

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Fayette County is located in southwest Pennsylvania, and is surrounded by the counties of Greene and Washington to the west, Westmoreland to the north, Somerset to the east, and the West Virginia state line to the south. Although predominantly rural in character, the County has 42 municipalities, including 24 townships, 16 boroughs, and two cities. Uniontown is the county seat and a substantial services center for Fayette County.

The total population listed for Fayette County in the 2000 Census is 148,644, the 23rd most populated county, and with 188 residents per square mile, it is the 28th most densely populated county. From 1990 to 2000, Fayette County's population grew by 2.3 percent, ranking 37th among the counties in population growth.

The County's 66,490 housing units rank 23rd among Pennsylvania counties. With an average of 84 homes per square mile, Fayette has the 28th highest housing density. The County's housing supply increased by 8.3 percent from 1990 to 2000, the 30th largest rate of housing supply growth among the 67 counties. During the same period, the number of households grew by 6.9 percent, ranking 38th among the state's counties. Census data for 2000 indicates that 38 percent of the County's residents worked outside the County, placing Fayette County in 18th place among Pennsylvania counties.

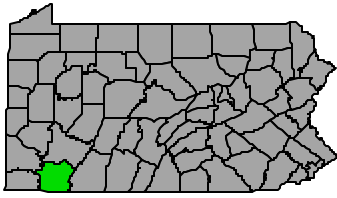
Existing Land Use Conditions

The predominantly rural character of Fayette County is reflected by its current land use conditions where 90.3 percent of the County's total land area is undeveloped. The majority of the undeveloped land is devoted to forest and agricultural uses.

With a land area of 790 square miles, Fayette County is the 24th largest among Pennsylvania's 67 counties. Fayette County can be divided into two parts, corresponding to the two sections of the Appalachian Plateau Province. The eastern half of the County forms part of the Allegheny Mountain Section and is mountainous, with Chestnut Ridge rising to heights of more than 2,900 feet. This area is sparsely populated. The western half of the County is a rolling and hilly plateau. Commercial woodland occupies 52 percent of the County's land area, and consists of second- and third-growth stands.

According to 1997 USDA data, Fayette County had 747 farms, ranking it in 22nd place among Pennsylvania's 67 counties. With a total of 109,000 acres of agricultural land, the County ranked in 30th position. An average farm in Fayette County had 145 acres, placing the County in 41st position.

As of December 2002, Fayette County's agricultural preservation program had purchased easements for six farms, ranking it in 39th place. These easements cover 776 acres, placing the County in 37th place. The average cost per acre of an easement was \$1,075.26, for 30th most expensive among



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the 67 counties. The County's total investment in agricultural easements was \$956,287.07, for 39th place statewide.

With the updating of the County ordinances, the development of prime agricultural land will be regulated differently than land with little or no agricultural activity. To date, the rural character of dominant land uses has limited the availability of public infrastructure. With the onset of development has come an increase in the number of malfunctioning on-lot systems.

The principal pressures for growth in Fayette County arise from the present difficulties of providing adequate transportation, sewerage, and water infrastructure. The Fayette Business Park, located on Route 40 in South Union Township, is the 'hot spot' for commercial development. The lack of coordination of funding sources at County, state, and local levels is a contributing factor to the lag in provision of adequate infrastructure.

Fayette County is aggressively seeking new business development. One of the County's new technology parks is located on Route 119 (north-south), which provides good access to Morgantown, West Virginia. Route 119 feeds directly into Route 43, the new Mon-Fayette Expressway, which, when completed, will connect to I-68 in West Virginia. This will provide easy access to Morgantown, West Virginia. Given that the business community perceives business taxes in West Virginia as onerous, this should make Fayette County's new

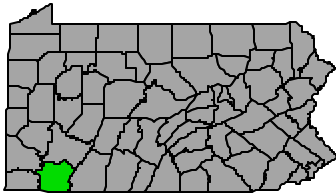
technology parks attractive locations for business investment from other areas.

Municipal officials in the Luzerne/Redstone/Brownsville area are taking a proactive approach in the use of multi-municipal planning to prepare for the opening of a new state correctional facility. A proposed road linked with the Expressway in Luzerne Township could service the correctional institution and allow for future commercial and industrial development in Luzerne Township.

A private developer has petitioned the County Commissioners to rezone property located in Springhill Township, near Toll Road 43, for an 800-acre mixed-use project. The site will include two 18-hole golf courses, a golf training school, riding stables, residential housing, condominiums/apartments, a clubhouse with a restaurant and a bar, commercial development in a strip mall, and office space. This property is a designated Keystone Opportunity Zone, which will exempt residents and businesses from taxes.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Fayette County's two cities, Uniontown and Connellsville, need revitalization efforts to ensure self-sustaining downtown districts.** South Union Township and Wharton Township appear to be the two growing municipalities in terms of population. With the opening of the new state correctional facility in the Luzerne Township/Brownsville area, that area is



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also expected to experience substantial growth within the next few years.

- ☑ **Although Fayette County has a substantial number of abandoned mine problem areas, the remediation of these mine areas should reassure residents concerned with continuing water quality,** and it should release additional land appropriate for needed business development and job creation.
- ☑ **The construction of microwave towers along Fayette County's National Road, Route 40, will improve cell phone service and provide opportunities for development of high-speed wireless Internet access.** The County Zoning Ordinance regulates the location of telecommunications towers and provides guidance to ensure compliance with the National Historical Preservation Act.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **Countywide subdivision and land development and zoning ordinances are being updated.** In 2000, the Planning Commission completed an update of the County comprehensive plan, which is in compliance with amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code. All 42 municipalities are covered either by local comprehensive plans, zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances, or by the County comprehensive plan and ordinances.

- ☑ **Eight municipalities are in the process of adopting joint municipal plans, and four multi-municipal plans are underway, with several others in preliminary planning stages.** Each municipal plan and the County plan address growth areas, but identification of specific boundaries is not currently under consideration.
- ☑ **Regional planning efforts have begun since Fayette County joined the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission as a full member.** Additional incentives for regional planning efforts in all areas, including housing, infrastructure, land use planning, transportation, and recreation, would help ensure that planning is as effective and as efficient as possible throughout the region.
- ☑ **The Mon-Fayette Expressway Land Use Management and Economic Development Analysis will provide recommendations for growth and development at each interchange and along the corridor of the Expressway.** This analysis is generally consistent with updating of the County ordinances and the municipal comprehensive plans.
- ☑ **An active Agricultural Land Preservation Board tracks agricultural land conversion.** The Board has identified agricultural security areas, and purchased development rights (easements) on several farms.