



# Butler County Comprehensive Plan



**A LAND USE AND GROWTH  
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR  
BUTLER COUNTY  
PENNSYLVANIA**

**2017**

**PREPARED BY COUNTY OF BUTLER  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

# Butler County Comprehensive Plan 2017

## **Butler County Board of County Commissioners**

Commissioner Leslie Osche

Commissioner Kim Geyer

Commissioner Kevin Boozel

## **Butler County Planning Commission**

Barbara Sutton    Charles McCall

Chuck Davey    Frank “Chip” Uhl

Larry Kurpakus    Jesse Hines

Ron Henshaw    Tom Kamerer

Cheryl Hughes

## **Planning Commission Staff**

Mark Gordon, Chief of Economic Development

Joel R. Mackay, Civil Engineering Technician

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retired planning director David Johnston for initiating this project

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## **Consultant**

Richard Grossman, Community Planning Consultant

PO Box 11

Grove City Pa 16127

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# INTRODUCTION

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

### WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is an official guidance document for local government leaders. It is prepared for two main purposes: to provide information about current conditions and trends, and make recommendations for future policies and actions by the governing body.

As a community grows or changes, local governments need information to make sound choices about everything from highway investments to zoning. A comprehensive plan should balance divergent needs and issues by examining the many aspects of a community that might impact growth or development. By both understanding trends and looking at a wide variety of issues, a community can understand how it is changing, and how to help achieve the future that residents desire.

In Pennsylvania, each county is required by law to prepare and adopt a County Comprehensive Plan. The law requiring this is The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, referred to in this document as the “MPC.”

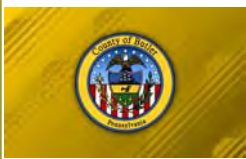
### COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

The official Pennsylvania definition of a County Comprehensive Plan is “a land use and growth management plan prepared by the county planning commission and adopted by the county commissioners which establishes broad goals and criteria for municipalities to use in preparation of their comprehensive plan and land use regulation”.

The Comprehensive Plan must be prepared by the designated planning agency for the county. The Butler County Planning Commission is the official planning agency for the county. The Commission includes a 9 member citizen board appointed by the County Commissioners, and a professional planning staff. Butler County prepared and adopted its last



Comprehensive Plan in 2002. This 2017 comprehensive plan is intended to update the 2002 comprehensive plan, not replace it.



# BACKGROUND TO COUNTY PLANNING

## Why should a local government undertake planning?

In addition to complying with state law, the County Planning Commission regards planning as a means to help local governments and citizens realize their goals and objectives. Local government planning recognizes that decisions made today can affect a community for decades. Sound municipal planning revolves around a number of key concepts:

### Accommodating Growth and Development:

As a community grows, it needs to ensure that it has enough capacity for water, sewer, roads, public services at a level expected by citizens. Each new development brings both prospects and challenges.

**Fighting Blight and Decline** If a community is losing population, or facing disinvestment, it must plan to preserve neighborhoods, maintain public services at a constant rate, and examine means to attract new investment.

### Protect private property from land use conflict:

As community density rises, small residential properties are more sensitive to the effect of light, noise, and traffic generated by nonresidential land uses. Businesses also need some certainty about where to invest.

### Maintaining favorable public service costs/ tax base ratios:

Communities must balance the services and facilities citizens want against the ability to pay for those services.

In each community planners must balance fact based analysis (demographic trends, economics,



Key to the preparation of a Comprehensive Plan is the leadership of citizen planners. The Butler County Planning Commission includes a high level of expertise with members who bring experience as real estate professionals, attorneys, builder-developers, educators, land surveyors, and professional planners.

how land is used, condition of buildings, streets and infrastructure) against local desires ( keep small town values, revitalize neighborhoods, keep rural character).

**Official Use of The Plan:** The county comprehensive plan has an official policy status, but it is not an ordinance. The comprehensive plan has no direct effect or limitation upon any private development or private use of land. Its main official status is to review government action that might relate to growth or development policy (See the Official Use Statement on Page 6).

*Local government planning recognizes that decisions made today can affect a community for decades.*

The process of comprehensive planning helps ensure that government action is consistent with overall goals. The twin goals of The Butler County Comprehensive Plan were established in 2002.

## OVERALL COUNTY GOALS: A SOUND ECONOMY AND MAINTAINING QUALITY OF LIFE

Before preparing the 2002 Butler County Comprehensive Plan, county planners conducted extensive town hall meetings. These meetings were held in fire halls and community centers, in every region of the County. Input was also sought from Township, Borough and City elected officials. Butler County residents and local leaders almost unanimously stated they wanted local government planning to focus upon two major goals relating to preservation and development.

**Preservation of small town and rural quality of life:** Butler County citizens treasure the rural landscapes, historic downtowns, and natural treasures that surround us. They also appreciate the low crime and family friendly atmosphere of their communities.

**Economic Development to create and maintain prosperity:** County residents want job and business opportunities for themselves and the next generation.

Balancing these two concepts requires careful forethought. A new development can create jobs but also change rural quality of life. A new sewer line might bring development, but cost the local government more than the tax revenues it brings. In some cases, The balance achieved between preserving small town values and encouraging growth may not always satisfy everyone. Ultimately, the Butler County Com-



The ultimate goal of a comprehensive plan is to help citizens of the community to realize their goals of making improvements to the economy and preserving local quality of life. An example of this is the successful Butler/Freeport Trail, which started as a Buffalo Township planning project, and is now a regional asset.

prehensive Plan seeks to protect the community characteristics that are highly valued. It does not seek to prevent new development that will bring prosperity.

This 2017 Comprehensive Plan update continues the legacy of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, but the document is meant to be briefer and more reader friendly than the 300+ page original. The County is also committing to more frequent updating of its plan, as funds are available. A more detailed discussion of countywide goals is found in Chapter 2.

## BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO BUTLER COUNTY

Butler County is one of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. It lies in the western portion of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The entire county is a part of the Ohio River watershed. The City of Butler is the seat of county government.

Butler County is named for General Richard Butler, an Irish born Revolutionary War patriot. After the Revolution, Butler was killed in the 1791 war between the United States and a confederation of Native Americans in the Ohio Valley. He is also memorialized by Butler County, Ohio and Butler County, Kentucky.

In recent years, the county is marked by diversity of character and consistent growth.

**County Diversity:** Butler County's most identifiable feature is its extreme diversity. The county includes rapidly growing suburbs, rural forest and farm areas, small towns, and urban areas. The County stretches from the northern suburbs of Pittsburgh to the gateway of the Pennsylvania Wilds region on the upper Allegheny River. Politically, The County is divided into 57 municipalities, which range in population size from 66 persons to over 28,000 population. The county's 795 square miles are divided into 33 townships, 1 city and 23 boroughs.

**Growth:** Since its creation in 1800, Butler County has grown from fewer than 4,000 settlers on the nation's frontier, to nearly 184,000 people living in urban, small town, suburban and rural environments. In its 210 year history, Butler County has never seen a population decline in any census year.

The County has a number of distinctions in Western Pennsylvania. It was one of only three counties in the western half of Pennsylvania that gained

County	2000 Total Population	2010 Total Population	numeric change	percent change
Butler	174,083	183,862	9,779	5.6%
Beaver	181,412	170,539	-10,873	-6.0%
Allegheny	1,281,666	1,223,348	-58,318	-4.6%
Armstrong	72,392	68,941	-3,451	-4.8%
Mercer	120,293	116,638	-3,655	-3.0%
Clarion	41,765	39,988	-1,777	-4.3%
Venango	57,565	54,984	-2,581	-4.5%
Lawrence	94,643	91,108	-3,535	-3.7%

**Every county that borders Butler County lost population in the years between 2000 and 2010.**

population between 2000 and 2010. The others were Forest County, (where a new state prison created a demographic anomaly of 56 percent growth) and Washington County which gained 2.2 percent. By contrast, Butler County saw 5.6 percent growth, making it the fastest growing county in Western Pennsylvania (when Forest County's incarcerated population is not considered). Population estimates prepared by the United States Census Bureau indicate that the County has continued to gain residents since the 2010 Census. As shown in the table above, every county that borders Butler County lost population in the years between 2000 and 2010. Butler was one of only two counties in the ten county Southwest Pennsylvania Region (SPC) to gain population, during the aforementioned decade. The only other SPS region county to grow was Washington, which only gained 2.4 percent total population, roughly half of Butler County's growth rate



## REGIONAL BASIS FOR COUNTY PLANNING

By necessity, countywide planning must be more generalized than local comprehensive planning. Butler County does not directly undertake many common municipal planning activities. The county has no countywide zoning ordinance. It owns no water or sewer lines. These decisions are left to individual local townships and boroughs. To make the county plan more useful and recognizing the aforementioned diversity, the County Planning Commission has divided the County into Five Planning Regions. These are depicted on Map 1. These regions were created to mirror natural community affiliations, zip codes, school districts, and local economies. For consistency in analyzing data. These five planning regions were kept the same from the 2002 edition of the plan.

**Region 1** is the northwest. It includes the area of Moraine State Park, the county's largest body of Water.

**Region 2** is the northeast. It contains both the lowest population density and the greatest area of state Gamelands and forest land in the County.

**Region 3** is the central region, containing the county seat of Butler, and the traditional home of many industries in the county.

**Region 4** is the southwest, home of the county's largest municipality (Cranberry Township) and

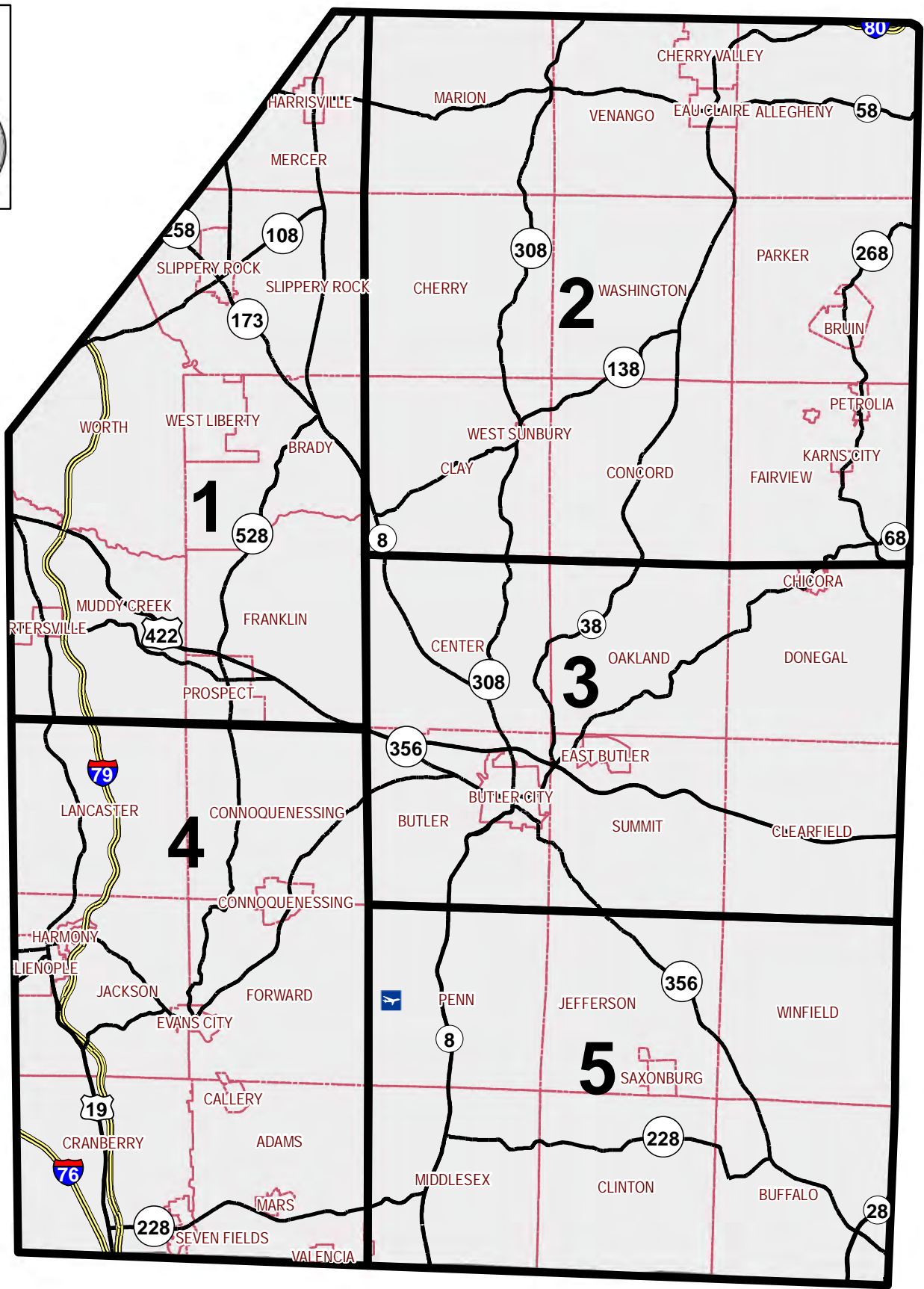
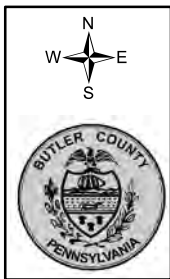


After the County plan was completed in 2002, municipalities and coalitions of municipalities like Harmony (shown here) and Zelienople, prepared regional comprehensive plans, many of which were by necessity more specific and detailed than the County Plan, which must maintain a broader framework.

many rapidly suburbanizing areas.

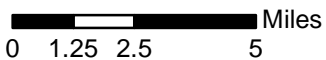
**Region 5** is the southeast, which was traditionally a rural farming area, but has seen some suburban growth.



To further ensure planning is relevant, the county also supported a host of multimunicipal comprehensive plans. Many of these were initiated almost immediately after the county comprehensive plan was adopted in 2002. Eight regional plans involving 22 municipalities have been prepared to date. These multimunicipal planning efforts are depicted on Map 2. In conformity with the intent of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, these regional plans are incorporated by reference into the County Comprehensive Plan.

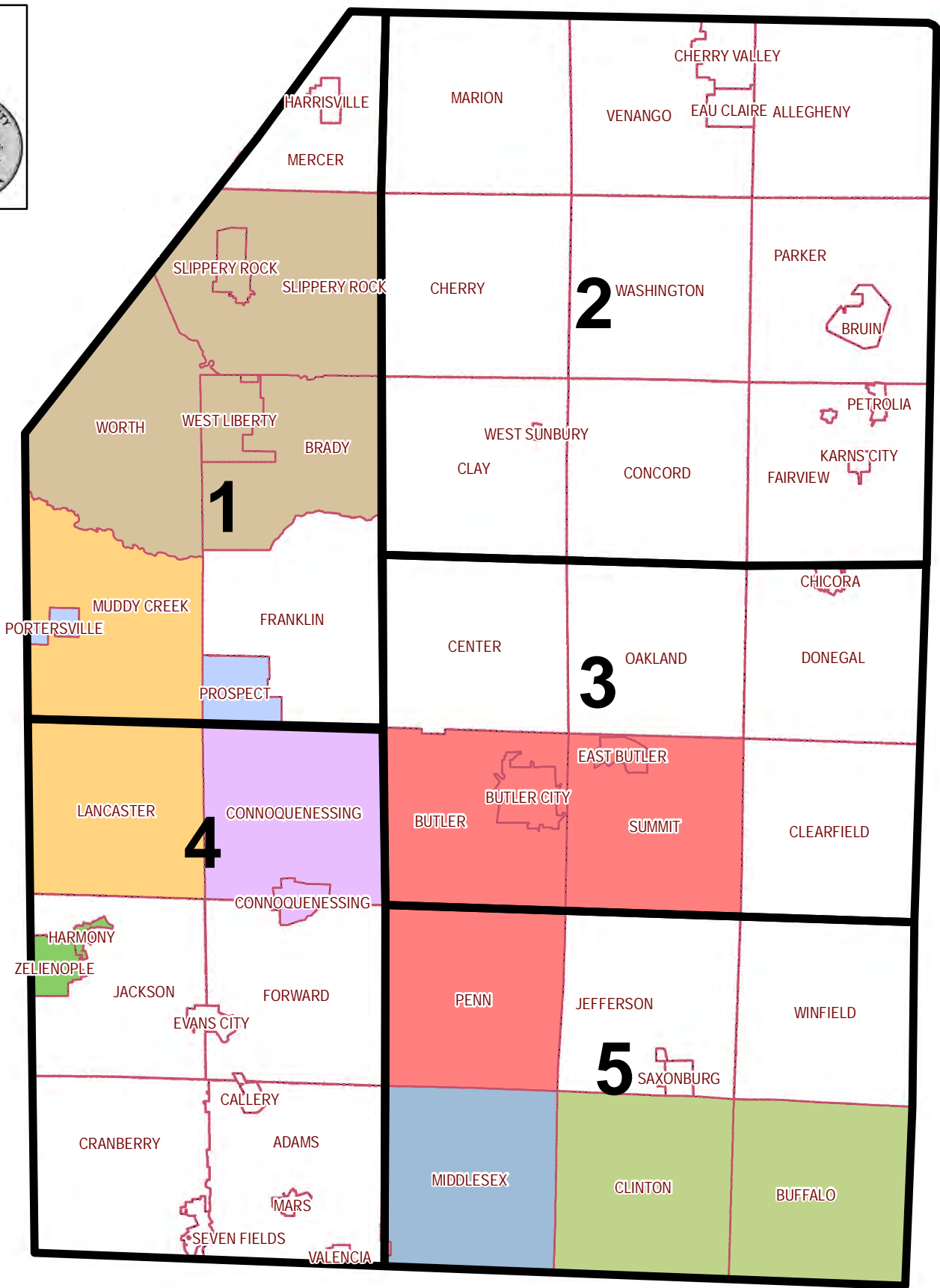
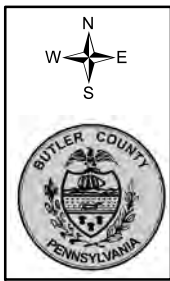


**Butler County**

FIGURE: 1-1

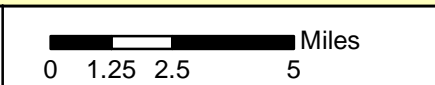


-  County Planning Regions
-  Municipalities
- 1** Planning Region Number



**Butler County  
Multi-Municipal Planning Status**

**FIGURE: 1-2**



County Planning Regions	BAMM	Middl/Richland
Municipalities	Buffalo Clinton	NorthWest
<b>1</b> Planning Region Number	Conneq Area	Port/Pros
	Lanc/Muddy	Zelig/Harm

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Butler County Planning  
Commission  
County Courthouse  
Annex  
124 W Diamond St,  
Butler, PA 16001  
Tel: 724-284-5138  
www.butler.co.pa.us



As an official document required by the MPC, the county comprehensive plan must by law address minimum content. All plans must address land use, housing, community facilities and public utilities, Transportation and Conservation of Natural and Historic Resources. All plans must identify mineral resources, and may not exceed state environmental laws regarding mineral extraction. In addition, all plans must note that both commercial agriculture and mineral excavation activities can have an effect upon water supplies and that these effects are regulated by state and Federal agencies. The county comprehensive plan must also identify a plan for preservation of agricultural and historic resources found within the county. It must also identify "Development of Regional Impact and Significance", which are defined as developments that because of their size or character, can affect more than one municipality.

### OFFICIAL USE STATEMENT

Pursuant to requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), the Butler County Planning Commission will use this comprehensive plan as a document to advise the County Commissioners on decisions relative to:

1. Consistency of local Comprehensive Plans by Townships, Boroughs, or the City of Butler
2. Consistency regarding any creation of a zoning ordinance and zoning map, as well as future amendments to zoning, amendment to the County subdivision and land development ordinance, or the creation and amendment of any official map.
3. The adoption or amendment of any borough or township comprehensive plan.
4. The location, opening, vacating, widening, narrowing, or enlargement of any street or watercourse in the County.
5. The location, opening, vacating, or extension of any public ground (land owned by a government body).
6. The location, erection, demolition, removal or sale of any public structure in the County.
7. The construction, extension, or abandonment of a water or sewer lines or a sewage treatment plant. The Planning Commission will also use this plan as required by Section 305 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to review any school district actions relative to the location, demolition, sale, or lease of any school district structure or land.

The County Planning Commission may make comments on the consistency of funding of any application for state or Federal grant or loan funding applications.

The recommendations of the Planning Commission will be supplied to the applicable public body within the days required by the MPC. It remains the responsibility of other public bodies to submit plans for applicable actions in sufficient time for review.

# COUNTYWIDE ISSUES

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

### COMMON ISSUES FACING THE ENTIRE COUNTY

In spite of Butler County's diversity, there are a number of key issues that impact every corner of the County. The population will change over the next ten years for every region and community. Some communities may decline and will face fiscal and other challenges as a result. Other communities will see new development, such as a business parks, housing plans, or unconventional gas and oil wells. This chapter includes the countywide priorities related to planning for future growth and development. It also contains technical issues that are required to be uniquely addressed in a County Comprehensive Plan. Subsequent chapters are arranged by regions. Local officials or interested citizens will find relevant information about trends where they live in those later chapters.

### A DIVERSE COUNTY WITH COMMON VALUES

As noted in Chapter One, This plan is based upon the twin goals of maintaining quality of life while encouraging prosperity. These values were established in Butler County prior to the comprehensive plan. In 1996, the Butler County Planning Commission sponsored five regional town hall meetings to and a special municipal officials meeting build a consistent long term vision for Butler County. Hundreds of participants identified the County's strengths and greatest challenges. Whether the meeting was held with citizens in Cranberry or Karns City, values were remarkably consistent.

#### Greatest Strengths of Butler County

- Highway system and road access
- Pleasant small towns/ rural atmosphere/sense of community
- Natural beauty, parks, trails.

- Low taxes, when compared to neighboring areas.
- Availability of land for future development

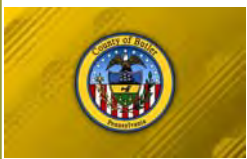
#### Greatest Issues Facing Butler County

- Lack of unified planning due to county diversity
- Internal road systems/traffic congestion
- Uncontrolled growth/loss of farmland
- Unemployment/underemployment

#### Citizen and Local Leader Future Priorities

- Economic Development Initiatives
- Planning/Growth Management/ Inter-municipal Cooperation
- Parks/Recreation Cultural Opportunities

These values comprise the basic community development goals and



# A DIVERSE COUNTY WITH COMMON VALUES

objectives for Butler County. In order to translate them into practical future actions and policies, the county has endorsed ten priorities that it can realistically accomplish over the next ten years.

A follow-up meeting with municipal leaders in 2016 confirmed that these values remain consistent not only across the county, but over the past two decades. The 2016 local leader priorities are summarized in the table below.

The Butler County Planning Commission has never attempted to intervene in local



**Fall at Moraine State Park: Citizens and Local leaders have consistently told the Butler County Planning Commission that growth and development should not come at the expense of rural landscapes, natural beauty and small town character. (Photo credit Judy Herlihy-Novak, Light Source Images)**

<b>2016 Countywide Municipal Leader Priorities</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Unimportant/The County Should not do this</b>
Providing information to municipalities about unconventional shale development in the county and planning for impacts	33	16	1
Support continued development of multi-municipal and single municipal comprehensive plans	19	29	2
Support continued development of trail systems, bikeways and hiking trails.	23	26	
Provide updated examples of model zoning standards and subdivision and land development standards for municipalities that wish to use them.	27	21	2
Prioritize continued investments in planning and highway improvements to minimize traffic congestion.	35	15	
Broaden opportunities for landowners to preserve land for rural uses through conservation easements	35	10	5

## COUNTYWIDE PLANNING PRIORITIES

affairs. The Commission has traditionally served as a technical review body for communities with local land use ordinances, administered the county subdivision and land development ordinance (for communities without a local ordinance) and provided professional assistance when able. These roles will continue. However, one lesson of the last ten years that local municipalities and citizens can benefit from an increased role of the county in local planning. Towards that end, this plan has selected ten issues where it can realistically assist communities in building capacity for growth, undertaking revitalization, or protecting quality of life.

These ten equally important goals and objectives are:

1. Provide basic information about growth and development patterns in each of the county's five regions.
2. Support tax base sustainability for every municipality
3. Provide a basic level of planning implementation at the county level to protect private property. .
4. Support local planning with an emphasis on multimunicipal efforts where suitable.
5. Provide information about unconventional natural gas development trends within the



**Slippery Rock Borough celebrated 175 years of self government in 2016. This plan endorses a “Core Communities” concept as a planning priority. Core Communities are the Boroughs, City of Butler, and some villages in Townships, such as Forestville in Mercer Township. They differ from townships because they were developed earlier and still serve as important civic and business centers. However, Core communities in Butler County often face greater challenges of population decline, older deteriorated buildings, and budget challenges. (Photo Credit Allied News/Sharon Herald. Used with permission)**

County.

6. Support continued development of trail systems, bikeways and hiking trails.
7. Support efforts to protect rural landscapes and natural and scenic resources through voluntary land conservation and maintaining value of rural land for rural uses.
8. Support downtown and “core community” revitalization efforts.
9. Prioritize continued investments in highway improvements to minimize traffic congestion and assist in developing and rebuilding other local infrastructure.
10. Provide updated examples of model zoning standards and subdivision and land development standards for municipalities that wish to use them.

## PRIORITY 1 BASIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

It has been noted that Butler County is one of the few counties in Western Pennsylvania that is growing. However, this growth is not uniform throughout the county. The map on the page 13 shows that some communities lost total population from Census 2000 to 2010. A few communities have been losing population since 1980.

As part of this update, the County Planning Commission prepared population projections based upon the 2010 Census. The first projection used both age and gender of the population, to estimate both births and deaths. The results of this projection showed that the countywide population is aging to the point it cannot sustain itself.

In summary, population growth is suppressed from declining births and population loss rises through increasing deaths. Without migration of new residents into Butler County from other places, the county population would decline. The projection also conformed that much past growth, and almost all future growth will be based upon migration, rather than natural growth.

### Butler County No-net migration projection 2010-2020

<b>Total 2010 Population</b>	<b>183,862</b>
<b>Estimated survivors after age based deaths 2010-2020</b>	154,584
<b>Estimated births 2010-2020</b>	18,360
<b>Total 2020 Population</b>	<b>172,944</b>
<b>Change</b>	<b>-10,918</b>

Every year, people either move into or out of Butler County. Fortunately, more people choose to move in than out each year, resulting in a net increase. Most of this migration has come from one source: The neighboring County of Allegheny. Future Population growth will be almost entirely dependent upon how many families and individuals choose to move to Butler from Allegheny County in the next ten years.

### Butler County migration patterns 2000-2010

If this migration equals that of 2000-2010, the County will gain perhaps 3-5% population by

Year	outmigration	In-migration	net change
2000-2001	6090	7224	+1134
2001-2002	5939	7284	+1345
2002-2003	5889	6754	+865
2003-2004	6337	6687	+350
2004-2005	6440	7107	+667
2005-2006	6210	7133	+923
2006-2007	6098	6575	+477
2007-2008-	6260	7027	+767
2008-2009	6034	6441	+407
2009-2010	5701	6289	+588
<b>Total</b>	<b>60998</b>	<b>68521</b>	<b>+7523</b>

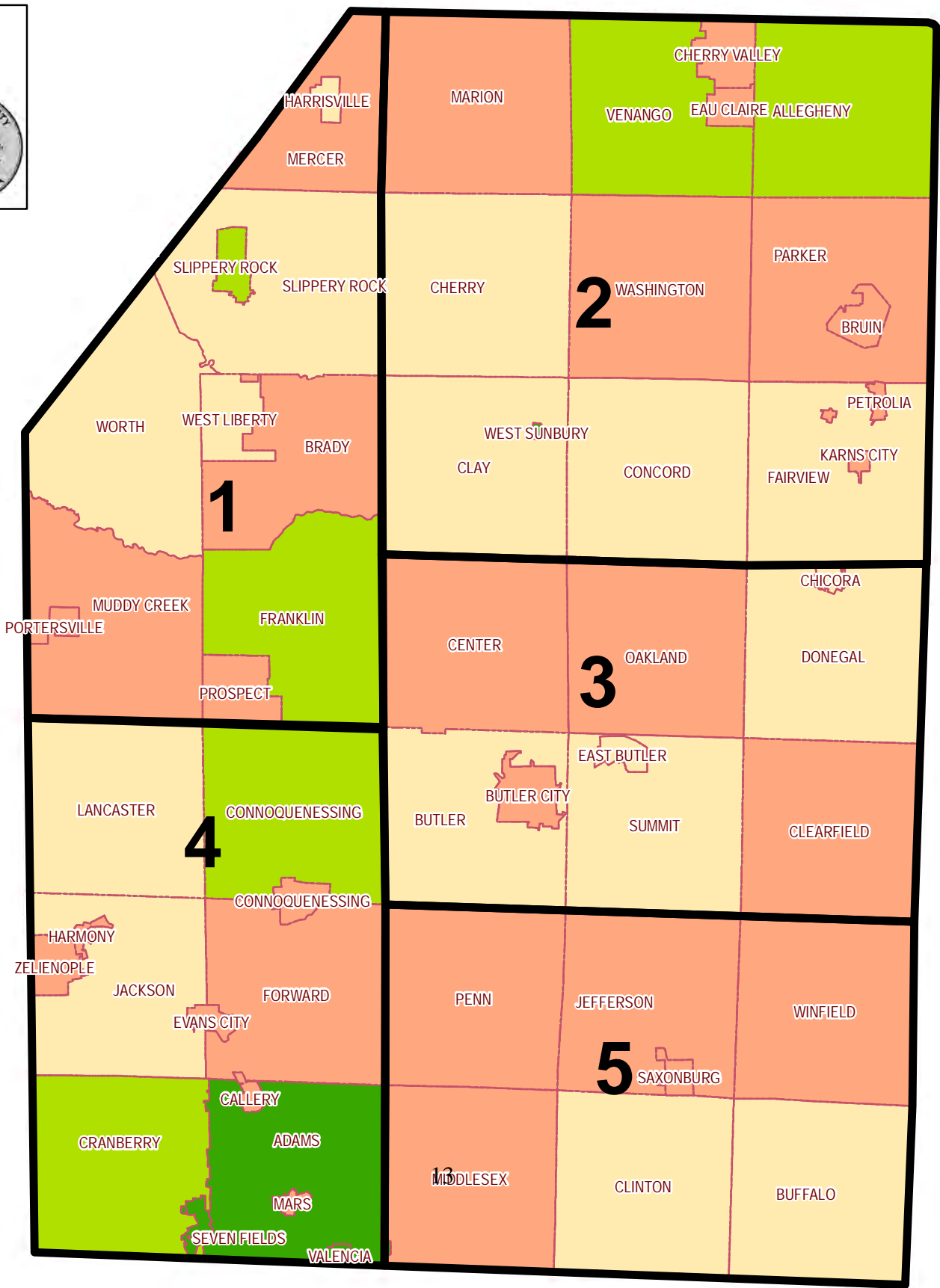
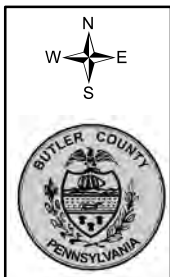
2020. In a low in-migration scenario, the County population will be stable to slightly declining.

Other factors can certainly influence population change. Some outmigration is driven by retirees who may choose sunbelt locations or alternative retirement housing. Younger persons typically migrate for employment opportunities. This means that overall population is linked to both housing and employment. The map on page 14 illustrates housing growth by municipality from 2000-2010. As it shows, housing growth clearly exceeds population growth. This is due to:

- Declining household size (fewer people now require more dwelling units)
- Consumer preference for newer housing units in growing suburban and rural communities.

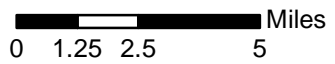
These changes will impact everything from tax base for municipalities to the employment base for businesses. More detailed trends are provided in subsequent chapters for each of the county's five regions.



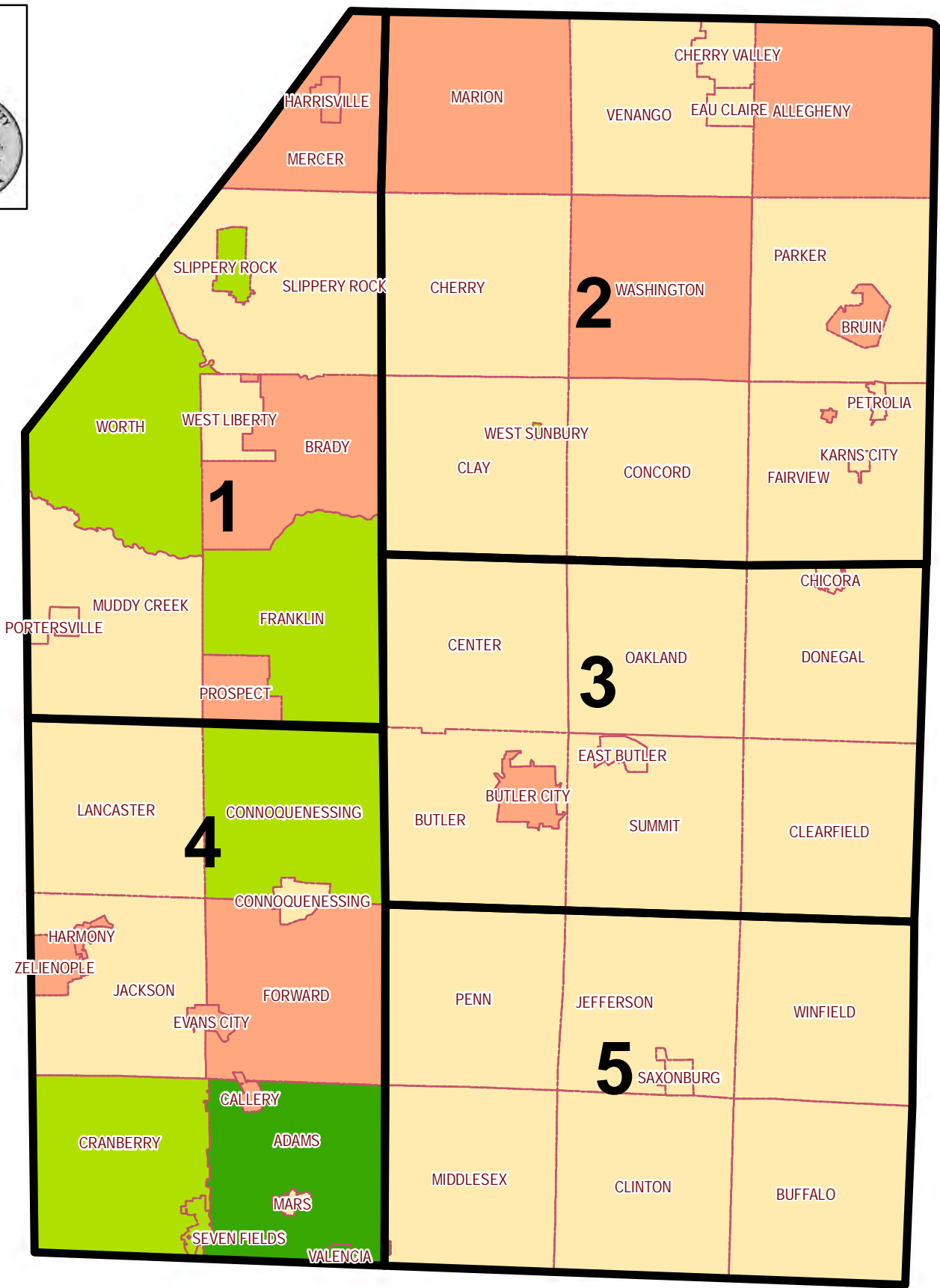
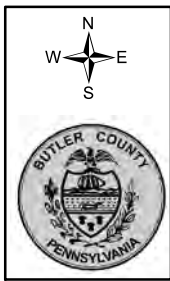


**Butler County  
Municipal Population Change  
2000 to 2010**

FIGURE: 2-1

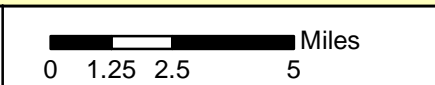


	County Planning Regions	<b>Population Change (%)</b> Population Loss 0 to 10% Growth 10% to 20% Growth > 20% Growth
	Municipalities	
<b>1</b>	Planning Region Number	



**Butler County Municipal Housing Change 2000 to 2010**

**FIGURE: 2-2**



	County Planning Regions		Housing Loss
	Municipalities		0 to 20% Growth
<b>1</b>	Planning Region Number		20.1% to 80% Growth
			> 80% Growth

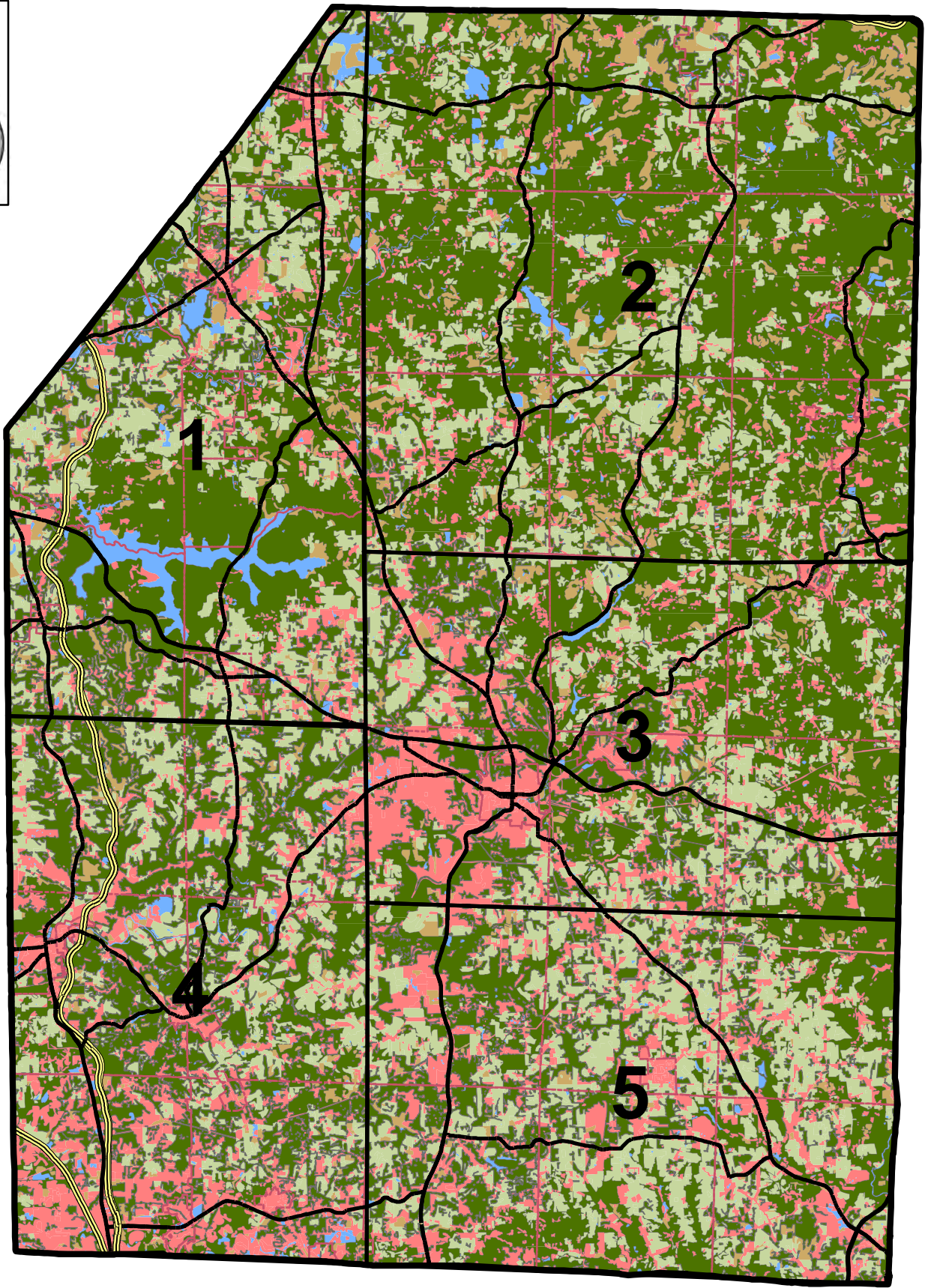
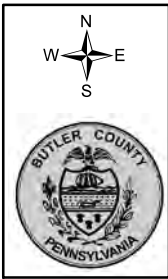
## PRIORITY 2: TAX BASE SUSTAINABILITY

Real estate taxes make up significant portions of the budget for the county, its constituent municipalities and school districts. All of these local units of government must provide a basic level of services, but the tax base from which they draw can vary widely. Municipal millages range from a low of 1.0 to a high of 42.0. While some municipalities provide local services such as police, there is a wide variance in millage rates due to various levels and types of development. There is a direct link between various kinds of development and their impact on tax base. Penn State Agricultural Economist Tim Kelsey studied Pennsylvania local taxes and found that private farm and forest land pay low tax rates, but need little in the way of public services. Conversely, single family dwellings typically cost the school district and local municipality as much in public services as they generate in taxes. This can be balanced by commercial or industrial development, which can help subsidize school districts by paying taxes without directly impacting the system. (see <http://extension.psu.edu/publications/ec410> for the full report)

Understanding Tim Kelsey’s public service costs to tax ratios is helpful for every municipality in making decisions about future land use. It will become more crucial in the future, as Butler County confronts an aging population. In spite of overall growth, the number of school aged children is expected to decline. The Pa. Department of Education prepares uniform future enrollment projections for every district in the county. Using the 2010 enrollment year as a consistent base with the 2010 Census, these forecasts show that every school district in the county may face decline in the future. The table below summarizes these forecasts.

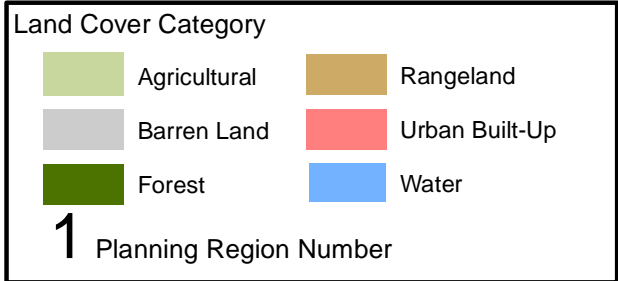
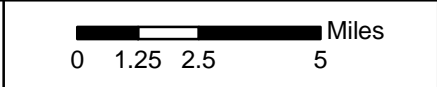
The land cover map on the next page shows that tax base challenges for urban built up land will be different than rural areas. Rural areas will need to retain private open land, and urban and suburban areas may need non residential development. Some communities should also examine and understand the impact of non taxable properties, such as state land and nonprofits. This is a considerable portion of land in some municipalities.

District	2010-2011	2020-2021	Change
Allegheny Clarion Joint School District*	789	671	-118
Butler Area School District	7616	6610	-1006
Freeport Area School District *	2007	1888	-119
Karns City Area School District *	1618	1132	-486
Mars Area School District	3162	3569	407
Moniteau School District	1489	1059	-430
Slippery Rock Area School District	2220	2119	-101
South Butler Area School District	2658	1998	-660
Seneca Valley School District	7288	6072	-1216
<b>County Total</b>	<b>28847</b>	<b>25118</b>	<b>-3729</b>
* District in Butler and other Counties			
Data Source: PA Department of Education Enrollment Projections			



**Butler County  
General Land Cover**

**FIGURE: 2-3**



## PRIORITY 3 AND 4 PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION AT THE COUNTY AND LOCAL LEVEL

One way that Butler County implements its comprehensive plan is through the countywide subdivision and land development ordinance. This ordinance exists to protect private property. It ensures that any new lots created meet minimum standards for lot sizes and are properly surveyed and recorded. It ensures new development has adequate means for safe sewage disposal and road access. It also provides a basic review for new nonresidential and multi-family residential buildings (defined in Pennsylvania as “land development”) The county ordinance is the only means to regulate new development in 9 townships and 8 boroughs within the county. Another 8 boroughs have local zoning but rely upon the county for subdivision and land development administration. For communities with their own zoning or subdivision and land development ordinances, the county provides a review of plans for new development as a courtesy to the municipality. This review is nonbinding, but is offered as a service to the community.

The county ordinance must be more generalized to fit the variety of municipalities that rely upon it. The county did create different lot density options for boroughs versus townships to help many un-zoned boroughs. To ensure more than a generalized level of site planning, townships and boroughs should consider adopting their own



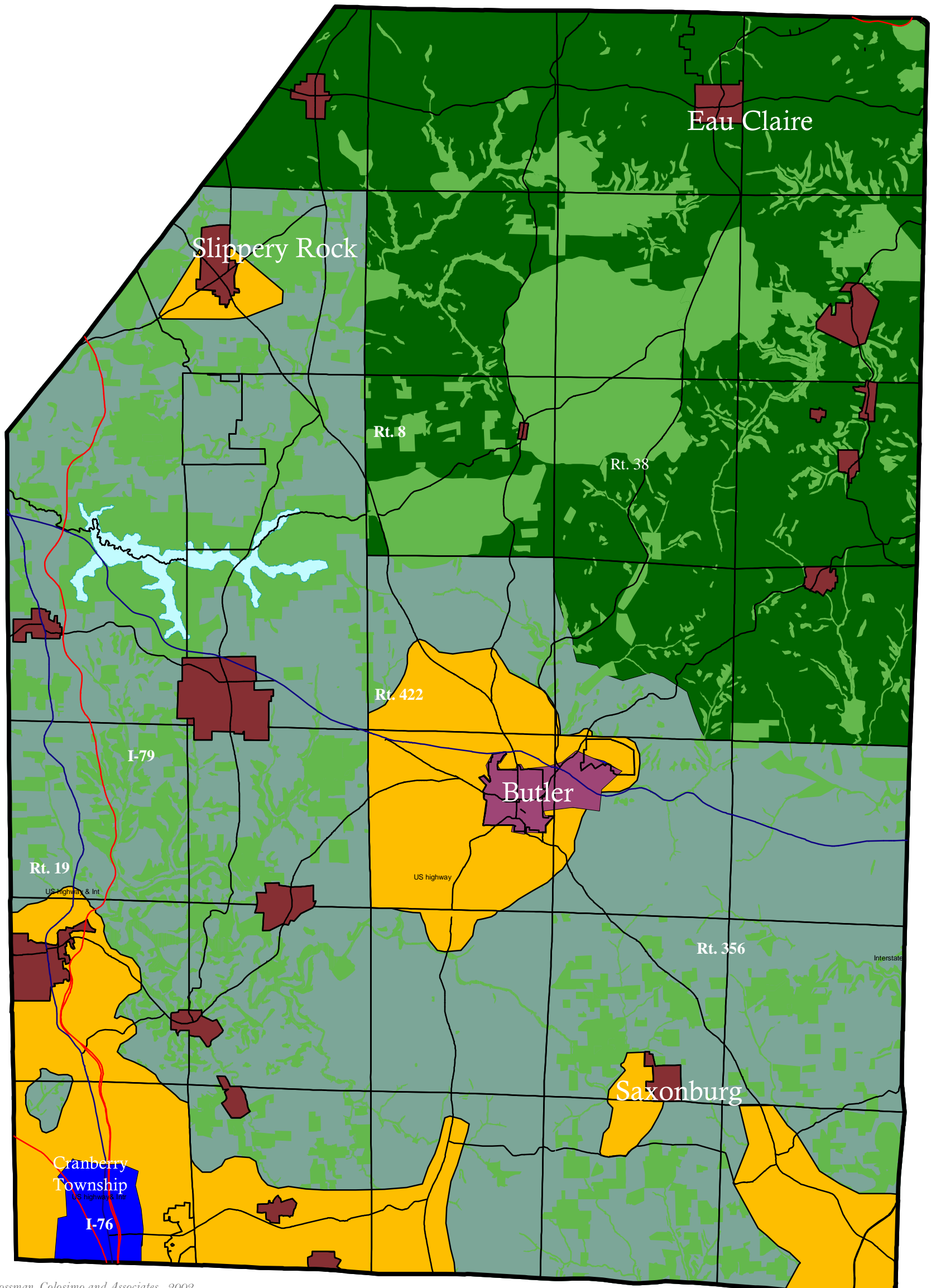
**Before its built, every site plan for new development in the entire county is reviewed by the County Planning Commission. For municipalities with their own ordinance, the review is a courtesy by professional staff. Other communities fall under the County Subdivision and Land Development jurisdiction. In either case, these reviews help ensure new development meets standards for ingress and egress , minimum lot size, and utility connections.**

zoning or subdivision and land development ordinances. Ideally, the adoption of these ordinances, should be preceded by a local comprehensive plan that identifies land use development trends (with a special eye toward tax base sustainability). This planning should also use the overall relationship between local land use and the overall region. Local planning should be a more detailed examination of the generalized county land use plan, retained from 2001 and depicted on the next page. It divided the county into four broad classes:

1. Existing rural, small towns and urban revitalization areas
2. Significant natural features and rural character
3. Whether a rural area is a revitalization priority or adjacent to suburban development areas.
4. Growing suburban and urban areas.

# Butler County Comprehensive Plan: 2-4 Land Use Policy Plan

- Interstates
- US Highways
- State Routes
- Priority revitalization-emphasize urban redevelopment and neighborhood conservation
- Cranberry Urban Area-Prioritize further economic diversification
- Small towns- prioritize revitalization and conserve existing development
- Municipal Boundary
- Suburban Development
- Significant Rural Features, includes:  
Slope, Parks, Public Open Spaces, State Game Lands, Flood Plains, Environmental Significance, ASA's
- Rural Revitalization Areas-Prioritize environmental and economic revitalization
- Preserve Rural Uses and Features-Development should not effect rurality



## PRIORITY 5: MINERAL EXCAVATION AND UNCONVENTIONAL NATURAL GAS DEVELOPMENT

Butler County is home to tremendous mineral resources. The county was home to some of the world's first oil wells. It also has been a traditional center of underground and surface coal mining, as well as limestone and sand and gravel mines. Shallow

(conventional) gas wells have been drilled in the county since the 1800's.

Beginning in 2006, energy companies began drilling successfully for deep levels of shale gas in the county. In the past 12 years, more than 500 nonconventional wells have been drilled, producing more than \$1.5 billion dollars of natural gas. The extent of current well locations are depicted on the map on the following page. Some well locations have resulted in local controversies over zoning classification and potential land use conflict, both in Butler County and throughout the greater region. As these type of conflicts are nothing new in mineral rich Pennsylvania, the planning code requires that each municipal comprehensive plan contain a statement that, "*Lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities.*" It is important to note that the term "Mineral" is defined in the code as "*any aggregate or mass of mineral matter,*



**Extracting energy from the ground is nothing new in Butler County. While oil drilling started in neighboring Venango County, Butler was home to many of the world's first oil boom towns. These included Petrolia Borough. (photo from Butler County Historical Society collection) [www.butlerhistory.org](http://www.butlerhistory.org)**

*whether or not coherent. The term includes, but is not limited to, limestone and dolomite, sand and gravel, rock and stone, earth, fill, slag, iron ore, zinc ore, vermiculite and clay, anthracite and bituminous coal, coal refuse, peat and crude oil and natural gas.*

Unlike other forms of development, mineral extraction can only occur where minerals are found. Municipalities should be careful to ascertain that their local land use ordinances provide reasonable opportunities for mineral extraction.

A unique aspect of unconventional natural gas development has been the establishment of a statewide impact fee. The County of Butler and each municipality receive a one-time fee for each unconventional natural gas well drilled within the county. This impact fee recognized that impacts (such as increased truck traffic) routinely cross municipal boundaries, so the impact fee establishes a formula to reimburse all affected communities.





## PRIORITIES 6 TRAIL SYSTEMS AND GREENWAYS

As Butler County grows and develops, undeveloped areas can be important to protect the rural character that attracts people to live here. Scenic resources whether public or private, add significant value to private land. Among the great planning successes of county planning in the past twenty years has been support and establishment of new trail systems. These included the:

1. North County Trail, a national scenic hiking trail that runs through the northern part of the County.
2. The Washington 1753 trail, a historic driving route that crosses the county and was initiated with assistance of the Butler County Planning Commission.
3. The Butler Freeport Trail, a former rail bed that is now a 21 mile non-motorized trail established through the leadership and tremendous vision of Buffalo Township.

Butler County endorses further trail development as a high planning priority for conservation, recreation and continued growth. The Butler County Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan was prepared in 2014. While a large measure of this planning effort was directed towards the County Park system, the plan identified potential greenways and trail links. This map is re-



**Trail Systems can include more than walking or biking. Streams such as Buffalo Creek, in the Southeastern part of the County, are part of greenway networks that provide both recreation and conservation of resources.**

produced on page 21 and is endorsed as a beginning point for further trail development. The highest priority for future trail development create an interconnected system involving:

1. Pedestrian and bicycle connections between large areas of public lands (such as state parks, local parks, county parks, and gamelands)
2. Pedestrian and bicycle connections to existing trails.
3. Connection to core communities and historic sites.
4. Connections through, and along, waterways and areas with significant scenic and rural resources, including land/water connections (water access points and waterfront trails)

Butler County will assist in trail and greenway planning efforts whenever possible.

**Legend**

- Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Proposed Bike Route
- Washington's Trail Scenic Drive
- Proposed Water Trail (Seasonal)
- Proposed Trail Town

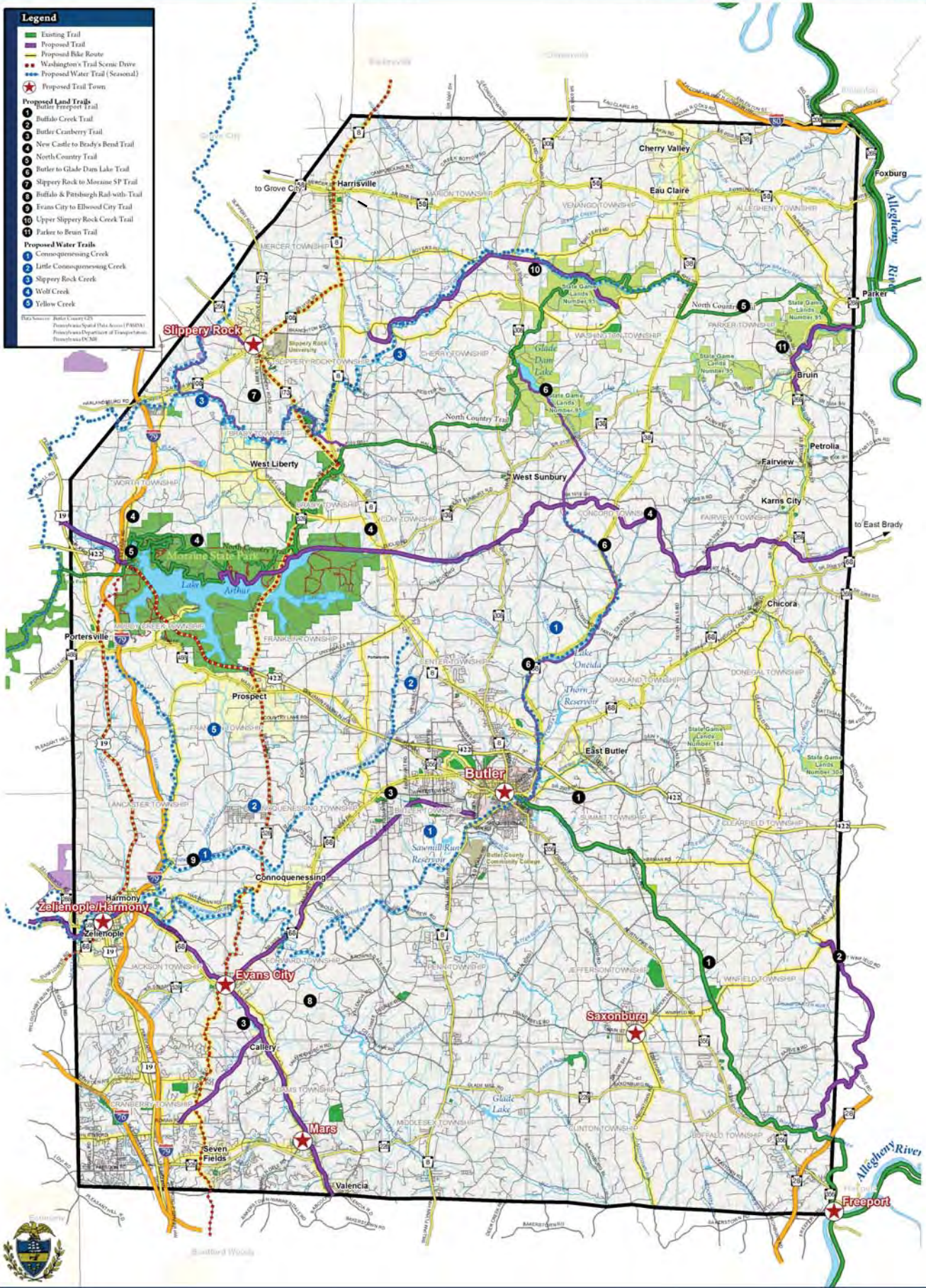
**Proposed Land Trails**

- 1 Butler Freepoint Trail
- 2 Buffalo Creek Trail
- 3 Butler Cranberry Trail
- 4 New Castle to Brady's Bend Trail
- 5 North Country Trail
- 6 Butler to Glade Dams Lake Trail
- 7 Slippery Rock to Moraine SP Trail
- 8 Buffalo & Pittsburgh Rail-both Trail
- 9 Evans City to Ellwood City Trail
- 10 Upper Slippery Rock Creek Trail
- 11 Parker to Bruin Trail

**Proposed Water Trails**

- 1 Connoquenessing Creek
- 2 Little Connoquenessing Creek
- 3 Slippery Rock Creek
- 4 Wolf Creek
- 5 Yellow Creek

Data Source: Butler County GIS, Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access (PASDA), Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Pennsylvania DNR



## PRIORITY 7: LAND CONSERVATION

Butler County has significant public land resources. These include 2 state parks, State Gamelands, a county park system, lands owned by conservancies (which are open to the public) and numerous local parks. However, land does not need to be public owned to have conservation values. This plan endorses the voluntary conservation and preservation of private farm and forest land through conservation easements.

Conservation easements are a formal agreement between a landowner and a local government or non profit. The landowner agree to not develop, in exchange for a payment. It is like selling another right, such as mineral rights, but otherwise retaining ownership.

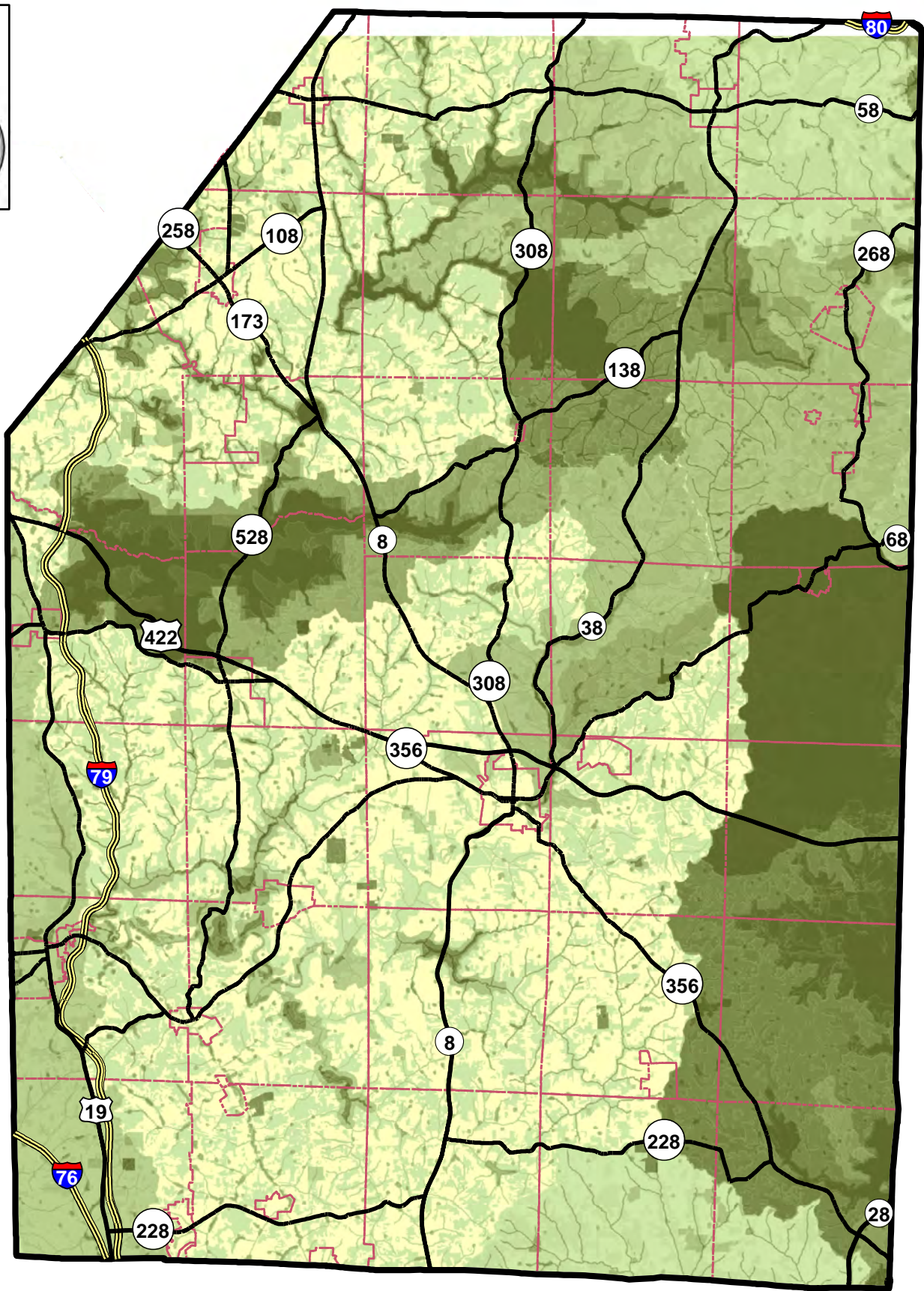
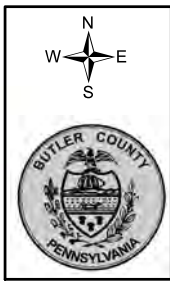
Butler County already has a successful conservation easement program through the County Farmland Preservation Program. Funded in part by bond issues and partly by tobacco taxes, the program allows for the purchase of conservation easements of high quality farmland. The Butler County program has been one of the most successful in Western Pennsylvania, preserving over 5,287 acres in the past 16 years.

A similar, locally funded program is needed for private forests and natural lands. Transfer of development rights (TDR) is an option to fund this. TDR has been enabled in Pennsylvania since 1989, but has only been used in the eastern portion of the state. Through a transfer of develop-



**Conservation easements preserve private land by protecting it from development. They still allowing the owners to farm, raise trees for timber, hunt, and pass the land to the next generation intact, while being paid.**

ment rights, a developer can gain the right to develop at a higher density in a growth area by paying a landowner owner to purchase a conservation easement. In essence, the developer transfers the development capacity of a rural tract to an urban tract. The owner of the rural tract is paid for this right. Transfer of development rights has several advantages. It is a voluntary transaction for both buyer and seller at an agreed price. If properly used, it can increase the from and type of development in areas the community wishes to direct it. The County can help by holding easements and enabling transactions across municipal boundaries. The maps on page 24 shows high concentration of naturally significant resources based upon the SPC Regional Ecosystem Framework. This framework would be a guideline to potential easement acquisition areas.



**Butler County  
Regional Ecosystem Framework**

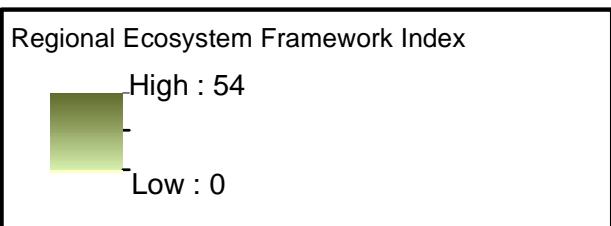
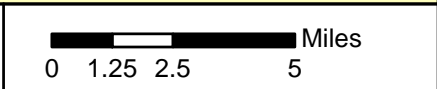


FIGURE: 2-6

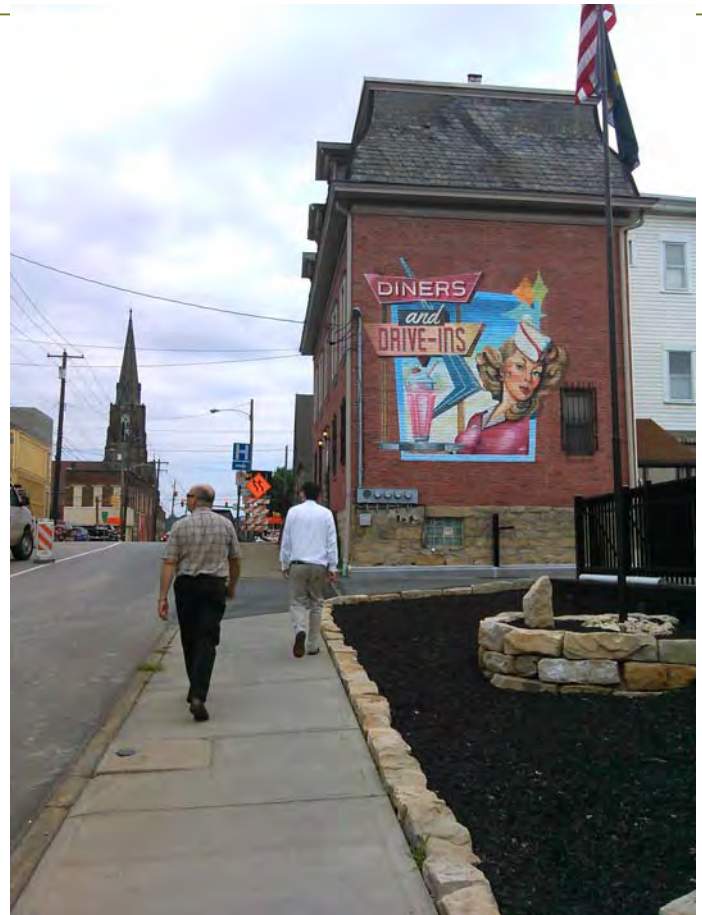


## PRIORITY 8: CORE COMMUNITIES AND HERITAGE

“Core Community” was a term developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development to describe older, densely settled and developed places within the commonwealth. Core communities typically were settled in the era before the automobile, so they were oriented for rail, river, or pedestrians. They typically have high proportions of churches and community organizations, and many surviving historically significant buildings. Many are incorporated as boroughs or cities, but some are villages within townships.

Like other areas in Pennsylvania, core communities in Butler County have been seeing decline in population and importance as commercial centers. In some cases, boroughs in the county are surrounded by growing townships but have been losing population for decades. As these core communities already have large proportions of non-taxable properties, population decline can devastate tax base. If these communities see continued dis-investment, blight and crime are inevitable.

As resources are available county planning will attempt to devote resources towards core community revitalization. Among core communities, this plan must emphasize the particular role of the county seat, The City of Butler. The City of Butler should remain the principal administrative, legal, and social seat of the county. Where possible, the county will assist in necessary redevelopment to keep this core community strong and healthy.



**Core communities, like the City of Butler, are the places where county residents continue to work, worship and use government services. While many core communities have declined as shopping or residential centers, their preservation is essential to our shared identity as Butler County citizens.**

Core communities are important to heritage planning, which a mandated emphasis of county comprehensive planning. The County of Butler provides crucial funding to the Butler County Historical Society which maintains its headquarters in Butler. Relying largely upon volunteers, the county historical society cannot undertake any widespread research on historic resources. However, an initial study was completed in 2007, as a part of the Rivers of Steel Heritage Plan. This plan could be used to further inventory historical buildings.

## PRIORITY 9: TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation Planning has been an established county planning priority since the establishment of the county comprehensive Plan in 2001. The county is involved in virtually all aspects of transportation planning:

- The County Airport Authority, which ensures air access directly to the county for benefit of businesses and individuals.
- Funding and project selection through participation in federal and state transportation projects.
- Establishing standards for local street networks through the county subdivision and land development ordinance.

The County has been an active participant in securing funding for specialized road studies, regular airport master planning, and bricks and mortar transportation improvements. Transportation planning will continue to be a priority for county planning; especially in allocation of limited staff resources. Public investments into transportation infrastructure have an enormous effect upon the use of land, and prospects for economic development. At the same time as this update was being prepared, the county prepared a countywide Mobility Study to identify areas of congestion, as well as areas where transportation investment will increase linkages for development. This mobility study will serve as a separate amendment to the county plan, and is adopted herein.

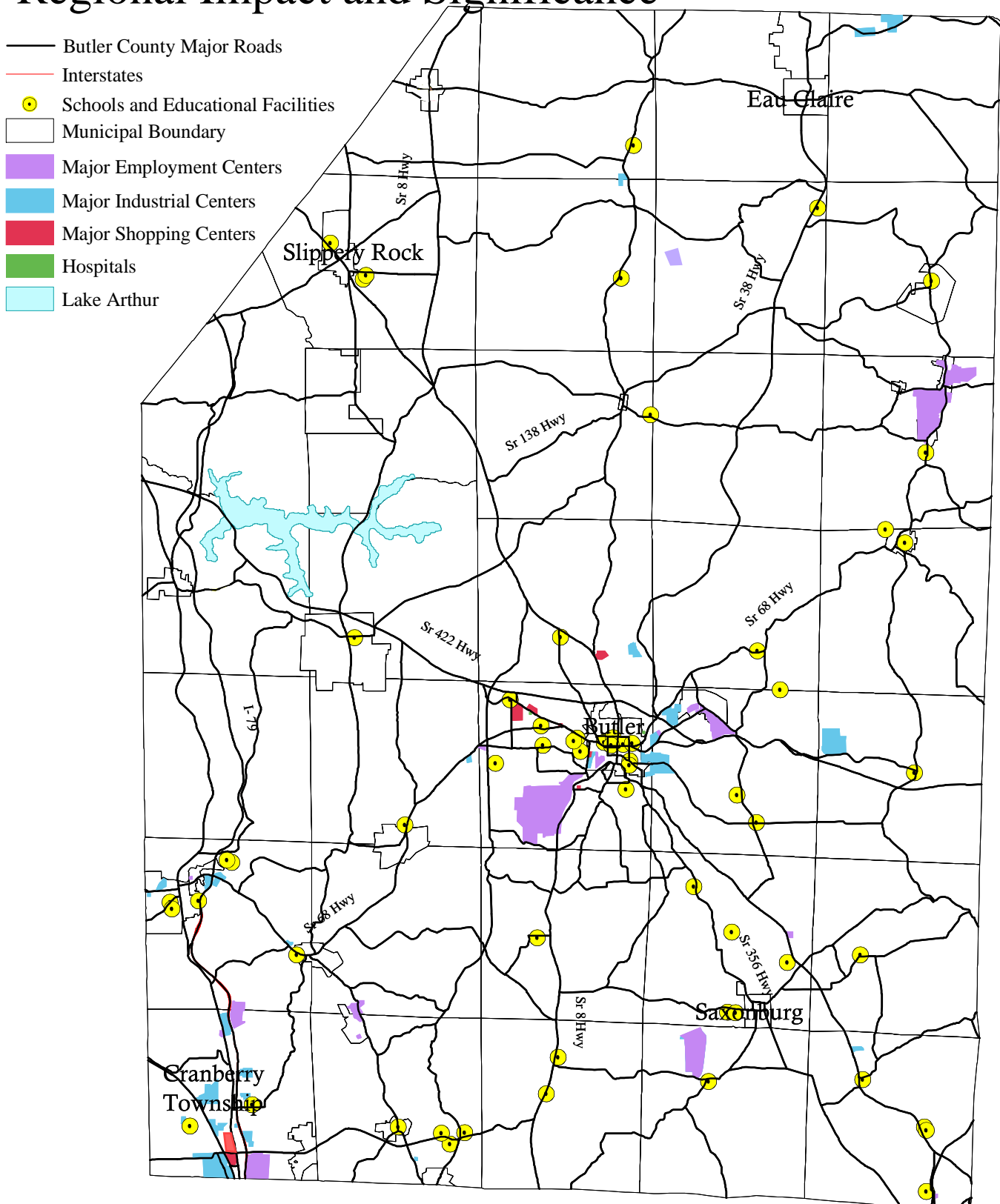


**Jeeps clog Main Street in Butler during a salute to the home of the Bantam Jeep. While festivals like this are occasional, traffic congestion is a real daily problem for both core communities and growing suburbs**

Infrastructure: Local municipalities are responsible for providing public water and sewer services. In older core communities, systems are old. Many Townships struggle to expand systems to keep up with growth. Building upon the direct assistance by county leadership and planners in transportation, the county is also exploring direct assistance for the wider infrastructure needs of communities. This would likely take the form of an infrastructure bank. The idea of an infrastructure bank was pioneered by Dauphin County as a means to make borrowing for major projects more affordable. Butler County has access to its unconventional gas well impact fee funds and is considering using the fee as seed money for local municipal borrowing for public water, sewer and other needs.

Large scale development generates traffic. For reference, purpose, a map of developments of regional impact (development that affects more than one municipality) is attached from the 2001 plan.

# Butler County Comprehensive Plan: 2-7 Current Development of Regional Impact and Significance



This Project was funded, in part, by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, State Planning Assistance Grant.

Graney, Grossman, Colosimo and Associates 2002

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Butler County Planning  
Commission  
County Courthouse  
Annex  
124 W Diamond St,  
Butler, PA 16001  
Tel: 724-284-5138  
www.butler.co.pa.us



## PRIORITY 10: LOCAL PLANNING ORDINANCE MODELS

The previous comprehensive plan noted that one of the problems of local zoning was widespread lack of locally appropriate models to accomplish various purposes. This was also identified as a priority by Township and other local government officials. Under the title of Butler County Land Use Advisory Guidelines, a number of model ordinances have been prepared to assist municipalities in a real way at finding local land use regulations that meet their local goals and implement local and multimunicipal comprehensive plans. This document is available separately in copywrite free electronic format for any municipality.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

The following documents may be used by the County Planning commission in making determinations of consistency with the County Comprehensive Plan pursuant to the official use statement on Page 8.

[Butler County Comprehensive Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan \(2014\)](#)

[Butler County Mobility Study \(2017\)](#) [Butler County Airport Master Plan \(2012\)](#)

[Butler County Steel Heritage Plan \(2007\)](#)

[Butler County Natural Heritage Inventory \(2011\)](#)

[Butler County Land Use Advisory Guidelines \(2017\)](#)

All these documents are available from the Butler County Planning Commission.



# REGION 1: NORTHWEST

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Cyclists on scenic Miller Road in Slippery Rock Township.

### REGIONAL INTRODUCTION

Historically an area of farms, small towns, and mining, northwestern Butler County has changed significantly over the past decades. The establishment of Moraine State Park in 1970 and the damming of Muddy Creek to create Lake Arthur became the largest body of water in the county; and the third largest state park in the Pennsylvania. The region is also home to a smaller state park, the Jennings Environmental Education Center, which protects some of the only remaining relict prairie ecosystem in Pennsylvania.

The construction of Interstate 79 in the 1960's and the later I-279 connector also initiated long term changes. Highway improvements resulted in greater access from the region to the Pittsburgh metro area

and immediate access to Interstate 80. US Route 422 was also improved to four lane limited access in the 1970's. This linked the northwest region to both interstates and the county seat in Butler. Highway access improvements may have helped speed the growth of Slippery Rock University, Butler County's largest 4 year institution of higher learning. Enrollment rose from 1,314 in 1960 to the current 8,628. Since 1990, many municipalities in this region have also seen demographic growth.

In spite of these changes, the area still retains significant rural resources. Agriculture, forestry, and mining for limestone, sand, and gravel remain important economic endeavors. While there are areas of new suburban development, it retains its rural economic base and character.



# NORTHWEST REGION FACT SHEET

## **Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plans in Region:**

Northwestern Butler County Comprehensive Plan (2007) The area covered by the plan includes Slippery Rock Borough, Slippery Rock Township, West Liberty Borough, Worth Township, and Brady Township. The plan is not available online currently.

Porterville-Prospect Joint Comprehensive Plan This is an archaic plan developed in the 1970's. It was discovered in the County Planning Commission archives and appears to have been adopted, and is technically still applicable. Not available online.

Muddy Creek Lancaster Township Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan This plan crosses into Lancaster Township which is located in County Planning Region 4 (southwest) and was completed in 2004. Not available online.

## **Public Water and Sewer Systems in Region**

The Slippery Rock Municipal Authority serves all of Slippery Rock Borough and a few adjacent areas of Slippery Rock Township with both public water and sewer systems.

Prospect Borough has public water and sewer. Harrisville Borough has public sewer lines which were extended from Grove City in Mercer County.

Mercer Township is currently developing a sewer system for Forestville village.

**Largest Employer in Region:** State System of Higher Education (SRU), which is the eighth largest employer in the county.

## **Agricultural Security Areas (ASA's) in Region**

Slippery Rock Township, Worth Township, Muddy Creek Township and Franklin Township have Agricultural Security Areas.

## **Historic Resources In Region**

There are no National Register of Historic Places listings in the region. The Old Stone House, located in Brady Township is a reconstruction of an 1822 Tavern as is operated as a museum by Slippery Rock University.

## **Existing Trails in Region**

North Country Trail, Washington 1753 Trail driving route, both originally county initiatives.

## **Developments of Regional Impact and Significance**

Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock Area School District, Moraine State Park.

## **Key Highways and Average Daily Traffic (ADT)**

Interstate 79: 23,000 ADT at County line. 28,000 ADT at Portersville Exit.

Rt. 422: 20,000 ADT in Franklin Township.

Rt. 8: 7,800 ADT at Pa 173 intersection in Brady Twp.

Pa. 108 11,000 ADT in Slippery Rock Borough.

## REGIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

While most of the 14 municipalities in the region saw population growth, five saw decline from 2000-2010. What is remarkable about demographics in this area is that a number of boroughs (Slippery Rock Borough, Harrisville and West Liberty) saw population increase. Overall levels of growth seemed to be linked to proximity to the Interstate 79 and US 422 corridors.

Place	2010 Pop.	2000 Pop.	Numeric	Percent
Brady Township	1,310	1,452	-142	-9.8%
Franklin Township	2,620	2,292	328	14.3%
Harrisville Borough	897	883	14	1.6%
Mercer Township	1,100	1,183	-83	-7.0%
Muddy Creek Township	2,254	2,267	-13	-0.6%
Portersville Borough	235	268	-33	-12.3%
Prospect Borough	1,169	1,234	-65	-5.3%
Slippery Rock Borough	3,625	3,068	557	18.2%
Slippery Rock Township	5,614	5,251	363	6.9%
West Liberty Borough	343	325	18	5.5%
Worth Township	1,416	1,331	85	6.4%

The region had a net gain of 1,007 housing units between 2000 and 2010. Some communities with demographic loss, such as Portersville, had gains in total housing. Many dwelling units gained Slippery Rock Borough and Township are multi unit student housing complexes built after 2000.

Municipality	2000 total Housing Units	2010 Total Housing Units	housing change 2000-2010
Brady Township	600	560	-40
Franklin Township	912	1,098	186
Harrisville Borough	346	345	-1
Mercer Township	503	492	-11
Muddy Creek Township	941	1,011	70
Portersville Borough	109	115	6
Prospect Borough	518	516	-2
Slippery Rock Borough	1,039	1,481	442
Slippery Rock Township	1,470	1,654	184
West Liberty Borough	123	147	24
Worth Township	543	692	149

## REGIONAL PLANNING PRIORITIES

**The northwest region is projected to see continued growth.** Planning success such as the SRU Innovation Drive development, North Country Trail development through state parks, strong multimunicipal planning and sewer improvements have made this area attractive to residential and other investment. Traffic patterns show that many residents likely commute to Region 4 (southwest) or Allegheny County.

Because this region is emerging as a bedroom community, the highest planning priority for this area is to **Encourage municipalities in this area to monitor land use changes to ensure proper balance of residential to nonresidential development to preserve tax base.** Local policies can either encourage preserving private farm and forest land or reserving areas for commercial/light industrial development through zoning. With large proportion of tax exempt state lands, too much residential growth could strain public services. Municipalities in this area should monitor land use changes to ensure proper balance of residential to nonresidential. Local policies can either encourage preserving private farm and forest land or reserving areas for commercial/light industrial development through zoning. Local officials are interested in tax base diversification. The county supports establishment of a new regional business and industrial park in the Northwest region.

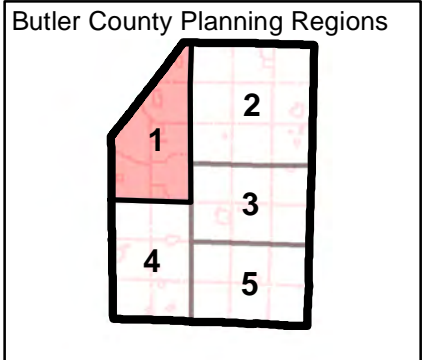
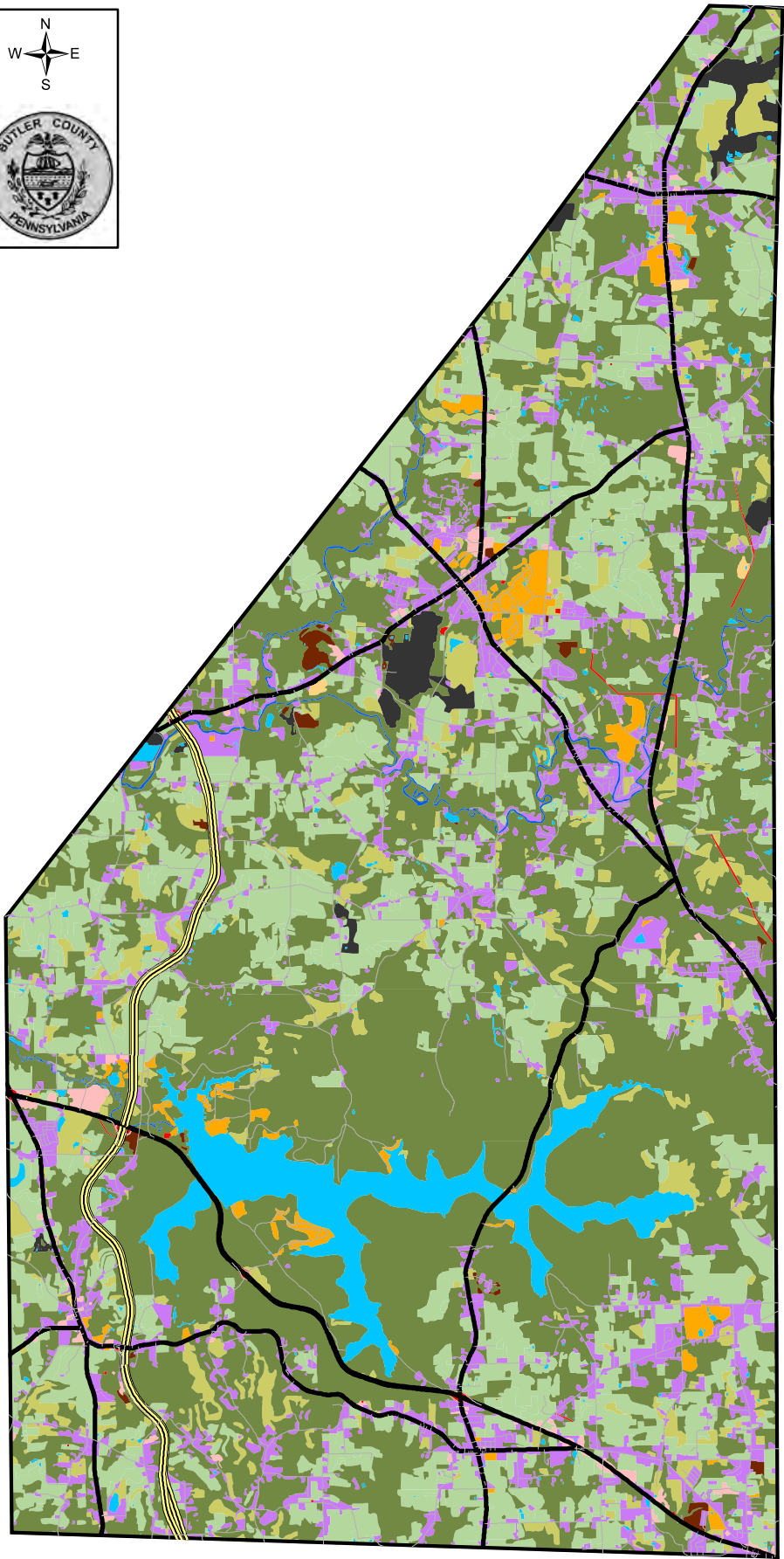
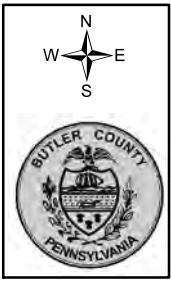


**The Blazing Star flower is the most beautiful and outstanding symbol of the ancient remnant glacial prairie at the Jennings state park.**

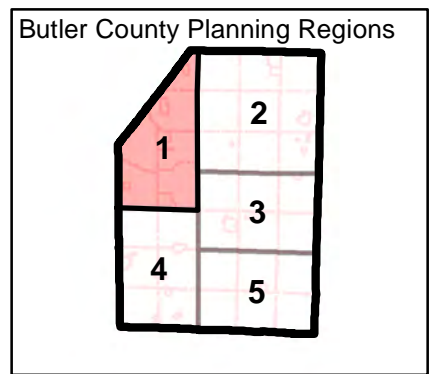
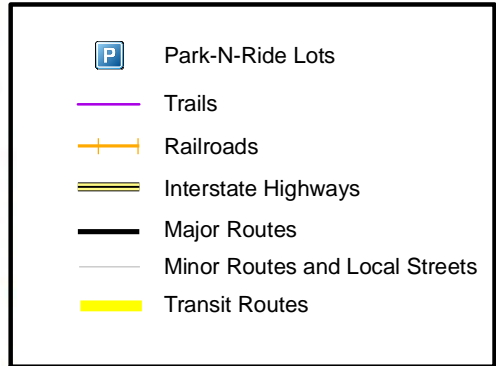
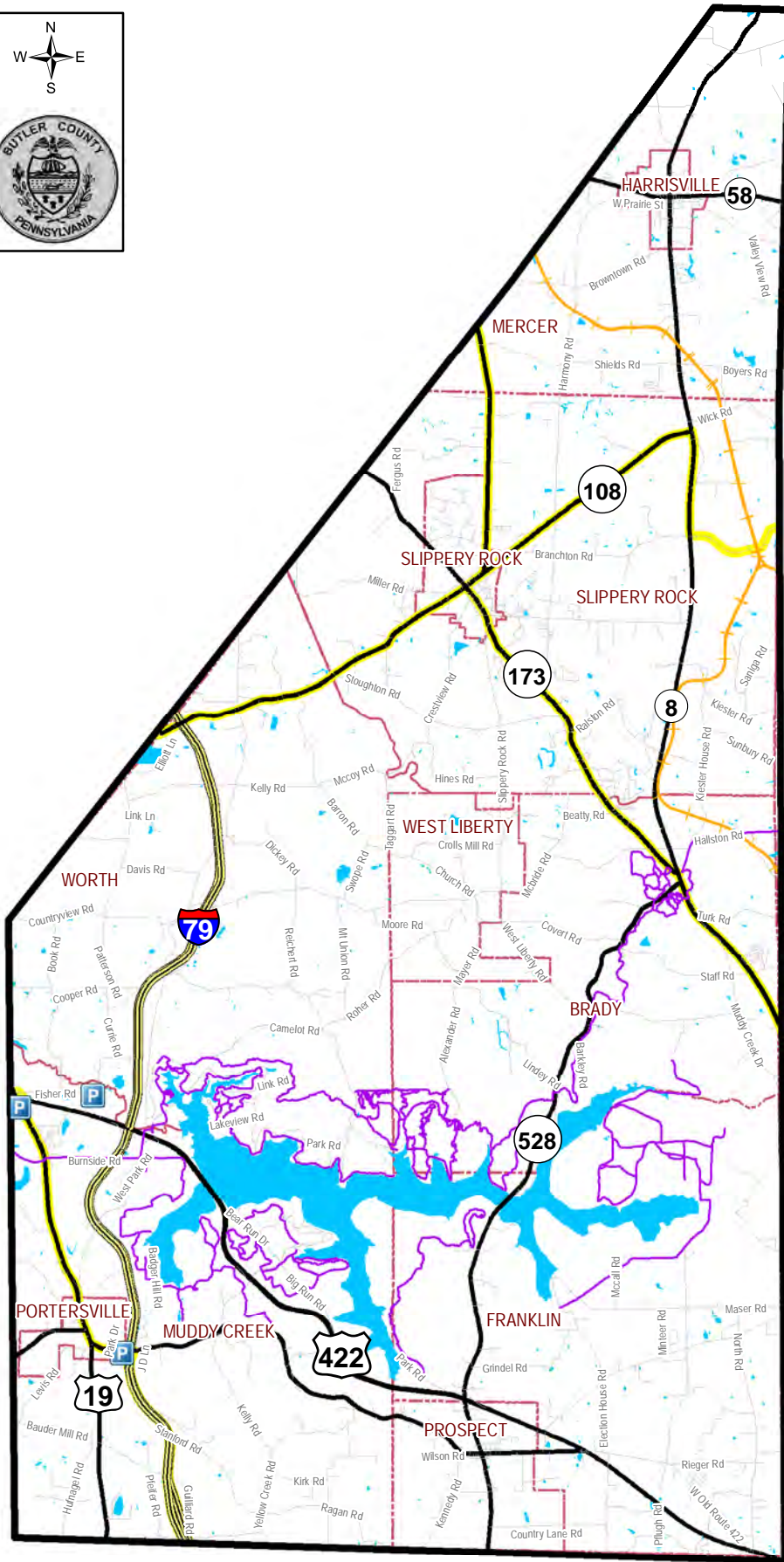
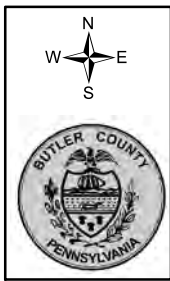
**Growth has also created need for transportation planning.** It is obvious that Pa. Route 108 has now emerged as a corridor stressed by increasing traffic congestion. Improvements for commuters (such as a formal park and ride) at the Pa 108 Interchange or US 422 and I-79 could material assist the region. Route 8 has significant truck traffic and should be part of a long term study for safety and capacity Improvements

**Trail planning and development is important to the region** The North Country trail has potential for roadside trails which could connect Slippery Rock and Moraine State Park and other communities.

**It is anticipated that mineral extraction, including unconventional gas drilling will continue.** Municipalities must carefully plan to avoid land use conflicts between growing rural residential areas, and traditional mineral extraction activities.

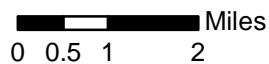


**Planning Region 1  
Land Cover**



**Planning Region 1  
Existing Transportation  
Infrastructure**

FIGURE: 3-2



**BUTLER COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN**

Butler County Planning  
Commission  
County Courthouse  
Annex  
124 W Diamond St,  
Butler, PA 16001  
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www.butler.co.pa.us



**REGIONAL PRIORITIES SUMMARY**

Support continued public sewer development projects in Harrisville, Prospect, Forestville (Mercer Twp.) and the Slippery Rock area to accommodate growth and enhance public health.

Prioritize core community re-investment projects for Portersville borough, Prospect borough, Slippery Rock Borough and Harrisville Borough.

Assist communities with outdated or no municipal level plans to develop current single or multimunicipal comprehensive plans.

Prioritize business park development in areas where access and infrastructure are present to support tax base and economic diversification, especially in the I-79 and US 422 corridors.

Prioritize congestion management for The Slippery Rock area, including Pa. Route 108, and possible future connector roads.

Prioritize safety improvement in Prospect Borough, including Pa. Route 488 and intersecting streets.

Prioritize Safety and traffic flow improvements to Pa Route 8, throughout the Region.

With growing commuters in this area, prioritize park and ride facilities along I-79/ US 422, and improved transit.

Help municipalities plan for mineral extraction, while minimizing conflict with small residential properties.

Prioritize trail and greenway development, with a goal of connecting core communities with state parks and other conservation areas via bicycle and pedestrian trail networks.

This area is an identified priority for voluntary purchase of conservation lands or conservation easements, due to anticipated growth.

The Butler County Planning Commission supports further expansion of visitor services, more facilities, and a broader range of recreation activities within Moraine State Park. It supports compatible tourist based development near the park.

# REGION 2: NORTHEAST

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Northeastern Butler County is a region of abundant woods and wildlife (Photo courtesy of Judy Herlihy-Novak, Light Source Images)

### REGIONAL INTRODUCTION

Northeastern Butler County is an area of small boroughs and villages, surrounded by rugged topography and vast forests. It borders parts of Venango, Clarion and Armstrong Counties, and shares much in common with the “Pennsylvania Wilds” region to the north and east. The region contains over 8,300 acres of Pennsylvania State Gamelands, all incorporated into Pa. State Gameland 95. These public hunting lands combine with vast private woodlands to make the area a sportsman's paradise. The area also includes a short length of direct access to the Allegheny River, which forms the eastern border of Allegheny Township over about 400 yards. This is the only area of Butler County that has a portion of Interstate 80 running through its bounds, and Exit 42 (PA Route 38)

is just over the county line.

While this area contains some outstanding beauty, it has a long heritage of mineral extraction, including coal mining, limestone mining, and petroleum drilling and processing. Many of the small communities were founded for oil production and processing, or mining. For example, The village of Boyers in Marion Township was formed around underground limestone mining. A cluster of communities around the Pa 268 Corridor, including Karns City, Bruinn and Petrolia, developed around refineries and petroleum processing. A challenge of this heritage is large areas of acid mine drainage, and environmentally damaged (brownfield) sites. The northeast also has a high number of very small local municipalities with less than 500 people.





# NORTHEAST REGION FACT SHEET

(SEE APPENDICES FOR MAPS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS)

## **Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plans in Region:**

None. Only one municipality in the northeast has ever completed a single municipal comprehensive plan (Clay Township in 1999).

## **Public Water and Sewer Systems in Region**

A small portion of Parker Township receives public sewer from Parker City in Armstrong County.

The Boroughs of Bruin, Petrolia, Fairview, and Karns City have Sewer service.

Very small portions of Fairview Township are served by Public Sewer from Chicora, and other neighboring Boroughs.

**Largest Employer in Region:** The Federal Government, which is also the largest employer in the County. Most Federal employees in region work at the Office of Personnel and Management Office at the former underground limestone mine in Cherry Township.

## **Agricultural Security Areas (ASA's) in Region**

Clay Township and Cherry Township have adopted ASA's.

## **Historic Resources In Region**

There are no National Register of Historic Places listings, and no Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission roadside parkers.

## **Existing Trails in Region**

The North Country National Scenic Trail crosses through the heart of the planning region.

## **Developments of Regional Impact and Significance**

Iron Mountain Complex , 200+ acres of underground storage and offices in a former limestone mine (Cherry Township)

The Northwest Sanitary Landfill, operated by Waste Management Landfill (Clay Township)

Karns City Area School District

Moniteau area School District

Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District

There remains a substantial number of specialty oil related businesses in the Karns City area, including Calumet Specialty and Calumet Penreco. Together they form a substantial employment center.

The County assisted in establishing a Keystone Opportunity Zone site in Allegheny Township. This was done in cooperation with The Allegheny Clarion Valley Industrial Development Corporation, and is now the home to several businesses.

## **Highest Average Daily Traffic (ADT)**

Interstate 80: 22,000 ADT at Exit 42

Pa. Rt. 308: 4,800 ADT in West Sunbury

Pa. Rt. 38: 4,900 ADT in Concord Twp.

Pa. Rt. 268: 5,000 ADT in Karns City

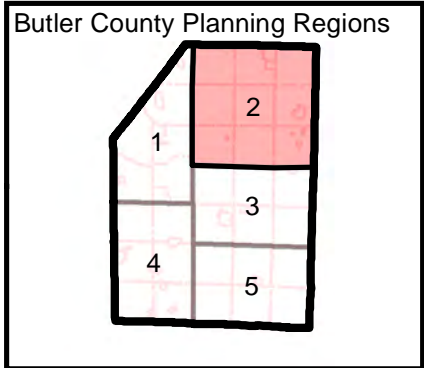
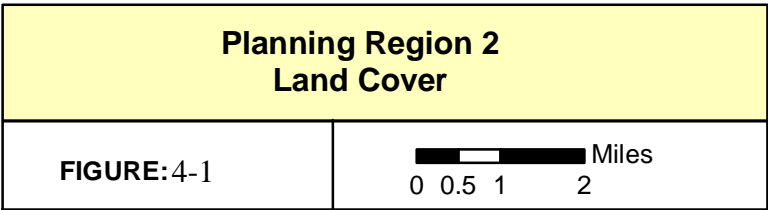
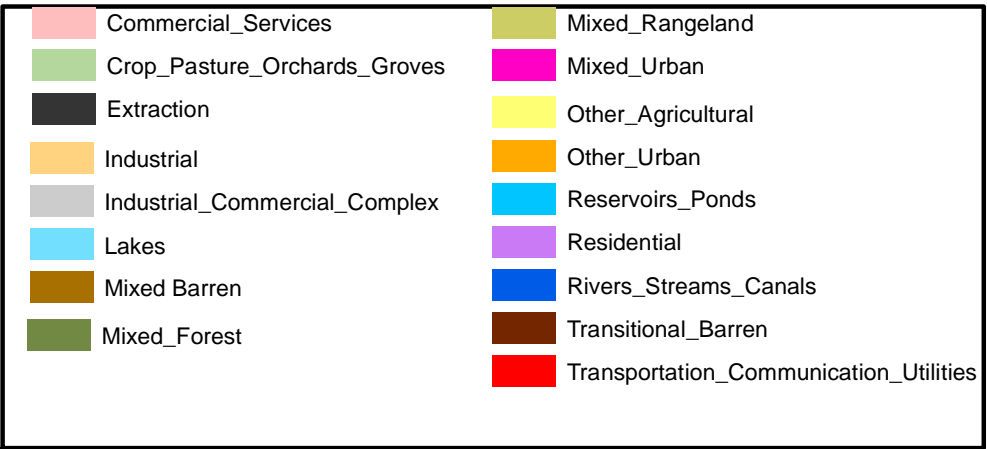
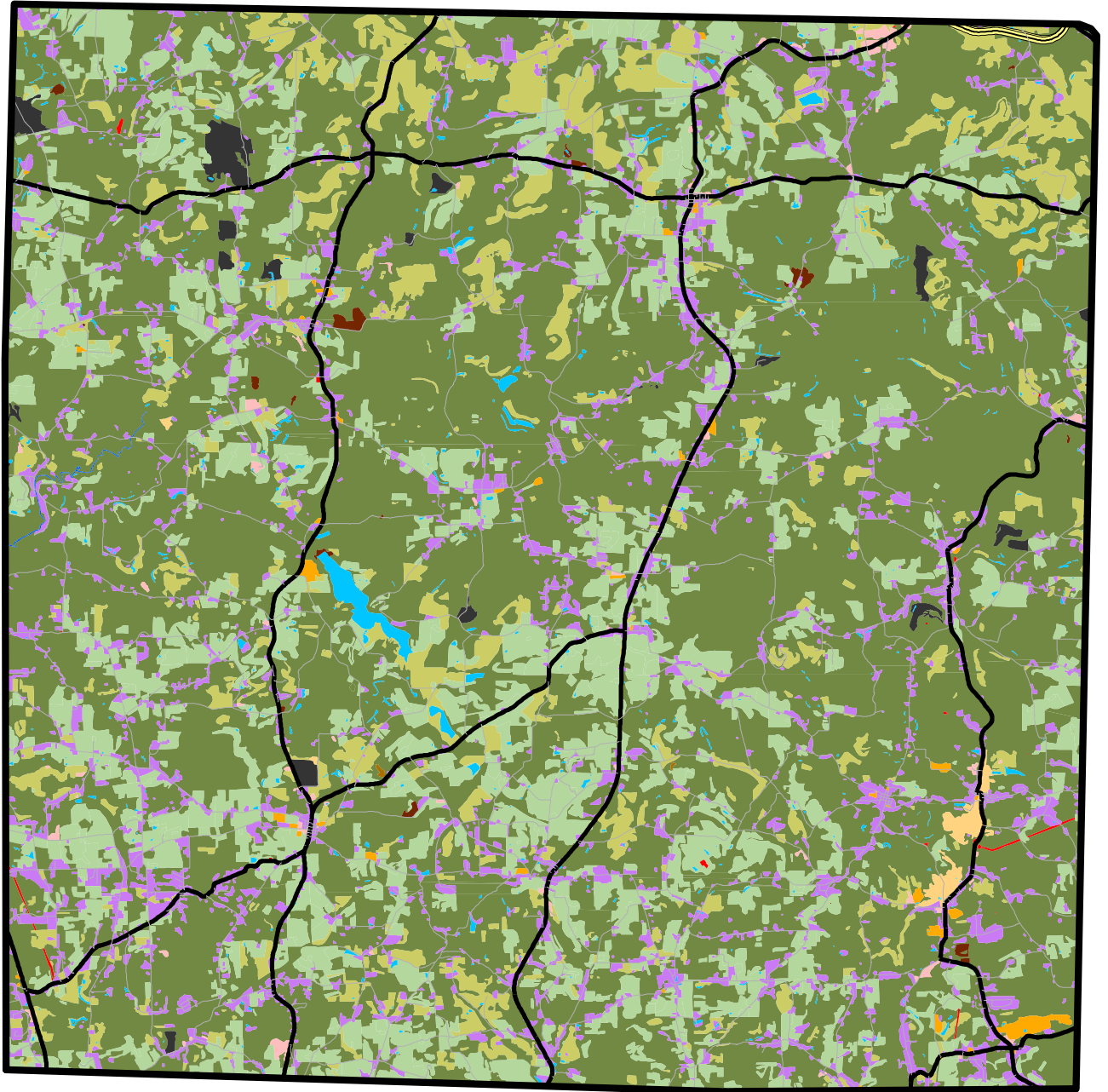
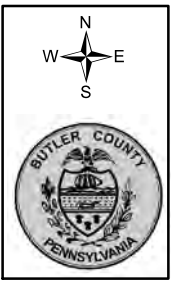
## REGIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

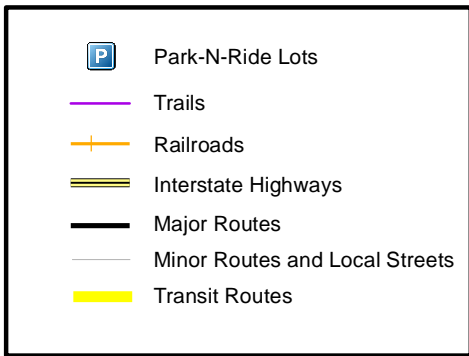
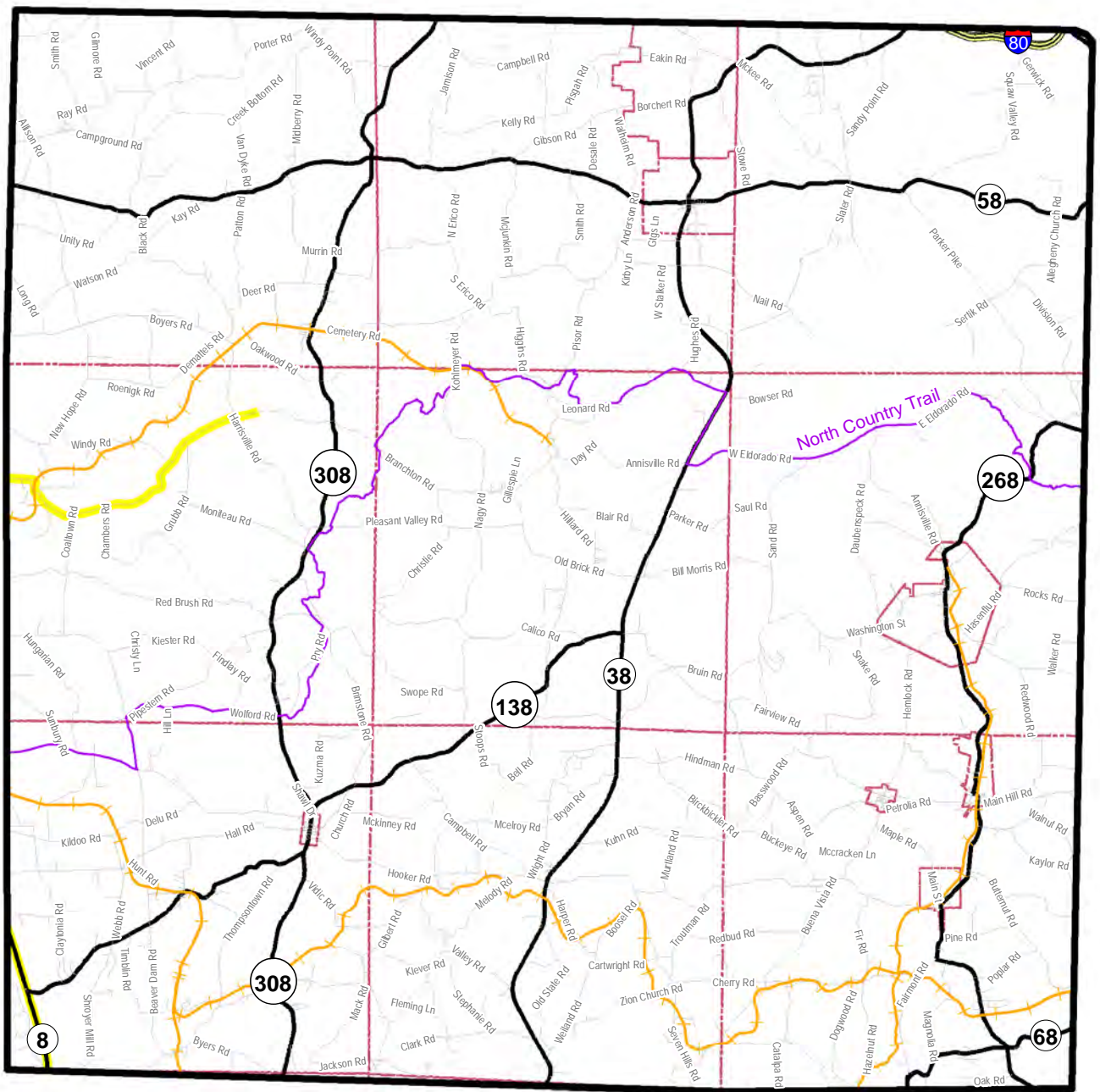
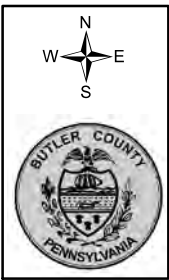
Over half of the 16 municipalities in the northeast region had population decline from 2000-2010. A few municipalities, such as Venango and Allegheny Townships, saw significant percentage growth.

Place	2010 Pop	2000 Pop	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Allegheny Township	641	555	86	15.5%
Bruin Borough	524	534	-10	-1.9%
Cherry Township	1,106	1,053	53	5.0%
Cherry Valley Borough	66	72	-6	-8.3%
Clay Township	2,703	2,628	75	2.9%
Concord Township	1,505	1,493	12	0.8%
Eau Claire Borough	316	355	-39	-11.0%
Fairview Borough	198	220	-22	-10.0%
Fairview Township	2,080	2,061	19	0.9%
Karns City Borough	209	244	-35	-14.3%
Marion Township	1,239	1,330	-91	-6.8%
Parker Township	632	700	-68	-9.7%
Petrolia Borough	212	218	-6	-2.8%
Venango Township	868	732	136	18.6%
Washington Township	1,300	1,419	-119	-8.4%
West Sunbury Borough	192	104	88	84.6%

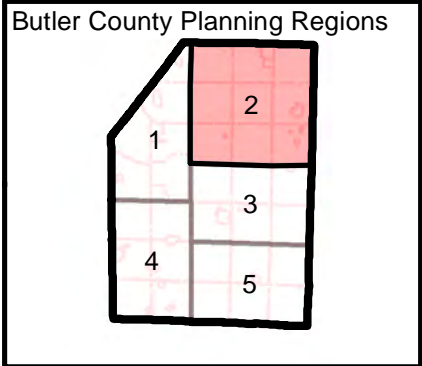
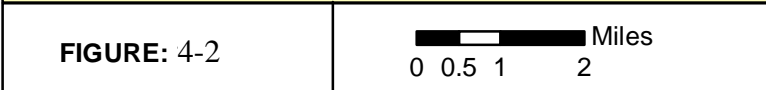
The region saw a gain of 302 housing units over ten years. However, several municipalities had significant housing loss, likely older homes and seasonal units which were demolished. Note: West Sunbury housing and population counts is believed to be an incorrect undercount in 2000, based upon comparisons of census 1990 and 2000 data.

Place	2000 Housing Units	2010 Housing Units	2000-2010 Change
Allegheny Township	373	309	-64
Bruin Borough	228	216	-12
Cherry Township	412	484	72
Cherry Valley Borough	31	33	2
Clay Township	1,036	1,151	115
Concord Township	602	675	73
Eau Claire Borough	143	146	3
Fairview Borough	79	72	-7
Fairview Township	775	835	60
Karns City Borough	96	97	1
Marion Township	550	544	-6
Parker Township	297	300	3
Petrolia Borough	99	100	1
Venango Township	348	374	26
Washington Township	560	558	-2
West Sunbury Borough	47	84	37





**Planning Region 2  
Existing Transportation**



## REGIONAL PLANNING PRIORITIES

The northeast region has unique challenges because of historic patterns of population decline, and limited local government capacity. However, it has seen some growth in jobs and economic activity through The KOZ industrial park and the Iron Mountain/Federal Office of Personnel Management complex. These centers are however, islands of activity. They have not generated associated clusters of retail or housing.



Events like the nationally known North Washington Rodeo bring visitors to the region and can serve to build community and create rural development opportunities in Tourism, when coupled with trails and natural lands.

**The highest priority for this region is for more detailed local comprehensive planning:** As resources are available, Butler County will encourage and assist multi municipal coalitions to undertake revitalization oriented multi-municipal plans in this region. Local comprehensive plan needs to focus on the challenge of building capacity for the small municipalities with limited management resources. This type of planning should also examine the existing job centers, and determine if their infrastructure needs are being met. For example, Iron Mountain lies on a rural state road with difficult geometry. There are few services within reasonable proximity.

The other planning priority for this region is to undertake support for regional development that takes advantage of existing and proposed

rural resources. The North County National Scenic Trail is a notable local success, but has not created any associated recreation or tourist based development. The County Planning Commission recommends preparation and implementation of a regional greenway plan that connects local public lands, scenic resources, small towns, and unique small business via water trails, scenic drives and non-motorized trails. Across the county line from the region in Clarion County, the Borough of Foxburg has become a trail and unique business destination, and can be both a model and connection.

With a large stock of older housing, and small boroughs, this is also region that has many core community revitalization priorities. Revitalization should be locally driven and supported, and may be developed after local planning initiatives build capacity. Implementation might range from sewer projects to demolition of deteriorated buildings.

**BUTLER COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN**

Butler County Planning  
Commission  
County Courthouse  
Annex  
124 W Diamond St,  
Butler, PA 16001  
Tel: 724-284-5138  
www.butler.co.pa.us



**REGIONAL PRIORITY SUMMARY**

Core community revitalization priorities: Eau Claire/Cherry Valley (combined), Karns City, West Sunbury, Bruin, Fairview Borough, and the villages of Boyers and North Washington

With low growth pressure and a wealth of public lands (which sometimes constrains local tax base) this is not a priority area for purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements. For other conservation land acquisitions, easements are preferred to fee simple acquisition. In some municipalities, the acquisition of undeveloped land by state agencies or non profits should be discouraged where it will result a loss of tax base sustainability. The exception may be areas needed to connect trail corridors and outstanding areas identified in the 2011 Butler County Natural Heritage Inventory.

Work to create coalitions of municipalities to undertake meaningful, development-oriented local comprehensive planning.

Share simplified models of appropriate rural zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance text for local consideration.

Assist in building municipal management capacity within the region, sharing services between municipalities where appropriate.

There are small villages and densely populated boroughs in the region without adequate sewage treatment facilities. As resources are available, the County will support sewage facilities planning and implementation that will find affordable options to serve these areas.

Due to its employment importance, a long term Traffic study of SR 4012 and SR 4010, and the Twp. Roads connecting Route 8 and the Iron Mountain/Federal OPM complex should be undertaken.

Participation by municipalities in the Butler County Mobility Plan and all transportation funding planning is low in this region. Clay Township identified the need for an overall transportation study, and a Parker-to-Bruin trail plan has been identified as part of the mobility study. As resources are available, the County will try to assist municipalities in more full participation in the transportation funding process.

# REGION 3: CENTRAL

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



In addition to being the home of the county seat, Central Butler County is home to unique attractions like the Maridon Museum. Founded in 2004, this relatively new museum displays a famous collection of Asian art.

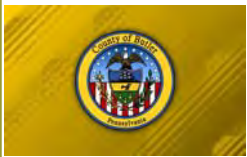
### REGIONAL INTRODUCTION

The central region of the county is unique as both the home of the county seat and the historic center for employment and shopping. In the 19th and 20th centuries, other regions of the county mined coal, logged, farmed, and drilled for oil. The central region was where these raw products were used to create steel, feed workers, and make railroad cars, automobiles, and a host of other industrial products. Citizens from all over the county also came to the central region to shop or conduct business.

This region changed after World War II. Newly prosperous Industrial workers built new homes on larger lots outside the urban areas, and began commuting to work. Retail shopping centers were built near

clusters of homes. Then, by the 1980's large employers like the Pullman Standard Rail Car Company closed.

After some difficult changes, the region retains many assets. It has a strong spirit of intergovernmental cooperation. Many communities have seen housing and nonresidential development in the past decade. Over half of the former Pullman complex was demolished and redeveloped, creating a business park, shops and a minor league baseball stadium. The city of Butler is, and should remain the principal administrative, legal, and social seat of the county. This can only happen if there is necessary redevelopment to keep this center strong and healthy.



# CENTRAL REGION FACT SHEET

(SEE APPENDICES FOR MAPS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS)

## **Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plans in Region:**

The Butler Area Multimunicipal Plan, covering The City of Butler, Butler Township, East Butler Borough, Summit Township and Penn Township (Which is in the Southeast County Planning Region). The communities that created the plan still meet regularly to discuss projects and progress.

## **Public Water and Sewer Systems in Region**

This sole provider of public sewer services is the Butler Area Sewer Authority (BASA). BASA has made major investments in the system to meet growth needs. BASA serves all of the City of Butler, and developed portions of Butler Township, Center Township, East Butler and a small portion of Summit Township. The BASA system has also expanded into the southwest and southeastern regions of the county. Pennsylvania American Water Company provides public water to most of the BASA service areas.

## **Largest Employer in Region:**

The central region is one of the county's major employment centers. The federal government (the largest employer in the county) maintains the Veterans Administration Hospital. Other major employers and ranking (in parenthesis) are: Butler Healthcare Providers (3rd) AK Steel Corporation (4th) Wal-Mart \* (5th) Butler Area School District (6th) Butler County Community College (9th) Butler County Government (10th). \*Walmart also has a presence in the

southwest region, like the split in federal employment between this region and the northeast.

## **Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) in Region**

Center and Butler Townships maintain ASA's.

## **Historic Resources In Region**

This area has a wealth of historically significant structures and places. The National Register listings include: The Butler Armory, Butler County Courthouse, Butler Count National Bank, Elm Court (located in Butler), The Walter Lowrie House (Now the headquarters of the county historical society), Butler Historic District, and the Preston Laboratories site in Butler Township.

## **Existing Trails in Region**

The terminus of the Butler Freeport Trail is in the City of Butler and passes through Summit Township.

## **Developments of Regional Impact and Significance**

In addition to major employers previously listed, this region is home to major shopping complexes in Butler and Center Townships, and a cluster of industrial employers in East Butler.

## **Highest Average Daily Traffic (ADT)**

US 422 at the Pa Rt. 68 exit 21,000 ADT

PA Rt. 8 South of City of Butler 20,000 ADT

PA Rt. 68, Butler Township 17,000 ADT

PA Rt. 8 Center Township 15,000 ADT



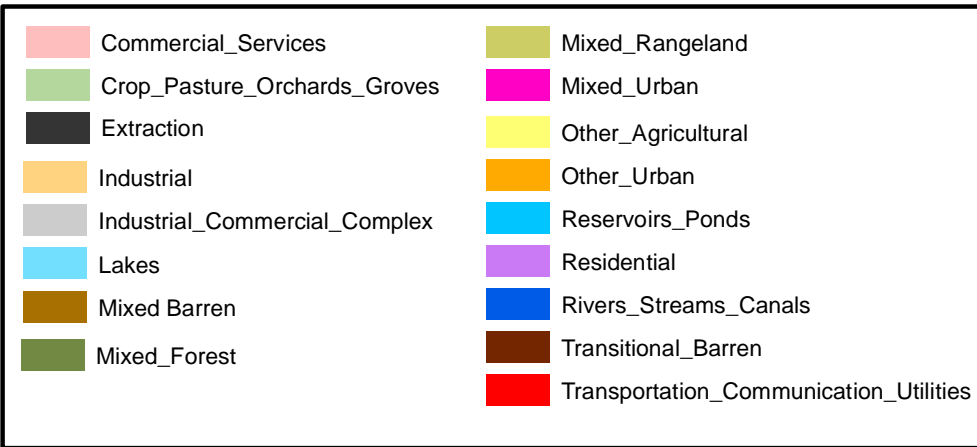
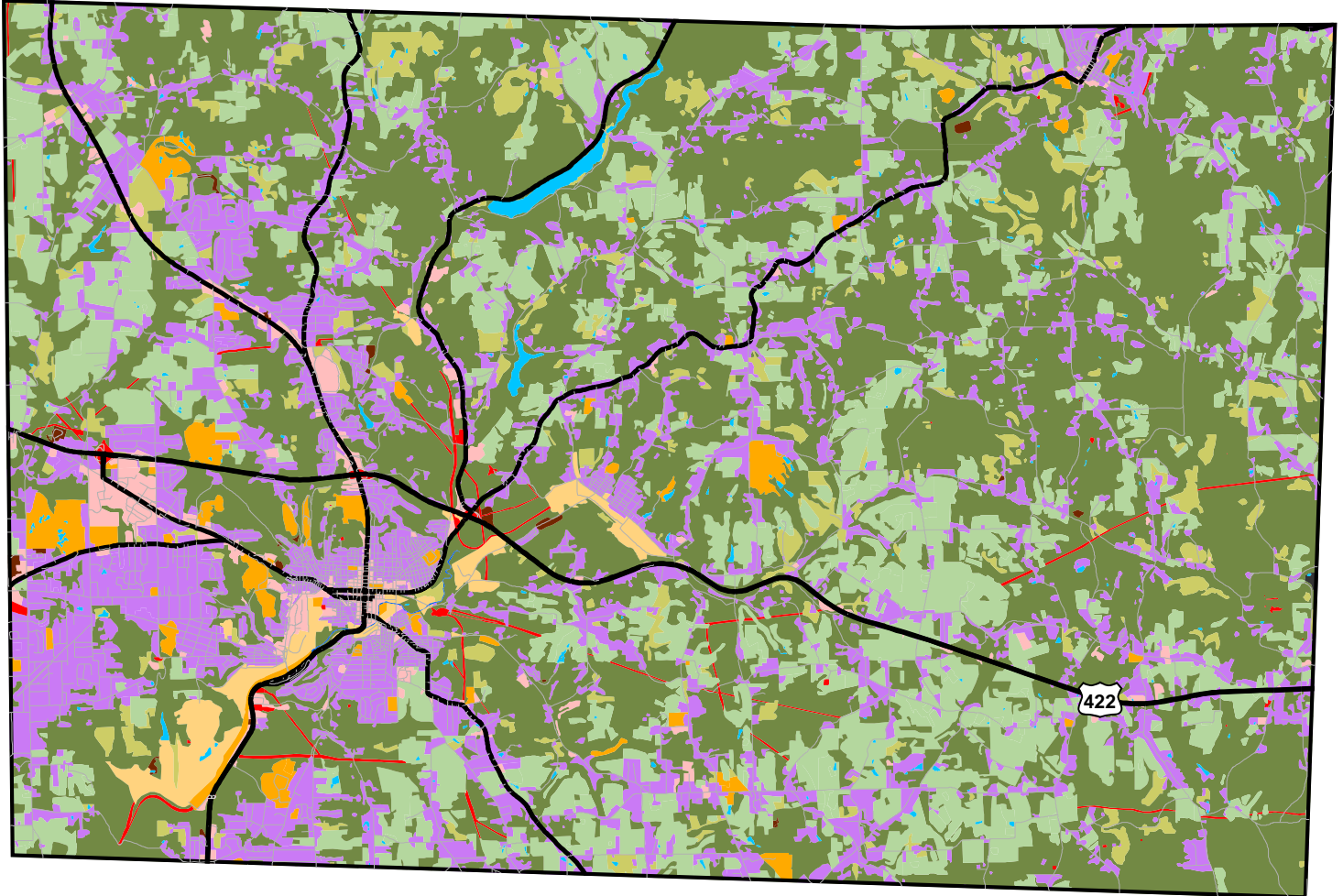
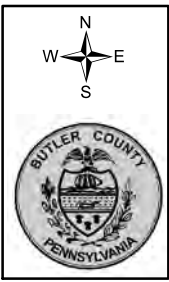
## REGIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Collectively, the central region had 1,359 fewer residents in 2010 than it had in the 2000 census. This is almost entirely due to major population loss in the City of Butler. Clearfield, Oakland and Center Townships also had losses, but not to the same extent. Losses in these three township can be largely explained by the county's aging population. The decline in Butler City is due a combination of aging population and long term out-migration. It is a similar trend to the shrinking populations in many Allegheny or Beaver County communities, where decades of deindustrialization caused younger residents to relocate elsewhere. This is part of a long term trends that began in the 1980's, when unemployment reached double digits. The generation of 18-30 year olds who left western Pennsylvania in the years 1980-1990 raised families elsewhere, so the population base of childbearing age residents in 2010 was smaller.

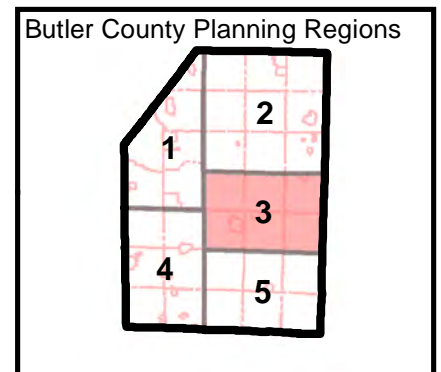
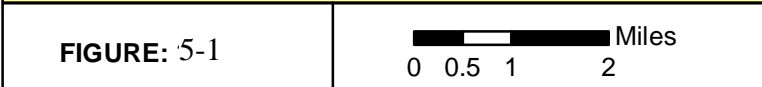
Place	2010 Pop	2000 Pop	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Butler City	13,757	15,121	-1,364	-9.0%
Butler Township	17,248	17,185	63	0.4%
Center Township	7,898	8,182	-284	-3.5%
Chicora Borough	1,043	1,021	22	2.2%
Clearfield Township	2,645	2,705	-60	-2.2%
Donegal Township	1,864	1,722	142	8.2%
East Butler Borough	732	679	53	7.8%
Oakland Township	2,987	3,074	-87	-2.8%
Summit Township	4,884	4,728	156	3.3%

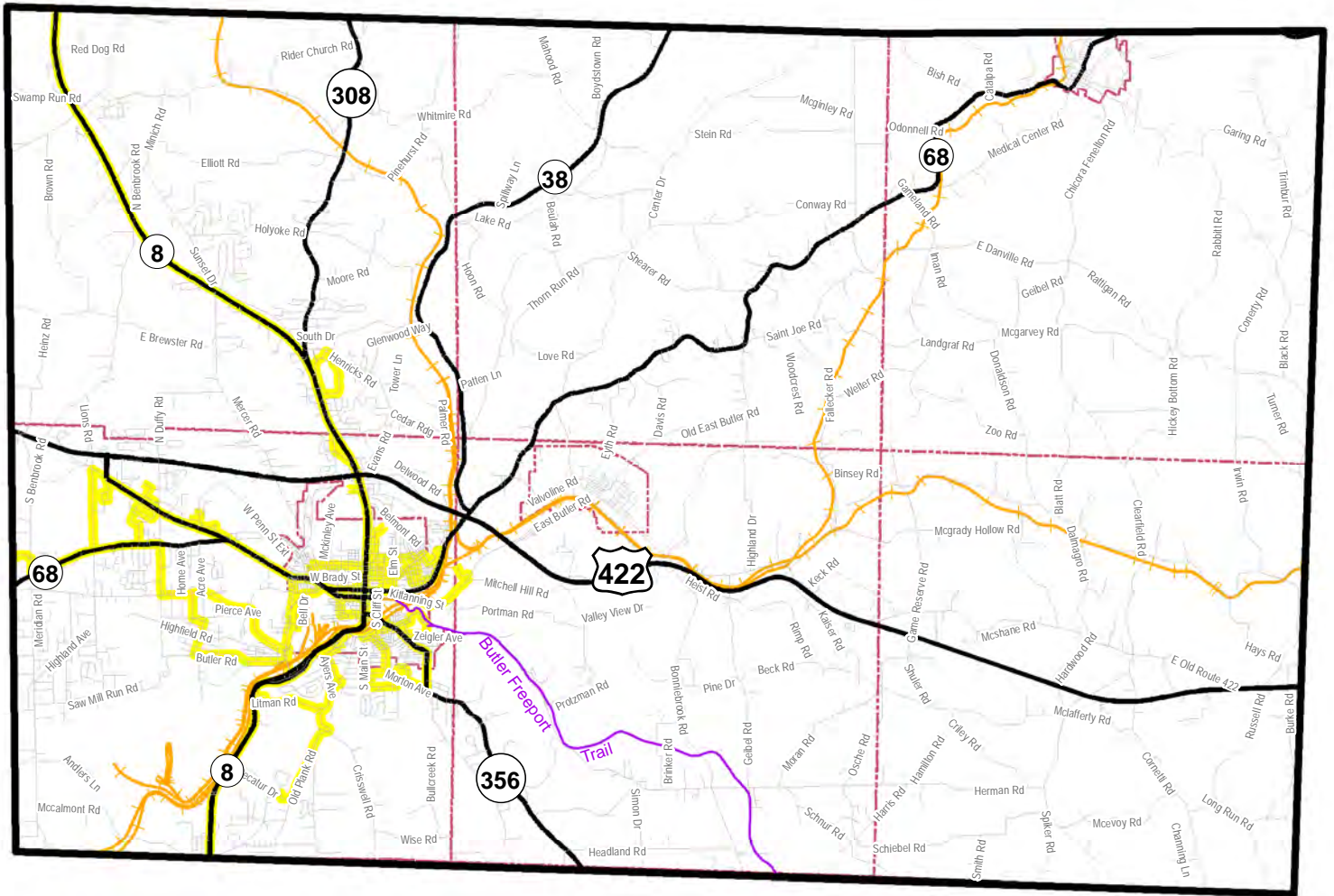
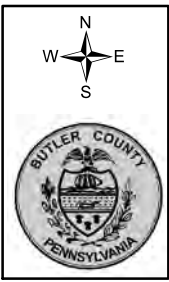
In spite of population loss, the region gained 687 housing units between 2000 and 2010. The only municipality in the region to see a decline in both population and housing was the City of Butler. This was significant decline for the city as it represents a loss of nearly 50 housing units each year. Butler Township led the central region in housing gains. The trend of housing gains in the midst of minor population loss is common. The number of persons per dwelling unit has been declining continuously in the US for over 100 years. It also reflects an aging population with fewer children at home.

Place	2000 Housing Units	2010 Housing Units	2000-2010 Change
Butler City	7,402	6,913	-489
Butler Township	7,500	7,875	375
Center Township	3,333	3,636	303
Chicora Borough	463	483	20
Clearfield Township	958	1,082	124
Donegal Township	623	727	104
East Butler Borough	302	328	26
Oakland Township	1,168	1,209	41
Summit Township	1,755	1,938	183

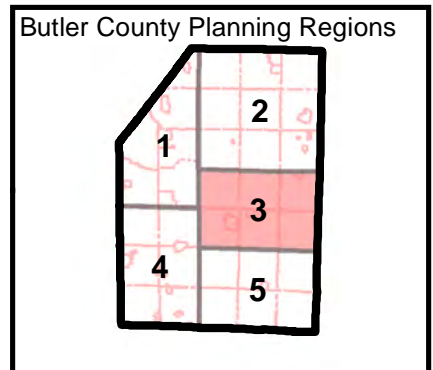
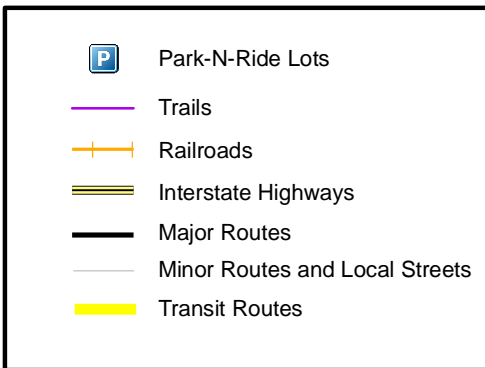
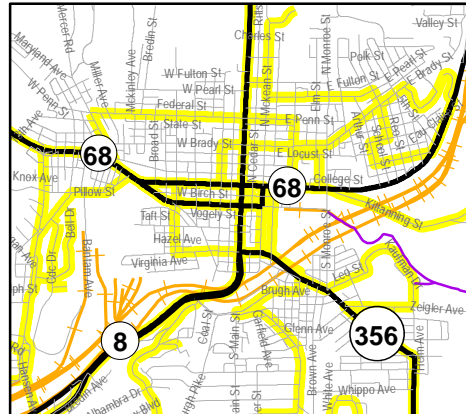


**Planning Region 3  
Land Cover**

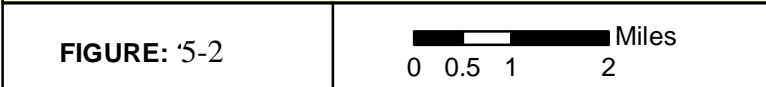




Butler Zoom



**Planning Region 3  
Current Transportation**



## REGIONAL PLANNING PRIORITIES

The planning priority for this region is revitalization of former industrial areas, older residential neighborhoods and downtown commercial development in the city of Butler and Lyndora (Butler Township). Planning should be conducted on a neighborhood or even block basis. In areas where a preponderance of sound single family dwellings remain, zoning should be examined to ensure that it is protecting permanent single family use and encouraging owner occupancy. Former in-

dustrial areas should be part of a long term planning effort to determine site specific incentives for realistic re-use. Across the area, underutilized buildings should be examined with an eye towards whether establishing re-use options through re-zoning, or demolition if warranted. Demolition of both former industrial sites, and underutilized commercial buildings has yielded some redevelopment success.

Another priority for this area is transportation. The BAMB plan states, “All municipalities would benefit from a focus on transportation issues related to connectivity to the Cranberry area and access to Pittsburgh”. This area has reasonable access to the Pittsburgh Metro region via US 422/I -79, Pa Route 8. or Pa Route 68. In particular, building capacity on Route 68 can



**Demolition in the City of Butler to create space for new development. It is a common planning error for any core community to assume that because they are “built out”, nothing will ever change. Core communities must actively work to attract new development and set its acceptable parameters.**

help this region build economic ties to rapidly growing southwest Butler County.

The central region is also home to the Butler Pittsburgh Regional Airport (informally known as the Butler County Airport) . This airport averages 170+ air operations each day, and is one of only two Public Airports in the entire county. Supporting this facility is a county priority for transportation diversification and economic development.

The BAMB plan and its working group are also a priority. Of numerous multimunicipal comprehensive plans created in the county since 2001, the BAMB group is the only one that has continued to meet on a regular basis. Its efforts has been frustrated by lack of implementation resources. Butler County endorses projects that the BAMB group may undertake as a county priority.

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Butler County Planning  
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124 W Diamond St,  
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## REGIONAL PRIORITY SUMMARY

Core community revitalization priorities: City of Butler, and Lyndora (Butler Township). This area remains the highest revitalization priority for the county. The county government will continue to commit public investments in the county seat for county facilities.

Core communities should re-visit zoning polices to ensure that remaining single family neighborhoods are protected from excessive amounts of transient housing and inadequately converted apartments. Communities should also look at re-use options for underutilized “white elephant” buildings.

With lower anticipated rural land development, this area is not a priority area for purchase of agricultural conservation easements. However, there are areas within townships (especially Center, Butler, and Donegal) where land preservation may be a local priority. The land conservation priority for this area is to connect core community areas in Butler City and Lyndora with established trails and greenways elsewhere. For example, former industrial areas along Connoquenessing Creek could be redeveloped as waterfront park areas with walking trails. This area could also be used to interpret the regions industrial heritage, through wayside markers and displays. A Trail Town program initiative for Butler is also important.

As resources are available, the County will support the BAMB plan working group to implement plan recommendations. This support might be specialized planning or a implementation project that would benefit all participants. In particular, Summit Township has seen growth and has identified public sewer extensions as a community priority.

Chicora Borough has seen modest growth, as has Donegal Township. The county would support these two communities to undertake joint planning efforts.

Transportation priorities focus:

- PA Route 68, which can strengthen the connection between region three and growth areas in southwestern Butler County.
- Reducing/re-routing truck traffic on Route 8 in downtown Butler. The city’s relatively short blocks are not suitable for significant truck traffic.

# REGION 4: SOUTHWEST

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



In spite of tremendous levels of growth and development, this region still preserves parts of its more rural past. Cranberry Township maintains the 1874 One room Sample Schoolhouse on the grounds of the municipal complex. It is used as a museum and education center.

### REGIONAL INTRODUCTION

The southwest region of Butler County has seen incredibly high levels of growth and development in the past three decades. Once an area of farms and small service communities, transportation improvements have made this area blossom into what many planners call an Edge City. Edge cities are areas on the outskirts of a traditional city having a high density of office buildings, shopping malls, and hotels. They typically grow up after the development of bedroom communities, where large tracts of housing are built for residents who commute to jobs elsewhere. As some bedroom communities grow, retail businesses sprout up to serve residential neighborhoods. Business parks are developed to take

advantage of the nearby residential base of potential employees. Southwestern Butler County represents the kind of city that Americans have been building since World War II. What was once a suburb evolved into a true city, serving as an economic and civic center for a full range of socioeconomic activity. In spite of rapid growth and transformation, this area retains significant small town and rural character. Ten minutes from the busiest intersection in Butler County there are still working farms. The region has several historic boroughs with walkable, tree lined streets. Rapidly growing townships have also mandated the preservation of natural features and standards to retain community character. This has made the region more attractive to development.



# SOUTHWEST REGION FACT SHEET

(SEE APPENDICES FOR MAPS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS)

**Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plans in Region:** This region has many active planning programs and nearly every municipality either has a recent comprehensive plan or is in the process of updating its plan. There are three relatively current multimunicipal plans.

The abutting boroughs of Harmony and Zelienople completed a multimunicipal comprehensive plan in 2010.

Connoquenessing Borough and Township adopted a multimunicipal plan in 2007.

Lancaster Township adopted a multimunicipal plan with Muddy Creek Township, which lies in county planning region one (northwest)

## **Public Water and Sewer Systems in Region**

Evans City has its own water and sewer authority

The Western Butler County Authority provides public sewer to Harmony, Zelienople, and parts of Jackson and Lancaster Townships. Each Borough has its own water system.

Connoquenessing Borough has its own sewage treatment plant.

The Breakneck Creek Regional authority provides sewage treatment to Adams Township, Mars Borough, Seven Fields Borough, Valencia Borough and portions of Cranberry Township, Forward Township, Middlesex Township

Pa. American Water Company is active in the region providing public water to small boroughs.

**Largest Employer in Region:** This area is emerging as the county's major employment centers. The second largest employer in the entire County is Westinghouse Electric Co LLC, headquartered in Cranberry. Walmart Associates is the 5th largest (which also has a presence in the Central Region). Seneca Valley School district is the 7th largest countywide employer.

**Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) in Region:** Lancaster, Connoquenessing, and Adams Township have ASA's

**Historic Resources In Region:** There is a significant cluster of significant historic resources in the Harmony Zelienople area, including the Pasavant House, and the Harmony Historic District.

**Existing Trails in Region:** There are no multimunicipal off-road trails in this region. However many municipalities have loop trails within parks and there are private housing development with walking trails.

**Developments of Regional Impact and Significance:** In addition to major employers previously listed, the region is home to major shopping complexes in Cranberry and Adams Townships. The region has two landfills; Vogel in Adams Township and Seneca in Jackson Township.

**Highest Average Daily Traffic (ADT):** The junction of Interstates 79 and 76 and intersecting state roads are the highest traffic areas in the County.

Pa .Turnpike at the county line 37,000 ADT  
Rt. 19 in Cranberry: 41,0000 ADT  
Pa. Route 228 west of I 79: 35,000 ADT

## REGIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

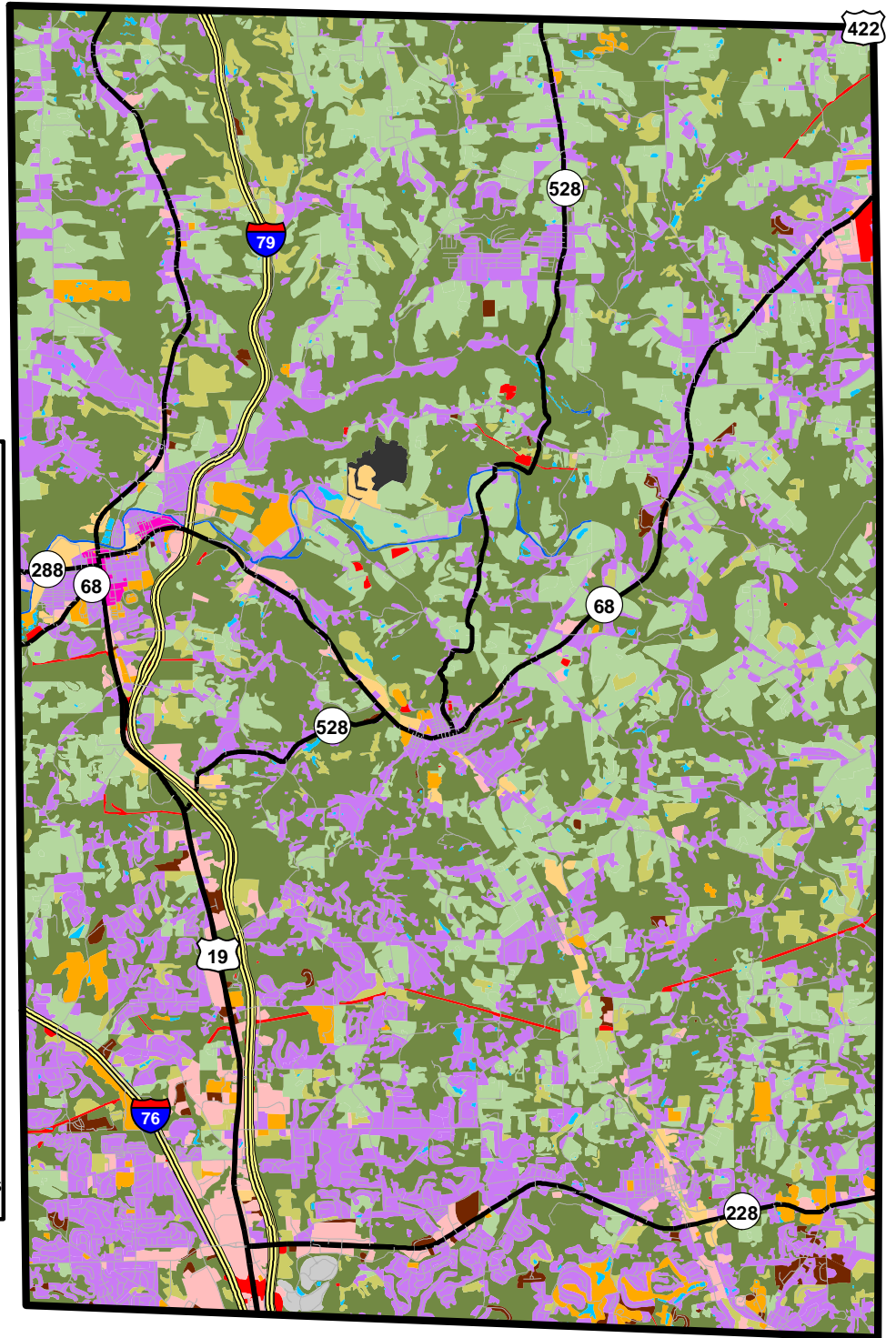
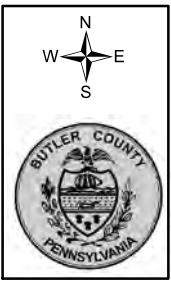
The southwest region gained 10,146 citizens between census 2000 and 2010. Growth was led by Adams Township which registered an astounding 72% growth rate. This was the second fastest growing municipality in all of southwestern Pennsylvania. However, in the midst of growth, some core communities and even a few townships registered population losses. Callery Borough had the third highest population loss in the county.

Place	2010 Pop	2000 Pop	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Adams Township	11,652	6,774	4,878	72.0%
Callery Borough	394	444	-50	-11.3%
Connoquenessing Borough	528	564	-36	-6.4%
Connoquenessing Township	4,170	3,653	517	14.2%
Cranberry Township	28,098	23,625	4,473	18.9%
Evans City Borough	1,833	2,009	-176	-8.8%
Forward Township	2,531	2,687	-156	-5.8%
Harmony Borough	890	937	-47	-5.0%
Jackson Township	3,657	3,645	12	0.3%
Lancaster Township	2,532	2,511	21	0.8%
Mars Borough	1,699	1,746	-47	-2.7%
Seven Fields Borough	2,887	1,986	901	45.4%
Valencia Borough	551	384	167	43.5%
Zelienople Borough	3,812	4,123	-311	-7.5%

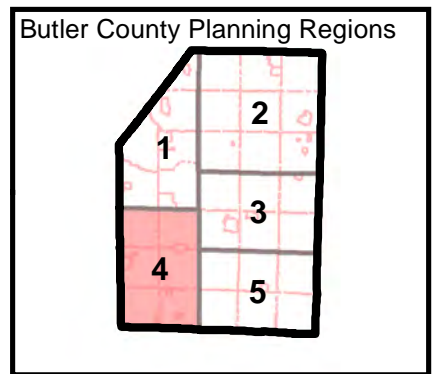
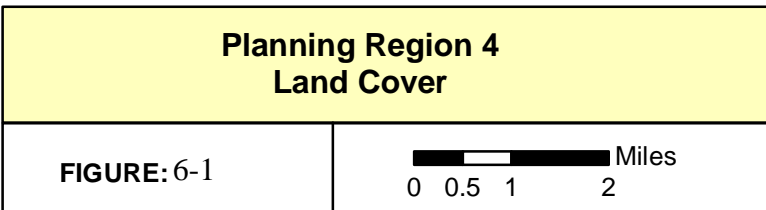
The southwest region gained 5,136 housing units during the ten years between 2000 and 2010. Housing losses were confined mostly to boroughs, though Forward Township appears to have lost both housing and population. This might be a census undercount or other anomaly. Both Cranberry and Adams Townships averaged over 200 new housing units each year.

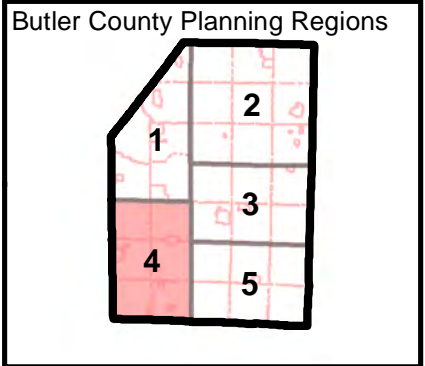
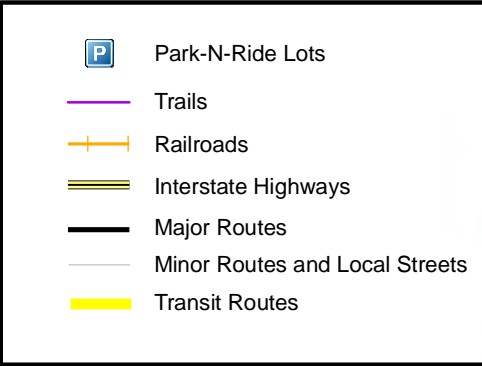
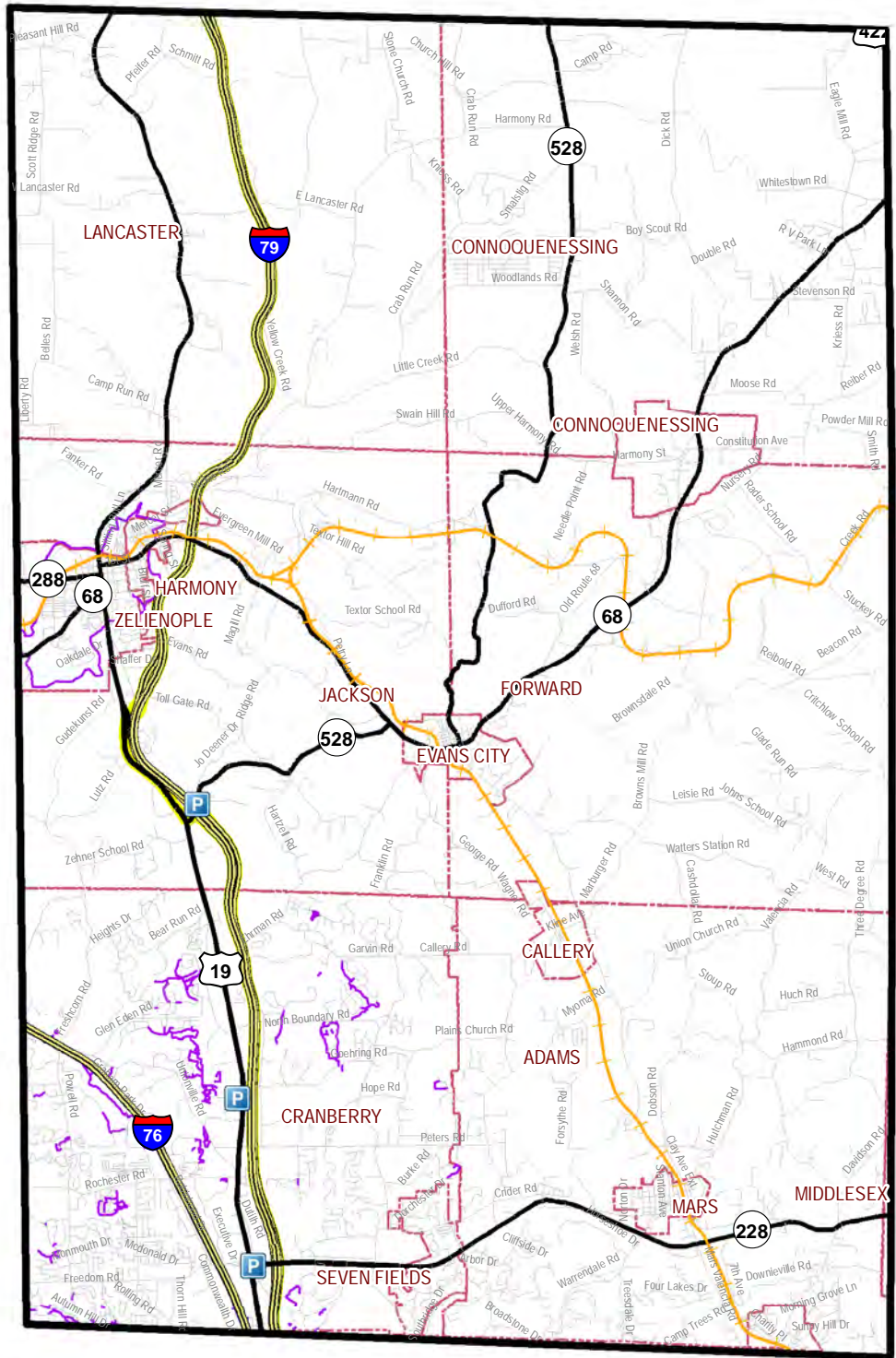
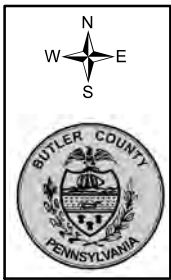
Place	2000 Housing Units	2010 Housing Units	2000-2010 Change
Adams Township	2,544	4,648	2,104
Callery Borough	164	161	-3
Connoquenessing Borough	204	219	15
Connoquenessing Township	1,458	1,838	380
Cranberry Township	8,724	10,769	2,045
Evans City Borough	850	829	-21
Forward Township	1,089	1,032	-57
Harmony Borough	434	411	-23
Jackson Township	1,439	1,518	79
Lancaster Township	932	1,008	76
Mars Borough	715	729	14
Seven Fields Borough	827	1,238	411
Valencia Borough	106	293	187
Zelienople Borough	2,113	2,042	-71





- Commercial\_Services
- Crop\_Pasture\_Orchards\_Groves
- Extraction
- Forested\_Wetlands
- Industrial
- Industrial\_Commercial\_Complex
- Lakes
- Mixed Barren
- Mixed\_Forest
- Mixed\_Rangeland
- Mixed\_Urban
- Non\_Forested\_Wetlands
- Other\_Agricultural
- Other\_Urban
- Reservoirs\_Ponds
- Residential
- Rivers\_Streams\_Canals
- Transitional\_Barren
- Transportation\_Communication\_Uilities





**Planning Region 4  
Existing Transportation**

**FIGURE: 6-2**

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

## REGIONAL PLANNING PRIORITIES

Planning priorities for the southwest region are continued utilization of innovative planning approaches, continued investments in transportation infrastructure, and natural land preservation.

Due to experience with high levels of growth, communities in this region have often excelled at utilizing planning techniques to accommodate growth, while retaining quality of life. Townships have established transportation capital improvement programs and impacts fees to ensure that growth pays its own way. Many have used innovative zoning to preserve natural land in the midst of development. Some townships permit higher density in exchange for better site and building design. The county supports the continuation and expansion of municipal planning techniques to preserve remaining rural and small town quality of life. Communities who have not used these approaches should examine the range of ordinances and techniques used by communities such as Adams, Jackson, and Cranberry. The efforts of leadership in these communities to invest in planning have yielded a high quality of life for residents and diverse tax base.

Roadway transportation congestion will continue to be a challenge. Highway improvements, while expensive, must be continued. The essen-



**Small Boroughs in the Southwest Region remain centers of community activity. Mars residents and visitors celebrate the Martian new year, as an annual community festival. This Plan commends building relationships between small boroughs and growing townships in the southwest region.**

tial Cranberry connector for I-79 and I-76 has yielded results. Giving travelers the options for transit or sidewalks also reduces vehicle trips. Even with improvements and alternatives, some areas may remain congestion points, such as Route 19 in Zelienople.

Southwest Butler County is where transfer of development rights has the best opportunity for success. The region's small boroughs need development and could identify redevelopment areas where greater density could be accommodated. Rural landowners in growing townships could sell conservation easements that could be used to increase opportunities for development in boroughs. This type of partnership could prevent further population decline which will inevitably bring blight and loss of tax base. It will also form planning partnerships between historic core communities and neighboring townships.

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Butler County Planning  
Commission  
County Courthouse  
Annex  
124 W Diamond St,  
Butler, PA 16001  
Tel: 724-284-5138  
www.butler.co.pa.us



## REGIONAL PRIORITY SUMMARY

Core community revitalization priorities: Harmony and Zelienople Borough is a priority, especially for any cooperative projects. Other priorities include Callery, Evans City, Connoquenessing and Mars.

This region will need continuing emphasis of transportation planning to manage congestion. Route 228, Route 19, and 68 and connecting roads will remain priorities for intersection and other roadway improvements,

With high growth pressure and a few public lands the southwest region is a priority area for purchase of agricultural conservation easements. This is also the area of the county where the full range of land conservation techniques could be realized, including transfer of development rights across municipal boundaries. Policies should emphasize continued development of "green infrastructure"—trails, tree preservation, municipal parks, and even passive stormwater systems (such as rain gardens). In addition to the natural heritage inventory, the Connoquenessing Creek Watershed Plan is a helpful guide to future conservation efforts in this region.

In addition to outright purchase of conservation easements, this is the area of the county where transfer of development rights could work across municipal boundaries. The recommended partnership would be between township and borough governments, rural landowners who wish to preserve their property, and developers who wish to achieve higher site density (or different dwelling types than otherwise permitted by zoning).

There are still un-zoned communities in this region. In time they may face either significant growth in areas where they cannot manage its effects; or see undesirable land uses locate within their boundaries. High impact land uses often choose to skip over the restrictions of zoned municipalities nearby. Especially in a high growth region, municipalities should carefully consider their current land use policies.

Growing communities in this region have done many things well. The plans and ordinances developed by Cranberry, Jackson, and Adams Townships are worthy of consideration by other municipalities who will find themselves in the path of growth in the next 10-20 years. These Townships have approached planning differently, but each has active programs to encourage beneficial growth and retain community character.

# REGION 5: SOUTHEAST

## BUTLER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Region Five is unique in that it only has a single borough, the historic community of Saxonburg, founded by German immigrant and inventor John Roebling.

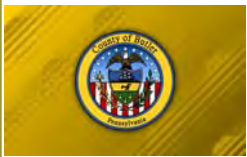
### REGIONAL INTRODUCTION

The Southeast region of Butler County was historically a rural area of well kept farms and villages. There were also scattered industries and mines. Industrial development began with John Roebling's wire rope factory, which enabled both the first trans-Appalachian railroad and modern suspension bridges. Later, the US Steel Corporation maintained a sintering plant in Clinton Township. (Sintering is a process to turn dust size iron ore into usable pellets). What is unique about the southeast is that it never developed clustered urban industrial centers. There is only one borough (Saxonburg) in the entire region.

This region has not seen the massive levels of growth and development

that the southeastern section of Butler County has experienced. Until recently, It was less accessible to the Pittsburgh Metropolitan region. This slowed immigration from Allegheny County. However, recent improvements to Pa. Route 28, have made it a viable commuter route to Pittsburgh. Since then a number of large scale housing developments have been built.

The region has retained significant rural character in both farms and scenic tree covered hills. However, it has seen much change. The former sintering plant is now the successful Victory Road Business Park, and a portion is now Clinton Township's Spring Valley Park. Projects like this have been an example of the best balance between accommodating growth and preserving the rural quality of life in the county.



# SOUTHEAST REGION FACT SHEET

(SEE APPENDICES FOR MAPS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS)

## **Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plans in Region:**

Buffalo and Clinton Township adopted a multimunicipal comprehensive plan in 2005.

Penn Township participates in the BAMB plan which primarily serves the central region.

Middlesex Township is part of a multimunicipal plan with Richland Township, Allegheny County.

## **Public Water and Sewer Systems in Region**

The Saxonburg Area Authority is the provider of sanitary sewer service to Saxonburg Borough, and various parts of Clinton, Jefferson, Penn, and Middlesex Townships. The Breakneck Creek Regional authority provides sewage treatment to other portions of Middlesex Township.

The Municipal Authority of Buffalo Township provides both sewer and water to developed portions of Buffalo Township and two Armstrong County communities (Freeport Borough and a small portion of South Buffalo Township).

## **Largest Employer in Region:**

None of the top ten employers in Butler County have a significant presence in the region, but there are regionally significant employers.

## **Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) in Region**

This is one of the largest cluster of ASA's in the County. Jefferson, Clinton, Buffalo, and Winfield Townships all maintain vast areas of ASA's

## **Historic Resources In Region**

Saxonburg Borough has a National Register Historic District containing 66 significant buildings and other resources. The 1810 Cooper Cabin in Winfield Township is operated as a museum by the Butler County Historical Society..

## **Existing Trails in Region**

The southern terminus of the Butler Freeport Trail is in Freeport (Armstrong County) The entire trail is owned by Buffalo Township. There are trails within the Todd Sanctuary Nature Reserve, operated by the Western Pennsylvania Audubon Society.

## **Developments of Regional Impact and Significance**

While none of the top ten employers in the County are here, there is a significant business base. Penn United Technologies, a tooling and precision metal manufacturing business, has a significant presence in the region. Other major employers include Concordia Lutheran Ministries ( a housing and social service nonprofit), II-VI Incorporated, which is known worldwide for advance materials development, Oberg Industries machining, and many successful businesses in Victory Road Business Park (Located in Clinton Township). This region may have the most diverse private sector manufacturing related employment in the county.

## **Highest Average Daily Traffic (ADT)**

Pa. Rt. 8. Middlesex Township: 30,000 ADT

Pa. Rt. 28 Buffalo Township: 21,000 ADT

Pa. Rt. 356 at Route 28: 17,000 ADT

Pa. Rt. 228 Middlesex Township: 17,000 ADT

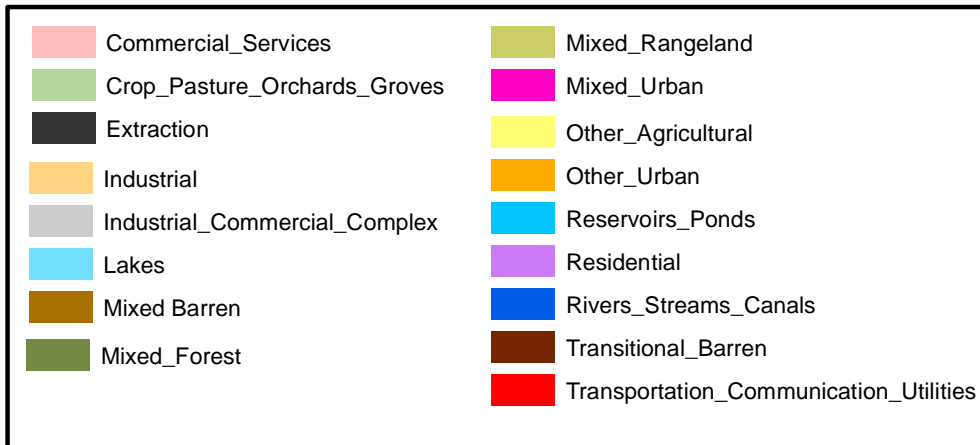
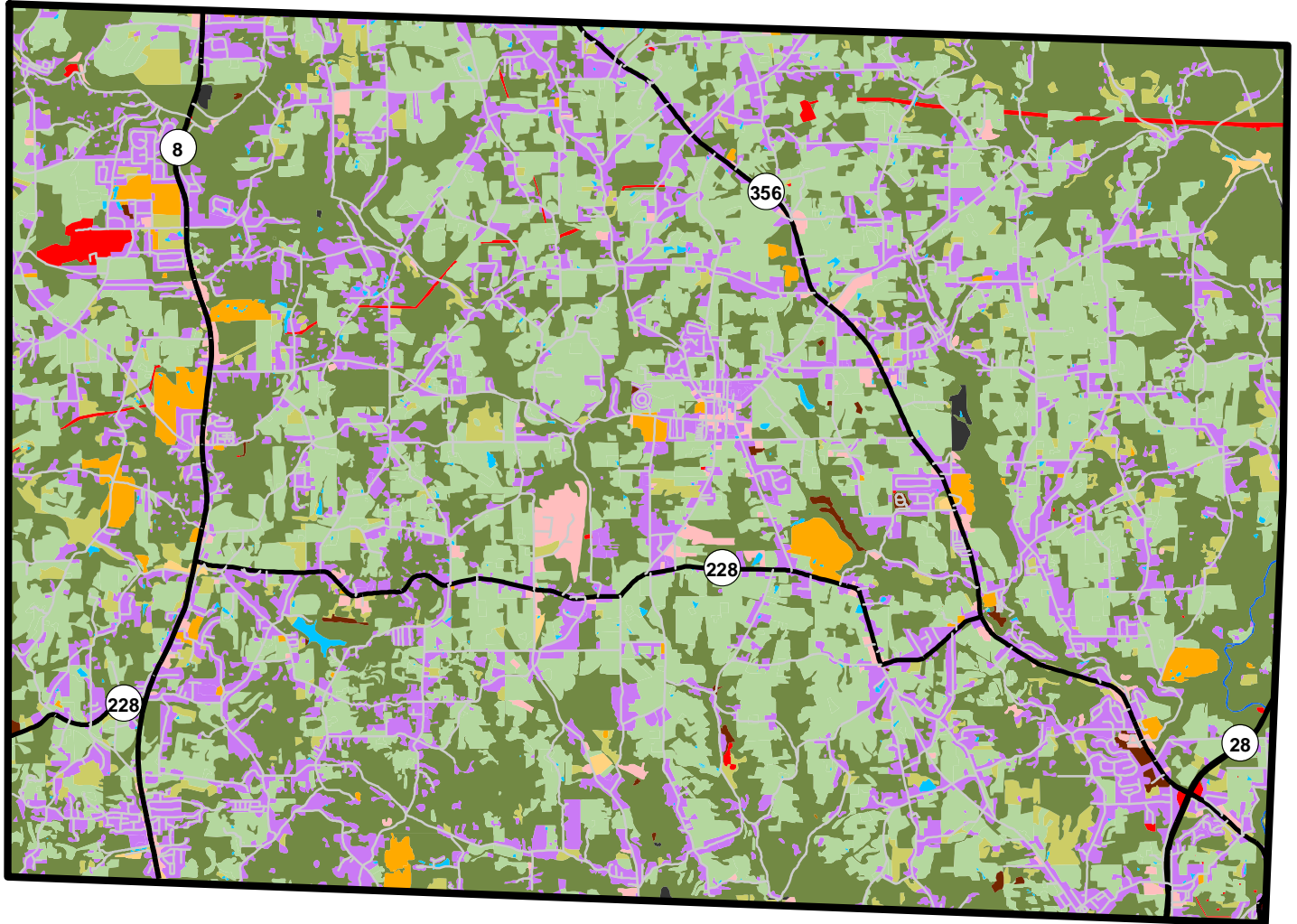
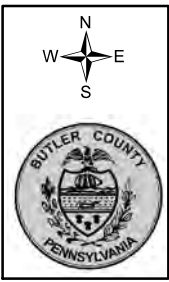
## REGIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

As a whole, the southeast region had 110 fewer residents in 2010 than 2000. Buffalo Township led the region in population growth, but this was offset by losses in other communities. This decline was one of the surprises of the analysis conducted for the comprehensive plan update. Projections by the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission showed a likelihood of significant population growth in the region. The reasons for this may lie in declining household size, undercounts in the 2000 Census, or overly optimistic growth projections. Recent residential subdivision activity indicates that Buffalo Township will continue to see substantial future growth. At some point, that development will cause spillover growth into other townships in the southeast region.

Place	2010 Pop	2000 Pop	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Buffalo Township	7,307	6,827	480	7.0%
Clinton Township	2,864	2,779	85	3.1%
Jefferson Township	5,504	5,690	-186	-3.3%
Middlesex Township	5,390	5,586	-196	-3.5%
Penn Township	5,071	5,210	-139	-2.7%
Saxonburg Borough	1,525	1,629	-104	-6.4%
Winfield Township	3,535	3,585	-50	-1.4%

Although there was some local population decline, every community in this region saw housing growth. The region as a whole gained 1,316 new homes over the ten years from 2000 to 2010. Even Saxonburg Borough, that had the highest level of population loss, gained new homes. Housing growth was led by Buffalo and Jefferson Townships, which accounted for over half of the new homes built over ten years. Growth in homes with simultaneous population loss, confirms the possibility that this loss is cyclical and due to an aging population. It is possible that the trend will be reversed as aging householders sell and their homes are re-occupied by young families.

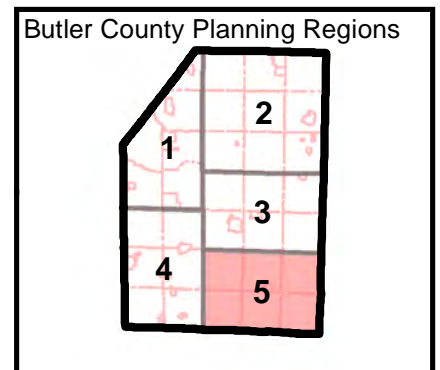
Place	2000 Housing Units	2010 Housing Units	2000-2010 Change
Buffalo Township	2,612	2,977	365
Clinton Township	1,075	1,171	96
Jefferson Township	1,970	2,333	363
Middlesex Township	2,105	2,208	103
Penn Township	1,980	2,086	106
Saxonburg Borough	713	837	124
Winfield Township	1,381	1,540	159



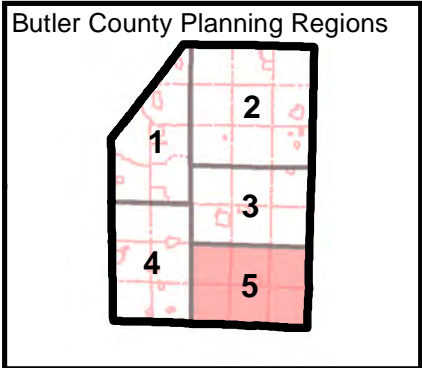
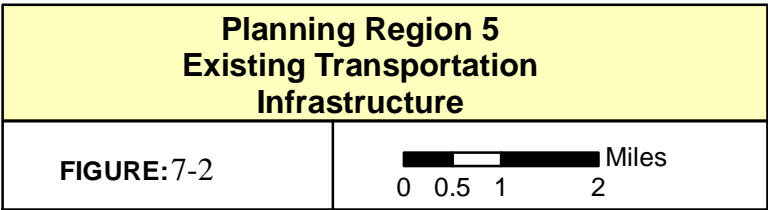
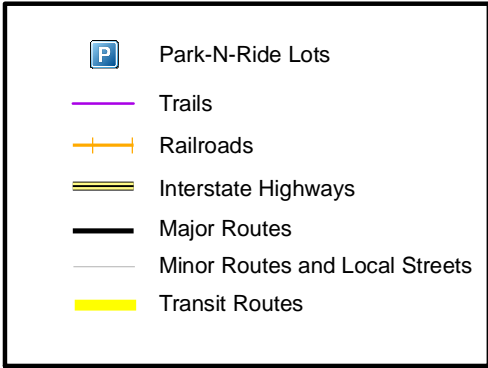
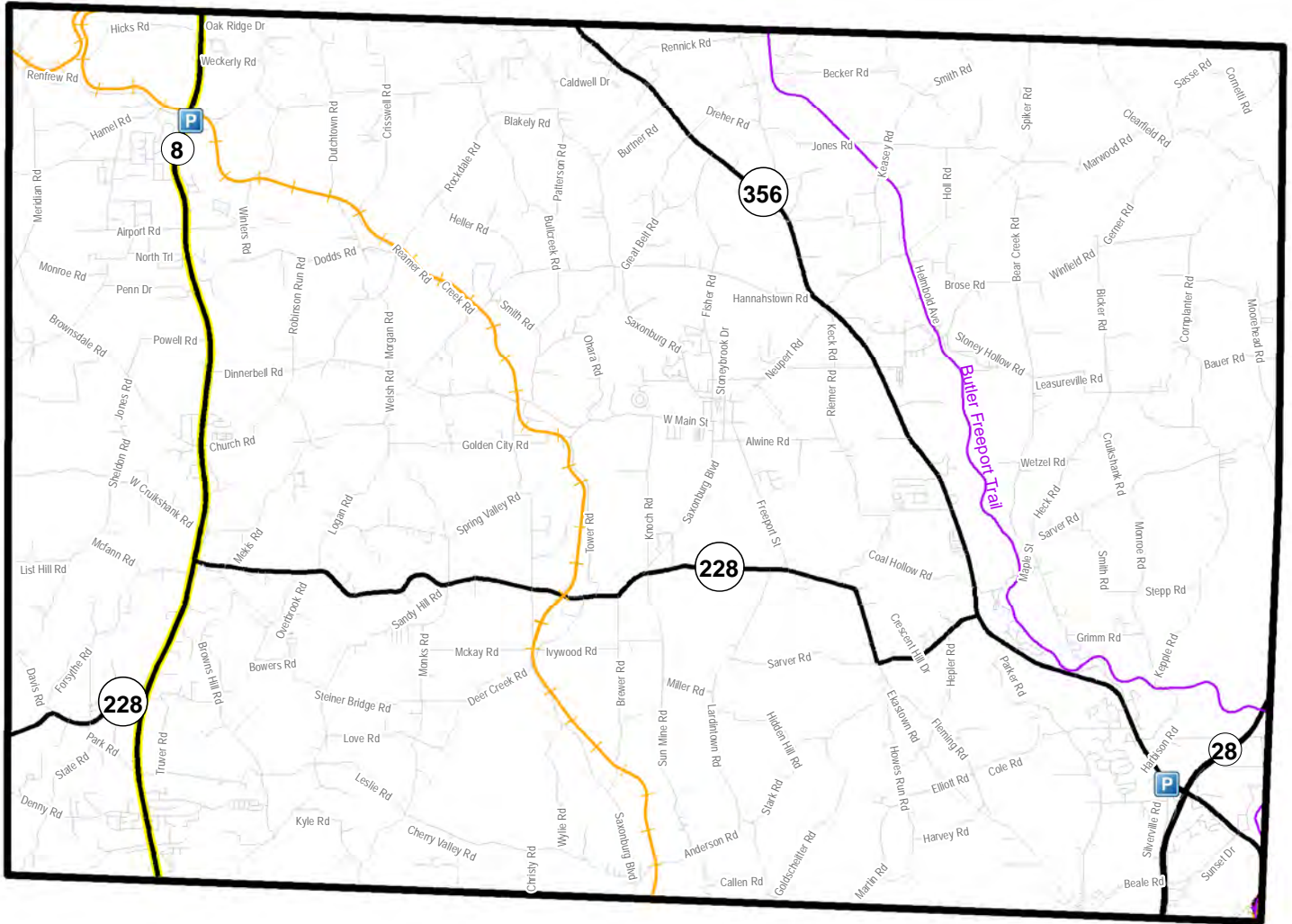
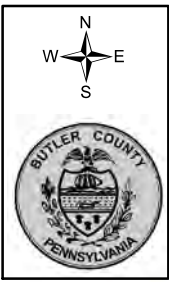
**Planning Region 5  
Land Cover**

**FIGURE: 7-1**

0 0.5 1 2 Miles







## REGIONAL PLANNING PRIORITIES

There are three major planning priorities for this region. These are roadway transportation improvements, farm and forest land conservation, and supporting economic diversification.

Growth and land use changes in this region have created areas of traffic congestion. In the past, the County has supported active transportation and land use planning: for both Pa Route 228 and Pa Route 356. Both of these roads will continue to see rising average daily traffic.

These two lane roads are carrying more traffic than US. Rt. 422 at the I-79 intersection. Townships affected by this have adopted advanced transportation planning ordinances. Middlesex Township adopted impact fees to pay for roadway improvements, and Buffalo Township has an access management overlay district and official map ordinance to preserve highway capacity. However, at some point physical improvements are necessary to meet the demands of growth.

This portion of Butler County the largest clusters of prime farmland in the county. It also has rugged wooded steep slopes, and important biological conservation resources. The Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania has both acquired land and purchased conservation easements. They also completed an important multimunicipal conservation plan for the Buffalo Creek Watershed. As this area grows, conserva-



**A portion of the Todd Nature Reserve in Buffalo Township. The Southwestern portion of the County nearest the Allegheny River and Buffalo Creek has some of the most rugged topography in the county, as well as outstanding natural beauty.**

tion lands will actually add value to residential neighborhoods. By building partnerships between conservation organization like Audubon and developers or residents, southeast Butler County can enjoy both the economic benefits of growth and preservation of rural and scenic character.

The Victory Road Business Park has been extremely successful and is nearing 90 percent buildout. The area already has a remarkable diversity of small industrial businesses. Planning should begin now to reserve sites for future manufacturing and business park growth. Municipalities in this area should be careful to ensure that zoning is used to ensure a balance between residential and non residential tax base. The best sites with public water and sewer services and good highway access should be identified. Then one or more of these sites should be considered for acquisition, marketing and development of future multitenant industrial parks.

**BUTLER COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN**

Butler County Planning  
Commission  
County Courthouse  
Annex  
124 W Diamond St,  
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Tel: 724-284-5138  
www.butler.co.pa.us



**REGIONAL PRIORITY SUMMARY**

Core community revitalization priority: Saxonburg Borough. With a wealth of history and strong community traditions, small investments in revitalization could help ensure this borough has a bright future.

With significant housing growth, This should be a priority area for future purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements. It is also an area where transfer of development rights is feasible for zoned communities, especially in partnership with each other. Clinton Township is the only municipality in western Pennsylvania that has enabled the transfer of development rights. It has never had an actual transfer, but its ordinance can serve as a model for other communities who wish to explore this innovative tool. The Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania has partnered with municipalities in this region for both planning and land conservation projects. The Audubon Society may also be a partner to hold conservation easements in a transfer of development rights arrangement.

As resources are available, the county will continue and aggressively support transportation funding for stressed roads in this region, especially Pa. Route 228 and Pa. Route 356.

With both a successful business park and a diverse industrial business base, this area should be considered for future multiple tenant industrial park development.

Municipalities should review planning and zoning policies to ensure there are adequate areas for nonresidential development. Growing un-zoned communities in this region might consider using zoning to reserve sites for nonresidential development. This will preserve tax base diversity in the face of residential growth.