



## 25 THE GREENING OF EXIT 7 IN CHAMBERSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

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### Introduction and Conceptual Framework

The proposed Exit 7 on I-81 in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania represents a classic study of jurisdictional disputes between an older and a younger community. The established community is the Borough of Chambersburg, one of the original and oldest urban settlements in the Cumberland Valley. The more youthful community is Greene Township, a municipality that appears to function as a young upstart type of suburb.

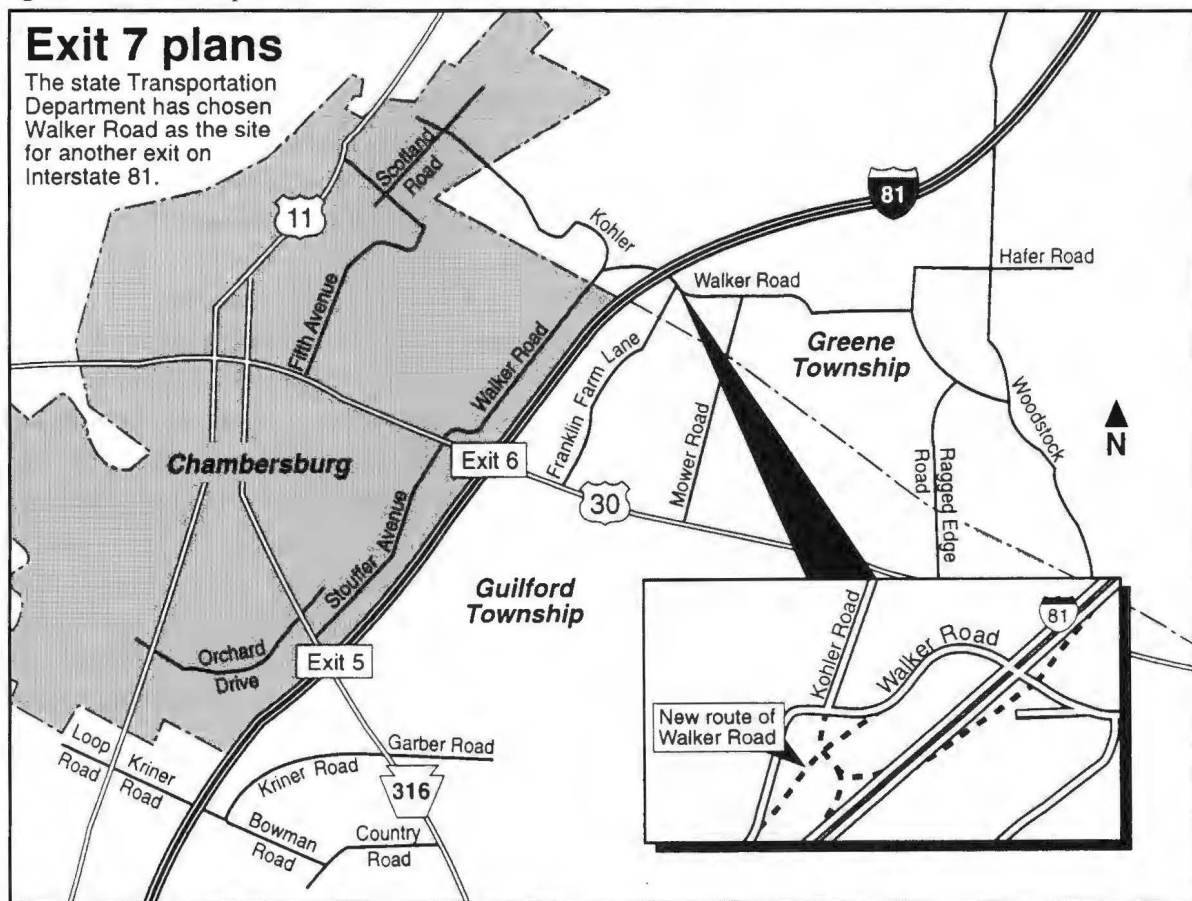
The proposed Exit 7 is situated at the edge of Greene Township (Figure 1) and less than a mile from one of the last undeveloped tracts of land in the Borough of Chambersburg. The cost of long-term infrastructure improvement would rest with Greene Township while the short-term economic benefits would go to Chambersburg Borough. The Exit 7 controversy reinforces the fragility of infrastructure improvements when a proposed public highway exit straddles a boundary between two communities with conflicting perceptions of space.

The conceptual framework of the controversy rests with a definition of power. Power is time- and space-specific and it produces a certain outcome. (Foucault, 1982, pp.777-95; Morehouse, 1996, pp.46-7). Both Greene Township and Chambersburg Borough have been exercising their decisional power over the Exit 7 controversy for the past ten years. If the proposed Exit 7 were not located near a political boundary, then it is extremely likely that controversy would have been easily resolved five years earlier. Either one government would have wholeheartedly endorsed the proposed exit or the other government would have disallowed it. Either way the project would not have dragged on for over ten years with little signs of immediate resolution.

The boundary nature of the proposed exit provides a chance for each community to publicly air their current views of space and their future community development objectives. The legitimacy of the power struggle is enhanced by each government's continued participation in the debate. The Exit 7 controversy is a power struggle which has cost over \$6 million dollars and has pitted various agencies of local, state and federal government against each other.

The Exit 7 controversy also illustrates the complexities and interactions involved in the definition and perception of geographic space. Absolute space is one type of geographic space defined by political boundaries and recognized by the American legal system. Relative and representation spaces are defined by relationships between selected objects like farmsteads, wood lots, roads, trees, transportation routes, cultural and ideological associations (Lefebvre, 1991,p.39). The primary representation space manifest at Exit 7 is a series

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**Figure1** Exit 7 Site Map

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Public Opinion

of historical agricultural landscapes which straddle the area east and west of the proposed exit (Figure 1).

A cursory analysis of the conflict indicates that space is the focus of the conflict. It is the contention of the author that the Exit 7 controversy focuses on two communities with differing perceptions of geographic space. Greene Township views the proposed Exit 7 as representational space while Chambersburg Borough, assuming the role of the administrative capital of the region, looks upon the proposed exit as a legitimate requirement for regional economic development. A demographic comparison of both communities will substantiate this generalization.

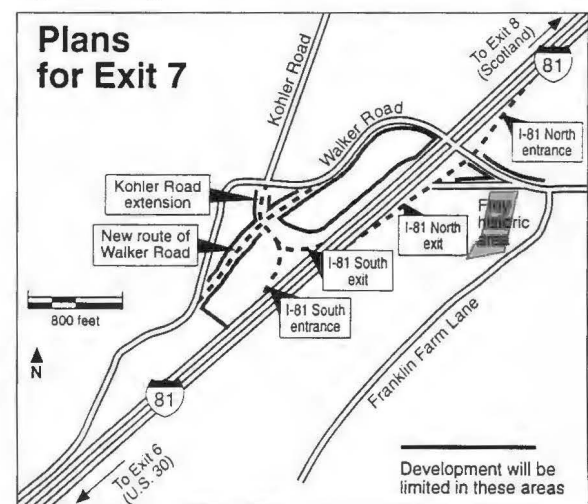
**Table 1** Historic and Projected Population Growth Percent Change

| Municipality         | 1960-1970 | 1970-1980 | 1980-1990 | 1990-2000 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Chambersburg Borough | -2.8%     | -6.6%     | 2.9%      | 2-3%      |
| Greene Township      | 36.7%     | 20.7%     | 4.0%      | 1-2%      |

Source: Chambersburg Comprehensive Plan, September, 1995.

## A Comparison of Two Different Communities

Greene Township and Chambersburg Borough do not share similar development objectives. Greene Township encourages open space preservation which comprises slightly less than

**Figure2** Design of Actual Exit

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**Table 2** Historic Landscape Criteria General and Contextual Definitions

| LANDSCAPE CRITERIA              | GENERAL DEFINITION                        | CONTEXTUAL DEFINITION                        |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Land use                        | Human Effects on Landscape                | Farming Practices                            |
| Spatial Organization            | Physical Organization of community        | Patterns of Roads & Fields; Distances        |
| Response to Natural Environment | Social Customs Defined by Natural Setting | Building Locations; Construction Methods     |
| Cultural Traditions             | Interaction with Physical Environs        | Building Diversity, Planted Crops            |
| Circulation Network             | Transportation System                     | Farm to Market Roads                         |
| Boundary Demarcation            | Property Delineations                     | Tree Lines Fence Rows                        |
| Vegetation                      | Historic Patterns                         | Crops and Tree Patterns                      |
| Artifacts                       | Vernacular Design                         | Arrangement of Buildings and Silos           |
| Functional Clusters             | Repetition Based on Similarity            | Groupings of Farmsteads                      |
| Archeological Sites             | Past Land Use Practices                   | Distribution of Roadways, Sawmill, Railroads |
| Small Scale Elements            | Collective Components of Past Activities  | Patterns of Road Traces, Fence Posts         |

*Sources:* McClelland, Linda F., J. Timothy Keller, Genevieve P. Keller and Robert Z. Melnick. Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes, National Register Bulletin #:30. Technical Information on Comprehensive Planning, Survey Of Cultural Resources and Registration in the National Register of Historic Places. U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. Interagency Resource Division. Author, 1997.

50% of its 34,000 acres. Chambersburg Borough has only 750 acres of undeveloped land, which represents about 17% of its total land area. Hence, Chambersburg Borough needs to carefully manage its short-term land use changes in order to plan.

Demographically, both communities are also quite different (Table 1). Greene Township has had a long history of sustained population growth, reaching a ten-year growth rate of 37% between 1960 and 1970. Recently, its population growth rate has slackened between 1980 and 1990 to about 4%. Chambersburg Borough, between 1980 and 1990, reversed a 30-year decline in its population and grew by 3%. Approximately 22% of Chambersburg Borough's 1990 population is over the age of 65 while only 8% of Greene Township's 1990 population is over the age of 65. In addition, Chambersburg Borough also has a larger percentage of adults and children below the poverty level than does Greene Township.

Thus, Chambersburg Borough is best characterized as a community with a historically stagnant population, declining tax base and increased public service costs. In many ways, Chambersburg Borough portrays a demographic profile of an inner city in the Northeast. Given its small area and limited commercial growth, Chambersburg Borough has become a community with few choices. Greene Township, in many ways, acts like a suburban-ring community in terms of its population growth and age-structure. Most importantly,

Greene Township is able to provide room for both residential and commercial expansion without sacrificing significant portions of its agricultural landscape.

The differences in the demographics and the development objectives between the two communities have shaped the perceived importance of the proposed Exit 7. Chambersburg needs to improve its tax base and one of the most logical methods is to increase the commercial and residential component of its land base. A tract of undeveloped land less than one-half mile from the proposed exit was once a semi-prosperous farm owned by a blue-blood Chambersburg family. The Borough recently rezoned the land to commercial and residential uses and it currently represents about 50% of the projected vacant land for the next ten years with the Borough. The potential of the tract would be greatly improved by direct access to I-81 (Figure 2). Currently a dirt road connects the undeveloped tract to an area less than 500 feet from the proposed Exit 7 (Figure 2). Once the road is completely extended to the proposed Exit 7, then people will be able to reach the interstate within ten minutes from the northern portions of the Borough.

Greene Township, with five times more land than the Borough and two-thirds of its population, is more concerned with agricultural land conservation in the general area of the proposed Exit 7. The most recent comprehensive plan for Greene Township succinctly defines the role of agriculture in the Township and discourages most types of land use change

**Table 3** Interpretation of Criteria by Opposing Parties

| LANDSCAPE CRITERIA              | GENERAL DEFINITION                          | CONTEXTUAL DEFINITION                         |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Land use                        | 92% farm/wood lot<br>(area inventory)       | 66% structures-suburb<br>(building inventory) |
| Spatial Organization            | 100 to 200 acre farms                       | 1 to 4+ acre residential suburb               |
| Response to Natural Environment | Intensive farming --><br>limestone outcrops | Grist mills, RR and sawmills gone             |
| Circulation                     | Pennsylvania cultural area -->              | Modern industrial society                     |
| Transportation                  | Roads support agricultural production       | Roads support suburban lifestyle              |
| Boundary                        | Trees and fences define fields              | Lawns define landscape                        |
| Vegetation                      | Pasture, orchards, and crop land            | Suburban induced vegetation                   |
| Artifacts                       | Farm houses, silos and cemeteries           | No agricultural supportive facilities         |
| Clusters                        | Based on agriculture                        | Based on single family residences             |
| Archeological Sites             | 18 prehistoric sites along stream           | No intact remains major disturbance           |
| Small Scale Elements            | Mill, raceways, cemeteries                  | Present but disjointed                        |

Sources: *Pennsylvania Historic Resource Form-Data Sheet*. Paula Reed. Preservation Associates, Inc. Hagerstown, Maryland. April, 1995.

*Response to Keeper's Request for Individual Eligibility Studies; I-81 Interchange Project*. Greene and Guilford Townships. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration, May 1996.

within existing agricultural areas. Green's comprehensive plan encourages commercial development only near existing shopping center and within villages. The current zoning classification in the area for the proposed Exit 7 allows only low density residential and agriculture as a permitted use. Greene Township, based on the development objectives in its comprehensive plan, supports commercial growth, but only when it represents an expansion of the preexisting commercial areas.

### A Conflict of Space

Representation space associates particular values within specific territories (Morehouse, 1996, p.47). From the perspective of Greene Township, the existing agricultural area around the proposed Exit 7 emphasizes a value rich historic agricultural landscape. Proof for its historic value came in 1995 when the area surrounding the proposed exit was classified as a historic agricultural landscape and placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The historic agricultural landscape designation is unique in land-use planning and the designation requires precise and detailed documentation of eleven criteria (Table 2). Most importantly, the contextual definition for each criteria should be visible within the existing landscape. An historic landscape designation does not prohibit private development. It merely

restricts the use of federal money.

The 1995 decision by Keeper forced the state highway department (PENNDOT) and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) to change the interchange layout and they had to twice redesign the entrance and exit ramps. The historic landscape designation has involved Greene Township and the state highway department in a contentious debate over the legitimacy of the eleven criteria (Table 3). In fact, the debate has divided the communities (Hook, 1997).

Many of the criteria needed for the historic landscape designation define a representation space linked to the American Civil War. The spatial organization, response to the natural environment, circulation network, boundary demarcation, vegetation and artifacts collectively define a symbolic landscape that once functioned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an actual Civil War landscape. The historic legacy of the Civil War is visibly evident today in the Chambersburg area. Travel brochures and pamphlets from the Chamber of Commerce openly brag that Chambersburg was the only northern town destroyed by the Confederate Army. It is also true that the area surrounding the proposed exit was a staging area for Confederate forces prior to the Battle of Gettysburg.

A true representational space rises above the ordinary and the mundane (Morehouse, 1996, p.47). Representational space is an abstract space directly linked by images and symbols. From the perspective of the local residents,

representational space has the capability to become the dominant space for the users (Lefebvre, 1991, p.39). According to opponents of the proposed exit, the area surrounding it represents space where the historic linkages of the Civil War are visible today in the layout of the farms, road, fields and even the wood lots. Any modification of the existing landscape, particularly by the federal government would defame the sacrifices made by thousands killed in the Battle of Gettysburg. Exit opponents believe that the site of the proposed exit is permeated with an historic reality and it needs preservation. Regional economic growth within the Borough of Chambersburg does not justify the destruction of this unique historic landscape.

## Conclusions

Many American communities are obsessed by the preciseness of absolute space. Representational space is more imprecise and harder to define its boundaries. Chambersburg Borough views the proposed Exit 7 as a logical extension of their absolute space. Their future economic survival rests with expanding their tax base and if a legal extension of their boundaries could occur, they would do it. However, Pennsylvania law currently prohibits municipal annexation. Greene Township looks at the potential liquidation of an historic landscape by an interstate highway exit as a microcosm of a larger battle facing many rural communities in America. Across the country, representational space has become the first casualty in the battle for regional economic growth.

The Exit 7 controversy is similar to battles waged during Medieval times when the fortified town tried to control the surrounding countryside. People flocked to the fortified city for protection and when the carrying capacity was exceeded, the town tried to extend its control over the surrounding countryside. The surrounding countryside functioned in a subservient role to the fortified town. In the case of the Exit 7 controversy, the surrounding countryside rejects the quasi-administrative control imposed upon it by the Borough of Chambersburg. If Greene Township were to succumb to the wishes of the Borough of Chambersburg, then a unique symbolic landscape may forever be destroyed.

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