

Chapter 3: Implement Best Practices

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PICTURED:

Downtown Brookville, Jefferson County



Implement Best Practices

Overview: The best practices presented in this chapter are a set of recommendations for the best use of land and visual display of community character in a variety of settings present in the Pennsylvania Wilds. These guidelines are not all-inclusive, but do provide a general baseline for various contextual settings. Covered in this chapter are the land use settings: Agricultural, Rural, Residential Neighborhoods, Town Center, Industrial, and Roadway Corridors. Although it is acknowledged that most communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds encompasses more than one setting, classification by land use type allows a framework for presenting recommendations in an organized manner.



Agricultural



Rural Communities



Residential Neighborhoods



Town Centers



Industrial



Roadway Corridors

AGRICULTURAL

Scenic Mosaics

Land within the Pennsylvania Wilds has produced dairy, oats, fruit, corn, potatoes, and other food products for over 300 years. The visual presence of farms and their fields is an important component of the regional landscape. Farms and farm fields seen from afar form beautiful mosaics of pattern, texture, and color.



Winslow Hill
Benezette, Elk County



The presence of large farm animals like horses and cows grazing by a roadside entice passers-by to peer from car windows and take notice of the rural lifestyle. Farming is hard work, and agricultural landscapes represent culture, history, and personal values based on a traditional way of life.



As growth continues in the Pennsylvania Wilds, pressure may be placed on farm owners to sell their lands for conversion to other uses. Government bodies must do what they can to support agriculture as an important economic industry and a vital contributing element to the region's scenic quality.

AGRICULTURAL

Distinguishing Elements

There are five primary distinguishing elements of the agricultural landscape: field, farmhouse, barn, upright silo, and roadside farm stand.



In October 2005, the state legislature unanimously passed resolutions recognizing the importance of the state's historic barns. As a result, an inventory of historic barns was conducted by the PA Department of Agriculture, the PA Historical and Museum Commission, and the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

The results showed that most historic barns are in good condition. Barn preservation is encouraged.

Barns typically have wood siding, with elements of stone, brick, concrete block, or stucco. The older the barn, the more likely it was built from trees growing nearby. When barns are painted white or red, they stand out as striking visual elements of the farm-scape.



Additionally, lightning rods and weather vanes serve practical purposes, and are visually interesting when located on the barn roof.

Benezette Hotel Elk-Styled Weather Vane, Elk County

Guidelines: Agricultural

1. Aim to maintain and restore historic barns and silos, especially those located along scenic road corridors.
2. Prevent the demolition of historic barns that are in good condition or candidates for rehabilitation.
3. Investigate programs that offer financial support for barn preservation and technical assistance on barn repair.
4. The removal of abandoned barns and silos is not necessary unless they present safety hazards, are clear visual nuisances, or are a liability to the property owner.
5. If abandoned structures are removed, consider recycling/re- using the materials. Oftentimes, the structural timber used for old barns was virgin wood and/or species that are no longer available in the marketplace.
6. Give barns a fresh coat of paint when needed.
7. Carefully consider advertisements painted on barns. Advertisements can be visually positive or negative, depending on the content and design of the message. (Tourists frequently photograph “Mail Pouch Tobacco” barns and view them as rural icons and folk art.)
8. During construction of new, large structures like barns or storage sheds that will have a high level of public visibility, consider articulating large doors and façades with accented beams, decorative supports, eaves, or other feature(s) to provide visual interest.
9. Encourage roadside fresh food stands and farmers’ markets. They are active symbols of agricultural character.

Guidelines: Agricultural

10. Allow for and provide economic outlets and markets for local goods and produce.
11. Consider using existing agricultural buildings and farmhouses for other uses, like shops or farmers' markets.
12. Post attractive roadside signs in front of farms that offer agro-tourism: any activity conducted on a working farm for enjoyment of visitors that generates income for owner: tours, corn mazes, horseback riding, farm-stay vacations, etc.
13. When new homes or residential subdivisions are situated adjacent to farms, provide distance buffers and/or a landscaped edge at the interface to give clear visual separation.
14. Consider alternative locations for communication towers, and if possible, avoid placing them in the middle of agricultural fields visible from scenic roadways, tourist destinations, or other public viewing areas. Communication towers can severely damage scenic pastoral views.
15. If a farm is proposed for conversion to another use (like a residential subdivision), make attempts to preserve the barn, silo, and other distinguishing features in the development plan as a cultural feature.
16. Discourage the conversion of prime agricultural lands and economically viable farms to other uses.
17. Use the TOOLBOX in this chapter to learn about transferring development rights on agricultural lands to other properties more appropriate for development.



Guidelines: Agricultural



Paint barns red or white if high visual appeal is desired



Convert existing agricultural structures into shops and other uses, like this store located near Marienville in Forest County



Preserve Mail Pouch Tobacco barns as rural icons



Remove abandoned structures when they become a clear visual nuisance or a safety hazard



Provide farmers' markets in rural settings

Guidelines: Agricultural



Place well-designed and unobtrusive roadside signs to advertise agro-tourism activities and identify farm functions



Keep fields and production areas free of clutter to increase visual appeal



Do not place communication towers in highly visible open fields



Always landscape or buffer urban development edges adjacent to farms



Provide buffers between farms and adjacent development to give visual separation

RURAL COMMUNITIES

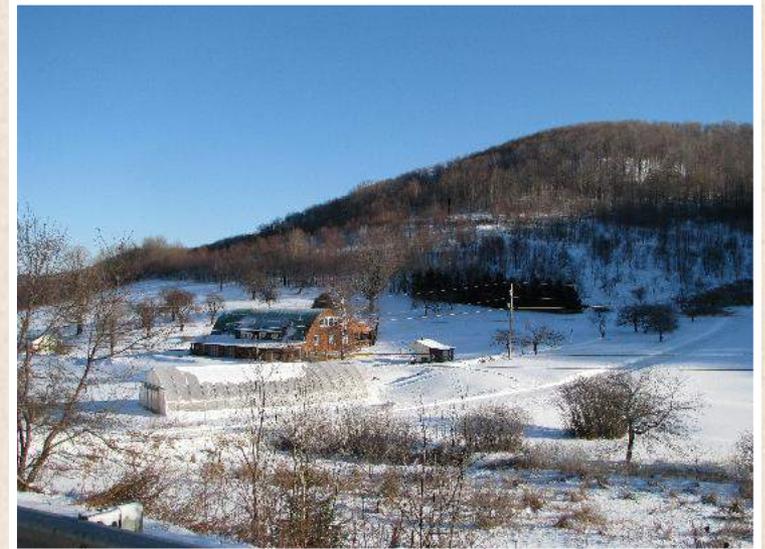
Characteristic Features

Rural areas are important contributors to the Pennsylvania Wilds' character and constitute a critically important and defining feature of the landscape. Rural areas generally consist of large-acreage residential lots where housing and the built environment are in harmony with the natural environment. Roads are generally two-lane rural roads reflective of a peaceful country lifestyle. In recognition of the distinctiveness of each rural community, and the differing circumstances that affect them, the design guidance contained in this section is broad.

Maintain Rural Charm

Nothing can detract from the rural feel and attractiveness of an area more than inappropriate signage cluttering rural roadways, isolated and inappropriately placed utility towers, and pockets of dense residential subdivision.

When signs are selectively placed and appropriately designed to reflect a rural character, the rural roadside view is more attractive. When new development is considerate of rural community character and is placed in appropriate locations without "leapfrogging" around a rural community, the rural charm is not interrupted.



RURAL COMMUNITIES

Promoting Smart Growth

Communities can successfully balance multiple land use objectives to meet the needs of today without compromising the quality of life for future generations. This type of balance which helps communities grow in ways that expand economic opportunity while preserving community character is commonly referred to as “smart growth”. Smart growth allows for the efficient use of land, revitalization of downtowns, creation of walkable, bicycle-friendly neighborhoods, and encourages design of distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place all while preserving open space, farmland, and critical environmental areas.

Rural communities often lack staff capacity and resources so it’s important for them to know attractive, vibrant, and livable communities are achievable in rural PA. Having an open line of communication during the early stages of development is all it takes in many instances to influence good design.



As rural counties in the region experience growth, our communities can have significant influence on what that growth looks like by promoting Design Guide principles in the early stages of development proposals or plans.



Filled with charm and history, rural communities are an important part of the regional character of the Pennsylvania Wilds.



Guidelines: Rural Communities

Signs

1. To visually identify rural communities, place community identity welcome signs at primary road entries. Draw from the community's most beloved icons in designing the sign's artwork. Include the community name, the word "Welcome" and the Pennsylvania Wilds logo somewhere on the sign. Refer to Technique 2-1 in the Chapter 2 TOOLBOX.
2. Use the design style established on the welcome sign for other civic signs in the community.
3. Due to the low density character of most rural communities and the potential limitations on funding sources, it is important that the community welcome sign and/or other common community signs be cost effective, durable, and relatively easy to maintain.

Rural Roads and Roadsides

1. Remove vacant, deteriorated buildings along scenic roadways when they become a clear safety hazard or visual nuisance.
2. Require deep front yard setbacks along rural roadways, except in rural hamlets.
3. Encourage well-maintained properties along rural routes. Seek to reduce and eliminate visual clutter such as abandoned vehicles and other discarded materials.
4. Avoid standard curb and gutter construction on roads except where necessary to ensure safety. Keep road widths narrow.
 1. Use grass channels in place of storm drains along rural roadways where needed to filter and convey runoff.
 2. Place street trees in random and natural patterns. Evenly spaced trees denote formality, which is not desired in rural areas except possibly at key focal points like villages or rural town centers.
 3. Limit street lights and other outdoor lighting to the minimum quantity and brightness levels necessary for safety, security and the enjoyment of outdoor living (refer to 'Preserve Dark Skies' in Chapter 5).
 4. Restrict the number of roadway signs and use simple sign designs so as to not distract from the rural environment. Wood block sign designs are encouraged. If external lighting of the sign is necessary, provide the lowest level of lighting possible to retain the rural ambiance.
 5. Discourage the placement billboards, neon signs, or digital changeable copy signs in rural areas.
 6. Construct walls, poles, and other supports for signs along rural roadways of natural materials such as wood or stone.

Guidelines: Rural Communities

Parking

1. Do not allow large asphalt paved parking areas to dominate the landscape of any rural view.
2. Where large parking lots are necessary, screen or soften them with grade separation and/or landscaping. Alternatively, consider permeable and more rural-looking paving materials such as gravel, rock, decomposed granite, paving stones, permeable interlocking concrete pavement, unmortared brick or stone, or geo-grid with grass.
3. Where wheel stops are desired in parking spaces, use stops constructed of stone, wood, or tree trunks. Typical curb and gutter or concrete wheel stops are discouraged.

Utilities

1. Limit public water/sewer expansions in remote rural areas only to areas where there is an identified health concern from contaminated wells or failing septic systems. Consider the growth-inducing impact of extending water and sewer lines; the availability of public services may induce other properties along the new lines to develop quicker and at higher densities that would otherwise occur.
2. Consider the use of alternative sewer systems like on-lot systems or pressurized grinder pump systems that are safer than septic systems and can be used in varied types of terrain.
3. Consider the use of rain gardens on rural residential properties to filter runoff, slow the rate and volume of water directed to the drainage system, and replenish groundwater.

Fencing

1. Select fencing types that complement a rural character.
2. Front yard fencing is discouraged in order to retain the open feeling of the area. In instances where front yard fencing occurs, do not build solid fences unless the fence is being used to hide an unattractive view.
3. If physical separation is needed along roadways between the public and private space, consider the use of open rail wood fencing.
4. Limit the use of barbed wire or wire mesh fencing in locations with high visibility from public roads and other public viewing areas, unless such fencing serves a practical function wherein other barrier options are not practical or are cost prohibitive.



Rural Communities



Encourage maintenance of private properties along rural routes



Promote unique assets



Adapt rural residences for other uses to attract residents and travelers



Do not post visually dominating billboards along rural roads and avoid them whenever possible



Rural Communities



Select natural-appearing materials in manufactured home design



Open rail wood fencing adds to rural charm



Remove abandoned and irreparable structures



Target key properties for renovation as catalysts for rural investments



Log Construction-style architecture is appropriate in certain locations like this large forested lot

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Defining Neighborhoods

Residential neighborhoods act as community building blocks, and it is the collection of many individual neighborhoods that make up the supporting structure of a town.

Neighborhoods often carry names and have recognized boundaries. Their characters are defined by a combination of factors including but not limited to location, home type and mix, architectural style, lot size, street pattern, and inclusion or exclusion of other land uses like schools and parks.

Binding together the functions of governance, the school system, parks/sports, religious institutions, and the central business district where shopping and employment activities occur, brings the residents of various neighborhoods together as one community.



RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Old Versus New

In the Pennsylvania Wilds, older residential neighborhoods are generally located around the edges of towns and central activity areas. Usually, homes were constructed in grid-like blocks with easy access to town. Some “company towns” also were present in the region. Newer neighborhoods are often located further from the center of town.



Homes in older neighborhoods embody traditional custom styles that are difficult to replicate in tract home development.



In many neighborhoods, it is easy to tell which homes were traditionally built and which were constructed under a modern tract home residential subdivision.



Character can be enhanced when new homes and neighborhoods are designed with quality and add architectural interest and “curb appeal” to a neighborhood. An attractive and inviting home can contribute positively to a neighborhood unit and strengthen the traditional character.

Guidelines: Residential Neighborhoods

Homes and Buildings

1. In new construction, use the traditional architectural styles described in this Design Guide (refer to Chapter 2).
2. If feasible, construct outbuildings in the same architectural style as that of the primary structure or to mimic the look of a traditional barn. Quaint outbuilding designs are encouraged.
3. Hide or buffer unattractive pre-fabricated sheds and other unappealing pre-fabricated structures from primary public viewing areas.
4. If a new residential subdivision is proposed in a rural community, build new housing off of side roads or shared drives, rather than lining scenic rural roads with new homes. Lining roads with residential lots can completely block scenic views.
5. A variety of pre-fabricated homes and buildings are available in the marketplace. Encourage property owners to select pre-fabricated structures that use non-reflective and naturally-appearing exterior materials such as natural or simulated wood, brick, or stone, or composition or other similar materials. Smooth, ribbed, or corrugated metal and plastic panels are not preferred.
6. Make pre-fabricated mobile homes appear permanent by using a continuous masonry or concrete foundation or curtain wall. Remove the running gear, axles, and wheels.
7. If new commercial development is proposed in a rural community, consult 'Strip Commercial, Big Boxes, and Franchises' in Chapter 4.
8. At the edges of rural communities where more intense development may be occurring, ensure that adjoining development blends into and is sensitive to the character of existing rural areas.



Warren, Warren County

Guidelines: Residential Neighborhoods

In addition to the guidelines listed below, please refer to the 'Theme: Architectural Styles' section of Chapter 2. Many of the guidelines given there are applicable, and most are not repeated here.

Existing Neighborhoods

1. Avoid the demolition or destruction of visually significant residential homes that reflect a traditional architectural style. Renovate and restore as the preferred course of action before permitting demolition. (Refer to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties).
2. Keep sidewalks and parking areas well-maintained.
3. Select architectural and landscape design themes that integrate well into the natural setting and surrounding community character.
4. Contemporary architectural designs are not recommended for new homes in old neighborhoods, but if they are used, ensure that the exterior architecture is compatible with the scale, material, color, and articulation of any surrounding historic buildings, historic districts, or mixture of historic architectural styles immediately adjacent or present in the general area.
5. Design the architecture of new homes to possess a historic basis that is familiar in the established community. Avoid introducing a completely new style of architecture into an established neighborhood.
6. Use fence and wall designs, materials, and colors that are compatible with those in the existing neighborhood.
7. Use paint colors that are as authentic as possible when compared to the traditional color palette of the selected architectural style and colors present in the established community.
8. Consider the shadow effect of new buildings; do not build tall structures that may cast long shadows on existing residential homes.
9. Build infill housing (housing built on vacant parcels surrounded by existing residential development on three or more sides) at similar lot sizes, densities, percentage of lot coverage, and of compatible character to surrounding homes.
10. Convey a sense of timelessness, elegance, and quality. Buildings should look durable and permanent, not temporary or makeshift.
11. Maintain a strong indoor/outdoor relationship. Consider the use of natural wood products for cabinetry and other interior woodwork to further complement the character of the Pennsylvania Wilds.
12. Do not over-light residential neighborhoods, but provide appropriate night lighting for security and safety (refer to 'Preserve Dark Skies' in Chapter 5).
13. Install energy-conserving features in homes such as energy-efficient and water-efficient appliances (see 'Be Environmentally Responsible' in Chapter 5).



Private Residence

Warren, Warren County

Guidelines: Residential Neighborhoods

New Home Architecture

1. Use architectural forms associated with traditional styles (see 'Theme: Architectural Styles' in Chapter 2).
2. If appropriate for the architectural style of the home, use projecting features such as bowed or bay windows, columns, offset roof planes, and similar features to create visual interest on the building elevations.
3. Provide front porches where style appropriate to add interest and increase opportunities for social interaction.
4. In new residential subdivisions, slightly vary the depth of front yard setbacks on straight streets. No more than three adjacent homes on a straight street should have the same front yard setback to avoid creating a "tunnel" effect. Front yard setback variation is not necessary on curving streets or on streets where a formal, more urban look is desired.
5. Accent shutters, used with either windows or doors, should be in keeping with the size and dimension of the window or door. Historically, it was the purpose of these elements to cover the window or door; therefore, the elements should reflect that original purpose wherever possible.
6. Design rear and side façades of residential buildings, particularly those facing onto streets, parks, and open spaces, as an important element in the success of a community's visual character. Do not permit large expanses of flat walls to be exposed to public view.
7. In neighborhoods with small lots, use one-story elements at street corners to reduce the perceived bulk and scale of the neighborhood. Bulk can also be reduced by using one-story edging on two-story elements.
8. If outbuildings are desired, construct them in the same architectural style as that of the primary structure.
9. Use side entry, recessed, or detached garages where appropriate to minimize the garage door dominance on the residential streetscape.
10. Do not orient more than two garage doors on any one structure to face the street. If a third front-facing garage door is needed, use an increased setback or offset. Consider a tandem garage which is deep enough for vehicles to be stored one behind the other.
11. Design driveways to have a minimal surface area. Large aprons, turnarounds, and parking areas on residential lots are discouraged.
12. Do not allow visually overbearing roofs. A-frame and mansard type roofs are discouraged unless they are part of a coordinated design theme and style.
13. Permit flat roofs over porches, entryways, or where compatible with the historical style. Otherwise, do not use flat roofs.
14. Select roof materials and colors that are appropriate for the architectural style of the home. Roof colors should be soft and warm rather than bright and bold, thus avoiding an overpowering visual intrusion to the community's appearance and character.
15. Design chimneys and spark arrestors to act as thematic forms and vertical architectural elements. Chimney caps should have low profiles and not be visually distracting.



Residential Neighborhood

Emporium, Cameron County

Guidelines: Residential Neighborhoods

Multi-Family Housing

A majority of the above-stated guidelines also apply to multifamily residential buildings (carriage units, townhomes, condominiums, apartments, time-shares, age-restricted living facilities, etc.). Some additional considerations for multifamily units include the following:

1. Use rear loaded garages if possible.
2. Provide porches and/or balconies for as many units as feasible.
3. Avoid visual monotony and box-like appearances.
4. Articulate façades to minimize large blank walls.
5. Use varied color schemes on large buildings or groups of buildings.
6. Use staggered and jogged unit plans to provide visual interest.
7. If the building has a long front façade, vary the front setback within the same structure.
8. Use pitched roofs; flat roofs are discouraged.
9. Screen mechanical systems from public view.
10. Screen large open parking areas from public view.

Guidelines: Residential Neighborhoods

New Subdivisions

1. Name new residential streets to reflect the heritage of the area.
2. Do not clear cut trees to make way for a residential subdivision. Instead, tailor the grading operation to save as many mature trees and natural features as possible (see 'Value Trees and the Landscape' in Chapter 5).
3. Integrate new residential buildings and additions to existing residential buildings into the natural topography (see 'Be Sensitive to Natural Landforms' in Chapter 5).
4. Retain scenic views and vistas from the street system when possible. Scenic views from residential streets will enhance the image and character of the neighborhood.
5. Avoid lining existing roads that offer scenic public views with rows of residential lots. When this occurs, views of nature are hidden from the road. Use alternative patterns of residential subdivision design such as a connected interior street system or shared driveways with clustered home arrangement.
6. Construct new residential tracts within walking distance to activity centers such as shopping, schools, parks, etc. and integrate pedestrian circulation paths as integral component of the tract design.
7. Incorporate greenbelts, pocket parks, and other natural amenities into subdivision designs. Consider the *Growing Greener: Conservation by Design* approach when preparing or revising a subdivision and land development ordinance or designing a residential subdivision. (For informaton go to www.dcnr.state.pa.us).
8. Provide rain gardens on residential lots where feasible to filter runoff and reduce the volume and rate of water discharged to the drainage system (see 'Be Environmentally Responsible' in Chapter 5).
9. Design residential subdivisions to value, conserve, and work around on-site sensitive resources instead of destroying or imposing on them (see 'Be Environmentally Responsible' in Chapter 5).
10. Provide focal points in neighborhoods (pocket parks, tot lots, etc.)to encourage outdoor living and gathering opportunities.
11. If new neighborhood identification moments or signage is desired, use natural elements in design.
12. Connect new subdivisions to existing streets to allow easy connections. If not possible, allow for other pedestrian and bicycle connections.
13. Use traditional street patterns for new subdivisions.



Residential Neighborhoods



Use a traditional architectural style



In multi-family construction, the use of porches, balconies, and staggered unit plans are ways to reduce visual monotony of the building mass



Use variation in both color and material. This house over-uses the color red and provides no variation in the building material



Select road names that reflect community character and history



Embrace the traditional architectural style of existing neighborhoods

Emporium, Cameron County



Residential Neighborhoods



Avoid a sea of garage doors dominating the streetscape (left) by using side entry garages (center and right) or by recessing the garage or detaching the garage from the house. This will allow other elements like front porches, entryways, and windows to be the dominant visual feature of the front façade.

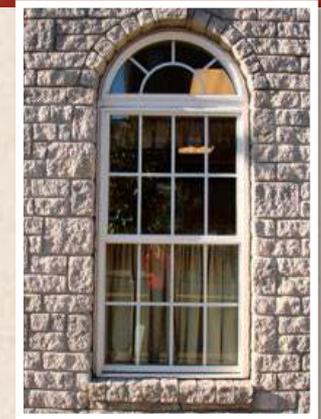


Residential Neighborhoods

Achieve a strong indoor/outdoor relationship by using natural products inside the home, like hardwood cabinetry shown here.



Use accent shutters that are in keeping with the size and dimension of the window to reflect the traditional purpose of the shutter



Design windows and doors to complement the building's architectural style



Use projecting architectural elements to add visual appeal and interest



Use dormer windows to avoid monotonous rooflines and to provide additional living space on upper stories



Residential Neighborhoods

Provide pedestrian connections and trails between residential neighborhoods and activity areas (schools, parks, shopping, natural assets). Even in winter, people make use of walking paths and trails to get from place to place.



Pedestrian Bridge, Smethport
McKean County



Clearfield River Walk, Clearfield County



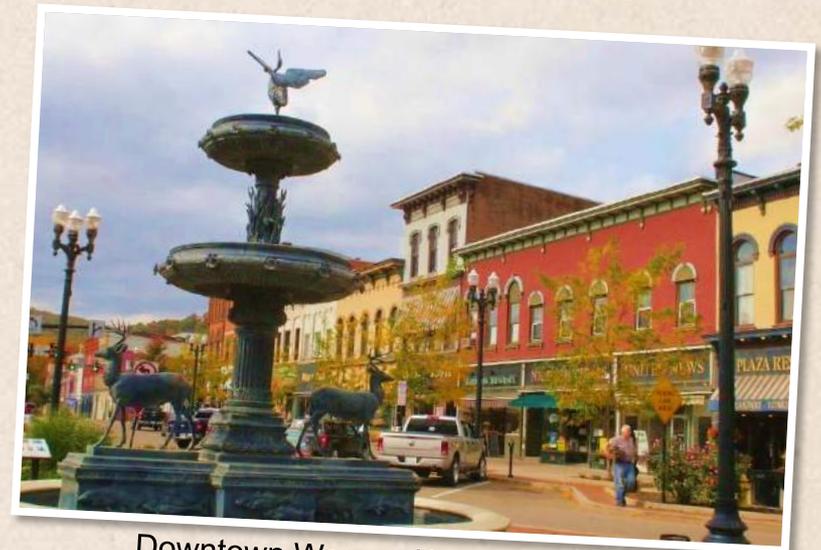
Susquehanna River Walk, Lycoming County

TOWN CENTERS

The visual quality and character of the town center is the greatest single indicator of the overall image of a community. Town centers are recognized as community focal points where shopping, business, social gatherings, entertainment, and government activities are concentrated. Their uniqueness in design and appearance is vital to attracting customers and providing an enjoyable visitor experience.

Many of the town centers in the Pennsylvania Wilds feature shops, restaurants, and businesses that reflect the area's history and natural environment. Specialty shops offering wares from local artists and crafters, antique shops urging customers to remember "the good old days," outfitters selling outdoor recreation equipment, and restaurants offering menu choices not found in other places are just a few examples of services that are offered in town centers.

Some town center businesses are locally owned, while others are not. Some successfully thrive with business and a bustle of activity, while others are struggling to draw customers and survive. Regardless of the size, shape, or vigor of a community's town center, steps can be taken to further advance their vitality, or just begin their transformation into alluring and attractive places to shop, eat, stroll, conduct business, and stay overnight.



Downtown Warren, Warren County

"Good design is especially important to those communities seeking to attract tourists and their dollars."

Ed McMahon, Urban Land Institute and Author of "Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania"



Town Centers

Chainsaw Carvers Rendezvous, Ridgway, Elk County

TOWN CENTERS

Community Charm

In addition to serving central business district functions, town centers also act as gathering places for local events. Concerts in the park, parades, festivals, fairs, and other activities occur annually in almost every town center over the Pennsylvania Wilds region. Although special events can certainly attract people to town centers, a special event should not be the only reason for people to come downtown. A town center should be inviting and have a festive atmosphere all year long.



Downtown Clearfield Street Festival
Clearfield County

Town centers need to be enthralling to community residents and display an irresistible appeal to people visiting and passing through. The ideal goal is for town centers to become destination points for visitors traveling around the Pennsylvania Wilds. The buildings, shops, public squares, and overall look and feel of the town should call out to people to stop their cars, park, and walk around to explore what the town has to offer. In towns lacking an alluring atmosphere, travelers are not enticed to spontaneously stop and explore the area. Instead, they will simply continue onto their intended destinations.

One of the most common complaints about traditional town centers is that businesses are not open in the evenings. “Die at Five” is a term used to indicate there is no life in the downtown after five o’clock P.M. Although closing at five or six o’clock in the evening may have been how town centers originally operated, these days evening activity is almost essential. Adding office, lodging, and residential to the mix of uses available in town centers assures a certain level of evening activity. To be successful, town centers should provide attractive, safe, and walkable access to their shops, restaurants, and activity areas during both day and night-time hours.

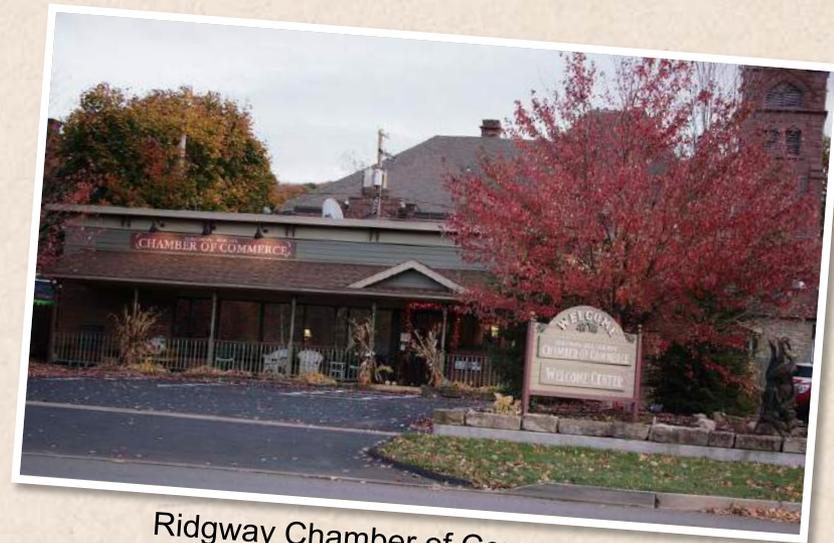
TOWN CENTERS

Welcoming Places

The word *welcome* expresses a hospitable greeting. The inviting characteristics of place and people that are present in the fabric of every community of the Pennsylvania Wilds convey a sense of reception and acceptance that is sometimes called small-town charisma, or rural charm. This sentiment needs to be visually expressed in communities in order to attract and meet the needs of visitors to the region. Adherence to the concepts contained in this Design Guide will assist in conveying a welcoming charm.

“Gateway” communities around the region serve as the “front doors” to the Pennsylvania Wilds experience.

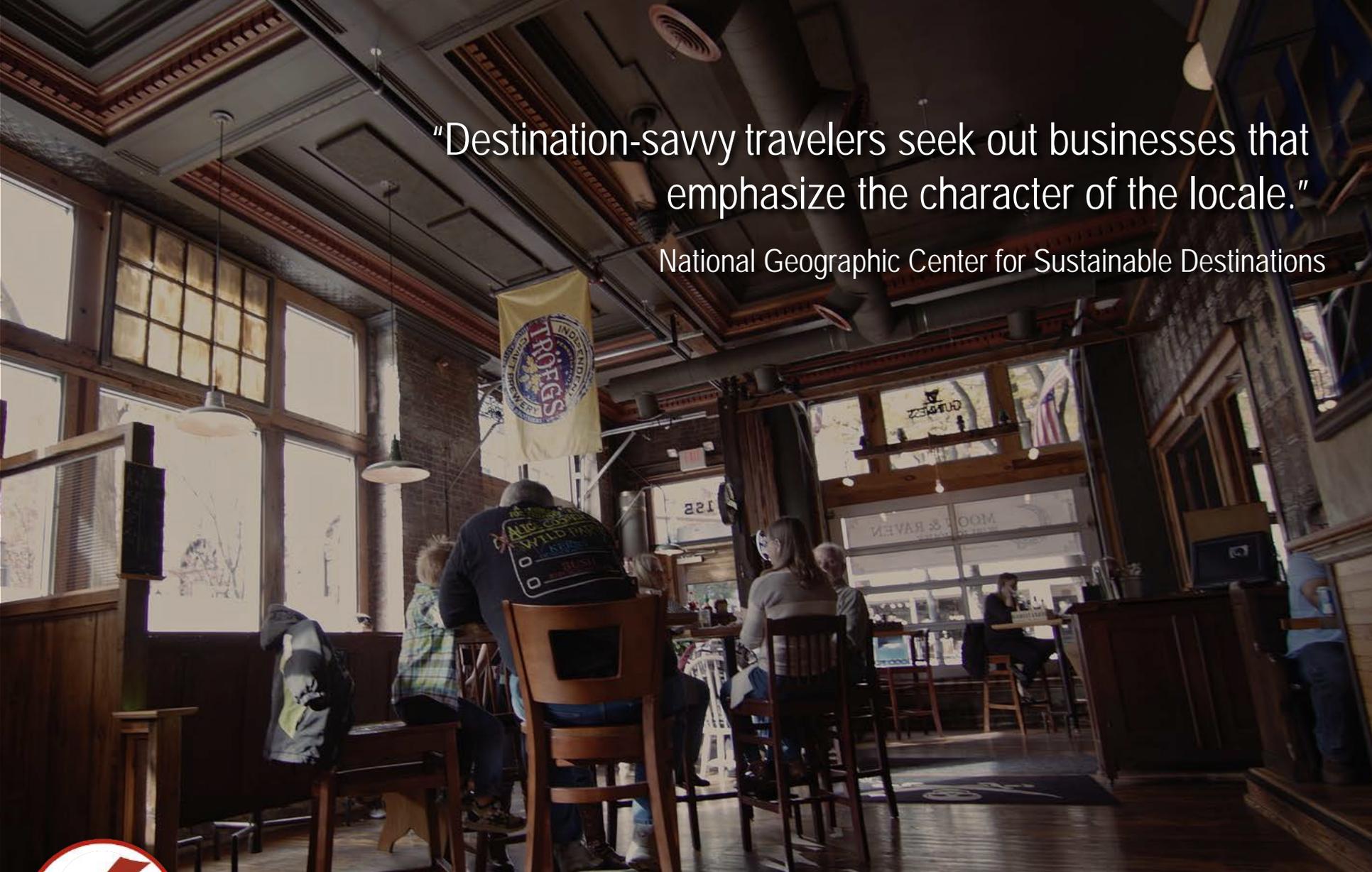
Many of the Pennsylvania Wild’s town centers have been in place for centuries. Not having the luxury of “starting from scratch” in creating the street layout, building arrangements, and other defining aspects of the town center structure should not be viewed as a disadvantage. To the contrary, town centers built centuries ago offer so many benefits that can never be achieved in new construction. Historic buildings of quality construction and detail, mature trees and landscaping, individuality of features, and authenticity of place are just a few.



Ridgway Chamber of Commerce,
Elk County

"Destination-savvy travelers seek out businesses that emphasize the character of the locale."

National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations



Town Centers

Moon & Raven
Williamsport, Lycoming County

“Little communities and individual property owners may not realize that the commercial district is like the book cover of the town. If you don’t have an attractive cover, no one will open the book.”

Marlene Lelock, Former Director of Punxsutawney Chamber of Commerce and 2016 PA Wilds Award Winner



Town Centers

Sheffield, Warren County

TOWN CENTERS

Many Hands Make Light Work

Many communities are focusing energy on rejuvenating their historic town centers. As shopping malls and strip commercial districts have become more homogenous, communities have taken interest in invigorating their downtowns. Programs such as the Pennsylvania Main Street Program use a grassroots structure to encourage revitalization by leveraging private dollars and requiring ongoing, local support.



Even without formally engaging in a Main Street Program, the municipality can do many things to encourage private investments in town centers.

By making small changes and improvements in the public right-of-way like sidewalk improvements, tree plantings, light post replacements, installation of public art and street furniture like benches and decorative trash receptacles, a tone is set for revitalization. Incentives can be given to property owners for improving their storefronts and providing pedestrian amenities such as a pedestrian pass-through, or a simple public bench on their property to support the vision of the town center.

Guidelines: Town Centers

Community Support

1. If there is a high level of community interest in participating in a downtown revitalization program, investigate the benefits of engaging in a formal Main Street Program.
2. Educate local business owners and residents on opportunities for service industry business growth to maintain the majority of gateway community businesses in local ownership.
3. Support the establishment of local businesses that tailor to the traveler (bed-and-breakfast lodgings, antique shops, cafes and quaint restaurants, retailers of arts and crafts and contemporary Pennsylvania forest products; local artist studios, etc.)

Historic Structures & Features

1. Pursue the establishment of Historic Districts in town centers that qualify for district status.
2. Place particular emphasis on maintaining, restoring, and re-using buildings that were used by or have relation to an historical figure or event.
3. Avoid the demolition of visually significant town center buildings constructed in a traditional architectural style. Renovate and restore as the preferred course of action before permitting demolition.

Historic Structures & Features, continued...

4. Refer to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties for storefront remodels and renovations. If there are any conflicts between Design Guide recommendations and these Standards (36 CFR 67), the national standards shall take precedence, particularly when pursuing income tax incentives for building rehabilitations.
5. Restore and maintain historic storefronts constructed before about 1950. Preserve façade features and storefronts that have acquired significance over time, such as Cararra glass or Vitrolite used in storefronts constructed in the 1930s and 1940s.
6. When storefronts and other buildings in the town center are renovated, salvage façade materials, particularly older visually unique materials in good condition. Offer them to other building owners for their building renovations. Moving a visually unique feature to another building is better than losing it altogether.
7. During building renovations, use storefront and façade details that are compatible with the building's traditional design and architectural style and are complementary to adjacent buildings.
8. When replacing exterior lights and hardware fixtures (door handles, knobs, knockers, mail slots, etc.), use fixtures that are complementary to the architectural style and period of the building.

Guidelines: Town Centers

Civic and Public Spaces

1. If civic uses are present in the town center, maximize their visibility. By their nature, civic facilities (town hall, library, courthouse, post office, park, police station, etc.) belong to the public and should be viewed as key elements in town centers.
2. Where necessary and as funding becomes available, enhance the appearance of civic facilities and amenities such as town halls, courthouses, libraries, community centers, schools and universities, libraries, parks, and police and public fire stations to serve as key examples of the community's desired aesthetic style and theme.
3. If a new civic building is needed, consider locating it in or near the town center.
4. In town squares and parks, include a pavilion, historical markers or monuments, seating areas, patriotic flags, and signs to help establish and reinforce town's history (see 'Theme: History and Patriotism' in Chapter 2).

Streetscape and Parking

1. Use a consistent front yard street setback along town center streets. New buildings on a street should conform to the dominant setback, identified in the municipality's zoning ordinance or comply with required "build-to lines."

Streetscape and Parking, continued...

2. Add street trees along sidewalks to make main streets appear more welcoming. Use hardy varieties free of droppings (acorn, fruit, seed, etc.) that litter sidewalks and cars.
3. Select street trees with mature canopy heights that extend above storefronts so signage and storefront views are not blocked.
4. If the community is participating in a community banner program, display community theme flags on streets of the town center.
5. Participate in a public art program and display tasteful public art as a form of community pride and expressionism. Select a public art theme that complements the community's assets and natural setting. Construct art pieces of durable materials and finishes and place them in locations where they will not be safety hazards or obstructions to pedestrian travel or storefront visibility.
6. Do not attempt to use public art to "cover up" or distract from an unattractive building. Instead, fix the building and display art as a complementary feature.
7. Use murals to liven up blank walls in alleys and other forgotten spaces and to recognize key leaders or events in town's history.
8. Contact utility providers about feasibility of placing utility lines underground or consolidating overhead utilities to reduce visual clutter.
9. Provide on-street parking to encourage street activity, minimize need for off-street parking lots, and to buffer pedestrians on the sidewalk from moving traffic. Look for opportunities to provide diagonal parking where parking demand is higher.

Guidelines: Town Centers

Storefronts, Façades, and Infill Construction

1. Design exterior building façades with a richness of detail. Exterior building designs should convey a sense of timelessness and be visually impressive.
2. Use large-glass paned windows for the display of goods along streets having or desiring to have a large volume of pedestrian traffic. Use bulkhead display shelves that were typical in traditional storefront architecture.
3. Do not close in traditional recessed entries.
4. Use traditional canvas awnings to enhance storefront areas on streets that have or desire to have a high level of foot traffic. Awnings should relate to the building in terms of scale, form, and color and should be coordinated with all businesses on the same street or block.
5. Emphasize front door entries by using roofs, recessions, awnings, pilasters or other details that express the importance of the entrance.
6. Use window sizes and patterns on the upper stories that are consistent with surrounding structures.
7. Windows, doors, and other features of the building should be proportional to human stature and height. Exceptionally tall heights used for doors and windows is not in keeping with a charming small town character unless appropriate to the architectural style of the building.
8. Develop a recommended complementary color palette for painted commercial façades and encourage storefronts to be repainted during renovation projects.
9. If rear or side building façades are visible to the public or face inner-block parking areas, enhance the façades to be visually appealing. Enhancements that are typically needed include repairs to masonry, wood, windows, doors, stairs, gutters and downspouts, and screening of unsightly building functions like trash bins and mechanical equipment.

Guidelines: Town Centers

Storefronts, Façades, and Infill Construction, continued...

10. In new construction and exterior building renovations, use wood for decorative features such as doors, window trims, stairs, porches, etc., if appropriate to the architectural style of the building.
11. Use traditional building materials for new construction to the maximum extent feasible (wood, brick, stone). Vinyl, aluminum and other synthetic siding materials are discouraged as the primary façade material in town centers. Use of synthetic materials in a color complementary to natural materials may be appropriate as an accent provided it does not detract from other materials.
12. In new construction, do not design imitations of “pioneer” style or “log cabin” buildings as storefronts, as their overuse or misuse will convey an unauthentic visual image. (In other words, avoid the impression of being in a fabricated environment like Disneyland’s “Frontier Land.”) If a log cabin look is desired, use a contemporary expression of the style instead of attempting an imitation. (Refer to Chapter 2 for recommended traditional architectural styles).
13. Do not allow the use of concrete block as a primary building material in town centers unless it is located on a façade with no public view.
14. Do not construct buildings that have flammable features or buildings that are of temporary or makeshift construction
15. Do not allow the construction of large box-like structures with little architectural detailing in town centers (refer to Chapter 4 for more information). If a building is targeted for demolition, identify the use of the vacant parcel following demolition. All parcels should have an intended use and vacant lots should have a plan for maintenance.
16. If a building is targeted for demolition, identify the use of the vacant parcel following demolition. All parcels should have an intended use and vacant lots should have a plan for maintenance.
17. Demolitions are less damaging to the integrity of a streetscape if they occur at the end of a building row. If a demolition occurs in the middle of a row, develop a plan for short- and long-term use of the parcel. All vacant lots in the middle of a building row should have an active use (new building construction, use as a park, an urban garden, or other useful space).
18. If a historic building with a unique front façade is being considered for demolition to accommodate new construction, determine if the front façade can be stabilized and incorporated into the new construction project. If demolition activity exposes the side wall of an adjacent structure, repair that wall to acceptable standards.

Guidelines: Town Centers

Pedestrian Friendly Features

1. Display historic artifacts and photographs in buildings and shops patronized by travelers.
2. Where feasible, enhance pedestrian routes through the town center. All streets, except for alleys, should be provided with continuous sidewalks. Clearly mark all pedestrian crosswalks.
3. Orient buildings and public spaces to the pedestrian instead of the car. The physical environment should be comfortable, friendly, accessible, and approachable.
4. Provide street-side amenities where they would likely be used and appreciated. For example, providing benches near destination points, such as retail stores, restaurants, and parks is a good idea.
5. Encourage street activity by allowing private cafes and restaurants to place tables and vendor carts outside.
6. Screen all outdoor storage and trash collection areas from pedestrian view.
7. Provide ample outdoor seating in public open spaces and parks, but not too much that would make the area appear unsafe. Configure seating to maximize scenic views and face to face conversation.
8. Maximize pedestrian and bicycle linkages and connections between public and private uses and activity areas to reduce number of automobile trips in the town center. Seeing pedestrian activity serves as a visual enhancement.
9. Minimize conflicts between cars, pedestrians, and bicycles. Separate vehicular and non-vehicular paths of travel by providing walkways and bikeways in areas away from busy roads.
10. Do not route pedestrians through visually unpleasant and dangerous circumstances (busy roads, parking lots, service alleys, etc.).
11. Provide bicycle storage racks in strategic locations to encourage bike riding. Develop a standard bicycle rack design and use it consistently for visual consistency.
12. In communities with public transit service, provide convenient access to transit stops. Where transit shelters are provided, place them in safe, highly visible locations. Shelters with wood themed coverings are encouraged.

Guidelines: Town Centers

Signs

1. Signage should be reflective of the overall community character. Use finely crafted signage with ample detailing and smaller character type. Wood block design style is encouraged, but not required. Wood and metal were the standard materials of traditional sign makers, and these materials, along with other natural materials, are recommended. should be coordinated with all businesses on the same street or block.
2. Prohibit plastic, internally illuminated signs, particularly those that contain large bold lettering.
3. Make business identification signs visible to both pedestrians and passing motorists. Depending upon the character of a street, a balance needs to be achieved between signage for vehicles and signage that is friendly to pedestrians.
4. Do not overbear or obscure architectural details of buildings by signs.
5. Do not allow multiple freestanding signs unless they are absolutely necessary, due to their ability to cause visual clutter.
6. Allow the placement of temporary “sandwich board” signs on the sidewalk so long as they do not impede or interrupt the flow of pedestrian traffic.

Guidelines: Town Centers

Uses

1. If Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) are permitted by the municipality's ordinances, use properties in and around the town center as receiver sites for density.
2. Allow the vertical mixing of uses (such as offices or living spaces on the upper stories of ground-level shops and restaurants).
3. Discourage the construction of freestanding national chain stores in town centers unless the building is constructed in an appropriate traditional architectural style and the building placement is pedestrian friendly.
4. Encourage full service hotels, franchises, and national chain stores to locate in historic buildings (see Chapter 4). If new buildings are required, construct them in one of the recommended traditional architectural styles (see 'Theme: Architectural Styles' in Chapter 2).
5. Restrict self-contained tourist attractions unrelated to the character of the community in areas well outside the town center. These may include water parks, amusement parks, and other such uses.
6. Discourage drive-thru restaurants and other drive-thru businesses in town centers, as their presence conveys a visual message of "get in and get out" as opposed to "come and stay awhile."
7. Use public spaces and "left over" parcels wisely to increase outdoor social interaction. Add park benches, gazebos, and pedestrian amenities where possible.
8. If a town center suffers from the presence of blighted buildings or vacant unattractive lots, the municipality should:
 - ◊ Work with property owners to keep vacant lots clear of debris;
 - ◊ Work with property owners to maintain vacant buildings to the level of occupied buildings. Install an attractive and functional fence with landscape screening;
 - ◊ If a vacant lot is publicly owned, use it as a temporary community garden or other public use;
 - ◊ If the lot or building is planned for a future use, display a well designed sign or mural indicating the future planned use.



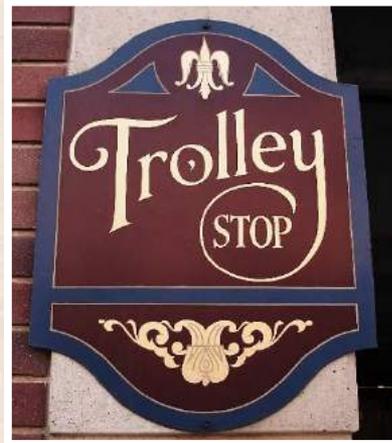
Town Centers



Allow service businesses such as restaurants to place tables and vendor carts outside



Pine Square, Lycoming County



Provide amenities that reduce auto traffic

Encourage national chain stores to locate in historic buildings like this Subway in Ridgway

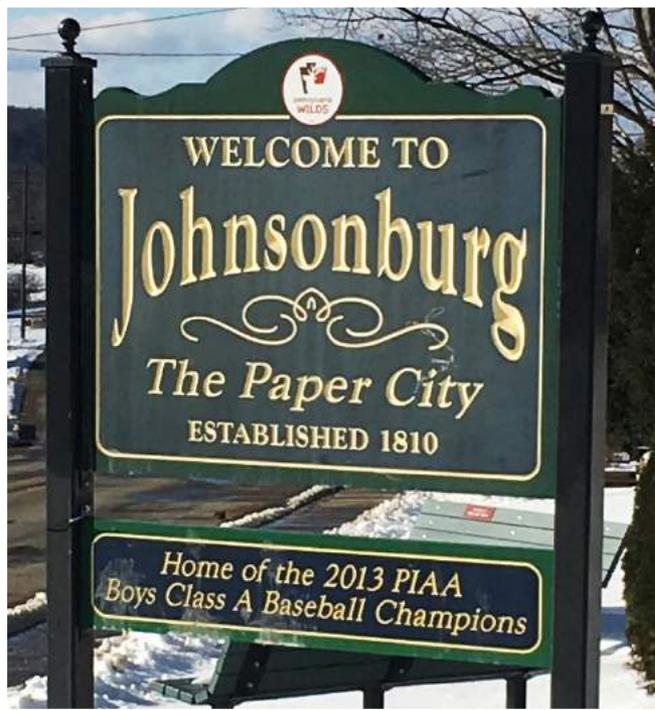


Ridgway, Elk County



Town Centers

Display welcome signs in appropriate locations.



Johnsonburg, Elk County

Display clear user-friendly signage to direct people to shops and other businesses.



Identify civic spaces as key elements in the town center



Use finely crafted signs in a consistent style and theme





Town Centers

Downtown Wellsboro, Tioga County



Town Centers



Select a public art theme that complements the community's assets and natural setting

“Bases Loaded”
Williamsport, Lycoming County



Display community theme banners

Clearfield,
Clearfield County



Retrofit historic buildings to meet modern-day regulations



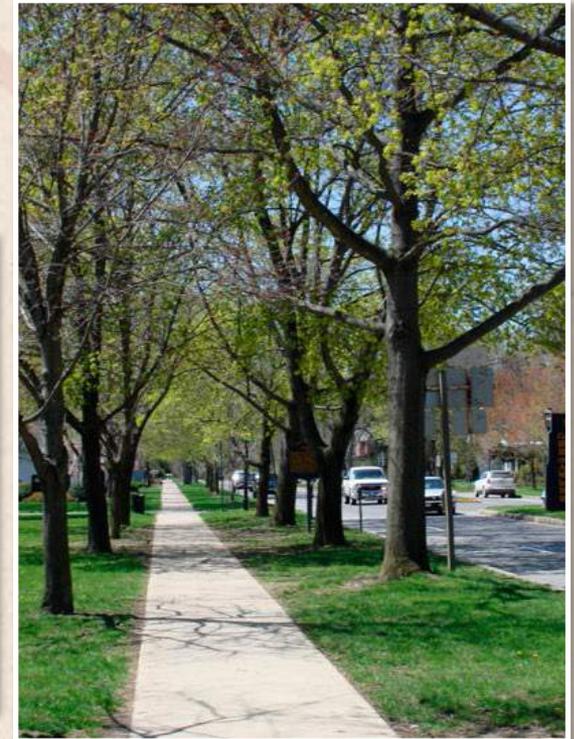
Town Centers



During restoration, stay true to the building's authentic façade features



Preserve large windowed storefronts to make the town center inviting and educate residents about supporting local business



Provide safe pedestrian walkways

INDUSTRIAL

Function Vs. Visual Appeal

Many industries are located across the Pennsylvania Wilds region, and others may appear. Industry is an important contributor to economic stability, as it provides jobs and needed services to the region. The visual impact of an industrial building depends on its size and use. Some industrial, manufacturing, and warehouse buildings are large and massive by their very nature, and cannot be forgotten in the consideration of regional aesthetics and visual character.

Industrial and manufacturing buildings are built for function, not for visual appeal. Still, with just a few design considerations, industries can contribute positively to the visual character of the region.



Bradford Forest Products improved their manufacturing and distribution facility by adding an attractive office building (left) at the public street. The building provides a nice aesthetic to the site's functional lumber yard (right).

INDUSTRIAL

Function Vs. Visual Appeal

The perceived scale of these buildings and their design elements directly relate to how they look in relation to nearby development. If a facility is surrounded by open space or is set back from smaller-scale development, its scale will be perceived as smaller than a facility of the same size that is located immediately adjacent to a residential neighborhood or other small buildings.

This Design Guide does not advocate a specific architectural style for industrial, manufacturing, or warehouse buildings, as it is acknowledged that economy and function are the most important considerations. It is recommended, however, that existing industries be aware of their impact on a community's visual appeal and make improvements over time. New facilities should be carefully sited and draw from regional design influences. For instance, the building entry design can reflect a traditional architectural style, building colors can complement the surrounding environment, massing can be broken up into smaller elements, and landscaping can screen unattractive features.



Design the main building entry to reflect a traditional architectural style appropriate for the region

Guidelines: Industrial

1. If a building is visible from a public road corridor and houses or once housed an interesting function (like a historic sawmill, refinery, etc.), add a visible identification marker to the structure or post a sign to draw interest.
2. Orient building entrances toward the primary public view (street frontage). Avoid turning main entrances away from the street.
3. Design the main building entry to reflect a traditional architectural style appropriate for the region. Entries should be designed to be consistent with overall architectural design, including colors and materials (see 'Theme: Architectural Styles', Chapter 2).
4. When multiple sides of the building are visible, avoid the appearance of a "false front." For example, do not design the front of the building in a "colonial" style if the rest of the building has metal siding. If the colonial style cannot be carried to other visible building elevations, limit its application to the entry only.
5. Incorporate overhangs, recessed openings, canopies, or other features to emphasize the entrance area.
6. Install windows, particularly along the street-side front elevation(s) to help incorporate a human-scale design element into large buildings.
7. Use wood and other natural materials for the construction of freestanding signs, outdoor benches, and employee amenity areas (see 'Theme: Wood and Timber' in Chapter 2).
8. Avoid large expanses of light colored wall or roof materials. Use neutral, earth toned, or dark neutral hues to visually reduce the perceived size of large buildings.
9. Do not use highly reflective surfaces as primary building materials because they can cause glare and are not consistent with the authentic character of the Pennsylvania Wilds.

Guidelines: Industrial

10. Consider reductions in perceived building mass on walls visible from public roads or other public viewing areas by one or more of the following:
 - Recessing building floors above the first story
 - Providing vertical or horizontal offsets in the wall surfaces
 - Articulating details around doors, windows, and plate lines
 - Reducing overly large and tall roof designs
 - Using a variety of textures (whether the building is made of metal, masonry, concrete, cement, plaster, or other material, effects of texture and relief can be incorporated that provide character.
11. Avoid large roof elements that visually dominate other architectural building features. Break up rooflines by providing changes in the roof height, form, or other articulations.
12. Do not use chain link fence or barbed wire in areas with public visibility unless there is no feasible alternative.
13. Screen all roof-mounted mechanical equipment, trash areas, and loading dock areas from public view.
14. Avoid the use of long, bleak, unarticulated metal panels. If metal buildings are proposed, use a well-articulated building form and mix the metal surfaces with other materials, or textures and colors. Hide or disguise wall fastening systems and seams.
15. Direct lighting away from public streets and adjacent properties (see 'Preserve Dark Skies' in Chapter 5).
16. When building a new facility, use a sensitive grading design that respects natural features and terrain (see 'Be Sensitive to Natural Landforms' and 'Be Environmentally Responsible' in Chapter 5). Preserve as many mature trees on the property as possible (see 'Value Trees and the Landscape' in Chapter 5).



Use landscape screening to block industrial views where appropriate

Industrial



Renovate buildings for modern use. This former factory built in the 1920s was renovated as a first-class office building.



Use earth materials excavated during grading to create landscape berms to buffer uses from adjacent properties



Limit the excessive use of chain link fence and barbed wire along scenic roadways



Industrial



Variations in building materials and colors, the use of awnings, and the placement of large glass windows at the entrance articulate the building and reduce the mass of the structure



Add human-scale features to make large buildings pedestrian-friendly and visually attractive



Industrial



When little can be done to improve the aesthetics of an industry's functional areas, landscape buffering can soften the view, as shown in these BEFORE (left) and AFTER (right) photographic simulations of a manufacturing plant.

ROADWAY CORRIDORS

Function Vs. Visual Appeal

There are many scenic routes in the region. Some of the most well-known are PA Route 6, the Longhouse Scenic Byway and the Bucktail Scenic Byway. Other roads have no formal designation, but are equally scenic and should be considered in the discussion of visual quality.

Roads serve as tributaries to the region's scenic character; thus, the protection of roadway corridors from view blockage, homogenized design, and unnecessary visual clutter is important. A passing motorist can clearly see the extent to which visual intrusions (e.g. unkempt buildings, cellular towers, obtrusive signage, unsightly land uses, etc.) impact scenic quality.

The most common roadside clutter is excessive signage and billboards, communication towers and utilities, open storage, junk cars, unscreened surface parking lots, and strip commercial development.



Visual clutter can lead to motorist stress and cause drivers to pass by a location instead of feeling invited to stop.



Bucktail Scenic Byway

Clinton County

ROADWAY CORRIDORS

Determine Visual Sensitivity

Not all travel routes have the same level of visual sensitivity. Roads with low travel speeds allow longer viewing times and usually have higher levels of visual sensitivity than roads with posted travel speeds of 55 mph or greater. Even roads with high travel speeds, however, can be view sensitive. When making land use decisions on properties along or visible from primary public roadways, professional judgments must be made about the level of visual sensitivity and the need to enforce strict design requirements, or be more flexible.



Tourist routes leading to a town center or connecting two communities are just as visually important to the driver as the town centers and communities themselves.

ROADWAY CORRIDORS

Road to Town

Visitors desiring to stop in town to eat, shop, sightsee, or rest, do so most often when the town is visible from the roadway. When a town can't be seen from the primary roadway, "visual isolation" occurs. For communities that are visually isolated and desire visitor foot traffic to increase economic opportunities, a simple, unobtrusive, and attractively designed welcome sign is recommended to be placed on the primary roadway.

Image of the Interchange

Although not prevalent in all parts of the region, interchanges on limited access highways can experience a unique set of aesthetic challenges. Typically, interchanges are popular and profitable spots for travel services (fast food restaurants, motels, and service stations). Usually, travel service businesses are constructed in prototypical corporate-driven architecture, which is not reflective of the region's desired character or style. Also, unusually tall signs and bright lights are typically used to attract patrons.



By recognizing interchanges as visual entryways to charming communities and beyond, measures should be taken to avoid the proliferation of visual clutter at interchange locations.

Avoid proliferation of visual clutter at interchange locations

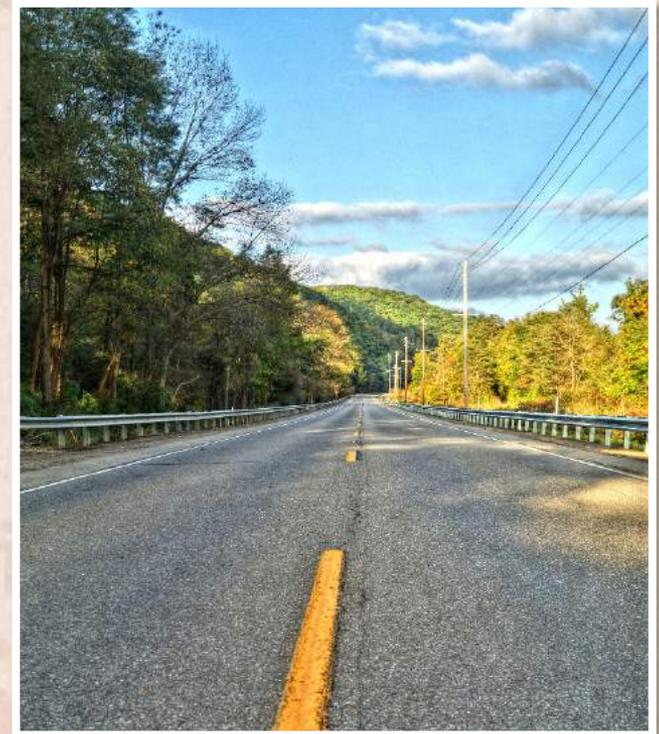


Guidelines: Roadway Corridors

1. If strip commercial or big box development is a visual concern from the roadway corridor, consult 'Strip Commercial, Big Boxes and Franchises' in Chapter 4.
2. If view blockage is a visual concern from the roadway corridor, consult 'Protect Scenic Viewsheds and Vistas' in Chapter 5.
3. If communication towers are visual concerns from the roadway corridor, consult 'Utility Towers' in Chapter 4.
4. If excessive lighting along roadways is a visual concern, consult 'Preserve Dark Skies' in Chapter 5.
5. Preserve existing trees along scenic road corridors to the greatest extent possible (see 'Value Trees and the Landscape' in Chapter 5).
6. Limit clearing and grading along scenic road frontages to the minimum necessary for safety, access and sight distance.
7. Do not block long distance views to town centers from approaching roadways (see 'Protect Scenic Viewsheds and Vistas' in Chapter 5).
8. Identify historic aspects of the route through signage or other means.
9. Encourage the ongoing maintenance of deteriorating or poorly maintained properties along visually sensitive roads.
10. Remove vacant, deteriorated buildings that are beyond repair when they become a clear safety hazard or visual nuisance.
11. Screen unsightly views from heavily traveled road corridors by landscaping, berms, walls, and/or fencing.
12. Do not use chain link or barbed wire fencing along roads unless there is no other viable option.
13. Reduce unnecessary signage to the greatest extent possible. 14. Use smaller and fewer signs. Design signs to simply communicate the intended message, be compatible with the natural surroundings, and enhance instead of degrade view from roadways.

Guidelines: Roadway Corridors

14. The use of billboards is discouraged. They have been found to lower surrounding property values, block views, and create hazardous distractions to motorists. The removal of natural vegetation and trees to accommodate the location of a billboard should be discouraged.
15. On roads that bypass a town center, place a simple, unobtrusive, and attractively designed identification and welcome sign on primary roadway, approximately 1 to ½ mile before the first available turn-off.
16. Limit the number of unrestricted access driveways along major roadways. Too many access driveways can lead to traffic tie-ups, accidents caused by constant turning movements, and demand for road improvements to correct safety and congestion problems. Encourage shared driveways.
17. Consider the development of Access Management Plans for main roadway corridors that preserve the capacity of existing roadways and thereby reducing the need for roadway expansion to maintain levels of service.



Bucktail Scenic Byway /Route 120
Cameron County



Roadway Corridors



Post slow travel speeds in areas of pedestrian activity



Preserve existing trees, maintain landscaping and utilize high quality streetscape features such as light posts.



Wykoff Run Road, Cameron County



Maintain original brick or cobblestone roadways



Lenticular Truss Bridge, Clinton County

Keep travel routes scenic and clear of unnecessary visual clutter.

Identify historic aspects of roadway especially bridges.



TOOLBOX: Implementing Best Practices

Technique 1: Create a List of Community-Specific Best Practices

Using this Design Guide, counties and municipalities should consider creating a tailored set of best practices and community character objectives specific to the land use settings, authentic qualities, and other physical elements of their community. For example, “Remove vacant and deteriorated buildings along Canyon Road and Valley View Drive” or “Restore historic Victorian storefronts along Bridge Street, between 1st and 4th Avenues.” By tailoring best practices, the guidelines are transformed into clear, specific, tangible objectives.

Technique 2: Define Authentic Qualities

This Design Guide covers a large, 12 ½ county region and gives general direction regarding visual quality and community character. Each community in the Pennsylvania Wilds has its own unique mixture of land uses, cultures, histories, architectural styles, and environmental assets. Each community should define its special and authentic qualities, and document them in comprehensive plans or separate documents. Refer to the list when assessing whether land use decisions, capital improvements, new construction, or alterations, additions, or renovations of existing buildings will preserve, enhance, or deter from the defining qualities of authentic character. To define a community’s authentic qualities, identify the following:

- Historic and architecturally significant buildings
- Predominant cultural or ethnic origins
- People or events of historical or social significance
- Core industries or other primary economic drivers in the past, present, or future
- Defining geographic or natural environmental characteristics



TOOLBOX: Implementing Best Practices

Technique 3: Transfer of Development Rights

The Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is enabled by Section 603(c) (2.2) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). When incorporated into and permitted by county or local municipal codes, it allows property owners to voluntarily transfer the development rights of one property to another property better suited for development. Municipal codes identify “sending zones” as areas to be conserved and “receiving zones” as areas that are most appropriate to handle growth.

In most instances, TDRs are pursued in order to preserve agricultural lands and other lands worthy of permanent conservation. TDR is a strong tool communities use to manage growth pressure and steer new development to appropriate locations. In accordance with Pennsylvania law, TDRs must occur within the boundaries of the same municipality, unless an intergovernmental cooperative agreement has been formed.

In a simple example, John would like to retire and sell his 200-acre farm to a developer, “cashing-out” his land for retirement. Municipal zoning allows one home per every ten acres (20 homes). Robert owns 50 acres of land near town and municipal zoning allows one home per every acre (50 homes). Using TDR, John can sell his development right (20 homes) to Robert, and Robert can then develop 70 homes instead of 50 on his property near town. The 200-acre farm would not be developed, and growth was directed to a logical location near town, eliminating “urban sprawl.”



TDR is a voluntary, market-based process and can be an effective tool for preserving land.