

Housing options are very important to current and future residents. Current residents do not want their neighborhoods to decline and future residents consider availability and affordability of housing when choosing a neighborhood in which to live. Additionally, the township's demographics play an important role in housing choices. Communities that have an older population may want to encourage town homes or garden apartments compared to a community with a larger middle-aged population with young children that prefer single family homes.

East Bethlehem Township encompasses several existing villages and has minimal land remaining to accommodate future development. Therefore, the township should focus on property maintenance, development of vacant lots, and infill development. Future development plans should take in consideration the demographics of the township, which reflects a high median age and larger percentage of residents over 65 years.

Housing Trends

This section will present an overview of housing trends and conditions provided in Chapter 2: Demographic Profile using data acquired from the United States Census Bureau 2000 Census. The Census determines vacancy status "by the terms under which the unit may be occupied, e.g., for rent, for sale, or for seasonal use only." The U.S. Census counts include units that are vacant for other reasons, such as personal reasons of the owner; use by caretaker or janitor; settlement of estates; and awaiting occupancy and similar reasons. Housing value is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as "the respondent's estimate of how much the property (house and lot, mobile home and lot, or condominium unit) would sell for if it were on the market." A summary of key findings follow:

- § There are 1,210 housing units, most of which are single-family units (88.9%).
- § Most of the housing units are owner-occupied (79.3%).
- § The vacancy rate (13%) is higher in East Bethlehem Township than Washington County and surrounding municipalities.
- § Most of the housing units were built in 1939 or earlier (60%).
- § Most residents do not have a mortgage (61%).
- § Housing value is less than \$100,000 for 95.5% of owner-occupied units.
- § Largest percent of vacant units were rental units (23%).

- § Renters pay between \$200-\$500 a month (60.8% of renters).
- § Housing value is lower in East Bethlehem Township compared to other Washington County municipalities. The Township has approximately 63 percent of its housing units valued at under \$50,000 and 32.5 percent between \$50,000-\$99,000. In Washington County only 19.2 percent of the total housing units are valued under \$50,000 and 40.6 percent between \$50,000-\$99,000.

The rental vacancy rate is high, which implies there is less demand for rental units in the township. This could be for a number of reasons; the condition of rentals, housing types available (single family, multi-family, apartments), and the location of rental units. East Bethlehem Township does contain a public housing development, Fredericktown Terrace, in the neighborhood of Fredericktown. The housing facility has 64 units and is currently at 46 percent occupancy. The public housing community comprises 76 percent of the overall vacant rental housing units in the township. Excluding the public housing numbers, the rental vacancy rate is only five percent.

Neighborhood Assessment

East Bethlehem has five distinct residential neighborhoods, which are displayed on Map 6:1: Housing. This comprehensive plan examines the residential aspects of each neighborhood separately. While Census data provides statistical housing data, field views are needed to document which neighborhood are in need of revitalization, which are best suited for new development, and what type of development would complement the established community character. Fieldwork thereby consisted of a cursory inventory of existing structures, corresponding conditions, and vacant or underutilized lots, as well as an assessment of the general character of each community.

Clarksville

Clarksville is located in the southern portion of the Township and borders Clarksville Borough, Greene County. Clarksville is a small single-family residential neighborhood with commercial uses located in the portion of the neighborhood that is located within Clarksville Borough, Greene County. The housing lots are small with modest brick and/or wood sided homes, many have been remodeled. During a fieldview of the neighborhood it was noted that one property was for sale, a small number of

properties were in the process of being remodeled, and there were vacant lots that could support new housing.

The Clarksville Parklet is located within the neighborhood and provides residents with local recreation facilities. There are no sidewalks in this neighborhood. The roads are narrow and residents park on the street.



Clarksville (Mackin, 2007)

Besco

Besco is located just off State Route 88 and consists of mainly single-family residences. The Norfolk Southern railroad transverse the neighborhood and no issues were noted with the railroad crossings. A few property maintenance issues exist within the neighborhood.

A number of vacant lots, a few underutilized structures, and a couple dilapidated structures were identified, which pose a re-development opportunity for the township. A limited sidewalk network exists in Besco.

Milfred Terrace

Milfred Terrace is a mixed use neighborhood accessible from State Route 88. The neighborhood contains single and multi-family homes, churches, and the Beth Center High School stadium.

Milfred Terrace is connected to downtown Fredericktown via streets and sidewalks. In the 1900's, the Clyde Mine Company processed the coal resources at this site and today

the remains are visible in a large coal spoil pile. While conducting fieldwork, Mackin staff documented the presence of the slag pile and the fact that community residents were experiencing sediment loads during wet weather events. Residents approached staff and noted that the Department of Environmental Protection have conducted site visits, but to date no solution has been presented. As the township negotiates with the Clyde Mine property owners, remediation for the sediment deposits must be included in the discussions. Residents expressed their concern that the presence of the slag pile disrupts the community cohesiveness.

The Beth Center High School stadium, which contains the football and baseball fields, is located in Milfred Terrace. A concern noted by stakeholder surveys and verified during fieldwork is the lack of directional signage to the stadium. The lack of signage creates confusion for visiting teams and patrons. There were paw prints painted on some roadways that lead to the stadium but those are now faded. There are no entrance or exit signs in the stadium area.

Other issues noted within the neighborhood are the lack of sidewalks in the neighborhood, a few underutilized lots and structures, and a couple dilapidated structures.



Milfred Terrace (Mackin, 2007)

Millsboro

Millsboro is located between the Monongahela River and State Route 88. The neighborhood is primarily residential

with a mix of single and multi-family housing. Commercial uses consist of a funeral home, post office, doctor’s office, beauty shop, and hardware store. New commercial efforts include the establishment of a bed and breakfast facility, which would be the single lodging facility available in East Bethlehem Township.

Millsboro has the highest frequency of property maintenance issues, with pockets of dilapidated structures and scattered vacant lots throughout the neighborhood.

The neighborhood appears to have a younger population as noted by children’s bikes and residential play units in resident’s yards. This neighborhood has a strong recreational river connection, with many private docks located along the river. This site is level, has two existing vacant structures, and offers redevelopment opportunities.



Millsboro (Mackin, 2007)

Newtown

The Clyde Mine property divides this neighborhood from Downtown Fredericktown but the slag pile does not sit immediately adjacent to this neighborhood, which abuts the Millsboro neighborhood. The housing in Newtown is primarily comprised of single-family residences.

The neighborhood appears to have a younger population as noted by children’s bikes and residential play units present in yards. This neighborhood has a recreational river connection, with many private docks located along the river.

This site is level, has two existing vacant structures, and offers redevelopment opportunities.

Fredericktown

Fredericktown is located on State Route 88 is the commercial center with a limited amount of residential structures. The neighborhood will be examined in two distinct sections: the Residential Upper Fredericktown and Downtown Fredericktown.

Residential Upper Fredericktown is a mix of single and multi-family residential units. There is a cemetery and a few churches in Upper Fredericktown. Property maintenance issues such as trash, minor structural deficiencies, and overgrown vegetation were identified during the field view. There were a few dilapidated and vacant structures. Additionally, the sidewalk network within the neighborhood is not complete.

Fredericktown Terrace is a multi-family public housing facility managed by the Washington County Housing Authority. Housing under the Public Housing Program is affordable to very low-income families who are charged 30 percent of the household's income for rent, as well as lower income working families who may pay a flat rent, which remains the same regardless of income. The facility has its own recreation amenities. Property maintenance issues noted during field view included: litter, overgrown vegetation, trash and litter, and fencing and signage at recreational area were in poor condition.

Downtown Fredericktown is the major commercial center for East Bethlehem Township and only contains a few single-family structures. Most of the commercial facilities have first floor uses but second and third floors are underutilized. As redevelopment occurs, second story residential should be encouraged. The downtown is also close to the river and a public docking area is available and there is significant opportunities to expand recreational amenities. Property maintenance issues are trash, minor structural deficiencies, and overgrown vegetation were documented during the field view of this neighborhood as were a few dilapidated and vacant structures. There is a

sidewalk network within the neighborhood but deficiencies were noted. (See section 4)



Fredericktown (Mackin, 2007)

Vestaburg

The Vestaburg neighborhood borders Deemston Borough and Centerville Borough and sits high on a hill overlooking State Route 88 and the Monongahela River. The neighborhood is a mix of single and multi-family structures with community and commercial uses such as a senior center, medical treatment facility, restaurant, church, post office, and two commercial automotive services facilities.

The neighborhood has a community square with a tennis / basketball court. During the field view, it was noted that a walking track was once present in some manner although wear patterns indicate that, there is still activity. Near the square are the Senior Center and the medical treatment center, which are surrounded by residential structures (refer to section 5 for more specifics).

There are many vacant, underutilized, and dilapidated structures or lots within the neighborhood and sidewalks, while present, are in disrepair. It was documented through stakeholder surveys with water and sewerage providers that the pipes and lines are old and many require replacement (see section 5). The replacement of water and sewer lines should be coordinated with necessary sidewalk repairs.



Vestaburg (Mackin, 2007)

Previous Studies

The Washington County Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2005, was reviewed for applicability to the project area. During the review of the housing plan, the following recommendations were pertinent to East Bethlehem Township:

- § "... significant historic character that often relates back to early settlement of the region,... encourage the preservation of these resources. Such effort makes good economic sense as historic structure rehabilitation restores valuable resources... although design guidelines and code requirements often increase costs, codes should be flexible... and compatible with surrounding buildings... "
- § "New housing strategies in older communities will need to encourage the development of infill housing... "
- § "Encourage redevelopment efforts that are consistent with the aesthetics of the surrounding neighborhood... "

The neighborhoods within East Bethlehem Township embody the village style of development. The various settlements exemplify the "patch town" concept of company towns built to provide housing to workers. The recommendations presented for residential use in East Bethlehem Township are consistent with the aforementioned County Development Objectives. Future development in East Bethlehem will need to build upon the existing development patterns and encourage appropriate development to maintain its historical character. As the Clyde Mine site

and vacant neighborhood lots are redeveloped, land use regulations will need to be enacted to ensure consistency between new development and current land uses.

Housing Action Plan

While East Bethlehem is primarily built-out, there are areas that could support new housing development. Public input indicates a need for townhouses, carriage and garden apartments, and second-story apartments in the downtown to accommodate an aging population and attract empty-nesters, while single-family housing is needed to retain young families.

A concern that was noted by the steering committee and through the public participation phase is the lack of property maintenance. Property maintenance issues exist in each East Bethlehem neighborhood. The public has stressed the need for a property maintenance program that addresses dilapidated and vacant structures and lots.

Goal: Diversify the types of housing available within East Bethlehem Township.

Objective: The East Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance should allow a mixture of single-family homes, townhouses, and carriage apartments in the neighborhoods of Vestaburg, Millsboro, and Fredericktown.

Objective: The East Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance should be amended pending the redevelopment of the Clyde Mine property if it is determined that the site is better utilized for residential and commercial uses.

Objective: The East Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance should allow second-story apartments in downtown Fredericktown.

Objective: The East Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance should ensure that lot size requirements are consistent with the existing development of each neighborhood.

Objective: The East Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance should not require off-street parking in every neighborhood, but rather be flexible to accommodate on-street parking in locations that are built-out, such as Vestaburg.

Goal: Enhance the accessibility of neighborhoods and foster a sense of place for the Township.

Objective: The East Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance should allow playground recreational uses in each neighborhood.

Objective: The East Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance should support the extension of the Greene River Trail and development of the Ten Mile Water Trail and allow for trail-oriented uses in the Clarksville, Besco, Millsboro, Milfred Terrace, and Downtown Fredericktown. Such uses may include trailheads, parking areas, fishing piers and boat launches.

Objective: Develop a community identity for East Bethlehem that integrates the neighborhoods – this can be accomplished through a consistent signing project or by producing design guidelines for renovations and new development.

Objective: Accessibility to the Beth-Center High School Stadium in Milfred Terrace should be improved with new directional signs on State Route 88 and on each access route.

Objective: A wayfinding plan should be prepared for Beth-Center High School Stadium, which may alleviate congestion during events.

Goal: Improve property maintenance

Objective: Enact a property maintenance code and implement in a consistent fashion with the services of a qualified code enforcement officer.

Objective: Conduct a thorough inventory of dilapidated and vacant structures and rank in order of priority for inclusion into the property maintenance program. The list should be reviewed and updated annually at the Board of Commissioners reorganization meeting.

Objective: Encourage the Washington County Housing Authority to implement stricter property maintenance activities at the Fredericktown Terrace.