

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Snyder County is located in the Middle Susquehanna River Valley in north central Pennsylvania and adjoins Union County to the north, Northumberland County to the east, Juniata County to the south, and Mifflin County to the west. The County contains 21 municipalities, which includes six boroughs and 15 townships. Middleburg is the county seat.

According to the 2000 Census, Snyder County ranks 58th in population with 37,546 persons and has a population density of 115.1 persons per square mile. From 1990 to 2000, the County's population grew by 4.0 percent, which was lower than the state's growth rate of 5.4 percent.

Snyder County's location is a major factor in determining the current and future types of development. The County is less than 50 miles north of Harrisburg, along the western shore of the Susquehanna River and is part of the Central Appalachian Region. Selinsgrove and Shamokin Dam are the County's two largest developed areas. Beyond the County's boundaries, Sunbury, Williamsport, and Lewistown serve as the regional destination centers. Coupled with its major transportation routes of U.S. Routes 11/15 and 522, Snyder County's geographic location greatly contributes to its dynamic composition.

Existing Land Use Conditions

Snyder County is located in the Ridge and Valley physiographic province and predominantly occupies the valley area between Jacks and Shade Mountains. The

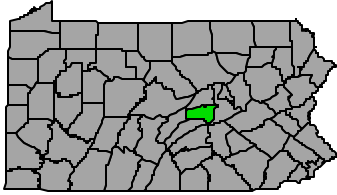
County's topographic features influenced past and current land uses greatly. For example, forested hillsides and fertile valleys provided adequate opportunities for profitable lumbering and agricultural activities. Today, Snyder County's land is still primarily used for these activities.

Despite the decreasing number of farms, agriculture continues to play a predominant role in the County's economy and overall land use patterns, occupying over 44 percent of the total land area.

The majority of Snyder County's developed land areas are concentrated along major transportation routes, such as U.S. Route 11/15 and U.S. Route 522. Snyder County's current development pressures focus in and around the Selinsgrove and Shamokin Dam communities. Moreover, the development of the Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway (CSVT) (U.S. Routes 11/15) will encourage additional growth and development pressures in this region of the County.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **The majority of Snyder County's land development activity is occurring in the rural-based, eastern tier municipalities** that are in proximity to existing public sewer and water infrastructure and major transportation corridors, such as U.S. 11/15 and 522.



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- ☑ **Infrastructure improvements will continue to impact future growth and development in Snyder County, particularly in the eastern portion of the County.** The most significant of these improvements is the development of the CSVT.
- ☑ **Snyder County's prime agricultural lands are in jeopardy from development pressures** as municipal zoning regulations lack the ability to "effectively" preserve agricultural land.
- ☑ **Traditional farming operations in Snyder County are in decline.** From 1987 to 1997, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that Snyder County lost 31 farm operations.
- ☑ **Farmland preservation efforts in Snyder County are ineffective.** The County's farmland preservation board's lack of matching state and county funds hinders their ability to purchase development rights. According to the PA Department of Agriculture, only 1,500 acres of the County's 93,000 acres have been preserved.
- ☑ **The future growth and development of many of Snyder County's municipalities is largely dependent upon the existing market demands for rural land holdings.** For example, Chapman Township officials are not anticipating a substantial increase in growth unless farmland is sold for development purposes.
- ☑ **The existence and preservation of Snyder County's Plain Sect population is vital to the County's ability to preserve productive agricultural land and the local cultural heritage.** For example, in Union Township, members of the Plain Sect own 60 percent of the existing large tract land holdings.
- ☑ **Snyder County is increasingly becoming a bedroom community for the greater Harrisburg area employment market.** The improvements made to U.S. 11/15 between Harrisburg and Selinsgrove has cut the commuting time to less than one hour. This, coupled with Snyder County's rural living environment and readily accessible cultural and service amenities, is making the County an attractive place to live.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ The Snyder County Board of Commissioners has adopted a new County comprehensive plan in 2001 entitled, *Snyder County in the 21st Century: A Strategic Comprehensive Plan*.
- ☑ Only four of Snyder County's 21 municipalities have adopted municipal comprehensive plans.
- ☑ The Snyder County Planning Commission is completing a new Multi-municipal Hazard Mitigation Plan for the County and its municipalities.