

## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

**P**hiladelphia County is located in the southeastern corner of Pennsylvania and is bordered by the Pennsylvania counties of Delaware, Montgomery, and Bucks, and the New Jersey counties of Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester. The City of Philadelphia entirely encompasses the County and thus will often be referred to as the City in this profile.

Philadelphia is the nation's 5<sup>th</sup> largest city and the most urbanized of Pennsylvania's counties. Its population of 1,517,550 persons (2000 Census) resides in a compact 135 acres. Since 1960, the City has experienced a net population loss of half a million persons and a net loss of a quarter million jobs. Still, with 11,234 residents per square mile and 750,000 jobs, Philadelphia retains a density and vitality that enables the City to serve as the major economic and cultural center for a tri-state area of six million people that encompasses much of eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and Delaware.

### **Existing Land Use Conditions**

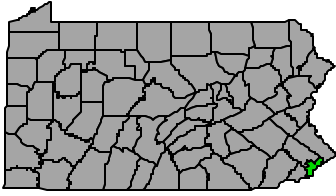
Developed land accounts for 82.1 percent of Philadelphia County's total land area. Residential, transportation, commercial, and trade businesses and uses account for most of the development within the County. City parks and recreation areas are part of the 17.6 percent of undeveloped land within Philadelphia County. As much as 7.7 percent of Philadelphia's land area may be described as vacant land or structures.

The City's pattern of development has been shaped by its location along the coastal plain at the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers. Settlement and commerce moved inland from these navigable rivers as an ever improving transportation network helped make Philadelphia a major port of entry for immigrants and imported goods, as well as a center for exports and manufacturing.

Today, primary ground transportation resources such as I-95 and the AMTRAK Northeast Corridor connect Philadelphia with coastal plain destinations to the north and south, while I-76 provides the major link east to New Jersey and west to Pennsylvania counties above the coastal plain. Maritime trade on the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers continues to connect Philadelphia and Pennsylvania to the world. Philadelphia International Airport, situated near the very river confluence where the City began, serves as a major hub for national and international aviation.

### **Key Land Use Issues**

**Philadelphia's key land use challenge has been its loss of population and employment.** From the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, Philadelphia experienced rapid and steady increases in jobs and population, but many of these gains have since been reversed. Since the mid-1900s, Philadelphia has struggled to transform its infrastructure and building stock, much of it designed for the needs of an earlier era, to serve the demands of more mobile, affluent households and decentralized businesses.



## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

One of the specific land use challenges presented by lost employment is the large number of former industrial parcels and buildings that remain vacant or underutilized. The City's rapid growth prior to 1950 was fueled by a robust manufacturing sector. Since 1950, growth in services and other economic sectors, particularly in the Center City or downtown area, has not been strong enough to compensate for steep decreases in manufacturing activity and employment. While numerous former industrial sites have been redeveloped for beneficial commercial, residential, recreation, and institutional activities, many more parcels remain a blighting influence.

Another challenge directly related to the decline of the City's manufacturing base is the reduced demand for housing, particularly in neighborhoods whose households once depended heavily upon manufacturing jobs. According to the 2000 Census, Philadelphia had almost 72,000 vacant housing units, 26,000 of which were outright abandoned. The Brookings Institution has reported that Philadelphia had the highest number of abandoned structures per capita, in a survey of 83 U.S. cities.

A broader issue affecting land use in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties is an inequitable distribution of needs and resources for employment, education, social services, and housing. New, low-density development targeted to middle and upper income residents and workers has

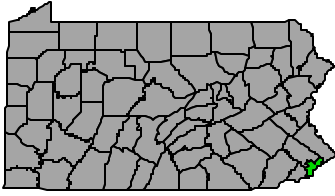
continued to push farther and farther away from Philadelphia. Over time, this decentralization has reduced the ability of Philadelphia and other older municipalities to provide access to jobs, adequate public education, and market-rate housing, while forcing these municipalities to shoulder a disproportionate share of the region's burden for social services and affordable housing.

In spite of population losses (and suburban sprawl), Philadelphia continues to be the state's economic engine, contributing 33% of the total gross state product. In fact, in 2000, Philadelphia's average household income (\$62,019), continued to exceed the state average (\$52,681). All of these indicators provide further evidence of the interdependent relationship between Philadelphia and its suburbs.

### **Land Use Planning Activities**

Philadelphia is working with federal, state, non-profit, and philanthropic partners to make the City more competitive for new investment. As awareness has grown of the financial, social, and environmental costs of both inner-City decline and suburban sprawl, new initiatives are helping the City of Philadelphia offer more attractive, urban options for households and employers looking to stay or relocate into southeastern Pennsylvania.

- ☑ **A centerpiece of the City's current revitalization efforts is the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI), which entails broad-**



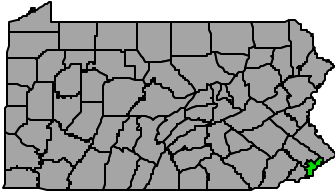
## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

based City efforts to combat blight, plan for neighborhood revitalization, and foster new development. The overall objective is to balance long-term system reform and infrastructure development with quick, visible, early actions and results. Philadelphia is investing \$275 million, over five years, in cleaning vacant lots, demolishing dangerous or abandoned houses and buildings, land assemblage for future development, and upgrading systems for the tracking and disposition of parcels. Under NTI, the City has cleaned 31,000 vacant lots, demolished 4,000 buildings, and removed over 40,000 abandoned vehicles from City streets. The City is also working with community partners to prepare new or updated plans for 34 different neighborhoods and corridors in Philadelphia.

- ☑ **A City/State effort to improve public education has resulted in the addition of dozens of new charter schools and an infusion of new technical and financial resources into the School District of Philadelphia.** A new capital program being prepared by the School District calls for a wave of new construction to modernize the District's school buildings and support improved teaching methods and technologies.
- ☑ **Philadelphia's central business district, known as Center City, continues to evolve and expand as the region's metropolitan center.** The Center City economy supports more than 260,000

jobs in business and professional services, retail and hospitality, arts and culture, health care, and education. The area boasts a number of new cultural and visitor attractions. Plans for the Independence Mall area include the recently completed National Constitution Center, Independence Visitor Center, and Liberty Bell Pavilion. The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, the renovated Academy of Music, and the Wilma Theatre are major recent investments in the Avenue of the Arts, a world-class cultural district along South Broad Street offering over 10,000 performance seats. Plans have been prepared for a significant expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, which is strategically located adjacent to the Market East Regional Rail station. Center City has also continued to grow as a residential center. The area experienced a 9% increase in population between 1990 and 2000, attracting a mix of young singles, families with young children, and empty nesters. The enactment of 10-year property tax abatements, first made available in 1997, has spurred the conversion of dozens of former industrial and office buildings, into thousands of new apartment and condominium units.

- ☑ **The City's transportation network is continuously being updated to preserve choices among modes of travel and accommodate new demands and changing land uses.** The Southeastern Pennsylvania



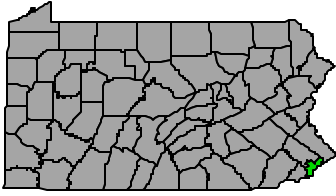
## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

Transportation Authority (SEPTA) is reconstructing its main transit route, the Market-Frankford line, and rehabilitating Suburban Station, one of the principle rail commuter facilities in Center City. PennDOT is reconstructing the roadway and interchanges along I-95 through the northeast section of Philadelphia. Philadelphia International Airport, owned by the City of Philadelphia but comprised of land in both Philadelphia and adjacent Delaware County, is studying ways to significantly increase airfield capacity and decrease flight delays. The Philadelphia Regional Port Authority is evaluating opportunities to improve and expand maritime facilities along the Delaware River.

- ☑ **Major redevelopment initiatives are being conceived and implemented for riverfront districts and properties.** The former Philadelphia Navy Yard, now operated as the Philadelphia Naval Business Center, is being transformed into a mixed-use complex of industrial, military, office, tourist, and residential uses. Along the City's North Delaware Riverfront, and along the tidal section of the Schuylkill River, the City is working with other public and private partners to promote the construction of new, riverfront trails and the redevelopment for mixed-use of hundreds of acres of underutilized industrial land. City efforts also continue to refine and select an appropriate development scheme for

the Penn's Landing site along the Delaware in Center City.

- ☑ **Acknowledging that resources have not been available to properly manage the City's large supply of parkland and open space, the Fairmount Park Commission is undertaking a new study to assess management and funding alternatives.** According to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's "2025 Open Space Network" program, surrounding counties will need to aggressively protect open space to meet their goals, while Philadelphia is close to meeting its goals today. The Fairmount Park system has contributed greatly to Philadelphia's open space and is a greatly appreciated asset and natural respite for the City and region.
- ☑ **The Pennsylvania Horticulture Society is working with the NTI Program to implement a visionary urban greening program called Philadelphia Green.** This program will create even more valued open space. This program is a neighborhood-based open space management program. It envisions vacant land, not as a symbol of decay, but as a potential long-term open space development opportunity and community asset. This program has already been put into practice in various neighborhoods around the City. Approximately, 471 parcels of vacant land have been converted to 13 acres of green space. It has proved to be very a



## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

beneficial use of public and private resources to manage vacant land. The “greening” of Philadelphia has demonstrated to its citizens that the City can improve its quality of life and create a sense of community among its neighborhoods.