

SUMMARY

Carlisle Borough

Comprehensive Plan



SUMMARY

CARLISLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to establish overall policies for the development and preservation of Carlisle over the next 15 years. This Plan is not by itself a regulation, but is intended to provide the policy direction for changes to the Borough's development regulations. The Comprehensive Plan mainly addresses Goals, Land Use and Housing, Historic Preservation, the Downtown, Community Facilities and Services, Transportation, Natural Features, and ways to Put this Plan into Action.

Goals:

THE MAJOR DIRECTION OF THIS PLAN

VISION STATEMENT

Carlisle: a premier town with a strong sense of community identity and an excellent quality of life, which makes it a superb place to live, learn, work, visit, shop and play.

- A Balanced Community: A small town in spirit and a small city in amenities. The historic and quaint charm of the past centuries, evolving to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Preserving our natural resources while promoting smart growth.
- Forward looking and responsible in community and economic development.
- A caring and engaged community, with unity in diversity.



Land Uses and Housing

- Protect and enhance Carlisle's quality of life as a traditional medium-sized town, with a well-balanced mix of uses.
- Promote pedestrian-friendly "human scale" development that is not overly dense and that includes substantial landscaping.
- Extend the best features of older development into newer development.
- Provide for compatible land use patterns that avoid conflicts between different uses.
- Strengthen the Downtown as the business, entertainment, cultural and civic center for the region.
- Strengthen residential neighborhoods, with an emphasis on encouraging home-ownership, rehabilitating older buildings, and avoiding incompatible development.
- Further enhance the diversity of Carlisle's population, uniting persons of varying ages, incomes, and racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- Improve the visual attractiveness of Carlisle and the surrounding region, with an emphasis upon major entranceways that create a first impression upon visitors.
- Promote appropriate types of businesses in various areas of the Borough towards controlling truck traffic and minimizing impacts on residential communities.



OVERALL MISSION STATEMENT

The citizens of Carlisle will continually strive to make Carlisle an even greater place in which to live, work, learn and play. These efforts will emphasize an active downtown, strong neighborhoods, an attractive living environment, preservation of historic buildings, economic growth, high-quality life-long education, a strong sense of community, citizen involvement, regional cooperation, abundant recreation, preserved natural areas, and the celebration of the arts and culture.



Economic Development

- Stress a strong diversified economy that generates stability, sufficient tax revenues and wide employment opportunities.
- Make sure that residents have the practical job skills needed by employers - to help individuals advance and to attract and retain businesses.
- Work to take full advantage of the Army War College, Dickinson College, Dickinson School of Law, the School District and the many other strong institutions in the region.
- Emphasize tourism that is built upon the area's heritage, arts and culture, and recreational assets.
- Encourage redevelopment of existing buildings and properties to take advantage of the increasing growth in technology-related fields.



Historic Preservation

- Encourage appropriate reuse and historic rehabilitation of older buildings, as well as encouraging new construction that is consistent with historic surroundings.



Community Facilities and Services

- Provide high-quality municipal and community facilities and services in the most cost-efficient manner, including a renovated community center and improved police facilities.



Transportation

- Work with PennDOT and adjacent municipalities to make cost-effective improvements to the region's street and highway system - to minimize congestion and improve safety.
- Seek to reduce the amount of truck traffic that passes through the Downtown.
- Promote increased use of public transit, bicycling, walking and carpooling.
- Seek commuter rail service from Carlisle to Center City Harrisburg and other destinations in the region.



Natural Features

- Protect important natural features, with a special emphasis upon the Letort Spring Run and mature trees.



Putting this Plan Into Action

- Continually work to put this Plan into action - through a program of updated planning and many short-term actions within a long-range perspective.
- Promote substantial citizen input, including making sure residents are well-informed about community issues and encouraging volunteer efforts to improve the community.
- Provide a leadership role in bringing together governments, groups and interested persons to cooperate on key regional issues.
- Maximize communications, coordination and cooperative efforts between Carlisle, the School District, adjacent townships, the County and other agencies and organizations.

Land Use and Housing Plan

The Land Use and Housing Plan recommends policies concerning residential, business and institutional development and redevelopment. An overriding goal is to minimize conflicts between different land uses - especially conflicts with homes. At the same time, to strengthen Carlisle's economy and the areas's employment choices, we need to spur business investment in appropriate areas.

Land Use Plan Map and Categories

This section describes Future Land Use policies for areas shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map. Most of these categories are intended to relate to zoning districts.

Major Buffers - The Land Use Plan uses a tree-pattern to highlight certain locations where major buffers of landscaped green space should be provided, particularly between homes and highways, and between homes and new business development.

Parks and Open Space - This category mainly includes existing Borough parks. This category also includes the proposed 200 feet wide linear park between Valley Meadows and Nottingham and the proposed industrial development in adjacent parts of South Middleton. This park will include a trail and a landscaped earth berm. The Letort Spring Run is discussed in the Natural Features section.



Major Trails - The Land Use Plan recommends recreation trails throughout the western part of Carlisle. In addition, the completion of a trail along the Letort Spring Run is endorsed, which connects to a "rails-to-trails" line to Mount Holly Springs and the Appalachian Trail. A recreation pathway should also be sought connecting the Army Heritage Center in Middlesex to Carlisle.

Major Community Facilities/Institutional - This category includes major community facilities, including Dickinson College, The Dickinson School of Law of the Pennsylvania State University and public schools.



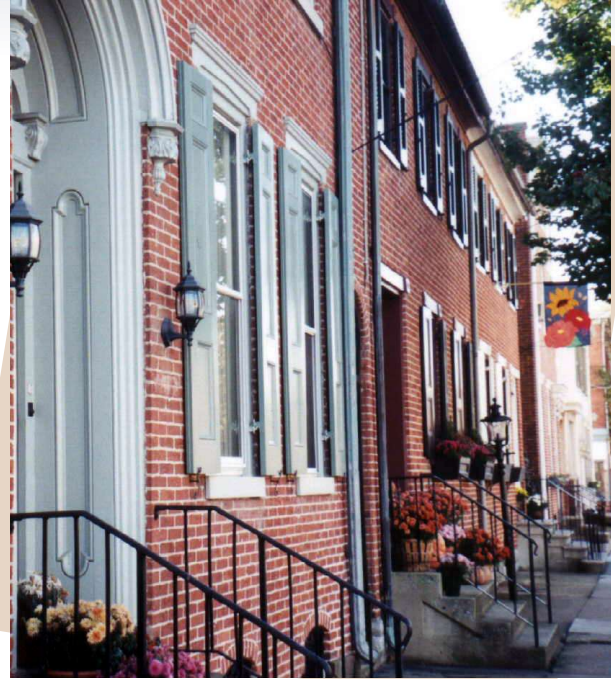
Low Density Residential - These areas are mainly intended to continue to provide for single family detached houses on approximately 1/4 acre (10,000 square feet) lots. In undeveloped areas adjacent to the Turnpike or proposed industrial development, cluster single family development is encouraged. This could allow reduced lot sizes if a minimum of percent of the land area is permanently preserved in open space. This method is known as “clustering of housing.” The goal is to have a heavily, landscaped buffer between new homes and a highway or industries that will increase the desirability of these areas for housing.



Medium Density Residential - This category is mainly intended to primarily provide for single family detached houses, side-by-side twin houses, townhouses and apartments at a density of 5 to 10 homes per acre. This Plan recommends that several existing undeveloped High Density Residential areas be changed to Medium Density Residential. This is to carry out goals of maintaining a moderate density that is consistent with existing older neighborhoods and seeking to increase the rate of homeownership in Carlisle.

High Density Residential - These areas are intended to provide opportunities for a full range of housing at a density of to 14 homes per acre. Most of these areas are occupied by existing apartment developments.

Town Center Residential - These areas mainly include older neighborhoods that have a mix of housing types, including many rowhouse neighborhoods. The goal is to maintain the character of these areas.



Traditional Residential - This category is proposed to include a new zoning district to encourage the redevelopment of the site of the main Carlisle Hospital buildings for new housing that will be consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. It also would enhance the character of existing older neighborhoods, by making sure that any new “infill” development is compatible with adjacent homes. For example, front porches, street trees and landscaped front yards should be required. Parking and garages should be accessed from rear alleys. If an alley cannot be provided, then a narrow driveway should pass along the side of a home from the street to a rear garage. These areas should mainly provide for single family detached houses with minimum lot sizes of approximately 7,000 square feet. Where most of the buildings on a block have the same setback, any new building should be required to have a similar setback. This zoning district should be used to protect the historic character of the entryway into Carlisle along N. Hanover Street north of the railroad. It also should be used where there are concentrations of historically significant architecture in residential districts that are not protected by the Historic District Ordinance. These areas include parts of S. Hanover Street and an area along E. Ridge St. west of the Letort Spring Run and north of Lamberton School.

“...a premier town with a strong sense of community...”

Central Business - The downtown should continue to provide for a balanced mix of residential, retail, service, restaurant, governmental, office, institutional and other compatible uses. The goal is to maintain a historic pedestrian-orientation. Commercial uses that are most likely to spur demolition should continue to be prohibited, such as drive-through restaurants, gas stations, auto sales and auto repair.



Shopping Center Commercial - This category includes the two large shopping centers, both of which are experiencing a large amount of redevelopment. The goal is to encourage intensified reuse or redevelopment of these sites, mainly for commercial development. The emphasis should be upon making sure that traffic access from the site is properly managed.

General Commercial - This category mainly applies to highway-oriented commercial areas, where a wide range of commercial uses would be appropriate. This should include provisions for heavier commercial uses, such as gas stations and auto repair. In most cases, these areas are not immediately adjacent to historic residential neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Commercial - This category mainly includes commercial areas that are closer to residential neighborhoods and historic areas. These areas should provide for most types of commercial uses, but not the heaviest uses such as gas stations and auto repair.

Entryway Business - With the opening of the Army Heritage Museum, Army Heritage Drive and E. North Street have the potential of becoming a major link for tourists to the Downtown. This new zoning district is intended to help serve the needs of visitors, while improving the attractiveness of this entryway into the Borough. This area is intended to provide for a mix of commercial (including retail and restaurants), office and light industrial uses (such as assembly, printing and publishing). A well-landscaped area should be required adjacent to public streets, with landscaped screening of outdoor industrial storage.

Office/Residential - This zoning district was created to address a difficult situation including existing homes along the west side of Allen Road north of the Ritner Highway, across the street from new industrial development. The current zoning allows the conversion of the existing homes into small offices. This could be expanded to allow additional commercial uses - if lots are merged and traffic access is coordinated. This is to avoid a situation where each lot has an intense commercial use with its own driveway onto Allen Road.

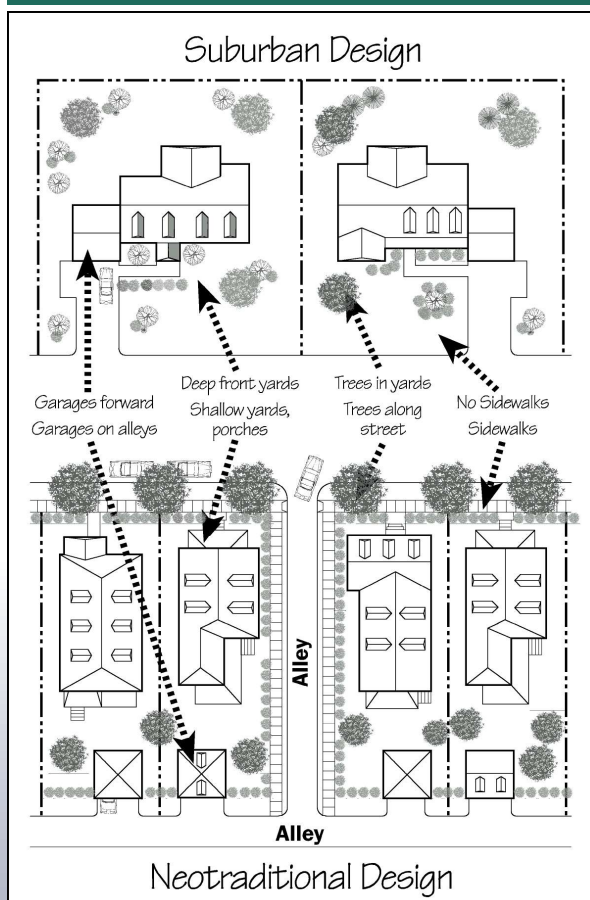
General Industrial - This category is intended to provide opportunities for a wide range of industrial uses, such as manufacturing, offices and warehousing.

Light Industrial - This Plan recommends an overall goal of encouraging business development in the West End of Carlisle in an attractive campus-style type of development. This should include a mix of light industrial and office park development, with limited commercial development that is designed to primarily serve employees. The emphasis should be upon extensive landscaping and green space, particularly highly visible green space along main roads.

- New development that is most likely to generate high volumes of tractor-trailer truck traffic should be avoided, particularly in areas south of Ritner Highway. Large warehouse/distribution uses and truck terminals should be limited to the General Industrial zoning district. Great attention is needed to ensure compatibility between business and residential areas, including setbacks and landscaped earth berms.

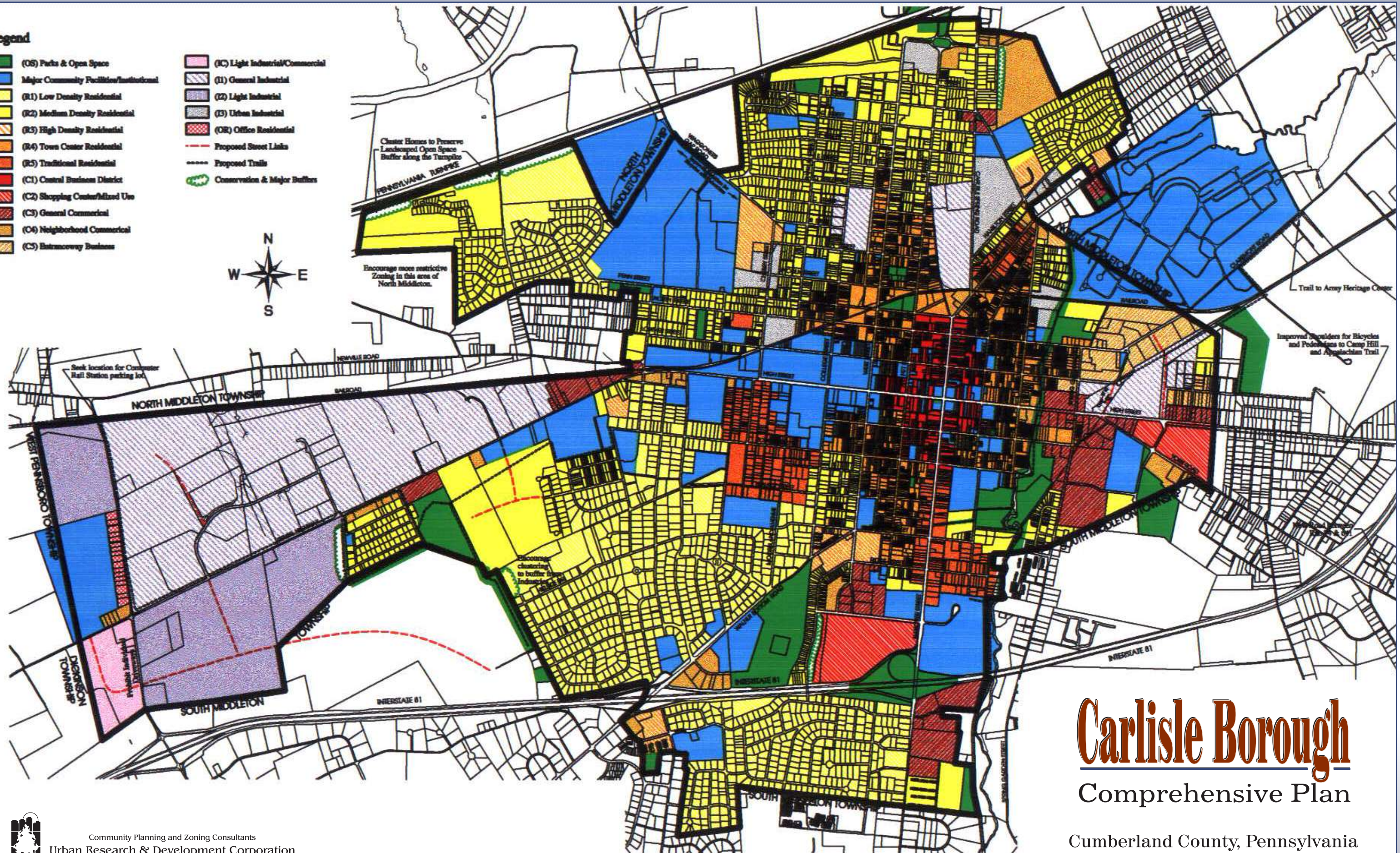
- One objective is to establish a high-quality environment that will help attract new employers to the area. Many businesses with on-site sales activities want an attractive setting, and want to know that if they invest in a quality building, the next lot will not be occupied by an unattractive use.

Suburban Design Vs. NeoTraditional Design



Legend

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| (OS) Parks & Open Space | (IC) Light Industrial/Commercial |
| Major Community Facilities/Institutional | (I1) General Industrial |
| (R1) Low Density Residential | (I2) Light Industrial |
| (R2) Medium Density Residential | (I3) Urban Industrial |
| (R3) High Density Residential | (OR) Office Residential |
| (R4) Town Center Residential | Proposed Street Links |
| (R5) Traditional Residential | Proposed Trails |
| (C1) Central Business District | Conservation & Major Buffers |
| (C2) Shopping Center/Mixed Use | |
| (C3) General Commercial | |
| (C4) Neighborhood Commercial | |
| (C5) Entranceway Business | |



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Comprehensive Plan

Cumberland County, Pennsylvania



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- An emphasis is needed upon landscaping regulations, which is the best tool the Borough has to improve the appearance of development. This includes requiring a planting strip along major roads. Loading docks and truck parking should be placed in less visible locations, and be screened by landscaping.

- A certain amount of commercial development is beneficial within or next to an industrial/office development to avoid the need for employees to travel long distances for lunch and daily necessities.

- Driveways of uses should first enter onto an internal road, before the traffic enters onto a main road. The internal road should be coordinated among adjacent tracts and should enter a main road at a carefully chosen location, preferably with a traffic signal.

Urban Industrial - This new zoning district is proposed to address smaller industrial sites that are surrounded by homes. The goal is to make sure that any new uses of these buildings do not cause significant nuisances or hazards for the surrounding residents. These areas should provide for a range of light industrial uses, but with zoning approval required from the Zoning Hearing Board. This process will still allow industrial uses, but will provide for careful review of potential nuisances (such as noise and late night operations) and hazards (particularly from hazardous substances).

Light Industrial/Commercial - This existing zoning district would continue to apply to land along Carlisle's western border south of the Ritner Highway and west of Allen Road/Route 465. This area is intended to provide for the type of development described in the Light Industrial district. In addition, these areas should provide for limited types of commercial development that are mainly intended to serve motorists traveling along I-81 and employees of businesses in the West End. A great amount of attention is needed to make sure that driveways enter onto an interior road system, as opposed to individual driveways entering directly onto Allen Road and the Ritner Highway. This "access management" is important to avoid traffic safety and congestion hazards. At best, a traffic signal would be located along Allen Road north of I-81 that could provide safe access to development on both sides of Allen Road.

Work to Extend the Best Features of Older Development Into Newer Development.

This Plan strongly encourages forms of "traditional neighborhood development." This involves extending the best features of the older areas of the Borough into new neighborhoods. This concept also involves making sure that development or redevelopment of lots within older neighborhoods occurs in a way that fits within the "urban fabric." Traditional neighborhood development primarily involves the following:



- Street trees should be planted to eventually provide a canopy of shade over streets. Studies show that mature street trees can increase the value of homes up to 10 percent.
- Sidewalks should be provided. There should be an orientation to pedestrians, with an ability to walk or bicycle to stores, schools and parks.
- A modest density (such as 5 to 8 homes per acre) will make best use of available land, while avoiding overly dense development and parking problems.



- Whenever practical, parking should be located to the rear or side of buildings, so that the front yard can be landscaped. At best, parking and garages would be placed to the rear of lots, with access using alleys. This design avoids conflicts between sidewalks and vehicles backing into the street, and allows the entire curbside to be available for on-street parking.
- Where garages cannot be accessed from alleys, narrow driveways should be encouraged along a side of a home to reach a garage in the rear of the home. In this way, driveways can widen out closer to the garage.
- Buildings should be placed relatively close to the street, with front porches, to encourage interaction among neighbors.

Emphasize Compatibility in Land Uses with Adjacent Municipalities.

Development and traffic patterns and community facilities and services need to be coordinated across municipal borders. Particular attention should be paid to the following areas along Carlisle's borders:

- Where new warehousing and distribution development is planned in South Middleton west of the Nottingham development and south of Valley Meadows. Large setbacks, landscaped earth berms and a linear park are being planned to help provide an acceptable buffer in this area.

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Downtown Plan

Strengthen the Downtown as the business, entertainment, cultural and civic center for the region.

This section builds upon the Carlisle Mainstreets Plan, prepared in 2000 with the involvement of Downtown merchants and the County Redevelopment Authority. On the whole, Downtown Carlisle is an extremely attractive, healthy and vibrant place. It has a great mix of retail, service, restaurant, arts, entertainment, service, office, institutional, hospitality and residential uses. The “urban fabric” of historic buildings along the streets is remarkably intact. The continued revitalization of downtown Carlisle will require a fully coordinated set of efforts involving:

- further improving the appearance of the Downtown,
- providing sufficient parking, and effective management of public parking areas,
- financial incentives,
- encouraging a balanced mix of uses,
- aggressively marketing the Downtown to customers, new businesses and investors,
- emphasizing festivals and special events to attract visitors, customers and businesses to the Downtown,
- actively organizing key persons, businesses and groups to carry out these efforts.

An emphasis is needed upon serving persons who work or attend classes in the Downtown or adjacent areas, as well as persons who live near the Downtown. In addition, greater efforts are needed to attract visitors to other attractions in the region to visit the Downtown. To take advantage of these markets, the following are needed:

- programs and special events designed to welcome College and Law School students and their parents and Army War College attendees to town, and let them know about downtown offerings;
- joint promotions among downtown businesses and attractions, so that customers of existing businesses are encouraged to visit other businesses,
- activities for persons attending car shows, and activities aimed towards wives and children of persons attending car shows, which should be publicized in cooperation with area motels, and which should involve a trolley service, and
- greater coordination of hours among Downtown businesses, and longer hours when most working persons have time to visit businesses.

The Main Streets Plan recommends the following major projects:

- the establishment of a local non-profit development corporation to take a leadership role in downtown development projects, in partnership with private investors;
- the development of Class A office space above high-quality first floor retail space;
- the development of market rate upper story apartments, targeted towards young professionals and older persons;
- working with property-owners to improve the front facades;

- adding additional landscaping along the streets and parking lots, and making sure that public areas remain clean and well-maintained;
- improving the appearance and feeling of safety along the walkways between the rear parking lots and the streets; and
- adding public displays of art, particularly interesting outdoor exhibits that periodically change to attract interest.

Properly Manage Parking to Serve Different Needs.

Downtown Carlisle must not try to replicate suburban parking or it will destroy the historic character and streetscape that makes Carlisle special. However, there may be additional opportunities over time to provide additional parking, particularly by demolishing accessory buildings and underused rear extensions of buildings in the inside of blocks. This is a method to increase parking supply without harming the “face” of the downtown along streets.



The key in downtown parking is not to only provide sufficient amounts of parking, but to make sure it is properly managed. This involves making sure that the most convenient parking spaces are available for high-turnover by customers. This is mainly achieved through time limits and enforcement. As unpopular as parking tickets can be, they are essential to avoid use of the best parking spaces by a single car for an entire day. If this is routinely allowed to happen, persons wishing to visit a downtown business for a quick trip will turn away and not return.

Owners of private parking areas in the rears of buildings should be encouraged to coordinate and share their rear parking lots. This will result in a greater total number of spaces and more efficient use of the spaces because different businesses have different peak times of demand.

“...Strengthen the Downtown as the business, entertainment, cultural and civic center for the region...”

Transportation Plan

Work with PA. DOT to Make Cost-Effective Improvements to the Region's Street System to Avoid Congestion Problems and Improve Traffic Safety.

The worst traffic congestion problem in the Borough is around the intersection of York Road and E. High Street. The Future Land Use Plan Map shows two alternatives that could reduce some of these problems. One would be to construct a new road link on the east side of the Frog Switch plant from E. High Street to Claremont Road. A second alternative would be to build a one-way northbound street from the York Road/High Street intersection to E. Louthier Street. Most of that route follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way. South Middleton has asked developers of land east of I-81 to build a new road that would connect Trindle Road with York Road. This road link is important because there are only partial interchanges of I-81 at High Street and York Road, which causes truck traffic to pass along residential streets. Improved signage may also help to better direct truck traffic in the area, and help it avoid the E. High Street bottleneck.

Another major traffic congestion point is along Walnut Bottom Road. Fortunately, South Middleton has required developers to build an extension of Marsh Road west to Walnut Bottom Road, which should allow some traffic to avoid the most congested part of Walnut Bottom Road.

The large events at the Carlisle Fairgrounds also generate significant traffic congestion. Consideration should be given to working with the Turnpike Commission, the Fairgrounds and North Middleton to seek a ramp from the Turnpike directly into the Fairgrounds property. This ramp would only be open during the special events.

Another major congestion location is around the intersection of N. Orange and W. High Streets. That intersection also includes a low railroad bridge and is adjacent to an awkward intersection at N. Orange Street and Neville Road. This area cannot be easily resolved because of the difficulty of replacing a railroad bridge and the stormwater problems in the area.

Continue to Work With Adjacent Municipalities and PennDOT to Carry Out the Route 465/I-81 Land Use and Traffic Impact Study

The Cumberland County Task Force recommended ways to coordinate future development and transportation improvements around the Route 465 (former Exit 12) interchange of Route 81. The task force included members from the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, economic development organizations, the County, four townships and Carlisle.

The study found that if all land in the study area would be developed to its maximum potential under current zoning, \$80 to \$100 million of road improvements would be needed to handle the resulting traffic. The study recommended zoning changes to moderate the total amount of development in the study area and encourage a wider mix of land uses. The study recommended delaying the development of portions of the area until road improvements are in place and by delaying water and sewage extensions.

Community Facilities and Services Plan

Provide Sufficient Community Facilities and Services Throughout all areas of Carlisle, in a Cost-efficient Manner, including Improved Parks and Playgrounds.

Carlisle Borough and the School District provide a tremendous system of public parks, playgrounds and recreation programs. Because Carlisle has a well-distributed public park system with a wide variety of facilities, this Plan recommends concentrating upon improving existing parks instead of developing new parks. The one exception is a 200 foot wide linear park with a recreation trail that is proposed along the Carlisle-South Middleton border, which will provide a buffer between homes and adjacent industrial development.



The Borough has a continual program of improving existing parks, including replacing outdated playgrounds with safer facilities. A major renovation is planned of the Borough's Community Center, which will enhance the appearance, increase security and improve many of the building's internal operations functions.

Continue to Emphasize High-Quality Police, Emergency Medical and Fire Protection to Protect Public Safety.

Carlisle's highly professional Police Department, Fire Companies and emergency medical services provide some of the greatest advantages of living within Carlisle. The Borough is planning a new police headquarters to replace the current cramped facilities in the basement of Borough Hall.

Emergency service providers need to be fully coordinated across municipal borders. Cooperative efforts are particularly important to allow personnel to be more highly trained for specialized matters and to provide specialized equipment without unnecessary duplication. All of the region's firefighters should continue to train together so that they can efficiently operate in case of a major event.

Natural Features Plan

Protect important natural features, with a special emphasis upon the Letort Spring Run and mature trees.

Cooperative efforts are needed with neighboring municipalities to preserve important natural areas around Carlisle. These areas are important to attract visitors to the area, maintain high quality fishing in streams, recharge the groundwater and protect the quality of the region's water supply (which is primarily drawn from the Conodiguinet Creek). These resources particularly include lands along the Conodiguinet Creek, the Letort Spring Run, the Blue Mountain and South Mountain.

Regional cooperation is needed to protect the Letort, which is an exceptional quality native trout stream. The following measures should be used:

- Plant and maintain a corridor of thick natural vegetation along the length of the Letort Spring Run and adjacent parts of the Molly Grub. This natural vegetation is important to filter pollutants from stormwater runoff before the runoff enters the stream. This natural vegetation is also important to maintain the proper temperatures and ecology for high-quality fishing habitats.



- Prohibit new or expanded buildings, paving, stone surfaces and outdoor storage within a certain distance of the Letort.
- Revise development regulations of Carlisle and adjacent municipalities to require "Best Management Practices" to filter out pollutants from stormwater runoff from new development.

Putting This Plan Into Action

The Comprehensive Plan should be implemented through a continuous process of follow-up planning and action. The most immediate action will be a comprehensive updating of Carlisle's Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. The following major tools are available to help implement this Plan:

- updating the Borough's Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Map and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance,
- adopting an Official Map, which can reserve proposed land for future street improvements and public uses for future public use for a limited period of time, and
- seeking additional Federal and State grant funds.

To be effective, community development efforts need wide participation. A close working relationship is needed between the Borough, adjacent municipalities, Federal agencies, State agencies, the County, the School District, businesses, institutions, property owners, and other groups.

Citizen Involvement

The volunteer efforts of neighborhood and civic organizations and individuals are essential to further improve Carlisle and to carry out this Plan. The objective is to strengthen community pride and emphasize volunteer efforts for residents and property-owners to improve their surroundings. Opportunities for citizen involvement should also be highlighted through the newspaper, internet sites and other media.

"...this plan should be implemented through a continuous process of follow-up planning and action..."