

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Forest County is located in northwestern Pennsylvania and is bordered by Warren, McKean, Elk, Jefferson, Clarion, and Venango Counties. As its name implies, Forest County is predominantly forested and rural. It is comprised of nine municipalities, including one borough and eight townships. Tionesta is the county seat.

With 4,946 citizens and population density at 11.6 persons per square mile, Forest County is both the least populated and least densely populated county in Pennsylvania. It is not, however, the smallest county relative to land area. With 428 square miles, it ranks 53rd out of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

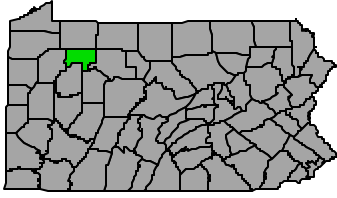
Existing Land Use Conditions

Geological conditions have resulted in the majority of the County being comprised of soils with steep slopes and high water tables, which severely limit the amount of land which can be developed. A total of 45 percent of the County's land is vacant.

County land uses are limited not only by soil suitability, but also by land ownership. Over 44 percent of the County's land is national forest, while state game lands and state parks and forests account for 2.6 percent and 1.9 percent, respectively. Agricultural and open space land use accounts for 6.6 percent of the County's total land area.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Close to one-half of the County's land area is devoted to public uses.** The Allegheny National Forest (ANF) encompasses 44 percent of the County's total land area. Because state and federal property are not subject to local taxation, a traditional source of municipal revenue is lost to many areas of Forest County. This limitation on local tax bases constrains the local economic base.
- ☑ **The loss of agricultural land to state and federal acquisition and abandonment has diminished the number of farms in Forest County.** The amount of farmland in Forest County decreased from 14,090 acres in 1964 to 4,702 acres in 1992.
- ☑ **The conversion of second homes to permanent homes presents unique land use and environmental challenges.** Many of the County's recreational and seasonal homes are being converted to permanent dwellings and are constructed on soils containing high water tables. This leads to environmental concerns associated with septic system suitability. In light of the lack of public infrastructure, larger lot sizes are appropriate in Forest County.



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- ☑ **The lack of infrastructure impedes planned growth.** Forest County would like to encourage planned growth. However, the lack of public infrastructure along with the significant amount of land that is national forest limits the type of business development that generates significant tax revenues.
- ☑ **Forest County's rural location and small population impedes an aggressive economic development campaign that could produce a major employer.** The local costs associated with attracting a major new employer to Forest County make it fiscally unfeasible to actively pursue the economic development strategies implemented by wealthier counties.
- ☑ **The number of housing units in Forest County far exceeds the number of households.** While Forest County has 8,701 housing units, it has only 2,000 households. This trend is due to the large number of vacation homes located around the Allegheny National Forest.

guidelines that would stress the importance of development consistent with the rural nature of the County. This is particularly important in light of the construction of a state prison, and its resulting development, in Forest County.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **Forest County has developed regional partnerships to strengthen solid waste management.** Forest County is working with Venango and Clarion Counties to prepare a tri-county solid waste plan.
- ☑ **Forest County's updated comprehensive plan promotes new development that is consistent with the County's rural nature.** The County's comprehensive plan, updated in 1998, promotes the development of design