

Nonresidential Development

At the early stages of the comprehensive plan process, the steering committee conducted a community visioning brainstorming session. As a result of these discussions, increasing employment opportunities and attracting new businesses both ranked as “medium” priorities in maintaining and improving the quality of life in East Rockhill. The purpose of this section is to identify the amount of undeveloped lands within the nonresidential zoning districts and determine if there is a need to provide additional nonresidential development opportunities. The following summary does not include an anticipated growth calculation of the nonresidential development areas to determine its build out capacity, since employment, sales and service needs vary significantly by locality. There are no reliable analytical models that can be used to effectively gauge the unique nonresidential needs of a community. Therefore, this section provides a summary of the status of lands available for nonresidential development.

The Land Use Characteristics and Development Trends section shows that nonresidential uses (i.e., commercial, mining and manufacturing, and government and institutional uses) compose about 5.4 percent of the total area of the township.¹ The majority of East Rockhill’s nonresidential uses are located along major arterials such as Ridge Road, North Fifth Street, and Dublin Pike (Route 313); however, there are also several nonconforming nonresidential uses scattered around the township.

Commercial Uses

As indicated in the 2004 Resident Survey, most residents purchase a majority of their goods and services outside the township, such as Perkasio and Quakertown boroughs. The township’s commercial development is generally restricted to the Commercial-Office, Village Commercial, and Cultural-Educational districts. However, there is limited land area remaining in these zoning districts. The Cultural-Educational district is located along Fifth Street and is the site of the Pennridge High School and Middle School. The Pennridge School district is currently undergoing an expansion of the school facilities, eliminating any future commercial use. Within the Commercial-Office districts, there are only limited areas available for future commercial development. In the Commercial-Office located northwest on Dublin Pike (Route 313), there is about 31 acres; however, there is a proposal for a shopping center and convenience store on this site. Within the Commercial-Office district at the corner of Ridge Road and Dublin Pike, there is one vacant 10-acre parcel. There are two Commercial-Office districts—one contains the Bucks County Community College—Upper County Campus and Glenwood Village Shopping Center, and the other contains the township’s sewage treatment plant; however, there is no vacant land available at these locations. The three Village Commercial districts located in Hagersville (Fifth Street and Dublin Pike) and along Rich Hill (Old Bethlehem Pike) are completely built out. While there are limited vacant lands available for future development in the Commercial-Office and Village Commercial districts, there does exist a potential for some infill or redevelopment.

¹ For the purposes of this plan, government and institutional uses were not considered as part of the nonresidential analysis. School facilities will be addressed in the Community Facilities section.

In order to provide additional commercial and employment opportunities, township officials have decided to examine the feasibility of expanding the Commercial-Office district located northwest on Dublin Pike. To increase nonresidential development opportunities while enhancing housing diversity in the township, the expansion of the Village Commercial and/or Village Residential districts will be explored, especially in the Hagersville area. However, any expansion of the village zoning districts should be predicated on a village study to identify ways of preserving and enhancing the village's character. For more detailed discussion on commercial zoning expansions, see Future Land Use and Growth Management section.

Home Occupation

Throughout the country, the number of people working at home has increased dramatically in the past decade. Home occupation allows self-employed professionals or “telecommuters” to take advantage of technological advances such as computers/trades persons or internet access, and fax machines that allow them to work as effectively at home as they would do in an office. Changes in the types and number of home-based businesses have resulted in a changing view of regulations for home occupation. Today's home-based businesses can operate without external effects on neighborhoods. Many have no employees, no signs, no clients coming and going, and no changes to the appearance of the house of operation. Accessory Home Occupation use is broken into seven types of accessory uses based upon the type of activity as follows: professional offices, personal services, instructional services, home crafts, family day care, and trades/business, and repair services and other. Accessory home occupations may be permitted by right, by special exception, or by conditional use in all districts except the Extraction District. The type of approval required depends on the nature of the home occupation. Accessory home occupations must be incidental to the primary residential use by its occupants and must comply with strict operation standards. A review of the zoning ordinance may be necessary to determine if additional use regulations (e.g., minimum lot size, equipment stored on premises, employees of the business restrictions) are needed to address the different types of home occupational uses that vary in the nature of the respective business. Support of home occupations will provide residents with limited employment opportunities within the comfort of their own home while posing minimal impacts upon neighboring properties. Allowing people to work at home can also reduce traffic congestion by reducing commuter trips.

Mining and Manufacturing Uses

East Rockhill's industrial zoning districts are limited to the I-1 and I-2 Industrial Districts located at the Pennridge Airport along northwest of Ridge Road and the Extraction district located northeast of Rockhill and Quarry roads. The Pennridge Industrial Park is located on the Pennridge Airport site and contains a few manufacturing operations. Since the late 1990s, there has been interest expressed in possible development of portions of the industrial district by the owners of the Pennridge Airport (Pennridge Development Enterprises). In order to take the appropriate steps necessary for the potential development of the airport site, in 2000, the Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance amendment that effectively split the original Industrial district into two separate zoning districts—the I-1 and I-2 Industrial districts. The purpose of the I-1 district is to provide

for industrial, major commercial, intensive office, and laboratory uses with suitable open space and landscaping. The purpose of the I-2 district has a similar purpose, but permits industrial park use. An industrial park is to consist of a planned development of industrial and related uses with a high quality business campus character with coordinated utilities, landscaping, buffering, and stormwater management. The I-2 district also permits an office park, which is a planned development of office and related uses in a business campus-like environment. There is extensive vacant land available for future development on the Pennridge Airport site, but, future development will have to be located outside the designated “airport zones,” which are restricted areas that need to be unobstructed for purposes of emergency takeoff and landing maneuvers. As a result of having revised the industrial zoning regulations, township officials are in a position of marketing new businesses into the industrial office park with the assurance that any development that does occur there will be consistent with the intended appearance and character along Ridge Road.

There is a quarry owned by Hansen Materials located off Quarry Road that has been inactive for quite some time, and there are no immediate plans for future use. Currently, it is a restricted area and is regularly patrolled to keep trespassers off the property. Preparation of mid- to long-term plans should be considered to determine the best use for quarry site in the event that ownership or use is transferred to the township.

Resident Employment

About 74 percent of the population age 16 years or older participates in the labor force. In 2000, 2.1 percent of township residents were unemployed which is comparable to 2.4 percent unemployment rate for Bucks County. Resident occupations in East Rockhill are shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Resident Occupation, 2000

Occupation	Number	Percent
Management, Professional, and Related Occupations	896	32.2
Service Occupations	351	12.6
Sales and Office Occupations	732	26.3
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	9	0.3
Construction, Extraction, Maintenance Occupations	345	12.4
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	451	16.2

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

The highest percentages of residents are employed in management and professional occupations (e.g., engineers, physicians, and executives), sales and office occupations (e.g., cashiers, travel agents, and secretaries), and production, transportation, and material

moving occupations (e.g., machinists, drivers, and welders). Service occupations (e.g., firefighters, home health aides, and childcare workers) and construction, extraction, and maintenance (e.g., electricians and mechanics) occupations both account for over 12 percent of resident occupations. Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations account for less than 1 percent of all resident occupations.

Resident employment can also be broken down by industry as illustrated in Table 14 below.

Table 14. Resident Labor Force by Industry, 2000

Industry	Number	Percentage
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	30	1.1
Construction	245	8.8
Manufacturing	568	20.4
Wholesale Trade	108	3.9
Retail Trade	401	14.4
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	40	1.4
Information	20	0.7
Fire, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing	201	7.2
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	343	12.3
Educational, Health and Social Services	563	20.2
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services	99	3.6
Other Services	122	4.4
Public Administration	44	1.6

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

While the U.S. Census does not indicate how many East Rockhill residents work at businesses located in the township, according to the table above, it is evident that a majority of township residents are employed in the manufacturing and education, health, and social services, with over 20 percent of the residents employed in these industries. The largest employers in the township include the Pennridge School District with 479 employees and Draper-DBS, Inc. (custom cabinetry and furniture manufacturer) with 73

employees.² Other significant businesses in the township include Bucks County Community College—Upper County Campus and Clemens Market.

In order to increase the tax ratable in East Rockhill, there may be a need to explore options for the expansion of nonresidential employment base in the township. In 2000, the creation of the I-2 Industrial District was just one vehicle that was intended to facilitate this objective, but other zoning options should be examined. Based upon the resident employment figures in Table 14 above, East Rockhill has a highly-skilled local labor force in various sectors that can be used to promote business creation or relocation in the township. Increased local employment opportunities may also be attractive to area residents as well, particularly if changing jobs in order to gain local employment will dramatically reduce their commuting time.

² The source of employee numbers from *Bucks County Industrial Directory* (2002). Pennridge School District employment figure is from their source data.

