

2002

ANNUAL REPORT ON LAND USE

Presented to
The Honorable Mark Schweiker, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



Prepared by



Pennsylvania Department
of Community and
Economic Development

January 2003

www.inventpa.com | www.landuseinpa.com





Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1

 Fourth in a Series 1

 Growth Trends 2

 Multimunicipal Planning Efforts 3

 Key Factors Influencing Land Use Trends 3

 Pennsylvania at a Crossroads 4

Chapter I – Introduction 7

Chapter II – Planning and Growth Trends 9

 What Are Pennsylvania’s Population Patterns? 9

 Inventory of County and Local Planning Tools 12

 Summary 15

Chapter III – Key Factors Influencing Land Use Decisions 17

 Why Is Pennsylvania’s Population
 Distributed in its Current Pattern? 17

Chapter IV – Pennsylvania at a Crossroads 23

 Resources Worth Protecting 23

 At the Crossroads 23

 The State’s Role 25

 Local Government’s Role 26

 The Role of the General Public and Private Sector 27

**Appendix – Planning and Growth Trends
Background Documentation 29**





Executive Summary

Pennsylvania is fortunate. The Commonwealth has been blessed with abundant natural and historic resources; its forests, farmland, streams, and rivers are the envy of other states. But Pennsylvania is more than majestic trees, bountiful farm fields, and flowing rivers. It is also home to more than 12 million people, and these residents require homes, businesses, industries, and schools.

Pennsylvania is also a state of contrasts. Its communities range from the prosperous and rapidly growing to those that are socioeconomically stagnant. Over the past decade, certain parts of the Commonwealth have experienced slow growth or even a decline in growth, while in other areas of the state, rapid growth has resulted in sprawling development and the problems that accompany such sprawl. Growth into these newly developed areas is often less than smart. It takes population away from cities and towns where an infrastructure exists and brings the need for costly roads and water and sewer lines to these new areas.

Four years ago, Pennsylvania embarked on a significant land use initiative designed to protect the state's valuable resources. The Governor's Land Use Executive Order 1999-1 recognized the Commonwealth's land as a finite resource and identified land use as Pennsylvania's most pressing environmental priority. Recognizing the important role that local government plays in successfully protecting this valued resource, the order designated the Governor's Center for Local Government Services as the principal state agency for land use assistance and monitoring.

Since that time, programs have been initiated to promote Growing Smarter, municipalities have been provided with additional tools to plan better, and money has been directed toward efforts to promote sound land use, preserve farmland, and protect the environment.

Fourth in a Series

The Governor's Center for Local Government Services promotes sound land use with a variety of approaches, including outreach, education and training, technical assistance, financial assistance, and state agency coordination. The Center also must report land use trends in Pennsylvania annually to the governor. This Annual Report on Land Use is the fourth in a series of reports prepared by the Center since the Commonwealth introduced its Growing Smarter Initiative.

This report examines Census 2000 and other population patterns in an attempt to answer the questions: *how* and *why* is population distributed throughout Pennsylvania in its current pattern? The report considers the impact of land uses, infrastructure, cost of living, commuting patterns, and business location decisions in determining Pennsylvania's growth and development patterns in various regions of the Commonwealth.

In this report, we will also note the progress that counties and multimunicipal groups have achieved in conducting comprehensive land use planning in recent years. Now in the third year of the Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP), the Center distributes funding for county and municipal comprehensive planning with a special emphasis on multimunicipal efforts.

Finally, the Center uses this report to suggest that Pennsylvania is at a crossroads in terms of its land use planning and, depending on which path we choose, two scenarios emerge for Pennsylvania: one, *we do nothing* and let current land use patterns continue, or two, *we do something* to halt the loss of valuable land to poorly planned development and practice smart growth.

Growth Trends

Census 2000 and other data reveal information on Pennsylvania's growth and shifting population. Analysis of this data indicates the following growth trends:

- **Trend 1: *Pennsylvania's growth is stagnant compared to that of the nation.*** Although Pennsylvania grew in the 1990s to 12.28 million residents, its rate of growth lagged significantly behind that of the nation overall. While Pennsylvania's population grew by 3.4 percent, the national increase was 13.2 percent. The Commonwealth's growth rate also lagged behind those of its neighboring states, except for West Virginia.
- **Trend 2: *Statewide, more citizens are migrating out of than into Pennsylvania.*** Between 1990 and 2000, a total of 1,728,084 people moved into the Commonwealth, while 1,887,605 moved out, creating a net out-migration of 159,521 citizens.
- **Trend 3: *People are migrating to Pennsylvania's eastern and southcentral counties.*** Eastern counties are gaining people primarily from New York and New Jersey, while counties in the southcentral part of the state are seeing an influx of residents from the Baltimore and Washington, D.C., areas.
- **Trend 4: *The growth occurring in eastern and southcentral Pennsylvania is part of a regional growth corridor.*** These growing regions of Pennsylvania are part of a band of population growth that surrounds the Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New Jersey, and New York metropolitan areas.
- **Trend 5: *Growth in Pennsylvania's western and northern tier counties is stagnant or declining.*** During the 1990s, 19 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties experienced a loss in population. Thirteen of these counties were located in western and northern Pennsylvania.
- **Trend 6: *Urbanized areas continue to experience population loss, while many traditionally rural areas are growing.*** During the 1990s, Pennsylvania's townships grew by 10 percent, while its cities lost 4 percent of their population and boroughs lost 2 percent. In 1980, 52 percent of the state's population lived in cities and boroughs. By 2000, this percentage had decreased to 26.
- **Trend 7: *Fewer people are consuming greater amounts of land.*** Despite our relatively slow population growth rate, Pennsylvania is ranked fifth in the nation for change in the amount of land developed. Only Texas, Georgia, Florida, and California rank higher.

Multimunicipal Planning Efforts

Since 1988, counties have been required to adopt comprehensive plans. While most counties have adopted such plans, many of these documents are more than 10 years old. Under legislation passed in 2000, counties must update their plans every 10 years.

As a result of amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code in 2000 and increased state funding for multimunicipal efforts, the number of municipalities joining forces to plan and update their comprehensive plans has increased from 134 in 1998 to 628 in 2002. Approximately 24 percent of the Commonwealth's 2,566 municipalities are now part of a multimunicipal planning effort.

Key Factors Influencing Land Use Trends

By further examining Census 2000 and other data, this report attempts to explain *why* Pennsylvania's population is distributed the way it is. The following factors influence land use trends throughout the Commonwealth:

- **Factor 1: *Government and government policy.*** Competition among municipalities to attract new business, local tax policies, perceived school quality, and availability of infrastructure all have a strong influence on where businesses locate and people live. A heavy reliance on property taxes to fund schools and other services frequently leads to a competitive climate for proposed development, and as a result, local decisions sometimes override regional considerations.
- **Factor 2: *Transportation and infrastructure.*** Because land use and infrastructure are inherently linked, where Pennsylvanians choose to live and work affects the level of infrastructure required to sustain their daily activities. Areas that are more accessible to roads, water, and sewer have a greater chance of being developed in the future. If we do not live, work, and shop in the same central location, transportation infrastructure must support our travels. Likewise, if water and sewer are not readily available to support development, developed densities will be reduced.
- **Factor 3: *Economic climate.*** Greater job opportunities attract a greater number of residents to an area. Conversely, businesses seek locations with an ample and qualified workforce.
- **Factor 4: *Changing lifestyle patterns and quality of life.*** Quality of life tends to be a matter of personal preference. While one family may choose to live on five acres in a rural location, another family might prefer the



excitement of a vibrant downtown area equipped with ready shopping and dining establishments. According to trends developed by analyzing census, migration, and commuting pattern data, many Pennsylvanians are moving away from urban areas and first-generation suburbs to rural areas and suburbs that are farther out.




Pennsylvania at a Crossroads

Pennsylvania's economy is closely linked to its land, which is dominated by forests (54 percent of the state's land) and farmland (26 percent). Agriculture, Pennsylvania's leading industry, contributed \$4.8 billion to the state's economy in 2000. The state's second largest industry, tourism, draws thousands of visitors to Pennsylvania each year to enjoy its forests, water resources, fishing habitats, gamelands, scenic beauty, cultural and historic amenities, and recreational opportunities.

On the other hand, Pennsylvania's manufacturing base, once considered one of the state's largest industries, is on the decline. In fact, the state has now moved toward a service-based economy. In the Delaware Valley alone, the number of manufacturing jobs has decreased from 595,500 in 1970 to 331,500 in 1999, while the number of service-sector jobs has increased from 485,800 in 1970 to 1.2 million in 1999.

This shift in Pennsylvania's economy is reflected in our population trends. There has been a continuing population decline in our urban and older suburban areas and population growth in the traditionally rural and newer suburban areas of the state. In the last 20 years, Pennsylvania's urban communities have gone from representing 52 percent of the state's population in 1980 to representing only 26 percent of the population in 2000.

These shifts in population have created a major dilemma for the Commonwealth and its communities, especially in terms of sound land use and smart growth. While our urban communities are left with large areas of vacant and/or underdeveloped industrial and commercial properties, large amounts of land in rural and newer suburban areas of the state are being consumed for residential and commercial purposes. Consequently, we are faced with a variety of issues, including but not limited to transportation and other infrastructure, taxation, the economy, and our environment, all of which are discussed further in this report.



This report describes five major factors that have brought about change in the Commonwealth in recent decades and that have influenced our use of land:

- Urban flight
- New highway construction
- Loss of farmland and open space to development
- Regional economic decline
- Population shifts

With so much riding on our land, we must do a better job of protecting our valuable resource. Our very future depends on it. Pennsylvania is at a crossroads, and, depending on which path we choose for land use in the future, two different scenarios emerge.

If we choose to do nothing, the trends described in this report will continue. People will continue to relocate from our urban areas to suburban and rural areas of the state. Costly new and improved highways will be required to accommodate more development in non-urban areas. We will continue to lose farm and forest lands to new development. Regions of the state that are in economic decline will likely maintain their descent, as people and businesses continue to move to newer, more prosperous areas.

If we choose to do something and plan for smart growth, we may be able to conserve and preserve more of our natural and historic resources, reinvigorate our urban areas and make them more attractive to citizens and businesses, and bring new prosperity to all regions of the Commonwealth.

If we choose the path to smarter growth, state agencies will continue to expand their initial efforts to adjust policies and programs to reflect the intent expressed in the Governor's Land Use Executive Order 1999-1. Local government officials will work together to develop and update comprehensive plans and land use regulations in a manner consistent with those of neighboring municipalities and other levels of government. The number of multimunicipal plans will continue to increase. Businesses and the general public will support state and local efforts to promote better land use planning and smart growth.

Pennsylvania has a rich heritage and a promising future that are directly tied to the use of its land. For that reason, the Commonwealth, its municipalities, and its citizens must make every effort to protect our land and its valuable assets. Our very future depends on it.

Introduction

Pennsylvania is a large and diverse state, home to more than 12 million inhabitants who reside in cities, townships, and boroughs of various sizes that comprise the state's urban and rural landscapes. The Commonwealth is blessed with an abundance of natural and historic resources and farmland that ranks among the best in the world. Our traditions and heritage date to the very origins of this country. Thanks to our many natural resources and an industrious people, Pennsylvania's economy helped fuel the nation's development.

Pennsylvania is indeed fortunate, but not without issues. It is a state of contrasts, characterized by communities that are economically prosperous and experiencing rapid growth, while others are socio-economically stagnant. This circumstance mirrors the picture of a nationwide trend where traditional urbanized areas are losing population and a healthy tax base and suburbs or outer fringe areas have become today's quality-of-life meccas.

As the Commonwealth has grown and changed during the past decades, population shifts have dramatically affected both the physical and economic landscape of the state. Suburbs and rural areas that are growing due to population increases have been forced to strain their financial resources to invest in costly infrastructure, such as roads, water and sewer lines, and educational facilities. Older urban communities are experiencing quite the opposite effect of an aging and under-utilized infrastructure.

By choice and by necessity, Pennsylvanians have become more mobile. This new emphasis on mobility is particularly defined and enabled by dependence on the automobile, taxes our environment, strains existing transportation systems, and continually threatens our quality of life. More and more, we tend to live in one community and work, shop, and enjoy leisure time in others. Increasingly, this mobility may run contrary to the best efforts of local governments to effectively plan their futures. Today, local governments are more cognizant of how the land use decisions of one community can impact an entire region. The value of intergovernmental cooperation, fused with the strong tradition of local government, will provide the best avenue for our citizens to address the Commonwealth's most pressing land use issues.

Efforts to promote sound land use planning began under the Ridge administration and have continued uninterrupted under the strong leadership of Governor Mark Schweiker. As a former local and county official, Governor Schweiker is a strong advocate for local government and intergovernmental cooperation. Both are cornerstones for the Commonwealth's Growing Smarter Initiative.

As a result of the Ridge-Schweiker administration's support and the efforts of many individuals and organizations, the awareness of land use planning issues



within the Commonwealth have become more pronounced. Discussion now centers on the problems and changes that result from unplanned growth. To protect land as a finite natural resource, encourage economic development with environmental considerations, and most importantly, improve the quality of life, both citizens and local government officials must use the planning tools now available to carefully direct Pennsylvania's future.

In the Annual Report on Land Use, the Governor's Center for Local Government Services:

- Examines trends derived from Census 2000 and other data to paint a picture of Pennsylvania today,
- Reports on the status of county and multi-municipal planning across the Commonwealth,
- Discusses why Pennsylvania's population is distributed in its current pattern, and
- Offers a glimpse of two alternative scenarios for the future of Pennsylvania.

