

The Comprehensive Plan for the Lycoming County Planning Area- Plan Review and Validation of Main Issues

Name of PAT Member: Art Plaxton

Municipality or Organization you Represent: Jackson Township

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Chapter 2 - Economic Development	Exodus of Younger Generation with Increasing Elderly Population – This is a concern because as an area ages the social fabric of the community becomes less stable. Fewer younger workers, who generate a greater proportion of the tax base required to support necessary community services required by older individuals, can create the potential for budget deficits and adversely impact the provision of community services to all individuals.		X	This has not been a problem.	
	Low Wages and Income – can adversely impact on the stability of the younger worker population and generation of tax revenues to support community service needs.		X		This has not been a problem.
	Lack of Employment Opportunities and Lower Paying Jobs – This is a concern because employment is generally the key factor that dictates where younger workers will make their home. Low paying jobs force breadwinners to hold multiple jobs to sustain their families which deprive the family of parent time.		X		This has not been a problem.
	Decrease in the Traditional Family – which impacts on human service needs.	X			This is a problem but it is outside the control of the township or county.
	Housing Stock and Diversity – This is a concern due to the increasing elderly population needing affordable choices to go with a changing lifestyle. It is also important to younger families with limited budgets.		X		This has not been a problem.
	Low Migration Rates – were viewed as an important indicator of close-knit stable communities.		X		This has not been a problem.

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	Diverse Economy – was viewed as a current strength and as a real need for the future of Lycoming County.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Loss of Industries and Opportunities – is a concern in terms of maintaining job opportunities for the younger workers.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Good Access to Capital – is viewed as a positive aspect of Lycoming County in terms of new business start-ups and existing business expansions.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Good Labor Force – was viewed as important to business development and expansion in Lycoming County.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Tax Rates – were noted as being a particular burden for business development as well as for low income and elderly families.	X		School taxes are an increasing burden, increasing much faster than wages or inflation.
	Storefront vacancies – can create a bad image for business development in boroughs and villages.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Lack of retail diversity – is a concern because it reduces employment opportunities, retail and service opportunities and choices that play a role in maintaining a stable community.	X		Big box stores drive out local, small merchants.

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	Fewer younger individuals and families are making Lycoming County their home, our population is growing older. This may be due in part to declining income levels, relatively lower wage rates, and fewer employment opportunities.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Current housing choices, particularly in terms of type and price, do not meet the changing needs of younger workers, the elderly and more non-traditional family households.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Lycoming County has a good labor force that has served a relatively diverse economy that was anchored by the Manufacturing Sector. However, it may not be well equipped to support our nation's changing economy, where the number of manufacturing jobs is decreasing and the number of high tech service jobs is increasing.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Trends of concern in the City of Williamsport include a declining population, increasing number of non-family households, high mobility rate of city residents, low median household income levels, and lack of affordable housing. These trends can impact the fabric of the community leading to higher crime rates and increasing social service needs.	X		Williamsport must be made attractive to higher income households.
Chapter 3 - Land use policy and natural and cultural resource management	Ridgetop Development – Ridgetop development impacts the county's invaluable scenic landscapes and local regulations should be considered to deal with this for appropriate areas of the County.	X		The zoning code should prohibit ridgetop development. It lessens the county's attractiveness.

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	Steep Slope Development – Steep slope development is a concern, since a significant proportion of the County has slope gradients equal to or in excess of 25 percent. The current County Zoning Ordinance does not prohibit development in these locations, but does require erosion and sediment control plans and a soil stability analysis and does define an aquatic resource buffer width graduated on the slope gradient.	X		The zoning code should prohibit steep slope development. It causes new problems and expenses.
	Land Use/Interchange Impacts from Interstate 99 – The future development of Interstate 99 will provide local municipalities with additional land development opportunities, particularly around both existing and new interchanges. However, such opportunities also pose challenges in terms of mitigating the potential negative impacts, as well as providing sufficient infrastructure to accommodate this growth. Current land use regulations do not specifically deal with highway interchange development activities.	X		Interchange development burdens municipalities far more than it benefits them.
	Agricultural Preservation – The possible future development impacts of the new I-99 corridor may threaten additional agricultural lands. The I-99 study area contains nearly 10,000 acres of productive farmland soils, the majority of which are located in the planning area’s floodplains and most developable land areas. However, less than 900 acres of these productive farmland soils have been protected through the use of Agricultural Security Areas, and none have been preserved through easement purchases. The most popular form of agricultural protection throughout Lycoming County, is the Clean and Green program, in which 368,590 acres or 575.92 square miles are currently enrolled from the County.	X		Interchange development need not be permitted at all interchanges. Use preservation easements.

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	Open Space Preservation – Open space is a key feature of the Lycoming County landscape. It protects and preserves groundwater quality and quantity, provides habitat for local biological resources, and provides recreational opportunities. Development is increasingly consuming open space lands and impacting the natural ecosystem. Forested open space performs the crucial role of stormwater absorption and groundwater recharge, which reduces the severity of flooding for downstream properties and urban communities of Williamsport, Jersey Shore, Montoursville, South Williamsport, Duboistown, Muncy and Montgomery.	X		Suburban sprawl seems to be encouraged by the county, it continues everywhere.
	Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) – The most notable effects of CAFOs are air, odor and water quality impacts. However, CAFO's are subject to more regulatory scrutiny and design standards than the relatively unregulated traditional family farm. Fear of large-scale intensive agricultural operations and odor trigger strong opposition wherever CAFO's are proposed. Lycoming County is in the process of developing a model ordinance that would provide municipalities with a tool to effectively regulate such operations.	X		The zoning board tends to approve anything, but do you want a CAFO next to your house?
	Junk/Salvage Yards – Commercial junk/salvage yards, as well as junk on residential properties, are posing a serious threat to the County's scenic beauty and rural quality of life. Currently, there are no specific local ordinances that adequately regulate accumulations of junk and debris. While local and County ordinances can prevent new junk, they cannot mandate cleanup.	X		The zoning board grants a variance for almost anything, but do you want a junkyard next door?

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	Floodplain Management – Because floodplains are relatively flat and have good soils, they are convenient for development. However, natural flooding cycles can cause tremendous damage to man-made structures. Accurate delineation of floodplains will help ensure that new development is sensitive to this hazard. Protection of new and existing development by means of dikes and levees is an option, but the associated costs and benefits must be weighed. Zoning ordinances, property acquisition and relocation, and stream stabilization projects are being utilized to minimize flood damages, however more needs to be done.	X		Building in floodplains needs to be prohibited. Those flooded want us to pay for their losses.
	Groundwater Quality – Groundwater is a main source of drinking water, and its protection will require sound practices regarding sewage and septic systems. In addition, new development will need to be sensitive to the fact that paving and other surface alterations will impact both the quality and quantity of accessible ground water.	X		The threat from fracking is still present.
	Susquehanna River Opportunities - The surface waters of the Susquehanna River and its tributaries provide drinking water, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat. Stormwater management, soil conservation measures, and riparian buffers are key tools for maintaining their quality.	X		Does dumping fracking waste into the Susquehanna River improve it?
	Scenic Resources – The natural beauty of the area is one of the County’s greatest assets and is very important not only to the people who live there, but also to those who visit. The 1973 study, Scenic Resources of Lycoming County, identified many of the scenic vistas in the planning area and scenic viewsheds have been mapped in comprehensive plans since 1977.	X		The scenic resources study desperately needs to be updated, with more areas added.

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	Cultural Resources – Cultural and historical resources are an integral part of the overall quality of life in the County. Little League Baseball, archaeological and other historic sites, Century Farms, and community festivals are all part of the cultural heritage of the area and have value to those who live and visit here.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Uncontrolled steep slope and ridgetop development may have negative environmental impacts in environmentally sensitive areas of the County, such as the Resource Protection area as defined on the County Vision map contained within this plan.	X		Ridgetop and steep slope development lessen attractiveness and make new problems and expenses.
	Proposed highway improvements for the US 220 / US 15 / I-99 corridor will increase growth pressure for development along the corridor and will result in significant land use changes that may or may not be welcome in some communities.	X		Interchange development burdens municipalities far more than it benefits them.
	Preservation of natural resources , including open spaces, wetlands, and prime agricultural soils is a high priority.	X		Development must be restricted to existing developed locations to preserve natural resources.
	Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) must be carefully located.	X		A CAFO's impact on surrounding properties is almost always negative.
	Commercial junk and salvage yards , as well as unsightly junk and other trash on private and public properties have negative impacts on our County image.	X		A junkyard's impact on surrounding properties is almost always negative.

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	Many of the County's cultural and historical resources are not protected.	X		No importance seems to be given to this.
	Much of the usable land in Lycoming County is located in the floodplains of the Susquehanna River and its tributaries. Minimizing flood damages, while still allowing for growth and development, is a significant challenge.	X		Floodplain development only creates requests for taxpayer reimbursement of the losses.
	Open Space, State Forest Land and State Game Lands have existing, untapped potential for additional recreational and tourism development.		X	Additional development will only destroy what is to be protected.
Chapter 4 - Transportation	The U.S. 220 corridor has been a major east-west route through Lycoming County. While the area has grown, development has mainly been focused along the corridor, which in turn has helped reduce the incidence of sprawl. However, it has long been recognized that the west end of the roadway is no longer adequate to meet the needs of those who use it. As a result, the corridor has been designated as part of the new Interstate 99 system and has undergone environmental and preliminary engineering studies to determine the final alignment.	X		The US220 proposals must be carefully monitored and challenged if they are inappropriate.

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	Access drives are found throughout the County, many of which are very steep and, in some cases, are so close together that they pose serious safety hazards.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Most developed areas of the County are well served by road, rail and air transportation facilities. The continued upgrade of these services is critical to future growth in the County.		X	The facilities are adequate.
	Public Transit is currently available within the more urbanized areas of the County. City Bus (now named River Valley Transit), which is operated by the Williamsport Bureau of Transportation, has scheduled fixed routes that serve most of the area along the river corridor, but not the communities in the outlying areas to the north and south. The lack of public transit options limits opportunities for residents who may wish to find alternative ways to work and for those who don't own a car or drive at all, e.g., younger residents and senior citizens.	X		More publicity can be given to the existing Susquehanna Trails bus service.
	Many bridges throughout the County need major rehabilitation or replacement. While some of these bridge projects are programmed for funding in the PennDOT TIP, others have been identified in the Williamsport Area Transportation Study Long Range Plan. An increase in funding is needed to implement these improvements.		X	Roads are not a county function or responsibility.
	The capacity of many of the local road systems is reaching its limit, particularly at various intersections. There are also safety concerns at specific sites throughout the County.		X	Roads are not a county function or responsibility.

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	The Williamsport Regional Airport provides connecting services to Philadelphia. Located in the Borough of Montoursville, the Williamsport Regional Airport is classified by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Aviation as a scheduled commercial service facility and provides services to area businesses, residents, and companies visiting the region. The airport provides commercial airline services with direct flights via US Airways Express to major international hubs at Philadelphia. Multiple daily departures connect Williamsport to over 160 cities in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Central and South America. Due to the Airport Authority's Fare Watch Program, which is designed to keep the airport's fees competitive.	X		The airport needs competition, additional airlines and destinations.
	The SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority has played a key role in preserving freight services in the County by purchasing the Williamsport Branch Line from Conrail. Currently, the Lycoming Valley Railroad operates the line. The Authority's goal is to "preserve service to rail-dependent industries through shortline operations," and facilitate economic development through good rail service. At the present time, the Authority serves eight counties and owns 200 miles of track and five shortline railroads that haul approximately 30,000 carloads of freight annually. This has allowed some 50 companies to remain cost competitive, which, in turn, has protected over 2,000 jobs in the region. The LVRR alone services 20 companies and handles approximately one third of the total carloads of freight. Currently, there are concerns regarding the preservation of the Norfolk-Southern Harrisburg to Buffalo Main Line.		X	This seems to work well.
	Maintaining a quality rail, road and air transportation system will be important to our future.		X	This has not been a problem.

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	Public transit services are limited to the more urbanized areas of the County.		X	More publicity can be given to the existing Susquehanna Trails bus service.
	Many of the roadways in Lycoming County have scenic qualities that are unique to our region but are undervalued, underutilized and unprotected from development and its impacts.	X		The scenic resources study desperately needs to be updated, with more areas added.
Chapter 5 - Community Infrastructure Plan	Water Quality for Wells - The quality of the natural groundwater is not high in many areas. Although well water may be potable, often it is not palatable without treatment (eg. sulfur taste and odor). Pollution of groundwater from nonpoint sources, such as agriculture, has not been identified as problematic in a widespread degree.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Stormwater Management Problems - Development has occurred without storm water management controls required. This has led to runoff problem areas adjacent to municipal roads and complaints amongst residents.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Telecommunication Towers - Telecommunication tower issues are two-fold. It is important that the I-99 Corridor have cellular telephone service without dead space. Also commercial and industrial growth requires cellular service. There is a need to balance adequate coverage and the number of towers. Additionally, the placement of cellular towers must be reviewed in relation to the natural beauty of the communities and the scenic viewsheds.	X		Placement in relation to the natural beauty must be carefully considered.

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	Campground Sewage Disposal - The Susquehanna River and Pine Creek corridors (as well as the Little Muncy Creek corridor to a lesser extent) have public and private campgrounds, as well as numerous river recreation lots. Use of river lots is restricted to a six-month period over the spring and summer. Collection and disposal of sewage from this concentrated recreational use is a significant issue.	X		Forceful enforcement must ensure that water supplies are not polluted.
	Campground/River Lot Flooding - The public and private campgrounds, as well as river recreation lots, located along the Susquehanna River and Pine Creek are in many cases located within the floodway. There is a concern for safety, and pollution from stored items.	X		Forceful enforcement must ensure that water supplies are not polluted.
	Sewer Expansion Capacity - The existing capacity of public sewerage systems provides for expansion in many growth areas.	X		Sewer expansion encourages undesirable sprawl. It is a subsidy to developers.
	Flood Protection - Flood protection from the Susquehanna River is a primary concern of many citizens. Although there is flood protection in the Greater Williamsport Area, many of the urban areas along the Susquehanna corridor are susceptible to flooding. Flood protection in these areas has been restricted to moving essential services such, as electricity and heat, to an area in residences that is above the flood levels.	X		Building in floodplains needs to be prohibited. Those flooded want us to pay for their losses
	Good school systems (public/private) – The residents in the Lycoming County Planning Area have the opportunity to attend quality public and private school systems at the elementary, middle school and high school levels. Additionally, there are excellent technical schools, colleges, and universities in the immediate area.		X	This is not a county issue.

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	Intermunicipal Cooperation - There are cooperative agreements in-place and a general spirit of cooperation between the municipalities in providing services with a few notable exceptions.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Public Infrastructure – The existing infrastructure, including road network, utilities, and services is in place and can support continued growth.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Integration of Land Use and Facilities – There has been poor integration of land use changes with existing facilities.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Subdivision without Infrastructure - An issue that is prevalent throughout the rural areas of these municipalities is residential subdivisions that were constructed without adequate road network, sewage treatment, or water supply until recent ordinances and enforcement.	X		Permits must be denied in the absence of adequate support facilities.
	Hospital and Medical Support - High quality hospital and medical services support continued growth of the communities and are an important factor in attracting new employers to the area.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Immediate Access to State Forest Lands - One of the strong points of this area is its natural setting in the heart of central Pennsylvania. These communities have excellent access to a tremendous State Forest Land and State Game Land resources.		X	This has not been a problem.

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	<p>Prime Fishing, Open Space, Clean Air, and Good Water Quality - There is immediate access to excellent fresh water fisheries, to include Lycoming Creek, Loyalsock Creek, Larry's Creek, Muncy and Little Muncy Creeks, Pine and Little Pine Creeks, and the Susquehanna River. These fisheries have the benefit of good water quality, which supports warm water species and cold-water species, such as trout in Lycoming and Loyalsock Creek. This area is rich with open space, both public and private. It is only a short drive, or in some cases a short walk, to peace and solitude in a rural or forest setting.</p>		X	This has not been a problem.
	<p>Access to the Susquehanna River - Access to the river is both a strong point and a weakness. The river is a tremendous recreational asset flowing through the community. In some respects it is readily accessible, however, there is room for significant improvements in boating access and general public access.</p>		X	This has not been a problem.
	<p>Bikeway Connectivity - The Pine Creek Rail Trail extends from the northwestern border of the County to a trailhead in Jersey Shore. The area has several other bikeways, including the Montoursville/Loyalsock Bikeway, the Lycoming Creek Bikeway, and designated bike paths throughout the City of Williamsport. Construction plans are in process for completing the section of the Susquehanna Trail that will connect to the Montoursville/Loyalsock Bikeway, the Lycoming Creek Bikeway, and Susquehanna State Park.</p>		X	This has not been a problem.

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	Unique, Natural Beauty - This area of central Pennsylvania is rich in natural beauty, with tree covered mountains and rich valleys. There are vistas and scenic overlooks throughout the County. A single trip along any one of a number of scenic corridors, such as the Pine Creek Valley, Route 15, or Loyalsock Creek will bring visitors back to our area year after year. There is seasonal beauty with snow-covered mountains in the winter, lush greenery and abundant wildlife in the spring and summer, and a fall foliage that rivals any in the world.	X		Additional sprawl must be stopped and the scenic resources study updated, adding more areas.
	Arts, Music, Museums - The Greater Williamsport Area is blessed with excellent facilities and programs to address the needs of musicians, artists, and performing artists. These facilities serve as the cultural center for the entire county.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Outdoor Recreation - There are many opportunities for outdoor recreation with numerous hiking and mountain biking trails in nearby State Forest Land and State Game Lands. The opportunities for outdoor recreation in the vast forestland and open fields of Lycoming County are endless. The region is also rich with quality streams and creeks, plus the Susquehanna River, offering opportunities for swimming, boating and fishing.	X		Intrusive development must be stopped.
	Amateur & Professional Sports - Historic Bowman Field is the home of the Williamsport Crosscutters, which provide local professional baseball at the Single A level. Although there are amateur sports leagues in a variety of sports, this area is known for baseball. The Greater Williamsport Area is the birthplace of Little League Baseball and World Headquarters of Little League Baseball.		X	This has not been a problem.

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	Sports Programs - The region has a wide variety of sports programs, from youth leagues through adult leagues.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Indoor Recreation (YMCA, YWCA) - There are indoor recreation facilities within a reasonable distance, including the YMCA & YWCA in Williamsport and several commercial facilities.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Natural Areas - Lycoming County has a high percentage of forestland and natural fields with State Forest Lands, State Game Lands, and large tracts of land from private hunting and fishing clubs. This abundance of forestland and fields provide natural areas and varied habitat for the enjoyment of all.	X		Development must be restricted to where it already exists.
	Golf Courses - The region has a variety of quality golf courses, which include the White Deer Golf Complex and the Williamsport Country Club. There are numerous golf courses within an hour drive outside the county.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Recreation Facilities – There are YMCA and YWCA recreation facilities and community pools supporting these communities. Recreation facilities such as baseball and soccer fields have been constructed through volunteer efforts, with improvements dependent on donations and volunteerism. There are community parks but a limited number of neighborhood playgrounds. A sports dome is being constructed at the Generation Sports Complex in Muncy Township. A new YMCA is also scheduled to start construction in the fall of 2006 at the complex.		X	This has not been a problem.

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	Abundant Wildlife - The large number of acres of forest land, natural fields, and waterways with State Forest Lands, State Game Lands, and large tracts of land from private hunting and fishing clubs provide and abundance and variety of habitat. This abundant habitat supports a variety of wildlife, including a variety of small birds and animals, big game animals, and many migratory birds. The area has seen a resurgence of bobcats and introduction of species such as the otter and fisher. There are several nesting eagle pairs throughout the County.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Preserved Open Space - There is a large number of acres of forest land, natural fields, and waterways with State Forest Lands, State Game Lands, and large tracts of land from private hunting and fishing clubs that is preserved. There is also a high percentage of private property enrolled in the Clean and Green Program. Additionally, many farms have fields and woodlands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program. The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy is very active in this region with the mission to offer conservation easements to private land owners.	X		Open space preservation must be high priority, both for residents and for visitors.
	Aging public infrastructure requires significant maintenance for continued residential, commercial and industrial growth.		X	This has not been a problem.
	Open Space, State Forest Land and State Game Lands have existing, untapped potential for additional recreational and tourism development.		X	This has not been a problem.