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Cities and Urban Studies

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Assignment 1.3 with Map

The area chosen for the following assignment is the small town of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. Bridge street (the main focus of the assignment) is on the outskirts of the town but acts as the main position of socioeconomic movement and activity. It is a place that has been attracting hundreds of visitors throughout the year with its inviting atmosphere, local restaurants, and historical monuments. Phoenixville has a history that dates back over 200 years to a time where industrialization both created and eventually destabilized the town. Today it is a residential and commercial area pressed against the Schuylkill River to the north-east and suburbs/forests for the rest. Phoenixville has been undergoing a revitalization plan in efforts to establish itself as a place of high-quality living.

There is a strong sense of community throughout the town. People generally know the faces of those who work in the shops and neighbors greet each other as they walk past one another’s porches. The main layout of the town is such that most economic and social activity happens along the Main Sreet where cafés, restaurants, and small artisan stores line the street. There is the famous “Colonial” movie theater whose twinkling lights and big posters draw crowds throughout the nights. The Main Street also has the most breweries per square mile than any other place in the United States. It is a versatile street that reshapes its layout in summer and winter; catering to the needs and satisfactions of visitors. Now during the coronavirus pandemic with restrictions on indoor dining, restaurants have stopped traffic on the weekends and set up tables on the street.

Besides main street the town is divided into two other sections: the residential section and the parks/lake areas. The houses closest to the main street are new and most commonly single person apartments. As one goes further from the main street the houses become older. Between 2014 and 2018 the household count was 7,111. A common housing option is the sharing of two families per single town house. There seems to be a clear distinction of recreation between residence of the town and visitors to the town. While visitors are drawn to the Main Street and mingle amongst the shops and restaurants surrounded by loud music, the residence tend to socialize in the parks and alleyways away from the center.

Phoenixville has a population of 4,688 per square mile, according to the 2010 census. It has a predominantly white population of 77.6%. 8.3% of the population is black or African American and 10.3% are Hispanic or Latino. Residence are intermixed and well acquainted with one another. There are over 30 places of worship that create a sense of community and several schools in the vicinity that children can attend. 21.3% of people are under 18 years of age, and 11.4% are 65 or older. It is not uncommon to see children running alone through the streets while parents or older residences watch over them. Phoenixville has Reeves park filled with swings, gazebos, and even an outside theater. At night the crowd varies as teenagers make their way to the benches and steps to hang out and chat with one another. The Schuylkill River running past the outer sides of the city has several parks and trails where people go to exercise and socialize. In the summer picnics are common and many food trucks make their way to Phoenixville throughout the year, so it is easy for anyone to plan a spontaneous gathering.

Phoenixville possesses a clear distinction from surrounding areas of suburbs and the Valley Forge National Park. Since other areas nearby have no strong center that serves as a community base, many come to Phoenixville to socialize. The town has free parking available along the sidelines of Main Street and reserved parking for specific restaurants/shops. One thing missing is a supermarket but as most people own cars, they shop at grocery stores outside the town. This reminds of Clarence Perry “The Neighborhood Unit” where the rise of automobile usage meant significant change in the needs of people living in urbanized areas. Most people in Phoenixville would not need a car as they can walk from any point A to any point B within the city by using sidewalks and streets to get where they need to go. However, if there is no supermarket (or other necessities unavailable within the town limits) then a car is needed and the layout must change. For those without a car this creates a significant amount of trouble.

The poverty rate according to the 2010 Census is at 10%. Those who fall under this statistic usually live on the edges of the town in smaller and older homes. While 2.35 is the average amount of persons per household, one often sees families of several generations living together. This allows them to share cars and support each other. The neighborhood community is strong and childcare is often a shared responsibility.

Phoenixville has significantly changed its layout throughout the past few years. In its revitalization plan it has managed to upgrade Main Street and offer several newly constructed apartments to incoming residencies. Now catering to a younger generation; it aims to attract more clientele and continue to revitalize the other sectors of the town. Within these plans it is necessary to study the needs and social flows of people. Below is a map of the main part of Phoenixville. (Mentioned above are Main Street, Reeves Park, the Colonial Theater, and the Schuylkill River).

Phoenixville Map



Reeves Park

Schuylkill River

Main Street

Colonial Theater



