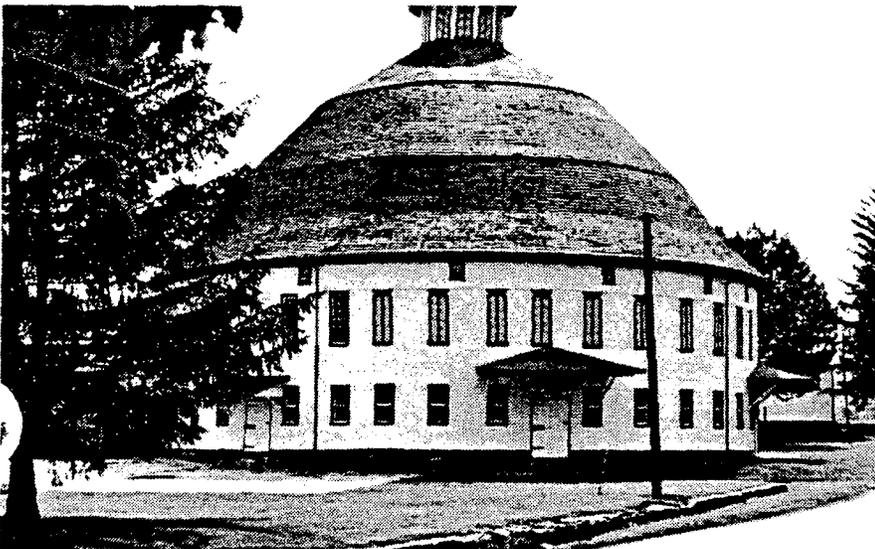
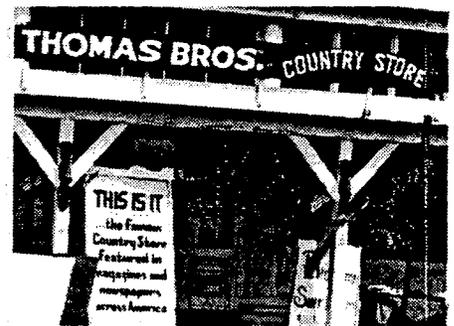
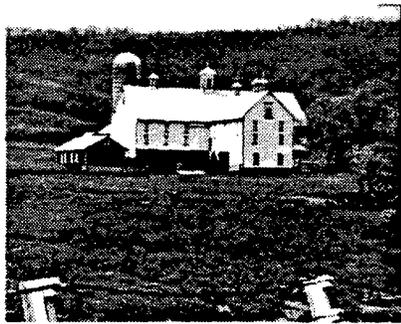


Chapter 2:

Existing Conditions

Adams County Comprehensive Plan



CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze existing conditions in Adams County. In particular, this chapter seeks to develop a clear understanding of the county's physical, demographic, social, and economic conditions, based on current circumstances and historical development. This analysis is intended to enable the County, local governments, and county residents to identify potential problems, to determine future needs, and to develop necessary policies and strategies to respond more effectively to future growth.

The material in Chapter Two is based on a series of background studies produced during the planning process. The chapter consists of nine sections in addition to this introduction: Existing Land Use; Pattern of Change; Natural Resources; Historic and Landscape Resources; Agricultural Resources; Population, Housing, and Employment; Circulation; Community Facilities; and Infrastructure and Environmental Systems.

The Land Use section provides a description of existing land use patterns and their implications for future development. The Pattern of Change section provides an analysis of recent development activity in the county. The Natural Resources section provides a summary of environmental factors which are capable of affecting the location and intensity of future development. Historic and Landscape Resources documents the cultural environment into which new development will be inserted. Agricultural Resources examines both the characteristics of Adams County farmland and the economy based upon it. The Population, Housing, and Employment section reviews selected socio-economic characteristics of county residents, employers and employees, and housing development. Included are population, housing, and employment projections. The Circulation section assesses existing conditions regarding traffic and circulation, while the Community Facilities section analyzes all public services and facilities serving Adams County. The Infrastructure and Environmental Systems section looks at the provision for water and sewer services, solid waste disposal, and public utilities.

SECTION 2: EXISTING LAND USE

Using information from the 1980 land use survey of the county by the Adams County Office of Planning and Development, recent aerial photography, relevant planning documents, and focused field reconnaissance, a generalized full-color map of current land use in the county has been constructed (Figure 2.2.1). The inventory included major categories of non-urban uses (woodlands, orchards, and open land) as well as the traditional full range of urban land uses.

The purpose of the land use survey is to assess the pattern and intensity of utilization of land in Adams County. Based on this assessment, it is possible to evaluate the compatibility of existing uses, the extent of land consumption, and to predict the direction that future development may be expected to take in light of existing conditions. The survey also makes apparent the remaining amount and location of land available for future development. Finally, through a comparison with the 1969 land use survey, an identification of changes in land use since the first Adams County Comprehensive Plan was completed may be made.

The basic configuration of land uses in Adams County has its roots in the original settlement patterns, with agriculture still the predominant land use activity. Gettysburg, strategically located at the junction of several early routes through the region, became the county center of commercial activity. A steadily evolving road network gradually made most of Adams County accessible, with smaller settlements such as Biglerville and New Oxford developing at significant road crossings. The rugged terrain in the western and northwestern parts of the county served to discourage development there and, despite the creation of a mat-like road grid covering most of the county, access to some mountainous areas remains limited.

The twentieth-century arrival of the automobile and improved roads began to permit non-farm jobholders to locate residences some distance away from employment centers, and after World War II the rural areas began to challenge urban centers as locations of choice for residential development. At the same time, the traditional urban cores began to be rivaled as business and service centers by commercial development at the edges of towns. These trends led to strip residential development along rural roads and strip commercial activity along major highways.

Most areas of Adams County are nonurbanized, consisting of lands under cultivation, open fields, orchards, woodlands, surface water bodies, and wetlands. Agricultural land interspersed with small wooded areas prevails over much of the county. Orchards are widespread in the foothills north of Fairfield and extensive woodlands cover the mountains. Surface waters and wetlands are mainly confined to stream valleys.

Urban land uses are concentrated in the boroughs and along major roads. Residential uses predominate, comprising the major land use in the boroughs and villages as well as along roadways. Within the boroughs a mix of housing types and densities exists, including single-

family detached dwellings, semi-detached (twin) homes, duplexes, rowhouses and some apartment buildings. Boroughs tend to exhibit a mixed-use character at their hubs, with close intermingling of residential, shopping, and employment facilities. Outside the incorporated places, dwelling units are almost exclusively of the single-family detached type, either conventional or mobile home units. Development densities are low in the outlying areas, with the exception of occasional subdivisions and mobile home parks.

Recently, large-scale (100 units or more) residential developments have emerged on the landscape. These are especially evident in eastern Adams County, bordering McSherrystown and New Oxford.

The second-home ventures of the 1960s and 1970s (Lake Heritage, Lake Meade, and Charnita) have made a significant impact on the landscape of Adams County. Apart from their flooding of stream valleys to create artificial lakes (in the case of Lake Heritage and Lake Meade), these developments have also evolved into relatively dense agglomerations of housing units, now mostly occupied as year-round permanent residences.

Commercial activity predominates at the cores of the major incorporated places, alongside major highways which serve these boroughs, and frequently between built-up areas on US Route 30 and on PA Route 34 north of Gettysburg.

Industrial land uses are generally close to the urban places, but more remote locations are also found. Planned business parks and large industrial districts are rare - except for a small industrial park at Cross Keys and development in Conewago Township's zoned districts, major manufacturing establishments tend to be dispersed. Government and institutional uses exhibit a similar pattern, with a concentration of these uses in Gettysburg. Individual school and church sites are scattered throughout the county.

Expansion of the broiler industry over the last two decades has spawned growth in poultry-related structures on Adams County farmsteads, particularly in the eastern half of the county. Food processing plants are significant uses in and near the orchards area.