

LAND USE PLAN

The land use plan deals with the present use, future use and reuse of land. The land use plan is central to this comprehensive plan. It is shaped by the other sections of this plan and in turn influences the other sections of this plan. The land use plan both draws from and has implications for the natural and historic resources element, the housing plan, the transportation plan and the community utilities plan.

This plan element starts with an examination of existing land use patterns and trends. The Future Land Use Plan follows. This part of the plan, in turn, has two elements, a description of various land use categories and a map depicting locations where these land use categories are appropriate. The Future Land Use Plan is to be implemented by various means. They are described in the implementation strategies portion of the Future Land Use Plan.

EXISTING LAND USES

The picture of the Nazareth multimunicipal area created by the mosaic of existing land uses is one of a predominately agricultural and rural area in the midst of change. Until recently, the area has been dominated by farms, interspersed with scattered rural development and small villages. Five boroughs have historically served as the larger centers of concentrated development, built around the industries and mining operations that provided job opportunities. These boroughs have also served as the focal points of area commerce, services and community facilities, beyond those limited facilities found in the countryside.

The Nazareth multimunicipal area is part of the Lehigh Valley, also known as the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Metropolitan area. The Nazareth multimunicipal area is located at the northern fringes of the urban area that has ever expanded outward from the three cities that are the namesake of the region. The proximity of the rural Nazareth Area to the urban areas of the Lehigh Valley has strongly affected recent development trends.

The arrival of the automobile era has allowed Lehigh Valley residents to discover the Nazareth Area as a desirable residential locale. The Nazareth Area is situated close enough to the employment and shopping opportunities of the Lehigh Valley's urban area to become a viable rural residential environment. Additionally, the Lehigh Valley has seen significant amounts of immigration from New Jersey due to housing cost differentials. With its relative proximity to New Jersey and access via I-78 and Route 33, the Nazareth Area has also become an attractive area for New Jersey residents. As a consequence, scattered rural and suburban development has displaced some of the agricultural uses in the Nazareth Area's townships. Access provided by Route 33 at the edge of the Nazareth Area has also influenced development patterns. Commercial and industrial development is burgeoning in the areas surrounding the interchanges.

Table 27 demonstrates the changes in the area's land use patterns. In 1972, nearly three-quarters of the area was in agricultural and rural uses. By 2002, this figure had shrunk to 56%. A decrease of 11,163.3 acres had occurred. Most of this loss of agricultural and vacant land was due to residential development. Land in residential uses increased by 6,917.9 acres in this period. The other land use category that exhibited significant gains in acreage in this period was parks and recreation, which increased by 2,667.7 acres.

The loss of agricultural and vacant acreage took place predominately in the townships. But this finding largely reflects the size of the townships as compared to the boroughs. The townships make up nearly 96% of the land area in the Nazareth Area. The portion of both townships and boroughs characterized as agricultural and vacant decreased. In the boroughs, the portion of agricultural and vacant land fell from 34% to 18% between 1972 and 2002. In the townships, the decrease was from 74.5% to 57.7%. The greatest losses in agricultural and vacant lands took place in Bushkill (4,031 acres) and Moore (3,153 acres) townships.

TABLE 27

NAZARETH AREA LAND USE (acres)												
1972-2002												
	1972	%Total	1982	%Total	Change 1972-1982	1992	%Total	Change 1982-1992	2002	%Total	Change 1992-2002	Change 1972-2002
Residential	9,192.5	13.8	11,152.7	16.8	1,960.2	13,546.8	20.3	2,394.1	16,110.4	24.2	2,563.6	6,917.9
Commercial	383.2	0.6	539.7	0.8	156.5	610.7	0.9	71.0	824.0	1.2	213.3	440.8
Industrial	1,617.8	2.4	2,067.2	3.1	449.4	2,100.3	3.2	33.1	2,114.3	3.2	11.0	493.5
Wholesale/ Warehousing	325.9	0.5	371.1	0.6	45.2	401.2	0.6	30.1	439.2	0.7	38.0	113.3
Trans, Comm & Utilities	3,106.3	4.7	3,252.2	4.9	145.9	3,366.4	5.1	114.2	3,473.6	5.2	107.2	367.3
Public & Quasi-Public	301.1	0.4	364.6	0.6	63.5	376.8	0.6	12.2	460.9	0.7	84.1	159.8
Parks & Recreation	3,212.9	4.8	4,934.8	7.4	1,721.9	5,309.7	8.0	374.9	5,880.6	8.8	570.9	2,667.7
Agricultural & Vacant	48,429.3	72.7	43,886.7	65.9	-4,542.6	40,857.1	64.1	-3,029.6	37,266.0	56.0	-3,591.7	-11,163.3
TOTAL	66,569.0		66,569.0			66,569.0			66,569.0			

Source: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.

As was previously mentioned, the largest gains in a land use category took place in residential uses. The percentage of residential land use rose from 13.8% to 24.2% in the period. Tracking the amount of increase in each ten-year period finds that the amount of growth in residential acreage is steadily increasing. From 1972 to 1982, the increase was 1,960.2 acres. From 1982 to 1992, the increase was 2,394.1 acres. From 1992 to 2002, the increase was 2,563.6 acres. Proportional to the total land area differences, 96% of the residential land use increase occurred in the townships. Nevertheless, the percentage of the boroughs in residential uses increased from 24.5 to 33.1. The disparity between the boroughs and the townships is illustrated by the fact that the increase in residential acreage in Bushkill Township alone between 1992 and 2002 is equal to the total residential acreage of the boroughs. More than 70% of the area's increase in residential acreage was in Moore and Bushkill townships.

Commercial land uses are highly visible land uses with prominent impacts. Yet, they make up a relatively small part of the area's land use. Only 824 acres, or 1.2% of the land area is in commercial uses. Half of the commercial land is in Lower Nazareth township. Older commercial areas and shopping centers along Route 191 between Nazareth Borough and Route 22 have been joined by new commercial development along Route 33 proximate to the Route 248 and Hecktown Road interchanges. The Route 248-Route 33 interchange currently boasts the largest single shopping center in the county. The commercial development is split between Palmer and Lower Nazareth townships. Of the boroughs, Nazareth has the largest and most developed commercial center in the form of a traditional downtown. Bath also has a commercial component.

From Table 27, 2,114.3 acres or 3.2% of the land area is in industrial land uses. Of this land, almost two-thirds is associated with mining and related operations. Limestone quarrying and cement manufacturing is foremost. Four active operations remain. They involve lands in Bath, East Allen, Lower Nazareth, Nazareth, Stockertown and Upper Nazareth. Other limestone quarries and cement plants have ceased operations. Other active mining operations involve the extraction of aggregate. Relatively little expansion of industrial uses has taken place in the last twenty years. Industrial acreage has increased by only 47.1 acres between 1982 and 2002, an increase of two percent. As the national and regional economies have seen a reduction in industrial activities, the Nazareth Area has seen older existing industrial properties become vacant or converted to other uses. These losses have been offset by new industrial uses located in industrial parks in Lower Nazareth and East Allen townships.

Wholesale and warehousing is the smallest of the land use categories in the Nazareth Area. These uses total 439.2 acres or 0.7% of the total. Most of the land in this category can be found in Moore, East Allen and Bushkill townships. The amount of land in this category has grown only slightly in recent years. Between 1982 and 2002, the growth was 68.1 acres.

Transportation, Communications and Utilities (TCU) is the fourth leading land use category with 3,473.6 acres or 5.2% of the land use. In the Nazareth Area, the vast majority of this land use category is composed of roads. The area lacks power plants and other facilities that would consume large land areas. The TCU category has seen steady, but small amounts of growth over the last thirty years. The acreage increase has been 367.3 acres or 12%. All but 15 acres of this growth has been in the townships.

Public and Quasi-Public land uses include government facilities, schools, churches and facilities belonging to non-profit organizations. Public and Quasi-Public uses are a minor land use category, consuming only 460.9 acres or 0.7% of the land area. Northampton County's Gracedale facility in Upper Nazareth is the largest single site in these uses within the Nazareth Area. The County houses numerous facilities and functions within this complex. Over half of the growth in this land use category occurred between 1992 and 2002. The construction of a new middle school in Upper Nazareth for the Nazareth Area School District is a notable development in this period. The 1992-2002 increase was 84.1 acres out of the thirty-year growth of 159.8 acres.

Parks and Recreation is the third leading land use category with 5,880.6 acres or 8.8% of the Nazareth Area total. The Park and Recreation Plan element of this comprehensive plan provides detailed information about park and recreation facilities in the Nazareth Area.

The existing land use for the Nazareth Area is shown on Map 18. Note that this land use map was created specifically for the multimunicipal plan from county assessment data, field checks, Natural Resources Conservation Service input (farmland) and municipal input through June 2004. The land use categories vary slightly from the data reported above from historical LVPC records through 2002.

ALTERNATIVE FUTURE LAND USE SCENARIOS

To assist in the creation of the Future Land Use Plan described in the next section, three basic alternative future land use scenarios were constructed. The three scenarios are termed Current Zoning, Farmland Preservation and Conceptual Land Use Plan. CommunityViz planning software was applied to create maps of hypothetical build-out scenarios and measurement of key "indicators". The CommunityViz software was specifically created by the Orton Family Foundation to assist in the comparison of alternative land use scenarios. "Indicators" are measurable attributes of the scenarios that represent key issues or concerns associated with the creation of a comprehensive plan. Important indicators for this plan include the loss of natural feature and farmland resources to land development and the impacts on schools, roads and sewer and water infrastructure from new land development. A brief description of each alternative future land use scenario is provided below.

Current Zoning Scenario

This future land use scenario is based on the allowable uses in the current municipal zoning. Lot sizes for residential development were based on the recent history of actual development. Lot sizes were defined for each municipal zoning category for sewer development and non-sewer development. Floodplains (100 year), steep slopes (>25%), wetlands and water bodies were made unavailable for future development.

Farmland Preservation Scenario

This future land use scenario includes two changes from the Current Zoning scenario. First, the natural feature areas unavailable for development were expanded based on the Natural Resources Plan for the Nazareth Area. A complete description of these areas is presented in the Future Land Use Plan section under Environmental Protection (see page 68). Second, extensive areas were defined for agricultural preservation based on identifying large, contiguous areas of existing farming. This scenario preserved the current zoning for lands not recommended for natural feature or farmland preservation. Lot sizes were again based on recent development experience except for farmland preservation areas. For these areas, only 10% of the gross land was available for new development in keeping with strong agricultural zoning used elsewhere in the Lehigh Valley.

Conceptual Land Use Plan Scenario

This future land use scenario is based on preservation of Natural Resource Areas consistent with the Farmland Preservation scenario. It is also based on the lot sizes as used for the Farmland Preservation scenario. Developed land use areas were defined based on their compatibility with existing land use patterns and the availability of existing or future public sewers. This scenario included fewer lands for agricultural preservation than the Farmland Preservation scenario.

CommunityViz was used to create two build-out options for each scenario — a full build-out that used all available land and a 2030 build-out that used LVPC population and employment projections to define lands needed for development. By definition, the full build-out option consumed all available land and showed dramatic differences between scenarios for measured indicators. For example, total new housing units for the Current Zoning scenario were 13,282 — nearly one quarter more than the Conceptual Land Use Plan that provides 10,243 housing units. Indicators for school students, traffic, water demand and sewage generation were much higher in the full build-out option under the Current Zoning scenario than the other options owing to fewer restrictions on land development. For example, total new school students were 11,171 for Current Zoning versus 8,400 for the Conceptual Land Use Plan. Nazareth Area School District showed a modest 8% reduction in school students with the Conceptual Land Use Plan but the Northampton Area School District had new school students reduced by nearly half (4,672 to 2,410, respectively). This build-out was meaningful for demonstrating the impacts of the “ultimate” land use condition. However, this build-out option could provide no sense of time or planning horizon. The 2030 build-out linked the build-out to the planning horizon for this comprehensive plan. Interestingly, the 2030 build-out still provided dramatic (though lesser) differences between scenarios for most indicators that were important for helping to drive the land use decision process. Presented in Table 28 is a summary of the key CommunityViz indicators for the three future land use scenarios for the 2030 residential build-out.

From Table 28, note that the new housing units are slightly different between the three scenarios. The new units listed for the Conceptual Land Use Plan exactly match those projected by the LVPC by 2030 for the Nazareth Area. For the other scenarios, the new units were slightly lower due to minor constraints on developable land to match the household projections by sub-region within the Nazareth Area. Since the new housing units are very similar between scenarios, indicators such as school students, traffic trips, water demand and sewage generation are similar also. These indicators are still useful, however, because the various land use scenarios distribute the new units differently. Impacts on specific roads or sewer systems can be considered in refining the land use plan.

The total land consumed is the first key indicator. Nearly 15,000 acres would be consumed by new housing units by 2030 under the Current Zoning scenario. That figure would be reduced by more than half under the Farmland Preservation scenario to 7,150 acres. The Conceptual Land Use Plan, which improves on the Farmland Preservation scenario by better linking future urban development to the availability of public sewers, reduces the land consumed from the Current Zoning scenario by about 45% to 8,236 acres. Clearly, this would represent a

MAP 18 EXISTING LAND USE JUNE 2004



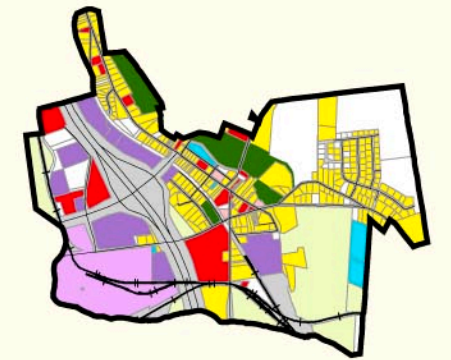
Bath



Chapman



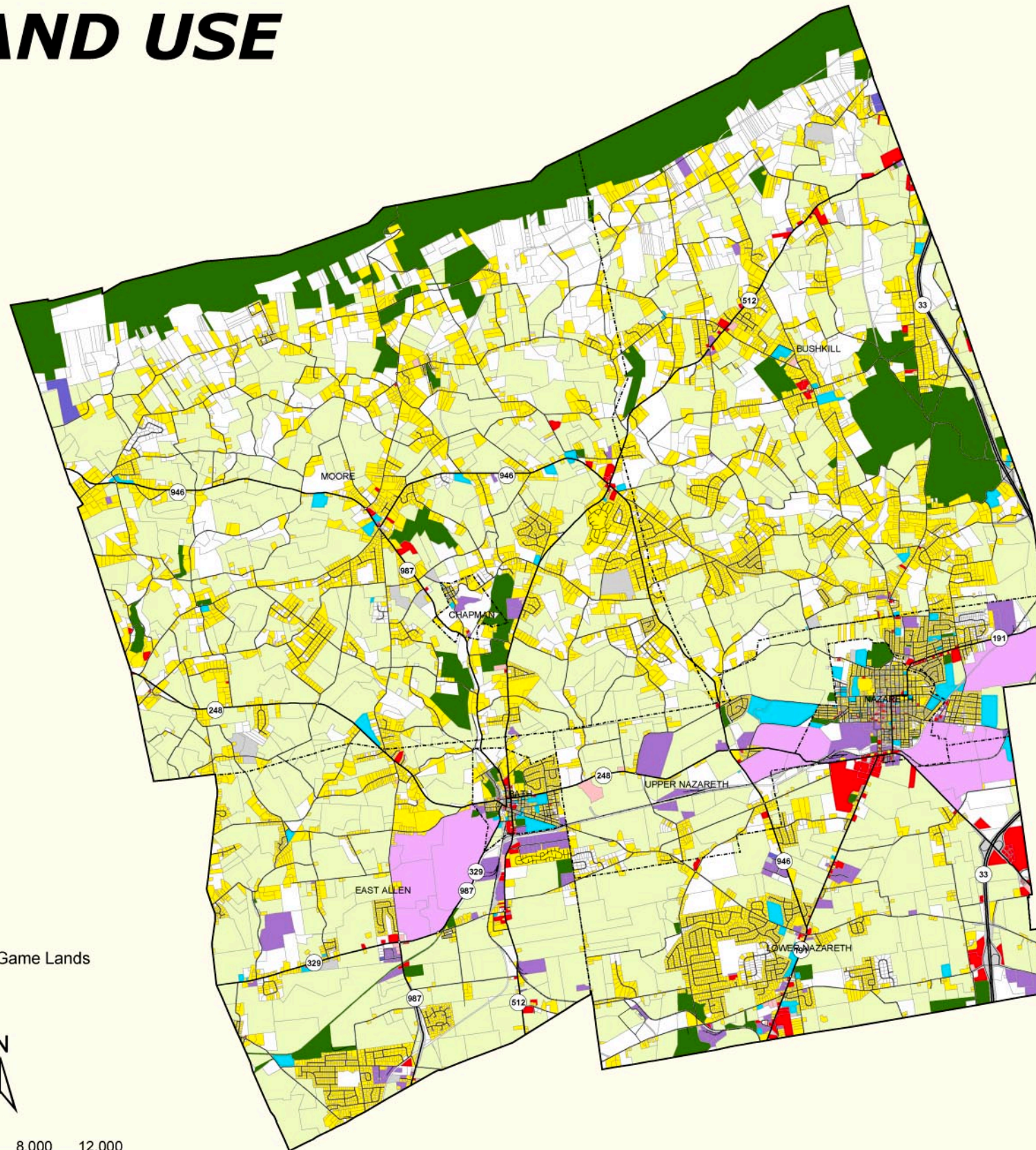
Nazareth



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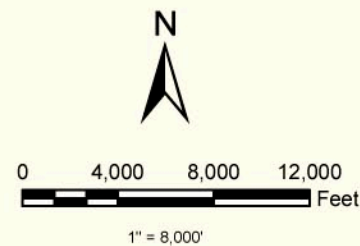


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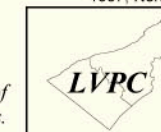
- Residential
- Retail/Commercial
- Offices
- Manufacturing/Industrial
- Warehousing/Distribution
- Transportation, Communication & Utilities
- Public & Quasi-Public
- Parks & Other Outdoor Recreational Sites; State Game Lands
- Active Quarries
- Existing Farmland
- Open Space/Vacant

- Municipal Boundaries
- Major Roads
- Minor Roads
- + Active Railroads



Note: The scale for individual boroughs is 1" = 3,000'.

Source: LVPC; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2001; National Wetland Inventory; Pennsylvania Science Office of The Nature Conservancy, 1999; PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; USDA-SCS, 1997; Northampton County Dept. of Fiscal Affairs, GIS Division, 2000



NAZARETH AREA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
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