

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

York County is located in south central Pennsylvania. It is bordered by the state of Maryland to the south, Adams County to the west, Cumberland and Dauphin Counties to the north, and Lancaster County to the east. York County is characterized by rolling farmland and a dispersal of low-density residential development throughout the rural areas, while the most intense development is primarily concentrated in four fairly distinct growth areas. There are 72 municipalities in the County. Half (36) are boroughs, 35 are townships, and one is a city, York. York is also the county seat and has been and remains an important regional center.

York County is large in size at 905 square miles, the 13th largest in Pennsylvania. The County is the 8th most populated in the state with 381,751 residents according to the 2000 Census. These two factors result in a population density of 422 people per square mile. York County's population and density grew by over 12 percent in the 1990s, almost four times the rate of Pennsylvania's population growth.

Existing Land Use Conditions

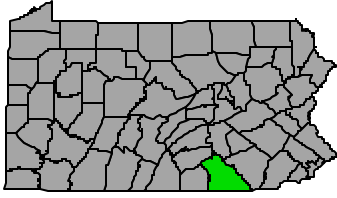
The majority (90.3%) of York County's land area is undeveloped and largely consists of agriculture and open space uses. The County's developed land area (9.7%) is growing and is attributed to the increase in residential development.

The County of York is located almost entirely in the Piedmont physiographic province. Rolling countryside, fertile soils,

and numerous waterways create pastoral scenery in the County's open spaces. The Susquehanna River has 54 miles of shoreline located in the County. In addition to the river, its tributaries – Muddy Creek, Codorus Creek, Conewago Creek, and Yellow Breeches – provide scenic and recreational values to the County. These amenities, plus the County's rich history, recreational opportunities, proximity to larger urban centers, and its job-producing economy has steadily attracted new residents to the area at a rate of about 12 percent per decade for the last hundred years. Development had been occurring in a pattern of York City as the hub, surrounded by smaller urban areas, rural villages and agricultural hinterlands. More recently, development has strayed from the historical patterns to a pattern of decentralization with development refocused to growth areas surrounding York City and Hanover Borough, as well as in the northern and southern areas along the I-83 corridor. Development has also extended into the rural areas, primarily along existing road frontages.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ Land use patterns of sprawl and decentralization threaten York County's qualities and features that make it a desirable place to live. The most telling statistic of this trend is a comparison of subdivision activity for the first five years of the 1980s compared with the first five years of the 1990s. The total number of proposed dwelling units in the 1990s was twice the total for the same period in the 1980s. Additionally,



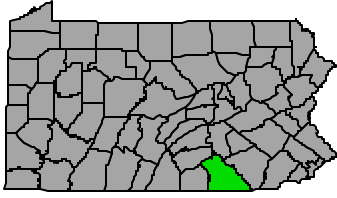
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during the 1990s, York County saw a 16 percent increase in the number of housing units (6th in the state) while its population grew by 12 percent. Much of this new development has been perceived to occur in a scattered manner throughout the rural areas.

- ☑ **York County has experienced a substantial loss of farmland.** Although all the land being developed is not productive farmland, the rate of farmland development is of great concern. Records show that in 1940 there were 468,058 acres of farmland in the County. By 1992 this number had dropped to 252,052 acres. More recently, the Census of Agriculture reports that 17,075 acres were lost between 1987 and 1997, a six percent decrease of farmland.
- ☑ **More people migrated into than out of York County during the 1990s.** According to the Internal Revenue Service's statistics, there was a net migration of approximately 18,000 people into York County between 1990 and 2000. Only a few Pennsylvania counties experienced a greater influx of residents, while most saw residents leave their county. The new York County residents migrated from the neighboring counties of Cumberland and Adams, followed by Baltimore County, MD, situated directly south over the state border.
- ☑ **Some York County residents are challenged to afford homeownership.**

The median home value in York County in 2000 was \$110,500. This was the 13th highest value in the state. Even after household members are able to purchase a home, they will be challenged to afford the monthly expenses associated with home-ownership. The County also ranks 13th in the state in the percent of household income devoted to monthly homeowner costs. On the other hand, renters in York County obligate a smaller percentage of their household income to gross rent than most other counties in the state.

- ☑ **Water supply and quality is a chief concern in York County.** Several of York County's waterways are ranked as quality fishing waters, as well as providing the area's drinking water. They also have a high potential for agricultural pollution and are under considerable pressure from urban development. Attention in the County is being focused on implementing conservation practices such as conservation tillage, contour strips, grassed waterways, diversions, riparian buffers, filter strips, barnyard runoff, and waste management systems. Water quality monitoring activities have also increased. Additionally, York County is integrating water resources and land use planning. A "water resources plan" has been adopted as a component of the comprehensive plan, providing an inventory of water resources with condition reports, an outline of the link between land use and water quality,



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and descriptions of best management practices.

Land Use Planning Activities

- Almost all of the municipalities in the County have adopted comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.** Comprehensive plans have been adopted by 67 of the 72 municipalities and zoning ordinances have been enacted by 66 of the municipalities. This large percentage of municipalities engaged in planning activities is significant and demonstrates concern over the changes occurring in the County and the desire to manage that change.

- York County's municipalities have been progressive in their use of transfer of development rights.** This program redirects potential development from areas where impacts are considered undesirable to sites chosen for the development. Several townships in York County have been using this land use tool for years. These townships include Hopewell, Lower Chanceford, Shrewsbury, and Springfield.