

The Northern Venango County Background Analysis

CORNPLANTER TOWNSHIP, CITY OF OIL CITY, AND THE BOROUGH OF ROUSEVILLE



2010

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Table of Contents

Demographics

Why?	D-1
Race and Hispanic Origin	D-2
Median Age	D-2
Age Characteristics	D-2
Group Quarters	D-4
Households and Families	D-4
Future Trends	D-5
The Future	D-6

Land Use

Current Land Use	LU-1
Cornplanter Township	LU-1
Rouseville Borough	LU-2
City of Oil City	LU-2
Current Land Use Controls in the Study Area	LU-3
Cornplanter Zoning	LU-4
Rouseville Zoning	LU-5
City of Oil City	LU-6
Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO)	LU-7
Summary	LU-7
Code Enforcement	LU-7

Physical, Natural and Historic Resources

Physical Environment	PR-1
Natural Resources	PR-3
Historic Resources	PR-4
Historic Districts	PR-4

Housing

Census Data	H-1
Assisted Housing	H-4
The Housing Market	H-6
National	H-6
Local Market	H-6
Report on the Housing Market for Venango County (czb, LLC)	H-7
New Housing Starts	H-8
Report on Housing Conditions	H-8
Housing Conditions Survey	H-9

Community Facilities and Public Utilities

Community Facilities	CF-1
Oil City Fire Department	CF-1
Cornplanter Fire Department	CF-3
Rouseville Volunteer Fire Department	CF-4
Police Protection	CF-4
Educational Resources	CF-6
Oil City Area School District	CF-6
Private Schools	CF-7
Venango Technology Center	CF-7

Community Facilities and Public Utilities (Continued)

DuBois Business College – Oil City Campus	CF-8
Clarion University – Venango Campus	CF-8
Recreational Opportunities	CF-10
Cornplanter Township	CF-10
Oil City	CF-12
Rouseville	CF-14
The Bike Trails	CF-14
Oil City Library	CF-14
Museum	CF-16
National Transit Building	CF-16
Oil City Civic Center, Inc.	CF-16
Oil City YMCA	CF-17
Oil City YWCA	CF-17
Oil City Parking Garage	CF-17
Public Utilities	CF-18
Water Systems	CF-18
Planned Improvements	CF-20
Rouseville Borough	CF-21
Cornplanter Township	CF-21
Sanitary Sewer Systems	CF-22
Rouseville Borough	CF-23
Cornplanter Township	CF-24
Public Works	CF-25
Cornplanter Township	CF-25
Oil City	CF-25
Rouseville	CF-25
Transportation	
Roads and Highways	T-1
Transportation Planning Process	T-2
Current TIP Projects	T-2
Traffic Volumes	T-3
Accidents	T-4
Railroads	T-5
The Venango Bus	T-6
Air	T-6
The Economy	
Economic Characteristics from the Census	E-1
Unemployment	E-2
Bureau of Economic Analysis	E-3
Retail Trade	E-4
The Retail Trade Study	E-5
Commercial Real Estate	E-5
The Economy – Local Sources	E-5

Tables

D-1: Population, 1970-2000	D-1
D-2: Race Characteristics, 2000	D-2
D-3: Gender – Study Area	D-2

Tables (Continued)

D-4: Age Groups, 1990-2000, Cornplanter, Oil City, Rouseville	D-3
D-5: Population in Households, 2000, Cornplanter, Oil City, Rouseville	D-4
D-6: Households and Families	D-5
D-7: Number of Female-Headed Households and Incidence of Poverty, 2000	D-5
D-8: Population Change, 2000 to 2007	D-5
D-9: County Population Projections – 2020	D-6
D-10: Penn State Center Projections – County	D-6
D-11: Cohort Survival	D-6
LU-1: Zoning – Cornplanter Township	LU-4
LU-2: Zoning – Rouseville Borough	LU-5
LU-3: Zoning – Oil City	LU-6
H-1: Housing County, 1990-2000	H-1
H-2: Tenure – 2000	H-2
H-3: Type of Housing – Units in Structure	H-2
H-4: Vacancy Status – 2000	H-3
H-5: Population in Group Quarters – 2000	H-4
H-6: Occupied Housing Units – Owners 65 and Older	H-4
H-7: Monthly Fair Market Rents – 2008	H-5
H-8: Income Limits – 2009	H-5
CF-1: Oil City Area School District Enrollment	CF-6
CF-2: Water Use – Oil City Water System	CF-18
E-1: Median Households, 1990 – Compared to 2000	E-1
E-2: Median Family Income, 1990 – Compared to 2000	E-2
E-3: Poverty Levels, Family and Individual, Census 2000	E-2
E-4: 1997 Retail Trade	E-4
E-5: 2002 Retail Trade	E-4

Maps

Regional Location Map	Precedes D-1
Current Land Use	Follows LU-1
Oil City Zoning Detail	Follows LU-3
Cornplanter Zoning Detail	Follows LU-5
Rouseville Zoning Detail	Precedes LU-6
Floodplains and Wetlands	Follows PR&HR-3
Prime Farmland Soils	Precedes PR&HR-4
Development Constraints	Follows PR&HR-4
Housing Conditions, 1999-2000 – Housing Grade from Assessment	Follows H-8
Oil City Housing Conditions	Follows H-11
Community Facilities	Follows CF-5
Public Recreation Facilities	Follows CF-11
Public Water Service	Follows CF-21
Sewer System	Follows CF-25
Federal Functional Classification	Follows T-1
Annual Average Daily Traffic	Follows T-3
Average Daily Truck Traffic (ADTT)	Precedes T-4
Accidents on Major Roads	Follows T-4

Chapter 1 – Demographics





Map 1 - Regional Location Map

Northern Venango County

Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008,
 U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005
 Venango County GIS, 2007
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

GCCA
2009

Demographics



The study of people is truly one of the most important parts of any comprehensive plan. Why? Very simply, because the people of our study area—Cornplanter Township, City of Oil City, and Rouseville Borough—are the reason for this Comprehensive Plan.

It must be clearly understood that the process of population study is not static—a review of a Census snapshot. No indeed! A region’s demography is a dynamic process showing the past, the present, and allowing informed projection of the future.

Table D-1 is the starting point of this analysis. It shows the population of the three study area communities from 1970 to 2000.

Table D-1: Population, 1970-2000

Year	Venango	Cornplanter	Oil City	Rouseville	Region
1970	62,353	2,391	15,033	877	18,301
1980	64,444	3,038	13,881	734	17,653
1990	59,381	2,968	11,949	583	15,500
2000	57,565	2,687	11,504	472	14,663
1970 to 2000	-4,788	296	-3,529	-405	-3,638
Percent	-7.7	12.4	-23.5	-46.2	-19.9
1990 to 2000	-1,816	-281	-445	-111	-19.9
Percent	-3.1	-9.5	-3.7	-19.0	-5.4

Source: U.S. Census Files

In that 30-year period, the region lost 3,638 persons, or nearly 20% of its population. Yet, the pattern of change varied—both Oil City (-3,529) as well as Rouseville (-405) lost population while Cornplanter grew (+296). However, in the last decade, all three municipalities lost population.

Why?

Population loss is due to one of two primary factors. It is either an excess of deaths over births (natural decrease) or out-migration. Given the accessibility of vital statistics, the former factor is quite easy to determine. In the decade of the 1990s, there were 1,897 live births and 2,100 deaths (Pennsylvania Department of Health) within the three communities. This translated to a net loss of 203 persons (about 20 per year). The actual loss in this time period (per the Census Bureau) was 837. So, natural decrease accounted for a quarter of the study area’s decrease. Consequently, out-migration represented the remaining 75 percent.

Race and Hispanic Origin

According to Census 2000, the racial characteristics of the study area are as shown by Table D-2.

Table D-2: Race Characteristics, 2000

Race	Cornplanter		City of Oil City		Rouseville		Total	Percent
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent		
Total	2,687		11,504		472		14,663	
Black	11	0.4	102	0.9	2	0.4	115	0.8
American Indian	2	0.1	30	0.3	4	0.8	36	0.2
Asian	1	0.0	33	0.3	0	0.0	34	0.2
Pacific Islander	0	0.0	5	0.0	0	0.0	5	0.0
Other	1	0.0	13	0.1	0	0.0	14	0.1

Source: Census 2000

As these statistics show, the study area is primarily white. Overall, the various non-white groups comprise 1.4% of the total population.

Table D-3: Gender – Study Area

	Cornplanter		Oil City		Rouseville		Total	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Male	1,302	48.5	5,468	47.5	230	48.77	7,000	47.7
Female	1,385	51.5	6,036	52.5	242	51.3	7,663	52.3

Source: Census 2000

The division in gender can be primarily traced to longevity—women live longer than men. For example, in Oil City, there were 1,239 residents over seventy years of age, about one quarter male, and the balance female. Such demographic numbers are typical in western Pennsylvania.

Median Age

As reported in the Venango County Comprehensive Plan, this is an “old” county, in an “old” state. Using the median age as a guide, Pennsylvania, at a median age of 38 years, was the third oldest state in the United States. Within Pennsylvania, Venango County, at 40.2 years, was the eleventh “oldest” county in the state. Within the study area, the median ages were (per Census 2000):

Cornplanter	42.7 Years
Oil City	37.9 Years
Rouseville	44.0 Years

Obviously, with a median age hovering between 38 and 44, the number of families in the key family-forming years (20 to 40) are limited.

Age Characteristics

Detailed age cohort characteristics can be viewed by Table D-4 of the “Venango County Comprehensive Plan, History and Background Studies.” In that report, some 13 separate cohorts were presented. In this study, only five age categories will be used, based upon the following:

- 0-4 – Preschoolers
- 5-19 – School age
- 20-34 – Young adults, family formers
- 35-64 – Adults, usually stable, higher income
- 65+ – Retirement age, but diverse in income and needs

Table D-4: Age Groups, 1990–2000, Cornplanter, Oil City, Rouseville

Community	0 to 4	5 to 19	20 to 34	35 to 64	65+	Total
1990						
Cornplanter	202	628	550	1,087	501	2,968
Oil City	839	2,422	2,563	3,990	2,135	11,949
Rouseville	40	119	117	212	95	583
Total	1,081	3,169	3,230	5,289	2,731	15,500
2000						
Cornplanter	155	551	331	1,112	538	2,687
Oil City	731	2,521	2,032	4,210	2,010	11,504
Rouseville	24	84	78	166	120	472
Total	910	3,156	2,441	5,488	2,668	14,663
Change	-171	-13	-789	199	-63	-837
Percent Change	-16%	0%	-24%	4%	-2%	-5%

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 and 2000

Note about demographic analysis. Over any 10-year period, the interval between the Census events, some losses due to natural causes and accidents can be anticipated. This is somewhat true with newborn children, but really does not show any significant impact until the 65-plus group is reached. Consequently, any significant population losses in groups under 65 can generally be attributed to out-migration.

An analysis of the age patterns for the study area show the following:

Age Group 0 to 4

1990 – 1,081

2000 – 910

The number of “preschool” children dropped by 171, or 16 percent.

Age Group 5 to 19

1990 – 3,169

2000 – 3,156

For school-age persons, a very small decline of 13, or less than 1%, was observed.

Age Group 20 to 34

1990 – 3,230

2000 – 2,441

The young adult category is a critical one. These are the ages when people settle down, buy homes, and start raising a family. In the study area, this age group lost 789 persons, or 24%, between the 1990 and 2000 Census.

Age Group 35 to 64

1990 – 5,289

2000 – 5,488

In contrast to prior age cohorts, the “adult” category grew by 199, or about 4 percent. Normally, these folks are the backbone of a community. They are usually homeowners, and are often good wage earners.

Age Group 65+

1990 – 2,731

2000 – 2,668

Those in retirement age saw a modest decrease of 63, or 2 percent. This age bracket is quite diverse; some are still in the workforce, yet others are frail and in need of special housing and healthcare.

The policy implications from these figures are:

- If the out-migration of the 20 to 34 year olds continues, there will be a decline in school enrollment and a steady erosion of the next critical age bracket, the 35 to 64 cohorts. It will also impact on wage taxes and the real estate market, with fewer new homebuyers.
- Those over 65 will increase in number.

Group Quarters

Persons who live in such places as college dormitories or nursing homes are counted by the Census Bureau as living in group quarters. In the study area, there is a small population in group quarters (see Housing).

Households and Families

In Census jargon, even a single person living in a separate dwelling unit is a household. Only certain households are classified as families. Families must have more than two persons and be related by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Table D-5: Population in Households – 2000, Cornplanter, Oil City, Rouseville

Municipality	Persons in Household	Percent Total Population
Cornplanter	2,579	96.1
Oil City	11,306	98.3
Rouseville	467	98.9
Total	14,352	97.9
<i>Source: Census 2000</i>		

As Table D-5 shows, the overwhelming majority of local residents live in households. Though Cornplanter has the lowest percentage of persons in households, at 96.1%, it must be noted that a nursing home of about 100 beds is located here.

Table D-6: Households and Families

Municipality	Households	Average Size	Families	% of Household	Average Size
Cornplanter	1,034	2.49	767	74.2	2.91
Oil City	4,762	2.37	2,983	62.6	2.99
Rouseville	204	2.29	138	67.6	2.76

Source: Census 2000

Table D-6 is somewhat surprising. Typically, in western Pennsylvania, family households are at the 70% level, even in urban places. This apparent anomaly is likely explained by age characteristics. There were some 918 single-person households in the three communities comprised of a householder aged 65 and older. Most of the senior single-person households are found in Oil City (763).

Another household type is the female-headed unit. Usually, female-headed households with children have lower-than-median incomes.

Table D-7: Number of Female-Headed Households and Incidence of Poverty, 2000

Municipality	Total	Poverty %	With Children*	Poverty %
Cornplanter	1,034	2.49	767	74.2
Oil City	4,762	2.37	2,983	62.6
Rouseville	204	2.29	138	67.6

**With children under 18 years of age
Source: Census 2000*

Future Trends

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of July 1, 2007, the study area communities had experienced the following population changes since 2000.

Table D-8: Population Change, 2000 to 2007

Municipality	2008	2000	Change	
Cornplanter	2,536	2,687	-151	(-5.6%)
Oil City	10,598	11,504	-906	(-7.8%)
Rouseville	432	472	-40	(-8.5%)
Total	13,566	14,663	-1,097	(-7.5%)

Source: Census 2000 and Census Bureau estimates (released July 2009)

Based on many years of experience, the consultant recommends these numbers be treated with caution—they are only *estimates*! Yet, they do exhibit a dramatic downward trend for all three communities.

Balanced against these figures are resident births and deaths since Census 2000. Such information available from the Pennsylvania Department of Health shows only a small “natural decrease” of about twenty-four persons per year. The disparity is caused, in part, by the nursing homes population. Otherwise, the results are almost neutral.

The Future

In the Venango County Plan, the demographic analysis contains 13 pages. On pages 12 and 13 are projections to 2020. Those prepared by RCS&A, Inc. had three options. All were negative. In addition, projections from the Penn State Data Center were used. From 2000 to 2020, the numbers varied from -4.1% to -18.4% (see tables below).

Table D-9: County Population Projections – 2020

Category	2000 Census	2010	2020	2000-2010	2010-2020 % Change	2000-2020 % Change
Trend Projections		55,975	54,385	-2.8	-2.8	-5.5
Natural Increase		54,961	52,668	-4.5	-4.2	-8.5
Population Projection	57,565					
Natural Increase and Migration		52,268	46,971	-9.2	-10.1	-18.4

Source: 2002 RCS&A, Inc.

Table D-10: Penn State Center Projections – County

	Census July 1, 2000	Projection July 1, 2010	Projection July 1, 2020	% Change 2010-2020
Venango County	55,943	53,140	50,852	-4.1

Source: Penn State Center

GCCA also prepared projections for the study area. The cohort survival method was used. These are summarized as follows:

Table D-11: Cohort Survival

	2000	2010	2020	2030	+ (-)	Percent
No Migration	14,209	14,266	14,110	13,912	(-273)	-3.79
1980 Migration	14,209	14,235	14,018	13,752	(-351)	-4.87
1990 Migration	14,209	14,245	14,046	13,801	(-327)	-4.54

Source: Census 2000, GCCA projections

These latter projections show some initial modest increases, then following 2020, a downturn. They are more optimistic, and they do have some other statistic backing—the Oil City Area School District student projections.

Perhaps things aren't quite as bleak as thought.

Chapter 2 – Land Use



Land Use



Current Land Use

The land use in the study area is typical of western Pennsylvania. What is seen is an interplay of economic forces with transportation, with one major exception—oil! The Oil Creek Valley was home of the oil boom of the 1860s. As the economic importance of oil was realized, this area was transferred from a small wooded rural place to a veritable boom town. Oil derricks, not trees, were seen in the Oil Creek Valley. Oil, refining, shipping, and support industries became the economic lifeblood of the area for over one hundred years. At one time, the population of the oil boomtown, Pithole, alone was higher than the current residents of the entire study area. However, oil dried up, the population left, and most of the physical elements of the boom disappeared. Ironically, the heart of the boom, the Oil Creek Valley, has returned largely to its rural past. Conversely, many remnants of prosperous times are still seen in Oil City. The most visible vestige of oil was in Rouseville. The Pennzoil refinery, once the dominant feature of the Borough, is gone—dismantled and demolished. Yet, the influences of those years remain and are still felt today, especially in Oil City.

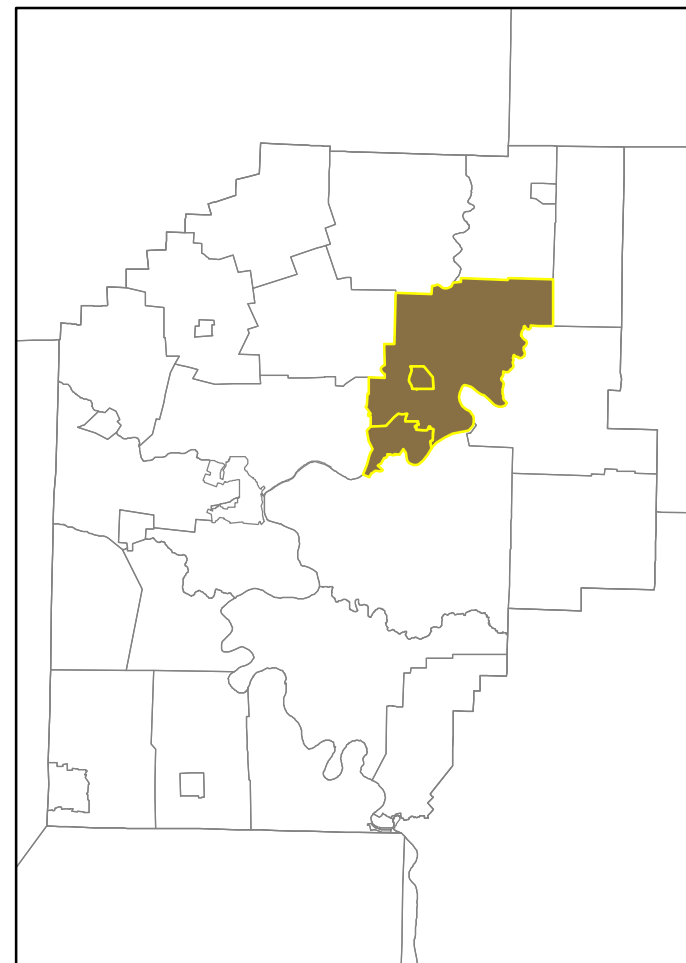
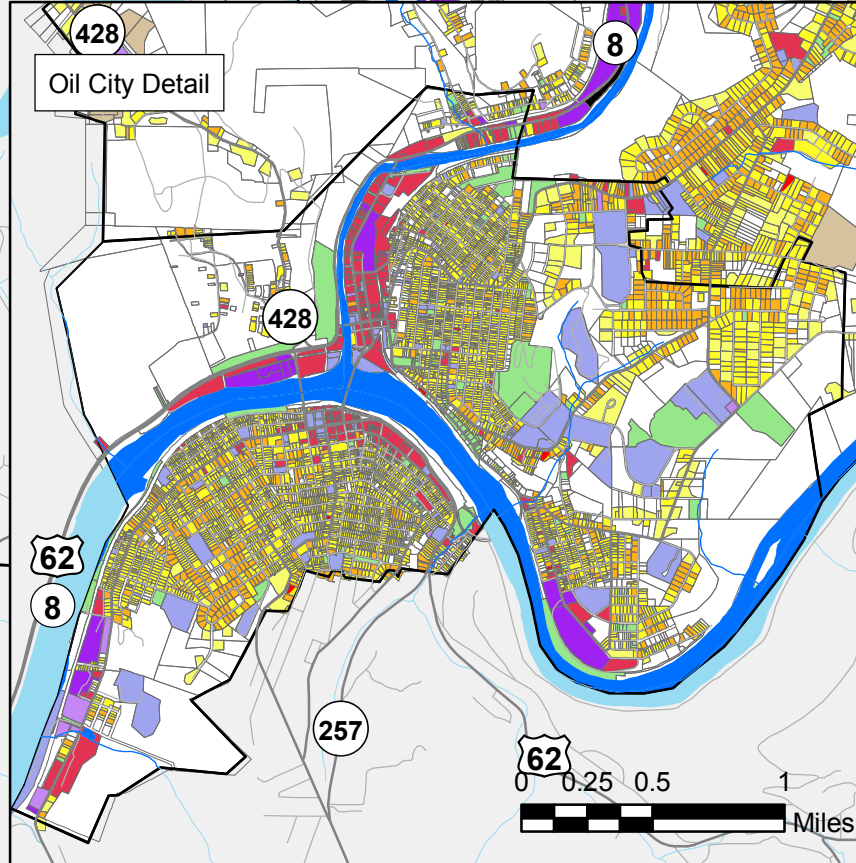
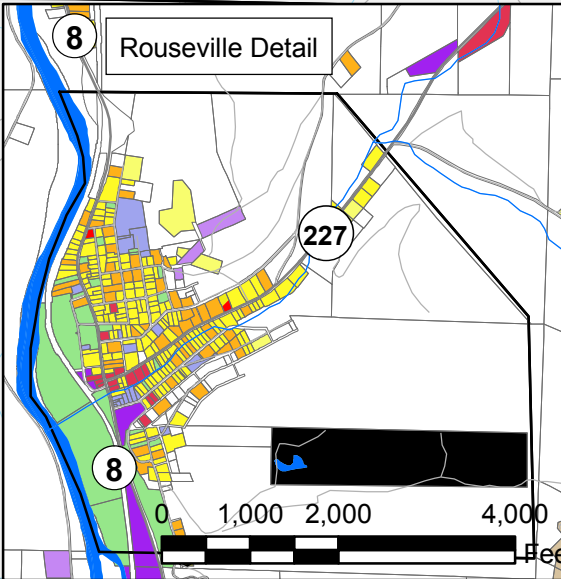
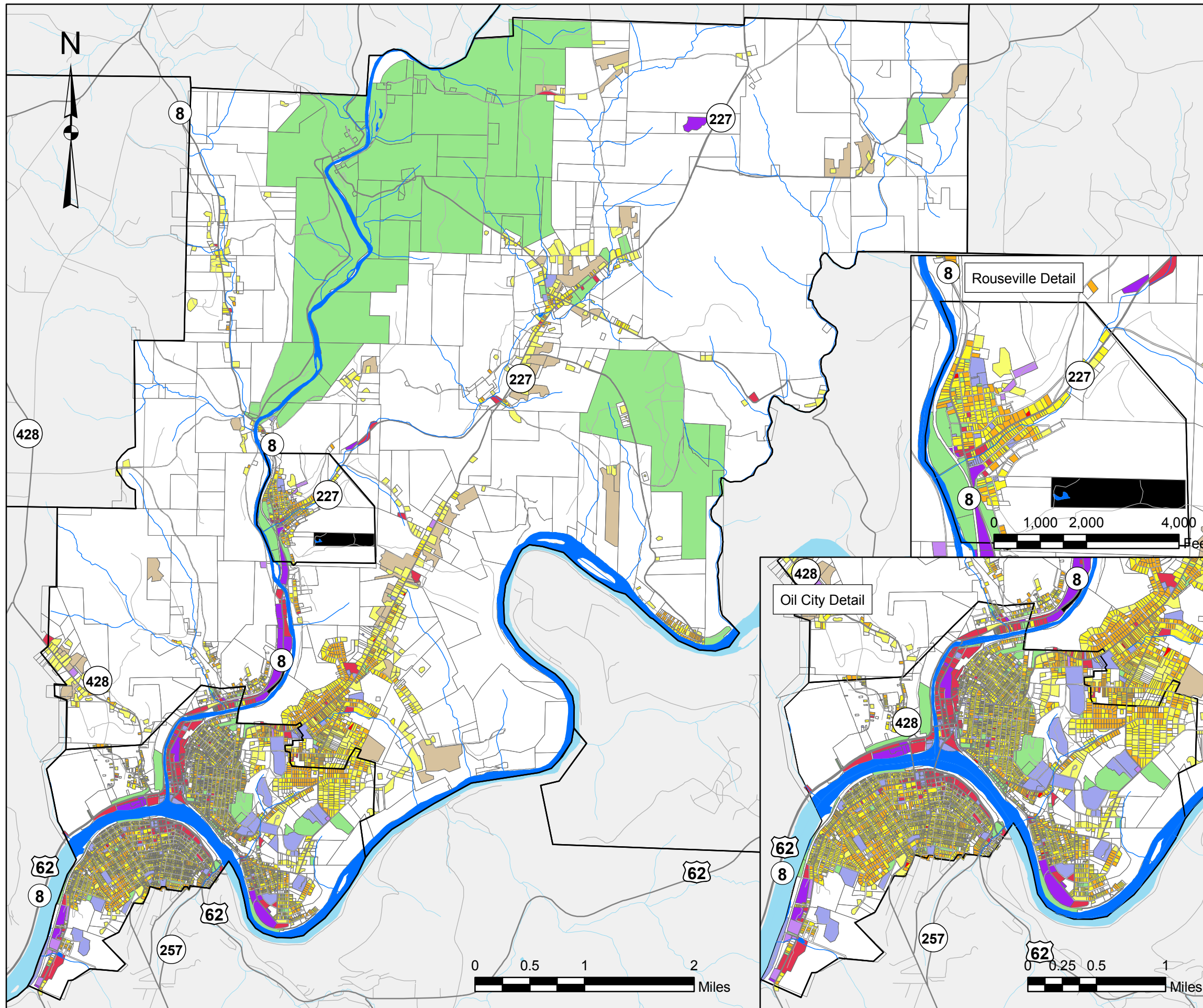
Cornplanter Township

In Cornplanter Township, the development pattern can be generalized as follows:



Oil Creek State Park

In the northern half of the Township, open space dominates the land use. Farmlands, wooded areas, and public-owned land dominate, with residential uses scattered along roadways. The public lands include the Oil Creek State Park, State Game Land No. 253, and the Pithole City historic site. More intense development is seen along Route 8, where residential structures are interspersed with occasional commercial activity north of Rouseville. A second development corridor is Route 227. Here, the Village of Plumer is found. Numerous homes and a few businesses are located in Plumer. Two notable features are the Township Building, located in an old school structure, and the historic Plumer Cemetery.



Legend

- Agriculture
- Brown Field
- Commercial
- Community Facility
- Forested/Undeveloped/Vacant
- Open Space/Park/Recreation
- Industrial
- Industrial/Infrastructure
- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Urban Residential
- Mixed Residential/Commercial

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map2: Current Land Use**

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Grandview, Moody Run Road, the Colonial Village area, and the Hasson Heights area represent the more modern development centers. This area includes much of the Township's single-family units, along with the Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department/social hall, the County's Emergency Management Center, and the Golden Living Center ("Grandview" nursing home). Exceptions to this generalization are the Cherry Hill public housing project (20 units), off of Rockwood Drive, and the Hasson Heights Elementary School, with the School District offices right on the Oil City border.

Along Route 8, south of Rouseville, development changes. McClintockville is a small residential settlement off of Route 8, just above the McClintockville Bridge. Most of the development south of that, along Route 8, is a combination of industrial land—much of it unused and being reclaimed—along with scattered commercial enterprises. This pattern continues to the Oil City line. At the far southern end of the corridor is Clapp Farm—a subdivision dating from 1895.

The final fingers of residential follow Union Street and Route 428 (Halyday Run Road).

Rouseville Borough

The two dominant land uses in Rouseville are residential and the industrial corridor along Oil Creek on the west side of Route 8. Much of this latter site was the former Pennzoil refinery, which has been dismantled, with the land now being redeveloped. The first major project here will be a new facility for Electralloy. The greatest portion of the Borough's residential development is north of Route 227, along and east of Route 8. The Borough Park and Social Center of the Rouseville Volunteer Fire Company are also located here. There is some scattered commercial, with such uses as small personal care homes and beauty parlors. The remnants of the commercial area are along Route 227, near the Route 8 intersection, with a few locations on Route 8. However, most of the commercial properties are currently vacant.

Residential development south of Mechanic Street is limited, due to topography and floodplains. Much of the land development in Rouseville was tied to the employment base created by Pennzoil. Since that company's departure, there has been little development. As noted in the "Housing" section, real estate interest is limited.

City of Oil City

Oil City represents a classic study in the development of western Pennsylvania industrial cities. The river, the railroads, and oil combined caused the City to flourish and grow. Development was spawned by these forces and the topography of the region.

Much of the frontage of the Allegheny River—where it is developable—is taken up by industrial uses. Rail lines, the old Oil Well plant, the Electralloy complex, the rail yards along Front Street, as well as some of the plants and facilities along West Front Street are witness to this fact. The traditional downtown is on the developable land east of Oil Creek. The South Side commercial area is situated across from this.

Residential areas are spaced around the City:

- The North Side is primarily single-family units on small lots, interspersed with duplexes and a few apartments. Some are hillside homes; most are quite old. Some conversions from single-family to duplex units are seen here.
- Palace Hill is similar to the North Side. Lots are small, homes generally older, with some commercial and institutional uses found along Spruce and Emerald.
- Siverly is a mix of development. The Oil City Industrial Park (Oil Well) is found here, along with a sizeable housing area. Many of the older homes on small lots were likely houses of the workers at Oil Well. In some areas, such as Gateway, newer homes with larger lots can be found.
- Hasson Park and Grove Hill Cemetery encompass a considerable portion of land above the North Side.
- Units along Oliver Manor as well as Fisher and Crestview are generally newer homes on larger lots.
- The development around the City’s swimming pool, off Grandview, is a mix of residential types, from estate-type homes to modest single-family dwellings. A small commercial node exists here, with a “plaza” development at Grandview and Summit.
- The residential development on the South Side is mixed. On its east side, as well as much of the area between Central and Division, smaller lots and older units are typical. The South Side also has extensive commercial development east of Petroleum as well as the Front and Second Street corridor. The west sector of the South Side is the location of larger lots with more substantial homes.



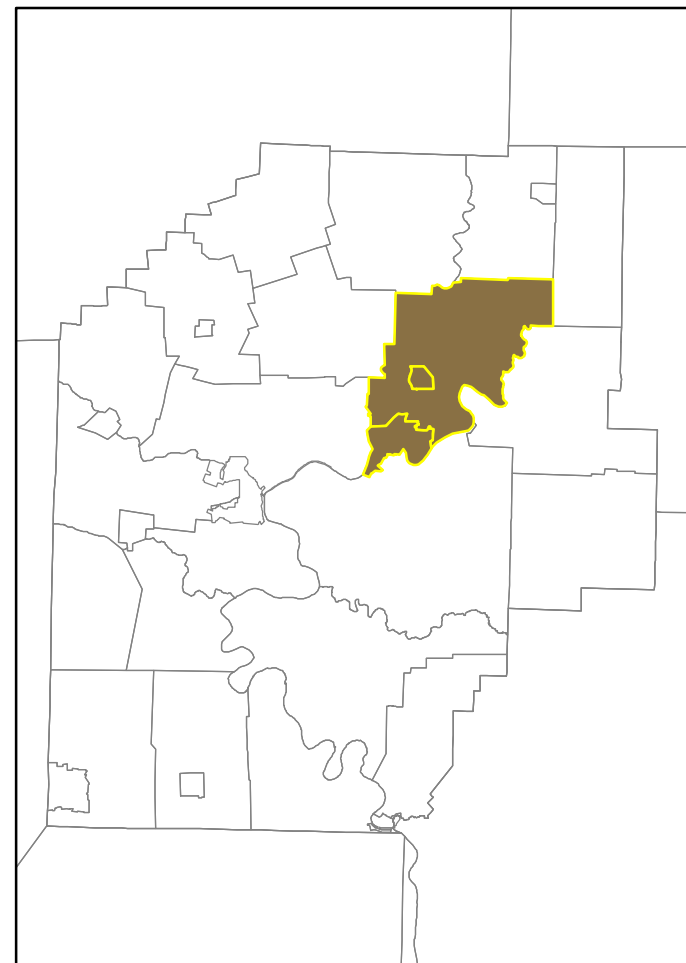
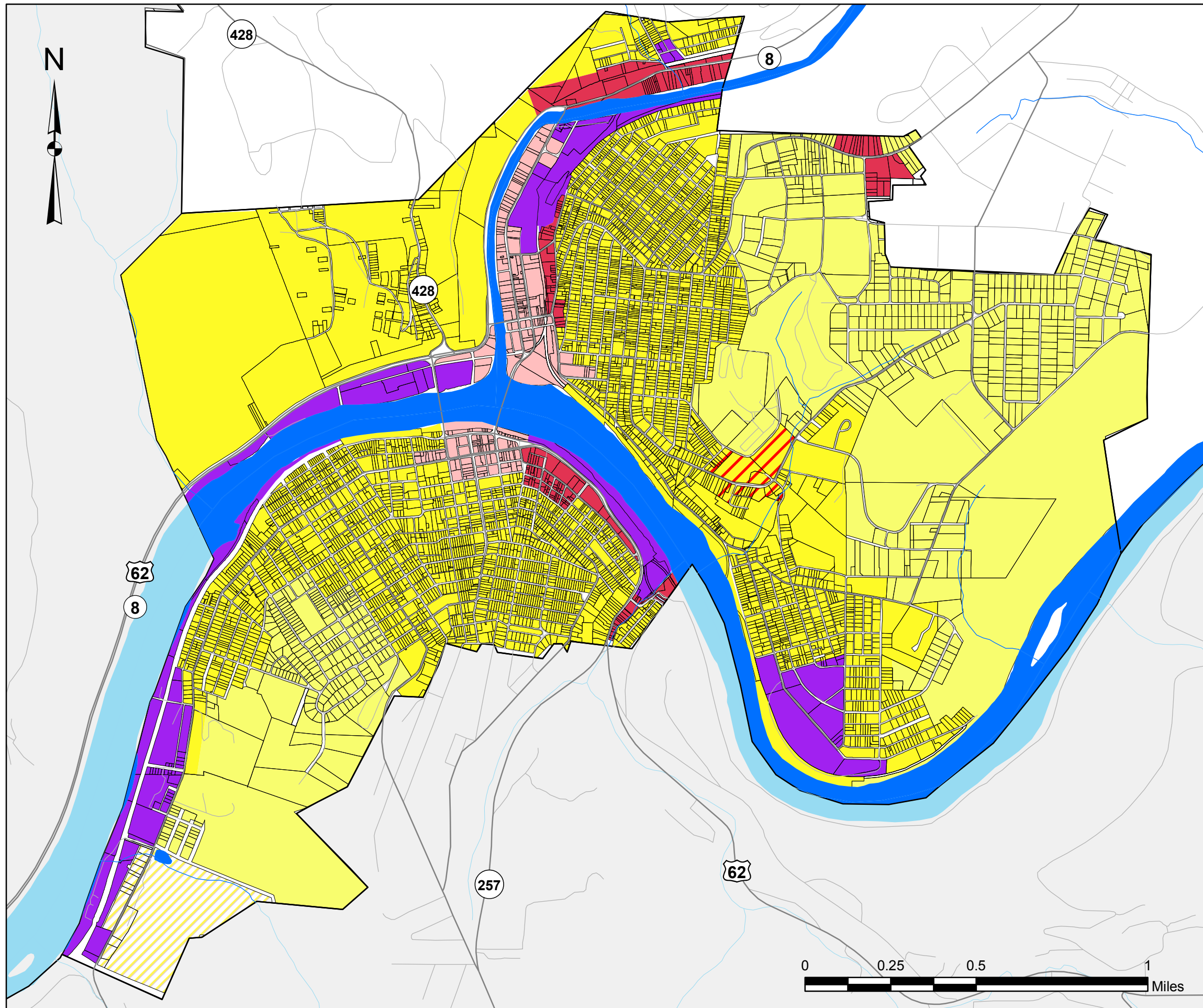
Residential housing in the Siverly area

Overall, the development on steep slopes areas, such as Grove, Butler, Cherry Alley, parts of Colbert—just to name a few—have deteriorated, as jobs have decreased and worker mobility increased. Show places along major streets (West First, East Bissell) are witness to the boom economic times for the City.

Institutional uses are somewhat scattered with many fine old churches. On the South Side, the YMCA, the Library, and a church comprise an entire block. The National Transit Building, imposing churches, City Hall, and the Venango Museum can all be found on the North Side.

Current Land Use Controls in the Study Area

All three communities in the Northern Venango County Area currently have zoning ordinances. An overview of these regulations follows:



Legend

- C-1 General Commercial District
- C-2 Central Commercial District
- I-1 Manufacturing and Industrial District
- INST-1 Institutional District
- R-1 Single Family Residential District
- R-2 Low Density Residential District
- R-O Residential Office District

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map3: Oil City Zoning Detail**

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Cornplanter Zoning

After the adoption of the community’s comprehensive plan, the Township put into effect its current zoning ordinance.

Much of the Township is included in the Conservation District. Roughly, 85% of Cornplanter is zoned Conservation. In general terms, the Conservation District is intended for the Greenspace and Rural Undeveloped Lands. Conservation designations in zoning are also useful for placing land in a holding pattern. The zone discourages intense development so that any subsequent change to more intense use may have a minimum negative impact.

Table LU-1: Zoning – Cornplanter Township

District	Lot	Lot Width	Lot Coverage Percent
Conservation			
Single-Family	1 Acre	150 Feet	15%
All Other Uses	2 Acres	200 Feet	20%
R-1 Residential and V-1 Village			
All Uses Not Served by Public Sewer	1 Acre	125 Feet	20%
Single-Family with Sewer	17,500 Square Feet	85 Feet	25%
Duplex with Sewer	22,500 Square Feet	100 Feet	25%
All Other Uses with Sewer	25,000 Square Feet	125 Feet	35%
R-2 Residential			
Follow R-1, Except Multi-Family	25,000 Square Feet Plus 5,000 Square Feet for Each Additional Unit	150 Feet	35%
CB – Commercial Business	25,000 Square Feet	125 Feet	50%
IB - Industrial Business	1 Acre	150 Feet	50%

In other areas of the Township, sewage facilities do determine the density that is allowable. In both the R-1 Residential and V-1 Village Districts, the access to sanitary sewer lines regulates minimum lot sizes. If a landowner has a no access to the sanitary sewer system, the minimum lot size is one acre, regardless of use. If sewer is available for the lot, the landowner can build on just 17,500 square feet (2.5 dwelling unit per acre), a smaller lot in rural areas. For a duplex, the lot size increases to 22,500 square feet (3.0 dwelling units per acre). Again, this lot size is small for a rural area. In the case of all other uses, the minimum lot size is 25,000 square feet. Some limited commercial is allowed in the V-1 Zone.

The R-2 Residential District, located in Hasson Heights, is essentially the same as the R-1 District. The only difference is that multi-family units are permitted here—that is three or more dwelling units on one property. In this district, any multi-family structure must tie into a sanitary sewer conveyance system. The lot requirements are a minimum size of 20,000 square feet for the initial dwelling unit plus an additional 5,000 square feet for each additional dwelling unit in the structure. Since this is for three or more dwelling units, the minimum lot size is at least 35,000 square feet (3.7 or more units/acre). Additionally, there is a maximum coverage of 35% for such lots.

The “CB” Commercial Business District allows a wide range of retail, commercial, and limited light industrial uses (contractor yards, light warehousing). It is found along the Route 8 corridor south of Rouseville.

The I-Industrial District is also found to the south of Rouseville and follows the Route 8 corridor, from the Oil Creek Bridge, south to the line with Oil City. A second industrial zone is seen on Route 227, just north of Moody Run Road. This is a very broad district, which permits several industrial uses, along with numerous commercial activities.

Rouseville Zoning

The Borough’s zoning ordinance reflects traditional Pennsylvania zoning practice. It has six districts, a conservation zone, two residential districts, two commercial zones, and one industrial district. Required lot sizes, widths, and coverage are given by Table LU-2, Zoning – Rouseville Borough.

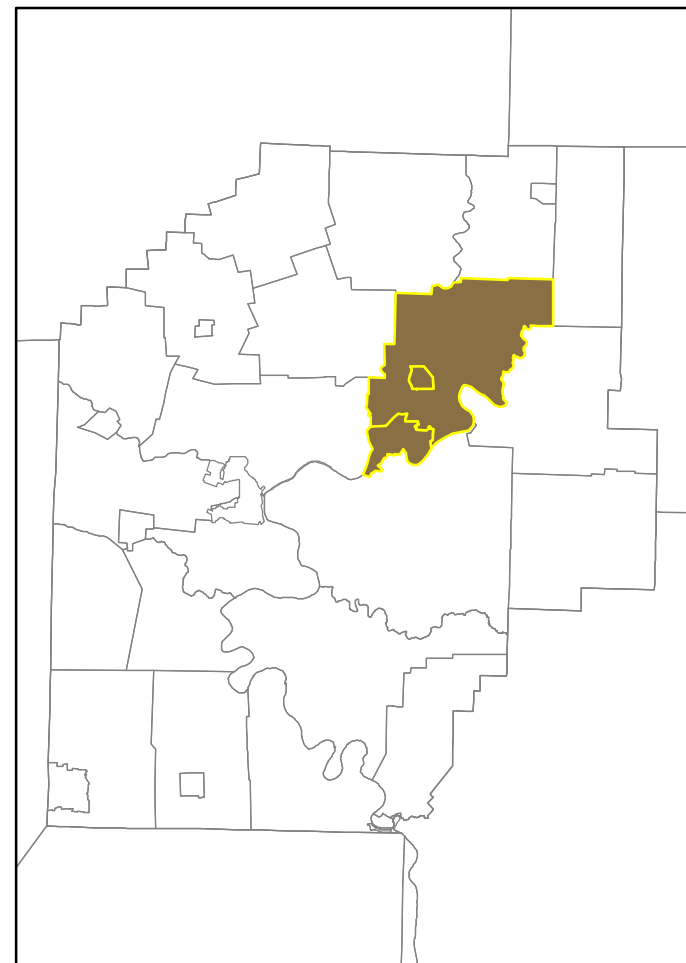
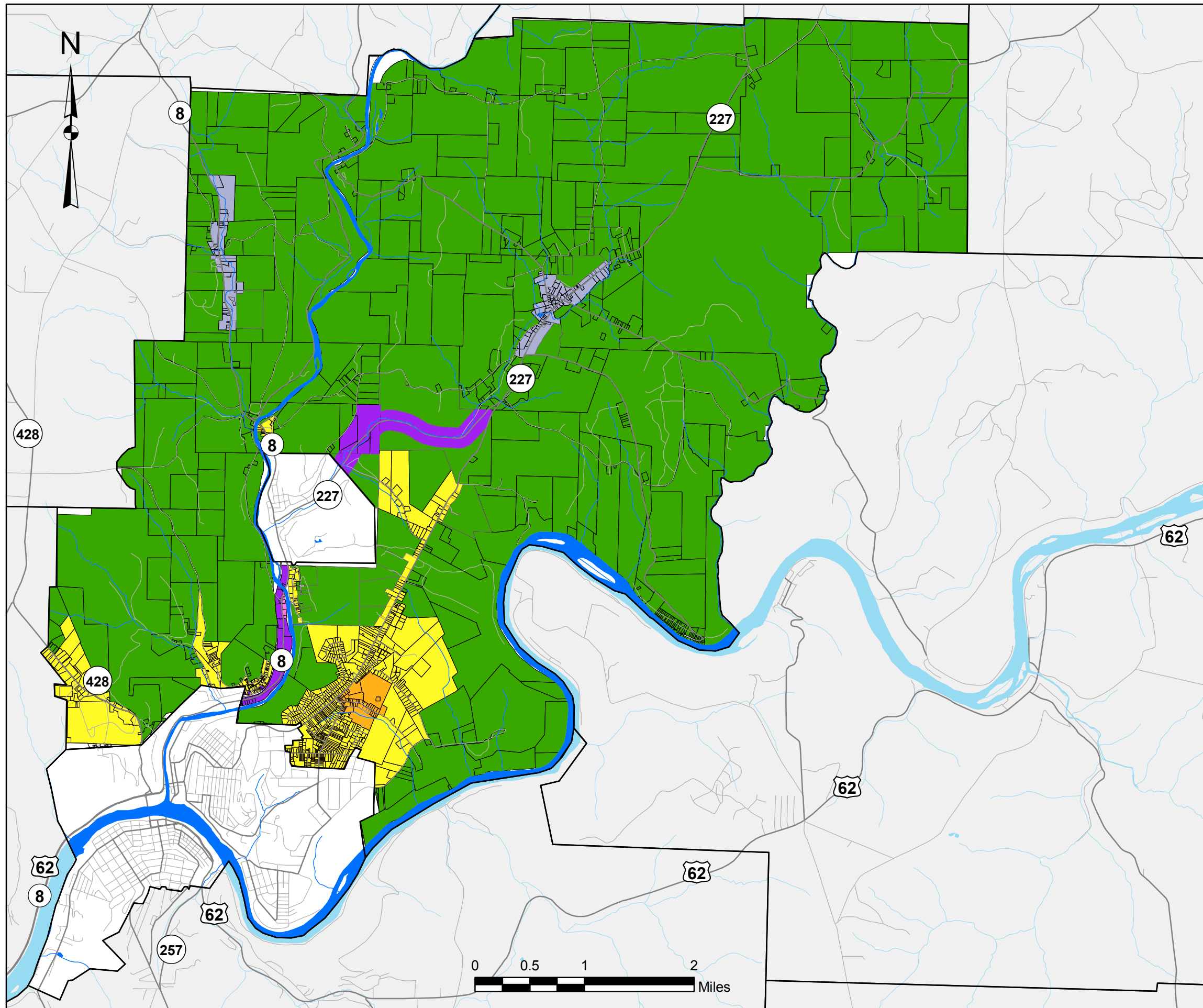
For an older urban area, the Borough’s zoning ordinance densities are quite modest. New single-family residential areas would vary from 1.7 to 2.2 dwelling units per acre. Other development varies from a rather dense Central Business to a medium-density Industrial area.

In the Borough’s R-1 and R-2 Districts, a relatively wide range of uses is provided, with little difference between the R-1 and R-2 in use patterns. There are two “B” (Commercial) districts in the Borough. The intent was to allow smaller lots with high coverage (80%) in the Central District while larger lots with lower coverage standards (50%) would be permitted in the B-2 District.

The Industrial District has a requirement of 2 acres—a quite modern lot. Although Pennzoil was the primary occupant of the district at the time the ordinance was enacted, it was written to permit a relatively large range of industrial and related uses.

Table LU-2: Zoning – Rouseville Borough

District	Lot Size	Lot Width (In Feet)	Lot Coverage Percent
Conservation			
Residential	1 Acre	150 Feet	15%
All Other Uses	2 Acres	200 Feet	20%
R-1 Residential*			
All Uses (Except Multi-Family)	25,000 Square Feet	100 Feet	25%
Multi-Family	25,000 Square Feet Plus 5,000 Per Family	150 Feet	35%
R-2 Residential*			
All Uses (Except Multi-Family)	20,000 Square Feet	75 Feet	35%
Multi-Family	20,000 Square Feet Plus 5,000 Per Family	125 Feet	40%
B-1 Central Business*	7,500 Square Feet	50 Feet	80%
B-2 Community Business*	15,000 Square Feet	100 Feet	50%
I-Industrial*	2 Acres	250 Feet	50%
<i>*All uses must be served by public water and sewer.</i>			

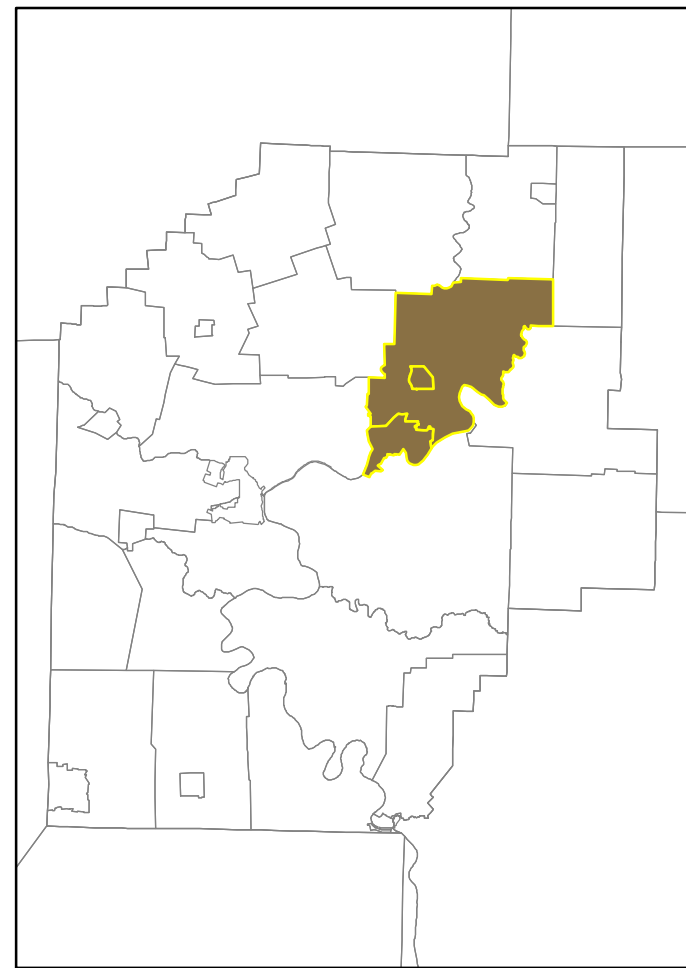
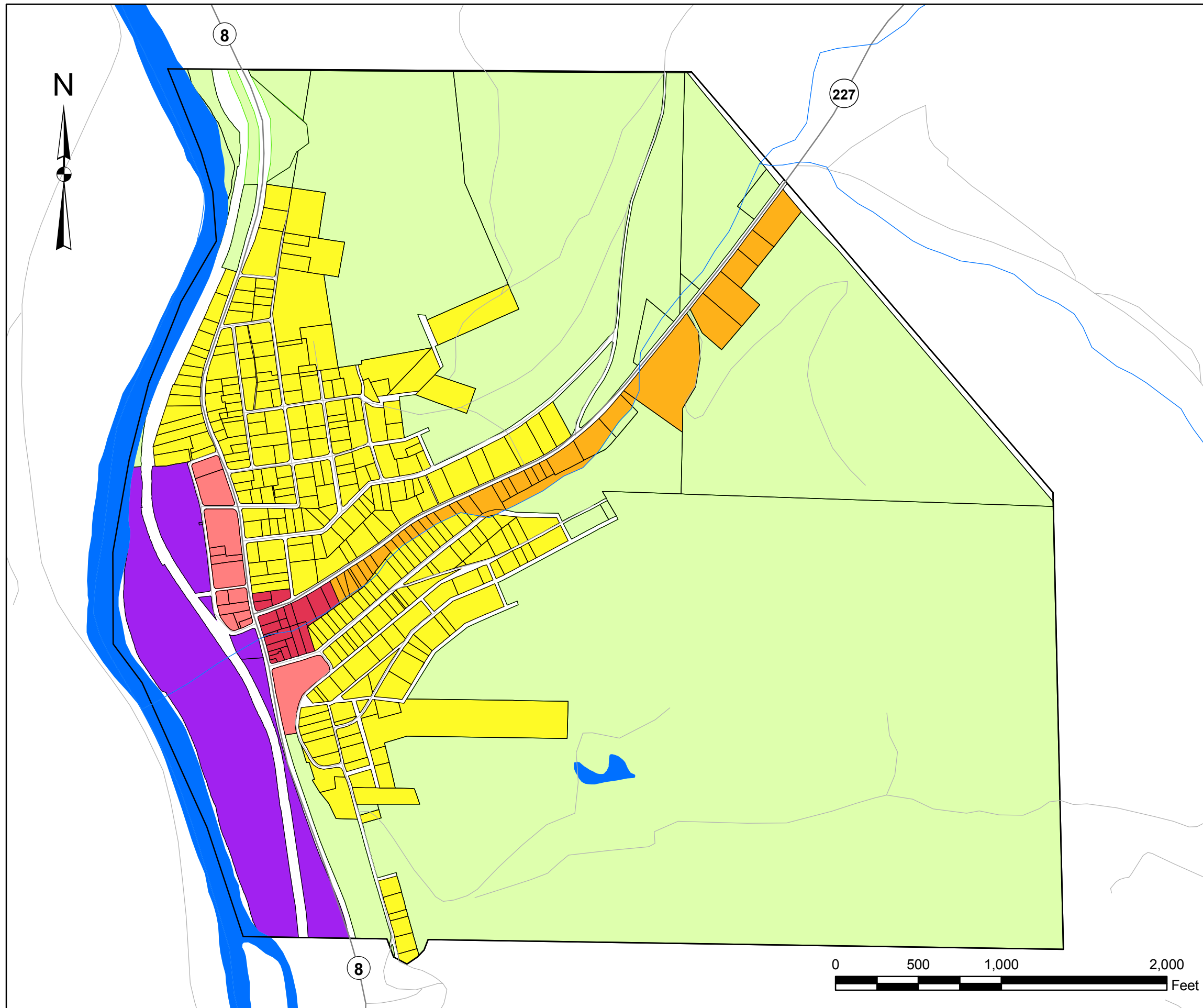


Legend

- C - Conservation
- CB - Commercial Business
- I - Industrial Business
- R-1 - Single Family Residential
- R-2 - Residential
- V - Village

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 4: Cornplanter Zoning Detail**

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983



Legend

- B-1 Central Business
- B-2 Community Business
- Conservation
- Industrial
- R-1 Residential
- R-2 Residential

Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 5: Rouseville Zoning Detail

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

City of Oil City

The City of Oil City has had a zoning ordinance for several years. The most recent edition, from October 14, 1996, replaced the 1963 ordinance. Similar to the Cornplanter and Rouseville regulations, this is written in the “permissive” style.

Table LU-3: Zoning – Oil City

District	Lot Size	Lot Width (In Feet)	Lot Coverage Percent
Residential			
R-1 Single-Family	7,500 Square Feet	50 Feet	20%
R-2 Medium-Density and R-O Residential Office			
Single-Family	5,000 Square Feet	50 Feet	35%
Two-Family	6,000 Square Feet	50 Feet	35%
Multi-Family	6,000 Square Feet Plus 3,000 Square Feet	50 Feet	35%
Commercial			
C-1 General Commercial	6,000 Square Feet	60 Feet	55%
C-2 Central Business	4,000 Square Feet	40 Feet	80%
Industrial			
I-Industrial	10,000 Square Feet	100 Feet	55%
Manufacturing and Industrial			
Institutional			
Institutional-1	7,500 Square Feet	50 Feet	20%

There are two residential districts in Oil City. The R-1 is a typical single-family, urban single-family district. Allowed density is moderate, at 5.8 dwelling units (du) a net acre. The R-2 allows a denser single-family use, at 8.7 du per acre. Two-family units are at 14.5 du an acre. The density for multi-family units (3 or more) varies with the number of units. A 10-unit development would need to be 12.1 du an acre. The R-O District was created for the former Oil City Hospital area and is patterned on the R-2, except “multi-family” development is not allowed, while medical-dental-health units are permitted as special exceptions.

Most of the residential land in Oil City is zoned R-2. The R-1 zoning category is seen on the geographically higher areas of the land north of the Allegheny, while the R-1 District on the South Side is found on the west side above Front Street. Though significant land is zoned R-2, most land use in all residential areas is single family. Although “high rise” apartments and some apartments exist, they are limited. The more contemporary housing development is the new student units along West First.

There are two commercial districts. The C-1 is the General Commercial District, while the C-2 is the Central District. The C-2 is used for the “downtowns” for both the North and South Sides, while the C-1 is found along Route 8 (from the White Bridge north), in the upper Grandview area, along East Front and just north of the North Side downtown, along Plummer, Spruce, and Spring.

The Industrial District follows historic development patterns.

The newest zoning district is the Institutional District. This district was created specifically for the Venango campus of Clarion State University. It encompasses the campus as well as the new student housing facility along West Front.

Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO)

Both Rouseville and Cornplanter use Venango County's SALDO. Oil City has its own ordinance, but it pre-dates the 1968 Planning Code.

Summary

Even though the densities and some uses in each of the zoning ordinances vary, they are quite similar in format and definitions. As such, these ordinances lend themselves to land use sharing options.

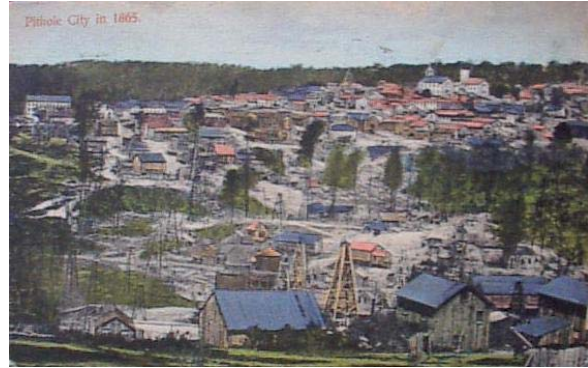
Code Enforcement

The three municipalities all use the Oil City Code Office. The International Property Maintenance Code is the base ordinance. In Cornplanter, the service is primarily complaint-driven, while regular trips are made to Rouseville. In Oil City, the Code Office has some 68 properties on its demolition list, with 10 currently being razed.

Chapter 3 – Physical, Natural and Historic Resources



Physical, Natural, and Historic Resources



Pithole, PA 1865

(FamilyOldPhotos.com website; submitted by John Hummel)

All communities are impacted by local conditions. Those that survive learn to live with what is at hand: the lay of the land, the resources that the earth provides, and the lessons taught by those who were here before us. The following section details the physical world of the study area.

Physical Environment

The most notable natural features of the region are the numerous waterways and the deep cuts they have made into the landscape. The Allegheny River, Oil Creek, Pithole Creek, Cherry Run, and a number of other streams and runs crisscross the three municipalities, impacting them all. The City of Oil City is split into three distinct areas by the Allegheny River and Oil Creek. In turn, Oil Creek is the western border of Rouseville Borough, with Cherry Run splitting the community in two. Likewise, Oil Creek splits Cornplanter Township with Pithole Creek, forming much of the municipality's eastern border with President Township. The action of all these waterways has resulted in the scarring of the upland plateau with many deep valleys, especially where the more swiftly flowing streams exist.



Cherry Run

The result of these deep cuts on the landscape is a large amount of steeply sloped lands in the study region. Though no land is too steep to develop today as a result of modern engineering techniques, lands with slopes of 15% or more usually are not used, especially in western

Pennsylvania. Several factors influence this trend. The primary reason is the fact that in recent years, it just does not make economic sense to develop steeply sloped lands. This contrasts with early development in Oil City, with many homes located on hillsides (viz. Colbert, Plummer, and Grove). That era has past, and many of these hillside homes are no longer attractive. There are plenty of parcels on slightly to moderately sloped lands to purchase that do not require all the improvements that steeply sloped parcels need. A large portion of the old industrial infrastructure in the three communities has either been cleared of structures or is awaiting brownfield redevelopment. The same is true of residential lands. There are plenty of parcels that can be

redeveloped, particularly in Oil City for residential development where there is little demand to develop sloped lands which are steeply sloped.

With water being such a prominent player in the development of the local landscape, one would expect that floodplains and wetlands would have a big impact on the region. In reality, the impact of wetlands is relatively limited. Most wetlands in the region are located in the floodplains of the Allegheny River, Oil and Pithole creeks, and Cherry Run. And much of the floodplains in the study region were developed years ago, long before regulations preventing building in the floodplain were put into affect. A large portion of this development was devoted to industrial lands, mainly as oil refineries. Much of these have since closed and been demolished, particularly in the Route 8 corridor in Cornplanter and Rouseville.

In terms of flooding in the region, there are two primary concerns. In the smaller streams, such as Cherry Run, Pithole Creek, and the other smaller waterways, the concern is sudden heavy rains or rapid snow melt (usually combined with heavy rain). The waters on these smaller streams climb rapidly, but at the same time, usually return to the normal banks quickly. For the two major waterways in the region, flows work a bit different. The Allegheny River has flood-control dams along its length, including those upstream of the region near Warren and along the Tionesta Creek. These tend to reduce the impact of large regional rain events and snow melts. However, both the Allegheny River and Oil Creek are susceptible to ice dams, particularly in very cold winters. The confluence of the river and Oil Creek traditionally has been an ice-choke point; and, historically, the source of some of the most severe flooding in downtown Oil City. That problem led to the construction of an “ice” dam on Oil Creek, north of the City in the Oil Creek State Park as well as the ice boom in the Allegheny. These devices are intended to lessen ice build-up on those waterways.



Allegheny River

Closely related to wetlands are hydric soils. These soils have a large amount of water in their composition. Sometimes this is because the soil is alluvial in nature, along the bank of a stream. Other times, this is because it has a large amount of very fine particles in its makeup, preventing the draining of surface water and runoff. Thus, whatever the underlying reason, hydric soils are a precursor to wetlands—one does not want to develop these lands. In the three municipalities, most hydric soils are located along the waterways, typically in the floodplains and wetland areas. Again, as with wetlands, no significant portion of any developable areas in the study region has a large amount of hydric soils present. And, while most of the soils in the region have a hydric component, this is typically 5% or less of that soil group. It does not represent an impediment to development.

A concern for rural communities is the ability of the soils present to handle on-lot sewage disposal. While Rouseville, Oil City, and the Hasson Heights region of the Township have public sewage collection, the vast majority of the land area of Cornplanter relies on on-lot sewage

disposal. Most of the Township has soils with severe on-lot disposal limitations. However, unlike much of western Pennsylvania, there are large tracts that do have just moderate limitations and there are actually a few small areas where the soils have only slight on-lot limitations. This should not be construed that development of a parcel to accommodate a single-family home is difficult to impossible. Indeed, on most parcels, one should be able to install some sort of septic system. However, it may take some work with the developer and the Township's sewage enforcement officer (SEO) to identify the proper type, size, and location of the disposal system for the property.

Natural Resources

During the administration of Governor Tom Ridge, the State placed an increased emphasis on the preservation of prime farmland soils. This decree was driven by the suburbanization of southeastern Pennsylvania where large areas of farmland were being converted into office parks, shopping centers, and residential enclaves. The Ridge Administration believed that prime farmland soils were worth preserving, for both economic and historic reasons.

It is in the very nature of prime farmland soils that developers should prize them. They, by definition, have slopes of eight percent or less, are deep, fairly loose, well drained and have a minimal amount of rocks in its composition. The very attributes that make cultivating of such soils easy also makes developing them for any other human activity easy.



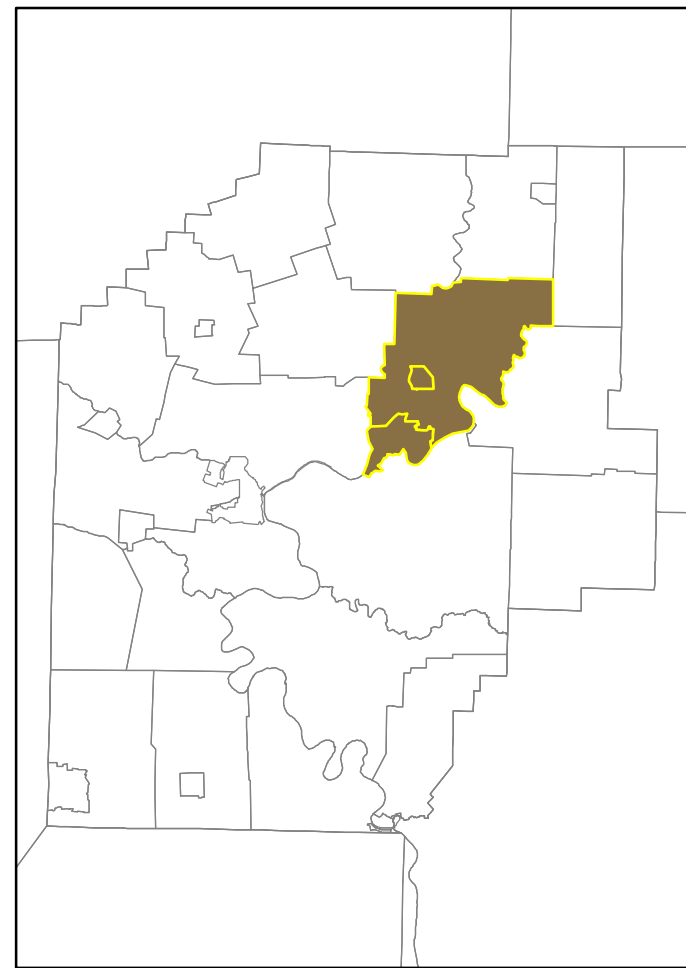
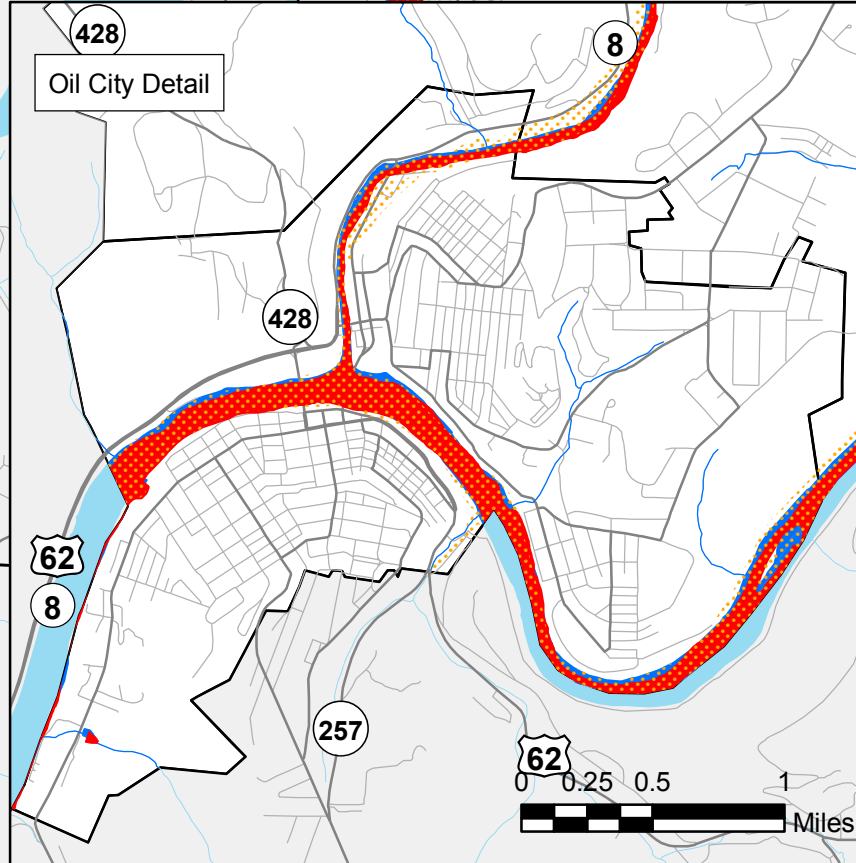
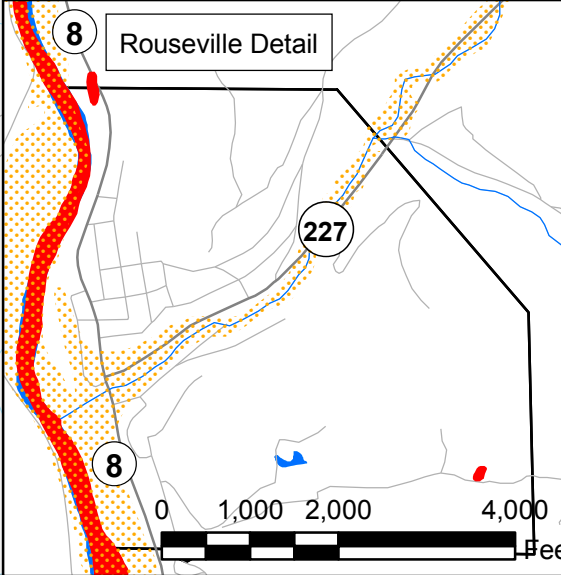
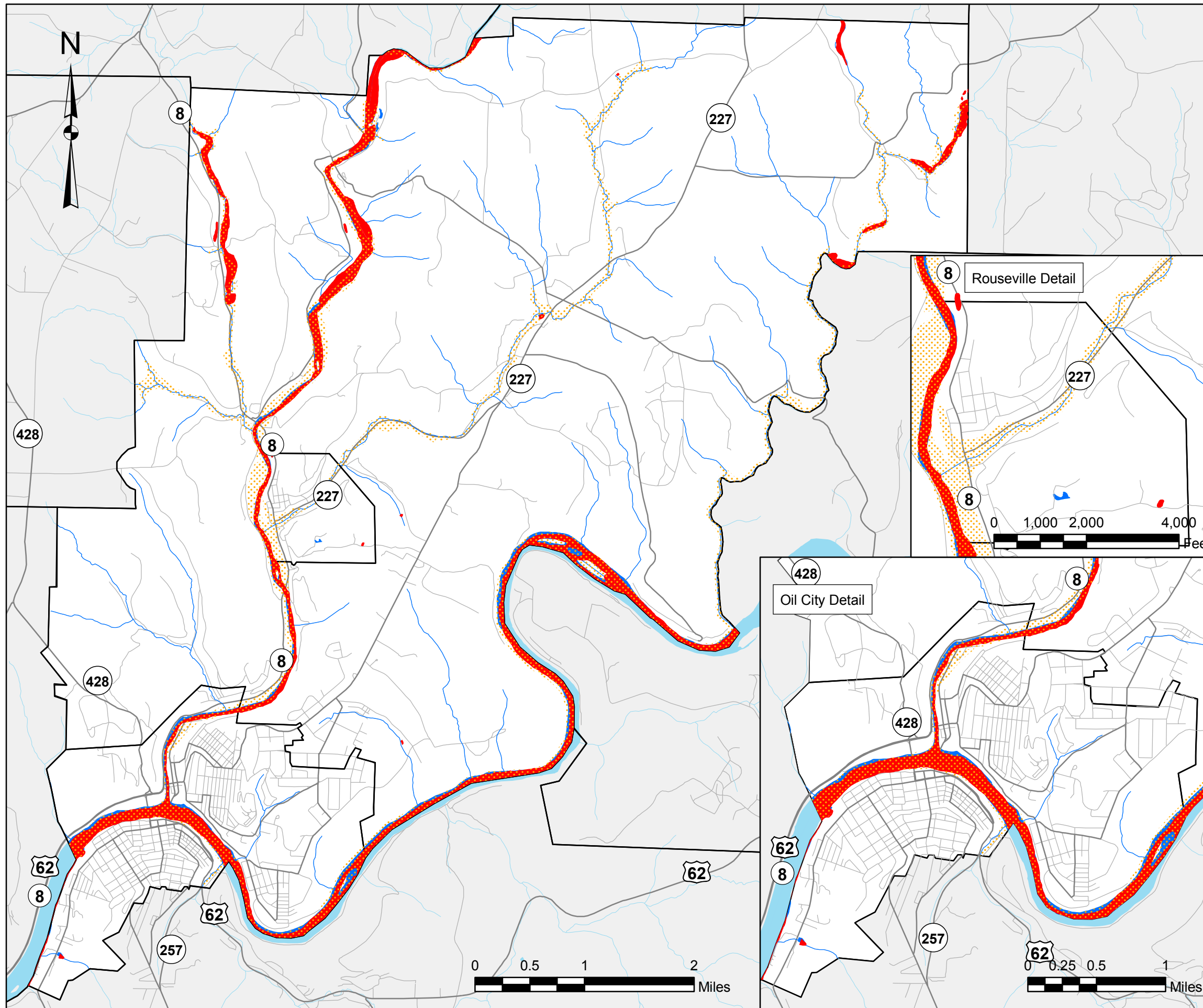
Oil Creek State Park

Again, as with on-lot sewage disposal, the emphasis here is on the prime farmland soils in Cornplanter Township. The other two municipalities do have such soils, but as one might imagine in urban areas, they either are usually developed or exist in the floodplains (a traditional location for prime farmlands). In addition to widely scattered areas of prime farmland soils in the Township, there are two large areas where there are large areas of this soil type. The first of these is along Grandview Road, extending from Hasson Heights to Walnut Bend Road. This area has been extensively developed, limiting the need to protect the soils. The other area is north of

Owlville, northeast of Petroleum Center. Here, no extensive development has occurred. Most of the area is forested and part of it is in Oil Creek State Park. No development is likely to occur here.

In fact, much of the undeveloped areas of Cornplanter Township are forested. There is little agricultural activity in the community, other than timber harvest. This was a great economic windfall for local landowners during the recent housing boom. Pennsylvania hardwoods are greatly prized.

One local asset that is sure to benefit from current economic concerns is natural gas and oil. This region is the birthplace of the modern oil industry. Oil Creek got its name due to the fact that crude oil would literally seep from the ground into the water. Most of the oil that was commercially viable has been recovered. Some wells still pump to capture a few barrels of crude to sell to refineries. More important though to the local economy are the gas wells. Natural gas

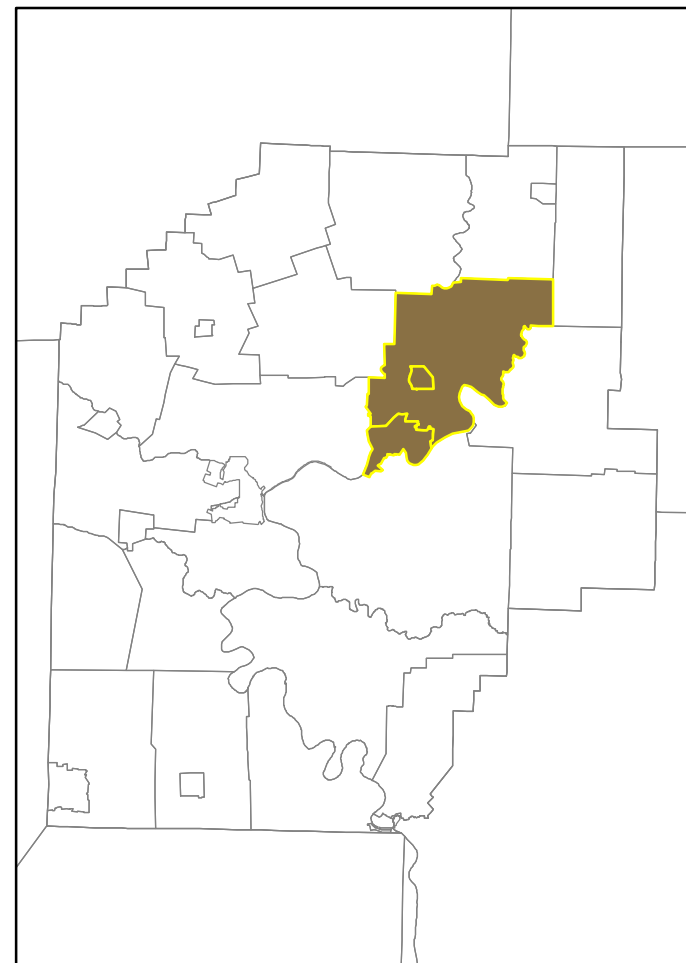
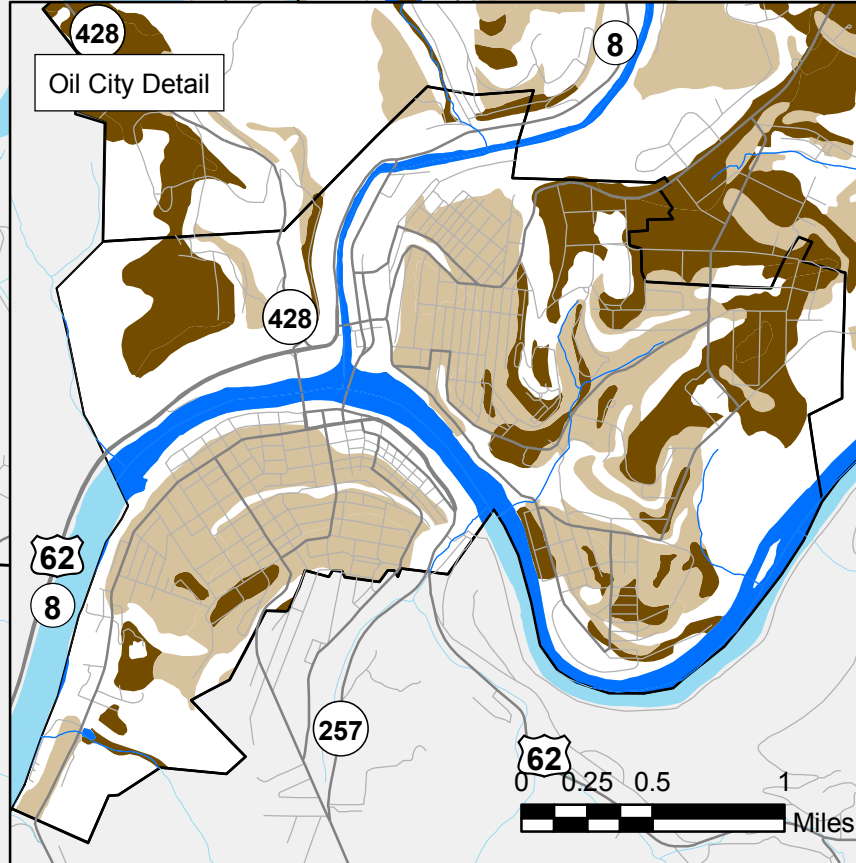
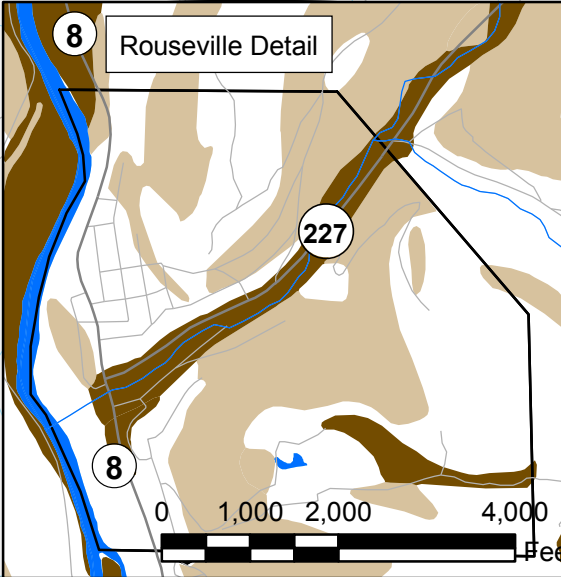
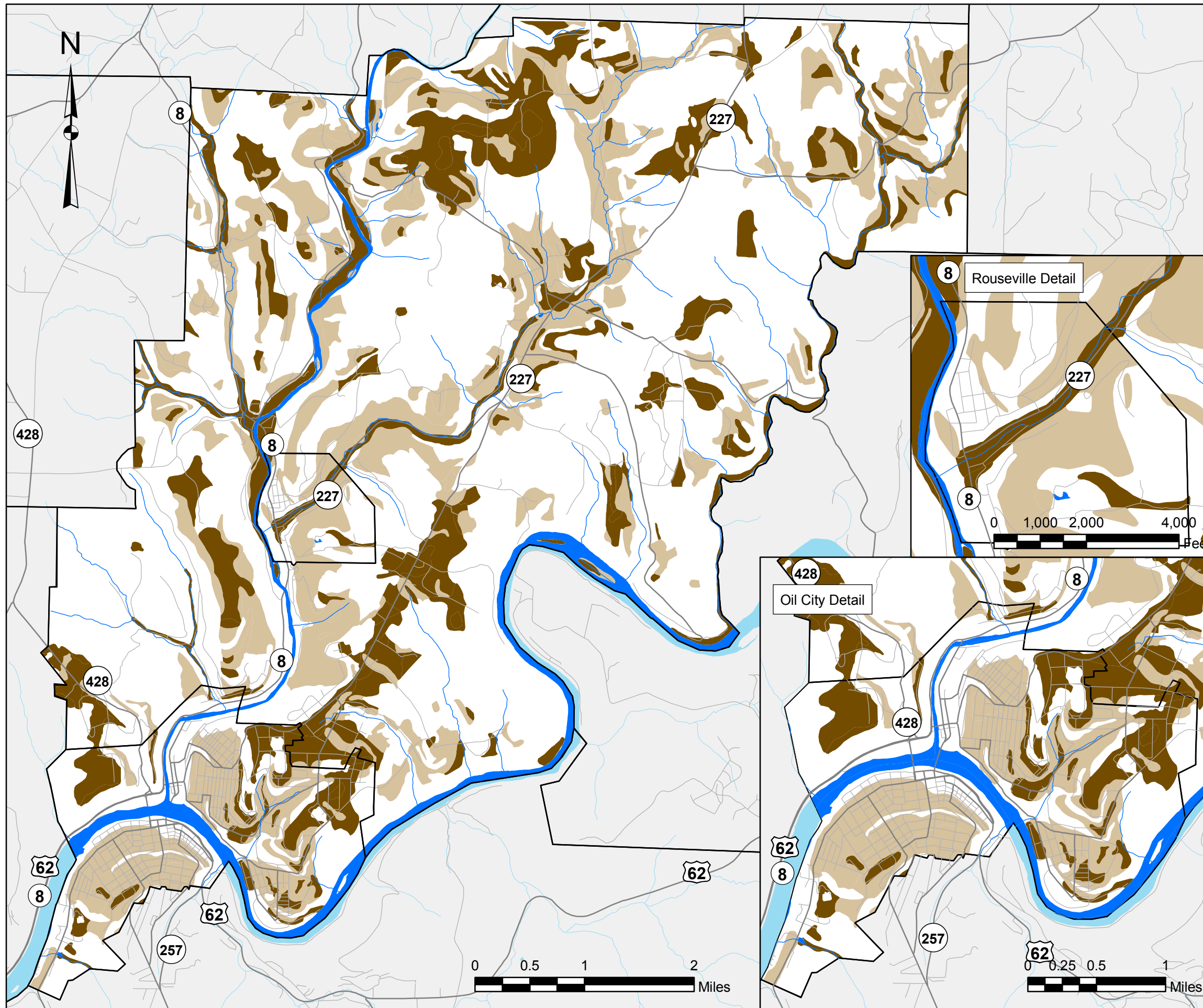


Legend

-  Floodplains
-  Wetlands

Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 6: Floodplains and Wetlands

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983



Legend

Soil Classification

- Soils of Statewide Importance
- Prime Farmland Soils
- Not Prime Farmland Soils

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 7: Prime Farmland Soils**

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

has become an important part for most of the western Pennsylvania economy and it is true here in Rouseville, Cornplanter, and Oil City. There are wells in all three communities, though the vast majority is located in the Township. Once drilled, these wells usually have little impact on the neighborhood.

The woodlands and waterways also provide a great opportunity for outdoor recreation in the area. Be it hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, biking, or a host of other activities, the natural conditions of the region lends itself to outdoor play in all year round.

Historic Resources

Much has been written about the history of the oil region. By now, it is well known that the area is the “birthplace of oil,” and, without a doubt, changed the history of the world. The extraction, refinement, and marketing of oil made the world a different place than it is now.



Active Oil Well

The history of the area has also been covered extensively in previous plans, including those completed for each of the Plan communities more than a decade ago, as well as the County’s recently updated comprehensive plan, and the Oil Heritage Region’s Management Action Plan Update, as well as others.

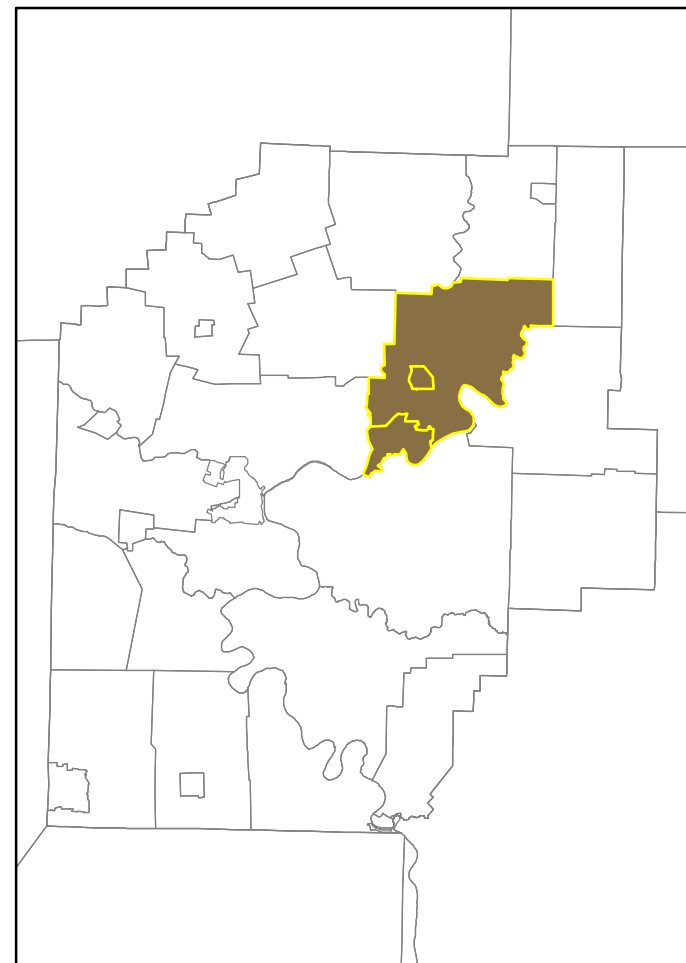
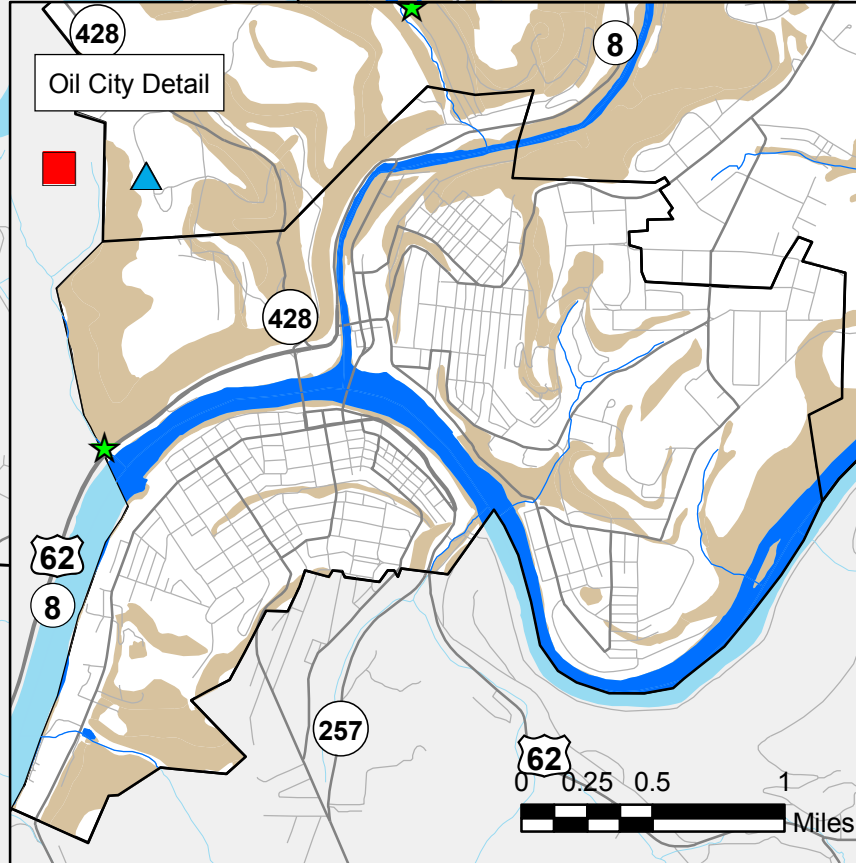
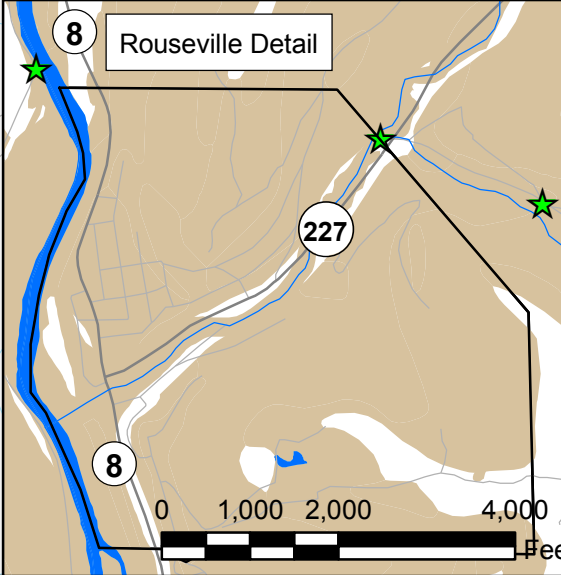
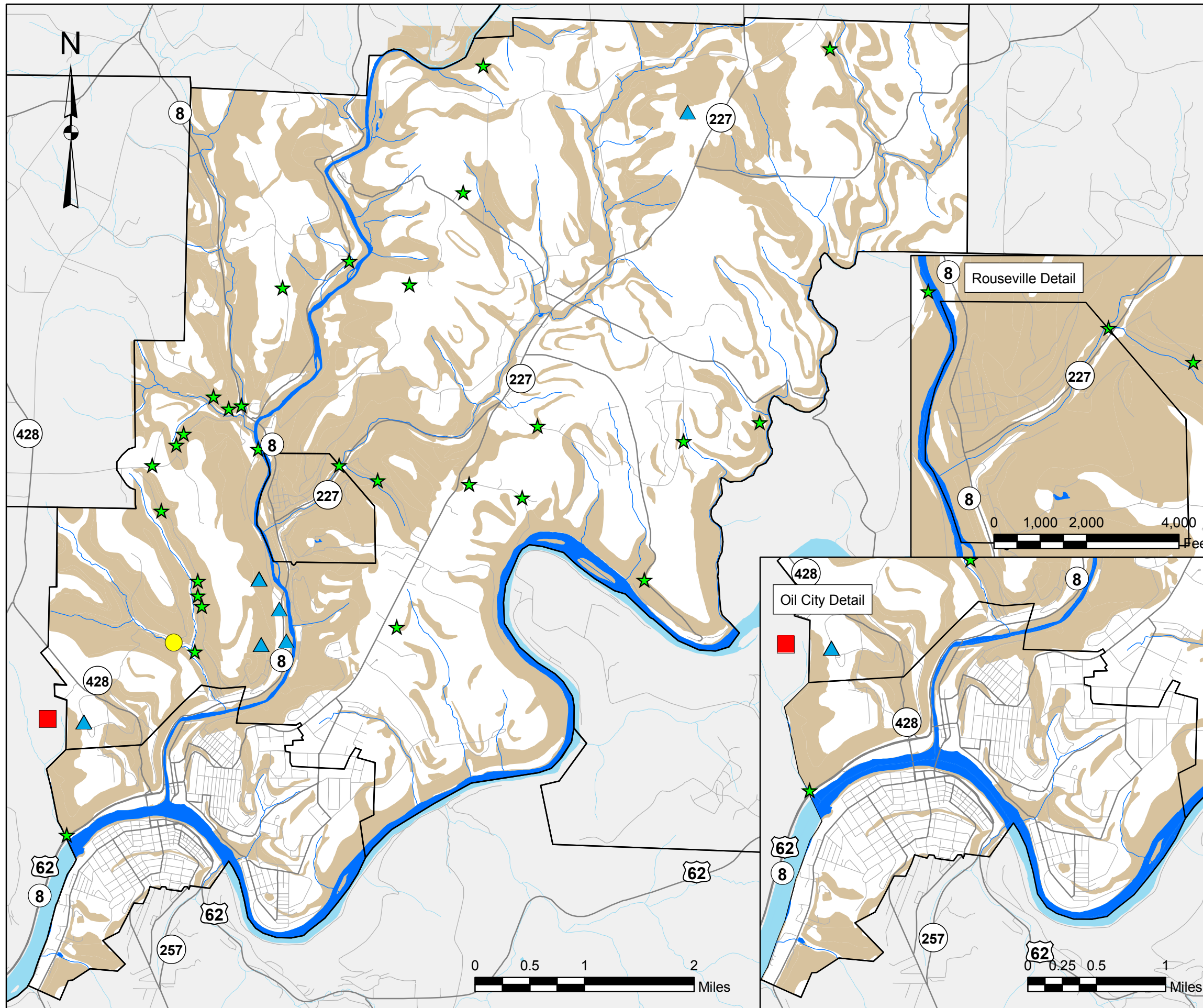
Therefore, this section will not repeat what has already been covered elsewhere. Instead, it will focus on two critical and intertwined issues that face the communities involved in this Plan. Those are the overall housing crisis that is facing not just the Plan communities, but the entire region, and the fact that many of these blighted structures are also important historically to the communities—perhaps not in and of themselves, but because they define the context of the community. Without a well-defined context, the area may well lose its individuality and certainly, its historical significance could be greatly affected, yet without addressing the blighted structures, there well may be no community to protect.

A primary goal of the Plan is to develop a strategy that balances these needs. A well-developed Plan component will consider the critical importance of developing and maintaining a healthy housing stock as well as give more than a nod to the historical significance of Plan communities.

Historic Districts

The existing historical districts in the Plan area, of which there are several, can be used as a logical point for developing this strategy. The remainder of this section discusses the districts and how they can be used to develop a classification system that addresses blighted structures and the area’s historic significance.

There are three historic districts. There are also three buildings in the City that have been designated as historic structures: the National Transit Building, the Oil City Armory, and the United States Post Office (now Museum). The three districts in the City are the:



Legend

- ★ Illegal Dump Sites
- Industrial Mineral Mining Operations
- ▲ Land Recycling Cleanup Sites
- Residual Waste Operations
- Lands with Development Constraints

Northern Venango County Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan Map 8: Development Constraints

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

- Oil City Northside Historic District
- Oil City Southside Historic District
- Downtown Commercial Historic District

Oil City: Northside Historic District

This district is an approximately 250-acre parcel that runs along Oil Creek to the north and its confluence with the Allegheny River in the downtown. It is primarily a working class neighborhood, with the most important homes dating from late 19th and early 20th century homes. Of the 1,214 historic structures listed in 1999, 94% were considered to contribute to the character of the district, and only 6% were considered non-contributing. Those buildings were non-contributing for two reasons: (1) they were built outside the period of significance, or (2) they had been altered to the degree that they no longer conveyed a sense of history within the context of the district as a whole.

Approximately 30% of the buildings were built during the 19th century and 70% date from the 20th century. None of the structures, in and of themselves, possess significance or scale to justify their individual identification, according to the National Register. Yet, the neighborhood does provide a sense of history for its period of significance (1870 to 1945).

The oldest buildings date from the early 1870s, with most construction occurring in the years that followed the initial oil boom in the area, from about 1880 to the 1930s. Some of the oldest buildings are in the vicinity of Pearl Avenue. The majority (95%) of the buildings in this district are residential. The remaining 5% of the historically significant buildings in the area are primarily churches.

Although nearly all designs typical of the era are included, the district’s historic significance is primarily in its integrity as a working class community. The lots were close to some of Oil City’s largest industrial operations and workers as well as managers lived in the neighborhood, and the neighborhood was a popular place to live for a socially and ethnically diverse group well into the 20th century.

Oil City: Southside Historic District

This mixed-used historic district is approximately 222 acres on the south side of the Allegheny River. It consists of a neighborhood commercial area along the banks of the river and a large residential section along the river and on the hillside to the south. There are also several churches and other historical buildings throughout the district.

The district, which was designated in 1997, has 932 resources, of which one, the Armory, was previously listed and four are military-related monuments and memorials. Of the 927 buildings, 882 (96%) contribute to the character of the district; only 45 (4%) are non-contributing.

While there are several newer apartment buildings and some new commercial development, there was no single pocket of noncontributing development in the district.

In 1997, at the time of the listing, the streetscape of the commercial area was generally devoid of vegetation. Within the residential areas, the lots had significant yards and many mature trees, which contributed to the overall character of the district.

Perhaps even more than the Northside, the Southside has widely divergent building types and architectural styles. These range from small cottages to institutional buildings and churches of varying sizes, to typical downtown architecture, grand Victorian homes that were the residences of the area's leading industrialists and modest suburban homes from the 1920s. Residential design within the district includes examples from nearly every architectural style from the Civil War era through World War Two, including at least two that may have been mail-order kit homes.

In 1997, the district was in excellent repair and showed little evidence of disinvestment. The consultant for this Plan has found that to generally be the case in 2009 as well. Certainly, there is a greater level of disinvestment on the Northside than there is on the Southside.

The Register also noted that though some demolition has occurred in the district, the activity was dispersed widely enough so that it did not detract significantly from the overall integrity of the district. Perhaps the most pervasive change has been the use of "artificial" siding and window replacement. Nonetheless, according to the Register, these activities have diminished the district's ability to convey a sense of history.

Oil City: Downtown Commercial Historic District

The Downtown Commercial Historic District was listed on the National Register in 1997. It is comprised of a 25-acre, primarily commercial district that is immediately north of the Allegheny River. This core business district includes both commercial and industrial buildings, a church, and two bridges (one for vehicles).

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this district is that it contains sixty-five individual resources; three of these (the National Transit Building and Annex and the former U. S. Post Office) were previously listed in the National Register. Of the remaining sixty-two, fifty-three (86%) contribute to the character of the district and nine (14%) are non-contributing. (As noted previously, this assessment is based on the 1997 listing. The tally, especially in this small area, should be updated, digitally cataloged, and compared to the existing register. Likely, much of this information is already available, given the excellent historic resources in the City.)

Both of the bridges are considered contributing resources. The 1939-1940 Center Street Bridge and the 1892 Erie Railroad Bridge both span Oil Creek in the southwestern part of the district.

Although changes have occurred to virtually all buildings within the district, these changes have not diminished the ability of the district to convey its own sense of history. Non-contributing resources are those built outside the period of significance of the district, and include a fast-food restaurant and several commercial establishments, widely dispersed throughout the district. Modifications to buildings within the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District include storefront alterations, window replacement, artificial siding, etc. In no instance is the extent of modification so severe as to render a resource non-contributing.

The period of significance of the district begins about 1870 and continues to about 1945; the earlier date corresponds to the date of the earliest extant resource, a small brick commercial building at 279 Duncomb Street.

The latter date refers to the latest period of construction of the historic buildings within the district, such as the 1942 Art Deco-style General Telephone Company Building at 260 Seneca Street. The closing date for the period of significance also corresponds to the end of the “Settled Phase” of the oil industry, as defined in “Oil Resources of Western Pennsylvania, 1859-1945,” according to Historic Register documentation.

Buildings within the district are generally of masonry construction, including stone, brick, and terra cotta, and range in height from one to five stories. The majority of the buildings are constructed flush with one another, with no setbacks and very few buildings have any rear lot setback. A number of buildings have additions to their rear elevations. Several buildings along Seneca and Main Streets extend to the banks of Oil Creek and others extend the entire depth of the lot on which they are built, giving them addresses on two streets.

When the area was designated, the majority of the buildings housed retail or offices on the first floor, with office use above.

As a result of the 1892 flood, which wiped out many of the buildings in the district, the bulk of the architecture dates from the 1890s through the 1960s. No individual architectural style dominates in any one section of the district. For the most part, the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District retains a high integrity, according to the Register.

And, within the context of the entire region, Oil City’s downtown historic district is newer than those of Titusville and Franklin. In some ways, it represents the most prosperous years of the oil industry in western Pennsylvania. The developers, builders, and architects who added to the City’s commercial district represent the best and the brightest of an entire industry. Clearly, it is a resource that should be protected.

Chapter 4 – Housing



Housing



This section of the background study focuses on housing. As defined in the work program, this is to include:

- Statistical information, primarily from the Census Bureau
- Assisted housing
- Local building permit data
- The current market

In addition, Venango County recently completed a study entitled “Report on the Housing Market in Venango County, Pennsylvania,” (czb, LLC). This provides insight into not only the overall County housing market, but also into individual geographic sectors. Venango County, as part of their “in-kind” support of this project, prepared a special housing insert for Cornplanter and Rouseville. Much of that insert was completed by czb, LLC consultants, with some editing and additional data supplied by GCCA.

Census Data

Housing information is collected as part of the Census effort. As previously noted, a new Census is about one year away (April 2010); thus, only an overview of Census data will be presented.

Table H-1: Housing Count, 1990-2000

Municipality	1990	2000	Change	Percent
Cornplanter	1,204	1,179	-25	-2.1
Oil City	5,449	5,276	-173	-3.2
Rouseville	254	240	-14	-5.5
Total	6,907	6,695	-212	-3.1

Source: Census 1990, 2000

Similar to the drop in population, all three communities also saw a decline in their housing stock. This trend was not unusual in Venango County. The County’s comprehensive plan (2004) noted that, overall, Venango County experienced a 612-unit decrease, during this same period. It must

be further noted that this decrease of housing occurred when the average household size in the three communities saw a modest 3% drop, from 2.47 persons per household in 1990 to 2.39 persons in 2000. This decline, though small, does create a slight increase in housing demand from the general population. In many western Pennsylvania communities, this decline in household size actually caused a significant increase in housing demand. Such was not the case locally.

A second important characteristic is tenure. In Census jargon, tenure refers to whether the housing unit is either owner- or renter-occupied. In Venango County, the proportion of owners is 76.4% versus rental, 23.6 percent. The characteristics for the study area are shown on Table H-2.

Table H-2: Tenure – 2000

Municipality	Owner	Percent	Renter	Percent
Cornplanter	921	89.1	113	10.9
Oil City	2,977	62.5	1,785	37.5
Rouseville	161	78.9	43	21.1

Source: Census 2000

These results are typical for western Pennsylvania. Home ownership is highest in townships and smaller boroughs, while more rental units are found in larger urban places. Along with patterns of ownership versus rental, there is a difference in the type of housing units. Typically, high-rise apartments, townhouse developments, and duplexes are seen in cities. Conversely, mobile homes are seen more frequently in rural settings. The data shown by Table H-3, Units in Structure, confirms this trend.

Table H-3: Type of Housing – Units in Structure

Housing Type	Cornplanter*		Oil City		Rouseville*	
Total	1,179	(100.0%)	5,276	(100.0%)	237	(100.0%)
Single-Family	1,054	(89.4%)	3,667	(69.5%)	210	(88.6%)
2-Family	8	(0.7%)	682	(12.9%)	10	(4.2%)
3 to 9	11	(1.0%)	590	(11.1%)	3	(1.3%)
10 to 49	0	(0.0%)	188	(3.5%)	0	(0.0%)
50 or More	0	(0.0%)	143	(2.7%)	0	(0.0%)
Mobile Homes	103	(8.7%)	6	(0.1%)	14	(5.9%)

**Percentages may not total, due to computer rounding.*
Source: Census 2000, Table QT-H10

Table H-3 supports Table H-2, reflecting that rentals are more apt to be duplexes or other types of multi-family units. Clearly, most of the rental units are in Oil City, which also has the highest incidence of multi-family structures.

Mobile homes are found primarily in Cornplanter, with a few listed for Rouseville, and only six in Oil City. Once more, this is consistent with state and regional trends. Mobile homes are historically a rural housing option. However, it is an option with a shrinking market share. In the mid-1990s, there were between 350,000 to 400,000 mobile homes sold annually. In that time,

they often comprised one third of all new homes. Their popularity has dwindled. In 2008, HUD’s quarterly U.S. Market Conditions (May 2009) reported only 69,000 mobile homes placed on site ready for occupancy. Essentially, mobile homes are now less than 10% of the national new housing market.

Vacancy rates are another characteristic the Census measures. The County plan notes that the vacancy rate in Venango County (2000) was at 15.5%, nearly six percentage points greater than that of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. However, that document rightly notes that this rate is inflated by the number of seasonal dwellings in the County (2,586). Vacancy status is shown by Table H-4.

Table H-4: Vacancy Status – 2000

Municipality	Units Vacant	Percent	For Sale Or Rent	Seasonal	Other
Cornplanter	145	12.3	11	114	18
Oil City	514	9.7	231	34	218
Rouseville	36	15.0	11	9	13
Total	695	10.4	253	157	249

Source: Census 2000

As can be seen, the study area emulates the County. The highest vacancy numbers, but not proportions, are in the large urban place (Oil City) while most seasonal units are in the township (Cornplanter). The units classified as “Other” vacant can be a cause for concern. It is true that “Other” vacant can reflect housing units under construction. This is unlikely in the study area. What is more likely is that such units are nearing abandonment.

The age of housing is also important, as it can be an indication of housing conditions. Older homes usually need more maintenance. The median “year built” listed by the Census was 1958 for Cornplanter—hardly contemporary, but such homes have relatively modern construction, wiring, and insulation. In both Oil City and Rouseville, the median year built was prior to 1940—the earliest date used by the Census. A physical review of homes in the City indicates many were built decades before the 1940 cutoff. It is also an indicator of housing problems—problems confirmed by the housing survey.



Condemned Housing

There is one housing characteristic not included with general housing data. This measures persons in “Group Homes.” Table H-5 shows the population in such facilities at the time of the 2000 Census.

Table H-5: Population in Group Quarters – 2000

	Cornplanter	Oil City	Rouseville	Total
Total	108	198	5	311
Institutionalized	108	165	5	270
Nursing Homes	108	117	5	230
<i>Source: Census 2000, SF-1 Files</i>				

As can be seen, the great many residents of group quarters in the study area are in nursing homes; some 88% of the total. Other persons were in educational dormitories or facilities for juvenile offenders. Since that time, both college housing and the juvenile facility have grown. The County's 2000 Census data showed 3.2% of its population was in group quarters; thus, at 2.2%, the study area is slightly under that proportion.

The age of homeowners is another characteristic that the Census measures. In the 2000 Census, there were an estimated 4,052 homeowners in the three study municipalities. Many are older citizens.

Table H-6: Occupied Housing Units – Owners 65 and Older

	Cornplanter	Oil City	Rouseville	Total
Number of Units	921	2,976	204	4,052
Owner Age 65 or Over	267	863	77	1,218
Percentage	30%	29%	38%	30%
<i>Source: Table H-14, SF-3, Census 2000</i>				

This table indicates an ongoing supply of homes will enter the market as older homeowners look to sell their units. That supply—or oversupply—was noted in the County's recent housing report. It was also mentioned in some of the written comments in the Community Survey—chiefly, by older homeowners who want to sell their home.

Assisted Housing

For the purpose of this report, assisted housing is considered as dwelling units that are subsidized by a governmental agency that also have income limits for its tenants.

There are two primary agencies that provide assisted housing. Both are HUD-recognized housing authorities.

The Oil City Housing Authority (PA059) has the following facilities in its inventory:

Name	Type of Housing	Units
Moran Towers	Elderly and Handicapped	47
Siverly Apartments	Elderly and Handicapped	28
Towne Towers	Elderly and Handicapped	90
Century Terrace	Family	50
Scattered Sites	Family	20
Total		235

Currently, the Authority reports 100% occupancy for its units. They also report an inventory of 167 Section 8 units.

The second agency is the Housing Authority of Venango County. Their offices are located in Cornplanter Township, at their Cherry Hill project.

A few years ago, this agency had some findings from HUD. These centered on the inspection and clearance of units for the Section 8 Voucher program. As a result, the Authority was under close scrutiny and actually lost about 100 of its voucher units. Under new leadership, it has brought its Section 8 inspection program into HUD compliance and has gained back some of its last units. Currently, the County has 340 vouchers. Occupancy at the Cherry Hill Apartments is now at 16 out of 20. Authority officials relate they have been very careful in screening tenants, resulting in some of the vacancies at Cherry Hill.

It must be noted the County Authority does not offer its services in Oil City. Residents there rely on the City's Authority.

Venango County's "Fair Market Rents" and income limits used for the Section 8 voucher program are as follows:

Table H-7: Monthly Fair Market Rents – 2009

Efficiency	\$431
One Bedroom	\$471
Two Bedroom	\$561
Three Bedroom	\$709
Four Bedroom	\$804
For units larger than four bedrooms, a 15% increase per bedroom is used.	
<i>Source: U.S. HUD</i>	

Table H-8: Income Limits – 2009

1 Person	\$18,850
2 Persons	\$21,500
3 Persons	\$24,200
4 Persons	\$26,900
5 Persons	\$29,050
6 Persons	\$31,200
7 Persons	\$33,350
8 Persons	\$35,500
<i>Source: U.S. HUD</i>	

Beyond the resources in the Authority's inventory, there are three other assisted housing projects. Luther Place is a 50-unit apartment (elderly) in the Oil City downtown, located in the former City Hall building. It is operated by the Lutheran Service Society of Western Pennsylvania. Facilities are all one-bedroom units. Rents are subsidized by HUD (Section 8).

A second development is Seneca Court, which is also in the downtown. Located at 232 Seneca Street, this is a 24-unit elderly housing development consisting of one-bedroom units. Financing was assisted by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Authority. The operator is listed as Warrior Run Development Corporation, a subsidiary of Yoder Group. This group has a second development of townhouses in the City overlooking the Allegheny River, off the intersection of Colbert and Harriott.

The Housing Market

National

News articles on the national real estate market can be seen daily. And, it is a market best described as struggling. Two primary sources are used for this section: the U.S. Housing Market Conditions, a publication of U.S. HUD, and the National Association of Realtors (NAR). In outline form:

- In May 2009, existing home sales saw a modest 2.4% increase from April, but still below comparable 2008 levels. The estimated seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) was 4.77 million units.
- The \$8,000 tax credit (see IRS website, First-Time Homebuyer Credit) is seen as a reason for the apparent modest increase in May. However, poor appraisals were blamed for delaying pending home closings.
- Average sales prices of existing homes have dropped from \$260,000 to \$172,900 over the past year.
- Sales prices in the Northeast United States dropped from \$284,600 to \$245,400. (The West saw the largest fall, -30.3%).
- On a positive side, since January of this year (2009), both the volume and average selling price of existing homes have experienced modest gains.

The NAR expects a strengthening market, but has concerns about the issue of good appraisals. This latter problem is of importance, as nearly 30% of buyers are “first-time homebuyers”; and solid appraisals are needed to qualify for the \$8,000 tax credit, instituted by the Federal government to stimulate sales. Recent news stories indicate a modest stabilization in home sales, but it will take some time for recovery.

Local Market

As part of the background research for the housing element, contacts were made with local real estate offices. Their views generally concurred. The first observation was the local markets did not experience the boom of national markets. It was described as somewhat slow, but stable.

Overall, the three municipalities which comprise the study area are seen as slow. Rouseville is seen as a particularly difficult market, especially



Colonial Village in Cornplanter Township

since Pennzoil left. In fact, it is not unusual for units to be on the market in Rouseville for over one year.

Cornplanter is seen as a better market. Still, in 2007, the average time on the market was quoted at 131 days. Average listed prices in Cornplanter (2007) were about \$83,000. The Colonial Village area was identical as a stronger sales area with sales in that development higher than the norm (\$90,000 to \$300,000).

Oil City is more of a mixed picture. Overall, average sales prices were quoted as about \$47,000. Yet, Oliver Manor is seen as a good neighborhood, with values from \$100,000 to \$400,000. Portions of the south side are also seen as strong.

Comments were made by real estate sources on the Art Colony Victorian homes sales. They characterize the initiative as modestly successful. An estimated 18 units have attracted people literally from all over (New York, California, New England, and even New Zealand).

Some final comments from the professionals:

- New “snow bird” housing for the 55-plus market-retiree market are needed
- Need more moderately priced homes (\$80,000 to \$120,000)
- There is an oversupply of lower-end homes in Oil City

Special Note: In late 2009, at least one real estate source reported that although residential sales in the first quarter were “very slow,” sales have picked up over this year, and the local market appears to be recovering.

Report on the Housing Market for Venango County (czb, LLC)

This report was released in 2009 and was prepared by Charles Z. Buki for Venango County via the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Full copies of the report are available from the Venango County Planning Commission. A summary of their findings can be found on page 4 of that report. It is gloomy.

- Population losses depress the housing market
- New home building and significant upgrades are “extremely low”
- Marginal upkeep standards
- Easy market for “slumlords”
- Code enforcement lacks sufficient resources
- Multi-unit layers of government make a unified remediation strategy difficult
- Stable to falling home prices

The report predicts these trends will continue unless significant changes in public policy continue.

New Housing Starts

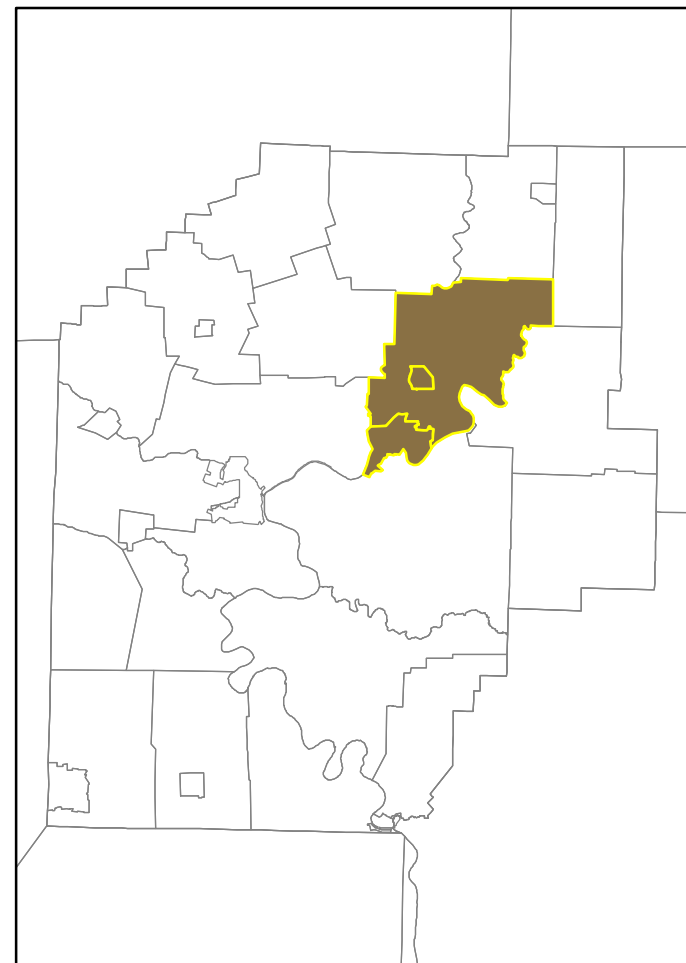
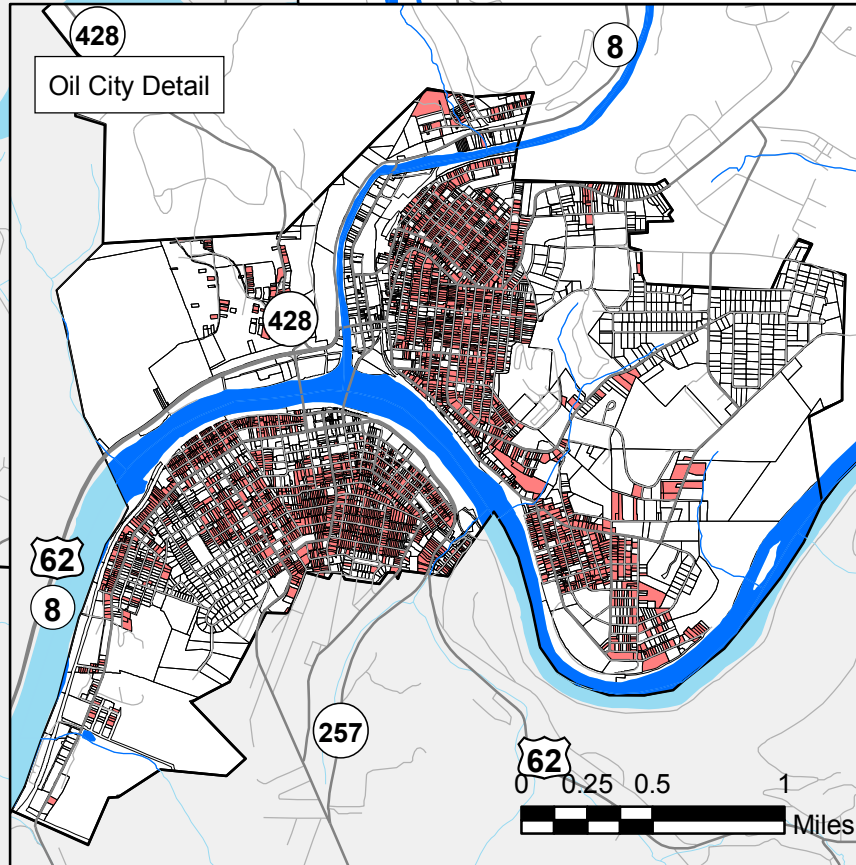
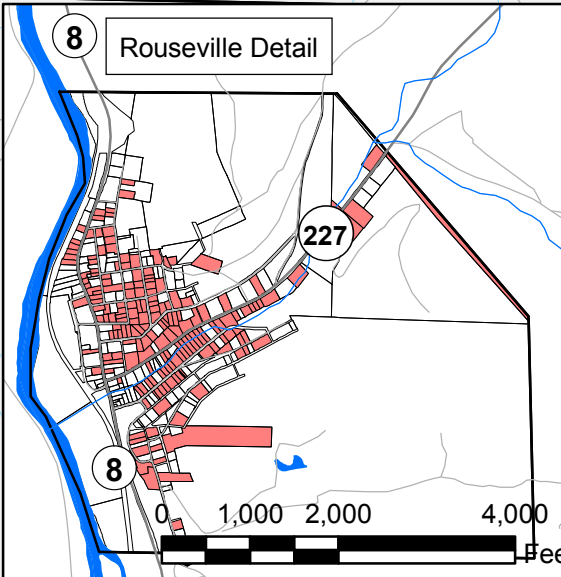
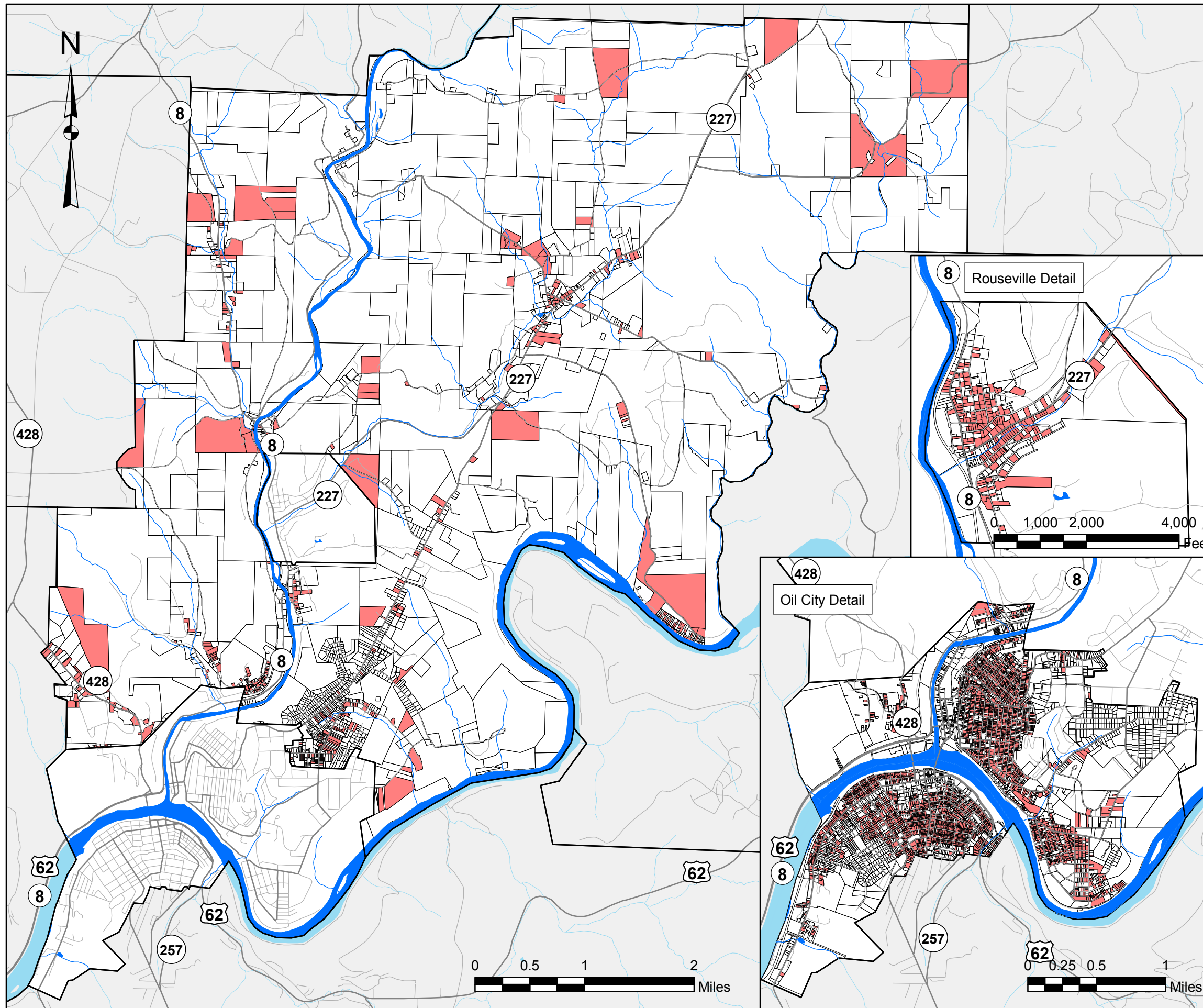
The County's housing market study examined new housing starts on a county level. At best, only a few new units are built per year. Even Cranberry Township—the most active local market—averaged only a few per year.

Report on Housing Conditions

As part of its work on the Northern Venango County Regional Comprehensive Plan, housing surveys were completed. Using a housing standard form (seen on the page H-9), the entire area of Oil City was reviewed by various teams from GCCA. Selected areas in Cornplanter and Rouseville were completed by the County.

In Oil City, approximately 3,600 single-family units were viewed by three separate two-person teams. Field work started in January 2009 and continued until May, with some follow-up work in June. Housing units were evaluated by using a “windshield” survey process. This entails both a driver and a coder, with both individuals participating in judging deteriorated units.

The consultant has completed similar surveys in the past and has found that they typically underestimate the actual level of problem homes by at least 15 percent. This was born out by a comparison with the City “Condemned Structure” list, as some of the units listed were not on the consultant's list. Why? The windshield survey approach allows the viewers only exterior views of the home. The raters have no power to enter into homes and evaluate electric, plumbing and heating systems. Many of the condemned units had such interior problems.



Legend

- Housing Condition Grades A, B, C or Ungraded
- Housing Condition Grade D Fair to Poor

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 9: Housing Conditions, 1999-2000
Housing Grade From Assesment**

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Housing Conditions Survey

Surveyed by: _____ Date: _____

Municipality: _____ Parcel No. _____

Address: _____

1. Use of Structure:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Family (No. of Units: _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Duplex | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed Use (Specify: _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial (Specify: _____) |

2. Principal Building Material:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brick | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Block | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco/Wood Frame |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood | <input type="checkbox"/> Vinyl or Metal Siding/Wood Frame |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stone | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Shingles/Wood Frame |

3. Structural Conditions (check one for each category):

	<u>Sound</u>	<u>Deteriorated</u>	<u>Dilapidated</u>
Foundation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roofing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exterior Cover (Siding)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Porches, Windows, Doors, Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Structure is:

- | | <u>Estimated Age</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sound | -25 Years (Contemporary) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In Need of Minor Rehabilitation | 25 to 50 Years (Modern) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In Need of Major Rehabilitation | +50 Years (Pre-1940) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended for Demolition | |

5. Comments:

Homes are rated using the following criteria:

Sound: A sound house is defined as one which has no visible defects or only those slight defects which are corrected during the course of regular maintenance. Under this approach, a house may have some peeling paint, minor cracks in wood or masonry, or broken gutters/drain spouts, and still be considered sound.

Deteriorating: Deteriorating housing is that which needs more repairs than would be provided through normal homeowner maintenance. Elements of deterioration are holes or cracks in the foundation, exterior framing, walls or roofs, evidence of structural sag, cracked windows, or broken stair treads. Other elements considered were a combination of deferred maintenance aspects, which, singly, may not be a concern, but, in combination, create a problem unit. Deteriorated housing was divided in two categories: Deteriorated-Minor and Deteriorated-Major, the difference being the degree of problems for an individual structure.

Dilapidated: Dilapidated housing has deteriorated to the point that it may no longer be safe or adequate shelter. Its defects are so severe that it would require extensive repair or rebuilding. Open holes, missing material over roofs, floors, or siding; missing windows; and serious structural sags are all indications of dilapidation.

The results:

	Units
Minor Rehabilitation Needed	245
Major Rehabilitation Needed	152
Dilapidated	20
Condemned by City Code Officer	68
Total	485

Based on the prior observations that the windshield survey underestimates the degree of problems, it can be assumed that between 550 and 560 units in the City need some type of remedial action. An estimated 420 to 460 units need rehabilitation. At the average “rehab” cost in western Pennsylvania (\$20,000±), that equals \$9 million to \$10 million. If the City were to receive a maximum HOME grant every year, it would take 18 years to resolve these problems.

Though problem homes are scattered throughout Oil City, there are certain focal points. These are listed below:

- The North Side – Plummer to Colbert Grove, Spruce to Bissell
- The Palace Hill Area – Spruce/Chestnut to Plummer
- Siverly
- The East Side – from Second to Highland, east of Central
- The West Riverfront from Petroleum to Wyllis, north of West First

There are scattered problems seen in nearly all neighbors. The west end of the south side and the Oliver Manor areas are seen as the soundest neighborhoods.

The results of the housing surveys were entered into a database to graphically illustrate where problem units can be found. See the Housing Conditions plate.

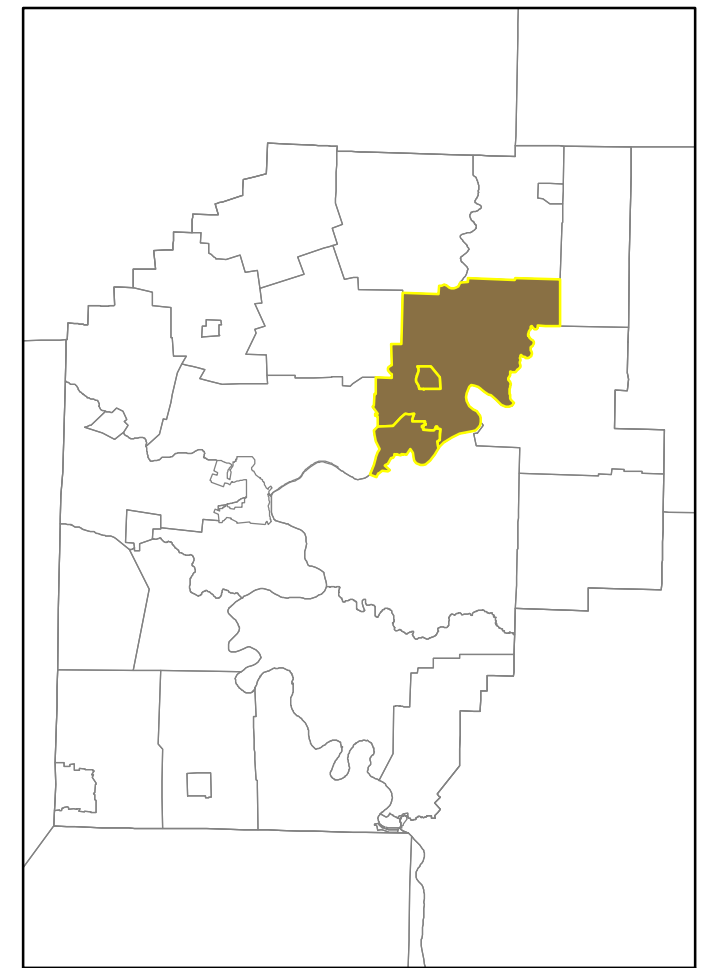
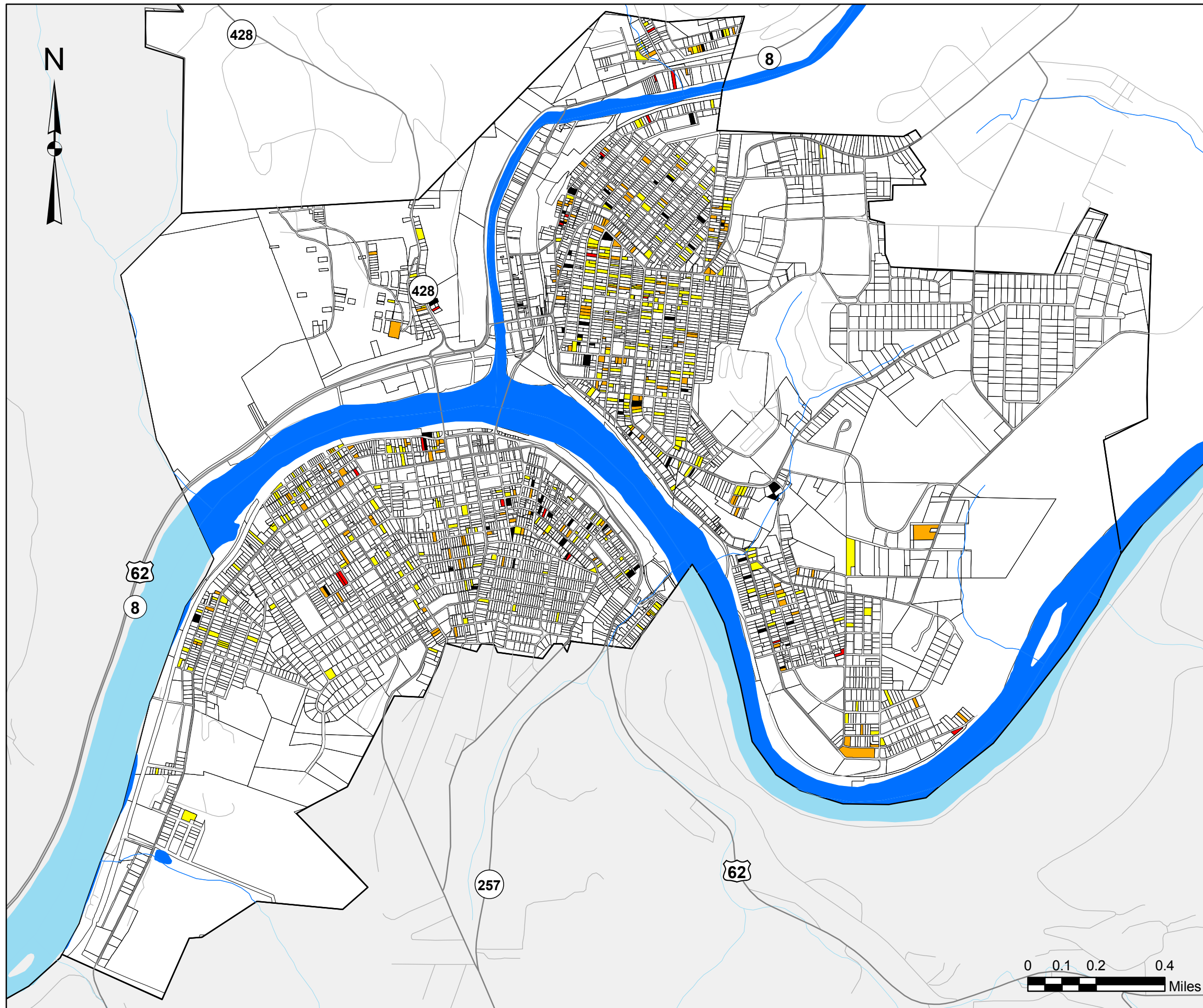
There can be little doubt that during economic boom times in Oil City, homes were built everywhere. Steep hillsides, alleys, and other locations typically bypassed were used. Now jobs are not so plentiful. And, workers who once had to walk to work now drive. Many of the units built in marginal locations are no longer market attractive. Of these, some are in poor condition and even if “rehabbed,” will not be saleable.

Certainly, in Oil City, the condition of housing must be seen as a very major problem. As stated earlier, the County of Venango prepared a special housing element for Cornplanter Township and Rouseville Borough as part of their “in-kind” contribution. This report—published separately—was based primarily on the Venango County Housing Market Study. In lieu of a field survey, that report contained a housing conditions plate, based upon the last County reassessment, was used. Because of the different approaches, GGCA consultants undertook an informal housing survey. All of Rouseville Borough was viewed. In Cornplanter, the Clapp Farm area and McClintockville were viewed.

The results indicated that 26 dwellings—over 10% of the homes in the Borough—were deteriorated. Primarily, these units were found along Cherry Run or east of Route 8 and south of Cherry Run. A full formal survey would likely have seen a higher proportion.

In Cornplanter, the survey problem was more complex. As a rural area, housing is more scattered, with great variations. The Village of Plumer, the “cottage” settlement of Oleopolis, and Colonial Village are quite distinct communities. In the end, field work focused on Clapp Farm and McClintockville as well as a mobile home park. Only 23 problem units were seen. They focused primarily in Clapp Farm. Although 7 units in the mobile home park were rated as deteriorated, none appeared in seriously dilapidated condition.

Overall, all three communities have problem housing to a degree that warrant remedial action.



Legend

- Parcels Not Deemed To Have Housing Deficiencies
- Minor Rehabilitation Needed - 250Units
- Major Rehabilitation Needed - 153 Units
- Demolition Recommended By Consultant - 20 Units
- Condemned By The City of Oil City - 68 Units

Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 10: Oil City Housing Conditions

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Chapter 5 – Community Facilities



Community Facilities and Public Utilities



Community Facilities

Oil City Fire Department

The Oil City Fire Department is a full-time operation, consisting of 16 full-time and four part-time persons. Personnel include the chief, three captains, and three lieutenants. Physically, the Department works from two locations. Its primary location is at Fourth Street and Central Avenue, while a smaller facility is located at the corner of Plummer Street and Bissell Avenue. Both structures are quite old. Originally the central station, the Department's headquarters was a school, and it was converted to its current use in 1956, over 50 years ago. This north side station, at one time, housed horse-drawn fire apparatus with an addition added in 1968.

Inventory of Equipment

- 2005 Crimson/International engine – 1
- 2004 Carmate: Special operations trailer (this contains special equipment related to the Department's role in the Region 2, Homeland Security, Urban Search and Rescue Group)
- 2003 Ford F-350 Rescue 7)
- 2001 Carmate 12-foot Cascade trailer
- 1998 Jeep Cherokee Chief/command car
- 1997 Pierce/International engine – 3
- 1996 Roughneck 16-foot 35 hp set board (for river rescue and services)
- 1990 Suburban Utility/Rescue – 12
- 1987 Emergency One/GMC engine – 2
- 1974 American LaFrance platform (snorkel)



Oil City Fire Department Headquarters

Last year, the Department responded to about 1,600 calls, both fire and emergency. In addition, there were some 546 public service calls. Beyond its fire and emergency functions, the

Department has several other activities, which are mostly related to local public safety, while some are regional in scope. Like the City's Police Department, the Fire Department is involved with the Region 2 Counter Terrorism Task Force (Homeland Security).

One of its regional activities is as a team member, with the City of Erie, in the Region 2 Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) team. As a result of that participation, the City has a special operations trailer, which is packed with a variety of gear for search and rescue efforts. Consequently, the Oil City operation has more equipment than is found in a comparable department.

Other activities, though not as dramatic, are important for the City. One is the role of the chief and 6 firefighters who are certified fire inspectors assisting the City Code Official with Fire Code inspections of all commercial, mercantile businesses, schools, restaurants, bars, and churches. In fact, the fire chief serves as the Fire Code Official for Oil City. Yet, another function was originally due to the Department's equipment. The Department maintains the City's traffic lights and controllers. This stemmed from the fact that, years ago, the Fire Department had the only "bucket" truck in the City.

As expected, water safety and rescue is an important service of the Department. Sitting at the confluence of the Allegheny River and Oil Creek, there are a number of boaters in local waterways and a resulting regular need for assistance. As an adjunct to its River Rescue Boat, the Department has a Dive Team. The Dive Team is a cooperative effort with Franklin. Recently, it received a \$50,000 grant for updated diving gear. Prior to that update, the team was using equipment from the 1950s and 1960s.



North Side Fire Station

As with most fire departments, emergency medical services (EMS) are a big element of the operation. This includes some of the functions of the River Rescue team, but is primarily in response to the emergency needs of the City's residents. In 2008, there were some 1,435 EMS calls to the Fire Department. Oil City is unique in that it has an Advanced Life Support (ALS) non-transport ambulance license. Its crews can supply all the needed EMS services. If transport is needed, the Community Ambulance Service is used. That non-profit organization has a contract with the City to reimburse the City for its ALS services.

The ISO (insurance) rating for Oil City is Class 5, out of a possible 10. Class 1 is the best rating, while Class 10 is the lowest. The Department related that its biggest impediment to receiving a higher rating is the number of firefighters. Oil City would need to add about 30 additional staff members to qualify for a Class 1 rating.

Current Priorities

The Fire Department has various capital priorities:

- Replacement of the platform/snorkel truck – estimated cost is \$850,000 to \$900,000*
- Replacement of the 1987 pumper – estimated cost of \$350,000*
- New turnout gear for firefighters – \$40,000*
- Consolidation of its two stations into a single facility. No cost estimate was available. Such a structure would need about two acres of developable land, centrally located.

**Note: All figures are estimates.*

Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department

The Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD) is located off Grandview Road, just south of Horne Lane. It is housed in a combination station and social center. This is a volunteer organization. Last year, the Department received about 400 calls. Unlike many volunteer fire companies in Pennsylvania, the Cornplanter operation has a full complement of personnel, with over 65 persons. Its active roster is 45. Last year, no calls were missed due to a lack of volunteers. Department personnel relate that they can man up to three trucks, if needed, at any time.

Inventory of Equipment

- 2008 HME tanker/pumper (just purchased – \$400,000)
- 1997 Penn Fab tanker/pumper and multi-purpose vehicle. This is a rescue/medical vehicle as well as a fire engine.
- 1995 International tanker/pumper, first out to serve those areas without fire hydrants
- Rescue Wagon – Ford F350 – This is classified as a medium rescue vehicle. In addition to medical and rescue equipment, it also has heavy rescue tools and can respond to water as well as traditional rescue calls.
- Fire-Police vehicle (converted ambulance)
- Two pickup brush trucks



Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department

- 1984 Simon/duplex pumper tanker fire truck. This is surplus equipment and is for sale. It is on display at the rear of the station.

Though well run and quite active, CVFD does have needs, with equipment being one of them. The Department is looking to replace their older pumper. Costs would likely be similar to that of last year's acquisition, somewhere in the \$400,000 range.

Perhaps more dramatic is the need for a new facility. There is serious discussion about building a new station for the CVFD. Property

off Grandview Road, near their current location, is available. The Department is actively seeking funding for this option. They indicate that the station would be the first priority, with a new social hall a long-term project. This may complement the County's needs. The County Emergency Management operation, which is on the same campus as CVFD does needs additional space. So, it may be possible that the current facility could be sold to the County. However, at this time, there is no firm decision on that element.

Rouseville Volunteer Fire Department

The Rouseville Volunteer Fire Department operates from a structure adjacent to the Borough Building, off Mechanic Street, in the Borough. The Department lists the following equipment:

- 1992 International Pumper/Tanker, Engine No. 6, 1,500-gallon tank, 1,500-gallon per minute pump, portable pump, generator, and foam educator
- 1980 GMC Pumper, Engine No. 5, 750 gallon tank, 1,000 gallon per minute pump, portable pump
- 1991 Ford F350 4 x 4 Brush Unit, No. 8, 300-gallon tank, 8 Indian tanks, miscellaneous equipment
- 2005 Ford F350 4 x 4 Rescue No. 4 Super cab, portable generator and lighting, Hazmat Spill kit
- In-house equipment, 6,500 watt generator
- 750-gallon, per minute, portable pump



Rouseville Borough Volunteer Fire Department

Personnel for the Rouseville Borough Volunteer Fire Department report two primary problems. One is fundraising. Historically, bingo was the Department's biggest fundraiser. Since the no smoking State policy went into effect, however, that source has dwindled. Even given that problem, the Department is financially sound. The most pressing issue is personnel. The Rouseville active membership is currently a dozen. They are "just barely making it." As the residents of the Borough age, future recruitments are difficult. And, being a volunteer fire fighter is expensive—expensive in time—about 188 hours of required training—and in-training materials (over \$700). The future of this Department is questionable.

Police Protection

Both Cornplanter Township and Rouseville are served by the Pennsylvania State Police. The local Barracks are in nearby Cranberry Township. They are part of Troop E, headquartered in Erie County. Located on Route 322, the Franklin station is responsible for Venango County.

The Oil City Police Department

Oil City has a full-time professional police operation. Currently, there are some 18 officers, including the Chief. The Department is now in the final stages of a grant process, which, if

successful, will add another officer. The Department operates from the City Hall Building in downtown Oil City. There are two holding cells at the police headquarters. However, if any long-term detention is needed, prisoners must be transported to the Venango County lockup in Franklin. Normally, prisoners are kept only for eight to ten hours in Oil City. Officials indicate they house from 30 to 90 persons a month. They use some nine patrol cars to service the City and log about 100,000 miles per year, in response to an average of 12,000 to 14,000 calls each year, as well as patrols. The Department has its own dispatchers and also uses the County 911 system.

Coverage is on a 24-hour basis, and the Department tries to have three to five officers available on each shift. This is not always possible; and, at a minimum, there are two officers on duty, with backup personnel available.

The Oil City Department has made a commitment to community policing and meets with the three local neighborhood groups on a regular basis. The Chief places a high priority on this aspect of police work. A second initiative is their relationship with the Oil City Area School system. The Department maintains an officer on school premises who services both the high school and the middle school. They also have an active DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program for school students. They now have two officers in the program and are looking to add additional resources.



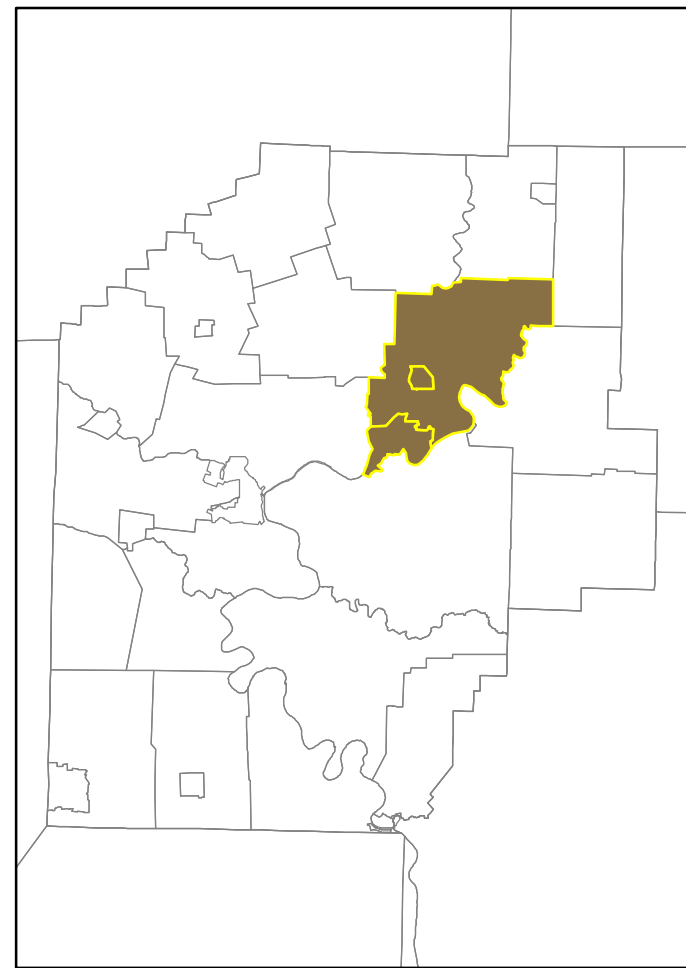
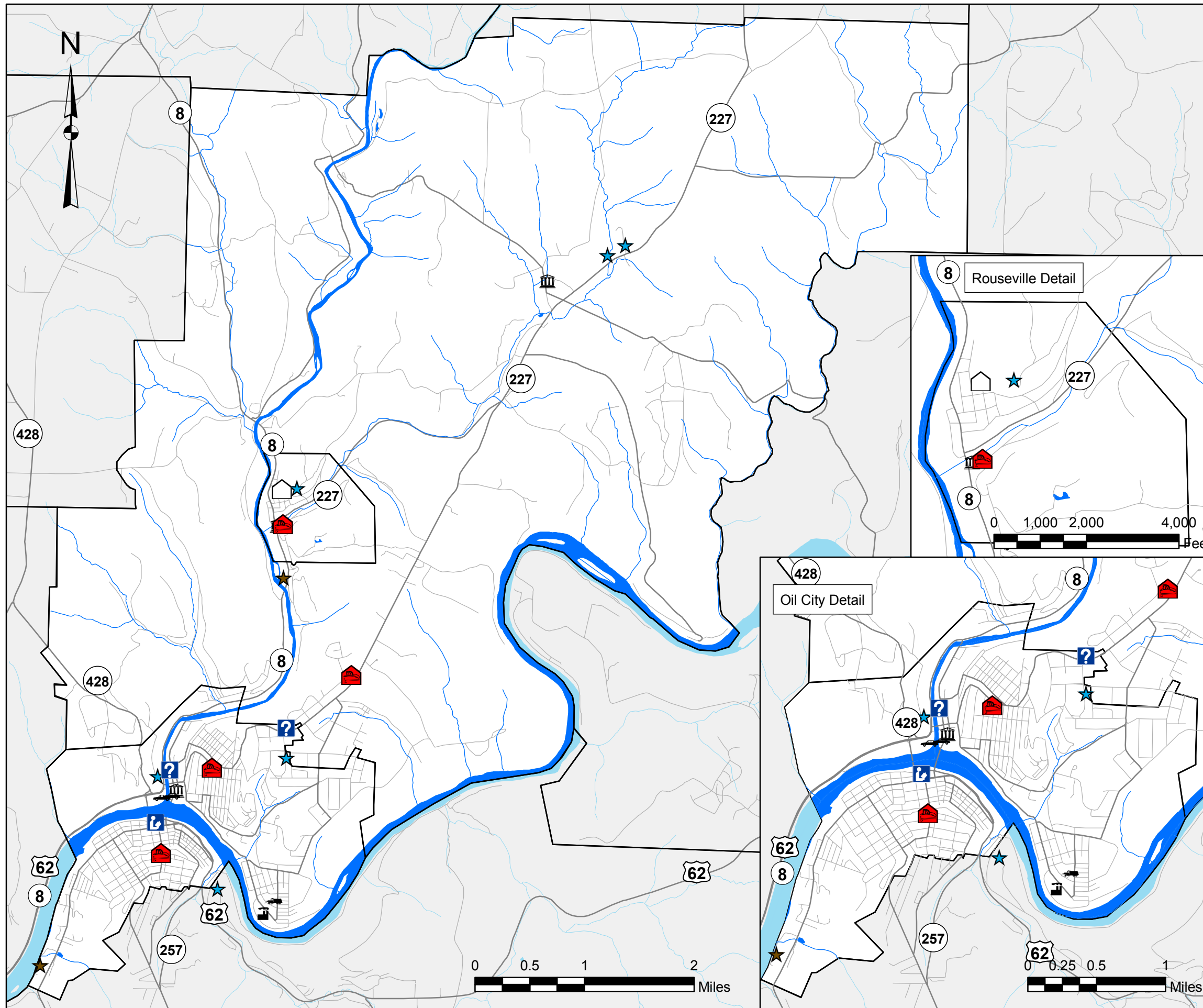
Oil City Police Department

In addition to its local work, the Department is quite active with the Region 2 Counter Terrorism Task Force (Homeland Security). This is a valuable resource for training and possible equipment needs. Training is usually in Meadville, at the Butler Community College, or in Jamestown, Pennsylvania.

The police have one very unique activity. They work with the City's Code Officer to keep an eye on deteriorated housing. The Department has found that often criminal activity and problem housing go hand in hand.

As would be expected, the Department has needs, which include both physical resources and equipment that will make their job more efficient. Current needs include:

- A secure impoundment area
- A secure area for parking police cars
- A 911 radio repeater system for police radios
- New Live Scan Fingerprinting equipment. Currently, prisoners must be transported to Franklin for fingerprinting, taking up time and personnel.
- New bullet-proof vest for the officers
- An updated video arraignment system
- Steady replacement of police vehicles (currently 1 per year)



- ### Legend
- Community Center
 - Economic Development
 - Fire
 - Government Center
 - Library
 - Parking
 - Social Services
 - Sewer
 - Water
 - Public Works

Northern Venango County Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan Map 11: Community Facilities

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Educational Resources

The study area is fortunate to have a variety of educational institutions within its borders. In addition to the Oil City Area School District, there is the Venango Technology Center, the Venango Campus of Clarion University, and the DuBois Business College.

Oil City Area School District

The Oil City Area School District serves all of the study area as well as Oakland Township and parts of President Township. Five of its six schools are located in either Oil City or Cornplanter.

Table CF-1: Oil City Area School District Enrollment

	Enrollment
Oil City Senior High School	856
Oil City Middle School	543
Oakland Elementary School	115
Hasson Heights Elementary School	574
Seventh Street Elementary School	167
Smedley Street Elementary School	195
Teaching Staff	178
Support Staff	54

Source: Oil City Area School District website

The Oil City system has a characteristic somewhat unique in western Pennsylvania. Instead of losing students and considering the closure of schools, they are generally maintaining their enrollment; and, in fact, are expecting a modest student increase. (See the State Department of Education, District Enrollment projections.) To accommodate increases in the K through 5 grades, the District is moving the 5th grade to the Middle School.

The shifting of students is not enough. In addition, the District has embarked on a \$17.5 million-renovation program. Its purpose is to modernize its facilities while maintaining the architectural integrity of the building. This program includes extensive renovations to the high school and middle school.

High School

- New office and security areas
- New electrical system
- Plumbing and HVAC systems
- Renovation of the pool
- Roof
- ADA compliance
- Science room
- Elevator

Middle School

- 7 new classrooms
- 1 special education room
- Electric system
- HVAC and Plumbing
- ADA compliance
- Roof

Athletic Complex

- New track and football field
- Tennis courts and related improvements

As the District has a high reimbursement ratio from the State, about three quarters of the expense for these renovations will be covered by the Commonwealth.

The Oil City Area District is planning a 21st century approach to education—a plan to rejuvenate learning; a concept where a laptop will replace textbooks, a concept of engaging the students' interest, the goal is to make school a place where the students want to be.

Finally, given the economic profile of the District, increased health services of all kinds are being considered. This includes medical, dental, and mental/behavioral services.

The Oil City system is indeed looking to the future.

The school system also supports local recreation, with playgrounds at the Seventh Street, Smedley Street, and Hasson Heights elementary schools available to students and neighbors.

Private Schools

There are two Catholic schools in Oil City. St. Stephens is an elementary school at 214 Reed Street. Enrollment is listed as just less than 160. Venango Catholic High School is at 1505 West First Street, with an enrollment of approximately 90 students.

Venango Technology Center

The Venango Technology Center is affiliated with seven school districts, including the Oil City School District, East and West Forest School Districts, the Cranberry School District, the Franklin School District, the Titusville School District, and the Valley Grove School District. Current enrollment is 840, and the facility operates from a campus located on Vo-Tech Drive in Oil City. Based upon information from the State Department of Education, it has experienced modest growth over the past few years.

They offer some 14 separate programs to school students who attend. In addition to teaching high school students, the Technology Center has an extensive program for adult education. Adult classes are normally from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and cover a wide range of topics. Their most recent session (spring 2009) had 14 separate entities, ranging from maintenance to computer

software. Healthcare, computer skills, manufacturing, and basic business skills are among the topics covered. For some classes, the resources of the DuBois Business School and the Community College of Allegheny County are used.

Their traditional courses include:

- Health Occupations
- Auto Body
- Automotive Technology
- Building Construction
- CAD Programs
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Arts
- Electronic Technology
- Equipment Operation and Maintenance
- Machine Tools Technology
- Marketing
- Natural Resources
- Welding

DuBois Business College – Oil City Campus

The DuBois Business College is a well-established business school, with its main campus in the City of DuBois. DuBois Business College is accredited and offers students a wide range of tuition assistance. The Oil City location is one of two branch campuses. They offer 18- to 21-month associate degrees as well as 9-, 12-, and 18-month diploma programs.

Its Oil City campus is located on 701 East Third Street. They are housed in the former Grant Street School. This school started its operation in Oil City July of 1996. Sessions consume about 48 weeks per year. Current student enrollment is 60, and school officials relate enrollment generally increases in hard economic times, such as the area is now experiencing. There are eight staff persons.

This facility can accommodate up to 150 students, though practical capacity would be somewhat less. Short-term planned improvements include a new boiler (fall 2009) and a central air conditioning system (spring 2010). Longer-term projects would focus on energy efficiency with new windows the most likely activity. As the school owns the entire former campus of the Grant Street School as well as an additional lot, they do have the capacity to expand.

Clarion University – Venango Campus

With the main campus within 30 miles, students can begin traditional courses at the Venango campus and can either complete their studies here or at the nearby Clarion campus. This facility is unique in two ways. It was the first regional campus in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The second aspect is the fact that when founded some 45 years ago, local leaders raised money to establish the campus.

The Venango campus offers associate, bachelor, masters, and one-year certificate programs. Current enrollment is about 1,000 students, with 750 on campus. Many of the students (about half) are adults, and about the same proportions are part-time students. Both residence and commuter students are accommodated.

There are residence facilities available in an apartment complex across West First Street from the campus. These apartments were originally opened in 2004 with additional units scheduled to open for the fall term. After the new units are opened, 89 students can be accommodated. Future plans include two more structures, for a total student capacity of 130. To date, all funding for the apartments is in place before construction, so they are debt free upon completion.



Venango Campus – Clarion University

The school offers:

- 11 associate degrees
- 3 bachelor degrees
- 2 masters degrees
- 12 one-year certificate programs

In addition, some 90-plus bachelor programs are available at the main campus.

Although the facility maintains a strong traditional academic program, its associate and technical offerings are cutting edge. Often, its associate or technical training leads to possible full degrees. Much of the emphasis of its applied technology and associate degrees is driven by community needs. This is based upon the unique community support which led to this campus. Their School of Nursing and Allied Health is a good example. In that school, students can begin with associate courses—sometimes held at a hospital. Those completing such courses can then pursue completion in the full Bachelor of Science in Nursing and go even on to a master's program.

A parallel program is found in the Department of Applied Technology. Here, there are 21 areas of study. One example for this department is line training for First Energy, an electric utility conglomerate. Successful students can obtain an associate degree but they also can continue school to earn a bachelor's degree.

Wind Energy Technology and Agile Robotics are two new potential programs the school is very excited about.

The school uses traditional on-site classrooms, off-site facilities, and on-line resources in its programs. They have outreach efforts in St. Marys and Ridgway.



The “Pond”

Though some new buildings may be in the future, improved use of current structures is first priority. A new laboratory for the School of Nursing and Allied Health is a good example of this policy. The utilization of off-site resources, such as the Precision Manufacturing Institute in Meadville, is another reason why on-site development can be minimized.

Finally, the “Pond” renovation program must be noted. The on-campus pond is a local landmark. In the mid-1990s, a storm caused extensive siltation in the pond. With a \$1 million-plus project (including extensive community support), the pond has been restored and enhanced as both a community and school resource.

Recreational Resources

Cornplanter Township

Cornplanter Township has no municipal parks, but it is the site of the largest recreational complex in the region. The Oil Creek State Park is located in Cornplanter as well as neighboring Cherry Tree and Oil Creek townships. The park encompasses most of the Oil Creek Valley to the north of Rynd Farm, stretching to the Drake Well Museum complex in Crawford County. Created in the late 1960s, much of the early land acquisition was a result of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Total land area is 7,243 acres. Visitations typically run 150,000 to 170,000 annually. Over the past few years, this has dropped to about 130,000. Park personnel indicate the park will increase its marketing efforts for “day trippers”—those within 60 miles.

The focal point of the park is in Cornplanter at Petroleum Centre. Here is the Park Office, Visitors Center, and a station on the OC&T Railroad. The historic theme for the facility is the fact that it is the home of the oil industry. The valley was the site of an extensive oil boom which followed Drake’s Well in 1859. Oil exploitation continued until the 1870s when local resources dwindled. However, some remnants of those early days remain, providing a historical backdrop for visitors.

The park is committed to its historical heritage. One of the current projects is the restoration of Egbert Farm. The exterior has been stabilized, and there are plans to begin looking at options for the interior. Park management works closely with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission on their preservation and interpretation efforts.

Today, Oil Creek Park’s major attraction is its natural state. The park offers an extensive hiking trail system, camping sites, as well as winter cross country skiing. In addition, Oil Creek itself provides fishing and canoeing opportunities. A paved 9.7-mile bikeway follows an old rail right-of-way from the Drake Well area to Petroleum Centre. It is planned to connect this trail to that in Cornplanter and eventually to the Oil City/Justus Trail system. Another attraction is the OC&T Railroad. They operate tourist passenger trains from June to October each year, with some

special trains in the off season. The line begins at the Titusville Station with stops at Drake's Well and Petroleum Centre, terminating at the Rynd Farm station.

One final note: the park is engaged in a long-term program of plugging old "orphan" oil wells for safety and environmental reasons. Often old tree stumps were used as plugs, and these fail over time. This program is a cooperative one with other State agencies (DEP). Some 50 wells in the southern area of the park are being plugged under a current contract, and the park's Miller Farm area is scheduled next.



A second resource in Cornplanter is the noted boomtown Pithole. Settled in 1865, Pithole was the first oil boomtown, with its population peaking at 15,000. It was, in fact, a borough. With the decline of the oil industry, population dropped sharply. That, in addition to a series of fires, led to the community's eventual demise. Currently, there are no structures remaining from the original settlement. In 1961, the site—some 92 acres—was given to the State Historical and Museum Commission. Since that time, a visitors' center and some interpretive

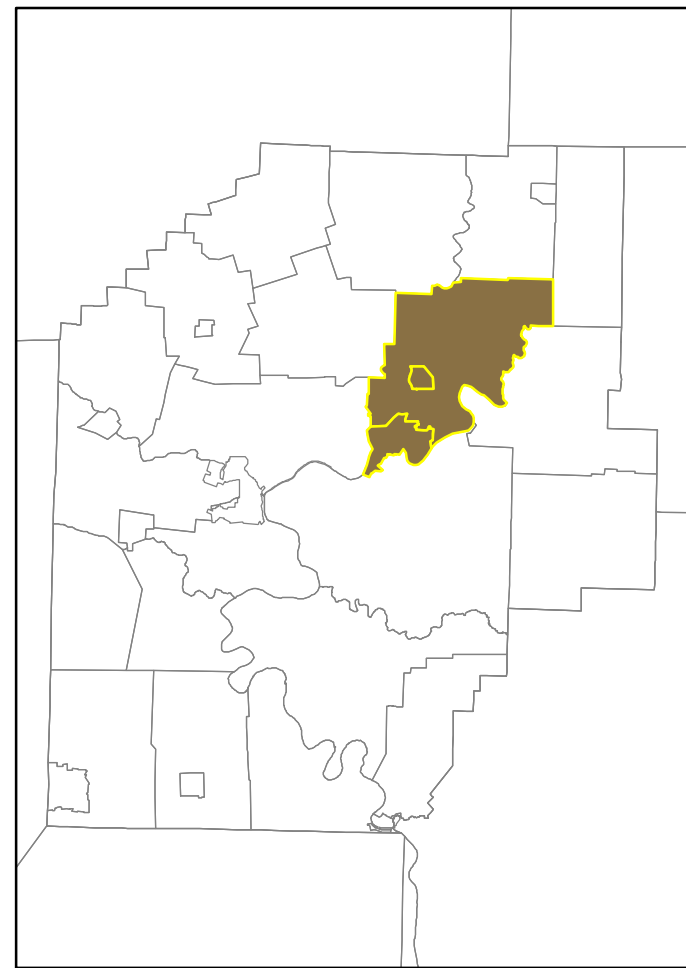
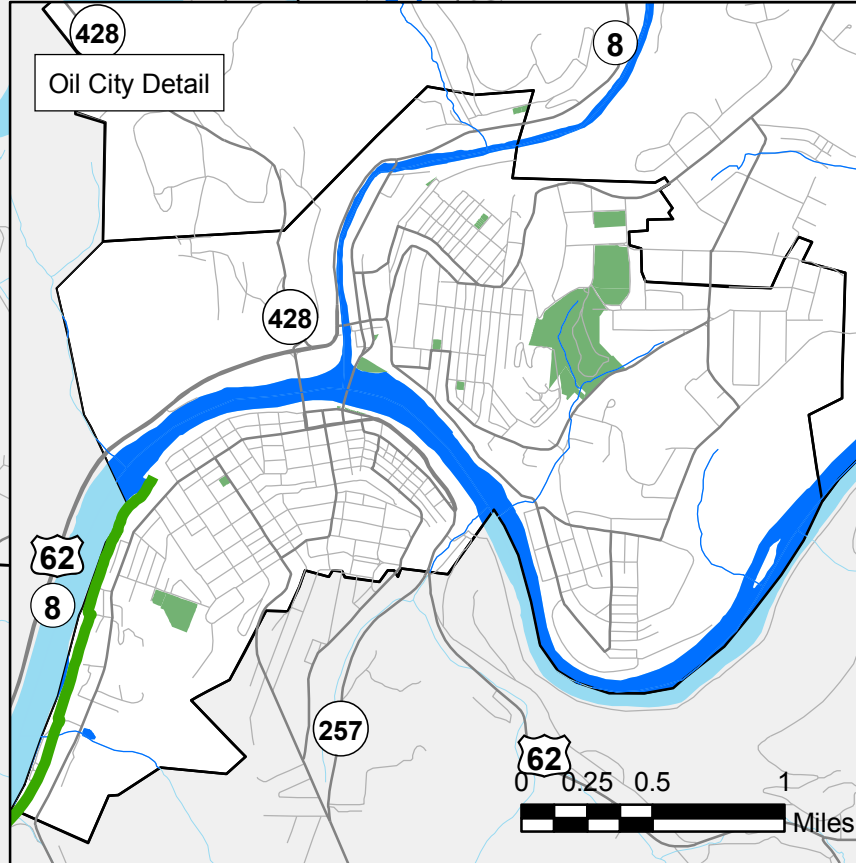
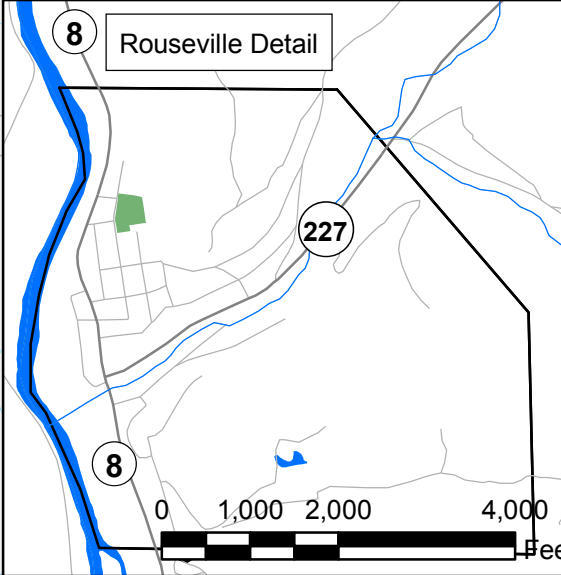
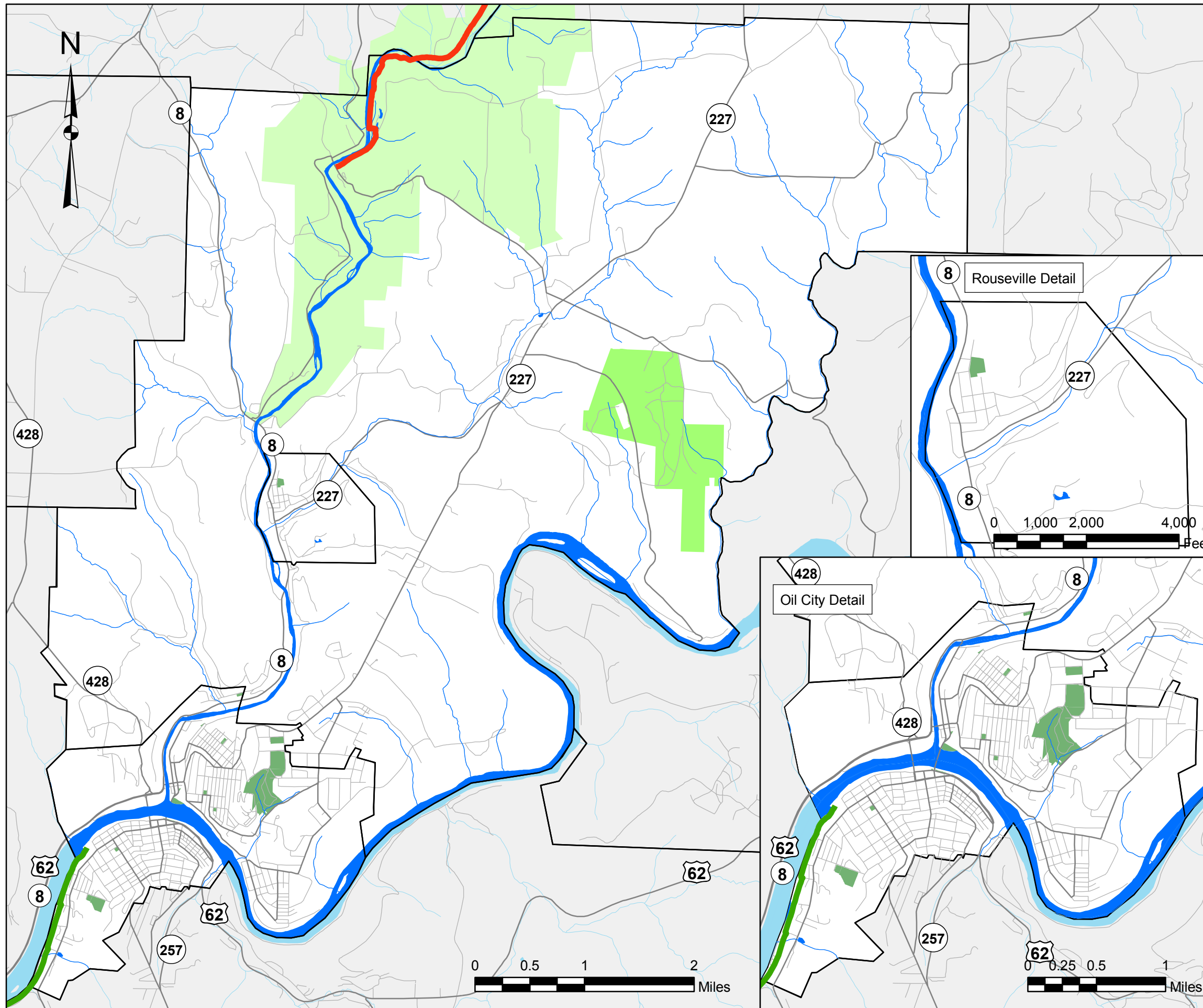
facilities have been constructed. Annual visitations are 3,000 to 4,000 a year. Due to road problems, current visitation is down. Pithole is open during the summer season (June to Labor Day), and volunteers operate the site.

Pithole is operated via the Drake Well Museum. At one time, the property was at risk. It was being considered by the State to be declared "surplus" and could have been sold. However, local volunteers, especially "The Mayor of Pithole," plus the Drake Well staff, have dissuaded the Commission from any sale. Via fund raising and special events, volunteers manage to pay the utility bills and keep the Pithole site viable.

The McClintock Well (off Waitz Road, near Route 8) is also part of the Drake Well holdings. This is the oldest oil well in continual operation in the United States.

Rounding out the outdoor resources of the Township is State Game Land 253. With an area over 665 acres, it provides local hunters with a nearby resource.

There are other public and semi-public facilities in Cornplanter. This includes the Masonic Lodge, the Moose Club, and the Tyred Wheels Museum. The Museum is on Russell Corners Road and features 25 antiques, cars, 5,000 miniature vehicles, and similar automotive memorabilia. It is open on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., from Memorial Day to Labor Day.



Legend

- Oil Creek State Park Trail
- Justus Trail
- Municipal Parks
- Oil Creek State Park
- State Gameland 253

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 12: Public Recreation Facilities**

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Oil City

The City of Oil City has an extensive park system. Their resources range from small neighborhood facilities to those of over 100 acres. A short overview of their facilities follows:

- **Mitchell Avenue Playfield:** This facility contains some 7.93 acres and is located in the residential section of Oil City's "South Side," and appears well used. It is home to three ball fields, a playground, and three tennis courts. When originally viewed, these courts seemed to be little used. However, local tennis players have indicated an interest, and active use of the courts are expected. The playground is a product of the "Land of Laughter" program, similar to the facility on Harriott Street. Overall condition is good to fair, with the exception of the tennis courts, which seem little used and in need of repair.
- **Innis Street Playground:** Located in a dense residential section on Innis Street, it is about one-half acre in size. The playground consists of a hard court basketball area, swings, and a climbing play apparatus with a climbing wall. There is also a picnic table. During the summer, the YMCA often provides this park area with a recreation program for younger children.
- **The Marina:** Situated off Front Street along the Allegheny River, the Marina facility contains about 11 acres. There is a parking area, restrooms, and a river access ramp. The parking area shows signs that trenching has been done and the blacktop has a section of gravel fill. Beyond routine maintenance, the facility appears in good condition.
- **Pierce Avenue Playground:** This facility is located in the Siverly area of the City. It contains a tennis court, play apparatus, a tire swing, swings, and benches. There is a tennis court area, but the court lacks nets and is overgrown. A hard-court basketball area is next to the tennis courts, with two hoops. It appears usable but in rough condition. The biggest issue with Pierce Park is maintenance and access. Located on a hillside, the slope is up to 25% in some areas, making mowing and maintenance difficult. Pierce's secondary access is via Keith Alley, a very narrow road in need of repair, with little area to park. Overall, this park appeared in poor condition and little used. A neighborhood group has indicated a willingness to adopt the park, but no final arrangements have been made.
- **Halyday Playground:** This small facility appears unused and abandoned. It is inconveniently located, with very difficult access and parking. The fencing is in poor condition and the remaining basketball hoop lacks a net.
- **Justus Park:** Justus is literally the Oil City downtown riverfront park. It is along the Allegheny River, just east of the Veteran's Memorial Bridge. There is a band shell,



Mitchell Avenue Playfield

numerous benches, play apparatus, restrooms, and a small shelter. Some statues are also found in the facility. Though close to the downtown and in a busy section of the City, some evidence of vandalism was seen, particularly to the band shell. Creekside extends from the Justus facility as a lineal walk with seats. It ends near the Center Street Bridge.

- **Charlton Street Playground:** Located in the Clapp Farm area, this playground is not currently in use. A blacktop basketball court is found here, but no use is evident. Under its CDBG program, the City does intend to repair the blacktop in 2010. There is a driveway-type access to the facility; the portion near the street is in poor condition.



- **Hasson Park, Ball Fields, Dek Hockey and the Ramage-Hasson Pool:** This impressive facility is certainly the most imposing park complex of the City. Overall, there are about 100 acres here. The lower section is green space, with picnic facilities, walking trails, restrooms, a pavilion, some play areas, and the Rhododendron arboretum. There are various stone grills and steps that are quite old and some in need of repair. Located to the north of that complex are found the ball field and the dek hockey facility as well as skate park. The dek hockey facility has a program operated by the Oil City YMCA, under contract to the City. It uses the former ice hockey rink. They have programs for three age categories: Youth (ages 6 to 12), Scholastic (ages 12 and up), and Adult (ages 18 and over). These programs are operating during the months of April (or May) to October. In addition, there is a “Foot Hockey” program sponsored, in part, by the Pittsburgh Penguins Hockey team. A companion program is the Skate Park. This facility is designed for roller bladders and skate boards. The pool is to the extreme north of the complex.
- **The Ramage-Hasson Public Pool, or the James A. Nelles Pool,** is certainly one of the crown jewels of the Oil City Park system. It is located off Park Avenue, between Traction Street and Summit Street. This pool was fully reconstructed in 2007. About half of the money for this \$1.6 million project was in the form of State grants, or “CDBG” dollars. The balance of funds was secured from local charitable trusts, businesses, and community donations.

The pool is a true modern facility with a dual water slide for older users and a variety of fountains, and water features for the wader. Modern and well kept, it is one of the premiere public pools in the area. The pool is open noon to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and noon to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. There is an adult “lap” swim daily from 11:00 a.m. to noon. The pool’s operation for 2009 is June 6th to August 23rd. Daily admission (2009) is \$4.00, but there are a variety of discounts and season passes available. These range, for residents, from \$60.00 for an individual session pass to \$150.00 for a family pass. A resident includes anyone living in Oil City, Cornplanter, or Cranberry Township. Fees for non-residents are somewhat higher, with the individual

pass at \$75.00 and family passes at \$200.00. An adult lap swim pass is \$25.00. On warm summer days, this is a very popular spot.

In addition to the pool itself, there is a bath house and equipment building. City officials indicate they would like to refurbish the bath house. Though an apparent solid structure, it does show signs of wear.

- The Harriott Avenue Playground: This is a small “Land of Laughter” playground, similar to the Mitchell Street facility. It is about one-half acre in size and is a true playground aimed at younger users. The location is Harriott and Mylan. An outdoor basketball court is part of this facility, located directly behind the playground.
- The School District also supplements local recreational resources. Playgrounds at three schools are open for summer use. The Seventh Street Elementary School also is a YMCA program location.

Rouseville

The Rouseville Park is located off of Second Avenue, on the same complex with the Community Center. The Rouseville Playground consists of play apparatus for climbing, has a slide, merry-go-round, along with a shelter. It is listed as a YMCA summer program park.

The Bike Trails

The study area is quite fortunate to have extensive bike trails. As previously noted, there are 9.7 paved trails from the Drake Well Museum to Petroleum Center. Then, starting at Rynd Farm, it continues along Waitz Road. The plan is to extend this segment along rail trackage to Oil City where it would connect with the Oil City Bike Trail; thence to the extensive Justus-Allegheny Valley tract system. This consists of 32 miles along the Allegheny River. Funds for filling the two-mile gap are available, both for planning/design as well as construction funds via a 2010 Federal earmark.

The primary problem is a three-mile gap from the current trailhead at Petroleum Center to Rynd Farm. Various locations have been studied, with one following the OC&T trackage favored. This is an expensive trail option. Given State Budget problems, this gap may remain for some time. However, modest funds have reportedly been made available, and some construction is expected for the next year.

Oil City Library

The Oil City Library is located at the corner of Central Avenue and Front Street. The structure has been added to since its original construction as a “Carnegie” Library in 1904. Although a department of the City of Oil City, the library is also part of the State system. In 1995, the library was designated by the Commonwealth Libraries to be one of 29 district library centers in the state of Pennsylvania. The Oil Creek District Library Center is the center for the 14 public libraries in the counties of Venango, Clarion, and Jefferson.

The library is open 64 hours a week, with the following hours:

Monday through Wednesday	8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Thursday	8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Friday and Saturday	8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

They have a collection of 103,000 items. Though consisting primarily of books, audio, and video, an extensive periodical collection is also included. Estimated users are 10,500. Library personnel report an increase of use, especially for internet access, since the economy has weakened. They are especially proud of the children's programs.



Physically, the Oil City facility has about 21,000 square feet of usable space. In addition, there are about 10,000 square feet of unused space in the now unused upstairs and the unfinished basement of their newest addition. An engineering study has been completed examining the structure's mechanical and electrical system, focusing on energy efficiency and increasing the public areas.

The principal support from the library is from the City. However, Cornplanter Township, Rouseville Borough, and President Township do contribute on a per capita basis. In Cranberry Township, residents can purchase a "household" card, with reimbursement from the Township.

The library has some immediate needs, as listed below:

- Roof Repair: Currently, a portion of the roof of the original building (a tile system) is leaking and causing damages to second-floor ceilings. Water is also getting to first-floor areas (estimated cost – \$57,000).
- West Front Street: A new ADA compliant ramp is needed (estimated cost – \$100,000).
- Replacement of stairs, Central Avenue entrance (estimated cost – \$29,000).
- Ongoing replacement of computer equipment and public access computers. (Gates Foundation money is expected.)

Final concerns are funding and personnel, and renovating the library building. With an expected cutback in State funding, local support is needed. The library is encouraging per capita support levels of \$5.00 from participating municipalities to meet State guidelines. Library personnel note current support could be incrementally increased at \$.25 increments over a few years to reach the \$5.00 goal. In addition, they are encouraging Cranberry Township to be a per capita supporter.

The second issue is personnel. The library has a staff of 10, with two part-time employees. Some have 30-year's experience, and retirements are expected. The concern is that current pay rates may not attract qualified replacements.

The third issue is a needed renovation of the library building. The last building renovation was done in 1978. Since 1978, there have been many developments, including the addition of new formats such as DVDs, CDs, etc. to the library's collection and the addition of a computer technology to run the library's operations. The Oil City Library Commission engaged Struxures Architecture and Construction (Seneca, Pennsylvania) to provide a building evaluation study of renovating the library building. The study estimates \$1.5 million in renovation costs to the library building to meet the demands for library services in the 21st century.

Museum

The Venango Museum of Art, Science, and Industry is located at 270 Seneca Street in Oil City, in the Beaux Arts Building, once the former post office. It is operated by a 501 C 3 non-profit organization. They operate from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday; Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Admission rates are modest, ranging from \$1.50 to \$4.00. General membership costs vary from \$5.00 to \$100.00. The Museum has a "Black Gold" or "Black Magic" story on how the local discovery of oil has and continues to impact the area, nation, and world. In addition to its "oil" theme, the Museum has a changing exhibit area, a restored Wurlitzer theater organ, and a historic Cord auto.

National Transit Building



Inside the National Transit Building

The National Transit Building was constructed in 1890 for the Standard Oil of Rockefeller fame. In 1978, the building was put on the National Register of Historic of Historic Places. For a time, Ralph Nadar operated a Civic Renewal effort here. He, in turn, gave it to the Oil City Civic Center, Inc. to be used for non-profit organizations. That board still owns the complex and it is responsible for its upkeep with close assistance and some financial aid from the City of Oil City. Later, the structure was home of combined county economic development agencies, now the Oil Regional Alliance (ORA).

At one time, the ORA occupied the entire fourth floor of the structure. However, in 2009, they relocated to their new quarters, one block away. Currently, the facility has public meeting spaces and offices on the first floor. Other floors are devoted to childcare and various endeavors of

the Oil City Arts Council. The most visible functions are two: the ARTS Oil City Program and the Art Gallery.

Oil City Civic Center, Inc.

ARTS Oil City provides artists with low-cost studio space on the second floor of the complex. The purpose is primarily to nurture an arts colony in the City. Most sales, however, are at shows or galleries out of the area. There are 23 artist studios and 4 studio spaces left. Other activities include art education, an art gallery, and special programming. As an adjunct to this program, a local bank offers 100% mortgages to incoming artists in a designated area around the downtown, in a designated "Arts District." However, given the comparative reasonable costs of homes in the

City, many opt for housing outside the district. Program operators point to some one million dollars in mortgages generated since the program's inception.

Oil City YMCA

The Oil City YMCA is located at 7 Petroleum Street on the south side. They have a variety of resources, from their indoor track, locker rooms, as well as a number of specialty areas. The "Y's" programs cover a gamut of activities, from swimming to "coffee and chat." Essentially, this is a membership organization. Current charges range from a monthly youth fee of \$9.50 to \$41.75 for a family. Annual payments are twelve times the monthly fee. There is a joiner fee for all except the "Youth" category.



Oil City YWCA

Located at 109 Central Avenue, this is also a membership organization. Their building consists of meeting rooms, a fitness center, and an auditorium.

Oil City Parking Garage

The Elm-Seneca Parking Garage is located at the corner of Elm and Duncomb streets.

Constructed in 1975, it has approximately 560 parking spaces. In addition to its function as a parking facility, it also provides some limited commercial office space and a drive-through bank facility. Though originally a full-service parking garage, it now uses a combination of parking meters and permit parking. Just recently, in April of 2009, the firm, Carl Walker, did an in-depth analysis of the structure.



According to that report, the structure has a life of 50 to 75 years (2025 to 2050). However, to have this projected lifespan, significant repairs and serious ongoing maintenance are needed.

The minimum short-term budget is \$2,098,784.

Various options would increase costs from \$2.1 million to \$2.5 million. In addition to the structural repairs, the City has just let a \$52,000 contract to repair the elevator.

Public Utilities

The primary public utilities for any community are its water and sewer services. These essential utilities are necessary to both sustain current development and enable new growth. All three municipalities have both public water and sewer services. In Oil City and Rouseville, these essential services are community-wide. In Cornplanter, they are provided in the Grandview/Colonial Village area, the Village of Plumer (water only), McClintock (water only), Dutch Hill and Clapp Farm.

Water Systems

The largest single water system is operated by Oil City. It supplies its own needs as well as providing services to sections in Cornplanter and Cranberry. The Rouseville system has its source in Cornplanter Township, and supplies the Borough as well as the villages of Plumer and McClintock.

The Oil City water system dates back to 1890s. The development of this utility was the result of a typhoid epidemic in 1894.

Oil City draws its water from a series of wells along the Allegheny River located in Cranberry Township at Seneca Farms, a 240-acre property. In 2007, the system served an estimated 11,504 persons. Though its service area is centered in the City, it also serves portions of Cornplanter and Cranberry townships.

The 2007 statistics for the Oil City Water Department were as follows:

Peak Day: 2,919,267 gpd (gallons per day)
 Minimum Day: 1,497,377 gpd
 Average Day: 2,117,119 gpd

Table CF-2 – Water Use – Oil City Water System

User Class	Customer Number	Gallons Per Day	Percent
Domestic	4,069	555,873	26
Commercial	258	131,566	6
Industrial	25	200,918	9
Institutional	23	50,325	2
Bulk Sales	9	416,037	20
Other (City Departments)	30	8,721	0
Unaccounted	–	753,679	36
Total		2,117,119	100
<i>Source: 2007 Annual Report</i>			

As can be seen from Table CF-2, the system is losing about one third of all finished water. City personnel hope to slowly reduce this loss figure to about 20 percent. As part of this program, they have an ongoing leak detection program. This program is twofold. One uses highly sophisticated leak detection equipment, which can literally pinpoint the location of a leak. The second tool is a computer-based software system, SCADA (Supervising Control and Data Acquisition). This allows water system personnel to identify any unusual water usage patterns and isolate where problems (leaks) occur. However, given the overall system age and costs, improvements are incremental.

Due to the City’s hilly terrain, the system must accommodate numerous elevations, which have been divided into five service areas. These, in turn, are serviced by some ten water tanks that are fed by four booster stations. To the left is a picture of the Hydro-Pillar, the tank located at Ridge and Summit.



Name of Water Tank	Capacity
Sage Run	2 tanks at 2 mg (million gallons) each
Hog Back	1 tank at 3 mg
Vo-Tech	2 tanks at 500,000 gallons each
Rich Hill	2 tanks at 400,000 gallons each
Clark Summit	1 tank at 24,000 gallons
West End	1 tank at 400,000 gallons
Ridge	1 tank at 500,000 gallons

Operationally, the water system is dependent on the Water Supply Department and the Public Works Department. Water is drawn from the wells and treated at the Seneca Farms water plant. Water treatment includes chlorination and an additive to control the leeching of leads into the system. The water plant is operated by a foreman and one other employee. They are responsible for the water treatment and the plant, the booster pumps, and the maintenance of the ten water tanks. The distribution system is under the Water Distribution Department, which is part of the City’s Public Works operation. Individual service lines, mains, fire hydrants, as well as curb and valve boxes are under their care.

The system is metered. During the 1990s, Oil City replaced all of its water meters and now the average age of these are only nine years. Even so, a meter replacement program is in place, with 74 new units installed in 2007. There was no physical expansion of the system in 2007.

In addition to serving its own citizens, the City sells bulk water to both Cornplanter and Cranberry Townships.

Cornplanter Connections

Name	Capacity
Charlton	20,000 gpd
Dutch Hill	10,000 gpd
Hasson Heights	250,000 gpd
Average Daily Sales	220,000 gpd

Cranberry Connections:

Name	Capacity
Collins	10,000 gpd
Harold Street*	50,000 gpd
Laurel	3,000 gpd
Sage Run	100,000 gpd
Seneca	500,000 gpd
Woodland Heights	100,000 gpd
Average Daily Sales:	195,000 gpd
*Harold Street—used as a backup for the Sage Run area only.	

Water usage figures (see Table CF-2) are significantly less than the numbers that were reported in the 1998 Plan, when the system was pumping 3,100,000 gpd annually. City officials relate the reduced pumpage can be traced to:

- Customer drop, primarily residential and industrial
- New meters accurately recording usage
- An ongoing leak-detection and repair program

Planned Improvements

Due to the age of the Oil City water system, much of its distribution network is quite old. Some of its pipes were installed over one hundred years ago. Old pipes often leak and are the primary reason for the system loss of about one third of all finished water produced. As a result of this situation, the City has prepared an improvement program to address its most immediate needs. Its recommendations are generalized below:

- **Line Replacement and Enhancement:** Some 14,391 feet of new water main are scheduled. New lines will be primarily 12 inches in size. In all, 11 new projects are planned. The total cost is estimated at \$1,338,200.
- **River/Creek Crossings:** Two river crossings are slated for renewal, and a new Oil Creek crossing is scheduled. Estimated cost is \$159,500.
- **Booster Stations:** Three booster (pump) stations are scheduled for reconstruction. Estimated cost is \$1,075,000.
- **Storage Tanks:** The majority of the system's water storage tanks are scheduled for repair, cleaning, and recoating.

The total project cost is \$5.2 million. This includes engineering, inspection, and a 10% contingency fee.

In addition to this formal improvement program, there are several other improvements that would improve the water system operations. These can be generalized as follows:

- New river crossing at main plant
- Retention tank/wet well for chlorination
- Security fences – install or improve fences at the main plant and around tanks
- Road improvements to main plant
- Refurbish the water plant – larger with added safety features
- Security cameras – various locations
- Access road improvements
- Additional maintenance truck and gear
- New valves – Clark Summit, West End, Hogback
- New SCADA system

Rouseville Borough

Rouseville Borough owns and operates a water system which provides drinking water to its own residents as well as supplying water to two systems in the Township—one for the Village of Plumer and one for McClintockville.

The Borough's water supply is from two locations. One is located north and up-gradient of the Village of Plumer and west of Route 227. The second source is Well No. 5, located east of Route 227, just across from School House Road. Well No. 5 is described by Borough officials as their water system's primary source. Wells Nos. 1 and 2 are shallow (approximately 30 feet). Well No. 5 is at a depth of 110 feet, drilled into the Cuyahoga rock group.

Water quality of the Plumer system is judged good. The most recent Annual Drinking Water Quality Report shows no violations with all tested qualities well below the Maximum Contaminant Level, as set by Federal and State standards. The Borough's water has also been tested for nitrate-nitrogen content and, per a water sample of March 2005; the result was 0.59 mg/l, well below the 5 mg/l standard.

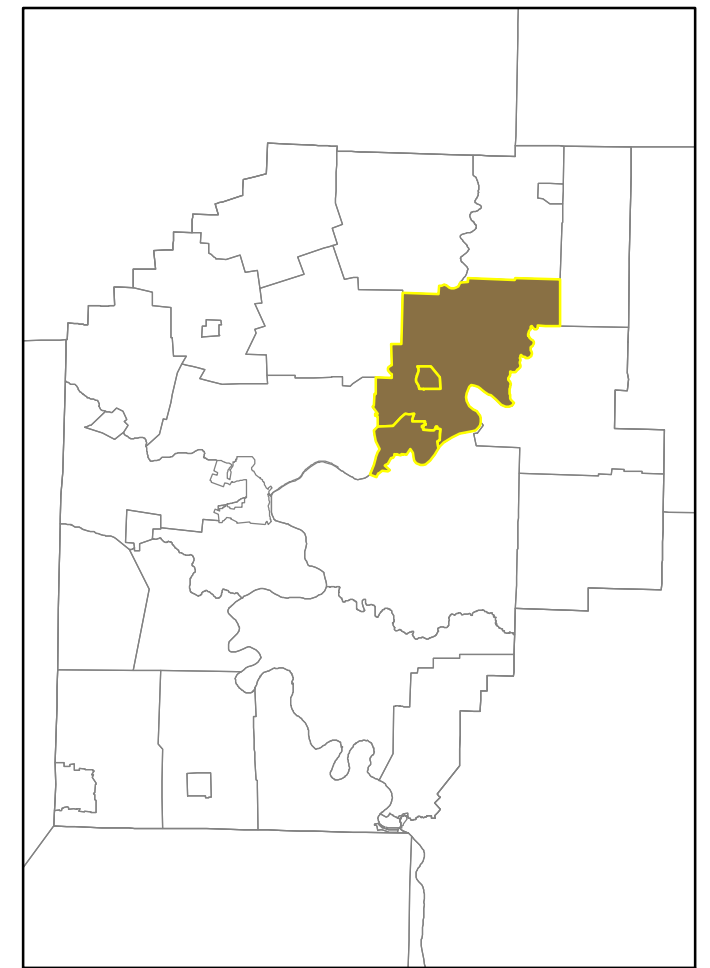
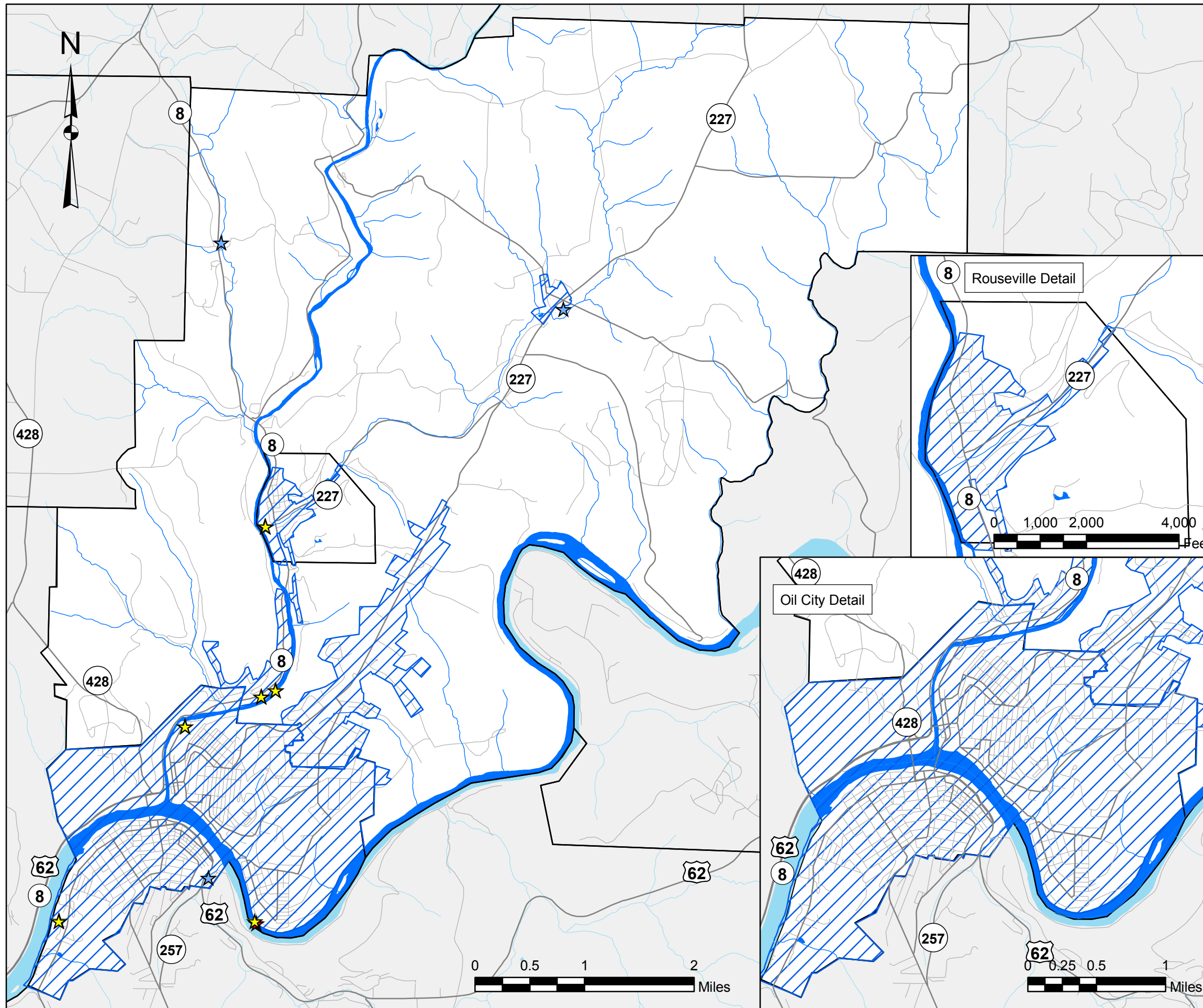
Water is collected for the Rouseville system at the well and fed by gravity or pumped to a small treatment facility in Plumer where the water is aerated and chlorinated. The Rhodes Water Company, which supplies the Plumer area, takes its water at this point. However, most water is then piped to Rouseville for distribution to serve the Borough and the nearby settlement of McClintockville. The system has two storage facilities, a 96,000-gallon tank, and a 30,000-gallon reservoir.

The Borough's primary distribution system is for its own residents. It has approximately 240 customers in the Borough, primarily domestic. As noted, the system sells water bulk to two customers. The Plumer Water Company (Rhodes Company) purchases water at the treatment facility in Plumer for the households in the village (approximately 68 households). The Township also purchases bulk water for McClintockville (9 households) through its own distribution system.

Cornplanter Township

The Township uses both the Rouseville and City of Oil City water systems to supply its users. The Rhodes system which supplies Plummer is described above. Oil City provides water service to other areas in Cornplanter Township. The principal sector is in the Grandview-Hasson Heights area, just north of the City, which includes Colonial Village, Horne Road, Oak Road, and abutting areas. There are 675 customers in this service region. Oil City also supplies water to Clapp Farm (27 users) and Dutch Hill (11 customers).

Although the Township controls the system, day-to-day maintenance services are provided by the Oil City Public Works Department for Cornplanter, as requested. For its services, the City bills Cornplanter Township for employee hours, and materials. Water testing, however, is done by the Township, with Stewart Laboratories preparing the required analysis reports.



Legend

- ★ Ground Water Withdrawal
- ★ Interconnection
- ★ Surface Water Withdrawal
- ▨ Public Water Service Area

Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 13: Public Water Service

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Sanitary Sewer Systems

There are two primary sewer systems within the study area—those of Oil City and Rouseville. Areas within Cornplanter which have public sewers are tributary to the Oil City system.

The Oil City system is comprised of some 70-plus miles of sewer lines, sanitary as well as combined sewers (sanitary sewers that also function as stormwater drains). The system is connected to collection systems both in Cornplanter and Cranberry townships. The City maintains its lines as well as those in Cornplanter.

There are five pump stations within the Oil City system. The primary ones are Northside, Southside, and Oliver Manor. Smaller pump stations include Colbert and Moran. Moran just went on line in 2007 to remediate a direct sewage flow into the Allegheny River.

Name	Capacity
North Side	468,000 gpd
Southside	200,000 gpd
Oliver Manor	115,000 gpd
Colbert	151,200 gpd
Moran*	

**Went on line in 2007*



North Side Pump Station

All sewerage is transported to the City's treatment plant. Located on the south bank of the Allegheny River, the plant now has a practical capacity of 11 mgd, up from its prior hydraulic limit of 4 mgd. The treatment plant could handle wet weather surges to 12.5 mgd. Its current limitation is due to the capacity of its chlorine contact capacity. The organic capacity is 5,542 ppd, with loading well below that level. The plant upgrade took place in 2008 as a result of a Consent Order and Agreement between the City and DEP dating from 1996. That order was issued due to wet weather overflows of the plant.

In accordance with its agreement with DEP, the

City completed a new Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan. After acceptance by the State of the Act 537 Plan, Oil City embarked on a three-phase remedial program.

The plant currently has a staff of six operators, although a seventh person is budgeted. There is also a summer employee at the sewer treatment plant. Plant personnel are responsible for the collection system's pump stations and interceptor, as well as plant operation.

The City Public Works Department maintains the balance of the collection system. Similar with the water system, it also provides services to Cornplanter, as requested, with billing based upon crew hours and material.

As is the case with its water lines, much of the City collection system is old, with cracked or broken pipe, bad joints, and similar problems. However, here the problem is water entering the

system rather than leakage from the system. Known as I&I (infiltration and inflow), this extra water enters through old cracked sewer pipe and joints (groundwater infiltration) as well as stormwater directly entering either, via the combined portion of the collection system, by parking lot drains, or roof drains (inflow). During heavy rains, or snow melt, this extra water would overload the plant.

As noted above the City completed a new Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan. Once accepted by DEP, the plan outlined a three-step process. Phase 1 was to increase the capacity of the sewer treatment plant so it would have the ability to handle these peak flows. Phase 1 was completed in 2008 at a cost of about \$4.25 million.

A secondary consequence of the hydraulic overloading of the system is a series of overflows. These allowed untreated sewage to enter the Allegheny or Oil Creek via a system of combined sewer overflows (CSOs). Currently, there are 16 CSOs in the system. They are the target of the Phase 2 project. These facilities will be rebuilt to direct more waste water to the plant and capture floating debris. Also, two of the CSOs will be combined. That project is designed, and construction is expected to be completed in 2009.

The overall system goal is to treat 85% of all water entering the system. This includes wastewater as well as any I&I from any source. Once the 85% goal is reached, this would bring the Oil City system into compliance with State DEP and Federal EPA standards.

Phase 3 of the plan (scheduled for 2010) will monitor the system to determine whether the new plant and reconfigured CSOs have reached the 85% treatment goal. If it does, the system will then follow a program of operation and maintenance with repairs as needed. However, if the 85% level is not achieved, further work will be required.

Though not formally part of the Act 537 project list, the wastewater treatment plant does have additional needs. Grinders are needed for the digester, belt press, and pump station (\$25,000 total). A flow meter is needed for Hogs Hollow. Finally, a pickup maintenance truck with a plow and lift are also needed.

Rouseville Borough

The Borough of Rouseville owns and operates its own sewer collection and treatment system. The sewer plant was built in 1963 and is in need of repair or replacement.

The plant is on Route 8, just south of the Borough, in Cornplanter Township. Raw sewage flows by gravity to a pump station at the treatment plant. It is then pumped through a grit separation unit and then into one of two aeration basins. After treatment, it is processed through two final clarifiers, where sludge is extracted. Effluent is treated by chlorine before discharge into Oil City. Sludge residual is hauled to the Franklin sewer treatment plant.

This plant has a permitted hydraulic capacity of 240,000 gallons per day and a rated organic loading of 204 pounds BOD⁵/day. According to its most recent Chapter 94 Report, the plant is working within both its hydraulic and organic loading parameters. However, the plant is now over 40 years old and is expensive to operate, primarily due to electric and personnel costs. The

Borough recently completed a special Act 537 Plan which recommends a new plant using Sequencing Batch Reactors. Cost for the new plant is estimated at \$1.7 million.

It must be noted that Rouseville has not only lost population over the past decades, but also its major industry, the Pennzoil Refinery, has closed and has been dismantled. Its former real estate holdings were turned over to the Borough, and new industries are expected.

The Borough's collection system is primarily composed of vitreous clay pipe with mortared joints. As such, there are infiltration issues. Over the years, the Borough has periodically replaced some of its older sewer lines with new PVC, reducing groundwater infiltration into the system. And, the proposed project does include some additional line replacements. Though some infiltration will continue, the new plant will have sufficient capacity to treat projected flows.

Currently the Act 537 Plan is under review by DEP. The Borough has been asked by DEP to compare the cost of the new plant with the cost of transporting its wastewater to the Oil City treatment plant, via a proposed line in Cornplanter Township along Route 8. That analysis has been completed and the recommended option remains the rebuilding of the Rouseville Plan.

Cornplanter Township

The sanitary sewer collection system of Cornplanter Township is focused in the Grandview Road and Colonial Village area. It extends along Grandview Road to the Golden Living Center. Much



Golden Living Center

of this system was installed during the 1960s and 1970s to accommodate residential development. Sewer lines are a combination of 8-inch and 10-inch diameter AC, VCP, and PVC pipe with the 4-inch force main to the nursing home. There are a total of eight pump stations within this collection area. The Cornplanter system connects to the Oil City system within the Hasson Heights area. Some 579 customers are served.

In addition to the Grandview area, there are two other sewer connections in the Township. One is on Dutch Hill and the other in Clapp Farm. Both are tributary to the Oil City system.

As is the case of the water supply, the Oil City Public Works Department is contracted by the Township to provide maintenance for its sanitary sewer collection system on an as needed and requested basis.

Special Note: Currently, at least two of the systems (Oil City and Cornplanter) are connected, as Oil City provides treatment. In the preparation of its 537 Plan, the City did not anticipate additional flow from Rouseville. Oil City has also been informed that Cranberry Township may wish to send more wastewater. This presents a potential problem. All system modeling to achieve the EPA CSO "85%" treatment level did not include these flows. The issue is: Can the transport system (the pipes) accept these additional loads and still keep the Oil City system at the 85% goal. At this time, no one knows.

Public Works

Cornplanter Township

Overall, Cornplanter has six employees. Two, the Secretary and Treasurer, work in the office; the other four are part of the Public Works Department. Duties include roads, drainage, and miscellaneous responsibilities. And, although the Oil City Public Works Department does routine maintenance and repair to the water and sewer system, the Township does the meter reading and water testing.

Oil City

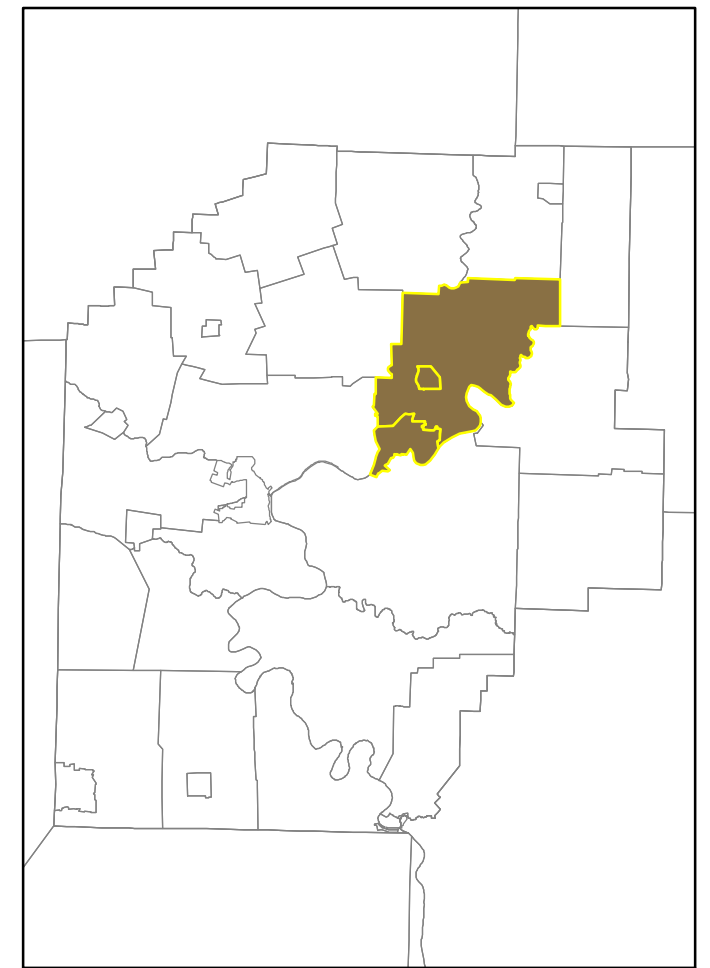
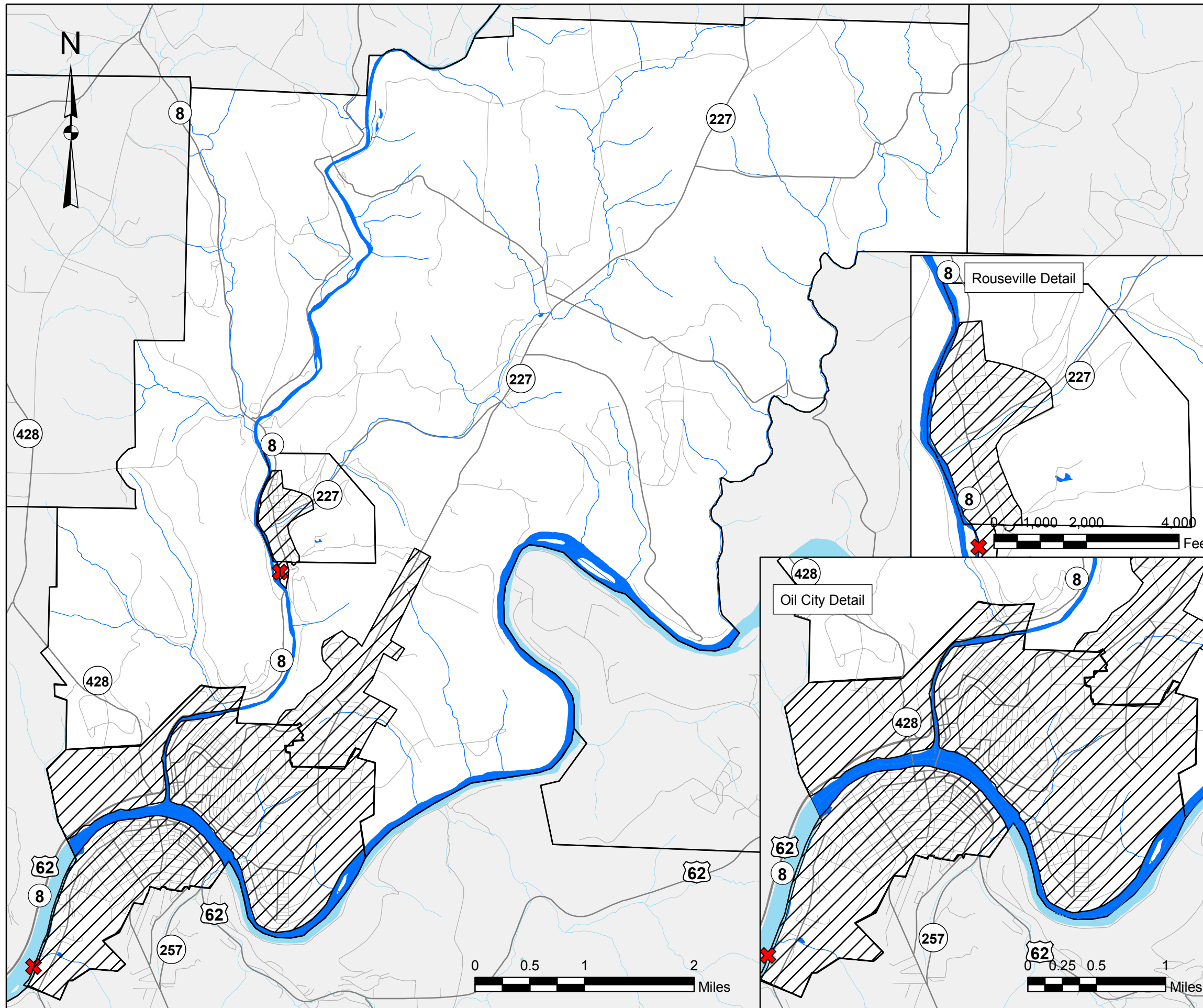
The duties of the Oil City Public Works Department relative to water and sewer are covered elsewhere. In addition, they:

- Maintain all City parks and operate the pool
- Maintain and plow 76 miles of road (64 paved and 12 unpaved)
- Remodeling, repairs, plumbing, and electrical repairs for all City buildings
- Maintain City-owned vehicles (over 50)

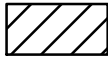

In addition to the ten regular employees, the City does add summer help for mowing and the pool.

Rouseville

The mayor of Rouseville also acts as its public works foreman. He and a second worker do most of the smaller public improvements needed in the Borough.



Legend

-  Sewage System Coverage
-  Waste Water Treatment Plant

Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 14: Sewer System

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Chapter 6 – Transportation



Transportation



One of the hallmarks of the current economic and social life of this country is convenient transportation. A ubiquitous road system, regional airports, and a re-emerging railroad network all are important to the study area. Only water transportation is lacking locally. This section of the Plan examines that network.

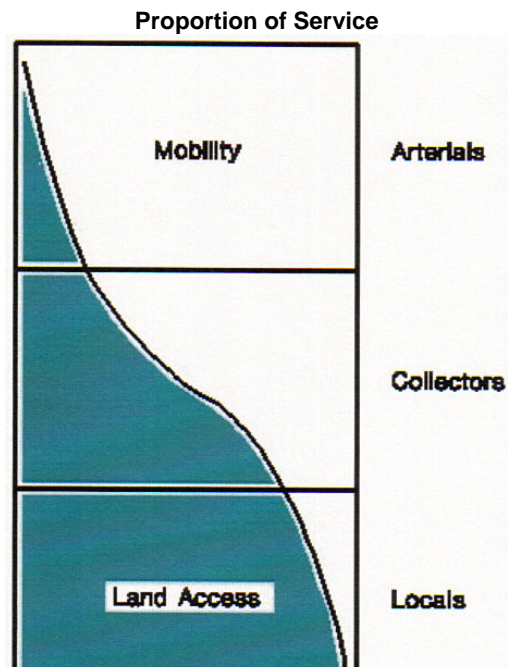
Roads and Highways

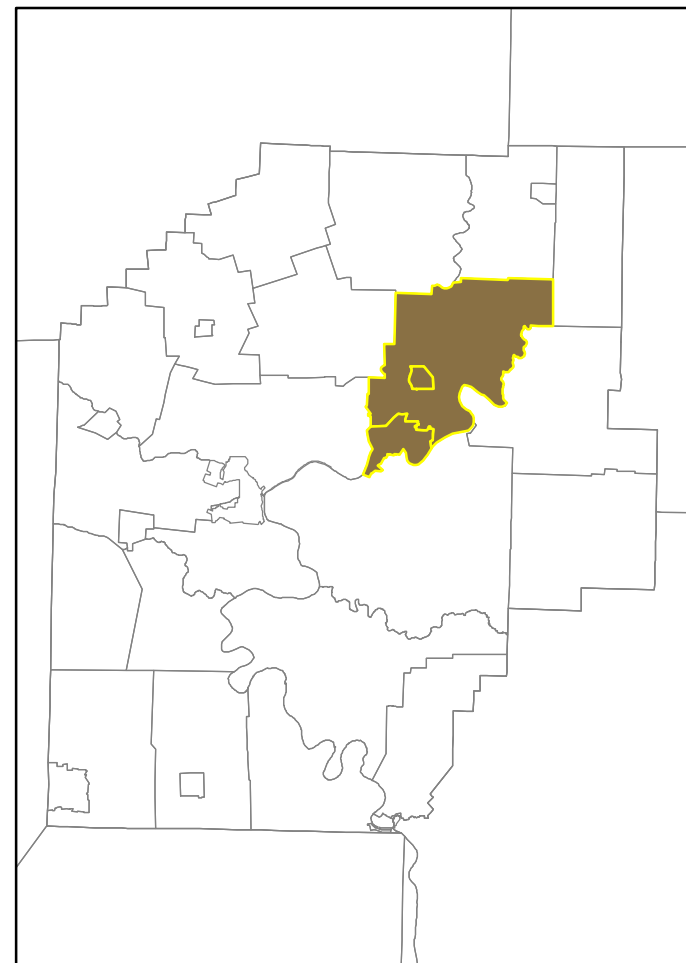
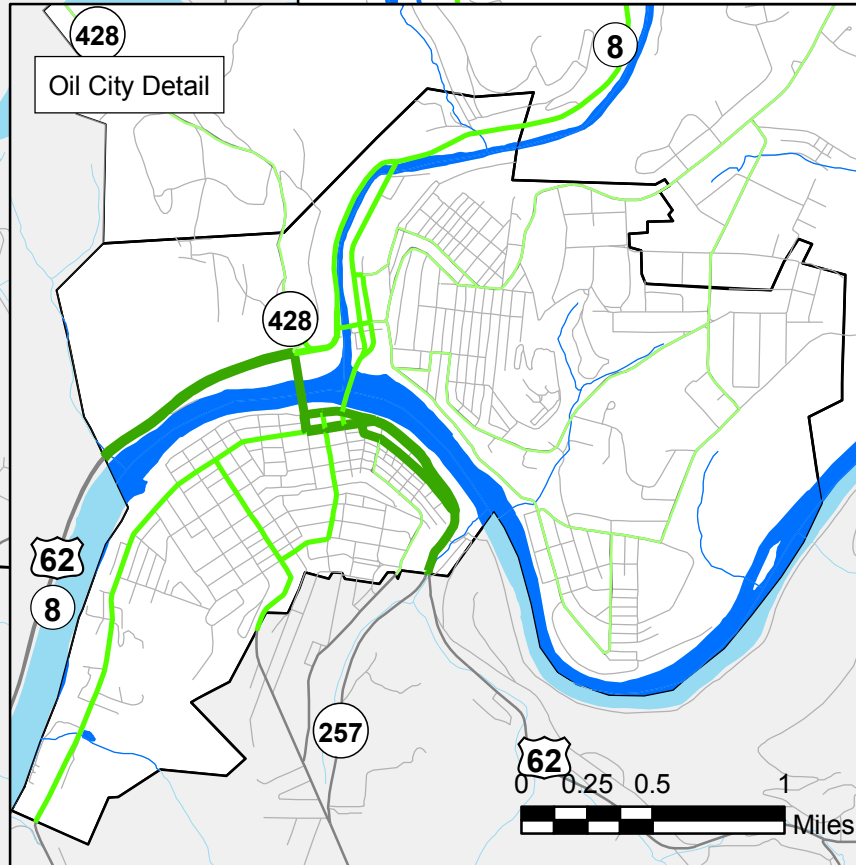
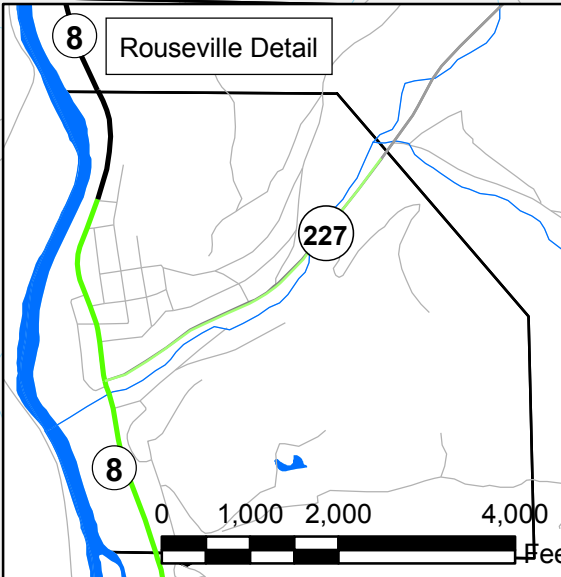
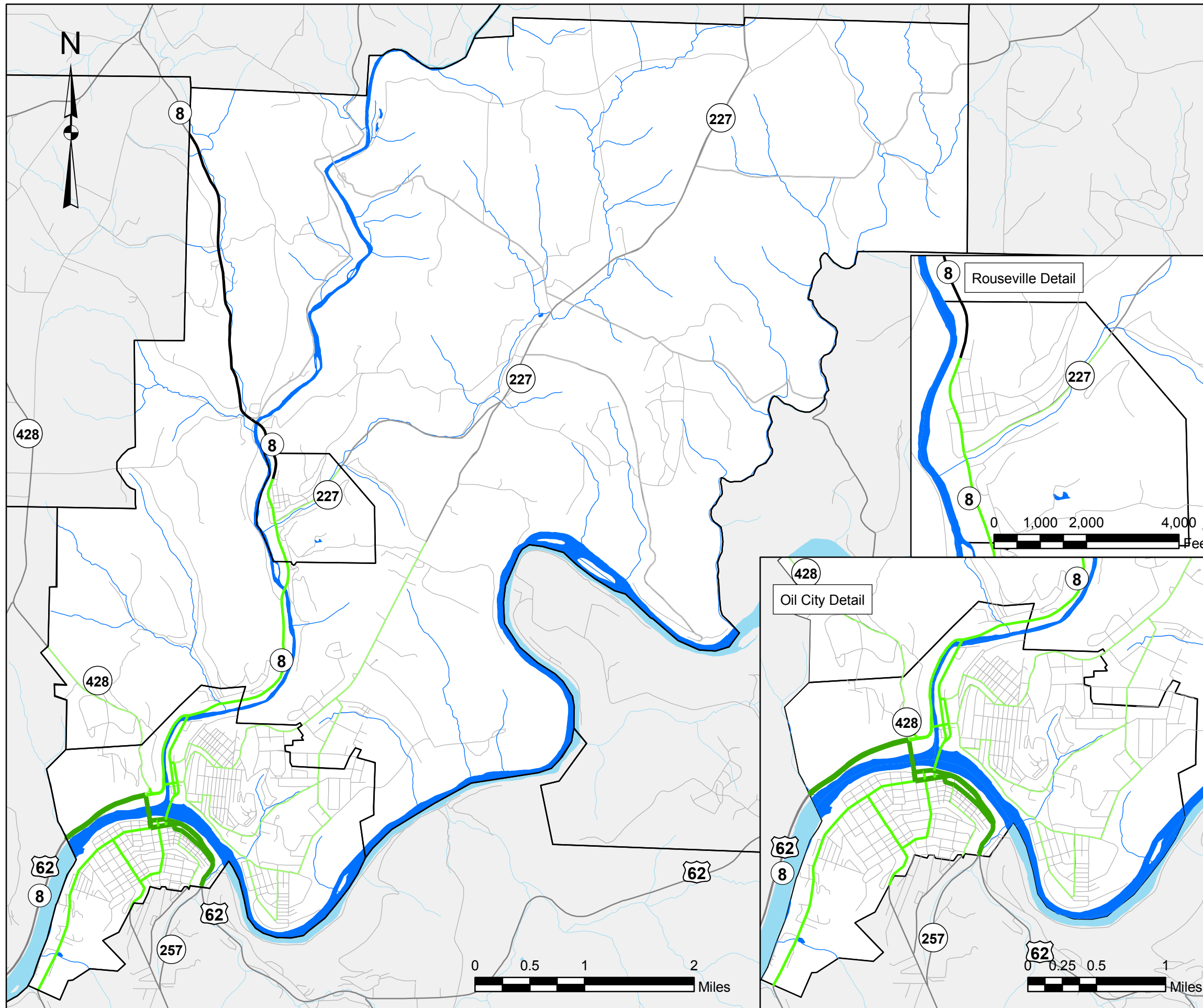
This element of the surface transportation network comprises the local and State road system. Within the Northern Venango County Region, there are approximately 170 miles of roads.

Transportation planners have long divided the road system into functional categories. These categories explain the purpose of roads. Generally, they are related to two characteristics: movement and access.

There are three overall classes of roads: arterials, collectors, and local. Their names are generally indicative of function. The “higher” class of roads is designed to carry larger volumes of traffic over longer distances. These are the various arterial roads. Next are the collectors. Though they may see hefty volumes of traffic, their function is more short range. Generally, they either “collect” traffic from local roads to arterials or to connect smaller developments. Finally, there are local roads. Though essential to the road network, they are less concerned for vehicle transport than for access to individual properties. This discussion is not purely academic, but also relates to road funding. Generally, projects for arterial and major collectors are funded. Consequently, road classification is important.

Relationship of Functionally Classified Systems in Serving Traffic Mobility and Land Access





Legend

Federal Functional Classification

- Rural Minor Arterial
- Rural Major Collector
- Rural Minor Collector
- Rural Local Road
- Urban Principal Arterial
- Urban Minor Arterial
- Urban Major Collector

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 15: Federal Functional
Classification**

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

Transportation Planning Process

The primary source of funds to improve the surface transportation system is via Federal (USDOT) funds. Normally, they supply about 80% of project costs, although this formula can vary. These funds supply the dollars used for major projects in the area; the balance is normally made up by the State (PennDOT). Certain local bridges and roads sometimes are also in this mixture with a municipal match.



The primary planning process for funds coming from the Federal/State sources is set forth by a series of laws and consequent re-enactment over the past years. The acronyms are numerous, but the process can be summarized as follows:

- Projects are suggested, nominated, etc. by local communities to individual county planning agencies. Along with roads and highways, airports, rail lines, transit, and even trails can also be involved.
- Under the auspices of the regional planning mechanism (Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission), a “Rural Planning Organization (or RPO), project lists are developed. This is done with the District PennDOT office in Oil City.
- The process is budget-constrained. This leads to rounds of processing and compromise locally and with the Harrisburg office of PennDOT—even the Federal Highway Administration is involved.
- This result is two basic documents. The first is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the list of projects to be accomplished over a 5-year period. The second is the Long-Range Transportation Plan. That plan has a 25-year horizon. Non-highway transportation, including rail and transit, are included in this process.

Current TIP Projects

As noted above, the “TIP” process has two characteristics: it is ongoing and it is budgetarily constrained. That constraint has become more acute in recent years. According to a recent release, the Federal Highway Trust Fund currently has a \$3.2 billion deficit and PennDOT is facing a “funding pinch.”

The current TIP lists the following projects:

- Waitz Road Bridge* (Cornplanter Township) and Bankson Road Bridge (Cornplanter): To be let in 2010.
- Sportsman Curve Project – Route 8: Design is authorized; construction not schedule yet.

- Route 8, Cornplanter Run: This is a small bridge near the intersection with Union Street. Estimated let date is 2011.
- Route 8 Bypass Wall: Let April of 2009 to repair the retaining wall along the Route 8 bypass in Oil City.
- Route 227 – Bridge over Cherry Run in Cornplanter Township: designed and bid April 2009.
- Petroleum Center Bridge (SR 1004): This is on the TIP, but no let dates have been set.
- McClintock Bridge on Route 8 (Cornplanter, just below Rouseville*): Due to be let 2011.
- Route 8 Bridge over Kane Run: Let June 2009.
- Oil City, Rynd Farm Trail: This is a Federal “earmark.” Design is underway. Will connect the Waitz Road bike trail section with Oil City.
- Railroad: Bridge rehab and construction. (No details known.)
- Transit: Buses, shelters, and signage.



Route 8 Bypass Wall

A second State planning process is via the County PennDOT maintenance operation, which programs road and bridge maintenance projects.

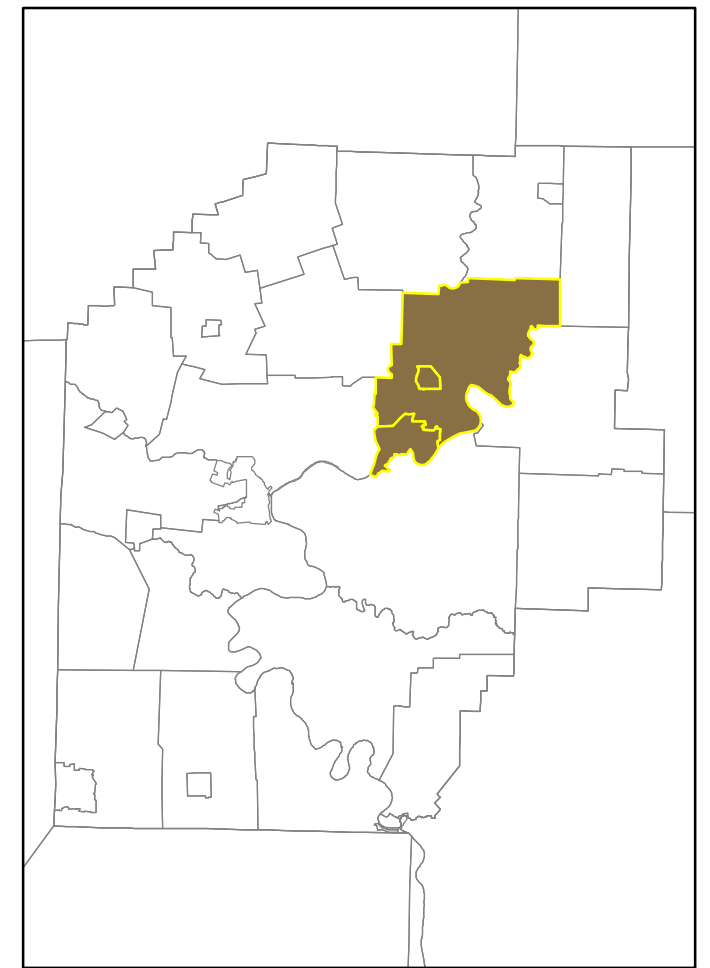
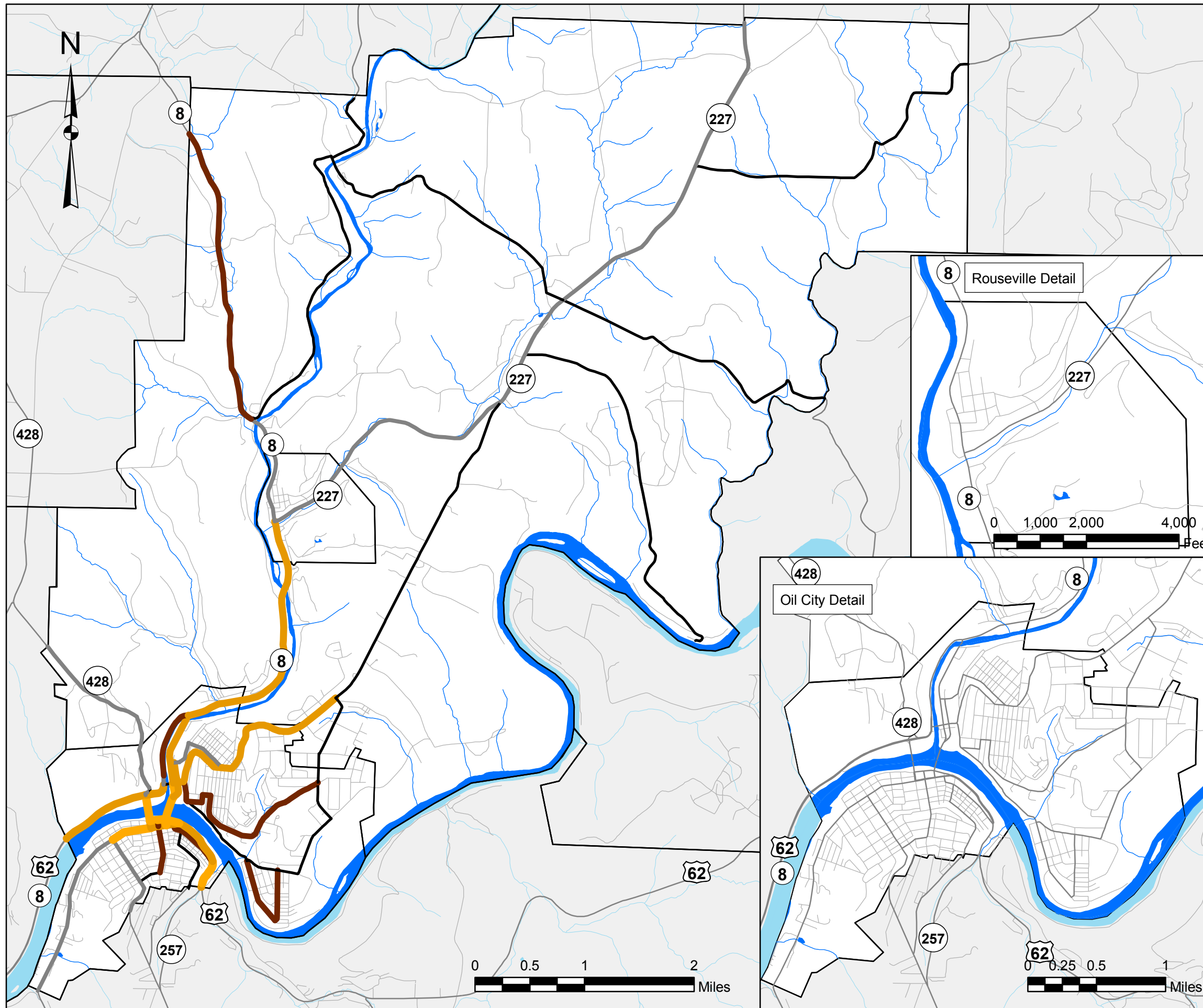
This planning process is ongoing, with two-year cycles. The 2009 update is now underway.

Of course, local roads, owned and maintained by municipalities, have maintenance or construction priorities set locally. They are constrained by local resources and the local share of Liquid Fuels funds.

Traffic Volumes

In terms of traffic volume, the State road system is the most important. Their classification is shown on the map “Highway Functional Classification.” The highest road classifications are Interstate or “Freeway” arterials. The nearest example would be I-80. However, there are important arterials locally.

- Route 8: From the Sugarcreek Borough line to Petroleum, this highway is an Urban Principal Arterial. North of Petroleum it is classified as an Urban/Rural Minor Arterial.
- Route 62: Where it shares cartway with Route 8 is an Urban Major Arterial. It keeps that designation until it exits into Cranberry Township.

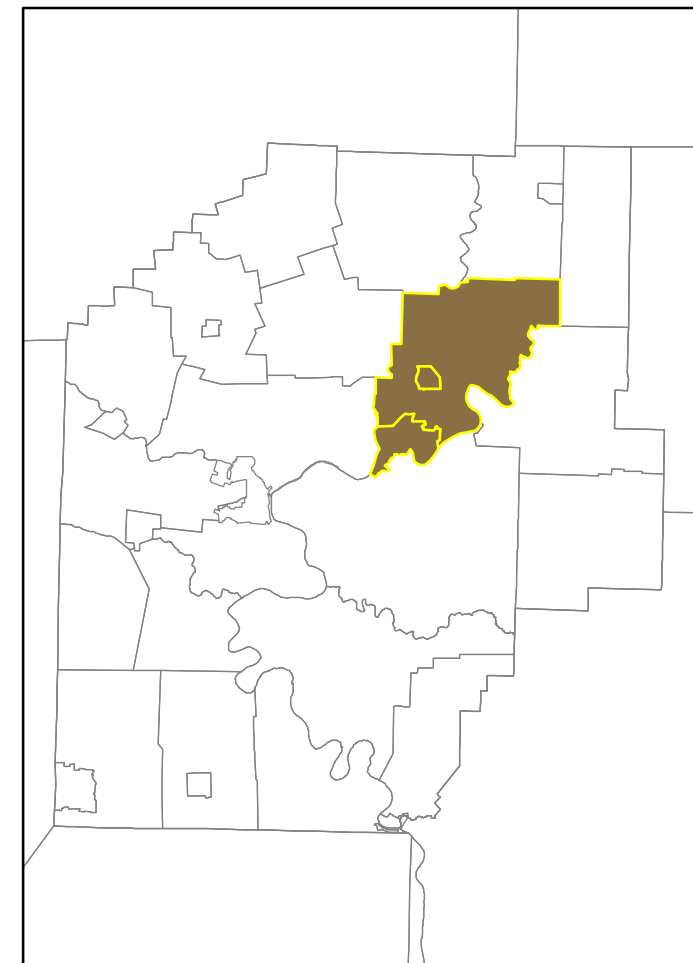
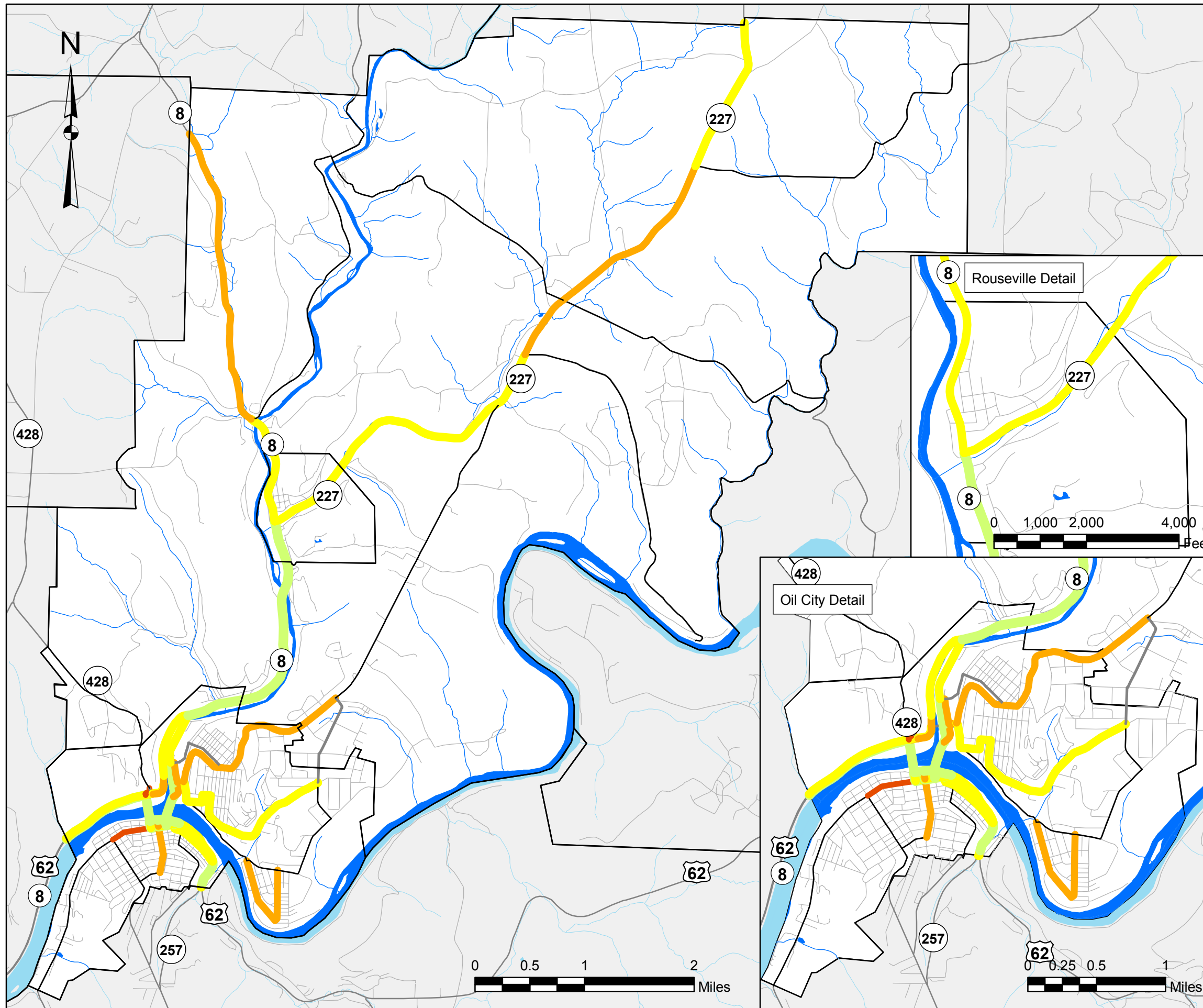


Legend

- Annual Average Daily Traffic**
- Up to 1,500 Vehicles per Day
 - 1,501 - 3,000 Vehicles per Day
 - 3,001 - 4,500 Vehicles per Day
 - 4,501 - 7,500 Vehicles per Day
 - 7,501 - 15,000 Vehicles per Day

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 16: Annual Average Daily Traffic**

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983



Legend

Average Daily Truck Traffic

- Up to 50 Trucks Per Day
- 51 - 100 Trucks Per Day
- 101 - 100 Trucks Per Day
- 101 - 150 Trucks Per Day
- 151 - 250 Trucks Per Day
- 251 - 500 Trucks Per Day
- 501 - 2000 Trucks Per Day

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 17: Average Daily Truck
Traffic (ADTT)**

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

- Other Minor Arterials are:
 - West First Street (SR 3025)
 - Innis Street (SR 2027)
 - Route 8 (Spruce Street)
- Other State Routes, either SRs or Traffic Routes, such as Route 227, are classified as Collectors

Accidents

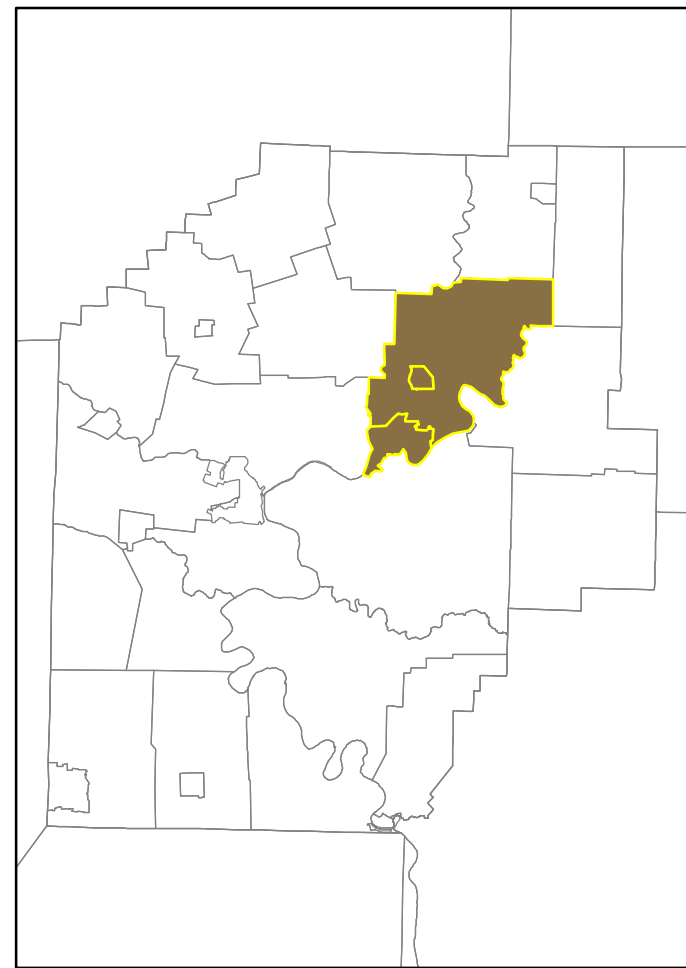
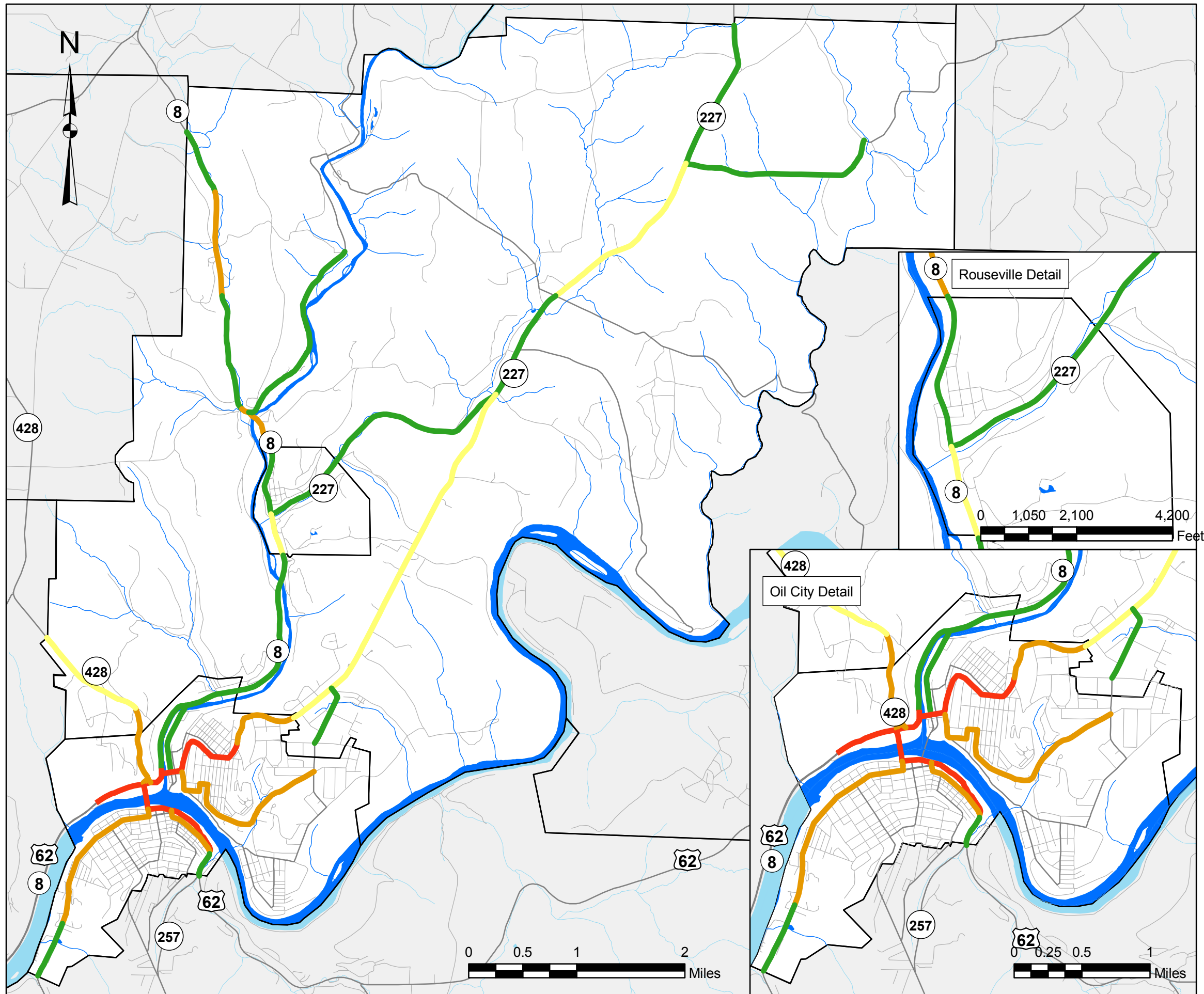
The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation provides accident data in a generalized fashion. Based on their information, some generalizations can be made. These are based on reportable crashes, 2004 through 2008, a five-year period. The crash incidence coding is shown on the accompanying maps. They can be summarized as follows:

Oil City (see map)

- High Accident Roads (12 crashes or more)
 - Route 8 from the City's west line to the intersection at Center Street
 - Petroleum Street/Route 62 from Route 8 to Pumphouse Road (*Note: Only the northbound lane of the divided portion of the highway*)
 - Center/Plummer corridor from Route 8 to Merrit Street
 - Innis Street, from First south to the Cranberry line
- Medium Crash Rating (7 to 11 crashes)
 - Route 428/Halyday Road
 - West First Street from Petroleum to Mineral Street
 - Plummer/Grandview from Merrit to the Cornplanter line
 - East Bissell from Harriott to Crestview
 - Route 62, split road southbound (entire length)
- Low Crash Rating (1 to 6 crashes)
 - Route 8 from Cornplanter to Center (via the "Bypass")
 - Route 8, Business (Seneca Street), White Bridge to Center
 - Spring to Graff and Harriott to Bissell
 - Route 62 from Pumphouse Road to the Cranberry Township line

Cornplanter Township (see map)

- High Rating (8 or more crashes)
 - Route 8, north of Rynd Farm
 - Route 428 from Route 8 to Lawrence Drive



Legend

- Accident Rate**
- Very Low
 - Below Average
 - Above Average
 - Very High

**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Map 18: Accidents on Major Roads**

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

- Medium Rating (4 to 7 crashes)
 - Route 8, from Waitz Road to the Oil City line
 - Route 8, Rouseville to Wykle
 - Grandview near the entire length from the “Y” to the Oil City line
 - Route 428, Sugarcreek Borough line, south to Lawrence Drive
- Low Rating (1 to 3 crashes)
 - Route 427 at Grandview “Y” and isolated locations
 - Route 8, from high accident stretch to Cherrytree line
 - Oak Road from Grandview to the Oil City line
 - Portions of Eagle Rock

Rouseville (see map)

- High Rating (4 to 7 crashes)
 - Route 8, from the Route 227 intersection to the southern boundary
- Medium to Low Rating (1 to 3 crashes)
 - Route 8 south of Route 227 to the northern boundary

Railroads

The study area is served by two railroads. From the Rynd Farm station north to Titusville is the 17-mile Oil Creek and Titusville Lines (OCTL). This is a short-haul rail which traffics in hardwood lumber, plastic resins, sand, petroleum wax, and fertilizer. This short line has an interconnect with the Western New York and Pennsylvania (WNYP) Railroad at Rynd Farm/Rouseville. In turn, the WNYP rail line connects to the Norfolk and Southern Railroad at the Meadville yards. That service has interconnects with Canadian Pacific, CSX and the Genesee, and Wyoming at various other locations on their line. Interconnects allow local users wide access to the national rail system.

The Oil City and Titusville Railroad (OC&TRR) also uses this track. It is a tourist railroad operating primarily in the summer months, up to October. The OCTL is the designated line operator running its freight operation, maintaining the right-of-way, and trip-leasing the engines to pull the OC&TRR passenger-excursion trains. Current ticket prices on the OC&TRR range from \$11.00 to \$17.00, with various discount options available. The fall foliage time is a particular busy time for the OC&TRR. Stations are located at Rynd Farm, Petroleum Centre, the Drake Well Museum, and in Titusville.



South Side Tracks

The Venango Bus



This is a transit operation of Venango County funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The primary routes are in Franklin and Oil City, with extensions into nearby points such as UPMC, Reno, the Cranberry Mall, and Pinoak Village.

In Oil City, services start at about 8:00 a.m. and last until about 5:00 p.m. Service head time (time between buses at a stop) are one hour. Principal stops in Oil City are:

- Central Avenue and Front Street
- Venango Campus (Clarion University)
- Giant Eagle parking lot
- Siverly
- Vo-Tech
- County Services Building

Service on Saturday starts one hour later. There is no Sunday service or on major holidays (New Year's, Christmas, etc.).

Rates for adults are \$1.50, children (ages 6 to 11) are \$.75, and senior citizens with a transit pass can ride free from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and all day Saturdays.

Beyond the Venango buses is the Demand Response system. Like the bus system, this service relies on State funding. Operated, under contract from the County, by Baker Transportation of Oil City, it primarily serves older, disabled, or medically dependent persons. Generally, a rider calls and is picked up by a van. The rides are primarily for medical or shopping purposes. Those eligible do not pay for this service. Persons who are not eligible for assisted rides can ride at full fare, but few take that option. Baker relates that rides must be scheduled at least two working days in advance.

Air

The Venango Regional Airport is the nearest commercial airport. It is served by Gulfstream International Airlines, with connections from Cleveland. An option for private pilots would be the Titusville Airport in Cherrytree Township.

Chapter 7 – The Economy



The Economy



SMS Millcraft – Oil City Plant

Economic Characteristics from the Census

The Census is completed every ten years. Consequently, then next one is due April 2010—about a year away. That means the data of the last Report is now at least nine years old. However, for many economic elements, it is even more dated as the Census requests income information from the prior year. Hence, Census 2000 uses 1999 income data. As a consequence, this element of the background report will only focus on the highlights of census economic information.

Most reports that measure the comparative prosperity of communities focus on the median household income. These figures also are often used by many government programs.

Table E-1: Median Households, 1990 – Compared to 2000

Municipality	1990	2000	Change	Adjusted Change*
Cornplanter	27,391	36,066	+\$8,675	-\$735
Oil City	20,411	29,060	+\$8,649	+\$637
Rouseville	23,380	22,917	-\$463	-\$8,032

**See text
Source: 1990 and 2000 Census Report; CPI Inflation Calculator, Bureau of Labor Statistics*

To compare income figures from the two Census figures, two approaches were used. The first is a simple arithmetic approach measuring the difference between the two figures. For the “Adjusted Change,” the 1990 Census data (1989 income) was “inflated” using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) “inflator” to 1999.

As can be seen, Cornplanter’s adjusted income level dropped just a little; in Oil City, households actually saw an appreciable increase of \$1,637. However, Rouseville experienced a significant loss. The data for Rouseville, however, must be taken with the proverbial “grain of salt.” This is primarily due to two factors. First, there were only 204 households in Rouseville in 2000. Second, information on income is sampling data. More than likely, only 30 to 35 households were included in the Census sample, meaning a relatively few extreme changes could result in such dramatic results.

Table E-2: Median-Family Income, 1990 – Compared to 2000

Municipality	1990	2000	Change	Adjusted Change
Cornplanter	\$35,125	\$48,259	+13,134	+\$1,067
Oil City	\$25,737	\$36,149	+\$10,412	+\$1,571
Rouseville	\$24,833	\$30,341	+\$5,508	-\$3,023

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census; CPI Inflation Calculator, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Two characteristics can be seen in the “Family Income” table. First, all three municipalities saw “raw” increases in income, ranging from \$5,508 to \$13,134. However, once more, when the “CPI” inflator was applied to Rouseville, a “constant” dollar decline of \$3,023 was the result.

Poverty status is another measurement that many governmental programs use.

Table E-3: Poverty Levels, Family and Individual – Census 2000

Municipality	Family		Individual	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Cornplanter	58	7.5	260	10.1
Oil City	487	16.2	2,141	19.0
Rouseville	22	16.3	118	25.2

Source: Census 2000

This table shows, graphically, that Oil City and Rouseville had a disproportionate number of families and persons in poverty per Census 2000. The same Census reported that on the State level, families in poverty were at 7.8% and individuals in poverty 11.0 percent. At the County level, figures for families were 10.4% and for individuals 13.4 percent. Though Cornplanter was more in line with County data, Oil City and Rouseville witnessed high levels of poverty.

Unemployment

Monthly unemployment data is not available for the study area, but it is for Venango County. Numerous reports done on Venango County show it traditionally has an unemployment rate higher than Pennsylvania by one or two percentage points. In the most recent on-line publications of the Pennsylvania Department of Industry (Center for Workforce Information and Analysis), the County’s unemployment rate was 9.0% in June and 9.1% in May 2009. The comparable rates in Pennsylvania were 8.3% and 8.1%, respectively. In June, Venango County’s unemployment ranked 34th out of all 67 Commonwealth counties. It is interesting to note that the County actually had a lower unemployment rate than the nearby counties of Erie, Lawrence, Clarion, or Crawford.

The July 2009 County Profile (Center for Workforce Information and Analysis) lists the top six employers (third quarter 2008) as:

- Joy Mining Machinery
- Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare
- UPMC Northwest
- Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.
- Venango County
- Metric Limited

Out of the top ten employers, four were manufacturers and one a retailer.

According to the same source, the top three employment industry sectors were:

- Manufacturing
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Retail Trade

Local average annual wage rates were also given. The most recent Profile is presented below. As can be seen, Venango County wages lag significantly behind the State average.

Venango County Profile

October 2009

Employment and Wages by Industry Sector ¹					
	NAICS Industry Sector	Employer Units	Employment	County Wage	PA Wage
	Total , All Industries ²	1,364	20,470	\$32,979	\$44,381
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	7	22	\$25,194	\$27,532
21	Mining	12	95	\$35,919	\$59,907
22	Utilities	6	141	\$90,343	\$96,484
23	Construction	89	496	\$30,214	\$51,928
31-33	Manufacturing	96	4,457	\$46,145	\$51,529
42	Wholesale Trade	54	542	\$39,297	\$63,443
44-45	Retail Trade	214	2,896	\$19,672	\$24,399
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	54	708	\$34,957	\$38,121
51	Information	17	176	\$30,778	\$59,311
52	Finance and Insurance	57	571	\$42,475	\$71,782
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	36	136	\$18,930	\$44,688
54	Professional and Technical Services	64	287	\$31,334	\$73,808
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	6	40	\$42,957	\$97,505
56	Admin/Support, Waste Mgmt/Remediation Svcs	33	694	\$23,152	\$30,887
61	Educational Services	9	92	\$21,247	\$45,970
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	261	3,478	\$32,172	\$41,185
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	16	102	\$9,925	\$26,583
72	Accommodation and Food Services	99	1,336	\$10,936	\$14,848
81	Other Services, except Public Administration	130	699	\$15,336	\$27,059
	Federal Government	18	122	\$47,157	\$63,173
	State Government	22	1,502	\$44,700	\$49,166
	Local Government	66	1,879	\$33,309	\$41,721

¹ 2008 Annual Average
² County total includes Private, Federal, State and Local Government

Bureau of Economic Analysis

The Bureau provides insight into sources of income for Venango County. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (U.S. Department of Labor), the County's 2007 per capita personal income was \$28,916. The components of personal income were net earnings, 53.3%; dividends, interest, and rent 13.4%; and personal current transfer receipts (social security, et. al) at 33.3 percent. This source makes a 10-year comparison (2007-1997) and showed a modest drop in "earnings"; a significant drop (nearly -4%) in dividends, interest, and rent; with an increase in

transfer payment, from 27.5% of County personal income to 33.3 percent. What does it mean? More retirees in the County!

Retail Trade

Tables E-4 and E-5 display the retail trade statistics for both Oil City and Venango County for 1997 and 2002. (Note: The 2007 Census of Retail Trade will not be available until 2010.) The Census of Retail Trade had no separate entries for either Cornplanter Township or Rouseville Borough.

Table E-4: 1997 Retail Trade

	Establishments	Sales*	Payroll*	Employees
Oil City	60	\$59,916	\$6,742	498
Venango County	247	\$417,353	\$37,828	2,792
Oil City Percent	24	14	18	18
*(\$1,000)				
Source: 1997 Census of Retail Trade				

In 1997 and 2002, Oil City had approximately 20% of Venango County's population. However, its share of retail sales was only 14% while both payroll and employee figures were at 18% of County totals.

Table E-5: 2002 Retail Trade

	Establishments	Sales*	Payroll*	Employees
Oil City	50	\$66,689	\$5,994	424
Venango County	244	\$542,766	\$47,956	2,957
Oil City Percent	20	12	9	14
*(\$1,000)				
Source: 2002 Census of Retail Trade				

As can be seen in comparing 2002 data with 1997, Oil City's share of retail trade in all categories dropped over this five-year period. Furthermore, the payroll figure in that sector dropped by some \$748,000, in spite of the inflation of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) by 12 percent.

Such trends are not unexpected, as retail trade has suburbanized significantly.

Within the 2002 retail sales of \$66,684,000, the major components of Retail Trade in Oil City were:

Food and Beverage	\$24,866,000 – 37%*
Health and Personal Care Stores	\$14,368,000 – 22%*
Building Maintenance, Garden Equipment	\$9,105,000 – 14%*

*Percentage of all reported Oil City sales – 2002 Census of Retail Trade

In all, these segments amount to about 75% of all trade in Oil City. Other reported sectors were Motor Vehicle Parts, \$3,991,000; Gasoline Stations, \$6,313,000; and Miscellaneous Stores, \$3,723,000. In sectors where only one of stores was present, data is withheld to respect confidentiality.

The Retail Trade Study

In 2005, the Shepstone/Fairweather consulting group did an extensive study on retail trade for the Oil City downtown. It covered both retail sectors in detailed tables, using proprietary data sources. That report also analyzed trade areas at three levels, and where local volumes indicated “leakage” of business to competing areas. This report will not duplicate the Shepstone/Fairweather report. It is a very detailed analysis of available public and proprietary statistics for Oil City, with a series of recommendations for the downtown. The picture on the right-hand corner of this page demonstrates a serious problem with the local sector—vacant storefronts!



Downtown Oil City

The report must note that efforts are underway to improve downtown Oil City. A committee of property owners working with the City, the specialist from the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission, and the Oil Regional Alliance (ORA) are preparing an application for full “Main Street” designation under Pennsylvania’s New Communities program. The application is partially drafted and well underway. It could hardly have come at a better time. Work on the downtown physical rejuvenation project is now complete and two special studies are in the process, which should enhance the Oil City downtown.

Commercial uses in both Cornplanter and Rouseville are scattered.

Commercial Real Estate

A review of real estate sales from 2000 to the present in the Oil City downtown was made. Some 25 sales were covered, in the traditional “downtown” sector, both North and South Side. The marketplace can be characterized as slow. Most commercial properties are on the market for over a year and sell at about two thirds of the asking price. Though hardly a brisk marketplace, it has held up surprisingly well. There are two major vacancies in the downtown: the Brady block and Cornplanter Square. The Brady block buildings are vacant and at least one segment has been condemned. The balance of the block is likely to follow suit. One bright note is the willingness of the ORA to assume ownership of that property if a suitable price can be negotiated. Some view the site as a possible greenspace—a central anchor for the Northside downtown.

The second building is Cornplanter Square. This is a more formidable structure. It has been vacant for some time, and no serious potential buyer is known.

The Economy – Local Sources

According to economic development professionals, the County’s economy is now feeling the effects of the National recession. Generally, the area is not affected by short-term variations. In fact, in the first quarter of 2008, the Oil Regional Alliance was literally scrambling to help local employees find qualified workers.

Now, however, many manufacturers are running 30% to 60% behind their normal employment levels. There is one bright spot locally, SMS Millcraft, at the Oil City Industrial Park, is expanding their operations and physical plant. The \$1.4 million construction is nearing its completion. SMS Millcraft's Oil City operation focuses on continuous caster molds, repairs and maintenance, along with a variety of fabrication, electroplating, and coating technologies.

The Oil City Industrial Park is certainly a local bright spot. Overall, there is about 200,000 square feet of manufacturing space, along with 7,500 square feet at the Innovation Center (former Oil Well offices). The Innovation Center now has USA Choice (an internet provider); the Life Long Learning Center; and a new tenant, St. Benedicts Education Center, aimed at job training and placement. In the past, this facility served as a business incubator, with very mixed results.

Currently, there are two tenants in the manufacturing space. SMS Millcraft occupies about 130,000 square feet. Schake Industries has 12,000 square feet, but will move into the space (about 55,000 square feet), recently vacated by Electralloy, and will end with about 67,000 square feet. This firm manufactures large tanks (water and oil) as well as fluid systems. They also do specialty fabrication as well as painting and powder coating. Their engineering services cover the same fields.

The Oil City Industrial Park is now essentially full. There is some thought of constructing a "spec" building on the site.

Another piece of good news—countywide—is the fact the Barkeyville Industrial Park has only 15 acres left. In addition, the Sandycreek Industrial Park off Route 8 in the township still has good potential, with another 40 acres poised for development.



Overall, the Oil Regional Alliance expresses concern of some local businesses to survive a long-term slow down. They emphasize so many of the smaller operations act as subcontractors to larger operations, such as Joy Manufacturing. These firms may not be in the immediate study area, but businesses in the study area do rely upon a healthy overall county/ regional economy.