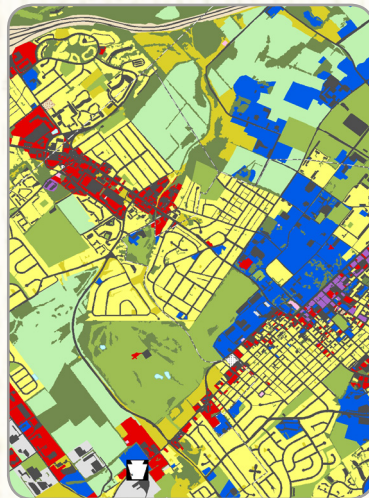


# Land Use

## INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Element provides the policy context for the Centre Region to achieve its goals for the preservation and future development of rural, suburban, and urban land uses. This Element includes a description of the key issues and findings and the goals, objectives, and policies for future land use, development, community design, agriculture protection, and resource protection in the Centre Region. This Element also includes a detailed description of the Future Land-Use Map and the related land-use designations and standards. The Land Use Element is organized into the following sections:

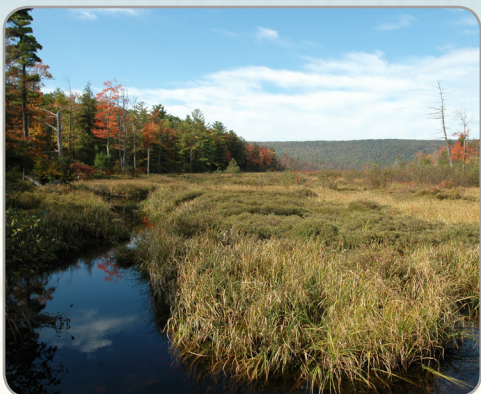
- **Key Issues and Findings**
- **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**
  - **Region-wide Planning and Community Development**
  - **Regional Growth Boundary**
  - **Sustainable and Smart Development Practices - Maps M2 - M8**
  - **Rural Residential Areas and Rural Centers**
  - **Agriculture Viability**
  - **Agricultural Land Preservation - Map M13**
  - **Agricultural and Urban Area Compatibility**



## KEY ISSUES AND FINDINGS

The following issues and findings emerged as a result of the *Inventory and Assessment of Existing Conditions* and act as a basis from which goals, objectives, and policies are identified:

1. Approximately 20% of the land area in the Centre Region is classified as developed. The remaining land is classified as undeveloped, and includes forest, vacant land, and water features, or is designated as agricultural land. The proximity and vast expanses of agricultural lands and protected natural areas, such as Rothrock State Forest, Mount Nittany, State Gamelands 176, and the Bald Eagle Ridge, indicate a fairly compact development pattern throughout the Centre Region.
2. The opening of Interstate 99 has influenced the location and the extent of new commercial development in the Centre Region.
3. Between 2000 and 2010 industrial land uses increased from 305 to 343 total acres. Approximately 94% of the Centre Region's industrial land uses are located in College, Ferguson, and Patton Townships.
4. Agricultural land use decreased by 1% between 2000 and 2010. Nearly half of all agricultural land zoned for agriculture in the Centre Region is located in Ferguson Township (11,857 acres or 46%).
5. The *2012 Regional Development Capacity Report* and *Centre County Growth Forecast 2040* indicate that land within the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area is sufficient to accommodate growth within the planning period of the Comprehensive Plan.
6. A combination of factors that include the location of prime agricultural soils, the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area, natural features, geology, environmental awareness, lifestyle choices, and access to open space have contributed to the development pattern in the Centre Region.
7. According to the U.S. Census Bureau and the Centre Region Geographic Information System, the number of people supported per acre of land decreased 35%, from 14 people per acre in 1980 to 8 per acre in 2010. In 1980, the Centre Region had a population of 62,015 people, who occupied 4,383 acres of residentially developed land, or 14 people per acre. The 2010 U.S. Census Bureau population count for the Centre Region is 92,906. There are approximately 10,680 acres of residentially developed land in the Centre Region, equating to only 8.6 people per acre of land.



Cherished landscapes and places in the Region often transcend municipal boundaries and require regional cooperation to protect for the future.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

### Region-wide Planning & Community Development

This section addresses Region-wide planning and community development efforts to address growth and development patterns in all areas of the Centre Region. Regional planning has a direct role in shaping the general character of urban and rural development that transcends municipal boundaries. This section addresses goals, objectives, and policies that encourage regional planning and community development efforts to provide a quality living environment for all existing and future residents of the Region.

**GOAL 1** - Inter-municipal and inter-agency cooperation is necessary in the planning and community development decision-making process.

#### Objective 1.1

**Coordinate regional land-use policy with implementation actions at the municipal level.**

##### Policy 1.1.1

Explore the development of uniform and complementary zoning designations and criteria for interested Centre Region municipalities.

##### Policy 1.1.2

Encourage the continued use of the official map to identify and preserve future open space areas. Create a regional working map that illustrates municipal official maps to clearly show regional connections or gaps among municipalities.

##### Policy 1.1.3

Identify sites for schools and parks in safe and convenient locations.



The complexity and dynamics of regional planning has evolved substantially over the past 50 years. Planning and preparing in a cooperative manner for the future has resulted in a “We are in it together” philosophy in the Centre Region.

## Regional Growth Boundary

The Regional Growth Boundary is one of the most effective land-management tools to guide growth in the Centre Region. The Regional Growth Boundary limits urban expansion onto farm and forest lands. Land inside the Regional Growth Boundary supports urban services such as roads, water and sewer systems, parks, schools, and fire and police protection that create places to live, work, and play. Land outside the Regional Growth Boundary is generally used for farming, forests, or large-lot single-family development at a density that does not require public sewer.

The Regional Growth Boundary limits urban sprawl and promotes the efficient use of land, public facilities, and services inside the boundary. Other benefits of the boundary include encouraging efficient land use and directing development to areas with existing roads and infrastructure required to serve new development.

**GOAL 2** - A Regional Growth Boundary allows the Centre Region to continue to guide growth.

### Objective 2.1

**Maintain a Regional Growth Boundary within which development is encouraged and urban sprawl is minimized.**

#### Policy 2.1.1

Continue to identify environmentally sensitive areas during the land development review process and locate development where there is minimal impact to environmental quality.

#### Policy 2.1.2

Provide updates the Regional Development Capacity Report in the CRPC Annual Report and conduct a detailed analysis every five years.

#### Policy 2.1.3

Periodically review the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process for potential changes and use the process to determine if the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area should be amended.

#### Policy 2.1.4

Determine if there should be a minimum density inside the Regional Growth Boundary that supports efficient use of infrastructure.

#### Policy 2.1.5

Locate future growth areas to avoid adverse impacts on identified source water protection areas for public wayer supplies.



The RGB/SSA allows efficient use of land, transportation and other public services, while helping to preserve farmland.

## Objective 2.2

**Actions related to zoning and land development must recognize the close relationship between land use and transportation impacts.**

### Policy 2.2.1

Municipalities should require regulations to provide site design features such as pedestrian and transit amenities, parks, woodland protection, landscaping, and building construction consistent with the character of the site location.

### Policy 2.2.2

Municipal subdivisions and land development ordinances must require adequate transit facilities for all proposed development within the Regional Growth Boundary.

### Policy 2.2.3

Require pedestrian and bikeway trail connections as part of the land development approval process when existing trails are adjacent or nearby a future land development site.



Sidewalks, like this one recently completed in Boalsburg encourage walking, and provide safe pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and the Village.

## Sustainable and Smart Development Practices

Sustainable and smart development practices encourage a variety and mix of land uses, such as residential, commercial, retail, office, and other uses that are increasingly viewed as an asset in many communities. Sustainable and smart development practices can contribute a number of benefits to a community, including an increase in the use of alternative transport, provision of entry-level and workforce housing, co-generational housing opportunities, and a more lively and diverse urban environment.

**GOAL 3** - Sustainable and smart development characteristics are incorporated into residential neighborhood and building designs.

## Objective 3.1

**Municipalities should consider the following points in planning for and developing new projects, and should consider retrofitting existing development to assure walkable neighborhoods, a mix of residential densities, a strong sense of place, and a mix of land uses. To achieve this, municipalities should ensure compact development plans, discourage sprawl, encourage infill, and provide a range of housing opportunities and choices.**

### Policy 3.1.1

Modify selected zoning districts to allow for a variety of land uses.

Policy 3.1.2

Develop mixed-use zoning districts and Planned Developments to allow appropriate redevelopment of strip commercial areas.

Policy 3.1.3

Integrate residential and commercial uses at densities that support continued transit access and usage.

**Objective 3.2**

**Locate the majority of industrial development within the Regional Growth Boundary in accordance with sound land planning principles and the needs of industry.**

Policy 3.2.1

Encourage the clustering of industrial land uses in locations with appropriate infrastructure.

Policy 3.2.2

Revise zoning regulations to allow municipalities the opportunity to share zoned lands and withstand legal challenges.

Policy 3.2.3

Develop adequate buffers between non-compatible land uses in the Region.

Policy 3.2.4

Primary uses in industrial zoning districts should be consistent with the purpose of the industrial zoning district, including the character of existing building(s) and the surrounding area.

Policy 3.2.5

Secondary uses in industrial zoning districts should be consistent with the purpose of the industrial district and be limited to those uses necessary to support the primary industrial use, such as administrative offices and retail sales of product.

**Objective 3.3**

**Balance the amount of vacant commercially zoned property with the needs of the Centre Region.**

Policy 3.3.1

Provide a detailed report at least every five years regarding the availability of vacant, developable land within the Regional Growth Boundary.

Policy 3.3.2

Provide an updated Zoning District Analysis every five years regarding changes in zoning and land development regulations outside the Regional Growth Boundary.

## Policy 3.3.3

Provide a summary of land developed on an annual basis in the CRPC Annual Report.

## Policy 3.3.4

Given the adequacy of the existing amount of commercially zoned land, the Centre Region municipalities should encourage the redevelopment of existing commercial property and the development of vacant commercial lands that have appropriate infrastructure.

## Objective 3.4

**Identify and develop strategies to encourage redevelopment and revitalization of under-utilized commercial properties within the requirements of redevelopment authorities in Pennsylvania.**

### Policy 3.4.1

Consider expansion of the State College Borough Redevelopment Authority to other Centre Region municipalities.

### Policy 3.4.2

Continue to implement the recommendations of the Best Practices for Development Review and Permitting report.

### Policy 3.4.3

Continue to strongly support efforts to direct the majority of growth into the Regional Growth Boundary and potentially incentivize redevelopment projects in the Region.



**GOAL 4** - New residential development is located in areas suited to establishing neighborhoods.

## Objective 4.1

**Maintain established single-family neighborhoods and buffer them from negative impacts of nearby higher-density housing.**



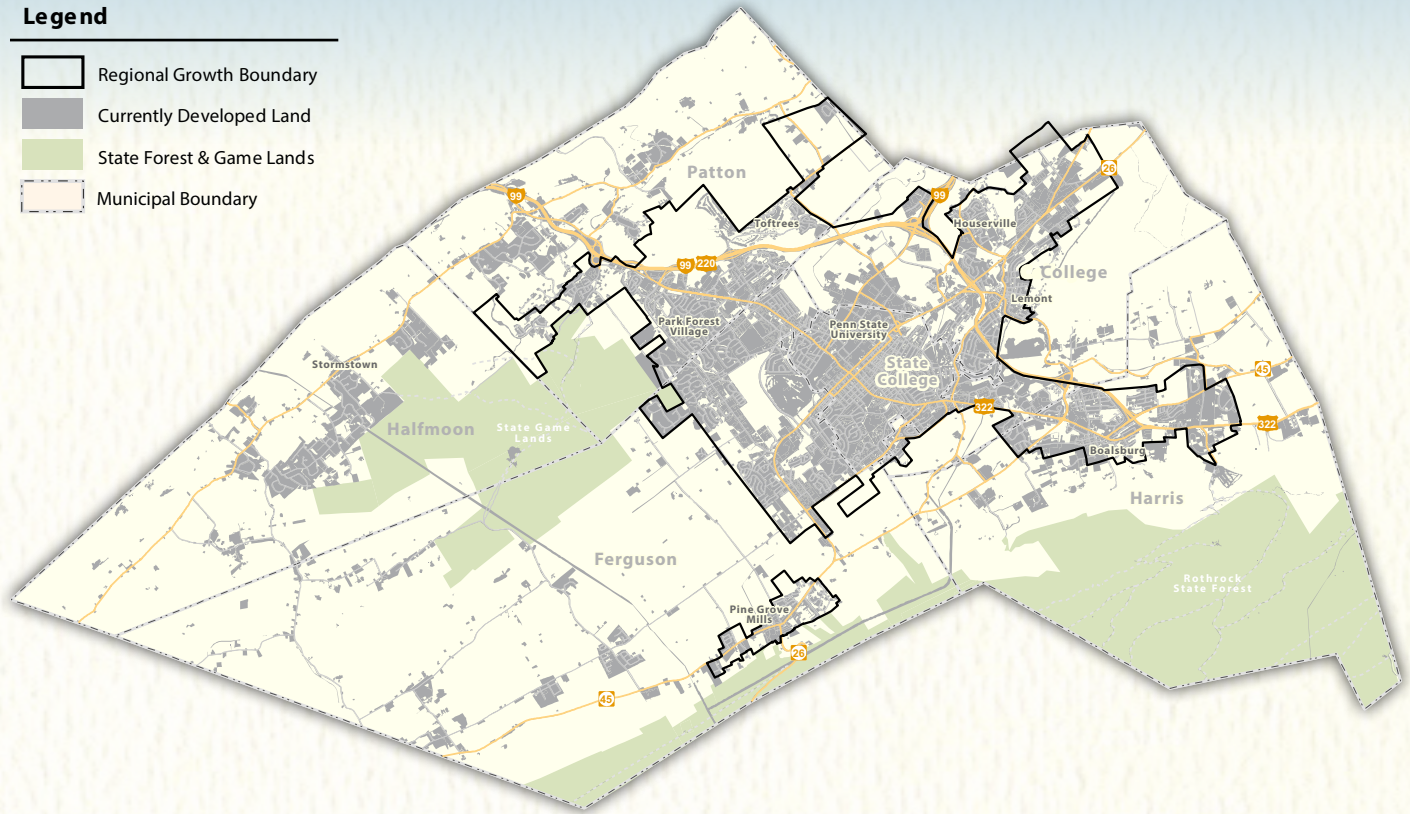
### Policy 4.1.1

Encourage residential in-fill development near established neighborhoods, villages, and planned communities in order to improve and expand parks and hike/bike trails, and reduce the costs of sprawl development.

As land uses in the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area evolve over time, it becomes increasingly important to pay attention to the physical relationship between lower and higher density uses.

**Legend**

-  Regional Growth Boundary
-  Currently Developed Land
-  State Forest & Game Lands
-  Municipal Boundary



Currently developed land in the Centre Region based off 2010 Land Use Inventory.

**Policy 4.1.2**

Continue neighborhood planning efforts with the public that will identify favorable site design features and limit environmental impact.

**Policy 4.1.3**

Modify zoning and subdivision regulations to require sidewalks and multiple street accesses, and to limit cul-de-sacs.

**Objective 4.2**

**Locate higher-density housing in areas zoned for intense mixed-use development where commercial, civic, and recreational opportunities are available.**

**Policy 4.2.1**

Revise the commercial and office zoning districts where appropriate to permit higher-density housing opportunities that will reduce traffic volume and improve transit accessibility.

**Policy 4.2.2**

Locate new housing concentrations within the Regional Growth Boundary to minimize cost and impacts on the Centre Region municipalities and residents.



## Policy 4.2.4

Consider revising zoning regulations to allow municipalities to share areas zoned for higher-density housing and prevent legal challenges.

## Objective 4.3

**Maintain a strong, diverse, and vital urban core and Downtown State College as the focal point of the Centre Region.**

### Policy 4.3.1

Implement the existing and future downtown and neighborhood plans that strengthen the downtown area as the cultural, educational, commercial, and tourism focal point of the Centre Region.

## Objective 4.4

**Encourage mixed-use development opportunities in appropriately identified areas of the Centre Region.**

### Policy 4.4.1

Encourage municipal regulations that apply to identified commercial centers throughout the Centre Region to provide for commercial, residential, and office uses adjacent to or on the same property.



## Rural Residential Areas & Rural Centers

Rural residential areas consist of areas that are developed with single-family homes on parcels that are more than one acre and generally fewer than five acres in size. These areas are characterized by large homes, narrow roads with no sidewalks, on-lot or community sewer systems, and private water wells or public water. Projects such as Trotter Farm Estates in Halfmoon Township and Aspen Heights in Harris Township are examples of this pattern of development.



Rural Centers consist of those areas outside the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area where there is a higher concentration of residential and/or commercial development that supports the rural area. Examples of Rural Centers include Stormstown, Linden Hall, Baileyville, and Fillmore.

**GOAL 5** - Rural residential development and rural centers are consistent with traditional rural lifestyles and rural character.

Residents of the Centre Region enjoy rural centers that are easily accessible and convenient to jobs in the Region.

**Objective 5.1**

**Designate rural residential lands where low densities can be sustained by infrastructure improvements such as on-lot septic systems, individual wells, and rural roads, without significantly changing the rural character, degrading the environment, or creating the necessity for urban services.**

## Policy 5.1.1

Work with municipalities to identify areas that are appropriate for rural residential development.

## Policy 5.1.2

Ensure zoning is appropriate for rural residential development patterns including adjacent zoning districts.

**Objective 5.2**

**Designate rural centers planned for a mix of residential and commercial uses to meet the needs of rural residents while retaining rural character and lifestyles.**

## Policy 5.2.1

Rural centers should be limited to rural communities and be defined by a logical outer boundary that considers the following:

- Preservation of the character of neighborhoods and communities
- Preservation of natural systems and open space
- Physical boundaries, such as streams, streets and highways, and land forms
- The ability to provide public facilities and public services in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl

## Policy 5.2.3

Commercial developments within rural centers should be of a scale and type to be primarily patronized by local residents and in some instances to provide support for resource industries, tourism, and the traveling public.

## Policy 5.2.4

Encourage developers to work with local residents within rural centers to develop plans that satisfy concerns for environmental protection, historic preservation, quality of life, property values, and preservation of open space.



Agriculture is an industry and should be recognized as such.

## Agriculture Viability

Agriculture plays a key role in shaping the heritage and the unique character of the Centre Region. A top priority in the Region is to protect existing agricultural uses while finding ways to expand the agricultural economy in the future. The goals, objectives, and policies in this subsection address the protection, expansion, and diversification of agriculture and its support industries.

**GOAL 6 - The Centre Region has a viable agricultural industry.**

### Objective 6.1

**Encourage the continued development of agricultural activities throughout the Centre Region.**

#### Policy 6.1.1

Coordinate with and support local, regional, and state agencies to encourage new economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable agricultural industries in the Centre Region.

#### Policy 6.1.2

Support the development of high-value food processing industries and the production of emerging crops and animal products that can lead to new markets for local products.

#### Policy 6.1.3

Identify locations where on-site farm product sales have good economic potential, such as on major roadways, and support the creation of agricultural tours and trails that promote agricultural tourism.

#### Policy 6.1.4

Support private and public farmers markets and produce stands that sell locally grown farm products by working with local Chambers of Commerce and agricultural groups.

#### Policy 6.1.5

Promote the connection between local farmers and consumers by enhancing access for local farmers to local markets, including restaurants, institutions, and schools.

#### Policy 6.1.6

Create municipal regulations that permit diversified farm-based uses, such as farm-based retail and agritourism, in agricultural zones as a means to promote economic viability while preserving the Region's agricultural heritage.

#### Policy 6.1.7

Evaluate and revise municipal regulations to ensure that farming activities are promoted and not hindered in appropriate districts.

#### Policy 6.1.8

Promote the use of community gardens, CSAs (community supported agriculture), Buy Fresh Buy Local programs, programs that connect farmers with schools and restaurants, and farmers markets to improve the growth, sales, distribution, and consumption of healthy, locally grown foods.

## Agricultural Land Preservation

The Centre Region is committed to protecting productive agricultural land and the agricultural industry. This subsection includes goals, objectives, and policies that address various agricultural land preservation and conservation strategies as well as farmland conservation programs managed by other agencies that acquire and hold conservation easements.

**GOAL 7** - Preserve and conserve land used for productive agriculture, potentially-productive agricultural land, and agricultural-support facilities over the long term.



### Objective 7.1

**Encourage enrollment in Agricultural Security Areas and participation in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program in appropriate locations.**

#### Policy 7.1.1

Update Centre Region municipal Agricultural Security Area maps every seven years.

#### Policy 7.1.2

Support the efforts of public, private, and nonprofit organizations to preserve agricultural areas in the Region through dedicated conservation easements.

#### Policy 7.1.3

Collaborate with landowners, cities, state and federal agencies, colleges, Penn State University, stakeholders, and community-based organizations to continue and expand agricultural preservation in the Region.

## Policy 7.1.4

Consider reasonable minimum permitted parcel size in areas designated agricultural to discourage land divisions for rural residential purposes and maintain parcels large enough for efficient commercial agriculture production.

## Objective 7.2

**Encourage municipal regulations that support agriculture as the primary use on property that has prime agricultural soils and is planned for and zoned as agriculture.**

### Policy 7.2.1

Continue to review existing zoning districts for compatibility with the future land-use designations.

### Policy 7.2.2

Review subdivision and land development ordinances for compatibility with future land-use designations.



A 3-D model showing a before (top) and after (bottom) scenario of how a proposed development could shape the landscape in an agricultural area in the Centre Region.

## Agricultural and Urban Area Compatibility

Reducing urban and agricultural land use conflicts plays a critical role in maintaining productive agriculture in the Region. Farming is considered an industrial activity, and the expansion of urban uses adjacent to farmland often creates conflicts that threaten the viability of existing agricultural uses. To combat this problem, the state adopted a Right-to-Farm Act, which requires prospective residents of new development near agricultural areas to be notified that inconveniences and discomfort associated with normal farming activities may occur, and that any established agricultural operations will not be considered a nuisance. The Agriculture Community and Rural Environment program (Act 38 or ACRE) may also be utilized to improve compatibility between land uses.

In addition to nuisance issues, residential development in rural areas and the parcelization of agricultural lands into smaller properties reduces the efficiency and viability of commercial farming. The policies in this section seek to minimize land-use conflicts between urban and agricultural uses, reduce farmland conversion, limit further parcelization of farmland, and establish adequate buffers between agricultural and urban uses.

**GOAL 8 - Conflicts between agricultural practices and land development activities are minimized.**

**Objective 8.1**

**Minimize conflicts between productive agricultural areas and urban land uses, and discourage the “parcelization” and conversion of large agricultural holdings into rural residential parcels or urban uses.**

## Policy 8.1.1

Require buffers between proposed non-agricultural uses and adjacent productive agricultural operations to protect farms, dairies, and agriculture-related production facilities from conflicts with non-agricultural uses, specifically residential development.

## Policy 8.1.2

Establish agricultural buffer standards based on the type of agricultural operation to be applied to development proposals adjacent to productive agricultural land and agriculture-related facilities.

## Policy 8.1.3

Require a minimum buffer between new residential development and existing agricultural operations, and establish design/maintenance guidelines for developers and property owners.

## Policy 8.1.4

Encourage clustering of homes on rural parcels to minimize interference with agricultural operations.

## Policy 8.1.5

Consider updating the municipal zoning ordinances to properly designate and provide minimum lot standards for agricultural districts that promote farming. Some A-1 zoning districts imply agriculture is the primary and desired use, when in fact large-lot residential can be the primary and desired use.

**Objective 8.2**

**Use rural preservation techniques for developments outside the Regional Growth Boundary.**

## Policy 8.2.1

Revise zoning regulations to encourage the preservation of open space, stream corridors, sensitive natural features, protection of public water supplies, and continued agricultural activity while allowing property owners to develop homes on a portion of their land.

## Policy 8.2.2

Protect and encourage agricultural productivity outside the Regional Growth Boundary.