

Landscapes Design Guides

Chester County, PA

The design of new development has a huge impact on local community character and municipal goals. Because of this, the Chester County Planning Commission has produced six landscape design guides based on *Landscapes3*, the county's comprehensive plan, that focus on different landscapes found around the county—urban, suburban center, suburban, rural center, rural, and agricultural.



Landscapes3 helps balance future growth with preservation of rural, agricultural, natural, and historic areas of Chester County.

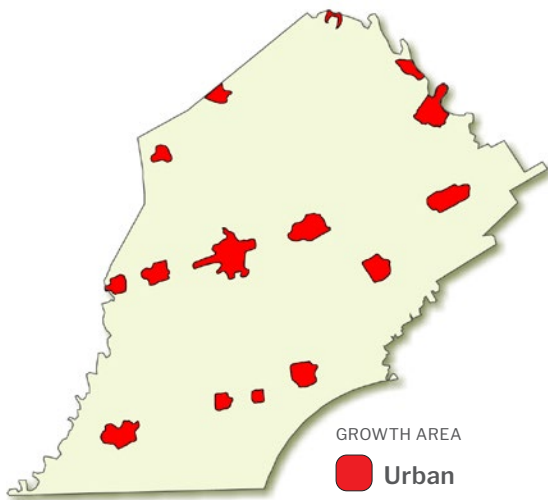
Quality design in the built environment supports
The Vision For 2045:

*Chester County abounds with healthy natural areas,
robust farms, cherished historic sites,
diverse housing, thriving businesses,
quality education, accessible transportation,
and vibrant communities for all.*



Chester County Planning Commission
www.chescoplanning.org

Urban Center Landscapes



Urban Center landscapes include historic downtowns and established neighborhoods that serve as civic, economic, and population centers with a traditional town character. Urban Centers will accommodate substantial future growth at a medium to high intensity with a mix of uses, including commercial, institutional, and cultural destinations. Transportation infrastructure and amenities support a walkable community that is integrated into the public transportation and roadway systems.

Key Planning Principles

- Substantial future growth
- Adaptive reuse of historic buildings
- Development compatibility with traditional neighborhood character

Key Design Elements



Building height and scale that complement the historic pattern



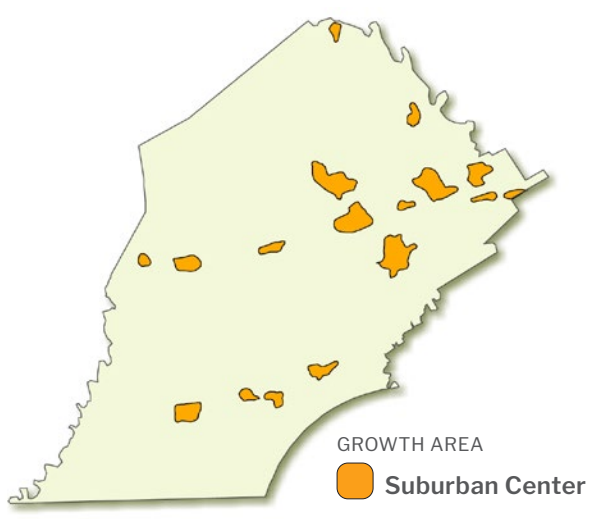
Streetscaping in downtown areas



Easy pedestrian access



Suburban Center Landscapes



Key Design Elements



Multi-story buildings

Suburban Center landscapes are regional economic, population, and transportation centers with varying land uses. Suburban Centers will accommodate substantial future growth of medium to high intensity, with a mix of uses, including commercial, residential, and industrial. As Suburban Centers grow, repurposing obsolete structures and sites and encouraging sustainable development will be critical. Transportation infrastructure and amenities will need to expand with new development to create an integrated multimodal network for a variety of users.

Key Planning Principles

- Substantial future growth
- Preservation and reuse of historic buildings to maintain integrity
- Preservation and restoration of stream corridors and critical natural features



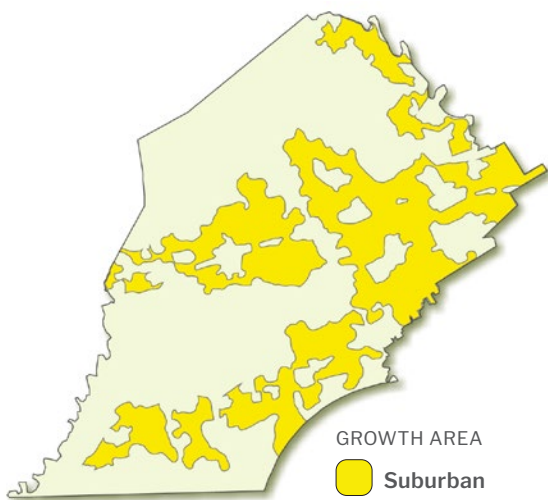
Community focal points in larger developments



Building, street, and driveway layouts that are designed for easy vehicular and pedestrian access



Suburban Landscapes



Suburban landscapes are predominantly residential communities with locally-oriented commercial uses and community facilities. The Suburban landscapes will accommodate growth at a medium density that retains a focus on residential neighborhoods, with enhancements in housing types and affordability. Neighborhoods are interconnected by roads, sidewalks, and paths with convenient access to parks and community facilities.

Key Planning Principles

- Future growth as a natural extension of existing development rather than leapfrogging to isolated greenfield sites
- Preservation and reuse of historic buildings in their historic context
- Protection and restoration of natural areas, nature preserves, and cultural landscapes

Key Design Elements



Residential character for commercial and institutional uses

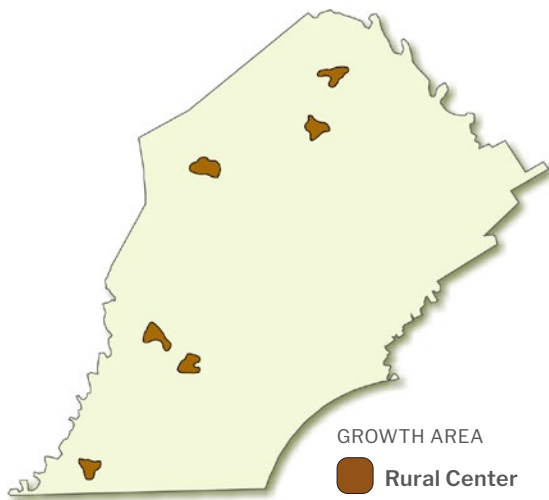


Active recreation facilities and central greens in residential developments



Extensive sidewalk and trail network

Rural Center Landscapes



Key Design Elements



Compact traditional village form

Rural Center landscapes often build from a village at a historic crossroads and expand over time to contain a mix of housing, commercial, and institutional uses that serve the surrounding rural and agricultural areas. Acting as community focal points for the surrounding area, Rural Centers will accommodate limited growth. Transportation infrastructure and amenities are provided at a village scale and character, with a focus on walkability within the core of the Rural Center.

Key Planning Principles

- Limited future growth
- Growth serves surrounding rural and agricultural landscapes
- Preservation and reuse of historic buildings in their historic context

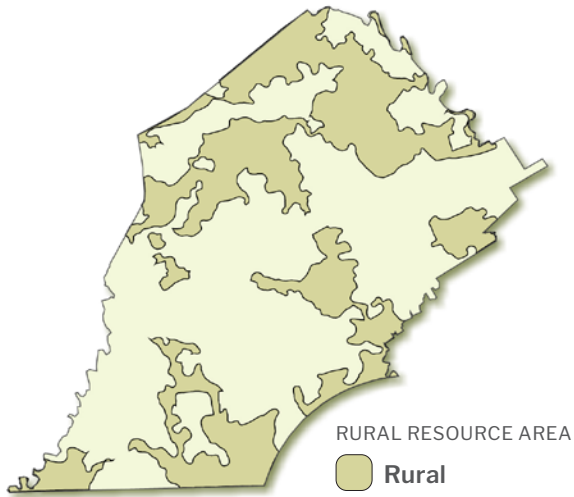


Active recreation facilities and central greens



Parking to side and rear of buildings and limited in front of buildings

Rural Landscapes



Rural landscapes consist of open and wooded lands, with scattered villages, farms, and residential uses. Very limited development occurs, preserving significant areas of open space and critical natural and cultural resources. Transportation infrastructure and amenities are context sensitive to the rural character and accommodate both residential and farm needs.

Key Planning Principles

- Very limited future growth
- Preservation of natural areas, including stream corridors, woodlands, steep slopes, and wetlands
- Protected agricultural land

Key Design Elements



Clustered residential development screened by open space, woodlands, and natural land forms

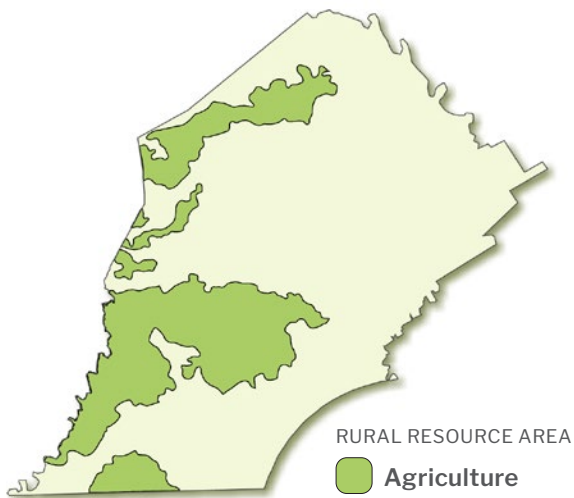


Large areas of open space



Rural lanes and narrow streets

Agricultural Landscapes



Agricultural landscapes consist of large concentrations of active and diverse farm operations, along with related support services. The landscape is dominated by working lands that support land-based livelihoods. Very limited development occurs at very low densities to preserve prime agricultural soils and farm operations. Transportation infrastructure and amenities are context sensitive to the agricultural character and accommodate farm and residential needs.

Key Planning Principles

- Very limited future growth primarily related to agricultural uses
- Protection of agricultural land and prime agricultural soils
- Preservation and restoration of stream corridors

Key Design Elements



Buildings that fit into agricultural landscapes



Soil and water conservation practices



Roads and bridges that fit agricultural character and uses

Using the Landscapes Design Guides

The Landscapes Design Guides are intended for use by elected officials, planning commission members, municipal staff, municipal attorneys, engineers, planners, businesses, developers, design professionals, and community members whenever they are tackling land use and development issues. The design guides have two key elements:

Design Elements

These specific elements illustrate how subdivisions and land developments should function and fit within a community.

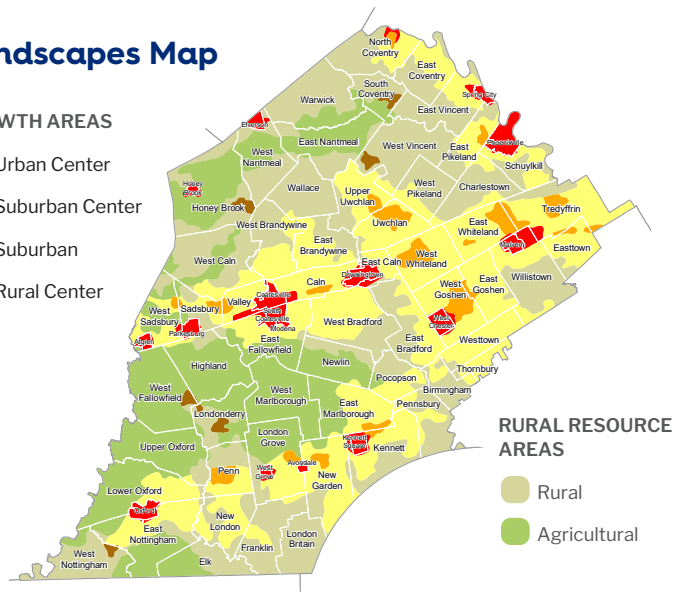
Planning Principles

These policies can be used when crafting comprehensive plans, writing zoning, or evaluating proposed developments.

Landscapes Map

GROWTH AREAS

- Urban Center
- Suburban Center
- Suburban
- Rural Center

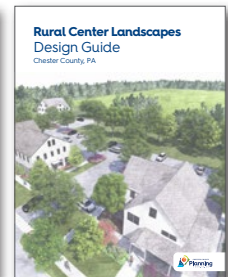
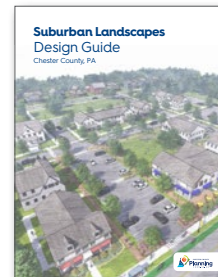
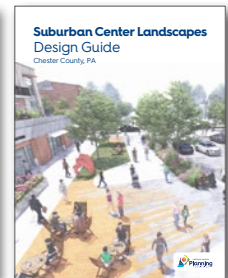
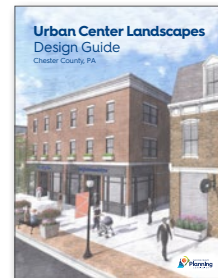


RURAL RESOURCE AREAS

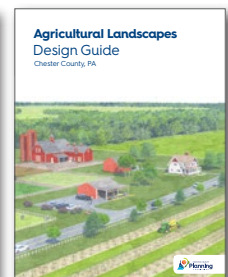
- Rural
- Agricultural

The Landscapes Map in Landscapes3 identifies six landscapes categories where growth and rural resource protection should occur. The four Growth Area landscapes categories best accommodate future growth. These are planned for a full range of infrastructure and are highly suitable for development and redevelopment, taking into account natural and historic landscapes. The two Rural Resource Area landscapes categories are not appropriate for significant growth, strongly reflect the agricultural and rural character of the county, and serve as a focus of preservation efforts.

GROWTH AREAS



RURAL RESOURCE AREAS



LANDSCAPES DESIGN GUIDE SERIES
chescoPlanning.org/LandUse/L3DesignGuides.cfm