

# RIVER CENTRAL

Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan

Catasauqua Borough | East Allen Township | Hanover Township  
North Catasauqua Borough | Northampton Borough



## ADOPTION DATES

### Hanover Township

August 2<sup>nd</sup>

### Northampton Borough

August 3<sup>rd</sup>

### North Catasauqua Borough

August 7<sup>th</sup>

### East Allen Township

August 24<sup>th</sup>

### Catasauqua Borough

September 18<sup>th</sup>

### FRONT COVER

**Left:** The Catasauqua clock sign, one of many around the borough. Right outside of the Catasauqua Municipal Building, Bridge Street, Catasauqua Borough.

**Middle:** Roxy Theatre, open since 1921. Main Street, Northampton Borough.

**Right:** Lehigh Valley International Airport. Airport Road, Hanover Township.

### August 2023



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The Coplay-Northampton Bridge over the  
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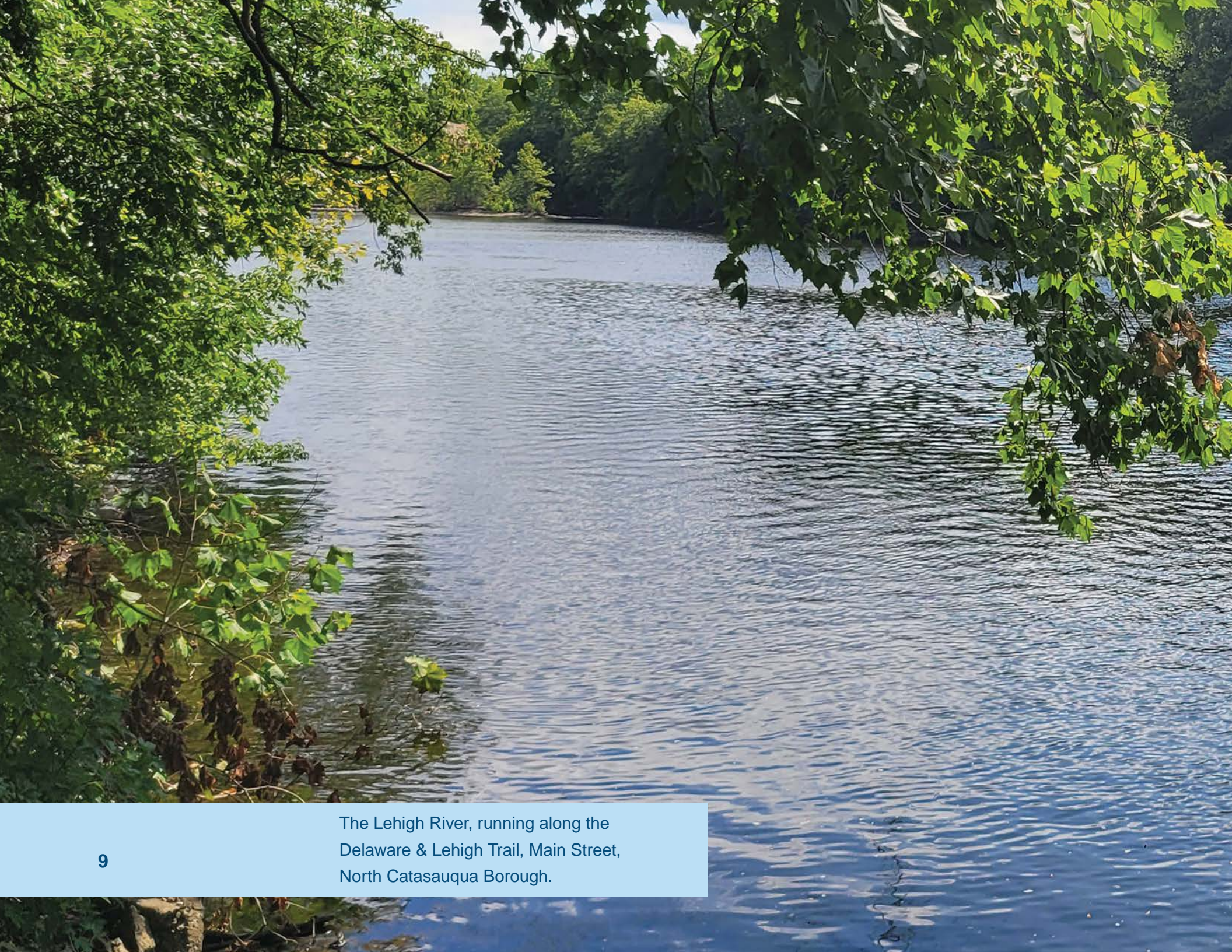


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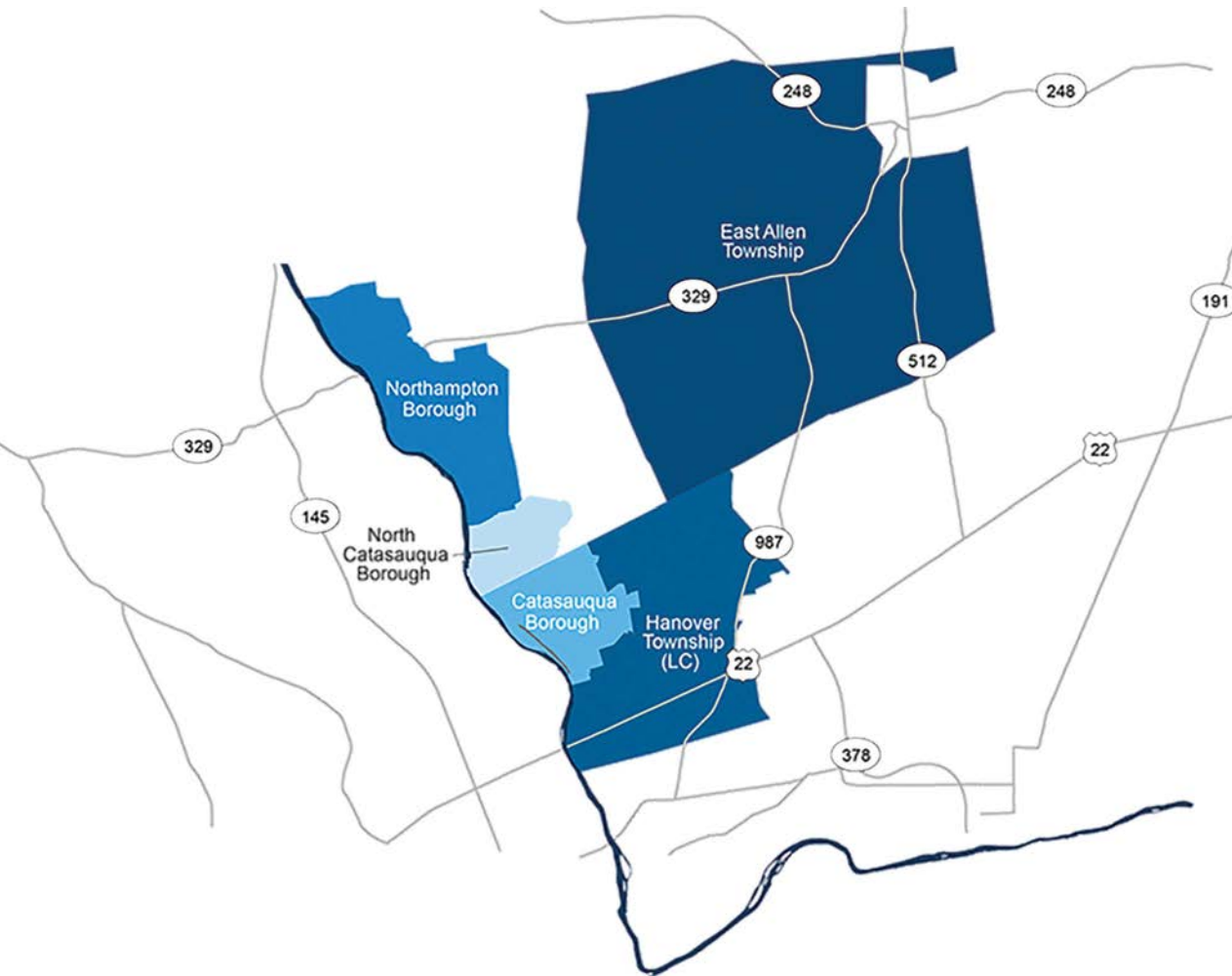
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# Introduction



## About the River Central Area

The River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan brings together the boroughs of Catasauqua, North Catasauqua and Northampton, and the townships of East Allen and Hanover — five communities encompassing approximately 23.5 square miles in the heart of the Lehigh Valley, straddling Lehigh and Northampton counties. The Lehigh River is the spine flowing along the entire western boundary, and Route 22, a major transportation corridor, runs along the southern portion of River Central, providing east-west connections across the Valley. Just north of Route 22 lies the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Hanover Township.

**26,113**

people call River Central home.



That number could grow to nearly

**30,000**

over the next 20 years.

Its history reaches back to the earliest settlers of the Lehigh Valley and before. Leni Lenape Indians were the first inhabitants, and many places and features in the area are derived from Lenape words. European settlers pre-dating the Declaration of Independence established industries in agriculture and milling. Construction of the Lehigh Canal and the Lehigh Valley railroad spurred manufacturing industries, including the Lehigh Crane Iron Works Furnace that launched the American Industrial Revolution, and Atlas Cement that contributed to population growth in the boroughs. River Central today boasts a variety of parks and recreational opportunities - including the Delaware and

Lehigh National Heritage Corridor — large swaths of farmland in East Allen Township and a wide variety of historic places and structures, all of which contribute to the area's unique identity and quality of life.

River Central is home to 26,113 residents. Over the past decade, the area overall has experienced a 3.5% increase in population, with growth in all five communities. The area is projected to grow by more than 3,100 new residents by 2045, with over half of this growth anticipated in the boroughs. Achieving the delicate balance between growth and preservation will be critical in maintaining and enhancing the high quality of life desired by River Central residents.



To accommodate the projected growth, River Central is estimated to need an additional 1,500 new housing units by 2045, a 14% increase in the current housing stock. To meet that need, the area would need to add approximately 60 new homes per year — an increase from recent development trends.

Single-family homes comprise about one-half of the housing units in River Central but dominate the housing supply in East Allen Township and North Catasauqua Borough. Catasauqua and Northampton boroughs and Hanover Township have much lower percentages of single-family homes, indicating more diversity of housing types.

The Region's median household income ranges from \$64,513 in Catasauqua Borough to \$73,750 in East Allen Township. The median household income for both Catasauqua Borough and Hanover Township is less than that of Lehigh County. In Northampton County, only East Allen Township has a

higher median income than the county. Overall, incomes are not keeping pace with housing costs as almost one-third of households are cost-burdened, according to federal guidelines, meaning that more than 30% of their income is spent on housing alone. The poverty rate in River Central is at about 9%, with both townships having rates of over 10%.

About 48% of the population is 45 years and older with 20% being 65 and over, indicating a higher need for healthcare services and availability of housing for older residents to age in place. Younger adults between 18-24 represent only about 7% of the population.

While adjoining areas have seen significant job growth, River Central communities are concerned about a loss of business activity in their downtowns. Despite a significant decline in manufacturing jobs over the last 10 years, the manufacturing industry remains the largest employer in River Central. Other top employers include

transportation and warehousing, retail, administration, and health care and social assistance. Commuting patterns in River Central show that only about one-third of the region's workers stay in the River Central Region for employment, while about 20% of residents commute out to Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton. A more diverse job market could entice commuters to choose a local job if more options were available.

Transportation infrastructure is aging in the River Central area. At the same time, the area has experienced increased truck traffic from development in adjoining municipalities. Except for East Allen Township, the area is generally well-served by transit. There is a strong community desire to expand the trail network and connect the business areas of River Central.



An image from the 1930s of canal boats going down the Lehigh Canal. North Catasauqua Borough.

## Our Journey

River Central communities have a long history of working together, from the volunteers in every community responding to fire and traffic emergencies in all five communities to supporting regional ambulance service to routinely sharing municipal equipment. Several have even entered into formal partnership agreements, such as Northampton and North Catasauqua's joint-purchase of a public works road paver. In addition, all five River Central municipalities joined together with neighboring communities, the Lehigh Valley International Airport, Lehigh and Northampton Counties, LVPC and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to participate in the development of the Lehigh Valley International Airport (LVIA) Area Freight Study.

But with growing costs and tightening budget, representatives from all five communities met in 2018 to consider if there were more efficiencies to be found in working together. That's when they realized they shared many of the same challenges, opportunities, and values. All were dealing with increasing freight traffic and rising budget costs. They all believed that strong Main Streets and preserving open space — whether in the parklands of Catasauqua, North Catasauqua, Northampton and Hanover or the farmlands of East Allen — were key to defining River Central's identity. And all agreed that supporting the farming economy was important to preserving the Region's character. Most importantly, it was clear to everyone that none of these issues stopped at municipal borders.

With that, the concept of the first-ever River Central Multi-Municipal Plan was born, and by November of 2019 the communities had chosen a Steering Committee to craft a way forward that would allow them to collaborate on managing traffic, rising costs, municipal services, community building, and perhaps most importantly, the deluge of development that was affecting all of them.

They decided the road to River Central's best future would be paved with creative strategies, modern solutions and the shared vision that they would get there by working together.



The Grand Opening Blast event in 2017 at the Ironworks site, Front Street, Catasauqua Borough.

# What Is A Comprehensive Plan?

**A comprehensive plan is a compilation of aspirations and strategies created to outline a vision for what a community wants to look like in the future, and the required steps to make that vision a reality.**

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) empowers municipalities to create and adopt comprehensive plans as one tool used to guide growth and development while protecting the resources of the community. The MPC does not define 'comprehensive plan' — instead a comprehensive plan is uniquely defined by its contents, which includes studies of land use, housing, transportation, community facilities, natural, cultural and historic resources, and utilities. Comprehensive plans are designed to be adapted as needed because goals and visions may change over time. They are intended to be revisited and reviewed at least every 10 years, as required by the MPC.

**A multi-municipal plan addresses the judicial mandates of the MPC to provide for all reasonable land uses on a regional basis.**

These plans cooperatively provide and extend services and facilities in an efficient coordinated manner, and allow communities to better protect natural resources, prime farmland, scenic areas and community character. The MPC also allows communities to keep autonomy in a multi-municipal plan by allowing communities to individually enact zoning ordinances while remaining generally consistent with the overall regional plan.

Communities can use their plan like a roadmap to implement goals proactively, rather than taking a reactionary approach to future development pressures, which helps them to be prepared for what's coming. The plan is the foundation for land use regulations and bridges the gap between the vision for the future and the regulation of private property interests.

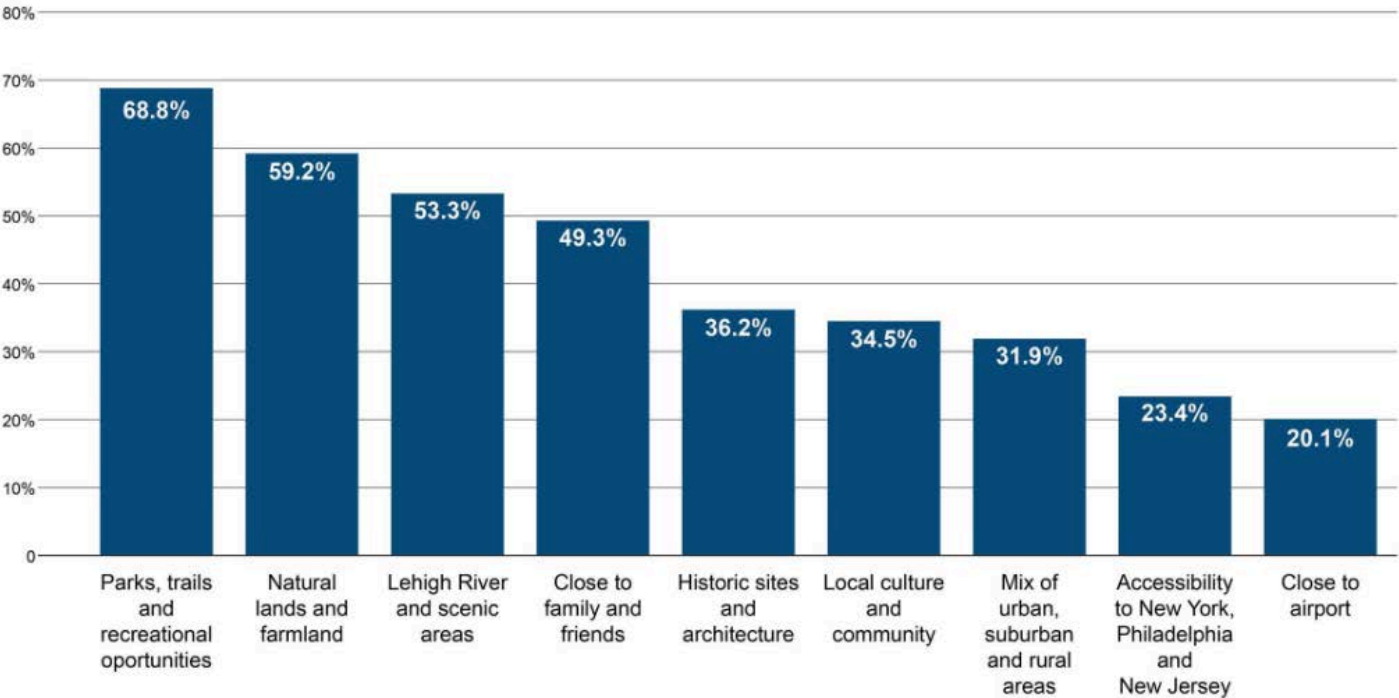
# Community Engagement Process

Community input is vital in creating a comprehensive plan and is a key component of this Plan. Residents, business owners, community leaders and officials all hold a stake in the area, and the community engagement effort obtained a mix of input from stakeholders throughout River Central.

From the initiation of the planning effort, the River Central Steering Committee recognized the importance of community engagement and feedback as part of the planning process and sought to maximize participation efforts.

Meetings of local stakeholders were held to obtain early input from community members. The priorities identified during these meetings were circulated via an online survey to gain additional input before creating the draft goals. Several public events were also attended by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) to obtain further input from communities. Results of the community engagement process are woven throughout the Plan's goals and policies and are tied directly to actions.

**What specifically do you like most about the River Central area?**



## KICK-OFF CHARETTES

Throughout April 2021, in the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the River Central Multi-Municipal planning process kicked off with a series of three virtual charettes — community workshops where attendees were invited to discuss the most essential community issues. The virtual charettes were interactive and included moderated discussion, focused on attendee participation and feedback on a variety of topics.

The Steering Committee compiled a comprehensive list of dozens of community stakeholders, including local residents and elected officials, organizations and experts, and business owners. The charettes were offered at different times on different days to maximize participation opportunities for people with all different types of schedule needs:

- ▶ Thursday, April 8th, 6 – 8pm
- ▶ Friday, April 9th, 1 – 3pm
- ▶ Wednesday, April 14th, 8 – 10am

LVPC staff provided a presentation of contextual data and demographics, and then attendees were divided into four virtual breakout rooms for group discussion. LVPC staff moderated discussion of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) for Natural, Agricultural and Historic Resources, Land Use and Development, Housing, Transportation and Community Facilities and Utilities. Moderators utilized Google Jamboard, a free online interactive whiteboard system, to document the discussion. At the end of the session, the larger group returned to the main virtual meeting space and prioritized their discussion findings into Priority Outcomes. The Priority Outcomes for all three charettes were ultimately compiled together.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

Following the feedback received from the Kick-off Charettes, the Steering Committee developed a Community Survey with questions to reach the larger general public. The survey included 10 topic questions gauging the public's opinion on transportation, development, availability of parks and open space, and overall what the community likes and dislikes about the area. An additional six demographic questions were asked for analysis purposes. To promote the survey and maximize participation, LVPC staff and Steering Committee members distributed post cards with the survey link and QR code at several community events:

June 13, 2021  
Paw Prints on the Canal in  
Northampton Borough

June 16, 2021  
East Allen Farmer's Market at  
Bicentennial Park West

June 18, 2021  
Summer Concert Series at  
Catasauqua Park

June 23, 2021  
Concert at William J. Albert  
Memorial Park in  
North Catasauqua

June 23, 2021  
East Allen Farmer's Market at  
Bicentennial Park West

July 2, 2021  
Summer Concert Series at  
Catasauqua Park

July 14, 2021  
North Catasauqua Community  
Night Out

August 24, 2021  
Hanover Township Community  
Night at Canal Park

Each municipality also shared links to the survey on their websites and social media platforms, hung posters and sent mailer ads and emails to residents and community stake-holders. LVPC also used targeted promotion of the survey on Facebook, and identified key traffic locations and placed promotional signs with the survey QR code throughout the River Central Area.

The survey opened June 9, 2021 and closed August 31, 2021, running for 12 weeks total. 306 survey responses were received, resulting in a 5.5% margin of error compared to the total River Central population.



**Left:** Paw Prints on the Canal. Canal Street, Northampton Borough.

**Top Right:** East Allen Farmer's Market at Bicentennial Park West, East Allen Township.

**Bottom Right:** North Catasauqua at the Summer Concert Series, held at William J. Albert Memorial Park, North Catasauqua Borough.



## SUBJECT MATTER ROUNDTABLES

As a result of the community feedback the Committee received from the Kick-off Charettes and Community Survey, the Committee identified several recurring and key topics that warranted further engagement to bring subject-specific experts and stakeholders to the table. The River Central Steering Committee held three Subject Matter Roundtables in a hybrid format, offering in-person participation at the East Allen Township Municipal Building and virtual participation via video and/or on the phone.

### **Farmers and Farmers Markets (February 8, 2022)**

All farms and farmers in River Central were invited, including Unangst Tree Farms, Twin Maple Farms, Valley Fruits and Veggies, Smith Family Farms and Seiple Farms. Organization representatives attended as well to contribute to the discussion, including Buy Fresh Buy Local, Penn State Extension, Kellyn Foundation, and the Northampton Farmers Market. The event was well-attended, virtually and in-person.

### **Emergency Management Services (April 12, 2022)**

All emergency management services departments serving the five River Central municipalities were invited, as well as the Northampton County Emergency Management department and the Lehigh County Office of Emergency Management. The event was attended by East Allen Ambulance, Han-Le-Co Fire, Northampton Regional Emergency Medical Services, Catasauqua Emergency Management Agency, Northampton Fire, Catasauqua Borough Manager and North Catasauqua Police.

### **Economy and Economic Development (April 13, 2022)**

The discussion was attended by local business owners, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, local officials and steering committee members. Discussion was focused on the municipalities' economic development needs and what opportunities local stakeholders identify to support this community vision. Conversation touched on revitalizing borough downtowns to ensure a mix of attractive niche retail stores and restaurants as well as anchor businesses needed by residents, such as banks, grocery and other services. An opportunity to better connect trail users to local businesses was identified and is worth exploring further.

# Core Values

The five communities of the River Central area envision a cohesive region that prioritizes quality of life for everyone.

This includes everything from providing a mix of transportation options that work for everyone, to protecting farmland and enhancing the farming economy. The region's bounty of natural and historic areas must be preserved, and recreational and cultural resources should be expanded as key components of River Central's

identity. As River Central continues to be a place where people want to live and the community grows, housing opportunities must be provided for all with an emphasis on safe, healthy, creative inclusive and livable neighborhoods. The long-term sustainability of the community's vision relies on balancing preservation and development aligned with appropriate infrastructure, and as a cohesive region each municipality has a part to contribute.

**The River Central area is proud to bring together five municipalities** that value inter-governmental collaboration, as well as public and private entities to make the community's vision a reality.



**Left:** A LANta bus stop and sidewalks along Race Street, Catasauqua Borough.

**Top Right:** A heron spotted at Canal Park on Dauphin Street, Hanover Township.

**Bottom Right:** Seiple Farms in the Fall, East Allen Township.



# Goals & Policies

**The goals, policies and implementation actions developed through the community engagement process are the foundation of the River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan.**

These goals, policies and actions support River Central's own future aspirations for a sustainable and thriving community: the goals foster the shared future vision of the region; the policies provide the foundation to support the overarching goals; the implementation actions serve as direct steps officials and residents can take, present and future, to bring the goals and ultimately the region's vision to fruition. Cumulatively, they are the byproduct of a dedicated and collaborative long-term thought process by the residents of River Central, cultivated through numerous public engagement events, workshops, regular steering committee meetings, and in-depth research and analysis.

# The Six Overarching Goals

- 1.** Balance preservation and development aligned with appropriate infrastructure.
- 2.** Promote and coordinate a mixed-transportation region that works for everyone.
- 3.** Protect and enhance farmland and the farming economy.
- 4.** Preserve and expand natural, recreational, cultural and historic resources as essential to quality of life.
- 5.** Enhance housing opportunities for all.
- 6.** Strengthen safe, healthy, creative, inclusive and livable communities.

# Plan Map Descriptions

Embedded within the Goals, Policies and Actions are the five plan maps: Future Land Use Plan; Centers and Corridors Plan; Farmland Preservation Plan; Natural Resources Plan; and Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. The intent, description and interrelationships associated with the five plan maps are provided below:

## FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

This plan shows areas recommended for Development, Farmland Preservation, Preservation Buffer and Exurban uses and should guide development and preservation efforts by private and non-profit organizations, government agencies and individuals. High Priority Areas from the Natural Resources Plan are recommended to be conserved regardless of the Future Land Use Plan recommendation. High, Medium and Low Priority areas from the Farmland Preservation Plan are included on the Future Land Use Plan as recommended for Farmland Preservation or certain Preservation Buffer areas. In the Preservation Buffer area, Farmland Preservation is preferred. Centers and Corridors located within Development areas are recommended for denser, mixed-use, mixed-transportation development. Centers and Corridors located in Preservation Buffer areas or Exurban areas are only recommended for denser, mixed-use, mixed-transportation development if they meet the development criteria. Centers and Corridors located within Farmland Preservation areas are not generally recommended for denser development. Proposed improvements shown on the Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Plan are compatible with any land use depicted on the Future Land Use Plan.

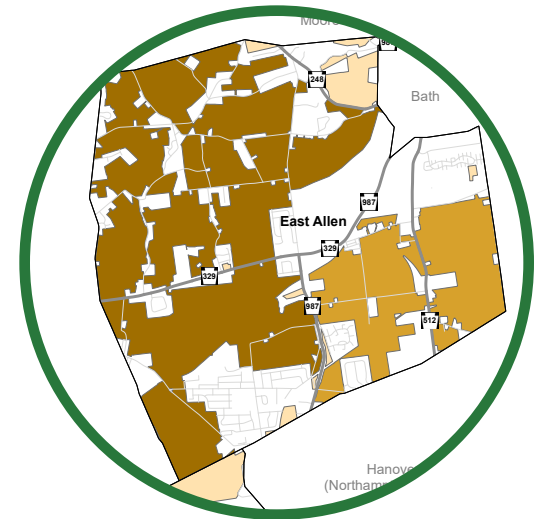


## CENTERS AND CORRIDORS PLAN

This plan shows major transportation infrastructure and opportunities for creating denser, mixed-use, mixed-transportation development and should be used by private and non-profit organizations and government agencies to guide efforts to improve the transportation network. The municipalities use this plan as an important component of development review and highly encourage projects that expand, improve or connect the mixed-transportation network.

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

The High and Medium Priority Farmland Preservation areas on the plan represent the most significant clusters of existing farmland, based on the overall size of the cluster combined with agricultural soils quality. The municipalities will use this plan as an important component of development proposal review. High Priority areas are the largest clusters and represent the best opportunity for infill with farmland-supportive businesses and services. This plan should be used by other government agencies and conservation organizations to prioritize areas for preservation of farming operations, typically through the acquisition of easements to permanently preserve the land as farming. Low Preservation Priority Farmland, defined as such due to small size, lower soils quality or lack of proximity to other farmlands, should also be considered for preservation as the opportunity arises. High, Medium and Low Priority areas are shown on the Future Land Use Plan for Farmland Preservation or certain Preservation Buffer areas. In the Preservation Buffer area, Farmland Preservation is preferred.



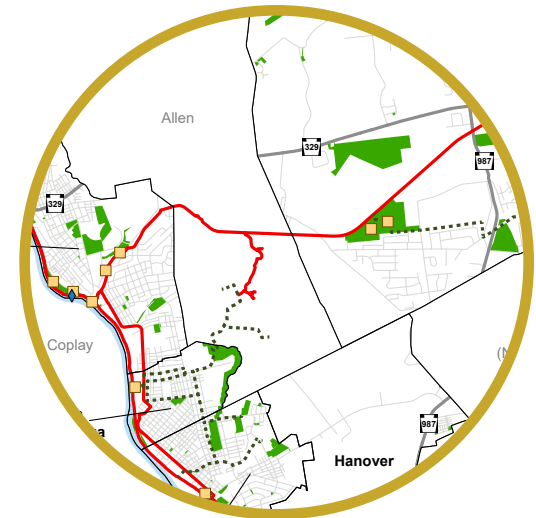
## NATURAL RESOURCES PLAN

The High Conservation Priority Natural Resource areas shown on the plan take precedence over other land use recommendations presented in this plan, including the Future Land Use Plan. This represents a conservation first perspective. The High and Medium Conservation Priority areas are used by the municipalities in review of subdivision and land development proposals, to identify potential preservation areas within a development, development of plans and ordinances, and grant applications, among other uses specified in the policies and actions. The High and Medium Conservation Priority areas should also be used by conservation organizations and other government agencies to prioritize conservation efforts.



## PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

This plan shows major existing and planned park, outdoor recreation and open space facilities and should be used to guide efforts by public/private organizations and government agencies to expand, improve and connect regional assets. The municipalities use this plan in concert with their individual open space plans, as applicable, and with the Northampton County and Lehigh County Livable Landscapes Plans, as well as other plans, to establish priorities for funding and work efforts for these facilities. Recommended improvements shown on this plan are compatible with any land use depicted on the Future Land Use Plan.





Hanover Canal Park. North Dauphin Street, Hanover Township.

# GOAL 1



Balance preservation and development aligned with appropriate infrastructure.

River Central is well known for its historic boroughs, cement manufacturing heritage, parks and trails, natural resources, and farmland. These features contribute to the area's identity and quality of life enjoyed by its residents today. As the area faces increased development pressure, River Central municipalities seek to balance the development necessary to accommodate growth with preservation of those features that make the area unique and attractive to its residents and businesses.

Municipal infrastructure and transportation networks are the primary elements that allow communities to function, fulfilling the essential health, safety and welfare needs of everyone. Growth over time has put a strain on River Central's systems, and over the next few decades continued growth and development pressure will increase the strain. The River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan outlines strategies to manage future land uses in locations with appropriate, sustainable infrastructure, while preserving community character.

Effective and efficient water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure are vital to protecting public health and promoting a thriving community. These integrated systems need to be sustainable, resilient and cost-effective, now and into the future. The water and sewer infrastructure in most communities is aging, inefficient for modern-day uses and in need of significant investment, while stormwater infrastructure for most municipalities is relatively newer, growing rapidly and subject to new regulations and increasing costs. Decision and policy makers will need to rethink infrastructure investment strategies and set a clear plan for where new development should locate, how intense it can be and what impact it will have on existing sewer, water and stormwater infrastructure.

# Future Land Use Plan Definitions

Several key definitions are required to fully interpret the map descriptions, policies and actions that use this terminology:

## Development or Redevelopment

These areas contain most or all of the factors needed to support growth, such as sewer and transportation infrastructure capacity and contiguity to existing development, and are capable of accommodating additional development. They may also have aging existing development that may be in need of modernization. These areas are appropriate for a variety of uses, including major commercial, residential and industrial development.

## Exurban

These areas have few or none of the factors necessary for development and should remain in rural uses, including agriculture, supportive businesses and parks and open space. Housing in or adjacent to rural crossroads villages or at low densities is also compatible.

## Preservation Buffer

These are areas where factors may be present and capable of accommodating additional development, but because of existing natural features, or if agriculture is the existing land use, preservation may be appropriate. Natural resources conservation and farmland preservation are strongly preferred in these areas, especially those without adequate infrastructure to support development. The most appropriate future land use for these areas should be based on a planning analysis of the development criteria.

## Farmland Preservation

These areas are predominantly natural areas or agriculture and are recommended to remain as such. The types of uses recommended include farming and related housing and businesses, parks, and open space. Housing not related to agriculture should be on a very limited scale.

## Centers

Centers are a wide range of place types that include crossroads villages, neighborhoods, urban or highway centers, among others, each with a unique character and combination of appropriate land uses, infrastructure and connecting transportation Corridors. The character of the varied Center types is supported by the Plan's goals, policies and actions and should be incorporated in municipal ordinances.

## Corridors

Corridors are a wide range of road types, from local to commercial and limited access, among others, each with a unique character and each supporting a unique combination of purpose, traffic volume, mobility, access potential for mixed-transportation options.

## Character-Defining Area

These areas represent the natural and scenic character of the region as a simplified version of the Natural Resources Plan, with highest elevation areas representing scenic resources.

# Development Criteria

Development Criteria Areas shown on the Future Land Use Plan as Preservation Buffer areas or Exurban areas may be considered appropriate for development if the following criteria are met:

- ▶ The proposal is consistent with the conservation of high priority natural resources.
- ▶ The site is contiguous to existing development.
- ▶ Adequate sewage conveyance capacity, allocation and treatment capacity are available for public sewage disposal, if appropriate adequate on-lot sewage disposal is provided. Privately owned package sewer treatment plants, which are pre-manufactured facilities and a smaller version of collective (public) purification plants, are not considered adequate for sewer access.
- ▶ The site is identified in the municipal comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance and Act 537 sewage facilities plan for the development type, and sewage facilities, as proposed.
- ▶ The site will be served by public water with adequate supply and delivery capacity, if appropriate on-lot water supply is unavailable.
- ▶ Adverse impacts to the transportation system due to development will be mitigated with respect to roads, bridges, transit facilities and bicycle/pedestrian facilities, including traffic safety or congestion, based on accepted transportation planning and engineering professional standards.

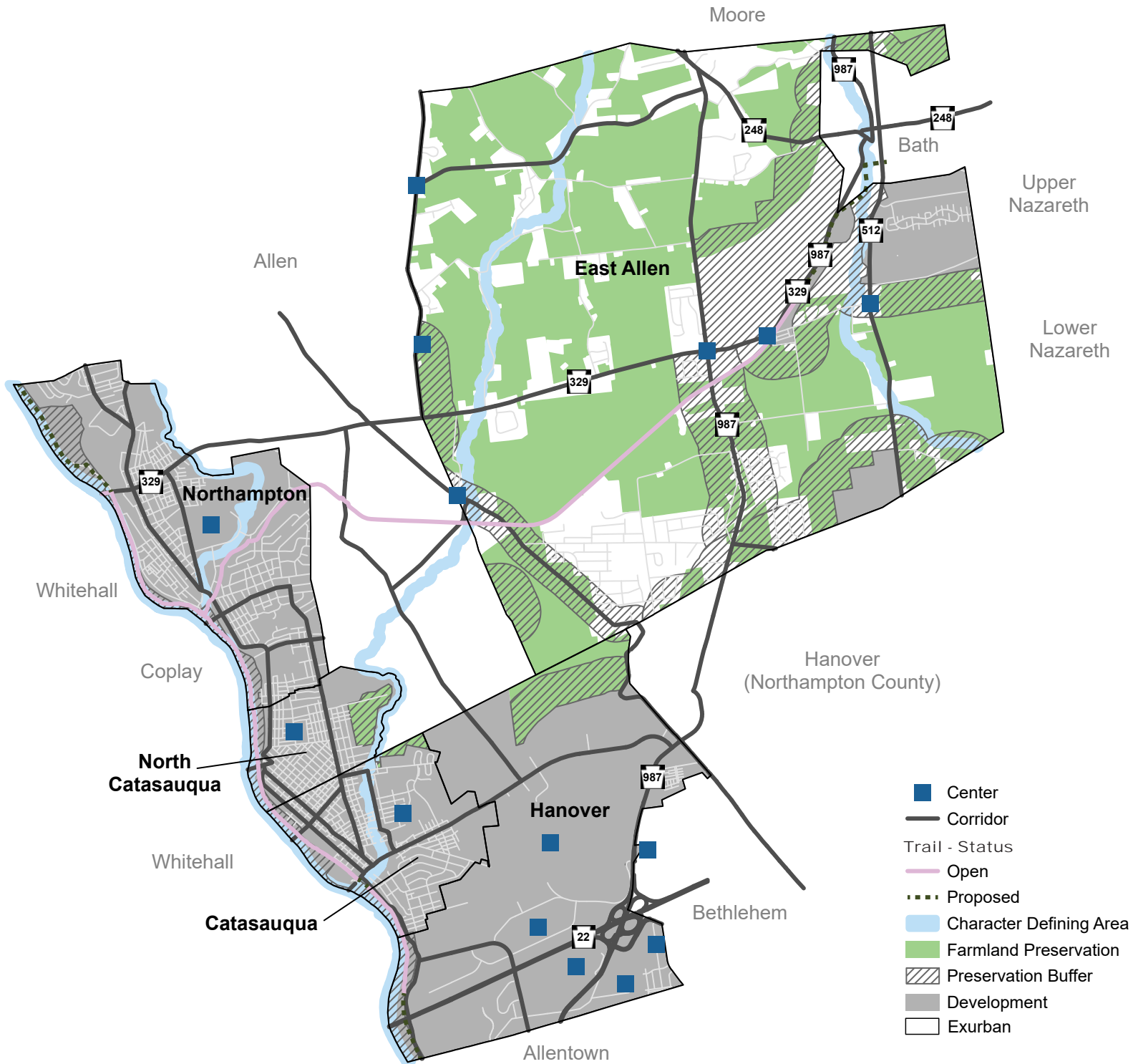


Residential construction at The Estates at Willow Brook. Woodmont Lane, North Catasauqua Borough.

# Future Land Use Plan

This plan shows areas recommended for Development, Farmland Preservation, Preservation Buffer and Exurban uses and should guide development and preservation efforts by private and non-profit organizations, government agencies and individuals. High Priority Areas from the Natural Resources Plan are recommended to be conserved regardless of the Future Land Use Plan recommendation. High, Medium, and Low Priority areas from the Farmland Preservation Plan are included on the Future Land Use Plan as recommended for Farmland Preservation or certain Preservation Buffer areas. In the Preservation Buffer area, Farmland Preservation is preferred. Agricultural properties adjacent to or in proximity to the Lehigh Valley International Airport should remain as farmland until used for airport expansion as identified in the ABE

Master Plan. Centers and Corridors located within Development areas are recommended for denser, mixed-use, mixed-transportation development. Centers and Corridors located in Preservation Buffer areas or Exurban areas are only recommended for denser, mixed-use, mixed-transportation development if they meet the development criteria. Centers and Corridors located within Farmland Preservation areas are not generally recommended for denser development. Proposed improvements shown on the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan are compatible with any land use depicted on the Future Land Use Plan. Character-Defining Areas on the map represent the natural and scenic character of the region as a simplified version of the Natural Resources Plan, with highest elevation areas representing scenic resources.



# 1.1

## Promote compact development and redevelopment with a mix of uses in designated growth areas.

As the Lehigh Valley grows, the River Central municipalities will also face increased population growth and development pressure. Development and redevelopment directed to existing Centers, like borough downtowns and crossroads villages, and along Corridors appropriate for growth, can provide a compact mix of uses and housing served by a variety of transportation types to relieve development pressure on potential preservation areas.

- ▶ Encourage reuse and redevelopment within Development areas, especially for properties considered underutilized.
- ▶ Support a variety of housing types within Centers located in Development areas.
- ▶ Align infrastructure investments with Centers and Corridors.
- ▶ Update zoning ordinances to increase flexibility and facilitate mixed-use development in Centers and along Corridors.

By 2045, **3,142** = **126**  
*River Central is expecting an increase of* **PEOPLE** *more people per year.*



Ground floor commercial business with a residential unit upstairs on 4th Street, North Catasauqua Borough.

# 1.2

## Coordinate industrial development with available road capacity, transit service and utility infrastructure.

Industrial development can have intense impacts on the community and therefore require an in-depth analysis to choose locations that are compatible with neighboring communities. These facilities should be located in areas with connectivity to a multimodal transportation network, adequate utility infrastructure, and access to high-quality internet service.

Thoughtful planning can accommodate the needs of industrial development while continuing to protect the character and vision of the River Central communities in the future.

- ▶ Locate freight-based facilities in areas with available or planned transportation capacity, such as structurally safe roads and bridges and intersections designed for truck movement; appropriately designed roads with direct access to higher classification roads, such as Regional Corridors.
- ▶ Locate industrial development where multimodal options exist, including walking, rolling and biking, and in areas supported by Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) fixed-route service, if possible.



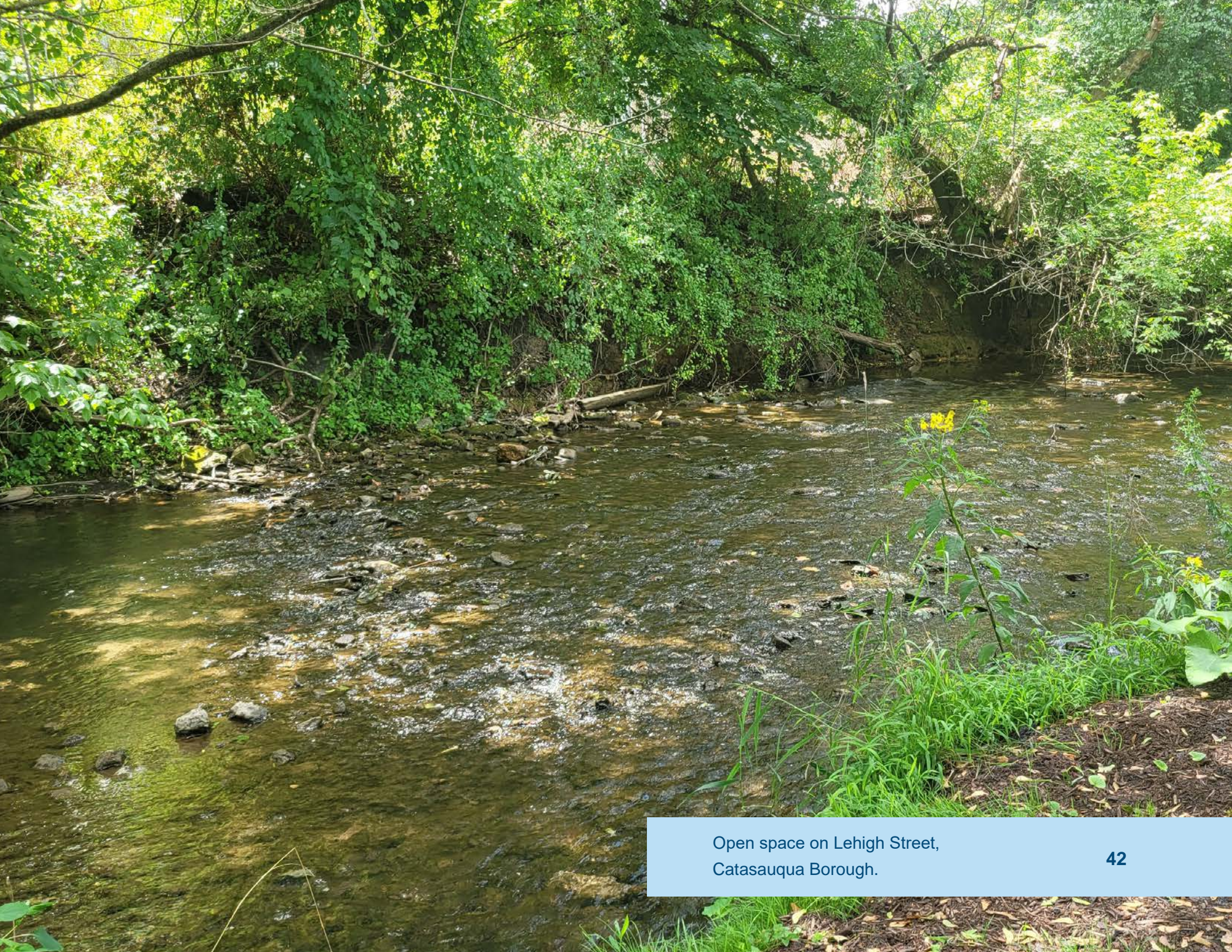
The construction of a warehouse on  
Lloyd Street, Hanover Township.

# 1.3

## Protect environmental and open space assets with strategic growth and development management.

Throughout the River Central area, development should be mindful of natural resources, open space, valuable farmland and the historic heritage prevalent throughout the area. A well-established park and recreation system also is a component of balancing preservation and development.

- ▶ Discourage development on overall high priority natural resource lands.
- ▶ Protect medium conservation priority natural resource lands through land development techniques such as conservation design generally consistent with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) Conservation Subdivisions Guide + Model Regulation.
- ▶ Discourage the extension of water and sewer services and new roads into areas where farming is the recommended land use.
- ▶ Review zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure current and future needs of the farming community are not inadvertently hindered.
- ▶ Allow transfer of development rights from farmland to development areas.
- ▶ Utilize LVPC guidance documents to promote sustainable housing methods in the townships, such as Cottage Housing and Conservation Design.
- ▶ Incentivize the use of green infrastructure techniques in infrastructure design.



Open space on Lehigh Street,  
Catasauqua Borough.

# 1.4

## Collaborate land use decision-making across public, private and governmental entities to bridge understanding and increase resiliency and quality of life.

The River Central municipalities aim to take a collaborative approach when it comes to managing development and the impacts of community growth on municipal infrastructure. Ensuring a broad and deep breadth of understanding between government officials and the public and private sectors on the impacts of land use decision-making will be critical. Building partnerships with public and private stakeholders can have a direct impact on achieving the region's development and preservation goals.

- ▶ Coordinate with public sewage disposal and community water supply providers to accommodate future growth consistent with the land use recommendations of this plan.
- ▶ Prepare or update public sewage facility and community water supply agreements, where appropriate, with adjacent municipalities or authorities to provide service consistent with the development recommendations of this plan.
- ▶ Educate elected officials and the public on the importance of sustainable sewer, water and stormwater infrastructure.
- ▶ Inform elected officials and the public on the benefits of conservation and preservation.
- ▶ Establish a system or procedure where planning, zoning and land development proposals of regional significance are reviewed with multi-municipal input and approval determined by the municipality in which the development is located.
- ▶ Coordinate the actions of government, the private sector and non-profit organizations to achieve land preservation goals.
- ▶ Coordinate with sewer and water providers to ensure adequate sewer conveyance, treatment and allocation, and adequate water supply and delivery capacity.

# 1.5

## Strategically manage and minimize the impacts of land uses on infrastructure.

A key to long-term sustainability in River Central is ensuring that the location and intensity of land uses are matched with adequate utility infrastructure capacity. Over the next 25 years River Central area is expecting to grow in population by 15%, and with additional economic growth, tourism and rapidly evolving business needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of striking a balance between land uses and available infrastructure is greater than ever.

- ▶ Review zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure the permissible scale of land uses match the availability and capacities of sewer, water and stormwater infrastructure.
- ▶ Direct infrastructure-intensive land uses to areas with public sewer and water supply systems able to accept additional growth.
- ▶ Limit public sewer and water system expansions or upgrades to designated development areas.
- ▶ Accommodate low-intensity development in exurban areas to be served by on-lot sewage disposal and water supply.
- ▶ Discourage infrastructure-intensive land uses in areas served by on-lot sewage disposal or privately owned central sewage facilities.
- ▶ Prepare capital improvement programs that identify and prioritize utility infrastructure needs, including those that solve existing drainage problems in accordance with Act 167 stormwater management plans.
- ▶ Provide adequate service to areas experiencing problems with existing on-lot sewer or water systems or central water supply systems.

## FUNDING

is the cornerstone to the implementation of infrastructure maintenance, upgrade or new construction.

# 1.6

## Align development with appropriate sewer infrastructure.

Municipalities are responsible for assuring that safe and reliable sewage disposal is provided within their boundaries. To accomplish this, municipalities are required to prepare sewage facilities plans under the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act, commonly called Act 537. These plans must identify the current and future sewage needs of the municipality and evaluate alternatives to meet those needs. The requirements apply to all systems, including public sewer systems, central or package treatment systems, as well as on-lot systems. For public and central sewer systems, Act 537 plans need to assure adequate sewage collection, conveyance, and treatment capacity. For on-lot systems, the plans need to assure proper site testing, construction, operation and maintenance, referred to as a sewage

management program. Each municipality in River Central has an official sewage facilities plan, with dates ranging from 1983 to 2022. The Northampton Borough Act 537 Plan Update was approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) in December 2022. Catasauqua Borough is in the process of updating its plan. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection approval of the plans is required.

In River Central, sewer service is provided by a combination of public sewer systems and individual on-lot sewage disposal systems. Five wastewater treatment plants provide sewer service in the area. Remaining portions of the area are served by individual on-lot sewage disposal systems.

- ▶ Maintain adequate Official Sewage Facilities Plans for each municipality, consistent with the requirements of the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act of 1966 (Act 537).
- ▶ Identify and remove excess infiltration and inflow in a cost-effective manner to maximize available sewer capacity.
- ▶ Require tested primary and replacement on-lot sewage disposal absorption areas for each lot proposed for on-lot sewage disposal.
- ▶ Adopt a sewage management program for all on-lot sewage systems to ensure long-term viability of systems.

## PUBLIC SEWAGE TREATMENT SERVICE IN RIVER CENTRAL

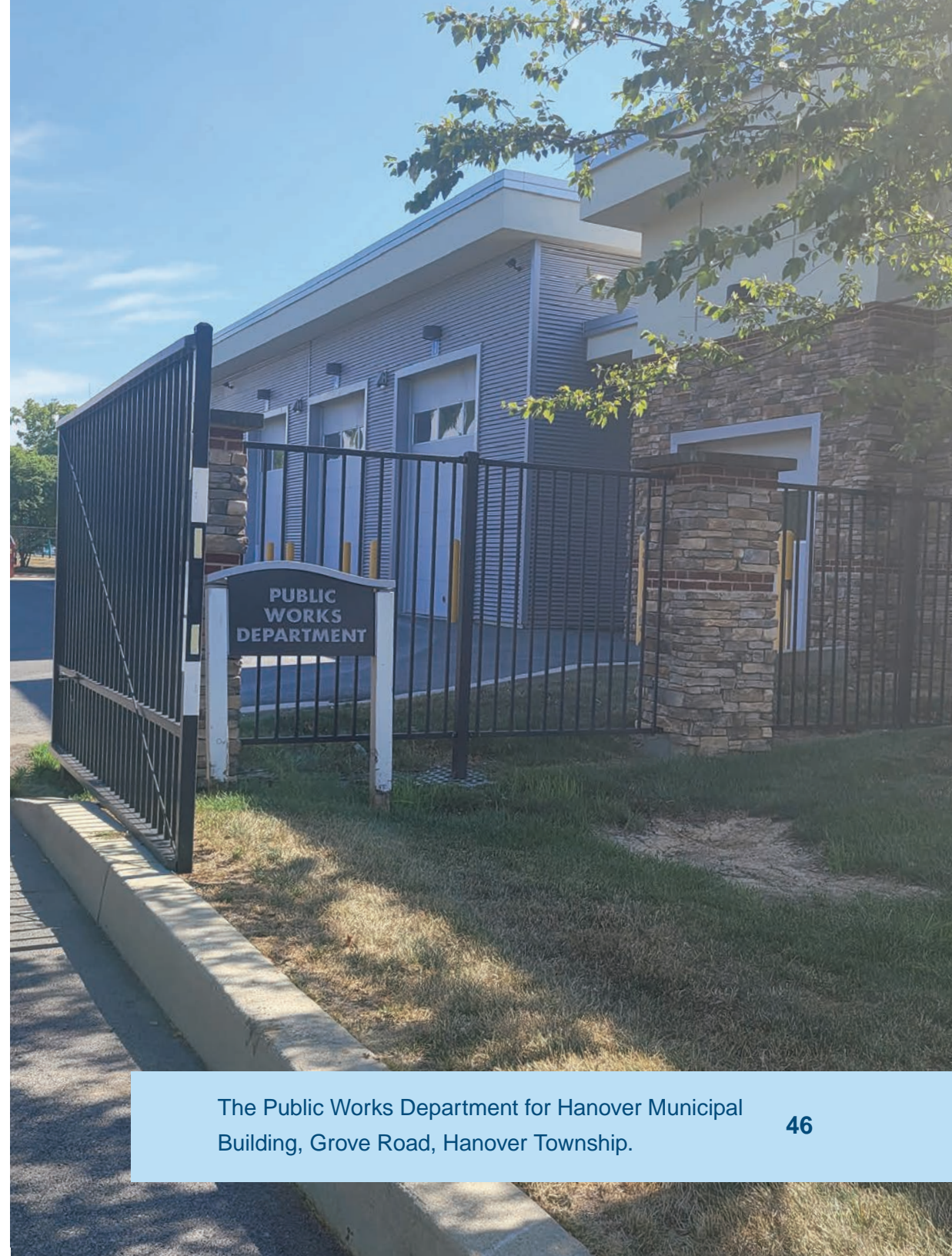
**The Northampton Borough wastewater treatment plant**, serving the Borough. The wastewater treatment plant has a design capacity of 1.5 million gallons per day (mgd). The draft Borough Act 537 Plan proposes to upgrade the plant to 2.0 mgd.

**The Catasauqua Borough Authority wastewater treatment plant**, serving the Borough, North Catasauqua Borough and portions of Hanover Township. The wastewater treatment plant has a design capacity of 2.25 mgd.

**The Bath Borough Authority wastewater treatment plant**, serving portions of East Allen Township in proximity to the Borough. The wastewater treatment plant has a design capacity of 0.51 mgd.

**The City of Bethlehem wastewater treatment plant**, serving a portion of Hanover Township, has a design capacity of 20 mgd.

**The Klines Island wastewater treatment plant** in the City of Allentown serves a portion of Hanover Township and has a design capacity of 44.6 mgd.



The Public Works Department for Hanover Municipal Building, Grove Road, Hanover Township.

# 1.7

## Align development with appropriate water infrastructure.

The ability to provide a safe, reliable water supply could be adversely impacted without careful planning. Water suppliers need to have emergency plans, establish emergency interconnections with other systems and implement water source protection programs. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires comprehensive plans to include strategies for the reliable supply of water and to be generally consistent with the State Water Plan and any applicable water resources plan adopted by a river basin commission. Comprehensive plans must also recognize that 1) 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, and 2) commercial agriculture production impacts water supply sources.

In River Central, water supply is provided by a combination of community water systems, central water systems and individual on-lot wells. The five community water suppliers on the next page provide water service in the area. Further, there are seven central water systems serving specific developments in East Allen Township. Remaining portions of the area are served by individual on-lot wells.

- ▶ Require assurances for proper long-term operation and maintenance of privately owned central water systems.
- ▶ Evaluate the viability of central water systems and consider acquisition, interconnection or independent upgrade of systems. If systems remain private, require assurances for proper long-term operation and maintenance.
- ▶ Define groundwater protection zones for all public water supply wells and implement groundwater source protection programs.

## PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIERS IN RIVER CENTRAL

**Northampton Municipal Authority**, serving Northampton Borough and most of North Catasauqua Borough. The Authority obtains its supply from surface water sources. The water is treated at an 8.0 million gallon per day treatment plant. The Authority has interconnections with Allentown, Bethlehem, Catasauqua and Lehigh County Authority.

**Bath Borough Authority**, selling water to East Allen Township for portions of the Township adjacent to the Borough. The Authority obtains its supply from three wells. There are no emergency interconnections with other water systems.

**City of Bethlehem**, serving portions of Hanover Township and East Allen Township. The City obtains its supply from surface water sources in Monroe and Carbon counties.

**Catasauqua Borough**, serving the Borough and a small portion of North Catasauqua Borough. Its water supply comes from three wells. The Borough has three interconnections with the Northampton Borough Municipal Authority.

**Lehigh County Authority Allentown Division**, serving selling water to Hanover Township, which serves a portion of the Township. The Authority obtains its supply from two springs and two surface water sources.

# 1.8

## Align development with stormwater management infrastructure.

Within River Central, stormwater management for new development is accomplished partially through implementation of ordinances created at the county level and enforced by local municipalities. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) also provides an advisory review role to the municipalities. The ordinances are created under the Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act, commonly referred to as Act 167. River Central municipalities lie within the Hokendauqua Creek Watershed Lehigh River Sub-basin 3, Catasauqua Creek Watershed Lehigh River Sub-basin 4, and Monocacy Creek Watershed, and ordinances have been created for all three. The plans and ordinances provide water quantity and water quality controls.

To comply with permit requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), municipalities must implement

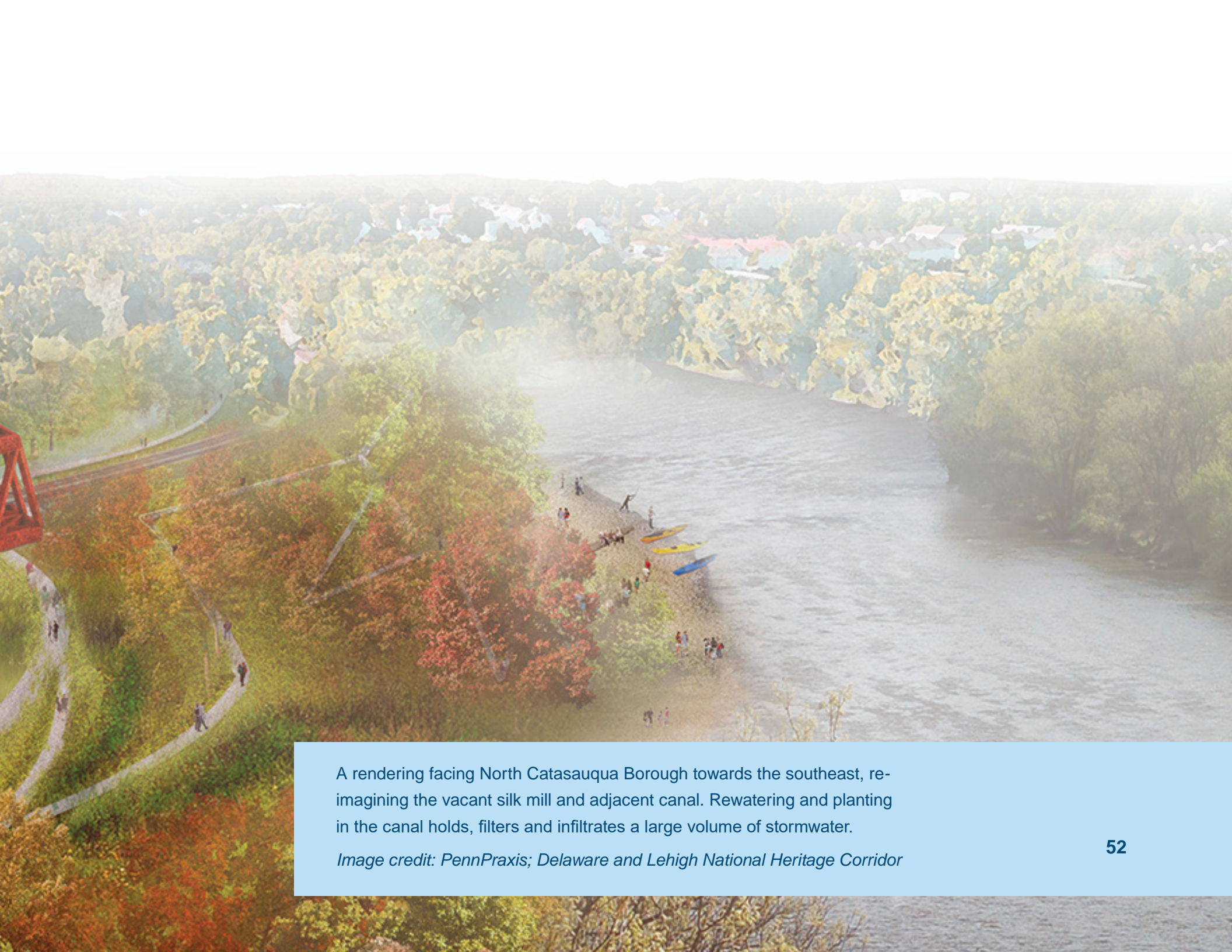
an ordinance that requires the use of stormwater best management practices to reduce or prevent the discharge of pollutants into receiving waters. The three watershed plans listed above provide a model municipal ordinance that meets this criteria, and each municipality has adopted their respective watershed ordinance(s). The EPA permit program is the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program. The ordinances also meet the EPA requirements for illicit discharge elimination and stormwater management during construction. Each municipality within River Central must manage the quality of discharges of stormwater from their MS4s.

The most recent MS4 permit requirements that impact municipalities are those mandating reduction of pollutants being discharged from the municipal systems into surface waters. Municipalities are required to prepare Pollutant Reduction Plans to accomplish this. Communities must implement best management practices of their own to meet defined pollutant reduction targets. Implementation of these plans will place significant cost

burdens on the municipalities. Moving forward, municipalities should consider collaboration where appropriate to minimize costs and need to consider all methods available to fund needed improvements, including specific stormwater fees. Coordinating water and sewer planning with comprehensive planning and zoning, combined with a commitment to providing safe and reliable service, will be necessary to meet the water and sewer needs of existing and future residents. The communities will need to identify and evaluate opportunities to maintain compliance with federal stormwater management regulations.

- ▶ Implement green infrastructure and groundwater recharge standards in stormwater design across all watersheds.
- ▶ Explore alternative funding sources, including grant programs and implementing a stormwater fee, to fund needed stormwater improvements.
- ▶ Implement the provisions of approved stormwater management plans through adoption of ordinances and enforcement of runoff control criteria, managing the rate, volume and quality of storm runoff.
- ▶ Explore opportunities to utilize the canal for stormwater management, ensuring it is done properly to preserve historic aspects.





A rendering facing North Catasauqua Borough towards the southeast, re-imagining the vacant silk mill and adjacent canal. Rewatering and planting in the canal holds, filters and infiltrates a large volume of stormwater.

*Image credit: PennPraxis; Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor*

# GOAL 2



Promote and coordinate a mixed-transportation region that works for everyone.

As the heart of the Lehigh Valley, River Central is an essential transportation hub in the regional network, connecting through all modes of moving people, goods and services. The diverse economy of River Central utilizes all modes of transportation from passenger vehicles, freight movements, air traffic to transit service, pedestrians and nonmotorized trail networks, including the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L Trail) and the regional Nor-Bath Trail. River Central is also home to the region's busiest segment of the State Route 22 highway with traffic averaging 100,000 vehicles per day, as well as the Lehigh Valley International Airport and its associated growth in freight and passenger air traffic.

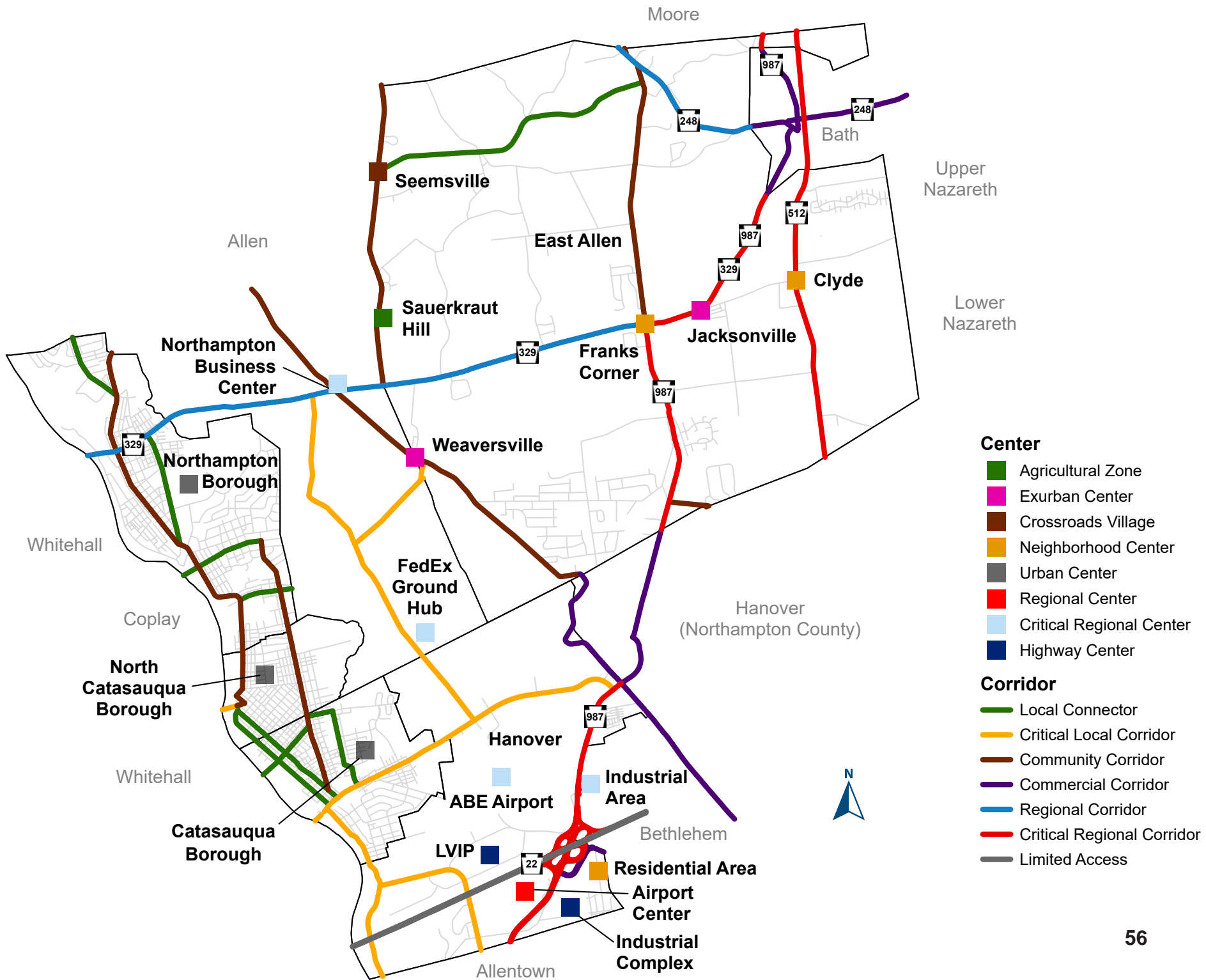
River Central is positioned to improve the transportation movement of its citizens, businesses, and visitors through future planning opportunities for enhancement of motorized and non-motorized travel modes. A focus on safety and efficient mobility is paramount to the future of the River Central's ability to grow while still respecting community character and be able to use the core of transportation to their advantage. A connected, safe commuter and recreational network encouraging multiple modes of transportation serves to mitigate increasing rates of motorized traffic and support a sustainable community and network.

# Centers & Corridors Plan

This plan shows major transportation infrastructure and opportunities for creating denser, mixed-use, mixed transportation development and should be used by private and non-profit organizations and government agencies to guide efforts to improve the transportation network. The municipalities use this plan as an important component of development review and highly encourage projects that expand, improve or connect the mixed-transportation network.

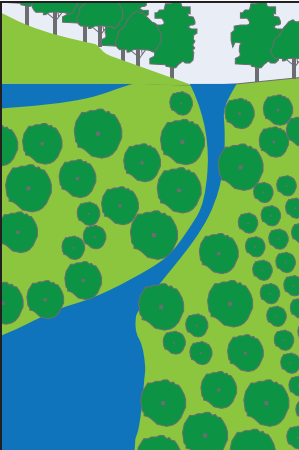




## HOW TO USE CENTERS & CORRIDORS

Matching the right development with the road system that serves it is vital to maintaining the character of Place Types. Use the chart on pages 57 to 60 to match the Place Types with compatible development and road connections that work best to protect and enhance a community's character.



Matching the right development with the road system that serves it is vital to maintaining the character of each Place Types.

# PLACE TYPES

PLACE TYPES	 <p data-bbox="564 553 663 613"><b>Natural Zone</b></p>	 <p data-bbox="831 553 1005 613"><b>Agricultural Zone</b></p>	 <p data-bbox="1173 553 1289 613"><b>Exurban Zone</b></p>	 <p data-bbox="1451 553 1604 613"><b>Crossroads Village</b></p>	 <p data-bbox="1793 553 1913 613"><b>Exurban Center</b></p>
PLACE TYPE DESCRIPTION	<p><b>Undeveloped natural area:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protects environmentally sensitive areas like forested areas and natural areas.</li> <li>• Parks and Recreational uses.</li> <li>• Limited residential.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Applies to areas of the region where there is a predominance of agricultural resources and uses. The non-farming activities should be restricted to the least productive areas of the farm parcel. Clustering of these uses would be encouraged:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural lands and businesses/agri-tourism.</li> <li>• Rural-scale residential.</li> <li>• Agriculture-based commercial.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lower density, primarily agricultural and residential:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural lands and businesses</li> <li>• Exurban-scale residential</li> <li>• The provision of public facilities and services to these areas is not anticipated.</li> <li>• Development is provided for at densities between 1 dwelling per 1-2 acres.</li> <li>• Public community services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Small group of houses organized around the intersection of rural roads; potentially commercial structures, but limited development capacity overall:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, it is a gathering of 5 to 10 residential dwellings with a distinct identity in an exurban area.</li> <li>• Includes areas of existing development to which new development is directly related to the exurban economy and the exurban way-of-life. Uses include:</li> <li>• Rural-scale residential.</li> <li>• Local commercial uses.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Provide for limited development in a scale that mirrors the existing character of a village. Traditionally ag/mining economy, now an active business presence with a mix of uses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small-scale commercial.</li> <li>• Residential.</li> <li>• Community-based services.</li> <li>• Local exurban-based businesses (landscaping operations, car dealership, church, local restaurant).</li> </ul>
TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS	Should offer trail connections as active transportation to other local and regional areas.	Should offer trail connections as active transportation to other local and regional areas.	Should offer trail connections as active transportation to other local and regional areas.	Bicycle and pedestrian facilities, should be incorporated where possible.	Should offer commuting opportunities via multiple modes of transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.
PLACE TYPE EXAMPLES	Lehigh River in Northampton, North Catasauqua and Catasauqua Boroughs, Hanover Township	Sauerkraut Hill in East Allen Township	East Allen Township South of Route 329	Seemsville in East Allen Township	Jacksonville in East Allen Township
ROAD TYPE CONNECTIONS	Community Corridors, Local Connectors, Local Roads	Community Corridors, Local Connectors, Local Roads	Critical Local Corridors, Local Connectors, Local Roads	Commercial Corridors, Community Corridors, Critical Local Corridors, Local Connectors, Local Roads	Critical Regional Corridors, Community Corridors, Critical Local Corridors, Local Roads

LESS INFRASTRUCTURE

Use the chart below to match the Place Types with compatible development and road connections that work best to protect and enhance a community's character.

<b>Neighborhood Center</b>	<b>General Urban Center</b>	<b>Urban Center</b>	<b>Regional Center</b>	<b>Critical Regional Center</b>	<b>Highway Center</b>
<p>Accommodates a wide range of retail and service uses which serve the community in areas with or without public services. Accessible primarily by vehicle; little or no residential. Includes small scale establishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convenience stores.</li> <li>• Hardware stores.</li> <li>• Personal services.</li> </ul>	<p>This zone can serve as a gateway into an urban center in an urbanized area or could serve as the main urban center for an exurban region. Landscape would include a mix of uses at a high density, but some may incorporate automobile-based businesses. Land uses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office.</li> <li>• Commercial.</li> <li>• Residential.</li> <li>• Light industrial.</li> </ul>	<p>Intended to be a compact, densely developed and well-defined area having a strong pedestrian orientation and urban character that provides both office and residential space within multi-story buildings while being compatible with nearby residential neighborhoods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides for the day-to-day and specialty shopping and service needs of the community.</li> <li>• Provides a mix of uses that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>≈ Office.</li> <li>≈ Commercial.</li> <li>≈ Residential.</li> <li>≈ Light industrial.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Intended for mainly office, light industry, research and development, and data processing, and other job-focused uses; may also include limited opportunities for support uses (e.g., banks, child care), shopping, and other compatible uses at a suburban scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big box retailers.</li> <li>• Office.</li> <li>• Low scale commercial.</li> <li>• Residential - suburban.</li> <li>• Light industrial.</li> </ul>	<p>Provide for limited development in a scale that mirrors the existing character of a village. Traditionally ag/mining economy, now an active business presence with a mix of uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small-scale commercial.</li> <li>• Residential.</li> <li>• Community-based services.</li> <li>• Local exurban-based businesses (landscaping operations, car dealership, church, local restaurant).</li> </ul>	<p>Highway-dependent uses that generate heavy truck traffic and impacts that are difficult to remediate on-site (e.g. noise and air impacts):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light or heavy manufacturing.</li> <li>• Warehouse.</li> <li>• Production.</li> <li>• Logistics and distribution.</li> </ul>
<p>Should offer commuting opportunities via multiple modes of transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.</p>	<p>Should offer commuting opportunities via multiple modes of transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.</p>	<p>Should offer commuting opportunities via multiple modes of transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.</p>	<p>Should offer commuting opportunities via multiple modes of transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.</p>	<p>Should offer commuting opportunities via multiple modes of transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.</p>	<p>Should serve as a major transit route. A dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facility, or facilities, should be incorporated along the roadway.</p>
<p>Clyde in East Allen Township Franks Corner in East Allen Township</p>	<p>Race Street and South of Route 22 in Hanover Township</p>	<p>Northampton Borough, North Catasauqua Borough, Catasauqua Borough</p>	<p>Airport Center in Hanover Township</p>	<p>Lehigh Valley International Airport in Hanover Township</p>	<p>Lehigh Valley Industrial Park in Hanover Township, and Southeast Hanover Township Industrial Complex</p>
<p>Regional Corridors, Commercial Corridors, Critical Local Corridors, Local Roads</p>	<p>Limited Access, Regional Corridors, Commercial Corridors, Critical Local Corridors, Local Roads</p>	<p>Regional Corridors, Critical Regional Corridors, Commercial Corridors, Critical Local Corridors, Local Roads</p>	<p>Regional Corridors, Critical Regional Corridors, Commercial Corridors, Local Roads</p>	<p>Regional Corridors, Critical Regional Corridors, Commercial Corridors, Critical Local Corridors, Local Roads</p>	<p>Limited Access, Regional Corridors, Critical Regional Corridors, Critical Local Corridors, Local Roads</p>

# CORRIDOR DESCRIPTIONS

ROAD TYPE	LOCAL ROAD	LOCAL CORRIDOR	CRITICAL LOCAL CORRIDOR	COMMUNITY CORRIDOR
TRANSPORTATION SERVICE TYPE	Mixed-Transportation	Mixed-Transportation Corridors	Mixed-Transportation Corridors	Mixed-Transportation Corridors
PURPOSE	Principal function is the provision of residential property access and connection to higher order roads.	These local roads experience major through-traffic from connected major corridors and connect residential areas to exurban and natural zones. The surrounding landscape is mainly residential development with accommodating local commercial. These could include State routes that serve as rural corridors.	Characterized by the surrounding residential development. These local road corridors experience some through-traffic from connected regional and community corridors.	These corridors are thoroughfares that lead to exurban centers, crossroad villages and exurban zones. These corridors are characterized by the local businesses and surrounding rural landscape.
VOLUME OF TRANSPORTATION	Automobile traffic volumes tend to be lower and traffic less concentrated with high levels of bike and pedestrian traffic.	Automobile traffic volumes tend to be lower and less concentrated.	Carries a high amount of car, bicycle and pedestrian traffic	Traffic volumes tend to be moderate amount of cars and concentrated.
MOBILITY AND ACCESS	Low mobility and high access.	Low mobility and high access.	Low mobility and high access.	Moderate mobility and high access.
FUTURE POTENTIAL FOR MIXED-TRANSPORTATION	Freight delivery routes. Offer commuting opportunities via multi-modal transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.	Freight delivery routes. Offer commuting opportunities via multi-modal transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.	Freight delivery routes and agricultural truck traffic. Offer commuting opportunities via multimodal transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.	Freight delivery routes and agricultural truck traffic. Offer commuting opportunities via multi-modal transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.
FUNDING AND INVESTMENT	Moderate level of funding for maintenance and repair.	Moderate level of funding for maintenance and repair.	Moderate level of funding for maintenance and repair.	Moderate level of funding for maintenance and repair.
EXAMPLES FOR RIVER CENTRAL	Lloyd Street in Hanover Township	East 9th Street in Northampton Borough	Race Street in Catasauqua Borough and Hanover Township North Dauphin Street/Lehigh Street in Hanover Township and Catasauqua Borough	Weaversville Road in East Allen and Hanover Townships
PLACE TYPES SERVED	All Place Types	Crossroads Village, Urban Center	Exurban Center, Urban Center, Critical Regional Center	Agricultural Zone, Crossroads Village, Exurban Center, Neighborhood Center, Urban Center, Critical Regional Center

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR	REGIONAL CORRIDOR	CRITICAL REGIONAL CORRIDOR	LIMITED ACCESS
Mixed-Transportation Corridors	Mixed-Transportation Corridors	Mixed-Transportation Corridors	Auto-oriented limited access corridors
Characterized by a concentration and distribution of retail and commercial uses. These corridors are thoroughfares that, in most cases, include exurban centers, neighborhood centers and/or lead to urban centers.	Largely for local and subregional mobility; connect day-to-day services and institutional and residential areas to regional & local road networks.	Connect intensely utilized locations or destinations, serve as commercial corridors and high-frequency local routes for commuting and day-to-day needs. Connect regional & local traffic to limited access highways.	Moving both people and goods long distance at relatively high speed.
Carries a high amount of truck, car, and bus traffic. Carries a moderate amount of bicycle and pedestrian traffic.	Carries a high amount of truck, car, and bus traffic. Carries a low to moderate amount of bicycle and pedestrian traffic.	Carries high amount of traffic.	Carries highest amount of traffic.
Moderate mobility and high access.	Moderate mobility and high access.	High mobility and access.	High Mobility and limited access.
Lower order freight corridor providing first mile-last mile access. Offer commuting opportunities via multi-modal transportation, including transit, bicycle, walking, and automobile.	Freight corridors that serve as the connection for limited access highway corridors and lower-level road corridors. Offer commuting opportunities via multi-modal transportation, including transit, automobiles, and dedicated bicycle ways & walking paths.	Freight corridor provides connections to limited access corridors and commercial corridors. Offer commuting opportunities via multi-modal transportation, including transit, automobiles, and dedicated bicycle ways & walking paths.	Main freight corridor for inter- and intra-regional access. Not appropriate for bicycle or pedestrian transportation.
Moderate level of funding for design, construction, maintenance and repair.	Moderate level of funding for design, construction, maintenance and repair.	High level of funding for design, construction, maintenance and repair.	High level of funding for maintenance and repair.
Catasauqua Road in Hanover Township	Route 329 in East Allen Township and Northampton Borough	Route 987 in Hanover and East Allen townships Route 512 in East Allen Township	Route 22 in Hanover Township
Regional Center	Neighborhood Center, Urban Center, Regional Center, Critical Regional Center	Exurban Center, Neighborhood Center, Urban Center, Regional Center, Critical Regional Center, Highway Center	Regional Center, Highway Center

# 2.1

## Provide a safe and well-maintained transportation system.

While guiding future land uses to locations advantageous to the existing transportation network promotes an efficient system for users of all ability and vehicle types, the municipalities of River Central also must address aging roadway infrastructure in need of repair.

- ▶ Right-size transportation infrastructure projects to maintain the scale and characteristics of River Central while improving efficiency, safety and accessibility for all modes of travel.
  - ≈ Utilize findings of the Weaversville Road Curve Study to implement location-specific strategies.
- ▶ Identify transportation infrastructure needs and be prepared to apply for project funding and technical assistance.
  - ≈ Request inclusion of transportation infrastructure projects by type improvement need to the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study for inclusion in the region's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), as this prioritizes projects for funding as made available across a variety of funding sources and programs.
- ▶ Coordinate with the LVPC for Local Technical Assistance Program support on transportation issues, to problem-solve and grow support for transportation improvements.
- ▶ Evaluate street design standards to ensure safety for all modes and consider strategic corridors for traffic-calming initiatives.



19th ST

ONE WAY

Erie Insurance  
Robertson Engler  
INSURANCE GROUP

1861

TRUIST

TRUIST

NORTHAMPTON  
OFFICE

Sidewalks and crosswalks at the intersection of Main Street and 19th Street, Northampton Borough.

## 2.2

Support the expansion of technology, communications and utilities to reduce travel demands, **optimize traffic flow and prepare** for the next generation of jobs.

New efficiencies and technologies are helping to overcome challenges as the economy continues to diversify and will continue to be significant drivers in the global, national, and regional economy through the 21st century. Ensuring access to technology, such as high-speed internet and subsequent generations of mobile networks, will be imperative to providing and strengthening opportunities to compete in today and tomorrow's economy. Planning and being proactive for the next generation of technological advances in communications and utilities will enable River Central to be a leader in deployment of infrastructure to grow opportunity and access for the residents and businesses of the area.

- ▶ Stay abreast of current and evolving technologies that must be in place to support advancing transportation and energy technologies, modern lifestyles and current-day workforce needs.
- ▶ Coordinate with electric utility providers to upgrade utility infrastructure as needed.
- ▶ Coordinate with telecommunications providers to increase access to high-quality, high-speed, and broadband internet, including future generations of technological advancements.



Route 22, heading westbound, Hanover Township.

# 2.3

## Mitigate the impacts of freight-based facilities.

Freight-based land use has its challenges. Warehousing and other industries that rely on freight movement have become prevalent within the River Central area. Mitigating the issues relating to these industries is important to retaining the standard of living expected within the region. The River Central communities need to work together to ensure that development within one municipality does not negatively impact its neighbors.

- ▶ Require documentation from freight-based land development proposals that demonstrate that adequate transportation infrastructure is available through a study of existing conditions.
- ▶ Ensure that ordinances and development submissions address the need for on-site truck waiting areas, on-site parking, driver amenities and necessary infrastructure to minimize idling, mitigate parking on public roads, and negate impacts on adjoining properties.
  - ≈ Manage freight-related development as industry needs evolve by adding ordinance definitions and regulations for emerging land uses, such as high cube and automated warehouses and overnight tractor trailer parking.
- ▶ Minimize truck traffic on local roads by directing freight traffic to designated state truck routes:
  - ≈ Route 329 (through Northampton Borough and East Allen Township)
  - ≈ Route 987 (through Hanover Township and East Allen Township)
  - ≈ Route 22 in Hanover Township
- ▶ Utilize strategies in the Lehigh Valley International Airport Area Freight Study to manage freight traffic.
- ▶ Prepare capital improvement programs that identify and prioritize transportation infrastructure needs.
  - ≈ Submit proposals to Long Range Transportation Plan as a possible funding source.
- ▶ Coordinate regional-scale grant and funding proposals with adjacent communities.
- ▶ Coordinate regional roadway planning among all River Central Area municipalities and PennDOT to provide orderly movement of traffic, identify alternative truck routes, and account for changes.



**75.7%**

of Community Survey respondents said  
**“Reduce freight traffic on local  
roads”** would be the most effective  
strategy in addressing River Central’s  
transportation and mobility needs.



**Top:** A FedEx plane being unloaded at Lehigh Valley International Airport, Hanover Township.

**Bottom:** A freight train near Jacksonville Road, East Allen Township.

# 2.4

## Accommodate passenger and freight air travel.

The area around Lehigh Valley International Airport (LVIA) has seen a boom in warehousing and distribution centers, and LVIA is a growing freight movement airport in addition to passenger traffic. Accommodating increased passenger and freight air travel requires coordination.

- ▶ Engage Lehigh and Northampton Airport Authority on strategic planning to allow the safe and efficient growth of air cargo for the Lehigh Valley.
- ▶ Create and implement a compatible airport surface transportation access network and community plan.
- ▶ Utilize strategies in the Lehigh Valley International Airport Area Freight Study to manage increasing freight logistics movements.
- ▶ Review and update zoning ordinances to ensure appropriate Airport Zoning and compatible land uses.





Lehigh Valley International Airport.  
Airport Road, Hanover Township.

# 2.5

## Enhance pedestrian, transit and trail network connections.

With a growing population and the expansion of transportation dependent industries, there is growing interest in ensuring the intermodal transportation network remains interconnected. The River Central communities need to be proactive to ensure that new developments are connected to existing transportation options and any gaps are improved.

- ▶ Identify trail gaps and connect trails to Centers, Corridors and historic assets.
- ▶ Communicate with the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) on development proposals and land use changes to support coordinated transit service.
- ▶ Identify projects and apply to PennDOT's funding programs for bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements during open application periods.
- ▶ Review subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure sidewalks are required in all future developments.
- ▶ Provide for and require sidewalks with American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant infrastructure in development plans, as well as multimodal amenities to encourage alternative modes of transportation, including bicycle racks, bike lanes, and modern bus stops.
- ▶ Pursue grants to improve the walkability in connection with existing transit bus stops.
- ▶ Coordinate upgrades to existing traffic management systems or traffic lights to implement smart streets with adaptive traffic signals and other evolving technologies.



The D&L Trail and North Catasauga Boat  
Launch, North Catasauga Borough.

# GOAL 3



Protect and enhance  
farmland and the  
farming economy.

The future of farms, farmland and farmers is vital to the health and vibrance of our rural communities within River Central. Farms provide nourishment, preserve rural landscapes and support local economic development. Preserving farmland and open space provides many advantages including preserving scenic views and natural habitats, improving community health and wellness as well as economic benefits. The loss of these lands to development can have long term economic, environmental and social costs, and is not easily reversed.

As the population of the area continues to grow, not only will these lands be threatened, but the need for them will intensify as more people will require more food. For these farms to survive, communities need to identify resources to purchase conservation easements, implement programs that reduce the loss of farmland, and support projects that increase the economic viability of farming. To thrive, farms need access to resources, as well as municipal and community support.

# 3.1

## Conserve farms and farmlands.

Farms and farmlands are under threat within the River Central region. Other types of development, such as housing and warehousing have placed development pressure on these prime lands. Without farmland protection plans, policies and funding, farmland will continue to be in danger of development. Communities need to be proactive to save these lands and their productive nature for future generations.

- ▶ Develop, update and implement farmland protection plans.
- ▶ Support effective agricultural preservation for priority farmlands, including farmsteads with historic value.
  - ≈ Enhance farmland conservation efforts through agricultural acquisition, conservation easements and purchase of development rights.
  - ≈ Pursue funds for farmland protection activities through federal, state, county and private grant programs.
  - ≈ Develop methods to increase the financial incentive of farmland preservation.
  - ≈ Educate the public on the benefits of conservation and farmland preservation.
  - ≈ Collaborate with local land trusts, conservancies and the private sector to coordinate conservation efforts.
- ▶ Manage growth and development.
  - ≈ Where development is to occur, permit cluster development through zoning amendments to allow farming to continue in the open space.
  - ≈ Discourage the extension of water and sewer services and new roads into areas where farming is the recommended land use.
  - ≈ Adopt and enforce zoning and subdivision regulations to protect priority farmlands.
  - ≈ Evaluate existing zoning and subdivision and land development regulations to ensure current and future needs of the agriculture community are not inadvertently hindered.



# 5,192

acres of farmland  
in River Central

698 acres are  
preserved

2,812 acres are  
protected  
in Agricultural  
Security Areas

Terra Fauna Farm.  
Mountain View Drive, East Allen Township.

## 3.2

# Support growth opportunities for farms and farmers.

For farming to continue to be an economic driver for the River Central region, farms need to be supported and opportunity for growth sought. Communities need to identify and develop incentives to expand local farming opportunities and encourage the production and purchase of locally grown products.

- ▶ Encourage education and training for existing and prospective farmers, such as apprenticeship programs.
- ▶ Support new agricultural opportunities.
  - ≈ Promote sustainable agritourism as a business opportunity.
  - ≈ Strengthen local markets for regional agricultural products.
  - ≈ Support agricultural processing and distributions facilities.
  - ≈ Encourage the support of businesses that use local ingredients.
  - ≈ Support diversified farming operations, including urban farms, suburban cooperatives and you-pick operations.
- ▶ Develop connections between farms and the River Central communities.
  - ≈ Ensure equitable access to fresh food and produce.
  - ≈ Develop a regional community garden program for more urbanized lots.
  - ≈ Involve farms, farmers and their products in local and regional events.
  - ≈ Expand the Northampton Farmers Market and encourage similar markets throughout the region.

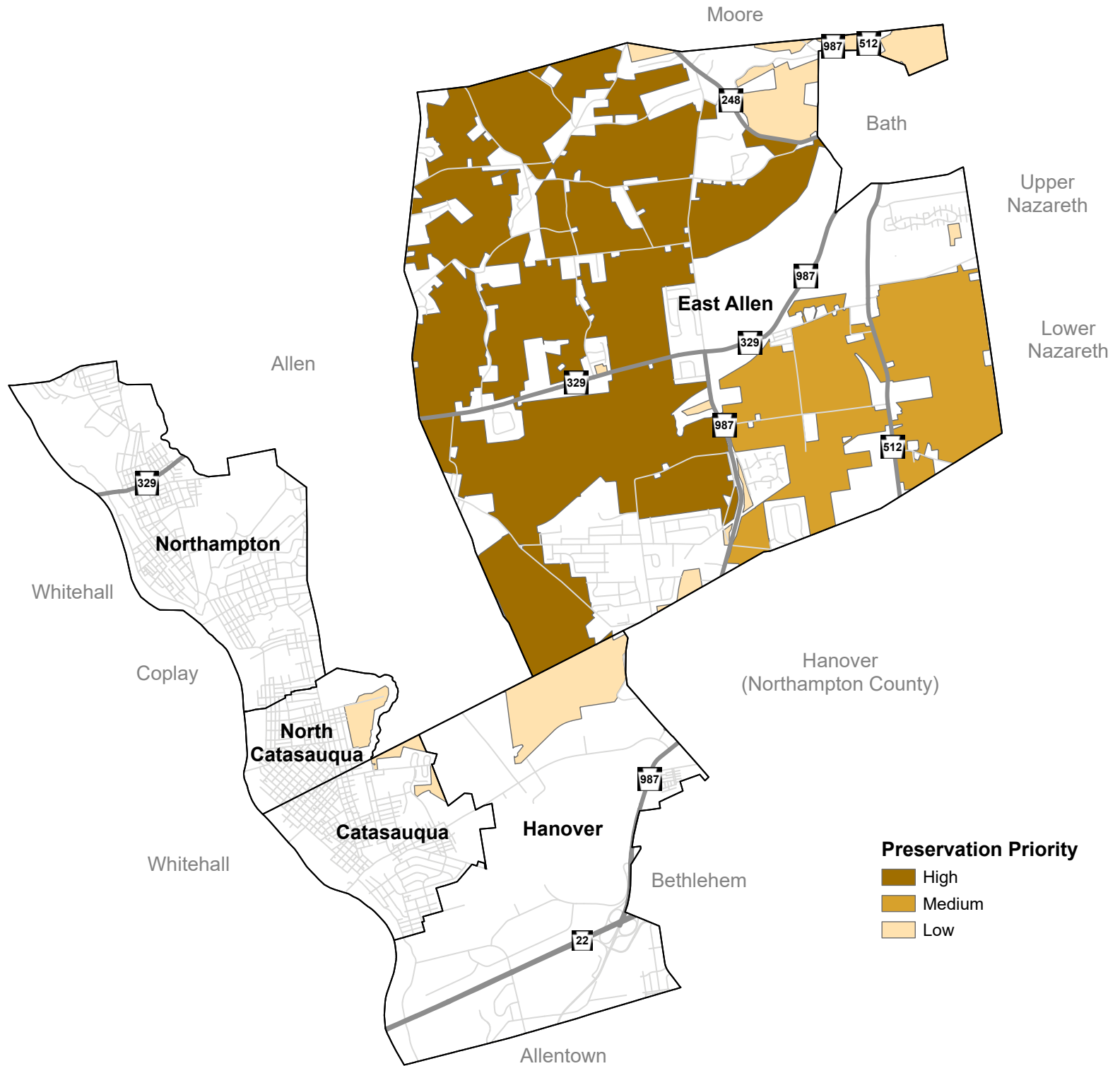


Cornfield on Old Carriage Road,  
East Allen Township.

# Farmland Preservation Plan

The High and Medium Priority Farmland Preservation areas on the plan represent the most significant clusters of existing farmland, based on the overall size of the cluster combined with agricultural soils quality. The municipalities will use this plan as an important component of development proposal review. High Priority areas are the largest clusters and represent the best opportunity for infill with farmland-supportive businesses and services. This plan should be used by other government agencies and conservation organizations to prioritize areas for preservation of farming operations, typically through the acquisition of easements to permanently preserve the

land as farming. Low Preservation Priority Farmland, defined as such due to small size, lower soils quality or lack of proximity to other farmlands, should also be considered for preservation as the opportunity arises. High, Medium, and Low Priority areas are shown on the Future Land Use Plan for Farmland Preservation or certain Preservation Buffer areas. In the Preservation Buffer area, Farmland Preservation is preferred. Agricultural properties adjacent to or in proximity to the Lehigh Valley International Airport should remain as farmland until used for airport expansion as identified in the ABE Master Plan.



# 3.3

## Promote local farming as a business.

The retention and expansion of family farms is imperative to the success of River Central. Communities need to encourage strategies toward preparing the next generation of farmers and support agricultural job training programs.

- ▶ Support farmers and offer resources in developing succession plans.
  - ≈ Support the retention and expansion of local family farms by promoting generational farmland transfers.
  - ≈ Lobby the state to end the death tax, which makes it difficult to leave farms to children.
  - ≈ Educate non-farm landowners on the importance and value of retaining land in agricultural use.
- ▶ Examine new farming techniques and opportunities.
  - ≈ Examine emerging specialty crops as a potential business opportunity.
  - ≈ Promote the use of best management practices and green infrastructure on farms.
  - ≈ Develop financial incentives to assist with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification.
  - ≈ Protect new agricultural uses by encouraging creative new revenue streams that supplement traditional farm revenues.
- ▶ Expand access to business education and networking connections for local farmers.
  - ≈ Encourage the creation of agricultural committees within the townships to foster improved communication on agricultural issues.
  - ≈ Provide and promote farmer engagement opportunities.
  - ≈ Explore farmer educational programming.
  - ≈ Coordinate with Penn State Extension for farm-supportive resources.
  - ≈ Encourage cooperation between farmers who need land and those who have access to rentable farmland.
  - ≈ Connect farmers to agricultural property owners to support agricultural-based land transfers and minimize the transition to non-farming uses.

**HUNSICKER'S** ←  
**TWIN MAPLE FARMS**  
[www.twinmaplefarmspa.com](http://www.twinmaplefarmspa.com)

**CABBAGE**  
TWIN MAPLE FARMS

**POTATOES**  
TWIN MAPLE FARMS

**SWEET CORN**  
TWIN MAPLE FARMS

Hunsicker's Twin Maple Farms, School Road, East Allen Township.

# FARMING and the ECONOMY

While many River Central communities and residents appreciate farmland for the aesthetic benefits and open space characteristics it provides the area, the community and economic benefits provided are just as important. Beyond rolling rural landscapes, agriculture is an economic driver and a livelihood, and once farmland is developed, that economic impact is lost forever. With their vicinity to major markets, not only within the region, but outside in areas like New York City and Philadelphia, farmers within River Central have the potential to flourish through innovation. While the average farm in America is over 400 acres, the average farm in the Lehigh Valley is 129 acres. Therefore, efficiency is important. Despite those size limitations, and limited leasable land in the vicinity, the local area is known for supporting local farmers and their products. In a 2022 report by the farming trade group Verdesian, the Lehigh Valley was ranked as the fourth-best area nationwide for supporting local farmers.

PENNSYLVANIA  
ranks behind only California in  
direct-to-consumer sales of  
farm products (\$600 million).

---

**\$115.3 m**  
market value of agricultural products  
sold in the Lehigh Valley

---



CROPS  
**\$84.9**  
MILLION

million

tural products

alley



LIVESTOCK,  
POULTRY AND  
PRODUCTS

**\$30.4**

**MILLION**

To thrive, communities need to:

Strengthen local agricultural connections.

- ▶ Encourage cooperation between farmers, merchants and consumers.
- ▶ Strengthen regional food systems by linking food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management.
- ▶ Promote direct to consumer farm sales.
- ▶ Collaborate on developing a regional farmers market program.
- ▶ Encourage residents, local food stores, restaurants and institutions to buy local farm-produced products.

Leverage proximity and connection to major metropolitan regions.

- ▶ Develop a relationship with regional restaurants, markets and businesses in Philadelphia and New York City that desire fresh produce.
- ▶ Connect to trail opportunities.
- ▶ Encourage and market agritourism as a supplemental business opportunity, and a reason to visit the area.
- ▶ Coordinate with Buy Fresh Buy Local for marketing and effective agricultural business strategies.

Utilize innovative new approaches and evaluate new specialty products.

- ▶ Provide education and offer technical and financial assistance in new farming techniques and strategies.
- ▶ Research and provide assistance in the development of new specialty agricultural products.

# GOAL 4

A decorative graphic consisting of four horizontal, wavy bands of varying shades of blue, ranging from light to dark, positioned below the title.

Preserve and expand natural, recreation, cultural and historic resources as essential to quality of life.

The identity of the River Central community is rooted in its natural, recreational, cultural and historic resources. From the Lehigh River and stream corridors to the highly valued park and trail system that includes the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, to the Roxy Theater and the Atlas Cement Company Museum, these features and places make River Central what it is. These assets are treasured for their contribution to River Central's heritage and character, and for the environmental, community, health, wellness and economic benefits they provide. The Lehigh Valley Return on Environment study documented that open space resources add significant value to the regional economy, with benefits accruing to businesses, governments and households by providing natural system services (e.g., flood mitigation and improved water quality), improving air quality, providing outdoor recreation opportunities and increasing property values. Additional benefits from cultural and historic resources include job creation, community

revitalization, attracting employers, increased tourism, and strengthening a community's unique sense of place. Located across the River Central region, these resources provide opportunities for a wide variety of activities and attractions for the enjoyment of both residents and visitors.

Preservation of these resources must be a priority as River Central continues to evolve—creating a fine balance to maintain the high quality of life that residents appreciate and desire, while generating economic growth. Preservation and economic growth are interdependent, as the presence of open spaces and natural features are often key to attracting employers and tourism. The municipalities of River Central can take steps to support the protection and preservation of these assets and capitalize on their benefits. Through collaboration and partnerships with local stakeholders, municipalities can coordinate a long-term preservation strategy, linking these cherished assets.

# 4.1

## Conserve, protect and manage natural lands, water and scenic resources.

While much of the River Central region is developed, the beautiful natural areas that remain are significant to the area's quality of life. Preservation of parks, trails and other recreational areas is imperative. Development pressure, from residential to industrial uses, threatens these precious lands. Communities need to be proactive to maintain green space.

- ▶ Preserve high and medium overall conservation priority natural resource areas and scenic vistas through acquisition or conservation easements.
  - ≈ Utilize an official map to protect and acquire properties with high and medium overall conservation priority natural resource areas.
  - ≈ Protect natural resource areas other than high and medium overall conservation priority if the opportunity arises, including through the subdivision and land development process.
  - ≈ Seek natural resource areas acquisition funding through federal, state, county and private grant programs.
- ▶ Ensure zoning and subdivision regulations protect natural and scenic resource areas.
- ▶ Encourage the establishment and restoration of riparian buffers adjacent to surface waters by using a variety of native, climate-adaptive trees and plants and providing educational signage as appropriate.
  - ≈ Reference the LVPC Riparian and Wetlands Buffers Guide + Model Regulations.
- ▶ Support open space and natural resources protection through Environmental Advisory Councils.
- ▶ Coordinate efforts with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Lehigh County, Northampton County, local land trusts, school districts and the private sector to fully protect natural lands, water and scenic resources.
- ▶ Educate the community about the importance of environmental stewardship and the unique natural, water and scenic asset of the River Central area to enhance knowledge, respect for and management of public and private lands.

# ENVIRONMENT by the Numbers

**852**

acres of Woodlands, primarily  
along stream corridors.

**4**

**WATERWAYS**

Lehigh River  
Catasauqua Creek  
Hokendauqua Creek  
Monocacy Creek

**32**

acres of Wetlands

**NATURAL  
HERITAGE**

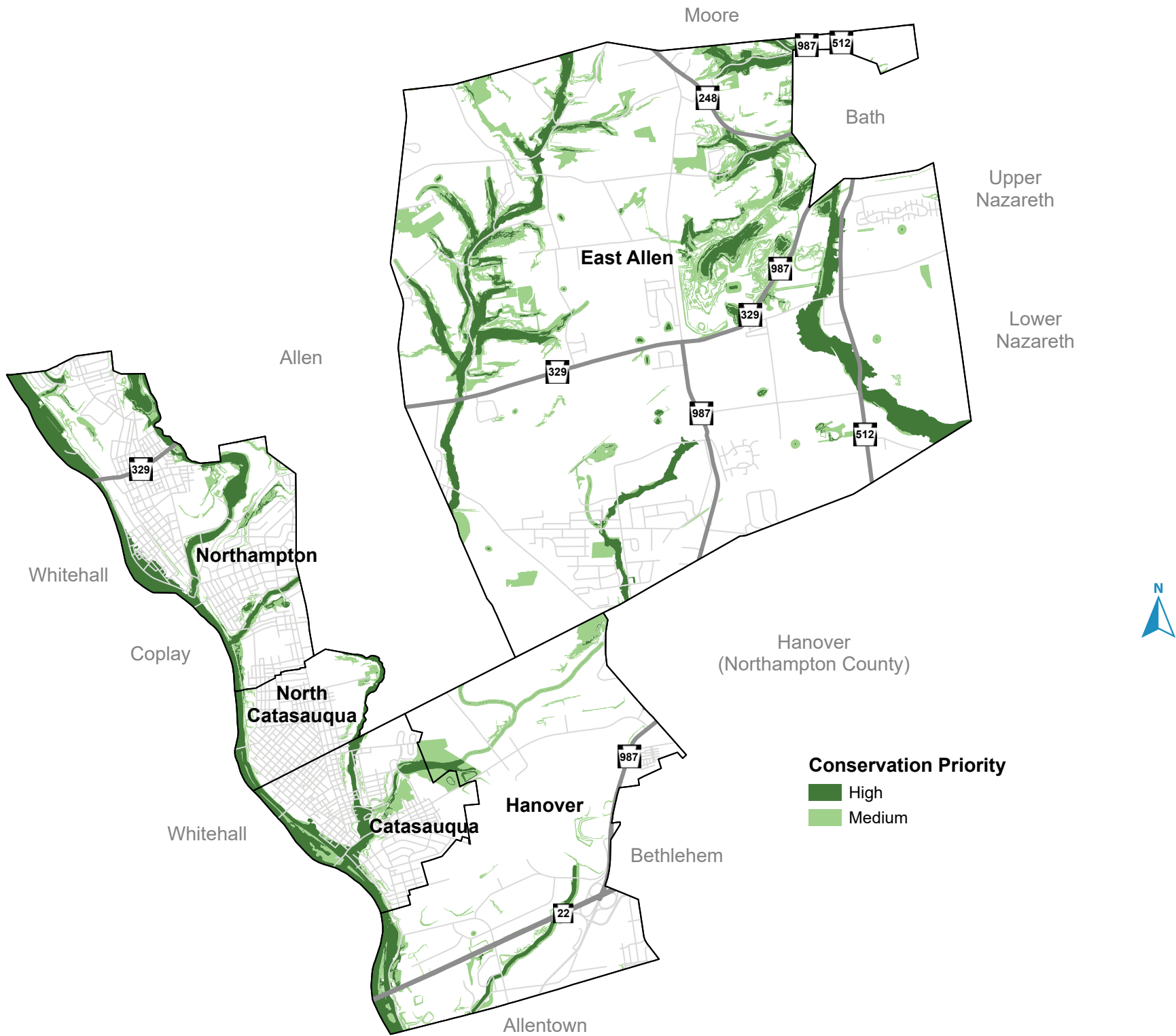
**2  
5**

locally significant  
core habitats  
  
supporting  
landscapes

# Natural Resources Plan

The High Conservation Priority Natural Resource areas shown on the plan take precedence over other land use recommendations presented in River Central, including the Future Land Use Plan. This represents a conservation first perspective. The High and Medium Conservation Priority areas are used by the municipalities in review of subdivision and land development proposals, to identify potential preservation areas within a development, development of plans and ordinances, and grant applications, among other uses specified in the policies and actions. The High and Medium Conservation Priority areas should also be used by conservation organizations and other government agencies to prioritize conservation efforts.

Natural Resources Plan Elements			
Element	Priority		
Natural Heritage Inventory - Core Habitat		Woodlands	
Global Significance	High	Greater than 500 acres	Medium
Regional Significance	High	100 to 500 acres	Medium
State Significance	Medium	25 to 99 acres	Medium
Local Significance	Medium	5 to 24 acres	Medium
Natural Heritage Inventory - Supporting Landscapes		Interior Woodlands	Medium
Global Significance	Medium	Steep Slopes	
Regional Significance	Medium	Greater than 25%	Medium
State Significance	Low	15 to 25%	Medium
Local Significance	Low	Hydrography	High
Blue Mountain/Kittatinny Ridge Natural Area	High	Riparian Buffers	Medium
Local Natural Areas	Medium	Floodplains	High
		Wetlands	High
		Hydric Soils	
		Predominantly	Medium
		Partially	Low



# 4.2

## Provide and maintain an accessible and interconnected park, trail and recreation system.

Providing parks, trails and recreational areas that are safe and well-maintained is imperative to the success of the River Central region. River Central communities need to update and implement park, recreation and open space plans that address facilities and management, personnel, administration, programming and financing. Special consideration should be made to keep these facilities, and other resources within the region, such as the riverfront, easily accessible and connected. River Central communities may consider taking the following actions:

- ▶ Adopt or amend official maps to proactively plan for future parks, trails, and bicycle and pedestrian pathways.
- ▶ Amend subdivision and land development ordinance regulations to require street connectivity, provide for sidewalks and bikeways, and connect sidewalks and trails.
- ▶ Require developers to dedicate open space or recreation land (or fee in lieu) as part of all new development proposals, subsequent to the adoption of a required municipal recreation plan.
- ▶ Review outdoor recreation sites for access issues and improve as needed
  - ≈ Leverage the Safe Routes to Parks program (National Park and Recreation Association).
- ≈ Ensure outdoor recreation facilities are compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act.
- ▶ Expand parks and recreation programming to meet the needs of all community members.
  - ≈ Survey residents and users' groups (e.g., from their website) for suggestions on park and trail needs, facility changes or conversions.
- ▶ Implement recommendations of the *Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan Catalytic Project* — Catasauqua Area Trail & Transit Initiative as opportunities arise.
- ▶ Use preserved open space along stream corridors for passive recreation activities.



## RIVER CENTRAL HAS

**30 parks**  
*public and private*

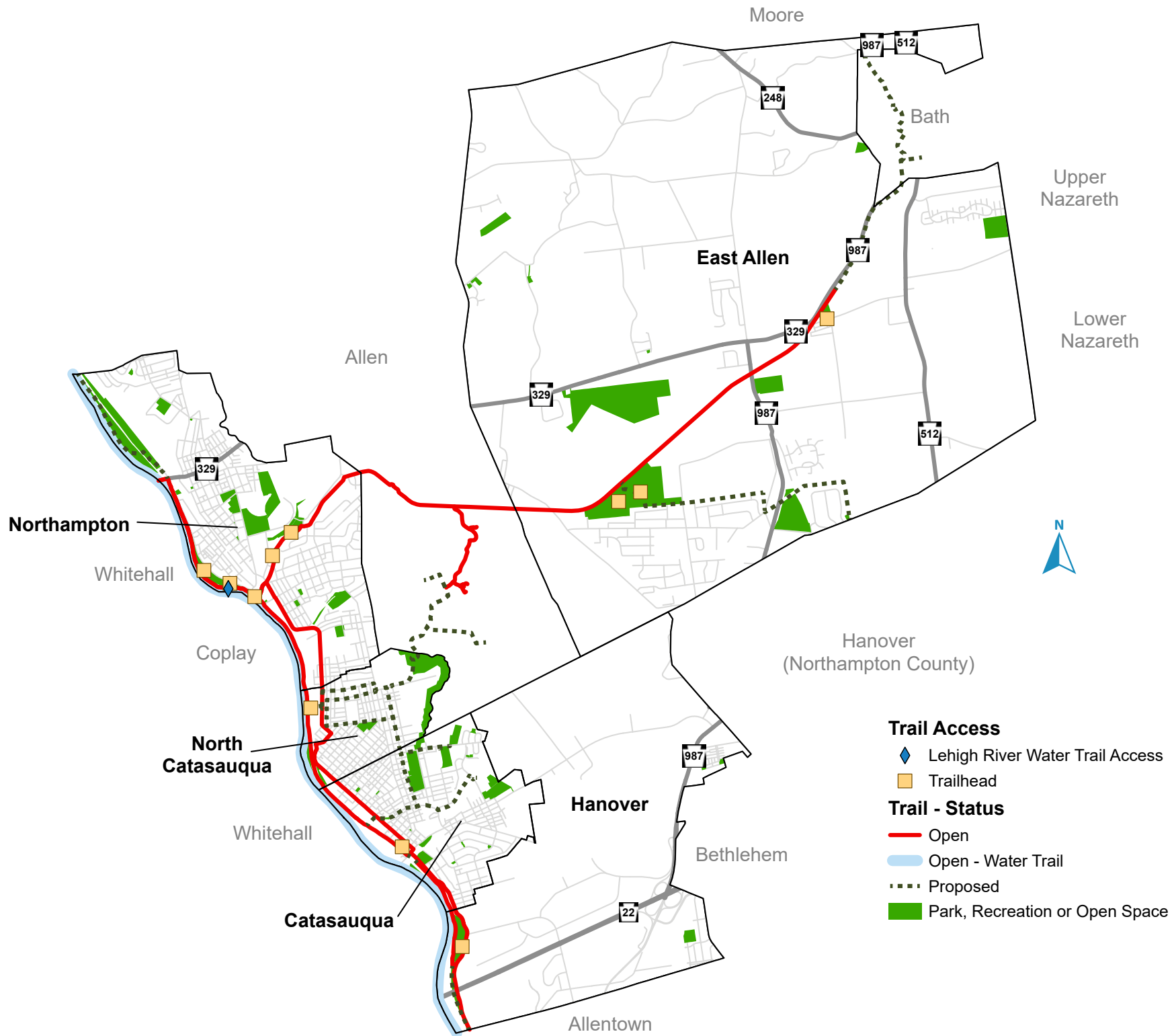
**6 trails**

*4 open, 2 proposed*

William J. Albert Memorial Park. Grove  
Street, North Catasaquua Borough.

# Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

This plan shows existing and planned park, outdoor recreation and open space facilities and should be used to guide efforts by public/private organizations and government agencies to expand, improve and connect regional assets and pursue a multi-municipal approach to park and recreation programming. The municipalities use this plan in concert with their individual open space plans, as applicable, and with the Northampton and Lehigh County Livable Landscapes Plans and other plans to establish priorities for funding and work efforts for these facilities. Recommended improvements shown on this plan are compatible with any land use depicted on the Future Land Use Plan.



# 4.3

## Preserve and enhance historic and cultural resources and landscapes.

The River Central region is adorned with historical and culturally significant homes, sites and communities. Special attention should be made within the main streets of the boroughs which are lined with historic structures. These resources need to be protected and preserved.

- ▶ Use zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to establish historic overlay districts, promote context-sensitive design regulations, establish demolition-by-neglect, and require developers to identify and preserve historic buildings and landscape resources in new development proposals.
- ▶ Leverage Northampton and Lehigh County grant programs, tax credits, incentive-based programs and other tools to revitalize and enhance historic communities and rehabilitate historic sites.
- ▶ Encourage continued investment in and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, through expansion of permissible uses within traditional neighborhoods and crossroads villages.
  - ≈ Explore opportunities to support potential businesses with adapting older buildings for modern-day needs.
- ▶ Consider designating historic districts through the adoption of historic district regulations pursuant to the Historic District Act (Act 167 of 1961).
- ▶ Assign high preservation priority to historic buildings that have educational importance, value as visitor attractions or that can be restored by the private sector.
- ▶ Participate in the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office's Certified Local Government program through which municipalities receive grants, training and technical assistance for preservation programming.
- ▶ Support property owners in pursuit of National Register of Historic Places designation for significant individual properties and historic and cultural landscape districts.
- ▶ Retain the Native American heritage of the region through education and promotion.
- ▶ Continue to support cultural heritage events and develop new historical events that further connect people to place and reinforce community pride.
- ▶ Educate property owners on the value of historic resources and opportunities for preservation.



**River Central has a wealth of historic resources —**  
Wolf Academy on Jacksonville Road, East Allen Township.

# 4.4

## Build and maintain partnerships with public and private organizations to maximize resource protection.

As part of this planning process, River Central communities have developed an in-depth inventory of tasks to protect natural and cultural resources. To be successful, communities will need to cooperate with each other, and leverage other public and private organizations to efficiently undertake all the work that needs to be done.

- ▶ Create a multi-municipal committee to connect the region's assets into a network of destinations that cross support outdoor, natural, historic, and cultural economies.
- ▶ Partner with organizations, such as the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Discover Lehigh Valley and surrounding communities to develop a signage program that connects and directs people to destinations and services.
- ▶ Collaborate with Lehigh Valley Greenways partners, school districts and the private sector to protect natural lands, water and scenic resources.
- ▶ Coordinate with schools, public and non-profit organizations to provide adequate recreational space for residents.
- ▶ Coordinate amongst the River Central municipalities to share recreational facilities and programming.
- ▶ Collaborate with Lehigh Valley Greenways partners to connect residents and visitors to trail opportunities.
- ▶ Coordinate with the Tri-Boro Sportsmen's Club as an education resource for children to learn about fishing and the environment.
- ▶ Partner with PennDOT District 5 for opportunities for the development of trails and bicycle/pedestrian facilities when roadways are constructed or repaired.
- ▶ Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Lehigh County Historical Society and the Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society for advice, assistance, and support to manage local historic and cultural sites.
- ▶ Coordinate with local historical societies, Main Street programs and neighborhood groups to develop interest and participation in documentation of buildings and history through historic surveys.
- ▶ Partner with Northampton County to implement the County's Draft Historic and Cultural Assets Plan.
- ▶ Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to complete historic resource surveys.



The George Taylor House. on South Front Street, Catasaqua Borough.

# 4.5

## Expand and diversify businesses associated with natural, recreation, cultural and historic resources in downtowns, crossroads villages and along regional trails.

Communities and towns within River Central have the opportunity to leverage nearby trails and natural resources for local benefits. Trail towns are characterized as communities that embrace their nearby and adjacent trails as an opportunity for improved quality of life and economic growth. Communities can support trail users with services and promote the trail to its citizens. In total, a trail town is built on the relationship between the town, the trail and its people. Developing and creating a trail town identity can bring citizens, people and organizations together to make positive change in their surrounding area.

- ▶ Create a multi-municipal committee to develop a Trail Town, cultural, historic, ecotourism and agritourism program that connects regional assets into a network of destinations and promotes River Central's economic identity.
- ▶ Attract businesses to downtowns and near regional assets that provide needed services for outdoor activity enthusiasts to further ecotourism and recreational tourism.
  - ≈ Coordinate with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce to further business development and marketing.
- ▶ Update land use regulations to direct lodging to appropriate areas that support local businesses and connect to regional assets.
- ▶ Encourage diverse dining options.
- ▶ Explore opportunities for amenities along trails by developing or reuse of existing development on adjacent parcels.
- ▶ Leverage Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor guidance, resources and grant opportunities for Trail Towns and Trail-Friendly Businesses.



D&L Trail to Bristol ←  
D&L Trail to Wilkes-Barre →

**D & L TRAIL**  
**NORTH CATASAUQUA BOROUGH**  
Funding for this project was provided in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation's Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund, the Northampton County Livable Landscapes Grant Program, and the Commonwealth Financing Authority

Deer crossing on the D&L, Trail. Main Street, North Catasauqua Borough.

# TRAIL TOWNS

Trail Towns can be linked to all types of trails, whether they are for hiking, walking, biking, snowmobiling, kayaking or horseback riding. In River Central, the trail network can be expanded through the municipalities that connect to the September 11 National Memorial Trail, Delaware & Lehigh Trail and Nor-Bath Trail, as well as to parks, residential areas and to employment centers. Expanding these connections and embracing the trails within communities can foster identities around trails and expand local economies.

## Elements of Trail Towns

### Local Services and Amenities

- ▶ Rest facilities
- ▶ Specialty restaurants, beverages, stores and farmers markets
- ▶ Travel supplies
- ▶ Bike rentals, supplies and repair
- ▶ Souvenirs
- ▶ Overnight lodging
- ▶ First-aid/medical care

### Place-based Activities and Events

- ▶ Historic tours
- ▶ Seasonal events
- ▶ Concerts
- ▶ Events along the trail

### Physical Connections

- ▶ Trailheads with parking
- ▶ Walking, biking routes
- ▶ Walking, biking infrastructure

### Signage and Visuals

- ▶ Welcome signs
- ▶ Destination markers
- ▶ Directional/wayfinding signage
- ▶ Educational, historic and science-related signage
- ▶ Maps: online, print, and posted in town



### Promotion and Advertising

- ▶ Targeted to local citizens
- ▶ Targeted to visitors from near and far
- ▶ Websites, social media, newsletters
- ▶ Reviews/testimonials of experiences



# GOAL 5



Enhance housing  
opportunities for all.

Perceptions of the quality of life in a community are often directly tied to everyday experiences in neighborhoods. Quality neighborhoods are safe, adequately served by public facilities and linked to the rest of the community by sidewalks or pathways. Housing is also directly tied to other critical resources and necessities, including education and jobs, and therefore is directly tied to a community's stability and sustainability. The River Central community strives to meet the needs and housing choices of a diverse population throughout all stages of life.

Planning for housing enables the River Central municipalities to determine a logical pattern of growth, at a reasonable scale that aligns with community goals. The Region is recognized as a desirable place to live because of its convenient transportation access and natural, recreational and cultural resources. These factors have contributed to steadily rising housing costs, especially in the boroughs where very little open space remains to accommodate new development. To avoid overcrowding, new or redeveloped housing should be located in areas with the infrastructure to accommodate it. Growth must also be strategically managed to ensure the future generations of River Central's residents do not become priced out of their lifelong homes.

# 5.1

## Improve and maintain the quality of existing housing for safe and suitable living environments.

Healthy, quality housing that is free from physical hazards promotes quality of life and community well-being. Homeowners and landlords both have responsibilities and opportunities to create well-built homes, whether new or renovated, that are more resilient, attractive and affordable. River Central and its partners can help ensure that all residents live in quality housing with code enforcement, education and assistance programs.

- ▶ Promote grants, loans and other housing assistance programs to improve quality of housing and homeownership.
- ▶ Identify and pursue ways to upgrade and revitalize older housing structures.
- ▶ Ensure infill and redevelopment regulations are clear and predictable.
- ▶ Seek partnerships with financial institutions to increase the availability of mortgage financing in areas with older housing stock.
- ▶ Leverage local, state and federal grant programs to accomplish housing rehabilitation.
- ▶ Review and establish effective code enforcement programs, rental housing registration and inspection, and presale inspection programs to ensure basic property maintenance.
- ▶ Utilize strategies in the Northampton County Blight Reversal and Remediation Plan to improve the condition of deteriorated housing.



**Top Left:** Townhouses on Main Street, Northampton Borough.

**Top Right:** A single-family detached house, Milton Street, North Catasauqua Borough.

**Bottom:** Allendale Apartments on Irving Street, Hanover Township.

# 5.2

## Facilitate stable housing costs and availability for households of all sizes and income levels.

Property owners who reside locally are more likely to be engaged with neighborhood revitalization efforts and to be part of the community network. 71% of River Central residents own their homes. Local ownership is an indication of community-scale investment by reinforcing commitment to place, and can provide stability and economic security to individuals and families.

River Central communities have stable resident bases — 61% of residents have lived in River Central for over 10 years, and another 19% have lived in the area for at least 5 years. However, as housing prices increase for both renters and owners, River Central faces a growing need for workforce-attainable housing, especially to support the growth of its local economy, small business owners and future generations of residents who want to remain in the area.

- ▶ Prioritize housing initiatives in areas with access to jobs, social opportunities and multimodal transportation.
- ▶ Promote neighborhood design that provides a mix of housing options attainable to workforce incomes, in locations with convenient access to community facilities and services.
- ▶ Update zoning ordinances to permit diverse housing types at higher residential densities in designated growth areas.
- ▶ Review zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to increase flexibility and eliminate provisions that unnecessarily raise costs of new housing construction.
- ▶ Provide development incentives to non-profit and for-profit housing providers and developers to create new or redeveloped housing in locations that are connected to public transit, trails or sidewalks.
- ▶ Promote Financial Assistance Programs.
- ▶ Promote information about fair housing and fair lending practices through municipal websites, newsletters and other outreach materials.
- ▶ Incentivize providing a minimum percentage of low-and-moderately priced units in residential development projects through density bonuses and streamlined approvals.



Dery Silk Mill Apartments. Race Street, Catasauqua Borough.

## 5.3

### Support strategies that allow current and future residents to age in place.

A primary concern that emerged through the community engagement process is the ability for River Central to accommodate an aging population. River Central communities may take a proactive approach to ensuring that residents can continue to age in place.

- ▶ Promote universal design standards that increase housing opportunities for people of all ability types and allow seniors to age in place.
- ▶ Explore programs and opportunities to adapt older housing units to accommodate Americans with Disabilities Act standards.
- ▶ Leverage programs and resources provided by AARP, and the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging at the United Way to grow River Central into an age-friendly community.
- ▶ Consider revising zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to conditionally allow in-law suites in strategic areas able to accommodate them.



“Elderly housing is lacking for lower incomes, and people are on waiting lists for years to get adequate housing.” – feedback received from the Kick-off Charettes

# GOAL 6



Strengthen safe, healthy,  
creative, inclusive and  
livable communities.

Community is built by residents and businesses, reflected by the places where people live, work and play. For a community to be truly livable, it is safe and accessible for all. River Central aims to build upon and elevate its places and environment into spaces that are representative of the unique culture and values of its community, with health and creative expression at its core. This will foster an inclusive and vibrant expression of River Central and its high quality of life.

# 6.1

## Promote efficiencies in emergency management.

Funding the services residents need is becoming increasingly difficult. This issue is not unique to the River Central area — across Pennsylvania, volunteer firefighters have declined from 300,000 in the 1970s to 38,000 today (Pennsylvania Fire Chiefs Association). A growing region means there will be increasing demand for fire, police and ambulance services.

At the Emergency Management Services roundtable, funding and its implications for department resources, staff retention, equipment and overall service capacity was identified as a primary issue. River Central's volunteer fire and ambulance departments are often competing for the same pot of resources and require innovative approaches to raise funds. Many municipalities across the state are working together to share costs of emergency services and plan together to minimize future impacts of growth on infrastructure or services.

- ▶ Establish a system or procedure where fire, police and ambulance departments are involved in the development review process, to inform service considerations and points of access.
- ≈ Ensure that appropriate emergency equipment is available to support new developments.
- ▶ Coordinate regular meetings between all emergency management departments and agencies to discuss issues, share solutions and identify opportunities to further regional collaboration and efficiencies.
- ▶ Develop and coordinate emergency management plans for each municipality based on mitigation and preparedness needs.
- ≈ Identify gaps in services and potential gaps in the face of crisis.
- ▶ Identify opportunities in acquiring the funding and resources necessary to support fire, police and emergency medical services operations.
- ▶ Evaluate opportunities to increase recruitment and retention of essential personnel including, but not limited to, firefighter, police and emergency management personnel.

# Coordinated Emergency Management Services

Coordinating emergency management services reduces the cost and burden of responsibility on individual municipal departments that are strained in personnel, equipment, funding and capacity. Regions like River Central with interconnected community systems have an opportunity to improve efficiency and increase the health, safety and security of the community. Continuous collaboration also helps ensure response efforts are working in harmony when minutes matter most.

- ▶ **Increase coordination between individual emergency service operations.**

- ≈ Conduct regular region-wide meetings of all municipal emergency management teams to coordinate efforts and identify opportunities to share resources and information.

- ▶ **Consider developing a regionwide response plan that addresses community emergencies, including fires, active shooters, natural disaster recovery, where emergency shelters could be utilized and strategies to collaborate during large-scale response efforts.**

- ▶ **Collaborate across municipalities to share the cost of training recruits**

- ▶ **Explore cost-sharing opportunities for facilities and equipment**

- ≈ Leverage funds for a program allowing joint use of equipment, training facilities, communications equipment and disposable items.





**Top Left:** Charotin Hose Company. Arch Street, North Catasauqua Borough.  
**Bottom Left:** Han-Le-Co Volunteer Fire Company. Postal Road, Hanover Township.  
**Top Right:** East Allen Township Fire Department. Nor Bath Boulevard, East Allen Township.  
**Bottom Right:** Northampton Fire Station. Lerchenmiller Drive, Northampton Borough.  
**Middle:** Catasauqua Fire Department. Front Street, Catasauqua Borough.

# 6.2

## Support sustainability and climate mitigation efforts.

Climate change is an increasing concern within the River Central region. Municipalities have an opportunity to lead by example and make real change. River Central communities need to collaborate to take on these challenges and sustain the livability we have come to expect.

- ▶ Develop and implement a shared environmental action plan for municipalities in River Central, outlining actions to mitigate the impact of climate change on the community level.
- ▶ Promote and incorporate green building and sustainable development incentives in subdivision and zoning regulations.
- ▶ Advocate for use of native, climate-adaptive and carbon-sequestering landscaping.
- ▶ Ensure green spaces are available throughout built environments.
- ▶ Amend zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to reflect current and future sustainable technologies and adapt to the new energy future.
  - ≈ Permit and encourage Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS).
  - ≈ Permit and encourage alternative and clean energy sources.



Solar panels on a single-family house on Howertown Road, North Catasauqua Borough.

# 6.3

## Pursue strategies to strengthen and grow the River Central economy.

The River Central communities envision a vibrant region with a diverse and sustainable economy that capitalizes on each municipality's unique assets, from main streets and downtowns in the boroughs, to multiple retail, commercial and industrial areas in Hanover Township, and direct-to-consumer farms and agritourism opportunities in East Allen Township. Across all of River Central, the communities share a central and highly accessible location in the Lehigh Valley that supports expansion of existing businesses as well as the growth of key industries such as tourism.

- ▶ Support the retention and expansion of the region's existing businesses:
  - ≈ Review zoning ordinances to allow supportive businesses and services related to key industries, including agriculture and cement manufacturing.
  - ≈ Implement a façade improvement program that rejuvenates the streetscape and implements placemaking techniques like lighting to enhance downtowns as destinations.
  - ≈ Collaborate with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Discover Lehigh Valley, THE LINK Trails partners, Lehigh and Northampton counties, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and Workforce Board Lehigh Valley to collectively achieve small business retention and expansion.
- ▶ Support higher education opportunities that provide essential workforce skills in partnership with local colleges and universities and technical and trade schools.
- ▶ Reserve first floor areas of traditional mixed-use buildings for commercial uses that add to the foot traffic needed to support main streets.
- ▶ Prioritize essential infrastructure to increase access to businesses, such as bicycle racks, bike lanes, sheltered bus stops, trail connections and electric vehicle charging stations.
- ▶ Review zoning ordinances to allow live/work spaces and home-based businesses.
- ▶ Support the advancement of high-speed internet technologies that facilitate working from home and meet evolving workforce needs.



A coffee shop on Main Street, Northampton Borough.

# 6.4

## Promote community identity through art and culture.

Considerable artistic and cultural resources exist within the River Central region. These assets should be leveraged and enhanced, to support community identity and encourage community pride. There are many organizations within the Lehigh Valley that foster artistic efforts, and cooperation between River Central communities and these organizations is critical to the success of the region.

- ▶ Create public spaces that integrate visual art and reflect or enhance local culture.
- ▶ Collaborate with local schools, non-profit organizations, museums, art and cultural centers and local businesses to create events that promote the holistic aspects of the communities and celebrate the art and culture of River Central.
- ▶ Promote the importance of Main Street programs to showcase art, culture and the uniqueness of each community within River Central.
- ▶ Promote historic preservation and heritage tourism at municipal events.
- ▶ Promote existing trails, parks, open space, scenic and historic and cultural assets through efforts coordinated with the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Wildlands Conservancy, Lehigh and Northampton counties, Discover Lehigh Valley, THE LINK Trail Partnership and others.
- ▶ Use municipality websites and social media to provide information on the region's resources to the public.
- ▶ Coordinate Main Street programs between municipalities and with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce and Northampton Affiliated Chamber of Commerce.
- ▶ Package incentive tools including zoning, tax credit, public and private financing opportunities to draw businesses that will support the economy and community goals.



*The Iron Worker*, a mural by Denton Burrows.  
Pine Street, Catasauqua Borough.

# 6.5

## Enhance equity and inclusivity for lower income and marginalized populations by assuring access to good living, working and recreating opportunities.

Providing equitable access to opportunity — safe and affordable housing, reliable transportation, meaningful education and employment opportunity, social and cultural experiences — is vital to a more productive and sustainable community. Lower income households have limited time and financial resources, and people of color as well as limited English-speaking populations have been impacted by limited access to opportunities. Increasing access to daily needs for lower income and marginalized people has been demonstrated to have wide-ranging effect on overall increased productivity, quality of life and economic success.

- ▶ Prioritize lower income housing initiatives in areas with access to jobs, education, recreation, community facilities and multimodal transportation.
- ▶ Ensure that zoning ordinances enable a mix of housing options at a variety of price points attainable to workforce incomes.
- ▶ Ensure that zoning ordinances enable essential businesses in accessible locations that meet resident needs, such as financial services, healthcare, childcare and grocery.
- ▶ When planning, developing or evaluating a policy, program or decision, identify potential impacts on lower income and marginalized individuals and groups, and to potentially eliminate barriers to opportunities.
- ▶ Engage marginalized and underserved populations in decision-making processes.

# 6.6

## Improve accessibility.

Accessibility is an important feature to any community. Ensuring that everyone has equitable access to the area's resources is an important aspect of a productive community.

- ▶ Evaluate zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances by ensuring universal design features are permitted and encouraged, to increase opportunities for residents to age in place.
- ▶ Protect and enhance access routes to community facilities, including schools, parks and recreation.
- ▶ Support regional efforts to work with PennDOT and local road departments to include bicycle and pedestrian-friendly facilities when new roads or road improvements are planned.



Sidewalk along Main Street,  
Northampton Borough.

# Plan Implementation

The process of implementation starts with the adoption of the River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan. Some actions can be accomplished individually, but others require continued cooperative planning among the municipalities. Immediate actions are those that should be accomplished within the first six months. Short-term actions are anticipated within two years of plan adoption and medium-term actions are those that are anticipated after the first two years. Many actions are ongoing activities, such as coordination with implementation partners.

## PLAN ADOPTION

The River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan was created for the municipalities of Catasauqua, North Catasauqua and Northampton boroughs and East Allen and Hanover townships. Adoption by all the municipalities is critical for establishing the distribution of land uses to satisfy the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requirements. If individual zoning ordinances are used, the ordinances should be revised as necessary to be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan, with appropriate consideration for existing development, uses and zoning districts when drafting a new ordinance.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATIVE IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

The adoption of an Intergovernmental Cooperative Implementation Agreement is the highest priority for plan implementation. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) created this measure specifically as a means of implementing multi-municipal comprehensive plans. The agreement should be adopted by each of the municipalities that participated in the plan.

The agreement should include the following components, among others:

- ▶ A process to achieve consistency between the Comprehensive Plan and relevant ordinances, such as zoning ordinances, that consider all possible land uses spread with the River Central municipalities as a whole, but not necessarily all uses in each municipality.
- ▶ A mechanism for resolving disputes.
- ▶ A system or procedure for review and approval of land uses of regional significance. The Agreement will spell out the criteria for what would be considered a land use of regional significance as well as a process for review with multi-municipal input and approval determined by the municipality in which the development is located.

# Zoning or Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Actions

## TIMELINE: Short-term

Revising ordinances to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan across all five municipalities is critical for implementation. The implementation actions listed below are not necessarily appropriate for each River Central community, but are offered as a guide to achieve particular development goals that may be designated as a priority by an individual municipality. The process should begin immediately upon adoption, including coordination of definitions and uses at a minimum, and generally be completed within two years. The creation and adoption of a multi-municipal zoning ordinance should be considered to allow for the coordinated implementation of the plan as well as coordination of infrastructure, location, and densities of uses, and to reduce administrative burden and costs. If individual zoning ordinances are used, the ordinances should be revised as necessary to be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan, with appropriate consideration for existing development, uses and zoning districts when drafting a new ordinance.

The following tables list ordinance-specific actions, to be done in the short-term, that directly support the goals and policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The appropriate actions and their priority may vary among municipalities depending on their circumstances and the Future Land Use Plan:

## LOCATING DEVELOPMENT

POLICY	ACTION
1.4	Collectively review zoning ordinances to ensure thorough inclusion of all land uses across the River Central municipalities.
1.5	Direct infrastructure-intensive land uses to development areas with public sewer and water supply systems able to accept additional growth.
1.6	Encourage reuse and redevelopment within Development areas, especially for properties considered underutilized.
1.6	Update zoning ordinances to increase flexibility and facilitate mixed-use development in Centers and along Corridors.
1.6	Support a variety of housing types within Centers located in Development areas.
1.7	Locate freight-based facilities in areas with available or planned transportation capacity, such as structurally safe roads and bridges and intersections designed for truck movement; appropriately designed roads with direct access to higher classification roads, such as Regional Corridors.
1.7	Locate industrial development where multimodal options exist, including walking, rolling and biking, and in areas supported by Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) fixed-route service if possible.
4.5	Promote the growth and development of local businesses in proximity to trail connections, including lodging, restaurants and general stores.
5.2	Support the development and redevelopment of diverse housing types within designated growth areas in proximity to job centers and public transit.
5.2	Revise zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to include development incentives for new or redeveloped housing in locations that are connected to jobs, education, public transit, trails or sidewalks.
1.5	Accommodate low-intensity development in exurban areas to be served by on-lot sewage disposal and water supply.

## PRESERVATION

POLICY	ACTION
<b>1.5</b>	Implement the provisions of approved stormwater management plans through adoption of ordinances and enforcement of runoff control criteria, managing the rate, volume and quality of storm runoff.
<b>1.8</b>	Ensure zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances permit development techniques that support preservation, such as conservation design.
<b>1.8</b>	Review zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure current and future needs of the farming community are not inadvertently hindered.
<b>3.1</b>	Adopt and enforce zoning and subdivision regulations to protect priority farmlands.
<b>4.1</b>	<p>Ensure zoning and subdivision regulations protect natural and scenic resource areas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ prohibiting development on slopes greater than 25%.</li> <li>▶ preparing a wetlands assessment as needed.</li> <li>▶ identifying and mitigating risks in carbonate bedrock areas.</li> <li>▶ establishing riparian buffers.</li> <li>▶ prohibiting development in floodplains.</li> <li>▶ controlling tree removal and maximizing tree preservation.</li> <li>▶ requiring dedication of natural resource lands.</li> <li>▶ implementing stormwater quality control measures.</li> </ul>
<b>4.1</b>	Reference the LVPC Riparian and Wetlands Buffers Guide to ensure zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances support establishing and restoring riparian buffers using a variety of native, climate-adaptive trees and plants.

## LAND USE REGULATION

POLICY	ACTION
1.5	Review zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure the permissible scale of land uses match the availability and capacities of transportation, sewer, water, stormwater, emergency management and other infrastructure.
1.5	Outside of Development areas, provide maximum development densities consistent with the long-term use of on-lot sewage disposal and wells.
1.8	Reference LVPC guidance documents, such as Cottage Housing and Conservation Design, to ensure zoning ordinances support sustainable housing options in the townships.
1.8	Revise zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to provide incentives for the use of green infrastructure techniques in development and infrastructure design.
2.3	Revise zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to require documentation from freight-based land development proposals that demonstrates adequate transportation infrastructure is available through a study of existing conditions.
2.3	Ensure that ordinances and development submissions require freight-based land development proposals to provide on-site truck waiting areas and parking, driver amenities and electrical hookups to minimize idling.
2.3	Ensure that ordinances include provisions to monitor and regulate property owner/tenant or operational changes for existing industrial and commercial facilities, such the number of employees, level of automation and traffic generation, to ensure that conditions of development approval remain consistent over time.
2.4	<p>Work with ABE Airport to implement appropriate Airport Zoning and compatible land use and ensure all municipalities meet requirements established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Act 164, Chapter 59, Airport Operation and Zoning.</p> <p><b>Key partner:</b> ABE Airport</p>

## LAND USE REGULATION

<b>2.5</b>	Review subdivision and land development ordinances to require sidewalks in all future developments within Development areas, internally within the site and along property frontages.
<b>2.5</b>	Ensure subdivision and land development ordinances require sidewalks compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
<b>3.1</b>	Revise ordinances to permit cluster development, to promote the continuation of farming and retention of open space.
<b>3.1</b>	Evaluate existing zoning and subdivision and land development regulations to ensure current and future needs of the agriculture community are not inadvertently hindered.
<b>3.3</b>	Revise ordinances to permit agritainment and agritourism uses that increase economic opportunities for farmers.
<b>4.2</b>	Amend subdivision and land development ordinance regulations to require street connectivity, provide for sidewalks and bikeways, and connect sidewalks and trails.
<b>4.2</b>	Review zoning ordinances to permit passive recreation activities along stream corridors.
<b>4.3</b>	Revise zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to establish historic overlay districts, promote context-sensitive design regulations, establish demolition-by-neglect, and require new development proposals identify and preserve historic buildings and landscape resources.
<b>4.3</b>	Revise zoning ordinances to support investment in and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, such as through expansion of permissible uses within traditional neighborhoods and crossroads villages.
<b>5.1</b>	Review zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure infill and redevelopment regulations are clear and predictable.

## LAND USE REGULATION

<b>5.2</b>	Review zoning ordinances to ensure neighborhood design prioritizes a mix of housing options attainable to workforce incomes, in locations with convenient access to community facilities and services.
<b>5.2</b>	Review zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to eliminate provisions that unnecessarily raise costs of new housing construction.
<b>5.2</b>	Revise zoning ordinances to incentivize providing low-and-moderately priced units in residential development projects through density bonuses and streamlined approvals.
<b>5.3</b>	Revise zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to permit accessory dwelling units, where appropriate.
<b>6.2</b>	Revise zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to provide incentives for green building and sustainable development.
<b>6.2</b>	Review zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure provisions for use of native, climate-adaptive and carbon-sequestering landscaping.
<b>6.2</b>	Revise zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to permit and regulate current and future sustainable technologies, including Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS), user-scale and utility-scale solar panels, and clean energy sources.
<b>6.4</b>	Revise subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure universal design standards are permitted and encouraged.

# Implementation Actions by Subject

In addition to actions specifically related to the update of municipal zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances in the short term, a series of actions emerged through the planning process that should be acted on to turn the Comprehensive Plan vision into reality in the short (two-year), medium (five-year) or long-term (up to 10 years):

TIMELINE	LENGTH
Short	2 years
Medium	2 – 5 years
Long	More than 5 years

KEY MUNICIPAL TOOLS		
POLICY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
1.5 2.3	Prepare annual capital improvement programs that identify and prioritize infrastructure needs, including transportation, utility and stormwater management.	Short
1.5	Maintain adequate Official Sewage Facilities Plans for each municipality, consistent with the requirements of the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act of 1966 (Act 537).	Medium
3.1	Develop, Update and Implement <b>Farmland Protection Plans</b> .	Medium
4.1 4.2	Adopt <b>official maps</b> to proactively plan for future roads, trails, parks, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, identify agricultural lands to be preserved, and to acquire properties with high and medium overall conservation priority natural resource areas.	Medium
4.2	Update and implement park, recreation and open space plans that address facilities and management, personnel, administration, programming and financing.	Medium
6.1	Develop and coordinate emergency management plans for the region or each municipality based on mitigation and preparedness needs.	Long

UTILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT		
POLICY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
1.5	Identify opportunities to provide adequate service to areas experiencing problems with existing on-lot or central sewer and water systems.	Medium
1.5	Implement green infrastructure and groundwater recharge standards in stormwater design across all watersheds.	Long
1.5	Explore opportunities to utilize the canal for stormwater management. <i>Key partner: Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor</i>	Long
1.1	Educate elected officials and the public on the importance of sustainable sewer, water and stormwater infrastructure. <i>Key partners: Local Technical Assistance Program, Lehigh Valley Government Academy</i>	Ongoing
1.1	Establish a system or procedure where planning, zoning and land development proposals of regional significance are reviewed with multi-municipal input and approval determined by the municipality in which the development is located.	Short

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT		
POLICY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
6.1	Establish a system or procedure where fire, police and ambulance departments are involved in the development review process.	Short
6.1	Identify opportunities to increase the funding and resources necessary to support fire, police and emergency medical services operations. <i>Key partners: Lehigh and Northampton Counties</i>	Long
6.1	Coordinate regular meetings between all emergency management departments and agencies to discuss issues, share solutions and identify opportunities to further regional collaboration and efficiencies. <i>Key partners: Eastern PA Emergency Medical Services Council, Lehigh County Ambulance Association, Northampton County Ambulance Association</i>	Ongoing
6.1	Educate elected officials and the public on the importance and needs of emergency service providers.	Ongoing

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE		
POLICY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
2.1	Identify transportation infrastructure needs, seek technical assistance where available, and apply to have projects added to the Lehigh Valley's Long-Range Transportation Plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Utilize strategies identified in the Weaversville Road Curve Study and LVIA Freight Study.</li> </ul> <i>Funding opportunity: Lehigh Valley Transportation Study, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Transportation Impact Fees</i>	Medium
2.1	Evaluate street design standards to ensure safety for all modes, and consider strategic corridors for traffic calming initiatives. <i>Key partner: Local Technical Assistance Program, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation</i>	Long

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY		ACTION	TIMEFRAME
2.5		<p>Establish a system or procedure where the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) is involved in the development review process.</p> <p><i>Key partner: LANTA</i></p>	Short
2.5	4.2	<p>Identify trail gaps, connect trails to Centers and Corridors, and reference the <i>Walk/RollLV Active Transportation Plan</i> to implement the Catalytic Project–Catasauqua Area Trail &amp; Transit Initiative as opportunities arise.</p> <p><i>Key partners: Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, THE LINK Trail partners, Northampton County</i></p> <p><i>Funding opportunity: Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA), Multimodal Transportation Fund, LVTS TIP, PennDOT, PA Department of Community and Economic Development.</i></p>	Long
2.2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Work with developers and utility providers to ensure that utility installations are designed and developed to minimize visual impact, to maximize reliability and to avoid environmental degradation to the extent possible.</li> <li>▶ Work with utility providers to map the location of existing lines and/or service areas, and to coordinate infrastructure expansions, upgrades or replacements to coincide with future development and or maintenance projects, such as road construction.</li> <li>▶ Work with utility providers to encourage co-location of communication facilities on existing structures to increase coverage and to prevent unnecessary scattering of these facilities.</li> <li>▶ Work with utility providers regarding the future location of lines and easements for transmission facilities to ensure a safe distance from development activities.</li> </ul>	Long

NATURAL AND HISTORIC ASSETS			
POLICY		ACTION	TIMEFRAME
1.1	4.1	Educate elected officials and the public on the benefits of conservation and preservation, environmental stewardship and the unique natural, water and scenic assets of the River Central area.  <i>Key partners: LVGA, Lehigh Valley Greenways partners</i>	Ongoing
4.1		Support open space and natural resources protection through Environmental Advisory Councils.	Ongoing
4.3		Revitalize and enhance historic communities and rehabilitate historic sites.  <i>Key partners: Historic Catasauqua Preservation Association, Northampton Area Historical Society, Lehigh County Historical Society, Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society, Pennsylvania Historical &amp; Museum Commission</i>  <i>Funding opportunity and technical assistance: Lehigh County and Northampton County grant programs, Pennsylvania Historical Society and Museum, Pennsylvania Downtown Center</i>	Long
4.3		Participate in the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office's Certified Local Government program through which municipalities receive grants, training and technical assistance for preservation programming.	Ongoing

AGRICULTURE		
POLICY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
3.1	Identify and develop methods to increase the financial incentive of farmland preservation. <i>Key partners: Lehigh and Northampton Counties</i>	Long
3.2	Connect existing and prospective farmers with education and training programs, such as apprenticeships or programs to support the business side of farming. <i>Key partners: Penn State Extension, Buy Fresh Buy Local</i>	Ongoing
3.3	Support the retention and expansion of local family farms by promoting generational farmland transfers.	Ongoing
3.3	Support farmers and offer resources in developing succession plans.	Ongoing
3.3	Advocate for the state to end the death tax, which makes it difficult to leave farms to children.	Long
3.3	Develop financial incentives to assist with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification.	Long
3.3	Connect farmers to agricultural property owners to increase access to rentable farmland, support agricultural-based land transfers and minimize the transition to non-farming uses.	Ongoing
3.3	Educate non-farmers on the importance and value of retaining land in agricultural use. <i>Key partners: Penn State Extension, Buy Fresh Buy Local, Lehigh and Northampton Counties</i>	Ongoing

HOUSING		
POLICY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
5.1	Ensure code enforcement and property maintenance information and resources are available and widely promoted.	Medium
5.1	Implement municipal or multi-municipal rental housing registration and inspection programs to ensure continued use and maintenance of existing housing. <i>Funding opportunities: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)</i>	Long
5.1	Implement a municipal or multi-municipal presale inspection program to identify major issues and ensure basic property maintenance.	Long
5.2	Promote grants, loans and other housing assistance programs to improve and maintain quality of housing. <i>Key partners: Lehigh and Northampton Counties, Community Action Lehigh Valley, Habitat for Humanity</i>	Medium
5.2	Promote information about fair housing and fair lending practices through municipal websites, newsletters and other outreach materials.	Medium
5.3	Promote universal design standards to raise awareness about ways to increase housing opportunities for persons of all ages and abilities.	Medium

## ECONOMY

POLICY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
3.3	<p>Promote and market agritainment and agritourism in the River Central area to drive foot traffic to direct-to-consumer farms and farmers markets.</p> <p><i><b>Key partners:</b> Penn State Extension, Buy Fresh Buy Local, Local farmers markets</i></p>	<b>Short</b>
4.5	<p>Create a multi-municipal committee to develop a Trail Town, cultural, historic, ecotourism and agritourism program that connects regional assets into a network of destinations and promotes River Central's economic identity.</p> <p><i><b>Key partners:</b> Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Buy Fresh Buy Local, Discover Lehigh Valley, LVPC, surrounding communities</i></p>	<b>Short</b>
6.3	<p>Support Main Street programs to showcase art, culture and the uniqueness of each community within River Central.</p> <p><i><b>Key partners:</b> Lehigh and Northampton Counties, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Discover Lehigh Valley, THE LINK Trails partners, Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, LVPC</i></p>	<b>Medium</b>
6.3	<p>Use municipality websites and social media to provide information on the region's resources, destinations and events to the public.</p>	<b>Short</b>
6.3	<p>Package incentive tools including zoning, tax credit, public and private financing opportunities to draw businesses that will support the economy and community goals.</p>	<b>Medium</b>

## ECONOMY

POLICY	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
6.3	<p>Prepare River Central to capitalize on location, attract and retain businesses and the economic vision for the area:</p> <p>Survey business and employers to better understand support needed, from workforce training to financing as the basis for a coordinated Community and Economic Development Strategy.</p> <p>Create a shared Circuit Rider position to support economic development initiatives in all River Central municipalities.</p> <p>Implement a unified River Central-wide marketing and branding strategy with a business directory and navigation information.</p> <p>Continue community organization and business collaboration efforts in partnership with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce and other partners.</p> <p>Identify and pursue programs such as Trail Town designation, Main Street Downtown Revitalization community or other such programs and financial opportunities that assist in achieving community and economic development goals.</p> <p>Consider establishing Business Improvement Districts that reinvest locally funded revenues into the district.</p> <p>Consider innovative opportunities to attract new businesses, such as local business incubators and public/private investor groups.</p> <p>Include public-private-nonprofit partnerships and variations of cross-sector partners to leverage resources and achieve defined economic outcomes.</p> <p><b>Key partners:</b> LVPC, Lehigh and Northampton counties, GLVCC, Workforce Board Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and THE LINK Trail partners</p>	Long



Cementon Bridge, Main Street and  
21st Street, Northampton Borough

# Plan Compatibility

Section 301 (a)(5) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires that multi-municipal comprehensive plans include “A statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is compatible with the existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous portions of neighboring municipalities, or a statement indicating measures which have been taken to provide buffers or other transitional devices between disparate uses, and a statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is generally

consistent with the objectives and plans of the county comprehensive plan.” This section of the Plan is divided into three components. The Internal Consistency component is an evaluation of how the multi-municipal plan relates to municipal boundaries within the multi-municipal area. The External Consistency component reviews compatibility between the Plan and the adopted comprehensive plans of neighboring municipalities. The Consistency with the County Comprehensive Plan component review is the compatibility of the multi-municipal plan with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

## INTERNAL CONSISTENCY

Internally, the River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan is generally consistent. This consistency applies to the various components of the Plan and its components regarding abutting municipalities.

The land use plan was constructed by utilizing other elements of the multi-municipal plan. The Future Land Use Plan reflects the natural areas identified in the Natural Resources Plan and the Farmland Preservation Plan. Areas identified for preservation in the Farmland Preservation Plan are similarly treated in the Future Land Use Plan. The Future Land Use Plan has been designed to provide ample opportunities for meeting the area's housing and community utility needs. Areas recommended for higher density development coincide with areas where public sanitary sewer service is available or planned. Conversely, areas recommended for low density development or preservation are not planned for public sanitary sewer service.

The Future Land Use Plan considered accessibility and transportation capacity as a factor in identifying appropriate areas for development. The Natural Resources Plan and the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan are interrelated. Some of the areas identified in the Natural Resources Plan as significant natural areas are preserved through the recommendations in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

Because the Plan considered the multi-municipal area's needs as a whole and because the policies in the Plan apply throughout the area, the elements operate seamlessly from one municipality to the next. As the Future Land Use Plan reflects Development areas and not specific land uses, the municipalities will need to ensure land use compatibility through the zoning process as an implementation action under the River Central Plan.

## EXTERNAL CONSISTENCY

The River Central municipalities have 10 municipalities within Lehigh and Northampton counties contiguous to their borders. The Lehigh River provides a natural buffer between the area from Northampton Borough to Hanover Township, Lehigh County and Whitehall Township and Coplay Borough in Lehigh County. Based on a comparison between the Future Land Use Plan of the River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan and the comprehensive plans and/or zoning ordinances of the eight remaining adjacent municipalities (including Bath Borough, Allen, Upper Nazareth, Lower

Nazareth, Moore and Hanover townships in Northampton County, and the cities of Allentown and Bethlehem in Lehigh County), no significant land use conflicts were identified. River Central communities should be aware that any minor differences in land use could be resolved as the municipalities determine actual land uses based on the Future Land Use Plan categories.

Otherwise, potential minor land use incompatibility instances can be resolved with appropriate buffering.

## CONSISTENCY WITH THE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan is generally consistent with the objectives and plans of the county comprehensive plan. *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* was adopted by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission on October 31, 2019 and by Northampton County on November 21, 2019.

Minimal differences exist between the county and the multi-municipal comprehensive plan land use plans. The methods used to develop the Future Land Use Plan for each

were very similar, with the multi-municipal plan providing more refined scale evaluations for farmland preservation and land use. A more refined place type analysis was used for the multi-municipal plan that led to more rural areas being identified for preservation buffer areas and a more refined Centers and Corridors mapping tied to place types and corridor types. The two plans are generally consistent in goals and policies as they relate to other plan sections.



Uptown Park. Center Street,  
Northampton Borough.



# Conclusion


River Central is a unique region that's developed its own identity within the greater Lehigh Valley. Its five municipalities of varying urban, suburban and rural characteristics are connected by shared interests and a belief that working together will bring the greatest good. This comprehensive plan reflects the commitment these municipalities made to come together and navigate the planning process, resulting in a unique opportunity to collectively confront challenges of today and take actionable steps towards a collective vision for the future. This comprehensive plan is an aspirational statement of general principles of good community planning. It is not meant as a

statement of any present deficiencies, in either an individual municipality or River Central communities as a whole, with regard to the mix of housing available, infrastructure, recreational opportunities, commercial uses or other components of well-balanced development in conformity with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

The Lehigh Valley is dealing with challenges that arise from unprecedented growth. Growing population, industrial development pressure, housing supply shortages, and shrinking state and federal funding emphasize the need for municipalities to develop long-term, sustainable strategies to preserve the Region's character and

identity while developing resiliency against negative external forces. River Central's location, rich history, sense of community and abundance of natural and recreational resources have contributed to the quality of life cherished by residents. This Plan is meant to retain and build upon that through its goals, policies and implementation actions.

The initial success of this Plan, and the planning process these municipalities underwent, is achieved through developing, adopting and implementing intermunicipal agreements. Cooperative agreements reinforce the separate identities of each municipality and create the framework each will use to achieve consistency with the multi-



municipal comprehensive plan. These agreements are meant to solidify partnership and coordination by providing an amicable approach to settling disputes that may arise regarding each municipality's own zoning, subdivision, land development and capital improvement strategies. Additionally, the agreements create a framework that encourages coordinating planning efforts to recognize impacts of development on neighboring communities and minimize economic and environmental disruptions, preserve historical community patterns, coordinate development with adequate infrastructure and appropriate utility access, mitigate traffic circulation congestion throughout the region's network, and encourage innovation that enhances public and

emergency services for all River Central residents.

While the vision has been set, the reality will be created only through the continued belief that River Central's best possible future will come by working together.

# Acknowledgements

The townships of East Allen and Hanover, and the boroughs of Catasauqua, North Catasauqua and Northampton would like to thank the many residents, community leaders, municipal partners and stakeholders who helped develop a shared vision for our growing region. The River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan would not have been possible without their time, commitment, ideas and passion for their community. Contributors include residents and stakeholders from every corner of all five municipalities who attended the River Central Steering Committee meetings, Kick-off Charettes, Subject Matter Round Tables, community events and who participated in the Community Survey.

Many thanks to East Allen Township for allowing use of their council chambers to host meetings in a hybrid virtual and in-person format, where residents, community leaders and stakeholders from around the region gathered to help set the priorities that would become the backbone of the Plan.

Much gratitude goes to the Catasauqua Area School District, Northampton Area School District, Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Lehigh-Northampton Airport Authority, Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority, Buy Fresh Buy Local, Historic Catasauqua Preservation Association, Lehigh County, Northampton County, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce and Northampton Regional Emergency Management Services for providing data, input and information needed to craft the plan.

And finally, a special thanks to the Steering Committee members who met for two years, including powering through a global Pandemic, showing an unmatched commitment to working together towards creating a roadmap of the best possible future for the five communities that make up the River Central Region.

THANK YOU



**RIVER CENTRAL**  
LEHIGH VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA



Catasauqua Borough | East Allen Township | Hanover Township  
North Catasauqua Borough | Northampton Borough