

Executive Summary

The Lycoming County Planning Commission and the Department of Planning and Community Development jointly present the 2018 Lycoming County Comprehensive Plan Update; **Lycoming 2030: Plan the Possible**. It is an implementable project and program oriented plan that charts the development future of the County for the next 10 years and beyond. The update is easy to read and understand, with clear cut projects and programs enumerated. The update should prove to be a working document that does not just sit on the shelf.

Game Changers and Economic Drivers over the past ten years

In 2007 the natural gas industry began drilling in Lycoming County and activity was heavy until 2014. During that time it is estimated by the Chamber of Commerce, based on information from the gas companies operating in the County and the expansion of local businesses, that the industry created in excess of 3,500 new jobs in Lycoming County. Due to Act 13 of 2012, Lycoming County received a total of \$13.1 million of natural gas (Act 13) Impact Fees between 2012 and 2017 which leveraged over \$100 million other dollars for infrastructure and economic development projects around the County.

According to the Economic Benefit report from the Hospital & Health System Association of Pennsylvania University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Susquehanna is a major economic driver in Lycoming County, providing over \$750 million annually in economic benefit to Lycoming County and the region. Including offices in Clinton, Tioga, and Northumberland counties, it provides one billion dollars annually. UPMC Susquehanna has made a \$500 million dollar commitment to build services in this region over the next 5-7 years. In the upcoming year UPMC Susquehanna will seek designation as a level II trauma center. An important project for the Department of Planning and Community Development and the City of Williamsport has been the Pathway to Health. The Planning Department has worked with UPMC Susquehanna for over 10 years to complete the project. The Pathway to Health is in its final stages of completion. It creates an efficient route from the interstate through the city to the medical center.

The Pennsylvania College of Technology is also a large economic driver in the County with over \$234 million generated each year. Over 2,000 students live in private rental housing in the County. Since 1998 the college has embarked on over \$250 million worth of construction projects on the campus. Workforce enrollments exceeded 7,500 in 2017. The Plastics Innovation & Resource Center (PIRC) provides training and technology resources to facilitate the growth of the plastics industry in the United States and throughout the world.

Lycoming College is also a major economic contributor to Lycoming County. Since 2008 Lycoming College has invested over \$25 million in its physical plant. The college employs 350+ full and part-time individuals. The college's operational budget of \$44 million and institutional endowment of \$220 million provide significant economic impact and local/regional investment on an annual basis. The college is very involved in the East End Gateway project and is planning to build to new entrance to the campus on Basin Street.

International Little League is a major economic driver in Lycoming County and the region. Little League pumps \$32 million into the economy per year. There are 70,000 unique visitors to Little League each year.

Plan Summary

The Update identified 8 major issues affecting the County. They are:

1. Infrastructure does not meet the needs of all areas of the County;
2. The Economy is changing and our communities and workforce are not optimally positioned to realize our untapped potential and become more resilient;
3. Fragmentation of Local Government & the sense of being disenfranchised are challenges facing Pennsylvania municipalities;
4. Flooding is a threat to life, properties, and communities throughout Lycoming County;
5. Current Land Use regulations and enforcement do not consistently and adequately meet community visions and respond to changing conditions;
6. Volunteerism and civic engagement, particularly among young people, are insufficient to sustain community institutions and services;
7. Water Quality is vital but vulnerable to a multitude of threats; and
8. Drugs, particularly heroin and opioids, are creating significant social, economic, public health, and safety problems across the County.

Issue 1 – Infrastructure

Infrastructure includes “the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.” It creates the physical and digital backbone that links communities together, sets the foundation for economic and community development, and allows residents to enjoy a quality of life. The 2018 Update identified six types of infrastructure: Transportation, Water and Sewer, Telecommunications, Natural Gas, Housing, and Outdoor Recreation. Since the early 2000s, Lycoming County has secured hundreds of millions in Federal and State funds to help advance over 230 community infrastructure projects.

Transportation

The Williamsport Area Transportation Study (WATS) serves as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Lycoming County transportation planning and programming. There are nearly 2,000 miles of publicly owned highways and over 700 bridges throughout Lycoming County. Local municipalities own 65% of this road mileage while PennDOT owns the remaining 35%. There are 717 publicly-owned bridges in Lycoming County. PennDOT owns 512 bridges and local municipalities own the remaining 205 bridges. A total of 62 bridges are classified as structurally deficient. In terms of the overall condition of state-owned bridges, most are in a good state of repair with only 12 bridges classified as structurally deficient.

The Williamsport Regional Airport is the only scheduled commercial air carrier service airport in Lycoming County. The airport is owned and operated by the Williamsport Municipal Airport Authority. The current service is limited to Philadelphia International Airport with three round trip daily flights provided by American Airlines.

The key infrastructure project involves the replacement of the aging and space limited airport terminal building with a larger state-of-the-art terminal facility that can accommodate future growth in commercial air traffic.

Lycoming County is also served by two freight railroads, Norfolk Southern and the Lycoming Valley Railroad. Norfolk Southern is a Class 1 railroad that owns and operates 37 miles of the Harrisburg-Buffalo Mainline that traverses Lycoming County. The Lycoming Valley Railroad is one of numerous Class III short-line railroads in PA and is the only short-line railroad operating in Lycoming County. This 38 mile rail line spans from Avis, PA (Clinton County) to Muncy, PA and is part of the North Shore Railroad System with headquarters in Northumberland, PA.

Safe bicycle and pedestrian routes were of high concern in several of the Planning Area Teams (PAT). They are very important to residents of the City as well as rural areas of the County. Residents increasingly want to bike and walk to work. Walkable and bikeable communities are much desired.

A safe reliable multi-modal transportation system is the economic lifeblood of our communities. Transportation facilities provide access to jobs, health care, shopping, recreation, and social activities. Without a reliable transportation system all aspects of the economy suffer. Transportation is essential to a viable economy. Business and industry consider the transportation system when deciding where to locate. Lycoming County has an excellent transportation system.

Water and Sewer

As essential elements of public infrastructure, the design/construction/operation & management (O&M) of water and sanitary sewer systems represent a technically complex, big business. Unlike transportation infrastructure which is funded primarily by taxes collected at various levels of government, water and sanitary sewer costs are covered by the system's rate payers; i.e. users of those services. Today, the water and sanitary sewer needs of the urbanized areas of Lycoming County are being fulfilled by a number of public entities. There are thirteen major providers in the County with billions of dollars in capital assets under their astute management, these infrastructure providers are constantly challenged to meet an increasingly strict set of environmental compliance requirements while maintaining an affordable rate structure for the residents and businesses being served.

Despite all the headway made over the past 15 years, there are still several issues that may be road blocks to the water and sanitary sewer providers to ensure that the past and future investments in water/sewer will be sustainable for County residents. These issues can generally be categorized as economic, operational, and workforce issues. The following represent a snapshot of these issues: lack of growth in designated growth area, tighter regulations, age of plant operators, and the lack of certified operators.

Regarding sewer, a particularly major challenge involved the biological nutrient removal criteria imposed by the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy. This US EPA mandate required the removal of increased amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment from incoming flows. This required costly upgrades at sewage treatment plants throughout the County.

Telecommunications

Lycoming County's large geographic expanse, together with its mountainous terrain in the north, creates a vexing challenge to the telecommunication infrastructure providers serving the County. This challenge is particularly acute for cell phone users and broadband internet service. In these areas, communication is generally limited to landline telephone service. Cellular and broadband infrastructure in the private arena varies rather markedly. Within urban and suburban communities, broadband service is robust with generous amounts of public Wi-Fi connectivity, 4G cellular capability, fiber optic connectivity, and T1 internet service. Unfortunately, companies that provide service for home computers, land lines, and cable television, such as Comcast Xfinity, are reluctant to extend their service territory into the rural countryside given the area's sparse population density. This issue is partially addressed by those companies that specialize in satellite connectivity such as Direct TV and Dish. Connectivity for home internet service remains a nagging issue in many rural sectors of Lycoming County. Cellular connectivity is equally problematic. Generally speaking, cell phone service is fairly robust along major highway corridors and throughout the urban and suburban core of the County. Many rural areas have either very weak service or no cellular connection at all.

Natural Gas

Although Lycoming County lies either in or adjacent to the Marcellus Shale Natural Gas drilling fields, this proximity factor does not translate into an easy, rapid, or automatic decision to extend natural gas service to the surrounding communities. While this is particularly true for homes located in rural country-sides throughout the County, it's equally daunting for many suburban communities as well. Thus, the public infrastructure investment to serve residential and commercial potential clients beyond the core communities will require gas utilities to make expansion decisions using more flexible terms. Also of importance to note are possible environmental impacts of the industry. There is concern about the fragmentation of our forests and possible water pollution, both surface and ground water. Land use regulations are necessary to mitigate any land use conflicts. Zoning is the best method of land use control.

Housing

According to 2015 US Census Bureau estimates, there are over 52,000 housing units in Lycoming County. Most dwellings (about 60%) are owner-occupied. However, 75% of the County's occupied housing stock was built prior to 1979. In fact, only approximately 2,200 residential structures have been built in the County since 2000. This is a deterrent to attracting young professionals and professionals in general to the County. Professionals desire a certain type of housing with modern amenities. They do not want to purchase homes that are over 50 years old and in need of renovations. The perpetual challenge is how to encourage a supply of homes in multiple cost ranges and locations to meet the needs of the community. Specifically, there is a need to optimize the style of dwellings to meet a changing demographic composition. The seniors who make up an increasing proportion of our population have different housing expectations than the millennial professionals that we want to retain and attract. Both groups are likely to seek rental housing. However, according to 2015 US Census Bureau estimates, the supply of rental units in Lycoming County has remained flat for the last 5 years. The total

real estate value In Lycoming County is approaching \$5.9 billion. The estimated 2015 median home value was \$138,500 while the median monthly rent for a 2-bedroom unit was \$737.

Outdoor Recreation

During the 2018 Update, over 1,120 citizens were surveyed regarding why they decided to become residents of Lycoming County and why they choose to remain. The natural beauty of the area and outdoor recreation were the most frequently cited reasons given. Lycoming County parks occupy an area of 4,142 acres or approximately 6.5 square miles. There are about 60 parks in the County. There are at least 30 named trails in the County, most notably the Pine Creek Rail Trail and the Susquehanna River Walk. Yet, many of the County's outdoor recreation resources are not fully developed, protected or promoted. This concern is not new, it was cited in both the 2006 County Comprehensive Plan and again in the 2008 County Recreation Plan.

Lycoming County is well known as a hunter's haven. Private hunting camps can be found in many rural areas. Beyond hunting, forest tourism may include: lumber heritage exploring, cross-country skiing, birding, hiking, and equestrian activities. Lycoming County is also graced with miles of exceptional value (EV) and high quality cold water fisheries (HQ-CWF) streams and watersheds. Beyond the West Branch Susquehanna River, the County includes six major streams: Muncy Creek, Loyalsock Creek, Lycoming Creek, Larry's Creek, Pine Creek, and White Deer Hole Creek. Over 2,200 miles of waterways traverse Lycoming County, reportedly more than any other county in Pennsylvania. Thus, water recreational activities are a defining feature of the County's culture.

Outdoor recreation also helps to protect the natural beauty of this County. The survey conducted in summer of 2016 by PCD indicated that natural beauty was by far the most frequently commented on topic of all the comment categories with 418 of the 1132 survey respondents indicating that natural beauty was one of things they care most about in the County.

The research indicates that outdoor recreation infrastructure has the ability to assist the County in addressing some of our most important issues including those identified under Issue #6 (volunteerism and civic engagement) and Issue #8 (Drugs). In addition to the benefits which outdoor recreation can provide to our citizens, outdoor recreation infrastructure projects can also be combined with other initiatives such as stormwater management, floodplain mitigation, resource protection, sourcewater protection, and transportation to provide additional leverage to complete those projects and to more efficiently invest our financial resources.

Issue 2 – Economy

The economy of Lycoming County has adapted many times throughout its history to take advantage of burgeoning industries and market trends. Historically, the County has been known for its lumber production, steel fabrication, manufacturing, plastics-related industry, and most recently—natural gas exploration and development. Adapting to changing economic forces has been the County's hallmark.

Over the last ten years, Lycoming County's economy has seen an increase in employment in Healthcare and Social Assistance; Mining, Quarrying, and Oil/Gas Extraction; and Accommodation and Food Services while seeing a decrease primarily in the Manufacturing sector. Although the number of manufacturing businesses has declined in the last decade, it remains the second largest industry in the County.

Lycoming County is also the northcentral PA hub for government, services, retail, finance, and entertainment. It is also home to eleven industrial parks, two colleges, and one large health care system, which have been stable and growing anchors in the economy. In fact, the healthcare and education industries represent two of the largest economic sectors in the County.

Lycoming County has many assets to take advantage of including its long-standing strongholds in the economy. The plentiful natural and cultural resources, its low cost of living, well-respected colleges and healthcare system, and the significant presence of the sports industry are all major economic components that can further advance the County's economic potential. Natural and Cultural Resources and their associated tourism potential have some of the greatest untapped opportunities to grow the economy while attracting new people and investments.

However, in order to truly achieve a resilient economy, there needs to be a diligent strengthening of both the traditional and non-traditional market sectors. All of the traditional and non-traditional economic sectors are components of an economic resilient community. None of them alone will be able to fix or drive the economic situation. Yet, their reinforcement along with continued additional diversification will help lead to economic resilience. To improve its economic strength, Lycoming County must concurrently reinvest in its historically strong economic sectors while also adapting to the changing opportunities and leveraging its local assets. The 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update focuses on articulating the County's asset-based development opportunities.

The following segments of the economy represent opportunities for asset-based economic growth within the County over the next 15 years:

Agriculture

Agriculture has been an important part of Lycoming County's heritage and rural character ever since 1795 and it continues to remain a viable economic sector in Lycoming County today.

As of 2012 Lycoming County had 1,207 farms with a total area of 158,462 acres. This represents 20% of the total land area of the County. The major commodities produced in 2012 in Lycoming County by value were grains, greenhouse/ floriculture, dairy products, and hogs/pigs.

Some of the challenges facing agriculture include a lack of local processing facilities, profitability, regulations, and public misconceptions. These challenges are not unique to Lycoming County. Many of these issues were identified in the Lycoming County 2006 Comprehensive Plan.

Strategies and opportunities were identified to address these issues; such as permanently preserve appropriate farmland, reform regulations, and support the diversification of farm operations.

Manufacturing

The manufacturing industry became a stronghold in Lycoming County in the 20th century, with manufacturing sites built along river corridors and factories built in neighborhoods near the workforce. Main industries included timber, steel, textiles, and furniture making. Today's manufacturing operations are primarily located in one of the County's eleven industrial parks, specifically planned, zoned, and prepared with infrastructure for this type of land use. Many manufacturing businesses are specifically located in Lycoming County because of its rich natural resources and easy access to clean, abundant land and water resources.

Although manufacturing is in a period of decline in both the number of businesses and the number of paid employees, manufacturing businesses are still a top employer in Lycoming County. However, any further loss of manufacturing would erode a core component of the local economy. Therefore, preservation of the manufacturing sector and preparing for changes in the industry is an important goal.

Today's manufacturing is increasingly automated and driven by high technology. In place of traditional trade skills, the manufacturing industry is in need of skills that align with changing manufacturing processes that increasingly rely on new technologies such as robotics. Finding an adequate local workforce trained with these skills has been challenging. Consequently, many businesses are resorting to on the job training which increases costs, training time, and reliability for employers. If the Lycoming County workforce cannot provide the skills needed to support current and future manufacturing businesses, this trend may threaten one of the historical economic strengths of Lycoming County's economy.

Lycoming County is well positioned to take advantage of the emerging manufacturing industries. One example of a growing component within the manufacturing sector is the plastics and petrochemical industry because there is a plastics cluster in Central Pennsylvania. This is supported by the report commissioned by the State of Pennsylvania and the Team Pennsylvania Foundation, the prospects to Enhance Pennsylvania's Opportunities in Petrochemical Manufacturing in order to study the opportunities and benefits in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania College of Technology, through its Plastics Innovation & Resource Center (PIRC), provides the technology resources to facilitate the growth and success of the plastics industry in Lycoming County. The Center focuses on education, training, and research. Retraining the workforce to respond to the changes in the manufacturing sector will allow Lycoming County to remain competitive in the manufacturing economy moving into the future.

In addition, Lycoming County is located in close proximity to the new ethane cracker facility to be built in Beaver County, Pennsylvania. There is an opportunity for new growth because of the close proximity to the feedstock used by these industries and the potential supply of this feedstock. The County has an opportunity to leverage this linkage to expand new job growth, build off its manufacturing base and diversify its economy.

Transportation, Warehousing, Logistics, and Fulfillment

The transportation, warehousing, logistics, and fulfillment sector represents another opportunity for economic growth in the County. US Census County Business Patterns data for Lycoming County depicts a steady increase in both the number of business establishments and paid employees in this sector of the economy. Lycoming County is extremely well situated to serve as a shipment, fulfillment, and logistics center for much of the

Northeast and Great Lakes regions of the United States. The road and rail infrastructure in the County is in a very good condition. I-80 and I-180 carry 25 percent of the truck traffic in the region already and the new Central Susquehanna Valley Transportation (CSVT) project will add a new limited access freeway through the central part of this region providing north-south connections. The Williamsport Regional Airport is also currently experiencing upgrades that will allow it to accommodate additional air service to meet growing commercial and passenger demands. Additionally, the proximity to major metropolitan areas, as stated earlier is of great advantage. These factors combined will allow Lycoming County to capture a growing market in this industry sector in Pennsylvania.

Small Business Development

Small businesses are an integral aspect of not only the economy but also communities and families across the country. They represent the creativity, ingenuity, and hard work that fuel the country's economy.

Similar to the rest of Pennsylvania, small businesses in Lycoming County represent one of the strongest underpinnings of the local economy. Approximately 50-56% of the County's employment is in the small business sector. The Pennsylvania Small Business Development Center (SBDC) reports that there were 9,051 small businesses (1-499 workers) in Lycoming County in 2013 which provided jobs for 46,696 people.

According to Pennsylvania SBDC, small businesses have accounted for a significant share of the Commonwealth's economic production and hiring. Some of the most significant challenges of the small business sector lie in the ability of businesses to fully realize their potential, sustain, and earn a profit. Businesses often found in the makers movement particularly have a hard time becoming more than a hobby non-profit business enterprise. Finding the resources to overcome the challenges are key. Lycoming County's greatest potential for further developing any business or industry clusters would lie in the ability to grow its asset-based economy. Over fifty percent of the County's workforce is employed by small businesses, most of those with less than twenty employees. Ensuring that these businesses are supported and provided incentives to grow and sustain is critical to the County's economic resilience.

Understanding the needs and the growth opportunities of the small business sector in Lycoming County is essential in order to provide a sustainable path for economic resilience and the ability to develop additional strongholds in the economy.

Tourism

Tourism is a significant driver of economic and social development. In fact, it is over a \$400 million industry just in Lycoming County alone (based on visitor spending). It stimulates economic growth by generating income, employment, and investment. It can also generate valuable spin-off benefits including preservation of cultural heritage, improved infrastructure, and local community facilities. Tourism built on the County's strengths and assets has the potential to stimulate economic growth and development in Lycoming County and have spillover effects throughout the region. This type of investment is more likely to produce multiple benefits across economic sectors and be sustainable over time.

Lycoming County’s tourism-related competitive advantages lie in its quality of life attributes and the things that people value most, such as its natural beauty, small town communities, its parks and trails, the local history and culture, the arts, outdoor recreation, and its well respected institutions and events.

Natural Resources

One of Lycoming County’s greatest assets is its abundant natural resources and the outdoor recreation opportunities associated with it. These assets have long offered residents and visitors opportunities for enjoyment and a diversity of experiences in this County. With world-class trails and exceptional value fishing streams, Lycoming County draws an increasing number of County residents and regional visitors. As such, it has become an important component of the economic wellbeing of Lycoming County.

Lycoming County serves as the eastern gateway to the PA Wilds region, a PA DCNR Conservation Landscape Initiative and tourism promotion region in northcentral Pennsylvania that includes twelve counties west to Warren and Clarion counties. It is known for its two million acres of public land, its two National & Scenic Rivers, the largest elk herd in the Northeast and some of the darkest skies in the country. Its natural resources are what drive the economy. As one of the major gateways, Lycoming County is well-positioned to capitalize on both the rural and urban aspects of the visitor demand to this region.

There exists opportunity for increasing business opportunity in a broad range of ecotourism or nature-based tourism services such as: guided trips, outfitters, camp grounds, and cabin rentals, in addition to dining and food services, equipment rentals for hikers, bikers, and kayakers including shuttle services.

With careful planning and management, natural resources and outdoor recreational assets have the ability to add another dimension to the marketability of Lycoming County, both from a business and investment standpoint as well as from a tourism promotion perspective. Capitalizing on these assets will also further diversify the economy. This includes recognizing and promoting local parks, lands, and facilities as well as regionally significant initiatives such as the PA Wilds and Lumber Heritage Region.

Cultural Resources

Lycoming County has a rich history and strong set of cultural assets that contribute to the high quality of life and attract visitors to the region. Williamsport in particular is home base for most countywide arts, culture, and history organizations. Leveraged together, these historic, cultural, and arts based assets provide an opportunity to grow the economy by positioning the County to have a competitive edge in the region.

Arts and cultural experiences help enhance the social capital of the community and increase the sense of collective identity of a place. Cultural amenities are important to not only to help maintain the quality of life for exiting Lycoming residents but also to help attract and retain a workforce to support a strong local economy.

Issue 3 – Fragmentation and Disenfranchisement of Local Government

The majority of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties are “fragmented” into a large number of small municipalities. In fact, there are 2,561 local governments in Pennsylvania--Lycoming County has 52 of them. In Pennsylvania, many

government rules, regulations, and policies are delegated to the most local level of government to administer. Likewise, many services are provided separately by each municipality. This type of government construct provides a number of distinct benefits; but it also creates a very challenging environment. In short, that environment is characterized by two principal issues: fragmentation that inevitably hampers the efficient execution of the municipal mission by locally elected and/or appointed officials and disenfranchisement that perpetuates the sense of isolation and powerlessness by local municipalities.

From a benefits standpoint, the Township, Borough, and City level is the most local form of government in Pennsylvania which allows citizens easy accessibility to elected and appointed officials. This enables the maximum degree of local citizen dialogue related to policymaking, service delivery, and taxation. In general, this form of government is viewed as being accessible, accountable, and effective.

However, since local municipalities must operate within the bureaucratic construct of an overarching Federal, State, and County Government, they have become increasingly vulnerable to fragmentation. Quite often, the unavoidable outcome of this fragmentation is a lost opportunity for improved cost efficiency and enhanced service delivery. Moreover, many municipalities find it increasingly difficult to recruit adequate numbers of citizens and trained professionals, to serve on their legislative bodies, boards, and commissions. Another challenge involves capital-intensive services, such as public water, sanitary and storm sewer, emergency services, as well as managing administrative functions that local governments are required to provide. In communities with small populations or tax bases, these requirements could be considered redundant overhead. The demands placed on local leaders can overwhelm their resources. This is perhaps most acutely experienced in the area of essential emergency services for Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) due to three vexing issues: decrease in volunteer capacity, intensive certification requirements, and the lack of sustainable financial resources.

The most ubiquitous and dominant concern identified by municipalities across the County involves their respective Fire and EMS Agencies' ability to provide adequate levels of emergency medical services and fire services to the residents they serve. As in other rural communities around the state, the local emergency medical service providers are also experiencing declining numbers of volunteers.

There are a number of excellent examples where local governments have crafted partnerships or structures to mitigate the challenge of fragmentation, more efficiently perform their duties, and tackle the growing sense of disenfranchisement. Some of these Best Management Practices have proven to be quite effective, but there's much more to do. Some of these organizations or partnerships are the Lycoming County Water and Sewer Authority, The West Branch COG, The Pine Creek COG, the MS4 Coalition, and the WATS MPO.

Issue 4 – Flooding

Floods are the most common and costly natural catastrophe in the United States. Nationwide, hundreds of floods occur each year, making it one of the most ubiquitous hazards in all 50 states and U.S. territories. In Pennsylvania, flooding is the number one natural disaster and can occur during any season of the year from a variety of sources. Every two to three years, serious flooding occurs along one or more of Pennsylvania's major rivers or streams, and it is not unusual for a flood disaster to occur several years in succession. Most injuries and

deaths from flooding happen when people are swept away by flood currents and most property damage results from inundation by sediment-filled water.

Lycoming County has in excess of 2,200 miles of river, streams, and creeks; this figure establishes Lycoming as having one of the highest amounts of waterways for a County in Pennsylvania. Major flood-prone areas include communities located in low-lying valleys of creeks, streams, and tributaries. Unless protected by a levee, most population concentrations along the West Branch Susquehanna River have a high possibility of flooding. Unfortunately, this vulnerability is ever-present throughout the year.

As documented in the County's 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan, Lycoming County had over 5,500 structures located in the Special Flood Hazard Areas (aka regulatory floodplain areas or SFHA) with varying degrees of vulnerability for each structure. As a result of the County's recent efforts to delineate the floodplain boundaries more accurately, the County has reduced the number of addressed structures to 4,188 (over 9% of all addressed structures in the County). Salladasburg Borough has the highest proportion of structures in the floodplain at over 75% of all structures vulnerable to flooding. Jersey Shore and Muncy Borough also have high percentage of structures in the SFHA. All critical facilities in Shrewsbury Township are located in the SFHA. When looking at vulnerable structures by property type, the vast majority those structures are residential in nature. Over 3,045 of these 4,188 structures (or 73%) are residential dwellings.

Lycoming County's flood management response to this reoccurring hazard hinges upon five interrelated measures including; levee protection, property acquisition, home remediation, regulatory tools, and flood insurance reform. Lycoming County has implemented a holistic approach to flood management.

Issue 5 – Land Use

All 52 municipalities within Lycoming County have either adopted their own zoning ordinance or have opted to join the County Zoning Partnership. Collectively, these designated land uses are intertwined with every aspect of our residents' daily lives and the community's lifestyle. Land use influences where we live, work, play, and recreate. Because of the significance of sound land use planning, it is equally evident that a failure to plan for and mitigate potential negative impacts of incompatible land uses will likely degrade a neighborhood or an entire municipality.

Over the past 10 years, land use regulations have been well-implemented throughout Lycoming County. However, elected as well as appointed officials need to stay abreast of changing trends which may affect land use such as new industry practices, new markets, and new infrastructure projects which change the development potential of previously undeveloped land.

From a development perspective, land use ordinances set the stage for economic development and community development opportunities. Community leaders must ensure that public infrastructure planning and land use planning are aligned. Moreover, community leaders must carefully evaluate the impact of land use decisions on the area's scenic beauty and natural resources—a factor deemed very important by all County residents.

Failure to implement and enforce land use regulations will result in uncoordinated development and land use conflicts. Land use conflicts could cause decreases in property values which hurts the economic prosperity of the municipality. Additionally, uncoordinated development could result in public safety hazards and unintended municipal fiscal burdens. Land use regulations also protect local resources such as our community character and help to coordinate new development with existing/planned infrastructure and utilities.

Issue 6 – Volunteerism

Many public and non-profit institutions in Lycoming County rely heavily on volunteers to provide amenities and services to the citizens of this County. Volunteers fulfill a variety of essential community functions such as serving as local fire firefighters and EMTs and assisting municipalities on boards such as municipal planning commissions, zoning hearing boards, and municipal authorities. Many local non-profit groups also rely on volunteers to achieve their missions. However, volunteerism and civic engagement, particularly among young people, has been an issue of concern since at least the 1980s. As an example, since 1985 the number of fire and EMS volunteers statewide has declined from 152,000 to 70,000. Municipal officials and community leaders at the local level recognize that the declining trend in volunteer involvement is consistent with what they have seen in their municipalities.

Local appointed boards are filled mostly with older citizens (many of which are in their late 50s and older). While this may not have been a major problem in the past, the issue is becoming more apparent as technology is dividing the population. The issue involves attracting, communicating with, engaging, and retaining young men and women to serve as volunteers on boards with aging members.

While the structure of local government in Pennsylvania presents some challenges for providing services, it also provides the key benefit of allowing citizens to directly participate in local government decision-making by serving on boards and voicing their concerns directly to government representatives. However, if local governments are not effectively communicating with their citizens and civic engagement continues to decline, then these benefits will rapidly diminish. Local government officials need to find solutions to solve this problem so that this local government structure remains relevant in the 21st Century and beyond.

Issue 7 – Water Quality

Access to clean drinking water is essential for a community to survive and prosper. Not only is water necessary to support public health, but reliable water service is also needed to foster development and economic growth.

Looking at water as a natural resource, in Lycoming County, there are nine major watersheds at USGS's HUC 10 level. Lycoming County contains 1161 miles of streams that are designated high quality (HQ) and exceptional value (EV) waters, qualifying by their good chemistry and biological makeup. Two of Lycoming County's EV/ HQ streams are known throughout the State for their exceptional quality: Pine Creek and the Loyalsock Creek. Outdoor lovers flock to Pine Creek to experience its scenic vistas and quality nature experience. The Loyalsock was recognized as the "2018 PA River of the Year" by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) and the Pennsylvania Organization for Waterways and Rivers (POWR).

There are approximately 2,200 miles of streams and 92 water bodies in the County. Roughly 8 percent of the streams located in the County are listed as impaired. Atmospheric Deposition, followed by Agriculturally Related Activities, Small Residential Runoff, and Acid Mine Drainage are the known causes of impairment. There are also 32.58 miles of impairment with unknown sources. While 8% does not appear to be a major issue it illustrates the fact that there is improvement needed.

As is the case with any watershed or aquifer, groundwater, and surface water sources are vulnerable to a variety of potential contaminants, such as improper disposal of hazardous chemicals or infiltration of man-made products including gasoline, oil, road salt, pesticides, or fertilizer runoff. Each year, PA DEP releases a water quality status report in accordance with the Clean Water Act. The most recent report is titled “2016 Final Pennsylvania Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report.” The narrative report contains summaries of various water quality management programs including water quality standards, point and nonpoint source controls, as well as descriptions of programs to protect lakes, wetlands, and groundwater quality. PA DEP categorizes surface and groundwater impairments as having a “source” and a “cause”. See the PA DEP website for the report that shows details of sources and causes of impairment for groundwater, lakes, and streams in PA.

Issue 8 – Drugs

In 2014, nearly 2,500 Pennsylvanians died from drug-related causes, a 20 percent increase from the previous year, according to the PA State Coroners Association. This currently puts PA as seventh in the nation for drug-related overdose deaths. In 2015, 3,505 Pennsylvanians died from overdoses and in 2016, 4,884 Pennsylvanians died of drug overdoses. These are a very significant increases in overdose deaths, almost twice as much as 2014. The 2017 numbers are not in yet.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), in 2012 an estimated 2.1 million Americans were addicted to opioid pain relievers and 467,000 were addicted to heroin. These estimates do not include an additional 2.5 million or more pain patients who may be suffering from an opioid use disorder because the NSDUH excludes individuals receiving legitimate opioid prescriptions.

Other important national statistics from a September 2014 Report for the Center for Rural PA:

- 4.2 million Americans age 12 and older have used heroin at least once
- 80% of heroin addicts reported abusing prescription opioids before starting heroin
- Health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for painkillers in 2012
- Heroin abuse affects one out of every four families

Across Pennsylvania, heroin and opioid abuse is becoming a serious epidemic. According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania December 2015 Report - Heroin: Combating this Epidemic in Pennsylvania:

- From 2007-2012 over 3,000 Pennsylvanians died from overdoses
- Overdose deaths increased by an astounding 470% over the last two decades
- More people are dying from overdoses than from car accidents (ages 20-44 in PA)

- 52,150 Pennsylvanians are receiving addiction treatment services
- Approximately 760,703 Pennsylvanians remain untreated
- In 2016 4,884 Pennsylvanians died from drug overdoses

The Lycoming County Coroner reports that there are 50-60 overdoses in Lycoming County per month. During one 24 hour period in the summer of 2017 there were 50 overdoses. The Lycoming County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) is preparing a strategic plan for Lycoming County to deal with the opioid epidemic. The plan will include all areas of the criminal justice system and the treatment alternatives in the County.