

## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

**B**eaver County is located 30 miles north of Pittsburgh, occupies 444 square miles, and is centrally located along Pennsylvania's western border with Ohio and West Virginia. Beaver County is bordered to the north by Lawrence County, to the east by Butler and Allegheny Counties, to the south by Washington County, and to the west by the states of Ohio and West Virginia. Beaver County is divided into 54 municipalities, including two cities, 22 townships, and 30 boroughs. Beaver Borough is the county seat.

Throughout Pennsylvania's industrial history, Beaver County has been a significant contributor of products and resources. It lies within the Pittsburgh metropolitan area and was once one of the most highly industrialized counties in the state. The collapse of the nation's steel industry in the late 1970s and continuing into the early 1980s significantly impacted Beaver County and the region. The closure of the County's primary industrial facilities resulted in significant job and population losses. Since 1980, the County's population losses have slowed as its service-based industries have strengthened.

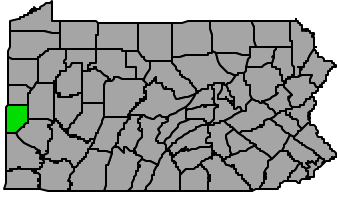
### **Existing Land Use Conditions**

According to the Beaver County Comprehensive Plan (1999), the highest concentrations of development exist throughout the river valleys as former steel industrial centers located along the Ohio and Beaver Rivers. An examination of the County's existing land uses reveals 76 percent of the County remains in

agricultural or forested use. However, recent growth patterns show an increase in the number of new single family and multi-family residential developments extending onto the plateau areas above the river valley communities. These development patterns are consistent with statewide land use patterns where cities and boroughs are experiencing an outward movement of their populations into the suburban and rural townships.

### **Key Land Use Issues**

- ☑ **Beaver County's population is dispersing without growing.** The County's urban river valley communities are declining in population and economic activity as public utility improvements have promoted growth into the outlying suburban and rural townships. From 1990 to 2000, the County's population decreased by 9.5 percent, while the number of single family housing units (built primarily in outlying suburban and rural townships) increased by 3.6 percent.
- ☑ **The majority of the County's new development is occurring east of Route 60.** Limited infrastructure, steep slopes, and public sentiment have kept development pressures from rapidly expanding westward.
- ☑ **Recent growth and development in nearby Cranberry Township (Butler County) has provided major economic growth opportunities for the eastern region of Beaver County.** Future



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highway improvements will improve access between Beaver County's river valley communities and Cranberry Township.

- ☑ **High concentrations of residential and strip commercial development are occurring along the Brodhead Road corridor**, resulting in increased traffic volumes and decreased capacity. Such development has proliferated access management issues throughout this corridor. This, in turn, has led to increased traffic congestion and other traffic safety concerns.
- ☑ **Future growth and development pressures are well defined and focused along the County's major highway corridors.** The 1999 Comprehensive Plan outlined five distinct growth areas: (1) Intersection of PA Routes 60 and 151, resulting from the Pittsburgh International Airport; (2) Aliquippa/Hopewell Exit along PA Route 60; (3) Route 60 and 51 corridors in Chippewa and Brighton Townships; (4) Crows Run Corridor east of Route 989 in southeastern New Sewickley Township and Economy Borough; and (5) Route 18 corridor through Big Beaver and Homewood Boroughs.
- ☑ **Beaver County's agricultural land uses are in decline** as the strength and viability of the County's agricultural industry has waned. From 1987 to 1997, the County lost 71 farms and 5,289 acres of farmland.

- ☑ **Agricultural lands are being preserved in Beaver County.** The Beaver County Agricultural Land Preservation Board has preserved over 1,200 acres of agricultural land through the County's agricultural easement purchase program.

### **Land Use Planning Activities**

- ☑ In 1999, the Beaver County Board of Commissioners adopted its new County comprehensive plan entitled, *Horizons: A Planning Guide for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.
- ☑ The County's first multi-municipal comprehensive plan was prepared for Ambridge Borough and neighboring municipalities. This project was partially funded by a \$78,000 LUPTAP grant.