

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Allegheny County, located in the heart of southwestern Pennsylvania, was established on September 24, 1788. Allegheny County includes 745 square miles and consists of 130 municipalities. The County has close to 1.3 million residents and a population density of 1,755 persons per square mile. Allegheny is the 2nd most populous county in Pennsylvania, the most densely populated county in the region, and the 3rd most densely populated county in the state. It is surrounded by Butler, Armstrong, Westmoreland, Washington, and Beaver Counties.

Existing Land Use Conditions

Perhaps no Pennsylvania county has had its land use shaped more by geologic and natural features than Allegheny County.

The flow of four major rivers – the Ohio, Allegheny, Monongahela, and Youghiogheny – created flat uplands and steep, V-shaped valleys that characterize the County. Flowing east to west, the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers merge to form the Ohio River in the center of the County, which is today the City of Pittsburgh.

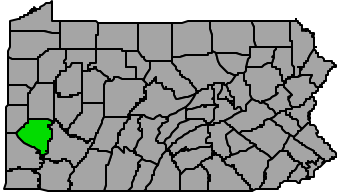
Rich in natural resources, the communities along the rivers transformed from the 1800s through the mid-1900s, from agriculturally based societies to those based upon extractive and heavy manufacturing industries. Mining, oil, glass, and steel industries each contributed significantly to the economy and land use patterns of the County.

Following the decline of the steel industry in the 1980s, Allegheny County has looked to other sectors to fill the employment gaps. Large investments have been made in specialized industry and service sectors such as information technology, biomedical technology, environmental technology, education, health care, and finance.

Nearly half of the County's total land area is considered developed. The remaining undeveloped land resides in forested and agricultural or open space land, spread outside the metropolitan Pittsburgh region.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Population loss and aging of the remaining population continues to be a significant challenge.** Between 1990 and 2000, the County's population decreased by 4.1 percent. Meanwhile, at close to 18 percent, the sector of the population over 65 remains higher than the state average of 15 percent.
- ☑ **Sprawl strains the fiscal and environmental condition of the County.** Despite population losses, from 1982 to 1997 the number of acres of developed land in Allegheny County rose from approximately 231,000 to 298,400. This indicates a consumption of approximately 29 percent more land during that period.
- ☑ **Brownfields and economic depression serve as challenges to development.** Successful projects engaging in adaptive reuse and cleanup of brownfield sites have created jobs, provided loft housing and entertainment venues and helped to

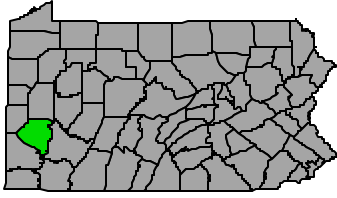


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preserve the industrial heritage of the region.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **Allegheny County is in the process of preparing its first comprehensive plan.** Allegheny County's comprehensive plan will provide clear goals and objectives for the County's future land use and economic development agenda.
- ☑ **The majority of Allegheny County's municipalities have adopted comprehensive plans.** Of Allegheny County's local governments, 80 percent have comprehensive plans, 96 percent have zoning ordinances, and 75 percent have subdivision and land development ordinances. The municipalities without subdivision and land development ordinances are governed by the County's ordinance.
- ☑ **Multi-municipal planning is being undertaken in the County.** Three municipalities have created a revenue-sharing agreement for waterfront redevelopment of a brownfield site. Two multi-municipal comprehensive plans have been completed. At least four other multi-municipal planning efforts include the development of comprehensive plans, joint zoning ordinances, or traffic studies.
- ☑ **The Mon Valley Economic Development Strategy may serve as a base for revitalizing the Mon Valley.** A study is currently in progress to develop a strategy for the revitalization of Allegheny County's Mon Valley by
- strategically targeting public investment in industry clusters.
- ☑ **Increased regional cooperation enhances planning efforts.** The Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) recently completed a 2003–2030 Long-Range Plan linking transportation and economic development for the 10-county region. The SPC also holds a Planning Directors Forum attended by directors of the 10 counties to address regional issues. A separate Tri-County Airport (TCAP) group focuses specifically upon coordinating airport-related development in the region. The 10 counties in the region have also agreed to allow the SPC to facilitate the creation of a regional Geographic Information System.
- ☑ **The County is involved with numerous conservation / preservation / environmental-related initiatives.** The Allegheny Land Trust, funded in part by the County, has preserved over 900 acres of land in Allegheny and Washington Counties. The Conservation District of the County employs state funds to preserve land for agriculture. Currently, the County is developing design guidelines. The use of native planting for County-reviewed projects is encouraged.
- ☑ **Trails initiatives are supported throughout the County.** Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh have been recognized for leadership in the national Rails to Trails Program. Several local nonprofit organizations are



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working to create a walking/hiking trail linking Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C.

- ☑ **The County's Farmland Preservation Program is in full swing.** Allegheny County has a small but viable farming community. To preserve land for agriculture, the Conservation District recently purchased its third conservation easement.