

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Montgomery County is located northwest of the City of Philadelphia. The County is bounded by Bucks County to the northeast, Philadelphia County to the southeast, Delaware County to the south, Chester County to the southwest, Berks County to the northwest, and Lehigh County to the north. The County contains 482 square miles, or 310,000 acres of land. The County has very fertile soil and contains abundant limestone.

Montgomery County was carved from part of Philadelphia County by an act of the Pennsylvania Assembly on September 10, 1784. Montgomery County consists of 24 boroughs and 38 townships.

The County is the third most populous in Pennsylvania, containing 750,097 people in 2000. The County's population density, according to the 2000 Census, was 1,553 persons per square mile. The County contains large, growing employment centers providing about 500,000 jobs and a diverse economy.

Existing Land Use Conditions

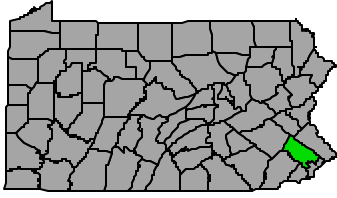
Over half of the County's total land area is undeveloped, with 34.4 percent devoted to forest and agricultural uses. Developed land comprises a nearly equal amount with 36.5 percent of the total land in the County. The County's general development patterns range from heavily suburban in the southeastern end of the County, rapidly growing and suburbanizing in the central

section, and mostly rural with rolling landscape and an active farming community in the northwestern portion. The County has urbanized boroughs along its rivers and rail lines including Norristown and Pottstown, which are industrial communities established in the nineteenth century along the Schuylkill River. Since the 1950s, the greatest change to the County has been the dramatic growth in its central part. Development has spread over the fertile soils that once supported productive farming and moved onward toward the western end of the County.

Montgomery County's population increase of 10.6% during the 1990s was much greater than during the 1970s and 1980s, when the population grew 3.1% and 5.4%, respectively. While the eastern section of the County (along its border with Philadelphia) continues to be the most densely populated, the greatest population gains are centered along and near the County's major expressways and arterial routes. These attractive routes have included: Route 202 corridor, Route 309 corridor, Route 422 corridor, Route 113 corridor, and Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike/I-476 corridor.

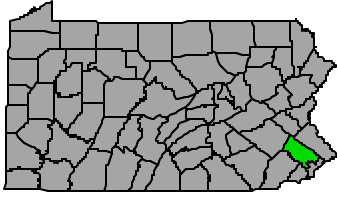
Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Intense development pressures are now being felt in the more rural, western portion of the County.** This pattern reflects a trend found in most densely populated metropolitan regions where more rural or suburban areas are growing faster than urban areas.



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- ☑ **Eastern Montgomery County, the most populous section of the County, has not gained much population since the 1980s.** “First-generation” suburbs are mostly located here, and they are starting to face some of the same issues as older boroughs. The most populous of the 62 municipalities of the County, found in the eastern portion of the County near Philadelphia, have been generally stable (slight gains or losses) in population since the 1980s. Population growth has shifted from the boroughs and townships in the east to the high-growth townships in central and western Montgomery County.
- ☑ **Montgomery County contains some of the region’s first industrial towns of the nineteenth century, which are now challenged to reinvent their economic bases.** Montgomery County’s population over the age of 65, 14.9 percent is greater than the national average of 12.2 percent (2000 Census). As the population has aged and industrial and commercial businesses have closed and not been replaced, these boroughs are struggling to meet an increased demand for social services and infrastructure upgrading with declining tax revenues.
- ☑ **Significant growth in the number of jobs in Montgomery County, and changes in the types of jobs, has created a shortage of workers.** A 60 percent increase in the number of jobs in the County in the past three decades has resulted in Montgomery County being a net importer of labor. More people come into the County each day to work than are commuting out – even to Philadelphia. While light manufacturing remains strong, the real growth has been in high-tech research and office jobs, as well as in services and retail. Pharmaceuticals and health care are particularly strong industries.
- ☑ **Like all suburban areas, Montgomery County faces the challenge of increased traffic congestion.** The growth of traffic, especially in the central and western portions, is increasing the need for expanded highway capacity. This growth has also increased the need for more and better public transportation and methods to reduce demand and improve the efficiency of the existing system.
- ☑ **Sprawling development, both residential and non-residential, is spreading out at ever-lowering densities.** This situation is creating a rapid loss of open land and the destruction of the rural landscapes and the historic character of the County, similar to what is occurring in other suburban counties. Reorienting this growth into more logical locations, such as already developed areas and designated growth areas, is a significant challenge.
- ☑ **High housing costs are also a major issue, one that is shared with the other suburban counties around Philadelphia.** While Philadelphia-area housing costs are significantly lower than many other large metropolitan



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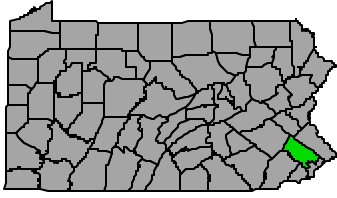
areas, it is a continuing hurdle for first-time buyers and those with below-median incomes to purchase homes.

Land Use Planning Activities

- Montgomery County is focusing its efforts on open space and farmland preservation.** The County has an active Farmland Preservation Program through Act 43, with almost 100 farms permanently preserved. In addition, the County adopted an Open Space Preservation Program in 1993, committing to an expenditure of up to \$100 million over 10 years for open space protection and enhancement, including the purchase of conservation land and the expansion of parks. Presently, this innovative effort has resulted in the preservation of almost 9,000 additional acres, the development of parks, and the construction of 23 miles of multi-use trails. To continue the effort over the next 10 years, County voters were asked in November 2003 to endorse the borrowing of another \$150 million to expand the preservation program.
- Through its Community Revitalization Program, the County is committed to helping to improve boroughs and the older township communities.** The goal is to enhance these areas physically and economically, reducing growth pressure on “greenfields” and making these municipalities more attractive for development. Grants currently totaling \$5 million per year are provided to

selected municipalities to assist their revitalization efforts.

- Municipalities in the County have a strong interest in planning activities.** All 62 of the municipalities in the County have an adopted zoning ordinance. Fifty-seven of the 62 municipalities have an adopted comprehensive plan. About two-thirds of the municipalities have some ongoing professional planning assistance provided through the County Planning Commission or through private consultants.
- Multi-municipal planning is gaining favor.** Currently, 25 municipalities are involved in “regional planning” efforts, using County Planning Commission assistance. These efforts have formed four regions containing between 6 to 8 municipalities each. One of the 4 multi-municipal efforts has resulted in the adoption of a regional plan and implementation efforts are underway. The other three areas are developing their regional plans.



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- ☑ **Montgomery County adopted a new countywide Comprehensive Plan in September 2004.** This plan replaces the existing 20-year-old plan and provides an up-to-date foundation for revising the local and multi-municipal planning efforts, encouraging consistency at all levels.
- ☑ **The County strongly advocates innovative planning techniques, especially those that preserve land and improve communities.** These efforts complement the County's funding programs. The County Planning Commission has developed educational materials and model zoning ordinances for innovative approaches, such as Transfer of Development Rights, Land Preservation, Clustering, Village Residential, Mixed-use Development, and Transit-Oriented Development. All are used to encourage municipalities and developers to strive for higher quality communities, achieve open space preservation, and create other public amenities through private sector development.
- ☑ **Montgomery County is focusing on implementing projects that enhance the quality of life for its residents.** For example, the County is a leader in developing a countywide regional trail system. These multi-use trails provide the recreational and transportation benefits residents desire and provides a unique quality-of-life resource that encourages economic development.