

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# Earth Conservancy – South Valley Corridor Lands

## Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

### Property Fact Sheet



#### **Property & Size Description:**

Earth Conservancy (EC) lands along the South Valley Parkway Corridor are located in the City of Nanticoke, Newport and Hanover Townships, all within in the Wyoming Valley of Luzerne County. The Wyoming Valley runs in a northeast to southwest direction along the Susquehanna River, through Wilkes-Barre City to the City of Nanticoke. EC's 1,534 acres are in the southwestern section of the Valley in the vicinity of Luzerne County Community College. The workshop will focus on four EC Parcels ranging in size from 240 acres to 574 acres with a total acreage of 1,534 acres. Of this total, 350 acres are under development, 190 acres are available for development, and 994 acres will be available beginning in 2010.

All the parcels are accessible by Interstate 81 and State Route 29, a regional parkway that cuts across the Valley and connects I-81 in the south with SR-11 in the north. A new South Valley Parkway will bisect SR-29, providing additional access to the developable lands. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), Bureau of Abandoned Mineland Reclamation (BAMR), EC and other partners are currently investing in the reclamation of the mine scarred lands to promote reutilization.

#### **MARKET DATA**

*The Joint Urban Studies Center of Wilkes-Barre University (JUSC) has completed extensive research on the region, including much of the data and trends included in a typical economic and demographic analysis. The information is available in the 2008 Lackawanna and Luzerne County Indicators Report. In addition, the 2007 Joint Urban Studies Center report entitled The Rise of Luzerne County: An Examination of the Origin and Future Effects of Recent Population Shifts includes additional demographic information.*

#### **Population and Workforce:**

Nanticoke and the South Valley Parkway Corridor area are part of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (population of 624,776 in 2000). According to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, the MSA has a civilian labor force of 284,500 people.

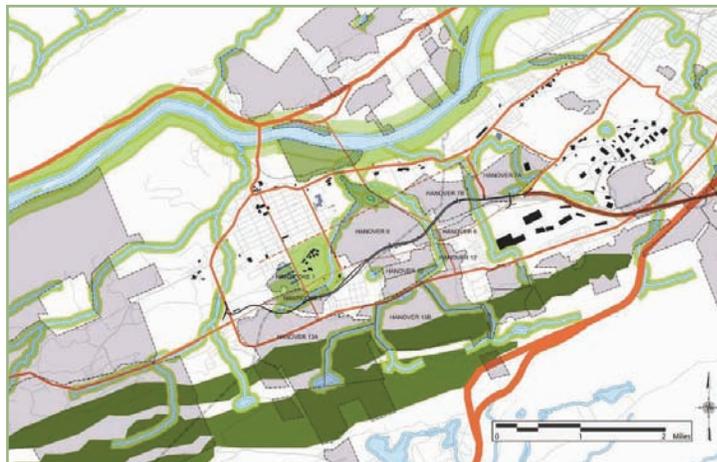
The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the 2006 population of Luzerne County at 313,200. Luzerne County experienced slight population increases from 2004 to 2005 and again from 2005 to 2006 after decades of decline.

Households in Luzerne County earning \$50,000 - \$75,000 annual represent 19.1% of the households, an increase of 1.5% since 2000. Approximately 9.7% of the households earn less than \$10,000 per year, while 9.2% of the households earned over \$100,000 per year.

**Economy and Business:**

The Scranton/Wilkes Barre/Hazleton area has gained recognition over the last decade as a strategic, affordable pathway to the economic centers of the United States and Canada. A significant amount of new development has occurred in the past decade, especially in the warehouse distribution market.

According to the 2007 JUSC Report, Luzerne County saw employment increases in 10 out of 19 industry sectors. The greatest increases from 2005 to 2006 occurred in healthcare, construction, arts, entertainment and recreation.



Earth Conservancy land in the South Valley Corridor.

**Transportation:**

The region is heavily influenced by the Interstate system of roads. The Scranton/Wilkes Barre/Hazleton area has gained recognition over the last decade as a strategic, affordable pathway to the economic centers of the United States and Canada. The convergence of Interstates 81, 80, 84, 78, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike create direct access to major cities in the United States. The Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport is about 25 miles north.

Existing railways provide additional linkages to major economic centers. Significant money has been spent over the past several years upgrading freight lines for expansion of commercial development and specific end users.

The Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton market has not only been recognized for its strong transportation links and active recreation, but also its affordable real estate, abundant workforce and its quality of life.



**Revitalization Planning:**

A regional analysis for the EC lands in the Wilkes-Barre region was sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with the purpose of helping EC better understand development trends, opportunities, and constraints to promote reuse planning for its mine-scarred lands. The intention of the study was to provide general analysis of factors that impact the area as a whole and provide an overall framework for the future development of the EC lands. The market analysis results indicate that the area has recently grown in population and has many local assets on which to build. The proximity of natural resources, numerous colleges, and a robust transportation network provide a solid framework on which mixed-use development has the potential to thrive.

Based on the market analysis results, regional development trends, historic trends of the region and to capitalize on existing transportation corridors, town networks, as well as smart growth features that promote linking development with multi-modal transportation options, several reuse concepts have been prepared for EC's target development area. The reuse concepts rely on two primary development components: Village Centers and the Thinkbelt.

EC land, in combination with adjacent properties, provides the opportunity to develop as many as five Village Centers, with a development density similar to that of Nanticoke. Complimenting the compact Village Centers, the reuse concepts propose the development of a Thinkbelt. The Thinkbelt will operate as a regional connector and an area in which green redevelopment concepts – such as integrating emerging stormwater practices, renewable energy development, and greenspace – and economic development strategies emerging from local universities can be focused. Central to the proposed reuse concepts is Luzerne County Community College, which can serve as a physical connection between Nanticoke, the Thinkbelt, and the Village Centers developed across EC's lands (see the image of the Ridge Road Scenario as an example).



*Village Centers are a core development component of the Earth Conservancy proposed land use plans.*



*The Thinkbelt is a core development component of the Earth Conservancy proposed land use plans.*

The Preliminary Draft Reuse Analysis and Land Use Framework report developed for the EC lands describes these development concepts in more detail, along with considerations for phasing and design features. Specific focus is given to mixed-use development and residential and commercial areas. All aspects of the framework strive to create a sense of place which would encourage development and use of the locations. The development of this framework for the EC lands in the South Valley Corridor and surrounding areas will help to achieve goals and objectives set forth by the development committee for EC as well as provide a tool for marketing the availability of the site to future developers and investors.



*Pulling it all together: the Ridge Road Scenario.*

EC and its project partners are excited about the plans for the region moving forward and the opportunities this framework present for economic development and community improvement to their already growing region.

To view a video of the project opportunity and the regions many benefits, please visit <http://www.vitanuova.net/ec/>.

The Draft Final Reuse Analysis and Land Use Framework will be available at the end of 2008. If you would like to receive a copy, please e-mail [mine-scarredlands@sra.com](mailto:mine-scarredlands@sra.com).