

Survey Details Educational, Career, Residential Aspirations of Rural Pennsylvania Youth



The educational aspirations of today’s rural Pennsylvania youth have decreased over the past decade, according to the research, *Rural Youth Survey: Trends and Developments in the Attitudes and Aspirations of Rural Pennsylvania Youth*. The research, conducted in spring 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, found

that more youth today plan to earn a high school diploma or less, and fewer plan to complete a four-year college degree than rural youth surveyed in 2010.

Researchers Dr. Lacey Wallace, Dr. Sam Tanner, Dr. Freyca Calderon-Berumen, and Dr. Lauren Jacobson of Penn State Altoona, documented the educational, career, and residential as-

(Rural Youth Survey continued on Page 6)

Center Updates Its Rural Municipal Definition

The Center has updated its rural municipal definition as follows:

A municipality is rural when the number of people per square mile in the municipality is fewer than 291 or the municipality is in a rural county and has fewer than 2,500 residents. All other municipalities are considered urban.

After the release of the 2020 Census, the Center updated its rural county/school district definition to reflect the change in Pennsylvania’s population and population density. The Center’s Board of Directors approved the new rural municipal definition at its May board meeting, as the new definition is easier to work with and understand. It also aligns more closely with the Center’s county/school district definition, which is solely based on population density:

A county or school district is rural when the number of people per square mile within the county or school district is fewer than 291. Counties and school districts that have 291 people or more per square mile are considered urban.

Since the Census Bureau will not release its urbanized definition until 2023, the updated rural municipal definition

will allow the Center, its research partners, and others to start using the definition immediately. Once the 2030 Census data are released, the Center will be able to update its county, school district, and municipal definitions at the same time.

Visit the Center’s website for more information on the definitions and more details about Pennsylvania’s counties, school districts, and municipalities.

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Chairman's Message

As you know, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's yearly Research Grant Program identifies topics for study that are important to our rural communities. These topics range from rural people and communities to health and welfare concerns. The results of our sponsored research help to build a stronger base of information about certain issues that have not been previously examined. They also provide more details about other

issues that have been studied, but not from a rural perspective.

In this issue, we highlight the results of two of our most recent research projects: one that examined the career, educational, and residential aspirations of our rural youth, and another that analyzed crime trends at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The articles featured on Pages 1 and 6 describe the results of these projects and provide some interesting considerations for policymakers.

In this issue, we also highlight our revised rural municipal definition. Nearly 20 years ago, the Center issued its rural definition, which is based on population density. At that time, the Center conducted more than a half dozen statewide meetings and talked with more than 150 data users, grant writers, administrators, and local and state government officials to develop the definition, which is now being used by state and local government agencies and private and nonprofit organizations. It has also been codified in several pieces of legislation.

Following the release of the 2020 U.S. Census, the Center reviewed its definitions of rural and urban Pennsylvania counties, school districts and municipalities. The Center updated the county and school district definitions, but complications in the Census Bureau's release of urbanized areas, which will not be available until 2023, prevented the Center from updating the municipal definition. To remedy this, the Center convened an advisory committee to review and revise the municipal definition. Center staff presented the proposed revision to the Center's Board of Directors at its May meeting. The board approved the new rural municipal definition, which we think is easier to work with and understand, and that aligns more closely with the Center's county and school district definitions, which are solely based on population density.

This definition also will allow the Center, its research partners, and others to start using the definition immediately. And, when the 2030 Census data are released, the Center will be able to update its county, school district, and municipal definitions at the same time.

Thank you to Center Board Member Dr. Tim Kelsey, Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health Executive Director Lisa Davis, Penn State Data Center Director Sue Copella, and Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania Faculty Member Dr. George Pomeroy for their participation in the advisory committee and their work in helping to revise our rural municipal definition.

Senator Gene Yaw

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COVID-19 and Pennsylvania Crime Trends

The statewide homicide rate rose 21 percent from 2019 to 2020, an increase that was relatively large for the past few decades. However, the 2020 increase was not out of line with increases that occurred since 2014 and was exaggerated by a relatively large decrease in homicides in 2019.

These findings are according to research conducted in 2021 by Dr. David Yerger, Dr. Brandon Vick, Dr. Robert Orth, and Charles Gartside of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The research, *COVID-19 Effects on Pennsylvania Crime Trends: A Rural/Urban Comparison*, analyzed Pennsylvania homicides and protection from abuse orders before and at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research team used data on homicides from 2012 to 2020 and protection from abuse (PFA) orders from 2017 to 2020 from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to conduct the analysis.

The research found some rural-urban differences in homicide and protection from abuse (PFA) order rates, but the findings did not suggest large, long-term effects due to the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the state.

When compared to the three-year average from 2017-2019, the 2020 statewide homicide rate increased 13 percent – still large but in line with changes over the past decade. Additionally, the analysis showed that homicide increases in 2020 were specific to a population and location, rather than being widespread throughout the state: Black, male victims in Philadelphia County, murdered with a firearm, and most with no known relationship between the victim and offender. The trend analysis suggested that the growth in the homicide rate since 2014 (and accelerated in the latter half of 2020) was largely driven by increases in Philadelphia County, with relative stability in the rates for other urban and rural counties.

The research found that racial and gender disparities in the homicide rate were large and persistent throughout the research timeframe of 2012 to 2020, with the rate among the Black population being about 10-15 times higher than that of the white population. This large disparity existed across all rural/urban county groupings. However, it increased dramatically in Philadelphia County since 2017, with the homicide rate for the Black population reaching 67.4 per 100,000 in 2020 (compared to 5.7 for the white population in Philadelphia, 29.5 for the Black population in rural counties, and 27.8 for the Black population in other urban areas).

Similar disparities were found between male and female rates, with higher homicide rates for males in all counties (with a somewhat lower gap in rural counties); these disparities have been rising only in Philadelphia County since 2016. While it might have been exacerbated by COVID-19, the trend of rising homicides against Black males was established before the pandemic.

In terms of PFA orders, the research determined that courthouse closures during the onset of the pandemic in March and April 2020 led to a brief fall in final PFA orders, with urban counties seeing the largest decreases during those months. Temporary orders were processed at similar levels during these initial months of the pandemic.

The processing of final orders was back to pre-COVID levels by May and June 2020. The findings suggest that an increase of temporary orders came in the summer of 2020, but only in non-Philadelphia urban counties, possibly reflecting the need for those courts to catch up to the earlier decrease in orders. It should be noted that the lack of long-term changes in PFA totals and rates, compared



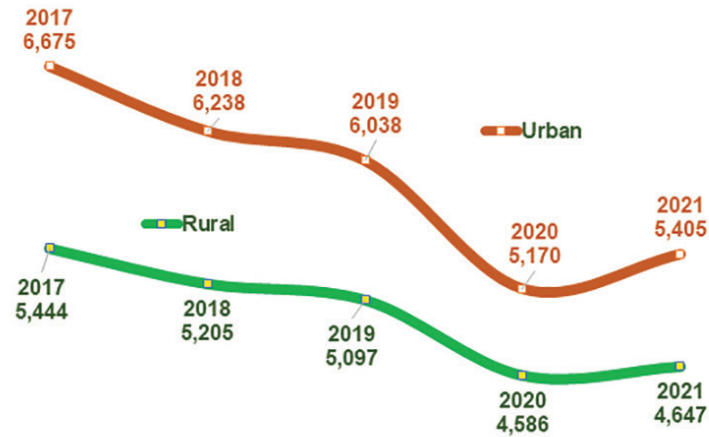
to the previous three years, is not evidence that the pandemic has had little or no effect on the prevalence or intensity of abuse. Caution should be used in drawing conclusions from this finding – an alternate hypothesis that the pandemic increased barriers for victims filing PFA orders should also be considered, as incidences of abuse can rise despite PFA orders not increasing.

Finally, the analysis on county-levels of COVID case and death rates found no statistical evidence of an association between county differences in COVID rates, homicide rates, and PFA prevalence rates. In other words, high COVID-rate counties were also not more likely to experience high levels of PFAs or homicides. The same analysis did suggest that indicators of economic distress, such as unemployment rates and the percentage of the population participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), are associated with PFA and homicide rates. County differences in unemployment and SNAP accounted for about one-third of the differences in homicides and PFA rates for most counties in Pennsylvania, as counties with higher unemployment rates and SNAP participation also experienced higher murder rates and PFA prevalence. This finding holds when considering either 2020 rates or average rates across the timeframes studied.

For the report, *COVID-19 Effects on Pennsylvania Crime Trends: A Rural/Urban Comparison*, visit the Center's website.

Rural SNAPSHOT

Total Crime Rates in Rural and Urban Pennsylvania per 100,000 Residents, 2017 to 2021
(Includes both Part I and Part II Crimes)

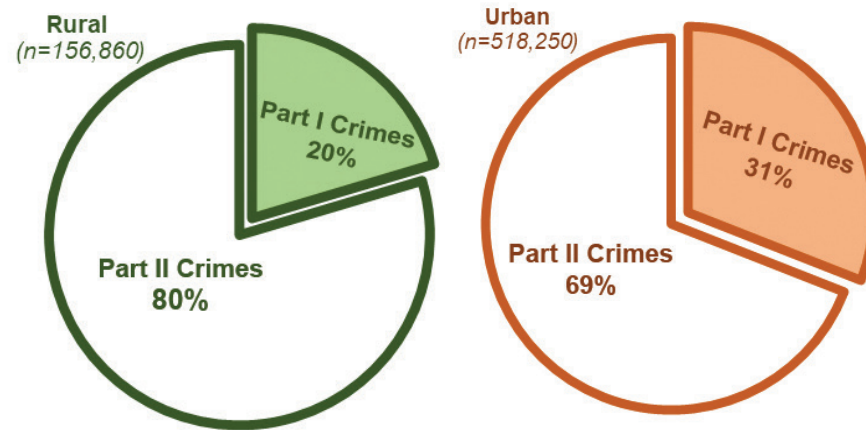


Number of Reported Crimes in Rural and Urban Pennsylvania per 100,000 Residents, 2021

- DUIs**
 - 404.6 = Rural
 - 253.0 = Urban
- Burglary**
 - 122.9 = Rural
 - 141.1 = Urban
- Weapons: Carrying, Possessing, etc.**
 - 45.3 = Rural
 - 96.1 = Urban
- Fraud**
 - 574.6 = Rural
 - 708.8 = Urban

Pennsylvania Crime Rates

Types of Crime in Rural and Urban Pennsylvania



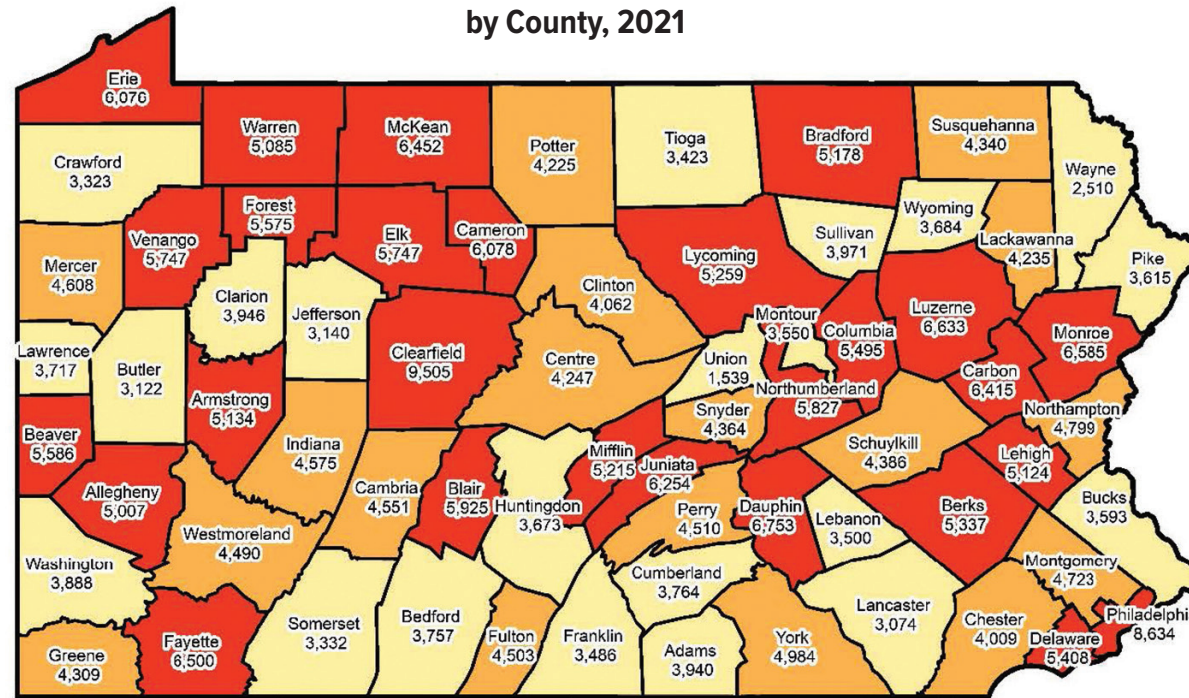
About the Snapshot:

This Snapshot used data from the Pennsylvania State Police on both Part I and Part II crimes. The definition of Part I and Part II crimes are defined in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program as follows:

Part I crimes include: Murder/nonnegligent homicide, manslaughter by negligence, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny – theft (excluding motor vehicles), motor vehicle theft, human trafficking, and arson.

Part II crimes include: Simple assault, forgery and counterfeiting, fraud, embezzlement, stolen property, vandalism, weapons (carrying, possessing), prostitution and commercialized vice, sex offenses (except forcible rape, prostitution, and commercialized vice), drug abuse violations, gambling, offenses against the family and children, driving under the influence, liquor laws, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, all other offenses (state or local laws not specifically identified as Part I or Part II offenses, except traffic violations), suspicion, curfew and loitering laws (people under age 18), and runaways (people under age 18).

Total Crime Rates (Part I and Part II Crimes) per 100,000 Residents, by County, 2021



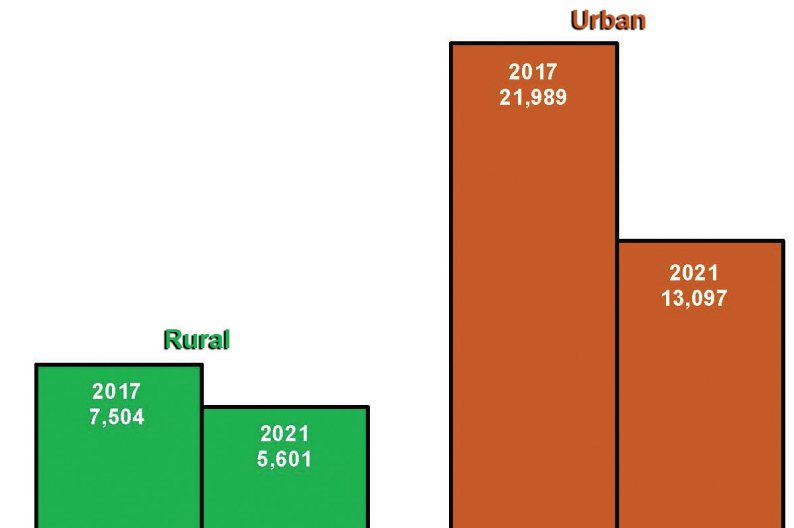
Statewide Total Crime Rate, 2021 = 5,208 per 100,000 Residents

- <4,000 Crimes per 100,000 Residents
- 4,000 to 4,999 Crimes per 100,000 Residents
- 5,000+ Crimes per 100,000 Residents

90 = Number of Rural Pennsylvania Murder Victims in 2021



Number of Marijuana-Related Crimes in Rural and Urban Pennsylvania, 2017 and 2021
(Includes Sale/Manufacturing and Possession)

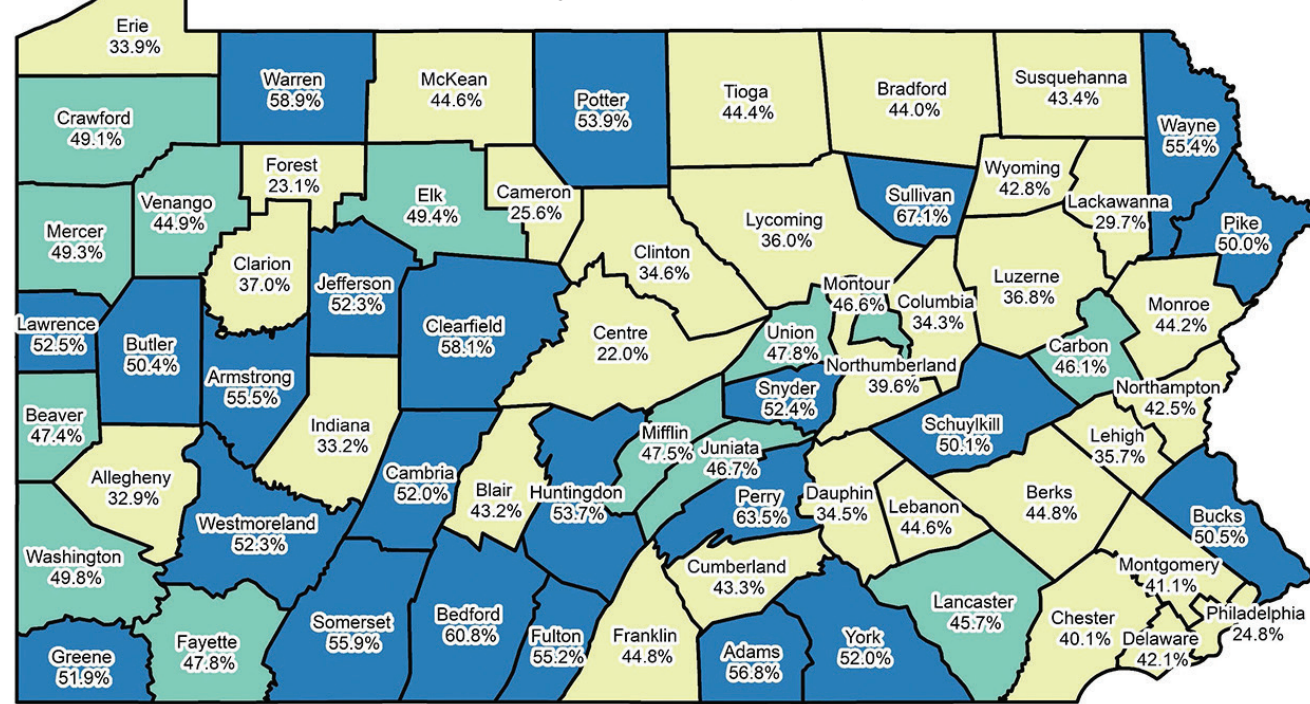


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Homeownership Rates Among Young Adults in Pennsylvania, 2020

Homeowners under 35 years old as a percent of all householders under 35 years old by county. Householders include both homeowners and renters.

Data source: 2020, 5-Year Average, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.



Pennsylvania Young Adult Homeownership Rate, 2020 = 38.9%

Legend: <45.0% (light green), 45.0% to 49.9% (medium green), 50.0%+ (blue)

Visit the Center's DataGram page at www.rural.pa.gov for more on young adult homeownership rates.

Rural Youth Survey (continued from Page 1)

pirations of rural Pennsylvania youth to learn how community, family, and peer factors might shape their aspirations, and to detail the opportunities and barriers that youth experience.

The project surveyed 9th and 11th grade students in four randomly selected rural Pennsylvania school districts and included interviews with one school principal in each of the four districts.

The results also indicated that students' educational goals were strongly associated with their relationships with their parents.

About one third of the students surveyed wanted to remain living in

rural Pennsylvania, however students with higher educational aspirations were more inclined to leave rural Pennsylvania.

In terms of career goals, the research found that health care was the top-reported career goal of today's rural youth.

However, youth largely aspired to careers that are gender-normative, such as females gravitating toward nursing and males toward manufacturing, which contributes to a gender divide in both educational and residential aspirations.

The data also revealed that many students and their families were nega-

tively impacted by COVID-19. Students reported being depressed and anxious and had significant concerns about academics, health, and their futures as a result of the pandemic.

According to the researchers, the study results suggest that today's rural youth need additional support from their schools and, indirectly, the Pennsylvania legislature to help close gender gaps and rural-urban gaps in youth aspirations and achievement.

Visit the Center's website for the report, *Rural Youth Survey: Trends and Developments in the Attitudes and Aspirations of Rural Pennsylvania Youth*.

JUST THE FACTS: LICENSED TO DRIVE

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), in 2021, there were 2.4 million licensed vehicle drivers in rural Pennsylvania. These drivers made up 86 percent of eligible drivers, or those 16 years old and older. In urban Pennsylvania, there were 6.6 million licensed drivers, or 84 percent of the eligible driving population.

From 2013 to 2021, there was a 2 percent decrease in the number of rural licensed drivers. This corresponded with a 2 percent drop in the rural population. In urban areas, there was a 4 percent increase in licensed drivers, which was matched with a correlating 3 percent increase in the urban population.

In Pennsylvania, the counties with the highest percent increase in both licensed drivers and population were Philadelphia, Lehigh, and Cumberland, each with a more than 6 percent increase, on average. Counties with the largest percent decline in licensed drivers and population were Cameron, Forest, and Greene, each with a more than 7 percent decrease, on average. Only 20 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties saw an increase in licensed drivers and population from 2013 to 2021.

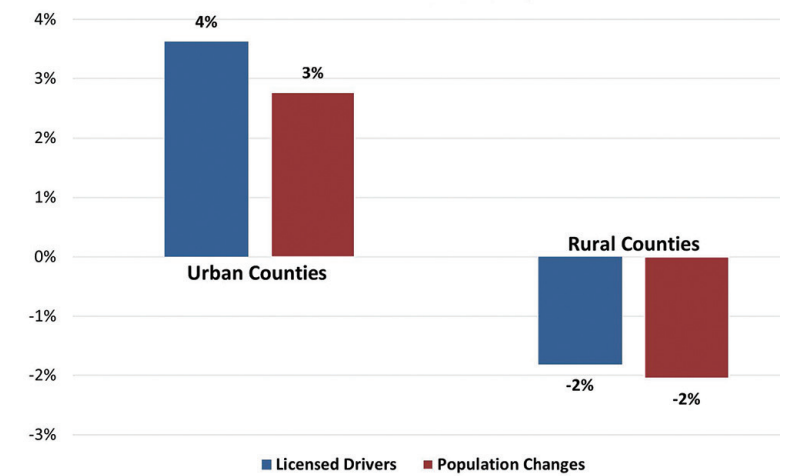
Using a different time period of 2016 to 2020, the Federal Highway Administration reported that there were 228.2 million licensed drivers in the U.S., or 87 percent of the eligible driver population. From 2016 to 2020, the number of licensed drivers in the U.S. increased 3 percent. Pennsylvania, however, saw a decrease in the number of licensed drivers, and ranked 5th nationwide in the total number of licensed drivers. The three states with the most registered licensed drivers were California, Texas, and Florida, which also are the most populated states in the country.

Despite the decline in the number of Pennsylvania licensed drivers, the number of registered vehicles in rural Pennsylvania increased 2 percent from 2017 to 2021, and the number of registered vehicles in urban Pennsylvania increased 4 percent during this period.

In 2021, there were 3 million registered vehicles in rural Pennsylvania, or an average of 1.2 vehicles per licensed driver. In urban Pennsylvania, the ratio was 1.1 vehicles per licensed driver.

Percent Change in Rural and Urban Pennsylvania Licensed Drivers and Population, 2013-2021

Data source: PennDOT.



Pennsylvania Adds 32 Preserved Farms to Farmland Preservation Program

In June, Pennsylvania added 32 new farms to the Farmland Preservation Program, which now includes a total of 6,076 farms and 613,884 acres in 58 counties. These farms are now forever protected from commercial, industrial, and residential development.

Pennsylvania continues to lead the nation in the number of preserved farms, and has invested more than \$1.6 billion since 1988 to protect the state's valuable farmland.

The 32 newly preserved farms are in Berks, Bucks, Centre, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Lycoming, Mifflin, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Perry, Schuylkill, Washington, and York counties.

By selling their land's development rights, landowners preserve their farms, protecting land from future development.

Pennsylvania partners with county, and sometimes local, governments and nonprofits to purchase development rights, ensuring a strong future for farming and food security.

More information about Pennsylvania's Farmland Preservation Program is at www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/farmland/Pages/default.aspx.



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Resources

Pennie Health Coverage for Pennsylvanians

Pennie is Pennsylvania's official health and dental coverage marketplace and the only place to get financial assistance to help lower the cost of coverage and care. Pennie enrollment typically runs from November through January 15th for all Pennsylvanians to shop for health insurance. After January 15th, folks who experience a Qualifying Life Event are still eligible to apply for financial assistance and shop for health insurance. For more information, visit the Pennie website at <https://pennie.com>.

Spotted Lanternfly Business Toolkit Available

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has a Spotted Lanternfly Business Toolkit to help businesses understand the threats of the Spotted Lanternfly, and to help slow its spread in the commonwealth. As Spotted Lanternfly season is here, it is critical that Pennsylvania businesses know their responsibilities when it comes to the quarantine and permitting. Visit the department's website at www.agriculture.pa.gov for more information.

PHMC and Historical Records Advisory Board Announce Grant Opportunity For Archival Records

Funding is available to historical records repositories including historical societies, libraries, universities, local governments, and school districts for collections care, such as surveying, inventorying, preserving, arranging, and describing historical records significant to Pennsylvania, as well as for records reformatting and equipment. Individual grants will be funded up to \$5,000 with no match required. Collaborative grants will allow two organizations to apply jointly for up to \$10,000 or three organizations to apply for up to \$15,000, no match required. Funding is provided by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). The Historical and Archival Records Care program is designed to improve the preservation of historically valuable records. Applicants are required to use the web-based electronic grant application process (eGrant). The application deadline is August 1. For grant program guidelines and eGrant application instructions, visit www.phmc.pa.gov/Preservation/Grants-Funding/Pages/Records-Care-Grants.aspx.