

Introduction

Land Partnerships is a countywide strategy designed to maintain and improve the quality of life in Cumberland County through:

- Agriculture Preservation
- Natural Resource Protection; and
- Parks, Trails & Greenways.

Land Partnerships is a blueprint intended to help the County achieve a healthy balance between preservation and development. The plan seeks to encourage action in the community and facilitate partnerships among federal, state, county and local governments, non-profit organizations, businesses and landowners to achieve a common vision. Land Partnerships will serve as a guidebook for the 33 municipalities in the County. Municipalities and conservation stakeholders should use the County plan as a reference and point of departure for their own planning initiatives.

Plan Goals

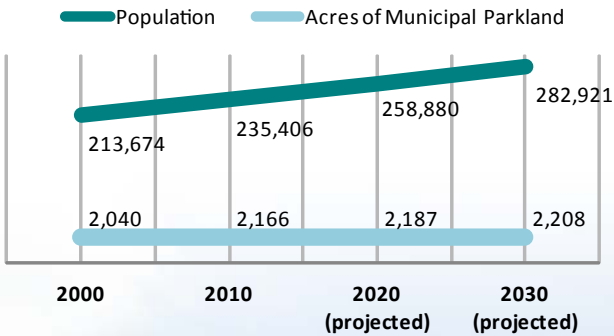
The core goals of the Plan are as follows:

- Preserve the agricultural lands of Cumberland County.
- Conserve the significant natural resources of Cumberland County.
- Provide parkland for the recreation needs of County residents.
- Provide trails to connect citizens with destinations throughout the County.
- Create a comprehensive greenways system throughout Cumberland County.
- Actively implement the principles of Land Partnerships in developed communities.
- Educate Cumberland County landowners, municipalities, and non-profit organizations to promote understanding of land conservation and preservation options and opportunities.

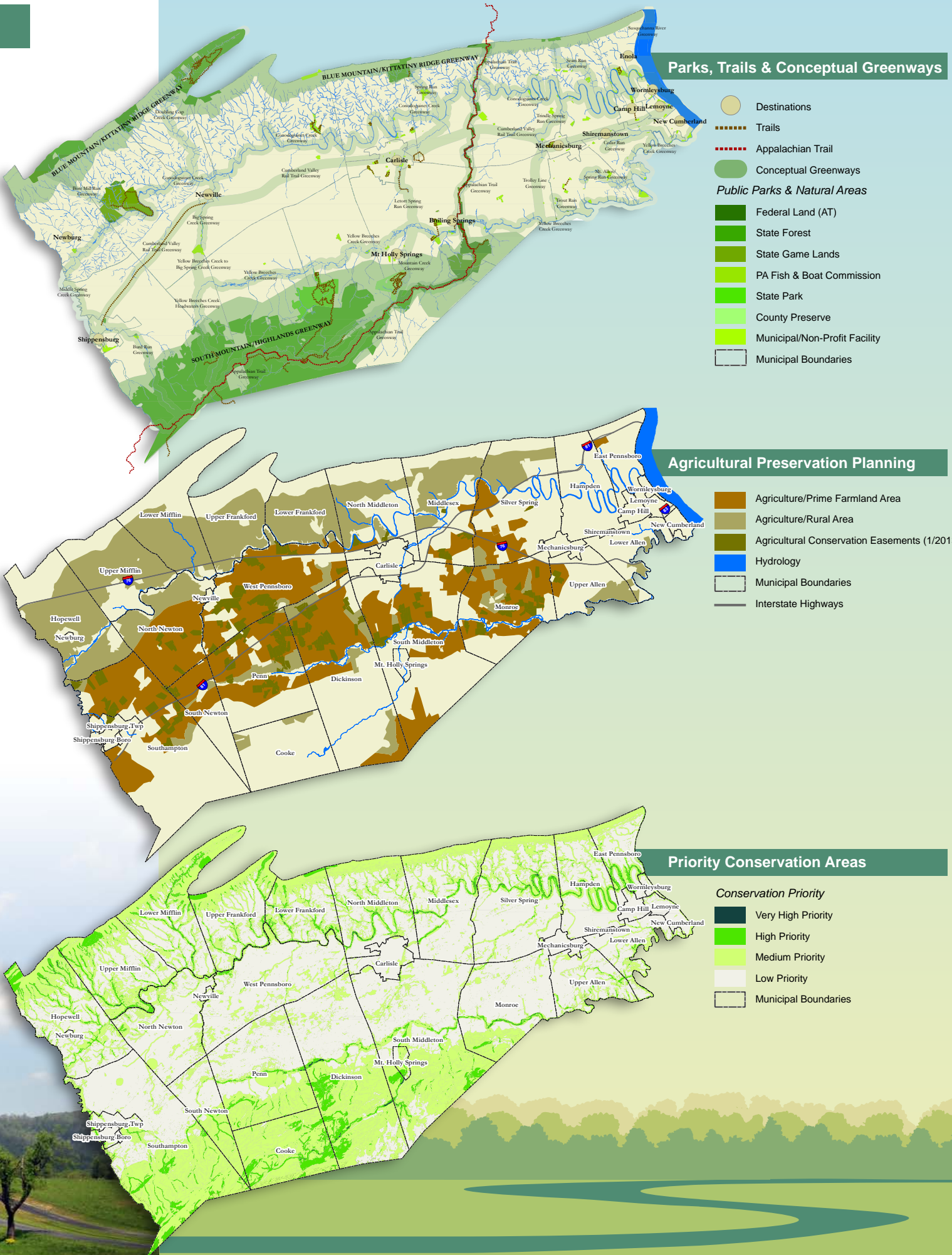
Needs Assessment Findings

The following needs were identified during the assessment process:

- The population of Cumberland County is expected to continue to grow steadily. Conservation efforts are needed to respond to the agriculture preservation, natural resource, and parks, trails & greenways needs of the increasing population.
- Important natural resources of the County lack permanent protection.
- Conservation and economic development are not mutually exclusive. Agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and park, trails & greenways are integral components to a thriving economy.
- Many municipal land use plans and ordinances are outdated and do not reflect current planning trends and best management practices. Planning for agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails & greenways is an immediate need.
- A balanced and diverse implementation approach is needed to respond to the unique needs of the County.

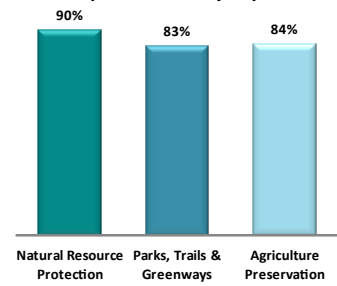


Cumberland County is barely maintaining the status quo of 9.2 acres of municipal parkland per 1,000 residents. Data shows that at current rates, population growth will outpace the establishment of new municipal parkland.

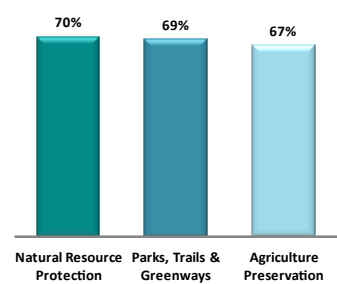


Public Participation Findings

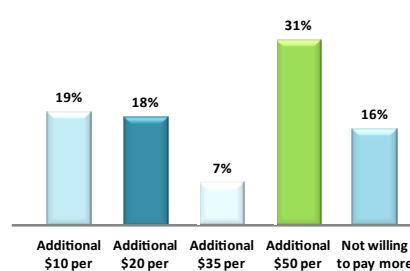
The majority of public survey respondents feel the following issues are important to very important



A majority of the public survey respondents feel more needs to be done to address the following issues



75% of public survey respondents are willing to pay additional dollars to preserve agriculture, natural areas, parks, trails and greenways



With over 1,100 participants, public involvement was a key element of the planning process including: a steering committee, public meetings, public opinion survey, project website and key stakeholder outreach. The key findings are summarized below:

- Agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails and greenways remain important issues for the residents of Cumberland County and more needs to be done to address the issues.
- The current amount of farmland in the county appears adequate, but there is a concern about future loss of farmland and agricultural heritage to development pressures. Access to local food is an important issue.
- Natural resource protection ranks as the number one priority among the three topic areas of the plan. Agriculture preservation and parks, trails and greenways rank as a second priority area.
- Water quality is a critical issue underlying the natural resource protection element.
- There is a strong demand for additional walking and biking paths that connect people with destinations. Trails should be designed for transportation, recreation and fitness.
- The need for additional parkland varies by community. Some communities have adequate facilities, while others are underserved. Maintenance of existing facilities is critical.
- Respondents support public financing of agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails and greenways and indicate a willingness to pay more to finance these initiatives.
- Ongoing education and outreach is needed to promote awareness among residents, stakeholders and government officials regarding the threats facing agriculture, natural resources, parks, trails and greenways.



Implementation Plan

A variety of strategies should be implemented to achieve Land Partnerships' goals and objectives. When implemented together, these strategies provide a comprehensive approach to agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails & greenways. Four categories of strategies are outlined in the plan including:

Planning – integration of the goals and objectives of the plan into local land use policies with specific priorities on the following:

- Providing technical assistance for the preparation of land use ordinances that protect the right to farm and associated operations.
- Providing technical assistance for the development and adoption of municipal comprehensive plans and land use ordinances that preserve the County's natural resources with a focus on protecting water quality/supply.
- Providing technical assistance for multi-municipal partnerships undertaking planning or preparation of land use ordinances / official maps promoting open space, park, trail and greenway development consistent with Land Partnerships.

Acquisition and Development – voluntary land acquisition and capital investments with specific priorities on the following:

- Pursuing funding to preserve farms located in the prime farmland areas with an emphasis on those that form partnerships among multiple stakeholders/organizations.
- Assisting preserved farms to implement best management practices that improve water quality.
- Assisting municipalities and non-profits to acquire important natural areas identified on the Priority Conservation Areas map.
- Partnering with The Nature Conservancy to maintain and enhance the Mount Holly Nature Preserve.
- Enhancing and expanding the Cumberland Valley Rail Trail, and establishing secondary trail connections to existing regional trails.
- Providing funding and technical assistance to municipalities and non-profits to meet future recreation needs by acquiring trail rights-of-way and upgrading older parks.

Partnerships – cooperation with other organizations to achieve common goals with specific priorities on the following:

- Multi-municipal projects
- Leveraged funding from private, non-profit, local, state or federal grant programs
- Coordinated efforts related to education, branding and marketing consistent with Land Partnerships

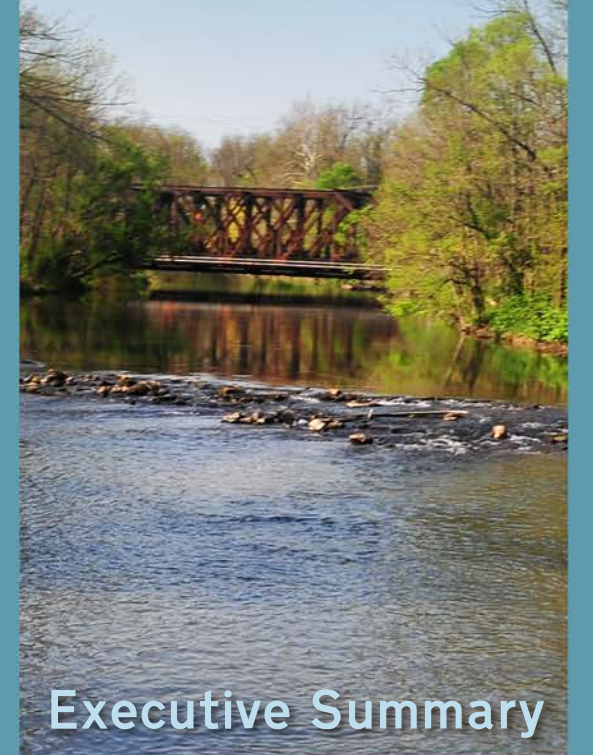
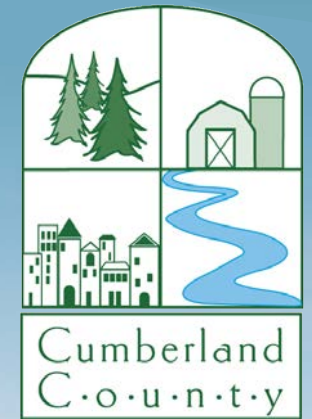
Education – municipal, stakeholder and public outreach to re-enforce the goals of the plan and garner continued support with specific priorities on the following:

- Increasing public awareness of the community benefits of local agriculture with an emphasis on local food, farm to school programs, community gardens and farmers markets.
- Educating private landowners about voluntary conservation practices including woodlot management, riparian buffers, invasive plant control, native landscaping, wildlife habitat, rain gardens and rain barrels, etc.



for more information please visit:
www.ccpa.net/landpartnerships

Land Partnerships Plan



Executive Summary