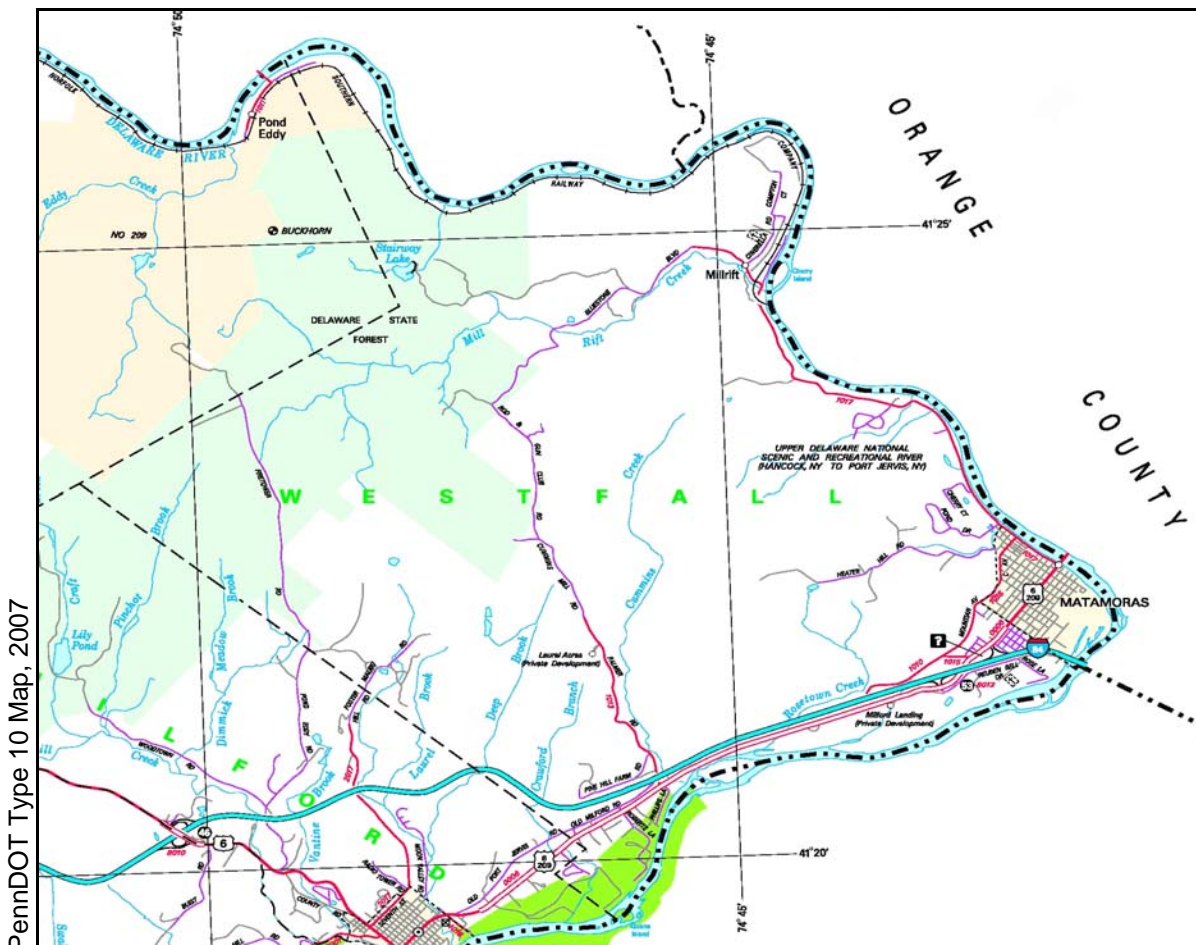


INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Planning Needs

This *Comprehensive Plan* was undertaken by the local officials of both Matamoras Borough and Westfall Township in recognition of a number of principal critical community needs:

- to identify and inventory the changes which have taken place in both municipalities over their development histories, particularly since the update of the Westfall Township Comprehensive Plan in May 1997 and amendment in October 2005;
- to establish a framework for the conservation of the historic character, residential neighborhoods, open land, and environment while concurrently providing for sustainable growth and development;
- to provide the foundation for updated land use management tools, principally zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development regulations, to ensure well designed development and to minimize sprawl;
- to organize for the most efficient administration of local government and the delivery of community facilities and services; and,



- to fully explore the possibilities and benefits of inter-municipal cooperation for providing facilities, services and administration.

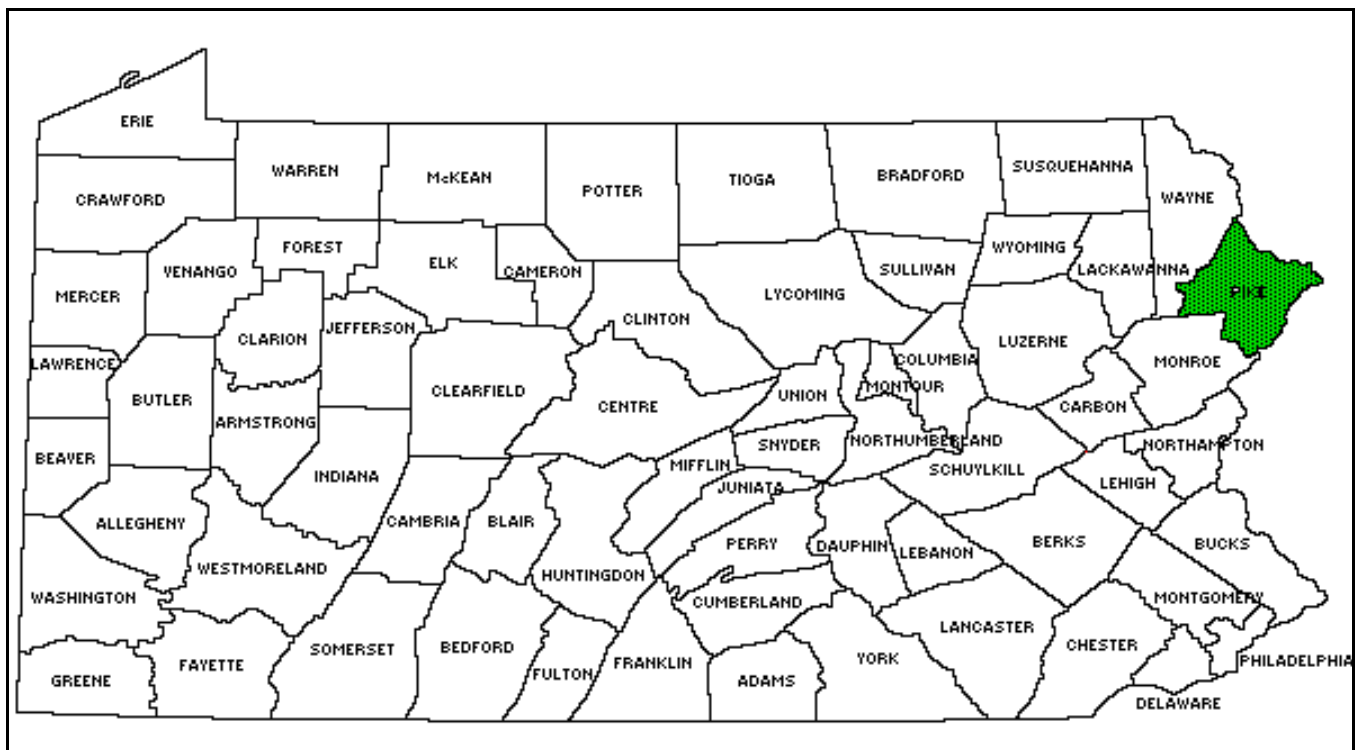
Matamoras-Westfall

Every community is unique in terms of community character and development concerns. The Borough and Township are grappling with and must manage the tremendous population growth occurring in Pike County. Geographically, the Borough and Township lie at the extreme eastern edge of Pike County where the first Interstate 84 interchange accesses Pennsylvania. I-84 carries thousands of vehicles each day, and many of these are destined for the Matamoras-Westfall Planning Area. Many of these travelers are second home owners and tourists; however, in recent years, more and more are permanent residents of Pike County and are commuting to work. This position has been key to shaping the character of the Borough and Township and will perpetually affect its future growth and development as Pike County continues as the fastest growing county in the Commonwealth.

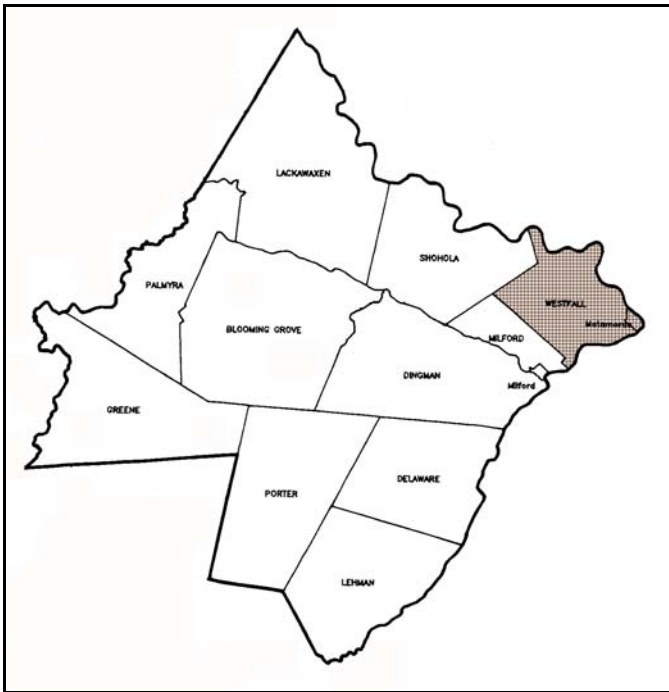
In past years, the Planning Area was seen largely as a rural-small town community. However, in recent years more and more families are *equity exiles* who sell expensive metropolitan area homes and purchase more affordable homes in Pike County. (See the *Equity Exiles Figure* on Page 3.)

Gateway Community

The recent and future growth and development of the Planning Area is aptly described as a *Gateway Community* in Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities: Communities that once promised refuge from the ills of the city have been transformed into congested towns with clogged highways, burgeoning crime rates, and mile after mile of look-alike shopping malls, franchise architecture, and soulless housing tracts.



Pike County in Pennsylvania



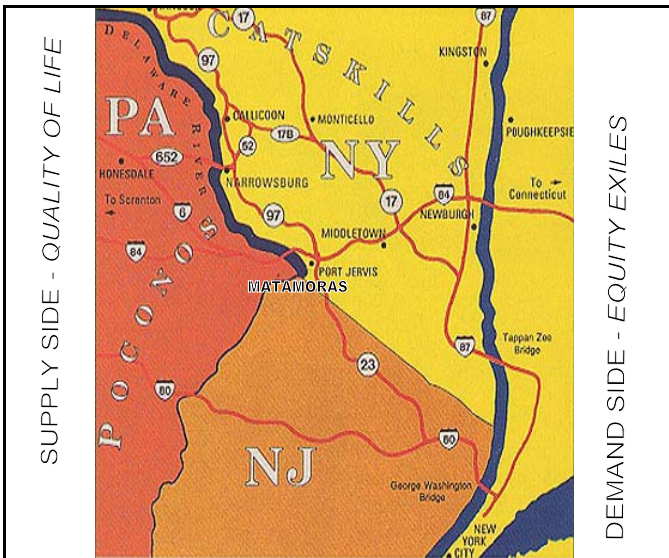
Matamoras-Westfall in Pike County

It should come as no surprise, then, that Americans are once again on the move, this time in a migration that pushes growth even farther into the countryside. Increasing numbers of people are fleeing the suburbs and choosing to live in the small towns and open spaces surrounding America's magnificent national and state parks, wildlife refuges, forests, historic sites, wilderness areas, and other public lands.

Gateway communities – the towns and cities that border these public lands – are the destinations of choice for much of the country's migrating populace. With their scenic beauty and high quality of life, gateway communities have become a magnet for millions of Americans looking to escape the congestion, banality, and faster tempo of life in the suburbs and cities.¹

Unlike many U.S. cities and suburbs, gateway communities offer what an increasing number of Americans value: a clean environment, safe streets, and a friendly, small-town atmosphere. But just as in the suburbs, unplanned growth and rapid development in gateway communities can create the same social and scenic ills from which many Americans are now fleeing. Worse, rising real estate values and higher property taxes brought on by an increased demand for housing can force lifelong residents from the communities they call home. Skyrocketing property values can quickly translate into housing shortages for longtime residents.²

If current demographic trends continue, gateway communities will experience astronomical growth rates for at least the next 20 years.³



Equity Exiles

The Borough and Township clearly serve as a gateway community lying between the 15,600-acre Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Areas and the Upper Delaware National Scenic and

Recreational River, and at the eastern edge of a county with some 95,000 acres of state park, state forest and state game lands. In addition, offering many of the national big-box retailers, the Matamoras-Westfall community has evolved into a regional shopping destination for many residents of the Tri-State Area.

¹Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Howe, J., McMahon, and Propst, L., Island press, Wash., D.C., 1997, p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 2.

³Ibid., p. 3.

**Planning Issues
Overview**

Although not increasing in population at a rate as high as Pike County and other municipalities in the county, the Matamoras-Westfall Planning Area, continued growth and demographic change is expected. Matamoras Borough is largely developed with relatively few vacant lots. Commercial development in the Borough is primarily retail and service found along Pennsylvania Avenue. This development merges with that in the Township. Although served by a public water system, the entire Borough relies on on-lot sewage disposal systems.

The Route 6/Route 209 corridor in Westfall Township is now a major regional shopping destination and continued commercial development is anticipated. The densely settled Bell Manor area of the Township is essentially a part of Matamoras, and many planned subdivisions are found throughout the Township. Nevertheless, much of Westfall Township remains undeveloped woodland including some 4,250 acres of State Forest Land, 165 acres of State Game Lands, and about 310 acres owned by the National Park Service as part of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

Given the amount of undeveloped land in the Township portion of the planning area and adjoining municipalities, the attractive lifestyle associated with the traditional, small town character, and the close proximity to the New Jersey and New York metropolitan and developing areas, continued growth in population and number of housing units and associated commercial development and traffic is expected for the Borough and Township. Clearly, the Borough and Township are poised to become one of the most changing areas of Pike County. This anticipated change presents to the municipalities the challenge of providing public services and facilities to meet the demands of the increasing population. Concurrently, the municipalities are responsible to ensure that the growth and development occurs in accord with sound planning principles with the goal of preserving the environment and community character. In short, the citizens and public officials must resolve the land use conflicts which result from the necessary balance between new development and the need for facilities and services, environmental protection, community character and open land conservation.

This combination of growth and development issues clearly demonstrates the critical need for this *Comprehensive Plan*, continued intermunicipal cooperation, and the consideration of new and innovative land use and community management techniques. Each individual municipality must choose its direction, and continue to work cooperatively to accomplish the goals of the *Plan*.

Planning Process

The comprehensive planning process was conducted cooperatively under recent amendments to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Local planning in the Commonwealth is governed by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and this *Comprehensive Plan* was prepared and adopted in accord with Planning Code requirements. The two municipalities, recognizing the changes occurring in the area, came together and organized this intermunicipal planning effort.

The elected officials from Matamoras Borough and Westfall Township organized the planning process, and each governing body appointed members

to the Planning Committee that managed the process. Community Planning and Management, LLC, Paupack, Pennsylvania, Sarcinello Planning & GIS Services, West Chester, Pennsylvania, and Herbert, Rowland and Grubic, Inc., Bartonsville, Pennsylvania, provided professional planning assistance. The Pike County Office of Community Planning assisted throughout the project as well.

In short, the planning process involves finding the sometimes complex answers to three simple questions:

1. *Where are we?*
2. *Where do we want to be?*
3. *How do we get there?*
4. *How are we doing?*

Where are we?

Background Studies - The initial step in the process is the collection and analysis of information on a wide range of community characteristics and concerns aimed at defining the existing condition of the community and identifying planning implications. This data is compiled in the *Plan* background studies.¹

Where do we want to be?

Goals and Objectives/ Plans - The *Plan Goals and Objectives* are a vision of how residents and local officials expect the community to develop and evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community needs. The *Goals and Objectives* were formulated by the Planning Committee and local officials based on the public participation process and the findings of the background studies. Based on this community vision and the needs identified in the planning process, various plans to guide the future growth and development of the Matamoras-Westfall Planning Area were developed.

How do we get there?

Implementation Strategies - The specific means to effect the various plans are also included, and are detailed in the *Planning Process and Interrelationship of Plan Elements and Implementation Strategies* section and discussed at various points in the various specific plans. In addition, and to facilitate on-going use of the *Comprehensive Plan*, the actions and the responsible entities required to carry out the plan's expectations are summarized in a matrix titled *Implementation Strategies And Specific Actions*. Examples of *implementation strategies* include zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance updates, historic structures preservation, and capital improvement budgeting.

Basic Planning Steps

Where are we? - inventory

Where do we want to be? - goals/plans

How do we get there? - implement

How are we doing? - evaluate

How are we doing?

Need for Continued Planning - It is important to emphasize that a comprehensive plan should not simply be considered a *document on a shelf*, but instead, one element of a community management process dependent upon the attitude and on-going foresight of the public officials charged with the responsibility of guiding the growth and development of the community. A comprehensive plan is a starting point - a blueprint to guide the future development of the two-municipality area and should be revised and updated periodically to reflect changing conditions, attitudes, situations, and goals of the community. The success of the planning program will be measured only in the form of accomplishment. The effectuation of the plan will be the responsibility of the area's residents. It will require public support and positive action by the local municipal officials.

State Mandated Plan Review

A recent amendment to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (§301,c) requires local municipal comprehensive plans to be reviewed *at least every ten years*. The change suggests a greater Commonwealth emphasis on planning and the need for local municipalities to incorporate the planning process into normal functions. However, the ten-year review window is certainly far too long. Planning, that is, assessing how decisions and community changes fit into the plan, should be practiced continually.