



Organization of Chapter

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Introduction and Goal and Objectives

The Region’s scenic character is formed in part by the Region’s landscapes, the uses imposed on those landscapes, and the communities that grew on those landscapes. The confluence of agricultural properties, natural resources, open space, historic villages and resources, and urban areas help to create the character that the Region’s residents recognize as their own. Scenic resources are an important part of this local character and identity, forming the visual image that residents carry with them of the place they call home. The Oxford Region recognizes the importance of the Region’s character and identified the following goal for scenic resources:

Identify, protect, and maintain the integrity of scenic resources that provide the rural character and cultural feel of the Region.

Plan Objectives

- 14-A** Continue to maintain and update the listing of resources that visually characterize the Region's rural/agrarian landscape including scenic roads, corridors, vistas, features, and landforms.
- 14-B** Protect and maintain the quality of scenic resources by developing and implementing appropriate land use strategies and regulatory measures.
- 14-C** Protect and maintain the quality of scenic resources by supporting community education efforts and activities.
- 14-D** Continue to maintain and update the listing of intrusions that may visually impair the Region's rural landscape, including poorly sited or designed residential, commercial, or industrial development; light pollution; inappropriate signage; utility structures or transmission lines; parking facilities; and abandoned or unkempt properties.

Scenic Resources Inventory Criteria

Within the Region, scenic resources include covered bridges, natural resources, historic resources, the Octoraro and Big Elk Creeks and their feeder streams and valleys, and most importantly, the many acres of farmland with their sloping terrain of crops and pastureland.

When asked about the importance of the scenic character of agricultural uses in comparison to the use itself, most participants indicated that the character was equally important
Scenic Resources Survey

Scenic resources can and do overlap with natural, historic, and agricultural features. While natural and agricultural resources will be discussed in this chapter, in order to avoid duplication, all historic resources identified and/or referred to in Chapter 13: Historic Resources should be considered "scenic."

Whether agricultural, historic, or natural, all scenic resources are categorized based on their most prominent attributes that promote the Region's character. This Chapter also addresses intrusions and negative impacts on the scenic landscape, such as light pollution, signage, and utilities. Scenic qualities are also lost through large scale land development, and incrementally through poor quality siting and design.



Scenic Categories and Characteristics

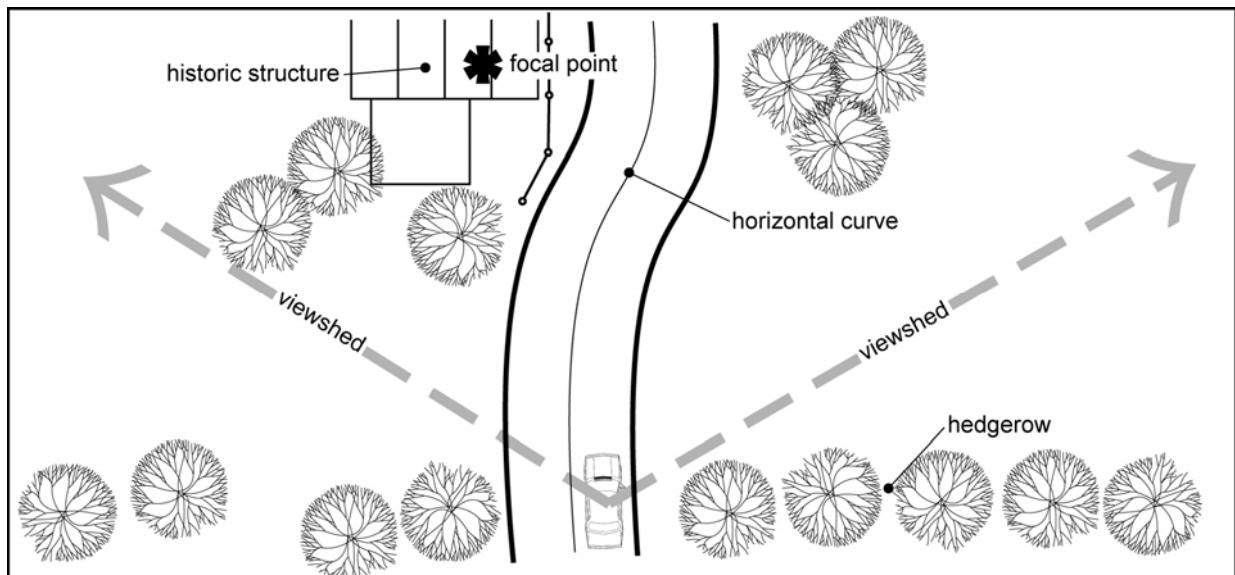
Five categories of scenic resources were identified for the Oxford Region: Scenic **Features**, Scenic **Vistas**, Scenic **Roadways and Corridors**, and Scenic **Landforms**. Each category has unique characteristics that separate it from the others, and together they are distinct from the related natural, historic, and agricultural resource categories. Scenic resources were selected broadly based on the representative nature of the Oxford Region's landscapes, character, and cultural feel, and on the specific criteria of individual categories as noted below. Photographs and illustrations provided below offer further clarification on these types of resources.

SCENIC FEATURE: A specific feature, visible from multiple public viewpoints, but limited in overall geographic scale, that has inherent scenic or aesthetic value. Stone walls or covered or stone bridges would be examples of scenic features.



SCENIC VISTA (or VIEWSHED): A physiographic area composed of natural, historic, agricultural, and/or cultural elements that may be viewed from a public area such as a roadway or park, and which has inherent scenic qualities and/or aesthetic values as shown in Figure 14-A.

Figure 14-A: Scenic Vista or Viewshed



Source: CCPC, 2004

SCENIC ROAD: A road that, in addition to its transportation function, provides a unique traveling experience as a result of the characteristics of the road itself that may include its narrow width, a canopy of trees, or the informal nature of the road's alignment.



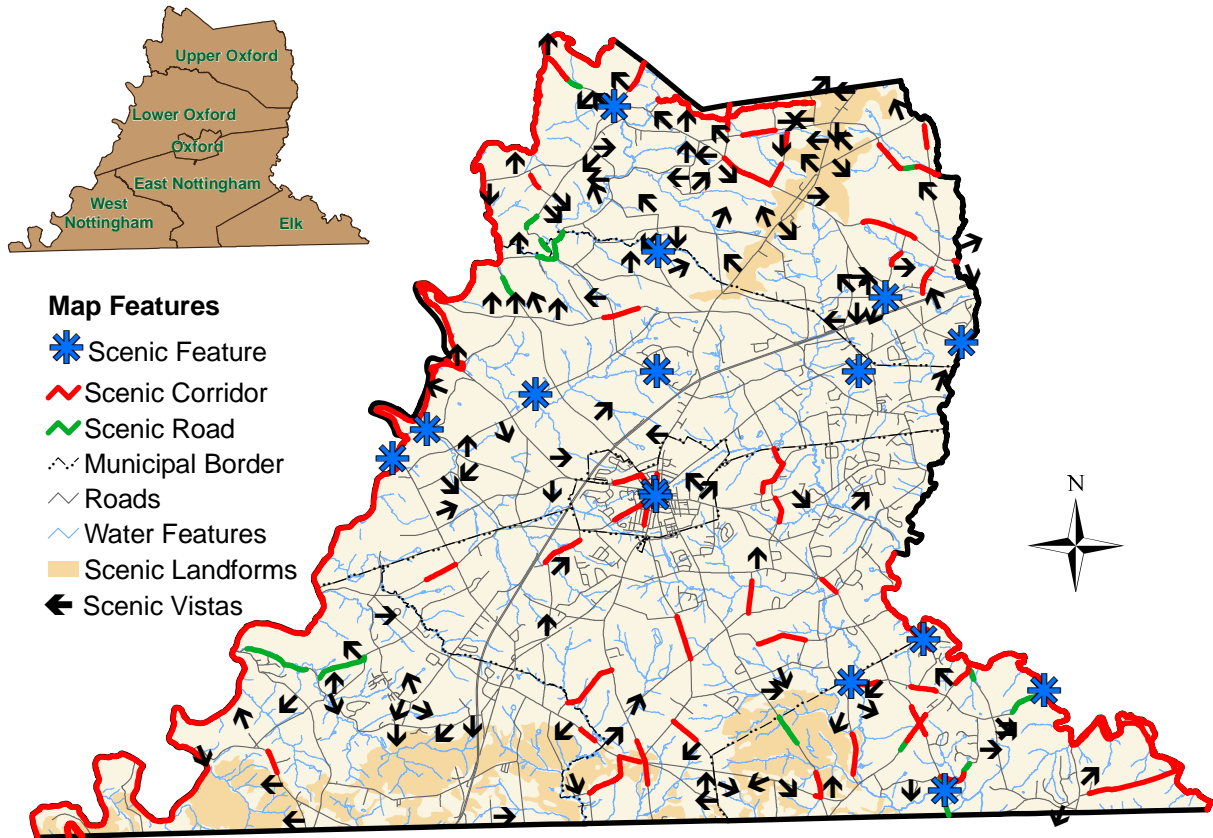
SCENIC CORRIDOR: A corridor such as a roadway or waterway and its adjacent area that provides opportunities for the enjoyment of exceptional beauty or natural, historic, or cultural features. For the purposes of this Plan, the scenic corridor can include scenic features within view of the roadway or waterway.



A scenic corridor moves the experience of the driver, pedestrian, cyclist, fisherman, or boater beyond the immediate area to those attributes within view.

SCENIC LANDFORMS: A broad geographic area that has some consistency in form throughout and which forms a significant, scenic landscape. Only two landforms have been identified in the Region, the serpentine barrens and the Route 10 ridgeline, both of which contain scenic features or vistas within their bounds.



Figure 14-B: Existing Scenic Resources in the Region

Existing Scenic Resources

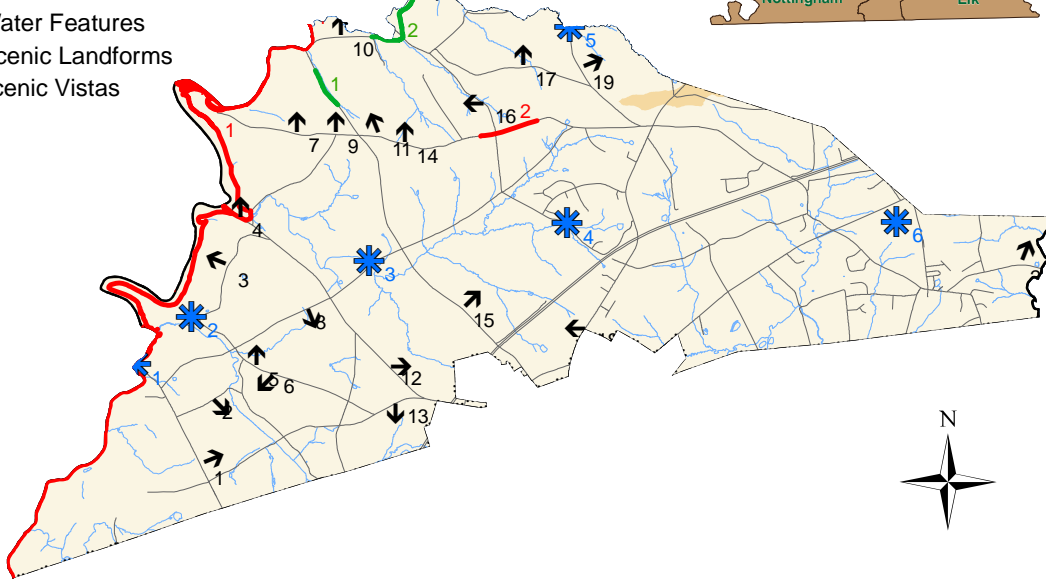
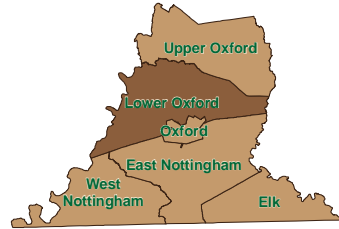
Figure 14-B identifies all scenic resources within the Oxford Region. (with the exception of historic resources identified in Chapter 13: Historic Resources) The inventory of scenic resources was initially pulled from municipal open space plans, and then verified with aerial data and field checking as necessary (additional information is included for specific resource categories, such as the direction of a scenic vista).

Appendix 14-A includes municipal resources and corresponding mapping by individual municipality. The listing includes a category type, an identification number (within each category type), tables that identify each of those resources, and prominent features of the resource. As a result, each individual scenic resource can be located and its' most important characteristic identified. This listing will enable each municipality to protect their resources to the fullest extent desired. The map of Lower Oxford Township's scenic resources included in Figure 14-C and the tables identifying scenic features, vistas, roadways and corridors, and landforms is included as an example of the information provided in Appendix 14-A.

Figure 14-C: Lower Oxford Township Scenic Resources

Map Features

-  Scenic Feature
-  Scenic Corridor
-  Scenic Road
-  Municipal Border
-  Roads
-  Water Features
-  Scenic Landforms
-  Scenic Vistas



| Scenic Road | |
|-------------|----------------|
| ID | Feature |
| 1 | Canopy Covered |
| 2 | Canopy Covered |

| Scenic Corridor | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| ID | Feature |
| 1 | Octoraro Creek |
| 2 | Natural |

| Scenic Landform | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| ID | Feature |
| 1 | Route 10 Ridgeline |

| Scenic Features | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| ID | Feature |
| 1 | Pine Grove Covered Bridge |
| 2 | Camp Tweedale |
| 3 | Stone Arch Bridge |
| 4 | Stone Arch Bridge |
| 5 | Stone Arch Bridge |
| 6 | Lincoln University |

| Scenic Vistas | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| ID | Direction | Feature |
| 1 | ENE | Ag/Woods |
| 2 | SE | Agriculture |
| 3 | WNW | Ag/Woodlands |
| 4 | N | Pond/Creek |
| 5 | N | Ag/Creek |
| 6 | SW | Ag/Creek |
| 7 | N | Ag/Woods |
| 8 | SSE | Ag/Creek |
| 9 | N | Agriculture |
| 10 | N | Ag/Woods |
| 11 | NNW | Agriculture |
| 12 | E | Agriculture |
| 13 | S | Ag/Creek |
| 14 | N | Ag/Woods |
| 15 | NE | Ag/Woodlands |
| 16 | W | Agriculture |
| 17 | N | Pond |
| 18 | W | Agriculture |
| 19 | ENE | Agriculture |
| 20 | NNE | Ag/Woods |

Municipal Ordinance Recommendations

Many of the protection efforts discussed throughout this chapter involve regulatory measures, therefore municipal ordinances should recognize scenic resources and their value. The following steps are critical to complete this process:

1. Recognize the importance of scenic resources within ordinances (Purpose statements),
2. Maintain a current listing of resources, and
3. Require within ordinances that any proposed subdivision, land development, or permit action in the vicinity of a recognized scenic resource coordinate early and throughout project development with the municipality to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate negative scenic impacts.

Techniques to Avoid Disturbance

Avoidance could be as simple as relocating an access point to a different portion of a property to avoid being in the line of a scenic vista. Minimization could be a design that reduces the prominence of new development in the public view of the Route 10 ridgeline. Mitigation could be as simple as a landscaping plan that provides a buffer between a new structure and an existing scenic feature.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCENIC RESOURCES

Action 14-1 Update municipal ordinances to guide development to areas less likely to impact scenic resources.

Action 14-2 Continue to protect the serpentine barrens and other sensitive natural features from development and disturbance, while implementing natural resource protection options ranging from educational tools to regulatory measures.

✓These actions address Objectives 14-A, 14-B, and 14-C.

Please see Chapters 11, 12, and 13: Agricultural, Natural, and Historic Resources, respectively, for specific recommendations and additional details.

Recommendations for Coordination with State Planning Programs

Construction or rehabilitation of roads can create significant impacts to the local environment, including scenic, natural, historic, or agricultural resources. In any roadway project it is critical that the local community be involved at the earliest stages to identify critical resources and transportation needs in order to achieve a project that serves the transportation needs while protecting community resources.



Adopt-A-Highway Program

Participants in PennDOT's Adopt-A-Highway program are requested to adopt a two-mile portion of state highway and pick up litter at least four times a year, with PennDOT providing safety training, safety vests, highway warning signs, and trash bags. PennDOT will also post signs acknowledging the volunteer's efforts and pick up bagged litter from the roadside. More information is available on PennDOT's website: www.dot.state.pa.us.

Great American Cleanup of Pennsylvania

This program is a spring statewide community cleanup program and part of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. The program asks communities to organize and conduct local cleanups – recruit volunteers, promote the event, and report the results for inclusion in statewide and national cleanup totals. For more information, go to www.keeppabeautiful.org.

Pennsylvania Byways

PennDOT designates **Pennsylvania Byways** at the request of local communities seeking to highlight cultural, historical, recreational, archaeological, scenic, and natural qualities as part of their **Highway Beautification Programs**. The program parallels the **National Scenic Byways Program**, and allows communities to take pride in their scenic resource, serve an active role in its protection, and create new opportunities along the byway. Municipalities can request a Pennsylvania Byway designation on their own or with neighboring townships to protect a longer segment of scenic road. State Route 52, for example, is a designated National Scenic Byway in Chester County. In addition to highlighting the scenic, historic, cultural, recreational, natural, and archaeological resources along a road, the Pennsylvania Byway Program offers a minimum level of protection to the corridor, as outdoor advertising is prohibited on designated byways.



Local Control of Roadways

Local control of roads enables local decision-making. On roads that are determined to be significant scenic resources, this option can ensure protection of resources that the municipality feels are worthy. The turnback of roadways, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9: Transportation does require a significant level of municipal commitment in regard to future maintenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCENIC ROADS

Action 14-3 Coordinate with PennDOT (or Chester County as appropriate) on any proposed transportation projects early and throughout the project development process to ensure a context sensitive design.

Action 14-4 Continue and expand efforts to organize volunteers to participate in PennDOT's Adopt-a-Highway Program and the Great Pennsylvania Cleanup Program.

Action 14-5 Investigate the Pennsylvania Byway Program to determine if there are roadways within the Region that may be eligible and worthy of special protection. If so, nominate the roadway, or portion thereof, to PennDOT for consideration to the program.

✓These actions address Objectives 14-B and C

Characteristics of Scenic Intrusions

Scenic intrusions are those manufactured objects or structures that detract from the landscape, such as: poorly sited or designed (residential, commercial, or industrial) development; light pollution; inappropriate signage; utility structures or transmission lines; parking facilities; and abandoned or unkempt properties. Depending on how topography and landscaping either permit or obscure views, a single intrusion can tarnish an otherwise scenic landscape.

Poorly Sited or Designed Development

This type of residential, commercial, or industrial development ignores the context and resources of the site and, in doing so, loses an opportunity to fit in with the existing landscape.

In creating and maintaining an up-to-date listing of scenic resources, as well as requiring protection of natural resources, the Oxford Region can notify developers of the resources they consider critical early in the development process, enabling a site design that fits with the overall character of the area.



Light pollution

Light pollution is defined as any adverse effect of artificial light including sky glow, glare, light trespass, light clutter, decreased visibility at night, and energy waste.¹ Light pollution is created by stray outdoor lighting that creates a halo of brightness, blocking out features visible under more natural conditions. One need only travel to an area without light pollution on a clear night and view the night sky in comparison to the typical Chester County night sky to understand the difference.

Light pollution is not just a concern because of the impact on our view of the night sky, or the nuisance one neighbor can inflict on another. Impacts can generally be grouped within the following categories: human health, safety, energy, and wildlife. Human health is impacted through disruption of circadian rhythms, impacts that are significant enough for the American Medical Association to adopt a resolution in 2009 to support the reduction of light pollution. Safety can be compromised by “disability glare” (particularly when excessive lighting impacts drivers), and by lighting that may be perceived as increasing security. Various studies, including a 1997 National Institute of Justice study, have shown no conclusive correlation between night lighting and crime. Light pollution is wasted energy, which translates to wasted money and wasted natural resources. Wildlife, perhaps, suffers the most from light pollution, as nocturnal animals become confused and disoriented. Species have experienced a decline in reproduction, difficulty foraging for food, increased exposure to predators, and increased mortality due to impairment of their night vision.² Using the appropriate amount of light for the task at hand in the most efficient manner possible will be safe, energy-efficient, and preserve dark skies for everyone.

Utilities

Utilities come in many forms, and from a scenic viewpoint, it is the visible structures or transmission lines, such as cell towers, stormwater management facilities, and overhead transmission lines that are of most concern. As with residential, commercial, or industrial development, the siting and design of these features should be regulated in order to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to scenic features. Empty detention basins that lack landscaping quickly become eyesores – proper ordinance language regarding design can prevent this. While control of certain utilities, such as cell towers, comes under the purview of state or federal agencies, municipalities retain some control, such as location (within certain zoning districts) and design (such as a flag pole or silo structure).

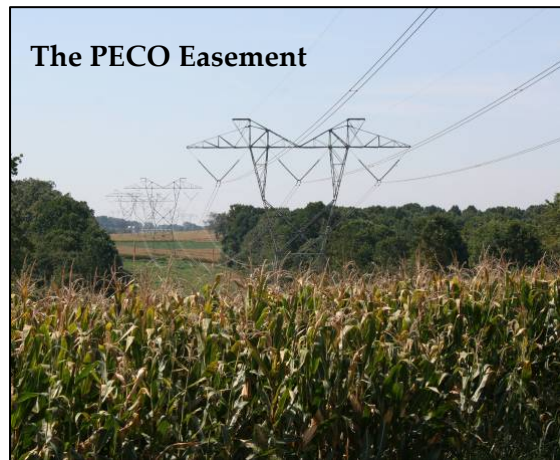
Cell towers, radio towers, and power lines were all identified as scenic impediments by the Planning Committee
Scenic Resources Survey

Other entities may also control some aspects of utility design and location. Construction of cell towers is considered a federal undertaking, which requires a review of potential impacts to historic resources that are listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Certain conservation programs, such as the Chester County Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, may prohibit construction of cell towers as part of easement conditions. Lands under

¹As defined by the International Dark-Sky Association, www.darksky.org.

² International Dark-Sky Association.

conservation easement by any non-profit or government entity may have similar restrictions or prohibitions.



Overhead utility lines can also be significant scenic intrusions, whether on the neighborhood or regional scale, such as the electric transmission towers and lines that span across the Region. Although little can be done with existing lines and structures, redevelopment in selected locations (such as an area transitioning from suburban to urban) may warrant the requirement that utility lines be located underground. Although costly to implement, in

selected locations it may be beneficial in the long term.

Signage

Outdoor signage is a necessity, and when designed appropriately it can complement the character of an area. Advertising that is too close together, distracts drivers, or blocks a scenic vista is inappropriate for the Region’s character. The MPC permits municipalities to regulate signage, including size, location, and lighting. Doing so provides municipalities a greater level of control over the impact of advertising.



Parking Facilities

Parking is another feature that can have an impact on a community’s character without proper design. Endless pavement, lack of vegetation, and the locational prominence of a parking area can create a scenic intrusion. Appropriate layout and landscaping can turn a parking area into a less offensive, and even pleasant, feature of a development.

Abandoned Buildings/Unkempt Properties

Abandoned Buildings and/or unkempt structures or properties are a public eyesore and can become a public nuisance and health concern if not addressed. In addressing this type of scenic intrusion, maintaining the public health and safety should be a primary consideration.

Existing Scenic Intrusions

A comprehensive listing of existing, individual, scenic intrusions within the Oxford Region was not developed as part of this Plan because existing features (like those pictured on the previous page) are difficult to change. Avoiding the creation of new scenic intrusions is a feasible goal however, and the recommendations below focus on this purpose. As sites with existing scenic intrusions are redeveloped or require any type of municipal permit, discussion of ways to minimize or mitigate the intrusion should occur between the municipality and the property owner.

Scenic intrusions can be addressed in part through regulations such as zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances, however public education and negotiation are also critical to avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating the negative impacts of scenic intrusions. The following six recommendations (Actions 14-6 to 14-11) regarding scenic intrusions have been identified to help municipal officials achieve the overall goal to protect scenic resources in the Region.

Recommendations to Address Scenic Intrusions

Light Pollution - Dark Skies

Educational materials on reasons for promoting dark skies and reducing light pollution, as well as guidance for reducing light pollution within residential neighborhoods, is available from the International Dark-Sky Association (www.darksky.org). Municipalities can help preserve dark skies by adopting ordinance regulations that prevent glare and light pollution by requiring the use of reasonable lighting levels, luminaries that do not emit glare and light above the horizontal, and automatic extinguishing of lighting when it is not needed. The Pennsylvania Outdoor Lighting Council (www.polcouncil.org) is a local resource for model ordinances and will present to municipal or other groups regarding light pollution on request.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUED DARK SKIES

Action 14-6 Recognize the importance of dark skies protection and educate residents through municipal newsletters and websites.

Action 14-7 Review and amend, as necessary, ordinance language to diminish the negative impacts of lighting and promote the continuance of dark skies.

✓These actions address Objectives 14-B and C

Outdoor Signage

It is important to strengthen signage regulations as a part of a municipal zoning ordinance to help prevent the overuse of signs of all types, ensure signs are not a distraction to drivers, promote good sign design guidelines, and avoid impacts on scenic resources. While all six municipalities in the Region have some signage standards in their respective ordinances, each municipality should review their ordinance provisions to determine if they can be strengthened to minimize the scenic impact of outdoor advertising.

Specific design guidelines would address features such as size, color, material, lighting, legibility, and sign type. By creating guidelines for areas that have a concentration of commercial or mixed uses, a municipality can encourage a consistency in appearance that improves the scenic character of an area while allowing for flexibility and uniqueness.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUTDOOR SIGNAGE

Action 14-8 Adopt ordinance provisions that will diminish the impact of outdoor signage, including billboards and advertising.

Action 14-9 Encourage appropriate signage by adopting specific design standards for Oxford Borough and designated village areas.

✓These actions address Objectives 14-B and C

The Impact of Utilities

Utilities can be addressed through zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances, and in the case of stormwater management facilities, even stand alone ordinances. Best management practices (BMPs) should be encouraged and required where appropriate through regulatory means. Regarding stormwater management, the *Pennsylvania Stormwater Best Management Practices Manual* (DEP, 2006) and the Chester County Water Resources Authority's model *Post Construction Stormwater Management Ordinance* offer current guidance. Early coordination on design issues for all utilities is most effective in creating an effective, efficient, and aesthetic facility.



Adopt ordinance provisions to diminish the negative scenic impact of utility structures and transmission lines (such as cell towers, stormwater management facilities, and overhead utility lines); if the municipality has already established regulatory language, review to determine if the language is current and in keeping with model ordinances and best management practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UTILITIES

Action 14-10 Diminish the negative scenic impact of utility structures and transmission lines.

✓This action addresses Objectives 14-B and C

Parking Facilities

Important issues to consider with parking facility design and construction are access, location, layout, surface treatment, screening, buffering, and landscaping. Inadequate consideration of these features can greatly impact aesthetics. Encouraging or requiring the use of native trees, shrubs, and plants has multiple benefits. Ordinance language should be flexible enough to allow for innovative ideas (such as pervious pavement) without compromising minimum standards.



A well-landscaped parking lot - Exton

RECOMMENDATION FOR PARKING FACILITIES DESIGN

Action 14-11 Adopt ordinance provisions to diminish the negative scenic impact of parking facilities; or if the municipality has already established regulatory language, review to determine if updates are necessary to limit negative scenic impacts.

✓This action addresses Objective 14-B

Summary of Website References

International Dark-Sky Association website: www.darksky.org.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful website: www.keppabeautiful.org.

PennDOTs website: www.dot.state.pa.us.

Pennsylvania Outdoor Lighting Council's website: www.polcouncil.org.

Figure Sources:

Figure 14-B: Existing Scenic Resources in the Region

Data Sources: Municipal Border, Roads, Streams- Chester County GIS; Scenic Features, Scenic Corridors, Scenic Roads, Scenic Landforms – ORPC and CCPC, 2009.

Figure 14-3: Lower Oxford Township Scenic Features

Data Sources: Municipal Border, Roads, Streams- Chester County GIS; Scenic Features, Scenic Corridors, Scenic Roads, Scenic Landforms – ORPC and CCPC, 2009.