

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Wyoming County is located in northeast Pennsylvania and is bordered by the counties of Susquehanna, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Sullivan, and Bradford. Like most other counties in the state, Wyoming County residents are demonstrating an increasing preference for a suburban or rural location rather than a downtown borough location. The County has 23 municipalities, including 18 townships, and five boroughs. Tunkhannock, the county seat, developed along the major east-west thoroughfare, Route 6. Growth has expanded in and around Tunkhannock to the point where a bypass project was completed.

Wyoming County is one of Pennsylvania's smallest counties in land area and in population, according to the 2000 Census. It ranks 55th in land area, encompassing 397.2 square miles, and is 60th in population with 28,080 persons. The resultant population density is 70.7 persons per square mile. During the 1990s the County's population grew by only four people (ranking it 48th in the state in terms of population growth since some counties lost population during the decade).

Existing Land Use Conditions

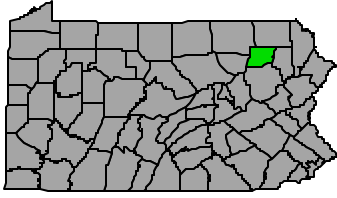
Over 97 percent of the County's total land area is undeveloped with 93.2 of this total devoted forest and agricultural uses.

Wyoming County is described as having the same geology as Sullivan and Susquehanna Counties, but it also has its own unique characteristics. The County is crossed from

northwest to southeast by the magnificent meandering canon-like valley of the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, which offers an unrivalled exhibition of the various hills and mountains of the region. This topography plays a big factor in influencing development patterns. A large portion of the County's land is open or wooded, some of this land reserved for game land. Much of the open land is in the southern portion of the County; however, this land is too steep for economical construction or high-density use. Overall the County is within easy reach of metropolitan areas, but also offers what has been described as boundless recreational opportunities.

Key Land Use Issues

- ☑ **Wyoming County has seen a redistribution of population in recent years, indicating a preference for suburban and rural locations over boroughs.** With modest exceptions, Wyoming County's townships have gained in population since 1960 and its boroughs have lost population. For example, Factoryville, Laceyville, Nicholson, and Tunkhannock boroughs lost between 9 to 17 percent of their population in the 1990s. While all municipalities added homes in the 1990s, the five boroughs were at the bottom of the list in terms of the percentage of their total housing units built in the past decade. Actual numbers of housing units built in the 1990s was between 9 and 16 in four of the five boroughs. Also, the five



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boroughs had the greatest percentage of housing units built before 1940.

Between 55 and 73 percent of their housing stock is more than 60 years old. This exodus from the boroughs to the outer townships has been influenced by tax rates among other factors.

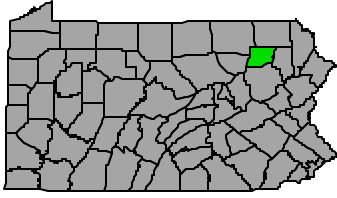
- ☑ **Wyoming County is largely becoming a bedroom community for the Scanton/Wilkes-Barre area.** According to 2000 Census' worker flow files, almost 49 percent of Wyoming County's resident workforce worked outside the County. This amounts to 6,069 workers who travel outside the County to their jobs each day. Of this number, 5,082 or 84 percent, are working in Lackawanna or Luzerne Counties. This trend has also been prevalent in the migration occurring from Lackawanna County, and to a much lesser extent from Luzerne County, to Wyoming County. Between 1990 and 2000, almost 700 more people from Lackawanna County moved into, rather than out of, Wyoming County. A little over 100 more people from Luzerne County moved into, rather than out of, Wyoming County.
- ☑ **Wyoming County residents are concerned about water quality and the health of their watershed.** As part of the Rivers Conservation Plan for the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, the Bowman's Creek and Mehoopany Creek watersheds are being studied. The main concerns of local residents include: illegal dumping, uncontrolled

development, acid rain, stream bank erosion, silt deposition, and flooding.

- ☑ **Wyoming County's residents believe they are slowly losing their rural character.** Both farmland and forest land are important to rural character. Forests covered 166,000 acres, or 65 percent, of the County's land area in 1993. It is not known if forestland has increased or decreased in the past 10 years. It is known that Wyoming County lost 11,574 acres, or 15.9 percent, of its farmland between 1987 and 1997. As of 1997, 24 percent of Wyoming County was farmland. The County has begun to utilize the Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program. Three farms and 683 acres have been preserved, as of the end of 2002.

Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **Wyoming County converted a flood-prone residential area into a regional park.** The homes of Lazybrook Acres in Tunkhannock Township were hit by severe flooding in January 1996. Residents opted for a buyout of their property by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The property was deeded to the Township. Officials decided to create a recreational area for the County. This, the first project of its kind in the state, was transformed into an enjoyable community amenity in a short period time by the efforts of many community volunteers.



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- ☑ **Wyoming County is working on making connections through biking and hiking trails.** The Iroquois Trail, a 10-mile greenway along the Tunkhannock Creek, will provide pedestrian access through a commercial strip development to connect homes with community facilities now separated by roadways. The trail will also interconnect recreation and historic sites in the Tunkhannock area.