

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

The Southeast Region includes Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, and Philadelphia Counties, and 378 municipal governments. Geographically, the region covers 3,746 square miles and is located in southeastern Pennsylvania bordering the states of New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland.

Often viewed as the cultural hearth of the Pennsylvania landscape, the port city of Philadelphia embraced the flood of English and European immigrants who made Philadelphia the largest city in North America and served as the gateway to the region's fertile Piedmont land. Today, the region serves as the Commonwealth's most urbanized and densely populated region with 1,282 persons per square mile. The region's rich social and cultural amenities support its growth and development, which is highly influenced by the Boston-Washington megalopolis corridor (i.e., the megalopolis formed by the cities between Boston and Washington, D.C.).

The region is highly accessible given that 17,763.9 miles of roadways, representing 14.8 percent of the State's total highway miles, traverse the region. Primary highway access includes Interstates 76, 78, 95, 276, and 476; and U.S. Routes 1, 30, 209, 222, 309, 322, 422, 611, and numerous major State highways.

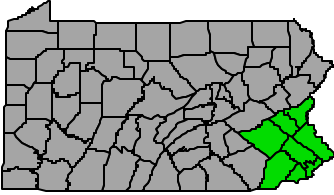
Between 1930 and 1970, the southeast region's population grew by 43.1 percent, or 1.27 million. However, the largest share (40.1%) of this population growth was gained during the dawn of the suburban

growth era in the 1950s and 1960s. This growth was stimulated primarily through the Federal government's post WWII interstate highway transportation development policy, as well as veteran home financing and GI Bill incentives. Today, the region's growth patterns continue to consume undeveloped land in areas further from the urban centers, with the greatest share of this development going to residential and commercial uses.

The region's economic base is highly diversified. According to the Pennsylvania's Targeted Industry Clusters report, the Southeast Region's economy supports a high concentration of closely linked industry groups that span the full spectrum of Pennsylvania's nine core industries – life sciences, business and financial services, education, advanced materials and diversified manufacturing, building and construction, agriculture and food production, information and communication services, logistics and transportation, and lumber and wood paper.¹

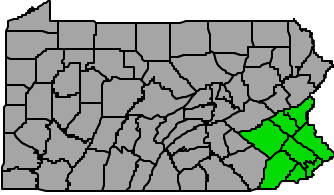
Key Land Use Trends

Key land use trends and issues for the Southeast Region were identified during a focus group held with the region's county planning directors and representatives from the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. The Montgomery County Planning Commission hosted the meeting on April 30, 2004, in Norristown.



Land Use and Growth Management Profile

- ☑ **Since 1970, population growth throughout the Southeast Region has stagnated, while land development patterns are decentralizing from the region's core communities, which encompass boroughs, cities, and first-class townships.** This trend has produced significant impacts on the region by decentralizing core cities, producing disparate and unsustainable growth within the suburbs, and decreasing the amount of farmland and open space in the rural communities. The impacts of these trends are well documented by the counties and their regional planning organizations. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the region's population and housing trends between the 1990 to 2000 Census period.
- ☑ **Loss of agricultural land and open space has been significant over the past several decades.** According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the region lost over 72,000 (8.9%) acres of farmland between 1987 and 1997. Land development pressures, combined with the decreasing viability of traditional farming practices, have significantly contributed to the loss of farmland.
- ☑ **The region is slowing the loss of farmland through aggressive agricultural preservation programs.** According to the PA Department of Agriculture, the region's counties preserved 63,577 acres of farmland between 1996 and 2003. This total represents 32 percent of the total farmland acres preserved throughout the Commonwealth. Figure 3 illustrates the region's annual preservation efforts and the share of the State's total acres preserved.
- ☑ **The desire for farmland preservation is strong throughout the Lehigh Valley subregion, but few municipalities administer agricultural preservation land use regulations because of public opinion.**
- ☑ **The region's extensive transportation network has continued to precipitate the region's growing suburban development patterns.** Highways and road systems throughout the region are often congested causing delays, frequent repairs, and decline in quality of life. Changes in the region's travel-time-to-work patterns during the 1990s are indicative of this trend. Since 1990, the percent of workers 16 years of age and over commuting 90 minutes or more increased by over 206 percent (Figure 4).
- ☑ **While increased activity in community planning and implementation has produced varying results on managing growth and development, it has, however, engaged a significant number of citizens in the planning process.**
- ☑ **Southeastern Pennsylvania has been transforming itself into an economically diverse region, though this continuing metamorphosis is fragile and should be planned.**
- ☑ **While many municipalities have adopted comprehensive plans, consistent implementation of the**

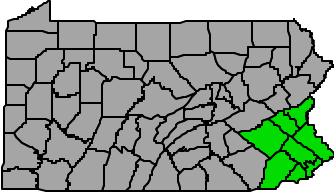


Land Use and Growth Management Profile

adopted goals and policies is often not achieved, even within the Southeast Region where some of the Commonwealth's most sophisticated planning tools exist. Instead, many local officials have relied solely on inconsistent land use ordinances and ad-hoc decision-making to regulate land use and development. As such, consistency should be clearly defined within the Municipalities Planning Code and be required to ensure local plans and implementing regulations adhere to the goals and objectives adopted through the county comprehensive plan. The county plan should serve as the basic framework for local and regional plans.

- ☑ **With the exception of PENNVEST, the majority of state agencies do not consider local planning goals and objectives in their land use consistency reviews and decision-making processes.**
- ☑ **There is a lack of coordination between land use planning and economic development.** State and local economic development decisions are too often made without considering community planning goals and objectives. One way to bridge this gap is to ensure that the Governor's Economic Stimulus package is implemented in a manner consistent with county and local community planning policies.

- ☑ **Current state policy lacks the ability to target funding in existing developed areas.** As such, the Governor and General Assembly should take a stronger role in coordinating planning and growth management activities of local governments by targeting state funding to preferred investment areas consistent with growth areas designated through county and multi-municipal comprehensive plans.



Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Figure 1
Southeast Region
Population Growth Comparison 1990-2000

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 & 2000

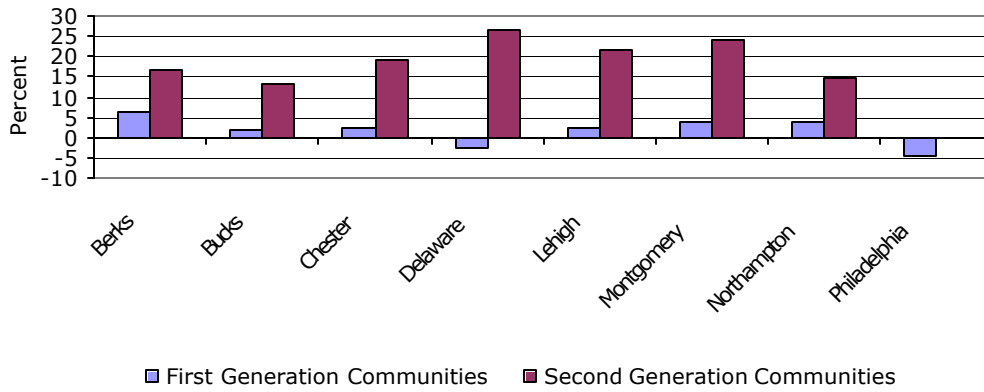
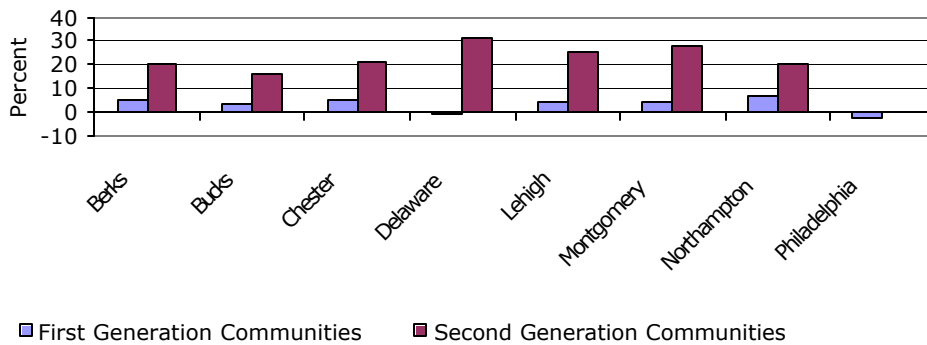
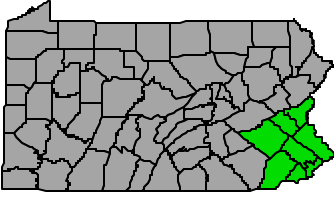


Figure 2
Southeast Region
Housing Growth Comparison 1990-2000

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 & 2000





Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Figure 3
Southeast Region Farmland Preservation Efforts

Source: PA Depart. Of Agriculture, Bureau of Farmland Preservation

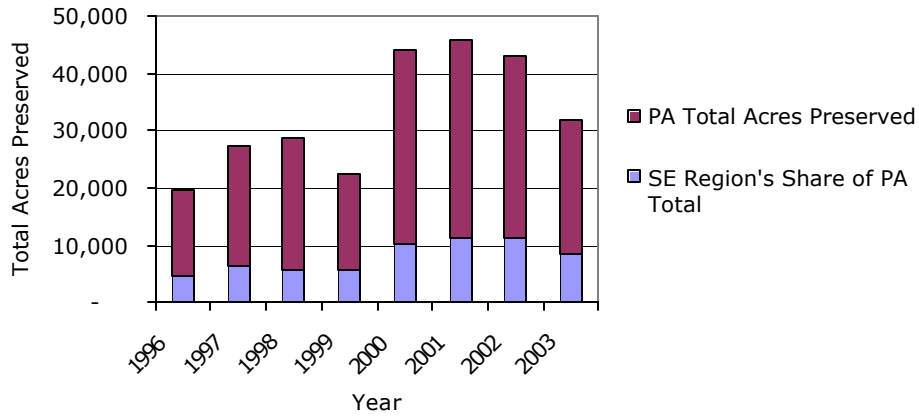
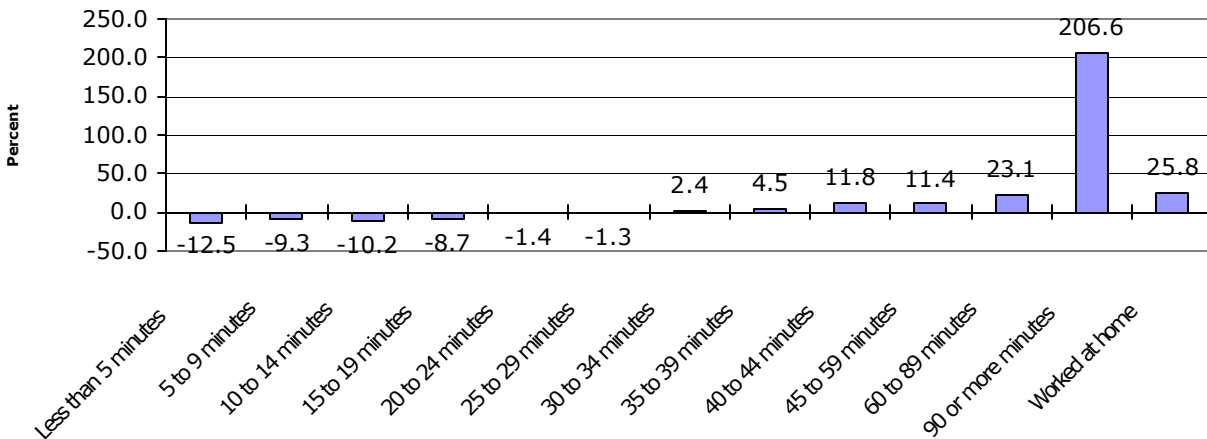
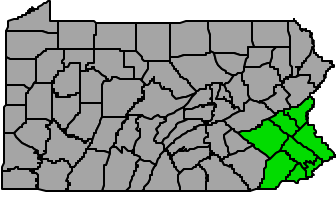


Figure 4
Percent Change in Travel Time to Work Patterns: 1990 - 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau





Land Use and Growth Management Profile

¹ Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, "Pennsylvania's Target Industry Clusters," Retrieved from <http://www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/cwp/view.asp?a=140&Q=210325&PM=1> on May 3, 2004.