

LACKAWANNA-LUZERNE REGIONAL PLAN DRAFT PLAN SUMMARY



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
AND LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
FOR LACKAWANNA AND LUZERNE COUNTIES,
PENNSYLVANIA



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INTRODUCTION

Located in northeastern Pennsylvania, Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties are comprised of 116 municipalities and home to over a half-million people. Over the years, these two counties have demonstrated a strong history of governmental cooperation and regional collaboration such as the joint Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) shared for transportation planning in the two counties and the 2004 *Open Space, Greenways, and Outdoor Recreation Master Plan*. In addition, the two counties jointly operate the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport.

This association represents a shared vision for collaborative planning and decision-making on a wide range of challenges and opportunities affecting the future of both counties. Chief among these are land use, economic development, transportation, and sustainable environmental quality.

Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties have now joined together to prepare a two-county comprehensive and long range transportation plan, as well as a hazard mitigation plan. The Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan is comprised of two critical and related planning elements, as follows:

- A Comprehensive Plan focused on providing an overall planning guide for the two counties and their municipalities. It establishes a framework for future growth,

conservation, and preservation that strengthens existing communities and responsibly stewards natural, agricultural, and cultural resources.

- A Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to develop, maintain, and manage an adequate, safe, accessible, and environmentally-sound transportation system. This system will support communities and provide for the reasonably efficient movement of people and goods within and through Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.

PURPOSE OF THE **NEW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The preparation of a comprehensive plan serves four purposes:

- Establishes a common planning database for Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties
- Identifies the basic direction and structure recommended for the future of the two-county region
- Specifies the goals, policies, and individual elements that will form the basis for development, conservation, redevelopment, and preservation
- Provides a specific implementation strategy and program to help achieve the goals of the Plan

This comprehensive plan is fully responsive to the needs of the residents of Lackawanna and

Luzerne County communities. It contains both long-range and short-range programs, balances local needs and perceptions with regional requirements and perspectives, and has its own logic and strategy for implementation.

PURPOSE OF THE **NEW LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

The long-range transportation plan has been developed as a long-range (20+ years) planning strategy and capital improvement program and serves as a guide for coordinated transportation planning throughout Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. The LRTP identifies the location, size, function, and type of new or improved transportation infrastructure, focusing on a multimodal approach to transportation planning. It includes projects for highways, streets, sidewalks, trails, rail, and airports, and for various modes of public transportation.

The LRTP serves as a resource to guide the wise use of public funds in the investment of a transportation system, so that cost-effective infrastructure that will efficiently move people and goods throughout the region will result.

This Plan Summary provides an overview of the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan. The full Plan provides much more detail.

THE SETTING: A SNAPSHOT OF BOTH COUNTIES

Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties are centrally located in Pennsylvania's Northeast Region (**Figure 1**). The area includes the region's largest city, Scranton, with additional population centers in Wilkes-Barre, Hazleton, Carbondale and Pittston. To the east are Wayne and Monroe Counties; to the south, Carbon and Schuylkill Counties; to the west, Columbia and Sullivan Counties; and to the north, Wyoming and Susquehanna Counties.

The combined physical area of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties is 1,350 square miles, or approximately 864,000 acres, and includes roughly 22 square miles of water bodies.

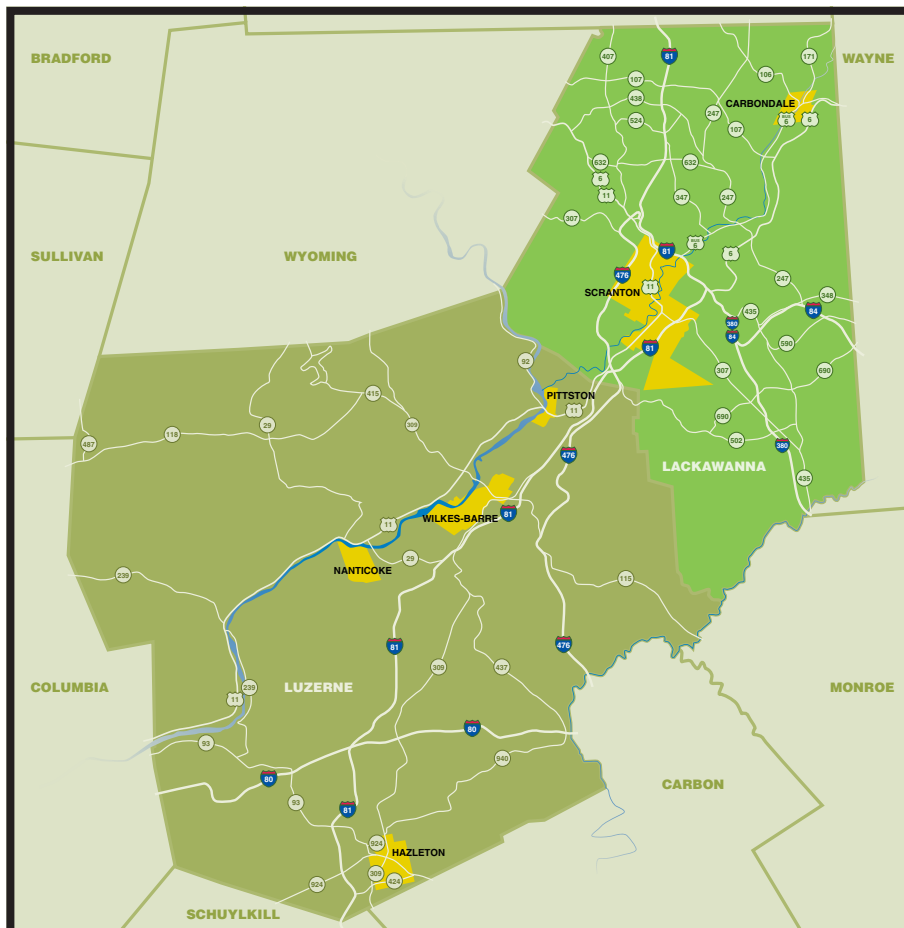
The landscape of the central portion of both counties is dominated by two major river valleys, the Wyoming and Lackawanna. Both valleys are bordered by a series of mountain ridges and upland areas on

either side. This geography has elevations exceeding over 2,000 feet above sea level in some areas.

Interstate highway access plays an important role in more recent changes in development patterns, as well as regional mobility. Interstate 80 along the southern third of Luzerne County and Interstate 380 in southeastern Lackawanna County provide a link to the nearby New York City Metropolitan area. From Philadelphia, Interstate 476 (PA Turnpike NE Extension) follows the eastern edge of Luzerne County and terminates north of Scranton in western Lackawanna County. Interstate 81 bisects the two counties while connecting the cities of Hazleton, Wilkes-Barre, and Scranton to each other en route from Harrisburg and points south northward to New York State. Interstate 84 crosses the southeastern corner of Lackawanna County, providing access to New England.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the combined total population for both counties is 525,295 persons. Lackawanna County has 40 municipalities, including 2 cities, 17 boroughs, and 21 townships. Luzerne County has 76 municipalities, including 4 cities, 36 boroughs, and 36 townships.

Figure 1



THE VISION

The Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan are being prepared as a single, precedent-setting, two-county Regional Plan that satisfies both the Comprehensive Plan requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code as well as the Long-Range Transportation Plan requirements of the Federal Highway Administration. This innovative Plan takes full advantage of new and evolving planning tools and strategic guidance on sustainability, sound land use, economic revitalization, and smart transportation to maximize transportation investment dollars and multimodal opportunities.

The following interrelated plan elements provide a vision for the future of the two-county area. They serve as a guide for public and private sector actions regarding future growth, development, and preservation in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. These plan elements also incorporate a comprehensive set of goals, objectives, and actions developed to embody the needs and aspirations of the people of both counties.

LAND USE PLAN

As the principal expression of the future direction for the region and the interrelationships among plan elements, the Land Use Plan ties together all the other components that make up this Regional Plan. In the Land Use Plan, the recommended distribution and desired character of future land uses are described. In particular, the Land Use Plan proposes that development and redevelopment be largely directed to specific locations in the form of relatively-concentrated mixed-use settings, providing opportunities for people to live, work, and play in close proximity. The actions recommended build on strengths while addressing weaknesses apparent in the two-county area. In doing so, the Plan provides opportunities for each county's places to prosper.

GOAL

The goal of the Land Use Plan is to achieve an overall future pattern of development that is responsive to existing and future economic, social, and cultural needs of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, promoting revitalization in the area's urban centers while conserving and preserving natural and agricultural resources.

OBJECTIVES

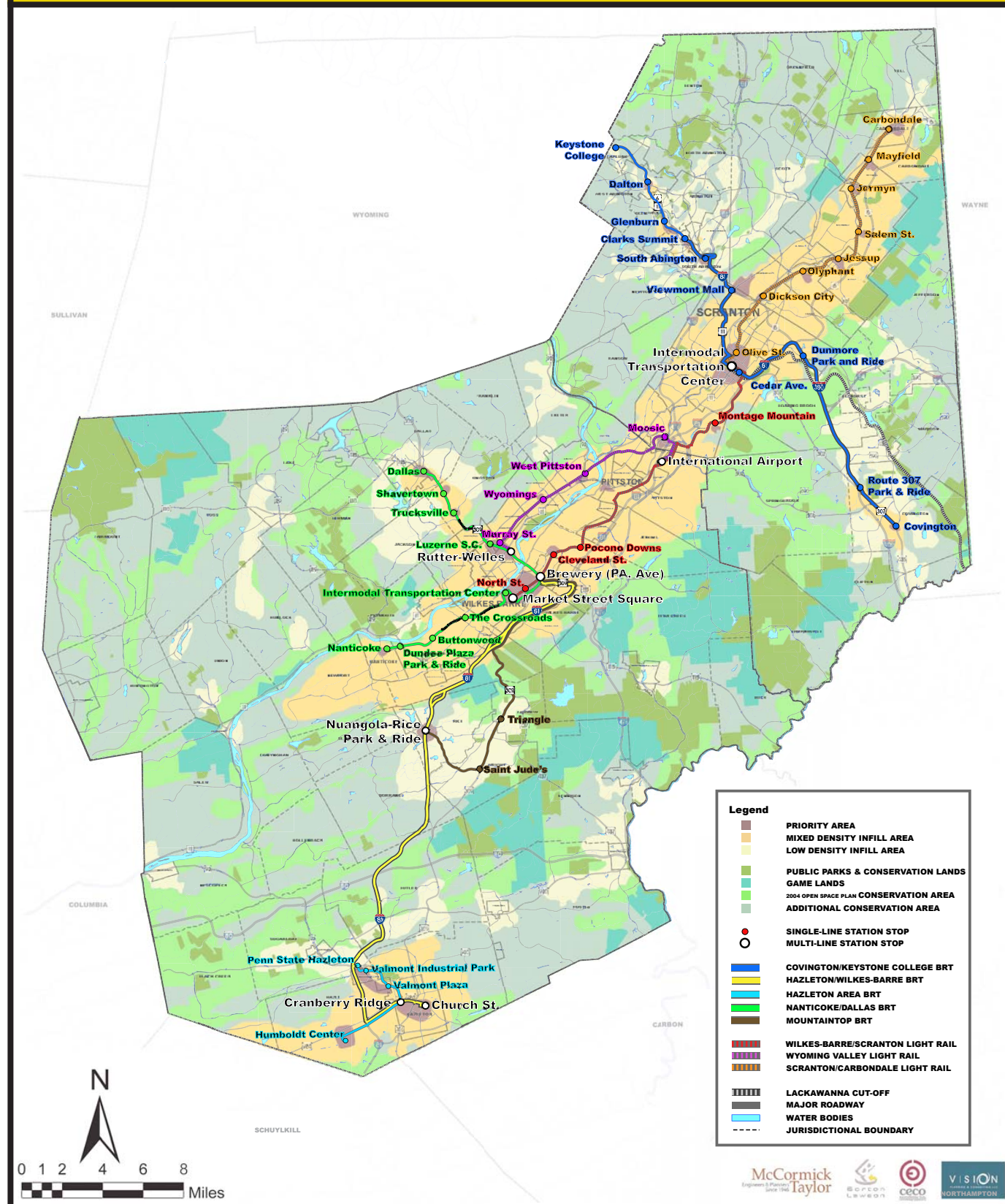
The objectives to be achieved by the Land Use Plan are as follows:

- A.** Promote municipal consistency with the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan.
- B.** Direct development and redevelopment to Priority Areas as identified in the Land Use Plan.
- C.** Establish Priority Areas as compact, intensive mixed-use centers for living, working, and playing.

The intent of the Land Use Plan (**Figure 2**) is to provide an efficient and economical way to allow for both new growth and revitalization, meet a diversity of needs, support transit, reduce consumption of open space, promote energy conservation and protect environmentally-sensitive resources. The Land Use Plan is a guide for development and redevelopment in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties through the year 2035. It is based on the moderate rate of growth projected to occur over the planning period, including an additional increase in population of approximately 35,000 people (568,000 total) and a net gain of 24,000 housing units. Recognizing current development trends and the importance of reinvestment along the Lackawanna and

DRAFT LAND USE PLAN, April 2011

Figure 2



Luzerne County valleys and in urban centers, the Land Use Plan is built around ‘smart growth’ principles.

MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

The Land Use Plan is structured on a framework of Priority Areas for targeted growth and revitalization, Infill Areas for additional growth, and Conservation Areas for agricultural, recreation, and open space uses. It is through this framework that both counties may support their existing centers, minimize sprawl, and promote the conservation of natural resources. The Land Use Plan builds upon existing infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewer systems, and adds missing features to ensure appropriate access and servicing in all parts of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.

The Land Use Plan also contains a network of rapid transit routes to promote accessibility throughout the region. A strong component of this Plan, multimodal accessibility offers many advantages to residents and business operators and provides solid support for mobility in a high-fuel-cost future.

CONCEPT 1 – **PRIORITY AREAS**

Priority Areas include the existing settings of City Centers (such as Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Hazleton) as well as Borough and Township Centers (such as West Pittston Borough and South Abington Township) and a limited number of proposed Transit Villages (such as Montage Mountain and Nuangola-Rice). The Land Use Plan proposes a combination of housing, shopping, employment, community facilities, and public open space by incorporating existing buildings, adaptively reused structures, and new construction.

Priority Areas are intended to provide a density of population sufficient to support new retail uses and community facilities, and attract employment. Concentrating jobs and residences in identified Priority Areas will increase transit ridership potential. As the demand for transit emerges, local transit authorities can offer new routes or extend existing ones.



CONCEPT 2 – **INFILL AREAS**

Infill Areas occur at various locations in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, and provide opportunities for new development and redevelopment on properties that are vacant or underutilized. While these are not expected to be targeted locations for public investment, they will continue to be locations where people live, work, and play.

An important aspect of Infill Areas is their proximity to Priority Areas. Future growth and development in Infill Areas will support multimodal linkages to nearby Priority Areas, including bicycle and pedestrian access.

CONCEPT 3 – **CONSERVATION AREAS**

Conservation Areas include sensitive environmental features, scenic landscapes, agricultural lands, as well as recreational sites and other cultural resources. Except for agricultural, recreational, and resource-based enterprises, there should be no new commercial or industrial uses in these areas.



TRANSPORTATION PLAN

GOAL

The Transportation Plan is intended to achieve a safe and efficient transportation system that is compatible with the natural, agricultural, and developed areas of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties and that provides viable transportation alternatives, including driving, biking, walking, and public transportation.

The following goals incorporate Federal goals for transportation and take into account the statewide emphasis on asset management that addresses the condition of existing infrastructure, such as the accelerated bridge program currently underway within the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT):

1. Support the economic vitality of the region, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency by increasing the accessibility and mobility options available to people and goods;
2. Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;

3. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and two-county area planned growth and economic development patterns;
4. Enhance integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes, for people and freight, in an effort to promote efficiency in system management and operation;
5. Emphasize preservation and connectivity of the existing transportation system (all modes);
6. Ensure consistency with the fundamental principles of Federal Title VI and Environmental Justice programs.



OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Transportation Plan are as follows:

- A. Maintain an asset management focus and redevelopment of critical assets to promote beneficial land use densities;
- B. Promote new capacity that supports the Priority Areas identified in the Plan;
- C. Use a performance-based measurement and analysis system for identifying and implementing transportation projects.

TRANSPORTATION, MOBILITY, AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

The Transportation Plan contains a GIS-based evaluation process for project ranking to determine whether potential projects are consistent with system preservation goals, land use objectives, and investment priority areas. Potential projects receiving high scores will be advanced for implementation on the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

Looking out twenty years, as this Regional Plan does, reveals the prospect of much higher energy costs than exist at present, with potential sharp declines in Vehicle



Miles Traveled (VMT), changes in behavior, and people asking for increased transit services. It is therefore reasonable and prudent to have in place an approach to transportation for Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties that fits with a high energy cost future. Focusing development and redevelopment at locations where residents can get services close at hand and where commuters have some choices concerning how they get to and from work makes sense. The Plan seeks to improve mobility in support of focused development and redevelopment, including upgrades to the system of roadways, sidewalks, and multi-use pathways.

The Transportation Plan proposes to upgrade the safety, connectivity, convenience, and efficiency of each county's transportation network in a way that is compatible with the Land Use Plan's identified Priority Areas (City Centers, Borough and Township Centers, and Transit Villages) and abutting

Infill Areas, and connections to those locations from other parts of the two counties. This includes maintaining and improving access and mobility for vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and transit patrons.

This Plan encourages further investment in added frequency and capacity for the two counties' five key local transit agencies, and the plan for future transit service includes both new passenger rail and new Bus Rapid Transit modes. The Plan also recognizes the importance of potential linkages to the New York metropolitan area, as well as rail extensions for freight movement and improved freight transportation service.

The provision for safe and convenient movement of pedestrians and bicyclists is an important element of this Plan. Multi-purpose trails for walking, biking, and hiking will frequently be part of greenways that will also provide appropriate buffers between high-volume traffic arteries and residential areas. Development of trails in conjunction with roadway improvement projects will be encouraged.

PRIORITY AREAS TRANSPORTATION

While the Transportation Plan describes transportation infrastructure improvements to support mobility throughout the Lackawanna and Luzerne County areas, the Plan stresses

support for Priority Area settings, as anticipated development or redevelopment in these areas should be seen as an opportunity to improve the transportation network. This objective can be accomplished by promoting improved rapid transportation linkages that are designed and constructed in concert with planned development and redevelopment.

INFILL AREAS TRANSPORTATION

The majority of Mixed Density Infill Areas and several adjoining Low Density Infill Areas either overlap with catchment areas for public transit or fall in close proximity to their service. Integration of Infill Areas with transit and neighboring Priority Areas is important. The emergence of multi-modal corridors with characteristics of "complete streets" – corridors with sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, transit shelters, and pedestrian-oriented lighting and amenities (and perhaps even transit lanes) – will promote this integration.



HOUSING PLAN

GOAL

The goal of the Housing Plan is to provide for a diversity of housing opportunities in harmony with existing development and the historical and natural environments.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Housing Plan are as follows:

- A.** Support a variety of housing opportunities, including affordable housing, in the Priority Areas identified in the Land Use Plan.
- B.** Encourage infill housing and improve the quality of the existing housing stock in established communities in Priority and Mixed Density Infill Areas.
- C.** Promote the use of green building techniques and energy efficient housing design.

HOUSING AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

The Housing element of the Regional Plan explicitly recognizes the division of each county into Priority and Mixed Density Infill Areas for housing growth and Conservation Areas as the non-growth portion of the region. Conservation Areas include most of the land area of Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties, and are proposed primarily for agriculture, resource conservation, environmental protection, and recreation, with housing having only a very minor role. Priority and Mixed Density Infill Areas are designated as the primary locations for housing development and redevelopment.

PRIORITY AREA HOUSING

Priority Areas represent significant opportunities to develop and redevelop properties for mixed

uses, including residential components. Parcels in these areas are suitable for higher-density residential uses, such as multi-family (apartment) and single-family attached (townhouse) units, and perhaps specialized residential uses such as life-care facilities. These areas include City Center Priority Areas, Borough and Township Center Priority Areas, and Transit Villages.

With a mix of commercial services, restaurants, and community functions, as well as advantages with respect to proximity to transportation and employment, these areas should be well-positioned to gain attractive, market-rate dwelling units at these locations, while also providing opportunities for the addition of smaller, moderately-priced units.

INFILL AREA HOUSING

Infill Areas provide opportunities for new development and redevelopment on properties that are vacant or underutilized. New development or redevelopment of these areas will provide opportunities for new or rehabilitated housing stock to be built using green building principles and both counties will encourage





environmentally-friendly housing construction.

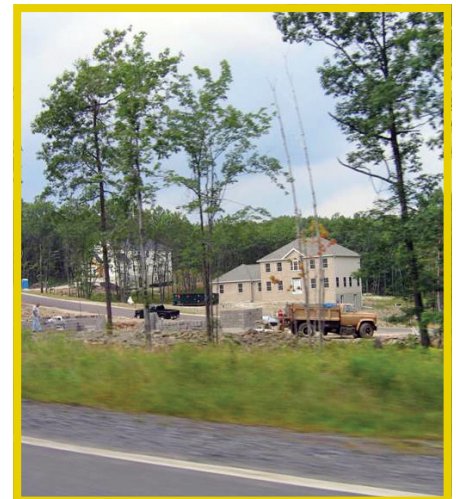
Mixed Density Infill Areas include existing single-family detached and attached dwelling units adjacent to transit stations and Priority Areas. Low Density Infill Areas are predominantly located in townships that are not very built up, and are characterized by existing single-family detached dwelling units located on large lots of one or more acres in size.

In general, cluster development is preferred, as it reduces the amount of land consumed for residences when compared with conventional development methods, while

at the same time preserving a portion of development tracts for permanent open space uses. This form of development design technique concentrates buildings in specific areas on a site to allow the remaining land to be used for agriculture, preservation of environmentally-sensitive areas, permanent buffers, open space, or recreational uses.

The Housing element permits realistic opportunities for land development, to be implemented through the Regional Plan, local plans, and county and municipal zoning regulations. Changes in future residential development patterns are a key ingredient

toward ensuring a higher quality of life and a more sustainable future for the two counties.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

GOAL

The goal of the Community Facilities Plan is to provide public services and facilities in the most cost-effective and environmentally-sensitive manner, taking into account the existing and future residential and non-residential needs of the two-county area.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Community Facilities Plan are as follows:

- A.** Provide new and expanded public and private facilities close to transportation hubs to maximize accessibility for patrons by a variety of modes.
- B.** Encourage intermunicipal cooperation in the provision of local services.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

Community facilities provide basic services to ensure the health, safety, welfare, and enrichment of residents. Examples include public libraries, educational institutions, hospitals and other health care services, and emergency services such as police, fire companies, and ambulance corps. The number, type, and adequacy of the facilities influence the quality and general livability of communities. Additionally, these facilities increase each county's ability to retain and attract new residents and businesses.

Priority Areas are the places targeted for future residential, retail, and employment growth. It makes sense for community facilities to locate here, where concentrations of people are and where accessibility is good.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Each of the two-county area's 116 municipalities has traditionally been responsible for providing its citizens with basic public services and facilities. Over time, the combination of the high number of municipalities and tradition of municipal self-sufficiency has produced much duplication of services and facilities. Greater intergovernmental cooperation is needed so that services and facilities can be provided more efficiently and economically.

PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

Community-based emergency medical service providers, such as fire companies and ambulance corps, must compete with a variety



of other private operators seeking support from residents. Police stations throughout Pennsylvania compete for the same funds. Consolidation of police, fire, and ambulance services could achieve an economy of scale that would reduce municipal expenses.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The quality of education has a strong influence on the health of communities in terms of attracting business and residents. Furthermore, all high school graduates need opportunities for advanced education in order to compete in the workplace.

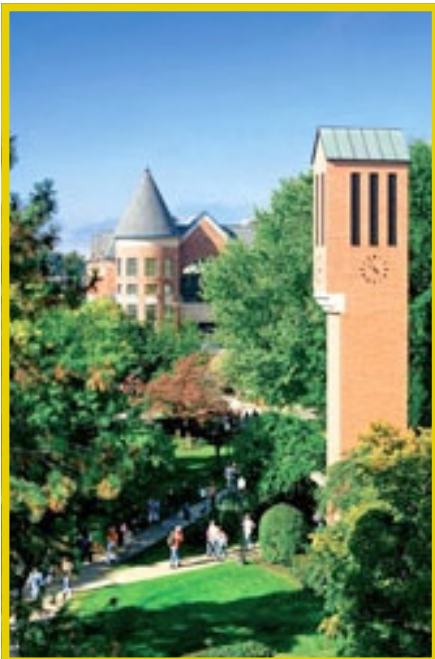
The provision of skilled labor for high productivity industries and increasingly skilled processes is required. The human resources in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties are only potential resources unless that potential can be realized through workforce education and skills development.

Each county should also consider developing recommendations and strategies to promote a safe route for students to walk to school without using private property or unsafe road crossings. The plan should include how to install or improve sidewalk networks adjacent to the elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as

adding traffic calming elements to surrounding streets.

HEALTHCARE SERVICES

As new health care facilities are planned, efforts will be taken to ensure that they will provide equitable access for all residents. New or expanded health care services should be located at or near Priority Areas with easy access via transit, automobile, and walking. Each County Human Services Department will advocate and encourage equitable access to medical service for residents within the two-county area.



PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND GREENWAYS PLAN

GOAL

The goal of the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenways Plan is to develop a system of linked recreation resources, providing a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting and preserving important natural features and environmentally-sensitive areas.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Plan are as follows:

- A.** Conserve open space.
- B.** Establish trails & greenways that provide connections between people, recreational facilities, and cultural facilities and other significant public areas.
- C.** Expand the parks and system to serve future populations, particularly in Priority Areas.
- D.** Raise public awareness of the benefits of greenways and open space.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & GREENWAYS AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

In 2004, an *Open Space, Greenways, and Outdoor Recreation Master Plan* was adopted, providing a vision for the two-county area and providing a framework for a regional system of open space and greenways that should be expanded upon at the local level through subsequent planning and implementation efforts.



PRIORITY AREAS AND INFILL AREAS

Reinvestment and new development within Priority Areas and Infill Areas should also include access to green space, including public spaces such as civic squares and pocket parks as well as neighborhood parks.

CONSERVATION AREAS

The widespread pattern of protected natural areas, permanent open space, sensitive natural features, existing and proposed trail network, and other areas to be preserved in Conservation Areas in the Land Use Plan forms the backbone of a two-countywide open space system. The overall objectives are to logically extend corridors of open space to tie the system together, give it permanent protection, and facilitate improved public access, where appropriate.



PARKS

Parks provide spaces for outdoor recreation, consisting of both passive activities, which have minimal impact on natural resources, and active recreation, which has a larger impact. New parkland for public use should offer places for athletic fields, passive open space, trails, and playground equipment, and can come into being in a variety of ways:

- Outright purchase by municipality or county or by a private, not-for-profit organization among whose purposes is the conservation of open space land and/or operation of park and recreational facilities;
- Dedication of property to a municipality or county through the land development process;

- Acquisition of an easement for open space and/or park and recreation uses by the municipality or county or by a private, not-for-profit organization; or

- Donation of property or easements to the municipality or county or to a private, not-for-profit organization.

OPEN SPACE

Open space refers to natural landscapes undeveloped for intensive human uses and can be publicly or privately owned. Open space includes land, as well as water features, and establishes the setting for outdoor recreation. A key role for the two-county area in future parks and recreation development will be in promoting the establishment, protection,

and selective development of the region-wide permanent open space system.

Natural feature corridors are proposed to be combined with existing protected areas, such as state forests, game lands, parks, and reserved areas, and with projected linear buffers to form a permanent interconnected open space system. This system is a critical component of the Land Use Plan, and is seen as the primary mechanism to simultaneously protect county resources and to offer long term opportunities to meet open space and recreational needs.

Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties should facilitate the development of appropriate park and recreational facilities within the framework of the overall open space system through a variety of lobbying, planning, and funding functions. These will need to be efforts undertaken in cooperation with other levels of government, with public and private interest groups, and with property owners.



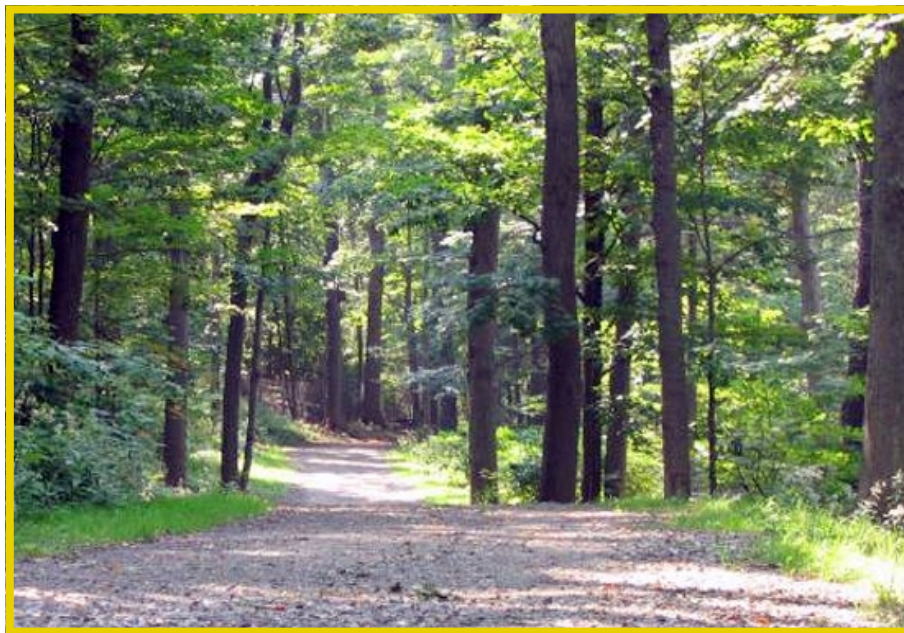
GREENWAYS AND TRAILS

Linear corridors of open space, greenways are important connectors linking wildlife habitats and ecosystems and providing access to open space and recreation spaces. A network of greenways can provide necessary connections between people and recreational facilities. Greenways

link various conservation areas and can include existing and proposed trails.

The Open Space, Greenways & Outdoor Recreation Master Plan identifies greenways along natural corridors, such as stream valleys, rivers, or ridgelines, as well as

along transportation corridors like rail, canals, and roadways. Greenways are linear and extend through several jurisdictions; effective protection of greenways requires multi-municipal



RESOURCE EXTRACTION PLAN

GOAL

The Goal of the Resource Extraction Plan is to maximize the opportunity for reuse and redevelopment of environmental contaminated lands, abandoned industrial areas, strip-mined areas and vacant or underutilized commercial areas of the region and to encourage the environmentally-sensitive extraction of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale.



OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Resource Extraction Plan are as follows:

- A.** Mitigate the negative effects of resources extraction.
- B.** Identify areas of potential mine subsidence.

RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

Priority and Infill Areas in some cases coincide with locations that have been disturbed by mining activities. These places are clearly appropriate for a designation as highest priority for reclamation. The Regional Plan emphasizes the reclamation of mine spoils for development areas for future industrial, commercial, residential, and open space uses. The focus

of the plan on revitalizing areas in and around existing communities and creating Priority Areas represents a course of action that, among other benefits, tries to harness new development and redevelopment as means to reclaim mine spoils areas. At the same time, directing new development to these concentrated mixed use areas promotes the Plan's goal to control sprawl and to conserve the natural resources of the region.

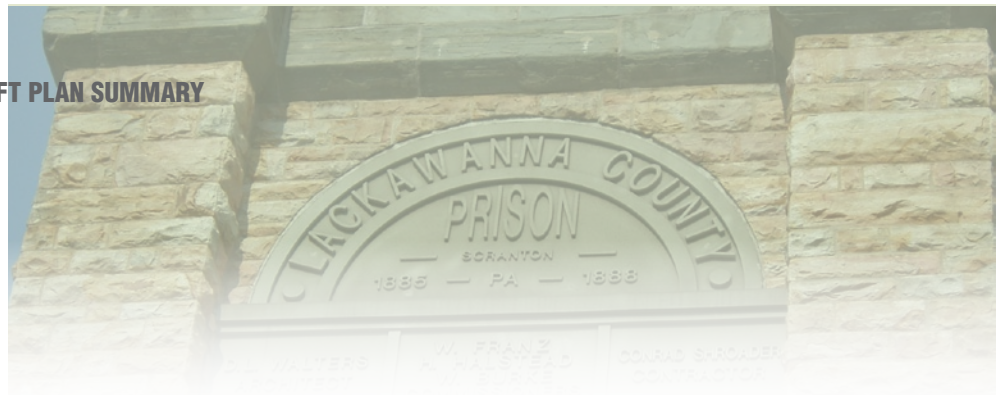
ABANDONED MINE DRAINAGE, SUBSIDENCE, AND RECLAMATION

Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties have many abandoned mine land features from past mining, including dangerous pits, shafts and cropfalls, which pose serious public safety and environmental hazards. Abandoned mine lands also collect and direct good water

into old underground mines, turning it into acid mine drainage that pollutes local waters.

Mine subsidence, another major concern, can be defined as movement of the ground surface due to collapse or failure of underground mine workings. Surface subsidence features usually take the form of either sinkholes or troughs.

According to the National Water-Quality Assessment program, efforts to remediate the effects of mining activities will significantly improve water quality. Each county will support the efforts of state agencies and nonprofits who are working to reclaim and remediate abandoned mine lands to minimize the impacts of acid mine drainage.



HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN

GOAL

The goal of the Historic and Cultural Resources Plan is to protect and enhance historically- and culturally-significant areas and features of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Historic and Cultural Resources Plan are as follows:

- A.** Identify and promote historic and cultural resources.
- B.** Protect historic and cultural resources.
- C.** Utilize cultural resources as a tool to stimulate economic development.
- D.** Protect historic landscapes including viewsheds and corridors.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

A clear and effective historic and landscape resources conservation plan will be an important part of the Land Use Plan implementation process. The process must promote development in the locations outlined in the Land Use Plan, and provide specific types of regulations in order to protect rural areas from scattered and breakaway development. It must ensure that such development occurs in a manner sympathetic to the landscape being conserved. The plan must also provide options to preserve and rehabilitate the historic resources in existing communities in ways that are sympathetic to economic and other community concerns.

PROTECTION OF HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

In rural areas, the region's historic fabric is comprised of many elements integral to the landscape in addition to its historic buildings, including roads and site features such as boundary lines, archeological resources, park structures, and bridges. Also important is the historic fabric of each county's existing villages, boroughs, and cities.

The two counties' primary role in the preservation of historic resources is to promote and assist in awareness of the need for preservation at the local level. Key to this effort will be encouragement of the establishment of municipal historical commissions, the detailed inventory and assessment of historic resources at the local level, and the adoption of municipal ordinances and review procedures requiring preservation and mitigation. The protection of historic buildings and structures should include protection of the historical contexts in which the buildings are situated. This is accomplished through the identification and protection of the historically significant landscape areas and features directly associated with the buildings under consideration.



PRESERVATION AS AN ECONOMIC STIMULUS TOOL

Studies have shown that property values increase more in designated historic areas than in non-historic areas. Future economic development in the region should take place within the context of historic preservation, which is a powerful tool for economic revitalization that attracts tourists and investors, generates jobs, and increases property values. In addition, reuse of existing historic buildings supports the local tax base, stabilizes downtowns and neighborhoods, and maintains the fabric and scale

of communities. Developers and property owners will be encouraged to rehabilitate and reuse historic structures whenever possible, especially within historic districts, downtown areas, and Priority Areas in existing centers of human activity.

PRESERVATION OF CHARACTER

Communities often consider historic sites as standing structures with little emphasis on the preservation of the historic character of road corridors, viewsheds, and landscapes. Depending on historic events,

these surroundings may also be eligible for historic recognition of significance.

Preservation of the aesthetic character of the landscape will be the primary focus along scenic byways, which can be considered as linear resources that require effective management in order to preserve what is unique. Any proposed changes – whether roadway or new development – within these corridors must be sensitive to the context, be it a rural landscape, scenic viewshed, or settlement. Designating scenic routes will support heritage tourism by connecting sites together and encouraging exploration of new areas.



AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN

GOAL

The goal of the Agricultural Resources Plan is to maintain a strong agricultural industry and to protect farmland for agricultural use.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Agricultural Resources Plan are to:

- A.** Conserve land for agriculture.
- B.** Within Conservation Areas, support agriculture as a viable land use.
- C.** Promote sustainable agricultural practices.

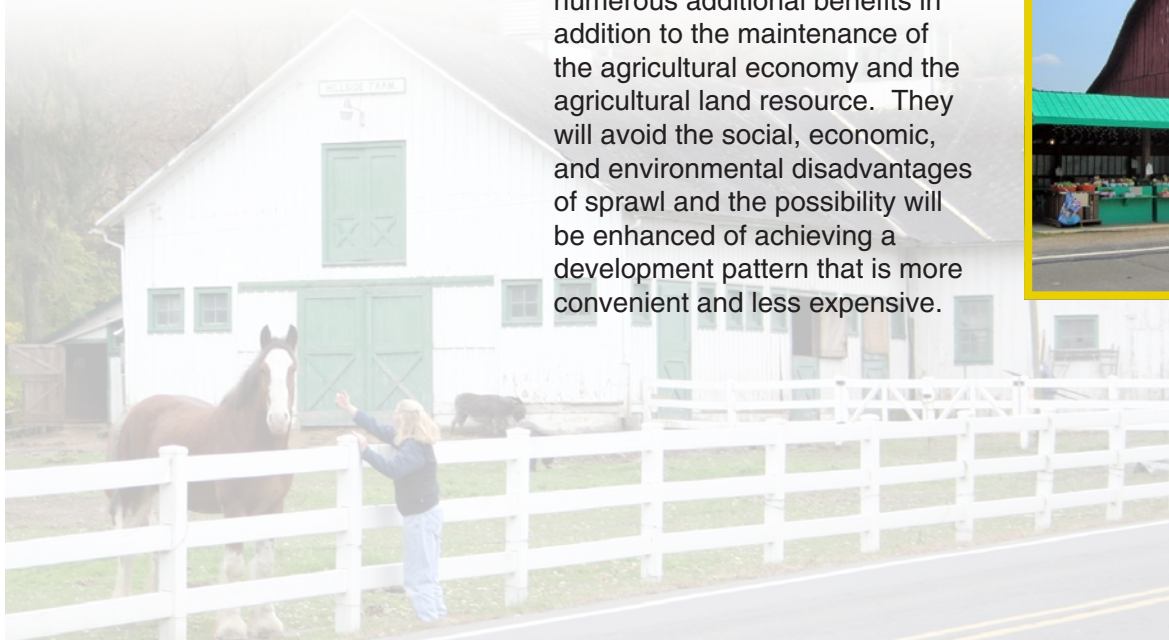
AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

The two parts of the general goal are equally important and are interrelated. If the farming industry is to continue, it is necessary that its land resource base be maintained. But the protection of the land base will not assure that the agricultural industry will remain profitable. And if farming is not profitable, there will not be an economic reason to protect the land resource. Many of the policies advocated to advance one objective will also advance the other.

If the general goal for agriculture can be achieved, the counties' residents and visitors will enjoy numerous additional benefits in addition to the maintenance of the agricultural economy and the agricultural land resource. They will avoid the social, economic, and environmental disadvantages of sprawl and the possibility will be enhanced of achieving a development pattern that is more convenient and less expensive.

MAINTAINING A STRONG AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Urbanization often results in additional financial costs to farmers, as well as conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors. Strategies for the strengthening of the agricultural community include increasing profitability of farming by allowing accessory activities on farms, reducing obstacles that make it difficult for young people to enter farming, and reducing obstacles to the economic expansion of the agricultural industry in the two-county area.



FARMLAND PROTECTION

According to the American Farmland Trust, the United States is losing two acres of farmland every minute to new development. Protecting the Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties' agricultural heritage requires solid strategies and sound planning.

AGRICULTURAL ZONING

The most promising and well-tested technique is strong agricultural zoning. Strong agricultural zoning strictly limits land uses to agriculture and related uses and limits residential development to no more than one dwelling per 20 acres on average.

For municipalities in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties that have local zoning, adoption of agricultural zoning is ultimately the responsibility of each municipality. Both counties can assist local municipalities by developing model ordinances and providing technical assistance to municipalities that are exploring zoning alternatives.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

The most effective measure for preventing the development of farmland is the acquisition of agricultural conservation easements. These are legally binding instruments, which go with the deed, that prevent development forever.

MINIMIZE DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE ON FARMLAND

Highway improvements in agricultural areas should be kept to a minimum, and utilities should not be extended into agricultural areas. Prevention of such growth-generating infrastructure will require firm and consistent action by the counties and their municipalities.

TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDRs)

Under a transfer of development rights system, an owner of a tract of land can separate the rights to develop that land from the property in question and transfer those rights to a different tract of land. TDRs can be very useful as a general growth management tool. Areas to remain undeveloped for non-urban uses, such as agriculture, may be designated as "transferring-out" or "sending" areas for TDRs; and areas appropriate for more intensive development, such as Priority and Infill Areas, may be designated as "transferring-in" or "receiving" areas for TDRs.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN

GOAL

The goal of the Environmental Protection Plan is to protect environmentally-sensitive areas of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Environmental Protection Plan are as follows:

- A.** Meet federal, state, and local air quality standards.
- B.** Improve quality of surface water and ground water resources, including the Susquehanna River.
- C.** Protect and restore critical stream valleys, floodplains, and wetlands to preserve their functions for floodwater storage, water supply, and ground water recharge.
- D.** Identify and protect ecologically sensitive areas such as wooded steep slopes, stream headwaters, woodlands, and wildlife corridors.
- E.** Mitigate negative impacts from resource extraction.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

The environmental protection element of the Regional Plan identifies the specific areas in the two counties that are environmentally sensitive, including floodplains, wetlands, aquifer recharge and wellhead areas, and other critical natural features. It also addresses wildlife and plants, and stormwater management.

Many aspects of natural resource protection are based upon state and federal laws and programs, such as the National Flood Insurance Program and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection wetlands regulations. The desire for protection of natural resources at a two-county and local level led to many of the recommendations in the two counties' *Open Space, Greenways, and Outdoor Recreation Master Plan*.

PROTECTION OF WETLANDS

Wetlands are generally areas within forested lands with a high water table and poor drainage, and having some degree of surface ponding during the year. Given the many environmental benefits wetlands provide, wetland conservation and restoration should be an integral part of a comprehensive local watershed management strategy.

Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties and their constituent municipalities can provide long-term wetlands protection by directing development away from these areas, by encouraging clustered construction on higher ground surrounding wetlands, and by purchasing wetlands important to protecting local floodplains or ecological systems.



PROTECTION OF STREAM CORRIDORS

Stream course water quality may be affirmed or improved through the maintenance of riparian buffers. A riparian buffer is a corridor of varying width adjacent and generally parallel to a stream or similar water course, extending for some distance back from the stream bank.

Many municipalities have adopted riparian buffer provisions into their zoning ordinances, limiting the development of lands within a certain distance of a stream bank, and taking into account whether floodplains, wetlands, steeply-sloped terrain, and woodlands are present. Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties should prepare a model ordinance for the protection of stream corridors and hydric soils and should promote the inclusion of such an ordinance in local zoning.

**AQUIFER RECHARGE AND WELL-HEAD AREAS**

Groundwater is the source of many residents' drinking water in the two-county area. It is therefore essential that zoning and other land development regulations be employed to protect well heads and aquifer recharge areas. Protection of each well's aquifer should be ensured by limiting the type of development permitted throughout the recharge area.

For the residents and businesses in each county that obtain their drinking water through reservoirs, source water supply watershed protection should be enacted. Efforts to protect water at its sources should be undertaken at the local and county levels, in addition to state regulations.

The Land Use Plan reveals a generous proportion of the two-county area intended for Conservation Areas that can act as an extensive aquifer recharge area and assure a permanent



framework for source water recharge, even as development may proceed into the future. Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties should employ this framework for source water recharge and protection of source water quality.

ACID MINE DRAINAGE

According to the National Water-Quality Assessment program, efforts to remediate the effects of mining activities will significantly improve water quality. Each county will support the efforts of state agencies and nonprofits who are working to reclaim and remediate abandoned mine lands to minimize the impacts of acid mine drainage.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The two-county area should prepare and promote the adoption of model ordinances and design guidelines for the retention of stormwater from new development and for temporary and permanent sedimentation and erosion control. Stormwater management areas should be located and designed to be extensions of permanent natural open space areas, rather than conventional retention basins, with appropriate native vegetation and wildlife habitat.

UTILITIES AND ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN

GOAL

The goal of the Utilities and Energy Conservation Plan is to ensure water, energy, communications, sewage, and stormwater service systems are adequate, well-maintained, affordable, and secure.



OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Utilities and Energy Conservation Plan are as follows:

- A.** Coordinate the planning and funding for utility extensions and expansions so that they are consistent with the Land Use Plan.
- B.** Support regionalization and shared use of utility assets.
- C.** Protect and enhance the quality and quantity of water resources.
- D.** Establish compact mixed-use centers that provide a dense population of potential transit users, both for trips within and between centers.
- E.** Make transportation corridors multi-modal, providing vehicular, transit, pedestrian, and cycling options, to encourage trips that are more energy efficient than those by single-occupancy vehicles.
- F.** Provide incentives to develop certified 'green' buildings and use alternative fuels.
- G.** Lower county and municipal energy consumption.

UTILITIES AND ENERGY CONSERVATION AND MAJOR PLANNING CONCEPTS

The Land Use Plan envisions new development and targeted redevelopment in Priority Areas. Infill development is appropriate for Low Density Infill Areas primarily in and around existing boroughs, villages, and urban places.

Central municipal water supply systems may have to increase their capacity to serve the increased residential and business populations that are part of existing communities. Corresponding increases in wastewater treatment capacity will also be needed.

The utilities element includes provisions for municipal solid waste disposal in accordance with Act 101, requiring each county to prepare a solid waste management plan to ensure disposal capacity for at least the next ten years.

WATER SERVICES

Consideration should be given to zoning, subdivision and land development regulations, and other approaches for protecting groundwater and surface water sources of potable water supplies, particularly for growing communities and planned new centers. Well head protection zones and source water supply zones should be enacted to protect the water supply.

PROTECTION OF WELL-HEAD AND AQUIFER RECHARGE AREAS

Well-head protection zones should be established around each major water supply well, extending at least ¼ mile from the well. In addition, protection of the entire aquifer from which the wells draw their groundwater should be considered: Limitations on development of potentially polluting facilities or activities throughout the “zone of contribution” or “recharge” area for the well (the area on which rainwater falls and percolates through the earth to supply water to the aquifer) should be enacted by all municipalities.

A large portion of county residents receive their water from public water supply reservoirs. These source water supply watersheds are in need of protection as well.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, through its Act 167, the Stormwater Management Act, requires the preparation of stormwater management plans for all watersheds. It is recommended that all two-county area municipalities identify stormwater management and control structures that may need repair or replacement, as well as stream segments that may need clearing, riprap, bank improvements or other measures to handle anticipated stormwater flows that may occur

over the course of the next 10 to 20 years.

WATER CONSERVATION

A number of water conservation measures are widely advertised and widely available, from low-flow shower heads to low-flush toilets. Numerous municipalities throughout the country have enacted ordinances or local plumbing codes requiring such devices or measures in new construction. It is a recommendation of this Plan that each municipality in both counties consider enacting such ordinances, codes, or other measures to achieve further reductions in water use.

SEWAGE SERVICE

An overall study of each county is needed to assess the capacity of existing sewer service systems as well as address environmental issues. These studies should also address prospective new development, since the Land Use Plan clearly implies that increases in capacities and improvements to existing sewer systems will need to occur to accommodate growth in and around existing centers during the planning period.

UTILITY REGIONALIZATION

As a way of alleviating capacity and other service problems

associated with municipal water and sewer systems, municipal authorities and other service providers will be strongly encouraged to explore the potential for regionalizing services.

SOLID WASTE SERVICES

For managing the solid waste for the two-county area, the quantity of refuse to be disposed can be greatly reduced through recycling. The counties should vigorously promote recycling.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

As a need for telecommunications services continues to expand in the marketplace, the two-county area should continue to look for opportunities to include telecommunications equipment such as cellular towers and high-speed cable lines as part of new land developments and as part of revitalization projects in existing communities.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

There are a number of public and private ventures currently taking place in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties to harness alternative energy sources. These include wind power, cogeneration facilities to use mine spoils as a power source, and the use of methane from landfills as fuel.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY



The *Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan* is a blueprint for the future of the two counties, showing how development and redevelopment may be directed to provide new economic opportunities, revitalize existing communities, preserve natural features, conserve open space, and protect historic and cultural resources throughout the 1,375-square-mile two-county area. The Regional Plan implementation strategy includes a specific sequence of steps for the two counties, municipalities, local agencies, the state, and others to create a positive future for the two counties.

Following adoption, the *Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan* becomes the day-to-day policy document of each county regarding development and redevelopment.

The implementation strategy calls for a higher county profile in planning over the coming years, as well as a higher profile for local planning, with municipalities adhering to the principles of the Plan and working cooperatively with each other and the two counties to achieve common goals. County governments will be the lead agencies in the implementation of the Regional Plan.

AN ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Adoption of the Regional Plan implies a commitment to follow through with the establishment or revitalization of Priority Areas, as designated in the Plan. Through the Regional Plan, the counties have identified specific locations for investment, activity, development, and redevelopment. The establishment of an Inter-county Priority Areas Task Force to determine four Priority Areas that should be targeted in the short term for development and for which focused master/urban design plans need to be prepared, and the establishment of Targeted Priority Area Task Forces for each targeted Priority Area, to oversee the preparation of focused master/urban design plans, are two critical early-action items for the implementation of the Regional Plan.



The following Essential Actions describe initial and subsequent critical actions needed to implement the Plan, including internal and external county coordination. Also included is enlisting the services of public and private agencies and organizations at all levels in order to coordinate policies and leverage available technical and financial resources.

The benefits of guided growth and community revitalization may be realized only if the two counties are joined in action by local municipalities, public agencies, private organizations, developers, investors, and others. Timely, coordinated planning efforts to direct development, investment, and activity to specific areas are needed to ensure that initiatives occur in ways that will benefit residents and be sustainable over the long term. Deliberate, cooperative steps to implement the Regional Plan's goals, objectives, and policies are required in order to create a bright future for the two counties.

ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

LAND USE

- Plan together, with inter-municipal consultation, cooperation, and consensus-building, and with the involvement of the counties, State, and other planning partners, as appropriate.
- Establish an Intercounty Priority Areas Task Force to determine the 4 Priority Areas that should be targeted in the short term for development and for which focused master/urban design plans need to be prepared. Formulate master/urban design plans that incorporate mixed-use buildings, civic space, community facilities, and 'complete' streets, including sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, pedestrian-oriented lighting, transit stops, bicycle lanes, and on-street parking.
- Establish Targeted Priority Area Task Forces for each Targeted Priority Area, to oversee the preparation of focused master/urban design plans.
- Limit the amount, extent, and intensity of new development outside designated Priority Areas.
- Enact new county development regulations (Luzerne County). Adopt new development regulations for each Priority Area to achieve a mixing of uses and use tools such as form-based

zoning and design controls to gain pedestrian-scaled settings and land development plans that follow through on the guidelines of the master/urban design plans.

- Devise focused master/urban design plans and new zoning district regulations for Targeted Priority Areas in the short term and other Priority Areas in the medium and long term.
- Produce and distribute marketing brochures to solicit private partners to participate in the development/ redevelopment of Priority Areas.
- Review and facilitate approval of land development plans for Priority Areas.

TRANSPORTATION

- Monitor the status of existing assets via data and information provided in the plan. Specifically

track structurally deficient bridges and roadway International Roughness Index.

- Provide new and/or upgraded transit service for Priority Areas.
- Utilize project prioritization criteria to rank projects for consideration on the next Transportation Improvement Program update.
- Update the project prioritization criteria for use in the next Plan. By continually updating these criteria, the Plan will be a living document and have more buy-in from all stakeholders.
- Investigate the possibility of developing a travel demand model for the two-county region that would allow better evaluation and tracking of transportation system performance.



ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION (continued)

HOUSING

- Adopt new development regulations for each Priority Area to achieve a mixing of uses and the inclusion of multi-family, live-work, and accessible and visitable units.
- Except as noted below, direct public funding for new housing and supporting infrastructure to Priority Areas.
- As part of Master Plans preparation, complete studies of vacant and abandoned properties in Priority and Mixed Density Infill Areas.
- Direct strategic rehabilitation of housing units to stabilize and revitalize established communities in Priority Areas and Mixed Density Infill Areas.

- Provide information on county and municipal websites to encourage housing developers to use the LEED or a similar certification process.
- Adopt regulations and guidelines that provide incentives for green building techniques and energy efficient housing design.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- Support new and upgraded facilities such as universities, community colleges, high schools, libraries, senior centers, community centers, post offices, State and federal offices, and municipal offices in concert with Priority Areas development.

- Encourage public and private adult day care centers, senior centers, licensed personal care facilities, and any other age-related facilities to care for the counties' aging population in concert with Priority Areas development.
- Assist local governments in their efforts to collaborate on providing municipal services.

PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND GREENWAYS

- Set conservation priorities from Conservation Area identified in the Land Use Plan and the 2004 *Open Space, Greenways, and Outdoor Recreation Master Plan*.
- Provide a variety of incentives, regulations, and guidelines to ensure that development occurs in a manner that also results in open space being permanently protected.
- Identify the trail and greenway network that will connect Priority Areas to one another.
- Facilitate public access to and along riverfronts.
- Establish new local parks, including civic squares near transportation hubs, tot lots, and small green spaces in Priority Areas and Mixed Density Infill Areas, and larger parks toward the edge of Infill Areas.



RESOURCE EXTRACTION

- Set priorities for remediation, particularly those related to natural gas drilling and development associated with the Marcellus shale deposit and acid mine drainage in areas that have been mined (surface and deep) or quarried.
- Require mine subsidence information to be provided as part of any development approvals process.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Attempt to secure funding to conduct a comprehensive survey of resources in all municipalities and prepare a searchable regional database.
- Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) yearly to receive updated electronic versions of the National Register listed and eligible resources.
- Prepare brochures describing historic resources, historic tour opportunities, and counties' websites.
- Provide development incentives to preserve resources, including density bonuses, permitted uses relief, parking requirements relief, and tax abatements.

- Use historic overlay district zoning.

- Identify Scenic Highway and Heritage Park opportunities.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

- Guide all new urbanizing uses (residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional) to Priority Areas and Infill Areas, unless such uses are directly related to the practice of agriculture, outdoor recreation, or forestry.
- Guide all new infrastructure to Priority Areas and Infill Areas, unless it is directly related to the practice of agriculture, outdoor recreation, or forestry.
- Enact effective agricultural zoning.
- Acquire agricultural conservation easements.
- Provide links on county and municipal websites to organizations and agencies active in these efforts.

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

- Provide incentives for commuting by public transit.
- Encourage programs and/or incentives to promote and attract green renewable power.
- Protect and restore critical stream valleys, floodplains, and wetlands to preserve their functions for flood water storage, water supply, and ground water recharge.
- Enact new and updated development regulations, including riparian buffer ordinances, and green streets ordinances that incorporate street tree, naturalized retention basins, and rain gardens provisions.
- Set conservation priorities from Conservation Area identified in the Land Use Plan and Hydrologic Features, Steep Slopes, Forested Areas, and Composite Constraints mapping.
- Direct development and redevelopment to Priority Areas as identified in the Land Use Plan and strongly limit such activities in the Conservation Area identified in the Land Use Plan.

ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION (continued)

- Set priorities for remediation, particularly those related to natural gas drilling and development associated with the Marcellus shale deposit and acid mine drainage in areas that have been mined (surface and deep) or quarried.

- Promote separate stormwater collection systems to eliminate combined sewer overflow problems.



UTILITIES AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

- Focus new, expanded, and upgraded infrastructure development in Priority Areas.

- Use Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Planning Act (Act 537) planning process to anticipate and prepare for future development and to identify and address on-lot sewage disposal problems.

- Facilitate and coordinate the actions of agencies and governments regarding stormwater management, stream maintenance, and flood mitigation.

- Utilize best management practices (BMPs) for stormwater management as part of new development.



- Guide the layouts of new neighborhoods and districts so that they achieve a grid or modified grid circulation systems and small blocks.

- Encourage municipalities to provide zoning districts that provide the necessary densities and intermingling of uses to achieve compact, mixed-use centers as well as permit live-work structures.

- Guide new development so that it occurs linked to major educational, cultural, and recreational destinations via transit and trail connectors.

- Perform energy audits of county and municipal governmental operations and engage in energy-efficient purchasing and operations.



BENEFITS OF THE PLAN/GOING FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE

The *Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan* benefits the two counties in the following ways:

- Sets the vision and direction for the coming decades
- Provides a framework for decision-making
- Identifies new opportunities for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, cultural, and recreational activity
- Provides implementation strategies for a more vigorous approach to land development and economic initiatives and to conservation
- Assists in developing partnerships with residents, business operators, property owners, investors, public officials, local organizations, and public and private agency personnel for Plan implementation
- Guides the counties' capital budget process to focus financial resources

The Regional Plan benefits municipalities in the following ways:

- Summarizes the issues facing municipalities
- Contains usable data, including mapping, to support a variety of local initiatives
- Identifies areas for targeted development, consolidation and stabilization, and conservation
- Outlines a framework for intergovernmental cooperation and action to achieve goals
- Provides tools, models, and best practices
- Sets the stage and strengthens opportunities for applications for government grants, loans, and permits (a proposed local action or initiative that is consistent with the Regional Plan will be more likely to gain a favorable review)

The Regional Plan benefits private developers in the following ways:

- Explains the counties' policies and strategies on growth, development, redevelopment, and conservation
- Highlights development opportunities
- Contains usable data, including mapping, to support development initiatives
- Sets the stage and strengthens opportunities for applications for government grants, loans, and permits
- Markets the area generally and specific locations for development and redevelopment

The Regional Plan benefits local nonprofit and civic organizations in the following ways:

- Offers a cohesive vision for enhancing quality of life in the two counties
- Provides direction as to where and how organizations can focus their efforts

