

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Regional Location

Milford Township and Milford Borough are situated in the northeast section of Pike County and are bordered by the Delaware River and the State of New Jersey to the east. The Milford planning area is bounded on the south by Dingman Township and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, on the west by Shohola Townships, and on the north by Westfall, Township.

The two major east-west routes in Pike County are Route 6 (Grand Army of the Republic Highway and the Roosevelt Highway), which has been proposed as a National Scenic By-Way, and Interstate Route 84 which has six interchanges in the County. Major north-south routes include Route 209, Route 402 and Route 739. Route 209 once carried over 2,500 tractor-trailers daily until the National Park Service assumed its ownership in the early 1980's, which resulted in most truck traffic moving to interstate highways. Also, just south of Milford, a key Joint Toll Bridge Commission bridge across the Delaware carries NJ State Route 206 traffic from New Jersey and New York into Pennsylvania. In short, Milford has easy access to all of northeastern Pennsylvania and the greater region. This easy access has played a principal role in the recent population growth occurring in the community, and will continue to play a key factor in future growth and development.

General Characteristics

A community's character evolves from, and is defined by, a variety of interrelated factors. Milford's regional location, physical characteristics (geology, topography, soils), early settlement patterns, the area transportation network and the regional economy have been synthesized into the existing community character of the Township and Borough and their context in Pike County, the Pocono Mountains, and the larger region.

The Milford planning area can best be characterized as a small gateway town in transition to a bedroom community where open land remains a predominate, yet fragile, feature of the landscape. However, continued residential development, and in fact total suburbanization, is clearly on the horizon as stimulated by recent internal population growth and migration from nearby urban areas to the Borough and Township and other small communities. Single-family homes

are the most numerous type of dwellings, with very few mobile homes, two-family or multi-family dwellings. Most residential development is concentrated in the Borough and areas in the Township adjacent to the Borough. There is no sewer system in the Borough or Township, however, the Borough does have central water. There are several planned residential communities in the Township along with individual lots divided piecemeal over the years from larger parcels. Commercial development is mainly concentrated in the Borough and adjacent Township areas. The larger scale commercial development is in the Township along Route 6. With the exception of Altec Lansing Technologies in the Township, there are no industrial/ manufacturing plants found in the planning area.

The 2000 Census reported almost 2,400 permanent residents in the Milford planning area – 1,292 in the Township, or 104 persons per square mile, and 1,104 permanent residents in the Borough, or 2,300 persons per square mile. This is compared to the county-wide population density of 85 persons per square mile. The Township population increased by 279 persons between 1990 and 2000 and the Borough population by 40 persons. Should the 1990 to 2000 population growth rate continue, the planning area population in 2010 could be almost 2,650 persons. Given the attractive natural environment and small town character of the Milford planning area and its regional location, continued population growth is expected. Without careful planning and land use control, this growth will certainly change the community character of the Borough and Township with increased traffic congestion, fragmented open lands and increased demand for community facilities and services.

Development History

- Among the first, if not the first, white settlers on the site of Milford was Thomas Quick, who arrived in this area in 1733 and settled along the stream later known as the Vandermark, so named for another early settler.²
- The town of Milford was founded in 1796.²
- Milford was known as a milling center early in its history.⁵

- Some say that John Biddis, who was of Welsh descent, named the town after his father's home in Wales; others claim that a mill by a ford across the Delaware River resulted in the name Milford.²
- *Tree Bees*, the planting of trees along the streets of Milford, are said to have started in the town's early years when the men, using teams of horses and oxen, hauled young trees into the village for replanting. The Milford Garden Club renewed this tradition a number of occasions in later years.² The pride of keeping Milford beautiful has been accomplished over the years by its dedicated citizens.
- During the 1800s, Milford had nine working water powered mills. Six of them, including the Jervis Gordon Grist Mill, were on the Sawkill Creek.⁵
- On March 26, 1814 Pike County was formed from Wayne County. It was named for General Zebulon Montgomery Pike.¹
- When Pike County was formed under the terms of the 1814 Act of the Assembly, the people of Milford raised \$1500 for the construction of the original stone court house. The courthouse was completed in 1815, and Milford was named the County seat. The original courthouse was later used as a jail and is now a Registered National Historic Site.^{1,2}
- Milford has enjoyed a newspaper, almost without interruption, since the *Eagle of the North* appeared in 1827.²
- Milford Township was created from Upper Smithfield Township in 1832.²
- The Schocopee Schoolhouse, a historic structure, was originally constructed in the late 1850's just *out of town* on Schocopee Road. It served as a one-room school until 1907, when it was replaced by the new, *modern*, school in what is now the Borough. The structure later served as a meeting and voting place for the community and witnessed Governor Gifford Pinchot casting his vote in many local elections.⁷
- The present County court house was erected in 1872-1873 at a cost of approximately \$45,000.²
- Milford Borough was formed from Milford Township in 1874.²
- The Milford Water Company took over operation of the Milford water supply in 1875 and laid new mains to replace the wooden pipes. In 1965 the utility was acquired by the Milford Municipal Authority.²
- 1881: Fire destroyed The Upper Mill.⁵
- 1882-1899: Jervis Gordon rebuilt the Upper Mill installing a new turbine to replace the wooden water wheel.⁵
- Gifford Pinchot was the son of James Pinchot, a native of Milford, Pennsylvania, and his wife, Mary, who was from New York. In 1886, after earning a fortune in the wallpaper business in New York, James retired and returned to his hometown with his wife to build their new home.⁷
- The Thomas Quick monument, which memorialized a still controversial figure, was dedicated on Milford's Sarah Street in 1886 to honor local settlers, in particular, the Quicks.^{2,6}
- In 1899 the Borough building was erected, a native stone structure housing a meeting room, lockup, firemen's meeting room and a section for fire equipment.²
- Late in the Nineteenth Century, large hotels and boarding houses, many of them family operated, brought countless visitors to Milford. Liberal divorce laws and residency requirements helped add to the influx of visitors, many of whom fell in love with the area and continued their visits here or became residents upon retirement.²
- The first banking institution in Milford was founded in 1900. It was first located in the Bloomgarden Building and then moved to the Forest Hall Building in 1905.²
- The first Pike County Courthouse was constructed in 1815, the current Courthouse in 1874, and the administration building in 1985.
- The old Milford Elementary School was erected in 1904 as the Milford High School.²

- Milford Borough adopted its first zoning ordinance on April 3, 1939, just twenty-three years after New York City adopted the first comprehensive zoning ordinance in the United States.⁴
- In 1954, Paul Struthers donated the flag which supported Abraham Lincoln's head at his death to the Pike County Historical Society. He also donated other artifacts from the Civil War era, including clothing that belonged to his famous mother, Jeannie Gourlay Struthers, and an oral history which provided details of an unbroken chain of family ownership of the flag dating back to April 14, 1865.⁷
- In 1955, devastating flooding on local the waterways damaged the milling operations which led to the demise of the milling operation at the Upper Mill in the late 1950s.⁵
- The mill became a hardware store, and in 1968, Chandler Saint had an antique shop and clothing boutique. In 1979, he sought a grant to adapt the water wheel to generate electricity.⁵
- In 1962 Grey Towers, built by James Pinchot in 1888, became the property of the United States Government when Dr. Gifford Bryce Pinchot, son of Pennsylvania Governor Gifford Pinchot, and his wife, Cornelia, donated it to the Forest Service.^{2,7}
- On September 24, 1963, Grey Towers was dedicated as the Pinchot Institute for Conservation Studies by President John F. Kennedy.²
- The Gifford Pinchot House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966.⁸
- Interstate Route 84 was completed into Pike County the early 1970's, opening the area for more development.
- Milford Borough identified a need to prepare its first Comprehensive Plan in 1979 in order to provide a good basis for updating of the Borough Zoning Ordinance.⁴
- The Callahan House on U.S. 209 and the Pike County Courthouse are listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 23, 1979.⁸
- Hotel Fauchere and Annex at 401 and 403 Broad Street are listed on the National Register of Historic Places on August 29, 1980.⁸
- President Ronald Reagan signed a funding bill in December 1981 that completed the transfer of Route 209 to the National Park Service.³
- U.S. Rep. Joseph McDade of Scranton introduced a bill, approved in 1983, banning all commercial vehicles on Route 209 except those making local deliveries or those whose companies are based locally. In 1984, provisions were added to allow a limited number of trucks from Orange County, N.Y. to use Route 209 each day on a first-come, first-served basis.³
- Forester's Hall on Broad and Hartford Streets is listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 14, 1983.⁸
- 1984-Present: The Water Wheel Group bought the mill, restored the parts of the milling system for educational activities. It became known as the Jervis Gordon Grist Mill Historic District and is on the National Registry of Historic Places. The Jervis Gordon Grist Mill Historic District is commonly known as *The Upper Mill*.⁵
- Milford Township constructed the present Township Building in 1987, with meetings previously conducted in the home of the Township Secretary.
- Milford Township adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1987.
- First adopted in 1988, the Milford Township Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance were updated in the 1990s.
- The Thomas Quick monument came down in 1997 after vandals took hammers to its four plaques, one of which described Indians as *savages*.⁶
- A county park, located in Milford Township was acquired by the County Commissioners in 1997.¹
- The Milford Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 23, 1998, and Borough Council adopted the Historic District Ordinance on December 6, 1999.⁸

- Census 2000 reports Pike County is the fastest growing County in Pennsylvania.

Past, Present and Future

Timbering, farming and milling served as the base for the initial settlement and early economic development of the planning area. During the Nineteenth Century, the Milford area was a rural community surrounded by small farms, and it saw the beginning of tourism and recreation which would lead to the many second homes of the the 1970's and 1980's. Today, the basic natural resource activities have lost significance to the local economy and many acres in the region which once were forested or in agriculture are now subdivided into residential lots. Nevertheless, open land remains an important part of the local landscape. Early settlers relied heavily on waterways for transportation, continuing improvements, initiated by railroad access and culminating in modern road improvements and the completion of the interstate highway system, have transformed Pike County into the mix of communities of today. In the midst of these changes, the planning area's population has continuously increased over the past one hundred years. The Borough and Township are now continuing the transformation from a rural community to a suburban bedroom community dependent on the larger region for employment.

Given its proximity to New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania metropolitan areas, its attractive lifestyle, recreation appeal, and the effect of 9-11, the Milford planning area holds great potential for continued development as the population of the County and larger northeast region shifts from urban to less populated municipalities. The direction plotted by this *Comprehensive Plan* and the land use control and growth management actions taken by the municipal officials of Milford Township and Milford Borough, along with the private development decisions made in response to demands for housing and commercial development, will shape the community's character over the next ten to twenty years.

¹ *Pike County, A Diamond in Northeastern Pennsylvania.* George J. Fluhr, County Historian. Third Edition, published 1998.

² *Pike County Historic Site and Scenic Area Survey.*

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³ *Route 209: State highway to park road.* David Pierce. *The Pocono Record.* August 14, 2001.

⁴ *Comprehensive Plan of Milford Borough, PA.* Milford Borough Planning Commission. Michael Cabot Associates, Community Planners. 1979

⁵<http://dvasdweb.dvasd.k12.pa.us/pppike/MillsofMilford.htm#Intro>

⁶ *Quick! Name Milford's unique claim to fame.* Greg Cannon. *Times Herald-Record.* August 23, 2003.

⁷ <http://www.pikehistory.org/lincoln.htm>

⁸ <http://www.nr.nps.gov>