

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Armstrong County lies in southwestern Pennsylvania on the Allegheny Plateau and is bordered by Allegheny, Butler, Clarion, Jefferson, Indiana, and Westmoreland Counties. Armstrong County, containing 664 square miles, is divided into 45 local government bodies consisting of 28 townships, 16 boroughs, and one city. Kittanning Borough serves as the county seat. In 2000, its population was 72,392, ranking 38th out of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. The County's population has remained fairly stable with net migration nearly zero between 1990 and 2000.

Armstrong County's temperate climate and fertile soils have supported its agricultural industry since the earliest days of the County's settlement. Abundant mineral resources, including coal, oil, gas, limestone, sand, gravel, and clay supported early ironworks and later industries, including glass, steel, and clay products. For 200 years, its abundant mineral resources and fertile farmland have supported the County's commercial value. A local grower, Creekside Mushrooms, is the world's largest fully integrated mushroom growing facility. Agriculture remains the premier business within the County.

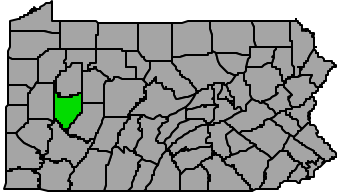
Existing Land Use Conditions

Topography and natural features have largely shaped Armstrong County's existing land use patterns. The Allegheny and Kiskiminetas Rivers, as much as the hilly terrain they flow through, are the defining physiographic features of the County. From at least the days of the

Pennsylvania Canal, these rivers have defined the County's major transportation arteries and set the location of its major towns and heavy manufacturing industries. The world's first oil boom, in Titusville, Oil City, and Parker City stimulated railroad extensions throughout the County during the 1860s. The next century saw the development of major production plants for PPG Industries, Allegheny Ludlum, and other heavy manufacturing firms. These early developments established the foundation for the County's historic and current land use patterns.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **During the past half-century, Armstrong County has become more suburban and decentralized** as its population has dispersed from the once prosperous mill towns and industrial centers to the rural outlying townships.
- ☑ **Highway development continues to have an impact on Armstrong County's land use.** State Route 28, extending from Pittsburgh northeast past I-180, has become the key artery for Armstrong County's commerce and growth. Suburban commercial strip development and plazas have located near the interchanges of the four-lane portion of the Route 28 corridor.
- ☑ **Population patterns indicate that larger households are purchasing homes in the County's boroughs.** The households, which are presumably younger families, have resulted in



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modest levels of revitalization in traditional neighborhoods.

- ☑ **Residential construction occurring in the southwestern and northern portion of the County has lead to development pressures.** In terms of raw numbers, the greatest increases have occurred near the Route 28 and Route 66 corridors. The greatest increases in housing stock have occurred in the northern portion of the County. Retirees and working families have begun to locate in these areas, which have the advantage of low real estate and school taxes and proximity to either the Route 66/Route 28 corridors or the Route 268 corridor. The cumulative effect of this development will place increased demands on public services in these areas.
- ☑ **Armstrong County has several brownfield industrial sites that are priority redevelopment sites.** The former Ford City PPG site now offers an 80,000 square foot industrial building scheduled to be converted into multi-tenant space. Efforts are underway to revitalize brownfields in Apollo Borough along the Kiskiminetas River, including the rehabilitation of an approximately 14.2 acre brownfield property owned by the Armstrong County Industrial Development Council. The project involves the completion of the second phase of remediation, infrastructure improvements for the development of industrial parcels, and a feasibility study

for the consolidation of training of emergency personnel.

- ☑ **Agriculture is one of Armstrong County's most vital land uses,** as the agri-business industry is one of the County's largest employment sectors, with 37 percent of land devoted toward agriculture and open space. The purchase of small farms as secondary homes by individuals residing outside of the County is an emerging trend.
- ☑ **Although economically vital, Armstrong County agricultural lands are diminishing.** According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the County lost 81 farms and 2,823 acres of agricultural land between 1987 and 1992.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **Armstrong County secured LUPTAP funds** to assist in the development of a new County comprehensive plan and a multi-municipal plan for five municipalities in the southwestern part of the County including: Freeport Borough, Cadogan Township, West Kittanning Borough, West Franklin Township, and Worthington Borough.
- ☑ **Armstrong County has established an Agricultural Preservation Board.** The loss of County farms is primarily due to the inability of smaller farms to earn reasonable profits. Therefore, landowners choose to utilize surface mineral extraction (strip mining) and timbering as a resource for their acreage.