

CHAPTER 2 - COUNTY PROFILE

Transportation Patterns

Hunterdon County is located midway between New York and Philadelphia, two of the nation's largest metropolitan areas. Despite the County's close proximity to rapidly expanding suburbs, the region remained relatively unchanged during the first half of the 20th century. Most residents were involved in agriculture, agriculture-related businesses or support services, such as restaurants, drug stores and markets. Those who commuted to jobs in New York, Newark and Philadelphia generally did so by train. As a result, the County's roadway network remained as it had been for most of the preceding century.

Old York Road was the primary route from Philadelphia to New York, as it had been since Colonial times. Route 22 was built in 1806 as the New Jersey Turnpike, connecting New Brunswick and Easton. The first State roadway was built in the County in the 1920's when the roadway now known as Route 31 was constructed to link Trenton with the northwestern part of the State. The remainder of the highway network was comprised of mostly local roads linking small towns throughout the County, providing access from farms to nearby villages and hamlets.

All of this changed in the late 1960's with the opening of Interstate 78 (I-78) in the northern part of the County. The Interstate Highway System was a Post-World War II initiative intended to facilitate the movement of homeland defense forces throughout the country. The unintended consequence of this nationwide highway system was the opening up of remote land to metropolitan area development.

When I-78 first opened in Hunterdon County, it did not connect to eastern segments of the roadway because of a missing link in Union County's Watchung Reservation. With the completion of the last section in 1987, employment centers located along the I-78 corridor in Hunterdon were now less than an hour from Newark International Airport and the New Jersey Turnpike. Despite an economic slowdown in the early 1990s, both residential and employment growth continued unabated throughout the County.

Hunterdon County is traversed by I-78 and State Route 22 (SR22) in the northern part of the County and State Route 202 (SR202), which runs through the east central part of the County and extends through to the southwest border before going into Pennsylvania. Other major routes in Hunterdon County are State Route 31 (SR31), and County Routes 519, 579, and 523. Flemington, located just south of the center of the County along State Route 31 and State Route 202, is the County seat.

Population Trends and Projections

Between 1950 and 1990, Hunterdon County's population growth ranged from 23% to 29% per decade. Although growth rates declined to 13% between 1990 and 2000, Hunterdon County ranked third in population growth among counties in New Jersey, following only Somerset County (23.8%) and Ocean County (17.9%). Hunterdon County's population in 2000 reached 121,987.

New Jersey experienced a growth rate of 9% over the past 10 years, slightly less than the national growth rate of 13%. This modest growth did not affect its status as the nation's most densely populated state with 1,134 persons per square mile. Hunterdon County covers 429.94 square miles and added an average of 30 persons per square mile in the last 10 years. At 283.7 persons per square mile, it has the third lowest population density of all counties in the state; only Sussex County (276.6) and Salem County (190.3) have lower densities.

Population projections for the County show a continued increase of moderate population growth (Figure 2.1). By 2020, the County's population will reach 152,889, a 25.3% increase from 2000. Projections were developed using the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJLDR) projected growth rate, knowledge of pending development applications, vacant developable properties and preserved properties.

Between 1990 and 2000, some of the fastest growing municipalities in the County have been those with close connections to major transportation corridors, such as the Town of Clinton (28%), Raritan (27%) and Bethlehem (23%). One of the more rural municipalities, Alexandria Township, experienced the highest growth rate (31%). Raritan, Readington, and Clinton Townships contain the largest resident populations while the smaller municipalities contain the highest densities. For example, both Flemington and the City of Lambertville contain over 3,400 persons per square mile compared to the County's 283.7 persons per square mile.

Municipal projections through 2020 predict that Raritan, Readington and Clinton Townships will continue to lead the County in total population. The highest growth rates between 2000 and 2020 are predicted to occur in Alexandria (65%), followed by Bethlehem (48%) and Union (45%).

Figure 2.1: Municipal Population Trends and Projections, Hunterdon County, NJ: 1970-2020

MUNICIPALITY	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Alexandria	1,629	2,127	2,798	3,594	4,698	6,141	7,769
Bethlehem	1,090	1,385	3,045	3,104	3,820	4,701	5,641
Bloomsbury	838	879	864	890	886	895	904
Califon	777	970	1,023	1,073	1,055	1,066	1,076
Clinton Town	1,158	1,742	1,910	2,054	2,632	2,909	3,187
Clinton Twp	3,770	5,119	7,345	10,816	12,957	15,521	18,592
Delaware	2,485	3,249	3,816	4,512	4,478	5,060	5,718
East Amwell	1,981	2,568	3,468	4,332	4,455	4,581	4,712
Flemington	3,232	3,917	4,132	4,047	4,200	4,358	4,522
Franklin	1,777	2,154	2,294	2,851	2,990	3,136	3,289
Frenchtown	1,340	1,459	1,573	1,528	1,488	1,724	1,742
Glen Gardner	787	874	834	1,665	1,902	1,940	1,979
Hampton	1,135	1,386	1,614	1,515	1,546	1,578	1,610
High Bridge	2,148	2,606	3,435	3,886	3,776	3,948	4,121
Holland	2,495	3,587	4,593	4,892	5,122	5,363	5,615
Kingwood	1,841	2,294	2,772	3,325	3,782	4,302	4,893
Lambertville	4,269	4,359	4,044	3,927	3,868	4,038	4,208
Lebanon Boro	880	885	820	1,036	1,065	1,199	1,233
Lebanon Twp	2,841	4,235	5,459	5,679	5,816	5,956	6,100
Milford	1,114	1,230	1,368	1,273	1,195	1,294	1,307
Raritan	4,545	6,934	8,292	15,616	19,809	21,819	23,830
Readington	6,147	7,688	10,855	13,400	15,803	18,173	20,899
Stockton	520	619	643	629	560	660	667
Tewksbury	1,908	2,959	4,094	4,803	5,541	6,392	7,375
Union	1,717	2,351	3,971	5,078	6,160	7,385	8,958
West Amwell	1,683	2,142	2,299	2,251	2,383	2,780	2,943
Hunterdon	54,107	69,718	87,361	107,776	121,987	136,919	152,889

Projections prepared by the Hunterdon County Planning Board, 2004
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Infrastructure and Development Patterns

Sewage facility systems are a key factor of the amount, location, and intensity of development in a community. Hunterdon County saw the construction of its first municipal sewage treatment plant in the early 20th century. Several other plants followed in the late 1950s through the 1970s.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regulates the issuance of New Jersey Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NJPDES) and Discharge to Ground Water (DGW) permits that are required for facilities that discharge more than 2,000 gallons per day. Furthermore, new treatment facilities must be consistent with the state’s Areawide Water Quality Management Plans (WQM Plans), which were designed to link population, growth demands and water quality with the construction of new

wastewater treatment facilities. Hunterdon County is within the Upper Delaware and Upper Raritan Areawide WQM Plans. Local Wastewater Management Plans (WMPs) are amendments to the Areawide WQM Plans and provide local information that identifies existing and future sewer service areas. These local WMPs identify future sewer areas where higher density and smaller lot sizes can be accommodated.

Local WMPs in Hunterdon County show very few future sewer areas. Nearly 80% of the County households rely on individual, on-site septic disposal fields for sewage treatment. These systems are designed to treat wastewater and allow infiltration back into the ground. In recent years several Hunterdon County municipalities have down-zoned significantly, arguing that larger minimum lot sizes are required to prevent groundwater contamination.

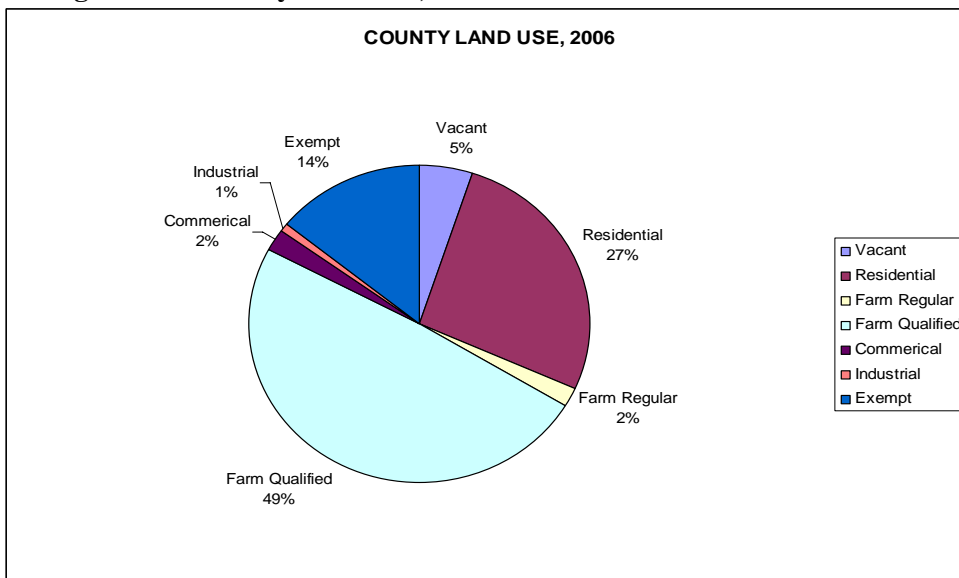
Development patterns prior to the 1980s followed sewer service areas and consisted of concentrated developments around existing settlements and along highway corridors. As parcels within sewer service areas have become more sparse, new development has become more dispersed, spreading throughout the County's rural landscape. Furthermore, several municipalities have down-zoned to preserve their rural character. Ironically, lower-density developments have crept further into rural areas, since development pressures in the County have persisted and larger lot areas are required with each new home.

By the early and mid -20th century, sewage systems became more prevalent, although their capacity and service areas remain limited to this day. By and large, the vast majority of County residents still rely on individual septic systems. As a result, growth has not been dependent upon the expansion of sewer service areas, a factor that has contributed to the decentralized growth patterns seen throughout the County.

Current Land Use Trends

An analysis has been made as to the types of land uses existing in the County from the 2006 Hunterdon County Board of Taxation property tax records. While agricultural/farming remains the predominant land use, lands designated as residential comprise the second largest category. (See Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2: County Land Use, 2006



Source: Hunterdon County Board of Taxation, 2006

Figure 2.3 clearly indicates the landscape trends that have occurred in the County. Within the period between 1984 and 2001 there was an increase of 36% in the acreage of land that was developed.

Figure 2.3: Hunterdon County Landscape Change 1984 – 2001 in Acres

Land Area	1984	1995	2001
Developed	48,548	60,961	66,161
Cultivated Grass Land	120,506	111,190	106,876
Upland Forest	94,486	92,088	90,755
Bare Land	629	762	1,193
Inland Wetland	10,686	9,814	9,779
Water	4,837	4,722	4,871

Source: Rutgers University Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis, 2006

Employment Trends and Projections

In the 1990s, New Jersey became a leader in research and technology with a strong mix of pharmaceuticals, computer technology, biotechnology and medical research. Minutes from Hunterdon County's eastern boundary on I-287 is a high-tech growth corridor that has capitalized on Somerset County's educated labor force and accessibility to major urban and suburban markets. Another successful high-tech industrial corridor is located south of Hunterdon County in the Princeton/Lawrenceville area along Route 1.

Analysts predict that future domestic businesses will capitalize on high-tech capabilities, including high speed internet access and teleconferencing. Home offices will continue to use this technology to conduct business long-distance, occupying an important segment of the economy. Hunterdon County will likely be the target for future economic development because of its strategic location within the region, good schools, positive business climate and a high quality of life. The extent of that growth, however, will largely be a function of the cost of new development and the availability of needed infrastructure. Some analysts, including Dr. James Hughes, Dean of Rutgers University's Bloustein School of Planning, predict that the next decade of growth in Hunterdon County will be subdued compared to previous years. This is a result of the increasing cost of conducting business in New Jersey and the statewide planning incentives to locate industries in urban areas.

In 1998, there were an estimated 47,100 total jobs in Hunterdon County. Of these jobs, 25% were goods-producing and 75% were service-producing. The goods-producing jobs include construction work and manufacturing facilities. Merck & Co. in Readington Township was included in this category. The category of service-producing jobs includes everything that is not construction or manufacturing. The largest sub-category of service jobs in the County is local services, which includes engineering and management firms, health services and a wide variety of small businesses. The County employment projections show continued growth in these "clean" industries, which are largely dependent on good transportation and communications facilities. (See Figure 2.4)

Figure 2.4: Estimated and Projected Employment by Major Industry Group, 1998-2008: Hunterdon County

Industry Title	1998		2008		Change: 1998– 2008		Percent Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Total	Annual	
Total Nonfarm Payroll Employment	47,100	100.0	53,100	100.0	6,050	12.8	1.2	
Goods-Producing	10,550	22.4	9,750	18.4	-800	-7.5	-0.8	
Mining	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Construction	2,550	5.4	2,800	5.3	250	9.7	0.9	
Manufacturing	8,000	17.0	6,950	13.1	-1,050	-13.0	-1.4	
Service-Producing	36,500	77.6	43,350	81.6	6,850	18.7	1.7	
Transportation, Comm., Utilities	1,250	2.7	1,550	2.9	300	22.9	2.1	
Wholesale Trade	1,850	4.0	2,250	4.2	350	19.8	1.8	
Retail Trade	8,850	18.8	10,500	19.8	1,650	18.7	1.7	
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	2,650	5.7	2,800	5.2	100	4.4	0.4	
Services	13,650	29.0	17,700	33.4	4,050	29.8	2.6	
Public Sector, w/Public Education	8,250	17.5	8,600	16.2	350	4.0	0.4	

Source: NJ Department of Labor, December, 2000.

