

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Warren County is located in northwestern Pennsylvania on the border with New York State. It is recognized for outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities, quaint downtowns, and abundant forestland. Warren County and its eastern neighbor, McKean County, are nicknamed “Kinzoa Country” after the famous Kinzoa Dam and reservoir completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1965. The 25-mile-long lake supports year-round recreation.

Established in 1800 from parts of Allegheny and Lycoming Counties, Warren County was once home to the Iroquois Seneca Nation. The County is situated in the Allegheny Plateau, a geomorphic province characterized by sandy soils and high elevations. This region is not well suited to agriculture, but supports forest cover in abundance. Indeed, the lumber industry played an important role in the County’s early history. Rafting and sawing lumber were dominant activities until oil was successfully drilled in nearby Titusville in 1859. From that point forward, Warren County joined the oil boom, establishing over a dozen oil refineries by the early 1900s.

Warren County is bordered by Erie and Crawford Counties to the west, Forest and Venango Counties to the south, and McKean County to the east. It shares its northern border with the counties of

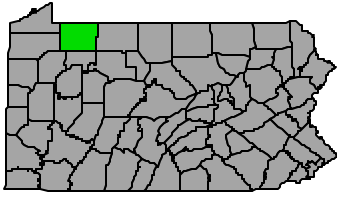
Chautauqua and Cattaraugus in New York State.

Warren County is comprised of 27 municipalities, including five boroughs, 21 townships, and one city. The City of Warren is the county seat. Laid out in 1795, it is a principle gateway to the Allegheny National Forest (ANF), a 513,000-acre hardwood forest that touches four Pennsylvania counties: Warren, McKean, Elk, and Forest.

Existing Land Use Conditions

Twenty-six percent of the County’s total land area is covered by the ANF, the only national forest in Pennsylvania. In addition to supporting a strong tourism sector, the ANF is a major source of timber for the region. A study conducted by Penn State University (PSU) on “The Role of the Allegheny National Forest in the Warren County Economy” estimated that ANF timber harvests support over 200 jobs and \$4.6 million in worker and proprietor income. According to the PSU study, Warren County is unique because employment is concentrated in primary timber processing; secondary-processing job opportunities are mostly found outside Warren County.

Warren County’s total land area is 883 square miles, ranking it 16th in size among the Pennsylvania’s 67 counties. In addition to the ANF, Warren County is home to over 37,000 acres of State game lands, the largest of which are located in the Allegheny River Valley – the central part of the County!



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Approximately 93.9 percent of the County's total land area is undeveloped, with most of this percentage devoted to forestland and some agriculture.

The County's 1991 comprehensive plan included a survey of existing land uses prepared using aerial photography and field surveys. The study found that development was largely concentrated in the County's boroughs, and that the predominant land use was residential. Outside these more densely settled areas, vacant land often represented the most prominent land use. This land use pattern has not changed significantly over the last decade.

Key Land Use Issues

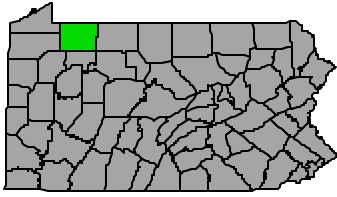
- ☑ **One-third of the County's land area is devoted to public uses.** Public lands encompass 33 percent of the County's total land area. Because state and federal property are not subject to local taxation, a traditional source of municipal revenue is lost to many areas of Warren County. This limitation on local tax bases constrains local economies.
- ☑ **Limited Interstate access inhibits business development.** U.S. Route 6 is the County's primary east-west highway. Designated "One of America's Top Ten Scenic Drives" by National Geographic, Route 6 stretches for over 400 miles across the Endless Mountains region of northern Pennsylvania. Passing through the

heart of the ANF, Route 6 provides unparalleled views of the County's landscape. As a well-known scenic byway, Route 6 is an important component of Warren County's tourist economy. The highway intersects with U.S. Route 62 north of Warren City. Route 62 is a north-south trending highway that links Warren to markets in southern New York. These two highways are Warren County's principal transportation corridors, yet neither has direct access to the Interstate highway system. The County is similarly isolated by a lack of telecommunications infrastructure.

- ☑ **Warren County has steadily lost population since it peaked in 1960.** In 1960, the County's population reached 45,582. By 2000, the County's total population had dropped to 43,863 – a decline of nearly four percent. Few people have been moving into the County because of limited employment opportunities.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **The City of Warren has initiated a riverfront development project to stimulate re-investment in downtown Warren.** 'Impact Warren' seeks to leverage \$7 million in private money to implement a \$40 million downtown revitalization project that includes a riverfront hotel, conference center, senior housing, retail/office space, and a 629-space parking garage. The County's tourism task force is utilizing a



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\$22,000 study grant from the Northwest PA Regional Planning Commission to complete a market assessment for the proposed conference center, which would be located in the former Loranger Manufacturing facility in downtown Warren.

- ☑ **Warren County is in the process of updating its comprehensive plan.** The County's current comprehensive plan was adopted in 1992. Concerns about declining public school enrollments and industry downsizing prompted the County to undertake this update, which will include revisions to existing zoning ordinances and subdivision/land development regulations. One of the issues being evaluated is school consolidation. The Warren County School District is the second largest in the State, yet enrollment levels are on the decline. This fiscal reality limits schools' capacity to upgrade equipment, maintain facilities, and broaden curricula. Some members of the public have suggested that school consolidation will enable Warren County schools to reduce costs while improving the quality of public education.
- ☑ **Warren County envisions improved access to the Interstate highway system.** Interstate 86 began as NY 17, a two-lane highway serving New York's southern tier. By the 1980s, Pennsylvania had completed a connection to Interstate 90 near Erie, PA.

Officially designated an interstate in the late 1990s, I-86 provides a continuous link from Erie, PA to Corning, NY. Warren County has a connection to I-86 via U.S. Route 62. However, once Route 62 enters New York State, the highway becomes unnavigable to most truck traffic. The action plan for the County's 1992 comprehensive plan identified improved access to the Interstate System as a top priority for Warren County.

- ☑ **An active Council of Government (COG) facilitates joint planning in the greater Warren area.** The Warren County Intergovernmental Co-op was organized in 1996. Warren County and 11 municipalities are members of the COG, which supports joint purchases, legislative advocacy, and information sharing.