

## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

**C**umberland County is located in south central Pennsylvania and adjoins Perry County to the north, Franklin County to the west, Adams County to the south, and York County to the southeast. Cumberland County's eastern border with Dauphin County is joined by the Susquehanna River. Cumberland County covers 550 square miles and is divided into 33 municipalities, which consist of 11 boroughs and 22 townships. Centrally located, the Borough of Carlisle is the county seat.

According to the 2000 Census, Cumberland County has the 17<sup>th</sup> largest population (213,674) and the 15<sup>th</sup> greatest density (388.4 persons per square mile) in Pennsylvania. Seventy-five percent of this total population is classified by the Census as urban. The eastern-most portion of the County is characterized by high-density, mixed urban development, which is primarily an extension of the City of Harrisburg urbanized area. In fact, 81 percent (173,136 persons) of the County's total population resides in the eastern portion of the County. High-density mixed-use development is also present in the older urban centers of Carlisle, Mount Holly Springs, and Shippensburg Boroughs.

Land use patterns west of Carlisle are primarily agricultural followed closely by low-density residential. Here the landscape is predominantly rural in character, pocketed by small mixed-used villages. Random strip development does, however, exist along U.S. Route 11 and PA Route 641.

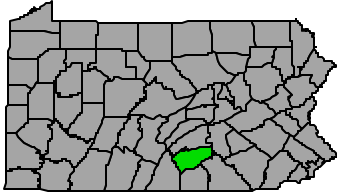
Geographically, Cumberland County lies within the Cumberland Valley and is naturally bounded to the north by Blue Mountain and to the south by South Mountain. The Cumberland Valley, with its beautiful landscape, fertile soils, and abundance of water and game attracted many settlers and traders. These amenities, coupled with its rich transportation system, made Cumberland County the nation's gateway to the West.

### **Existing Land Use Conditions**

Although classified as a predominantly urban population, the 304,375 acres (88.2%) of Cumberland County's land area is undeveloped. Of this total, 33.2 percent is in forest and 53.2 percent is in agriculture. Forested areas are predominant along the County's northern and southern tier areas, while agricultural uses are concentrated in the rich limestone valley.

### **Key Land Use Issues**

- ☑ **Cumberland County's land uses are highly influenced by its rich transportation system.** Interstate 81 serves as the primary transportation corridor in the County, traversing its entire length from Shippensburg to the Susquehanna River. Between these two nodes, the County's development impacts are concentrated in close proximity to the highway's 10 interchanges. A major land use impact stemming from this transportation system is the proliferation of the County's warehousing/distribution industry. This land use creates traffic



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and community impacts that are politically and publicly unpopular.

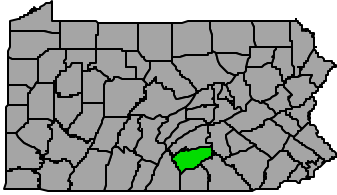
- ☑ **The majority of Cumberland County's boroughs east of Carlisle are depopulating, while the suburban and rural townships are fueling the County's overall population growth.** From 1990 to 2000, the boroughs combined lost nearly five percent of their population, while the suburban and rural townships experienced a combined population increase of over 15 percent. These trends are indicative of the fact that the County's rural-farming communities west of Carlisle are experiencing greater development pressures.
- ☑ **Agriculture uses are steadily declining in Cumberland County.** The majority of these losses were experienced in the western rural municipalities, which is indicative of the County's ever-increasing development pressures. Moreover, there is a great disparity in the amount paid to a land owner through the County's agricultural easement purchase program (on average, \$2,000 per acre) versus the fair market value (\$50,000-\$60,000).
- ☑ **Cumberland County's housing market is predominated by single-family units, the development of which has had a profound impact on the County's existing open space and agricultural lands.** According to the Cumberland County Planning Commission's annual report, construction of single-family homes dominated the market in 2002,

with final land development plans approved for 883 homes; this is almost double the amount approved for multi-family homes and townhouse units.

- ☑ **Dispersed development in the County's rural townships has caused increased congestion on local and state highway systems.** This trend has fueled the discussion on the need for more efficient modes of transportation, including public transportation improvements in the form of a regional commuter rail system.
- ☑ **The number of residential development proposals having 100 units or more is increasing.** Recently, Middlesex, Monroe, and South Middleton Townships have received development proposals calling for 1,000, 700, and 200 residential units, respectively. The impacts of such large developments need to be closely monitored in terms of municipal services, transportation, and environmental issues.

### **Land Use Planning Activities**

- ☑ **Cumberland County continues to take a proactive approach towards its land use planning initiatives,** which is demonstrated by its numerous strategic planning initiatives. Such initiatives include the County Comprehensive Plan Update, Exit 44 Land Use/Transportation Study, Countywide Greenway Study, Open Space Preservation Plan, and the I-81 Corridor Study.



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- ☑ **The Central Cumberland County Task Force received statewide recognition for its development of the Exit 44 Land Use/Transportation Study.** This study set a precedent for intergovernmental cooperation in land use and transportation planning initiatives to develop a strategic future land use and transportation improvement plan for the I-81 Exit 44 Interchange area.
- ☑ **The “Future of Cumberland County Agricultural Committee” has spearheaded an effort to study the present state and future sustainability of Cumberland County’s agriculture and agri-business community.** The results of this study will provide a strategy for helping agri-business to operate profitably in the County.
- ☑ **A 229-acre farm in Cumberland County (Southampton Township) is the sixth in the state to participate in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture’s Installment Purchase Agreement (IPA) plan.** Under the IPA program, farmers can gain better tax advantages when selling their easements, by deferring all of part of the purchase price—and the resulting capital gains taxes—for up to 30 years.
- ☑ **Intergovernmental cooperation is a widely used practice in Cumberland County** as 23 of its 33 municipalities are members of organized councils of government (COGs).