

Chapter 7

Study Recommendations

Implementation Strategy

To make greenways happen, certain elements must be in place. All are required, not merely one or two things that might be nice to do. Most of the recommendations are related to criteria for building great communities: bringing people together, collaboration, a vision, attention and dedication to resource protection, effective management, solid planning, and funding. These elements all figure into the recommendations that are the subject of this chapter.

Not unexpectedly, the course of action is full of caution signs. There are major challenges between identifying potential greenways and actually establishing them in the County. The major objective of the recommendations is to provide explicit steps that Cumberland County could take to establish a Countywide system of greenways. This will help the citizens of this County to obtain the kind of community that they would like for themselves and their children's children well into the next century. It will require courage and foresight on the part of citizens, elected officials, and the County to move ahead in establishing greenways.

The recommendations set forth the following actions:

1. Establish an effective greenway planning system
2. Organize a management system for greenways
3. Create partnerships for greenway development
4. Establish a funding program to support greenways
5. Develop a public education program about greenways
6. Develop a pilot greenway project

Recommendation 1: Establish an Effective Greenway Planning System

Greenway Plan

- a) **Adopt the Greenway Plan as an official County plan.**
- b) **Make the greenway plan a component of the County's comprehensive plan.** Include a parks, recreation, and open space component in the comprehensive plan. Apply for a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Keystone Community Grant for this component.
- c) **Seek a resolution endorsing the greenway plan from each municipality endorsing the greenway study recommendations.**

Ongoing Planning

- a) **Establish greenway planning as an ongoing function of County planning.**
- b) **Work with municipalities to develop local plans for greenways.** The local plans would incorporate the recommendations of the County's plan as a planning base. This could be done as 33 individual plans for each of Cumberland County's municipalities. However, the County prefers to fund multijurisdictional projects. This strategy makes more sense in terms of greenway planning, which

typically goes beyond jurisdictional boundaries. Planning will require collaboration, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Regional and municipal greenway planning requires: funding assistance, technical assistance, and financial support. Financial assistance should be a combination of State, County and local efforts. Funding recommendations are presented in Recommendation 4.

- c) **Consider expanding the County's focus on greenways to a broader program of resource protection including open space, natural resource conservation, farmland preservation, and greenways and trails.** This study found that the emphasis on greenway planning might actually be too narrow for the ultimate needs of Cumberland County. The findings indicate that the larger issue of open space planning may help the County to achieve its goals rather than just greenway planning. We recommend that future planning efforts deal with open space planning within which greenways would play an important role.
- d) **Seek a planning grant through the Keystone Grant Community Grant Program to undertake a Countywide open space plan.**

Recommendation 2:

Organize a Management System for Greenways in Cumberland County

- a) **Establish a strong role in managing greenway development.** While there are important examples in greenway planning and implementation at the local level as well as with private nonprofit organizations, the County needs to serve as the catalyst in establishing greenways Countywide.
- b) **Hire additional staff to supplement the efforts of current planners who already have more-than-full workloads.** If greenway planning were forced into existing workloads, people would be spread too thin and work items not accomplished. Our research showed that other counties with similar initiatives have hired staff. There is already an example in Cumberland County in which an organized group is asking for County support: the Cumberland Valley Trail. We recommend that Cumberland County hire at least one additional staff person, preferably two, to work on open space and greenway planning with a prime focus on outreach to municipalities. We recommend that they have flexible work schedules in order to participate in community outreach programs that require meetings when volunteers and community groups are available, typically during the evenings and occasionally on weekends.

One possibility for staffing would be to work with PA DCNR (Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) to explore funding opportunities. DCNR is reviewing its grant programs and may consider funding a person who would work on greenway establishment, volunteer development, partnerships and other related tasks. Since the greenway would be county-wide, the County would need to foster relationships and work with PA DCNR to insure that this position would be eligible for grant funds.

- c) **Determine how the County can assume the role for managing greenways that run through several jurisdictions.** A prime example is the Cumberland Valley Trail. There needs to be a decision about if and how the County should do this. The Task Force recommends:

1. Vesting the responsibility in the Planning Commission.
2. Establishing a County Parks Department that would be equipped to manage greenways. This would be the traditional method of greenway management. Most counties that have a parks department have a mission directed at natural resource protection with associated passive

recreation opportunities. One of the decisions that needs to be made is in regard to the County's position on establishing County parks. This should be determined through the comprehensive plan.

3. As the program grows, work with County conservancies, municipalities, and private citizens groups to assume management and ownership of the greenways. Even with ownership and operation of greenways by private groups or landowners, there still needs to be an umbrella organization for greenways in Cumberland County. An example of such an operation in which the government does not own or directly control land is the National Park Service's Upper Delaware National Recreation Area. The National Park Service serves as the manager of the Recreation Area even though the land is not owned by the National Park Service.
- d) **Manage greenways that run through one jurisdiction or on private lands at the local level or through private organizations .**

Recommendation 3: Establish Greenway Partnerships

- a) **Collaborate with municipalities in greenway development and management.** Provide incentives for regional greenway management. Provide workshops, consultations, materials, contacts, case studies, and other items that both encourage and inform the municipalities about greenway management.
- b) **Work with the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy to establish it as a full-time conservancy.** If this is not possible, pursue establishing a Cumberland County Conservancy for land preservation. Bring in an established organization with a successful track record in land conservancies such as the Natural Lands Trust. County officials should visit other conservancies with successful programs such as the Heritage Conservancy in Bucks County and the Montgomery County Lands Trust for guidance. We do recommend that Cumberland County have its own conservancy based upon the great responsiveness of people in the County to local organizations. They appear to have a strong alliance to organizations based within the County.
- c) **Organize partnerships with environmental organizations.** This would include the LeTort Authority and others on the identified steps of establishing the specific greenways.
- d) **Explore opportunities for developing rivers conservation plans along water-based greenways.** The Susquehanna River, Yellow Breeches, and other streams within greenway corridors are potential study subjects.
- e) **Continue to operate with the Greenway Advisory Board as the primary citizens advisory group for greenways in Cumberland County.**
- f) **Develop an organized volunteer program for greenways.** Before any volunteers are recruited for such an effort, a program designed to seek, train, place, supervise, recognize, sustain, and replenish volunteers should be set up. It needs to be a responsibility vested with a person. Volunteers are not free. A volunteer program should be officially approved by Cumberland County. Responsibility for it should be delegated to a specific individual.

Recommendation 4: Establish a Funding Program to Support Greenways

- a) **Consider a bond issue for greenway planning and development.** The Task Force recommends that Cumberland County use bond funds for greenway planning and development. Research into other counties floating bonds shows that the bonds are used for open spaces including greenways, farmland preservation, parks, and open space protection. Consult with these other counties, including Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, and Monroe about their open space programs and bond issues. Monroe is the most similar to Cumberland with respect to size and constituency. Delaware County was not successful in passing a bond. There are valuable lessons to learn from this county as well. For a bond to be successful, a land protection program may be better received than a greenway program alone. Since farmland preservation, watershed protection, and natural areas are near and dear to the hearts of Cumberland County residents, funding should have a broader purpose.
- b) **Determine the mechanics of establishing a bond program.** Cumberland County should carefully orchestrate the process of decision making and public involvement in order to cultivate public support. These steps could include:
- ***Appointing a steering committee*** composed of a diverse membership representing the interests to be supported by funding. The membership should contain people with clout to make this happen. Advisory members should be considered.
 - ***Seeking financial counsel*** for this study to determine the County's ability to obtain funds and the impact on tax payers. County bond funds have been in the range of \$25 million to \$100 million. Counties that have floated bonds have seen spin-offs with local municipalities also floating bonds ranging from \$4 million to \$20 million.
 - ***Develop the case to present the bond to the public.*** Establish a campaign to convey the benefits of paying for open spaces and preserving farms rather than having land developed. People need to understand that while open space costs money, development costs more. Even if a bond appears to be a sure-fire success, there is always the danger that an unknown, unanticipated special interest will come out at the end of the campaign to try to defeat the project through scare tactics.
- c) **Establish the purposes for which the bond funds could be used.** Proposed elements eligible under the bond include the following:
- ***Planning*** -Bond funds should be used to fund a County open space plan and to support local planning. In other counties with bonds, certain amounts are allocated for local planning in the range of about \$10,000 that municipalities could supplement or use as a match for a Keystone Planning Grant. Municipalities could also join together with their funding. The County could provide incentives to do this.
 - ***County Open Space Projects*** - Funds should be available for County land acquisition, easements, rights-of-way, and so on. This could include potential County parkland acquisitions should the County decide they would like to establish County parks.
 - ***Local Open Space Projects*** - Bond funds for local open space projects could be made available on a formula basis with a base amount for each municipality, additional funds based upon land area or population, and incentives for regional projects. The local municipality should provide a match. Bond funds in other counties have been at about 80 percent County and 20 percent local in cost sharing.
 - ***Environmental Protection*** - A portion of the funds could be used for environmental protection projects such as establishing riparian buffers and implementing streambank stabilization projects. These funds could be used to match Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources River Conservation Grants.

- **Legal Assistance** - A portion of the funds could be used for legal support that municipalities may need regarding real estate proceedings or litigation related to getting open space.
- **Administration and Staffing** - A portion of the bond should go to support the administration of the greenways program, including staffing required.

Agricultural Preservation may be an area the County would want to include in a broader based program for open space and resource protection.

Recommendation 5:

Develop a Public Education Program about Greenways

- a) **Develop a public education program.** The purpose of the public education program is to inform and promote the benefits of greenways, farmland preservation, natural resource protection, and open spaces. In this feasibility study, it was clear that people do not understand the concept of greenways, nor the cost benefits of investing in land preservation. A solid program is needed.
- b) **Develop a speaker's bureau to make presentations to organizations throughout Cumberland County.** The public participation process showed that there is a core group of adamant supporters for this project as shown in the advisory committee. The survey demonstrated that there is a high level of support among the general public. The public meetings resulted in a poor turnout. One of the reasons appears to be the great number of meetings that take place for a variety of planning projects in the County. Based upon the experience of this study, it appears that the County needs to go directly to the groups. One idea generated by the Task Force was the corps of 33 volunteers who would serve as liaisons with their municipalities. Staffing this effort would be an important component to implement.
- c) **Hire a professional marketing firm to develop and orchestrate greenway promotion.** If an outreach program becomes part of an existing job in the County, it will fall between the cracks. The cultivation of public education and support is too important to risk with a hit-or-miss fashion.
- d) **Involve the municipalities and conservation organizations in the process regarding County open space planning and decisions regarding land and funding.**
- e) **Establish a process for regular communication with municipalities about the greenway project.** This could be done through newsletters at regular intervals and by establishing a WEB site that would be actively managed and updated.

Recommendation 6:

Pilot Greenway Project

- a) **It is important to have a greenway success to use as a public example.** The LeTort Spring Run Nature Trail and the Cumberland Hiker-Biker Trail are examples of successful trail initiatives in Cumberland County. These trails are part of the LeTort Spring Run/Mountain Creek/Hiker-Biker Trail Greenway. The completion of the greenway segments (Conodoguinet Creek to Yellow Breeches and Yellow Breeches to Pine Grove Furnace) that connect these two trails were prioritized as #1 and #4 respectively. The County should assist the local municipalities in developing the LeTort Spring Run/Mountain Creek/Hiker-Biker Trail Greenway as shown on Map 2 as an example of a successful greenway project within the County.

- b) The LeTort Spring Run/Mountain Creek/Hiker-Biker Trail Greenway is located between the Conodoguinet Creek and Pine Grove Furnace State Park. The greenway length is approximately 21 miles. The greenway is located in portions of five municipalities: Middlesex Township, Carlisle Borough, South Middleton Township, Mount Holly Springs Borough, and Dickinson Township. The greenway connects to the Conodoguinet Creek Greenway, the Yellow Breeches Creek Greenway, and the Appalachian Trail Greenway. The LeTort Spring Run Nature Trail is a walking and hiking trail and bicycle use is not permitted.
- c) The following steps should be undertaken to pursue the completion of the LeTort Spring Run/Mountain Creek/Hiker-Biker Trail Greenway.

Feasibility Study - Conduct a detailed feasibility study of the greenway corridor segments.

1. Determine the source of funding for a feasibility study of the greenway corridor. One option is to obtain a River Conservation Grant for work along the stream corridors. River Conservation Grants are available to government entities and river support groups, such as the LeTort Regional Authority, to conserve and enhance river resources. Planning grants are available and implementation grants are provided to carry out recommendations of river conservation plans. River Conservation Grants require a 50 percent match.
2. Form a study committee to complete the feasibility study in conjunction with professional consultants. A representative of the Cumberland County Planning Commission should lead the study committee. Members should include: Carlisle Director of Parks and Recreation; South Middleton Director of Parks and Recreation; The Superintendent of Pine Grove Furnace State Park; representative of the LeTort Regional Authority; elected officials from Middlesex Township, Carlisle Borough, South Middleton Township, Mount Holly Springs Borough, and Dickinson Township; Planning Commission members from each of the municipalities; and general citizen representatives.
3. Retain a professional with expertise in trails and greenway acquisition/implementation to complete a title search of properties along the corridor. The corridor is defined by the abandoned railroad along two portions of the greenway, but north of the LeTort Spring Run Nature Trail and in the Mount Holly Springs area a route for the greenway must be defined. The title search will facilitate the route determination and define the number of landowners along the corridor. Two tasks must be undertaken:
 - Identify the current owners of the abandoned rail corridor and the nature of their legal interests.
 - Determine, based on the factual outcome of the ownership determination, the feasibility of acquiring the abandoned railroad right-of-way for future trail use.

It is important to work with a professional who understands title search and acquisition analysis, using it as a tool to highlight problems, factoring risk and developing a preliminary strategy. This understanding of the intricacies of railroad corridor acquisition projects will guard against typical pitfalls, which include:

- Paying twice for a right-of-way, once to the owner of record and a second time to quiet title with various entities holding other interests (i.e., easements, leases, or licenses).
 - Losing portions of the rail line to abutting private landowners with legitimate reversionary interests.
3. Develop an organized outreach program for communications with landowners. The goals of the outreach program should include:

- Effective communications. An orchestrated approach is needed to communicate with landowners to gain their buy in and support for the greenway.
- Strategy to resolve potential conflicts.
- Determination of who should initiate communications. The strategy may differ depending upon the relationship committee members may have with various landowners.
- A comprehensive public information program. Information should include:
 - a. Educational materials on greenways and trails for municipalities
 - b. Educational materials for landowners on greenway benefits, easements, land donations, tax benefits, and estate planning.
 - c. A professional visual presentation for use in presenting the greenway to government groups, service organizations, and general citizenry.
- 4. Hire an acquisition professional to negotiate with landowners to obtain easements, rights-of-way, or fee simple parcels for the greenway corridor. Securing the land is the most important aspect of the greenway plan. It is important to work with a professional who understands the goals of the project, the many forms of corridor ownership, as well as the tax, estate planning, and land use benefits of greenways.

Greenway Master Plan – Once the corridor route is determined in the feasibility study, a master plan should be developed which defines the design of the trail.

1. Hire a consultant to develop the greenway master plan. The County Planning Commission representative should oversee the project, working with the study committee from the feasibility study.
2. Determine the locations of trailheads, trail access areas, parking areas, trail amenities, trail surface options based on user groups, road crossing improvements, stream access areas, the signage system, and trail amenities. Determine the function of the greenway segments, as trail or protected greenspace. Greenway/trail extensions and linkages will be explored and defined.
3. Estimate development costs based on the final design for the greenway/trail.
4. Coordinate with each municipality along the corridor regarding land use regulations that could be adopted that will support the development of the greenway.
5. Develop a greenway management plan for the LeTort Spring Run/Mountain Creek/Hiker-Biker Trail Greenway. The management plan should address the following:
 - Determining who will own, maintain, and accept responsibility and liability for the trail
 - Developing strategies for working with partners
 - Developing a Friends of the Greenway group
 - Developing a security plan
 - Developing strategies for communication with the local municipalities
6. Determine funding sources for the greenway/trail development. Funding options include: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Keystone Grant Program, Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), Cumberland County, local municipalities, fund-raising, LeTort Regional Authority, and/or local conservancies.
7. Develop an action plan for acquisition, funding, and developing the greenway/trail.
8. Acquire land and/or easements as necessary to complete a greenway/trail.
9. Complete design, engineering, and construction specifications.
10. Bid project and complete construction.

Special Pilot Project Initiatives – The LeTort Spring Run/Mountain Creek/Hiker-Biker Trail Greenway is proposed as a pilot greenway project. Special projects should be developed within this greenway initiative, in addition to projects listed above, to support the entire Countywide greenway program. Prototype projects include:

1. Develop kiosks with educational displays at trailheads which describe the Countywide greenway system and the benefits of greenways.
2. Provide signs along the LeTort Spring Run Nature Trail, the Hiker-Biker Trail, and other locations along the greenway that identify the corridors as part of the Countywide greenway system.
3. Develop programs to educate landowners and trail users about riparian buffers, stream bank stabilization, and other resource protection issues along greenway corridors.
4. Develop a comprehensive signage system that identifies the greenway at road/trail intersections, provides direction to the greenway from community areas and major road intersections, and identifies points of interest along the greenway.
5. Develop a promotional program that publicly promotes the initiative and informs the public about the greenway development. A promotional program should include the following:
 - Press releases
 - Ribbon cutting
 - WEB site updates and information
 - Links to tourism in Cumberland County and the Capital Region.