

Monroe County Comprehensive Plan Update

“The Challenge Continues...”

December 2014

**Monroe County
Planning Commission**



A high-angle, wide shot of a river valley. The river, a vibrant blue, winds through a deep, lush green forested valley. The surrounding hills are covered in dense green trees. In the foreground, dark, jagged rock formations are visible, with some green foliage growing on them. The sky is a pale blue, and the overall atmosphere is serene and majestic.

Monroe County Comprehensive Plan Update

“The Challenge Continues...”

PHOTO: JAMES CHESNICK

Monroe County, Pennsylvania*

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*This reflects officials, board members, and staff at the time of adoption of the plan. It should be noted that the Task Force members listed above are both members appointed by the County Commissioners in 2011 and representatives that consistently attended Task Force Meetings.

Special acknowledgement is given to Mr. John Woodling, the former Director of the County Planning Commission. Mr. Woodling was the Director of the County Planning Commission for over 20 years and officially retired during the development of this update. He continued to serve part time as a Senior Staff member until the completion of the draft in the Spring of 2013. Mr. Woodling was instrumental in the success of the original Monroe 2020 process and in the development of its update. He is to be commended for his commitment and dedication to Monroe County.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 7

Part I – Overview 9

Statement of Community Objectives..... 9

External Influences10

Population Projections..... 13

Projects of Regional Significance15

Interrelationships of Plan Components 17

Part II – Recommendations23

Land Use Plan 23

Housing34

Transportation 36

Community Facilities 45

Water Supply 52

Solid Waste, Stormwater, Waste Water Management, and Utilities 56

Energy Conservation60

Agricultural Land Preservation 64

Open Space and Recreation 66

Historic Preservation70

Food System Plan 71

Part III – The Policies 75

Economic Development 75

Housing 81

Energy 83

Roadscape 84

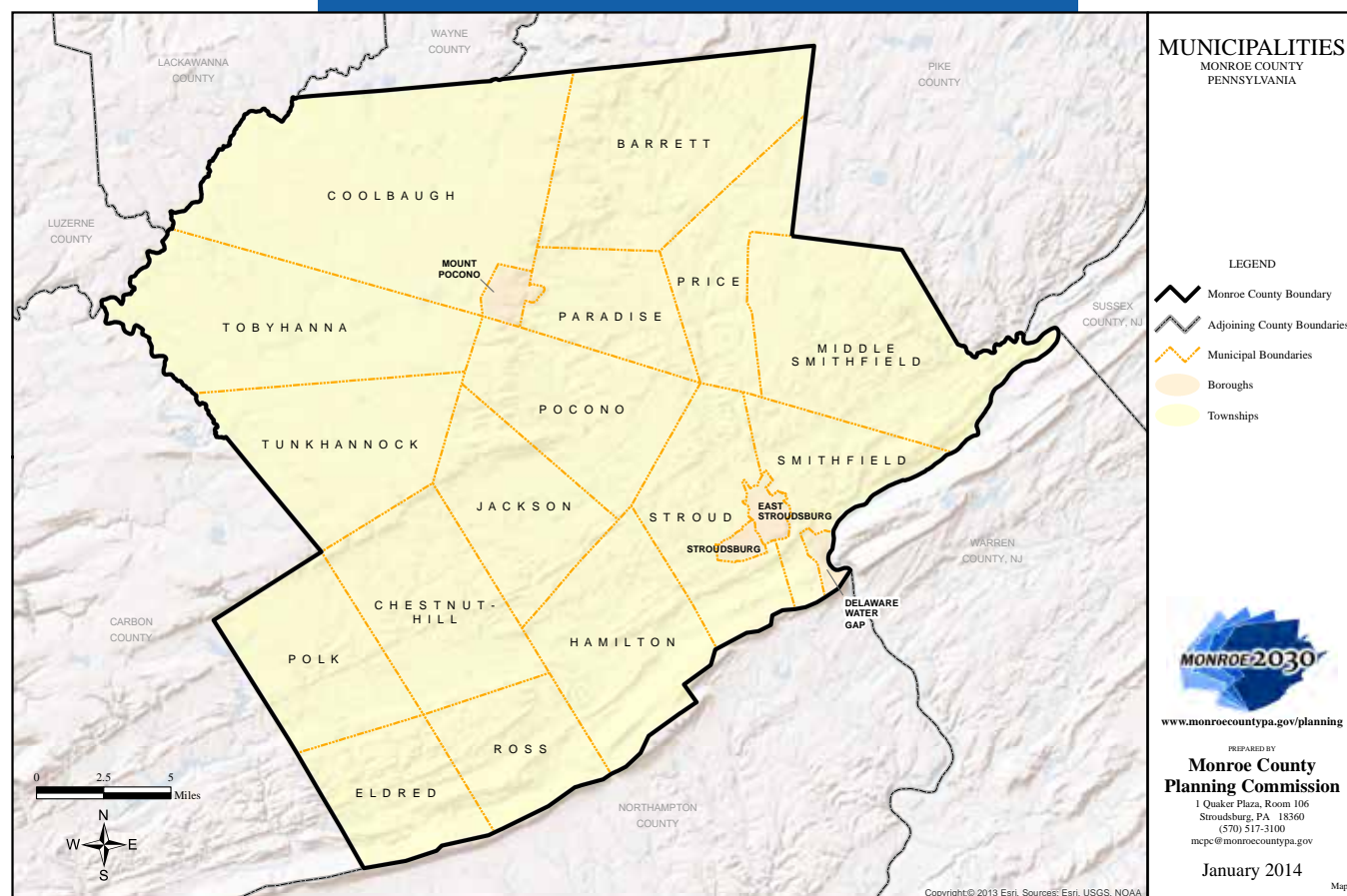
Advocacy 85

Arts and Culture 88

Part IV – Implementation 91

Vision Statement

The citizens of Monroe County will continue working together to sustain and improve our quality of life by insuring that the County's environmental, economic, and cultural assets are within reach of all its people



The Monroe 2020 Update Task Force

Introduction

The original Monroe 2020 Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1999 after an extensive planning process that involved 100 people on five task forces meeting for three years. Broad consensus on a wide variety of goals and objectives was achieved, and adoption emphasis was placed on implementation which became the focus that continues today in the comprehensive plan update.

The goals, objectives and recommendations of the original plan remain viable, and therefore the 1999 plan should be viewed as Volume I of an ongoing process. Volume II is the current update, which also makes use of the task force approach. As a starting point, the policies in the original plan were reviewed, revised, and updated. The task force then reviewed the Economic Development Implementation Plan which was prepared by a consultant. Finally, the task force discussions from an 18 month program were developed by the MCPC staff into the updated comprehensive plan document.

Many of the concepts from the original plan have been incorporated into municipal ordinances through the Municipal Partnership Program and the Financial Assistance Program. These programs are what proved to be the fundamental basis for positive change. Because implementation is so important and requires maintaining long term working relationships, it is appropriate to call the updated plan "Monroe 2030 - The Challenge Continues." By emphasizing quality of life and building on past success, the county and municipalities can continue to meet current and future challenges to ensure that the county's environmental, economic, and cultural assets are within reach of all its people.



Part I - Overview



Statement of Community Development Objectives

Based on the original Monroe 2020 plan, the Update Task Force discussions, and the implementation activities that have been undertaken, the Community Development Objectives listed below are proposed for adoption. These objectives are based on the Keystone Principles which were developed and adopted in 2008 as an approach to fostering sustainable economic development and conservation of resources within the Commonwealth.

1. Support projects which propose to reuse and redevelop existing sites, particularly brownfields and older developed areas. In these areas, encourage activities that create jobs, housing, mixed-use development and recreational facilities. Of particular importance is promoting the expansion and retention of existing County businesses.
2. Provide efficient infrastructure that allows for transportation choice, provision of wastewater management and drinking water supply for higher density development and green infrastructure in appropriate growth areas, and expansion of service consistent with approved comprehensive plans and implementing ordinances.
3. Support infill development that is compact, conserves land, is integrated with existing or planned infrastructure, and results in well-designed neighborhoods that are walkable and bikeable and connect to village centers.
4. Increase job opportunities through integrating both educational and job training opportunities for all workers with the workforce needs of businesses, while investing in businesses that provide quality jobs in the neighborhoods described above. Focus should be paid to expanding job opportunities in medical, educational, distribution, technical, manufacturing, light industry, and similar fields.
5. Support natural resource based businesses such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, recreation and tourism that utilize sustainable practices in energy production and use.
6. Maintain and expand programs that protect and conserve land, air, and water resources and promote development that respects and enhances the county's natural lands and resources. It is also important to realize the economic development potential associated with preserving natural amenities and environmentally valuable assets.
7. Maintain and improve recreational and heritage assets and resources to provide recreational and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors.
8. Support multi-municipal, county, and regional planning that has public input and support that is consistent with the above noted objectives.
9. Support equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development.



External Influences

Introduction

Events and decisions external to Monroe County continue to influence what occurs in the county. The major influences were discussed in the original Monroe 2020 plan, and most of these are still applicable. One of them, however, the connection of Route 33 to I-78 has been completed and now provides an expedited route to the New York and New Jersey metropolitan areas.



The Delaware Water Gap Toll Bridge

Impact of the Metropolitan Region

The New York-New Jersey areas have provided the vast majority of in-migration to Monroe County for the past 30 years. At its peak, this influx represented about 5,000 persons per year moving to the county. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the influx increased as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, however, the economic recession had the dramatic effect of virtually reversing this trend. According to the U.S. Census Bureau

estimates, the county’s population increased by only 40 persons from 2010 to 2011, and slightly decreased from 2011 to 2012.

This dramatic change is reflected in the number of home foreclosures, declining school enrollment and a decrease of over 90% in the number of single family building permits issued for the period 2004-2012. Although the metro area remains a major employment destination for commuters from Monroe County, it is obvious that the region is currently not a major contributor of residents. It appears that significant economic sector improvement will need to occur before the county could experience increased in-migration. The original Monroe 2020 document could not predict the recession, and it is remarkable how different the current conditions are from those in 1999.

Passenger Rail Service

At the time of the original Monroe 2020 plan, the prospect of passenger rail service restoration between Scranton and Hoboken, NJ was thought to be likely in the fairly near future. Currently, the first phase to re-install seven miles of track from Port Morris to Andover, NJ is underway. The next phase would be from Andover to Delaware Water Gap and East Stroudsburg but funding for this is not in place at this time. The third phase, also unfunded, is from East Stroudsburg to Scranton.

Although restoration of passenger rail service would have the potential to reduce traffic on I-80, funding considerations and the lengthy construction process may make this project a longer term consideration. Station locations and planning for the areas around them remain an important consideration, and the county and municipalities should keep abreast of developments regarding future phases of the restoration project.

New Jersey International Trade Center (ITC)

Located in Mount Olive, the ITC currently has about 4 million square feet developed with almost 3 million square feet available. Development of the remaining space could be a significant source of employment for commuters from Monroe County.

Mountain Laurel Performing Arts Center

Located on the site of the former Unity House resort in Pike County, the facility was envisioned as the long-awaited performing arts center for the Pocono region. Although the center has undergone a change of ownership and several management changes, it has had difficulty providing a full slate of performances on a consistent basis. The economic recession further hampered efforts to realize the center’s full potential. If the economy recovers sufficiently, the center may be able to more fully realize its original vision. Access and potential traffic impacts on Monroe County remain to be mitigated.

Population Growth in Lehman Township, Pike County

Highland Village, a major residential development (±5,000 units) proposed several years ago, is apparently on hold at the present time. Much like the arts center, a development of this magnitude could present significant traffic impacts for Monroe County. The population of Lehman Township more than tripled from 1990 to 2010, however, the rate of growth may have slowed since then. Census Bureau estimates for 2011 indicate that Pike County had a population decrease of 515 persons from 2010, and it is reasonable to assume that this same trend affected Lehman Township as well.

The Delaware Lackawanna Railroad provides freight service to several Monroe County businesses.

Rail Freight Linkages

In 2006, Monroe and Lackawanna Counties formed the Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority (PNRRA). Previously, each county had its own rail authority, although the two had worked together closely for a number of years. The PNRRA provides rail freight service to several Monroe County businesses including RockTenn in Smithfield Township, Royal Chemical and AM&T Morgan in the Crowe Industrial Park in Stroud Township, Bestway Lumber in Cresco, and Horizon Milling in Pocono Summit. It should be noted that the majority of rail freight enters into the county as raw material and leaves as finished product by truck. They are also working with Northwoods Paper in the Crowe Industrial Park and hope to service this facility in the future. Service is provided by the Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad which interchanges with CP Rail and Norfolk Southern Railways.

Rail freight service continues to be an important factor in site marketing for the Pocono Mountains Economic Development Corporation (PMEDC). A number of potential rail users have looked at the Corporate Center West site (Tegawitha) and the Pocono Mountains Industrial Park because rail freight service could be provided. The number of cars/year for existing shippers in Monroe County has increased over the last three years, and the proposed

expansion of the Panama Canal will spur warehouse/distribution activity in the future. The PMEDC emphasizes that rail freight service will be a major part of their efforts going forward.

National Defense Policy and the Tobyhanna Army Depot

Tobyhanna Army Depot continues to be the County’s largest employer (Approximately 3,900 workers of which 535 are residents of Monroe County) and has not only survived several rounds of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, but also has been successful in receiving increased workload from facilities that were closed as a result of the BRAC process. Historically, the Depot has faced potentially significant funding cuts as a consequence of the BRAC process throughout its existence and this fact is likely to continue. A recent example being in a February 21, 2013 article in the Pocono Record, as the Department of the Army’s report on the impact of looming cuts indicated that 1570 jobs would be lost at Pennsylvania’s two depots, Tobyhanna and Letterkenny. That example underscores the fact that Tobyhanna is vulnerable to the consequences of policies and decisions from Washington. Widespread community support is a major factor in surviving the BRAC process, and may be needed in future situations as well.



PHOTO: DEAN CURTIS

PENNDOT Initiatives

PENNDOT recently announced a proposal to expand I-80 to six lanes from East Stroudsburg to Bartonsville and to upgrade the interchanges on this section. The estimated cost is over \$220 million and the estimated completion date is 2024. Funding for this and other projects including the East Stroudsburg interchange improvements are to be provided in part by the Governor’s recently passed transportation funding plan.

The designation of the East Stroudsburg urbanized area as a result of the 2010 Census raised the issue of the formation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) as required by Federal legislation and how this would affect the existing five county Rural

Bridge repair in Paradise Township [top]

5 Points intersection in Mount Pocono [bottom]



Planning Organization which included Monroe, Carbon, Pike, Schuylkill and Wayne counties. The MPO has been approved by the Governor and consists of Monroe, Carbon, Pike and Schuylkill counties. Wayne County has decided to remain as a rural county. It is believed that the formation of the MPO will be a positive development for Monroe County and should provide more flexibility in funding and scheduling of major projects. The MPO will be working with NEPA Alliance with respect to the functions of the planning committee and working with a consultant to prepare the regional long range transportation plan.

Commonwealth Legislative Initiatives

The State Planning Board recently undertook a survey to assess the project approval and permitting process in the Commonwealth’s municipalities and counties. The object of the survey was to evaluate existing processes and seek ways to improve them. The approval permitting process is often cited as a problem by project developers, and results of the survey should be available in the near future. These results could prove valuable to discussions in Monroe regarding the approval process.

A recent amendment to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PMPC) requires municipalities to notify the superintendent of their respective school districts(s) of approvals of subdivisions on a monthly basis. The requirement remedies a long standing disconnect in that school districts were outside of the approval process, but had to deal with the consequences of new residential development and increased enrollments.

Recreation and Tourism Trends

According to a recent report by Tourism Economics entitled Pennsylvania’s Tourism Regions – Economic Impact of Travel by Region and County, the Pocono Mountains are the fourth ranked area in the Commonwealth in terms of visitor spending, ranking behind the Philadelphia area, Dutch Country, and the Pittsburgh area. Of the four Pocono counties, Monroe ranked the highest in tourism spending, employment, direct sales, and tax revenue generated. Of particular note is that the Poconos had the 2nd highest share of spending on shopping and recreation among the states 11 tourism regions. This is a direct reflection of the region’s recreational facilities such as water parks and ski areas, and shopping areas such as the Crossings and the major downtowns of the Pocono counties. The recent rise of adventure sports events has become a significant part of the area’s “draw,” and this trend is likely to continue with events such as Tough Mudder, Warrior Dash, and Ironman competitions.

The Commonwealth Medical College (TCMC)

The Commonwealth Medical College was established in 2008 and welcomed its first class in August 2009. In 2011, TCMC opened its Medical Sciences Building in Scranton, and regional campuses are located in Wilkes-Barre and Williamsport. Pocono Health System has begun a partnership with TCMC to become the fourth regional campus. This would enable students to receive part of their medical education in Monroe County, and this could lead to their decision to practice in the community in the future. The benefits of becoming a regional campus would have a positive effect on the county, its health care system and economic development activities related to health care as indicated in the Economic Development Policy in Part III of the Comprehensive Plan.

Population Projections (2012-2030)

Population projections were estimated in two categories, “low” and “moderate”. Due to the difficulty of projecting the population and uncertainty with the economy, the two projections are considered realistic. The Census Bureau releases population estimates every July for the previous year. It is suggested that the projections indicated in this plan be reviewed, and if warranted, the projections should be revised to reflect the changing conditions.

The “low” population projection was based on the assumption that the residential construction would continue at approximately its current rate for the next 8 years. Based on these numbers Monroe County is projected to gain 2,900 people by the year 2020.

The “moderate” population projection was based on the assumption that the economy will fully recover, and residential construction would increase to approximate levels of 2010. This trend was also projected for a 10 year period. Based on these figures it is assumed that Monroe County will gain 5,000 people during the period 2020-2030.

The Census Bureau has just released its population estimate for 2013 which indicates that the county’s population declined by 1,288 persons from 2012. The total population is estimated at 167,148. This decline is consistent with declines in school enrollment, drastically reduced housing construction and a large number of foreclosures. These factors taken together support the projections noted above and the graph on the next page.

Additional assumptions which were considered are indicated below.

■ Low – 145 building permits (2012) @ 2.5 persons per unit for 8 years = 2,900. Moderate – 200 building permits/year, 2.5 persons per unit for 10 years = 5,000.

■ Residential construction is currently 7.5 % of what it was in 2004 and this will likely continue for the next several years, at least.

■ Rapid population increase has leveled off and future population increases will be very modest, static or may decline somewhat.

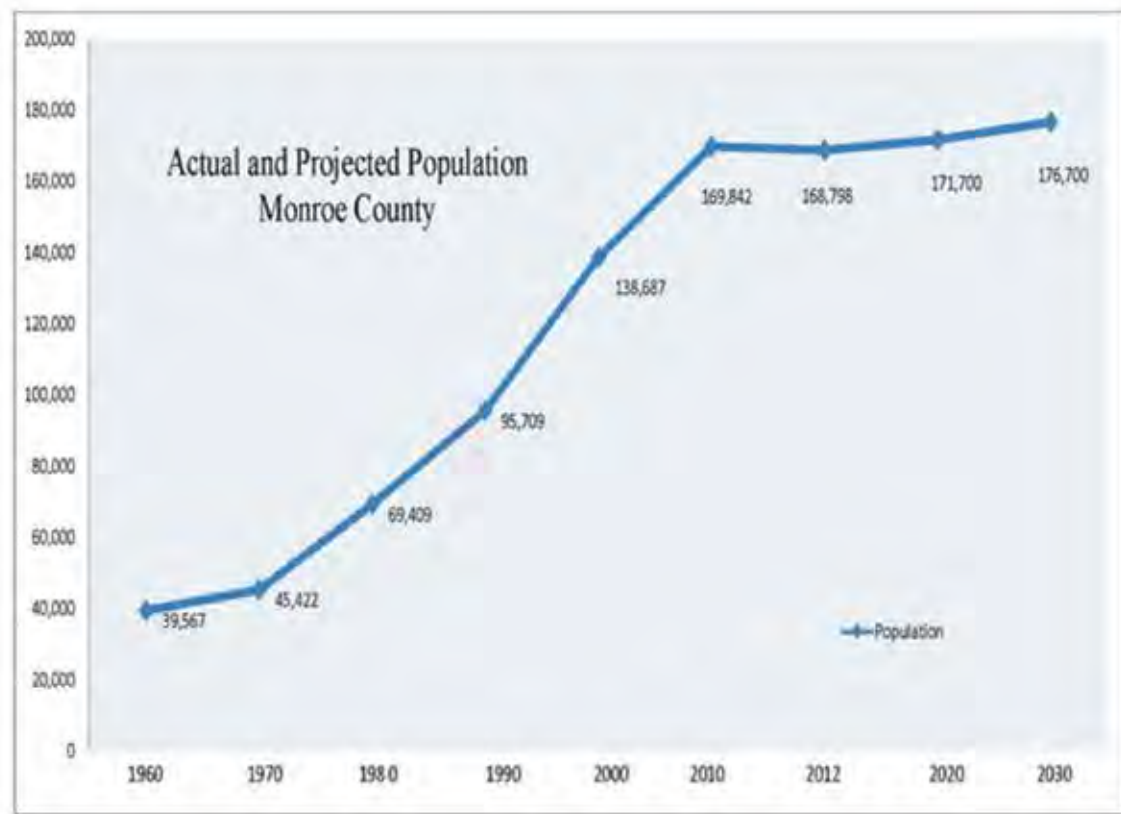
■ The median age for county residents is increasing and doing so faster than in the recent past.

■ Average household size will continue at about 2.5 persons/household.

■ School enrollment figures are declining, and this is likely to continue as population continues to remain basically static or declines slightly.

■ The cost of living will rise moderately

■ The Lackawanna Cut-Off commuter rail project faces significant funding challenges and may not be completed within the time frame of this plan.



Projects of Regional Significance

Existing Projects of Regional Significance:

Tobyhanna Army Depot:

Established in 1953, the Tobyhanna Army Depot specializes in electronic systems for all branches of the military and is the largest employer in Northeast Pennsylvania. The Depot employs over 5,000 people, however, only approximately 700 reside in Monroe County. This 1,100 acre site is located in Coolbaugh Township, adjacent to Interstate 380 and has rail access. Cut-backs to military spending have traditionally been an issue to the depot, and continuing support is necessary to retain this facility.

Mt. Airy Resort and Casino:

Originally the Mount Airy Lodge, this resort was demolished and a casino and hotel were constructed and opened in 2007. In 2010, table games were permitted within the casino. This resort contains over 180 hotel rooms, approximately 2,000 slot machines, various dining options, and over 70 table games. For the July 2013/ June 2014 fiscal year over 42 million dollars of gross revenue was generated from table games and Gross Terminal Revenue from slot machines was over 140 million dollars. A portion of this money finances Local Share Account grants to projects that meet the program's criteria. This resort is located in Paradise Township and employs approximately 1,400 workers.

Pocono Raceway:

Opened in 1971, the Pocono Raceway is host to two annual NASCAR races. In 2013, IndyCar races, which were discontinued in 1989, returned to the raceway. While exact event attendance is unknown for these races,



Mount Airy Resort and Casino [top]

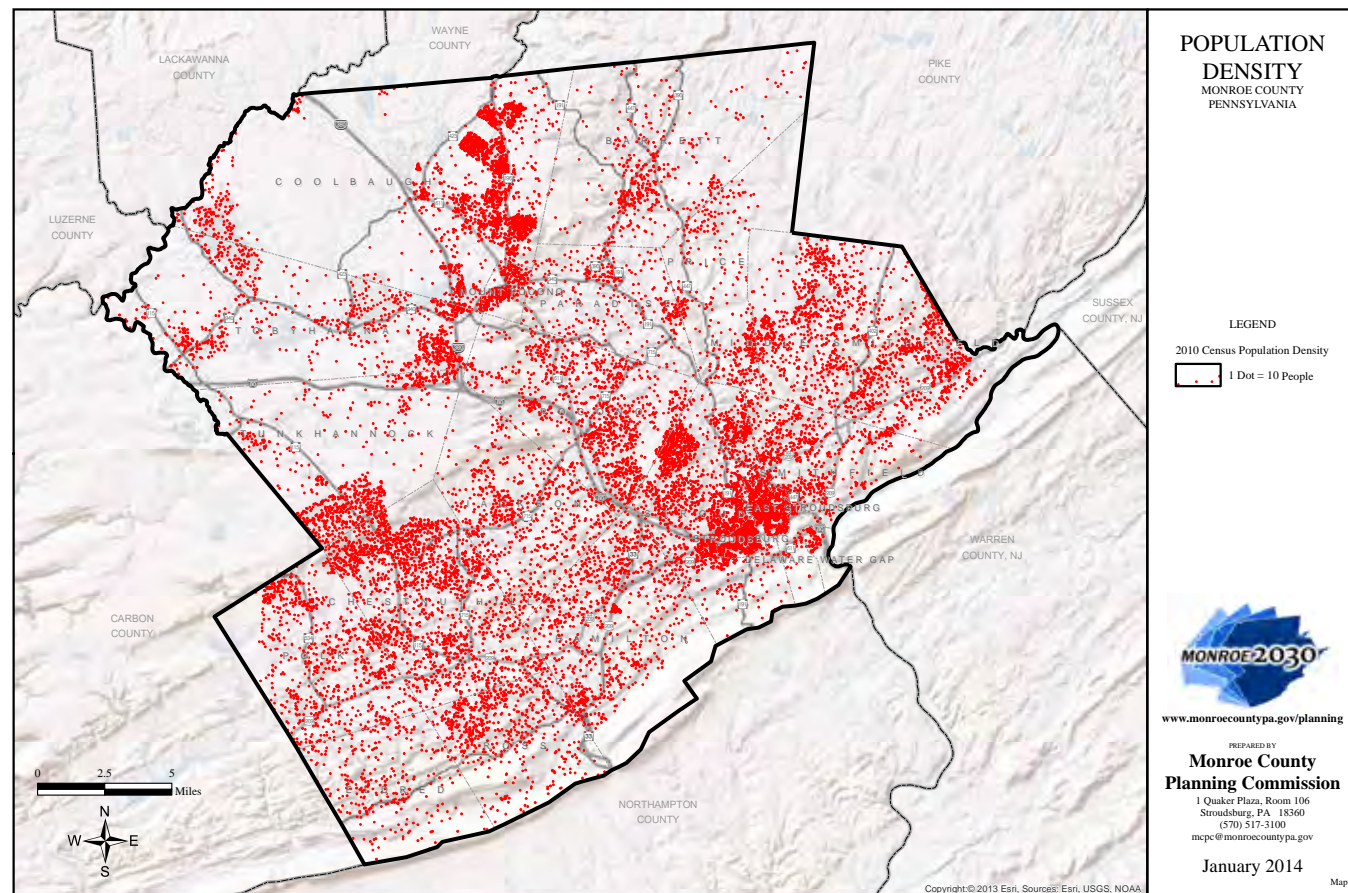
East Stroudsburg University [bottom]

the facility remains a major draw for racing enthusiasts and race weekends generate a significant influx of revenue and the 40-50 employee staff expands to a largely volunteer force of 2,000.

East Stroudsburg University:

Founded in 1893, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania is a public university and is one of 14 state universities of Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Approximately 7,000 students are currently enrolled in the University, and over 800 persons are employed by the school. ESU offers 59 undergraduate and 22 graduate degree programs, as

well as 18 varsity sports. The 257 acre campus contains 65 buildings and is located adjacent to Pocono Medical Center in East Stroudsburg Borough. Drawing students from over 30 states and two dozen foreign countries, ESU remains a key provider of higher education throughout the northeast Pennsylvania region.



Northampton Community College:
Tannersville is home to a satellite campus of the Northampton Community College based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. An additional larger campus has recently been constructed adjacent to Route 715 in Pocono Township. This new campus will create over 40 new positions and significantly add to Associate degree programs offered in various fields. The new campus will offer expanded opportunities for adult education, affordable secondary education for recent high school graduates, and increased cultural and community assets.

Construction of the Northampton Community College, Monroe campus, Fall 2013 [top]

Sanofi Pasteur [bottom]



Pocono Medical Center:
Employing over 1,800 people, Pocono Medical Center is a mid-size, not-for-profit hospital located in East Stroudsburg Borough. The only hospital facility in the county, Pocono Medical Center offers care for local and surrounding county residents. The Mattioli Emergency Center is one of the busiest emergency rooms in the state, treating approximately 90,000 patients annually. Recently, a 58,000 square foot cancer center was opened to expand the services offered to residents and visitors, and branches have also opened in Bartonsville and Brodheadsville.

Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport:
The Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport is a general aviation airport located near Mount Pocono off State Route 611. The airport offers flight training, charter service, hangar space, and tie-down space that can accommodate up to 30 aircraft. The airport is managed by the Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport Authority.

Sanofi Pasteur:
Employing over 2,400 workers, Sanofi Pasteur is the second-largest employer located in Monroe County. With headquarters in France, Sanofi Pasteur is one of the largest international vaccine producers in the world. Their U.S. headquarters is located near the intersections of State Routes 611 and 314 in Swiftwater, Pocono Township. Expansion and upgrading of facilities at this campus has been steady for the last several years and it is a viable and successful business landmark in Northeast Pennsylvania.

Projects of Regional Significance:

Kalahari Resort:
Kalahari Resorts based in Sandusky, Ohio has been approved and is under construction for the development of a combination water park, hotel and conference center at a site located at Pocono Manor. The indoor water park is to be over 300,000 square feet at build-out with 300,000 square feet of

convention center space making it the largest water park/conference center in the country. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for public infrastructure has been approved for this project. Pocono Manor also has plans to develop adjoining property with retail facilities (2,000,000 s.f.)

Camelback Mountain Resort:
Camelback Mountain Resort is constructing a hotel/water park located adjacent to an already developed ski and outdoor water park facility in Pocono Township. When completed the project will consist of a 125,000 square foot water park and a 450 room hotel/restaurant and bar. The owners have been approved for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for the purchase of furniture, fixtures and equipment.

St. Luke's Hospital:
The St. Luke's Hospital project is in the early stages of constructing a 190,000 square foot, 140 bed hospital to be located along State Route 611 in Bartonsville. There is the potential for future phases that would add another 140,000 square foot hospital facility and a 60,000 square foot medical office building



Interrelationships of Plan Components

Taken together, the various plan components are directed toward improving the quality of life for all residents, and all plan components are interrelated as discussed below.

■ Higher density residential development in the centers can provide lower housing costs and conserve open space in undeveloped areas. Use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is one action that may aid in achieving this goal.



■ Focusing non-residential development in the major centers and corridors also helps to conserve land, provides facilities on public transit routes and makes use of existing infrastructure.

■ Enhanced mass transit service reduces energy consumption and improves mobility for those who don't drive. This is especially important for those who use the shared ride program for transportation to medical appointments.

Earth moving activities at the site of the Camelback Hotel and Waterpark, Fall 2013 [top]

Groundbreaking ceremony for the Kalahari Resort [bottom]

■ Preserving agricultural land maintains the historic connection to farming and provides areas to grow food locally which can reduce energy consumption, improve health and enhance the local economy.

■ Promoting resort/recreation development is an important part of the economy and can create jobs. Conserving and enhancing the county's natural resources ties directly to efforts to promote tourism.

■ More compact development and the use of conservation subdivision principles preserves open space, reduces the distance of new roads required, and can assist in providing a range of housing types at different prices.

■ Development in the centers and villages can provide walkable/bikeable places that reduce energy consumption, conserve land and provide healthier life styles.

■ The mix of housing types and prices in well planned village settings can have positive social benefits for all age groups.

■ Preservation of natural resources and open space improves the attractiveness of the county for businesses, visitors, and potential residents. This in turn enhances economic development efforts.

■ Reduced energy consumption, use of existing infrastructure and fewer new roads will have a positive fiscal impact on county and local government and taxpayers.

Not only are the interrelationships of Comprehensive Plan components important, but also the interrelationships of the Comprehensive Plan, Open Space Plan, and the Economic Development Implementation Plan are equally important and the coordination of all three plans will largely determine their success. A concerted effort by all involved agencies will be required in order to achieve maximum beneficial results.

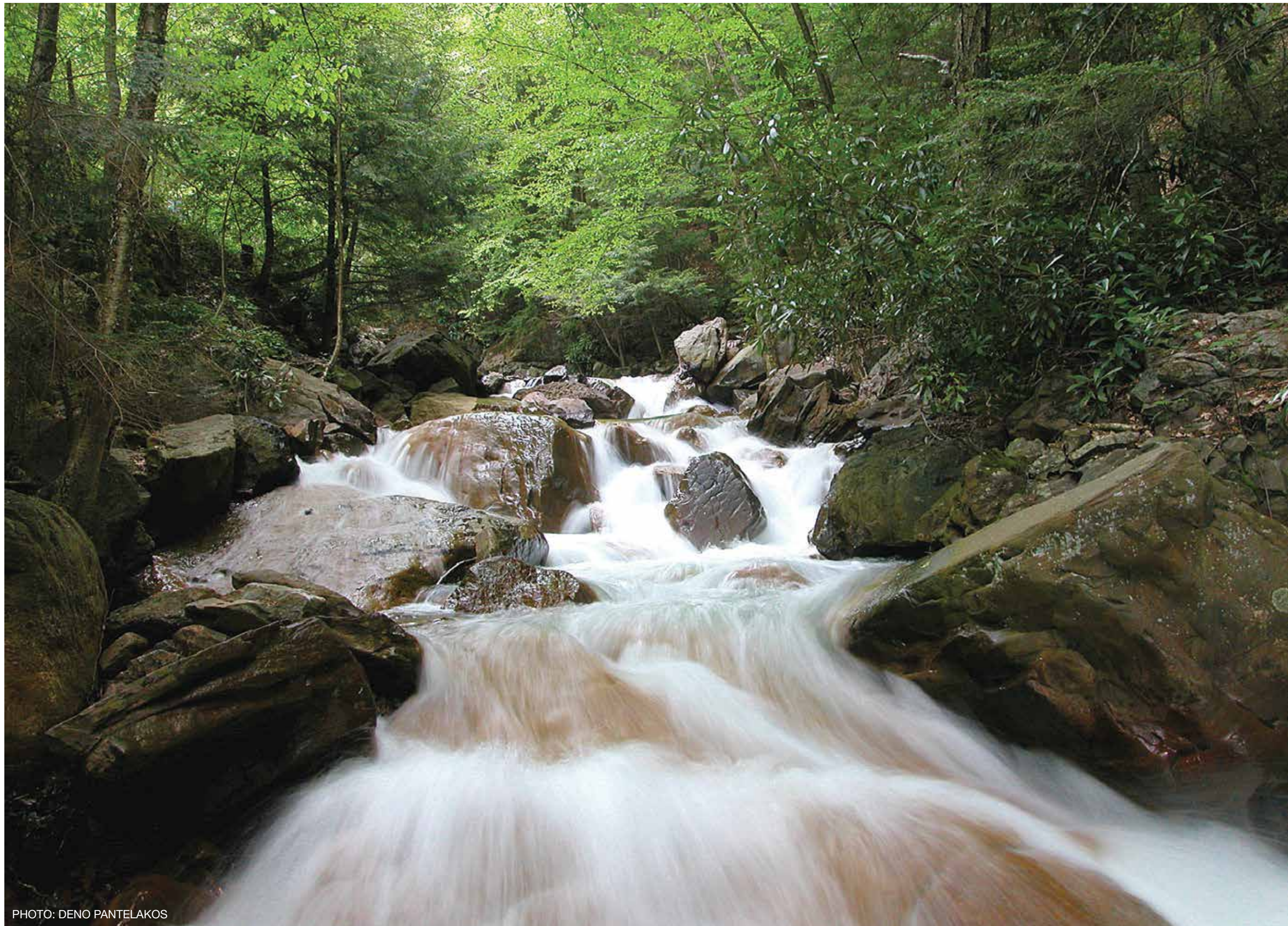
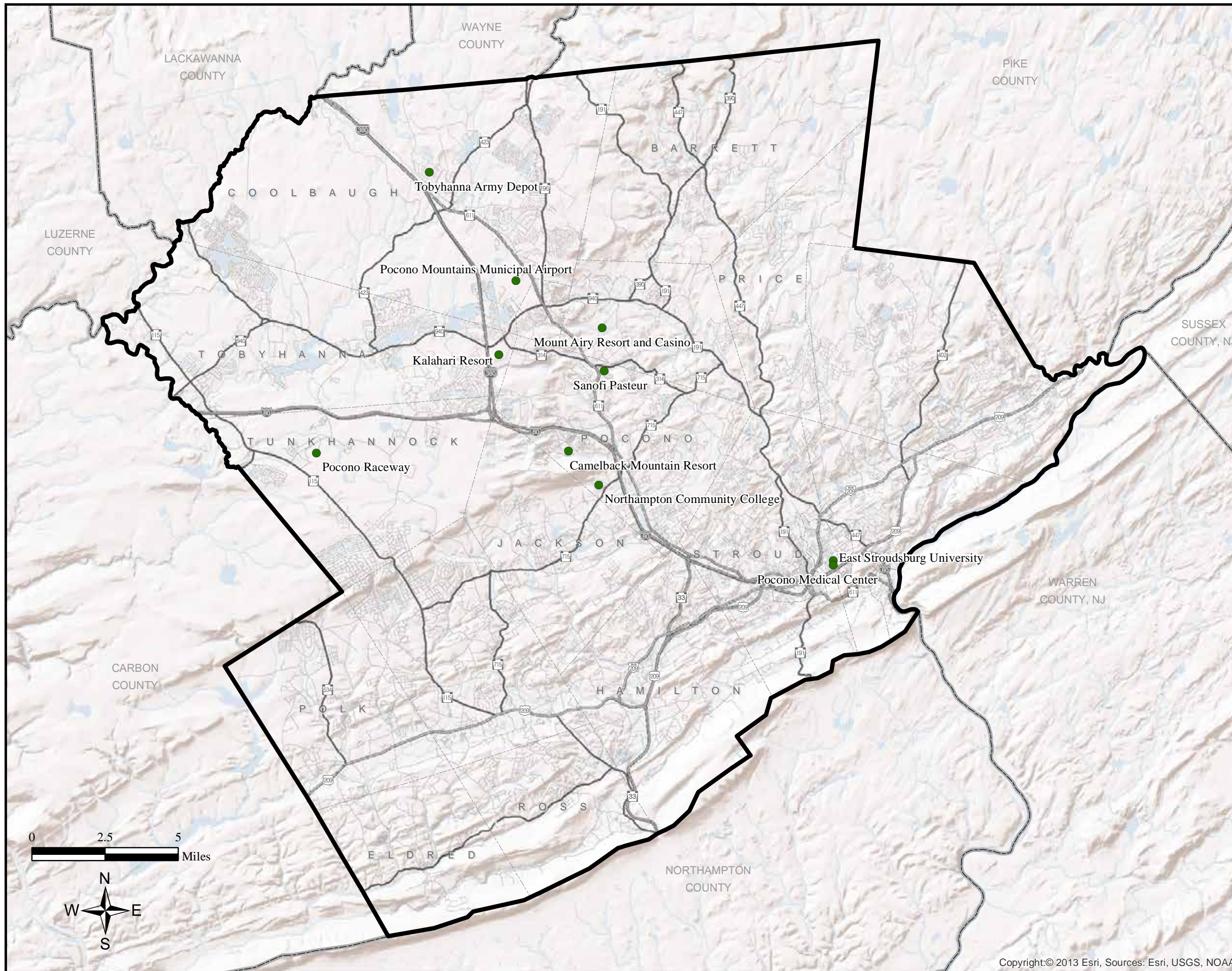


PHOTO: DENO PANTELAKOS



PROJECTS OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

MONROE COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

LEGEND

- Camelback Mountain Resort
- East Stroudsburg University
- Kalahari Resort
- Mount Airy Resort and Casino
- Northampton Community College
- Pocono Medical Center
- Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport
- Pocono Raceway
- Sanofi Pasteur
- Tobyhanna Army Depot



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Map 3

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PHOTO: COURTESY POCONO MOUNTAINS VISITORS BUREAU

Part II - Recommendations

Land Use Plan

Introduction

It is the consensus of the Task Force working to update the Comprehensive Plan that the overall land use concepts presented in the 1999 plan are still valid and remain the course that the county should follow. This concept includes major centers, smaller villages and hamlets, intensive development in the major corridors of Routes 611 and 209, extensive bicycle/pedestrian linkages, active participation in reforestation efforts with the American Chestnut, encouragement of viniculture in appropriate geographic areas, and rural and transitional area housing options. These major features of the Land Use Plan are described in more detail as follows:

Centers

The major centers remain the same as in the 1999 plan, however, the three centers in the Route 611 corridor are connected by major developments that have occurred along most of the corridor. Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg, Tannersville, and Mt. Pocono are the major centers which are now connected by the development that has occurred between them over the last 12 years. This development has been spurred by the extension of both water and sewer lines along the Route 611 corridor.

New construction of commercial facilities has occurred in the centers as demonstrated by Wal-Mart in Mt. Pocono, Great Wolf Lodge, CVS and Turkey Hill in Tannersville and new downtown development in Stroudsburg (former Liquid building) and East Stroudsburg (Trackside and new Liquid) on the former site of the Dansbury Depot. The ESU Innovation Center and additional medical offices along Route 447 are further examples. These projects have been able to use existing infrastructure and some have replaced obsolete buildings with infill redevelopment in accordance with plan recommendations, and this type of development should continue.

New or expanded public facilities in the centers include the substantial renovation and expansion of Stroudsburg High School. The

construction of a new library at the Coolbaugh Township municipal complex in the village of Tobyhanna is an additional example. Public facilities should be located in the centers since these areas are served by public transit and contain a concentrated population.

While the 1999 plan envisioned most development occurring in the centers, it also recognized that development would occur at the edges and as extensions of the centers. This new development could be served by existing utilities or their extension, and this trend is evident.

The 1999 plan also encouraged the provision of at least 30 percent of housing demand in the centers, however, there has been virtually no residential development in the past several years, and even prior to that most residential development occurred outside the centers. Demand for new housing fell sharply with the economic recession and has not rebounded as evidenced by an analysis of residential building permits over the past five years. The number of permits issued has steadily declined from 451 in 2008 to 175 in 2013, a decrease of 62%. This data can also be contrasted to 2004 when 1,644 permits were issued. Provision of new units as infill and at higher densities in the centers remains a viable goal and municipalities are encouraged to support such development. The provision of accessory housing units for family members or as rental units is also encouraged. Preliminary plans for the Kopelson development in Tannersville proposes a mix of units, but this project appears to be on hold.

The 1999 plan projected that some 30,000 new housing units would be needed to accommodate projected population growth. During the first half of the 2000-2010 decade, the county's population increased significantly, almost 5,000 persons per year. This growth began to decline after 2005 and had fallen to an increase of just 40 persons from 2010 to 2011. Major factors contributing to this decline include the economic recession, the significant number

of home foreclosures in the county (over 1,800 in 2012) and declining school enrollments. These issues are all interrelated and when coupled with the large number of existing homes for sale (2,000±) they indicate a vastly decreased demand for new housing units. It appears unlikely that the housing market of the early 2000's will return, and even if it does it is likely that the demand will be for smaller homes (both sales and rentals) in settings other than the conventional subdivisions which characterize much of the residential development that has occurred in the past.

Accordingly, infill development in the centers and conservation subdivisions in the outlying areas will characterize the housing market of the future in the county.

Corridors

The major transportation corridors have remained the focus for economic development outside the centers, particularly for retail. Non-retail uses have developed primarily in the business parks and corporate center locations marketed by the Pocono Mountain Economic Development Corporation (PMEDC), and this should continue. The 1999 plan recommended that corridor development occur on sites that could be planned and designed as units (25-50 acres or more). This has occurred to an extent with some of the retail development in the Bartonsville area, however, strip commercial development has occurred in other areas, and should be discouraged in the future.

It should also be noted that Chestnuthill, Smithfield and Tobyhanna Townships participated in “Reinventing Commercial Strips” programs for the Brodheadsville, Marshalls Creek and Blakeslee areas, respectively. These exercises provide plans to improve existing commercial strips and should be encouraged and continued.

Linking the centers and other areas with appropriate bicycle/pedestrian facilities is a primary consideration,

and sidewalks have been provided in a number of locations as part of new commercial development in the Route 611 corridor. Although the areas are not currently connected, they form the starting point for improved pedestrian access along parts of the corridor. The plan encourages the continuation of requiring sidewalks as part of any new development in the corridors. Additional circulation and transportation recommendations will be included in the Transportation Plan section.

Business Parks/Corporate Centers

As noted previously, most non-retail development in the last 12 years has occurred in the Business Parks/Corporate Centers which have been established by PMEDC. These are located in the triangle formed by Route 611, 940, and I-380 and form an economic development corridor which has rail service and good highway access. PMEDC has been successful in attracting a number of businesses to these areas including United Envelope, Mountain Healthcare Center, Johnson & Johnson, and Keystone Coca Cola, and should continue efforts to attract additional tenants.

The 1999 Plan recommended sites of 20-50 acres along the major corridors for non-residential development. Such sites could be planned and designed as units and would contain landscape buffers, controlled access points and attractive signage. These design features would be in contrast to existing parking lots without landscaping, multiple access points and signage clutter as seen in many locations in the county. Illustrations of these proposals were contained in the 1999 Plan, and the recommendations are still quite valid today.

Major employers located outside the Business Parks/Corporate Centers include Tobyhanna Army Depot, Sanofi Pasteur, and Pocono Medical Center.

Tobyhanna Army Depot has acquired additional work flow from other installations that were closed as a result of the Base Realignment Closure Process (BRAC) and widespread regional community support played a significant role in the Depot's success. Any future regional efforts to retain/expand Tobyhanna Army Depot should be strongly supported.

The Sanofi Pasteur facility in Swiftwater has undergone tremendous expansion to become a major corporate facility. The water and sewer line extensions along Route 611 have supported this expansion, as has the soon to be completed natural gas line serving the facility.

Pocono Medical Center has also undergone significant expansion with a new emergency room, the new Hughes Cancer Center, the development of satellite immediate care facilities, the ESSA Heart and Vascular Institute, and the Abeloff Community Health Center. It is recommended that future expansion

of health care facilities be supported by the county and its appropriate agencies, especially since health care is one of the major components of the economic development policy.

Other major employers such as the various educational institutions and school district will be discussed in the community facilities section.

A parallel activity to the comprehensive plan update is an Economic Development Implementation Plan (EDIP) which was prepared by Vantage Point Development Advisors. The plan contains recommendations for short, mid, and long term strategies to improve the economic development process in the county and to enhance the county's ability to both attract new businesses and help them expand. The EDIP is incorporated herein by reference, and it is recommended that the strategies be implemented as expeditiously as possible. The two organizations that will be most involved are the PMEDC and the MCPC, but

coordination and participation by the Municipalities, Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau (PMVB), Greater Pocono Chamber of Commerce (GPCC), Monroe County Conservation District (MCCD), East Stroudsburg University, Northampton Community College, and other entities will be crucial to a successful effort.

Rural and Transitional Area Housing Options

Much land in rural areas of Monroe County municipalities is already zoned and subdivided for low density residential development, at one-two acres per dwelling unit or more. While this is the essence of sprawl, it is unrealistic to assume that municipalities will enact growth management measures that completely prevent development of properties with vested rights. Market demand for large lot exurban dwellings has declined and evidence from comparable communities in Pennsylvania and other states indicates a resurgence of interest in more compact home-sites protected by large areas of common open space.

The plan's strategy for areas outside the centers continues to encourage conservation or open space subdivisions at an average of two units per acre, with appropriate utilities. Large areas of woodlands or other common use space can thus be maintained. Since adoption of the 1999 plan, the MCPC has worked with the municipalities to incorporate conservation subdivision provisions into their ordinances and to date, 17 of the 20 municipalities have adopted such provisions or have incorporated them into draft ordinances which are currently being finalized. This has been a critical first step towards implantation of conservation subdivision principles.



Swamp Rose in Tannersville Cranberry Bog



Bald Eagle mid-flight over the Brodhead Creek

Open Space Preservation and Conservation

Open space in a variety of forms is the most distinguishing feature of Monroe County. Further preservation of open space is both an objective of the Comprehensive Plan and a tool for achieving other objectives of the plan such as focusing development in centers to enhance their distinctive value as landmarks and strengthen them economically, upgrading and containing arterial corridor development so it is more efficient, safe, and less congestion prone, and landscaping those corridors to make them more attractive and inviting.

The county's Open Space Program began in 1998 with the passage of a referendum for a \$25 million open space bond. Subsequently, the Open Space Advisory Board (OSAB) was formed and program guidelines were developed. The county's first Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed in 2001, and since the inception of the program, approximately \$75 million has been leveraged with the \$25 million bond and an additional \$11 million provided by the county. To date, over 21,000 acres have been protected through the open space and agricultural land preservation programs. This program has been one of the main successes to come out of the Monroe 2020 planning process.

An update to the county's Open Space and Recreation Plan has been completed. The updated plan is incorporated herein by reference, and implementation of that plan and the comprehensive plan will require close coordination. The Economic Development Implementation Plan and the Updated Open Space Plan will also require close coordination and cooperation. Open Space and economic development are not mutually exclusive, but rather they can work hand-in-hand. Open space preservation and recreation activities can significantly enhance economic development opportunities and this is one of the key principles of the 1999 Plan and this update. The use of Transferable Development Rights, TDR, is just one method to conserve open space and direct development to the centers. TDR's are recommended in all three regional comprehensive plans and are recommended herein as well.

Resorts and Recreation Venues

Since the preparation and adoption of the original Monroe 2020 Comprehensive Plan, a number of resort/recreation projects have been developed or are currently proposed. The plan encouraged upgraded facilities and expansions and urged support for the tourism industry which is a major part of the county's economy.

Facilities that have been developed include Mt. Airy Resort and Casino, Great Wolf Lodge, and Camelbeach at Camelback Mountain Resort. Proposals include Kalahari Resort (water parks, hotel, and convention center), and Camelback Hotel and Water Park (indoor). These projects represent significant growth in the tourism sector of the economy, and coupled with a greatly enhanced marketing program by the PMVB and present an updated image of the county and the entire Poconos region as a major destination for visitors.

It is recommended that additional/expanded resort facilities be

encouraged and supported in locations that are appropriate in terms of access, compatibility with surroundings, and environmental sustainability.

Agricultural and Silvicultural Initiatives

As with many areas, traditional agriculture in the county is a lesser part of the economy than in the past, however, there are initiatives underway and others that can be undertaken. Specialty agriculture operations such as organic produce, Christmas trees and the like have appeared in the county and they should be encouraged and supported. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) such as the Josie Porter farm in Cherry Valley in Stroud Township is an excellent example of this type of operation, and additional CSAs should also be encouraged and supported. Additional agricultural/food plan recommendations are included in the Food Protection and Distribution section, as is a discussion of the Shop Local Save Land campaign.

Several vineyards/winery operations have been developed in the county. These are located in the southeastern portion of the county and take advantage of south facing slopes to grow a variety of grapes. Such facilities not only diversify the agriculture of the county, but also provide destinations for visitors. As with the items noted above, this type of operation should be encouraged and supported.

A silvicultural initiative that has been discussed at Task Force meetings and that is the object of extensive research is the effort by the American Chestnut Foundation (ACF) to create a blight resistant American Chestnut. Formed in 1983, the ACF is close to having a "restoration chestnut" that could be used in reforestation projects. The chestnut once made up 25% of eastern forests prior to its near extinction due to blight that originated in Asia. Monroe County forests were once dominated by chestnut trees, and would be good candidates for



Great Wolf Lodge [top]



Big Creek Vineyard in Kresgeville [bottom]

reforestation efforts if a blight resistant variety is successfully developed for release. Appropriate county agencies such as the MCPC and MCCD should keep abreast of current research and take advantage of reforestation opportunities that may develop.

Also, as important as the protection of native species in the region is the elimination of invasive non-native species. Pest species such as Multi-Flora Rose and Japanese Knotweed have gained a strong foothold within the county. Efforts to combat further encroachment should be made through increasing public awareness of identifying and removing such species as well as through prohibiting their use within commercial landscaping standards

A hybridized chestnut sapling in Fall



Implementation of Recommendations

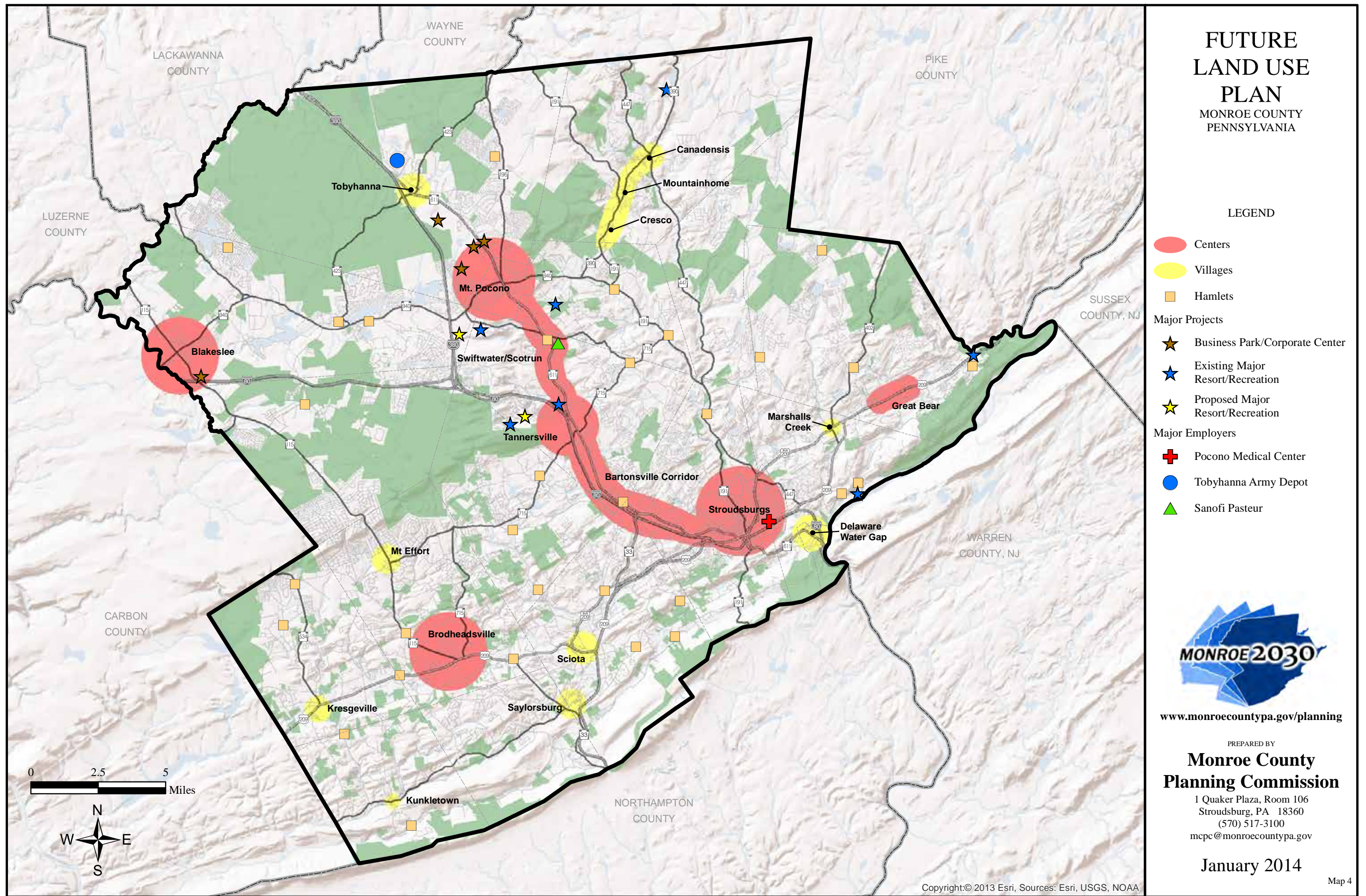
Since adoption of the original Monroe 2020 plan, the emphasis has been on implementation of recommendations and this emphasis should continue. The two main programs for accomplishing this are the Municipal Partnership Program (MPP) and the Financial Assistance Program (FAP), now in its second iteration. Through these programs, the county has provided technical and financial assistance to the municipalities in order to update ordinances, incorporate conservation subdivision provisions, develop multi-municipal plans, and a number of other activities. These programs have been a key factor in promoting a good working relationship between the county and the municipalities, and they should be continued.

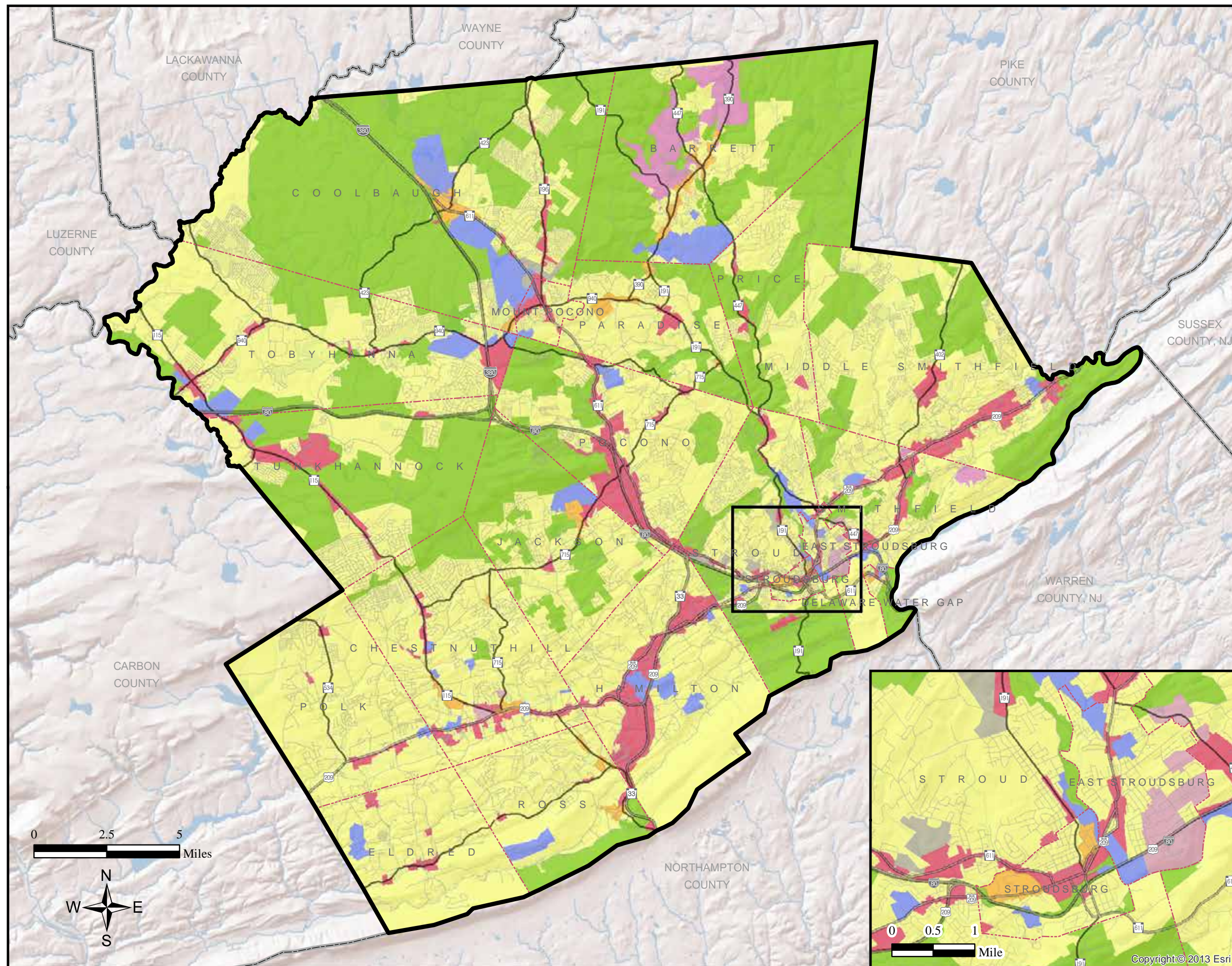
The programs noted have also facilitated the development of official maps in nine municipalities. Four have been adopted, and five are in development. The official map is a planning tool that is not widely used, but it allows municipalities to better plan for transportation, open space and other activities, and also gives landowners information about future projects that may affect them.

A continued emphasis on implementation is appropriate when the updated plan is adopted and is the primary reason for past successes. Implementation measures and recommendations are contained in Section IV of the plan.



PHOTO: MARLANA HOLSTEN





GENERALIZED ZONING

MONROE COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

LEGEND

Generalized Zoning Districts

-  Business Park
-  Commercial
-  Conservation/Recreation
-  Industrial
-  Institutional
-  Mixed Use/Village
-  Residential
-  Resort



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Map 5



New Townhouses in Keswick Pointe



Housing

Introduction

As part of the comprehensive plan update, a Housing Policy was developed which contains four major objectives which address housing supply, cost, quality, and special needs housing. Specific actions to achieve the objectives are also contained in the policy which is located in Section III of the Comprehensive Plan. Additional housing topics are discussed further as follows.

New Construction

The current housing situation in Monroe County is vastly different than it was at the time of the original Monroe 2020 plan. At that time, residential construction was nearly 1,500 units per year, and virtually all

of the units were large, single family homes in conventional subdivisions consisting of lots of 1 to 2 acres. As the economy slowed, the rate of construction began to decline and by 2012 was only about 9% of what it had been at its peak. The reduction in the number of units being constructed was accompanied by decreasing prices for existing homes for sale and a large number of foreclosures (over 1,800 in 2012).

Although housing construction has seen a slight increase in some areas of the country, the trend in Monroe has continued downward, and it appears reasonable to assume that new housing construction will remain at a reduced level for at least the next several years. Obviously, economic conditions are a major factor, and while there is some modest improvement, the potential increase in new housing starts is likely minimal.

Existing Housing Stock

The 2010 Census indicated that there are over 80,000 housing units in the county, and of the 61,000+ occupied units, almost 79% are owner occupied. The census tallied over 19,000 vacant units, of which 13,600 were considered as seasonal, recreational or

for occasional use. The large number of seasonal vacant units has been a distinguishing feature of the county's housing stock for many years and reflects the county's position as a vacation and tourist area. A majority of the existing housing stock has been built since 1970, reflecting the rapid population growth that began in the early 1970s.

**Rehabilitation/
Weatherization**

Despite a majority of the housing stock having been constructed since 1970, there is a continuing need for rehabilitation programs in the older developed areas. In addition, the conversion of former vacation homes into year round dwellings has created a significant need for rehabilitation and weatherization services. Vacation homes that were built with cheaper materials and without proper insulation create problems when they are used year round, resulting in much higher energy costs. The Redevelopment Authority has had successful rehabilitation and weatherization programs for many years, using a combination of CDBG and other funds, and these programs need to be continued.

**Existing Housing Market and
Projected Future Market**

Information provided by the Pocono Mountains Association of Realtors indicates that 2013 was largely a year of recovery across the nation. In Monroe County, new listings new listings increased, and pending sales were up almost 24%. Inventory levels decreased to 2,416 units, about a 12 month supply at current sale rates. The median sales price decreased to \$110,000, a considerable reduction from past years. Housing indices are showing market turnaround, although data varies for different areas of the country. Simply stated, some areas are recovering faster than others. In Monroe, distressed sales have put downward pressure on sales

prices in the past several years, and this may continue as 2013 saw an increase in the number of foreclosures.

Future housing market conditions will be influenced significantly by the number of foreclosed units. As long as a large inventory of foreclosed homes exists, the perception, if not reality, will be that buyers can get more house for less than the cost of building new and this will continue to dampen new housing starts. In-migration has plummeted, based on census estimates of recent population growth, and this means a reduced pool of buyers that once made up most of the market. Decreasing household size, delaying marriage and other trends will likely create demand for smaller units (both sales and rentals) in areas with bike/ pedestrian access to amenities, stores, and employment. This will be a major shift for the Monroe County market which has been characterized almost exclusively by large homes on large lots. An increasing senior population will also be a market for smaller units with accessibility and reduced maintenance requirements.

Homelessness

A pressing issue in Monroe County is the number of homeless individuals and families who are living in places not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily reside, fleeing situations related to violence, losing their primary nighttime residence, or are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. Recently, a number of area agencies, churches, and individuals met to address the growing problems of homelessness in the county. Together, the Homelessness Task Force of Monroe County was formed to address these issues. In order to serve the needs of these disenfranchised individuals, it is recommended that a prevention program be instituted that reorients the service system from managing to preventing homelessness, to

making homelessness temporary by developing a system that responds rapidly to homeless situations, to make homelessness non-recurring by providing housing (emergency shelter, permanent supportive, transitional and low and moderate-income and support services. Although various sources of assistance are available, there needs to be a coordinated approach to this problem. To combat this issue, it is recommended that the Homelessness Task Force be supported in its efforts to promote the goals of such an initiative. It is also recommended that low-and moderate income housing options be made available, as well provisions for additional units of permanent supportive housing in appropriate areas.

It is therefore recommended that a Homeless Plan be prepared to provide an overall framework within which the issue can be successfully addressed.

**Implementation of the
Housing Policy**

As stated above, the Housing Policy in Section III lists specific actions to achieve stated objectives. A number of agencies including the Housing Authority, Redevelopment Authority, Planning Commission, Pocono Alliance, and others are all involved with implementing the policy. These agencies need to cooperatively work together to improve housing conditions for all residents.

Accessory units can also play an important role in fulfilling some of the Housing Policy objectives. Zoning revisions to permit these types of units may be required, and the County Planning Commission has examples of how these units can be an effective way to provide affordable units, particularly in the centers and villages.



Transportation

Introduction

Just as it did during the original Monroe 2020 process, the county still has many elements of an excellent transportation network. However, the challenge of developing a multi-modal transportation system plan still remains. Several things have occurred since the original process and these items present both challenges and opportunities. Efforts to hire a Transportation Planner, and subsequently, an Infrastructure Planner were not successful. As mentioned in previous sections, the County is now a member of a Metropolitan Planning Organization and is working with a consultant to prepare a regional long range transportation plan. Important components of the transportation system are further discussed below.

Opening of the repaired 7th Street Bridge in Stroudsburg



MPO Designation and Regional Long Range Transportation Plan Summary

The original five county RPO administered by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA), solicited proposal for the preparation of a Regional Long Range Transportation Plan and selected McCormick Taylor to complete the plan. However, when the East Stroudsburg Urbanized Area was designated by the 2010 Census, the process was put on hold while the five counties determined whether to be part of the MPO as required by Federal legislation for urbanized areas.

Monroe County officials examined the various options and concluded it would be advantageous to be part of an MPO with the other counties. At first it appeared that the three counties of Monroe, Carbon, and Schuylkill would be an MPO, with Pike and Wayne counties continuing as an RPO or as individual rural counties, however, Wayne County decided it would not move forward with the other four counties and that the MPO would consist of Monroe, Carbon, Schuylkill and Pike. The Governor approved the creation of the 4 County MPO at the end of March 2013. The MPO Planning Committee will be moving forward with the preparation of the Long Range Transportation Plan which has been an objective for years and should be expeditiously completed

2013 Transportation Funding Law

The state's recently signed Transportation Funding Law is estimated to provide an additional \$2.3 billion per year by FY2017-18 for highway, bridge, public transit, and modal infrastructure systems. This additional funding is to be provided by a 5 year phase-out of the Oil Company Franchise Tax cap, increased vehicle registration and driver licensing fees, and changes to traffic violation fines. Other portions of this law provide for a substantial increase for the Dirt & Gravel Roads program

and establish a dedicated fund for multimodal transportation projects, along with numerous other changes to transportation funding policy provisions.

12 Year Program – Current Projects

The county participated in the PENNDOT 12 Year Program process for many years. Every two years PENNDOT solicits projects and input as an update to the 12 Year Program. The list of projects is referred to as the region's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and is part of the Commonwealth's State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Due to funding limitations, not all candidate projects can be funded, and indeed some have been on the county's list of priorities for many years. The next update of the TIP is currently underway and the newly formed MPO will continue through this process. The current project list for the county is included in this section as Appendix A. The two year updates are developed with input from the municipalities, MCTA, and others as to what their priority projects should be. Also included in Appendix A is the current approved TIP which shows the highway, bridge, and public transit projects in Monroe that are programmed.

The 12 Year Program list has served as an ad hoc plan for the county, but it needs to be better integrated with other activities and most importantly, additional funding sources must be found at the local, state, and federal level. A recent funding source is the revenue from the Act 13 Impact Fee. The County received almost \$240,000 in 2012-2013 and approximately \$239,000 to be used for replacement or repair of locally owned, at-risk deteriorated bridges. While this is a welcome funding source, significant other sources must also be secured.



Pedestrian Walkway at the Monroe County Corporate Center

Linkages – Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

As stated in the Roadscape section of the policies in Section III of this comprehensive plan, creating linkages for pedestrian and bicycle access is greatly encouraged. Several municipalities already require the installation of sidewalks for new development along certain roadways, and this example of creating such linkages should continue to be encouraged. Improving connectivity provides a host of benefits to local communities such as decreased traffic on arterial streets, increased safety, and greater recreational and fitness opportunities for residents and visitors. Ensuring non-vehicular accessibility and route connection is a valuable goal that should be embraced.

Together, existing trail networks and bike paths are valued community assets. Linking these areas and trails so that they might be accessed through non-vehicular means would enhance these facilities and would provide an increase of their use. Opportunities to place sidewalks or multi-use paths within existing waterway buffers and utility easements should be capitalized upon whenever possible for the specific purpose of connecting public spaces while taking necessary precautions for safety.

Municipalities are encouraged to amend their Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances (SALDO) to recognize the need for bicycle accommodations such as bicycle parking areas near building entrances and transit stops. Combined with other recommendations such as side and rear parking encouragement, such techniques would facilitate pedestrian friendly atmospheres where visual emphasis is not placed on parking lots but rather building storefronts and pedestrian and bicycle linkages. This should be particularly emphasized in villages and centers and in redevelopment of existing commercial corridors.

Aside from requiring such linkages through municipal ordinance, securing funding for projects of destination for these linkages is also recommended, as well as disseminating information regarding these recreational opportunities to the public. Official Maps can be a valuable tool in designating linkages and will be further discussed in Section IV. It is also recommended that pedestrian safety be strongly promoted, with examples being the use of traffic calming features such as bump-outs, colored crosswalks, and accessible pedestrian signals such as those on Main Street in Stroudsburg.



“Martha,” one of MCTA’s Trolley Buses

Transit

The Monroe County Transit Authority (MCTA) has made significant improvements to its facilities and services over the past six years:

- Branded themselves as the Pocono Pony, expanded services and increased ridership
- Added the Featherman Wing to the main building
- Separated Fixed Route and Shared Ride departments to operate more efficiently
- Grew their fleet from 37 revenue vehicles to 48
- Acquired a thirty acre adjacent parcel and began work on Land Development Planning
- Added farebox technology to the Shared Ride and Fixed Route operations to support operator and accounting department performances
- Continued participating on multiple boards throughout the region, promoting the many benefits of public transportation for riders and non-riders alike

From 2007-2013, fixed route ridership increased 36% to over 240,000 riders and shared ride has increased 19% to almost 70,000 riders. These increases demonstrate the need for transit services and also reflect the service improvements made by the MCTA.

MCTA has updated their Strategic Plan for the next 5-6 years and this document is currently in final draft form. Some of the items expected to be in the plan are a 250 car Park and Ride, a Bus Transfer Center, Ride Share/ Vanpool programs, and potentially converting the fleet to natural gas. The MCTA is to be commended for their efforts in enhancing mobility in the county, and the updated strategic plan should be incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan update as soon as it is available.

Rail Freight and Rail Passenger Service

The Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority (PNRRA) oversees the provision of rail freight service in the county and has been successful in increasing the number of cars per year that service industries in the county. Interchanges with CP Rail and Norfolk Southern provide excellent connections to other parts of the country, and expansion of rail freight service should be encouraged. The availability of service is included in marketing efforts by the PMEDC and this should continue.

The restoration of passenger rail service between Scranton and Hoboken, NJ is an on-going project that has received much attention over the last 20 years. Currently, a seven mile section of the former Lackawanna Cut-off is being restored between Port Morris and Andover, NJ as the first phase of the restoration. Funding for the second phase (Andover to Delaware Water Gap) has not been secured, nor has funding for the third phase (Delaware Water Gap to Scranton). These additional phases will require major capital investment, and given the current

funding constraints, these phases may be delayed for some time. While few would argue against the provision of alternative modes of transportation, the reality of the difficulty of securing funding for these phases cannot be overlooked. It is recommended that the PNRRA continue to participate in the restoration process and advise the county of progress and opportunities.

Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport

The Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport (PMMA) has undergone recent improvements and changes which include the following;

Completion of improvements to runway 13-31, a 5,000 foot runway and a second hangar is now complete and this is a public/private partnership project in which the Authority has leased the land to a private developer who is constructing the hangar. Moyer Aviation has returned to the airport and this company provides charter service, flight instruction, and maintenance.

As a result of the runway expansion, larger equipment for snow removal has also been acquired.

There has been a notable increase in charter traffic due to the runway extension. The NASCAR races at Pocono International Raceway have generated part of this increase and the return of Indy cars for a third major race this year should also generate increased charter traffic.

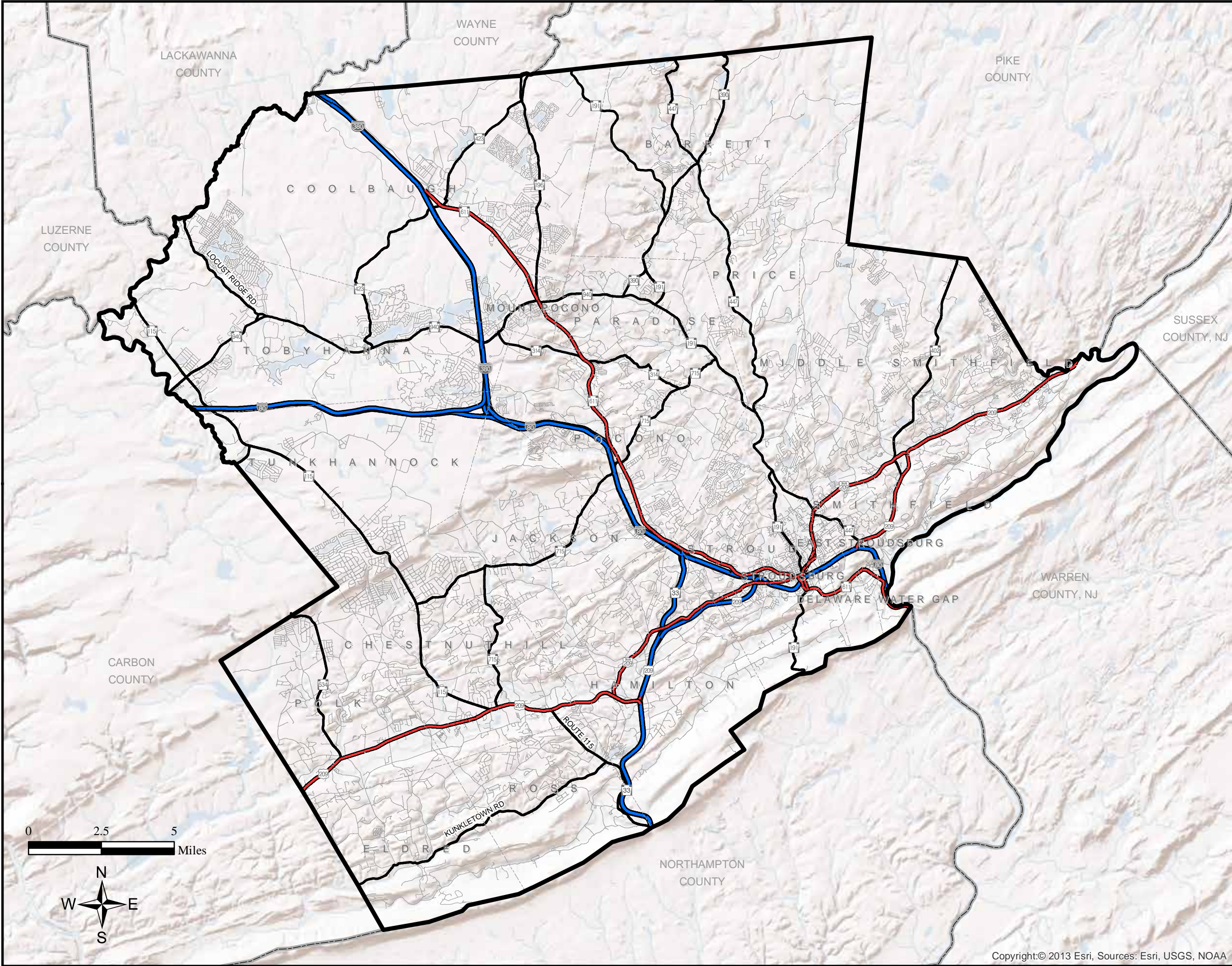
The PMMA has had a long range plan for improvement for many years and has made significant progress in achieving stated goals. It is recommended that the Authority continue to improve facilities and expand services, and that they be actively involved in the preparation of the regional long range transportation plan.

The Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport near Mount Pocono [top]

A Delaware Lackawanna freight train heading north out of East Stroudsburg [bottom]



PHOTO: DEAN CURTIS



**TRANSPORTATION
CORRIDORS**
MONROE COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

LEGEND

- Highways
- Major Arterials
- Arterials
- Other Roads



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Map 6

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PHOTO: MATT SIPTROTH



Community Facilities

Education

The opportunities for furthering an education past high school have greatly increased in the past several years. Existing facilities have and continue to expand, while other universities in the Commonwealth have chosen to locate branches in the county.

East Stroudsburg University, located on approximately 237 acres in East Stroudsburg and Smithfield Township employs approximately 326 faculty and educates approximately 7,000 students every academic calendar year.

Tannersville is home to a satellite campus of the Northampton Community College based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Currently, an additional larger campus has recently been constructed adjacent to Route 715 in Pocono Township. This new campus will create over 40 new positions and significantly add to Associate degree programs offered in various fields.

Wilkes University has opened a Poconos satellite branch in Bartonsville. The branch offers programs and degrees to working adults including an accelerated Bachelor of Business Administration, a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Science in Engineering Management.

Temple University has been invited to offer the Masters of Social Work (MSW) program in Monroe County to meet the professional development needs of residents. The cohort design program allows the MSW program to be offered at off-campus locations through a variety of instructional methods.

While primary and secondary education within the county is excellent, the four public school districts have begun to experience a decline in enrollment numbers. Since 2009, East Stroudsburg has experienced a 3% decline, Pocono Mountain 7%, Stroudsburg 6% and Pleasant Valley a 5% decline. All four school districts are in discussions concerning closing school buildings. The challenge in the future will be the ultimate re-use of closed buildings. Potential uses could include:

- Assisted Living or Senior Housing
- Apartments or Condominiums
- Senior Centers
- Community Centers
- Conference Centers or Meeting Rooms
- Office Space for Governmental Departments
- Day Care Centers – including Senior Day Care Centers
- Dance Schools/ Recreation Centers

The school districts will continue to be extremely important as sponsors of community and cultural space. It is recommended that the school districts create opportunities for school age children to become part of the community by creating opportunities for participation in community based improvements such as development of trails on open space properties, and improving historical structures within the community.

It is recommended that the county, the school districts, and the institutions of higher learning continue to cooperate to advance programs such as the Regional Bioscience Initiative, workforce development, and other programs outlined in the Economic Development Implementation Plan.

Medical Services

The County is home to the Pocono Medical Center, which is a mid-sized, not for profit community hospital. As the county's sole hospital the services provided include direct patient care, as well as community wellness initiatives. Through the Pocono Health Foundation, scholarships for pursuing careers in health related fields are available to residents of the county. Pocono Medical Center has also begun a partnership with the Commonwealth Medical College to become the fourth regional campus. This will enable medical students to receive part of their medical education in our community.

A country wide trend in healthcare has begun to develop in Monroe County where residents are able to access health care at Walk-in Clinics or urgent care centers for issues such as sprains and strains, common cold and flu, and simple wounds and minor bone fractures. Geisinger Health Systems and Pocono Medical Center, as well as many private corporations, have developed sites throughout the county for this type of care. St. Luke's has also proposed a hospital in Bartonsville along Route 611, which is currently in the planning stage.

In 2011, the Pocono Medical Center completed a county health assessment that produced the following findings concerning the health and wellness of Monroe County residents and how it is being affected detrimentally by a systemic lack of:

- Overall primary care.
- Projects and programs that strengthen maternal health care.
- Initiatives improving access to behavioral health programs.
- Programs promoting healthy attitudes and practices (especially targeting smoking, drinking and nutrition)
- Programs ensuring access to basic dental care.



Pocono Medical Center in East Stroudsburg

The study also concluded that the health and wellness of Monroe County residents would improve significantly through initiatives that:

- Provide residents with information and knowledge required to attain the highest level of health and wellness.
- Encourage the creation and support the maintenance of information and referral systems for consumers.
- Promote policy changes and strengthen programs that will improve access to information and primary, secondary and tertiary prevention programs.
- Assist safety-net providers who offer services to high-risk, underserved people and to the disadvantaged in the community.

■ Promote programs that encourage prevention among high-risk, underserved and/or disadvantaged communities.

Libraries

There is a long history of support by residents for the many libraries that are located throughout the county. Some of the first efforts for a community library occurred in Barrett Township in 1909 when the Barrett Friendly Library was formed. By 1916, the Stroudsburg Library was formed and located in a Reformed Church on Eighth Street in Stroudsburg. In 1937, the Stroudsburg Library became the official County Library when the county commissioners and the library board signed a cooperative statement to establish it as such.

The County now has five main libraries, the Barrett and Paradise Friendly Library, the Clymer Library which services Tobyhanna and Tunkhannock Townships. The Pocono Mountain Public library that serves the Coolbaugh area, the Western Pocono Community Library that provides services to the Pleasant Valley School District and the Eastern Monroe Public Library (formerly the Monroe County Library) which consists of the main library in Stroudsburg and two branch libraries, the Pocono Township Library on Route 611 in Tannersville and the Smithfields Library in Marshalls Creek.

The goals of each of the libraries include providing ready access to cultural, informational and recreational resources through traditional and new technologies. Another component of all the libraries is the promotion of the library as a community focal point. Each provides community rooms for public meetings, as well as annual events such as art shows and holiday events.

Currently there is a 0.75 to 2.00 mil tax that provides financial support to the county wide library system, and it is recommended that this support continue.

Hazard Mitigation

The Monroe County 2011 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update has been prepared to meet requirements set forth by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) in order for the County to be eligible for funding and technical assistance from state and federal hazard mitigation programs. The Monroe County Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee was formed in 2004 to complete the original plan which was adopted in 2005. Updates to the plan take place at a minimum of every five years. Therefore, in 2010, a committee was re-established to update the existing Hazard Mitigation

The Barrett and Paradise Friendly Library [top]

The Pocono Mountain Public Library in Coolbaugh Township [bottom]



Plan. This plan is the result of work by citizens of the County to develop a pre-disaster, multi-hazard mitigation plan that will not only guide the County toward greater disaster resistance, but will also respect the needs of the community. It is recommended that the MCPC staff continue to work with the Monroe County Emergency Management Agency to ensure that all twenty municipalities adopt, implement, and continue to update this important planning tool.

Readdressing

This project has involved the development of digital orthophotography for the County, and the creation of several “layers” of information derived from the orthophotos, including building locations, road centerlines, driveway locations, hydrography, dams, bridges, airports and railways. The municipalities have also taken inventory of all existing roads within their borders. This data has been analyzed by the consultant, L. Robert Kimball & Associates of Ebensburg, PA and “field plots” have been developed for each of the municipalities. Representatives from the municipalities have attended training sessions and have assembled groups of volunteers

or hired outside firms to collect information in the field and edit these “field plots” where necessary. The municipalities have returned these field plots to the consultant and addresses have been determined. The municipalities are responsible for naming all roads labeled as “unnamed” and resolving any duplicate road name conflicts that have been identified by the consultant. This data was sent to the United States Postal Service for approval. As of Spring 2012, all 20 Monroe County municipalities and Lehman Township in Pike County had received their “new” addresses. MCPC will be responsible for maintaining the Master Street Address Guide (MSAG) for the E-911 System and will determine addresses for structures when notified by the municipalities. Residents will have a grace period of 1 year to begin using their new address. It should be noted that residents who use Post Office boxes may continue to do so; however, they will also receive a physical address for their home or business for E 9-1-1 purposes. Funding for this project has been secured through Act 56 and Act 78 as well as Monroe County’s participation in the PAMAP program. Each municipality has developed specifications and a purchasing procedure for E 9-1-1 house number signs. To date, the readdressing staff, comprised of 9 individuals, has fielded over 15,000 telephone calls from residents who either did not receive their notification letter, or had questions about the program. The United States Postal Service – Address Management Division has contributed toward the effectiveness of the implementation process. Both staffs have spent many man hours on the telephone coordinating changes and updates. Readdressing staff have been in continuous contact with the municipalities to assist with the address roll-out throughout the County.

Maintenance on the system will continue moving forward as there are still municipalities changing road names and placing street signs and street address number signage. New construction will also require address assignment.



The success of this program can be gauged by asking the emergency responders if the new signage is helping them navigate to incidents. Positive feedback is evident in those municipalities who have been aggressive in implementing the addressing program. It is recommended that the county’s role in this project continue, as this will ensure a consistent numbering and road naming system that will help to ensure the most accurate and timely emergency response when needed.

Fire and Ambulance Services

The county is served by nineteen volunteer fire companies, and they utilize Tobyhanna Army Depot Fire Company for back-up in certain situations, especially for HAZMAT events. There are five ambulance companies, all with paid staff, although they are non-profit except for Suburban Ambulance which is for profit. Three volunteer search and rescue groups provide service in the county, but they cover northeastern Pennsylvania, not just Monroe County.

Funding is a major issue for both fire and ambulance companies, and as the call volume increases, this becomes more of an issue. Maintaining vehicles and equipment requires significant financial resources and underscores the need for continual fund raising via memberships, donations, and special events. Municipal support for fire and ambulance services becomes more important as calls increase. Cooperation with the State, County, and adjacent municipalities and evaluating the potential provision of services on a regional basis are recommended going forward.

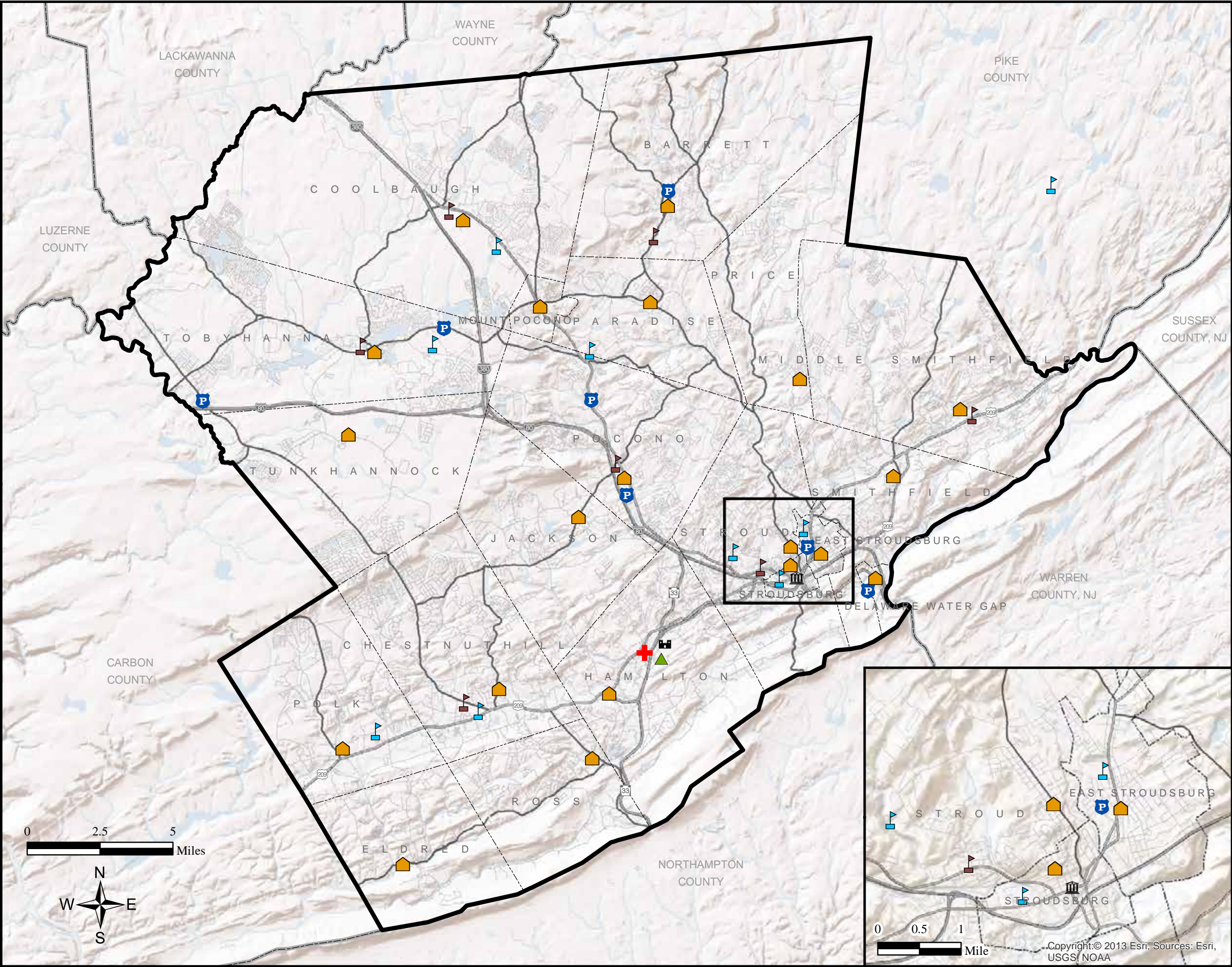


A street sign renamed as per the county readdressing program [top]

Bushkill Ambulance Service [bottom]

Flood event conditions of the McMichaels Creek in Stroudsburg





COMMUNITY
RESOURCES
MONROE COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

LEGEND

- County Courthouse
- Public Safety Center
- Corrections Facility
- Pleasant Valley Manor
- Police
- Municipal Building
- School Campus Facilities
- Library



www.monroecountypa.gov/planning

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January 2014

Map 8



PHOTO: MATT SIPTROTH



Water Supply

Introduction

Monroe County's pattern of water supply remains largely as it was at the completion of the original Monroe 2020 plan. This pattern is characterized by less than one-half of the county's dwelling units being served by public water systems and the remainder supplied by individual wells. The Brodhead Creek Regional Authority (BCRA) has extended water service from Bartonville to Sanofi Pasteur in Swiftwater, however, there have not been other major expansions of service since the original plan, although various improvements have been made by several public suppliers such as pipe replacement, treatment facility upgrades and the like.

The overall water supply system being very similar to that which existed in 1999, the Monroe County Water Supply and Model Wellhead Protection Study completed in 1997 remains a relevant document, and its broad objectives and policies are still applicable. The Water Supply study is incorporated herein by reference, and the objectives and policies are indicated below.

Water Supply Objectives and Policies

A.) Objective: Maintain Adequate Long-term Supply of Water for Domestic, Commercial, and Industrial Uses.

Policies:

1. Encourage measures to reduce demands for water supply. Monroe County has a high number of vacation homes and recreation based communities. Efforts should be made to reduce water use by using a favorable rate structure.
2. Encourage a balance between aquifer withdrawals and aquifer recharge so that withdrawals do not exceed the long-term safe-yield of the aquifer.
3. Protect the county's natural and man-made surface waters to maintain and enhance all intended uses of the county's waters.

B.) Objective: Maximize the efficiency of water supply systems.

Policies:

4. Encourage the implementation of procedures correcting existing facility deficiencies and improving facility capacity.
5. Encourage the provision of water service that is consistent with growth management.
6. Encourage the delivery of potable water in sufficient quantities to meet peak emergency demands.
7. Encourage the use of water conserving devices such as water saving toilets and low flow valves.

C.) Objective: Protect and enhance the quality of surface water and groundwater resources in Monroe County.

Policies:

8. Promote the protection of surface water and groundwater from non-point source pollution. The largest surface water pollutant in the county is sediment caused by erosion. This can be best controlled by utilizing

existing and encouraging new watershed stormwater management plans. The largest groundwater pollutant in the county is from on-lot septic. Methods such as central sewer, or central water systems with proper aquifer protection should be encouraged.

9. Encourage the prevention of water quality degradation resulting from point sources of pollution.

10. Encourage the identification and remediation of groundwater or surface water contamination areas. If remediation is found not to be a cost-effective solution, systems should research opportunities for interconnections.

D.) Objective: Coordinate water resources planning with other infrastructure and basic services, natural resources, and recreational planning.

Policies:

11. Encourage the use of land development, stormwater, and wastewater techniques that maintain the natural functions of the hydrologic cycle.
12. Identify the character, location, magnitude and timing of development based on the quantity and quality of water that is available without adversely affecting water quality and without reducing the sustainable yield of the water source.
13. Integrate water resources planning with land use, sewage facilities, stormwater management, natural resources, and park and recreation planning.
14. Encourage the coordination of the efforts of agencies responsible for the planning and management of water resources quality and quantity.

Accompanying these objectives and policies are a wide array of recommended actions for the County Commissioners, Planning Commission, Municipalities and water suppliers. Of particular relevance to the Comprehensive Plan is the emphasis

on interconnection of existing systems and protection of the surface and sub-surface water supply. The model wellhead protection ordinance establishes land use and related standards for areas in which wells are located, including their proximity to sewage disposal facilities of various kinds and their relation to stormwater management measures.

Watershed Integrity

The concept of watershed integrity rests on two basic issues:

- Watershed functions and values should be maintained, and existing uses should be protected.
- Water should be returned to the ground where it is withdrawn.

While this may seem over-simplified, the concept is very basic to current thinking on a watershed level and should be encouraged. It is recommended that the county, its agencies, watershed associations, and the municipalities place an emphasis on watershed integrity when projects are planned and reviewed.

PMPC Requirement

As required by the PA Municipalities Planning Code, the water supply plan recognizes that:

- Lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities.
- Commercial agriculture production impacts water sources.



Offices of the Monroe County Waste Authority



Solid Waste, Stormwater, Wastewater Management, and Utilities

Solid Waste Plan Update

Since 1998, changes have been made to policies and regulations that govern the development and approval of county municipal waste management plans. Some of these changes were the result of changes in the waste industry and some were based on the results of litigation involving county plans.

All county plans must be revised and submitted to the DEP at least three years before the remaining available permitted capacity is exhausted, at least three years before the expiration of the term of the county’s approved plan, or when otherwise required by DEP.

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee, appointed by the County Commissioners assisted the Authority staff and the consultant in the development of the waste management plan that will be in effect for the next ten years.

The primary purposes of a municipal waste management plan are to:

1. Ensure that each county has sufficient processing and disposal capacity for its municipal waste for 10 years.
2. Ensure a full, fair and open discussion of alternative methods of municipal waste processing or disposal.
3. Ensure maximum feasible waste reduction and recycling of municipal waste or source separated recyclable material
4. Shift the primary responsibility for developing and implementing municipal waste management plans from municipalities to counties.
5. Conserve resources and protect the public health, safety and welfare from the short and long term dangers of transportation, processing, treatment, storage and disposal of municipal waste.

Since Act 101 was enacted in 1988, there have been several pieces of legislation enacted that impact Act 101, primarily Act 140 of 2006 that requires mandated curbside municipalities and other municipalities receiving more than \$10,000 in \$904 recycling performance grant funding to have in place specified recycling, compliance, and reporting programs.

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee developed recommendations for the County Municipal Waste Management Plan. These recommendations include a listing of waste management programs and systems to be used by the county in an order that is most environmentally acceptable. This list includes waste reduction, recycling and composting, and beneficial reuse operations. Increasing the County

wide recycling system, expanding the opportunities for composting of yard waste, and enforcing the policing of illegal dumping and improper handling of municipal waste through litter prevention programs are important parts of the plan that will benefit the county for the next ten years. It is recommended that the Solid Waste Plan be incorporated by reference.

Stormwater

The Brodhead and McMichaels Creek Watershed stormwater management plan was amended and adopted by the County Commissioners on December 6, 2006. This plan represented a change in procedure as the Brodhead and McMichaels watersheds previously had individual stormwater management plans. The decision to combine was based on the fact that the McMichaels Creek is a tributary to the Brodhead Creek and that each area had similar stormwater issues.

The Brodhead and McMichaels Creek Watersheds are contained within seventeen municipalities. The Brodhead Creek drains a watershed area of approximately one hundred seventy-two square miles in the northern and east central areas of the county. The McMichaels Creek drains a watershed area of approximately one hundred thirteen square miles in the south central area of Monroe County.

Although the land use of the watershed has become more urbanized since the original Plan adoptions, the stormwater management ordinance provisions to reduce post-development peak rates to pre-development peak rates of runoff recommended in the original palm have been implemented.

The updated Plan is a comprehensive watershed management plan that includes provisions for helping to reduce the inadequate management of accelerated stormwater runoff resulting from development throughout the watersheds. This will be accomplished through a five-phased approach which

includes:

1. Maintain groundwater recharge. Recharging rainfall into the ground replenishes the groundwater that provides base flow to streams and maintains groundwater for drinking water purposes.
2. Implement non-point source pollution removal methodologies. Pollutants accumulate on impervious surfaces between rainfall events. It has been found that the majority of rainfall events are one inch of rain or less. Capturing smaller storms will allow the stormwater to be detained and allow pollutants to settle, allowing for a cleaner outflow. One method of creating this is by providing for vegetative buffers along streams and wetlands.
3. Reduce channel erosion. Detaining the smaller, more frequent events where feasible will help to minimize the number of streams causing stream bank erosion.
4. Manage overbank flood events. Flooding and stormwater problems are caused by excess stormwater quantity and an overbank event typically occurs from the 2- 10 year rainfall. The management of these events utilizes the management

Demonstration of stormwater infiltration on permeable pavement





Expansion construction of the Stroudsburg Waste Water Treatment Plant

district, which groups subareas of the watershed into mapped districts which have specific criteria which are to be met in order to address these overbank events.

- 5. Manage extreme flood events. Extreme events occur from 25-50- and 100 year rain fall events. While some overbank events are inevitable, the goal is to control the frequency of damages to existing infrastructure.

Another integral part of the updated plan is the model ordinance that is to be adopted by each municipality within the watershed area. This ordinance, which is currently adopted by seventeen municipalities, addresses maintenance of the natural hydrologic regime, and promotes groundwater recharge and protects groundwater and surface water quality and quantity.

The current Tobyhanna/Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Management Plan was adopted in March of 2004. The Tobyhanna Creek watershed previously had an adopted plan in 1997, while the Tunkhannock Creek watershed did not have an existing plan. It was studied in 2003 for plant and aquatic communities and rare species assessment by the Nature Conservancy.

The Tobyhanna Creek/Tunkhannock Creek Watershed is a 129 square mile watershed located in the Pocono Plateau region of Monroe County. It includes more than 14,000 acres of wetlands, 480 miles of streams and more than 2,200 acres of lakes and ponds.

The Stormwater Management Plan has three management goals:

1. *Control and manage development within the watershed:* A successful watershed-based growth management program can manage growth in key areas.
2. *Control and management of invasive species in the watershed:* Increasing land development will also increase habitat fragmentation and linear corridors that will favor the introduction and spread of invasive species.
3. *Reducing and eliminating current sources of non-point source pollution in the watershed:* Sediment from existing development within the watershed is creating non-point source pollution that is negatively impacting downstream water bodies within the watershed.

The model ordinance for the Tobyhanna/Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Plan contains provisions for utilizing and preserving the existing natural drainage systems, managing stormwater impacts close to the runoff source and providing for proper operations and maintenance of all permanent stormwater management BMP's. Another important aspect of the model ordinance is meeting water quality standards to support those uses in all streams and to protect and maintain water quality in special protection streams.

It is recommended that stormwater management plans be prepared for the remaining watersheds in the county, and that existing plans be updated as required.

Wastewater Management

As noted in the original Monroe 2020 plan, no county-wide wastewater analysis and recommendations have been recently prepared. Individual municipalities have plans for addressing sewage disposal and treatment needs as required by Act 537, but these plans require continuous updating to include new projects that are proposed for development. Recently, the MCPC and Conservation District staff has been meeting to develop a more proactive approach to wastewater management by coordinating the Act 537 Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. This discussion has led to the idea of developing regional Act 537 plans if the multi-municipal planning areas agree to explore this option. Details of how this might be accomplished are still being worked on, but such a process could lead to positive results and provide predictability for the municipalities and developers.

It is recommended that the county continue to explore the regional Act 537 approach and that the following activities related to wastewater management also be undertaken:

- An analysis of unused flow for the Pocono/Hamilton Sewer line.
- An analysis of the other sewer systems within the county (capacity and operational quality).
- Develop a map for the implementation portion of the plan which will illustrate possible regional utilization of soil based disposal methods.
- Assess the challenges of siting on lot sewage systems in High Quality and Exceptional Value (HQ and EV) watersheds for new residential development.
- Assist in providing training for Municipal Officials on the new DEP regulations via workshops and the like.
- Promote sewage management programs for existing on lot systems.
- Evaluation and education concerning alternative wastewater systems suitable for Monroe County
- Explore a mechanism for reserving suitable areas for land application of wastewater through potential open space acquisition

Natural Gas

The emergence of natural gas drilling has become a major issue throughout Pennsylvania and will have several impacts to the county. Namely, the controversy over drilling for shale gas, the availability of a cheaper and cleaner burning fuel source, and the economic benefit from Act 13 impact fees levied on extraction are examples of the impacts gas drilling will have on the commonwealth and Monroe County. While the county is not at the forefront of the recent fracking debate as these large gas deposits are located further north, the possibility for extraction activities to reach Monroe County should not be ignored. Model ordinances that are consistent with Act 13 and the protection of natural resources should be developed and made available to local municipalities. Allocation of impact fees to improvements consistent with Act 13 should be monitored and utilized to the greatest benefit to the County. Also, there has been considerable debate and controversy about the potential for gas drilling and fracking to adversely impact water resources, and it is recommended that the annual water study include additional sites in the northern portion of the county to establish baseline data for streams in that area.

Three major gas lines serve Monroe County, and there is currently expansion of this infrastructure to transport natural gas to new clients within the county. It is recommended that this continue along major corridors to create greater incentive for investment and increased services offered. It should be noted that the Monroe County Transit Authority is currently in the process of considering the feasibility of a line extension and equipping buses to run on natural gas. It is recommended that this option continue to be pursued.

The energy cost savings associated with expanded Natural Gas availability is likely to not only spur commercial and industrial growth and development, but also provide much needed savings to homeowners as well.

Susquehanna-Roseland Power Line Project

This project involves the replacement of an existing power line between the Berwick area in Pennsylvania and the Roseland area in New Jersey. The line will mostly follow the existing right-of-way, but the right-of-way will be widened in some areas and the transmission towers for the new 500kV line will be taller than those on the existing 230kV line. The line crosses the easternmost portion of Middle Smithfield Township for a distance of about 1.25 miles, but also crosses portions of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River and the Appalachian Trail.

To mitigate the unavoidable impacts on federal lands, the utilities involved, PP&L Electric Utilities and PSE&G will contribute to a fund administered by a non-profit group. This fund will be used to purchase or preserve land for public use, compensate for wetland impacts and fund cultural and historic preservation activities. Areas and agencies that would benefit directly from these activities include:

- Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
- Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River
- New Jersey and Pennsylvania state land conservation agencies
- Other natural, conservation and recreational agencies and interests

It should also be noted that acquisition through this mitigation funding has already occurred and some sites have been located in Monroe County. Currently, 550 acres of land in Shawnee are in the process of being added to National Park Service lands as part of the mitigation plan.



Solar panels at Pocono Raceway



Energy Conservation

Introduction

As part of the comprehensive plan update, an Energy Policy was developed that contains a number of objectives to address existing needs and potential development, as outlined within Section III. A major component of the Energy Policy is energy conservation.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is a rapidly growing means to conserve finite, non-renewable fuel and energy sources. The two most common types of such energy sources are solar and wind systems. Unfortunately, due to a reduction of economic incentive at the state and federal level, solar energy production is not currently viable as a large scale commercial operation, as evidenced in several such projects being on hold in the county. Similar large scale wind farm operations are also not viable as the conditions for production of wind energy are marginal throughout the county, with only a few small exceptions along the Kittatinny Ridge and the top of Big Pocono State Park. Accessory solar and wind systems are able to offset energy costs for smaller residential and commercial activities, however, and their use is generally encouraged with proper consideration in municipal zoning ordinances in order to offset any possible impacts. Together with energy conservation practices, energy costs may be lowered further, and in a manner that is friendly to the environment as well as financially

beneficial to home and business owners. It is recommended that education of residents and developers of these systems be promoted in order to raise awareness, and that available model ordinances to properly mitigate impacts be promoted.

Mass Transit

Mass transit is another contributor to energy conservation, as it transports large numbers of people at once, reducing the overall amount of fuel used. The Monroe County Transit Authority (MCTA) is the county’s main mode of mass transit, and has seen a continuous increase in ridership, even as the county’s population has leveled off. The MCTA is in the planning stage for improvements to an adjacent property that has been recently acquired in order to improve and expand services. These improvements include the construction of an inter-modal transit facility and converting buses to run on cleaner and cheaper natural gas. It is recommended that this process continue and the MCPC should provide assistance in moving the project forward.

Conservation in New Construction

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a building rating system that is the standard for high-efficiency building systems. LEED certification is ranked in five levels through the assessment of energy conservation, water savings, sustainability, and similar categories. Through energy conservation, LEED certified buildings offer savings to the owner while also improving the quality of the building space for its occupants. It is recommended that LEED certification be promoted in all new construction and that developers embracing this program be recognized and commended.



Community bike and pedestrian crossing in Lake Naomi

Retrofitting and Weatherization

A majority of homes and business in Monroe County would benefit from energy conservation techniques such as improved insulation, geothermal systems, and other evolving energy technologies. Weatherizing and retrofitting a home or business would translate to reduced energy consumption and greater savings. Examples of retrofitting include high-efficiency appliances, replacement of HVAC equipment, insulation and sealing, switching from incandescent to compact fluorescent lighting, and unplugging electronics that are not in use. There is a natural incentive for home and business owners to utilize these practices, and spreading awareness and promoting them should be strongly encouraged.

Walkable Communities

As already noted throughout this comprehensive plan update, walkable communities are increasingly desired by a growing number of residents for numerous reasons. One other positive effect of such communities is the reduced reliance on vehicular modes of transport. With greater access for pedestrians and bicycles, energy conservation is improved while offering added health and recreation benefits. Conservation Design subdivisions, Traditional Neighborhood Development, and similar techniques are already in place in many municipalities, and together with trail and bike path connectivity and Transit Oriented Development, the result is communities less dependent on automobiles. It is recommended that efforts to support such development through education and amending municipal ordinances to allow such concepts should continue.



PHOTO: VINZON LEE

Agricultural Land Preservation

Monroe County, while geographically diverse, contains many acres of productive farmland. This farmland contains fertile soils, adequate water, and favorable climate. These favorable agricultural features have shaped the agrarian history that has dominated the culture of the West End section of the County. While the historical aspect of farming is of great value to the County's citizens, Monroe County farming remains a productive resource which contributes to the local economy, maintains groundwater recharge areas and provides open space valued by residents and tourists. But as the County's prime agricultural soils become increasingly scarce, the importance of protecting the future value of farmland as a food producing resource for generations of Monroe County citizens cannot be overemphasized.

Preserved farmland in Ross Township



The growth and development that the County has seen over the past 20 years has been beneficial to the economy, but much of it has occurred on prime agricultural soils which were once farmland. Beginning with the vacation home rush of the 1960's and 1970's and the influx of permanent residents, productive farmland has been reduced annually. This reduction of farmland corresponds directly to the increase in the amount of residential development that occurred in the County. While other natural factors such as attrition of the farm community and degradation of productive soils have been felt in Monroe County, the growth of residential communities represents the major threat to the agriculture industry.

Because residential areas have been developed in a manner that can be described as suburban sprawl, farming areas in Monroe County have become fragmented. Most farmland in the County is located on relatively flat land, which presents few impediments to construction. This situation has led to even faster growth in farmland areas because of the diverse geography in the County which limits development in areas of steep slopes. Because this is a high growth area and only a marginal amount of land can be considered prime for development, increased pressures fall on the farmland. In upcoming years, the Monroe County agricultural community will be faced with monumental impediments. Rising costs of farm operation, fluctuating market prices and demand, steadily increasing property taxes and a continued (although reduced) pressure from development are anticipated in the next decade. These factors reduce the competitive position of the Monroe County farmer in regional markets and further contribute to the decline of the agricultural community

The Monroe County Commissioners have acknowledged the great importance of preserving and maintaining the County's prime agricultural lands. In order to successfully implement this policy, the Commissioners established the Monroe County Agricultural Land Preservation Board in 1990. The board's primary

purposes it to administer a program for purchasing and receiving gifts of agricultural conservation easements on behalf of the County. The program protects and promotes continued productive agricultural use on viable agricultural lands by acquiring agricultural conservation easements which prevent the development or improvement of the land for any purpose other than agricultural production and allowed, related agricultural activities.

To date, the County Agricultural Land Preservation program has permanently preserved over 7,000 acres of active farmland. The program is currently funded by both the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the County's Open Space Program, however, funding at both the State and County levels is decreasing while there is still interest by landowners to permanently preserve their farms. The preservation of remaining farmland and the agricultural industry will require continued effort by the County, municipal governments and all residents. While in all likelihood growth and development will continue to threaten the farmland of Monroe County, it is in the best interest of the County's future to act immediately towards achieving preservation of the valued agricultural resources of the land. Failure to act will surely mean the devastating loss of a continual source of food, economic productivity, environmental and cultural qualities and the heritage of one of Monroe County's prime assets.

It is recommended that the county, its agencies and the municipalities continue to seek alternate funding sources in order to continue the agricultural land preservation program.



Preserved farmland in Polk Township [top]

5,000 acre preservation celebration [bottom]



The Brodhead Creek at Psold Farm Preserve [top]

Entrance to the Knauf Preserve in Paradise Township [opposite page top]

Long Pond in Tunkhannock Township [opposite page bottom]



Open Space and Recreation

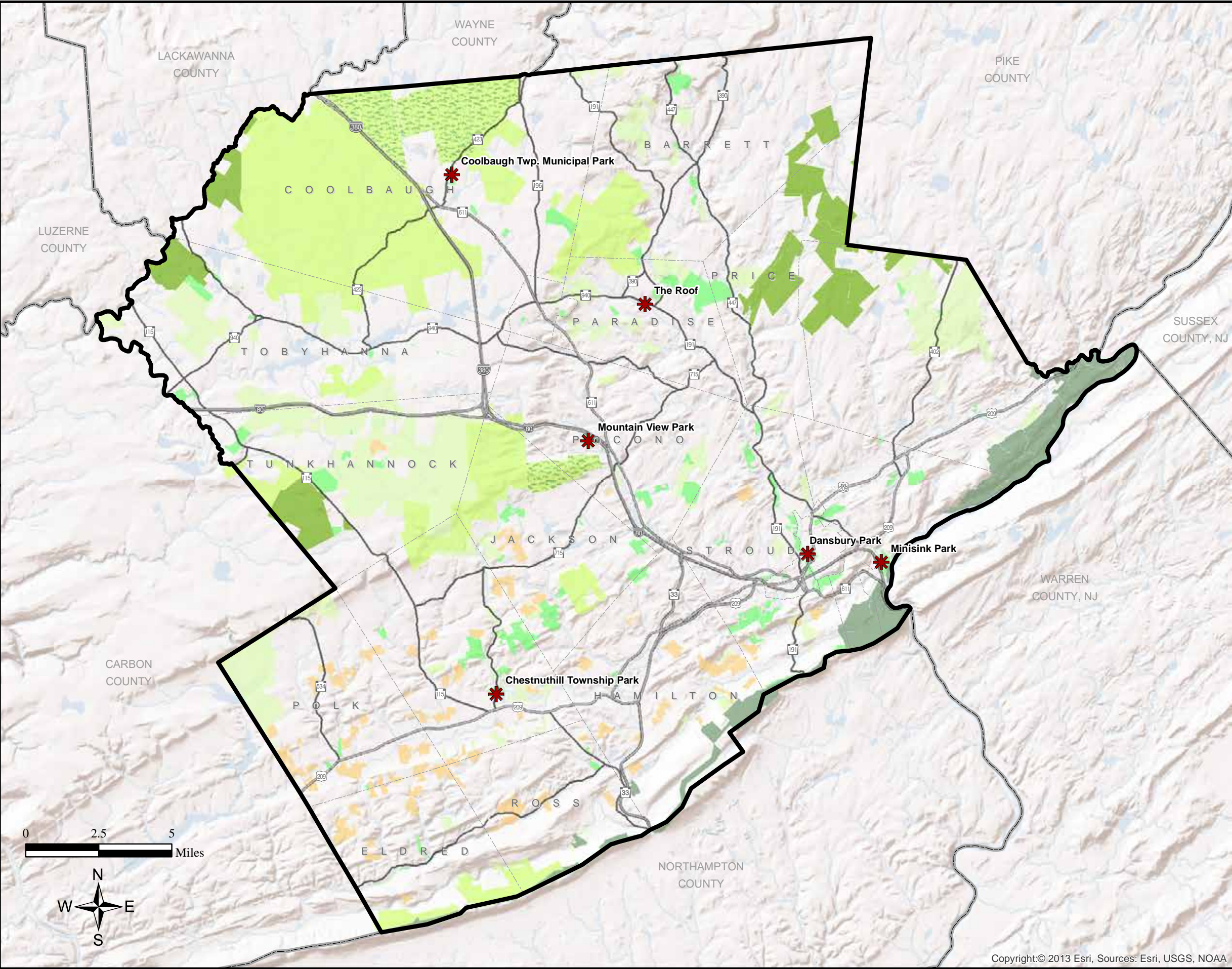
Monroe County has made tremendous progress toward the preservation of its scenic rural landscape since the inception of the Monroe 2020 planning process in 1996, the passage of the County's \$25 million open space bond referendum in 1998 and the adoption of the Open Space Plan in 2001. The creation of the successful Open Space Program was a natural outgrowth of Monroe 2020 which continues to be recognized as a participatory planning effort that engaged all leadership levels of the County as well as a broad base of citizens. Since the adoption of the Open Space Plan and the

initial bond referendum, the County Commissioners have provided an additional \$11 million in funding. This total funding resulted in protection of over 21,000 acres and leveraged almost \$75 million in state and municipal matching funds. The Open Space Program also provided for the development of six regional open space and recreation plans encompassing each of the 20 municipalities and has seen the acquisition of properties either jointly or individually within each of the regions. The development of these plans has also led to the creation of 4 Regional Open Space and Recreation Commissions, three of which have Executive Directors.

The Monroe County Open Space Program is at a critical point where it is necessary to determine how to move forward with continued land protection efforts and there is a need to renew the commitment and investment to insure a balance of conservation and development. The Open Space Advisory Board worked with a consultant to update to the Open Space, Greenways and Recreation Plan (the Plan) which provided an opportunity to review the accomplishments of the past ten years, establish the goals and objectives to be achieved over the next ten years, and emphasize the need for connections and continued implementation of our initial vision, "Forever Green", a county with parks and open space lined by green infrastructure.

It is recommended that the updated Open Space Plan be incorporated herein.





**OPEN SPACE
& RECREATION
RESOURCES**
MONROE COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

- LEGEND**
- Federally Conserved Lands
 - PA State Parks
 - PA State Game Lands
 - PA State Forest
 - County & Municipal Conserved Lands
 - Land Trusts & Private Easements
 - Purchased Agricultural Easements
 - Township Parks



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Map 10

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Historic Preservation

Introduction

Monroe County was formed in 1836 from parts of Northampton and Pike Counties, and just as it is important to have a plan that looks to the future of the county, it is also important to preserve the past. Historic resources are a vital part of the county's character, contribute to the county's appeal as a tourism destination, and thus play an important role in the economy.

Historic Preservation Plan and Historic Legacy

The Historic Preservation Plan and the Historic Legacy report were completed in 1980 through the cooperation of the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC) and the County Planning Commission. There were 1,500 structures, 42 sites, and 51 zones identified, photographed and mapped as part of the project.

The Historic Legacy report contains a narrative history of the county and numerous photographs and maps of over 200 identified historic features, and serves as an excellent resource for individuals and groups who are doing historical research. The Historic Preservation Plan contains details of the surveys conducted for each municipality, the resources identified, maps, preservation tools and resources, and a historic preservation plan for the county which includes an action plan.

Some of the recommendations have been implemented such as the designation of historic districts where appropriate, e.g. the Hill District in Stroudsburg. As also recommended, the MCPC has provided assistance to individuals and municipalities in their research and preservation activities.

Local historical associations have formed in several municipalities since the plan was prepared, and these groups have been quite active in preserving resources and doing research on them. The original photographs from the survey are stored at the MCPC office and are available to all interested parties. These photographs were of significant assistance to the Historic Architectural Review Board in Stroudsburg, and the MCPC was also actively involved in preparing materials for the county's sesquicentennial celebration in 2011.

It is recommended that the MCPC continue to facilitate historical research, and that the local historical associations be encouraged to do further research in the preservation of not only the physical historic resources, but also the county's social and cultural past as well. The Monroe County Historical Association (MCHA) has formed a Historic Coalition which meets quarterly and includes the local historical groups. The MCHA is also developing a passport booklet which gets stamped as historic sites are visited. It is recommended that the MCHA continue and enhance its efforts to promote the county's rich history.

Food System Plan

Introduction

A food system can be defined as a set of interconnected activities that grow, manufacture, transport, sell, prepare, and dispose of food from farm to table to waste or compost pile. Although the preparation of a complete food system plan is beyond the scope of this comprehensive plan update, there are a number of food related topics which are included herein.

Increasing interest in exercise, physical fitness and healthy eating has been part of the impetus for municipalities and regions to develop food system plans. Monroe County has seen an increase in the number of specialty agricultural operations and local farmer's markets. These activities and other food related issues are discussed in more detail below.

Shop Local and Save Land

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy has developed a booklet entitled Shop Local Save Land which is partly based on the premise that every purchase made at a local farmer's market or farm

stand brings revenue into the economy which can sustain local farms and allow them to remain in business instead of having to sell their land and alter the area's rural character. The booklet covers Monroe, Pike, and Wayne Counties in PA and Sullivan County, NY and contains information on 64

farms and wineries, 10 farm markets and 3 community gardens in this four county area. Location, contact information and a description of the farms and markets are provided, as well as information about various land preservation programs that are available in the region. The booklet is an excellent resource and has been widely distributed in the area.

Food Production and Distribution

Of the total farms and wineries listed in the Shop Local Save Land booklet, thirteen are located in Monroe County. Their products include a wide range of items such as vegetables, fruits, eggs, honey, herbs, garlic, wines, Christmas trees, and many others. Many of the farms sell their products at the Monroe Farmer's Market in Stroudsburg and the Dansbury Farmer's Market in East Stroudsburg while others have farm stands located on their properties.

A more recent development is the appearance of local produce in area supermarkets which makes these items available at times other than when the farmer's markets are open. This also provides an additional outlet for the growers to reach the public.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

The Josie Porter Farm in Stroud Township is the first CSA in the county and CSA shares are also available at Gould's Produce and Farm in Chestnuthill Township. These facilities provide residents with an opportunity to participate in the CSA, and the CSAs also sell produce to the public. CSAs are becoming increasingly popular as more emphasis is placed on eating healthy and knowing where food comes from.



The Historic Monroe County Bar Association in downtown Stroudsburg [top]

Demolition of the fire damaged Dansbury Depot, since restored [bottom]



Gould's Farm Produce Stand in Chestnuthill Township

Use of Open Space Areas/
Community Gardens

In addition to the CSAs, Barrett Township has acquired a property through the open space program (Pasold Farm) where residents can grow their own produce by reserving a plot. This activity is referred to as a Community Garden and works well for residents who don't have a suitable area for a garden at their residence. Activities such as this help to raise public awareness of healthy eating through the use of publicly owned properties.

Recommendations
and Next Steps

Monroe County is within the 100 mile foodshed of Philadelphia (as well as New York City's) and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission has prepared "Eating Here: Greater Philadelphia's Food System Plan." Although it deals with a much larger area, there are several goals and recommendations that have applicability to any area, and these are enumerated below:

- Support local agriculture and grow the local food economy while improving profitability for farmers.
- Protect the environment.
- Ensure safety, security, and healthfulness of food and the food supply.
- Improve nutrition and reduce obesity and preventative diseases.

- Ensure residents of the region have access to enough nutritious food to eat.
- Encourage collaboration between individuals, organizations, and government agencies.

Additionally, removing regulatory barriers to farmer's markets and on-site farm stands is an action that local municipalities can take to increase the supply and availability of local food.

As noted in the introduction, the preparation of a complete food system plan was beyond the scope of this comprehensive plan update, however, it is recommended that such a plan be prepared as a next step during the implementation process.

Community Supported Agriculture at
the Josie Porter Farm



PHOTO: MARLANA HOLSTEN



PHOTO: MATT SIPTROTH

Part III - The Policies



I. Economic Development

Monroe County's 2020 Update Task Force is in agreement that the County should formulate an economic development policy and engage in an aggressive promotional program that will:

- Attract environmentally friendly economic enterprises to Monroe County.
- Conserve the environmental quality that is the County's principal attraction for visitors and residents alike.
- Pursue as a priority the retention and expansion of existing Monroe County companies.
- Help balance the tax base to ease the heavy burden on residential properties for financing public works and services.
- Recycle vacant and under-utilized buildings and sites with access to infrastructure whose current uses may be obsolete.

1. Diversity will be a key to success.

Monroe County benefits from an economy that features a wide variety of enterprises. Tourism is a major economic activity to be maintained and enhanced. The Tobyhanna Army Depot is the largest single employer and one whose longevity is to be protected. At the same time, however, the other top five largest employers (Sanofi Pasteur, Pocono Medical Center, Mount Airy Casino Resort, and Wal-Mart Associates) indicate significant strengths in other industries such as healthcare, distribution, research and development, retail, and tourism. Promotional activity directed at supporting and expanding diversity will be essential to Monroe County's future. Diversity extends to the scale of business enterprises as well as the type. Monroe County should afford opportunities to firms large and small, to established corporations as well as to individuals just starting out who want to grow their enterprises in fertile ground. The needs of big and small business frequently differ and any successful economic development endeavor must address the requirements of each. The business community is comprised of a very high proportion of small businesses. It is important that development activities provide support to these smaller businesses as well as the larger employers.



Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Coolbaugh Township

2. Multiple institutions carry the economic development message and play important roles in promoting Monroe County. Their respective policies merit coordination. The Pocono Mountains Economic Development Corporation (PMEDC) and the Redevelopment Authority of Monroe County (RAMC) are key agencies of County government with skilled staff and access to an array of financial incentives for qualifying enterprises. Both the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau and the Greater Pocono Chamber of Commerce are private sector membership institutions that provide information and technical assistance to prospective firms and promote the advantages of Monroe County. The Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Rail Authority provides leadership in encouraging the growth of rail service as an alternative means of transportation and provides assistance in attracting new employers and businesses that help make rail service more viable. PPL is a major utility that fosters economic growth. Although not directly involved in promoting economic activity, the Monroe County Planning Commission provides valuable resources of geographic, environmental

and other physical data. The Monroe County Conservation District is delegated to administer parts of the Federal Clean Streams Law, and is able to provide technical guidance to permit applicants. This delegation has also allowed for entire National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits to be issued within the County, streamlining and expediting the permitting process for developers. Individual municipalities exercise zoning and other regulatory powers that affect the siting, configuration and special impact mitigation requirements for new facilities. Their permit review procedures may be key to an entrepreneur's decision to locate or expand within the County. Clearly, no single entity is solely responsible for pursuing economic development in Monroe County. Many individuals and entities are involved. They should share a common understanding of development goals, opportunities, environment and strategy.

3. The County's setting in relation to the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region is a crucial element in its economic development history and potential. This location and accessibility set Monroe County apart from other Northeast

Pennsylvania counties. As a direct result of the lower cost of living relative to these major metropolitan areas, Monroe County has experienced explosive growth as a bedroom community. While the rapid residential growth has been greatly influential in the growth and economic success of the construction industry, recent economic hardships have reduced such growth to a virtual standstill, and severely impaired economic industries associated with a rising residential population. This slowing of population increases will likely not last, but the growth experienced throughout the 1990s and 2000s is not likely to be repeated. This pause is therefore an excellent time to redefine the economic goals of the County, and focusing on residential growth should no longer overshadow commercial, industrial, and other economic sector growth. A tax base overburdened by large residential communities and their associated need for public services has emerged from the past unbalanced growth. The area's relationship and proximity to major urban centers will continue to shape its economic future, however, creating incentives that attract business along with new residents is strongly needed, as well. Any future improvements in the economy will again likely increase population, and it is important to ensure that costs of services are mitigated with an improved commercial and industrial base from which to draw from.

4. An educated and professionally trained work force is essential for filling positions in increasingly technical fields, and in attracting businesses that require such capable employees. An important facet of economic development is preparing local residents to meet work place expectations and to provide the education and training opportunities necessary to strengthen and prepare the local work force. Monroe County is in a good position to reach these goals, considering the education opportunities available in the area. Specifically, Northampton Community College, Monroe Career and Technical Institute (MCTI), East Stroudsburg University, and the nearby Commonwealth

Medical College are all valuable institutions for facilitating work force development. These institutions, along with PA CareerLink of Monroe County, help produce a skilled resident labor force, offer opportunities for upgrading skills, and can mount special programs that meet particular employer training needs. There are several key efforts that should be encouraged to better assist local education, including cooperation between school boards and other County groups, establishing post-secondary school vocational training, encouraging internships, increasing MCTI to a full service high school, and providing more educational opportunities to low and middle income students. Preparing a competent and professional local work force is vital to attracting and retaining appropriate businesses.

There is a clear link between economic development, community well-being, and an effective and affordable education system. Schools in Monroe County have an excellent history of providing outstanding educational opportunities for young students as

well as adults at the primary, secondary, technical and higher education levels. However, changing demographics, a more challenging economy, and increasing costs associated with public education dictate that school districts must combine forces with municipal entities at all levels to insure that our educational institutions are as cost effective as possible. Otherwise, increasingly unbearable tax burdens will not only jeopardize the education system itself, but will stifle economic development as a whole. In order to ensure that the quality and efficiency of education in Monroe County is maximized, tools and policies to measure educational effectiveness and reduce waste are necessary. A Unit Cost Analysis that quantifies the value of education in dollar amounts, as best as possible, could quickly become an invaluable tool for developing schools budgets. It is important to not only provide local citizens with the education that they need to succeed, but also to eliminate unnecessary waste and keep costs down for residents as a whole.

The WHAT of Economic Development

1. Current County Enterprises which want or need to expand: Monroe County is home to several large and expanding industries that greatly benefit the local economy. These include employers such as Sanofi Pasteur, Vigon International, Pocono Medical Center, and Wal-Mart Distribution, as well as tourist destinations such as Mount Airy Casino, Great Wolf Lodge and Camelback Mountain Resort. While these businesses expand and grow, it is also important for other opportunities to be pursued in other sectors. Keystone Opportunity Zones, infrastructure improvement, educational opportunities, and improving the overall quality of life are all concepts that should be supported in order to facilitate economic expansion.

The tourism industry has changed dramatically over the last 20 years, and as a result the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau model has changed as well. Re-investment in facilities, which

Weiler Brush Corporation in Cresco



had declined, is now a significant part of the successful equation. Great Wolf Lodge in Scotrun is reportedly the most successful facility in the Great Wolf chain, and can be an example for other facilities. All successful businesses should be encouraged and supported as they seek to expand and improve their facilities.

Civic tourism is a relatively new concept that can be described as a supplement and tool for ecotourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism, geotourism and other place-based activities. In partnership with museums, preservation agencies, parks and other stewards of place, the travel/ tourism industry is uniquely suited to benefit from these economic designs and make a significant contribution to the community and economy. This type of partnership and cooperation should be encouraged and supported.

2. Manufacturing or distribution operations for which Monroe County’s location has distinct transportation advantages:

Companies such as Pocono Produce, Wal-Mart Distribution, and Johnson & Johnson, along with other occupants of the County’s industrial parks and corporate centers find the accessibility of I-80 and I-380 and their interconnecting expressway network highly cost-effective for markets in the Northeast. Johnson & Johnson is an excellent recent example of a distribution facility attracted in large part by Monroe’s road links. Further opportunities for manufacturing/ distribution facilities exist in the Corporate Centers and should be encouraged. Re-use of existing buildings is also evident in the purchase of the former Imperial Cosmetics by Vigon International. Such re-use by existing firms looking to expand should also be encouraged and supported.

3. Office uses related to the metro region: Although the events of September 11, 2001 generated considerable interest and activity in locating back office operations (such as Wall Street West) in Monroe County and surrounding areas, this effort appears to have stalled and is no longer a viable opportunity at the present time. However, there are still relevant

uses such as medical offices and smaller office uses which should be encouraged. Internet based businesses conducted in the home are also activities which should be encouraged, particularly since they reduce or eliminate commuting to work and its attendant problems with congestion, consumption of fossil fuels, etc. Zoning amendments to allow internet based businesses to be conducted as home occupations may be needed and should be supported.

The presence of fiber optics and other telecommunications technology is a significant advantage, and when coupled with the fact that many software/tech firms are small (less than 50 employees), there is an opportunity to promote the development of the smaller office facilities noted above. Village Centers would be prime locations if these office uses can be coupled with walkable spaces, housing choices and mixed uses. If the County can provide positive steps to improve the Quality of Life, these smaller enterprises can be attracted to locate here.

4. Telecommuting: With the rise of internet based communications, telecommuting is becoming an increasingly viable employment option. While broadband internet is adequate throughout the County, a lack of multiple service providers leaves higher speed internet expensive. Attracting new providers in areas with only a single provider would increase competition and lower costs to consumers. Ultimately, the main attraction for telecommuting jobs remains the quality of life afforded by the area, as these jobs are not bound by geography and commuting distances. Maintaining the natural environment, improving telecommunication infrastructure, reducing property tax, and promoting denser, walkable, community-oriented development with an increase in multi-family housing options would help attract and retain these jobs.

5. Retail Trade: While retail trade has grown steadily throughout the County and in particular along the 611 corridor, adverse impacts such as increased traffic need to be addressed.

This traditional sprawling style of development may be reduced through innovative and progressive zoning and municipal encouragement for more centralized commercial areas that are integrated within the community. Creating clear centers for denser and well planned development along with allowing for multiple housing options within those centers are possible options for reducing unattractive commercial sprawl. With involvement of the Natural Lands Trust, communities such as Blakeslee and Brodheadsville are already working to create unique town centers rather than common commercial strips.

6. Recreation and the Arts (Previously Artists and Artisans):

The Pocono region has had many successes in regards to recreation, art, and leisure activities. Considering the many festivals, recreation opportunities, and shows offered in the County, it becomes clear that the advertisement of these events is key to furthering their success. Of the many entities that actively promote these activities, the Visitors Bureau appears most capable in the ability to coordinate and publicize such events. These opportunities are directly linked with the tourism industry and the image of the Poconos as a whole, and efforts should be made to ensure that the area remains a destination location.

7. Health Care: Increases in the County’s health care capability, particularly in the number of small private care facilities, have reduced strain on the Pocono Medical Center emergency room. Increased coordination between regional health care providers has also strengthened the effectiveness of the area’s health care industry. As these smaller more specialized private care facilities continue to emerge throughout the County, issues concerning a need for more doctors, care for low-income families, and new expectations for doctors to work shorter 8 hour days still need to be addressed. As the need for health care services increases, the County should continue to encourage the growth of this sector of the economy, particularly in regard to cultivating an educated health care workforce.



Camelback Resort and Waterpark

The WHERE of Economic Development

One of the defining principles in the original Economic Development Policy is that diversity is a key to success. This principle is still relevant to the County’s current situation, and if infrastructure cannot or should not be provided everywhere, the WHERE of Economic Development might look as follows:

Area	Appropriate Uses
Existing Business Parks	Light manufacturing, distribution, offices.
Rt. 611	Corridor Retail and services, but not strip development. Long standing industrial uses such as Sanofi Pasteur.
Rt. 209 Corridor (West End)	Retail and services not requiring centralized sewer and water, but not strip development.
Village of Blakeslee	Mixed uses, smaller retail and services with residential above. Infill and redevelopment are key.
Village of Brodheadsville	Larger retail at outer edge of village center, mixed uses with residential above and smaller retail/services in village center. Infill and redevelopment are key.
Other Existing Centers (As indicated in the original M2020 Plan)	Mixed uses with residential above, appropriate public uses, medical and educational. Infill and redevelopment are key. (Includes Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg)
Resorts/Recreation Areas	Existing/former locations of these types of facilities. Redevelopment is key.
Agriculture	Current agricultural areas and prime agricultural soil areas.
Open Space	Green infrastructure can be an economic driver, and provide connectivity via greenways, trails, and stream corridors. Linkage and awareness of these areas is key.



PHOTO: MARLANA HOLSTEN



II. Housing

The availability of diverse and affordable housing is a fundamental issue that has and will continue to require thoughtful consideration. In order to ensure that County residents are able to find suitable housing within reasonable cost, several objectives need to be met. Of these, housing supply, cost, quality, and special needs housing are all important subjects that will need to be addressed with policies that reflect the needs of current and future area residents. The main purpose of the housing policy is to encourage affordable housing that contributes to a sense of community and meets the needs of all households. It is also important to locate these homes in a manner consistent with the land use goals outlined in the County’s Comprehensive Plan, as well as regional and municipal comprehensive plans.

Housing Supply

The goal of this objective is to provide an adequate supply and variety of housing options to meet the needs of the residents of Monroe County. This includes single-family, two-family, multi-family, and other dwellings. The location and mix of housing should maintain or enhance the character of local communities.

- Promote an adequate supply of owner and rental housing units in a number and location consistent with the County’s Comprehensive Plan.
- Rehabilitate existing substandard housing in the County for a range of household incomes and for owner and renter households.
- Encourage housing development in rural centers and existing and new villages.

- Encourage conservation subdivisions which retain the overall existing community character.

- Encourage housing mixed with commercial and institutional uses to improve accessibility for all segments of the population.

- Encourage a mix of housing types and prices within communities to contribute to diverse communities.

- Provide homeownership counseling services that encourage homeownership opportunities and maintain existing owner-occupied housing.

- Encourage the use of Transferable Development Rights (TDR) in municipal ordinances as a means of providing housing in appropriate locations.

- Encourage the development of walkable neighborhoods with access to public transit and pedestrian/bicycle amenities.

Housing Cost

While the availability of adequate housing is important, the cost of housing is usually the first issue that comes to mind for current and future residents. In response to rising property taxes and a stagnant real estate market, the cost of housing has become a complex subject and should be addressed in a manner that takes both recent developments and their future repercussions into consideration. The goal of this objective is to provide a variety of owner and rental housing options that are affordable for all income levels throughout Monroe County.

- Promote the equitable funding for schools to alleviate the tax burden of housing cost.

- Provide the integration of housing opportunities for households at all income levels to create diverse communities.

- Encourage the development and preservation of rental properties for low and moderate income households.

*Over 55 community in
Smithfield Township*





Whitestone Village in Bartonsville

- Development of affordable housing.
- Promote efficiency in the development review and permitting process to avoid adding unnecessary costs to housing development.
- Create opportunities for public/private partnerships to develop affordable housing by utilizing programs for tax credits, CDBG funding and other programs.
- Support the use of manufactured housing as an important type of affordable housing.
- Distribute subsidized housing units throughout the County.
- Encourage the use of accessory apartment units.

Housing Quality

Area housing should be safe, suitable, and sound for residents. It is vital to maintain, rehabilitate, and renovate the housing stock where necessary. Neighborhoods should be safe from the negative impacts of incompatible uses, and should also be adequately constructed and maintained. Improving housing quality creates safe communities while also enhancing its visual character.

- Support consistent land use regulations and building codes to protect public health and safety, reduce conflicts among municipalities, and not adversely affect housing costs.
- Rehabilitate substandard housing units throughout the County.
- Upgrade existing units so that they are energy efficient and conserve water.
- Address environmental hazards such as lead-based paint, asbestos, and radon.
- Support the adoption and enforcement of building maintenance codes.
- Encourage the use of “green” technology in new construction and rehabilitation activities.

Special Needs Housing

Another concern in Monroe County is the availability of housing options for those with special needs. It is the goal of this policy to ensure that the range of housing opportunities is sufficient to manage the requirements of the elderly, disabled, and special needs residents. Providing for this population is key to maintaining the health, safety, and welfare of Monroe County.

- Promote accessible and visitable units, opportunities for alternative units, supportive programs and convenience to transportation and shopping to meet the housing needs of the elderly.
- Promote accessible and visitable housing, convenient to transportation, shopping, and jobs, and supportive programs for all people with disabilities.
- Support the provision of accessible emergency housing for the homeless.
- Support the provision of accessible transitional housing for special needs populations to help them prepare for permanent independent housing.
- Promote the enforcement of fair housing laws.

III. Energy

While green technology and renewable energy are clearly necessary to address energy needs within the County while maintaining the local environment, a focus should also be placed on energy conservation in general. Monroe County currently contains a working solar energy farm at the Pocono Raceway, and the use of accessory solar energy systems is steadily increasing. Steps should be taken to encourage such development and also to mitigate any possible negative impacts. Due to the geography of the area, wind powered turbines as more than an accessory use is unlikely, since wind conditions are marginal or worse for all but a few small locations. Natural gas is also an emerging topic of interest, as it presents a cleaner and cheaper fuel alternative. Below are general recommendations that should be pursued in order to create a comprehensive and effective energy policy.

- Facilitate the expansion and planning of infrastructure needed to increase the availability of natural gas as an alternative to other fossil fuel based energy.
- Encourage green technology and energy conservation strategies for new and existing development. (Geothermal and other renewable energy, LEED certification, water conservation, etc.)
- Promote the use of accessory solar and wind energy systems with proper mitigation of potentially adverse impacts (glare, noise, etc.) through providing model ordinances to municipalities. Doing so would encourage decentralized energy production and self-sufficiency.

- Educate residents and promote energy conservation tools and techniques such as weatherizing homes and the use of more efficient appliances.
- Provide assistance and model ordinances for principal solar energy facilities in municipalities and promote legislation that would make solar energy production more desirable though increasing the value of Renewable Energy Credits.
- Properly mitigate impacts associated with the use and production of biomass energy, such as the growing of crops to produce ethanol.
- Promote the adoption of ordinances to mitigate negative impacts associated with the use of outdoor furnaces used to offset energy and heating costs.
- Encourage the efficient placement of common utility corridors and encourage underground utilities.

- Promote and emphasize coordination with relevant agencies such as the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) (and utilize their Wind Energy Voluntary Cooperation Agreement), PA Public Utility Commission (PUC), etc. when planning and designing energy projects.
- Continue to be aware and well informed of developing and evolving energy technology.
- Continue to encourage sustainable development such as conservation design that would promote higher density development while also preserving open space.
- Encourage municipalities to amend their Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances and Comprehensive Plans to assist in the development of bike and trail networks in order to adopt standards more favorable for the development of sidewalks and bike paths. This would reduce reliance on automobiles and the use of fossil fuels.

Solar panels over the Sarah Street Bar & Grill





Attractive signage in Mountainhome

IV. Roadscape

From the outset, the Monroe 2020 Update Task Force has recognized that addressing the image of the Poconos and the visual character of its municipalities, communities, and roadways is critical to insuring the success of the Monroe 2020 Comprehensive Plan and the future health of the region.

First impressions matter. This applies to communities as well as people. For visitors and residents alike, the first impression of Monroe County and its Pocono Mountain landscape is shaped by what is visible along its roadways. People experience this scenic region of Pennsylvania primarily while driving along regional arterial highways and local collector roads. Even though roadways occupy only a small percentage of the land area of the county, they nevertheless represent the county as a whole and present the county's face to the world. If the

roadway views are attractive, both citizens and tourists will perceive Monroe County to be a beautiful place. If scenic vistas are spoiled by intrusive billboards and chaotic roadside development, then Monroe County will be perceived to be an unsightly, tacky place.

Task Force members have recognized that community character and image affect local residents' collective attitudes about the places they live and the real estate they own and occupy. If a community as a whole looks unsightly or poorly maintained, there is little motivation for residents of the community to care very much about their individual properties.

Likewise, community character and image directly affect business in general and tourism in particular. Both potential visitors and investors are naturally drawn to places that are charming, orderly and visually appealing. Indeed, the unique and enchanting landscape of the Poconos is the number one product marketed by the county to the rest of the world. Spoiling that product is equal to letting milk spoil and then trying to sell it. Tourism, long a pillar of the Monroe County economy, depends on the appeal of the county's natural beauty. But tourism has become a very competitive business. Consequently, if the county is to continue to draw tourists and maintain its economy in the years to come, protecting its image and character is vitally important. The following policy points provided below are a roadmap to achieving these goals:

- Enhance and safeguard areas of prominence (arrival points, landmark areas, scenic vistas, etc).
- Support efforts (in coordination with PennDOT) to remove illegal billboards and signage.
- Implement signage standards through a model ordinance to promote standards that create a fine visual impression, and keep advertising orderly and unobtrusive, especially in light of impacts caused through new digital advertising.

- Ensure that roadway edges, shoulders, curbs, and access points are clearly defined and maintained in order to improve safety.

- Promote landscaping in parking lots and place visual emphasis on buildings rather than parked vehicles by locating parking areas to the side or rear rather than adjacent to roadways.

- Encourage underground rather than overhead utilities while coordinating with utility companies.

- Promote bike path and sidewalk provisions in municipal ordinances.

- Create enforceable standards for landscaping, buffer areas, and lighting for commercial facilities, particularly with respect to mitigating light pollution (dark sky enhancement) while maintaining safety.

- Facilitate funding for roadscape conservation and improvement projects, such as greenways, bike paths, and viewshed restoration along scenic and arterial roadways.

- Promote community recognition and incentives for developers and landowners to create positive roadscape impact through visually pleasing signage and landscaping.

- Have the county planning commission create an inventory and analyze the worst arterial road 'hot spots' through the use of GIS, and also coordinate with the municipalities and various agencies to create county-wide and local trail linkages, greenways, and biker/hiker route systems.

- Encourage and support continuing education opportunities for municipal officials related to transportation improvement.

- Ensure that the Highway Sanitation Program is able to continue efforts to maintain aesthetically pleasing roadscares.

- Work in coordination with the County's Waste Authority to promote/ encourage continuation of litter program utilizing ARDs, Probation Department and inmates.

- Promote the construction and placement of bus shelters for public transportation.

- Address transportation issues through the development and implementation of Official Maps.

- Provide assistance to municipalities in developing standards to address blighted properties and promote building design guidelines, particularly along major commercial corridors.

- Work closely with PennDOT to implement transportation enhancement plans and other roadway improvements.

- The image of the county may also be positively influenced through the development of implementation of improved branding. Focusing on natural amenities is recommended to reduce the 'honeymoon capital' perception.

Reinventing Commercial Corridors Workshop



V. Advocacy

Previously, the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan contained several legislative advocacy positions to adopt amendments to the MPC. While some major goals have been accomplished, particularly in terms of regional planning partnerships, new challenges have arisen that will need to be met. Initiatives at the municipal, county, and state level are needed to better implement sound land use planning. (Lead Advocate for implementation is indicated in parenthesis.)

Municipal

- Promote greater consistency between ordinances within existing regional planning areas such as CJER and the Top of the Mountain regions. (Municipalities, County)

- Adopt Conservation Subdivision Design in the remaining municipalities that lack such provisions. (Municipalities)



Randall Arendt preparing for a county sponsored workshop [top]

Alan Price Young, Co-Chair of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force [bottom]

- Adopt Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) in the municipalities that have not done so. (Municipalities)
- Adopt ordinances requiring developers to dedicate open space/recreation or pay “fees in lieu of.” (Municipalities)
- Adopt updated and more comprehensive signage ordinances. (Municipalities)
- Purchase smaller undevelopable lots remaining in older subdivisions through repository sales and use them for open space and possible greenway corridor connections. (Municipalities)
- Adopt standards for higher design quality along commercial corridors. (Municipalities)
- Consider requiring developers to submit impact assessments for larger scale projects. (Municipalities)
- Adopt ordinances preserving areas and buildings of historic value. (Municipalities)
- Advocate for increased communication between municipal officials, education officials, and other relevant parties and maintain open dialogues between these groups. (County)

- Adopt improved standards for landscaping in and surrounding parking areas. (Municipalities)
- Coordinate between developers and various permitting agencies, including the use of pre-development meetings. (Municipalities, County)
- Make visual/audio recordings of meetings available to the public via television or internet. (Municipalities)
- Create Capital Improvement Plans for individual municipalities. (Municipalities)
- Develop local and regional transportation plans. (County)

County

- Provide qualified personnel to assist the municipalities within the county to obtain pertinent planning knowledge to make more qualified decisions. (County)
- Provide opportunities and incentives for neighboring municipalities to work collaboratively with each other. (County)
- Assist municipalities in acquiring grant assistance when available. (County)
- Encourage decentralized sewage treatment facilities and the use of appropriate green space areas for drip and spray irrigation, as well as other alternative systems. (County)
- Promote the correction of the worst infrastructure problem areas and discourage the extension of infrastructure into unsuitable areas. (County)
- Advocate the provision of infrastructure in developed areas where density can be increased, walkability can be improved, and where mixed uses can be provided. (County)
- Advocate regional review and revision of Act 537 - Sewage Facilities Planning, and how it can be better related to comprehensive planning in a more proactive manner. (County)

State

- Enable municipalities to adopt “concurrency requirements” that allow them to defer private development approvals until/unless necessary supporting infrastructure is in place or scheduled. (State Legislature)
- Develop a mechanism for increased communication between all levels of government and provide education concerning new state regulations. (State)
- Provide funding for enhancing commercial development and open space acquisitions. (State)
- Advocate for consistency requirements between Act 537 plans and comprehensive plans within the MPC and enact appropriate legislation. (State Legislature)
- Implement a more equitable method of school funding to alleviate the tax burden on residents.
- Examine and revise Local Share Account grant policies to allow funds to be spent in the most effective manner.

Schools

- Provide incentives for collaboration and foster non-traditional partnerships between groups such as schools, scouts, the arts community, etc. (School Districts, County)
- Emphasize the need for proactive policies concerning education rather than reactive policies. (School Districts)
- Fully implement the greater productivity made possible through effective use of technology in the learning process. Every student should have a computer, and every teacher should be adept in guiding computer assisted learning. (School Districts)

- Ensure that learning productivity is at its highest and insure that every classroom is presided over by a highly effective teacher. (School Districts)
- Consider converting our school system to a year-round schedule in order to better utilize facilities, and improve educational efficiency. (School Districts)
- Promote a seamless connection among all educational institutions in the county (the high schools, the Career and Technical Institute, Northampton Community College, and East Stroudsburg University) so that students can utilize whatever curricula best suits their individual educational needs. (School Districts, Institutions noted)
- Seek input from education officials for municipal decisions such as zoning. (Municipalities)
- Conversion of the Monroe Career and Technical Institute into a full service high school needs to be thoroughly evaluated in order to more fully realize the offerings of this valuable county asset. (County, School Districts)

- Advocate the sharing of services and resources between schools, municipalities, and other organizations. (County, Municipalities, School Districts)
- Education is a serious, complex and expensive public undertaking that consumes approximately 80% of all local tax collections. Capable citizens with business and managerial experience should be willing to serve as school directors.
- Create increased state funding for education in order to offset financial strain on area residents and reduce the current discrepancy of funding per student throughout the state. (State Legislature)

The East Stroudsburg University Innovation Center





The Sherman Theater in downtown Stroudsburg

VI. Arts and Culture

Since the adoption of the Monroe 2020 Comprehensive plan, local art and culture has steadily gained in importance. As local residents have become more aware of cultural opportunities in the area, the number of community events has increased accordingly, often attracting non-residents. The renovation and reopening of the Sherman Theater in Stroudsburg has helped revitalize the downtown Stroudsburg area, drawing acts ranging from local musicians to well known performers. The development of the PA Partners in the Arts program, a partnership between the Pocono Arts Council and the PA Council on the Arts, has brought over \$600,000 in state tax dollars to the Pocono region for organizations conducting arts programming. The Pocono Arts Council joined with the ARTSPACE Gallery to open the PoconoArts Community Cultural Center in Stroudsburg in 1999.

The Open Space program has preserved thousands of acres of environmentally valuable lands, providing for excellent hiking and recreational opportunities while also maintaining the integrity of the County's natural resources. Numerous festivals and events throughout the County augment local economies and enhance community identities. It is important to ensure that these trends continue in order to preserve and promote the arts and culture within Monroe County.

Goals

- Expand opportunities for participation in cultural activities related to the visual and performing arts.
- Seek and obtain grants for promoting the arts and history.

- Work with Northampton Community College and ESU to add programs within the community and increase theatrical/concert performances in school facilities.
- Make facilities and volunteers available for recreation and other community purposes, especially to address teenagers' needs.
- Establish priorities for acquiring, developing, and operating public recreation facilities.
- Increased coordination and cooperative efforts between cultural organizations and agencies that may facilitate their actions, such as the Monroe County Transit Authority and the Pocono Mountain Visitors Bureau.

Needs

- Cultural centers on the mountain, in the West End, and Bushkill areas of the county.

- Improved opportunities for arts and cultural organizations, i.e. paid staff, more involved and knowledgeable board members and funding.
- An environmentally friendly and uncluttered community, particularly roadsides.
- Appreciation of the importance of education at all levels.
- Transportation alternatives to lessen reliance on the automobile, such as promoting public transit.
- The creation of pedestrian friendly environments and development of hiking and biking trails, as well as materials identifying the location of these areas, such as trail maps.
- Preservation of historic and cultural resources.

Inside the ArtSpace Gallery in Stroudsburg





PHOTO: MARLANA HOLSTEN

Part IV - Implementation

Introduction

Ever since the adoption of the original Monroe 2020 plan in 1999, the Planning Commission staff has focused on implementation of plan recommendations, using a variety of programs and working closely with the municipalities. Specific implementations tools that have been used and the need for their continuance are discussed below.

Municipal Partnership Program

The Municipal Partnership Program (MPP) was the first program developed after plan adoption. All twenty municipalities have adopted Memorandums of Understanding and participate in this program. Simply stated, the MPP was established to promote cooperation between the local and county governments to assist in implementing the County Comprehensive Plan. Technical assistance is provided by the County Planning Commission through sample ordinances, GIS products, demographic data, and community audits to review municipal plans and ordinances for consistency with the County Comprehensive Plan. Growing Greener audits were also conducted by consultants to determine if regulations were inadvertently thwarting

conservation objectives. In both audits, the final report recommended changes to ordinances and actions that needed to be undertaken by the municipality. It is recommended that the MPP be continued, with modifications as needed, in order to facilitate implementation of the updated County Comprehensive Plan.

Financial Assistance Program

The Financial Assistance Program (FAP I and FAP II) was established to provide monetary assistance to the municipalities of Monroe County in order to promote the development and adoption of resource protection ordinances and plans which will assist in the presentation of open space through non-acquisition techniques. Funding for FAP I and FAP II was provided through the Planning, Education, and Promotion allocation in the 1998 open space bond.

To date, eleven municipalities have completed projects under FAP I, six more have projects that are underway using FAP I, and three applicants have projects underway using FAP II. Applicants under the FAP II are Delaware Water Gap Borough, Stroud Region Open Space and Recreation Commission, and the CJER Regional

Comprehensive Plan municipalities (Chestnuthill, Jackson, Eldred, and Ross Townships.)

Eligible projects under the FAP program include Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) revisions such as conservation subdivision design, commercial corridor redevelopment, stormwater management, floodplain regulations, and natural features conservation, among others. Zoning ordinance revisions include conservation zoning, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), wellhead protection, and Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND), among others. Official maps, regional comprehensive plans, and special studies are also eligible activities.

Additional funding for the Financial Assistance Program should be provided at an acceptable level and its role in economic development incentives should be emphasized.

Geographic Information System

The Geographic Information System (GIS) is an invaluable tool for the comprehensive plan implementation process. The system was first installed in the planning office in the mid 1990's and has been continuously refined and updated into its current high level of sophistication. Ongoing development of GIS was a major recommendation of the original Monroe 2020 plan, and that recommendation should continue to be supported.

All twenty municipalities have accounts and are utilizing GIS, primarily through a web based system. The recently developed web GIS platform features parcel data, addresses, road centerlines, zoning, wetlands, floodplains, aerial photography, and other data. It should be noted that the aerial photographs were taken in 2008, and it would be advantageous to have updated imagery. Current information is available to the public through access terminals in the Tax Assessment office and though a subscription based web service.

The development of mobile applications utilizing GIS is currently being explored and should become a focus in the future. Such applications may provide the tools necessary for a wide variety of uses, ranging from site selection for development to an easily accessible method of locating and viewing information on local trails and preserved lands. It is recommended that the county continue to enhance the Geographic Information System and further develop its capabilities and the data available. Its value as an implementation tool cannot be overstated.

Official Maps

The use of Official Maps has long been authorized by the Municipalities Planning Code, but relatively few municipalities across the Commonwealth have made use of them. Several years ago, the MCPC started encouraging municipalities to consider an Official Map and the results have been good. To date, four have been adopted, and five are in development. The official map allows municipalities to better plan for transportation improvements, open space acquisition, and other activities and also gives landowners information about future projects that may affect them. It is recommended that the planning staff continue to promote the use of official maps and continue to provide technical assistance and GIS services to assist in this effort.

Economic Development Implementation Plan

The completed EDIP report contains short, mid, and long term strategies for improving economic development efforts in Monroe County. It is recommended that this separate document be incorporated by reference in the Comprehensive Plan and that its

recommendations be implemented.

Executive Committee

During the completion of the original Monroe 2020 plan and for several years after its adoption, an Executive Committee of nine members plus the County Commissioners oversaw the implementation of plan recommendations. The Executive Committee was instrumental in moving the process forward and providing overall direction. It is recommended that a similar group be appointed by the County Commissioners to oversee the completion and implementation of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Benchmarking/Indicators

As implementation of the plan recommendations moves forward, it is recommended that an on-going evaluation of progress be made. This would involve establishing baseline data on plan components and measuring progress in achieving stated goals/recommendations. Indicators of success would need to be established for a variety of actions, e.g. the number of jobs retained, acres of farmland preserved and so forth.

Annual Review

It is recommended that an annual review session be conducted with all the participants in the plan update process and the general public. This could be a one day session at ESU or other venue that would provide an annual evaluation of implementation progress, discussing what's working, what's not, and any other issues that have arisen in the previous year. This not only is part of the benchmarking process, but also provides an opportunity for the larger community to assess the plan's effectiveness.

Staffing and Coordination

As noted in other plan sections, there are three major documents which are being completed at virtually the same time: an updated Comprehensive Plan, an updated Open Space Plan and the Economic Development Implementation Plan. As has been the case since the original Monroe 2020 plan in 1999, implementation activities fall directly on the MCPC staff for the Comprehensive Plan and Open Space Plan and on the MCPC and PMEDC staffs for the EDIP. In order to continue to be successful, an increased level of cooperation between these two agencies, and others for that matter, is needed and it is imperative that sufficient staff be maintained. Open Space conservation, economic development and all other plan components can complement each other, rather than having one at the expense of another. Successful implementation is a result of "troops on the ground," not a result of simply including text in the plan.





