

Chapter 5

Greenway Corridors

Corridor Identification and Prioritization

The inventory and analysis phase identified and mapped resources that contribute to greenway development. Corridors were then designated that align with the resources and link community destinations together. Eight regional greenway study corridors were identified which create a framework for a Countywide system of greenways and trails. The eight regional greenway study corridors include:

- Conodoguinet Creek Greenway
- Yellow Breeches Creek Greenway
- Cumberland Valley Trail Greenway
- Appalachian Trail
- Big Spring Creek/Doubling Gap Creek Greenway
- LeTort Spring Run/Mountain Creek/Biker-Hiker Trail Greenway
- Trindel Spring Run/Trolley Line Greenway
- Susquehanna River Greenway



The Recommended Greenway Corridor Map on the following page identifies the eight regional greenway corridors. Descriptions of the eight greenway study corridors are provided in Table 5-1 on page 5-4. The character and landscape of Cumberland County changes dramatically from east to west, as does the greenway study areas that traverse the County. The identified greenway study areas were separated into 19 geographic segments for evaluation and planning purposes. The greenway segments are designated between significant geographic features such as the County boundary, a stream confluence, or a municipality. Table 5-1 identifies municipalities in which the corridors are located, key corridor features, other planning/development efforts in the corridor area and length of the greenway corridor in miles.



These corridors are the main greenways that link throughout Cumberland County. They are located along linear resources, which extend beyond the boundaries of the County. As adjacent counties plan and develop greenways, connections to Cumberland County will create a regional network of protected open spaces.

The ridge tops of Blue Mountain and South Mountain are not identified as potential greenways because both of these ridges are primarily located within State Forests and State Game Lands which protect the area from development. Smaller stream corridors have not been listed but will provide important green connections linking to the identified greenway corridors.

Recommended Greenway Corridor Map

Table 5-1

The next step in the planning process was to evaluate the regional corridors as potential greenways and prioritize their protection and development. Criteria for evaluation of the corridors were based on the greenway planning goals set at the outset of the project, which identified characteristics of greenways. Additional criteria were added to reflect the outcomes of the Countywide citizen survey. This criteria was listed in a questionnaire which provided three options for categorizing the criteria: high County priority, low County priority, and municipal priority. The Task Force completed the questionnaire that ranked the evaluation criteria. Based on the numeric compilations of the responses, the criteria were placed into three categories: first priority, second priority, and third priority. The designation of County or municipal role for greenway protection was eliminated from the priority classification. Table 5-2 identifies the greenway evaluation criteria priorities.

| Table 5-2 Greenway Evaluation Criteria Priorities | |
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| 1st Priority | |
| Preserve stream corridors and enhance stream buffers | |
| Connect state and municipal parks or regional recreation resources | |
| Extend existing trails of regional significance | |
| Preserve/connect natural corridors for wildlife | |
| Connect urban areas to regional recreation resources | |
| Protect property slated for development or currently up for sale | |
| Provide alternative means of transportation | |
| Protect outstanding habitat. Diverse species, communities and natural succession stages. Large enough to be stable. | |
| Protect property contiguous with a large area of natural habitat | |
| Links to areas of cultural or historic significance | |
| 2nd Priority | |
| Preserve existing unprotected trails | |
| Connect to trails in an adjacent county | |
| Connect urban center to urban center | |
| Protect area under development pressure. Located in high growth area. | |
| Provide long distance passive recreation | |
| Adjacent to agriculture preservation areas | |
| Preserve scenic qualities | |
| 3rd Priority | |
| Protect rare community type. Extraordinary example of a natural community. Includes PNDI sites. | |
| Connect urban areas to rural countryside. | |
| Extend trails of local significance. | |
| Link subdivisions with local park/school | |

Regional Greenways

The 19 geographic segments of the greenway corridors were evaluated based on the established criteria and a prioritized ranking resulted. Table 53 on the following page illustrates the outcome of the prioritization process.

Table 5-3 Greenway Ranking

The resulting ranking of greenway corridors is a useful tool for County and municipal officials and planners to prioritize acquisition and implementation of protection strategies. It does not place a relative value on the greenways nor assess the current “degree of threat” or “availability” of a corridor. The ranking provides a point of departure for future action but consideration must be given to current development pressures and protection opportunities. Each greenway identified is important to the quality of life of Cumberland County residents and provides many of the benefits presented earlier in this plan. Cumberland County should strive to protect and preserve each of the identified greenways.

Greenway Functions

Greenways can take many forms; some will be corridors of protected natural areas, or corridors that include a footpath for exploring nature, while others can be developed primarily as commuter or recreation trails. The nineteen geographic segments of greenways that were ranked in Table 5-2 were further evaluated to determine the importance of trail development within the protected corridor. The ranking criteria were narrowed to include criteria that evaluated trail importance, transportation and recreation opportunities, and linkages. Each geographic segment was evaluated based on the criteria and a prioritized ranking resulted. Table 5-4 on the following page illustrates the outcome of the prioritization trail ranking process.

The resulting trail ranking provides a guideline for the prioritization of trail development within the identified greenway segments. The ranking should only be considered a guide and all trail development should be completed after a comprehensive design and planning process that considers the compatibility of a trail with corridor characteristics, the significance and sustainability of natural resources, and operations and management resources of the greenway segment. An ecologist should evaluate a proposed trail alignment to verify that trail development is compatible with resource protection goals.

Greenways Links

The eight regional greenways alone do not complete a greenway system that expands to the farthest reaches of the County. Additional greenways must be identified which will extend greenways along secondary corridors, interconnecting greenways and creating “loops” that tie the main greenways together. These greenway links will enhance the system by expanding it throughout the County. Ten greenway links were identified which connect to the regional greenways. Greenway links include:

- Middle Spring Creek
- Burd Run
- Bore Mill Run
- Sears Run
- Spring Run
- Cedar Run
- Unnamed tributary of the Yellow Breeches Creek (connects Winding Heights/Mt. Allen to Yellow Breeches Creek)
- Headwaters of Yellow Breeches Creek
- Yellow Breeches Creek to Big Spring Creek
- Capital Area Greenbelt

Trail Ranking – Table 5-4

Functional Links

Connecting community places with greenways can not be totally achieved with the regional greenways and the greenway links alone. Functional links provide the last piece of the puzzle, connecting nearby parks and schools to greenway corridors. In most instances, a natural or manmade corridor does not exist to connect these community destinations. Trails should be developed to link these community resources to planned regional greenways and greenway links. Municipalities, school districts, and private land owners must work together to develop the functional links which connect local parks and schools to the Countywide greenway system.

Pilot Greenway Corridor

Established greenways and trails are valued features in the landscape but they are often initially looked upon skeptically by the general public and even municipal officials. Fears of vandalism and security are often voiced when a trail or greenway project is initially discussed. Education and first hand experience are the best methods of illustrating the benefits of protecting and developing greenways and trails. Also, the experience of others is a valuable tool to illustrate how greenways and trails can be developed in other communities.

South Middleton Township in southcentral Cumberland County has been pursuing greenways and trails throughout the Township for over five years. South Middleton Township is fortunate to have the Appalachian Trail and a portion of the LeTort Spring Run Nature Trail within its boundary as well as a fulltime recreation director who has led the greenway effort. Since 1997 South Middleton Township has developed approximately 2 miles of municipal greenways and trails. Reviewing the planning process and outcomes of these efforts can be a valuable guide to others in the County. Table 5-5 is a synopsis of the South Middleton Township's greenway and trail initiative.

| Table 5-5 South Middleton Township Greenway and Trail Initiative | |
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| Adopted planning documents that support trails/greenways in South Middleton Township | The 1995 Comprehensive Recreation Plan recommended six greenways throughout the Township. This was the first introduction of the greenway concept in the Township. |
| Ordinance provisions which support the trail/greenway initiative | The Township had mandatory dedication provisions in their Subdivision/Land Development Ordinance. The ordinance was revised to allow easements to be obtained as part of the dedication process. A Greenway Map was included in the revised Subdivision/Land Development Ordinance. |
| Trail/Greenway initiative leader | A dual approach to the initiative leadership was developed with involvement of one Township Supervisor and the Township Director of Parks and Recreation. |
| Municipal committee | A 14-member Greenway and Trail Committee was formed of Township residents. Several committee members had expertise in related fields such as planning, recreation, and volunteer organizations. Representative of the Supervisors and the Director of Parks and Recreation were on the committee. The Greenway and Trail Committee (GTC) mission statement: "Working to develop a comprehensive Greenway and Trail network throughout South Middleton Township linking parks, open space, schools, and commercial, residential and employment areas." |

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| First presentation of greenway/trails proposal to the South Middleton Township Supervisors | The GTC prepared a written document, the Preliminary Proposal for Greenways and Trails in South Middleton Township, and presented the proposal and accompanying map to the Board of Supervisors in May 1997. Several of the Supervisors were familiar with the concept of greenways through their involvement on the GTC and knowledge of greenways in other areas. |
| Municipal official vision for greenway/trails | Two-fold vision: recreation benefits and opportunity to preserve open space. |
| Intermunicipal/ School District Cooperation | South Middleton was ahead of other municipalities so intermunicipal cooperation not a key. P&R Director contact and cooperation with the School District was important. |
| Greenway initiative tied to other park and recreation initiatives | Targeted acquisition of parks that further greenway/trail goals. Link parks via greenways and trails. |
| First step in process once initiative approved by Supervisors | Prioritize greenways and get the message out. Take an active role, target grants, meet with PennDOT, talk to people, etc. |
| Public education effort | Presence at community events with booth/display on greenway trail initiative. Key is talking to people one-on-one. Publish a brochure and bookmark that promote initiative. Next step is a greenway newsletter. |
| Strategies to promote greenway initiative to public | Primarily presence at community events. Highlight greenway accomplishments in P&R newsletter. Would like to produce a video for cable access TV – work with school students to produce |
| Primary concerns regarding initiative in Township | Farmers concerned about trails near homes and if subdivided in future will trail be a problem. |
| Role of volunteers | Small eagle scout projects. No real volunteer base – GTC were the volunteers, they use and monitor the trails. |
| Determination of greenway/trail routes | Committee determined trails. Student developed trail map. |
| Landowner meetings and incentives | P&R Director met with landowners in residential area. Offered buffer landscaping and split-rail fence. Landowners did not want trail. |
| Fund-raising efforts | Work done to date with grants and tax dollars. Must have defined plans, more than a potential route map, to raise funds. |
| Development approach | Township built a portion of the existing trail and a contractor built a portion. |
| Timeline on greenway/trail initiative | Ongoing effort |
| What would be done differently if starting initiative over now | Be prepared for all questions and concerns of homeowners, especially when seeking easements. |
| One piece of advise regarding developing municipal greenways and trails | Get the people in your community involved who have expertise (i.e., planners, engineers, etc.) Tackle tough issues as they arise. |

Open Space Protection

Protecting greenway corridors is one of the most effective methods of protecting open spaces and enhancing the environment. Because greenway corridors are often lands that are not considered developable due to floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, or past use such as rail lines, they are often open but not protected. Protecting these forgotten green corridors preserves and protects sensitive natural areas, reconnects fragmented landscapes, and enhances habitats for wildlife. Green corridors with trails will provide multiple benefits to the citizens of Cumberland County, reconnecting them to the importance of protecting open spaces. Creating greenways throughout Cumberland County will require the cooperation of private landowners, developers, municipalities, and agencies. Techniques for open space protection and greenway development are outlined in Table 5-6.

| Table 5-6 | | |
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| Open Space Protection Strategy | Strategy Explanation | Advantage/Disadvantage |
| <i>Acquisition or Donation</i> | | |
| Acquisition | Acquisition of land for the sole purpose of greenway/trail development | One of the most effective methods of permanently protecting open space. It is also the most costly and contingent upon an agency or organization to manage and maintain the land. |
| Donations/Gifts | Donation of land to an agency or non-profit organization | Provides permanent protection without public expenditure. May provide tax benefits to the donor if the donation is for preservation or conservation. |
| Bargain Sale | Land is purchased at less than its appraised market value. | Difference in purchase and fair market value is considered a charitable gift for tax purposes. |
| Option to Buy | An agreement with a property owner to purchase or have the right of first refusal to purchase land. | Secures the rights for future purchase but does not set price or determine when or if property would be sold. |
| Purchase of Development Rights | To provide a landowner the monetary difference between the value of land when fully developed with uses allowed by rights verses the value of the same parcel remaining undeveloped as open space. | For landowner lowers taxes on land. Cost to purchase development rights may be high. |
| Purchase of Resource Protection Rights | To purchase the rights from a landowner to protect and manage specific resources. | Cost to purchase resource protection rights may be high. |
| Purchase & Resale | Purchase land by party desiring to restrict its future use and resold only under conditions or restrictive deed conditions. | Party that originally purchased the land for the sole purpose of restricting its use is relieved of continuing ownership and maintenance responsibilities. Land remains on tax roles. |
| Condemnation | Condemnation is the act of eminent domain or taking of private property for public purposes. | Tool for acquisition. May be costly and reflect negatively on the greenway initiative. Use as last resort for protection. |
| <i>Easements</i> | | |
| Conservation Easements | A legally enforceable agreement between a landowner and an agency or non-profit organization which places restriction on the use of or activities on a specific property which aligns with conservation objectives. | Less expensive than acquisition of land. The landowner retains rights not surrendered in the easement agreement and the easement provisions are valid and enforceable in perpetuity. Public access may be restricted. Method for enforcement needed. |
| Public Access Easement | An easement that provides the general public the right to access to or through a privately owned land for a defined purpose such as hiking, walking, and biking. Specific activities such as hunting and motorized vehicle use may be prohibited. | Less expensive than acquisition of land. The landowner retains rights not surrendered in the easement agreement and the easement provisions are valid and enforceable in perpetuity. |

| <i>Land Use Regulations</i> | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Open Space Protection Strategy | Strategy Explanation | Advantage/Disadvantage |
| Overlay Zone | A zone that is overlaid on an existing zone which adds regulation governing the use of a property. This technique is typically used to protect floodplains, woodlands, and steep slopes. Overlay zones can be designated for specific resources or areas to provide additional environmental protection. Riparian buffers, wetlands, and unique natural areas are resources that could be protected with an overlay zone. | Enforced by local government. Allows targeted protection of natural resources. |
| Cluster Zoning | Cluster zoning promotes the clustering of development and maximizing open space on a tract of land. Ordinance provisions should promote the preservation of sensitive natural resources such as stream corridors, wetlands and hedgerows, contiguous open space, and buffering. | Can reduce construction and infrastructure costs. Must work with developer to ensure that open space is useful as a greenway and linked to other protected open space. |
| Transfer of Development Rights | Property owners can sell development rights to developers for use in targeted areas. Open space is preserved by deed restrictions on properties that no longer carry development rights. | Allows development to be directed to specific areas. |
| Mandatory Dedication | Dedication of land from developers for park and recreational purposes. Municipalities must adopt a recreation plan that supports the dedication standards contained in the subdivision and land development ordinance. | Dedicates open space where development is occurring. Fee in lieu of provisions allows fee for land based on fair market value to be used for purchase of land in targeted areas. |
| Open Space Subdivisions | Open space subdivisions promote preservation of open space through the identification of natural resources and development designs that preserve these resources and significant open space. | Retain the density of the tract being developed. Must work with developer to ensure that open space is useful as a greenway and linked to other protected open space. |
| <i>Other Methods</i> | | |
| Official Map | A municipality may map existing and proposed features such as parks, greenways, trails, and easements, and through this designation reserve public land. If a plan for subdivision or development of mapped land is presented, the municipality may withhold approval for a period of one year, giving the municipality the option to purchase or condemn the property. | The official map does not protect land for greenways but merely reserves land for purchase by the municipality. |
| Deed Restriction | Restrictions as part of the deed that limit in some way the use of a piece of land. Examples include removing vegetation, requiring a portion of a tract to remain undeveloped, buffer, etc. | Features protected in perpetuity. |