

In The News



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No sign of slowing in Cumberland, commonwealth's fastest-growing county

April 26, 2017 • By Jason Scott

Residential developers are not ready to start pumping the brakes in Cumberland County, the commonwealth's fastest-growing county this decade.

County planners said 2,208 residential units were proposed last year, the most in the county since 2007. Apartments and townhouses represented about 75 percent of the total, according to the county planning department's [annual report](#).

Development proposals are not a guarantee of building permits for an actual house or apartment, but it is a good sign that the pipeline is strong and that building activity should remain steady for awhile.

There were nearly 1,100 residential building permits issued across Cumberland County last year, according to the county's annual report. That was up from 922 in 2015. The county has averaged about 1,000 permits per year for the last five years.

County planning director Kirk Stoner said Cumberland County needs about 1,000 new dwelling units per year to support its 1 percent annual population growth. The U.S. Census Bureau said Cumberland County's population has [risen 5.6 percent since 2010](#) with an estimated 248,506 people living there as of July 1, 2016.

Since 2000, 80 percent of the proposed residential units and 76 percent of the residential permits in the county have fallen in eight municipalities.

Hampden Township has been No. 1 for proposed units, while Silver Spring Township has been the leader for permits over that span.

Last year, Hampden Township topped the list for most permits with 255. Silver Spring Township finished with 224. Both municipalities are part of the [popular Cumberland Valley School District](#).

The other six municipalities leading the way for residential development in the county include the following townships: Upper Allen, Lower Allen, Southampton, South Middleton, North Middleton and East Pennsboro.

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Trending so far this year

Through April 20, Stoner said the county has seen a drop in proposals this year compared with last year's pace.

He cited 272 proposed single-family lots compared with 814 a year ago. Development plans overall were quick to surface in 2016, he said.

"Townhouses and multifamily units really carried the ball (last year)," he said. "Will we have the population growth to sustain it? We'll see."

A lot of the residential building activity seen over the last decade in the county can be traced to a boom in proposals before the recession, he said, namely from 2005 to 2007.

Residential proposals totaled 3,182 units in 2005, 2,647 in 2006 and 2,411 in 2007, according to county planning data.

By comparison, proposed units fell to 1,073 in 2008 and bottomed out at 502 units in 2012 before starting to rebound.