

Land Use Characteristic and Development Trends

Regional Perspective

In the past, development within the Pennridge Area (which includes East Rockhill Township) has been steady due to good transportation access and economic activity. Development has primarily been in the form of single-family detached residential and commercial establishments. Nearly three-quarters of the Pennridge Area is either agricultural, rural residential, or vacant land uses, while about 17 percent of the total land area is in the form of single-family residential use. The four boroughs in the area (i.e., Dublin, Perkasio, Sellersville, and Silverdale boroughs) have received significant nonresidential development in recent decades. Due to increased public water and sewer availability and a strong commercial and industrial base, this growth trend is expected to continue. Development within the Pennridge Area has not been as significant as other areas within the county; however, the economic stability and presence of public water and sewer make it attractive for future growth.

Township Perspective

East Rockhill Township is still largely rural in character. Table 5 provides a snapshot of the land use characteristics within the township between 1990 and 2003 and Figure 1 highlights 2003 land use.¹ In 2003, over half or 56 percent of the township consists of three land use categories—rural residential (2,417 acres), agricultural (716 acres), and vacant (1,542 acres). A majority of the agricultural land is concentrated in the southeastern portion of the township.²

Rural Residential land use constituted the largest land area in the township with 2,417 acres or over 29 percent of the total land area of the township. Rural Residential land use contains a single-family detached dwelling but is located on lots that are 5 acres or greater (for a detailed description of land use classification definitions, see Appendix 1). The purpose of the Rural Residential category is to identify large residential lots that may have potential for future subdivision or land development. This category is useful for identifying potential areas for future development remaining in the township as discussed in the Future Land Use and Growth Management section. Single-Family Residential category consists of 1,543 acres or over 18 percent of the total land area of the township, and consists of single-family detached dwellings on lots less than 5 acres.

¹ For 2003 land use mapping and statistics, subdivision and/or land development proposals that received a building permit at the time of plan production was considered constructed or subdivided and the parcel and its respective acreage was included in the respective land use category.

² The agricultural land use category is limited to parcels that are 20 acres or over for statistical and mapping purposes. Agricultural lands under 20 acres are classified as either Vacant or Rural Residential land uses.

Table 5. Land Use Characteristics, 1990 and 2003

Land Use Category	1990		2003		1990–2003	
	Acreage	%	Acreage	%	Amt. Chg.	% Chg.
Single-Family Residential	1,220	14.7	1,543	18.6	323	20.9
Multifamily Residential	56	0.7	85	1.0	29	34.1
Rural Residential	2,386	28.8	2,417	29.2	31	1.2
Agricultural	1,122	13.5	716	8.7	-406	-56.7
Mining & Manufacturing	26	0.3	26	0.3	0	0
Commercial	146	1.8	109	1.3	-37	-31.3
Transportation & Utilities	494	6.0	532	6.4	38	7.1
Government & Institutional	267	3.1	316	3.8	49	15.9
Parks, Recreation, & Protected Opens Space	618	7.5	1,004	12.1	386	38.4
Vacant	1,953	23.6	1,542	18.6	-411	-26.6
Total	8,288	100%	8,288	100%		

Note: The percentage of the respective land use category is based upon the total land area of the township.

Multifamily Residential land use comprises 1 percent of the land area in the township and consists of three or more attached units. Multifamily residential developments are scattered throughout the township, but the highest concentration is located within the Pines at Pennridge and Cedarbrook development along North Fifth Street.

Parks, Recreation, and Protected Open Space land use constitutes 1,542 acres or over 12 percent of the area of the township. This is due to the extensive State and local park system. State-owned lands consist of a portion of Nockamixon State Park and State Gameland No. 139. Other protected open space includes the township acquired common open space associated with residential subdivisions and land with conservation easements.

Nonresidential land uses represent only a limited land area and overall percent of the township. Government and Institutional accounted for the largest land area (316 acres or 3.8 percent), followed by Commercial (109 acres or 1.3 percent), and Mining and Manufacturing (26 acres or 0.3 percent).

Development Trends

Historically, there have been subtle shifts in land use characteristics in East Rockhill Township. An examination of these development trends between 1990 and 2003 are provided in Table 5. During this time period, the largest land use decreases were agricultural (406 acres or over 56 percent decrease) and vacant (411 acres or over 26 percent decrease). This can largely be attributed to the conversion of agricultural and vacant areas to single-family and multifamily residential development. Consequently, over this same time period, Single-Family Residential and Multifamily Residential land uses have increased significantly, to about 20 and 34 percent, respectively. The number of residential lots will increase in the near future as suggested by the residential subdivisions that were approved but pending issuance of building permits.

Between 1990 and 2003, Parks, Recreation, and Protected Open Space land use had the highest percentage increase (over 38 percent), due to in a large part to the purchase of open space and the creation of Markey Park, open space acquired in 2000 as part of the Bucks County Open Space Program, and additional open space purchased by the township. Scheduled to open in 2006, the township is planning on developing a regulation 18-hole public golf course on a portion of this property.

Development trends between 1990 and 2003 indicate that Government and Institutional land use grew by about 16 percent, Mining and Manufacturing stayed the same, while Commercial land use actually decreased by over 31 percent. This can be attributed to the dramatic affect on the percentage change that results from transferring parcels from a land use category with limited land area to different a land use category. Specifically, the Bucks County Community College—Upper County Campus moved into the former Bucks County Bank headquarters building in the Glenwood Village Shopping Center, and an office building located off Clymer Road was converted to a nursing home. As a result, the bank and office building parcels that were classified as Commercial in 1990 have been converted into Government and Institutional and Multifamily Residential land uses, respectively. Since there is only 307 acres of Commercial land area, the loss of these two parcels (that collectively total about 32 acres) has resulted in the significant percentage change of -31.3 percent.

Approved Development Proposals

As of January 2003, various development proposals have received approval or pre-approval status from the township, but have not received a building permit. The majority of these proposals involved subdivisions of 3 lots or less; therefore, the inclusion of these proposals have not been incorporated into the 2003 land use statistics and mapping.

