NORTHERN PENNSYLVANIA TRI-COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

MCKEAN

POTTER

CAMERON

MCKEAN COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

JANUARY 2020

Resolution No. __8__ of 2020

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires that county comprehensive plans be updated every 10 years; and

WHEREAS, the MPC outlines content and procedural requirements associated with the preparation, review and approval of county comprehensive plans that have been followed in this County Plan Update process; and

WHEREAS, the McKean County Planning Commission coordinated the preparation of the McKean County Comprehensive Plan Update that has been published in one document, entitled *Northern*

Pennsylvania Tri-County Comprehensive Plan of McKean County dated January 2020 and comprised of charts, textual matter, narratives, and implementation plans; and

WHEREAS, the McKean County Planning Commission conducted a robust and inclusive public participation and engagement process, and
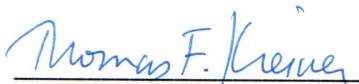
WHEREAS, the proposed McKean County Comprehensive Plan Update was submitted to school districts within and contiguous to McKean County, and contiguous counties and was otherwise made publicly available for municipal and citizen review and comment; and

WHEREAS, the McKean County Planning Commission adhered to the Public Meeting and Public Hearing requirements of the MPC in finalizing the County Plan Update; and

WH EREAS, the McKean County Planning Commission duly noted and considered all public comments received in finalizing the County Plan Update; and
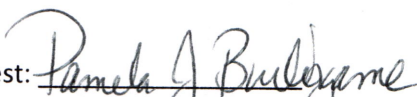
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Commissioners of McKean County hereby adopt the McKean County Comprehensive Plan Update that has been published in one (1) document, entitled *Northern Pennsylvania Tri-County Comprehensive Plan of McKean County* dated January 2020 and comprised of charts, textual matter, narratives, and implementation plans that form the whole of the County Plan Update and fulfills county responsibilities under the MPC.

A true and correct copy of said NORTHERN PENNSYLVANIA TRI-COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF MCKEAN COUNTY dated January 28, 2020 is attached hereto.

_____   _____   _____
Thomas F. Kreiner   Carol E. Duffy   Clifford D. Lane

Attest: _____   Date: 2-28-2020
Pamela J. Burlingame, Chief Clerk

Acknowledgements

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Sara Andrews, Executive Director
City of Bradford Office of Economic and Community Development

Jason Childs, District Manager
Potter County Conservation District

Dessa Chittester, Director of Accounting
Area Transportation Authority of North Central PA

Terry Cole, Administrator
PA Department of Labor & PA CareerLink

Lori Copp, Executive Director
Visit Potter-Tioga

Alicia Dankestreiter, Airport Director
Bradford Regional Airport

Terri Dennison, Executive Director
PA Route 6 Alliance

Linda Devlin, Executive Director
Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau

Carol Duffy, Commissioner
McKean County Board of Commissioners

Glenn Dunn, Emergency Management Coordinator
Potter County Department of Emergency Services

Sherri Geary, Director of Economic Development
McKean County Economic Development Department

David Greene, Member
Cameron County Industrial Development Authority

Nancy Grupp, Secretary; Board Member
Eulalia Township; Township Association

Paul Heimel, Commissioner
Potter County Board of Commissioners

Anne Horning, Broker
Crown Realty

Tina Johns Solak, Executive Director
Cameron County Chamber of Commerce

Phillip Jones, Commissioner
Cameron County Board of Commissioners

Tom Kase, Land Manager; Borough Council President
Collins-Kane Hardwood; Kane Borough

Susan Kefover, Commissioner
Potter County Board of Commissioners

Kara Kennedy, Executive Director
Bradford Area Chamber of Commerce

Tom Kreiner, Commissioner
McKean County Board of Commissioners

Cliff Lane, Commissioner
McKean County Board of Commissioners

Seth McClymonds, Pastor
United Methodist Church

Randy Metcalf, Deputy Director
Northern Tier Community Action Corporation

Doug Morley, Commissioner
Potter County Board of Commissioners

Bev Morris, Borough Manager
Coudersport Borough

Carolyn Newhouse, Executive Director
Bradford Area Alliance

Chris Nicholas, Forest District Manager
PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

Debbie Ostrom, Secretary
Potter County

Jeff Ream, President
J. Ream Engineering Consultants

Don Reed, Borough Manager
Emporium Borough

Lori Reed, Commissioner
Cameron County Board of Commissioners

Jennifer Rossman, Community Development Director
Potter County

Katie Sasala, Member; Teacher
Potter County Planning Commission; Austin Area School District

Ben Stone, Park Operations Manager, Hills Creek State Park Complex
PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Ken Straub, Member
Cameron County Planning Commission

Sandy Thompson, District Manager
McKean County Conservation District

Charlie Tuttle, GIS Technician; Chair
Potter County; Triple Divide Watershed Coalition

Dan Wertz, Director of Children and Youth Services
McKean County Department of Human Services

Bob Wicker, Business and Education Liaison
Potter County Planning Commission & Education Council

Alcherrie Williams, Director
McKean County Redevelopment Authority

Keith Wolfe, Superintendent
Cameron County School District

John Wright, Executive Director
Potter County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities

Planning Staff

Cliff Clark, Cameron County Planning Director
Will Hunt, Potter County Planning Director
Jeremy Morey, McKean County Planning Director
Amy Kessler, North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission

Consultant Team

Brian Funkhouser, AICP, Michael Baker International
Jamie Lemon, AICP, Michael Baker International
Vanessa Shamberg, AICP, Michael Baker International
Tracey Vernon, AICP, Vernon Land Use

Table of Contents

Introduction to the Plan

Northern Pennsylvania Tri-County Comprehensive Plan

The *Northern Pennsylvania Tri-County Comprehensive Plan* serves as the official policy guide for short-term and long-term decision making relative to priority investments in McKean County over the next 10-years. At its core purpose, a county comprehensive plan is intended to answer the question, "what is our game plan moving forward?". Throughout the planning process, comprehensive plans allow public officials, staff, and residents to take a step back and look at the big picture to form a strategic plan for county initiatives and investments.

Unique to this Plan, McKean County partnered with Cameron and Potter Counties to facilitate the planning process. This approach has provided one unified strategy for the region supported with county-specific actions. The three plans were developed in 2018 and 2019 with extensive public outreach and engagement. Based on public input, five prominent areas of focus, or "issues", were identified as regional priorities and validated throughout plan development. The issues are stated as goals with action items for each county in the individual plans and are not listed in any priority order.

- **Workforce Development**
  Regional expansion of local, statewide, and national employee recruitment efforts to attract talent to the region.

- **Economic Base**
  Business attraction and retention to provide high-quality jobs for the region's residents.

- **Communities**
  Invest in communities to enhance quality of life for residents, employers, and visitors.

- **Infrastructure/Environment**
  Deliver reliable, cost-effective infrastructure to support a high quality of life for residents, employers, and visitors.

- **Public Health**
  Ensure access to healthcare, including mental health and substance abuse services.

Overarching these goals is a shared region wide vision to ensure the premier wilderness and natural resources in Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties are available for the enjoyment and benefit of current and future generations. To further this vision, each of the counties will:

- Continue efforts to make certain a reliable water supply is available.

- Ensure future land use is concentrated in areas of existing development, to the maximum extent possible, and is compatible with contiguous municipalities and counties.

- Work with local officials and North Central to promote transportation access and improvements to efficiently move people and goods throughout the region.

- Protect natural and historic resources consistent with state and federal statutes and laws.

- Ensure resource extraction activities protect property owner rights while balancing natural resource protection.

Recognition of Existing County Efforts

The action items as presented are based on public input as well as input from businesses and community and economic development partners received during the planning process. The actions are areas on which the vast majority of stakeholders believe the county should focus its efforts. As one stakeholder framed it, "If we simply "continue to do" what we have done in the past, nothing will ever change. We need new radical ideas."

For each of the five goal statements, the action items will require a fresh look and likely revisions to existing policies, programs, and efforts; many identified in McKean County's 2009 Comprehensive Plan. This should not be disconcerting, but rather encouraging as the community recognizes the importance of the work performed by the county and its partners.

Planning Horizon

On a final note, the Comprehensive Plan is long-range in nature. The action items need to be prioritized, focusing on a few at a time and addressing the remaining items as capacity allows. The Plan is also a living document; it should be
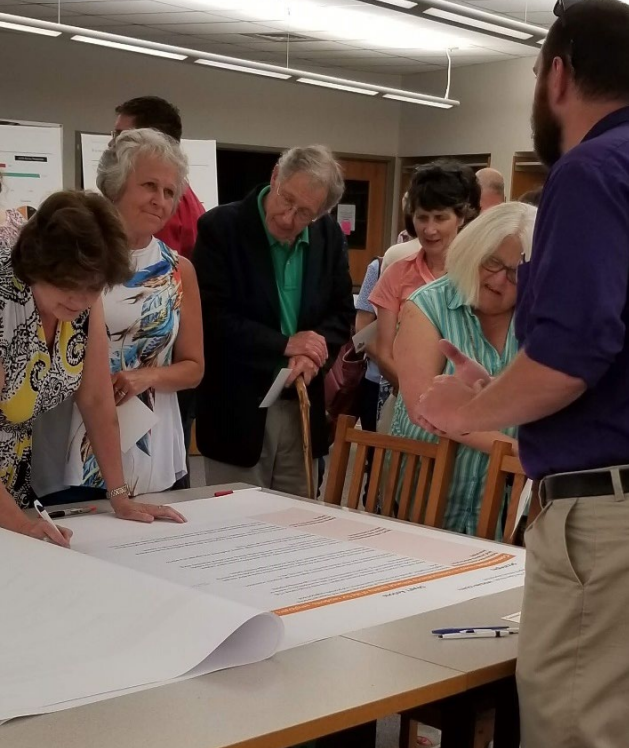
Planning Process

The *Northern Pennsylvania Tri-County Comprehensive Plan* was funded by the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission (North Central) with matching funds provided by Cameron County, McKean County, and Potter County. The regional approach to the planning process, under the leadership of North Central, provided synergy, substantial cost efficiencies for the three counties, and reduced the overall investment of taxpayer dollars. In total, McKean County's financial contribution to the plan was $11,500. The overall Plan, for all three counties, totaled $115,000.

The consultant team, Michael Baker International and Vernon Land Use, was engaged under an existing contract with North Central. The project team guided the overall planning effort, which was based on robust public engagement, to understand the desires of the community and visions for the future. Under the direction of North Central and the three counties, the planning process also reflected the Commonwealth's guidance on implementable comprehensive plans, focusing on fewer, but more relevant community issues.

Steering Committee

Through the leadership of the county planning departments, a diverse Steering Committee was convened to help guide the comprehensive planning process. The 44-member Steering Committee consisted of county residents and a diverse range of community stakeholders and community leaders to provide a strong grassroots foundation and champions for the plan's successful implementation. At the onset of the planning process, the Steering Committee was critical in identifying relevant issues affecting the Northern Pennsylvania region and supporting public outreach efforts. In addition, the Steering Committee helped analyze the public input received and was responsible for finalizing the list of goals that serve as guiding framework for this plan.

Focus Groups

The project team facilitated focus groups early in the planning process to gather initial public input regarding the top issues in the region as well as in each of the three counties. In total, 75 individuals participated in four focus groups presenting a broad range of interests. The list of attendees invited to participate was developed in close coordination with Cameron, McKean, and Potter County as well as the Steering Committee. Focus group participants included concerned citizens, farmers, tourism professionals, education professionals including school superintendents, resource

extraction representatives, municipal officials, and healthcare professionals, among others. Through the four focus groups, attendees identified specific opportunities and challenges in Cameron, McKean and Potter Counties and provided local knowledge and insight surrounding socioeconomic and industry trends.

Online Public Survey

An online survey was made available for a one-month period to provide residents and interested stakeholders the opportunity to give detailed input for the *Northern Pennsylvania Tri-County Comprehensive Plan*. The survey was developed to highlight and expand upon the top issues discussed during the Steering Committee meetings and focus groups, and was widely advertised through social media, news media, Solomon's Word, e-mail, and through the counties and Steering Committee. In addition, a simple random mailing sample of 1,500 property owners was administered to ensure the public at-large was represented in the survey. In total, 2,374 public participants completed the survey across the three counties, offering valuable insight on a number of important topics and issues.

Interviews with Major Employers

Concurrently with the online survey, the consultant team conducted one-on-one interviews with major employers in the region. In total, 13 companies participated representing manufacturing, healthcare, resource extraction, and telecommunications. The purpose of the interviews was to gather insights and observations about the region's top employers and their recommendations to improve the region's business climate. Many of the employer concerns echoed input received via the Steering Committee and focus groups specifically related to workforce availability, infrastructure, and telecommunications. Businesses contacted for the interviews included private sector employers in each of the three counties.

Public Open Houses

A public open house was held on June 27, 2019, at Port Allegany High School and was widely advertised and promoted via social media, news media, email, and through the counties and Steering Committee. In total, 57 individuals attended the Open House. Inform the public about the comprehensive plan and offer an opportunity to provide feedback, ideas, and suggestions directly to the project team;

- Showcase existing condition findings to the public and describe historical and projected trends in the region;
- Share the public input findings obtained through the Steering Committee, focus groups, business interviews, and online survey; and
- Facilitate meaningful dialogue with members of the public, property owners, and stakeholders to generate consensus on the goal statements and initial strategies that were developed based on public involvement.

In addition, McKean County held a second public open house on October 22, 2019 to collect public comments on the draft plan, which was posted on McKean County's website in early October for public review and comment.
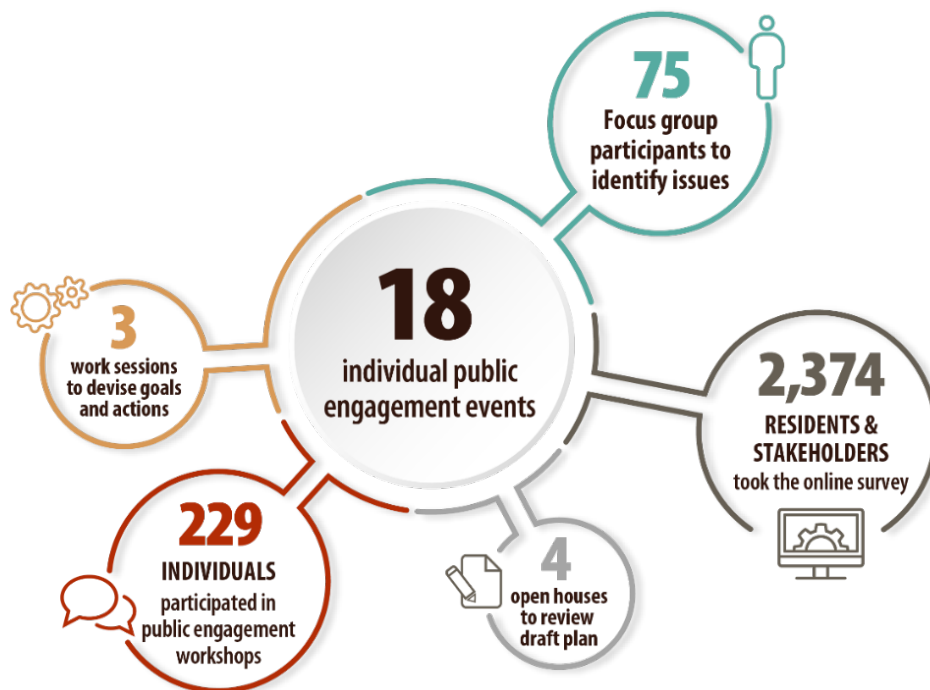
An Overview of Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties

The Tri-County region includes Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties located in north central Pennsylvania. Together, the three counties are home to 63,758 residents and 19,605 jobs.

Encompassing 1.5 million acres of land, Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties are located within the heart of the PAWilds, one of the best outdoor recreation destinations in North America. The region is largely rural and forested, has a rich history and unique small-town culture, and offers breathtaking beauty and fresh air. Among other visitor attractions, the three counties and the larger PAWilds region is known internationally for its:

- Dark Skies
- Allegheny National Forest
- Elk Scenic Drive
- Kinzua Skywalk

Population Trends

Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties were generally first settled in the 19th century to make use of the local natural resources of timber and fossil fuels, both of which continue to play a key role in the local economy. The expansion of the railroad and discovery of oil in the late 1800s and early 1900s resulted in strong population growth. Throughout the 1900s, all three counties experienced slight shifts in population, growing during certain periods and contracting in others.

Since approximately 1980, however, the population of the three counties has experienced a decline, decreasing from 75,035 residents in 1980 to an estimated 63,758 residents in 2018. Potter County's population has remained the most stable, while McKean County has lost the most residents (a loss of 8,610 residents between 1980 and 2018). McKean County is forecasted to lose additional residents through 2040, while Cameron and Potter County are forecasted to remain relatively stable.

Historical and Projected Population Shifts, 1810-2030
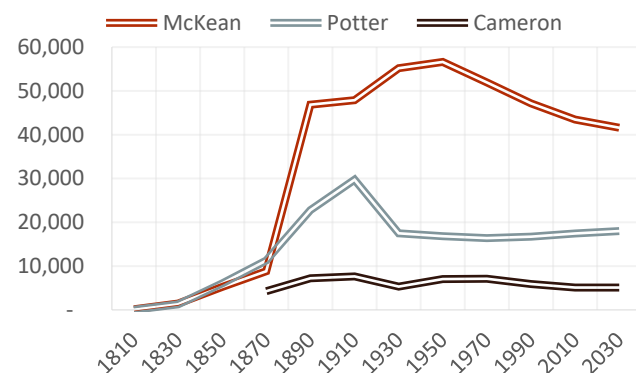
Tri-County Population, 1960-2040

Year	Population	% Growth
1960 (Actual)	78,586	
1970 (Actual)	75,406	-4.0%
1980 (Actual)	75,035	-0.5%
1990 (Actual)	69,761	-7.0%
2000 (Actual)	69,990	0.3%
2010 (Actual)	65,992	-5.7%
2020 (Estimated)	65,460	-0.8%
2030 (Projected)	64,690	-1.2%
2040 (Projected)	63,240	-2.2%

Age Distribution

Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties have an aging population and, when compared to the Commonwealth, is one of the oldest regions in the state. Cameron County has the oldest population of the three counties with a median age of 50.6.

Tri-County Absolute Population Change by Age Cohort, 2010 to 2023
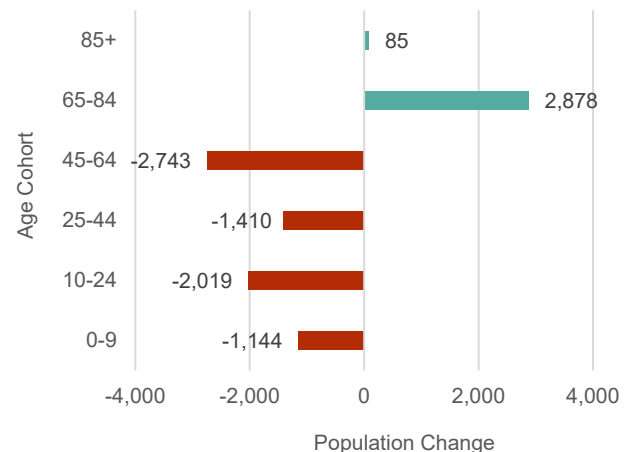
These types of age distribution trends are occurring across the country as America's baby boomer generation is in retirement or reaching retirement age. However, this trend is more pronounced in the rural Tri-County region and will have implications for housing, workforce development, transportation, and overall economic resiliency.

Housing Trends

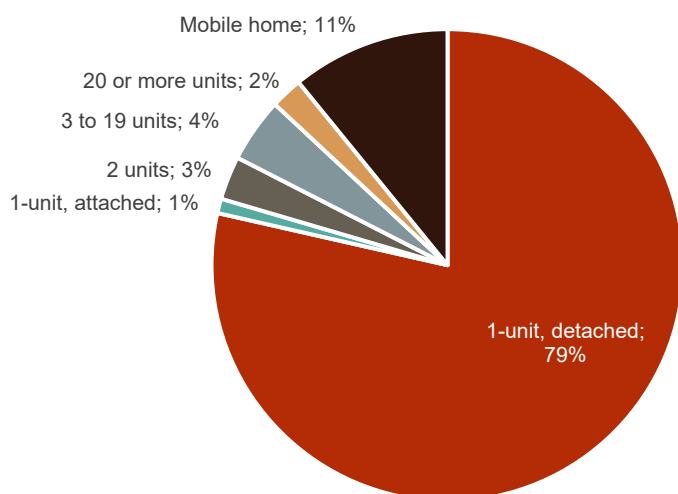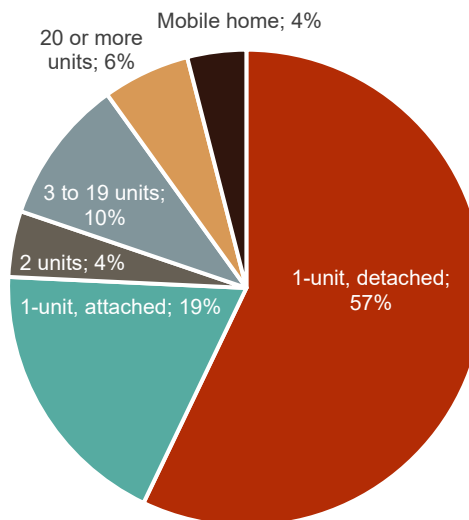### Housing Overview

Based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey estimates (2018), the primary housing stock in the Tri-County region is 1-unit detached homes. The second most common housing type is mobile homes. This differs from statewide averages as many communities have an abundance of 1-unit and multi-unit attached homes, which are less common in Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties.

Tri-County Housing Units by Structure Type, 2018

Mobile home; 11%
20 or more units; 2%
3 to 19 units; 4%
2 units; 3%
1-unit, attached; 1%
1-unit, detached; 79%

Pennsylvania Housing Units by Structure Type, 2018

20 or more units; 6%
Mobile home; 4%
3 to 19 units; 10%
2 units; 4%
1-unit, attached; 19%
1-unit, detached; 57%

Housing Units by Value

Based on 2018 data, the majority of home values (70% of all homes) in the Tri-County region range between $50,000 and $150,000, with an average home value of $133,509. Potter County has the highest median home value in the Tri-County region at $114,844. In comparison, the median 2018 home value in Pennsylvania was $185,452.

Housing Type

Based on 2018 data, there are an estimated 38,563 housing units in the three counties. Of these, 49.7% are owner occupied, 17.4% are rented, and 32.9% are vacant. Vacant housing is most prevalent in Cameron County and Potter County, which currently have a vacancy rate of 52.5% and 45.3%, respectively. McKean County's vacancy rate is 21.2%. Statewide, 10.3% of housing units are vacant.

Unique to the region, a large percentage of vacant housing in the three counties is due to seasonal homes. Data from the 2010 census (most recently available) shows that over 85% of vacant homes in Cameron and Potter Counties are used seasonally and for recreational use. In McKean County, that number is 57.9%.

Tri-County Housing Units by Type, 2018

32.9%
49.7%
17.4%
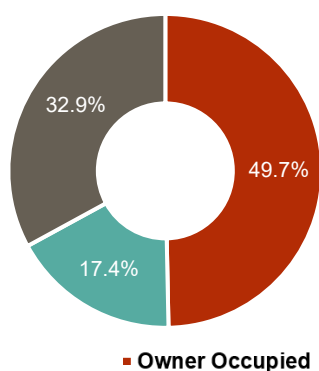
Pennsylvania Housing Units by Type, 2018

10.3%
29.0%
60.7%
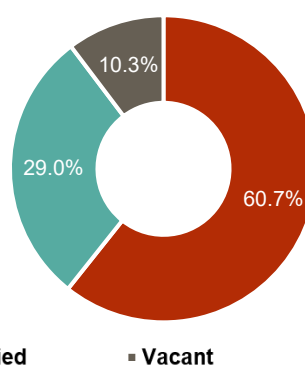
■ **Owner Occupied**   ■ **Renter Occupied**   ■ **Vacant**

Income and Employment Trends

Median Household Income

The median household income in the Tri-County region was $44,788 in 2018 and is projected to increase to $51,498 by 2023. The region's median household income is lower than the statewide average of $57,362.

Tri-County Median Household Income, 2018

Labor Force and Unemployment

The Tri-County's labor force, defined as resident individuals age 16 and older who are employed or are seeking employment, is 27,400 individuals. Approximately 95%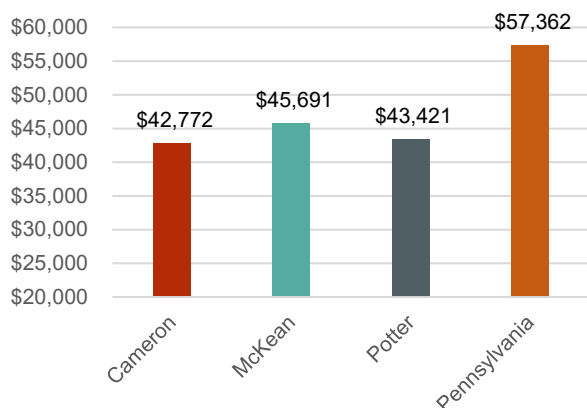 of the region's labor force are employed and 5% are unemployed. Potter County has the highest unemployment rate of the three counties at 5.7%.

Unemployment spiked regionally, statewide, and nationally in 2008, 2009, and 2010 due to the recession, but has trended downward since 2011. The Pennsylvania statewide average unemployment rate is 4.1%.

Labor Force and Unemployment Rate, 2018

Year	Labor Force	Unemployment
Cameron	2,100	4.9%
McKean	18,100	4.9%
Potter	7,200	5.7%

Employment Trends

Beginning in the 1980-1990s, the nation began to witness a shift in its economic base where the manufacturing sector began to decline, and the service sector began to grow. This shift was due to multiple factors, including automation, off-shoring, and recessions; but the shared result has been a decrease in manufacturing jobs. Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties have been affected by this trend. Since 2010 alone, the Tri-County region has lost more than 865 jobs across all sectors.

Today, there are 19,605 jobs located within Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties. The top employing sectors are Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing, Educational Services, and Nursing and Residential Care Facilities.

Top Industries by Employment, 2018
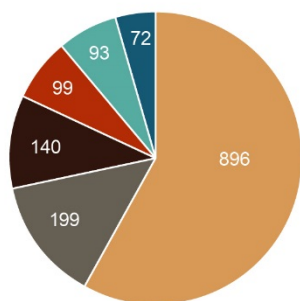
Cameron Top Industries, 2018

- Manufacturing (896)
- Public Administration (199)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (140)
- Retail Trade (99)
- Accommodation and Food Service (93)
- Other Services (except Public Administration) (72)
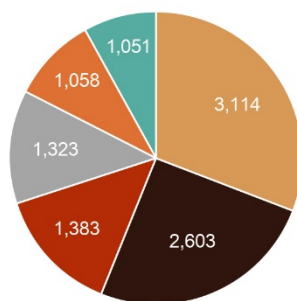
McKean Top Industries, 2018

- Manufacturing (3,114)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (2,603)
- Retail Trade (1,383)
- Educational Services (1,323)
- Construction (1,058)
- Accommodation and Food Service (1,051)
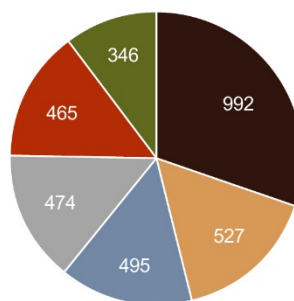
Potter Top Industries, 2018

- Health Care and Social Assistance (992)
- Manufacturing (527)
- Transportation and Warehousing (495)
- Educational Services (474)
- Retail Trade (465)
- Information (346)

Survey Results at a Glance

How Many Survey Responses?

2,374 Survey Responses

County	Responses
Potter	745
McKean	1,117
Cameron	342

Who Completed the Survey?

Age

- 314 — 21 and under (Gen Z)
- 511 — 22 – 38 (Gen Y – Millennials)
- 651 — 39 – 53 (Gen X)
- 767 — 54 – 72 (Baby Boomers)
- 83 — 73+ (Silent Gen)

Education

- 272 — Some high school
- 468 — High school diploma
- 230 — Technical training
- 875 — College degree
- 366 — Graduate or doctorate degree
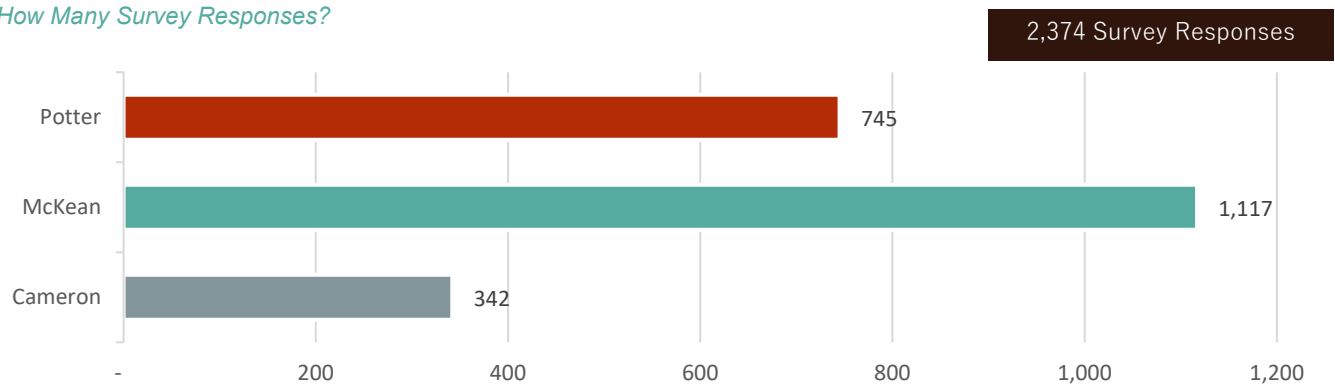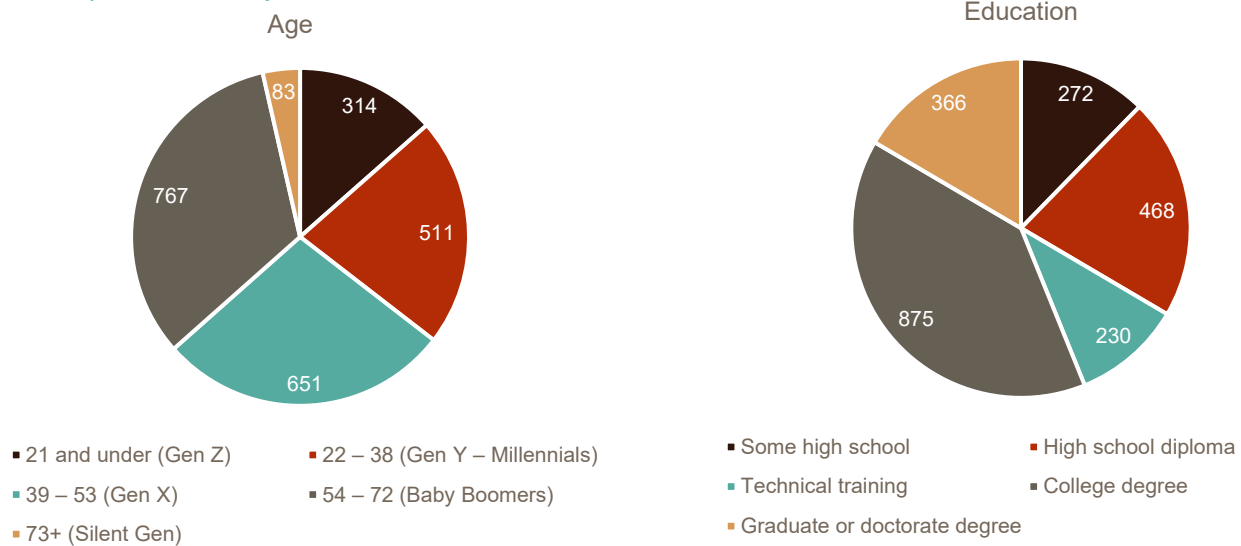
Where do Survey Participants Work?

Industries of Survey Participants

Industry	Count
Services	~500
Other (e.g., homemaker, retired)	~447
Trades	~306
Government	~268
Healthcare	~266
Student	~261
Nonprofit	~144
Retail	~87
Agriculture	~25
Unemployed	~20
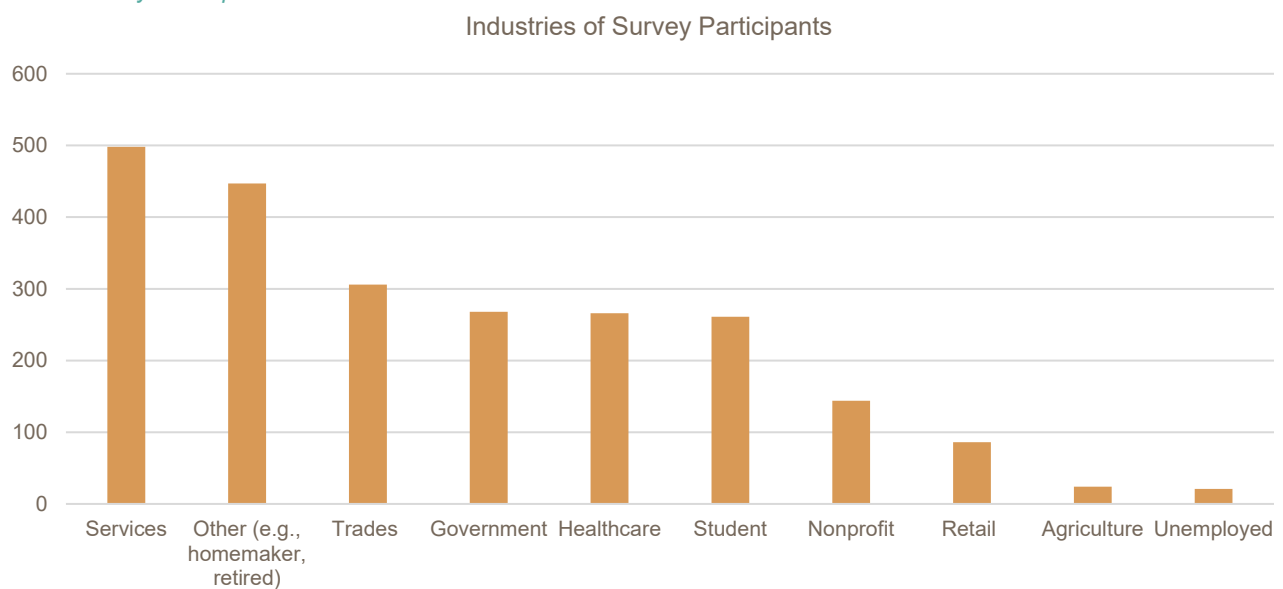
What Makes your County a Great Place to Live?

Bar chart values (approximate, highest to lowest):
- Forests & natural areas — ~1140
- Reasonable cost of living — ~1000
- Active outdoor recreation — ~990
- Rural living — ~940
- Close-knit communities — ~690
- Good local school districts — ~400
- Good community services — ~250
- Access to good-paying jobs — ~80
- Access to higher ed. and tech. training — ~80
- Tourism — ~70
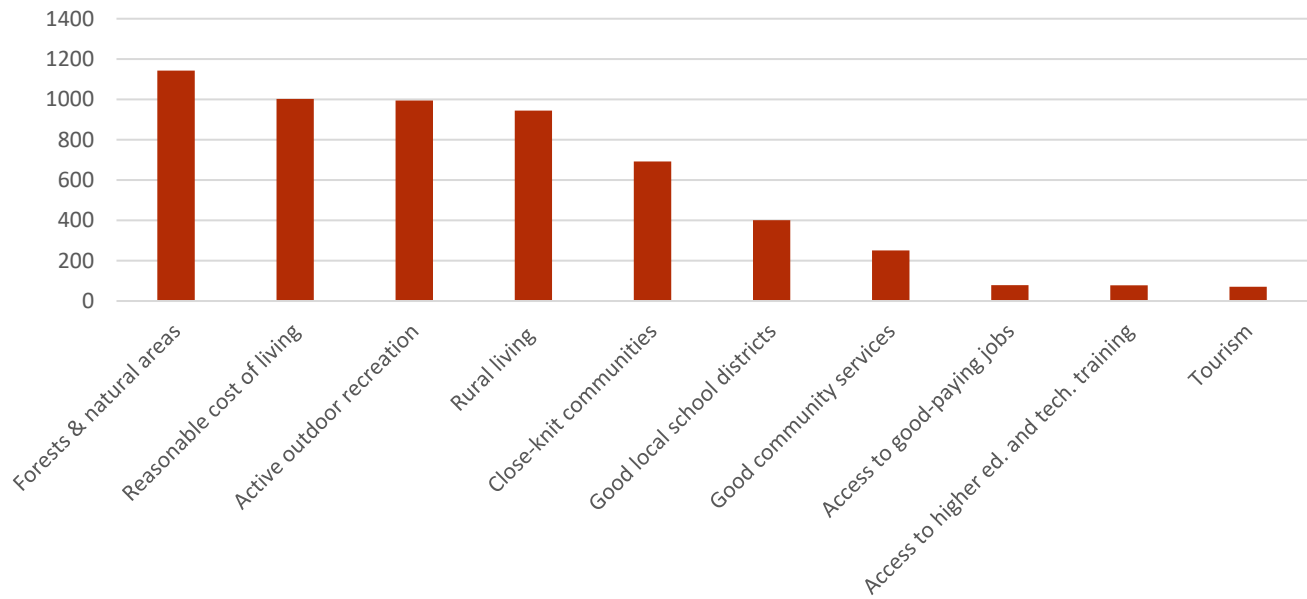
Where Should Taxes be Invested in the Future?

Bar chart values (approximate, highest to lowest):
- Create jobs — ~1140
- Attract more shopping, restaurants — ~720
- Improve local infrastructure — ~670
- Improve job skills — ~600
- Address poverty — ~470
- Address opioid addiction — ~455
- Improve housing — ~445
- Attract new residents — ~410
- Expand tourism — ~355
- Improve community services — ~185
- Expand parks/playgrounds — ~180
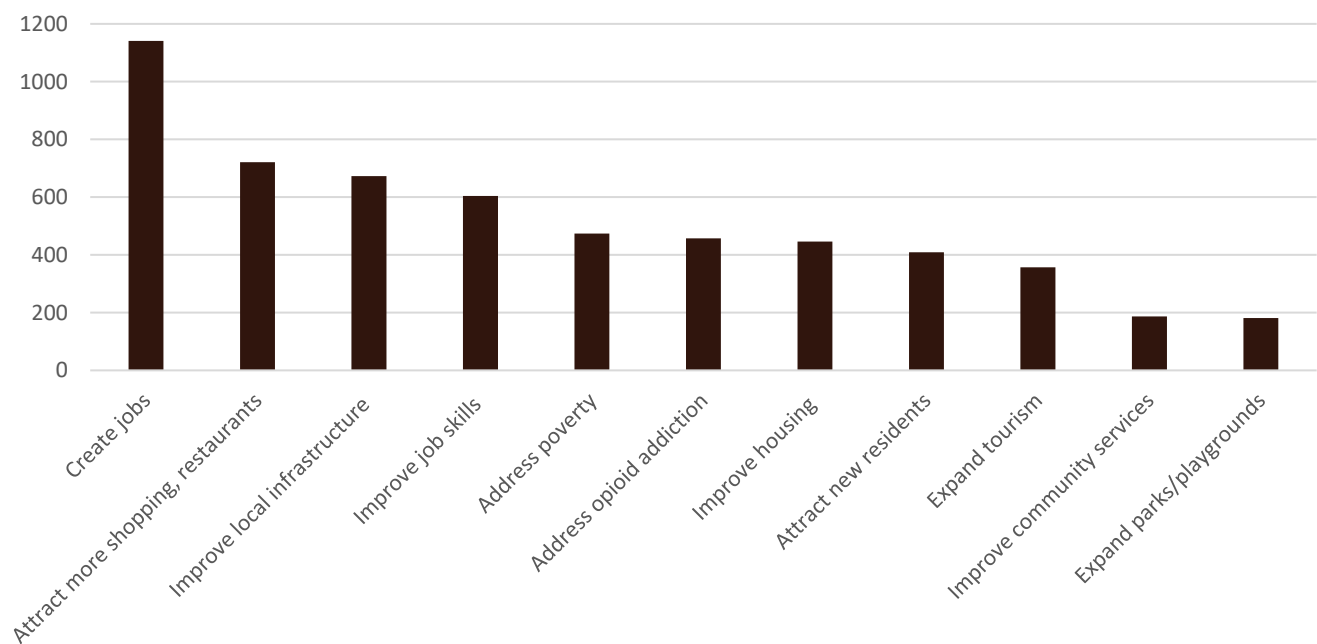
Workforce Development

The Challenge

Since the 2008 recession, Pennsylvania's economy, like the nation's, has rebounded. Unemployment is at its lowest level in 45+ years, employment in the Commonwealth reached a record high in 2019, and total jobs in Pennsylvania were up 30,300 with gains in the majority of industry sectors. But as the economic picture has improved over the past 10 plus years, a workforce shortage has emerged.

Statewide, Pennsylvania's workforce is retiring as the Baby Boomer generation reaches 65+ years of age. In fact, 17.1% of the Commonwealth's population is over age 65, making Pennsylvania the 5th oldest state in the nation. The aging workforce is also coupled with low unemployment throughout the state, creating a tight labor market where there are often more jobs than qualified candidates. According to the PA Chamber of Business and Industry's most recent Economic Survey, employers have identified difficulties finding skilled and qualified employees to fill positions as the biggest problem facing their companies today.

In manufacturing, which has historically been the backbone of the Tri-County region, workforce shortages are also driven by a skills gap. The Manufacturing Institute reports the manufacturing industry contends with the following challenges:

- Today's workforce lacks the computer skills, programming skills, digital skills, working with tools, and critical thinking needed to be successful.

- During the past academic year (2018-2019), only 81.4% of seats available to high school students were utilized in career and technical education facilities. Additionally, there are anecdotal stories of high-scoring students being steered away from career and technical education opportunities because school districts want students to remain in the traditional classroom to complete standardized tests, often associated with state funding.

- Many manufacturers depend on outdated approaches for recruiting the right people, developing their employees' skills, and improving performance.

> " … only 81.4% of seats available to high school students were utilized in career and technical education facilities in 2018-2019. "

Primary Goals for Workforce Development

The Commonwealth has prioritized workforce development under the Wolf Administration and is advancing several prominent initiatives including PAsmart, the Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center, and the Statewide Workforce, Education, and Accountability Program (SWEAP). The programs are anticipated to provide grant funding for education and workforce development initiatives throughout the state and help provide guidance and best practices for the regional and local levels.

At the county level, McKean County can continue to support the North Central Workforce Development Board implement its initiatives and continue to build collaborative partnerships with industry leaders. The Comprehensive Plan has outlined the following priority goals for workforce development.

Regional expansion of local, statewide, and national employee recruitment efforts to attract talent to the region.

- **Close the training gap in the region's workforce**

- **Enhance marketing and employee attraction**

- **Increase student interest in the trades and promote technical training**

Close the training gap in the region's workforce

Workforce development is under the purview of three primary organizations in McKean County, including the North Central Workforce Development Board, CareerLinks, and partially from the Potter County Education Council – Port Allegany Office. From a planning outlook for McKean County, it's beneficial to understand how these organizations are

providing workforce development and, based on existing efforts, how the County can be an active partner to further cultivate a highly skilled workforce.

North Central Workforce Development Board: The North Central Workforce Development Board serves as the primary facilitator of workforce development for a six-county region that includes the counties of Cameron, McKean, Potter, Clearfield, Elk, and Jefferson. The agency, which is federally funded and mandated, is led by the private sector. For this reason, private sector representatives from all six counties (including Cameron, McKean, and Potter) serve as the majority on the Board of Directors and are responsible for overseeing programming. In addition, the Workforce Development Board has agreements in place with the six county governments outlining roles and responsibilities. A commissioner from each county sits on the Board and attends meetings on a quarterly basis. County representatives are to serve as a liaison and should be updating respective staff and county agencies of ongoing efforts and opportunities. All meetings are open to the public.

At the core of its mission, the Workforce Development Board strives to meet the human capital needs of employers by providing resources for job seekers. The organization has recently updated its FY 2017-2020 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Multi-Year Local Area Plan outlining trends, strategies/programming, strengths and weaknesses, and vision and goals. In addition, the Workforce Development Board participated with Workforce Solutions and Manufacturing, Education, and Employee Advancement, Inc, (MEEA) to complete a regional action plan for workforce solutions. These documents are up to date, detailed, and provide a strategy for advancing workforce development.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

One area of success for the Workforce Development Board has been the Business and Education Connect Program. In McKean County, the Workforce Development Board partners with two education councils to go into the schools and provide a variety of career exploration workshops and activities. The program's goal is to make all youth aware of the available occupations in the region so they can make an informed career decision.

Among other programming, the organization is overseeing three active Next Generation Sector Partnerships in the region supporting Manufacturing, Healthcare and Social Assistance, and Building and Construction industries. The top priorities of each partnership are summarized below:
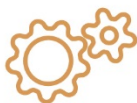
MANUFACTURING
- Develop Technical Training
- Metal Working Hub
- School to Work
- Best Kept Secret: Marketing of Our Region

HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
- Policy Changes
- Technology
- Prospective Employees - Recruitment and Retention

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION
- Educating pre-high school students on trades and skilled-labor occupations and opportunities
- Business partnering with education

OTHER WORKFORCE PROVIDERS

PA CareerLink:
PA CareerLink is a statewide initiative that assists individuals with finding a job in Pennsylvania. In the tri-county region, PA CareerLinks operates in conjunction with Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania and operates a branch office in each county. The primary function of PA CareerLink is to serve as a job-matching system where employers post jobs and candidates can apply online.

Potter County Education Council:
The Potter County Education Council is a nonprofit organization that provides cost effective educational services, including accredited courses, skills training, seminars, and workshops, as well as career and financial counseling. While the majority of the Education Council's work is in Potter County, the organization does have an office in Port Allegany. During the planning process, it was identified that when compared to efforts in Cameron County (DISCOVER Partnership) and Potter County (Potter County Education Council), McKean County is underserved.

The Comprehensive Plan's actions call for communications planning with the region's economic development, workforce, and tourism agencies/partnerships to outline a collaborative approach to ongoing coordination and communication. In addition, actions include:

- Increasing McKean County's participation in the Workforce Development Board meetings each quarter.

- Coordinating with the Workforce Development Board to offer the quarterly meetings in two locations as opposed to the one current location. Given the geographic size of the six-county region, conducting meetings with a smaller subsect (e.g., three counties) may help improve private and public sector participation by minimizing travel time.

- Embracing an ambassador role where McKean County actively conducts outreach to its private sector businesses to increase the number of Workforce Development Board members and, therefore, representation of McKean County.

TOP ANNUAL OPENINGS IN NORTH CENTRAL WORKFORCE REGION

Figure: Bar chart of annual openings by position. ANNUAL OPENINGS (y-axis) vs POSITION (x-axis).

Position	Annual Openings
Team Assemblers	58
Licensed Practical & Vocational Nurses	69
Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	77
Sales Representatives	80
Operating Engineers & Equipment Operators	82
Office and Administrative Supervisors	83
Machine Tool Setters, Operators and Tenders	83
Supervisor Production & Operating Workers	90
General Operations Managers	93
Machinists	97
Registered Nurses	111
Maintenance & Repair Workers	125
Retail Sales Supervisors	125
Nursing Assistants	144
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	317

Enhance marketing and employee attraction

One of the items the County heard consistently during public engagement was the need to increase marketing of the region to students and prospective employees. On one hand, the public input process revealed that worker attraction is a major challenge in McKean County. It was noted schools, private businesses including manufacturers and healthcare providers have difficulties finding employee candidates even for good paying jobs. Likewise, residents, business owners, and community leaders are passionate about McKean County's natural beauty and recreational offerings, low cost of living, and close-knit communities. With advances in broadband, living in rural North Central Pennsylvania but remaining connected to metropolitan areas and jobs is more feasible.

Attracting new residents, both for jobs as well as for the region's natural rural landscape, requires improvements in how the County is marketed. Like workforce development, the Comprehensive Plan recommends communications planning sessions with the region's economic development, workforce, and tourism agencies/partnerships to outline a collaborative approach for marketing. To avoid duplication of resources, a planning process will help outline the best platform for a targeted marketing campaign geared toward recruiting students and workers to the region. In addition, providing technical resources for employers relative to employee recruitment was identified as an opportunity.

Increase student interest in the trades and promote technical training

Over the last few decades, the United States has experienced steady increases in educational attainment. According to the US Census, while just under 1 in 20 adults completed at least 4 years of college in 1940, that ratio rose to 1 in 4 by 2000. Today, 89% of people 25 years and older have completed high school and 60% have studied beyond the high school level. The value society has placed on educational attainment has led younger generations to often think of skilled labor career paths as outdated or "dark, dirty, and dangerous" work involving repetitive tasks.

The public input process uncovered a need to help students think strategically about their career path in the Tri-County region and diminish the stigma that currently surrounds technical training. Technological advances have changed the factory floor. Today, manufacturing provides a range of highly skilled, high paying jobs and a strong ladder for career advancement.

To help students better explore career paths in the trades, the Comprehensive Plan offers two primary action items.

- Expose students to the trades beginning in middle school and extending through high school to garner interest in and awareness of the region's technical career opportunities. This action item is already being coordinated through the Workforce Development Board's Business and Education Connect Program, but could be strengthened with the partnership of a non-profit. In Potter County, the Potter County Education Council is very active in this arena and in Cameron County, DISCOVER Partnership facilitates school outreach. It is reported that McKean County is underserved.

- Expand capacity of Seneca Highlands Career and Technical Center (CTC) and the Bradford High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) to service McKean County residents and heighten regional promotion of the programs.

Education in McKean County

McKean County offers a comprehensive range of educational opportunities for residents throughout six public school districts and several private schools. In addition, the County is home to the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College, and Seneca Highlands Career and Technical Center.

- The **University of Pittsburgh at Bradford** has been located in the City of Bradford for more than 50 years and offers baccalaureate and graduate degrees in dozens of academic fields. As a satellite location of University of Pittsburgh, the university provides a variety of programs and maintains several longstanding and fruitful community partnerships including collaborations with regional school districts. The university also is home to the Center for Rural Health Practice, which researches and addresses the specific health care needs of the rural population, and the Allegheny Institute of Natural History, which studies the unique species of the area.

- **Northern Pennsylvania Regional College** is focused on post-secondary and adult learning through the delivery of postsecondary education and associate degree programs as well as workforce development courses and certificate training programs for specific industry requests. The post-secondary options at the college aids in workforce development by providing relevant training and education necessary to cultivate higher-skilled employees.

- Located in Port Allegany, **Seneca Highlands Career and Technical Center** is a regional career and technical training facility serving Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties. Expanding capacity of the CTC is a primary action item under the Comprehensive Plan, recognizing the importance of supporting a variety of career paths.

Education plays a vital role in the region and McKean County is committed to supporting the region's educational institutes as they continue to serve students and the community at large.

Economic Base

The Challenge

Beginning in the 1980-1990s, the nation began to witness a shift in its economic base whereby the manufacturing sector began to decline, and the service sector began to grow. This shift was due to multiple factors, including automation, off-shoring, and recessions; but the shared result has been a decrease in manufacturing jobs. In rural Pennsylvania, including Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties, this national trend has greatly impacted the local manufacturing industry. Since 2010, the Tri-County region has lost more than 865 jobs.

The local economic base was one of the most prominent discussion topics during all stakeholder and public engagement events during the planning process. Residents and community leaders recognize the need to diversify the economy to promote job growth, while also supporting and adding value to the region's legacy industry base. Tied directly to workforce development, as previously discussed, attracting workers to the region to fill jobs is also a critical priority.

Primary Goals for Economic Base

The goal statement for economic base is to support "business attraction and retention to provide high-quality jobs for the region's residents". For existing businesses, the action items outlined are intended to increase awareness of the resources and support McKean County and local economic development organizations provide, as well as to provide pad-ready sites that can support business attraction and retention for larger companies. Equally important, there are specific action items for supporting cottage industries and tourism.

Business attraction and retention to provide high-quality jobs for the region's residents.

- **Promote the County's economic development resources**
- **Leverage natural resources and focus on economic diversification**
- **Grow tourism**

Promote the County's economic development resources

Today, the top employment sectors in the Tri-County region are Manufacturing, Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, Retail Trade, Education Services, and Accommodation and Food Service. These industries, along with others, currently employ a total of 21,562 individuals in the Tri-County region, of which 14,734 are in McKean County (based on 2018 second quarter employment data). In McKean County, the two top industries are Manufacturing and Health Care and Social Assistance. Zippo Manufacturing is the largest employer in the County.

Since 2000, McKean County's economy has lost a total of 2,870 jobs, largely during the 2008 recession but job losses occurred again between 2015 and 2018. Between 2015 and 2018, the County lost 588 jobs.

To promote continued job growth in the County, the Comprehensive Plan recommends two key action items: First, increase awareness of available business resources and, second, continue to identify and market the County's opportunity sites and offer incentives to expand existing businesses or attract new ones. The County and its economic development partners already offer local businesses a wide range of support services, but improvements can be made relative to technical assistance with brand development, job posting and recruiting techniques, and funding incentives. An example of funding assistance is UPMC Cole's use of the Pennsylvania Primary Health Care Loan Repayment Program, which has helped the hospital in Potter County attract health care professionals by repaying education loans for those working for a period of two years. As a second example of funding incentives, the County can leverage Commonwealth programs to identify and market a priority site for development. Providing pad-ready sites, subsidized through grant funding, is a strong mechanism for supporting a business expansion or relocation project.

Leverage natural resources and focus on economic diversification

The community recognizes the value of cottage industries, a business or manufacturing activity conducted in a person's home, as an excellent way to diversify job opportunities. Cottage industries support the region's tourism market and leverage natural resources, often providing hand-crafted, local products. Promoting McKean County's existing small business incubator is an excellent way to continue to support business startups and cottage industries. In addition, maximizing the region's forest and timber products has been identified as an opportunity to leverage natural resources.

In terms of economic diversification, investing in arts, culture, and music is identified as a priority item. Supporting the establishment and growth of cultural establishments will support thriving, downtown communities while also providing jobs. Currently, county employment data shows there are 66 existing jobs in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry.

Grow tourism

McKean County is part of a 12-county region marketed as Pennsylvania Wilds, an area promoted for its untouched forests, world-class stargazing, and outdoor recreation. Based on a 2017 Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism in Pennsylvania, travelers spent nearly $1.8 billion in the region, a 3.6% increase over 2016, and accounting for 10.7% of the region's employment.

Compared to its neighbors in the Pennsylvania Wilds region, McKean County ranked 5 of 12 in terms of visitor spending. To further capture tourism activity in the County, the Comprehensive Plan recommends increased marketing and the identification and completion of high priority tourism projects.

In terms of marketing, there are several tourism organizations in the region providing high quality promotion and branding. As shown below, many of the organizations have overlapping coverage areas, which may be confusing to a visitor trying to access a single, comprehensive resource for planning a trip. The Comprehensive Plan, accordingly, recommends a communications planning effort to ensure resources and initiatives are not duplicative and continued collaboration and communication remain.

Prominent Tourism Agencies in Cameron, McKean and Potter Counties

PA State Tourism Office Region Initiative

pennsylvania WILDS

the wilds cooperative of Pennsylvania IS HERE

Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties + 10 additional counties

Local Official Tourism Promotion Agencies and Destination Marketing Agencies

PENNSYLVANIA GREAT OUTDOORS VISITORS BUREAU

Cameron County + 4 additional counties

ALLEGHENY NATIONAL FOREST ANF VISITORS BUREAU

TRAIL CENTRAL

McKean County

Visit POTTER-TIOGA Pennsylvania

Potter County + 1 additional county

Additional Tourism Agencies in the Region

LHR Lumber Heritage Region

Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties + 12 additional counties

Do 6

McKean and Potter Counties + 9 additional counties

Communities

The Challenge

The population of the Tri-County region has declined, decreasing from 75,035 residents in 1980 to an estimated 63,758 residents in 2018. Similar to the regional trend, McKean County's population has steadily decreased since 1950, decreasing from 56,607 in 1950 to 40,968 in 2019.

From a national outlook, the population in the United States continues to urbanize and 81% of all residents now live in urbanized areas. Millennials, born between 1977-2000, have continued the trend. As one NPR article describes,

"With Wi-Fi and telecommuting, young people theoretically could dodge overpriced real estate and ugly commutes and opt instead for a spacious house with a big yard and a broadband connection. But it turns out the millennial generation is only accelerating the demographic shift."

The national population trends create a challenging path forward for McKean County. Based on public input, 57% of survey respondents reported population decline needs to be addressed. As part of the same narrative, 62% of residents reported that amenities, shopping, and restaurants in the region need to be improved to help retain and attract residents. Finding ways to retain the region's youth and attract new residents is a priority outcome of the Comprehensive Plan.

Primary Goals for Communities

As part of the previous comprehensive plans, each of the three counties adopted a Future Land Use map that identified areas for population growth and development. In McKean County, Urban Downtown, Urban Neighborhood, and Town Center land use designations were identified in Bradford and Kane. Contextually at this time, these

Only **9.5%** of the **261** high school students responding to the community survey indicated they will stay in the region after high school graduation.

designated areas may not translate into high increases in population or new development. What it can translate to, however, is concentrated investments in community amenities to create a strong sense of place in McKean County's population centers, focusing on restaurants, cultural attractions, night life, and, quite simply, things to do.

The strategies in this Comprehensive Plan address building deterioration and blight, housing, investments in streets and façade improvements, and short-term visitor lodging as important areas for reinvestment to support community development. Making these improvements will, over time, help curb migration trends out of the region while also attracting visitors. In addition, the strategies prioritize development in existing town centers to preserve McKean County's pristine natural areas for generations to come.

Invest in communities to enhance quality of life for residents, employers, and visitors.

- **Address building and property deterioration and blight**
- **Bolster well maintained, vibrant downtown communities**
- **Expand short-term visitor lodging**
- **Preserve forest and timber resources and concentrate new development in existing communities**

Address building and property deterioration and blight

Based on data collected during the focus groups, property deterioration and blight are a top concern in the region and residents would like to see the three counties combat deteriorating conditions and blight throughout all municipalities.

While each of the three counties has addressed blight to some degree, improving code enforcement at the county level is recognized as necessary. Enforcing building codes improves safety and helps retain property values by regulating the safety, sanitation, and appearance of the interior and exterior of structures and all exterior property areas. Another tool to address blight is Pennsylvania Act 152-2016 which amends Act 87-1982, the Recorder of Deeds Fee Law. It allows counties to enact a fee for the recording of deeds. The collected fees may then be used to fund the demolition of blighted properties. Establishing a county land bank under the provisions of Pennsylvania Act 153-2012 is another tool to return vacant, abandoned properties to productive use.

In McKean County, the City of Bradford has experienced blight as homes are older and larger with vacancies due to the declining population. The County has surplus housing stock that is falling into disrepair. To address the housing challenge, the County established a Blighted Properties Review Board in 2015 and adopted the provisions of PA Act 152 in 2017. The Board recently received their first property through the process. A circuit rider for code enforcement has been previously discussed.

To further enhance its efforts, the Comprehensive Plan recommends formally adopting a county-wide code enforcement program, to include hiring a code enforcement staff member, and providing training for local officials on ways to address blight such as the use of tool lending programs. Combining enforcement with innovative community initiatives, like tool lending, is a multi-prong approach to achieve change.

Bolster well maintained, vibrant downtown communities

As described above, cultivating investment in McKean County's downtowns is a priority outcome of the Comprehensive Plan. Investment will help maintain and create vibrant communities with a variety of shopping, restaurants, and things to do to retain residents, attract new residents, and leverage visitor spending. While real estate market conditions play a key role in private sector investment, the public sector can help create a positive environment that is attractive for investors. Public improvements to be considered should include well-maintained, attractive streets with new sidewalks, consistent branding and wayfinding signage, street trees, and pedestrian fixtures. These improvements will also create an excellent gateway and first impression and help encourage visitors driving through to stop and spend time in each community.
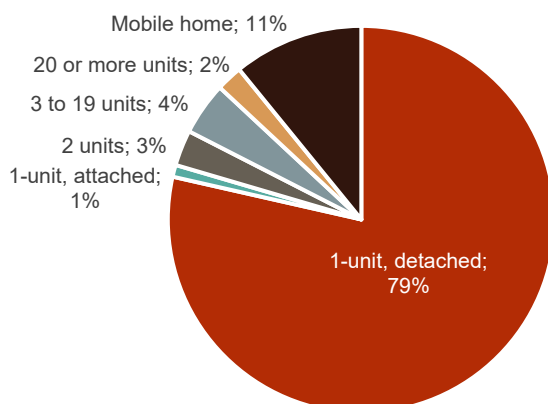
Housing

Offering a variety of high-quality housing stock is the foundation of healthy, vibrant communities. Communities need a mix of detached, attached, and multi-family homes of varying sizes providing affordable, workforce, and higher priced housing stock to meet all income levels.

In the Tri-County region, the current mix of housing is predominantly limited to 1-unit, detached homes. While generally sold at lower than statewide averages, these existing single-family homes are large and typically have not been updated by owners, requiring substantial investment to renovate and maintain. For example, during the focus groups young professionals reported that while they would like to purchase their first home, they are unwilling to invest in the large single-family homes on the market. Instead, they would prefer smaller, but more upgraded detached units.
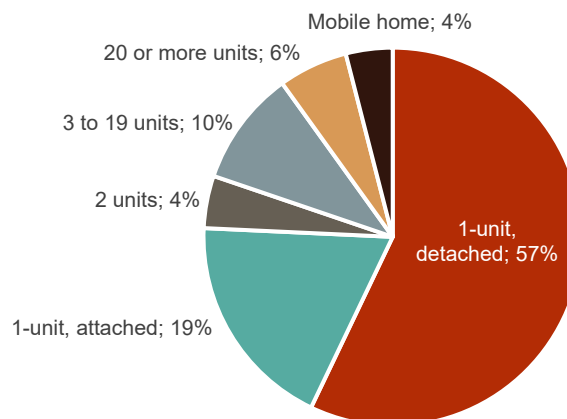
Statewide, 18% of all housing is 1-unit attached homes. In the Tri-County region, just 1% of housing are 1-unit attached homes, demonstrating how limited the housing stock is in terms of variety. In addition, the region has a higher proportion of mobile homes. While offering an affordable option for low-income families, mobile homes are more vulnerable to natural disasters and present hazard mitigation concerns.

A key action item in the Comprehensive Plan is to work with local developers to rehabilitate housing stock and/or convert large homes into two or more units. In addition, McKean County should consider developing a financial model to incentivize market-rate apartments, townhouses, and ADA-accessible single-family homes.

Tri-County Housing Units by Structure Type, 2018

Mobile home; 11%
20 or more units; 2%
3 to 19 units; 4%
2 units; 3%
1-unit, attached; 1%
1-unit, detached; 79%

Pennsylvania Units by Structure Type, 2018

Mobile home; 4%
20 or more units; 6%
3 to 19 units; 10%
2 units; 4%
1-unit, attached; 19%
1-unit, detached; 57%

Expand short-term visitor lodging

In terms of supporting the region's tourism industry, the planning process revealed a shortage of short-term visitor lodging. Currently, there are limited chain-affiliated hotels in the Tri-County region (e.g., Hilton, Best Western, Radisson, etc.), which is often a preferred lodging type for visitors. For this reason, anecdotally, residents and tourism professionals indicated visitors often travel to St. Marys in Elk County which offers several chain-operated hotels including Cobblestone Inn & Suites, Holiday Inn Express, and Best Western. Why is this important? Limited lodging accommodations detract from the region's ability to capture visitor spending on lodging and food. Pennsylvania estimates that 35% of all visitor spending is on lodging and food and beverage and, by not offering a variety of places to spend the night, McKean County's tourism industry isn't capturing one-third of its potential revenue. By category, visitors to the Pennsylvania Wilds spend less on lodging than in any other region in Pennsylvania.

Based on discussions with county officials, staff, tourism professionals, and residents, the Comprehensive Plan recommends conducting a hotel market study for the purpose of attracting additional tourism lodging options to the region. If feasible, the County should also identify investors and grant funding to support expanding lodging options. For example, the Commonwealth awarded $3 million in state grant funding to support a hotel project in St. Marys in 2010.

Visitors today also prefer to stay in short-term rentals, often provided through online platforms like Airbnb and Vacation Rentals by Owner (VRBO). Short-term rentals are a good opportunity for the Tri-County region, as nearly one third of all housing units in the region are identified as vacant due to the large number of seasonal homes. Online interfaces for renting homes, such as Airbnb, are an excellent opportunity to generate income for home owners, as well as county and state taxes, while also meeting the need for visitor lodging.

Preserve forest and timber resources and concentrate new development in existing communities

In McKean County's 2007 Comprehensive Plan, the McKean County Land Use Map outlines nine land use designations for the County. Six designations are designated growth areas: Urban Downtown, Urban Neighborhood, Industrial, Town Center, Town Neighborhood, and Village. Three designations are rural resource areas: Countryside, Resource Production, and Resource Preserve. In total, 97.6 percent of land in McKean County is designated as Rural Resource Areas. The Resource Production and Resource Preserve designations are specifically purposed to accommodate forestry, mineral extraction, and to conserve areas with critical natural resources, including floodplains and wetlands.

With declining population trends, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan continues to prioritize development in its Designated Growth Areas to minimize unnecessary sprawl and to focus investments in strengthening the County's existing communities. In addition, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan reemphasizes a commitment to preserving the County's natural resources.

Energy in McKean County

Much of the focus is on the discovery of vast natural gas resources that have been confirmed in shale layers two miles or more below the ground in portions of McKean County. Recent technological innovations have enabled energy companies to access these resources with horizontal drilling and hydrofracturing to bring the gas to the surface. Three inhibiting factors have slowed shale gas development during the early part of the 21st century – lack of pipelines to usher the gas to market, a glut of natural gas in the market, and low prices at the wellhead. Industry experts forecast that, as conditions evolve, gas production will occur in earnest across much of the Appalachian Basin.

Meanwhile, development of alternative energy sources has been growing nationwide and McKean County is beginning to see early forays into wind and solar energy production. These renewable energy sources are largely dependent on market factors, as well as state and federal government policies related to tax incentives and other potential supportive measures. Future developments in energy production must be balanced with natural resource preservation.

Infrastructure/Environment

The Challenge
Modern, reliable infrastructure is foundational to quality of life and economic development in the Tri-County region. Infrastructure includes physical and organizational structures that allow communities to operate effectively and efficiently. Transportation infrastructure includes roads and bridges, which enable the movement of people and goods, while water and sewer infrastructure support the health and growth of communities. In the 21st century, transferring information through telecommunications infrastructure (e.g., internet and cellular service) plays a significant role in the livelihood of communities across the country. Providing efficient emergency services is also part of the infrastructure that communities rely on every day.

Rural communities in Pennsylvania are adversely impacted by deteriorating physical infrastructure, dwindling resources for emergency management, and a lack of reliable communication channels. Residents in the Tri-County region understand these impacts and see a need for critical, focused infrastructure investments. When asked which public infrastructure improvements local governments should invest more tax revenue in, the top two responses from Comprehensive Plan survey respondents included road and bridge improvements and expanded internet/cell service.

Primary Goals for Infrastructure/Environment
The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has demonstrated a commitment in recent years to bringing its critical infrastructure into a state of good repair. In 2013, the state legislature signed into law House Bill 1060, also known as Act 89, creating Pennsylvania's most comprehensive state transportation funding package in decades (approximately $2.3 billion invested over 5 years). Act 89 also established a special fund within the state treasury called "Fee for Local Use Fund". This new revenue source is generated by a County-adopted $5 vehicle registration fee and can be used for a variety of transportation improvements, including upgrading local bridges. Beyond transportation, a Pennsylvania Broadband Initiative was launched in 2018 with the goal of providing high-speed internet access to every household and business in the state. In total, $35 million in financial assistance was made available to private providers to incentivize expanded service throughout the state.

Infrastructure improvements, such as the extension of water and sewer, are critical items for future development in a community. While many people in the Tri-County region voiced that improved infrastructure of all types would be beneficial, some members of the community expressed concern surrounding growth and would rather focus on conservation. Clearly, a balanced approach is needed to ensure a state of good repair of the region's public infrastructure while protecting the region's expansive wilderness.

Deliver reliable, cost-effective infrastructure to support a high quality of life for residents, employers, and visitors.

- **Expand broadband and cellular service**
- **Improve local roads, bridges, and 4-digit state routes**
- **Attract additional volunteers for emergency services**
- **Upgrade water and sewer infrastructure**
- **Protect water quality and environment**

Expand broadband and cellular service
According to the latest 2019 estimates from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), more than 800,000 Pennsylvania residents do not have access to broadband connectivity. Broadband speeds are generally faster in urban areas, while residents in rural areas such as North Central Pennsylvania pay higher rates for internet speeds that do not meet the federal or state definition of broadband. Several important factors limit the expansion of broadband connectivity in rural areas, including:

- The topography and landscape of rural counties, specifically dense tree canopies and widespread areas with no land development;
- The cost of building and maintaining last-mile broadband infrastructure to businesses without immediate demand for service; and

> " If you want to generate business growth, you need to improve the internet infrastructure in the County. I would not bring business to an area without reliable fiber. "

- Access to capital and financial resources.

This lack of high-speed internet puts the Tri-County region at a disadvantage in an increasingly interconnected, knowledge-driven economy. To position itself to meet the challenges of the 21st century and embrace new opportunities for not only growth but simply retention of businesses and competitiveness, the Tri-County region must develop and support a cellular and broadband deployment strategy to proactively engage service providers and identify potential anchor customers. McKean County can assist in this effort by participating on a broadband deployment task force, which is a key recommendation of this Comprehensive Plan.

Improve local roads, bridges, and 4-digit state routes

Rural roads and bridges in Pennsylvania often do not receive adequate and timely maintenance, and motorists are nearly three times as likely to die on rural roads in the state, according to a 2019 study titled *Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland*. In addition to an entirely rural road network, over half of the Tri-County region's road system is locally-owned as shown in the table below.

Linear Miles of Roadway, 2018

| County	Local	State	Total
Cameron	124.8	152.9	277.7
McKean	479.1	541.9	1,021.0
Potter	639.9	451.1	1,091.0
Tri-County Region	**1,243.8**	**1,145.9**	**2,389.7**

> " One of the biggest issues is the condition of our local roads. It will be easier to attract new industry when our infrastructure is brought up to date. "

Statewide, local bridge conditions are improving. Since 2008, the number of locally-owned bridges (greater than 20 feet long) in Pennsylvania rated "poor" in condition decreased from 2,131 to 1,863 (representing a 12.6% change). However, extensive investment is required to bring many local bridges in the Tri-County region into a state of good repair. Shown below, nearly 40% of all local bridges across the three counties are in "poor" condition.

Local Bridge Conditions, 2018

	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
Cameron	4	5	7	16
McKean	22	29	30	81
Potter	12	16	17	45
Tri-County Region	**38**	**50**	**54**	**142**

Local Bridge Conditions in the Tri-County Region, 2018
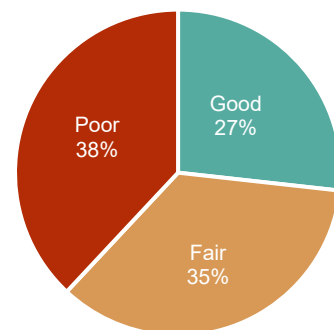
Bridges by Local Jurisdiction, 2018

	County	Township	City/ Boro	Other	Total
Cameron	5	11	0	0	16
McKean	5	58	17	1	81
Potter	0	38	7	0	45
Tri-County Region	**10**	**107**	**24**	**1**	**142**

Rural roads and bridges are critical links within the local economy, providing access to natural resources, agriculture, manufacturing, and many other economic drivers. Several state and federal transportation investments in the Tri-County region have been made since 2013 and address rural road and bridge conditions. As of spring 2019, more than 165 projects totaling nearly $300 million have either been planned, are currently underway, or have already been completed.

Act 89 Transportation Projects in the Tri-County Region, Completed as of Spring 2019

	Projects	Cost (000s)
Cameron	12	$46,325
McKean	62	$120,796
Potter	91	$126,901
Tri-County Region		**$294,022**

To begin addressing local road and bridge conditions, McKean County must first engage and educate its municipalities on the need for capital improvement planning and programming. This can be accomplished by offering training programs to local officials on capital improvement plans and their benefits. After local transportation needs are documented, McKean County will be better equipped to coordinate with the North Central RPO and PennDOT District 2-0 to improve local transportation infrastructure.

Attract additional volunteers for emergency services

In 2018, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania issued a Senate Resolution 6 Final Report on the current condition of fire and emergency management services (EMS) services statewide. According to the report, two primary challenges in delivering critical emergency response services must be addressed: the lack of funding for EMS providers and the decrease in the number of volunteer firefighters. As reported by stakeholders, emergency response professionals in the Tri-County region are burdened by service and training demands, staffing issues, and a lack of proper resources available to address increasingly complex emergencies.

The most critical component of the emergency response system is the use of volunteers to provide life-saving services. While Pennsylvania has taken an active role in offering funding assistance to volunteer emergency service organizations, much more remains to be done to assist in the recruitment and retention of volunteers. The Senate Resolution 6 Commission, in its 2018 Final Report, contended that a public safety crisis is unfolding due to the continuing decline in the ranks of Pennsylvania emergency service volunteers. To begin addressing the volunteer shortage, the Commission recommends over 20 resolutions. As recommended by the Comprehensive Plan, the following resolutions, among others, could be advanced within the Tri-County region:

- Continuing word of mouth recruitment, as it is still the most effective way to find individuals interested in volunteering.
- Implementing career and technical education training in each county through public safety programs.
- Identifying alternative funding for organizations that provide state-approved first responder training in order to reduce the burden on volunteer systems.
- Exploring the feasibility of junior/explorer programs.
- Advocating for the proposed First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program, which proposes student loan forgiveness up to $16,000 for college graduates after serving four years with a volunteer fire company, rescue company, or emergency medical services agency.

Upgrade water and sewer infrastructure

Communities across Pennsylvania are struggling to maintain their aging water infrastructure. The 2018 Report Card for Pennsylvania graded the state's water and wastewater systems at a D and D-, respectively. Infrastructure receiving a D grade are in poor to fair condition and mostly below standard, with many elements approaching the end of their service life. County officials and stakeholders echoed this, reporting severe deterioration of many systems in the County that needs to be addressed in the short and long term. Increasing environmental regulations, older systems, and costs to operate are some of the constraints associated with operating McKean County's existing water and sewer systems.

Deferring needed investments in McKean County will only result in greater expenses in the future and pass a greater burden on to future residents. Comprehensive studies of water and sewer service areas are needed to determine the needs of the systems and allow for effective capital planning. In terms of funding, which is a critical constraint, the County needs to proactively pursue state and federal funds for its priority water and sewer projects. The U.S. Department of Agricultural, Rural Development, is a primary resource securing grant and low-interest loan funds.

Protect water quality and environment

Pennsylvania is a water-rich state, with approximately 85,000 miles of streams and rivers connecting over 700,000 acres of lakes, bays, and wetlands. Additionally, the state has the highest density of stream miles per acre in the continental United States. Unfortunately, a quarter of those stream miles are listed as impaired and unsafe for their intended use, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. These intended uses range from drinking water supplies to sustenance fishing to recreation. Many agencies are charged with watershed protection but lack the resources to fully address threats to water quality and comply with state and federal clean water laws. Collectively, the three counties have over 24,000 water wells.

Pennsylvania state law does not require private well testing and regulatory agencies do not routinely monitor the private water quality. Accordingly, periodic water testing is the only way owners of private wells can be ensured water is safe to drink. In 2007, Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences launched a water testing program to encourage owners of private wells to test water quality. The Penn State Extension Office, along with the County Commissioners and the Conservation District, developed an initiative to test 200 wells across McKean County.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends organizing a team to identify areas that are in greatest need of source water protection and determine potential sources of contamination in those areas.

Health Services

The Challenge

The opioid crisis is a public health emergency in Pennsylvania. The crisis impacts all areas of the state and nation, and is contributing to addiction, overdose emergencies, and deaths for people of all ages. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, there were more than 70,200 drug overdose deaths in the U.S., or 21.7 per 100,000 residents. Overdose deaths in Pennsylvania exceed the national average, totaling more than 37.9 per 100,000 in 2016 and a staggering 44.3 per 100,000 in 2017.

As awareness of the opioid crisis has reached the national stage, the state and nation are beginning to see a drop in the number of opioid prescriptions prescribed. In Pennsylvania, providers wrote 57.7 opioid prescriptions for every 100 persons in 2017, compared to the average U.S. rate of 58.7 prescriptions. This represents more than a 30%decrease from a peak of 83.3 opioid prescriptions per 100 persons in 2012. Governor Wolf and the Pennsylvania Department of Health have also ushered in several core initiatives in recent years to stem the crisis. These initiatives have included:

- Issuing a **statewide disaster declaration for the heroin and opioid epidemic** to enhance the state response and increase access to treatment.

- Obtaining funds for **45 Centers of Excellence (COE)** throughout the Commonwealth to provide level-of-care assessment for substance use disorder.

- Establishing the **Pennsylvania Coordinated Medication-Assisted Treatment** (**PacMAT**) program, which expands access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT).

- Strengthening **Pennsylvania's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)**, which enables health care providers to safely prescribe controlled substances to their patients.

- Increasing the **availability of life-saving naloxone**.

- Launching a **24/7 helpline** (1-800-662-HELP) for those who need immediate assistance with drug and alcohol problems.

Primary Goals for Health Services

While continuing to curb the availability of opioids is critical at the statewide level, so is providing the highest level of care locally for individuals fighting substance abuse. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of the McKean County Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services, Inc. (ADAS) and finding ways to continue to support and expand services. DHS oversees the coordination of the human services system and works closely with the private non-profit sector to maximize community resources through effective utilization of multiple sources of available funding. ADAS serves as a Single County Authority (SCA) for Cameron, Elk, and McKean Counties providing inpatient, outpatient, intervention, prevention, and case management services, and is certified in co-occurring and gambling addictions.

Improve county mental health and substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services.

- **Increase investment in priority services and treatment**

Increase investment in priority services and treatment

Looking forward, the priority action item is to review the County's existing mental health and substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation centers and services to identify opportunities to strengthen existing resources as well as to attract new providers. In addition, a dedicated review will help ensure the County is leveraging state resources to the maximum extent possible.

Implementation Plans

About

To support the implementation of the comprehensive plan goals, the following pages provide a complete list of implementation strategies and corresponding action items. These strategies outline a tactical approach for advancing the Northern Pennsylvania Tri-County Comprehensive Plan vision by specifying tangible action steps that can be taken to ensure progress over the next 10 years. In addition to implementable strategies, this chapter also identifies key partners the Counties may collaborate with to support implementation. Partners include local, regional, and state entities, as well as qualified consultants who offer expertise in specific areas of need.

Measures

In the public sector, the program logic model is the preferred framework for measuring progress toward a stated goal. It's used to measure whether a specific public program is achieving the desired outcomes and is, therefore, an effective use of public resources.

The logic model, simply stated, clearly defines what a program does and what its intended results are to be. This includes the following indicators:

> **For purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, the measures identified are outputs. This is important. The County cannot achieve short and long-term outcomes without first providing the appropriate program activity inputs.**

- **Resources**: The human and financial resources dedicated by the county for program activities.

- **Input**: The actual program activity that is conducted by the county.

  o Example 1: Code Enforcement

  o Example 2: Tourism Marketing

- **Output**: The direct yield of the program activity.

  o Example 1 (Code Enforcement): The number of houses inspected in each municipality, the number of hours worked by the code enforcement officer; etc.

  o Example 2 (Tourism Marketing): The number of paid advertisements issued in print, in social media, and in radio, the number of wayfinding signs installed, etc.

- **Outcome** (short-term)

  o Example (Code Enforcement): Improved housing conditions

  o Example 2 (Tourism Marketing): Increased unique visitor views of websites

- **Outcome** (long-term)

  o Example 1 (Code Enforcement): Increased home values

  o Example 2 (Tourism Marketing): Increased visitor spending

For purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, the measures identified are outputs. This is important. The County cannot achieve short and long-term outcomes without first providing the appropriate program activity inputs. By concentrating first on inputs and outputs and then, in 3-5 years, looking at outcomes, McKean County will be able to identify which actions are providing concrete results and which actions may need to be revisited. It is recommended that the County more clearly defined the targeted outputs as each action item is more clearly defined and implemented.

Workforce Development

1	Regional expansion of local, statewide, and national employee recruitment efforts to attract talent to the region. • Close the training gap in the region's workforce • Enhance marketing and employee attraction • Increase student interest in the trades and promote technical training

1.1	**Action** Conduct communications planning sessions with the region's economic development, workforce, and tourism agencies/partnerships to increase collaboration between the region's economic development and workforce development staff and community board stakeholders.	**Measure** Completion of facilitated planning sessions to identify a clear structure for communication and collaboration. Engage PREP & Next Gen Progress	**Lead (Who and When)** • Cameron, McKean, and Potter County Boards of Commissioners • Economic development, workforce, and tourism agencies/partnerships **2020**
1.2	**Action** Leverage regional marketing to highlight the County's high quality of life and low cost of living to students and workers seeking employment opportunities.	**Measure** Implementation of a targeted marketing strategy for the region that, while pulling on existing efforts, enhances the overall approach and effectiveness.	**Lead** • Workforce Development Board • Partners contingent on 1.1 findings to identify the best public-sector lead to facilitate regional marketing for employment **2021**
1.3	**Action** Increase McKean County participation in the Workforce Development Board.	**Measure** Attendance at quarterly meetings and the number of meetings between McKean County and private sector businesses to attract new members for the Workforce Development Board.	**Lead** • McKean County Board of Commissioners • McKean County Economic Development Department in partnership with PREP • Chambers of Commerce • Nominated Private Sector Businesses • Workforce Development Board **2021**

1.4	**Action** Increase student exposure to the trades beginning in middle school and extending through high school to garner interest in and awareness of the region's technical career opportunities. Opportunities could include presentations, a job-shadow program, job fairs, and other school district-coordinated events to connect students with employers.	**Measure** Qualitative and quantitative expansion of school district awareness events between base year (2020) and target improvement (2025).	**Lead** • Workforce Development Board (Business and Education Connect Program) • Potter County Education Council • McKean County School Districts (Bradford Area; Otto-Eldred; Kane Area; Smethport Area; Port Allegany) **Ongoing**
1.5	**Action** Expand capacity of Seneca CTC and Bradford High School CTE and heighten regional promotion of the programs.	**Measure** Number of meetings (e.g., regular coordination) with Seneca Highlands CTC, Bradford High School CTE, and the School Districts.	**Lead** • McKean County Economic Development Office • McKean County School Districts • Seneca Highlands CTC • Workforce Development Board **2020**

Economic Base

2	Business attraction and retention to provide high-quality jobs for the region's residents. • Promote the County's economic development resources • Leverage natural resources and focus on economic diversification • Grow tourism		
2.1	**Action** Participate in the DCED Engage! program to understand business needs.	**Measure** Continued participation in the DCED Engage! Program in McKean County to regularly and proactively interact with targeted companies.	**Partners** • McKean County Industrial Development Council • McKean County Economic Development Department • North Central **Ongoing**
2.2	**Action** Increase business awareness and offering of business resources (e.g., technical assistance with brand development, job posting and recruiting techniques, etc., and funding).	**Measure** Qualitative and quantitative expansion of awareness efforts and resources between base year (2020) and target improvement (2025).	**Lead** • McKean County Industrial Development Council • McKean County Economic Development Department • Chambers of Commerce • PA CareerLink **Ongoing**
2.3	**Action** Continue to identify and market the County's opportunity sites (Lafferty Hollow; Airport Multi-tenant Center; Wilds Airport Business Park, Kane Industrial Park, etc.) and offer incentives to expand existing business or attract new ones.	**Measure** Identification of one priority site for business attraction and coordination with the Governor's Action Team to list the site on PA Site Search, secure state grant funding to incentivize development/redevelopment, and, if warranted, complete a development feasibility study.	**Lead** • McKean County Industrial Development Council • McKean County Economic Development Department • City of Bradford Office of Economic & Community Development • Kane Area Industrial Development Council

			• Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development **Ongoing**
2.4	**Action** Encourage efforts to promote the existing business support center in Bradford for cottage industries as well as the incubator facility, and advance other shared-work space programs throughout McKean County.	**Measure** Qualitative and quantitative increase in promotion and support for Bradford and Kane PAWilds Innovation Center.	**Lead** • McKean County Economic Development Department • PAWilds and the Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania • Clarion County Small Business Development Corporation **2020**
2.5	**Action** Support a diversity of economic development efforts by focusing/investing in arts, culture, and music in support of regional vitality.	**Measure** Operating support to promote, advocate, and foster opportunities for arts organizations and audiences.	**Lead** • Elk County Council of the Arts • McKean County Council of the Arts • University of Pittsburgh at Bradford **Ongoing**
2.6	**Action** Leverage the resources of the region's tourism agencies to market McKean County as a tourism destination.	**Measure** Improvements to tourism marketing and consistent branding in the County.	**Lead** • Contingent on 1.1 findings to identify the best public-sector lead to facilitate regional marketing for tourism **2021**
2.7	**Action** Convene training for local officials on a variety of topics including tourism marketing.	**Measure** Establishment of a training program for McKean's local officials on a variety of topics, including tourism marketing. Measured by the number of training sessions held annually, and number of officials trained.	**Lead** • McKean County Planning Office • Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau • PAWilds and the Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania **2025**

2.8	**Action** In conjunction with municipalities, identify high priority tourism projects (e.g., trail projects) in McKean County and develop a corresponding funding and implementation strategy.	**Measure** Advancement of at least one priority tourism project and/or annual event to include funding for planning and implementation (may include state grant funding). Project identification: **2022** Project Implementation: **2025**	**Lead** • McKean County Planning Office • McKean County Economic Development and GIS • Chambers of Commerce • Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau • Trail Organizations • McKean County Municipalities **2022**
2.9	**Action** Participate in state advocacy to help shape Pennsylvania's legislative and policy initiatives for agricultural, forestry, timber, and energy industries.	**Measure** Formulation of proposed legislative strategies Number of advocacy events that provide information on legislative activities and provide opportunity to speak to and hear from legislators.	**Lead** • PA State Senators and Representatives • McKean County Board of Commissioners • Regional Advocacy Organizations **Ongoing**

Communities

3	Invest in communities to enhance quality of life for residents, employers, and visitors. • Address building and property deterioration and blight • Bolster well maintained, vibrant downtown communities • Expand short-term visitor lodging • Preserve forest and timber resources and concentrate new development in existing communities		
3.1	**Action** Convene training for local officials on a variety of topics including tool lending programs.	**Measure** Establishment of a training program for McKean's local officials on a variety of topics, including tool lending programs and community initiatives to promote home maintenance and neighborhood pride. Measured by the number of training sessions held annually, and number of officials trained.	**Lead** • McKean County Redevelopment and Housing Authority • McKean County Blight Committee **2022**
3.2	**Action** Adopt and fund a county-wide code enforcement program.	**Measure** To include the hiring of a full-time code enforcement staff member and creation of local ordinances governing property maintenance.	**Lead** • McKean County Board of Commissioners • McKean County Redevelopment and Housing Authority • McKean County Blight Committee **2022**
3.3	**Action** Continue to leverage statewide programs to remove blight through property acquisition, building demolition, and other related activities (e.g., Act 152, etc.). In addition, identify and address locations of illegal dumping throughout McKean County.	**Measure** Number of properties acquired and demolished, and the number of illegal dumping sites identified and addressed.	**Lead** • McKean County Board of Commissioners • McKean County Redevelopment and Housing Authority • McKean County Blight Committee **Ongoing**

3.4	**Action** Utilize a land bank and work with local developers to rehab housing stock and/or convert large homes into 2 or more units and consider developing a financial model to incentivize market-rate apartments, townhouses, and ADA accessible single-family homes.	**Measure** Number of housing units rehabilitated or converted, and the implementation of a financing model to incentive the private sector.	**Lead** • McKean County Board of Commissioners • City of Bradford Office of Economic & Community Development • McKean County Redevelopment and Housing Authority • McKean County Municipalities **Ongoing**
3.5	**Action** Reimagine catalyst sites/core main streets and determine phased projects for redevelopment to include streetscapes, façade improvements, and shopping, dining, and cultural amenities along PA Route 6 and PA Route 219. Encourage new planning techniques such as traffic calming along main streets, high-density mixed-use districts, multi-use structures in historic downtowns, and planting shade trees in town centers.	**Measure** Advance one or more prioritized sites/corridors. Advance implementation by 2025.	**Lead** • City of Bradford Office of Economic & Community Development • McKean County Economic Development Department • McKean County Municipalities • Chambers of Commerce • PA Route 6 Alliance **Ongoing**
3.6	**Action** Support regional efforts to implement high quality wayfinding and signage as a way to brand and market the Region's growth areas. May include PA Route 219 as PA Bike Route C as designated in 2018 for local and state signage.	**Measure** Number of municipalities improved with wayfinding.	**Lead** • Contingent on 1.1 findings to identify the best public-sector lead to facilitate wayfinding and signage • PA Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources and Transportation • PA Tourism Office Wayfinding Signage Programs **2027**

3.7	**Action** Conduct a hotel market study for the purpose of attracting additional tourism lodging options to the region. If feasible, identify investors and grant funding to support implementation.	**Measure** Completion of a hotel market study by 2027. Identification of investors and incentives by 2030.	**Lead** • McKean County Economic Development Department • McKean County Industrial Development Authority • Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau • Private Developers **2021**
3.8	**Action** Encourage the use of homes and cabins for tourist lodging and update ordinances to ensure municipalities and the County receive applicable taxes. In addition, explore the use of fairground or other privately-owned land to create new opportunities for visitor lodging.	**Measure** Completion of ordinances and an awareness campaign surrounding the county's need for tourist lodging by 2025.	**Lead** • McKean County Planning • County Association of Township Officials • McKean County Municipalities • Homeowners (year-round and seasonal) **Ongoing**

Infrastructure/Environment

4	Deliver reliable, cost-effective infrastructure to support a high quality of life for residents, employers, and visitors. • Expand broadband and cellular service • Improve local roads, bridges, and 4-digit state routes • Attract additional volunteers for emergency services • Upgrade water and sewer infrastructure	

4.1	**Action** Continue to develop and support a county and regional cellular and broadband deployment strategy.	**Measure** Convening of a taskforce that inventories existing infrastructure, identifies anchor customers, and proactively engages service providers by 2023. Expand coverage by 2030.	**Lead (Who and When)** • North Central PA Regional Planning & Development Commission (North Central) • McKean County Economic Development Department • McKean County Broadband Task Force **Ongoing**
4.2	**Action** Convene training for local officials on a variety of topics including municipal adoption and use of capital improvement programming to address locally-owned transportation infrastructure.	**Measure** Establishment of a training program for McKean's local officials on a variety of topics, including of capital improvement programming. Measured by the number of training sessions held annually, and number of officials trained. Long-term, the number of municipal adoption and use of capital improvement programming.	**Lead** • McKean County Economic Development Department • McKean County Planning • McKean County Conservation District • North Central • PA Department of Transportation (Local Technical Assistance Program) **2025**
4.3	**Action** Improve coordination with the North Central RPO and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) District 2-0 to improve local bridges, roadways, and bicycle/pedestrian access.	**Measure** Attendance at North Central meetings and the number of projects on the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). • Recommendation of priority roadway and bridge projects, betterment needs, and other modal infrastructure.	**Lead** • McKean County Planning • McKean County Conservation District • North Central • McKean County Municipalities **Ongoing**

		• Development of a regional bridge bundling program to address off-system bridges or locally-owned structures less than 20 feet in length. • Utilization of the PennDOT Connects initiative to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle improvements.	
4.4	**Action** Implement actions from the *2018 Pennsylvania Senate Report 6* to address the shortage of volunteer first responders and consider use of county funds to help cover training and certification requirements.	**Measure** Number of actions implemented from the study; Total funding used to support first responders training and certification; and The total increase of volunteer first responder numbers between base year 2020 and target improvement 2025.	**Lead** • McKean County Board of Commissioners • McKean County Emergency Services Office • Local Fire Stations/Companies **2025**
4.5	**Action** Work with municipal water/sewer authorities to ensure appropriate capital improvement planning and assist with identifying grant funding (e.g., USDA Rural Development).	**Measure** Prioritization of one or more water/sewer infrastructure upgrade/expansion projects and the total amount of grant funding secured. Identify priority projects by 2023; advance implementation by 2030.	**Lead** • McKean County Planning • McKean County Economic Development Department • Water/Sewer Authorities • McKean County Municipalities **2030**
4.6	**Action** Implementation of water quality programs that promote remediation, conservation and protection of our water resources.	**Measure** Number of studies completed, areas evaluated, and project implemented.	**Lead** • McKean County Conservation District • Watershed Associations • Trout Unlimited • Municipalities **Ongoing**

4.7	**Action** Work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to address floodplain issues affecting insurance rates and community development potential. Provide and coordinate education programs for citizens on conserving, protecting and sustaining our natural resources.	**Measure** Reduce the number of properties currently identified in the FEMA flood zone. Number of education programs and number of citizens reached. Long-term, the number of adopted sustainable use practices.	**Lead** • McKean County Economic Development Department • McKean County Conservation District • Penn State Extension **2020**
4.8	**Action** Encourage municipalities to utilize the County GIS Department.	**Measure** Digitize municipal infrastructure in GIS to maintain location information and to catalog improvements.	**Lead** • McKean County Economic Development and GIS **Ongoing**

Public Health (including Mental Health and Substance Abuse)

5	Improve county mental health and substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services. • Increase investment in priority services and treatment		
5.1	**Action** Review the County's existing mental health and substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation centers and services to identify opportunities to strengthen existing resources as well as to attract new providers.	**Measure** Complete review of existing services and outline needed investments and/or expansion of services.	**Lead** • McKean County Human Services • Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services, Inc. **2020**

Michael Baker

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Contact Information:

Brian Funkhouser, AICP, Project Manager
4431 North Front Street, 2nd Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17110
(717) 213-6236
Brian.funkhouser@mbakerintl.com