



# 50 WAYS YOUR COMMUNITY CAN PROTECT OUR PLANET

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- STREAM CORRIDOR RESTORATION
- NATURALIZED STORM WATER FACILITIES
- LOW-MAINTENANCE LAWNS
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- GREENWAYS
- NATIVE PLANT USE
- FOREST RESTORATION
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PROTECTING EARTH'S RESOURCES  
ENSURES A RESILIENT  
ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS  
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES. LEARN  
MORE ABOUT WHAT YOUR  
COMMUNITY CAN DO TO MAKE  
A DIFFERENCE.

## NATIVE PLANT USE

Native plants easily fit into the natural environment, providing habitat for native animals while needing little maintenance and the associated energy costs.

**Action:** Municipalities can require native plantings in new development through their subdivision and land development ordinances. ▶

## STREAM CORRIDOR RESTORATION

Restoring stream corridors with stabilized banks and new wooded buffers protects water quality, reduces flooding, and limits erosion.

**Action:** Municipalities can work with local conservancies and nonprofits to restore streams on properties they own, while also requiring developers to restore streams on properties they are developing. ▶

## NATURAL FEATURE PROTECTION

As a first step in rewilding, it is critical to protect existing wetlands, forests, steep slopes, and waterways. Protecting these natural areas improves property values, reduces flooding, filters pollutants, protects habitat, and improves health.

**Action:** Municipalities can protect these features through their zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances. ▶

## BIRD-FRIENDLY WINDOWS

Bird-friendly windows make it easy for birds to avoid crashes and protect bird populations.

**Action:** Municipalities can require these types of windows through their building codes. ▶

## FOREST RESTORATION

Forest restoration improves property values, reduces flooding, filters pollutants, protects habitat, provides shade, and reduces erosion.

**Action:** Municipalities can work with local conservancies and nonprofits to restore forests on properties they own, while also working with developers and homeowners' associations to reforest open space in developments. ▶

## NATURALIZED STORM WATER FACILITIES

Stormwater facilities that mimic nature with natural plantings, meandering water courses, and recharging opportunities improves water quality, groundwater supplies, and flood protection.

**Action:** Municipalities can require naturalized stormwater facilities in new developments through their subdivision ordinances and can retrofit existing stormwater basins that they own. ▶

## OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT

Proper stewardship of municipal open space, which includes infrequent mowing, removal of invasive species, and erosion control, will help protect water quality and animal habitat.

**Action:** In addition to good stewardship of their own open space, municipalities can require developers and homeowners' associations to create open space management plans. ▶

## GREENWAYS

Greenways connect open space areas, provide corridors for wildlife, and boost the health of open space nodes.

**Action:** Municipalities can preserve greenways during the land development process, making sure that open space lands are connected. ▶

## LOW-MAINTENANCE LAWNS

Lawns that need infrequent mowing, few pesticides and herbicides, and limited watering help the environment by using less energy, improving water quality, and supporting wildlife.

**Action:** Municipalities can support these naturalized lawns by relaxing their property maintenance codes. ▶

## BACKYARD WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES

Birds, amphibians, butterflies, and other wildlife can thrive in backyards that are designed for their needs.

**Action:** Municipalities can support backyard sanctuaries through their maintenance codes. ▶

# REWILDING THE SUBURBS

**With extensive yards, parks, and buffers, the suburbs offer many ways to bring back nature and rewild large portions of Chester County**



# GREENING FOR EVERYONE

Chester County is a green country place. Both good landscaping and local food opportunities can be woven throughout the county's existing and new communities to continue this green heritage.



## BACKYARD CHICKENS

Eggs are a great local food that can reduce long-distance shipping.

Action: Through their zoning ordinances, local municipalities can allow backyard chickens while making sure they are not a nuisance to neighbors. ▶

## BEEKEEPING

Much of the plant kingdom is dependent on pollinators, like bees, to reproduce, and this is particularly important for local fruit and vegetable production.

Action: Municipalities can permit beekeeping in their ordinances with regulations that also protect the general population. ▶

## TREE TOWNS

Broader tree coverage in communities, known as the urban tree canopy, creates a linked network that benefits animals, people, and the economy.

Action: Municipalities can protect trees through their subdivision and land development ordinances, create shade tree commissions, and become a Tree City USA through the Arbor Day Foundation. ▶

## PARKS

Having a wide variety of parks near people improves health and reduces transportation energy use.

Action: Municipalities can purchase park land of various scales and types to make sure all neighborhoods are served by these critical facilities. ▶

## PARKING LOT LANDSCAPING

Parking lots can be designed with extensive landscaping that reduces heat islands, keeps parked cars cooler, and provides filtration for stormwater.

Action: Through their subdivision and land development ordinances and through their review process, municipalities can require planted islands with shade trees, rain garden, and groundcover. ▶

## RESERVE PARKING

Having less parking means there will be less impervious coverage and less polluted runoff in streams.

Action: Since too much parking is often built, municipalities can lower many of their current parking ratios in their zoning ordinances. Alternatively, communities can allow some of the required parking to be put in "reserve," which means it is left green and undeveloped until needed. ▶

## STREET TREES

Trees beautify streetscapes, muffle sounds, absorb dust, provide shade, and increase property values.

Action: Municipalities can require, plant, and maintain street trees, which many do through a shade tree commission. ▶

## BUFFERS

The landscaping in buffers reduces the impacts of land uses on each other, including visual, noise, light, and dust impacts, and provides opportunities to create pockets of diverse plants and habitats.

Action: Municipalities can require a wide range of tree types and plants in their required buffer areas. ▶

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community gardens provide opportunities to grow food locally, which means that this food doesn't need to be shipped from elsewhere, with all the environmental impacts that come from shipping over long distances.

Action: Local municipalities can provide space within their parks or other land for community gardens. ▶

## COMPOSTING

Composting can reduce the amount of waste burned or landfilled while also creating a product that absorbs rainwater, limits erosion, supports plant growth, and replenishes soil nutrients.

Action: Municipalities can collect and compost organic matter, such as leaves and yard waste, to make compost and mulch available to their residents. ▶

# DISCOVERING NEW ROUTES

## BUS SHELTERS

Taking a bus is much better for the environment than driving a car, but it can be difficult or sometimes unpleasant to take a bus. Bus shelters are a simple way to make the experience more appealing.

Action: Municipalities can require developments to provide bus shelters and pulloff areas and can work with companies that want to put bus shelters in their community. ▶

## SIDEWALKS

When sidewalks exist, people are much more likely to walk and less likely to drive.

Action: Municipalities can require sidewalks in their subdivision and land development ordinances while making sure sidewalks are not waived during the development review process. ▶

## TRAIN STATION IMPROVEMENT

Like buses, trains are an important transportation mode that can reduce air pollution.

Action: Although local municipalities do not control train station areas, they can advocate for improvements and provide sidewalk connections to train stations. ▶

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS

Children who have safe walking routes to school can walk instead of taking a school bus or being driven by their parents.

Action: Municipalities can participate in safe routes to school programs, work to improve their sidewalk system and crosswalks, and support special events, like walking school buses. ▶

## BIKE FACILITIES

Bicyclists, especially commuters, need bike facilities, including bike racks, storage lockers, bicycle repair stations, and, in the work place, showers.

Action: Municipal zoning ordinances can require these facilities or make this an optional bonus. ▶

## TRAILS

Trails provide safe places for commuters and recreational users to walk, bike, or ride a horse. When they're on a trail, they're not in a car.

Action: Local municipalities can create a trail system by planning for trails, requiring new developments to install trails, building municipal trails, and connecting to regional trails. ▶

## INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Keeping traffic moving through coordinated traffic signals and other intelligent transportation systems reduces air pollution, because vehicles spend less time idling at traffic lights.

Action: Through their control of traffic signals, municipalities can significantly improve road functioning by using Intelligent Transportation Systems. ▶

## TRAFFIC CONGESTION REDUCTION

Traffic congestion adds to air pollution.

Action: Local municipalities can enact traffic impact fees and use these funds to improve intersections and roads, including state-owned roads. In addition, when land developments are proposed, communities can require traffic studies and require improvements to adjoining roads. ▶

## WALKABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development can be designed to encourage walking by having sidewalks lead to front doors, locating buildings close to the street, and creating interesting and enjoyable streetscapes.

Action: Municipal zoning ordinances can include design standards for walkable development, and local communities can improve their streetscapes with decorative lights, benches, street trees, and landscaping. ▶

## BIKE LANES

Bike lanes, particularly on busy roads, are a critical component of a safe bicycle network.

Action: Municipalities can work with PennDOT's repaving program on the creation and maintenance of bike lanes for state-owned roads while installing bike lanes on roads they own themselves. ▶



# CORRALING GROWTH

**Smart growth and preservation is a Chester County hallmark.  
Planning for this growth and preservation is a critical local task.**



## INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Infill development, where compatible development occurs in existing developed areas, reduces the need for new infrastructure, like new roads, water lines, sewer pipes, and electric lines.

**Action:** Local municipalities can allow infill development while making sure it is consistent with existing neighborhood character. ▶

## MIXED LAND USES

When land uses are mixed in a development, there is less need to drive from place to place; instead, people can walk.

**Action:** Municipal comprehensive plans can identify the best places for mixed uses, and the zoning ordinance can require that developments have this mix of uses, including residential, commercial, and institutional uses. ▶

## GROWTH BOUNDARIES

With growth boundaries, new infrastructure, like sewer and water lines, is not extended into more rural and natural areas of a community, which protects natural resources and discourages sprawl development.

**Action:** Municipalities can create de-facto growth boundaries through their comprehensive plan, sewage facilities plan, and zoning. ▶

## TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Development that is next to train stations and bus stops and designed for walking reduces car trips and their ensuing air pollution.

**Action:** Where municipalities have train stations or frequently-serviced bus stops, they can zone for higher density, mixed use development. ▶

## CLUSTER ZONING

With cluster zoning, part of a property has development while most of the property is left as open space, which protects critical natural areas.

**Action:** Local communities can create cluster regulations in their zoning ordinances. ▶

## HOUSING DIVERSITY

Housing other than single-family detached homes, such as apartments, townhouses, and twins, uses less energy per home to build, has less of an impact on the natural environment, and uses less energy over time to heat, cool, and electrify.

**Action:** Through their zoning ordinances, municipalities can allow a diverse range of housing types in appropriate locations. ▶

## AGRICULTURE ZONING

Under agricultural zoning, development is very limited, with agriculture being the predominant use. This provides local food while limiting the environmental impacts of sprawl development.

**Action:** Typically, agricultural zoning is only used by municipalities with major concentrations of farms with high quality soils. ▶

## CENTER REINVESTMENT

Reinvesting in centers reduces sprawl by encouraging growth in our urban and suburban cores, which in turn reduces the negative environmental impacts of sprawl.

**Action:** Through their comprehensive plans, zoning, and capital investments, municipalities can make their centers natural places for new growth and development. ▶

## TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Transfer of development rights programs move development from one part of a community to another, helping to protect the natural resources in the area where development no longer occurs.

**Action:** These programs are created through a municipal zoning ordinance, based on the local comprehensive plan. ▶

## ADAPTIVE REUSE

With historic buildings, the energy and materials needed to construct the building have already been used; so, adaptively reusing these buildings has environmental benefits.

**Action:** Municipalities can encourage adaptive reuse in their zoning ordinances through use and dimensional bonuses. ▶

## CLEAN ENERGY

Clean energy, particularly solar and wind energy, does not generate air pollution or greenhouse gases.

Action: The county's municipalities can purchase clean energy, allow both residential and commercial-grade energy facilities in appropriate locations, and provide information on energy to its residents. ▶

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Although electric vehicles do produce some greenhouse gases, their impact is much less than conventionally-fueled cars.

Action: Municipalities can buy their own electric vehicles, install charging stations in their parking lots, and allow charging stations in other, appropriate locations. ▶

## ENERGY CONSERVATION

Reducing energy use through conservation is a very effective way to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Action: In addition to conserving energy in their own buildings and operations, municipalities can encourage their citizens to do the same. ▶

## RECYCLING

Recycling is a straightforward way to reuse products instead of sending them to landfills or burning them.

Action: Through their recycling programs, municipalities have a huge impact on recycling. ▶

## GREEN AND BLUE ROOFS

Flat roofed buildings can be made green with landscaping on the roof that absorbs rainwater or can be made blue with storage of rainwater that evaporates or slowly dissipates.

Action: Local municipalities can make green and blue roofs part of their stormwater management requirements, which are often in the subdivision and land development ordinance or in a separate stormwater management ordinance. ▶

## ENERGY AUDITS

At times, it can be difficult to know exactly how to conserve energy, and energy audits are a great tool for doing this.

Action: Municipalities can hire a firm to do an energy audit for them, and, typically, the savings from using more energy-efficient equipment more than pays for itself over time. ▶

## ON-LOT SEWAGE MANAGEMENT

On-lot sewage disposal can be a safe and effective method for domestic sewage, provided it is managed appropriately.

Action: Local municipalities can help homeowners understand proper maintenance and management of their systems with information and guidance. ▶

## WATER CONSERVATION

Conserving water reduces the community's impact on the groundwater table and helps protect stream quality.

Action: Local municipalities can conserve water in their own operations while including water conservation requirements in their building code. ▶

## GREEN BUILDINGS

Green buildings are designed to minimize all kinds of environmental impacts.

Action: Municipalities can encourage green buildings by providing bonuses in their zoning ordinances for them and can make sure that new municipal buildings meet green building standards. ▶

## CONTROLLED LIGHTING

Bright lights can adversely affect both wildlife and people.

Action: Local municipalities can regulate light levels, light trespass, and glare through their zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances. ▶

# BEFRIENDING THE ENVIRONMENT

**Chester County's open spaces, woodlands, streams, and natural areas are like a giant lung, keeping residents healthy and happy. There are many ways to befriend this wonderful county asset.**



# CHESTER COUNTY'S PROTECT GOAL

PROTECT AND RESTORE CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES TO ENSURE A RESILIENT ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

## WHY IT MATTERS

The county's natural environment is integral to the high quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors and serves as a foundation for our vibrant economy. Protecting woodlands, streams, wetlands, riparian buffers, groundwater, floodplains, soils, and wildlife habitat provides significant and wide-ranging benefits.

Natural resources are essential to our health and well-being. Appropriate stewardship practices provide clean air, potable water, and a safe food supply for communities. Trees and woodlands provide shade, capture stormwater runoff, filter pollutants, mitigate urban heat islands, remove carbon from the atmosphere, and provide wildlife habitat. Nature preserves, state forest lands, parks, and trails provide opportunities to enhance our physical and mental health.

A healthy environment and unimpaired natural resources are crucial elements of the county's economic well-being. Raw materials from nature are necessary for the production of many goods. Businesses require a reliable supply of water. Food production, a major component of the county's economy, depends on healthy soils. Businesses and their employees greatly value the natural and scenic beauty of the county, as well as our many parks and recreation areas.

Natural resource based planning considers the location of resources first and then plans around them. Comprehensive and coordinated planning and implementation for protection of natural resources can guide development away from critical natural areas, minimize impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, and mitigate impacts that do occur, helping to ensure overall environmental and community health.





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