

## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

**S**ullivan County is located in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. It lies south of Bradford County, east of Lycoming County, north of Luzerne County, and west of Wyoming County. Rural in character, Sullivan County has 13 municipalities, nine townships, and four boroughs. Laporte is the county seat. Dushore Borough is the largest municipality. Laporte, Eagles Mere, and Forksville Boroughs form the other core communities.

Sullivan County's population of 6,556 ranks it 66<sup>th</sup> among Pennsylvania's 67 counties. With an average of 14.6 people per square mile, the County also ranks 66<sup>th</sup> in density. Its land area of 450 square miles makes Sullivan the 51<sup>st</sup> largest county in the state. From 1990 to 2000, Census figures show a 7.4 percent population increase for Sullivan County, enabling it to achieve the 18<sup>th</sup> fastest rate of population growth among the 67 counties.

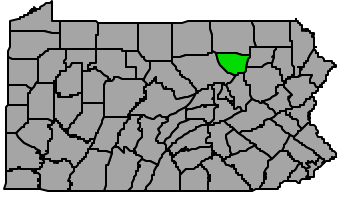
Sullivan County's 6,017 housing units, the total number of units in 2000, ranked it 66<sup>th</sup> statewide. The County experienced a 10.2 percent growth in housing units in the 1990s. At the same time, Sullivan had a 16.7 percent increase in the number of households from 1990 to 2000, making its rate of new household formation the 7<sup>th</sup> fastest increase in Pennsylvania. The County also had a 7.6 percent decrease in the average size of households, the largest decrease in size of household of any county in Pennsylvania.

### **Existing Land Use Conditions**

Approximately 97 percent of the County's total land is undeveloped, with about 81.8 percent of this land devoted to forest and agricultural uses.

Sullivan County is located in the Endless Mountains Region in Northeastern Pennsylvania. A significant amount of the County's open space is used for state parks, wood stands, and game lands owned by state and federal governments. State owned land totals 305,000 acres, and the County ranks second among Pennsylvania counties in forested land coverage. The County is considered "extremely rural" by the federal government. There is only one traffic light in Sullivan County, the intersection where Route 87 crosses Route 220 in Dushore. The nearest movie theaters and shopping malls are 40 miles away.

U.S. Route 220, a major north-south transportation route running from South Carolina to New York, is the primary corridor through the County. Airport access is 40 miles away in Montoursville, at Williamsport Regional Airport. Manufacturing in the County is based on wood products, including pallets, lumber, wood veneer, log homes, wood chips, and saw-logs for export. Demand for new seasonal and residential homes has resulted in a mini-boom in construction. Since seasonal housing usually would not locate along a major highway corridor, U.S. Route 220 currently does not seem to be attracting a lot of new housing development.



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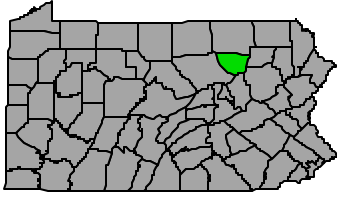
Sullivan County is well wired, with a fiber optic loop around the entire County, and throughout most of the five-county Northern Tier Area with Internet connectivity. There are also seven wireless sites. However, cell tower coverage is rated as poor.

### **Key Land Use Issues**

- Development in the County is occurring at a moderate rate, particular in the east.** The eastern section of the County is part of the Pocono migration, and many second homes are being converted to primary residences. The greatest part of this migration originates in Bradford and Lycoming Counties, rather than in New York State, as is the case in other northeastern counties.
- The continued viability of agriculture, which is primarily dairy, is a concern for the northern and northwestern parts of the County.** Twenty percent of this part of the County is farmland, and agricultural acreage is decreasing due to development pressures. According to the Census of Agriculture, from 1992-1997, agricultural acreage throughout the County has decreased by 3 percent. As of 1997, what remains is 123 farms and 27,000 acres of farmland, ranking Sullivan County 59<sup>th</sup> among Pennsylvania's counties in agricultural land use. To date, agricultural easements have been purchased for three farms comprising 278 acres. The Conservation District and the Extension Office are tracking agricultural land conversion in the County.
- The median age among residents of Sullivan County in 2000 was 43.0, the second oldest median age among Pennsylvania counties.** This can significantly increase the need for social services in the County. Also, according to the 2000 Census, 12.8 percent of Sullivan County's population was below the poverty line, ranking it 21<sup>st</sup> in the state. The statewide average was 10.9 percent. Sullivan County did have one of the lowest high school dropout percentages in the Commonwealth, and currently, nearly 50 percent of high school graduates pursue higher education. A growing number of artists, crafts people, and writers reside and work in Sullivan County.

### **Land Use Planning Activities**

- During the past decade, there has been one dominant land issue planning activity in Sullivan County, and that is the issue of the adoption of countywide zoning.** Exploratory discussions of this topic began in 1991. Land use maps have now been completed for the entire County. Additionally, the County's comprehensive plan, which was adopted in 1981, will be updated and brought into compliance with recent Municipalities Planning Code Amendments in the near future. The new comprehensive plan is not expected to include growth areas, as defined by the Municipalities Planning Code Amendments.



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- ☑ **Sullivan County is participating in a multi-county watershed project, the Muncy Creek Stormwater Management Study.** While Sullivan County officials are fully committed to undertaking this study, the present focus is on more densely populated communities along the Susquehanna River and Lycoming Creek in Lycoming County. Stormwater management erosion and sedimentation control studies for DEP must first be completed for these communities, then it will commence in less densely populated Sullivan County.