

**Potter County Comprehensive Plan –
Preserving and Enhancing the Quality of Life for Current and Future Residents of Potter County**

Chapter 3 – Population and Socioeconomic Trends

Introduction

A community is constantly undergoing change as the residents marry, have children, relocate, and go through various life stages. By studying local and regional demographic trends, the County can better understand the changes taking place and plan for future needs of its residents. This chapter provides an overview of growth trends and changes that affect the county now and are likely to affect it in the future.

Population and socioeconomic characteristics that describe past trends, present conditions, and future projections will be discussed. Other demographic data that will be analyzed will include age cohorts, sex, racial diversity, educational attainment, and income characteristics. Combined with data from the other basic studies, this information will aid in determining future needs of the Region.

The primary sources of data for this chapter are the 2003 Potter County – Adelpia Impact Assessment prepared by Delta Development Group, Inc., the 1998 Potter County Comprehensive Plan (**editors note: the 1998 Plan was not adopted by the Potter County Board of Commissioners**), and the 2000 U.S. Census.

Population Trends

It has been said that during Pennsylvania’s whitetail deer hunting season the population of Potter County can double; however, it is the base population of the county that will drive future needs and goals. As presented in Table 3-1, Potter County has experienced a fluctuation in population since 1960. After a period of slight decline from 1960 to 1970, the county experienced a significant increase of 8.1% when the county population jumped from 16,395 residents to 17,726 in 1980. This increase was not localized to Potter County, but occurred generally throughout the state. Subsequently the county’s population slipped to 16,717 in 1990, which represents a -5.69 rate of growth. The county reversed that negative trend between 1990 and 2000, with a growth rate of 8.15%, which is twice the rate of Pennsylvania and could be attributed to the success of the County’s largest employer, Adelpia Communications Inc., which had its corporate offices in Coudersport Borough. However, recent changes in the corporate structure of Adelpia Communications, Inc., have led to the relocation of jobs, and families, outside of Potter County and Pennsylvania. This led to a slowing of growth between 2000 and 2002, which was less than 1%. Adelpia Communications Inc. is not the only employer in Potter County, and the natural beauty of the county, and its recreation resources, coupled with a lower cost of living will continue to draw people to the county.

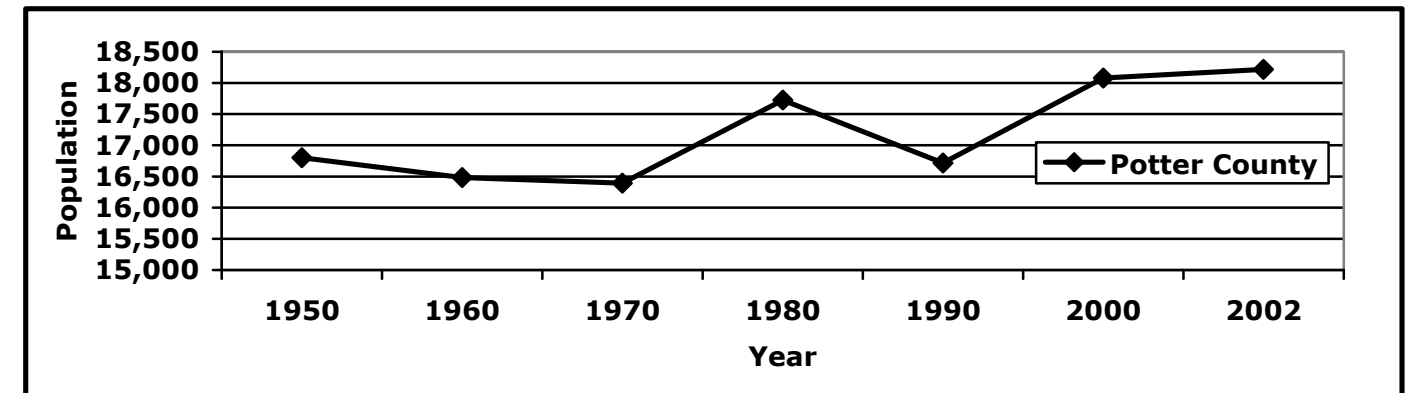
Table 3-1 graphically shows the population trends, including actual population change and rate of population change for Potter County, Pennsylvania, and the United States, from 1950 to 2002. Chart 2-1 shows the actual population change for Potter County from 1950 to 2002.

**Table 3-1
Population Trends
Potter County, Pennsylvania, and United States**

Year	Potter County		Pennsylvania		United States	
	population	% Change	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1950	16,801	--	10,498,012	--	150,697,361	--
1960	16,483	(1.8)	11,319,366	7.8	179,323,175	19.0
1970	16,395	(.5)	11,794,005	4.2	203,320,000	13.4
1980	17,726	8.11	11,864,751	.5	226,546,000	11.4
1990	16,717	(5.69)	11,881,640	.1	248,710,000	9.8
2000	18,080	8.15	12,281,054	3.4	281,421,906	13.2
2002	18,217	.75	--	--	--	--

Source: Potter County Comprehensive Plan and 2000 U.S. Census

**Chart 3-1
Potter County Population Trends**



Population Distribution

In 2000, the population of the county was 18,080 residents. More important than the overall population of the county is the distribution of the population within the thirty municipalities, consisting of twenty-four townships and six boroughs. The rural nature of the county is clearly evident in reviewing the population distribution which shows that approximately 34% of the county residents live in the six boroughs. The boroughs are located throughout the county and act as centralized nodes providing needed services to the residents of the surrounding townships. It is refreshing to see that Potter County boroughs play an extremely important role in the daily lives of county residents when most boroughs are withering in Pennsylvania. Sylvania Township has the lowest population with 61 residents, and Coudersport Borough has the largest population with 2,667 residents. This distribution range can also be correlated to the amount of public land in Potter County. The smaller populated municipalities are generally large in land area and include large areas of public lands, which cannot be developed.

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Table 3-2 provides population information for each of the thirty-one municipalities, including 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census Population, 2002 estimates, and rate of change between the reporting years.

**Table 3-2
Population Growth by Municipality**

Municipality	1990 Population	2000 Population	% Change from 1990 to 2000	2002 Population Estimates	% Change from 2000 to 2002
Potter County	16,717	18,080	8.15	18,217	.75
Abbott Township	173	226	30.6	228	.88
Allegany Township	413	402	-2.6	404	.50
Austin Borough	569	623	9.4	623	0
Bingham Township	557	687	23.3	705	2.6
Clara Township	133	168	26.3	174	3.6
Coudersport Borough	2,854	2,650	7.1	2,667	.6
Eulalia Township	686	941	37.1	956	1.6
Galeton Borough	1,370	1,325	-3.2	1,362	2.8
Genesee Township	803	789	-1.7	782	-.9
Harrison Township	1,129	1,093	-3.1	1,095	.2
Hebron Township	525	622	18.4	631	1.5
Hector Township	336	453	34.8	463	2.2
Homer Township	216	390	80.5	432	10.8
Keating Township	304	307	.9	306	-.3
Oswayo Borough	156	159	1.9	157	-1.3
Oswayo Township	214	251	17.2	253	.8
Pike Township	252	292	15.8	236	-19.2
Pleasant Township	78	80	2.5	80	0
Portage Township	176	223	16.7	221	-.9
Roulette Township	1,266	1,348	4.4	1,346	-.2
Sharon Township	841	907	7.8	935	3.1
Shinglehouse Borough	1,243	1,250	.5	1,240	-.8
Stewardson Township	66	74	12.1	73	-1.4
Summit Township	115	112	-2.6	119	6.3
Sweden Township	581	775	33.3	783	1.0
Sylvania Township	80	61	23.7	61	0
Ulysses Borough	668	684	2.3	692	1.2
Ulysses Township	557	691	24.0	690	-.1
West Branch Township	286	392	37.0	397	1.3
Wharton Township	70	91	30.0	92	1.1

Source: U.S. Census

Table 3-3 represents the population density for Potter County and the thirty-one municipalities. Potter County, as a whole, had a 2000 population density of 16.72 persons per square mile. Population density of the County's thirty municipalities range from .99 persons per square mile in Stewardson Township to 1,897.14 in Galeton Borough. Again, this table shows the important role that boroughs play in the county and the townships with large public land holdings.

**Table 3-3
Population, Square Miles, and Population Density**

Municipality	2000 Population	Square Miles	Population Density
Potter County	18,080	1,081	16.72
Abbott Township	226	69.9	3.23
Allegany Township	402	40.3	9.97
Austin Borough	623	4.0	155.75
Bingham Township	687	35.8	19.18
Clara Township	168	19.8	8.48
Coudersport Borough	2,650	5.7	464.91
Eulalia Township	641	31.1	20.61
Galeton Borough	1,325	.7	1897.14
Genesee Township	789	36.0	21.91
Harrison Township	1,093	36.0	30.36
Hebron Township	622	43.3	15.88
Hector Township	453	41.4	10.94
Homer Township	390	31.9	12.22
Keating Township	307	41.4	7.41
Oswayo Borough	159	1.1	144.54
Oswayo Township	251	37.8	6.64
Pike Township	292	37.1	7.87
Pleasant Township	80	19.6	4.08
Portage Township	223	37.7	5.91
Roulette Township	1,348	32.7	41.22
Sharon Township	907	34.0	26.67
Shinglehouse Borough	1,250	2.1	595.23
Stewardson Township	74	74.3	.99
Summit Township	112	49.4	2.26
Sweden Township	775	33.7	22.99
Sylvania Township	61	29.9	2.04
Ulysses Borough	684	4.0	171.0
Ulysses Township	691	75.1	9.20
West Branch Township	392	62.6	6.26
Wharton Township	105	61.8	1.47

Source: Potter County Planning Commission and 2000 U.S. Census

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**Table 3-4
Population by Age - Under 5 to 59
Potter County - 2000**

Municipality	Under 5	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59
Potter County	1,112	1,290	1,437	1,290	811	2,060	2,664	2,492	1,022
Abbott Township	9	12	17	17	3	23	35	39	20
Allegany Township	20	18	37	23	14	45	55	77	20
Austin Borough	62	47	52	46	36	97	90	64	24
Bingham Township	41	57	61	79	34	72	105	85	39
Clara Township	11	11	8	17	2	23	26	25	8
Coudersport Borough	173	194	199	160	134	352	378	375	141
* East Fork District					1	1	3	1	3
Eulalia Township	34	61	58	66	20	77	132	173	33
Galeton Borough	84	87	101	99	52	137	226	123	67
Genesee Township	50	56	68	57	33	88	121	105	49
Harrison Township	61	81	107	100	52	120	183	149	55
Hebron Township	42	52	38	42	25	63	89	91	39
Hector Township	23	35	33	31	31	48	59	66	22
Homer Township	24	31	39	37	13	42	91	63	17
Keating Township	11	17	26	19	7	40	33	47	26
Oswayo Borough	13	12	16	14	11	21	23	17	4
Oswayo Township	13	22	26	17	11	31	37	26	21
Pike Township	13	14	18	22	13	22	42	56	17
Pleasant Township	7	6		2	5	8	13	11	7
Portage Township	8	9	17	17	7	21	32	33	18
Roulette Township	112	98	88	99	80	151	197	161	90
Sharon Township	52	73	70	58	33	108	133	127	64
Shinglehouse Borough	71	87	125	87	58	147	174	149	64
Stewardson Township		4	1	7	1	9	11	9	5
Summit Township	5	8	7	3	6	8	17	20	11
Sweden Township	46	64	63	38	39	108	102	105	56
Sylvania Township		2	4	3	2	4	11	14	5
Ulysses Borough	66	58	51	47	42	91	82	87	20
Ulysses Township	45	54	64	58	29	59	105	110	43
West Branch Township	14	14	30	20	16	36	52	63	29
Wharton Township	2	6	8	5	1	8	7	21	5

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

* - East Fork District has merged with Wharton Township

**Table 3-4 (continued)
Population by Age – 60 to 85+
Potter County - 2000**

Municipality	60-64	65-74	75-84	85 +	Total Population 2000
Potter County	888	1,546	1,101	367	18,080
Abbott Township	17	16	14	4	226
Allegany Township	20	45	23	5	402
Austin Borough	23	51	26	5	623
Bingham Township	39	41	29	5	687
Clara Township	5	14	15	3	168
Coudersport Borough	88	210	183	63	2,650
* East Fork District	1	2	2		14
Eulalia Township	37	84	76	90	941
Galeton Borough	58	115	127	49	1,325
Genesee Township	40	63	44	15	789
Harrison Township	55	89	37	4	1,093
Hebron Township	42	61	30	8	622
Hector Township	37	39	24	5	453
Homer Township	7	10	10	6	390
Keating Township	30	33	16	2	307
Oswayo Borough	3	19	5	1	159
Oswayo Township	7	24	14	2	251
Pike Township	20	28	22	5	292
Pleasant Township	5	9	2		80
Portage Township	21	29	7	4	223
Roulette Township	77	103	73	19	1,348
Sharon Township	56	83	39	11	907
Shinglehouse Borough	48	107	111	22	1,250
Stewardson Township	8	12	5	2	74
Summit Township	13	9	4	1	112
Sweden Township	46	71	30	7	775
Sylvania Township	4	7	3	2	61
Ulysses Borough	28	59	42	11	684
Ulysses Township	23	56	38	7	691
West Branch Township	22	47	41	8	392
Wharton Township	8	10	9	1	91

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

* - East Fork District has merged with Wharton Township

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Population by Age

Detailed age statistics have been compiled from the 2000 Census. The age cohorts can be divided into four distinct categories – School Age (Ages 5 to 24), Productive and Family Formation (Ages 25 to 44), Mature and Empty Nesters (Ages 45 to 64), and Retirees and Special Needs (Ages 65 and Over). As identified in Table 3-4, approximately 4,828 residents fall into the School Age category, 4,724 residents are categorized in the Productive and Family Formation category, 4,402 residents are categorized as Mature and Empty Nesters, and 3,014 residents fall into the Retiree and Special Needs category.

The analysis of this distribution is important because it provides a snap shot of future needs, including educational needs, shifts in population, housings needs, and health needs to name a few. There is a fairly equitable distribution of population throughout the identified categories. However, the Productive and Family Formation group is extremely important to the economic and social fabric of the County. A severe decrease in this category can directly impact the ability of the county, school districts, and municipalities to continue to offer needed services. Likewise, a spike in the Retiree and Special Needs category can result in significant demands on the health network.

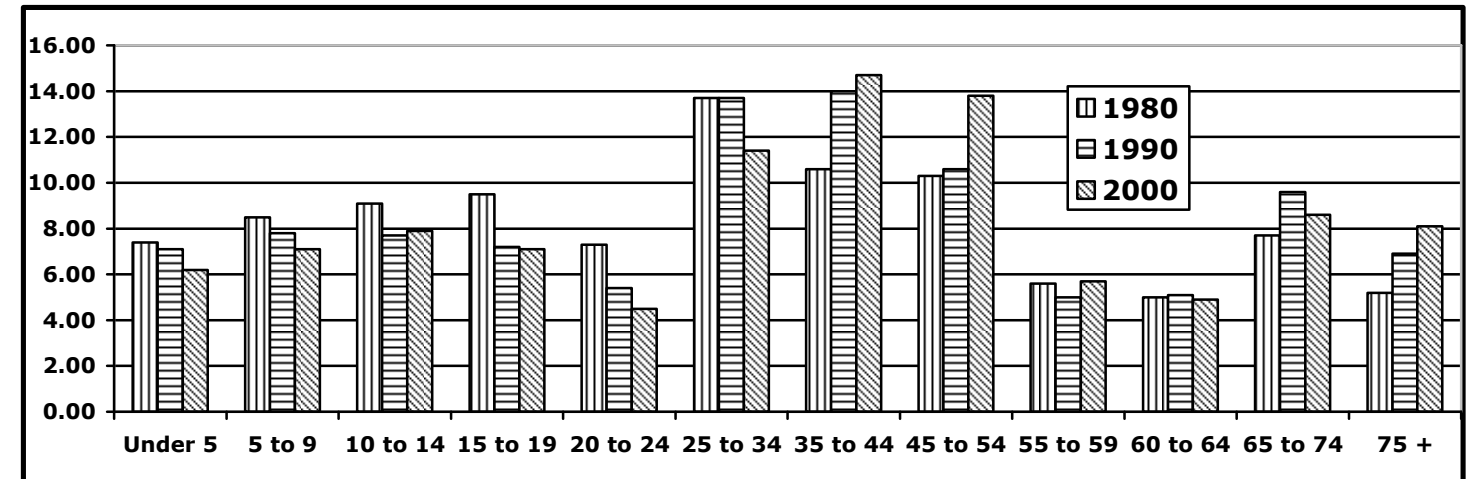
Table 3-4 provides the age distribution for Potter County and the thirty-one municipalities. Table 3-5 provides a historical age distribution for Potter County from 1980, 1990, and 2000, and Chart 3-2 provides the same distribution by percent over the three decades.

**Table 3-5
Population Trends by Age
Potter County**

Age Group	1980		1990		2000	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Under 5	1,315	7.4	1,188	7.1	1,112	6.2
5-9	1,507	8.5	1,305	7.8	1,290	7.1
10-14	1,612	9.1	1,294	7.7	1,437	7.9
15-19	1,683	9.5	1,199	7.2	1,290	7.1
20-24	1,292	7.3	904	5.4	811	4.5
25-34	2,425	13.7	2,290	13.7	2,060	11.4
35-44	1,887	10.6	2,335	14.0	2,664	14.7
45-54	1,819	10.3	1,766	10.6	2,492	13.8
55-59	996	5.6	829	5.0	1,022	5.7
60-64	888	5.0	853	5.1	888	4.9
65-74	1,373	7.7	1,603	9.6	1,546	8.6
75+	929	5.2	1,151	6.9	1,468	8.1

Source: Potter County – Adelphia Impact Assessment – March 2003

**Chart 3-2
Age Cohorts by Percent
1980, 1990, and 2000
Potter County**



Male and Female Gender

As identified in Table 3-6, Potter County population 18 years of age and over totals 13,383. Of that total, 6,513 or 36.0% are male and 6,870 or 38.0% are females. The distribution of males and females is a determinant of future family formations and birth rates. In most cases, a higher proportion of females to males is considered favorable to a stable population. This proportion exists for the county and will contribute to stabilizing the population.

**Table 3-6
Male and Female Population Ratio - 18 Years of Age and Over
Potter County**

Potter County		
Gender	Number	Percent
Male	6,513	36.0
Female	6,870	38.0
Total	13,383	74.0

Source: US Census

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Race Characteristics

Race characteristics from the 2000 Census show that the county’s population is primarily white, with 17,951 residents reporting their race as white. Asians represent the next largest group with a total of 90 respondents, followed by African Americans, and American Indian/Alaska natives. 164 residents noted their race as other/two or more races, and 103 classified themselves as having a Hispanic origin.

Potter County is not as racially mixed as other counties in Pennsylvania, which can be attributed to the secluded location of the county in the northern tier of Pennsylvania.

**Table 3-7
Race Characteristics
Potter County**

Municipality	2000 Population	Total One Race	White	African American	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Other/Two or more Race	Hispanic or Latino Origin *
Potter County	18,080	17,951	17,729	52	40	90	5	164	103
Abbott Township	226	224	224					2	
Allegany Township	402	398	398					4	1
Austin Borough	623	618	615	1				7	1
Bingham Township	687	682	673	2	7			5	
Clara Township	168	168	168						
Coudersport Borough	2,650	2,634	2,571	13	2	43		21	13
** East Fork District	14	14	14						
Eulalia Township	941	935	920	5		10		6	2
Galeton Borough	1,325	1,319	1,290	13	5	7		10	11
Genesee Township	789	783	771	8	4			6	2
Harrison Township	1,093	1,081	1,077	2	1			12	7
Hebron Township	622	604	600	1	2	1		18	2
Hector Township	453	453	452		1				5
Homer Township	390	386	379	2		5		4	1
Keating Township	307	307	304	1	1			1	6
Oswayo Borough	159	159	158		1				
Oswayo Township	251	250	250					1	
Pike Township	292	291						1	
Pleasant Township	80	80	80						3
Portage Township	223	219	218			1			1
Roulette Township	1,348	1,347	1,332	1	3	4		8	15
Sharon Township	907	907	899	2		3	2	1	3
Shinglehouse Borough	1,250	1,235	1,228		2	1		19	10
Stewardson Township	74	73	73					1	
Summit Township	112	112	111		1				1

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Municipality	2000 Population	Total One Race	White	African American	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Other/Two or more Race	Hispanic or Latino Origin *
Sweden Township	775	769	751		4	7	2	11	9
Sylvania Township	61	57	57					4	
Ulysses Borough	684	681	875		5		1	3	4
Ulysses Township	691	691	682	1		2		6	6
West Branch Township	392	386	381			5		6	
Wharton Township	91	88	87		1			3	

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

* - Not Part of 2000 Total Population

** - East Fork District has merged with Wharton Township

Educational Attainment

**Table 3-8
Education Attainment – Persons Age 25 Years and Older
Potter County and Pennsylvania
2000**

Educational Level	Number 2000	% Potter County	% Pennsylvania
Population 25 Years of Age and Over	12,144	100	--
0-8 Years of Elementary	713	5.9	5.5
1-3 Years of High School	1,647	13.6	12.6
4 Years of High School	5,738	47.2	38.1
Some College, No Degree	1,818	15.0	15.5
Associate Degree	735	6.1	5.9
Bachelor's Degree	947	7.8	14.0
Graduate or Professional Degree	546	4.5	8.4
Percent High School Graduate or Higher	--	80.6	81.9
Percent Bachelor's Degree or Higher	--	12.3	22.4

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Education is of primary importance to the general welfare of the community. Skills and abilities required to compete in the labor market are acquired through the educational process. These skills provide a degree of economic security for individuals, and in turn will collectively contribute to improving the general and employment conditions of the community. The educational attainment

levels for Potter County were compared against the state, and are separated into seven distinct categories. Potter County had 12,144 residents 25 years of age and older in 2000. As identified in Table 3-8, 5.9% had only an elementary school education, and 13.6% had 1-3 years of high school. In total, almost 20% of the county's 2000 population 25 years of age and older did not have a high school education. This is compared to 18% state wide. Low educational attainment levels could be attributed to the high percentage of residents in the 65 and greater age cohort. These residents attended school in the 1920's and 1930's when today's emphasis on education was not as demanding. In order to achieve suitable earning power to support a family, at a minimum, a high school education is required. 47% of the county's population 25 years of age and older have at most a high school education. This in compared to 38% state wide. In order to maximize employment opportunities and earning potential, college course work is required. 15% of this population group have attended some college but have not received a degree, which is compared to 15.5% state wide. The percent of residents achieving an associate's degree, which is a two year college degree program, is higher than the state. The percentage of residents within this age group that hold a bachelor's or graduate degree is 12.3%, compared to 22.4% state wide. This is indicative of the employment opportunities in the county that generally do not require advanced degrees, and the absence of higher education facilities in the county.

Residency

The stability of the county's population is extremely important to predicting future services and levels of operation. Too many residents moving into the county at once can adversely affect public infrastructure and school systems. Too many people leaving the county can impact home values, tax revenue, and job creation, to name a few.

Table 3-9 represents residency trends in Potter County for the population group of 5 years of age and older. The county had a total of 16,974 residents that fell into this age range. 65% of this population lived in the same house as in 1995. The remaining 35% lived in a different house. 17.6% of the group that lived in a different house lived in Potter County and made a lateral move to another dwelling. In total, 83% of the county's population lived in Potter County in the same dwelling or a different house in Potter County in 1995. The county experienced an in-migration of 2,960 residents 5 years of age and older from 1990 to 2000, which represents 17% of that age group. Potter County has a stable population and is not experiencing too rapid an increase or decrease; however, job shifts occurring with the county's largest employer may cause a spike in the number of residents leaving the county and flatten the percent of new residents moving into the county.

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**Table 3-9
Residency Trends – Population 5 Years of Age and Over
Potter County
1995**

Residence	Number	%
Population 5 Years of Age and Over	16,974	100
Same House in 1995	11,021	64.9
Different House in the U.S. in 1995	5,847	34.4
Same County	2,993	17.6
Different County	2,854	16.8
Same State	1,584	9.3
Different State	1,270	7.5
Elsewhere in 1995	106	.6

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Population Projections

Population projections are necessary to anticipate and better plan for future land use needs, size, and characteristics of future markets, utility demands, schools, parks and playgrounds, streets, emergency systems, employment and other services and facilities. Future decisions should be based on a population projection that is theoretical in nature, but tempered by judgments sensitive to the area's future development potential.

Chart 3-3 represents the population projections for Potter County and its 30 municipalities. The county as a whole grew by 8.15% from 1990 to 2000, and by .76% from 2000 to 2002. This trend is expected to continue through 2020. In total, the county's population is projected to increase by 1,024 residents from 2000 to 2010 and 1,194 residents by 2020. This represents a growth rate of 5.66% between 2000 and 2010 and 6.25% from 2010 to 2020. Over the next twenty years the County is not expected to maintain the same rate of growth it experienced from 1990 to 2000. Seven municipalities lost population from 1990 to 2000, thirteen municipalities experienced a positive growth rate between .55% to 23.34%, and nine experienced high rates of growth of 24% and higher. However, these high growth rate municipalities tend to have smaller populations to begin with, and any positive increase in the population will generally represent a high rate of growth. The boroughs will continue to play an important role throughout the next fifteen years.

The population projection method utilized is a straight line projection and is the simplest form of projecting population increases and decreases. The method utilizes past growth rates to determine the 2010 and 2020 projections. Population fluctuation may occur as growth management polices are implemented and employment shifts continue to occur; however, the Planning Commission projections in Chart 3-3 will provide sufficient guidance to begin developing future growth and development strategies.

The county's base population is expected to grow over the next twenty years through natural increases and immigration from other areas. However, Potter County has an abundance of seasonal housing which is used for weekend getaways, recreation, and hunting camps. In total the county has 12,159 dwelling units, of which 5,154 units are classified as vacant. Of these 5,154 vacant units, 4,711 units are classified as for seasonal, recreational, and occasional use only. The vast amount of public lands and heavily forested areas attract hunters, and the formation of hunting cabins. During whitetail deer hunting season the seasonal population of Potter County could potentially increase by 66%. This fluctuation also holds true during other seasonal events such as snowmobiling and fishing seasons. The increase in population represents an economic opportunity for local businesses; however, it must be considered when developing future land use strategies.

The projection prepared by the Planning Commission as part of this plan is more aggressive than the projection prepared by the Pennsylvania State Data Center. The Commission projection is in line with the county's 2002 population, and there are no major indicators that the county's population will lose 3,228 residents over the 20 year period from 2000 to 2020.

The Pennsylvania State Data Center Projection

The Pennsylvania State Data Center and the Population Research Institute at the Pennsylvania State University consulting with a statewide advisory committee comprised of state agencies, regional planning agencies and academic representatives have produced state and county population projections for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These preliminary projections are detailed by age, sex and race. Presented as follows are county totals from the 1990 Census and projections for 2000 to 2020.

The method of projection is a cohort-component demographic projection model. That is, the base population is survived 5 years in each iteration of the projection cycle, and births are projected by applying fertility rates to survived females of childbearing age to determine the population due to natural increase. The survived population for each group is then adjusted for projected net migration by age-sex-race.

**Table 3-10
Population Trends and Projections
Pennsylvania Sate Data Center
1990 - 2020**

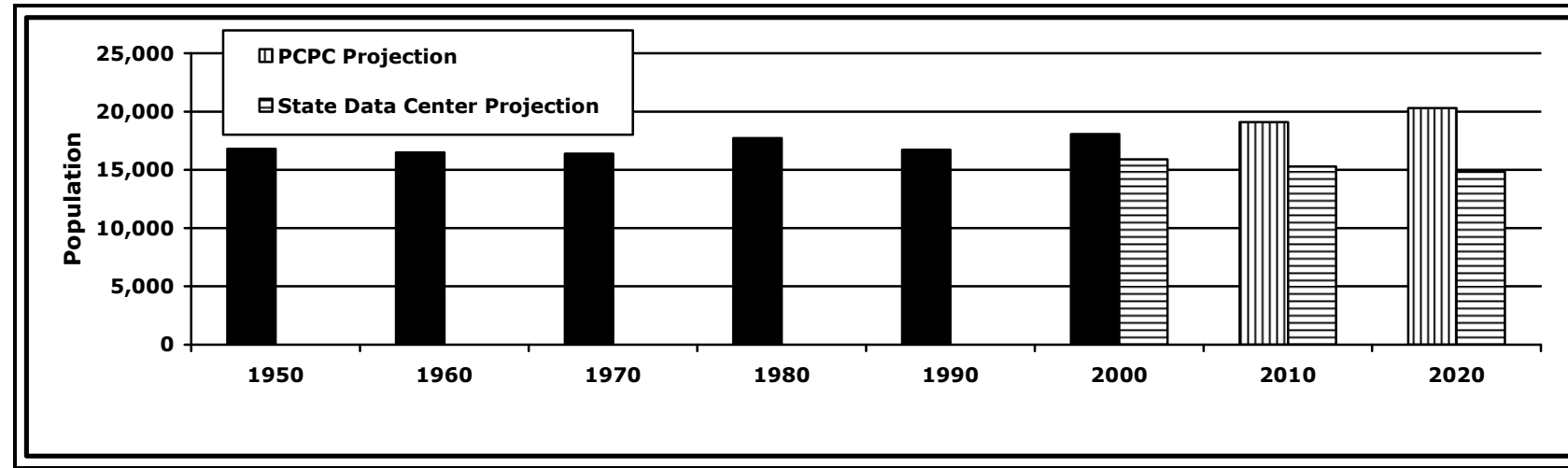
	Census	Projection	Projection	Projection	% Change	% Change	% Change
	April 1, 1990	July 1, 2000	July 1, 2010	July 1, 2020	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020
Pennsylvania	11,882,842	12,241,488	12,407,523	12,569,017	3.0	1.4	1.3
Potter	16,717	15,899	15,276	14,852	-4.9	-3.9	-2.8

Source: Pennsylvania State Data Center

**Potter County Comprehensive Plan –
Preserving and Enhancing the Quality of Life for Current and Future Residents of Potter County**

Chapter 3 – Population and Socioeconomic Trends

**Chart 3-3
Population Trends and Projections
2010 – 2020**



**Chart 3-4
Potter County Population Growth and Population Projections
1950 – 2000, and 2010 and 2020 Projections**

