

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Carbon County is located at the foothills of the Pocono Mountains in eastern Pennsylvania. Established in 1843, the County rose to prominence with the discovery of anthracite coal and railroad transportation in the mid-1800s. During the coal industry's boom period, Carbon County ranked second only to Schuylkill County in terms of total coal production. A canal system was constructed along the Lehigh River to transport coal to markets in Philadelphia. The County thus became a major transportation hub and population center, peaking at 63,380 persons in 1930. The County's early growth focused upon Jim Thorpe Borough, the home of railroad magnate Asa Packer. During Packer's reign, Jim Thorpe rivaled Niagara Falls as a tourist destination. Today, the county seat continues to draw thousands of visitors a year for outdoor recreation, shopping, and museum tours.

Although deep mining continued through the 1970s, the Great Depression and several high-profile mining disasters softened the industry. The County continued to lose population until the 1970s, when the public rediscovered the beauty of Carbon County through the Pocono Mountain Region. Today, tourism is a staple of Carbon County's economy.

Existing Land Use Conditions

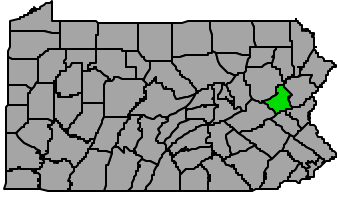
Carbon County is 382 square miles in land area with a population density of 153 persons per square mile. The County is comprised of 23 municipalities - 12 boroughs and 11 townships. According to

the 2000 Census, Carbon County's population is 58,802 persons, which represents a 3.4 percent increase from 1990 (pop. 56,846). Much of this population growth has been concentrated *east* of the Lehigh River in Kidder Township, Penn Forest Township, and Towamensing Township.

Rugged terrain has inhibited development in the County's northern and western reaches. This led to the development of small, isolated villages nestled throughout the Lehigh River Valley. A major tributary of the Delaware River, the Lehigh River, connects some of the County's largest population centers, which includes Lehighton Borough (pop. 5,537), Palmerton Borough (pop. 5,248), and Penn Forest Township (pop. 5,439). Traversing the northern tip of the County, Interstate 80 is the principle east-west highway. The northeast extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-476) provides a vital connection to the metropolitan areas of Wilkes-Barre-Scranton-Hazleton and Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton.

Nearly 40 square miles County's land area is dedicated to state parks and state game land. Much of the remaining acreage is comprised of second-growth forest, primarily oak and northern hardwoods. Overall, three-quarters of the County's land is devoted for forests, and a significant portion of this forestland is under private ownership.

Remnants of glacial activity can be found in northern Carbon County, which is home to two state parks, two major ski areas, and

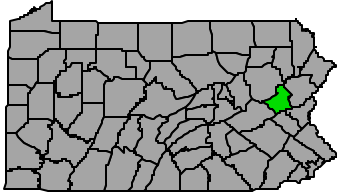


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miles of rails-to-trails that follow the Lehigh Gorge, a steep-walled canyon carved by the Lehigh River. In its southern end, the County has Beltzville State Park, a 2,972-acre recreation area that includes a 900+ acre lake and a host of year-round outdoor opportunities. Nearby Palmerton offers additional downhill skiing opportunities at Blue Mountain Ski Resort.

Key Land Use Issues

- Carbon County is experiencing a growth in residential demand in response to rising real estate prices in the Lehigh Valley.** To a certain extent, southern Carbon County is becoming a bedroom community for the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton metropolitan area. Soaring housing prices and a desire for a more rural way of life are two factors contributing to the growth of Carbon's commuter population.
- The demand for seasonal housing continues to drive development in northern Carbon County.** Statewide, seasonal housing represents only 3 percent of the housing stock and 3.25 percent of new housing units constructed within the last decade. In contrast, 16 percent of Carbon County's housing stock is comprised of seasonal housing, which accounts for 26 percent of all new units built between 1990 and 2000. Unlike vacation homes of yesteryear, today's homebuyers are building the second home with the intention of taking up permanent residence as they reach retirement age. The westward expansion of the New
- Jersey-New York metropolitan area has contributed to the expansion of Carbon County's seasonal housing market. The influx of a more affluent category of homeowner is creating demand for municipal infrastructure and services that cannot be sustained through existing tax revenue.
- Many of Carbon County's older boroughs continue to lose population.** In contrast, townships situated on the border with growth-impacted counties (Lehigh, Northampton, and Monroe) continue to witness population gains and pressure for additional residential development. According to the U.S. Census, Carbon County gained 3,112 additional housing units over the period 1990-2000. In total, 42 percent of these new housing units were built in Penn Forest Township, a primarily rural community with a modest employment base. Penn Forest is accessible from Interstates 80 and 476, making it an attractive choice for homeowners that work in larger metropolitan areas.
- Abandoned industrial sites present brownfield redevelopment opportunities in Carbon County.** The most notable redevelopment opportunity is located at the gateway to Palmerton Borough. For nearly 70 years, the New Jersey Zinc Company maintained a zinc smelting operation at this location, which ceased operations in 1980. The U.S. EPA is currently overseeing the cleanup of the zinc pile site, which could be redeveloped for commercial or industrial uses.



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Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **The County supports efforts to regionalize wastewater systems.** Parts of central Carbon County are served by on-lot septic systems that experience a high rate of malfunction. The County supports efforts to secure public funding and to regionalize wastewater treatment systems.
- ☑ **Carbon County actively markets its two major industrial parks, both of which are located in a Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ).** The 635-acre Green Acres Industrial Park West is located in Nesquehoning, adjacent to PA Route 54. The McAdoo Industrial Park is a 172-acre park adjacent to PA Route 309 in Banks Township.
- ☑ **Carbon County is an active participant in the Pocono Mountain Wayfinding Signing Program.** As an alternative to tourist-oriented directional signs (TODS), the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has partnered with the PA Tourism & Lodging Association to develop signing districts. Within each district, a comprehensive network of directional signs would guide travelers from key transportation corridors – or “gateways” – to various tourist destinations, cultural attractions, and recreational areas throughout a region. The Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau, its member counties, PennDOT, and the PA Tourism & Lodging Association are participating in a collaborative effort to establish unified

signage throughout the Pocono Mountain region. Tourist-friendly signage is another tool Carbon County can utilize to market its tourism assets.