

## Land Use and Growth Management Profile

**P**erry County was established in 1820 from part of Cumberland County. Pennsylvania's 51<sup>st</sup> county is comprised of 30 municipalities – nine boroughs and 21 townships. Topography shaped much of the County's early settlement and continues to exert its influence on land use trends. Several small mountain ranges traverse the County, extending in a northeasterly direction. Historically, steep slopes limited development to the valley bottoms where fertile limestone soils supported a strong farming economy. The County's population has more than doubled in the last 40 years – from a low of 26,582 in 1960 to a high of 43,602 in 2000. Much of this growth has been concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of the County, which is quite accessible by highway to the State Capitol and to major employment centers throughout Dauphin and Cumberland Counties. The county seat is located in New Bloomfield.

### Existing Land Use Conditions

The Susquehanna River forms the County's eastern border and defines the boundary between Perry and Dauphin Counties. Topographic features delineate the County's northern and southern extent, which are defined by the Tuscarora Mountain and Blue Mountain, respectively.

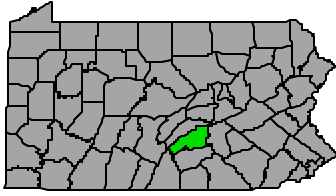
Less than four percent of the County's total land area is developed, with most of the remaining lands dedicated to State forests and State game lands. Development has

traditionally been restricted to residential development and limited commercial opportunities. The County's boroughs and towns were the primary population centers. Today, however, the County's nine boroughs represent less than 20 percent of the County's total population. Population growth has been most pronounced in outlying townships.

### Key Land Use Issues

Perry County is part of the Tri-County Region, a geographic area that encompasses Cumberland, Dauphin, and Perry Counties. The cultural and economic "heart" of the Tri-County Region is the City of Harrisburg, which is Pennsylvania's State Capitol. Access to federal highway funds motivated Perry County to join the Tri-County Region in the 1960s. However, these counties share commonalities that go beyond federal funding concerns. A significant amount of *economic* integration exists among these three communities. According to U.S. Census Worker Flow Files, nearly 70 percent of Perry County's resident workforce commutes *outside* the County to work. An overwhelming majority of these workers travel to Cumberland (33%) and Dauphin (30%) Counties, where many of the Capitol Region's largest employment centers are located. A small, but growing percentage commutes as far as Lebanon, Lancaster, and York Counties.

- ☑ **Townships in southeastern Perry County are transforming into bedroom communities for the expanding Harrisburg metropolitan area.** Rising

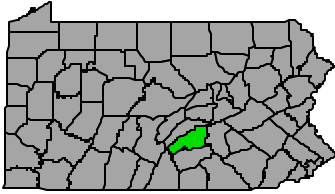


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real estate costs and development pressures in the Capitol Region have prompted many people to establish residence in Perry County, a predominantly agricultural community that has witnessed steady population growth since the 1960s. This population growth has resulted in increased traffic congestion on U.S. Routes 11/15, PA Route 274, and PA Route 34, particularly during a.m. and p.m. peak hours.

has appeared in Perry County. The County offers a wealth of opportunities for sportsmen (e.g., anglers, hunters) that make the County an attractive location for vacation homes and year-round living. Concerned about encroachment on Blue Mountain, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy (CPC) has worked in partnership with the Pennsylvania Game Commission to acquire and protect critical wildlife areas.

- ☑ **Completion of the Dauphin Bypass spurred development in eastern Perry County.** The Dauphin Bypass was constructed as a relief road for U.S. Route 22/322, which experienced frequent bottlenecks during rush hour and Penn State home game days. PennDOT led the bypass project, which involved the conversion of the existing two-lane highway into a 4-lane limited access highway. The Dauphin Bypass was first opened to traffic in 1999. This project underscored the County's ongoing efforts to attract quality business development to Perry County. This development is needed to balance the increasing costs of residential development, which places increased tax burdens on Perry's rural communities.
- ☑ **Residential development is encroaching on sensitive environmental areas.** As the Harrisburg area has become more congested, more housing development
- ☑ **As development pressures increase, the sustainability of the County's farming economy may come into question.** Agriculture remains a leading industry in Perry County, producing over \$58 million in farm products within a given year. Farming activity has concentrated in the valley bottoms because these lands offer the most fertile soils in the County. These lands are also some of the most attractive to development because the land is relatively flat. Should current trends continue, the County can expect to see farmland conversions happening with greater frequency. Some communities in Perry County are particularly vulnerable to uncontrolled development, because they lack zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development ordinances. It will be important to manage growth so that the County's rural character is retained.



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### Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **Several municipalities in Perry County participate in a Joint Task Force on Transportation & Planning.** Thirteen municipalities in Perry County joined four Cumberland County communities to identify workable solutions for the traffic congestion that characterizes U.S. Routes 11/15, PA Routes 944, 274, and 34. These corridors are increasingly utilized by commuter traffic because employment centers and residential communities are scattered throughout the region. This inter-municipal planning effort focused upon both safety and congestion solutions.
- ☑ **The Perry County Planning Commission has completed the County's Draft Comprehensive Plan (2005).** The Plan incorporates growth management strategies promoted by the Tri-County Regional Growth Management Plan.
- ☑ **Perry County is a participant in the Regional Growth Management Plan (RGMP), adopted by the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission.** The plan represents a collective effort to institute growth management strategies that will be embraced and implemented by the three counties within the Tri-County Region, which includes Cumberland, Dauphin, and Perry Counties. By recognizing Planned Growth Areas, the RGMP directs future development to those areas that have the greatest investment in public infrastructure and prevents continuation of the dispersed development pattern that has predominated over the past 50 years.
- ☑ **A new 56-acre business park is being developed to promote economic development in Perry County.** In a concerted effort to grow employment opportunities *within* Perry County, the County Commissioners established the Perry County Economic Development Corporation (PCEDC) and began work on a multi-tenant facility in Penn Township, off U.S. Routes 11/15. The objective of the project is to attract quality business opportunities to Perry County and to stem the out-migration of the County's workforce.