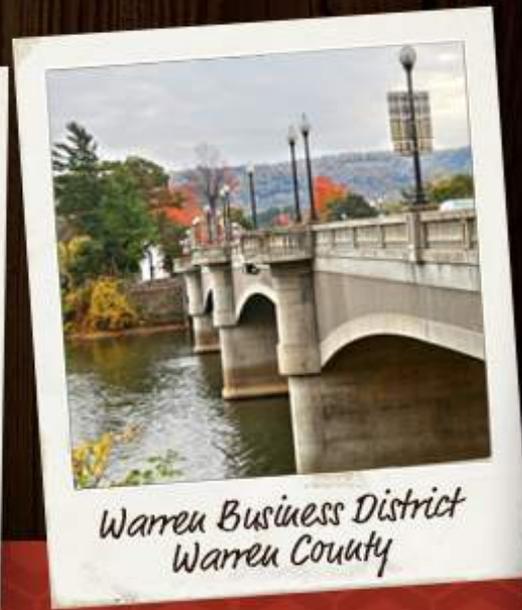
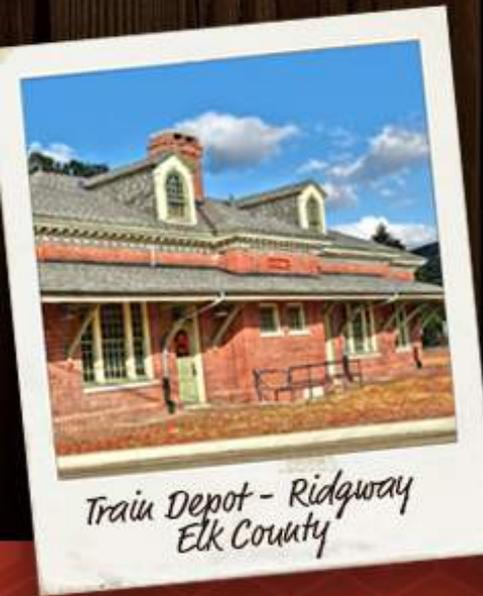




DESIGN GUIDE

for Community Character Stewardship

Second Edition



Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship

Second Edition
2017

Developed by:

The Pennsylvania Wilds Planning Team

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PA WILDS CENTER
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

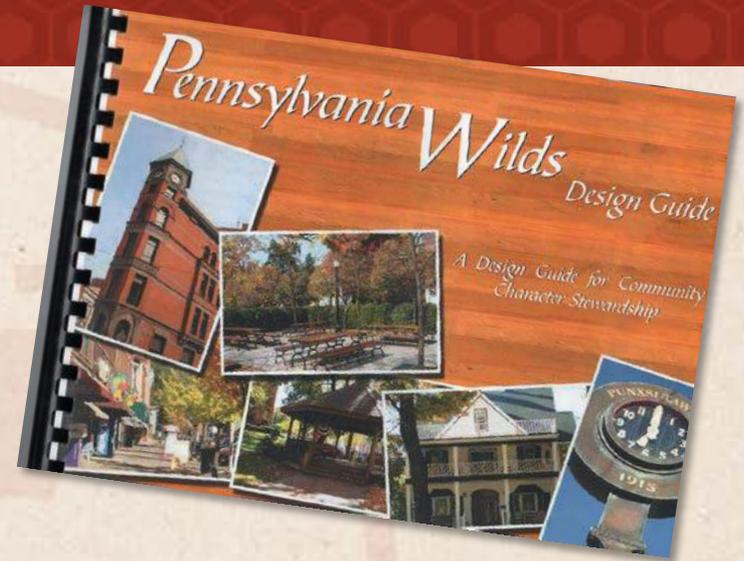
Foreword	4	Chapter 4 - Lessen the Impact of Intrusive Development	
Users Guide	5	Assessing the Impact	166
Chapter 1 – Introduction		Strip Commercial, Big Boxes, and Franchises	168
A Special Place.	9	Hotels and Lodging	181
Why is Regional Character Important?	11	Utility Towers	187
What is a Design Guide?	13	Wind Energy Facilities	193
Why is a Design Guide Needed?	14	Toolbox for Lessening Impacts	196
Guiding Principles	17	Chapter 5 - Complement the Landscape	
Toolbox for Using Design Guide	27	Protect Scenic Viewsheds and Vistas	200
Chapter 2 - Consider Regional Themes		Be Sensitive to Natural Landforms	210
Thematic Elements	33	Preserve Dark Skies	214
Theme: The Pennsylvania Wilds Logo	35	Value Trees and the Landscape	223
Primary Themes:		Be Environmentally Responsible	230
• Wood and Timber	39	Toolbox for Complementing the Landscape	241
• History and Patriotism	47	Chapter 6 - Context-Sensitive Transportation	
• Architectural Styles	58	The Experience of Travel	251
Secondary Themes:		The Roadway Network	257
• Water	72	Bridges	264
• Wildlife		Trails and Paths	271
• Glass	76	Toolbox for Context-Sensitive Transportation	281
• Stone and Brick	80	Chapter 7 - A Decade of Success	
Toolbox for Regional Identity	90	Introduction	286
Chapter 3 - Implement Best Practices		Design Initiatives	289
Best Practices	99	Project Case Studies	291
Agricultural	100	Acknowledgments	333
Rural Communities	106		
Residential Neighborhoods	113		
Town Centers.	127		
Industrial	147		
Roadway Corridors	155		
Toolbox for Implementing Best Practices	163		

Foreword

The PA Wilds Planning Team (PWPT) was created in 2006 through an Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement (the largest geographic area covered by such an Agreement in state history) between the following 12 member counties: Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga, and Warren. As an advisory group of county planners, regional economic development and heritage organizations, local government associations and other stakeholders, the Team came together to help communities capitalize on the economic potential of the PA Wilds initiative, while maintaining their rural and unique character. In 2007, they created the *PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship – First Edition* as a resource for the region. The document was well-received and that same year garnered a “Planning Excellence Award” from the American Planning Association Chapter – Pennsylvania Chapter.

The document paved the way for several implementation initiatives to encourage use of Design Guide concepts and principles in projects across the region. This included grant programs for community welcome and business signage, design technical assistance for a variety of specific model projects and recognition of “Great Design” through the PA Wilds Champion Awards Program.

In addition, a companion resource, *Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guide Supplement for Oil & Gas Best Practices* was prepared in 2013 to



identify techniques for addressing development related to oil and gas operations in the region. That document can be found at <http://www.pawildscenter.org/community-character-stewardship/>.

Now a decade after its original release, a *Second Edition* of the Design Guide is being published to update the document with new material and to bring attention to successful use of Guide principles and best practices in and by PA Wilds communities.

USER'S GUIDE: Audiences & Applications



How to Use the Design Guide

The Design Guide was created to encourage positive design patterns and characteristics through guidelines and best practices. It is not intended to provide strict regulations, standards or requirements. Its use is **voluntary**. It should be interpreted with some flexibility and professional judgment tailored to the specific circumstances of a particular property or project.

Chapter 1 of the Design Guide sets the stage for use of the document with overall **Guiding Principles** and **Implementation Strategies**.

Chapters 2-6 of the Design Guide have two main components: **Guidelines and Toolbox**. Guidelines provide specific design criteria and photo examples for concepts being addressed. Toolbox includes techniques that can be used to implement the recommended guidelines and to better evaluate proposed land use and design projects.

Important Note:

Don't feel intimidated by the length of this Design Guide. The Design Guide covers a wide range of land uses, physical locations, and special environmental situations that occur within the Pennsylvania Wilds region. Likely, only portions of this document will apply to your project.

Design Guide Legend:



Key Message



Good Example



Avoid!



Toolbox



"A community's image is fundamentally important to its economic well-being. The Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guide will go a long way toward helping the region preserve its identity, while also prospering economically.

This Design Guide is one of the best and most comprehensive I have seen."

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



Chapter 1: Introduction

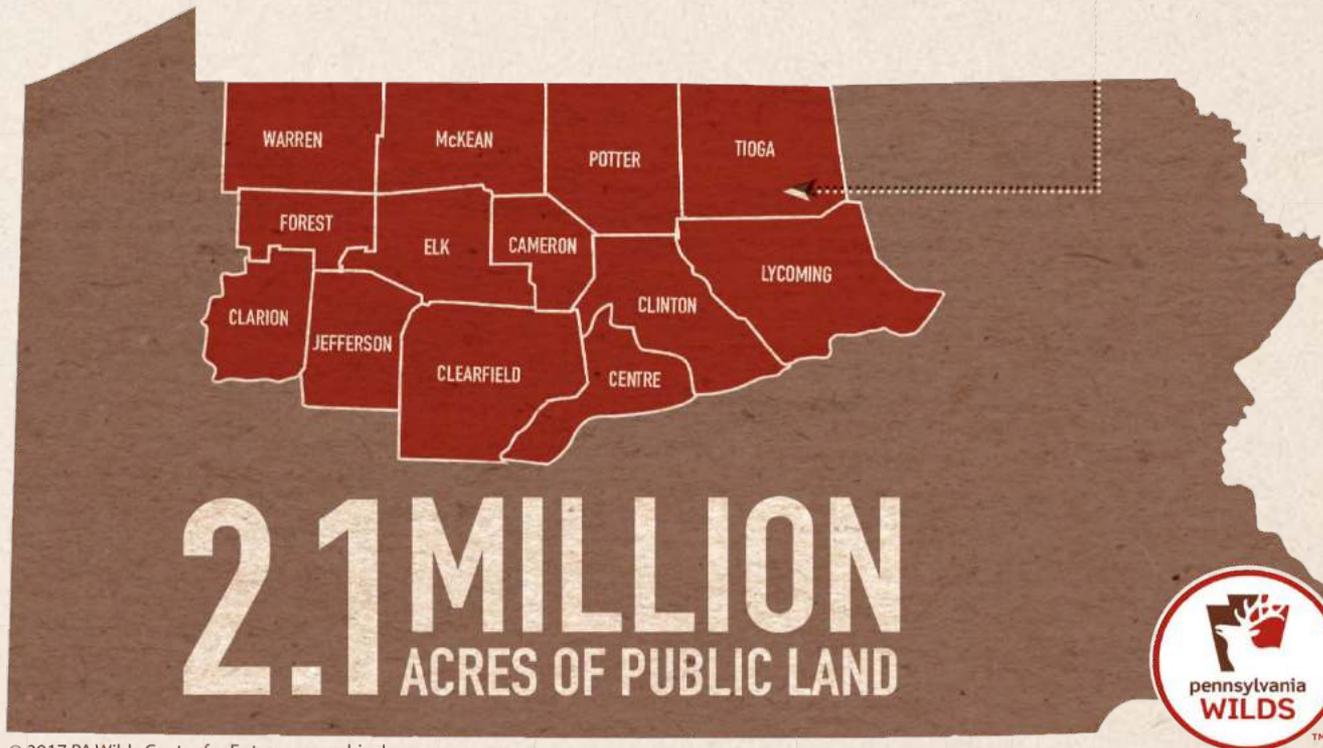
A Special Place.....	p. 9
Why is Regional Character Important?.....	p.11
What is a Design Guide?	p. 13
Why is a Design Guide Needed?.....	p. 14
Guiding Principles	p. 17
Toolbox for Using the Design Guide	p. 27

Pictured:

"Bases Loaded" public art
Birthplace of Little League Baseball
& Home of the Little League World Series
Williamsport, Lycoming County

A Special Place

The Pennsylvania Wilds is a place of endless discovery, a majestic landscape with millions of acres of public land and beautiful natural resources. The Pennsylvania Wilds is also a place to call home with charming and thriving towns & cities, local businesses, creators, makers, and artisans that celebrate and draw on the natural environment and rich history & heritage of the region.



Fast Facts:

- One of the state's 11 official tourism regions
- A large rural area that covers about a quarter of the Commonwealth's land area.
- The 12 1/2 – county landscape is known for its **2.1 million acres** of public land
- 50 State Game Lands
- 29 State Parks
- 8 State Forests
- Allegheny National Forest
- Two National Wild & Scenic Rivers
- The largest wild elk herd in the Northeast
- Some of the darkest skies in the country
- A rich oil and lumber heritage

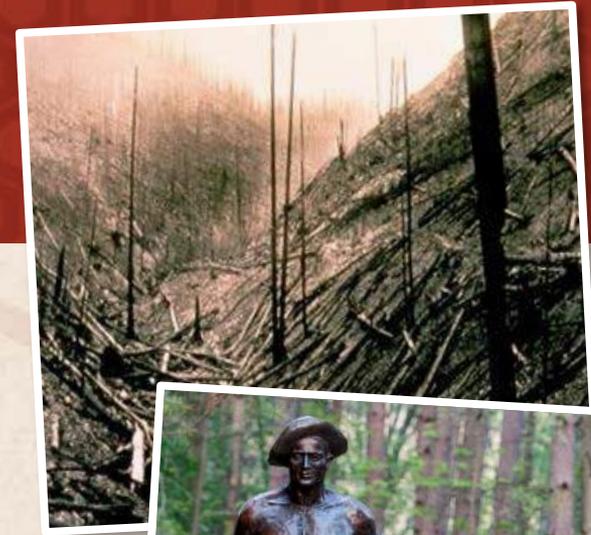
A Special Place

The Miracle Forest

Perhaps not obvious to the casual observer, the Pennsylvania Wilds' natural beauty represents a rebirth and a commitment to conservation that dates back nearly a century. Before European settlement, Pennsylvania was blanketed in virgin timber. Early settlers cleared the timber to make way for farming and settlement. With the dawn of the industrial revolution in the early 20th century, the Pennsylvania Wilds, like other large swaths of the American Northeast, saw a vast majority of its virgin timber cut, logged, and used domestically or exported by the 1920s. Left behind were heaps of burning debris, blighted mountain slopes, and sediment-choked streams. **The Pennsylvania Wilds was stripped of its timber resources.**

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS: In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration launched the CCC, modelled after a program established in PA by Governor Gifford Pinchot, to create jobs and help rebuild Pennsylvania's forests. We all owe thanks to thousands of men, U.S. Army managers, and foresters who fought forest fires, planted trees, built roads and created many of our state parks.

Thanks to strong convictions and significant investments in conservation efforts, the modern traveler enters north central Pennsylvania to find a renewed landscape. With support from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), other resource agencies, conservation organizations, sportsmen's clubs, and private landowners, the integrity and diversity of the forest has been revived. Magnificent hardwood forests, thriving wildlife, and clean rivers and streams are present once again.



Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Statue
Leonard Harrison State Park, Tioga County

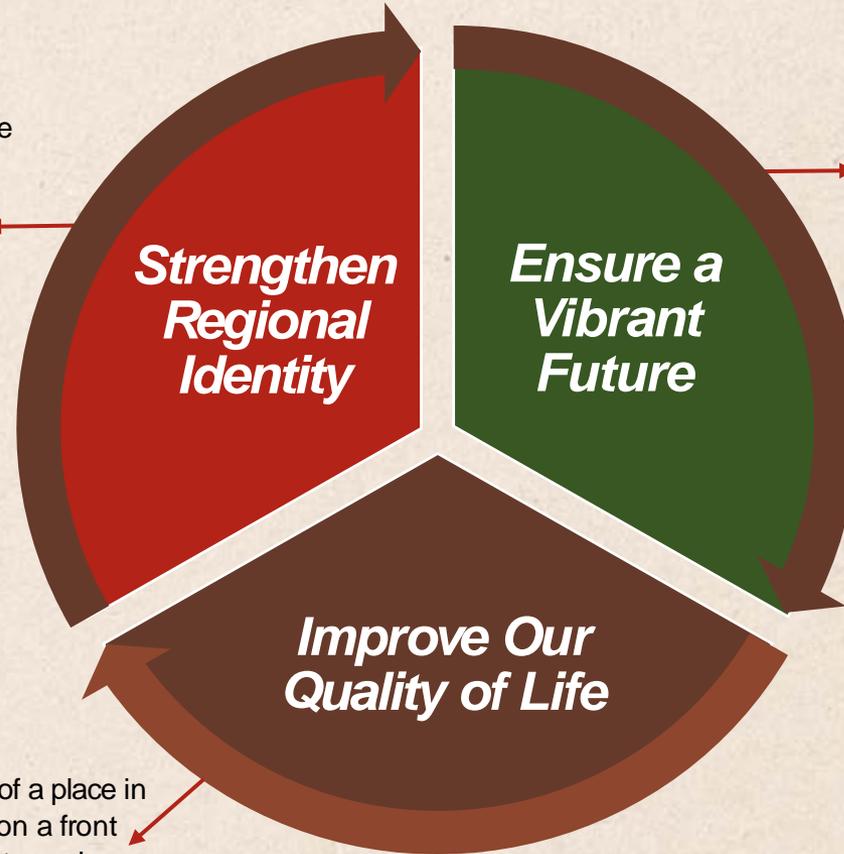
Why is Regional Character Important?

The regional character of the special place we call the Pennsylvania Wilds is inextricably linked to its forested landscape, wild and natural resources and the history, culture and tradition of its communities.

Public lands are interspersed with farms, town centers, rural villages, historic landmarks, locally-owned businesses, and productive industries.

The resulting patchwork quilt of natural, rural, and developed areas creates a unique composition that is greater than its individual parts. This quilt is a true reflection of “regional & community character.”

People gain an overall impression of a place in a variety of ways, including sitting on a front porch, walking around a town center, using a trail, and catching glimpses of the scenery from a car window. The more positive feelings people have about a location, the greater likelihood of them living, visiting, or investing there. The quality of life enjoyed by the region’s residents is intricately tied to geography, history, and landscape.



Protecting the region’s unique character is of paramount importance to the success of the Pennsylvania Wilds.

When it comes to attracting business investment and tourism dollars, looking like “everywhere USA” is not a plus.

A key concept in 21st century economic development is “community differentiation.” If people don’t see your community or region as different or special, you have no competitive advantage when attracting both financial and human capital.

The image shows the exterior of the Elk Country Visitor Center. The building features a prominent entrance with a large, multi-level wooden structure supported by stone pillars. The roof is gabled with exposed wooden beams. The walls are a mix of stone and wood. A large glass window and door are visible, with a person standing near the entrance. The building is surrounded by lush greenery, including trees and shrubs. In the foreground, there are two wooden benches on a paved area. A sign is visible on the right side of the image.

"A strong and distinct visual appearance is the single most defining element of place recognition."

- Tracy Zinn, T&B Planning

What is a Design Guide?

1. A Common Tool

A commonly used tool to steer development patterns and aesthetic qualities in a consistent direction that has been used in the U.S. for decades. It is a tool that has become more popular with renewed interest in creating healthy, vibrant communities and reducing impacts on the environment.

2. Sets Design Objectives

Sets forth physical and aesthetic design objectives. It includes photographs, illustrations, and descriptions of design elements and land use patterns that are desirable for preserving a sense of place in an area like the Pennsylvania Wilds.

3. Simple & Flexible

Easily understood guidelines and recommendations that can be applied as appropriate given the situation or project in question. Use of this design guide is voluntary and can supplement existing plans. It can help provide ideas to communities that do not have comprehensive plans or zoning.

4. Promotes Aesthetic Quality

Offers ways to ensure respect during the development process for the natural environment and to promote certain aesthetic qualities in our communities that reinforce a sense of place and uniqueness. It is not a replacement for comprehensive plans, or land development or zoning ordinances.

5. Defines Expectations

Defines expectations so public officials, property owners, developers, investors, and design professionals will know what is desired in the quality and character of new construction, exterior building renovations, redevelopment efforts, public improvements, basic land use arrangements, and other projects.

Why is a Design Guide Needed?

To have the best of both worlds -- more economic development but done in a way to retain what makes the a community and region unique and special.

Increases in tourism to the region is a sign of growth, presenting opportunity and pressure in communities for new development – including retail and commercial, new industry, housing, technology and transportation infrastructure. This is positive but such **growth has the potential to harm the very resources and characteristics that are attracting it – the authentic character of the landscape.** This is especially true in areas where major new destination facilities have come on line such as the Elk Country Visitor Center in Benezette, Elk County.

Too often, development comes at the expense of scenic quality, natural resource preservation, and individual community character. New construction in many American cities and towns has taken on a uniform look that would not serve the Pennsylvania Wilds well.



Allegheny Riverside, Warren County



The Design Guide stresses the importance of enjoying growth while taking protective measures to promote community character stewardship.

Why is a Design Guide Needed?

To foster and increase community civic pride...

Strong community character stewardship is by no means solely limited to making sure the area is attractive to tourists. A unique community character tied to the region's natural assets instills community pride and a commitment to protect natural assets in the hearts of every resident and business owner. Community pride has been shown to increase volunteerism, participation in community events, use of public recreation facilities, and patronage of locally-owned businesses. It also fosters small-scale economic growth, entrepreneur investment, and a lower emigration of young professionals.



Development decisions of today will impact future economic health and quality of life in the region.

To retain the region's intrinsic charm and beauty for future generations...

The Design Guide equips communities with tools to ensure that both public and private investment entities consider community character and respect the integrity of the natural environment. Utilization of the Design Guide will help the region to retain and strengthen its core identity, maintain a distinct visual character, direct development to be considerate to the land it occupies, preserve natural assets, and ensure that its various parts positively relate to the region as a whole.

Voluntary Approach

Use of this Design Guide is voluntary. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it is difficult to impose mandatory regulations to address the visual quality of an individual property or project. This is partially because the courts have ruled that judgment of visual quality can be subjective based on the preferences of an individual person or small group.

When considering the overall 12½-county region of the Pennsylvania Wilds and the mission of the Pennsylvania Wilds Center to increase tourism and economic growth based on the region's natural assets and unique character, the range of subjective judgment defining visual quality becomes limited. The definition of visual quality is no longer left to the interpretation of a single individual or small group.

The principles outlined in the Design Guide are voluntary unless and until they are incorporated into local zoning ordinances and land development regulations.



While voluntary, the Pennsylvania Wilds Planning Team highly encourages every county and municipality in the 12½-county region to consult this Design Guide and follow its principles to the greatest extent possible.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Design Guide identifies guiding principles in the following five categories:

1. General / Region-Wide
2. Developed Areas / Town Centers
3. Natural Resources
4. Rural Areas
5. Agricultural Areas

The Guiding Principles listed in this section reflect the goals and vision for the use of land in the Pennsylvania Wilds. When considered collectively, these 38 principles integrate community character, design, and natural resource conservation considerations into the planning and land use decision process.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

General / Region-Wide

- ⬡ Invoke a welcoming atmosphere and inviting character for residents and visitors
- ⬡ Enhance regional identity with coordinated identification signage and thematic design elements
- ⬡ Eliminate blight in the form of deteriorating or poorly maintained properties
- ⬡ Encourage clustered development and discourage sprawl
- ⬡ Ensure that wireless towers and wind energy facilities are not visually offensive and are located on appropriate sites
- ⬡ Encourage placement of large-scale development sites only in appropriate locations
- ⬡ Avoid confusing patterns of development and circulation.
- ⬡ Control the appearance and location of big box commercial development, chain stores, strip centers, and franchises
- ⬡ Encourage private investment for public benefit
- ⬡ Support capital improvement projects that benefit authentic community character





General / Region-Wide

Enhance regional identity with coordinated identification signage and thematic design elements



Elk Country Visitor Center
Elk County



Waterville Tavern
Lycoming County



Waterville Tavern
Lycoming County

Invoke a welcoming atmosphere and inviting character for residents and visitors

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Developed Areas / Town Centers

- Retain, enhance, and rehabilitate historic resources and sites
- Reduce unnecessary visual clutter (associated with excessive signage, open storage, above-ground utilities, parking lots, abandoned vehicles, and discarded items)
- Encourage a complementary mix of land uses
- Support creative design concepts and prevent a homogenized appearance
- Support locally owned businesses, especially those that enhance community character
- Maintain traditional town centers as community focal points
- Provide elements that encourage pedestrian activity (sidewalks, trails, lighting, and benches)
- Coordinate streetscape elements such as signage, lighting, and street furniture





Developed Areas / Town Centers



Lock Haven River Walk
Clinton County

Provide elements that encourage pedestrian activity (sidewalks, trails, lighting, and benches)



Downtown Coudersport
Potter County

Coordinate streetscape elements such as signage, lighting, and street furniture



Kane Train Depot
McKean County

Retain, enhance, and rehabilitate historic resources and sites

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

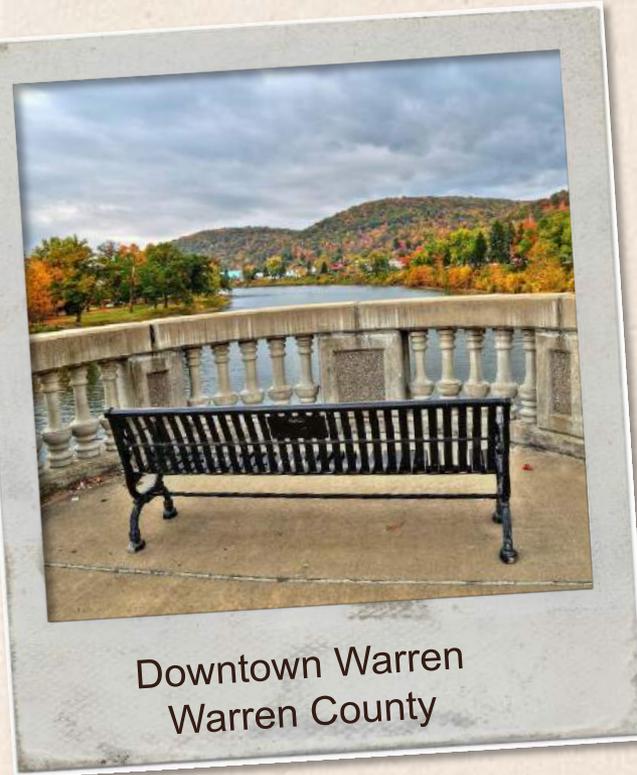
Natural Resources

- Protect the scenic quality of natural resources.
- Ensure that public views to scenic resources are not obstructed or negatively affected.
- Improve public access to scenic views and viewsheds.
- Discourage substantial sources of artificial light and glare that could negatively affect dark skies.
- Protect sensitive resources from human intrusion.
- Protect the character of the existing natural setting by preserving important natural features, landforms, and historic sites.
- Support environmentally sensitive development.
- Encourage the remediation of degraded natural resources.



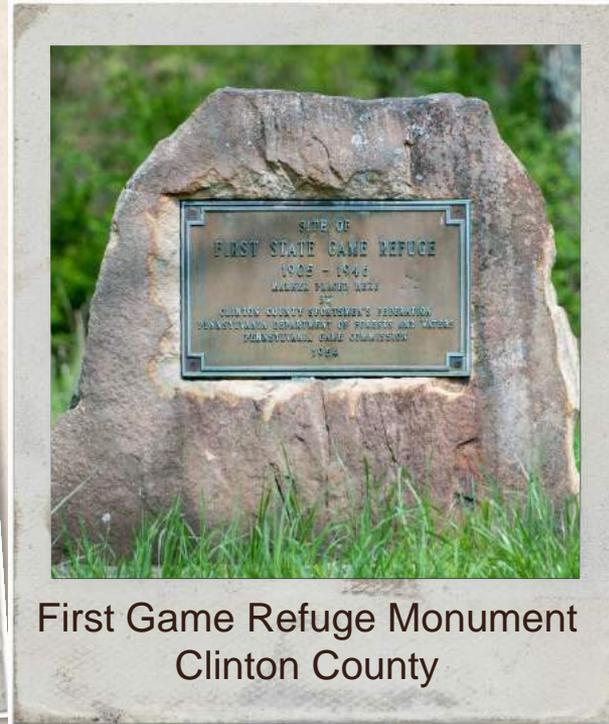


Natural Resources



Downtown Warren
Warren County

Improve public access to scenic views



First Game Refuge Monument
Clinton County

Protect character of the existing natural setting by preserving important natural features, landforms, and historic sites.



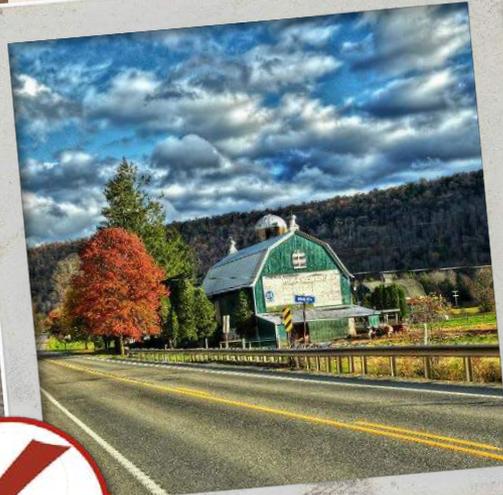
Nature Inn at Bald Eagle
Centre County

Ensure public views to scenic resources are not obstructed or negatively affected

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Rural Areas

- ⬡ Maintain a rural character along primary roadways
- ⬡ Encourage the maintenance of private property visible from primary roadways
- ⬡ Support the preservation of existing rural residential neighborhoods
- ⬡ Limit the construction of street lights, sidewalks, curbs and gutters in rural areas
- ⬡ Discourage uses that are detrimental to rural character
- ⬡ Properly buffer industrial/manufacturing activities from public views and adjacent incompatible land uses



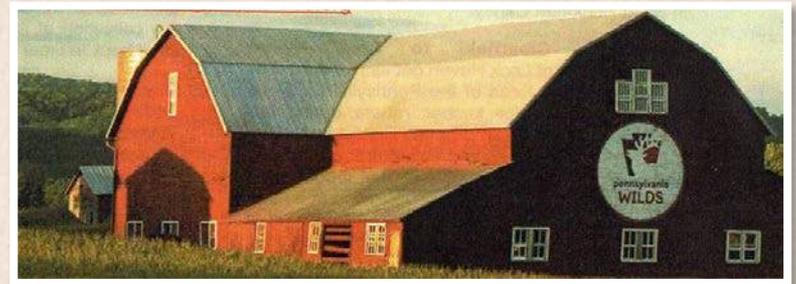
Rural Landscape
Potter County



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Agricultural Areas

- Preserve farmland and discourage the conversion of farms to non-agricultural uses
- Prevent changes in the surrounding environment which, due to their location or nature, could place pressure on farms to convert to other uses
- Discourage incompatible land uses from locating adjacent to operating farms
- Preserve agricultural character and heritage
- Recognize the importance of local food production and support the efforts of farmers to remain economically viable
- Consider land uses that support increased opportunity for the agricultural economy, such as farm stands, farmers' markets, rural hospitality uses, and other small-scale production and processing





Recognize the importance of local food production and support the efforts of farmers to remain economically viable

Coudersport, Potter County



TOOLBOX: Using the Design Guide

Consider Design Guide when prioritizing capital improvement projects

This Design Guide can serve as basic criteria for establishing priorities for funding capital improvement projects. Projects that advance the principles contained in this Design Guide should have a greater priority than those that would either not achieve or be detrimental to the achievement of the principles of this document. For example, public investment in local road or sidewalk improvements can spur private investment along the roadway corridor. Thus, capital investments should be made in areas where development is desired.



Pine Creek Rail Trail, Tioga / Lycoming Counties

Provide Design Guide to development applicants as early as possible

This Design Guide provides constructive ideas for new development and redevelopment projects in regard to aesthetic quality. Clear direction is appreciated by applicants because they know up-front what type of development character is desired by public officials and the community. Such transparency can also simplify and speed the review and approval process for both applicants and governments. It is best to provide applicants with clear design guidance at the onset of a project, well before time-consuming and expensive engineering and design work is undertaken. As a result, applicants are more likely to welcome the concepts and incorporate them into their initial applications.

If clear guidance is not provided during initiation of a project, applicants can sometimes incur unnecessary expenses associated with design revisions, which can be time-consuming for both the applicant and the municipal officials involved in the project review process.



TOOLBOX: Using the Design Guide

Seek Advice

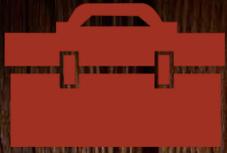
If a community is looking to incorporate Design Guide principles into their local land use regulations for the purpose of preserving their unique community character a first step to consider is seeking advice from your county planning office.

If the county planning office can't directly provide technical assistance then seek advice from a professional planner. When selecting a professional planner, caution should be exercised to assure that the planner understands what you want to achieve and is or will become well versed on the Design Guide principles.

Too often, municipalities adopt a conventional zoning ordinance from another municipality which ends up not producing the desired effect because it was designed for the needs of another community. Each community is unique and as such municipalities should avoid simply using a "cookie cutter" land use ordinance that produces mediocre, homogenous development.



Seek advice on incorporating Design Guide principles into local land use regulations from your county planner or a professional planner.



TOOLBOX: Using the Design Guide

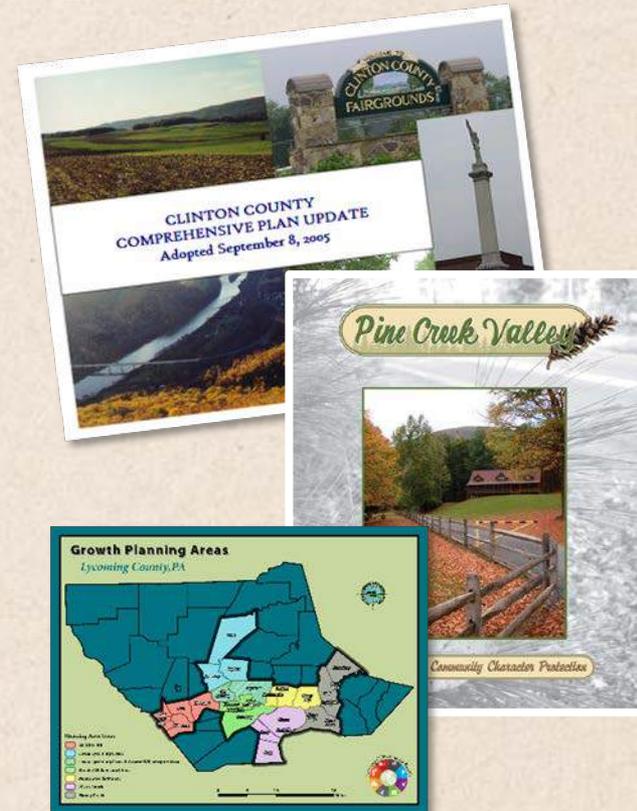
Consider Design Guide when preparing or revising Comprehensive Plans, Zoning Ordinances and Official Maps

The location, type, and intensity of development projects are typically determined through the process of planning, zoning, and permitting conducted by public agencies and elected or appointed bodies. This Design Guide can be reviewed and considered when preparing or revising comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, official land use maps, design review procedures, and subdivision and land development ordinances.

Guidelines may be tailored to particular circumstances of a community and incentives can be developed to provide benefits for property owners incorporating key design objectives in projects. They can also be used as a model for a stand-alone design manual for the context of a specific community. The Pine Creek Council of Governments utilized principles in this Design Guide when they developed a Corridor Management Plan and Corridor Signage Plan in 2009. You can find these documents at www.pawildscenter.org (Select “Community Character Stewardship” under “Programs and Services.

A sample template for how to include Design Guide principles into a land use ordinance is also available at link referenced above.

www.pawildscenter.org .





TOOLBOX: Using the Design Guide

Consider Design Guide when reviewing development applications



Wellsboro, Tioga County

Design review of development applications is strongly encouraged in every instance. When reviewing applications, county and municipal officials should consider the Design Guide concepts and decide if the proposed project meets these guiding principles.

It should always be kept in mind that two primary purposes of this Guide are to provide (1) a better quality of life for residents and (2) to enhance regional economic benefits from geo-tourism, which is based on geographic, scenic and community character of a place.

Although all elements of the built environment contribute to the overall scenic character, properties visible from public viewing areas (primarily roadways, parks, trails, navigable waterways, historic landmark sites, and other visitor destinations) are the most important to carefully review. It should be remembered that winter conditions and future tree-cutting activities may cause an obscured site to become more visible.

The utilization of the concepts in this Design Guide will benefit the region, communities, and individual property owners.

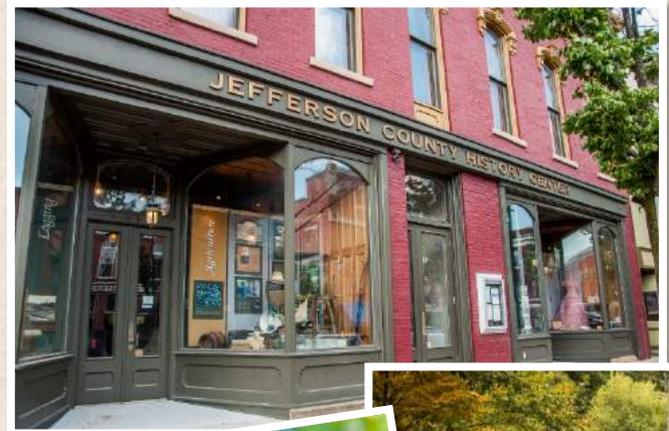


TOOLBOX: Using the Design Guide

Make Design Guide widely available to business associations, community groups and citizens

This Design Guide should be made widely available to the community at large. The mere fact that guidance is available can, in and of itself, provide comfort to community residents and business owners, knowing that their investments are protected from undesired and unattractive development patterns. Businesses, residents, and tourists make decisions to locate and live in attractive communities.

This Design Guide can also be used by chambers of commerce, citizenry and business advocacy groups, and grassroots organizations to advocate for high-quality design or development in their neighborhoods.



Distribution and availability of this Design Guide helps communities and residents realize that they have choices in how their community grows, develops, and changes.