

# Upper Merion Township

## Summary of Population, Housing, and Employment Projections

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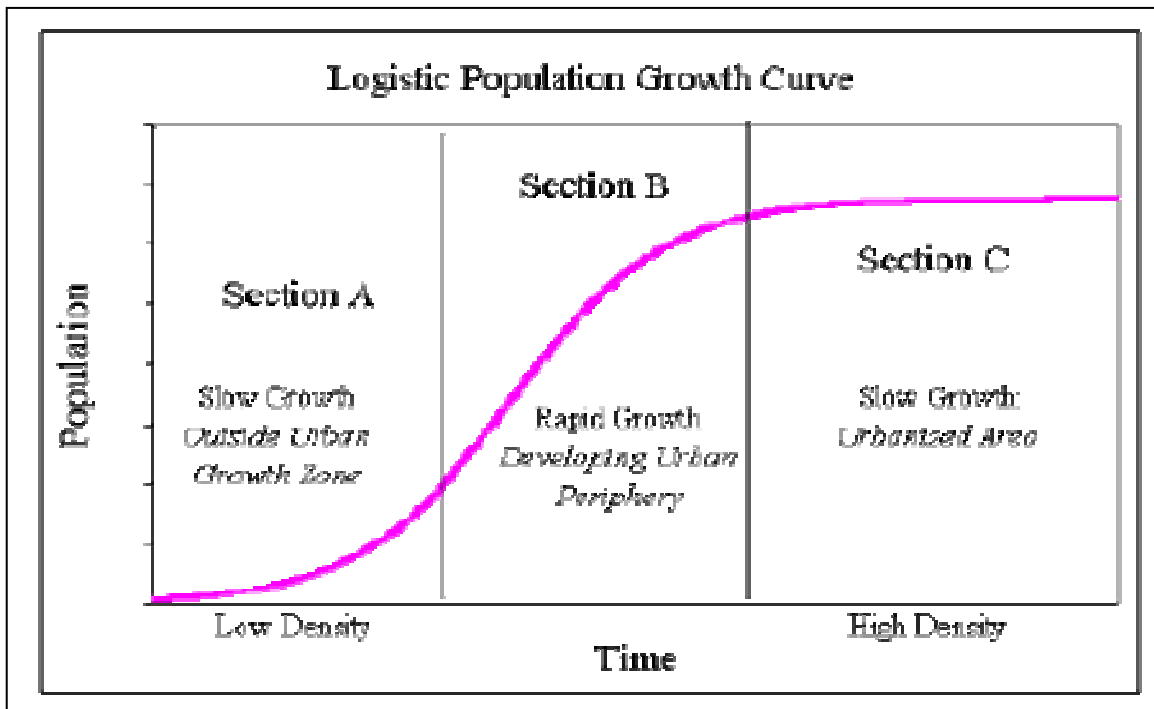
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## The Growth Pattern of American Communities

Many communities in the United States have grown to a point where they no longer are considered a small rural community. History has demonstrated that any community that has experienced this change typically experiences three different phases. The first phase (Section A in the chart below) is characterized by slow growth, low density, and is usually an agriculturally-oriented community. The second phase of growth only happens when an event “sparks” a population and development boom in the community. Many feel that the “spark” in Upper Merion was the construction of the Pennsylvania Turnpike and the Schuylkill Expressway. The second phase of growth (Section B) is characterized by a rapid growth rate, increasing densities, and a diversification in local economy. This growth typically continues for several years until limited resources, such as raw land, become scarce. This rapid growth continues until the “capacity” of that community is filled, and then the growth levels off. The community then passes into the third phase (Section C). This phase is characterized, once again, by slow growth, but now the community has higher densities, large infrastructure investments, and usually little or no agricultural orientation. From this point, communities typically remain relatively stable or can actually begin to decline in population and investment.

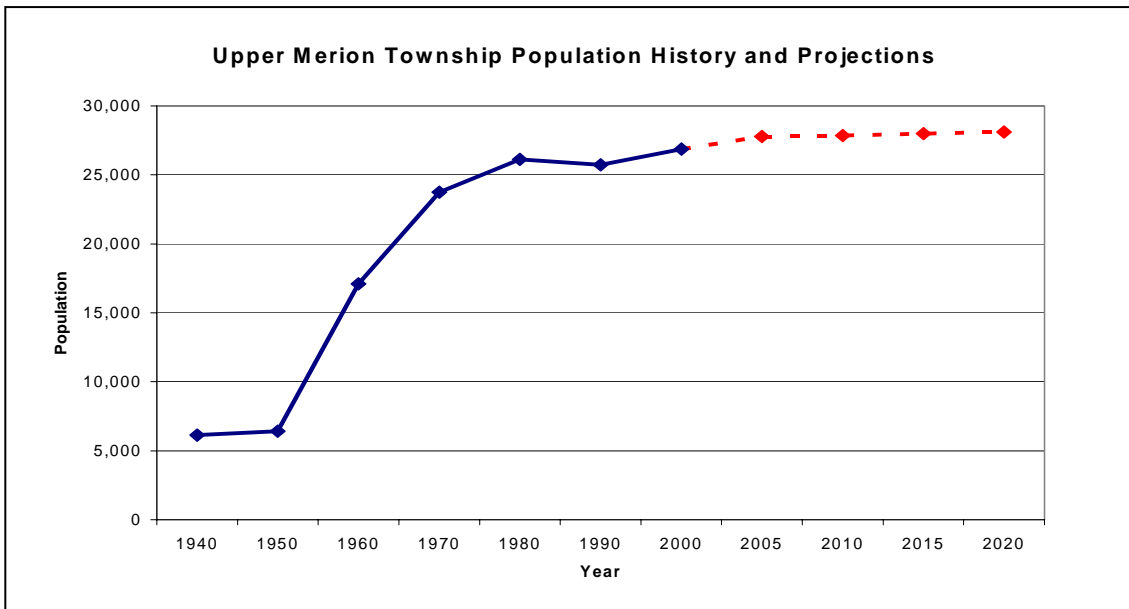
Each community experiences this pattern at different times in history. Some communities may never pass into the second phase, while others have been in the third phase for several decades or centuries. Upper Merion Township can be characterized as being somewhere between Section B and Section C on the graph below.



### Population Projections Summary

Since 1980, population growth has begun to level off to a more manageable rate. From 1950 to 1980 the township population boomed, gaining about 650 new residents per year on average. Since 1980, the township has been gaining only about 35 new residents per year on average. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has taken into account national, regional, and local trends in developing the latest projections for the township. Current projections suggest that the population will continue to grow at a slow and steady pace through the year 2020. The township is expected to grow by approximately 1,250 residents by 2020. This growth amounts to approximately 65 new residents per year on average. Of course several factors will determine the true amount of growth, including zoning changes, local housing markets, and redevelopment trends. *If some of the larger undeveloped tracts in the township are re-zoned to residential, the number of new residents could grow to over 3,000, thereby pushing the township population over the 30,000 mark.*

Upper Merion Township Population Projections					
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
<b>Population</b>	26,863	27,780	27,860	27,990	28,120
<b>5-yr %</b>		3.4%	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%
<b>5-yr. Growth</b>		917	80	130	130
<b>Avg. Annual %</b>		0.7%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
<b>Avg. Annual Growth</b>		183	16	26	26

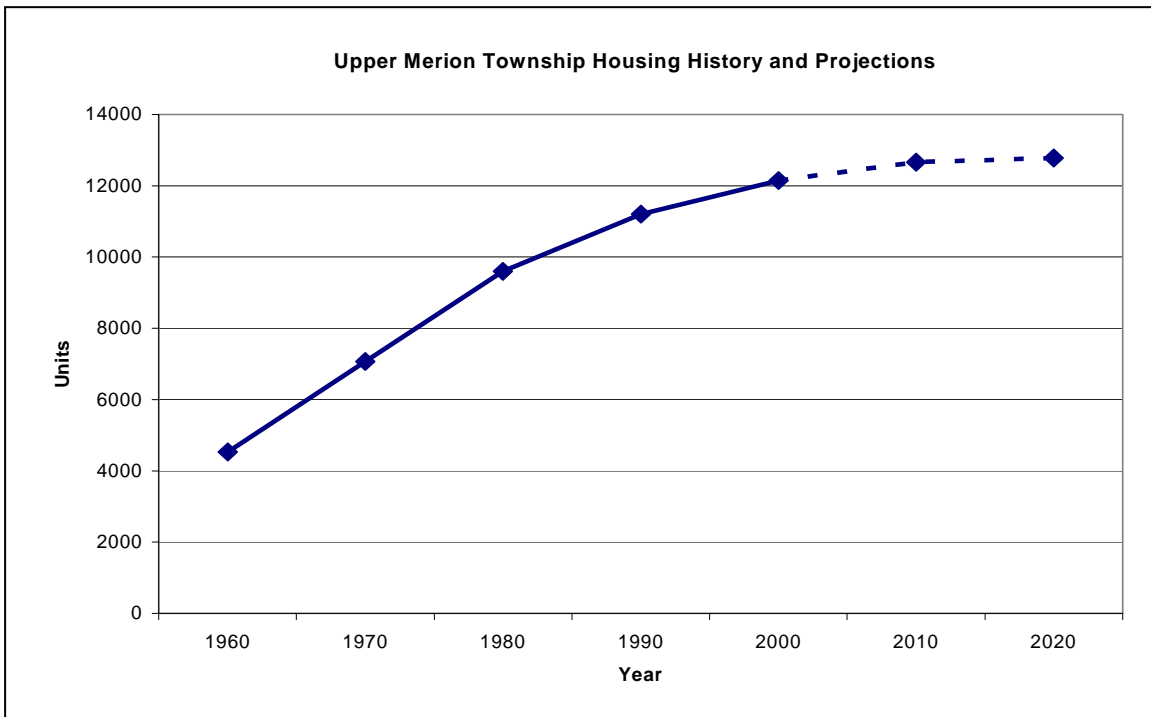


Sources: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
U.S. Census

### Housing Projections Summary

Much like the population, housing development boomed during the 1960's and 70's. From 1960 to 1980, housing in the township grew at an annual average rate of 250 new housing units per year. Since 1980, housing has been growing at an annual average rate of 130 new housing units per year. Given DVRPC's population projections, along with current land availability conditions, and development trends, the township can expect to gain about 630 new housing units by the year 2020. This growth amounts to about 32 new housing units per year on average. Much like the population projections, the true amount of new housing units will depend on zoning changes, market conditions, and redevelopment trends. There has been some discussion about rezoning certain properties in the township to allow residential development. *If some of the larger parcels are rezoned, the number of new housing units could reach as much as 1,500 by the year 2020, assuming the housing market supports the new supply.* This would amount to about 75 new housing units per year.

Upper Merion Township Housing Projections					
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Housing Units	12,151	12,627	12,664	12,723	12,782
5-yr Growth %		3.9%	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%
5-yr Growth		476	36	59	59
Avg. Annual %		0.8%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Avg. Annual Growth		95	7	12	12

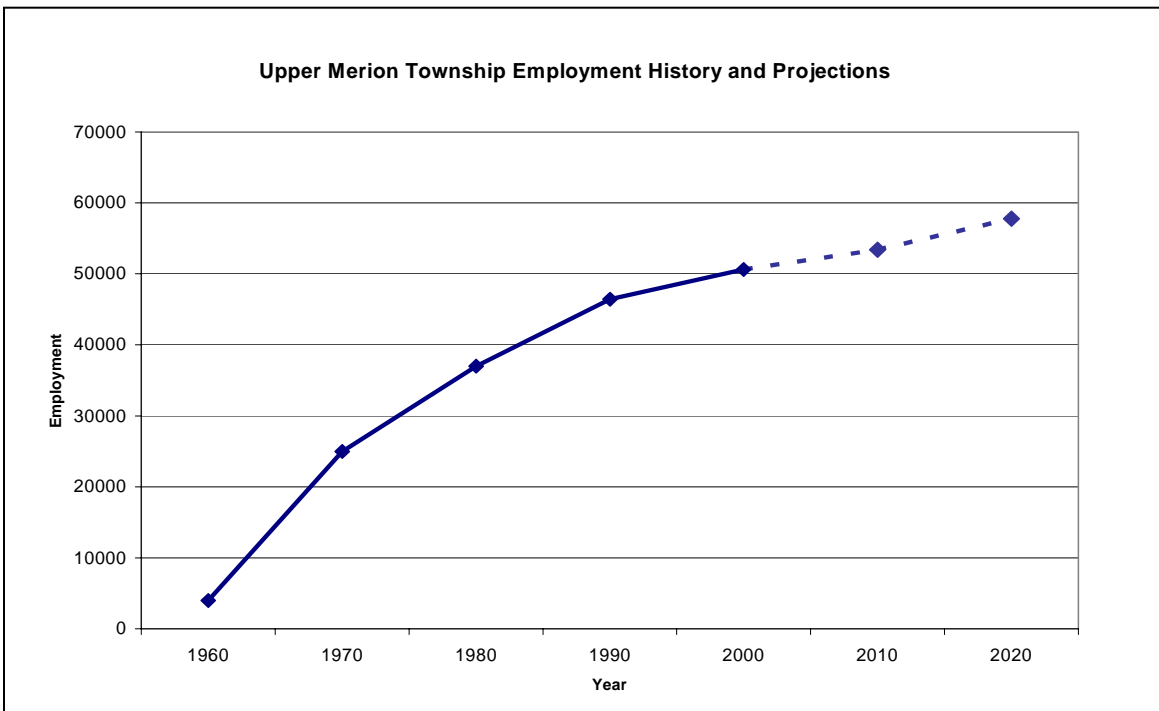


Source: U.S. Census

### Employment Projections Summary

Since 1960 the number jobs in Upper Merion Township have skyrocketed from 4,000 jobs to over 50,000 today. Upper Merion has become a major employment center for the region with almost two jobs for every one resident. Like the population and housing projections, employment is expected to grow at an overall slower rate than the previous three decades. However, unlike the population and housing projections, employment growth is not expected to flatten out in the foreseeable future. The King of Prussia area is expected to continue to be a favorable location for jobs as the suburban population in the region continues to grow. The DVRPC's projections show an increase of 7,200 new jobs by the year 2020. This amounts to an annual average of 360 more jobs each year in the township. As mentioned in the population and housing summaries, zoning changes and market conditions will determine the true growth. *If certain large parcels in the township are rezoned to residential, as has been discussed in recent times, then the number of new jobs would be minimized.*

Upper Merion Township Employment Projections					
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Employment	50,600	52,500	53,400	56,000	57,800
5-yr Growth%		3.8%	1.7%	4.9%	3.2%
5-yr. Growth		1,900	900	2,600	1,800
Avg. Annual Growth %		0.8%	0.3%	1.0%	0.6%
Avg. Annual Growth		380	180	520	360

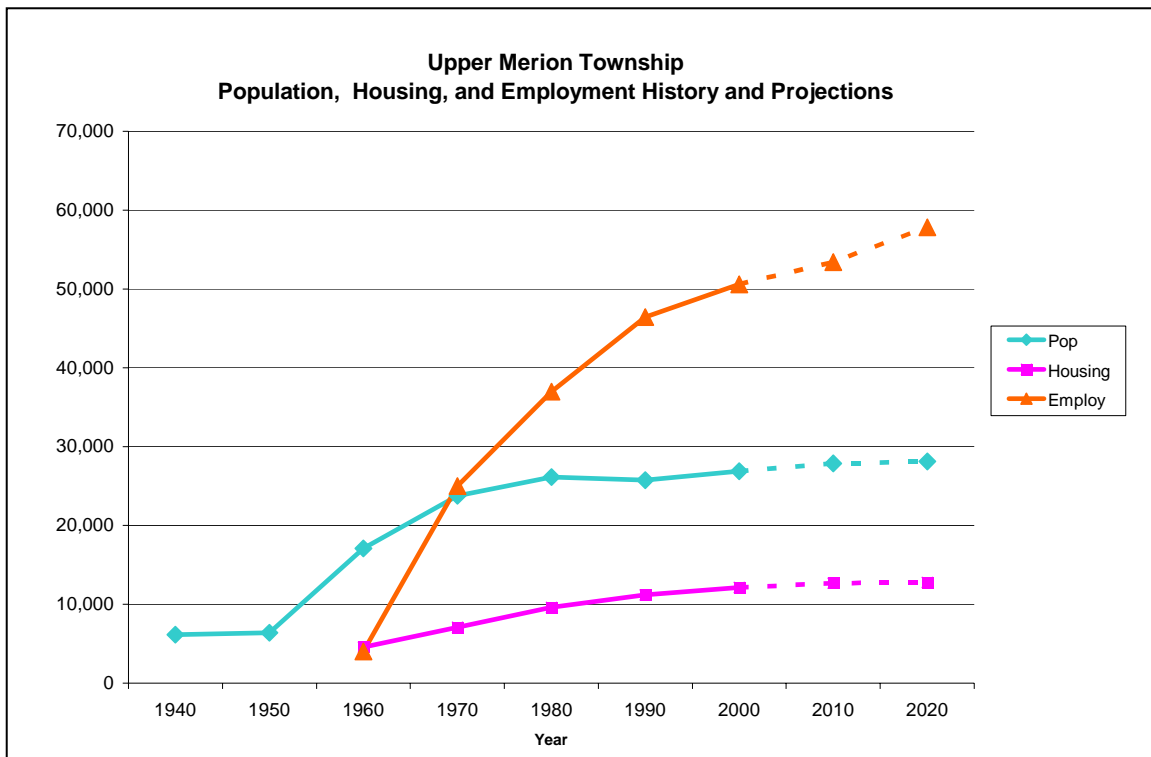


Sources: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
U.S. Census



## Conclusion

By assessing township land use data, along with projections and other information from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and the U.S. Census, we can derive a comfortable estimate of what to expect for the next several years. Historic demographic data and future projections indicate that Upper Merion Township is beginning to pass from a “developing, high-growth” community to a “developed, slow growth” community. Pending future zoning changes, population and housing growth in the township is expected to level off considerably, thereby indicating that it is approaching its peak population. Due to its continued ideal location and accessibility, however, the township is expected to host a substantial number of new jobs in the next two decades. Assuming the township maintains its competitive location and accessibility, the data indicates that the amount of employment in the township has yet to peak. *Again, market and other forces beyond the control of the township will be major determinants of the reality of these projections, but the current indicators give us a starting point to form a position on land use and budgetary policies, as well as other major decisions for the future of the township.*



Sources: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
U.S. Census