

E. PUBLIC UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN

The County plan, regarding waste water facilities, is to encourage economic efficiency projects and environmental upgrade projects. This includes projects which will promote local growth and reduce existing adverse environmental impacts.

The steady growth of the powdered metal industry continues to be somewhat limited by inadequate supporting infrastructure in Elk County. The County supports infrastructure upgrade, expansion, and system replacement simultaneously with industrial/commercial expansion projects to enable infrastructure needs to be met.

Efforts to facilitate local growth in the powder metal industry reflecting this concept are already visible in Elk County.

For example, four (4) of the powdered metal companies located in the City of St. Marys area worked to implement a cost effective method to reduce copper loading at the City's wastewater treatment plant. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had determined that copper levels should be reduced in plant effluent. This reduction in effluent copper levels will help to facilitate continued growth in the local powder metal industry by enabling sufficient treatment at the City of St. Marys treatment facility.

The County Plan, regarding energy conservation, is to increase public awareness of the need to conserve energy and promote projects that increase energy efficiency. The County will serve as an information center for energy conservation information and support local conservation efforts. The county is proud to acknowledge efforts of its local industries actively pursuing this effort.

For example, St. Marys Pressed Metal, Inc. won the DEP 1996 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence for recycling efforts including:

1. Source reduction to eliminate hazardous materials.
2. Elimination of all industrial wastewater discharges thereby eliminating pretreatment costs for wastewater and providing more plant capacity of the Ridgway Borough Sewage Treatment Plant.

The County Plan will promote projects which comply with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan outlined on page IIA-10 of this plan.

The County will encourage local youth to participate in gainful energy projects. Elk County is proud to acknowledge the Ridgway School District in winning the 1996 DEP Commercial Recycling Award for its organic waste recycling program.

Comprehensive Plan: Elk County, Pennsylvania

The County will attempt to encourage school districts to participate in such programs to further similar efforts such as the Delancy Awards Program. The Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors presents an annual award for youth programs that improve quality of life and involve youth in the community. For more information contact:

PSATS
3001 Gettysburg Road
Camp Hill, PA 177011-7296

(717) 763-0930

The Department of Environmental Protection periodically sponsors and announces youth conferences and contests to engage youth in recycling issues and offer scholarship awards, savings bonds or other incentives. For more information contact:

Dept. of Environmental Protection
Chief of Recycling and Markets
717-787-7382

The County will promote refurbishment of vacant industrial/commercial complexes with existing infrastructure to minimize sprawl and to minimize infrastructure costs. The Stackpole complex represents an example of this effort.

The County supports the development of new infrastructure where needed to abate existing health and safety threats such as:

1. Inadequate potable water supplies
2. Discharges of untreated domestic wastewater to streams (wild cat sewers)
3. Inadequate water supplies for fire protection

The County plans to consider a County wide Act 537 Plan (Sewage Facilities Plan) update to accommodate future sewage handling needs, particularly outside of suggested growth boundaries. The County will encourage municipal level Act 537 planning on a drainage basin basis for watershed improvement.

The County will give priority to public sewer system upgrades and extensions in established growth boundaries over those projects which extend outside of established growth boundaries or are otherwise felt to support sprawl and contribute to economic stress related sprawl.

The County plan, regarding solid waste, will be to locally promote Eco-Industrial parks. Eco-Industrial parks consist of individual industries with a mutualistic dependency on one another for feed stocks in their processing. The feed stock of one industry is a "would be waste product" of another industry that would otherwise necessitate disposal.

The County plan, regarding energy conservation, is to support the development and implementation of local energy conservation programs.

F. ELK COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PLAN

F1. Introduction

This plan outlines several specific actions to begin to address the County Goals and Objectives outlined in Section IIA, page IIA-11 of this plan.

It is important for transportation planning to be carefully coordinated with other Comprehensive Plan components including the Land Use plan, the Community Facilities plan, and the Housing and Economic plans.

Some of the vehicular transportation problems in Elk County are structural in nature. Most problems are functional. Those identified include:

- Short sight distances due to grade and curvature;
- Congestion resulting from difficult intersection configurations (the diamond in St. Marys);
- Congestion resulting from the carrying capacity of “the diamond” exceeding design capacity;
- Congestion resulting from seasonal tourism use (Rt. 555 and Winslow Road in Benezette Township);
- The lack of local street intersections or cul-de-sacs (dead ends);
- Lack of easy ingress/egress by emergency vehicles.

Local municipal maintenance of Township, Borough and City roads including tar and chipping and some skin patching and crack sealing appears to be ongoing and generally adequate.

F.2 Improving Accessibility

Improvements to the Continental One Route 219 Corridor need to be supported with consideration given to careful planning of exits, numbers and in location, as not to encourage sprawl-type development. While the upgrade of this 219 Corridor to a functional thoroughfare is questionable over the next several decades due to the lack of recognition by state and federal funding agencies, it is important to support improvements in the Wilcox, St. Marys, Ridgway, and Johnsonburg areas, and more important to plan for an interim solution to economy and transportation impediments outside of this potential improvement to the 219 corridor.

This plan supports further study of alternative means of connecting Route 255 and Route 120 to lessen congestion in the diamond area of the City of St. Marys. Reconfiguration is only recommended to improve safety. This plan supports re-routing the Johnsonburg road to meet Route 120 near the waste water treatment facility. The diamond should be preserved for its historical and present day cultural values as well as for its future

potential as tourism industries grow in and around Elk County.

This plan supports the upgrade projects outlined in section IF of the plan for 1999.

F.3 Reducing Congestion

- Assist local industries in planning for improved plant access.

The County will encourage development of subdivision rules and regulations that:

- minimize driveways that directly dump to major routes with current congestion problems and encourage new subdivisions to have access located on collector streets;
- require turnaround and cul-de-sacs in appropriate locations to avoid impediment to emergency vehicles, yet minimize the use of cul-de-sacs by promoting through traffic.

F.4 Public Transportation

This plan encourages municipal governments to consider conducting a need analysis to determine the demand existing from the communities' elderly, low income, and handicapped residents to justify requesting extension of local public transportation system services.

Several studies have already demonstrated the inadequacy of the present system including:

- The route schedules of the current public transportation systems preclude some low income persons from being able to take employment in service industries with employment opportunities for evening or weekend work;
- Persons have expressed difficulty in affording the costs associated with the Area Transportation Authority system.

The County plans to encourage the Area Transportation Authority (ATA) to expand public transportation to those who, for reason of income, and/or disability, cannot drive themselves, and to provide such persons access to the community, and to access the need to expand hours of services to existing service areas. The County also encourages the development of such facilities to be located in already existing ATA service areas so as not to contribute to increased costs for such services.

F.5 Pedestrian Systems

Sidewalks

Sidewalk repair is usually not politically popular or rated highly as a grant fundable project. While local City/Borough code permits assessment for sidewalks, assessment is a seldom desired mechanism.

Where upgrades to sidewalk systems are needed, a plan prioritizing upgrades should be developed. Plans are encouraged to consider handicapped accessibility, the places where single sided walkways are adequate as opposed to where sidewalks are necessary on both sides of a street, where improvements are needed to enhance safety (pedestrian access to schools), and where sidewalk improvements will allow interconnection with recreational pathway systems.

Where possible, integration of small town community sidewalk systems with pedestrian trails and pathway systems should be encouraged. This integration of a natural and scenic experience with a downtown (possibly historic business or historic residential district) serves to build community intrigue and character and may serve to capture tourist expenditures locally.

Walking and Hiking Trails

Pathway systems using publicly owned lands, lands of historical significance, and linkage into sidewalk systems should be encouraged to enhance recreation and tourism opportunities.

The County will support the Lumber Heritage Program in the development of recreational pedestrian systems to enhance tourism, cultural preservation, and education.

F.6 Rail System

Like the rest of Pennsylvania, use of rail systems for transportation is on the decline. The few railroads which transverse Elk County are being replaced with freight-by-truck operations. The future use of rail systems in Elk County for primary uses including passenger-service, freight, or tourism will depend largely on the future of American railroads in general, a discussion beyond the scope of this study.

G PUBLIC SERVICES AND RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION PLAN

G.1 Introduction

This section develops a public service plan and recreation plan based on the inventory of such facilities in Section IG of this document. Most development of such services in Counties are usually more so the responsibility of individual municipal governments. The County plan establishes a framework for needed improvement and supports local efforts in the area.

G.2 Public Services Plan

The County encourages each municipality to inventory existing public and municipal service facilities for function (usability by all interest groups, i.e. use by elderly, use by youth) such as fire/police, and A.D.A. compliance. Municipalities are encouraged to prioritize identified needed facilities and facility upgrades.

Prioritization may be useful in grant procurement.

G.3 Recreation Plan

The County encourages land use planning on a municipal scale, consistent with this Comprehensive Plan and plan objectives, in order to achieve predetermined recreational goals.

The few structures serving as community centers in the outlying county areas are, for the most part, former school buildings in need of major renovation and rehabilitation efforts. Community center opportunities in the County are, overall, limited to structures that do not adequately meet the needs of local interest groups for meetings and gatherings.

Although the State Game Lands, State Parks, and the ANF provide great out-of-doors recreational opportunities, small municipal parks and recreation areas are needed. Nearby opportunities can not substitute for local opportunity. It is local opportunity that provides a focal point for both tourist and local resident gatherings. Development of municipal park opportunities is encouraged to enhance the quality of life for both youth and elderly citizens.

Community improvements are recommended to make Elk County's municipalities increasingly more attractive and more marketable for local, county and regional agencies in their pursuit of economic development opportunities. The County overall will gain benefits and opportunities associated with promoting tourism locally.

Community improvements committees are encouraged which may consist of, for example, community members representing education, religious establishments, local retail, senior citizens, youth, the Planning Commission, and nearby local industry.

Development of small municipal parks including, for example, gazebos, tees, benches, and attractive landscaping can serve as a showpiece for residents, visitors, and travelers and provide a focal point for social, civic, and cultural activities within convenient access of local businesses, and nearby communities.

Additionally, indoor recreational opportunities are needed in the County for elderly citizen groups and youth groups alike, i.e. swimming pools, senior citizen centers, skating, recreation halls.

Quality of life is a concern voiced at all public meetings in development of this plan with a large emphasis on limited opportunity for the County's youth. Quality of life, in terms of recreational opportunity, for this group in particular, is evident. The survey indicated that 88% of survey participants felt that the availability and activities of youth centers should be increased in their community. Additionally

1. 71% of respondents felt that parks should be increased
2. 74% of respondents felt that recreation centers should be increased
3. 46% of respondents felt that tennis courts should be increased
4. 63% of respondents felt that biking trails should be increased
5. 60% of respondents felt that walking trails should be increased
6. 46% of respondents felt that athletic fields should be increased
7. 71% of respondents see a need for increased indoor recreational facilities
8. 90% of respondents agree that youth/teen centers should be increased
9. 64% of respondents were willing to incur more taxes for recreational facilities

This plan encourages municipalities to contact Life and Independence For Today (LIFT) for assistance in ADA compliance as structures used for public meetings and gatherings are constructed or renovated. LIFT is a source of ADA compliance information including, but not limited to, handicapped accessibility counseling information on cost savings for construction related to accessibility and information on tax credit and tax exemptions for accessibility related activities. An example is that renovation in excess of \$5,000.00/year is eligible for a tax credit equal to ½ of the accessibility portion of construction costs.

These types of credits/exemption also apply to municipal park development/upgrades.

G.4 Encouraging Recreation

The County plans to encourage recreation. Some of Elk County's municipalities are capable of capturing more of the region's tourist traffic passing through or near to them.

The County would encourage municipal parks and the exploration of grants, trusts, and other resources, including donations of money and volunteer work from community-minded citizens and community service organizations. It is recommended that communities follow on a theme (e.g. timbering or other theme) and develop a coordinated plan for the preservation and development around the selected theme (e.g. facades, signs, and perhaps a community park).

Other private-sector investments could be complemented with community improvements (e.g. sidewalks, small trees, and benches).

The County encourages the seeking of funds such as funding through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Community Grant Program to study and inventory recreation resources and needs. Funding is up to 100%. Small communities are also eligible for up to 100% funding for design and material costs for park rehabilitation up to \$20,000 or 100% of project costs. Projects over \$20,000, require a 50/50 match.

Preservation of land development of historical and cultural resources is encouraged. The Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program can be a source of funding to inventory, preserve, and enhance historical, cultural, and recreational resources to stimulate tourism and business growth.

G.5 Environmental Conservation Plan

The County plans to encourage conservation of natural resources in all other Comprehensive Plan components, i.e. housing, recreation, transportation, land use. Additionally, the County will encourage projects which fulfill the objectives outlined on pages IIA-8, IIA-9, IIA-10, IIA-11, IIA-13, and IIA-14.

For example, the County will encourage the endeavors of Trout Unlimited to remove old dams and structures affiliated with old industries, such as the dam in Ridgway associated with the Elliot Company, in their effort to improve the habitat for the native trout population. This project is in accordance with the County's Environmental Objective #8 on page IIA-9 of this plan.

The County further encourages the implementation of development tools that encourage the incorporation of green spaces and natural areas into planned developments and residential subdivisions. Environmental conservation should be considered in all the other planning aspects, as it can not be separated from transportation, recreation, land use, housing, or the economic plans found herein.

G.6 Community Health

The County endorses the implementation plan outlined in the Community Health Needs Assessment of Elk, Potter and Cameron Counties, prepared by the St. Marys Regional Medical Center and the Charles Cole Memorial Hospital and Tripp, Umbach, and Associates. See page IG-8. This plan should be consulted by interested persons for ongoing implementation.

H. LAND USE PLAN

H.1 Introduction/Historical Overview

Land use planning is one of the roles of local government which, in broad terms, guides the activities of citizens and of property owners on land, including the placement of improvements and the way in which improvements are constructed. Land use decisions result from varied social, environmental, economic, and legal factors and should reflect the desires and interests of all citizens and property holders.

Without comprehensive land use planning, individual developers often present plans which may conflict with other goals and objectives of the larger community's comprehensive land use planning or lack of cohesive planning. With coordinated development, the same development can occur while not compromising other community goals and objectives.

It is clear, looking historically at development in Elk County, that development (meaning house, business, industries, infrastructure, highways) has had an effect on economy, environment, and quality of life that is not always optimum.

The 1968 County Comprehensive Plan provided information on land use. This information is compared to land use in 1998 in the following table:

LAND USE	1968	1998
Residential	0.85%	6%
Commercial	0.05%	<1%
Public-Semi Public	0.65%	<1%
Forest (Total)	91.35%	88%
Forest (National)	21.74%	20%
Forest (State)	24.65%	23%
Forest (Private)	44.96%	45%
Industrial	0.10%	<1%
Open(Agriculture & Vacant)	7.0%	5%
Total	100%	100%
Sources	1968 Elk County Comprehensive Plan	Elk County Windshield Survey