

THE PEOPLE

This Comprehensive Plan embraces a growing, changing community. The Plan energetically recognizes the long term growth potential of the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County, and of the fundamental demographic changes being experienced by the community.

This section presents the Plan's underlying population growth assumptions and statutory review of population densities.

OVERALL POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTION

Lancaster County's population is assumed to reach over 363,000 persons by the year 2025 — that's nearly 113,000 people more than the County's year 2000 population base of 250,291 persons. By the year 2050, the County's population is projected to reach 527,000 people, or more than 277,000 people than reside in the county today.

This growth is based on an assumed rate of 1.5 percent per year throughout the fifty year period. While the rate exceeds what the community has experienced since the 1960's (i.e., 1.2 percent per year), it does generally mirror the community's most recent growth trends. During the decade of the 1990's, population in the County grew at a rate of 1.6 percent per year. The 1.5 percent annualized figure provides a firm foundation for planning and fostering the community's expansion.

As will be examined later in this document, it is anticipated that the rate of growth will be routinely monitored as the Plan's Vision is put into place. This monitoring will be based on an array of growth and development factors that go beyond just the community's estimated population.

The Plan assumes the annualized growth rate of 1.5 percent will remain constant over the next five decades. The effect of this assumption is a population base that continues to add a greater number of people each year as the Plan reaches out toward the future. Early in the planning period, nearly 4,000 new people per year will become part of the county. This figure will top 5,000 persons per year by the year 2025, and stretch to 7,500 by the year 2050.

Within this expanding population base, changes are also envisioned to occur in the community's demographic mix. Although no specific projections have been made, it is assumed that the city and county's future population will mirror several recent local and national trends.



For example, within the planning period the face of the community will witness further growth among existing racial and ethnic minority groups. As noted earlier in the Plan, Lincoln and Lancaster County’s minority community more than doubled between 1990 and 2000. This increase was witnessed across all segments of the minority community –



with notable growth occurring among Black/African Americans, Asians, “Other” racial groups, and persons of Hispanic origin. Increases within the minority community — both in absolute numbers and as a percent of the area’s overall population – are anticipated to continue into the future. This trend is embraced by the Comprehensive Plan’s Vision and is to be considered as the Plan’s policies and programs are implemented.

A second demographic trend of significance is the continuing growth in the area’s senior population. Issues relating to an aging population will increase in importance as more and more individuals reach the age of 65 and above. Over the next twenty five years, this segment of the community will similarly grow in number and as a percent of the overall population base. This will place greater emphasis on the unique transportation, housing, economic, and recreational needs of this expanding demographic segment.

URBAN, RURAL, AND VILLAGE GROWTH

As the County’s population grows over the next fifty years, the Plan anticipates the distribution of the people residing in certain geographic areas of the county will remain at their present levels.

The City of Lincoln’s population will stay at about 90 percent of the County’s population. This means that Lincoln’s population will reach beyond 327,000 persons by the year 2025, and to almost 475,000 persons by the year 2050.

The balance of the projected population is expected to reside in the County’s smaller cities and villages, on farms, and in the rural areas on acreages. For purposes of long term planning, the population of the incorporated cities and towns will stay a little under 3 percent. Persons living in these jurisdictions will grow from the current level of 6,500 persons, to around 9,400 in the year 2025, and near 13,700 in the year 2050.

While no specific count is available on the number of people living on “farms,” it is assumed that about one percent of the County’s population are part of the “farming community.” This means that around 2,500 people reside on farms today. This figure would grow to nearly 3,600 persons in the year 2025, and top 5,000 by the year 2050.

The remaining population was assumed to live on acreages (either free standing or as part of rural subdivisions), on other farmsteads, and in the County’s handful of unincorporated towns. This demographic element was calculated at around 15,700 in the year 2000, and would grow to about 22,800 by the year 2025, and exceed 33,000 by the year 2050.

POPULATION DENSITY

Since about 1970, Lincoln's population density has remained relatively consistent at around 3,000 persons per square mile. Certainly within the urban fabric there are variations from this norm. Areas of residential concentration near the Downtown and many of Lincoln's older neighborhoods have levels of density greater than this average. Conversely, there are locations on the urban fringe with newer neighborhoods having population densities below this level.

As the city experiences additional urbanization in the future, the Plan assumes that the overall city-wide population density will stay at a level comparable to this figure. This assumption applies throughout the initial 25 year planning horizon. Reaffirmation of this population density figure should occur in the future whenever a new comprehensive plan is being prepared for the community.

While sufficient developable land is designated in the plan to accommodate an overall city-wide density comparable to the current figure, the community should strive to maximize efficiency in development.

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