

2001 Annual Report

on Land Use



Presented to
The Honorable Mark Schweiker, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



Prepared by:



Department of Community
and Economic Development

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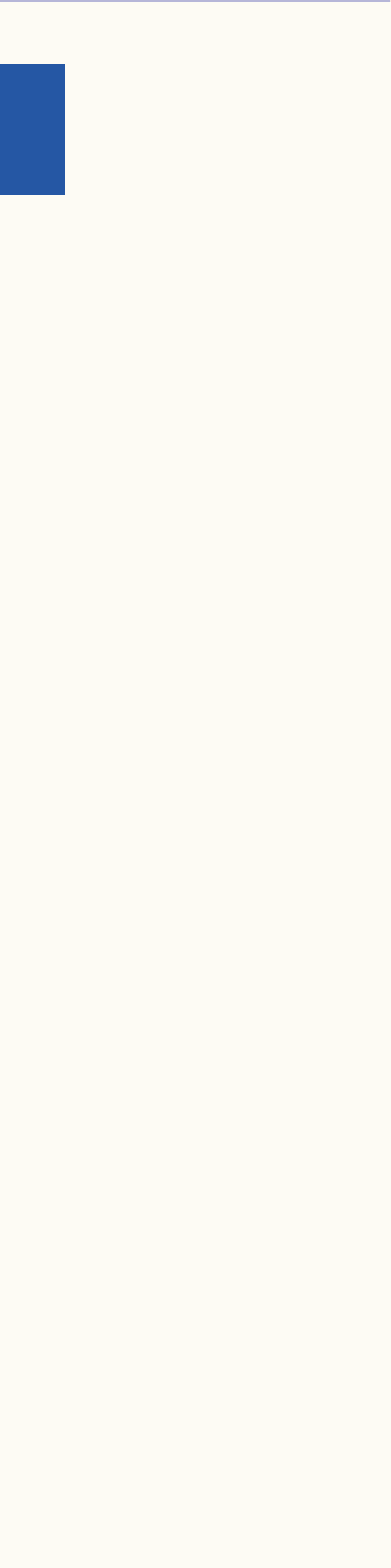
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Executive Summary

A visitor to Pennsylvania four or five years ago would have made a number of observations about development. Perhaps he or she would have noticed the rapid rate of low-density, sprawling development occurring in certain parts of the state. More than a half-million acres of land were developed between 1992 and 1997 in Pennsylvania, double the rate of land lost to development in the previous 10 years. Or maybe he or she would have observed the loss of land devoted to farming, a 14 percent decrease between 1982 and 1997.

Today, that same visitor might still observe the suburban sprawl and decreasing farmland that continues to plague Pennsylvania, but also noticeable would be something new — a sense of energy and excitement surrounding discussions about land use. Hopefulness and determination would also be seen among state officials, municipal officials, and residents pushing for responsible land use planning.



A townhouse development

Pennsylvanians have long recognized the value of their precious land. Three years ago, the Commonwealth made a conscious decision to better protect this valuable resource. Since that time, programs were initiated that promote Growing Smarter, municipalities have been granted additional tools to plan better, and money was directed to protecting the environment, preserving farmland, and promoting sound land use.

Thanks to aggressive efforts by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services and its many partners, Pennsylvanians now have the support, programming, training, and technical and financial assistance needed to plan responsibly for the future and for generations to come.

Third in a Series

This Annual Report on Land Use is the third in a series of reports prepared by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services since the Commonwealth introduced its Growing Smarter Initiative. All three annual reports have described the efforts of the Center and its many partners to implement the Governor's Land Use Executive Order 1999-1.

The first report, released in January 2000, focused on the Center's recommendations to promote sound land use, which came to be identified as Growing Smarter. Following sweeping changes to the Municipalities Planning Code and significant increases in funding for land use planning and technical assistance in 2000, a whole new host of planning tools became available to local governments. The second report, released in February 2001, described the Center's Growing Smarter Action Plan and its Land Use Agenda for 2001, both created to help local government officials make use of the new planning tools available to them.

Picking up where the last report ended, this annual report reveals how the Commonwealth is continuing its aggressive efforts to promote sound land use. From outreach and financial and technical assistance to partnerships with municipalities, counties and other state agencies, the Center continues to stress the advantages of multi-municipal planning that provides flexibility and preserves local government control.

In addition to providing a summary of the Center's efforts to promote Growing Smarter throughout the Commonwealth in 2001, this report unveils the Center's Land Use Agenda for 2002 and includes updates on several land use trends presented in the first Annual Report on Land Use.




McGee's Mills in Clearfield County

The response by local officials and others to the Center's efforts to promote sound land use is ample evidence that Pennsylvania is indeed "Growing Smarter." A theme repeated throughout this report is the Center's efforts to create partnerships in many of its initiatives—with the Land Use Interagency Team and individual state agencies, county planning directors, local government associations, and officials from many of the state's 2,567 cities, boroughs, and townships.

Land Use Trends

In the first Annual Report on Land Use, the Center examined 38 land use trends in Pennsylvania. In this annual report, the Center provides an update on several of these trends: the developed land trend and three land use management trends – municipal planning, zoning, and joint planning and zoning.

Updated data reveals that Pennsylvania is experiencing an increased rate of urban and suburban sprawl that outpaces its population growth and exceeds the national rate. As developed land increases in the Commonwealth, the amount of land devoted to farming is decreasing.



According to recent statistics on municipal planning and zoning, about 58 percent of Pennsylvania's municipalities have comprehensive plans and 65 percent are covered by a zoning ordinance. Municipalities have expressed an increased interest in joint planning and zoning as a result of recent legislation encouraging multimunicipal efforts – 150 municipalities are participating in 50 joint comprehensive plans and 11 municipalities are covered by four joint zoning ordinances.

Looking Back — 2001 Accomplishments

Assigned to be the lead agency for state land use monitoring and assistance by the governor in 1999, the Governor's Center for Local Government Services has expanded its role in the past three years to consultant, adviser, trainer, guide, promoter, and coordinator on land use issues in the Commonwealth.

Building on the Growing Smarter Action Plan developed in 2000, the Center's efforts to promote sound land use in 2001 can be grouped into five categories: outreach, education and training, technical assistance, financial assistance, and state agency coordination.


As part of its outreach initiative in the past year, the Commonwealth reached out to a broad audience in March 2001 through the first-ever Pennsylvania Growing Smarter: Land Use in PA Conference. This three-day event was hosted by the Center and sponsored by the 16 state agencies on the Land Use Interagency Team, five local government associations, the Governor's Green Government Council, the Sound Land Use Advisory Committee and other organizations. More than 1,400 participants heard from keynote speakers and panelists from around the nation and the state, including Pennsylvania Governor Mark Schweiker.

In conjunction with the conference, the Center launched a new Growing Smarter Web site — www.landuseinpa.com — to serve as a resource for sound land use information in Pennsylvania.

The education and training of local officials have always been a priority for the Center, and the year 2001 saw the introduction of the first of a series of new planning courses for local government officials sponsored by the Center and provided by the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors and the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs. Other education efforts in the past year were directed at professional planners, municipal solicitors, and state agency staff, including the first annual Land Use Institute, held at Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle.

"How we use our land is an important concern. That is why Pennsylvania is working aggressively to address the issue of land use with such a powerful package of tools that the nation has taken notice."

Mark Schweiker
Governor



Another long-standing priority of the Center is to provide technical assistance and support to local officials. Following a directive in Executive Order 1999-1, significant funding increases, and amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code, the Center has expanded this priority to include land use planning support and assistance. Working closely with county planners, Center staff visited more than 100 municipal and multi-municipal groups throughout the Commonwealth. It also established a peer-to-peer program to provide further support to local officials.

In another initiative, the Center began developing a Land Use Electronic Resource Library. Initially, the e-library will provide electronic access to county and municipal comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and official maps. In later phases, the Center will add other planning documents and land use ordinances. Web access to the Electronic Resource Library will serve as an important tool for state, county, and local officials, citizens and businesses seeking to expand.

“A vital component of Growing Smarter is the State Interagency Land Use Team. This is another indication of the Commonwealth’s commitment to coordinate sound land use policy.”

Jim Lombardo
Executive Director
Governor’s Center for
Local Government Services

As part of the Center’s financial assistance responsibilities, the Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP) provides one of the keys to Growing Smarter. In 2000-2001, \$2.6 million in planning grants—more than double the amount of the previous year—was available for counties and municipalities to develop new land use plans and ordinances. Almost half the projects funded in 2000-2001 were for new or updated comprehensive plans. Requests exceeded the funds available for the year and are on a pace to again surpass the appropriation in 2001-2002.

The Center recognizes the importance of state agency coordination to make sound land use work in Pennsylvania. One of the Center’s most productive partnerships this past year has been with the Land Use Interagency Team. Through this team, the Center works with other state agencies to promote sound land use consistent with each agency’s respective mission.

These collective efforts have led to a number of important accomplishments to promote sound land use in 2001:

- The departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, and Environmental Protection, and the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority continue to administer Growing Greener, the five-year \$645 million initiative to preserve farmland and open space, protect watersheds, invest in parks and clean water, and restore abandoned mines and wells. Pennsylvania now leads the nation in the number of farms and acres of farmland preserved.
- Two of the Department of Community and Economic Development’s programs targeting revitalization of developed



areas were expanded in 2001. Funding for the Communities of Opportunity program was increased and \$5 million was set aside to encourage housing in previously developed areas. The Keystone Opportunity Program, which has created more than 10,000 new jobs and retained another 4,500 by promoting growth and investment in locally selected areas, was also expanded in 2001.

- The Greenways Partnership Commission, co-chaired by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Department of Transportation, unveiled the State Greenways Plan in 2001. This plan envisions a system of greenways and linear corridors of open space throughout Pennsylvania.
- The Department of Environmental Protection sponsored 15 Water Resources Forums and is working on a series of measures to improve both the quantity and quality of the state's water resources.
- The Department of Transportation created a new staff position to coordinate its work in integrating land use with transportation planning.



The natural beauty of Clarion County

Looking Ahead – Agenda 2002

In 2002, the Center and its partners will continue their aggressive efforts to promote sound land use in Pennsylvania through Growing Smarter. As a follow-up to the 2001 statewide Growing Smarter Conference, a series of regional Quality of Life Conferences are planned for the Fall of 2002. These conferences will bring together business leaders, community and economic development organizations, and local government officials to identify and address regional land use planning and growth issues.




Boalsburg in Centre County

The Center will also focus on core communities — the population centers of Pennsylvania — and ways to strengthen them. A “tool kit” will be developed to identify state resources available to strengthen and revitalize core communities. In its outreach, the Center will promote “smart codes” that make it easier to rehabilitate existing structures, thereby providing another tool to revitalize older communities.

As part of the Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP) grants, the Center is partnering with





other agencies in a pilot program to assist in providing funding in a single planning effort that addresses multiple needs such as greenways, environmental protection, open space and transportation.

The Center will continue to strengthen its partnership with county planning agencies and begin to offer limited financial assistance to smaller, distressed counties for planning staff. The Center has already begun a series of on-site visits to every county planning office to learn more about their planning goals and needs.

Working Together to ‘Grow Smarter’

In the past year, the Governor's Center for Local Government Services continued to promote sound land use throughout the Commonwealth with a variety of approaches — outreach, education and training, technical assistance, financial assistance, and state agency coordination. To achieve its objectives, the Center has sought to collaborate with other organizations and individuals who have similar goals.

In the three short years since Executive Order 1999-1 on land use planning was issued, sound land use and Growing Smarter have become priorities for state agencies, local governments and the citizens of Pennsylvania. In all, the Center has received an enthusiastic response from its partners, local government officials, and others to work together to support and promote land use planning so that Pennsylvania indeed “Grows Smarter.”

“Pennsylvania’s future depends on the quality of life we establish today.”

Jim Lombardo
Executive Director
Governor’s Center for
Local Government Services