



## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary	1
Established Partnerships	
Elm Street Program	
Chambersburg Elm Street Neighborhood Study Area	
Key Neighborhood Characteristics	3
Summary of Planning Process	
Neighborhood Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)	5
Summary of Goals and Objectives	6
Plan Purpose	6
Neighborhood Vision	6
Plan Goal and Objectives	6
Implementation Plan	
Credits and References	17
Credits	17
References	17
Appendix	17
Appendix 1: Five Year Action Plan	17
Appendix 2: Planning Process	18

### CHAMBERSBURG ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



# **Executive Summary**

This plan represents a neighborhood-based, long-range vision for the revitalization of the Chambersburg Elm Street Neighborhood Area. This plan provides a blue-print for neighborhood revitalization emphasizing improvement of the condition of the neighborhood for all residents. This document was produced using the results of a collaborative planning process including input from residents, business owners, local elected officials, Borough staff, agency leadership and representatives of downtown.

## Established Partnerships

The Borough of Chambersburg received a planning grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) to prepare this plan required to address five key areas referred to as sustainable organization; clean, safe and green; neighbors and economy; design; and image and identity. DCED has turned to the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) to perform assessment responsibilities and provide training and technical assistance to Elm Street communities across the Commonwealth. The Elm Street Program is designed similar to the Main Street Program. Therefore, partnership between Chambersburg Borough and Downtown Chambersburg, Inc. (DCI) is crucial to success of this plan, Elm Street designation and plan implementation. Building Our Pride in Chambersburg (BOPIC), a not for profit organization, has partnered with the Borough and DCI to undertake this Elm Street planning effort. Throughout the planning process other partnerships emerged, existing partnerships were strengthened and new partnerships were identified. The Borough, DCI and BOPIC leadership was assisted by a planning consultant to prepare the Elm Street Neighborhood Plan.

# Elm Street Program

The Elm Street Program is intended to strengthen older historic neighborhoods that characterize many of the Commonwealth's communities. The Elm Street Approach is intended to operate in parallel cooperation with existing downtown or commercial corridor revitalization programs, including Pennsylvania's Main Street program. Through this cooperative approach, the connections between healthier neighborhoods and revitalized business districts can be strengthened. The following is a description of the Elm Street Program goals described in the New Communities Program Guidelines issued by DCED in November 2006.

- To revitalize neighborhoods in proximity to the existing downtown by improving the exterior appearance of the buildings and streetscapes.
- To formalize a connection between established residential neighborhood areas with downtown revitalization activities.
- To prevent neighborhood decline by developing a plan that includes the establishment of a sustainable community organization that will implement the five year strategy.
- To assist municipalities in preparing and implementing a revitalization strategy for established residential neighborhoods either in the vicinity of a Main Street Program project or in proximity to an existing commercial district.

### CHAMBERSBURG ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



An Elm Street designation will enable the Borough of Chambersburg in partnership with others to employ an Elm Street Manager for up to five years and apply for additional grant funds to undertake a variety of public improvement projects within the designated Elm Street Neighborhood. This Plan will provide the framework for analysis and development of plan topics consistent with the Elm Street Program Approach including the following five key areas:

- o **Point One** Program Area: Sustainable Organization
  - Create a viable organization to carry out the plan, create partnerships, and establish a volunteer base to staff committees, promote communication among all partners and identify responsibilities of partners.
- Point Two Program Area: Image & Identity
  - Organize neighborhood and special district events, improve the general image of the neighborhood, promote residential marketing, and utilize Main Street promotional techniques as examples to build upon.
- o **Point Three** Program Area: Design & Appearance
  - Conduct property inventories, neighborhood survey, and identify public improvement needs of the neighborhood, identify programs, review planning and zoning ordinances and identify other tools, review parking and traffic calming methods.
- Point Four Program Area: Neighborhood & Economic Restructuring
  - Assemble neighborhood demographic and market information, housing and commercial building stock condition, and strategies for fostering a sustainable mixed-use neighborhood.
- o Point Five Program Area: Clean, Safe & Green Activities
  - Assess maintenance of public space and areas, inventory open space and recreation areas, and assess the perceived and real crime solution.

# Chambersburg Elm Street Neighborhood Study Area

The Borough and DCI have identified a target neighborhood primarily residential in nature with some pockets of non-residential uses referred to as the Chambersburg Elm Street Neighborhood. This neighborhood is a typical traditional neighborhood adjacent to the downtown. The neighborhood is rich in history and has architectural integrity in existence well before 1961.

Map 1: Study Area illustrates the boundaries of the Chambersburg Elm Street Neighborhood Plan Study Area. The study area was determined by the Borough in collaboration with Downtown Chambersburg, Inc., with input from the Elm Street Advisory Council (ESAC). There is both a physical and programmatic relationship between the current Main Street Program or Main Street Area and the proposed Elm Street Neighborhood.

#### CHAMBERSBURG ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



### **Key Neighborhood Characteristics**

The assessment of existing conditions includes analysis of socio-economic data from the US Census Bureau, code enforcement and crime data from the Borough, real estate data from regional data sources and neighborhood condition data from a Neighborhood Inventory conducted as part of this planning process. The following is a summary of key conditions within the neighborhood.

#### **Demographic Profile**

- One quarter (23.9%) of the children that are school aged in the Borough resides in the neighborhood.
- Less than one-tenth (7.7%) of the retirement aged people in the Borough reside in the neighborhood.
- Two-thirds (67.5%) of the occupied housing units in the neighborhood are renter occupied.
- Over half (52.6%) of the vacant housing units in the neighborhood are for rent.
- One-firth (19.9%) of the vacant units in the Borough are in the neighborhood.
- The majority (59.0%) of the households in the neighborhood are 1 and 2 person households.
- Two-thirds (61.7%) of the people living below the poverty level in the Borough reside in the neighborhood.

#### **Structural Condition Analysis**

- There are 951 primary structures in the neighborhood.
- 341 primary structures (35.9%) are in sound condition.
- 533 primary structures (56.0%) are in need of minor rehabilitation.
- 73 primary structures (7.7%) are in need of major rehabilitation.
- 4 primary structures (0.4%) are dilapidated.
- There are 168 secondary structures in the neighborhood.
- 11 secondary structures (6.5%) are dilapidated.

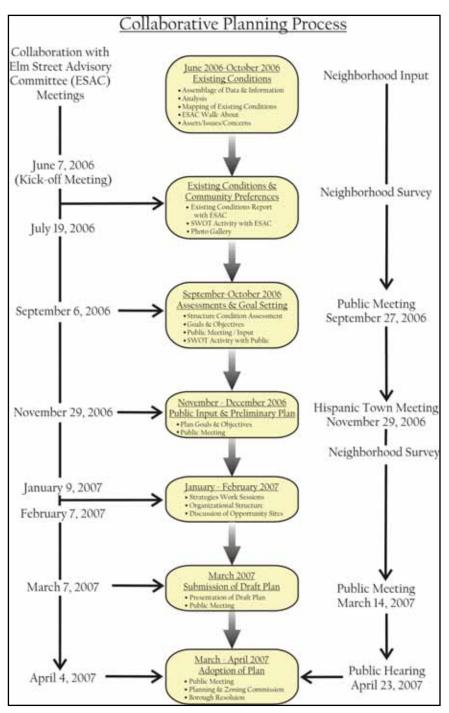




## **Summary of Planning Process**

The Borough, Downtown Chambersburg, Inc., BOPIC and planning partners realized that a collaborative planning process was necessary for the establishment of sustainable organization support neighborhood revitalization Therefore, the partners efforts. implemented collaborative а planning process as depicted in Diagram 1. This process included the establishment of an Elm Street Council (ESAC) Advisorv consisting of broad representation from the neighborhood including residents, business owners, civic leaders. property owners and developers. The ESAC met monthly with regular attendance of members throughout the planning process to provide guidance to the planning consultant.

Additionally, the ESAC prepared and administered a neighborhood survey. The survey was prepared in two versions and in two languages (English and Spanish) to obtain opinions from members of the neighborhood as well as opinions from those who are considered 'outsiders'. The ESAC sponsored three public meetings to discuss the planning process, present information, obtain input and to present findings and plan recommendations. One of the three meetings was conducted as a Hispanic Town Meeting.



The plan purpose, vision statement, goals and objectives were developed in draft form using input received from the neighborhood survey and first public meeting. The vision, goals and

### CHAMBERSBURG ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



objectives were then finalized working collaboratively with the ESAC in a work session. The plan purpose, vision statement, goals and objectives provide the basis for assessment of the neighborhood and development of the organizational structure, implementation strategies and Five Year Action Plan.

Information throughout the planning process was posted on partner websites and the media covered the kick-off of the project, key points in the planning process, announcement of public meetings and public meetings. All public meetings were well attended and response to the neighborhood survey was very good. The plan was presented to the Borough's Planning & Zoning Commission and Town Council and was adopted by resolution for submission to the PDC and DCED for review and acceptance for designation. A more detailed account of this planning process is provided in Appendix 2.

## Neighborhood Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

The following is a summary of the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified and prioritized by the ESAC and neighborhood members participating in public meetings and responding to the neighborhood survey. A more detailed listing of SWOT results is contained in later sections of the plan.

#### Strengths

- · Crime is down.
- Safe neighborhood.
- Businesses at Southgate.
- FCHA affordable housing for the elderly and disabled.

#### Weaknesses

- Lack of access to grocery store; a modern facility is needed.
- No public transportation.
- Run down housing.
- Southgate Mall.
- Property maintenance by slum landlords and tenants.
- Lack of community pride; trash and sidewalk condition are terrible.

#### Opportunities

- Homeowner occupied property program.
- Future home of Chambersburg Townhomes.
- Housing on South Street is in need of façade improvements.
- Southgate Mall.
- FCHA Community Center / home of the boys and girls club.
- Unique experience with opportunity for Southgate to provide goods and services for all ages.
- Downtown restoration needs to continue into residential neighborhood.

### CHAMBERSBURG ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



#### **Threats**

- Public's perception of safety (outsider's perception).
- Absentee landlords.
- Location and perception of housing in relationship to Southgate.
- Increased drub and gang activity.
- Southgate Mall's vacant space.

### Summary of Goals and Objectives

As previously outlined, the Elm Street Program emphasizes the integration of a five points approach to neighborhood revitalization in both planning and implementation. The following plan purpose, vision statement, goals and objectives are organized by the programs five key points and are based upon input received through the collaborative planning process. The neighborhood and ESAC played in important role in crafting the plan purpose, vision statement, goals and objectives.

### **Plan Purpose**

The purpose of the plan, organization and implementation efforts to follow is to empower the neighborhood, its organizations and leaders to achieve neighborhood revitalization results, demonstrate worth and build a sustainable neighborhood revitalization program in five key areas of focus referred to as the "Elm Street Five-Point Approach" resulting in:

- A clean, safe and green neighborhood for current and future residents and business owners;
- Neighbors and healthy economy desirable to current and future residents and business owners:
- Neighborhood character strengthened through design sympathetic to history, function, use, aesthetics and desired amenities;
- A neighborhood **image and identity** desirable to current and future residents and business owners; and,
- A **sustainable organization** with respect to leadership, governance, finances and staffing to support neighborhood revitalization efforts.

# **Neighborhood Vision**

The neighborhood vision is that the Elm Street Neighborhood will be a socially and economically diverse traditional neighborhood with a sustainable organizational structure that is committed to improving the overall quality of life for residents through various neighborhood revitalization efforts including affordable housing opportunities.

# **Plan Goal and Objectives**

The following plan goals and objectives are based upon the assessment of the neighborhood's standing in relation to the five point approach as well as assessment of the neighborhood's readiness previously described.

### CHAMBERSBURG ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



 Community-based Empowerment (Sustainable Organization): Build a sustainable organization within the neighborhood that is committed to long-term viability of the neighborhood.

#### Objectives:

- a. Coordinating activities and programs that can identify and address problems across a diverse spectrum of neighborhood needs.
- b. Develop partnerships with other interested organizations in areas such as housing, public works, employment and other revitalization concerns.
- c. Build credibility with the neighborhood.
- 2. **Neighborhood Cleanliness, Safety and Greening:** Create a healthy neighborhood that is perceived to be safe and pleasant place to live, work and play.

### Objectives:

- a. Improve neighborhood safety.
- b. Provide safe routes for children to walk or bike to school, for residents to access commercial developments and for recreation.
- c. Improve the cleanliness of the neighborhood.
- d. Improve neighborhood appeal through greening such as landscaping, street trees, community gardens, plantings, parks and recreation space.
- 3. **Neighborhood Character (Includes Design):** Strengthen neighborhood character through various elements of design to attract residents, visitors and businesses.

#### **Objectives**

- a. Encourage respect for existing architectural styles with compatible styles for new development and redevelopment.
- b. Encourage respect for existing neighborhood character through compatible site design.
- c. Unify the neighborhood as well as make connections to the downtown using streetscape and alleyway improvements.
- d. Rehabilitate owner and renter occupied residences to strengthen neighborhood character.
- 4. **Neighborhood Economy:** Create a healthy neighborhood with a stable economy desirable for both residents and businesses.

#### Objectives:

- a. Increase homeownership rates and housing values.
- b. Increase employment opportunities in the neighborhood.
- c. Provide quality, affordable housing.
- d. Reduce unemployment rates by raising educational levels and by providing training and job opportunities.
- e. Develop partnerships with downtown businesses and business organizations to increase employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.





5. **Neighborhood Image & Identity:** Create a neighborhood with a strong sense of identity viewed by outsiders as a safe, clean and attractive place to live, work, visit and play.

#### Objectives:

- a. Increase private and public investment in the neighborhood.
- b. Attract outside funding and resources to invest in highly visible neighborhood revitalization projects and programs.
- c. Actively engage neighborhood residents, businesses and organizations in revitalization efforts through neighborhood associations, volunteerism, neighborhood activities and investment.
- d. Outreach and marketing of neighborhood revitalization efforts including education of neighborhood residents about resources (funds and services).





# Implementation Plan

The following is a summary of implementation strategies addressing neighborhood revitalization goals and objectives that emerged through the planning process. The implementation plan and action plan are detailed in later sections of the plan.

Summary of Implementation Strategies			
Priority	Goal	Objective	Strategy
1 Initial Action	Community-based Empowerment (Sustainable Organization) Build a sustainable organization	A. Coordinate activities and programs that can identify and address problems across a diverse spectrum of neighborhood issues.	<ol> <li>Hire an Elm Street Manager with proven track record of organizational development, coordination of volunteers, fundraising and recognized in the community as a leader, mentor and a person of action.</li> <li>Establishment of the Alliance of Partners.</li> <li>Establish strong leadership through Elm Street Advisory Council membership.</li> <li>Establish a neighborhood-based organizational structure consisting of committees to meet Elm Street Program requirements.</li> </ol>
Item & Ongoing		B. Develop partnerships with other interested organizations in areas such as housing, public works, employment and other revitalization concerns.	<ol> <li>Local/regional housing agencies should be represented on the Elm Street Advisory Council and/or members of Alliance of Partners.</li> <li>Develop private/public partnerships with key property owners and reputable developers.</li> <li>Conduct annual forums for a wide array of identified and potential partners to explore possibilities for neighborhood revitalization as part of annual planning efforts.</li> </ol>





Summary of Implementation Strategies			
Priority	Goal	Objective	Strategy
1 Initial Action Item & Ongoing	Community-based Empowerment (Sustainable Organization) Build a sustainable organization within the neighborhood that is committed to long-term viability of the neighborhood.	C. Build credibility with the neighborhood.	<ol> <li>Conduct a continued promotional campaign for all volunteer activities and social programs as well as planned, designed and implemented projects.</li> <li>Established on-going communication with the neighborhood.</li> <li>Have diverse representation on the Neighborhood Committees.</li> </ol>





Summary of Implementation Strategies			
Priority	Goal	Objective	Strategy
	Neighborhood Cleanliness, Safety and Greening Create a healthy neighborhood that is perceived to be safe and pleasant place to live, work and play.	A. Improve neighborhood safety.	<ol> <li>Develop Neighborhood Watch Groups.</li> <li>Improve lighting in both private and public spaces.</li> <li>Establish a program with the Police Department through a grant program referred to as Volunteers in Police Service Program (VIPs) consisting of retired police officers and other law enforcement professionals.</li> <li>Continue Community Policing Program with targeted foot patrols and bicycle patrols. Use a community-based problem solving approach.</li> </ol>
2		B. Provide safe routes for children to walk or bike to school, for residents to access commercial developments and for recreation.	<ol> <li>Establish safe houses per block for children to seek safety.</li> <li>Improve sidewalk, streetscapes, alleyways and pedestrian paths.</li> </ol>
		C. Improve the cleanliness of the neighborhood.	<ol> <li>Join Hands Day Neighborhood/ Neighborhood Clean Up.</li> <li>Placement of public trash cans and dumpsters at key locations.</li> <li>Enforcement of nuisance code violations.</li> <li>Graffiti Removal Program using work release programs and community service programs for volunteer labor.</li> </ol>
		D. Improve neighborhood appeal through greening such as landscaping, street trees, community gardens, plantings, parks and recreation space.	<ol> <li>Establish a Street Tree Program to plant at least one street tree per block.</li> <li>Establish a Plant a Tree Program to plant trees on private property.</li> <li>Green public parks and recreation spaces.</li> </ol>





Summary of Implementation Strategies			
Priority	Goal	Objective	Strategy
	Neighborhood Character (Includes Design) Strengthen neighborhood	A. Encourage respect for existing architectural styles with compatible styles for new development and redevelopment.	<ol> <li>Educate local officials, boards and commissions about benefits of infill housing in unique locations such as fronting on alleyways.</li> <li>Establish a zoning overlay with infill housing use and design standards that are comprehensive and flexible.</li> <li>Conduct design workshops with current owners and potential developers considering infill housing.</li> <li>Promote the sketch plan process to identify key issues with respect to location, access, design and aesthetics.</li> </ol>
3		B. Encourage respect for existing neighborhood character through compatible site design.	<ol> <li>Infill zoning overlay must include incentives for quality site design and construction in the context of the existing neighborhood.</li> <li>Develop private/public partnerships to promote market rate housing and mixed-use neighborhoods for all income levels.</li> <li>Streamline various review processes.</li> </ol>
		C. Unify the neighborhood as well as make connections to the downtown using streetscape and alleyway improvements.	<ol> <li>Design improvements and seek funding for identified pedestrian connections through alleyway improvements and trail extensions.</li> <li>Extend streetscape improvements along Main Street and other image corridors connecting to the downtown.</li> <li>Establish a Wayfinding Signage Program.</li> </ol>





Summary of Implementation Strategies			
Priority	Goal	Objective	Strategy
			<ol> <li>Utilize HOME Funds for homeowner rehabilitation program.</li> <li>Use existing Owner Rehabilitation Program to revitalize neighborhood.</li> <li>Three tiered rehabilitation strategy including</li> </ol>
3	Neighborhood Character (Includes Design) Strengthen neighborhood character through various	D. Rehabilitate owner and renter occupied residences to strengthen neighborhood character.	improvements to owner-occupied dwellings; next door neighbors targeting properties where the owner lives nearby or next door; and, rental properties where the owner is not nearby.
	elements of design to attract residents, visitors and businesses.		4. Develop a rental rehabilitation program that provides financial assistance for multi-unit property owners to rehabilitate buildings to current code requirements.
			5. Develop a First Time Homebuyers/ Rehabilitation Program to provide financial assistance to those interested in buying and rehabilitation existing housing stock.





Summary of Implementation Strategies			
Priority	Goal	Objective	Strategy
	Neighborhood Economy Create a healthy neighborhood with a stable economy desirable for both residents and businesses.	A. Increase homeownership rates and housing values.	<ol> <li>Establish a First-Time Homebuyers Program through partnership with the Borough, Franklin County and local banks.</li> <li>Provide more affordable housing through partnerships with developers and housing agencies to pursue infill development opportunities.</li> <li>Continue Borough's Housing Rehabilitation Program.</li> </ol>
4		B. Increase employment opportunities in the neighborhood.	<ol> <li>Develop a variety of incentives for new and emerging businesses.</li> <li>Streamline regulatory requirements for small business development.</li> <li>Provide technical assistance to small businesses.</li> <li>Establish a small business incubator.</li> <li>Establish Child Care Programs for individuals participating in job training programs.</li> </ol>
		C. Provide quality, affordable housing.	<ol> <li>Conduct additional planning – Housing Capacity Analysis.</li> <li>Develop private/public partnership to pursue residential infill development on portion of Southgate Shopping Center.</li> <li>Third Street Project – 25 unit Townhouses</li> <li>Buchanan Street Project – 40 unit housing project.</li> <li>Habitat for Humanity infill and rehabilitation opportunities, code compliant rental properties and homeownership opportunities for the Hispanic Community.</li> <li>Effective code enforcement to maintain existing housing stock.</li> </ol>





Summary of Implementation Strategies			
Priority	Goal	Objective	Strategy
	Neighborhood Economy Create a healthy neighborhood	D. Reduce unemployment rates by raising educational levels and by providing training and job opportunities.	<ol> <li>Partner with the School District and other programs offering adult education programs to provide job training.</li> <li>Establish a satellite CareerLink training facility.</li> <li>Continue existing ESL Programs.</li> <li>Provide public transportation to job training</li> </ol>
4	with a stable economy desirable for both residents and businesses.	E. Develop partnerships with downtown businesses and business organizations to increase employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.	<ol> <li>programs and employment.</li> <li>Provide assistance to spin-off business start-ups from existing businesses.</li> <li>Establish a small business incubator.</li> <li>Provide technical and financial assistance to business expansions.</li> <li>Utilize existing Business Mentor Programs.</li> <li>Partner with local developers to attract a grocery store at an existing retail center.</li> </ol>





Summary of Implementation Strategies			
Priority	Goal	Objective	Strategy
		A. Increase private and public investment in the neighborhood.	<ol> <li>Establish a Façade Improvement Program.</li> <li>Re-establish LERTA.</li> </ol>
	Neighborhood Image & Identity Create a neighborhood with a strong sense of identity viewed by outsiders as a safe, clean and attractive place to live, work, visit and plan.	B. Attract outside funding and resources to invest in highly visible neighborhood revitalization projects and programs.	<ol> <li>Develop private/public partnerships to support investment in the neighborhood.</li> <li>Establish a Redevelopment Authority, a Redevelopment Area, pursue Certifications of Blight and receive Redevelopment Proposals from developers.</li> <li>Utilize Elm Street Grant Funds to attract other grant dollars and private investment.</li> <li>Apply for a wide array of DCED Grant Programs.</li> <li>Coordinate public improvements with PennDOT Projects &amp; Programs (Hometown Streets/Safe Routes to School Program).</li> </ol>
5		C. Actively engage neighborhood residents, businesses and organizations in revitalization efforts through neighborhood associations, volunteerism, neighborhood activities and investment.	<ol> <li>Establish Elm Street Neighborhood committees.</li> <li>Develop partnerships and coordinate efforts/activities, resources and volunteers.</li> <li>Establish a Volunteer Program for high school and college students.</li> <li>Schedule block parties; use them to unite the community, celebrate neighborhood revitalization/promote accomplishments and recruit volunteers.</li> </ol>
		D. Outreach and marketing of neighborhood revitalization efforts including education of neighborhood residents about resources (funds and services).	<ol> <li>Develop a program promotions strategy.</li> <li>Develop a website to promote, educate and Inform the neighborhood about projects, programs, grants and resources.</li> <li>Establish a Resource Center as part of the Elm Street operations.</li> <li>Media coordination to promote opportunities.</li> <li>Bilingual messages.</li> </ol>

## CHAMBERSBURG ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



## **Credits and References**

#### **Credits**

Borough of Chambersburg

Building Our Pride in Chambersburg (BOPIC)

Community Development Corporation (CDC) of Franklin County

Downtown Chambersburg, Inc. (DCI)

Elm Street Advisory Council (ESAC)

**Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce** 

Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC)

Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)

Planning Consultant: Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson

#### References

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Economic Census 2002, United States Census Bureau, Economic Census

New Communities Program Guidelines, Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development, November 2006

Population Estimates 2003-2005, United States Bureau Census Bureau

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#### World Wide Web Sites:

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United States Census Bureau, Summary File 3, Technical Documentation and Datasets, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington D.C. 20233, <a href="http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf">http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf</a>, [Accessed 2006]

# **Appendix**

# Appendix 1: Five Year Action Plan

The Five Year Action Plan provides the supporting documentation for grant application as well as information to support implementation efforts.





# Appendix 2: Planning Process

The planning process is documented detailing involvement of the Elm Street Advisory Council (ESAC) and the community as well as includes results of the Neighborhood Survey and Public Meetings.