

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Jefferson County is situated among the scenic forests of northwestern Pennsylvania. It is bordered by the counties of Forest, Elk, Clearfield, Indiana, Armstrong, and Clarion. This peaceful, rural county comes to life every winter when Punxsutawney Phil, a groundhog, prognosticates on the length of winter. In addition to Punxsutawney, there are 10 other boroughs in the County, and 23 townships. Brookville is the county seat.

Jefferson County has a population of 45,932, according to the 2000 Census. This is a drop of 0.3 percent since the 1990 Census. The County now ranks 50th in population growth or change; 17 other counties experienced a greater decline in their population during the 1990s. Jefferson County's land area comprises 655 square miles. The resultant population density was about 70 persons per square mile in 2000.

Existing Land Use Conditions

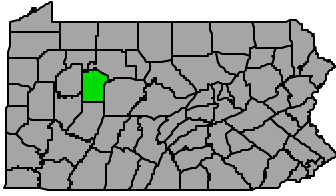
Jefferson County's rural setting is reflected by its current land use conditions where approximately 90.4 percent of the County's total land area is undeveloped. The majority of the undeveloped land area is devoted to forest and agricultural uses.

Jefferson County is blanketed with forests and pristine mountain streams and rivers that flow among the woodlands. The southern part of the County has a rolling landscape and is dotted with Amish farms. Development only accounts for 9.6 percent

of the total land use. The County contains several coal basins, but only a few are workable and productive. The forests, rivers, and coal basins have shaped the County's history. In the early 1800s, lumbering was the primary industry in the County. The Clarion and Allegheny Rivers carried lumber to Pittsburgh and treasured goods back to the County. By the end of the 1800s lumbering was waning, but the coal industry was huge. Coal mining companies imported workers to the region to extract the coal. Coals mines were worked out by the Great Depression. Since then, Jefferson County's economy has been recovering and reestablishing itself in manufacturing and service-related industries. Tourism, especially outdoor tourism, has been on the rise in the region thanks to State parks and game lands, the beautiful forests, and clear running streams. Quaint towns, Amish-made crafts and, of course, Phil, the prognosticating groundhog, also attract visitors to the County. In addition, Interstate 80 greatly impacts the County, bringing people and goods to and from the area.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Jefferson County's economy is based heavily on the manufacturing sector.** This sector employs approximately 26 percent of Jefferson County's workforce, compared to the state where about 15 percent of the workforce is engaged in the manufacturing sector. While this sector tends to have better wages than the wholesale and retail trades,



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transportation, warehousing, and hospitality services, it is also more volatile. This sector is quick to reflect a recession and translate this into job losses. For instance, in 1992 when the state had an unemployment rate of 7.6 percent, Jefferson County experienced a 10.3 percent unemployment rate. In 1998 when the state had a 4.6 percent unemployment rate, Jefferson County saw 7.0 percent of their workforce unemployed.

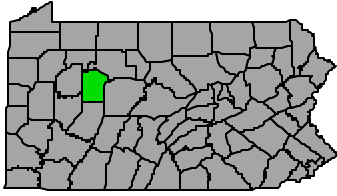
- Compared with most other Pennsylvania counties, Jefferson County has experienced only a modest decline in farmland between 1987 and 1997.** Between the 1987 and 1997, the Census of Agriculture recorded a loss of 4,830 acres of farmland (5.7 percent) in the County. Some of this land was lost to housing construction. The County increased its housing stock by 4.1 percent, or 862 units, during the 1990s even though it lost population during this decade. Forests covered 62 percent of the County's land area in 1997. It is not known if this percentage has increased or decreased since that assessment.
- Jefferson County's communities are in need of infrastructure repair and expansion.** Over the past decade, municipalities in Jefferson County have been receiving grant funding to repair, replace, and expand various water, sewer, and storm water facilities. Some of this work was badly needed to correct

such problems as the discharge of untreated wastewater into waterways. Other work entails the expansion of water treatment lines and services to keep up with development. Still other work has been accomplished to replace deteriorated lines and system components for the aged infrastructure.

- Water quality is a significant concern in Jefferson County.** There are two main sources of water pollution in the County: acid mine drainage and what is referred to as "wildcat" sewage discharge. There are approximately 10,000 acres of abandoned strip mines within the County. Some of these mines are leaching acid and other pollutants into nearby waterways. Also "wildcat" sewer lines, illegal pipes that connect a building to a stream, are polluting the waterways. These are difficult to pinpoint. Inflow and infiltration is also a problem in the County, but infrastructure projects are gradually remedying this problem.

Land Use Planning Activities

- Some of Jefferson County's municipalities have comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, but these appear to have been adopted prior to 1986.** Fifteen of the County's 34 municipalities have adopted comprehensive plans, but only six have a zoning ordinance. It appears that most of these planning tools were enacted between 1965 and 1985. The County completed a comprehensive



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plan in 1991 and is currently updating the plan.

- ☑ **To encourage businesses to locate in Jefferson County, 16 Keystone Opportunity Zone sites have been established.** Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZ) are zones or sites where state and local taxes are reduced or abated for approximately 10 years for the businesses that locate in these zones. Sixteen such sites have been set up in the County. They range from a 257-acre greenfield site to a 15-acre downtown tract.