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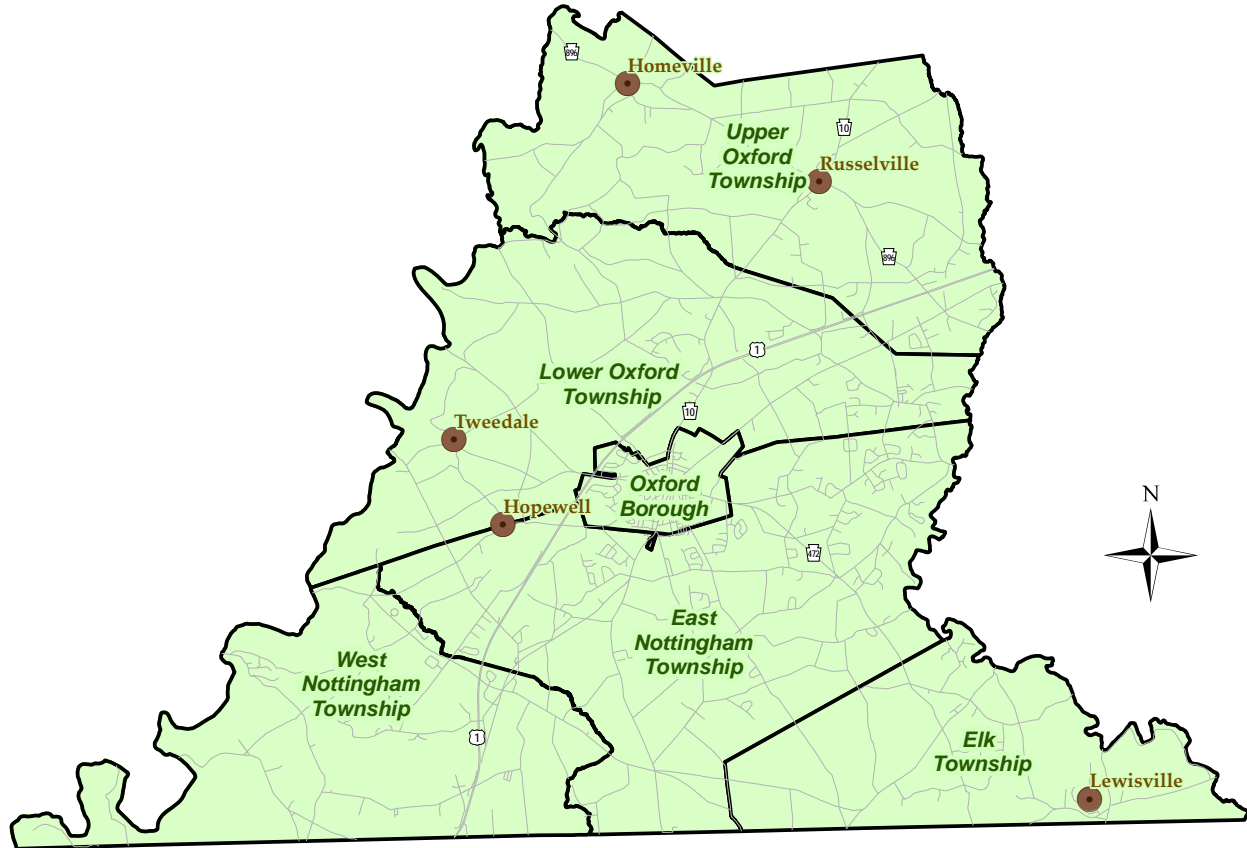
Introduction

This Chapter introduces the reader to the Oxford Region and provides a brief overview of the Region’s land use characteristics and shared resources. Further, this chapter provides an overview of the Comprehensive Plan work program and the activities of the Planning Committee. When discussing multimunicipal planning, it is important to understand the relationship between the communities within the Region and between the Region and Chester County, as well as Lancaster County and the state of Maryland. The small-town ethic and agricultural resources and industry identified in this Plan define the character of the Oxford Region and the work ethic of its community leaders, business owners, and residents.

Overview of the Oxford Region

The Oxford Region encompasses the southwestern-most corner of Chester County and includes the Townships of East Nottingham, Elk, Lower Oxford, Upper Oxford, and West Nottingham and the Borough of Oxford as shown in Figure 1-A.

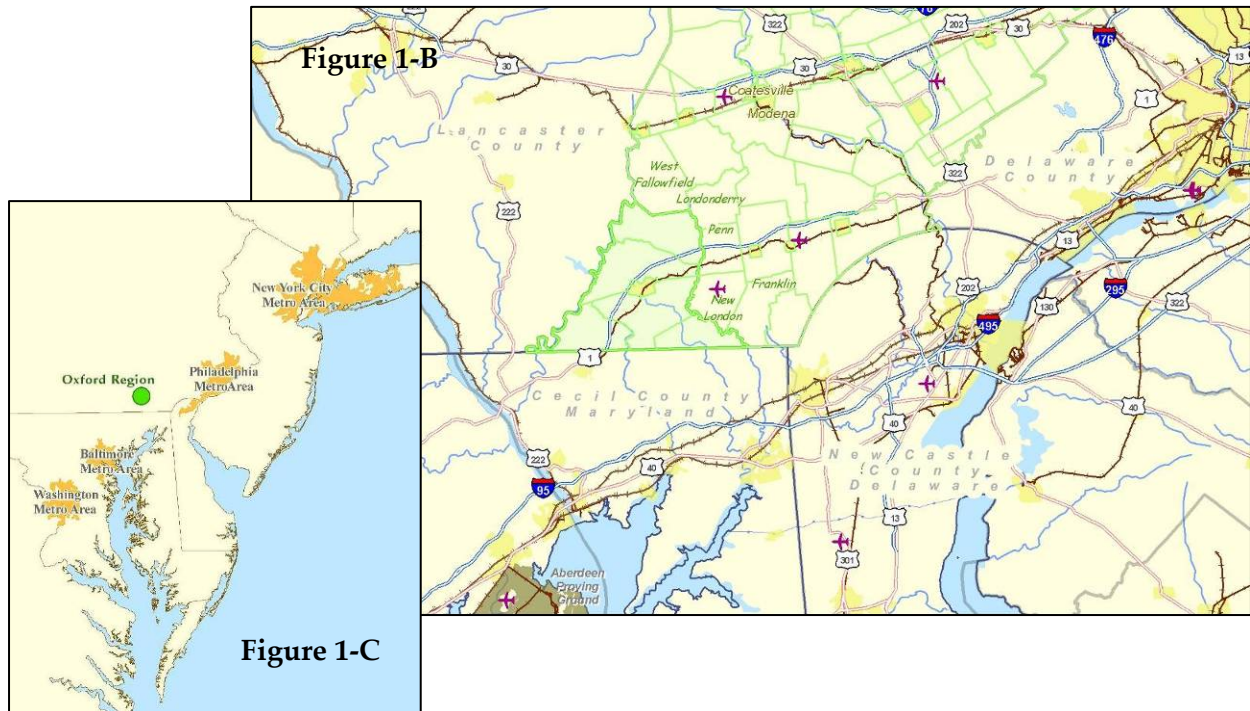
Figure 1-A: Oxford Region



The earliest settlements in the Oxford Region are represented by historic villages including Homeville and Russelville in Upper Oxford Township, Tweedale and Hopewell in Lower Oxford Township, and Lewisville in Elk Township. (See Chapter 13: Historic Resources for a brief history of the Region).

Although the Region is primarily rural and much of the land remains in active agriculture (See Map 5-A on page 5-3) it is nonetheless influenced by its proximity to Lancaster County and the city of Wilmington. These urban areas influence growth in the Region and its associated impact on regional resources and the agricultural industry. The Oxford Region is also located within close proximity to Major Metropolitan areas along the Atlantic Seaboard including Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and New York.

Figure 1-B and 1-C: Regional Influences



Shared Resources in the Region

A common thread that unifies the six municipalities in the Region is the vast Agricultural, natural, historic, and scenic resources that define the rural character of the Region. The rolling hills of farmland, livestock, and wooden-clad farmsteads suggest a simpler time when silos outnumbered subdivisions. While the Region consists primarily of farmland and agricultural uses, there are two stream corridors that frame the Region along the eastern boundary (Big Elk Creek) and western boundary (Octorara Creek). These waterways, and their numerous tributaries influenced the colonization of the Oxford Region and the location of the historic villages discussed above.

Regional and Municipal Planning Efforts

While the Oxford Region has not worked together during the last several decades, they do have a tradition of planning together. In November of 1969, the representatives of the six municipalities completed the *Oxford Region Comprehensive Plan*. The Plan included eight chapters that addressed: existing and future land use, physical features, regional population growth, finances, community facilities and services, and transportation. While it is not entirely clear which municipalities actually adopted the Plan, it is clear that three of the Region’s municipalities utilized the policies set forth in the 1969 Plan for over forty years until the 2012 Oxford Region Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan was adopted.

Municipal Planning Efforts

During the decades that followed the completion of the 1969 Oxford Region Comprehensive Plan, the municipalities of the Region have continued to address growth in their individual municipalities adopting Open Space Plans, updated their Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances, and (in the case of Elk, East Nottingham and Upper Oxford Townships), adopted revised comprehensive plans. These comprehensive plans represent the municipalities updating their policy and regulations to address issues that face each municipality and its elected officials in the new millennium.

Figure 1-D: Current Municipal Policy and Regulatory Documents

Plan or Ordinance	East Nottingham	Elk	Lower Oxford	Oxford Borough ¹	Upper Oxford	West Nottingham
Comprehensive Plan	1969 ²	1987	1969	1969	1982	2006
Zoning Ordinance	2006	2002	1999	2004	2010	2012
Subdivision Ordinance	1997	2007	2002	1988	2010	1995
Open Space Plan	2002	1995	1993	2002	1994	1996

Source: Municipal documents, 1969-2012

Regional Influences

Obviously, the Oxford Region is influenced by Lancaster and Wilmington, as well as major metropolitan areas such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. Perhaps not as obvious are the other regional influences that impact the Region’s policies. We have included a list of those influences and a reference to the Plan Chapter where they are discussed:

Regional Influence	Plan Chapter
Oxford Area Sewer Authority	Chapter 8: Community Facilities and Services
Oxford Area School District	Chapter 8: Community Facilities and Services
Chesapeake Bay Watershed Association	Chapter 12: Natural Resources and Chapter 8.

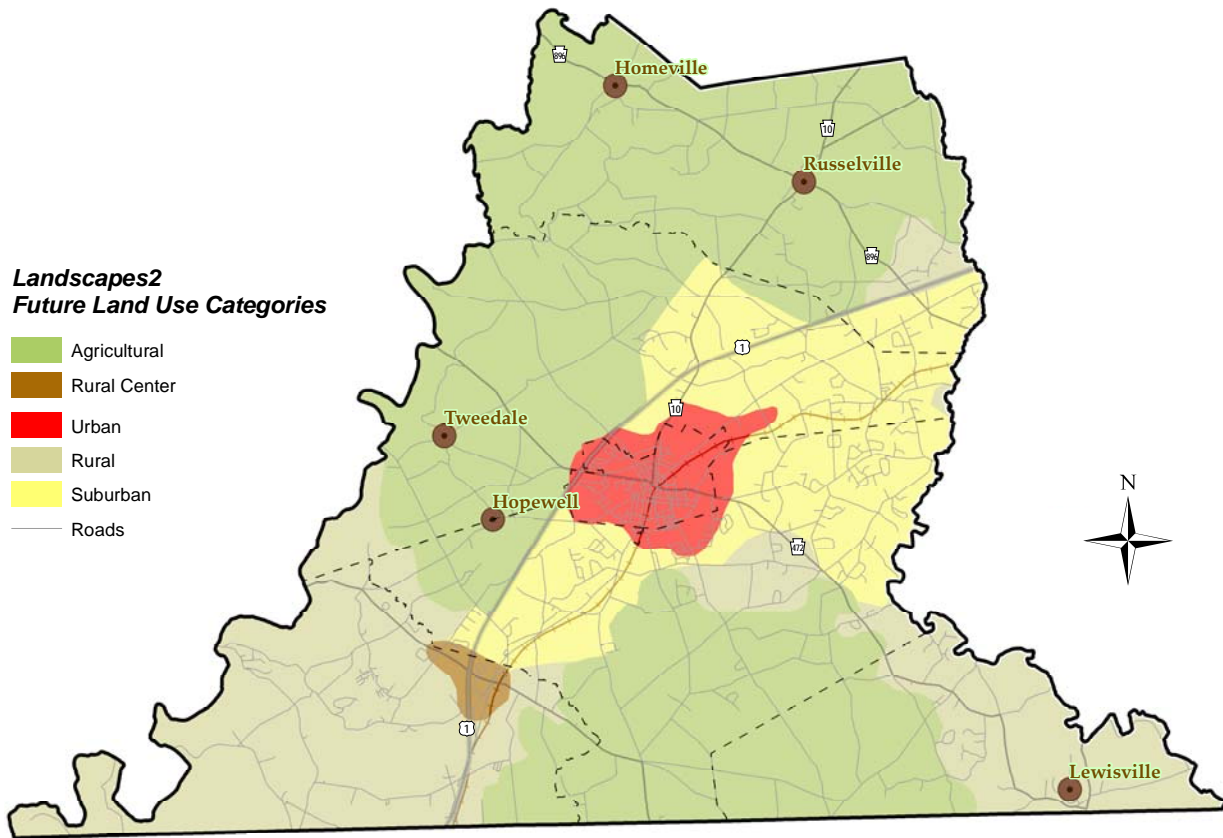
¹ Oxford Borough adopted a Revitalization Plan in 2003.

² East Nottingham and Lower Oxford Townships and Oxford Borough use the 1969 Oxford Region Comprehensive Plan

Relationship to Chester County Landscapes

This Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan was developed in cooperation with the Chester County Planning Commission, and was undertaken as part of the Vision Partnership Program (VPP). The VPP is a program designed to provide the most effective coordination and consistency between the growth management policies of *Landscapes2*, Chester County’s Comprehensive Policy Plan, adopted in 2009, and those of municipalities in the County. With respect to the Region, the policies identified in this Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan are consistent with the policies identified in *Landscapes2*.

Figure 1-E: Livable Landscapes Designations in the Oxford Region



The updated Chester County Comprehensive Plan, *Landscapes2*, was adopted on November 9, 2009. *Landscapes2* contains a Livable Landscapes map that represents a guide for accommodating expected growth while maintaining the quality of life in the County. The following Landscapes have been identified in the Oxford Region:

Agricultural Landscape

This landscape is dominated by commercial agriculture, agricultural security areas, large areas protected by agricultural easements, and areas where the local municipality demonstrates a commitment to effective agricultural zoning. This landscape is

characterized by large agricultural areas, and is not planned to accommodate projected growth.

Rural Landscape

This landscape is characterized by open space dominated by woodland and undeveloped areas. It contains agriculture and scattered residential development on relatively large lots, or subdivisions with protected common open space. Development is primarily served by on-lot sewer and water systems.

Suburban Landscape

This landscape is dominated by the built environment and is largely served by public sewer and water systems and an auto-dominated transportation network. This Landscape includes developed areas and nearby areas that are planned for additional future development. It is typically characterized by residential subdivisions containing primarily single-family housing. This landscape also contains concentrations of non-residential land uses and the largest employment centers in the County.

Urban Landscape

This landscape includes the County's historic population centers, which demonstrate a traditional development pattern characterized by grid street patterns with alleys. These areas serve as centers for commercial, civic, and cultural activities for the surrounding area. This Landscape includes the City of Coatesville, all boroughs, and selected portions of townships that demonstrate a distinctive existing or potential urban development pattern.

Rural Center

Rural Centers are commonly located at crossroad villages and contain historic structures and traditional rural support services. They are focal points for accommodating limited growth that is anticipated within the rural resource areas. These areas are intended to accommodate land uses that support the surrounding agricultural community.

Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan

The Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan work program was developed as a result of the need for the Region's municipalities to update their municipal policy documents. See Regional and Municipal Planning Efforts. Further, the Region's municipalities identified an opportunity to develop regional policies to address resource protection and growth management at a time when the economy and development pressure were stalled during the second half of the first decade of the new Millennium.

Chester County Planning Commission

During the Spring of 2007 the Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) was contacted by municipal officials in the Oxford Region inquiring about the availability of funding and consultation services for the update of individual municipal comprehensive plans. After

meeting with the representatives of each of the region’s six municipalities and discussing the benefits of planning together as a Region, the decision to move forward with a multimunicipal plan was made.

Planning Committee

The development of a multimunicipal comprehensive plan is a significant undertaking of time and commitment. It was determined early in the process that each municipality would provide a municipal representative from their governing body and planning commission. These representatives would be charged with overseeing the development of the Comprehensive Plan and all that entails. With that came the responsibility to represent their communities and sharing the progress of the plan program with their fellow municipal official.



Defining a Vision for the Plan

Working together can be a challenge for individual municipalities that have established policies addressing growth management and resource protection. Because the majority of the Region’s municipalities were operating under dated comprehensive plans (with the exception of West Nottingham Township), the Region was able to start with an essentially “blank slate.”

Planning Committee Meetings

For the duration of the work program, the planning committee members met at the Lower Oxford Township on the fourth Wednesday of nearly every month. The planning committee meetings provided the opportunity for discussion of regional activities and preliminary discussion regarding the many topic areas addressed in the Plan.

Topical Surveys and Presentations

The CCPC Team prioritized the input of the Planning Committee, which led to the development and distribution of Topical Surveys. In order to facilitate a discussion of the many topics being addressed during the development of this Plan, these surveys were developed and distributed to Planning Committee members as well as their municipal counterparts. While the number of participants fluctuated between 15% and 25%, the results helped CCPC staff better understand the Region’s perspective regarding each topic before it was formally presented at a Planning Committee Meeting. The results of the survey were used to develop PowerPoint presentations that inspired the Planning Committee members to provide valuable feedback which, in turn, guided and prioritized the development of plan recommendations and plan chapter content.

Oxford Region Website

During the first year of Plan development, the CCPC Team developed a website that would include information for both the Planning Committee as well as any other municipal officials or interested parties. The logo to the right was designed as part of the website and used throughout the program to identify Oxford Region-related materials. The Oxford Region website is hosted by the Chester County Planning Commission and includes a wealth of information including: News and Announcements, Project Schedule, Meeting Reports, Draft Review Materials, Draft Policies, Survey Results, and Related Links. See for yourself:

<http://www.chesco.org/planning/oxfordregion>



Figure (Map) Sources:

Figure 1-A: Oxford Region

Sources: Municipal Borders, Roads – Chester County GIS; Railroad, Villages – CCPC.

Figure 1-B Regional Influences:

Sources: Municipal borders – Chester County GIS; General Regional Data – ESRI Data Solutions.

Figure 1-C Regional Influences:

Sources: Oxford Region – CCPC, 2012; All other layers – ESRI Data Solutions.

Figure 1-E: Livable Landscapes Designations in the Oxford Region

Sources: Municipal borders, Roads – Chester County GIS; Future Land Use Categories – CCPC, ORPC.