

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Pike County is located in northeastern Pennsylvania. It shares a border with the states of New York, New Jersey, and with the Pennsylvania counties of Wayne and Monroe. Pike County is a dynamic county, having experienced a 400 percent population increase since 1960. There are a total of 13 municipalities in the County. Two are boroughs and the rest are townships. The Borough of Milford, perched on a bluff overlooking the Delaware River, is the county seat.

While Pike County was the fastest growing county in the State during the 1990s, Pike's residents look around and inform outsiders that there are still only 46,302 residents in the County (U.S. Census 2000). The land area of the County was 547 square miles and the resultant density was almost 85 persons per square mile in 2000. Pike County ranked 44th in the State in terms of density, meaning two-thirds of the counties in Pennsylvania had a greater density than Pike. Still, some municipalities have seen explosive growth. Dingman Township had 382 residents in 1960, whereas by 2000, 8,788 people resided there. Similarly, 318 people lived in Lehman Township in 1960 and it grew to 7,515 residents by 2000. These two townships are on the eastern side of the County and share a border with New Jersey.

Existing Land Use Conditions

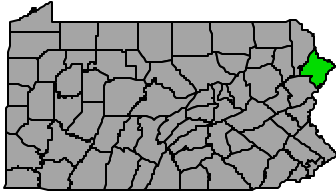
Approximately 95.7 percent of the County's total land area is undeveloped with 85.8 of

this total devoted forest and agricultural uses. Nearly 10 percent of the County is devoted to water and wetlands, largely in part due to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area on the eastern border.

The County has a tremendous amount of natural beauty. Opportunities to enjoy this beauty include: eagle watching along the Delaware River, canoeing, rafting, hiking, camping, seasonal hunting, waterfalls, and boating and water activities on Lake Wallenpaupack. The Delaware River, on the County's northeastern border, has brought attention to the area, in addition to offering natural beauty and recreational opportunities. Pike County is rather different geologically than nearby counties—no iron ore, coal or other mineral beds exist in the County. Even the limestone and cement rocks of Monroe County run along the Delaware River on the New Jersey side, but not in Pike County.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Pike County's surge in population over the past several decades has created significant transportation problems and social concerns.** One of the biggest issues appears to be traffic congestion. Formerly rural roads, as well as the interstates, are becoming clogged as almost 72 percent of Pike's resident workforce leaves the County each day to find work. Many are commuting long distances to New York City and employment centers in New Jersey. The interstates and major roadways heading



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to and from the east are heavily congested during rush hour. Other issues include increased crime, the need for expansion of schools, and the shortage of tax dollars to address these problems.

☑ **Pike County’s increased population has come largely from the migration of New York and New Jersey residents.**

The two biggest contributors of new residents to Pike during the 1990s were the neighboring counties of Sussex County, New Jersey, and Orange County, New York. These two counties were followed closely by the New York City counties of Queens and Kings (Brooklyn). Bergen County, NJ, adjacent to New York City, also contributed many new Pike County residents. While the net difference of people moving “into” rather than “out of” the County during the 1990s was a little over 11,000, this was still substantially less than Monroe County’s net increase in migration of approximately 28,000 people during the same period. Higher costs of living, home values, crime, and the desire for more open space have been the impetus for relocation of New York and New Jersey residents to Pennsylvania.

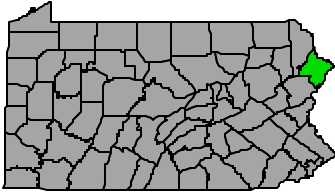
☑ **Many of these new migrants continued to work in New York and New Jersey during the 1990s.** Of all the counties in Pennsylvania, Pike County had the greatest percentage of its resident workforce that worked outside the

County. About 72 percent of its residents worked outside the County. The County also had the longest “mean travel time to work” of all Pennsylvania counties at 46 minutes, according to the 2000 Census. Only 2,600 workers from outside the County replaced the almost 14,000 workers that left the County each day to find work elsewhere. If more high-paying jobs were available in the County, many of these commuters would prefer to live and work in the same County.

☑ **Like Monroe County, booming population growth is placing a great strain on Pike County’s schools, resulting in escalating taxes.** As the population grows, so does school enrollment. The need for new school construction and the upgrading of existing schools is significantly increasing the tax burden shouldered by the County’s residents. This is especially true given the relatively modest amount of commercial development in the County to help shoulder the burden. Among those hardest hit are seniors who have lived in the County all their lives, watched changes occur all around them, and have experienced the steep escalation of their property taxes.

Land Use Planning Activities

☑ **Pike County has developed a new Draft County Comprehensive Plan, which is slated for final adoption by the Board of Commissioners in 2006.**



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This update and “new look” at the issues and challenges associated with land use in the County is especially important given the dynamic change occurring there. The County’s change in land use has not been tabulated before now, but should show significant patterns of growth and development. Residents have observed more traffic on the roads, new construction of homes, and the conversion of vacation homes to permanent residences. The comprehensive plan will tabulate these changes and will develop a strategy to address past changes and anticipate future ones.

- ☑ **Pike County recently conducted a comprehensive visioning process.** This grassroots process helped Pike County residents address the substantial changes that have occurred in the County. Various task forces were formed to address economic development, environmental, infrastructure, and quality of life issues. Each task force developed a “road map” of specific action items. From the road maps a “high priority” list was developed that is currently being tackled by a Visioning Benchmark Committee.