

Borough of Chambersburg Alley Analysis Report



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INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared by staff from the Engineering Department, Land Use and Community Development Department and Storm Sewer Utility. The Borough Geographic Information System (GIS) and fieldwork were used to prepare the report, which includes various maps depicting alley characteristics as well as ways to potentially finance maintenance of Borough-owned alleys.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the Borough, there are privately owned alleys and Borough-owned alleys. This report focuses on Borough-owned alleys only.

The Subdivision and Land Development Code defines an alley as a right-of-way intended for vehicular travel which serves as a secondary means of access to lots and which abuts the side or rear yards of two or more lots.

The Zoning Code defines an alley as a public thoroughfare other than a side street, which affords only a secondary means of access to abutting property and is not intended for general traffic circulation.

There are some alleys that provide primary access to dwellings or other buildings, however, those buildings are mostly located in older neighborhoods. The Subdivision and Land Development Code prohibits construction of new buildings with primary access to an alley, unless granted permission by Town Council.

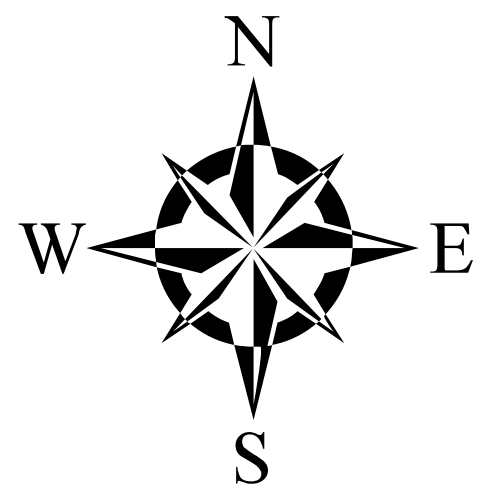
In addition to secondary access, alleys provide connectivity between alleys and streets. Most alleys provide two-way vehicle access but some provide only one-way access.

Alleys are used by:

- Pedestrians;
- Motorized vehicles (motorcycles, cars, trucks, etc.);
- Non-motorized vehicles (bicycles, skateboards, etc.);
- Refuse collection trucks;
- Utility facilities, underground and above ground, including surface stormwater conveyance, whether Borough-owned or owned by private companies.

Alleys typically have a 16-foot right-of-way with a paved cartway width of 16 feet or less. Comparatively, a local street typically has a 50-foot right-of-way with a paved cartway of 36 feet. Most alleys are paved with gravel, asphalt, concrete or brick, however, some alleys are not paved at all and are simply covered with grass. There are 23.73 miles of Borough-owned alleys, with 22.05 miles improved and 1.68 unimproved, while there are 68.28 miles of Borough-owned streets.

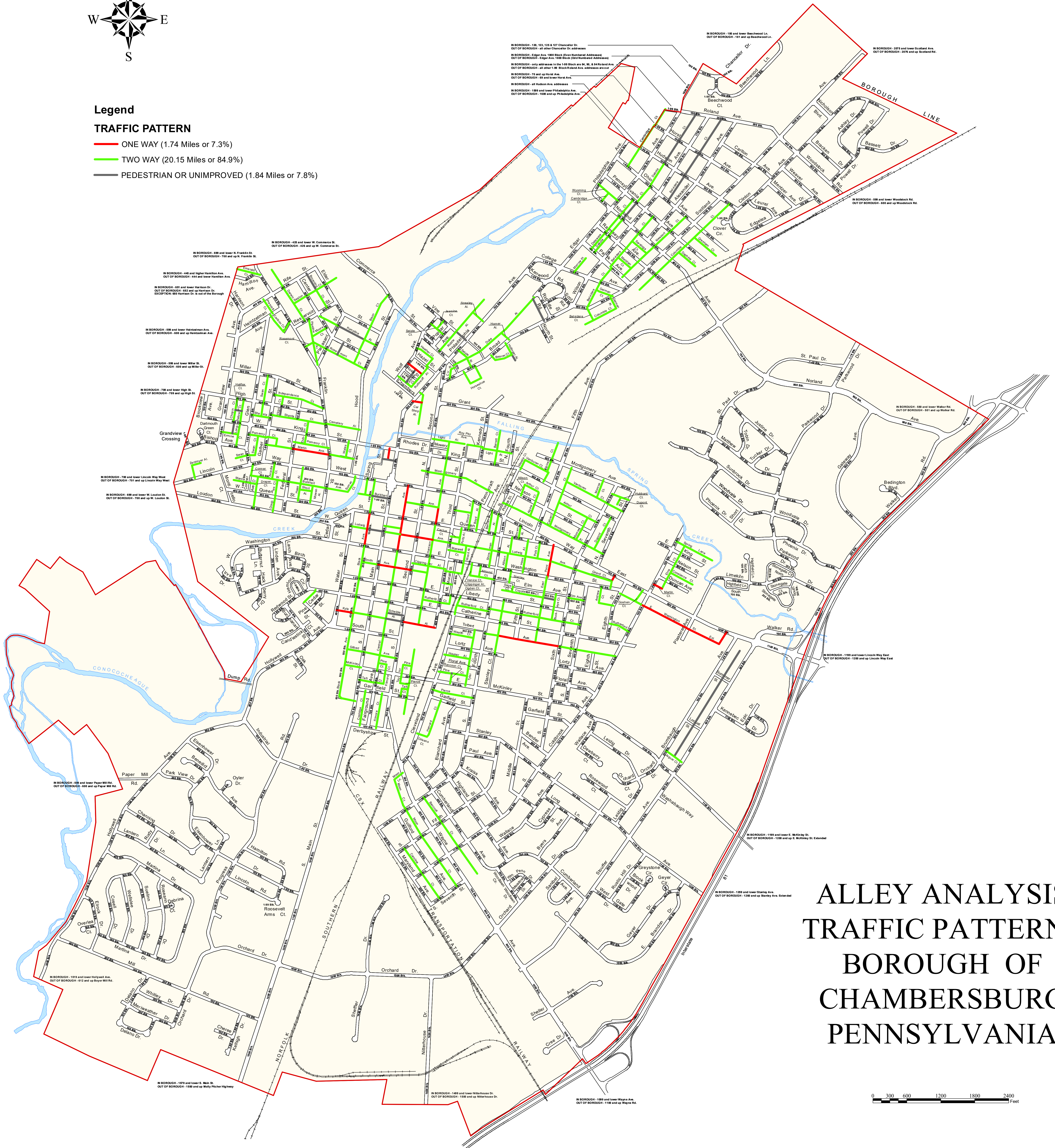
Based on staff inspection and analysis, improved Borough-owned alleys are in good, fair or poor condition. 2011 was the last time a contract was awarded by Town Council to reconstruct alleys. Mill and overlay was the most common construction method used.



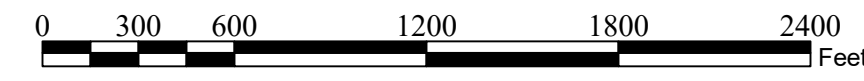
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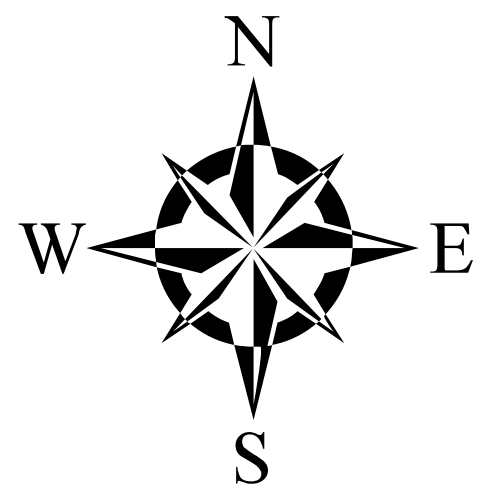
TRAFFIC PATTERN

- ONE WAY (1.74 Miles or 7.3%)
- TWO WAY (20.15 Miles or 84.9%)
- PEDESTRIAN OR UNIMPROVED (1.84 Miles or 7.8%)



ALLEY ANALYSIS TRAFFIC PATTERNS BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA

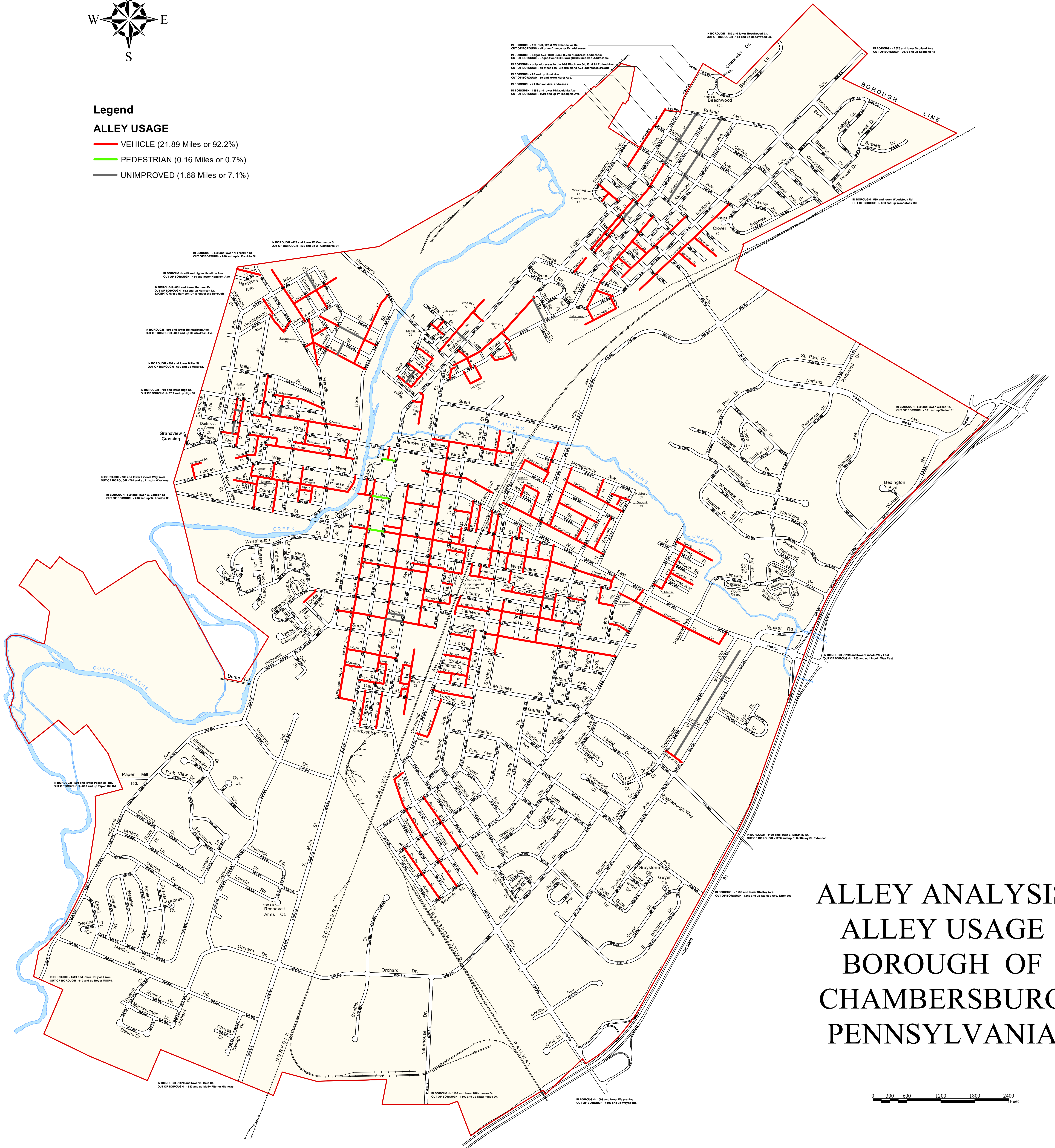




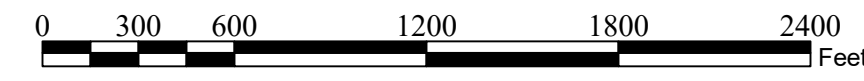
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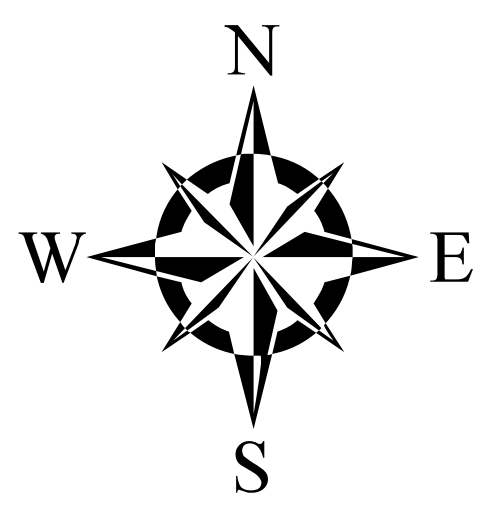
ALLEY USAGE

- VEHICLE (21.89 Miles or 92.2%)
- PEDESTRIAN (0.16 Miles or 0.7%)
- UNIMPROVED (1.68 Miles or 7.1%)



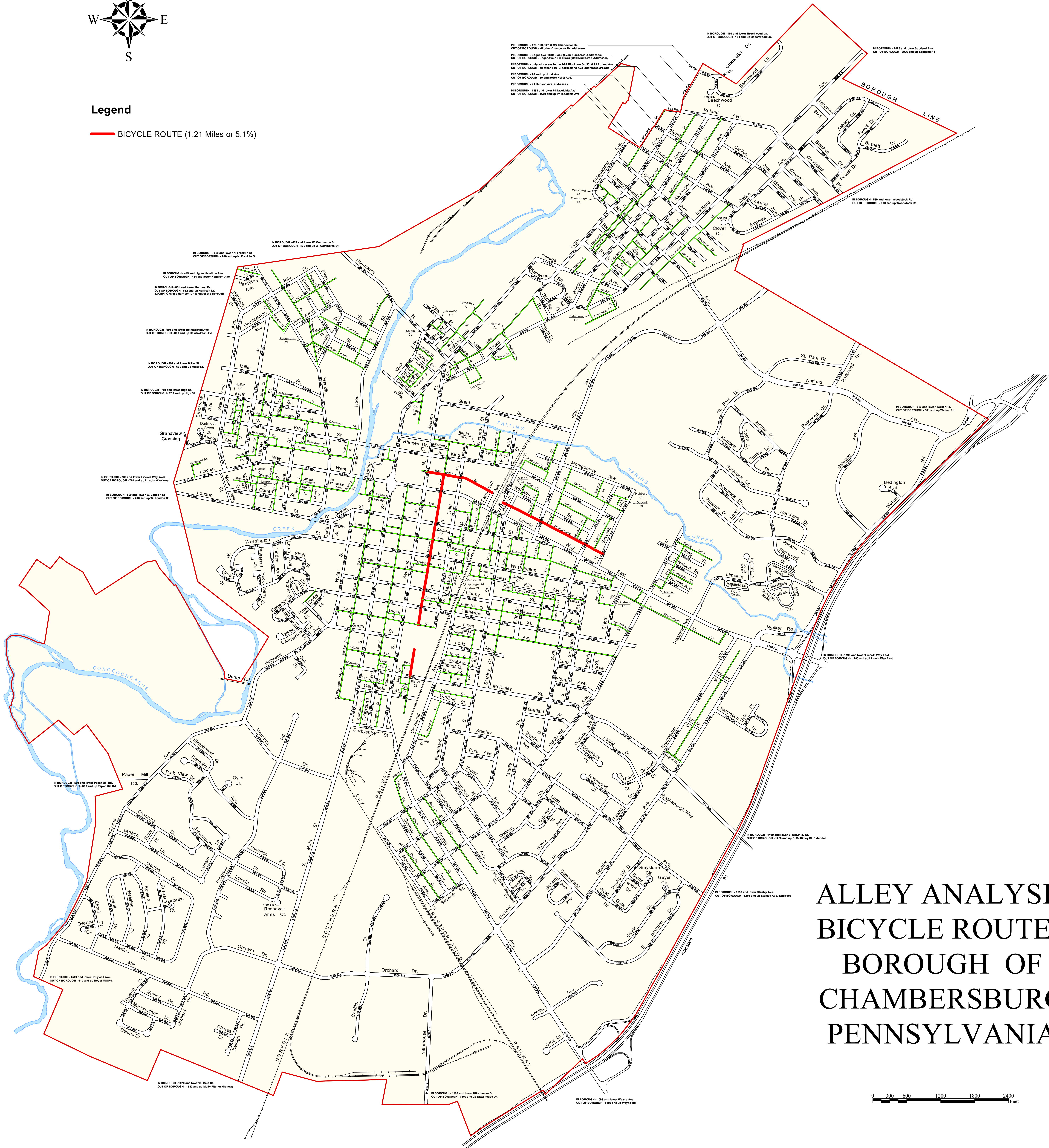
ALLEY ANALYSIS ALLEY USAGE BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA



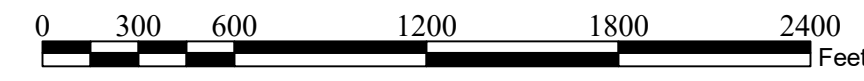


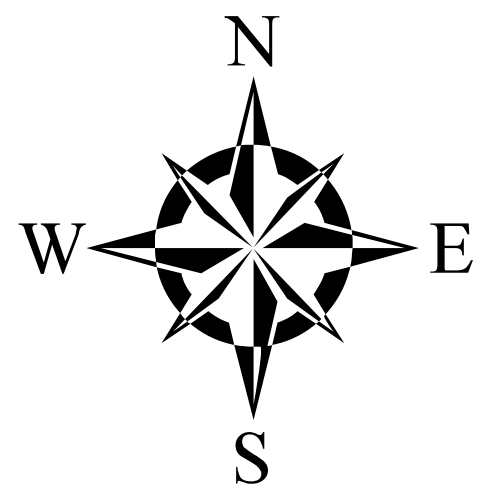
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 BICYCLE ROUTE (1.21 Miles or 5.1%)



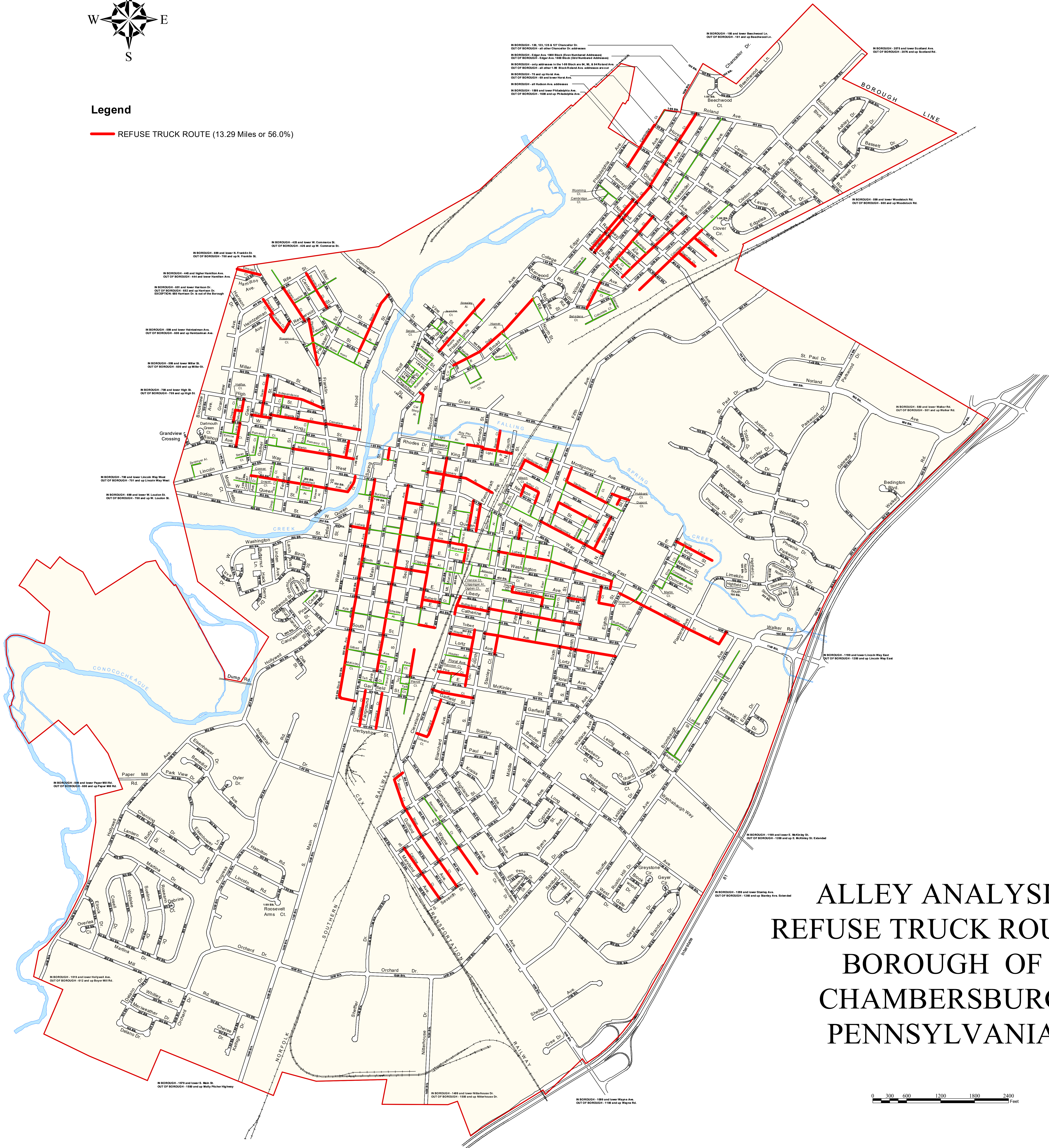
ALLEY ANALYSIS BICYCLE ROUTES BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA



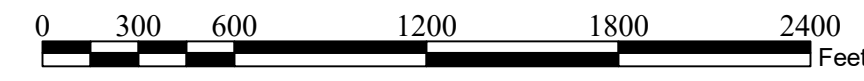


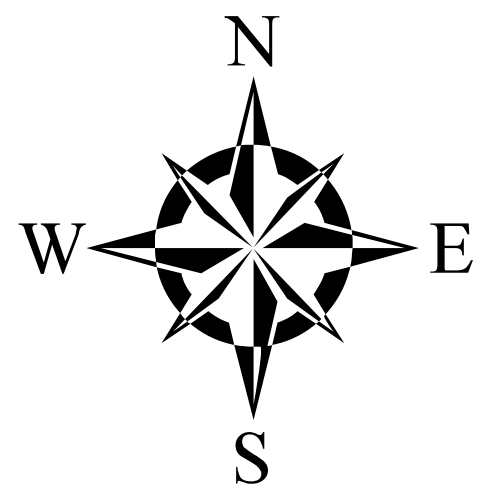
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 REFUSE TRUCK ROUTE (13.29 Miles or 56.0%)



ALLEY ANALYSIS REFUSE TRUCK ROUTES BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA



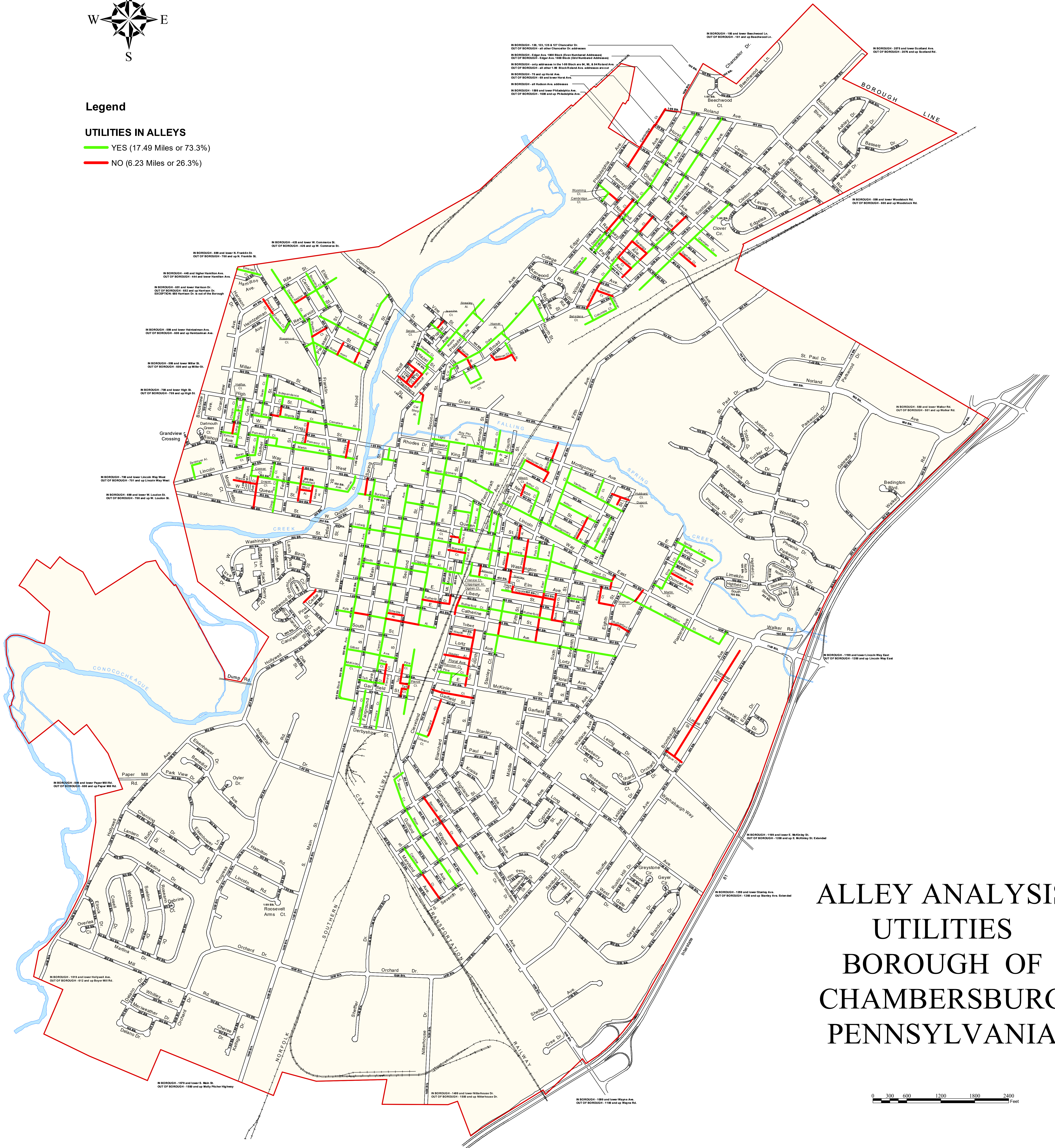


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UTILITIES IN ALLEYS

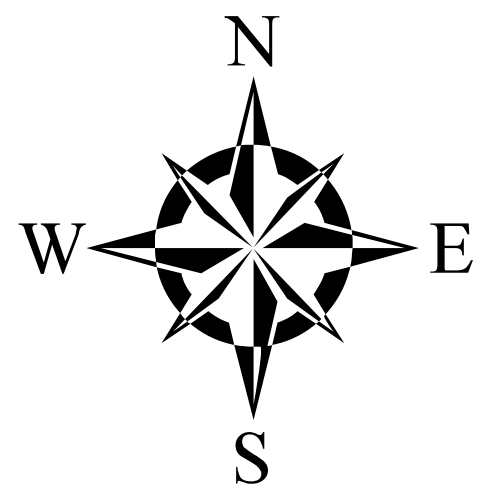
YES (17.49 Miles or 73.3%)

NO (6.23 Miles or 26.3%)



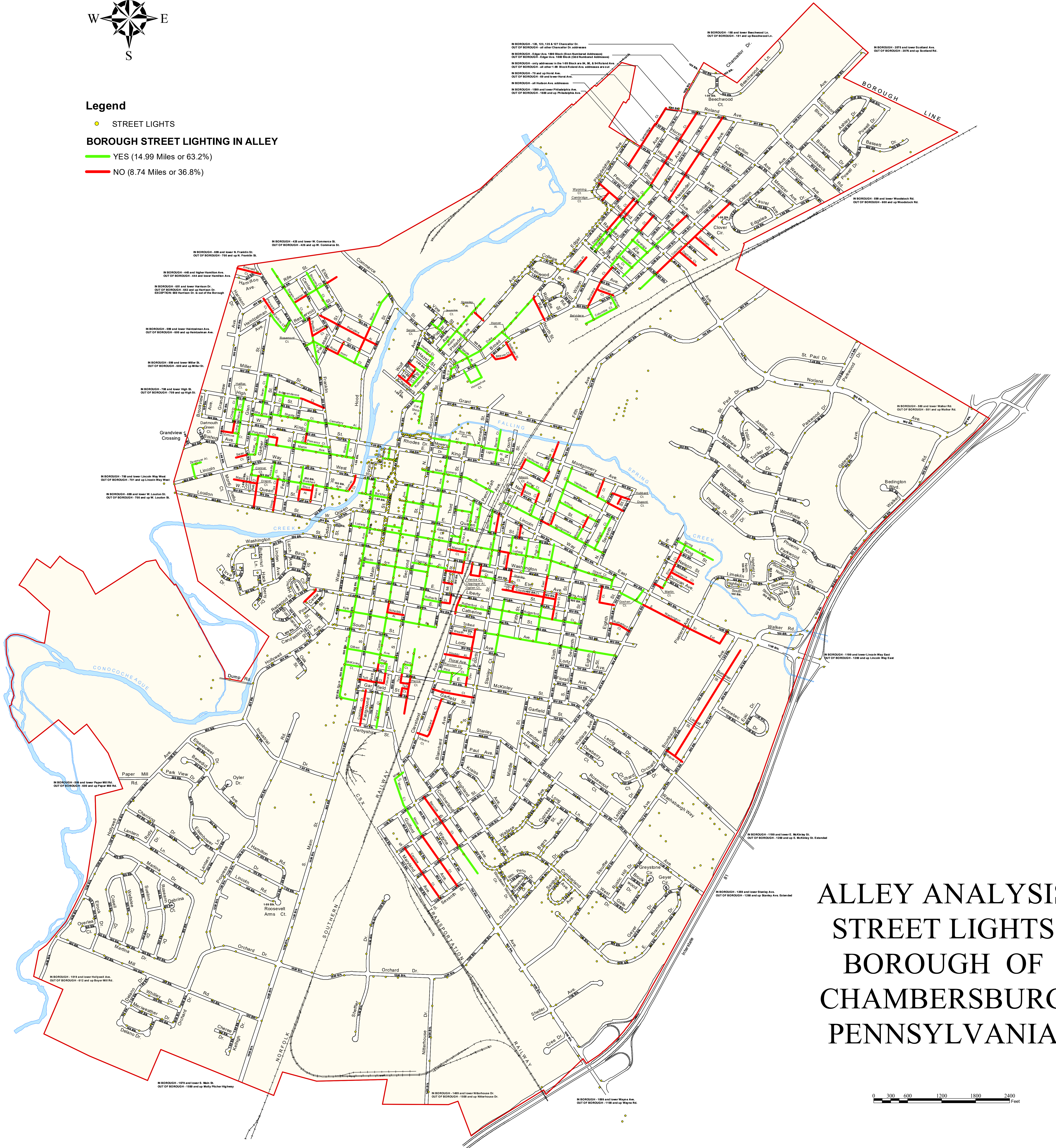
ALLEY ANALYSIS UTILITIES BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA

0 300 600 1200 1800 2400 Feet

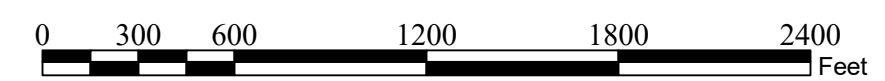


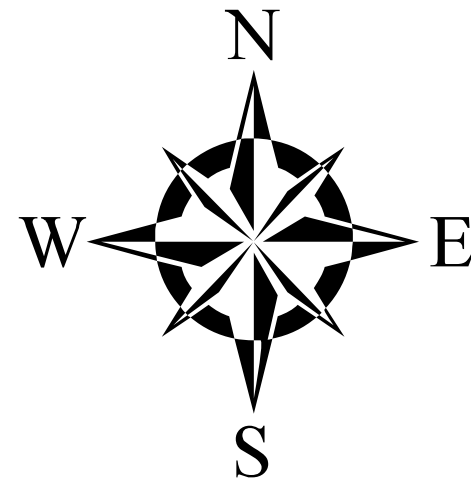
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- STREET LIGHTS
- BOROUGH STREET LIGHTING IN ALLEY**
- YES (14.99 Miles or 63.2%)
- NO (8.74 Miles or 36.8%)



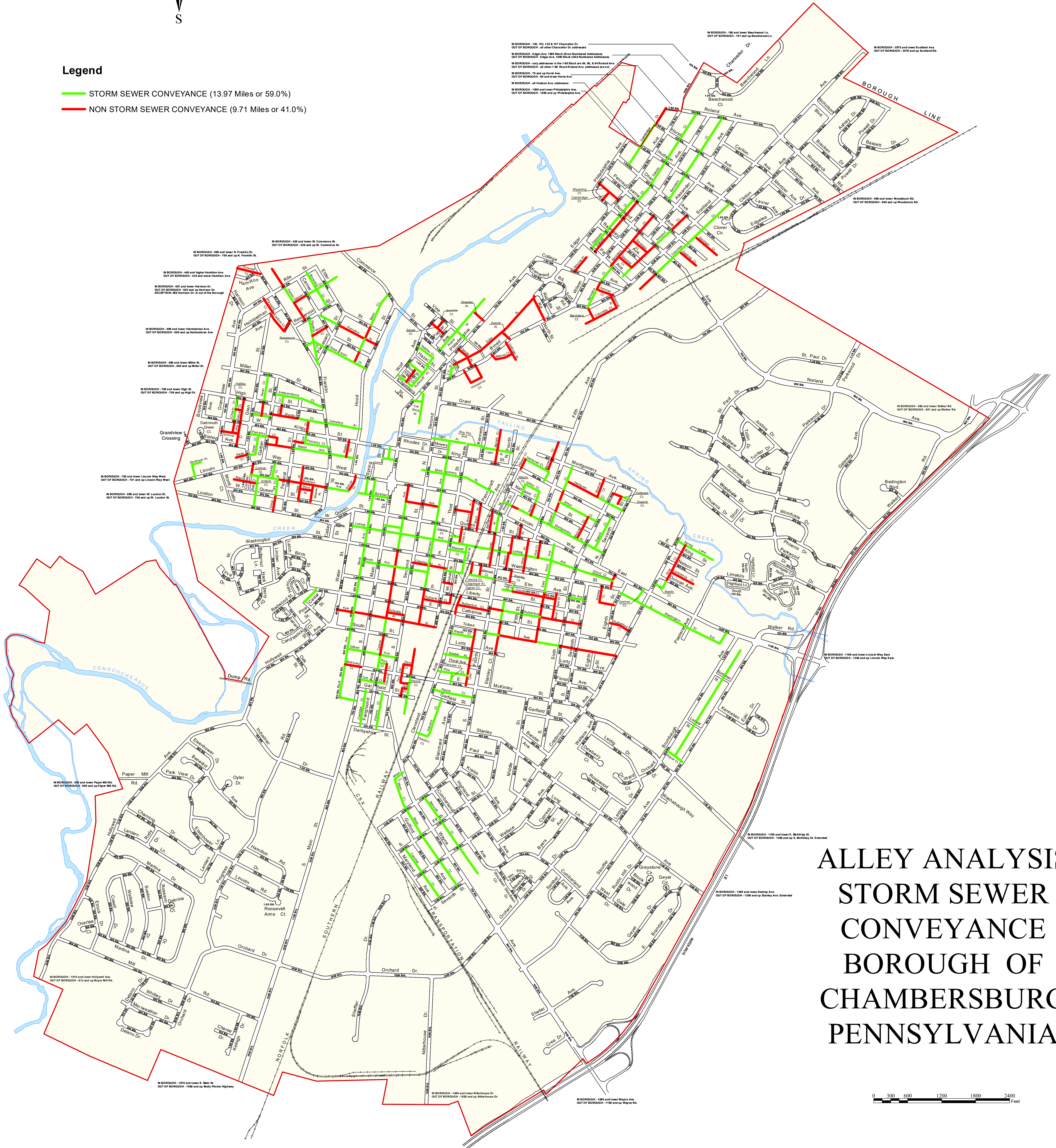
ALLEY ANALYSIS STREET LIGHTS BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA





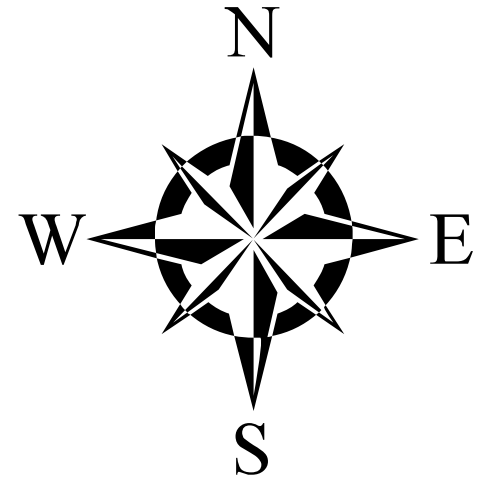
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- STORM SEWER CONVEYANCE (13.97 Miles or 59.0%)
- NON STORM SEWER CONVEYANCE (9.71 Miles or 41.0%)



ALLEY ANALYSIS STORM SEWER CONVEYANCE BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA

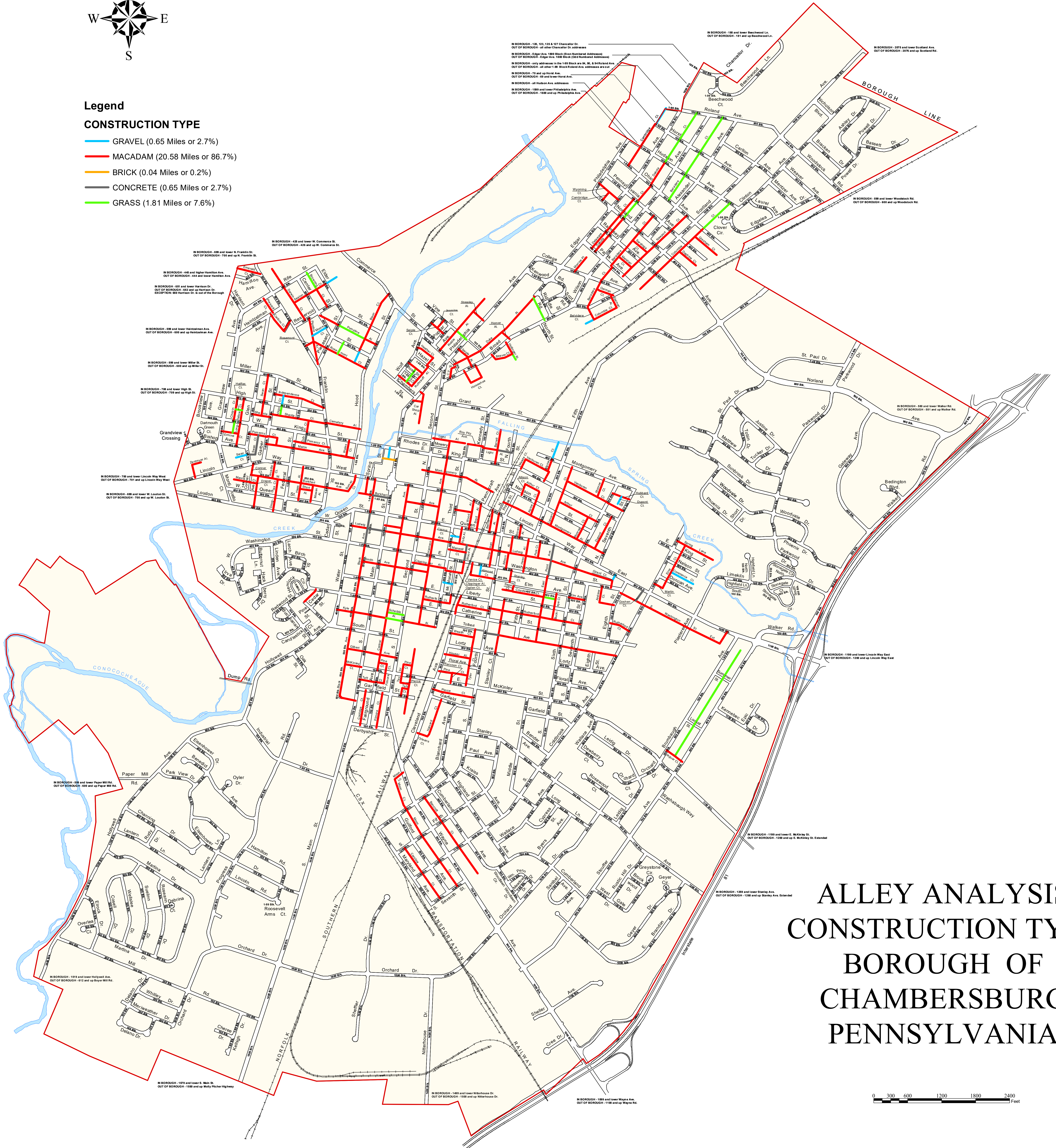
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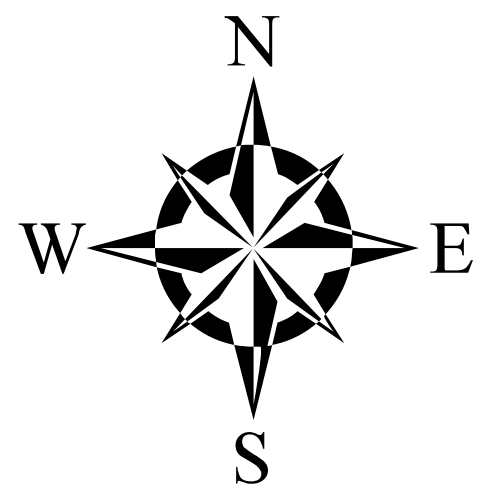
CONSTRUCTION TYPE

- GRAVEL (0.65 Miles or 2.7%)
- MACADAM (20.58 Miles or 86.7%)
- BRICK (0.04 Miles or 0.2%)
- CONCRETE (0.65 Miles or 2.7%)
- GRASS (1.81 Miles or 7.6%)



ALLEY ANALYSIS CONSTRUCTION TYPE BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA

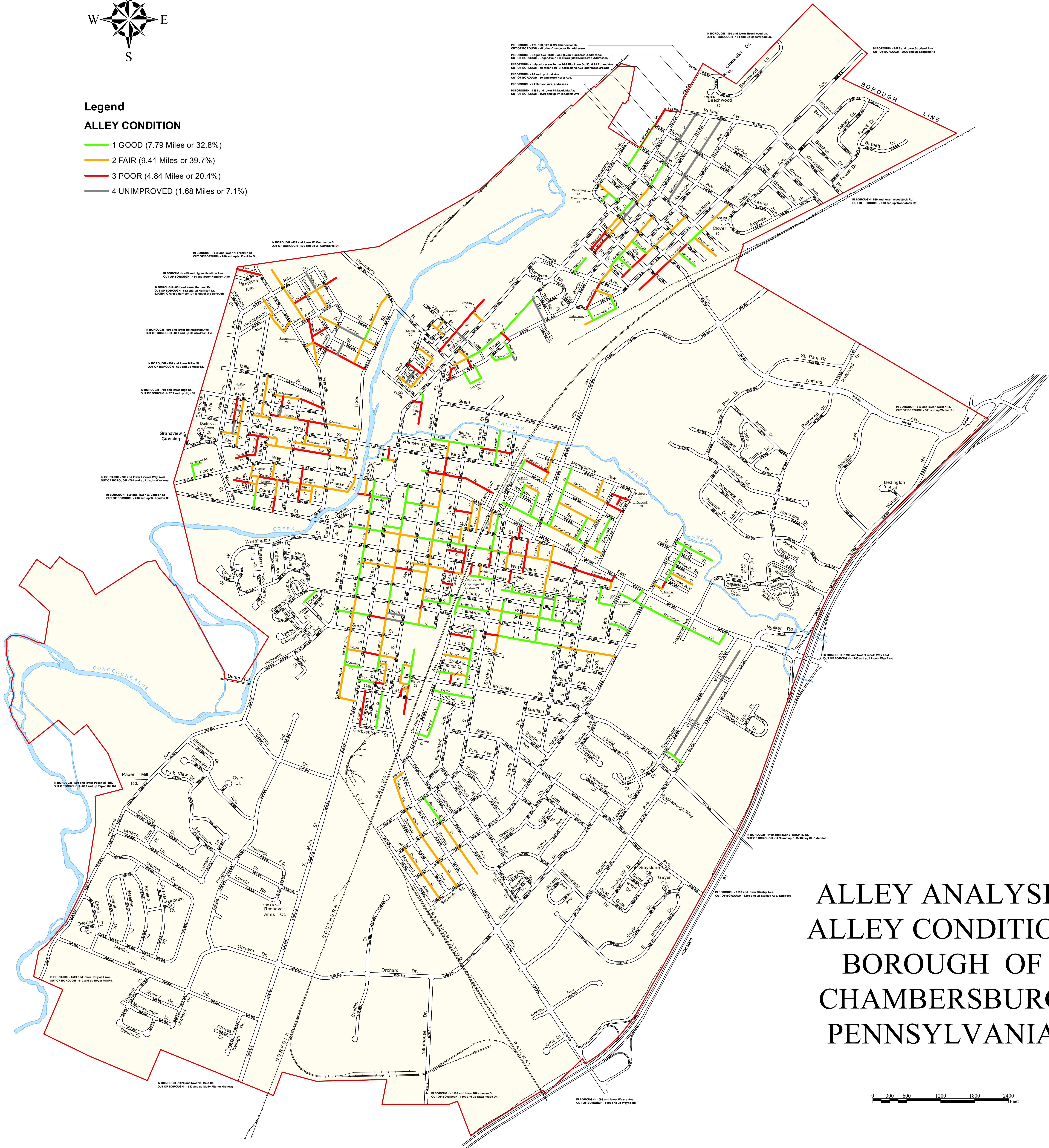




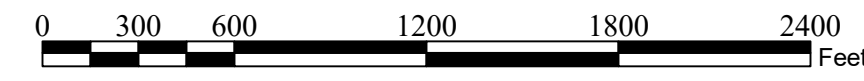
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ALLEY CONDITION

- 1 GOOD (7.79 Miles or 32.8%)
- 2 FAIR (9.41 Miles or 39.7%)
- 3 POOR (4.84 Miles or 20.4%)
- 4 UNIMPROVED (1.68 Miles or 7.1%)



ALLEY ANALYSIS ALLEY CONDITION BOROUGH OF CHAMBERSBURG PENNSYLVANIA



FINANCING OPTIONS

The Borough currently funds street reconstruction with funds from the Borough General Capital Reserve account, state Municipal Liquid Fuels Program and state and federal grants. It appears that previously, the Borough used General Fund revenue to finance alley improvements.

BOROUGH FUNDS

According to the Borough Code, Section 21A01, Town Council has the power to pay the cost, in whole or in part, of any and all public improvements to the grading, building, paving, regrading, rebuilding and repaving of streets, by any of the following methods:

- (1) From general Borough funds;
- (2) From special Borough funds created for that purpose;
- (3) By assessment of costs against the benefited properties either on the front foot or benefit conferred method of assessment.

According to the Borough Code, Section 1701, the term street includes a street, road, lane, court, cul-de-sac, alley, public way and public square, either for or intended for public use, and includes the cartway, sidewalk, gutter and the right-of-way area, whether or not the street or a part of the street is owned in fee by others than the Borough.

General Borough funds allocated to alley improvements could be taken from the General Capital Reserve, supported by the General Fund, which funds many other components of the Borough operation and is supported by tax revenue, including real estate, deed transfer, earned income and local services taxes. For the most part, these tax rates are set at their maximum limits, leaving little opportunity to fund alley improvements.

While a special Borough fund could be established to fund alley, and street, improvements, it would be limited to a 5-mil tax upon all real property taxable for Borough purposes. Again, a limited opportunity to fund alley improvements.

Another option is to assess owners of properties abutting alleys for costs associated with reconstruction, which would be an entirely new, and potentially controversial, way to fund alley improvements.

MUNICIPAL LIQUID FUELS PROGRAM

In 2022, the Borough is estimated to receive an allocation of \$563,997.15 from the state Municipal Liquid Fuels Program, which is based on Borough road mileage of 68.28 and population of 20,268. As approved by Town Council through the 2022 Borough budget, this funding will be used for the street improvements projects approved for 2022. There are no alley improvements funded for 2022, aside from manual bituminous patching conducted by the Highway Department

Unfortunately, alleys do not qualify for the Municipal Liquid Fuels Program, so this is not a funding option for alley improvements.

STORM SEWER POLLUTION CONTROL FEE

Town Council could consider allocating a portion of revenue collected from the Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee to maintain alleys that serve as stormwater conveyances. A funding source of this nature would compete with funds used for Storm Sewer Utility operations, system maintenance and capital improvements. The monthly Storm Sewer Pollution Control Fee, which is currently \$5, would have to be increased to support this option.

GRANTS

Town Council could also consider seeking state or federal grant funding for general alley maintenance, stormwater conveyance and/or pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

VACATION

Finally, Town Council could consider vacating alleys that serve a limited number of properties and/or that do not provide connectivity to other alleys or streets. Rather than the Borough, owners of properties abutting the alley would then be responsible for maintenance indefinitely. Before vacation, an easement would have to be secured for alleys with Borough-owned utilities underneath or above, or utilities owned by other companies.

PLANNING

The Borough currently has a limited number of alleys used for pedestrian access only, however, planning documents approved by Town Council and other community organizations envision the potential for better use of alleys for pedestrians, non-motorized vehicles and motorized vehicles, in some instances shared by all three. These planning documents include the Downtown Master Plan issued by Downtown Chambersburg, Inc. in 2015, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements Plan approved by Town Council in 2018, and the draft Comprehensive Plan for the Borough, Chambersburg Vision 2035, pending Planning and Zoning Commission recommendation and Town Council approval.

This report includes a map depicting bicycle routes that may utilize alleys, as recommended through the Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements Plan. The report also includes a map depicting alleys illuminated by streetlights, which is an important public amenity to identify for pedestrian and bicycle use.

RECONSTRUCTION METHODS

When alleys are reconstructed in the future, staff recommends better reconstruction methods, like Full Depth Reclamation,

NEXT STEPS

- Establish a plan and priorities for which alleys should remain Borough-owned and which ones should be vacated, how and when alleys will be maintained and how maintenance will be funded.
- Funding is obviously the biggest challenge, however, establishing a plan and priorities is an important first step to determine whether an incremental and diverse funding approach is preferable or whether larger funding sources, such as grants, could be secured to implement a holistic strategy to improve multiple alleys at one time. For example, are there ways to combine alley improvements, utility improvements, including stormwater, and pedestrian and bicycle improvements into one grant application?
- When hired, allow the new Director of Public Works an opportunity to review this report and to become a key stakeholder in plan development and implementation.
- Allow other Borough department personnel, most notably, Highway, Sanitation, Fire, Police and Utilities, an opportunity to review this report and provide input for plan development.
- Allow the Solicitor an opportunity to review this report and provide input for plan development and implementation, largely to ensure legal compliance for financing and vacation.
- Allow GMS Funding Solutions an opportunity to review this report and provide input for potential grant resources.
- Most importantly, allow Town Council an opportunity to review this report and to think about policy and funding options described within, or others, that may be considered for implementation. Many years ago, Town Council appointed a Public Works Committee comprised of several Town Council members. Does Town Council wish to appoint such a Committee to work with staff and the Solicitor to develop this plan?
- Once a plan is finalized, it could be implemented with the annual Capital Improvements Plan process, to include completion of utility improvements before alleys are improved, most likely starting in 2023 or 2024.

Any questions about this report can be directed to Phil Wolgemuth, Deputy Borough Manager, at 717-251-2436 or pwolgemuth@chambersburgpa.gov.