



# Hourglass Quarterly

Summer 2021



## The Growth Issue

CENSUS DATA & PLACES2040

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

HOUSING DENSITY CASE STUDY

FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

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## Letter from the Executive Director

Hello Hourglass community,

I hope this issue of the Hourglass Quarterly finds you well. There's something about this time of year that has always represented transition. As I see students waiting for school buses, my mind recalls the abrupt end of summer days spent catching crayfish in the stream by my house, or riding my bike with neighborhood kids, as we transitioned to new teachers, homework and after school sports.

It's appropriate that at this time Hourglass is also undergoing a transition. I am honored to take on the role of Executive Director, picking up the mantle from my capable predecessor Jonathan Russell, to continue our work of bringing innovative ideas into the community to preserve and improve the quality of life for us all.

And of course, Lancaster County is also in the process of transition. New census data shows that our population is growing and diversifying. As we grow, we have to think about what we value as a community so we can grow together, strategically. This issue of the Hourglass Quarterly dives deeper into what our growth means for Places2040, the County's comprehensive plan, as well as farmland preservation and housing.

I look forward to getting to know each of you in the coming months and years. As you get to know me, you'll find that I'm a Lancaster City resident who loves to travel, I'm a graduate student studying sustainability, I'm a Master Naturalist who loves hiking and the outdoors, and I'm a Syracuse basketball fan. But most importantly, you'll find I have a heart for community, something I believe all of us in the Hourglass community have in common. I look forward to getting to know what community issues you care about, and how we can work together to make Lancaster a better place to live and work.

With gratitude,

Diana Martin  
Executive Director



## CENSUS DATA & PLACES2040

### The future of growth in Lancaster County

The 2020 census data for Lancaster County was released in August. The numbers show the county's population grew to 552,984, a 6.5% increase over the last 10 years. That's the slowest pace of growth here since the 1910s. And yet Lancaster is the seventh-fastest growing of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, officially becoming a metropolitan area.

#### **How does this growth align with Places2040, Lancaster County's comprehensive plan?**

Census data showed that growth is far from evenly spread within the county. The fastest growing among municipalities were suburban townships: Pequea (18.9%), Penn (16.2%), Lancaster (15.4%) and Manheim (15.3%). Meanwhile, Lancaster city lost 1,283 people since 2010, or 2.2% of its total population. Millersville lost 265 people, or 3.2% of its population, and Columbia lost 193 people, or 1.9%.

This might seem in conflict with Places2040's smart growth strategy, developed by the Lancaster County Planning Commission in 2018, which encourages local officials to steer new, denser construction to Urban Growth Areas that already have access to

needed public infrastructure like sewer, water, electricity and roads—reducing sprawl and maintaining farmland and open spaces. But Scott Standish, Executive Director of the Planning Commission, says on closer examination, the plan is on track.

***"We've been successful in where we grow, but not how we grow," said Standish.***

Preliminary analysis by the Planning Commission shows that the majority of all new housing units and population growth in the last 10 years have been in the designated urban growth areas, likely even higher than the Places2040 goal of 85%.

Where we're missing the target is in density. "Our goal is 7.5 units/acre in the designated growth areas," said Standish, "but we're still seeing a significant number of large single family lots. We need to grow up instead of out, and invest in developing vacant, underutilized land in the targeted growth areas." Density is especially important because our urban growth areas only have 24,000 acres of vacant buildable land remaining—which we're consuming at the rate of about 1,000 acres per year.

**Other Census Findings:**

- In Places2040, the Planning Commission predicted Lancaster County would see our population increase by about 100,000 people between 2015 and 2040. But based on our slowing population growth we “might not get there,” according to Standish.
- Where is our population growth coming from? There is a myth in the county that growth is coming from migration, but 79% of our growth in Lancaster County over the past decade has been internal.

**2020 CENSUS: LANCASTER COUNTY POPULATION BY MUNICIPALITY**

This graphic shows the 2000, 2010 and 2020 population totals for each community, along with the change from 2010 to 2020.

■ 0-4.9% growth ■ 5-10% growth ■ >10% growth

Location	2000	2010	2020	2010-20 change	2010-20 % change
Lancaster City	56,348	59,322	58,039	-1,283	-2.2%

Boroughs	94,353	97,775	100,540	2,765	2.8%
Adamstown	1,201	1,772	1,916	144	8.1%
Akron	4,046	3,876	4,152	276	7.1%
Christiana	1,124	1,168	1,112	-56	-4.8%
Columbia	10,492	10,400	10,207	-193	-1.9%
Denver	3,332	3,861	3,792	-69	-1.8%
East Petersburg	4,450	4,506	4,573	67	1.5%
Elizabethtown	11,887	11,545	11,639	94	0.8%
Ephrata	13,213	13,394	13,794	400	3.0%
Lititz	9,029	9,369	9,381	12	0.1%
Manheim	4,784	4,858	5,046	188	3.9%
Marietta	2,689	2,588	2,623	35	1.4%
Millersville	7,774	8,168	7,903	-265	-3.2%
Mountville	2,444	2,802	3,017	215	7.7%
Mount Joy	6,765	7,410	8,325	915	12.3%
New Holland	5,092	5,378	5,743	365	6.8%
Quarryville	1,994	2,576	2,843	267	10.4%
Strasburg	2,800	2,809	3,117	308	11.0%
Terre Hill	1,237	1,295	1,357	62	4.8%

“Overall, the efforts of a county-wide vision of where to develop growth has been successful,” said Standish.



The Lancaster County Planning Commission plans to revisit the comprehensive plan every 5 years to make adjust-

ments. This fall Places2040 is hosting a series of implementation workshops around the county called “Creating Great Places” focused on housing choice and placemaking. The Places2040 Summit will be held March 31, 2022.

Hourglass is proud to be one of the “Partners for Place” for Places2040. Graph from LNP.



# FARMLAND PRESERVATION

## Lancaster Farmland Trust releases report



Lancaster County continues to lead the country in farmland preservation, with more than 115,000 acres preserved across 1,539 farms, or roughly 19% of the county's land area. However, population growth puts development pressure on farmland. We are currently losing 1,200 acres of farmland to development annually, and the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board and Lancaster Farmland Trust have a combined backlog of 250 farmers who want to preserve their farms but are on a waiting list.

One challenge is government funding for farmland preservation, which in Lancaster County has declined significantly in the past two decades accord-

ing to the recently released "State of Farmland Preservation in Lancaster County" report. Specifically, the county government's investment in farmland preservation dropped 40% between 2010 and 2020, continuing a decline since funding peaked in 2001 at \$16 million.

"Most of our municipalities are doing a good job with zoning, but we know zoning is temporary and can be changed," said Karen Martynick, Executive Director of Lancaster Farmland Trust at Hourglass's August First Friday Forum. "We recognize that with population growth, pressure on farmers will continue to increase. That doesn't only mean farmland will be developed. But

if development becomes scattered, and new people move next to farms that don't like the smells, the dust, and the noise, or it becomes dangerous for farmers to be out on the road—all of those things put pressure on farmers and our agricultural land.”

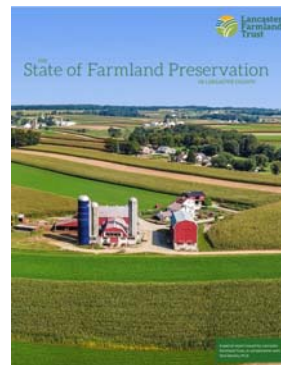
Lancaster Farmland Trust recommends county officials devote \$125 million to farmland preservation by 2030—about the total amount local officials allocated in the previous 37 years. That funding would support Lancaster Farmland Trust's goal to double Lancaster's acres preserved by 2040. That would account for more than half of all land in Lancaster County zoned for agriculture.

The report recommends various zoning and planning tools for township officials to use for farmland preservation. One, transfer of development rights (TDRs), is a program that allows farm owners to sell their development rights to a developer who can then use those rights to build elsewhere with some new privileges otherwise not permitted by zoning. That can be more density than otherwise allowed, or fewer stormwater management requirements, for instance. Caernarvon, Manheim, Penn, Warwick, West Hempfield and West Lampeter townships have all enacted transfer of development rights ordinances already.

Other recommendations for townships include agricultural zoning that limits how many homes or subdivisions can exist on each property. This precludes future owners from splitting up a farm into a new residential development.

The report also highlights Honey Brook Township in Chester County, where in 2005 voters approved a half-percent increase to a local income tax to fund preservation efforts. Lancaster Farmland Trust proposes a referendum to determine public support for a similar farmland preservation tax here in Lancaster County.

“We know that growth is coming and we know that we're losing farmland, and at some point in the future those two are going to come together,” said Martynick. “If we're not careful and don't make the right decisions, we're going to look around and say, ‘What happened? What happened to our farms?’”



Find the full report at [LancasterFarmlandTrust.org/farmlandreport](https://LancasterFarmlandTrust.org/farmlandreport).

*Hourglass held a First Friday Forum in August 2021 on “The State of Farmland Preservation in Lancaster County” with Karen Martynick and Jeffrey Swinehart of Lancaster Farmland Trust. You can find a video of the conversation on the Hourglass website or on our*



# INCREASING HOUSING DENSITY

## “Gentle Density” in Washington, D.C.

*Lancaster County is not building at the density outlined in Places2040, which is 7.5 units/acre. One challenge for building at a higher density is zoning. Another is misconceptions from neighbors that dense housing will change the character of their neighborhood, increase traffic, or other issues. What can Washington, D.C. teach us about tackling this challenge? A Brookings Institute Report.*

On roughly 75% of land in most cities today, it is illegal to build anything except single-family detached houses. The origins of single-family zoning in America are not benign: Many housing codes used density as a proxy for separating people by income and race. But as communities across the U.S. grapple with worsening housing affordability, there is growing interest in how zoning rules could be relaxed to allow smaller, less expensive homes.

Often, the choice is posed as a trade-off between detached homes with big yards or skyscraping apartment towers. In reality, the housing stock in most communities is much more diverse than these two extremes. While high-rise apartments in strategic locations should be part of the solution, many single-family neighborhoods

could easily yield more housing—and more affordable housing—if land use rules allowed “gentle” increases in density, such as townhomes, two- to four-family homes, and small-scale apartment or condominium buildings.

### **A D.C. example**

Washington, D.C. has several predominantly single-family neighborhoods close to downtown that would offer perfect opportunities for gentle density. According to tax assessor data, the median lot size for single-family detached homes in the District is 5,460 square feet, compared to 1,600 square feet for rowhouses and 4,100 square feet for four- to six-unit multifamily buildings. This suggests that most single-family lots could accommodate more housing. Figure 1 shows some different scenarios for a 4,500 square foot lot, currently occupied by a two-and-a-half-story, 3,000 square foot single-family home including: the lot as is, redeveloped with three side-by-side townhomes, or redeveloped with a three-story, six-unit condo building.

According to analysis from the Brookings Institute, the newly built townhomes would sell for nearly the same price per unit as the current single-family detached home (assuming that



FIGURE 1

## More homes, less yard



Note: These are hypothetical examples created for this analysis. Structure types and building dimensions are typical of homes in Washington, D.C., verified against Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal residential data from [opendata.dc.gov](https://opendata.dc.gov).

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single-family homes that are most attractive for redevelopment are in poor condition and buyers who purchased the home to live in rather than redevelop would likely incur substantial renovation costs.)

In the other redevelopment scenario, the per-unit prices for a six-unit condominium building are about 40% lower than for the three townhomes. One important factor is that the land costs, expensive in D.C., are divided among six completed homes, rather than three. The second reason the condo prices are lower than townhomes is that each unit is smaller: 1,200 square feet per condo versus 2,000 square feet per townhome (typical sizes in the District for each structure). This analysis shows that adding more homes in single-family neighborhoods makes it possible for more people to move into the

neighborhood and that under certain conditions, the new homes will also improve affordability.

### Density supports neighborhood retail and a healthier planet

Adding more homes—and thus more neighbors—to low-density neighborhoods can help support local retail businesses that depend heavily on foot traffic, like hardware stores, bakeries, and restaurants. Although dense housing reduces yard space, good landscaping, green roofs, and other design solutions including sidewalk berms can offset stormwater runoff. Local retail that households can access without driving helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the largest driver of climate change and air pollution. And with good planning, increased density in single-family neighborhoods won't necessarily mean more cars competing for street parking.



**More homes equals more affordability and economic opportunity**

The D.C. redevelopment scenario offers three main lessons for policymakers thinking about how to improve housing affordability.

First, it is possible to add more homes in single-family neighborhoods while keeping buildings at similar scale. When viewed from the street, three adjacent townhomes or six small condos can be constructed at approximately the same height and mass as existing single-family homes.

Second, allowing smaller homes that use less land is an important way to improve affordability. Where land is expensive, adding more homes on a given parcel reduces housing costs for each household. Gentle density also enables better matching between the size of one's house and the size of one's household; Washington, D.C. has seen rapid growth of one- or two-person households, many of whom would prefer to live in small apartments. Where these are not available, they end up sharing single-family

homes or apartments with multiple households to reduce costs. Building more small homes—including accessible flats for older adults—would free up the existing single-family stock for people who need larger homes, including families with children and multi-generational households.

Third, diversifying the housing stock in exclusive neighborhoods creates better access to economic opportunity. The reason land is expensive in these neighborhoods is because they are located near job centers and transportation hubs, and offer amenities such as excellent public schools and low crime.

Removing barriers to townhomes, two- to four-family homes, and small-scale multifamily buildings can be part of the solution to communities like ours that need more housing, especially low-cost housing.

*Report: "Gentle density can save our neighborhoods," by Alex Baca, Patrick McAnaney and Jenny Schuetz. Brookings Institute, December 4, 2019.*



# HOURGLASS FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

## Highlights From Recent Forums

Sponsored by:



### May 7, 2021—Tenfold

**Presenters:** Mike McKenna, CEO, and Shelby Nauman, Chief Impact Officer

Hourglass was joined by leaders from Tenfold (formerly Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership and Tabor) to learn more about the organization's merger, the current state of housing and its impact on the Lancaster community, and the organization's services.

### June 4, 2021—Resiliency in Cities

**Presenter:** Grant Ervin, Chief Resiliency Officer and Assistant Director of Planning for the City of Pittsburgh

Grant spoke about the city of Pittsburgh's work to become a resilient city, the Rockefeller Foundation's Resilient City framework and how it can be applied to cities throughout the country.

### August 6, 2021—Preserving Farmland in Lancaster County

**Presenters:** Karen Martynick, Executive Director, and Jeffrey Swinehart, Chief Operating Officer, Lancaster Farmland Trust

Leaders from Lancaster Farmland Trust discussed their new "State of Farmland Preservation in Lancaster County" report, including the benefits of farmland preservation, the impact of our area's population growth, funding efforts around farmland preservation, zoning strategies and more.

Watch forum recordings at [HourglassLancaster.org](https://HourglassLancaster.org) or on our Youtube channel. To attend forums like these, become an Hourglass member at [HourglassLancaster.org/membership](https://HourglassLancaster.org/membership).



**HOURGLASS**  
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Hourglass champions and facilitates sound decision-making to continue Lancaster County's prosperity while maintaining its unique character and enviable quality of life.

As a trusted source for information, innovative ideas and insights, Hourglass helps stakeholders, elected officials and citizens make more informed and enlightened decisions.

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