

10. Community Facilities, Utilities, and Energy Conservation

10.1 Overview

The community facilities of Union County greatly impact its citizens' quality of life and safety. They include: public sewer and water, emergency services, schools, libraries, healthcare institutions, and related services. (Park and recreation facilities, often addressed under community facilities, are addressed separately in Chapter 9 of the Plan.) This element analyzes the current status of these facilities and services and makes recommendations for providing them as effectively as possible.

The County is served well by many types of community facilities; examples include Bucknell University, the SUN Area Career and Technology Center, Evangelical Community Hospital, Citizens Electric Company, and the Union County Library System. Assessing the operations and planning for the future needs of these organizations and institutions as part of the county comprehensive planning process provides an important perspective because most currently serve more than one municipality. This offers the opportunity for more regional understanding and cooperation among service providers, as exemplified by the current regional police study being completed by Lewisburg Borough and East Buffalo Township.

Union County's growing and changing population will need expanded and new community facilities. These changes will vary from renovated or new school buildings to educate the County's children to different emergency services to address new needs in the population. The locations of these community facilities are also an important planning consideration that significantly impacts their accessibility and can strongly influence growth patterns in the County.

SUSTAINABILITY KEY = ENERGY CONSERVATION

Energy is required for all of life's activities, from simple movements to complex lighting and heating systems. Minimizing energy usage both conserves resources and yields economic returns by lowering costs. With the cost of energy rising globally, there are significant environmental and economic benefits to be gained by modifying daily patterns and designing the built environment to do more with less energy. Examples of how these methods could be applied to community facilities include co-locating different facility types to reduce vehicular trips by citizens using their services, and designing buildings for maximum natural light exposure to reduce the need for artificial lighting. Energy conservation measures are also an easy solution for residences and businesses seeking to reduce their costs and/or increase profits.

10.2 Strengths and Issues

Union County's community facilities are diverse in their operations. (See Part I Regional Context and Trends – Community Services and Utilities of this Plan for more information and the locations of Union County's existing community facilities.) The projected growth across the County will create new demands on these important services.

Strengths

- Union County has an established tradition of volunteering and provides strong support for its community organizations. A unique source of volunteer support, especially in the central and western areas of the County, is the involvement of the Mennonite community in fire and emergency services.

Utilities

- Ground and surface waters in Union County provide adequate water sources to meet the needs of residents and businesses. Central water systems are available in primary growth areas with the exception of Hartleton Borough.
- Central sewage systems are present in all primary and secondary growth areas in the County except Forest Hill and Winfield.

- There are no substantial threats to water supply in the primary and secondary growth areas. Further, the State Water Plan (2008) did not identify any critical water issues in future development areas of the County.
- Conservation measures, such as the installation of water-saving toilets at Bucknell University, have lowered the flow demand for the Lewisburg Area Joint Sewer Authority.
- Safe and reliable electric, phone, and other services are available throughout Union County. No capacity issues are projected.

Emergency Services

- There are five police forces currently providing police protection based in designated growth areas. They are Hartleton, Mifflinburg, Lewisburg and New Berlin Boroughs and East Buffalo Township.
- There is a Pennsylvania State Police Barracks nearby in Milton, PA.
- Fire and emergency services groups provide good coverage across the County.
- Police, fire and emergency service providers work together to share resources, special training, and equipment.

- Union County's citizens care for and watch their neighborhoods, providing extra protection and safety in these communities.

Education

- The four school districts serving Union County are recognized for their quality education by local residents and businesses. The schools are an economic asset to the County and are coordinating with the Pennsylvania Heartland Coalition of Schools to promote the quality of public education to attract new businesses to the region.
- The SUN Area Career and Technology Center is an excellent vocational and technical education facility that provides resources for Union County recognized by students and businesses.
- Union County's citizens have access to a diverse set of quality colleges and universities. The County's public schools take advantage of partnerships with local universities, especially Bucknell and Susquehanna, for programs. In addition, the Susquehanna Valley Community College, which will provide classes at regional high schools, is currently under consideration in Sunbury, Northumberland County.

Healthcare

- Evangelical Community Hospital in Lewisburg and Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, PA provide high-quality healthcare services for Union County residents. Access to these facilities is also viewed as an economic asset for the County.
- Several different retirement facilities, ranging from Riverwoods to the Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, offer a variety of senior living options in the County.

County Government & Prison Facilities

- Union County has excellent administrative facilities located primarily at the Union County Courthouse, the Union County Government Center, and the Union County Community Services Center in Lewisburg and the County Office Center in Mifflinburg.
- A full range of prison facilities are located in Union County, which provides good access to these services and offers stable, good-paying jobs for the County’s residents. The prison facilities located in Union County are: the Union County Jail in Lewisburg, the Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary in Kelly Township, and the Allenwood Federal Correctional Complex in Gregg Township.

Other Community Services

- The County is well served by its public library system in three locations: Lewisburg, Mifflinburg, and Laurelton. The Public Library for Union County in Lewisburg recently expanded to accommodate new materials and computer terminals. Plans for the expansion of the Herr Memorial Library in Mifflinburg are underway.
- A number of community centers offer meeting places and various local services. The three community centers are the Donald Heiter Community Center in Lewisburg, the Community Center in New Berlin, and the West End/Hartley Township Community Center in Laurelton. There are also several senior centers: the Lewisburg Center, the New Columbia Senior Center, Penns Creek Adult Resource Center, and the West End Center/Hartley Township Community Center.

Issues

- Many opportunities exist for regional cooperation, but too many community facilities and services continue to be duplicated in individual municipalities.
- The scattered nature of new development is making it difficult to serve it efficiently with infrastructure and community facilities.

New Growth and Costs for Community Facilities

As new development occurs in Union County an important on-going planning consideration for each community will be: how does growth affect the capacity of existing community facilities to provide vital services? The Union County Planning Commission has compiled the following costs of local services to show the possible fiscal impacts of new growth on the County’s community facilities:

Average Annual Cost of Local Police Services	
Per Resident.....	\$152
Cost of a New Fire Engine.....	\$500,000
Annual Expenditures per Pupil.....	\$7,550-\$8,970

- The cost of community services for new residential development is often greater than its contributions in tax revenues. Growth management and the balance of various land uses are very important to the fiscal health of community facilities. This was demonstrated in two studies conducted in Union County by the Penn State Cooperative Extension for Kelly and Buffalo Townships.¹⁰

¹⁰ Penn State Cooperative Extension, The Public Finance Implications of Land Uses and Community Services: Kelly Township & Buffalo Township.



Utilities

- Several areas around the County have inconsistencies between designated growth areas and utility service areas.
- Eight of the ten sewage authorities in Union County have Act 537 Plans that are more than 10 years old.
- At least half of the County’s sewer authorities have indicated the need for upgrades to their current systems and few of these authorities have the financial resources to complete the necessary improvements. Mifflinburg Borough, New Berlin Borough, and White Deer Township’s authorities are currently under corrective orders from the PA Department of Environmental Protection.
- The Chesapeake 2000 Agreement pursuant to the U.S. Clean Water Act requires Pennsylvania and other states within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to reduce sediment loading to the Susquehanna River and other bay tributaries, with the goal of removing the nation’s largest estuary from the Clean Water Act’s list of impaired waters by 2010. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is requiring sewage authorities in Union County to upgrade their treatment plants to comply with the agreement.

- Various rural locations around Union County are experiencing problems with on-lot sewage systems, such as Winfield, Kelly Crossroads, Buffalo Crossroads and Cowan. Problems are remote and spread out from existing central systems.
- Water pressure is an issue in the Lewisburg/East Buffalo Township water system.
- There is no central water system in Hartleton Borough, the designated primary growth area for the Western Planning Area.
- Energy costs are currently increasing at a high rate. Citizens Electric rates serving the eastern portion of Union County increased by 50 percent in January 2008. Conservation is the major option for lowering costs.
- An electric substation is projected to be needed in the Mifflinburg area in the next ten years.

Emergency Services

- Most municipalities in Union County rely on the Pennsylvania State Police for service. However, this coverage is very minimal with long response times because the State Police at Milton patrols three counties. Other local police forces in Union County are often asked to respond, which places additional demands on their resources.

- With the projected growth in Union County additional police will be needed but there is a lack of funding to hire new officers and address more specialized training.
- Criminal drug activity and drug-related crime is increasing, which creates a need for specialized policing and requires substantial staff time. This issue is a challenge for the current small police forces to address.
- Alcohol use and violations are a significant public safety issue.
- Availability of personnel, especially for daytime fire/emergency calls, is an issue for most companies in the County because these companies mainly rely on volunteers. Job and two-income family demands have limited citizens' time available for volunteering.
- Fundraising and training needs are becoming a greater burden on the volunteer fire / emergency companies.
- Congestion on major routes in the County, including Routes 15, 45 and 192, is impacting response times for emergencies.

Education

- In the next ten years the County's school districts will have significant facility needs. Lewisburg School District is projecting the need for a new high school. Mifflinburg School District has major renovation needs. The SUN Area Career and Technology Center has renovation and expansion plans.
- Advanced academic and technical training standards are needed in the County's schools to meet international competition.
- Current funding for public education is mostly based on property taxes, creating disparities in the County and inadequate funding for education. State financial assistance for technical education is also being reduced.
- Federal education mandates create significant resource demands on public school districts.

Healthcare

- Evangelical Community Hospital needs to expand its facilities onto property surrounding its current building.
- Transportation access for health services is difficult for anyone without an automobile.

County Government & Prison Facilities

- It has been determined by a peer study sponsored by the National Association of Counties that the current Union County Jail is inadequate and should not continue to operate.
- New drug, alcohol, and mental health courts will likely reduce the future prison population at the County level.

Other Community Services

- Meeting/community facilities for young families with children, teens, and informal community groups and clubs are somewhat limited.
- Securing adequate funding for operating the County's libraries and community centers is a constant challenge.

10.3 Community Facilities, Utilities, and Energy Conservation Goals



Community Facilities, Utilities, and Energy Conservation Goals

- The coordination of municipal services / facilities and regionalization of community services are encouraged where feasible.
- The region’s water supply is maintained and improved.
- Efficient, centralized sewer and water facilities are provided within Union County’s growth areas and strongly restricted in designated rural areas.
- The reliance on energy sources external to Union County is reduced through conservation and use of local generation facilities.
- The growth needs of Evangelical Community Hospital are supported.
- Existing fire and emergency services are maintained and their capacities improved to serve a growing population.
- Specialized police services are expanded to meet local needs.
- Union County’s education systems receive adequate investment to provide internationally competitive training. In addition, educational facilities are community focal points within the County’s designated growth areas.
- Growth of the Union County Library System is supported.
- Provide adequate, shared, multi-purpose community space in towns and villages for seniors, families with small children, non-religious community groups, and youth (age 15-20).

10.4 Community Facilities, Utilities, and Energy Conservation Strategies

10-1. Regionalize sewer and water authorities where possible.

Many of the County's sewer authorities require costly upgrades and maintenance to their current systems. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has found that by regionalizing sewer and water authorities, especially in smaller villages and towns, municipalities can improve operating efficiency, reduce costs, and help alleviate overflows that threaten the environment. In addition to addressing structural improvements on a larger scale, regionalized authorities can consider best management practices, water conservation, and water reuse for larger areas of the County reducing the need to duplicate studies.

10-2. Support centralized utility investments in the County's designated growth areas by directing the location and timing of future growth and infrastructure.

Growth Areas and Rural Resource Areas (Conservation/ Woodland and Agriculture) are designated in Figure 5-1 (Future Land Use). To effectively implement the Union County Rural and Town Policies (Section 3.4) it is essential that municipalities direct utility investments and infra-

structure to the designated growth areas. Each municipality needs to review its municipal land development regulations and Act 537 plans for consistency with the land use, infrastructure, and community facilities goals of this Plan.

In addition, development densities within the County's growth areas should support central sewer and water utilities. The average residential density target in the County's primary growth areas should be 6 dwelling units/acre, and the target for secondary (village) growth areas should be an average density of 2.5 dwelling units/acre. Within the primary and secondary growth areas, development should be sited in locations suitable for connections to utilities and water supply.





10-3. Restrict centralized sewer and water facilities outside of designated growth areas and promote alternative solutions for rural environments.

Residential development depends on sewer and water facilities. Better maintenance, repair, and inspection of existing on-lot systems is a preventive measure that can be taken as a first line of defense. In addition, rather than expand centralized sewer and water facilities to hamlets and existing rural development, municipalities can promote sewage treatment systems that improve groundwater recharge, such as spray and drip irrigation systems. Biological solutions that use natural processes to treat wastewater are another possibility. In agricultural areas, municipalities and farmers can explore the potential for expanding the use of composted sewage treatment as fertilizer.

10-4. Explore innovative approaches to meeting Pennsylvania’s DEP requirements for the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Susquehanna and Potomac River watersheds in Pennsylvania contribute about half of the fresh water to the Chesapeake Bay. Pennsylvania signed the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement and is committed to removing the Bay from the federal Clean Water Act’s list of impaired waters by 2010. To meet the Pennsylvania DEP requirements for the Chesapeake Bay watershed and reduce pollution for nonpoint sources (e.g., farmland and urban runoff), Union County can explore innovative approaches such as nutrient trading¹¹ and biological treatment (for example, the process used at the Lewisburg Sewage Treatment Plant).

¹¹ Nutrient trading is a voluntary program developed by DEP to help meet the requirements of the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement. It allows parties that reduce the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus, and/or sediments they generate below baseline environmental requirements to sell the resulting credits to other parties. For example, farmers can sell credits derived from reducing nutrients generated by manure or chemical fertilizer application below specified thresholds to municipal sewage treatment plants to contribute to meeting effluent discharge requirements.

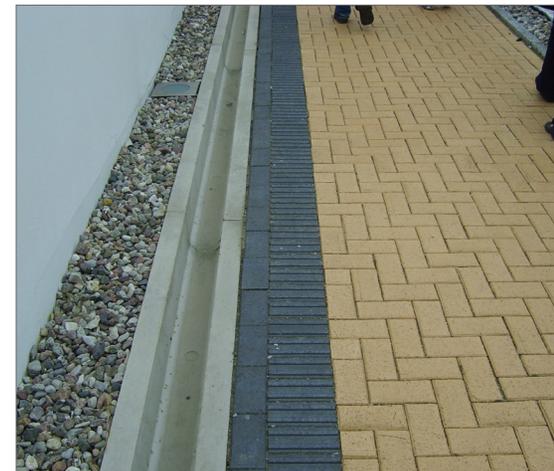
10-5. Promote stormwater best management practices and other development methods to preserve the County's existing vegetation, maximize groundwater recharge, and minimize impermeable surfaces.

Promoting development methods that limit negative effects on the environment is consistent with the sustainability principles of this Plan. Examples include conservation subdivisions, green roofs, rain gardens, porous paving, and best practices for stormwater management. To help preserve the County's existing vegetation and maximize groundwater recharge stormwater management should seek to minimize the use of engineered solutions such as pipes. In rural resource areas, any development should preserve existing vegetation to the extent possible, especially on steep slopes and in riparian corridors, to protect water quality.

10-6. Maintain the energy supply infrastructure while maximizing conservation and increasing renewable energy usage (e.g. - wind, solar and biomass).

This strategy supports "Energy Conservation", the Sustainability Key for this Element, by conserving resources and lowering costs. A number of existing institutions and companies, such as the SEDA-COG Energy Resource Center, Citizens Electric, and the Sustainable Energy Fund (SEF) of Central Eastern PA, work with municipalities and private users to increase the use of renewable energy and reduce demand through conservation.

Municipalities can enact land development regulations to encourage the siting of new structures to take the best advantage of passive solar lighting and heating and to allow for renewable (wind and solar) installations. Federal grants through the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Energy help reduce the cost of wind and solar installations on farms. For example, in 2008 federal grants provided over \$730,000 to 14 farms in the State of Massachusetts for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.



Surface Stormwater Drainage Treatment, Malmo, Sweden



Rain Garden in Parking Lot

Other potential tools include establishing local renewable energy suppliers and setting targets for reduced municipal and private energy consumption.

10-7. Seek additional opportunities for joint training, equipment and other regional cooperation among Union County's police, fire, and emergency services organizations.

With the exception of the four boroughs and East Buffalo Township, municipalities in Union County rely on the Pennsylvania State Police for police protection. The limited local police coverage in most parts of the County increases demand on the existing municipal departments. To conserve resources, limit spending, and streamline services, municipalities could pursue regional police forces. Such regionalization would facilitate opportunities for joint training, shared equipment, and combined facilities across the County's police, fire, and emergency services. Through regional cooperation, the departments can better combat increases in drug and criminal activity and focus some new, specialized police positions and training on drug and alcohol enforcement issues.

10-8. Maintain effective emergency response times as Union County continues to grow.

By directing the majority of the County's new population into growth areas, police, fire, and emergency services can concentrate their resources and therefore maintain emergency response times. In addition, limiting new development in rural resource areas and managing traffic on major routes in the County may help to improve emergency response.

10-9. Generate financial resources for additional staff and services through special services taxes.

In Pennsylvania, municipalities can adopt a Local Services Tax (LST) payroll tax of not more than \$52 per year per taxpayer. The tax was renamed in 2008 from the Emergency and Municipal Services Tax, but the primary purpose remains to help fund police and other emergency related services throughout the state. Municipalities must use at least 25 percent of the tax revenue for emergency services such as hiring more police and fire district staff. LST revenues can also be used to reduce property taxes through homestead or farmland exclusions.

10-10. Expand joint educational programs among Union County's school districts to the greatest extent possible.

School districts throughout Union County, in particular Lewisburg and Mifflinburg Districts, are anticipating the need for new and updated educational facilities over the next ten years. Again, by regionalizing and expanding joint education programs, such as before and after-school recreation or tutoring programs, the districts can help cut costs and avoid duplicating some services. In addition, non-profit education-based organizations could use space at local schools and provide services for students across districts.

10-11. Target resources to make education facilities in Union County environmentally sustainable, energy independent, and demonstrations of technical and public innovation.

Whenever feasible, school districts should meet expansion needs by utilizing and renovating existing educational facilities rather than constructing new buildings. When new facilities are planned they should be located within the County's designated growth areas and connect to current neighborhoods for multi-modal transportation access. In addition, school districts and municipalities should consider the co-location of school and other community facilities, such as recreation or cultural arts centers, in order to maximize the use and investment in these public buildings.

Also, school districts can target resources to make educational facilities throughout the County environmentally sustainable, energy independent, and demonstrations of technical and public innovation. Possible partners such as Bucknell University and the SEDA-COG Energy Resource Center could assist the school districts in these initiatives.

Utilizing Alternative Energy Systems

The Benton Area School District, located in Columbia County, PA, is installing a biomass boiler system in an effort to switch to renewable energy sources and support the local economy. Advanced Recycling Equipment (St. Mary's, PA) designed the system to heat two schools by utilizing energy sources such as corn, wood chips, wood pellets, and switchgrass pellets from a central service building. The School District was awarded a \$350,000 grant from the PA Energy Development Authority (PEDA) to purchase and install a biomass boiler in 2006. *Sources: Commonwealth News Release (2006) and Lancaster Farming Magazine (2007).*

10-12. Support the growth of Bucknell University through compatible infill projects in Lewisburg Borough and East Buffalo Township.

Bucknell University is committed to "building bridges" between the university, surrounding communities, and the larger region. Through its Strategic Plan, the University is focused on local partnerships and community development efforts. Infill projects will provide anchors of economic activity for these communities and enhance services for the University's students.

Bucknell University Strategic Plan

In April 2006 the Board of Trustees approved The Plan for Bucknell. This strategic plan calls for improvement in five areas: strengthening the academic core curriculum, deepening the residential learning experience, enhancing diversity, building bridges with the local community, and securing Bucknell's financial future. "Building bridges" covers a broad range of interactions between Bucknell and the surrounding community, for example:

- Providing diverse opportunities for students to promote social change
- Engaging Lewisburg and the region through partnerships and relationships with governmental agencies at all levels
- Advancing Bucknell's strength as an employer of choice locally, regionally, and nationally

10-13. Improve access to healthcare and related services by encouraging the expansion of Evangelical Hospital and the Union/Snyder Transportation Alliance.

Evangelical Hospital currently provides specialty units for adult, pediatric, and intensive care and is highly regarded in the community. The Hospital can expand its facilities and patient services by redeveloping nearby properties for use as new medical facilities. It could also partner with other medical providers such as outpatient doctors' offices to redevelop nearby sites for medical services. In addition to medical related facilities, compatible uses such as senior mixed-use housing adjacent to the Hospital should be encouraged.

Also, the County can work with the existing Union/Snyder Transportation Alliance to improve access to quality healthcare and other services for anyone without an automobile.

10-14. Maintain Union County's excellent government facilities and reduce reliance upon the County's antiquated prison.

Union County has adequate administrative facilities to operate and provide effective services for the foreseeable future. One identified need is for additional County storage, which is currently under consideration.

It has also been determined that the current Union County Jail is deficient. The lockup, some parts of it dating back to 1856, will continue to play a role in housing special inmate populations. Meanwhile, exploration has begun and should continue with neighboring counties for a possible regional multi-county prison approach.

10-15. Support maintaining and expanding the County's library system and other community centers.

The number of residents using the Union County library branch has more than doubled over the past twenty years. Planned renovations will improve the services offered to local patrons and better serve new users to the library. The Herr Memorial Library in Mifflinburg and the



West End Library in Laurelton should continue to assess their needs and consider renovations and expanded facilities as necessary.

In addition, co-locating community services provided by the County's libraries and community centers could improve access to these services and reduce operating costs by sharing resources. For example, Hartley Township's new library and recreation center are located next to one another. These buildings are also contiguous to the township park, offering convenient services for residents in one place.