

Centre Regional Planning Commission

Member Handbook

CRPA

Centre Regional
Planning Agency

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CHAPTER 1 – THE CENTRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (CRPC)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Authorization for the establishment of the Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC) is set forth in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) and the Agreement of Relationship with Centre County. Powers and duties are specified in the Joint Articles of Agreement of the Centre Regional Planning Commission of the six Centre Region municipalities, which was entered into in 1986.

The CRPC has several responsibilities that are outlined by both the Joint Articles of Agreement and the MPC. The CRPC was established to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the Centre Region, through effective development of the region's municipalities. The CRPC, whether directly or through its designees, has the responsibility to do the following:

- Prepare and maintain a Regional Comprehensive Plan, in accordance with the provisions of the MPC, for guidance of the continuing development of the Centre Region
- Prepare reports and recommendations on regional problems and issues
- Maintain education programs to inform the public on specific planning proposals
- Present the regional point of view to State and Federal Agencies that are considering legislation or public works that would affect the Centre Region
- Aid in the preparation of long term budget programs in accordance with the Regional Comprehensive Plan
- The CRPC must authorize all agreements with PennDOT and federal entities as the contracting body for the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO)

The CRPC is also responsible for making a recommendation on any proposed action by a participating municipality relating to:

- The location, opening, vacation, extension, widening, narrowing or enlargement of any street, public ground, or watercourse located within the region
- The location, erection, demolition, or sale of any public structures located within the region
- The adoption, amendment or repeal of any official map, subdivision and land development ordinance, zoning ordinance, or planned residential development ordinance

- Any proposed action by the governing body of a school district within any municipality in the Centre Region relating to the location, demolition, removal or sale of any school district structure or land
- Requests to expand the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area

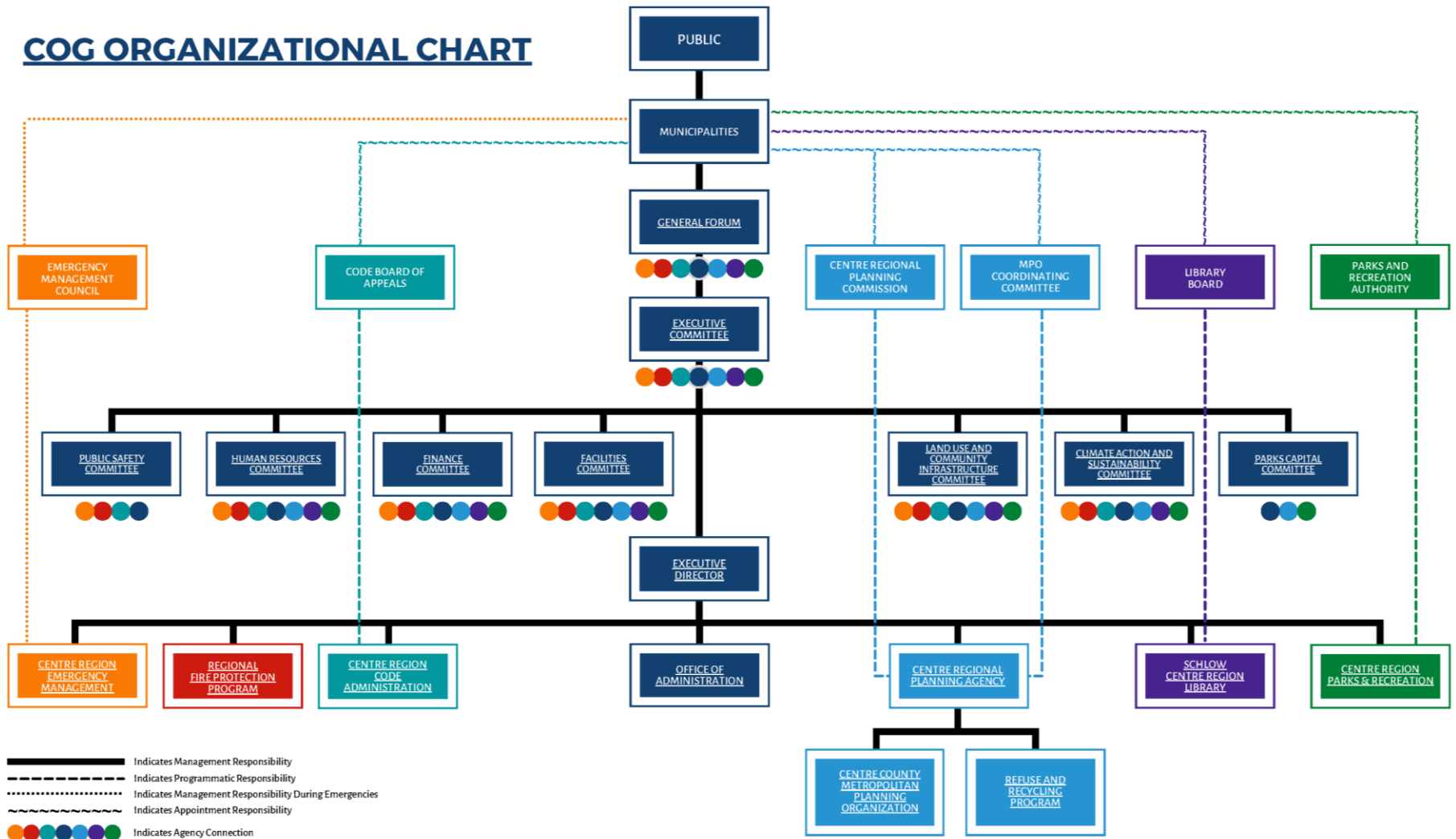
The Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA) is the organization which provides staff support to the CRPC. In addition, the CRPA is responsible for providing staff planning assistance to participating member municipalities, to review and comment on local planning issues which may result in regional impact, and for encouraging cooperative regional planning initiatives among the Region’s municipalities. The CRPA is an agency which is part of the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG), which has programmatic responsibilities related to the CRPC.

In addition to the CRPC, a committee of the Centre Region COG known as the Land Use and Community Infrastructure (LUCI) Committee (formerly known as the Transportation and Land Use [TLU] Committee) also reviews and discusses transportation and land use issues within the Centre Region. The LUCI Committee is a seven member body comprised of one elected official from each participating municipality and a representative from the Pennsylvania State University. The LUCI Committee discusses and reviews transportation and land use issues which must go before the COG General Forum. The LUCI Committee, unlike the CRPC, does not review municipal planning requests for regional impacts or conformity with the Regional Comprehensive Plan and does not provide recommendations to municipal Planning Commissions. Please refer to the organizational chart located on the next page to better understand the relationship between the CRPC, CRPA, and LUCI Committee.

1.1 JOINT ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

As mentioned above, the powers and duties of the CRPC are outlined in the Joint Articles of Agreement of the Centre Region Planning Commission, which were entered into on January 24, 1986. The Joint Articles of Agreement also offer a history of the evolution of the CRPC and its relation to other local and regional governmental organizations. The Joint Articles of Agreement are included as Appendix A of this handbook.

COG ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



1.2 ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE CENTRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The CRPC's primary responsibility is to serve the public interest by representing the Centre Region as a whole. Planning Commissioners have the unique opportunity to help shape the present and future quality of life in the region by making recommendations and providing input that can have long-term consequences.

Most of the time, the role of the CRPC will be to provide comments to municipalities or the General Forum on proposals forwarded to the Commission for review, to maintain and update the Regional Comprehensive Plan, and to conduct other regional planning studies. Individual members of the CRPC may also have additional assignments to other boards and committees where they will also be able to provide comments and guidance. At times, the CRPC's role is to serve as a public forum for public participation and discussion of issues important to the region.

THE ROLE OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS

The primary role of the members of the Centre Regional Planning Commission is to provide recommendations and input that will positively affect the quality of life experienced by the residents of the Centre Region. When looking at any issue brought before the CRPC, analysis and comments should be considered at a regional level. While many CRPC members also serve on a municipal Planning Commission, their primary CRPC role is to consider the regional impact of proposals brought before the CRPC.

WHO DO PLANNING COMMISSIONERS REPRESENT?

The Centre Regional Planning Commission is comprised of seven members; one individual is appointed by each of the participating municipalities and the Pennsylvania State University. CRPC members are appointed by the local governing body of their respective municipalities. A common misconception is that members of the CRPC attend to represent only the municipality where they live, their municipal planning commission, or the governing body that appointed them. While each participating municipality and the Pennsylvania State University appoint one individual to the CRPC, members of the CRPC are expected to provide recommendations and input from a regional perspective. Specifically, members of the CRPC should feel free to voice their own opinions and make suggestions regarding regional matters without feeling the need to represent any particular person or group within their municipality. Much like members of municipal Planning Commissions give input on what will help improve the municipality to which they belong, CRPC members should give input and suggestions on what will improve the region to which they belong.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER OF THE CENTRE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (CCMPO)

Federal law and regulations require local and state officials in all urbanized areas in the United States with a population of over 50,000 persons to have a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive long-range transportation planning program, which is carried out by a “metropolitan planning organization (MPO).” The CCMPO fulfills this mandate in Centre County.

The CCMPO is comprised of multiple entities that work together to complete long-range transportation planning activities, program federal and state funds for surface transportation projects, and complete planning studies identified in the bi-annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The policy-making body of the CCMPO is the Coordinating Committee, which is responsible for the transportation planning activities mandated in federal laws and regulations. The Coordinating Committee includes eighteen voting and three non-voting members from county and municipal governments, and federal, state, and local public agencies. A Technical Committee comprised of members from the same organizations provides comments and recommendations to the Coordinating Committee.

The CRPC has been a voting member of the Technical and Coordinating Committees since the MPO was originally formed in 1982. At that time, the MPO was responsible for a geographic area that included the six Centre Region municipalities and Benner Township. Because the CRPC was the entity which led comprehensive land use planning activities on behalf of six of the seven municipalities in the MPO study area, the 1982 formation agreement designated the Commission with the responsibility for performing the technical work required to maintain the MPO’s long range transportation plan and program.

Along with completing technical analyses, the CRPC assumed responsibility for contracting with PennDOT for federal and state funding provided to the Commission’s professional staff to complete the technical work. The CRPC also assumed responsibility for approving and executing contracts with outside consultants and vendors, when federal and state funding is used to retain special services.

The CRPC maintained its role as the lead technical support agency after the MPO was expanded to a countywide organization in 2004. The CRPC continues to be a voting member of the CCMPO Technical and Coordinating Committees and continues to be responsible for approving contracts with PennDOT and outside consultants/vendors. The CRPA Planning Director and his/her designee are authorized to execute contracts on behalf of the Commission. The CRPA and other professional staff at the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO) and the Centre Area Transportation Authority are responsible for completing technical work tasks on behalf of the CRPC.

Specific actions typically taken by the Commission to fulfill its responsibilities include:

- Appointing a voting representative to the CCMPO Coordinating Committee (typically a Commission member)
- Appointing a voting representative to the CCMPO Technical Committee (traditionally the CRPA Director)
- Approving and executing periodic Master Agreements (typically multiple year) and Work Orders (typically bi-annual) between the CRPC and PennDOT which provide funding for the CRPA to complete work tasks on behalf of the CCMPO.
- Approving a Resolution (typically annually) authorizing the CRPA Planning Director and his/her designee to execute the Master Agreements and Work Orders.
- Approving and executing Agreements between the CRPC and outside consultants/vendors for the completion of work tasks on behalf of the CCMPO.
- Reviewing a draft of the bi-annual CCMPO UPWP and providing comments and a recommendation about approval to the CCMPO Technical and Coordinating Committees.
- Receiving periodic reports about projects and planning tasks and providing comments to CRPA and the CCMPO Committees.
- Receiving reports about the CCMPO section of the annual COG Budget and providing comments to CRPA about budget issues and potential work tasks.

As a recipient of federal and state funds, the CCMPO and its support organizations, including the CRPC, CRPA, CCPCDO, and CATA are subject to many federal and state laws and regulations. In particular, the operating and business practices of the CRPC, CRPA, CCPCDO, and CATA must consider federal and state nondiscrimination and environmental justice laws and policies.

In 2014, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and PennDOT conducted a detailed review of the CCMPO's planning process, to assess compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations. FHWA and PennDOT presented the results of the review in November 2014, and indicated that the CCMPO fully complies with the spirit and intent of federal metropolitan transportation planning laws and regulations, and is in compliance with Title 23, United States Code, Section 134 (Highways - Metropolitan Transportation Planning).

ATTENDANCE

CRPC members are expected to attend all meetings, arrive on time, and stay for the entire meeting. Continuous absences place an unfair burden on other CRPC members, applicants, and the public. An alternate member should attend the meeting when a Commissioner is unable to attend.

MEETING PREPARATION

CRPC members should become knowledgeable on all matters prior to CRPC meetings. This includes:

- Reading the staff reports, attachments, and minutes of the previous meeting.
- Visiting the property if you are unfamiliar with it or its surroundings.
- Becoming familiar with the Centre Region Comprehensive Plan as well as any information provided within the regular agenda.
- Understanding the proposal and the pertinent facts.
- Thinking through the key issues and being prepared to engage in a dialogue regarding issues at the meeting.
- Alerting CRPA staff prior to the meeting if something needs clarification.
- Preparing questions to ask staff, the applicant, or other interested parties at the meeting.

MEETING PARTICIPATION

CRPC members are expected to be active participants at all required meetings. This includes, but is not limited to, raising questions for clarification and discussing issues and options. Members should also voice and explain their opinions and reasoning both prior to and at the time a motion is made regarding an item.

There may be opportunities for CRPC members to attend tours and training conferences several times each year, as budgeting permits. These events are considered opportunities for CRPC members to acquire the additional knowledge and information necessary to fully understand planning issues and to make sound recommendations in the best interest of the Region. CRPC members are encouraged to attend these events whenever possible.

CRITERIA FOR MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

CRPC members must be prepared to make comments and recommendations which carefully balance public and private interests. In doing so, the following guidelines are applicable:

- Comments and recommendations should be based on key planning and land use issues.
- Remain objective and don't allow your emotions or personal values to impair your ability to make sound comments or recommendations.
- Keep an open mind until you hear all of the testimony and discussion. Weigh the facts and issues carefully before making comments or recommendations.
- Consider the facts presented, not the person presenting them.
- Stick to the key regional issues. Don't get bogged down with minor details.
- Try to be consistent with your comments and recommendations.
- Strive to make the best comments and recommendations possible under the circumstances.

FAIR TREATMENT

It is important that the CRPC conduct fair and impartial meetings. Fair and equitable treatment should be provided for all parties involved.

- It is okay to ask for clarification. If you find you disagree with staff, the applicant, or the public when discussing the issues with them, make an effort to provide a recommendation or comment that can be included with the final motion.
- Don't state your support or non-support, or express an opinion regarding the appropriate outcome, until all testimony has been presented and the public has commented. Questions should be phrased in a way that implies you are seeking information instead of stating an irrefutable fact or that your mind is closed to further consideration.
- Depersonalize all discussions and decisions. The focus should be on the issues and not the individual. Don't allow personalities to cloud the environment for rational debate and sound decision making.
- Actively listen to all testimony. The people appearing in front of you have spent considerable time preparing.

- Don't interrupt a presentation. Wait until the question and answer period.
- Don't be vindictive or "punish" the applicant for some real or imagined affront on some previous occasion, which may or may not be related to the present meeting.
- Communication with staff, the applicant, public, and other commissioners should be cordial at all times.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The only time some people will ever have direct involvement with the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG) is at a CRPC meeting. It is important that every CRPC member presents a positive image of the COG and the entities they represent.

- Show an interest in the applicant's request and be sensitive to his/her concerns and those of other interested parties.
- Help the public and the applicant to understand the request, issues, and options. Ask questions to ensure that the applicant and the public have a clear understanding of the request and the key issues.
- The chair should summarize the request and key issues identified during the discussion period to ensure that all have a shared understanding prior to the vote.
- After the CRPC completes an item, the Chair should thank everyone for their testimony and summarize the decision or ask the Planning Director to summarize the decision to ensure that all have a clear understanding of the action taken.
- Be conscious of your appearance, conduct, and attitude at all times.
- Be polite and as helpful as possible to those who are nervous, frightened, uninformed, or confused. Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- CRPC members may disagree but should not be openly critical of one another.
- The CRPC is not obligated to answer questions from the audience but should explain why they are not appropriate.
- Encourage open communication by helping those who are unsure or confused to express their concerns and opinions.

1.3 ORGANIZATION

MEMBERSHIP

CRPC membership consists of one member or appointed alternate from each Township or Borough that is a member of the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG) and one member and alternate appointed by the Pennsylvania State University. All members are appointed for a term of two years. All members of the CRPC shall reside in the Borough or Township that appointed them, except the member appointed by the Pennsylvania State University, who shall be an employee of the University. Vacancies are filled as they occur for the remaining length of the term.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

An annual organizational meeting shall be held to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair of the CRPC and to make appointments to the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) Coordinating Committee, State College Borough Water Authority, Centre Region Parks and Recreation Authority, the University Area Joint Authority, and the CCMPO Technical Committee. Members that serve on or as liaisons to additional boards and committees should represent the CRPC at these meetings and provide reports of action to fellow CRPC members on a regular basis.

The Chair presides at all meetings, decides points of order and procedure, and performs other duties normally conferred by parliamentary usage on such officers. The Chair is a voting member and may participate in all discussions. The Vice-Chair performs these duties in the absence of the Chair. In the event that both the Chair and Vice-Chair are unable to perform their duties, a member of the CRPC will be elected to temporarily serve in this capacity by the members present at the meeting.

SECRETARY

The Planning Director of the Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA) or his/her designee serves as Secretary to the CRPC. The Secretary schedules and provides notice of meetings, prepares, and delivers the CRPC's meeting packet, confirms attendance prior to meetings, takes minutes of all meetings, keeps permanent records, and provides all other administrative services as needed.

STAFF LIAISON

The Planning Director of the CRPA or his/her designee serves as liaison to the CRPC and provides professional support and guidance as needed.

MEETINGS

IN GENERAL

Regular meetings will be held on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Centre Region Council of Governments building. In the event of a conflict with holidays or other events, a majority vote at any meeting may change the date of a regular meeting.

Notice will be provided to each member by the Secretary at least 24 hours in advance. Any item requiring formal action will take place only at a regular or special meeting. A quorum consisting of a majority of members is required to conduct business.

The CRPC meets twice annually with the COG Land Use and Community Infrastructure (LUCI) Committee. Both joint meetings are held at the regular LUCI Committee meeting day and time – the first Thursday of the month at 12:15 p.m. in the Centre Region Council of Governments building.

SPECIAL MEETINGS

The CRPC may hold a special meeting for the purpose of conducting business upon the call of the Chair or a majority of the members.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The order of business at regular and special meetings will be as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Approval of the minutes from previous meetings
3. Public comments
4. New Agenda Items
5. Reports for items of regional interest
6. CRPA activity report
7. Consent, Action, and Discussion items
8. Committee and liaison reports
9. Other business
10. Adjournment

RECESS AND ADJOURNMENT

Any meeting may be recessed or adjourned to a specific date and time by a vote of the members.

MEETING CANCELLATION

- Any meeting may be canceled due to the lack of a quorum.
- Any meeting may be canceled by a prior vote of the members.
- The Chair or Vice-Chair may cancel a meeting if there are no scheduled items on the agenda.

PACKET DELIVERY

The CRPC meeting packet is generally mailed, either physically or electronically, to each member on or before the Friday prior to the week of the meeting.

QUORUM

A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members of the CRPC. The number of votes necessary to conduct business shall be a simple majority. The Secretary will contact each member prior to all meetings to confirm that a quorum will be present.

1.5 DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

MEETING PROCEDURES

- a. The Chair calls the application and the name of the CRPA staff member that will be presenting it.
- b. CRPA staff states the request and its location and presents a report on the pertinent facts and issues before the CRPC. CRPC members may ask questions after the presentation.
- c. The Chair may ask the applicant or authorized representative to present evidence and arguments which support his or her application. The applicant may choose to rely solely on the written application. The Chair may limit testimony to a specified time period and ensure that it is pertinent. The CRPC members may ask questions after the presentation.
- d. The Chair calls on the public who wish to testify on the matter. The public must state their name and municipality prior to speaking about the item. The Chair may limit the testimony of each person to a specified time period and will ensure that the testimony is pertinent and not repetitive. The CRPC members may ask questions after each presentation.

- e. The applicant or authorized representative is given the opportunity for rebuttal and a closing statement and may be asked to answer additional questions by the CRPC members.
- f. The Chair calls on staff for any final comments on the application and procedural guidance.
- g. The Chair declares the public comment portion closed and requests comments and recommendations from the CRPC members.
- h. The CRPC will limit its discussion to the relevant facts and pertinent issues. The CRPC may ask staff, the applicant, or any public person in attendance to clarify a point of testimony or obtain additional information or procedural guidance.
- i. Prior to voting on a formal recommendation, the Chair restates the motion to ensure a common understanding by all members. The final action is taken by vote, with each voting member answering yea or nay.
- j. The Chair announces the decision of the CRPC. The Chair may clarify the CRPC's action but will not entertain further comment or debate on the merits of the decision.

MEETING PROTOCOL

All speakers make their presentation from the podium. Testimony, questions, and arguments are addressed to the CRPC and not to staff or other parties.

Orderly procedures require that each presentation proceed without interruption. CRPC members may ask questions after each presentation for the purpose of clarification or to obtain additional testimony. The Chair may also call for questions from staff.

All presentations, questions, and discussions are addressed through the Chair.

CRPC members are encouraged to have discussions about issues with the applicant, other witnesses, or staff. Discussions should remain respectful at all times.

CRPC members present their own arguments or indicate how they intend to vote after all staff and public testimony has finished, and the matter is open for CRPC discussion.

CRPC members must abide by the provisions of the Pennsylvania Public Official and Employee Ethics Act. When a member determines that he or she has a conflict of interest, the member will announce a conflict, refrain from influencing the CRPC's decision on the matter, and excuse himself or herself from the table until the item is completed. The member will advise the Chair of the conflict before the start of the meeting or immediately upon determining a conflict exists if the meeting has already begun.

WITHDRAWALS

An applicant may withdraw an application at any time prior to or during the public meeting. The withdrawal may be made in writing prior to the meeting or in person at the time of the meeting. The Chair will acknowledge that the application has been withdrawn, but no other action is required on the part of the CRPC.

CONTINUED AND TABLED ITEMS

The Commission may continue consideration of an item to a later date whenever it finds that additional evidence is required, that potential alternatives need further study, or that it is otherwise desirable for the Commission to take the item under advisement.

The Commission may continue an item if the applicant fails to appear or is unable to appear for any reason.

Items will normally be continued to the next regularly scheduled meeting or a specific date. If it is necessary to table an item for an indefinite period of time, the Secretary will give proper notice and place the item back on the agenda when it is ready for further consideration. The Commission may, on its motion, remove any item from the table and schedule it for consideration.

Those in attendance who desire to testify but are unable or unwilling to return at a later date will be allowed to testify prior to continuing or tabling an item.

A motion to table or continue an item is not subject to debate.

EXHIBITS

The Chair will identify all pertinent documentation presented during the course of a public meeting as an exhibit for the record. This includes but is not limited to reports, maps, plans, drawings, pictures, slides, petitions, and/or letters. All exhibits become part of the permanent record of the CRPC.

1.6 VOTING

IN GENERAL

An affirmative vote of the majority of the members present is required to pass a recommendation on any item. CRPC members are required to vote on every action item at a meeting they attend, except in the event of a conflict of interest.

BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR AND REPORTS AND COMMENTS

No vote will be taken on any item raised under these agenda items. The Chair may direct staff to put an item on a future agenda for consideration and action.

MOTIONS

All motions should be made in the affirmative, meaning that the motion would be to recommend approval. All motions must receive a second. Making a motion that receives a second brings the item before the CRPC for a final vote.

1.7 CRPC MEETING GUIDE

At the beginning of each meeting, the Chair should introduce the CRPC body and explain the general role and format of the meeting. An example of how this introduction could be worded is as follows:

Welcome to the (state the date) CRPC meeting. The CRPC is a public body appointed by the participating member municipalities and boroughs of the Centre Region Council of Governments and one representative from the Pennsylvania State University. The CRPC acts in an advisory role to COG member municipalities and COG General Forum with regard to items brought before the CRPC. You will have an opportunity to address the CRPC during the public portion of the meeting. Your testimony is appreciated and encouraged.

The CRPC works from a written agenda. If you wish to speak to an item during public comment periods, you must address the CRPC by coming to the podium, stating your name and municipality of residence, and then delivering your comments. Copies of the agenda are located just inside the main door to the COG General Forum room.

PUBLIC MEETING PROCEDURES

1. Chair calls the application number
2. CRPA staff presents a report
3. Applicant makes a presentation
4. Persons in support or opposition present their comments
5. Applicant is given the opportunity for rebuttal
6. CRPA staff present final statements and guidance
7. Chair closes the public comment period and asks for a motion

GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Speak only from the podium. State your name and municipality for the record.
- Be as brief and to the point as possible. Avoid repetition.
- Large groups should designate a spokesperson.
- Do not applaud or otherwise disrupt the meeting.
- All exhibits become part of the permanent CRPC file.

1.8 THE SUNSHINE ACT: PENNSYLVANIA’S OPEN MEETINGS LAW

THE CONCEPTS OF THE ACT

The act states that “the right of the public to be present at all meetings of agencies and to witness the deliberation, policy formulation and decision making of agencies is vital to the enhancement and proper functioning of the democratic process and that secrecy in public affairs undermines the faith of the public in government and the public's effectiveness in fulfilling its role in a democratic society.” 65 Pa.C.S. § 702 (a)

The act “declares it to be the public policy of this Commonwealth to insure the right of the public to have notice of and the right to attend all meetings of agencies at which any agency business is discussed or acted upon as provided in this chapter.” 65 Pa.C.S. § 702 (b)

WHY DO WE HAVE AN OPEN MEETING LAW?

1. Protect the Public

- a. To avoid decision making in secret
- b. To promote accountability by encouraging public officials to act responsively and responsibly.

2. Protect Public Officials

- a. To avoid being excluded (notice)
- b. To prepare and avoid being blind-sided (agenda)
- c. To accurately memorialize what happens (minutes)

3. Maintain Integrity of Government

4. Better Informed Public

5. Build Trust Between Government and the Public

WHAT CONSTITUTES A MEETING?

A meeting is “Any prearranged gathering of an agency which is attended or participated in by a quorum of the members of an agency held for the purpose of deliberating agency business or taking official action.” 65 Pa.C.S. § 703

WHO MUST COMPLY WITH THE OPEN MEETING LAW?

Agencies must comply with the law. "Agencies" as defined by the act includes but is not limited to the General Assembly, school boards, municipal boards or commissions, boards for state funded universities, etc. 65 Pa.C.S. § 703

WHAT IS REQUIRED UNDER THE OPEN MEETING LAW?

1. Notice

The open meeting law requires that an agency gives notice of its first regular meeting of each calendar or fiscal year at least three days in advance of the meeting and that it shall give public notice of the schedule of its remaining regular meetings. A minimum of 24 hours' notice must be given for any special meetings. Notice is not required in the case of an emergency meeting or conference. 65 Pa.C.S. §709

Notice must be given in time to allow it to be published or circulated within the political subdivision where the principal office of the agency is located. Pa.C.S. §709

2. Public's Rights

The public has the right to:

- Attend
- Speak during public comment periods
- Listen
- Tape Record
- Videotape

The public has no right to:

- Disrupt the meeting

3. Minutes of Meetings

Meeting minutes must be kept of all open meetings of any agency. Those minutes must include:

1. The date, time, and place of the meeting.
2. The names of all members present.
3. The substance of all official actions and a record by individual member of the roll call votes taken.
4. The names of all public persons who appeared officially and the subject of their testimony.

Pa.C.S. § 706

CHAPTER 2 – THE CENTRE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY (CRPA)

2.0 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The CRPA is part of the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG). The structure of the CRPA is illustrated in the figure below:

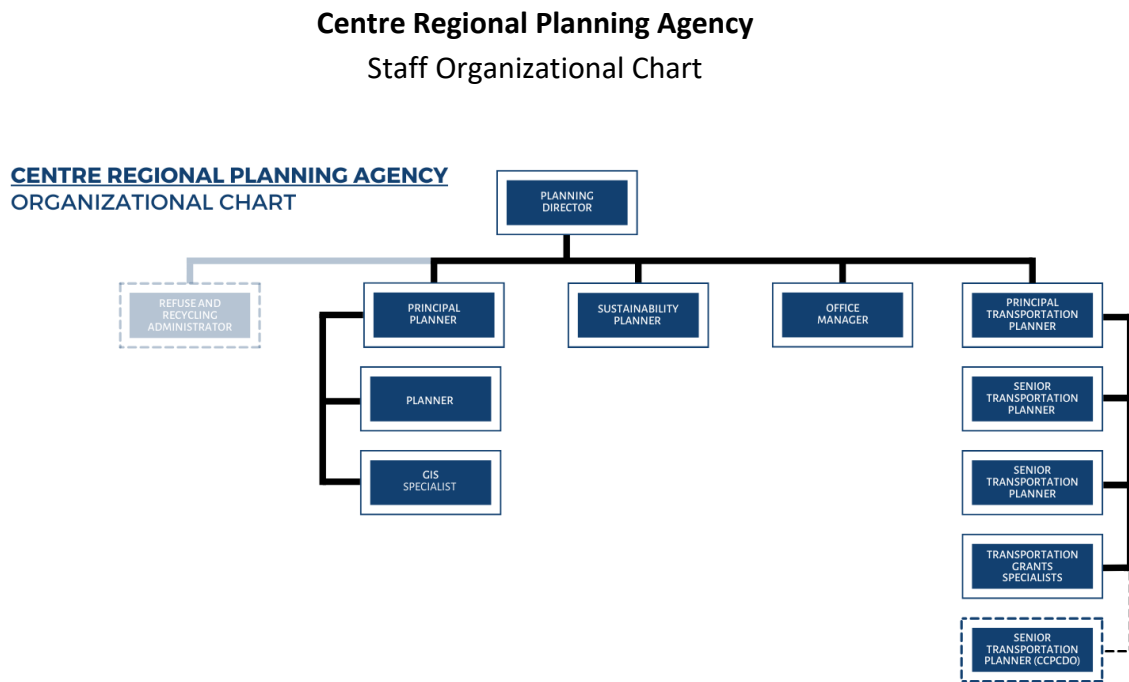


Figure 2.0 - CRPA Organizational Chart

2.1 THE ROLE OF THE CRPA IN THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

LOCAL PLANNING AND ZONING FUNCTIONS

CRPA staff conducts a variety of services and activities as they relate to ordinance preparation, development review, and entitlement processes in the Centre Region municipalities. At the most fundamental level, staff provides professional advice to municipalities regarding proposals to adopt or revise ordinances, rezone property, or develop property in the municipalities. Some of these items will come before the CRPC for comments and a recommendation to the municipal governing body. Currently, Harris and Patton Townships contract with CRPA to have part-time local planners, while six municipalities contract with the CRPA for regional planning services.

Some of the common local functions conducted by the CRPA staff assigned as local planners include:

- Rezoning
- Ordinance amendments
- Zoning Permits
- Conditional Use Permits
- Preliminary Plats
- Design Review
- Building Construction Plan Review
- Staff for local Planning Commissions
- Staff for the local Governing Body

REGIONAL PLANNING FUNCTIONS

In addition to providing local planning services, the CRPA is responsible for conducting regional planning for the six member-municipalities. Regional planning functions can include a variety of activities and studies that are meant to help promote regional planning goals and objectives identified in the Regional Comprehensive Plan. CRPA will regularly present regional planning activities to the CRPC, as well as provide ongoing project updates. CRPA regional planning activities include but are not limited to:

- Ensuring that the Centre Region Comprehensive Plan is updated and adhered to in the development process
- Drafting ordinances that should be adopted by all member municipalities to address regional goals
- Reviewing proposals for expansion of the regional Sewer Service Area
- Implementing and updating the ACT 537 Sewage Facilities Plan
- Creating specific area plans, as well as other activities that will help positively impact the quality of life through proactive land use planning in the Centre Region.

ADMINISTRATION

CRPA staff provides administrative assistance to the CRPC to ensure that the Commission is able to function efficiently and fulfill its role in the regional planning process.

The following list identifies some of the administrative functions conducted by the CRPA:

- Report preparation
- Public advertising
- Filing
- Public participation
- Public notification
- COG General Forum notification/coordination
- Local municipality notification/coordination
- Staff for the Centre Regional Planning Commission
- Staff for the General Forum
- Staff for COG committees

2.2 ROLE OF THE CRPA RELATED TO THE CRPC

There are several staff members that will interact with the CRPC on a regular basis. Staff are here to be a resource for the CRPC prior to, during, and after meetings. The primary staff members and their functions are:

CRPA DIRECTOR

Mike Tylka, AICP
mtylka@crcog.net

REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING STAFF

CRPA staff consists of professional planners who function as regional planners, local planners, or a hybrid of local and regional planning. The CRPA staff and their functions are outlined below:

Jenna Wargo, AICP
Principal Land Use Planner
Regional and Local Planning
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Summer Brown
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TRANSPORTATION PLANNERS

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ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Reagan Mann
Office Manager/CRPC Recording Secretary
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CHAPTER 3 – REGIONAL PLANNING

3.0 INTRODUCTION

On September 1, 1960, College and Patton Township, along with the Borough of State College, joined together to form the Centre Regional Planning Commission, which included a representative from each of the Townships and the Borough, as well as a representative from The Pennsylvania State University. The Commission grew in 1961 to also include the Townships of Ferguson and Harris, and later in 1965 to include Halfmoon Township. For more than 50 years, the residents of the Centre Region have enjoyed a high quality of life, in part due to the willingness of the municipalities in the Centre Region to work cooperatively to achieve common goals with regard to the development of the area.

Regional planning is not unique to the Centre Region; however, it is often “off of the radar” of most residents and officials, until they become involved in regional planning efforts. Knowledge of regional planning is typically limited to those public officials who serve on a Regional Planning Commission or Board with new members facing a steep learning curve upon appointment. The purpose of this chapter of the Centre Regional Planning Agency handbook is to help provide some background and insight into regional planning both generally and in the Centre Region.

3.1 REGIONAL PLANNING

WHAT IS REGIONAL PLANNING?

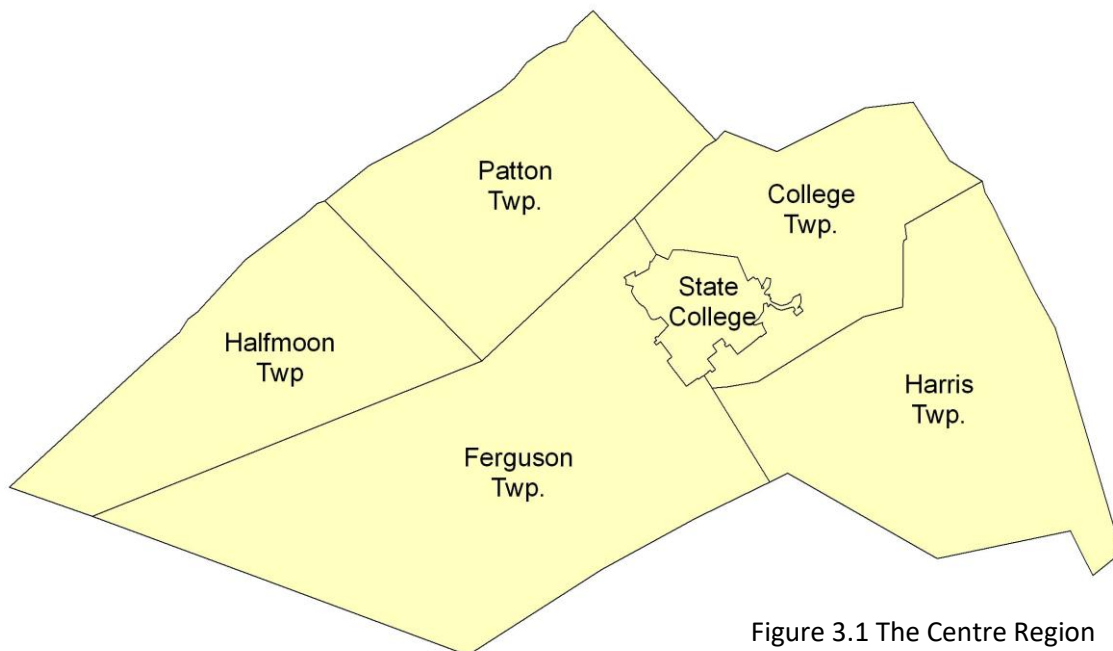


Figure 3.1 The Centre Region

Regional planning deals with the efficient placement of land use activities, infrastructure, and growth across a larger area of land than an individual municipality. For the Centre Region, such regional planning takes place in the context of the participating Townships and the Borough of State College. Authority to conduct regional planning in the State of Pennsylvania is provided by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) Act 247. The MPC recognizes Regional Comprehensive Plans as legitimate land use and growth management tools that can be implemented by any number of contiguous municipalities, as well as non-contiguous municipalities within the same school district. The MPC also grants the same legal status to Regional Comprehensive Plans as to municipal-level plans, requiring zoning, subdivision, and land development regulations as well as capital improvement programs to further the goals and policies of the Regional Comprehensive Plan. The MPC permits local governments to enter into cooperative agreements in order to implement the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

BENEFITS OF REGIONAL PLANNING

One thing that makes regional planning unique is that it is a voluntary endeavor, where municipalities choose, based on their view of the benefits of regional planning, whether to participate. By not participating in a regional planning effort, municipalities are required to independently fulfill their land use obligations. By cooperative regional planning, municipalities are able to benefit from increased communication on issues as small as a minor ordinance amendment or as large as a major development that will have impacts throughout the region.

Creating and maintaining a Regional Comprehensive Plan can have many benefits for the communities involved. Such benefits include the creation of Regional Growth Boundaries, which help control sprawl and allow the region to target areas more easily for revitalization; economic development; historic preservation; and neighborhood enhancement. In addition, Regional Growth Boundaries can have benefits in sewage facility planning. Municipalities that conduct sewer planning in a proactive manner can avoid sprawling systems through low-density areas that are more costly to construct and maintain than systems that serve smaller geographic areas. Allowing new development in the most appropriate areas of a region helps avoid the creation of unnecessary sewer extensions, reducing the amount of sewer infrastructure that has to be maintained.

3.2 REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

One of the benefits of regional planning is the ability to define land uses and growth areas on a regional scale, resulting in better development patterns and a higher quality of life in participating municipalities. The main tool by which regional planning is accomplished is through the establishment and adoption of a Regional Comprehensive

Plan which allows municipalities to cooperatively set and implement regional goals and policies. A Regional Comprehensive Plan is not only limited to development issues, but also sets goals in relation to infrastructure, the environment, historical resources, etc. Through the creation of the Centre Region Comprehensive Plan, participating municipalities are able to set common goals that are more easily achieved when approached on a regional level, as opposed to only a local level. In addition, municipalities can interact with and cooperate with one another to help achieve goals specific to particular municipalities.

The fundamental elements of a Regional Comprehensive Plan are contained in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). While the MPC provides some additional planning options for Regional Comprehensive Plans, the majority of the required elements are the same as those required for Municipal Comprehensive Plans. A benefit to participating municipalities is that the Regional Comprehensive Plan replaces the need for a Municipal Comprehensive Plan.

The most recent Comprehensive Plan for the Centre Region was adopted on November 25, 2013. A Regional Comprehensive Plan must include the following elements, as required by the MPC:

- **Land Use Plan:** May include provisions for the amount, intensity, character, and timing of land uses proposed for all potential land use types throughout the region.
- **Housing Plan:** A plan to meet the housing needs of present residents and those individuals and families anticipated to reside in the municipality.
- **Transportation Plan:** A plan for the movement of people and goods, which may include expressways, highways, local street systems, parking facilities, pedestrian and bikeway systems, public transit routes, terminals, airfields, port facilities, railroad facilities, and other similar facilities or uses.
- **Community Facilities and Utilities Plan:** A plan which may include public and private education, recreation, municipal buildings, fire and police stations, libraries, hospitals, water supply and distribution, sewerage and waste treatment, storm drainage and flood plain management, utility corridors and associated facilities, and other similar uses.
- **Natural and Historic Resources Protection Plan:** A plan for the protection of natural and historic resources, to the extent not preempted by federal or state law. This includes, but is not limited to, wetlands and aquifer recharge areas, woodlands, steep slopes, prime agricultural land, flood plains, unique natural areas, and historic sites.

Comprehensive Plans are not limited only to the sections listed above but can also include other useful elements to help municipalities and regions to achieve their goals.

One benefit of conducting Comprehensive Plans on the regional scale is the ability to apply additional elements not traditionally used in municipal planning. The Centre Region Comprehensive Plan contains several additional elements, including:

- **Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation:** A plan for the provision of recreational facilities and the conservation of open space. This includes active and passive recreation facilities and services throughout the Centre Region.
- **Sustainability:** A plan to help define the use of public facilities, infrastructure, and resources in an efficient and cost effective manner to extend their usable life span and limit capital impact on the residents of the Centre Region.
- **Community and University Relations:** A plan that strengthens the relationship between Penn State University and the Centre Region municipalities. This element seeks to improve communication between the Centre Region and the University to ensure that the needs of both can be met in a way that provides the most benefit to all of the community's residents.
- **Economic Development:** A plan to provide for continued economic development and prosperity in the Centre Region. This element emphasizes the revitalization or redevelopment of underutilized properties, the need to strengthen working relationships between the COG and the Region's economic development entities, and efforts to attract users for the UAJA's beneficial reuse water.

The first Comprehensive Plan for the Centre Region was completed and adopted in 1976. This plan included recommended land uses for each municipality and identified a Primary Growth Area (PGA) where development would be encouraged. The PGA was intended to act as a growth area until the year 2000; however, growth in the Region during the 1980s was occurring at a rapid pace and extending beyond the original PGA boundaries. In 1990, an updated Comprehensive Plan was adopted based on the fact that the 1976 plan was out of character with the growth needs of the area. Another update was done in the year 2000. The MPC requires that Comprehensive Plans be updated every 10 years.

By establishing and maintaining a Regional Comprehensive Plan, which is a primary responsibility of the CRPC; municipalities are able to benefit from approaching common challenges and goals cooperatively to result in a better quality of life for their residents.

RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL PLANNING

A Comprehensive Plan is required for each county by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). The CRPA, along with the CRPC, prepares and administers a Regional Comprehensive Plan for the Centre Region municipalities. A Regional Comprehensive Plan acts as the Comprehensive Plan for the municipalities it addresses.

When a municipality makes any decision, whether it is to approve a new ordinance amendment or rezone an area, the Regional Comprehensive Plan should act as a guide. The purpose of the plan is to help identify the goals and objectives that are specific to the region and to the municipalities as well, and implementation of the plan occurs as municipalities follow the implementation strategies included within the plan. For example, if the Regional Comprehensive Plan specifically states the need to create more single family housing, and a municipality is looking to approve a rezoning to a new single family subdivision, the decision to rezone would be in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.

As local municipalities make decisions, the Regional Comprehensive Plan should be consulted in order to ensure that the goals and objectives of the plan are being addressed wherever possible. While some decisions may not be specifically outlined in the Regional Comprehensive Plan, municipalities should avoid making decisions that would hinder attainment of the goals and objectives identified by the participating municipalities, or they should seek an amendment to the plan so that it more accurately reflects the needs of the community.

3.3 REGIONAL GROWTH BOUNDARY/ACT 537 PLAN AND SEWER SERVICE AREA

HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE REGIONAL GROWTH BOUNDARY

During the 1990s, the Centre Region experienced substantial growth that emphasized

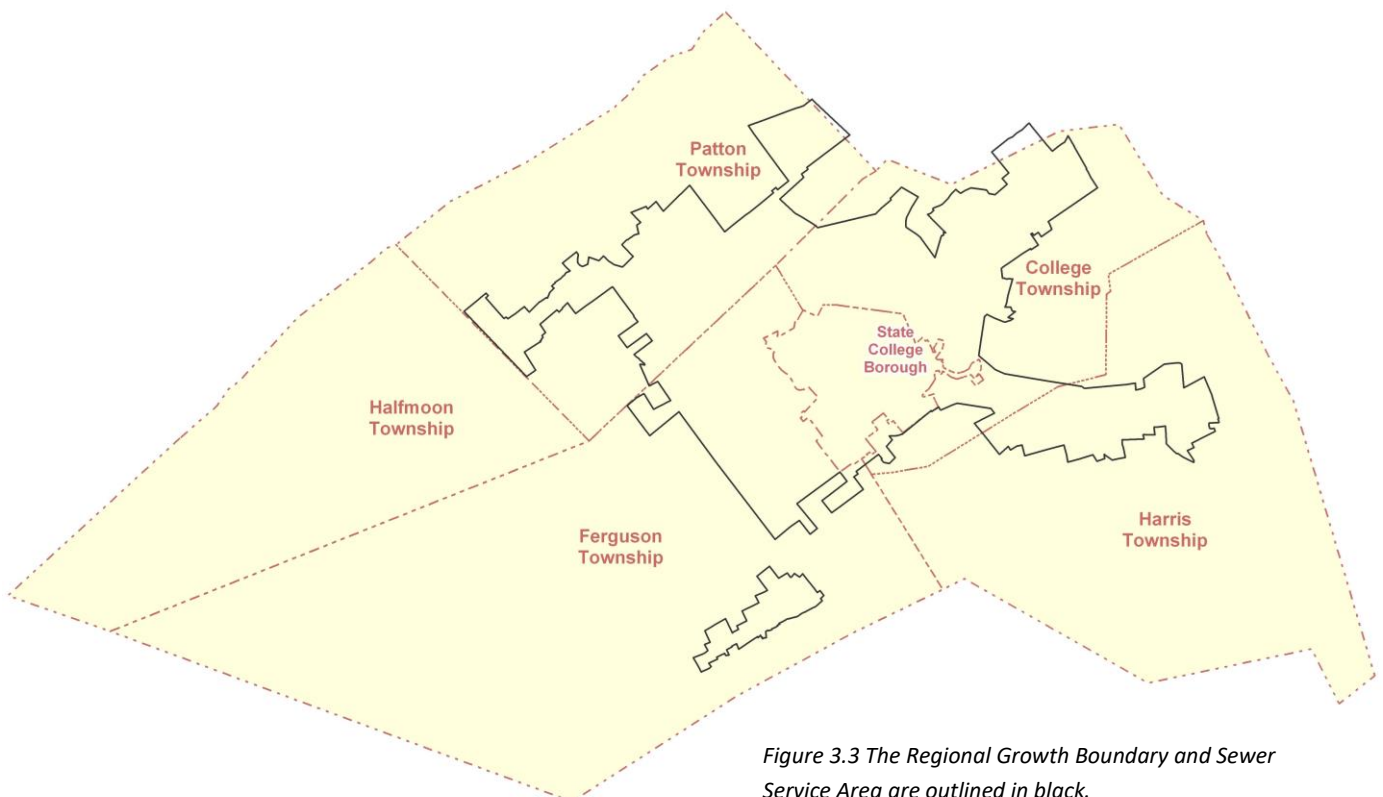


Figure 3.3 The Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area are outlined in black.

the need to create a long-range plan to address future growth more adequately. As permitted by the MPC, the 2000 Centre Region Comprehensive Plan identified a Regional Growth Boundary that identified where the majority of future growth should take place. The boundary relates to the present and future locations of public services and facilities that can be provided to residents in a cost effective manner. Through the application of zoning ordinances, the boundary's effect is strengthened by permitting higher density development only within the areas of the municipalities that are located within the growth boundary. The Regional Growth Boundary does not prohibit growth in outlying areas but encourages a level of growth compatible with the rural character of those areas.

The purpose of establishing a Regional Growth Boundary is to ensure that growth in the Centre Region occurs in an orderly manner and in such a way that public services can be provided at a reasonable cost. Allowing development to occur in outlying areas requires the lengthy extension of public services, which costs more to install and more to maintain. In addition, the rural character of those outlying areas is lost if development is permitted to spread in a haphazard manner and is difficult, if not impossible, to reclaim. The Regional Growth Boundary helps contain development in areas where it has been deemed appropriate and helps to preserve the rural character and landscape of areas outside its borders. The location of the Regional Growth Boundary is shown on the map below:

3.4 THE ACT 537 PLAN AND THE REGIONAL SEWER SERVICE AREA

WHAT IS THE ACT 537 PLAN AND THE SEWER SERVICE AREA?

In 1966, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act (Act 537) in order to help correct existing sewer disposal issues, as well as prevent new problems. The act requires that sewage disposal for all situations are planned for, and that local municipalities are largely responsible for administering the plan. Municipalities are required to develop and implement comprehensive official plans that provide for the resolution of existing sewage disposal problems, provide for the future sewage disposal needs of new land development, and provide for future sewage disposal needs of the municipality.

Since comprehensive land use planning is conducted at the regional level in the Centre Region, the local Act 537 Plan is also addressed regionally, as opposed to an independent plan for each municipality. The Sewer Service Area (SSA) is the area identified by the regional Act 537 Plan where public sewer service will be provided in the future by the University Area Joint Authority (UAJA). Areas located outside of the SSA are not eligible for sewer service, unless they were connected to the system prior to the enactment of the SSA or it is deemed that they can be connected due to an on-lot septic failure.

WHAT ARE THE BOUNDARIES OF THE SEWER SERVICE AREA?

In order to help ensure that sewer service is provided in areas where development is intended and not provided in areas that are to remain rural in nature, the Sewer Service Area boundaries are generally the same as the Regional Growth Boundary outlined in the previous section. This boundary is often referred to as the RGB and SSA, and closely linking the two boundaries helps ensure coordination between sewage facility and land use planning efforts.

HOW DOES THE SEWER SERVICE AREA (SSA) AFFECT DEVELOPMENTS LOCATED OUTSIDE OF THE REGIONAL GROWTH BOUNDARY?

The boundaries of the Regional Growth Boundary (RGB) and Sewer Service Area (SSA) are generally the same in order to help ensure coordination between sewage facility and land use planning efforts. If an area is located outside of the RGB, the intent is for that land not to be developed or to be developed into low density uses, whereas land inside the RGB should be developed into higher density uses that are not rural in character. In order to develop outside of the RGB, sewage disposal must take place on the property or through an individual or community on-lot disposal system, since sewer service is not available. The lack of ability to obtain sewer service outside of the RGB and SSA acts as a deterrent to higher density development outside of the RGB. In this manner, restricting the SSA to the same areas covered by the RGB allows the objectives and purposes of the RGB to be more easily obtained.

3.5 REQUESTS TO EXPAND THE REGIONAL GROWTH BOUNDARY AND SEWER SERVICE AREA

The Centre Region municipalities rely on two fundamental planning tools to guide decisions related to future growth and development in the community. These documents are the Centre Region Comprehensive Plan and the Centre Region Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan. The Centre Region Comprehensive Plan, last updated by the municipalities in 2013, reaffirmed the Regional Growth Boundary (first established in 2000) within which most future growth is anticipated to occur. The Sewer Service Area, which was established in the 1990 Centre Region Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan and approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as the Official Sewage Facilities Plan for the Centre Region, was updated in 2006. During the 2006 update to the Centre Region Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan, the Sewer Service Area was aligned to approximate the Regional Growth Boundary.

The six Centre Region municipalities initially adopted an implementation agreement to define the process for expanding the RGB and SSA. There have been five requests to expand the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area since adoption of the Implementation Agreement in January 2007. Three of the requests were unanimously approved by a unit vote of the six municipalities. The fourth request, which was denied

by a 5-1 unit vote, was appealed to the Centre County Court of Common Pleas. The issue was settled out of court, resulting in public sewer service being extended to the subject property with conditions. Based on the discussion and issues that were raised during this request to expand the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area, the COG General Forum requested that changes or amendments be made to the Implementation Agreement. The COG General Forum adopted the changes in December 2013. These include:

- Changing the vote for applications requiring General Forum approval from a unanimous unit vote to an affirmative unit vote of at least five municipalities to approve the request.
- Allowing municipalities to approve some requests to expand the RGB and SSA without General Forum approval.
- Allowing applicants to submit requests to expand the RGB and SSA at any time during the year. This was formerly limited to twice annually in the spring and fall.
- Requiring project specific development agreements for requests to expand the RGB and SSA that are approved.
- Establishing a process to amend the Implementation Agreement at least every five years, and more frequently if approved by the municipalities.
- Establishing a process to expand the SSA beyond the RGB in cases where the health, safety, or welfare of Centre Region residents is threatened.

Requests to expand the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area may require a Development of Regional Impact application to be submitted with the request. The process is explained in detail in the Centre Region Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area Implementation Agreement, adopted by the municipalities in December 2013, and readopted in 2018 and 2023.

CHAPTER 4 – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND GENERAL REFERENCE

4.0 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Throughout their terms of service, members of the CRPC will frequently be faced with questions. The following list of frequently asked questions should act as a quick reference for members of the CRPC. If a member ever finds that he or she is unable to find an answer to a question in this handbook, he or she should feel free to contact the CRPA Director for further information.

Q: Who is in charge of the CRPC?

The CRPC has a chairperson who is appointed annually by a vote of the appointed CRPC members. A vice-chair is also elected to fulfill the duties of the chairperson in his or her absence. The following are some of the duties of the chairperson:

- Ensure that a quorum exists and that meetings are run in an orderly fashion.
- Respond or refer to staff all questions, whether from the floor or from a CRPC member, that should be addressed directly to the chairperson.
- Provide direction to CRPC members for the fulfillment of their responsibilities on the CRPC.
- Lead discussion of pending issues.
- Sign correspondence to municipalities that contain comments or recommendations from the CRPC

Q: What is the purpose of the CRPC and what is my role?

The primary purpose of the CRPC is to provide comments to the Centre Region municipalities or the COG General Forum on proposals forwarded to the Commission for review; to maintain and update the Regional Comprehensive Plan; and to conduct other regional planning studies. Each member of the CRPC is expected to provide recommendations and input that will have a positive effect on the quality of life experienced by the residents of the Centre Region.

Q: Who do I represent?

Each member of the CRPC is a representative of the Centre Region as a whole. While appointed by a local governing body or the Pennsylvania State University, each member of the CRPC represents the region itself and not the body by which he or she was appointed. CRPC members should feel free to voice their own

thoughts and opinions and should not feel as though they must represent the viewpoints of their local Planning Commissions or governing bodies.

Q: What should I do if I disagree with other CRPC members?

Members of the CRPC are not expected to agree with one another on all points or approaches. Being able and willing to express differing viewpoints is vital to ensuring the proper function of the Planning Commission. CRPC members should always address one another with respect, even when they disagree.

Q: What is the function of the Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)?

The CRPA provides staff support to the CRPC and is responsible for conducting planning exercises on behalf of the CRPC and the local municipalities. When an item is brought before the CRPC, a CRPA staff member will typically present information regarding the item and will be available to answer questions.

Q. Where can I find more information about planning related topics?

More information can be found online at the following websites:

- CRPC Agendas and Minutes: www.crcog.net/crpc
- Regional Planning Documents, including the Centre Region Comprehensive Plan and Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan: www.crcog.net/planning
- PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC): <http://www.dep.state.pa.us/hosting/growingsmarter/MPCCode%5B1%5D.pdf>

4.1 GLOSSARY OF COMMONLY USED REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING TERMS

The following is a glossary of commonly used planning terms, select definitions from the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), and terms specific to the Centre Region:

Accessory Building or Structure – A building or structure that is subordinate to and is used for purposes that customarily are incidental to those of the principal building or principal structure located on the same lot (for example, a freestanding garage, garden shed, or fence).

Accessory Use – A land use that is subordinate to and customarily incidental to a principal use located on the same lot.

ACT 537 Sewage Facilities Plan – An act adopted by the Pennsylvania State legislature in 1966 in order to help correct existing sewer disposal problems as well as prevent new problems. The act requires that sewage disposal for all situations is planned for, and local municipalities are largely responsible for administering the plan. The Sewer Service Area of the Centre Region is an element of the local Act 537 plan.

Adaptive Reuse – Converting obsolete or historic buildings from their original or most recent use to a new use. For example, an old manufacturing site could be converted into apartments or retail space.

Affordable Housing – Housing units that are to be occupied by low- to moderate-income persons, monthly rents, or monthly mortgage payments, including property taxes and insurance, that do not exceed 30% of that amount which represents 100% of the adjusted gross annual income for households within the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or, if not within the MSA, within the county in which the housing unit is located, divided by 12.

Agricultural operation – An enterprise that is actively engaged in the commercial production and preparation for market of crops, livestock, and livestock products and in the production, harvesting and preparation for market or use of agricultural, agronomic, horticultural, silvicultural, and aquacultural crops and commodities. The term includes an enterprise that implements changes in production practices and procedures or types of crops, livestock, livestock products or commodities produced consistent with practices and procedures that are normally engaged by farmers or are consistent with technological development within the agricultural industry.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – Federal legislation passed in 1990 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. In addition to other public and private facilities, the act requires all transportation facilities and services must be accessible to individuals with physical handicaps.

Architectural Controls – Regulations and procedures requiring development to conform to design standards intended to increase the likelihood that the structure will be in keeping with the general appearance, historical character, and/or architectural style of the structures in a surrounding area.

Arterial – A moderate or high capacity road or street that allows major traffic movements between major points in an urban area. These roads allow for speeds faster than collector and local streets and accommodate greater volumes of traffic. Arterial roads are immediately below a highway level of service.

Brownfield – An area that was previously used for industrial purposes. These usually pose environmental challenges to new developments and must be cleaned up before they can be redeveloped.

Build-Out Analysis – A study that examines an area’s capacity for development based on explicit assumptions about the area and the nature of development that is authorized.

CCMPO (Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization) – The CCMPO’s primary responsibility is to approve the use of federal funds for highway and mass transit projects within Centre County. This responsibility is fulfilled through the development and adoption of the short range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). For more information, see the definition of Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Cluster/Open Space Zoning – Commercial, residential, or mixed use development in which a significant portion of the site (e.g. 40% or greater) is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space, while the buildings (houses, shops, etc.) are clustered on the remainder of the property.

Collector – Roads that collect traffic from local streets and connect them to the arterial network. These roads can accommodate more traffic volume at faster speeds than local streets.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – A federal program administered by the Department of Housing and Community Affairs that subsidizes a wide range of community development and economic development activities.

Community Planning – An activity or profession of determining the future physical arrangement and condition of a community. It involves an appraisal of the current conditions, a forecast of future requirements, a plan for the fulfillment of these requirements, and proposals for legal, financial, and construction programs to implement the plan.

Complete Communities – Neighborhoods or districts that have interconnected transit and commercial environments with a diversity of housing types, services, and amenities.

Complete Streets – Design and operation of streets that enable safe access for all users of any age or ability, including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit users.

Comprehensive Plan – A Comprehensive Plan is a plan which dictates public policy in terms of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing for a specific geographic area. All municipalities in the State of Pennsylvania are required to have a Comprehensive Plan. A municipality that participates in a multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan, like the Centre Region Comprehensive Plan, is not required to have a Comprehensive Plan for its individual municipality.

Conservation Easement – Legal agreement a property owner makes to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on his or her property. A partial interest in the property is transferred to a qualified nonprofit, land trust, or governmental entity either by gift or purchase, in exchange for potential tax savings. As ownership changes, the land remains subject to the easement restrictions.

Dedication(s) – The transfer of ownership of property in a land development from a private owner to a government. The government is not compelled to accept an offer of dedication and may place conditions on its acceptance.

Density – The number of dwellings, buildings, or uses per acre of land.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) – The agency in the State of Pennsylvania responsible for protecting and preserving the land, air, water, and energy resources through enforcement of the State's environmental laws.

Design Standard – A minimum or maximum standard prescribed by ordinance that governs a physical characteristic of a land development, building, or structure (such as its size or shape).

Designated Growth Area – A region within a county or counties described in a municipal or multi-municipal plan that preferably includes and surrounds a city, borough, or village, and within which residential and mixed use development is permitted or planned for at densities of one unit to the acre or more, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses are permitted or planned for, and public infrastructure services are provided or planned.

Developer – Any landowner, agent of such landowner, or tenant with the permission of such landowner, who makes or causes to be made a subdivision of land or a land development.

Development of Regional Impact (DRI) – Any land development that because of its character, magnitude, or location will have substantial impact on upon the health, safety, or welfare of the public in more than one Centre Region municipality. The Region will assess the impact on public services including, but not limited to, public sewer,

public water, public transportation, fire, police, and schools when considering Development of Regional Impact applications.

Development Right – The legal right to develop a property.

Easement – A grant by a property owner of the use of his or her land by another party for a specific purpose.

Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) – As defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, an EDU is any use which produces 400 gallons of wastewater per day. In the Centre Region, the University Area Joint Authority has defined an EDU as being any use that produces 175 gallons of wastewater per day.

Fee Simple – The legal term for ownership of the bundle of property rights (such as rights of use, development, possession, transfer, & mineral rights) for a particular property.

Future Growth Area – An area of a municipal or multi-municipal plan outside of and adjacent to a designated growth area where residential, commercial industrial and institutional uses and development are permitted or planned at varying densities and public infrastructure services may or may not be provided, but future development at greater densities is planned to accompany the orderly extension and provision of public infrastructure services.

Gentrification – The term used to describe the process when residential and nonresidential land uses that cater to affluent households displace existing residential and nonresidential uses that address the needs of less affluent households.

Geographic Information System (GIS) – A computerized system that identifies the spatial location of data while allowing the mapping and analysis of that data.

Greenfield – A land area where there has been no prior construction or development activity on the site.

Greyfield – A term used to describe formally vibrant retail and commercial shopping sites that suffer from lack of reinvestment and have been made obsolete by newer, larger, and better designed malls or shopping sites. These areas usually contain high vacancy rates, empty parking lots, poor tenant mix, and underutilized real estate.

Historic Preservation – The research, protection, restoration and rehabilitation of buildings, structures, objects, districts, areas, and sites significant in the history, architecture, archaeology or culture of this state, its communities, or the nation.

Impervious Surface – A manmade surface including paved and unpaved roads, parking areas, roofs, driveways, and walkways, from which precipitation runs off rather than infiltrates.

Infill Development – Refers to the reuse or change of use of a previously developed parcel or group of parcels, or the intensification of use or change of use by remodeling or renovating an entire structure.

Infrastructure – The basic facilities such as roads, water and sewer lines, schools, power plants and communication systems on which the continuance and growth of a community depends.

Intermodal – Places where interconnectivity exists between various types of transportation. These locations may provide access to multiple types of transportation and allow you to transfer from one form of transportation to another. For example, an intermodal station may service air, rail, road, and waterway transportation.

Lot – A designated parcel, tract or area of land established by a plat or otherwise as permitted by law and to be used, developed, or built upon as a unit.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – A federally required planning body responsible for transportation planning and project selection in its region. The governor designates an MPO in every urbanized area with a population of 50,000 or more people.

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) – A metropolitan statistical area is a geographical region with a relatively high population density at its core and close economic ties throughout the area.

MGD – Million gallons per day (refers to sewage treatment or water supply flows).

Mixed-Use Development – The planning practice of allowing more than one type of use in a building or set of buildings. This can mean several different combinations of residential, commercial, industrial, office, institutional, or other land uses.

Multimodal – Relating to more than one mode of transportation. It also may mean a distribution of values that has more than one mode.

Multimunicipal Plan – A plan developed and adopted by any number of contiguous municipalities, including a joint municipal plan as authorized by this act, except that all of the municipalities participating in the plan need not be contiguous, if all of them are within the same school district.

Multimunicipal Planning Agency – A planning agency comprised of representatives of more than one municipality and constituted as a joint municipal planning commission in accordance with Article XI of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), or otherwise by resolution of the participating municipalities, to address, on behalf of the participating municipalities, multimunicipal issues, including, but not limited to, agricultural and open space preservation, natural and historic resources, transportation, housing and economic development.

Natural Area – An area of land or water that is not dominated by man-made features and that may have unusual or significant flora, fauna, geological, or similar features of scientific, ecological, or educational interest.

Nonconforming Lot – A lot the area or dimension of which was lawful prior to the adoption or amendment of a zoning ordinance, but which fails to conform to the requirements of the zoning district in which it is located by reasons of such adoption or amendment.

Nonconforming Structure – A structure or part of a structure manifestly not designed to comply with the applicable use or extent of use provisions in a zoning ordinance or amendment heretofore or hereafter enacted, where such structure lawfully existed prior to the enactment of such ordinance or amendment or prior to the application of such ordinance or amendment to its location by reason of annexation. Such nonconforming structures include, but are not limited to, nonconforming signs.

Nonconforming Use – A use, whether of land or of structure, which does not comply with the applicable use provisions in a zoning ordinance or amendment heretofore or hereafter enacted, where such use was lawfully in existence prior to the enactment of such ordinance or amendment, or prior to the application of such ordinance or amendment to its location by reason of annexation.

Official Map – A map outlined by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) which identifies elements or portions of elements of a comprehensive plan in regard to public lands and facilities.

Plat – The map or plan of a subdivision or land development, whether preliminary or final.

Preservation or Protection – When used in connection with natural and historic resources, shall include means to conserve and safeguard these resources from wasteful or destructive use, but shall not be interpreted to authorize the unreasonable restriction of forestry, mining, or other lawful uses of natural resources.

Prime Agricultural Land – Land used for agricultural purposes that contains soils of the first, second or third class as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture natural resource and conservation services county soil survey.

Regional Growth Boundary – A geographic boundary where future development is directed. The area within the regional growth boundary is capable of being served by public utilities in the near future. Areas outside of the Regional Growth Boundary should be zoned for lower density, rural uses which would not require public services.

Right of Way – Land acquired by a government entity that is used for roadway, sidewalks, rail, and the buffer between transportation infrastructure and private property.

Rural Resource Area – An area described in a municipal or multi-municipal plan within which rural resource uses including, but not limited to, agriculture, timbering, mining, quarrying and other extractive industries, forest and game lands and recreation and tourism are encouraged and enhanced, development that is compatible with or supportive of such uses is permitted, and public infrastructure services are not provided except in villages.

Sewer Service Area – The Sewer Service Area is the area identified by the regional Act 537 Plan where public sewer service will be provided in the future by the University Area Joint Authority (UAJA) sewerage system

Street – Includes street, avenue, boulevard, road, highway, freeway, parkway, lane, alley, viaduct, and any other ways used or intended to be used by vehicular traffic or pedestrians whether public or private.

Structure – Any man-made object having an ascertainable stationary location on or in land or water, whether or not affixed to the land.

Subdivision – The division or redivision of a lot, tract or parcel of land by any means into two or more lots, tracts, parcels or other divisions of land including changes in existing lot lines for the purpose, whether immediate or future, of lease, partition by the court for distribution to heirs or devisees, transfer of ownership or building or lot development: Provided, however, that the subdivision by lease of land for agricultural purposes into parcels of more than ten acres, not involving any new street or easement of access or any residential dwelling, shall be exempted.

Transferable Development Rights – The attaching of development rights to specified lands which are desired by a municipality to be kept undeveloped, but permitting those rights to be transferred from those lands so that the development potential which they represent may occur on other lands where more intensive development is deemed to be appropriate.

Zoning – A set of regulations and standards relating to the nature and extent of uses of land and structures. For example, land that is zoned residential can be used for single family housing or multiple family housing units, such as apartments, duplexes, or townhomes.