

Plan Elements

Circulation Plan

The Circulation Plan proposes to upgrade the safety, convenience, and efficiency of the road system, principally within the eastern and southeastern one-third of the Joint Area designated for growth. Safety improvements are most urgently needed at the intersections between Route 61 and Bellemans Church Road and between Route 61 and Main Street-Shoemakersville Road. A separate, dedicated left turn lane is needed for each of the two intersections, as are adequate lighting and signage.

The Circulation Plan proposes a variety of new roadway links, consistent with the pattern of future development outlined in the Land Use Plan. The new links will provide accessibility to the areas around Centerport, Dauberville, and Mohrsville, establishing an expansion of the Joint Area's network of local streets and, in general, servicing those areas of the Land Use Plan intended for medium density residential growth through the planning period.

Community Facilities Plan

The Schuylkill Valley School District, of which the Joint Area is only a part, recently consolidated all district schools at one campus, in Ontelaunce Township. The former elementary school on Main Street now stands vacant, but it remains a notable local landmark and an important community asset. The building has the potential to be reused in a number of different ways, including an educational institution, community center, day-care operation, library, or Centre Township Municipal Building.

With the present inventory of Joint Area park and recreation areas totaling less than ten acres, it is clear that more acreage will be required for these uses into the future. Additional areas for the creation of parks and public open space to serve the growing population of the Joint Area are outlined on the Land Use Plan (overleaf).

Environmental Protection Plan

Protection of floodplains, wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, wildlife habitat, woodlands, areas of steep slope, and areas having a seasonal high water table will rely to a large extent on implementation of the Land Use Plan's extensive network of open space. The thrust of the Plan is the broad protection of these sensitive features, with affected areas designated as open space or for very low density residential uses. Development in general should be kept away from these areas to prevent destruction of important resources and to protect residents from future problems.

Implementation Strategy

The Joint Plan provides a framework for development, with opportunities for growth and for protection of natural features and agricultural heritage. Plan adoption also sets the stage for actions by decision-makers to implement the Plan's recommendations. The Plan must be understood and vigorously endorsed by local officials. Without such support, the Plan will not be useful, nor will it be followed.

Housing Plan

The Plan's growth area is the primary intended location for new housing, including low, medium, and medium-high density development. For the designated rural and agricultural portion of the Joint Area, only approaches to residential development that support the basic principles of conserving land, such as very low overall densities and clustering of units on a small portion of a tract while the rest is left open in perpetuity for agricultural or other legitimate conservation purposes, should be permitted.

Cluster development can also be important for growth areas, since there is a need to accommodate natural features protection, designated buffers, and provisions for open space uses in these areas too. Clustering reduces the amount of land consumed for residences when compared with conventional developments, while at the same time preserving a portion of development tracts for permanent protection of natural resources and for open space uses.

Cultural, Historic, & Landscape Resources Conservation Plan

Agriculture can remain profitable over the long term for the Joint Area only with effective agricultural zoning and with the acquisition of conservation easements on farmland for that portion of the Joint Area not designated for growth.

The scenic qualities of the Joint Area are derived principally from its rolling rural countryside. In order to preserve this landscape legacy, agriculture must be retained as the predominant activity beyond the growth area. The sensitive integration of new development into the borough and the villages, however, will allow them to retain their distinctive character while creating revitalized local service centers.

Utilities Plan

Both municipalities are updating their Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities (Act 537) Plans, each including public municipal sewage collection and treatment facilities for the first time. The township's system will serve existing built-up areas of Dauberville and Mohrsville exclusively. For Centerport, a separate municipal system is to serve only existing developed areas in and around the borough. This Comprehensive Plan endorses municipal sewage systems as a critical step in solving problems with existing on-site systems and as a first stage of implementation for the Plan. But extensions and expansions of central systems, within the designated growth area, will be needed over the coming years to accommodate expected growth. Central water supply should also be started in Centerport and Dauberville.

The Plan's recommendations provide a basis for changes to the development regulations for the two municipalities. A number of revisions to the current Joint zoning ordinance, for example, are recommended. A most basic change will be new regulations that correspond to and implement the clear differentiation between designated "growth" and "low-growth" areas presented in the Land Use Plan.

Centre Township/Centerport Borough Comprehensive Plan

1997

Growth Trends and Issues

Centre Township, in which Centerport Borough is embedded, is located in north-central Berks County, approximately eleven miles north of the City of Reading. The township measures a little less than five miles in both the east-west and north-south directions and contains about 22 square miles of land, whereas the borough is small by comparison, measuring only one-half mile by three-quarters of a mile. The combined 1990 population of the two municipalities was 3,438, the borough containing 284 persons and the township 3,154 persons.

Centre Township consists mostly of rolling and sometimes hilly terrain, its pattern dominated by Irish and Plum Creeks, which carve through the landscape en route to the Schuylkill River. The river forms the eastern boundary of the township and separates it from PA Route 61, the area's Principal Arterial Highway.

Historically, the township has been sparsely built-up, with the exception of two older settlements of modest size, Dauberville and Mohrsville. Centerport Borough is another older, compact, and relatively dense place.

Development activity in the township and the borough (the "Joint Area") had been nominal over the years, largely due

to the absence of major roads, only three bridge links to Route 61, and the almost total lack of central sewer and water facilities. Recently, however, as a result of new industrial and commercial development just to the east and southeast and further south along Route 61, as well as the continuing residential suburbanization of the City of Reading, there has been more development activity in the township. Beginning in the 1970s, small, scattered subdivisions were stripped along parts of the many roads of the township, although development tended to be found near the Schuylkill River crossings. A few 10-to-20-unit subdivisions also were constructed. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, the pace and extent of residential development picked up, occurring in a mostly-scattered pattern throughout the township. This suburban-style residential development has now become a significant feature of the township, despite its still-present rural character.

Recent development activity and its anticipated continuation concern the two municipalities in terms of the adequacy of the road system, the lack of central sewer and water utilities, and the potential effects of this new development on the agricultural atmosphere and way-of-life in the countryside and the character and integrity of Centerport, Mohrsville, and Dauberville.

The 1996-97 Joint Comprehensive Plan

Centre Township had a comprehensive plan prepared in the 1970s, but it was 25 years old by the mid-1990s, while Centerport Borough never had a comprehensive plan. In the 1996-97 Joint Comprehensive Plan preparation the data base for the Joint Area has been brought up to date, including surveys of natural and cultural features, the current land use pattern, the road system, and the systems of public services and utilities. Also included are analyses and projections of population and housing and an examination of the rate and types of change over the last 15 to 20 years. Most importantly, the adopted Plan identifies a basic direction and structure for the future development of the Joint Area. The Plan specifies the goals and policies that will form the basis for future development, and lays forth a clear implementation strategy and program to aid the two municipalities in achieving the goals of the Plan.

The 1996-97 Joint Comprehensive Plan can provide the support for day-to-day municipal decisions about future development so that they may be thoroughly rational and consistent and move the Joint Area in a desirable direction in terms of agricultural and open space conservation, historic preservation, traffic management, utilities and recreation facilities development, and fiscal balance. The Plan contains both long-range and short-range programs of implementation and recognizes local needs and



perceptions as well as regional requirements and perspectives. The Plan relates to the new Berks County Comprehensive Plan and is also responsive to the State of Pennsylvania's Municipalities Planning Code's requirements concerning municipal comprehensive plans.

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*This document
summarizes the 1997
Centre Township/
Centerport Borough
Comprehensive Plan.
The complete
Technical Plan is
available at the
Centre Township
Municipal Building.*

The Land Use Plan ties together all the elements that make up the Joint Comprehensive Plan. It thus becomes the primary reference against which land use decisions, as well as decisions on major public expenditures, can be measured for the next ten to twenty years. The Land Use Plan is concerned with the proposed location, intensity, and amount of different uses. It strives to be in harmony with trends affecting economic development in the Joint Area and its environs, the county, and the region, while mirroring the values, needs, and expectations of the residents of Centre Township and Centerport Borough.

The Land Use Plan is oriented toward planned development of the Joint Planning Area through 2016, and reflects continuing steady population growth, stable local employment levels, a balanced land-use mix, conservation of natural and cultural resources, efficient utilization of the existing local road network, and the initiation of central sewer facilities. The Land Use Plan is based upon a 2016 Joint Area population of between 5,200 and 5,400 persons, and an increase of about 650 to 730 housing units.

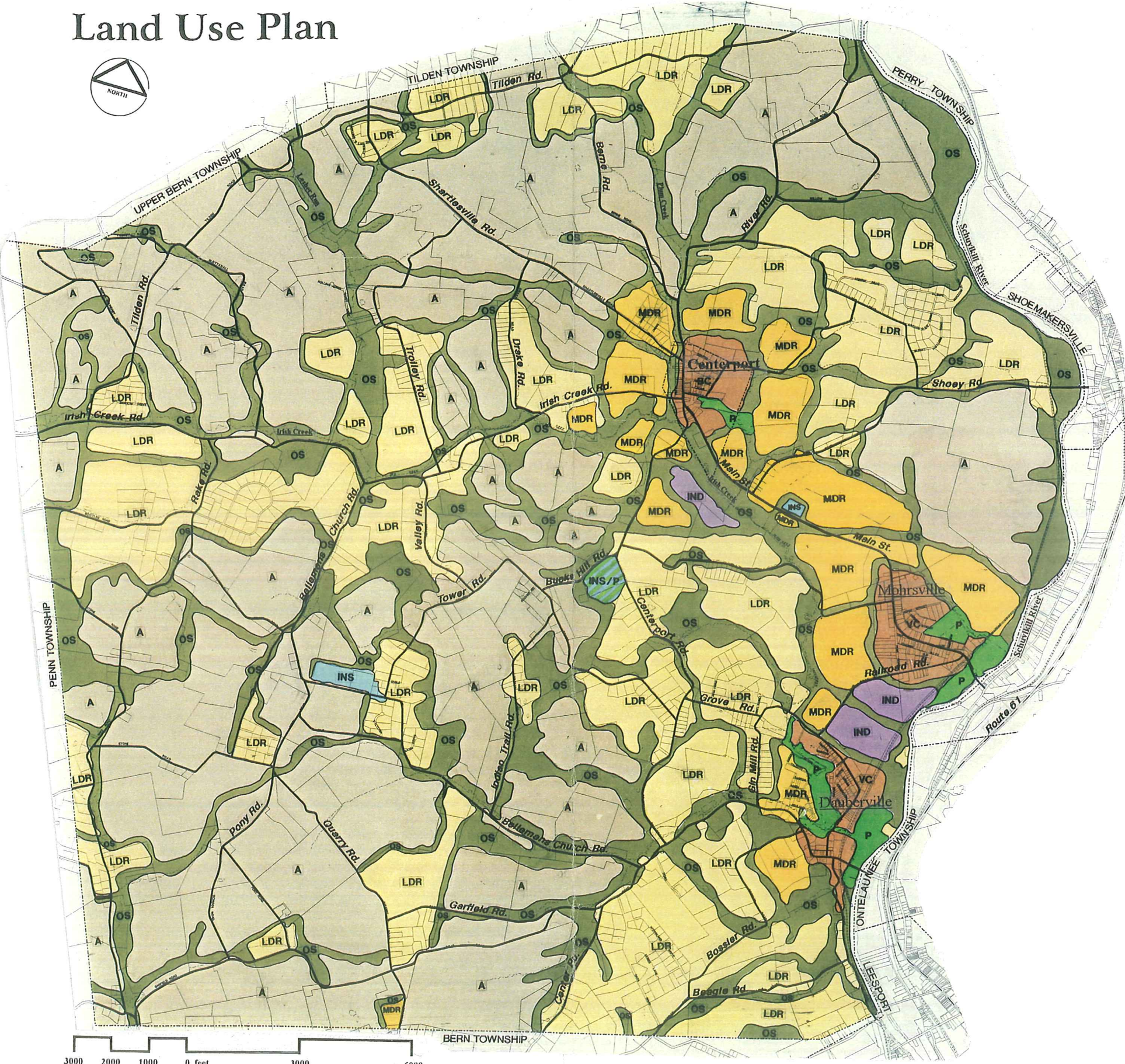
The Land Use Plan incorporates a growth-area concept to provide for the orderly extension of development. Growth is directed primarily toward Centerport, Dauberville, and Mohrsville for the greatest concentration and mix of land uses. The designated growth area also includes areas around and near the three centers that have good access to these places and to the bridges over the Schuylkill River and that have some potential to be served by municipal central water and sewer facilities over the planning period.

The intent is to direct growth to areas with community facilities, having a high level of accessibility, and with potential for central water and sewer systems, and to limit the amount, intensity, and character of any residential or other urbanizing uses outside of the designated growth area. The growth-area concept provides an efficient and economical way to allow new growth to occur while limiting urban uses spreading throughout the still-largely rural and agricultural portions of the Joint Area. The majority of the residential development, as well as any new commercial, industrial, and institutional development, is intended to take place within the designated growth area. Areas outside the growth area are planned primarily for agricultural use, as well as natural resource protection and low-intensity recreational and open space uses.

Growth areas are focused on the existing three communities, with their residential neighborhoods, community facilities, and prospects for public utilities. The expectation that these three areas will receive central sewers in the near future has been a significant factor in determining the location and extent of the designated growth area. In turn, it is important that municipal Act 537 sewage plans adopted by the Township and the Borough support the growth-area concept of the Land Use Plan.

Care should be taken in relating the picture of future development shown in the Land Use Plan to expected development through the planning horizon of about twenty years. The Land Use Plan has built-in slack; rather than being a strict representation of the twenty-year "build-out", it illustrates those areas in which particular land uses can be supported by the policies of the Joint Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use Plan



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The Land Use Plan is composed of 8 major identity areas:

- A** **Agriculture, Resource Conservation, & Residential -- Very Low Density.**
 The Land Use Plan formally apportions the Joint Area into growth and low-growth areas, with the intent of limiting development outside of the growth area and promoting continued agricultural production as well as the protection of the Joint Area's historic and rural landscape.
- LDR** **Low Density Residential.**
 Portions of the Joint Area that have good access to Centerport, Dauberville, and Mohrsville and to the bridges over the Schuylkill River are indicated for low density residential development in the range of 0.4 to 1 dwelling unit per acre. Clustered and conventional single-family detached houses would predominate.
- MDR** **Medium Density Residential.**
 Areas surrounding the borough and the two villages are intended for medium density residential development in the range of 1 to 4 dwelling units per acre. Mostly small-lot single-family detached dwellings would be built in these areas.
- BC/VC** **Borough/Village Center (Mixed Use).**
 The Borough of Centerport and the villages of Dauberville and Mohrsville are intended for the greatest concentration and mix of land uses within the Joint Area. A mix of residential and commercial uses, compatible with the character of these places, should reinforce them as centers for Area community life, including local businesses.
- INS** **Institutional.**
 Institutional uses include the Township-owned 16-acre parcel on Bucks Hill Road, the former public school on Main Street, the Bellemans Church complex, and many other smaller sites in the Joint Area.
- IND** **Industrial.**
 Two primary areas are indicated for industrial use. The first is the vicinity of the former mushroom plant south of Centerport, and the second, larger, location is between Dauberville and Mohrsville.
- OS** **Environmental Protection Areas & Significant Buffers.**
 These areas, to remain permanently open and undeveloped, run throughout the Joint Area and provide for the protection of natural features and logical and effective transitions between major land use areas.
- P** **Parks & Public Open Space.**
 Included are existing parks and playgrounds and areas designated for future public open space, such as: Parts of the Township lands on Bucks Hill Road; an extension of the Central Berks Fire Company property; a new park along the Schuylkill River by the Dauberville Bridge, with a westward extension to include the dam area; and parkland along the river by the Mohrsville Bridge, including the creek floodplain that leads to the Mohrsville Athletic and Playground Association open space area.