

Part III

The Policies

A. Economic Development

B. Open Space and Recreation

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Economic Development

Monroe County's 2020 Task Forces are in solid agreement that the County should formulate an economic development policy and engage in an aggressive promotional program that will:

- Attract environmentally friendly economic enterprises to Monroe County.
- Conserve the environmental quality that is the County's principal attraction for visitors and residents alike.
- Pursue as a priority the retention and expansion of existing Monroe County companies.
- Help balance the tax base to ease the heavy burden on residential properties for financing public works and services.
- Recycle vacant and under-utilized buildings and sites with access to infrastructure whose current uses may be obsolete.

Some Defining Principles

1. *Diversity will be a key to success.* Monroe County benefits from an economy that features a wide variety of enterprises. Tourism is a major economic activity to be maintained and enhanced. The Tobyhanna Army Depot is the largest single employer and one whose longevity is to be protected. At the same time, however, the County has significant strengths in other industries such as manufacturing, distribution, research and development, retail, computer-oriented enterprises, arts, crafts, and education. Promotional activity directed at supporting and expanding diversity will be essential to Monroe County's future. Diversity extends to the scale of business enterprises as well as the type. Monroe County should afford opportunities to firms large and small, to established corporations as well as to individuals just starting out who want to grow their enterprises in fertile ground. Our imperative is similar to that of Loudoun County, Virginia, whose successful economic development strategy includes the following directives:

- While large business relocations make the economic development headlines, the day-to-day business development and job growth represented by small businesses is the mainstay of any economic development program. The needs of big and small business frequently differ and any successful economic development endeavor must address the requirements of each. The business community is comprised of a very high proportion of small businesses. It is important that development activities provide support to small businesses as well as the larger employers.

2. *Multiple institutions carry the economic development message and play important roles in promoting Monroe County. Their respective policies merit coordination.* The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and the Redevelopment Authority of Monroe County (RAMC) are key agencies of County government with skilled staff and access to an array of financial incentives for qualifying enterprises. Both the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau and the Pocono Mountains Chamber of Commerce are private sector membership institutions that provide information and technical assistance to prospective firms and promote the advantages of Monroe County. The Monroe County Rail Authority (MCRA) provides leadership in encouraging the growth of rail service as an alternative means of transportation and provides assistance in attracting new employers and businesses that help make rail service more viable. Pennsylvania Power and Light is a major utility that fosters economic growth.

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Backing their efforts and important to the area's advantages are two institutions of higher education - East Stroudsburg University and Northampton Community College - along with four of the top-rated school districts in the Commonwealth. These institutions, along with Monroe County Job Training and the Job Service office, help produce a skilled resident labor force, offer opportunities for upgrading skills, and can mount special programs that meet particular employer training needs.

Although not directly involved in promoting economic activity, the County Planning Commission provides valuable resources of geographic, environmental and other physical data. These will be expanded as the Commission's Geographic Information System is made operational and accessible to the public. Individual municipalities exercise zoning and other regulatory powers that affect the siting, configuration and special impact mitigation requirements for new facilities. Their permit review procedures may be critical to an entrepreneur's decision to locate or expand within the County.

Clearly, no single entity is solely responsible for pursuing economic development in Monroe County. Many individuals and entities are involved. They should share a common understanding of development goals, opportunities, environment and strategy.

3. The County's setting in relation to the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region and, to a lesser extent, the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Metropolitan Area is a crucial element in its development potential. That location and accessibility set Monroe County apart from other Northeast Pennsylvania counties. Although wages in the County are relatively modest, median household income is higher than that of the Commonwealth as a whole. This is because the County, especially municipalities accessible to I-80 and Route 33, is a highly attractive residence for commuters to the metro areas where salaries are substantially higher than in Monroe. The 1997 Commuter Survey conducted by the Chamber of Commerce (over 740 returns) indicated that fewer than five percent of the respondents had annual wages of \$25,000 or below, and more than 30 percent had wages over \$55,000. The average wage of jobs within Monroe County in 1995 was \$22,000, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Metropolitan jobs provide Monroe County families with expanded purchasing power. By the same token, however, express highway linkages and long distance bus transit are so good that the County is positioned to attract enterprises serving the metro regions, thereby helping to balance the local economy and possibly relieve the necessity for many of their employees to commute as far as they do now. This phenomenon of economic growth following commuter residence patterns has occurred in metropolitan regions throughout the country and is precedent for capitalizing on the County's special advantages.

One of these may be the relatively favorable tax status for business as well as residents of a close-in Pennsylvania location. The August 1997 issue of the Pennsylvania Economy League's Capital Perspective indicates that total state and local taxes per capita and per \$1,000 of personal income in Pennsylvania are substantially lower than in New York and New Jersey.

The WHAT of Economic Development

Many Monroe 2020 Task Force members, along with speakers at public meetings and forums, have asked what kinds of enterprise should Monroe County attract and promote? With diversity as a watchword, here are some examples:

1. Current County enterprises which want or need to expand. This is the most rewarding form of growth because it permits retention of companies that have already made contributions to the

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local economy and are prospectively even stronger corporate citizens. Three excellent recent examples are the expansion of Instrument Specialties at the Delaware Water Gap, Sales Plus CorNet (formerly CorNet International) in Stroudsburg, and Aventis Pasteur (formerly Pasteur Meriéux Connaught) at Swiftwater. Dozens of new jobs have been created. Each of the three represents a form of high-tech industry, heavy on skills, for which the County has both location and quality of life advantages. State and/or local government has helped with financial incentives for each of these expansions.

Major investments to upgrade existing tourism facilities are apparent throughout Monroe County. These expenditures by the industry assure the retention of these enterprises and their jobs and clearly demonstrate the strength of the industry's campaign to remain competitive. One of the primary principles of a recently adopted strategic plan prepared by the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau outlines the need to focus on providing a quality experience at all Pocono Mountain attractions and properties. Support to the tourism industry in its effort to upgrade facilities and respond to changing trends will be an important component of the County's economic development effort.

2. Manufacturing or distribution operations for which Monroe County's location has distinct transportation advantages. Companies such as Roadway and Pocono Produce, along with many occupants of the County's industrial park, find the accessibility to I-80 and its interconnecting expressway network highly cost-effective for markets in the Northeast. An excellent recent example of a manufacturing operation attracted by Monroe's railroad and road links is the Harvest States (Amber Milling) flourmill under construction near I-380. Amber Milling is also an excellent example of creative reuse for an obsolete facility...in this case an abandoned distribution staging area adjacent to an existing rail line. How such a site could become the nucleus of a cluster of related industries is illustrated by the interest of pasta makers to locate adjacent to the mill, utilize its flour as raw material, and market their finished products to the Northeast and mid-Atlantic markets.

3. Office uses related to the metro region. Although concerted efforts to attract office uses are yet to be mounted, an economic study by Wadley-Donovan for the northeastern Pennsylvania region indicates that the Monroe County area offers "...excellent location for corporate back and front office operations, particularly for companies with offices currently in the New York, New Jersey, or Philadelphia areas."

The report cites the presence of fiber optics and other telecommunications technology as significant advantages. It goes on to suggest that companies with up to 300 office employees represent prime promotional targets, although much smaller operations, from professional offices to software developers, could be attracted by the quality of Monroe County life.

Over 30 percent of the commuters who responded to the Chamber's recent survey identified themselves as engaged in office sectors from communications to finance. This exceeded the next most identifiable group of employees (20 percent in manufacturing). The high level of administrative skill represented in the commuting work force that could be drawn upon for local enterprise is illustrated by 20 percent of the 742 respondents who classified themselves as some form of "managers".

4. Telecommuting. Telecommuting is one of the fastest growing forms of employment in the United States. It involves the use of one's home as one's place of business, on a full or part-time basis, with heavy emphasis on computer communications. Telecommuters range from writers and other freelancers to corporate employees with special arrangements to work part-time at home and minimize commuting to a distant office. Johnson & Johnson is one major New Jersey

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metropolitan area employer that has instituted a telecommuting program for its professional staff, some of whom may live in Monroe County. The current scale of telecommuting is not known, although conversations with individual commuters indicated many spend only part of a week in New York or New Jersey and work out of home offices the other days. Sizable houses at affordable prices, along with excellent communications connections, quality services, and good highway access may make Monroe County an ideal location for telecommuters.

5. Retail Sales. With the popularity of the Crossings and other discount outlets, Monroe County is becoming a retail destination area. The International Council of Shopping Centers classifies “Tannersville” as one of the top 18 outlet markets in the country. Additional retail investments have been made recently by WalMart in East Stroudsburg and Shelby’s in Stroudsburg, which have converted obsolete sites or buildings to productive reuse. New malls have been proposed for Stroud Township. In addition to its full-time managerial force, retailing provides excellent part-time jobs to supplement other sources of income for retirees, housewives, and students. Shopping complexes can be significant property taxpayers as well. Although their traffic impacts on overloaded roads may be serious, often these impacts can be mitigated, and retail activity can have a strong role in the county’s economy.

6. Artists and Artisans. Artists and crafts people are increasingly attracted to the County. Monroe County is a hospitable, affordable place near the metropolis, and tourists are also a market for their products. Indeed, some crafts endeavors, such as Liztech Jewelry in East Stroudsburg, are small businesses that sell to national markets. Activities of the Arts Council, the Jacob Stroud Main Street program in Stroudsburg, and the showcasing of local musicians (many with national and international audiences) at clubs such as the Deer Head Inn in Delaware Water Gap are part of a mutual support structure. Encouraging a continual flow of artists, musicians, and crafts people to the County will add to its attractions and reputation for quality and economic diversity.

7. Health Care. As the nation’s population ages over the next two decades, virtually every demographic study agrees that the delivery of health care services will grow rapidly. The substantial growth of clinics and specialty offices surrounding the Pocono Medical Center offers strong evidence of this growth in Monroe County. This market segment, with its higher than average pay scale, should be encouraged whenever possible and expanded when necessary when market forces and health care system changes encourage regionalization of the health care service delivery system.

The WHERE of Economic Development*

Enterprises investigating sites in a particular area need to know where they will find adequate infrastructure and supporting services and where they will be welcome in the community. By the same token, community residents need to know which are the most suitable locations for business of various kinds and how potential negative impacts from industrial or commercial growth can be avoided, mitigated or contained. Questions as to where economic development should occur have surfaced often in the 2020 process.

** In their reviews of this policy statement, all five of the Monroe 2020 Task Forces concurred with its relevance - both to present day promotional activity and to the long-term prosperity of the County. At the same time, however, each of the area Task Forces emphasized special features of their area, which mandated targeted promotional effort that might well be different from clusters of communities elsewhere in the county. Both Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg, for example, highlighted their urban settings for office uses and redevelopment potential. Enterprise zones in Stroud Township and relatively small sites served by existing utilities in the Smithfields were cited as promising for retail and office uses. This contrasted with Pleasant Valley, where that Task Force stressed the serious lack of local economic development opportunity and the necessity of identifying at least one area within the township which could be marked as a development site and town center.*

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Monroe 2020 will, over the months to come, provide answers for the business community and citizens alike. A high priority task of the County Planning Commission, utilizing its new Geographic Information System (GIS), will be to integrate existing data and conduct field investigations to identify:

1. An inventory of all lands planned and zoned for various kinds of commercial and industrial uses, including evaluation of unutilized capacity on these sites to accommodate additional economic development at various scales — from small lots that might contain individual office or retail structures to large acreage for industrial uses.
2. An inventory of infrastructure systems (water, sewer, roads, electric power, fiber optics, etc.) that provide service to these sites and evaluation of their available capacity.
3. An inventory of developed buildings and sites that have become obsolete, yet lend themselves to recycling for new or expanding enterprises.
4. An inventory of general locations, potentially suitable for economic growth that could be added to the pool of available sites through infrastructure extensions and planning and/or zoning changes. Criteria for selecting these locations should be made explicit, along with evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. To the extent that these options involve major land use changes, mitigation measures, and/or capital investment, they should be tested within the Monroe 2020 Task Forces and before a broader public.