CLEARFIELD & ELK COUNTIES
# JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

CLEARFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

JUNE 2024

CONTENTS

RESOLUTION

Dave Glass
Tim J. Winters
John Sobel
County Commissioners

Heather Bozovich
County Solicitor
Lisa McFadden
Chief Clerk

Clearfield County
212 E. Locust Street
Suite 112
Clearfield, PA 16830
Phone 814-765-2642
FAX 814-765-2640
cccomm@clearfieldco.org

COUNTY OF CLEARFIELD
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
RESOLUTION No. 2024- #3

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF CLEARFIELD COUNTY APPROVING THE ADOPTION OF THE CLEARFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 1968. P.L. 805, No. 247 as reenacted and amended) requires that counties prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan and that municipal plans be generally consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, with assistance from staff of the Clearfield County Planning Department, has the duty of preparing a new Comprehensive Plan for Clearfield County; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, with the assistance of staff and a professional consultant, prepared a new County Comprehensive Plan titled "Clearfield & Elk Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan." as accordance with Section 209.1 and 301 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The plan addresses eight focus areas which include transportation, infrastructure, land use, resources, housing, social services, energy, and the economy; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, in accordance with Section 209.1 and 301 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, held a public meeting, worked with a 15-member Steering Committee, and incorporated feedback from municipalities, students, focus group stakeholders, and the general public; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission recommend that the Board of County Commissioners adopt this comprehensive plan as official county policy; and,

WHEREAS, the Clearfield County Board of Commissioners held a 45 day public comment period followed by a public hearing pursuant to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to consider public comments; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that in accordance with the Section 302 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Board of Commissioners of Clearfield County accept and adopt the 2024 Clearfield County Comprehensive Plan.

DULY ADOPTED and enacted this 9th day of July, 2024.

ATTEST:

Lisa McFadden, Chief Clerk

COUNTY OF CLEARFIELD
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Dave Glass, Chairman
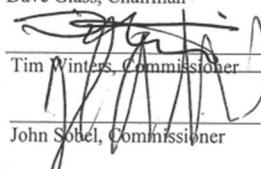
Tim Winters, Commissioner
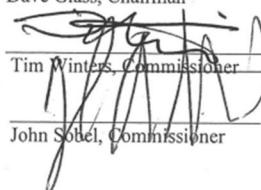
John Sobel, Commissioner

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

STEERING COMMITTEE

Heather Bozovich, *Clearfield County Solicitor*
Jodi Foster, *Retired Elk County Planning Director*
Dave Glass, *Clearfield County Commissioner*
Tina Gradizzi, *Community & Economic Development Director, City of St Marys*
Lisa Kovalick, *Clearfield County Redevelopment Authority Director*
Fritz Lecker, *Elk County Commissioner*
Paul McCloskey, *Clearfield County Clearly Ahead, VP of Energy & Business Development*
Ryan Miller, P.E., *ARS Engineering Services, VP/Senior Engineer*
Lee Neureiter, *Elk County Recorder of Deeds*
Mike Vaow, *Stahl Sheaffer Engineering, Project Manager*
Kelly Williams, *Clearfield County Conservation District Watershed Technician*
Rachel Wolfel, *T&W Consultants, LLC*
Jodi Brennan, *Clearfield County Planning Director*
Tracy Gerber, *Elk County Planning Director*
Amy Kessler, *NC RPO Director of Community Development and Regional Planning*

CLEARFIELD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Leland Condon
Henry Daugherty
Robert Ferguson
Matthew Hasselback
Gerry Hatcher
Zane Hensel
Howard Osewalt
Michael Vaow
Jody Yost

PLANNING STAFF

Jodi Brennan, *Clearfield County Planning Director*
Commissioner Joseph Daghir, *Elk County Commissioner (retired)*
Tracy Gerber, *Elk County Planning Director*
Amy Kessler, *NC RPO Director of Community Development and Regional Planning*

Thomas Larson, *Clearfield County Planning, Community Development Specialist*
Commissioner Matthew Quesenberry, *Elk County Commissioner*
Connor Vecellio, *NC RPO Transportation Planning Coordinator*

CONSULTANT TEAM

Michael Baker International

Rockland Planning

5. Assess approaches to tourism promotion and public funding tools to ensure that the Counties are maximizing opportunities.
6. Expand access to reliable broadband opportunities including unserved and underserved populations.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

1. Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.
2. Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.
3. Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Clearfield and Elk Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan was funded by the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission (North Central) using Supplemental Planning funding provided through the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) with matching funds provided by Clearfield and Elk counties. By combining efforts to update the existing comprehensive plan, both counties were able to collaboratively evaluate shared challenges and plan for the region's future. This approach resulted in substantial cost savings for both counties.

A project team composed of staff from each county's planning department and the project Steering Committee guided the overall planning effort, which was based on a robust public engagement process to understand the region's desires and visions for the future.

PHASE 1: LEARN	PHASE 2: ESTABLISH	PHASE 3: LAUNCH	PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION
Listen to the public to learn more about the opportunities and challenges in the community.	Establish action steps and a road map to advance the vision of the Counties and Community Values.	Share the draft plan for public comment and final adoption.	Begin the implementation of identified action items and create a progress tracker.
SPRING 2023	**FALL 2023**	**WINTER 2024**	**SPRING 2024**
• **Focus Groups:** Clearfield and Elk Counties will be facilitating focus groups with key stakeholders to collect public input. • **Existing Conditions:** A Clearfield and Elk Counties Today report will be created through in depth analysis of current conditions within the counties.	The project management team, in coordination with the steering committee, will work to incorporate feedback gathered from focus groups and stakeholder interviews to draft the comprehensive plan.	• Community Open House Events will be hosted to collect feedback on the draft document. • Formal Plan Adoption Period • Public survey will be available to collect feedback	The Counties will work together to implement the action items that were identified in the comprehensive plan. *Stay tuned for updates on progress!*

Steering Committee

The planning departments of both counties organized a 15-member Steering Committee to provide experience and guidance on key topic areas. The Steering Committee included representation from local governments, private citizens, business and education leaders, County departments, design professionals, and EMS. The Committee was integral to the development of the Plan through issue identification, development of the vision, mission, and goals, and the vetting of strategies for implementation.

Focus Groups

With input from the planning departments, a list of stakeholders was identified to participate in nine (9) focus groups. These focus group meetings were conducted early in the planning process to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities throughout the region. These meetings were held virtually.

The focus groups were based around the eight identified topic areas – infrastructure, economy, energy, housing, transportation, land use, social services, and resources. (A separate focus group discussion was conducted with the Elk County Planning Commission.) The information gathered in these sessions was invaluable to the planning process and informed portions of the Policy Statements and Implementation Plan chapters of this plan.

Municipal Officials Survey

The planning process also included the administration of a seven-question municipal officials survey to obtain feedback from municipalities on what resources are needed to further their projects and how the County could best help advance their priorities. A total of 23 municipalities across both counties participated in the survey that ran from August – September 2023. The information gathered was used to inform recommendations within the Joint Comprehensive Plan as well as provide key feedback to the counties for future coordination with municipalities.

The officials were asked to identify assets and challenges throughout their communities. The following were the top responses received, by county:

Clearfield County:

Assets	Number of Responses
Recreation/Tourism	7
Land/Agriculture	6
Good People	5
Challenges	**Number of Responses**
Funding (limited tax base and funding for municipal projects)	9
Blight/Housing Shortage	7
Infrastructure Maintenance	6
Population Decline	6

Elk County:

Assets	Number of Responses
Recreation/Tourism	9
Industry	7
EMS Departments/Schools/Good People	4

Challenges	Number of Responses
Blight/Housing Shortage	12
Funding (limited tax base and funding for municipal projects)	9
Population Decline	4

Youth Survey

Clearfield County conducted a 14-question survey for the youth within the county. The survey was distributed through the school districts for voluntary participation in September 2023. With over 420 responses, the survey was successful at reaching a high number of high school students and gathering their input regarding the county's future.[1]

Among the questions posed, students were asked to describe Clearfield County in one word. Figure 1 presents a word cloud of the most frequent responses.

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[1] In order to protect privacy concerns, the plan does not include information on *which* schools responses came from.

Figure 1: Clearfield County Students: How Would You Describe Clearfield County in One Word?

A full summary of the youth survey results is included in Appendix B.

Public Survey

The planning process included a third survey that allowed community members to provide feedback on a draft plan. Clearfield County conducted a six-question survey, which was distributed online and promoted via a press release. Clearfield County residents were asked to provide feedback on the areas in their community that needed the most investment, what they would change about the community, and what they don't want to change. Survey participants also provided feedback on the Joint Comprehensive Plan overall.

> Clearfield County -
> **Top 5 Areas for Investment**
> *Per Public Survey*
>
> 1. Transportation Infrastructure
> 2. Economic Growth
> 3. Public Spaces
> 4. Regional Hospital
> 5. Blighted Properties

The survey results highlight two key areas: transportation infrastructure and economic development. Regarding economic development, respondents expressed a desire to grow while maintaining the small-town feel they love about their community.

What are 3 things that you would NOT WANT TO CHANGE about your community?

In terms of transportation infrastructure, respondents expressed a desire to improve road and bridge quality, explore alternative transportation options, and enhance pedestrians and cyclists' safety. A common request was for a rideshare program, along with improved safety features such as functioning pedestrian signals at crosswalks.

Residents also emphasized the need for Clearfield County to address blighted properties by enforcing building codes and redeveloping historic properties. Suggestions included beautifying neighborhoods through property redevelopment, downtown revitalization efforts, and clean-up initiatives. Respondents also highlighted the importance of upgrading and expanding recreational spaces, including parks and playgrounds. Furthermore, there's a strong desire for affordable housing projects and public programming that can assist with necessities like groceries, utilities, and gas.

Lastly, survey participants consistently called for increased investment into Penn Highlands Healthcare. They expressed a need for better healthcare services related to labor and delivery, mental health, and drug rehabilitation. Investing in the hospital not only creates new jobs but also improves the overall quality of life for area residents.

Interviews

The comprehensive plan process included 10 stakeholder interviews. These interviews were used to engage a variety of business owners and subject matter experts who provided additional insight into local challenges and needs. Topics addressed through the interviews included housing, downtown revitalization, drug and alcohol challenges, school districts, workforce development, local taxing authorities, and delivery of social services. A few highlights of comments received throughout the interviews are reflected below.

Land Use	Housing	Social Services	Economy and Workforce
Create communities that people are attracted to.	Start by improving existing housing stock, the cost of building new is cost prohibitive.	Quality and affordable housing is a barrier for people re-entering the community.	Young professionals will want to stay in the region if we make our core, urban communities more attractive. Create a sense of place.
Create a demand for people to want to stay and live in Clearfield and Elk Counties.	Work with Housing Authority to expand home improvement programs.	Lack of quality daycare hinders those seeking employment opportunities and medical care.	Counties needs a cohesive vision and then make decisions that meet that vision.
Lack of property maintenance and blighted properties are a barrier to growth.	Coordinate local zoning to streamline approval process.	County should help with providing transportation to/from employers.	Improve existing housing to attract young workers.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The first phase of the planning process included an existing conditions analysis to establish a planning baseline for the two counties.

Demographics

Population Trends

As the United States continues to urbanize, rural counties across the country have experienced decreases in total population. Clearfield and Elk counties have not been immune to this trend as both have declined in population since 2000. The U.S Census Bureau estimates that in 2022, the population of Clearfield County was 77,904 while for Elk County, the figure was 30,477. This indicates that the population of the counties has decreased 8.5 percent since the turn of the century. DuBois, the largest city in Clearfield County, experienced a 3.6 percent decline in population and St. Marys, the largest municipality in Elk County, saw its population fall by 2.5 percentage points. Since 2010, of the 32 boroughs, cities, and CDPs (Census Designated Places) in Clearfield County, only four have experienced an increase in population with Treasure Lake CDP recording the largest increase. In Elk County, only the Weedville CDP has registered an increase in population size. Figure 2 depicts the percentage of population change between 2010 and 2020 for geographical areas within the region.

Figure 2: Population Change in Clearfield County (left) and Elk County (right), 2000-2022
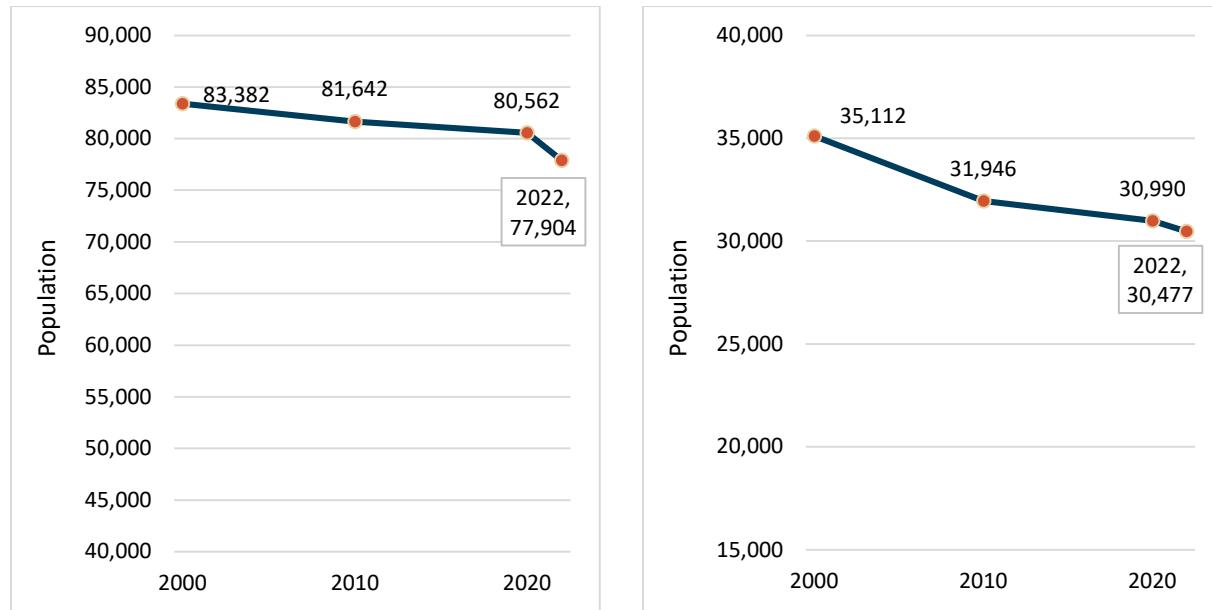
Source: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census (2000,2010,2020), U.S Census Bureau PEP (2022)

*Figure 3: Clearfield County Population Change, 2010-2020*
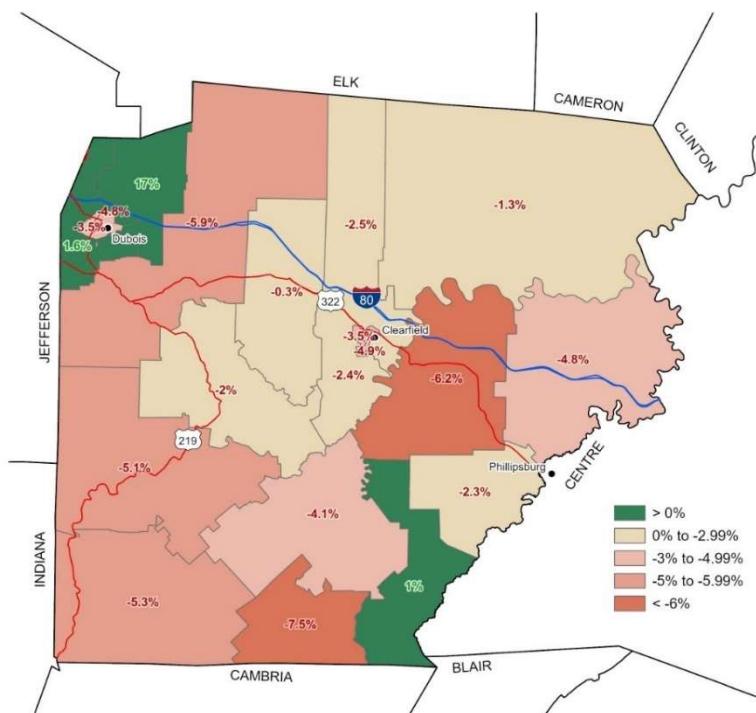
Figure 4: Elk County Population Change, 2010-2020
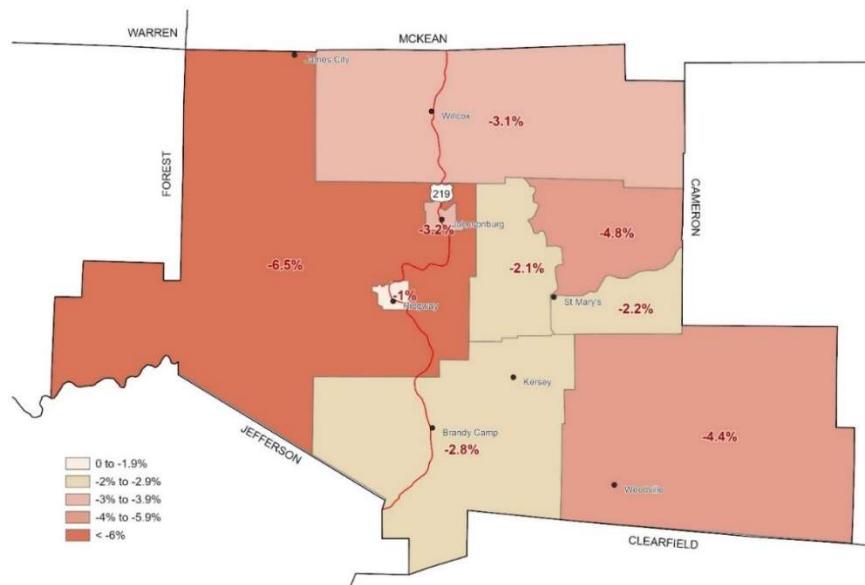
Source: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census (2010,2020)

Population Projections

The decline in population is forecasted to continue. Using projections from Woods and Poole, both Clearfield and Elk counties will continue to experience a decline in population through 2050. These projections are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Population Projections, 2020-2050
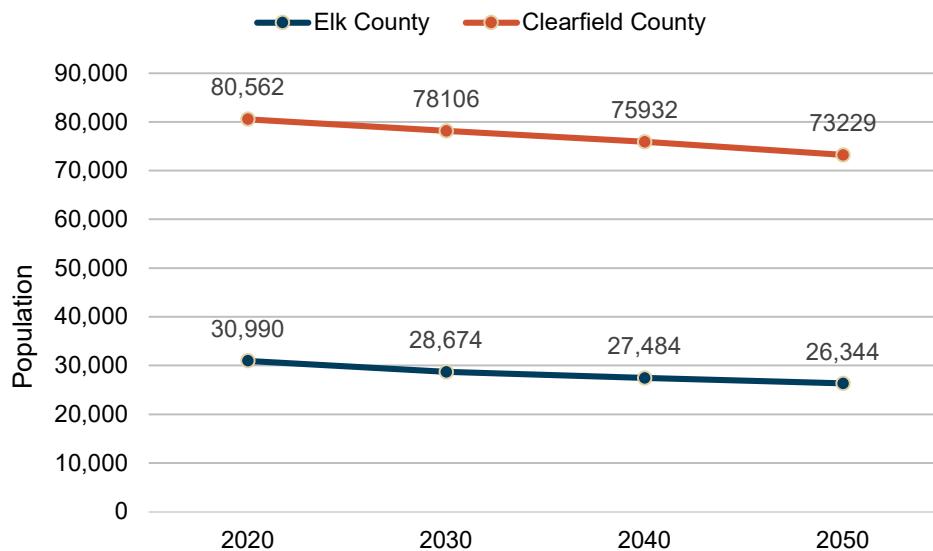
Source: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census (2020), Woods and Poole (2030-2050)

Age Distribution

Clearfield and Elk counties are also both experiencing a greater share of an aging population. The percentage of the population 65 years old or older has increased over 5 percent between 2000 and 2020. This trend will only increase as Woods and Poole project nearly a third of the region's population to be over the age of 65 by 2050. The aging population distribution can be seen in Figure 6. As the population ages there is a higher percentage of the population on a fixed income which shrinks the tax base. This could also lead to a shortage of qualified workers, especially in counties with heavy economic reliance on manufacturing and industrial employment, such as Elk County. Additionally, the counties may need to consider a greater emphasis on healthcare, transportation, and housing for elderly populations.

Figure 6: Clearfield and Elk Counties: Combined Age Distribution, 2000, 2020, 2050
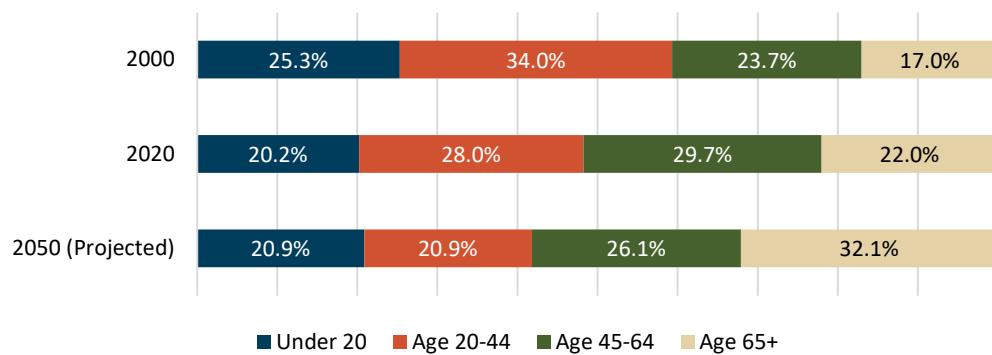
Source: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census (2000,2020), Woods and Poole (2050)

Population within Clearfield and Elk county varies by different age groups. The County-specific breakdowns can be seen in Figures 7 and 8.

Figure 7: Clearfield County Population Pyramid (2020)
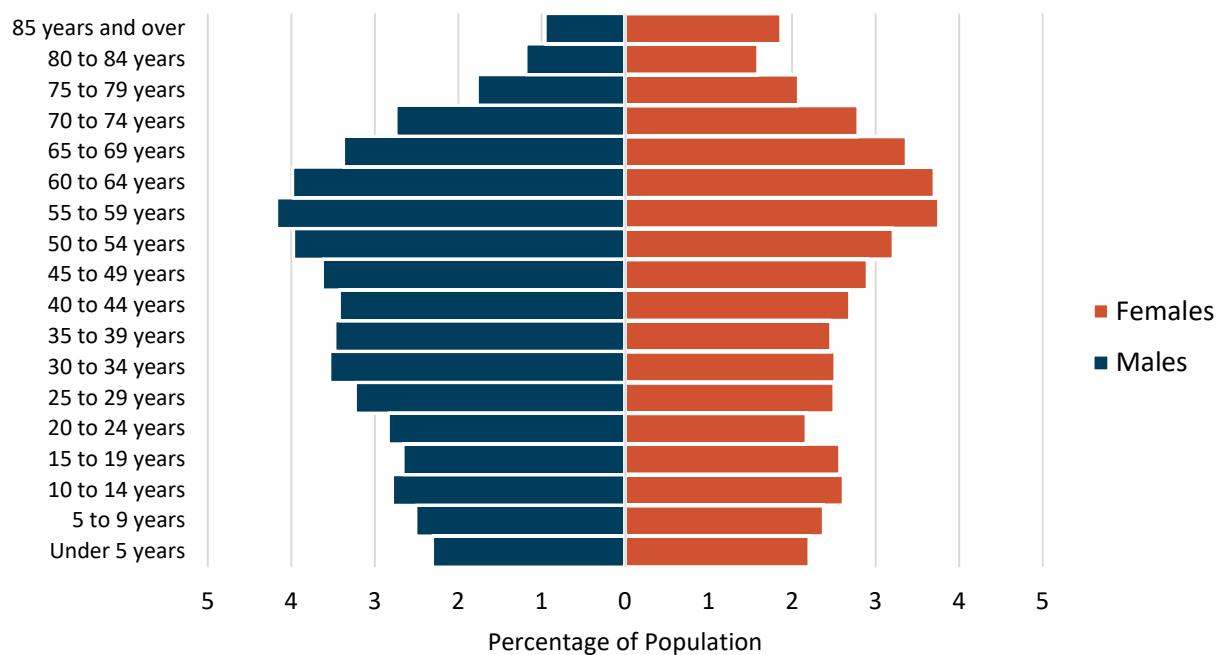
Source: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census (2020)

Figure 8: Elk County Population Distribution (2020)
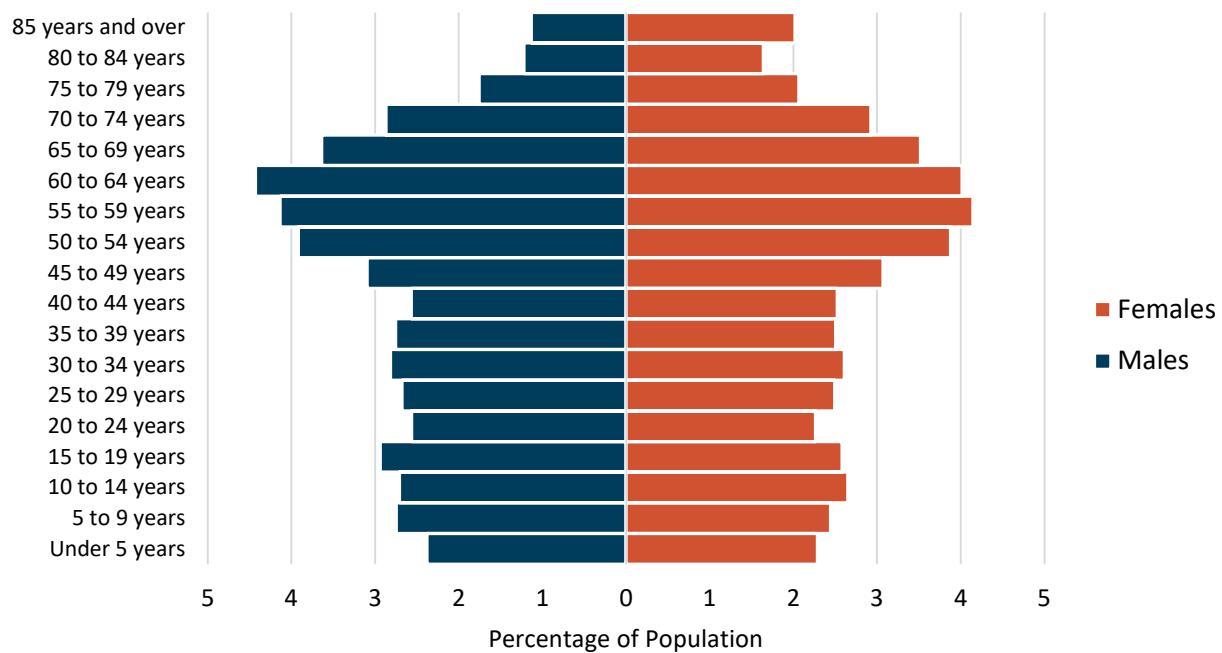
Source: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census (2020)

Housing

Overview

Housing has been identified as a major issue. Housing needs to be affordable, well maintained, and abundant to facilitate economic growth. Owning property allows residents to grow generational wealth as housing values tend to increase over time. In Clearfield and Elk counties, housing prices have seen an increase between 2010 and 2020 with median housing value (adjusted for inflation) increasing roughly $12,000 in the ten years. This can be seen in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Median Housing Values, 2010, 2015, 2020
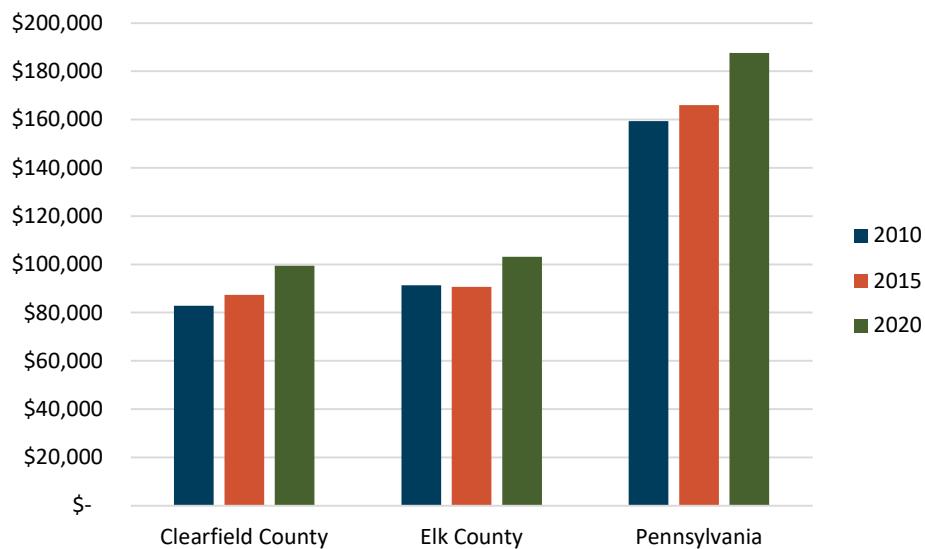
Source: U.S Census Bureau American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates, 2010,2015,2020)

Both counties have a high percentage of owner-occupied residences. Just over three-quarters of occupied houses are owner occupied in Clearfield County compared to a figure of 78 percent in Elk County. The state average is 69 percent (American Community Survey 5-Year estimates, 2020).

Vacant Housing

Vacant buildings can be a sign of blight and can lower the property values of surrounding buildings. It also highlights a decrease in tax base and can be an indicator of negative issues in the housing market. However, vacancy rates do not always tell the full story. The Census classifies seasonal, recreational, and occasional use homes as vacant. Clearfield County has over 2,000 seasonal homes and Elk County has surpassed 3,000 of these residences. Both counties have relatively high vacancy rates compared to the state average. Both are close to 20 percent with Elk County recording a high of 24.5 percent in 2015. The prevalence of vacant units is impacted by recreational/season housing. The vacancy rates in 2010, 2015, and 2020 are shown graphically in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Vacancy Rates, 2010, 2015, 2020
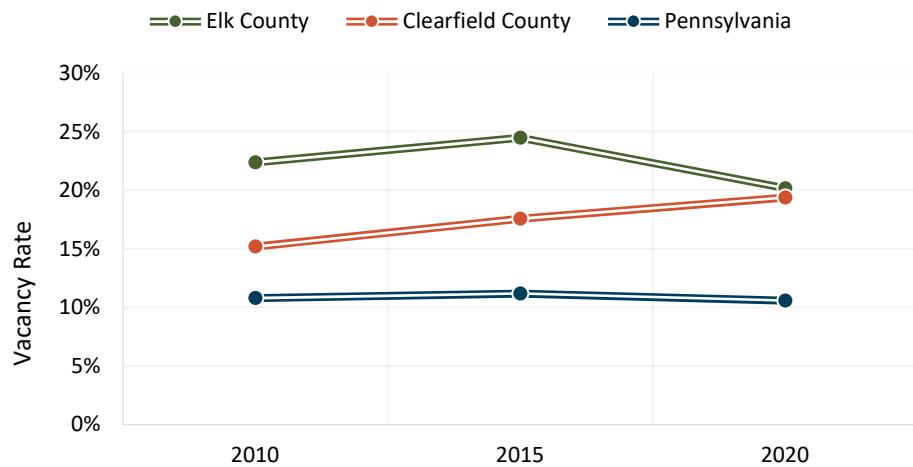
Source: U.S Census Bureau American Community Survey (5 Year Estimates, 2010,2015,2020)

Age of Housing Units

While the year a house was built is less important than the upkeep, materials used, and other factors, it can shed light on different housing factors. Focus Groups identified historic housing as a major asset for the two counties. These older houses can preserve history but also may require more maintenance. New houses can also indicate development and positive economic factors. Both counties have a slightly higher percentage of their housing stock built before 1940 than the state average. Figure 11 shows a breakdown of when the housing stock was built, analyzed over 20-year periods.

Figure 11: Housing Age
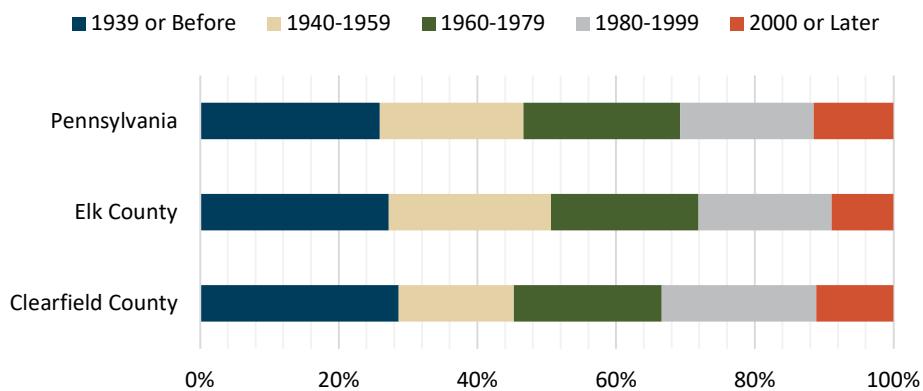
Source: U.S Census Bureau American Community Survey (5 Year Estimates, 2020)

Economy

Economic Overview

Both counties experienced an increase in median household income by over 30 percent, between 2010 and 2021. The increase in median household income, adjusted for inflation, can be seen in Figure 12. While both counties are still well below the state median income, this increase helps to highlight progress in both counties.

Figure 12: Median Household Income, 2010, 2020
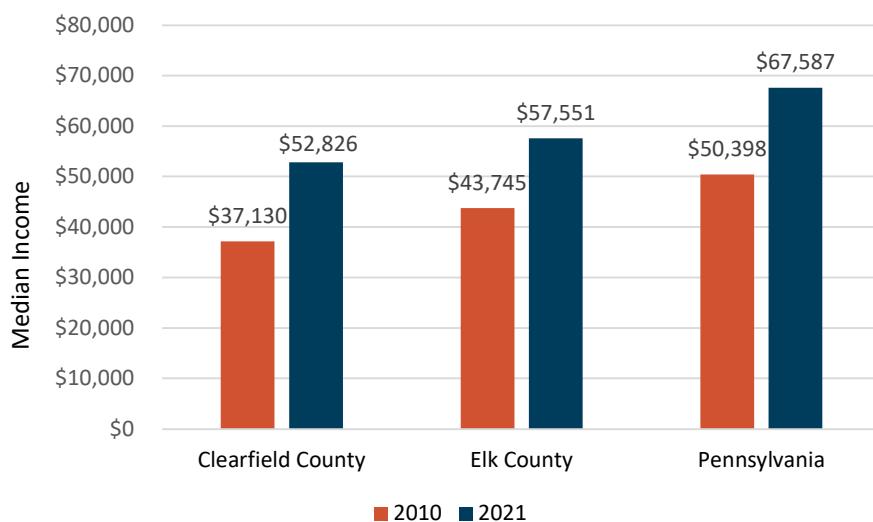
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates 2010, 2021)

Clearfield County has consistently had a higher unemployment rate than Elk County and Pennsylvania as a whole. Elk County's unemployment rate has fluctuated compared to the state. As of April 2023, both counties saw their unemployment rate drop lower than the state average. The COVID-19 Pandemic had a much higher impact on Elk County's unemployment with the unemployment rate spiking over 25 percent. The unemployment rates between January 2013 and April 2023 are shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Unemployment Rates, 2013-2023
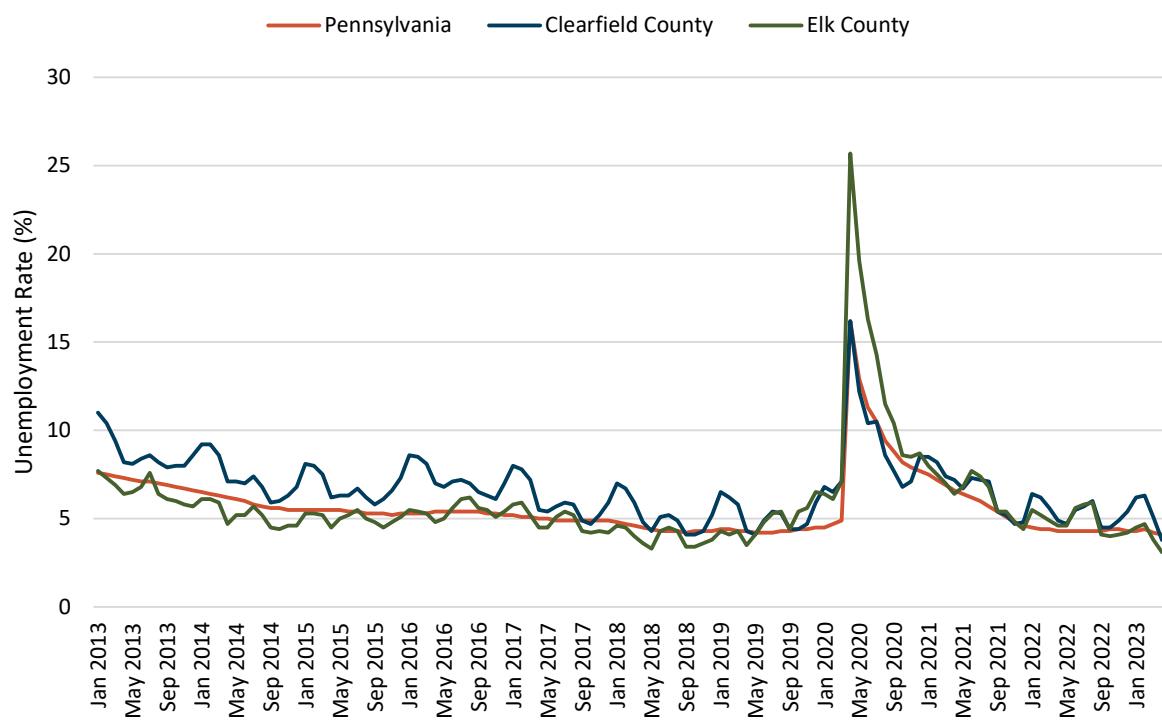
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (Clearfield, Elk, Pennsylvania)

Place of Employment

A majority of the total workforce in both counties work inside the respective county of residence. The breakdown for each county can be seen in Figure 14. This percentage is higher in Elk County, partially due to the prominence of manufacturing jobs. The percentage of the workforce that works outside of the county of residence includes workers crossing into neighboring counties or commuting further to urban areas in other parts of Pennsylvania. Additionally, a small percentage of the workforce in each county works outside of Pennsylvania. Clearfield County has 1,414 workers who work remote jobs and do not commute to work. Elk County has 336 who work remotely.

Figure 14: Places of Work, 2020
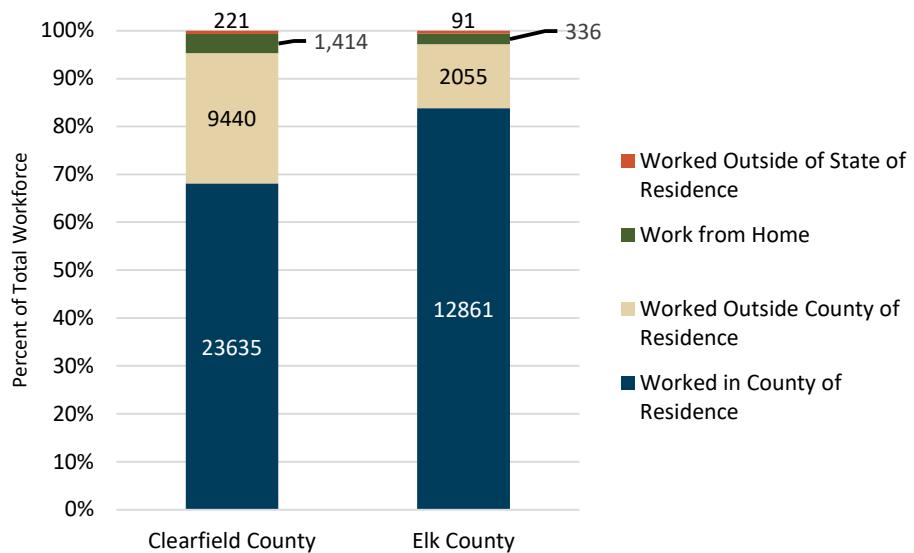
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates, 2020)

Major Industries and Employers

Clearfield and Elk counties rely on manufacturing, education, and health care and social services for a large percentage of their workforce and economies. Other major sectors of the regional economy are retail, transportation and warehousing, and construction. A breakdown of employment by industry can be seen in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Employment by Industry
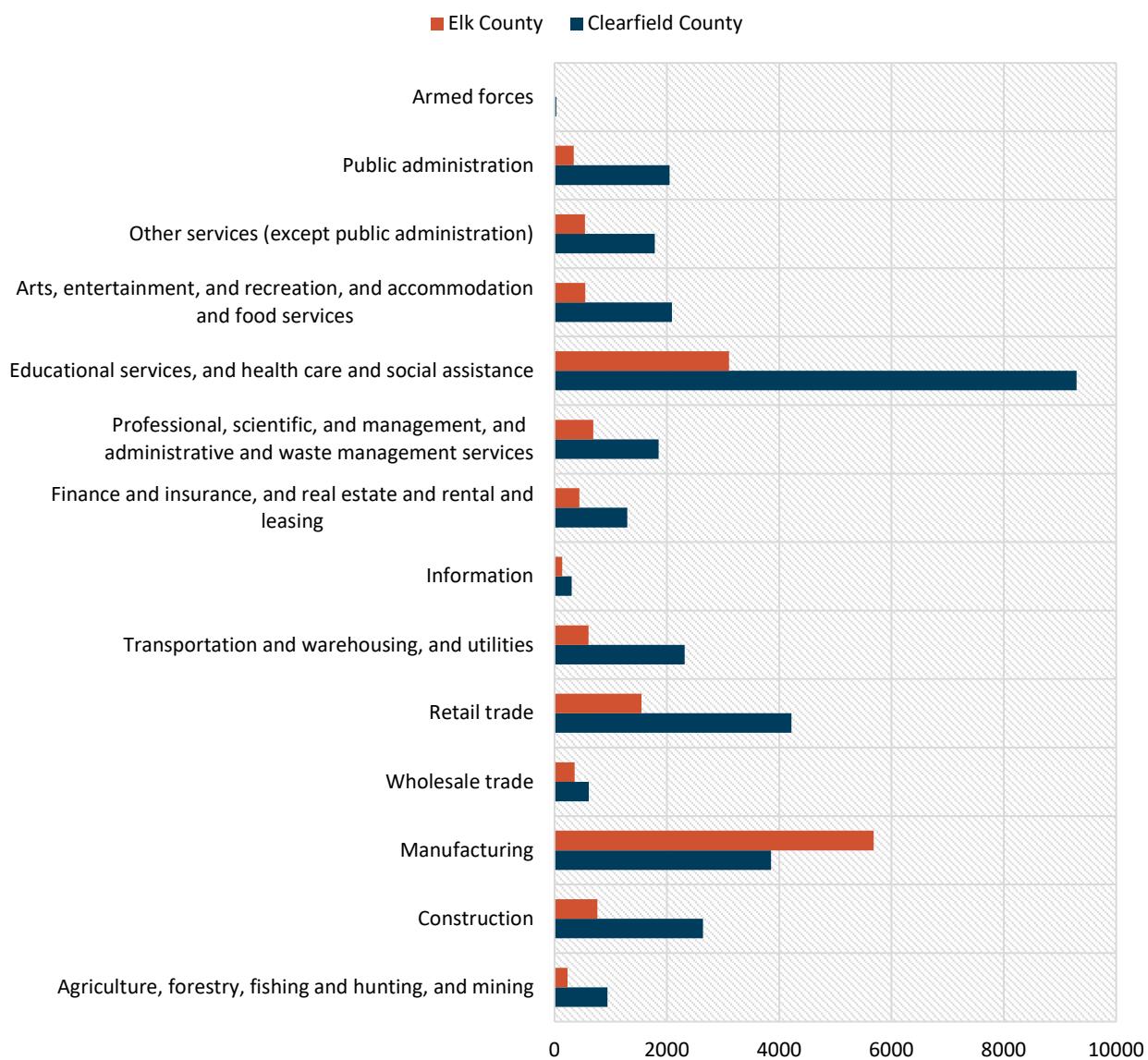
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates, 2020)

While manufacturing may create the most jobs, the largest employer in both counties is a regional medical or health center. The top 10 employers in each county (as of the fourth quarter of 2022) is depicted in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Major Employers

Clearfield County	Elk County
Top 10 Employers (2022 Q4)	**Top 10 Employers (2022 Q4)**
1. DuBois Regional Medical Center	1. Elk Regional Health Center, Inc.
2. Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.	2. Domtar Paper Company LLC
3. State Government	3. Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.
4. Cen-Clear Child Services, Inc.	4. Keystone Powdered Metal Company
5. DuBois Area School District	5. SGL Carbon LLC
6. Clearfield Area School District	6. Saint Marys Area School District
7. Penn Highlands Healthcare	7. Metal Powder Products LLC
8. Christ the King Manor	8. Amphenol Thermometrics, Inc.
9. County National Bank	9. Eastern Sintered Alloys, Inc.
10. Fayette Resources, Inc.	10. Morris Compressors, Inc.

Source: PA Department of Labor and Industry, (Clearfield County Profile, Elk County Profile)

Location Quotient

Location Quotient (LQ) compares the counties' specialization relative to the state as a whole. This is calculated by dividing the counties' percentage of its workforce in each industry by the state percentage. A quotient of one means that the county has the same percentage of workers in the industry as the state. The higher the number, the more important the industry is relative to the state.

Clearfield County

Analyzing the LQ of Clearfield County reveals a relatively diverse economy (Figure 17). The county is reliant on natural resources with agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining representing the highest LQ. Public Administration, Construction, Retail, Education and Health, and other services also represent comparatively critical industries.

Figure 17: Clearfield County Location Quotient, 2020
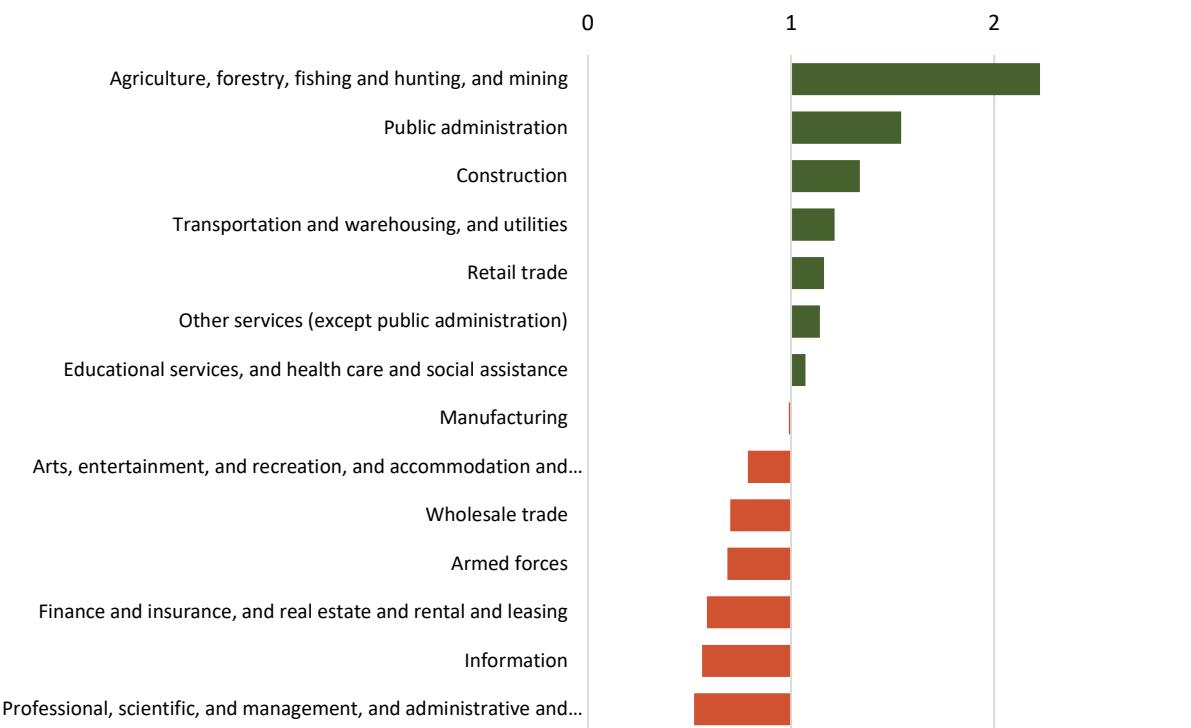
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates, 2020)

Elk County

The LQ of Elk County tells a different economic story (Figure 18). While Elk County is also reliant on its natural resources for agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining, manufacturing represents the largest LQ in Elk County. With an LQ of 3.24, this is the highest reliance on an industry in the two counties and highlights how crucial manufacturing is to Elk County's economy. While a strong manufacturing industry is a positive for the county, the lack of diversity in the economy is a concern. Every other major

industry group has an LQ below one. This indicates that any shocks to the manufacturing sector could have major economic consequences.

Figure 18: Elk County Location Quotient, 2020
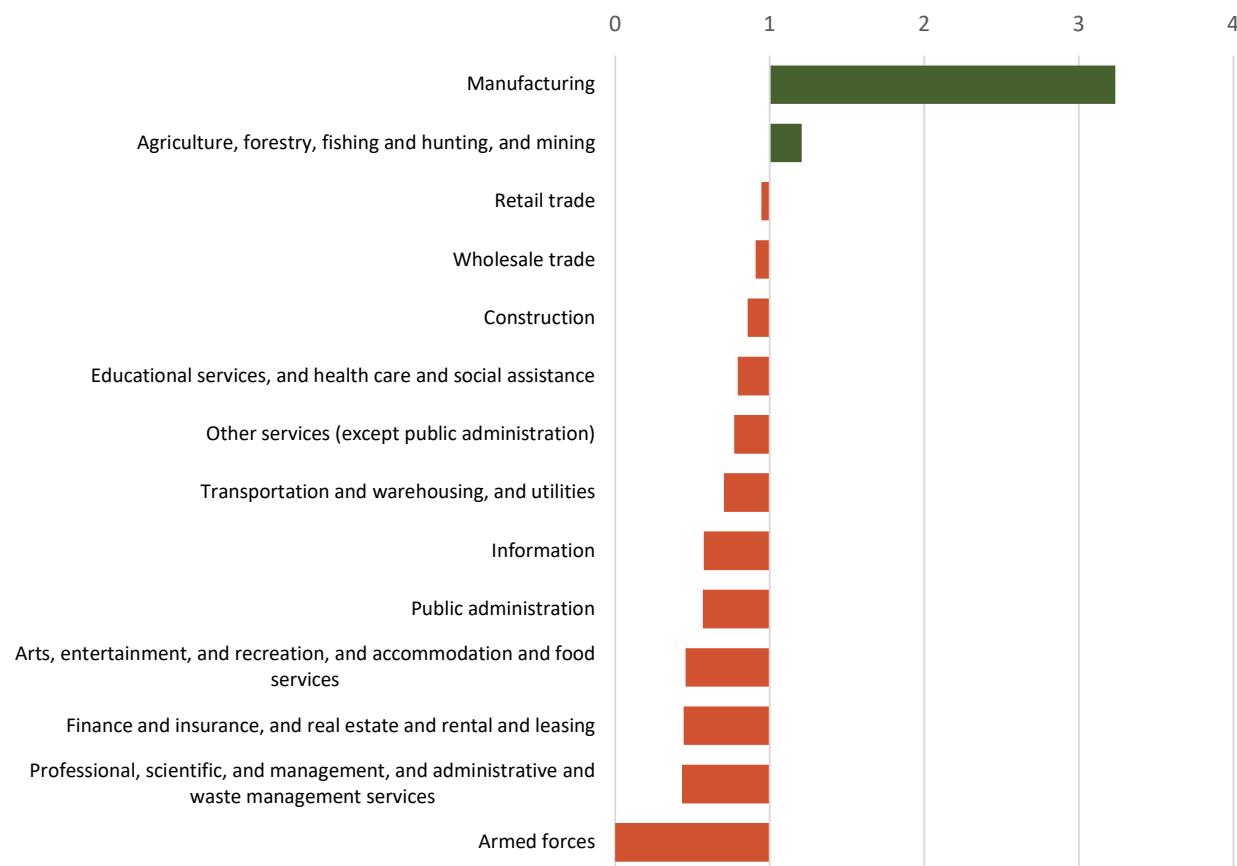
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates, 2020)

Tourism

Tourism is a major source of both revenue and employment in both counties. The counties' natural beauty makes them a hotspot for ecotourism. Tourism creates jobs which can be seen in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Employment Supported by Visitor Spending
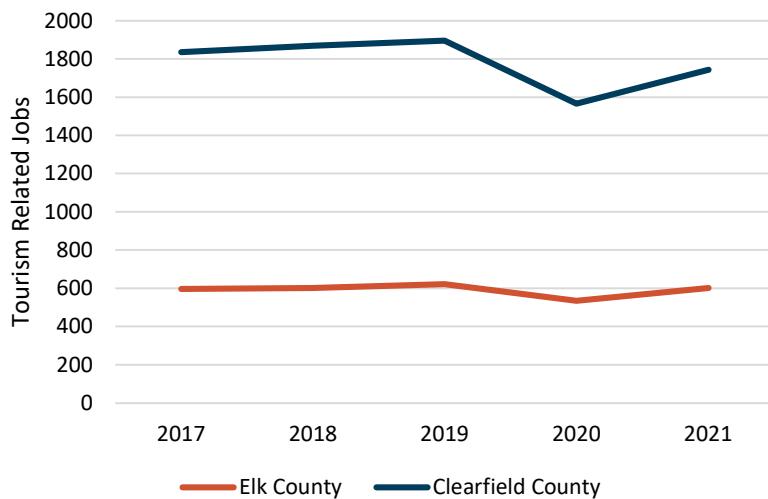
Source: Pennsylvania Tourism Office – Economic Impact of Travel & Tourism Report (2021)

Visitor spending can help boost the economy and increase the tax base. Visitor spending is shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Visitor Spending, 2017-2021
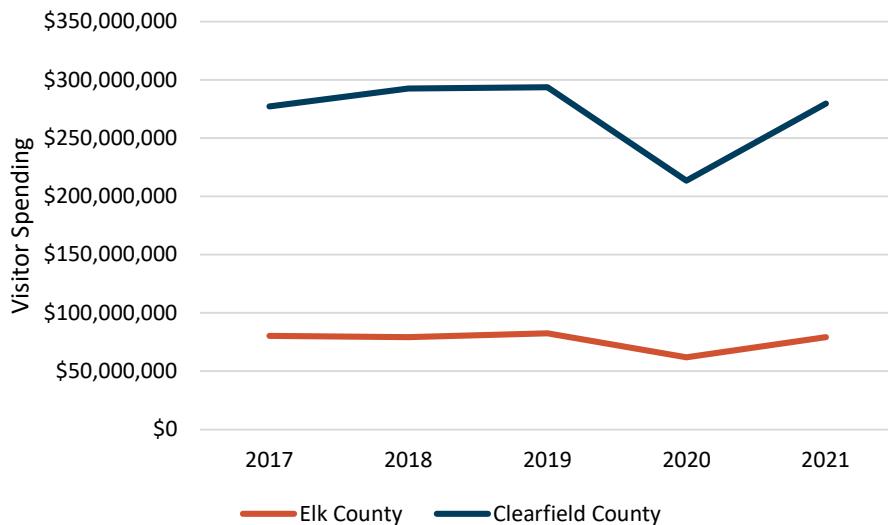
Source: Pennsylvania Tourism Office – Economic Impact of Travel & Tourism Report (2021)

Poverty Rates

As far as poverty rates are concerned, there is a sizeable gap between the two counties. Clearfield County has a high percentage of people experiencing poverty, around two percentage points higher than the state average of 12 percent. The poverty rate in 2020, 14.3 percent, is exactly the same as it was in 2012. Elk County's poverty rate is consistently lower than the state average. At 9.9 percent of the population in 2020, the rate is 0.7 percentage points lower than it was in 2012 with a trough in 2016 dropping below 9 percent. Trends in regional poverty rates are shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Poverty Rates, 2012-2020
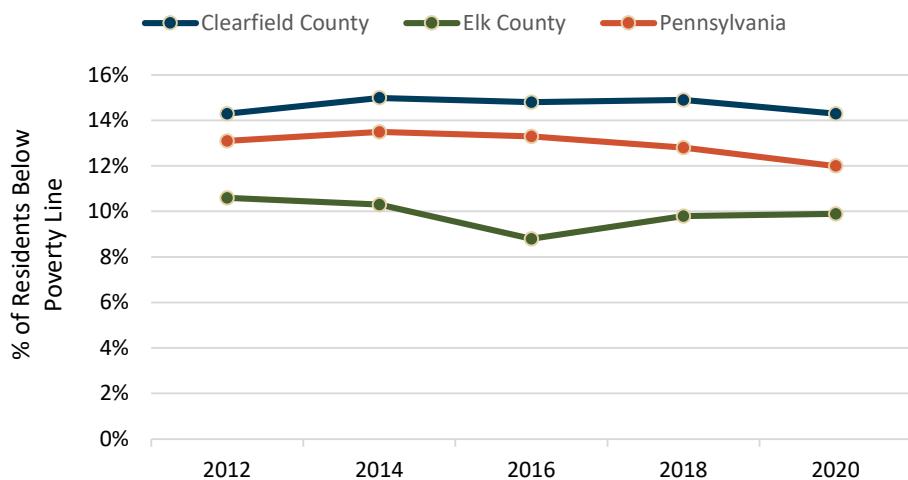
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, (5-Year Estimates, 2012,2014,2016,2018,2020)

Health & Community Services

Education and Social Factors

Education and social factors are important to analyze quality of life and opportunities. While Clearfield and Elk counties are on par with and exceeding national averages for high school completion, the counties fall well below state and national averages for residents having completed some level of higher education. The counties are also well below national and state averages for broadband access. This can be concerning in an increasingly online world. Both counties far exceed state and national averages in social associations per 10,000 people which indicates strong social networks (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Social Factors (2020)

Social Factors	Clearfield County	Elk County	Pennsylvania	USA
High School Completion	89%	93%	91%	89%
Some College	49%	58%	67%	67%
Social Associations Per 10,000	17.7	17.6	12.1	9.1
Broadband Access	78%	80%	86%	87%

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Examining recent education data is also essential to see any potential shortcomings or areas in need of more investment. It can also tell a more immediate story of improvements or changes. Figure 23 shows the graduation statistics for 5-year cohort graduation rates for all school districts.

Figure 23: Educational Attainment (2021-2022)

School District	Grads	Cohort	Graduation Rate	Economically Disadvantaged Graduation	College Bound	Postsecondary Bound
Clearfield County	798	875	91.2%		48.3%	52.4%
DuBois Area SD	255	278	91.7%	89.0%	49.8%	59.2%
Clearfield Area SD	154	178	86.5%	82.1%	45.9%	49.2%
Curwensville Area SD	73	77	94.8%	92.9%	50.6%	50.6%
Glendale SD	61	65	93.9%	87.1%	44.2%	50.0%
Harmony Area SD	25	26	96.2%	90.9%	47.4%	47.4%
Moshannon Valley SD	54	60	90.0%	77.8%	48.6%	51.4%
Philipsburg-Osceola Area SD	117	128	91.4%	87.0%	54.6%	54.6%
West Branch Area SD	59	63	93.7%	87.0%	40.0%	40.0%
Elk County	243	270	90.0%		59.0%	61.2%
Johnsonburg Area SD	29	33	87.9%	92.3%	58.5%	58.5%
Ridgway Area SD	51	57	89.5%	87.0%	62.8%	62.8%
Saint Marys Area SD	163	180	90.6%	84.5%	57.8%	61.5%
Pennsylvania	**121,966**	**135,661**	**89.9%**	**84.8%**	**60.0%**	**62.3%**

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education 5-year Cohort Graduation Rates (2021-2022) and Graduates by Public Schools (2021-2022)

Community Health

Understanding community health is essential to tackling future challenges in healthcare and related fields. Both counties fall below the state and national average on several personal health-related factors. Both counties' residents have slightly higher poor physical and mental health days per month than state and national averages. Additionally, adult smoking is 5 percent higher than the national average in Elk County and 6 percent higher in Clearfield County. Adult obesity is 2 percent higher in Clearfield County than the national average as well. Access to exercise opportunities is a majorly concerning statistic in these counties with 61 percent of residents in Clearfield County having adequate access and 74 percent in Elk County. Pennsylvania's average is 86 percent. A chart comparing the counties to Pennsylvania and the national averages can be found in Figure 24.

Figure 24: Community Health Factors (2020)

2020	Clearfield County	Elk County	Pennsylvania	USA
Poor or Fair Physical Health	16%	14%	13%	12%
Poor Physical Health Days per Month	3.6	3.3	3.1	3
Poor Mental Health Days per Month	4.9	5.2	4.8	4.4
Adult Smoking	22%	21%	17%	16%
Adult Obesity	34%	32%	32%	32%
Excessive Drinking	22%	22%	21%	19%
Physical Inactivity	25%	23%	23%	22%
Access to Exercise Opportunities	61%	74%	86%	84%
Food Insecurity	13%	12%	9%	12%

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare is an extremely important metric for a community. Understanding gaps can help guide decisions and policy to improve the system. Both counties have a lower percentage of uninsured residents than the national average. Despite this, the population per primary care physician and dentist are much higher. This means there are fewer medical professionals per population and could put a strain on the healthcare facilities. Clearfield County has a lower population per mental health provider than state and national averages, while Elk County has a much higher ratio.

Figure 25: Access to Healthcare (2020-2021)

2020-2021	Clearfield County	Elk County	Pennsylvania	USA
Uninsured	8%	7%	8%	10%
Population per Primary Care Physicians	2180	2280	1220	1310
Population Per Dentist	2160	3850	1410	1380
Population per Mental Health providers	320	910	400	340

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

FOCUS AREAS

The Clearfield and Elk County Comprehensive Plan is organized around the following focus areas. These were identified by the County Planning Departments and affirmed through the focus group meetings, open houses, Steering Committee meetings, and survey results. Each is detailed within this section of the Plan, followed by a recommended action plan. The Plan's focus areas include the following and are presented here in no priority order:

1. **Transportation**: areas of interest include multimodal, rail and freight, walkable communities, and bridges.
2. **Infrastructure**: includes improvements to broadband, water and sewer, stormwater networks, and deteriorated roads.
3. **Land Use**: uses such as agriculture, tourism, parks, downtown mixed development, and impacts of public land ownership are included.
4. **Resources**: including but not limited to timber, water, coal, natural gas, and rare earths, historic assets, and open space.
5. **Housing**: issues affecting young families and professional housing, senior housing/nursing homes, code enforcement challenges, blighted properties, and limited qualified contractors.
6. **Social Services**: include services such as EMS Services, access to rural health, education, and drug and addiction support.
7. **Energy**: areas of interest included climate change, solar/alternative energy, hazard mitigation resiliency and climate action plans, and abandoned mine reclamation.
8. **Economy**: elements impacting the local economy including workforce development, growing the tax base, local government services, and education.

Transportation	Resources	Housing	Economy
Infrastructure	Land Use	Social Services	Energy

TRANSPORTATION

The Challenge

Transportation infrastructure includes roads and bridges as well as active transportation (bicycle and pedestrian), rail, aviation, and public transportation facilities that enable the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. The two-county region's transportation system is anchored by a nearly 3,000-mile roadway network (Figure 26) that accommodates over 3 million vehicle miles of travel, daily. Additionally, the region also has a large inventory of aging and deteriorating bridges to maintain as part of its overall transportation system This transportation system must support a geographic area that is over 1,980 square miles in size (Clearfield County in fact is the third-largest in the state, by land area). The region's geographic expanse, coupled with the ongoing centralization of health care and school consolidation, raises the importance of transportation infrastructure and services in support of the region's livelihood.

Figure 26: Regional Roadway Network
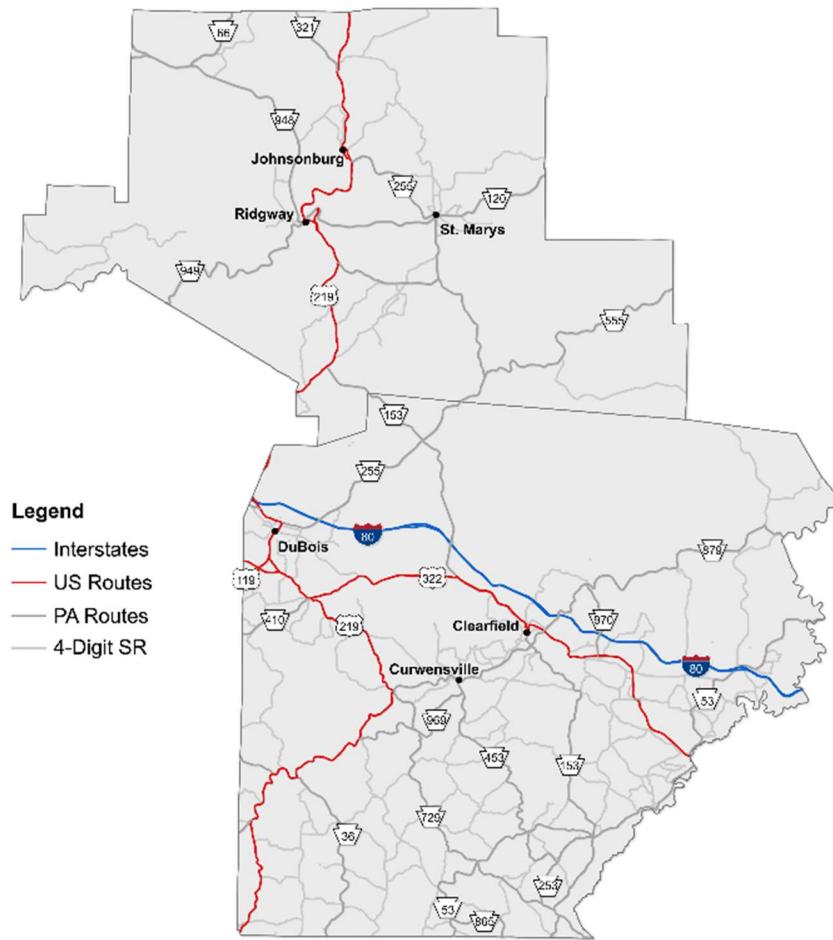
In maintaining and improving the regional transportation network, the two counties work collaboratively with the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission (North Central), which serves as the administrator for the six-county Rural Planning Organization (RPO) region that includes Clearfield and Elk counties (Figure 27).

During the Comprehensive Plan development process, focus group participants and survey respondents identified local bridge conditions, walkability, and local matches for funding to finance improvements as some of the region's most critical areas for investment. Maintaining and improving an integrated, multimodal network of transportation infrastructure is critical to the counties' overall quality of life and economic vitality, allowing residents to access jobs, commerce, healthcare facilities and essential services while attracting new business and industries.

Figure 27: Clearfield and Elk Counties within the North Central RPO Planning Region

Community Goals that will be Impacted

Healthy and Connected Communities

- HCC1: Ensure safe and efficient transportation systems that link communities and vulnerable residents to places of interest and employment.
- HCC3: Maintain public infrastructure and downtowns/main streets to promote high quality of life.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

- PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

Objectives

Maintain local roads and bridges in a state of good repair.

Ensuring adequate and timely maintenance is essential to a rural roadway network. Of the region's nearly 3,000 miles of roadway, over half (53%) are owned and maintained by municipalities. In Clearfield County, 56 percent of roadway mileage is locally owned; while in Elk County, these roads comprise 45 percent of total mileage. Table 1 provides more detail on roadway ownership within the two counties.

Table 1: Summary of Roadway Linear Miles by Ownership

	State	Local	Other*	Total Mileage
Clearfield	791.08	1,144.58	111.84	2,047.50
Elk	294.27	371.32	152.01	817.60
Region	**1,085.35**	**1,515.90**	**263.85**	**2,865.10**

*Roads owned/maintained by other state or federal agencies
Source: PennDOT Publication 600 (2022 Highway Statistics)

Of the region's portion of roadway network that is state-owned, just over a third (37%) have an IRI condition rating of "Excellent," with another 34 percent rated as "Good." The IRI index refers to the International Roughness Index, a measure used to quantify the roughness of road surfaces. Regionally, poor condition pavement accounts for 15 percent of total segment miles. Table 2 depicts IRI pavement conditions for the two counties.

Table 2: Summary of Segment Miles by International Roughness Index (IRI) Condition Rating

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Clearfield	319.62	292.51	119.77	112.33
Elk	97.40	95.14	42.67	63.85
Region	**417.02**	**387.65**	**162.44**	**176.18**

Source: PennDOT OneMap (2023) and Calculations

Addressing poor pavement conditions on state-owned roadways primarily falls under project funding through the North Central RPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The region's transportation system also includes 508 state-owned bridges greater than 8 feet in length and 106 locally-owned bridges greater than 20 feet in length. Maintaining bridges in good condition is an essential part of ensuring the region's overall transportation system provides continued mobility and access to the region's residents.

State-owned bridge repairs and maintenance are largely funded through revenue administered by North Central. For the 2025-28 TIP, North Central has allocated $26.3 million to address bridge maintenance needs across the six-county region. On the local network, municipalities with bridges greater than 20 feet in length may work with the RPO to apply for Off-System Bridge (BOF) funding, which, for the region's 2025 TIP totals an additional $25.6 million. Municipalities must provide anywhere from a five to 20 percent match, depending upon other sources being used. State-owned bridges functionally classified as minor collectors and local are also eligible for funding under this category.

Table 3 provides additional detail on the two counties' state-owned bridge inventory and compares existing conditions to bridges statewide.

Table 3: Summary of State-Owned Bridge Conditions (January 2024)

Area	Count	Deck Area (MSF)	Closed Bridges	Posted Bridges	Percent Good	Percent Fair	Percent Poor
Clearfield	384	1.194	0	2	37.0	55.0	8.0
Elk	124	0.351	0	1	38.7	57.3	4.0
Statewide	25,431	117.4	30	430	34.4	56.6	9.1

Source: PennDOT Bridge Management System (BMS). Percentages are based on bridge count.

The data show that bridge conditions on the state-owned system within the two Counties are largely in line with statewide averages. There are only three posted, or load-restricted state-owned bridges within the region, including:

- SR1006 two miles north of Clearfield (Goshen Rd);
- SR3014 at Waukesha; and
- TSR301 in Belltown, Elk County.

All three structures carry low daily traffic volumes (ADT <225). Conditions are more acute however on the locally-owned system, as depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Locally-Owned Bridge Conditions (January 2024)

Area	Count	Deck Area	Closed Bridges	Posted Bridges	County Closed Bridges	County Posted Bridges	Percent Good	Percent Fair	Percent Poor
Clearfield	70	0.084	5	18	2	2	21.4	38.6	40.0
Elk	35	0.073	0	6	0	0	25.7	42.9	31.4
Statewide	6,674	15.34	199	1,304	86	550	26.4	49.6	24.1

Source: PennDOT Bridge Management System (BMS). Percentages are based on bridge count.

Of the region's 105 locally-owned bridges, 12 are County-owned, including 10 in Clearfield, and two in Elk. Both of Elk County's bridges are rated as being in Good condition, while Clearfield County has two that are posted, and two others that are closed: County Bridge #30 which carries Kellytown Road over Clearfield Creek in Knox Township, and Leonard Street Extension over the R.J. Corman Railroad in Lawrence Township. Both bridges are over 120 years old.

The overall condition of the region's locally-owned bridge network have remained largely consistent over the past decade, attesting to the difficulty the Counties and their municipalities have had in reducing the number of bridges classified as being in Poor condition.

The average age of a locally-owned bridge in Elk County is 58 years, while in Clearfield County it is 75. Statewide, the average age is 60 years.

Support pursuits in applying for discretionary transportation funding opportunities (e.g., federal and state grant programs).

The passage of the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) authorized a historic, long-term investment in the nation's infrastructure, including roadways, bridges, and public transportation. It reauthorized many existing federal transportation funding programs and created new ones, with approximately 40 percent of funds available via competitive grant programs.

Stakeholders identified the abundance of discretionary grant programs as high priority opportunity for the region; however, the challenges faced in competing for those funds was also recognized. Specifically, the ability to provide the required non-federal/local match for many of these programs was identified as a major obstacle as many local municipalities have limited resources to provide the match and prepare applications.

Promote tools for Core Communities that support walkability.

The plan recognizes the need to have specific, community plans for making core communities more walkable. The Counties are already part of a regional active transportation plan that can be used for pursuing projects. The Comprehensive Plan's emphasis on core communities dictates that an implementation step includes a focus on planning and local policies at this level of geography.

Continuous, interconnected networks of trails, greenways, sidewalks, bike lanes, and paved shoulders are necessary to support the viability of nonmotorized transportation. Core communities contain the most robust system of multimodal networks throughout the region and thus provide the greatest level of service for people who do not own a vehicle. Continued investment into these communities and directly funding and support for completion and improvement of sidewalks and bicycle facilities will help enhance the livability of these areas for people of all ages. Active Transportation Plans and Complete Streets policies are tools that local municipalities can use to help build out their multimodal networks.

"Sidewalk audits" are a good way for communities to evaluate the extent and condition of their pedestrian facilities. Mapping the current sidewalk network using Geographic Information Services (GIS) software can help municipal decision-makers identify underserved areas, system gaps and needs. This is an initiative that the County could work on in collaboration with municipalities to identify priority gaps and needs that could then be used to pursue funding for construction.

The existing active transportation network in the region includes over 850 miles of trails. While a significant portion of this mileage is located within Moshannon State Forest and Parker Dam State Park, there are several notable trails that connect the region's urban centers and serve the role of both recreation and transportation. These include:

- **BicyclePA Route V**: A state-designated bicycle route that travels along several state routes including PA 53, SR 2030 (Bigler Cutoff Road), US 322, SR 4014 (Shaffer Road), US 219, and PA 830 from east to west.
- **David S. Ammerman Trail**: A 10.5-mile rail trail that connects Clearfield (near Chester Street), Curwensville, and Grampian (near Main Street).

- **Houtzdale Line Trail**: A nearly 12-mile-long rail trail that connects Smoke Run (West of Ramey) and PA 53 west of Houtzdale.
- **Clarion-Little Toby Trail:** An 18-mile trail from Ridgway to Brockway that mostly traverses Game Commission land.
- **West Creek Recreational Trail:** A nearly 20-mile rail trail that travels through Elk and Cameron counties and connects St Marys and Emporium.
- **Quehanna Trail:** A nearly 73-mile trail that traverses Elk, Clearfield, and Cameron counties.

The regional trail network is shown in Figure 28.

Figure 28: Regional Trail Network
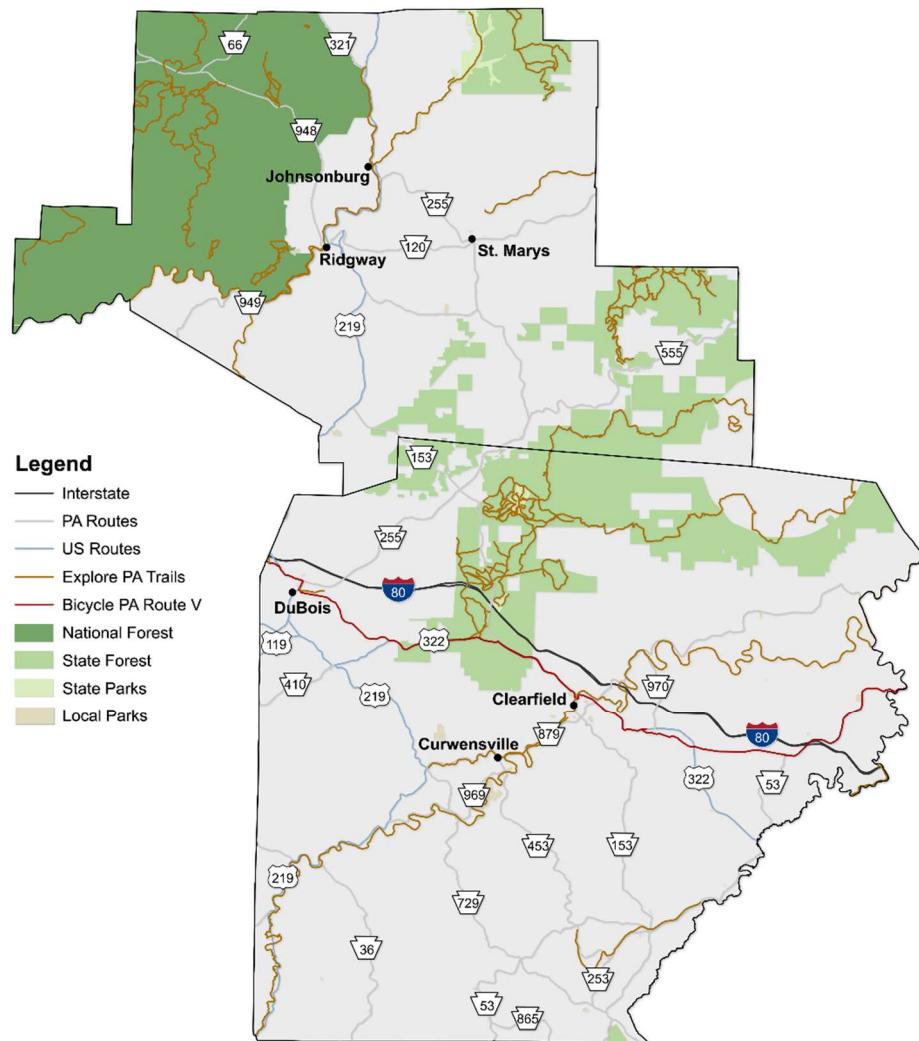
Source: PennDOT, PA DCNR

Improve highway safety by reducing crashes, fatalities, and serious injuries.

The total number of crashes in the two-county region decreased between 2018 and 2022. Clearfield County experienced a 9.6 percent reduction in total crashes in the five-year period with an average of 754 crashes annually. (Of crashes within Clearfield County, there was an annual average of 157 occurring on Interstate 80.) Crash activity trends in both counties continue to trend in a favorable direction, as shown in Figure 29.

Figure 29: Average Annual Crashes, 2014-2022
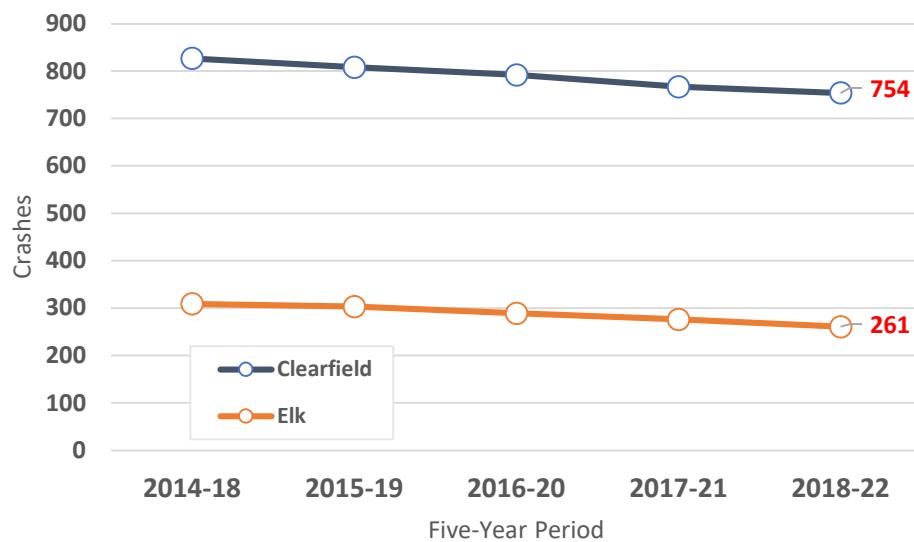
Source: Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool

Similarly, the total number of fatal crashes in the region also declined. Between the two counties, Clearfield County experienced a higher number of roadway fatalities than Elk County, averaging 14 fatalities annually over the five-year period.[2] Figure 30 identifies fatality trends over the past decade.

Figure 30: Average Annual Roadway Fatalities, 2014-22
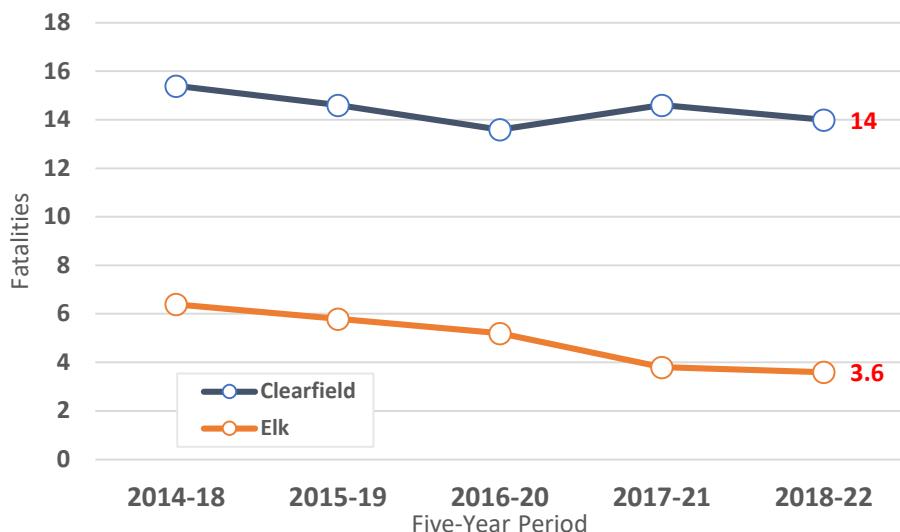
Source: Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool

The number of suspected serious injuries also decreased, with Clearfield County experiencing a 13.6 percent decline, and Elk County trends remaining steady between 2018 and 2022, as depicted in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of Suspected Serious Injury Crashes, 2018-22

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Clearfield	44	42	37	31	38
Elk	15	10	15	15	11
Region	59	52	52	46	49

Source: Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool

The comprehensive planning process also uncovered an increase in the total number of crashes involving drivers aged 65 years and older in the region. While crashes involving these drivers decreased in Elk County between 2018 and 2022, Clearfield County experienced a 30 percent increase, as depicted in Table 6.

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[2] There were a *total* of 10 roadway fatalities on Interstate 80 during the 2018-22 reporting period.

Table 6: Summary of Crashes Involving Drivers 65+ Years of Age

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Clearfield	120	130	124	126	156
Elk	49	55	33	46	44
Region	169	185	157	172	200

Source: Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool

Promote the use of existing public transportation services and explore new opportunities to expand transit use.

Public transportation services in Clearfield and Elk counties are provided by the Area Transportation Authority of North Central Pennsylvania (ATA) and include both fixed route and paratransit service. From its headquarters in Johnsonburg, ATA also serves Cameron, Clarion, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter counties. In the most recent annual report published by the PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation, the agency provided fixed route service to nearly 300,000 passengers as well as over 107,000 shared ride trips in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2021-22. Figures 31 and 32 offer ridership trends over the past five years.

Figure 31: ATA Fixed Route Ridership (SFY 2017-22)
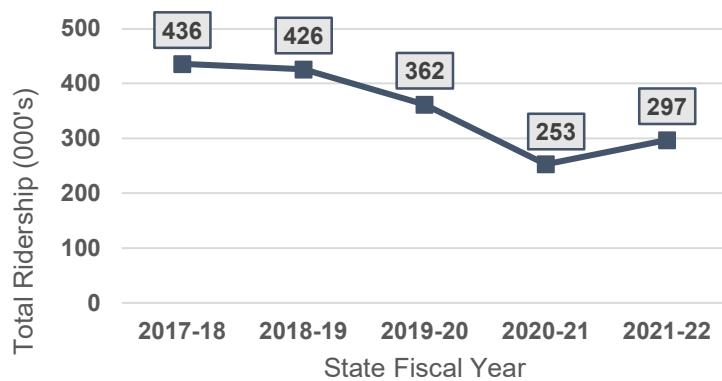
Source: PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation Annual Report (SFY 21-22)

Figure 32: ATA Shared Ride Trips (FY 2017-22)
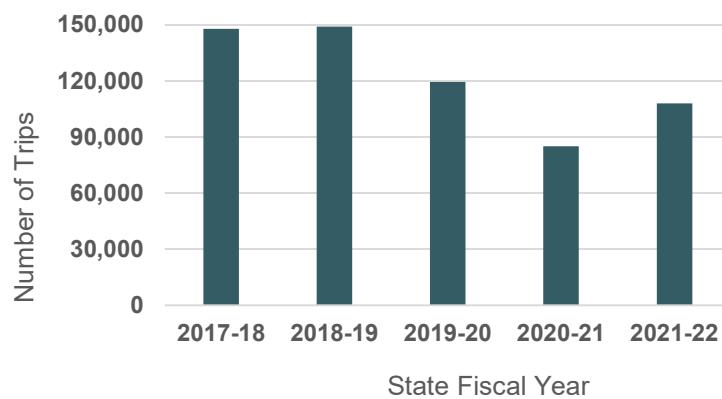
Source: PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation Annual Report (SFY 21-22)

While the data shown in figures include ridership across ATA's entire service area, similar trends can be drawn for Clearfield and Elk counties. Ridership has exhibited some recovery since the COVID 19 pandemic; however, both fixed route and shared ride ridership have yet to fully rebound to pre-pandemic levels.

During the stakeholder engagement phase, participants in the Transportation focus group noted the critical role that education plays in attracting new public transportation users. Educating the public on the availability of transit service as well as how to use it could offer an opportunity to increase ridership on ATA's existing fixed route, shared ride, and countywide micro transit services. ATA has developed some resources for education purposes that could serve as a launch point.

Facilitate efficient movement of freight, including energy transport and storage.

Clearfield County's freight network includes 41.8 miles of interstate highway, 161 miles of freight railroad trackage, several pipelines, and the Clearfield-Lawrence Airport. While located in neighboring Jefferson County, DuBois Regional Airport is also leveraged for air cargo.

In 2022, Clearfield County's roadway network accomodated 553,549 daily truck vehicle miles traveled (Truck DVMT), ranking 18th in the state. (For comparison, Elk County registered 79,477 miles of truck VMT, the sixth-lowest.) This truck traffic typically travels along Interstate 80 and other major arterial highways in the county, most of which are included on the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN). The NHFN is comprised of several subsystems including:

- **Primary Highway Freight System (PHFS):** Interstate 80 is the only route in the region that is part of this subsystem.

- **Non-PHFS Interstates:** There are 459 miles of non-PHFS interstate routes statewide; however, none of this mileage is located within the two-county region.

- **Critical Urban Freight Corridors:** These priority segments typically consist of first or last mile connector routes from high volume freight corridors to freight intensive land uses or urban freight facilities. Since Clearfield and Elk counties are not located within any urbanized areas, there are no CUFCs designated within the two counties.

- **Critical Rural Freight Corridors**: Similar to CUFCs, these first and last mile connectors link to key rural freight facilities, including manufacturing, agricultural, and intermodal uses. CRFCs in Clearfield County include sections of PA 255 (1.34 miles), PA 970 (1.58 miles), PA 879 (1.66 miles), and US 219 (0.67 miles). In Elk County, a 19-mile segment of PA 120 is also included as part of this network.[3]

While not formally a part of any federally-recognized priority freight network, US 219 is the region's primary north-south route. Improvements over the years such as PennDOT's work on bypasses in Bradford, Johnsonburg, and Ridgway have all improved safety and travel times, enabling shippers to transit the region from the New York state line to Interstate 80 in under 90 minutes. The counties will

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[3] Pennsylvania Freight Movement Plan, Appendix 11. https://www.penndot.pa.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Documents/FMP/FMP-Appendix-Pub%20791A_WEB_11.22.pdf

continue to participate in planning for this and other strategic roadways through their roles within the North Central RPO.

Figure 33 shows how the two counties compare to the rest of Pennsylvania in truck DVMT.

Figure 33: Truck DVMT by County, 2022
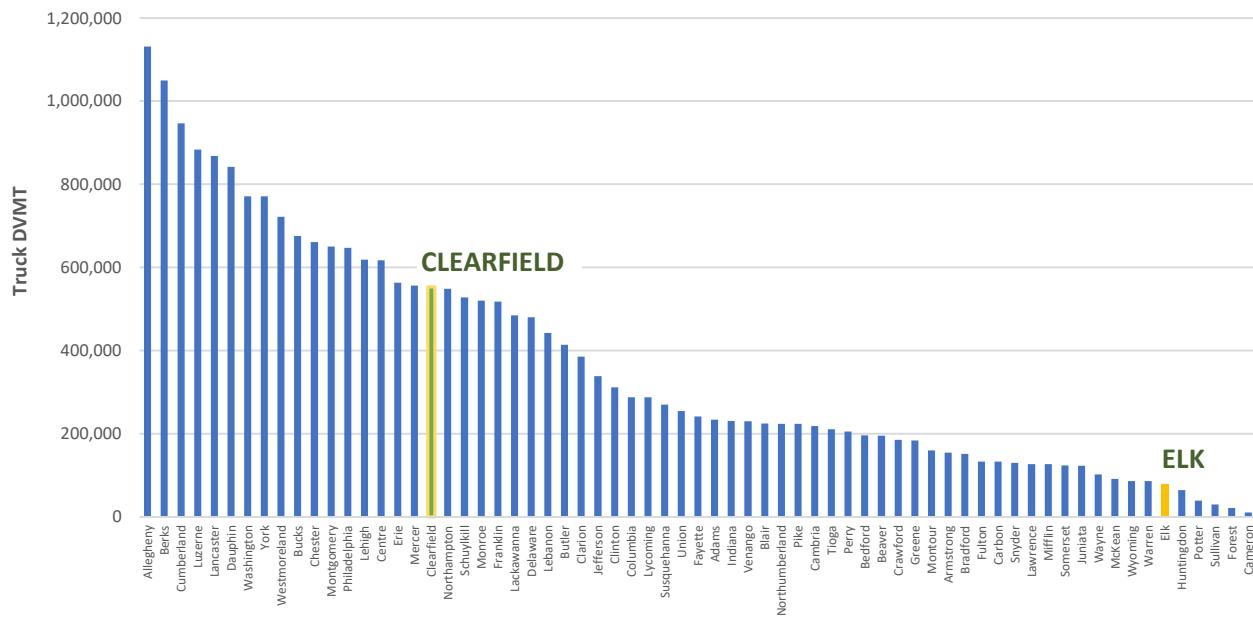
Source: PennDOT Publication 600 (2022)

The region is served by several railroads, including the Buffalo and Pittsburgh (B&P), Pennsylvania's largest regional railroad (Figure 34). The B&P's mainline runs north-south through Elk County and offers the Larkeytown Intermodal Rail Freight Service from its yard in Sandy Township. The B&P also operates on the Low Grade between DuBois and Driftwood on lines formerly used by the Pennsylvania Railroad, then Conrail. The R.J. Corman Railroad connects Mahaffey and Clearfield to Class I service in Keating, in neighboring Clinton County. These railroads are critical in the movement of major commodities, such as coal and timber. There is also interest within the region to establish a rail connection between the B&P and R.J. Corman Railroad between DuBois and Curwensville. In addition to rail, Clearfield County is also home to several gas and hazardous liquid pipelines that are essential to energy transport.

Figure 34: Regional Rail Freight Network
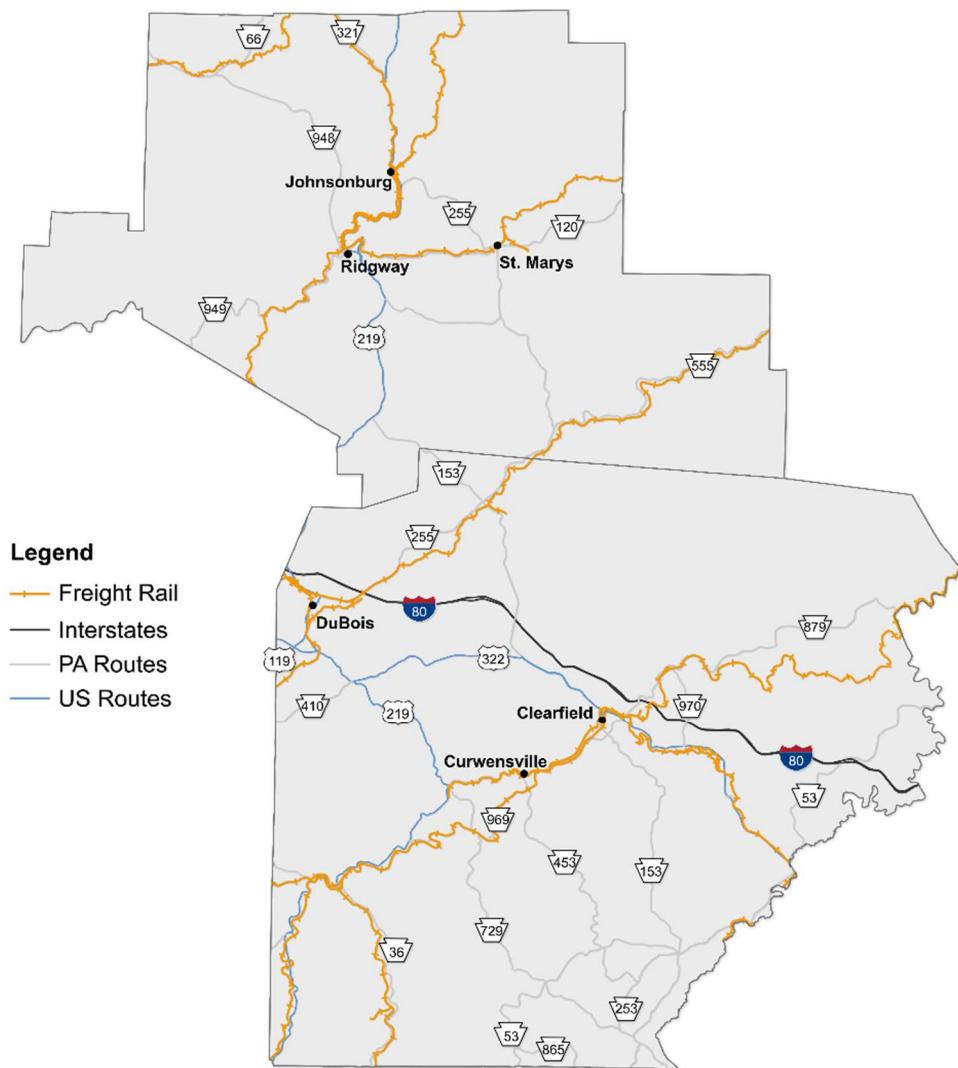
Source: PennDOT

Support the development of interconnected, multimodal transportation systems with alternative travel networks and connections that feature bicycle lanes, walkable communities, rideshare options, and EV charging stations.

The County will continue to work as a convener between its local municipalities and the North Central PA Commission as the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) working with transportation agencies at the state and federal level to advocate for multimodal projects. Highway and bridge projects dominate state and regional programs, yet the comprehensive plan recognizes the multimodal nature of transportation and the need for a complete system that satisfies all users and modes of transportation.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Challenge

Significant population decline across the region over the past two decades has affected local government revenues which are needed to maintain and improve existing infrastructure. The services that are essential to providing quality of life and improving a household's standard of living include the basic infrastructure of roads and bridges, water, sewer and stormwater networks. These also include supporting infrastructure such as sidewalks, trails, parks, and communication infrastructure such as broadband. Collectively, these services are expected by today's households and where easily available and dependable, will lead to communities where people will want to live, work and play.

Access to reliable and dependable broadband and a having a digital footprint is needed more than ever for businesses to succeed and to ensure access to educational tools and employment opportunities. The recently completed PA State Broadband Study notes that "broader access to reliable and affordable broadband contributes to economic growth, yields higher personal incomes, and lowers unemployment rates. Additionally, it can help improve social outcomes by democratizing access to education and fostering social connections. Innovations such as telehealth can also directly improve health outcomes." Access to Broadband in Clearfield County is 78% of the population which is far below the State average of 86%. The recently completed Clearfield County Broadband study also identifies specific areas within the county where broadband access is missing. The study recommends that "*Clearfield County must evaluate the available options and choose a multi-method approach. A combination of various service modes and providers appears to be the only viable approach to providing coverage. The County should take a cautious approach to providing coverage, balancing costs while limiting coverage gaps.*"
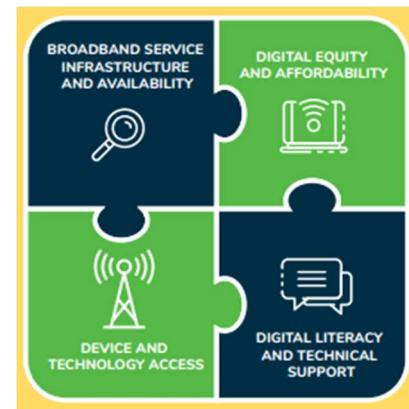
Stormwater management is also a topic that many identified as a priority to help protect water quality. The lack of countywide stormwater regulations has been identified as a significant shortcoming in Clearfield County. A Countywide Action Plan was completed in 2019. The plan touts that it is "the most comprehensive local plan that has ever been completed to address local and state water quality issues within Clearfield County." Challenges including lack of funding, capacity within current partner organizations, and competing priorities among agencies and the general population are issues that hinder progress to implementing the plan and improving and protecting water quality in the county. Support for stormwater best management practices will most likely come from model ordinance and educational workshops for local governments.

During the Focus Groups discussions (Figure 35) centering on the challenges of infrastructure, participants noted that deferred maintenance on water lines has also caused a number of "boil water" advisories which puts public health at risk. The lack of bridge funding was also noted as a significant issue as was the lack of access to reliable broadband service. Bridge funding is addressed within the plan's Transportation section.

Figure 35: Infrastructure Focus Group Summary
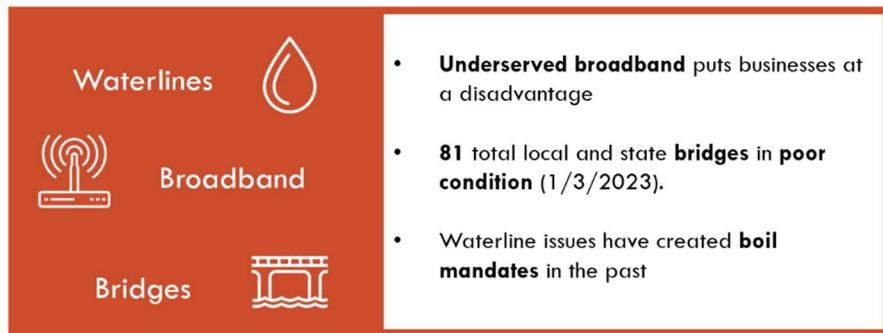
Community Goals that will be Impacted

Healthy and Connected Communities

- HCC3: Maintain public infrastructure and downtowns/main streets to promote a high quality of life.

Economic Vitality and Growth

- EVG6: Expand access to reliable broadband opportunities including unserved and underserved populations.

Objectives

The following overarching objectives and strategies listed are designed to address the lack of readily available capital and local and state policies needed for maintenance of critical infrastructure throughout the region. Support for expansion of broadband connectivity is an area of priority for both Clearfield and Elk counties.

Promote and support education about stormwater issues and benefits of stormwater remediation.

Protecting water resources and water quality are important county priorities. Such resources directly impact the tourism economy for both counties and enhance the lives and livelihood of residents and businesses. Ensuring that County government is doing all it can to protect water resources through supporting stormwater best management practices via model ordinances and educational workshops with the County Conservation District are important action steps.

To assist with funding stormwater projects, counties could encourage municipalities to enact a stormwater fee for long term sustainability and funding of Best Management Practices (BMP). The Counties should also support State legislation (such as House Bill 1128) that would reduce or eliminate the burden and cost associated with maintenance of stormwater facilities along state roads.

Advocate for new legislation that would eliminate barriers to providing reliable broadband to our rural communities and local industries, such as agriculture, that require such technology for their day-to-day operations.

Clearfield County conducted a study that examined the barriers to fully integrating broadband access throughout the region. Since the study has been completed, recommendations have been incorporated as part of the comprehensive plan's implementation. Recommendations such as supporting funding for underserved areas and prioritizing projects expanding fiber optic capacity are key areas from the plan. Additionally, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania completed a statewide broadband plan in 2022. Designating a person or office within each county who is responsible for following broadband needs and plan recommendations would help ensure that these initiatives move forward.

Encourage recreation options that differ from typical outdoor recreation.

Outdoor recreational opportunities are seen as a regional asset that enhances the quality of life for residents while providing a key economic driver for communities. However, stakeholders identified a lack of indoor recreation facilities and programs was a detriment for the region's youth. Completing a needs assessment and feasibility study that identifies what youth programming is needed and the cost to provide such services would help the Counties align their funding and support facilities and youth programs that are currently missing.

Collaborate and coordinate with municipalities and counties on infrastructure planning, including Capital Improvement Plans (CIP), comprehensive/master plans, and hazard mitigation plans.

Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) are important fiscal management tools that every local government should prepare to ensure their capital facilities are identified and appropriately planned, maintained, and upgraded. CIPs are typically five-year plans that assess the current state of locally owned infrastructure and provide funding strategies to maintain, improve or expand each facility. Although this is considered a best management practice for municipalities by the Government Finance Officers Association, few communities take the time to develop these plans. This could be attributed to lack of capacity, lack of available funding, or an understanding of how to develop these plans, but they are important to help communities determine impending costs for infrastructure repairs and maintenance and properly plan for potential grant opportunities to help offset those costs. Counties can help support this work through education and assistance with funding these plans. CIPs can also be used by the Counties to prioritize and help fund capital projects that serve significant regional improvement projects.

Maintain and expand the region's infrastructure to address the needs of businesses and residences.

Many counties and local governments have created their own funding programs to assist in helping municipalities pay for critical infrastructure improvements. Financial tools such as low-interest revolving loan programs to assist with sewer, water, stormwater, and sidewalk replacement projects would help municipalities tap into easy and inexpensive funding for smaller, capital projects. These tools could also be used as cash match for larger, statewide grants and funding programs. Additionally, local governments will need to add fees or increase taxes to build up revenues sufficient to maintain infrastructure.

Collaborate with the North Central PA Commission in implementing its EV Charging Infrastructure Implementation Plan.

The planning process, scheduled to conclude in April 2024, will identify areas throughout the region for the placement of EV charging infrastructure. The plan is being developed in support of energy

independence and national climate goals, increasing the number of electric vehicles (EVs) remains a priority strategy for the transportation sector. Both federal and state funding is being allocated to broaden and enhance our EV charging infrastructure to support the needs of our communities and long-distance travelers and to spur additional EV sales.

The National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program will provide more than $170 million to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) over the next five years for public charging stations. A NEVI discretionary program will be available in the coming year that will provide state, regional, and local transportation agencies additional funding for community and other corridor charging needs.

LAND USE

The Challenge

The importance of the region's outdoor features, tourism, and natural beauty is a strength that needs to be both preserved and promoted. Balancing the need for investment and to grow the local economy with the desire to protect the areas that make the region attractive is key but complex to achieve. During focus group discussions (Figure 36) around land use, the ever-present issue of population decline throughout the region and it leading to fewer dollars available to maintain infrastructure and provide services for people who live in Clearfield and Elk counties were identified.

Another significant issue affecting the region is the amount of state and federal owned land. These properties provide valuable opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism but provide little in the way of tax revenue back to the communities to support public services and infrastructure maintenance. Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) is provided to the communities but at a significantly reduced amount compared to if the property were privately held and assessed at a market rate. This issue is discussed more thoroughly within the plan's Resources section but is noted under Land Use to highlight its importance.

There are divergent opinions on the opportunities that may exist to help address land use challenges as evidenced in the outcome of Focus Group discussions summarized in Figure 36. Participants supported the protection of natural resources to sustain and grow the tourism economy, but many also promoted expansion of extractive industries to bolster job opportunities for families and young people. Basic needs such as jobs and quality housing are necessary to slow the trend of declining population. Move-in ready homes and a diversity of businesses are critical to providing tax revenue to communities struggling to maintain public services and improve existing infrastructure.

Figure 36: Land Use Focus Group: Priority Challenges

Rank	Challenge
1st	Population Issues (Shrinking, Aging)
2nd	Aging and Outdated Infrastructure
3rd	Few Amenities For Residents, tourists
4th	Lack of Revenue, Tax Base
5th	Environmental Issues
6th	Lack of Housing Options
7th	Lack of Public Access to Land
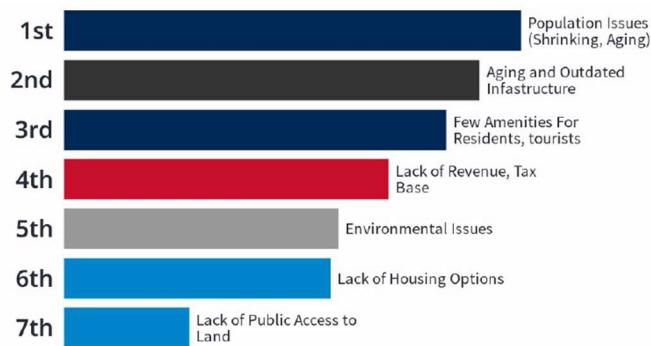
Figure 37: Land Use Focus Group: Priorities

Strategies and interventions that encourage proactive planning, multi-municipal coordination, and informed land use regulations within each community are highlighted to provide a measured approach to development. Understanding that the protection of natural resources goes a long way toward supporting eco-tourism as a prime industry is important. Moving the region toward a more resilient area that relies more on alternative energy will also help preserve natural resources by reducing demand for fossil fuels and extractive industries.

The composition of each county's land use is shown in Figures 38 and 39.

Figure 38: Elk County Land Use
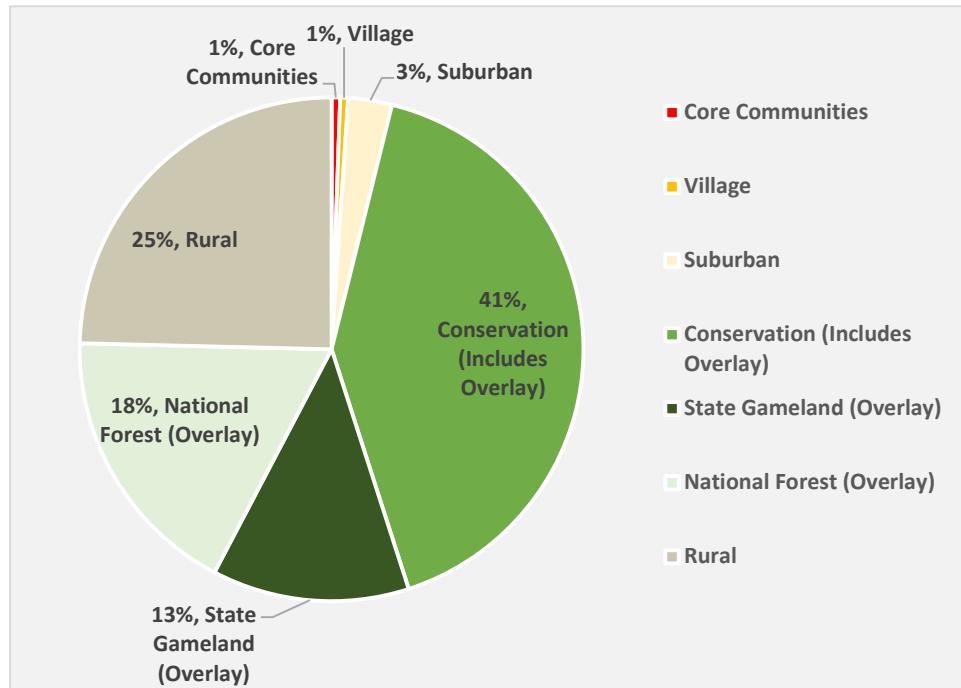
Figure 39: Clearfield County Land Use
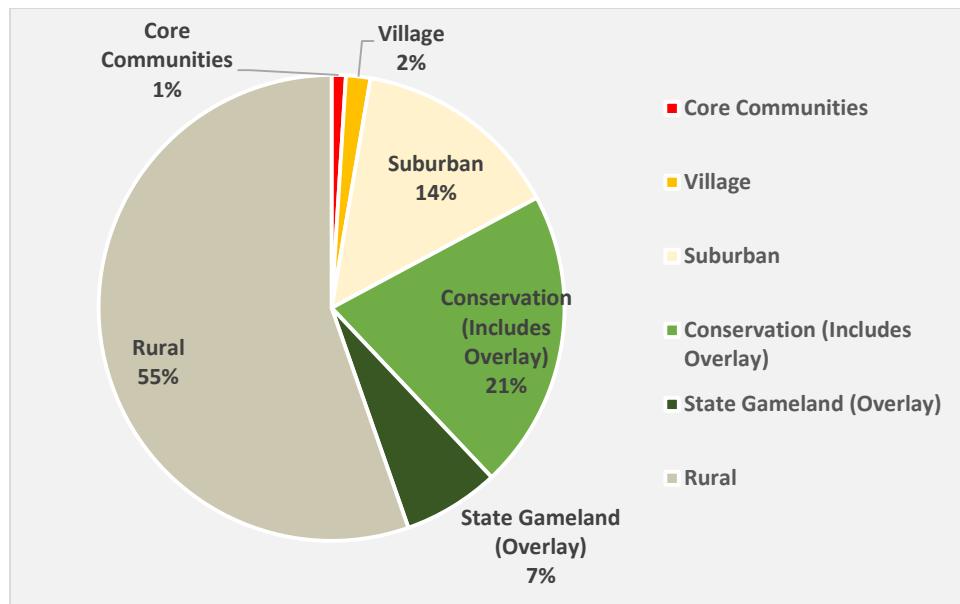
Clearfield and Elk counties prepared a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) that reflects the region's current land uses and desired future vision. The FLUM is based more on the design and best planning practices that should be incorporated within the development and less on specific land uses. The design and character of the development within Core Communities should be aligned with historic downtowns and more dense housing types while areas in rural areas should focus on preservation and protection of natural environments.

Both Counties are predominately rural with an abundance of conservation and state-owned land. To provide for future growth and redevelopment, Counties should focus efforts where infrastructure and business currently exist, typically within or near Core Communities, while protecting sensitive natural areas.

The Counties should base decisions on investment of resources, funding and policies based on the adopted FLUM. Core Communities include areas that are already developed for more urban habitation and include areas such as St Marys, DuBois, Curwensville Borough, and Clearfield. They should be prioritized for new development and redevelopment opportunities while areas designated for conservation should be protected. Villages and Boroughs are historic centers of the community but in some cases have limited potential for development due to lack of public sewer and water.

Other FLUM Character Areas[4] include Suburban which include areas near the outskirts of Core Communities and include predominantly residential uses. Conservation areas include the region's natural and environmental assets as well as host state and federally owned lands. Rural areas outside of the Core

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[4] "Character Areas" refer to distinct geographic zones with unique features or land use patterns. These areas help define the overall character and identity of the county, allowing for the development of strategies to preserve or enhance the specific characteristics of each zone.

and Suburban centers include areas suitable for farming or homes not within public water or sewer service areas.

Figure 40: Clearfield and Elk Counties Future Land Use

Community Goals that will be Impacted

Healthy and Connected Communities

- HCC1: Ensure safe and efficient transportation systems that link communities and vulnerable residents to places of interest and employment.
- HCC2: Provide and enhance recreational opportunities, social services, and emergency services to support healthy communities.
- HCC3: Maintain public infrastructure and downtowns/main streets to promote a high quality of life.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

- PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.
- PCA2: Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.
- PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

Objectives

Encourage municipalities to properly plan and zone their communities using best practices that incorporate the recommendations of the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The County Planning Department should work with local municipalities to ensure that infrastructure improvements are not directed toward hazardous areas without compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

The County Planning Department can guide the county's municipalities concerning recommendations directly connected to proper land use planning that keep development outside of sensitive areas prone to flooding. County Planning can also play an active role in educating municipal officials on the importance of protection of floodways and flood hazard areas. They can also take the lead in planning for demolishing and removing structures that are located in special flood hazard areas.

Key Stakeholder comments on land use

- Counties should focus on creating communities that people are attracted to.
- Create a demand for people to want to stay and live in Clearfield and Elk Counties.
- Lack of property maintenance enforcement and blighted properties are a barrier to growth.

Promote sound land use practices that maximize use of available land to balance the needs of the community.

Elk and Clearfield counties developed a Future Land Use Map based on areas best suited for development and growth versus those designated for conservation and preservation. Both Counties should use this map to match support with the respective county's overall land use and development vision. Areas designated as Core Communities and Villages on the Future Land Use Map represent historic developed centers and should be considered for future development opportunities where infrastructure and support services already exists. This will provide a balanced approach to growth and development in each County while preserving areas with significant natural features and/or prime farmland.

Core Communities like the cities of St Marys and DuBois, and the boroughs of Clearfield, Curwensville, Ridgway, and Johnsonburg contain historic investments such as water, sewer, stormwater networks, roads, sidewalks, buildings, legacy businesses, industry and residential housing that need to be maintained and upgraded. By targeting funding and resources on improving the existing built environment within these Core Communities and Villages the County's dollars will be reciprocated more efficiently. These communities provide the best opportunity to attract new residents to the area by providing a holistic set of services such as shopping, education, housing, public services, transportation options, and parks. They are also attractive areas for younger generations since housing tends to be more affordable and the ease of access to shops and places of employment.

Reinvestment tools should be focused on proposed development within Core Communities and developed Villages. Creative financing tools and value capture programs permissible by the State including LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Abatement) and similar programs should be encouraged to support redevelopment efforts and incentivize investment within areas with existing infrastructure. Encouraging using programs available from the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (Home - PA Downtown) such as Main Street and Elm Street programs will help align downtown development that is commensurate with public amenities and work to restore historic buildings. Promoting the PA Wilds Rapid Response Design Assistance Programs within these developed areas will help ensure that redevelopment occurs in concert with the unique history of the area.

RESOURCES

Resources refer to all the materials available in our environment that serve various purposes. A resource is something that can be used for some benefit or to make a profit. Resources help satisfy our needs and wants. As such it is essential that we understand that some resources, like timber, are renewable (they can replenish themselves), while others, like coal and natural gas, are nonrenewable (limited in supply). Balancing resource use and conservation is essential for a sustainable future. If we manage our resources properly, we can sustain the many economic and environmental benefits in which they provide our communities and industries. Figure 42 highlights the many resources this comprehensive plan seeks to protect.

The Challenge

The topic of resources in the two-county region includes many themes and challenges. These challenges included population and demographic changes, infrastructure, tax revenue, affordable housing, and other issues affecting the region's future. The word cloud in Figure 41 depicts the challenges that participants in Focus Groups believed were most relevant in maintaining and preserving the region's resources. The issues that more people agreed on are in larger text. These issues centered on the declining population, lack of young people staying in the area, an aging population, and lack of local revenue to support and maintain aging infrastructure. The issues identified by the Focus Group are validated by the Community Profile regarding a declining and aging population.

Figure 41: Resource Focus Group - Challenges

To counteract those challenges, recommendations centered on reclamation and reuse of brownfields and abandoned mine properties, updated technology and broadband access, more childcare options, and youth engagement.

Figure 42: Our Resources

PEOPLE

People are a valuable resource—our skills, knowledge, and labor drive economic and social development. Human capital contributes to innovation, productivity, and overall well-being. People are both consumers and stewards of resources.

LAND

Land is a fundamental resource that provides space for human activities, agriculture, housing, infrastructure, and ecosystems. It encompasses everything from forests and mountains to urban areas and farmland.

WATER

Water is essential for life and various human activities. It includes freshwater bodies like rivers, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater. Access to clean water is crucial for drinking, sanitation, and agriculture.

MINERALS

Minerals are naturally occurring substances found in the Earth's crust. They have diverse uses, including construction, manufacturing, and energy production. Minerals play a crucial role in industry, technology, and infrastructure.

OUTDOOR AMENITIES

Outdoor amenities refer to natural features that enhance quality of life. These can include parks, trails (land & water), and recreational spaces where people can enjoy nature and physical activity.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Historic Resources in communities are invaluable elements that connect us to our past, shaping our present and future.

NATURAL GAS

Natural gas is a fossil fuel composed mainly of methane. It's used for heating, electricity generation, and industrial processes.

TIMBER

Timber refers to wood from trees. It's essential for construction, furniture, paper, and other products. Sustainable timber management is crucial to maintain healthy forests.

COAL

Coal is another fossil fuel formed from ancient plant material. It's used for electricity generation, steel production, and other industrial purposes.

Figure 43: Resource Focus Group - Opportunities

A major issue includes the limited ability of the region's municipalities to provide matching funds. Many of the region's municipalities are at a disadvantage when competing for grant funding because they cannot afford meeting matching funds requirements. Further, preparing grant applications and administering grant funds requires specific technical expertise and significant staff time—many municipalities have neither. Moreover, the requirements for many state and federal grant programs put many local initiatives beyond the reach of rural counties and municipalities. Compounding the problem is the increase in federal and state transportation funding through competitive grants, which poses significant challenges for local governments—especially the municipalities most in need of funding. To compete for federal funding, municipalities must invest heavily in grant preparation and management and provide non-federal matching funds.

Community Goals that will be Impacted

Economic Vitality and Growth

- ECG2: Continue promoting the use and extraction of coal, oil, rare-earths, and drilling while investing in protection of resources and industry best practices.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

- PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.
- PCA2: Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.
- PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

Objectives

Support the Implementation of County plans (Hazard Mitigation Plan, County Action Plan/Watershed Implementation Plan, and County Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Plan).

Climate change is already impacting Pennsylvania; worsening heat waves, increased flooding, and other impacts are affecting the local economy and public health. Resilience is the capacity of a community, business, or natural environment to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover from disturbances, while retaining the basic functions of the system.

In terms of hazard mitigation, heavy precipitation and flooding can severely affect human health, agriculture, and built infrastructure, with those in or near floodplains at greatest risk. To address these impacts, the County should implement existing plans such as the County Hazard Mitigation Plan which includes a number resiliency action items.

The County Action Plan/Watershed Implementation Plan is a roadmap for Clearfield County to follow to achieve pollution reduction goals that will improve water quality, recreation, and quality of life. The plan represents the most cost effective and locally needed best management practices (BMPs).

The County Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Management plan addresses how to sustain county waste reduction and recycling initiatives. Recycling saves energy, conserves natural resources, curbs carbon dioxide emissions, and supports the local economy.

Encourage and foster the development of sustainable strategies that will support the preservation of historic and natural resources.

The North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission completed a comprehensive Greenways and Active Transportation Plan in December 2022, which examined the entire six-county region for opportunities to improve interconnectivity among recreational, ecological, cultural resource and transportation options. There are specific recommendations contained within the plan for each county. Both counties can use these recommendations to help promote and preserve the unique natural resources present within their communities. Top priorities for Clearfield County include:

- Explore alternative alignments for the Anderson Creek Gorge Trail to avoid rail corridors. Alternatively, create a long-term strategy for rail corridor acquisition or partnership needed for pursuing current desired alignment. (#1 priority)
- Coordinate with Headwaters Charitable Trust to conduct a feasibility study for the DuBois to Falls Creek Trail, and seek grant funding if needed to complete the study.
- Conduct a feasibility study to identify potential routes for connecting Curwensville Lake Recreation Area and water access point to downtown Curwensville.
- Improve safety for water trail users at the Shawville Dam portage through the installation of signage or adjustments to the route.
- Use signage to improve safety for water trail users at the dam in Clearfield. (Coordinate signage plans with the Susquehanna Greenway Water Trail.)

- Conduct a feasibility study to connect Curwensville's town center to the David S. Ammerman Trail/Clearfield to Grampian Trail and emphasize the trail presence in the town center. Seek grant funding if needed to support the study.
- Coordinate with DCNR to construct a bridge over Mosquito Creek in Moshannon State Forest to close a DCNR-identified trail gap.
- Seek funding for the restoration of the dam at Shaggers Inn impoundment in Moshannon State Forest.

Natural resources have been and continue to drive the county's economy. Timber, coal, clay, natural gas, and local waterways have played an important part in the region's economic vitality. While many traditional extractive industries have declined, they are still viable and important to the local economy. Advances in technology have made access to the county's abundant, unconventional natural gases a possibility.

Pollution due to past mineral extraction such as acid mine drainage is now a possible source for much needed rare earth minerals. Penn State College of Earth and Mineral Sciences – Center for Critical Minerals recommends that regions with abandoned mines or that have acid mine drainage remediation sites have unique opportunities to reclaim byproducts of coal waste by extracting critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt and aluminum for reuse in other manufacturing processes.

Another key resource are the 102 miles of the West Branch Susquehanna River. Water is a vital resource that supports county industries, provides public drinking water, and supports a diverse ecosystem all while providing an abundance of recreational opportunities for both residents and tourists. Since North Central details economic development strategies for all major industries within the region, including tourism, Elk and Clearfield Counties should partner with North Central to support implementation of its CEDS Plan. Support at the local, State and Federal levels will help ensure that industries important to the area are able to grow and expand their operations which will in turn, provide opportunities for local jobs.

The comprehensive plan also recognizes the need for historic preservation and will support the efforts of the County's local historical societies to preserve historic assets. Side benefits to this initiative are many, and include fostering cultural identity, attracting tourism, and promoting community engagement. These efforts also help preserve the county's uniqueness and aligns with the county's broader community development goals.

Pursue opportunities to assess and cleanup brownfield properties.

Clearfield County soils are mostly associated with previously disturbed surface mining.[5] The County should focus redevelopment opportunities on these sites to select those with the most opportunity to provide for future large-scale redevelopment. Taking an inventory and assessing each site to determine those most appropriate for redevelopment, large scale solar development or remediated for natural open space would be a key first step in realizing the true potential available within these brownfield areas.

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[5] DEP: County and Regional Maps

Support the growth of tourism and value-added natural resource industries (e.g., ecotourism, sustainable farming, and local food and beverage production) to enhance economic opportunities.

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc., is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to integrate conservation and economic development in a way that inspires the communities of the Pennsylvania Wilds. The Pennsylvania Wilds is a designated and branded 13-county region that includes the counties of Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga, Warren, and northern Centre. The PA Wilds Center promotes the region and its 2+ million acres of public land as a premier outdoor recreation destination as a way to diversify local economies, inspire stewardship, attract investment, retain population and improve quality of life.

The PA Wilds Center's core programs seek to help businesses and communities leverage the trademarked Pennsylvania Wilds brand and growing outdoor recreation economy, and connect with new market opportunities through a network known as The Wilds Cooperative of PA. The Wilds Cooperative (WCO) is free to join and focuses on growing unique place-based businesses, which are vital to creating vibrant, sustainable communities. WCO members receive access to branding and marketing tools, networking and education opportunities, new market opportunities via the physical PA Wilds Conservation Shops and the online PA Wilds Marketplace at ShopThePAWilds.com, as well as mentorship and referrals to PA's financial and technical service programs.

Continued support of initiatives that the PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship operates will impact Elk and Clearfield counties and help promote much needed economic development. This support should include participation in the recently created PA Wilds Climate Network which is designed to bring support agencies together to collaborate on the challenges and opportunities of climate change on communities.

Support a sustainable and reliable forest products supply chain and raise awareness of the benefits of forest management and working forests.

The forests play a crucial role in the environment and economy throughout Clearfield and Elk counties. In addition to being rich with recreation and tourism opportunities, they are working forests. Pennsylvania Forest Products Association (PFPA) is Pennsylvania's foremost industry trade association representing all sectors of the Forest Products Industry. Their members range from the landowners, foresters and loggers that maintain our forests to the sawmills, secondary processors, industry suppliers, paper mills and wood product manufacturers who bring us products we all use in our daily lives. PFPA stands for the sustainable management of our forest resources to enhance forest health, habitat, environmental quality, economic growth, and overall quality of life.

Another important entity related to our forests is the PA Lumber Heritage Region (LHR), a designated Heritage Area. LHR encapsulates the entire PA Wilds region. It serves as a window into Pennsylvania's forest heritage, spanning from the struggles of early pioneers to the conservation efforts that have shaped our managed forests today.

Pennsylvania Hardwoods leads the nation in hardwood growing stock and production of hardwood lumber. The Forest Products Industry in Pennsylvania employs over 60,000 Pennsylvanians. Remarkably, our forests are growing at 2-3 times the rate we harvest them, demonstrating their sustainability. Hardwood trees are a naturally regenerating renewable resource, often eliminating the need for replanting. These forests not only provide economic benefits but also contribute to our well-being, recreation, and environmental health.

Support the implementation of the State Transportation Advisory Committee's Local Match Study.

According to the study that was completed in December 2023, the Pennsylvania Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) examined the challenges associated with obtaining discretionary grants from both a local government and state government perspective, and to identify best practices and recommendations. The study – called "Addressing Municipal Challenges to Participating in Competitive Transportation Grant Programs" – aimed to draw attention to the need to strengthen the competitive position of Pennsylvania's municipalities as they work to secure a share of federal and state grant funding to make vital transportation investments in our communities. One such challenge identifies that many of the region's municipalities are at a disadvantage when competing for grant funding because they cannot afford meeting matching funds requirements.

Several of the study report's recommendations speak directly to Clearfield and Elk counties' situation, with initiatives geared toward:

- **County-implemented transportation funding initiatives –** Developing a county-level strategy for transportation improvements should include local government associations and local and regional transportation planners. Best practices from Pennsylvania local government associations, particularly the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), would be appropriate to consider as part of implementation.

- **Property tax modifications** – Changes to the state PILT (or Payment in Lieu of Taxes), includes legislation currently under consideration in the Pennsylvania General Assembly (SB 225) that would increase the dollar amount per acre of PILT that DCNR, PGC, and PFBC pay to local governments, school districts, and counties for land owned by the agencies. Current proceeds fall short of the amount that would be generated if the property were taxed at market value.

- **Promoting/incentivizing multi-municipal cooperation** – encourage local governments to continue multi-municipal partnerships to leverage municipal resources.

The counties support CCAP's 2023-24 official policy/platform recommending an equitable increase in payments in lieu of taxes for federally exempt property, and an increase in payments in lieu of taxes for state game lands to an equitable amount but not less than $6.00 per acre, comparable to the in lieu of tax payment made to counties for state forest and park lands.

PILT in Pennsylvania

- The state PILT rate in effect since 2016 for **State Forests and State Parks** is $1.20 per acre for the county, school district, and local government, or $3.60 per acre total.

- Pennsylvania SB 225 would increase the annual PILT rate on **State Forests and State Parks** from $2.00 per acre to $2.85 per acre ($8.55 per acre total) with annual adjustments based on fluctuation in the U.S. Department of Labor Consumer Price Index.

- Pennsylvania SB 225 would also increase the annual PILT rate on **State Game Lands** from $1.20 per acre to $1.70 per acre ($5.10 per acre total) with annual adjustments based on fluctuation in the U.S. Department of Labor Consumer Price Index.

Coordinate with the North Central PA Commission's grant writing staff on priority county projects.

Coordinating with the Regional Commission allows the County to tap into broader expertise, gain access to regional data, and present a more comprehensive and cohesive proposal. This collaboration enhances the possibilities for securing grants by aligning the county's goals with regional priorities and demonstrating a unified approach.

HOUSING

The Challenge

The challenges facing housing in Clearfield and Elk counties are similar to many other rural areas across the nation. As housing stock begins to age, the cost of upkeep and renovations rise. Low market demand and a lack of qualified contractors, particularly in areas with a declining population hinder those homes receiving critical upgrades and basic repairs. Additionally, as the population ages, the need for housing that caters to seniors and elderly becomes increasing important. Modifications to existing homes so that seniors can "age in place" or newer housing with advanced accessibility that is affordable is in demand in the region. However, in areas where the housing market is stagnant, there is little incentive for developers to invest in building new and costlier housing. A Housing Needs Assessment and Market Strategy completed for the North Central Region in 2022 identified similar challenges and issues for the six-county region.

Figure 44: Housing Focus Group – Top Challenges
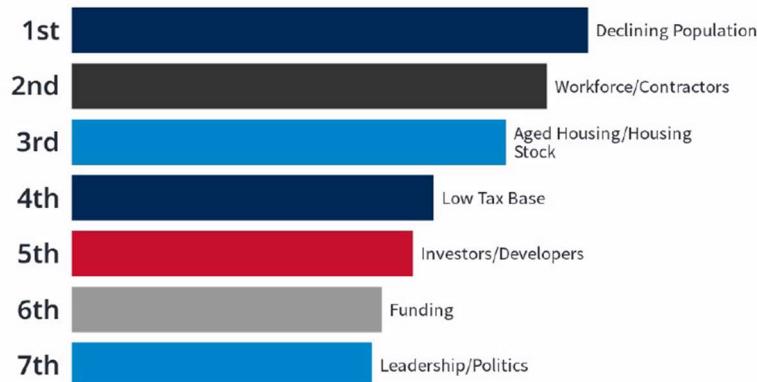
According to Housing Focus Group discussions, the top three challenges facing both counties include: A declining population which is causing a high level of vacant homes, lack of contractors to assist with home improvements, and an aging housing stock which indicates low levels of new housing being constructed.

This feedback is validated through the socio-economic and demographic data indicating that the majority of housing in the region was built before 1940 and that vacancy rates for housing is close to 20 percent, which is significantly higher than the average vacancy rate for the State of Pennsylvania as a whole.

Figure 45: Age of Structure

Source: U.S Census Bureau American Community Survey (5 Year Estimates, 2020)

County stakeholders supported interventions to address housing shortcomings including more readily available and low-cost funding for home improvements to existing homes, dedicating money to address and remove blighted properties, and supporting small scale, senior housing development within more developed communities where services and health care is easily accessible.

Stakeholders also noted that there is a lack of housing agencies that provide robust types of housing assistance within the region. Strategies such as creating a housing collaborative to build a holistic system of services for home ownership and repairs is a recommendation of the North Central Housing Needs Assessment. Both Counties should support and encourage the North Central Planning and Development Commission to implement the Housing Needs Assessment.

Community Goals that will be Impacted
Economic Vitality and Growth

- EVG4: Diversify and restore housing options to help grow the workforce and provide attainable options for residents.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

- PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.
- PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

Objectives

To address the housing challenges identified in the region, the North Central Planning and Development Commission completed a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment and Market Strategy in 2022. This study is all inclusive of various housing strategies to address issues of funding, costs of construction, lack of skilled trades and the like. Rather than reiterating the recommendations of that plan, it is recommended that Clearfield and Elk counties continue to support and encourage North Central Planning Development Commission to implement the Housing Needs Assessment and Market Strategy (2022). By implementing the Housing study, it will improve the economic vitality of the region while helping to create more sustainable and affordable housing for current and future residents.

In addition to implementing that study, there are a few additional recommendations that came out of this planning process. Those strategies include:

Encourage green design, construction, energy efficiency, HVAC, and renewable solar energy in county HOME and CDBG housing programs.

Both Elk and Clearfield counties receive funding from HUD through their Community Development Block Grant and HOME programs. To create sustainable and affordable homes to low-income families and meet each counties objectives of advancing climate action strategies, home funding programs should incorporate standards for alternatives to heating and cooling and increased energy efficiency upgrades.

Support broader development of property maintenance enforcement and incentives for minor home rehabilitation.

Counties typically play a limited role in enforcement of Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) and property maintenance standards. However, they are well positioned to establish programs to address blighted properties through the creation of Blighted Property Review Commissions that can authorize a declaration of blight on poorly maintained properties.

Support for shared code enforcement is another tool that has been used in rural areas. To assist with funding a study to look at shared uses among municipalities, such a code enforcement, many communities have used the PA DCED's Strategic Management Plan program to look at cost saving measures such as shared uses and joint cooperative agreements.

> **Key Stakeholder comments on housing**
>
> - Start with improving our existing housing stock, the cost of building new is prohibitive.
> - Create a county-wide housing task force to implement Housing Needs Assessment.
> - Work with Housing Authority to expand home improvement programs.
> - Coordinate local zoning to streamline approval process.

Counties can also create tools to address vacant and tax delinquent properties such as through a Land Bank (see map of 39 PA Landbanks). Land Banks play a vital role in intervening in tax delinquent properties. These entities, when created by a local government, can preempt delinquent tax sales, and take properties with the purpose of putting them back into productive reuse. Establishing and funding a Land Bank on a county-wide scale would permit all municipalities to utilize this tool to address blight within their own communities.

Clearfield County passed an ordinance giving the County Redevelopment Authority Land Bank authorization in January 2024. This action gave the Redevelopment Authority the ability to acquire more tax-delinquent properties, clear titles, and market a clean property.

Land Banks in Pennsylvania
[In chronological order of ordinance adoption]

Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania
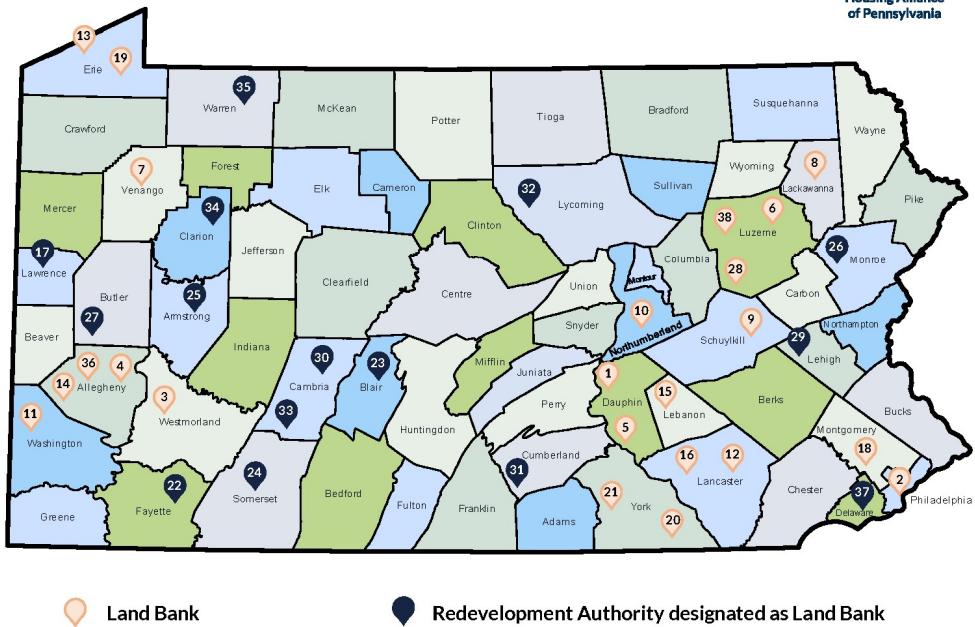
◯ Land Bank   ⬤ Redevelopment Authority designated as Land Bank

Enable new construction of affordable and market rate housing (especially smaller units such as ranch homes, townhomes, apartments, and condos).

Local land use policies such as zoning and SALDO can be used to encourage development of new homes when written with intention. Zoning can also discourage affordable housing options such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). ADUs, also called Granny Flats, is an affordable housing option that allows an accessory building or addition to a home to support a single-family dwelling. This can be a garage converted for occupancy or a basement apartment. ADUs offer multiple benefits including low-cost housing for young professionals and seniors, the ability to provide modest income to off-set the cost of older or large historic homes, and provide for extended families to live together. County planning staff can educate municipal officials on the provisions of the state Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) to manage land use through zoning and other land use management techniques. Although counties do not

typically administer zoning regulations for municipalities, they can also provide model ordinances for municipalities to easily adopt.

Support local technical school development of construction industry courses.

This initiative would foster skilled workforce growth, address local labor needs, and help enhance community housing conditions through well-trained professionals. A skilled workforce is better equipped to address the region's housing challenges, ultimately enhancing living standards and the overall quality of the region's housing stock.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Challenge

Lack of job opportunities, quality and affordable housing, dependable childcare, and a cohesive sense of community and engagement were identified as significant obstacles to the health and general wellbeing of citizens. Young people tend to leave the region once they graduate high school and are unlikely to return. They are seeking better paying jobs outside of the region and in some cases, in other states. Losing young and early career professionals creates an imbalance within the socio-economic structure of the region. Fewer people are available to help support existing communities and an aging population that is more dependent on fixed sources of income goes without a younger generation of employees to fill vacancies as people retire.

Figure 46: Social Services Challenges
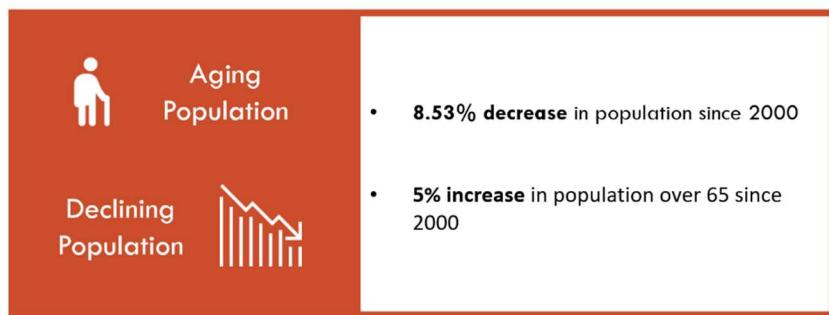
Stakeholders noted that employment challenges, lack of skilled trade jobs, increased drug abuse, and inadequate housing options were among the biggest challenges facing the counties. Figure 47 identifies the challenges noted by the Social Service Focus Group.

Figure 47: Social Service Focus Group - Top Challenges

The greatest opportunity identified to help support the population within the region and slow the number of young people leaving the area was to focus on housing. Many noted that although the existing housing stock in most of the communities is older, it is still relatively inexpensive and affordable to younger residents and families. Creating programs that help to repair these homes and make them more attractive to young workers and families is a priority for the county. Many stakeholders also noted that creating a

sense of pride and hosting events that brought people together would encourage more families to stay or move back to the area.

Figure 48: Social Service Focus Group Opportunities

As noted in the Community Profile, Figure 49 shows that the population in both counties is aging. This coupled with a declining population means that there are shifts in social service needs to meet the demand of an aging population with fewer resources. Areas of need include improved senior housing opportunities, transportation for those who can no longer drive, and rising health care needs. This also means that there are fewer people within the workforce to meet the needs of local industries.

Figure 49: Clearfield and Elk Counties Combined Age Distribution, 2000, 2010, 2050

	Under 20	Age 20-44	Age 45-64	Age 65+
2000	25.3%	34.0%	23.7%	17.0%
2020	20.2%	28.0%	29.7%	22.0%
2050 (Projected)	20.9%	20.9%	26.1%	32.1%
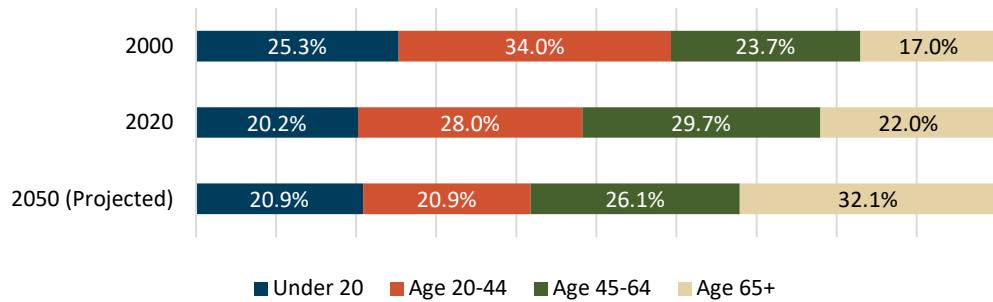
Source: U.S Census Bureau Decennial Census (2000,2020), Woods and Poole (2050)

Access to effective and timely health care in rural areas is a challenge. Declining populations in rural areas and cost saving measures by healthcare providers are directly affecting access to quality health services in rural areas. Recent changes in certain healthcare services, such as Penn Highlands Elk's decision to close its maternity unit (in favor of having patients travel 45 minutes to Penn Highlands DuBois Hospital), and the closure of Ridgmont, a personal care community in Ridgway, reflect this trend.

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania recently held a public hearing for state officials on the issue of population decline and its impact on workforce, housing, healthcare and transportation. Written testimony given by Janice Walters, MSHA, CHFP, Interim Executive Director for the Rural Health Redesign Center succinctly summaries the challenges of rural hospitals across the Commonwealth " *rural hospitals are financially distressed due to significant demographic and economic changes that have had*

downstream impacts on the healthcare delivery system. With declining populations and industry, it has put the hospital and other anchor institutions in jeopardy. However, we know that sustainability of rural health infrastructure is essential to improving the economic viability of rural communities. Healthcare infrastructure is essential to economic development, as business investors look for communities with strong healthcare and schools to attract talent to their organizations. Strong hospitals have a better chance at attracting primary care physicians and other specialists, as often professionals desire employment arrangements to ensure their own personal viability. In addition, a robust rural economy impacts the ability to recruit physicians as often there is a "trailing spouse" that requires professional employment as well." Addressing this issue will take a multi-level approach that combines local political advocacy, state legislation to advance rural health opportunities, and federal legislation that expands payment options for hospitals whose service area includes a large amount of Medicare covered patients.

Community Goals that will be Impacted

Healthy and Connected Communities

- HCC2: Provide and enhance recreational opportunities, social services, and emergency services to support healthy communities.

Objectives

Increase financial and volunteer contributions for community events and Main Street development initiatives to increase social connections.

Representatives from the St. Marys School District and the Clearfield County Career and Technical Center noted that there is an abundance of programs to help prepare young people for skilled labor jobs or to prepare them for college. However, many of them do not view that remaining in the area, once they have completed their education, as a viable option. They seek attractions found in larger cities and where pay is typically more rewarding. However, both counties have core communities that can and do provide for multiple services such as shopping options, eating and drinking establishments, and entertainment venues with a much lower cost of living. Focusing resources on improving those core communities and improving the existing housing stock will help to keep young professionals in the community.

Ensure that all residents have connections and opportunities related to nearby outdoor assets to foster community pride, good stewardship and local economic benefits.

The North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission recently completed a regional Active Transportation and Greenways Plan that provides multiple recommendations for trails, connected sidewalks and access to open space throughout the area. Clearfield and Elk county should focus on prioritizing and completing key recommendations from that planning study.

> **Key Stakeholder comments on social services**
>
> - Quality and affordable housing is a barrier for people re-entering the community. Blighted housing should be addressed.
> - Lack of quality day care prevents those seeking employment opportunities, particularly lower paying jobs.
> - County should help with providing transportation to/from employers.

Create housing programs that directly target removal of blighted homes and repairs to housing that can be marketable.

The prevalence of blighted and unkept properties, particularly residences, has been a consistent issue raised by numerous focus groups throughout the planning process. Every community desires that residents and property owners see the value of their property and keep it up to acceptable standards. However, in areas where market demand is softening for homes and property values, property maintenance will decrease and blighted and or abandoned properties will begin to rise. Fortunately, there are several tools available to local governments to address problem properties. Tools can include homeowner rehabilitation loans and grants to help stave off property maintenance issue. More aggressive programs such as blight declaration processes, eminent domain takings and creating a Land Bank are other options for communities to use.

Support an advocacy role by the County so that it can act as a convenor with Workforce Solutions and Industry Leaders.

The County should work closely with its Workforce Development Board (dba Workforce Solutions for North Central PA) and industry leaders to understand and workforce challenges that employers are facing including finding skilled workers, identifying education and training needs and funding for this training. Workforce Solutions oversees the PA CareerLink centers in the region and these centers are prepared to address barriers to employment experienced by job seekers as well as to connect skilled workers to employment and assist employers in finding skilled employees through a myriad of programs.

Barriers that Workforce Solutions is addressing include: Reentry following incarceration, substance use disorder, poverty, lack of available and affordable childcare, transportation, as well as many other barriers. Workforce Solutions partnered with several agencies and counties to develop the Discover PA Six website, intended to be used to attract people to our region to live work and play as well as to keep youth in the region by educating them on the high priority occupations and career pathways available to them in the region (see Workforce Solutions website at www.workforcesolutionspa.com for more information about the many programs available to employers and job seekers including incumbent workers training, industry partnerships, business education partnership, registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, Internship reimbursement program for employers, education and skills training collaboratives, provision of labor market information, and many more). The website www.discoverpasix.com also includes more information regarding this initiative.

Support local and state efforts to improve staffing and involvement in Emergency Services.

Across the Commonwealth communities are struggling to keep up minimum staffing for their volunteer fire and EMS services, placing residents and business at risk of loss of life and property. Counties can play a role in helping to answer this challenge by supporting local and state initiatives to provide financial incentives and tax credit for volunteer and part-time service providers. Counties can also advocate for statewide initiatives to provide funding for EMS services (such as HB 1557) and apply to FEMA to aid in EMS recruitment. Groups like KeystoneFirefighters would be a resource toward advancing this initiative.

Leverage a best practices approach to address rising problems related to drug use and abuse.

One highly effective tool to help curb the increase in drug use, particularly among teens and young adults, is the utilization of a drug court. A drug court is a way to circumvent incarceration of minor offenses and help those in need to get the treatment and wraparound services that will help them recover from addiction. Drug courts have been used effectively throughout the country to assist in mitigating drug abuse and improve the awareness of services available for treatment.

Drug courts emphasize rehabilitation over incarceration, helping participants overcome substance abuse issues, leading to lower rates of reoffending. By addressing the root cause of criminal behavior, drug courts can reduce long-term costs associated with repeated arrests, court proceedings, and incarceration.

Advocate for state and federal legislation that expands resources to rural health providers.

Senator Robert Casey Jr. has co-sponsored the rural Hospital Support Act that would modify and extend certain payment adjustments for rural hospitals under Medicare's inpatient prospective payment system.

Specifically, the bill indexes payment adjustments for sole community hospitals and Medicare-dependent hospitals to FY2016 operating costs, if it results in higher payments for such hospitals. The bill also makes payment adjustments for Medicare-dependent hospitals and low-volume hospitals permanent (the adjustments expired at the end of FY2022). Tracking and support for this and similar legislative initiatives (e.g., prescription drug discount programs, telehealth, and available transportation options) would help provide resources to address the reduction in healthcare services and facilities that both Elk and Clearfield counties are experiencing.

Additionally, the County should collaborate with healthcare providers to establish/maintain dedicated pediatric and geriatric care facilities. Developing partnerships with local organizations and nonprofits to create support services for families and caregivers of children and the elderly can also contribute to a comprehensive healthcare approach.

The regionalization of health care is a major issue within the region with myriad planning implications.

ENERGY

The Challenge

The economies of both counties have historically relied heavily on extractive industries. However, major shifts in the decline of these industries has occurred, leaving large areas of abandoned strip mines and other closed industrial sites scattered throughout the region. Public demand for alternative fuel sources is also creating new opportunities for rethinking what can happen on those vacant or underutilized parcels.

The Energy Focus Group noted that the decline in population has reduced the available workforce for the industries that remain in the area. Additionally, increased environmental regulations and permitting processes have created additional barriers for extractive industries to grow. The emerging Federal funding for renewable energy such as solar should become a top priority in the region. For Clearfield County, large abandoned areas once used for strip mining operations are now prime for large scale commercial solar array. Proper planning and identification of sites most appropriately suited for commercial solar would benefit the county over the longer-term.

Figure 50: Energy Focus Group - Challenges
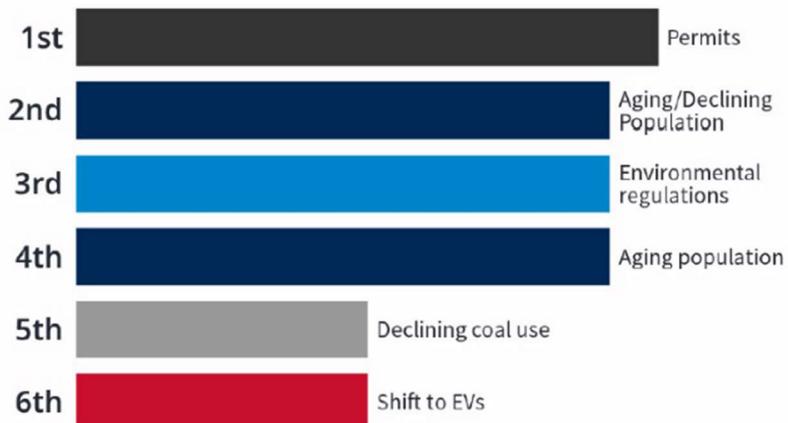
Planning for Clean Energy alternatives and for advancing the use of Electric Vehicles and EV stations is a priority for both counties. As these technologies continue to advance, the demand for more access to reliable charging stations will increase. This is particularly relevant for tourists who travel into the counties to take advantage of the open space and recreational areas.

Both Clearfield and Elk Counties are part of the Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub (ARCH2), which is a regional hub bringing together private industry, state and local government, academic and technology institutions, NGOs, and community organizations across the Northern Appalachian region including West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky to develop an inter-connected, full value chain H2Hub solution. ARCH2 will provide clean energy jobs throughout fossil energy and coal energy communities that are so prevalent in Northern Appalachia. The ARCH2 hub's location is centered in the nation's second-largest natural gas-producing region, which provides an abundance of end-use opportunities across multiple sectors.
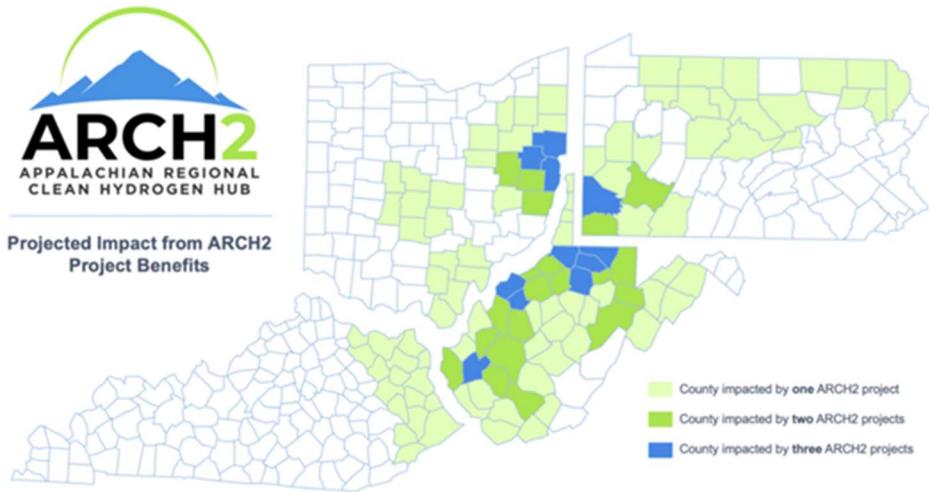
Areas previously used for mining provide a unique opportunity for future development and should be explored further to determine the feasibility of brownfield redevelopment opportunities. Some parcels may be more suitable for commercial solar while others may have the potential for new business development. Figure 51 shows the extent of Clearfield County's abandoned mine inventory.

Figure 51: Abandoned Mine Land Inventory, 2023
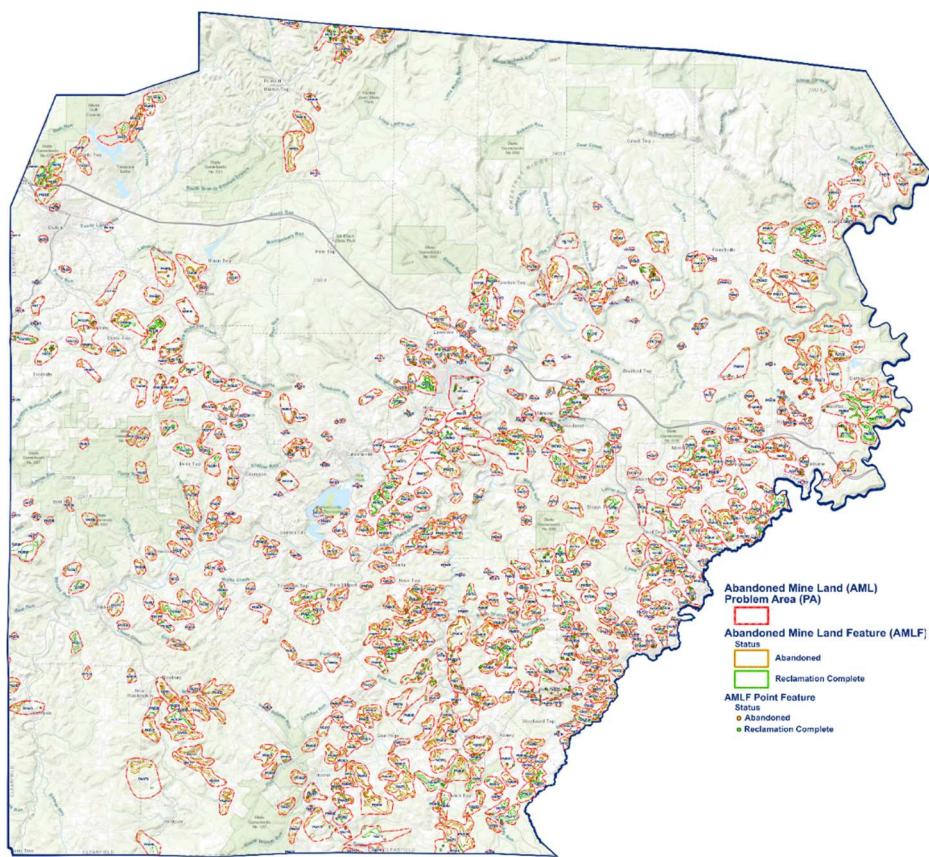
Source: PA Department of Environmental Protection

In 2022, the Inflation Reduction Act was passed into law, making an historic commitment to build a new clean energy economy by providing billions of dollars in grant and loan programs and other investments for clean energy and climate action. Additionally, this law commits to delivering 40 percent of the overall benefits of climate, clean energy, infrastructure, and other investments to disadvantaged communities, including Tribes, communities with environmental justice concerns, rural areas, and energy communities. Both Counties are designated as energy communities and coal closure energy communities in the Inflation Reduction Act, positioning both favorably for new development and investment from the renewable energy industry. Figure 52 shows the extent of Designated Energy Communities in Pennsylvania. The designation applies to all municipalities in the two-county region, with the exception of the boroughs of Johnsonburg and Ridgway.

Figure 52: Designated Energy Communities; Coal Closure Communities
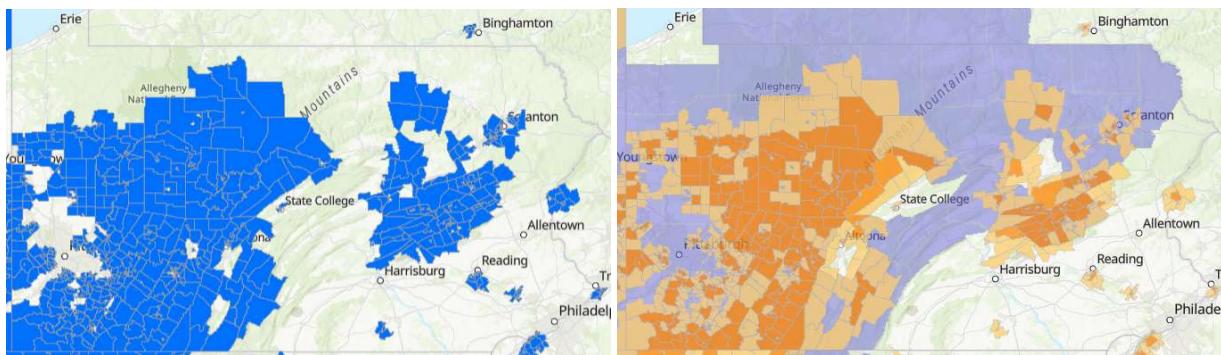
Source: Department of Energy

Community Goals that will be Impacted

Economic Vitality and Growth

- EVG1: Save existing businesses while promoting the growth of new industries.
- EVG2: Continue promoting the use and extraction of coal, oil, natural gas, minerals, and rare-earths, and drilling while investing in protection of resources and industry best practices.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

- PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.
- PCA2: Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.
- PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

Objectives

Advance understanding of the impacts of land use and development on climate change.

The impacts of climate change are being felt globally. Local and county governments are seeking to not only understand what it means to their residents and the services they provide but also what legislative and policy decisions are needed to help adapt to the impacts of climate change. Creating Local Climate Action Plans that examine the impacts of clean energy and reduction of fossil fuels, and locally supported solutions is a positive step toward addressing this issue. This type of local planning process will provide a pipeline for education and engagement with all of the municipalities within each county and both counties will benefit by staying active within the PA Wilds Climate Network which will provide training and technical support for their member communities.

Support legislation that allows for the development of community solar in Pennsylvania.

Currently Pennsylvania only permits solar installations for individual homes or businesses or commercial level solar arrays that help feed energy back into the electric grid. Community solar is another option that many states allow but is currently not permissible in Pennsylvania. Community Solar is a smaller installation that could provide solar power to many homes rather than individuals responsible for their own installation, and that would benefit areas where there is more compact housing in core communities. Both Clearfield and Elk counties should support the passage of community solar legislation at the state level.

Pursue a joint energy purchasing cooperative with other county institutions and businesses for procuring 100% of electricity from renewable sources for government operations.

Clearfield and Elk counties should pursue a cooperative arrangement to purchase renewable energy and alternative energy programs from approved energy cooperative providers. They could use a Council of Government structure (COG) and coordinate with other municipalities to leverage their buying power. Additionally, both counties should investigate using the Guaranteed Energy Savings Act (GESA) process to upgrade their own facilities. This act allows local government to perform an energy audit to determine the most cost-effective upgrades needed for their own facilities. The savings from those upgrades can be used to pay off any necessary debt or general obligation bonds needed to pay for such improvement. Savings are guaranteed for the life of the payment terms.

As a designated federal energy community, encourage clean energy deployment on current and former mine land while supporting co-location of advanced manufacturing that would be supported by such clean energy.

Pennsylvania's abundance of energy resources sets the State up as an industrial powerhouse. As the second-largest energy supplier in the United States, the impact of the energy economy shows up in all the State's priority industry sectors. Critically, energy production, transmission, and distribution are a key enabler of the entire economy. Each are especially important for energy-intensive industries, like additive and advanced manufacturing. As such, co-locating such energy intensive industries with clean and renewable energy sources is a win-win for both the economy and the environment.

Advance economic opportunities in our region for the expansion of existing industries and the development of new industries that could use the abundant supply of natural gas.

Preferably this could be in cleaner forms such as through the production of blue and green hydrogen. The County will work with county, regional, state, and federal partners to pursue funding opportunities associated with our natural gas-producing region, which provides an abundance of end-use opportunities across multiple sectors.

ECONOMY

The Challenge

Economic factors impacting the overall economy and livelihood of households within the region include a decline in good paying jobs and a lower household income compared to the state and national median. Young people, once they are educated, are leaving the area for higher paying jobs outside of the region. Although local vocational and technical programs are experiencing an increase in demand for their programs, recent graduates are still leaving the area for higher paying, skilled labor jobs in more densely populated areas and cities that offer many amenities and services such as shopping, housing options, walkable communities, entertainment, and diversity in employment options. Support in developing Core Communities to improve existing housing stock, update historic buildings and main streets, and expand retail and entertainment venues will help attract young people to stay in the area.

Figure 53: Median Household Income, 2010, 2021
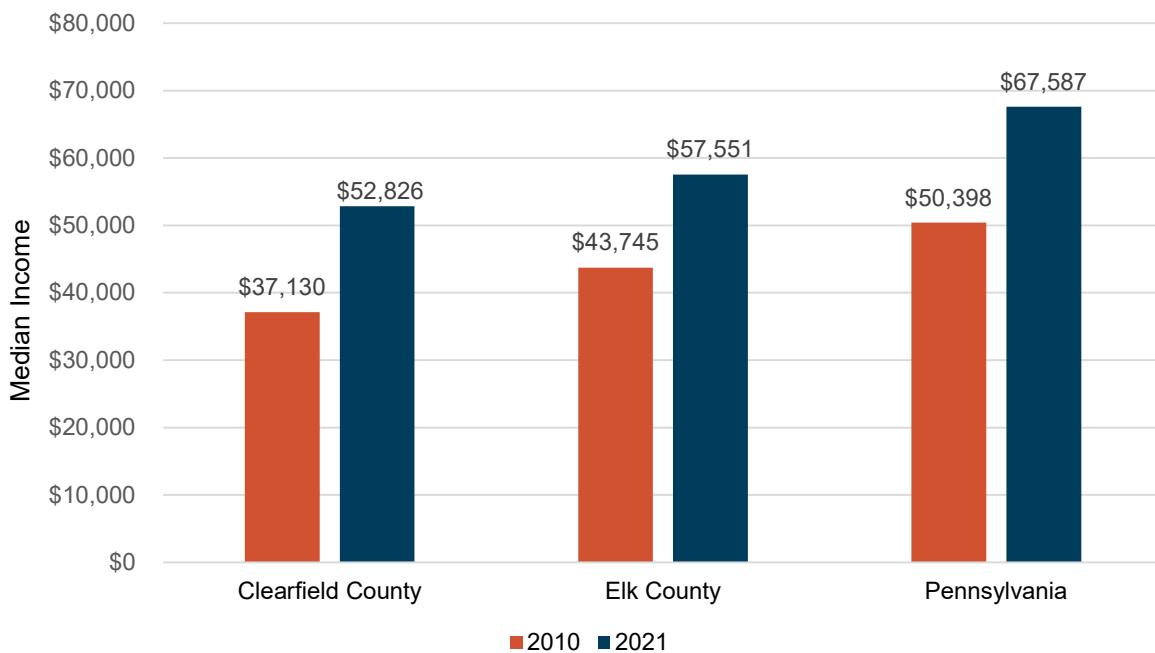
A lack of qualified workers is directly impacting areas such as emergency service positions where the shortage of available workforce is a significant risk to jobs that support public safety. In addition, the lack of residential construction trades creates hinderances on the region's ability to maintain and improve housing that is so desperately needed. Finally, Focus Group and stakeholder interviews revealed that inadequate and lack of dependable childcare options is another barrier to attracting a skilled work force.

Figure 54: Economy Focus Group: Findings

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Resiliency Plan 2022-2026, completed by the North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission identified that employment challenges within the two-county region focused on strengthening employment and education. While Elk County has a strong base in manufacturing jobs, which tend to pay higher wages, there is an overall lack of diversity among businesses and business types. Clearfield County has a more diverse economy, but it is heavily dependent on lower wage jobs in agriculture and declining opportunities within extractive industries of mining and quarrying. Collaboration between the two counties and working on regional priorities that grow a holistic and diverse employment base is key. Residents and employers will benefit by the two counties working together to diversify and attract new businesses. Focusing support on the tourism economy was also viewed as an important step to improve local job opportunities.

CLEARFIELD

The economy of Clearfield County employs 28.8K people. The largest industries are Health Care & Social Assistance (6,131 people), Retail Trade (4,514 people), and Transportation and Warehousing (3,009 people), and the highest paying industries are Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas ($72,261), Management of Companies and Enterprises ($71,315), and Utilities ($69,663).

ELK

The economy of Elk County employs 13.3k people. The largest industries are Manufacturing (5,556 people), Health Care & Social Assistance (1,691 people), and Retail Trade (1,329 people), and the highest paying industries are Management of Companies and Enterprises ($88,026), Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas ($64,319), and Finance and Insurance ($64,257).

Source: 2022-2026 CEDS and Resiliency Plan – North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission

Community Goals that will be Impacted

Economic Vitality and Growth

- EVG1: Save existing businesses while promoting the growth of new industries.
- EVG3: Promote workforce development, like training and internships, to encourage youth retention and strengthen the workforce.
- EVG4: Assess approaches to tourism promotion and public funding tools to ensure that the counties are maximizing opportunities.
- EVG5: Expand access to reliable broadband opportunities including unserved and underserved populations.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

- PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.
- PCA2: Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.
- PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

Objectives

Support regional action items from Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Resiliency Plan (2022-2026).

The top strategic priorities noted within the recently completed CEDS plan includes:

- Infrastructure – Infrastructure is inclusive of water, sewer and roads but also covers rehabilitation of the region's housing stock.
- Workforce and Entrepreneurship – Support for small businesses and entrepreneurs was seen to help diversify job opportunities and replace jobs lost due to reduction in manufacturing and extractive industries.
- Natural Resources and Tourism- Preserving the environment and natural beauty within the region is seen as key to supporting growth in tourism. However, the plan notes the importance of ensuring that tourism development needs to be sustainable and not detrimental to the community.
- Quality of Life – Healthcare, supporting arts and culture, and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation were recommendations that would bolster a quality of life for residents within the region.

Key Stakeholder comments on economy and workforce

- Young professionals will want to stay in the region if we make our core, urban communities more attractive. Support creating amenities in downtowns. A sense of place.
- County needs a cohesive vision and then make decisions that meet that vision.
- Improve existing housing to attract young workers.

Support the region's local Main Street or downtown improvement programs.

The PA Downtown Center (PDC) mission is "to build support and capacity of local non-profit organizations, municipalities and individuals to enhance the overall well-being and sustainability of PA's core communities." The PDC is supported by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Core communities that follow the Main Street model can have access to technical assistance for planning that can connect them to funding for programs including façade grant improvement projects, signage, and streetscape funding. Through support of improving downtown within the Core Communities of the region, both Clearfield and Elk counties will improve the attractiveness of the area that will lead to keeping young people in the region, act to promote these communities to professionals particularly in the healthcare industry to relocate, and support the overall stabilization of the region's population.

In many rural communities throughout Pennsylvania, declining population is having a ripple effect and negatively impacting the services that community agencies, schools and municipalities are able to provide. As people leave the area, revenues drop for agencies such as public schools that are dependent on local taxes and a healthy economy to cover the costs of education. By promoting actions that help to stabilize core communities and attract people to live in the region, Elk and Clearfield counties will directly support improvement of schools and public education offerings. Main Street programs have also proven successful in helping downtowns redevelop upper floors of historic buildings that can provide needed rental housing in core communities.

Downtown DuBois

Minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the local community and its members to achieve social sustainability.

The PA Wilds Planning Team is one of the largest and longest-standing governance structures around the PA Wilds effort. It was formed in 2006 through a groundbreaking Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement (ICA), the largest geographically of its kind in Pennsylvania. The ICA brings together the region's county governments, typically through representation of the county planner, the region's four Economic Development Districts, two Heritage Areas, visitor bureaus, PA Wilds Center, conservation partners and others to work on regional planning issues related to outdoor recreation development.

The PA Wilds Planning Team and PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship work together to implement the PA Wilds strategy. Together, their programs provide support related to place-based tourism development that supports communities and economies. Their collective programs include planning and assistance grants, marketing and entrepreneurial support, stewardship initiatives, and more.

By working closely with the PA Wilds Center and advocating for responsible use of sensitive areas and natural resources, any negative impacts from tourism can be identified and mitigated. The County can also assist with offering planning assistance: land use tools and techniques for small, tourism-driven communities that experience high volumes of tourist traffic.

The Aspen Institute's Community Strategies Group completed a Call-to-Action report for rural communities, including those within the PA Wilds service area. This report looked at ways to make the outdoor recreation economy more equitable and sustainable for the people who live in rural America. The Rural Framework Building Block includes working within three strategic areas, Rural Voice and Power, Equitable Aims and Design, Resources for Productive Action. Clearfield and Elk counties should support the PA Wilds Center's execution of this framework within their policies and programs.

Encourage the ongoing development of recreation infrastructure (trails, indoor/outdoor facilities, parks, etc.) that serve the needs of both residents and visitors.

The North Central PA Regional Planning Development Commission completed a Greenways and Active Transportation Plan in 2022. This plan identifies several short-, mid- and long-term recommendations for each county to support the regional greenway system. Prioritizing the regional initiatives within the 2022 Greenways and Active Transportation Plan will continue Clearfield and Elk counties' collaborative efforts while implementing projects that have a regional impact.

Encourage ongoing development of "Trail of Dreams…An Elk County ATV Mission" to connect the communities in Elk and Clearfield county with ATV travel using private land trails and municipal roads to promote tourism and outdoor recreation.

Elk County Riders ATV (ECRATV) is a local nonprofit organization formed solely to develop trails for motorized recreation, mainly UTV's and ATV's. To date, ECRATV has opened a main riding corridor of 23.6 miles stretching from Benezette Township, Elk County, through Jay, Fox, Horton, Huston and Sandy Townships to Cayman Landing Treasure Lake, Clearfield County. Along the main corridor is an extended route network of existing open township ATV roads for a total riding opportunity of 47.5 miles. Funding for the project has been achieved through County and DCNR grants, Philanthropic gifts, Foundation awards and local fundraising. Both Clearfield and Elk counties should continue to support the balance of community connections to further enlarge this trail system.

Explore incentive programs to keep people anchored in the region. Enhance the availability of quality and affordable childcare options throughout the region.

As noted under the Social Services Policy area, the affordability and reliability of childcare is a hindrance to creating a stable work environment and ensuring that businesses can find the skilled workforce they need. The County should work closely with their Workforce Improvement Board (Workforce Solutions) and industry leaders to understand and address the issue of costly and unreliable child-care for workers. One significant barrier to full employment and for those who are reentering the workforce after incarceration is access to quality day care. The County has a lot of leverage to bring people from the region together to fix significant community issues like day care. They should use that leverage to address this barrier to employment opportunities.

Support proposed state legislation that could help preserve Pennsylvania's remaining dairy farms.

According to a USDA report, the U.S. has lost more than half of its licensed dairy operations. "*The overall number of licensed operations in the U.S. has marched steadily downward since data collection began, declining by more than 55%, from 70,375 in 2003 to 31,657 in 2020. The last three years of data show larger year-over-year declines than any other decline in the last 13 years. This recent acceleration of the decline reflects how difficult it is to operate a dairy in a low milk price environment.*" Pennsylvania law makers are working to help reduce the burden on dairy farmers through a number of legislative proposals. Elk and Clearfield county elected officials should monitor and advocate for new laws to project dairy farms in their region.

Raise student awareness of career opportunities and high priority occupations.

Workforce Solutions oversees a Business Education Partnership. The purpose of the Business Education Partnership (BEP) is to connect businesses and schools through partnership programs. Employer participation can offer students career-related experiences and opportunities to learn about high priority occupations and career paths in the region. Through direct employer involvement in their programs, there can be a greater awareness of job opportunities within the region, and also learn the skill sets and education needed to obtain those jobs.

County government can commit to becoming more involved in this partnership and encourage local businesses to participate. Workforce Solutions through their Business Education Partnership implemented programs such as career fairs, mock interviews, careers on wheels, industry days, company tours and many more to raise school students' awareness of various career opportunities and high-priority occupations in the region. Partnering with Workforce Solutions can help to increase the reach of these programs.

Promote the availability of remote work options.

Rural counties like Clearfield and Elk can benefit from the ongoing shift to remote work options that have accelerated since the coronavirus pandemic. The counties can promote remote work options through several ways, including investing in digital infrastructure, ensuring widespread access to high-speed internet. They can also implement flexible work arrangements – including remote work – within their own workforce. Additionally, raising awareness about the benefits of remote work and offering resources for

skill development related to remote collaboration tools can contribute to the successful promotion of remote work options within the county.

Support the development of critical minerals industry.

County government can create incentives for business in the sector and facilitate collaboration between industry stakeholders, research institutions, and local government. The County should also promote workforce development programs to ensure there is a skilled labor force available for the industry. Encouraging sustainable and environmentally responsible mining practices is essential for long-term success and community support.

Support the Local Workforce Development Board as it implements its Workforce Solutions Plan.

One of the strategies of Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania's Workforce Solutions Plan is to attract people to the region to work and live. The goal is to recruit people to the region while retaining current population. This is being done through the PA SIX brand as an initiative designed to increase awareness of career opportunities that exist within the region.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To support the implementation of the comprehensive plan, this section provides a complete list of implementation objectives and corresponding action items. These strategies outline a tactical approach for advancing the Clearfield/Elk County Comprehensive Plan vision by specifying tangible action steps that can be taken to ensure progress over the next 10 years. In addition to implementable objectives, this chapter also identifies key partners the Counties may collaborate with to support implementation. Partners include local, regional, and state entities, as well as qualified consultants who offer expertise in specific areas of need.

PERFORMANCE/PROGRESS MEASURES

In the public sector, the program logic model is the preferred framework for measuring progress toward a stated goal. It's used to measure whether a specific public program is achieving the desired outcomes and is, therefore, an effective use of public resources.

The logic model, simply stated, clearly defines what a program does and what its intended results are to be. This includes the following indicators:

- **Resources**: The human and financial resources dedicated by the county for program activities.

- **Input**: The actual program activity that is conducted by the county.

    o   Example 1: Code Enforcement

    o   Example 2: Tourism Marketing

- **Output**: The direct yield of the program activity.

    o Example 1: The number of houses inspected in each municipality, the number of hours worked by the code enforcement officer; etc.

    o Example 2: The number of paid advertisements issued in print, in social media, and in radio, the number of wayfinding signs installed, etc.

- **Outcome** (short-term)

    o Example: Improved housing conditions; number of blighted properties

    o Example: Increased unique visitor views of websites

- **Outcome** (long-term)

    o Example 1: Increased home values

    o Example 2: Increased visitor spending

For purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, the measures identified are outputs. This is important. The county cannot achieve short and long-term outcomes without first providing the appropriate program

inputs. By concentrating first on inputs and direct outputs and then, in 3-5 years, looking at outcomes, each county will be able to identify which actions are providing concrete results and which actions may need to be revisited.

The Implementation Plan contained within this section follows the following framework:

NAME OF FOCUS AREA (e.g., one of the plan's eight focus areas: Transportation, Economy, Energy, etc.)

1	Community Goals that would be impacted *see pages 5-6 for the full listing*		
1.1	Objective #1		
	Action Item #1	Lead/Support	Timeline
	Action Item #2	Lead/Support	Timeline
1.2	Objective #2		
	Action Item #1	Lead/Support	Timeline
	Action Item #2	Lead/Support	Timeline

TRANSPORTATION

Healthy and Connected Communities

HCC1: Ensure safe and efficient transportation systems that link communities and vulnerable residents to places of interest and employment.

HCC3: Maintain public infrastructure and downtowns/main streets to promote high quality of life.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

Action		Lead	Timeline
1.1	Maintain local roads and bridges in a state of good repair.		
	Support local bridge funding programs/initiatives and assist municipalities in bridge maintenance.	County Commissioners; NC RPO Grant Writing Staff	Ongoing
	Use county Act 13 at-risk bridge dollars for priority local bridge projects.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
	Consider adoption of the Act 89 Local Use Fee to raise revenue for bridge maintenance.	County Commissioners	Long-term
	Leverage available technical assistance and training opportunities on local roadway maintenance through the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP).	PennDOT; NC RPO	Ongoing
	Maintain and improve access to Interstate 80.	PennDOT; North Central RPO	Ongoing
1.2	Support pursuits in applying for discretionary transportation funding opportunities (e.g., federal and state grant programs).		
	Support regional efforts to apply for state and federal grant programs and other transportation funding programs.	County Commissioners; NC RPO	Ongoing
	Continue to provide technical assistance/support to municipalities who are interested in pursuing funding for transportation projects through grant programs.	County Planning Staff; NC RPO Grant Writing Staff	Ongoing

Action		Lead	Timeline
1.3	Promote tools for Core Communities that support walkability.		
	Develop a countywide Complete Streets policy or follow Complete Streets approaches in project planning. Utilize tools supported by WalkWorks WalkWorks (pa.gov) to help fund municipal projects and policies.	County Planning Commission; County Commissioners	Long-term
	In conjunction with municipalities, identify and prioritize trail gaps within Clearfield County.	County Planning Staff with assistance from NC RPO or PA Wilds Center	Long-term
1.4	Improve highway safety by reducing crashes, fatalities, and serious injuries.		
	Participate in the development and implementation of the North Central RPO's Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Action Plan.	County Planning Staff, municipalities	Ongoing
	Develop a partnership with Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging, North Central RPO, PennDOT, and Area Transit Authority (ATA) to provide informational resources for seniors and their support networks.	NC RPO, County Planning Staff, PennDOT, ATA	Short-term
1.5	Promote the use of existing public transportation services and explore new opportunities to expand transit use.		
	Pursue and/or support additional microtransit opportunities/pilots.	NC RPO; County Planning Staff; ATA	Ongoing
	Educate residents, commuters, and visitors on the availability/use of public transportation, fixed-route, vanpool, and shared-ride services. ATA provides brochures that have begun this conversation – Ride To Work (rideata.net) Shared Ride for Seniors (rideata.net)	NC RPO, County Planning Staff; ATA	Short-term
	Explore additional options for demand-response or carshare transportation service at DuBois Regional Airport for additional landside connections.	NC RPO; County Planning Staff	Long-term
	Support the promotion of "Find My Ride" to better help residents plan for their transportation needs.	ATA RTAC; North Central RPO	Short-term

Action		Lead	Timeline
1.6	**Facilitate efficient movement of freight, including energy transport and storage.**		
	Encourage municipalities to incorporate truck parking and staging requirements in zoning and land development regulations (if applicable).	County Planning Staff; municipalities	Long term
	Preserve rail corridors that are essential to the transport of goods identified as major economic drivers, such as coal, lumber, and natural gas.	NC RPO; County Planning Staff; rail carriers	Ongoing
	Encourage the repurposing of idle facilities served by freight rail and increase the number of rail-served properties.	County Planning Staff	Long-term
1.7	**Support the development of interconnected, multimodal transportation systems with alternative travel networks and connections that feature bicycle lanes, walkable communities, rideshare options, and EV charging stations.**		
	Support the North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission in the conduct of its EV charging study and eventual implementation.	County Planning; PennDOT; NC RPO	Short-term
	Coordinate with the North Central RPO on the county's transportation priorities and grant funding assistance.	County Planning; PennDOT; NC RPO	Ongoing
	Coordinate with the county's municipalities on project needs at the local level for potential incorporation into the RPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).	County Planning; PennDOT; NC RPO	Ongoing

INFRASTRUCTURE

Healthy and Connected Communities

HCC3: Maintain public infrastructure and downtowns/main streets to promote a high quality of life.

Economic Vitality and Growth

EVG6: Expand access to reliable broadband opportunities including unserved and underserved populations.

	Action	Lead	Timeline
2.1	**Promote and support education about stormwater issues and benefits of stormwater remediation.**		
	Continue to implement recommendations from the Clearfield County – Countywide Action Plan https://files.dep.state.pa.us/Water/ChesapeakeBayOffice/WIPIII/2021/Clearfield/Clearfield_CAP_Narrative.pdf	County Planning Staff; Clearfield County Conservation District	Short-term
	Create and promote model stormwater ordinance for municipalities within the region.	County Planning Staff; municipalities	Long-term
	Counties should support State legislation that would reduce or eliminate the burden and cost associated with maintenance of stormwater facilities along state roads including House Bill 1128. Bill Information - House Bill 1128; Regular Session 2023-2024 - PA General Assembly (state.pa.us)	County Commissioners	Short-term
2.2	**Advocate for new legislation that would eliminate barriers to providing reliable broadband to our rural communities and the local industries, such as agriculture, that require such technology for their day-to-day operations.**		
	ClearfieldCoPA_Broadband Deployment Findings Report_16Nov2022_Final_Draft.docx (egnyte.com)	County Commissioners	Ongoing
	If private sector fails to apply for Broadband funding in underserved areas of the county, then the County should explore the possibility of publishing a request for proposal (RFP) for one or	County Commissioners	Long-term

	Action	Lead	Timeline
	more areas to enhance broadband services. A regional approach with Elk and Jefferson counties on either an RFP or partnership with an existing ISP also could provide a preferred approach in seeking funds through the Broadband Authority.		
	Since Fiber Optic has many advantages, the county should prioritize and support those applications made to the state broadband authority that expand fiber optic broadband opportunities within the county	County Commissioners	Short-term
	Identify a point of contact within the county who will be responsible for managing broadband needs and implementation of the report.	County Commissioners	Short-term
2.3	Encourage recreation options that differ from typical outdoor recreation.		
	Continue to fund programs for local parks and recreation through use of Act 13 funding.	County Commissioners	Long-term
	Complete a feasibility study to assess the need for a regional recreational facility – multicounty.	County Planning Staff	Long-term
2.4	Collaborate and coordinate with municipalities and counties on infrastructure planning, including Capital improvement Plans (CIP), comprehensive/master plans, and hazard mitigation plans.		
	Assist municipalities in creating 5-year Capital Improvement Plans and, ultimately, prioritize regionally significant capital improvement projects that the County can support.	County Planning Staff; municipalities; PA DCED STMP program	Long-term
2.5	Maintain and expand the region's infrastructure to address the needs of existing businesses and residences.		
	Use ARPA funding to create a local, low interest, revolving loan fund for municipalities to use for upgrades and maintenance of sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure.	Clearfield County Commissioners	Short-term
	Monitor and support the implementation of the PA TAC Local Match Study (Dec. 2023). This study identifies challenges for communities to provide local match for grant programs and includes recommendations such as countywide reassessment, increase PILT for state and	NC RPO, County Commissioners	Short-term

Action		Lead	Timeline
	federally owned lands, as well as multi-municipal coordination. www.Talkpatransportation.com		
2.6	Collaborate with the North Central PA Commission in implementing its EV Charging Infrastructure Implementation Plan.		
	Work with RPO staff in identifying priority areas within Clearfield County (other than I-80) as priorities for EV charging infrastructure.	NC RPO; PennDOT; County Planning Staff	Short-term

LAND USE

Healthy and Connected Communities

HCC1: Ensure safe and efficient transportation systems that link communities and vulnerable residents to places of interest and employment.

HCC2: Provide and enhance recreational opportunities, social services, and emergency services to support healthy communities.

HCC3: Maintain public infrastructure and downtowns/main streets to promote a high quality of life.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.

PCA2: Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.

PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

	Action	Lead	Timeline
3.1	**Encourage municipalities to properly plan and zone their communities using best practices**		
	Create a best practices model zoning ordinance and education strategy for municipalities.	County Planning Staff; municipalities	Long-term
	Encourage municipalities to add HMP policies and goals into their own planning and land use documents.	County Planning Staff; municipalities	Long-term
	Provide education and training to building/zoning code officials to better implement floodplain management and building practices.	County Planning Staff; municipalities	Short-term
	Provide examples to the public of the benefits of consistent code enforcement in municipalities across the county.	County Planning Staff; municipalities	Long-term

	Action	Lead	Timeline
3.2	Promote sound land use practices that maximize use of available land to balance the needs of the community.		
	Leverage the Character Area Map or Future Land Use Map to support the vision of the County through consistency reviews.	County Commissioners; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
	Invest County resources as appropriate based on the adopted Character Area Map.	County Commissioners; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
	Invest in infrastructure needed to support Core Communities and Villages.	County Commissioners; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
	Support reinvestment tools such as TIF, LERTA, KOZ, KIZ, LDD Appalachian Regional Commission.	County economic development agencies	Ongoing
	Promote the redevelopment of Core Communities for infill housing, new housing and new or expanded non-residential uses throughout the County.	County Commissioners; County Planning Staff; housing agencies	Ongoing
	Promote the Rapid Response Design Assistance Program and encourage design standards within Core Communities and Village areas. Rapid Response Design Assistance Program - PA Wilds Center pawildscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/PA-Wilds-Design-Guide.pdf	County Planning Staff; PA Wilds Center	Short-term

RESOURCES

Economic Vitality and Growth

ECG2: Continue promoting the use and extraction of coal, oil, rare-earths, and drilling while investing in protection of resources and industry best practices.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.

PCA2: Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.

PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

	Action	Lead	Timeline
4.1	**Support the implementation of County plans (Hazard Mitigation Plan; County Action Plan/Watershed Implementation Plan; County Integrated Solid Waste Plan).**		
	The Clearfield County Hazard Mitigation Plan states that the County should incorporate the goals and objectives of that plan into the updated to the Comprehensive Plan. The issue of flooding and maintenance of stormwater facilities was identified as a priority action within the HMP.https://www.dropbox.com/s/ppex1srz3e6lfxb/2022%20Final%20HMP%20and%20Appendices.zip?dl=0	County Planning Staff	Ongoing
4.2	**Encourage and foster the development of sustainable strategies that will support the preservation of natural resources.**		
	Greenways and Active Transportation Plan from North Central. Clearfield County will continue to support and encourage implementation of the Greenways and Active Transportation Plan	North Central Planning; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
	Elk and Clearfield county should partner with North Central to support implementation of their CEDS Plan to support and growth economic opportunities throughout the region. Support at the local, State and Federal levels to ensure that industries important to the area	North Central; County Planning Staff	Ongoing

Action	Lead	Timeline
are able to grow and expand their operations which will in turn, provided opportunities for local jobs.		
Implement County Farmland Preservation Program (Recommended from Clearfield CAP)	County Planning Staff	Ongoing
Support Conservation District's efforts to restore and protect the streams of Clearfield County including but not limited to the design and construction of passive treatment systems for abandoned mine drainage, installation of stream bank stabilization and in-stream habitat devices, conducting watershed assessments and developing restoration plans	County Commissioners	Ongoing
4.3 **Pursue opportunities to assess and cleanup brownfield properties.**		
Clearfield County should work with county economic agency to pursue grant opportunities to assess and clean up brownfield properties.	County Planning Staff, municipalities; county economic agency	Ongoing
4.4 **Support the growth of tourism and value-added natural resource industries (e.g. ecotourism, sustainable farming, and local food and beverage production) to enhance economic opportunities.**		
Continue to support initiatives through the PA Wilds Center that will lead to economic development opportunities within the region.	County Planning Staff; PA Wilds Center	Ongoing
Support implementation of the North Central CEDS Plan.	North Central; County Planning Staff; County Commissioners	Ongoing
Implement recommendations for each county from the North Central Greenways and Active Transportation Plan from North Central.	North Central; County Planning Staff; municipalities	Long-term
Support the development of critical minerals throughout the county through county-wide planning and legislative advocacy.	County Commissioners; County Planning Staff	Long-term

	Action	Lead	Timeline
4.5	Support a sustainable and reliable forest products supply chain and raise awareness of the benefits of forest management and working forests.		
	Collaborate with the PA Lumber Heritage Region (LHR) and Pennsylvania Forest Products Association (PFPA) to enhance their related ongoing efforts.	County Commissioners; County Planning Staff	Short-term
4.6	Support the implementation of the State Transportation Advisory Committee's Local Match Study.		
	Support Legislation to increase PILT for land owned by Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Senate Bill 225 (County PILT - DCNR $2 - $2.85; Game and Fish and Boat $1.20 to $1.70) to help the region build local revenue to better compete for state and federal funding opportunities	County Commissioners	Short-term
4.7	Coordinate with the North Central PA Commission's grant writing staff on priority county projects.		
	Work with North Central grant writing staff to enhance possibilities for securing grants by aligning the county's goals with regional priorities	County Planning staff	Ongoing

HOUSING

Economic Vitality and Growth

EVG4: Diversify and restore housing options to help grow the workforce and provide attainable options for residents.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.

PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

	Action	Lead	Timeline
5.1	**North Central Planning and Development Commission completed a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment and Market Strategy in 2022.**		
	Support implementation of the Regional Housing Plan - https://www.ncentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NCPA-Housing-Assessment-10.07.2022.pdf	North Central; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
5.2	**Encourage/incentivize green design, construction, energy efficiency, HVAC, and renewable solar energy in private development of new housing.**		
	Promote the new Inflation Reduction Act Home Energy Rebate Program that is for both individual households and multifamily buildings. (Rebate programs for PA are expected to open in late 2024.)	County Commissioners; area housing agencies	Short-term

	Action	Lead	Timeline
5.3	**Support broader development of property maintenance enforcement and incentives for minor home rehabilitation.**		
	Encourage more municipalities to join the COG for shared code enforcement.	County Planning staff; municipalities	Ongoing
	Encourage municipalities to use PA DCED's Strategic Management Plan Program to create 5 years financial plans for their communities and tap into Phase 2 funding for implementation	County Planning staff; municipalities	Ongoing
	Establish a countywide land bank and provide funding to address vacant and abandoned properties	County Commissioners	Ongoing
	Support code enforcement funding legislation such as proposed HB 1827 Municipal Property Maintenance Code Assistance Fund (HB 1827) - Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania (housingalliancepa.org) *This legislation would establish a matching grant program administered by DCED for municipalities to establish special code enforcement program to prevent and eliminate blighted properties and hire code enforcement personnel. A surcharge imposed on repeat violators will be collected to fund the grant program.*	County Commissioners	Short-term
5.4	**Enable new construction of affordable and market rate housing (especially smaller units such as ranch homes, townhomes, apartments, and condos).**		
	Provide model ordinance language for municipalities that address barriers to housing such as the addition of Accessory Dwelling Units and parking requirements for senior living.	County Planning Staff; municipalities	Short-term
	Utilize a county RDA or Landbank to acquire problem properties that require demolition and utilize a scattered lot strategy for new housing opportunities.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
5.5	**Support local technical school development of construction industry courses.**		
	Foster partnerships between the technical school and local construction companies, industry associations, and trade unions to ensure relevance and support.	County Planning staff; Workforce Investment Board	Short-term

SOCIAL SERVICES

Healthy and Connected Communities

HCC2: Provide and enhance recreational opportunities, social services, and emergency services to support healthy communities.

	Action	Lead	Timeline
6.1	**Increase financial and volunteer contributions for community events and Main Street development initiatives to increase social connections.**		
	Support the creation of main street or downtown improvement districts within the more urban communities that have a civic minded mission.	County Planning Staff; PA Downtown Center	Ongoing
	Continue financially supporting events throughout the county through the hotel tax.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
6.2	**Ensure that all residents have connections and opportunities related to nearby outdoor assets to foster community pride, good stewardship and local economic benefits.**		
	Create a local Active Transportation Plan that will develop priority trail, sidewalk and multi-modal connections	County Planning Staff; NC RPO	Long-term
	Implement regional priorities from the NC Greenway and Active Transportation Plan	County Commissioners	Ongoing
6.3	**Create housing programs that directly target removal of blighted homes and repairs to housing that can be marketable.**		
	Provide technical assistance as needed to support and sustain new county landbank.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
	Advocate for additional funds for RDA.	RDA; County Commissioners	Ongoing
6.4	**Support an advocacy role by the County so that it can act as a convenor with Workforce Solutions and Industry leaders.**		
	Work with the Workforce Development Board (Workforce Solutions) and industry leaders to understand and address the barriers to employment that many job seekers are facing	County Planning staff; Workforce Development Board	Short-term

	Action	Lead	Timeline
	including, transportation, substance use disorder, lack of affordable and reliable child-care for workers.		
	Identify issues and gaps in public transportation services with businesses.	County Planning staff; ATA; Workforce Improvement Board	Ongoing
6.5	**Support local and state efforts to improve staffing and involvement in Emergency Services.**		
	Advocate for passage of HB 1557 (Firefighter and Emergency Medical Service Provider Recruitment and Retention Tax Credit) and future legislative actions that would provide funding to support emergency services throughout the state.	County Commissioners	Short-term
	Advocate for the passage of state legislation such as SB 114 that addresses volunteer deficiencies. Senate Passes Brooks' Bill to Preserve Safety by Recruiting Firefighters - Pennsylvania Senate Republicans (pasenategop.com)	County Commissioners	Short-term
6.6	**Leverage a best practices approach to address rising problems related to drug use and abuse.**		
	Research the feasibility of creating a Drug Court to assist individuals in entering long-term drug treatment rather than being incarcerated.	County Commissioners; County President Judges	Long-term
6.7	**Advocate for state and federal legislation that expands resources to rural health providers.**		
	Support the Rural Hospital Act co-sponsored by Senator Robert Casey (D-PA). S.4009 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Rural Hospital Support Act	Congress.gov	Library of Congress	County Commissioners	Short-term
	Support the continuation of the Pennsylvania Rural Health Model and the advocacy programs developed by the Rural Health Redesign Center. Pennsylvania Rural Health Model	Rural Health Redesign Center (rhrco.org)	County Commissioners	Long-term

ENERGY

Economic Vitality and Growth

EVG1: Save existing businesses while promoting the growth of new industries.

EVG2: Continue promoting the use and extraction of coal, oil, natural gas, minerals, and rare-earths, and drilling while investing in protection of resources and industry best practices.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.

PCA2: Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.

PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning

	Action	Lead	Timeline
7.1	**Advance understanding of the impacts of land use and development on climate change.**		
	Create a County wide Local Climate Action Plan (LCAP) that includes assessment of energy efficiency funding opportunities for governments, ways to connect businesses with resilient tools and practices, and establishes policies and goals for the region. Connect plan to county participation in the PA Wilds Climate Change Network.	County Planning Staff	Long-term
	Connect county to the PA Climate Network and Training opportunities through PA Wilds Center.	County Planning Staff	Ongoing
	Suggest resources / local training opportunities for local municipal officials to learn more about grid scale solar development and related land use management tools. Solar Energy | Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research (MCOR) (psu.edu) Solar Energy Resource Hub (pa.gov) Solar | Department of Energy	County Planning Staff	Short-term

	Action	Lead	Timeline
7.2	**Support legislation that allows for the development of community solar in Pennsylvania.**		
	Support proposed community solar legislation.	County Commissioners; state representatives, municipalities	Short-term
	Legislative lunch and learns on annual basis by Board of Commissioners to discuss issues including community solar and similar energy initiatives.	County Commissioners; state representatives; business leaders	Ongoing
7.3	**Pursue a joint energy purchasing cooperative with other county institutions and businesses for procuring 100% of electricity from renewable sources for government operations.**		
	Clearfield and Elk Counties should pursue a cooperative arrangement to purchase renewable energy and alternative energy programs. They could use a COG and coordinate with other municipalities to leverage their buying power.	County Commissioners	Long-term
	Clearfield and Elk County should investigate using the Guaranteed Energy Savings Act (GESA) process to upgrade their own facilities. The accompanying links provide insights and resources, including technical assistance opportunities, on a new program for municipal governments to receive green energy tax credits to upgrade their assets instead of applying for a grant. Technical Assistance How it Works	County Commissioners	Ongoing
7.4	**As a designated federal energy community, encourage clean energy deployment on current and former mine land while supporting co-location of advanced manufacturing that would be supported by such clean energy.**		
	Include energy community designation in county marketing materials to attract outside investment that supports community and economic development for our communities.	County Commissioners; County economic development agencies	Ongoing

	Action	Lead	Timeline
7.5	Advance economic opportunities in our region for the expansion of existing industries and the development of new industries that could use the abundant supply of natural gas.		
	Preferably this could be in cleaner forms such as through the production of blue and green hydrogen. The County will work with county, regional, state, and federal partners to pursue funding opportunities associated with our natural gas-producing region, which provides an abundance of end-use opportunities across multiple sectors.	County Planning Staff/Commissioners/North Central/DCED/DOE/economic development agencies	Ongoing

ECONOMY

Economic Vitality and Growth

EVG1: Save existing businesses while promoting the growth of new industries.

EVG3: Promote workforce development, like training and internships, to encourage youth retention and strengthen the workforce.

EVG4: Assess approaches to tourism promotion and public funding tools to ensure that the counties are maximizing opportunities.

EVG5: Expand access to reliable broadband opportunities including unserved and underserved populations.

Preserve, Conserve, and Adapt

PCA1: Balance growth efforts surrounding housing, economic opportunities, and resource extraction with preservation and protection of outdoor recreation and scenic natural ecosystems.

PCA2: Preserve and conserve our unique historic and community character along with our natural areas that support industries, families, recreation, and tourism.

PCA3: Proactively build resilient communities through a focus on education and planning.

Action		Lead	Timeline
8.1	Support regional action items from Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Resiliency Plan (2022-2026).		
	Support implementation of the North central CEDS - https://northcentralpaceds.com/	North Central; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
8.2	Support the region's local Main Street or downtown improvement programs.		
	Promote the use of Main Street and Elm Street programs offered by the PA Downtown Center to Core Communities throughout the region. These programs will support business development and historic property rehabilitation in the Core Communities.	County Planning Staff; municipalities	Ongoing

Action	Lead	Timeline
8.3 **Minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the local community and its members to achieve social sustainability. Support forms of tourism which do not disturb and interrupt the daily life of the population.**		
PA Wilds Center Leave No Trace Leave No Trace - Home - Leave No Trace (lnt.org)– Support and promote education of this program	PA Wilds Center; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
8.4 **Encourage the ongoing development of recreation infrastructure (trails, indoor/outdoor facilities, parks, etc) that serve the needs of both residents and visitors.**		
Implement the North Central PA Greenway and Active Transportation Plan and focus on regional priority projects. (https://northcentralpaceds.com/)	NC RPO; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
8.5 **Encourage ongoing development of "Trail of Dreams…An Elk County ATV Mission" to connect the communities in Elk and Clearfield county with ATV travel using private land trails and municipal roads to promote tourism and outdoor recreation.**		
Continue to support the ATV activities to promote tourism and outdoor recreation.	County Commissioners; County Planning Staff	Ongoing
8.6 **Explore incentive programs to keep people anchored in the region. Enhance the availability of quality and affordable child care options throughout the region.**		
County Commissioners add childcare initiatives to their annual legislative agenda and advocate for support from state representatives.	County Commissioners; Workforce Solutions, state representatives	Short-term
8.7 **Support proposed state legislation that could help preserve Pennsylvania remaining dairy farms.**		
An Act providing for the creation of keystone opportunity dairy zones to facilitate the economic development of Pennsylvania's dairy industry; Bill Information (History) - House Bill 995; Regular Session 2023-2024 - PA General Assembly (state.pa.us)	County Commissioners; state representatives	Short-term
An Act ensuring that milk haulers can travel on highways during a declaration of disaster emergency. Bill Information - Senate Bill 153; Regular Session 2023-2024 - PA General Assembly (state.pa.us)	County Commissioners; state representatives	Short-term

	Action	Lead	Timeline
	An Act to streamline the home delivery of milk and other agricultural products with a farm vehicle registration plate. Senate Co-Sponsorship Memoranda - PA State Senate	County Commissioners; state representatives	Short-term
8.8	Raise student awareness of career opportunities and high priority occupations.		
	Partner with Workforce Solutions on their Business Education Partnership and other initiatives.	Workforce Development Board; school districts	Ongoing
8.9	Promote the availability of remote work options.		
	Investing in digital infrastructure; implement flexible work arrangements – including remote work – among the county's own workforce; and raise awareness about the benefits of remote work and offer resources for skill development related to remote collaboration tools.	County IT	Ongoing
8.10	Support the development of critical minerals industry.		
	Continue to advocate for continued research and development of this industry through the existing PSU & industry partnership - the "Center for Critical Minerals," and local government.	Board of Commissioners; county economic development agencies	Ongoing
8.11	Support the Local Workforce Development Board as it implements its Workforce Solutions Plan.		
	Support the promotion of the brand PA SIX as an initiative designed to increase awareness of career opportunities that exist within the region.	County Board of Commissioners; Chambers of Commerce; County Planning staff; county economic development agencies	Ongoing

APPENDIX

MUNICIPAL SURVEY

Identify the top 3 assets in your municipality:

Topic	Number of Responses
Recreational Space (parks, trails, game lands)	7
Land/Agriculture (farming, developable land, natural resources)	6
People (businesses, council members, neighboring municipalities)	5

Identify the top 3 challenges facing your municipality:

Topic	Number of Responses
Blight/Housing Shortage	7
Funding	9
Infrastructure Maintenance	6
Population	6

What resources or assistance could the county provide that would benefit your municipality?

- Funding Opportunities and more resources on how to obtain funding (grant writing)
- Information from county on solar development best practices (best practice toolkit)

Please list up to 5 SHORT-TERM projects that your municipality would like to complete in the next 5 years:

(From Sandy Township):
- Phases 2 and 3 of Slab Run waterline replacement.
- Sewer line extension in Kiwanis Trail for 60 existing homes and 80 future homes.
- Industrial drive sewer extension
- Platt Road
- Job creation
- Rails to trails extension
- Rare earth element processing facility

Please list up to 5 LONG-TERM projects that your municipality would like to complete in the next 5 to 10 years (or longer):

(from Morris Township):
- Improvements to our roads, Paving, DSA, etc.
- Expanding Recreation
- Expanding Broadband for our residents
- Reduction in Blight

Thinking forward to 2040, what does your ideal Clearfield/Elk County look like? What services or opportunities will be available?

- More recreation opportunities and facilities.
- A diversified workforce and economy.
- Increased affordable housing and stabilized infrastructure.

How do you hope the Comprehensive Plan update will benefit your municipality?

- Access to grant funding by providing data and resources for applying to grant funding.
- Resources to help further develop municipalities.
- General support from county on initiatives.

YOUTH SURVEY

1. **List up to three words that you would use to describe your community:**

Responses to this question ranged from negative to positive thoughts on their community. Positive comments included scenic, friendly, fun, good people, welcoming, and quiet. Negative comments included unwelcoming, boring, drug-filled, and rundown.

2. **What is your favorite thing about your community?**

Many respondents indicated nature and natural beauty as a favorite aspect of their communities. Other responses included small town friendliness, quiet, water access (rivers and other waterways for fishing, etc.), and safety.

3. **What is your least favorite thing about your community?**

Many respondents indicated drug problems as being their least favorite thing about the community. Others cited unwelcoming behavior, lack of stores, boring, and rundown communities.

4. **What is one thing you wish your community had?**

Many respondents indicated that they would like to have greater access to amenities such as stores and recreational facilities. Common stores/restaurants requested were Chik-fil-A, malls, and Target. Overall a general desire for activities to participate in recreationally.

5. **What is the highest level of education you would like to achieve?**
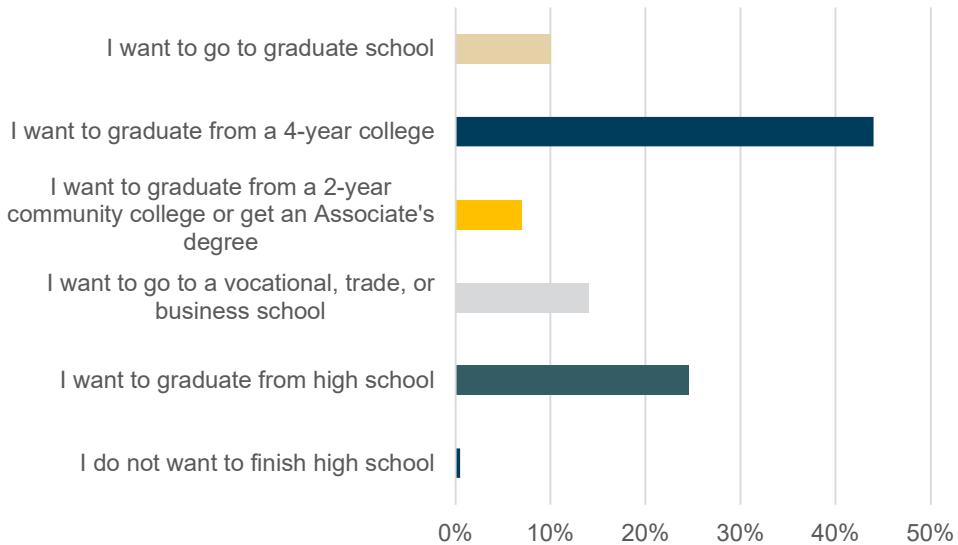
6. **Where do you think you will want to live when you are 30 years old?**

20% of respondents indicated they did not know where they wanted to live when they are 30 years old. Another bulk of respondents indicated they would want to live in varying community sizes in another state. Finally, 11% indicated they would like to stay in their current community.

7. **Why?**
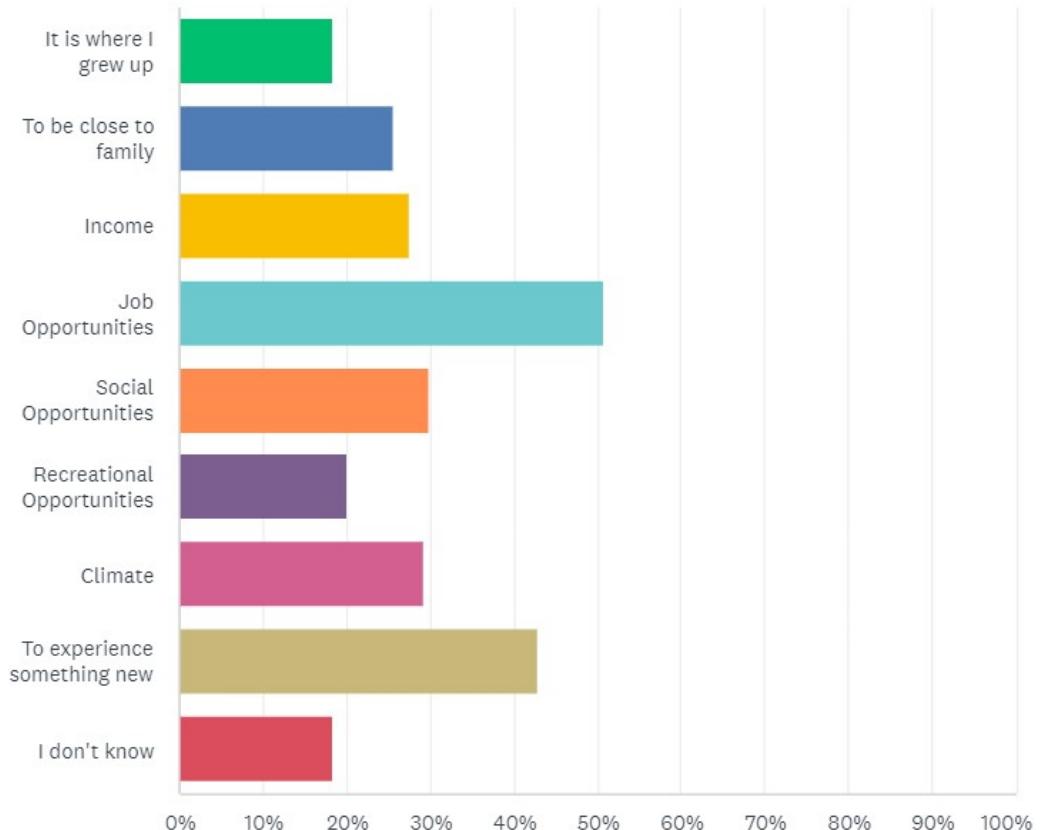
8. **Do you currently have a job?**

A horizontal bar chart showing two responses:
- Yes: approximately 32%
- No: approximately 68%
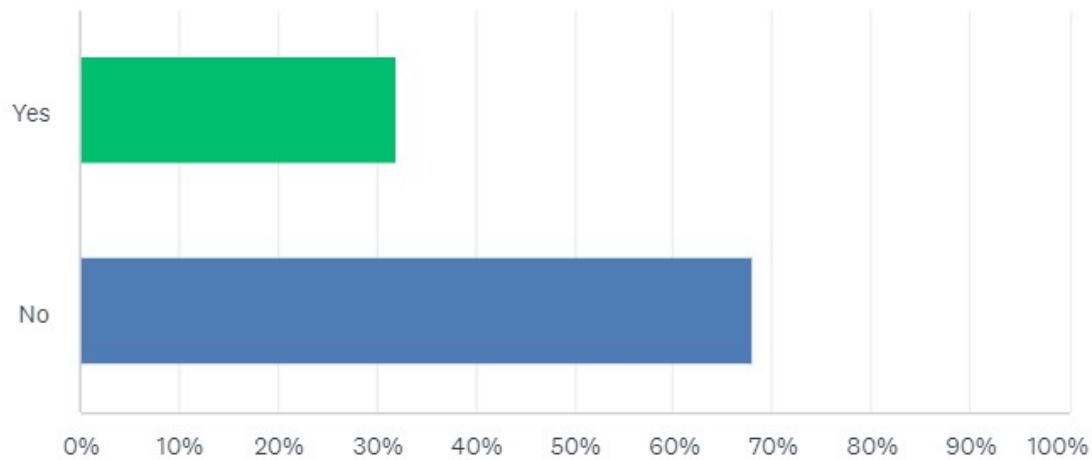
9. **How much do you like the community where you currently live?**

A horizontal bar chart showing four responses:
- A lot: approximately 21%
- Some: approximately 44%
- A little: approximately 28%
- None at all: approximately 6%
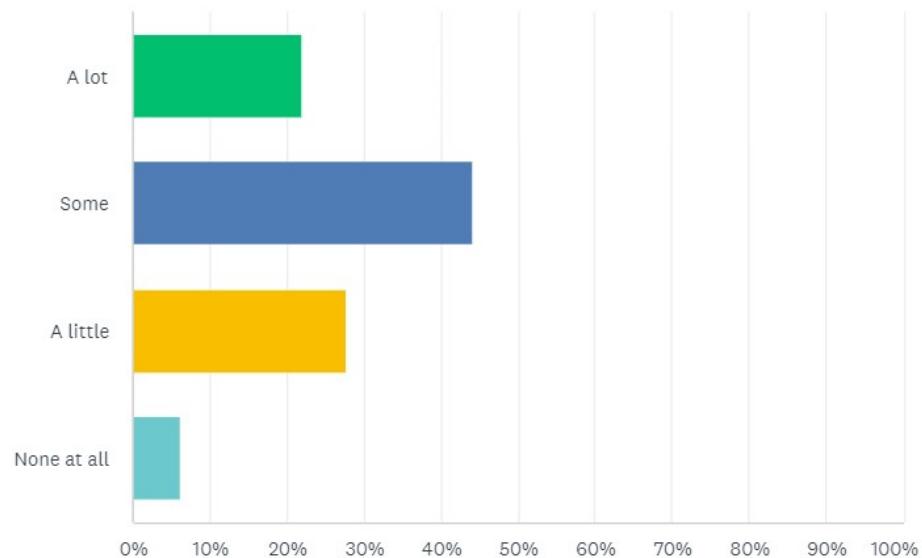
10. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

|	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
My community is safe.	9.20% 37	38.81% 156	31.09% 125	17.66% 71	3.23% 13
My community is welcoming to people who are different.	8.96% 36	27.36% 110	29.60% 119	20.40% 82	13.68% 55
My community cares about me.	7.02% 28	32.08% 128	39.35% 157	14.54% 58	7.02% 28
I will have to leave this area to get the job I want.	31.44% 127	19.06% 77	29.21% 118	15.59% 63	4.70% 19
My community is a good place to raise a family.	14.18% 57	36.57% 147	32.34% 130	8.46% 34	8.46% 34
I can stay in this area and get a good education.	9.65% 39	35.40% 143	29.46% 119	18.07% 73	7.43% 30
There is plenty to do in my community.	5.96% 24	16.63% 67	21.59% 87	32.51% 131	23.33% 94
Community leaders listen to the ideas of people my age.	4.21% 17	8.17% 33	38.61% 156	26.24% 106	22.77% 92
Everybody knows your business in my community.	15.42% 62	29.35% 118	32.34% 130	16.67% 67	6.22% 25
My community shares my values.	4.99% 20	17.21% 69	42.14% 169	21.95% 88	13.72% 55
I like the outdoors.	57.07% 230	31.02% 125	7.69% 31	1.74% 7	2.48% 10
People in my community work together.	6.68% 27	36.39% 147	39.36% 159	11.39% 46	6.19% 25

11. Rank how important you believe the following resources are to a community:
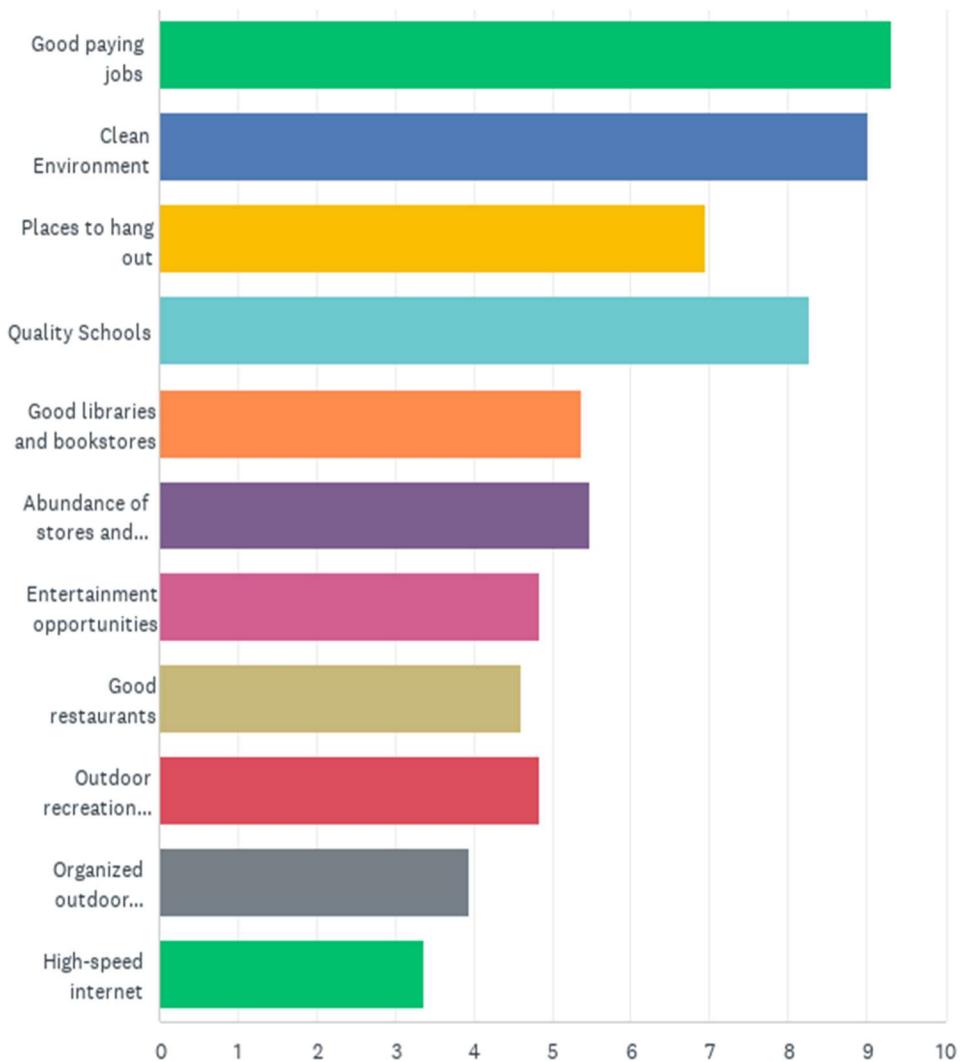
12. How satisfied are you with the following resources in your community?

	VERY SATISFIED	GENERALLY SATISFIED	NEUTRAL/ DO NOT KNOW	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL
Good paying jobs	5.49% 22	25.94% 104	46.63% 187	16.21% 65	5.74% 23	401
Clean Environment	6.00% 24	31.75% 127	23.75% 95	26.25% 105	12.25% 49	400
Places to hang out	9.07% 36	25.44% 101	20.91% 83	25.94% 103	18.64% 74	397
Quality Schools	13.78% 55	38.10% 152	27.32% 109	14.29% 57	6.52% 26	399
Good libraries and bookstores	13.00% 52	29.75% 119	39.25% 157	12.75% 51	5.25% 21	400
Abundance of stores and shopping facilities	7.44% 30	22.83% 92	23.33% 94	25.31% 102	21.09% 85	403
Entertainment opportunities	5.72% 23	26.87% 108	30.35% 122	24.38% 98	12.69% 51	402
Good restaurants	11.69% 47	36.57% 147	25.87% 104	19.90% 80	5.97% 24	402
Outdoor recreation opportunities like hunting, hiking, and fishing	36.48% 147	36.48% 147	18.61% 75	6.45% 26	1.99% 8	403
Organized outdoor activities like sports	27.36% 110	41.29% 166	24.88% 100	3.48% 14	2.99% 12	402
High-speed internet	12.19% 49	33.33% 134	28.36% 114	16.17% 65	9.95% 40	402

13. Do you want to stay in Clearfield County after you graduate?
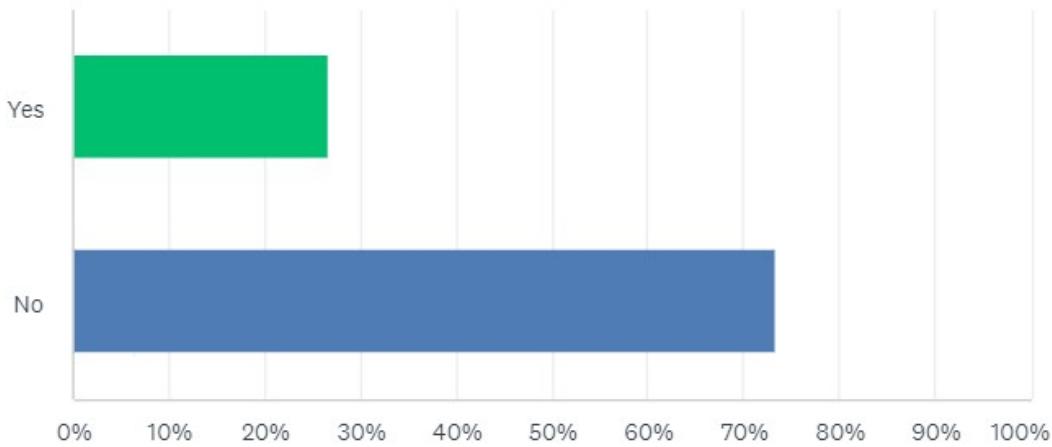
14. Are your friends and family influencing you to stay or leave after graduation?

Open ended responses ranging from they don't care to they are influencing them to stay or leave for education.

PUBLIC SURVEY

The planning process included a third survey that allowed community members to provide feedback on a draft plan. Clearfield County conducted a six-question survey, which was distributed online and promoted via a press release. Clearfield County residents were asked to provide feedback on the areas in their community that needed the most investment, what they would change about the community, and what they don't want to change. Survey participants also provided feedback on the Joint Comprehensive Plan overall.

The survey results highlight two key areas: transportation infrastructure and economic development. Regarding economic development, respondents expressed a desire to grow while maintaining the small-town feel they love about their community.

What are 3 things that you would NOT WANT to change about your community?

In terms of transportation infrastructure, respondents expressed a desire to improve road and bridge quality, explore alternative transportation options, and enhance pedestrians and cyclists' safety. A common request was for a rideshare program, along with improved safety features such as functioning pedestrian signals at crosswalks.

Residents also emphasized the need for Clearfield County to address blighted properties by enforcing building codes and redeveloping historic properties. Suggestions included beautifying neighborhoods through property redevelopment, downtown revitalization efforts, and clean-up initiatives. Respondents also highlighted the importance of upgrading and expanding recreational spaces, including parks and playgrounds. Furthermore, there's a strong desire for affordable housing projects and public programming that can assist with necessities like groceries, utilities, and gas.

Lastly, survey participants consistently called for increased investment into Penn Highlands Healthcare. They expressed a need for better healthcare services related to labor and delivery, mental health, and drug rehabilitation. Investing in the hospital not only creates new jobs but also improves the overall quality of life for area residents.

Clearfield County Top Five Areas for Investment

1. Transportation Infrastructure
2. Economic Growth
3. Public Spaces
4. Regional Hospital
5. Blighted Properties

QUESTION 1

What age group best describes you?

Clearfield County survey respondents primarily fell into the middle age and older categories. Just under 40% of survey respondents described themselves as being between the ages of 46 and 65, while 37% identified as being over 65. The younger age ranges constituted the last quarter of survey respondents, with 19% recording their age as somewhere between 25 and 45, and 5% as under 25. The survey results reveal that older age groups had an outsized influence on the overall survey results.

What Age Group Best Describes You?

Age Group	Percentage
Under 25 years	~5%
25 - 45	~19%
46 - 65	~39%
Over 65 years	~37%
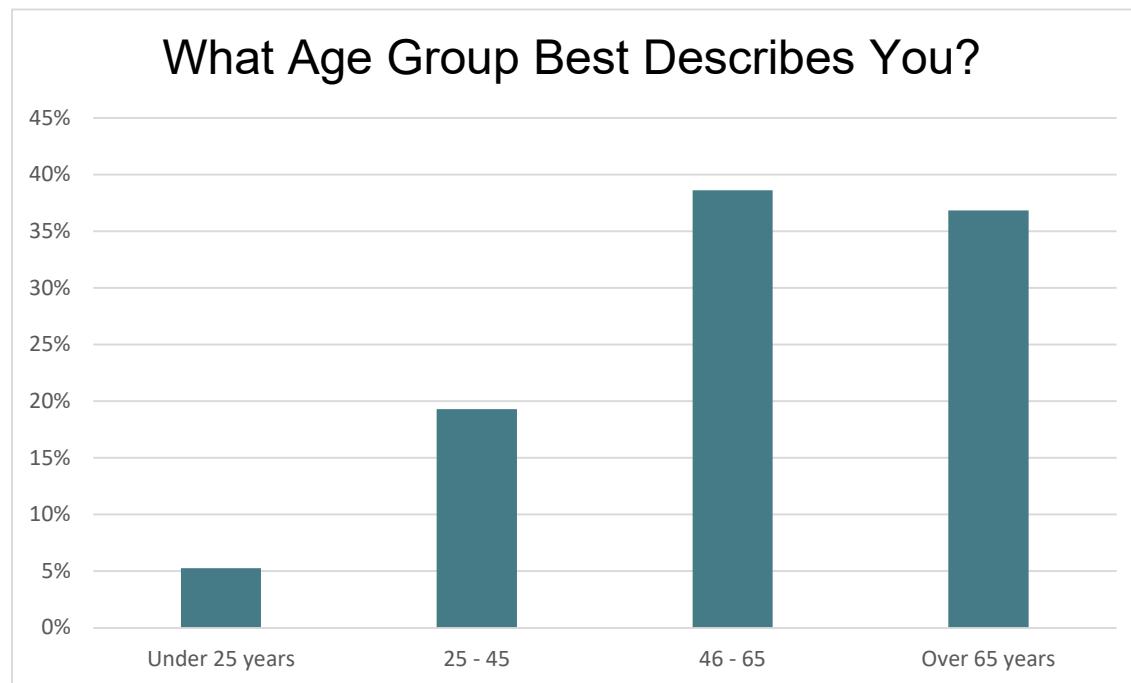
QUESTION 2

What are 3 things that you would WANT to change about your community?

Quick Overview

- Economic Growth
- Blighted Properties
- Number of Group Activities

Clearfield County residents have emphasized the need for economic growth within their community. Survey respondents called for diversified employment opportunities, with some expressing a desire for higher-quality jobs and better pay. Long-term job stability is also a priority for many. There's interest in incentives to attract new industries and businesses, as well as a focus on sustainable job creation. While some residents are open to industry development, they prefer non-extractive approaches and are particularly interested in technical industries.

Respondents want greater diversity not only in job opportunities but also in retail and restaurant offerings. Specifically, they'd like to see restaurants offering higher-quality, fresh food. Downtown revitalization efforts should include more leisure activities and a variety of events. In addition, there's a request for a fitness center to be added to the community. On the flip side, some residents are against more Dollar General stores, smoke shops, or game of chance stores, preferring small businesses instead. While business growth is important, the community strongly values locally-owned retailers.

They also want to see improvements made to the hospital and healthcare in the region, although few participants provided detailed insights into what these improvements would be. Respondents desire an independent living development for elderly community members and an expansion of elderly-care facilities. Some wish to see reduced drug usage and crime in the community. Participants discussed exploring incentives for retaining talent, including developing a local trade school and a youth leadership program.

Many participants expressed a desire for more free or affordable activities for all ages. Beyond generic desires for additional activities and cultural events, they specifically want an updated playground and safe, free outdoor recreation for children. A handful of residents hope for expanded greenspaces using native plants. Improving the appearance of these counties was a common theme, with frequent mentions of "blighted properties" and sentiments related to town beautification, historic building preservation, and enforcing building codes. In addition to maintaining existing properties, several respondents called for additional housing units.

Environmental and safety concerns emerged as a major survey theme. Community members proposed various approaches, from increasing environmental awareness to advocating for an end to fossil fuel extraction. The community also wants more natural surface trails. County residents favor the development of electric charging stations and renewable energy jobs. One participant wishes for more recycling drop-off points, and there were calls to address illegal dumping and littering.

Regarding transportation, several requested implementing a rideshare program like Uber. Other comments focused on better roads, safer pedestrian crosswalks, bike routes, and overall cohesive transportation planning. Finally, community members asked for utilities to be expanded to properties lacking water and natural gas lines.

QUESTION 3

What are 3 things that you would NOT WANT to change about your community?

Quick Overview

- Small Town Feel
- Friendliness of Residents
- Greenspaces

Clearfield County residents emphasized their love for the small-town feel of the County. In fact, this was the most common response to the question. Following closely behind the appreciation for the quaintness of both counties was the enjoyment of their greenspaces and natural beauty. Community members highlighted recreation facilities, such as the community pool and sporting opportunities, as appealing aspects of being part of these communities. Rails-to-Trails, the nature conservancy, was specifically mentioned by name several times as something residents want to preserve in the County. They also value daily conveniences like smooth traffic flow and mild weather. Also, respondents appreciate the small-town friendliness, generosity, and the ability to know all their fellow residents. Safety within their communities is another highlight, along with an acknowledgment of everyone's commitment to work and helping others.

Many participants indicated a desire to maintain certain programs and businesses. They expressed a wish to preserve historic buildings and promote thriving small businesses over large corporations. Many residents specifically appreciate the Penn Highlands Healthcare and the services they've received while living here. Community support programs like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) were also mentioned as helpful. Furthermore, participants expressed a desire to keep the farming and agricultural sectors alive, along with maintaining existing zoning regulations and local tax rates.

QUESTION 4

What do you think are the top 3 issues facing you, your family, or your community?

Quick Overview

- Lack of Economic Growth
- Lack of Educational Resources
- Drug and Alcohol Addiction

Clearfield County residents expressed similar sentiments to the last two survey questions, with a heavy focus on the cost of living and illegal substance abuse. When it comes to higher living costs, many

participants cited the lack of industry, employment opportunities, and low pay as the cause of their concern. The lack of affordable housing, utilities, groceries, and transportation due to inflation were specific problem areas they reported.

Community members also mentioned a lack of educational resources, youth programs, activities, and early childcare options for new parents. Respondents broadly discussed population decline. Some participants alluded to the risk of addiction being attributed to the community's lack of activities. Substance abuse issues, despite being mentioned earlier, increased in responses for this section of the survey. This indicates that substance abuse is a prominent issue for many residents in addition to the issues discussed earlier in Question 2.

Beyond the issues mentioned above, Clearfield County residents communicated that healthcare, transportation, and utilities were other areas where they faced challenges. They discussed how certain types of healthcare, such as labor and delivery and dental options, were inaccessible. Broadband and connectivity issues were also included in their responses. Participants most often referred to the lack of accessible transportation as the cause of their transportation issues in both counties.

QUESTION 5

Where are the top areas where you believe investment in your community should be applied?

Quick Overview

- Transportation Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Public Spaces

When residents discussed desired infrastructure investments, improvements in road quality and alternative transportation methods, such as safe walking and bus routes, were common responses. Survey participants specifically requested free senior rides for public buses and less commercial vehicle traffic.

Second to infrastructure improvements were suggestions for investment in economic growth. However, quite a few respondents emphasized the need for development not to overshadow the area's small-town feel and local businesses. Many participants expressed a desire for more high-paying employment opportunities, aiming to attract technical, green, and manufacturing industries.

Survey respondents also conveyed a need for investment in public spaces, including greenspaces, recreational facilities, fairgrounds, and playgrounds. County residents feel that improved and expanded recreational spaces are necessary for families to gather, along with updates to existing facilities. Additionally, they requested more youth and elderly activity programs. Another suggestion was a home repair program for elderly community members. In terms of public programming, several participants called for programs targeting low-income and homeless individuals to build a financial base.

A significant number of respondents highlighted investing into Penn Highlands Healthcare as a top priority. These comments encompass investments in mental health care, drug rehabilitation clinics, and overall functionality.

Housing and blighted properties were frequent topics of input. Regarding housing, respondents emphasized affordable housing developments to boost population growth. Some participants requested the redevelopment of old housing and buildings instead of solely constructing new ones. This leads to the next point: investing in blighted properties to enhance residents' satisfaction with their community. Community members suggest enforcing housing codes, revitalizing city center buildings, and restoring old houses. One participant even expressed a desire to see the rehabilitation of old mines, while another called for investment in eco-friendly building developments.

These areas were the common points of discussion. Less frequently mentioned topics included investment in talent retention, childcare, tourism, broadband expansion, water/sewerage expansion, and logging regulation.

QUESTION 6

Do you have any other comments on the draft comprehensive plan documents?

Quick Overview

- Excitement for the Joint Comprehensive Plan
- Specific Transportation Problem Areas
- Economic Development Strategies

There were a handful of general comments regarding the public's sentiments regarding the plan. A couple of commenters felt excited about seeing the plan come to fruition and being part of the process. They conveyed their gratitude for the emphasis on renewable energy and clean manufacturing. One participant wanted to see governance restructuring, with elected officials holding office for just two terms.

Clearfield County residents place immense importance on economic growth. Many survey respondents proposed ideas for local economic growth through investments in retail and tourism. In this section of the survey, several participants expanded on what the comprehensive plan could include to support economic growth. One participant expressed how important maintaining the healthcare workforce is for their community. Another commenter suggested that the plan should recommend that Penn Highlands Healthcare be acquired by a larger healthcare provider. Another recommendation was for healthcare employers to invest in their workplace environment to attract and retain skilled medical professionals, promoting long-term economic development.