



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

CENTRE COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES

CENTRE COUNTY GOVERNMENT



County Services

Mission- "The business of Centre County Government is to

provide high quality services to county residents in an efficient and cost effective manner. Citizens have repeatedly said that maintaining the quality of life in Centre County needs to be a top priority. The services provided by county government, as well as by municipalities and school districts, are an important component of the quality of life here in Centre County."¹

Centre County Government is responsible for providing a wide range of services, many of which are mandated:

Courts and corrections (including staff for the judges, the magistrates offices, the district attorney, the sheriff, the prothonotary, the register of wills, the probation and parole department, the domestic relations department, and the county prison).

Human services (programs for children, adults, and senior citizens, including disabled, families, veterans, as well as people needing nursing care or transportation services).

Environmental management (such as housing and community development, planning, the agricultural easement program, and programs which conserve natural resources and enhance the productivity of our farms).

Public Safety (including emergency management, a 911 system, hazardous materials planning, and weights and measures).

General Government (including elections and voter registration, recorder of deeds, tax assessment, and the public defender).²

These services are financed through two major revenue sources: taxes and grants. With respect to taxation, the County is permitted to

levy up to 25 mils on the assessed value of real estate for general County purposes. The County cannot levy a wage or sales tax. The current tax rate in the 2003 Budget is 6.59 mils with 5.0 mils being levied for current operations and 1.59 mils being used for debt. The County Budget for 2003 is \$80.5 million. This millage accounts for approximately 17% of the average real estate taxes paid per County resident. Municipal taxes comprise an average of 7% while taxes paid to the school district average 76%. (See Figure 1: Homeowner Tax Contribution).

Grants, comprising 52% of the County's revenues, are monies received from other governments, i.e., Federal, state and local governments. The majority of the grant monies received by Centre County are from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare. These grant dollars support the programs administered by Children & Youth Services, Mental Health/Mental Retardation Office, and Office of Aging, and are mandated by state law.³

Bonds are used to finance major capital improvement projects. Projects financed include: Willowbank Office Building renovations, development of the County's 911 system, Centre Crest renovations, Courthouse renovations, and construction of a new prison.

Other revenue sources include: fees, departmental earnings, and interest.

County Facilities

Centre County's services are housed in multiple County owned and leased facilities situated throughout its jurisdiction. These facilities are an important component of County government in keeping with the Mission statement of providing 'high quality services....in an efficient and cost effective manner.' In carrying out this mission, some of these publicly-owned facilities such as the Willowbank Office Complex offer centralized services for County taxpayers.

The following is an overview of the County's existing and planned facilities.

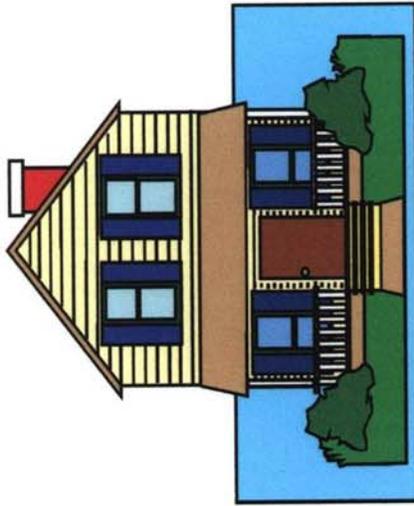
¹ Centre County 2003 Budget, Bellefonte, PA

² Ibid

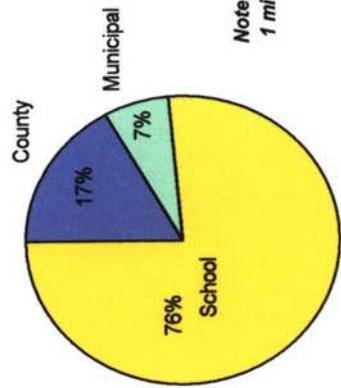
³ Ibid

Homeowner Tax Contribution

2003



	<u>Amount Paid</u>	<u>Total Percentage</u>
Average Market Value of Home	\$ 102,874	
Assessment Ratio	50%	
Average Assessed Value of Home	<u>\$ 51,437</u>	
Current County Millage	6.59	
Tax Paid to County	\$ 338.97	17%
Current Average Municipal Millage	2.671	
Tax Paid to Municipalities	\$ 137.39	7%
Current Average School District Millage	29.79	
Tax Paid to School District	\$ 1,532.31	76%
Total Tax Paid by Homeowner	<u><u>\$ 2,008.67</u></u>	<u><u>100%</u></u>



Note: The average home is based on 30,329 residential properties. 1 mill equals \$1,000 of assessed value.

The County is currently only responsible for 17% of the average taxes paid, whereas, the school districts are responsible for 76%.

Willowbank Office Complex



Situated on 3.78 acres in Bellefonte Borough, the Willowbank Building was formerly owned and operated as Centre Community Hospital, Bellefonte. Centre County Government officially acquired the property, located at Holmes and Valentine Streets, on September 29, 1988. Once the sale was finalized, plans for converting this structure from a hospital to a government office building were underway. A bond issued in 1990 was used to cover the cost of the renovation.

Today, 24 offices are housed in the main building.

Adjacent to the main building, sets the former Infirmary which was converted to offices in 1992. Three County offices are housed in this building. The Records Management Office is housed in the old Boiler Building on the site.

Approximately 250 employees work in the Willowbank Offices.

A future capital improvement project needed for the Willowbank Office Complex is the addition of 40-50 parking spaces to address increased utilization of the building.

In addition, design work has begun to improve the rear entrance to the building. The entranceway will be enclosed and offer better security measures.

Records Management



Storage of County records is a mandated responsibility as provided for in the County Records Act of 1963. The Pennsylvania

Historic and Museum Commission is the lead state agency charged with working with Counties on administration of local records. Procedures and Standards have been developed at the state level on records retention.

In complying with these Procedures and Standards, Centre County Government established a Records Management facility at the Willowbank Office Complex. At this facility, close to 4,200 cubic feet of records are stored with an additional 2,000 cubic feet of records being stored off-site at a leased storage facility located in Clinton County. The County's Records Management Office is responsible for storing records for more than 30 County offices. Each year the need for storage space continues to increase.

Improvements were made to this facility in 2003. Temperature and humidity controls were added to the Center in order to permanently maintain valuable County records.

The County Records Improvement Committee developed a countywide Records Improvement Plan to address current and future storage of records. Long term issues to be addressed are 1) exploring options for increasing County-owned storage capabilities, and 2) continuing to efficiently store data electronically.

Centre Crest



Since opening in 1939, Centre Crest has provided short and long term nursing care. This facility was expanded in 1964 and 1972 and extensively renovated in 1996. Currently, there are 240 beds in Centre Crest. At the beginning of 2003, there were 304 full and part-time employees providing the necessary support for

its twenty-four hours per day/seven days a week operation. A number of full-time positions were added during the year.

The Centre Crest Nursing Home is one of the few publicly operated nursing homes in Pennsylvania that has earned accreditation by the nationally recognized Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JAHCO).

With an increasing aging population and the attractiveness of Centre County to retirees, Centre Crest continues to look at new ways to meet the needs of those persons requiring nursing home care. This facility offers a dedicated Alzheimer's Unit and has future plans to increase the number of beds made available for this type of care. This change would require the conversion of nursing home beds for this specialized unit. No new beds would be added to the total beds available at Centre Crest. In addition, an 'End of Life' Unit is also in the planning phase for this nursing home.

Other plans include transforming a residential structure located at the rear of Centre Crest to a day care center. A private provider, supported by grant funding, would operate this facility 24 hours per day based on need. Centre Crest employees would have the top priority in using the day care program, followed by other County employees, and the general public.

On average, 97% of Centre Crest's beds are full. Currently, there is a statewide moratorium on adding beds covered by Medical Assistance which restricts Centre County's ability to expand. If the moratorium is not lifted, meeting an increased demand for Medical Assistance beds in Centre County will be a challenge in the future.

No additional capacity is planned for Centre Crest. Capital improvements will be undertaken as necessary to maintain this facility.

District Courts- Minor Judiciary Courts of Centre County

In Pennsylvania, the first tier of the judicial system is a district court. District courts handle the original filings of all grades of criminal offenses from summary traffic violations to

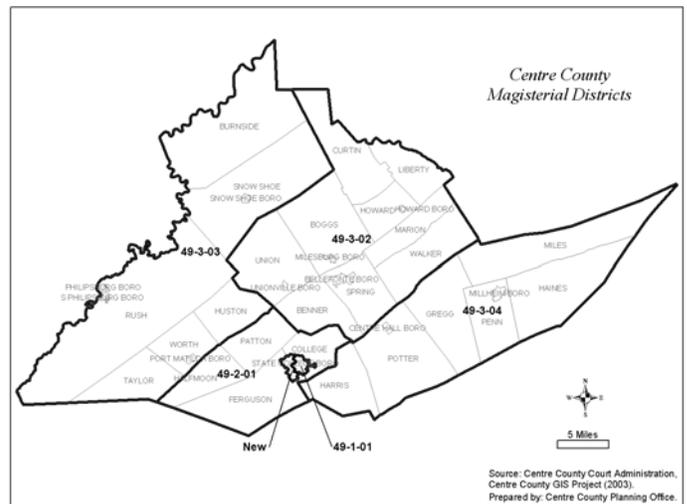


Figure 2: Map of Magisterial Districts in Centre County

charges of murder, other summary offenses, landlord tenant actions, and civil claims not to exceed \$8,000. At the present time, there are five district courts in Centre County. One new district will be created effective January 2004.

The creation of the new magisterial district was based on a request by the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts for each judicial district in the state to examine caseloads of the district magistrates. The judicial district (Centre County comprises the 49th district) was charged with making recommendations on: 1) realignment of district boundaries, 2) creation of new magisterial districts, and/or 3) the consolidation of existing magisterial districts.

As a result of this study, one change was recommended to the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts. Since the State College District Magistrate handles almost triple the statewide average of cases, it was recommended that this district, covering the Borough of State College, be divided in two creating a new magisterial district effective 2004. A new district magistrate will be elected in 2003 to serve in this district. This change was not the first for the Borough of State College. Formerly, it was part of the Centre Region's district until caseload volume warranted a change in the district boundary lines in the mid-1990s. Effective January 1, 1996, the Borough of State College became a district separate from the

Centre Region. The other magisterial districts are: Centre Hall, Centre Region, Philipsburg, and Bellefonte. (See Map of Magisterial Districts, Figure 2)

The Bellefonte magisterial district is the only district office located in a building owned by Centre County government. It is located in the Willowbank Building, Bellefonte Borough; however, plans are in the works to relocate this office to leased space. The other offices are housed in leased spaces. Future considerations for the district courts will be to continue to lease space or purchase a building for the offices.

Court of Common Pleas

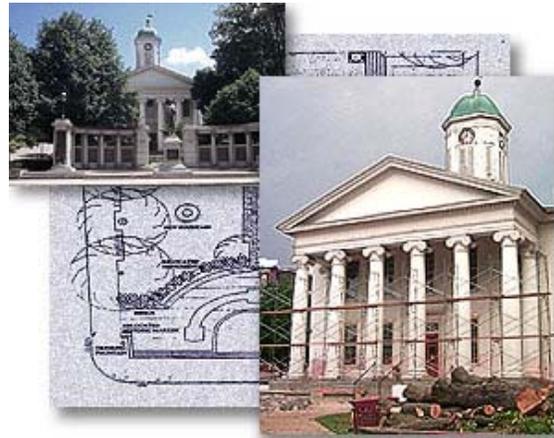
As with the District Courts, another County facility needing to respond to caseload volume is the Court of Common Pleas. Within a ten-year period, Centre County's court will have added two judges to meet the caseload demand. A third judgeship was created effective January 1998.

Statistics compiled showed steady caseload increases in the District Attorney, Public Defender, and Prothonotary Offices. After the Board of Commissioners gave their approval for the creation of a fourth judge, state legislation was passed and signed by the Governor for this judgeship. The fourth judge would be in place in 2006.

As with the creation of the third judgeship, the fourth judgeship will require the Courthouse to be modified to include a courtroom and chambers. Future Capital Projects include work to be done to the Courthouse to accommodate this newly created position. Currently, there are three courtrooms in the Courthouse.

In addition to creating space for the fourth judgeship, Centre County Government, upon reaching a population of 145,000, will need to plan for the split of the Prothonotary's Office into the Office of Prothonotary and the Office of Clerk of Courts. This split is per the County Code and is mandated for Counties of the third and fourth class. Once a U.S. Census has determined that Centre County has reached a population of 145,000 (Act 107 of 2001), the County will change its classification from fifth class to fourth class.

Courthouse



Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Centre County's Courthouse, originally built in 1806, is a landmark for Centre Countians and visitors alike. The original, two-story structure was built out of limestone and measured about 20' by 60'. Situated in the heart of Bellefonte Borough's downtown business district, this structure has undergone several renovations over the years in an effort to preserve its integrity as well as modernize the facility for County offices.

Exterior Renovations

The first renovation to this historic building took place in 1811 with the addition of brick wings to the core of the building. In 1835, a Greek revival portico was added with eight, 26-foot columns, serving as the support for this addition. In 1854, the Courthouse was determined to be in a state of disrepair. The structure was razed with the exception of the portico and the front façade. Reconstruction of the Courthouse was completed in 1855 and included the cupola with a clock.

During the years 1909-1911, an 80' x 40' section was added. The addition featured a basement allowing space for the installation of heating and ventilating equipment. Running water and bathrooms were also installed. The last major renovation of the Courthouse was in 1965 which entailed an addition to the rear of this facility.

Today, exterior renovations are underway which have spanned over the course of three years with the renovations being completed in 2004.

The renovation project was broken down into four phases which are: restoration of some 56 wooden window frames and cast iron motifs adorning the windows of the historic portion of the Courthouse: repairs to the portico and courtyard; repairs to the roof and cupola; and, painting the exterior.

One source of funding to cover the costs of this project was the Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program. To date, the County has received \$170,000 from this program.

The final phase of the Courthouse renovation project will be to clean and repair the Curtin statue and the War and Peace Memorial in the front courtyard. This project is scheduled to be undertaken in 2004.

Interior Renovations

A bond was issued in 1996 to cover the cost of relocating and renovating the Courthouse offices which included the following: Prothonotary's Office, Sheriff/Court Reporters' Office, Third Judge Chambers and the District Attorney's Office. A new elevator has also been installed.

Courthouse Expansion

The Existing Conditions Study and Assessment for the Centre County Prison recommended an addition of approximately of approximately 31,000 square feet and conversion of the existing site to parking. Cost of the project was estimated at \$7.8 million. The Commissioners have acknowledged the expansion of the Courthouse as the County's next priority need.

Fire/Emergency Services Training Center

Six years ago, the Fire Training Center located on the grounds of Penn State University closed due to contamination concerns, leaving local emergency services providers without a local training facility. This facility was operated by the Alpha Fire Company and the Boalsburg Fire Company. Together, the Centre Region municipalities shared the costs associated with this facility.

Since the closure of the training center at Penn State, emergency services providers are being trained at facilities outside of the County. In an

effort to address this problem and through intergovernmental cooperation, a concept was developed for meeting this need locally.

Centre County Government, working in cooperation with the Centre Region Council of Governments, is developing a new facility on land acquired through the state as part of the land transfer for the Centre County Prison project. This facility will be located north of the US Route 220 (I-99) Bellefonte/SR 150 Interchange and west of SR 150. The Center will be owned by Centre County Government.

Development and operations of this facility was placed in the hands of a Fire and Emergency Services Training Site Committee, which is working with an architect on the design and overall concept of the plan. The new facility will include: Live Fire Training Building, Training Tower, Self-contained Breathing Apparatus Facility, Roof Simulator, Fire Extinguisher Training and a Simulated Flammable Liquid Fires Pit, Drafting and Pump Testing Area, Automotive Training, Gas Leak/Fire Simulators, Rehabilitation Area, Storage Area, and Classroom Building. Projected completion of the initial phase of the Training Center is June 2005.

Prison-Existing



Centre County's Prison is located at the rear of the Centre County Courthouse complex in Bellefonte Borough. Centre County Prison is responsible for housing an average of 170 inmates per day; however, due to insufficient space, approximately one-half of these inmates are housed in the Clinton County Correctional Facility. The Prison employs 38 persons.

In order to have an objective look at the issues facing the existing prison, a consultant was hired to evaluate the facility. The findings included a list of security, structural and operational deficiencies as well as insufficient layout. Examples listed were:

- *No ability to segregate inmates by security classifications, such as maximum, minimum, medical, etc;*
- *No female housing;*
- *No ADA compliant housing facilities;*
- *Inadequate or non-existent staff support and training facilities;*
- *Inadequate or non-existent space for inmates; and,*
- *Inmates housed in areas that were never intended to serve as secure housing, such as the basement spaces.⁴*

After studying the overall needs of the Judicial/Correctional branch of Centre County Government, the consultant recommended that the 'existing Centre County Prison does not have any value in reuse for other County functions.'⁵ The recommendation entails razing this facility to make room for the recommended Courthouse expansion.

Prison-Future (Below)

After months of study, followed by a review from the Prison Citizens Advisory Committee, the Centre County Board of Commissioners voted to build a 308-bed facility on a Benner Township site formerly owned by the state and acquired



through a transfer of ownership and agreement

⁴ Centre County Prison Existing Conditions Study & Assessment, 1991 (VITETTA)

⁵ Ibid

of sale. The transfer was authorized through a legislative measure signed by the Governor. The cost to build the prison will be approximately \$25 million. An Act 71 Grant (Prison Facilities Act of 1990) of \$435,640 has been received for the construction of this facility. The new County Prison will be built to accommodate a range of levels of security as well as a male/female inmate population. Cells will also be dedicated to the housing of work-release prisoners.

Central Counties Youth Center

Providing adequate facilities for youth detention is also a concern of Centre County Government. Twenty years ago, five counties (Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Huntingdon, and Mifflin) jointly established a secure juvenile detention facility for youth between the ages 10 to 17. The Center is located along Paradise Road in Benner Township and was built to detain youth pending disposition by the courts. The average census of the Center is 11 youth per day. It currently is a 12-bed facility and accommodates both males and females. The average stay per youth is 14 days.

The five counties contribute to the facility based on usage. The contribution is determined by the average usage over a five year period. Centre County's share is currently 35%. Other revenues received by this facility include contracts with counties outside of the service area. Costs for these services are partially reimbursed through the state.

Renovation of this facility will soon be underway. Improvements include: installation of a new kitchen, addition of a storage room and an ADA compliant room for youth detainees, and upgrading the fire alarm and suppression systems.

The Center also provides programs which include Education, Life Skills and Health Care.

Public Safety-911



Passage of state legislation, Act 78, in 1990 established 911 as the statewide emergency phone number. Act 78 also established a monthly surcharge for subscriber phone bills to fund a central 911

communications center. Centre County's Center is located in the Willowbank Office Building, Bellefonte, PA. The new Center became operational on June 1, 1994. 911 service is provided to all County residents with the exception of those with 684 phone exchange (Tyrone). Residents in this area of the County continue to use their current seven digit emergency number.

Initially, the Center started out with Basic 911, plus Automatic Number Identification, which provides the Communications Center with the phone number of the calling party. With the help of a geographic database, the Communications Center using Computer Aided Dispatch is able to dispatch emergency services by cross referencing the database with the information from the calling party. All of this information is coordinated with predetermined dispatching procedures for police, fire, and ambulance services.

The Communications Center monitors radio channels, 911 phone trunk lines and non-emergency and administrative phone lines. The Center is also linked to the following networks:

CLEAN (Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network);
CRIMES (Criminal Records Information Management Records Extraction System);
Communications Center Network;

County Computer Network; and,
Emergency Management.

In 2001, the Center handled 177,056 calls of which 40,240 were 911 calls. 46% of the calls were generated by cellular phones. The Center averaged one phone call every 3.2 minutes in 2002 and is operational 24 hours per day, seven days a week.

This facility also includes twelve 911 towers and one antennae located on top of a building at the Penn State University. This network of towers supports the emergency communications for the entire County.

Legislation is pending that would add a surcharge on cell phone service so that a system can be developed that shows the geographic location from which a cellular call is

being made. In addition, the geography of the County makes radio communications in some portions of the County difficult. Technology now exists to reduce or eliminate these problem areas by installing 'repeaters' (a piece of equipment that could pick up a radio transmission and re-broadcast it). Federal Homeland Security funds are expected to provide money for updating the systems to digital technology.

Senior Centers



Six Senior Centers, operated by the Office of Aging, are located in various parts of the County. The Centers are: Bellefonte, Centre Hall, Centre Region (located in State College), Eastern Penns Valley (located in Rebersburg), Philipsburg, and Snow Shoe. Currently, the space utilized is leased. The Centre Hall site is the only site which is not exclusively used by the Center since it is owned by the Centre Hall Fire Company. This building serves as the fire station and also houses a Penns Valley Emergency Medical Services ambulance.

These facilities provide activities and meals to the County's senior citizens. Transportation to and from the Centers is provided by the Centre County Transportation Office's Van Service. Currently, Centre County is exploring the option of constructing a building on the Rebersburg Elementary School property adjacent to the old school house. The County would subdivide a parcel from the parent tract. The newly created parcel, which would include the old school house on the site, would be leased from the Penns Valley Area School District. The new building would be owned by the County and would serve as the new Senior Center for Eastern Penns Valley. The old school house would also be owned by the County and retained for an appropriate use.

Whether to continue to lease or own other Senior Centers in the County are options which will be investigated further over the next few years. When renting a space, one important consideration is that the Center has exclusive use of the building/space.

The Office of Aging does not anticipate the establishment of any new Centers in the County.

Transportation

Located outside of Milesburg Borough, Centre County's Transportation Office is situated on leased land. The Office, relocated in 1997, was formerly housed in the Willowbank Building.

The Transportation Office is responsible for approximately 25 vehicles and 29 employees. In 2002, County vehicles provided 77,000 trips to residents and delivered almost 39,000 meals. Vehicles used by the Transportation Department are replaced each year using grant funding, Penn State in-kind monies, and County funds. Since the relocation, the Office has nearly doubled in size.

OTHER CAPITAL PROJECTS

Centre County is required to replace the current voting machines by 2006. Federal and state grant monies are available to help offset the cost. The new voting machines will be touch screen.

Another capital expenditure will be reassessment. The Commissioners will need to consider a reassessment of properties within the next 10 years.

Both are two basic functions (services) provided by County government which require a substantial capital investment that needs to be planned for.

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

Authorities are independent bodies created by a governing body to fulfill a function of public interest. Financed by user fees or lease rentals, authorities have the power to incur debt, own property and finance capital projects. These quasi governmental bodies provide a wide range of services integral to our communities.

Centre County's Authorities include: Airport, Higher Education, Housing, Industrial Development (created in 2003), Solid Waste and Water. Separate municipal authorities provide services such as water, sewer or industrial development.

Although authorities are created by a political subdivision, i.e. the County or a municipality, they still operate independently. The sole power of the governing body is appointment of board members.



Figure 3: Properties owned by the Centre County Housing Authority

MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES

When Centre County was incorporated in 1800, there were eight townships. Today there are 25 townships and 11 boroughs and two Councils of Governments; the Centre Region and the Moshannon Valley.

Municipal services provided include: water, sewer, administration, recreation, police, and road maintenance. Municipal facilities are tied to these services and vary in scale depending on the needs of the individual municipality.

As municipalities in the County experience growth, the demand for services and facilities will increase. Adding and upgrading services/facilities will be a challenge facing these municipalities. For example, some municipalities on the fringe of the Centre Region may need to make a decision in the future as to whether or not the time has come to hire a municipal manager. Others may need to build or expand municipal buildings to accommodate

an increased level of services. Police protection may also be a service that is warranted based on the type of growth that occurs within a municipal or regional jurisdiction. Another important consideration is the development of recreational opportunities for the enjoyment of the residents. Funds to operate governmental facilities and services come mostly from local tax source. As with the County, grants and other sources of funds supplement municipal tax revenues.

Finally, long range land use planning, capital improvement plans and budgets, and intergovernmental cooperation are important tools to help guide municipal officials with facilities planning. Participation in an intergovernmental cooperation effort allows municipalities to cost-effectively provide for many of these facilities through shared costs. Working together is the key to providing high-quality services in a cost effective and efficient manner.

Several of the County's regions have joined to prepare multi-municipal comprehensive plans. The Centre Region municipalities adopted their third regional plan in 2000, while the Nittany Valley and Penns Valley municipalities respectively have begun the process of developing such plans.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOAL

Promote the appropriate location and maintenance of existing and proposed community facilities, utilities, and services for the citizens of Centre County.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES OBJECTIVES

Promote and retain social services and facilities in locations that are convenient and accessible to County residents.

To promote the placement of these facilities and services in such a way as to minimize potential land use conflicts and maximize their intended public use.

To provide adequate opportunities for social interaction, recreation and cultural activity.

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve cooperation between governmental agencies to avoid duplication of services provided on a Federal, state, county and municipal level wherever possible.

Provide the same level of County services to each planning regions.

Explore opportunities for increased citizen participation in the planning of localized facilities and services planning.

Continue to foster and improve cooperation among municipalities where shared facilities and services might be more economically provided on a multi-municipal level.

Plan for the provision of local facilities and services at the local and multi-municipal levels to be consistent with the Centre County Comprehensive Plan.

Develop municipal buildings as multi-use facilities for the community.

Continue to orient county level services towards social and human service programs, administered on a county-wide basis. Expansion of county facilities and services should be matched to future needs and financing.

Coordinate County, multi-municipal and local long-range planning with future facilities and services planning in order to promote efficient and cost effective land use and infrastructure decisions.

Develop a capital improvement plan and budget for facilities owned by County government. Address whether additional facilities needed by County government should be built or leased.