

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Delaware County is located in southeastern Pennsylvania and is bordered by the states of Delaware and New Jersey to its south, and by the Pennsylvania counties of Chester, Montgomery, and Philadelphia. The County is predominantly urbanized and contains some of the first generation suburbs of Philadelphia. The County has 49 municipalities, including 27 boroughs, 21 townships, and one city, the City of Chester. Development has occurred in rings that radiate out from Philadelphia, with the oldest in the eastern part of the County and the newest in the western part.

According to the 2000 Census, Delaware County had the fifth largest population and the second greatest density in Pennsylvania. Its population was 550,864, though it grew by only six tenths of a percent (0.6%) between 1990 and 2000. Its population density was 2,987 people per square mile with a land area of 184.4 square miles. Compare this with Forest County that had a population density of 12 persons per square mile in 2000. Additionally, the County experienced a significant net out-migration of residents in the 1990s.

Existing Land Use Conditions

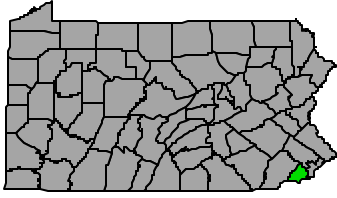
The urbanized character of Delaware County is reflected by its current land use conditions where 51 percent of the County's total land area consists of residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Much of the County's developed land exists as single-family detached units and parking

lots. Approximately 49 percent of the County's total land area is undeveloped, with 44 percent of this total devoted to forest and agricultural uses.

Delaware County's proximity to Philadelphia has largely shaped its land uses. For three centuries, people have been attracted to the County because of its easy access to Philadelphia's trade, products, and culture. In the last century, the Delaware River played a major role in attracting large companies to the area such as Sun Shipbuilding, Ford Motor Company, Westinghouse Electric Company, oil refineries, and others. This aggregate of jobs and opportunities, and the relatively flat terrain, precipitated the construction of many new residential developments throughout the middle and late 20th Century. The County reached its largest decennial population in 1970 at 603,456, and since then, some residents have migrated out of the County, attracted by larger homes and newer suburbs of the outer ring of counties surrounding Philadelphia.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Delaware County is under great pressure to protect open space.** Delaware is one of Pennsylvania's most urbanized counties as evidenced by its density of 2,987 people per square mile (second only to Philadelphia with 11,234 people per square mile). Open space is a valuable and disappearing asset in the County. In 2000, 14,241 of its 118,035 acres were documented as protected open space (parks and land trust lands).



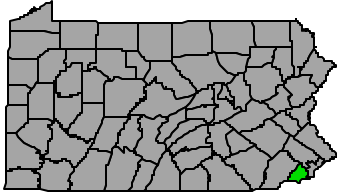
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The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's "2025 Open Space Network" established a goal of protecting an additional 18,540 acres of open space by the year 2025 (this total would represent 25 percent of the County's land area). One of the ways the County is addressing this goal is through its "Open Space Mapping Program."

- ☑ **Delaware County contains some of Philadelphia's first generation suburbs that have been hit hard by migration to the outer suburbs.** Delaware County's core cities, such as Chester, and its first generation suburbs, situated next to Philadelphia, have been losing a substantial number of both residents and jobs since 1950. The city and the first generation suburbs have lost upper and middle class households and jobs, thus shrinking tax bases, increasing the demand for social services, and stressing local government's ability to finance local services. Additionally, racial composition has shifted from predominantly white to predominantly non-white. The William Penn School District, for example, saw its school demographics change from 68 percent white, 32 percent non-white in 1985 to 24 percent white, 76 percent non-white in 1998.
- ☑ **Delaware County experienced a significant net out-migration in the 1990s.** As recorded by the 2000 Census, approximately 23,000 more people moved out of the County than moved into it between 1995 and 2000.

Delaware County residents generally moved west through the outer suburbs and eventually to Chester, Philadelphia, and Montgomery Counties in Pennsylvania, and New Castle County in Delaware according to Internal Revenue Service migration data. It is notable that some people migrated out to Chester County, while others chose the urban setting of Philadelphia. In a comparison of age group populations between 1990 and 2000, Delaware County experienced an almost 7 percent decrease in the age group of 25 to 44 years. The other age groups remained relatively unchanged, except for a slight increase in the age group of 45 to 64 years.

- ☑ **Even with Delaware County's limited amount of developable land, the County's housing units increased at a greater pace than its population.** Delaware County's quantity of housing units increased by 2.8 percent between 1990 and 2000, while its population increased by only 0.6 percent. Housing units outpacing population growth was a trend experienced by most of Pennsylvania's counties in the 1990s, but this is still significant for the County. Additionally, an increase in the number of households during the 1990s was almost 5,000, while the size of households decreased about three percent, resulting in and explaining the need for additional housing units.
- ☑ **Delaware County is challenged by traffic congestion and is encouraging alternative transportation choices.** The



Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission found that the metropolitan area of Philadelphia, which includes Delaware County, increased its average annual daily traffic by approximately 16 percent between 1990 and 1995, and vehicle availability increased by 2.6 percent during the same period. Also, public transit usage declined between 1990 and 1999. To minimize the traffic congestion that can result from these trends, the County is working to provide alternatives to single occupancy vehicles through carpool programs, public transit services, corporate shuttles, telecommuting, and other mobility alternatives programs.

Land Use Planning Activities

☑ **Planning activities in Delaware County have substantially increased in the past several years.** Municipalities are making a direct connection between planning activities and quality of life. All municipalities in the County have enacted a comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and subdivision and land development ordinance. Twenty-eight of the 49 municipalities have updated their comprehensive plans since 1995 or are currently in the process. The County is also in the process of updating its comprehensive plan and subdivision and land development ordinance. Twenty-three municipalities currently use the County's subdivision and land development ordinance.

- ☑ **Greater attention is being paid to revitalizing downtowns and first generation suburbs.** The County's "Renaissance Program" addresses five critical elements important to making these communities more attractive, livable, safe, and economically viable. The program consists of two phases, planning and implementation, and will entail the development of a revitalization strategy and a prioritized list of projects to be implemented.
- ☑ **Delaware County's municipalities are demonstrating a growing interest in multi-municipal planning.** Most municipalities in the County that have recently updated their comprehensive plan have done so through multi-municipal efforts. At least five different efforts in the past three years have included 15 municipalities. This is in addition to Delaware County's extensive participation in the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's activities.