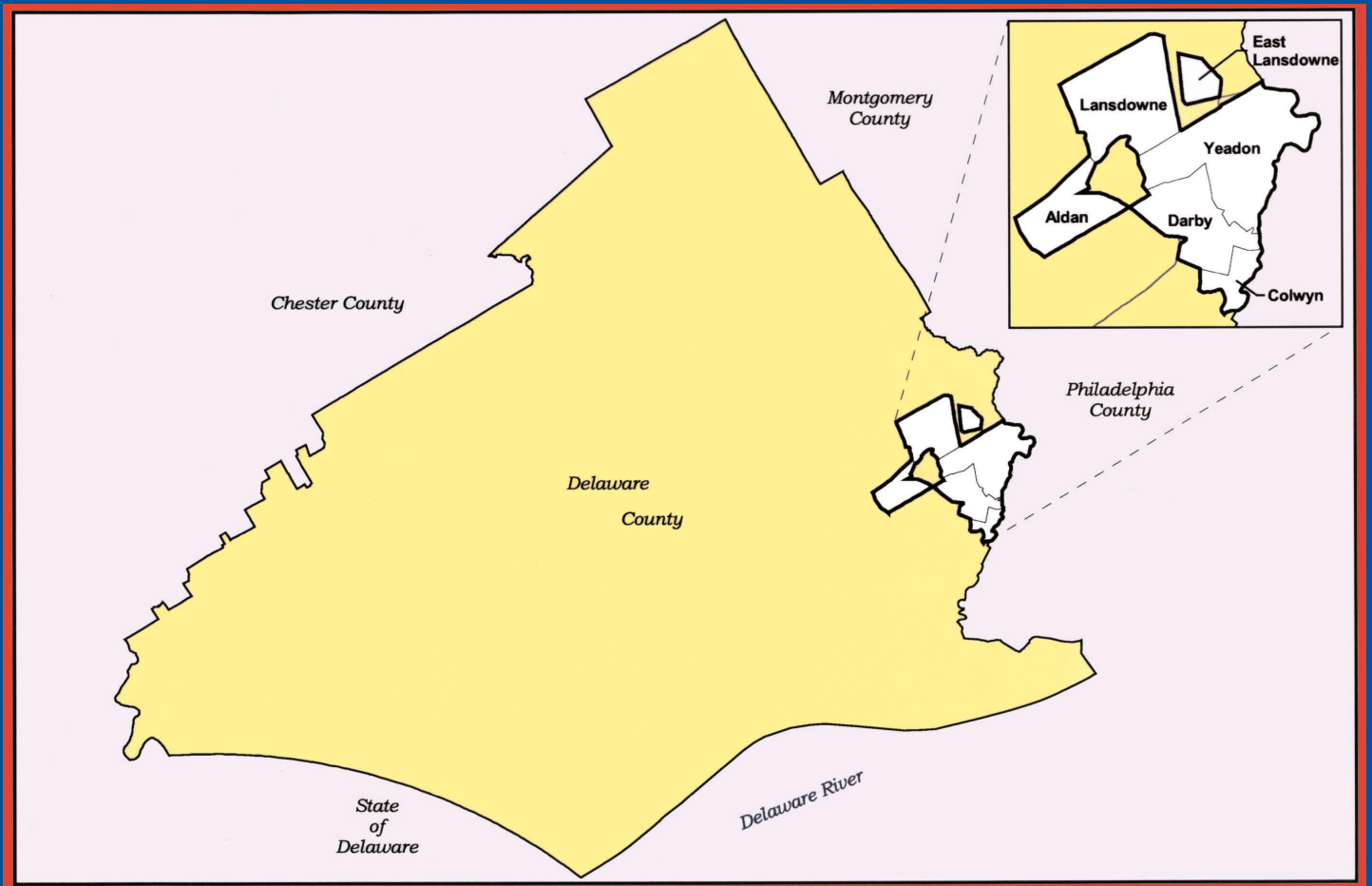


# First Generation Suburbs : Putting Principle into Practice

*An Assessment of the Six Municipalities that  
Comprise the William Penn School District  
Delaware County, Pennsylvania*



Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission



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August 2000

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Created in 1965, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency that provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning to shape a vision for the future growth of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, as well as the City of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey. DVRPC provides technical assistance and services; conducts high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member state and local governments; fosters cooperation among various constituents to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determines and meets the needs of the private sector; and practices public outreach efforts to promote two-way communication and public awareness of regional issues and the Commission.



Our logo is adapted from the official DVRPC seal, and is designed as a stylized image of the Delaware Valley. The outer ring symbolizes the region as a whole, while the diagonal bar signifies the Delaware River. The two adjoining crescents represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey.

DVRPC is funded by a variety of funding sources including federal grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Pennsylvania and New Jersey departments of transportation, as well as by DVRPC's state and local member governments. (A sentence regarding special sources of funding may be inserted here.) The authors, however, are solely responsible for its findings and conclusions, which may not represent the official views or policies of the funding agencies.

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## Executive Summary

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In December 1998, DVRPC released a report entitled *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley*, which defined the economic disadvantages and financial burdens facing older, first generation suburban communities. The term "first generation suburb" generally refers to the earliest group of townships and boroughs to develop outside of a region's urban core. The Delaware Valley's first generation suburbs include both older boroughs scattered across the region, which took root as early agricultural and industrial settlements, and the region's earliest suburban bedroom communities, which developed rapidly in the decades following World War II.

As first generation suburbs lose both upper and middle class households and jobs, their tax base shrinks, demand for social services increases and the local ability to finance local services (including schools) comes under stress. Rapidly growing areas in the next ring of development offer larger homes on larger lots, negligible social problems and comparatively low tax rates, attracting both people and businesses. Together, these processes perpetuate decentralization and produce fiscal and socioeconomic disparities between aging first generation suburbs and more affluent "outer ring" communities.

This report looks in greater detail at the six municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District in eastern Delaware County, Pennsylvania, an area characteristic of the Delaware Valley's first generation suburbs. The William Penn School District, located between Upper Darby Township and the City of Philadelphia, is composed of six small boroughs: Aldan, Colwyn, Darby, East Lansdowne, Lansdowne and Yeadon. All are adjacent except East Lansdowne, which is separated from the other communities by a narrow strip of Upper Darby Township. **The purpose of this study is to compile and analyze historic, demographic and economic information and to formulate potential revitalization strategies for the school district and its member municipalities.**

Once some of the area's most prosperous communities with sound residential neighborhoods, the six municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District are currently facing a variety of fiscal, social, and economic challenges. These challenges include the continuing loss of population and jobs; increasing school enrollment; a relatively low percentage of residents with college degrees; and a low median household income. Additionally, the communities have an older housing stock and aging infrastructure system; a predominance of residential land uses; a high percentage of renter-occupied units; and a lack of vacant, developable land.

Although the tax bases per household in the six communities are among the lowest in Delaware County, the demand for services continues to increase. Given the district's relatively low median income, increasing property taxes is not a viable means of raising additional revenue, since it would place an unfair burden on current homeowners and perpetuate the population and employment losses experienced in the area in recent years.

Despite these challenges, opportunities exist within the area that can provide a foundation for community stabilization and revitalization. These include a wealth of affordable housing units in stable neighborhoods well-served by the region's transit and roadway network; existing commercial and employment centers; access to the City of Philadelphia and to the Philadelphia International Airport; and ongoing revitalization activity in Darby Borough, which is now a concentration of poverty and decline but was once the commercial center of eastern Delaware County.

## **Recommendations**

Many of the problems facing the region's central cities and first generation suburbs, including municipalities in the William Penn School District, are the result of a continuing regional pattern of decentralization and disinvestment. While municipal officials can and should pursue local initiatives that help to mitigate specific problems facing their communities, long-term solutions and a reversal of the continuing loss of both people and jobs can best be accomplished through broader, cooperative regional approaches. Thus, the report recommends the implementation of regional and county-wide planning and growth management strategies, including targeting future infrastructure investments to existing developed areas to discourage continued development in the region's "outer ring" communities.

Given the fiscal disparity that exists between the region's oldest communities and its more affluent outer ring municipalities, the report also recommends investigating long-term alternatives to the property tax as the primary means of financing local services, especially education. Such action would discourage individual municipalities from permitting tax-generating development regardless of its potential impact on neighboring communities or its corridor and region-wide benefits and costs. Alternatives include regional tax-base sharing, earned income taxes or increased "sin" taxes on alcohol and tobacco products. Another option may be a major overhaul of the way that Pennsylvania funds education, an alternative currently being debated in the General Assembly.

Finally, the report makes recommendations to state, county and municipal officials with the goal of alleviating some of the problems experienced in the William Penn School District and facilitating community revitalization, including the following:

- **Municipal officials should participate in a multi-municipal coalition and implement intermunicipal strategies to increase the effectiveness of service deliveries, reduce costs and increase their political clout.** Given the importance of the quality of the education offered by the William Penn School District to the overall health of the community, cooperative undertakings should include both local officials and the school administration. Examples of intermunicipal cooperation that should be pursued or expanded include developing and implementing a joint land use and transportation plan; pursuing joint purchasing and service agreements; implementing a multi-municipal Main



Street Program along Baltimore Pike; and undertaking joint recreation planning and programming.

- Municipal officials should **review their local comprehensive plans and zoning regulations and revise them as necessary**, to support existing businesses, attract new employers and support in-fill residential development where appropriate. Plans and zoning ordinances should allow uses that are compatible with and complement existing uses and assist in accomplishing the community's goals for economic and community development. Non-traditional housing alternatives, such as accessory apartments, shared housing and residential conversions, should be considered in appropriate locations.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Delaware County Office of Housing and Community Development and local non-profit groups should **increase funds available for housing assistance for low and moderate income families, including both homeowners and renters.**
- Municipal officials should **review and revise local property maintenance requirements** and actively enforce those requirements. Absentee landlords as well as the community's residents and business owners should be required to maintain their properties. Public works crews should be utilized where necessary to clean and maintain the exteriors of properties where owners have neglected to do so, and those owners should be fined or have a tax lien placed against their property. Local officials should work with neighboring municipalities, striving for consistency between these requirements and their enforcement.
- Municipal officials should **assess (and improve as necessary) sidewalk and street maintenance provided in their neighborhoods, and enhance streetscape improvements (including street lighting) as well.** These actions can strengthen the residents' sense of community pride and encourage them to maintain their individual units.
- Municipal officials should **review and expand as necessary the level of police protection** provided to their businesses and residential neighborhoods.
- Municipal officials should **respond aggressively to housing vacancies** as a part of their overall neighborhood revitalization plan, including boarding vacant units, seeking acquisition of vacant properties or, if appropriate, demolishing deteriorated vacant structures.
- Municipal officials should **work with the Delaware County Commerce Department to identify and take advantage of all available economic development programs and incentives** offered through federal, state and county agencies as well as private foundations.

- Delaware County should work with municipal officials to **inventory vacant and abandoned structures and properties** within the study area.
- Municipal officials should **explore the feasibility of implementing "2-rate taxation"** (which imposes separate tax rates on land and improvements) as a means of encouraging landowners to utilize their properties to their fullest potential.
- County and municipal officials should **work together to identify necessary improvements to the highway network** and seek potential funding sources.
- County and municipal officials, the Delaware County Transportation Management Association and SEPTA should **work together to continue to improve transit service to key employment centers, including office parks and industries around the Philadelphia International Airport.**
- **The William Penn School District's administration should review their current policies as they relate to student achievement and continuing education opportunities for adults and explore any potential opportunities for improvement,** including improved college-preparatory curriculums, enhanced job-readiness programs and adult education programs.
- **Residents in the study area should strive for increased participation in the decision-making process within their community and critically assess the consequences of actions affecting local governments and the school district,** and should actively participate in Borough Council meetings, planning and zoning board hearings and school board meetings.
- County, municipal and school district officials, as well as civic associations, should **work together to actively market the community's strongest advantages,** utilizing tools such as brochures, commercial media or an Internet site.

## I. Introduction

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In December 1998, DVRPC released a report entitled *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley*, which defined the economic disadvantages and financial burdens facing older suburban communities and the negative impacts of these issues on all facets of the community. The term "first generation suburb" generally refers to the earliest group of townships and boroughs to develop outside of a region's urban core. Discussions about metropolitan decentralization have traditionally focused on the effects of disinvestment in cities, suburban sprawl and the loss of open space and agricultural land. Recently, however, more attention has been given to emerging patterns of decline in the region's older suburbs.

The Delaware Valley's first generation suburbs include both older boroughs scattered across the region, which took root as early agricultural and industrial settlements, and the region's earliest suburban bedroom communities, which developed rapidly in the decades following World War II. This latter group is largely clustered around the cities of Philadelphia and Camden, extending along the region's major roads and highways. Most of the region's first generation communities gained both population and jobs between the late 1940's and 1970.

More recently, however, these communities have experienced the same kind of decline experienced by the region's core cities prior to 1970, as schools become crowded, local crime rates increase and middle-income households and businesses move farther out into the suburbs, leaving behind concentrations of poverty. Many of these first generation communities are now facing fiscal and socioeconomic challenges that until recently were perceived as exclusively urban problems, including population and job loss, stagnant or declining tax bases and a resulting disparity between the need for local services and the revenues available to meet those needs.

### **Study Purpose**

The current report looks in greater detail at an area which is characteristic of the region's first generation suburbs: the William Penn School District in eastern Delaware County, Pennsylvania. The William Penn School District, located between Upper Darby Township and the City of Philadelphia, is composed of six small boroughs: Aldan, Colwyn, Darby, East Lansdowne, Lansdowne and Yeadon (see Map 1). All are adjacent except East Lansdowne, which is separated from the other communities by a narrow strip of Upper Darby Township.

As is the case in many first generation suburbs, the district is well-served by the region's highway and transit network (see Map 2). Several major roadways (including the Blue Route (I-476), Route 1, Springfield Road, Baltimore Pike and Chester Pike) traverse the District or are within reasonable proximity, and the community is directly served by

SEPTA's R-2 and R-3 regional rail lines. The area is also within a reasonable distance of SEPTA's 69<sup>th</sup> Street Terminal.

This purpose of this study is to compile and analyze historic, demographic and economic information and to formulate potential revitalization strategies for the school district and its member municipalities. The study was guided by a task force composed of representatives from each of the six communities, the school administration, and state and county agencies.

The report begins with a brief sketch of the community's history. A statistical profile of the area is presented in Chapter II, and these statistics are translated into challenges and opportunities in Chapter III. Finally, Chapter IV identifies goals and objectives for the study area and discusses potential revitalization strategies, including region-wide alternatives to revitalize first generation suburbs (such as property tax reform and regional planning and growth management) as well as localized revitalization strategies.

### **The History of the Community**

The six municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District were once a part of Darby Township, which originally consisted of 17.5 square miles bordering Philadelphia. Today these six boroughs cover a total of 4.8 square miles *combined* and represent less than half of the thirteen municipalities that were carved from the original Darby Township. Their individual histories parallel the historical development of many other municipalities in the vicinity. The following provides a general history of the area's development along with a more detailed look at the six boroughs that comprise the William Penn School District.

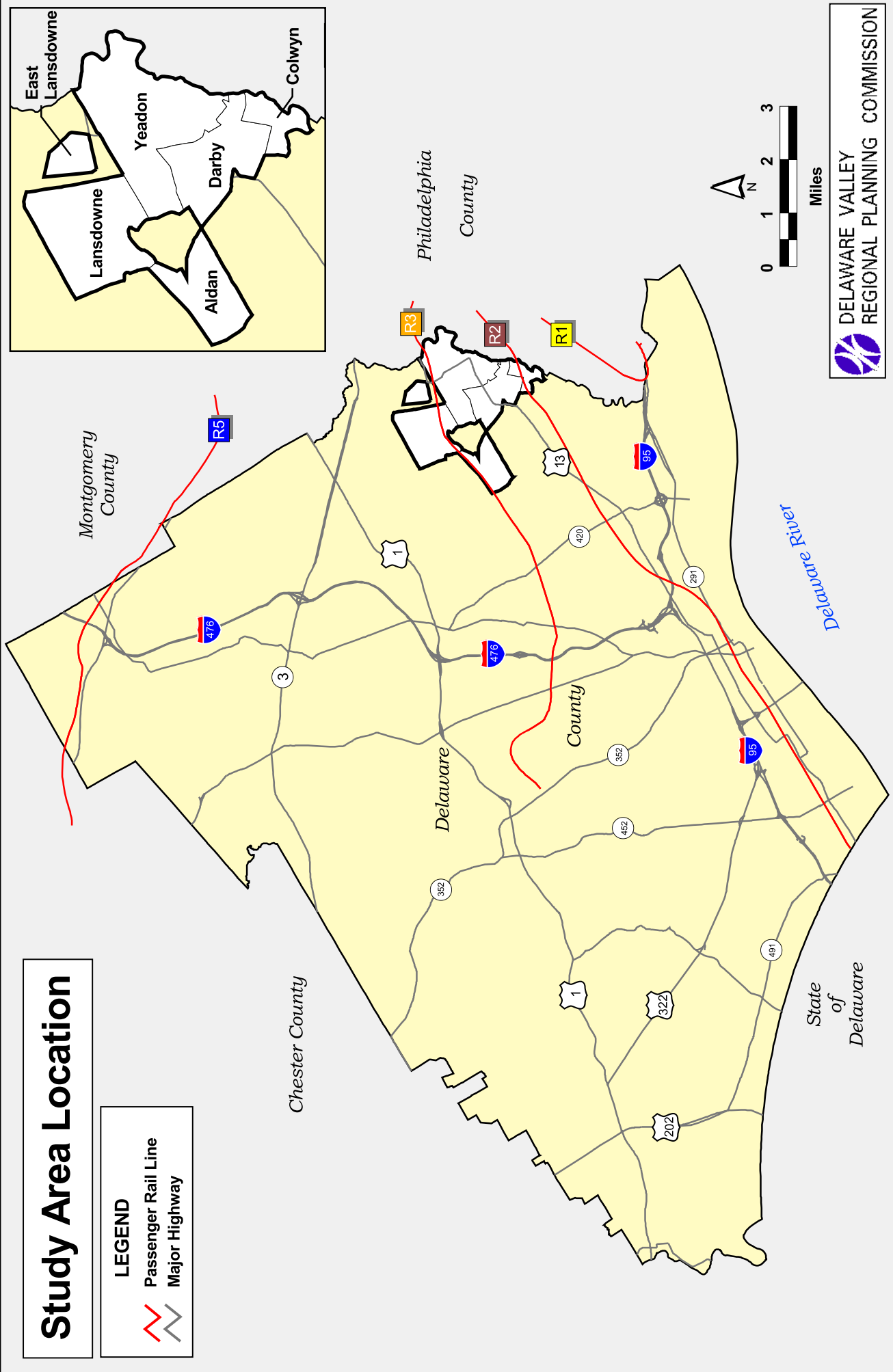
Southeastern Delaware County was probably first explored by the Swedes during the seventeenth century under Governor Johan Printz. Settlement was initiated in 1682, when William Penn's 45,000 square mile grant from the Duke of York was made available to European settlers. In 1683, one year after the initial settlement, Darby Township was declared an official political subdivision of what was then Chester County. Over the next 100 years almost 20 other political subdivisions were formally recognized within the County. In 1786 Darby Township split in two, with the northern-most section becoming Upper Darby Township. Chester County experienced an even more substantial change when it was split by an Act of Assembly on September 26, 1789, creating Delaware County.

Proximity to waterways and the attractiveness of the land spawned the earliest development of the six William Penn School District boroughs. Darby Creek provided an ideal setting for mills, and milling communities eventually evolved throughout the area. The entire area was rural until the late 1850's, with the exception of the commercial village of Darby.

# Study Area Location

## LEGEND

- Passenger Rail Line
- Major Highway

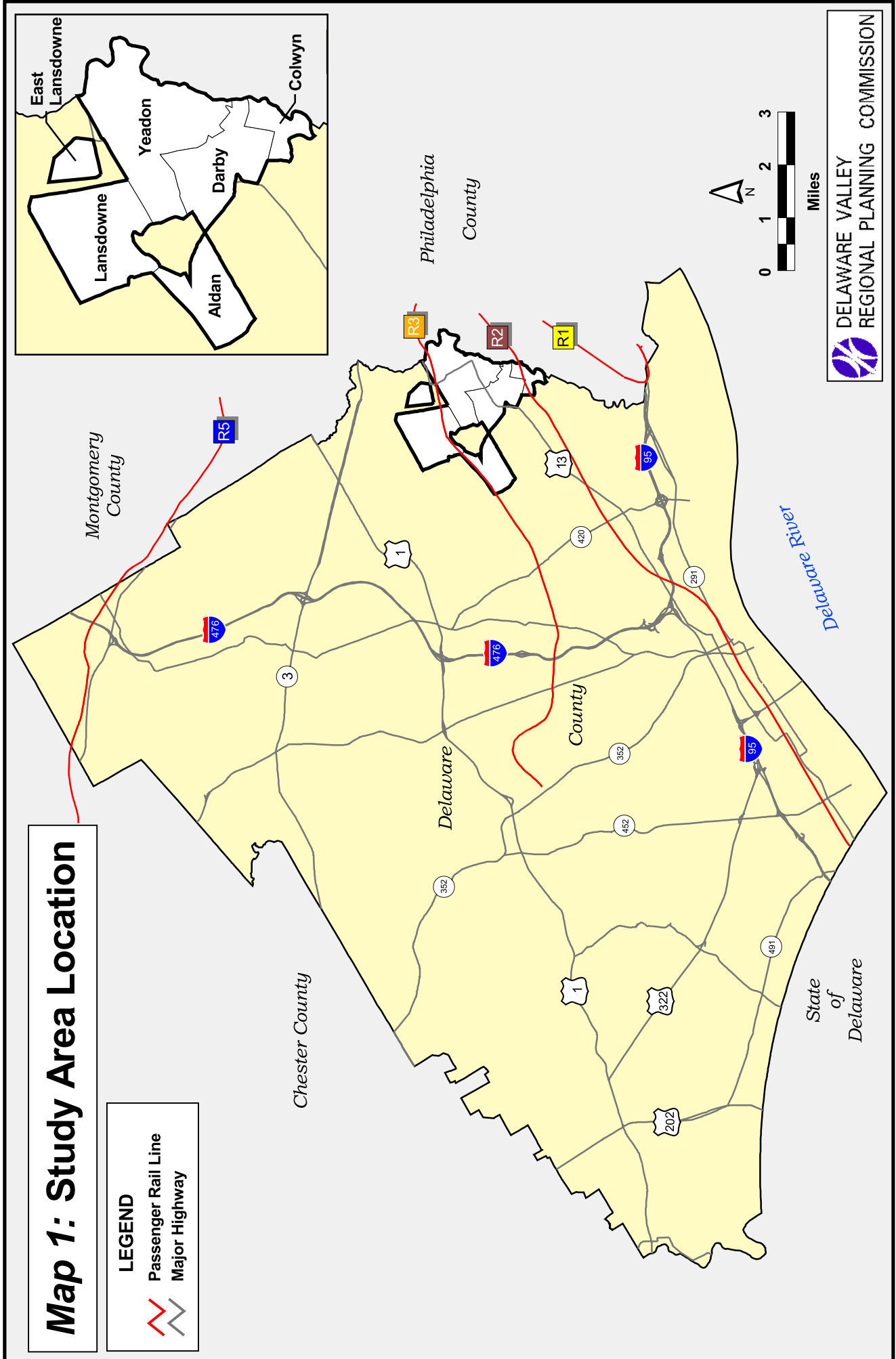




# Map 1: Study Area Location

## LEGEND

- Passenger Rail Line
- Major Highway







The end of the Civil War was immediately followed by rapid technological development and an increase in industrial and manufacturing activity. The development of railroads and an improved roadway network provided new and better ways of moving people and goods. These roads and railroads connected existing villages and spawned the growth of new communities. Industries developed along the railroad, and new urban and industrial centers were created at train stations and terminals.

The growing population in Darby and Upper Darby townships brought new demands for public services which could not be adequately provided by the existing Township government. Boroughs began breaking away from Darby and Upper Darby and assuming the responsibility of providing better and more efficient public services at the local level, including a better education for its residents. By the early 1900's, thirteen separate political entities had been created from what was once Darby Township. The following six brief histories indicate the uniqueness of each municipality as they developed within the overall pattern common to southeastern Delaware County.

Darby Borough became an incorporated political body separate from Darby Township in 1853. At that time, Darby was primarily a mill town, with the Darby, Cedar Hill and Imperial Mills all operating within the Borough's boundaries. Locomotive service was introduced in Darby Borough in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroads. These railroads further expanded Darby's transportation links with Philadelphia and encouraged development in the Borough. An increase in the number of residents in the Borough led to the development of a thriving commercial center located around Main Street. The introduction of trolley service further elevated Darby's position in a growing network of Philadelphia suburban communities.

The Borough of Colwyn incorporated as a borough separate from Darby Township in 1892. Colwyn was predominantly a farming community until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when industries began to develop. The first industrial establishment was a cotton mill located on Church Run, known as Warpington Mills. After a fire destroyed the mill in 1877, Richard Thatcher, the mill's owner, converted his house into a summer boarding house, and Colwyn for a time became a resort area for many Philadelphians. The Thatcher boarding house was destroyed by fire in 1897, at which time the property was divided into several separate building lots. Subsequently, retail business and industry developed along with residences, giving Colwyn a distinct urban character.

The Borough of Aldan was incorporated as a political entity separate from Upper Darby Township on September 22, 1893. The Borough was originally known as Adamsford, and later became East Clifton. Aldan was originally affiliated with Clifton Heights, but objections raised by Aldan's residents to the extensive industrial development which occurred in Clifton Heights led them to disassociate themselves with the rest of the Borough. In 1906 a trolley line was built on Woodlawn Avenue connecting the boroughs

of Sharon Hill, Collingdale, Aldan and Clifton Heights with the 69<sup>th</sup> Street business center in Upper Darby. This trolley line provided a link to and from the commercial center in Upper Darby and was vital to the development of Aldan.

Lansdowne Borough also became an incorporated political body separate from Upper Darby Township in 1893. The Lansdowne area was once a farming community and home to several mills located along the banks of Darby Creek. Transportation played a significant role in Lansdowne's development, with the intersection of Baltimore Avenue and the Darby/Radnor Road (today's Lansdowne Avenue), two major arterials for the Philadelphia area, becoming the center of the community. In 1855, the West Chester and Philadelphia Railroad initiated rail service that passed through Lansdowne. The late 1800's and the early 1900's saw a significant building boom, as Lansdowne's proximity to Philadelphia and access to road and rail made it extremely attractive as a residential area.

Yeadon Borough became an incorporated political body separate from Darby Township in 1894. Known as Palmerton before incorporation, Yeadon was originally a farming community. The fields, however, gradually began to disappear and the Borough began to take on a residential appearance. Soon after, industrial and commercial establishments began to emerge, mimicking similar patterns of development that were occurring in the adjacent boroughs.

The Borough of East Lansdowne was the last borough created, separating from Upper Darby Township in 1911. The land that was to become East Lansdowne was once an old farm that was purchased in 1902 by Wood, Harmon & Company, a real estate firm. Clifford Burke Harmon, a real estate salesman and founder of the Borough, divided the tract of land into individual building lots that went on sale later that year. Over the years, most of the 130 acres were developed as residential units along tree-lined streets. Throughout the 1900's, East Lansdowne expanded and strengthened its residential atmosphere along with a single strip of commercial activity along Baltimore Avenue, a major thoroughfare for the area.

## II. Statistical Profile

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Once some of the area's most prosperous residential communities, the six municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District are currently facing a variety of fiscal, social, and economic challenges. As first generation suburbs lose both middle class households and jobs, their tax base shrinks, demand for social services increases and the local ability to finance local services (including schools) comes under stress. Rapidly growing areas in the next ring of development offer larger homes on larger lots, negligible social problems and comparatively low tax rates, thereby attracting both people and businesses. Together, these processes perpetuate decentralization and produce fiscal and socioeconomic disparities between aging first generation suburbs and more affluent outer ring communities.

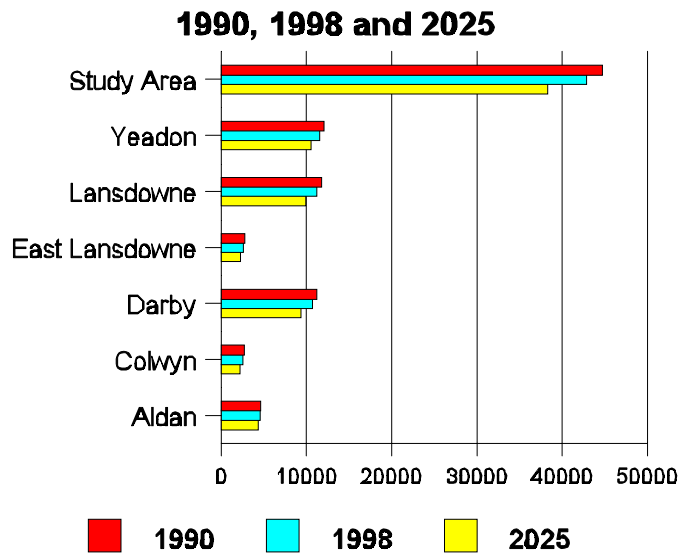
The following sections discuss population and employment changes, income trends, land use characteristics and housing traits in the William Penn School District, illustrating disparities within Delaware County. Chapter III then summarizes these characteristics by identifying the challenges and opportunities they present for local decision-makers.

### Population Changes, 1990 through 2025

The William Penn School District includes some of the most densely populated municipalities in the region, with Darby and East Lansdowne having more people per square mile in 1990 than did the City of Philadelphia. In recent decades, however, the communities have experienced population losses. Map 3 illustrates the percentage change in the municipal population in Delaware County between 1990 and 1998, and Figure 1 indicates changes that have occurred within the School District.

Among the 49 municipalities in Delaware County, the William Penn School District municipalities rank from 14<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup> in population growth between 1990 and 1998. During this time period the six municipalities in the William Penn School District lost over 4% of their combined population (1,857 people), while Delaware County lost less than 1% of its population. Five of the six municipalities in the William Penn study area lost a greater percentage of their population than did Delaware County between 1990 and 1998.

**Figure 1: Study Area Population**

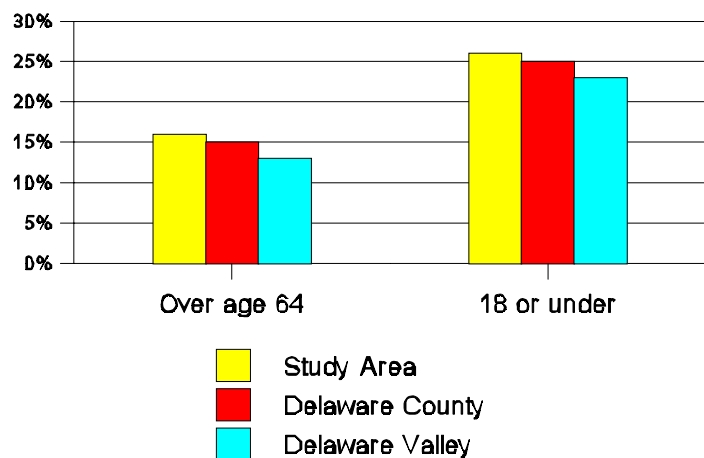


As illustrated in Figure 1, this trend is expected to continue through 2025, with stable or slightly declining population in each of the six municipalities.<sup>1</sup> As a whole, the population in the school district is forecast to decline by over 14% between 1990 and 2025, compared to a decline of only 2% county-wide.

### Age of the Population

The study area's municipalities rank from 11<sup>th</sup> (17%) to 41<sup>st</sup> (11%) among Delaware County's 49 municipalities in the percentage of the total population over the age of 64. As indicated in Figure 2, the age of the district's population in 1990 mirrored that of the County overall. Approximately 16% of the total population of the area were age 65 and over, compared to approximately 15% of Delaware County's total population. Delaware County itself is slightly older than is the rest of the nine-county Delaware Valley region, where just over 13% of the population is over the age of 64. Three of the six William Penn School District municipalities, however, have a higher percentage of elderly people than the County.

**Figure 2: Percent of the Population Over age 64 and age 18 or under**



Three of the six William Penn School District municipalities, however, have a higher percentage of elderly people than the County.

The District's six municipalities ranked from 3<sup>rd</sup> (Darby Borough, with 31%) to 41<sup>st</sup> (Borough of Lansdowne, at only 22%) in terms of the percentage of residents age 18 and under in 1990. About 26% of the study area's total population were age 18 and under, compared to 25% of Delaware County's total population. Three of the District's six municipalities had a higher percentage of people under age 18 in 1990 than did Delaware County overall.

### Change in Jobs, 1990 through 2025

Map 4 illustrates the percentage change in employment in Delaware County municipalities between 1990 and 1997. Municipalities in the William Penn School District rank from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 45<sup>th</sup> in the County in the percent change in jobs during this time period. The total number of jobs in the district decreased by approximately 2% between 1990 and 1997, compared to an increase of 2% county-wide.

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<sup>1</sup>Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, *Year 2025 County and Municipal Population and Employment Forecasts*, April, 2000: Appendix C.

# Map 3: Percent Change in Population Delaware County: 1990 - 1998

## LEGEND



Study Area

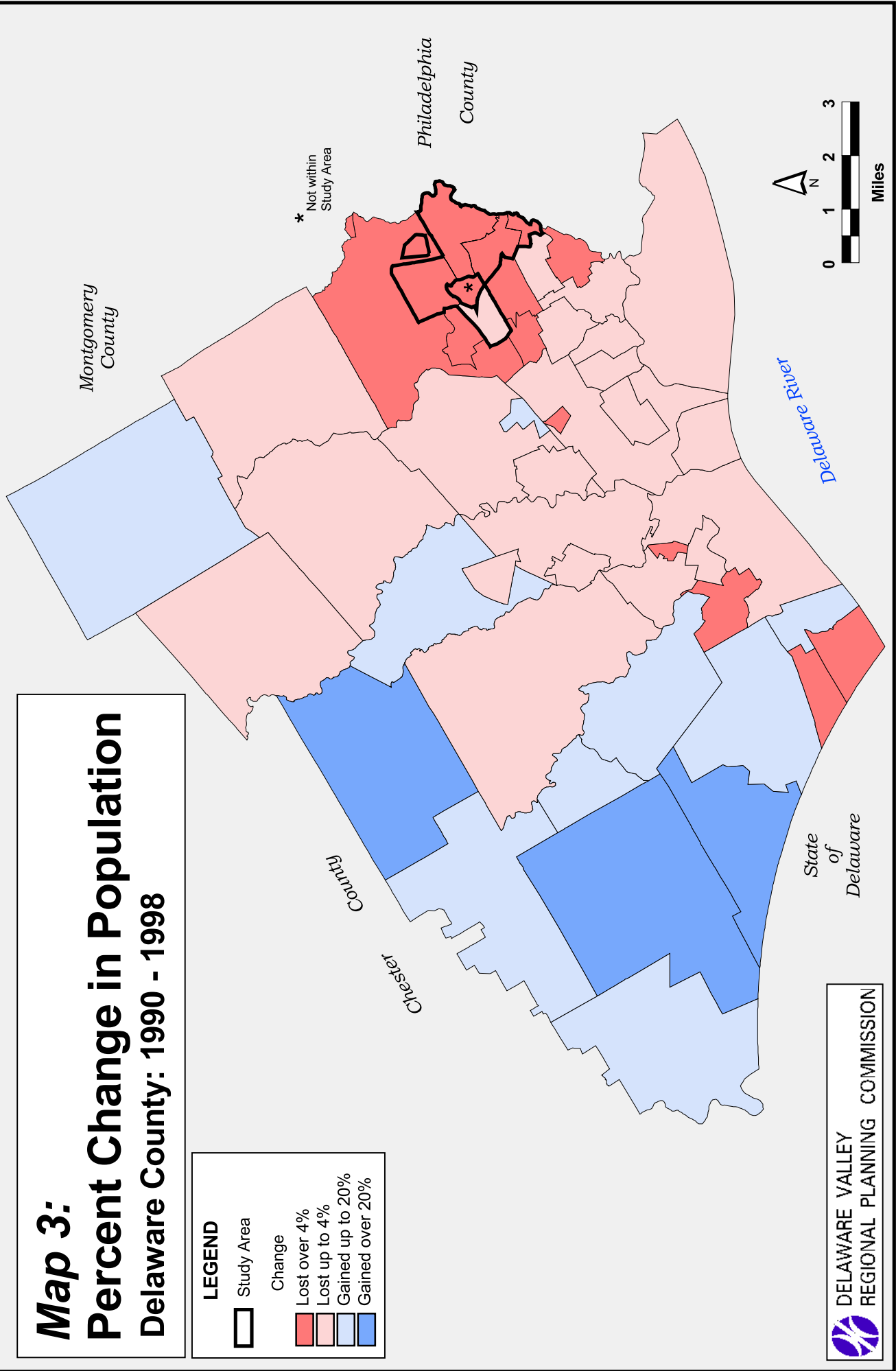
### Change

Lost over 4%

Lost up to 4%

Gained up to 20%






Gained over 20%

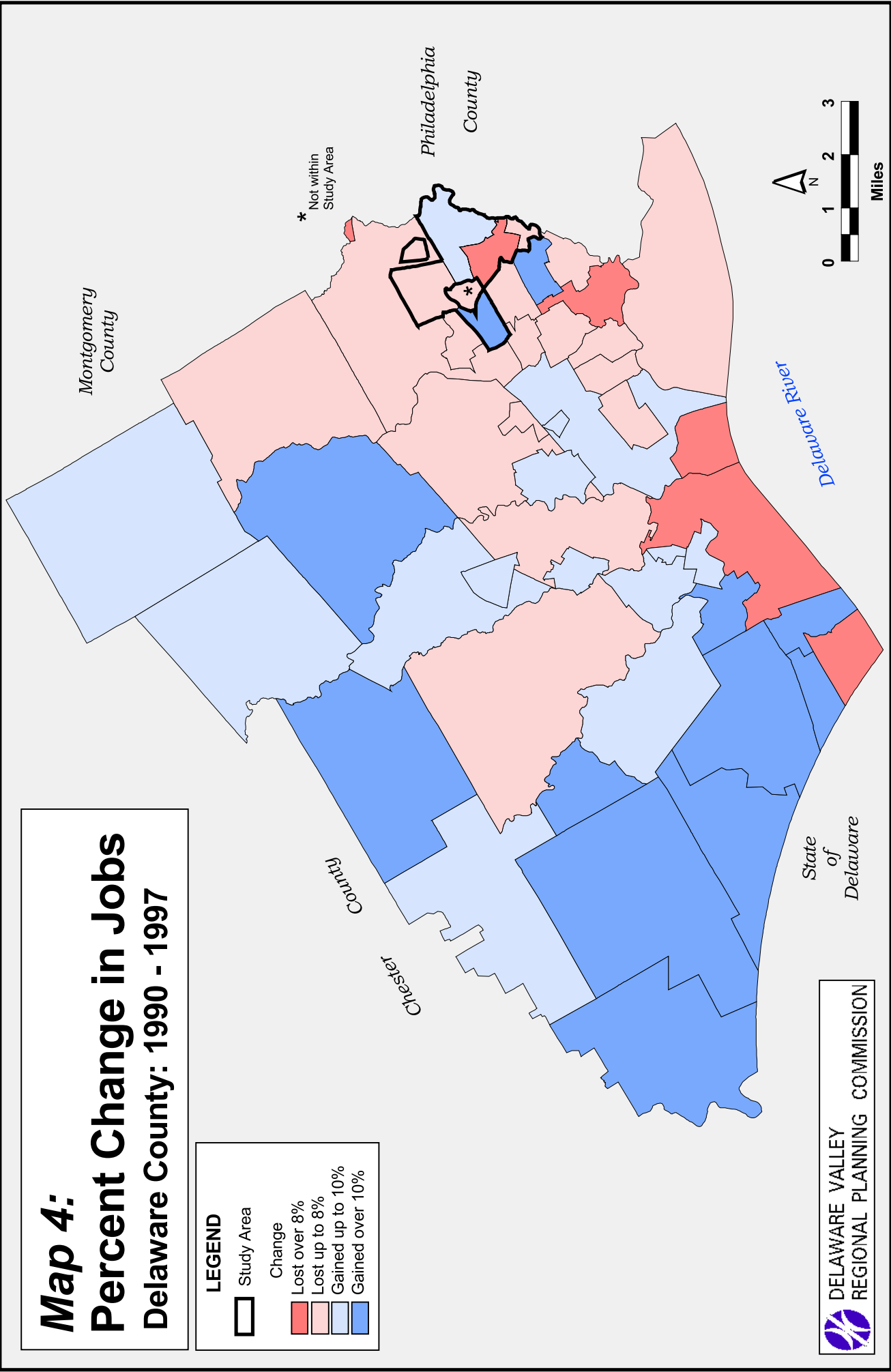




# Map 4: Percent Change in Jobs Delaware County: 1990 - 1997

**LEGEND**

-  Study Area
- Change**
-  Lost over 8%
-  Lost up to 8%
-  Gained up to 10%
-  Gained over 10%

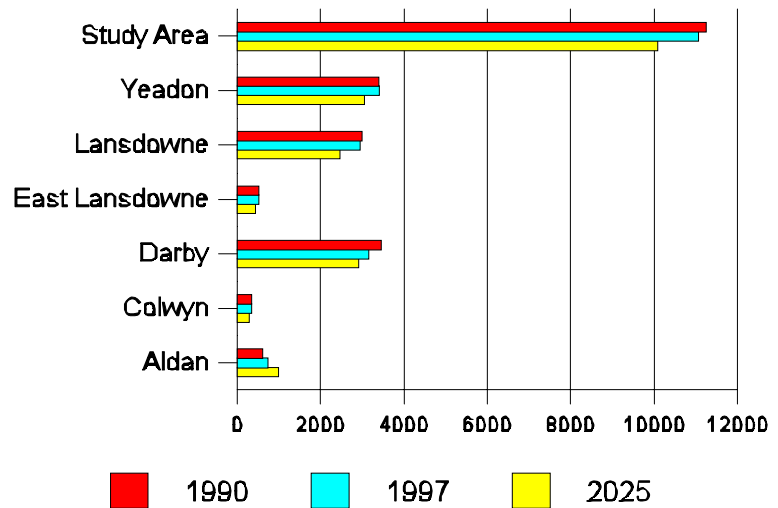






As indicated in Figure 3, however, only one of the William Penn School District municipalities, saw a significant decline in their total number of jobs between 1990 and 1997 (Darby Borough, which lost over 8% of its employment). Employment in four other communities remained stable while Aldan realized an 18% increase, gaining over 130 jobs.

**Figure 3: Study Area Employment  
1990, 1997 and 2025**



Given the continuing trend toward decentralization of the region's employment outward into its rural and exurban fringes, employment in the District overall is forecast to decline by over 10% between 1990 and 2025, compared to a county-wide increase of over 14%.<sup>2</sup> Only the Borough of Aldan (which has been able to attract new employers in recent years) is expected to realize any increase in employment through the year 2025.

### Occupations of the Residents

According to the United States Census, a lower percentage of the residents of the William Penn School District worked in jobs that were managerial or professional (26%) in 1990 than in Delaware County overall (31%). As illustrated on Table 1, the proportion of jobs that were managerial or professional in five of the District's six municipalities was lower than in Delaware County, while the percentages of residents that worked in all other occupational categories were higher. More of the district's residents worked in jobs that are *technical, sales or administrative support* (37%) than any other occupational category.

### Median Household Income

Map 5 illustrates the 1998 median household income by municipality in Delaware County. Among the County's 49 municipalities, the study area's municipalities rank from 18<sup>th</sup> highest (Aldan Borough, at \$54,102) to 5<sup>th</sup> lowest (the Borough of Darby, at \$32,774) in median household income. Five of the six municipalities in the William Penn School District (with the exception of Aldan) had a lower median household income than did Delaware County in 1998.

<sup>2</sup>DVRPC, *Year 2025 County and Municipal Population and Employment Forecasts*, April, 2000. Appendix E.

**Table 1: Occupations of Residents by Municipality in Delaware County**

Municipality	Occupational Group											
	managerial/ professional		Technical, sales, administrative support		Service		Farming, fishing, forestry		Precision production, craft, and repair		Operators, fabricators, and laborers	
	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank
<b>Aldan borough</b>	<b>27.52%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>40.51%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9.88%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1.38%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11.39%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>9.32%</b>	<b>32</b>
Aston township	27.78%	25	34.42%	27	10.78%	22	0.91%	15	13.34%	23	12.76%	21
Bethel township	30.84%	19	34.05%	30	5.88%	45	4.10%	1	17.14%	6	7.99%	34
Birmingham township	49.08%	5	37.21%	17	4.07%	49	1.56%	5	6.13%	46	1.95%	49
Brookhaven borough	28.33%	24	38.82%	8	7.68%	41	0.41%	37	15.10%	15	9.66%	29
Chester city	16.68%	39	32.01%	37	23.67%	1	0.46%	35	9.17%	36	18.00%	9
Chester Heights borough	49.79%	4	31.39%	41	5.28%	47	0.90%	16	7.01%	45	5.63%	42
Chester township	16.69%	38	33.37%	32	17.67%	3	0.49%	33	12.26%	26	19.52%	7
Clifton Heights borough	19.57%	36	35.73%	21	15.11%	9	0.33%	43	15.50%	13	13.76%	18
Collingdale borough	15.99%	43	36.82%	18	10.24%	25	0.77%	22	18.50%	4	17.68%	11
<b>Colwyn borough</b>	<b>13.26%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>39.31%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12.71%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1.25%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15.05%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18.41%</b>	<b>8</b>
Concord township	40.69%	13	29.78%	47	8.36%	37	1.59%	4	12.31%	25	7.27%	36
<b>Darby borough</b>	<b>13.32%</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37.68%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16.48%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1.14%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13.63%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17.77%</b>	<b>10</b>
Darby township	21.60%	31	36.45%	20	12.79%	12	0.55%	30	11.61%	31	17.00%	12
<b>East Lansdowne borough</b>	<b>16.16%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>37.63%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12.52%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2.28%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20.49%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10.93%</b>	<b>25</b>
Eddystone borough	14.80%	44	32.62%	34	14.97%	10	3.27%	2	14.03%	19	20.31%	6
Edgmont township	47.96%	7	31.11%	42	5.77%	46	1.52%	6	9.06%	38	4.57%	45
Folcroft borough	16.03%	42	39.84%	3	10.30%	24	0.73%	25	16.16%	8	16.95%	13
Glenolden borough	18.68%	37	39.65%	4	10.97%	21	0.35%	40	15.96%	11	14.39%	15
Haverford township	41.11%	11	34.77%	25	8.93%	34	0.83%	19	7.90%	42	6.45%	39
<b>Lansdowne borough</b>	<b>35.32%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>34.18%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>9.54%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1.14%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12.09%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>7.74%</b>	<b>35</b>
Lower Chichester township	8.22%	48	34.23%	28	16.62%	7	0.00%	45	19.44%	3	21.49%	4
Marcus Hook borough	7.84%	49	32.64%	33	19.35%	2	0.60%	29	16.07%	9	23.51%	2
Marple township	37.64%	16	37.58%	14	8.03%	39	0.74%	23	9.61%	35	6.39%	40
Media borough	38.12%	15	33.67%	31	9.08%	33	0.53%	31	10.47%	34	8.12%	33
Middletown township	41.61%	10	31.63%	39	7.76%	40	1.16%	9	11.31%	33	6.52%	38
Millbourne borough	25.87%	27	32.09%	35	17.41%	4	0.50%	32	11.94%	29	12.19%	23
Morton borough	28.85%	23	36.74%	19	11.47%	16	0.82%	20	12.09%	28	10.03%	28
Nether Providence township	48.44%	6	30.49%	44	6.40%	43	0.72%	26	7.32%	44	6.63%	37
Newtown township	40.95%	12	34.95%	23	8.73%	35	0.70%	27	9.15%	37	5.52%	43
Norwood borough	19.69%	35	37.32%	16	10.70%	23	0.42%	36	17.95%	5	13.92%	17
Parkside borough	22.92%	30	40.70%	1	9.97%	27	0.33%	42	14.29%	18	11.79%	24
Prospect Park borough	20.08%	33	39.44%	5	13.11%	11	0.00%	46	14.74%	17	12.63%	22
Radnor township	50.96%	3	32.00%	38	9.50%	31	0.87%	17	3.52%	48	3.15%	46
Ridley Park borough	30.12%	20	35.12%	22	11.40%	17	0.34%	41	13.49%	22	9.52%	31
Ridley township	23.21%	29	37.34%	15	9.68%	29	0.74%	24	15.61%	12	13.42%	19
Rose Valley borough	59.61%	1	30.02%	46	4.32%	48	0.00%	47	3.89%	47	2.16%	48
Rutledge borough	34.71%	18	32.04%	36	8.50%	36	0.97%	12	13.11%	24	10.68%	26
Sharon Hill borough	19.90%	34	37.77%	11	11.72%	15	0.21%	44	16.04%	10	14.36%	16
Springfield township	38.54%	14	38.85%	7	8.27%	38	0.40%	39	7.99%	41	5.96%	41
Swarthmore borough	56.66%	2	31.46%	40	6.38%	44	0.91%	14	2.37%	49	2.22%	47
Thornbury township	42.09%	9	30.46%	45	7.41%	42	0.84%	18	8.80%	39	10.41%	27
Tinicum township	16.12%	41	34.78%	24	11.07%	20	0.65%	28	16.30%	7	21.07%	5
Trainer borough	12.04%	47	28.39%	48	16.65%	6	0.80%	21	19.86%	2	22.27%	3
Upland borough	20.37%	32	23.56%	49	16.68%	5	0.00%	48	15.26%	14	24.13%	1
Upper Chichester township	23.37%	28	34.53%	26	11.15%	18	0.47%	34	13.98%	20	16.50%	14
Upper Darby township	29.61%	22	37.98%	9	10.21%	26	0.94%	13	11.65%	30	9.63%	30
Upper Providence township	47.31%	8	31.08%	43	9.12%	32	0.41%	38	7.32%	43	4.77%	44
<b>Yeadon borough</b>	<b>29.68%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>37.90%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11.09%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>8.58%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12.76%</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Delaware County</b>	<b>31.40%</b>		<b>35.48%</b>		<b>10.77%</b>		<b>0.76%</b>		<b>11.13%</b>		<b>10.46%</b>	
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>25.95%</b>		<b>37.12%</b>		<b>11.80%</b>		<b>0.92%</b>		<b>12.03%</b>		<b>12.19%</b>	
<b>Median</b>	<b>27.78%</b>		<b>34.77%</b>		<b>10.24%</b>		<b>0.73%</b>		<b>12.31%</b>		<b>10.93%</b>	

Source: United States Census Bureau.

# Map 5: Median Household Income Delaware County: 1998

## LEGEND



Study Area

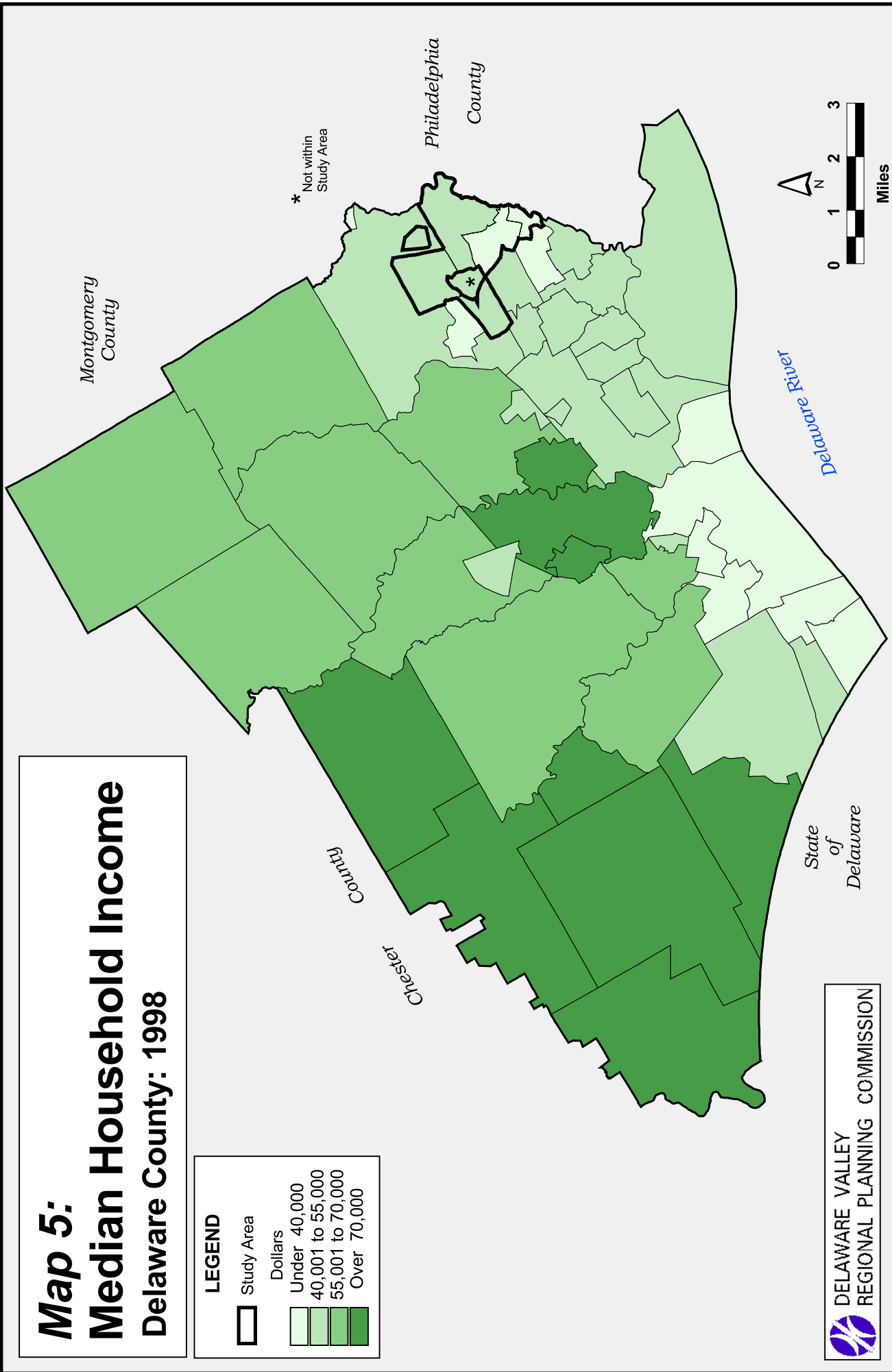
Dollars

Under 40,000

40,001 to 55,000

55,001 to 70,000

Over 70,000





The fact that five of the six municipalities have a lower median household income than Delaware County overall is even more significant given that the County's median is lower than other areas in the nine-county Delaware Valley region. At just over \$50,000, the 1998 median household income in Delaware County was approximately 10% lower than the region's overall median in the same year (estimated to be approximately \$55,330).<sup>3</sup>

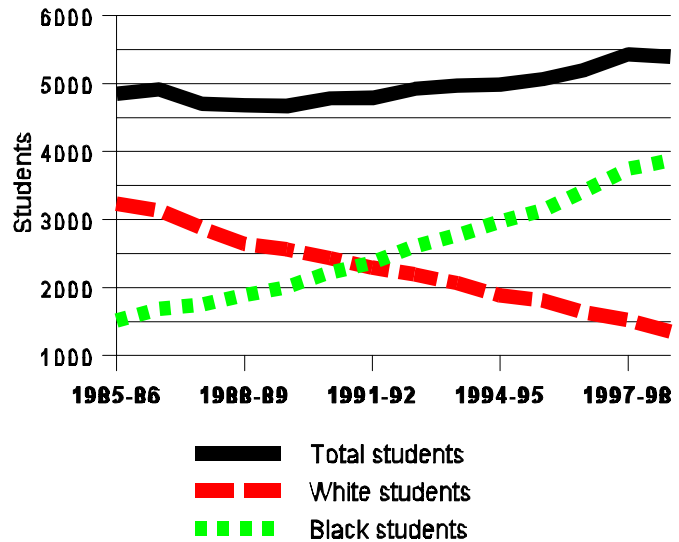
The lower income evident in Darby Borough may reflect the high percentage of family households headed by single females. In 1990, 33% of the family households in the Borough were headed by female heads-of-household, as compared to 20% of all households in the study area and only 16% of households County-wide. Twenty-five percent of the children under the age of five in Darby Borough in 1990 lived below poverty level, compared 9% county-wide, 10% in the Borough of Colwyn and less than 4% in each of the District's other four municipalities.

### School Demographics

Despite a declining overall population, school enrollment in the district has shown little fluctuation and even increased in recent years. As indicated in Figure 4, school enrollment increased by 16% between 1990 and 1998, from 4,668 students to 5,396 students.

The racial composition of the district's enrollment has shifted dramatically over the last decade. In 1985, 68% of the students were white and 32% were other races, mainly black. By 1990, those percentages had shifted to 52% and 48% respectively, and by 1998, only 24% of the students were white while 74% were black and 2% were other races. Additionally, as illustrated in Figure 5, approximately 45% of the students enrolled in the district during the 1999-2000 school year came from low-income families, an increase of over 5% since 1995.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 4: William Penn School District Enrollment: 1985-86 through 1998-99**



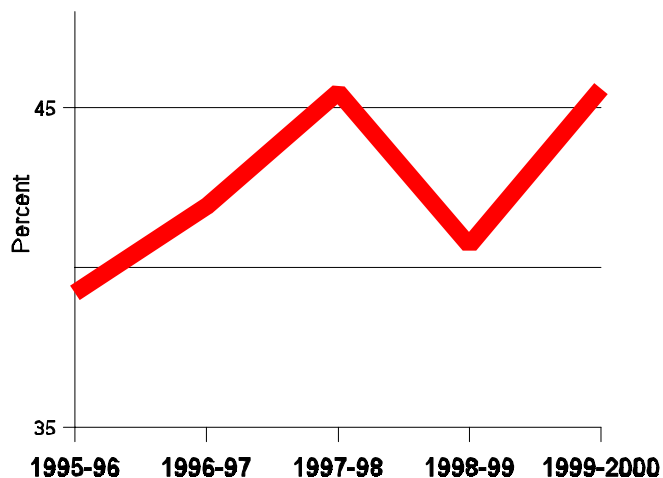
<sup>3</sup>Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission estimate based on 1990 Census data adjusted by the Consumer Price Index to March, 2000.

<sup>4</sup>Data obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website, [www.pde.psu.edu](http://www.pde.psu.edu).

## Percent of the Adult Population that Graduated from High School

The William Penn School District's six municipalities rank from 12<sup>th</sup> to 42<sup>nd</sup> in percentage of the population age 25 and over that are high school graduates. Eighty percent of the study area's residents age 25 and over have a high school degree, compared to 81% of Delaware County's population age 25 and over. While four of the six William Penn School District municipalities have a lower percentage of high school graduates in their population than Delaware County, this percentage is significantly lower only in the Borough of Darby, where only 70% of the residents age 25 or older have completed high school.

**Figure 5: Percent of William Penn Students Coming from Low-Income Families**



## Percent with College Degrees

Among the 49 municipalities in Delaware County, the William Penn School District municipalities rank from 15<sup>th</sup> (37%) to 45<sup>th</sup> (9%) in percentage of population age 25 and over that have an associate's or bachelor's degree. Only 26% of the study area's population age 25 and over have an associate or bachelor's degree, while 38% of the County's population age 25 and over have an associate or bachelor's degree. None of the six municipalities have as high a percentage of degree holders as does the County.

For the 1996-1997 school year, the William Penn School District had the second lowest percentage in the County (61%) of high school graduates continuing on to some form of post-secondary education (second only to the Chester-Upland School District).<sup>5</sup> This statistic may at least in part be explained by the socio-economic status of the district's families. Some studies have shown that both standardized test scores and the percentage of students continuing on to college is often correlated with income, the level of parental education and race. Districts with a high percentage of students from low income families, a high percentage of minority students and/or a high percentage of parents with little or no post-secondary education often have lower average test scores and a relatively low percentage of students continuing on to some form of post-secondary education.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Pennsylvania State Data Center, *1999 Delaware County Data Book*, page 22.

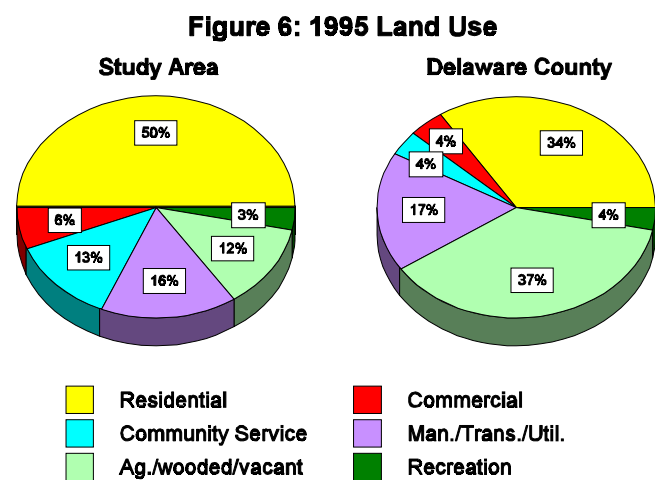
<sup>6</sup>*Group Differences in Standardized Testing and Social Stratification*, Report 99-5 from the New York State College Entrance Examination Board, pages 8 through 14.

As discussed previously, the William Penn School District's enrollment is primarily minority students; the percentage of minority students has increased significantly in recent years; many of these students come from low income families; and only 26% of the adults living in the study area hold post-secondary degrees.

Many of the same studies, however, also indicate that well-designed elementary education reforms can increase test scores and encourage students to continue on to college. The challenge facing the District's Administration, faculty, parents and other residents of the study area is to design and implement an educational program that will encourage students to attain higher levels of achievement, utilizing all available resources.

### 1995 Land Use

Figure 6 illustrates land use in the study area and Delaware County in 1995. Over half of the land in the study area was in residential use at that time, compared to only 34% county-wide. Map 6 illustrates the percentage of total land area in residential use by municipality in Delaware County in 1995. The William Penn School District's municipalities are among the highest in the County in terms of the percentage of residential land use; three are among the top five.



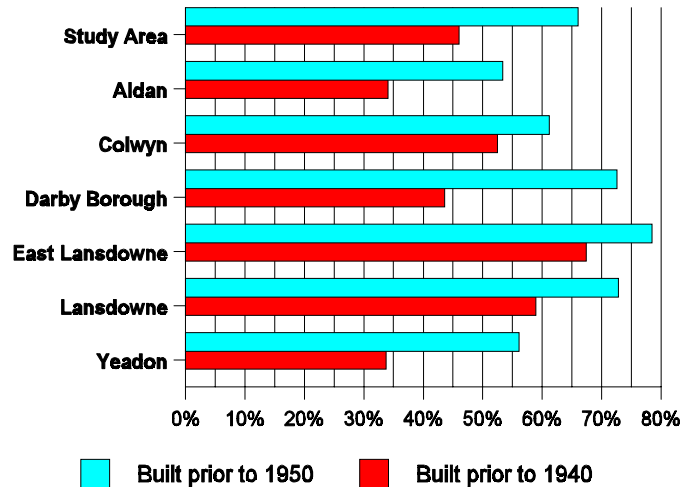
Likewise, a higher percentage of the total land area in the study area is used for commercial activities (6% as opposed to 4%) and for community services (13% as compared to 4%) than in Delaware County as a whole. A significantly lower percentage of the study area's land area, however, is agricultural, wooded or vacant (12% as compared to 37%). Less than 0.5% of the land in the school district was vacant in 1995, as compared to over 2% in the County overall.

### Age of the Housing Stock

Map 7 illustrates the percent of the housing stock built prior to 1950 in each of Delaware County's 49 municipalities, and Figure 7 illustrates the percent of housing units in the district's communities built prior to 1940 and 1950. The boroughs that make up the William Penn School District rank from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> in the County in the percentage of their total housing units built before 1950. Sixty-six percent of the housing stock in the William Penn School District was built before 1950, compared to only 46% of the housing stock in Delaware County overall.

All six of the school district's municipalities have a higher percentage of total housing units built before 1950 than does Delaware County overall. Over 70% of the housing stock in Darby, East Lansdowne and Lansdowne is at least 50 years old, having been built previous to 1950. In fact, almost half of the houses in the district are over 60 years old (having been built prior to 1940), including 65% of the units in East Lansdowne, 59% in Lansdowne and 52% in Colwyn.

**Figure 7: Percent of the Housing Stock Built Prior to 1940 and 1950**



### New Residential Construction

As indicated on Map 8, municipalities in the William Penn School District rank among the lowest in the County in terms of new housing construction. Only 79 new residential units were authorized by building permits in the school district between 1994 and 1998. The vast majority (for 64 units, or 81%) were issued in Aldan Borough, while permits for 12 new units were issued in Darby Borough and an additional three were issued in Lansdowne Borough. Colwyn, East Lansdowne and Yeadon Boroughs realized no new residential construction during this five-year time period. Over 5,400 building permits were issued for new housing units in Delaware County between 1994 and 1998, mostly in municipalities in the southwestern section of the County, such as Concord, Bethel, Aston and Upper Chichester Townships.

### Housing Tenure

Approximately 5% of the study area's housing stock was vacant in 1990, as compared to 4.6% of the County's housing units. The housing vacancy rates in five of the District's municipalities, however, were less than or equal to the County average. The District's average vacancy rate was skewed by the vacancy rate in Darby Borough, which at 8.2% was the third highest in the County.

As indicated in Map 9, the school district's municipalities rank among the highest in the County in the percentage of the housing stock that is renter-occupied. Almost one in three (31%) of the housing units in the William Penn School District are renter-occupied, compared to about a quarter of all housing units in Delaware County. Four of the six School District municipalities have a greater proportion of renter-occupied housing than Delaware County.





# Map 6: Residential Land Use Delaware County: 1995


## LEGEND


 Study Area

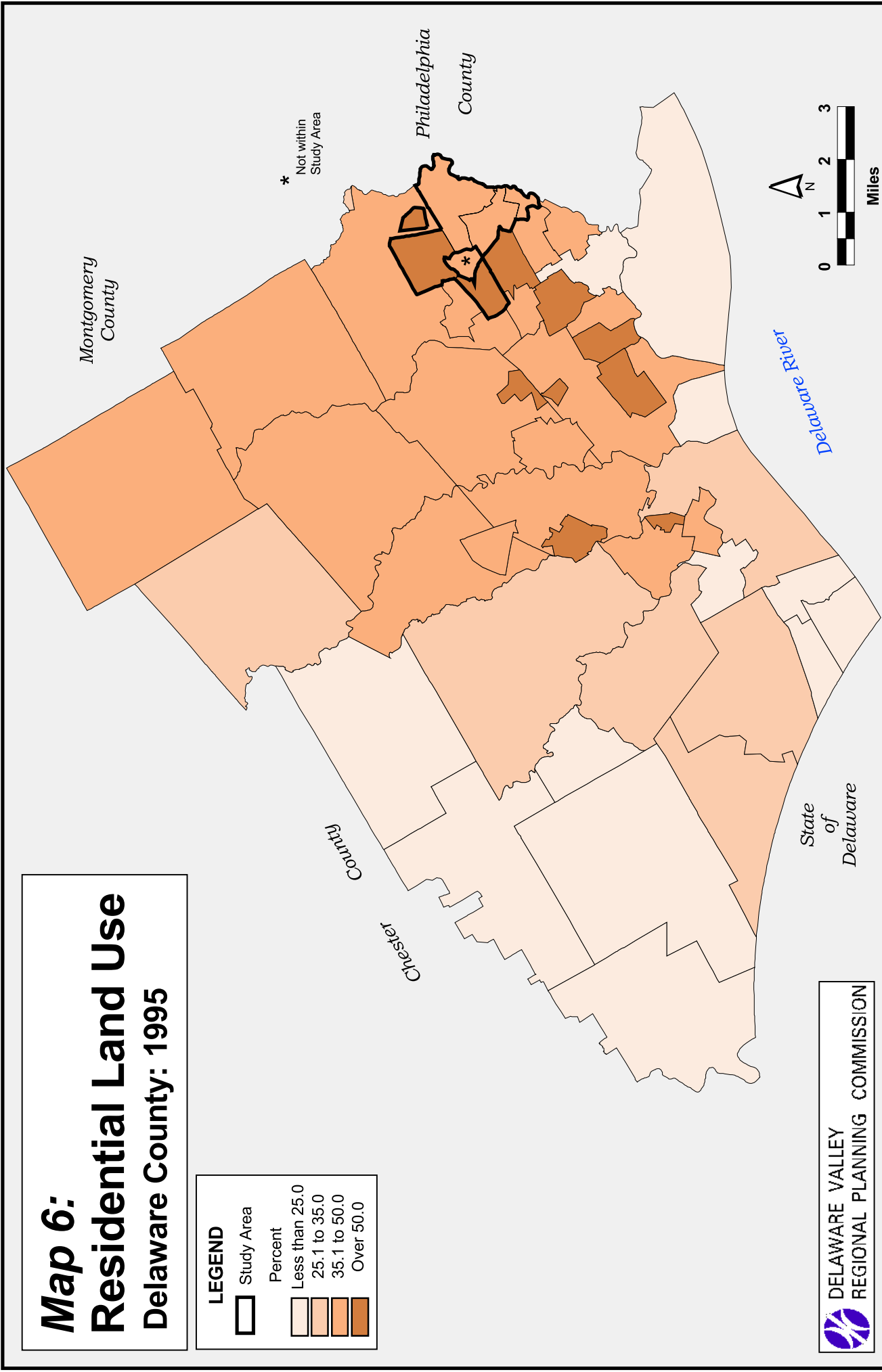
Percent

 Less than 25.0

 25.1 to 35.0

 35.1 to 50.0

 Over 50.0





# Map 7: Percent of Housing Stock Built Prior to 1950

## LEGEND



Study Area

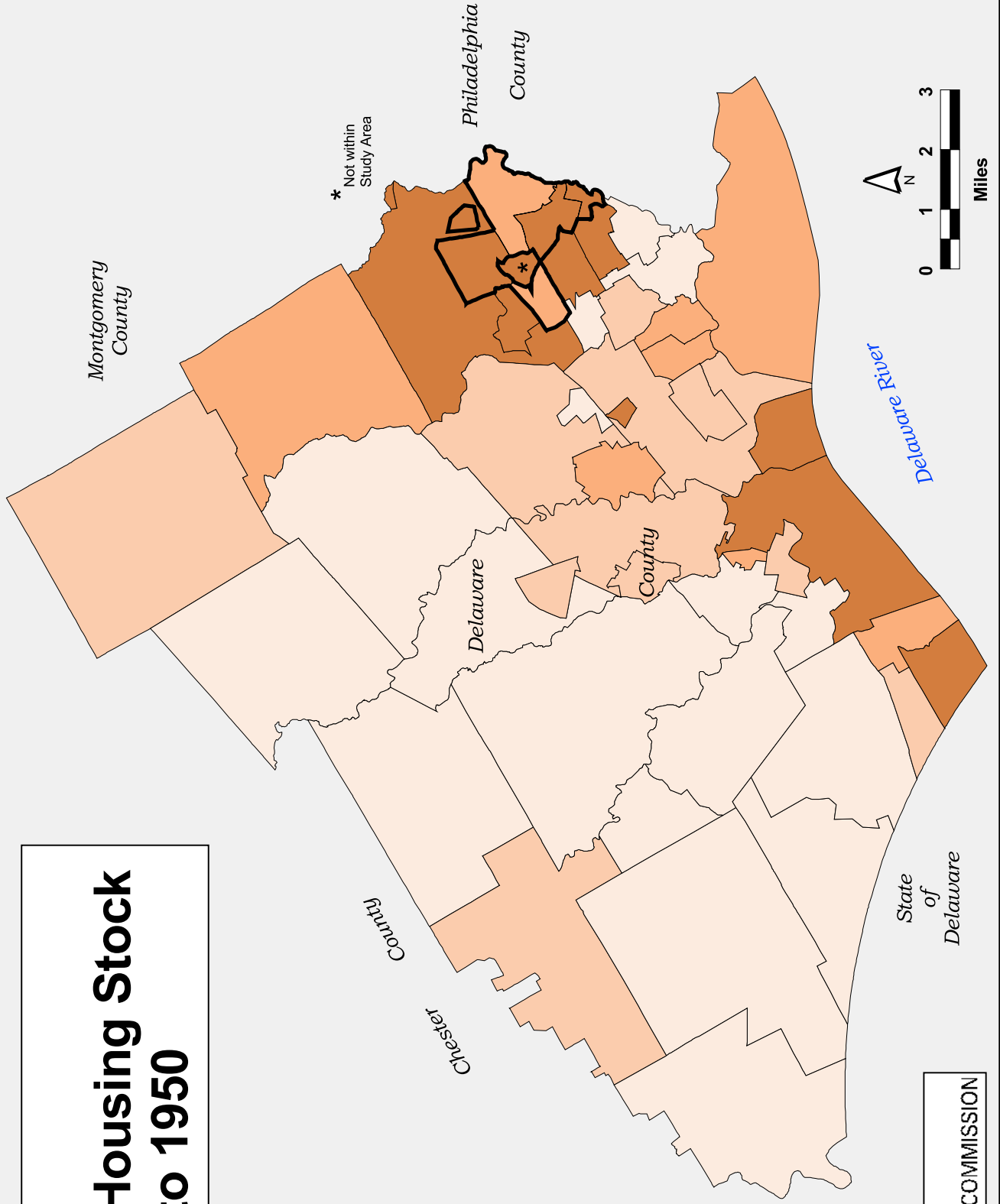
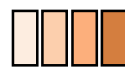
Percent

Less than 25.0

25.1 to 50.0

50.1 to 60.0






Over 60.0

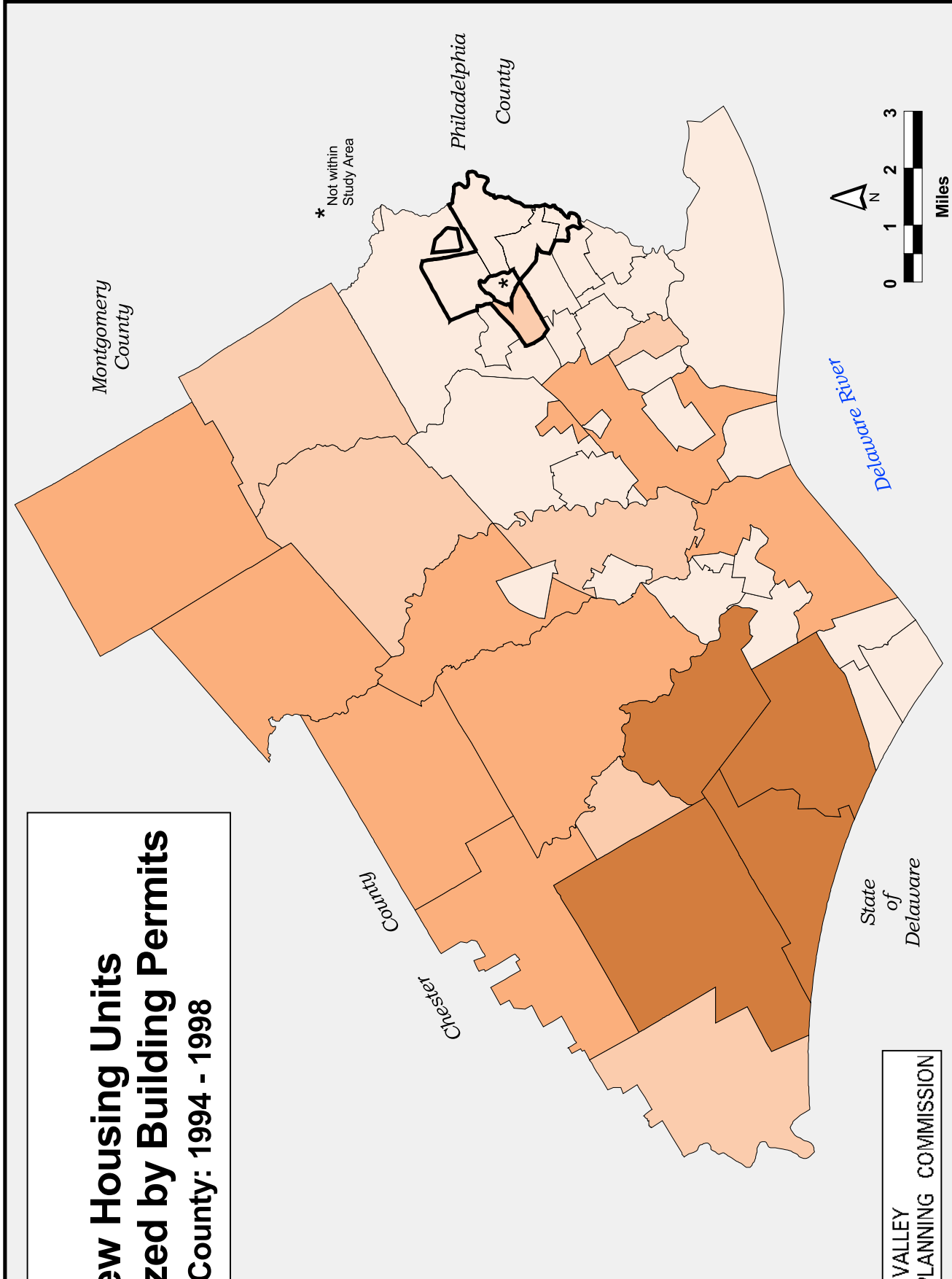




**Map 8:**  
**Total New Housing Units**  
**Authorized by Building Permits**  
**Delaware County: 1994 - 1998**

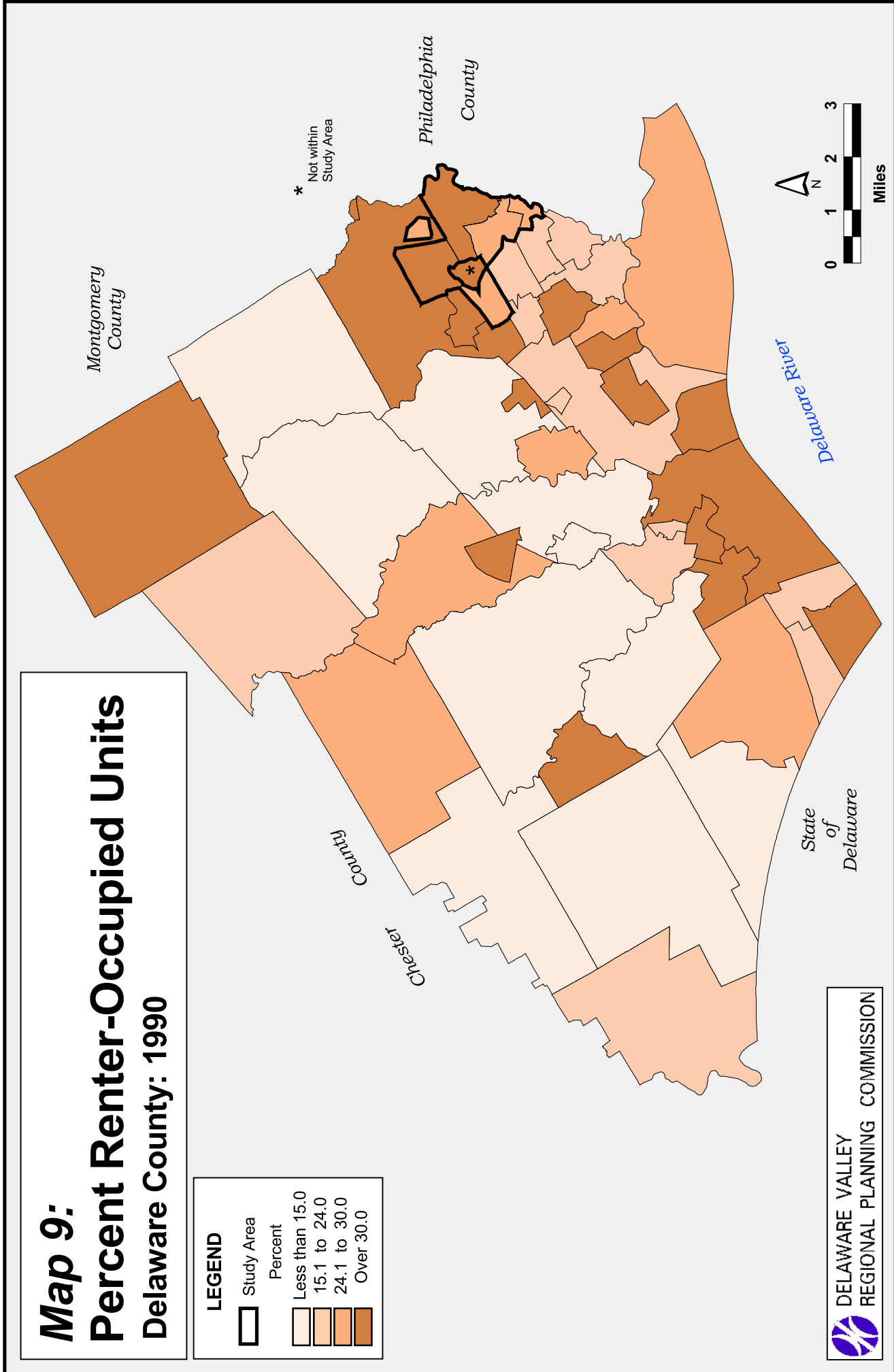
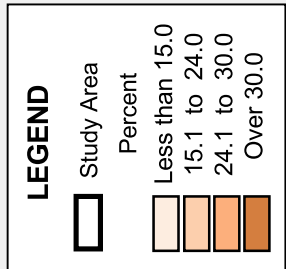
**LEGEND**

-  Study Area
- Permits Issued**
-  0 to 50
-  51 to 100
-  101 to 300
-  Over 300





# Map 9: Percent Renter-Occupied Units Delaware County: 1990







## **Housing Sales**

Map 10 illustrates the median sales price of housing in Delaware County in 1998. As indicated, sales prices in the study area rank among the lowest in the County, with higher prices concentrated in communities in the County's western half. Darby Borough (with a 1998 median sales price of \$42,900) and Colwyn (at \$50,000) are the County's second and third most affordable municipalities, respectively, behind only Chester City. With a median sales price of \$102,758, Aldan was the only one of the district's six municipalities where the median sales price exceeded \$100,000 in 1998.<sup>7</sup> By comparison, the median sales price for the 4-county suburban Philadelphia region in 1998 (including Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties) was \$147,500.

Within the last few years, however, housing sales prices in the district have increased. Sales prices in Lansdowne, Yeadon and Darby Boroughs, where the majority of the district's housing units are located, increased by 8%, 11% and 23%, respectively, between 1988 and 1998, and the housing turnover rate in each was between 4% and 5%. Although higher percentage increases have occurred in other Delaware County municipalities (many of which have also realized significant new construction), sales prices in three of the District's communities increased by at least the County's median percentage increase between 1988 and 1998, with Aldan Borough experiencing a slight decrease (less than 5%) in sales price. Aldan, however, had experienced a significant increase in housing sales prices earlier in the 1990's.

## **Municipal Tax Base per Household**

Given the current dependence on property taxes as their primary source of revenue, the overall strength of the local tax base directly affects the ability of local governments and school districts to provide quality services. Communities with high tax bases are generally able to provide more and better services than low tax base communities. Ironically, high tax base communities with higher priced housing also typically have a younger, more affluent population with fewer demands for public services such as homeless intervention, elderly services and remedial education.

Map 11 illustrates the tax base per household in 1996 in municipalities throughout Delaware County. With the exception of Tinicum Township, municipalities in the eastern half of Delaware County have a significantly lower tax base than those in the central or western portions of the County, leaving them at a distinct disadvantage in terms of available resources for services, including education. The six communities in the William Penn School District rank among the lowest county-wide in tax base per household.

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<sup>7</sup>Philadelphia Inquirer. *Guide to Home Prices*, published April 25, 1999. Median sales price was based on sales transactions provided by Realist, Inc.

## Analyzing the Findings: Orfield's Z-Score Approach

Myron Orfield is a nationally recognized expert on first-generation suburbs, their problems and strategies for addressing municipal distress. A lawyer by training, Orfield is a four-term member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, representing a district in southeast Minneapolis. Using basic mapping software, Orfield developed a series of maps to illustrate existing economic and demographic conditions at the municipal and school district level. In 1997, he completed *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*, which described the interrelationships between extreme poverty in central cities, decentralized development in previously rural areas, and the economically distressed suburbs in between.

Although his own experience was with the Twin Cities region in Minnesota, it was clear to Orfield that fiscal disparities and declining older suburbs characterize metropolitan development across the country. As Orfield's work in Minnesota became more well known, he was asked to repeat his studies in other regions. In 1997, he applied his work to the Philadelphia area, at the request of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) and the Center for Greater Philadelphia. A final report summarizing his observations and findings was released by PEC in 1997.<sup>8</sup>

In the Philadelphia report, Orfield created a series of maps to illustrate social, economic and fiscal conditions in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Composite scores known as "z--scores" were calculated for each municipality that take into account four different socio-economic factors: tax base per household, female-headed households as a percent of all households with children, the percentage of children under five living below poverty and median income. These four factors were weighted equally and combined as one z-score, which was then used to divide the 238 Southeastern Pennsylvania municipalities into four different categories: the central city (Philadelphia), "affluent suburbs", "older cities and boroughs" and "middle-income townships". Municipalities receiving a positive score were classified as affluent suburbs, while those receiving negative overall scores were designated as either middle-income townships or older cities or boroughs, depending on how they were legally incorporated.






Map 12 illustrates the results of Orfield's z-score analysis in Delaware County. Based on the four variables listed above, the six municipalities that make up the William Penn School District are classified as "older cities and boroughs". Using Orfield's methodology, 45% of southeastern Pennsylvania's 238 municipalities are classified as either "older cities and boroughs" or "middle income townships", while 54% of the municipalities are classified as "affluent suburbs" (otherwise referred to as "outer-ring"

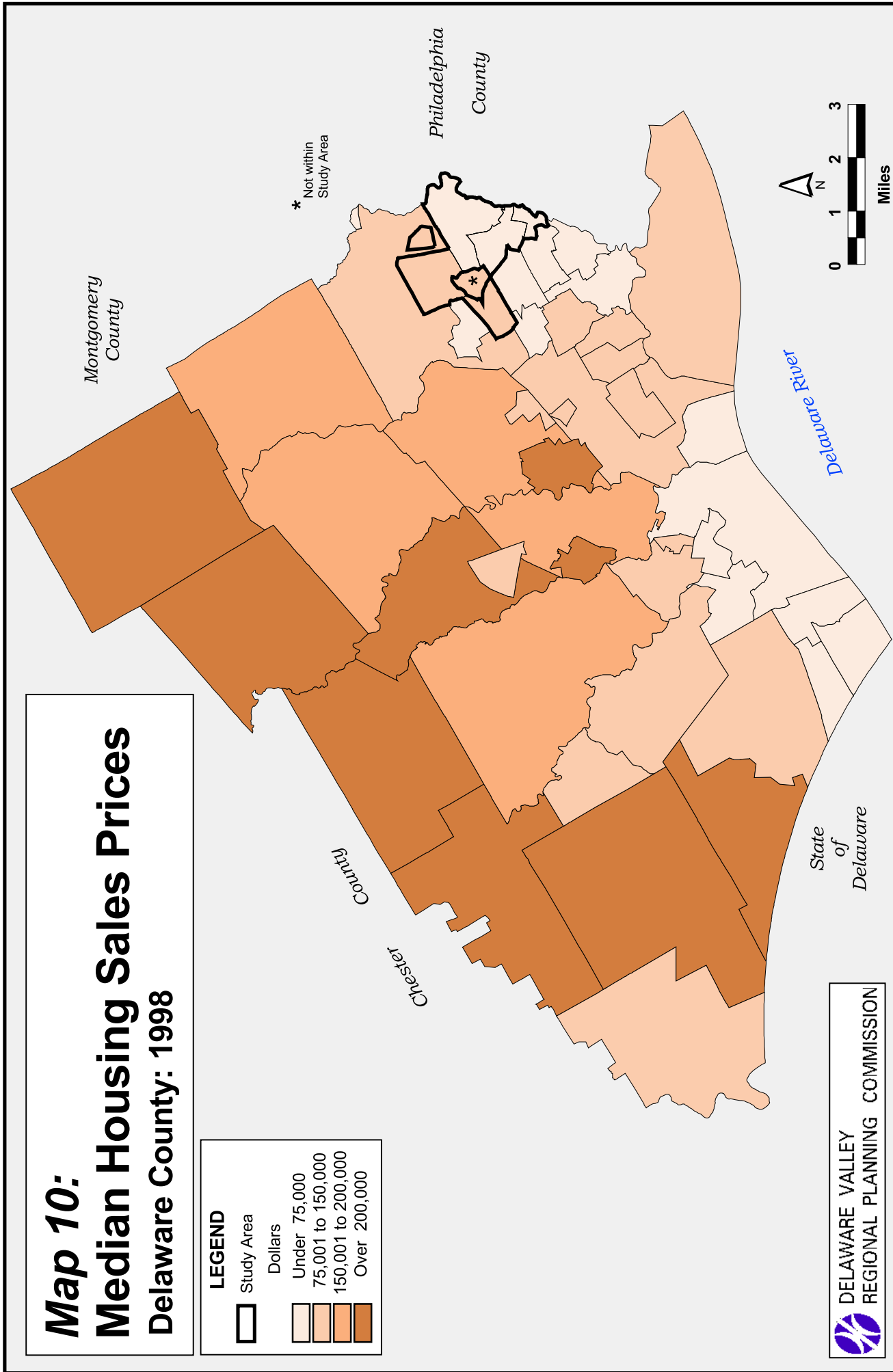
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<sup>8</sup>Orfield, Myron. *Philadelphia Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*. A Report to the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, March, 1997.

# Map 10: Median Housing Sales Prices Delaware County: 1998

**LEGEND**

-  Study Area
- Dollars
-  Under 75,000
-  75,001 to 150,000
-  150,001 to 200,000
-  Over 200,000





# Map 11 : Tax Base Per Household Delaware County: 1996

## LEGEND



Study Area

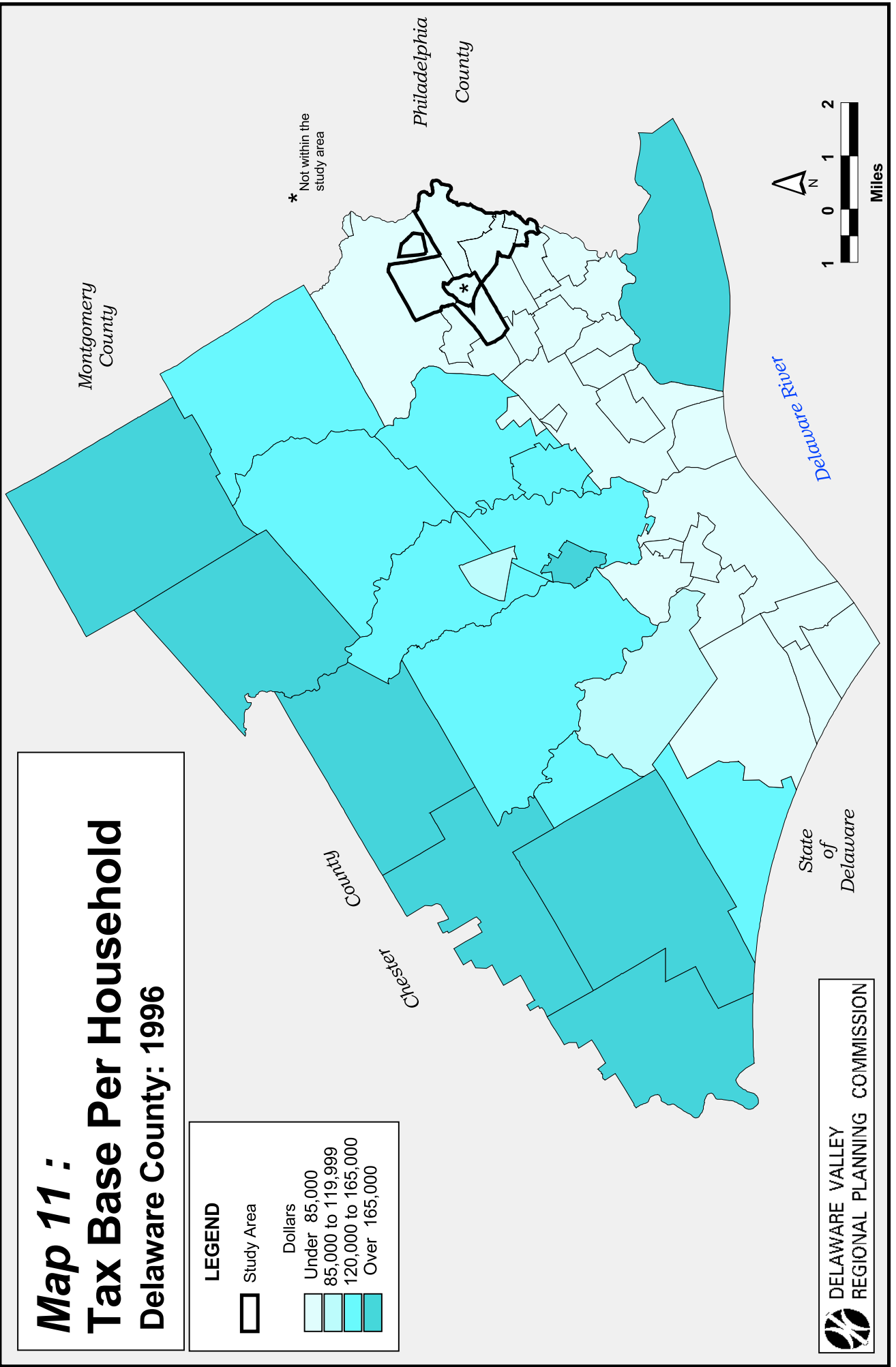
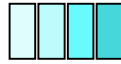
Dollars

Under 85,000

85,000 to 119,999





120,000 to 165,000

Over 165,000



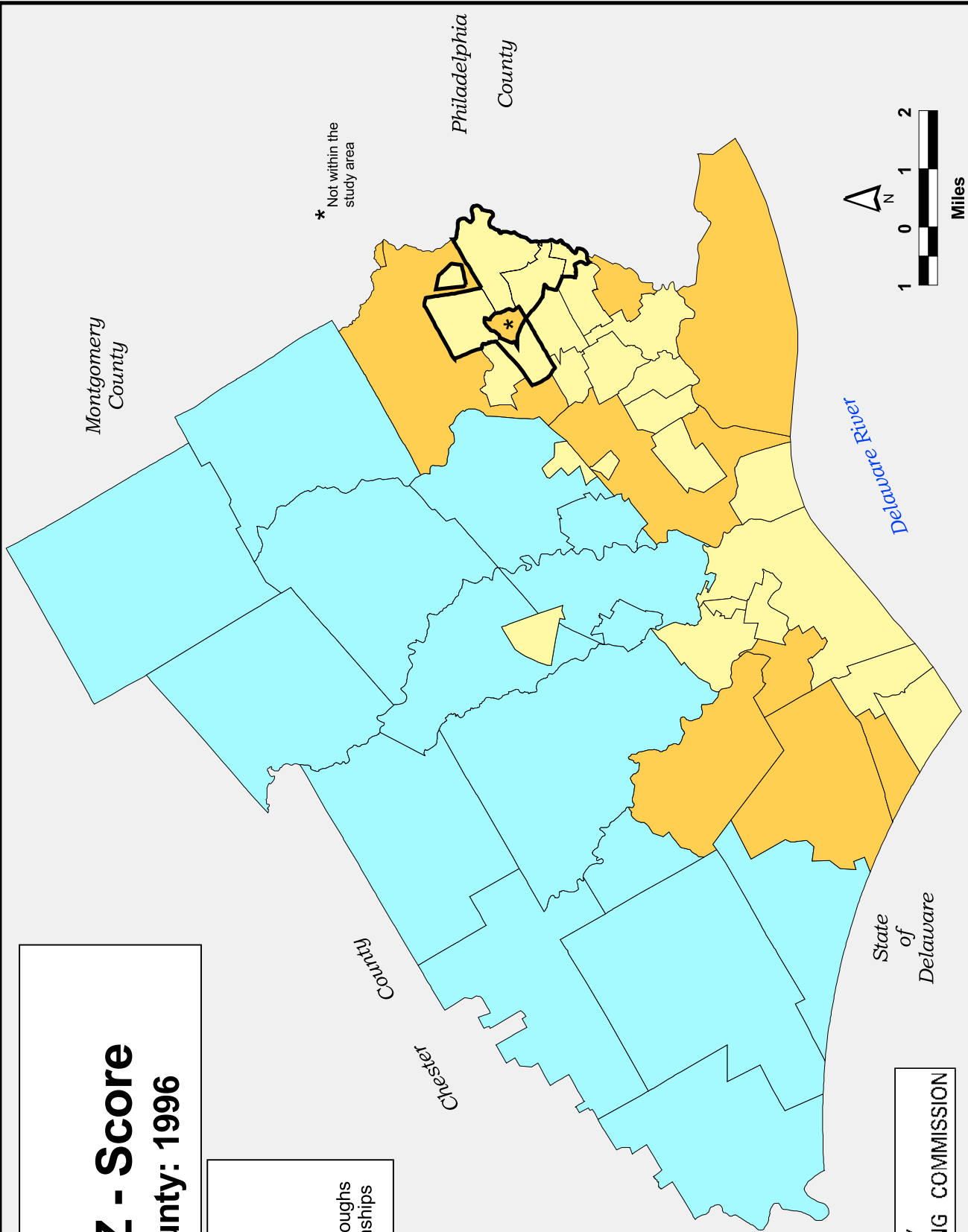


# Map 12: Orfield's Z - Score Delaware County: 1996

- LEGEND**
-  Study Area
  - Z - Score**
  -  Affluent Suburbs
  -  Older Cities and Boroughs
  -  Middle Income Townships

Note: Municipalities were divided into categories based on:  
 (1) Tax base per household, 1993;  
 (2) Percent female-headed households, 1990;  
 (3) Percent of children under five below poverty, 1990;  
 (4) Median household income, 1990.

Myron Orfield prepared Pennsylvania map for Philadelphia Metropolitan (1997).







communities). Not surprising given its historical development, only 35% of the municipalities in Delaware County are classified as a "affluent suburbs" while 65% of its communities, mainly older municipalities in its eastern sections, are classified as either "older cities and boroughs" or "middle-income townships".

In addition to Orfield's method, DVRPC's report *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley* presents two additional methods for evaluating local conditions: one based on conditions within school districts (the percent of students eligible for free lunch and population change) and another based on municipal dynamics (population change, employment change and tax base per household). In both methods, the majority of municipalities in the William Penn School District ranked within the lowest quartile of scores regionally. The one exception was Aldan Borough, which ranked in the second lowest quartile of scores using the municipal dynamics method. This slightly higher rating was due to the employment growth experienced by the Borough between 1990 and 1996, which was incorporated into the municipal dynamics analysis but not considered in calculating either Orfield's composite z-score or DVRPC's school district z-score.

## **Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated that the six municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District display characteristics common to many of the region's first generation suburbs, including population loss, an aging housing stock, a stagnant or declining tax base, and a relatively low median household income and housing sales price. When compared to other municipalities in Delaware County and throughout the Delaware Valley region, these communities are fairly similar, as evidenced by their common characterization as "older boroughs" under Orfield's composite "z-score" approach.

Table 2 illustrates, however, that the six communities are also relatively diverse. The Borough of Aldan, for example, experienced an 18% increase in employment between 1990 and 1997 compared to a 2% loss district-wide, and was the only municipality in the study area which did not experience a population loss between 1990 and 1998. Over 40% of the housing stock in both Aldan and Yeadon Boroughs was built after 1950, compared to less than 30% of the stock in Darby, East Lansdowne and Lansdowne. Revitalization of the study area as a whole and an improved quality of life for all of the School District's residents will depend in large part on the ability of municipal officials to work together to take advantage of each community's strengths as they work to overcome the area's common challenges.

**Table 2**  
**Summary of Demographic and Socio-Economic Trends and Characteristics**

	<b>Population change 1990-98</b>	<b>Employment change 1990-1997</b>	<b>Median Household Income, 1998</b>	<b>Median Housing Sales Price, 1998</b>	<b>% of Housing Built Prior to 1950</b>
<b>Aldan</b>	0%	18%	\$54,102	\$98,000	53%
<b>Colwyn</b>	- 4%	0%	\$37,708	\$50,000	61%
<b>Darby</b>	- 3%	- 9%	\$32,774	\$42,900	73%
<b>East Lansdowne</b>	- 4%	0%	\$42,907	\$77,500	78%
<b>Lansdowne</b>	- 3%	- 1%	\$47,586	\$92,800	73%
<b>Yeadon</b>	- 3%	0.4%	\$46,446	\$72,500	56%

**Source:** Population and employment changes are based on 1990 Census data and Census Bureau estimates; 1998 median income and 1998 median housing sales price data is from the Philadelphia Inquirer's *Guide to Home Prices* published April 25, 1999.

### III. Challenges and Opportunities

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The previous chapter described demographic, economic and land use conditions in the municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District. Based on this analysis and on input from steering committee members, this chapter defines challenges facing the study area and considers existing opportunities for community revitalization.

#### CHALLENGES

- **Population loss:** While the population in Delaware County remained essentially stable between 1990 and 1998 (with a very small loss of 0.4%), municipalities in the study area experienced a 4.2% decline in population. The population decreased in each of the six William Penn School District municipalities, for a combined loss of 1,857 persons.
- **Increasing school enrollment:** Despite a declining population overall, enrollment in the William Penn School District has increased every year over the last decade, resulting in a 16% overall increase since 1990. While this trend may be viewed as positive, indicating that families are not abandoning the school system, increased enrollment translates into an increased demand for services as well as increased wear-and-tear on the district's physical facilities. The district has also experienced dramatic shifts in the percentages of minority students and students from single-parent families, who require a different type and level of services.
- **Low percentage of high school graduates bound for post-secondary education:** In the 1996-1997 school year, the William Penn School District had the second lowest percentage of students (at 60%) bound for either a 2 or 4-year college or some other form of post-secondary education of any district in Delaware County. Only the Chester-Upland School District had a lower percentage of students bound for post-secondary education.
- **Percent of residents over age 25 with college degrees:** Although a fair percentage of the population age 25 and older in the study area are high school graduates, the percentage of Bachelor's or Associate's degree holders is not as favorable (26%). This is not consistent with Delaware County (where 38% of the population over the age of 25 hold college degrees), suggesting that the area and its workforce is less competitive for the increasing number of knowledge-based and high technology jobs.
- **Job loss:** Municipalities in the William Penn School District saw a combined decrease in jobs of 2% between 1990 and 1997, while employment in Delaware County increased by 2% during the same time period.
- **Low median household income:** Municipalities in the William Penn School District are among the least wealthy in Delaware County, with median household incomes ranging

from \$32,774 to \$54,102. In 1998, the median income of only one community in the district exceeded the county's median household income, and over 45% of the school district's enrollment in 1999 came from low-income families. Approximately 41% of the students in the William Penn School District are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches through the National School Lunch Program (an accepted indicator of poverty among the community's youth). This is the third highest percentage of eligible students in the County, behind only the Chester-Upland School District (where almost 80% of the students are eligible) and the Southeast-Delco School District (with 43%).

- **Percent of lower-skilled, lower paying jobs held by residents:** A lower percentage of the jobs held by residents of the William Penn study area are managerial/professional than in Delaware County overall, while the proportion of jobs in other occupational groups is higher. The difference suggests that people living within the district are more likely working in lower-skilled, lower wage jobs, which then impacts the median household income within the district and the resident's ability to maintain their home and pay property taxes.
- **Older housing stock:** The majority of the housing units in the study area were built before 1950 (66%). This is significantly greater than in Delaware County overall (46%), and may indicate the need for housing restoration and rehabilitation programs.
- **High percentage of renter-occupied housing:** A higher percentage of the housing units in the William Penn study area are renter-occupied (31%) than in Delaware County overall (26%). A high number of rental units is sometimes associated with a transient population, and renters are often perceived to have a lower stake in the neighborhood and may, therefore, be less committed to the community than are owners.
- **Predominance of residential land uses:** Over 50% of the total land area in the study area is in residential use. This is a significantly higher percentage than Delaware County (34%); three of the top five municipalities with the highest percentage of residential land use are located within the William Penn School District. Residential development generates a significant demand for local services, and may in some cases not generate enough in tax revenue to meet the costs of those services. (The residential character of the communities, however, is also an asset, as discussed on page 47).
- **Low tax base per household:** Communities in the study area have experienced population losses, job losses and corresponding decreases in their tax bases. Additionally, many properties in the area are not being used to their greatest potential. The tax bases per household in the six communities are among the lowest in the County. The demand for services (including education), however, continues to increase. This puts these municipalities at a distinct disadvantage in terms of their ability to fund local services, including education, without raising property taxes. Given the district's relatively low median income, increasing property taxes is not a viable means of raising additional

revenue, since it would place an unfair burden on current homeowners and perpetuate the population and employment losses experienced in the community in recent years.

- **Relatively high percentage of non-taxable land uses:** Over 12% of the total land area in the district is in community service uses, much of which is non-taxable. This compares to only 4% of the land area in the County that is occupied by community service uses. While the study area includes only 2½ % of the total land area of the County, over 8% of Delaware County's total land area in community service is located there.
- **Lack of available vacant, developable land:** Less than ½% of the district's land area was vacant as of 1995, leaving little if any opportunity for new development. Instead, the focus must be on the adaptive re-use of currently vacant or under-utilized properties.
- **Concentration of poverty in Darby Borough:** Over half the population of the Borough of Darby, which contains over 25% of the total population of the study area, is classified as low to moderate income. In 1990, one of every three households in Darby Borough was headed by a female. Over 45% of the district's female-headed households with children lived in the Borough, and over 25% of its children under the age of 5 lived in poverty. This concentration of poverty within one specific area presents a challenge which must be addressed if the quality of life for all of the District's residents is to be improved.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Despite these challenges, numerous opportunities have been identified that can provide a foundation for the community's stabilization and revitalization. These include:

- **Residential character and sense of community:** As previously discussed, over 50% of the land in the study area is in residential use. This is a significantly higher percentage than Delaware County (34%), and three of the top five municipalities with the highest percentage of residential land use are located within the William Penn School District. These older, stable neighborhoods offer their residents a unique sense of community and neighborhood character and also provide affordable housing opportunities.
- **Affordable housing:** Housing in the William Penn study area is among the most affordable in the region, providing an opportunity for young families and individuals to secure affordable housing in stable neighborhoods that are well-served by the region's transit network. Housing prices have also stabilized and even increased slightly in recent years. The high percentage of affordable rental units, which are scarce in many parts of this region, provides opportunities for people just entering the housing market to rent a decent unit at an affordable price before moving on to homeownership.
- **Existing concentrations of commercial and employment activity:** While employment throughout the district as a whole is limited, the area includes several existing

commercial and employment concentrations (including Darby Borough and the Yeadon Business Park) which could play a significant role in an area-wide revitalization strategy.

- **Stable employment in specific areas:** Although the number of jobs throughout the study area declined between 1990 and 1997, employment in three of the six municipalities remained stable, and Aldan Borough gained over 100 jobs (a 22% increase).
- **Public transit:** Many bus routes, trolley stops and regional rail lines pass directly through or in close proximity to the William Penn School District study area, linking the area to Philadelphia and other employment centers.
- **Highway network:** Many major highway routes connect the study area with surrounding communities, including the City of Philadelphia.
- **Access to the Philadelphia International Airport:** The community is within a reasonable distance of the Philadelphia International Airport and its surrounding employment opportunities.
- **Access to the City of Philadelphia:** The William Penn School District's proximity to Philadelphia is invaluable. Philadelphia provides opportunities for employment, consumerism and access to regional cultural and sports activities. The City also serves as a labor source and market for prospective businesses.
- **High percentage of high school graduates:** Municipalities in the William Penn School District study area have a high percentage of population age 25 and over that are high school graduates (80%).
- **Relative percentage of youth:** A significant percentage (26%) of the study area's residents are 18 years of age or younger. School district enrollment, for example, has remained stable and even increased in recent years, despite overall losses in population. While stressing the public education system in the short-term, the area's youth offer a potentially valuable resource for the community's future work force.
- **Relative percentage of elderly:** Although three of the six communities have a higher percentage of residents over the age of 65 than the County overall, the percentage in the area as a whole is no higher than it is throughout the County.
- **Sites with redevelopment potential:** Several properties in the area are currently under-utilized or unoccupied, and offer a potential for redevelopment or adaptive re-use.
- **Ongoing redevelopment and revitalization activities in Darby Borough:** The revitalization of Darby Borough is critical to the overall revitalization of the William Penn School District. Delaware County has in recent years invested a significant amount of time

and financial resources into Darby Borough. A Comprehensive Plan and revised Zoning Ordinance were adopted in 1990, and the *Strategic Plan for the Downtown Business District* was developed in 1994, in conjunction with the Darby Business Association. The *Darby Borough Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy* was prepared by the Delaware County Office of Housing and Community Development in 1998.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy recommended several strategies for reducing poverty, improving economic conditions and improving the housing stock in the Borough, including job training, improving access to employment opportunities, pursuing the revitalization of several specific properties, implementing housing assistance programs and implementing recreational and counseling programs targeted to the community's youth. Since the release of the document, the County has continued to target revitalization efforts in downtown Darby Borough.

- **Other ongoing revitalization and community development initiatives:** In addition to the County's targeted revitalization efforts in Darby Borough, several other state, regional and local initiatives are currently under way which will directly or indirectly benefit the William Penn School District's first generation communities and can serve as catalysts for their revitalization. In February 2000, Governor Ridge introduced the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's "Growing Smarter" initiative, which advocates redevelopment and revitalization of the Commonwealth's existing developed areas as opposed to rural and exurban spaces. This initiative includes substantial funding (approximately \$2.6 million) to encourage joint planning between neighboring communities. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is currently preparing the *Horizons Year 2025 Land Use and Transportation Plan*, an updated long-range plan for the Commission's nine-county region, that advocates redevelopment of the region's existing centers and revitalization of first generation suburbs. Delaware County is also in the process of completing a new county-wide long-range plan.

Additionally, SEPTA, southeastern Pennsylvania's transit provider, has worked with the region's Transportation Management Association's (TMA's) in several areas (including Delaware County) to implement transit routes that better serve employees commuting to major employment centers from the region's cities and first generation communities. SEPTA's Route 305, for example, provides service between Darby Township and the Airport Industrial area. Within the school district, the Lansdowne Economic Development Group has pursued various revitalization strategies in Lansdowne Borough, including a downtown streetscape program. Additionally, the Borough of Yeadon is currently undertaking a long-range planning process, with assistance from the Delaware County Planning Department and 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania, drawing on research from a new housing market study conducted by Zimmerman/Volk Associates.





## IV. Goals, Objectives and Policy Recommendations

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This chapter first defines goals and objectives in the study area. It then identifies region-wide strategies that can assist in the revitalization of first generation suburbs throughout the region, including those in the William Penn School District. These broad strategies are followed by more specific local initiatives that address individual goals identified by the William Penn School District Study Task Force (see Appendix A, page 68).

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives listed below were identified based on the challenges and opportunities listed above and the future as envisioned by the Study Task Force members. Community input was also obtained through a review of public opinions offered to the Delaware County Planning Department during their ongoing long-range planning process. The accomplishment of these goals and objectives will in turn serve as a catalyst for continued economic and community development, and facilitate the retention of the existing population, the attraction of new residents (particularly middle-income families) and the deepening of community identity and pride.

#### ***Goal 1: Improve the community's economy***

- Attract new businesses to appropriate locations in the study area.
- Retain the existing employment base.
- Encourage and support the adaptive re-use of vacant and currently under-utilized properties, while discouraging land speculation.
- Improve transit service between the study area and employment opportunities at and around the Philadelphia International Airport.
- Expand access for the residents of the community to desirable employment opportunities that pay at least a livable wage and offer long-term opportunities for advancement.

#### ***Goal 2: Maintain and improve the community's infrastructure***

- Maintain and improve the existing infrastructure, including water, sewer, communications and other utilities.
- Improve the highway network, including intersection and roadway improvements.
- Improve and enhance the area's bicycle and pedestrian environment.

#### ***Goal 3: Improve community services for the district's current residents and, by doing so, stem the continuing loss of moderate and middle income families and attract new residents to the community.***

- Improve the quality of education offered in the William Penn School District.

- Provide recreational opportunities for local youth.
- Improve and expand the services available to the community's elderly.
- Expand the availability of neighborhood community facilities, including youth centers.
- Rehabilitate and revitalize the existing housing stock (including rental units as well as owner-occupied units).
- Expand homeownership opportunities in the area.
- Reduce crime.
- Improve the image of the William Penn School District, throughout Delaware County and the Delaware Valley region.

## **STRATEGIES AND POLICIES**

This section begins by identifying region-wide strategies for accomplishing the revitalization of first generation suburbs throughout the Delaware Valley, including supporting regional and county-wide planning initiatives and investigating alternatives to the existing property tax structure as the primary means of financing local services, including education.

The section continues with a discussion of the advantages of cooperating with neighboring municipalities to accomplish local objectives, and concludes by identifying a number of policies and actions which could be pursued by municipal officials in response to issues within their own communities. Although many economic and social problems (and their causes) in first generation communities are regional in scope, other challenges are unique to specific municipalities. In addition to the region-wide strategies discussed below, municipal officials in the region's older suburban communities can and should pursue local initiatives to mitigate specific problems within their own boundaries. In the William Penn School District, options are available to state, county and municipal officials, as well as school administrators, to alleviate some of the problems typical of first generation suburbs. Local strategies and initiatives are often more politically and logistically feasible than these broad, regional approaches, and are also more immediate in their effects.

<b>Region-wide Strategies</b>
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Many of the problems facing the region's central cities and first generation suburbs, including municipalities in the William Penn School District, are the result of the continuing regional pattern of decentralization and disinvestment. While municipal officials can and should pursue local initiatives that help to mitigate specific problems facing their communities, long-term solutions and a reversal of the continuing loss of both people and jobs can best be accomplished through broader regional approaches.

The region-wide strategies discussed below would facilitate the revitalization of first generation suburban communities throughout the Delaware Valley, including those located in the William Penn School District. These strategies include supporting the implementation of regional and county-wide land use and transportation plans and developing a viable alternative to local property taxes as a primary source of funding for local services, especially education.

- **Support the implementation of regional and county-wide planning and growth management strategies as a means of resolving or reducing the disparities between central cities, inner ring suburbs and outer ring suburbs.**

Land use and development decisions made by individual municipalities competing for tax ratables in order to fund local services has encouraged sprawl and contributed significantly to the region's continuing pattern of decentralization. Decisions regarding investments in sewer and water, which significantly impact regional growth patterns, are likewise made by individual authorities, often with no regard to their implications on regional growth. Regional approaches to planning and investment decision-making that advocate revitalization of the region's core cities and existing developed areas, such as DVRPC's Direction 2020 long-range plan and directed infrastructure investment policies, could improve conditions in first generation suburbs.

DVRPC's Direction 2020 is based on a "centers and corridors" approach that promotes growth and investment in and around established communities ("centers") linked by transportation corridors. By linking transportation and land use planning, the 2020 Plan encourages new development in specified growth areas while supporting the revitalization of the region's core cities and older suburbs and the preservation of open space, farmland and environmentally sensitive areas. Many of the regional policies recommended in Direction 2020, including targeting future infrastructure investment to existing developed areas to discourage continued development in the region's "outer ring", are the same actions that need to be taken in order to address the challenges facing the region's first generation suburbs.

DVRPC is currently in the process of updating the 2020 Plan through its *Horizons 2025* planning process, with a final update due to be completed by the Spring of 2001. Additionally, the Delaware County Planning Department is currently developing an updated long-range plan for the County.

A regional policy of directed infrastructure investment, as advocated in DVRPC's Direction 2020, would alleviate many of the problems faced by first generation communities such as the William Penn School District. In 1995, DVRPC released a report entitled *Reinvesting in Cities: Transportation Improvements in Urban Areas*. That report recommended that the project selection criteria for the regional transportation improvement program (TIP) be revised to give higher priority to projects that encourage growth in

identified centers and corridors, and to assign negative ratings to projects that encourage growth outside these areas. The report further recommended that transportation, water and sewer investment decisions be coordinated at all levels and integrated with adopted land use plans and environmental goals and objectives.

The directed investment policies outlined in *Reinvesting in Cities* would clearly support the revitalization of first generation suburbs. The goal of such a policy is to influence growth patterns by making strategic decisions about where to build roads and highways, extend water and sewer lines and expand utilities. Although the region's older suburbs generally have sufficient if not excess infrastructure capacity, many older communities are struggling to maintain and improve aging systems. A policy of directing infrastructure investment back into these areas would provide funds for maintenance and make these communities more attractive to developers. Simultaneously, limiting investment in yet undeveloped areas would reduce sprawl and channel some of this growth back into the region's existing developed areas.

While DVRPC plays an important role in TIP programming, the Commission does not have direct control over any infrastructure investment decisions. Some examples of stronger regional decision making powers include the UNIGOV (in Indianapolis) and the Metropolitan Council in Minneapolis-St. Paul, where the regional government oversees sewer, transit, land use and airport decisions.<sup>9</sup>

- **Investigate long-term alternatives to the property tax as the primary means of financing local services, especially education.**

Implementation of some alternative to the existing property tax would discourage individual municipalities from pursuing tax-generating development, regardless of its potential impacts on neighboring communities. Municipalities depend heavily on property taxes as their primary source of revenue for local services, including education. As of 1992, property taxes accounted for the greatest share of all local taxes, and more than half of all revenues received by townships.<sup>10</sup>

Relying on the local property tax to fund local services, however, results in disparities in revenue-generating ability. The American Planning Association notes that "if two local governments have exactly the same population, but one has extensive commercial, office and industrial development and the other residential development with

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<sup>9</sup>See DVRPC's *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley Region*, Chapter 5, for additional information.

<sup>10</sup>Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley*, page 81.

some commercial uses, the latter government will have to increase the property taxes to obtain the same revenue as the former".<sup>11</sup>

Many of the region's oldest cities and boroughs, including those in the William Penn School District, have among the lowest tax bases per household. Unfortunately, many of these communities also have relatively high concentrations of poverty, a higher incidence of social problems and aging infrastructure. Possible alternatives to the existing property tax include tax-base sharing (either district-wide, county-wide or region-wide); overall statewide tax reform; earned income taxes; or increased "sin" taxes (on cigarettes or alcohol, for example).

Tax-base sharing proponents advocate reducing reliance on the local property tax by creating a new source of revenue generated from a regional or statewide pool. By definition, tax-base sharing is a system that combines some portion of the local tax bases of several communities into a regional or state-wide pool and redistributes the resulting revenue based on some pre-defined criteria other than total contributions to the pool. In New Jersey, for example, the 1968 *Hackensack Meadowlands Development and Redevelopment Act* established a fourteen-municipality district to ensure coordinated regional land use planning and to help attract private investment. These 14 municipalities practice joint planning and zoning as well as tax-base sharing to fund necessary services. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul region, municipalities receive a distribution of the tax base from a pool based on population and fiscal capacity, where fiscal capacity is defined as the per capita real property valuation relative to the rest of the region.

For first generation communities struggling to get by on stagnant or declining tax bases (including those in the William Penn School District), tax base sharing would offer new opportunities to fund necessary local services. Tax base sharing also promotes fiscal equity by creating a regional funding source that could be used to address regional problems, including the concentration of poverty that characterizes the region's oldest cities and boroughs. Unfortunately, other more affluent communities who stand to contribute more in revenue than they will realize in return are generally quite vocal in their opposition to any tax-base sharing proposal.

As a part of his study of Southeastern Pennsylvania communities, Myron Orfield proposed two different tax-base sharing scenarios for the five-county region. The first considered the potential for sharing the taxes generated from high-value residential properties. This alternative would require the creation of a regional revenue pool of property taxes generated for housing valued at greater than \$200,000. These funds would then be redistributed back to municipalities using a formula that gave preference to

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<sup>11</sup>American Planning Association, *Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook (Phase I)*, page 14-3.

communities with a low per capita tax base. The results of this simulation showed that new taxes would be generated for municipalities in western Chester and western Montgomery counties, those along the Delaware River in Bucks and Delaware counties, and in the City of Philadelphia. Altogether, 105 of the 238 communities in the 5-county region would receive additional tax revenue, and 39 legislative districts would gain tax base as opposed to only 25 that would lose.<sup>12</sup>

Orfield's second alternative required every municipality to contribute 15% of its tax base into a regional pool, to be redistributed based on a formula giving preference to those communities with a lower tax base. In order to ensure that a substantial share would be distributed to other communities, this scenario capped Philadelphia's share of the total pool at \$5 billion. The results of this scenario were similar to the first, in that new tax base would be created in approximately 90 communities including Philadelphia, communities in Bucks and Delaware counties along the Delaware River, and in many older cities, boroughs and townships throughout the region.

These scenarios represent just a few of an infinite number of possible tax sharing schemes that might reduce reliance on local property taxes, minimize competition between municipalities and encourage more rational development. Major revision to the existing tax structure, including any kind of tax-base sharing scenario, would require legislative action by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Any proposed tax-base sharing scenario will have to overcome the political opposition that it will surely face, given that some communities must of necessity contribute more in revenue to the pool than they will realize in return.

### **Property tax reform and school finance**

Over reliance on local property taxes as the primary source of school funding is both inefficient and inequitable. The American Planning Association has concluded that "studies of school financing repeatedly point to the dramatic differences in the property tax base ... as the single most important contributor to the disparity in the amount of money spent per child on education in a community. The disparities being created by land-based local funding lie at the heart of the community".<sup>13</sup>

While the debate over spending per pupil and educational outcomes is controversial, there is little disagreement that the present system creates significant disparities in the ability of individual school districts to fund local schools. These disparities are evident in Delaware County, where expenditures per "average daily membership" (or the average number of students attending per day) in 1997 ranged from \$12,560 in the Radnor

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<sup>12</sup>Orfield, Myron. *Philadelphia Metropolitcs*, page 31.

<sup>13</sup>American Planning Association, *Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook*, pp. 14-29.

Township School District to \$6,917 in the Upper Darby School District. Expenditures per average daily membership in the William Penn School District were \$7,927 during the same school year, 5<sup>th</sup> lowest among the 15 Delaware County school districts and lower than the county-wide average of \$8,238.<sup>14</sup>

Reliance on the property tax has also been criticized because real estate taxes do not automatically adjust with the ability of the taxpayer to pay, unlike other sources of tax revenue (such as wage and sales taxes). This system therefore pits the needs of school age children against those of elderly home owners living on fixed incomes.

Several states have taken action to implement school finance reform measures. In Michigan, for example, the legislature passed "Proposal A" in 1993 as a means of reducing the reliance on property taxes to fund schools. Under Proposal A, the percentage funding for K-12 public education coming from property taxes was reduced from 60% to less than 32%, with the bulk of the increase in state funding generated through an increase of 2% in the state sales tax (from 4% to 6%). The new funding formula was designed to maintain the same level of total per pupil revenues available to each local school district that was available the previous year. While all districts were guaranteed an increase in funding each year, the state has attempted to address equity in per-pupil funding by providing those with the lowest revenue levels the greatest annual increases.

### **Current legislative initiatives**

As noted previously, any major revision to the existing property tax structure, and especially to the way that Pennsylvania funds education, would require action by the state's General Assembly. Several alternatives for school funding in Pennsylvania are currently being considered; these include House Bill 32, House Bill 108, Senate Bill 304, Senate Bill 1283 and House Bill 2106, nicknamed KEEPS (the Keystone Equity and Educational Performance System).

House Bill 32 (proposed by Representative Mayernik) would require that property taxes be frozen at the amount existing when a property owner reached the age of 65. Pennsylvania's Lottery Fund would reimburse each school district for any revenue lost as a result of the law. House Bill 108 (proposed by Representative Dermody) would prohibit schools from levying property taxes for any purpose, while Senate Bill 304 (proposed by Senator Gerlach) would authorize local governments, including school districts, to revise their tax structures to eliminate property taxes in favor of sales, income or other taxes.

Two pieces of legislation currently being considered by the General Assembly, House Bill 2106 (co-sponsored by 32 representatives and introduced in December of 1999)

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<sup>14</sup>Pennsylvania State Data Center, *1999 Delaware County Data Book*.

and Senate Bill 1283 (introduced by 19 senators in February of 2000), propose a total overhaul of the way that Pennsylvania funds its public schools. The two bills are similar in that they both raise the state's share of the total cost of education by raising the state income tax, thereby allowing local communities to reduce or even eliminate school property taxes. Both also recognize that teaching children under certain difficult circumstances (such as in poor communities where there is a high incidence of single-parent families) costs more, and provide the greatest level of state aid to economically distressed communities. They differ, however, in their implementation schedule, the amount of state funding that they would require and their potential impact on the state income tax.

Senate Bill 1283 describes four tiers of funding for public schools. Under this bill, the Commonwealth would provide every school district with a base amount per student equal to 80% of the median amount that all districts spend on instruction per student (for example, the base amount per student for the 1997-1998 school year was calculated to be \$4,000 per student). The remaining 20% of the median would be shared by the state and the local school district, based on an "aid ratio" calculated for each district by measuring property and income wealth. The state's contribution would be mandatory, while the local contribution would be voluntary. The Commonwealth would also provide additional funding based on the difficulty of educating students within the district, considering poverty rates, adult education levels, and the percent of single-parent families.

Local districts would be allowed to supplement state funding with taxes to support programs and services not covered by other funds. Senate Bill 1283 would take effect immediately upon enactment. Analysts have estimated that the proposal spelled out in Senate Bill 1283 would require an increase of \$4.8 billion in state funding, raising the Commonwealth's share of the cost of education to about 80% and requiring an increase in the state income tax of about 2% (from 2.8% to 4.8%).

House Bill 2106 likewise proposes a significant increase in the Commonwealth's share of the cost of education. Unlike Senate Bill 1283, however, the KEEPS proposal uses the actual cost of the most successful districts as the basis for determining necessary funding levels for all schools. Each district's enrollment would be multiplied by the average per pupil expenditure in districts where at least half of the schools had at least 25% of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade students score in the top 25<sup>th</sup> percentile on state reading and math tests during the previous year. The formula also would allow districts to weight enrollment figures to provide additional funding for students with limited proficiency in English, learning-disabled students, students living in poverty and special education students. Supplemental funding would be provided by the state based on the concentration of poverty in the district (using the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunches) and the district's size (with a higher factor used in smaller districts).

House Bill 2106 would be phased in over three years, beginning with the 2000-2001 school year. The proposal would require an increase of \$3.5 billion in state funding, raising



the Commonwealth's share of the cost of education to approximately 64%. The state income tax would have to be raised 0.5% during each of the three years of its implementation, and 1/3 of the eventual increase in state funds would be added each year to the state subsidy for each district. Advocates argue that the proposal would substantially increase funding for most of the state's school districts, and that school officials would be able to either reduce property taxes to match the state's increase or freeze property taxes and use the state's increase to improve the quality of education.

As if this date, these bills remain in committee in the legislature, and, while Pennsylvania's legislators generally agree that some revision to the existing property tax system is critical, the prospects for passage of any particular scenario remains unclear.

### **Intermunicipal Cooperation**

- **The study area's municipalities should develop a multi-municipal coalition to implement intermunicipal strategies that increase the effectiveness of service delivery; increase efficiency (thereby reducing costs); and increase their political clout.**

There are 353 separate cities, townships and boroughs in the nine-county Delaware Valley region, each exerting their own local control and making independent decisions regarding land use within their boundaries. Home rule is and has long been held sacred by communities in both the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey. The desire for local control, however, often conflicts with other important goals, including improving local services without raising local taxes.

Many municipal officials now recognize the benefit of working together with their neighbors to address common problems and issues. Three key arguments in favor of cooperating include saving money, improving service delivery and increasing political clout. Cooperation is especially important in the case of first generation suburbs, which face social and economic problems uncharacteristic of more affluent developing communities but without the resources often available in the region's urban core. Without broad-based municipal coalitions, first generation suburbs have little influence on regional policies and trends that will in large part direct their future.

Additionally, departments within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that represent potential funding sources now emphasize intermunicipal cooperation. An Executive Order signed by Governor Ridge in 1999 (Executive Order 12898) directed the Center for Local Government Services to encourage local governments to work together with neighboring communities and their respective counties when developing comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. Both the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) have indicated that grant applications from coalitions of municipalities for projects that have

identified benefits across municipal boundaries are preferred, and are given priority over applications from individual jurisdictions.

Some (but not all ) of the communities in the William Penn School District recently joined with other municipalities to form the Eastern Delaware County Council of Governments. Councils of Governments (COG's) are one means of accomplishing intermunicipal cooperation. The Crum and Ridley Creeks COG, for example, was formed in Delaware County in 1979. It currently has 12 member municipalities and has several accomplishments to its credit, including joint planning and zoning ordinances, joint personnel and employee handbooks, joint training for elected officials and planning officials, a traffic sign inventory and joint purchasing. Those communities that are not yet participating should consider joining the Eastern Delaware County Council of Governments as a means of accomplishing inter-municipal planning and programming. Specific examples of areas and issues that could benefit from intermunicipal cooperation include the following:

***Coordinate municipal planning and zoning decisions and/or prepare a multi-municipal land use and transportation plan and/or zoning ordinance:*** Year 2000 amendments to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) facilitate and encourage municipalities to coordinate their planning and zoning with adjacent municipalities. For example, municipalities are required to state the relationship between proposed development within their locality and adjacent municipalities as a part of their comprehensive planning process.

The MPC also authorizes municipalities to undertake multi-municipal planning and zoning. A district-wide land use and transportation plan that presents the shared vision and goals of the community could be used by municipal and school officials to guide future infrastructure investment, recreation planning and other policy decisions. A multi-municipal planning commission can be established (with or without multi-municipal zoning) for the purpose of undertaking a planning process, preparing a multi-municipal comprehensive plan and encouraging cooperation between municipalities. Several of these multi-municipal planning commissions have been established in Chester County.<sup>15</sup> Another means of facilitating intermunicipal planning would be through the existing Eastern Delaware County Council of Governments.

***Expand the use of joint purchasing and service provision agreements:*** One means of improving service delivery and reducing cost is through joint purchasing and service agreements. These agreements can be forged between municipalities, between school districts or between one or more municipalities and the school district that services them.

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<sup>15</sup>Chester County Planning Commission, *Regional Planning and Other Forms of Multi-Municipal Cooperation*, data bulletin #47.

Cooperative agreements can be very informal, covering purchasing (such as office supplies) or services (property code enforcement, snow plowing, leaf removal or landscaping, for example) Cost savings can be realized by taking advantage of favorable economies of scale by buying in bulk, and cooperative agreements can also minimize the cost of advertising and preparing bid specifications.

Intermunicipal agreements are relatively easy to accomplish and are often done informally. Formal contracts between the parties, however, can spell out the terms of the agreement and minimize potential disputes over issues such as liability, responsibility for damaged equipment and the availability of back-up equipment in case of equipment failure. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, for example, encourages formal cooperative agreements through its Agility Program, under which local entities (municipalities or school districts, for example) enter into cooperative agreements for various transportation-related purchase and work projects. Shared services under the Agility Program could include, for example, line painting, seal coating, mowing, tree trimming, sign maintenance, curb installation, grading or pipe washing.

***Implement a multi-municipal Main Street program along Baltimore Pike***, utilizing available DCED program assistance. Baltimore Pike (Route 13) traverses the northern section of the school district, cutting through Lansdowne, East Lansdowne and Yeadon before entering Philadelphia. The highway is a major route, and is the first (and often times, only) impression that many travelers get of the community. Steering committee members expressed an interest in the development of a Main Street Program aimed at revitalizing Baltimore Pike as a catalyst for additional redevelopment in other areas of the district. Baltimore Pike could become a "gateway" to the area, through visual enhancements such as facade improvements, streetscaping and signage with a common theme and design.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Main Street Program is a five-year program designed to help a community's downtown economic development effort by providing assistance in establishing a local downtown redevelopment organization and hiring a full-time program manager. The program selection criteria include the documented viability of the business district; an identification of the needs of the district and the potential for improvement; the strength of private and public sector commitment; local interest in and a commitment to historic preservation; a local commitment to community and economic development; proof of the ability of the community to fund their required match; and clearly defined local goals and objectives.

DCED staff has indicated that priority would be given to a multi-municipal effort, and suggested that the current report might serve as the background information to support an application. There are also indications that other neighboring communities outside of the school district (such as Clifton Heights) are interested in participating in a Main Street Program along Baltimore Pike.

**Undertake joint recreation planning and programming, especially for the district's youth.** A joint recreation program for the community's youth should be developed which utilizes the school district's available resources and facilities and includes assistance from the municipalities in organizing and implementing programs and in maintaining and improving aging school facilities. In addition to serving the community's youth, joint programming and planning between the district administration and local officials could also incorporate neighborhood and community programs as well as activities for senior citizens.

There are several arguments in support of providing recreational services through a cooperative arrangement between neighboring municipalities and the school district. These include cost savings, the ability to offer expanded programming and the enhanced political clout gained by joining together as one voice. Information on creating a formal joint recreation commission can be found in the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's *Intermunicipal Cooperation Alternatives Report 1: Regional Recreation Commissions*. Several multi-municipal recreation commissions are in existence in Southeastern Pennsylvania, including the Downingtown Area Recreation Commission and the Marple-Newtown Leisure Services.

#### **Other Municipal and County Policies and Actions**

Increasing the level of cooperation between the communities that comprise the William Penn School District and joint participation in the planning and programming process offer perhaps the greatest potential for revitalizing these first generation municipalities. Other actions that should be pursued by individual municipalities, the County and the Commonwealth include the following:

- Especially in light of the new amendments to the MPC, municipal officials should **review their local comprehensive plans and zoning regulations and revise them as necessary**, to support existing businesses, attract new employers and support in-fill residential development where appropriate. Plans and zoning ordinances should allow uses that are compatible with and complement existing uses and assist in accomplishing the community's goals for economic and community development. Non-traditional housing alternatives, such as accessory apartments, shared housing and residential conversions, should be considered in appropriate locations.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Delaware County Office of Housing and Community Development and local non-profit groups should **increase funds available for housing assistance for low and moderate income families**, to help homeowners and landlords rehabilitate and maintain their units and assist renters in becoming homeowners. Funding should be increased for programs that provide counseling in basic home repair and budgeting as well as for emergency mortgage assistance.

- **The William Penn School District's administration should review their current policies as they relate to student achievement and continuing education opportunities for adults and explore potential opportunities for improvement,** including an improved college-preparatory curriculum, enhanced job-readiness programs and adult education programs. All students in the district should be offered challenging academic courses that encourage them to achieve high standards and reach their fullest potential. The District's Administration and faculty should focus on preparing each student for advancing on to post-secondary institutions and/or for securing employment in the "new economy", by instilling basic, academic and highly technical skills. For those students who have demonstrated a need, the district should focus on opportunities that enhance the ability to independently solve problems. Schools should support families by continuing to reinforce personal qualities that begin at home, including responsibility, self-esteem, integrity and respect for self and others. Education should be linked as needed to other supportive services, such as nutritional programs, family counseling, drug counseling and medical care.

- Municipal officials should **review and revise local property maintenance requirements** and actively enforce these requirements. Absentee landlords as well as the community's residents and business owners should be required to maintain their properties. Public works crews should be utilized where necessary to clean and maintain the exteriors of properties where owners have neglected to do so, and these owners should be fined or have a tax lien placed against their property. Local officials should work with neighboring municipalities, striving for consistency between municipalities in terms of both the requirements and their enforcement.

- Municipal officials should **assess and enhance (as necessary) sidewalk and street maintenance as well as streetscape improvements (including street lighting) provided in their neighborhoods,** to strengthen residents' sense of community pride and encourage them to maintain their individual units as well as their neighborhood.

- Municipal officials should **review and expand as necessary the level of police protection** provided to their businesses and residential neighborhoods.

- Municipal officials should **respond aggressively to housing vacancies** as a part of their overall neighborhood revitalization plan, including boarding vacant units, seeking acquisition of vacant properties or, if appropriate, demolishing deteriorated vacant structures.

- Municipal officials should **explore the feasibility of implementing "2-rate taxation"** as a means of encouraging landowners to utilize their properties to their fullest potential. Under existing Pennsylvania law, the Commonwealth's boroughs are authorized to implement a "2-rate" (otherwise referred to as split-rate) taxation system. In a standard property tax system, land and buildings are taxed at the same rate. In a "two-rate" scheme,

land value is taxed at a higher rate than the building. Thus, a landowner who fails to build on the property is taxed at a higher rate than another owner who has improved his lot.

Switching to a 2-rate system does not typically result in new revenue for the municipality, since some landowners will pay more under the system and some will pay less. Rather, it provides an incentive for property owners to improve and maintain their properties, while discouraging abandonment and speculation. Eighteen different cities and boroughs of varying size throughout the Commonwealth have implemented such a system, and many have experienced substantial increases in building permits and employment. Local officials should consider the feasibility of implementing such a system, either individually or throughout the district's six municipalities. Information on "2-rate" taxation can be obtained from the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs.

- Municipal officials in the district should **work with the Delaware County Commerce Department to identify and take advantage of all available economic development programs and incentives** offered through federal, state and county agencies as well as private foundations.
- Municipal officials should continue to **seek loans from the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST) to correct problems with aging infrastructure** systems, in cooperation with neighboring municipalities whenever possible.
- County and municipal officials should **work together to identify necessary improvements to the highway network** and to seek potential funding sources for these improvements, including inclusion on DVRPC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or through other sources such as the Transportation Enhancements Program.
- County and municipal officials, the Delaware County Transportation Management Association (TMA) and SEPTA should **continue to work together to improve transit service to key employment centers, including industries around the Philadelphia International Airport**. While the area is currently served by several of SEPTA's bus and regional rail routes, steering committee members noted that service to major employment centers is round-about, taking a relatively long time and requiring one or more transfers. SEPTA has already worked with the TMA to implement bus routes serving specific employment centers. The Route 305, for example, provides service between Darby Township and employers located in the vicinity of the Philadelphia International Airport.
- The Delaware County Planning Department and the Delaware County Commerce Department should **inventory vacant and abandoned structures and properties** within the William Penn School District's municipalities, determining size, location, ownership, available information on previous uses and potential for redevelopment. Where appropriate, municipalities should exercise the power of eminent domain to obtain ownership of these properties and make them available for redevelopment.



- County, municipal and school district officials as well as civic associations should **work together to actively market the community's strongest advantages**, utilizing such tools as brochures, commercial media or an Internet site. Other ideas for marketing the community as well as deepening community pride include advertising campaigns, work fairs, "William Penn School District" community days, community bulletin boards or a district-wide publication.
- **Residents of the study area should strive for increased participation in the decision-making process in their community and critically assess the consequences of actions affecting local government and the school district.** Taxpayers should become aware of important local issues, raise questions as appropriate and actively participate in Borough Council meetings, planning and zoning board hearings and school board meetings.

## POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Financial resources and technical assistance are available to the community through a number of different agencies and sources, including the Delaware County Planning Department, Office of Housing and Community Development and Commerce Department. Technical assistance is also available from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Through its annual Work Program, DVRPC prepares detailed studies of certain identified corridors and areas as a part of its implementation of the region's long-range Plan. More information about DVRPC is available through the Commission's website ([www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)).

Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development can provide technical assistance and financial resources through a host of programs designed to assist communities. Funding and technical assistance could be provided to the school district's municipalities, for example, for coalition building and the revision of local plans and ordinances. Funding for coalition building, planning and visioning may be available through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's *Community Revitalization Fund* or the *World Class Communities Program*.

State planning assistance grants are also available that provide a 50/50 match for visioning and comprehensive planning projects, particularly if they involve multi-municipal efforts. Additionally, the *Small Communities Planning Assistance Program* provides up to 100% of the needed funds to certain communities. Targeted assistance available through DCED includes the Main Street Program discussed above. The Department also provides assistance with revitalizing community infrastructure (critical to attracting and retaining business) through its *Communities of Opportunity* and *Infrastructure Development* programs. Other activities that are eligible for DCED funding through a variety of programs include the acquisition and demolition or rehabilitation of buildings, the acquisition of land or rights-of-way, and activities related to public safety, crime prevention and recreation.

DCED can also provide community assistance through its *Project for Community Building* initiative. *Project for Community Building* offers community-based organizations the opportunity to use any of eight different initiatives to support community-driven solutions to their own defined problems. These initiatives include the Pennsylvania Community Development Bank, which makes capital available for community and economic development improvements; the Family Savings Account Program, to assist low-income families in attaining self-sufficiency; an Education Mentoring Program, which links responsible adults with at-risk youth; charter schools; the Crime Prevention Program, which provides resources to community organizations to develop strategies to address juvenile crime; a self-employment assistance program; and resources to help develop strategies to reduce teen pregnancies.

DCED offers a wide-range of other community development and housing assistance programs that may be helpful to the municipalities in the William Penn School District, and can assist communities in accessing programs available through the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. More information on specific programs is best obtained by contacting the Department directly and discussing the community's goals, objectives and local capacities with one or more of their representatives. A Funding Source Directory has been published by DCED that can be used as a guide when applying for assistance, and all applications for financial assistance are made through the Department's Single Application process. The Department can be contacted at 1-800-379-7448, or through their website ([www.dced.state.pa.us](http://www.dced.state.pa.us)).

Depending on the community's objectives, other state agencies will also be able to provide technical assistance and funding. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), for example, offers assistance in developing joint service agreements under their Agility Program and has initiated and provided funding for various corridor studies throughout the Commonwealth. Delaware County is part of PennDOT's District 6-0 (which includes Bucks, Chester, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties as well). Additional information on the Department is available through their website ([www.dot.state.pa.us](http://www.dot.state.pa.us)), and PennDOT's District 6-0 staff can be reached by telephone at 610-205-6700. Other agencies and authorities which may have resources available include the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR; website address [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)); the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP; website address [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us)); the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE; website address [www.pde.psu.edu](http://www.pde.psu.edu)); and the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST; website address [www.pennvest.state.pa.us](http://www.pennvest.state.pa.us)).

## **CONCLUSION**

The municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District and the School District's Administration have expressed an interest in working together to achieve community improvements. It is hoped that this study will provide a useful tool that



summarizes area opportunities, challenges and strategies to achieve change. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission hopes that a partnership of county and local officials, with the assistance of state and federal financial resources and programs, will provide the catalyst that will result in an enhanced quality of life for the William Penn School District's municipalities in the years ahead.

## APPENDIX A

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**Title of Report:     The Future of First Generation Suburbs: A Case Study  
                          An Assessment of the Six Municipalities that Comprise the  
                          William Penn School District**

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**Key Words:** "First Generation" suburbs, inner ring communities, z-score, regional tax-base sharing, intermunicipal cooperation

**ABSTRACT:**

In December 1998 DVRPC released a report entitled The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley, which defined the economic disadvantages facing older "first generation" suburbs. The term "first generation suburb" generally refers to the earliest townships and boroughs to develop outside a region's central city. In the Delaware Valley, these include older boroughs scattered across the region that developed as industrial and agricultural settlements as well as the region's first suburban bedroom communities.

As a follow-up case study, this report assesses the six municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District in Eastern Delaware County, an area characteristic of the region's first generation communities. The study documents demographic and socio-economic conditions in the area; identifies the area's challenges and opportunities; and presents recommendations for revitalization, including both broad regional strategies (such as regional tax-base sharing) and local initiatives, including intermunicipal cooperation and coalition building.

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