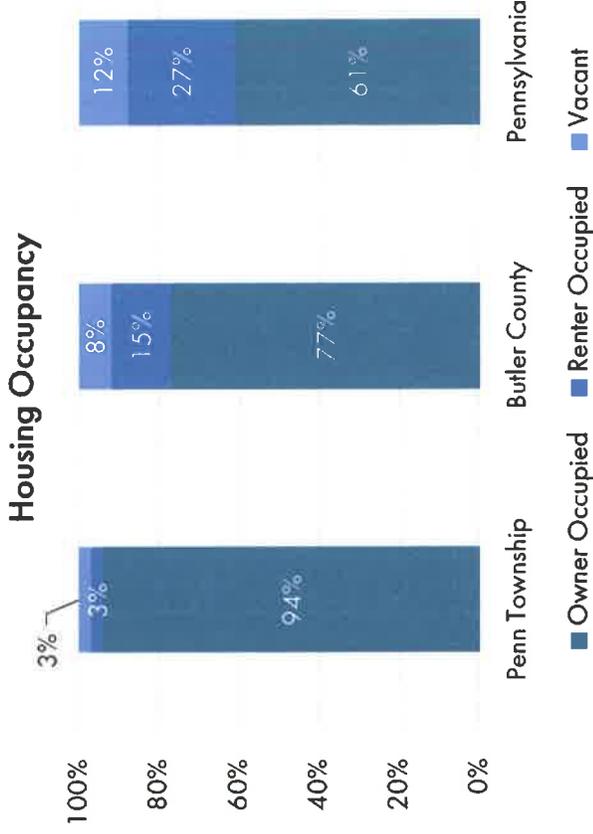
Housing Units

In 2021, there were 2,159 housing units within Penn Township. The following graph shows a comparison in the number of housing units for Penn Township and all neighboring area municipalities. Aside from the outliers of Adams Township and Butler Township, Penn Township's household count is comparable to the other surrounding municipalities.



Renter/Owner Occupancy and Vacancy

Of Penn Township's total housing units in 2021, 94% were owner-occupied, 3% were renter-occupied, and 3% were vacant. Penn Township's homeowner rates were higher than the ownership rates in the County and the State. The following chart provides a comparison of the Township to Butler County and Pennsylvania.



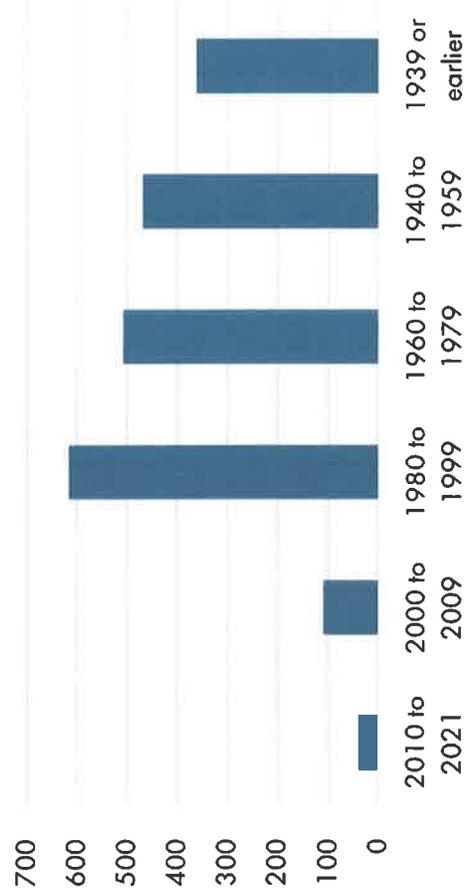
Some of the housing stock in Penn Township

Age of Housing Stock

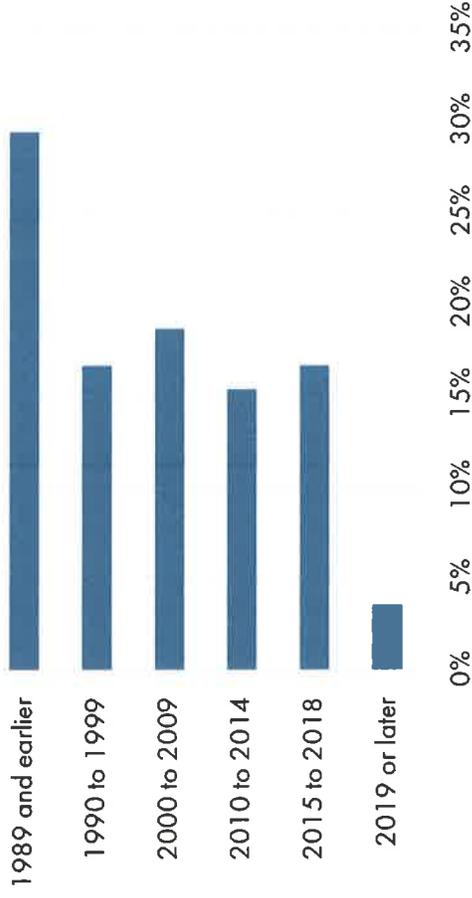
In general, the housing stock in the Township is aging and not being replaced proportionately. This also contributes to the population leveling off in the past few years in the Township, as the current housing stock is almost entirely occupied as of today. As seen in the following chart, the years with the largest increase in new home construction was between 1980 and 1999, where 616 homes were built. In comparison, in the last 22 years, only 146 new homes were built, with more than half of those built between 2000 and 2009.

The new home construction rates, however, do not directly correlate to the years that residents moved into their current homes. For example, 29.4% of all residents of Penn Township moved into their current home in 1989 or earlier, while the remaining 70.6% moved into their current home in 1990 or later. This may indicate that most residents that are moving to the area are not constructing or purchasing a new home but are rather buying from the existing, older housing stock.

Number of Homes Built



Year Moved In

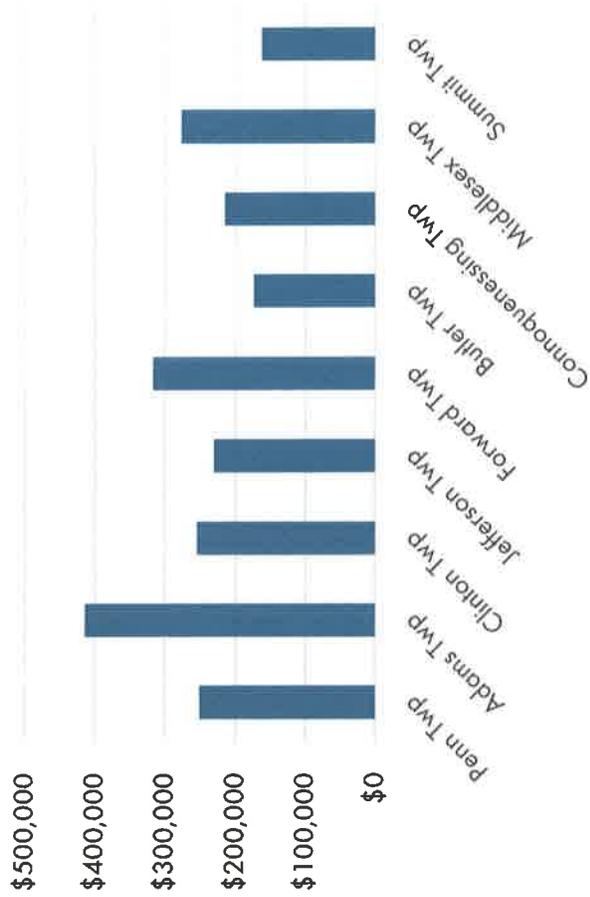


Home Value

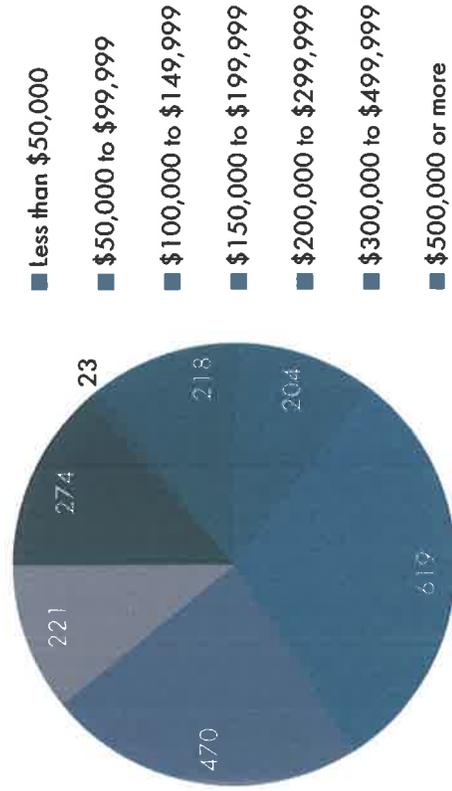
The median value of owner-occupied units in Penn Township was \$250,400 in 2021, which is about the same as the median value County-wide (\$251,700) and slightly higher than the State average (\$222,300). Penn Township's median home value is roughly average for all median household values of neighboring municipalities. The full valuation of median home value for all neighboring municipalities can be seen in the chart on the following page.

The majority of homes, or 54%, in the Township are valued between \$200,000 and \$499,999. The least represented housing brackets include homes over \$1,000,000 in value, which there are predicted to be zero of, and homes valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999, which includes about 1% of all homes in Penn Township.

Median Home Value



Home Value Distribution



Affordability

The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Housing Affordability Index (HAI) measures whether or not a typical family could qualify for a mortgage loan on a typical home. A typical home is defined as the national median-priced, existing single-family home as calculated by NAR. The typical family is defined as one earning the median family income as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. The prevailing mortgage interest rate is the effective rate on loans closed on existing homes from the Federal Housing Finance Board. These components are used to determine if the median income family can qualify for a mortgage on a typical home.

A value of 100 in the NAR Affordability Index means that a family with the median income has exactly enough income to qualify for a mortgage on a median-priced home. An index above 100 signifies that family earning the median income has more than enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan on a median-priced home, assuming a 20% down payment. For example, a composite HAI of 120.0 means a family earning the median family income has 120% of the income necessary to qualify for a conventional loan covering 80% of a median-priced existing single-family home. An increase in the HAI, then, shows that this family is more able to afford the median priced home.

The Township is a very affordable place to purchase and own a home, as the Housing Affordability Index for Penn Township in 2021 was 98, meaning a family earning the median family income has 98% of the income necessary to qualify for a conventional loan.

TRANSPORTATION

QUICK FACTS



24.2

MEAN TRAVEL
MINUTES TO
WORK



57

MILES OF
TOWNSHIP
ROADWAYS



88.2%

RESIDENTS
DROVE ALONE
TO WORK



State Highway 8

Transportation Network

State Highway 8 runs north/south through the center of the Township, serving as a main arterial roadway for the region. Several collector roads, including Renfrew Road, Old Plank Road, Dinnerbell Road, and Brownsdale Road, run east to west, connecting State Highway 8 with the surrounding residential and agricultural areas. Three Degree Road and Meridian Road serve as major connector roads, connecting Brownsdale Road to Renfrew Road at two different points.

Roadway Jurisdiction and Maintenance

The Township owns and maintains 57 miles of roadways in the municipality. Road maintenance includes the paving and repaving of road surfaces, snow plowing, and general upkeep of roadway conditions. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) owns and maintains roughly 20 miles of roadways in the Township, including State Highway 8, Beacon Road, Dinnerbell Road, and Brownsdale Road, which are some of the most traveled roadways in the Township. On the following page is a map of roads by management provider.

ROAD MANAGEMENT

PENN TOWNSHIP

Legend

-  Penn Township
-  Butler County Municipality Boundaries
-  State Roads
-  Local Roads



N

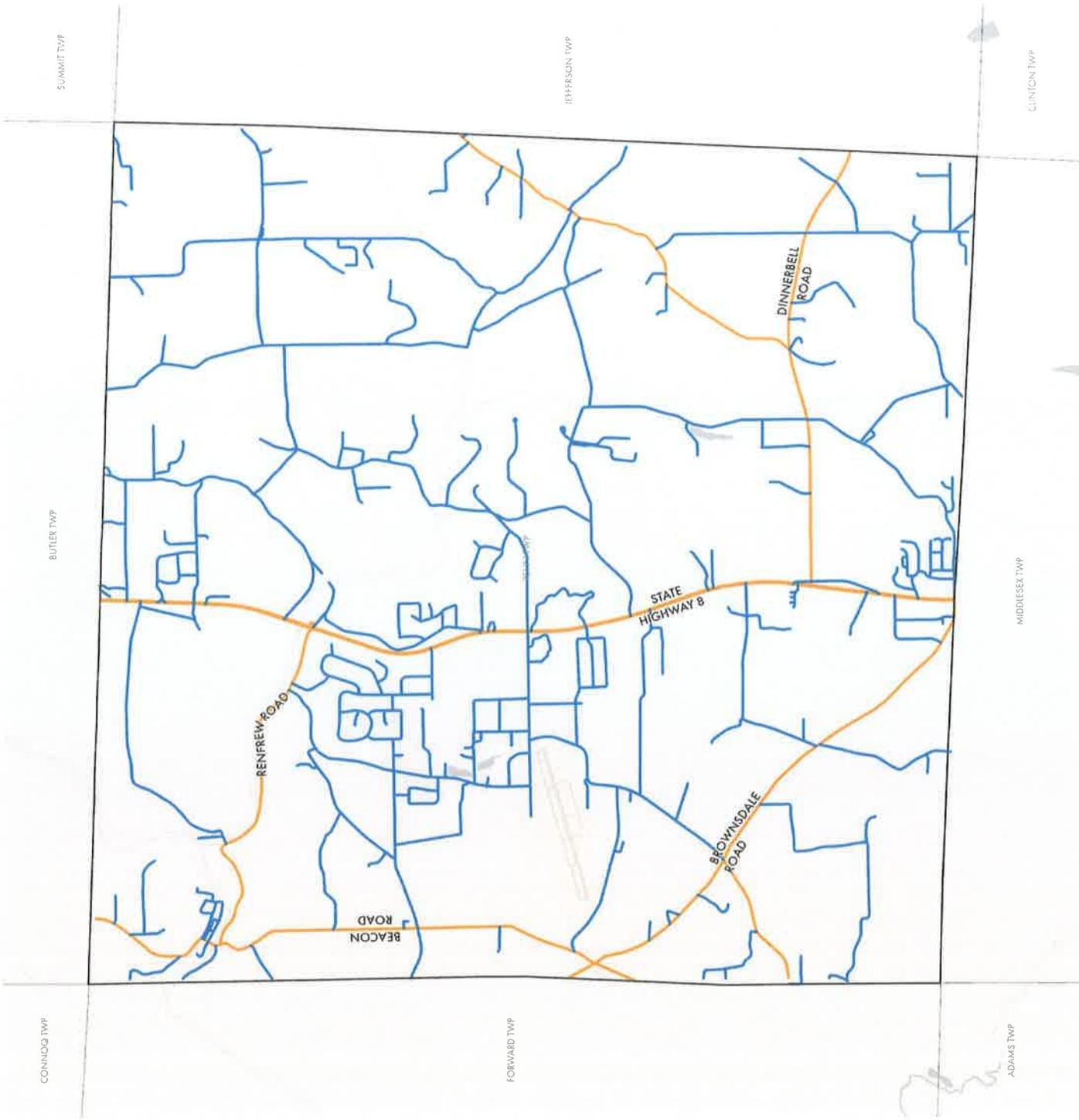


0 1 2 Miles

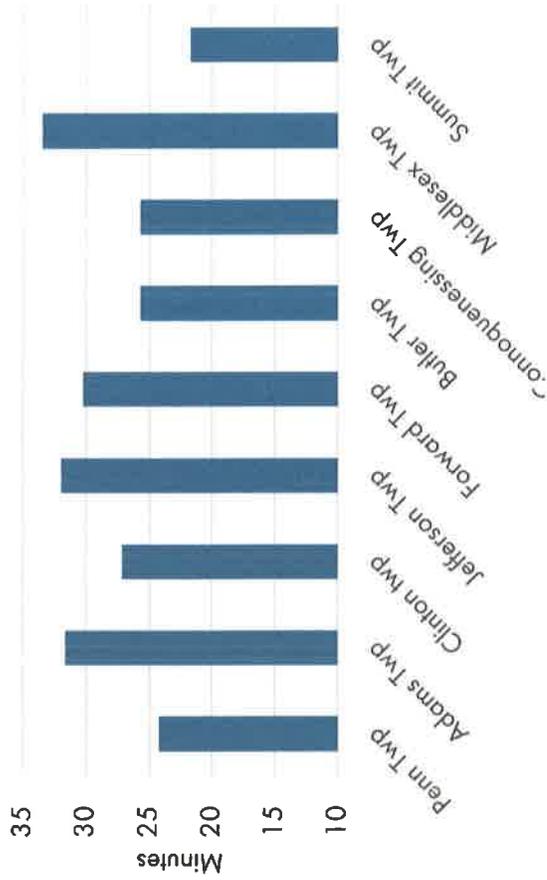
Map prepared by Penn Township, PA, with GIS Group, Consulting Engineers, Inc., 2023, using GIS Data, 2023, by Penn Township, PA.

3/18/2023

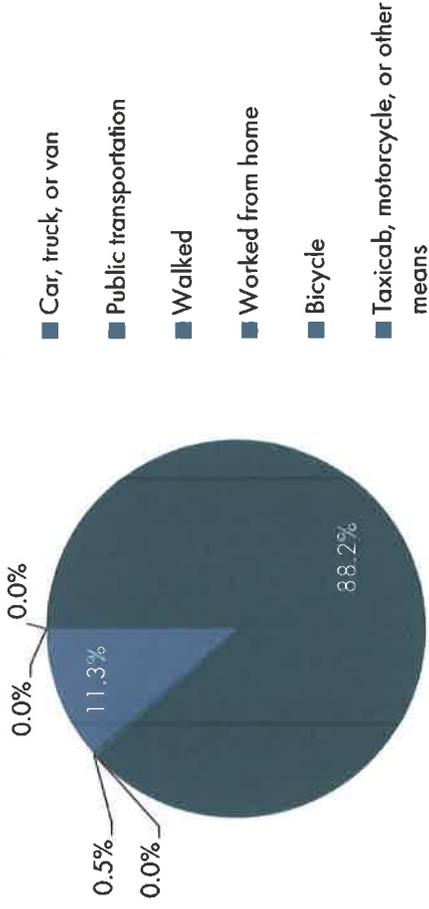




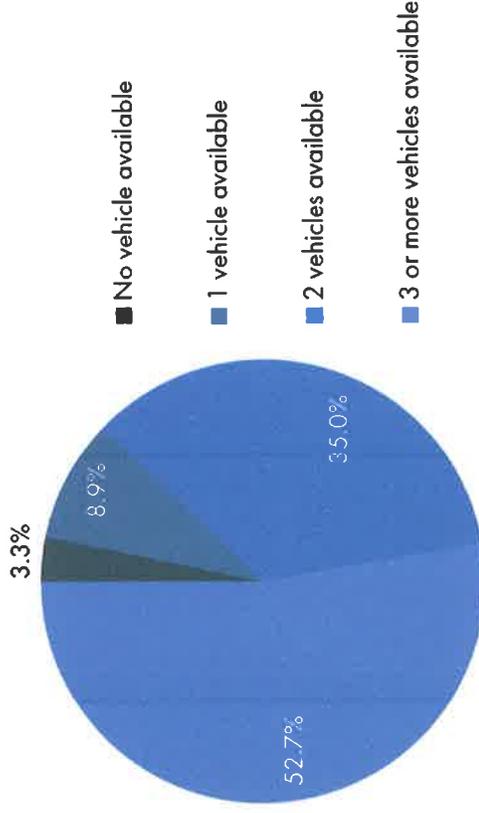
Mean Travel Time to Work



Commute Mode



Vehicle Access for Workers



At 88.2%, an overwhelming majority of workers in the Township travel to work by car, truck, or van. Less than one percent travel by taxicab, motorcycle, or other means, and zero percent commute by bike, on foot, or using public transportation (other than taxis). Just over eleven percent of the Township works from home.

Vehicle Access

Within Penn Township, 96.7% of workers sixteen years or older who are part of a household have access to at least one vehicle. Over 50% of them have access to three or more vehicles.

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

QUICK FACTS



\$80,156
MEDIAN
INCOME



3.2%
COUNTY
UNEMPLOYMENT
RATE



3,571
JUNE 2023
COUNTY
JOB POSTINGS

Butler County Overview

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (DLI), the top ten employers in the 4th Quarter of 2022 in Butler County included the following:

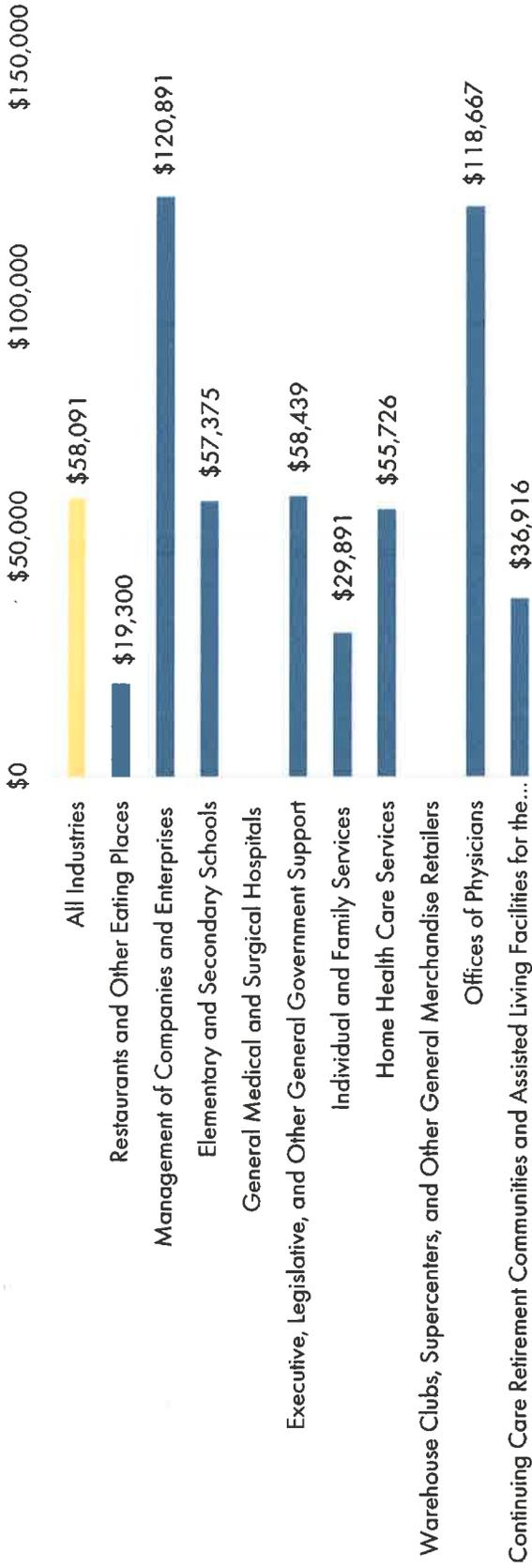
1. Federal Government
2. Butler Healthcare Providers
3. Westinghouse Electric
4. AK Steel Corporation
5. Seneca Valley School District
6. Wal-Mart

7. PA State System of Higher Education
8. Butler Area School District
9. FedEx
10. Penn United Technologies

The top employers correspond to a similar list of the top ten employment sectors in the County as per the 2022 4th Quarter DLI report:

1. Restaurants and Other Eating Places
2. Management of Companies and Enterprises
3. Elementary and Secondary Schools
4. General Medical and Surgical Hospitals
5. Executive, Legislative, and Other General Government Support
6. Individual and Family Services
7. Home Health Care Services
8. Warehouse Clubs, Supercenters, and Other General Merchandise Retailers
9. Offices of Physicians
10. Continuing Care Retirement Communities and Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly

Average Income Per Sector, DCI 2022 4th Q*



* Note: General Medical and Surgical Hospitals as well as Warehouse Clubs, Supercenters, and Other General Merchandise Retailers did not have available data at the sector level.

Restaurants and Other Eating Places is the top employment sector in the County but there are no restaurants listed as a top employer in the County. This is likely the result of many restaurants, primarily smaller scale non-chain restaurants, that collectively account for a large portion of the labor force in the County. Many jobs in the County are categorically service providers, including public education, medical care, personal care, and federal government work.

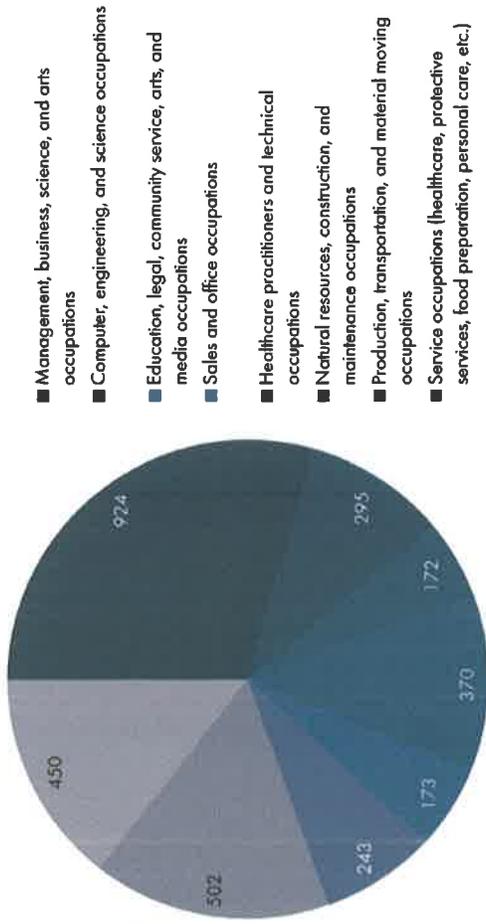
The median household income in 2021, which is the income cut-off where half of the households earn more and half earn less, was \$77,065 in Butler County and \$80,156 in Penn Township. The more well-paying jobs an industry provides, the greater its potential on the local economy.

In Butler County, the mean annual wage, which is the average income in the County, paid in 2021 was \$58,091. The top employment sector, Restaurants

and Other Eating Places, paid far less than the average county-wide income at \$19,300. The next two largest employers, Management of Companies & Enterprises and Elementary & Secondary Schools, paid about \$51,000 and \$25,800, respectively. The full list of average income per sector can be seen above.

The impact of industries on employment and income should be considered when planning for new development or redevelopment. Consideration should be given concerning whether new jobs pay enough for employees to afford the cost of living in Penn Township. Of the top ten sectors listed in the DCI report, three sectors have an average income far below the mean annual income in the County. This may indicate that the cost of living for employees in those sectors may not make enough income to support themselves financially. This also may indicate that the ability for a resident to afford to own a home may not be equally feasible for all sector workers in the County.

Top Employment Sectors, 2021



Employment in Penn Township

The top industries employing Township residents in 2021, as per the 5-year ACS report, included the following:

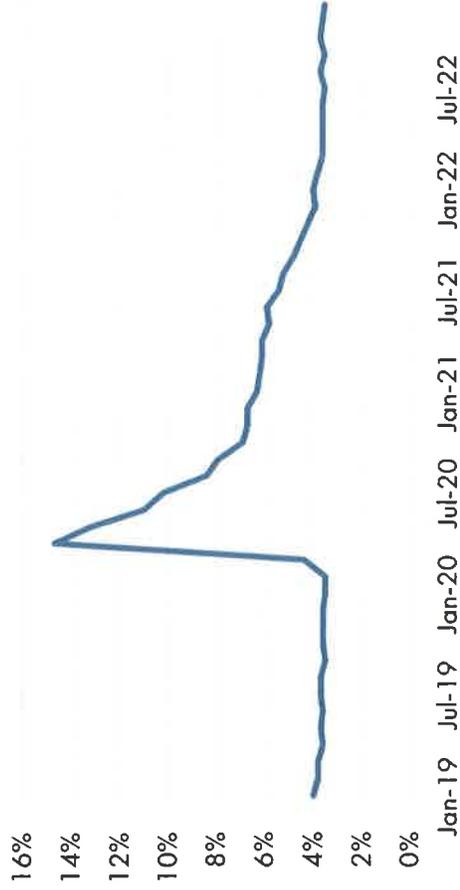
1. Management, business, science, and arts occupations (924 residents)
2. Production, transportation, and material moving occupations (502 residents)
3. Service occupations (healthcare, protective services, food preparation, personal care, etc.) (450 residents)
4. Sales and office occupations (370 residents)
5. Computer, engineering, and science occupations (295 residents)
6. Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (243 residents)
7. Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations (173 residents)
8. Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations (172 residents)

Potential Impacts of Covid-19 on Employment

During the COVID-19 pandemic, national unemployment rates rose to levels not seen since the 1930s. The 2020 unemployment rate in Butler County was significantly higher than previous years because of lay-offs and business closures, both temporary and permanent. Low-wage jobs and minority employees were disproportionately impacted by the mix of layoffs and temporary and permanent business caused by the pandemic (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, 2022).

Across Pennsylvania, 30.9% of employers offered increased opportunities to work from home during the pandemic. Job loss in occupations that offered the ability to work from home was considerably smaller than other occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Business Response Survey to the Coronavirus Pandemic, September 2020).

US Unemployment Rate 2019-Present



Retail Market Potential

The 2021 ESRI Retail Market Potential Report analyzed particular market sectors and the consumer behaviors for Penn Township. Sectors such as Apparel, Automobiles, Electronics, Entertainment, Financials, and more were scored using the Market Potential Index (MPI). The MPI measures the relative likelihood of the adults or households in the specified trade area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the U.S. An MPI of 100 represents the U.S. average.

The Report organizes the MPI scores by category (i.e. Restaurants or Travel) and subcategory (i.e. went to a fast food restaurant in the last 6 months or took an international trip in the last 6 months). To the right are the average scores for selected categories analyzed in the Retail Market Report.

Generally, Penn Township performs just slightly above the national average for market potential, with a total mean MPI of 102. In all but four of the selected categories, Penn Township performs above the national average, with Cell Phones (99), Entertainment (98), Restaurants (99), and Travel (98) performing just a few points under the national average. The categories that have a value under the national average indicate that residents in the Township engage in those consumer behavior types less often than the average American. Township residents may engage less frequently in those consumer behaviors due to a number of reasons, including affordability of those purchases, access to those products, and more.

Product/Consumer Behavior	Average MPI Across Subcategories
Apparel	100
Automobiles	107
Cell Phones	99
Computers	102
Entertainment	98
Financial	107
Grocery	100
Health	103
Home	106
Restaurants	99
Travel	98
Insurance	103

Total Average

102



Some of the retail corridor in the Township

LAND USE & ZONING

QUICK FACTS



6
ZONING
DISTRICTS



2
OVERLAY
DISTRICTS



24.3
SQUARE
MILES

Existing Land Use and Zoning

Penn Township has historically been a predominantly rural, suburban community. Over the last decade or so, growth and development has occurred in neighboring municipalities, which has started to bring some potential development pressures to Penn Township as well.

Penn Township is made up of a mix of land uses and is home to the Butler County Airport, Succop Nature Park, the Butler Country Club, the Penn Valley Athletic Club, numerous residential areas and neighborhoods, farmlands and agricultural areas and related uses, and various types of businesses along the busy Route 8 corridor.

The Township's current Zoning Map provides for all land uses through the following zoning district designations:

ZONING DISTRICTS

-  C1 - Neighborhood Commercial
-  C2 - Highway Commercial
-  I-L Limited Industrial
-  OZ1 - Overlay Zone Renfrew
-  OZ2 - Overlay Zone Port O' Call
-  R1 - One Family Residential
-  RE - Residential Estate
-  S - Conservancy

Commercial Areas

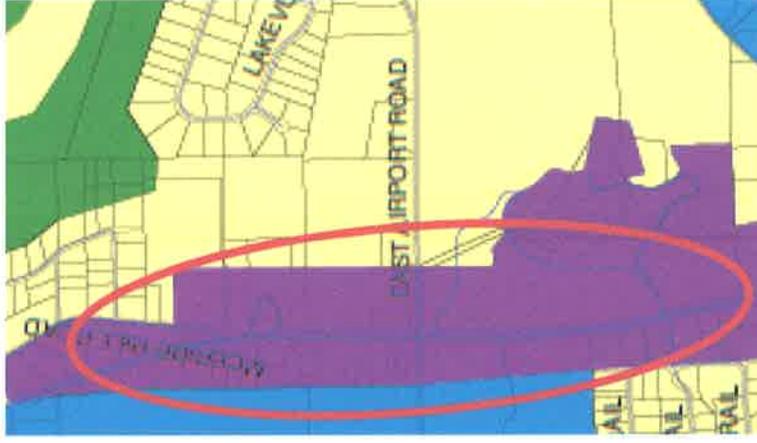
There are two commercial zoning districts within Penn Township. The C1 District is the Neighborhood Commercial District and there are two small C1 areas in Penn Township. The first is located in the center of the Township on the north side of Airport Road near the intersection of Country Club Road. In addition, the second C1 area is located in the southeastern part of the Township along Dinnerbell Road, between Robinson Run Road and Rockdale Road. The images on the following page from the Township's Zoning Map show the C1 areas.



The C-2 District



The C2 District, also known as Highway Commercial, is the other commercial zoning district within Penn Township. This District runs the majority of the length of the State Route 8 corridor from north to south through the Township, from the border to the south with Middlesex Township to the northern part of the Township bordering Butler Township. There are many businesses along Route 8 in Penn Township including restaurants, retail stores, car dealerships, auto repair garages, animal day care and veterinary services, recreational destinations, landscape supply centers, business and professional offices, and much more. The following images show some of the C2 areas along Route 8.



The I-L District



Industrial Areas

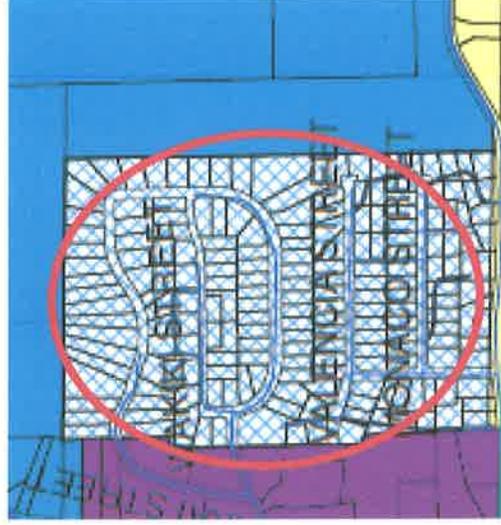
While only a small amount of land is dedicated to industrial uses, Penn Township is still home to several industrial areas and businesses. Penn Township's industrial uses can be found throughout properties in the I-L Limited Industrial Zoning District. The I-L zoned areas are predominantly located in the northern part of the Township. Specifically, there are I-L areas along Hicks Road, off of Renfrew Road, and also Renfrew Road near Township Lane. In addition, there is a small I-L area along East Airport Road between Lakevue Drive and Winters Road. The images on the following page highlight a few of the I-L areas in Penn Township.



The R-1 District



While zoned mostly for residential uses, the Butler County Airport, which began operations in 1929, is located across both residential zones in the Township. Both the R1 and RE zoned areas are scattered throughout Penn Township. Much of the western half of the Township is zoned R1 while the more dominant zoning district on the eastern side of the Township is the RE zone. The R1 zones are cream colored while the RE zones are colored in blue on the Township's Zoning Map. The following images show a few of residentially zoned areas in Penn Township.



The Port-O-Call Overlay District

The majority of the land in Penn Township is zoned and used for residential purposes. There are two residential zoning districts in Penn Township, R1 Low-Density Single-Family Residential and RE Residential Estate. Per the Township's Zoning Ordinance, the R1 District reflects a traditional residential lot. Lot sizes required in the R1 are smaller than in the Conservancy and RE Districts but larger than lots found in older municipal subdivisions. By comparison, the Residential Estate District is intended to provide a rural environment for large-lot single-family homes, allowing a greater variety of permitted and conditional uses than just residential but keeping with the rural character of the community.

Residential Areas



The Renfrew Overlay District

PARKS & RECREATION

QUICK FACTS



1
MUNICIPAL
PARK



65
ACRES OF
PARKLAND



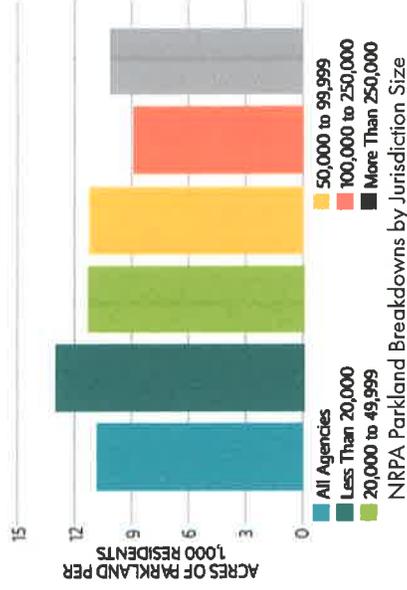
13
ACRES OF
PARKLAND PER
1,000 RESIDENTS

Township Facilities

Penn Township owns and manages roughly 65 acres of parkland at the only public park in the Township-- Harcrest Park. Park Metrics provided by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) compare a municipal department's recreation offerings to comparable communities across the United States. The average number of acres of parkland per 1,000 residents for communities with populations less than 20,000 is 13, and Penn Township has roughly 13 acres per 1,000 residents, which means the community is on par with other communities of similar size.

The Park Metrics also account for park amenities. Note that the NRPA metrics represent the average community's existing facilities, which may or may not match the needs of Penn Township.

FIGURE 2: ACRES OF PARKLAND PER 1,000 RESIDENTS (BY JURISDICTION POPULATION)



Harcrest Park

As the only park in Penn Township, Harcrest Park offers several facilities for various purposes with several more facilities planned in the coming years. The current amenities include walking paths, a playground, pavilion, a sand volleyball court, a disc golf course, a horseshoe court, parking, and public restrooms. A large portion of the land is devoted to passive recreation and meadowland.

The Township purchased the property that Harcrest Park is now located on in 2007 and the Township began work on the Harcrest Park Master Plan later that year. As a part of the Plan process, the Township and the planning

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



consultants sought public feedback via a community survey, interviews, and a focus group to discuss the facilities and amenities that the park should host. The results from the public engagement process indicated that the three most-requested amenities for the new park should be walking trails, biking trails, and picnic shelters. With that input in mind, the final Plan released in 2009 included five phases to address residents' recreation needs as seen in the following map. It also set the vision for preserving parts of the park as open lawn, rather than formal athletic fields.

The first phase of park development, to include most of the existing amenities available at the park, was constructed according to this plan in 2017. The overall plan was updated in 2018, with the important change of excluding a vehicle circulation from the core of the park. Residents had grown to love the natural character and unimpeded walking trails in the park, and public input supported the change to park circulation.

In 2021, the Township purchased the parcel directly north of the existing Harcrest Park land to be added to the park development plan. A grant from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund was awarded in 2022 for the construction of Phase 2 improvements. Construction costs had greatly increased since the original grant application. The Township, with the assistance of HRG, determined that the grant award would not cover the full extent of the proposed improvements.

As a result of the challenge of funding and the opportunity of land acquisition, the Township updated the master plan to include development of facilities on the newly-acquired land including additional parking spaces, several sport courts, a paved and shaded walking loop with a great lawn, additional restrooms, and a shelter.

The original Park Master Plan was predicted to cost \$3,773,330 and the subsequent Plan Update is projected to cost an additional \$3,637,447. The proposed improvements will be constructed in phases, prioritized based on resident needs and constructed based on available funding, as seen in the following plan design.

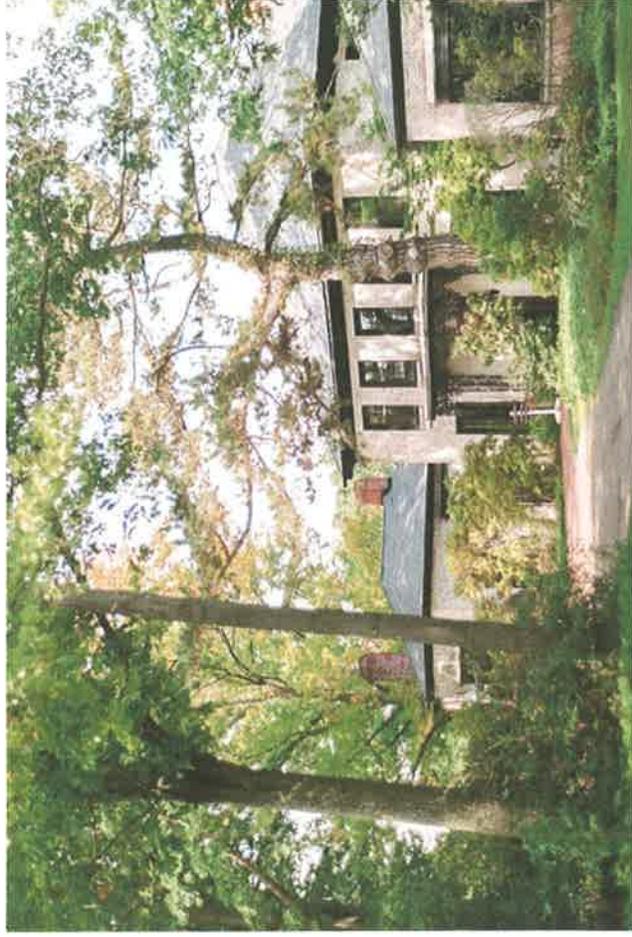


Additional Recreation

While Penn Township has only one municipally owned park, there are several other nature-oriented and recreational facilities in the Township that are available to residents.

Succop Nature Park

The Succop Nature Park is owned and managed by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania and offers 50 acres of woodlands, fields, two ponds, pavilions, and walking trails available to the public. The historic property was once the estate of T. W. Phillips Jr., the founder of T. W. Phillips Gas and Oil Company, and was operated by the Butler County Community College Education Foundation from 2001 to 2011, at which time it was given to the Audubon Society to manage.



Succop Nature Park, image courtesy of Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania



Harcrest Community Park Sign

Golf Courses

Penn Township is home to a number of privately-owned golf courses including the Butler Country Club, Conley Resort & Golf, and LakeVue North Golf Course. While these facilities are not open to the public, they are recreational opportunities aside from Harcrest Park or Succop Nature Park where residents can engage in active recreational activities such as golf.

Land Dedication & Fee-in-Lieu

The process whereby developers dedicate land to the Township for recreation, or pay a fee in lieu of land dedication, has not been adopted by the Township as of 2023. In light of lack of green spaces in the Township, as well as the Parks and Recreation Department's proactive efforts to raise the standard of excellence for community facilities, this is an issue of utmost importance as well as general fiscal responsibility and accountability.

Land dedication, and the Township's ability to charge a fee in its place, is an important way that municipalities can accommodate the impacts of increased development on recreation needs. It is authorized under the Pennsylvania



Children playing at Harcrest Park's first-opened playground, image courtesy of the Cranberry Eagle

Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247 of 1968). These funds are provided for by law because they are an important part of how municipalities sustain essential services. The MPC also governs how these funds are to be managed and utilized according to the municipality's formally adopted Comprehensive Recreation Plan. In light of the strain placed on parks and outdoor community spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic, securing proper funding is now more important than ever.

Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires playgrounds and facilities constructed or altered after March 15, 2012 to comply with ADA design standards. Accessible playgrounds create a sense of inclusivity for communities and schools, allowing all residents to partake in recreational activities. Inclusive playgrounds allow children of all abilities and developmental

stages to play in the space. Playgrounds are required to have available, unobstructed routes to play equipment, at least one type of ground-level play component, existing or new ramps to have handrails on both sides, and to use specific safety surfacing that meets ADA criteria.

Harcrest Park has only one playground as of 2023, but that playground was built to accommodate individuals with all ability levels. As the Park continues to grow and develop, the Township will continue to offer ADA-compliant recreational opportunities for all locals.

Programming

Due to Harcrest's Park state of development, there is no official parks and recreation programming at this time. However, the Township should consider exploring the development of programming for all ages as the park continues to be developed over the next several years. The Township may adopt some programs that other municipalities have hosted such as concerts in the park, picnics in the park, community days, yoga, Easter egg hunts, and more.



Harcrest Park's Disc Golf Course

PUBLIC FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

QUICK FACTS



41,466
RESIDENTS



27
ACTIVE
FIREMEN



4
FULL TIME
POLICE
OFFICERS

Utilities

To meet the needs of residents, Penn Township is served by a variety of utility providers. Central Electric and West Penn Power provide services in the area. Sewage and water are provided by the Saxonburg Sewer Authority, the Municipal Authority of Adams Township, and PA Water depending on where in the Township the property is located. Natural gas is supplied by Peoples Gas across the Township.

Broadband & Wireless

Consolidated Communications (which purchased North Pittsburgh Telephone Company) and Armstrong are the current internet and phone companies available to Penn Township residents. Both provide up to 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download/upload speed.

Waste & Recycling

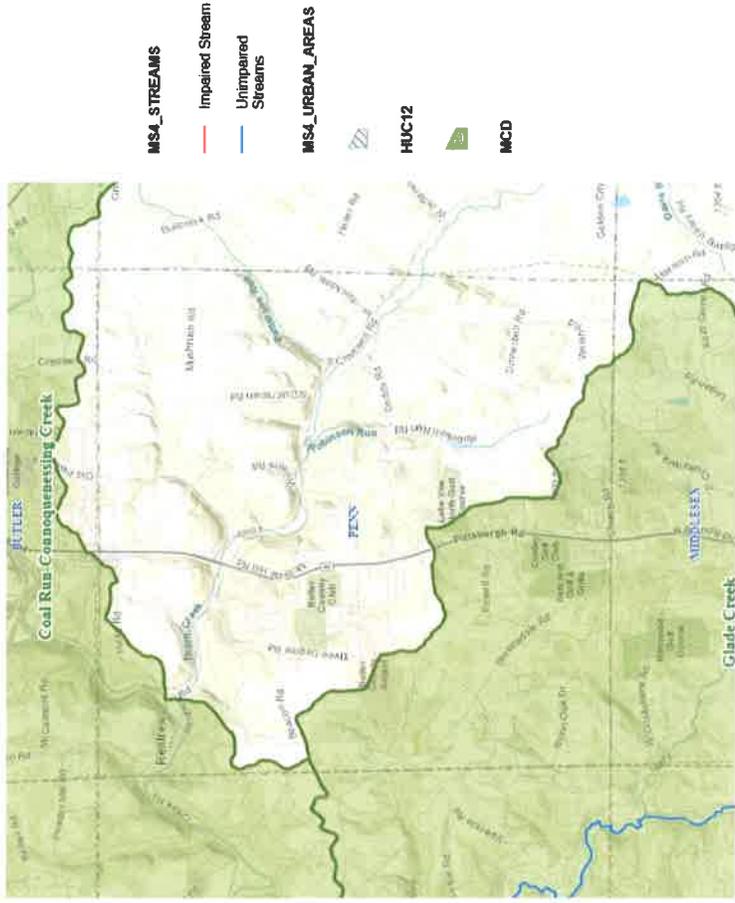
There is no municipal-wide waste and recycling company that residents are required to use. Instead, residents are responsible for hiring independent contractors to handle their ongoing waste and recycling needs.

Public Works

The Penn Township Public Works Department has 4 full-time employees who are responsible for the maintenance of the 57 miles of municipally-owned roadways. As well, the Public Works department, is responsive 24/7 to address weather-related incidences such as fallen trees, vandalism of road signs, roadway flooding, and unpredictable snowstorms. As well as the standard Public Works responsibilities, Penn Township also hosts its own composting facility where residents can dispose of lawn trimmings and other organic materials.

Stormwater Management

As of 2003, Penn Township is required to have a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4), under the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (PADEP's) National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II permit program for storm water discharges from storm sewer systems. Since then, the Township has implemented several actions to ensure the proper handling of stormwater discharge through its MS4 system. In 2011, the Township passed a stormwater ordinance prohibiting illicit discharges or connections of non-stormwater discharge, as well as regulating stormwater management of land disturbance activities and the handling of post-construction stormwater runoff.



Schools

Public School

The Township is served by the Knoch School District (formerly called the South Butler County School District). The school system includes four schools including Knoch Primary School (K-3), Knoch Intermediate Elementary School (4-5), Knoch Middle School (6-8), and Knoch High School (9-12). Between all schools, the Knoch School District has 2,750 enrolled students and employs 279 staff.

In 2022, Knoch School District released the 2022-2025 Comprehensive Plan and included some of the following indicators of success:

1. Clear and Shared Focus
2. High Standards and Expectations
3. Effective District Leadership
4. High Levels of Collaboration and Communication
5. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Aligned with Standards
6. Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning
7. Focused Professional Development
8. Supportive Learning Environment
9. High Levels of Community and Parent Involvement

Private School

In addition to the Knoch Area School District, the Township is also served by one private institution, Penn Christian Academy.

Fire & Emergency Services

Fire Department

Penn Township is served by one volunteer fire department (VFD), which has 27 active firemen that service the area. In addition to rescue and fire services, the Fire Department also often hosts community fundraising events and other recreational events such as the Car Cruise, a Tool Bash, and fire safety events.

Police Department

The Township has its own municipal Police Department with 4 full-time officers and 3 part-time officers. The fleet is comprised of two marked patrol units and one unmarked patrol unit. Each patrol unit is equipped with V.A.S.C.A.R. speed timing devices. In addition to the equipment available, the Police Department also offers a house check program for residents out of town to ensure their properties are safe and secure.



One of Penn Township's firetrucks

Emergency Management Services

Ambulance services in the Township is provided by Butler Ambulance which consists of 11 ambulances, 14 wheelchair vans, an advanced life support squad vehicle, and over 100 employees to provide care to residents at all hours of the day, 365 days of the year.



One of Penn Township's police vehicles and emergency response vehicles

FINDINGS

What We Learned

Demographics – Penn Township residents median age is 53.5, which is older than the median age of surrounding municipalities. This means that the Township must plan for an aging population and determine if attraction of younger families to fill in those gaps is important. Further, the number of households in the Township has remained relatively unchanged for the past several years, so the Township must consider whether a population increase is imperative to the future vision of the Township. The ramifications of these demographics will play an important role in planning for the future of Penn Township.

Transportation – The location of Penn Township and proximity to arterial roadways helps with accessibility but requires residents to own a car. Commute times to work are average for the region. Current and near future transportation improvement is limited to bridge repair. Walkability/bikeability for transportation purposes is non-existent.

Parks & Recreation – Harcrest Park is a highlight of Penn Township and the plans for the future of the Park are impressive. The Township might consider whether all its park, recreation, and open space needs are being met, and will continue to be met, solely with Harcrest Park.

Housing & Affordability – Compared to its neighbors, Penn Township is about average for the percentage of homes that are owner occupied. The Township is on the lower end of percentage rentals and for percentage vacant. Penn Township is a highly affordable location in Butler County.

Economy & Development – Average annual earnings in Penn Township are well above those for the State. While Eating Places and Company Management are strong in the region, Penn Township's major employer industries have a wide range of median salaries which indicated a general gap in wealth between upper and lower classes.

Land Use – Penn Township has diverse land use including residential, commercial, and two overlay districts. Moving forward, the Township should strive to be clear regarding where future growth and development versus preservation should occur as well as remain open to the idea of zoning changes to achieve those outcomes.

Public Facilities & Amenities – Penn Township is mostly meeting the current needs of its residents through well-coordinated service offerings, and the help of dedicated volunteers. However, the Township does not have a unified sanitary collection service.

Together these findings provide a foundation, to begin work on a Comprehensive Plan for Penn Township.