

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Juniata County is located in the central part of the state, surrounded by the counties of Mifflin, Snyder, Northumberland, Perry, Franklin, and Huntingdon. Juniata County is primarily a rural county, rich with natural resources. The County contains 17 municipalities; four are boroughs and 13 are townships. The county seat is Mifflintown Borough.

Juniata County's rural nature is evident in the size of its population and its density. The 2000 Census reported a population of 22,821 (only six counties had smaller populations) on 392 square miles. This resulted in a population density of 58.3 persons per square mile (ranking it 53rd in the state in terms of density). The County's population grew by 10.6 percent in the 1990s, three times the state's growth, making it the 11th fastest growing county in the state.

Existing Land Use Conditions

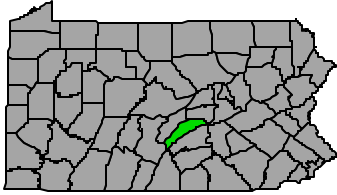
Approximately 96 percent of the County's total land area is undeveloped with 94.5 of this total devoted forest and agricultural uses.

Not surprisingly, topography has shaped Juniata County's land uses. The County generally lies between the Appalachian Mountain ranges of Shade Mountain to the northwest, and Tuscarora Mountain to the southeast. The Juniata River snakes through the County from east to west. This topography influenced Juniata County's economy in the past and continues to do so today. The "blue waters" of the Juniata

River brought settlers to this region. Early industries included lumbering, iron production (furnaces), and farming, while the forests and river provided ample fishing and hunting. Today, Juniata County is becoming well known for its outdoor recreation. Small-mouth bass fishing is reported to be the best in the country and small game hunting seasonally lures many to the County. The Juniata River offers excellent fishing, swimming, and boating opportunities, while a number of trails pass through the forests. Tourists to the County can catch a glimpse of the Amish and Mennonite and enjoy its small communities with quaint shops, colonial structures, museums, and nearby covered bridges. Recent improvements to State Route 322 are also affecting economic development and growth patterns. Increasing numbers of residents are able to commute to the Harrisburg and State College areas for employment.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Juniata County has experienced a substantial increase in new home construction.** When the rate of increase of new housing units exceeds the rate of increase of households, then it is highly probable the new housing units are consuming more land and sprawling across the landscape. During the 1990s Juniata County's population increased by 2,196 (10.6%), households increased by 986 (13%), and housing units increased by 1,526 (17.9%). This increase in housing caused the vacancy rate to jump from 12 percent in 1990 to



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14.4 percent in 2000. One of the consequences of the increased housing development is the need to double the size of the water treatment plant. It currently is operating at 90 percent capacity.

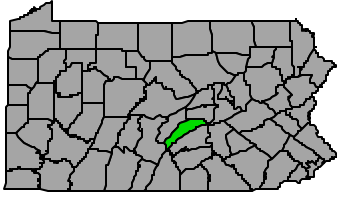
- ☑ **Over 44 percent of Juniata County residents travel outside the County to find employment.** Most are commuting to the greater Harrisburg area. Sixty percent of these commuters work in Dauphin, Cumberland, Perry, or York Counties. Other popular destinations are Mifflin, Snyder, and Centre Counties. While 4,678 residents traveled *outside* the County to work according to the 2000 Census, 1,698 traveled *to* Juniata County to work. The net leakage of workers was 2,980. This imbalance may continue for quite some time, especially since the County's largest employer (approximately 1,000 employees), Empire Kosher Poultry, may be for sale.
- ☑ **Juniata County is experiencing a "brain drain" and an aging of its population.** While this trend is not new for Pennsylvania, it is an important factor for counties like Juniata. The County's two younger generations (under age 25 and age 25 to 44) comprised a smaller portion of the County's total population in 2000 compared to 1990. Their percentage of the total population dropped by 4.1 percent, resulting in the older generations (age 45-64 and age 65+) becoming a greater percentage of the population. For example, the County's

oldest generation (age 65+) increased by 16.2 percent during the 1990s. This trend can result in a reduction of the workforce (younger generations) and an increase in social service needs for the elderly (older generations).

- ☑ **Juniata County lost 5.1 percent of its farmland between 1987 and 1997.** This loss was not as significant as that which occurred in many other Pennsylvania counties, still it is important. According to a Penn State Cooperative Extension report, in the year 2000, farming employed approximately 1,000 people and accounted for almost 10 percent of the County's economy. Local officials are not yet concerned about development consuming farmland but are watching the situation. The County has begun to participate in Pennsylvania's Agricultural Land Preservation Program. As of the end of 2002, conservation easements had been purchased on five farms, protecting 647 acres.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **The County itself has not yet drafted a comprehensive plan and only a few municipalities have adopted comprehensive plans or zoning ordinances.** County and local officials are speculating that most growth will bypass the County and they will take a "wait and see" attitude on the need for comprehensive planning. Besides the County being without a comprehensive plan, only five of the County's 17 municipalities have adopted both a



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comprehensive plan and a zoning ordinance. Local officials feel that developers are paying their fair share of development costs (in terms of transfer taxes, sewer rates, water rates, earned income tax and real estate taxes). Additionally, these officials would love to see development and jobs come to their County to shorten the long commute of their residents.

- Juniata County is participating in a “Regional Tourism Plan” with Mifflin County.** The Plan outlines a strategy for comprehensive tourism development and promotion for the region. The region is the Juniata River Valley comprised of Juniata and Mifflin Counties. The Plan analyzes the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats to tourism development in the region. It is concluded with an action plan and implementation strategy. Through this Plan, the region will strive to better enhance and market their heritage and natural resources.