
Preface

Introduction

Cumberland County is fortunate to have many unique natural and cultural resources that contribute to the high quality of life and strong economy. Preserving those resources, and in turn a high quality of life and business friendly climate, can prove to be especially challenging. In order to preserve the features that make Cumberland County a great place to live, work and play, it is essential to plan for the future.

Land Partnerships is a countywide strategy designed to maintain and improve the quality of life in Cumberland County through open space preservation and smart growth planning. 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.

Plan Purpose

Land Partnerships is a blueprint intended to help the County achieve a healthy balance between preservation and development. *Land Partnerships* will serve as a guidebook for open space preservation and smart growth planning for the 33 municipalities in the County. Municipalities should use the County plan as a reference and point of departure for their own planning initiatives.

Land Partnerships identifies the important features of the County and suggests different strategies and policies to protect those resources for current and future generations. The Plan also includes an action plan and implementation schedule to achieve Cumberland County's open space preservation and smart growth goals.

The role of County government and private property rights in regard to open space and smart growth planning was raised numerous times during preparation of this plan. *Land Partnerships* does:

- NOT supersede local planning initiatives or zoning and land development ordinances.
- NOT make determinations about specific properties, farms, parks or trails.
- NOT require participation by any landowner or municipality.
- NOT encourage the use of eminent domain as a method of open space preservation.
- NOT preclude future decisions based on changing objectives and opportunities.

Planning Process

To develop *Land Partnerships*, Cumberland County obtained a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. To assist in the planning process the County retained a team of consultants including; Yost Strodoski Mears, Toole Recreation Planning, and Gannett Fleming. This team consisted of a community planner, recreation planner, landscape architect and GIS specialist, among others.

The planning process consisted of six steps:

1. Inventory and mapping of agricultural, natural, recreational and cultural resources.
2. Assessment of public opinion and level of support for open space preservation.
3. Creation of a vision.
4. Formation of goals and objectives to achieve the vision.
5. Development of conclusions and strategies regarding open space preservation and smart growth.
6. Establishment of an action plan and schedule to implement the recommendations.

Public involvement was the foundation for the planning process. A 20 member steering committee was formed by the County Commissioner's in 2001 to oversee development of the plan. The committee included various representatives with an interest in open space preservation and smart growth. The County conducted five public meetings to obtain input. A visioning/goal setting session was held in the spring of 2003. This was followed by four topical forums in the fall of 2003 based on emergent themes of the visioning session. Key person interviews were also conducted with various stakeholders in the community. The consulting team interviewed approximately 30 different individuals and/or organizations to ascertain opinions and ideas on open space preservation. A critical element of the public participation process was a countywide public opinion survey of 1500 households across the County.

In conjunction with the public participation elements, Cumberland County worked in coordination with the Natural Lands Trust to promote smart growth techniques during development of the plan. In 2003, the County hosted a *Growing Greener: Conservation by Design* educational workshop and subsidized technical assistance on conservation subdivision and land development principals.

Plan Organization

Land Partnerships is organized in the following manner:

Chapter 1 – Introduction provides a brief introduction and background on open space planning in Cumberland County. This chapter includes; a physical description of Cumberland County, a history of previous greenway and open space planning and explains the benefits of open space preservation and smart growth as envisioned by *Land Partnerships*.

Chapter 2 – Needs Assessment identifies and analyzes population trends, development patterns, development activity, loss of prime farmland, the status of land preservation and smart growth planning across the County.

Chapter 3 – Public Participation describes the components and findings of the public participation process.

Chapter 4 – Goals and Objectives details the vision, key focus areas and goals and objectives of *Land Partnerships*.

Chapter 5 – Farmland Preservation identifies the agricultural resources of the County, describes various farmland preservation programs, trends in farming locally and challenges facing productive farms and offers strategies for farmland preservation.

Chapter 6 – Natural Resource Protection includes an inventory and assessment of natural resources and offers strategies for protection of the resources.

Chapter 7 – Parks, Trails & Greenways provides an inventory and assessment of park, trail and greenway resources in Cumberland County and offers strategies to meet present and future needs.

Chapter 8 – Livable Communities describes the characteristics of livable communities and offers strategies to enhance existing communities and smart growth techniques for developing communities of tomorrow.

Chapter 9 – Implementation includes an action plan, timeline and potential funding mechanisms for implementation of *Land Partnerships*.