

Landscapes Index: 1996–2010



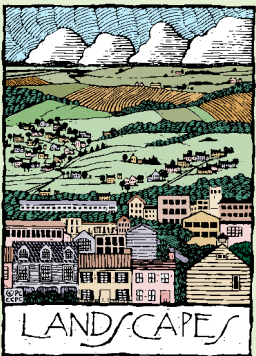
The Board of County Commissioners adopted Landscapes2 on November 9, 2009. The updated plan renews the vision for our future, while responding to changes that have occurred since Landscapes was first adopted. The county will champion three major initiatives for change: build working partnerships, create sustainable communities, and keep Chester County green, to achieve the vision.

The Landscapes2 Index is being developed to correlate to changes in the updated plan. It will include some entirely new indicators measuring new subjects, as well as changes to existing indicators to provide more useful findings. The Planning Commission will produce the first Landscapes2 Index in 2011.

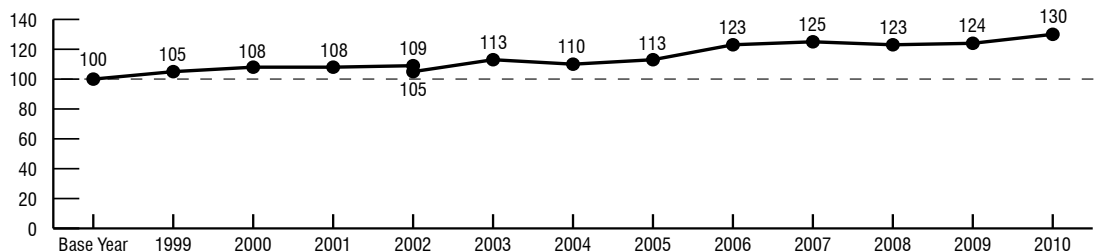
Because the 2010 Landscapes Index is the final Landscapes Index with the current set of indicators, the Planning Commission is including a list of significant accomplishments reflected by the index and a summary of the trend shown by each indicator.

Significant accomplishments since 1996

- There has been an increase of 19,868 acres of farmland protected by easements.
- The five organizations sampled for the *eased land* indicator have preserved 12,961 acres of open space with conservation easements.
- The state, county, and municipalities have added 7,450 acres of public park land in Chester County.
- 17% of the total number of proposed housing units on subdivision and land development plans was in the urban landscape. The percentages of units in the urban landscape were generally higher in more recent years, signifying increased housing development in the urban centers.
- The number of annual automobile crashes with injuries has gone down fairly steadily from 2,837 crashes to 1,870 crashes, despite a large increase in the number of vehicles.
- Average ridership on the carriers sampled for the *public transportation* use indicator has increased from approximately 2,400 riders to 3,100 riders a day, a 29% increase.
- The total market value of agricultural products from Chester County has increased from 8% to 9% of the total value in the state, despite the growth and development in the county.
- There have been 25 historic districts and places added to the National Register of Historic Places or certified by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.



TREND LINE



Note: The trend line shows two values for 2002 reflecting a change in the water resources indicator. The index was 109 using the original stream protection indicator and 105 using the replacement stream quality indicator. The annual index includes the most recent data for each indicator.



Summary of Findings from the Indicators

The overall Landscapes Index has shown a steady positive trend since it was created in 1998. Following is a summary of the long term trend demonstrated by each of the eighteen indicators.

Legend

(+) Positive indicator (o) Neutral indicator (-) Negative indicator

Preserved Land Sub-Index

- (+) *Protected farmland* had a continuous positive trend. The amount of farmland protected by easements has nearly quadrupled.
- (+) *Eased land* had a continuous positive trend with additional acres protected by conservation easements each year.
- (+) *Park land* had a continuous positive trend with the total acres of public park land increasing in all except one year.

Proposed Development Sub-Index

- (+) *Proposed housing units consistent with Landscapes* alternated between a positive and negative change almost every year. In the early years the indicator was usually below 100, but in later years it was above 100. This means the percentage of proposed housing units located in the growth areas increased over time.
- (o) *Proposed non-residential development consistent with Landscapes* started with a positive trend, but then generally had a negative trend and stayed below 100 until 2009. The percentage of non-residential development proposed outside the growth areas increased over time. While the general trend was less consistency with Landscapes, the percentage did not change much from the base year.
- (+) *Community water and sewer* started with a negative trend, but then generally stayed around 100. The percentage of proposed housing units with water and sewer service consistent with Landscapes was usually very high.



Housing Sub-Index

- (-) *Housing affordability* had a generally negative trend and remained below 100. Housing is less affordable than when Landscapes was adopted.
- (+) *Residential loans in urban areas* started with a negative value, but then had a positive trend. This indicates that an increasing proportion of housing loans are for housing units in urban areas. This is consistent with the goal of preserving and enhancing urban areas.
- (+) *Residential lot size/residential unit density* started with a negative value, but then had a positive trend. Lot size decreased slightly over time, which is consistent with Landscapes.



Transportation Sub-Index

- (+) *Traffic safety* started with a negative trend, but then exhibited a positive trend above 100. This indicates that there have been fewer crashes and injuries relative to the increasing number of registered vehicles.
- (+) *Public transportation use* had a generally positive trend continuously above 100. Public transportation ridership has increased.
- (-) *Travel time* had a generally negative trend and remained below 100. It is taking longer to drive on the highways in Chester County.

Economy Sub-Index

- (+) *Farm production* started with a negative trend, but then became positive and remained above 100. Chester County is a major producer of agricultural goods and the county's share of the total state output has increased.
- (o) *Job growth* has experienced the greatest annual variation of all indicators. This is because the measure is the change in the growth rate from the previous year, which can change greatly. The growth rate trend shows the interrelationship of the county economy to the state and national economies. The overall number of jobs in the county has grown.

Resources Sub-Index

- (+) *Historic resources and plans* had a slow positive trend. There has been an increase in the number of registered historic resources in Chester County.
- (o) *Stream quality* has alternated between a positive and negative change almost every year and remains slightly below 100. Stream quality remains generally good, but it has not improved since Landscapes was adopted.



Municipal Initiatives Sub-Index

- (+) *Municipal ordinance amendments consistent with Landscapes* had a positive trend that improved early and maintained a high level of consistency. Municipalities have taken actions to make their land use ordinances consistent with Landscapes.
- (+) *Municipal volunteerism* had a positive trend continuously at or above 100. The number of volunteers serving their municipalities has remained at a high level. This indicates a strong commitment to civic involvement.