

2. Community Profile

2.1. *Geography and Environment*

Fulton County is a small rural county located in south-central Pennsylvania. It is bordered to the west by Bedford County, to the north by Huntington County, to the east by Franklin County, and to the south by Maryland. It is 437.6 square miles, making it one of the smallest counties in the state.

The County is mountainous, with numerous high ridges separating narrow valleys. These valleys are fertile and productive enough to support the primarily rural lifestyle of the County's residents. Over 68 percent of the land area is forest land. Several of the large streams within the County flow southward into Maryland and drain into the Potomac River. The streams in the western and northern part of the county are tributaries of the Juniata River.

Fulton County has an extensive transportation network of roads, with 20 miles of turnpike and interstate highways, 368.4 miles of state and federal highways, and 231.5 miles of secondary and municipal roads. The major routes are US 522, US 30, PA 16, I-70, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76).

2.2. *Community Facts*

Fulton County was created on April 19, 1850, from a portion of Bedford County. It consists of 13 municipalities – 11 townships and 2 boroughs. The County seat is McConnellsburg, which has a population of 1,073.

The County has a rich historical background dating back to pre-Revolutionary days. Because of its Mason-Dixon Line location, Fulton County was a significant area during the Civil War. Agriculture is the main industry.

2.3. *Population and Demographics*

Population and demographic data provide baseline information about residents. Changes in demographics or population may be used to identify higher-risk populations. Maintaining up-to-date data on demographics will allow the County to better assess magnitudes of hazards and develop more specific mitigation plans. Baseline demographic information for Fulton County is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics

Demographics	2000 Census
Total population	14,261
Male	7,133
Female	7,128
Median age (years)	38
Under 5 years	898
18 years and over	10,754
65 years and over	2,068
Household population	14,159
Group quarters population	102

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3), Fulton County

Fulton County has one of the smallest populations in the Commonwealth (14,261). The County is also one of the least densely populated, with a population density of only 33 people per square mile (The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, County Profile available at http://www.ruralpa2.org/county_profiles.cfm). A low population density means that people are spread throughout the County rather than clustered in groups. Dispersing information, instructions, and resources in a low-density area is more difficult than in a more densely populated area because individuals are not centralized.

However, a low population density also helps prevent hazards from affecting as many people. For examples, diseases may not spread as quickly because there is less contact between people. Similarly, fires are less likely to spread to other structures because of the large distances between them. The magnitude of an event is typically smaller in a less populated area because each event affects fewer people and properties.

Over 14 percent of Fulton's population is 65 or older. These residents may have special needs. For example, many may be unable to drive; therefore, special evacuation plans may need to be created for them. They may also have hearing or vision impairments which could make receiving emergency instructions difficult. Both older and younger populations have higher risks for contracting certain diseases. Fulton's combined under-5-years-of-age and over-65 populations represent approximately 21 percent of its population.

Just under 1 percent of Fulton's population is in group quarters. Group quarters refer to people living in communal settings, which can include inmates in a prison, students in a dorm, or elderly or mentally disabled in group care homes. Residents in group quarters are often special needs populations. It is important to ensure that each group quarters facility has its own emergency plan that would account for its needs during an event.

Fulton County Hazard Mitigation Plan

The table below provides population estimates for each municipality in Fulton County and for the County as a whole. Fulton County is expected to grow very little in the next 20 years. By the year 2030, it is estimated that the entire County will have a population of 15,602. This represents a population increase of just over 1,000 people in a 30-year period. Many municipalities are actually expecting to deal with a population loss. This means that some structures may become vacant and infrastructure will age, since there will be little new development that would require infrastructure updates. It is important that the County properly maintain its existing infrastructure and have plans to manage or redevelop vacant properties.

Table 2: Population Estimates

Municipality Name	2000 Census	Annual Growth Rate (Percent)	2010 Projected	Annual Growth Rate (Percent)	2020 Projected	Annual Growth Rate (Percent)	2030 Projected
Ayr Township	1,982	0.56	2,094	-0.28	2,036	0.1	2,060
Belfast Township	1,341	0.67	1,431	0.80	1,545	-0.02	1,541
Bethel Township	1,420	0.41	1,478	0.57	1,562	-0.02	1,559
Brush Creek Township	730	1.32	826	1.10	917	0.01	918
Dublin Township	1,277	0.47	1,337	0.75	1,437	-0.04	1,431
Licking Creek Township	1,532	1.01	1,687	0.81	1,823	0.01	1,825
McConnellsburg Borough	1,073	-0.52	1,018	-0.42	975	-0.02	973
Taylor Township	1,237	0.34	1,279	0.43	1,334	-0.01	1,332
Thompson Township	998	0.56	1,054	-0.04	1,049	0.08	1,058
Todd Township	1,488	0.74	1,599	0.49	1,677	0.03	1,681
Union Township	634	0.54	668	0.31	689	0.03	691
Valley-Hi Borough	20	1.07	22	0.67	24	0.04	24
Wells Township	529	-0.16	520	-0.24	508	0.01	508
FULTON	14,261	0.5	15,011	0.4	15,575	0.02	15,602

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 2006.

Table 3: Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity	2000 Census
One race	14,158
White	14,012
Black or African American	94
American Indian and Alaska Native	29
Asian	15
Pacific Islander	2
Some other race	6
Two or more races	103
Hispanic or Latino	52
Speak a language other than English	231

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3), Fulton County

Approximately 2 percent of Fulton’s population speaks a language other than English. Hazard mitigation strategies will need to address language barriers to ensure that all residents can receive emergency instructions.

Table 4: Housing Characteristics

Housing Characteristics	2000 Census
Total housing units	6,790
Owner-occupied housing units	4,462
Renter-occupied housing units	1,198
Vacant housing units	1,130
Median value (dollars)	83,900
With a mortgage (dollars)	786
Not mortgaged (dollars)	263

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3), Fulton County

Fulton County has 6,790 residential properties. These properties may be vulnerable to various natural hazards, in particular, flooding and windstorms. Damage to residential properties is not only expensive to repair or rebuild, but also devastating to the displaced family.

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Approximately 17 percent of the County's residential properties are vacant. Vacant buildings are particularly vulnerable to arson and criminal activity. Since vacant properties have not been maintained, many are structurally deficient and at risk of collapsing.

Approximately 21 percent of the County's population rents their home. Renters are more transient than home owners; therefore, communicating with renters may be more difficult than communicating with home owners. Similarly, tourists would be a harder population to communicate with during an emergency event. Communication strategies should be developed to ensure that these populations can be given proper notification.

Table 5: Economic Characteristics

Economic Characteristics	2000 Census
Median household income in 1999	\$ 34,882.00
Median family income in 1999	\$ 40,341.00
Per capita income in 1999	\$ 16,409.00
Families below poverty level	334
Individuals below poverty level	1,529

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3), Fulton County

In 1999, the median household income in the County was \$34,882, which was lower than the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's 1999 median household income (\$53,220). The County's per capita income of \$16,409 was also lower than the Commonwealth's per capita income of \$27,722. Over 8 percent of Fulton's families were below poverty level and almost 11 percent of its individuals were below poverty level. It may be more difficult to send emergency instructions to people below the poverty level. They most likely do not have access to the Internet. Additionally, many may not own vehicles; therefore, they could be a special needs population during an evacuation.

2.4. Land Use and Development

The following information was excerpted from the 2005 Land Use & Growth Management Report, Community and Regional Profiles, Fulton County. Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

Fulton County's existing land use patterns are greatly influenced and shaped by surrounding natural features such as mountain ranges, valleys, and waterways, as well as its transportation features. These features have largely determined the location of transportation corridors and development activities, as well as agricultural practices. A network of high-capacity transportation systems traverses Fulton County.

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These systems include the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Interstate 70, U.S. Route 30, and U.S. Route 522. In addition, Fulton County is in close proximity to the juncture of I-70 and I-68 in Maryland. These transportation systems have greatly contributed to Fulton County's accessibility and land development patterns. Of the County's total land area, only 4 percent is considered developed, while the bulk of the undeveloped resides in forested and agricultural uses.

McConnellsburg Borough has remained the population center and the industrial and commercial nucleus of Fulton County. Consequently, a natural pattern of development has occurred as a concentric ring of growth has expanded outward from the Borough into the neighboring rural townships.

Fulton County's commercial and industrial land development patterns are largely influenced by the transportation network and availability of public sewer services. As a result, future growth in the County is expected to occur in five distinct geographic areas: (1) McConnellsburg, (2) Warfordsburg, (3) Hustontown, (4) Ft. Littleton, and (5) Crystal Spring.

Fulton County's future population growth and land use development patterns will be largely influenced by in-migration patterns of people from the east and south. Data gathered from the Internal Revenue Service reveals that Fulton County's greatest population inflows originated in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, and Washington County, Maryland.

Fulton County's rural character is being jeopardized as its agricultural lands are slowly being converted to low-density, scattered residential development. From 1990 to 2000, U.S. Census enumerations show that the increase in housing units (9.8 percent) outpaced the County's population growth (4.6 percent).

Land use regulations are not prevalent in Fulton County. For example, Fulton County does not have a county zoning ordinance nor a subdivision and land development ordinance. In addition, of the 13 municipalities, only McConnellsburg Borough has adopted a zoning ordinance. Moreover, municipal subdivision and land development ordinances lack the regulations necessary to support the preservation of the County's existing rural character.

Agricultural use of land is in long-term decline. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 18 farms and 5,635 farmland acres were lost between 1987 and 1997. Less than one-tenth of one percent (95 acres) of the County's total farmland is enrolled in its agricultural easement program. The primary reason here is that very little to no money exists to support this program and the additional purchase of agricultural easements it entails.

Access management is an increasing concern as residential land development patterns continue to develop in a linear fashion along local roadways (e.g., U.S. 522) and each property obtains an individual highway occupancy permit from PennDOT.

2.5. *Data Sources*

Information for the Community Profile was developed by using information from the following sources:

- U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3), Fulton County
- The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, County Profile available at http://www.ruralpa2.org/county_profiles.cfm
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 2006
- 2005 Land Use & Growth Management Report, Community and Regional Profiles, Fulton County. Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development