

# Albion's Plan



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**ALBION BOROUGH RESOLUTION # 03-2019**

**A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT AN UPDATE TO THE ALBION BOROUGH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Borough of Albion, Erie County, Pennsylvania, adopted the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan, also known as the Albion – Cranesville Area Comprehensive Plan, on December 15, 1994; and

WHEREAS, the Albion Borough Planning Commission recommended that an update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan is desirable in order to plan for the future growth and development on the Borough; and

WHEREAS, Article III, Section 302 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247) grants the governing body of the municipality the power to adopt and amend the comprehensive plan as a whole or in part; and

WHEREAS, the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development offered to facilitate the plan update process and provide technical assistance, at no cost to the Borough, for development of an updated Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Albion Borough Council authorized an update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan on December 17, 2017; and

WHEREAS, Albion Borough officials, staff, the Albion Borough Planning Commission, and other community members reviewed data, obtained public comment, and developed an update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to public notice, the Albion Borough Planning Commission held a public meeting regarding the update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan on January 29, 2019; and

WHEREAS, no adverse comments were received from the public during the public meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Albion has received no adverse comments from the County of Erie, Conneaut Township or the Northwestern School District within forty-five (45) days of submission of the update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan; and

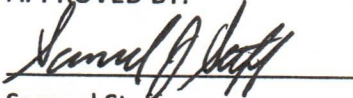
WHEREAS, pursuant to public notice, Albion Borough Council held a public hearing regarding the update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan on April 16, 2019; and

WHEREAS, Albion Borough Council, after consideration of comments received (or lack thereof, as the case may be), has determined that the update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan should not be substantially revised in whole or in part.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Albion Borough Council, that the update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan, also known as Albion's Plan, is hereby adopted in its entirety by authority of same.

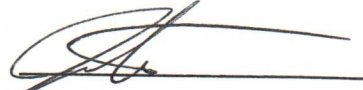
Adopted this 16<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2019.

APPROVED BY:



Samuel Steff

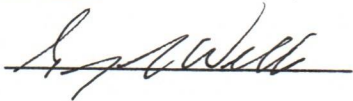
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Mayor

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# Introduction

## Let's work together on Albion's Plan!

The Borough of Albion is proud to present this update to the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan. Planning for Albion's future has never been more important. With the availability of the internet, people and businesses can now locate just about anywhere they choose, so quality of life issues have become increasingly more important. In order to compete with other communities, and to retain and attract residents and businesses, Albion must do everything possible to recognize its full potential.

*This plan is about making Albion an even better place to live for its current and future residents*

Albion's already a great place to call home. We need to recognize that, and build upon the qualities that make it special. This plan is about making Albion an even better place to live for its current and future residents. We'll do more to promote Albion throughout the region, and increase government transparency. We'll maximize the potential of Albion's public park to host regional events and to serve the recreational needs of area residents. And we'll improve our neighborhoods and do more to help support our local businesses.

Unfortunately, we can do all the planning in the world, but without the necessary time and resources to implement the plan, not much will change. The Borough is currently facing some budgetary constraints and has been forced to reduce staffing levels in recent years. As a result, funding for plan implementation is limited, and the Borough staff has limited time available to take on new responsibilities. These constraints have been considered throughout the planning process, and steps have been taken to ensure that the resulting goals and action items are realistic, achievable, and affordable.

Borough officials and staff have embraced this plan, and are looking forward to working towards its implementation. However, they won't be able to implement this plan on their own.

**The successful implementation of this plan will require the support and active participation of our entire community, including our business owners, community leaders, and residents.**

## How will this plan be different?

The unfortunate reality is that historically, municipal comprehensive plans have had a poor track record for success. You may be familiar with the old adage, "another plan sitting on the shelf".

There are a few factors that often contribute to this lack of success. Many of these plans are very broad in scope, and include an excessive number of goals. This can lead to confusion and indecision. "Where do we start?" In addition, the goals often lack specifics, and the plans seldom provide the details or specific information needed to successfully implement them. "How do we get started?" "What's the first step?" And perhaps the biggest downfall is the misperception that the process is completed when the plan is finished and adopted.

The Borough recognized that in order to be successful, we needed to avoid these common pitfalls, and that a fresh approach to planning was needed. A decision was made to follow a planning process known as an "Implementable Plan". This process is advocated by the Pennsylvania Governor's Center for Local Government Services. There are 5 keys to an implementable plan.



The primary purpose of this planning process was to identify and focus on the Borough's top 3 or 4 priorities. Action plans were then created to address each of the priorities. These action plans provide the details and step by step instructions needed to implement the plan and achieve the desired results. The action plans have been vetted to insure they are realistic and financially feasible.

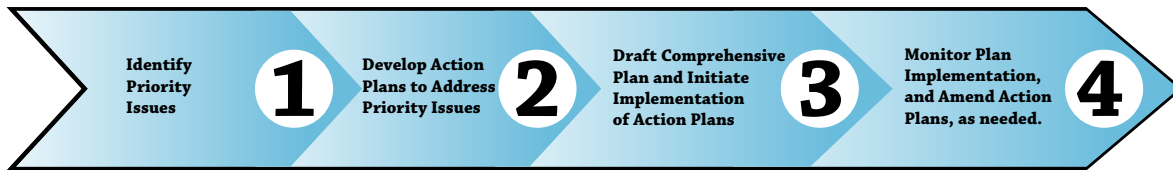
The Borough has made a commitment to implement this plan. There is recognition that adoption of this plan is not the end of the process. Instead, this plan is an important first step in a larger process, and is a tool that will be used to get results. Following plan adoption, progress will be reviewed on a regular basis to make sure that everything possible is being done to ensure the successful implementation of this plan.

## The Planning Process

In December 2017, Borough Council passed a resolution supporting the development of this plan, and formally requested the assistance of Erie County's Department of Planning and Community Development. The County agreed to assist the Borough by helping to facilitate the planning process and by providing technical assistance. The County provided these services to the Borough at no cost.

Borough officials created a steering committee to provide input, and to help guide the planning process. The committee initially consisted of 12 members, but grew to approximately 15 to 20 members by the end of the process. It included Borough officials, business owners, representatives from the fire department and school district, community leaders and residents. The steering committee met at strategic times throughout the process, and all meetings were open to the public.

The planning process was divided into four phases, as follows:



The process was initiated in January 2018, with the first three phases scheduled for completion by year end. Phase 4 will be an on-going process for 1 to 5 years following plan adoption.

The first five months (Phase 1) were devoted to identifying Albion's top priorities. As part of this process, the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development met with the steering committee, the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce and the Albion Fairgrounds Association.

In order to give all residents an opportunity to participate and provide input, a public survey was taken from March 1st through April 16th of 2018. Paper copies of the survey were included in the Borough's newsletter to all Albion households. The survey was also made available online. The Borough received 176 responses to the survey. Of these, 73 responses were submitted online, and 103 responses were submitted on paper forms. Respondents to the survey were asked to rate Albion in several different areas. They were also asked to provide their opinions about priorities for several potential priority areas.

On April 24, 2018, a public meeting was held to share the results of the public survey, and to receive public comments on potential priority issues. Approximately 28 people attended the meeting.



In May of 2018, the steering committee reviewed and evaluated the background data available and the public input that had been received concerning the Borough’s priorities. After considering all factors, the committee identified Albion’s top 4 priorities as:

- **Promote Albion**
- **Love Our Park**
- **Improve Our Neighborhoods**
- **Support Our Businesses**

During Phase 2 of the planning process, action plans were developed to address each of these priority issues, and to achieve the Borough’s desired results. The anticipated time frame for implementation of the action plans will be 5 years or less. The steering committee created work groups to provide input during this process. The Albion Fair Association assisted with the development of the “**Love Our Park**” action plan, and the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce assisted with the development of the “**Support Our Local Businesses**” action plan. On January 29, 2019, a public meeting was held to present the proposed action plans to the public, to discuss first steps for plan implementation, and to receive public comments .

Following the development of the action plans (Phase 2), this comprehensive plan was drafted in order to memorialize the decisions that were made during this process. The action plans have been incorporated into the comprehensive plan, and are the primary focus of the plan. During phase 3, the community also began taking steps to implement the action plans .

As noted previously, adoption of this plan is not the end of the process. Our commitment is to implement the plan, and to achieve the desired results. Phase 4 of this process will follow the Borough’s adoption of this plan. During this phase, Borough officials and steering committee members will meet on a regular bases (annually, or as needed) to review the progress being made towards implementation, and to evaluate results. If obstacles to implementation are being encountered, or if satisfactory results are not being obtained, it may be necessary to make adjustments to this plan so that the desired results can be achieved.

# Summary of Goals

## Promote Albion

1. Keep residents informed, and promote community pride by publishing an Albion Borough newsletter.
2. Showcase Albion and provide useful and timely information to residents and visitors by maximizing the use of the Albion Borough website.
3. Build a strong social media presence to better engage with residents.
4. Build and maintain good relationships with the news media.
5. Use the Borough newsletter, website, social media, and media relationships to promote and encourage implementation of the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan.

## Love Our Park

1. Establish a Parks and Recreation Board
2. Build community support for the park and increase citizen involvement.
3. Increase usage of the park by residents of Albion and surrounding communities.
4. Supplement municipal budgeted funds by raising funds for park maintenance, programming, special events, capital improvements, and other park related needs.
5. Plan for the park's future.

## Improve Our Neighborhoods

1. Improve the quality, condition and safety of housing, buildings and other structures.
2. Maintain safe, clean and walkable neighborhoods.
3. Beautify Albion neighborhoods with trees, gardens, attractive landscaping and holiday decorations.

## Support Our Businesses

1. Promote and encourage community support for local businesses and associated events/ activities.
2. Encourage and support the efforts of new and/or existing businesses to address the needs of local residents.
3. Buy local. Patronize Albion area businesses.
4. Improve the appearance and function of the State Street commercial corridor.
5. Continue LERTA program.

# Promote Albion

**1**

**Keep residents informed, and promote community pride by publishing an Albion Borough Newsletter**

**2**

**Showcase Albion and provide useful and timely information to residents and visitors by maximizing the use of the Albion Borough website.**

**3**

**Build a strong social media presence to better engage residents.**

**4**

**Build and maintain good relationships with the news media.**

**5**

**Use the Borough newsletter, website, social media, and media relationships to promote and encourage implementation of the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan.**

<http://www.albionborohg.com>



# Introduction

## Why is this important?

Let's face it. A positive community image and strong community pride are important. A community with a positive image will attract new residents from within the region, and current residents will be more likely to buy homes and stay. Communities with a strong sense of pride often see this pride reflected in positive ways, such as higher home maintenance standards, participation in community and neighborhood organizations, and attendance at local events.

This component of the plan focuses on **Promoting Albion**. The desire is to improve Albion's image, and create a stronger sense of community pride. It's about improving the way residents view and feel about Albion, as well as how Albion is viewed by non residents.

The Borough will work to promote itself and strengthen community pride by implementing a public relations and communications strategy based on improvements to the Borough's existing newsletter, website, social media, and media relations. These communications tools will be used to improve Albion's image by highlighting the community's successes, the positive changes taking place, the accomplishments of area residents and businesses, and local events.

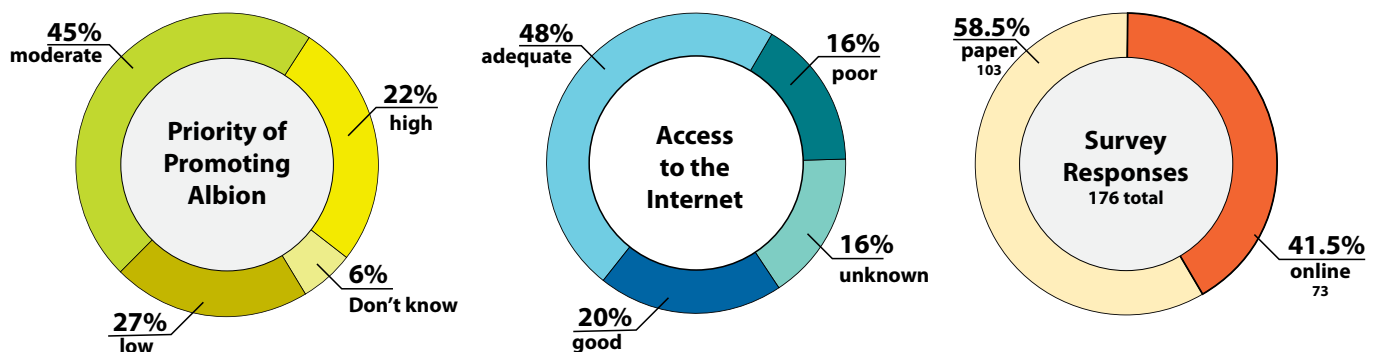
An additional benefit of improving the Borough's existing newsletter, website, social media, and media relations is that they will also be used to promote and encourage the implementation of this plan. This plan is designed to be implemented over a 5 year period, and it can sometimes be difficult to maintain momentum over that length of time. These communications tools are an inexpensive and effective way to help keep the public engaged and the momentum going.

## Public Input/Public Survey Results

As part of the public survey, area residents were asked how much priority should be given to promoting Albion in terms of a community newsletter, Borough website, social media, etc. The majority of survey respondents (67%) considered promoting Albion to be either a high (22%) or moderate (45%) priority; while only 27% considered this to be a low priority. The remaining 6% were undecided.

The survey also provided some relevant information concerning internet access. Sixty-eight percent (68%) rated access to broadband internet as either good (20%) or adequate (48%), while only sixteen percent (16%) rated access as poor. The remaining 16% didn't know.

It's also worth noting that of the 176 survey responses that were received, 73 were submitted online (41.5%) and 103 were submitted as paper copies (58.5%). This provides some insight regarding internet availability and usage. Clearly, many area residents have access to internet. However, many others still either do not have access, or prefer paper copies. This tends to suggest the importance of making future community newsletters available in print as well as online.



## Long Term Vision for Promoting Albion (Year 2040)

Year 2040 – Albion residents have pride in their community, and are proud to be part of its success. It's a great place to live. Good things happen when people care about their community. There's always something going on. Numerous activities and events are held at the public park. Local businesses are expanding. Neighbors help each other, and there are lots of opportunities to get involved with the community through volunteer opportunities.

Area residents and non residents throughout the region know that they can follow local events and stay informed about all of the positive things going on by visiting the Borough's website, and by following the Borough's social media. The Borough's newsletter is a great supplement to the local news coverage.

Borough officials have built a good relationship with the news media. This pays off every time the media helps the Borough by sharing Albion's story with others throughout the region. As a result of this positive press coverage, Albion's image has become one of success.

## Goals and Objectives (Tasks)

### **Goal #1: Keep residents informed, and promote community pride by publishing an Albion Borough Newsletter.**

A good newsletter is not only a great way to keep residents informed, but will also contribute to a greater sense of community pride. There are a lot of positive things happening in Albion, and those stories need to be told. Unfortunately, in many cases these happenings and events are overlooked by the news media. Part of the solution is to improve the Borough's newsletter, and maximize its potential for telling Albion's story and shaping Albion's image in a positive way.

The Borough currently publishes a newsletter twice a year, and distributes it to all residents by mail. This newsletter consists primarily of basic information such as meeting announcements and public service information, and does not contain any news related articles. The idea is to increase the frequency of the newsletter, and to increase its quality by going beyond the basics, with news about Albion and its residents, businesses and events.

There is an abundance of online resources that offer guidance and advice on creating, publishing and distributing a community newsletter. *How to Create a Neighborhood Newsletter*, by "Yes we can!" is online at [http://www.grassrootsgrantmakers.org/wp-content/uploads/Create\\_a\\_Nhood\\_Newsletter.pdf](http://www.grassrootsgrantmakers.org/wp-content/uploads/Create_a_Nhood_Newsletter.pdf)

### **Task 1.1 : Designate Borough staff and/or recruit area residents to serve on a newsletter committee.**

The Borough's first step towards creating, publishing and distributing a good quality newsletter will be to recruit a newsletter committee. There will be a lot of work involved, and this is not a job for just one or two Borough staff members. The newsletter will benefit from the inclusion of volunteers who are skilled at writing articles, photography, and desktop publishing.

Individuals will be needed to serve in the following roles. It's possible that some may fill and/or contribute in more than one role:

- An editor who will be in charge of keeping track of deadlines, gathering material, collecting articles from contributing writers, and reviewing articles for errors.
- A design editor who will oversee the layout for each newsletter. This person should be skilled at desktop publishing.
- Writers and contributors of articles, materials, and information.
- A volunteer(s) to assist with distribution, such as mailings or deliveries to area businesses or other areas frequented by residents.

### **Task 1.2 – Publish Borough newsletters on a regular schedule.**

One of the first decisions that the Borough’s newsletter committee will need to make will be the newsletter’s publishing schedule. The Borough currently publishes a newsletter twice a year, and public comments received during this planning process indicate that residents desire more frequent issues. However, quality is better than quantity. It is recommended that the Borough start slowly, and focus initially on increasing the quality of the newsletter. Then, as the publishing process becomes more established the newsletters can be published more often.

As noted previously, there are a lot of online resources available related to the publishing of newsletters. There is no need to reproduce all of that information in this plan. However, the following general recommendations are being made.

- People are busy and don’t have time to read lots of information, so don’t pack too much material into an issue. Save some for the next time. Shorter newsletters are also less expensive to produce. Limit the length of the newsletters to no more than 4 to 6 pages.
- It’s better to have a less frequent but regular newsletter than one which is promised every month and fails to appear. A lot of groups find that quarterly newsletters work well. The Borough’s website and social media can be used to keep people informed between issues.
- Consider using a regular layout that will make the newsletter more familiar to readers. Decide on some regular features like “community spotlight”, “business of the month”, “upcoming events”, etc.
- Reach out to residents, business owners, and community groups for topics and material, but remember that it’s not always easy for people to put their thoughts down on paper. Someone from the newsletter committee may need to talk to them and then write an article based on that conversation. Each newsletter should have an email address for readers to send in story ideas, news items, or anything else they want to share. Remember, there is no obligation to print everything that is received.
- More people will read the newsletter if they find it helpful and enjoyable to read. Balance public service related material with fun, practical and/or useful information. For example, highlight a local auto repair business, and include some car care tips.

### **Task 1.3 – Distribute Borough newsletters in both print and online formats.**

Although many residents have access to internet, many others still either do not have access, or will prefer to receive paper copies of the newsletter. Therefore, the newsletters will be distributed in print as well as being made available online.

The Borough’s current newsletter is printed at the Borough office and mailed to all residents twice per year. It is anticipated that future newsletters will continue to be mailed to residents. The newsletter committee may also want to consider distributing copies of the newsletter at businesses and other locations that residents and non residents frequent such as the grocery store, convenience stores, retail stores, churches, etc. This would be a cost effective way to expand distribution, and to reach non residents who visit Albion.

Each newsletter will be posted to the Borough’s website. In addition, the publication of each newsletter will be announced on the Borough’s social media platform(s), and a link to the Borough’s website will be provided.

**Goal #2: Showcase Albion and provide useful and timely information to residents and visitors by maximizing the use of the Albion Borough website.**

The Borough's website offers an opportunity to showcase Albion. Not all visitors to the website will be Albion residents. Municipal websites are often viewed by non residents, so there is a good opportunity to promote Albion and encourage people to visit. The Borough may want to consider offering information about what it's like to live in Albion, adding links to the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce and the Albion Fair, making sure there are plenty of photographs of Albion, and listing or providing links to local events.

**Task 2.1 – Retain a consultant to design a Borough website that is organized, useful, and user-friendly.**

In order to get the most value out of the Borough's website and maximize its potential use, it is essential that the site is well designed and user friendly for both site visitors and the Borough staff who are tasked with maintaining the site.

If site visitors can't find the information that they are looking for in a manner that is simple and easy to navigate, then the website will not be as successful as it could be. At the same time, if Borough staff find it difficult to update or add content, then the site is less likely to be kept up-to-date with useable, relevant information.

The Borough should retain a consultant to evaluate the existing website, and make recommendations concerning the functionality of the existing Borough website, possible upgrades to that site, and whether or not it will make more sense for the Borough to upgrade its current website or to have a new website designed. This will allow the Borough to make an informed decision regarding the best way to ensure that its website is capable of meeting the needs of the Borough. The Borough should then follow through with any upgrades or redesign work that is needed.

**Task 2.2 – Designate and train a Borough staff member to maintain the Borough's website.**

The Borough's website will need regular maintenance in order to keep its content up to date. The responsibility of updating and adding new content when appropriate should be delegated to a Borough staff member as part of his/her job responsibilities. Adequate training should be provided, as needed, in order to ensure that the staff member will feel comfortable taking on this role.

**Task 2.3 – Keep residents and non residents informed by providing relevant, usable, and up-to-date information via the Borough's website.**

Today, most people are accustomed to finding all of the information they need online. However, outdated information is not relevant or useful. Therefore, in addition to designating a staff member to maintain the website, the Borough should also create a plan to help ensure that the site is kept up to date with current, relevant information. For example, the Borough may want to review the site's contents on a regular basis (monthly, at a minimum) in order to ensure that it remains relevant and up to date. The Borough may also want to establish deadlines for updates to specific types of content. As an example, the Borough may decide to post Council meeting minutes by the end of the day following each meeting.



### **Goal #3: Build a strong social media presence to better engage residents.**

Social media offers a new type of community participation. Many residents don't have the time or the desire to attend a council meeting or public hearing. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't interested, or that they don't have opinions and viewpoints to share. The use of social media allows the Borough to connect with some of these hard to reach residents.

#### **Task 3.1 – Adopt a social media policy that governs the use of the Borough's official social media platform(s).**

Social media can be a powerful tool with substantial benefits. However, as with other forms of communication, care must be taken to make sure that it is used appropriately.

The best way to make sure that the Borough's social media platform(s) is being used appropriately is to establish a social media policy that governs its use. The policy should be reviewed by the Borough's solicitor prior to implementation, and should be posted on the Borough's website.

There is no "one size fits all". The Borough will need to tailor a policy to suit its needs. At a minimum, it should include:

- Public comment policy
- Procedure for monitoring public comments
- Procedure for removal of inappropriate comments in accordance with the policy
- Employee use policy (including elected officials)

*Building Local Government Social Media Policies*, by the National League of Cities Risk Information Sharing Consortium is one of several online resources that are available. It can be viewed at <http://www.nlc.org/sites/default/files/RISC-2011-Social-Media-Policies.pdf>

#### **Task 3.2 – Designate and train a Borough staff member to maintain and monitor the Borough's social media platform(s).**

The Borough's social media platform(s) will need to be maintained and monitored, and this responsibility should be delegated to a Borough staff member as part of his/her job responsibilities.

The Borough's social media policy should not discriminate against any views. However, obscenity, defamation, hate speech, or comments/posts that threaten to harm individuals, groups or organizations should not be allowed. The Borough may want to consider using a site administrator to pre-screen comments/posts in order to prevent the posting of any inappropriate comments that are in violation of the Borough's policy. As an alternative to pre-screening comments/posts, any inappropriate comments/posts should be promptly removed.

There should also be a procedure in place for monitoring, responding to, and taking timely action upon information conveyed via public comments. The staff member(s) designated to monitor the Borough's social media platform(s) should be trained to respond appropriately to comments that are critical of the Borough, and to make sure that any public safety related concerns are brought to the attention of the appropriate Borough officials.

**Task 3.3 – Keep residents and visitors informed by providing relevant, usable, and up-to-date information via the Borough’s social media platform(s).**

People will be more likely follow the Borough’s social media if they receive a useful stream of information. In order to build and maintain a strong social media presence, the Borough will need to commit to on-going site maintenance to keep its contents and information relevant, usable and up-to-date. It is recommended that information posted by the Borough should be kept relatively short for easier use and display on mobile devices. Access to more detailed information can be distributed via links to the Borough’s website. For example, rather than posting meeting minutes or a copy of the Borough’s newsletter directly on social media, that information should be posted on the Borough’s website, with links provided on the Borough’s social media platform(s).

**Task 3.4 – Give residents a voice by using social media to collect public input and feedback.**

Social media is a new way for people to engage with their government and their community. Platforms like Facebook give people an accessible place to ask questions, leave suggestions, or make complaints. The Borough also has an opportunity to post questions, and allow participants to provide their input and feedback on pertinent topics.

**Task 3.5 – Stay relevant by using the social media platforms preferred by residents and visitors.**

There are many different social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and others. In addition, new platforms continue to be developed, and trends in usage can change over time. In order to stay relevant the Borough should consider and explore the latest and most popular platforms to determine which platform(s) best meet its needs. The Borough may wish to consider using public surveys to find out which platforms are being used by and/or are preferred by its residents and others who are interested in the community.

**Goal #4: Build and maintain good relationships with the news media.**

The Borough intends to strengthen its community engagement and improve government transparency through an improved newsletter, website and social media. A more productive and effective relationship with the news media will also help to get the word out about the many positive things that are being done in Albion.

The intent of this goal is to build and maintain good relationships with all types of news media, including print, television and radio. This should be expanded to include online news media if that opportunity presents itself in the future.

**Task 4.1 – Designate a Borough Council member(s) and/or the Borough manager as the Borough’s primary media contact(s).**

It is recommended that Borough Council should designate a Council member or members and/or the Borough manager to act as the Borough’s primary media contact(s). That person(s) will take primary responsibility for engaging with the news media, and working to build a positive relationship. The designated contact(s) should be easily assessable. It is recommended that contact information should be available on the Borough’s website. Ideally, the contact(s) should be comfortable with dealing with the media, and should be able to articulate the Borough’s positions and viewpoints in a positive manner. It should be noted, however, that good media relations should not be solely the responsibility of the designated contact(s). This will need to be a team effort by all Borough officials and staff.

#### **Task 4.2 – Proactively engage with the media by contacting them about newsworthy stories and events.**

In order to effectively get Albion’s message out, relevant information needs to be given to the right people. The Borough should assemble a list of media contacts who are interested in Albion and its issues and events. The Borough’s designated primary media contact(s) should then contact the media directly, by phone and/or email, about newsworthy stories and events.

There is a lot of information available online about media relations. This includes *Media Relations Tips for Newly Elected Officials*, by the Institute for Local Government - [https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/media\\_relations\\_tips\\_for\\_newly\\_elected\\_officials\\_march\\_2014\\_0.pdf](https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/media_relations_tips_for_newly_elected_officials_march_2014_0.pdf)

**Goal #5: Use the Borough newsletter, website, social media, and media relationships to promote and encourage implementation of the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan.**

The Borough’s newsletter, website, social media and media relations can all be used to help promote and encourage the implementation of this plan. All of these tools provide the Borough with an opportunity to engage the public and to keep them informed about how they can be part of the process and contribute in a positive way to improving the community.

These tools also provide an opportunity for the Borough to highlight its successes and the contributions of its residents, businesses and community organizations. For example, a volunteer neighborhood “clean-up” day, the rehabilitation of a blighted property, a successful event held at the park, and the expansion of a local business all contribute to the successful implementation of this plan. Accomplishments like these should be recognized, and people should be reminded how these efforts contribute to the Borough’s larger vision of plan implementation.

## **Implementation**

### **How can you help promote Albion?**

Area residents can help to promote Albion in the following ways:

- Read the Borough newsletter, and stay informed about local events and activities.
- Visit the Borough website regularly for up-to-date information relevant to area residents.
- Share the positives about Albion with your friends and neighbors on social media.
- Participate in public surveys, when available. Let Borough officials know your opinions.

### **How can your business, organization or neighborhood group help promote Albion?**

Your business or organization can help to promote Albion by contributing relevant news items to the Borough newsletter. For example, if your business or organization is expanding, or holding or sponsoring a special event or activity, let the Borough know.

## Promote Albion Action Plan

	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal #1</b>	<b>Keep residents informed, and promote community pride by publishing an Albion Borough newsletter.</b>					
Task 1.1	Designate Borough staff and/or recruit area residents to serve on a newsletter committee.	Borough Council	Borough staff	Within first 6 months	none	n/a
Task 1.2	Publish Borough newsletters on a regular schedule.	Borough staff	Newsletter committee; contributing writers from area businesses, community organizations, neighborhood groups, etc.	On-going	Staff time	Borough general fund
<b>Goal #2</b>	<b>Showcase Albion and provide useful and timely information to residents and visitors by maximizing the use of the Albion Borough website.</b>					
Task 2.1	Retain a consultant to design a Borough website that is organized, useful, and user friendly.	Borough Council	Borough staff	Within first 6 months	\$1,500 - \$3,000.	Borough general fund; grant funding, if available
Task 2.2	Designate and train a Borough staff member to maintain the Borough's website.	Borough Council	Borough manager	Within first 6 months	Staff time; training costs	Borough general fund
Task 2.3	Keep residents and non-residents informed by providing relevant, usable, and up-to-date information via the Borough's website.	Borough staff	n/a	On-going	Staff time	Borough general fund
<b>Goal #3</b>	<b>Build a strong social media presence to better engage with residents.</b>					
Task 3.1	Adopt a social media policy that governs the use of the Borough's official social media platform(s).	Borough Council	Borough staff, Borough solicitor	Within first 6 months	legal fees	Borough general fund
Task 3.2	Designate and train a Borough staff member to maintain and monitor the Borough's social media platform(s).	Borough Council	Borough manager	Within first 6 months	Staff time; training costs	Borough general fund
Task 3.3	Keep residents and visitors informed by providing relevant, usable, and up-to-date information via the Borough's social media platform(s).	Borough staff	n/a	On-going	Staff time	Borough general fund
Task 3.4	Give residents a voice by using social media to collect public input and feedback.	Borough staff	n/a	On-going	Staff time	Borough general fund

	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
Task 3.5	Stay relevant by using the social media platforms preferred by residents and visitors.	Borough staff	n/a	On-going	minimal or none	n/a
<b>Goal #4</b>	<b>Build and maintain good relationships with the news media.</b>					
Task 4.1	Designate a Borough Council member(s) and/or the Borough manager as the Borough's primary media contact(s).	Borough Council	Borough manager	Within first 6 months	minimal or none	n/a
Task 4.2	Proactively engage with the media by contacting them about newsworthy stories and events.	Designated media contact(s)	Borough Council; Borough manager	On-going	minimal or none	n/a
<b>Goal #5</b>	<b>Use the Borough newsletter, website, social media, and media relationships to promote and encourage implementation of the Albion Borough Comprehensive Plan.</b>	<b>Borough staff</b>	<b>Borough Council; Designated media contact(s)</b>	<b>On-going</b>	<b>minimal or none</b>	<b>n/a</b>

# Additional Resources

## Reference Materials

*Elm Street Manager's Handbook*, page 1.11, by Pennsylvania Downtown Center

[https://padowntown.org/assets/pdfs/Handbooks/Elm\\_St\\_Handbook.pdf](https://padowntown.org/assets/pdfs/Handbooks/Elm_St_Handbook.pdf)

*5 Tips for Creating a Successful Municipal Website*, by Vermont Council on Rural Development

<https://www.vtrural.org/programs/digital-economy/updates/5-website-tips>

*Creating a Managing a Municipal Website*, by Vermont Council on Rural Development

<https://www.vtrural.org/programs/digital-economy/services/municipal-websites/toolkits>

*How to Create a Neighborhood Newsletter*, by Yes we can!

[http://www.grassrootsgrantmakers.org/wp-content/uploads/Create\\_a\\_Nhood\\_Newsletter.pdf](http://www.grassrootsgrantmakers.org/wp-content/uploads/Create_a_Nhood_Newsletter.pdf)

*What will you put in your neighborhood newsletter?*, by Resource Centre

<https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/What-will-you-put-in-your-community-newsletter.pdf>

*Planning a Community Newsletter*, by Resource Centre

<https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/planning-a-community-newsletter/>

*Building Local Government Social Media Policies*, by the National League of Cities Risk Information Sharing Consortium

<http://www.nlc.org/sites/default/files/RISC-2011-Social-Media-Policies.pdf>

*Three Golden Rules of Social Media for Municipalities*, by Ryan Treleaven

<https://www.sherrardkuzz.com/pdf/MW-Mar2014-Treleaven.pdf>

*Media Relations Tips for Newly Elected Officials*, by the Institute for Local Government

[https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/media\\_relations\\_tips\\_for\\_newly\\_elected\\_officials\\_march\\_2014\\_0.pdf](https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/media_relations_tips_for_newly_elected_officials_march_2014_0.pdf)

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# Love Our Park

**1**

**Establish a Parks and Recreation Board**

**2**

**Build Community Support for the Park and increase citizen involvement**

**3**

**Increase usage of the Park by residents of Albion and surrounding communities**

**4**

**Supplement municipal budgeted funds by raising funds for park maintenance, programming, special events, capital improvements, and other park related needs**

**5**

**Plan for the Park's Future**



# Introduction

## Why is this important?

Albion’s “crown jewel” is its public park and adjacent fairgrounds. The Park is a legacy from past generations, and helps to define the community’s character. It provides residents and visitors with a place to relax, meet their neighbors, develop friendships, and enjoy life.

Each September, the Albion Fair draws visitors to Albion from throughout the region. The Fair brings friends and families together, and is a source of community pride.

When individuals and families choose where to live, they consider more than just the quality of the school system, the condition of the roads, and the safety of the neighborhoods. Close to home, affordable, recreational opportunities are also an important consideration. When businesses decide to locate or expand within a community, they consider quality of life factors. That includes things like parks and entertainment options.

The Albion Park is approximately 57 acres. When the adjacent fairgrounds property is included, the combined acreage increases to approximately 79 acres. This community asset sets Albion apart from other municipalities. Few municipalities have a park of this size, quality, and potential. There is sufficient land area available to provide for a wide range of active and passive recreational opportunities for all age groups. In addition, the park and fairgrounds are large enough to host regional events.

*The Park is a legacy from past generations, and helps to define the community’s character.*

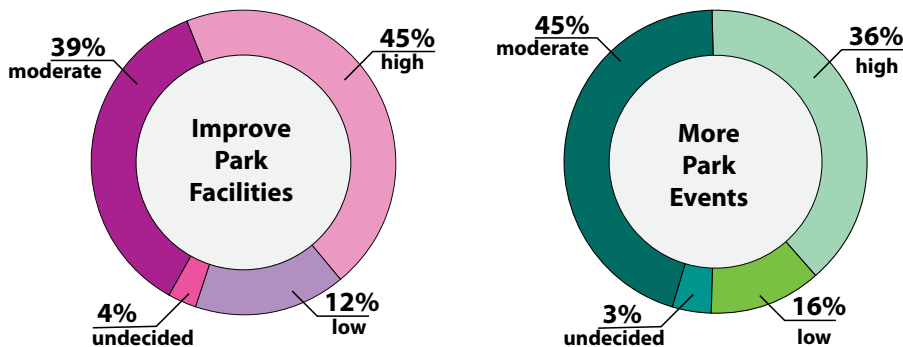
At the present time, the park is underutilized, and many of its facilities are showing signs of age. However, steps can be taken to maximize the park’s potential. The park and fairgrounds provide endless opportunities to bring recreational and entertainment options to Albion that will benefit the community both socially and economically.

## Public Input/Public Survey Results

Albion residents understand the importance of the park to their community. As part of the public survey, 84% rated “Improving the Public Park and Facilities” as either a high priority (45%) or a moderate priority (39%), while only 12% rated it a low priority. The remaining 4% were undecided.

In addition, 81% of survey respondents rated “Hold more community events and activities (festivals, activities at the park, etc.)” as either a high priority (36%) or a moderate priority (45%), while only 16% rated it a low priority. The remaining 3% were undecided.

It’s also worth noting that according to the public survey results, a lack of recreational activities for families, for the elderly, and for the youth were rated as 3 of the top 8 areas of greatest dissatisfaction. Working to bring more recreational programs and opportunities to the park will help to address this problem.



## Long Term Vision for Albion's Park (Year 2040)

Year 2040 - The Albion Park has maximized its potential as a community asset. While the Albion Fair continues to be the community's signature event, the park now hosts other regional events on a seasonal basis. Each year, thousands of visitors are drawn to Albion to experience these events, and this has been a benefit to local businesses.

The Borough's Park and Recreation Board and Friends of the Park Organization are active, and play a leading role in the successful operation of the park. Each year, they plan and conduct numerous recreational programs and events, and organize fundraisers to help pay for not only the cost of these programs, but to help with the cost of park maintenance and capital improvements.

The park has seen many capital improvements and upgrades over the years. Walking trails have been added throughout the park, picnic pavilions and restrooms are well maintained, recreational facilities have been added, and the park features a new, all seasons gathering place with kitchen and restroom facilities. The carousel is featured prominently, and continues to be a main attraction.

# Goals and Objectives (Tasks)

## ***Goal #1: Establish a Parks and Recreation Board***

At the present time, the Borough has limited staff capacity available to improve the park and associated recreational opportunities. Creation of a Parks and Recreation Board is a solution to this problem. Board members will be citizen advocates of the park, and will serve without pay. The Board will serve the Borough in an advisory role. It will help to relieve the Borough staff from some of the day to day operational responsibilities and concerns of the park, and will help to plan and conduct recreational programs and special events. The Board will play a leading role in implementing this plan. It will help to promote the park, solicit public input, help to get citizens involved in volunteer efforts, and help to raise funds to supplement the Borough's budgeted funds.

*The Recreation and Parks Board Handbook, Fourth Edition*, authored by Susan E. Landes, CPRE, provides guidance on how to establish an effective Parks and Recreation Board. This reference is available online at [http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_002301.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_002301.pdf)

### ***Task 1.1 - Adopt municipal ordinance to create a Parks and Recreation Board***

The Pennsylvania Borough Code, Sections 2708 - 2710, gives the Borough the authority to create a Parks and Recreation Board. The Board will be established by ordinance, and will possess the powers and duties that are delegated to it by the Borough.

If assistance is requested, the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development will assist with drafting the ordinance. However, the Borough solicitor should review the ordinance prior to adoption.

### ***Task 1.2 - Recruit and Appoint Board Members***

Finding and recruiting the best candidates for Board membership will be critical to the Park's future as well as the successful implementation of this plan. Board members should be advocates of the park who are friendly and people oriented, enthusiastic, have time to give, and have the talents and qualifications that fit the needs of the Board. It is recommended that the majority of Board members should be residents of the Borough. In accordance with Section 2709 (b) of the Borough Code, membership will consist of between 5 and 9 persons, and members will be appointed by Borough Council.

In order to find and recruit the best possible board members, it's important to look in the right places. Professional organizations, local civic groups, the school district, youth sports organizations, area businesses, the religious community, and parent teacher organizations are often great sources. Recruitment can be done through direct contact with these organizations, announcements at meetings or special events, in newsletters or by use of the Borough and/or organization's website.

It is recommended that the Board roster should be filled with members whose skills and talents match up with 4 proposed committees, as follows:

- **Finance Committee** – The Board will need at least 1 or 2 members who are skilled with fund raising, and will be comfortable seeking donations, discussing event sponsorships with local businesses, etc. It would be ideal to have at least 1 member with some book keeping experience.
- **Programming Committee** – These are the “party planners”. The Board will need at least 3 members who enjoy planning and conducting recreational programs, activities, and special events. Ideally, they will also be good at recruiting and working with volunteers needed for these events.
- **Public Relations Committee** – The Board will need at least 1 or 2 members who will be comfortable being its spokesperson(s), and who are talented with promotional and marketing efforts.
- **Buildings & Grounds Committee** – The Board will need at least 1 or 2 members who have the skills needed to oversee buildings and grounds maintenance. It will be essential that they are able to work with volunteers on various maintenance projects.

Since communication and a strong working relationship with Borough Council will be essential, it is recommended that one Borough Council member should serve as either a Board member or as a liaison to the Board.

### **Task 1.3 - Provide Orientation & Training**

In order to be effective, it is important that Board members understand their roles and responsibilities. Once the Board is established, existing Board members will be available to help orient and train new members. However, when the Board is initially established, other alternatives for orientation and training will be needed.

Fortunately, help is available. Here is a list of some options and resources:

- DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Northwest Regional Office
- Other Municipal Parks and Recreation Boards – Reaching out to other municipal park and recreation boards, and establishing good relationships with them will be beneficial. They will most likely be willing to provide advice and may also be willing to offer some assistance. The sharing of ideas and information between boards will benefit everyone.
- There are many reference materials available online. See the “references” noted at the end of this section.
- If assistance is requested, the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development will assist with the initial establishment and orientation of the Board, to the extent that its staff capacity allows.

Training should not be limited solely to an initial orientation session(s). It should be continual and on-going. It will be important for the Board to stay up-to-date, with the most current information and ideas relating to parks and recreation. Networking with other municipal park and recreation boards is recommended.

For on-going assistance, networking and training opportunities it is recommended that the Board join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS). PRPS is a state-wide, non-profit, membership organization that promotes quality recreation and parks opportunities for all Pennsylvania citizens through education and training, technical assistance, information on funding opportunities and other support to local, county, regional, state and federal recreation and parks providers. More information is available online at <https://www.prps.org/>.

#### **Task 1.4 - Draft and Adopt Board Bylaws**

Once the Parks and Recreation Board is established, it should develop its own bylaws. The bylaws should then be reviewed periodically to make sure they are still effective. The bylaws should be approved by Borough Council.

*The Recreation and Parks Board Handbook, Fourth Edition*, authored by Susan E. Landes, CPRE, provides guidance on how to develop bylaws, and includes a sample that can be used as a template. Refer to pages 17-18 and Appendix D (pages 129-136). This reference is available online at [http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_002301.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_002301.pdf)

#### **Task 1.5 - Create Board Committees for Finance, Buildings & Grounds, Programming, and Public Relations**

In order to be most effective, the Parks and Recreation Board should create committees for finance, buildings & grounds, programming, and public relations. At least 1 or 2 board members should serve on each committee, and each committee should be chaired by a board member.

As noted previously, the PA Borough Code limits the number of board members to between 5 and 9 persons. Given the amount of work that needs to be done, board members will need additional support. It is recommended that non-board members, perhaps “friends of the park”, should be given an opportunity to participate on these committees.

The roles of these committees are as follows:

- **Finance** – Advise Borough Council on funding needs. Help plan and conduct fundraising events, seek donations, and approach businesses regarding sponsorships of events.
- **Buildings & Grounds** – Advise Borough on maintenance needs. Help recruit volunteers. Plan and conduct “clean-up” days, and other volunteer maintenance projects.
- **Programming** – Plan and conduct programs, activities and special events. Recruit volunteers needed to support these activities and events.
- **Public Relations** – Act as the Board’s spokesperson(s). Promote the park, programming and events. Keep residents informed about the park, collect public input, and work to get public support. Help recruit volunteers needed to support the park and its recreational opportunities. Work to develop and maintain partnerships with the school district, businesses and community organizations.



## **Goal #2: Build Community Support for the Park and increase citizen involvement**

In order to make substantial improvements to the park and its associated recreational opportunities, strong community support will be needed. Obtaining that support will take some work.

An effort must be made to build a positive image and increase the public's awareness of the park and the efforts that are being made to improve it. Getting people actively involved in park activities, events, and volunteer opportunities will help lead the way towards gaining the support that will be needed.

### **Task 2.1 – Organize a volunteer base and provide volunteer opportunities to help meet the needs of the park.**

Improving the park needs to be a community effort. The Borough and the Borough's Parks and Recreation Board will need the support of a strong, volunteer base.

A "Friends of the Park" organization should be established to provide the Parks and Recreation Board with the support needed. Members of the "Friends of the Park" should be encouraged to participate on all of the Board committees.

Volunteer needs should be identified and inventoried. The jobs should be specific and meaningful. Rather than simply asking for "volunteers", ask for event organizers, program instructors, help with fund raising, help with park clean-up, etc. Ideally, the inventory list of volunteer needs should include a wide variety of different opportunities so that all interested citizens will have an opportunity to participate, regardless of their skills or areas of interest.

Use the Borough newsletter, website and/or social media to recruit volunteers. Some potential sources of volunteers include schools, businesses, religious institutions and other community organizations.

In cases where volunteers are in contact with children, they will typically need child clearances. It is recommended that any fees associated with obtaining these clearances should be paid by either by the Borough or with funds raised for this purpose by the Parks and Recreation Board or the Friends of the Park.

Be sure to recognize and acknowledge the work and accomplishments of volunteers.

### **Task 2.2 – Strengthen existing partnerships and create new partnerships.**

Given the importance of the Albion Fair, and the fact that the Albion park property is leased to the Albion Area Fair Association for use during the fair, the importance of maintaining a strong partnership with the Fair Board is obvious.

Developing and maintaining partnerships with the Northwestern School District, Albion Area Chamber of Commerce, Albion Fire Department, religious institutions, businesses and community organizations will be beneficial. Developing these partnerships should be a priority of the Board's Public Relations committee.

Examples of partnerships include, but are not limited to, business sponsorships of special events, partnering on grant applications, and cooperating on the planning and conducting of recreational programs and events.



### **Task 2.3 – Build a positive image by keeping park facilities well maintained.**

Providing clean, safe and well maintained park facilities will enhance peoples’ recreation experiences, save money, reduce liability and help to build and maintain a positive public image.

In order to accomplish this, a park maintenance plan needs to be developed and implemented. An inventory of maintenance needs should be created, along with a schedule of when and how often maintenance work should be performed.

Park maintenance plans typically include routine, regularly scheduled tasks (mowing grass, weeding & watering flower beds), repairs needed to help prevent excessive wear and more expensive repairs, daily custodial housekeeping (cleaning restrooms, emptying trash cans, etc), hauling/set-up and tear down & clean-up for recreational programs and special events, scheduled improvements (roof replacements, painting), and emergency repairs (vandalism, accidents, weather damage).

As part of the maintenance plan, at least one “park clean-up day” should be held each year. Keep Erie County Beautiful provides support for “clean-up” days and events throughout Erie County. Contact the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development for additional information. Special volunteer projects or events can also be conducted for needs such as playground upgrades, painting park facilities, etc.



### **Task 2.4 – Increase public awareness of the park and its programs.**

The success of the parks and recreation program can be measured by the number of people it serves. Therefore, it’s important to get the word out, and keep the public informed about the recreational opportunities available, special events being held, accomplishments of volunteers, new park facilities available, and any other important items of interest that are relevant to the park.

The Borough’s newsletter, website and social media should play a leading role in promoting the park and its events. The Board’s public relations committee should submit information to the Borough and the media on a regular basis.

The Parks and Recreation Board may want to consider tracking the number of park visitors as a performance measure of its success.

## **Goal #3: Increase usage of the Park by residents of Albion and surrounding communities**

Some of our best memories are from times spent enjoying life and attending recreational events with family and friends. This goal may be one of the most rewarding goals of this plan.

### **Task 3.1 – Provide a variety of affordable recreational programs and opportunities suitable for all age groups.**

The public survey results and public comments received during development of this plan make it clear that area residents desire more recreational opportunities for families and for people of all ages. They also recognize that the park provides an ideal location for some of those activities.

There are many types of recreational programs. These include arts & crafts, educational, fitness & wellness (aerobics, yoga), performing arts, social recreation (dances, board games, and preschool events), special events (festivals, fairs), sports, and games & athletics (volleyball, basketball, softball).

Recreational programs can also be offered in several different formats. Examples include classes, workshops, clubs/interest groups, competitive, drop-in, one-day only, or weekend.

A public survey(s) can be used to help determine the feasibility and amount of interest for various types of recreational programs prior to offering them. This will help to ensure that the recreational programs and activities being offered will be successful and that they meet the needs of area residents.

**Task 3.2 – Plan and hold at least one, regional, family oriented special event per season.**

The Albion Park has the size, location and other characteristics needed to hold special events on a regional scale. These events will benefit the Borough and area businesses by drawing visitors from far beyond Albion’s municipal boundaries.

This regional potential is demonstrated each September by the Albion Fair. The community will continue to support the fair as its “signature event”. However, our goal is to increase the number of events held each year, and to plan and hold at least one, regional, family oriented event per season. This will result in consistent, year-round use of the park.

The types of events that can be held are limited only by one’s imagination. Concerts, egg hunts, craft shows, 4th of July celebrations, and auto shows are just a few examples. Chestnut Hill Township, in Monroe County, PA has held a successful Haunted Forest event around Halloween. Currently, Albion Borough is working on a “Christmas in the park” event.

There are lots of great ideas online. Sites like <https://visitpa.com/pa-events-festivals> and <https://www.festivalsinpa.com/> are sources for ideas, and also offer an opportunity to get the word out about events being held at the Albion park.

**Task 3.3 - Promote the Park for use as a gathering place for families, community groups, and organizations.**

Park facilities include the log cabin community center, the stone house, and several picnic pavilions which are available for rent. These facilities are ideal for picnics, family reunions, birthday parties and other special events.

Although the Borough currently promotes the use of these facilities in its newsletter and on its website, it is recommended that these promotional efforts should be intensified to the extent practicable. The goal is the get as much use out of these facilities as possible and draw as many visitors to the park as possible.

**Goal #4: Supplement municipal budgeted funds by raising funds for park maintenance, programming, special events, capital improvements, and other park related needs**

In Pennsylvania, most of the funding for public parks and recreation comes from the general funds of local municipalities. Unfortunately, at the present time, the Borough has limited funding available to expand park operations and/or activities. The good news is that there are many opportunities to supplement municipal budgeted funds with grant funding, user fees and fundraising efforts.

*Financing Municipal Recreation and Parks, Second Edition*, authored by Susan E. Landes, CPRE is a great source of useful information. It is available online at [http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_002283.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_002283.pdf)

**Task 4.1 – Research and pursue available grant opportunities.**

There are numerous grant opportunities available for parks and recreation. Some of them are listed in the “Additional Resources” following this section of this plan. The Parks and Recreation Board, its finance committee, and members of the “Friends of the Park” should take the lead in researching and pursuing these opportunities.

**Task 4.2 – Pursue sponsorships of special events and recreational programs by area businesses, community groups and organizations.**

Offering sponsorships of recreational programs and special events is a great way to help offset the associated costs. It's important to offer participating businesses a return on their investment, such as visibility. For example, the name of the business should be included in all advertisements associated with the event.

**Task 4.3 – Charge user fees and admission fees to help cover costs associated with specific recreation programs and events, when appropriate.**

Many recreation programs and activities can be funded on a break even basis through user fees paid by the participants. For example, it is common practice to charge fees to offset the costs of things like supplies need for an arts & crafts class, hiring an instructor for a yoga or aerobics class, or renting a park facility for a club meeting. In some cases, fees can even bring in additional funds that can be used to help offset the costs of park maintenance and other services.

**Task 4.4 – Plan and hold fundraising events/activities.**

There are endless possibilities for fundraising events and activities. It is recommended that rather than simply asking for donations, something of value should be given in return. Pancake breakfasts, raffle tickets and bake sales are just a few ideas. Many more ideas are available online.

**Task 4.5 – Partner with a business(s) to earn income from concessions sold at the Park.**

Partnering with a local business to earn additional income for the park can be as simple as adding some vending machines. Other possibilities include leasing a concession stand during special events, bringing a farmer's market to the park, and Christmas tree sales.

**Goal #5: Plan for the Park's Future**

**Task 5.1 – Monitor Implementation of Park Plans**

Implementation of this plan is our ultimate goal. In order to make implementation a reality, progress should be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis, but at least once a year at a minimum. If obstacles to implementation are being encountered, or if satisfactory results are not being obtained, it may be necessary to make adjustments to this plan so that the desired results can be achieved.

**Task 5.2 – Park Master Plan (long-term plan for the park)**

During this planning process, public comments have suggested various capital improvements for the park. This includes walking trails and sidewalks; and an all season gathering place with kitchen, restrooms, fireplace, parking, and seating for up to 300 people.

Before spending a lot of time and money, more extensive planning should be done. It is recommended that in the first few years following adoption of this plan, the Borough's focus should be on establishing a Parks and Recreation Board and increasing the number of recreational programs, activities and special events. Fundraising should also be done to supplement the Borough's budgeted funds.

After the Board has been established, and it becomes more clear which types of activities and events are of most interest to the community, and what the park's greatest needs are, then it will be time for a park master plan.

A professional consultant with experience in park planning should be retained to prepare the park master plan. At the present time, the cost of a master plan is estimated at between \$40,000 and \$60,000. However, it may be possible to arrange grant funding to cover part of this cost.



Regardless of the cost, a park master plan will be a necessity to ensure that future investments in the park are done wisely. In addition, it is often necessary to have a master plan in order to be eligible for park rehabilitation and development grants.

### **Task 5.3 – Feasibility studies for any substantial park improvement or program.**

The purpose of a feasibility study is to explore whether or not a proposed development project is viable, in terms of cost, citizen interest and support, location, etc. A feasibility study should be a prerequisite to any significant capital improvement, such as a swimming pool or large all seasons gathering place.

### **Task 5.4 – Review Park Action Plan and update for next 3-5 years, as needed.**

This 5 year, action plan represents the first steps to be taken towards accomplishing the community’s long term vision for the park. This plan should be reviewed near the end of this 5 year period. It may still be relevant, or perhaps may just need some slight modifications to keep it up to date. During this review, it will also be important to review the long term vision for the park. If the long term vision has changed, it’s likely that adjustments will need to be made to this plan in order to ensure that positive progress continues to be made.

## **Implementation**

### **How can you help our park?**

Improving Albion’s park and expanding upon the number recreational activities and events available needs to be a community effort. Area residents can support the park in the following ways:

- Visit and enjoy the park. Bring your friends and family.
- Attend recreational activities and special events held at the park.
- Become a “Friend of the Park”.
- Use social media to encourage your friends and family to visit and enjoy the park.
- Participate on a park “clean-up” day or volunteer effort to address the park’s maintenance needs. Information about these events and other volunteer opportunities will be posted on the Borough’s website.
- Support fundraising efforts held on behalf of the park.
- Give the Parks and Recreation Board some feedback. Are they doing a good job? Do you have suggestions for how the park can be improved? Respond to public surveys requesting public input about the park. All Parks and Recreation Board meetings are open to the public. The meeting schedule will be posted on the Borough’s website.

### **How can your business, organization or neighborhood group help our park?**

Here are some suggestions on how your business, organization or neighborhood group can get involved with the park:

- Hold a company or organization meeting, picnic or special event at the park.
- Partner with the Parks and Recreation Board to help plan, conduct and/or sponsor a recreational program or special event.
- Partner with the Parks and Recreation Board to help plan and conduct a park “clean-up” day or volunteer effort to address one of the park’s maintenance needs.
- Support fundraising efforts held on behalf of the park.

## Love Our Park Action Plan

Goal #1	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
Task 1.1	Establish a Parks and Recreation Board Adopt municipal ordinance to create a Parks and Recreation Board.	Borough Council	Borough solicitor; Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development (ECDP)	Within first 6 months	legal fees; typical costs associated with adoption of an ordinance	Borough general fund
Task 1.2	Recruit and appoint Board members	Borough Council	Albion Plan steering committee	Within first 6 months	none	n/a
Task 1.3	Provide Board orientation & training	Borough Council	ECDP	Within first 6 months	none	n/a
Task 1.4	Draft and adopt Board bylaws	Parks & Rec Board	ECDP	Within first 6 months	none	n/a
Task 1.5	Create Board committees for finance, buildings & grounds, programming, and public relations	Parks & Rec Board	n/a	Within first 6 months	none	n/a
Goal #2	Build community support for the park and increase citizen involvement.					
Task 2.1	Organize a volunteer base and provide volunteer opportunities to help meet the needs of the park.	Public Relations Committee	Parks & Rec Board	Year 1, then on-going	none	n/a
Sub-Task 2.1.1	Establish "Friends of the Park" organization	Public Relations Committee	Parks & Rec Board	Year 1	none	n/a
Sub-Task 2.1.2	Identify (inventory/list) volunteer needs and opportunities.	Parks & Rec Board	Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	none	n/a
Sub-Task 2.1.3	Recruit "Friends" to help address volunteer needs of the park.	Parks & Rec Board	Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	none	n/a
Task 2.2	Strengthen existing partnerships and create new partnerships.	Public Relations Committee	Park & Rec Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	none	n/a
Task 2.3	Build a positive image by keeping park facilities well-maintained.	Building & Grounds Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park, Borough officials & staff	Year 1, then on-going	Depends on park usage and other factors. Refine estimate as part of park maintenance plan.	Borough general fund, supplemented by fundraising efforts, user fees associated with recreational programs, admission fees for special events, facilities rentals, etc.
Sub-Task 2.3.1	Develop park maintenance plan	Building & Grounds Committee	Parks & Rec. Board; Borough; ECDP	Year 1	none	n/a
Sub-Task 2.3.2	Plan and hold at least one "park clean-up day" each year to get citizen volunteers involved, and to help address the maintenance needs of the park.	Building & Grounds Committee	Park & Rec. Board; Friends of the Park; Keep Erie County Beautiful	Year 1, then on-going	possible equipment and/or supply costs, lunch for volunteers, etc.	Borough general fund or supplemental funding efforts

	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
Sub-Task 2.3.3	Plan and Hold at least one "park maintenance day" each year to get citizen volunteers involved, and to help address the maintenance needs of the park.	Building & Grounds Committee	Park & Rec. Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	possible equipment and/or supply costs, lunch for volunteers, etc.	Borough general fund or supplemental funding efforts
Task 2.4	Increase public awareness of the park and its programs.	Public Relations Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	minimal or none	supplemental funding efforts
<b>Goal #3</b>	<b>Increase usage of the park by residents of Albion and surrounding communities.</b>					
Task 3.1	Provide a variety of affordable recreational programs and opportunities suitable for all age groups.	Park Program Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	program specific	Supplemental funding efforts; User fees and admission fees can be used if appropriate for the event/activity.
Task 3.2	Plan and hold at least one, regional, family oriented special event per season. (minimum of 4 each year)	Park Program Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	specific to the event	Sponsorships and other supplemental funding efforts; Admission fees can be used if appropriate for the event.
Task 3.3	Promote the park for use as a gathering place for families, community groups, and organizations.	Public Relations Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	minimal or none	n/a
<b>Goal #4</b>	<b>Supplement municipal budgeted funds by raising funds for park maintenance, programming, special events, capital improvements, and other park related needs.</b>					
Task 4.1	Research and pursue available grant opportunities.	Finance Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park; Borough Council & staff	Year 1, then on-going	Depends on grant & grant project. Grant matching funds will be required in most cases.	Borough general fund; supplemental funding efforts
Task 4.2	Pursue sponsorships of special events and recreational programs by area businesses, community groups and organizations.	Finance Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	none	n/a
Task 4.3	Charge user fees and admission fees to help cover costs associated with specific recreation programs and events, when appropriate.	Finance Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	none	n/a

	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
Task 4.4	Plan and hold fundraising events/activities.	Finance Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park	Year 1, then on-going	specific to the event	Funds raised should exceed any costs associated with the event.
Task 4.5	Partner with a business(s) to earn income from concessions sold at the park.	Finance Committee	Parks & Rec Board; Friends of the Park; local business(s)	Year 1, then on-going	none	n/a
<b>Goal #5</b>	<b>Plan for the Park's Future</b>					
Task 5.1	Monitor implementation of park plans	Parks & Rec. Board	Friends of the Park	On-going, but annually at a minimum	none	n/a
Task 5.2	Park master plan (long-term plan for the park)	Parks & Rec. Board	professional consultant	Year 3, or prior to any substantial improvements	Estimated \$40K - \$60K, but will vary depending on scope of work.	Grant funding; matching funds from supplemental funding efforts and/or Borough general fund
Task 5.3	Feasibility Studies for any substantial park improvement or program	Parks & Rec. Board	professional consultant	As needed, prior to any substantial improvements or implementation of major recreation program.	Will vary depending on scope of work.	Grant funding; matching funds from supplemental funding efforts and/or Borough General Fund
Task 5.4	Review park action plan and update for next 3-5 years, as needed	Parks & Rec. Board	professional consultant, if needed	Year 5, or after implementation of this plan.	Cost will be minimal if done "in house". If consultant is needed, cost will vary depending on scope of work.	supplemental funding efforts

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# Additional Resources

## Reference Materials

*Community Recreation and Parks, Second Edition*, authored by Susan E. Landes, CPRP.  
[http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_002280.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_002280.pdf)

*The Recreation and Parks Board Handbook, Fourth Edition*, authored by Susan E. Landes, CPRE.  
[http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_002301.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_002301.pdf)

*Financing Municipal Recreation and Parks, Second Edition*, authored by Susan E. Landes, CPRE.  
[http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_002283.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_002283.pdf)

## Where to go for help

Help is available from the following organizations, among others:

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Recreation and Conservation;  
Northwest Regional Office;  
<http://www.dcnr.pa.gov>

Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS);  
<https://www.prps.org/>

Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development  
<https://www.eriecountypa.gov/county-services/county-offices/planning-department/planning-department.aspx>

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# Improve Our Neighborhoods

**1**

**Improve the quality, condition and safety of housing, buildings and other structures**

**2**

**Maintain safe, clean and walkable neighborhoods**

**3**

**Beautify Albion neighborhoods with trees, gardens, attractive landscaping and holiday decorations**



# Introduction

## Why is this important?

The **“Improve Our Neighborhoods”** component of this plan is about creating a better quality of life for Albion residents through safer, cleaner, and more attractive neighborhoods. Many small communities, such as Albion, struggle with a lack of investment which can lead to property maintenance issues and blight, reduced property values, population loss, increased crime, and a negative image.

Abandoned and deteriorated housing, buildings and structures create significant costs for the Borough, create health and safety concerns, and deter investment. Vacant properties require a larger investment of police and fire resources than occupied properties because they are often the sites of crime and arson or accidental fires. In addition, studies have shown that vacant, blighted properties negatively impact the property values of other homes in the area.

*Improving our neighborhoods needs to be a community effort.*

For neighborhoods to be strong and healthy, they need ongoing care from residents, neighborhood groups and community organizations that are engaged and committed to making a difference. Healthy neighborhoods are desirable places to live, foster friendships among neighbors, and often have high resident participation in neighborhood/community groups and volunteer efforts.

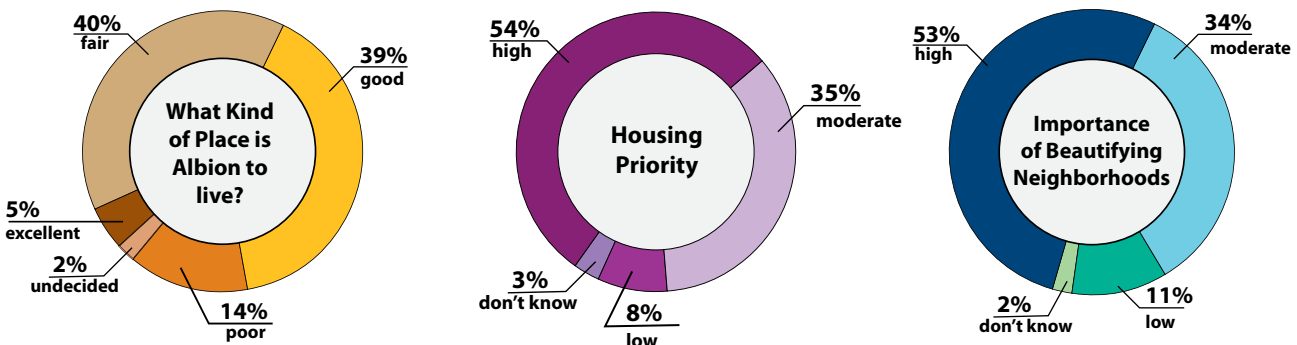
## Public Input/Public Survey Results

The results of Albion’s public survey indicate that we need to take steps to **improve our neighborhoods**. This includes working to improve our housing, beautifying our neighborhoods, and keeping them safe and “family friendly”.

As part of the public survey, only 44% rated Albion as either a good (39%) or excellent (5%) place to live, while 54% rated Albion as either a fair (40%) or poor (14%) place to live. The remaining 2% were undecided. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of public survey respondents rated developing and implementing a strategy to address deteriorated housing as either a high priority (54%) or as a moderate priority (35%). Only 8% rated it as a low priority. Three percent (3%) didn’t know. The survey specified that this was intended to include such things as rehabilitation programs, property maintenance codes, homeowner assistance programs for the elderly, etc.

The survey also asked about the importance of beautifying neighborhoods. This was clarified to include things like street lighting, sidewalk maintenance, tree planting programs, community “clean-up days”, etc. Eighty-seven percent (87%) rated beautifying neighborhoods as either a high priority (53%) or a moderate priority (34%). Eleven percent (11%) rated it a low priority. The remaining 2% didn’t know.

One of the top areas of dissatisfaction was indicated to be a lack of variety of housing options, especially options for the elderly. Public comments also indicated a perception among residents that crime is becoming more of a problem. Many voiced support for the police and fire departments. There were also concerns about an inability to attract and/or retain young families.



## Long Term Vision for Albion’s Neighborhoods (Year 2040)

Year 2040 – Albion’s neighborhoods are pleasant, attractive and safe. Community pride is evident. Homes and businesses are well maintained, and have attractive landscaping. Roads are also well maintained, and in good condition. The sidewalk system has been improved. People now have safe, walkable access to businesses, schools, and the public park. Residents look after their elderly and disabled neighbors, and neighbors help neighbors in times of need.

Albion is considered to be a desirable place to live. When homes are offered for sale, they sell quickly, and property values are strong. The strength and desirability of Albion’s residential neighborhoods is also having a positive impact on area businesses. With a stable customer base, businesses are now able and willing to invest and expand their businesses in order to make more goods and services available to the local community.

## Property Condition Survey

As an initial, first step towards improving Albion’s neighborhoods, the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development and Borough officials conducted a property condition field survey on August 1, 2018. The primary purposes of the survey were to document existing property conditions and to identify abandoned, unsafe and deteriorated properties that are in need of priority attention.

The survey team inspected all properties from the street, and rated property condition based on the following criteria:

- **Excellent** – Overall condition is exceptional, with no apparent maintenance needs.
- **Good** – Overall condition is good, with no apparent maintenance needs other than perhaps a few minor and/or typical maintenance needs.
- **Average** – Overall condition is average. Some minor and/or typical maintenance may be needed, but there are no apparent signs of neglect.
- **Fair** – The property is starting to show signs of neglect, and is in need of maintenance.
- **Poor** – The property has clearly been neglected, and is in need of major repairs.
- **Unsound** – The property appears unsafe, deteriorated, and rehabilitation does not appear to be feasible.

The Borough currently has 622 properties which are improved with a house, building or other structure. Parcels of vacant land are not included in this analysis. The results of the property ratings were as follows:

<b>Condition Rating</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Excellent	29	5%
Good	114	18%
Average	380	61%
Fair	76	12%
Poor	18	3%
Unsound	5	1%

Surveys of this type involve some subjectivity. Many properties have characteristics falling in the middle, between categories. For example, the difference between an excellent property and a good property is not always easy to determine. Ratings, in these cases, involved some subjectivity and judgement. However, despite this drawback, the condition survey still provides useful information. It will serve as a useful baseline upon which to measure Albion’s progress and level of success in the years to come. This can be accomplished by comparing the results of this survey against the results of similar surveys to be done in the future.



In addition to providing baseline information, this survey also gives Albion a place to start regarding prioritization of properties that are in need of attention. The following recommendations and observations are made:

- The survey identified 5 properties that appeared unsound, with no rehabilitation feasibility. These properties should be a priority for potential acquisition and demolition, most likely in partnership with the Erie County Land Bank and/or another governmental agency or non-profit organization.
- The Borough should monitor the 18 properties that were rated in poor condition. Rehabilitation of these properties by the property owners should be encouraged. Should the properties become tax delinquent, they should be a priority for acquisition and either rehabilitation or demolition. Again, it is recommended that this should be done in partnership with the Erie County Land Bank and/or another governmental agency or non-profit organization.
- Seventy-six properties (12%) were rated in fair condition. Attention should be given to these properties, and an effort should be made to prevent them from slipping into the poor condition category. Owners should be encouraged to rehabilitate and maintain them through a combination of homeowner assistance efforts and property maintenance codes.
- The majority of properties are rated in average condition (61%). These properties are generally healthy. However, continued maintenance should be encouraged, and homeowner assistance programs should be made available to the extent possible.
- The majority of properties (84%) appear to be in average, good or excellent condition. The implementation of this plan, including homeowner assistance efforts, property maintenance codes, maintenance and improvement of public infrastructure, and other recommended actions will help to maintain the desirability and value of these properties. The close proximity of poorly maintained, inferior properties has been shown to negatively affect the values of surrounding properties.

## Goals and Objectives (Tasks)

### **Goal #1: Improve the quality, condition and safety of housing, buildings and other structures**

Home values are a good indicator of how desirable a neighborhood is, and for many residents, their home is their largest investment. In order to protect and maintain property values, Albion will implement a proactive blight mitigation strategy based on increasing public awareness, providing homeowner assistance, encouraging rehabilitation and investment, progressive code enforcement, and partnering with the Erie County Land Bank and/or other agencies to address unsafe, abandoned and deteriorated housing, buildings and structures.

**Task 1.1 – Build awareness and encourage the support of residents, businesses, neighborhood groups and community organizations via the Borough newsletter, website, social media and other forms of public engagement.**

Improving our neighborhoods needs to be a community effort. It will be essential to gain the support and involvement of residents, businesses, neighborhood groups and community organizations. The Borough will make information available about homeowner assistance programs, volunteer needs and opportunities, property maintenance code requirements, and any grant opportunities that become available. These medium will also be used to give recognition to property owners and volunteers for their efforts and contributions towards plan implementation.

**Task 1.2 – Assist homeowners with property maintenance needs .**

Property maintenance and rehabilitation is a key component of Albion’s strategy to mitigate blight and improve its neighborhoods. Voluntary property maintenance and code compliance by property owners is desired, and is certainly preferable to property maintenance code enforcement efforts.

Proper planning is the first step towards getting results. It’s important to maintain inventories of property maintenance needs and available resources. As part of this planning process, a property condition field survey was made. This survey provides information about general property conditions. If time and staff capacity permits, it is recommended that a follow-up survey(s) may be useful in order to collect more detailed information about specific types of maintenance needs, such as properties needing structural repairs, window replacement, exterior painting/siding, etc. This will help Albion match maintenance needs to grants and other sources of assistance that may become available.

In addition to identifying and maintaining a list of needs, it’s also important to maintain inventories of available resources. One inventory that should be maintained is a list of any neighborhood groups, community organizations or businesses that are able and willing to plan and conduct volunteer efforts to assist homeowners and/or businesses with small repairs and/or more significant maintenance needs.

Another important inventory is a list of grant programs, governmental assistance programs, or financial assistance programs that are available. It is recommended that a list of these resources should be maintained on the Borough’s website for easy access by residents, community organizations and business owners. Some examples include:

- The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) offers a weatherization assistance program that empowers community organizations to help recipients make their homes more energy efficient. More information is available online at <https://dced.pa.gov/housing-and-development/weatherization/>.
- Lowe’s Community Impact Grant which is administered through Keep Erie County Beautiful. Contact the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development for more information.
- The PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) Homeowners Energy Efficiency Loan Program (HEELP) offers loans between \$1,000 and \$10,000 for specific energy efficiency repairs at a fixed rate of one percent (1%) for 10 years with no prepayment penalties. More information is available online at <https://www.phfa.org/programs/repairs.aspx>.

There are often grant opportunities available to municipalities, community organizations, homeowners, and/or businesses to assist with property maintenance and rehabilitation needs. These opportunities should be researched and pursued as they become available. This should not be considered solely the responsibility of Borough officials and staff. Many grants are available only to non-profits. Others may be available directly to home and/or business owners. Once they are identified, it is recommended that links to associated information should be maintained on the Borough’s website.

It is noted that the “pursuit” of grant opportunities sometimes involves more than just completing and submitting a grant application. For example, if the municipality or community organization is pursuing a grant to assist low income homeowners with window replacements or other energy efficiency upgrades, follow up will most likely be necessary to identify a list of eligible homeowners who are interested in participating in the program. This can be accomplished via announcements in the Borough newsletter or on the Borough’s website. Another option would be direct contact with owners of properties identified by the field surveys noted above.

A successful property maintenance and rehabilitation program will require the collaboration of Borough officials, residents, neighborhood groups and community organizations. Unfortunately, not all property owners have the financial and/or physical capacity to maintain their homes and businesses. This is especially true of elderly, disabled and/or low income property owners. Businesses, community organizations and neighborhood groups are encouraged to plan, hold and/or sponsor volunteer efforts to provide property maintenance assistance to elderly, disabled and/or low income homeowners.

In an effort to encourage property maintenance and rehabilitation, the Borough enacted a LERTA program on March 8, 2018. This program provides tax abatement relief for qualifying improvements or new construction for a period of 5 years, and assists home and business owners by helping to offset some of the costs associated with those improvements. See Goal #5 in the “Support Our Businesses” section of this plan for more details about this program.

### ***Task 1.3 – Improve property maintenance codes and code enforcement.***

Property maintenance code enforcement can be a delicate and in many cases, an unpopular issue. Strict enforcement forces property owners to make required repairs, clean up their properties or take other actions, as necessary to achieve compliance. However, an absence of property maintenance codes, inadequate codes or a lack of enforcement can put residents and neighborhoods at risk, especially when health and safety issues are involved. Studies have shown that eliminating blight reduces crime, improves health, increases property values, and reduces municipal costs associated with police and fire protection. Albion currently has property maintenance codes which address dangerous structures, the height of grass and weeds, removal of snow from sidewalks, junk motor vehicles, and the storage of junk. However, according to Borough officials, these existing codes are not as effective as they could be, and enforcement has been difficult.

The first steps for improving the Borough’s existing property maintenance codes are to review and evaluate them, and then to research and consider model ordinances and any other options that may be available. It is strongly recommended that the Borough review and consider the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC). The IPMC provides clear and specific property maintenance standards, as well as enforcement procedures. It is not necessary for the Borough to adopt the entire IPMC. The Borough may wish to modify the IPMC to better suit its needs.

At this time, the Borough does not have a qualified building code inspector on staff, and contracting for these services has proven to be very expensive. This has complicated code enforcement efforts. Some property maintenance codes can be enforced by a police officer, zoning administrator, or other Borough official. However, more serious violations, and especially those dealing with deteriorated and/or dangerous structures, often require the expertise of a qualified building code inspector. The Borough’s budget is inadequate to hire a full time building code inspector. However, it may be possible to partner with other municipalities, a council of governments (COG), or some other governmental agency to share the services of a building code inspector. Fines imposed for code violations can be used to further offset the cost.

For code enforcement efforts to be successful, it is also important to solicit and secure the support of the Magisterial District Justice. This will be especially important prior to any increased code enforcement efforts or prior to enforcement of any new and/or upgraded property maintenance codes.

One drawback of property maintenance codes is that the procedures required for code enforcement are often time consuming. An enforcement notice must be delivered, a reasonable time must be given for any required repairs or improvements, and the property owner must be given the right to appeal. Non-compliance results in a citation, which leads to legal hearings and court costs.

In order to help to expedite the code enforcement process, the Borough will develop and adopt a quality of life ticketing ordinance. Any municipality in Pennsylvania may adopt this type of ordinance, and they are becoming more and more popular. Municipalities may issue tickets and fines similar to a parking ticket as an initial step to the code enforcement process. Citizens are not deprived of their right to dispute the tickets or to receive due process of the law. However, often the issuance of a citation and associated court hearing and court costs can be avoided. This expedited process is especially useful for time sensitive issues such as trash, high grass, and snow removal from sidewalks.

***Task 1.4 – Partner with the Erie County Land Bank to address unsafe, abandoned and deteriorated housing, buildings and structures.***

When code enforcement efforts have been ineffective, land banks offer a potential solution for addressing abandoned and deteriorated properties that pose a threat to the health and safety of communities. They acquire, inventory, market, hold and transfer interests in properties that are vacant, abandoned, and in most cases, tax delinquent. The purpose is to rehabilitate or demolish the properties or get them into the hands of new owners who will improve them in accordance with the long term interests of the community and surrounding properties.

The Erie County Land Bank (ECLB) was established in 2018. At this time, it is still developing its policies and procedures, so details of what a partnership will entail have not yet been finalized. However, it is anticipated that the following will be needed:

- The Borough, Northwestern School District, and County of Erie will need to formalize a partnership with ECLB via a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or other cooperative agreement(s).
- The Borough will be requested to help ECLB engage residents and business owners.
- The Borough will be asked to establish a blight committee to help identify and inventory unsafe, abandoned and deteriorated properties; and to create a list of priority properties.
- The Borough and/or its blight committee may need to assist ECLB with acquisition, disposal, and/or development plans for any property presented to ECLB for consideration.

The ECLB does not have the power of eminent domain. The Borough may need to help negotiate a property donation or favorable selling price with property owner. Since ECLB does not desire to maintain a large inventory of properties, a responsible, new property owner will need to be identified. In addition, plans, including a cost estimate, will be needed for any rehabilitation or demolition work that may be required.

In preparation for a future partnership with the ECLB, the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development and Borough officials conducted a property condition field survey on August 1, 2018. The survey team identified 5 properties that appear unsound, with no rehabilitation feasibility; and 18 properties that are in poor condition with major repairs needed. Properties rated unsound should be a top priority, followed by properties in poor condition. Ease of acquisition; availability of a responsible, new property owner; proposed future use of the property; impact on the Borough and immediate neighborhood; costs associated with the project; and consistency with the Borough's plans are other factors that should also be considered as part of the prioritization process.



## **Goal #2: Maintain safe, clean and walkable neighborhoods**

Arguably, one of the most important factors in a neighborhood's health is how safe and pleasant people believe it is. Litter, graffiti, illegal dumping areas, poorly maintained sidewalks, and the like, signal that no one cares. This can lead to a negative image, petty crime, and eventually more serious crimes, as well as disinvestment. Moving forward, it is imperative that Albion remains vigilant in its efforts to mitigate these problems.

### **Task 2.1 – Maintain a police force to the extent possible, given budgetary considerations.**

Due to budgetary considerations, the Borough has recently been forced to reduce staffing levels for its police department. However, Borough Council remains committed to maintaining the police department to the greatest extent possible, given budgetary considerations.

Public comments received indicate that some residents would like police staffing to be increased. However, the results of the public survey suggest that most residents (71%) believe the current level of police protection is either good (27%) or adequate (44%). Twenty two percent (22%) rated it poor. The remaining 7% didn't know.



### **Task 2.2 – Organize neighborhood watch groups.**

The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) created the National Neighborhood Watch program in 1972 as a crime prevention concept. Today, many of these neighborhood groups have expanded their roles beyond traditional crime prevention to also focus on emergency preparedness, fire prevention, terrorism awareness, and restoring community pride and unity. It is not uncommon for these groups to plan and conduct neighborhood clean-ups and landscape maintenance projects; as well as fun activities, like neighborhood barbecues, that are designed to bring neighbors together. Perhaps most important, these groups give neighbors a reason to get together and talk about improving their neighborhood and community.

It is recommended that the Borough encourage the establishment of neighborhood watch groups by doing the following:

- Use the Borough newsletters, website and social media to promote the benefits of the Neighborhood Watch program.
- The Albion Police Department should assign an officer to help support the establishment of neighborhood watch groups, and to act as a liaison.

*The Neighborhood Watch Manual* prepared by the National Sheriffs' Association, is available online at [https://www.bja.gov/Publications/NSA\\_NW\\_Manual.pdf](https://www.bja.gov/Publications/NSA_NW_Manual.pdf). Another good source of information is the National Neighborhood Watch website, <http://www.nnw.org/usaonwatch>.

It is also noted that several, free, cell phone apps are available for improved communications by neighborhood watch groups.

### **Task 2.3 – Support the Albion Fire Department.**

The Albion Fire Department enjoys overwhelming support by area residents. Ninety three percent (93%) of respondents to the public survey rated fire and ambulance services as either good (52%) or adequate (41%).

The Borough currently provides funding support for the fire department as part of the municipal budget, and plans to continue this support to the extent possible, given budgetary considerations.

In addition, the Borough will use its newsletter, website and social media to promote and encourage community support for the fire department, its fundraising efforts, and associated events and activities. Community-wide support is needed so that the fire department can continue to provide its services to the community.

Businesses and community organizations are also being encouraged to help support the fire department. Like many small town fire departments, the Albion Fire Department struggles to maintain adequate staffing levels. This limits the amount of time available for fundraising efforts. Businesses and community organizations can make a positive difference by planning, holding and/or sponsoring fundraising events or activities benefiting the fire department.

***Task 2.4 – Organize a community clean-up day(s) and/or event(s) (minimum of 1 per year).***

Each spring, citizens from throughout Erie County, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the nation participate in the Great American Cleanup. On the third Saturday in September, many participate in the International Erie Coastal Cleanup. These are just two opportunities that are available. Keep Erie County Beautiful, an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, works with schools, businesses, neighborhood groups and community organizations and all others interested in planning and conducting clean-up events.

These events may be held at any time during the year. Keep Erie County Beautiful offers assistance by providing supplies like work gloves and trash bags. All that is needed for a group or organization to participate are volunteers, a clean-up location, which can be anywhere needed, and a method of trash disposal. For example, in some cases the trash is collected and disposed of by the municipality. In other cases, a participating business will allow the trash to be disposed of in its dumpster, or a local waste hauler will agree to donate the trash disposal. More information about Keep Erie County Beautiful and its programs is available online at <https://www.eriecountypa.gov/county-services/other-services/recycling/keep-erie-county-beautiful.aspx>.

Waste Management Think Green Grants offer another opportunity for those interested in planning and conducting clean-up events. These grants are offered through Keep Erie County Beautiful. They provide funding to support the clean-up of an identified property. These events often focus on illegal dumping or hoarding issues. For more information, contact Keep Erie County Beautiful, using the link provided above.

***Task 2.5 – Partner with the Erie County Recycling Program to make affordable, hazardous waste and electronics collection events available to residents.***

The Erie County Recycling Program currently holds e-waste & household hazardous waste collection days on specified Saturdays throughout the year. These events are held at a permanent location in Millcreek Township. A satellite event is also offered in the Corry area each year. These events are open to all Erie County residents, but are not convenient to Albion residents due to travel times and distances.

The Erie County Recycling Program has expressed an interest in making a similar, satellite event available in the Albion area. That event would also be open to all Erie County residents, but would be much more convenient to residents in the Albion area. During this planning process, the Borough and Erie County Recycling Program have initiated discussions to secure a suitable collection site so that this type of event can be brought to the Albion area starting in 2019.

In addition to working with the Erie County Recycling Program to bring an annual e-waste & household hazardous waste collection event to the Albion area, the Borough also partners each year with other west Erie County municipalities and the Erie County Recycling Program to hold a West County Municipal Recycling Day. These events are typically held in September, and offer residents an opportunity to dispose of some hard to dispose of items such as furniture, appliances, used motor oil and tires. Albion plans to continue participating in this event in future years.

More information about the Erie County Recycling Program and its collection events is available online at <https://www.eriecountypa.gov/county-services/other-services/recycling/erie-county-recycling-center.aspx>.

**Task 2.6 – Identify and address pedestrian infrastructure needs, including sidewalks, crosswalks, street lighting, bicycle facilities and other amenities.**

The Borough recognizes the importance of providing for pedestrian infrastructure needs such as adequate street lighting, sidewalks, bicycle facilities and other amenities. It has recently completed an upgrade of street lighting to LED throughout the Borough.

During this plan’s public engagement process, including the public survey, very few comments or complaints were received concerning pedestrian infrastructure needs. The notable exception was the quality and condition of sidewalks. Although most responders to the public survey rated the quality and condition of sidewalks as either adequate (47%) or good (10%), thirty-nine percent (39%) rated them as poor. It is likely that perceptions may have been influenced based on the condition of the sidewalks in the survey responder’s immediate neighborhood. In addition, a few comments were received recommending the installation of sidewalks on Academy Street, north of W. State Street and leading to the public park.

During August of 2018, a field survey was made of the sidewalk system throughout the Borough. During this process, sidewalks that were broken, damaged and in need of replacement were identified. The survey also identified gaps in the sidewalk system. The information provided by the sidewalk survey will be used to help the Borough prioritize its sidewalk maintenance and installation needs.

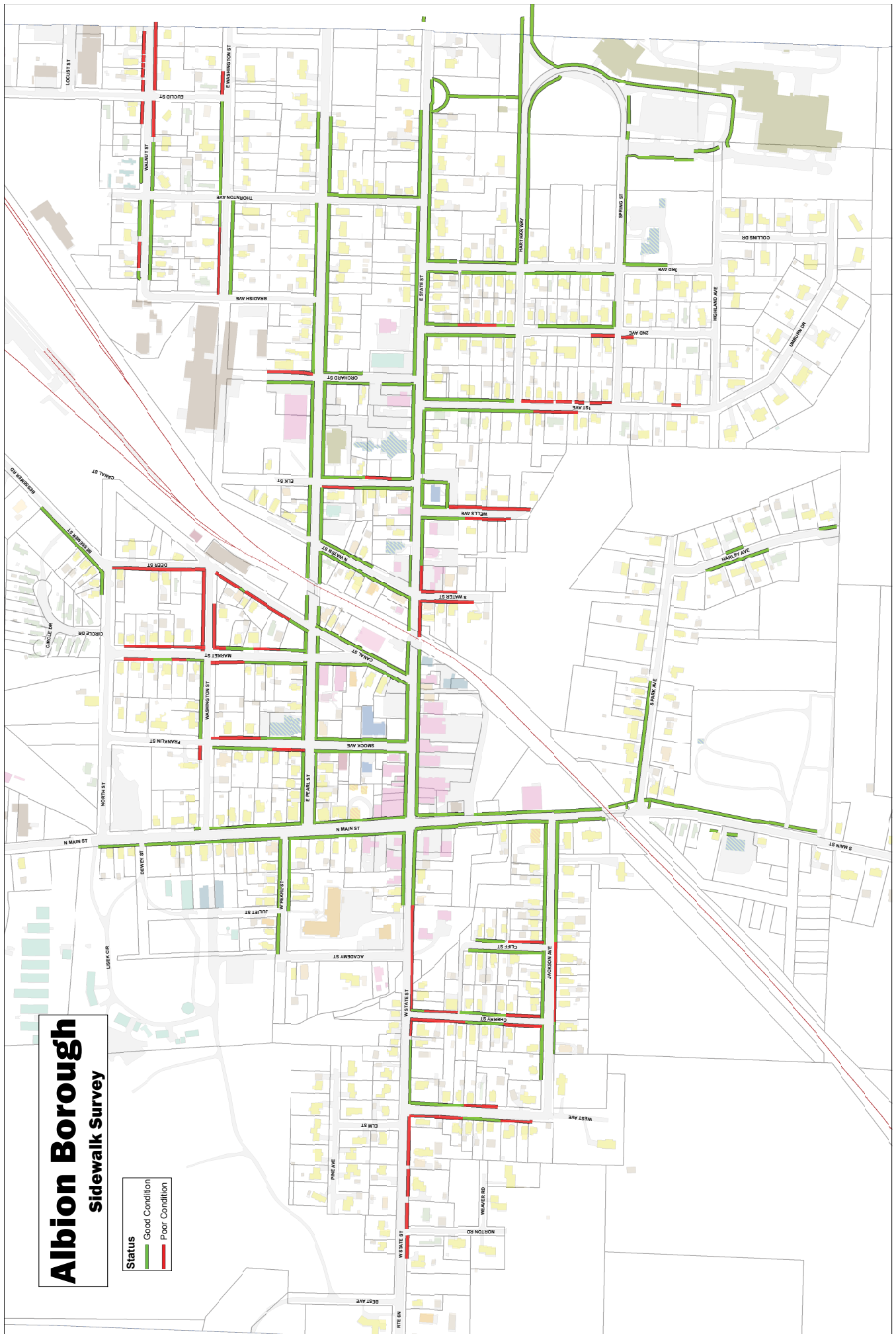
One potential source of grant funding is the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. In order to be eligible for CDBG funding, the Borough will need to document that the new sidewalks will serve low to moderate income (LMI) residents. This is accomplished by a LMI survey of residents in the area to be served. The Borough will also be responsible for the cost of engineering work associated with the projects.

The following recommendations and observations are made:

- The Borough should apply for CDBG grant funding for replacement of sidewalks in poor condition and/or for the installation of sidewalks where needed. It is recommended that an entire block should be done as part of the project(s), rather than limiting the project(s) to individual segments within a block.
- The Borough will need to actively pursue the LMI surveys that are required for CDBG funding. It is likely that not all areas will qualify since not all areas within the Borough will qualify as low to moderate income. This will most likely be an influencing factor during prioritization of the projects. It may be necessary to survey several different areas in order to find an eligible project area(s).
- The topography along both sides of Academy Street will make sidewalk installation more difficult and more expensive, and may limit the feasibility of installing sidewalks in that area. The Borough will need to consult with an engineer for more information.
- It is recommended that for purposes of sidewalk replacement/installation prioritization, the Borough should consider the condition of the existing sidewalks, availability of grant funding (LMI qualifying locations, etc.), safety issues along State Street, pedestrian access to the public park and schools, and completion of a sidewalk/grid system.
- It is noted that some neighborhoods, especially some of the newer neighborhoods, do not currently have sidewalks. Unless residents voice a strong desire for sidewalks and/or there is a safety concern or other need for sidewalks in these areas, they are not recommended to be a priority at this time.

# Albion Borough Sidewalk Survey

**Status**  
 Good Condition  
 Poor Condition



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### ***Goal #3: Beautify Albion neighborhoods with trees, gardens, attractive landscaping and holiday decorations.***

Attractive landscaping and mature trees add to the visual appeal of a neighborhood, and help to create a positive image. They can also have a positive effect on property values.

***Task 3.1 – Promote and encourage Albion residents, neighborhood groups and community organizations to beautify Albion via the Borough newsletter, website, social media and other forms of public engagement.***

Residents, businesses, neighborhood groups and community organizations need to take the lead on beautifying Albion. The Borough will utilize its website, newsletter and social media to help inspire efforts to beautify Albion’s neighborhoods by planting trees, maintaining attractive landscaping and decorating for the holidays. Outstanding efforts should be recognized and given public acknowledgement.

***Task 3.2 – Identify and prioritize public locations that would benefit from tree plantings, improved landscaping and/or flower gardens.***

Pleasant and attractive public spaces show community pride and project a positive image to residents and visitors. Public areas that will benefit from some additional landscaping, such as flower gardens or from improved maintenance of the existing landscaping, need to be identified and prioritized. Volunteers, neighborhood groups and/or community organizations should be encouraged to adopt and maintain these areas for the benefit of the entire community.

***Task 3.3 – Research and pursue available grant opportunities for tree plantings, landscaping and/or other improvements for more attractive public spaces.***

Grants are often available for tree planting and/or other “green” projects. For example, TreeVitalize makes tree planting grants available to municipalities or non-profit organizations. More information is available online at <https://treepennsylvania.org/treevitalize-grants-program/> Another potential source of grant funding may be the Erie Area Council of Governments (EACOG). Go to <https://www.erieareacog.org/> for more information about the EACOG and its programs.

***Task 3.4 – Plant and maintain trees, landscaping and/or flower gardens in locations where they can be enjoyed by residents and visitors.***

All residents and businesses can contribute to the implementation of this plan by maintaining and beautifying their own properties. Neighborhood groups and community organizations can assist with these efforts by organizing volunteer efforts and by working with Borough officials to address landscaping needs in public spaces.

***Task 3.5 – Decorate the exterior of homes and businesses for the holidays.***

Residents, businesses, neighborhood groups and community organizations can all contribute to creating holiday spirit by decorating for the holidays. These efforts should not be limited solely to Christmas. Other holidays, such as Halloween and the Fourth of July also offer opportunities. Decorating contests can add to the fun.



# Implementation

## How can you help improve our neighborhoods?

Area residents can help improve our neighborhoods in the following ways:

- Be a good neighbor. Strive to maintain your home in the best condition possible. Attend to small repairs, keep your lawn mowed, and make an effort to keep sidewalks free of snow.
- Help an elderly or disabled friend or neighbor with property maintenance needs such as snow removal, landscaping or small repairs.
- Join a neighborhood watch group. If your neighborhood doesn't have a neighborhood watch group, consider starting one.
- Support fundraising events/activities benefiting the fire department.
- Participate in a community clean-up day.
- Beautify your home with attractive gardens and landscaping.
- Decorate the exterior of your home for the holidays.

## How can your business, organization or neighborhood group help improve our neighborhoods?

Here are some suggestions on how your business, organization or neighborhood group can help to improve our neighborhoods:

- Plan, hold, participate in, and/or sponsor a volunteer effort to provide property maintenance assistance to elderly, disabled and/or low income homeowners.
- Organize a neighborhood watch if none currently exists in your neighborhood.
- Support fundraising events/activities benefiting the fire department.
- Partner with the Albion Fire Department to plan, hold and/or sponsor a fundraising event or activity benefiting the fire department.
- Organize and/or participate in a community clean-up event.
- Work with the Borough to identify appropriate, public locations that would benefit from tree plantings, improved landscaping and/or flower gardens. Commit to "adopt" a location to maintain for the enjoyment of the entire community.

## Improve Our Neighborhoods Action Plan

Goal #1	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
Task 1.1	Build awareness and encourage the support of residents, businesses, neighborhood groups and community organizations via the Borough newsletter, website, social media and other forms of public engagement.	Borough staff	Borough Council	On-going	Staff time; costs associated with newsletter, website & social media	Borough general fund
Task 1.2	Assist homeowners with property maintenance needs.					
Sub-Task 1.2.1	Identify and maintain inventories of property maintenance needs and available resources.	Borough staff	Borough Council, Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development (ECDP)	Year 1, then on-going	Staff time	Borough general fund
Sub-Task 1.2.2	Research and pursue available grant opportunities.	Borough staff	Borough Council, ECDP, neighborhood groups, and community organizations	Year 1, then on-going	Staff time; grant match requirements may apply	Borough general fund for staff time; donations from businesses, community organizations, fundraising events, etc.; contributions toward match by program participants, as needed.
Sub-Task 1.2.3	Plan, hold and/or sponsor volunteer efforts to provide property maintenance assistance to elderly, disabled and/or low income homeowners.	Businesses, community organizations and neighborhood groups	Area residents	Year 1, then on-going	Building supplies & materials	Grant funding, as available; donations from businesses, community organizations, fundraising events, etc.; participating homeowners, as needed
Sub-Task 1.2.4	Continue LERTA program	Borough Council	Erie County, Northwestern School District	On-going	none	n/a
Task 1.3	Improve property maintenance codes and code enforcement.					
Sub-Task 1.3.1	Review and evaluate the Borough's existing property maintenance codes. Research options available, and recommend updates or revisions needed.	Albion Borough Planning Commission	Borough Council, Borough staff, ECDP	Year 1	Staff time	Borough general fund
Sub-Task 1.3.2	Develop and adopt new and/or updated property maintenance codes, as needed, to more effectively address the Borough's needs.	Borough Council	Albion Borough Planning Commission, Borough staff, ECDP, Borough solicitor	Year 1	Staff time; legal fees	Borough general fund

	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
Sub-Task 1.3.3	<i>Develop capacity to effectively enforce property maintenance codes by retaining a qualified code enforcement officer and securing the support of the Magisterial District Justice.</i>	Borough Council	Borough staff	Year 1	Cost of retaining code enforcement officer.	Revenue from fines imposed for code violations; supplemented, if needed, by Borough general fund
Sub-Task 1.3.4	<i>Develop and adopt a quality of life ticketing ordinance to help expedite the code enforcement process.</i>	Borough Council	Albion Borough Planning Commission, Borough staff, ECDP, Borough solicitor	Year 1	Staff time; legal fees	Borough general fund
Sub-Task 1.3.5	<i>Enforce property maintenance codes.</i>	Borough Council	Borough solicitor, Borough staff, code enforcement officer, Albion Police Department, Magisterial District Justice	On-going	Legal fees; staff time; code enforcement officer	Revenue from fines imposed for code violations; supplemented, if needed, by Borough general fund
Task 1.4	Partner with the Erie County Land Bank to address unsafe, abandoned and deteriorated housing, buildings and structures.	Borough Council	Erie County, Northwestern School District, Erie County Land Bank, Borough staff, ECDP	Year 1, then on-going	Staff time	Borough general fund
<b>Goal #2</b>	<b>Maintain safe, clean and walkable neighborhoods.</b>					
Task 2.1	Maintain a police force to the extent possible, given budgetary considerations.	Borough Council	n/a	On-going	To be decided as part of annual budget	Borough general fund
Task 2.2	Organize neighborhood watch groups	Neighborhood groups	Borough staff, Albion Police	On-going	minimal or none	n/a
Task 2.3	Support the Albion Fire Department					
Sub-Task 2.3.1	<i>Promote and encourage community support for the fire department and associated events/activities via the Borough newsletter, website, social media and other forms of public engagement.</i>	Borough staff	Borough Council, Albion Fire Department	On-going	Staff time; costs associated with newsletter, website & social media	Borough general fund
Sub-Task 2.3.2	<i>Continue to provide funding support for the fire department to the extent possible, given budgetary considerations.</i>	Borough Council	n/a	On-going	To be decided as part of annual budget	Borough general fund
Sub-Task 2.3.3	<i>Plan, hold and/or sponsor fundraising events/activities benefiting the fire department.</i>	Businesses and community organizations	Albion Fire Department	Year 1, then on-going	No cost to Borough	n/a
Sub-Task 2.3.4	<i>Support fundraising events/activities benefiting the fire department.</i>	Area residents, businesses, and community organizations	n/a	On-going	No cost to Borough	n/a

	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
Task 2.4	Organize a community clean-up day(s) and/or event(s) (minimum of 1 per year)	Borough staff	Keep Erie County Beautiful, community organizations, neighborhood groups, businesses, Northwestern School District	Year 1, then on-going	minimal or none	Grant funding, as available
Task 2.5	Partner with the Erie County Recycling Program to make affordable, hazardous waste and electronics collection events available to residents.	Borough Council	Borough staff, Erie County Recycling	Year 1, then on-going	Specific to the event	Grant funding, as available; fees paid by grant participants.
<i>Sub-Task 2.5.1</i>	<i>Host a hazardous waste &amp; electronics collection event (annually).</i>	<i>Borough Council</i>	<i>Borough Staff, Erie County Recycling</i>	<i>Years 1-5; annually</i>	<i>Specific to the event</i>	<i>Erie County Recycling Program; grant funding, as available; fees paid by participants, as needed to supplement other funding sources.</i>
<i>Sub-Task 2.5.2</i>	<i>Partner with other municipalities holding West County Recycling Day</i>	<i>Borough Council</i>	<i>Borough Staff, West County Recycling Committee, Erie County Recycling</i>	<i>Years 1-5; annually</i>	<i>Specific to the event</i>	<i>Approx. cost to Borough estimated at \$1,000. Program is supplemented with grant funding, as available; and fees paid by participants, as needed to supplement other funding sources.</i>
Task 2.6	Identify and address pedestrian infrastructure needs, including sidewalks, crosswalks, street lighting, bicycle facilities and other amenities.					
<i>Sub-Task 2.6.1</i>	<i>Identify and prioritize pedestrian infrastructure needs.</i>	<i>Borough staff</i>	<i>Albion Planning Commission, residents, neighborhood groups, and community organizations, Borough staff, ECDDP</i>	<i>Year 1, then on-going</i>	<i>Staff time</i>	<i>Borough general fund</i>
<i>Sub-Task 2.6.2</i>	<i>Research and pursue available grant opportunities.</i>	<i>Borough staff</i>	<i>Borough Council, ECDDP, neighborhood groups, and community organizations</i>	<i>Year 1, then on-going</i>	<i>Staff time; grant match requirements may apply</i>	<i>Borough general fund; CDBG and other grant funding, as available</i>
<b>Goal #3</b>	<b>Beautify Albion neighborhoods with trees, gardens, attractive landscaping and holiday decorations.</b>					
Task 3.1	Promote and encourage residents, neighborhood groups and community organizations to beautify Albion via the Borough newsletter, website, social media and other forms of public engagement.	Borough staff	Borough Council	On-going	Staff time; costs associated with newsletter, website & social media	Borough general fund

	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
Task 3.2	Identify and prioritize public locations that would benefit from tree plantings, improved landscaping and/or flower gardens.	Borough staff	Albion Planning Commission, residents, neighborhood groups, and community organizations, Borough Council, ECDP	Year 1, then on-going	Staff time	Borough general fund
Task 3.3	Research and pursue available grant opportunities for tree plantings, landscaping and/or other improvements for more attractive public spaces.	Borough staff	Borough Council, ECDP, neighborhood groups, and community organizations	Year 1, then on-going	Staff time; grant match requirements may apply	Borough general fund; grant funding, as available
Task 3.4	Plant and maintain trees, landscaping and/or flower gardens in locations where they can be enjoyed by residents and visitors.	Residents, businesses, neighborhood groups, and community organizations	n/a	On-going	No cost to Borough.	n/a
Task 3.5	Decorate the exterior of homes and businesses for the holidays.	Residents, businesses, neighborhood groups, and community organizations	n/a	On-going	No cost to Borough.	n/a

# Additional Resources

## Reference Materials

*Quality of Life Ticket Presentation* – Danville Boro

<http://boroughs.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Quality%20of%20Life.pdf>

*Neighborhood Watch Manual*

[https://www.bja.gov/Publications/NSA\\_NW\\_Manual.pdf](https://www.bja.gov/Publications/NSA_NW_Manual.pdf)

*International Property Maintenance Code (IMPC)*

<https://codes.iccsafe.org/public/document/IPMC2015>

PA Blight Library

<http://www.pablightlibrary.com/>

*From Blight to Bright* – Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5342bfabe4b076ea499631f5/t/591f236737c58119c43bbeed/1495212920481/Blight+to+Bright+rev+may+17+19.pdf>

*Elm Street Manager's Handbook*, by Pennsylvania Downtown Center

[https://padowntown.org/assets/pdfs/Handbooks/Elm\\_St\\_Handbook.pdf](https://padowntown.org/assets/pdfs/Handbooks/Elm_St_Handbook.pdf)

## Where to go for help

Keep Erie County Beautiful

<https://www.eriecountypa.gov/county-services/other-services/recycling/keep-erie-county-beautiful.aspx>

Erie County Recycling Program

<https://www.eriecountypa.gov/county-services/other-services/recycling/erie-county-recycling-center.aspx>

Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania

<https://housingalliancepa.org/>

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)

<https://dced.pa.gov/>

Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development

<https://www.eriecountypa.gov/county-services/county-offices/planning-department/planning-department.aspx>

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# Support Our Businesses

**1**

**Promote and encourage community support for local businesses and associated events/activities**

**2**

**Encourage and support the efforts of new and/or existing businesses to provide the goods and services desired and needed by local residents**

**3**

**Buy local. Patronize Albion area businesses**

**4**

**Improve the appearance and function of the State Street commercial corridor**

**5**

**Continue LERTA program**



# Introduction

## Why is this important?

Albion is not alone in its struggle to attract and retain local businesses. Many small, rural municipalities face similar problems. Small population numbers limit the size of the customer base available to support local businesses, and in some cases, lower than average median income levels further complicate the problem by limiting the disposable income and purchasing power of that customer base. To make matters worse, many of these municipalities lack the resources necessary to implement successful business attraction and retention programs.

At this time, Albion is limited in its ability to attract and support new and existing businesses. However, there are steps that can be taken to move forward in a positive direction. This plan is largely about building a stronger and more stable customer base that is needed to support local businesses. In fact, all of the other sections of this plan contribute in some way to supporting Albion's businesses and strengthening the customer base. Businesses will be promoted through the "**Promote Albion**" component of this plan. Attracting visitors to events held at Albion's public park should help to bring potential customers to Albion. Improving Albion's neighborhoods will help to attract and retain the residents needed to provide a stronger and more stable customer base.

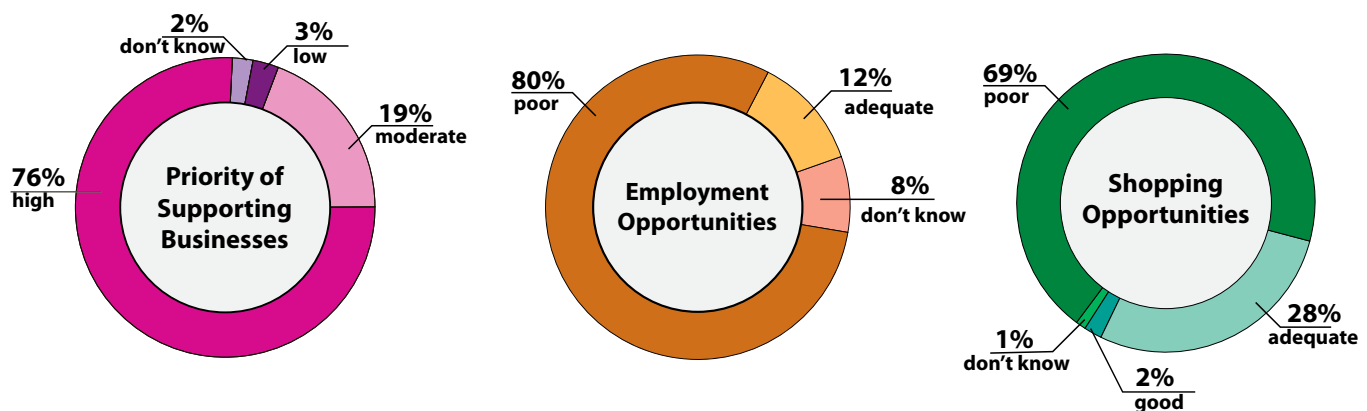
*The best way to help local businesses succeed is to "buy local".*

Implementation of the goals and tasks in the following action plan will help Albion's businesses to not only survive, but to hopefully grow and prosper.

## Public Input/Public Survey Results

As part of the public survey, area residents were asked what priority should be given to each of seven different issues during the next five years. The intent of this questioning was to help Albion identify and rank its top priorities. Not surprisingly, "Supporting new and existing businesses" received the highest rating of all seven potential priority issues. Seventy-six percent (76%) rated supporting new and existing businesses as a high priority, and 19% rated it as a moderate priority. Only 3% rated it as a low priority. The remaining 2% didn't know.

In addition, the availability of employment opportunities and shopping opportunities were rated the top two areas of greatest dissatisfaction by survey respondents. Eighty percent (80%) rated employment opportunities as poor, and 69% rated shopping opportunities as poor.



## Long Term Vision for Albion's Businesses (Year 2040)

Year 2040 – Albion is thriving, and so are its businesses. The State Street commercial corridor has been revitalized, and has become an attractive and inviting place to shop. Visitors are drawn to the area by the regional events held at the public park as well as the many, regular events held by the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce in partnership with local businesses.

Area residents appreciate and support their local businesses. They understand the importance of buying locally. Their patronage has allowed local businesses to grow, expand, and provide many more of the goods and services that the community needs and desires.

Business is good, and new businesses are now being attracted to the area. Family style restaurants, retail shops, and a health and fitness club have been great additions to the community. And yes, Albion finally got a second gas station!

# Goals and Objectives (Tasks)

## ***Goal #1: Promote and encourage community support for local businesses and associated events/activities***

### ***Task 1.1 – Promote and encourage community support for local businesses and associated events/activities via the Borough newsletter, website, social media, and other forms of public engagement.***

Maximizing visibility through advertising and promotional efforts is important to many businesses. Albion's website, newsletters, and social media offer a great opportunity to highlight local businesses. It is recommended that a story promoting a local business should be included with every newsletter if possible, or at least once per quarter at a minimum. In addition, the Borough should give businesses an opportunity to advertise in the newsletters at a reasonable cost. This would benefit the businesses as well as help to offset the cost of publishing the newsletters.



The Borough should also work with the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce to help promote the Chamber's activities and events that are held for the benefit of local businesses.

### ***Task 1.2 – Encourage local businesses to become members of the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce.***

The mission of the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce is “to promote business and industry within the Albion area”, and Albion's plan is consistent with that mission. In fact, the goals and tasks in this section of the plan are nothing new to the Chamber. The Chamber has been pursuing similar goals and tasks for years.

The idea that is being presented in this plan is to encourage more local businesses to join, and get actively involved with the Chamber and its mission. In 2017, the Chamber had 31 members. If membership can be increased, this will increase the Chamber's capacity to fulfill its mission. This may also open up new opportunities, and will almost certainly lead to even better results.

### ***Task 1.3 – Plan, hold and/or sponsor activities and events promoting and/or benefiting local businesses.***

Special events and activities are a great way to attract people to Albion and its local businesses. These events should be coordinated with sales and promotions designed to get people to patronize the local businesses.

Holding regular events, perhaps weekly or monthly, will help to encourage customers to get into the habit of visiting and buying from local businesses on a regular basis.



**Goal #2: Encourage and support the efforts of new and/or existing businesses to provide the goods and services desired and needed by local residents**

**Task 2.1 – Explore options to recruit new businesses and to expand existing businesses to provide the goods and services desired and needed by local residents.**

Comments received during public meetings and through the public survey made it clear that Albion residents desire more businesses that provide the goods and services needed to support the local community. Many expressed a desire for family restaurants, another gas station, health and recreation options, and another grocery store.

Attracting new businesses can be very difficult. However, the Borough should work hard to take advantage of any opportunities they may present themselves. Encouraging existing businesses to expand or to adapt their business plans to provide the desired goods and services is probably a more realistic goal. For example, several comments were received complaining about a lack of options to buy fresh produce. This may present an opportunity for an existing business.

A market study by the Erie County Data Center using IMPLAN (2016) illustrates that the household demand for goods and services within the Albion area (zip codes 16401 and 16410) is not being fully captured by businesses located within the area. This suggests that there is an opportunity for Albion area businesses to capture additional market share.

Goods & Services	Household Demand	Market Capture	Market Share
		(Albion Area)	Lost
Limited Service Restaurants	\$6,691,110.00	63.40%	\$2,448,879.35
Nonstore retailers	\$4,174,063.28	62.82%	\$1,552,000.21
Full Service Restaurants	\$3,947,794.00	66.30%	\$1,330,288.14
General merchandise stores	\$3,830,872.00	10.76%	\$3,418,746.79
Food and beverage stores	\$3,529,222.44	60.50%	\$1,393,936.99
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	\$2,773,603.00	13.82%	\$2,390,402.01
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	\$1,987,521.00	0.01%	\$1,987,362.00
Building material and garden equipment and supplies stores	\$1,941,630.00	63.95%	\$699,977.03
Health and personal care stores	\$1,676,740.00	30.75%	\$1,161,125.68
Gasoline stores	\$1,000,578.00	94.98%	\$50,229.02
Miscellaneous store retailers	\$960,113.50	0.01%	\$960,017.49
Furniture and home furnishings stores	\$843,719.70	0.01%	\$843,643.77
Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book stores	\$594,299.30	0.01%	\$594,239.87
Electronics and appliance stores	\$387,538.60	0.02%	\$387,445.59

Source: Erie County Data Center; IMPLAN; Data for Year 2016, Zip Code Areas 16401 & 16410

**Task 2.2 – Reserve sufficient land areas in appropriate locations for businesses dedicated to serving the needs of local residents.**

A prerequisite to recruiting new businesses and encouraging the expansion of existing businesses is to make sure that sufficient land areas are available, and that the land is available in appropriate locations. This will be accomplished through the Albion Borough Zoning Ordinance.

The Borough is currently in the process of updating its zoning ordinance. As part of this process, Borough officials should consider the types of businesses needed to provide residents with the goods and services that they need and desire. They should also consider the type of location needed for those businesses to succeed. For example, retail businesses, restaurants and gas stations all require locations with high visibility and good access. State Street is the most obvious location for those types of businesses. Care needs to be taken during the zoning ordinance update, to ensure that zoning is adequate along State Street to accommodate the commercial needs of the community.

### ***Goal #3: Buy local. Patronize Albion area businesses***

“Buying local”, and patronizing Albion area businesses is most likely the most important goal in this section. Throughout the planning process, residents have expressed a desire for more shopping and employment opportunities. The best way to help local businesses succeed, and to help make more shopping and employment opportunities a reality is to “buy local”.

### ***Goal #4: Improve the appearance and function of the State Street commercial corridor***

Let’s make Albion a desirable and pleasant place to shop and do business. We want people to visit Albion, and patronize our businesses while they are here. We also want our residents to shop locally. An attractive, inviting, and pedestrian friendly commercial corridor will help to make this a reality.

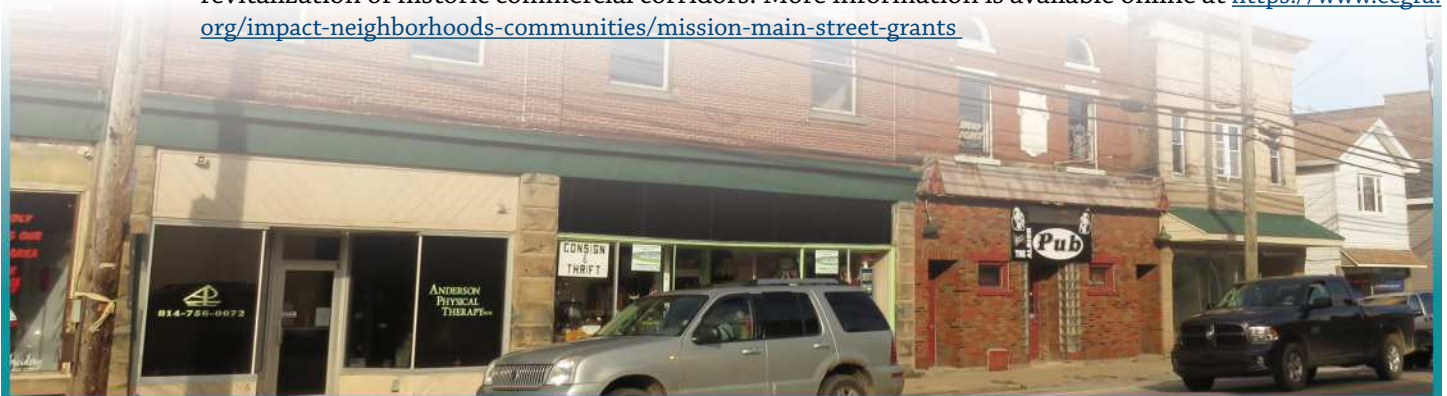
#### ***Task 4.1 – Retain a professional consultant to prepare a corridor improvement plan for the State Street commercial corridor.***

Improvements are needed to the State Street commercial corridor in order to make it more attractive and inviting. For example, there are many older buildings that would benefit from façade improvements. More attractive street lighting, improved signage, and pedestrian friendly amenities such as seating areas, bicycle facilities, and trash receptacles would also be a great addition.

Some additional planning by a professional consultant is recommended in order to help ensure that improvements made in this area are well thought-out, cost effective, consistent, and complementary to one another.

#### ***Task 4.2 – Research and pursue available grant opportunities to implement the State Street corridor improvement plan.***

Grants are often available for commercial corridor improvement projects. For example, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) has a Mission Main Street grant program that provides funding for revitalization of historic commercial corridors. More information is available online at <https://www.ecgra.org/impact-neighborhoods-communities/mission-main-street-grants>



## **Goal #5: Continue LERTA program**

In an effort to encourage business development and expansions, as well as property maintenance and rehabilitation, the Borough enacted the “Borough of Albion Comprehensive Real Property Tax Abatement Ordinance” on March 8, 2018. This type of ordinance is more commonly known and referred to as LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act) which is the name of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Act that authorizes local taxing authorities to exempt improvements to certain deteriorated properties.

The Borough’s ordinance provides tax abatement relief for qualifying improvements or new construction for a period of 5 years. For the first year, the amount of relief is 100% of the eligible assessment related to the qualified improvement or new construction. The amount of relief gradually declines to 20% in the fifth year.

LERTA requires the approval of all taxing bodies. The Northwestern School District and the County of Erie are partnering with the Borough to make this program available.

The Borough should consider tracking the number of LERTA applications, the amount of dollars invested by property owners as a result of LERTA, and the increase in property tax assessment values as performance measures of the success of this program.

# Implementation

## **How can you help support our businesses?**

Area residents can support our local businesses in the following ways:

- Buy local. Patronize Albion area businesses.
- Attend local events sponsored by the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce and/or local businesses.

## **How can your business or organization help support our businesses?**

Here are some suggestions on how your business or organization can help to support our local businesses:

- Buy local. Patronize other Albion area businesses when purchasing supplies, business services, etc.
- If you own or manage a business, consider becoming a member of the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce. Maximize the benefits of your membership by participating actively in meetings and events sponsored by the Chamber.
- Partner with the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce to plan, hold and/or sponsor activities and/or events promoting and/or benefiting local businesses.

## Support Our Businesses Action Plan

	Goal / Objective	Responsible Party	Assistance Provided By	Time	Funding Needs	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal #1</b>	<b>Promote and encourage community support for local businesses and associated events/activities.</b>					
Task 1.1	Promote and encourage community support for local businesses and associated events/activities via the Borough newsletter, website, social media, and other forms of public engagement.	Borough staff	Borough Council	On-going	Staff time, hard costs associated with newsletter, website & social media	Borough general fund
Task 1.2	Encourage local businesses to become members of the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce.	Albion Area Chamber of Commerce	Local businesses	On-going	none	n/a
Task 1.3	Plan, hold and/or sponsor activities and events promoting and/or benefiting local businesses.	Albion Area Chamber of Commerce	Local businesses	On-going	Specific to the activity or event	Albion Area Chamber of Commerce; participating businesses
<b>Goal #2</b>	<b>Encourage and support the efforts of new and/or existing businesses to address the needs of local residents.</b>					
Task 2.1	Explore options to recruit new businesses and to expand existing businesses to provide the goods and services desired and needed by local residents.	Albion Area Chamber of Commerce	Local businesses	On-going	minimal or none	n/a
Task 2.2	Reserve sufficient land areas in appropriate locations for businesses dedicated to serving the needs of local residents.	Borough Council	Albion Borough Planning Commission, Borough staff, Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development (ECDP)	Year 1, then on-going	minimal; cost of legal review & ordinance adoption	Borough general fund
<b>Goal #3</b>	<b>Buy Local. Patronize Albion area businesses.</b>	<b>Area Residents</b>	n/a	<b>On-going</b>	<b>No cost to Borough.</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Goal #4</b>	<b>Improve the appearance and function of the State Street commercial corridor.</b>					
Task 4.1	Retain a professional consultant to prepare a corridor improvement plan for the State Street commercial corridor.	Borough Council	Borough staff	Year 3	Fee will depend on desired scope of work.	Grant funding, as available; Borough general fund
Task 4.2	Research and pursue available grant opportunities to implement the State Street corridor improvement plan.	Borough Council	Borough staff, Albion Area Chamber of Commerce; Local Businesses	Years 4-5	Staff time; grant matching funds may be required	Grant funding, Borough general fund, other sources, as applicable
<b>Goal #5</b>	<b>Continue LERTA program</b>	<b>Borough Council</b>	<b>Erie County, Northwestern School District</b>	<b>On-going</b>	<b>none</b>	<b>n/a</b>

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# Additional Resources

## Reference Materials

No specific references are being made. However, numerous online resources exist on a variety of topics, including business marketing and promotional ideas.

## Where to go for help

Pennsylvania Downtown Center

<https://padowntown.org/>

Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)

<https://dced.pa.gov/>

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# Other Issues and Considerations



# Population and Demographics

As an initial step to this planning process, the characteristics and composition of Albion’s population were considered. Demographic information such as total population, age, sex, educational attainment, median household income, household size, and other factors help to determine the needs of a community and its residents. A study of recent trends and a forecast of future changes is a prerequisite for any planning program.

The United States Census Bureau provides detailed information concerning population and housing. This information is available online, through American Fact Finder, at <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>. There is no need to duplicate all of this demographic information within this plan. Instead, the discussion of population and demographic information will be limited to a few of the most relevant considerations.

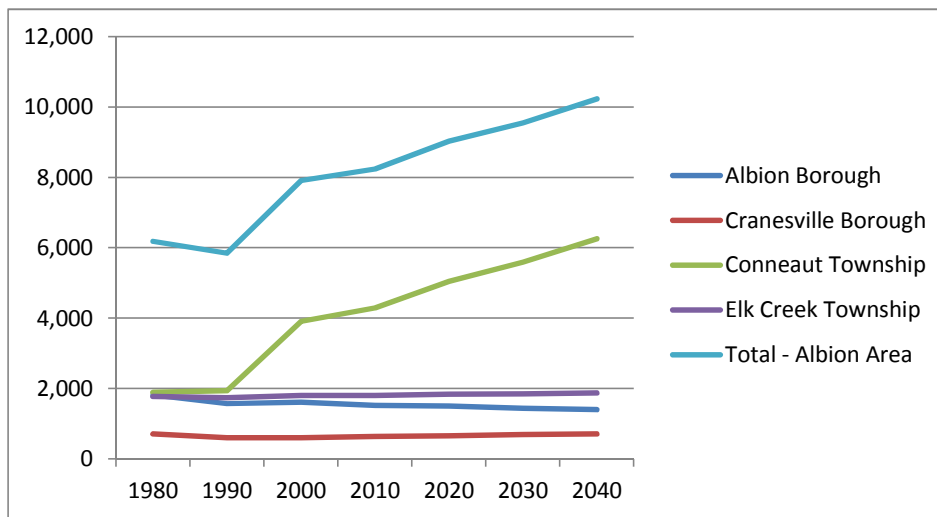
## Population Projections

**Albion Area Population & Population Projections**

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040
Albion Borough	1,818	1,575	1,607	1,516	1,495	1,434	1,396
Cranesville Borough	703	598	600	638	655	685	707
Conneaut Township	1,893	1,938	3,908	4,290	5,047	5,590	6,255
Elk Creek Township	1,775	1,738	1,800	1,798	1,833	1,846	1,872
<b>Total - Albion Area</b>	<b>6,189</b>	<b>5,849</b>	<b>7,915</b>	<b>8,242</b>	<b>9,030</b>	<b>9,555</b>	<b>10,230</b>

Sources: ACS 15 5YR DP05; DEC 10 SF1 DP1; DEC 00 SF1 DP1; US Census 1980; US Census 1990; Projections (years 2020-2040) from PA DEP, PA State V

**Note: Increase in Conneaut population due to prison (1990-2000) may have influenced DEP's projections for 2020-2040**



Sources: ACS 15 5YR DP05; DEC 10 DP DPDP1; DEC 00 SF1 DP1; US Census 1980; US Census 1990;

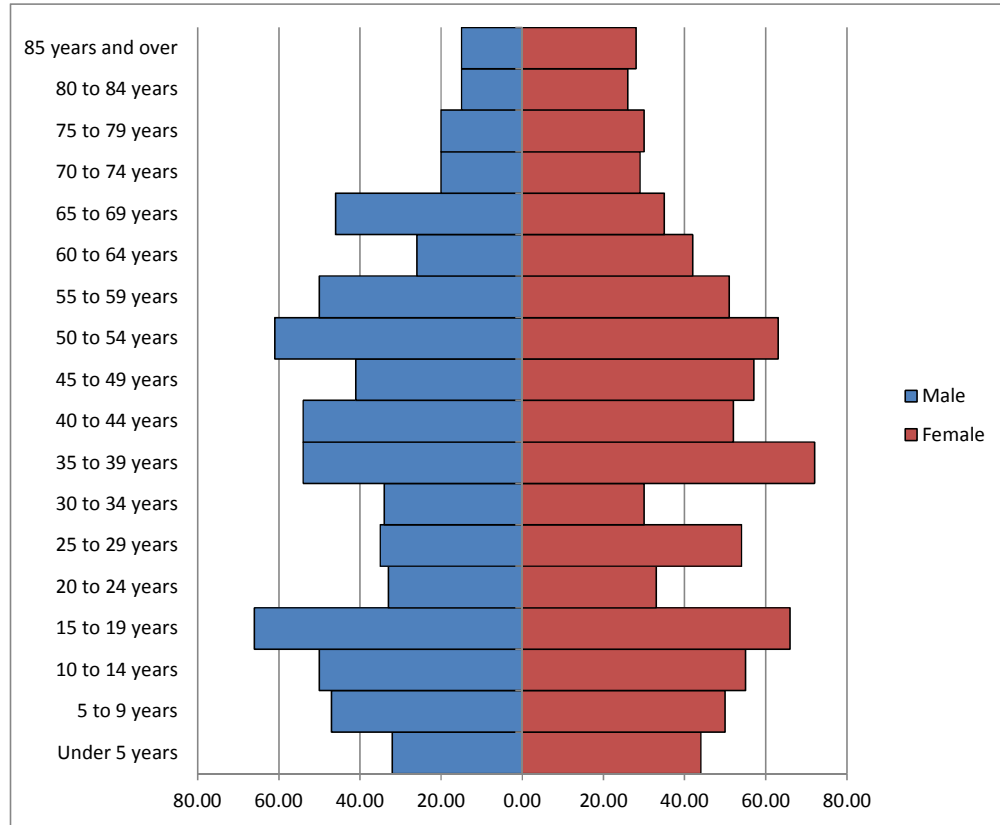
Projections (years 2020-2040) from PA DEP, PA State Water Plan

**Note: Increase in Conneaut population due to prison (1990-2000) may have influenced DEP's projections for 2020-2040**

According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 5 Year Estimates, Albion’s current population is approximately 1,531. As shown in the chart above, population numbers have declined from 1,818 since 1980, but have remained relatively stable since 1990. Barring some unanticipated major future event, population numbers are expected to remain stable or decline slightly through 2040. The populations of surrounding municipalities, including Conneaut Township, are also expected to remain more or less stable.

The population increase that occurred in Conneaut Township during the 1990's is due to the opening of SCI Albion. Although PA DEP projections for 2020 2040 suggest significant future growth in Conneaut Township, this is considered unlikely. That projected growth is considered to be unrealistic, and is attributed to the methodology used to create the projections. The projections are based on mathematical calculations which were influenced by the SCI Albion population numbers. The opening of SCI Albion was a one time event, and it is not considered to be a reliable indicator of a continued, future growth rate within Conneaut Township.

## Population Age & Sex



Source: DEC 10 SF1 DP1

This chart illustrates how Albion’s population is distributed by age and sex. This type of chart is referred to as a population pyramid or age-sex pyramid because the distribution of the various age groups typically forms the shape of a pyramid when the population is growing. In Albion, there is a notable reduction in the population of young adults from ages 20 to 34, and this is likely contributing to smaller numbers of children, 14 years old and younger.

## Median Age

### Median Age

	2000	2010	2016
Albion Borough	35.1	40.2	43.2
Erie County	36.2	38.6	38.9
Pennsylvania	38	40.1	40.6

Sources: ACS 16 5 YR S0101; DEC 10 SF1 DP1; DEC 00 SF1 DP1

As the chart above illustrates, Albion’s median age has been steadily increasing. In 2016, Albion’s median age was estimated at 43.2 years. This is slightly older than the median ages of Erie County (38.9) and the state (40.6).

## Household Types and Sizes

### Household Sizes

2016 Percentages - Occupied Housing Units	Pennsylvania	Erie County	Albion Borough
1-person household	29.9%	30.0%	35.1%
2-person household	34.7%	34.9%	32.2%
3-person household	15.5%	14.8%	15.2%
4-or-more-person household	20.2%	20.3%	17.5%

Source: ACS 16 5Yr S2501

### Household Types

2016 Percentages - Occupied Housing Units	Pennsylvania	Erie County	Albion Borough
Family Household	64.4%	63.2%	58.8%
Nonfamily-Householder Living Alone	29.6%	30.0%	35.1%
Nonfamily-Householder Not Living Alone	6.0%	6.8%	6.1%

Source: ACS 16 5Yr S2501

### Average Household Size

	1990	2000	2010
Pennsylvania	3.1	2.48	2.45
Erie County	3.16	2.51	2.42
Albion	3.14	2.45	2.35

Source: 1990 Census; DEC 00 SF1 H012; DEC 10 SF1 H12

Note: Based on 2016 ACS, 1,531 population / 656 occupied housing units equals 2.34

According to Census data, Albion's average household size has been steadily decreasing since 1990. As household sizes decrease in size, this impacts the types and sizes of housing units that are desired by the market. The 2016 American Community Survey estimates that 73.3% of Albion's households are either 1 person households (35.1%) or 2 person households (32.2%).

### Median Household Income

	2000	2010	2016
Pennsylvania	\$40,106	\$50,398	\$54,895
Erie County	\$36,627	\$43,595	\$47,094
Albion Borough	\$33,007	\$42,153	\$39,545
Conneaut Township	\$35,682	\$39,393	\$50,446
Cranesville Borough	\$35,000	\$41,667	\$56,944
Elk Creek Township	\$42,269	\$57,216	\$60,060

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP03; ACS 10 5YR DP03; DEC 00 SF3 DP3

### Percent below poverty rate

	Pennsylvania	Erie County	Albion Borough	Conneaut Township	Cranesville Borough	Elk Creek Township
Population	13.3%	16.7%	16.8%	13.8%	11.8%	9.4%
Families	9.1%	11.7%	10.6%	10.8%	8.1%	4.3%
Families with related children under 18	15.6%	21.0%	20.9%	22.9%	7.8%	7.4%

Sources ACS 16 5YR DP03

In 2016, Albion's median household income was estimated at \$39,545, and 16.8% of its population was below the poverty rate. The median household income is lower than that of the state, county, and surrounding municipalities. Poverty rates are comparable to Erie County's, but are higher than the state's, and significantly higher than those of Cranestown Borough and Elk Creek Township. Income levels have social and economic impacts. The purchasing power of residents impacts housing choices and values, the ability of residents to maintain their homes, the types of assistance programs that are needed, and other factors.

## Education

### Education - Population 25 years or older

	Pennsylvania	Erie County	Albion Borough	Conneaut Township	Cranesville Borough	Elk Creek Township
Percent high school graduate or higher	89.5%	91.1%	89.4%	81.6%	96.1%	92.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	29.3%	27.0%	14.4%	4.3%	15.1%	14.3%

Source: ACS 16 5YR S1501

According to the 2016 American Community Survey, 89.4% of Albion residents are high school graduates. This is reasonably consistent with the state, Erie County and surrounding municipalities. The most notable difference in education rates is the percentage of residents with a Bachelor's degree or higher. Only 14.4% of Albion's residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher. This is significantly lower than the state (29.3%) and Erie County (27%).

## Population & Demographics Analysis

Albion's population is aging, and most people 45 and older want to stay in their homes for as long as possible. This is called "aging in place". In order to effectively accommodate an aging population, Albion will need a variety of affordable, accessible housing options; a range of transportation choices; and easy access to shopping, health and social services, and recreational opportunities.

Population and demographic data demonstrate that Albion is struggling to retain its young adults (ages 20-34 years old). In addition, the percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher is significantly lower than that of the County and the State, and this is most likely contributing to a lower median household income, and higher poverty rates. Reversing these trends will take time, and will not come easily. However, this plan focuses on improving Albion's quality of life as a step towards attracting and retaining younger, educated, and more affluent residents.

Albion's population is projected to be more or less stable through 2040. However, Albion's population is aging, and household sizes are decreasing. While it is unlikely that Albion will need to significantly increase its supply of housing, the types of housing desired by its residents will most likely change over time. There will likely be an increased demand for senior housing, assisted living developments, smaller unit sizes, more 1 bedroom units, condominiums, rental units, and "visitable" units that are designed for persons with physical disabilities.

Small population numbers in Albion and the surrounding municipalities limit the size of the customer base that is available to support local businesses. In addition, Albion's lower than average median income level limits the disposable income and purchasing power of that customer base. These factors limit Albion's ability to attract and support new and existing businesses. However, Albion's plan to "**Support Our Businesses**" will help Albion to start building the stronger and more stable customer base that is needed to support its local businesses.

## Housing Issues and Considerations

### Housing Occupancy

	Pennsylvania	Erie County	Albion Borough
Occupied Housing Units	88.7%	91.8%	93.0%
Vacant Housing Units	11.3%	8.2%	7.0%

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP04

Note: Albion has estimated 705 housing units; 656 occupied; 49 vacant

### Housing Tenure

	Pennsylvania	Erie County	Albion Borough
Owner occupied	69.0%	65.9%	60.7%
Renter occupied	31.0%	34.1%	39.3%

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP04

Note: Albion has estimated 656 occupied housing units

According to the 2016 American Community Survey, Albion Borough has an estimated 705 housing units. Of these, 656 are occupied (93%) and 49 are vacant (7%). Albion's occupancy rate is slightly greater than the state and county rates. Of Albion's 656 occupied units, 60.7% are owner occupied, and 39.3% are renter occupied.

## Housing Age and Condition

According to the 2016 ACS, 57.5% of Albion's housing structures were built prior to 1950, while 28.1% were built in the 1970's and 1980's. The construction of new housing has been negligible since 2010. Although the ACS does not account for any new construction since 2010, building permit data obtained from the Erie County Bureau of Assessment indicates that one new home was built in 2015.

### Housing Age

Year Structure Built	Units	Percentage
Built 2014 or later	0	0.0%
Built 2010 to 2013	0	0.0%
Built 2000 to 2009	21	3.0%
Built 1990 to 1999	39	5.5%
Built 1980 to 1989	93	13.2%
Built 1970 to 1979	105	14.9%
Built 1960 to 1969	42	6.0%
Built 1950 to 1959	88	12.5%
Built 1940 to 1949	59	8.4%
Built 1939 or earlier	258	36.6%

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP04

As part of the public survey associated with this plan, Albion residents were asked to rate the quality and condition of housing. Fifty-four percent of respondents rated quality and condition as either adequate (48%) or good (6%). However, 36% rated it poor. The remaining 10% didn't know.

The **"Improve Our Neighborhoods"** section of this plan addresses housing condition, including the results of a field survey of housing condition and strategies for addressing deteriorated housing.



## Housing Choice and Variety

According to Albion’s public survey, the variety of housing options (houses, apartments, senior living, etc.) is one of the areas of greatest dissatisfaction in Albion. Forty-five percent of respondents rated housing variety as poor, while only 43% rated it as either adequate (34%) or good (9%). The remaining 12% didn’t know.

The 2016 ACS estimates that Albion has 705 housing units. This includes 494, single family, detached homes (70.1%), and 58 mobile homes (8.2%). The remaining 153 of housing units (21.7%) are located in multiple family structures of varying densities.

### Housing Units - Number of Bedrooms

Bedrooms	Units	Percentage
No Bedroom	11	1.6%
1 bedroom	97	13.8%
2 bedrooms	150	21.3%
3 bedrooms	312	44.3%
4 bedrooms	108	15.3%
5 or more bedrooms	27	3.8%

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP04

Note: total housing units 705

As indicated in this chart, 63.4% of Albion’s housing units have 3 or more bedrooms. However, as noted previously, Albion’s population is aging, and the average household size is decreasing. Based on population and demographics, it is anticipated that future housing needs and preferences will be for smaller, more affordable units, including more rentals, and more 1 and 2 bedroom units. Accessibility for people with disabilities will also become more important as the population continues to age.

## Demand for New Construction

Although Albion is more or less built out, there are some vacant lots in residential zoning districts. As discussed in the “Housing Age and Condition” section, new construction has been negligible since 2010. This reflects a lack of demand for new housing in Albion.

Implementation of this plan will improve Albion’s neighborhoods, and make Albion a more desirable place to live. The Borough has also enacted a residential LERTA program in an attempt to make new construction a more attractive and affordable option within the Borough.

Ultimately, it is hoped that conditions will improve, and demand for new housing will increase. However, this will take time. At present, the supply of residentially zoned, vacant land in Albion is considered adequate to meet the demand for new housing.

## Housing Affordability

The purchase price index (PPI) provides an indication of housing affordability. It is calculated by dividing a community’s median home value by its median household income. The lower the PPI is, the more affordable the housing. In 2016, Albion’s PPI was 2.37. This suggests that housing affordability in Albion is more or less consistent with that of Erie County and its surrounding municipalities.

### Purchase Price Index (2016)

Location	Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Purchase Price Index (Years)
Pennsylvania	\$54,895	\$167,700	3.05
Erie County	\$47,094	\$120,300	2.55
Albion Borough	\$39,545	\$93,900	2.37
Conneaut Township	\$50,446	\$113,100	2.24
Cranesville Borough	\$56,944	\$82,200	1.44
Elk Creek Township	\$60,060	\$124,500	2.07

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP03; ACS 16 5YR DP04; PPI calculated

## Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income (SMOCAPI)

	Pennsylvania	Erie County	Albion Borough	Conneaut Township	Cranesville Borough	Elk Creek Township
Less than 20.0 percent	44.8%	51.2%	58.6%	61.1%	63.8%	53.7%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	16.2%	16.7%	14.2%	11.6%	5.3%	11.5%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	10.9%	9.5%	6.9%	15.7%	12.8%	7.0%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	7.1%	6.3%	8.2%	1.0%	2.1%	12.8%
35 percent or more	20.9%	16.3%	12.1%	10.6%	16.0%	15.0%

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP04; Housing units with a mortgage (excluding units where SMOCAPI cannot be computed)  
note; 232 estimated owner occupied w/mortgage in Albion

Selected monthly owner costs are calculated from the sum of payments for mortgages, real estate taxes, various insurances, utilities, fuels, mobile home costs, and condominium fees. When the total of these costs are evaluated as a percentage of household income, they provide a measure of housing affordability and excessive shelter costs. Many government agencies consider costs to be excessive when they exceed 30% of household income. According to the 2016 ACS, Albion has an estimated 232 housing units with a mortgage. Most of these (79.7%) fall below the 30% threshold, which suggests that selected monthly owner housing costs should be manageable for most households. The other 20.3% (47 units) of households must budget 30% or more of their household income to pay for housing.

Based on Albion's purchase price index, and a review of selected monthly owner costs for owner occupied units with a mortgage, there does not appear to be any significant housing affordability issues with respect to Albion's owner occupied housing units. The selected monthly owner costs suggest that some households are struggling with housing costs that exceed 30% of their household income. While that's certainly not desirable, the percentages are consistent with, and in some cases even favorable to the percentages for the state, county and surrounding municipalities.

## Housing Affordability – Rental Units

### Rent-to-Income Ratio (2016)

Location	Median Household Income	Median Gross Rent	Annual Rent	Rent-to-Income Ratio (%)
Pennsylvania	54,895	859	10,308	18.78
Erie County	47,094	701	8,412	17.86
Albion Borough	39,545	531	6,372	16.11
Conneaut Township	50,446	547	6,564	13.01
Cranesville Borough	56,944	757	9,084	15.95
Elk Creek Township	60,060	727	8,724	14.53

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP03; ACS 16 5YR DP04; annual rent & rent-to-income ratio calculated

The rent-to-income ratio provides an indication of rental housing affordability. It is calculated by dividing a community's median annual rent by its median household income. The lower the rent to income ratio is, the more affordable the rental housing. In 2016, Albion's rent to income ratio was 16.11. This suggests that in general, rental housing is more affordable in Albion than the state and Erie County average.



## Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (GRAPI)

	Pennsylvania	Erie County	Albion Borough	Conneaut Township	Cranesville Borough	Elk Creek Township
Less than 15 percent	13.8%	14.0%	13.0%	15.2%	30.8%	23.7%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	12.7%	12.3%	11.7%	15.2%	53.8%	26.3%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	12.4%	11.7%	19.7%	17.0%	0.0%	0.0%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	11.5%	12.7%	12.6%	11.6%	0.0%	7.9%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	8.7%	8.0%	20.2%	12.5%	0.0%	21.1%
35 percent or more	40.9%	41.3%	22.9%	28.6%	15.4%	21.1%

Source: ACS 16 5YR DP04; Occupied units paying rent (excluding units GRAPI cannot be computed)

note; estimated 223 occupied units paying rent in Albion; 26 units in Cranenville

Many government agencies consider housing costs to be excessive when they exceed 30% of household income. According to the 2016 ACS, Albion has an estimated 223 occupied rental units. Of these, 43.1% of households must budget 30% or more of their household income to pay for rent. This suggests that many of Albion’s renters are facing challenges in meeting their monthly housing costs. While this is a problem, it should be noted that Albion’s percentages are consistent with, and in some cases even favorable to the percentages for the state, county and surrounding municipalities.

According to the 2016 ACS, Albion’s median gross rent is \$531. This is lower than the state, Erie County and surrounding municipalities. Therefore, affordability issues associated with rental housing in Albion are more likely attributed to Albion’s lower median household income, than to excessively high rental rates.

### Recommendations

The “**Improve Our Neighborhoods**” section of this plan presents goals and actions to be taken in order to improve the quality, condition and safety of Albion’s housing stock.

The following additional recommendations concerning housing are made:

- According to Albion’s public survey, the variety of housing options (houses, apartments, senior living, etc.) is one of the areas of greatest dissatisfaction in Albion. Albion’s population is aging, and the average household size is decreasing. Based on population and demographics, it is anticipated that future housing needs and preferences will be for smaller, more affordable units, including more rentals, and more 1 and 2 bedroom units. Accessibility for people with disabilities will also become more important as the population continues to age. The Borough’s zoning ordinance should continue to allow for a variety of different housing options. It will be important to ensure that there are adequate opportunities for multiple-family housing, senior housing, and accessible housing options to meet current and future demands.
- The construction of new homes has been negligible since 2010, and there are some vacant lots available in residential zoning districts. At present, the supply of residentially zoned, vacant land in Albion is considered adequate to meet the demand for new housing.
- Based on the data available, Albion does not appear to have a significant problem with housing affordability. However, some households are facing challenges with monthly housing costs which exceed 30% of their household income. The Borough’s goals related to homeowner assistance (see “**Improve Our Neighborhoods**” section of this plan) will be important as the Borough moves forward with the implementation of this plan.

# Land Use

## Land Use Issues and Considerations

Generally, land use evolves over time as a community grows and changes. Numerous factors can impact land use, including economic activity, population growth and demographics, transportation facilities and environmental resources. Careful land use planning is necessary in order to promote compatible land use patterns and discourage the haphazard use of land.

Albion is almost fully built-out. There is a limited supply of land that is vacant and/or available for redevelopment. As discussed in the Housing Section of the plan, the supply of residentially zoned, vacant land in Albion is considered adequate to meet the demand for new housing. However, residents have expressed dissatisfaction with the variety of housing options, including apartments, senior living, etc. Albion's population is aging, and household sizes are decreasing. These factors suggest that demand for smaller, affordable housing options, including apartments, is likely to increase in the future.

Unlike residentially zoned land, the availability of land for commercial uses is more of a concern. According to Albion's public survey, the lack of shopping opportunities is one of the areas of greatest dissatisfaction. Comments received as part of the survey and during public meetings make it clear that residents desire more shopping opportunities that serve the needs of local residents, including family style restaurants, health and fitness facilities, grocery and retail stores, and another gas station. A prerequisite to recruiting new businesses and/or encouraging the expansion of existing businesses to provide these goods and services is to make sure that sufficient land areas are available, and that the land is available in appropriate locations.

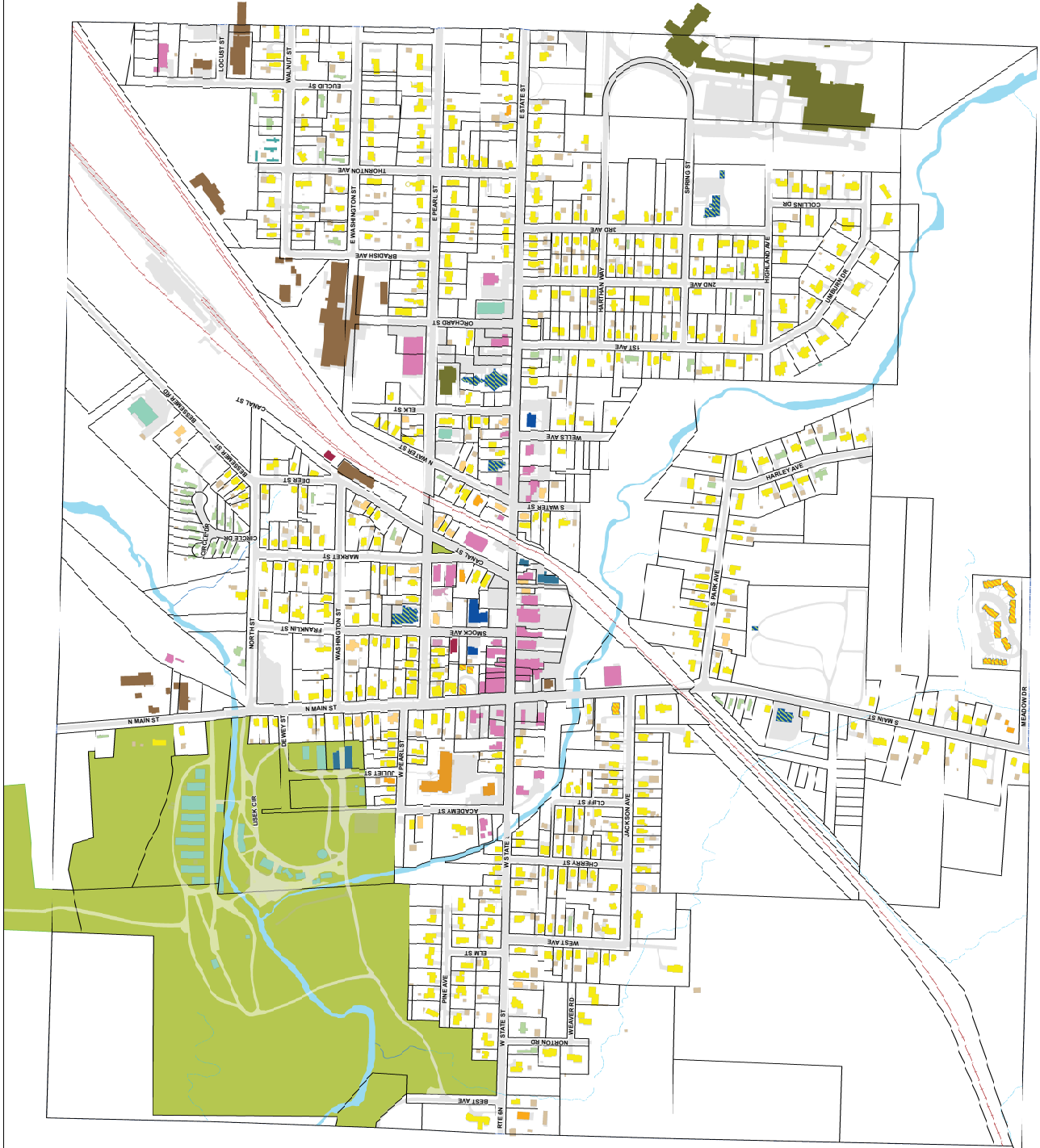
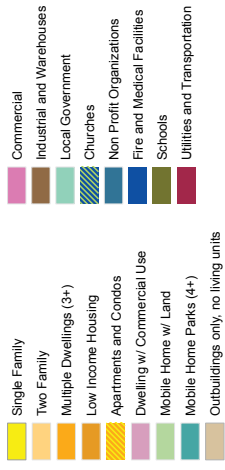
## Existing Land Uses

An important first step to land use planning is to document and study existing land uses. This information helps with the establishment of land use districts that will serve as a guide to future development. The Albion Borough Structure Classification Map documents existing land uses within the Borough.



# Albion Borough

## Structure Classification



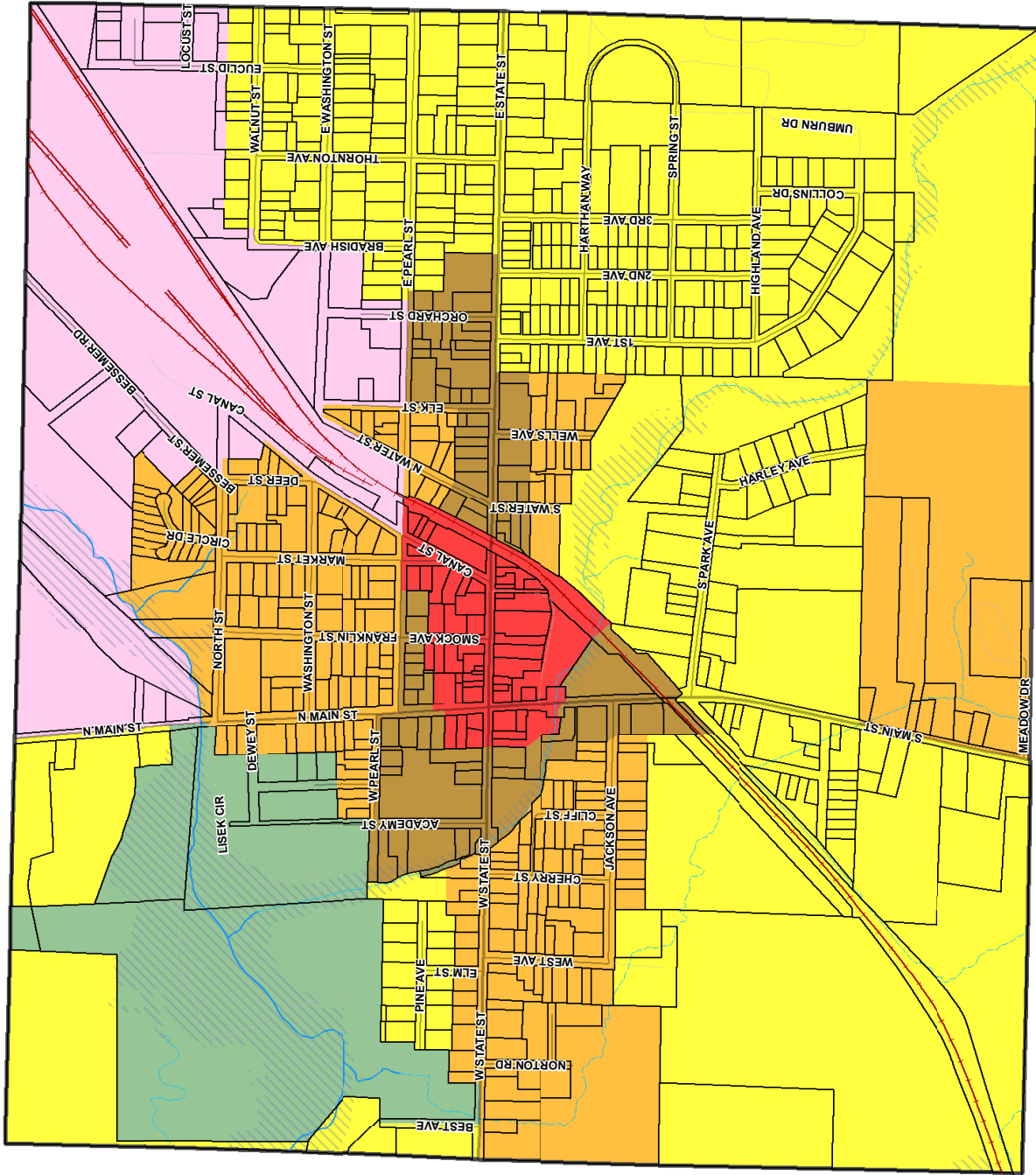
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# Albion Borough

## Future Land Use Map

Adopted: April 12, 2019

- R-1 Residential (Suburban Residential)
- R-2 Residential (Urban Residential)
- C-B Business (Central Business)
- B-1 Business (Neighborhood Business)
- B-2 Business (High Impact Business)
- REC Public Recreation
- F-P Flood Plain Overlay



2018 Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development

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## Community Development Objectives

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247) requires municipal comprehensive plans to include “A statement of objectives of the municipality concerning its future development, including, but not limited to, the location, character and timing of future development.” These policy goals are referred to as community development objectives. Municipal zoning, subdivision and land development regulations and capital improvement programs should reflect and serve to implement these objectives.

The Community Development Objectives of the Borough of Albion are as follows:

- A.** To promote consistent and compatible land use patterns both within the Borough and with adjacent municipalities in order to preserve neighborhood character and quality of life.
- B.** To ensure that the scale, layout and design of new development minimizes negative impacts on surrounding parcels and infrastructure.
- C.** To encourage development of a variety of housing types and densities in safe and affordable neighborhoods with access to services and amenities that meet the needs of residents.
- D.** To support a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment with clean air, clean water, and development that is sensitive to natural features, preserves scenic views and conserves open space.
- E.** To minimize pollution or disruption of the environment by objectionable noise, vibrations, smoke, fumes, odors, harsh lights, solid wastes and liquid home effluents.
- F.** To promote the establishment of new businesses in the Borough to create jobs and increase the tax base.
- G.** To assure that businesses and institutions in the Borough provide sufficient and well-designed off-street parking that manages traffic flow safely and effectively and accommodates demand efficiently.
- H.** To create a safe and well-planned traffic circulation pattern that effectively facilitates the movement of goods and people, and promotes good access to neighborhoods, workplaces, shopping destinations, businesses and recreational areas.
- I.** To prevent unsafe construction in floodplain areas.
- J.** To ensure that future growth occurs in suitable areas with stable soils, necessary utilities and sufficient street capacity and access.

## Future Land Use Plan

The Albion Borough Future Land Use Map illustrates the desired pattern of future land uses and development within the Borough. It establishes six land use districts, each with its own purpose. The map also includes a floodplain overlay district.

The land use districts and their purposes are as follows :

**R-1, Residential (Suburban Residential):** The purpose of the suburban residential district is to accommodate low density, residential growth within the Borough. Those areas designated suburban residential are to be used primarily for low density residential, and associated public, institutional and recreational uses.

**R-2, Residential (Urban Residential):** The purpose of the urban residential district is to accommodate all basic forms of housing including single family detached dwellings and housing structures for more than one family. It includes single family attached dwellings (such as duplexes, townhouses, and condominiums), apartment buildings, and similar uses.

**C-B, Central Business (Central Business):** The purpose of the central business district is to encourage the development and expansion of the Borough's central business district in a manner that allows the existing character of development to be preserved to the greatest extent possible. The intent is to allow for sidewalk fronting buildings and a dense development pattern that allows common walls; and to accommodate parking in a convenient manner that does not interfere with street traffic. The district allows for a wide variety of commercial, service, office, retail, and related uses.

**B-1 Business (Neighborhood Business):** The purpose of the neighborhood business district is to accommodate a mixture of higher density residential uses and compatible, commercial and institutional uses serving the needs of the community. Heavy commercial, industrial and other high impact uses are excluded in order to limit undesirable or incompatible situations and/or conflicts between land uses within this district.

**B-2, Business (High Impact Business):** The purpose of the high impact business district is to provide land for commercial, institutional, and industrial uses, including heavy commercial, heavy industrial and other high impact uses.

**REC, Public Recreation (Public Recreation):** The purpose of the public recreation district is to provide for the continued use of Albion's public park and the Albion Fairgrounds in a manner that is compatible with adjacent land uses and zoning districts. Permitted uses include recreational uses; special events of a temporary nature, such as agricultural fairs and exhibits; circuses; carnivals; festivals; auto, boat and/or recreational vehicle shows; outdoor concerts or shows; and similar events; and other compatible uses which contribute to and/or support the continued use of the park and fairgrounds.

**F-P, Floodplain Overlay (Floodplain):** The Floodplain designation is an overlay designation that consists of all floodplain areas identified by FEMA. The desire is to mitigate the risk of damage to property and loss of life due to flooding within these areas.

## **Land Use Ordinances**

The Albion Borough Zoning Ordinance and the Albion Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance will be essential tools to be used for implementation of this plan.

Zoning protects and enhances property values, preserves neighborhood character, and protects against incompatible land uses. The Albion Borough Zoning Ordinance was adopted on December 18, 1997, and is approximately 21 years old. Borough officials recognized the need for an update to the zoning ordinance, and a new zoning ordinance is being developed in conjunction with this plan.

Subdivision and land development ordinances ensure that sites for development are adequate in terms of size, shape, availability of water and sewer, etc. In addition, they regulate design and construction standards for public improvements such as roads and water and sewer systems, and help to control municipal costs by ensuring that the costs of any required site improvements are paid by the developer and not by the municipality. The Albion Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance was adopted on January 20, 1994, and is approximately 24 years old. Like the Borough's current zoning ordinance, an update is needed and recommended.



## Recommendations

The following recommendations concerning land use are made:

- An update to the Albion Borough Zoning Ordinance is recommended, and is currently being developed by the Albion Borough Planning Commission.
- An update to the Albion Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance is recommended.
- A prerequisite to recruiting new businesses and encouraging the expansion of existing businesses is to make sure that sufficient land areas are available, and that the land is available in appropriate locations. The Borough is currently in the process of updating its zoning ordinance. As part of this process, Borough officials should consider the types of businesses needed to provide residents with the goods and services that they need and desire. They should also consider the type of location needed for those businesses to succeed. For example, retail businesses, restaurants and gas stations all require locations with high visibility and good access. State Street is the most obvious location for those types of businesses. Care needs to be taken during the zoning ordinance update, to ensure that zoning is adequate along State Street to accommodate the commercial needs of the community.
- As discussed in the Housing Section of the plan, the supply of residentially zoned, vacant land in Albion is considered adequate to meet the demand for new housing.
- Residents have expressed dissatisfaction with the variety of housing options, including apartments, senior living, etc. Albion's population is aging, and household sizes are decreasing. These factors suggest that demand for smaller, affordable housing options, including apartments, is likely to increase in the future. Albion's current zoning allows for all types of housing. This policy should be continued as part of the update to the Borough's zoning ordinance.
- The Albion Park and fairgrounds are currently zoned R-1, Residential, which is for low density residential use. The park and fairgrounds property is one of Albion's greatest assets. It is recommended that the Borough create a public recreation zoning district to provide for the continued use of the park and fairgrounds in a manner that is compatible with adjacent land uses and zoning districts. Permitted uses should be tailored to the needs and desired uses of the park and fairgrounds, including recreational uses; special events of a temporary nature, such as agricultural fairs and exhibits; circuses; carnivals; festivals; auto, boat and/or recreational vehicle shows; outdoor concerts or shows; and similar events; and other compatible uses which contribute to and/or support the continued use of the park and fairgrounds.

# Transportation

## Transportation Issues and Considerations

As part of the public survey, Albion residents were asked to rate the adequacy of Albion's public transportation, winter road maintenance, and the quality and condition of sidewalks and streets. The **"Improve Our Neighborhoods"** component of this plan addresses Albion's pedestrian infrastructure needs, including sidewalks, crosswalks, street lighting, bicycle facilities and other amenities.

Given Albion's outlying location, EMTA bus service is minimal. Therefore, it's not surprising that 65% of respondents to the public survey rated the adequacy of public transportation as poor. Albion should continue to advocate for increased bus service. However, due to limited ridership and the economics involved, little else can be done by the Borough at this time.

Seventy-six percent (76%) of survey respondents rated the quality and condition of roads and streets as either adequate (64%) or good (12%), and seventy-seven percent (77%) rated winter road maintenance as either adequate (55%) or good (22%). This suggests that the majority of residents are satisfied with the current level of street maintenance.

## Recommendations

In addition to the goals and tasks related to the Borough's sidewalks (see the **"Improve Our Neighborhoods"** component of this plan), the following transportation related recommendations are made:

- The Borough should continue to monitor the condition of its streets, and maintain them, as needed.
- The Borough should continue to proactively address any transportation related, public safety hazards that may become evident in the future.

# Community Facilities & Utilities

## Community Facilities & Utilities Issues and Considerations

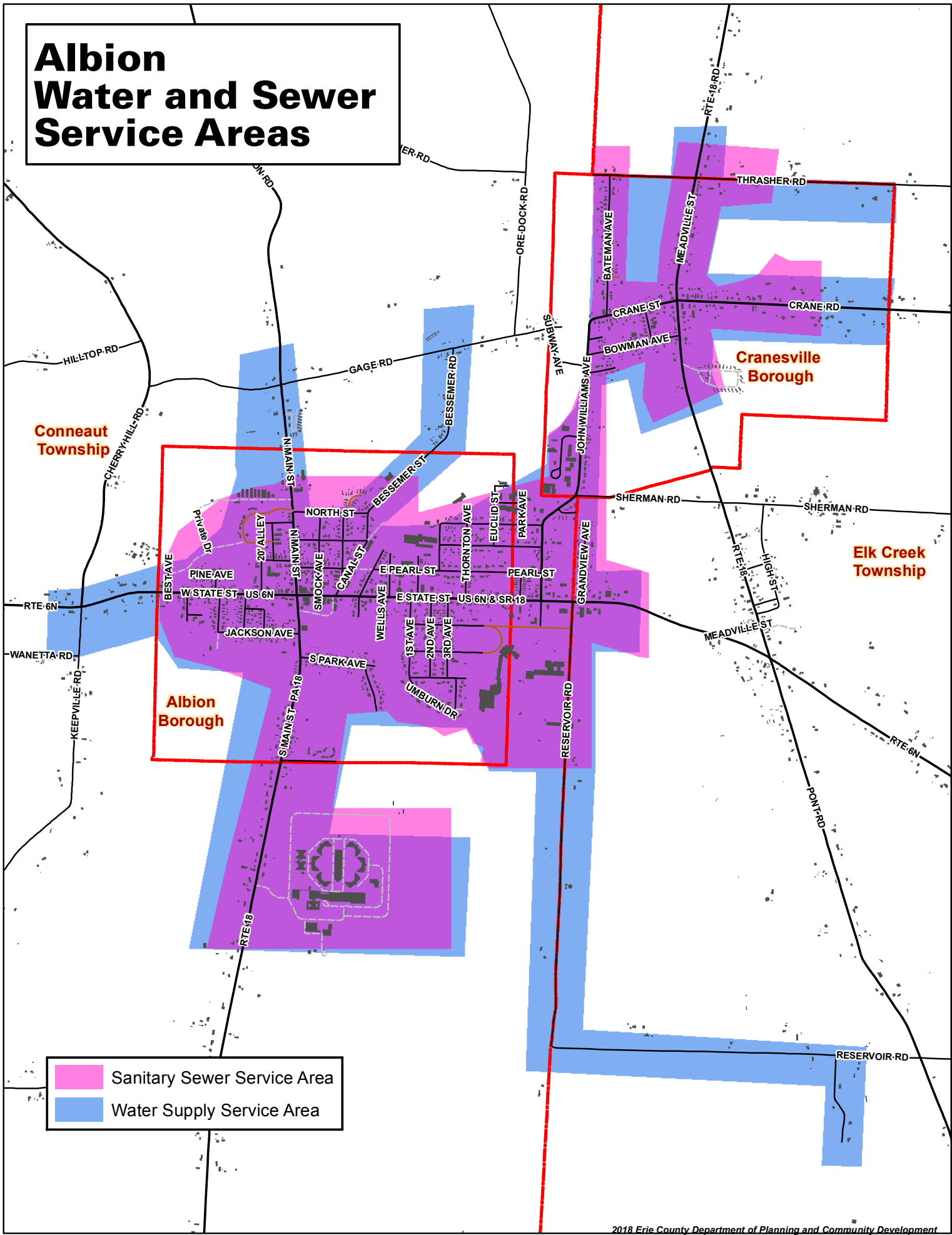
### Albion Borough Water System

The Albion Borough water system is owned and operated by the Borough. It serves Albion Borough, Cranesville Borough (via bulk purchase) and portions of Conneaut and Elk Creek Townships. Its largest customer is the State Correctional Institution (SCI) Albion, which is located in Conneaut Township. According to Borough officials, SCI Albion represents approximately two thirds of Albion's water and sewer use.

The system's water sources include 4 groundwater wells at the Gage Road facility and 3 groundwater wells at the Pont Road facility. In recent years, the Borough has had trouble meeting the demand for water during dry months, often August and September. In some cases, it has had to implement water conservation restrictions, and in 2016 the Borough had to truck in water from other parts of Erie County in order to boost water levels at the treatment plant.

The Borough has taken steps to address its water supply problems. A new well is being located on Gage Road. According to Borough officials, its capacity is significant, and exceeds the combined capacity of all existing wells. With the new well, the Albion system will have adequate capacity to allow for expansion and additional customers. At this time, the well is still in the permit process. The permit process is lengthy, and may take another couple of years to complete. Another issue that must be resolved is the expense of developing this well to full capacity. It may be more cost effective for the Borough to drill a 2nd well to help cover current capacity needs, with the new Gage Road well operating at less than full capacity until additional capacity is needed in the future.

# Albion Water and Sewer Service Areas



- Sanitary Sewer Service Area
- Water Supply Service Area

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Several years ago, the water system was experiencing water pressure problems in some areas. However, a couple of years ago a new water tower was built, and that has resolved the low water pressure problems.

The water system is regularly monitored for water quality. The annual drinking water quality reports are made available for public review on the Borough's website. Other than routine and on-going maintenance needs, no significant maintenance issues have been identified. The Borough is working to upgrade water lines as scheduling and budget permit.

Overall, the Albion Borough water system appears to be adequate to meet the future needs of the Borough. Any current, capacity issues should be resolved by the new Gage Road well. According to Albion's public survey, 69% of respondents rate public water service as either adequate (46%) or good (23%). Only 19% rated in poor. The remaining 12% didn't know.

### **Albion Borough Sewer System**

The Albion Borough sewer system is owned and operated by the Borough. It serves Albion Borough, Cranesville Borough (via bulk purchase) and portions of Conneaut and Elk Creek Townships. Its largest customer is the State Correctional Institution (SCI) Albion, which is located in Conneaut Township. According to Borough officials, SCI Albion represents approximately two thirds of Albion's water and sewer use.

During 2011 and 2012, the sewage treatment plant was upgraded at a cost of approximately \$9 million. The upgrade was needed to address system capacity issues. According to Borough officials, the problems were corrected, and the system now has plenty of additional capacity. Permit capacity is 1.4 MGD, and the system is currently running at about 50% capacity. That leaves a lot of room for expansion, new customers and new businesses.

Inflow and infiltration (I&I) is clean storm and/or groundwater that enters the sewer system through cracked pipes, leaky manholes, or improperly connected storm drains, down spouts and sump pumps. Most inflow comes from storm water and most infiltration comes from groundwater. The Albion system is experiencing some infiltration problems. This is common, especially with older systems. The Borough has started a 5 year program to address I&I. The system has been divided into geographical sections. Each year, one section will be tested for I&I and repaired, as needed. This schedule is subject to revision, if needed, due to budgetary considerations.

Aside from routine maintenance and the I&I issues, the only other notable improvement that will be needed is a new generator for the wastewater treatment plant. This will cost approximately \$268,000, and is required for the DEP permit. According to the Borough, adequate revenue is available for this project.

Overall, the Albion Borough sewer system appears to be adequate to meet the current and future needs of the Borough. According to Albion's public survey, 70% of respondents rate public sewer service as either adequate (44%) or good (26%). Only 13% rated in poor. The remaining 17% didn't know.

### **Waste Management & Recycling**

Raccoon Refuse provides trash collection services to the Borough. Participation is mandatory for all residents. Public survey results were positive. Seventy-four percent of respondents rated the residential garbage service as either adequate (39%) or good (35%). Only 8% rated it poor. The remaining 18% didn't know.

In the middle of June 2018, Erie County was forced to close its recycling drop off site that was located at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Albion. Fortunately, the Borough was successful in retaining Raccoon Refuse to provide curb side recycling to Albion residents on an optional basis.

The Borough also works with Erie County and other west county municipalities to provide its residents with options for electronics & hazardous waste collection as well as other hard to dispose of items such as tires, furniture, Freon free appliances and other large items. See the “**Improve Our Neighborhoods**” section of this plan for more information.

### **Municipal Buildings**

In 2005, the Borough of Albion entered into a 50 year lease agreement with the Albion Volunteer Fire Department. Under the terms of the lease, the fire department will have full use of the Albion Borough Fire Hall, which is located at 15 and 19 Smock Avenue, and which is owned by the Borough. In return, the Borough will have use of the municipal building which is located at 26 Smock Avenue, and which is owned by the fire department. This agreement may be somewhat unusual. However, it is working satisfactorily at the present time.

In addition to the fire hall building, the Borough also owns a maintenance building located at 36 Bessimer Avenue, the Albion public library building located at 111 E. Pearl Street, and the former Dollar General which is located at 202 E. State Street. The former Dollar General is currently vacant, and available for sale.

### **Public Schools**

Albion residents love their public schools. The Borough is part of the Northwestern School District, and the school district achieved the highest satisfaction rating as part of Albion’s public survey. Eight-six percent of survey respondents rated the school system as either adequate (34%) or good (52%). Only 8% rated it poor. The remaining 7% didn’t know. In addition, 89% of survey respondents rated the school buildings and facilities as either adequate (41%) or good (48%). Only 5% rated them poor. Six percent didn’t know.

The Northwestern School District has its own comprehensive plan, also known as its District Level Plan, which is available online at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7Hf3sdpHzMVWmNHc3F6WUNnRXc/view>.

More information about the Northwestern School District is available on the school district’s website at <https://www.nwsd.org/>.

### **Other Utilities**

Albion Borough is fully served by National Fuel Gas (gas service), Penelec/First Energy (electric service), Windstream Communications (telephone service), and Spectrum Cable (cable television). These services are adequate to serve the needs of the Borough.

Internet and cell phone services are available. Based on the results of the public survey, internet service appears to be meeting the needs of most residents. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents rated the internet access as either adequate (48%) or good (20%). Sixteen percent rated it poor, while the remaining 16% didn’t know. Cell phone service did not receive the same level of approval. Thirty-six percent of survey respondents rated the availability and quality of cell phone service as poor. However, the majority (61%) rated it as either adequate (42%) or good (19%). The remaining 3% didn’t know.

### **Recommendations**

Based on a review of Albion’s community facilities and utilities, it appears that Albion is adequately served by all utilities, with no significant problems or issues. The sewer system has adequate capacity for expansion, and with the new Gage Road well, the water system’s capacity issues should be addressed. Borough officials have implemented plans to address the maintenance requirements of these systems. The municipal buildings also appear adequate, and the Borough is planning for and providing for maintenance needs associated with these buildings.

The school system has its own comprehensive plan, and is well supported by the community.

Fire and police protection have not been addressed in this section because they were incorporated into the “**Improve Our Neighborhoods**” section of this plan.

No additional recommendations are being made concerning community facilities and utilities.

# Natural Resources

## Natural Resources Issues and Considerations

According to the 2012 Erie County Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI), a portion of the East Branch Conneaut Creek Natural Heritage Area (NHA) is located in the Borough of Albion. The NHI is available online at [http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/cnai\\_pdfs/erienhi\\_update2012.pdf](http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/cnai_pdfs/erienhi_update2012.pdf). See pages 187-189 and pages 206-207. The NHI provides some conservation recommendations including:

- Conserve and expand the forested riparian buffers of the East Branch of Conneaut Creek and its tributaries.
- Streams through forested areas should be considered a high priority for conservation.
- Streams through non-forested areas should be restored with native trees and shrubs appropriate to the habitat.
- Establish at least a 100 foot buffer of woody vegetation along the creek and its tributaries to help reduce erosion, sedimentation, and pollution.
- Best management practices that focus on limiting the introduction of non-point sources of pollution into surface and groundwater should be applied to the surrounding area.
- Pesticide use should be avoided in the Core Habitat and minimized in the Supporting Landscape.

The Albion Borough Floodplain Management Ordinance (Ordinance No. 2 of 2014) was adopted on February 19, 2014. This ordinance regulates construction or development within areas subject to flooding. Its intent, among other things, is to “minimize flood damage in the future”, and “to minimize the danger to public health by protecting water supply and natural drainage”.

The Albion Borough Stormwater Management Ordinance (Ordinance No. 1 of 2011) was adopted on September 22, 2011. This ordinance is consistent with the Erie County Act 167 Stormwater Management Plan. This ordinance helps to “manage accelerated runoff and erosion and sedimentation problems close to their source”, “preserve the natural drainage systems as much as possible”, “maintain existing flows and quality of streams and watercourses”, and “preserve and restore the flood carrying capacity of streams and prevent scour and erosion of stream banks and streambeds”.

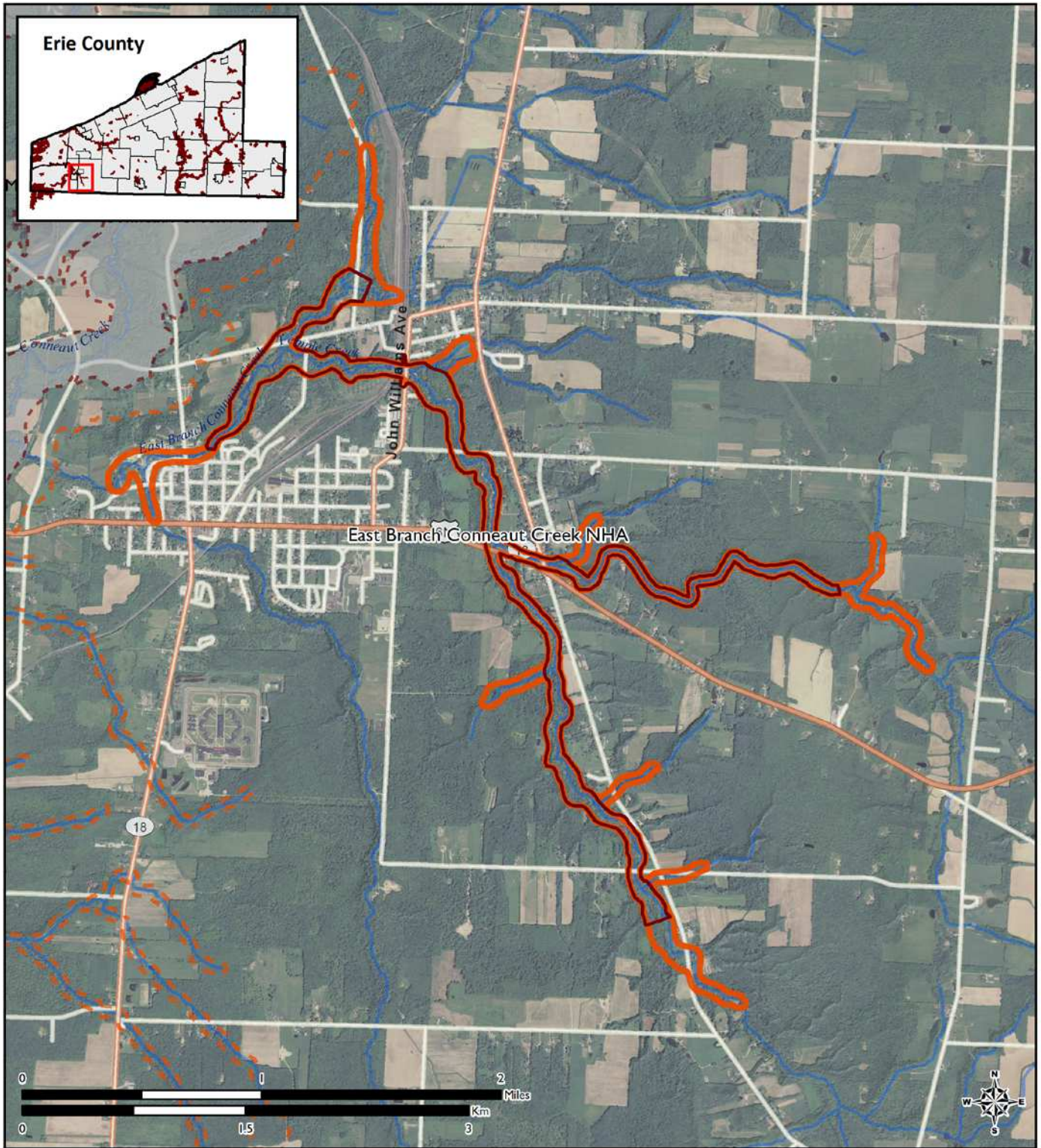
## Recommendations

There are several goals and tasks that were presented earlier in this plan that will have positive impacts on natural resources. For example, the “**Improve Our Neighborhoods**” component of this plan calls for tree plantings as part of neighborhood beautification projects, the proper disposal of hazardous wastes and electronics, and community “clean-up” days. Proper care and maintenance of the public park grounds (**Love Our Parks** component) helps to provide for responsible, public access to Conneaut Creek.



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## East Branch Conneaut Creek Natural Heritage Area

Forested waterways at this site provide aquatic habitat for two sensitive species of special concern.

Significance Rank:  
STATE



Pennsylvania  
Natural Heritage Areas

- Core Habitat
- Supporting Landscape
- Other Core Habitat
- Other Supporting Landscape
- Conservation Lands

The following additional recommendations concerning natural resources are made:

- The Borough's Floodplain Management and Stormwater Management ordinances are comprehensive and up-to-date. No updates are recommended at this time. However, the Borough should review them periodically, and update them if/when needed.
- The Borough should consider using its newsletter and website to encourage its residents and businesses to engage in environmentally friendly practices, such as recycling, sustainable lawn care practices, composting, etc.

## Historic Resources

### Historic Resources Issues and Considerations

In 2014, Preservation Erie retained Wise Preservation Planning, LLC to provide a survey of historic buildings in Erie County. The results of that survey are available online at <http://www.eriebuildings.info/background.php> , and the associated project report is available at <http://www.eriebuildings.info/pdf/survey-report2015.pdf> . Based on the architectural significance and integrity of their exterior, four properties located in Albion were identified as being potentially eligible for the National Register. This includes the Grace United Methodist Church, located at 49 Franklin Street and 3 residential properties. See page 72 of Wise Preservation Planning's project report. The survey did not identify any Albion properties that are currently on the National Register. In addition, it did not identify any historic districts either currently on the National Register, or that may be potentially eligible for the register.

The Albion Carousel was built in the 1890's, and is thought to be the 3rd oldest working wooded carousel in the United States. It is currently located at the Borough's public park, and is a community asset. Public comments that were received during this planning process make it clear that residents recognize its significance, support its continued use and preservation, and would like to see it more prominently featured during the Albion Fair and other events.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations concerning historic resources are made:

- The Albion carousel is a community asset to be enjoyed by residents and visitors. The Borough should continue to celebrate the carousel and ensure its preservation. As part of a future park master plan (see "**Love Our Park**" component of this plan), consideration should be given to the carousel, and how it can be featured in the best possible way.
- Property owners of potentially eligible buildings should be encouraged to pursue nominations to the National Register. Property owners may contact the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) for more information.
- On August 22, 2017, Erie County adopted the Erie County Cultural Heritage Plan. The Borough should cooperate with the County on any future implementation efforts associated with that plan. That may include such things as helping the County to identify priority historic assets, and assisting with public awareness and outreach. The Erie County Cultural Heritage Plan is available online at <https://www.eriecountypa.gov/county-services/county-offices/planning-department/regional-planning/planning-documents/erieculturalheritageplan.aspx> .



# State Planning Requirements

## Interrelationships of Plan Components

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247) requires municipal comprehensive plans to include a statement of interrelationships among the various plan components. The purpose of this is to ensure that the plan's components and goals complement and support each other, and that the implementation of one section or component of the plan will not conflict with the goals or implementation of any other components of the plan.

This plan is has four primary components, each addressing one of Albion's top priority issues. No single component was developed to stand alone. Instead, all four components interrelate, complement one another, and work together to move Albion forward to achieve its desired future and a better quality of life for its residents.

For example, implementation of the **Promote Albion** component will benefit the other components of this plan and assist with their implementation by helping to generate positive publicity and by encouraging residents to get involved in the community. The successful implementation of the **Love Our Parks** component will compliment Albion's efforts to support its businesses and improve its neighborhoods by bringing visitors to Albion and by improving recreational opportunities for residents. **Improving Our Neighborhoods** will help to retain and attract the residents needed to improve and stabilize the customer base needed to **Support Our Businesses**. Likewise, a successful business community will help to improve our neighborhoods by providing the goods, services, and employment opportunities needed and desired by our residents.

## Consistency with Other Plans

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247) requires municipal comprehensive plans to include a statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is compatible with the existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous portions of neighboring municipalities, and a statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is generally consistent with the objectives of the county comprehensive plan.

Conneaut Township surrounds Albion Borough, and is the only contiguous municipality. Conneaut Township's comprehensive plan was adopted in 1980, and the township does not have zoning. Albion's existing and proposed development are compatible with the existing development and all known proposed development and plans of Conneaut Township.

The Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development has provided consulting services associated with the development of this plan. This plan is generally consistent with Erie County's plans and policies, including the Erie County Comprehensive Plan.

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