

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Lebanon County is located in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch Country, only 25 miles east of Harrisburg – the State Capitol. Established in 1813 from portions of Dauphin and Lancaster Counties, Lebanon evokes a rich agricultural heritage that is reflected in the numerous farmfields and food processing facilities dotting its landscape. The County’s diverse agricultural economy owes its success to rich limestone soils and good highway access. In fact, Lebanon County is the birthplace of turnpikes – predecessors to today’s modern highway system. At the turn of the century, Lebanon Valley’s farming community led a campaign to build turnpikes connecting their farms to markets in Lancaster, Philadelphia, and Reading. Both U.S. 422 and U.S. 322 follow portions of these early toll roads and remain catalysts for growth in Lebanon County.

Lebanon County is comprised of 26 municipalities – 18 townships, seven boroughs, and one city. Located at the intersection of PA Route 72 and U.S. Route 422, the City of Lebanon is the county seat and largest population center. With 24,461 persons, the City comprises 20 percent of the County’s total population, which grew to over 120,000 persons in the 2000 Census.

Existing Land Use Conditions

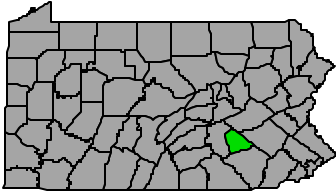
At 362 square miles, Lebanon County is not a particularly large county, but delivers big impact, particularly in the area of tourism development. Visitors to Lebanon Valley

can enjoy thoroughbred racing at Grantville’s Penn National Race Track, see into America’s industrial past at historic Cornwall Furnace, or experience the arts at the annual Mt. Gretna Art Festival. Because the County lies within easy reach of other visitor destinations in Hershey, Reading, and Lancaster, it has become a crossroads community. Heavy traffic volumes have invaded formerly peaceful rural towns, such as Annville, Lebanon, and Schaefferstown.

Despite these development pressures, the dominant land use in the County remains agricultural with approximately 56 percent of the total land area. Both the northern and southern reaches of the County are protected from future development by established conservation easements and/or State game lands. Development pressures stemming from Dauphin County along the Routes 322 and 422 corridors are particularly evident in the southwestern part of the County.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Its rural character, highway accessibility, and proximity to major urban areas make Lebanon County an attractive location for both developers and homeowners.** Three interstate highways (I-81, I-78, and I-76) place Lebanon County within commuting distance of major urban areas such as Philadelphia, New York, and Harrisburg/Hershey. The availability of developable land and proximity to major employment centers has made



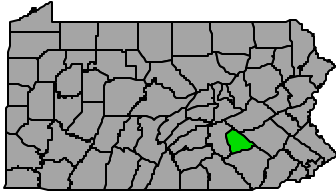
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Lebanon County an increasingly attractive option for business and industry. High housing costs in neighboring communities, particularly the Hershey and Lancaster areas, have contributed to Lebanon County's housing boom. According to U.S. Census data, over 9,000 housing units have been constructed in Lebanon County since 1980. The majority of new housing starts are single-family detached units. However, rental units and townhouse developments are increasingly common. As more families move to the area, some school districts are experiencing unexpected increases in student enrollment. In response, some schools are evaluating space needs and contemplating capital projects to accommodate projected growth.

- ☑ **The separation of work and residence has contributed to greater traffic congestion on Lebanon County's roadways.** Commuting data provided by the U.S. Census suggest that more residents are choosing to live in Lebanon County, but work elsewhere. In 1990, 31 percent of the County's workforce worked *outside* the County. By 2000, that number had jumped to 37 percent. As the County's residential population increases, the separation between home and work – and its impacts – have become more apparent. Commuting times have increased substantially over the last decade. In 1990, 22 percent of the County's workforce spent a *minimum* of 30

minutes en route to work. The average travel time was closer to 10 to 20 minutes. A decade later, 27 percent of the County's workforce faces a 30+-minute daily commute – and a growing number regularly travel 60+ minutes to work. This data suggests that residential location decisions are contributing to traffic congestion problems, particularly along the U.S. 422 and Route 72 corridors where much of the residential development is concentrated. Suburban development is placing strains on existing infrastructure, yet many municipalities lack the resources – and planning capacity – to support growth in a fiscally responsible manner.

- ☑ **Over the last decade, Lebanon County's population has become more urban.** U.S. Census data indicate that a majority (58%) of the County's population was classified as rural in 1990. By 2000, the majority had shifted to 69 percent *urban*. Surprisingly, the County's population has become more urban, while its only city – the City of Lebanon – continues to lose population. Since 1960, the City has lost 5,584 residents – a 19 percent rate of decline.
- ☑ **Lebanon County's traditional farming economy is threatened by rising land values and factory farming operations.** The County's prime agricultural lands have proven attractive to development because they offer well-drained soils and a comparatively flat landscape.



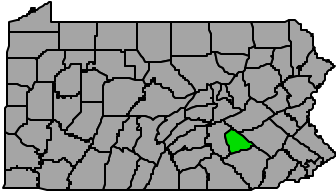
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These development pressures have increased land prices, which have placed some farmers in a compromising position. In an age where the federal government regulates commodity pricing and profit margins are low, farmers are attracted to development projects that can offer them a higher level of compensation than most agricultural preservation programs. While this trend is not unique to Lebanon County, it underscores the challenges faced by Lebanon's family farms.

- ☑ **Lebanon County has a strong commitment to farmland and open space preservation.** According to the Census of Agriculture (a national survey conducted at five-year intervals by the U.S. Department of Agriculture), from 1987 to 1992 the acreage devoted to cropland declined by 10,760 acres. Development pressures have driven up land values, making it difficult for farmers to remain economically competitive. In an effort to protect open space and to preserve the farm culture, Lebanon County administers an agricultural preservation program. Through its Ag Land Preservation Board, the County purchases conservation easements to protect highly productive farmland from future development.
- ☑ **Traffic congestion on PA Routes 72 and 501 have spurred interest in traffic relief strategies.** As the County's

primary north-south collector, PA Route 72 carries significant traffic volumes between the Interstate and the PA Turnpike. Yet, the highway does not have an interchange with I-78, limiting its ability to support the interstate system. A proposed interchange and relief route would allow through traffic to bypass downtown Lebanon. The County also envisions a realignment of PA Route 501 to eliminate congestion, access, and maneuverability problems in downtown Schaefferstown.

- ☑ **Sporadic residential development has led to the proliferation of public water and sewer systems that lack the financial and operational capacity to sustain future growth.** Historically, development in Lebanon County concentrated in its towns and boroughs. As the County's population has grown, many new residents have opted for planned developments in outlying townships as opposed to older, more established neighborhoods. This development pattern has placed increased pressure on small water systems that face great difficulty meeting today's drinking water standards. The County has partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to examine the market feasibility of regionalizing these systems to meet growing demand.
- ☑ **Farmland conversion is adversely affecting water quality within the Swatara Creek watershed.** Swatara



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Creek is the County's most significant waterway. As part of the Susquehanna River Basin, the Creek drains much of the County westward to the Susquehanna River. Over the last 40 years, the watershed has witnessed a 40 percent growth in population. As farmland is converted to residential and commercial uses, water quality concerns have shifted from agricultural runoff to urban runoff.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **Heavy traffic volume on State Routes 501 and 72 have spurred public interest in relief road projects – both in the Village of Schaefferstown and the City of Lebanon, respectively.** In the fall of 2000, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) initiated preliminary engineering and environmental studies to complete the Schaefferstown Bypass Project, which will construct a relief road for this historic community. Because the Route 72 corridor is riddled with deficiencies at numerous intersections, a Lebanon City bypass has not been forthcoming. However, improvements to the Route 72 corridor remain a County priority – both for the public's safety and the County's continued economic growth.
- ☑ **With the assistance of several state grants, Lebanon County is in the process of updating its County Comprehensive Plan.** This plan is unique in that state agencies have come together and reviewed the various

needs within the County and have coordinated the scope of work for the project. When adopted, the plan is expected to further multi-municipal planning among the County's many local governments.

- ☑ **Lebanon County's municipalities see the importance of using a zoning ordinance as a planning tool.** Twenty-four of the County's 26 municipalities have adopted a zoning ordinance. Almost all of these (22 municipalities) have been updated in the past five years. Twenty municipalities in Lebanon County have also adopted a comprehensive plan, though only six of these have been updated in the past five years.