

# Future Land Use



The BethWorks project is a cornerstone of the South Side's revitalization effort



## **Future Land Use**

## ■ Future Land Use Vision

This Future Land Use chapter is the City's vision of what are appropriate uses and appropriate densities for Bethlehem's many different areas. By implementing this vision, the City hopes to guide future development and avoid conflicts between land uses. Future Land Use visions and principles are highlighted below:

- Protect residential neighborhoods by promoting compatible land uses at appropriate densities.
- Encourage more traditional neighborhood development, which promotes buildings and lot layouts compatible with the best features of older neighborhoods.
- Differentiate between business uses that should be permitted near neighborhoods and those that should not.
- Promote the adaptive reuse of obsolete and underutilized business properties.
- Promote business uses that will create good-paying jobs and generate real estate tax revenues.
- Avoid unplanned strip commercial development along major roadways.
- Protect important wooded areas, steep slopes and creek corridors within City boundaries.



A West Bethlehem single-family home

In preparing this Future Land Use chapter the City also tried to ensure existing and proposed development in the City is compatible with existing and proposed development and land use policies for areas adjacent to the City in neighboring municipalities.

## ■ Existing Land Use

Current land use patterns in the City are the starting points for Bethlehem's Future Land Use strategies.

### Residential Uses

Housing is the dominant use of Bethlehem's land north of the Lehigh River. The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that single-family detached homes and single-family attached homes (twins, townhouses, and row homes) each represent 37% of the City's housing stock. Apartments account for the remaining 26%. By comparison, single-family detached homes total 25% of Easton's housing stock and 23% in Allentown.



Single-family detached dwellings are most prevalent in Bethlehem's far west end and the City's northeastern and northwestern sectors. Single-family detached homes are the most common housing type in the downtown historic district and the Mt. Airy historic district (the area south of Market Street between 8th Avenue and 15th Avenue). Most older attached homes and apartments located north of the Lehigh River are in and around the downtown. The South Side features more of a mixed housing stock. Apartments are numerous in the Lehigh University campus area.

Bethlehem's newest large residential projects and the Bethlehem Housing Authority's subsidized housing stock are profiled in the next chapter.

### **Commercial Uses**

The North Side's primary commercial areas include the Main Street district as well as business corridors along Broad Street, Stefko Boulevard and Schoenersville Road. Parts of Linden Street north of Broad Street and parts of Union Boulevard also have commercial concentrations. Most of these areas contain at least some small strip commercial centers. However, the vast majority of Bethlehem's commercial uses are smaller, stand-alone retail shops, service businesses, and office uses. The new Lowes home improvement store on 8th Avenue is the only big-box retailer within City borders.

Most commercial uses on the South Side are along 3rd Street, 4th Street, and Broadway. This South Side business area combines with the Main Street business district on the north side to provide Bethlehem with two downtowns.

The Main Street business district on the North Side is anchored by Hotel Bethlehem and the Moravian Bookstore complex. Main Street features many small, specialty shops and some multi-tenant office uses. It is also noted for its architectural integrity and historically-inspired streetscape.

The South Side business district is a more eclectic mix of offices, retail stores, galleries, restaurants and services, many of which include a heavy student trade. The South Side commercial area is also home to the Banana Factory, a large community arts center



Stefko Shopping Center is one of Bethlehem's oldest strip developments



and gallery. The South Side business district features many commercial properties that were given new economic life through renovation and reuse.

### **Industrial and Office Uses**

Bethlehem's largest single industrial employer is B. Braun, a medical instrument manufacturer in west Bethlehem. Just Born, Inc., a candy manufacturer on Stefko Boulevard, is the next largest.

Much of the office, warehouse and industrial employment in the Bethlehem area is in business parks developed by the non-profit Lehigh Valley Industrial Park, Inc. LVIP has developed seven business parks in the region. Its first park, called LVIP I, is in Bethlehem north of Route 22. LVIP VII at Bethlehem Commerce Center includes over 1,000 acres of former Bethlehem Steel land located northeast of Route 412. LVIP VII is being developed in phases. Current occupants include office, industrial and distribution companies plus an intermodal rail and truck terminal. An additional component of the reuse of former Bethlehem Steel land includes more than 500 acres to be developed by Majestic Realty into a mix of manufacturing, distribution and light industrial uses.

The Generalized Existing Land Use Map shows a concentration of office and research uses on the South Side east of Mountain Drive. This is Lehigh University's Mountaintop campus. It includes a mix of university and private sector research, development and educational facilities.

This Industrial land use category also includes utilities, such as the Conectiv electric generating plant south of Applebutter Road, roadways, bus stations and railroad rights of way.

### **Beth Works - Industrial Land in Transition**

Bethlehem Steel, and its predecessor the Bethlehem Iron Company, had been in the City for over 120 years. At its zenith, Bethlehem Steel employed over 30,000 people in Bethlehem. When the 1,800-acre steel complex ceased operations in the 1990's, Bethlehem was left with the largest privately-owned brownfields redevelopment site in the nation. Revitalization of this land is a major City objective.



Just Born Inc. manufactures a variety of nationally known candies at its Bethlehem plant



Old Bethlehem Steel structures on the BethWorks site



The Priscilla Payne Hurd Complex at Moravian College's north campus



Much of the former Bethlehem Steel site east of the Minsi Trail Bridge area is being redeveloped by LVIP. In 2004, Pennsylvania approved legislation creating new gaming licenses, one of which was later awarded for a casino complex in South Bethlehem. The BethWorks master plan, which incorporates this casino, envisions a multi-phase redevelopment of all old steel lands along the Lehigh River between the Minsi Trail Bridge area and the Fahy Bridge. The first phase features a casino, retail uses, a parking deck and a hotel/conference center that will include performance space. Future plans include housing, office, additional retail shops and cultural attractions. Proposed cultural attractions include a state-of-art performance and broadcasting venue, and a National Museum of Industrial History.

The BethWorks project will be a cornerstone of the South Side's revitalization. Plans call for preserving Bethlehem Steel's blast furnaces along the Lehigh River and incorporating other historic mill buildings into new reuses. This dovetails with the City's hope of preserving key parts of Bethlehem Steel's iconic physical heritage.

### **Public and Institutional Uses**

The Generalized Existing Land Use Map shows significant land devoted to Public and Institutional uses. Bethlehem's places of worship, museum properties, public school sites, and City Hall complex are in this category. Moravian College and Lehigh University are also included. Lehigh University includes three main campuses. The original Asa Packer Campus includes most student housing and classrooms. The Mountaintop Campus mainly features research and educational buildings. The Goodman Campus south of I-78 is largely devoted to athletic facilities.

This category also includes the Muhlenberg campus of the Lehigh Valley Hospital. The main campus of St. Luke's Hospital is situated just outside of the City in Fountain Hill Borough. Some related medical offices extend into Bethlehem.

### **Parks and Other Outdoor Recreation**

Bethlehem's extensive park system is part of this Existing Land Use category, as is the future path of the City's South Bethlehem Greenway. More information about these properties is detailed in the *Parks and Recreation* chapter.

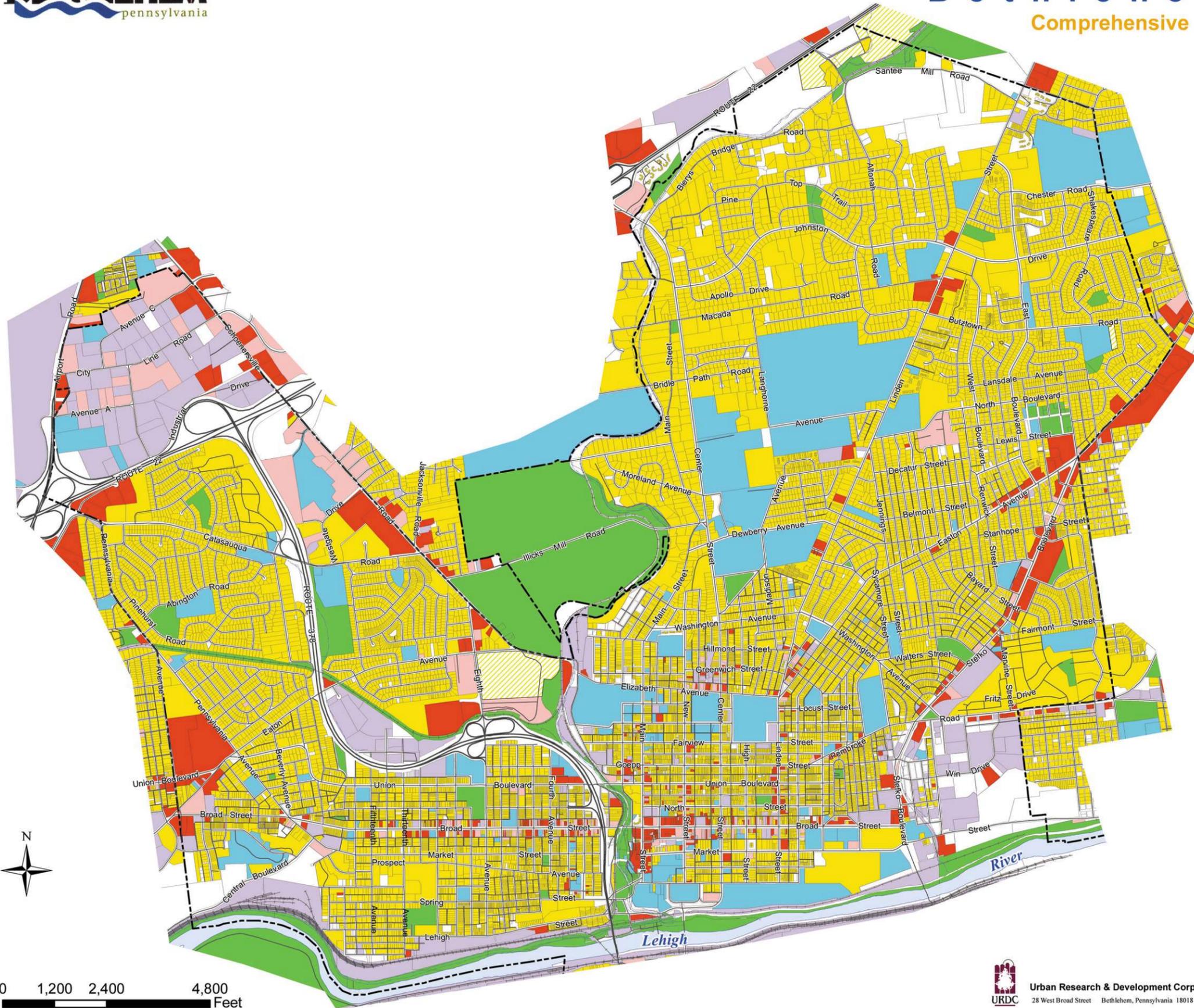


# City of Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan

## GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE - 2008

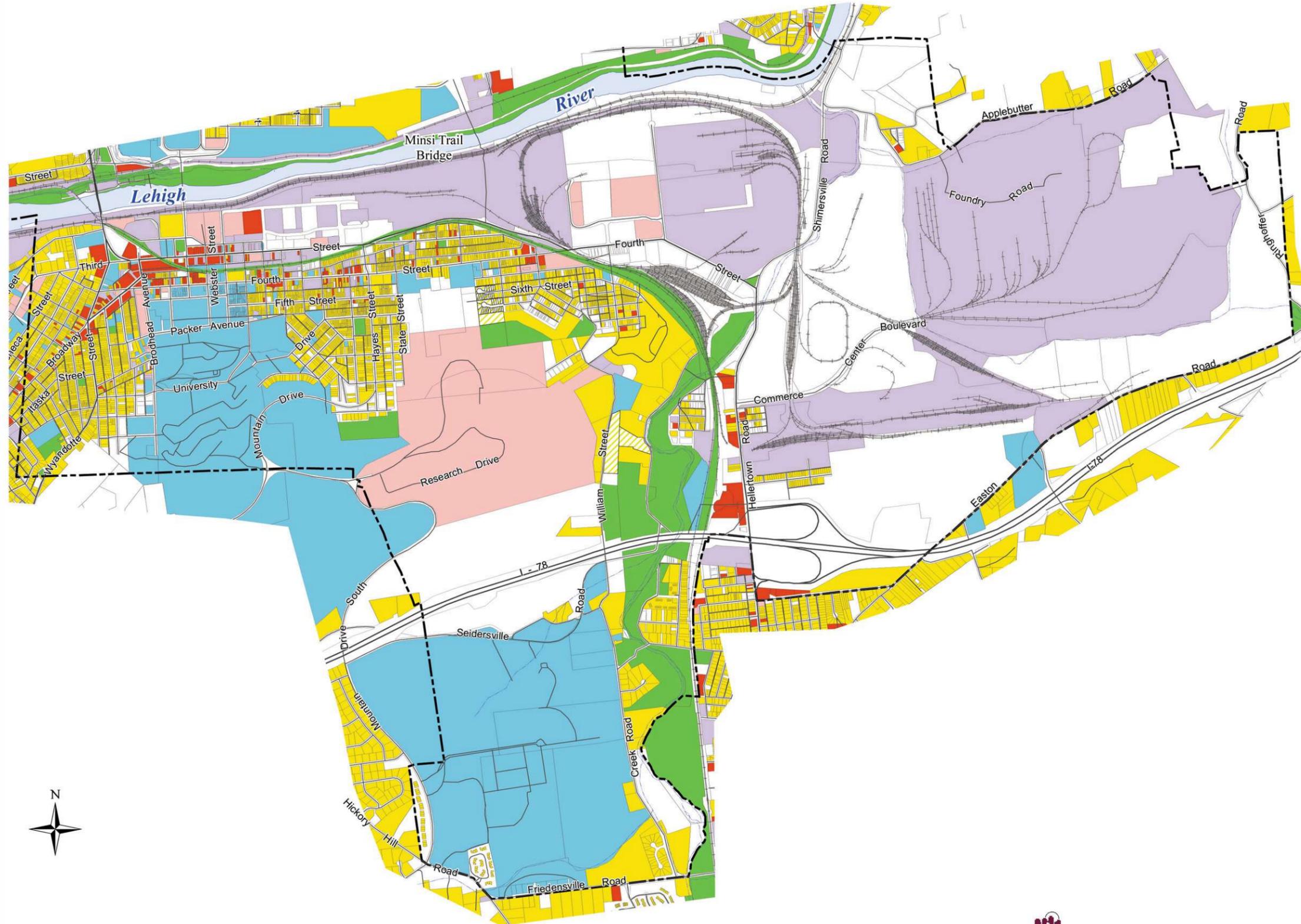
### Northern & Western Section - 1 of 2

-  Undeveloped
-  Residential
-  Office
-  Retail & Other Commercial (excluding Office)
-  Public & Institutional
-  Parks & Other Outdoor Recreation
-  Industrial, Transportation & Utilities
-  Proposed Residential Development



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- Undeveloped
- Residential
- Office
- Retail & Other Commercial (excluding Office)
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Feet



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## ■ Future Land Use Strategies

The Future Land Use Plan Map illustrates the City's vision for appropriate patterns of land uses throughout Bethlehem. Some areas should be residential, commercial or industrial. Others should feature a mix of complementary uses. The City will update its Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Map to help carry out these policies.

### Public Recreation

Public Recreation areas include public parks and trails such as the South Bethlehem Greenway. The City also hopes to convert a former railroad right-of-way in West Bethlehem into a recreation trail that leads to the Allentown border.

### Special Features Areas

Most locations shown as Special Features Areas include steep slopes and/or forested land. The City has zoning regulations that limit construction on steeply sloped lands, regardless of the zoning district. Lands in the Special Features Area should accommodate only very low intensity development. Natural features on these sites should be preserved to the greatest extent feasible.

Very steeply sloped lands (over 25 percent slope) are not generally suitable for new development. Moderately steep lands (15 to 25 percent slope) are only suitable for low intensity development. Preserving the ecology of the Monocacy Creek, the Saucon Creek and their tributaries is an important City goal.

The steeply sloped and wooded Camel's Hump area west of Linden Street is a valuable water recharge area that feeds into the Monocacy Creek. It may be appropriate to promote clustering of housing in this area in return for preservation of the area's steep slopes.

### Floodprone Areas

The Future Land Use Plan highlights areas expected to be flooded during the worst flood in an average 100-year period. In this 100-year floodplain, no additional new buildings should be constructed.



Steeply sloped lands are generally not suitable for development





### **Low Density Residential**

Single-family detached houses at 2.5 to 3.5 homes per acre are the most appropriate uses for these areas. Larger lots should be required when a building is proposed on steeply sloped land. Low Density Residential areas should not be home to any new apartments or single-family homes converted to apartments. In selected areas, it may be appropriate to allow a density bonus for age-restricted housing.

### **Medium Density Residential**

These areas are primarily for single-family detached houses, twin homes, rowhomes and townhouses. To encourage home ownership, each home should be on its own fee-simple or condominium lot. An average of 4 to 8 homes per acre is appropriate. New apartments should be possible only on larger tracts of land.

In medium density residential areas, some low impact non-residential uses may be appropriate abutting non-residential zoning districts or along arterial or collector roads. Such non-residential uses may include assisted living facilities, nursing homes, funeral homes, day care centers and other selected uses.

### **High Density Residential**

These areas are appropriate for all types of housing. New high-rise apartments should be limited to areas near the downtowns. Density in these areas should average 9 or more units per acre. Higher densities may be appropriate for developments targeted to seniors.

In areas planned for higher densities, the City may offer a density incentive if a certain number of the housing units within a new development are committed to affordable or “workforce” housing. Portions of the High Density Residential areas could also allow for offices, personal care/assisted living homes, nursing homes, funeral homes, day care centers, senior housing facilities and related uses.

### **Institutional and Major Community Facilities**

Moravian College and Lehigh University are the predominant uses in these areas. Other schools, larger cemeteries, the City Hall complex, fire stations and other public facilities are additional examples included in this category.



Moravian Village – a continuing care retirement community



The City intends to be flexible regarding what is allowed in the core of the Moravian and Lehigh campuses. However, special attention should be paid to ensuring campus edges are compatible with adjacent neighborhoods. For example, tall heights may be most appropriate in the core of a campus, while a three-story height limit may be more appropriate next to a neighborhood. Both Moravian and Lehigh should continue making their campuses more pedestrian-friendly.

### **Institutional-Research**

Lehigh University's Mountaintop Campus and undeveloped land owned by Lehigh University along I-78 deserve special attention. These areas should accommodate a mix of educational uses, offices, laboratories and research uses. These areas should not be targeted for student housing. Some complementary commercial uses may be appropriate to serve local employees and students.

The road system limits the ability of the South Mountain land to handle heavy truck traffic. Industrial uses should be limited to prototype and custom manufacturing affiliated with research activities.

### **Health Care Campus**

The Muhlenberg Campus of Lehigh Valley Hospital is located between Route 378 and Schoenersville Road. This area should be for hospital uses, health care facilities, nursing homes, medical offices, and smaller commercial uses that serve employees in this vicinity.

### **Downtown Commercial**

This category is aimed at major downtown commercial areas on the North Side and on the South Side. Permitted uses should remain pedestrian-friendly. New auto sales, auto repair, gasoline sales uses and adult uses should be prohibited. These areas should continue to feature retail, restaurant, hotel, office, entertainment, cultural and service uses.

The City's downtown commercial zoning district currently does not have a height limit. Consideration should be given to a 12 to 15-story limit in these areas.



The historic Sun Inn - located in downtown Bethlehem



### **Neighborhood Commercial**

Neighborhood Commercial areas, such as along West Broad Street, should provide for lighter types of commercial uses that serve nearby homes. These areas should remain pedestrian-friendly. The focus is on regulating the type of commercial uses allowed. Intensive commercial uses should be prohibited, such as gasoline sales, auto repair, auto sales, nightclubs and adult uses.



Neighborhood commercial uses along W. Broad Street

Denser forms of housing should be limited to buildings that also include street-level commercial uses if the lot is adjacent to a major street. Upper-story apartments and upper-story offices should be encouraged to create more customers for nearby businesses. Personal care and nursing homes may also be appropriate. Buildings should be two or more stories high, should cover most of the lot, and be placed close to the sidewalk. Parking should be at the side or the rear of buildings whenever feasible. A maximum front yard building setback is important. In commercial areas, placement of required parking spaces on a nearby lot should be acceptable. Maximum heights of 3 or 4 stories should be appropriate in most cases.

### **General Commercial and Shopping Centers**

These areas are targeted for a variety of commercial uses, including lighter and heavier commercial uses. This category includes heavier existing commercial areas along portions of Stefko Boulevard, as well as shopping centers. Heights of up to 4 stories should be appropriate in most cases.

### **Business and Technology Park**

The City promotes business campus growth on Lehigh Valley Industrial Park land to the northeast of the I-78/Route 412 interchange. This area will provide for offices, research and development facilities, light industrial uses such as pharmaceutical manufacturing, hotels and selected commercial uses. Extensive landscaping in a campus-like setting is highly encouraged. The site will be very visible from I-78.

### Mixed Use Redevelopment

Bethlehem aggressively supports redevelopment of former industrial properties. The City may consider allowing flexible development standards in return for a higher level of site design and a careful attention to compatibility between various uses. A range of light industrial, institutional, office and commercial uses should be allowed. Heavy industry should be prohibited. The Sands Bethlehem gaming and hotel complex is being built in this area.

Current zoning allows some uses that could be unattractive along Bethlehem's Route 412 entryway. This list of allowed uses should be re-examined. Auto sales and vehicle repair, are two examples of uses not compatible with the City's goals for key community entrances.

This category may also be appropriate for redevelopment of some areas along the east side of the Stefko Boulevard corridor south of Pembroke Road. That vicinity now houses a mix of heavy industrial, commercial and single-family residential uses. Residential uses should be limited to existing buildings that are immediately adjacent to residential districts.

### Mixed Use Redevelopment - Residential Option

This category is similar to the Mixed Use Redevelopment category noted above, except that it should also allow residential uses in the BethWorks development area between New Street and the Casino/Hotel complex. This residential development could include the former Bethlehem Steel headquarters on 3rd Street and other infill sites.

The City is considering offering a density incentive if a portion of the housing units within a new development are committed to affordable or "workforce" housing. No strict building height limitation should be imposed in this area.



Commerce Center Boulevard was constructed from Route 412 to access land for future industrial development



## **Industrial**

The Industrial Future Land Use category should continue to be divided for zoning purposes, into Planned Industrial, Light Industrial and Heavy Industrial zoning districts.



Former Bethlehem Steel lands south of Applebutter Road.

The Planned Industrial district should continue to include the bulk of Lehigh Valley Industrial Park I north of Route 22 and east of Airport Road. This area primarily allows lighter types of industrial uses, but a wider variety of business uses would also work well here, such as offices and services. This will allow fuller use of existing lots while maintaining a well-landscaped campus setting.

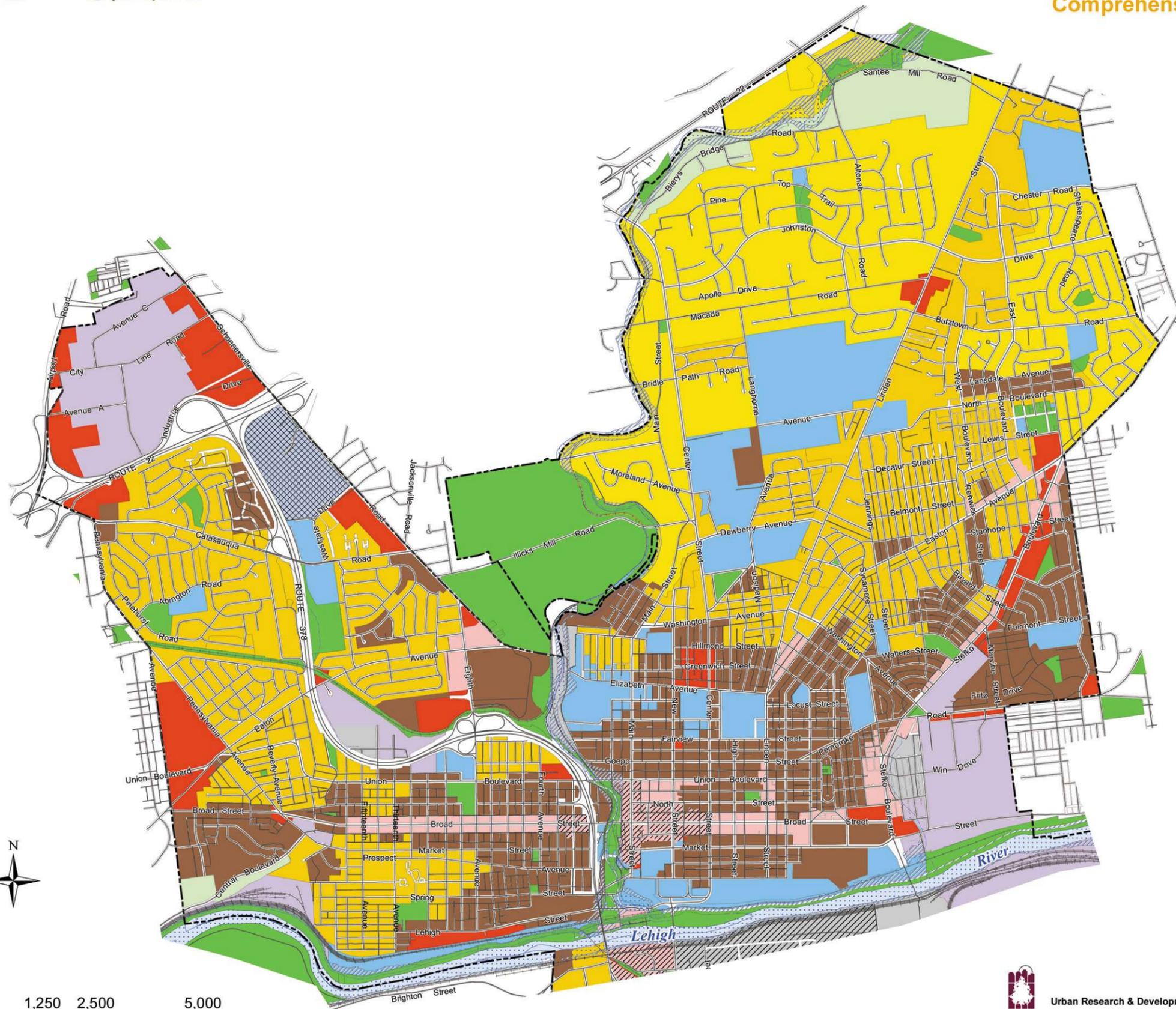
The Light Industrial areas should include the bulk of the industrially zoned land in the City. A range of industrial and complementary commercial uses should be permitted in these areas. Heavier industries more likely to cause nuisances or hazards are not appropriate.





City of  
**Bethlehem**  
Comprehensive Plan

**FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**  
Northern & Western Section - 1 of 2



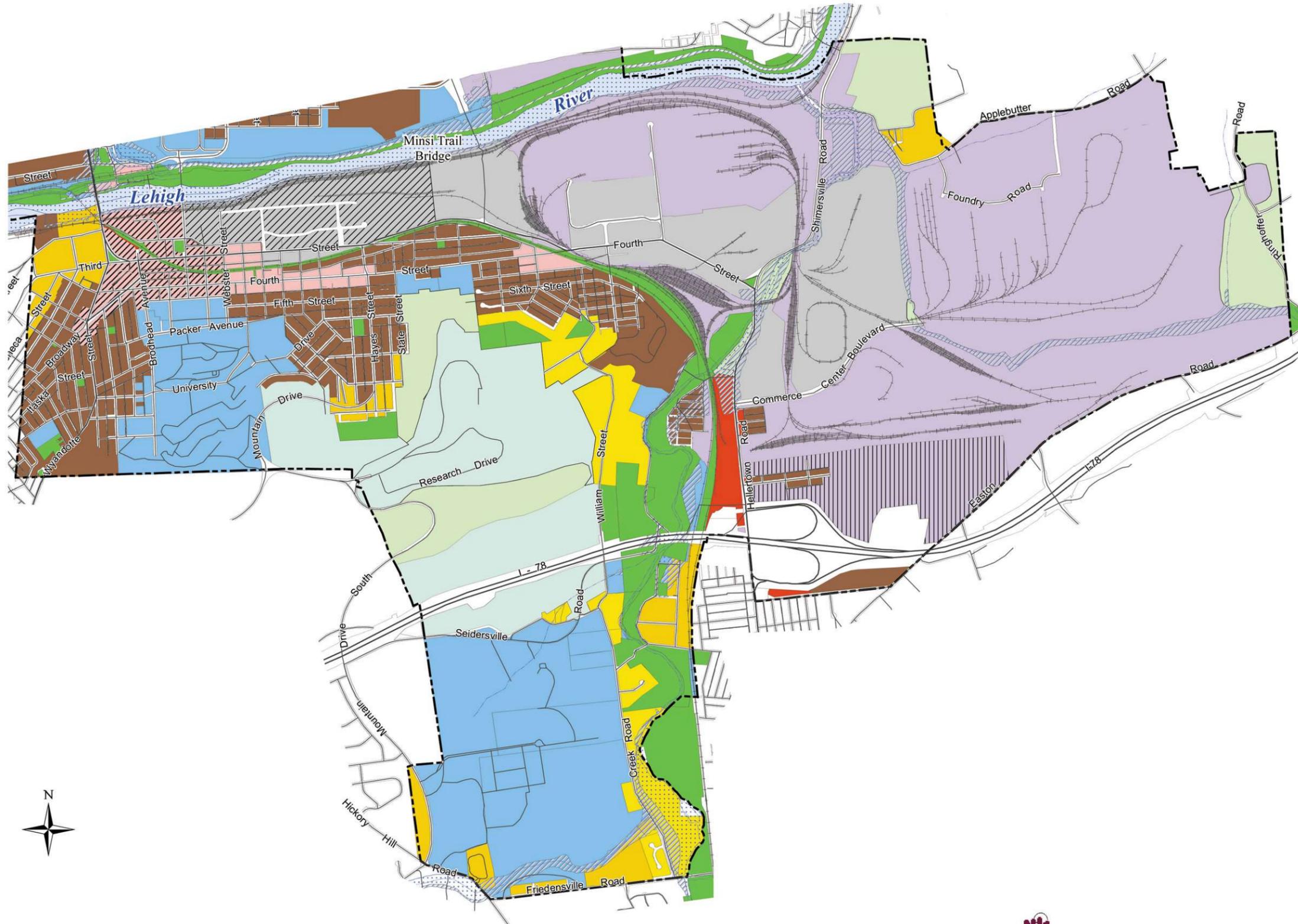
- Special Features Area
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Downtown Commercial
- General Commercial & Shopping Centers
- Institutional & Major Community Facilities
- Research & Institutional
- Industrial
- Business & Technology Park
- Health Care Campus
- Mixed Use Redevelopment - Residential Option
- Mixed Use Redevelopment
- Public Recreation

**FLOODPRONE AREAS**

- Approximate 100 Year Floodfringe
- Approximate Floodway Areas

0 1,250 2,500 5,000  
Feet





- Special Features Area
  - Low Density Residential
  - Medium Density Residential
  - High Density Residential
  - Neighborhood Commercial
  - Downtown Commercial
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- Approximate 100 Year Floodfringe
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