
Chapter 4

Goals and Objectives

Vision for Cumberland County

When asked “What is your vision for open space in Cumberland County ten years from now?” participants in the planning process mentioned a wide range of natural and built features, the status of environmental quality, planning and project activities, accomplishments, and milestones.

Together, they laid out an image of Cumberland County identifiable by its landscape. This vision of Cumberland County preserves the qualities of the County that residents’ value while recognizing that growth will occur. Through foresight and thoughtful planning a balance can be achieved to create a future that retains the best of Cumberland County’s landscape.

Land Partnerships Vision

The Cumberland County landscape...

retains its heritage, character and identity through its scenic, natural, and historic features,

demonstrates a visible connectedness of parks, trails and natural areas within and between County communities,

includes working farms and a strong agricultural community,

maintains natural resources and environmental quality, and

supports diverse business opportunities and livable communities.

Cumberland County and its partner agencies...

are committed to a balanced approach of smart growth and open space preservation, and

are dedicated to maintaining the quality of life enjoyed by residents.

Elements of Land Partnerships

This vision for Cumberland County was then translated into four plan elements. Each element is associated with a unique landscape and function in the County. Together they represent urban and rural landscapes, public and private ownership, and active and passive land uses. The four elements are:

- Farmland Preservation
- Natural Resource Conservation
- Parks, Trails and Greenways
- Livable Communities

The four elements of *Land Partnerships* reflect the diversity of the County. From the highly developed West Shore communities to the farmland of the Cumberland Valley, the four open space elements address the broad spectrum of the County's landscape. An open space program based on these four elements will provide opportunities for everyone; from the developed boroughs to the rural countryside and the areas in between. These four themes or elements to the Plan are shown in the conceptual figure below.

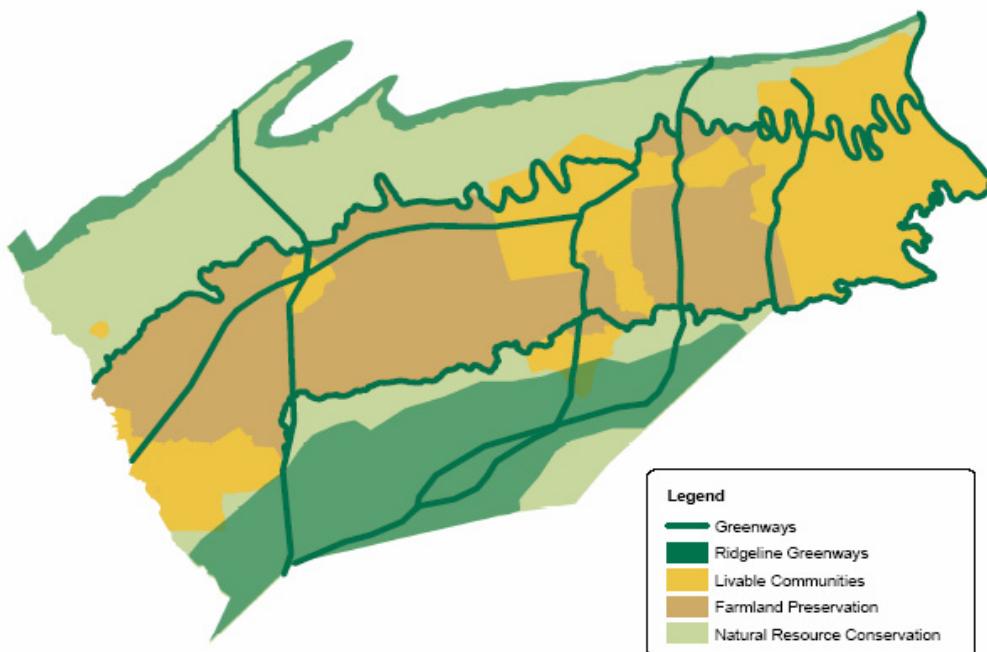


Figure 4-1 Elements of Land Partnerships

Farmland Preservation

The farmland preservation element focuses on the Cumberland Valley as a region where abundant prime soils and soils of statewide importance produce sustained high yields when effectively managed.

Farmland is valued economically and culturally by County residents. For some residents, farming is an occupation. Whether full-time or part-time, farming activities provide income for farmers and their families. For others, farming is a way of life. They value home-grown produce and livestock, the interaction with the natural environment and the stewardship of natural resources – land, water, plants and animals. And still for others, farmland simply represents the County's heritage. They feel a sense of connection to the County's history and appreciate the visible continuity with the past.

Why Preserve Farmland?

1. Farmland is a rapidly disappearing natural resource.
2. Local farms provide fresh food at a reasonable cost.
3. Protecting local farmland keeps property taxes down.
4. Preserved farmland protects local scenery and promotes local tourism.
5. Local farm businesses support farm and farm-related jobs.
6. Locally protected farms benefit the environment.

Source: Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Association

www.pafarmland.org

Cumberland County participates in the Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program to work with willing landowners to purchase agricultural conservation easements or development rights. This program pays the farmer to permanently preserve active, high quality farmland while placing restrictions on the property's use. The farmland remains in private ownership but the easement restricts non-agricultural uses. This program preserves the farmland in perpetuity and the landowner retains all rights associated with the land except the development or transfer for non-agricultural purposes. The Cumberland County Agricultural Land Preservation Board has preserved 9,530 acres through the purchase of 75 easements since its inception in 1989.

The farmland preservation element directs County attention to the need to supplement the existing program and take action now. State funding is limited and shared across Pennsylvania. As land values rise, the total cost of farmland preservation in the County skyrockets. Acquiring easements will cost less if rigorously pursued in the next 10 years than if causally pursued over the next 30 years. This commitment to agricultural preservation is fundamental to the continuation of the farm industry in Cumberland County.

Open space protection in the farmland preservation element will be implemented primarily through agricultural easement purchases on working farms and effective agricultural preservation zoning techniques.

Natural Resource Protection

The natural resource protection element focuses on the protection of the County's natural resources. Cumberland County is blessed with abundant woodlands on the ridge lines of Blue Mountain and South Mountain, the Susquehanna River, Yellow Breeches Creek, Conodoguinet Creek, important natural springs, and other important natural areas. The conservation of these resources and maintaining their role in the environment is critical to healthy communities.

Blue and South Mountains are important to residents for their ecological functions and their natural, scenic beauty, as well as their economic value. Natural springs on the mountain faces are the origin of the County's two major waterways. Their geologic formations and forested condition are critical to promoting steady water supply and maintaining water quality in the stream corridors. The forests purify the air, provide the necessary habitat for woodland wildlife, and create seasonal beauty enjoyed by all. Additionally, forests are a renewable resource for the forest industry.

The natural resource conservation element directs attention to the need to conserve the woodlands, steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, stream corridors and other sensitive natural communities of the County. Open space protection in this element

will be achieved through public acquisition, conservation easements and municipal regulation of land development. Voluntary land management practices by private landowners are also strongly encouraged.

Parks, Greenways and Trails

The parks, trails, and greenways element focuses on the recreational and leisure aspects of open space. Access to these amenities is an important aspect to quality of life. Residents of Cumberland County are fortunate to have the Appalachian Trail, three state parks and numerous municipal parks and other recreation sites within the County, but the population is expanding.

Parks are the public sites where residents can escape the built environment for relaxation and play while spending quality time with family and friends. This plan recognizes that parks and greenways are critical to community life. Just ask your local realtor. What do prospective residents ask about schools and parks? How many? How far? Are there sidewalks or trails to get here? People see parks as places where good things happen: children burn off energy and learn skills in team sports, adults catch up on neighborhood news and squeeze in a few minutes of physical activity, families picnic together, and singles find a pick-up game of basketball or a new acquaintance.

Greenways and trails are the linear connections. They connect parks and other public sites with neighborhoods, providing safe passage for residents of all ages on foot, on bikes, or by other means. Greenways also include riparian buffers along rivers and streams. They filter pollutants from stormwater runoff, removing oils, sediments, and other contaminants before they can pollute the water. Buffers shade streams from the sun, keeping waters cool for aquatic life, and contribute vegetative matter to the aquatic food chain. Finally, as continuous lines of vegetation, buffers provide travel corridors and habitat for wildlife. Similarly, forest ridgelines are greenways for migratory land- and air-based wildlife.

Geographically, the parks, trails and greenways element overlays the other three elements as a network of recreational destinations and ecological corridors. This plan directs the County's attention to the need to maintain a diverse network of park and recreation facilities. Both parcel-size parks and community trail connectors are necessary to meet contemporary recreation needs. Open space protection in this element will entail public acquisition, conservation easements, and ordinance provisions that facilitate development of parks, greenways and recreation facilities.

Livable Communities

The livable communities element focuses on the livability of town environments. The County's towns, comprised of boroughs and portions of some townships, were designed and developed to meet the needs of a pedestrian and carriage-traveling society. While the

Benefits of Greenways

- Greenways provide opportunities to protect and manage wildlife, forests and ecological systems.
- Greenways protect our state's water resources by buffering non-point sources of pollution.
- Greenways are one solution to maintaining important open spaces and farmland that retains Pennsylvania's rural nature.
- Combining greenways with a historic feature provides an opportunity to experience a historic site and to enjoy nature.
- Greenways provide recreation opportunities for families and individuals of all ages and abilities and are a core component of strategies to foster health and wellness.
- Greenways create alternative means to travel between residential and shopping districts, and make connections to other recreational facilities and larger green space
- Greenways educate the public about historic sites, the protection of natural resources, environmental and scientific topics, health benefits, and promote the interaction of people and nature.
- Greenways enhance the sense of place in a community or region. The partnership approach not only provides resources but also builds public support or "community capital" and consensus for more greenways investment.

Source: Pennsylvania Greenways Program , PA DCNR
www.pagreenways.com

automobile has become the predominant means of travel and subsequent land development patterns have changed in response, these communities continue to be places where residents live, work, and play. They typically offer smaller, more affordable properties and housing units, extensive public utilities and services, local retailers, and transit services. Affordable properties and extensive public services can place heavy demands on municipal budgets, resulting in limited funds for community improvement initiatives.

This element directs County attention to the need to sustain these communities as livable places, not just collections of housing units. As communities, the physical infrastructure that ties the pieces together must be maintained and periodically replaced or improved. This physical infrastructure not only includes roads, water and sewer lines, but also the public spaces where people meet, discuss, and participate in community life, such as sidewalks, plazas, public lawns, close to home parks, etc. These public spaces are important to the quality of life offered in communities and make residents feel safe and comfortable by their design. Tree-lined streets make sidewalks and bike routes more comfortable and appealing. Public plazas provide a landmark for people to meet. Public lawns and gardens, such as in front of a public building, offer a sunny site for a picnic lunch or an outdoor meeting. This plan provides direction for the enhancement of existing public spaces and establishment of new public places.

Geographically, the livable community's element corresponds to the growth areas and rural cores of Cumberland County, as identified in the Tri-County Regional Growth Management Plan. Open space protection in this element refers primarily to the maintenance and enhancement of public spaces, though in some cases, such as streetscape, it refers to private land in the public right-of-way.

Goals and Objectives

The first steps toward open space protection are admittedly big ones. Land Partnerships is one of those big steps, establishing goals, identifying policy and strategies that can have effective results, and laying the foundation for a County program. The County's approval of a \$3 million bond in 2004 as seed money to support farmland and open space preservation (\$2 million and \$1 million, respectively) was an enormous, second step in the right direction.

The next ten years will be critical for Cumberland County's open space preservation program. With continued growth projected, the County will need to lead the way in protecting its diverse landscapes and making quality of life investments. The County's promotion of open space protection goals and implementation of specific strategies will be necessary to achieve the open space protection that residents' desire.

"Livable communities are places where people want to live and start families, where businesses, large and small, want to locate, where open space preservation is just as important as growth and development."

Ann Toole, Toole Recreation Planning, Pennsylvania Township News, March 2004

Many of these goals are common to County planning policy, as documented in the County's 2003 Comprehensive Plan, and are already being implemented through programming efforts. *Land Partnerships* aims to supplement these efforts in light of the need to take immediate action.

The Plan establishes the following goals and desired outcomes as specific objectives:

Goal: Preserve the agricultural lands of Cumberland County.

Desired Outcomes:

- 10,000 additional acres of farmland are protected through a combination of agricultural easements and effective agriculture preservation zoning provisions in 10 years.
- Cumberland County agricultural preservation programs include creative initiatives to promote and sustain farming.

Goal: Conserve the significant natural resources of Cumberland County.

Desired Outcomes:

- The ridges, streams and important natural areas of Cumberland County are protected.
- Municipalities have integrated natural resource protection provisions into their ordinances.
- **Land owners utilize conservation techniques (e.g., best management practices)** to manage their properties for personal property goals and community values.

Goal: Provide parkland for the recreation needs of County residents.

Desired Outcomes:

- A diverse system of parks is in place that includes federal, state, county, municipal and non-profit organization parkland.
- Countywide the amount of parkland seeks to achieve the goal of 15 acres of land per 1,000 citizens in 10 years.
- Municipal parks are provided within 1 to 2 miles of each resident and regional parks are located within 15 miles of each resident.
- Parkland demonstrates the importance of conserving and protecting natural resources, agricultural lands, and open space through environmental education and interpretation.

"Our windows for wholesome activity are getting much smaller. We may only have two hours on a Saturday afternoon," Bowman says. "But to have a place where a family can take a walk together, have a picnic together, this adds to their ability to spend time together, and these parks will provide that."

John Bowman, Pennsylvania Township News, March 2004

Goal: Provide trails to connect citizens with destinations throughout the County.

Desired Outcomes:

- Trails connect residential areas, parks, schools, and community destinations.
- There is a main trail corridor within 5-7 miles of each citizen.
- Each municipality or planning region of the County has a trail plan to link municipal trails to main trail corridors.
- Between 8 and 10 miles of trails are developed in Cumberland County per year.

Goal: Create a comprehensive greenways system throughout Cumberland County.

Desired Outcomes:

- Green corridors of open space create connections between communities, allowing residents to travel as bicyclists and pedestrians from one community to another.
- Greenways protect natural resources, such as the mountain ridgelines and riparian corridors of the Susquehanna River and streams.
- Greenways conserve the cultural resources and their surroundings throughout Cumberland County.
- Greenways nominated in the 2000 Cumberland County-wide Greenway Study are fully established and there are municipal connections.

Goal: Renew the Boroughs and older communities of Cumberland County through physical enhancements.

Desired Outcomes:

- Enhance the public spaces of Boroughs and older communities.
- Information is provided to communities regarding enhancement opportunities and benefits.
- Half of all trips within Boroughs and older communities are made on foot or by bicycle.
- Enhancements serve as a tool for economic development and community revitalization.

Goal: Cumberland County landowners, municipalities, and non-profit organizations have a clear understanding of land conservation and preservation options and opportunities.

Desired Outcomes:

- County becomes the point of contact for land conservation questions and information.
- County institutes education programs and initiatives targeted at specific needs of County landowners.
- County actively promotes open space protection strategies to municipalities, landowners, and private non-profit organizations.
- County works in partnership with conservation organizations on education and outreach.