

## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

**H**untingdon County is located in the heart of Pennsylvania’s Juniata Valley Region – an area noted for its scenic landscape, historic heritage, and outdoor recreation opportunities. The County is most often recognized as the home of Raystown Lake, the largest inland lake in Pennsylvania. This 29,000-acre facility operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers includes an 8,000-acre lake, which borders Trough Creek State Park. In addition to this recreation area, the County is home to three State parks, a State forest, and State game lands. According to the 2000 Census, the County is home to 45,586 persons, which represents a 3.2 percent increase from 1990. The County is comprised of 48 municipalities – 18 boroughs and 30 townships – and has a population density of 52 persons per square mile. Huntingdon Borough is the county seat. With 6,918 residents, it remains the County’s largest population center despite a 4.4 percent population loss over the last 40 years.

### **Existing Land Use Conditions**

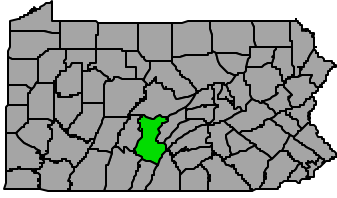
Huntingdon County encompasses 888 square miles. The predominant land use is forest, which covers approximately 69 percent of the County’s total land area. In addition to State and Federal lands, the County has a significant amount of agricultural land, which constitutes another 24.3 percent of the County’s total land area. Because of historic transportation routes

(e.g., Juniata River, canal, railroad, and highway), development has largely concentrated within the U.S. Route 22 corridor, a two-lane arterial that extends in an east-west direction, connecting Huntingdon County to the cities of Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

Only a small percentage of the County’s total land area is devoted to development. The County’s major commercial centers are located in Huntingdon Borough, Mount Union Borough, Shirley Township, and Smithfield Township.

### **Key Land Use Issues**

- ☑ **Seasonal housing comprises a significant percentage of the County’s housing stock.** According to the 2000 Census, there are 21,058 housing units in Huntingdon County – a 9.2 percent increase from 1990. Seasonal housing represents 15 percent of the County’s housing stock, a sharp contrast to the 2.8 percent of seasonal housing units statewide. This trend reflects Huntingdon County’s appeal as a vacation destination and the potential for growth in the second-home market.
- ☑ **A majority of the County’s residential developments do not have access to public water and sewer systems.** According to Phase I, Background Studies of the County Comprehensive Plan, *Continuity Through Conservation II* (1997), only 40 percent of the County’s housing units have access to community systems. Of the existing sewer and



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water systems, a number are inadequate or in need of upgrades. The County continues to support water and sewer improvements that encourage development, eliminate water pollution, and promote the health and safety of residents.

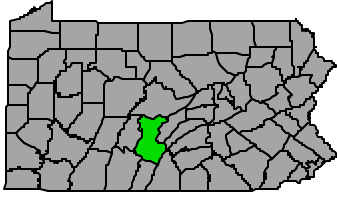
- ☑ **Additional capacity along the U.S. Route 22 corridor is needed to accommodate projected transportation demand.** In addition to road widening, the principles of access management must be implemented throughout the U.S. Route 99 corridor to maintain level of service (LOS) and to avoid strip-type development that degrades the community's high quality of life.
- ☑ **A large number of municipalities do not have land use controls.** The County has identified universal coverage by a subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) as a key need in its 2000 Comprehensive Plan, "Continuity Through Conservation II, The Plan." Only 30 of 48 municipalities have a SALDO. Eight municipalities have a zoning ordinance.

### **Land Use Planning Activities**

- ☑ **The County has drafted model ordinances to facilitate the universal adoption of development regulations.** The County's comprehensive plan, "Continuity Through Conservation II, The Plan," recognized that many local governments lack the resources to hire professional staff or to undertake

significant planning activity. Too often, these resource limitations place municipalities in a reactive position, unable to consider development opportunities within the context of a collective community vision. In addition to encouraging all 48 municipalities to adopt the County Comprehensive Plan by reference, the County also developed model ordinances to facilitate the universal adoption of SALDOs and the implementation of zoning in the County's boroughs and high-growth townships.

- ☑ **To facilitate implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, the County developed a series of indicators to monitor progress toward plan implementation.** A primary indicator was adoption by reference, of the County Comprehensive Plan. Thus far, 18 municipalities have adopted the Plan by resolution. This action gives communities an official Statement of Community Development Objectives, a necessary prerequisite for adopting zoning ordinances and commenting upon actions by other public bodies.
- ☑ **The Huntingdon County Planning Commission is leading an effort to digitize all tax parcel maps in the County.** In cooperation with the County Tax Assessment Office, County Planning Commission staff is digitizing county tax parcel maps. These maps will establish baseline information for a



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countywide land use inventory. They will also support the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program.

- ☑ **In 2003, the County secured designation of a PA Enterprise Zone (EZ).** The EZ is a linear corridor connecting key communities within the U.S. Route 22 corridor, the County's principle east-west arterial highway. To provide EZ businesses with the technical support they need to survive and prosper, the County has partnered with Juniata College to administer the EZ program. The College currently administers the Juniata Valley Business Incubator in conjunction with its Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership (JCEL). A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been executed to facilitate partnership opportunities with other key organizations, including Huntingdon County Business & Industry (HCB&I), Greater Huntingdon Chamber of Commerce, and the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau. A chief goal of the MOU is to provide "one-stop" business support services to EZ tenants.
- ☑ **To encourage greater coordination among planning and economic development agencies, Huntingdon County led the effort to develop a strategic action plan for economic development.** Completed in April 2003, the *Comprehensive Economic Analysis for Huntingdon County* utilized target

industry analysis and public involvement to draft an economic development agenda that reinforces community priorities outlined within the Comprehensive Plan. The project has successfully launched a number of local initiatives, including the Huntingdon County Partnership for Economic Progress and Leadership Huntingdon County, a locally developed leadership program.

- ☑ **The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has completed a Natural Heritage Inventory for Huntingdon County.** This inventory identifies Biological Diversity Areas (BDAs) and Landscape Conservation Areas (LCAs) and provides a scientific basis for the conservation of ecologically important land.
- ☑ **In 2002, the Huntingdon County Commissioners created an Agricultural Land Preservation Program, following PA Act 43 and 147 provisions.** The Huntingdon County Conservation District administers the Program with support from the County Planning & Development Department.