

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Bradford County is located in northeastern Pennsylvania within the Low Plateau Section of the Appalachian Plateau Province. The Susquehanna River traverses the county from north to south, and with its tributaries, covers practically all of Bradford County. This system is divided into 221 different watersheds, each of which is determined by topography. Within the County, these watersheds drain an area of 1,150.7 square miles. Bradford County is the largest of the 4 counties in the Endless Mountain region of Pennsylvania, and the second largest county in the state.

Bradford County shares its northern border with Tioga County, New York, and its western, southern, and eastern borders with Tioga, Lycoming, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming Counties in Pennsylvania. Bradford County is comprised politically into 51 municipalities, consisting of 14 boroughs and 37 townships. Towanda Borough is the County's government seat.

Bradford County has experienced a cycle of population growth and decline over the last 30 years. Despite periodic decreases, the population of the County increased by 8.3 percent to achieve a total population of 62,761 in 2000. Among the state's 67 counties, Bradford ranks 40th in total population and 42nd in total housing units.

Bradford County is highly rural given that its population density of only 54.5 persons per square mile is considerably lower than the state's density of 273.6 persons per square mile. The County's rural character is also recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau,

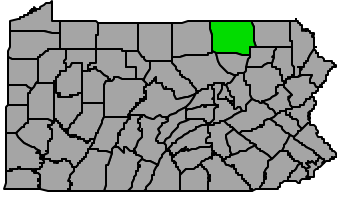
which classifies the majority (over 80 percent) of its population as being rural.

Bradford County's settlement and development patterns are inherently linked to its topography and transportation features. Glaciations greatly influenced the County and region's topography, which is characterized by steep rolling hills, glacial lakes, and stream valleys. Most of the County consists of uplands or mountainous terrain, and the remaining land is composed of valley bottoms and rolling lowlands. To this end, land development, including transportation systems, is concentrated within the County's valleys and rolling lowlands.

Two main highways – U.S. Routes 6 and 220 – support Bradford County's highway transportation system. U.S. 6 runs east and west and provides connections between Tioga, Bradford, and Wyoming Counties of the Northern Tier Region, and continues west to Ohio, and east to the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Metropolitan area. U.S. 220 runs north-south through Bradford County, to the New York/Pennsylvania state line. This route provides a major link for Bradford County to Williamsport and I-80 to the south and NY 17 to the north, which provides access to Elmira and Binghamton, New York.

Existing Land Use Conditions

Topographic and natural constraints – namely steep slopes and surface waters – have caused the majority of Bradford County's land area to remain undeveloped. The largest share of this undeveloped land



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area is forested, with the second largest share existing in agriculture.

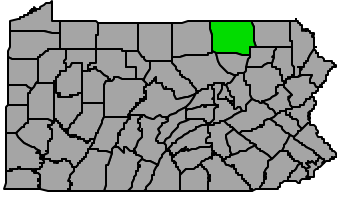
Developed areas account for only 3.1 percent of Bradford County's total land area. The majority of this developed land exists as residential developments, followed by commercial and industrial uses. The County's developed areas have historically been concentrated within its 14 boroughs – especially in the Towanda, Troy-Canton, and Sayers-Athens areas, but recent expansion of sewer and water infrastructure has facilitated growth and development into the neighboring suburban and rural townships. These development trends have, in some way, contributed to the depopulation of the County's boroughs.

Key Land Use Trends

- ☑ **Bradford County's boroughs are becoming depopulated as sewer and water infrastructure improvements have facilitated growth outward into the neighboring suburban and rural townships.** From 1970 to 2000, the vast majority of Bradford County's municipalities (80 percent) increased in population. The ten municipalities that experienced population decreases were all boroughs.
- ☑ **Bradford County, overall, is not experiencing significant growth pressures as increases in housing units are sluggish compared to neighboring counties in Pennsylvania.** From 1990 to 2000, Bradford County experienced one of the lowest housing unit growth rates (5.9 percent) in the region. In fact, the

majority (75.3 percent) of the County's housing units were constructed prior to 1980.

- ☑ **Bradford County's employment centers are concentrated in the Towanda, Troy-Canton, and Sayers-Athens areas.** These areas hold the County's top 50 employers and are linked together by U.S. Routes 6 and 220. These transportation corridors will support future growth and development of these areas.
- ☑ **Similar to national and statewide trends, the presence of Bradford County's agricultural community is waning.** From 1987 to 1997, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that the number of farms decreased by 153 and the number of agricultural lands decreased by 32,039 acres. As urban and suburban communities have grown, development has often taken advantage of level topography and infrastructure over soil productivity.
- ☑ **Bradford County is implementing its farmland protection program through the purchase of its first set of agricultural easements.**
- ☑ **The majority of Bradford County's municipalities have not adopted a comprehensive plan.** The few in existence, however, are severely outdated and are questionable in their current validity.



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- ☑ **A number of municipalities within Bradford County have prepared zoning ordinances without having adopted a comprehensive plan.** This is an all too common practice among Pennsylvania's municipalities and often results in the enactment of ill-conceived land use regulations.

Key Planning Initiatives

- ☑ **Bradford County is preparing a new countywide comprehensive plan.** This new plan replaces the County's 1982 Comprehensive Plan.
- ☑ **The spirit of intergovernmental cooperation is taking hold in Bradford County,** as several multi-municipal comprehensive plans have been prepared, including the Canton/Granville Comprehensive Plan and the Troy Area Comprehensive Plan.