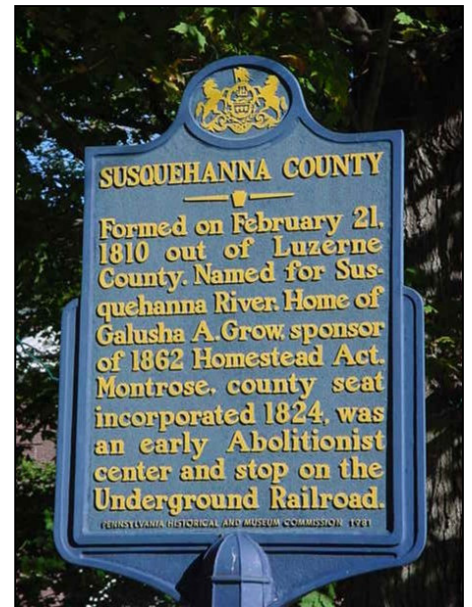




# Susquehanna County Comprehensive Development Plan Update

Adopted November 12, 2003



# Susquehanna County Comprehensive Development Plan Update

Prepared by

The Susquehanna County  
Board of Commissioners

The Susquehanna County  
Planning Commission

The Susquehanna County  
Department of Planning and Development

Community Planning  
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## I. Introduction and Overview

### Questions for the Future

- ♣ *Which internal and external forces will affect the way Susquehanna County develops in the coming decade?*
- ♣ *What growth and development scenarios are probable?*
- ♣ *Which forces provide the largest threats, greatest opportunities, and widest range of choices?*
- ♣ *What tools will be needed, or actions taken, or plans developed to direct these forces?*
- ♣ *How can we prepare for and accept, alter, embrace, manage or cause certain events and developments?*
- ♣ *Where are our efforts needed?*
- ♣ *Will local governments see the value of zoning ordinances and growth management tools if fewer people will be moving to the County?*
- ♣ *Will new housing and infrastructure be our number one concern or is health care for the elderly more important?*
- ♣ *Will our County become a bedroom community with most of our workers living here and working elsewhere or will our economy grow with expansions of existing businesses and development of new businesses?*
- ♣ *How does economic development relate to the overall condition - social and environmental - of the County?*

These questions and many more must be addressed so that we, the residents of Susquehanna County, are prepared to meet the challenges we will certainly face. While many points of view and concerns will be identified, County residents, community organizations, businessmen, elected and appointed officials and public agencies and employees must all work together to find a balance for the growth and development of our community.



*Typical Susquehanna County Farm*

### Planning Needs

In July 1992 the Susquehanna County Commissioners adopted the *Susquehanna County Comprehensive Development Plan*, with the research leading to the development of the plan beginning in 1989. The plan and the information leading to its adoption are now over ten years old, including the surveys of public opinions that formed the basis for many of the goals and objectives outlined in the 1992 *Comprehensive Plan*.

Ten years ago the County was experiencing an increase in land subdivision and anticipated substantial population increases. The reopening and expansion of a large landfill was proposed as well as statewide discussions of siting a low-level radioactive waste site somewhere in Pennsylvania, with Susquehanna County in consideration. The main issue was, understandably, environmental protection. Many changes have occurred in the County and surrounding areas in the past decade. Broome County, New York, an important source of employment for many of our residents, suffered a downturn in their economy. The re-opening of the landfill was defeated. Siting of a low-level radioactive waste site in Pennsylvania was abandoned (at least for now). Land is still being subdivided but is not as rapidly as had been expected. Young people are leaving the area in search of employment. Wages continue to lag behind state averages. Crime is on the rise. The departments of county government with the

greatest increase in demand for services, likely a result of fewer good paying jobs and consequently a lower standard of living, are Services for Children and Youth, Juvenile Probation, and Domestic Relations. Given this change in circumstances, there appears to be a shift in public opinion in the years since the adoption of the 1992 *Comprehensive Plan*. While protection of the environment remains an important issue and must be an integral part of continued planning and growth management, economic development and planned growth have become critical concerns.

This *Update* of the *Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan* was undertaken by the Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission in recognition of four principal critical community needs:

- ♣ The need to identify and inventory the changes which have taken place in the County over the past decade;
- ♣ The need to establish a framework for the conservation of the County's character, agricultural and natural resource economy, open land, and environment while concurrently providing for sustainable growth and development;
- ♣ The need to promote reasonable and consistent land use management effected by subdivision and land development regulations and local municipal zoning; and,
- ♣ The need to organize for the most efficient administration of County government and the delivery of community facilities and services.

### **Planning Perspective**

The members of the Susquehanna County Planning Commission are proactive in their approach to guiding the future development of Susquehanna County. The Planning Commission recognizes the need to consider different scenarios and plan accordingly, now, rather than later, when it may be too late. In updating the *Comprehensive Plan* the Commission considered all factors, not merely those which are traditionally considered – the changes in recent years such as an increase in telecommuting, global economies, lifelong education, changes in the way we do business and how we make our living; and the relationships

between land use, economic development, education, social health, transportation, etc.

The Planning Commission recognizes the need to develop plans that are dynamic, based on the probabilities of certain events, trends, and forces taking place, which will affect the County. The County can take many directions in planning for the future, but which way will best provide us with the tools and readiness for what actually may occur?

The 1997 public opinion survey taken by the County Planning Commission and the County's *Vision 2020* effort identified economic development as one of two top priorities. In response to this Susquehanna County recently initiated a *let's do something* approach to its economic future. The County has established its own Department of Economic Development that coordinates with other economic development groups, Team PA (Pennsylvania), Penn State Cooperative Extension, the County Chamber of Commerce, and the Department of Planning and Development. As part of this coordinated effort the Planning Commission must study and prepare for events which may be brought about by internal forces (e.g., successes of the Economic Development Office) as well as continuing to prepare for the affects of external forces.

The Commission recognizes that a county planning commission has limited responsibility with matters that are either controlled by others (such as local municipalities and school districts) or which may not fall into a *land-use and physical development* category. Nevertheless, the County can play a role of coordination for growth and development issues and actions, and the County does directly provide many community and social services. The Planning Commission also recognizes the holistic nature of *countywide planning* – a change in one element of a community will likely affect another element. One cannot discuss economic development without addressing transportation. Economic development and transportation affect land use patterns, and vice versa. Continued environmental quality is critical, yet sensible economic development is also vital to the overall quality of life in the County. A decline in economic health can result in significantly

increased demand for social services. Many County residents now recognize that land use decisions have a greater influence on a community than realized in the past.

Partnerships developed during the process of updating the *Comprehensive Plan* must continue following adoption of the *Plan*. In bringing together the various community groups and organizations and identifying important issues in our County many participants have realized, and hopefully will remember, their relation to the whole. *Vision 2020* brought together a greater number of groups than ever before in Susquehanna County. It was this effort that brought to light the relationships between the physical development of the County and the social ramifications. A partnership between eleven municipalities in the northern and northwest section of the County, together with Cornell University, demonstrated that municipalities can plan for their future cooperatively. Discussions about future facility and service needs with County department heads, highlighted the importance of working together for the delivery of County services.

The result of these efforts is an updated *County Comprehensive Plan*, a plan for the future of your County as it relates to land use, physical development, community facilities and social services. More than that, though, the *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes the interrelationships between land use, transportation, and community facilities and areas of concern such as economic development, education and social well-being.

Whether it is through the promotion of local municipal land use management ordinances, the identification of recommended growth and conservation areas or technical assistance, the Susquehanna County Planning Commission, through this *Comprehensive Plan*, intends to work with County residents, community organizations, businessmen, local elected and appointed officials, and County agencies and employees to guide the County toward reaching its vision of the future.

### **Planning Process**

County and local municipal planning in the Commonwealth is governed by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and this *Comprehensive Plan Update* was prepared and adopted in accord with Planning Code requirements under the direction of the

County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is comprised of nine, unpaid interested residents appointed by the Board of Commissioners.

Citizen participation included a series of community meetings, and the Planning Commission meeting and Supervisors hearing required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code prior to the adoption of the *Plan*. In addition, the results of the 1997 countywide resident survey and *Vision 2020*, served as the foundation for much of the *Plan*.

The planning process involved the collection and analysis of information on a wide range of community characteristics and concerns aimed at identifying planning implications. The background data in the 1992 *Comprehensive Plan* was used as much as possible, particularly the information on natural features. Compilation of new dated focused on the changes, which occurred since 1992. This data, integrated in the plan sections, included:

- ♣ *Community Character and Development History*
- ♣ *Growth and Development, and Existing Land Use*
- ♣ *Natural Features, Land Suitability for Development and Development Concerns*
- ♣ *Demographics and Economic Base*
- ♣ *Financial Analysis*
- ♣ *County Community Facilities and Services*
- ♣ *Highways and Transportation*
- ♣ *Planning and Development in the Region and Contiguous Municipalities*

The *Plan Goals and Objectives* provide a vision of how residents expect the County to develop and evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions, which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community expectations. The *Goals and Objectives* were formulated by the Planning Commission based on the citizen participation process and the findings of the background studies. Founded on this community vision and the needs identified in the planning process, the Planning Commission formulated the various plans to guide the future growth and development of the County, including:

- ♣ *Land Use, Natural Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection Plan*
- ♣ *Community Facilities and Services Plan*
- ♣ *Economic Development Plan*
- ♣ *Transportation Plan*
- ♣ *Housing Plan*

### **Need For Continued Planning**

Things change, as we have all experienced in this *post 9/11 era* as it is being called. Change is created by both external and internal forces, many times beyond our control and sometimes contrary to the expected. Planning for our future must consider the possibility of change and adapt to these changes. For example, if another shift in the regional economy takes place, or rail service between New York City and Scranton widens the reach of commuters, the affects on Susquehanna County must be considered and the *Plan* must be adjusted.

It is important to emphasize that a comprehensive plan should not simply be considered a *document on a shelf*, but instead, one element of a community management process dependent upon the attitude and on-going foresight of the public officials charged with the responsibility of guiding the growth and development of the community. A comprehensive plan is a starting point - a blueprint to guide the future development of the County and should be revised and updated periodically to reflect changing conditions, attitudes, situations, and goals of the community. The success of the planning program will be measured only in the form of accomplishment. The effectuation of the plan will be the responsibility of the County residents. It will require public support and positive action by the County Commissioners and local municipal officials.

### **Planning Issues Overview**

Land use, and in particular, sound community and land use planning, has been at the forefront of Pennsylvania's initiatives in recent years. Beginning with Governor Ridge's Executive Order No. 1999-1, sound land use planning has been the topic of workshops, discussions, and countless articles in newspapers, magazines and other publications.

In developing this *Comprehensive Plan*, Susquehanna County has the advantage, thanks to the volumes published concerning sound community planning, of

considering the findings and conclusions of many experts in the fields of land use, the environment, community development, and the economy. The planning process should not attempt to *reinvent the wheel*. Instead, the experience and advice of these experts and other communities should be considered and balanced with the specific needs and expectations of Susquehanna County. The County is certainly unique in many ways, but shares common land use and development problems with all Pennsylvania counties and municipalities, although often not on as grand a scale.

The citizens and elected officials of Susquehanna County have the advantage, for the time being, to consider what has happened in other parts of the Commonwealth and make our plans accordingly. The issues are generally the same, but the timing is to our advantage. Population in the County increased by 4.6 percent between 1990 and 2000, and this rate is not so dramatic to preclude taking the time to plan carefully for the future. In looking at planning issues, one must consider the issues facing all counties and municipalities, whether those same issues are now facing the County, or will instead emerge as issues in the future. And, in dealing with, or preparing to deal with those issues, the County must debate policies and procedures already identified by others who are addressing those same issues on a more urgent basis. A good starting point is with the policies established by the Commonwealth, specifically Executive Order 1999-1 as shown in the following sidebar.

### **Executive Order 1999-1 Policy Guidelines for Decisions That Impact Land Use in Pennsylvania**

1. Soundly planned growth is in the best long-term interest of the Commonwealth and should be encouraged at all levels of government.
2. Farmland and open space are valued natural resources and reasonable measures for their preservation should be promoted.
3. Development should be encouraged and supported in areas that have been previously developed or in locally designated growth areas.
4. Because land use decisions made at the local level have an impact that expands beyond municipal boundaries, regional cooperation among local governments should be encouraged.
5. The constitutional private property rights of Pennsylvanians must be preserved and respected.
6. The Commonwealth shall work to improve the understanding of the impact of land use decisions on the environment, economic and social health of communities.
7. Sustaining the economic and social vitality of Pennsylvania's Communities must be a priority of state government.
8. Infrastructure maintenance and improvement plans should be consistent with sound land use practices.

### **Major Planning Issues in Susquehanna County**

As described in the *Recent Planning Activities* section of this Plan, a number of surveys and public meetings have been conducted in the County in recent years to determine issues concerning County residents and their expectations about the future. The major, recurring issues identified are listed below:

- ♣ Protect Rural Character
- ♣ Provide Jobs for Our Residents
- ♣ Preserve Agriculture
- ♣ Protect the Environment
- ♣ Keep The County the Same (prevent undesirable development impacts)

In addition, certain characteristics of Susquehanna County have emerged as critical to the planning process:

- ♣ A rural county, dependent on neighboring areas for employment, entertainment, shopping and recreation
- ♣ An aging population
- ♣ *Brain Drain* - many of our younger people do not stay in the area
- ♣ Lower median income than much of the surrounding area
- ♣ An influx of higher income residents from metropolitan areas
- ♣ Potential increases in taxes for services without the benefit of commercial and industrial development to generate tax revenues

This *Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan* is intended to address these issues, keeping in mind the policy guidelines of the Governor's Executive Order and the concerns and expectations of the County's residents.

### Rural Character Defined

In various surveys conducted in Susquehanna County the term *rural character* or *rural atmosphere* is often used to describe what residents hold important about their communities. But, what is *rural character*? *Vision 2020* asked this question and received a variety of answers, most of which were specific to the respondent. In other words, rural character means different things to different people. One person may define *rural character* as an idealized, romantic, nostalgic vision of what is or what used to be. To another, it may be the combination of homes, open land, agriculture, small businesses and other economic activities that comprise the rural working landscape. It is simply the way one person, or a group of people, remembers their past, individually or collectively, or sees the present. *Rural character* is relative. What is rural to newcomers may be seen as rampant development to natives. Rural character is ever-changing but is also most often seen as the *better way*. *Rural character* cannot be photographed, recorded, standardized or copied. It is individual and unique, and exists in the mind of the person living within, and longing for, that place that is rural in character.

And so, how does a local municipality *protect the rural character* when the term is not, and cannot, be defined to satisfy everyone?

## II. RECENT PLANNING ACTIVITIES

In the years since the adoption of the 1992 *County Comprehensive Plan*, a number of planning actions have been undertaken by the County to identify resident expectations about the future and the anticipated effects of growth and development. These actions broaden considerably the base of information to develop this *Plan Update*, and the results of these interim planning activities are summarized in this section. The full details of each activity are available from the County Department of Planning and Development.

### *Susquehanna Survey, 1997*

In 1997 the Susquehanna County Planning Commission sent a survey to property owners in the County as a first step in updating the County's Comprehensive Plan. Simply stated, the Commission wished to find out what was on the minds of County landowners. A total of 23,325 surveys were distributed and 3,100 completed surveys were returned, a return rate of some thirteen percent. Although the survey cannot be cited as a representation of the opinions of all County residents, it does provide an indication of the expectations of those citizens who are interested in the future of the County.

- 38% of respondents (or spouses) were born in the County, 42% chose to live in the County and 18% had vacation homes.
- Only 22% were employed within the County. (Those employed outside the County included 566 vacation home owners.)
- 65% plan to remain in the County following their retirement.
- *Rural environment, clean air and water, and open space* were the most important characteristics of the County identified.
- 60% viewed the prospect of their children finding employment in the County as poor.
- Respondents identified *job creation, roads and bridges, and police protection* as the three most important issues facing the County.

- A wide range of job types and commercial developments were identified as most needed in the County.
- Some 61% do not want commercial development *in their backyard*.
- Almost 31% believe local and county government interfere with county-wide progress, 25% do not, and 45% are uncertain.
- About 32% feel more public services are needed, but only 19% would be willing to pay more taxes for more services.

### *Vision 2020, Susquehanna County*

In 1998, concerned citizens, the Department of Planning, the newly formed Department of Economic Development, and Penn State Cooperative Extension began a county-wide visioning process named *Vision 2020*. Following two years of meetings, surveys and discussions with county residents about a number of community elements, the results were published in 2000 including for vision statements, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and action priorities. The action priorities have been incorporated into the goals and objectives of this *Comprehensive Plan Update* with the vision statements included in the *Vision 2020* excerpt below.

Excerpted from the *Vision 2020* publication, 2000

#### Overall Vision Statement -

*Healthy People Living and Working In a Healthy Community - Full of potential, energized by the will, determination and vision of people who care, Susquehanna County comes together to create new linkages, new coalitions and a renewed sense of self in order to address identified concerns.*

A Statement about Visioning -

*YEAR 2000—Pennsylvania's rural counties and small towns are changing. That change can mean increased economic and social opportunities or it can mean urban sprawl, destruction of farmland and an eroding quality of life. Every community in Pennsylvania has the power to control change, and residents of Susquehanna County, during the last two years, wielded that power and participated in a community visioning effort. The purpose of the exercise was to develop a continuously evolving plan which residents can use in bringing about a change that will have a positive effect on our economy, our environment and our future generations.*

*Community visioning is both a process and a product. The process is where residents have an opportunity to express what they value about their community and to develop a consensus on what they would like to change or preserve. The product is what you hold in your hands. It represents the vehicle to move Susquehanna County from where we are to where we want to be in the year 2020. We have undertaken this task with clear vision. And it is our wish and desire that you will join us on our journey as we utilize our assets and move towards implementing the plans that represent the shared goals of those who participated.*

Community Development Vision Statement

*In the year 2020 Susquehanna County has well maintained roads, adequate wastewater facilities and community integrated after school activities. Strong land use policies are in place which are revitalizing our hamlets; preserving greenways and open space; and providing for sustainable communities. Opportunities for life long learning and artistic expression are available throughout the county. Each person living in the county has access to state-of-the-art telecommunications. Positive working relationships exist among governments and the public. There is an appreciation of and promotion of historical roots and culture throughout all of our multi-generational residents. Plant and animal life continues to be diverse.*

Economic Development Vision Statement

*By the year 2020, there will be ample high paying jobs in Susquehanna County so that our people will be able to continue to live their lives here with a satisfactory standard of living. Additionally, the*

*wages paid, the fees paid for local services, materials and supplies and the taxes paid into the county by enterprises located here all will help provide funds for investments and improvements needed to provide a high quality of life. Our towns and villages will be revitalized commercial and industrial centers. At the same time, we will still preserve the rural heritage of the region.*

Education Vision Statement

*In the year 2020, education in Susquehanna County will provide equal opportunities for citizens from birth to adulthood to acquire relevant/appropriate skills and knowledge with the aid of trained educators utilizing state-of-the-art equipment in safe, modern facilities for all to succeed and excel.*

Health Vision Statement

*Susquehanna County: healthy people living and working in a healthy community.*

Social Redevelopment Vision Statement

*Susquehanna County can be a county of happy and friendly people while maintaining the balance of natural beauty, and a sustainable prosperity.*

Natural Resources Recreation/Tourism Vision Statement

*To conserve and to promote our history, heritage and culture; to educate local citizens and visitors to the county about the wise use of our natural resources, scenic views and recreational areas; and to create a comprehensive plan to guide us in the management and sharing of these resources.*

Susquehanna County Student Survey, 1999

As part of *Vision 2020*, the Steering Committee, assisted by the United States Department of Agriculture, Regional Manager for rural Development, conducted a survey of high school seniors in the six school districts in the County. Questionnaires were completed by 374 seniors. In response to the question *Do you plan to live in Susquehanna County after you graduate?*, sixty-five (17.4%) seniors said *yes*, 233 (62.3%) said *no*, and seventy-six (20.3%) said *maybe*. The survey also asked the seniors to identify strengths and weaknesses of the County with the top ten of each reported as follows:

<b>Table II-1 Student Survey Strengths and Weaknesses</b>		
<b>RANK</b>	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
1	natural beauty	no jobs
2	low crime	nothing to do
3	rural/hominess	poor roads
4	outdoor activities	drugs/alcohol
5	good/friendly people	lack of shopping
6	good schools	poor schools
7	low cost of living	no public transportation
8	open space/privacy	teen pregnancy
9	low cost of housing	outsiders moving in
10	sense of community	inadequate housing

***The Potential Economic and Fiscal Impacts of 3,400 Additional Residents in Susquehanna County***

In January 2000, Penn State Cooperative Extension, with financial support from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, applied the Community Impact Model - Penn State (CIM-PSU) to assess the potential effects of an increase of 3,400 persons to the population of Susquehanna County. As noted in the report, CIM-PSU is a fiscal impact model designed to help communities better understand their local economy and the impact of change. CIM-PSU focuses on how a local economy, local government services and revenues, and school district services and revenues interrelate, and how a change in one may affect the others. These relationships can help predict important aspects of economic change, including employment and unemployment, local commuting patterns and migration, and projected changes in local government and school district revenues and spending. Though CIM-PSU is a powerful tool for conducting economic analysis, it should not be relied on exclusively for local policy decisions. Instead, the results must be viewed in context of other important community concerns, such as quality of life, environment, social interactions, and community culture and history.

The study made the following assumed the completion of passenger rail service between Scranton and New York City, an increase of 3,400 in the population of Susquehanna County (2,380 from new residents who commute to work outside the County and 1,020 retirees moving to the County) and an assessed valuation of \$100,000 for each new property. The study goes on to note that *there are no direct long-term employment impacts in Susquehanna County (unlike, for example, a new factory which will employ people). The new residents, however, will affect the number of jobs because they will spend part of their incomes in local businesses, and the children will need to go to school.* The study included the following findings:

- Almost 550 new jobs would be created - primarily in the government, and retail and service sectors, 204 of which would be filled by *retirees* working part-time.
- About \$14.1 million in new wages would be generated as a result of direct and induced impacts.
- The 3,400 new residents would induce an additional population increase of 790 persons.
- An additional 1,416 children would be enrolled in County schools.
- County revenues would increase by about \$100,000 more than expenditures.
- Taken as a whole for all forty local municipalities, expenditures would increase by about \$100,000 more than revenues.
- Taken as a whole for all six school districts, revenues would increase by about \$500,000 more than expenditures.

Although clearly not significant, particularly when spread across six school districts, the positive net fiscal effects on the County and school districts suggested by the study are somewhat surprising. Residential development is generally found to require more in the cost of community facilities and services than in tax revenues generated. (See the discussion of Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Cooperative Extension, *Extension Circular*

410 - *Fiscal Impacts of Different Land Uses, The Pennsylvania Experience* in Section IV.) Perhaps the tax revenue generated by induced business development would more than offset increased demand for services and the residential revenue generation shortfall.

### ***Municipal Officials Survey, 2002***

In an effort to involve local municipal officials in the comprehensive planning process, the County Planning Commission distributed a survey to 235 elected and appointed local officials serving the forty townships and boroughs in the County. The survey was aimed at discovering local officials' opinions about their community and the County, important issues, and future expectation. Seventy-four completed surveys were received, a return-rate of almost thirty-two percent, with at least one response from twenty-nine of the forty municipalities in the County. The results are summarized below:

- The responding municipal officials rated the County highest in terms of scenic beauty, environmental quality, and natural areas, and lowest in terms of job opportunities, places to shop and social activities.
- Quality of schools, job opportunities, and a good place for raising children were reported as most important, followed by environmental character and overall quality of life. Availability of places to shop, recreational activities and social activities were the least important.
- About 48% felt the quality of life in the County will stay about the same over the next five to ten years, 28% felt it would be less desirable, and 20% more desirable.
- Recreation facilities and programs available to residents are rated as adequate by 47% of the responding officials and inadequate by 51%.
- Housing available to residents is adequate and affordable according to 64% of respondents, with 28% disagreeing.
- The proportion of respondents who rated the following economic activities as important –
  - ♦ tourism, hunting and fishing - 90%
  - ♦ small stores, shops and offices - 82%
  - ♦ residential development - 78%
  - ♦ farming - 77%
  - ♦ timbering - 68%
  - ♦ quarrying and mining - 67%
  - ♦ electronic/high tech firms - 65%
  - ♦ manufacturing and industry - 62%
  - ♦ large scale commercial - 30%
- Respondents ranked the importance of the following issues facing the County (in descending order):
  - ♦ job creation
  - ♦ environmental protection
  - ♦ state highway improvements
  - ♦ land use control
  - ♦ agricultural preservation
  - ♦ improved social services
  - ♦ open land preservation
- Responding municipal officials reported increased demand for the following services (from most to least noted):
  - ♦ road improvements
  - ♦ police protection
  - ♦ land use ordinances
  - ♦ recreation facilities
  - ♦ sewer service
  - ♦ ambulance service
  - ♦ fire protection
  - ♦ water service
- 28 respondents reported their municipality has considered adopting zoning, and 30 reported the same about subdivision and land development ordinances.
- Respondents see the role of Susquehanna County in growth and development management as follows:

<b>Table II-2, Role of County in Growth and Development</b>	<b># of responses</b>
continued enforcement of subdivision and land development ordinance	48
provide model subdivision and land development ordinance	27
adopt county-wide zoning ordinance	29
provide a model zoning ordinance	24
provide local comprehensive planning services	26
coordinate multi-municipal planning	24
provide model open land preservation techniques	22
conduct training workshops	34
not sure	6

### III. GENERAL COUNTY CHARACTERISTICS

#### Regional Location

Susquehanna County lies at the northeastern part of Pennsylvania, just north of Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties and south of Broome County, New York. The Susquehanna River, which gave the County its name, dips into the north central part of the County from New York State. As part of the Endless Mountains, the County elevations range from 800 feet near the Susquehanna River to a high of 2,693 feet at Elk Mountain in the southeastern part of the County. The majority of the County is high and rolling with typical elevations above 1,500 feet.

Susquehanna County's regional location, physical characteristics (geology, topography, soils), early settlement patterns, the area transportation network and the regional economy have been synthesized into the existing community. Susquehanna County can best be characterized as a rural, largely bedroom community where agriculture has lost some of its economic importance, yet open land remains a predominate feature of the landscape. However, residential and commercial development are becoming more evident as stimulated by recent population growth. Single-family dwellings are the most numerous types of dwellings along with a number of mobile homes. Relatively few two-family and multi-family dwellings are found in the County. With the exception of several planned developments, residential development is found on individual lots divided from larger parcels and in historic village centers. Commercial development is largely retail/service in nature and is situated primarily along the major state routes. Although declining in recent years, dairy farms continue to operate in the County, with the better land used for field and forage crops. Forest is the predominate land cover and timbering remains an important part of the local economy.

Given the attractive rural character of the County and its regional location, the slow population growth is somewhat surprising, and the situation can change quickly as the area is *discovered* by individuals and families in nearby urban centers or if some large development or event changes the regional perspective. Population growth would certainly change the rural character of the County by fragmenting agricultural lands and increasing demand for community facilities and services. On the other hand, economic stagnation or decline brings other planning issues such as the most efficient use of limited financial resources and the need for business development and job creation. In either case, careful planning and local municipal cooperation is important to the future of the area.

#### Community Character and Development History

- ♣ Susquehanna County was formed on February 21, 1810 out of Luzerne County.
- ♣ Named for the Susquehanna River. Susquehanna is an Indian name meaning "crooked stream of water"
- ♣ Home of Galusha A. Grow, sponsor of 1862 Homestead Act.
- ♣ Home of Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, from 1825-29, at which time he translated "The Book of Mormon".
- ♣ Early industries used natural resources such as timber and stone.
- ♣ Farming, mainly dairy, moved from subsistence to commercial in the late Nineteenth Century.
- ♣ The present transportation system grew out of "farm-to-market" roads as well as "turnpikes" that provided links between more urban areas -- Milford-Owego Turnpike, Bridgewater-Wilkes-Barre Turnpike, Great Bend-Cochecton Turnpike, Philadelphia-Great Bend Turnpike.

- ♣ Railroads played a major role in development of the County as a means of shipping goods to market. Two railroads, an east-west and a north-south, along with a smaller north-south line, provided a means of transportation for both goods and people.
- ♣ The Borough of Susquehanna was the site of a railroad manufacturing facility for the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad.
- ♣ I-81 was opened in Susquehanna County in 1960.



An example of the rural character of Susquehanna County

### **THE ENDLESS MOUNTAINS, A BRIEF HISTORY OF ITS DEVELOPMENT**

Susquehanna County is part of the Endless Mountain Region and has historically been linked to the growth and development of the region. The following discussion, excerpted from the *Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan, November 1998*, provides a good overview of the early development process of Susquehanna County.

*Pennsylvania evolved from settlement patterns established in the nineteenth century, patterns that are still clearly visible today. Agriculture, transportation, natural resource exploitation, and community building have imprinted this landscape, one that has remained remarkably rural and stable for all its proximity to the Eastern Seaboard.*

*The Endless Mountains, named by 18th century European explorers, are found largely in four counties in northeastern Pennsylvania: Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming. Lying just south of the New York State border and west of the Pocono Mountains, it is a predominantly agricultural area with valleys blanketed by fields and woodlands and intersected by the winding North Branch of the Susquehanna River. Small crossroads hamlets and larger commercial centers reminiscent of a bygone era lie interspersed amidst farms, wood lots, pastures, and old fields, interlaced by a wealth of little-traveled farm-to-market roads. United by a common heritage, the region is rich with significant cultural and natural resources and recreational opportunities.*

*The Endless Mountains possess a rich history shaped in large part by topography and geology. The fertile valleys of the Endless Mountains have supported dispersed agricultural villages since prehistoric times. The undulating character of the terrain, however, historically restricted travel through the region, limiting the creation of large settlements. A prominent regional feature is the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, which meanders through Susquehanna, Bradford, and Wyoming Counties. The river valley has long been a major transportation corridor, although its shallow rocky waters made it an uncertain means for shipping even in the days preceding canal and rail access to the region.*

*Following the retreat of the Wisconsin Glacier 15,000 years ago, the Endless Mountains underwent a gradual transformation from a relatively barren, post-glacial landscape inhabited by nomadic bands of hunters and gatherers to a largely forested region supporting diverse wildlife and small agricultural villages. By 1000 BC, the Susquehannock people arrived in the Susquehanna River Valley. They lived in small villages along the river, cultivating small fields in the floodplain and hunting for game in the dense forests of the region. The Iroquois took control of the region during the seventeenth century. Their power gradually waned, and during the first half of the eighteenth century a mix of refugees from southern tribes arrived, fleeing rising colonial settlement. In the decades after the French and Indian War, colonial settlers came into the region in*

*ever-increasing numbers, slowly pushing out Native American groups.*

*Settlers arriving during these first decades of settlement spent much of their time clearing land, constructing shelter for their families, and hunting and foraging to supplement their diets. Although the first wave of settlers took over fields left by Native Americans, agricultural production could only be characterized as subsistence. The region contained a limited number of gristmills and sawmills for processing grain and lumber.*

*By the nineteenth century, settlers succeeded in establishing productive farms and growing surplus crops for export. Proceeds from the sale of grain and lumber enabled residents to participate in a regional economy based initially on barter and later on cash. The forests supported many small-scale sawmills and tanneries. Population levels grew throughout the Endless Mountains, and communities with stores, artisans, and small-scale agricultural industries emerged and thrived.*

*During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Endless Mountains experienced an era of industrial expansion, fueled by regional transportation improvements. Although fraught with construction problems and ultimately short-lived, the North Branch Canal, which was extended into the region during the mid-nineteenth century, reduced costs for the shipment of coal, lumber, and other products to distant markets and paved the way for the construction of the Lehigh Valley Railroad several decades later. Railroads and technological improvements in agriculture also enabled the region's farmers to develop specialized market produce, such as dairy products, eggs, and small fruit. Conditions were also favorable for entrepreneurs to establish large-scale industries, such as tanneries, coal mines, and sawmills. Stewardship of the land around the mines and lumber operations was given little thought, and by the turn of the century, portions of the region experienced ecological devastation.*

*Before the onset of the Great Depression, the economy of the Endless Mountains was already in decline with natural resources exhausted in many areas. Dairy farming became the mainstay of the regional economy. The state government made*

*significant investments in the region, purchasing large tracts of cutover land. The federal Civilian Conservation Corps was then brought in to replant the region's denuded mountains - areas that later became prized recreational areas. The tourism industry that began during the late nineteenth century expanded to include numerous regional lakes.*

*As the century progressed, the quality of rural life improved considerably due to electrification and road and communications improvements.*

*Cultural traditions enhance the unique physical and historical qualities of the Endless Mountains. Ethnic groups have brought their distinctive marks to the region's place names, foods, architecture, and events. The region's churches, community halls, granges, theaters, and post offices have traditionally added a measure of vitality, sociability, and eventfulness to the cyclical routine of rural life. The number of historic buildings and communities to be seen here today is extensive. Many structures date from the second half of the nineteenth century and retain their historic character. Thus far, modern development has had a light touch in this region, and many small towns and hamlets in the Endless Mountains still possess the flavor of bygone years:*

*Country roads, most of which follow their original alignments, leading from one pleasant stream valley to the next, winding over and around the undulating hills that give this region its historic name, are one of the glories of the Endless Mountains. The pleasing distinction between "town" and "country" one senses in driving from place to place is an experience that has become increasingly rare within the megalopolis that has overtaken the East Coast.*

*Natural resources within the Endless Mountains are extensive. Forests and recreational lands are abundant and pleasing to the eye. Remote, almost wilderness-status, recreational experiences are possible here. Wildlife is everywhere to be enjoyed - some animals for hunting, many for the simple pleasure of seeing them at large in their natural habitat. The rushing streams and rivers in this region are especially notable for their number, water quality, and beauty, and are highly attractive for fishing and boating.*

*All told, the Endless Mountains today embody the quintessential American countryside: beautiful, historic, and natural. The character of the landscape seen in the Endless Mountains today reflects in large measure the patterns of agricultural and community development that arose during the second half of the nineteenth century despite impacts of industrial development. Boroughs and villages blanket the region in a regular pattern set amidst a backdrop of dairy farms, abandoned fields and woodlands. Highways connect most major population centers but the region still retains an important secondary transportation network of gravel roads that are reminiscent of an earlier era.*

**Excerpts from “A Touch of New England”,  
Garford F. Williams, Pennsylvania Heritage  
Magazine, Summer 1982**

*Susquehanna County, one of several counties formed from both Connecticut and Pennsylvania, reflects a blend of New England and Pennsylvania traditions. Although the land would remain part of Pennsylvania, the majority of pioneer settlers to this northern tier region were actually from Connecticut and other New England states.*

*Although there were reports that Indian villages once existed near the present towns of Lanesboro and Great Bend, by the time of white settlements none remained. Besides their trails they left behind them the word “Susquehanna” meaning “crooked stream of water” as their name for the river which enters the Commonwealth in the County’s northeast corner and curves its way through the land. It was along this river that white settlers originally built their homes.*

*Records do not show inhabitants in what would become Susquehanna County until the spring of 1787 when forty families came to settle the region around present-day Brooklyn. Later in 1787 two families settled on the Susquehanna River at Great Bend.*

*By an act of the Pennsylvania Assembly, Susquehanna County was separated from Luzerne on February 21, 1810, although it was not fully organized until 1812. The County was eventually*

*divided into twenty-seven townships and thirteen boroughs and by 1820 could list 9,958 residents. After much discussion and plotting by rival communities Montrose was chosen as the county seat even though most of its rivals could claim larger populations.*

*The dense growth of the forest gave rise to the County’s first industries. Initially many early settlers spent much of their time engaged in the production of maple sugar which could be traded anywhere for all other necessary commodities. Later the trees were felled and lumbering became the chief industry.*

*Closely connected with the lumber industry were tanning operations. Other enterprises, which relied heavily upon wood were the Beach Manufacturing Company and the Crandall Company, a pioneer in the production of wooden toys in the United States.*

*Lumbering and related industries are still big business in the County but the most important continuously operating industry is agriculture. Fifty years ago there were nearly two cows for every county resident and dairy farming provided the livelihood for the majority of citizens. Creameries were in operation in nearly every township. Butter was produced by the ton each day and the railroads ran special milk trains from the County to New York City on a regular schedule.*

*With the development of farming came the organization of Agricultural Societies. Each community developed an annual fair. The Harford Agricultural Society, organized October 21, 1858, held the first such festival that same year. A fair has been held there every year since 1858 making it the oldest annual fair in continuous operation in the Commonwealth.*

*In addition to agriculture and lumbering other industries developed. A number of foundries operated in the County, the largest of these opened in 1856. Flagstone at one time brought in an average of \$100 thousand in sales annually but it is the bluestone, which is of exceptional quality and has always found ready markets.*

*Railroads came to the area in the mid-nineteenth century. One of the largest operations in the County*

*for over a century was the Erie Railroad Shops located in Susquehanna. The Shops employed nearly a thousand men and the equipment was valued at \$300 thousand. The passenger depot, about three hundred feet long and thirty-six feet wide, has recently been refurbished and is now on the National Register of Historic Places.*

*The railroads also brought to the County one of the most imposing structures anywhere to be seen – the Starrucca Viaduct. Built in 1847-48 at a cost of \$350 thousand it was at that time the most costly bridge ever constructed in the world.*

*Susquehanna County has no real concentration of population. It contains, instead, a succession of quaint and rather quiet small towns. The Borough of Forest City, as an example, sits in the County's southeast corner. In thirty years the town grew out of a wilderness to become home to thirty-five hundred people and the largest community in the County. The rapid growth followed the discovery of a very pure grade of anthracite coal, which was uncovered while building the railroad. Coal from Forest City was judged by some to be the best anthracite ever mined in the state.*

*Formal education began with the first settlements and at one time there were more than 270 one-room schoolhouses scattered throughout the County. Private schools began to appear in 1816 with the granting of a charter to Susquehanna Academy in Montrose.*

*Susquehanna County has always been popular as a resort area, boasting pure fresh air in abundance and beautiful scenery. Those who have visited Susquehanna County know of its beauty and advantages, of its numerous lakes, which retain much of their pristine nature. They have witnessed the forests of maple, beech, ash, pine and hemlock, which, have long provided a source of revenue as well as an escape and place to retreat. They have seen the meadows and pasture lands upon which dairy herds feed. All of these things, in combination with the County's history and architecture, do indeed bring a touch of New England to the Commonwealth.*

### Susquehanna County as part of Appalachia

During the Vision 2020 process a local Methodist minister presented to the group a report from 1985 titled ‘How Appalachia Resembles the Third World’ written by Harold W. McSwain of the Center for Town and Rural Ministries of Columbus, Ohio.

Mr. McSwain’s report draws similarities between developing Third World countries and the Appalachian Region of the United States. The report proved to be of interest to the Vision 2020 efforts since many of the characteristics outlined in the report mirrored those of Susquehanna County.

Some of the major points made in the report are:

- ♣ In Appalachia there was a shift in the traditional subsistence-oriented economy based largely on farming, a strong sense of community and mutual aid, to an economy based on earning a living by means of wages, controlled by others generally living outside of the region.
- ♣ Coinciding with that shift was a belief that money and wealth, rather than land and family, defined a “better way” and the belief that life could be better by purchasing market goods and services rather than doing it themselves. In other words, a shift from self-reliance to reliance on others.
- ♣ Those clinging to the “old” beliefs of self-reliance, community and mutual aid were seen as “backwards or old fashioned”.
- ♣ Certain levels of poverty and hunger continue to exist. The existence of hunger, defined in one way as the need for nutritional foods, clean water, and the lack of understanding of the benefits of a balanced diet, is directly related to the level of poverty that exists.
- ♣ Health problems can be directly related to the distance from and lack of access to basic as well as specialized health care.
- ♣ A concentration of substandard housing due to a variety of influences, including large amounts of absentee land ownership and disproportionate land prices, is contrasted by new, expensive housing developments within the same region.
- ♣ Money for education is tied directly to land ownership. Low expenditures per pupil are most prevalent in areas with a high concentration of large parcels of land owned by a small group of owners.
- ♣ Large land owners contribute less to the tax base relative to what they own than do the smaller owners. The larger owners have their land taxed at a lower rate per acre than the smaller owners.
- ♣ A feeling of helplessness exists, one that allows people to feel unworthy, or to say “it’s good enough for me” rather than striving for the best.

The report focused on very rural areas of southern Appalachia and offers a more harsh assessment than is appropriate to Susquehanna County. However, one cannot help but notice some similarities. Susquehanna County was once a stable agricultural or at least natural resource-based community. This has changed due to many factors, and we are now reliant mainly on employment outside of the county.

Our farms continue to be divided into housing lots. Absentee ownership of the land remains high. People from “away” purchase land for their eventual retirement. Others escape the city and suburbs to return to a more peaceful and safe environment. Our development is based on an influx of new residents, many of whom do not work in the county and therefore may not have the tie to the county as those who were raised here and remained here to work.

## Demographics

### Importance of Demographics

Understanding population demographics is important to planning for the growth and development of a community. The geographic, physical and economic character of the community affects the demographic composition of a community's population. At the same time, the demographic composition is largely responsible for the manner in which a community develops and grows (or declines) in terms of demand for community facilities and services to meet the specific needs of the changing population, thereby altering the very character of the community. Over the past few decades more and more urbanites have moved from the city to nearby residential and rural areas and now commute daily to their jobs in the city. As once rural areas developed into suburbs, the demands placed on local governments changed as the population changed. More highways, public water supplies, and public sewage disposal systems were needed. Residents leaving metropolitan areas for recreation and relaxation, constructing vacation homes, and in many cases, permanent residences increased the demand for commercial facilities to meet the retail and service needs of the changing population. The new residents often expect the same facilities and services in rural areas as they were accustomed to in the city, such as paved roads, streetlights and police protection. As more people move into the county from areas that are more urban or suburban than Susquehanna County, these expectations and desires will become even more prevalent, stimulating the transition from a rural to more suburban like community.

Other factors, such as public health, quality of life and the environment must be considered. One aspect that cannot be measured or predicted with any certainty is the impact on the social environment of the County. As people move to the County they bring their experiences, aspirations and expectations, not all of which will mesh with those of the current population. Social differences, of course, should not be viewed as being detrimental to the County. Many of those who have moved to the County have a keen desire to *maintain the rural character* or to protect that, which attracted them to the County in the first place. Many are willing to participate in

committees and work with local government toward those goals. At public meetings it is not uncommon to find the more vocal conservationists and proponents of land use controls to be those who have recently moved to the County. As more people from outside of the County immigrate and share their experiences about mismanaged growth in urban and suburban communities, the result may be the adoption of local land use controls and other actions for the protection of our community assets.

By gaining an understanding of the demographic character of a community and forecasting how the population is likely to change, both in number and composition, public officials can assess the need for additional or different types of public and private facilities and services required to meet the demands of the changing population, and anticipate the need for new or updated land use management regulations.

### Historic Population and Recent Trends

Over the past fifty years the population of Susquehanna County has been increasing at an average rate of five percent each ten years, with no dramatic increase in any given decade. At ten percent, the period from 1970 to 1980 had the highest rate of increase when the population increased by 3,532 persons. Between 1980 and 1990 the rate fell to 6.6 percent with an increase of 2,504 persons, and with an increase of 1,858 persons between 1990 and 2000, the rate continued to decline, falling to 4.6 percent. Most population growth in the County has resulted from immigration. Between 1990 and 1999, natural population increases (births minus deaths) accounted for about 515 new residents while immigration accounted for almost 1,300. Although the growth rate has been declining and is very modest when compared to the growth rate of other areas of the Commonwealth, the Pocono Mountain region for example, any population growth can be expected to increase demand for housing and community facilities and services, and result in the development of what is now open land.

**TABLE III-1 POPULATION GROWTH RATES**

<b>MUNICIPALITY</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>%'80-'90</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>%'90-'00</b>	<b>%'50-'00</b>	<b>Density 2000</b> (per square mile)
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	10,498,012	11,319,366	11,793,909	11,863,895	11,881,643	0.15	12,281,054	3.36	16.98	267.63
Susquehanna Co	31,970	33,137	34,344	37,876	40,380	6.61	42,238	4.60	32.12	51.32
<b>Blue Ridge</b>										
<b>School District</b>	5,542	6,995	6,801	7,453	7,299	-2.07	7,331	0.44	32.28	
Great Bend Borough	751	777	826	718	714	-0.56	700	-1.96	-6.79	2346.7
Great Bend Township	846	1088	1,441	1,936	1,828	-5.58	1,890	3.39	1.23	52.307
Hallstead Borough	1,445	1,580	1,447	1,280	1,291	0.86	1,216	-5.81	-15.85	3040
Jackson Township	635	587	678	820	760	-7.32	788	3.68	24.09	30.19
New Milford Borough	880	1,129	1,143	1,062	971	-8.57	878	-9.58	-0.23	798.18
New Milford Township	985	1,834	1,266	1,637	1,735	5.99	1,859	7.15	88.73	41.78
<b>Elk Lake</b>										
<b>School District</b>	3,986	4,099	4,310	5,078	5,800	14.22	6,399	10.33	60.54	
Auburn Township	1,177	1,146	1,222	1,390	1,647	18.49	1,816	10.26	54.29	35.89
Dimock Township	727	883	983	1,120	1,238	10.54	1,398	12.92	92.30	47.55
Middletown Township	298	276	261	343	341	-0.58	340	-0.29	14.09	11.85
Rush Township	843	842	925	1,068	1,136	6.37	1,290	13.56	53.02	34.13
Springville Township	941	952	919	1,157	1,438	24.29	1,555	8.14	65.25	51.15
<b>Montrose Area</b>										
<b>School District</b>	6,854	7,918	8,948	10,556	11,675	10.60	11,708	0.28	70.82	
Apolacon Township	157	172	319	508	496	-2.36	507	2.22	222.93	21.95
Bridgewater Township	1,355	1,498	1,876	2,284	2,379	4.16	2,668	12.15	96.90	65.88
Choconut Township	215	325	492	739	806	9.07	797	-1.12	270.70	39.65
Forest Lake Township	587	727	837	1,054	1,237	17.36	1,194	-3.48	103.41	40.2
Franklin Township	528	570	675	747	919	23.03	938	2.07	77.65	39.41
Friendsville Borough	65	60	77	71	102	43.66	91	-10.78	40.00	60.67
Jessup Township	432	396	327	429	486	13.29	564	16.05	30.56	26.36
Liberty Township	712	874	1,051	1,284	1,361	6.00	1,266	-6.98	77.81	42.63
Little Meadows Borough	196	301	337	387	328	-15.25	290	-11.59	47.96	126.09
Montrose Borough	2,075	2,363	2,058	1,980	2,014	1.72	1,664	-17.38	-19.81	1280
Silver Lake Township	532	632	899	1,073	1,547	44.18	1,729	11.76	225	52.87

											<b>Density 2000</b> (per square mile)
<b>Mountain View</b>											
<b>School District</b>	5,638	5,646	5,775	6,864	7,907	15.20	8,700	10.03	54.31		
Brooklyn Township	736	731	807	750	876	16.80	889	1.48	20.79	36.58	
Clifford Township	1,204	1,238	1,351	1,704	2,161	26.82	2,381	10.18	97.76	59.23	
Gibson Township	740	745	674	869	1,022	17.61	1,129	10.47	52.57	35.62	
Harford Township	985	985	918	1,038	1,108	6.74	1,301	17.42	32.08	39.54	
Hop Bottom Borough	375	381	430	408	350	-14.22	333	-4.86	-11.20	555	
Lathrop Township	535	583	550	713	797	11.78	835	4.77	56.07	40.53	
Lenox Township	1,063	983	1,045	1,382	1,593	15.27	1,832	15.00	72.34	45.46	
<b>Forest City Regional</b>											
<b>School District</b>	3,957	3,343	3,037	2,700	2,739	1.44	2,822	3.03	-28.68		
Forest City Borough	3,122	2,651	2,322	1,924	1,870	-2.81	1,855	-0.80	-40.58	2061.11	
Herrick Township	485	405	436	464	564	21.55	599	6.21	23.51	24.25	
Uniondale Borough	350	287	279	312	305	-2.24	368	20.66	5.14	147.2	
<b>Susquehanna Community School District</b>											
<b>District</b>	5,993	5,913	5,473	5,225	5,291	1.26	5,278	-0.25	-11.93		
Ararat Township	314	307	325	358	420	17.32	531	26.43	69.11	28.24	
Harmony Township	412	533	365	484	546	12.81	558	2.20	35.44	17.77	
Lanesboro Borough	591	502	550	479	669	39.67	588	-12.11	-0.51	226.15	
Oakland Borough	871	889	817	730	645	-11.64	622	-3.57	-28.59	1244	
Oakland Township	457	490	489	521	550	5.57	550	0	20.35	33.54	
Susquehanna Depot Borough	2,646	2,591	2,319	1,994	1,791	-10.18	1,690	-5.64	-36.13	2414.29	
Thompson Borough	320	286	307	293	295	0.68	299	1.36	-6.56	747.5	
Thompson Township	382	315	301	366	375	2.46	440	17.33	15.18	20.28	
<b>Municipality</b>											
	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% '90-'00</b>							
Pennsylvania	11,863,895	11,881,643	12,281,054	3.36							
Susquehanna Co	40,380	40,504	42,238	4.3							
Broome Co. NY	213,648	212,160	200,536	-5.5							
Bradford Co.	62,919	60,061	62,761	2.8							
Wayne Co.	35,237	39,944	47,722	19.5							
Wyoming Co.	26,433	28,349	28,080	-0.9							

While the overall County growth rate was 4.6 percent between 1990 and 2000, local municipal rates varied greatly, with local municipal population growth rates shown in Table III-1. The variation is due to circumstances specific to each local municipality including such factors as an aging population with few new residents, better access to regional job markets, and the effect of conversion of vacation homes to permanent residences. In general, the boroughs experienced population decreases and the townships increases, ranging from Montrose Borough's 17.4 percent decrease to Ararat Township's 26.4 percent increase. The range of population change rates is somewhat misleading because a smaller number of new residents in a municipality with an already low population may result in a higher rate than in a larger municipality experiencing the same increase in the number of new residents. In terms of the change in the number of residents, Bridgewater Township saw the highest

increase with 289 new residents, and Montrose Borough lost the greatest number of residents, 350.

One other way of evaluating population changes is enrollment by school district. Changes in total population in Susquehanna County's school districts are shown in Table III-2. Obviously, school enrollment changes would be expected to mirror changes in total resident population. The increase in resident population in the southern half of the county has affected Elk Lake, Mountain View and Forest City School Districts, where between 1992 and 2000 school enrollments increased by 14.6 percent, 11.0 percent and 10.5 percent, respectively. Increasing enrollment means more teachers and more rooms with associated expenditure increases and probable tax increases. During the same period Montrose Area registered a decrease in the number of students while Blue Ridge and Susquehanna Community School Districts showed small increases.

<b>Table III-2, School District Population and Enrollment</b>						
SCHOOL DISTRICT	1990 total pop	1992 students*	2000 total pop	2000 students**	total pop '92-'00	students '92-'00
Blue Ridge	7,299	1,250	7,331	1,320	0.4%	5.6%
Elk Lake	5,800	1,440	6,399	1,650	10.3%	14.6%
Forest City	2,739	835	2,822	927	3.0%	11.0%
Montrose Area	11,675	2,200	11,708	2,070	0.3%	-5.9%
Mountain View	7,907	1,375	8,700	1,520	10.0%	10.5%
Susquehanna Community	5,291	1,165	5,278	1,175	-0.2%	0.9%
Career and Technical Center	n/a	265	n/a	200	n/a	-24.5%

\* as reported in 1992 Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan

\*\* PA System of School Assessment

<b>Table III-3, Susquehanna County Population Projections</b>		
2000 Census Pop. = 42,238	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>
5% growth rate	44,350	46,570
10% growth rate	46,460	51,110
Penn. State Data Ctr.	45,967	47,656

<b>Table III-4, Comparison of Growth Rates</b>		
	'80 – '90	'90 – '00
Pennsylvania	0.14%	3.4%
Susquehanna County	6.6%	4.6%
Broome County	- 0.69%	- 5.5%
Bradford County	- 4.5%	2.8%
Wayne County	13.3%	19.5%
Wyoming County	7.2%	- 0.9%

Population Density

The average density of the County’s population, including all boroughs and townships is currently 51.3 persons per square mile, based on the Year 2000 population of 42,238 and a land area of 823 square miles. The average population density for townships in the county is 39.8 persons per square mile, roughly the current density of Harford, Franklin and Choconut Townships. For boroughs the average density is 701.6 persons per square mile, similar to the densities of New Milford and Thompson Boroughs. Using a projected population of 47,000 the Countywide population density in the Year 2020 would be some fifty-seven persons per square mile. In terms of planning for the future, even with the expected population increases, density in the County will remain low and the range of facilities and services required will continue to be associated with those needed to serve a rural population.

Population Projections

Table III-3, Susquehanna County Population Projections, includes three scenarios for the increase in Susquehanna County’s population to the Year 2020, two based on constant growth rates and one provided by the Pennsylvania State Data Center which uses fertility, mortality and migration rates and trends to project future population. Based on a

five-percent growth rate, slightly higher than the 4.6-percent rate of the previous decade, the County population would reach almost 44,400 persons by 2010 and 46,700 persons by 2020. Should the rate jump to ten percent, a significant and unanticipated increase, the 2020 population could exceed 51,000. The State Data Center appears to expect continued significant immigration to the County between 2000 and 2010 with a slowing of the growth rate in the following ten years. Assuming the population reaches 45,000 by 2010, the County will have some 2,700 new residents, and applying the Year 2000 average household size of 2.53 persons, some 1,070 new households will be functioning in the County. While existing facilities and services will certainly be able to accommodate some of the increased demand generated by these new residents, additional facilities and services will be required as will homes, some in existing unoccupied dwelling, but most in newly constructed homes. The same can be said for the expected population increase between 2010 and 2020.

Comparing Susquehanna County to neighboring counties and the Commonwealth, as a whole is another means of assessing the significance of population changes, as shown in Table III-4, Comparison of Growth Rates.

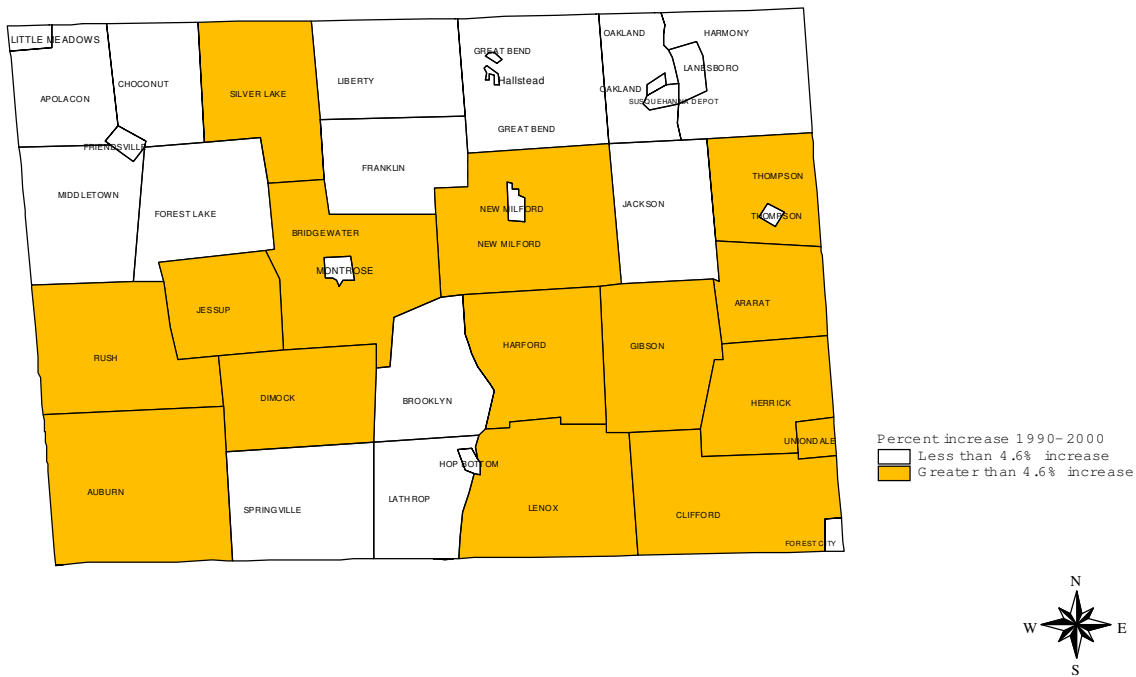
Population change varied considerably depending on county location and character. Susquehanna County’s population grew at a somewhat higher rate than the Commonwealth between 1990 and 2000, 4.6 percent compared to 3.4 percent. During the same period the population of Bradford County increased a modest 2.9 percent. Although very low when compared to the Pocono region, these rates are, nevertheless, positive and suggest continued interest in and at least limited opportunity for living and working in the respective counties. Wayne County’s 19.5 percent increase can be attributed to its relative proximity to New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania metropolitan areas. Along with Pike County and Monroe County, where population between 1990 and 2000 respectively increased by sixty-two percent and forty percent, Wayne County has experienced an influx of new residents who commute to work over long distances via improved highways and public transportation. These explosive growth rates resulted from lower housing costs and local taxes and a better quality of life in

rural Pennsylvania compared to metropolitan areas. While declining or slow growing communities often struggle with loss of jobs and increasing poverty rates, much of the Pocono region finds itself at the opposite end of the spectrum, scrambling to preserve open space, protect the environment and provide adequate facilities and services. As the population of Susquehanna County, Wayne County and Bradford County increased during the 1990' s, the number of residents of Broome County, New York, decreased by 5.5 percent, Lackawanna County decreased by 2.6 percent and Wyoming County decreased by 0.9 percent. Broome County's population decline can be attributed to lost industrial jobs over the past decade, with many unemployed workers leaving the area to find employment elsewhere. Time will reveal if recent economic development organization successes in attracting new businesses to Broome County have reversed the population decline. Lackawanna County's 2.6 percent loss in residents is not dissimilar to that of Broome County, coupled with residents of Lackawanna County's boroughs and cities moving to more rural areas and commuting to their jobs within the County. Wyoming County's small loss of population may be attributable to its lower overall population and fewer job opportunities within the County. Given its somewhat more remote location

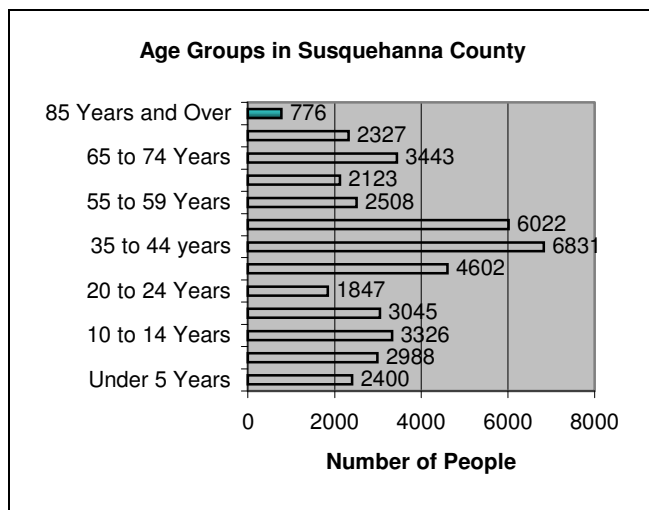
in relation to the eastern megalopolis, Susquehanna County has not experienced the influx of commuters as have Pike, Monroe and Wayne Counties. Broome County's economic downturn tempered our population growth to some extent, but a growing job market in the Scranton area may have contributed to the net increase in Susquehanna County's population. Another contributing factor in recent years is the migration of Monroe and Lackawanna County residents to Susquehanna County due to increasing taxes, overcrowding of schools, and a change in social conditions in those and surrounding counties. As Figure III-1, Municipalities compared to 4.6 Percent County Growth, 1990-2000 shows, those municipalities having an increase greater than the 4.6 percent County growth rate are generally found in the southern half of Susquehanna County.

**Figure III-1, Municipalities compared to 4.6 Percent County Growth, 1990-2000**

## Population Increase from 1990-2000



**Figure III-2, Age Groups**



Age Group	Percent 2000		Percent 2020*	
	Susq Cty	PA	Susq Cty	PA
under 18 years	25.5%	23.8%	--	--
under 20 years	29.1%	27.5%	24.4%	24.7%
18-64 years	59.0%	60.6%	--	--
65 years+	15.5%	15.6%	19.2%	18.4%
<b>2000 median age</b>	<b>39.5</b>	<b>38.0</b>	--	--

\*Center for Rural Pennsylvania

### Age of Population

While the total population in an area dictates the demand for overall community resources, the age distribution of that population will determine the nature of the facilities and services that are required. Evaluating and projecting *age cohorts* can reveal much about the current situation and future community facility and service needs. A younger population will require more school facilities, while an aging population will require more medical facilities and social services. As Figure III-2, Age Cohorts, shows, the most numerous age cohorts in Susquehanna County are the 35-44 and the 45-54 year-old groups, accounting for almost one-third of the County's total population. In Susquehanna County, the 20-24 year-old group at 4.4 percent of the population and the 25-34 year-old group at 10.9 percent, are each almost two points below the Commonwealth proportion, suggesting less than optimum job opportunities for younger workers.

As shown on Table III-5, Age Distribution, the overall age structure in Susquehanna County is similar to that of the Commonwealth, with the County's population somewhat younger. However, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania predicts the proportion of County residents under twenty years of age will decrease 4.7 points and the proportion of senior citizens will increase 3.7 points by 2020, suggesting a shift in the types of facilities and services required. The median age of the population Susquehanna County at 39.5 years, compared to 38.0 years for the Commonwealth. The County median age increased from 34.9 years in 1990 and, given the age distribution projections, will certainly continue to increase.

### Planning Considerations

The population of Susquehanna County is expected to continue to increase at a slow, steady rate unless some significant change occurs in either the internal factors or external factors affecting population. If for example, the economy in the County falters, increased emigration would be expected resulting in population losses. Conversely, if social circumstances cause increased numbers of urbanites to migrate to rural areas, the County growth rate could rise dramatically. Absent such dramatic changes, the steadily increasing population will, as noted earlier, in all likelihood mean an increase in

the amount of expenditures required to provide facilities and services. Concurrently, the types of services and facilities will require adjustment to serve an aging population or people moving into the County who have different lifestyle expectations. The demand for housing will also increase as will the need for land use management. It is important to keep in mind this discussion is oriented to county-wide changes and effects, and demographics can, and do, vary from one municipality or area to another. Individual municipalities and school districts must evaluate local demographics to plan for their futures. In some cases increases in expenditures at the municipal level may be greater than those at the county level with the opposite occurring in other areas. Expenditures may exceed revenues unless taxes are increased in districts where new school buildings are required; or, in areas of declining enrollment maintenance of extra space could become an unanticipated cost. In short, the County population will continue to change in amount and character, and understanding this change provides one tool for planning for the future.

### Social Indicators

Table III-6, Social Indicators, presents data on a number of programs and community characteristics, which serve as a measure of the change in the social condition in the County, and provide a somewhat mixed message. The overall poverty rate and the child poverty increased between 1989 and 1997 while the proportion of the population receiving public assistance declined, which may be more a function of a change in the public assistance program than in the number of poor residents. The number of clients served by the Homeless Assistance Program increased in the County dramatically, as it did statewide. Crime rates also increased dramatically in the County, especially when compared to the statewide statistics. The dropout rate fell between 1990 and 2000 while the number of child abuse cases increased. The information suggest that while the County population grew by 4.6 percent between 1990 and 2000 the overall social condition of the population continued to experience certain difficulties. In any case, it is important to remember that some of the changes may have occurred due to modifications in program requirements, more accurate reporting or client awareness of program availability.

<b>Table III-6, Social Indicators</b>		
	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>Susquehanna</b>
<b>POVERTY</b>		
Poverty Rate, 1989	10.4%	10.6%
Estimated Poverty Rate, 1997	10.9%	12.5%
Poverty Rate for Children Under 18, 1989	16.4%	15.5%
Estimated Poverty Rate for Children Under 18, 1997	16.6%	18.9%
<b>PUBLIC ASSISTANCE</b>		
% Population Receiving Cash Assistance, June, 1996	5.1%	3.3%
% Population Receiving Cash Assistance, June, 2001	2.2%	1.2%
% Population Eligible for Medical Assistance (MA), June, 1996	13.5%	14.8%
% Population Eligible for Medical Assistance (MA), June, 2001	11.8%	13.3%
% Population Participating in Food Stamp Program, June, 1996	9.1%	9.7%
% Population Participating in Food Stamp Program, June, 2001	6.1%	5.4%
% Population Participating in WIC Program, June, 1998	2.0%	2.7%
% Population Participating in WIC Program, June, 2001	1.8%	2.6%
<b>HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM</b>		
# Clients Receiving Homelessness Assistance, 2000-01	114,691	289
# Clients Per 1,000 Residents, 2000-01	9.3	6.8
% Change in Number of Clients 1995-96 to 2000-01	36.7%	35.0%
<b>LOW INCOME STUDENTS</b>		
% Students Receiving AFDC, 1990	12.6%	5.2%
% Students Receiving AFDC, 1995	12.8%	6.3%
% Students Receiving TANF, 2000	5.8%	2.2%
<b>DROPOUT RATE</b>		
Dropout Rate, 1989-90	2.9%	2.6%
Dropout Rate, 1999-00	2.5%	2.1%
<b>CRIME RATE</b>		
Total # Crimes Reported to the Police (Part 1 & 2), 2000	978,393	1,724
% Change in Total # Reported Crimes, 1995-2000	5.5%	55.6%
# Reported Crimes Per 100,000 Residents, 2000	7,967	4,082
Total # Serious Crimes Reported to Police (Part 1), 2000	346,371	643
% Change in Reported Serious Crimes, 1995-2000	-8.6%	48.5%
# Reported Serious Crimes Per 100,000 Residents, 2000	2,820	1,522
<b>CHILD ABUSE</b>		
# Substantiated Cases of Abuse per 1,000 Children, 1990	2.8	2.6
# Substantiated Cases of Abuse per 1,000 Children, 2000	1.7	3.5

**IV. Land Use, Natural Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection**

**Background and Findings**

**Growth and Development and Existing Land Use**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Environment Commission formed in July 1992 by Governor Thomas J. Ridge, identified land use as the most pressing environmental priority of the Commonwealth. Many areas in Pennsylvania are experiencing growth, some rapid and some moderate and sustained, which threatens open space and in many cases the sustainability of agriculture. The Governor’s Center for Local Government Services, designated as the principle state entity responsible for land use assistance and monitoring, identified five fundamental land use practices to guide the Center’s work:

1. *Sound land use is not synonymous with anti-growth. To be a proponent of sound land use practices does not make you an opponent of growth. Rather sound land use practices promote growth in a smart and efficient way.*
2. *A one-size-fits-all sound land use strategy is not realistic in this diverse Commonwealth and will not work.*
3. *Implementing sound land use practices addresses our community and economic development needs and allows the Commonwealth to improve, not diminish, the quality of life for the residents of our cities, boroughs, townships, and small villages.*
4. *Successful sound land use strategies are best*

*developed and initiated at the local level.*

5. *Regional cooperation is necessary and effective tool for communities to achieve development objectives while conserving open space and natural resources.*

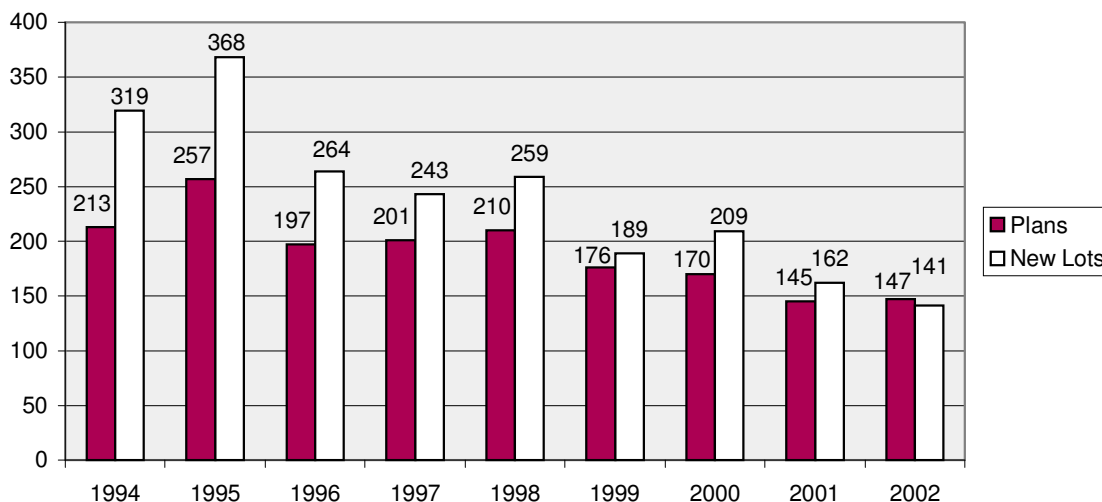
In the County Survey of Municipal Officials almost sixty percent of the respondents believe that land use control is very important. Although population growth in Susquehanna County is occurring at a rate far lower than many other areas of the Commonwealth, any level of growth brings change. In fact, lack of growth also brings change, and often this change, particularly if economic stagnation results, has social and land use effects as unwanted as unbridled growth. In any case, it is critical that Susquehanna County officials work with local municipal officials, the business community, and the public at large, to ensure the County has some method of managing change and directing growth to the most appropriate areas.

**SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY**

The number of subdivision plans approved in the County and, consequently, the number of new lots created, has continued to decrease in the latter part of the last ten years as shown in Figure IV-1, Subdivision Activity in Susq. Co, 1994-2000. Although the number of subdivision plans has decreased, population continued to grow slowly over the same period increasing 4.6 percent between 1990 and 2000. Concurrently, the number of housing units in the County increased by almost six percent.

New Milford Township had the most new lots

**Figure IV-1, Subdivision Activity in Susquehanna County, 1994-2002**

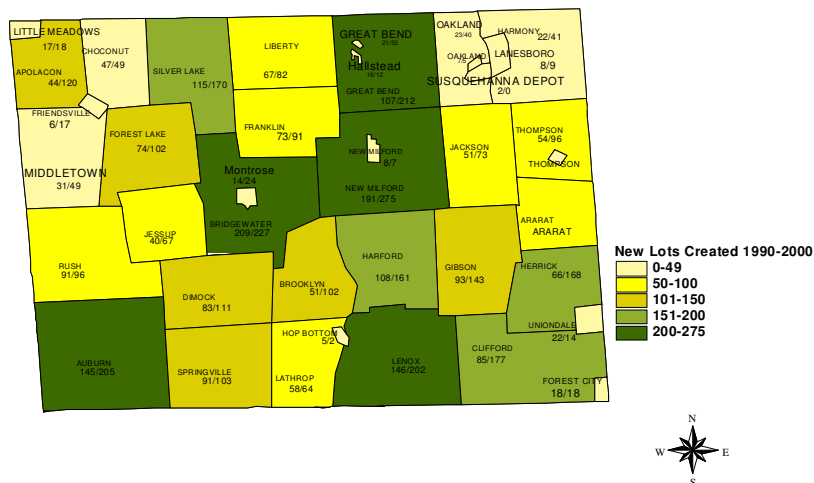


created during the period of 1990 to 2000, with 275, followed by Bridgewater Township with 227, Great Bend Township with 212, Auburn Township with 205 and Lenox Township with 202 new lots. From a countywide perspective, most of the new lots over the past ten years in the County were platted in townships in the southern half of the County, where seasonal homes and commuting to Scranton are key factors. For example, Clifford Township and Herrick Township are located near Elk Mountain, a major ski resort, where skiers from out of the area often buy land to build vacation homes. The increase in tourists and seasonal visitors plays an

important role in the number of subdivisions in these areas. Also adding to the creation of new lots are families relocating from the Scranton area to the more rural area of Susquehanna County. As for areas not in the southern half of the County, Bridgewater, Silver Lake and New Milford Townships saw significant numbers of subdivisions and new lots. This can be attributed to the Binghamton, New York, employment influence as well as their proximity to I-81. The map shown in Figure IV-1 shows subdivision activity between 1990-2000 in Susquehanna County.

Figure IV-2, Subdivision Activity in Susquehanna County

**New Lots Created 1990-2000**



Although, the number of subdivisions is an important indication of past growth and potential growth and land use, the intended use of the subdivided parcels is also important in terms of land availability for residential and commercial development. In 2001, almost 13,000 of the 27,400 total parcels of land in the County were classified as residential dwellings, an increase of some 350 residential properties since 1996. In 2001 some 3,100 vacant lots of less than ten acres were reported along with 3,400 over ten acres. Many of these lots are intended for residential purposes, with the ten-acre threshold important due to the effects of the *Clean and Green Program* which because of tax benefits tends to push developers to create ten-acre

or larger lots. (See later discussion on *Clean and Green*.) During the same period, the number of commercial and industrial properties only increased by a total of twenty-two; suggesting dwellings have comprised most recent development. New land developments and commercial lots are most numerous in Great Bend and New Milford Township, both containing I-81 interchanges, and Bridgewater Township, which is experiencing the growth around the Borough of Montrose. Agricultural parcels decreased by 355 since 1996, clearly a reflection of the increase in residential parcels. Table IV-1, Assessment Type, includes data for 1996-2001 for each parcel type as assessed by the County.

**Table IV-1 Assessment Type**

Type	Total Number of Parcels 1996	Total Number of Parcels 1997	Total Number of Parcels 1998	Total Number of Parcels 1999	Total Number of Parcels 2000	Total Number of Parcels 2001	Total Number of Parcels 2002
Agricultural	5,588	5,701	5,732	5,784	5,849	5,943	6,089
Commercial	980	979	981	988	989	999	1,015
Industrial			25	26	27	28	28
Lots (<10 ac)	3,221	3,212	3,181	3,154	3,146	3,077	3,064
Mining	33	31	25	24	23	21	21
Residential	12,612	12,685	12,771	12,842	12,895	12,978	12,976
Trailers	1,086	1,073	1,063	1,025	1,017	985	979
Vacant (>10 ac)	3,274	3,316	3,327	3,358	3,394	3,402	3,372
<b>Totals</b>	<b>26,794</b>	<b>26,997</b>	<b>27,105</b>	<b>27,201</b>	<b>27,340</b>	<b>27,433</b>	<b>27,544</b>

**Physiography**

The July 1992 *Susquehanna County Comprehensive Development Plan* detailed the physiography of the County and a summary is provided below.

**Topography**

- ♣ Susquehanna County lies mainly within the Glaciated Low Plateaus section of the Appalachian Plateaus Province, one of the major physiographic divisions of the Commonwealth.. A small part of the southeastern corner of the County is part of the Appalachian Mountain Section of the Valley and Ridge Province.
- ♣ The County is characterized by moderate to steep hills trending generally in a northeast - southwest direction, a result of the direction of glacial movement.
- ♣ The highest point in the county is in the southeast corner of Herrick Township where the North Knob of the Elk Hills reaches an elevation of 2,693 feet above sea level. Elevations above 2000 feet are common in the eastern portion of the county while 800 to 900 feet is typical in the vicinity of the Susquehanna River near Great Bend. The maximum countywide relief, therefore, is about 1800 feet.
- ♣ In contrast is the broad Susquehanna River, which dips into the north central part of the County. The few large areas of flat land, which occur in Susquehanna County are found along this river.

**Surface Water**

- ♣ Rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds, cover about one percent of the County' s land area.
- ♣ The major surface water feature, of course, is the Susquehanna River, which eventually receives all the run off from the County.
- ♣ Major watersheds include the Salt Lick, Choconut, and Snake Creeks in the northern part of the County; the Wyalusing, White, and Mehoopany Creeks in the southwest; the Tunkhannock and Martins Creeks draining most of the central and eastern portions; and the Lackawanna River draining the extreme eastern area of the County.



*Susquehanna River*

**Groundwater**

- ♣ Groundwater is the major source of water for residences and businesses in Susquehanna

County. The importance of keeping this vital resource clean cannot be too strongly emphasized.

- ♣ The County receives about forty-two inches of rain per year. Twenty inches of this is lost to the atmosphere as a result of evaporation and plant transpiration. Six to nine inches constitutes runoff to surface waters. Twelve to fifteen inches percolates to ground water, between 397 and 496 gallons of water per minute per square mile.
- ♣ Sixty to eighty percent of stream flow in the County is from groundwater, reflecting the abundance of groundwater as well as it' s shallow depth below the ground surface.
- ♣ Median water levels in domestic wells in the Appalachian Plateaus Province were measured by the Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic Survey at twenty-five feet in valleys, sixty feet under hillsides, and 108 feet under hilltops. In the Valley and Ridge Province median depth to water is fifteen feet, thirty-five feet , and forty feet, for valley, hillside and hilltop locations respectively.
- ♣ The most troublesome natural constituents in the groundwater are iron and manganese.
- ♣ Groundwater contamination in the Upper Susquehanna River Basin comes from a variety of sources. Non-waste related sources include leaking underground storage tanks, mine drainage, prehistoric brine (saltwater) intrusion, water wells causing flow between aquifers, oil, and gas wells, surface water intrusion, agricultural activities (manure, herbicides, pesticides, algaecides), highway de-icing salts, and atmospheric contaminants (dust, auto emissions, pesticides). Sources of contamination related to waste disposal are industrial wastewater impoundments, landfills and dumps, septic tanks and cesspools, municipal wastewater (leaking sewers, treatment plants, residual solids), landfilling and/or spreading of sludge, mine wastes, and animal feed lot wastes.



*Quaker Lake, one of many pristine lakes in the County*

### Wetlands

- ♣ Wetlands are the transitional area between clearly defined aquatic environments and clearly defined terrestrial environments. These areas are inundated by water at or near the surface of the land or are covered by shallow water.
- ♣ After many years of wetland losses due to drain and fill activities, we have begun to recognize the value of these vulnerable areas. For example, wetlands temporarily store flood waters and protect downstream lands from flood damage. Wetland vegetation reduces soil erosion, dampens wave activity, and reduces the velocity of current, also protecting downstream areas from costly damage. Wetland vegetation also reduces turbidity and helps to improve water quality. Wetlands help purify water by filtering out sedimentation and removing nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, and chemical and organic pollutants, before reaching rivers or lakes. In addition, wetlands are prime groundwater recharge areas. Wetlands have other important values as well, including sources of harvestable resources such as timber, fish, wildlife, peat, berries, and wild rice, and recreation activities, such as hiking, fishing, and wildlife watching. Wetlands are extremely important wildlife habitats. They provide water, food, and shelter for a multitude of creatures, ranging from the smallest amoeba to fish, reptiles, amphibians, furbearers, and waterfowl.

- ♣ The U.S. Forest Service estimated that there were sixty-one wetland sites over forty acres in size in Susquehanna County in 1979, some 3,800 acres. No one knows how many acres of smaller wetlands currently exist in Susquehanna County, or have been lost to development of one kind or another in the past. Statewide, between 1956 and 1979, there was a six percent loss. The Pocono region lost 15 percent of its wetlands. 46 percent of the state's wetlands losses resulted from pond and lake construction. 37 percent were lost to urban and other development and 17 percent were lost to agriculture.
- ♣ Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, administered jointly by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is the primary federal law governing wetland activities. The Commonwealth also has permitting authority for wetland activity under Chapter 105 of the Dam Safety and Encroachment Act, which gives the state the authority to regulate virtually all encroachments into the waters of the Commonwealth including wetlands. However, because of limited state and federal agency time and resources many small local wetlands continue to be destroyed each year.

### Soils

- ♣ Moderate to steep slopes and shallow water tables combine with the County's soil types to become the greatest limitations to development.
- ♣ The most extensive soils in the area are deep, gently sloping or sloping, and somewhat poorly or moderately well drained.
- ♣ The single most limiting factor to development is the existence of a barely permeable fragipan about fifteen to forty inches below the surface. The fragipan is loamy and brittle layer of silt and sand, and its slow permeability diminishes the soil's capacity to assimilate sewage effluent.
- ♣ The Susquehanna County Soil Survey reports that 91.7 percent of the soils in the County have severe limitations for on-site sewage disposal, 7.0 percent have moderate limitations, and only 1.3 percent have slight limitations.

- ♣ Factors entering into the sewage limitation categories are permeability, slope, depth of bedrock, depth to seasonal water table, susceptibility to flooding, existence of boulders and stones, and erosion and slippage hazard.

### Geology

- ♣ Exposed rock formations in Susquehanna county (from youngest to oldest) include: Alluvium along the major drainages, the Pottsville Group and the Llewellyn Formation in the extreme southeastern corner, the Catskill Formation (underlying the majority of the area), and the Lock Haven Formation (originally Chemung) along the northern and western boundaries of the County.
- ♣ The major structural feature is the Lackawanna syncline (trough) which ends in the southeastern corner of the county, but whose axis turns and runs due north along the Wayne County line. To the northwest of this synclinal axis, the strata dip steeply to the southeast but flatten out in four or five miles to a nearly horizontal plane.
- ♣ Then comes a reversal of dip towards Tunkhannock Creek, to the northwest, on the axis of an anticline (arch), which continues southwestward beyond the county line. This anticline dies out to the northeast in about the center of Herrick Township.
- ♣ Rocks in the remaining part of the County lie nearly horizontal but are folded locally into minor anticlines.
- ♣ Several folds enter the county from Bradford County but flatten out and disappear to the east. The Wilmot anticline enters at the southwest corner and extends across Auburn Township. Its southward dips are rarely more than fifty to seventy-five feet to the mile so that the strata in the southern part of the county are also nearly horizontal.
- ♣ The Towanda or Rush anticline of Bradford County crosses Rush Township and fades. The Rome anticline enters the county from the west and extends through Friendsville to Hallstead.

Climate

- ♣ Available climatological information from the Montrose Station of the U. S. Weather Service, covers the years from 1951 to 1980 and is thought to be fairly representative of the entire County.
- ♣ Susquehanna County is an area of cold winters, cool summers, and a relatively short growing season. Cold weather usually begins in early November and continues through March with only occasional periodic moderations.
- ♣ Abundant sunshine, mild to warm days and comfortably cool nights characterize summer conditions. Summer temperatures range from the fifties at night to the eighties during the day.
- ♣ During the period from 1951 to 1980 the average daily maximum temperature was 54.3• F.
- ♣ Precipitation is normally plentiful and well distributed throughout the year. Annual rainfall amounts, while ranging from 34 to 59 inches (1951-1974) averaged 42.14 inches (1951-1980). Seasonal snowfall, averaged about eighty-eight inches per year but varies widely.
- ♣ The importance of existing rail lines to economic development and the potential effect of passenger rail service are critical issues.
- ♣ County residents, as revealed in recent surveys, believe job creation is the most important issue, followed by environmental protection.
- ♣ The many natural areas and environmentally sensitive areas in the County must be carefully considered in any development proposal.
- ♣ Lakes and streams with good water quality are key components of the County's environment and rural character, and sound land use management is vital to protecting water quality.
- ♣ Agriculture, forestry and mining have long been important parts of the County's rural working landscape, and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires special consideration for these activities.
- ♣ More and more agricultural land is falling out of production as farming becomes more economically difficult. Continued loss of agricultural land to development and the fragmentation of larger agricultural parcels will seriously affect the long-term viability of agriculture.

Plan for Land Use, Natural Resource Conservation and Environmental ProtectionSummary of Planning Issues

- ♣ Susquehanna County, given its location between Binghamton NY, and Scranton PA, and its rural character holds the potential for long-term residential growth and development.
- ♣ More residential development will spawn more retail/service commercial development, and increased demand for municipal facilities and services.
- ♣ Land use change is not consistent throughout the County - some areas are experiencing growth while others lag behind.
- ♣ The Interstate Route 81 corridor and the area around Montrose Borough have experienced the most recent commercial development.
- ♣ Blue stone extraction is becoming more important to the local economy.
- ♣ The challenge is to provide for the essential economic growth and development of the County while concurrently conserving its scenic and natural environment and the viability of agriculture.
- ♣ Currently there is no countywide zoning or countywide intermunicipal zoning, and few local municipal zoning ordinances, to manage land use change.
- ♣ Innovative zoning techniques such as *performance zoning* or *flexible zoning* adapted to meet local needs provide opportunities not embodied in traditional exclusive district zoning.

- ♣ Higher density residential development and commercial and industrial development need to be served by adequate roads, water supply and sewage disposal.
- ♣ The importance of providing landowners with adequate and reasonable opportunity to realize adequate financial returns on their land must be considered in any land use management strategies.

### County Planning Commission Role

Historically, the County Planning Commission's primary role in land use management has been the administration of the Susquehanna County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance for the thirty-three of the forty local municipalities that have not adopted their own subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO). In Pennsylvania, a locally adopted SALDO supercedes the County ordinance. There have been many requests from citizens and municipal officials alike for the County Board of Commissioners to adopt a county-wide

zoning ordinance which would be administered by the County Planning Commission. However, the County has not taken this approach because the current County Commissioners, the Planning Department, some County Planning Commission members and many experts in Pennsylvania planning believe that zoning ordinances are best handled at the local municipal level. The Susquehanna County Planning Commission and the Department of Planning offer technical assistance to the forty municipalities in the County. Model ordinances are available, either developed by the Department or a municipality or found elsewhere within the Commonwealth. The Commission and Department are also responsible for the review of zoning ordinance and SALDO amendments, Act 537 sewage facilities plans, transportation planning, and review and comment on subdivision and land development plans proposed under local municipal ordinances. The results of the *Local Municipal Officials Survey* suggest that these roles should be continued with emphasis on technical assistance, training workshops, model ordinances and coordinating multi-municipal planning.

### Stormwater and Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control

As is the case with sewage disposal, proper stormwater and soil erosion and sedimentation control are vital to maintaining water quality and minimizing flooding. The water that runs off the land into surface waters during and immediately following a rain storm is referred to as stormwater. In an area undergoing development, the volume of stormwater resulting from a particular rainfall event increases because of the reduction in pervious land area; that is, land not covered by pavement or buildings, or other surfaces which prevent or restrict the percolation of water into the soil. Although many factors interact to affect this segment of the hydrologic cycle, the most significant that influence the volume of stormwater are amount and intensity of the precipitation, surface depression storage, and infiltration into the soil.

The alteration of native cover and topography for residential, commercial, and industrial uses results, in almost all cases, in decreased infiltration and increased run-off of rainfall. This can result in an increase in both the volume and flow rate of stormwater. As development in Susquehanna County increases, so too will the problem of dealing with the increasing quantity of stormwater from building sites, roads, parking areas and other impervious surfaces. Poor forest management practices also can contribute to stormwater and soil erosion problems. Failure to properly manage increased or accelerated runoff has resulted in increased flooding and stream channel erosion and siltation and reduced groundwater recharge. Silt and sediment washed into streams and lakes carries nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus; that can result in water quality degradation resulting in algae blooms and deterioration of aquatic habitats, for example. Stormwater management involves the planning for and implementation of structural and non-structural control methods to mitigate the adverse impacts that can result from the land alteration and development processes.

### County Conservation District Role

The Susquehanna County Conservation District plays many roles in protecting the County's natural

resources, and works closely with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The Conservation District provides information and

technical assistance to the public about its main concerns -- soil erosion and sedimentation control from earth disturbance, stream and lake water quality, agricultural nutrient management, and environmental education. The Conservation District also issues on behalf of DEP permits related to soil erosion and sedimentation control at land development sites and road and other improvements construction associated with residential subdivisions. Permits, based on the submission of detailed control plans, ensure compliance with DEP regulations

governing soil erosion and sedimentation. The Conservation District reviews the erosion and sedimentation control plan and the site during construction to make sure the control measures are installed. The County Planning Department coordinates the administration of the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance with the Conservation District to address soil erosion and sedimentation control.

#### Stormwater Management Act

In June of 1972, in the form of Hurricane Agnes, Pennsylvania received a resounding message that stormwater runoff demanded regulation. The scope of damage that storm inflicted caused lawmakers to pause. Although there is little anyone can do to prevent damage from a storm of that magnitude, damage from other, more frequent, storms can be minimized. Future stormwater problems from increased development can be addressed with watershed stormwater plans developed under Act 167, the Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act, which also incorporates soil erosion and sedimentation controls. In 1978, the Pennsylvania General Assembly approved the Stormwater Management Act, P.L. 864, No. 167. Act 167 was adopted based on the statewide recognition of the adverse effects of inadequate management of excessive rates and volumes of stormwater resulting from development. A statement of findings in Act 167 points out that inadequate management of accelerated runoff of stormwater resulting from development throughout a watershed increases runoff velocities and flood levels. This increased flood flow and velocity contributes directly to erosion and sedimentation, overtaxes the carrying capacity of streams and storm sewers, greatly increases the cost of public facilities to carry and control stormwater, undermines flood plain management and flood plain control efforts in downstream communities, and reduces groundwater recharge, thus threatening public health and safety. The Act states that a comprehensive program of stormwater management is fundamental for the protection of the people of the Commonwealth, their resources and their environment. Act 167 requires all Pennsylvania counties to prepare and adopt stormwater management plans for each watershed located in the County. Stormwater planning under Act 167 is the responsibility of the counties in Pennsylvania; the implementation of stormwater controls, via a local ordinance, rests with the local municipality and is mandated by the Act for each municipality in the watershed where a plan has been adopted. The plans are to provide for uniform standards and criteria throughout a watershed for the management of stormwater flowing from development sites. The types and degree of controls are based on the expected development patterns and hydrologic characteristics of each individual watershed; and can include such controls as detention basins, infiltration pits, parking lot storage and porous pavement.

State funding for stormwater planning has been limited and most watersheds in the Commonwealth have not prepared plans. However, once a stormwater plan is completed for a particular watershed, a model ordinance is drafted and local municipalities must adopt an ordinance, using the model to implement the recommendations of the plan. Lebanon Township adopted the required ordinance in 1997. The application of such an ordinance can be best summarized by Section 13 of Act 167, which defines the duties of a developer of land:

*Any landowner and any person engaged in the alteration or development of land which may affect stormwater runoff characteristics shall implement such measures consistent with the provisions of the applicable watershed stormwater plan as are reasonably necessary to prevent injury to health safety, or other property. Such measures shall include such actions as are required:*

- 1. To assure that the maximum rate of stormwater runoff is no greater after development than prior to development activities; or*
- 2. To manage the quantity, velocity and direction of resulting stormwater runoff in a manner which otherwise adequately protects health and property from possible injury.*

### **Storm Water Management Plans**

The Susquehanna County Department of Planning and Development and the County Conservation District, with consulting assistance from Borton-Lawson Engineering, are developing a Storm Water Management Plan for the Choconut, Snake and Wyalusing Creek Watersheds. Developers, as required by local municipal ordinance, will be required to prepare stormwater management plans as part of the project review and approval process. Currently the Watershed Plan is in Phase I which inventories the watershed and identifies problem areas. Phase II will establish standards for stormwater control and include a model ordinance for local municipalities in the Watershed. The cost of this plan is significant, however, DEP will cover about seventy-five percent of the cost. Plans for other watersheds will be initiated as state funding becomes available. The County, although a formal stormwater management plan has not been adopted, has realized the necessity of stormwater management, and detailed requirements are included in the and in the subdivision and land development ordinance. Most local municipal subdivision and land development ordinances also include stormwater management provisions.

### **Local Municipal Land Use Regulations**

#### Land Use Controls

As authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the subdivision and land development ordinance and the zoning ordinance are the principal land use management tools, which are available to counties and local municipalities in Pennsylvania. The subdivision and land development ordinance provides standards for dividing land and for residential and non-residential

development projects assuring the provision of adequate community facilities such as roads, water supply and sewage disposal, utilities, proper highway access, and storm water control. The zoning ordinance regulates the use of land by dividing a community into districts to separate land use activities (residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial, etc.); sets standards for lot size, setbacks and building height; includes specific standards for a broad range of land uses including for example: parking, signs, junkyards, mobile home parks, natural resource uses and multi-family dwellings, and other general community development and environmental performance standards.

#### Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances

The Susquehanna County Planning Department and Commission governs all subdivision and land development activity in thirty-three of the forty municipalities in the County. The remaining seven municipalities govern subdivisions and land developments through their own locally adopted ordinance and a local municipal planning commission to administer the ordinance. First adopted in 1968, the County ordinance has been amended several times over the years to include updated standards and address changes made to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. In Pennsylvania, subdivision and land development is governed by the county ordinance until a local municipality adopts its own ordinance, which automatically supercedes the county ordinance. Subdivisions and land developments proposed in those municipalities having adopted an ordinance must be submitted by the municipality to the County Planning Commission for review and comment in accord with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

Seven municipalities have adopted local subdivision and land development ordinances:

Ararat Township	Forest City Borough
Clifford Township	Montrose Borough
Liberty Township	Susquehanna Depot Borough
Silver Lake Township	

Five municipalities have established planning commissions for a variety of reasons but have not adopted a subdivision and land development ordinance:

Choconut Township	Hop Bottom Borough
Harford Township	New Milford Borough
Herrick Township	

Six municipalities have established zoning ordinances in order to manage land use and development:

Forest City Borough	Montrose Borough
Hop Bottom Borough	New Milford Borough
Herrick Township	Susquehanna Depot Borough

Intermunicipal Planning

Population changes, the highway network, economic development, land use planning and management, and environmental protection all transcend municipal boundaries and demand regional attention. As noted in other sections of this *Plan*, the importance of inter-municipal cooperation on growth and development issues in the County cannot be overemphasized. While this *Comprehensive Plan* identifies growth area and sets broad parameters for the future of Susquehanna County, the ultimate responsibility for planning at the community level remains with local governments. Local planning is particularly important for land use management and community facilities and services, while sharing a vision for the future development of the community and sharing limited resources to provide facilities is a clear advantage. In addition, planning issues vary throughout the County, and inter-municipal planning can focus the efforts of participating municipalities on the issues of most importance. The Northern Tier Coalition, comprised of Apolacon Township, Bridgewater Township, Choconut Township, Forest Lake Township, Franklin Township, Friendsville Borough, Jessup Township, Liberty Township, Little Meadows Borough, Middletown Township, Rush Township, and Silver Lake Township, is now in the process of preparing a multi-municipal comprehensive plan to address common issues and

identify means of inter-municipal cooperation for land use management and the provision of community facilities and services.

**Zoning – how it works, benefits, pitfalls.**

As noted previously, zoning is the primary tool used by municipalities in Pennsylvania to manage land use and development, and to date, only six municipalities in the County have adopted zoning ordinances. At the current time, the Susquehanna County Commissioners do not support creating a countywide zoning ordinance. This position is obviously shared by most county commissioners in the Commonwealth, with less than ten of sixty-seven counties having adopted zoning ordinance. Zoning has historically been viewed as a local municipal prerogative and most counties are reluctant to exercise authorities generally held by local officials. Similar to subdivision ordinances, a locally adopted zoning ordinance automatically supercedes a county zoning ordinance. In addition, the administration of a countywide zoning ordinance is difficult, particularly in large counties such as Susquehanna.

However, the County Planning Commission understands the benefits zoning would bring, such as planned commercial and industrial development, the separation of incompatible land uses,

environmental protection, and the preservation of our natural resources. The Department of Planning and Development and the Planning Commission supports the concept of zoning for the local municipalities and particularly intermunicipal zoning. Traditionally, zoning has been used to divide communities into various districts to segregate various land use types such as agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial. The intent is to prevent the *externalities*, or the negative spillover effects, of one use on an adjoining use. One of the problems faced by local officials in designating districts, particularly in rural areas, is determining the ideal use of the hundreds of parcels of land in the community. Each parcel may have the potential for many uses and limiting the use of one parcel to agriculture while allowing commercial development on other parcels may result in a windfall for one owner and severe limitation for another. More recently, municipalities have begun to use *performance zoning* or flexible zoning. In its purest form, *performance zoning* would allow any type of land use on any parcel of land and would control the negative spillovers with development standards. Ordinance criteria would govern such issues as building height, noise, setbacks, lighting, and buffers aimed at protecting the rights of adjoining landowners and community at large, and all new development would be subject to the performance standards.

The County Planning Commission envisions for the local municipalities in the County zoning ordinances, which use a combination of the traditional district designation approach and performance zoning. District designation is important to recognize areas already developed and where the restriction of incompatible uses can be logically applied. Existing residential neighborhoods, residential subdivisions, downtown main streets and *Keystone Opportunity Zones* are good examples. In areas with little development, a broad range of uses would be permitted and performance standards would be applied. Local municipalities would develop zoning ordinances within this broad framework creating such zoning districts and including the performance standards necessary to address local needs. A recent report by the Cascade Policy Institute, a non-profit Oregon policy research center, includes a discussion on the *digital economy* which points to the need for flexible zoning techniques.

*In the 21st century economy, land-uses are likely to be much more varied than they have ever been. Technological innovation is breaking down geographic barriers at a rapid pace, with telecommunications capacity doubling roughly every 18 months. These innovations are giving Americans more choices with regard to where and how they live, work and recreate. This means that people will increasingly scatter themselves across the landscape, continuing a trend that has been underway for most of this century.*

*Indeed, the trend is likely to accelerate because the technologies that enable people to live and work in disparate locations are becoming less expensive all the time. In terms of hours of work needed to pay for consumer goods, the costs of the four major technologies that allow suburbanization -- electricity, telephones, computing, and motor vehicles -- are now a tiny fraction of when those products were first manufactured. In addition, the cost of housing has declined, encouraging people to seek larger homes on larger lots.<sup>1</sup>*

Intermunicipal, cooperative zoning would carry this approach to the next level with two or more municipalities working together to develop, adopt, and administer zoning in their respective township or borough. This approach, authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code if based on a joint comprehensive plan, allows great flexibility. Each municipality can adopt and administer its own ordinance or can adopt and administer a joint ordinance. Zoning cannot be used to exclude particular uses from a municipality, a dogma long held firm by the courts. In other words, a local municipal zoning ordinance must provide reasonable opportunity for the development of all legitimate uses including such activities as adult businesses, cell towers, solid waste disposal facilities, jails, and drug treatment centers. Cooperative zoning enables participating municipalities to spread the range of legitimate uses around the entire area, each not having to provide for each use within individual municipal boundaries. The Pennsylvania Municipalities

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<sup>1</sup>Beyond Zoning: Land Use Controls in the Digital Economy, Charles, John A., Cascae Policy Institute, Portland, Oregon, June 1998, [www.CascadePloicy.org](http://www.CascadePloicy.org)

Planning Code requires a joint comprehensive plan and formal intermunicipal implementation agreements between all municipalities participating in cooperative zoning. Other benefits derived from intermunicipal zoning include the ability to address land use on an area wide basis, less duplication of

effort, shared manpower and staff costs, increased availability of grant monies, and the option of using one zoning hearing board. In addition, the cost of developing a joint comprehensive plan would be less than individual plans for each municipality.

How can the Susquehanna County Planning Commission foster intermunicipal planning and zoning?

- ♣ Identify planning areas comprised of local municipalities within the County with common growth and development issues.
- ♣ Work with local officials to create a committee of representatives from each municipality in a planning area to discuss the potential for joint planning and cooperative zoning in the planning area.
- ♣ Provide information and resources such as the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute, and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, to each municipality about the benefits of intermunicipal zoning and its affects on their individual municipality.
- ♣ Provide technical assistance to the municipalities that undertake intermunicipal planning and cooperative zoning.

It is critical for local municipalities to understand that zoning, whether adopted individually or undertaken intermunicipally, requires a significant commitment from local officials. Developing the comprehensive plan and then the zoning ordinance are only the first steps in a perpetual effort. Understanding the limitations of zoning as the ordinance is prepared and the diligent administration, enforcement and evaluation of the ordinance are critical to its effectiveness. As noted earlier, the task of determining the future use for each parcel of land is a difficult one, and local officials must undertake this daunting responsibility with an eye to flexibility and the use of performance standards in districts where a broader range of uses are permitted. Concurrently, certain areas such as residential neighborhoods may warrant the designation of more exclusive districts to protect existing community character. Another zoning pitfall is that many local officials undertake zoning as a means of preserving the status quo. Overly large minimum lot sizes and excluding or over-regulating certain uses are examples of such efforts. This approach simply does not work and results in extreme loss of credibility with constituents. Simply stated, zoning must provide for all legitimate land uses and is intended to

guide, and not stop, development. Once adopted, the effective and reasonable administration of the ordinance is critical. The ordinance must be applied consistently to all properties, a qualified and dedicated zoning officer must be hired, and the zoning hearing board must closely follow prescribed standards and procedures. In addition, local officials must monitor the effect of the ordinance on the community and be willing to amend it to improve misdirected standards and meet changing community needs. In short, zoning is an ongoing process, which requires careful attention to detail, a commitment to professional administration and a willingness to make required changes.

### **Land Uses of Regional Impact**

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, at §301(7), requires county comprehensive plans to *identify current and proposed land uses which have a regional impact and significance, such as large shopping centers, major industrial parks, mines and related activities, office parks, storage facilities, large residential developments, regional entertainment and recreational complexes, hospitals, airports and port facilities.* In recent

years, Susquehanna County has not experienced the development of any land uses of regional impact. One of the most significant land uses having affected the County over the last fifty years was the completion of Interstate Route 81 in 1960. Historically, State Route 11 served as the primary north-south route through the County; however, with the completion of I-81 and its shortened travel times, the focus of much of the commercial development in the County shifted to the I-81 interchanges. This pattern continues today and the I-81 corridor will certainly play a key role in the future development of the County.

Does Susquehanna County have potential for the development of a *land uses of regional impact*? It certainly does, and the statewide search for a low level radioactive waste disposal site in the 1990' s is a good example. Other possibilities include a large-scale mining operation given the recent resurgence of the blue stone industry, or the construction of a large manufacturing plant as County and local economic development efforts proceed. Another regional project, which will affect the County is the development of passenger rail service between Scranton and Hoboken, NJ on to New York City. The ripple development effects on Susquehanna County would not be expected to reach the level of Monroe County, which has already experienced explosive development associated with the eastern megalopolis, but the project must be monitored. And, should the passenger rail service be extended from Scranton to Binghamton through Susquehanna County, the potential for spillover effects will certainly be heightened.

How should local municipalities and the County plan for *land uses of regional impact*? As is the case with most development, some citizens will view a project as positive for the community and others will raise concerns. For example, a large manufacturing plant would be welcomed by many as a new employer for the area, while many would focus on environmental concerns, both legitimate points of view. Land use management is the prerogative of local government and multi-municipal comprehensive planning and cooperative zoning using the approaches described earlier provide the best means for addressing *land uses of regional impact*.

### **Designated Growth Area, Future Growth Area, and Rural Resource Area**

The designation of *growth areas* is an important tool for land use management. A growth area is a general a geographic boundary line within which development at higher densities is encouraged and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) exists or is planned to serve the needs of a higher density population. Growth area designation can direct development to areas where public investment and development is the most appropriate with the following benefits identified by 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania:

- ♣ Ensure that adequate infrastructure will be available where growth is targeted
- ♣ Encourage revitalization and reinvestment in developed areas
- ♣ Make infrastructure investments and the supporting tax dollars more cost-efficient by concentrating expenditures in smaller areas
- ♣ Add certainty to the development process by clearly delineating where development will and will not be provided with public infrastructure
- ♣ Promote affordable housing in close proximity to public and community facilities and services by providing sufficient land for a variety of residential types and densities
- ♣ Stimulate community development patterns that support more accessible public transit
- ♣ Relieve development pressure on rural lands
- ♣ Enable accessible retreats to rural lands from urban centers
- ♣ Encourage long-term strategic thinking about a community's future

This *Land Use Plan* reflects the direction taken by the Year 2000 amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), which included definitions of *designated growth area*, *future growth area*, and *rural resource area*. These types of designations serve well for envisioning the future growth and development of the County. A definition of each designation, modified somewhat from the MPC definitions, and how each applies to the County are included in sidebars on the following page. The County *Land Use Plan* is intended to serve as a broad foundation for municipalities to build on as local plans are developed. In short, local municipal and multi-municipal plans will be more specific

than the County *Plan* in terms of designating growth and development areas and local plans will be the base for zoning and other land use management efforts. Without local municipal participation in managing land use, the countywide land use vision will be impossible to achieve. The basic land use planning approach and factors for delineating future land use considered for evaluating and designating future land use in the County are listed below:

**SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY LAND USE PLAN**

**Basic Land Use Planning Approach**

- conserving and protecting the natural environment
- preserving agriculture and rural character
- protecting residential uses
- providing well-situated and appropriate development areas to accommodate projected growth
- encouraging commercial and industrial development in areas with adequate public infrastructure
- encouraging the use of natural resources, particularly forest and blue stone products, as part of the local economy

**Factors for Delineating Future Land Use**

- existing land use and existing municipal zoning districts
- availability of public water and sewer
- adequate road access and railroad service
- environmental constraints
- extent of agricultural use

Generalized Future Land Use Plan

The maps titled Designated Growth Areas, in the Appendix, show the principal population/commercial centers in the County, the major transportation routes, and areas served by public water and sewer, the primary factors for designating growth areas. Based on these factors, five parts of the County are identified as *designated growth areas* and the important characteristics of each area are highlighted below, and taken together represent the *Susquehanna County Generalized Land Use Plan*.

Forest City

- ♣ Located in southeast corner of the County with easy access to the Lackawanna Valley Industrial Highway via State Route 171 and State Route 6.
- ♣ Existing higher density residential development and commercial development.
- ♣ Public water and public sewer.
- ♣ Within six miles of railroad service in Carbondale.
- ♣ Active industrial development organization – Greater Forest City Industries, Inc.
- ♣ Designated Keystone Opportunity Zone.
- ♣ Natural gas service available (the only area in Susquehanna County).

Susquehanna - Oakland - Lanesboro

- ♣ Located in northeast section of the County with easy access to I-81 via State Route 171.
- ♣ Existing higher density residential development and commercial development.
- ♣ Public water and public sewer.
- ♣ Direct railroad service with siding under development.
- ♣ Active industrial development organization -Susquehanna-Oakland-Lanesboro Industrial Development Authority.
- ♣ Designated Keystone Opportunity Zone.

New Milford - Great Bend - Hallstead

- ♣ Located in north-central Susquehanna County with direct access to I-81 via New Milford and Great Bend interchanges.
- ♣ Existing higher density residential development and commercial development.
- ♣ Public water and public sewer in New Milford with sewer extension planned to Hallstead and Great Bend.
- ♣ Direct railroad service with existing siding and land owned by New Milford Borough for potential commercial/industrial uses requiring rail service.

Montrose - Bridgewater

- ♣ Located in central Susquehanna County with access to I-81 via State Route 706 and State Route 11.
- ♣ Existing higher density residential development and commercial development.
- ♣ Historically served as commercial/activity

center given that Montrose Borough is the County Seat.

- ♣ Public water and public sewer with sewer extension planned several miles east along State Route 706.
- ♣ Designated Keystone Opportunity Zone in Bridgewater Township.

Gibson Interchange

- ♣ Located about midway in the County on I-81 with
- ♣ direct access via an interchange
- ♣ Existing and proposed commercial development.
- ♣ Private central sewer available.
- ♣ Level land suitable for development available.

**Designated Growth Area**

An area that preferably includes and surrounds a borough or village, and within which residential and mixed use development is permitted or planned at densities of one unit to the acre or more, commercial, industrial and institutional uses are permitted or planned and public infrastructure services are provided or planned.

*Future growth areas* are designated around the *designated growth areas* and would not be developed until the designated growth areas can no longer absorb the higher density residential and larger scale commercial development. The balance of the County is designated *rural resource area* with the principal goal of protecting open land and agricultural land and preserving agriculture, forestry and quarrying as viable components of the local economy. Similar to the *growth areas*, one or more locally designated zoning districts should further define the bounds and types of uses permitted. Recognizing that farmers and other large landowners have long been good stewards of their land and must be able to glean a reasonable economic return from this care, single-family residential development and commercial development and light manufacturing should be permitted by local zoning in accord with performance standards aimed at minimizing exterazlities, that is, negative spillover effects. Local municipal and multi-municipal plans may identify within the county-designated rural resource areas,

**Future Growth Area**

An area outside of and adjacent to a designated growth area where residential, commercial industrial and institutional uses and development are permitted or planned at varying densities and public infrastructure services may or may not be provided, but future development at greater densities is planned to accompany the orderly extension and provision of public infrastructure services.

sub-areas or *village centers* to serve as local focal points for commercial development and social activities. These *village centers* would include smaller scale development than anticipated for the *designated growth areas* and *future growth areas* envisioned by the overall County plan. Development techniques such as conservation residential subdivision design and planned residential development and transfer of development rights should be encouraged to minimize effects on agricultural and open land.

**Residences**

Residences are found in many planned developments and on individual lots throughout the County. Local officials must recognize that the County and local future land use plans anticipate all types of commercial and manufacturing uses. However, the plans and any land use ordinances must also afford to existing residences and new residential development protection from incompatible uses and the *externalities*, that is, negative effects, of unrestrained commercial and industrial development. This can be accomplished by designating separate residential and nonresidential zoning districts, applying environmental, development and operational performance standards to commercial and industrial uses, and establishing increased lot sizes, setbacks, and buffers where such uses adjoin residential development. All of these techniques must be considered as any local municipality develops its zoning ordinance.

### **Natural Areas and Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

There is a significant number of natural areas and environmentally sensitive areas in the County which provide benefits to residents by, among others, purifying ground and surface water, maintaining biodiversity, and providing scenic views and educational opportunities. Stream corridors, woodlands, wetlands, floodplain, steep slopes, and similar areas all play critical environmental roles. These areas must be protected from the effects of growth and development and must be addressed in subdivision and land development ordinances and zoning ordinances. State and federal regulations do afford certain protections, but addressing environmental protection early in the development process is critical. Conservation design (discussed in a following section) for residential and commercial development, stream buffers, special planning and design for development on steep slopes, and floodplain development regulations are examples of local standards which can be used to protect natural and environmentally sensitive areas. Another invaluable tool is a *County Natural Areas Inventory* which would identify, map and discuss important ecological places within the county; prioritize them based upon their attributes, and provide recommendations regarding their management and protection. County and local municipal planners; federal, state and local agencies; businesses; environmental consultants; developers; local conservation organizations; and many other groups use these studies to help make land-use decisions within their counties and municipalities. County inventories can streamline economic and infrastructure development by providing sensitive environmental information early in the planning process when adjustments can be made at little cost or delay.<sup>1</sup> A natural areas inventory has not been conducted for Susquehanna County, as has been done in several other counties in Northeastern Pennsylvania as a joint effort of a county, the Commonwealth and The Nature Conservancy. The County should investigate the possibility of conducting such an inventory to add to the available land use management tools.

#### **Rural Resource Area**

Rural resource uses including agriculture, timbering, mining, quarrying and other extractive industries, forest and game lands and recreation and tourism are encouraged, single family residential and commercial development and light manufacturing compatible with such uses is permitted, and provision of public infrastructure is not anticipated now or in the very long term.

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<sup>1</sup>Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index, July 2001 County Inventories Information Sheet.

## Open Land and Natural Area Conservation

### Open Land and Natural Area Conservation

Open land and natural areas are key ingredients of the County's attractive rural character, and County and local officials must encourage the conservation of open land if this character is to be maintained. Recent opinion surveys conducted in the County found that preserving open and agricultural land as well as natural resource protection are important issues to residents. Some of the limited prime farmland in the County and many unique land features have already been developed with single-family dwellings. Continued unabated, all areas of privately owned land which are not wetlands, floodplain, or extremely steep, or not already protected by easement, could be developed, using central sewage disposal if necessary. Taken to the extreme, the entire area of the County, which is available for development would be platted into lots meeting the minimum lot size requirement. While this level of development of the County will certainly not occur, the traditional cookie-cutter subdivision scenario does little to preserve rural character which is so dependent on agricultural and other open land.

Local municipalities should consider permitting in subdivision and zoning ordinances planned residential development (PRD) to allow for flexibility of design of residential development with common open space. A variety of housing types are permitted in a PRD with a variation in lot dimensional requirements while the base unit density is maintained. Open land and natural areas are protected by shifting development to more appropriate areas of the site. Another means of conserving open space is conservation design development, which allows the same number of units on a parcel as a typical subdivision but with a reduction in minimum lot size. The balance of land needed to maintain the density established by the ordinance is set aside as permanent open space. In addition to maintaining open land, conservation design reduces development costs (and commitment of resources) given shortened road and water and sewer line length, minimizes long term maintenance costs of such improvements, and limits environmental affects such as soil disturbance and storm water. The same design process can be applied to multi-family and commercial

development. The Natural Lands Trust, a nationally known land conservation organization suggests that the conservation design concept be taken to a higher level by providing incentives (or disincentives) to encourage the conservation of open land and establishing specific techniques for the design of open space subdivisions. The process is presented in detail in the handbook, *Designing Open Space Subdivisions, A Practical Step-by-Step Approach*, published by the Natural Lands Trust. Incentives could include allowing higher density for open space design; a disincentive would be the reduction in density if a traditional lot layout is used in place of the open space design. In fact, some communities have mandated the use of open space design for all development.

Conservation design development is practiced most widely in areas where little open space remains, such as southeastern Pennsylvania where residents know what they have lost to rampant development. Consequently, conservation subdivision design has emerged in that region as an important method to preserve what little open space remains. In Susquehanna County the perception is that there is plenty of open space, and therefore *I want my piece of the pie*, or *I want room to spread out* are common desires voiced among new residents. The problem is that as this pattern continues, the sprawl that the emigrating urbanites left behind, or escaped, is beginning in Susquehanna County and will ultimately change the very character, which is so attractive to new residents.



*Typical residential subdivision*

### Goals for Conservation Design Development

The Natural Lands Trust recommends including the following goals for conservation design development

in comprehensive plans which then provides the foundation for including such standards in a subdivision and land development ordinance and a zoning ordinance.

1. To conserve open land, including those areas containing unique and sensitive natural features such as woodlands, steep slopes, streams, flood plains and wetlands, by setting them aside from development.
2. To focus on the preservation of prime and other active agricultural land as a means of preserving agriculture.
3. To provide greater design flexibility and efficiency in the siting of services and infrastructure, including the opportunity to reduce length of roads, utility runs, and the amount of paving required for residential development.
4. To reduce erosion and sedimentation by the retention of existing vegetation, and the minimization of development on steep slopes.
5. To provide for a diversity of lot sizes, building densities, and housing choices to accommodate a variety of age and income groups, and residential preferences, so that the community' s population diversity may be maintained.
6. To implement adopted municipal policies to conserve a variety of irreplaceable and environmentally sensitive resource lands, including provisions for reasonable incentives to create a greenway and trail system for the benefit of present and future residents.
7. To implement adopted land use, transportation, and community policies, as identified in the

municipality' s Comprehensive plan.

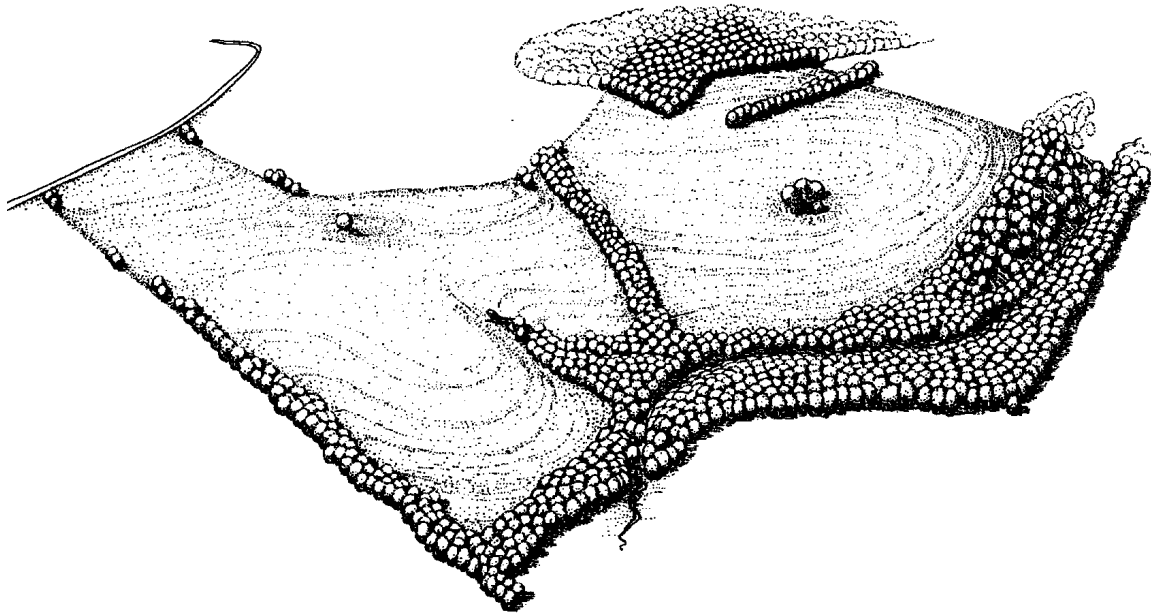
The design process involves the following steps: (See the following figures for illustrations from *Designing Open Space Subdivisions, A Practical Step-by-Step Approach*)

1. Yield Plan - the number of units, which could be developed on the site using the traditional subdivision approach.
2. Identification of all potential open space areas including primary conservation areas such as . . .
  - ♣ Soils suitable for on site sewage systems
  - ♣ Water bodies
  - ♣ Floodplain
  - ♣ Wetlands
  - ♣ Steep slopes

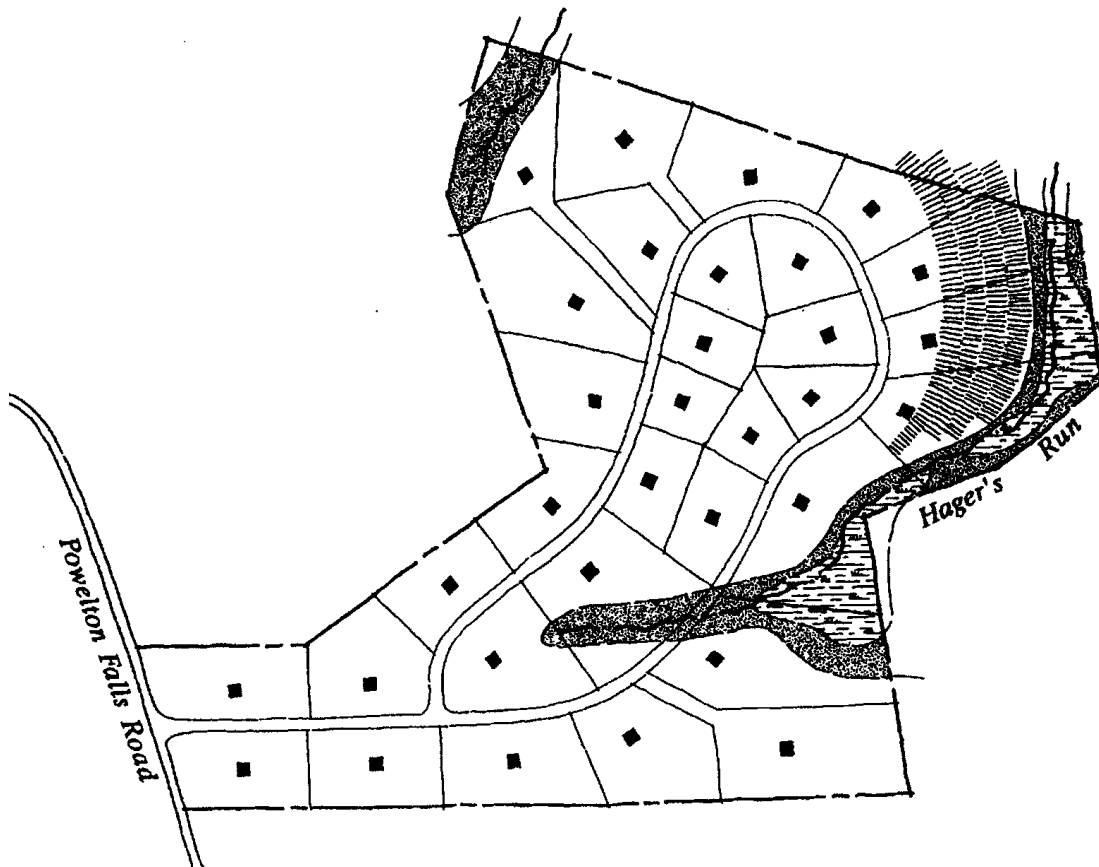
and secondary conservation areas such as . . .

- - ♣ Mature woodlands
  - ♣ Prime farmland
  - ♣ Significant wildlife habitats
  - ♣ Historic, archeological, and cultural feature
  - ♣ Views into and out from the site
  - ♣ Aquifers and recharge areas
- 3. Identification of potential development areas -- Where should the houses be logically located on the site?
- 4. Location of potential house sites -- Where should individual units be located within the development area?
- 5. Design of road alignments and trails -- How is access best provided with the least impact on conservation areas?
- 6. Drawing in the lot lines at the reduced lot size results in the conservation of the designated open land.

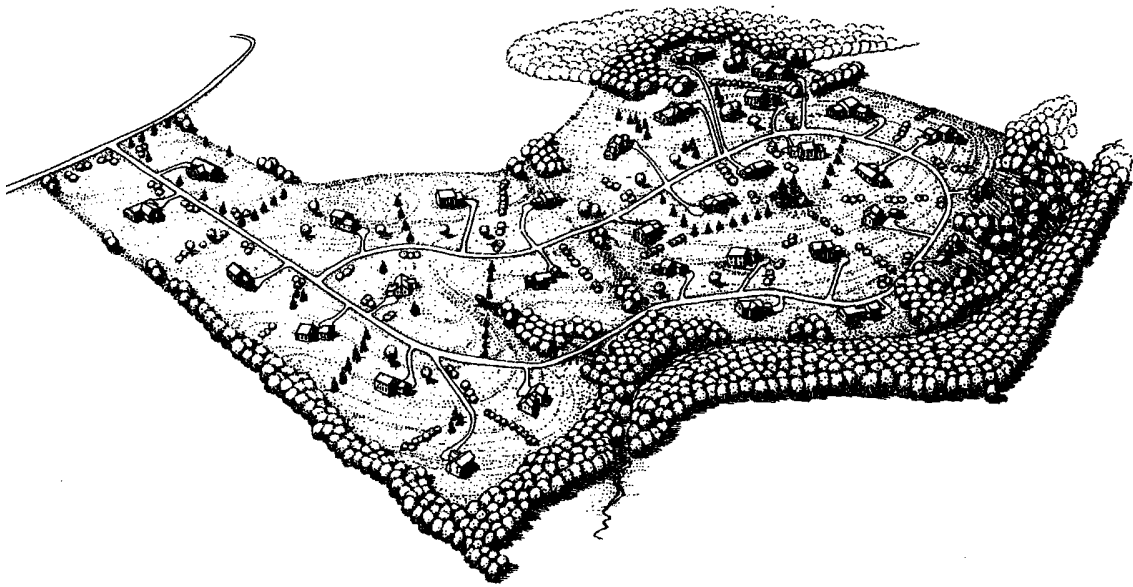
Conservation Design – 1 – *Before Development*



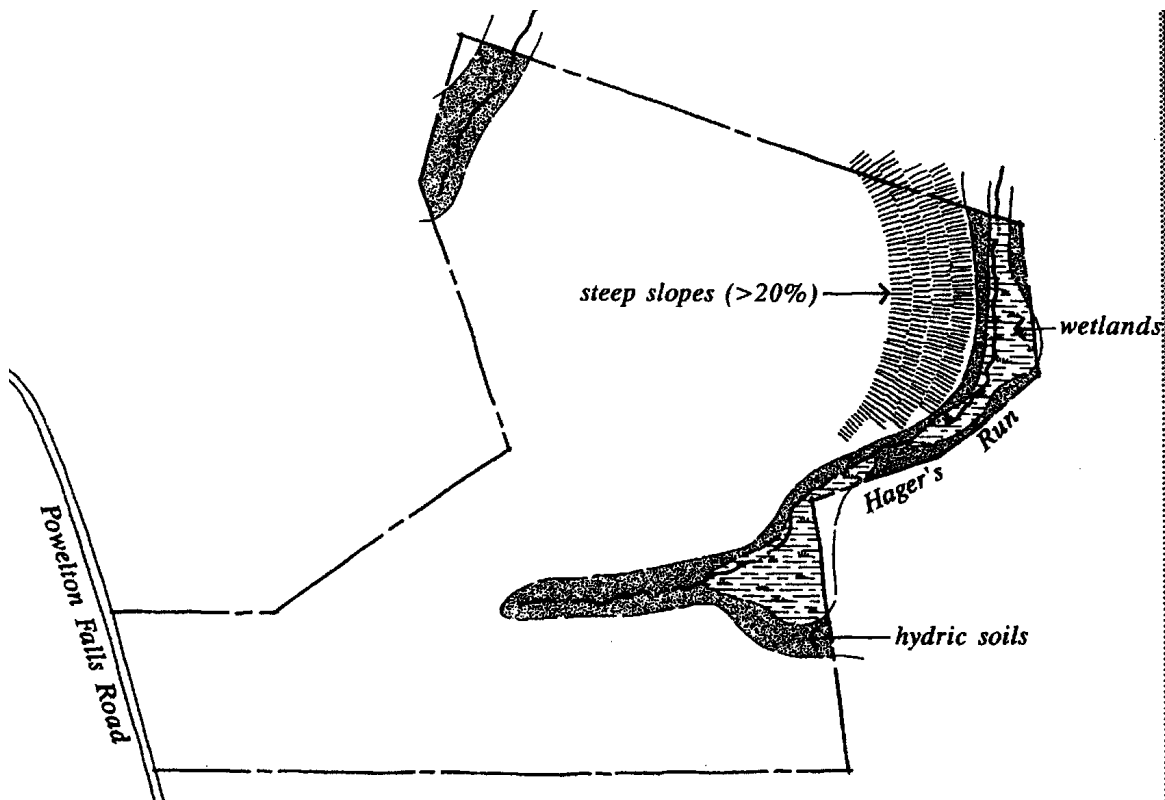
Conservation Design – 2 – *Yield Plan*



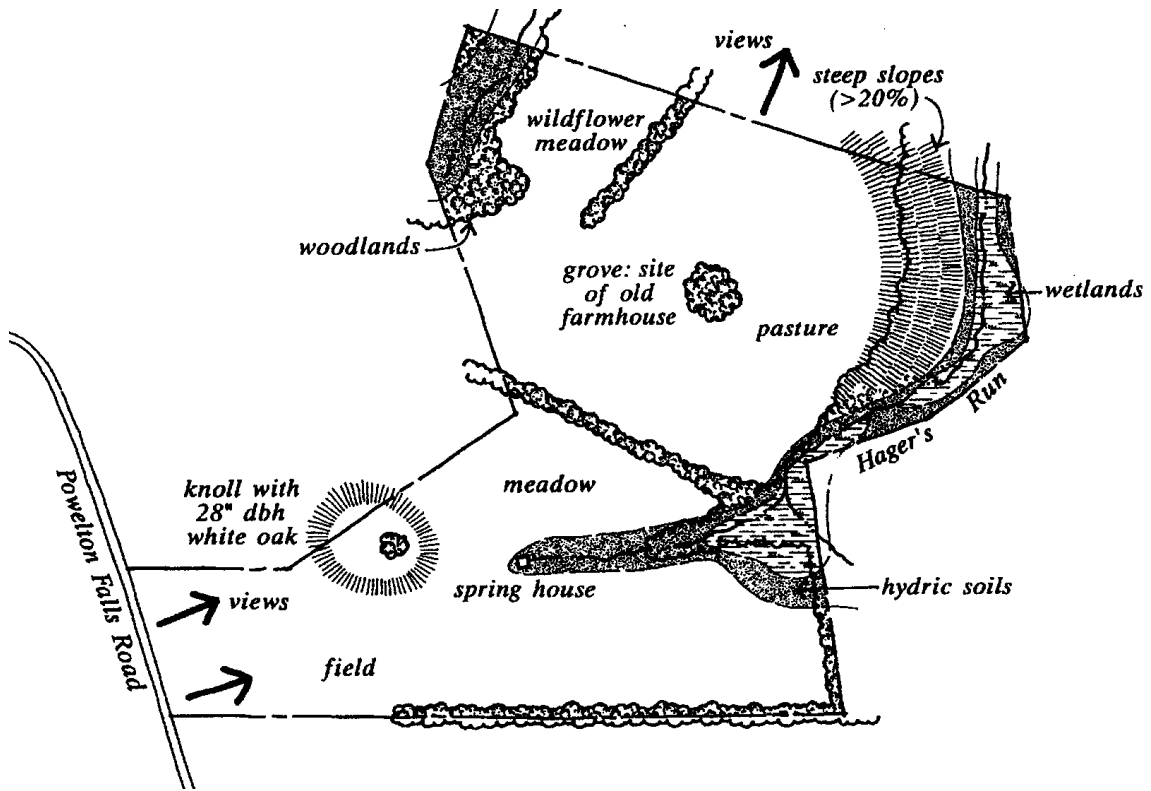
Conservation Design – 3 – *With Conventional Development*



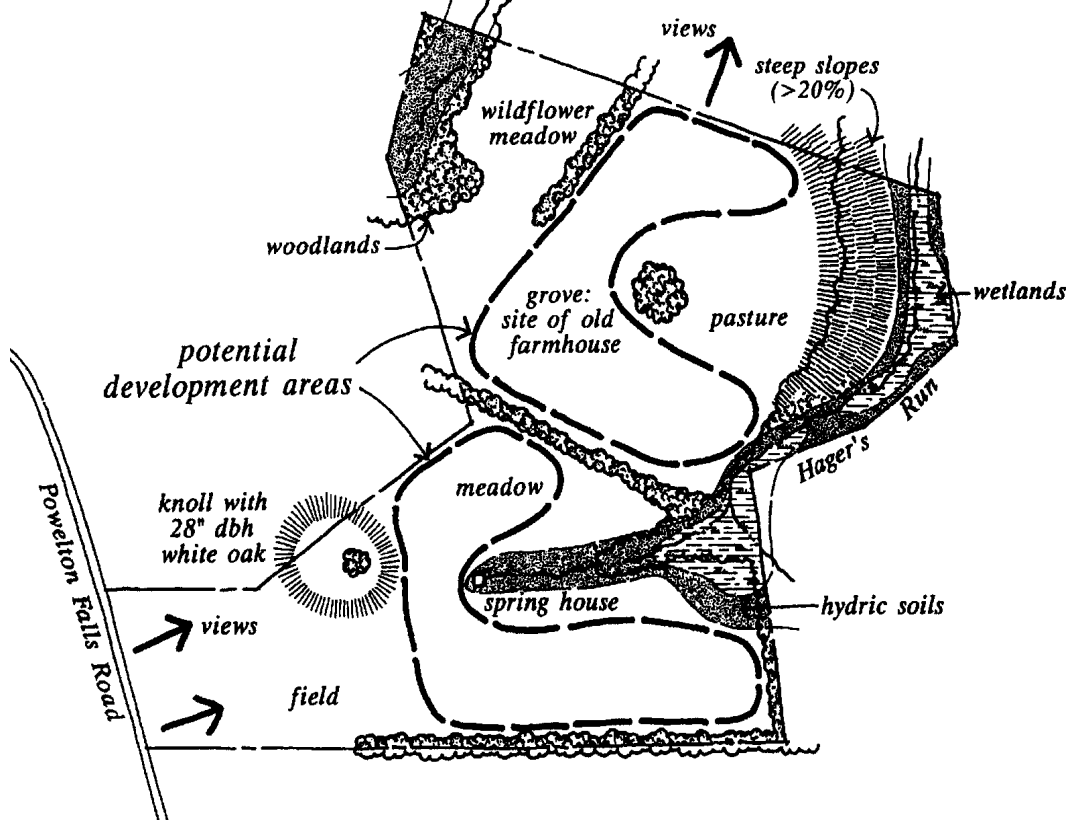
Conservation Design – 4 – *Identifying Primary Conservation Areas*



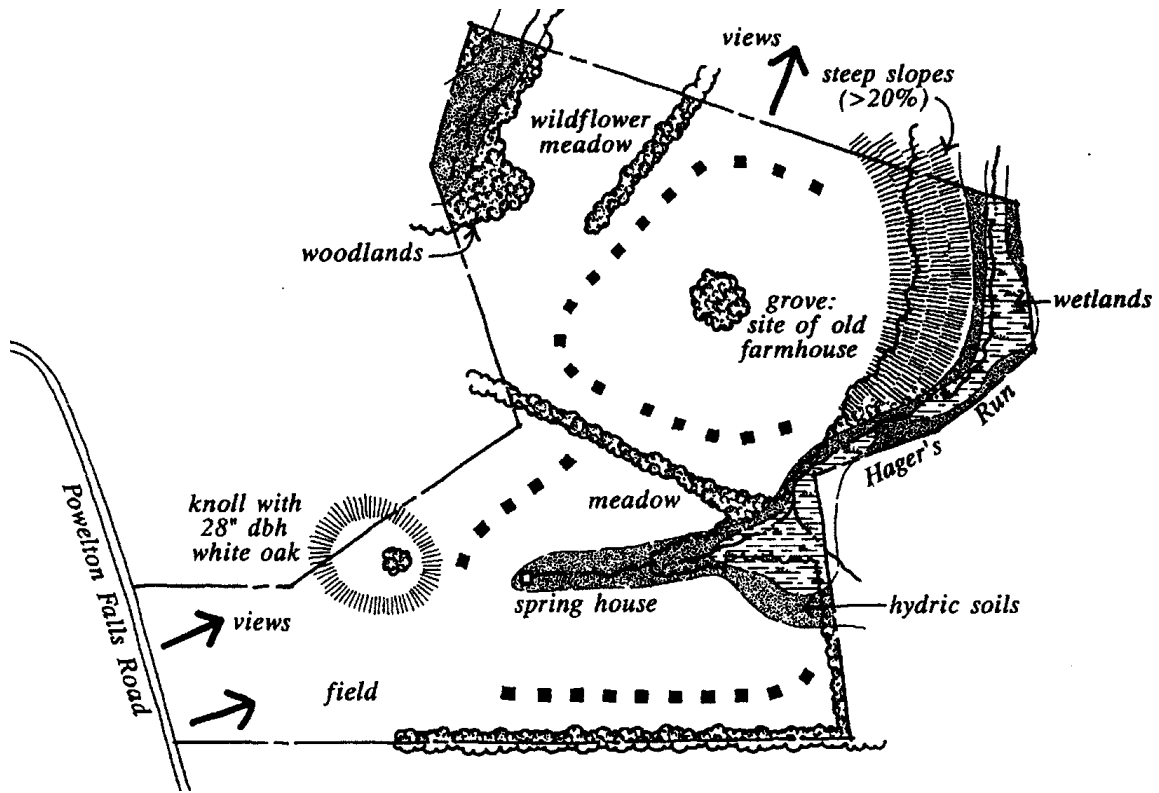
Conservation Design – 5 – Identifying Secondary Conservation Areas



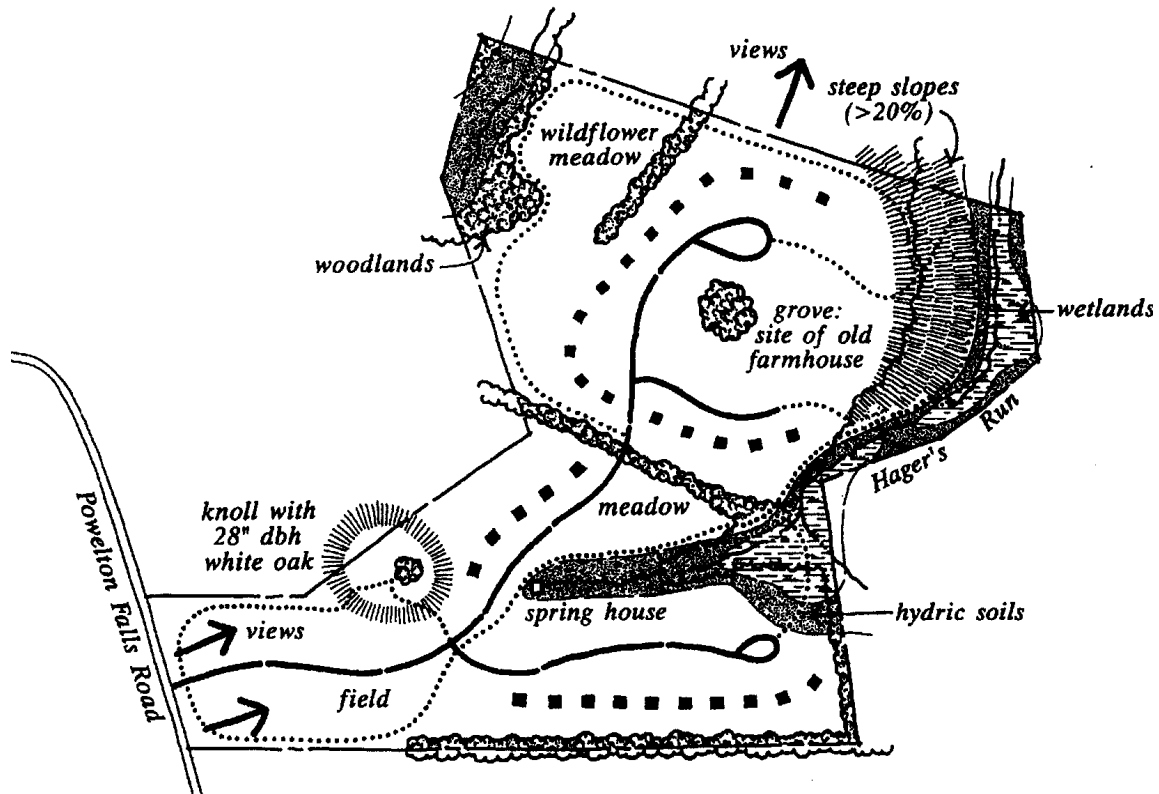
Conservation Design – 6 – Identifying Potential Development Areas



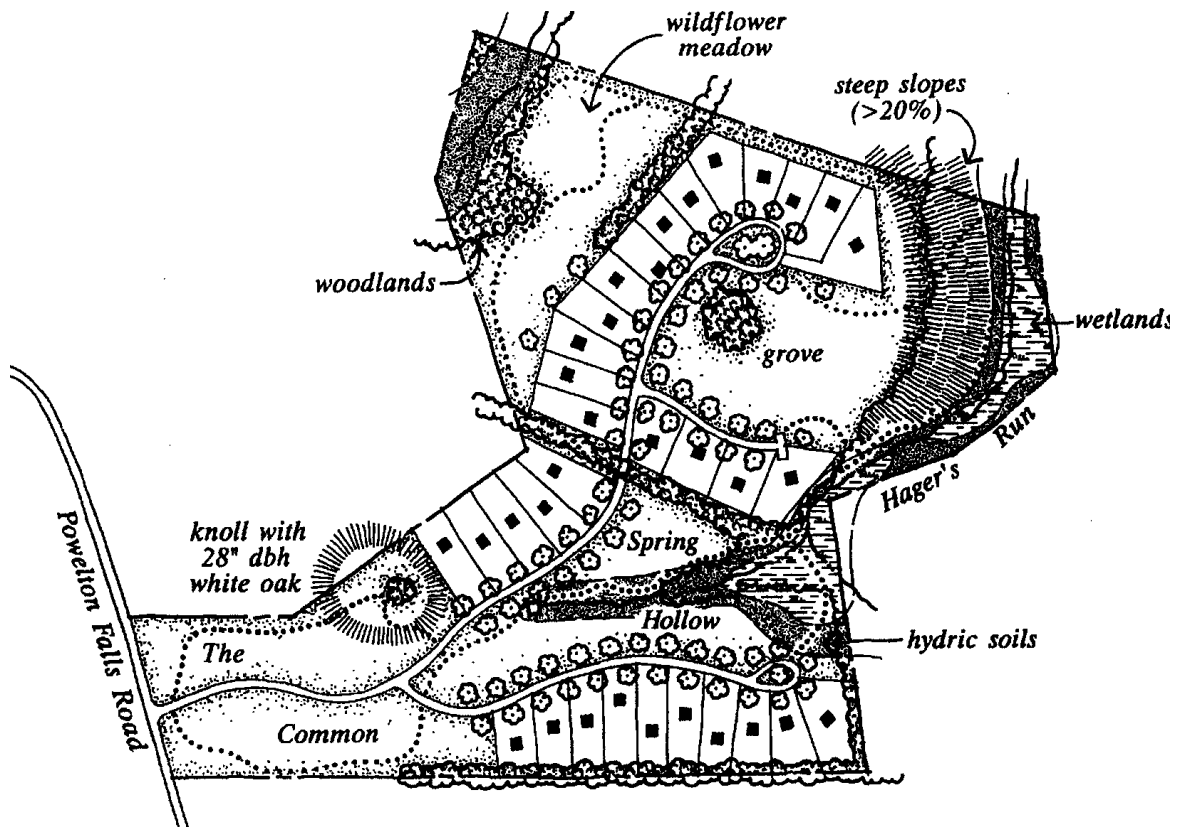
Conservation Design – 7 – Locating Potential House Sites



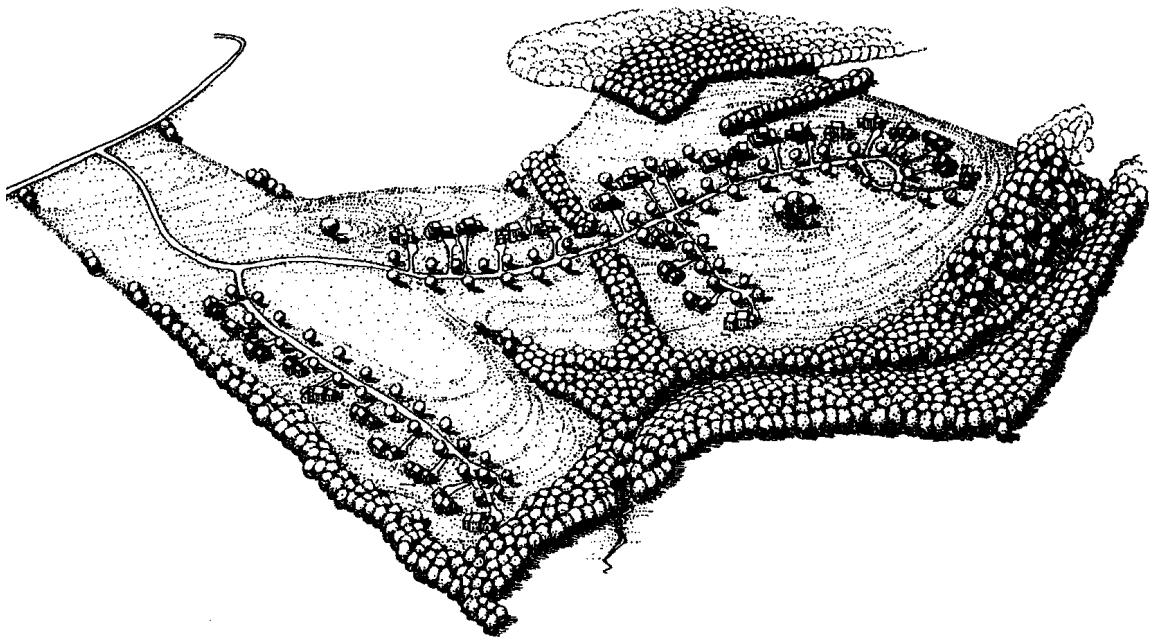
Conservation Design – 8 – Designing Road Alignments and Trail Links



Conservation Design – 9– *Drawing in the Lot Lines*



Conservation Design – 10 – *With Open Space Design*



Fiscal Benefits of Open Land Preservation

Open Land Preservation not only benefits the environment, but has many fiscal benefits as well. The Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Cooperative Extension, in *Extension Circular 410 - Fiscal Impacts of Different Land Uses, The Pennsylvania Experience*, reports on a study conducted in a number of townships in Pennsylvania, including several rural townships. Revenue collected compared to funds spent on services by land use category is reported in Table IV-2, Cost of Community Services Ratios by Land Use. The study found that:

- ♣ Land uses affect the size of the local

government, the types of services it offers, the types of equipment it must purchase, and the taxes it must levy.

- ♣ Land use also affects the number of students in the local school district, the sizes and number of school buildings, the number of teachers, and the taxes and tax rates the school levies.
- ♣ The overall fiscal impact of a land use depends on both its (tax) revenue and its (municipal) expenditure impacts.
- ♣ Residential land, on average, contributed less to the local municipality and school district than it required back in expenditures.
- ♣ Commercial, industrial, and farm- and open land contributed more to the local municipality and school district than they took, thus helping to subsidize the (service) needs of residential land.

Table IV - 2 Cost of Community Services Ratios by Land Use				
Township In:	\$ revenue collected : \$ spent on services			
	Resid	Comm	Indus	Open
<b>South Central Townships</b>				
Bethel Lebanon County	1 : 1.08	1 : 0.07	1 : 0.27	1 : 0.06
Carroll Perry County	1 : 1.03	1 : 0.06	—	1 : 0.02
Maiden Creek Berks County	1 : 1.28	1 : 0.11	1 : 0.06	1 : 0.04
Richmond Berks County	1 : 1.24	1 : 0.11	1 : 0.06	1 : 0.04
Straban Adams County	1 : 1.10	1 : 0.17	1 : 0.05	1 : 0.06
<b>Philadelphia Area Townships</b>				
Bedminster Bucks County	1 : 1.12	1 : 0.01	1 : 0.04	1 : 0.04
Buckingham Berks County	1 : 1.04	1 : 0.16	1 : 0.12	1 : 0.08
<b>North Central Townships</b>				
Bingham Potter County	1 : 1.56	1 : 0.26	1 : 0.15	1 : 0.15
Stewardson Potter County	1 : 2.11	1 : 0.37	--	1 : 0.15
Sweden Potter County	1 : 1.38	1 : 0.07	--	1 : 0.08
<b>Western Township</b>				
Allegheny Wstmrlnd County	1 : 1.06	1 : 0.15	1 : 0.14	1 : 0.13
Source: <i>Calculating a Cost of Community Services Ratio for Your Pennsylvania Community</i> , The Pennsylvania State University, 1998				

- ♣ If growth must occur, commercial and industrial development has a potentially beneficial impact on the tax base as long as it does not dramatically raise the demand for services.
- ♣ When farmland is converted for residential purposes the land will be converted from a net contributor to the municipality and school district into a net drain.
- ♣ Even with preferential assessments, farmland ends up subsidizing the educational costs of residential land and plays a positive economic role in the community.

The Montgomery County (Pennsylvania) Land Trust identifies the following additional benefits of open land preservation

**Increased Property Values:** Property becomes more valuable because of

- ♣ Attractive Settings
- ♣ Wildlife and natural area accessibility
- ♣ Recreational Opportunities
- ♣ Environmental Education Possibilities

**Corporate Relocation:** Many reports indicate that a high quality of life attracts

new businesses, which in turn boost the economy. Land preservation improves quality of life by providing access to:

- ♣ Natural Setting
- ♣ Convenient health-enhancing activities
- ♣ A calming visual respite from a busy work environment

**Visitor Services/ Travel Industry:** Open space and natural areas, such as parks, draw visitors to the County thereby creating revenue. The Communities along these open areas can create revenue-generating visitor services, including:

- ♣ Recreational Equipment sales and rentals
- ♣ Special events
- ♣ Food
- ♣ Lodging
- ♣ Convenience items

**Expenditures by Residents:** Recreation expenditures account for portions of family spending for things like:

- ♣ Biking
- ♣ Hiking
- ♣ Fishing
- ♣ Camping
- ♣ Driving
- ♣ Special Events

**Community Cultivation:** Preserved open space adds to the community's character. When a community gets together to preserve something they come away with:

- ♣ An appreciation of history
- ♣ Improved family cohesion
- ♣ Pride in their local heritage
- ♣ Improved Public health

### **Other Preservation/Conservation Techniques**

Comprehensive Planning - enables counties, boroughs, and townships to create a vision for the future which can focus on open land preservation.

Maximum Lot Size Standards - limits the amount of land devoted to a use as a means to preserve agriculture.

Lot Averaging Standards - overall density is maintained while the individual lot size varies.

Flexible Lot Size - sets lot size based on the availability of public water supply and/or sewage disposal.

Transferable Development Rights - the right to develop is sold from areas to be preserved to areas where development is encouraged; the overall area density development remains the same. Units, which would be constructed on the *sending* property are developed on the *receiving* property, and the *sending* property is preserved. ([www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/tafs-fptool.htm](http://www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/tafs-fptool.htm))

Overlay Zoning - applies special standards in addition to the underlying zoning district for areas of special concern (e.g., floodplains, prime farmland, steep slopes).

Agricultural Protection Zoning - designate areas where farming is the primary land use and discourage other land uses in that area.

Open Space and Natural Area Acquisition -conservation easements or fee simple title acquired by public bodies or conservation organizations. Permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation value. ([www.lta.org/conserve/options.htm](http://www.lta.org/conserve/options.htm))

Greenways - corridors of public and private lands preserved as open space, often along streams.

Riparian Buffers - areas of vegetation left undisturbed along streams and lakes.

Wellhead and Aquifer Protection - special standards wells and groundwater sources to protect water quality.

Sewage Facilities Planning - conducted in accord with DEP regulations and aimed at assuring adequate sewage disposal and water quality protection.

Floodplain Management - local regulations based on National Flood Insurance Program standards to minimize flood related damages to structures.

Stormwater Management - local regulations based on area wide plans to minimize stormwater runoff.

Erosion and Sedimentation Control - coordination with County Conservation District to minimize soil loss and protect water quality.

Differential Assessment - agricultural and forest land is assessed at its value for agriculture/forestry, instead of the fair market value; example in Susquehanna County would be Clean and Green (Act 319).

### **Conservation Easements . . . . . private and public actions to preserve land and rural character**

A conservation easement is a legal agreement that is voluntarily entered into between a landowner and a land trust or government agency which places permanent restrictions on the use or development of land in order to protect its conservation values.. The easement may be sold or donated by the property owner. In addition to government agencies community based non-profit organizations are also acting to preserve land and rural character by accepting donation or acquiring conservation easements. Such organizations range in size from the Nature Conservancy, a nationwide organization, to small organizations with Board members from the local community.

#### **Advantages Offered by Conservation Easements**

Private Ownership: The property remains in private ownership and continues to contribute to the local tax base. The landowner may choose to live on the land, sell it, or pass it on to heirs.

Owners Satisfaction: Gives the landowner the satisfaction that the land will remain unchanged.

Flexibility: Easements are flexible and can be written to meet a particular land-owner's needs while protecting the property's resources.

Permanency: Most easements are permanent, remaining in force when the land changes hands. The easement holder ensures that the restrictions are maintained.

Tax Reduction: There are significant tax advantages if easements are donated, rather than sold.

Charitable Taxes: The donation of a conservation easement to a land trust is treated as a charitable gift of the development rights. The donation creates a charitable tax deduction, equal to the value of the conservation easement, on the landowner's Federal and State income tax returns.

Estate Taxes: Estate taxes are significantly lower, sometimes making the difference between heirs holding onto the family land or selling it to pay inheritance taxes.

Property Taxes: Conservation easements will sometimes lower property taxes, a result of reduced valuation on property subject to the conservation easement.

Minimizes Effect of Development: Minimizes other impacts of residential development such as increased population, traffic, and demand for community facilities and services.

### **A Conservation Easement in Susquehanna County**

#### **Stockholm farm sells Agricultural Conservation Easement**

The Stockholm farm is included in the Rush & Dimock Township Agricultural Security Areas. A perpetual easement placed on this property help preserve the rural nature of the townships and contribute to maintaining a critical agricultural mass in the area. This is the third farm in Dimock Township and the first in Rush Township to be preserved by an agricultural easement.

The conservation practices in use on this farm include pasture and hayland management, diversions, obstruction removal, tree planting; wildlife area improvement, conservation cropping system, contour farming and woodland management..

Susquehanna County' s program is part of a statewide Agricultural Conservation Easement Program that protects viable agricultural lands through the purchase of development rights on farm properties. An agricultural conservation easement is a legal restriction on land development that limits the use of. land to agricultural purposes.

The State Agricultural Land Preservation Board has established minimum requirements which farmland tracts must meet to be eligible to be considered for easement purchase. Farmland tracts shall:

- 1) Be located in an agricultural security area consisting of 500 acres or more:
- 2) Be contiguous acreage of at least 50 acres unless the tract is at least 10 acres and is either utilized for a crop unique to the area or is contiguous to a property which has a perpetual conservation. easement in place.
- 3) Have at least 50 percent of the soils which are available for agricultural production and are of capability classes I-IV.
- 4). Contain the greater of 50 percent or 10 acres of harvested cropland, pasture or grazing land.

Applications are available at. the Susquehanna County Penn State Extension Office. The application acceptance period is November 1st through January 15 each year. Applications are ranked according to soil quality, development potential, farmland potential, and clustering

potential. The highest ranking farm is considered for purchase first. The farm is appraised to determine the easement value.

All easements are perpetual. All normal agricultural uses are permitted, including crop and livestock productions, and the construction of farm buildings. One additional residence may be constructed on the farm for the purpose of housing the landowner or for housing farm employees. All agricultural production on the farm must be conducted in accordance with a conservation plan approved by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Funding comes from an annual allocation by the Susquehanna County Commissioners. These county funds are matched by the State Bureau of Farmland Protection, which also awards grant money to counties. Susquehanna County landowners have received an average of over \$600 per acre for giving up their development rights. Unfortunately, because of funding limitations, only one or two farms can be preserved each year in Susquehanna County. The Susquehanna County farmland preservation program has preserved nine farms covering 2,490 acres, with perpetual agricultural conservation easements.

For more information on Susquehanna County' s program, call Evie Gff at the Penn State Cooperative Extension office (570) 278-1158 or contact one of the board members: John Benscoter, Eleanor Kurosky, Brian Gesford, and Commissioner Lee Smith.

#### **Preservation of Agricultural and Compatibility of Land Use Regulations**

A distinction must be made between preserving agricultural land and preserving agriculture. While open land conservation techniques can be used to minimize the consumption of land for development, such programs must be coupled with a concerted effort to directly preserve agriculture and to minimize conflicts between residential and commercial development and agriculture. As development occurs and farmland is fragmented by interspersed residences; the potential for conflict increases. People who move to the country for the rural lifestyle are not accustomed to living with normal agricultural practices such as the application of pesticides and herbicides, spreading of manure and other fertilizers, machinery in fields at night, and

slow moving farm vehicles on roads. If normal agricultural practices are impinged by the complaints of noise, odor and road delays, the preservation of agriculture becomes difficult. In short, many people are in favor of the preservation of agricultural land, but not necessarily in favor of preserving agriculture and its normal attendant practices.

A successful agriculture preservation program cannot be accomplished solely by any one entity working independently. Agriculture preservation is a local, municipal, county, state and national issue which must be addressed by all levels of government and only with the cooperation of the landowners and public. Farmers have been preserving agricultural land for generations simply by working the land, and the decision to initiate a comprehensive agricultural land preservation program cannot be made without their concurrence and participation. The land and the value that it holds does in fact belong to the farmer and its preservation cannot be legitimately accomplished without maintaining the land's monetary value or compensating the farmer. Land values can be maintained where soils are productive, large parcels of contiguous land are available with few conflicting uses, and agriculture is an economically viable activity. Large lot, low development density agricultural zoning may be effective in these areas. Should the farmer decide to sell his land, which has been zoned for agriculture, the value of the land is maintained by its agricultural productivity. In contrast, instituting large lot agricultural zoning in areas where agriculture is not economically successful simply takes the value of the land. The land has no agricultural value and residential development is precluded by the zoning. In essence, the landowner is paying for the public goal of open land preservation because he cannot capture the development value of the land. Where soils are less productive, or the agriculture economy is marginal, or development demand for land has inflated its value, other preservation techniques involving compensation to the landowner may be necessary. In any case, a combination of programs and techniques are generally used in areas where agriculture has been successfully preserved.

### Agricultural Protection Zoning

*Agricultural Protection Zoning refers to county and*

*municipal zoning ordinances that support and protect farming by stabilizing the agricultural land base. Maintaining a critical mass of agricultural land and farms allows the retention of an agricultural infrastructure and support services, such as equipment dealers and repair facilities, feed mills, fertilizer and pesticide suppliers veterinarians, spraying and seeding contractors, food processors and specialized financial services.<sup>1</sup> This type of zoning also referred to as APZ, designates areas where farming is desirable based on the soil quality. APZ ordinances contain procedures for delineating agricultural zones and for defining the land unit to which regulations apply. Typically, APZ sets a very low residential density for new development and limits non-agricultural uses. Agricultural protection zones are mandatory, unlike agricultural security areas, which are voluntary. APZ helps stabilize the agricultural land base by keeping large tracts of land relatively free of non-farm development. APZ also maintains a *critical mass* of agricultural land to maintain farming in the future. See the following side bar from the September 1995 *Pennsylvania Township News* for additional discussion.*

The following are some of **the benefits** that Agricultural Protection Zoning would bring to the area:

- ♣ Inexpensive way to protect large areas of agricultural land
- ♣ Reduces the likelihood of conflicts between farmers and non-farming neighbors
- ♣ Helps prevent suburban sprawl and infrastructure costs
- ♣ Can be implemented quicker than other conservation tools
- ♣ Easy to explain to public
- ♣ Flexible, can be modified as necessary

APZ also has its drawbacks, such as the following:

- ♣ APZ is not permanent
- ♣ APZ can reduce land values
- ♣ APZ can be difficult to monitor and enforce
- ♣ County APZ ordinances do not protect agricultural land against annexation by municipalities<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/tafs-apz.html](http://www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/tafs-apz.html)

<sup>2</sup>[www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/tafs-apz.html](http://www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/tas/tafs-apz.html)

Agricultural protection zoning (APZ) is appropriate in areas with good soils and viable agriculture and is used extensively in Lancaster, Berks and York Counties where the agricultural value of the land is high in comparison to its development value. Given the limited extent of prime soils and the difficult state of agriculture in Susquehanna County, APZ is probably not a viable approach because farmers would be limited from using their property for uses other than agriculture, and in essence, would be supporting the public effort to preserve open land by forfeiting their development rights. In addition, the adoption of APZ in an area where few zoning ordinances have been enacted would be difficult in terms of public understanding, and without the support of the farming community would not be feasible.

**Agricultural Security Area**

Agriculture Security Areas (ASAs), authorized by the Agricultural Area Security Law, PA Act 1981-43 (Act 43), are initiated by landowners whose combined parcels total at least 250 acres. The parcels must be viable agricultural land and the ASA may be comprised of non-contiguous tracts at least ten acres in size. Subsequent ASA’s recorded by the municipality are not required to meet the initial minimum size. As of October 1999, some 3.2 million acres of farmland have been included in 824 ASAs in the Commonwealth. A voluntary program in that landowners must work together to initiate enrollment and secure the minimum acreage for each Agricultural Security Area prior to requesting its approval by the local government and recording in the Courthouse. The landowner initiative to include land in an ASA is a good indicator of local interest in agriculture preservation. ASA’s provide protection from local ordinances, which restrict farming practices and nuisance ordinances, unless the local municipality can clearly demonstrate a direct public purpose for the regulation in order to protect the public health, safety and welfare. The ASA also restricts land condemnation procedures by state, county and local governments without approval by the State Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board, and ASA’s cannot be considered as a site for a low-level radioactive waste disposal, which spurred the designation of many of the ASA’s in the County. In cases where the ASA includes 500 acres or more, the farmland becomes eligible for the state conservation easement purchase program. The ASA program is voluntary and not permanent, with each ASA reviewed every seven years, and the land can be sold for development at any time.

Table IV-3, Agricultural Security Areas in Susquehanna County, shows, by municipality, the total acreage of agricultural security areas that have been established in Susquehanna County through 2002. Almost 191,000 acres, thirty-six percent of the County’s land area, are currently enrolled in this program, with Lenox Township including the highest number of acres in the County, almost 17,000, and Jessup Township the highest proportion, seventy-five percent. County and local officials should continue to encourage landowners to participate in ASA Program and local municipal zoning ordinances should consider ASA’s in the

zoning district designation process.

	Acres		
	Ag Security Acres	Total Acres	
Apolacon Twp	3,738	16,640	22%
Ararat Twp	3,152	13,440	23%
Auburn Twp	8,592	30,720	28%
Bridgewater Twp	13,029	23,680	55%
Brooklyn Twp	9,800	14,720	67%
Choconut Twp	4,304	12,800	34%
Clifford Twp	2,953	26,880	11%
Dimock Twp	7,094	17,920	40%
Forest Lake Twp	6,941	19,200	36%
Franklin Twp	4,096	14,720	28%
Gibson Twp	6,514	26,880	24%
Great Bend Twp	2,598	24,320	11%
Harford Twp	8,259	20,480	41%
Harmony Twp	626	21,120	3%
Herrick Twp	6,128	16,640	37%
Jackson Twp	3,441	16,000	22%
Jessup Twp	9,165	12,160	75%
Lanesboro Twp	583	1,920	30%
Lathrop Twp	8,358	14,080	59%
Lenox Twp	16,689	25,600	65%
Liberty Twp	10,618	19,200	55%
Middletown Twp	9,275	19,840	47%
New Milford Twp	7,750	29,440	22%
Oakland Twp	1,458	10,240	13%
Rush Twp	16,761	23,680	53%
Silver Lake Twp	1,695	20,480	8%
Springville Twp	12,778	23,040	64%
Thompson Twp	4,484	14,720	30%
County Total	190,879	530,560	36%

**Agricultural Conservation Easement Program / Susquehanna County** Conservation easements, which can be applied to agricultural land and other open land, preclude development on the land. The landowner voluntarily sells the perpetual conservation easement to a government agency or private conservation organization such as a land trust. (See previous conservation easement sidebar.) The selling price for agricultural conservation easements is typically the difference between development value and the agricultural value. The Susquehanna County Board of Commissioners have appointed the Susquehanna County Agricultural Land Preservation Board which directs the County Agricultural Preservation Program, and the Commissioners provide ongoing administrative and matching easement purchase funding. This enables Susquehanna County to participate in the Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Program, which provides state funding for agricultural easement purchase. Easements are purchased based on criteria, which, include soil quality, likelihood of conversion of the farm to other uses, proximity to other eased lands, and quality of land stewardship. The long- term goal of the Susquehanna County Ag Easement Program is to preserve farmland with better soils. To be eligible in Susquehanna County, farms must be located in an agricultural security area and at least half of the soils must be used for crops or pasture and must be Class I - IV. The farm must also be able to generate at least \$25,000.00 in annual gross receipts. The owner of the land continues to farm and is able to receive payment for development rights, but is restricted from developing or using the land for any purpose other than agriculture. To date Susquehanna County has purchased conservation easements on fifteen farms totaling 3,625 acres at an average price of \$650 per acre, and is currently working with landowners to acquire easements on two additional farms. Of the forty-seven counties in the Commonwealth, Susquehanna County ranked twenty-seventh in agricultural conservation easement acreage in November 2001. Statewide, some 1,760 farms are preserved by easement totaling 213,000 acres purchased at an average price of \$1,997 per acre, with a range of \$13,500 paid in Delaware County to a low of \$500 per acre in Perry County. Given the economic and landowner and public acceptance difficulty of applying agricultural protection zoning in the County, the purchase of conservation easements, if adequately funded, could

be the most effective means for long term agricultural land preservation.

**Clean and Green/ Tax Incentives**

The Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act, known as the Act 319 Clean and Green Program, was enacted in 1974 to bring more equity in the tax structure for rural landowners and to help preserve farmland, forest land, and open space by authorizing a differential tax assessment for enrolled parcels. The land is assessed by the participating county assessment office according to its use rather than the prevailing market value. Three categories of land are eligible -- agricultural use, agricultural reserve use, and forest reserve use. The agricultural use category includes land, which is actively used for producing an agricultural commodity. Agricultural reserve is noncommercial open space land that is open to the public free of charge for recreational opportunities. Forest reserve must contain trees capable of producing timber or wood products.

The amount of tax revenues lost from the land enrolled in the program must be shifted to the other taxpayers with the intent of placing the tax burden on those developed properties which generate the greatest demand for services. Landowners voluntarily enroll their property, which must be ten or more acres, or if it is less, the land must be able to produce \$2000 annually from the sale of agricultural products. Land which is taken out of the program is subject to a rollback tax, imposed for up to seven years plus a six percent penalty. The interest from the penalties is dedicated to the purchase of agricultural conservation easements.

Year	Total Parcels
1998	6,674
1999	6,824
2000	7,035
2001	7,249
2002	7,480
Source: Susquehanna County Assessment Office Records	

What are the Clean and Green impacts on land use in Susquehanna County? As reported in a 2001 study

conducted by Cornell University<sup>1</sup>, the number of lots less than ten acres being platted in Susquehanna County has decreased over the past five years, while the number of lots over ten acres has increased. The lot size increases are predominantly due to the effect of the Clean and Green Program which enables the owner of a lot over ten acres to qualify for a real estate tax reduction. Between 1991 and 2001, the proportion of new lots under ten acres declined from sixty-one percent to forty-three percent, and the proportion of lots between ten and twenty acres increased from twenty-two percent to thirty-four percent. During the same period, the median lot size increased from six to 10.1 acres. (See Figure IV-3)



*Agricultural land in Susquehanna County*

There is much concern in Susquehanna County about the Clean and Green Program. Many residents believe the Clean and Green Program unfairly shifts the tax burdens from large landowners to small landowners. Many residents of the County feel that the Clean and Green program should be reserved solely for farmers who are actively farming and producing agricultural commodities, not simply for any land owner who has ten or more acres of land. The Cornell study asks the pertinent question .... *does the statute preserve land and help the small farmer or give developer's the incentive to build 10-acre subdivisions?*<sup>2</sup> Clean and Green does preserve open space and agricultural lands, but it also has ...*caused a loss of tax revenue throughout the state particularly effecting areas like Susquehanna*

<sup>1</sup>Berger, Bonnie, *The Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Assessment Act of 1974 (Clean and Green): The Impacts to Susquehanna County*, Fall 2001, Cornell University.

<sup>2</sup>Berger, p. 12.

*County. The financial burden often falls on a portion of residents who cannot afford it. Wealthy homes on large acreage may pay less property tax than modest homes on small parcels.*<sup>3</sup>

Act 156 of 1998 amended the Clean and Green statute to allow the farmstead land, or the base acre, which may include a residence, farm building or other accessory, to also qualify for the preferential assessment. Act 156 has exacerbated the problems with Clean and Green in Susquehanna County. *The relationship between the cost of preferential assessments and the development pressures is important to understand the programs effectiveness, the justification and the distribution of costs.*<sup>4</sup> In Susquehanna County the program cost in shifted tax burden is not warranted by the relatively modest development pressure. The tax burden shift is felt more sharply in small, rural areas with a small population base. Susquehanna County has more farmland and forestland available for the program and thus has more participants shifting the burden to others. With 7,035 in 2000, Susquehanna County had the second highest number of Clean and Green parcels statewide and the second largest number of acres at 391,351.

Fiscal impacts to the County are great. Class I agricultural land in Susquehanna County is typically valued at \$1,133 per acre compared to the Clean and Green dollar value of \$478, a fifty-eight percent reduction. Residents with smaller house lots are paying higher taxes than most with ten acres or more. Clean and Green is diluting the tax base in Susquehanna County, people in a low population county are paying more than their share for a program which benefits the entire state. Many states reimburse municipalities for revenue loss due in preferential assessment programs, but Pennsylvania does not. Due to the flexibility of eligible use definitions and rising land prices, Act 156 has also created an incentive for dispersed, large lot development. The *necessity* to own ten acres to qualify for Clean and Green has resulted in the platting of unnecessarily large lots which are not being used for any agricultural purposes and are

<sup>3</sup>Berger, p. 14.

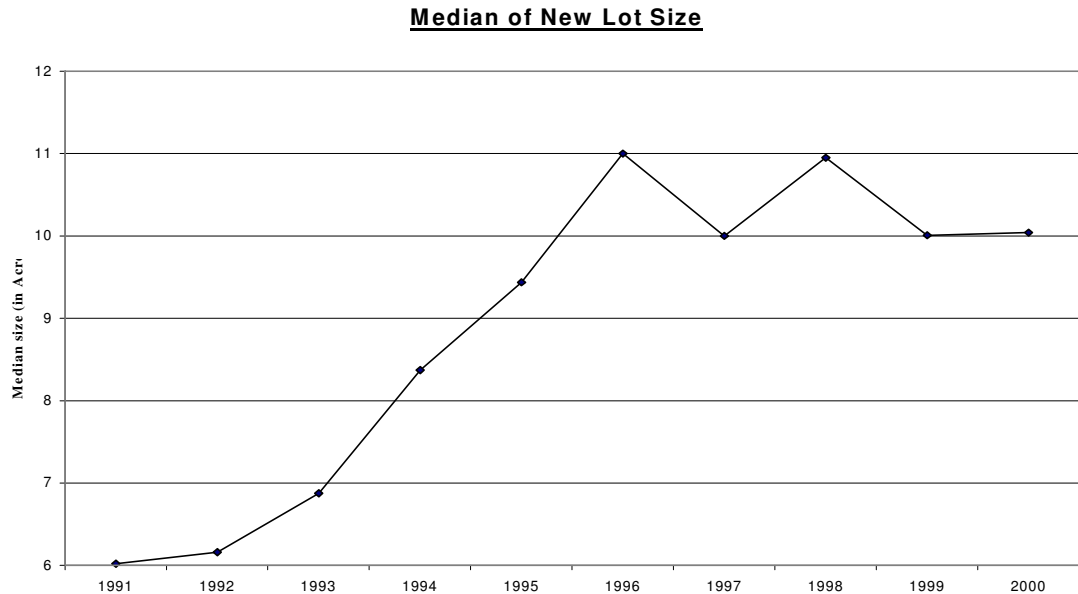
<sup>6</sup>Berger, p. 6.

shifting the tax burden to the tax payers who own small lots. Some people believe that preserving ten-acre tracts preserve land, while others believe that it proliferates sprawl and fragments the landscape on a larger scale.

Currently, State Representatives Sandra Major and Tina Pickett are attempting to change the Clean and

Green Program to make the *farmstead*, or base acre, portion of the tract enrolled in the Forest Reserve and Agricultural Reserve categories ineligible for preferential assessment. County and local municipal officials should support this change to the Clean and Green Program to forestall additional large lot subdivisions and refocus the Program back to its original intent of preserving agriculture and forestry.

Figure IV-3



**Watershed Planning**

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, a watershed is “an area of land, including all the surface and ground waters within it, that drains to a body of water.” Susquehanna County is part of the second largest watershed in the U.S., the Susquehanna River Basin, which drains to the Chesapeake Bay. As evidenced by the ecosystem degradation problems in the Bay, land use activities in the upper reaches of a watershed will affect downstream water quality. Soil erosion and sedimentation and increased storm water from residential and commercial development, sewage treatment plant discharges, and poor agricultural practices all add to the pollutant loading. Watershed planning focuses on the whole watershed, not just managing individual wastewater discharges or other specific pollutant sources. “Watershed planning and management involves many activities,

including: targeting priority problems in a watershed; promoting a high level of involvement by interested and affected parties; developing solutions to problems through the use of expertise and authority of multiple agencies and organizations; and measuring success through monitoring and data gathering” ([www.state.me.us/dep/blwq/watersh/htm](http://www.state.me.us/dep/blwq/watersh/htm)). Watersheds do not follow political boundaries; efforts made at watershed levels will require involvement and coordination of multiple geographical entities, such as municipalities, boroughs, county, and state agencies. Management activities take place at the state, river basin, or individual watershed level, and coordination is critical.

The Susquehanna County Soil and Water Conservation District supports local, grass roots efforts with the creation and work of Watershed Associations. Currently, there are two watershed

groups that are active in the County, the Snake Creek Watershed Association and the Choconut Creek Watershed Associations. The County is in the process of starting up the Wyalusing Creek Watershed Association and the Tunkhannock Creek Watershed. Concerned private citizens to protect the areas watersheds from uncontrolled development and water quality degradation created these associations.

#### Snakes Creek

The Snakes Creek Watershed, comprised of the area drained by the main branch of Snakes Creek Watershed and Little Snakes Creek, includes 148 square miles. The Little Snakes Creek Watershed includes parts of Silver Lake Township and extends into Broom County, New York, and the Snakes Creek Watershed includes parts of Silver Lake, Liberty, Bridgewater, and Franklin Townships. The Snakes Creek Watershed Association was formed to “maintain the quality of resources...provide education...and to promote responsible development and to maintain the culture of the area” ([www.snakescreek.org/faq.htm](http://www.snakescreek.org/faq.htm)). The Association was funded by a state “Growing Greener” Grant, which aided with initial expenses, water testing equipment, training; and in-kind services are provided by the Susquehanna County Conservation District and the Endless Mountains Resource Conservation and Development Council, via its Watershed Incubator Program. In the Spring of 2002, the Association was awarded a second Growing Greener Grant for an assessment of the condition of the watershed. Assisted by GTS Technologies and Hawk Engineering, the Association found all of the sub-watersheds in the study were in fair to excellent condition. The Snakes Creek Watershed Association has contracted with GTS Technologies to perform a sedimentation study at Quaker and Laurel Lakes and make recommendations for improvements.

#### **Choconut Creek**

The Choconut Creek Watershed includes the Townships of Choconut, Silver Lake, Apolacon, Forest Lake and Vestal in New York State, and encompasses 30.43 square miles or 19,473 acres. “The Association seeks to preserve the high quality of the Choconut Creek, and to reduce flooding and erosion” ([www.stny.com/choconut/CCWA%20Minutes.htm](http://www.stny.com/choconut/CCWA%20Minutes.htm)). The Choconut Creek Watershed Association is also

part of the Endless Mountains RC&D Council’s Watershed Incubator Program. The Association conducted a preliminary watershed assessment done by Larson Design Group and identified problem areas including numerous unstable banks and gravel bars. The Choconut Creek Watershed Association has received a fourth “Growing Greener” grant for the design and DEP permit process for a two-mile stream restoration project.

#### **Wyalusing and Tunkhannock Creek Watershed**

The County Conservation District is currently working with interested citizens on organizing Watershed Associations for Tunkhannock Creek and Wyalusing Creek. The Tunkhannock Creek Watershed includes parts of Susquehanna, Wyoming, and Lackawanna Counties and the Wyalusing Creek Watershed includes parts of Bradford and Susquehanna Counties.

#### **Need for Watershed Planning**

Both the Snakes Creek Watershed Association and the Choconut Creek Watershed Association are very active in protecting the quality of their waters and planning for watershed conservation, and have set an example for other citizens and local officials in the County. Watershed Planning is a proactive approach to conservation and more watershed associations should be formed in the County to promote conservation and water quality protection by:

- ♣ Organizing interested citizens and local officials. Working with the County Conservation District, the Endless Mountains Resource Conservation and Development Council, and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to take full advantage of available technical assistance and grants.
- ♣ Assessing the condition of the watershed and existing water quality.
- ♣ Establishing an ongoing water quality-monitoring program.
- ♣ Using study information to educate the public about the importance of watershed protection.
- ♣ Taking a balanced approach and recognizing the importance of environmentally sensitive growth and development to the economic well being of the community.
- ♣ Working within the framework of local government for sound land use planning and growth management.

- ♣ Identifying problem areas and designing specific restoration projects.

### County Action

Susquehanna County will provide the necessary staff and other resources to the Conservation District to ensure that adequate organizational support and technical assistance is provided to all local groups working to form a watershed association and to ensure that continued support services are available to all operational watershed associations.

### Water Supply

Potable water in Susquehanna County is provided primarily from individual groundwater wells serving residences and businesses with a number of small community water systems. Several large central water systems serve many of the more densely populated municipalities as noted below. No chronic water supply problems have been identified in the County with current supply adequate to meet anticipated development over the next ten to fifteen years. Water quality issues are typically related to high mineral content, often iron and manganese, with few reports of chemical contamination. Some

localized bacterial contamination related to malfunctioning on-lot sewage systems has occurred, and given the number of such systems in the County with less than ideal soils, the potential for such contamination is real. In addition, agriculture related nitrate and pesticide levels in groundwater can be a concern. Nitrate levels, which exceed ten milligrams per liter are considered a health hazard and can cause *blue baby* disease, which interferes with the blood's ability to carry oxygen. The County's primary reliance on groundwater for domestic purposes, in combination with the use of on-site disposal systems and agricultural practices, demands that groundwater quality be carefully monitored. Based on the thousands of acres of open land in the County, which facilitates groundwater recharge, quantity of supply does not appear to be an issue. In other words, groundwater aquifers are recharged at a rate higher than the water is withdrawn for use. (See *Hydrologic Cycle in Pennsylvania and Rate of Recharge* sidebar.) Nevertheless, this does not obviate the need for the wise use and conservation of water and the protection of groundwater recharge areas.

### Water Companies in Susquehanna County

Pennsylvania American Water Company - Drinking water for almost 2,700 dwellings and businesses in Susquehanna County is provided by the Pennsylvania American Water Company (PAWC), which is regulated by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. Some 250,000 gallons per day of potable water for Montrose Borough and part of Bridgewater Township are supplied by groundwater wells and which passes through the PAWC filtration plant which has a maximum capacity of 650,000 gallons per day (gpd). A 1.2 million gpd filtration plant and a 50-gallon per minute well serve Hallstead Borough, Great Bend Borough, Susquehanna Borough, Lanesboro Borough, Great Bend Township, Oakland Township, and Harmony Township, with current usage averaging 550,000 gpd. A 33-gallon per minute well serves Thompson Borough with current consumption at 18,000 gpd; filtration is not required. The Forest City Area is also serviced by a central water system owned and operated by the PAWC. According to the PAWC, Stillwater Reservoir is the main source of supply for the Forest City Water Treatment Plant, located along the Lackawanna River in Forest City. The Lackawanna River serves as an alternate source of supply. The Forest City Plant delivers approximately 360,000 gallons per day to the distribution system for residential, commercial, and industrial use.

National Utilities - National Utilities, Inc. (NUI), serves eighty-seven customers in Hop Bottom Borough and Brooklyn. This water system can handle a modest increase, but there has been no increase in customers over the past several years, and significant increases are not anticipated in the near term.

New Milford Borough - The New Milford Municipal Authority serves almost 500 customers in the Borough. The total capacity of their water system is 230,000 gallons per day, and they are currently at 90,000 gpd.

### Recommended Actions

Specific actions for conserving water supply and protecting water quality are largely not within the authority of Susquehanna County. Consumers must use water wisely, water companies must maintain water systems to minimize water losses, and the Commonwealth and local governments must act to ensure both ground and surface water quantity is conserved and quality is protected.

#### Consumer Actions

- ♣ Conserve water.
- ♣ Maintain on-lot sewage disposal system.
- ♣ Use lawn and garden fertilizer and pesticide in accord with recommended application rates.
- ♣ Use phosphate free detergents.

#### Water Companies

- ♣ Improve and maintain water distribution systems to minimize water loss.
- ♣ Encourage water conservation by customers.
- ♣ Charge for water based on the amount used.
- ♣ Consider system interconnection for maintaining adequate supplies.

### **The Hydrologic Cycle in Pennsylvania and Rate of Recharge**

Each year on an average, 41, inches of precipitation falls in Pennsylvania. Six inches of that enters streams and lakes directly either as surface runoff or as flow that enters streams from the unsaturated zone under the land surface. Twenty inches returns to the atmosphere through evaporation and transpiration. The remaining fifteen inches infiltrates the soil and moves downward to the zone of saturation to recharge groundwater, a recharge rate of about thirty-seven percent. Although not specific to Susquehanna County, the Pennsylvania Geological Survey Water Resources *Report 65, Groundwater Resources of Pike County, Pennsylvania*, provides an idea of the amount of ground water recharge that can occur. The report indicates that the average groundwater recharge rate in Pike County is 992,000 gallons per day per square mile. Nevertheless, over development and periods of below normal rainfall can combine to create water supply problems.

### **Water Supply and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code**

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) in Section 301(b), requires comprehensive plans to contain a statement recognizing that:

- 1) Lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities.
- 2) Commercial agriculture production may impact supply sources.

Recent MPC changes state that zoning ordinances can only regulate mineral extraction and agriculture only to the extent that such zoning is not preempted or superceded by state regulation. The required water supply language appears to be a reminder to local officials of the limitation of regulating or arguing against mineral extraction and agriculture based on water supply impacts.

#### State and Local Government

- ♣ Adopt well ordinances to regulate, in addition to installation, the testing and closure of wells.
- ♣ Adopt wellhead and aquifer protection standards.
- ♣ Enforce existing water quality protection regulations.
- ♣ Require developers of projects involving large quantities of groundwater to document potential impacts and mitigation actions.
- ♣ Maximize groundwater recharge by encouraging or requiring the use of innovative land based sewage disposal and storm water management techniques.

#### Susquehanna County (Conservation District, Penn State Extension, Planning and Development)

- ♣ Encourage well testing programs be developed to monitor groundwater for bacterial and nitrate contamination where individual participants pay for well water tests and the results are recorded and mapped.

- ♣ Work with local municipalities and state agencies to identify areas with ground or surface water contamination and develop plans for corrective action.
- ♣ Should growth and development and population increases dictate or if water supply problems begin to surface, consider preparing a more definitive County Water Supply and Well Protection Plan.

### **Important Natural Resources -- Forestry and Mining**

Susquehanna County relies on its natural resources to supply a living for many individuals. In addition to agriculture, forestry and mining have long been important to the economy of Susquehanna County. Agriculture contributes about \$18 million dollars to the local economy each year and forestry contributes another \$16 million dollars. In recent years, the bluestone industry has blossomed and coupled with the other quarry and sand and gravel operations, annually contributes some \$110 million to the local economy. While new types of businesses and industries will be important to the County, the historic contribution and current and future operational needs of natural resource businesses must not be forgotten. Without viable agriculture, forestry and mining, the economic condition of the County would be severely crippled. Nevertheless, the economic importance of natural resources must be balanced against the critical need to ensure that the County's environment is protected by compliance with all environmental regulations and the application of best management practices in the use of all natural resources.

#### **Forestry**

This *Comprehensive Plan* encourages forestry activities throughout the County provided such operations are conducted in accord with sound forest management practices and environmental regulations. According to the report titled "An Assessment of Forest Resources and Conservation for the Northern Tier Coalition of Townships" (Hirsh, Robert, 2001, NTRES 492, Cornell University) in 2001 some eighteen forestry, wood products, and paper products businesses and almost twenty logging operations employed almost 300 people in the County. Much of the timber that is forested goes to local sawmills to be processed into hardwood lumber to be sold as wholesale and retail.

Although lumber contributes greatly to the area economy, the County lacks value-added wood products industries, such as furniture operations, home manufacturing and other industries that could generate more revenue for the local economy. Although the monetary value of the forested lands in Susquehanna County cannot be ignored, the forests are also provide a myriad of recreational opportunities including hiking, biking, birding, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, hunting, fishing, camping, and many other outdoor activities.

Private ownership accounts for the largest percent of the forest areas, with ninety-six percent, while governmental ownership only accounts for four percent. Each private landowner is responsible for proper management. Landowners manage their forests for a variety of reasons including income from timber sales, wildlife habitat, recreation, water quality protection, bio-diversity, and timber for long-term investment. Improper harvesting and management practices often raise stream water quality and other environmental concerns with local residents and local officials. It is critical for public acceptance of forestry, environmental quality and the long-term viability of the industry and forest resources that logging professionals and individual landowners use best management practices when harvesting and for long-term forest maintenance.

The County has no direct role in the management of forests. However, it does supply office spaces with rental charge for the County Forester who is employed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry and who assists landowners with forest management and promotes best management practices. In addition, the County Soil and Water Conservation District provides assistance with soil erosion and sedimentation control planning.

The County Planning Department provides land use planning technical assistance to local municipalities and will emphasize the importance of forestry in the County and encourage municipal officials to be reasonable in any local regulations adopted to address forestry. In other words, local regulation must strike a balance between maintaining environmental quality and unreasonable interference in forestry enterprises. The importance of this balance is reflected in the Pennsylvania

Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), which at Section 301(a)(7)(iii), states that a county comprehensive plan shall *encourage the compatibility of land use regulation with existing agricultural operations* (the MPC definition of agriculture includes forestry). The MPC is even stronger in supporting the rights of forestry in its authorization for zoning ordinances, Section 603(f), stating: *Zoning ordinances may not unreasonably restrict forestry activities. To encourage maintenance and management of forested or wooded open space and promote the conduct of forestry as a sound and economically viable use of forested land throughout this commonwealth, forestry activities, including, but not limited to, timber harvesting, shall be a permitted use by right in all zoning districts in every municipality.* The MPC defines forestry as *the management of forests and timberlands when practiced in accord with accepted silvicultural principles, through developing, cultivation, harvesting, transporting and selling traces for commercial purposes, which does not involve any land development.* Land developments include buildings such as sawmills and wood products manufacturing which can be treated as separate uses in the zoning ordinance.

#### Forest Legacy Program

The Agricultural Easement program has been a success in saving over 3,625 acres of farmland in the County and a similar program is now available to Susquehanna County for forestland protection. The Pennsylvania's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) provides federal funding for up to seventy-five percent of the cost of conservation easements or fee acquisition of forest lands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses ([www.lta.org/publicpolicy/flweb.htm](http://www.lta.org/publicpolicy/flweb.htm)). The U. S. Forest Service requires non-federal sources for twenty-five percent of the costs and state and local governments, landowner contribution, land trusts or non-profit agencies can provide this share.

The Forest Legacy Program has seven main goals:

- ♣ To maintain traditional forest uses, including recreation and timber harvesting following Best Management Practices.
  - ♣ To maintain productivity of forests for future generations.
  - ♣ To reduce the trend toward forest parcelization.
  - ♣ To conserve significant tracts of contiguous forest.
  - ♣ To conserve water resources and riparian zone.
  - ♣ To conserve important habitats for plants, fish, and wildlife
  - ♣ To restore degraded forest ecosystems
- The FLP is available to purchase easements on lands or properties only in an approved Forest Legacy Areas, which in Pennsylvania are counties. A local conservancy/land trust or another non-profit organization must apply for sponsorship, and once certified, may nominate a county for designation as a Forest Legacy Area. The county must agree with the FLA designation and sponsoring organization prior to approval by the state and federal government. The FLA sponsor is responsible for community outreach, landowner contact, and compliance monitoring, and the State via the Department of Conservation and Natural resources is responsible for the enforcement of the easement. While the state program has concentrated primarily on easements as a means of protecting conservation values while also maintaining economic uses including timber harvesting, FLP funds may be used for all of the following:
- ♣ Purchase of conservation easements
  - ♣ Fee acquisition
  - ♣ Surveys, title work, and other activities to facilitate donations of land or easements for FLP purposes
  - ♣ State FLP planning and administration
- The lands entered into the FLP will remain working forests in perpetuity with many benefits such as the following:
- ♣ Alleviates economic pressure to convert forest land to non-traditional uses
  - ♣ Assures access to adjoining public properties and enhance recreational opportunities
  - ♣ Ensures management of forested riparian areas to enhance water quality
  - ♣ Alleviates parcelization of forest lands
  - ♣ Ensures sustainable forestry practices through implementation of a Forest Stewardship Plan
- Specific County Actions to Encourage Sustainable Forestry
- ♣ Include forestry and value added forest products industries in economic development efforts.

- ♣ Continue to support the efforts of the State Forester in providing technical assistance to forest land owners and promoting best management practices.
- ♣ Continue to support the efforts of the County Conservation District for soil erosion and sedimentation control.
- ♣ Evaluate the costs and benefits of the County Conservation District assuming delegated authority for soil erosion and sedimentation control enforcement.
- ♣ Via the Planning Department, encourage local municipalities to be reasonable when adopting any local regulations governing forestry in terms of regulating types of cutting, including requirements for best management practices and compliance with state environmental regulations.
- ♣ Work with elected state representatives and DEP to ensure effective enforcement of regulations applicable to forestry enterprises.

#### Mineral Extraction

This *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes the importance of providing for *the reasonable development of minerals* in the County, and similar to forestry, encourages mineral extraction throughout the County provided such operations are conducted in appropriate locations and in accord with sound mining practices and environmental regulations. The minerals of importance present in the County are bluestone, sand and gravel, and quarry stone. As is the case with any industry, mineral extraction must be undertaken carefully to minimize community concerns and ensure environmental protection. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) approximately 250 quarries hold active permits in the County, and DEP holds the primary authority for quarry regulation including standards for operation (setbacks, dust control, noise limitations, blasting), replacement and restoration of affected water supplies, and reclamation.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) severely limits the range of development and operational standards that can be applied to mineral extraction by municipalities, with location standards the primary tool available to local jurisdictions.

Planning Code §603(I) states that *zoning ordinances shall provide for the reasonable development of minerals in each municipality*. The Code definition of minerals is: *Any aggregate or mass of mineral matter, whether or no coherent. The term includes, but is not limited to, limestone and dolomite, sand and gravel, rock and stone, earth, fill, slag, iron ore, zinc ore, vermiculite and clay, anthracite and bituminous coal, coal refuse, peat and crude oil and natural gas*. The Code, at §603(b) allows zoning ordinances to regulate mineral extraction, but only to the extent that such uses are not regulated by the state Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, the Non-coal Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, and the Oil and Gas Act. In short, zoning ordinances may limit mineral extraction to certain zoning districts and establish minimum parcel sizes related to the size and nature of the operation, and require the submission of plans and operation information, but cannot regulate the specifics of the operation. In addition, a zoning ordinance can define asphalt- plants, concrete plants and other mineral related manufacturing as separately regulated uses.

#### Specific County Actions for Reasonable Mineral Extraction

- ♣ Include minerals and value added mineral products industries, especially bluestone related, in economic development efforts.
- ♣ Via the Planning Department, encourage local municipalities to be reasonable when adopting any local regulations governing mineral extraction.
- ♣ Any zoning ordinances implemented by the County or municipalities should require a minimum size to be no less than the permissible area allowed by DEP for that type of mining.
- ♣ Mining and related operations should be directed to areas where road access and conditions are adequate, and where conflicts with other development and the loss of prime agricultural land is minimized.
- ♣ Work with elected state representatives and adjoining counties to pressure DEP to provide the necessary staff to ensure effective enforcement of mining regulations and preferably to locate an office closer than Pottsville.

### **An Overview of Susquehanna County's Natural Resources – Especially its Minerals**

From a presentation by William S. Young at the Natural Resources Workshop held in Montrose, Pa., on October 24, 2002. Copyright @ 2002 William S. Young

*Probably our oldest continuous industry--one carried on almost entirely by individuals--is trapping for pelts. Sawmills and grain mills run a close second, and have also been continuous. With the early mills began the use of waterpower at sites throughout the county.*

*Settlers clearing their land generally used the stone for field walls and building foundations. Wood that was not saw milled they often burned to make charcoal or to produce "black salts"--a crude potassium carbonate that could be further refined into potash for fertilizer and pearl ash for leavening. The refineries were called asheries. Some were large and regional, others small and local. Small asheries and charcoal pits existed in Ararat. Another charcoal operation was near Susquehanna.*

*Past industries of importance related to agriculture or timber harvesting were woolen mills, tanneries, wood-turning factories, and wood-acid factories. The tanneries took the hemlock bark and the factories took the hardwoods. Wood-acid making in America was begun by Scottish technicians at Conklin, New York, in the 1850s. The process was at first secret. A factory at Brandt was the second in America; another early acid factory was at Brookdale. Later there were six more in the county. These factories burned wood to distill pyroligneous acid, which they mixed with slaked lime to produce acetate of lime or "wood vinegar"-- calcium acetate. This was shipped mostly to England and Europe for use in fabric dyes. Charcoal led a list of byproducts. A by-products plant near Brandt made alcohol. Our area provided many skilled workers when sawmills and acid factories moved west in Pennsylvania.*

*In speaking of natural products we often overlook ice. Until electric power made mechanical refrigeration possible dairymen relied on the local pond, lake, and stream ice, and sometimes cut their own. Creameries needed ice for the railroad milk cars. and much ice was also shipped out of the county by rail to creameries and other users in New York and New Jersey. The large ice house at Heart Lake sent out nearly 500 carloads in 1898.*

*Quarrying didn' t hit its stride until the 1870s and ' 80s beginning in the central part of the county and spreading to the townships south of Montrose, to Harmony, Auburn, New Milford and elsewhere. Oil-stone was taken from Gibson Township by interests from New York as early as the 1820s. Oil-stone is used to make whetstones for sharpening knives and other tools. The material from Gibson proved too soft and the operation was soon abandoned.*

*Here and there stone was used for bridges, most notably for a county landmark, the New York & Erie Railroad' s Starrucca Viaduct built at Lanesboro in 1847-48. A quarry at Montrose provided material for the building of a county jail in 1853. Local stone was also used for the nearby larger jail completed in 1868 and used as a jail until recent times. By 1872 stone was being quarried in Montrose for the town' s sidewalks.*

*The first quarrying boom continued into the opening years of the twentieth century. Susquehanna County stone was shipped to major cities and as far away as Cuba, much of it for curbs and sidewalks. White stone from Forest City went into Binghamton' s Broome County courthouse. A quarry in Auburn and another near New Milford used steam tractors to haul their stone to railheads. Sometimes very large pieces were quarried: a block 8 inches by 8-1/2 feet by 28-1/2 feet required two days, two teams, and thirty men to bring it to the rail loading dock at Stevens Point in 1897.*

*After concrete largely displaced stone, there were always a few persons around who knew stone and continued to work with it locally. During the great depression of the 1930s a Works Progress Administration crew built a highway retaining wall of stone at Stevens Point. Now we have a second boom in stone, quarries have been opened or reopened all over the county, and more stone is being shipped than was sent out one hundred years*

ago. Besides the traditional bluestone flag, it comes in other colors and shapes and sees a variety of uses. Some quarrymen have revived the elaborate processes for making stone products.

We also have active gravel pits, including a bank in Oakland Township that yields aggregate for concrete. Our major past purely mineral resource was in the southeastern corner of the county: anthracite, which hasn't been mined around Forest City or in most of the Northern Field for a number of years. By the broad definition of "mineral" we may include the beds of peat moss that have been worked commercially at several locations in recent times.

Except for stone and anthracite, most past mineral operations or reported discoveries in the county have been small, short-lived, disappointing, or just plain bogus. Pennsylvania's first geological survey, made by State Geologist Henry Darwin Rogers and a corps of assistants in 1858, lent no encouragement to notions that the county had useful deposits of iron, copper, or paint ore. State Geologist J. Peter Lesley, when he introduced the second survey in 1881, described our area as "uncommonly barren of mineral resources." There might be lots of hematite (iron) ore, but practically speaking it was out of reach, from 1,000 to 5,000 feet below ground.

Because there was coal around Forest City, people were sure there must be coal along Snake Creek. or around Apolacon, Gelatt, Melrose, Union Dale, Brandt, Choconut, Red Rock, Jackson, Ararat, Oakland, South Gibson, Silver Lake, Susquehanna, Hallstead, and other places. Futile digs or drillings were made at several locations. Traces of coal may have turned up in quarries now and then, but not in exploitable quantities. True, some twenty years ago anthracite was mined at two locations in Thompson and Harmony townships, but it was culm--powdery waste coal that had been used about eighty or ninety years earlier to fill old trestles on a since-abandoned railroad.

Rock formations lining the Susquehanna Valley were known to contain manganese oxide, small particles of which collected in some of the bogs along the river. In the middle nineteenth century several tons of this were shipped out by rail from a site near Great Bend. But whoever received it seems to have found it of no real value.

In Ararat and around Elk Mountain there are many dark boulders containing from 10 to 65 per cent lime conglomerate. The noted geologist Israel White, who explored the county for the Second Pennsylvania Geological Survey in 1880, thought these should be burned to make agricultural lime for the local poor soil but the only place this is known to have been done was at Cherry Ridge in Wayne County. Israel White was the first to grasp that oil and gas accumulate beneath convex domes of rock-- what the discipline calls anticlinal trapping.

In the past, a few other mineral resources have been used successfully. Sand for the short-lived window-glass works at Dundaff in the 1830s was gathered from the shores of Crystal Lake. Around 1900 a Clifford farmer was shipping sand to the railroad foundries in Carbondale. Over the years brick or terra cotta clay was found near Brandt, Montrose, Hallstead, and Burnwood. Brandt became a center for the making of bricks and terra cotta products. It had two brickworks, which finally merged. Clay was taken from a 75-foot glacial bank jutting into the Starrucca Valley below Brandt at Schlager's. Brantbrick was used in Susquehanna for buildings and street paving in Binghamton for the Kilmer Building, and at Deposit, New York for the large milk condenser that is now the Agway warehouse. A brick works also operated at Burnwood for a while.

In 1897 a Civil War veteran living south of Hallstead along Salt Lick Creek was prospecting for flagstone on his farm when he uncovered a 12-foot bed of what it seems was bauxite ore--the principal source of aluminum--mixed with ferric oxide as bauxite usually is. It turned out to be good for making Venetian-red paint. Ferric oxide is still used in pigments today. It's another name for rust. At least 25 years earlier a deposit of "mineral paint" had been said to lie on the other side of the Susquehanna Valley northeast of Taylortown (now Hickory Grove). Scranton capitalists formed the Hallstead Paint Manufacturing Company and laid plans for a factory. The veteran sold them land. It appears that the ore was still being dug in 1902 when he moved to Union Dale to take up a new vocation as a harness-maker.

Many residents can testify to the presence of a sulfurous taste in some local water. This has been known to encourage exploration for oil and something like it led the Butterfield brothers to establish a spa near a mineral spring in Rush Township during the 1870s, along Deer Lick Creek about a mile southeast of present-day Lawton.

*They built a three-story 40-by-60 hotel on an elevation with a view. There were no heated baths and apparently the crowds didn't come for long. Other mineral springs were discovered along Riley Creek in Auburn. Another was reported at Birchardville and still others in Dimock and Great Bend townships.*

*There were at least two locations in the county where salt was made by evaporation from natural brine. One was in Middletown, where drilling began as early as 1825 and some salt was made during the 1830s and 1860s. Historic Salt Spring in Franklin has been extensively researched as part of the establishment of the state park there. State Geologist J. Peter Lesley recommended in 1881 that a 3,000-foot test well for salt be drilled in Susquehanna or Wayne counties. He felt there was scant hope of finding oil, although brine is often a harbinger of oil or gas.*

*It is the quest for oil and gas that has stirred the most excitement and been attended by the greatest disappointment. Oil was first sought in the county in the 1860s during the western Pennsylvania oil boom. A well drilled at West Auburn in 1865-66 went down over a thousand feet and found pockets of gas and sulfur-impregnated salt water and bare traces of oil. The same company later drilled at Little Meadows and in Apolacon Township without success.*

*The old Indian Salt Spring site in Franklin, laboriously drilled by hand in the early nineteenth century, was re-drilled in 1865 with a steam-powered rig and some dairy salt made. Further drilling to a reputed depth of 800 feet in 1870 or after produced a richer flow of brine. This company's property was the object of a sheriff's sale in 1872. Another company, in which prominent residents of the county were involved, drilled about 2,000 feet for gas in 1902 finding oiled sand and tapping a modest flow of gas that was used for some time by the family whose house was on the land. One more company drilled for gas in the early 1920s. Traces of gas still bubble from the well.*

*In 1877 local interests began drilling in Oakland Township along the north bank of the Susquehanna near the present Mormon historic site where oil was said to float on the surface of a tributary brook. A decade earlier area investors had drilled a 1,000 foot hole on the river's opposite shore. New York interests, supported by local investors, drilled to a depth of 2500 feet in Brooklyn Township in 1894 and reportedly found some gas. The well was plugged the following year, the investors lost their money, and the derrick was taken to Factoryville.*

*Another venture, backed by several well known Scrantonians, began drilling near Hallstead in 1902. The drill broke and had to be fished out. Traces of crude oil were reported. In 1903, at 600 feet, the drill hole was dynamited producing a small amount of gas. By 1908 the hole was down 1500 feet and there were plans to go farther. Then the drill got stuck again. Drilling resumed in 1911, apparently without satisfactory results.*

*The Geology of Pennsylvania, jointly published in 1999 by the Pennsylvania Geological Survey and the Pittsburgh Geological Survey estimates that there could be anywhere from 2 billion to 131 billion cubic feet of natural gas underlying our county. But, chances of finding gas lessen as the search moves eastward across northern Pennsylvania. Where we are deep wells going down at least 1,000 feet would be required. Although the northwest part of the county holds the most promise. Even there geologists view the prospects as merely speculative to unfavorable. Abandoned anthracite mines are another possible source of exploitable gas.*

*Lease rights for oil and gas have been a part of life here for at least a hundred years. Geologists say that any local oil should have progressed to gas long ago. Mere traces of oil have been found and not enough gas to be marketable. Yet it is doubtful that the petroleum companies have given up on us. Remember that gas was reported in most of the county wells we know about. There must be more of it down there. The difficulty may lie in finding a way to link small pockets of gas that are at great depths. Eleven gas wells drilled in Bradford County about 30 miles west of here during the 1990s were recently still producing. Traces of gas have been found as far east as Pike County. It is long established in law that a seller of land may reserve the subsurface rights. It would be rash to assume that exploration for gas will not continue in our county or that usable deposits will never be found.*

## V. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### Overview

Community facilities and services, as provided by local, county and state government, and by quasi-public institutions such as volunteer fire departments, hospitals and libraries, are most often considered in terms of government or institutional response to meet the needs and demands of the community's residents. The types and quality of community facilities and services are critical to the quality of life in a community and can directly affect the potential for growth. As the County and regional population continues to increase and change in character, the demand for facilities and services will also increase and change -- more classroom space, police protection, social services, recreation facilities, etc. will be needed. Public community facilities and services in the County are provided on several levels, and the provision of these facilities and services is dependent on tax dollars, whether in the form of state aid, county supported programs or locally funded facilities and services. Both public and private funds support institutional facilities and services.



*Midtown Park, New Milford*

Community facilities and services can also serve as a tool, or as an unexpected trigger, to guide or stimulate community growth and development. Provision of a public water supply or sewage disposal system can be used to attract industry, but unexpected (and perhaps undesired) associated

commercial and residential development can result in the area where such facilities are provided. The construction or improvement of roads can have similar effect resulting in a change in community character. In short, the planning and provision of community facilities and services must be undertaken in the overall context of the *Comprehensive Plan* and the community's long-term growth and development goals and objectives. More importantly, the County should not act as an island when considering facilities or services, but should cooperate with other counties, local municipal jurisdictions, and the school districts to provide and improve facilities and services, which are best provided regionally.

This section of the *Comprehensive Plan* focuses on those facilities and services that are provided by Susquehanna County. Given the population growth and changing character of the population in the County, the demand for services and facilities provided directly by the County has been continually increasing. For many years in the early history of counties in Pennsylvania, the main responsibility of County officials was operating the judicial and criminal justice system, maintaining property records, organizing elections and voter registration, and administering the tax assessment program. In more recent years, social programs have become an important responsibility, and state related programs such as soil and water conservation, solid waste planning and recycling have added to the facility and service responsibilities of counties. (See Sidebar for additional information on counties in Pennsylvania.) Certainly, the facilities and services provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and local municipalities are vital to County residents, but are somewhat beyond the scope of this *Plan*. Should residents find that state facilities or services are inadequate, County officials can serve as a conduit for communication with responsible state officials to effect facility and service improvements. In order to provide an overview of the range of facilities and services available in a community, Table VI-1, Facilities and Services Providers, includes a matrix of typical facilities and services, which can be provided by various jurisdictions.

Table V-1 TYPICAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES PROVIDERS (not specific to Susquehanna County)					
Service	Local Municipality	School District III	County	State	Quasi-Pub
Social Programs					
Aging			D	S, D	
Domestic Relations			D	S, D	
Children & Youth			D	S, D	
Welfare, etc.				D	
Education		D		S	
Parks & Recreation	S, D	D	S, D	S, D	D
Judicial			D	S, D	
Criminal Justice			D	S, D	
Police Protection	D		D	D	
Emergency Mngmt	D		S, D	S, D	D
Roads/Highways	D		S, D	S, D	
Tax Assessment			D		
Elections	D		D	S, D	
Land records			D		
Libraries, museums	S, D	D	S, D	S	D
Fire & Rescue	S, D		S	S	D
Health Care			D	S, D	D
Utilities	D		D		D
Land Use Control	D		D	S, D	
Environ Protection	D		D	S, D	
Solid Waste Disposal	D		S, D		

S - provides financial support to other jurisdiction or quasi-public entity  
 D - provides directly to public

### **The Pennsylvania County**

*The common thread running through county history is the role of county government as an administrative unit of the state. Counties have traditionally taken their grants of authority from the Commonwealth and, before the Revolution, the provincial government. The earliest responsibilities of counties included the maintenance of the local judicial system and the local prison. Because the prisons were often associated with debtors, counties in a backdoor fashion acquired some responsibilities for human services. The county "poor farm" was an early example that continued into the 20th century. In the early years, the counties also had fairly significant degrees of responsibility for maintenance of what then constituted the local highway system. Counties' roles saw little change through the 19th century, with the exception of the addition of responsibility for the local school system, particularly in the smaller counties. By that time, the local court systems were well established, as were the county jails. The concept of institution districts had been established for counties to begin a tradition of caring for the poor and the disadvantaged. County structure had also remained somewhat constant. From the earliest years, counties had been governed by commissioners or some similar office. Counties also had what are now known as row officers, with the earliest being the sheriff, treasurer and auditor. Many of these row offices were delineated in the early Pennsylvania constitutions. With the advent of the 20th century, the role of county government came to be defined as it is known today. County government now had both state and local dimensions. Its primary responsibilities, traditional in nature, are as an agent of the state for the purposes of the administration of justice, maintenance of legal records, the conduct of elections and the administration of human services programs. Counties have also been granted powers more commonly considered local, rather than state, in character. Some of these powers include zoning, parks and recreation and solid waste management. Since the early 1960s, however, county government has experienced explosive growth, especially in human services programs and court-related areas. Counties have grown into the role of the primary provider of state and federal social programs. Counties have outgrown their former "caretaker" status and evolved into active providers of services for their inhabitants.*

Source: *Manual for County Commissioners*, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, 2001, Page 2.

### **Governmental Structure and Administration**

The County Code of Pennsylvania divides counties into nine classes based on population with higher-class counties having greater population. Susquehanna is a Sixth Class County. The County Code addresses sixth and seventh class counties as follows:

*Sixth Class Counties - Those having a population of 45,000 and more but less than 95,000 inhabitants, and those having a population of 35,000 and more but less than 45,000 inhabitants, which by ordinance or resolution of the board of county commissioners elect to be a county of the sixth class.*

*Seventh Class Counties - Those having a population of 20,000 or more but less than 35,000 inhabitants, and those having a*

*population of 35,000 and more but less than 45,000 inhabitants which have not elected to be county of the sixth class.*

Susquehanna County, with a 2000 Census population of 42,238 persons would be classified as a *Seventh Class County*, however, a previous Board of Commissioners opted to move to the sixth class. The County Code and the State Constitution require the elected officials discussed in the following section for counties not under home rule. In sixth and seventh class counties, the prothonotary and clerk of the courts are combined and the offices of register of wills, recorder of deeds, and clerk of orphans' court are held by one person.

## **Administrative and Departmental Planning Issues**

This *Plan* addresses County facilities and services from the relationship between demand and the staff and office space required to meet the demand. The nature of demand for services varies from department to department and may be related to the number of clients served, the number of documents handled, or the increased responsibilities resulting from state or federal mandates. As demand increases, for whatever reason, the level of service can be expected to decline unless efficiency is improved or the number of staff is increased. Efficiency is often related to the amount and configuration of work and storage space available, use of improved operating techniques (e.g., computerizing or staff training), and effectiveness of interoffice communication.

As part of the planning process, County Department Heads were interviewed to gain a general understanding of responsibilities, current service levels, efficiency of office space, and future needs. The results of the interviews are summarized in the sections that follow. The increase in the number of County employees from 160 in 1990, to 199 in 1995, to 236 in 2002 clearly demonstrates the demand for County services is increasing, and the need for additional office space is apparent from the interviews. The increased demand is obviously related to the recent growth and changes in the nature of the County population and the condition of the economy, along with more state and federal programs and expanding reporting requirements in existing programs. For example, the increasing County population results in more voter registration, marriage licenses, and recycling. More drug and alcohol treatment services, more criminal court and probation cases, social services and tax claims may be linked to a downturn in the economy. The State Emergency Management Agency mandate for the 911 emergency call and addressing system, and Department of Environmental Protection requirements for soil erosion control planning for

smaller development projects translate directly to additional staff time.

Note: Details about county government are available in the *Manual for County Commissioners*, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, 2001, available from the Governor's Center for Local Government Services, (717) 783-0176, or as a PDF at <http://www.inventpa.com> (select *Communities in PA*, select *Local Government Services*, select *Publications*). Much of the information in this section of the Comprehensive Plan was taken from the *Manual for County Commissioners*.

### **Summary of Administrative and Departmental Planning Issues**

- ♣ Many County Departments are experiencing an increased demand for services.
- ♣ Demand for social services and the court system case load is generally increasing more than for other services, and at a rate higher than the County population growth.
- ♣ The need for additional staff and office space is critical in a number of departments and was identified as a near term need by several other offices.
- ♣ Several departments identified a need for more privacy for client interviews, hearings and conferences.
- ♣ Records consolidation, storage, and destruction are issues with many departments.

## Community Facilities and Services Plan

### **Information Infrastructure and the Digital Economy**

#### Background

The nation's social, economic, and lifestyle characteristics have been changed dramatically by national infrastructure deployments: rail transport, electrification, waterway control, air and highway transport. We are currently in the midst of a national and global information infrastructure deployment that will have similar, and potentially greater, impacts, and this deployment is likely to accelerate. Susquehanna County, as a small rural county, cannot control or even much influence the overall infrastructure deployment. We can, however, decide how we want to take advantage of these new communications technologies and we can influence when desired features are made available to us.

To assure that Susquehanna County gains positive benefits from the emerging information infrastructure, we need to articulate a County vision and goals and lay out a general path for attaining the goals. As a first step in doing that the County establishes the following goals to guide the planning process. Additional discussion and a planning outline is provided in Appendix B.

The County Goals are:

1. Promote deployment and exploitation of an advanced Information Infrastructure including widespread introduction of Broadband Telecommunications and Internet Services to provide residents with greatly improved access to educational, health care, and community services while fostering substantial economic growth.
2. Identify opportunities to encourage information technology providers and users to invest in Susquehanna County.
3. Make the County Government an attractive “anchor client” for advanced services by forming “user consortiums” with County schools, libraries and medical facilities, and with neighboring counties. These can serve both to gain volume discounts on new services and to improve the likelihood of obtaining federal and state funding grants.
4. Maintain a current awareness of County needs and of changes in the technology, regulatory, and market environments, which may impact those needs.

A report from the Cascade Policy Institute of Portland, Oregon, “Beyond Zoning: Land Use Controls in the Digital Economy” by John Charles, Environmental Policy Director, (Policy Insight No. 106, June 1998) provides the following discussion about the emergence of a “digital economy” which in many ways may become applicable to Susquehanna County.

We have entered the information era, where wealth is increasingly generated from the processing of knowledge, not raw materials. The natural resource industries —farming, forestry, fishing, mining, and ranching—represent a much smaller part of the overall economic picture than they used to, and this trend is likely to continue. Some analysts have suggested that in a digital economy, “geography is irrelevant”, because the physical features of the landscape are no longer barriers to many types of economic enterprises.

“Perhaps for the first time in history, it is not necessary to accept as inevitable the shift of population from country to city. Technology now affords us the opportunity to locate many jobs anywhere we want them. Thus, those who once had to go to the city to pursue a career now theoretically could stay where they would prefer to be if we gave them the opportunity that is now available. But to rise to the challenge and take advantage of the opportunity

requires different ways of thinking, planning and doing business.”

*The digital economy calls for new land use policies. The telecommunications revolution of the past 20 years has created a digital economy. This new order is characterized by rapid change, real-time communication, and the substitution of knowledge for raw material processing. Many governmental policies, including land-use planning, are becoming obsolete in the digital economy, because electronic networks simply bypass the bureaucracies of the regulatory state.*

### **What is the Digital Economy?**

*Author and consultant Don Tapscott, in a book by the same name, describes the digital economy by saying: “Today we are witnessing the early, turbulent days of a revolution as significant as any other in human history. A new medium of human communication is emerging, one which may prove to surpass all previous revolutions—the printing press, telephone, television, computer—in its impact on our economic and social life. Interactive multimedia and the so-called information highway, and its exemplar, the Internet, are enabling a new economy based on the networking of human intelligence.”*

*The key characteristic of the digital economy is change. Virtually everything we’ve come to accept as “standard” in organizational structure, technology and education will become obsolete. Government land-use plans, however, are not designed to accommodate change; they are designed to make change fit the plans. To land-use regulators, the future must be “brought under control, managed, and planned—preferably by “experts.” It cannot simply evolve.”*

*In the 21st century economy, land-uses are likely to be much more varied than they have ever been. Technological innovation is breaking down geographic barriers at a rapid pace, with telecommunications capacity doubling roughly every 18 months. These innovations are giving Americans more choices with regard to where and how they live, work and recreate. This means that people will increasingly scatter themselves across the landscape, continuing a trend that has been underway for most of this century.*

Indeed, the trend is likely to accelerate because the technologies that enable people to live and work in disparate locations are becoming less expensive all the time. In terms of hours of work needed to pay for consumer goods, the costs of the four major technologies that allow suburbanization—electricity, telephones, computing, and motor vehicles—are now a tiny fraction of when those products were first manufactured. In addition, the cost of housing has declined, encouraging people to seek larger homes on larger lots. While the costs of “sprawl” are declining, personal income for Oregon families is rising at a rate faster than the Consumer Price Index. These factors, taken together, make it highly unlikely that people will voluntarily lower the quality of their lives by living on expensive, small lots in dense urban neighborhoods, if what they really want is something else.

*Statewide land-use planning has been historically justified on the basis of at least four assumptions: farm and forest lands are scarce commodities that must be preserved through government regulation; urban development must be contained through zoning and urban growth boundaries; land-use regulation is necessary to protect open space and scenic vistas; and planning is necessary to ensure the efficient and rational use of land. There is little evidence to support any of these assumptions. In fact, farm and forest lands are becoming less important due to increased productivity; the amount of land set aside for recreation and scenic use is growing, not shrinking, over time; and land-use planning encourages inefficient land-use patterns because zoning ordinances do not reflect market forces. Even if Oregon’s land-use system has accomplished some worthy objectives, we must ask whether the current approach is appropriate in a digital economy. What are the consequences if our policies remain static while the world is rapidly changing?*

**VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Economic Base**

This section focuses on defining Susquehanna County’s economic base, how it differs from the regional economy, and what can be expected in the future.

Much of Susquehanna County’s economy in the past was based on agriculture and forestry. Dairy farms, creameries, tanneries, timbering and related pursuits accounted for the major portion of the available jobs in the nineteenth century. Later, mainly in the Susquehanna Depot area, the railroad provided many jobs. Manufacturing appeared in the second half of the twentieth century, generally being small to mid-sized companies making a variety of products including wooden toys and metal products. Today many of the agricultural jobs have disappeared due to the demise of family farms. There are no creameries, no tanning, and the forestry and mining industries are strictly extractive in nature and offer little or no value-added processing to benefit the local economy as a whole. With the shift from a “home-based” agricultural economy, many workers were forced to leave the County to find employment, the Broome County and Scranton/Wilkes-Barre areas offering the best possibilities for employment. Today, the economy of Susquehanna County continues to be strongly linked with the economies of both the Broome County and Scranton/Wilkes-Barre areas. According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 49.2 percent of the County’s residents commute to jobs outside of the County.

According to the 2000 Census the largest proportion of the working population in Susquehanna County is currently employed in the service and retail trade

sectors with the smallest proportion employed in the wholesale trade and mining sectors. Farming accounts for only 8.8 percent of the jobs held by Susquehanna County residents. (Note: The proportions are of the type of job held by County residents at the location of employment and not the jobs available within the County.) The service sector increased most dramatically over the ten-year period between 1989 and 1999, with a similar increase nationwide and a more modest increase in the Commonwealth. During the same period the manufacturing sector in the County decreased dramatically, as compared to the state and nation, due at least in part to the loss of manufacturing jobs in Broome County. The proportion of finance, insurance and real estate jobs held by County residents declined while increasing in the state and nation.

Employers In Susquehanna County

Susquehanna County and neighboring counties include a wide range of types and sizes of business establishments. As shown in Table III-7, Business Establishments, the largest percentage of business establishments employ nine or less employees, evidencing the importance of small businesses to the local economy. (See, also, Table III-8, Largest Employers in Susquehanna County.) As reported by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, during the period from 1990 to 1999 the number of mid-size establishments increased from fifty-seven to eighty-two, a forty-four percent increase and small sized establishments increased in number by thirty-two percent from 114 to 150, while the total number increased by twelve percent, representing some eight new establishments. This data indicates that existing business growth (in employees) has outpaced new business start-ups during the ten-year period.

Number and Size of Business Establishments in 1999					
	Susquehanna	Bradford	Lackawanna	Wayne	Wyoming
Large - 20+ Employees	64	139	787	103	58
Mid-Size - 10 to 19 Employees	82	169	687	165	62
Small - 5 to 9 Employees	150	278	1060	274	126
Micro - Less than 5 Employees	486	744	2859	881	381
<b>Total Establishments</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>1330</b>	<b>5393</b>	<b>1423</b>	<b>627</b>

*Source: Center for Rural Pennsylvania*

***The largest employers in Susquehanna County are as follows:***

<u>Business Name</u>	<u># of Employees</u>
Barnes Kasson Hospital	370
Elk Lake School District	275
Montrose Area School District	206
Susquehanna Comm. School Dist.	177
Forest City Nursing Center	160
Susquehanna County Government	157
Blue Ridge School District	149
Mt. View School District	144
Donald Dean and Sons, Inc.	130
Endless Mts. Health Systems	125
US Post Office	122
Envirocycle	107
People's National Bank	90
Forest City Reg. School Dist.	85
Kartri Sales Co., Inc.	80
Community Bank and Trust Co.	76
Meadow View Senior Living Center	73
Pump N' Pantry	58
NEPA Telephone Co.	41
Endless Mountains Stone Co.	40
State Aggregates, Inc.	34
Masters Redi-Mix Concrete Co.	30
Loomis & Sons, Inc.	28
Cornerstone Forest Products	28
Montrose Publishing Co.	28
Brunges Pallet Mfg.	25

***Source: Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Community Data Book, 2001***

Economic Contributions of Certain Industries

As noted previously small businesses in Susquehanna County account for the majority of income for those working in the County. Typical small businesses other than retail and service establishments are forestry, agriculture, mining and tourism related businesses. While these particular sectors do not employ large numbers of the population, their economic contribution is paramount to the overall economic condition of the County, as shown in Table VI-8, Economic Contributions of Certain Industries.

**Table VI-2, Economic Contributions of Certain Industries**

Forestry and wood products	\$15.8 million
Agriculture	\$17.7 million
Tourism	\$63.9 million
(D.K. Shifflet & Assoc. Nov. 2000) <i>see page VI-8</i>	
Mining	\$110.0 million
(Congressman Sherwood's office)	

Employment and Income

The County's civilian labor force, as reported by the PA Department of Labor and Industry, was 18,700 in April 2002, with some 17,500 employed and 1,200 unemployed, registering an unemployment rate of 6.3 percent. While the unemployment rates of Susquehanna County and its neighbors have generally been higher than the Commonwealth over the past five years, the Susquehanna rate has been consistently higher. The rate in 2001 was the highest since 1997, and at 6.9 percent was two points higher than the Commonwealth, and remains high, the April rate being reported at 6.3 percent.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	11/02
Pennsylvania	5.2%	4.6%	4.4%	4.2%	4.7%	5.6%
Susquehanna Co	7.2%	5.2%	4.9%	4.5%	6.9%	7.1%
Bradford Co	5.6%	4.7%	4.2%	3.8%	5.7%	6.0%
Lackawanna Co	7.1%	5.8%	5.2%	4.3%	5.4%	5.1%
Wayne Co	8.3%	6.7%	6.0%	5.4%	5.5%	5.4%
Wyoming Co	8.3%	7.2%	5.6%	4.5%	4.6%	5.6%

*Source: PA Department of Labor and Industry*

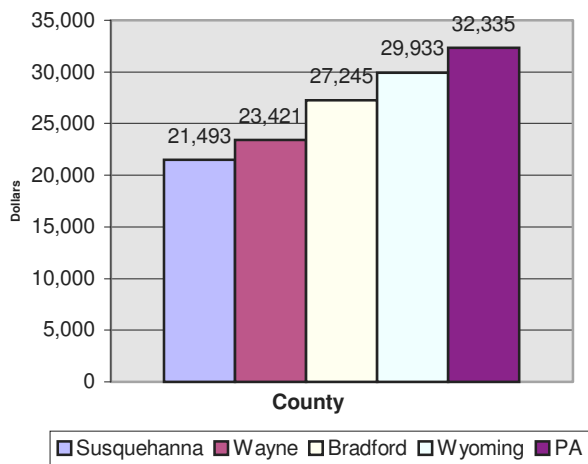
As reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, per capita income in Susquehanna County in 2000 was \$22,420 compared to \$29,504 for Pennsylvania, ranking Susquehanna County number fifty out of the Commonwealth's sixty-seven counties. As shown on Table VI-10 the Center for Rural Pennsylvania reports the average annual wage in 2000 for Susquehanna County was \$21,493, lowest among surrounding counties and more than \$12,000 less than the Commonwealth. Clearly, the economy and job opportunities in Susquehanna County lag behind those of neighboring counties and the Commonwealth. The most telling statistic may be, as noted previously; almost one-half of the workforce must travel outside the County's borders to find employment. The lack of jobs in the County and lower wages for available jobs appear to be key elements for the state of the local economy which leads to lower incomes and the associated social ramifications.

community. As residential properties increase without an increase in commercial and industrial use the tax burden on the individual residential property owner grows because the demand and cost for services increases. An expansion of the commercial and industrial base can help relieve the burden on residential properties of the cost of needed facilities and services. Because of the County's reliance on regional employment, taking a regional approach to economic development will provide the greatest opportunity for sustaining the County's well being. County officials should monitor and participate in regional economic development efforts, not only with the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission but with Lackawanna and Broome Counties as well.

Public Opinion and Economic Development

Four different surveys taken in Susquehanna County – the first in 1998 of all citizens, the second by the Vision 2020 group of citizens attending the meetings, the third of high school seniors in 1999, and the fourth of Municipal Officials in 2002 – have found that one of the top concerns of residents is the need for jobs. For many years – most of the 1990's – residents of the County have been seeing jobs disappear, young people moving away from the area or not returning following college, while demanding that someone *do something* to bring jobs to the area. In 1998 The County Commissioners established a Department of Economic Development to work toward maintaining existing businesses and hopefully others to move to the County. The two other most noted concerns in each of the surveys were the desire to protect the environment and retain the *rural character* of the county. When this desire is coupled with the reality of the current employment sector characteristics, it suggests that the County should work to attract environmentally friendly, small to medium sized service industry employers. Over the past decade a few small manufacturing companies have relocated to Susquehanna County. These companies were not, for the most part, wooed by tax incentives or government programs, but by the desire of the company owner to live in our rural community away from the congested cities. The County Department of Economic Development recognized the importance of the rural attractiveness of the County and has begun to highlight that feature in promotional pieces and on their web site.

**Table VI-4  
Average Annual Wage 2000**



Regional Economy and Tax Consequences

Similar to most other rural/residential communities situated within commuting distance of urban centers, Susquehanna County residents rely to a great extent on the regional market for employment and services. A concern raised by this reliance on employment outside the County is the effect on the local tax base. Typically, industry and business pay a significant proportion of local taxes that support local facilities and services required to meet the needs of the entire

### Additional Considerations

With increased capabilities of telecommunications it is now possible for many to live anywhere they choose and *telecommute* to their employer's location. Although we have no estimate of the number of *telecommuters* living in Susquehanna County, and no real way to measure it, we are aware of the potential and must recognize it as yet another way to provide opportunities for employment. Here again, the quality of life becomes a major component of the decision to live in Susquehanna County and *telecommute*. Another factor is the availability of fast, efficient, reliable broadband connection. Both Commonwealth Telephone Company (CTCO) and Northeast Pennsylvania Telephone (NEP) report they have the capabilities required for the highest level of telecommunications.

Another consideration is that of the impact of tourism on our County's economy. It cannot be ignored that tourism is one of, if not the greatest, contributors to our overall economy, shown mainly in the growing retail and service sectors. The D.K. Shifflet & Associates report, which the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognizes as the official report on tourism, indicates that tourism accounts for \$63.9 million dollars flowing into our economy. It must be noted, however, that the impact of mining, while shown as contributing \$110.0 million, may actually be higher if all receipts were reported.

### Conclusion

Susquehanna County's significant economy is based upon small businesses, mainly in the retail and service sectors, and local workers who commute to jobs outside of the County. Mining, forestry, agriculture and tourism account for a major portion of the income in the County. The majority of workers are found in the service and retail sectors. Small, environmentally friendly, low impact businesses, generally in the service sector, seem to be well suited to the County. As the population increases, retail and service businesses will grow proportionately to meet the needs and demands for those types of establishments. Expansion of existing small business establishments offers a significant and probable opportunity for economic growth. Attention should be paid to *telecommuters* whose presence may increase over the next ten years, and

the growth of tourism in the County as well as the Commonwealth. Businesses that recognize and capitalize on the rural character of the County, and rely on its continuation for their own success, fit well into Susquehanna County.

### **Susquehanna County Department of Economic Development**

The Susquehanna County Commissioners created the Susquehanna County Department of Economic Development in 1998. A five-member board of directors representing the various economic development organizations in the County guides the activities of the Department. These organizations include the Susquehanna County Industrial Development Authority, the Greater Forest City Industries, the Montrose Area Industrial Development Authority, the Susquehanna-Oakland-Lanesboro Industrial Development Authority, and the Susquehanna County Chamber of Commerce. The Board structure includes an Advisory Committee of over thirty County residents representing local governments, businesses, non-profit organizations and the agricultural community.



*2000 Industrial Park, Forest City Borough*

### Mission and Values

The mission of the Susquehanna County Department of Economic Development is to enable business to grow and prosper, through recruitment, retention, and expansion. The Department provides clients and prospects with information and other assistance that is comprehensive, credible, timely and focused.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Susquehanna County Department of Economic Development is to facilitate the creation of family-sustaining employment throughout the County business community. The department will work to recruit new businesses to the County and to retain and expand the County's existing businesses. To accomplish its goal, the Department has established these objectives:

1. To provide a one-stop economic development service for the County.
2. To coordinate all major economic development efforts in the County, and to assure the implementation of these activities on a cost-effective basis.
3. To involve all major economic development interests in the County in its activities, and to involve all environmental, ecological, conservation, preservation, and historical organizations in the County in an advisory capacity.

Partners in Progress

The Department of Economic Development actively seeks opportunities to partner with County and regional agencies and organizations to enhance the level of business development services offered to Susquehanna County's businesses and entrepreneurs. The Department has strong ties with the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, the Susquehanna County Chamber of Commerce, the University of Scranton's Small Business Development Center, ASSETS Trehab, the Endless Mountains Visitor's Bureau and the Endless Mountains Heritage Region. The Department is also an active member of the Susquehanna County Tourism Committee and administers the activities of the Susquehanna County Rail Committee.

**Economic Development Plan**

This *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes the efforts of the Susquehanna County Department of Economic Development as critical to the growth and development and quality of life of the County and incorporates the Departments plans by reference. Continued Department coordination of economic development efforts and cooperation with interested individuals and organizations, along with attention to the associated planning elements of land use,

transportation, and environment, is key to effecting a balanced development program.

**Heritage Destination Development (tourism)**

A component of Economic and Community Preservation and Development

Our forests, agricultural land, open space, rolling terrain and winding roads, along with historic structures and quaint towns and villages, are key elements of Susquehanna County's rural working landscape that add to the quality of life enjoyed by residents. These same features are attractive to visitors as well and hold great potential as resources for inclusion in a comprehensive heritage destination strategy and marketing plan that blends tourism with community and economic development.

To be effective a comprehensive tourism strategy and marketing plan must be the product of public input and consensus of the various stakeholders and must include specific actions that can be implemented. It should be founded on the concepts and best practices that have already been tested for destinations (sites, communities and regions) by the experiences of tourism developers across the nation. The strategy should bring together heritage resources (natural, cultural, historical and recreational) and tourism businesses to develop quality visitor experiences that generate community development and economic activity through travel-related investments and expenditures. Specific actions should include strategies for encouraging regional and local planning that enhances quality of life, conserves resources and develops a regional destination through resident awareness and stakeholder training, public and private financing, visitor experience development and marketing, and leadership and coordination. *Heritage Destination Development* is the current jargon used to describe such a strategy, which, in short, is a comprehensive program that focuses on creating and maintaining the infrastructure necessary to establish quality, visitor-ready heritage-based attractions and visitor services that, when organized effectively, positions the region to be branded and marketed through customer-based and resident-driven strategies.

The strategy must be sensitive to and understanding of the resources, while taking a business-like approach to development and marketing. It

integrates community development, economic development, conservation and recreation and focuses them on the creation of a sustainable regional model for tourism. The strategy integrates cultural, historic and natural attractions in a way that protects, develops and presents the character of these resources. The resources include the arts, museums, festivals and other cultural events as a vital part of the tourism product. Simply put, well-planned and executed tourism preserves the natural environment and rural working landscape while promoting economic development.

The County, through the Department of Economic Development, the Chambers of Commerce, and the Department of Planning and Development must assemble the disciplines necessary to generate public and business interest and participation and to provide the necessary expertise to develop an effective *Heritage Destination Development* strategy which will result in the generation of community development and economic activity through travel and tourism expenditures and investments that are spawned and sustained by community pride.



*Silver Lake Church, one of the many historic churches in the County*

The *Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan*, adopted in November of 1998, provides a framework for the implementation of heritage tourism and related activities. The plan presents recommendations in the areas of interpretation and education, tourism and recreation, economic development for small businesses and major employers, agriculture, and conservation of cultural and natural resources. The plan should be used as a general guideline for Heritage Destination (tourism) development in the County.

**The Montrose Restoration Committee** recently contracted the Bailey Design Group to recommend a strategy for increasing tourism in the Borough. The Bailey Design Group held public meetings to solicit input from residents of the Borough and surrounding area as well as visitors. The resulting report, dated August 24, 2002, features a listing of strengths as seen by those taking part in the study, and recommendations on necessary physical improvements, standards to set for restoration and development, and marketing the Borough and surrounding area as a tourist destination. Following are excerpts from the Bailey Design Group's plan.

Note: this information is included in the Comprehensive Plan to demonstrate what any municipality or group of municipalities can do to plan for the future of their area. As stated above, we highly recommend this type of activity for all areas of the County.

...from the Bailey Design Group study, August 24, 2002...

In order for Montrose to plan for its future there first needs to be a plan in place. It needs to have criteria as well as focus. Ultimately, Montrose needs some structure in order to avoid damaging what is a quaint resource.

*The plan needs to take into consideration the current status as well as future opportunities. It also should connect Montrose to other regional assets that can serve as valuable resources with which Montrose can partner.*

*The physical challenges range from major repairs of infrastructure such as sidewalks, to general maintenance such as painting and landscaping that has lapsed on privately owned properties. Signage (the quality of it) in some cases is sited as a source of “bad” aesthetics. Overall the physical issues are simple to address; they just require resources that may not exist in all cases. The critical mass issue is a different type of challenge. In order to develop Montrose as a destination for people there needs to be reasons for people to come. Since Montrose is located in a rural setting it is important to understand that in many cases people are driving 20 to 60 minutes to visit. If the perception is that Montrose has limited resources as well as limited hours of operation, people will make other choices.*

*The Borough should be a series of small businesses that can return the “downtown” to its vibrant past. In order for Montrose to become more of a destination however, there is a need for the town to develop critical mass to provide choice for people coming to town. There is a significant population in the surrounding region and if there is enough choice and variety people will come to and experience Montrose.*

*The types of stores that people desire range from restaurants to boutiques. People are looking for variety as well as culture and activities.*

Another consideration for long-range planning is to develop standards that can protect the integrity of the Borough and Montrose area. These standards should consider everything from building usage to signage standards. Standards and codes can truly help the planning process and can also act as guidelines for development and deployment of business placement strategy.

*The town could position itself as a friendly, quaint and quiet place to visit that is unique, pretty and charming. Older visitors and retirees seem like one logical tourist subset. Families and couples looking for wholesome activities could also be targeted assuming the right critical mass is developed. It could also leverage its rural/small-town nature, a key and attractive subset in Pennsylvania marketing trends.*

The D.K. Shifflet figures on tourism are based on revenue gained from “visitors”, someone who travels to the County from more than 50 miles away, for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A formula is then used to break the total figures into county figures. Tom Shepstone prepared the following for use in the Plan Update:

### *Tourism*

*The economic impacts of travel and tourism in Susquehanna County as well as other areas of the Commonwealth are measured annually by the Department of Community and Economic Development. This work is done in cooperation with D.K. Shifflet and Associates Ltd., an internationally recognized tourism research firm. The firm conducts continuous surveys of the lodging and travel industry, collecting data on travel patterns, tourism consumer preferences and spending. This data is collected, analyzed and published both quarterly and annual. The annual data on travel expenditures by domestic travelers (U.S. residents traveling at least 50 miles in one direction, excluding commutes to work) is assembled into reports not only for the Commonwealth as a whole, but also by region and county.*

*The information collected from surveys is combined with objective data sources such as traffic counts, employment and sales tax revenue to yield breakdowns of impacts by industry sector and geography. Three types of impacts are considered; 1) the direct impacts from spending by tourists themselves, 2) the indirect impacts from spending by tourism providers on the purchase of goods and services to operate their businesses, and 3) induced impacts from household spending by employees of the firms involved directly or indirectly in servicing travelers. These impacts are gauged by employing input-output economic analysis techniques. This approach effectively measures the total impacts of an overnight stay at a bed and breakfast, for instance, by examining how much of the room rental is paid out for local labor, food purchases, fuel oil to heat the room and other expenditures. These expenditures are similarly analyzed to estimate how much the oil dealer spends on vehicles, labor and the like as local.*

*Travelers spend money on retail goods, entertainment, food, beverages, transportation, lodging and a host of other goods and services. This spending has made tourism Pennsylvania’s second largest industry and generates major tax revenue. The impact on Susquehanna County is also considerable. The County is ranked 49<sup>th</sup> out of 67 counties in total travel expenditures, indicating room to grow. Nonetheless, the industry produced an estimated \$60,975,000 in direct spending, some 1,578 jobs and \$18,745,000 in employee compensation for Susquehanna County in 2000. This included \$16,890,000 spent at restaurants, \$15,410,000 of transportation expenditures and \$10,570,000 of entertainment. Additionally, there were an estimated \$17,532,000 of induced impacts resulting in a total economic impact of over \$90 million on Susquehanna County from tourism.*

*-Tom Shepstone, October 15, 2003*

## VII. Transportation

### Transportation Planning - Susquehanna County As Part Of The State And Region

Excerpts from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's "Transportation Policy Plan" (<http://www.pti.psu.edu/top/Pennplan/PPMoves/introduction.pdf>)

*In the 1950s, America embarked on what was the most ambitious transportation project in modern history—the construction of the interstate highway system. The interstate construction program was a resounding success, having literally paved the way for the greatest peacetime economic boom the world has ever seen. But now, at the dawn of the 21st Century, transportation planners and others grapple with some of the unforeseen consequences of that program, such as environmental impacts and the declining role of cities as the centers of activity. While the interstate highway system was a triumph of engineering and ingenuity that has provided personal access and mobility for most Americans, it has also been a major factor in opening up rural lands for development, and moving people and centers of commerce out of older cities. It is important that state and regional transportation planning and spending in the 21st Century be integrated with local land use planning and decisions in a way that promotes optimum economic, social, and environmental health for all communities.*

*In 1995, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) adopted the Pennsylvania Transportation Policy Plan to address future transportation issues. The policy plan identified seven broad policy goals and several objectives to assist in achieving those goals. The policy plan was a good start. However, the need to measure our success and to address the transportation needs of the 21st Century compelled us to reassess the policy plan. The product of that reassessment is this new Pennsylvania Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan (PennPlan). PennPlan represents the Commonwealth's attempt to shape its response to the changes that will accompany the passing of the next quarter century. PennPlan is the blueprint for all modes of transportation — highways, transit, passenger rail,*

*freight rail, air and water facilities, and bicycle and pedestrian paths—and how these modes will interact and interconnect to form a system. Most important, PennPlan is the result of listening to you, the providers and users of the transportation system, and responding to your needs and desires. What you have told us validates PennDOT's long-standing policy of placing highest priority on the maintenance of the Commonwealth's transportation system and the safety of those who use it.*

*PennPlan will complement transportation planning as it is currently performed in Pennsylvania. Today, that planning is a cooperative venture among the Commonwealth, regional agencies and local governments, and the public. Regional transportation plans reflect the specific policy objectives of each region over the next 20 or more years. These objectives may address diverse issues such as economic development, air quality, finance, congestion mitigation, and land use. The planning process leads to the identification of transportation projects and services that are ultimately compiled into various capital programs, as follow:*

*Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs)—four-year outlooks, cooperatively developed by local, regional, and state transportation officials, that identify specific projects and the resources to implement them. The TIPs, in turn, are compiled into a . . .*

*Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) — the statewide plan required by the U.S. Department of Transportation that includes all highway and transit projects to be implemented over a four-year period. The current STIP, in turn, represents the first component of the . . .*

*Twelve Year Transportation Program (TYP) — a mid-range plan required by Pennsylvania law that incorporates the STIP and identifies other projects to be implemented beyond the four-year range of the STIP. This program, in addition to covering highway and transit projects, also includes aviation, port, and freight rail projects.*

*PennPlan's importance lies in its linking of broad policy goals and specific action items, and in its connecting action items with the transportation planning done at the regional and local levels. The*

*plan is the product of collaboration between PennDOT and its regional and local planning partners—metropolitan planning organizations, local development districts, and county planning commissions.*

Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission – Our Local Development District

Susquehanna County uses the services of the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, the *Local Development District* designated by PennDOT for transportation planning issues, mainly state roads and local, county and state bridges located on state and local municipal roads. Through the Northern Tier Rural Area Transportation Advisory Committee, Susquehanna County and its municipalities submit road and bridge projects for inclusion on the PennDOT Twelve Year Plan (TYP) and the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Also under the jurisdiction of the Transportation Advisory Committee are the issues of long range transportation planning and railway planning.

The Twelve Year Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program are incorporated in this Comprehensive Plan by reference. Each plan is updated regularly and represent the road and bridge improvements identified as most important by the local governments in the County. The Twelve Year Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program are available to the public at the Susquehanna County Planning Office or by contacting the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission. ([www.northerntier.org](http://www.northerntier.org))

In 1999 the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC) conducted a long range transportation study for its five member counties, which includes the following discussion related to Susquehanna County.

Excerpts from the NTRPDC Transportation Study Report

*The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC) wanted to gather citizen input into their regional long-range transportation planning process. To accomplish this, they contracted with M-BRS Research and Consulting Services (M-BRS) to develop and*

*implement a citizen input process, one that could be used in subsequent years. Citizen input was solicited from mid-August to mid-September 1999 in Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wyoming Counties in the Northern Tier.*

*The citizen input process consisted of five focus groups attended by six to ten professionals and/or public officials who were asked to address three issues: maintenance and rehabilitation of the present highway system, new construction needed, and other modes of transportation (rail, air, hiking/biking trails, mass transit). One was held in each of the counties in mid-September. In addition, M-BRS developed three different survey instruments (one for residents, one for commercial businesses and organizations, and a third one for professionals and public officials) which were distributed from mid to the end of August, 1999.*

*All total 6,854 surveys were distributed throughout the counties. A total of 779 residential, 122 commercial, and 31 professional surveys were returned. The results from these surveys represent the opinions of the individuals who completed them and are not able to be used as statistically reliable results for the region. They do however, give the NTRPDC a good idea of the types of projects of interest to the public and provides a list of potential projects to include in the long-range plan.*

The citizen input process found . . .

*The highway system is the primary means by which goods are shipped and received and customers arrive at businesses/ organizations in the Northern Tier. Only twelve percent (12%) of goods are shipped and ten percent (10%) are received by air freight. Almost no goods are shipped or received by rail or marine transport. Only seventeen percent (17.1 %) of customers walk to businesses, almost five percent (4.9%) come by bus or taxi, four percent (4.1 %) ride a bike, and eight percent (8%) find some other means.*

*Twenty-five percent (25%) of residents and fifty-eight percent (58%) of professionals/public officials drove more than 21,000 miles last year. Close to a quarter of respondents expect the number of miles they drive next year to increase. Throughout the five counties, four percent (4%) of residents don't own or lease a vehicle and almost three percent of*

households don't have a member with a valid drivers license. If residents don't own or lease a car or truck, twenty-five percent ride with friends, almost six percent use taxis, while a third find other means.

#### Rating the Transportation System . . .

When asked to rate their local transportation system, sixty-three percent (63%) gave it a "fair-poor" rating while thirty-three percent (33.6%) gave it a "good-excellent" rating. Sixty percent (60%) of residential respondents think the state highway system is worse than other states. When asked to compare the state highway system to what it was like five years ago only fifteen percent (15.6%) thought it was worse, almost fifty-five percent (54.9%) thought it was the same, and twenty-seven percent (27%) thought it was better. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of professional/public official respondents stated they had a positive relationship with PennDOT, while six percent (6%) had a negative relationship, and sixteen percent (16%) didn't respond.

#### Responses to Open-Ended Questions . . .

The results of the open-ended questions reinforced the results from the multiple choice questions. Residential respondents were asked a series of questions about what they liked about the transportation system, what they saw as problems with the transportation system, and what they felt was the most important problem. Commercial/organizational respondents were asked how the transportation system helps their business or organization, how it hinders their business, what they saw as problems with the system as it affects their business/organization, and what problem they considered most important. Professional/public official respondents were asked two additional questions in addition to the same questions asked of residential respondents. They were asked what could be done to improve their working relationship with PennDOT and what specific projects would they like to have included in the long-range transportation plan.

Respondents on all three surveys gave both positive and negative comments about what they liked about the system. Positive comments fell into these categories: not much congestion, little traffic, improvements, maintenance, scenic, rural nature, easy access, snow removal-winter care, and general comments on the condition of the roads.

The majority of the responses across all three surveys addressing the two questions dealing with problems with the system dealt with maintenance and rehabilitation and new construction issues such as bad roads, lack of maintenance, improvements needed, safety issues, congestion and traffic, speed, trucks, and general negative comments. These were followed by comments on other modes of transportation including public bus transportation, rail, hiking/biking trails, and air service. These comments fell into these categories: no transportation system, scheduling issues, present system limitations, not enough, use limitation, communication issues, costs, rail service, taxis, walking/biking paths, we need one, and don't use.

Commercial/organizational respondents when asked to identify how the transportation system in their county helped their businesses/organization gave both positive and negative comments. The positive comments fell into these categories: provides accessibility, improves safety, saves on maintenance, provides employment, supports tourism, provides funds, and general comments. The comments received to the questions asking about how the transportation system hinders their business / organization fell into these categories: bad roads, poor maintenance, congestion, hinders access, regulations, safety issues, and lack of funds.

The professional/public official respondents offered these suggestions to improve their working relationship with PennDOT: improve communications, have a change of attitude, work on customer service options, financial support, and other. The specific projects they mentioned and which were included in the priority list of projects for each county, included suggestions which were placed into these categories: improvements, walking/biking trails/paths, safety, planning needs, rail service, maintenance, bad roads, and cost.

#### Susquehanna County Results . . .

The results of the survey process and focus group held in Susquehanna County found agreement with PennDOT's priority of maintenance and rehabilitation of the present road system. This is shown on the surveys by the selection of the top issues the public felt were "very important" and wanted to include in the long-range transportation plan: **improve the quality of roads, improve the**

*shoulders of roads, improve the quality of bridges, and the cleanliness of roadways. Residents were also asked to rank how important a list of transportation issues were to them. They selected to improve the quality of the road surface and the safety of the roads as the "most important" by a large percentage. When residential respondents were also asked to identify the top transportation issues in their neighborhood their responses showed consistency when they chose rough road surfaces, somewhat or very dangerous roads, many or a lot of big trucks on their roads, and quite a lot of traffic noise to deal with as the top issues.*

*The focus group participants also addressed maintenance and rehabilitation issues when they identified the need to raise the condition of present roads to a higher level and then maintain them at that level. They saw **Routes 11 and 706 as the top priorities**. They wanted to see **passing lanes on Route 706**, especially at Summit Hill, and to see the development of a **main east-west route** through the county. They identified the need to develop a **long-range transportation plan** which included an analysis of who uses what roads for what purposes as well as to accommodate the changes taking place with the present industries in the county, including farming and tourism.*

*They saw the need to maintain a long-term perspective to solve problems and to look at the needs of areas that are growing and have the potential to grow in the county. They then want to develop corridors across the county to meet the identified needs, while protecting taxpayers property rights. They saw a need for an infusion of outside capital to do this and voiced frustration with the time delays in getting anything accomplished through the present system. In conjunction with the focus group results, eighty percent of respondents felt the transportation system was the same or better than it was five years ago. However, there were sixty percent who felt it was worse than other states.*

### Susquehanna County - Findings

As identified by the NTRPDC long range transportation study, efficient, convenient, safe and well-maintained roads and highways are important to the citizens of the County, and these same

characteristics are vital to the transportation system in terms of the future economic well-being and the stable growth and development of any community. Susquehanna County' s topography and patterns of physical development have required a network of major and secondary roads to provide local access and to connect the county to outside urban centers upon which the economy greatly depends. The 1992 *Susquehanna County Comprehensive Development Plan* made similar and other observations which remain valid today. . .

- ♣ *The location and condition of the major roads in Susquehanna County are vital to the development of its economic potential.*
- ♣ *In order for new industry to settle in the area, it is necessary to have reasonable accessibility to modern efficient highways.*
- ♣ *If the creation of jobs through the attraction of light, clean industry is desirable to the community, some attention must be given to the adequacy of the road network.*
- ♣ *It is not necessary to upgrade the entire network of roads in the county in order to attract businesses . . . it is only necessary to identify those few areas most likely to be attractive to business and utilize the resources available to local communities and businesses to upgrade the highway facilities serving them, if necessary.*
- ♣ *The most obvious and attractive place for commercial and industrial development in the Susquehanna County is the I-81 corridor.*
- ♣ *I-81 has a significant impact on the area insofar as it makes it easily accessible to the entire Mid-Atlantic region. In terms of the transportation network, its five Susquehanna County interchanges represent substantial development potential for the area.*
- ♣ *While there is not an over abundance of flat land with adequate soils for sewage treatment along the I-81 corridor, there is enough to support several small industries and commercial development. Furthermore, if other conditions are attractive enough, small individual package treatment plants have already been shown to be*

*a feasible solution to the sewage problem.*

- ♣ *Highway services, the first commercial activities usually drawn to these areas, are already established at all but the Lenoxville exit. These will surely be expanded to include more lodging, restaurants, and gas stations to take advantage of highway traffic and increased county growth.*
- ♣ *Because it is the most attractive area for commercial and industrial development in the county, the I-81 corridor merits special attention from development organizations and the county planning office.*
- ♣ *Including the network of primary connectors into the area under consideration effectively widens the I-81 corridor. These primary roads make places somewhat farther removed from the highway quite accessible.*
- ♣ *Of the other roadways that have been experiencing recent growth pressures, nearly all intersect I-81. Route 11 between Hallstead/Great Bend and Route 706 just south of New Milford - especially near the boroughs and interstate interchanges - have seen numerous commercial activities. The eight-mile stretch of highway between the two borough centers has considerable development potential.*
- ♣ *Route 706 east of Montrose in Bridgewater Township, connected to I-81 by Route 11, is experiencing commercial strip development. Development in this area occurs because of the importance of Montrose and the surrounding area as a population center. This particular strip is occurring in part because Bridgewater Township has no zoning while the borough of Montrose does. Route 29, both north and south of Montrose has also been the location of some commercial development.*
- ♣ *Route 171 between Hallstead/Great Bend and the municipalities of Oakland, Susquehanna, and Lanesboro is likely to see some pressure in the near future because of the I-81 access and the proximity of two of the most densely populated areas in the county.*

Roads and Highways In Susquehanna County



The County has 1,884 miles of roads within its borders, 812 miles are owned and maintained by Penn DOT, and 1,072 miles are owned and maintained by the townships and boroughs. Only four of Pennsylvania's sixty seven counties have more miles of roads per person than Susquehanna County.

Because there are no commuter bus lines, no commuter railroad and no air passenger services available in the County, the emphasis on travel by car and truck remains first and foremost, and in terms of County planning, the focus is on the major roadways which tend to serve to carry traffic in and out of the County and internally between commercial and community activity centers.

Major Roadways

Some twenty-seven miles of I-81 traverses Susquehanna County in a north-south direction offering interstate travelers easy access through this mountainous region. Since its construction the interstate has had the effect of being a *by-pass*, limiting businesses located along US11, once the main north-south roadway in Susquehanna County, and stimulating commercial development at

**Exit Numbers Changed**

In April of 2001 PennDOT began adopting a new mileage-based numbering system for I-81 exits. All signs will include both the old and the new exit numbers for a period of at least two years. Numbering increases from south to north and from west to east. The new numbers for Susquehanna County exits are as follows:

<u>Exit Name</u>	<u>Old Exit Number</u>	<u>New Exit Number</u>
Glenwood/Lenoxville	63	206
Lenox	64	211
Harford	65	217
Gibson	66	219
New Milford/Lakeside	67	223
Great Bend/Susquehanna	68	230

interchanges. In any case, I-81 has had a profound effect on the character of the County, which depending upon the point of view, has been positive or negative, or a combination of both.

The major routes in the County are shown on the map titled *Major Routes and Rail Lines in Susquehanna County* in the Appendix, and are noted below.

Major north-south arterial routes in the County:

**SR0171** – connecting Forest City and south to the Borough of Susquehanna and east, connecting with I-81 at Great Bend

**SR0092** – connecting Lenox and south to the Borough of Susquehanna and north into New York State

**US0011** – connecting Nicholson, Wyoming County, and southern areas with New York State and

paralleling I-81

**SR0029** – connecting Tunkhannock, Wyoming County and southern areas, to New York State

**SR0267** – connecting Meshoppen, Wyoming County, with Vestal, New York and NY17

**SR0858** – connecting western Susquehanna County with Apalachin, New York and NY17

Major east-west arterial routes in the County:

**SR0706** – connecting Bradford County and US 6 with Montrose and New Milford Boroughs and I-81

**SR0492** – connecting I-81 at New Milford Borough with Jackson Township and east

**SR0106** – connecting Kingsley and US11 with Clifford, to Carbondale and US 6.

**Table VII-1, Average Annual Daily Traffic**

Route Number	Section of Road	Traffic Count 1992	Traffic Count 2000	Increase/Decrease
106	Clifford to Lenoxville	3100	3700	+600
106	Lenox to Kingsley	1700	2200	+500
106	Lenox to W.Clifford	1500	2900	+1400
92	Lenox to S.Gibson	1500	2000	+500
92	S.Gibson to Gelatt	1000	1200	+200
92	Gelatt to N. Jackson	700	1200	+500
92	N.Jackson to Susquehanna	800	1100	+300
171	In Forest City Borough	3600	6600	3000
171	Forest City to Uniondale	2000	2900	900
171	Thompson to Lanesboro	2000	2900	900
171	Herrick Center to Thompson	1100	1400	300
29	Springville to Dimock	2300	3200	900
29	Dimock to S.Montrose	3100	2900	-200
29	S.Montrose to Montrose	4300	5600	1300
29	Montrose to Franklin Forks	2600	2700	100
29	Franklin Forks to Brookdale	2500	3100	600
706	Rushville to Lawton	1500	1900	400
706	Lawton to Rush	1900	1400	-500
706	Rush to Fairdale	1600	1400	-200
706	Fairdale to Montrose	1800	1800	0
706	Montrose to Tiffany Corners	4100	6500	2400
706	Tiffany Corners to New Milford	3400	3500	100
11	County line to Hop Bottom	2200	2100	-100
11	Hop Bottom to Kinglsey	1200	1300	100
11	Kingsley to New Milford	1400	4300	2900
11	New Milford to Hallstead	5800	2800	-3000
11	In New Milford Borough	4300	4300	0
I-81	Lenoxville to Lenox Exit	16000	24000	8000
I-81	Lenox to Harford Exit	16100	24000	7900
I-81	Harford to Gibson Exit	15700	25000	9300
I-81	Gibson to New Milford	15900	25000	9100
I-81	New Milford to Great Bend	16300	25000	8700
171	Lanesborough	4400	7300	2900
171	Oakland	1700	1600	-100
92	Oakland	1000	600	-400
92	Susquehanna	2500	6900	4400
267	Auburn Center to Rushboro	1100	1100	0
267	Rushboro to Lawton	1100	1100	0
267	Lawton to Birchardville	1100	1800	+700
267	Birchardville to Choconut	2700	4300	+1600
492	New Milford to Lake Side	1500	2400	+900
492	Lake Side to Steinbachs Corners	1100	1500	+400
492	Steinbachs Corners to Jackson	700	850	+150
492	Jackson to Thompson	500	900	+400
858	Rushville to Middletown Center	300	300	0
858	Middletown Center to Little Meadows Borough	550	700	+150



I-81 Exit 230 - Great Bend / Susquehanna

**Traffic Volume and Level of Service**

It is obvious that traffic on the roads in the County has been increasing steadily as development and population have increased. While traffic volume has been increasing, the ability of the highway system to carry the traffic is the key factor in determining the overall adequacy of the highway system and providing safe and efficient traffic flow. Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes are a way to measure increases or decreases in road use to provide an overview of the traffic flow in the County for planning purposes. Table VII-1, Average Annual Daily Traffic, compares PennDOT AADT data for 1992 and 2000 at a number of locations along the major routes in the County. (See [www.dot.state.pa.us](http://www.dot.state.pa.us) for additional AADT volumes and locations.)

Traffic volumes have historically not been a problem in the County in terms of capacity to carry traffic, referred to as level-of-service. The capacity of a rural, two-lane highway is dependent on a number of design variables; and, the ideal conditions for two-lane highways as defined by the Transportation Research Board of the National Research Council in their *Highway Capacity Manual* are:

1. Design speed greater than or equal to 60 mph.
2. Lane widths greater than or equal to 12 ft.
3. Clear shoulders wider than or equal to 6 ft.

4. No "no passing zones" on the highway.
5. All passenger cars in the traffic stream.
6. A 50/50 directional split of traffic.
7. No impediments to through traffic due to traffic control or turning vehicles.
8. Level terrain

<b>Table VII-2</b> LEVELS OF SERVICE (LOS) For Ideal Conditions			
LOS	Avg Speed (mph)	Delay Time (%)	Max. Flow Rate (pcph)
A	60	35	420
B	55+	45	750
C	50+	60	1200
D	50+	75	1800
E	25 - 50	75+	2800
pcph = passenger cars per hour, total in both directions			

If all the ideal conditions were satisfied, the capacity of the highway would be 2,800 passenger cars per hour (pcph), total, in both directions. Given the rolling terrain of the County, the capacity of the arterials and collectors is substantially less than the ideal. Local roads, because of the limited service and low traffic volume area, are not considered in terms of capacity. The quality of traffic service is discussed in terms of level-of-service (LOS) with the highest quality of service occurring if traffic is able to travel at the desired speed of motorists' -- up to 60 mph without strict enforcement. Table VII-2, Levels of Service, summarizes the speed and delay factors associated with the levels-of-service A through E. As LOS moves from A to E speeds decrease, delay time increases and noticeable platoon formation and platoon size increases occur. Maximum capacity is achieved at LOS E where more vehicles are on the route moving at slower speeds. At LOS F, traffic volumes exceed capacity and traffic is bumper to bumper. See Table VII-3, Levels of Service Description.

<b>Table VII-3 LEVELS OF SERVICE DESCRIPTION</b>		
An arbitrary but standardized index of the relative service provided by a transportation facility. For highways, levels include the following:		
<b>Level of Service</b>	<b>Description of Conditions Intersections</b>	<b>Description of Conditions Freeways</b>
A	Free and unobstructed flow, no delays and all signal phases sufficient in duration to clear all approaching vehicles.	Free flow with little or no restriction on speed or maneuverability caused by other vehicles.
B	Stable flow, very little delay, a few phases are unable to handle all approaching vehicles.	Stable flow but speed is beginning to be restricted by other traffic - still negligible restrictions on maneuverability.
C	Stable flow, delays are low to moderate, full use of peak direction signal phase(s) is experienced.	Stable flow but most drivers are becoming restricted in their freedom to select speed, change lanes or pass. Operating speeds are 2/3 to 3/4 maximum.
D	Approaching unstable flow, delays are moderate to heavy, significant signal time deficiencies are experienced for short durations during the peak traffic period.	Approaching unstable flow. Tolerable average speeds are maintained but subject to considerable and sudden variation. Low maneuverability and driver comfort, high accident potential; most drivers consider this level unsatisfactory.
E	Unstable flow, delays are significant, signal phase timing is generally insufficient, congestion exists for extended duration throughout the peak period.	Absolute capacity (maximum flow rate), usually at 35 mph or 1/2 design speed. However, operation is unstable and both speed and flow rate may fall below optimum levels.
F	Forced flow, in urban areas flow may cease or approach "grid-lock."	Forced flow beyond capacity of facility. Speed and flow rate may drop to zero. Generally referred to as "bumper-to-bumper" traffic.

Obviously, the state routes serving as the collector and arterial roads in the County continue to carry the greatest volumes of traffic, with borough and township roads serving primarily residences and more remote areas of the community. The roads in the County continue to adequately carry even peak volumes of traffic without serious delays and declines in LOS, with no significant change expected in the near term. Simply stated, travelers on roads and intersections in Susquehanna County typically do not experience any significant delays. Such delays would indicate that a road is approaching its capacity and reaching an unacceptable level of service. This does not mean, however, that all arterial and collector roads in the

County are in optimum condition, and that particular problem areas and safety concerns need not be addressed.

Potential Growth Areas, County Role, and Need for Local Land Use Management

As noted earlier, the I-81 corridor holds the greatest potential for economic development in the County, and as the 1992 *Comprehensive Plan* points out, efforts to promote economic development should be focused here. The continued development in the I-81 corridor predicted in the 1992 *Plan* is certainly materializing. For example, I-81 Exit 219 (formerly Exit 66), the Gibson Exit, is being developed as a prime commercial center for the surrounding region.

A sewage treatment plant has been built with capacity to serve a large commercial development currently being planned. In addition, a Keystone Opportunity Zone has been established on a nearby property, available for commercial and industrial development.

This is consistent with both transportation and land use planning because those land uses which generate larger volumes of traffic should logically be located in the areas of a community served by roads with greater carrying capacity. For example, commercial establishments generate more traffic than single family residences and should be located on routes which have sufficient capacity to serve the use. The capacity of a highway or road typically decreases as the service area of the route declines. For example, the capacity of I-81 is obviously significantly greater than arterials, which in turn have a greater capacity than collectors, with the lowest capacity associated with local roads.

Other areas of the County will also experience growth and increasing traffic on the highway network, and the County should continue its two primary roles. First, the County Department of Economic Development will continue to facilitate the economic development process, focusing its efforts in those areas with adequate highway access and other necessary infrastructure. Second, the County can use transportation networks to affect land use by determining those roadways that should be placed on the PennDOT Transportation Improvement Plan and Twelve Year Plan for improvement. Roads submitted to the TIP and TYP should be those that serve areas of the County designated as growth areas (and, of course, those where safety is the major issue). However, the real authority for directing development to the most appropriate areas in terms of highway capability (and other community facilities and services) lies with local governments. Zoning is the principal means of directing growth and development, and the local municipalities in the County should, as local comprehensive planning progresses and zoning ordinances are adopted and updated, direct higher intensity commercial and manufacturing development to areas served by the major state routes. Local land use regulations should also include requirements for PennDOT highway access permits as a requisite for project approval and traffic

impact studies for large scale projects.



*Typical rural road*

#### Local Road Access Permits

With approximately 1,072 miles of roads under the control of local municipalities, the townships and boroughs have the ability to minimize the effects of development along their roads. Through the use of a highway occupancy permit ordinance, a municipality can manage development along a particular road and thereby address stormwater runoff, snow removal, road restoration, and safety for their residents. The highway occupancy permit ordinance should require adequate sight distance and proper drainage when driveways are installed, and the restoration of the road base and surface when any road cuts are made. Municipal officials can, at the time of a subdivision proposal, limit the number of driveways allowed on a local road, encouraging conservation type design where one driveway serves many lots, rather than each lot having its along the municipal road. Municipalities can also require bonding of roads when used for transporting heavy materials such as forest and stone products to ensure the cost of repairing any damage is paid by those benefiting from the use of the roads; rather than the taxpayer.

#### Transportation at the Neighborhood Level

Much of the previous discussion on transportation has centered around major and arterial roadways. However, the transportation *network* also includes the street where you live, the neighborhood street. Current thinking among planning professionals is that neighborhood streets should consider not only vehicular traffic but also pedestrian traffic. By simply narrowing the required right-of-way of a new

street an environment is created that encourages walking, bicycling, a sense of community, and greater safety. As the width of a street decreases so does the speed of vehicular traffic. Narrow streets are also better for the environment because less pavement means less run-off, less soil erosion, and less non-point source pollution.

Sidewalks should be encouraged in both new and existing neighborhoods. Municipalities should enforce sidewalk maintenance ordinances and work with the County through the Community Development Block Grant program for sidewalk improvement.

#### Subdivision Roads

New road construction in the County is generally associated with residential development. The County or local municipal subdivision and land development ordinance sets standards for road layout, design, and construction. Roads may be owned and maintained by private communities, or if a road is constructed to the standards of the road dedication ordinance it may be accepted by the local municipality for general public use. Dedicated roads are then added to Pennsylvania Liquid Fuels Program reimbursement list and are owned and maintained by the municipality.

#### Bridges

The County owns and maintains thirty-two bridges which are located throughout the County on township and borough roads as shown on the map titled *Bridges Owned by Susquehanna County* in the Appendix. The County maintains a detailed inventory of the location, size and condition of the bridges. A contracted engineering firm inspects each regularly, and necessary maintenance work is scheduled and performed accordingly by the County maintenance crew. The bridges range in length from forty to 120 feet and most are in good condition.

#### Rail Service

Susquehanna County has two Class 1 railroads: Norfolk Southern's Southern Tier Main Line forms an east-west corridor running along the Susquehanna River in Great Bend, Oakland and Harmony Townships. This railroad also runs through the boroughs of Susquehanna and Lanesboro. The Canadian Pacific railroad runs north-south through the County along the Route 11 corridor. A Canadian

Pacific local out of Binghamton serves a public siding in New Milford Borough. See Figure VII-1.

The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, through its Rural Transportation Advisory Committee, is investigating the possibility of establishing a rail authority for its five member counties. However, Susquehanna County's rail service is not directly linked to those lines located in other NTRPDC counties. Instead, Susquehanna County's rail lines are generally connected with lines in New York State and Lackawanna County. While joining with a rail authority created by NTRPDC would give Susquehanna County strength in numbers, it does little to enhance the rail connections the County currently enjoys. Understanding this, the Susquehanna County Commissioners have established a Susquehanna County Rail Committee to study the feasibility of rail service, both passenger and freight, within the County's borders. The Committee has found that certain industries could benefit from rail freight service, namely the bluestone and forestry industries. Also, a study done by Clough, Harbour and Associates for the Rail Committee found that the boroughs of Forest City and New Milford are prime sites for greater economic development benefits through rail freight service. The County should continue to consider re-establishing and upgrading rail service, mainly freight service, to further the County's economic development efforts.

Passenger rail service is expected to be established between the Scranton area and New York City in 2006, and there is a possibility that this service may be extended to Binghamton, New York soon thereafter. Studies suggest the most feasible route to connect Binghamton with New York City via Scranton would be through Susquehanna County. This possibility dramatically demonstrates that the link between transportation and land use must always be recognized. Just as population and the economy affect land use, transportation affects population and the economy and demands the consideration of two questions. How will the extension of passenger rail service to Scranton affect Susquehanna County? and What would be the further effects of an extension to Binghamton? The immediate and obvious answer is that population and development in the County will increase.

However, the level of development and amount of population increase, and where this will occur and how to manage the change are not so obvious; and the Susquehanna County Rail Committee must address the answers to these questions in its consideration of passenger railroad service.

#### Public Transportation

Public transportation in rural communities is generally limited by low population density, the cost of providing the service, and uncertainty of public acceptance and use. In short, the cost is too high in relation to the potential revenue from the users of the system, and without public subsidy, it is simply not feasible. In addition, even in areas where the public subsidy has been provided, use of public transport is low given long trips and limited schedules, and the historic reliance on automobiles in rural areas. Public transportation in Susquehanna County is associated only with the provision of social services and the provision of expanded public transit is not economically realistic now or in the near term. The Barnes-Kasson Hospital and Tri-County Human Services currently provide van service to clients, and this type of social service transportation should be the focus of County public transit efforts.

#### Airports

No commercial airports are located in the County, with residents relying on regional airports in Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey for commercial carrier service. The closest commercial airports are the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport in Avoca, Luzerne County and the Broome County Airport north of Binghamton, New York. Given the current tenuous economic condition of many airports and carriers, and the availability of service relatively close to the County, no specific action relative to airports is planned.

#### Transportation Goals, Objectives and Actions

**Goal:** Improve the condition and maintain the quality of roads and bridges through a regular improvement and maintenance schedule.

1. Continue to work with the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission's Rural Transportation Advisory Committee to submit and monitor road and bridge projects as part of PennDOT's Transportation Improvement Program and Twelve Year Plan.

2. Develop a maintenance and capital improvements program for County bridges.

**Goal:** Use and promote transportation planning as part of County and local municipal land use policies.

1. Encourage local governments to limit higher density and higher traffic impact development to areas with adequate highway capacity.

2. Encourage local governments to adopt uniform road ordinances setting standards for new road construction and access to roadways.

3. Encourage pedestrian and bicycle friendly design in new and existing roads.

4. Avoid the creation of highway hazards in new subdivisions and land developments by developing driveway, parking, setback, and road standards.

**Goal:** Prioritize transportation networks based on projected use.

1. Work with economic development agencies, municipalities, major industries and PennDOT to formulate a plan for the improvement of east-west travel in the County.

2. Use designated growth areas as a basis for road improvement prioritization.

3. Encourage legislators to support transportation projects.

**Goal:** Promote the enhancement of a public transportation system to fulfill basic social, economic and health needs for all people of the county, with particular attention given to the elderly, handicapped, poor, and others who are especially dependent on alternative means of transportation.

1. Support state legislation which would provide an equitable share of subsidies for rural transit services.

2. Support Barnes-Kasson Hospital's and Tri-County Mental Human Services' rural transportation service, and others offering public transportation to elderly and handicapped citizens.

**Goal:** Preserve existing rail service and facilitate the return of rail service on the several defunct lines throughout the County.

1. Support legislation providing railroad subsidies.
2. Support the continuing operation of a County Rail Committee.
3. Support rail-to-trail development as a means of “land banking” existing rail lines.
4. Promote the use of rail freight service for businesses located within the county.

## VIII. HOUSING

### Municipalities Planning Code Requirements

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) addresses housing from the perspective of ensuring affordable housing for families of all income levels. In terms of planning, MPC Section 301 requires comprehensive plans to include an element *to meet the housing needs of present residents and of those individuals and families anticipated to reside in the municipality, which may include conservation of presently sound housing, rehabilitation of housing in declining neighborhoods and the accommodation of expected new housing in different dwelling types and at appropriate densities for households of all income levels.* In terms of land use management as effected by zoning, MPC Section 604 requires zoning ordinances to *provide for the use of land within the municipality for residential housing of various dwelling types encompassing all basic forms of housing, including single-family and two-family dwellings, and a reasonable range of multifamily dwellings in various arrangements, mobile homes and mobile home parks, provided, however, that no zoning ordinance shall be deemed invalid for the failure to provide for any other specific dwelling type.* Court decisions have upheld this zoning provision of the MPC establishing a *fair share* rule which considers the percentages of land available for a given type of housing, current population growth and pressures within the municipality and surrounding region, and the amount of undeveloped land in a community. The Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development publication titled, *Reducing land Use Barriers to Affordable Housing, Fourth Edition, August 2001* ([http://www.inventpa.com/docs/Planning\\_Series\\_10.pdf](http://www.inventpa.com/docs/Planning_Series_10.pdf)) lists a number of barriers to affordable housing associated with land use regulations, including among others:

- ♣ insufficient amount of land zoned for medium and high density residential development
- ♣ excessive lot frontage and setback requirements which dictate greater lot sizes
- ♣ excessive street widths and construction standards unrelated to expected traffic volumes
- ♣ lack of provisions for cluster design and planned residential development
- ♣ limitations on the use of mobile homes and

- ♣ manufactured homes
- ♣ plan review and administrative delays

While Susquehanna County will continue to take the lead in administering state and federal housing programs, local municipalities which choose to manage land use, must carefully craft zoning ordinances so that development standards do not add to the affordable housing problem.

### Housing Characteristics

As shown in Table VIII-1, Total Housing Units, the 2000 U.S. Census reported a total of 21,829 housing units in Susquehanna County, an increase of more than 1,500 units, or 7.5 percent, since 1990, while the number of units in the Commonwealth increased by 6.3 percent. The 1990 to 2000 increase in housing units in the County was preceded by an increase of 3,106 units or 18.1 percent between 1980 and 1990. The number of housing units in the County has been increasing at a rate considerably higher than the population increase - population increased by 6.7 percent between 1980 and 1990 and 4.6 percent between 1990 and 2000. The differential results from the number of seasonal homes in the County which in 2000 accounted for eighteen percent of the total, as compared to 2.8 percent in the Commonwealth as a whole. (See Table VIII-2, Selected Housing Characteristics.) Second homes tend to drive housing values higher, while local household incomes tend to lag behind, making housing generally less affordable for County residents. While the proportion of seasonal homes declined somewhat from 1990 to 2000, the proportion remains far higher than in the Commonwealth and these homes will continue to play an important role in the housing mix of the County. Similar to population changes, the changes in housing unit numbers varies from region to region of the County, depending on such factors as proximity to employment centers in and around Montrose and in Broome County and Lackawanna County, and the effect of second homes such as in Herrick Township with Elk Mountain ski area. The number of housing units increased most dramatically in Bridgewater Township, where 182 dwellings were added between 1990 and 2000, with other large increases in Herrick Township with 162, Clifford Township with 117, Lenox Township with 115, and Harford Township with 109. Most increases

occurred in the townships rather than the boroughs, with most boroughs actually showing a decrease in housing units. The decreases could be from the

conversion of two-family or multi-family to single-family, losses due to fire or demolition, or a counting error during the 1990 Census or 2000 Census.

Table VIII-1 Total Housing Units				
MUNICIPALITY	Housing Units		Change 1990-2000	
	1990	2000	#	%
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	4,938,140	5,249,750	311,610	6.3
<b>Susquehanna Co</b>	20,308	21,829	1,521	7.5
<b>Blue Ridge School District</b>	3604	3823	219	6.1
Great Bend Borough	336	344	8	2.4
Great Bend Township	781	859	78	10.0
Hallstead Borough	529	544	15	2.8
Jackson Township	496	543	47	9.5
New Milford Borough	409	396	-13	-3.2
New Milford Township	1,053	1,137	84	8.0
<b>Elk Lake School District</b>	2824	3126	302	10.7
Auburn Township	783	866	83	10.6
Dimock Township	631	680	49	7.8
Middletown Township	236	264	28	11.9
Rush Township	546	622	76	13.9
Springville Township	628	694	66	10.5
<b>Montrose Area School District</b>	5527	5552	25	
Apolacon Township	252	266	14	5.6
Bridgewater Township	1,063	1,245	182	17.1
Choconut Township	374	377	3	0.8
Forest Lake Township	575	592	17	3.0
Franklin Township	465	484	19	4.1
Friendsville Borough	42	45	3	7.1
Jessup Township	225	264	39	17.3
Liberty Township	605	577	-28	-4.6
Little Meadows Borough	124	131	7	5.6
Montrose Borough	868	834	-34	-3.9
Silver Lake Township	934	1,037	103	11.0
<b>Mountain View School District</b>	3954	4414	460	11.6
Brooklyn Township	369	403	34	9.2
Clifford Township	1,081	1,198	117	10.8
Gibson Township	534	590	56	10.5
Harford Township	634	743	109	17.2
Hop Bottom Borough	145	140	-5	-3.4
Lathrop Township	377	411	34	9.0
Lenox Township	814	929	115	14.1

MUNICIPALITY	Housing Units		Change 1990-2000	
	1990	2000	#	%
<b>Forest City Regional School District</b>	1629	1804	175	10.7
Forest City Borough	961	937	-24	-2.5
Herrick Township	523	685	162	31.0
Uniondale Borough	145	182	37	25.5
<b>Susquehanna Community School District</b>	2777	2810	33	1.2
Ararat Township	378	452	74	19.6
Harmony Township	345	341	-4	-1.2
Lanesboro Borough	292	278	-14	-4.8
Oakland Borough	260	248	-12	-4.6
Oakland Township	281	281	0	0.0
Susquehanna Depot Borough	765	727	-38	-5.0
Thompson Borough	152	148	-4	-2.6
Thompson Township	304	335	31	10.2

Given the regional location of the County within easy access of metropolitan areas, and the recreational character of parts of the County and associated second home, continued increases in housing units can be expected. This will be in addition to the housing units needed to accommodate natural population increases. The regional differences in numbers of units added will also continue based on the same factors. In any case, local municipalities must take the lead role in adopting and applying zoning and building code standards governing the location, density and quality of housing.

In terms of types of housing units, at about seventy-four percent, single-family dwellings predominate in

the County with relatively few one unit attached (two-family) and multi-family dwellings and almost sixteen percent mobile homes. (See Table VIII-2, Selected Housing Characteristics.) This mix is not atypical for rural counties but differs substantially from the Commonwealth as a whole where two-family and multi-family dwellings comprise almost forty percent of all units and mobile homes only five percent. Housing types did not change substantially between 1990 and 2000, with the greatest shift between mobile homes and single-family dwellings. The proportion of owner occupied dwellings increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, with the vacant unit proportion declining and the renter occupied proportion holding essentially steady.

Characteristic	Susquehanna County				PA 2000 % of total
	1990		2000		
	#	% of total	#	% of total	
total housing units	20,308	100.0%	21,829	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Occupancy</b>					
occupied - total	14,898	73.4%	16,529	75.7%	91.0%
owner occupied	11,798	58.1%	13,145	60.2%	71.3%
renter occupied	3,100	15.3%	3,384	15.5%	28.7%
vacant - total	5,410	26.6%	5,300	24.3%	9.0%
seasonal/recreational	3,943	19.4%	3,924	18.0%	2.8%
unoccupied	1,467	7.2%	1,376	6.3%	6.2%
<b>Units in Structure</b>					
one unit detached	14,304	70.4%	16,057	73.6%	55.9%
one unit attached	113	0.6%	252	1.2%	17.9%
multi-family	2,123	10.5%	2,096	9.6%	21.1%
mobile homes, other	3,768	18.6%	3,424	15.7%	5.0%

Table VIII-3, Rate of Housing Development, provides a schedule of when housing units in the County were constructed. More than one third of the dwellings in the County were constructed prior to 1940 with almost another third constructed since 1980. Although this provides an overview of the age of housing and the potential need for repairs due to age, it does not necessarily reveal housing conditions, which are more dependent on income than housing age. While a detailed inventory of housing condition was beyond the scope of this *Comprehensive Plan*, it is obvious that housing conditions in the County vary widely, with many needs for rehabilitation and assistance programs.

Table VIII-4, Range of Housing Values, provides 2000 Census data for the County. Similar to the Commonwealth, about fifteen percent of owner occupied units in the County are valued at \$50,000 or less. The County had a substantially higher proportion of housing units in the \$50,000 to \$99,999 range than the State, with generally lower proportions in the higher value categories. While size and location certainly are a factor in housing value, poor condition may also add to the number of units valued less than \$50,000.

The median value of owner occupied dwellings in Susquehanna County in 2000 was considerably lower than in the Commonwealth as a whole, \$81,000 compared to \$97,000, which is not atypical for rural communities. The values ranged widely among the forty municipalities in the County, from a high of \$113,600 in Herrick Township, again likely a reflection of second homes, to a low of \$53,000 in Susquehanna Borough, where housing units are older and smaller. (See Table VIII-5, Median Housing Value.) In addition to age and condition, differences in housing value are related to many of the same location factors affecting the increase in housing units. These factors, particularly demand by second home buyers and households commuting outside the County to work will play a continuing role in determining housing value. Taken to the extreme, the externally driven demand for land and housing can drive housing costs beyond the means of many residents tied to the local economy where wages are lower.

units built between years	Susquehanna Co.		PA
	#	%	%
1999 to 03/00	398	1.8%	1.3%
1995-1998	1,170	5.4%	4.1%
1990-1994	1,783	8.2%	5.1%
1980-1989	3,479	15.9%	10.1%
1970-1979	3,416	15.6%	13.5%
1960-1969	1,796	8.2%	11.4%
1940-1959	2,236	10.2%	24.3%
1939 or earlier	7,551	34.6%	30.3%
Total	21,829	100.0%	100.0%

value	specified owner-occupied units		
	Susquehanna County		PA
	#	%	%
less than \$50,000	1,097	15.2%	15.1%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	3,907	54.2%	37.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,574	21.8%	24.3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	390	5.4%	11.9%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	179	2.5%	7.4%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	40	0.6%	2.9%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	9	0.1%	0.8%
\$1,000,000 or more	12	0.2%	0.2%
median value	\$81,800		\$97,000

Table VIII-5, Median Owner Occupied Housing Value			
<b>Susquehanna Co</b>	\$81,800	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	\$97,000
<b>Blue Ridge School District</b>		<b>Susq Community School District</b>	
Great Bend Borough	\$62,900	Ararat Township	\$98,300
Great Bend Township	\$82,500	Harmony Township	\$85,500
Hallstead Borough	\$64,600	Lanesboro Borough	\$69,500
Jackson Township	\$84,800	Oakland Borough	\$57,700
New Milford Borough	\$74,700	Oakland Township	\$72,200
New Milford Township	\$88,400	Susquehanna Depot Borough	\$53,000
		Thompson Borough	\$67,000
<b>Elk Lake School District</b>		Thompson Township	\$97,500
Auburn Township	\$87,700		
Dimock Township	\$79,600	<b>Mountain View School District</b>	
Middletown Township	\$81,300	Brooklyn Township	\$82,500
Rush Township	\$78,100	Clifford Township	\$112,200
Springville Township	\$97,800	Gibson Township	\$103,100
		Harford Township	\$91,300
<b>Montrose Area School District</b>		Hop Bottom Borough	\$66,500
Apolacon Township	\$98,800	Lathrop Township	\$90,000
Bridgewater Township	\$94,300	Lenox Township	\$102,100
Choconut Township	\$88,100		
Forest Lake Township	\$79,500	<b>Forest City Regional School District</b>	
Franklin Township	\$81,700	Forest City Borough	\$59,500
Friendsville Borough	\$91,300	Herrick Township	\$113,600
Jessup Township	\$76,300	Uniondale Borough	\$73,800
Liberty Township	\$79,800		
Little Meadows Borough	\$73,500		
Montrose Borough	\$78,900		
Silver Lake Township	\$90,500		

**Housing Affordability**

Municipalities throughout the Country have been addressing housing issues for many years, and the Summer 2000 *Affordable Housing Study* for Jacksonville Florida provides a good description of how affordable housing is assessed. *The "American Dream" has long been associated with the possibility of owning one's home. National housing-market surveys report that the home ownership rate reached a peak in the late 1990s—almost 67 percent in 1999—due mainly to a robust economy with record levels of low unemployment and low interest rates. However, while this unprecedented economic expansion enabled many Americans to purchase their own homes, it has pushed housing prices and rental rates higher, preventing many other households, with insufficient incomes, from either becoming homeowners or finding affordable, safe, and decent rental housing. Housing affordability is a relative concept—both rich and poor can*

*experience difficulty in affording housing, depending on how much they spend toward housing costs. Housing in one community with a relatively high median income can be quite expensive but "affordable" compared to housing in another community with a relatively low median income. Federal governmental guidelines, primarily those established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), define "affordable" housing as costing no more than 30 percent of a household's gross monthly income—referred to here as the "30 percent rule". The income counted is derived from all wages earned by people 15 and older in the household. For homeowners, "affordability" is generally defined as owning a house with a value equal to slightly more than twice the household's annual income. The homeowner costs counted typically include a mortgage payment (principal, interest, taxes, and insurance) and utilities. For renters, the costs usually include*

*contract rent and utilities. The "30 percent rule" leaves 70 percent for food, clothing, health care, child care, transportation to work, and other basic expenses. Because of increasing housing costs, many lower income Americans are forced to make tradeoffs and go without necessities. Tenants experiencing unexpected emergencies typically fall behind in their rent and face eviction. If not assisted, they may become homeless.*

Similarly, *Pennsylvania Housing*, a 1988 study conducted by the Pennsylvania Housing Financing Agency, defined *affordable* as requiring less than thirty percent of gross monthly income for rent or less than twenty-eight percent for a mortgage and other related housing costs. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), guidelines continue to define *affordable housing* as costing no more than thirty percent of a household's gross

monthly income. As shown on Table VIII-6, Affordable Housing Data, median housing value and median gross rent adjusted for inflation actually declined somewhat between 1990 and 2000, while adjusted median household income increased, suggesting improvement in the availability of affordable housing. Nevertheless, the proportion of homeowners with home related expenses exceeding thirty percent of household income is more than one fifth of all homeowners in the County, and in case of renters, almost one third pay more than thirty percent of household income on rent. Clearly, according to accepted standards, affordable housing is an issue for many residents of Susquehanna County. Table VIII-7, Range of Household Income, compares Susquehanna County to the Commonwealth, and shows County household income lags behind the State.

Table VIII-6 Affordable Housing Data U.S. Census		
<b>Dwelling Types</b>		
	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
one unit detached	70.4%	73.6%
one unit attached	0.6%	1.2%
multi-family	10.5%	9.6%
mobile homes, other	18.6%	15.7%
<b>Value, Rent, Income</b>		
median housing value	\$64,200	\$81,800
1990 median housing value adjusted for inflation	\$84,744	n/a
median gross rent	\$342	\$427
1990 median gross rent adjusted for inflation	\$451	n/a
median household income	\$24,736	\$33,622
1990 median household income adjusted for inflation	\$32,652	n/a
<b>Specified Owner Occupied Housing Units</b>		
total	6,264	7,208
# with home expenditures >30% of household income	1,122	1,543
% with home expenditures >30% of household income	17.9%	21.4%

Specified Renter Occupied Housing Units		
total	2,752	3,053
# households with rent >30% of income	971	976
% households with rent >30% of Income	35.3%	32.0%

Table VIII-7 Household Income Data 2000 Census			
households with income	Susquehanna Co		PA%
	#	%	
less than \$10,000	1,672	10.1%	9.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1,447	8.7%	7.0%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2,840	17.2%	13.8%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	2,625	15.9%	13.3%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	3,086	18.7%	16.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	3,022	18.3%	19.5%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,052	6.4%	9.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	548	3.3%	6.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	129	0.8%	1.8%
\$200,000 or more	122	0.7%	1.9%

The County Housing Authority’s FY 2001 Annual Plan required by HUD included the data reported for renting families in Table VIII-8, Housing Needs of Families in Susquehanna County by Family Type. The Authority estimates a total of 1001 renting families with housing needs in various

income groups, almost 340 elderly, and almost fifteen Native Americans. Housing characteristics are rated from 1 to 5 with 1 being *no impact* and 5 being *severe impact*. Quality and supply are reported as having the most problematic impact.

Table VIII-8, Housing Needs of Families in Susquehanna County by Family Type							
Family Type	Overall	Affordability	Supply	Quality	Accessibility	Size	Location
Income<30% of AMI*	400	2	3	4	2	1	1
Income>30% but <50% of AMI	395	2	3	4	2	1	1
Income>50% but <80% of AMI	206	2	2	4	2	1	1
Elderly	336	3	3	4	4	1	3
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	13	2	1	4	1	1	1

\*AMI=Annual Median Income

**County Housing Programs**

The Susquehanna County Housing/Redevelopment Authority, an independent organization with a mission to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing to the low-income residents of the County, is responsible for administering County housing programs. Funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) flow to the authority through the Commonwealth and are used for housing subsidies (Section 8 named for a section of the federal housing law), housing repair, and the construction of public housing. As authorized by state law, the County Commissioners have instituted the collection by the Recorder of Deeds of a one dollar fee per recorded deed or mortgage for affordable housing programs.

Table VIII-8, Public Housing Units in Susquehanna County, provides details on the 208 HUD sponsored and Authority operated public housing units in the County. The Housing Authority's housing complexes historically were one hundred percent occupied with a two-year waiting period. Currently at some projects the occupancy rate is running at about ninety-five percent with no waiting period. The Authority administers 253 Section 8 subsidized family/elderly units throughout the County with a ninety-five percent occupancy rate and an average waiting period of six months, which was two years until recently. In addition, the Redevelopment Authority provides approximately twenty owner-occupied households a year with housing rehabilitation services including such improvements as windows, siding, furnaces, etc., and currently the waiting period is two to three years.

The Susquehanna County Housing Authority's goals for the next five years are to preserve the availability of decent safe and affordable housing in the county as measured by state and federal standards; ensure equal opportunity in housing; promote self-sufficiency and asset development of families and individuals as measured by residents that no longer require assistance because of welfare-to-work initiatives; and improve community quality of life and economic vitality. The Housing Authority plans to maintain its current level of service over the next ten years, and does not foresee any construction of additional housing units or increased demand for Section 8

vouchers. The Authority intends to focus on developing home ownership programs that could include a *First Time Home Buyers Program* or obligating ten of the Section 8 subsidized housing vouchers for home ownership by our low-income clients that currently rent. The Redevelopment Authority maintains a waiting list of two-to-three years and anticipates the demand for housing rehabilitation to increase in the future. New regulations governing removal of lead based paint raises the possibility of less households receiving assistance depending on the costs of compliance.

The Trehab Center, a large, non-profit community action agency designated by the Board of Commissioners, provides state-supported community-based programs to low- to moderate-income individuals and families and others in need due to personal, family or health-related circumstances. Trehab offers the following housing related programs:

- ♣ Home Ownership Program - homeowner education and counseling for home loan qualification
- ♣ Weatherization - installation of energy saving home improvements, education

**Specific County Actions**

- ♣ Continue to support the efforts of the Susquehanna County Housing/Redevelopment Authority and Trehab to provide affordable housing and home improvements to low income residents.
- ♣ Take full advantage of all available state and federal housing programs and encourage the Housing/Redevelopment Authority to develop innovative housing assistance programs.
- ♣ Continue the assessment of the one dollar fee for affordable housing on recording of deeds and mortgages.
- ♣ Evaluate and revise as necessary the provisions of the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance in terms of unnecessarily stringent standards effects on costs of housing.

- ♣ Encourage local municipalities to direct higher density development to the growth areas identified in this *Comprehensive Plan*.
- ♣ Promote and provide to local municipalities sample subdivision and land development ordinance and zoning ordinance standards to reduce regulatory effects on the cost of housing.
- ♣ Evaluate the current allocation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in terms of housing, historic preservation and other authorized activities.

Turnpike Terrace Apartments, Susquehanna	50 units elderly
William Penn Apartments, Forest City	50 units family
Prospect Park Apartments, Susquehanna	43 units family 5 garden style
Howard J Emerson Apartments, Susquehanna	40 units elderly
Harford Village Apartments, Harford	20 units elderly
total family units	98
total elderly units	110
total all units	208



*Howard J Emerson Apartments, Susquehanna*



*Harford Village Apartments, Harford*

## IX. Historical Resources

The many historical and archeological resources in Susquehanna County are well chronicled and have great community value and heritage tourism potential. Fieldstone walls and fences; bridges, railroad viaducts and related buildings; farmhouses and barns; commercial buildings; and historic Victorian style homes in many of the small villages and boroughs add to the rural character and appeal of the County and can serve as valuable educational tools. Preserving historical and archeological resources and encouraging new development to be consistent with the existing historical character are critical to the future of the historic fabric of Susquehanna County and its municipalities. Promoting the County's historic buildings and resources will also stimulate tourism, which is significant to the local economy. This promotion will highlight the economic importance of historic resources and stimulate additional preservation efforts.

This *Comprehensive Plan* calls for the County to encourage and support programs, which preserve historical and archeological resources. Without such attention, local history is easily lost. Many historical resources are in need of repair and restoration, while some have already been lost. For example, fieldstone walls are disappearing, given the value of the stone as a landscaping design element. The historic preservation and promotion effort should include: a detailed inventory of all historic resources in the County; action to list qualifying buildings, structures and places on the National Register of Historic Places; the identification and designation of historic districts; and integration of historic resources in County economic development efforts.

An important component of this *Comprehensive Plan* is to encourage the local municipalities to take

an active role in the future of the County. Historical resources are not only important to the county as a whole, but also to each individual municipality. Without direct municipal participation in the process, the long-term preservation of these historical resources cannot be ensured.

Concurrently, local municipalities cannot hope to achieve the preservation of historic resources without support and participation from interested citizens and historical societies. In short, the key to historic and archeological resource protection is careful planning, strengthening County resources to undertake preservation efforts, organizing local historical societies, promoting the resources as an important part of the community, and linking the resources to tourism economic development.

### Historical Societies

The Susquehanna County Historical Society, including the Historical Society Museum, is presently located on the second floor of the Susquehanna County Free Library in Montrose Borough (although moving the location of the library or historical society museum is currently under consideration). The Society's main function is to assist people with genealogical research and to provide information regarding the history of the County. Numerous reference materials and historical documents are maintained at the museum. Several, independent historical societies in the County work individually to protect their local historical resources; generally promoting themselves through community fundraising events. These local historical societies use the services of the County Historical Society for resources concerning historic preservation or grant information, and should take the lead in the preservation and restoration of local historic places.

August 1, 2002

**NATIONAL REGISTER LISTED & ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES**

*Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission  
Bureau for Historic Preservation*

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**Susquehanna County**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>KeyNo</b>	<b>Historic Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Stat Date</b>
Chocanut Township	103194	Saint Joseph Roman Catholic Church	Friendsville	Eligible	03/15/1995
Clifford Township	095693	Woods, James, House	Rte. 247 N. at Crystal Lake	Eligible	10/04/1988
Gibson Township	000111	Bridge in Gibson Borough	L.R. 57045	Listed	06/22/1988
Gibson Township	110726	Gibson Village Historic District	S.R. 848 at S.R. 547	Eligible	11/20/1998
Hallstead Borough	106586	First Presbyterian Church	107 Pine St.	Eligible	08/14/1997
Harford Township	096367	First Congregational Church	L.R. 570	Eligible	05/12/1989
Harford Township	104019	Harford School Building	School St.	Eligible	07/14/1995
Harford Township	097168	Kingsley Railroad Station		Eligible	01/04/1991
Harford Township	097174	Kingsley Viaduct		Eligible	01/04/1991
Harford Township	092227	Sophia, John, Farm	Richardson Rd.	Eligible	03/30/1987
Harford Township	087015	Tyler, John, House	Main St. In Harford	Eligible	05/23/1983
Lanesboro Borough	000838	Starrucca Viaduct	Pa. L.R. 57058	Listed	10/29/1975
Middletown Township	102360	Coleman Farmstead	East Side of S.R. 858	Eligible	04/12/1994
Montrose Borough	110147	Berry Street African Methodist Episcopal Zion Ch	Berry St.	Eligible	08/07/1998
Montrose Borough	087014	Montrose Historic District	Montrose	Eligible	08/14/1989
Montrose Borough	114576	Montrose Inn (Demolished)	Church St.	Eligible	
Montrose Borough	000837	Mulford, Sylvanus, Residence	65 Church St.	Listed	05/22/1978
Montrose Borough	000836	Silver Lake Bank	75 Church St.	Listed	03/07/1975
Montrose Borough	097594	Susquehanna County Courthouse Complex	Maple, Monument, Lake & Pine St.	Listed	06/28/1996
Montrose Borough	050683	Universalist Church	Corner of Lake Ave. & Prospect St.	Eligible	02/07/1984
Multi-Municips	102247	Delaware & Hudson Railroad	Simpson (Fell Twp.), Lackawanna Co. to NY State Line	Eligible	05/13/1994
Susquehanna Depot Boroug	000835	Erie Railroad Station	Main St.	Listed	06/19/1972
Susquehanna Depot Boroug	104725	Susquehanna Commercial Historic District		Eligible	03/01/1996
Susquehanna Depot Boroug	097707	Susquehanna Historic District		Eligible	06/14/1994

**Totals:** National Historic Landmarks: 0 National Register Listed: 6 National Register Eligible: 18

### National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the Nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission manages the National Register of Historic Places for Pennsylvania. National Register properties are distinguished by having been documented and evaluated according to uniform standards. These criteria recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have contributed to the history and heritage of the United States and are designed to help state and local governments, federal agencies, and others identify significant historic and archeological properties worthy of preservation and of consideration in planning and development decisions. Listing in the National Register, however, does not interfere with a private property owner's right to alter, manage or dispose of property. It often changes the way communities perceive their historic resources and gives credibility to efforts to preserve these resources as irreplaceable parts of our communities. (See accompanying list of National Register properties in Susquehanna County.)

Listing in the National Register contributes to preserving historic properties in a number of ways:

- ♣ Recognition that a property is of significance to the nation, the state, or the community.
- ♣ Consideration in the planning for federal or federally assisted projects.
- ♣ Eligibility for federal tax benefits

#### Historical Preservation Assistance

Grants are available from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) to nonprofit organizations and local governments for various aspects of historic preservation such as planning and surveys, nominations to the National Register, restoration and rehabilitation, museums, history and archives, historical markers, and operating support. PHMC grants are competitive and are awarded on an annual or, in some cases, ongoing basis. PHMC staff is available to assist local groups. The PHMC is the primary source for the County to begin its formal historic preservation effort, with the Department of Planning and Development making application in concert with the County Historical Society to inventory historic and archeological resources and prepare an overall historic preservation plan.

#### Specific Historical Preservation Actions

1. Use the recommendations of the Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan in determining specific actions to protect

and preserve historical and archeological resources and integrate the resources with tourism development. (Department of Economic Development and Chambers of Commerce)

2. Make application to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for a grant to inventory historic and archeological resources and prepare an overall County historic preservation plan to identify properties for inclusion in the National Register and potential historic districts, and make specific preservation recommendations based on the inventory. (Historical Society and Department of Planning and Development)
3. Establish as part of the County Historical Society a historic and archeological resource center to encourage and coordinate local societies, and serve as a clearinghouse for information, referrals and technical assistance. (Historical Society and Department of Planning and Development)

4. Organize a countywide workshop on historic and archeological resource protection. (Historical Society, Department of Planning and Development, Penn State Extension Service, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission)
5. Use the workshop as a starting point for the organization and promotion of local societies as part of the countywide effort.
6. Encourage local municipalities and residents to submit eligible properties for registration on the National Register of Historic Places. (Historical Society and local societies)
7. Develop guidelines for residential and commercial development to encourage historically sensitive design. These guidelines would be recommended to developers in areas not included in a formal historic district where specific architectural design standards can be applied by ordinance. (Historical Society and Department of Planning and Development)
8. Develop strategies for the repair, restoration and maintenance of historic structures, including abandoned cemeteries. (Historical Society and Department of Planning and Development)
9. Based on the historic resources inventory, encourage the formation of historic districts in qualifying areas and the adoption of the necessary design standards for new and renovated structures. (Historical Society, local societies, and Department of Planning and Development) Note: Ordinances to regulate the architectural integrity of structures are the prerogative of local municipalities and cannot be enforced without the creation of a historic district certified by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.
10. Include conservation residential subdivision design in the County subdivision and land development ordinance to preserve important historical resources and encourage local municipalities to do the same in zoning and subdivision ordinances.
11. Evaluate the current allocation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in terms of housing, historic preservation and other authorized activities.

## **X. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN CONTIGUOUS COUNTIES, AND THE REGION**

### Planning Code

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) dictates, and common sense suggests, that planning and development in contiguous municipalities be considered when a comprehensive plan is adopted. MPC §301 states specifically that comprehensive plans shall include:

*A statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is compatible with the existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous portions of neighboring municipalities, or a statement indicating measures which have been taken to provide buffers or other transitional devices between disparate uses, and a statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is generally consistent with the objectives and plans of the county comprehensive plan.*

The section certainly implies that it applicable to how local municipalities relate to other local municipalities. Land use control using zoning in Susquehanna County and adjoining counties has historically been the prerogative of local municipalities and this role is not anticipated to change. In other words, specific decisions about how areas will be zoned; will be made by local municipalities, with county plans typically identifying generalized growth areas. Nevertheless, assessing the status of planning in adjoining counties is important in terms of similarity of development patterns and identification of growth areas.

### County Planning

A 1988 amendment of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) required all counties in the Commonwealth to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan within three years. As noted earlier, this *Comprehensive Plan* updates the plan adopted by Susquehanna County in July 1992. The surrounding counties are at various stages of comprehensive planning. Bradford County is currently preparing a comprehensive plan that will replace the plan prepared by the Planning Commission (but not adopted by the County

Commissioners) in 1982. The Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission did prepare a plan in 1976, however, the plan was never formally adopted by the County Board of Commissioners. Lackawanna County is, in cooperation with Luzerne County, developing an open space plan, which is expected to be complete by the fall of 2003, but has no undertaken the preparation of a comprehensive plan. Wayne County adopted a comprehensive plan in November, 1994, and Wyoming County in November 1997.

### Compatibility

The areas along the borders of Susquehanna County and adjoining counties are generally similar in character, that is, largely agricultural and forest land with scattered residential and small scale development. This *Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan* does not identify any growth areas along the border with any neighboring county minimizing the potential for incompatibility. As local municipalities develop and revise land use plans, existing zoning ordinances and land uses in all adjoining municipalities must be considered to minimize, and avoid if possible, any conflict. For example, it would be inappropriate for one township to designate an industrial or heavy commercial area adjacent to an existing residential development or residential zoning district in an adjoining municipality. The future land use plan suggested by this *Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan* should also serve as a guideline for local municipalities in assuring compatibility of land uses along municipal borders.

### Regional Planning

Regional planning in the area of Pennsylvania encompassing Susquehanna County is not formalized in any municipally organized body. Each county planning agency is responsible for review and coordination of planning within its jurisdiction. The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC), located in Towanda, Bradford County, serves as a community and economic planning and development coordinator and information source, and funnels for grants and special projects for Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming Counties, but has no municipally authorized regional planning power. NTRPDC is a key coordinator in regional transportation planning and economic development

and provides technical assistance to the counties and local municipalities in the designated region. In the case of Broome County, little intergovernmental cooperation has occurred. However, given the importance of Broome County and its employment

opportunities to the economic well being of Susquehanna County, such cooperation should be pursued particularly on transportation (e.g., railroads) and economic development.

## Goals and Implementation Table

*The following table provides specific actions based on the goals and background information found in corresponding sections of the Plan. For a detailed discussion on individual goals and actions please refer to the Section number shown in the shaded row of each section.*

<b>Basic Land Use Plan Approach (Section IV)</b>
Conserve and protect the natural environment
Preserve agriculture and rural character
Protect residential uses
Provide well-situated and appropriate development areas to accommodate projected growth
Encourage commercial and industrial development in areas with adequate public infrastructure
Encourage the use of natural resources, particularly forest and blue stone products, as part of the local economy

<b>Key To Table</b>		
ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES	PRIORITY TIMING

<b>Land Use Section IV – 12 – Intermunicipal Planning and Zoning</b>		
Identify planning areas comprised of local municipalities within the County with common growth and development issues.	County Planning	Ongoing
Work with local officials to create a committee of representatives from each municipality in a planning area to discuss the potential for joint planning and cooperative zoning in the planning area.		
Provide information and resources such as the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute, and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, to each municipality about the benefits of intermunicipal zoning and its affects on their individual municipality.		
Provide technical assistance to the municipalities that undertake intermunicipal planning and cooperative zoning.		

<b>Key To Table</b>		
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES</b>	<b>PRIORITY TIMING</b>

<b>Land Use Section IV – 13 – Growth Areas</b>		
Designate future growth and rural resource areas, as listed below:	County Planning (Completed as part of this plan)	Update as needed
Forest City	Local Municipalities (Further refinement of specific growth areas)	First 5 years
Susquehanna – Oakland – Lanesboro		
New Milford – Great Bend – Hallstead		
Montrose – Bridgewater		
Gibson Interchange of I-81		
Rural Resource Area (any area not designated as a specific growth area)		

<b>Land Use Section IV – 17 – Open Land and Natural Areas Conservation</b>		
Investigate the possibility of conducting a Natural Areas Inventory to add to the available land use management tools	County Commissioners County Planning Conservation District	First 2 years
Encourage Conservation Design Development	County Planning, Conservation District	Ongoing
Include Conservation Design in local land use ordinances	Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Actively lobby the State Legislature to correct the inequities of the Clean and Green Program (Act 319)	County Commissioners Local Municipalities	First 2 years

<b>Land Use Section IV – 29 – Preservation of Agriculture</b>		
Provide the necessary technical support for the Agricultural Security Area program	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Consider Agricultural Security Areas when designating zoning districts	Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Continue to fund and provide staff for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Investigate alternate funding sources for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program	Ag Preservation Board County Planning	First 5 years

<b>Land Use Section IV - 33 – Watershed Planning</b>		
Watershed Planning is a proactive approach to conservation and more watershed associations should be formed in the County to promote conservation and water quality protection.		
Provide the necessary staff and other resources to ensure that adequate organizational support and technical assistance is available to all local groups working to form a watershed association.	County Commissioners Conservation District	Ongoing

<b>Key To Table</b>		
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES</b>	<b>PRIORITY TIMING</b>

<b>Land Use Section IV - 34 – Water Supply and Water Quality</b>		
Adopt well ordinances to regulate, in addition to installation, the testing and closure of wells.	PaDEP Local Municipalities	First 5 years
Adopt wellhead and aquifer protection standards.	PaDEP Local Municipalities	First 5 years
Enforce existing water quality protection regulations.	PaDEP Local Municipalities	Ongoing
In local land use ordinances, require developers of projects involving large quantities of groundwater to document potential impacts and mitigation actions.	PaDEP Local Municipalities County Planning	Ongoing
Maximize groundwater recharge by encouraging or requiring the use of innovate land based sewage disposal and storm water management techniques.	PaDEP Local Municipalities County Planning	Ongoing
Work with local municipalities and state agencies to identify areas with ground or surface water contamination and develop plans for corrective action.	Conservation District Penn State Extension County Planning	First 5 years
Should growth and development and population increases dictate or if water supply problems begin to surface, consider preparing a more definitive County Water Supply and Well Protection Plan.	Conservation District Penn State Extension County Planning	Ongoing

<b>Land Use Section IV –37 - Forestry</b>		
Include forestry and value added forest products industries in economic development efforts.	Economic Development Department	Ongoing
Continue to support the efforts of the State Forester in providing technical assistance to forest land owners and promoting best management practices.	County Commissioners Conservation District	Ongoing
Continue to support the efforts of the Soil and Water Conservation District for soil erosion and sedimentation control.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Evaluate the costs and benefits of the County Conservation District assuming delegated authority for soil erosion and sedimentation control enforcement.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Via the Planning Department, encourage local municipalities to be reasonable when adopting any local regulations governing forestry in terms of regulating types of cutting, including requirements for best management practices and compliance with state environmental regulations.	County Planning	Ongoing
Work with elected state representatives and DEP to ensure effective enforcement of regulations applicable to forestry enterprises.	County Commissioners County Planning Local Municipalities	Ongoing

<b>Key To Table</b>		
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES</b>	<b>PRIORITY TIMING</b>

<b>Land Use Section IV - 39 – Mineral Extraction</b>		
Include minerals and value added mineral products industries, especially bluestone related, in economic development efforts.	Economic Development Department	Ongoing
Via the Planning Department, encourage local municipalities to be reasonable when adopting any local regulations governing mineral extraction.	County Planning	Ongoing
Any zoning ordinances implemented by the County or municipalities should require a minimum size to be no less than the permissible area allowed by DEP for that type of mining.	County Planning Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Mining and related operations should be directed to areas where road access and conditions are adequate, and where conflicts with other development and the loss of prime agricultural land is minimized.	County Planning Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Work with elected state representatives and adjoining counties to pressure DEP to provide the necessary staff to ensure effective enforcement of mining regulations and preferably to locate an office closer than Pottsville.	County Commissioners County Planning Local Municipalities	Ongoing

<b>Community Facilities - Section V – 4 – Specific County Facilities and Services Actions</b>		
In addition to the ongoing County services and programs the following actions have been identified.		
Undertake a detailed evaluation of staff and office Space needs to identify improvements required to ensure quality service delivery and develop a ten-year plan, including capital improvements.	County Commissioners  Department Heads	First 3 years
Annually review and update the service delivery plan to maintain the ten-year planning period.		Ongoing
Employ a human resources director to assist the Chief Clerk with employee matters.		First 3 years
Take immediate steps to improve records consolidation, storage and destruction by meeting the needs of the Historical Records/Archives Department.		First three years
Improve interoffice communications by networking computers and requiring use of common software.		Ongoing
Designate a common room for hearings, conferences And client interviews which can be reserved and used by any, department.		First three years
Develop an inventory and operation and maintenance plan for all County buildings and grounds.		First three years

<b>Key To Table</b>		
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES</b>	<b>PRIORITY TIMING</b>

<b>Community Facilities - Section V – 5 – Information Infrastructure (also see Appendix B)</b>		
Develop a plan and implementation approach to attain the goals of the plan as outlined in Appendix B (see Appendix B)	County Commissioners	Ongoing

<b>Economic Development - Section VI – 5 – Goals and Objectives</b>
<p>The goal of the Susquehanna County Department of Economic Development is to facilitate the creation of family-sustaining employment throughout the County business community. To accomplish its goal, the Department has established these objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♣ To provide a one-stop economic development service for the County.</li> <li>♣ To coordinate all major economic development efforts in the County, and to assure the implementation of these activities on a cost-effective basis.</li> <li>♣ To involve all major economic development interests in the County in its activities.</li> <li>♣ To leverage all major economic development resources available in the County to generate maximum grant dollars from the State and Federal governments.</li> <li>♣ To involve all environmental, ecological, conservation, preservation, and historical organizations in the County in an advisory capacity.</li> <li>♣ To recruit new businesses to the County and to retain and expand the County’s existing businesses.</li> </ul>

<b>Heritage Destination Development – Section VI – 5 – Heritage Destination Development</b>		
Assemble the disciplines necessary to generate public and business interest and participation.	Economic Development Department	First three years
Provide the necessary expertise to develop an effective <i>Heritage Destination Development</i> strategy.	Department	
Use the <i>Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan</i> as a general guideline for heritage destination (tourism) development.	County Planning	

<b>Transportation – Section VII – 12 – Goals, Objectives and Actions</b>		
Continue to work with the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission’s Rural Transportation Advisory Committee to submit and monitor road and bridge projects as part of PennDOT’s Transportation Improvement Program and Twelve Year Plan.	County Commissioners  County Planning	Ongoing
Develop a maintenance and capital improvements program for County bridges.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Direct higher density and higher traffic development to areas with adequate highway capacity.	Local Municipalities (Zoning) County Planning (Technical Assistance)	Ongoing

<b>Key To Table</b>		
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES</b>	<b>PRIORITY TIMING</b>

<b>Transportation – Section VII – 12 – Goals, Objectives and Actions</b>		
Adopt uniform road ordinances setting standards for new road construction and access to roadways.	Local Municipalities County Planning	First three years
Include pedestrian and bicycle friendly design in new and existing roads.	Local Municipalities County Planning	Ongoing
Avoid the creation of highway hazards in new subdivisions and land developments by developing driveway, parking, setback, and road standards.	Local Municipalities County Planning	Ongoing
Work with economic development agencies, municipalities, major industries and PennDOT to formulate a plan for the improvement of east-west travel in the County.	County Commissioners County Planning Economic Development Department	First three years
Use designated growth areas as a basis for road improvement prioritization.	County Planning	Ongoing
Encourage legislators to support transportation projects	County Commissioners Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Support state legislation which would provide an equitable share of subsidies for rural transit services.	County Commissioners Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Support Barnes-Kasson Hospital's and Tri -County Human Services' rural transportation service, and others offering public transportation to elderly and handicapped citizens.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Support the continuing operation of the County Rail Committee.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Support legislation providing railroad subsidies.	County Rail Committee	Ongoing
Support rail-to-trail development as a means of "land banking" existing rail lines.		
Promote the use of rail freight service for businesses located within the county.		

<b>Housing – Section VIII – 8 – Specific County Actions</b>		
Continue to support the efforts of the Susquehanna County Housing/Redevelopment Authority and Trehab to provide affordable housing and home improvements to low income residents	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Take full advantage of all available state and federal housing programs and encourage the Housing and Redevelopment Authority to develop innovative housing assistance programs.	County Commissioners	Ongoing
Continue the assessment of the one dollar fee for affordable housing on recording of deeds and mortgages.	County Commissioners	Ongoing

<b>Key To Table</b>		
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES</b>	<b>PRIORITY TIMING</b>

<b>Housing – Section VIII – 8 – Specific County Actions</b>		
Evaluate and revise as necessary the provisions of the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance in terms of unnecessarily stringent standards effects on costs of housing.	County Planning	First two years
Encourage local municipalities to direct higher density development to the growth areas identified in this <i>Comprehensive Plan</i>	Local Municipalities (Zoning) County Planning (Technical Assistance)	Ongoing
Promote and provide to local municipalities sample subdivision and land development ordinance and zoning ordinance standards to reduce regulatory effects on the cost of housing.	County Planning	Ongoing
Evaluate the current allocation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in terms of housing, historic preservation and other authorized activities.	County Commissioners	Ongoing

<b>Historical Resources – Section IX – 3 – Specific Historical Preservation Actions</b>		
Use the recommendations of the Endless Mountains Heritage Region Management Action Plan in determining specific actions to protect and preserve historical and archeological resources and integrate the resources with tourism development.	Economic Development Department Chambers of Commerce	Ongoing
Make application to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for a grant to inventory historic and archeological resources and prepare an overall County historic preservation plan to identify properties for inclusion in the National Register and potential historic districts, and make specific preservation recommendations based on the inventory.	Historical Society County Planning	First three years
Establish as part of the County Historical Society a historic and archeological resource center to encourage and coordinate local societies, and serve as a clearinghouse for information, referrals and technical assistance.	Historical Society	First 5 years
Organize a county-wide workshop on historic and archeological resource protection for use as a starting point for the organization and promotion of local societies as part of the county-wide effort	Historical Society Penn State Extension	First two years
Support local efforts to submit eligible properties for the National Register of Historic Places	Historical Society Local societies	Ongoing

<b>Key To Table</b>		
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES</b>	<b>PRIORITY TIMING</b>

<b>Historical Resources – Section IX – 3 – Specific Historical Preservation Actions</b>		
Develop guidelines for residential and commercial development to encourage historically sensitive design. These guidelines would be recommended to developers in areas not included in a formal historic district where specific architectural design standards can be applied by ordinance.	Historical Society County Planning	First two years
Develop strategies for the repair, restoration and maintenance of historic structures, including abandoned cemeteries.	Historical Society Local Societies	First five years
Encourage the formation of historic districts in qualifying areas and the adoption of the necessary design standards for new and renovated structures.	Historical Society County Planning	Ongoing
Include conservation residential subdivision design in the County subdivision and land development ordinance to preserve important historical resources and encourage local municipalities to do the same in zoning and subdivision ordinances.	County Planning	Ongoing
Evaluate the current allocation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in terms of housing, historic preservation and other authorized activities.	County Commissioners	Ongoing

<b>Contiguous Planning – Section X-1 – Regional Planning</b>		
As land use plans are developed and revised consider existing land use plans, existing zoning ordinances and land uses in all adjoining municipalities to minimize and avoid, if possible, any conflicts.	Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Use this <i>Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan</i> as a guideline to ensure compatibility of land uses along municipal borders.	Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Given the importance of Broome and Lackawanna Counties and their employment opportunities to the economic well-being of Susquehanna County, pursue cooperation on transportation (e.g., railroads) and economic development.	County Planning Economic Development Department	Ongoing

## Appendix A

### Elected Officials

#### ♣ Three County Commissioners

- ♣ serve as the policy makers for the County
- ♣ create and manage the annual budget and set tax rates to generate adequate funds
- ♣ manage County personnel
- ♣ ensure that property assessments are fair and equitable
- ♣ cannot direct how other elected row offices are managed
- ♣ ensure that state program mandates are satisfied
- ♣ provide facilities and support for the judicial system
- ♣ address risk management for the County administration
- ♣ make purchasing and contracting arrangements
- ♣ manage county human services
- ♣ provide financial support for the county jail and serve on the County Prison Board for jail management
- ♣ serve as the County Board of Elections which responsible for all aspects of elections
- ♣ manage County buildings and property
- ♣ implement the 911 emergency call system and provide communication system for emergency services
- ♣ provide for emergency management in accord with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
- ♣ appoint a County Planning Commission and ensure that a comprehensive plan is adopted and updated in accord with the Municipalities Planning Code
- ♣ conduct solid waste disposal planning as required by state law
- ♣ appoint the County Sealer of Weights and Measures who inspects and certifies scales and gas pumps
- ♣ appoint the Conservation District Board of Directors and provide financial support
- ♣ support the services of Penn State Cooperative Extension
- ♣ appoint a Director of veterans' Affairs who assists veterans in the County with claims, record changes, etc.
- ♣ provide for data and information management

- ♣ Three Auditors (or, where the office of auditor has been abolished, a Controller) - Susquehanna County elects three Auditors
- ♣ perform a post audit function, not an accounting function

- ♣ Treasurer (in Susquehanna County also serves as Director of the Tax Claim Bureau and shares staff)

- ♣ receipt, custody and disbursement of all county monies
- ♣ pays bills on order of Commissioners
- ♣ maintains vouchers and transaction records for the Auditors
- ♣ acts as issuing agent for:
  - ♣ Department of Agriculture - thirteen sub-agents, total of 7,623 dog licenses in 2001
  - ♣ PA Fish and Boat Commission - 477 fishing licenses in 2001,
  - ♣ PA Game Commission - 1,229 hunting and 14,000 antlerless licenses in 2001
- ♣ issues permits for bingo and small games of chance - 184 in 2001
- ♣ issues pistol permits - 101 in 2001
- ♣ see *Tax Claim Bureau* for more details

- ♣ **Recorder of Deeds** (in Susquehanna County also serves as Register of Wills and Clerk of Orphans' Court)
  - ♣ located in Courthouse
  - ♣ responsible for preservation of real property (land and buildings) records
  - ♣ affix seal and record deeds, mortgages, subdivision plans and other property ownership records
  - ♣ records oaths of office and commissions of all county officers, notaries and district justices
  - ♣ each document requires thirteen steps for recording and filing (6,609 documents in 1995, 8,825 in 2001 for Recorder of Deeds Register of Wills and Clerk of Orphans' Court combined)
  - ♣ collects state and local real estate transfer tax
  - ♣ collects fee of \$1 per document for historical records storage and \$1 per deed or mortgage for affordable housing program
  - ♣ Staff - 5 full-time: recorder/register, 4 deputies. 1 part-time filing clerk
  - ♣ Need for full-time microfilming clerk, office space, and records storage
  
- ♣ **Register of Wills** (in Susquehanna County also serves as Recorder of Deeds and Clerk of Orphans' Court)
  - ♣ jurisdiction over the probate of wills
  - ♣ Commonwealth's agent for collection of inheritance taxes
  - ♣ maintains records on wills, inventory of estates, fiduciary accounts, inheritance tax records, registration of licenses (including marriage licenses) and other miscellaneous records
  - ♣ see *Recorder of Deeds* for staff and office details
  
- ♣ **Clerk of Orphans' Court** (in Susquehanna County also serves as Recorder of Deeds and Register of Wills)
  - ♣ files all proceedings relative to adoptions and to estates of incompetents
  - ♣ adoption records are sealed and not available to the public
  - ♣ see *Recorder of Deeds* for staff and office details
  
- ♣ **Prothonotary** (in Susquehanna County also serves as Clerk of Courts)
  - ♣ located in Courthouse
  - ♣ clerk of the court of common pleas
  - ♣ keeps records of all civil procedures before the courts - about 1,200 to 1,300 civil cases per year
  - ♣ signs all writs and processes
  - ♣ files copies of all records and processes
  - ♣ takes bail in civil actions, enters judgments at the instance of plaintiffs, and upon the confession of defendants
  - ♣ signs all judgments and takes acknowledgments of satisfaction of judgments or decrees
  - ♣ administers oaths and affirmations
  - ♣ required by state law to maintain the judgment docket
  - ♣ receives petitions in connection with roads and rights of way
  - ♣ records the action of members of boards of view and eminent domain proceedings
  - ♣ processes of naturalization papers. The office obtains information and makes records and arrangements for naturalization court
  - ♣ provides applications for passports
  - ♣ records divorce proceedings
  - ♣ Staff - 6 full-time, 1 part-time
  - ♣ Need for microfilming clerk, consolidated records storage, improved office space/layout, space for public file review
  
- ♣ **Clerk of Courts** (in Susquehanna County also serves as Prothonotary)
  - ♣ chief clerk and recordkeeper for the criminal courts

- ♣ keeps all papers filed under criminal and civil procedures of the courts – about 450 criminal cases in 2001, up from 280 in 1992
- ♣ maintains the minute book and the records of all similar procedures of the courts
- ♣ see *Prothonotary* for staff and office details
  
- ♣ **District Attorney**
  - ♣ located in Courthouse
  - ♣ signs all bills of indictment
  - ♣ conducts all in-court criminal prosecution in the name of the Commonwealth
  - ♣ assistants, special assistants, deputy assistants, deputy assistant district attorneys, county detectives, stenographers, and clerks are appointed to assist in criminal investigation and prosecution of the cases before the court
  - ♣ Staff – 4 full-time, 1 part-time
  
- ♣ **Sheriff**
  - ♣ located in Courthouse
  - ♣ serves principally as an officer of the court and appoints deputies for assistance
  - ♣ delivers and carries out orders of county court, such as protection from abuse orders
  - ♣ serves various writs, processes, and other judicial documents
  - ♣ provides courthouse security and prisoner transport
  - ♣ assists in impaneling juries and in executing sheriff's sales
  - ♣ conducts application checks for pistol permits
  - ♣ Staff – 6 full-time
  - ♣ Needs – improved office space
  
- ♣ **Coroner**
  - ♣ investigates deaths of a suspicious or violent nature
  - ♣ assisted by a Coroner Jury of Inquest when called to determine the cause of death
  - ♣ empowered to perform autopsies, subpoena witnesses, administer oaths, and compel attendance at an inquest
  - ♣ required to issue a certificate of cause of death when it occurs without medical attention or attendance
  
- ♣ **Two Jury Commissioners**
  - ♣ provide a jury panel for the ensuing court year
  - ♣ authorized to appoint a clerk to assist them in performing this function

### **Departments and Employees**

In addition to the elected officials, a wide variety of individuals and departments operate to provide the facilities and services mandated by the County Code and various state and federal programs. The responsibilities of each department are summarized below.

- ♣ **Office of Commissioners and Chief Clerk** - State law requires the Board of Commissioners to appoint a Chief Clerk, and in Susquehanna County, the Commissioners Office and Chief Clerk's Office function as one in the same.
  - ♣ serves as the Commissioner's liaison to the public
  - ♣ coordinates between the Commissioners and other County departments
  - ♣ keeps the official record of Commissioners' proceedings
  - ♣ operates as the administrative assistant to the Commissioners
  - ♣ maintains the books and accounts of the Commissioners
  - ♣ serves as the chief purchasing officer for the County
  - ♣ assisted by four full-time employees

- ♣ Assistant Chief Clerk
- ♣ Accounting Clerk
- ♣ Payroll Clerk
- ♣ Clerk/Typist/Switchboard Operator
- ♣ County employees increasing 1990 - 160 employees, 1995 - 199 employees, 2002 - 236 employees
- ♣ new state-mandated programs and grants demand additional staff future needs
- ♣ human resources director for additional employees, benefit programs, and 5 union contracts
- ♣ additional office space
  
- ♣ **Solicitor** - The County Code authorizes the expenditure of county funds for legal counsel.
  - ♣ part-time, appointed by the Commissioners to represent them in all legal matters
  - ♣ brings suits involving any County rights, claims or privileges
  - ♣ defends suits against the County
  - ♣ provides legal advice
  - ♣ may be assisted by special counsel appointed by the Commissioners
  
- ♣ **Assessment Office/Chief Assessor** - The real estate tax provides the largest source of funds for local municipalities, school districts and counties, and the assessed valuation of each parcel of land is the basis for the real estate tax. The Commissioners hold the ultimate responsibility for setting assessed valuations but rely on the Assessment Office for operation of the program. The Assessment Office is directed by the Chief Assessor
  - ♣ appointed by the Commissioners
  - ♣ determines values, updates records and prepares reports
  - ♣ updates tax maps for new land subdivisions
  - ♣ maintains the occupational privilege tax and per capita tax records
  - ♣ sends tax notices for the County and local municipalities
  - ♣ administers Act 319 Clean and Green preferential assessment
  - ♣ number of property parcels increasing
    - ♣ 1975 - 24,000 parcels
    - ♣ 1992 - 26,970 parcels
    - ♣ 2000 - 27,200 parcels
    - ♣ 2002 January - 27,430 parcels
  - ♣ Chief Assessor assisted by 8 full-time employees
    - ♣ 3 Field Appraisers
    - ♣ Cartographer
    - ♣ Assistant Cartographer
    - ♣ Head real Estate Clerk
    - ♣ Assistant Real Estate Clerk
    - ♣ Occupational Privilege/Per Capita Tax Clerk
  - ♣ works with Board of Assessment Appeals
    - ♣ three-member Board appointed by Commissioners
    - ♣ hears formal tax assessment appeals
    - ♣ addresses tax exemption questions
  - ♣ future needs
    - ♣ additional staff
    - ♣ improved office space and layout
    - ♣ room for assessment board meetings/hearings
  
- ♣ **Tax Claim Bureau (and Treasurer's Office)** - the elected County Treasurer serves as Department Head.
  - ♣ located in Courthouse
  - ♣ receives tax reports from the 40 Tax Collectors in the County and provides summary to the

- Treasurer's Office
  - ♣ maintains additions and exonerations to the tax rolls along with Assessment Office and Tax Collectors
  - ♣ collects delinquent taxes - about 3,000 each year
  - ♣ assists with tax sales
  - ♣ collects and processes rollback taxes on Clean and Green violations
  - ♣ see *Treasurer* for additional office functions
  - ♣ Staff - treasurer plus 4 full-time, 6 part-time temporary for tax sales, doe licenses
  - ♣ Need for records storage, this will free space for offices
  
- ♣ **Voter Registration Office** - The County Commissioners serve as the County Board of Elections and appoint the County employees in the Voter Registration Office to administer election and voter registration under jurisdiction of the Board. When one of the Commissioners is a candidate, the President Judge of Common Pleas appoints a judge or an elector to serve on the Board of Elections in place of the Commissioner. The County Board certifies election results and voter registration totals to the Department of State.
  - ♣ maintains registered voter list
  - ♣ selects and equips polling places and assists with set-up for elections
  - ♣ prepares election ballots and mails absentee ballots
  - ♣ purchases and preserves voting booths (voting equipment) and supplies
  - ♣ prepares and publishes notices and advertisements
  - ♣ receives petitions and nomination papers
  - ♣ investigates allegations of vote fraud
  - ♣ announces election results and reports to the State
  - ♣ issues certificates to successful candidates
  - ♣ 2 full-time employees
  - ♣ number of registered voters
    - ♣ 1982 - 17,710 voters
    - ♣ 2002 - 25,421 voters
  - ♣ statewide voter registry may affect present operations
  - ♣ need for records storage
  
- ♣ **Historical Records/Archives** - Located in the old gym in the Warner Building and staffed by one County employee. Court related, tax assessment, birth and death, genealogy and other old records are currently stored.
  - ♣ Shelving and storage of records and documents
  - ♣ Assists county staff and public with record searches - about 2,000 annually
  - ♣ Anticipated future needs
    - ♣ destruction of certain old records
    - ♣ consolidation of records
    - ♣ once storage areas are renovated – digitizing, scanning, micro-fiche
  
- ♣ **Housing and Redevelopment** - The Susquehanna County Housing/Redevelopment Authority is an independent organization initially created by the Board of Commissioners. The Housing Authority's mission is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing to the low-income residents of the County. The Redevelopment Authority's mission is to focus on, and address housing and community facility problems; and to pursue economic development and commercial revitalization activities through initiatives that will result in the development and expansion of job opportunities.
  - ♣ one full-time Executive Director serves both the Housing and the Redevelopment Authority
  - ♣ Housing Authority
    - ♣ five full time staff

- ♣ level of service and activity has been consistent with the population increase
- ♣ four elderly housing projects, one family project, 202 apartments, and 253 Section 8 housing units
- ♣ three to six month waiting period for housing units
- ♣ Redevelopment Authority
  - ♣ full time administrative assistant
  - ♣ contracts for housing rehab inspection services
  - ♣ need for records disposal
- ♣ **Economic Development** - The Department of Economic Development's mission is to enable businesses to grow and prosper in the County. The Department serves existing, emerging, and relocating businesses by offering planning and counseling, research and development, site selection, marketing, project management, and financial services. The Department is also involved in community development, workforce training, infrastructure development, environmental assessments, recreational opportunities, public relations, heritage preservation, grant writing and displacement services.
  - ♣ two full time staff; a director and an assistant director
  - ♣ expects an increase in service by at least twenty percent due to the rapidly growing list of clients
- ♣ **Chamber of Commerce** - The County provides office space to the Chamber of Commerce and staff and operational costs are paid by membership dues.
  - ♣ part-time director
  - ♣ organizes Chamber functions
  - ♣ responds to inquiries about recreation, lodging, etc.
  - ♣ storage space needed
- ♣ **Veterans Affairs** - Assists veterans and their dependents with processing claims for Federal, State, and County benefits, such as pensions, widow's benefits, burial needs, and educational assistance. Provides counseling services and maintains files for all veterans.
  - ♣ staff – 1 full-time, 1 part-time
- ♣ **Services for Children and Youth** - The goal of children and youth social services is to ensure for each child in the County a permanent, legally assured family, which protects the child from abuse and neglect. Children and Youth is supported by state funds and county funds and the agency budgets for twenty-percent county support, but efficient use of state funds has limited the level of annual county support to eleven to thirteen percent.
  - ♣ Staff - 21 total: 1 director, 4 supervisors, 10 case workers, 2 homemakers, 4 clerical staff
    - ♣ Number of clients steadily increasing - appears to be related to local economy
    - ♣ Type of cases shifting from health and environment to violence, drugs and alcohol
    - ♣ More focus on in-home services instead of removal of children from home requires more staff for services but keeps long-term out-of-home placement cost down
    - ♣ Increasing staff time for state and federal reporting
    - ♣ Need for improved economy, job opportunities and community activities
    - ♣ Public transportation would be beneficial
- ♣ **Area Agency on Aging** - The office assists elderly consumers in meeting their needs through home and community based services. Assessments are done to determine an appropriate level of long term care to enable persons to remain as independent as possible. Care management staff work with older adults in their homes and the Agency office. The County provides office space with state funds supporting staff and programs.. The funds are generated by State monies.
  - ♣ Serves Susquehanna, Bradford, Sullivan and Tioga Counties
  - ♣ Susquehanna County Staff - 6 total: 1 supervisor, 4 care managers, 1 clerk/typist

- ♣ 6 Senior Centers - Lenoxville, Montrose, Lanesboro, Great Bend Borough, Lawton, Forest City
- ♣ Providing more intensive in-home services to avoid nursing home care
- ♣ Proportion of elderly population increasing
- ♣ Operation of senior centers contracted to Barnes Kasson
- ♣ In-home personal care services contracted to Trehab
  
- ♣ **Trehab Center** - The Trehab Center is a large, non-profit community action agency designated by the Board of Commissioners to provide state-supported community-based programs to low- to moderate-income individuals and families and others in need due to personal, family or health-related circumstances. Trehab maintains an office in each of its six-county service area, with the main administrative office in Montrose.
  - ♣ Serves Susquehanna, Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Wayne and Wyoming Counties
  - ♣ Service area staff totals 90 full-time and 40 part-time
  - ♣ Services
    - ♣ Community - nutrition, housing, employment
    - ♣ Home - homemaker, personal care, caregiver relief
    - ♣ Drug and Alcohol Program - treatment and prevention
    - ♣ Home Ownership Program - homeowner education and counseling for home loan qualification
    - ♣ Weatherization - installation of energy saving home improvements, education
    - ♣ Work Force Development Programs -training and skill development
    - ♣ Welfare to Work Programs - education and training to welfare recipients to move to employment
    - ♣ Services linked to economy
  
- ♣ **Drug and Alcohol Commission** – The Susquehanna County Drug and Alcohol Commission, under contract with the PA Department of Health, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol, manages the delivery of drug and alcohol treatment, prevention, and education services in the County, and provides the following direct care services: drug and alcohol assessments, administrative care management, and intensive case management.
  - ♣ Staff - 2 full time
  - ♣ Now completes all county drug and alcohol assessments for County residents who are uninsured or Act 152 eligible
  - ♣ Service Increases are expected - drug & alcohol addiction is the #1 health care problem in the country
  
- ♣ **Maintenance** – General upkeep of all County buildings and grounds.
  - ♣ Staff - 6 full time, 3 part-time
  
- ♣ **Solid Waste and Recycling** - The Department of Solid Waste and Recycling administers the County Municipal Waste Management Plan and County waste hauling ordinances, licenses refuse and septage haulers, maintains records and reviews landfill issues. Educational programs on waste reduction, proper disposal, recycling tire disposal, and household hazardous waste are provided to individuals, businesses, organizations and schools, as is assistance with establishing recycling programs. The Department also operates the county recycling program and assists municipalities with local recycling programs. The County Recycling Center is located along Route 29 just south of Montrose and is open for public drop-off 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Department also conducts solid waste disposal planning as required by the Commonwealth.
  - ♣ Staff - 4 total: director, administrative assistant, processing manager, assistant processing manager
  - ♣ Provides containers to drop-off sites in municipalities and school districts
  - ♣ Operates one truck for pick-up at drop-off locations
  - ♣ Education program includes speakers, tours, web site, and newsletter

- ♣ **Communications/Emergency Management** - The Susquehanna Communications Center is located on the lower floor of the County Office Building. The Center handles 911 calls for all municipalities in the County except Forest City, which is part of the Lackawanna County system. The department is also responsible for emergency management planning required by the Commonwealth and will be responsible for the countywide 911 street addressing program.
  - ♣ Staff - 15 total: coordinator, deputy coordinator, 10 dispatchers, 3 administrative
  - ♣ Number of calls has been increasing
  - ♣ Anticipate need for staff and space as number of calls increases, for 911 addressing, and emergency management planning requirements
  
- ♣ **Soil and Water Conservation District** - The Susquehanna County Conservation District provides information and technical assistance to assist people and communities in the wise use of natural resources. Among the district's programs are Environmental Education, Erosion and Sedimentation Pollution Control, Waterway and Wetland Protection, Storm Water Management, Floodplain Monitoring, Dirt and Gravel Roads, Pollution Prevention, Nutrient Management, Chesapeake Bay Program, Watershed Association formation, Beneficial use of Biosolids, and Agricultural Land Preservation. Currently there are nine full-time staff and one part-time positions.
  - ♣ Staff - 8 full-time, 1 part-time
  - ♣ Offices are split into three separate locations, due to the lack of space in the County Office Building.
  - ♣ More public awareness, new regulations and new programs demanding more staff time
  - ♣ Future needs
    - ♣ more space for employees in consolidated location
    - ♣ additional staff in near future
    - ♣ Environmental Education Center
  
- ♣ **Penn State Cooperative Extension** - An outreach of the Pennsylvania State University consisting of resources and non-formal educational programs in the areas of agriculture, youth development, family and consumer sciences and community development. The Extension office is located on the first floor of the County Office Building.
  - ♣ Staff - six full time
  - ♣ 4-H members, walk-in clients, program participants increasing
  - ♣ Anticipate more reliance on technology given staff budget constraints
  - ♣ Need a different type of office/work space to allow for more technological capabilities
  
- ♣ **Bureau of Forestry** - The County provides, for a fee, an office in the County office Building for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Forester, whose salary is paid by the Commonwealth.
  
- ♣ **Planning and Development:** The Susquehanna County Department of Planning and Development administers the day – to - day operations of the Susquehanna County Planning Commission. Review of subdivision land development plans, preparation for the monthly Planning Commission meetings and ordinance review and development, and supporting any and all activities relative to the development of the county are duties of the department, which is located in the County office Building.
  - ♣ Staff - 3 full-time: Director, Deputy Director, Secretary/Planner
  - ♣ Need for consolidated records storage

### **The Court System**

The local court system is supported by the County and the county courts taken as a whole provide the foundation for the Commonwealth's judicial system. With the exception of a number of smaller counties, which share a judge, each county has its separate court system, court house and contingent of court officials. While judges are

elected and are paid by the Commonwealth, the County is otherwise responsible for court staff salaries, court facilities and operation, and the law library, all of which are included in the county budget. The President Judge selects and terminates court system employees, but all new positions and salaries must be approved by the County Salary Board. Adult Probation, Juvenile Probation and Domestic Relations are under the direct jurisdiction of the Court.

- ♣ **Court Administrator** - The Court Administrator organizes, coordinates and directs all services relative to the Court system under the direction of the President Judge. This office also provides liaison between attorneys, the Court, various County offices and the public, and is responsible for preparing the annual court calendar, monthly and daily trial lists, and administration of the District Justice system in the County. The Court Administrator's office is located in the Courthouse
- ♣ **Adult and Juvenile Probation** – The Adult and Juvenile Probation office, located in the Courthouse, provides information to aid the Court in determining an appropriate disposition on offenders through preparation of pre-sentence information, and the office supervises adjudicated adult and youth who are on probation. About seventy percent of the Department's funding is provided by the State.
  - ♣ Staff - 12 full-time: 4 "adult" officers, 5 "juvenile" officers, 3 clerical
  - ♣ Case load has been increasing - currently some 420 adults and 70 youths
  - ♣ Officer case loads exceed 50-case ideal level
- ♣ **Public Defender** - The Public Defender provides cost-free legal representation to indigent persons, juvenile through adult, in criminal matters ranging from traffic offenses to criminal homicide. Clients may seek representation, pre-arrest through appellate proceedings. Currently there are two full-time and one part-time employees. There has been an increase in the level of services and severity of charges and felony cases. Over the next five years the numbers of cases are projected to increase by 20%.
  - ♣ Staff: 2 full-time, 1 part-time
  - ♣ Case load in 2001 - 813
  - ♣ Number of cases and severity of charges and felony cases increasing
  - ♣ Projected to increase by 20 percent over next 5 years
  - ♣ Future needs:
    - ♣ Storage space for documents
    - ♣ Increase secretary hours and add paralegal
- ♣ **Domestic Relations** – The Domestic Relations Section of the Court of Common Pleas is under the supervision of the President Judge and is responsible for assisting the Court in enforcing the law of spousal and child support. Complaints dealing chiefly with alleged non-support of dependent parents and children are processed through this office. The office is responsible for securing and enforcing court orders, collecting and disbursing support payments, and locating absent parents and discharges its responsibilities primarily by receiving requests from individuals, the Department of Public Welfare, Children and Youth, or other agencies and jurisdictions who believe themselves entitled to support on their own behalf or on the behalf of a minor child for whom it is providing support, and filing the proper documents to obtain a Court Order for support.
  - ♣ Staff - 8 full-time: director, assistant director, 2 intake officers, 2 conference officers, 2 enforcement officers
  - ♣ Required to provide all Title IV-D services of the Social Security Act and required by Federal and State law, including:
    - ♣ Application and Locate Services
    - ♣ Petition/Complaint processing
    - ♣ Paternity Service and Genetic Testing
    - ♣ Financial Assessment Services
    - ♣ Establishment of Support Services and Medical support

- ♣ Enforcement Services
- ♣ Intra/Inter - State Services
- ♣ Legal Services
- ♣ Monitoring Cases
- ♣ Case load is increasing: 1981 - 850 cases, 1991 - 1,200 cases, 2001 - 2,500 cases
- ♣ New programs require additional staff time
- ♣ Future needs
  - ♣ Office space
  - ♣ Storage space
  - ♣ Private/separate conference rooms
- ♣ **Jail** - The County Jail is responsible for the care, custody and control of adjudicated inmates and is located on twelve acres off Route 29 just south of Montrose.
  - ♣ Staff - 26 full-time: warden, deputy warden, 20 corrections officers, 2 cooks, maintenance man, secretary, and 6 part-time corrections officers
  - ♣ Maximum capacity is 100 inmates, 55 average daily population in 1995, approximately 80 inmates currently
  - ♣ A separate area is set aside for women inmates
  - ♣ Future needs
    - ♣ Storage space
    - ♣ Additional employees
    - ♣ Need for separate women's facilities to meet state requirements
- ♣ **District Justices** - Susquehanna County is served by three District Justices with one located in New Milford Borough for the Northern District, one in Montrose for the Montrose District, and one in the village of Harford for the Southern District

### **County Buildings and Property**

The county owns the Courthouse, the Courthouse Annex, the Warner Building, the County Office Building, the Widmann Building, the Jail, and several parcels of land. Constructed in 1854 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Courthouse contains the offices of the Commissioners, Prothonotary, Treasurer, Register and Recorder, Tax Claim, Tax Assessment, Probation, and Auditors. It also houses the County's data processing facilities, Judges chambers, law library, two courtrooms, and archival storage. The Courthouse Annex, which connects the Courthouse to the Warner Building, was remodeled in 1973 and 1974 and provides space for Probation, the Sheriff, the local District Justice, the District Attorney, the Senior Judge, the Court Administrator, and Domestic Relations. Previously serving as the Lake Avenue School, the Warner Building was renovated in 1988 by the County for office space. Diagonally across the street from the Courthouse on Public Avenue is the County Office Building. Renovated in the early 1980's, this building is home to the Planning Commission, a conference room, Penn State Extension Service, Emergency Management Agency, Soil Conservation District, Forestry, and Veterans Affairs. Next to the County Office Building the County owns the Widmann Building which is presently the location of the Services for Children and Youth.

Behind the Warner Building on Lake Avenue is the old jail. Constructed in the 1860's, the old jail is now the location of the District Magistrate and storage of records. A new jail was built in 1994 on land adjacent to land owned by the Montrose Area Industrial Development Agency in South Montrose. At the same location is the new County Recycling Center.

The county also owns two small park areas on either side of the courthouse. In addition, it leases district justice offices in New Milford Borough and Harford. The county also leases part of the fairgrounds in Montrose for emergency management transmission towers.

In addition to physical facilities owned by the county and the services provided in them, the county provides financial support to several other organizations including:

- ♣ Art Exchange, Inc.
- ♣ Elder Guild
- ♣ Endless Mountains Tourist Association
- ♣ Firemen' s Association
- ♣ Hallstead Library
- ♣ Harford Fair
- ♣ Humane Society
- ♣ Literacy Council
- ♣ Mental Health/Mental Retardation
- ♣ Pratt Memorial Library
- ♣ Special Olympics
- ♣ Susquehanna County Library Association
- ♣ Vo-Tech Nursing Training
- ♣ Susquehanna County Chamber of Commerce

### **County Bridges**

See Transportation section.

### **Solid Waste Planning**

Under the terms of the Pennsylvania Solid Waste Management Act (Act 101 of 1988), planning for the disposal of solid waste is a county responsibility. In Susquehanna County, the Department of Solid Waste and Recycling conducts solid waste planning for the Board of Commissioners with the assistance of a twelve-member Solid Waste Advisory Committee and technical assistance from the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission. The *Susquehanna County Municipal Waste Management Plan* was adopted in 1991 and was revised in 2001. The original *Plan* and *Revisions - 2001* are hereby incorporated by reference in this *Comprehensive Plan*. *Revisions - 2001* includes the following Executive Summary:

#### *Executive Summary*

*As required by Act 101 of 1988 - Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act, Susquehanna County (County) has formulated Revision-2001 which, upon acceptance by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), shall be incorporated into the Susquehanna County Municipal Waste Management Plan of 1991 (Plan).*

*The County recognizes the key role of a waste management plan in conserving limited resources and protecting the public health, safety and welfare from both the short- and long-term dangers of transportation, processing, treatment, storage and disposal of municipal waste. The Revision 2001 to the County's Municipal Waste Management Plan of 1991 was developed by the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC), under the direction of the Board of Commissioners. The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission provided technical assistance. The Revision 2001 consists of*

- (a) *an updated application process and Agreement for determining the disposal facilities to be utilized by the County,*
- (b) *updated solid waste and recycling descriptions and generation projections, and*
- (c) *the methods by which the County plans to reach the State recycling goal of 35% from its current rate of 11%.*

*The SWAC agreed that it was in the County's best interests to continue using the current solid waste disposal method, which is utilizing out-of-county facilities. The County will retain its Municipal Wasteflow Control Ordinance, No. 92-001, and its Municipal Solid Waste Hauler Ordinance, No. 94-002.*

*Additionally, the Committee identified four waste disposal problems within the County. The Revision 2001 addresses these issues. The identified problems are:*

- (1) significant and toxic pollution created by extensive backyard burning,*
- (2) large numbers of improperly stored or abandoned tires throughout the County, creating a public health hazard and a detriment to tourism,*
- (3) lack of separate collection or disposal of Household Hazardous Waste (toxic by definition), and*
- (4) lack of a recycling option for agricultural plastic, mainly hay bale wrap.*

*Revisions -2001 goes on to make a number of recommendations to the County Board of Commissioners to meet the solid waste management needs of the County as follows:*

*Summary of Recommendations to the Susquehanna County Commissioners*

- 1) Current methods of collection and disposal of municipal solid waste (MSW) are effective and should be continued, along with the existing wasteflow control and hauler licensing ordinances.*
- 2) Tire recycling efforts should be maintained annually through uniform county-wide municipal ordinance(s) and funding. Limited funding for tire recycling programs may be available from the Pennsylvania DEP through the Act 190 and West Nile Virus grant programs.*
- 3) The Susquehanna County Solid Waste Department should work toward elimination of backyard burning through a special education campaign, coupled with technical assistance to municipalities of providing public education materials and sample ordinances.*
- 4) The Susquehanna County Solid Waste Department should take advantage of PA DEP's Household Hazardous Waste grant program, which supports collection and disposal 50% and education 80%.*
- 5) Processing for market of plastic hay bale wrap should be included in the Susquehanna County Solid Waste Department's long-range plans, in the event markets for the material become reliable.*
- 6) To meet the state's 35% recycling goal by 2003, the Susquehanna County Solid Waste Department should:*
  - ♣ Provide technical assistance to municipalities to create or improve recycling programs, including inter-municipal cooperation projects, annual cleanups and anti-bum programs.*
  - ♣ Increase the recycling data collection effort.*
  - ♣ Significantly expand the existing recycling education program with the following aspects*
    - a) Promote the 35% goal.*
    - b) Be audience specific and address all sectors of the community (municipalities, businesses, youth groups, civic organizations, general population, and schools).*
    - c) Create an opportunity for participant involvement.*
    - d) Emphasize cost savings to adults.*
    - e) Emphasize paper recycling to increase recycled tonnage and reduce burning.*
    - f) Install more signs designating recycling sites.*
    - g) Provide additional staff- time to coordinate the 90% grant-funded separate education contracts.*

*The above recommendations will require funding from the County in addition to available state funds. Act 101 funding will expire in the year 2004, and although the Recycling Center has been operating at a lower per ton cost than landfill tipping fees, its revenue is subject to volatile markets. The Committee recommends imposing an administrative fee on IVISW, to be collected by the landfills named in the Plan Revision 2001. Not wishing to cause a significant increase in disposal costs, the SWAC is comfortable with \$2.00 per ton for the fee, creating new revenue of approximately \$35,000 to \$40,000 annually.*

**Public Libraries**

The public library system in the County is operated by the Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library Association. The Main Library is located in Montrose with branches in Forest City, Hallstead and Susquehanna. The Association participates in the state library system with the Scranton Public Library serving as Susquehanna County's designated state regional library. All planning and administration is conducted by the Association and the County annually allocates funds to the Association to supplement state monies and funds raised by the Association.



*Susquehanna County Historical Society and  
Free Library Association*

## Appendix B

### Background

To assure that Susquehanna County gains positive benefits from the emerging information infrastructure, we need to articulate a County vision and goals and layout a general path for attaining the goals. This plan is the first step in doing that. The following paragraphs discuss some key factors impacting Susquehanna County's ability to exploit the emerging information infrastructure, including county characteristics, relevant studies, and technology, regulatory, and market aspects.

Susquehanna County has a population of about 42,000 people dispersed widely over about 825 square miles, with about a dozen clusters accounting for 20-30% of the population. The topography is very hilly pasture and woodlands with an adequate but limiting road structure (e.g., particularly between the NE to SW and NW to SE corners). These characteristics strongly affect the economic deployment of different modes of broadband telecommunications for much of the county and its population. They also affect the ability of county residents to access the available Community College sites (currently co-located at 3 county schools) for courses and of the college to form economically adequate class sizes in desired topics. While these "empty distances" are now viewed as a limiting factor, they may provide an opportunity to attract new broadband wireless technology providers seeking a low-cost niche market to showcase their products. Similarly, the lack of extensive fixed college facilities may provide an economic opportunity to adopt E-learning and distance learning technology to the mutual advantage of both county residents and educational providers.

### Findings

The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC) produced a regional strategic telecommunications report in October 1996 based on surveys of telecommunications users providers and on assessments of likely technology progress. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has produced a number of recent (through June 2001) analyses on the deployment of Broadband services (defined as "high speed" for one way service of at least 200KBS and as "advanced" for service of at least 200KBS both ways.) These reports provide insight into the technology and regulatory market aspects. Pennsylvania has adopted a

policy of deploying advanced telecommunications throughout the Commonwealth and has let a 5-year contract in May 2000 to accomplish that objective as the PA Keystone Communications Project (KCP) under the Office of Information Technology (OIT). Newly emerging Wireless Broadband Technology has great promise for providing economic services in rural areas like Susquehanna County. The highlights of these topics are presented below.

### The FCC Report on National Trends

In February 2002, the FCC issued its Third Report Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability for All Americans, as required by the Telecommunications Act of 1996; the report covers data through June 2001. The report's overall conclusion is that deployment is occurring in a reasonable and timely fashion. The FCC is committed to accelerating the deployment, particularly to low-income and minority consumers and to those living in sparsely populated areas and will continue to monitor those areas. It has initiated several actions to improve the regulatory climate and to foster more rapid investment in broadband rollout. It is examining ways to make more radio spectrum available for use by broadband wireless services. It is also considering the appropriate roles and practices of federal, state, and local governments with respect to rights-of-way management. This last initiative is aimed at reducing the barriers (regulatory and financial) to using these rights-of-way for deployment of advanced telecommunications facilities.

The data collected by the FCC shows very high growth rates for broadband services although the vast majority of users are still connected to the Internet by dial-up modem over narrow-band lines. While there was a slowdown in growth rates in 2001, the overall rates are high. Satellite and Fixed Wireless show the highest recent growth rates - most likely due to increasing use of fixed wireless services since there is very little 2-way 200KBS satellite service available to consumers. While the national growth rates are high for residential and small business users, Pennsylvania has higher growth rates than the national averages for the June 2000 to June 2002 period.

### The Northern Tier Report

The NTRPDC report is the only recent study of

Susquehanna County and the nearby region and some of its information and findings still apply. It noted that virtually all forms of telecommunications service were being used in the region although service coverage and utilization was spotty and some areas were underserved. Cellular coverage was cited as very poor with some areas receiving inconsistent or no service. Fiber-optic facilities were not available in some areas. Internet service was available by dial up access from Commonwealth Telephone Company (CTCO) and by cable modem by two companies that did not serve Susquehanna County. Video conferencing facilities were available for some schools but underutilized for business.

Today, services are improved and used more but, with some key exceptions, much the same assessment could be made. There are three cable companies (Adams Cable, Blue Ridge Cable, and Time-Warner Cable) serving portions of Susquehanna County and those portions generally have access to cable modem internet service, e.g. Time-Warner Cable offers the "Roadrunner" internet service. CTCO provides dial-up internet access through its EPIX internet service to most of the county; and provides high speed ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) service ("Jack Flash") to some portions of the county. Cellular service has gotten better, but there are still many "dead" areas in the county. In general, the report's recommendations for action have not been implemented.

Commonwealth Telephone (CTCO) and North-Eastern Telephone Company are the primary telephone and telecommunications servers for the County. Both companies have digital switching in their central offices with fiber interconnects and some fiber lines are in place through the county. Both offer a full range of normal voice, fax, and custom calling features. At that time, CTCO also offered Centrex, switched-56, T-1, and fiber-optic interconnects to its business clients. A limited amount of ISDN service was available. It was found that the majority of current and planned applications could be met by this infrastructure. North-Eastern Telephone has recently begun to offer modern internet access.

#### The Keystone Communications Project

In keeping with the goal of positioning Pennsylvania as a leader in technology worldwide, a statewide

telecommunications contract was let in May 2000. The objectives of the contract are to :

- ♣ Install a state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure statewide
- ♣ Provide competitive pricing
- ♣ Encourage non-state government businesses to utilize the advanced infrastructure and competitive pricing.
- ♣ Encourage Telecommunications research and development
- ♣ Consolidation of Commonwealth telecommunications vendors
- ♣ Institute a web-based application to track telecommunications inventory and monitor workflow

The name of this agreement is the Commonwealth Telecommunications Services (CTS) contract and the awarded vendor consortium is PA-Team. The official project name given to transitioning the Commonwealth from their present carriers to the PA-Team carriers is the Keystone Communications Project (KCP). Both are managed under the Office of Information Technology (OIT) with COVAD Communications as the prime or PA-Team main contractor on the project. By implementing this contract, the state hopes to develop a solid telecommunications infrastructure for Pennsylvania's present and future e-commerce needs. Building the infrastructure will take place over the next five years and includes an advanced fiber-based backbone across the state to avoid congestion and delay; it is intended to provide all 67 Pennsylvania counties with access to the latest video, voice, Internet, data services. The infrastructure will provide major cost savings to the state (on the order of \$100 million over 5 years) and is expected also to benefit private industry as well as local governments and educational organizations. In essence, the Commonwealth is the anchor tenant on a public network designed to attract additional smaller users by offering a simple but aggressive pricing plan. The Commonwealth intends to extend the infrastructure into rural areas and offer competitive rates comparable to those in larger metropolitan areas.

#### Emerging Wireless Broadband Technology

As indicated by the FCC report, Satellite and Fixed Wireless services are showing very high growth rates in 2001 and are expected to increase in future. Furthermore, these technologies have the potential to

overcome Susquehanna County's sparsely populated hilly terrain characteristics at relatively low investment cost to providers (and hence attractive prices to consumers). Three technology/services are emerging: Satellite, Fixed Wireless and 3G Wireless (the FCC views this as "fixed" since the cell site is fixed, even though the user is mobile).

Satellites internet service to the home is now available from two vendors. Hughes DirecPC was the first and provided up to 400kbs down, but required users to dial through a telephone modem to request data and to move information upstream. A new Hughes service with 2-way satellite transmission is now being offered with up to 256KBS possible upstream and 400KBS downstream. Starband also offers 2-way satellite transmission with up to 500KBS downstream and up to 150KBS upstream. Both require only clear sight line to the southern sky and are a shared service, like cable, which means if many users are on at the same time speeds drop considerably from the advertised "up to" limits. They have the advantage of being available everywhere in the county now.

Fixed Wireless service is provided to an antenna on the home from a centrally located transmission/reception site/antenna, much like a cell phone site. Initially these services were economical for short-range systems (termed LMDS) offering 100's of millions of bits per second (MBS vs. KBS) to high-density locales. New Service providers are emerging now offering relatively long-range systems (termed MMDS) offering 10's of MBS for ranges of 25-35 miles from the central antenna. These latter systems are benefiting from new technologies for coding and signal processing and for "smart" antenna design, which allow them to overcome many problems normally encountered by radio transmissions in hilly and forested terrain. These MMDS services have very high potential for economic broadband service in areas like Susquehanna and nearby counties. Some services are being offered by large companies, but there are a number of new innovative providers starting up. This situation is worth monitoring to determine whether, when, and how it may be advantageous for the county to negotiate with a provider.

The other form of Fixed Wireless service is called 3G, for 3<sup>rd</sup> generation cell phone service. First generation was analog; second generation was digital. Most current

service is second generation, which also provides some slow data transmission (9-19KBS). Some new services are being called 2 ½ Generation since they offer greater data capabilities and speeds. 3 Gen is expected to rollout in the next 2-5 years and to offer very high bandwidths comparable to MMDS and LMDS with very adaptive features. The handsets are expected to act as internet appliances and to connect to a variety of other similar devices and internet-based services in a simple user-friendly fashion. The industry is making very large investments in this technology and if it does take off as anticipated, it may become pervasive. The Wireless Cell phone (and emerging "internet phone") has great potential, but how and where it rolls out is still to be seen. This technology area should be monitored along with the other wireless technologies for future applicability.

### Goals and Objectives

Susquehanna County intends to achieve the full benefits of the emerging national information infrastructure for its residents and businesses. There are both national and state policies and programs established to foster rapid deployment of advanced information technologies to rural areas. However, the funds to accomplish these programs are limited and will go first to those communities that can best articulate their needs and vision for using these technologies for the public good. By including an Information Infrastructure segment in the County Comprehensive Plan, the County begins the process of defining current capabilities, determining the need for future services and capabilities, and identifying opportunities and strategies for obtaining them in a cost-effective way.

#### County Goals:

1. Promote deployment and exploitation of an advanced Information Infrastructure, including widespread introduction of Broadband Telecommunications and Internet Services, to provide residents with greatly improved access to educational, health care, and community services while fostering substantial economic growth.
2. Identify opportunities to encourage information technology providers and users to invest in Susquehanna County.
3. Make the County Government an attractive "anchor client" for advanced services by forming "user

consortiums” with county schools, libraries, and medical facilities and with neighboring counties. These can serve both to gain volume discounts on new services and to improve the likelihood of obtaining federal and state funding grants.

4. Maintain a current awareness of County needs and of changes in the technology, regulatory, and market environments, which may impact those needs.

#### Plan Objectives:

1. Provide a reference source for finding existing County capabilities and needs, current and potential service providers, the likely growth of needs and/or service availability, and the potential sources for satisfying those needs or for regional partnering to do so.
2. Facilitate economic development activities, which seek to attract new or retain existing businesses which need information technology for operations and growth.
3. Facilitate educational development activities, which provide County residents and businesses with easy access to educational products and services from a variety of providers through the introduction of E-Learning and Distance Learning capabilities.
4. Facilitate activities to improve residents' access to healthcare and community services (e.g., technology-enabled community centers, telemedicine capabilities, provision of services via the County Website, etc.).
5. Recognize and promote the fact that information technology inter-connects many aspects of life in the County, namely economic development, quality of life, population and the provision of services.

#### Plans and Actions

- ♣ Establish a Technology Advisory Group to lead the Information Infrastructure and Technology planning and implementation process and act as a County resource to coordinate activities within the County and among its various departments, agencies and organizations, and with external organizations and regional groups. Since some of these activities may

be ad hoc and of short duration (e.g. participation in another NTRDPC strategic telecommunications study) that involve multiple department responsibilities. The Technology Advisory Group must be able to support the appropriate department leader for specific tasks.

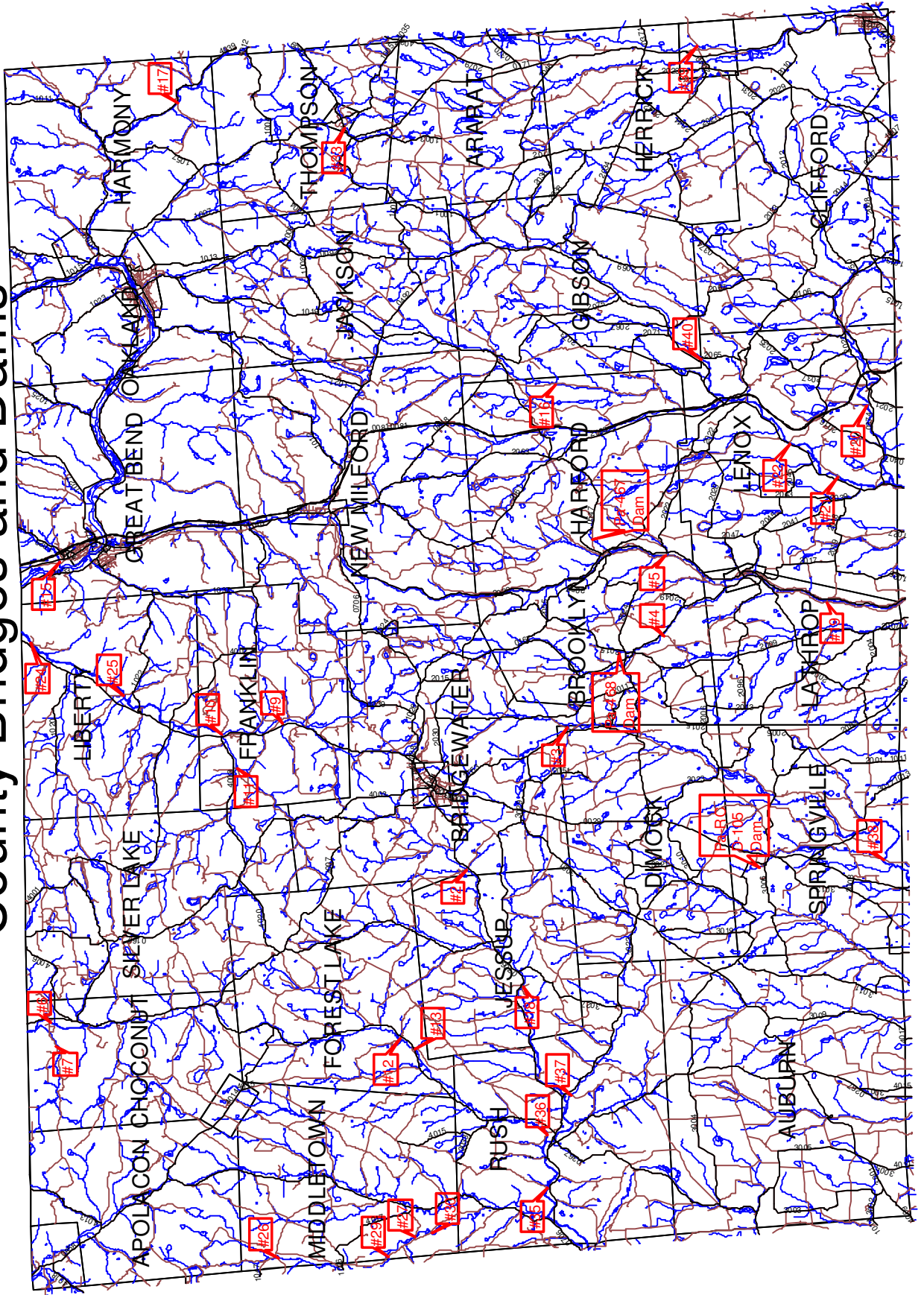
- ♣ Promote awareness of the County Information Infrastructure Goals and key activities on the County web page, in newsletters, and with appropriate flyers or brochures. This will serve to keep the community and region informed; to gain community feedback on needs and preferences; to interest potential businesses, residents and technology service providers in the County; and to attract volunteers, supporters and innovative suggestions.
- ♣ Develop and maintain an Information Infrastructure database as a reference source on existing County capabilities, facilities, and service providers and their likely expansion; known unmet needs for services and the likely growth of needs based on surveys and studies; and potential sources for satisfying those needs (e.g. technology providers, grant funding agencies, regional partners, etc.). The database should support County efforts to devise strategic plans, investment approaches, and grant applications and to monitor changes in market, technology, and regulatory factors which impact County needs and present opportunities for action.
- ♣ Establish and fund a project to define concepts, opportunities, and specific plans for exploiting Information Technology to provide the County with greatly improved access to educational, healthcare, and community services while fostering substantial economic growth. This effort will guide development of future County Information Infrastructure capabilities and facilities. The project should:
  - ♣ Devise strategies and activities to improve residents' access to healthcare and community services (e.g. technology-enabled community centers, telemedicine capabilities, provision of services through the County Website, etc..)

- ♣ Devise strategies and activities to provide county residents with easy access to educational products and services from a variety of providers through the introduction of E-Learning and Distance Learning capabilities and facilities.
- ♣ Guide the evolution of the Susquehanna County Distance Learning Initiative beyond its initial capabilities by partnering with additional providers (schools, colleges, university outreach activities, etc.) and by expanding the course content to address lifestyle enrichment as well as academic and work-related topics.
- ♣ Identify potential partners, user consortiums,

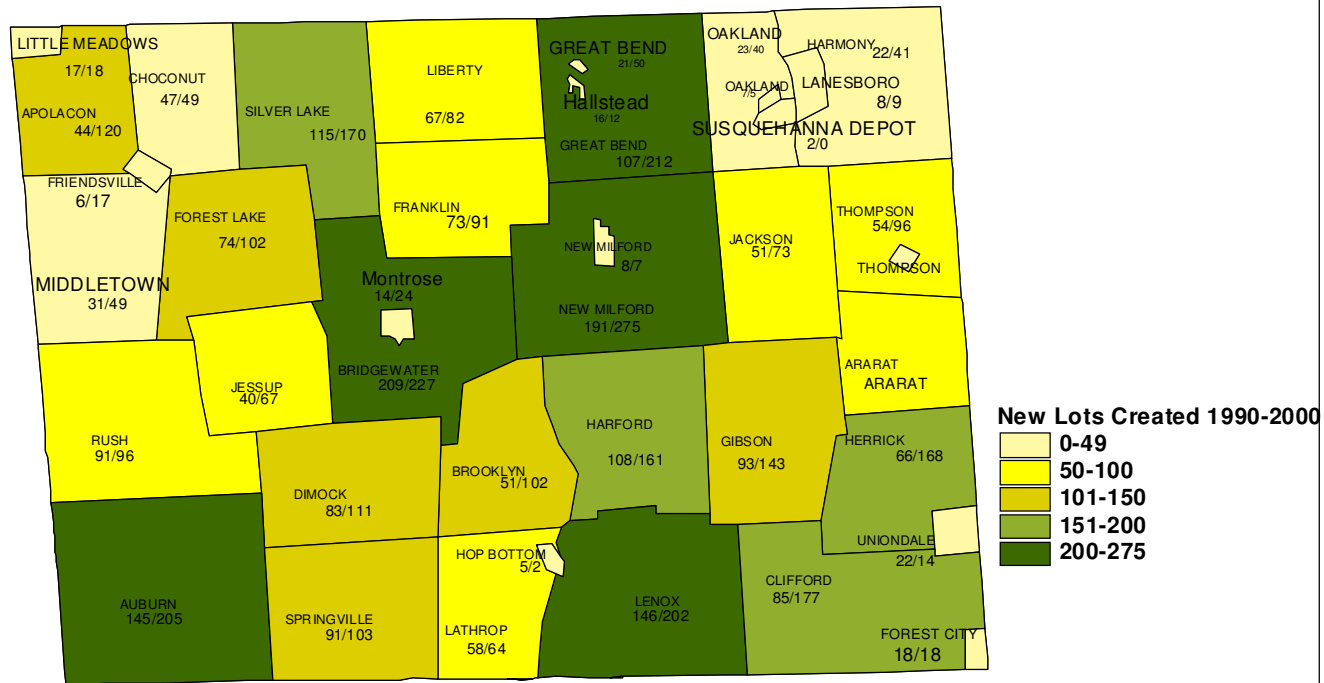
and funding sources for establishment of needed capabilities on favorable economic terms.

- ♣ Examine successful innovations in comparable communities and regions for their relevance to local needs and to establish useful contacts for information sharing on strategies.
- ♣ Identify major barriers or constraints to accomplishment of goals and outline approaches to deal with them.
- ♣ Identify and recommend projects for County implementation, their respective priorities, benefits, costs, and potential sources for funding and grants.

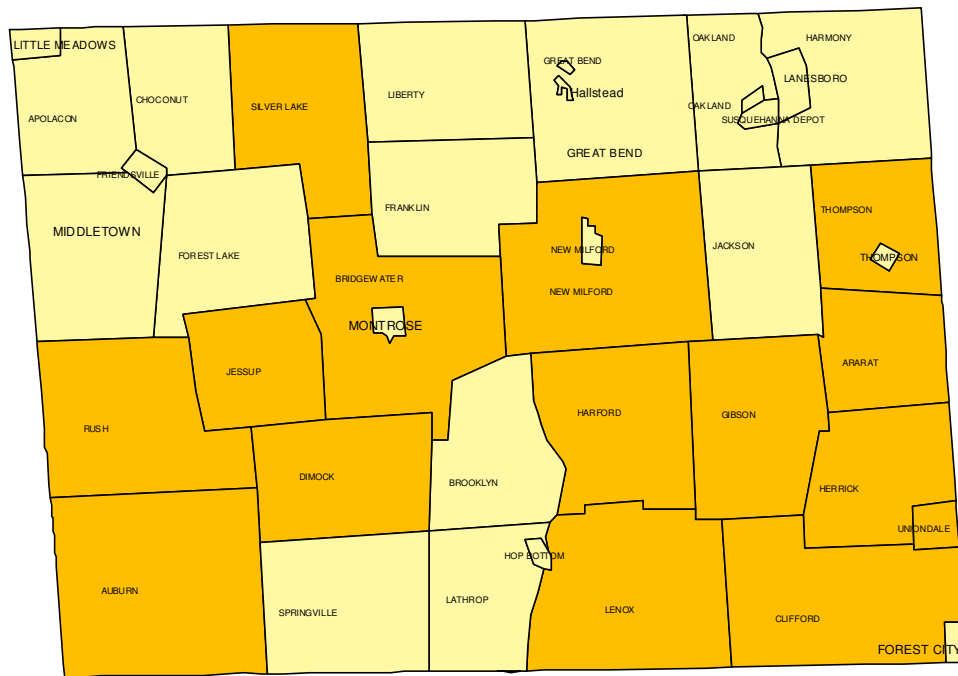
# County Bridges and Dams



# Subdivision Activity in Susquehanna County 1990-2000 Plans/New Lots



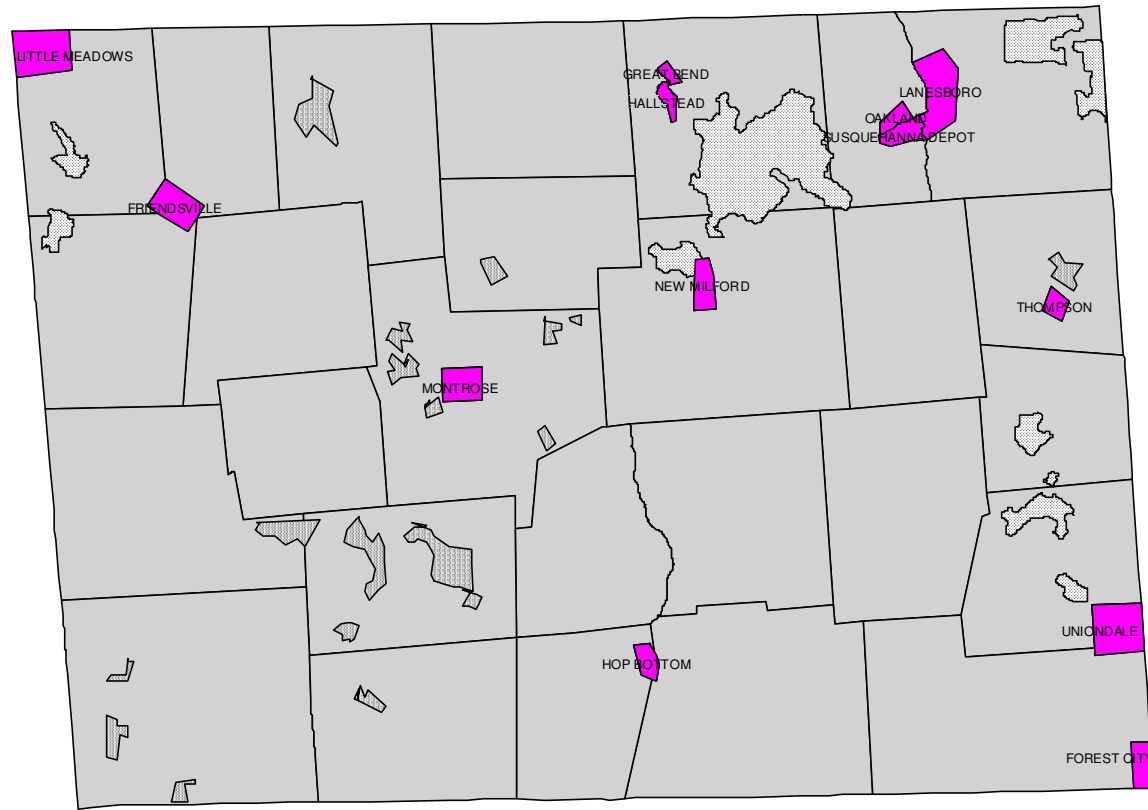
# Municipalities in Susquehanna County with Greater than a 4.6 Percent Increase in Population 1990-2000






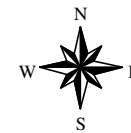
Percent increase 1990-2000  
Less than 4.6% increase  
Greater than 4.6% increase



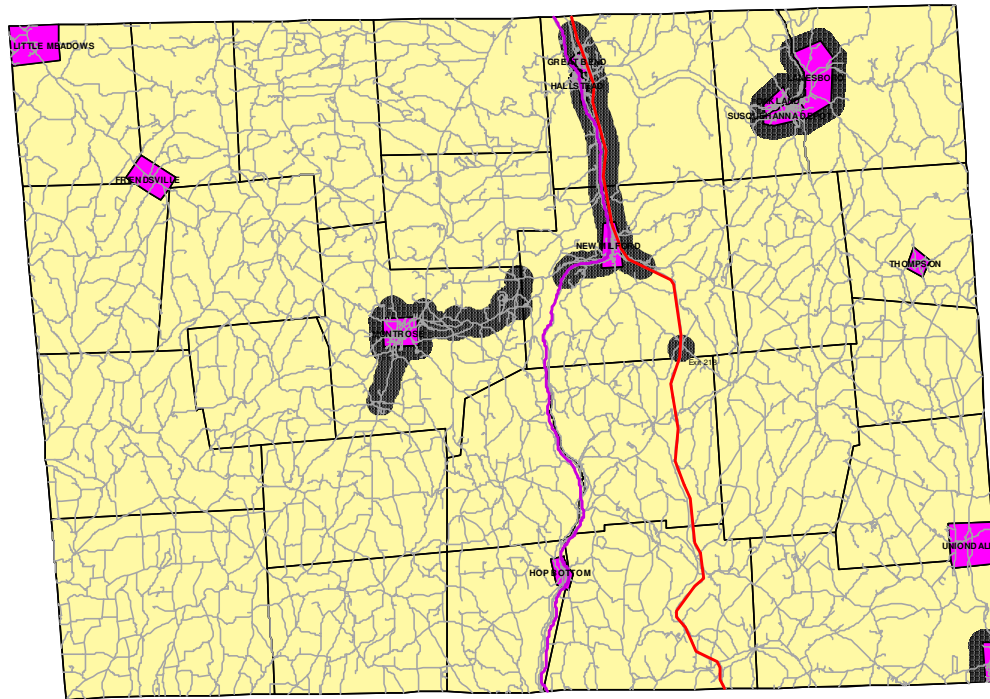
# General Land Use in Susquehanna County



-  Population/Commercial Centers
-  State Game Lands
-  Ag. Easement Areas
-  Rural Resource Area



# Designated Growth Areas



- I-81
- Route 11
- Roads
- Growth Areas
- Borough Boundaries
- Municipal Boundaries

10 0 10 20 Miles



# Susquehanna County Commissioners

570-278-4600  
Fax 570-278-9268

Gary W. Marcho, *Chairman*  
Lee Smith, *Vice Chairman*  
R. Calvin Dean, *Commissioner*



SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY COURT HOUSE  
MONTROSE, PENNSYLVANIA

Suzanne Brainard, *Chief Clerk*  
Michael J. Giangrieco, *Solicitor*

PO Box 218 – Courthouse – Montrose, Pennsylvania 18801

## THE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN RESOLUTION NO. 2003 - 29

**Whereas**, the Board of Commissioners of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, are charged with the protection and promotion of the public health, safety and general welfare; and,

**Whereas**, the Susquehanna County Board of Commissioners and the Susquehanna County Planning Commission recognized four critical community needs -

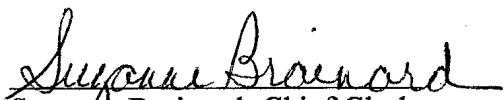
1. The need to identify and inventory the changes which have taken place in the County over the past decade;
2. The need to establish a framework for the conservation of the County's character, agricultural and natural resource economy, open land, and environment while concurrently providing for sustainable growth and development;
3. The need to promote reasonable and consistent land use management effected by subdivision and land development regulations and local municipal zoning, and,
4. The need to organize for the most efficient administration of County government and the delivery of community facilities and services; and,

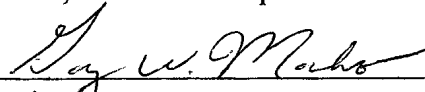
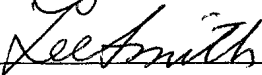
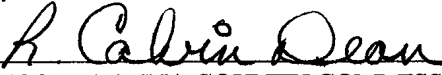
**Whereas**, the Board of Commissioners, in order to address these community needs, directed the Planning Commission to prepare a *Comprehensive Plan Update* in accord with the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code; and,

**Whereas**, the Planning Commission has prepared a *Comprehensive Plan Update* and has recommended its adoption to the Board of Commissioners;

**Now Therefore**, the Board of Commissioners of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, by action on this Resolution approved on this 12<sup>th</sup> Day of November, 2003, adopt the *2003 Susquehanna County Comprehensive Plan Update* along with all the textual matter, charts, tables and maps therein contained.

ATTEST:

  
Suzanne Brainard, Chief Clerk

  
  
  
SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

