

Strategic  
Management  
Program  
Plan



*funded in part by the*



# Preface

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## Management Letter

Board of Commissioners  
County of Potter  
Gunzburger Office Building  
1 N Main Street  
Coudersport, PA 16915

October 3, 2024

Dear Commissioners,

Kafferlin Strategies is pleased to present the attached Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP) plan for your review and approval. The completion of this plan marks an important milestone in Potter County's commitment to thoughtful governance and long-term sustainability. We commend the board of commissioners and their administrative staff for their leadership and investment in this process. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to all the department heads and stakeholders who contributed their time and insights, always demonstrating openness and a collaborative spirit throughout this collective effort.

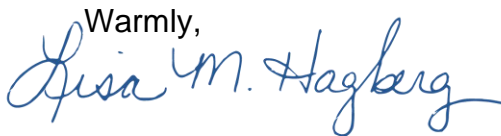
The board of commissioners are caretakers of a precious inheritance, an institution passed down through generations. You have been entrusted with the stewardship of a county rich in history and potential. This inheritance requires constant cultivation and careful improvement, balancing the need for progress with the understanding that too much change at once can be disruptive. The challenges facing Potter County, particularly those related to population decline and budgetary shortfalls, present unique complexities. Unlike some areas where growth may lead to increased revenues, population decline does not equate to a proportional reduction in service costs. Many county services are already operating at minimum staffing levels, making it imperative to seek strategic, long-term solutions. While this plan does not offer simple solutions or silver bullets, it provides a structured approach and practical guidance to help navigate these challenges effectively.

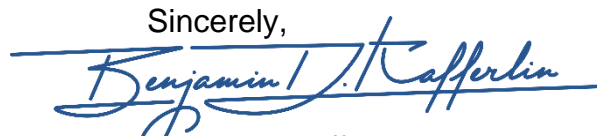
As you move forward, the implementation of this plan should be approached with flexibility and adaptability. It is recommended that the plan be reviewed and adjusted annually in conjunction with an annual strategic action plan to ensure it remains responsive to the county's evolving needs. Immediate next steps include presenting the

document for adoption at a public meeting and preparing to apply for Phase II of the DCED's STMP program in January 2025. This will provide continued opportunities for growth and improvement, built on the work completed in this phase.

Looking ahead, ongoing implementation will require sustained effort and commitment. Kafferlin Strategies stands ready to assist with future phases and to support the county in achieving its goals. We are honored and deeply grateful that Potter County entrusted us with this opportunity—our first STMP project. This collaboration has been invaluable, and we remain committed to offering our support and expertise as needed in the future.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the future of Potter County and trust that this plan will serve as a useful tool in guiding decision-making and fostering continued success. Your leadership and commitment to thoughtful governance will shape the county for years to come, and we are confident that with strategic implementation, Potter County will continue to thrive.

Warmly,  
  
Lisa M. Hagberg, Partner

Sincerely,  
  
Benjamin Kafferlin, Partner

# Strategic Management Planning Program

## Overview

The Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP) is an initiative designed to offer proactive financial and managerial assistance to municipalities experiencing financial difficulties that have not yet been formally declared distressed. Administered by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services within the Department of Community and Economic Development, the STMP provides grants to local governments for the development and implementation of comprehensive multi-year financial and management plans. These plans are tailored to meet the specific needs of each municipality and are aimed at enhancing financial stability, operational efficiency, and administrative capacity.

The program focuses on critical areas such as expenditure reduction, revenue enhancement, economic development strategies, and best management practices. By fostering regional cooperation and intergovernmental cost-sharing, the STMP seeks to promote sustainable economic growth and community revitalization, ensuring that municipalities can effectively plan for and manage their future financial circumstances. Through a structured process involving financial condition assessments, trend forecasting, emergency planning, management audits, and continuous implementation and review, the STMP equips local governments with the tools and resources needed to achieve long-term fiscal health and resilience.

## Program Objectives

The program objectives include:

- Engage in an assessment of managerial policies, procedures and practices relative to operations and service delivery and provide recommendations to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of financial and human resources.
- Provide the resources to assist local governments to identify, prioritize and address financial difficulties by implementing short- and long-term goals and objectives.
- Strengthen the managerial and administrative capacity within local governments to develop, adopt, monitor and implement Multi-Year Financial Management Plans and incorporate this process into their annual budget process.
- Engage in related management studies and operational improvements that will enhance financial administration and management of the local government.

- Implement a system of multi-year revenue and expenditure financial trend analysis, monitoring and forecasting so that local governments can anticipate and plan for future financial circumstances.
- Support the adoption of best management practices and efficiency measures to increase municipal financial stability.
- Promote multi-municipal and regional cooperation strategies and cost-sharing opportunities between two or more local governments.
- Further the integration of sound community and economic development strategies to encourage the economic growth of a local government's tax base over a multi-year period.

## Keystone Principles

The Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment & Resource Conservation are a set of guidelines developed to promote sustainable economic development and resource conservation in Pennsylvania. By reference, these principles support the Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP) by providing some operating rules for the plan, and thus the county to follow in order to achieve fiscal stability, efficient infrastructure use, regional cooperation, and community revitalization, ensuring that local governments can implement strategies that foster long-term economic growth and environmental stewardship.

- **Redevelop first**, support reuse and redevelopment of previously developed sites, conserve heritage resources, support rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- **Provide efficient infrastructure**, use and improve existing infrastructure, provide transportation choice, require service expansions to be consistent with plans.
- **Concentrate development**, support infill and compact development, foster well-designed neighborhoods.
- **Increase job opportunities**, retain and attract a diverse workforce, invest in businesses offering quality jobs.
- **Foster sustainable businesses**, strengthen natural resource-based industries, support renewable energy, construct green buildings.
- **Restore and enhance the environment**, conserve sensitive lands, promote respectful development.
- **Enhance recreational and heritage resources**, maintain and improve recreational assets, support adaptive reuse of historic resources.
- **Expand housing opportunities**, support construction and rehabilitation of diverse housing types, coordinate housing with jobs and infrastructure.
- **Plan regionally, implement locally**, support multi-municipal planning and implementation, provide education and funding for regional projects.

- **Be fair**, support equitable sharing of development benefits and burdens, ensure fair consideration for rural projects.

## Early Intervention Program

In 2008, Potter County engaged with Susquehanna Group Advisors, Inc. to develop a five-year financial management plan under the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Early Intervention Program (EIP). The EIP was designed to provide municipalities with financial and managerial support to address fiscal challenges proactively and establish long-term sustainability strategies. The resulting financial management plan aimed to provide a structured approach to improving the county's fiscal health through recommended policy changes, financial planning, and operational adjustments. This plan expired in early 2014, and while some progress was made, many of the recommendations were not fully implemented.

As part of the 2024 Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP), the previous EIP report was reviewed to identify incomplete recommendations that remain relevant to Potter County's current challenges. Those recommendations that were still applicable and aligned with the county's present-day needs were incorporated into this updated plan to build upon prior work and maintain continuity in addressing long-term fiscal sustainability. However, a significant number of recommendations from the 2008 plan were found to be either outdated, impractical given the county's evolving priorities, or otherwise inadvisable based on current circumstances. These recommendations were not carried forward into the 2024 plan, ensuring that the focus remains on practical, actionable strategies that align with the county's present-day financial realities and operational capabilities.

## Engagement

On January 25, 2024, Potter County issued a Request for Proposal seeking qualified consultants to assist with the development and implementation of a Strategic Management Planning Program. The RFP detailed the county's need for a comprehensive financial and managerial review to improve fiscal stability and operational efficiency. This initiative aimed to provide a structured approach to addressing financial challenges, optimizing resource allocation, and enhancing service delivery. Responses were due by February 16, 2024, and Kafferlin Strategies LLC submitted a detailed proposal that outlined relevant qualifications, experience, and competitive pricing.

Following a thorough review and interview process, during which Kafferlin Strategies demonstrated its strategic approach, and understanding of the county's unique

challenges, the county commissioners selected the firm's proposal. On March 17, 2024, the commissioners officially voted to approve the proposal, marking the beginning of a structured and collaborative effort to guide the county's strategic planning process.

To formally initiate the project, a kick-off meeting was held on April 19, 2024, bringing together key stakeholders, including county leadership and department heads. This meeting served as a foundational step in the project, fostering alignment among stakeholders, clarifying roles and expectations, and establishing a clear roadmap for the successful execution of the Strategic Management Planning Program. The collaborative effort set in motion during the kick-off meeting reflects the county's commitment to proactive planning and continuous improvement.

### County Objectives

Potter County is committed to the development and implementation of a multi-year financial management program and strategies, and to that end, have contracted to work with a consultant with the following objectives:

- Strengthen multi-year financial planning processes for the County.
- Assist the County on a Strategic Management Planning Program basis to identify and address financial difficulties.
- Develop the internal capacity within the County so that it is able to develop, adopt, monitor, and implement Multi-Year Financial Management plans and incorporate this process into the annual budget process.
- Assess possible revenue creation in a county which has limited taxation ability.
- Conduct related management studies that will improve the management, financial administration, operations, and economic development activities within the County. This part of the study should include but not be limited to an analysis of the appropriate structure, command, scheduling, and staffing levels of each department and a review of current practices compared to established "best practices" and standards of excellence for local government service delivery. It should also include a review of all current collective bargaining agreements and recommendations regarding cost containment and cost sharing for relevant departments and operations. [waiting to see if less CBAs in June]
- Implement a system of multi-year revenue and expenditure financial monitoring and trend analysis so that the County can anticipate and plan for future financial circumstances. This includes analysis of retirement plans, liability and health insurance coverage and cost.
- Determine and establish the adoption of "best practices" for management of the County and develop standards that support financial stability.

- Provide a mechanism by which the County may adopt prioritized short- and long-term goals and objectives for subsequent adoption and implementation.
- Explore the opportunities for promoting inter-municipal and regional cooperation strategies and cost-sharing among area county governments.

## Deliverables

To meet those objectives, the consultant has agreed to a five step process, creating the following in a comprehensive document:

- **Step 1: Financial Condition Assessment** – This assessment is to be performed as a means to establish a realistic baseline of the County’s historic and financial condition. A review of each fund starting with the General Fund and all other funds that exist for the County. This review should include a minimum of four (4) years of detailed historical financial data.
- **Step 2: Financial Trend Analysis** – Performed over a multi-year period, this analysis will project future revenue, expenditure, economic and demographic trends for at least a three (3) year period so that the County can understand its future financial position and take immediate steps to counteract any negative trends.
- **Step 3: Management Audit** – With assistance from the consultant, the County shall perform a management audit of all departments and operations. The audit is to include narrative summaries of each department comprised of budget and personnel information as well as other relevant data. This data is to be supported by interviews with members of the governing body, department heads, and key staff members as may be required in order to facilitate the most comprehensive view of the County’s most critical operational needs. Recommended structure, command, scheduling and staffing levels (based on “best practices” for local government service delivery) should be provided for each department so that it will be possible for management to use a “benchmarking” strategy to address operational deficiencies. The management audit shall encompass any and all areas outlined by the County Commissioners during the interview and consultant selection process.
- **Step 4: Multi-Year Plan Strategy** – The Plan, at its foundation, will identify the County’s top three financial management priorities. Additional prioritization should be conducted at the departmental level, and interdepartmental objectives that are countywide. These should be detailed in the Plan. Each objective is to contain a detailed action plan that describes: 1) policy objectives to be achieved; 2) budgetary impact; 3) timing and deadlines for each action step; and 4) which employee and/or department has the primary responsibility for the objective.
- **Step 5: Multi-Year Plan Implementation** – The Strategic Management Planning Program is an ongoing process and an adopted plan must be evaluated,

adjusted and adopted each year. A master implementation schedule should be created that specifies key deadlines for each objective set forth in the Plan. Key to the ultimate implementation of the Plan, this schedule will serve to monitor whether or not individual department objectives are being met, thus providing a means by which the Board of County Commissioners can measure overall progress in implementing the Plan.

### Deliverable Due Dates

The county and consultant agreed to have Step 1 & 2 substantially complete by June 14, 2024, including the multi-year condition assessment as well as the future forecasting. Step 3, the management review, was agreed to be completed by July 26, 2024. Step 4, the five year plan, and Step 5, the implementation schedule, were agreed to be due September 6 and 30, respectively but were extended to substantially complete and ready for review at the October 3, 2024 commissioner meeting. That said, Potter County Commissioners graciously allowed for Kafferlin Strategies to continue to copyedit and refine it until the publish date.

## Kafferlin Strategies

Kafferlin Strategies LLC is a management consulting firm focused on small Pennsylvania local governments. The company is known for strategic planning, comprehensive budgeting, operations reviews, interim management, and executive search. Founded in 2013, the company is owned by four partners and seeks a thriving Pennsylvania. The company was honored to be selected by Potter County to complete the STMP and used the following team members.

### Team

**Ben Kafferlin** is a Partner of Kafferlin Strategies LLC, where he has experience working with local governments including townships, boroughs, counties, and small cities in Pennsylvania. He is a former two-term Warren County Commissioner. He has bachelor's degrees in political science and economics and a master's in public administration. He was the primary project manager for the STMP, and was primary on the trend analysis, many of the management reviews, and implementation schedule.

**Lisa Hagberg** is a Partner at Kafferlin Strategies LLC, where she primarily consults local governments on fiscal and human resources. She served as a borough manager for over ten years, a county administrator for three years, and a tax accountant for twenty years primarily working on local government accounts. Her bachelor's is in accounting. She took the lead on the financial conditions assessment and many of the management audits.

**Doug Kafferlin** is a Partner at Kafferlin Strategies LLC where he primarily supports clients with information technology consulting, process engineering, and community engagement. He is a retired CEO and holds a bachelor's degree in engineering.

**Brian Zeybel** is a consultant specializing in law enforcement-related activities. He is a retired State Trooper with the Pennsylvania State Police, and subsequently a county sheriff. He primarily supported the STMP by completing management reviews of departments related to law enforcement.

**Jeff Davidek** is an entrepreneur and former Senior Vice President for the predominant pension management firm for Pennsylvania counties, where he helped managed portfolios worth over \$1.5 billion. He reviewed the county's retirement plan in detail. He is a lecturer at Grove City College and holds a degree in economics from Allegheny College.

**Michael Rearick** is the Director of Client Outreach at MCM Consulting Group, Inc. He specializes in 911 and emergency management and was previously of a county Office of Emergency Services. He was primarily responsible for management reviews related to emergency services.

**Diane Chido**, is the founder of Erie-based research firm DC Analytics and an adjunct instructor at the Institute for Intelligence Studies at Mercyhurst University. She has over 25 years of experience in security, intelligence, and socio-cultural and economic development. She holds an M.S. in Applied Intelligence Analysis and an M.A. in Russian Language. Diane contributed to the STMP by conducting analysis related to population trends.

**Stephanie Fera, Esq.** is a partner in Gabriel Fera, a Pittsburgh-based law firm specializing in labor-related law, mostly serving Pennsylvania local government. Her role primarily related to reviewing staffing levels, collective bargaining agreements, and human resources procedures. She earned her Doctor of Law from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

**Brian Bull** is a Certified Pennsylvania Evaluator (CPE) and the Chief Assessor of another Pennsylvania county. He helped to evaluate the assessment department and provide recommendations related to taxation, tax claim and tax assessment.

**Tyler Nichols** is a vice president of a Fortune 500 company where he oversees infrastructure solutions. He primarily served by reviewing the capital volatility of facilities from building envelope to mechanical, electrical, and plumbing in order to build a capital improvement plan. He is a graduate of Grove City College where he studied entrepreneurship and industrial engineering.

**Michael Logut** is a Principal of Seubert & Associates, Inc. where he has been since 2011. He handles benefits transparency to reduce medical and pharmacy spend. He assisted with reviewing health care costs and projections. He is a graduate of Slippery Rock University.

**Todd Fantaskey** is an environmental consultant with Northwest Soil Services where he has been for 25 years. He served as a conservation district manager for 10 years before that and consulted on activities related to conservation for the STMP. He is a graduate of Lock Haven University in environmental sciences.

**Jeff Steiert** joined the MCM Consulting Group, Inc. team with an extensive background in public safety. He brings a broad spectrum of frontline, administrative and operational

management experience to the MCM team. Jeff started his public safety career at Northampton County as a 911 dispatcher and remained with the county for twenty-three years holding additional positions of systems manager and deputy director. He has managed both the 911 and emergency management divisions. Prior to his work with Northampton County, Jeff worked in public safety as an EMT and paramedic.

## Method

Kafferlin Strategies employed a comprehensive and structured approach in the development of the (STMP), going beyond the normal internal focus, ensuring a thorough evaluation of the county's financial and landscape. The process began with a kick-off meeting on April 19, 2024, which brought together key stakeholders, including county commissioners, some department heads, and other relevant personnel. This initial meeting was instrumental in fostering collaboration, clarifying expectations, and establishing a clear project roadmap to guide the planning process effectively.

Following the kick-off, Kafferlin Strategies initiated an extensive data collection phase, gathering detailed fiscal information from all relevant departments and demographic information. A significant challenge in this phase stemmed from the county's use of separate financial systems across departments, compounded by a recent transition to new accounting software. These factors created inconsistencies in data reporting and tracking, necessitating a meticulous effort to align and reconcile financial records. By carefully reconstructing financial data, the firm was able to develop a more accurate and realistic baseline for assessing the county's financial health.

Once the fiscal data was consolidated, a detailed trend analysis was conducted, examining historical financial records to identify patterns and project future financial conditions. This analysis provided valuable insights into revenue and expenditure trends, helping to forecast potential fiscal challenges and opportunities. Individual meetings were then held with department heads and key external stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of operational challenges, resource needs, and strategic priorities. These discussions revealed critical insights into departmental functions and areas for potential improvement, contributing to a well-rounded perspective on the county's operational landscape.

The final phase of the STMP process involved the development of a comprehensive implementation plan and schedule. This plan outlined actionable steps, assigned responsibilities, and included rough budget estimates to support informed decision-making. The plan prioritized the county's most pressing needs while emphasizing collaboration and long-term sustainability. By focusing on achievable objectives and

phased implementation, the plan provides a strategic framework to guide the county through its next steps.

The structured approach taken by Kafferlin Strategies resulted in a robust and actionable Strategic Management Plan. This plan equips Potter County with the necessary tools and strategies to enhance fiscal stability, optimize operational efficiency, and position the county for sustainable growth. The collaborative effort between the consulting firm and county leadership underscores a shared commitment to proactive planning and continuous improvement in service delivery.

## County Profile

Potter County, situated in the center of Pennsylvania's northern tier, is renowned for its expansive forests, rolling hills, and abundant outdoor recreational opportunities. Often referred to as "God's Country," the county's natural beauty is a significant draw for both residents and visitors.

As of the 2020 census, Potter County's population was 16,396, ranking it as the fifth-least populous county in Pennsylvania. The county spans approximately 1,081 square miles, making it the sixth-largest in the state by total area. This results in a low population density of about 15.2 people per square mile.

Demographically, the county is predominantly White, with 95.7% of residents identifying as such. Other racial groups include Black or African American at 0.4% and individuals of other races at 3.4%. Hispanic or Latino individuals of any race make up 1.7% of the population.

The median household income in Potter County is approximately \$59,840, which is below the state median. The county also has a higher median age of 48.1 years, indicating an aging population. This demographic trend presents challenges for workforce availability and economic development.

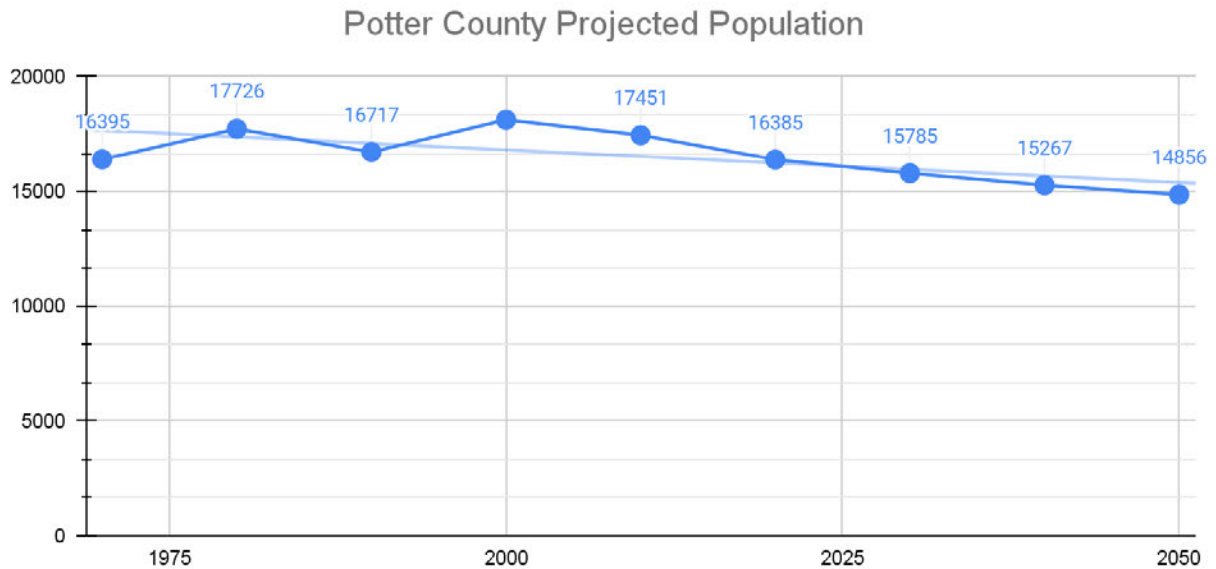
Economically, Potter County employs approximately 6,830 people. The largest industries include manufacturing, which employs 982 people; health care and social assistance, employing 940 people; and retail trade, with 713 employees. The highest-paying industries are mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, with an average salary of \$64,120; utilities at \$63,333; and professional, scientific, and technical services, averaging \$61,063.

Despite its natural assets and strong community ties, Potter County faces several challenges. The population has been declining, with a 7.1% decrease from 2010 to 2022. This decline, coupled with an aging demographic, impacts the local economy and the provision of services. Additionally, while the county's unemployment rate is not specified in the available data, the economic structure and demographic trends suggest potential employment challenges.

## Population

Potter County, like many rural communities, is experiencing a declining and aging population, a trend that has significant implications for its future. At the time of the last

decennial census, the county's population was approximately 16,400. Projections from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania indicate a continued decline in the coming years, which presents challenges that extend across economic, social, and governmental domains.



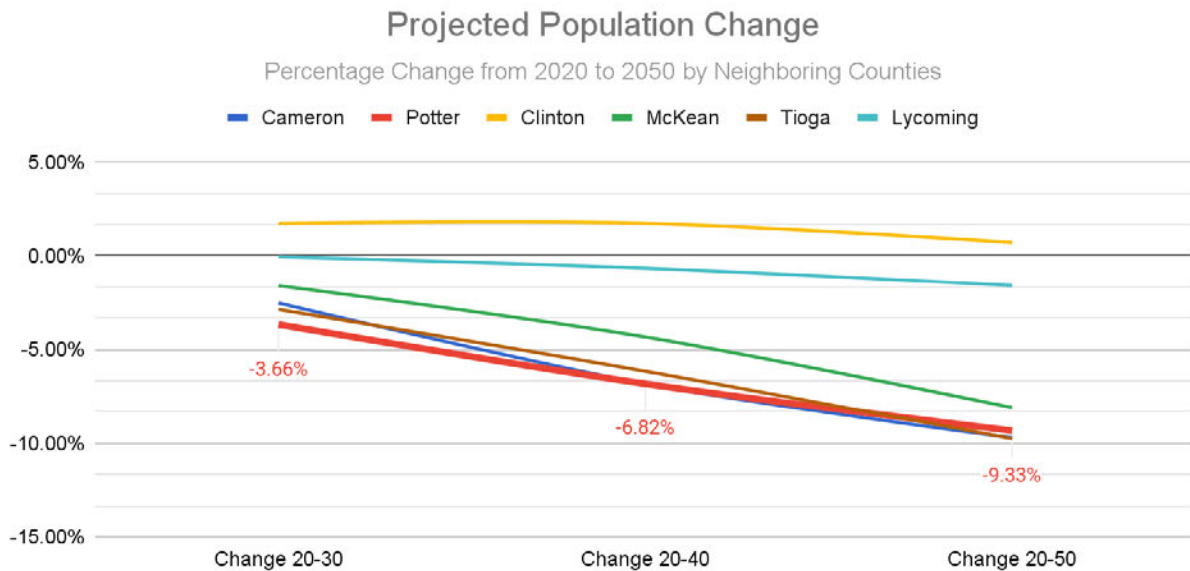
A shrinking population can lead to a reduced labor force, making it more difficult for local businesses to find employees and potentially deterring new enterprises from establishing operations in the area. This contraction can slow economic growth and reduce the county's overall competitiveness. As the population decreases, the cost per capita for maintaining infrastructure and public services, such as schools, healthcare facilities, and transportation networks, can increase. This situation often results in difficult decisions about consolidating or reducing services, which can further impact the quality of life for remaining residents.

Population decline can also erode the social fabric of communities. With fewer residents, civic engagement may diminish and sustaining cultural and recreational activities becomes more challenging. Community organizations and events that contribute to a vibrant communal life may struggle to continue operating. An increasing median age within the population places additional strains on healthcare services and the local economy. A higher proportion of elderly residents often correlates with greater demand for medical care and support services, while simultaneously reducing the available workforce and consumer base.

Addressing these challenges requires proactive and strategic planning. Efforts could include developing policies and programs aimed at attracting and retaining residents,

such as economic incentives for businesses, investment in quality-of-life improvements, and initiatives to enhance educational and employment opportunities. Creating a welcoming environment for diverse populations and exploring avenues for sustainable development may also help mitigate the adverse effects of population decline.

Understanding the multifaceted impact of demographic changes is crucial for Potter County as it navigates these challenges and seeks to build a resilient and prosperous future. Long-term planning that accounts for shifting demographics will be necessary to ensure fiscal stability, operational efficiency, and community vitality.



The above chart illustrates the projected percentage of population decline for Potter County and the surrounding counties in the near future. The decline in rural counties is a common trend as people migrate to urban areas in search of employment opportunities, better access to services, and other factors that contribute to quality of life. Given that this trend is prevalent across the region, it is recommended that Potter County pursue collaborative efforts with neighboring counties to develop regional strategies that address shared challenges related to population decline, economic development, and workforce retention, especially through the collaborative work of the PA Wilds initiative.

While some individuals have likely relocated to Potter County due to their ability to work remotely and their preference for rural living, this trend remains relatively small. For it to significantly counterbalance the projected decline, greater efforts are needed to attract and support remote workers. Enhancing infrastructure such as broadband internet access, promoting the region’s quality of life to urban professionals, and fostering a

strong sense of community could help position Potter County as a desirable location for remote work. However, a more aggressive approach to marketing these opportunities and offering incentives may be required to see meaningful results.

Retaining the county's existing young population is another critical component in addressing population decline. Encouraging students to remain in the county requires a multi-faceted approach that includes raising awareness of career opportunities within Potter County, ensuring access to the necessary training and educational resources, and providing clear pathways to employment. The Potter County Comprehensive Plan addresses many of these concerns, outlining strategies to connect students with local employers and highlight available career paths. Additional efforts, such as facilitating mentorship programs, job shadowing opportunities, and internships with local businesses, could further strengthen these efforts.

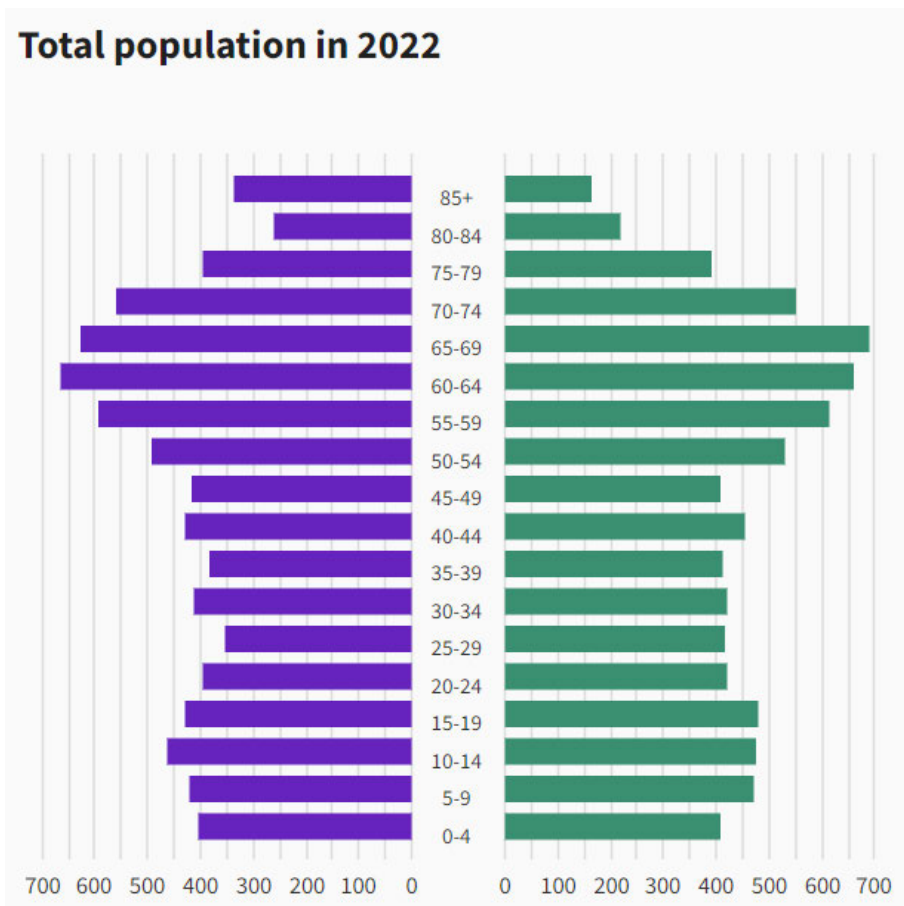
Engaging students with real-life success stories from individuals who have moved to Potter County to work remotely may also provide valuable insights and inspiration. Exposing students to professionals who have successfully established careers while enjoying the benefits of rural living could broaden their understanding of potential opportunities. This outreach could include guest speakers in schools, career fairs, and social media campaigns showcasing the benefits of living and working in Potter County. A proactive and collaborative approach, both within the county and with neighboring regions, will be essential to mitigating the effects of population decline and fostering sustainable community growth.

## Age

The following two charts present the population distribution of rural Pennsylvania by cohort as of 2020, alongside a detailed breakdown of Potter County’s population by age range. These charts provide valuable insights into the demographic composition of both the region and the county, highlighting key trends that influence long-term planning and service provision.

A review of the data reveals an aging population, with a significant proportion of residents in older age brackets. This trend has important implications for the county’s future, as an aging population typically results in increased demand for healthcare services, social support programs, and senior-friendly infrastructure. Conversely, the working-age population is shrinking, which poses challenges in terms of workforce availability and economic vitality. As fewer younger individuals remain in the county, businesses may struggle to fill positions, and the tax base could erode, placing additional financial strain on public services.

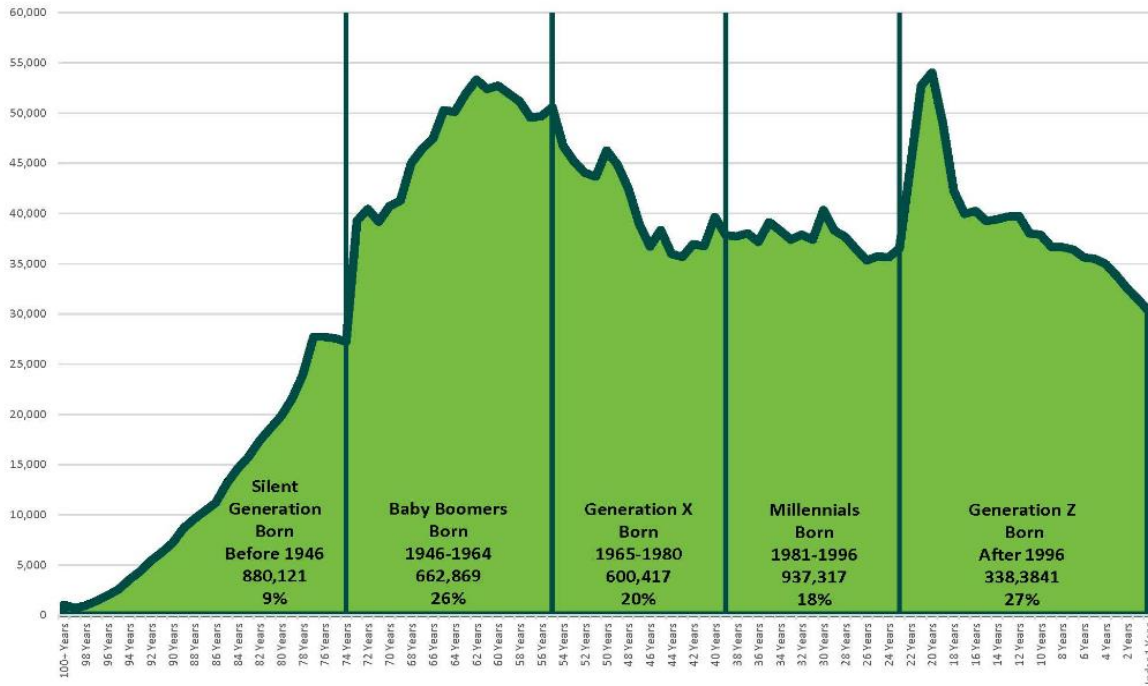
The comparison of Potter County's age distribution with that of rural Pennsylvania provides context for understanding the county’s unique demographic challenges and opportunities. While rural Pennsylvania as a whole is experiencing similar trends, Potter



County’s population skew may necessitate targeted interventions to address local needs more effectively. Efforts to retain young adults and attract new families will be critical in ensuring a balanced age distribution and sustaining economic and social stability.

## Rural Pennsylvania Generational Cohorts, 2020

*Generational defined by Pew Research Center. Data source: 2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau.  
Prepared by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.*



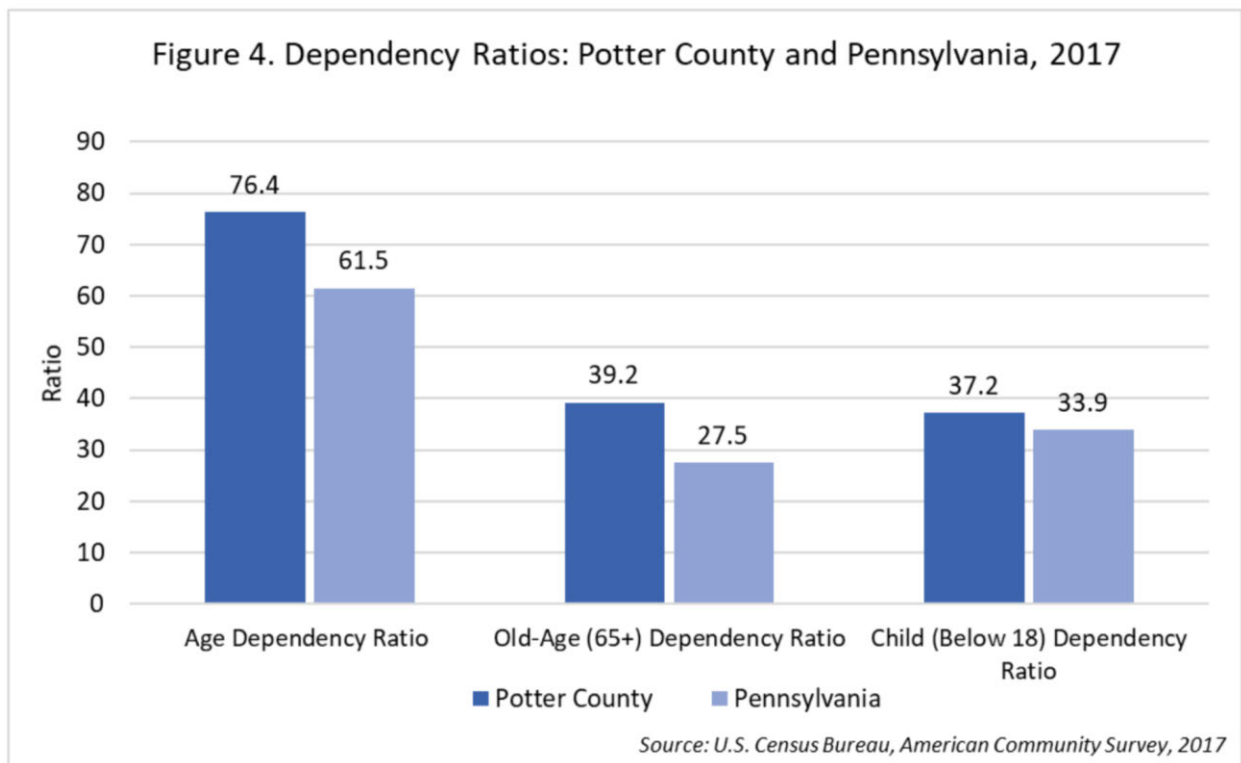
The charts also highlight the importance of workforce development initiatives, educational opportunities, and targeted economic development strategies that align with the county's demographic realities. Encouraging younger residents to stay and attracting new working-age individuals through remote work opportunities, quality-of-life improvements, and career pathways could help address these demographic challenges. Understanding the county’s age distribution is crucial for planning future public services, economic strategies, and infrastructure investments. Policymakers should use this data to inform decisions related to healthcare, housing, transportation, and workforce development to ensure that Potter County remains resilient and responsive to the evolving needs of its residents.

### Dependency Ratio

The dependency ratio measures the proportion of the population that is classified as pre-working age (children) and post-working age (elderly) compared to the working-age population. This metric provides valuable insight into the relative tax burden placed on

the working-age population when comparing different regions. A higher dependency ratio indicates a greater proportion of non-working residents who rely on public services, which can place fiscal pressures on local governments and taxpayers.

The chart below, based on 2017 data, illustrates that Potter County has a relatively high dependency ratio compared to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Specifically, the elderly population in Potter County is 11.7 percent higher than the state average, while the child population is 3.3 percent higher. These figures suggest a potentially greater demand for healthcare, social services, and educational resources within the county. Although a higher dependency ratio may initially suggest a significantly greater financial burden on the local working-age population, it is important to recognize that many of the services that support children and the elderly are funded through state and federal programs. These external funding sources help offset some of the financial strain at the local level. Programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and state-funded education initiatives contribute to meeting the needs of these dependent populations, reducing the direct fiscal impact on the county government and taxpayers.



However, despite the availability of state and federal funding, a high dependency ratio still presents challenges for local service delivery and economic sustainability. An aging population may require increased healthcare services, senior housing options, and specialized transportation solutions, while a higher percentage of children necessitates

investments in education, childcare, and recreational opportunities. Ensuring that the county's infrastructure and services can meet these evolving demands will require careful long-term planning and resource allocation.

Understanding Potter County's dependency ratio is critical for developing strategic policies that address both immediate and future needs. The county may need to explore strategies for attracting and retaining working-age residents to balance the population structure, such as promoting job opportunities, enhancing quality of life, and supporting initiatives that encourage younger families to settle in the region.

## Ethnicity

The ethnic makeup of Potter County is predominantly white, with 95.9 percent of the population identifying as such, compared to the state of Pennsylvania, where the white population accounts for 61.6 percent. The remaining population in Potter County includes 1.7 percent Hispanic or Latino, 1.2 percent identifying as two or more races, 0.6 percent Asian, 0.6 percent African American, and 0.4 percent Native American. These figures indicate a significantly lower level of racial and ethnic diversity compared to the broader state demographic profile. It is worth noting that rounding in the data results in a total percentage exceeding 100 percent.

The relatively homogenous demographic composition raises important questions about whether or not the community will be welcoming to other demographics that might bolster the population. Possible barriers to non-white individuals living or working in Potter County could include economic opportunities, social and cultural integration, and access to community resources. Employment prospects, housing availability, and perceptions of inclusivity may all play a role in influencing whether individuals from more diverse backgrounds choose to relocate to or remain in the county.

Economic opportunities are a key factor in attracting and retaining a diverse population. If industries and employers within the county are not actively recruiting from broader talent pools or offering competitive wages and benefits, it may limit the county's appeal to non-white professionals and job seekers. Additionally, the availability of affordable and inclusive housing options could influence the ability of diverse populations to settle in the area.

Social and cultural factors also play a critical role in determining whether individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds feel welcomed and included within the community. The presence of cultural organizations, religious institutions, and support networks that cater to diverse populations can contribute to a sense of belonging and integration. Conversely, the absence of such resources may create perceived or real barriers to entry for individuals considering moving to Potter County.

Furthermore, access to essential services, such as healthcare, education, and legal support, can be a determining factor for diverse populations when choosing where to live and work. Ensuring that these services are culturally competent and accessible to all residents, regardless of background, is an important consideration for fostering a more diverse and inclusive community.

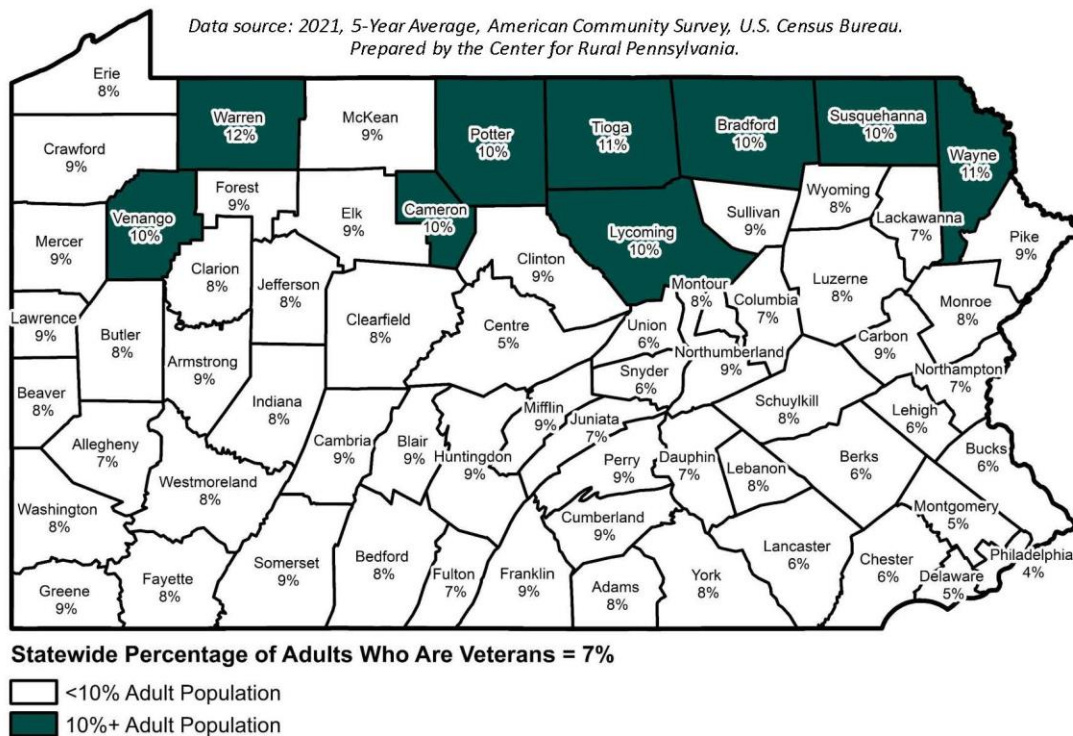
To better understand and address potential barriers to diversity, the county may consider conducting targeted outreach efforts, engaging with community leaders from diverse backgrounds, and assessing policies that could impact inclusivity. Encouraging open dialogue and actively working to create an environment where all individuals feel valued and welcomed will be critical in promoting demographic diversity and enriching the cultural fabric of Potter County.

### Veterans

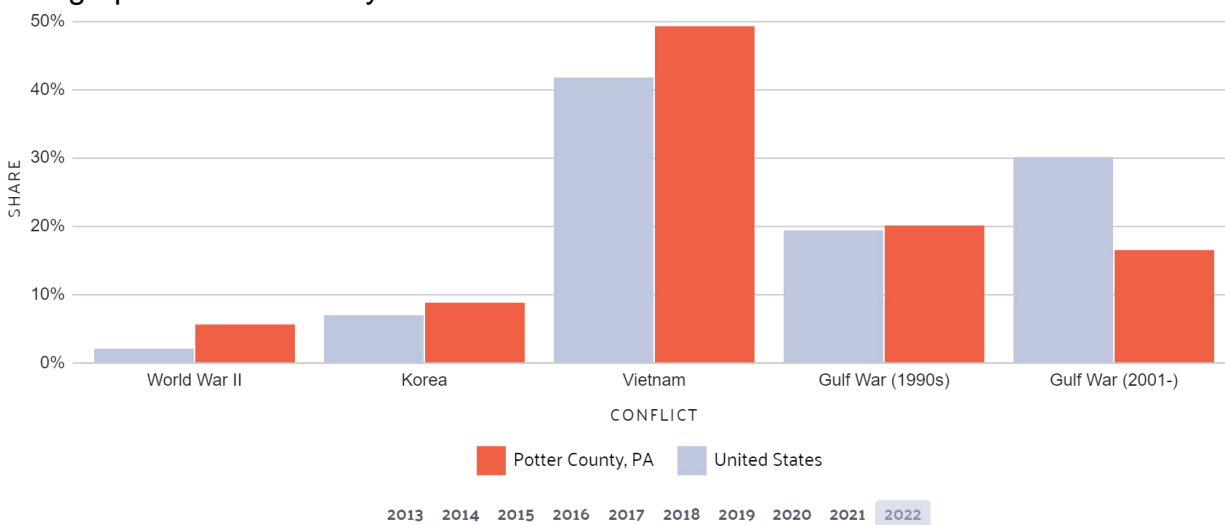
Potter County has a very high percentage of military veterans at about 10%, only behind Warren County (12%) and Tioga County (11%).

## Pennsylvania Veterans, 2021

(Veterans as Percentage of Population 18 Years Old+, by County)



A disproportionate percentage of those veterans served in the Vietnam War, and were disproportionately underrepresented in the Gulf War, which is consistent with the age demographics of the county.



## Migration

The migration in and out graphs provide valuable insights into the movement patterns of Potter County's population. These graphs illustrate where younger residents are relocating and where older individuals are moving from when they return to the county. Understanding these trends is essential for developing strategies to retain younger populations and support the needs of returning retirees.

The regional data indicates that younger individuals, particularly those in their twenties and thirties, are leaving areas like Potter County in significant numbers. Many are relocating to urban areas and regions with more diverse economic opportunities, such as Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and out-of-state metropolitan areas like Buffalo and New York City. The primary drivers behind this out-migration include access to higher education, career advancement opportunities, and amenities not readily available in a rural setting. Young professionals often seek areas with stronger job markets, higher wages, and vibrant social and cultural scenes, which Potter County struggles to provide due to its limited employment opportunities and relatively isolated geographic location.

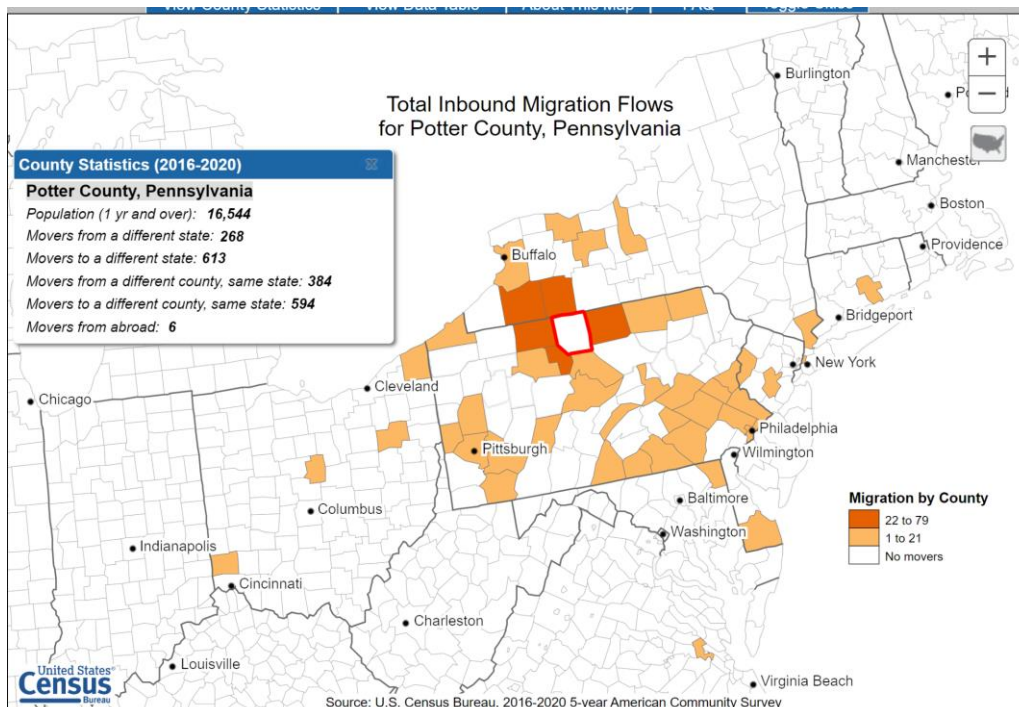
Conversely, the migration of older adults into Potter County suggests a trend of retirees or near-retirees returning to the area after spending much of their working lives elsewhere. The data indicates that many of these individuals are moving back from larger cities within Pennsylvania and surrounding states, such as New York and Ohio. Several factors contribute to this in-migration, including the lower cost of living, familiarity with the area, and the appeal of the county's natural beauty and slower pace

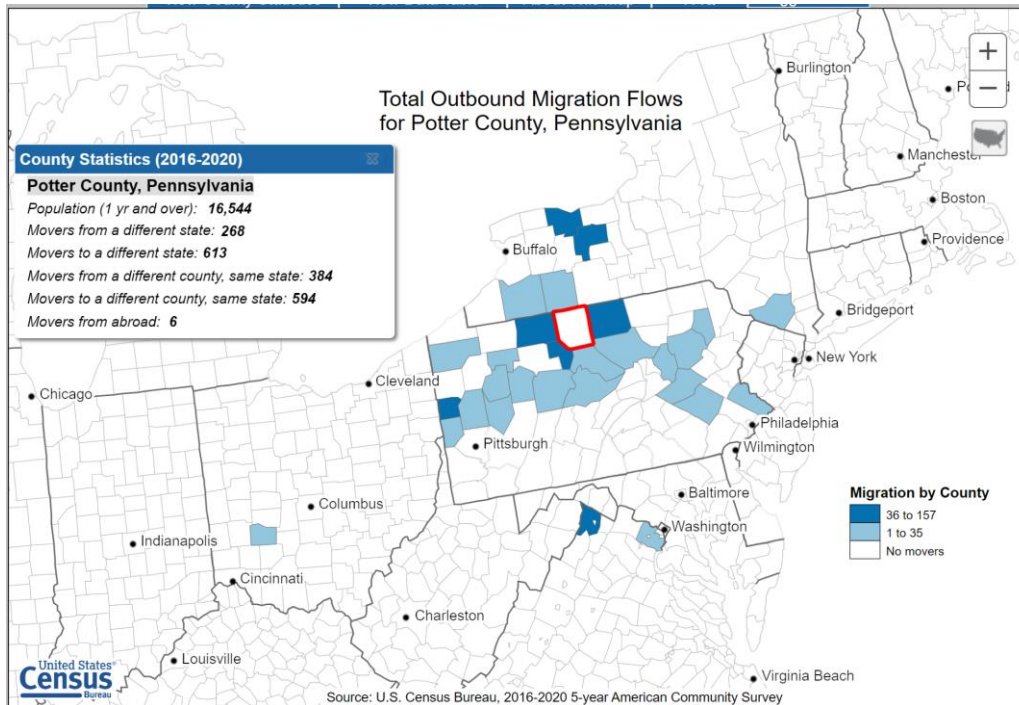
of life. Many retirees seek to return to their roots, reconnect with family, and take advantage of the county’s outdoor recreational opportunities, which offer a desirable lifestyle for those no longer in the workforce.

While the return of retirees provides some economic benefit to the local community, primarily through property taxes and local spending, it does not compensate for the loss of the younger, working-age population. The declining youth population contributes to workforce shortages, school enrollment declines, and a shrinking tax base, which puts increased pressure on local services and infrastructure.

Addressing these migration patterns requires a multifaceted approach. Retention efforts could focus on creating economic opportunities that appeal to younger demographics, such as expanding remote work options, promoting entrepreneurship, and investing in industries that align with the skills and interests of younger residents. Additionally, marketing Potter County as an attractive destination for families and professionals who value a high quality of life in a rural setting may help counteract the outflow of younger residents.

At the same time, efforts should be made to better accommodate the needs of the returning older population by ensuring adequate healthcare services, senior-friendly housing options, and recreational opportunities that align with their lifestyles. Understanding these migration trends allows for more targeted policy interventions aimed at balancing the demographic challenges facing Potter County.





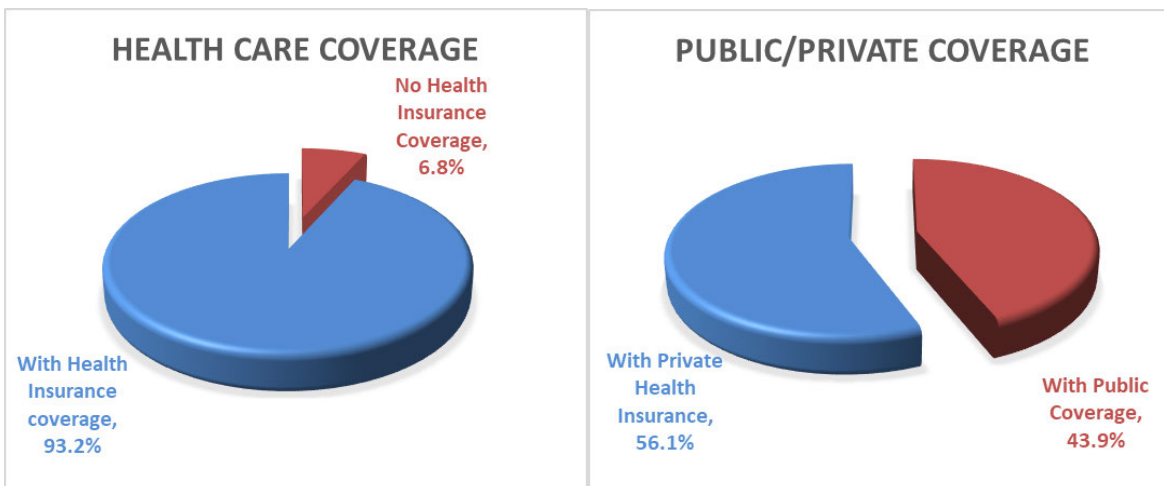
These statistics show a net outflow of 345 people from 2016 to 2020. The charts show inflows from more highly populated areas and further away, while outflows are to more rural areas nearby, with some overlap between the two. It is recommended that efforts be made to encourage young people to stay in the county while promoting immigration from urban areas of remote workers.

## Quality of Life & Quality of Place

### History

Part of the quality of life is the access to historic and cultural events and experiences. Museums and other historic places often become the location for cultural events which



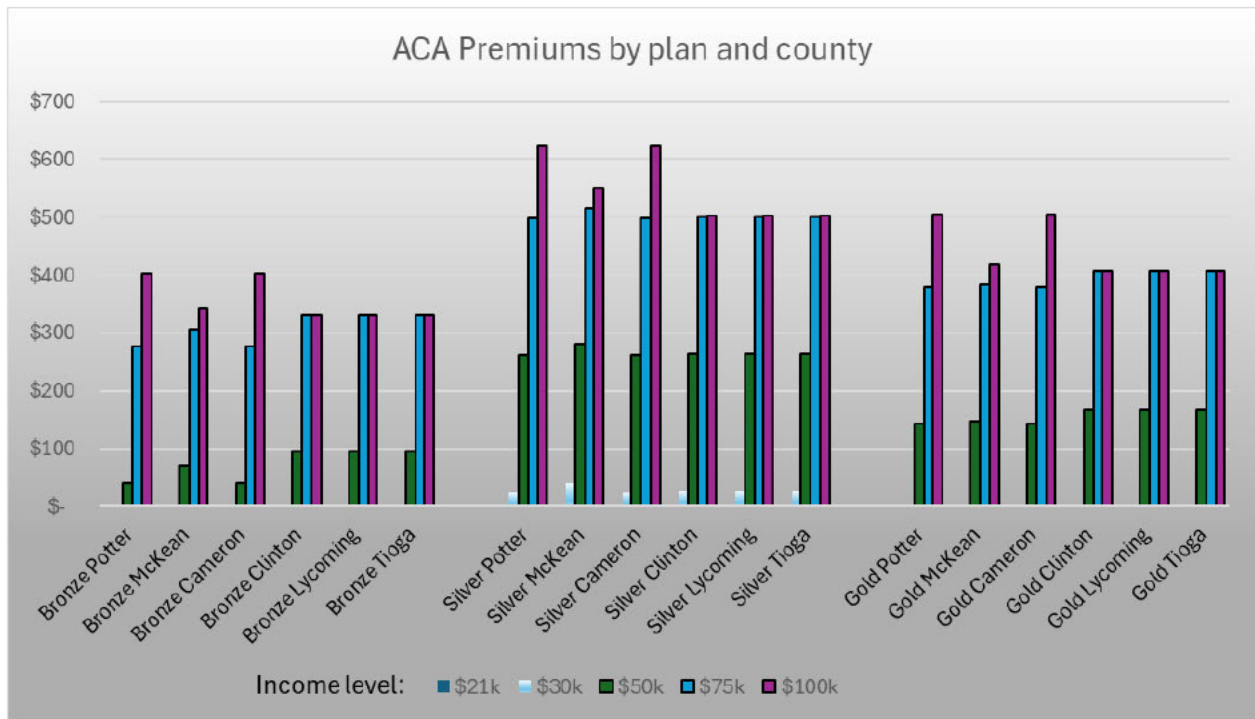


The table and chart below show the monthly premium costs for an Affordable Care Act (ACA) health plan for a 40-year-old individual living in Potter County or a neighboring county. Premium costs are displayed at various income levels and reflect subsidies applied based on income to lower the final cost for eligible individuals.

2024 ACA Premiums for Potter and surrounding counties												Rates for a 40-year-old			
Income / Percent of poverty		\$ 21,000 144%		\$ 30,000 206%		\$ 50,000 343%		\$ 75,000 514%		\$ 100,000 686%					
		Premium	Subsidy	Premium	Subsidy	Premium	Subsidy	Premium	Subsidy	Premium	Subsidy				
Bronze	Potter	\$ 402	\$ -	\$ 656	\$ -	\$ 600	\$ 41	\$ 361	\$ 277	\$ 125	\$ 402	\$ -			
	McKean	\$ 341	\$ -	\$ 565	\$ -	\$ 509	\$ 70	\$ 271	\$ 307	\$ 34	\$ 341	\$ -			
	Cameron	\$ 402	\$ -	\$ 656	\$ -	\$ 600	\$ 41	\$ 361	\$ 277	\$ 125	\$ 402	\$ -			
	Clinton	\$ 332	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ -	\$ 476	\$ 94	\$ 238	\$ 331	\$ 1	\$ 332	\$ -			
	Lycoming	\$ 332	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ -	\$ 476	\$ 94	\$ 238	\$ 331	\$ 1	\$ 332	\$ -			
	Tioga	\$ 332	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ -	\$ 476	\$ 94	\$ 238	\$ 331	\$ 1	\$ 332	\$ -			
Silver	Potter	\$ 623	\$ -	\$ 656	\$ 23	\$ 600	\$ 262	\$ 361	\$ 498	\$ 125	\$ 623	\$ -			
	McKean	\$ 550	\$ -	\$ 565	\$ 41	\$ 509	\$ 280	\$ 271	\$ 516	\$ 34	\$ 550	\$ -			
	Cameron	\$ 623	\$ -	\$ 656	\$ 23	\$ 600	\$ 262	\$ 361	\$ 498	\$ 125	\$ 623	\$ -			
	Clinton	\$ 502	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ 26	\$ 476	\$ 264	\$ 238	\$ 501	\$ 1	\$ 502	\$ -			
	Lycoming	\$ 502	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ 26	\$ 476	\$ 264	\$ 238	\$ 501	\$ 1	\$ 502	\$ -			
	Tioga	\$ 502	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ 26	\$ 476	\$ 264	\$ 238	\$ 501	\$ 1	\$ 502	\$ -			
Gold	Potter	\$ 504	\$ -	\$ 656	\$ -	\$ 600	\$ 143	\$ 361	\$ 380	\$ 125	\$ 504	\$ -			
	McKean	\$ 418	\$ -	\$ 565	\$ -	\$ 509	\$ 148	\$ 271	\$ 384	\$ 34	\$ 418	\$ -			
	Cameron	\$ 504	\$ -	\$ 656	\$ -	\$ 600	\$ 143	\$ 361	\$ 380	\$ 125	\$ 504	\$ -			
	Clinton	\$ 407	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ -	\$ 476	\$ 169	\$ 238	\$ 406	\$ 1	\$ 407	\$ -			
	Lycoming	\$ 407	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ -	\$ 476	\$ 169	\$ 238	\$ 406	\$ 1	\$ 407	\$ -			
	Tioga	\$ 407	\$ -	\$ 532	\$ -	\$ 476	\$ 169	\$ 238	\$ 406	\$ 1	\$ 407	\$ -			

\*Ineligible for tax credit

Source: <https://www.kff.org/affordable-care-act/issue-brief/how-aca-marketplace-premiums-changed-by-county-in-2024/>



The data indicates that health insurance premiums under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) are generally higher in Potter County compared to some surrounding counties. Several factors may contribute to this discrepancy, including differences in healthcare provider availability, regional healthcare costs, and insurer competition. However, income-based subsidies play a significant role in reducing out-of-pocket expenses for eligible individuals, helping to mitigate the cost disparities between counties. These subsidies are designed to make healthcare coverage more accessible and affordable, ensuring that residents of Potter County have comparable access to insurance options despite the higher base premiums.

### Health Behaviors

The chart below shows some of the Health Indicators for Potter County as compared to Pennsylvania and U.S. rates.

Selected Potter County Health Indicators Compared to Pennsylvania and U.S., 2024			
	Potter County	Pennsylvania	U.S.
Percent Reporting Fair or Poor Health	17.5	14.7	14.0
Average Number of Physically Unhealthy Days	3.5	3.4	3.3
Percent Reporting Frequent Physical Distress	12.7	10.7	10.0

Average Number of Mentally Unhealthy Days	5.5	4.7	4.8
Percent Reporting Frequent Mental Distress	18.2	14.9	15.0
Percent of Adults Reporting Currently Smoking	21.6	14.9	15.0
Percent of Adults with Obesity	39.1	33.3	34.0
Percent Reporting Physically Inactivity	27.6	23.1	23.0
Percent With Access to Exercise Opportunities	28.0	86.1	84.0
Percent of Adults with Diabetes	9.5	9.4	10.0
Percent Reporting Excessive Drinking	16.6	19.1	18.0
Percent Having an Annual Mammogram	41.0	47.0	43.0
Percent Currently Vaccinated for Influenza	26.0	53.0	46.0
Percent Reporting Food Insecurity	11.5	9.4	10.0
Percent Reporting Limited Access to Healthy Foods	1.5	4.6	6.0
Social Association Rate	19.1	11.8	9.1
Suicide Rate (Age Adjusted)	26.8	14.1	N/A
Percent of Households with Broadband Access	82.9	87.1	88.0

Source: University of Wisconsin County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

The following table and chart illustrate the monthly premium costs for an ACA (Affordable Care Act) health care plan for a 40-year-old individual residing in Potter County or a neighboring county. The premium costs are presented at different income levels. It is important to note that the displayed premium amounts reflect the application of subsidies, which are calculated and applied based on income, to reduce the final cost for eligible individuals.

The table below shows health behaviors for Potter County residents as compared to Pennsylvania residents as a whole.

Potter County Adult Behavioral Health Risk Factor Statistics, 2020-2022				
Measure	Potter	Interval (95%)	PA	Comparison
Percent current smoker	15	(11.0 - 20.0)	15	Similar
Percent currently has asthma	9	(6.0 - 12.0)	10	Similar
Percent ever tested for HIV (ages 18-64)	35	(29.0 - 42.0)	40	Similar
Percent ever told they have arthritis	25	(20.0 - 31.0)	29	Similar
Percent ever told they have diabetes	15	(10.0 - 21.0)	11	Similar
Percent fair or poor general health	16	(11.0 - 23.0)	16	Similar
Percent obese	37	(31.0 - 42.0)	33	Similar
Percent overweight	68	(61.0 - 74.0)	67	Similar
Percent visited doctor for routine checkup in the past 2 years	84	(79.0 - 88.0)	89	Lower

Many of these indicators show an opportunity for Potter County residents to improve their health indicators. Addressing all of these may exceed the scope of County government, but a collection of organizations with County participation (and possibly leadership) could address these. Such an organization could follow the Communities of Excellence framework (<https://communitiesofexcellence2026.org/>) to address these and other areas. The data indicates significant room for improvement in the health and wellness of Potter County residents. While it may not be feasible for the County government to single-handedly tackle all of these issues, a collaborative approach involving multiple organizations, with potential leadership from the County, could prove effective.

One potential model for such a collaborative effort is the Communities of Excellence framework. This framework could be used to comprehensively address the identified health concerns and other areas for improvement within the community. By leveraging the collective resources, expertise, and commitment of various stakeholders, this collaborative approach could lead to sustainable and impactful improvements in the overall well-being of Potter County residents.

## Hospitalizations

The 2022 hospitalization data shows that Potter County has lower age-adjusted hospitalization discharge rates compared to Pennsylvania for most conditions, including injuries, heart disease, and chronic respiratory conditions. The county’s lower rates may reflect a combination of factors, such as a smaller, less dense population and potentially healthier lifestyles. However, they could also indicate limited healthcare access or differences in care-seeking behaviors, which may lead to underutilization of hospital services.

Influenza and pneumonia hospitalization rates in Potter County are similar to the state average, highlighting the ongoing need for preventive measures such as vaccinations and public health outreach. Data for conditions such as COPD and heart attacks are not displayed due to low case counts, which may suggest lower incidence rates or underreporting.

While the county’s lower hospitalization rates appear positive, continued efforts are necessary to ensure that all residents have access to timely and comprehensive healthcare services.

Measure	Potter	Interval (95%)	PA	Comparison
All injuries (injury hospitalizations only)	339.5	(262.7 - 416.4)	745.6	Lower
Cerebrovascular diseases	108.6	(71.6 - 145.7)	217.4	Lower
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	70.4	(41.0 - 99.8)	130.6	Lower
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)	ND	ND	76.4	Lower
Fall (unintentional, self-harm, assault, undetermined)	192.7	(139.8 - 245.6)	451.6	Lower
Heart attack	ND	ND	132.5	Lower
Heart diseases	534.2	(447.6 - 620.9)	813.1	Lower
Influenza and pneumonia	170	(120.9 - 219.2)	148.3	Similar
Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome, nephrosis	92.2	(58.0 - 126.3)	131.5	Lower
Septicemia	396.1	(318.1 - 474.2)	536	Lower

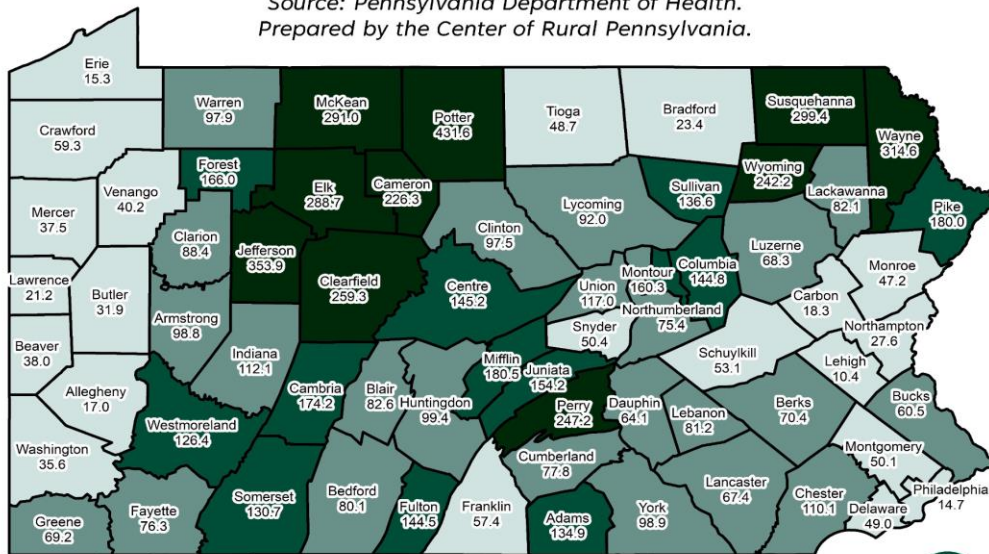
ND = Not displayed when count is less than 20, or data is not available. Age-adjusted rates are per 100,000, and are calculated using the U.S. 2000 standard million population distribution.

## Lyme's Disease

Lyme disease poses a significant public health concern for Potter County, given its heavily forested landscape and outdoor recreational culture. The county is the highest per-capital infection rate than anywhere in the state. The county's abundant natural areas, which attract residents and visitors alike for hiking, hunting, and other activities, create an environment where exposure to ticks carrying Lyme disease is more likely. The prevalence of Lyme disease in the region has implications not only for public health but also for the local economy, as concerns about tick-borne illnesses could impact tourism and outdoor activities that are central to the county's identity and economy.

### Number of Reported Lyme Disease Cases per 100,000 Population, 2022

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Health.  
Prepared by the Center of Rural Pennsylvania.



Statewide Rate = 64.9 Cases per 100,000 Pop.



Efforts to mitigate the spread of Lyme disease should include public education campaigns to raise awareness about prevention strategies, such as the use of protective clothing, tick repellents, and proper tick removal techniques. Additionally, promoting regular tick checks after outdoor activities and ensuring that healthcare providers are well-equipped to diagnose and treat Lyme disease promptly can help reduce the long-term effects of the illness.

The county may also consider collaboration with local and state health departments to explore integrated pest management strategies, such as habitat modification and targeted control measures to reduce tick populations in high-traffic areas like parks and trails. Providing informational materials at popular recreational sites and engaging with

schools to educate students on prevention methods could further support county-wide awareness and response efforts.

Given the increasing incidence of Lyme disease across Pennsylvania, Potter County should take proactive steps to address this issue through community outreach, healthcare partnerships, and policy initiatives aimed at reducing exposure and ensuring timely medical intervention for affected individuals.

## Drug-Related Death

The devastating impact of drug-related deaths is a pervasive issue that has garnered significant media attention, and Potter County is unfortunately not exempt from this crisis. The provided chart, illustrating the number of overdoses per 100,000 residents per county for 2023, reveals that Potter County falls within the mid-range of 35-59.9 overdoses per 100,000 residents. This alarming statistic underscores the severity of the drug overdose problem within the county and highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions and comprehensive strategies to address this public health emergency.

The implications of this data are far-reaching, affecting not only individuals struggling with addiction but also their families, communities, and the healthcare system as a whole. The high rate of drug overdoses places a substantial burden on healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, and social services, straining resources and hindering the ability to effectively respond to the crisis. Furthermore, the loss of life and the associated economic costs resulting from drug overdoses have a devastating impact on the community, eroding social cohesion and hindering economic development.

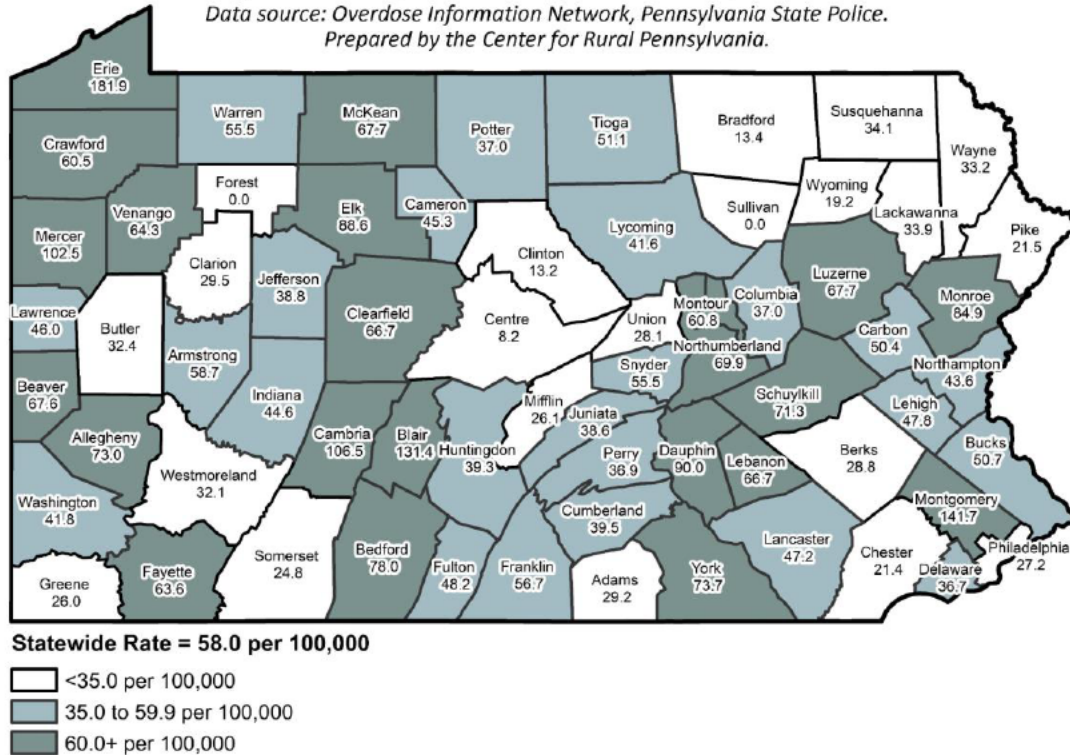
Addressing this complex issue will necessitate a multi-faceted approach that encompasses prevention, treatment, and harm reduction strategies. Prevention efforts could include public awareness campaigns to educate residents about the risks of drug use, early intervention programs to identify and support individuals at risk of addiction, and initiatives to reduce the availability of illicit drugs within the community. Treatment options should be expanded and made accessible to all individuals struggling with addiction, including medication-assisted treatment, counseling, and support groups. Harm reduction strategies, such as needle exchange programs and the distribution of naloxone, can help to mitigate the immediate risks associated with drug use and prevent overdose deaths.

Collaboration among various stakeholders, including healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and government officials, will be essential to effectively address the drug overdose crisis in Potter County. By working

together to implement comprehensive and evidence-based strategies, Potter County can reduce the number of drug-related deaths, improve the health and well-being of its residents, and create a safer and more resilient community.

## Number of Reported Drug Overdoses per 100,000 Population, 2023

*Data source: Overdose Information Network, Pennsylvania State Police.  
Prepared by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.*



### Poverty

The following chart illustrates the income required for a working adult in Potter County to support themselves and their family while working full time, assuming that in two-adult households, both individuals earn the same wage.

2024 Living, Poverty and Minimum Wages for Potter County, PA				
		Living Wage	Poverty Wage	Minimum Wage
1 ADULT	0 Children	\$41,392	\$15,059	15,080
	1 Child	\$72,072	\$20,446	15,080
	2 Children	\$89,690	\$25,813	15,080

	3 Children	\$114,379	\$31,200	15,080
2 ADULTS 1 WORKING	0 Children	\$58,427	\$20,446	15,080
	1 Child	\$71,677	\$25,813	15,080
	2 Children	\$82,035	\$31,200	15,080
	3 Children	\$84,677	\$36,587	15,080
2 ADULTS BOTH WORKING	0 Children	\$29,203	\$10,213	15,080
	1 Child	\$41,101	\$12,917	15,080
	2 Children	<b>\$50,939</b>	\$15,600	15,080
	3 Children	\$56,659	\$18,283	14,976

The data highlights the disparity between the living wage required to meet basic needs and the current poverty and minimum wage levels. For a single adult with no children, the living wage is \$41,392, significantly higher than the minimum wage of \$15,080. The gap widens with additional dependents, underscoring the financial challenges faced by households with children.

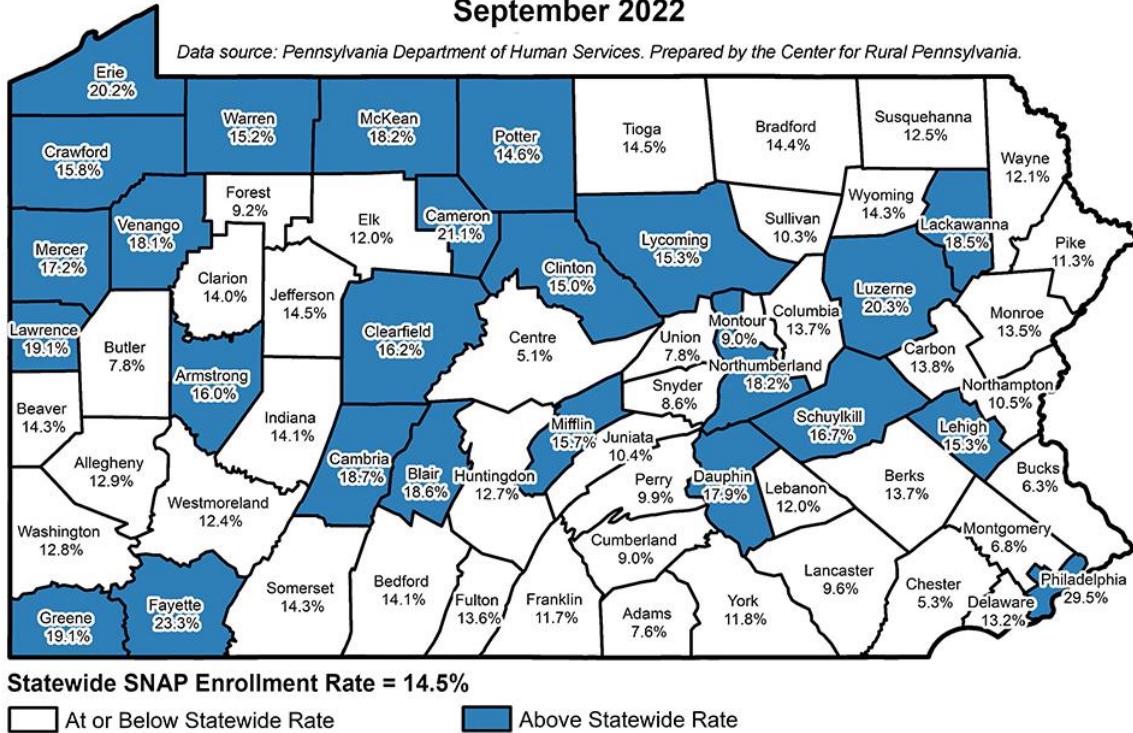
A comparison with the Pennsylvania Occupational Wages for North Central Workforce Development Median Wage data indicates that just over half of the listed occupations offer a median wage above the living wage threshold for a single adult with no children.

This finding suggests the need for targeted workforce development efforts to help residents access careers that provide sustainable incomes. Career guidance for students should focus on occupations that offer wages sufficient to support independent living, while adult education programs should prioritize training opportunities aligned with higher-wage career paths to improve economic stability for county residents.

### SNAP participation

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides food benefits to low-income families to help them obtain nutritious food essential to their health and well-being. The statewide participation rate is 14.5 percent, while Potter County's rate stands at 14.6 percent. This rate is consistent with those of other rural counties and does not indicate a significant deviation from statewide trends.

### SNAP Enrollment as Percent of Population, by County September 2022



## Education

Potter County has a notably lower percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to other counties, which can impact the county’s economic development and workforce competitiveness. A lower educational attainment rate may contribute to challenges in attracting higher-paying jobs and diversifying the local economy. Expanding access to higher education within the county could help address these challenges by providing residents with greater opportunities for career advancement and skill development.

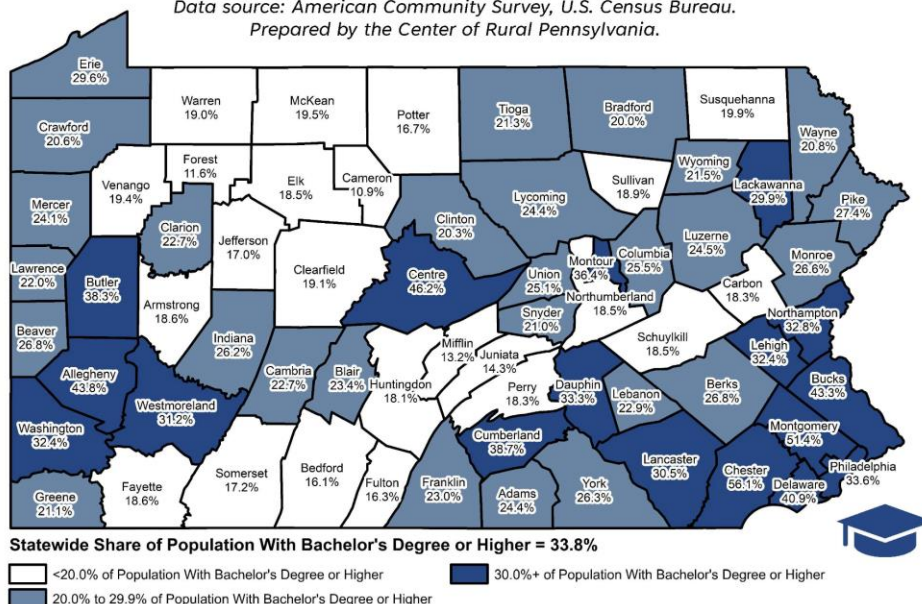
The Potter County Education Council and Northwestern Pennsylvania Rural College to offer college-level courses and degree programs locally that could be a stepping stone to bachelors degrees. Such collaborations could provide flexible and affordable educational opportunities tailored to the needs of residents and local employers. Offering in-person and hybrid learning models could also help overcome barriers related to transportation and accessibility, making it easier for working adults and recent high school graduates to pursue further education without leaving the county.

Increasing access to higher education within Potter County could have long-term benefits, including strengthening the local workforce, improving economic stability, and enhancing the county’s appeal to potential employers looking for a skilled labor pool.

Strategic efforts to promote educational opportunities and align programs with local industry needs will be crucial in supporting the county’s economic and social development goals.

## Share of Population Age 25+ with Bachelor’s Degree or Higher, 2022

Data source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.  
Prepared by the Center of Rural Pennsylvania.



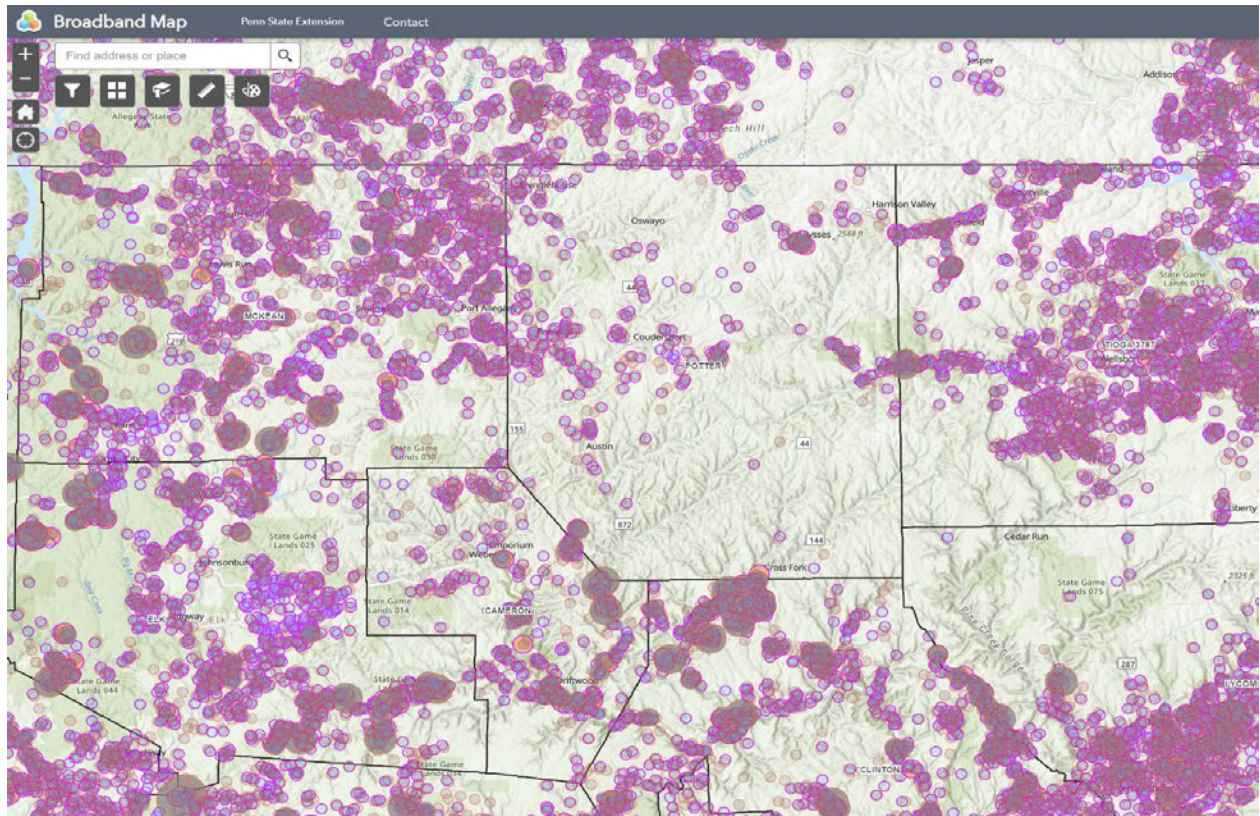
## Internet Connectivity

For the period of 2018 to 2022, the latest available data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that 88.9 percent of households in Potter County had access to a computer, while 82.9 percent had a broadband internet subscription. These figures suggest that a majority of county residents have access to digital resources; however, a notable portion of the population remains without reliable broadband connectivity.

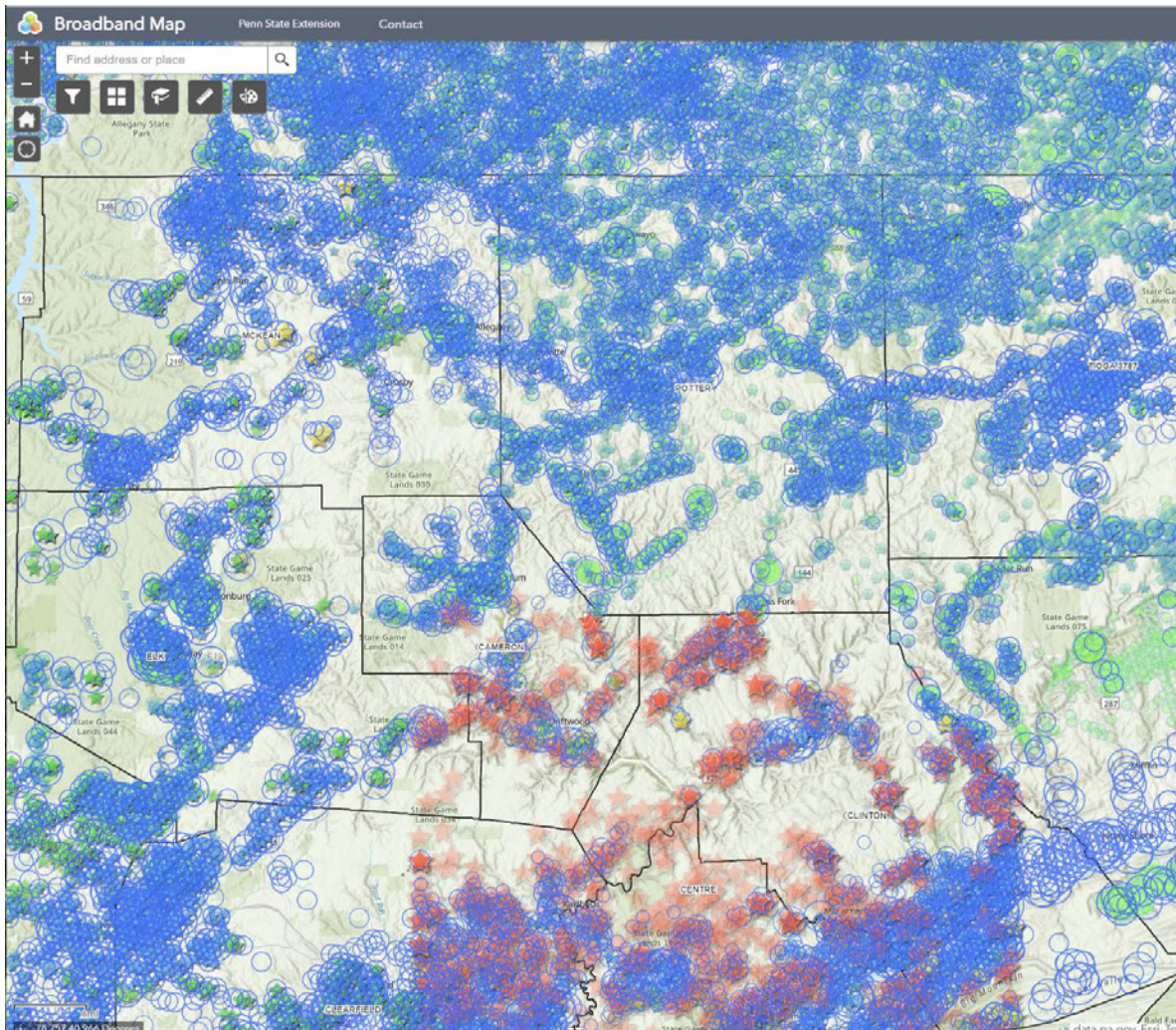
The availability and quality of internet access are critical for economic development, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. Fortunately, it is comparatively good upload/download speeds for a rural community. Nevertheless, rural areas still face challenges related to broadband infrastructure, resulting in gaps in coverage and lower internet speeds.

The map provided by Penn State Extension highlights the underserved areas within Potter County and its surrounding counties. Expanding broadband access remains a critical priority for Potter County to support economic growth, enhance educational

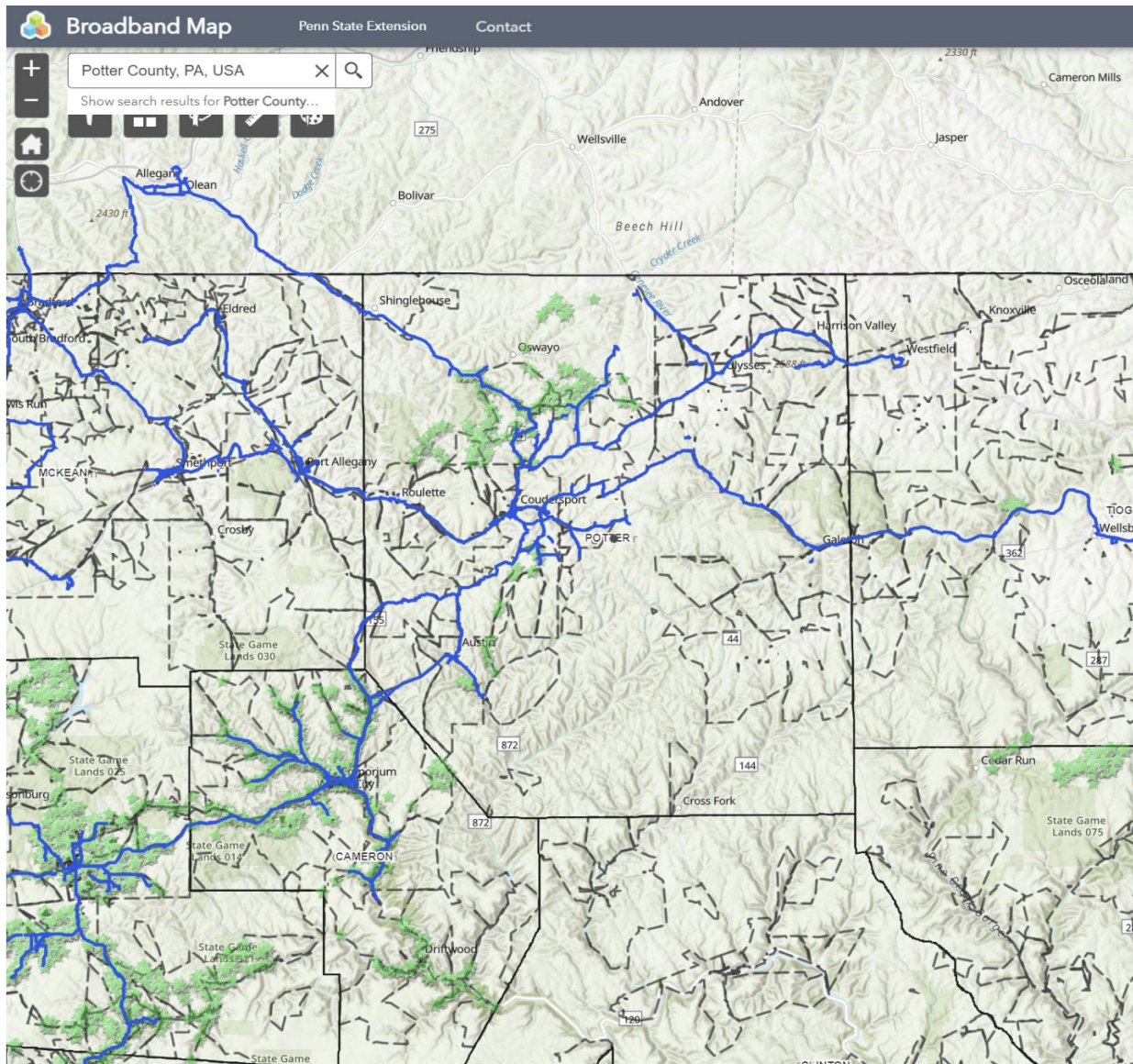
opportunities, and improve access to essential services. Efforts to bridge the digital divide will be crucial in ensuring that all residents have the connectivity needed to participate fully in today's digital economy.



The following map, also courtesy of the Penn State Extension, shows adequately served areas in Potter County and surrounding counties for internet access:



The map provided by Penn State Extension highlights that much of the underserved broadband coverage in Potter County is concentrated in the lower portion of the county. However, this area consists largely of state-owned land, including the renowned Dark Sky area, which is designated for conservation and recreational purposes. As such, the lack of broadband infrastructure in this region is not a significant concern, as it does not impact residential or commercial development. The primary focus for broadband expansion efforts should instead be directed toward populated areas where improved connectivity can support economic growth, educational access, and public services.



## Housing

The average household and family sizes in Potter County are 2.45 and 3.01, respectively, indicating a need for homes with at least two or three bedrooms. Currently, 65.8 percent of the county's housing stock consists of two- or three-bedroom homes, which appears to align well with the household and family size needs.

With a population of 16,390 and an average household size of 2.45, it is estimated that 6,690 housing units would be sufficient to accommodate the current population. However, the county has a total of 12,395 available housing units according to census data, of which only 6,895, or 53.2 percent, are occupied, while 5,800 units, or 46.8 percent, remain vacant. This vacancy rate is significantly higher than that of similarly

sized counties in Pennsylvania. This likely indicates a higher percentage of AirBNB (or similar) rental units, or low quality (blighted) units, or both.

For comparison, Juniata County, with a population of 23,535 and 10,502 housing units, has a vacancy rate of 15.7 percent. Montour County, with a population of 18,165 and 8,096 housing units, has a vacancy rate of 5.7 percent, while Fulton County, with a population of 14,545 and 7,119 housing units, has a vacancy rate of 13.9 percent. The higher vacancy rate in Potter County suggests that efforts to reduce the housing stock should continue unless there is an anticipated increase in population in the near future.

The age of the housing stock is another important consideration. Approximately 25.3 percent of the county’s housing stock was built prior to 1939, with 50 percent constructed between 1960 and 1999. In 2018, 27.4 percent of the housing stock was built before 1939, compared to 30.5 percent in 2010. This trend indicates that the county, either independently or through private enterprise, has demolished 4.6 percent, or 806 units, of aging housing stock since 2010. However, these demolished units have not been fully replaced, as only 347 new housing units have been constructed since 2010.

Owner-occupied homes account for 80 percent of housing tenure in Potter County, a proportion that is higher than other similarly sized counties in Pennsylvania. In comparison, owner-occupied homes make up 73 percent of the housing stock in Juniata County, 69.6 percent in Montour County, and 77 percent in Fulton County.

Population trends related to moving into a home in Potter County are consistent with patterns observed across Pennsylvania, indicating stability in residential movement within the county despite the challenges presented by the high vacancy rate and aging housing stock.

<b>Year Moved Into Unit</b>		
	<b><i>Potter County</i></b>	<b><i>Pennsylvania</i></b>
2021 or Later	3.2%	3.7%
2018-2020	10.1%	16.9%
2010-2017	26.1%	30.5%
2000-2009	23.6%	19.8%
1990-1999	15.7%	12.4%
1989 or Earlier	21.2%	16.7%

The median home value in Potter County is \$135,200, which is significantly lower than the statewide median of \$226,200. While home values within the \$50,000 to \$299,999 range align closely with state averages, values for homes in the \$300,000 to \$999,999 range drop substantially below the state average. This suggests that higher-value

homes are less common in the county, likely due to a combination of economic factors, demand, and market conditions. The lower median home value may reflect the county's rural character, limited access to high-income employment opportunities, and an aging housing stock that may not meet the preferences of higher-income buyers.

The limited presence of higher-value homes could also indicate a lack of newer or upscale housing developments that appeal to individuals and families seeking modern amenities. This gap in the housing market may present an opportunity for targeted development efforts to attract higher-income residents, retirees, or remote workers who are looking for affordable living options with quality housing features.

At the same time, the relatively low median home value makes Potter County an attractive option for first-time homebuyers and individuals seeking more affordable housing options if those properties, when they become available, are not bought up for short-term rental properties.

Addressing these disparities in home values may require a multi-faceted approach, including incentives for housing development, improving local amenities, and fostering economic opportunities that support a more diverse housing market. Expanding efforts to promote the county's affordability and quality of life could encourage population retention and attract new homeowners looking for a balance between rural living and modern housing needs.

<b>Home Value</b>		
	<b><i>Potter County</i></b>	<b><i>Pennsylvania</i></b>
Less than \$50,000	12%	5.8%
\$50,000-\$99,999	24.3%	10.4%
\$100,000-\$149,999	18%	12.5%
\$150,000-\$199,999	14.3%	14.3%
\$200,000-\$299,999	20.6%	23.9%
\$300,000-\$499,999	7.2%	21.8%
\$500,000-\$999,999	2.4%	9.6%
\$1,000,000 or More	1.3%	1.6%
Median Value	\$135,200	\$226,200

Although median income for households, family and nonfamily have steadily increased since 2018, they are all below the median incomes in Pennsylvania and for those counties similarly sized.

**Income**

	Potter County	Pennsylvania	Juniata County	Montour County	Fulton County
Median Household Income	\$56,491	\$73,170	\$61,915	\$72,626	\$63,153
Median Family Income	\$70,218	\$93,685	\$78,555	\$87,020	\$77,817
Median Nonfamily Income	\$31,082	\$42,103	\$33,504	\$35,907	\$32,880

A household is considered cost burdened if more than 30 percent of total income is spent on housing, including essential utilities. In Potter County, 36.4 percent of renter households and 38.7 percent of owner-occupied households fall into this category. These figures suggest that a significant portion of the population faces financial strain related to housing costs, which can impact their ability to afford other necessities such as healthcare, transportation, and education. While these rates are not uncommon in rural areas with lower median incomes, they highlight the need for efforts to increase affordable housing options and ensure that housing costs remain in line with local income levels. Addressing the issue of housing affordability may involve initiatives such as rental assistance programs, incentives for property improvements, and partnerships with developers to increase the supply of affordable housing.

A key observation from the housing data is the high number of vacant units combined with the significant percentage of households considered cost burdened. While there has been a reduction in the number of cost-burdened households over the past five years, the presence of vacant, and potentially blighted, properties presents an opportunity for revitalization. Addressing this issue may involve exploring incentives for property owners to demolish or rehabilitate vacant units and replace them with affordable housing options that better align with the needs of the community. Programs that facilitate redevelopment and attract investment in new housing construction could contribute to a healthier housing market and improve overall living conditions in Potter County.

Strategic planning to address these challenges will require collaboration between local government, housing authorities, and community stakeholders to develop solutions that balance affordability, population trends, and economic development goals. Ensuring

that the county’s housing stock meets the evolving needs of residents will be essential in fostering a stable and thriving community.

<b>Housing</b>	<b>Potter County</b>	<b>Tioga County</b>	<b>Cameron County</b>	<b>Clinton County</b>	<b>McKean County</b>	<b>Lycoming County</b>
Housing Units, July 1, 2023, (V2023)	12,409	21,609	3,929	18,653	19,488	52,780
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2018-2022	80.00%	76.40%	71.40%	71.40%	77.40%	69.90%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2018-2022	\$135,200	\$165,000	\$85,900	\$165,100	\$96,600	\$182,500
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2018-2022	\$1,187	\$1,350	\$1,056	\$1,265	\$1,022	\$1,423
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2018-2022	\$477	\$510	\$451	\$536	\$458	\$548
Median gross rent, 2018-2022	\$725	\$811	\$657	\$840	\$756	\$886
Building Permits, 2023	21	32	0	33	24	57
<b>Families &amp; Living Arrangements</b>						
Households, 2018-2022	6,595	16,583	2,210	14,877	15,931	45,705
Persons per household, 2018-2022	2.45	2.44	2.03	2.44	2.37	2.36
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2018-2022	91.60%	89.30%	92.00%	88.50%	88.70%	87.50%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2018-2022	2.90%	1.90%	2.70%	7.00%	2.50%	3.90%

Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

### Occupancy & Tenure

<b>5 year projection from 2022</b>	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>Potter County, Pennsylvania</b>
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Label	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent
<b>HOUSING OCCUPANCY</b>						
Total housing units	5,753,908	±890	5,753,908	12,395	±43	12,395
Occupied housing units	5,193,727	±8,465	90.3%	6,595	±146	53.2%
Vacant housing units	560,181	±8,840	9.7%	5,800	±140	46.8%
Homeowner vacancy rate	1.0	±0.1	(X)	1.4	±0.6	(X)
Rental vacancy rate	4.9	±0.2	(X)	1.1	±1.2	(X)
<b>UNITS IN STRUCTURE</b>						
Total housing units	5,753,908	±890	5,753,908	12,395	±43	12,395
1-unit, detached	3,267,754	±8,521	56.8%	9,911	±156	80.0%
1-unit, attached	1,084,915	±6,191	18.9%	43	±20	0.3%
2 units	244,601	±4,351	4.3%	337	±76	2.7%
3 or 4 units	230,675	±4,755	4.0%	83	±31	0.7%
5 to 9 units	179,502	±3,368	3.1%	91	±36	0.7%
10 to 19 units	148,641	±3,319	2.6%	78	±40	0.6%
20 or more units	388,178	±4,266	6.7%	120	±43	1.0%
Mobile home	207,175	±2,986	3.6%	1,719	±104	13.9%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	2,467	±407	0.0%	13	±10	0.1%
<b>YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT</b>						
Total housing units	5,753,908	±890	5,753,908	12,395	±43	12,395
Built 2020 or later	16,430	±834	0.3%	16	±11	0.1%
Built 2010 to 2019	258,485	±3,724	4.5%	331	±62	2.7%
Built 2000 to 2009	457,789	±4,828	8.0%	1,006	±106	8.1%
Built 1990 to 1999	529,761	±4,974	9.2%	1,357	±88	10.9%
Built 1980 to 1989	558,482	±5,200	9.7%	1,407	±121	11.4%
Built 1970 to 1979	722,494	±5,117	12.6%	2,082	±160	16.8%
Built 1960 to 1969	578,341	±4,816	10.1%	1,357	±129	10.9%
Built 1950 to 1959	766,399	±6,683	13.3%	1,037	±119	8.4%
Built 1940 to 1949	406,827	±4,645	7.1%	665	±104	5.4%
Built 1939 or earlier	1,458,900	±7,389	25.4%	3,137	±188	25.3%

<b>ROOMS</b>						
Total housing units	5,753,908	±890	5,753,908	12,395	±43	12,395
1 room	117,386	±3,103	2.0%	343	±60	2.8%
2 rooms	126,663	±3,075	2.2%	547	±75	4.4%
3 rooms	419,073	±4,859	7.3%	917	±100	7.4%
4 rooms	690,068	±6,507	12.0%	2,108	±153	17.0%
5 rooms	881,704	±7,849	15.3%	2,321	±152	18.7%
6 rooms	1,187,730	±7,666	20.6%	2,125	±137	17.1%
7 rooms	826,273	±7,321	14.4%	1,297	±122	10.5%
8 rooms	637,112	±5,042	11.1%	1,033	±97	8.3%
9 rooms or more	867,899	±6,996	15.1%	1,704	±155	13.7%
Median rooms	6.0	±0.1	(X)	5.5	±0.1	(X)
<b>BEDROOMS</b>						
Total housing units	5,753,908	±890	5,753,908	12,395	±43	12,395
No bedroom	129,662	±3,124	2.3%	370	±60	3.0%
1 bedroom	593,557	±5,416	10.3%	1,934	±120	15.6%
2 bedrooms	1,289,051	±7,994	22.4%	3,933	±193	31.7%
3 bedrooms	2,454,212	±8,383	42.7%	4,232	±199	34.1%
4 bedrooms	1,027,100	±6,183	17.9%	1,374	±140	11.1%
5 or more bedrooms	260,326	±3,476	4.5%	552	±93	4.5%
<b>HOUSING TENURE</b>						
Occupied housing units	5,193,727	±8,465	5,193,727	6,595	±146	6,595
Owner-occupied	3,593,490	±13,567	69.2%	5,279	±138	80.0%
Renter-occupied	1,600,237	±9,273	30.8%	1,316	±126	20.0%
Average household size of owner-occupied unit	2.55	±0.01	(X)	2.46	±0.07	(X)
Average household size of renter-occupied unit	2.13	±0.01	(X)	2.41	±0.16	(X)
<b>YEAR HOUSEHOLDER MOVED IN</b>						

Occupied housing units	5,193,727	±8,465	5,193,727	6,595	±146	6,595
Moved in 2021 or later	193,160	±3,349	3.7%	212	±53	3.2%
Moved in 2018 to 2020	876,761	±6,970	16.9%	667	±84	10.1%
Moved in 2010 to 2017	1,583,948	±8,656	30.5%	1,724	±125	26.1%
Moved in 2000 to 2009	1,029,152	±7,259	19.8%	1,555	±107	23.6%
Moved in 1990 to 1999	642,239	±6,548	12.4%	1,038	±103	15.7%
Moved in 1989 and earlier	868,467	±5,829	16.7%	1,399	±99	21.2%
<b>HOUSE HEATING FUEL</b>						
Occupied housing units	5,193,727	±8,465	5,193,727	6,595	±146	6,595
Utility gas	2,666,360	±9,448	51.3%	4,300	±163	65.2%
Bottled, tank, or LP gas	249,298	±2,857	4.8%	548	±55	8.3%
Electricity	1,265,171	±7,649	24.4%	521	±78	7.9%
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	780,256	±4,977	15.0%	205	±42	3.1%
Coal or coke	48,651	±1,353	0.9%	157	±37	2.4%
Wood	114,435	±2,232	2.2%	764	±77	11.6%
Solar energy	4,022	±460	0.1%	7	±9	0.1%
Other fuel	38,960	±1,506	0.8%	71	±22	1.1%
No fuel used	26,574	±1,402	0.5%	22	±14	0.3%
<b>VALUE</b>						
Owner-occupied units	3,593,490	±13,567	3,593,490	5,279	±138	5,279
Less than \$50,000	210,163	±3,184	5.8%	633	±75	12.0%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	372,716	±4,122	10.4%	1,281	±95	24.3%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	449,338	±4,720	12.5%	949	±86	18.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	515,109	±4,961	14.3%	756	±93	14.3%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	859,237	±6,818	23.9%	1,085	±108	20.6%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	782,079	±7,082	21.8%	382	±50	7.2%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	346,288	±3,806	9.6%	125	±34	2.4%
\$1,000,000 or more	58,560	±1,654	1.6%	68	±34	1.3%
Median (dollars)	226,200	±546	(X)	135,200	±7,560	(X)
<b>MORTGAGE STATUS</b>						
Owner-occupied units	3,593,490	±13,567	3,593,490	5,279	±138	5,279

Housing units with a mortgage	2,123,566	±9,827	59.1%	2,310	±137	43.8%
Housing units without a mortgage	1,469,924	±7,935	40.9%	2,969	±108	56.2%
<b>GROSS RENT</b>						
Occupied units paying rent	1,512,268	±8,964	1,512,268	1,066	±125	1,066
Less than \$500	140,489	±3,071	9.3%	249	±69	23.4%
\$500 to \$999	485,158	±5,992	32.1%	676	±92	63.4%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	514,013	±5,891	34.0%	129	±39	12.1%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	232,798	±4,102	15.4%	8	±13	0.8%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	84,115	±2,618	5.6%	4	±5	0.4%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	26,216	±1,417	1.7%	0	±18	0.0%
\$3,000 or more	29,479	±1,423	1.9%	0	±18	0.0%
Median (dollars)	1,110	±5	(X)	725	±32	(X)
No rent paid	87,969	±2,241	(X)	250	±61	(X)

Source: [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2022.DP04?q=DP04&g=040XX00US42\\_050XX00US42105](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2022.DP04?q=DP04&g=040XX00US42_050XX00US42105)

### AARP Livable Community Score

The AARP creates a livability score based on a scale of 0-100 points, with 100 being the best.

AARP Livable Community Scores for Aging, 2023 (Out of 100, higher is better)		
	Potter County	Pennsylvania
<b>Overall</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>54</b>
Housing (Affordability & Access)	61	55
Neighborhood (Proximity & Security)	29	53
Transportation (Safety & Convenience)	46	56
Environment (Clean Air & Water)	64	54
Health (Prevention, Access & Quality)	33	51
Engagement (Civic & Social Involvement)	42	59
Opportunity (Inclusion & Possibilities)	52	54

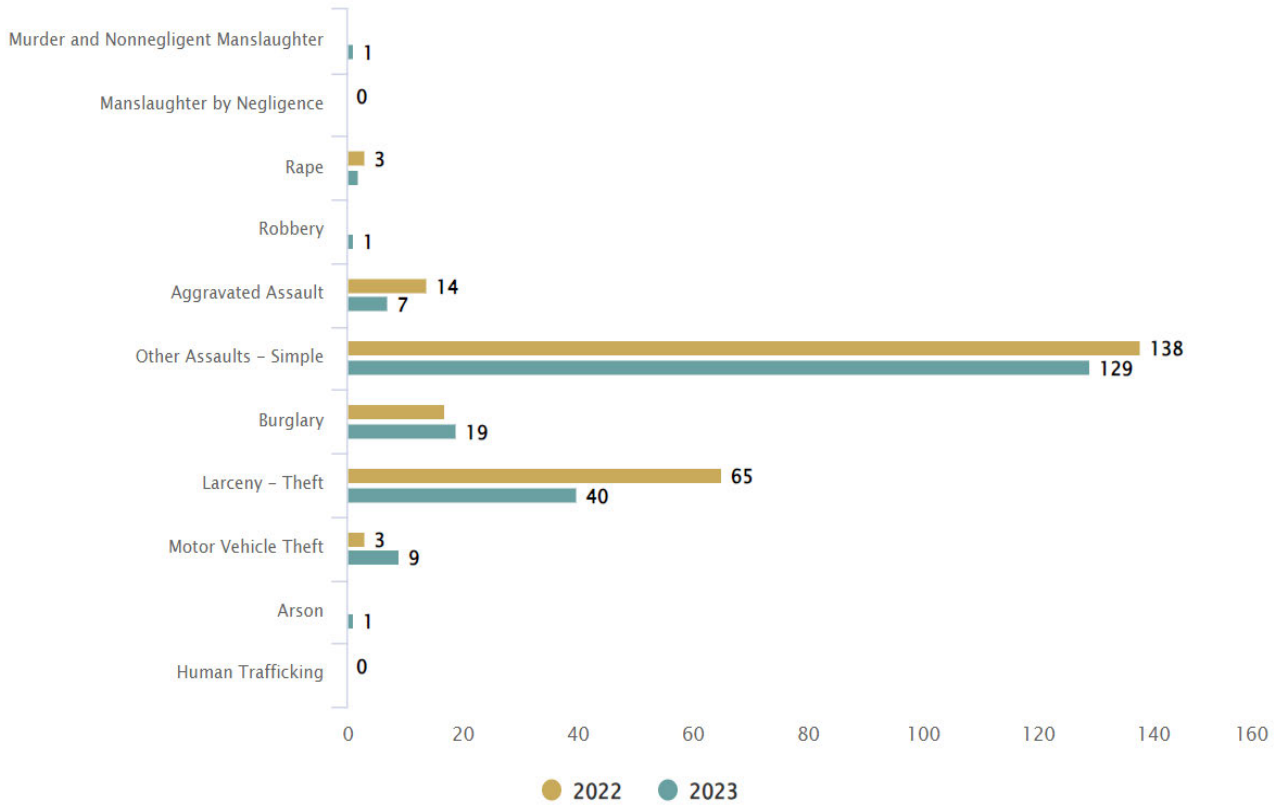
The housing data for Potter County aligns with trends commonly seen in rural areas, offering insight into potential areas for improvement. The county's high percentage of vacant housing units partially reflects the presence of a substantial number of hunting camps and seasonal residences. These properties are owned by individuals who have

already made significant investments in the county, demonstrating a clear interest in the area's recreational opportunities and natural beauty. Encouraging these property owners to increase their time spent in Potter County or consider establishing permanent residence could have a positive economic impact, bringing additional revenue to local businesses and strengthening community engagement.

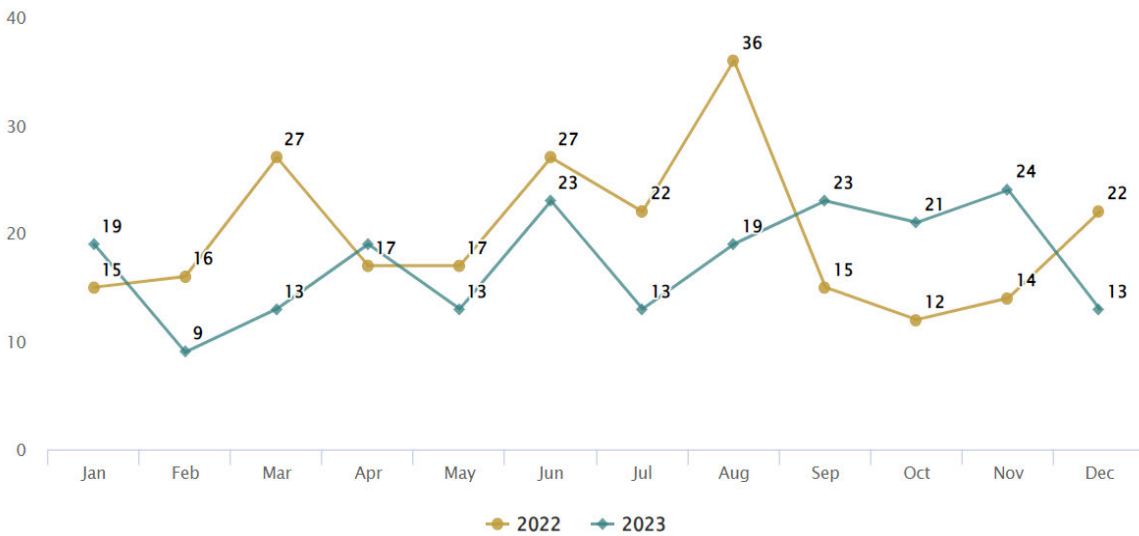
## Crime

The offense count data for 2022 and 2023 reveals notable trends in criminal activity within the county. Aggravated assaults nearly doubled from 7 incidents in 2022 to 14 in 2023, and motor vehicle thefts increased from 3 to 9, suggesting a rise in violent and property-related crimes that may require targeted law enforcement efforts. Larceny-theft also saw a significant increase from 40 to 65 incidents, indicating a growing concern for property crime. In contrast, simple assaults decreased slightly from 138 to 129, and burglary cases declined, suggesting potential improvements in certain areas of public safety. Serious crimes such as murder and manslaughter remained rare, with only one incident reported in 2022 and none in 2023. Additionally, human trafficking cases were not reported in either year. While some crime categories show improvement, the increase in aggravated assaults, theft, and vehicle-related crimes highlights the need for continued vigilance and proactive crime prevention measures.

### Offense Count



### Offense Count by Month



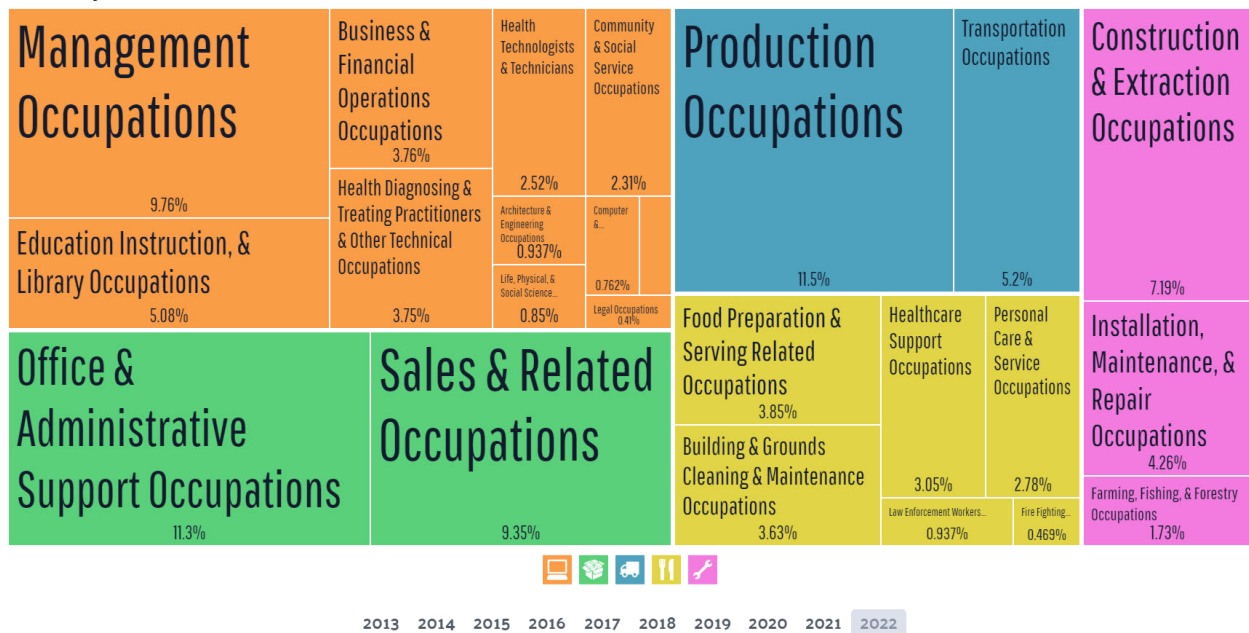
Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2023	19	9	13	19	13	23	13	19	23	21	24	13
2022	15	16	27	17	17	27	22	36	15	12	14	22

## Economy

The economy of Potter County employs approximately 6,830 people. The largest industries in the county are manufacturing, employing 982 people; health care and social assistance, employing 940 people; and retail trade, employing 713 people. The highest-paying industries include mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, with an average annual wage of \$64,120; utilities, averaging \$63,333; and professional, scientific, and technical services, with an average wage of \$61,063. These high-paying industries present valuable career opportunities and should be considered when guiding young residents toward sustainable employment paths.

## Occupations Makeup

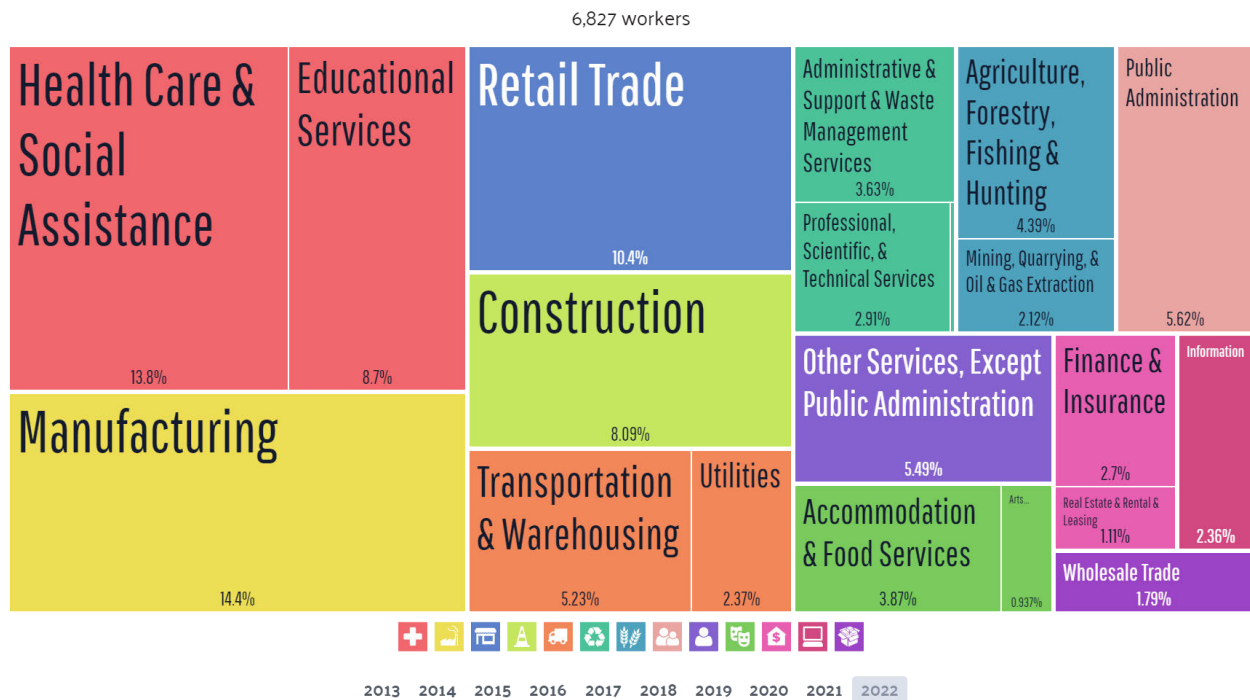
From 2021 to 2022, employment in Potter County grew at a rate of 1.64%, from 6,720 employees to 6,830 employees. The most common job groups, by number of people living in Potter County are Production Occupations (785 people), Office & Administrative Support Occupations (769 people), and Management Occupations (666 people). This chart illustrates the share breakdown of the primary jobs held by residents of Potter County, PA.



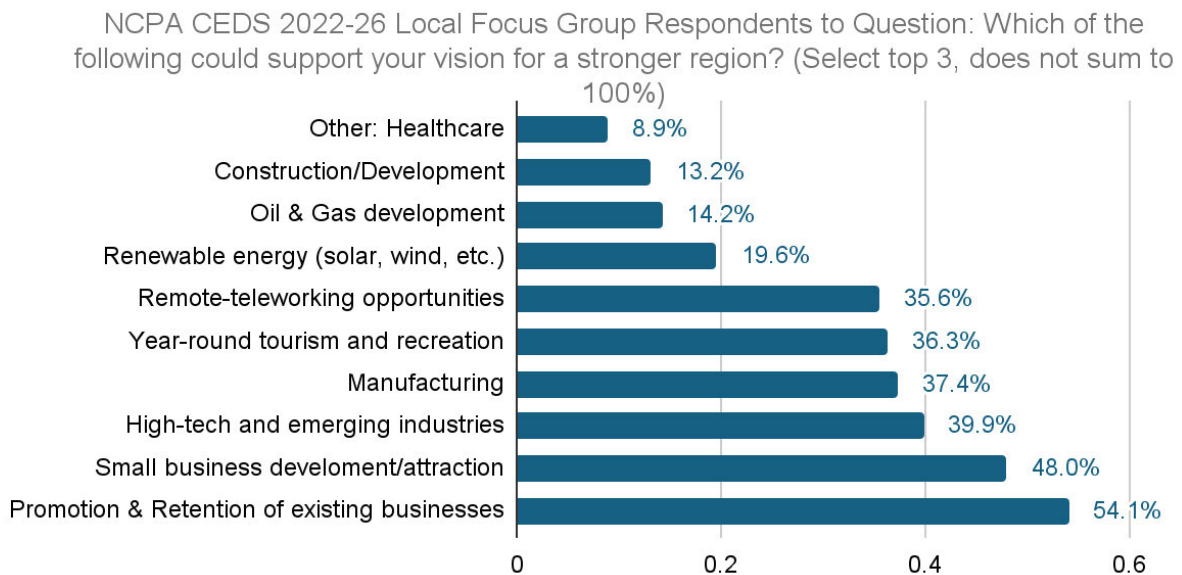
## Employment Industries

The most common employment sectors for those who live in Potter County are Manufacturing (982 people), Health Care & Social Assistance (940 people), and Retail Trade (713 people). This chart shows the share breakdown of the primary industries for residents of Potter County though some of these residents may live in Potter County

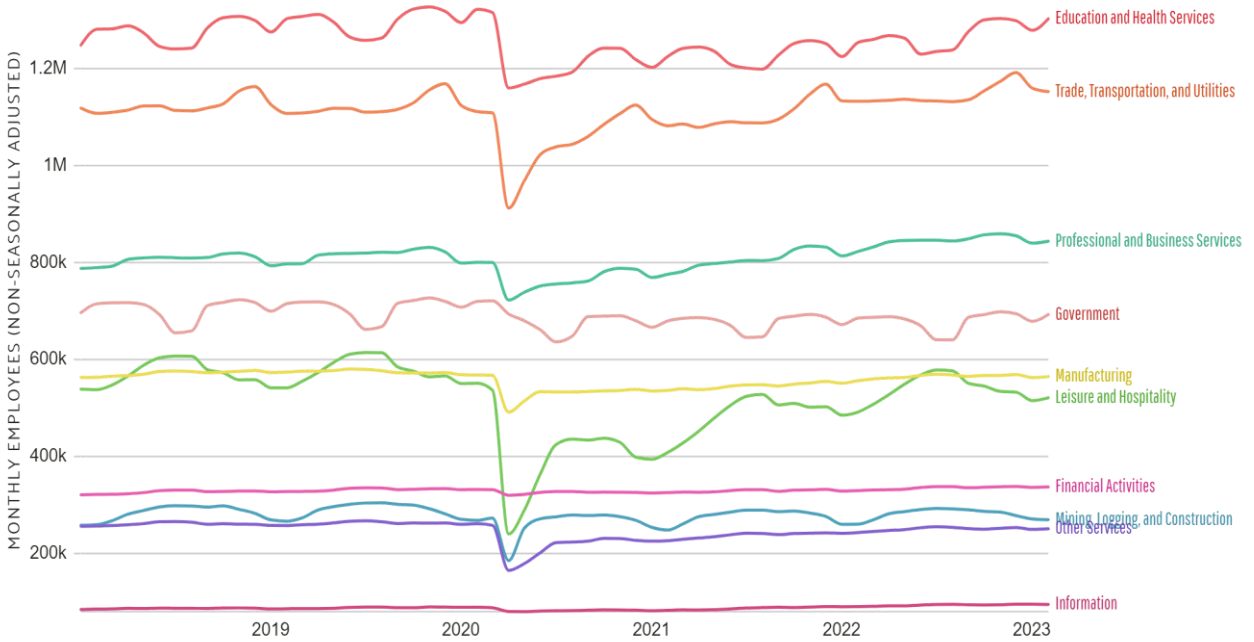
and work somewhere else. Census data is tagged to a residential address, not a work address.



North Central Pennsylvania Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy survey showed support by the public for the following industries:



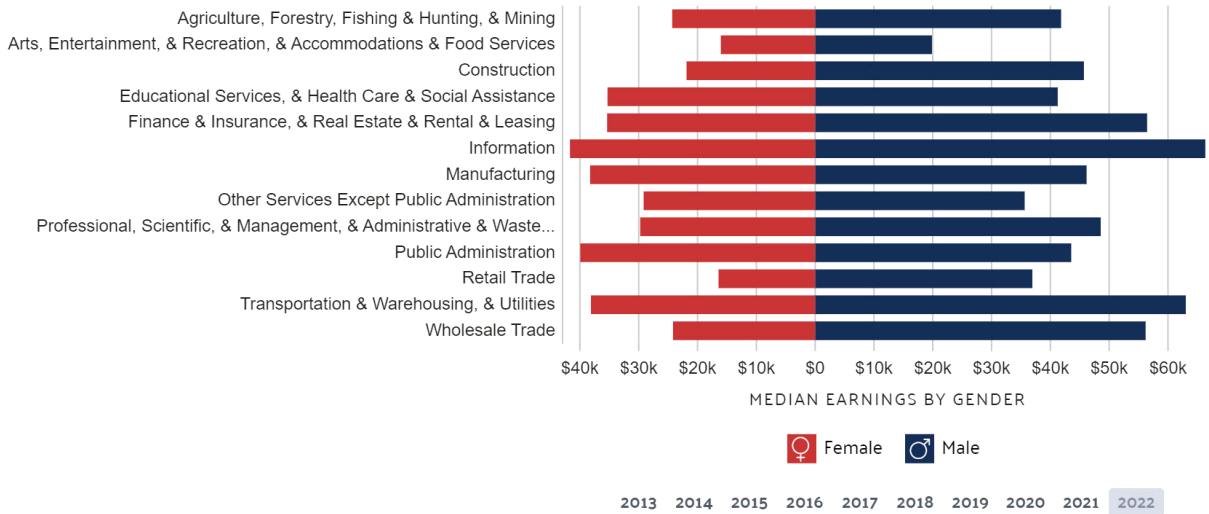
The following chart shows the employment by industry in Potter County over time, including the Covid-19 shutdowns. This indicates that most sectors have recovered to pre-Covid-19 levels with the exception of Other Services.



### Median Earnings

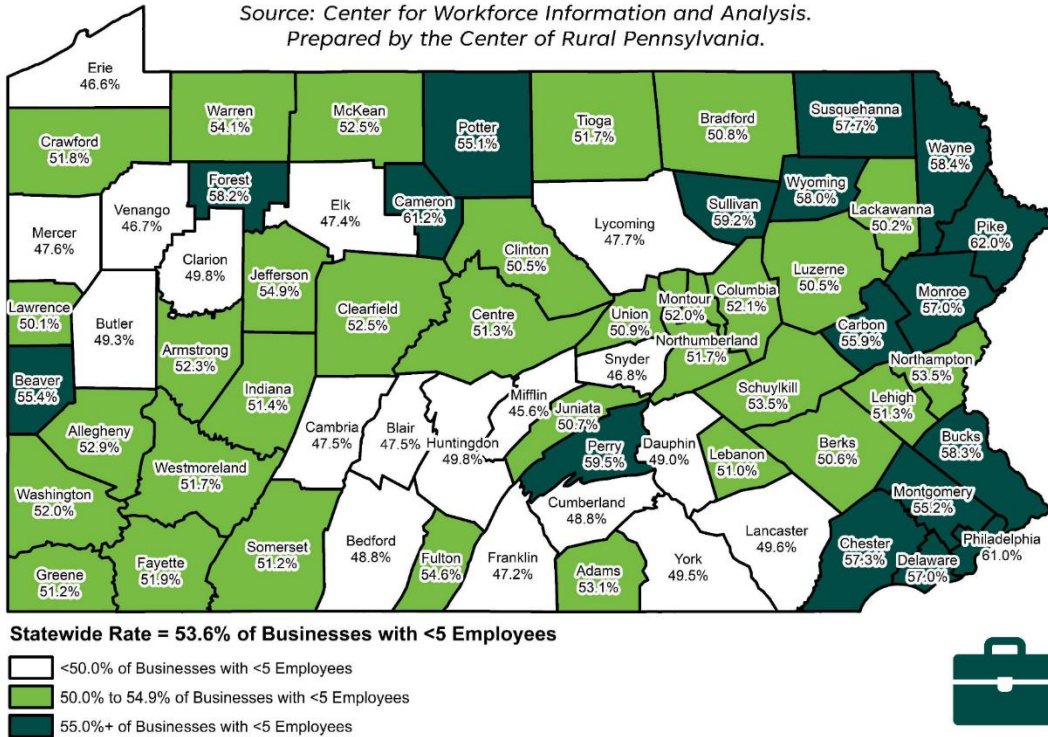
The industries with the best median earnings for men in 2022 are Information (\$66,346), Transportation & Warehousing, & Utilities (\$63,026), and Finance & Insurance, & Real Estate & Rental & Leasing (\$56,449).

The industries with the best median earnings for women in 2022 are Information (\$41,696), Public Administration (\$39,926), and Manufacturing (\$38,264).



# Share of Businesses with Less Than Five Employees by County, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, 2023

Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis.  
Prepared by the Center of Rural Pennsylvania.

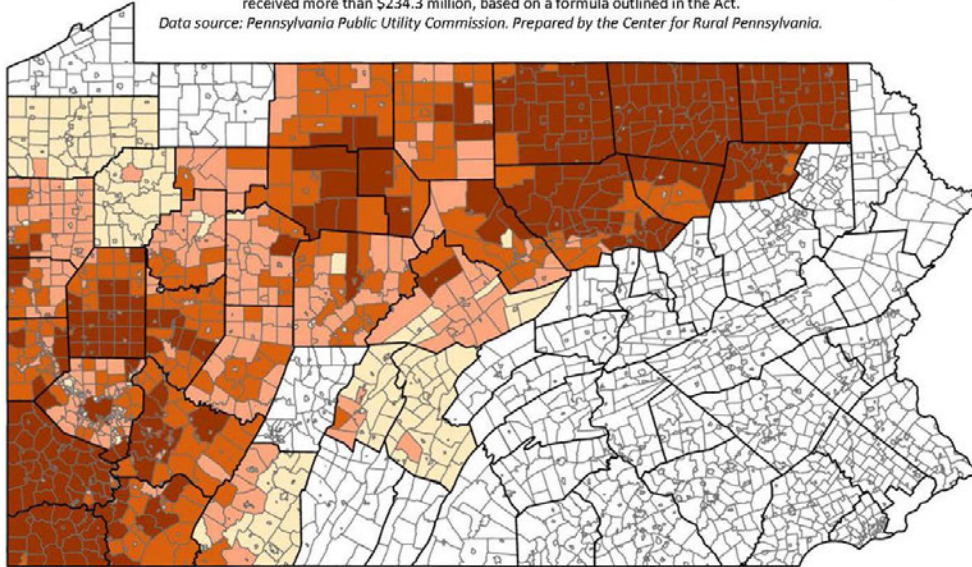


This indicates that Potter County has a higher proportion of businesses with less than 5 employees, but the range is from 46.6% to 62%, so this is not far from average.

## Act 13 Impact Fee Disbursements to Municipalities, 2021

Act 13 of 2012 imposed an impact fee on unconventional gas wells. In 2021, state agencies, county governments, and municipalities received more than \$234.3 million, based on a formula outlined in the Act.

*Data source: Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. Prepared by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.*

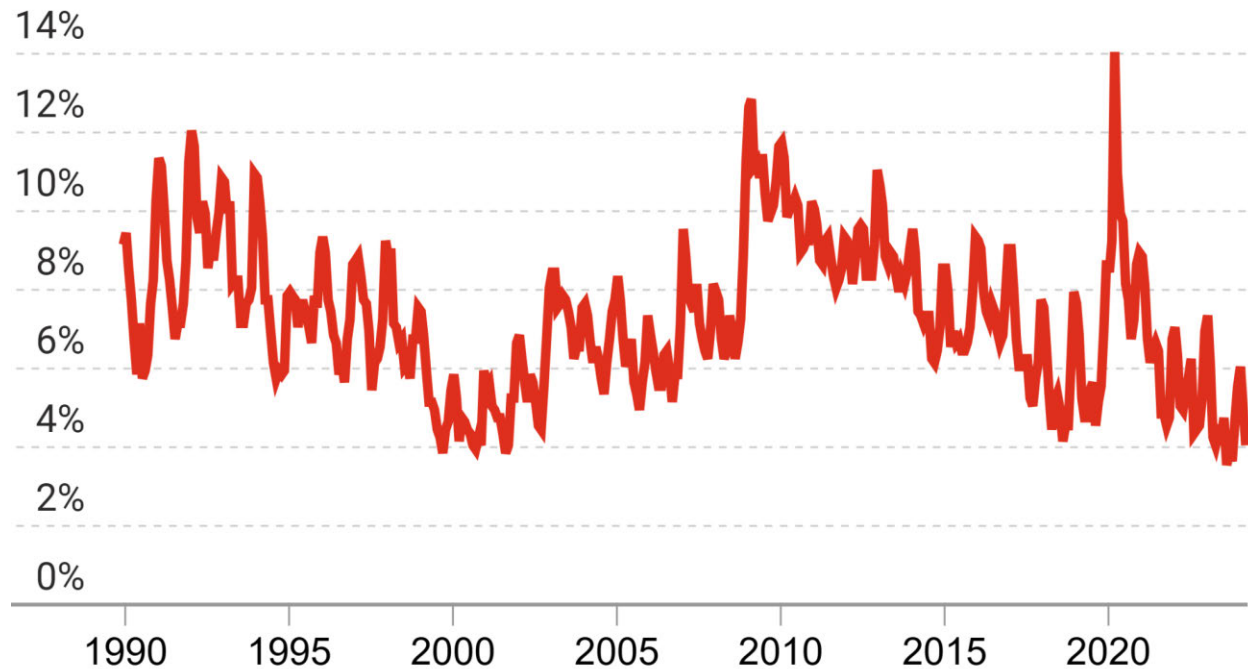


**Statewide Disbursement to Municipalities, 2021 = \$78.5 Million**



Unemployment

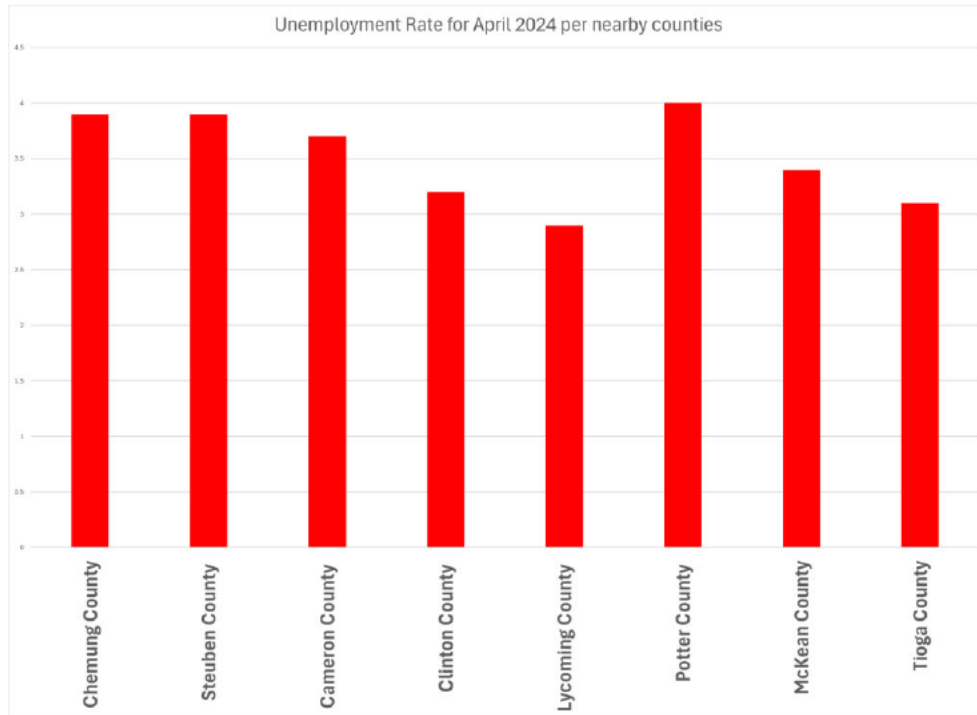
### Unemployment rate in Potter County



Data from bls.gov via Data Commons

The chart above illustrates the long-term unemployment rate in Potter County through April 2024, indicating that it is currently at or near historic lows. This trend suggests a relatively stable labor market with improved employment opportunities compared to previous years.

However, the chart below, which compares the April 2024 unemployment rate across nearby counties, highlights that Potter County has the highest unemployment rate among the counties shown. Notably, Potter County’s unemployment rate is more aligned with neighboring counties in New York rather than those in Pennsylvania, with a difference of approximately 1 percent when compared to other Pennsylvania counties. This disparity may reflect regional economic differences, workforce availability, or industry composition. Addressing the factors contributing to this higher unemployment rate could present opportunities for targeted workforce development and economic growth initiatives.



## Employment by Sector

### Growing Occupations

The following table shows the occupations that are expected to grow in the North Central region between 2020 - 2030. These occupations will be in the most demand by 2030 and should be training priorities now, as many of them require experience or specialized training in advance.

North Central WDA HPO projections (Sorted by Growth)			Wages (2022)		Employment			
SOC Code	SOC Title	Ed.	Entry Level	Annual Ave.	Est. 2020	Proj. 2030	% Change	Annual Demand
51-4041	Machinists	LT OJT	\$31,900	\$44,690	570	730	28.1%	82
11-9111	Medical & Health Services Managers	BD+	\$64,620	\$104,370	230	290	26.1%	25
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	MT OJT	\$36,620	\$46,010	630	790	25.4%	90
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	LT OJT	\$42,210	\$56,640	510	620	21.6%	57
31-9092	Medical Assistants	PS	\$29,880	\$35,120	240	280	16.7%	35
31-9097	Phlebotomists	PS	\$30,890	\$36,100	70	80	14.3%	8
49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	LT OJT	\$40,870	\$55,590	70	80	14.3%	7
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers	ST OJT	N/A	N/A	670	760	13.4%	91

35-1012	Supervisors - Food Preparation & Serving Workers	WK EXP	\$26,230	\$37,100	620	700	12.9%	105
29-2040	Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	PS	N/A	N/A	240	270	12.5%	19
51-9111	Packaging & Filling Machine Oprs/Tenders	MT OJT	\$33,930	\$41,810	80	90	12.5%	10
51-4081	Multiple Machine Tool Setters/Oprs/Tenders	MT OJT	\$27,680	\$38,340	910	1,020	12.1%	109
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	AD	\$40,290	\$52,800	90	100	11.1%	12
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder & MH Counselors	BD	\$34,220	\$49,690	550	610	10.9%	60
21-1021	Child, Family & School Social Workers	BD	\$34,240	\$46,760	280	310	10.7%	29
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Techs	BD	\$41,430	\$55,490	100	110	10.0%	7
43-5031	Public Safety Telecommunicators	MT OJT	\$33,600	\$42,990	100	110	10.0%	11
47-4051	Highway Maintenance Workers	MT OJT	\$33,760	\$40,110	410	450	9.8%	48
51-1011	Supervisors - Production & Operating Workers	WK EXP	\$47,910	\$66,210	680	740	8.8%	74
21-1093	Social & Human Service Assistants	ST OJT	\$27,950	\$37,360	350	380	8.6%	43
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	AD	\$44,100	\$57,210	130	140	7.7%	10
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics	LT OJT	\$40,180	\$57,430	130	140	7.7%	14
47-2111	Electricians	LT OJT	\$42,610	\$65,370	270	290	7.4%	31
53-7062	Laborers & Freight/Stock/Material Movers	ST OJT	\$25,220	\$35,880	1,470	1,570	6.8%	208
33-3051	Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers	MT OJT	\$38,710	\$66,500	480	510	6.3%	40
47-2031	Carpenters	LT OJT	\$30,800	\$45,570	340	360	5.9%	34
51-4111	Tool & Die Makers	PS+	\$42,780	\$52,990	380	400	5.3%	41
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	PS	\$36,430	\$49,060	2,170	2,280	5.1%	252
43-5061	Production, Planning & Expediting Clerks	MT OJT	\$35,110	\$46,200	200	210	5.0%	21
41-3091	Sales Representatives - Services	MT OJT	\$34,830	\$63,190	210	220	4.8%	25
51-7041	Sawing Machine Setters/Oprs/Tenders, Wood	MT OJT	\$29,140	\$35,450	230	240	4.3%	26
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	BD	\$40,290	\$61,050	240	250	4.2%	24

Additional data is available that shows which occupations are expected to grow at slower rates or to decline.

Top Industries



# Potter County

# Top 50 Industries 2nd Quarter, 2023

Rank 2023 Q2	Rank 2020 Q2	NAICS Industry Description	NAICS
1	1	Elementary and Secondary Schools	6111
2	2	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	6221
3	3	Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	5171
4	4	Executive, Legislative, and Other General Government Support	9211
5	5	Other Electrical Equipment and Component Manufacturing	3359
6	9	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	7225
7	6	Professional and Commercial Equipment and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	4234
8	7	Individual and Family Services	6241
9	8	Sawmills and Wood Preservation	3211
10	11	Pipeline Transportation of Natural Gas	4862
11	10	Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)	6231
12	14	Grocery and Convenience Retailers	4451
13	19	Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing	3363
14	16	Gasoline Stations	4571
15	17	Utility System Construction	2371
16	20	Building Material and Supplies Dealers	4441
17	18	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	2373
18	15	General Freight Trucking	4841
19	21	Administration of Environmental Quality Programs	9241
20	22	Forging and Stamping	3321
21	23	Cattle Ranching and Farming	1121
22	N/A	Warehouse Clubs, Supercenters, and Other General Merchandise Retailers	4552
23	26	Automobile Dealers	4411
24	12	Specialized Freight Trucking	4842
25	27	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5419
26	28	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	5416
27	N/A	Health and Personal Care Retailers	4561
28	29	Outpatient Care Centers	6214
29	41	Civic and Social Organizations	8134
30	30	Other Wood Product Manufacturing	3219
31	31	School and Employee Bus Transportation	4854
32	24	Depository Credit Intermediation	5221
33	34	Traveler Accommodation	7211
34	33	Postal Service	4911
35	37	Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	9221
36	39	Legal Services	5411
37	38	Other Residential Care Facilities	6239
38	40	Management of Companies and Enterprises	5511
39	36	Greenhouse, Nursery, and Floriculture Production	1114
40	35	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	6213
41	42	Automotive Repair and Maintenance	8111
42	N/A	Used Merchandise Retailers	4595
43	86	Services to Buildings and Dwellings	5617
44	52	Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	7139
45	68	Child Care Services	6244
46	N/A	Drugs and Druggists' Sundries Merchant Wholesalers	4242
47	51	Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)	7224
48	44	RV (Recreational Vehicle) Parks and Recreational Camps	7212
49	67	Vegetable and Melon Farming	1112
50	N/A	Home Health Care Services	6216

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Center for Workforce Information & Analysis  
 (877) 4WF-DATA • www.workstats.dli.pa.gov • workforceinfo@pa.gov

November 2023

Top Employers



# Top 50 Employers

## 2nd Quarter, 2023

### Potter County

Combined Government Ownerships

Rank	Employer	Rank	Employer
1	Charles Cole Memorial Hospital	26	Kightlinger Motors
2	Morris Compressors Inc	27	Federal Government
3	Zito Media	28	Harmony Gas Oil & Coal LLC
4	State Government	29	Dickinson Center Inc
5	Cole Care Inc	30	Campbell Trucking Inc
6	Northern Potter School District	31	Coudersport Borough
7	Sweden Valley Manor	32	Coudersport SHOP'n SAVE
8	Truck-Lite Co LLC	33	Singelyn Enterprises IV Inc
9	Gas Field Specialists Inc	34	Buckler Transport Inc
10	Coudersport Area School District	35	Austin Area School District
11	Potter County Commissioners	36	US Inspection & NDT LLC
12	Ram Forest Products Inc	37	Charter Communications LLC
13	National Fuel Gas Supply Corp	38	AIPHC Holding Company LLC
14	UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside	39	Wending Creek Farms Inc
15	Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit	40	Fox's Pizza Den
16	Catalus Corporation	41	County HomeMakers Incorporated
17	Galeton Area School District	42	Goodwill Industries of North Central PA
18	Dominion Energy Transmission Inc	43	Sheetz Inc
19	Patterson Lumber Co Inc	44	A & W West End Grill
20	Level 3 Communications LLC	45	Rev Forestry Services LLC
21	Oswayo Valley School District	46	Coudersport Golf Club
22	Whipperhill Consulting LLC	47	Shop 'n Save
23	Dolgencorp LLC	48	Kaytees Family Restaurant
24	United Refining Company of PA	49	Fillhart Friendly Inn
25	Potter County Human Services	50	Dajon Inc

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Center for Workforce Information & Analysis

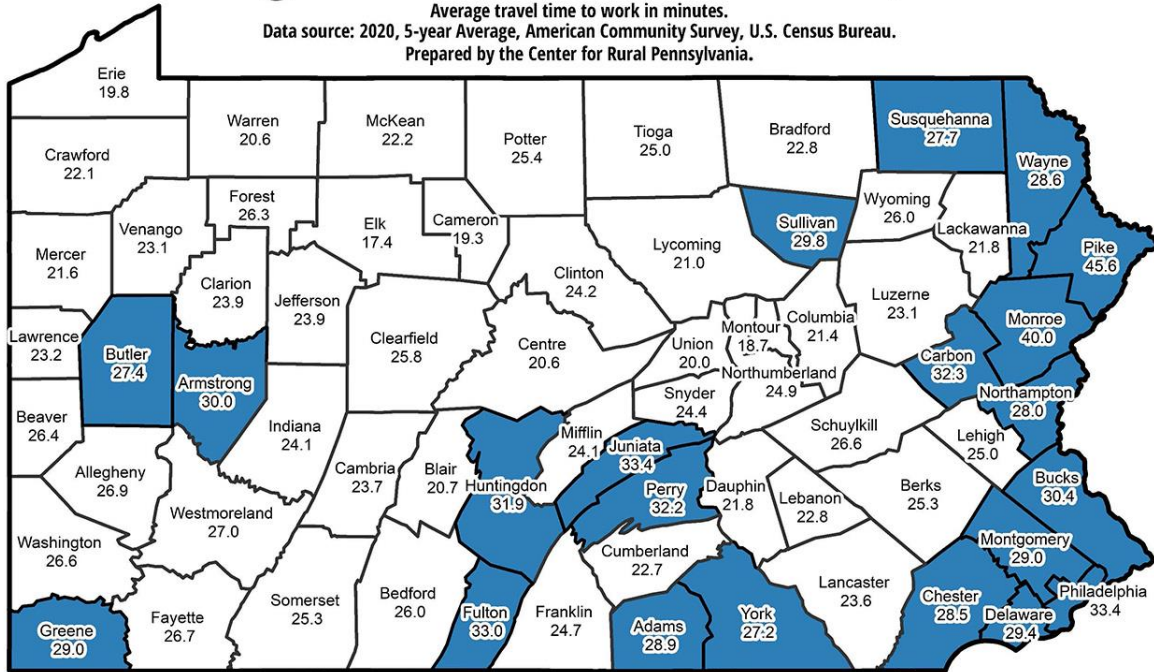
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November 2023

Commuting Patterns

# Average Commute Time to Work, 2020

Average travel time to work in minutes.  
 Data source: 2020, 5-year Average, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.  
 Prepared by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.



Statewide Rate = 27.1 Minutes

- At or Below Statewide Rate
- Above Statewide Rate

Commute times in Pennsylvania counties are generally consistent; however, road conditions and traffic patterns vary significantly. In Potter County, most roads are two-lane, often narrow, and posted at lower speed limits of 35 to 45 miles per hour, winding through agricultural areas. These conditions reduce the distance that can be covered within a typical 25-minute commute and have a considerable impact on freight transportation. The slower speeds and road limitations add both time and cost to deliveries entering and leaving the county. Given Potter County’s population size, significant investment in local roads by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is unlikely. However, targeted improvements, such as adding passing lanes in strategic locations and increasing speed limits on certain sections, could be pursued as part of the state’s five-year transportation plan. Enhancing the existing road infrastructure to be more accommodating to freight traffic—through wider lanes, increased speed limits, and designated passing areas—would benefit local businesses, create more opportunities for residents, and improve accessibility for tourists.

Beyond daily commutes, travel time to larger population centers with shopping, business, and cultural opportunities is also a considerable factor. Travel distances and times from Coudersport to nearby cities are as follows: Bradford, PA (42 miles, approximately 58 minutes), Olean, NY (53 miles, approximately 53 minutes), Hornell, NY (54 miles, approximately 66 minutes), Corning, NY (70 miles, approximately 85 minutes), Mansfield, PA (55 miles, approximately 68 minutes), and Ridgway, PA (58 miles, approximately 74 minutes). These travel times illustrate the relative geographic isolation of the county and underscore the importance of maintaining and improving road infrastructure to support economic development and quality of life.

## Tourism

The PA Tourism Economic Impact 2021 report compiled by the DCED contains a lot of details about tourism around the Commonwealth. We will touch on some of the PA Wilds data here but recommend that the full report be reviewed.

# PENNSYLVANIA WILDS ECONOMIC IMPACTS

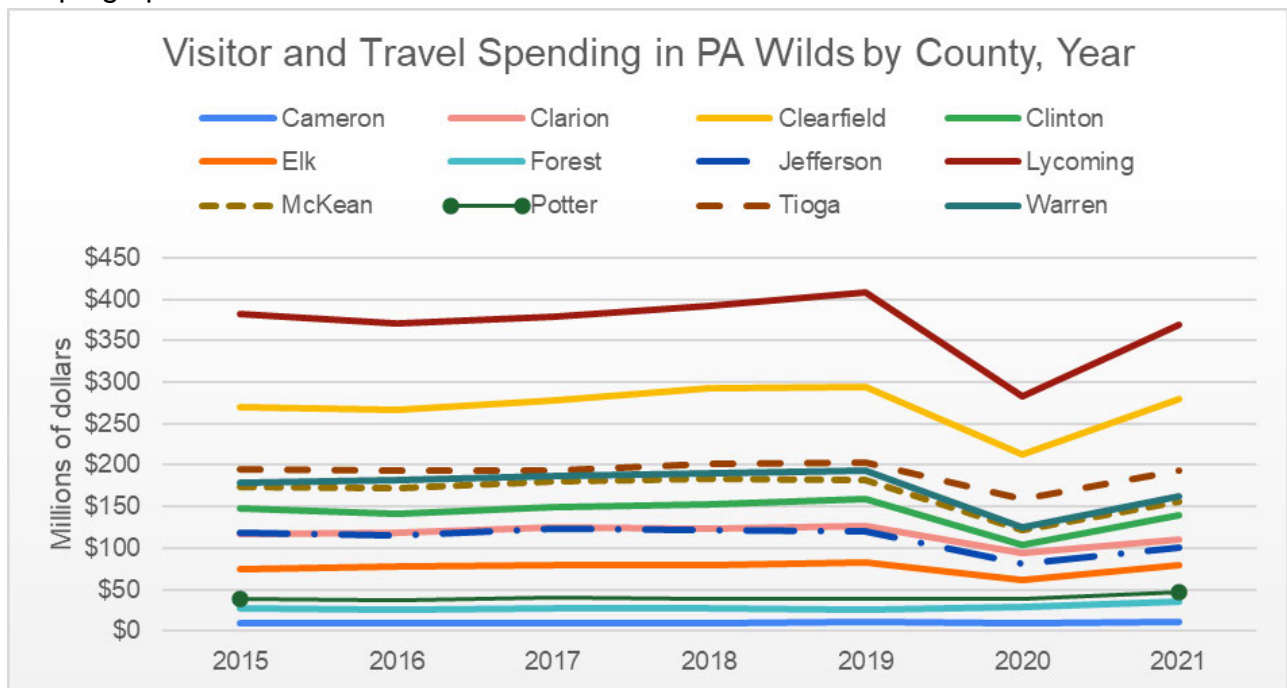
## Travel Industry (direct) Impacts, 2020 & 2021

Amounts in \$millions, except employment (in units), % change 2020-2021

By County, 2021	Visitor	Employment	Labor Income	Taxes	
	Spend			State/Local	Federal
Cameron	\$11.0	80	\$1.7	\$0.5	\$0.5
Clarion	\$110.0	1,095	\$29.4	\$5.8	\$7.1
Clearfield	\$279.8	1,744	\$57.6	\$13.8	\$15.4
Clinton	\$139.5	1,010	\$28.9	\$6.9	\$7.7
Elk	\$79.1	601	\$15.7	\$4.0	\$4.3
Forest	\$35.1	170	\$4.9	\$1.5	\$1.6
Jefferson	\$101.3	772	\$22.2	\$5.1	\$5.8
Lycoming	\$368.7	2,723	\$86.7	\$19.4	\$22.0
McKean	\$155.5	1,169	\$35.0	\$7.9	\$9.0
Potter	\$46.7	293	\$7.4	\$2.2	\$2.2
Tioga	\$193.6	1,623	\$47.6	\$10.4	\$11.9
Warren	\$162.2	1,152	\$33.0	\$7.8	\$8.8
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>\$1,682.6</b>	<b>12,434</b>	<b>\$370.0</b>	<b>\$85.3</b>	<b>\$96.2</b>
<b>% Change</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>

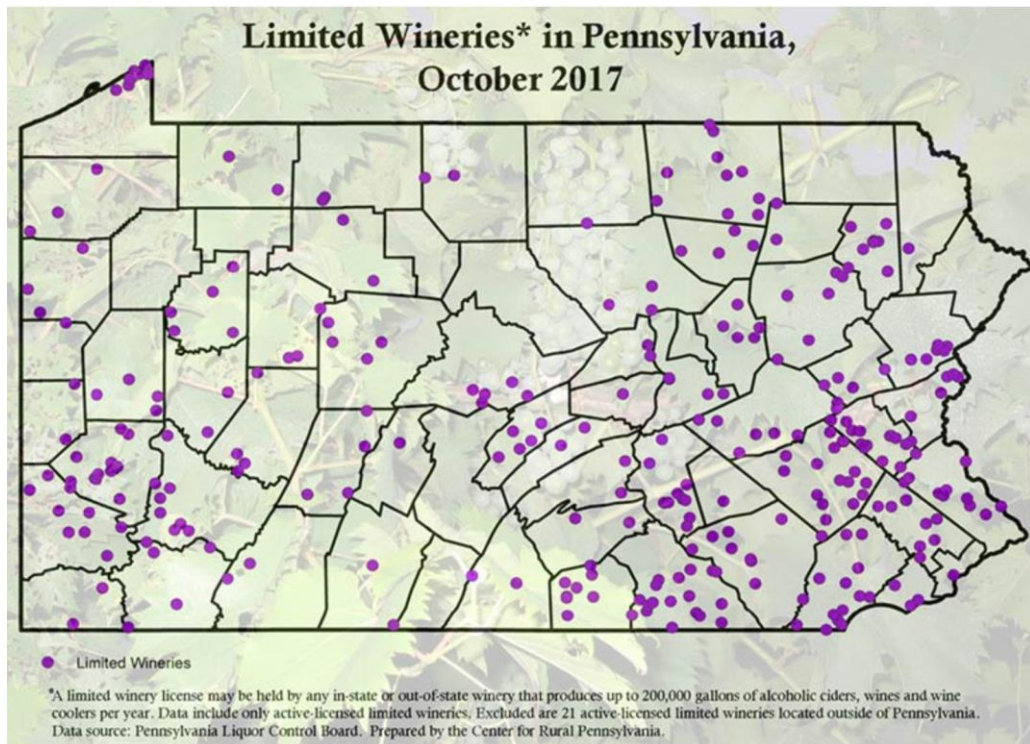
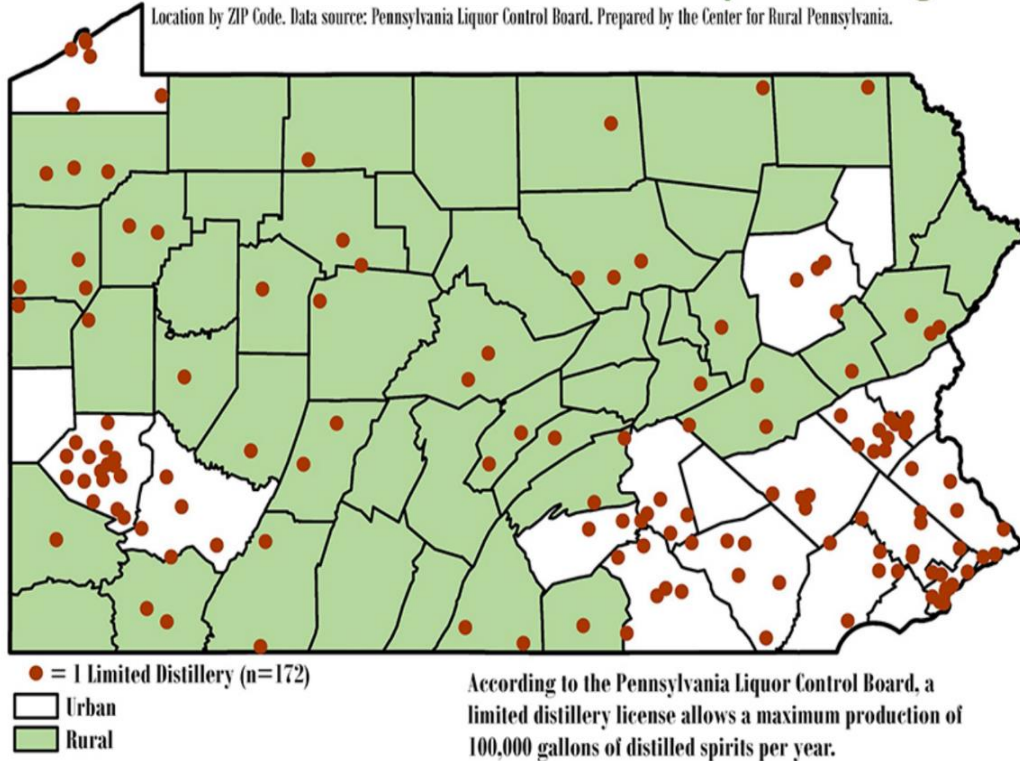
Potter County is 10th out of the 12 counties in the PA Wilds, so there is plenty of room to grow.

The following chart shows the Visitor and Travel Spend per county in the PA Wilds for the period of 2015 - 2021. Note that the spending appears flat except for some counties during the period the Covid-19 lockdowns restricted travel. This appears to not even be keeping up with inflation.



This is the group of PA counties that Potter is competing against for tourist dollars. Moving up in this area will require more events, food venues, and overnight accommodations within the county and promotion of them. Many tourism programs include tasting visits at local Winery/Brewery/Distillery establishments, but it appears that Potter County does not currently have any of those. Perhaps some type seasonal arrangement could be set up to include in the tourism offerings.

## Active Licensed Limited Distilleries in Pennsylvania, August 2022



Potter County has a limited presence of wineries and lacks breweries or distilleries, all of which are popular attractions that currently draw tourists to neighboring counties. Expanding these types of establishments could help attract a broader demographic of visitors and boost local tourism. Additionally, improvements in transportation infrastructure would further enhance the county's appeal to tourists. Many of the numbered routes in Potter County have lower speed limits due to the winding nature of the roads. Straightening and widening these roads, along with improved signage, would benefit drivers unfamiliar with the area and improve overall accessibility. Although road infrastructure falls under the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), the county can advocate for its priorities by actively engaging with PennDOT's planning process and providing input on their five-year plan.

Collaborating with other counties, such as the existing partnership with Tioga County through initiatives like Visit Potter-Tioga, offers a cost-effective approach to promoting tourism. However, to maximize the benefits of such collaborations, Potter County should ensure its events, attractions, and tourism-related activities are actively promoted. A key improvement would be to offer the visitors guide as a downloadable resource rather than relying solely on mailing physical copies, allowing potential visitors to access information immediately when their interest is highest. Without consistent participation in promotional efforts, the partnership risks being dominated by Tioga County's events and venues, potentially diverting tourists away from Potter County instead of enhancing its visibility.

## Agriculture

According to the 2023 Pennsylvania Annual Bulletin from the USDA for 2021 to 2022 all of the PA North Central counties either held steady or declined in the head count of cattle, while some saw an increase in Hogs and Sheep.

### Farmer Ages

Under 35	68
35 – 64	408
65 and older	283

Source: 2022 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service County Profile

### Farm size

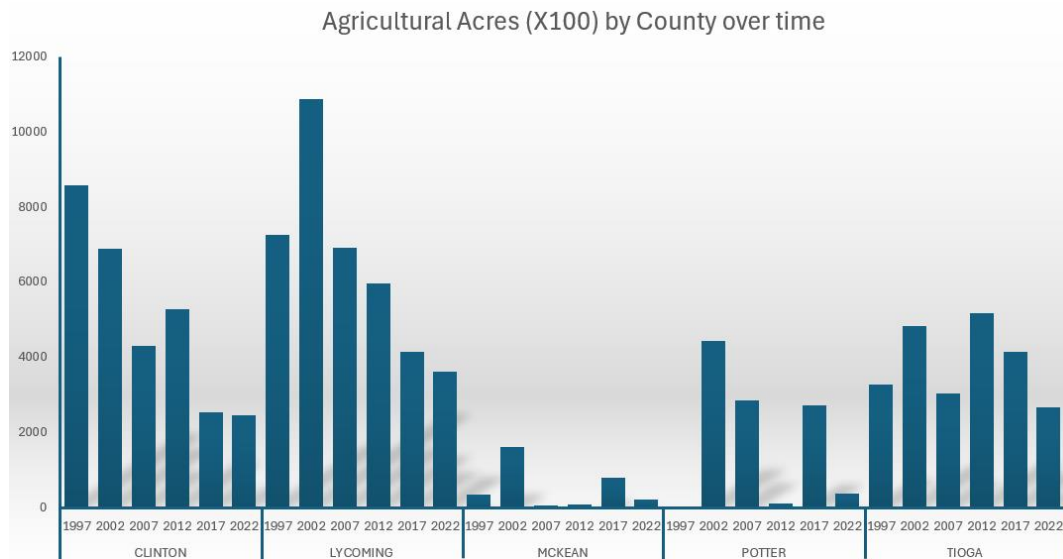
#### Acreage

Data from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service provides insight into the trends in agricultural land use across north-central Pennsylvania. The data indicates a

general decline in the number of acres dedicated to agriculture across the region, with McKean and Potter counties exhibiting particularly low figures compared to other counties.

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture County Profile for Potter County, cropland accounts for 42,715 acres, making it the predominant agricultural land use. Pastureland covers 9,176 acres, supporting livestock production, while woodland—often used for conservation purposes, timber production, or supplemental agricultural activities—comprises 39,648 acres. An additional 11,776 acres fall under the category of "other" land use, which may include farmsteads, conservation areas, and land used for non-traditional agricultural purposes.

The overall decline in agricultural acreage presents challenges for the local economy and agricultural sector. Reduced farmland availability may impact food production, local agribusinesses, and the county's rural character. The data underscores the importance of strategic land use planning to support existing agricultural operations while exploring opportunities to optimize land use through diversification, conservation initiatives, and economic incentives to sustain farming operations in the region.



## Sales

**Total and Per Farm Overview, 2022 and change since 2017**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>% change since 2017</b>
Number of farms	417	-7
Land in farms (acres)	103,315	+6
Average size of farm (acres)	248	+13
<hr/>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>(\$)</b>	
Market value of products sold	42,537,000	+8
Government payments	917,000	-20
Farm-related income	2,573,000	-8
Total farm production expenses	33,661,000	+7
Net cash farm income	12,367,000	+4
<hr/>		
<b>Per farm average</b>	<b>(\$)</b>	
Market value of products sold	102,007	+16
Government payments <sup>a</sup>	6,843	+20
Farm-related income <sup>a</sup>	18,514	+9
Total farm production expenses	80,721	+15
Net cash farm income	29,657	+12

Per the 2022 Census of Agriculture, County Profile

## Conclusion

Potter County offers a unique appeal to individuals who value nature, agriculture, and outdoor recreation. The county's vast state forests, game lands, and renowned dark skies provide ample opportunities for those seeking solitude, open spaces, and a connection to rural life. The availability of affordable land and homes, coupled with expanding access to high-speed internet, has allowed some individuals to relocate to the area while working remotely. However, despite these advantages, population projections indicate a continuing decline, underscoring the need for strategic efforts to retain and attract residents.

One key focus for mitigating population decline is retaining younger residents. Migration patterns suggest that many who leave Potter County do not relocate far, indicating an opportunity to create local career pathways that match their interests and aspirations. Enhancing workforce development by aligning education and training programs with local economic needs can help retain young talent. Additionally, fostering entrepreneurship through initiatives such as business incubators, mentorship programs, and e-commerce platforms could support local businesses in reaching broader markets and create new employment opportunities within the county.

Tourism presents another significant opportunity for economic growth and population stabilization. While efforts are currently underway to promote the county's natural attractions, Potter County faces competition from other destinations, often with more convenient access. Developing targeted tourism initiatives that capitalize on existing strengths—such as hunting, hiking, and stargazing—can help differentiate the county and attract niche audiences. Marketing efforts should focus on regions with demonstrated interest in visiting Potter County, as indicated by inflow migration data.

Building on tourism efforts, the county could encourage seasonal visitors to make a longer-term commitment by investing in second homes or transitioning to permanent residency. Marketing strategies aimed at existing camp owners and potential new residents could emphasize the county's quality of life, affordability, and outdoor lifestyle as key selling points.

# Government Profile

## Overview

Potter County is the fifth-least populous county in Pennsylvania with the county seat in Coudersport Borough, which is its largest population center. It was created in 1804 (organized in 1836) and named for General Potter, a war hero of the American Revolution. It is nicknamed “God’s Country” due to its remoteness and natural beauty. It is the northmost and centermost county in the Commonwealth, located on the New York border to the north and surrounded by Allegany County (New York, north), Steuben County (New York, northeast), Tioga County (east), Lycoming County (southeast), Clinton County (south), Cameron County (southwest), and McKean County (west). The county encompasses 1,082 square miles of land. Uniquely, three major watersheds meet there (Chesapeake Bay, St. Lawrence River, and Mississippi River) and the Allegheny River starts in the county. The most significant roadway is US Route 6, which goes east to west through the county.

The county has three school districts exclusively, and share four more with surrounding counties. Additionally, the county has six private schools

The county has 8 state parks, including:

- Cherry Springs
- Denton Hill
- Lyman Run
- Ole Bull
- Patterson
- Prouty Place
- Sinnemahoning
- Sizerville

## Municipalities

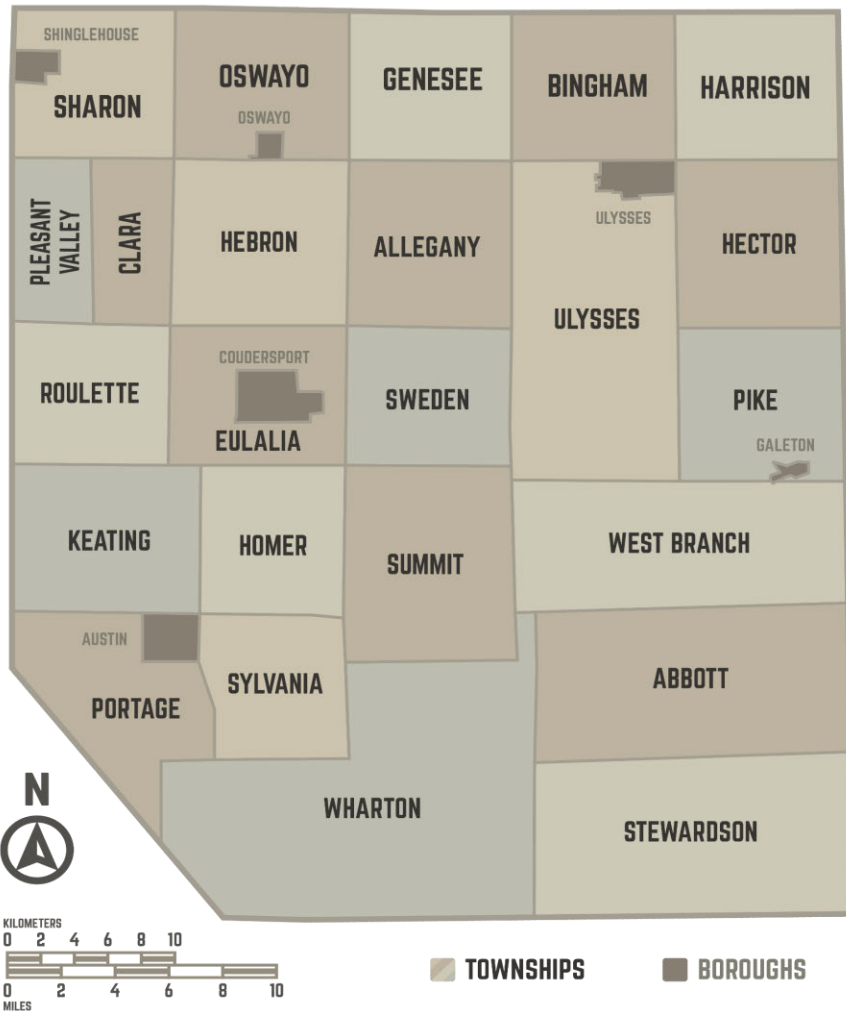
Potter County is composed of six boroughs (no cities) and 24 townships (all second class). According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 65% of the population lives in the townships and 35% in the boroughs.

### Boroughs

- Austin
- Coudersport
- Galetton
- Oswayo
- Shinglehouse
- Ulysses

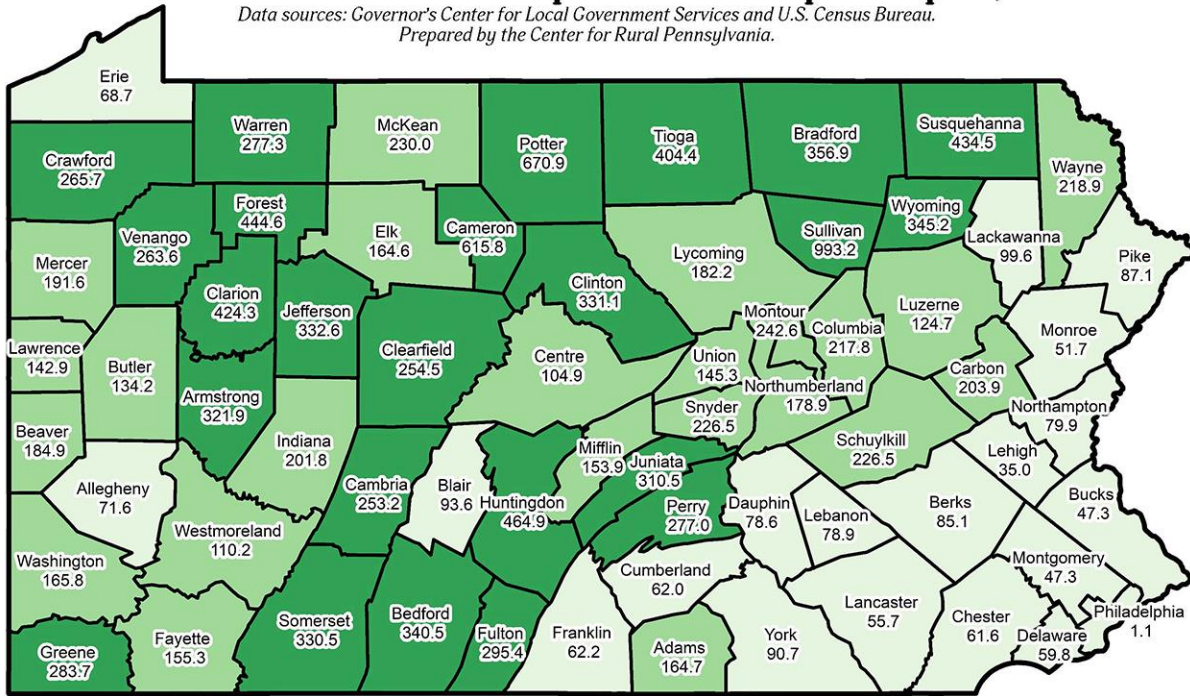
### Townships

- Abbott
- Alleghany
- Bingham
- Clara
- Eulalia
- Genesee
- Harrison
- Hebron
- Hector
- Homer
- Keating
- Oswayo
- Pike
- Pleasant Valley
- Portage
- Roulette
- Sharon
- Stewardson
- Summit
- Sweden
- Sylvania
- Ulysses
- West Branch
- Wharton



## Number of Elected Municipal Officials\* per Capita, 2022

Data sources: Governor's Center for Local Government Services and U.S. Census Bureau.  
Prepared by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.



Statewide Rate = 97.9 Officials per 100,000 Residents

Legend:  <100.0 per 100,000  100.0 to 249.9 per 100,000  250.0+ per 100,000

\*Note: Elected officials exclude county and school district officials.

Second only to Sullivan County, Potter County has the most number of elected officials per capita.

## County Government

### Overview

Potter County, established in 1804, is located in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the county seat is Coudersport. It is an 8<sup>th</sup> class county operating under normal county code for its size (not optional charter or home rule). The county government employs 93 individuals, excluding tax collectors and human services personnel. Unlike some other counties, Potter County does not operate a county home, own any bridges or roads.

### Mission

Potter County seeks flourishing communities. To that end, the primary functions of the Potter County government is to orchestrate safety and order, equitably enforce laws and

restore lawbreakers, care for the underprivileged, and facilitate economic development, while promoting shared heritage, opportunity and community.

The mission is *to serve the common good with stewardship, dedication, competence and inclusiveness.*

- *To protect the highest American ideals of freedom, justice, and compassion for the less fortunate.*
- *To pursue and maintain partnerships with citizens, organizations, governmental agencies and other entities to ensure the long-term well-being of the county.*
- *To encourage and support an abiding sense of community that extends across all of Potter County.*

## Services & Structure

Below is a representative list of the offices and departments:

- 911
- Assessment
- Auditors
- Commissioners
- Children & Youth Services
- Conservation District
- Coroner
- Court Administration
- District Attorney
- Domestic Relations
- Emergency Management
- Elections / Voter Registration
- GIS/Mapping
- Housing Authority
- Human Services
- Probation
- Prothonotary & Clerk of Courts
- Public Defender
- Redevelopment Authority
- Register & Recorder
- Sheriff
- Tax Claim
- Treasurer
- Veterans Affairs

## Tri-County Comprehensive Plan

### Introduction

As part of developing Potter County's Strategic Management Program Plan (STMP), the Tri-County Comprehensive Plan was reviewed to identify shared goals and ensure consistency between the two efforts. Many of the overarching themes found in the Comprehensive Plan—such as preserving agricultural lands, promoting balanced economic growth, and improving infrastructure—carry forward into the STMP. This alignment underscores the importance of maintaining a coordinated vision for Potter County, one that supports the county's rural character while embracing new opportunities for growth and collaboration.

## Overview

The Tri-County Comprehensive Plan integrates natural resource protection with sustainable development strategies, reflecting Potter County's distinct blend of rural landscapes and economic aspirations. By prioritizing farmland preservation, responsible forestry, and sound management of resources like timber and natural gas, it reaffirms the value of the county's open spaces and abundant natural assets. Alongside resource stewardship, the Plan emphasizes the need to encourage economic diversification by fostering small business growth, investing in workforce training, and promoting tourism through the county's scenic vistas and recreational offerings. Partnerships with vocational schools and community organizations are highlighted as essential in tailoring education and training programs to match emerging industry needs, particularly in healthcare, manufacturing, and technology.

Infrastructural improvements also feature prominently as critical underpinnings of economic development. The Comprehensive Plan advocates for regular roadway maintenance and enhanced bridge systems, essential for maintaining safety during harsh winters and meeting the demands of commercial transportation. Expanding broadband coverage is similarly central to supporting telemedicine, remote education, and local entrepreneurship. In addition, modernizing municipal water and wastewater systems is seen as fundamental to both public health and long-term community growth. Housing rehabilitation is encouraged to ensure safer, more energy-efficient homes, while incentives for affordable or senior-friendly housing aim to help retain long-time residents and accommodate an aging demographic.

## Health, Safety, and Regional Collaboration

The Plan recognizes that for Potter County to thrive, critical services such as healthcare, social support, and emergency response must keep pace with evolving community needs. It encourages working with existing providers and exploring new delivery models—like telehealth initiatives—to reach residents in remote areas more effectively. Strengthening volunteer fire departments and ambulance services is also addressed, as these organizations often face funding and staffing shortages. A consistent theme is the importance of reaching beyond county lines to coordinate with neighboring counties on issues like watershed protection, large-scale infrastructure upgrades, and grant applications. By forming regional partnerships, Potter County can pool resources, share expertise, and secure broader funding, all while maintaining local autonomy and a focused vision for growth.

## Sustaining the Vision through Local Governance

Although grounded in broader regional considerations, the Plan calls for local municipalities to review and update their zoning ordinances and land use regulations to align with its principles. By instituting performance metrics—such as tracking progress in preserving agricultural acreage, upgrading utilities, or expanding broadband—Potter County can evaluate how effectively it is meeting its Comprehensive Plan objectives. Adjustments to policy and practice can then be made as new opportunities arise or as community priorities shift. The Plan’s emphasis on balanced growth, rural preservation, and strategic investment in community services ensures that Potter County remains well-positioned to meet the needs of its residents and businesses while preserving the environment that defines the region’s character.

## Looking Ahead

Much of the Tri-County Comprehensive Plan content remains relevant to Potter County’s development, and the STMP provides an avenue for the county to play an even more proactive role in guiding implementation. The Comprehensive Plan is set to expire in 2028, whereas the STMP will remain in effect until 2030. By the end of the STMP period, Potter County can use the insights and progress made through both documents to inform a new or substantially updated Comprehensive Plan, ideally in collaboration with its neighboring counties. Such an intergovernmental approach will help maintain the momentum established by the Tri-County Plan, further integrate regional priorities, and ensure that the county continues to evolve in a way that benefits all of its communities.

# Financial Condition Assessment & Trend Forecasting

## Introduction & Scope

Step 1 of the Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP) involves a comprehensive financial condition assessment. This step is essential for establishing a realistic baseline of Potter County's historic and current financial status. Unlike standard audits, which typically offer a year-over-year comparison, this assessment provides a multi-year perspective that is crucial for understanding long-term financial trends and challenges. The use of different accounts and funding streams across various years complicates this process, necessitating considerable effort to match accounts and identify inconsistently booked transactions. This financial review covered the years 2019 to 2023, including an in-depth examination of each fund, starting with the General Fund and extending to all other county funds. Notably, the county underwent a software transition during this period, which, coupled with delays in external audits, added to the complexity of the assessment. Consequently, the consultants relied on available audits from 2017 to 2021, as the 2022 audit had not been completed by June 2024.

Step 2 focuses on trend forecasting, which is integrated within each section following the financial condition statements. This step involves analyzing general ledger reports, audits, budgets, and other financial documents to identify trends and project future financial scenarios. While the consultants did not perform a formal audit, they ensured that the financial data was materially accurate to the best of their ability. The primary goal of this step is not to achieve perfection in the data but to construct a coherent financial narrative that highlights key trends and informs strategic decision-making. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the financial story of Potter County, enabling informed planning and resource allocation for the future.

## High Level Findings

At a high level, Potter County has consistently passed balanced budgets but has struggled to adhere closely to them, with actual figures deviating by more than 10% in recent years. The county's average budget over the past five years was approximately \$11.5 million. However, actual revenues averaged \$10 million, while expenses averaged \$10.3 million. This discrepancy highlights challenges in budget accuracy and financial management.

The county experienced an influx of funds in 2020 and 2021 through the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), leading to unusual financial activity. These

funds were used to shift operational expenses, coupled with furloughs that significantly affected the county's financial statements for those years. Due to the transition between software packages in 2020, both revenue and expenditure figures for that year are notably understated, complicating accurate projections based on historical data.

As ARPA funds were depleted, the county began drawing from reserve funds to balance its budget. By the end of 2024, it is anticipated that most capital reserves will be exhausted, coinciding with a sizable tax increase. Key findings from the financial assessment include:

- Assessed property values and corresponding tax revenues have remained stable but have not kept pace with inflation.
- The commissioners did not adjust taxes in line with inflation rates.
- The pension demographic has shifted to having more retirees than working contributors, failing to meet actuarial targets.
- Payroll costs are increasing by approximately \$250,000 annually.
- Other costs, particularly health insurance, are rising significantly faster than property tax revenues can accommodate.
- The county's reserves are nearly exhausted.
- The county has about \$34 million in tangible assets and generally have significant capital needs with no reserves or active sinking fund.

Potter County has limited control over expenditures and, in terms of revenue, is primarily constrained to raising property taxes. Currently, property taxes are set at 21.5 mills, close to the statutory cap of 25 mills, leaving little room for further increases. This financial condition underscores the need for strategic planning to address revenue shortfalls and manage growing expenses effectively.

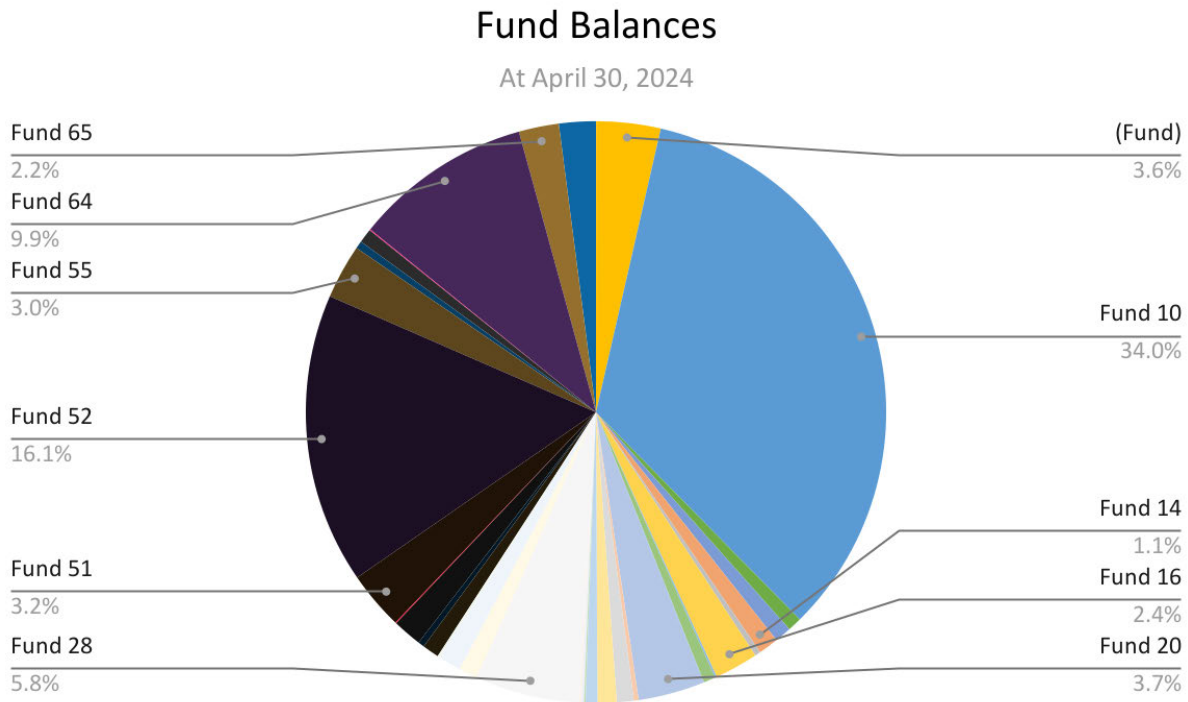
## Audit Review

The independent CPA auditing firm Potter County has used for the period reviewed were all completed by Zelenkofske Axelrod LLC, one of the premier and most common accounting firms in Pennsylvania dealing with county governments.

The independent audit is to determine if there are any material misstatements contained in the financial statements. There were no material weaknesses and the financial statements are presented fairly according to the audit years 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021. The 2022 and 2023 audits were unavailable at the time of publication, in large part due to changing fiscal systems.

## Funds & Bank Accounts

Potter County maintains approximately thirty-three bank accounts and thirty-eight funds, excluding those related to Human Services. While there are opportunities to streamline the number of funds, a more significant opportunity lies in consolidating bank accounts through a pooled cash strategy. Implementing pooled cash management could improve liquidity, enhance cash flow management, and potentially increase interest earnings by optimizing the county’s financial resources.



As of June 2024, the county's bank account balances are detailed below, showing their alignment with various funds. The General Fund, as anticipated, holds the largest share of the county’s financial assets, accounting for approximately one-third of total funds. This reflects its critical role in supporting county operations and providing financial flexibility. Analyzing the distribution of assets across all funds and accounts will help identify potential areas for consolidation and improved financial oversight.

A comprehensive review of these accounts and funds should focus on reducing administrative complexity while maintaining the necessary financial controls to ensure compliance with state regulations and best practices in municipal finance. Streamlining fund management processes could result in more efficient financial reporting, improved budgeting accuracy, and enhanced transparency in the county’s financial operations.

ACCOUNT NAME	BALANCE	VOID	INTEREST	WITHDRAWAL	DEPOSIT	BALANCE	FUND
TAX CLAIM CONVENIENCE	\$29.23	\$ -	\$ 22.18	\$ (162,188.46)	\$ 162,159.23	\$ 22.18	
PAYROLL	\$25.19	\$ -	\$ 11.54	\$ (208,710.30)	\$ 208,710.30	\$ 36.73	
EMPLOYEE FUND	\$351.86	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 351.86	
TAX CLAIM HIFI	\$177,592.09	\$ -	\$ 125.25	\$ (162,159.23)	\$ 166,709.08	\$ 182,267.19	
GENERAL FUND	\$76,415.61	\$ 1,847	\$ 3,380.34	\$ (1,217,081.87)	\$ 2,867,861.82	\$ 1,732,423.64	Fund 10
HAZ MAT/ LEPC	\$ 43,128.21	\$ -	\$ 36.46	\$ (4,374.99)	\$ 806.01	\$ 39,595.69	Fund 11
RETIREMENT	\$ 110,734.92	\$ -	\$ 61.59	\$ (147,042.12)	\$ 83,447.56	\$ 47,201.95	Fund 13
LIQUID FUEL	\$ 63,343.49	\$ -	\$ 67.81	\$ (6,700.72)	\$ -	\$ 56,710.58	Fund 14
NORTH FORK DAM	\$ 16,120.96	\$ -	\$ 14.09	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 16,135.05	Fund 15
911 WIRELESS	\$ 200,568.06	\$23,498	\$ 198.62	\$ (100,792.69)	\$ -	\$ 123,472.53	Fund 16
SAULTER PRESERVE	\$ 5,180.95	\$ -	\$ 4.53	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,185.48	Fund 17
AUTOMATION CIVIL	\$ 32,814.86	\$ -	\$ 29.53	\$ (1,329.53)	\$ 2,170.00	\$ 33,684.86	Fund 18
OFFENDER SUPER	\$ 181,710.67	\$ -	\$ 228.70	\$ (479.29)	\$ 7,715.10	\$ 189,175.18	Fund 20
JUVENILE RESTITUTION	\$ 13,534.25	\$ -	\$ 11.83	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 13,546.08	Fund 21
FARMLAND PRES	\$ 48,127.69	\$ -	\$ 42.08	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 48,169.77	Fund 22
FARMLAND ROLLBACK	\$ 53,487.49	\$ -	\$ 58.81	\$ -	\$ 465.84	\$ 54,012.14	Fund 22
IMPROVEMENT	\$ 32,981.09	\$ -	\$ 29.10	\$ -	\$ 336.00	\$ 33,346.19	Fund 24
AUTOMATION CRIM	\$ 4,473.07	\$ -	\$ 3.97	\$ -	\$ 88.71	\$ 4,565.75	Fund 25
TOBACCO COMPLIANCE	\$ 7,328.53	\$ -	\$ 6.41	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,334.94	Fund 26
SUBSTANCE ABUSE	\$ 4,954.90	\$ -	\$ 4.71	\$ -	\$ 608.49	\$ 5,568.10	Fund 27
DOMESTIC RELATION	\$ 282,068.62	\$ -	\$ 657.17	\$ (8,861.00)	\$ 22,409.36	\$ 296,274.15	Fund 28

SPECIALTY COURT	\$ 52,512.47	\$ -	\$ 58.03	\$ (79.50)	\$ 923.01	\$ 53,414.01	Fund 32
DEMOLITION	\$ 64,250.53	\$ -	\$ 71.33	\$ -	\$ 1,125.00	\$ 65,446.86	Fund 33
VOJO	\$ 5,867.36	\$ -	\$ 5.13	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,872.49	Fund 34
VICTIM WITNESS	\$ 39,343.47	\$ -	\$ 34.62	\$ -	\$ 8,254.63	\$ 47,632.72	Fund 35
VETERANS TRUST	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 11.08	\$ -	\$ 17,636.74	\$ 17,647.82	Fund 36
DIVORCE	\$ 62,323.77	\$ -	\$ 83.98	\$ (41.98)	\$ 20,244.50	\$ 82,610.27	Fund 38
DES BLDG	\$ 2,685.18	\$ -	\$ 2.35	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,687.53	Fund 39
CAPITAL PROJECTS	\$ 202,588.79	\$ -	\$ 211.04	\$ (37,636.74)	\$ -	\$ 165,163.09	Fund 51
OPERATIONAL	\$ 869,799.85	\$ -	\$ 1,834.72	\$ (50,000.00)	\$ -	\$ 821,634.57	Fund 52
PHARE	\$ 172,434.76	\$ -	\$ 190.99	\$ (18,750.00)	\$ -	\$ 153,875.75	Fund 55
VICTIM IMPACT	\$ 21,712.76	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 21,712.76	Fund 59
HOTEL TAX	\$ 23,161.65	\$ -	\$ 24.91	\$ -	\$ 16,901.17	\$ 40,087.73	Fund 60
EMPLOYEE WELLNESS	\$ 2,671.01	\$ -	\$ 2.34	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,673.35	Fund 61
CDBG	\$ 187,702.26	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (361,410.13)	\$ 173,716.68	\$ 8.81	Fund 62
GASWELL IMPACT	\$ 503,439.43	\$ -	\$ 1,122.42	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 504,561.85	Fund 64
HIGHWAY BRIDGE	\$ 113,542.26	\$ -	\$ 138.98	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 113,681.24	Fund 65
911 INTERCONNECTIVITY	\$ 104,258.29	\$ -	\$ 127.62	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 104,385.91	Fund 66
TOTAL	\$ 3,528,851	\$ 23,498	\$ 5,374.95	\$ (737,498.69)	\$ 356,848.80	\$ 3,177,075	

## Purpose Funds

The County has 40 funds with unique purposes. They are as follows:

- General Fund: The largest fund, managing the budget for all general government services, covering both revenue and expenditures.
- LEPC Fund: Supports emergency preparedness for hazardous materials incidents, funded primarily by LEPC allocations for training, equipment, and communication systems.
- Retirement Fund: Established under PA County Pension Law to manage the Pension Plan and ensure long-term financial stability for county employees.
- Liquid Fuels Fund: Designated for public road and bridge maintenance, funded by fuel taxes and distributed by PennDOT to local governments for eligible transportation projects.
- North Fork Dam Fund: Supports maintenance of the North Fork Dam, funded by allocations from the general fund.
- 911 Fund: Supports emergency 911 telecommunication services, with 85% funding provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- Sauter Preserve Fund: Funds habitat restoration, wildlife management, and environmental education through grants, donations, and user fees.
- Automation (Civil) Fund: Supports automation efforts to enhance technological capabilities and streamline county government systems.
- Covid Hospitality Fund: Provided relief for businesses impacted by the Covid-19 crisis; fully expended per Commonwealth requirements.
- Supervision Fees Fund: Funded by monthly offender fees to cover administrative costs of offender services, with usage regulated by the Commonwealth.
- Juvenile Restitution Fees Fund: Supported by fees paid by juvenile offenders to compensate victims of juvenile crime.
- Farmland Preserve and Rollback Fund: Utilized by the conservation district through a reimbursement agreement.
- Sinking Fund: Established for debt repayment or capital projects; currently, no activity or accounts related to this fund.
- Improvement Fund: Supports technology improvements for the Register and Recorder's office.
- Automation (Criminal) Fund: Provides support for automation enhancements to improve county government systems.
- Tobacco Compliance Fund: Funded by tobacco manufacturers; currently earning interest but managing no active cases.
- Substance Abuse Fund: Supports substance abuse programs and initiatives within the county.

- Domestic Relations Fund: Provides child support services, primarily funded by the Commonwealth.
- Recorder of Deeds Improvement Fund: Supports technical and administrative improvements for the Register and Recorder's office.
- Specialty Courts Fund: Supports the operation and development of specialized court programs.
- ACT 152 Demo Fund: Funded by realty transfer taxes to address blight through demolition efforts.
- VOJO Fund: Provides support to victims of crimes committed by juveniles, including counseling, restitution, and advocacy.
- RASA Fund: Rights and Services Act fund supports victim services through penalties assessed to offenders.
- PA Veterans Trust Grant Fund: Inactive since 2020 but maintains a bank balance.
- Triple Divide Water Monitoring Fund: Inactive since 2022.
- Divorce Fund: Funded by no-fault divorce fees and used for general fund budget balancing.
- DES Building Fund: Originally set up for the Department of Emergency Services building; now holds minor funds accruing interest.
- 911 System Upgrade Fund: Funded through a bond issue but now spent down.
- Capital Projects Fund: Available for funding county capital projects.
- Operational Reserve Fund: Acts as a reserve account for general fund operations.
- Covid-19 County Relief Grant Fund: Fully expended and closed.
- PHARE Fund: Pennsylvania Housing Affordability Fund, grant-funded for housing projects.
- ARPA Fund: Fully expended and closed out with the Treasury.
- PC Victims Impact Panel Fund: Supports the victim impact panel program.
- Hotel Excise Tax Fund: Captures revenue from the hotel occupancy tax.
- Employee Wellness Initiative Fund: Grant-funded for employee wellness programs.
- CDBG Fund: The Community Development Block Grant supports low- to moderate-income project areas.
- Capital Reserve Fund: Funded through ACT 13 gas well impact fees for capital reserves.
- Highway Bridge Improvement Fund: Funded through ACT 13 gas well impact fees for road and bridge improvements.
- 911 Statewide Interconnectivity Grant Fund: Supports regional interconnectivity projects funded through a state formulary.

## Chart of Accounts

Potter County utilizes a fund accounting model that is generally aligned with recommendations from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). This model organizes financial transactions and reporting through a structured framework based on several key elements, including Fund, Department, Object, Cost Center, and Budget Code. These elements provide a foundation for tracking revenues and expenditures with a level of detail that facilitates financial oversight and compliance with governmental accounting standards. The specific funds utilized within this system are detailed in a separate section of this report.

While the county's chart of accounts is designed to accommodate a wide range of financial activities, its current structure is extensive and, at times, cumbersome to administer. The complexity of the chart of accounts can result in inefficiencies in financial reporting and budget management, requiring significant effort to navigate and maintain. Additionally, the presence of obsolete or false departments within the system further complicates financial processes, contributing to confusion and potential misallocations. Streamlining and modernizing the chart of accounts could improve administrative efficiency, enhance transparency, and better align with best practices in governmental accounting.

Addressing these challenges may involve conducting a thorough review of the current chart of accounts, identifying redundant or unnecessary entries, and implementing a more standardized structure that reflects the county's operational needs. Such efforts would support more effective financial planning, simplify reporting requirements, and provide greater clarity for decision-makers and stakeholders.

## Budget

Potter County currently employs an annual line-item budgeting approach, focusing on detailed categorization of expenses rather than adopting a multi-year or results-based budgeting framework. The budgeting process begins with the Chief Clerk collecting year-to-date actuals and compiling a comprehensive "wish list" from various county departments. This approach allows departments to request funding based on their perceived needs and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

Once the departmental requests are gathered, the Chief Clerk prepares a preliminary budget that consolidates the priorities across all departments. This draft is then presented to the county commissioners, who review and adjust it based on their own prioritization of county needs and available resources. However, the current budgeting

process does not incorporate financial projections, long-term strategic planning, or systematic methodologies such as cash flow budgeting or capital improvement planning. The absence of these elements limits the county's ability to anticipate future financial challenges, assess long-term funding needs, and allocate resources in a manner that aligns with broader strategic goals.

The reliance on a line-item budgeting model provides a clear and detailed view of expenditures but may not offer the flexibility or forward-looking perspective needed to address evolving financial and operational challenges. Without a structured approach to financial forecasting and strategic resource allocation, the county may face difficulties in managing unexpected expenditures, capital investments, and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Moving toward a more strategic budgeting framework, such as incorporating multi-year planning, results-based budgeting, or developing a formal capital improvement plan, could provide greater financial clarity and support more informed decision-making. These methods would allow for better alignment of financial resources with the county's long-term objectives and improve overall fiscal stability.

## Actuals

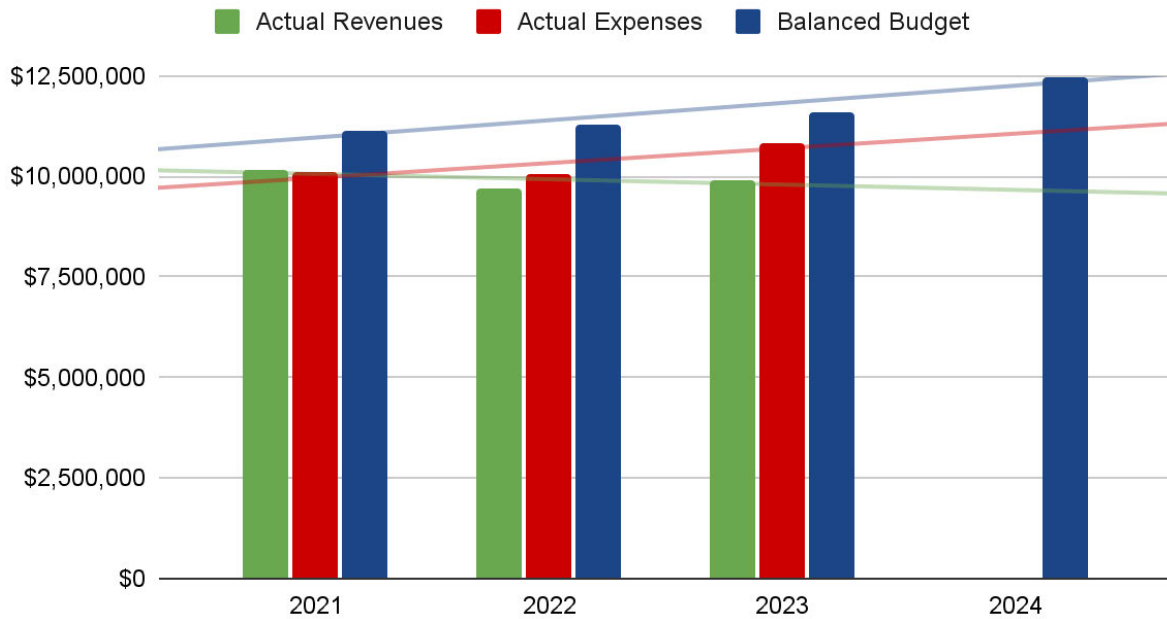
The provided data indicates that Potter County has consistently passed balanced budgets; however, actual financial performance has not aligned closely with these projections. Over the past five years, the county's budgeted expenditures have averaged approximately \$11.5 million. In contrast, actual revenues have averaged \$10 million, while actual expenses have averaged \$10.3 million, reflecting a persistent gap between projected and realized financial figures. This variance, exceeding 10% in recent years, underscores the challenges the county faces in accurately forecasting revenues and controlling expenditures.

The chart illustrates the disparity between actual revenues and expenses compared to the budgeted amounts, with revenues falling short while expenditures continue to trend upward. The data suggests that expenses have been consistently higher than revenues, necessitating reliance on reserves or other financial measures to bridge the shortfall. It is important to note that the trend does not yet account for the 2024 tax increase, as actual figures for that year are not available.

These financial inconsistencies highlight the need for improved forecasting methodologies, enhanced financial controls, and a more strategic approach to budgeting that incorporates contingency planning and long-term financial sustainability. A more proactive and data-driven approach to budget planning could help the county

better align its financial resources with operational needs and avoid recurring budget shortfalls.

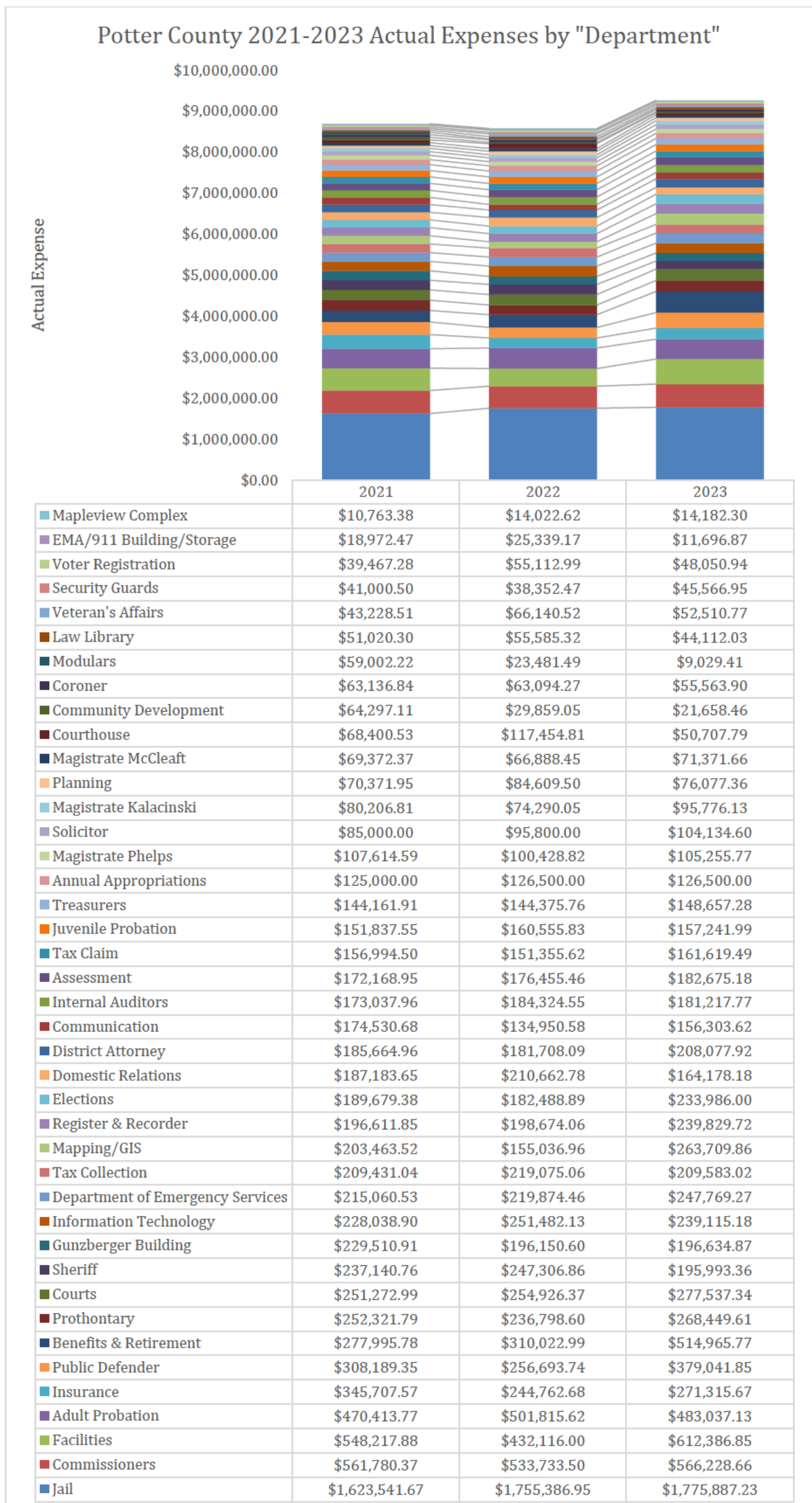
### Actuals versus Budget



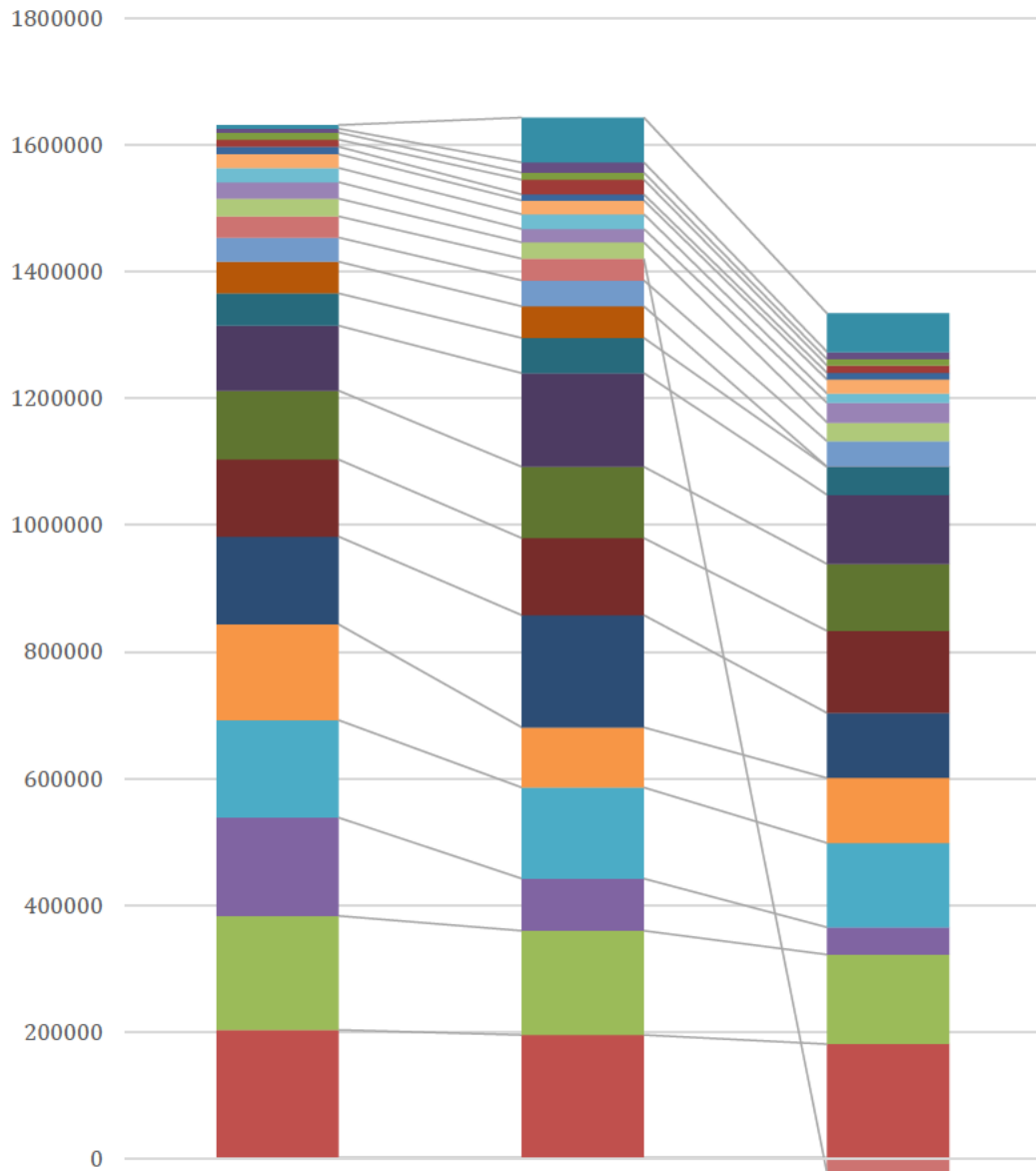
### Budgeted Departments

The county budgets for many “departments” that are not departments in a traditional sense of the word. This compares non-departments to departments, which confuses the chart of accounts, makes coding (and thus reporting) inaccurate. The value of doing this can be replicated in other ways within the chart of accounts. In many cases, there are offices within a department that are broken out as a department in this model. One obvious suggestion is to modify the funds and accounts to streamline such that these offices fall within departments and their totals roll up into the departmental total for clarity.

As usual, the county’s jail is by far the largest single expenditure coming in at \$1.75m.



Non-Tax Revenue by Department



	1	2	3
Elections	\$5,499.50	\$71,032.70	\$60,598.06
Planning	\$6,245.00	\$16,100.00	\$11,540.00
Assessment	\$11,058.75	\$10,930.70	\$9,947.55
Coroner	\$11,184.57	\$23,185.40	\$11,540.32
Magistrate McCleaff	\$11,855.07	\$9,654.96	\$10,657.71
Sheriff	\$21,563.62	\$21,725.88	\$22,100.05
Treasurers	\$22,484.25	\$22,914.25	\$14,690.90
Magistrate Phelps	\$25,936.00	\$21,627.51	\$31,036.29
Magistrate Kalacinski	\$27,977.35	\$25,535.32	\$29,426.05
Prothontary	\$33,420.40	\$34,455.49	-\$22,775.48
Mapping/GIS	\$38,115.95	\$40,440.45	\$40,401.00
Juvenile Probation	\$49,964.00	\$49,968.00	\$143.19
Law Library	\$51,020.30	\$55,585.32	\$44,112.03
Domestic Relations	\$102,484.00	\$147,775.00	\$109,056.00
Modulars	\$108,700.01	\$112,699.99	\$105,625.00
District Attorney	\$121,582.13	\$121,557.90	\$129,433.10
Insurance	\$138,451.68	\$177,146.31	\$102,715.12
Adult Probation	\$151,182.03	\$94,660.54	\$102,437.66
Register & Recorder	\$153,779.27	\$143,708.17	\$133,039.05
Jail	\$155,140.44	\$82,264.23	\$43,036.55
Courts	\$179,883.40	\$164,707.01	\$141,182.31
Tax Claim	\$201,519.58	\$193,343.01	\$179,176.90
Revenues	2021	2022	2023

## Revenue

Potter County's revenue structure is composed of various sources that provide funding for essential services and operational needs. A detailed analysis of these revenue streams highlights the county's financial reliance on specific income sources and the potential challenges associated with each.

Real estate taxes represent the primary and most stable revenue source for the county. This is a typical funding structure for many counties and provides a consistent base for operational expenditures. However, given that a significant portion of Potter County's land is state-owned, payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILT) payments play an important role in supplementing revenue. These payments help offset the lost tax revenue from tax-exempt state properties, but their long-term stability and sufficiency in addressing financial needs remain an area of consideration.

Revenue from 911 reimbursements is another key component of the county's funding. This revenue stream is governed by a complex funding formula that is subject to change based on legislative and regulatory adjustments. Any future changes in the funding structure could impact the county's ability to sustain emergency communication services without increasing reliance on local funding sources.

An noteworthy revenue stream comes from divorce filings. While this source provides some additional income (about \$250,000 per year), it may not be a reliable long-term revenue generator due to societal trends and potential changes in marriage and divorce rates. A decrease in filings could lead to a decline in revenue from this source, requiring the county to explore alternative funding mechanisms.

Rental income, though a smaller component of the overall revenue structure, offers a steady supplemental income stream. Leasing available space can help offset operating costs, but it is not a primary funding source and its growth potential may be limited.

Grant funding is another significant contributor to county revenues, particularly for targeted programs such as election integrity and social services. While grants provide essential support for specific initiatives, they are often restricted in use and subject to the availability of federal and state funding cycles. Over-reliance on grant funding may present sustainability challenges, as grants are typically project-specific and may not cover ongoing operational needs.

The County, as all counties, saw a huge influx of cash with CARES and ARAP funding in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. The county mostly used the funds to balance the budget, particularly on capital items, to their credit.

Overall, Potter County's revenue structure reflects a mix of stable, supplemental, and fluctuating funding sources. A key challenge for the county moving forward will be ensuring a balanced approach that leverages consistent revenue streams while exploring new opportunities to diversify and enhance financial sustainability.

The following shows the inflow of cash over the years broken out by fund. As is clear, the general fund, and property tax specifically, makes up the majority. The operations throughout the county are funded 42% by real estate tax.



## Property Tax

Potter County currently levies a general property tax rate of 21.5 mills, with no special-purpose millage in place. Under Pennsylvania law, counties are permitted to impose a maximum of 25 mills for general purposes. However, there is a legal provision that allows the county to petition the courts for additional millage beyond the statutory limit on a temporary, year-by-year basis if justified by financial necessity.

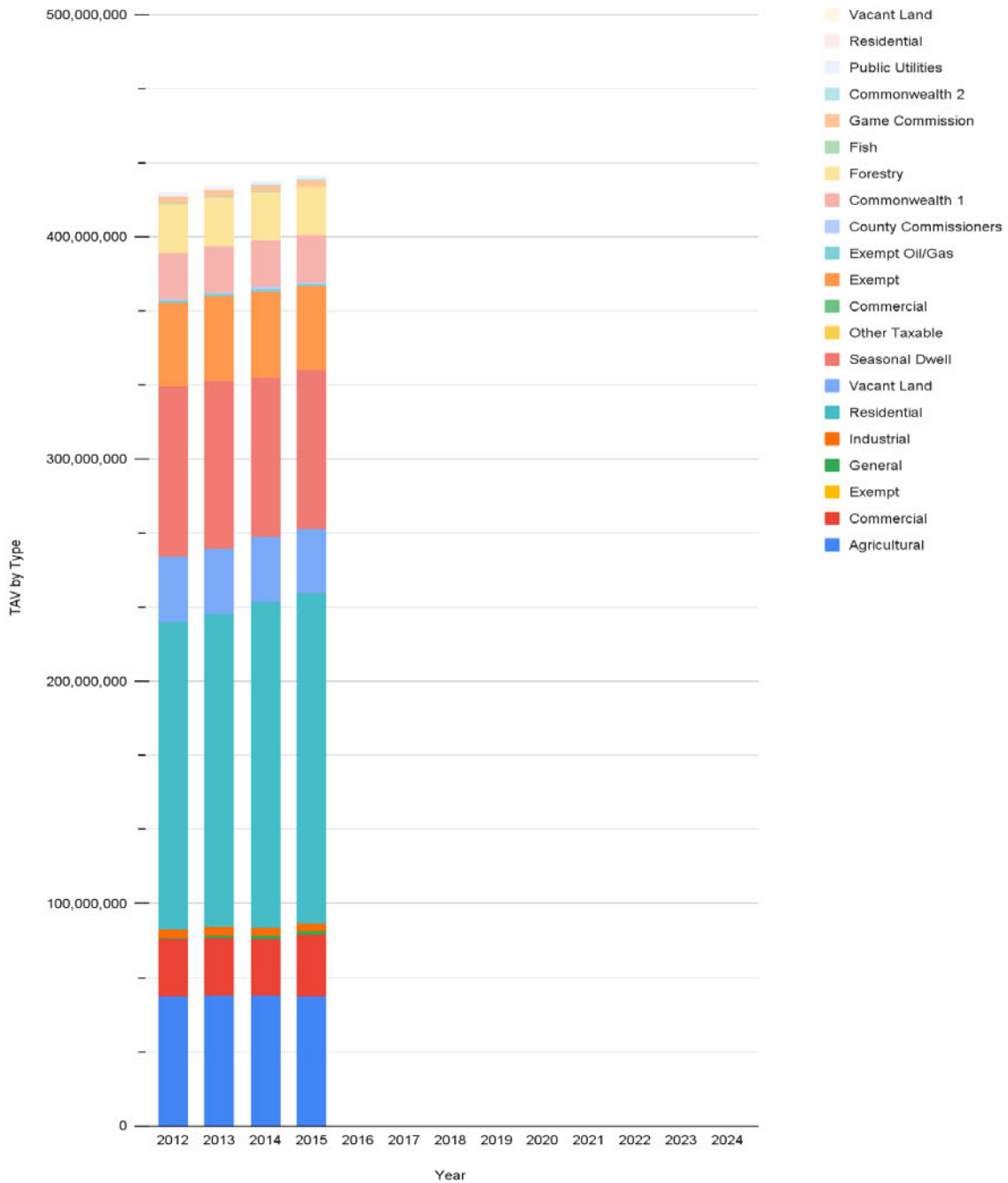
### Assessed Value Mix

The provided assessment data covers the period from 2012 to 2015, with no detailed breakdown available for more recent years. However, given the relatively stable nature of assessed values over time, it is reasonable to assume that the proportions among property types have remained largely consistent. Residential housing continues to represent the largest portion of the county's total assessed value and serves as the primary driver of any growth in the tax base.

The breakdown of assessed property types highlights a significant reliance on residential properties, while other categories such as commercial, agricultural, and public utilities contribute comparatively smaller portions. The presence of exempt properties, including state-owned lands and tax-exempt organizations, further impacts the taxable base, limiting the county's ability to generate additional revenue from property taxes.

The county's dependence on residential properties for tax revenue underscores the importance of strategic planning to encourage sustainable development, attract new residents and businesses with industrial/commercial space and housing.

**Total Assessed Value**  
by Type from 2012 to 2024



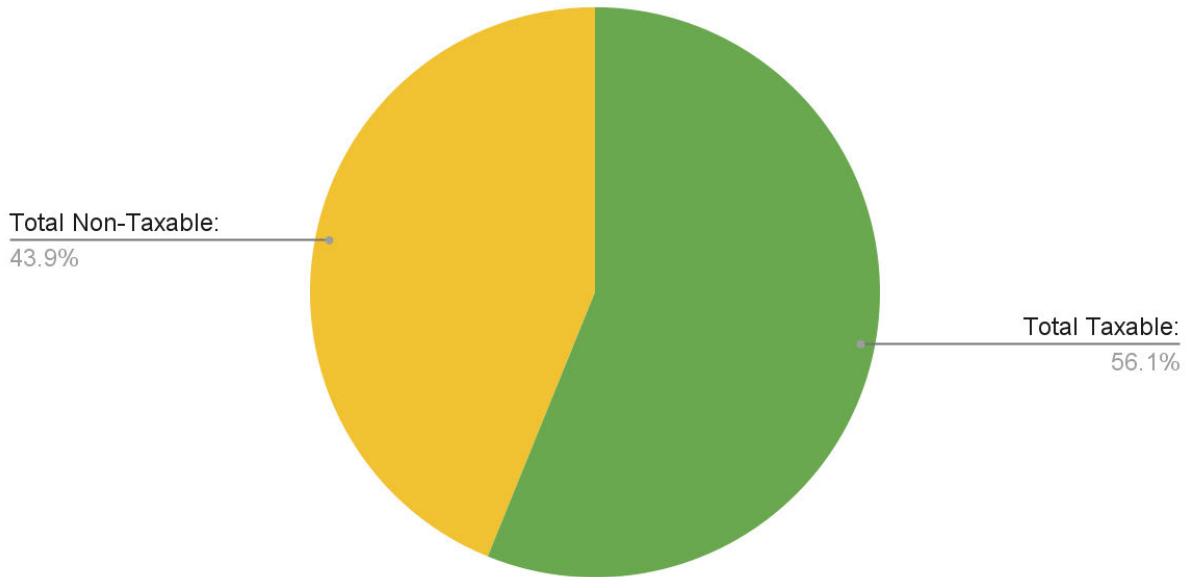
### Acreage Mix

In Potter County, the total assessed acreage amounts to 1,337,732 acres. Including subsurface Oil and Gas acreage, a significant majority of 950,510 acres (71%) are non-

taxable, while only 387,221 (29%) acres are taxable for 2023. Excluding Oil and Gas acreage see the chart below from 2015 (latest available data). This distribution highlights a substantial portion of the county's land being exempt from property taxes, which can impact the county's revenue generation capacity. There are 20,115 parcels in the county.

### Total Taxable Versus Non-Taxable Acres

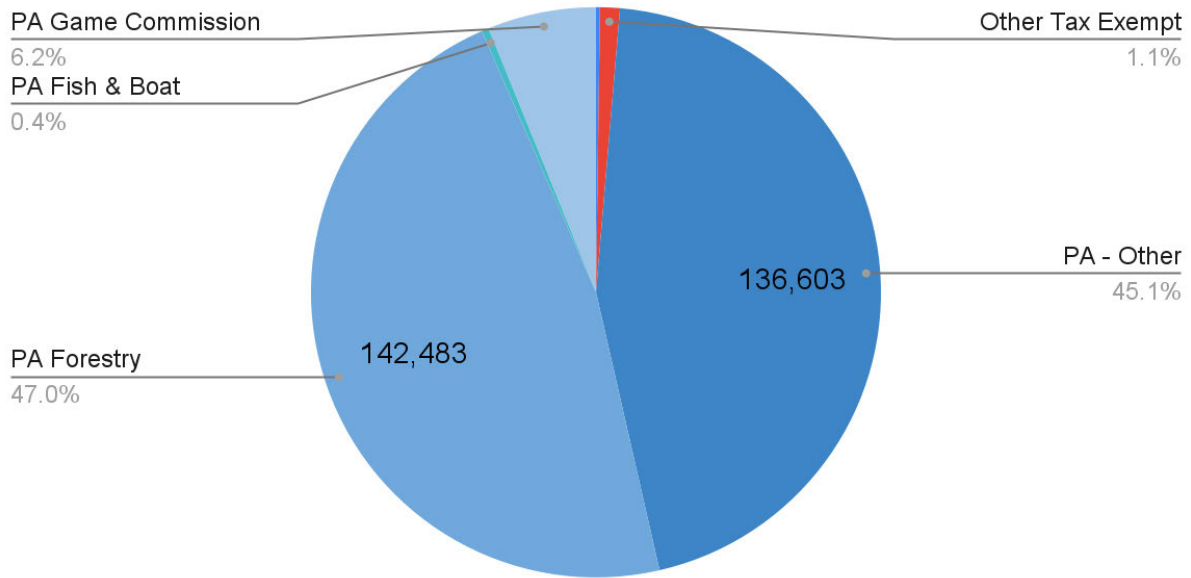
2015 Potter County Assessment Data (Excluding Mineral Acres)



44% of the county is owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which certainly drives tourism but is of concern for the long term financial health of the county. This high proportion of non-taxable land limits development and thus the potential tax base. Additionally, the relatively small commercial and industrial sectors suggest potential areas for economic development initiatives to broaden the tax base and enhance revenue.

### Non-Taxable Acres

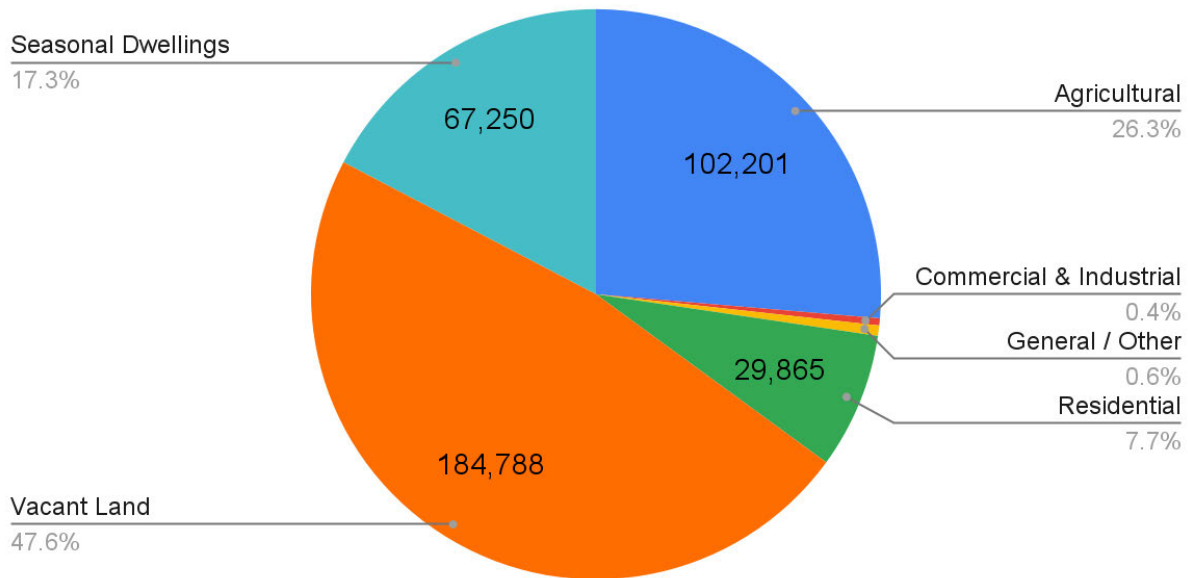
2015 Potter County Assessment Data



Of taxable acreage, undeveloped land is by far the largest category, making up almost half of all privately owned property, followed by about a quarter dedicated to agriculture, 17% toward seasonal dwellings, and less than 10% for residential. Less than half a percent of the acreage is used for commercial purposes, only 160 acres for industrial use, and .6% for all “other” reasons.

## Taxable Acres

2015 Potter County Assessment Data



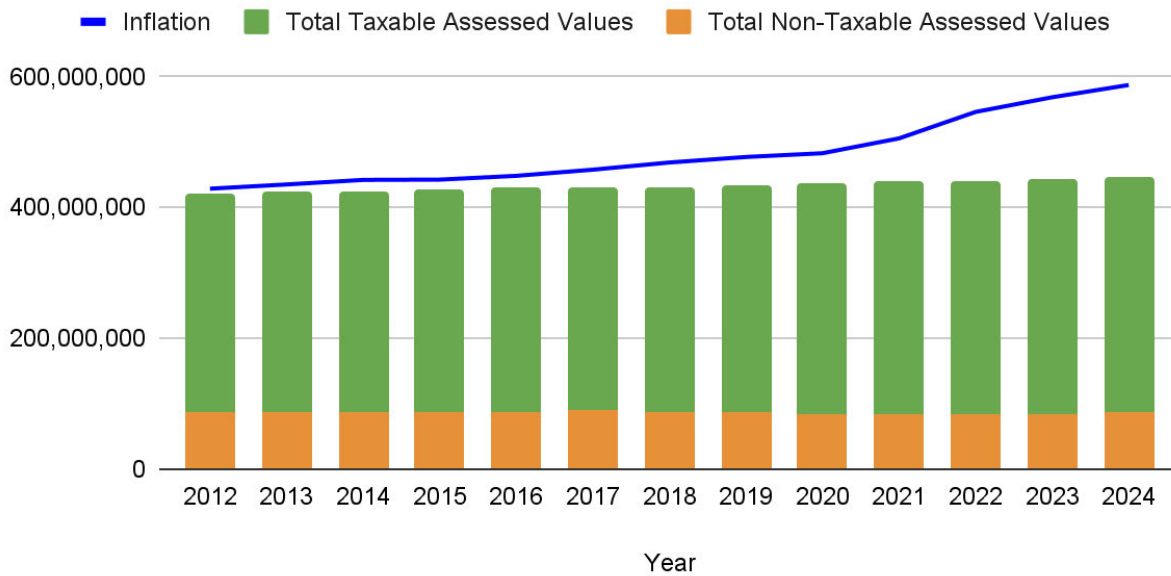
### Assessed Value Versus Inflation

The assessment data for Potter County from 2012 to 2024 reveals the trends in both taxable and non-taxable assessed property values. The total non-taxable assessed values have shown a general decrease over the years, starting from \$87,489,930 in 2012 to \$86,346,098 in 2024. On the other hand, the total taxable assessed values have steadily but modestly increased from \$332,422,748 in 2012 to \$361,344,398 in 2024. This data is critical for understanding the financial health and revenue potential of the county as it directly impacts property tax revenue.

Despite the increase in taxable property values, the cumulative growth rate over this period is approximately 8.4%. When comparing this growth to the inflation rate, which has been about 32.1% over the same period, it becomes evident that property values have not kept pace with inflation. This disparity indicates that while taxable property values have increased, they have not grown sufficiently to maintain the same buying power. Consequently, the revenue generated from property taxes has diminished in real terms, affecting the county's ability to fund services and infrastructure effectively.

## Total Assessed Value Versus Inflation

2012 - 2024 with Linear Trendlines



## Millage Rates Versus Inflation

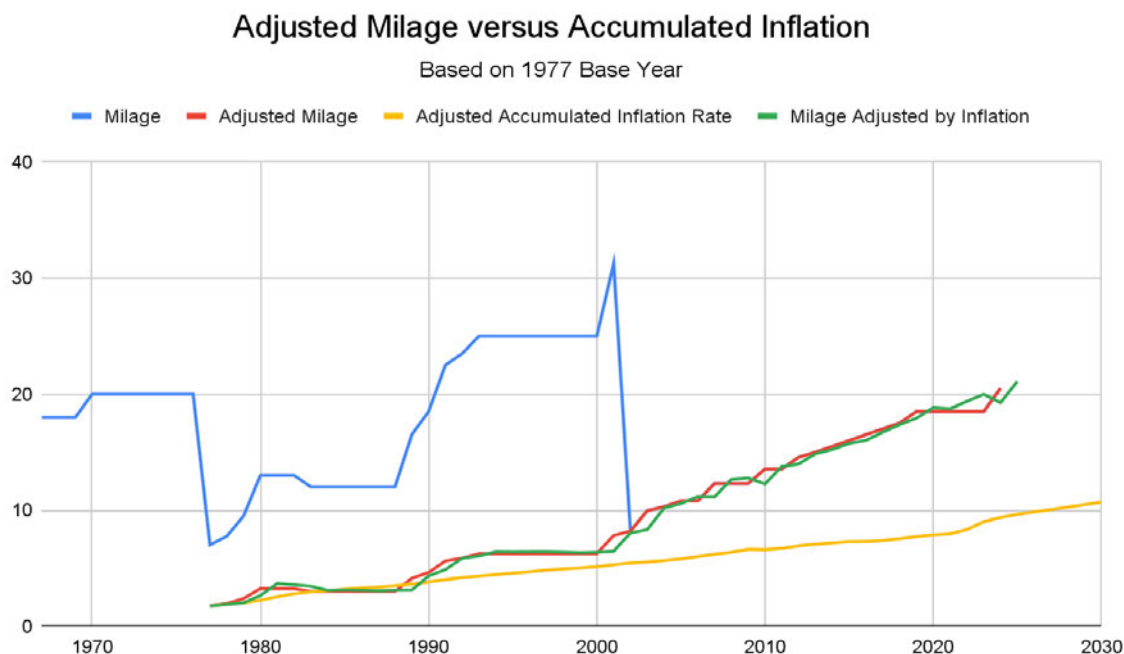
Potter County's property tax base year is 1977, which remains in place today and is one of the oldest assessments in the Commonwealth. Over the past five decades, the county's adjusted millage rate has largely tracked inflation. However, in recent years, commissioners did not adjust the millage rate in line with inflation, leading to a decline in the purchasing power of each mill over time.

Following the 1977 reassessment, the millage rate was initially set at 7 mills based on 25% assessed property values. Between 1993 and 2000, the county reached its statutory cap of 25 mills, necessitating a presumed court order to raise property taxes to 31.5 mills in 2001. However, in that same year, the county shifted from a 25% assessed value to a 100% assessed value system, which resulted in a significant drop in the required millage rate to 8.2 mills.

To provide historical context, the blue line on the accompanying graph represents the raw millage rate, while the red line adjusts past values to reflect a 100% assessment rate for comparison. The green line projects what the 1977 millage rate would be if it had increased at the same rate as inflation.

The data suggests that, over time, the county has consistently increased the millage rate in line with inflation until recently. However, given the stagnant assessed values

that have not kept pace with inflation, the county is forced to rely on higher millage rates to generate necessary revenue. Without reassessment to reflect actual property values, the county is left with limited options to address rising costs aside from continuing to raise millage rates. Moving forward, strategic planning efforts should consider reassessment as a tool to ensure a more equitable and sustainable revenue structure.



## Expense

While revenue sources for Potter County are relatively straightforward and consistent, expenses present a more complex and variable picture. The county’s expenditure patterns are influenced by a variety of factors, including mandated services, personnel costs, and operational demands that can fluctuate year to year. Unlike revenues, which are largely predictable due to stable sources such as property taxes and state reimbursements, expenditures are subject to greater uncertainty. Changes in service demand, rising healthcare and pension costs, unexpected infrastructure needs, and external economic factors all contribute to variability in spending. Additionally, the county’s budgeting process lacks a comprehensive system for tracking and forecasting expenses, leading to challenges in aligning spending with financial goals. Departments operate with varying levels of financial oversight, and inconsistencies in how costs are categorized and tracked make it difficult to perform meaningful multi-year analysis. Addressing these challenges will require the implementation of more robust financial

management practices, including improved expense tracking, clearer cost allocation, and long-term planning to ensure fiscal sustainability.

## General Fund Expenses

The county has seen significant increases in expenses. ARPA floated a lot of expenses in the last few years but the fund is exhausted. Again, the 2020 conversion output poor data and cannot be trusted.



# Retirement Fund

## Introduction

The Potter County Employees Retirement Fund provides a pension benefit that is required by state law, and which is a valuable incentive for attracting and retaining quality personnel.

County pension funds within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are governed by Act 96 of 1971 – also known as “The County Pension Law”. The Act establishes a comprehensive framework for the creation, maintenance, and administration of pension funds for county employees. It outlines the responsibilities of counties, the eligibility criteria for employees, the management of funds, and the distribution of benefits. The Act ensures that all counties provide secure retirement benefits to participants while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Notably, the County assumes all investment risk while providing a defined benefit that is essentially guaranteed to its eligible participants. It is because of this assumption of risk, and the subsequent cost of the guarantee, that pensions have become increasingly rare. According to the United States Senate – Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, as of 2024, nearly 30% of the American workforce had a pension in 1975; today the number has fallen to just 13.5%. Cost is the primary reason for this decline.

As this section of the study will discuss, the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund has been responsibly administered, is relatively healthy with respect to its funding, and can be preserved as a sustainable benefit so long as it remains prudently managed. However, multiple data points do indicate fundamental changes or trends that have emerged – most significantly, concerning the Fund’s demographics – which the County should discuss and consider with respect to its strategic planning.

Public pension funds derive their assets from three sources:

- 1) Employer Contributions
- 2) Employee Contributions
- 3) Investment Returns

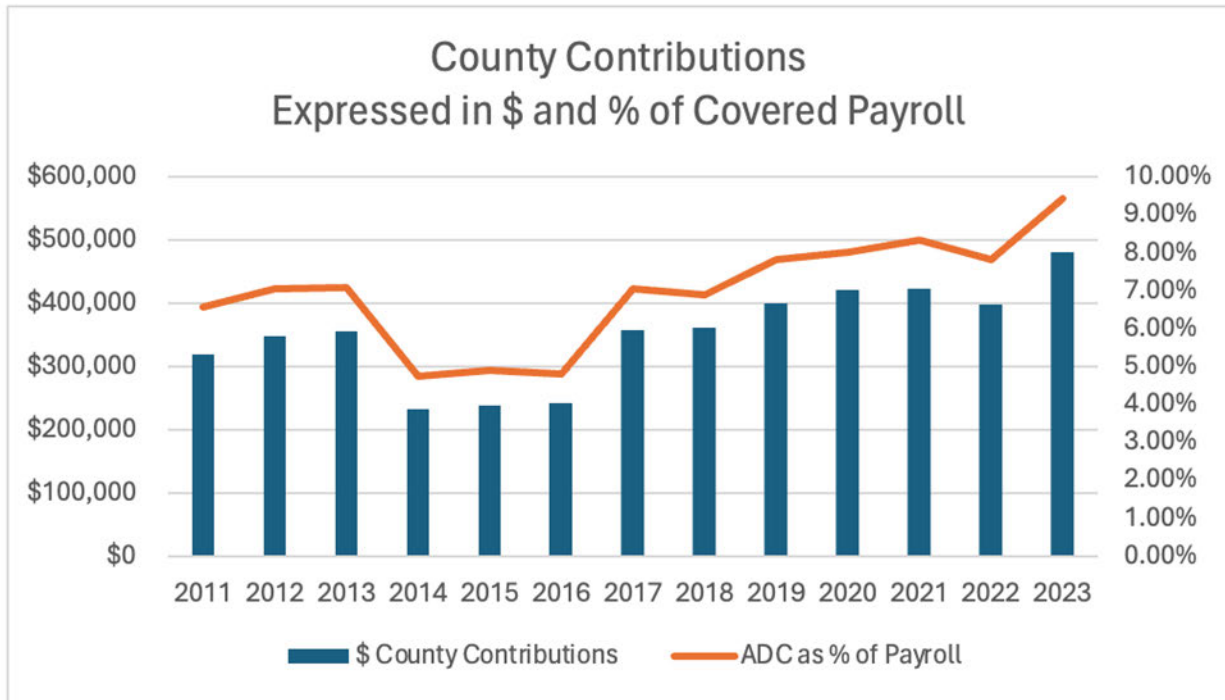
Public pension costs and liabilities – in contrast to the preceding which can be highly variable – are defined in accordance with applicable pension formulas.

If any one source of assets declines, relative to defined costs and liabilities, that decline must be made up for by another source.

The County can control Employer Contributions but has limited control over Employee Contributions. The County can also control its Investment Return Assumption, which it should strive to align with the long-term rate of return that can be reliably achieved by the plans investment portfolio (which will always be subject to market volatility). Accordingly, Employer Contributions and Investment Return Assumptions are two key areas of focus in strategic discussion.

### Assessing Financial Health of the County Retirement Fund

Careful management of the County Retirement Fund is essential to ensuring availability of the County’s financial resources to maintain and/or advance its other priorities. “Although taxpayer contributions to state pension plans have nearly doubled as a share of state revenue over the past decade, the plans still face a more than \$1 trillion shortfall. If these benefits aren’t sustainably funded, the cost of paying for them could hinder states’ ability to fund core government services such as schools, public safety, and infrastructure.”<sup>1</sup>



No government – state or local – desires to spend an increasingly large percentage of its budget on accrued liabilities. In the context of pension funds, much of this risk may

<sup>1</sup> NASRA Issue Brief: Public Pension Plan Investment Return Assumptions  
<https://www.nasra.org/files/Issue%20Briefs/NASRAInvReturnAssumptBrief.pdf>

be mitigated by maintaining a high Funding Ratio through a combination of the County's commitment to fully funding its ADC each year and by having long-term alignment between the Fund's Assumed Rate of Return and the actual performance of its investments.

## Funding Ratio

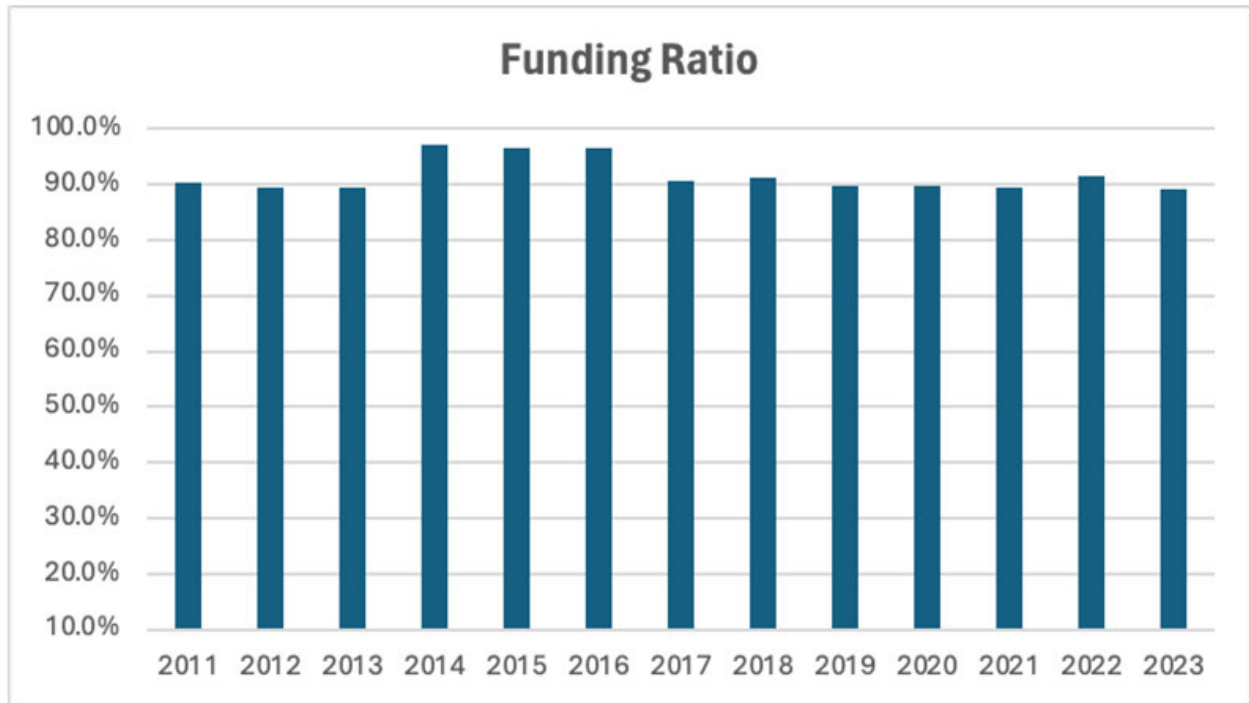
Funding Ratio is a measure of Actuarial Value of Fund Assets divided by the Actuarial Value of Fund Liabilities. It is one of the most widely referenced measures of a pension system's health – and for good reason. If the present value of a fund's obligations is significantly greater than the value of its assets, a large amount of ground will need to be made up via some combination of investment returns and contributions.

Key variables in determining Funding Ratio include:

- Value of Pension Fund Assets
- Value of Pension Fund Liabilities
- Assumed Rate of Return (Discount Rate)
- Mortality (Average Life Expectancy)
- Wage Growth Assumption
- Inflation Assumption
- Interest Rate Paid on Member Contributions

## History – Funding Ratio of the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund

The following chart illustrates the historical Funding Ratio of the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund. Data is for the period 2011-2023, sourced from the Hay Group / Korn Ferry actuarial reports provided.



When a retirement plan’s funding ratio is equal or greater than 100%, that plan is considered “fully funded”. At such a level, the retirement plan’s investment returns should theoretically be sufficient to cover its obligations – so long as they meet or exceed the return assumption, without requiring additional contributions beyond the Normal Cost.

Observations

Since 2011, the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund’s highest reported Funding Ratio was 97.0% (2014). The lowest Funding Ratio was 89.2% (2023). This is generally quite positive data for a pension fund.

For context, according to Milliman, the estimated funding ratio of the 100 largest public pension funds in the U.S. is 79.2%, as of March 31, 2024. In Pennsylvania, the City of Philadelphia Board of Pensions and Retirement just reported a funding ratio of 61.9% (March 2024).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Milliman – Public Pension Funding Index April 2024  
<https://www.milliman.com/en/insight/public-pension-funding-index-april-2024>

However, it is important to note that Funding Ratio is dependent upon the assumptions used to calculate it and some care should be taken to seek out “apples-to-apples” comparisons.

One of the most significant assumptions in calculating Funding Ratio is the interest rate assumption (aka Return Assumption). All else constant, a plan that assumes a higher rate of return will be earned on its investments will appear to have a higher Funding Ratio vs. an identical plan that assumes a lower rate of return will be earned on investments.

The Milliman study notes a median interest rate assumption of 7.0%, which is lower and more conservative than the County’s current assumption of 7.5%.

If the County were to estimate its Actuarial Accrued Liabilities using a more conservative 7.0% interest rate assumption, its Funding Ratio would be lower than the 89.2% value from the most recent report.

The County’s actuary, Korn Ferry, could provide a forecast of what the Funding Ratio would change to if different assumptions (e.g. 7.25% or 7.00%) were used, which is a recommendation the County may wish to consider. Reasons for this recommendation are discussed below.

## Demographic Sustainability

When most U.S. pension funds were created, many decades ago, there were more active employees (paying into funds) than retirees (drawing payments from funds).

For example, when the Potter County Retirement Fund was created (circa 1950) the ratio, nationally for pension funds, was approximately 7 active employees per 1 retiree. The cash flow into a pension from 7 active employees (making contributions) would be sufficient to not only cover the payment of benefits to 1 retiree but would also result in a surplus of cash flow into the retirement fund which could then be invested to compound over long periods of time.

The current ratio of active employees to retirees across U.S. public pension funds has been steadily declining. Recent data shows, according to Milliman, the ratio is approximately 1.25 active employees for every retiree. This decline reflects the broader trend of an aging U.S. population, where the number of retirees is increasing faster than the number of active workers contributing to these pension systems. This ratio has significant implications for the financial health and sustainability of public pension funds, as it affects the balance between incoming contributions and outgoing benefits.

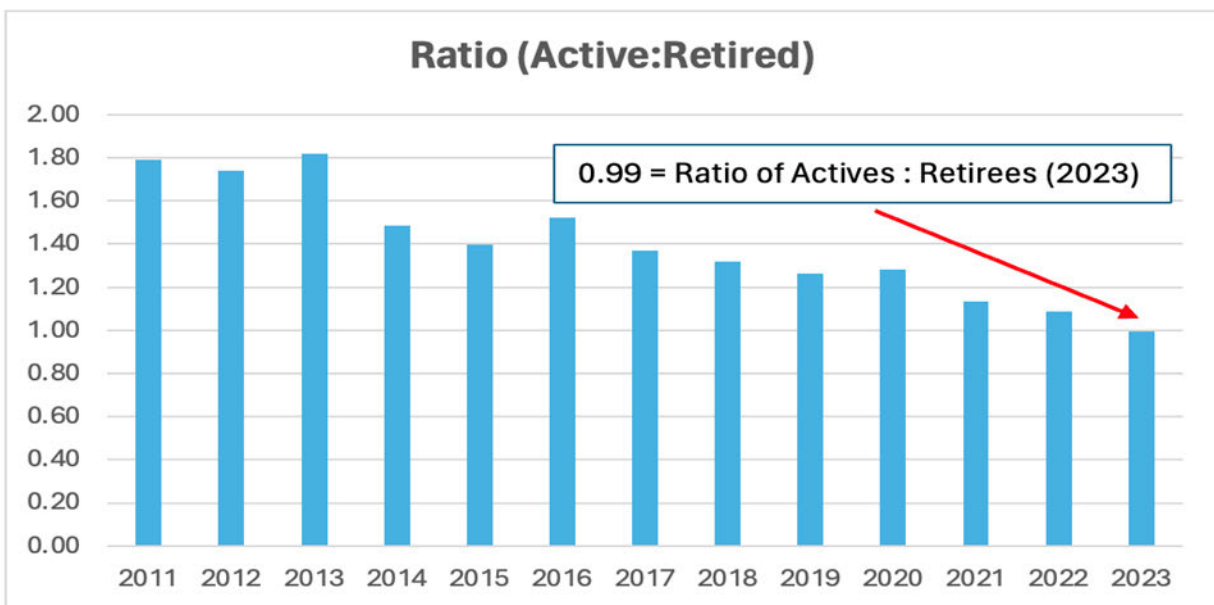
The County Retirement Fund’s ratio of actives to retirees is 0.99, indicating the Fund is demographically older than the national average, as of the most recent actuarial report prepared by Korn Ferry, but still younger than local government averages for Pennsylvania overall.

### Ratio of Actives to Retirees

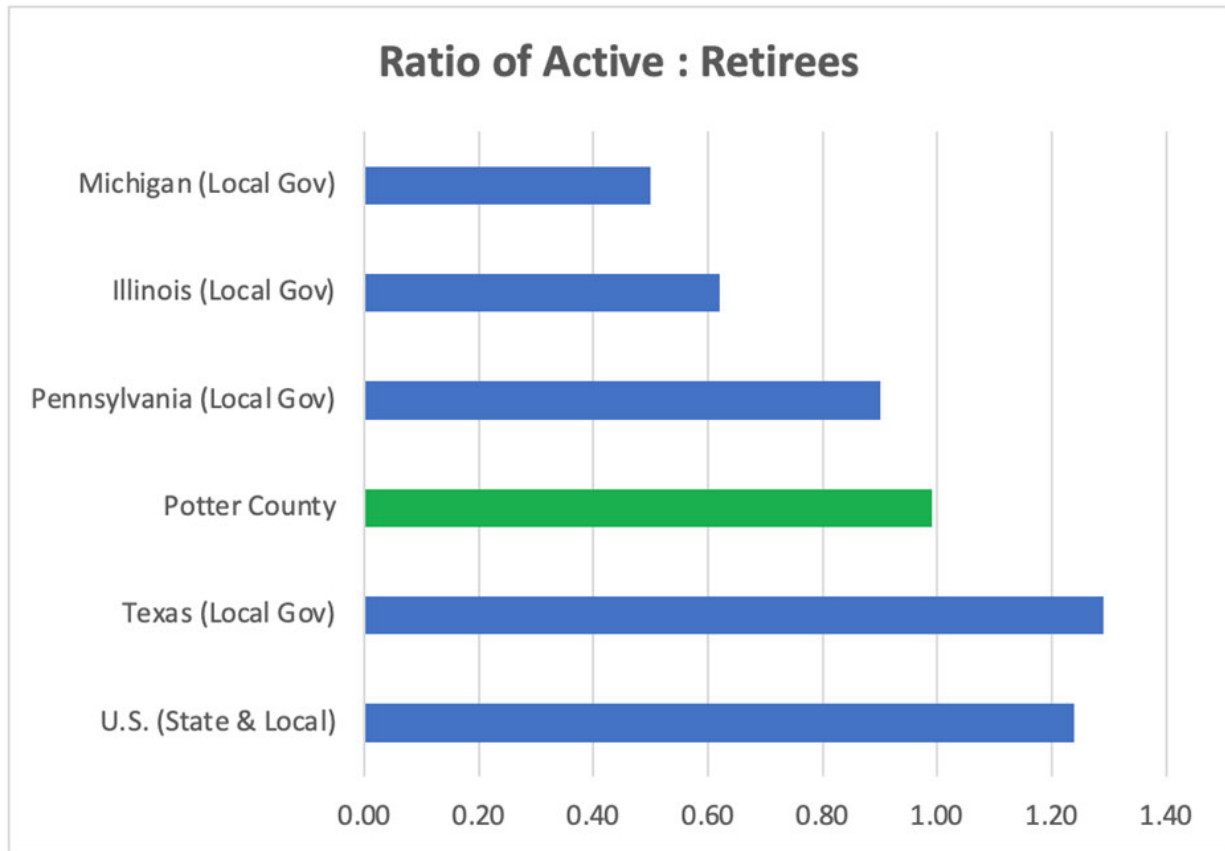
The population of the United States and most developed countries is aging, as is the case in Pennsylvania and in the majority of its counties, including Potter County.

This is not without consequences and is an important fact which the County should consider incorporating into multiple aspects of its long-term strategic planning.

Regarding pension matters, the following chart illustrates the historical Ratio of Active : Retired employees within the Potter County Retirement Fund. Data is for the period 2011-2023, sourced from the actuarial reports provided.



With a ratio of 0.99 Actives : Retirees, the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund is – for the first time in its recorded history – demographically “upside-down”. This is important for County leadership to understand, discuss, and consider in its long-term planning – though not uncommon.



As shown in the chart above, while not as “old” demographically as some public pension funds, including those in Rust Belt states such as Michigan and Illinois or even compared to other local government funds in Pennsylvania, the Potter County Employees Retirement System is no longer “young” relative to the national average for state & local governments.

More Retirees are drawing benefits from the Fund than the number of Active employees making contributions, resulting in recurring negative cash flows. For example, Schedule H of the Report on 2023 Actuarial Valuation, prepared by Korn Ferry, details \$1,440,264 of payments for Benefits and Expenses Paid During Year versus \$902,558 in Contributions Received During Year, a cash flow deficit of \$537,706 before considering investments.

This contribution dynamic is also not uncommon among public pension funds. However, it is also not advantageous to the County from a fiscal standpoint or to its investment management.

For example, consider two pension funds: Fund A and Fund B.

Fund A has a net \$500,000 added through contributions each year, because it has many Active employees and few Retirees. Fund B has a net \$500,000 subtracted each year, because it has few Actives and many Retirees whom it is obligated to pay.

Presume that financial markets have a bad year. Both pension funds suffer a \$400,000 loss.

Fund A does not have to sell any of its assets to pay Retirees – it has enough inflows from Active employee contributions to cover all outflows. Fund B, unfortunately, must raise \$500,000 from somewhere to pay Retiree benefits and will likely be forced to sell some of its investments at a loss.

All else constant, an investor is at a disadvantage if it must sell assets at a time other than one of its own choosing. This is a difficult challenge facing the County and its investment management as its Fund demographics continue on this trend.

### Return Assumptions

One of the most significant decisions within the County's control regarding its Retirement Fund and its long-term implications, on both future budgeting and overall fiscal health of the County, is the Return Assumption selected for the Fund.

Unlike private or corporate pension funds, which have minimal control over their Return Assumptions, public pension funds, including the Potter County Employees Retirement System, maintain the ability to choose the assumed rate of return upon which their Employer Contributions are determined.

For decades, the Fund has utilized a 7.5% Return Assumption. As shown in the graphic below, this 7.5% Return Assumption would have been considered among the most conservative during the period from about 2001-2010 but is now among the most aggressive.

There are a number of reasons that have caused public pension funds to shift to more conservative Return Assumptions, but the most commonly cited have been:

- Historically Low Interest Rates
  - o Historically low interest rates in the wake of the Great Recession, driven by the Federal Reserve's unprecedented rate cuts and quantitative easing, reduced the rate of return investors could expect to receive for most fixed income investments (i.e. bond portfolios, CD's, etc.)
- Aging Pension Fund Demographics

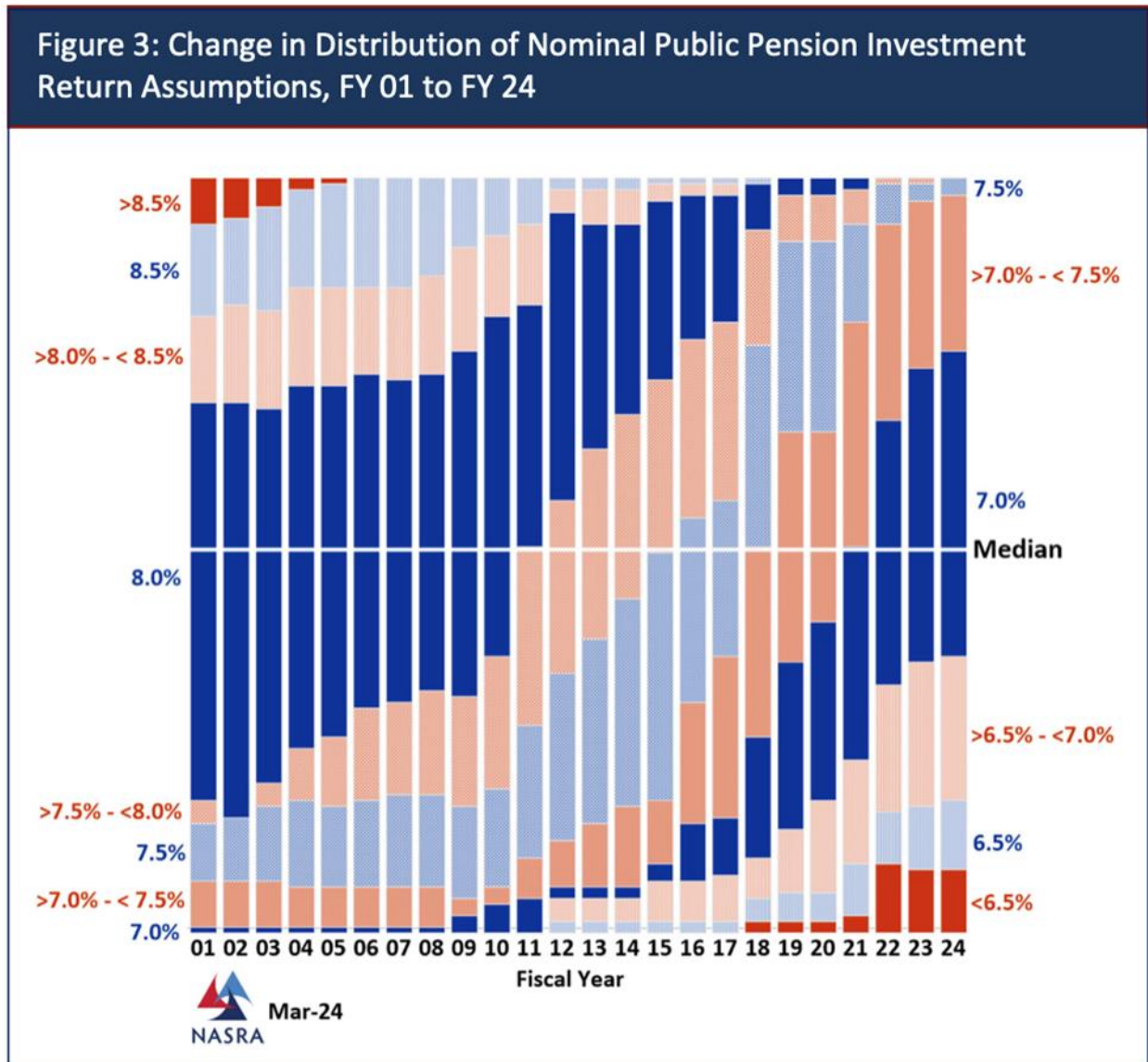
o As many funds have seen their Ratio of Active : Retirees decline toward 1.0 or below, they have had to contend with reduced control regarding the sale of fund assets to cover the cost of outflows for plan benefits. This new dynamic has led many plans to seek out less volatile and more conservative asset allocations.

o Although most pension funds are considered to have a perpetual time horizon, in cases where Retirees outnumber Actives, an investment dynamic exists that can be similar to that which occurs in personal finance.

§ For example, a younger investor who is many years away from retirement can accept a riskier asset allocation, and plan around a correspondingly higher rate of return, because they will not need to sell investments for a long period of time. They could have a portfolio of 80% stocks vs. 20% bonds and – should stocks decline in value, the young investor can wait for the market to recover.

§ Conversely, an older investor who is on the eve of retirement – or already retired – does not assume many years of surplus income going into their investment account, with no outflows coming out. This older investor may desire a less risky asset allocation to reduce the chance of being forced to sell assets at a loss. They might have a portfolio of 60% stocks vs. 40% bonds.

§ Critically, if their asset allocations are different, the younger and older investor would be expected to have different assumed rates of return for their portfolios. The more aggressive asset allocation could support a higher expected rate of return. The more conservative asset allocation would warrant a lower expected rate of return.



Investment Performance vs. Actuarial Return Assumption

Has the retirement fund’s rate of return exceeded its actuarial assumed rate of return? For the 10-year period ended 12/31/23, the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund generated a 6.13% annualized rate of return. The Fund’s blended benchmark return averaged 7.11% annualized. Both rates are below the 7.5% assumed rate of return used for actuarial projections and calculation of the County’s contributions.

Reviewing older data, for the 10-year period ended 12/31/2013, the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund generated a 6.78% annualized rate of return. The Fund’s blended benchmark return averaged 6.65% annualized. Both rates are below the 7.5%

assumed rate of return used for actuarial projections and calculation of the County's contributions.

The foregoing is significant and implies the following questions:

- Is the County's 7.5% assumed rate of return too aggressive to achieve?
- Is the Fund's asset allocation not aggressive enough?
- If the County wishes to maintain a 7.5% assumed rate of return, is the County comfortable taking a higher level of risk?

If the fund maintains a target of 7.5% and that target is greater than the return that will be generated over the next 10 years, the cost will be absorbed by the County in the form of Employer Contributions.

### Benefit Level – Class

Act 96 permits counties to grant a pension benefit across a range of Classes or pension multipliers. Each employee member of the pension plan is required to contribute a minimum percentage of salary to the pension fund via payroll deduction. The Classes and minimum contribution percentages are as follows:

Class 1/120	5%
Class 1/100	6%
Class 1/80	7%
Class 1/70	8%
Class 1/60	9%
Class 1/50	9%
Class 1/40	9%

The Potter County Employees Retirement Fund has long maintained benefits at the Class 1/80 level, which is a more conservative and less costly benefit than most Pennsylvania counties, the majority of which provide a Class 1/70 benefit or Class 1/60.

### Authorized Rate of Interest to Credit to Member Accounts

Act 96 requires the County to pay a guaranteed level of interest on Member Contributions held within the Members Annuity Reserve portion of the County Retirement Fund. The level of interest paid on these employee contributions must range between 4.0% and 5.5%. The Retirement Board controls this rate and may change it.

The current rate of 5.5% is reasonable, given the alternate options available to employees via banks, money market mutual funds, and government bonds.

## Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA's)

The Retirement Board may, from time to time, but is not required to, grant a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (aka COLA) to retirees, increasing the pension annuity which they receive.

Granting a COLA will increase cost to the County.

For states and local governments, rising inflation can affect retirement system benefits, funding levels, and costs. In particular, increases to inflation can erode the purchasing power of benefits over time, making it harder for retirees to maintain a given standard of living.

Under Act 96, Pennsylvania county retirement funds are not required to grant COLA's.

## Contribution History

Committing to responsibly funding pension obligations is an area where Potter County has excelled, making 100% of the actuarial recommended contribution for all years covered in this report.

There are many examples of other local and even state governments that have not done the same, generally to their long-term fiscal detriment.

It is sound fiscal practice for the County to continue making 100% of all Actuarially Determined Contributions or greater.

## Providers

The County Retirement Fund is served by three long-tenured and credible providers, each with positive reputations and decades of experience serving public pension funds within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

### Korn Ferry

An internationally established consulting firm, with multiple businesses, Korn Ferry was founded in 1969 in Los Angeles, California and employs a team of over 8,000, with 111 offices in 53 countries. In 2015, Korn Ferry acquired Hay Group, the Philadelphia-based longtime actuary for the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund. Continuity has been maintained, with the same personnel serving the County for well over a decade.

## Wells Fargo (Principal)

Founded in 1852, Wells Fargo is one of the largest financial institutions in the world and offers a wide range of banking and related services. As the custodian of the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund, it is responsible for safe keeping of the Fund's assets. The County's current structure – which separates the custodian function from the Fund's investment advisory function is prudent, as it provides an important check & balance that requires ongoing data reconciliation between the respective providers.

## C.S. McKee

Founded in 1931, C.S. McKee is a registered investment advisor (RIA) regulated by the SEC under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, and is a legal fiduciary to the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund. The firm specializes in serving institutional investors, such as public pension funds, which make up the majority of its client base. McKee does not custody the Fund's assets, but manages its portfolios by directing trades, which are then reflected in the Fund's ledger at its custodian bank.

## Pension Conclusions

Based on the data, the Potter County Employees Retirement Fund's demographics have undeniably changed, creating new challenges, and the fund has struggled over the past two decades, to exceed its actuarial assumed rate of return.

The County may elect to maintain its current investment return assumption, which will preserve a greater level of budget flexibility in the near-term but should be aware that its current Funding Ratio assumes which, while conservative two decades ago, has since become aggressive relative to many other public pension sponsors.

The Fund does retain high quality and reputable providers for its actuarial, custodial, and investment services, which is a strength with respect to strategic planning. Care should be taken to ensure continuation of the checks and balances inherent in an unbundled structure, where each provider is completely independent from the others. That said, the ten-year return was below the actuarial target.

## Current Financial Condition

To put a finer point on it, a decreasing population doesn't necessarily translate into decreased services or costs for a local government. This is primarily due to the need for maintaining baseline staffing and infrastructure, which represent fixed costs. Fixed

costs, such as salaries for essential personnel, maintenance of public facilities, and administrative overhead, remain constant regardless of population changes.

In economic terms, while a reduction in population may lead to a decrease in variable costs—those costs that fluctuate with service demand, such as utilities, consumables, and some types of direct public services—this does not necessarily result in a proportional decrease in total costs. Total costs are the sum of fixed and variable costs, and because fixed costs comprise a significant portion of a municipality's budget, they anchor the total expenditure at a relatively high level even as the population declines.

Moreover, economies of scale, which benefit larger populations by spreading fixed costs over a larger number of residents, are reduced or lost in the context of a shrinking population. This can lead to a higher per capita cost of services, putting additional financial strain on the remaining residents and the local government's budget.

When the population decreases, variable costs typically decrease proportionally, but fixed costs remain constant. Total costs are the sum of fixed and variable costs, so even if variable costs decrease, total costs do not decrease proportionally because of the fixed costs. For example, if fixed costs are \$100,000 and variable costs are \$50,000, with a 20% population decrease, variable costs might decrease to \$40,000, making the new total cost \$140,000. This shows that a 20% reduction in variable costs only results in a 6.7% reduction in total costs, demonstrating that fixed costs limit the impact of decreasing variable costs on total expenditures.

In summary, the relationship between population size and municipal costs is complex, as fixed costs remain unaffected by population decreases, leading to a situation where reductions in variable costs do not significantly impact total costs. This underscores the importance of strategic planning and efficient resource management in local government operations.

### Step 1 Recommendations

In light of these concerns, there are many recommendations that come out of the Step 1 & 2 reviews. These include the following in no particular order:

1. **Enhance Financial Reporting:** The fiscal director should provide the Commissioners with comprehensive financial reports, including outstanding checks, to enable informed decision-making. A thorough understanding of each fund's purpose, funding sources, and allowable uses is essential for accurate reporting.

2. **Implement Pooled Cash Strategy:** The county should adopt a pooled cash management strategy and reduce the number of bank accounts to optimize interest earnings.
3. **Consider PLIGT or Similar:** Explore joining the Pennsylvania Local Government Investment Trust (PLIGT) or a similar cash management trust to maximize interest rates on investments.
4. **Timely Financial Reporting:** The administrative team must provide the commissioners with regular and timely financial reports to facilitate effective decision-making.
5. **Integrate All Funds into Accounting System:** Ensure that all funds, including Tax Claim, inmate commissary, sheriff's funds, and any other unaccounted funds, are properly integrated into the county's accounting system.
6. **Move Human Services Under County EIN:** Transition Human Services operations under the County Employer Identification Number (EIN) and enhance collaboration between departments.
7. **Utilize Financial Software for Reconciliation:** Reconcile bank accounts using the financial software instead of relying on manual paper-based processes to improve accuracy and efficiency.
8. **Expedite Human Services Software Migration:** Prioritize the migration of Human Services operations to the SmartFusion software system.
9. **Strengthen Fiscal Director's Role:** The Fiscal Director should play a more active and integral role in the budget process, providing expertise and guidance.
10. **Regular Fiscal Reporting at Board Meetings:** The Fiscal Director should present regular financial updates at board meetings to ensure transparency and accountability.
11. **Itemized Approval of AP Run:** Implement a process for itemized approval of accounts payable runs to enhance control and oversight.

12. **Write Desk Manual:** Write a fiscal desk manual that explains how all the funds interact, how the chart of accounts is structured to spread knowledge beyond Fiscal.
13. **Energy Savings Initiatives:** Explore energy-saving measures, such as adjusting temperature settings during shoulder months and competitively bidding energy contracts to reduce costs.
14. **Clean Up Chart of Accounts:** The Chart of Accounts is not utilized consistently and has several non-departments reported as departments. There are many inactive, underutilized or overutilized accounts which should be cleaned up.
15. **Use of Accounts Consistently:** Inconsistent use of accounts leads to booking inconsistencies, hindering accurate year-over-year analysis. Develop a Chart of Accounts document that provides clear and standardized account descriptions.
16. **Build a Capital Improvement Plan:** The County should build and maintain a multi-year capital improvement plan with corresponding reserves and savings to pay for said improvements on a planned schedule.
17. **Raise Mills:** Recognizing revenue projects have been unmet, increase the millage rate in line with inflation to make up for lost time.
18. **Consolidate Debt:** Consider taking out a bond to cover future capital needs and use special-purpose millage to cover it.
19. **Utilize Budget Publication Software:** For transparency with the public and departments, consider using a comprehensive budgeting software package that APIs to existing accounting system to publish budgets and real-time spending on the County's website.
20. **Reduce the Actuarial Target:** The actuarial assumption is too high.
21. **Use Results-Based Budgeting:** Try using a results or performance-based budgeting model.

## Management Review

Step 3 of the is the management audit, a critical phase that builds upon the financial assessment and trend analysis conducted in the earlier steps. The primary objective of the management audit is to evaluate the operational efficiency, effectiveness, and overall performance of each department within Potter County. This audit goes beyond financial metrics to assess how well resources are being utilized, identify any operational bottlenecks, and explore opportunities for improvement.

During this step, comprehensive meetings were held with department heads and key stakeholders to gather insights into each department's current status, challenges, and aspirations. These discussions provided valuable context and qualitative data, which, combined with the quantitative financial analysis from Steps 1 and 2, allowed for a holistic understanding of departmental operations.

The management audit focuses on identifying both strengths and areas needing improvement within each department. It examines workflows, staffing levels, resource allocation, and service delivery methods to ensure that each department is aligned with the county's strategic goals. The findings from this audit will inform the development of actionable recommendations and guide the creation of an implementation plan in subsequent steps. By engaging openly with department heads and fostering collaboration, this audit aims to create a foundation for sustainable operational improvements and enhanced public service delivery.

## Cross-Departmental Observations

Generally, there are many small to medium recommendations that come from the departmental management reviews. That said, on the whole, the county is generally in a good place from an operations perspective. The departments are mostly properly staffed, there are not massive liabilities, and most of the capital items have been taken care of. That said, there are several themes and/or cross-departmental observations worth raising independent of the department-specific reviews.

## Departmental Organization Structure

The County is structured into a normal but haphazard array of departments and offices. Much of this can be attributed to the law, but some is within the Commissioners power to control. As a general takeaway, this STMP recommends a more hierarchical structure akin to the following [organizational chart](#).



In this model, or a similar version, the Commissioners would seek to have a manageable span of control of not more than five major departments and perhaps a handful of offices, whereby departments are either large group of employees or a synthesized grouping of offices. Meanwhile, offices serve a specific function and are usually staffed by only a handful of people, whether those offices are elected or appointed.

It is recommended that the Chief Clerk would be responsible for departments that serve the other departments - human resources, finance, information technology, buildings and grounds. In that way, the internal operations of the county government come back to one source of accountability. While it may not be feasible to combine other offices into departments beyond what is already current, that should be the general thrust of the Commissioners when given the opportunity for the sake of span of control and accountability, as well as shared resources and mission. Of course, due to statutory requirements, the elections department would still report to the board of elections and the jail to the prison board.

## Performance Budgeting & Reporting

In the current structure, departmental performance and financial reporting are areas that require significant improvement. Departments in Potter County do not have real-time insights into their financial status, nor do they engage in meaningful follow-up discussions with the county commissioners regarding their operational budgets. This lack of real-time awareness and communication hampers the ability of departments to manage their resources effectively and to align their spending with strategic objectives.

Moreover, the county does not employ results-based budgeting, which, while rare, could significantly enhance how resources are allocated and how performance is measured. There is a lack of synthesized or prioritized projects in coordination with the commissioners, who control the budget. This gap means that while capital projects are generally well-maintained, the process for budgeting these capital items is informal and lacks a structured approach. Furthermore, the absence of a cash flow budget—relying only on cursory analysis—limits the county’s ability to anticipate and manage financial challenges proactively. The financial reports provided to the commissioners are inadequate and do not support informed decision-making, leaving the county at a disadvantage when responding to fiscal issues.

To address these shortcomings, it is recommended that Potter County adopt a comprehensive approach to budgeting. This should include the development of clear policies and procedures that define how budgeting processes work, encompassing cash flow, operational, and capital budgets. Additionally, the county should consider

transitioning to performance-based or results-based budgeting, which would shift the focus from line-item specifics to broader strategic goals. This approach would foster more meaningful conversations about the county's objectives for the year or multiple years, ensuring that financial resources are aligned with strategic priorities.

Furthermore, the financial system needs to be upgraded to generate more meaningful and actionable reports for the commissioners. These reports should be presented at regular meetings where commissioners and financial decision-makers can thoroughly analyze the county's financial health. Regular department head meetings should also be established to provide updates on projects, ensure accountability, and keep departments aligned with their goals. These changes would greatly enhance the county's financial management and ensure that all departments are working towards a common set of objectives.

### Public Reporting & Access

Integrating advanced digital systems into Potter County's website is essential for enhancing transparency, reporting, and accountability to the public. These tools allow residents to easily access important government documents, track budgetary expenditures, and monitor the county's financial health in a user-friendly manner. By making this information publicly available online, the county promotes greater civic engagement and trust, ensuring that government actions are transparent and aligned with community interests. Moreover, such systems streamline internal processes for county officials, enabling more efficient data management and facilitating timely and accurate reporting to the public, ultimately leading to more responsible and effective governance.

### Regular Service Provider Review

Potter County should establish a formal policy and procedure for regularly evaluating its vendors and service providers to ensure optimal performance, cost-effectiveness, and alignment with the county's needs. This policy would include the routine review and potential rebidding of contracts for critical services, such as auditing firms, radio tower maintenance, HVAC systems, and energy and healthcare providers. By periodically considering new vendors, the county can benefit from competitive pricing, improved service quality, and the latest industry advancements. Regularly assessing vendors also mitigates the risk of complacency and encourages providers to maintain high standards. Additionally, the county could expand this evaluation process to include other services such as information technology support, facility management, and transportation services. Implementing this policy would help ensure that Potter County consistently receives the best value and service from its vendors, ultimately contributing to more efficient and effective county operations.

## Energy

Potter County should consider adopting a more strategic approach to its energy procurement process. Currently, the county tends to make annual purchases close to contract expiration, locking in rates all at once. This method can expose the county to market volatility and budget inconsistencies. A more prudent approach would be to implement a laddering strategy, where energy is purchased incrementally over time, spreading the risk and securing rates during the "shoulder months" (spring and fall) when prices are generally more stable. By purchasing energy for several years into the future at different intervals, the county could achieve greater budget consistency and potentially lower costs. This approach allows for more flexibility in responding to market fluctuations and helps ensure that the county remains within its budgetary constraints, providing more predictable and manageable energy expenses over the long term.

## Healthcare & Other Benefits

Potter County's participation in a healthcare [trust pool](#) presents both benefits and challenges that warrant closer scrutiny. While the stability provided by a trust is valuable, it comes with the downside that entities with lower claims, like Po may end up subsidizing those with higher claims, potentially leading to higher costs than if the county were independently insured. Compounding this issue is the trust's lack of transparency, as it currently does not share critical data with the county, making it nearly impossible to conduct meaningful comparisons or assess the plan's performance accurately. This lack of data inhibits the county's ability to make informed decisions about its healthcare strategy.

Given the importance of excellent healthcare benefits in attracting and retaining employees, it is crucial that the county explores cost-cutting measures without compromising on the quality of coverage. This could include increasing employee contributions, but more importantly, conducting a thorough analysis to identify potential savings. The county should also consider bidding out stop-loss coverage to ensure competitive pricing and maintain leverage over incumbents, especially following years of poor risk performance. Additionally, there may be opportunities to secure a more competitive pharmacy contract, which could result in significant savings. Offering supplemental insurance options directly through payroll deductions could add convenience for employees while potentially lowering overall healthcare costs. Finally, exploring the implementation of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) or Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) could provide tax advantages for both the county and its employees, further enhancing the benefits package while controlling costs.

Seubert did as detailed analysis of the healthcare program as possible, given limited data. That report can be found [here](#).

## Staffing & Pay

In general, the county has appropriately adjusted staffing levels. If all positions were filled, no single role would likely be excessively overburdened or underutilized. However, as a general trend and recommendation, the Salary Board should critically evaluate clerical positions that become vacant, considering the rise of technological advancements and budgetary concerns. Instead of automatically refilling these roles, the board should consider consolidating them into more skilled positions or transitioning to contracted services where appropriate.

It is also recommended that the Salary Board formally review and update the list of existing positions to prevent offices from filling long-vacant roles without a thorough evaluation. Implementing a policy and procedure in conjunction with Human Resources would ensure that any vacated positions are assessed for their efficacy, necessity, and structure before being refilled.

Lastly, many positions within Potter County are significantly underpaid compared to market value, leading to high turnover, excessive overtime, extended vacancies, and employee dissatisfaction. The Salary Board currently lacks a comprehensive [compensation philosophy](#) and corresponding pay structure that is both defensible and fair. Therefore, it is recommended that the Salary Board adopt a formal compensation policy and establish a [wage tier system](#) to address these issues and improve employee retention and satisfaction.

## Revitalize Potter County & Public Input

The County Commissioners have commendably worked towards a working group whose mission would be to reverse the aging and depopulation trends - this is called Revitalize Potter County. Stakeholders need to be more regularly coordinated and the county commissioners should use their power to convene to have regular updates with NGOs and authorities, higher levels of government, education etc to have a coordinated and concerted effort to stop brain drain, bring in new employment opportunities, tourism and agriculture etc. The group must consider having a community leadership class for up-and-coming community leaders. They might also consider traveling to places like Kane and Jim Thorpe to glean ideas.

One thing noticeably lacking is funding of such things from donors - the commissioners should facilitate and encourage a philanthropic foundation focused on the county and/or endowment funds. Currently, there is but a small piece of the Community Foundation for the Northern Tier.

Related, the county should be more proactive in regularly informing the public as to what the county, its departments, its agencies, partner organizations etc are doing. The citizenry should have a better sense of the positive things the stakeholders are doing perhaps by having post cards, town halls, public work sessions, etc in addition to concerted online presence.

## Digital Presence

Potter County's digital presence is currently outdated and underutilized, presenting significant opportunities for improvement. The county's website, a critical tool for public communication and engagement, is in need of a comprehensive update. Currently, some divisions, such as Human Services, operate their own separate websites, leading to a fragmented online presence that can be confusing for residents and visitors alike. Additionally, the county's use of social media is minimal, missing out on a vital channel for community interaction and information dissemination.

A modernized website should serve as a central hub for all county information, integrating various components to provide a seamless user experience. For example, the website could incorporate a tourism section that highlights Potter County's unique attractions, filling a gap left by the Tourist Promotion Agency (TPA), which currently lacks Potter County-specific content. Economic development and site selection information should also be prominently featured or linked, guiding businesses and investors to relevant resources.

The website should integrate with software systems, such as financial software for budget transparency, a document management system for public agendas and important documents, and various forms for employment interest, applications, and other public services. A .gov domain has already been reserved but not activated; utilizing this domain would enhance the site's credibility and trustworthiness. Additionally, ensuring ADA compliance is crucial to make the site accessible to all users, including those with disabilities.

To further enhance user experience, the website could incorporate a payment gateway for online transactions, GIS mapping and parcel viewers, and deed records. The addition of a chatbot could assist users in navigating the site, providing quick answers to common questions and guiding them to relevant sections.

Finally, the website should be designed to be slick, easy to use, and integrated with tools like Google Analytics to monitor and improve user engagement. By taking these steps, Potter County can create a digital presence that not only meets the needs of its

residents but also supports tourism, economic development, and transparency, positioning the county as a modern, accessible, and community-focused government.

## Community Development

Potter County faces several challenges and opportunities in the realm of community development, which, if addressed, could significantly enhance the quality of life for residents and increase the county's appeal as a destination for both tourists and potential new residents.

One of the most promising opportunities lies in the development of the county's natural assets, particularly the Austin and North Fork dams. These areas could be transformed into attractive parks that serve as major tourist attractions. Establishing a Recreation Authority responsible for overseeing such developments could ensure that these projects are managed effectively, with a focus on both recreation and tourism. Such an authority could also take charge of developing and maintaining other recreational spaces, organizing community events, and promoting outdoor activities that draw visitors to the area.

In addition to outdoor recreation, there's a notable lack of child programming and activities within the county. The absence of organizations like the Boys and Girls Club or YMCA limits opportunities for youth engagement, making the area less attractive to young families. Establishing or supporting programs that provide activities, mentorship, and educational opportunities for children would not only improve the quality of life for residents but also help retain younger families in the area.

Public transit is another area of concern. Although there is some regional transit service, it appears to be insufficient to meet the needs of the community. Improving public transportation options could help connect residents to jobs, schools, and essential services, making the county more accessible and livable, particularly for those without access to private vehicles.

The county also suffers from a lack of coordination among its relatively few community organizations, such as the Galeton Chamber of Commerce, Austin Pride, and various senior and service organizations. These groups could greatly benefit from stronger leadership and organizational learning initiatives, potentially facilitated by the county. By offering classes and resources aimed at leadership development and organizational effectiveness, the county could help these nonprofits become more impactful, fostering a stronger sense of community and cultural vibrancy.

Another critical issue is the declining volunteerism in Fire and EMS services. With fewer qualified individuals available to respond to emergencies, this poses a significant risk to public safety. Addressing this issue may require a combination of volunteer recruitment campaigns, enhanced training programs, and possibly even exploring paid staffing models or shared services agreements with neighboring counties to ensure adequate coverage.

An innovative idea for the boroughs within Potter County is the concept of a circuit rider—an individual employed by the county but funded in part by the boroughs—who would focus on downtown development and community programs. This role could be housed within the community development office and might also include responsibilities related to grant writing and securing funding for local initiatives. By coordinating efforts across multiple boroughs, the circuit rider could help unify community development efforts, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and that small towns within the county have the support they need to thrive.

By addressing these areas—recreation, youth programming, public transit, nonprofit coordination, emergency services, and community planning—Potter County can foster a more vibrant, connected, and resilient community. These efforts will not only improve the quality of life for current residents but also make the county more attractive to potential new residents and visitors.

## Housing Development

Potter County is currently facing significant challenges in its housing market, which are exacerbated by the lack of a comprehensive housing plan or related study. The absence of such a plan makes it difficult for developers to fully understand and capitalize on the opportunities within the county, which in turn limits the availability of suitable housing for residents. A housing study would provide essential data on the current state of the housing market, identify gaps in housing availability, and offer recommendations for addressing these issues.

One of the key challenges in Potter County is the insufficient quality of much of the existing housing stock. When higher-quality properties do become available, they are often quickly purchased by individuals looking to convert them into short-term rentals. This trend drives up housing prices, making it more difficult for local residents to find affordable, long-term housing. The result is a growing divide between those who can afford the inflated prices and those who cannot, further entrenching a "haves-and-have-nots" dynamic within the community.

This situation not only limits housing options for current residents but also hampers the county's ability to attract new residents, particularly those who might be looking to settle down and contribute to the local economy. Without a sufficient supply of affordable, high-quality housing, the county may struggle to retain and attract the workforce needed to support local businesses and services.

To address these issues, Potter County should prioritize the development of a comprehensive housing plan. This plan should include a detailed assessment of the current housing stock, an analysis of market trends, and projections for future housing needs. It should also explore strategies for balancing the demand for short-term rentals with the need for affordable long-term housing. This might include zoning regulations, incentives for developers to build or renovate affordable housing, and policies aimed at preserving existing housing stock for long-term residents.

Furthermore, the plan should consider the unique demographic and economic factors at play in Potter County, such as its aging population, the influx of seasonal residents, and the demand for housing from those employed in local industries. By addressing these factors, the county can create a more balanced and sustainable housing market that meets the needs of all its residents, supports economic growth, and enhances the overall quality of life in the community.

Developing and implementing a housing plan will require collaboration between county officials, local developers, community organizations, and residents. However, the long-term benefits of such a plan—ranging from increased housing affordability to a more vibrant and economically diverse community—make it a critical investment in the future of Potter County.

For a minor revenue generation, the Commissioners should consider passing a fee schedule for use of its parks, office space and such for non-government organizations.

## Economic Development

Potter County currently lacks a comprehensive long-term economic development plan, which is crucial for strategically attracting and retaining businesses, fostering job creation, and ensuring sustainable economic growth. The Redevelopment Authority (RDA), which is co-housed with the Housing Authority, occasionally engages in economic development activities such as redevelopment and blight remediation. However, its primary focus remains on housing. To more effectively address the county's economic needs, one approach could be to expand the RDA's mandate to include a stronger focus on economic development. Alternatively, the county could

establish a dedicated economic development function within its planning department, such as a Community & Economic Development Office.

This new office would be responsible for several critical tasks. First, it would focus on attracting new businesses to the county while supporting existing businesses to ensure they remain and grow within the community. Workforce development would also be a key responsibility, involving partnerships with local educational institutions and workforce agencies to develop programs that align with the needs of local industries, ensuring a skilled labor force is available. The office would also support entrepreneurship by providing resources and support for startups and small businesses, including access to financing, mentorship, and networking opportunities.

Infrastructure development would be another priority, with the office identifying and advocating for necessary improvements, such as broadband expansion, transportation upgrades, and utilities, to support economic growth. Additionally, the office would work on securing state and federal grants, as well as private funding, to support economic development projects. Tourism promotion would also be a focus, developing and marketing the county's tourism assets, enhancing recreational facilities, and partnering with local businesses to attract visitors.

The economic development office would also coordinate land use planning and development with the planning department to ensure that land use policies and zoning regulations support economic growth and align with the county's development goals. The office would facilitate public-private partnerships, bringing together the public and private sectors to fund and implement economic development projects.

In addition to establishing a dedicated economic development office, the county is taking steps to reactivate its Industrial Development Authority, which has been dormant for some time. This authority could play a significant role in financing local businesses and leading the economic development charge, provided it is appropriately staffed. With the right focus and resources, the Industrial Development Authority could be a powerful partner in driving the county's economic growth and revitalization efforts.

The county should also explore the potential for creating an Economic Development Corporation (EDC) or expanding the role of existing organizations like the Industrial Development Authority. An EDC could take the lead in coordinating economic development efforts, securing grants and funding, and partnering with private sector entities to drive growth.

One immediately salient study could have to do with the newly discovered lithium in oil and gas well brine, which could be a potential byproduct used for battery production. Either way, the economic development plan ought to capitalize on what the county has - like how DoTerra is using black locust for its essential oils.

Partnerships with regional educational institutions could support workforce development initiatives, ensuring that local workers have the skills needed for emerging industries. These partnerships could also facilitate innovation and entrepreneurship, with programs designed to support startups and small businesses.

## Land Use

Potter County has several existing tools and potential opportunities for economic development that are currently underutilized or unexplored. Expanding on the current Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program, which is limited to commercial and industrial properties, could foster broader development, including residential housing improvements. The county's lack of promotion of the LERTA program has resulted in it being underutilized, so a targeted marketing strategy should be developed to raise awareness among developers and property owners about the benefits of LERTA.

In addition to better utilizing LERTA, the county could consider establishing a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program. C-PACE enables property owners to finance energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation projects through a special assessment on their property taxes. This could attract businesses and developers interested in sustainable building practices and reduce long-term energy costs for commercial properties.

The creation of a Land Bank is another powerful tool for economic development, particularly for addressing blight. A Land Bank could acquire, manage, and repurpose vacant or tax-delinquent properties, facilitating redevelopment and returning these properties to productive use. This would be especially valuable in areas suffering from blight, helping to revitalize neighborhoods and attract investment.

Conducting a comprehensive Economic Development Plan would provide a clear roadmap for attracting businesses, fostering job growth, and enhancing the overall economic vitality of the county. This plan could include specific goals, strategies, and action steps, along with metrics for measuring progress.

The county could consider launching or facilitating boroughs to use Business Improvement District (BID) authorities in key areas to fund improvements and services

that benefit local businesses and attract customers. BIDs can enhance the appeal of commercial districts through streetscaping, marketing, and events that draw people to shop, dine, and invest in the area.

Planning Commission members noted that there are many vacant storefronts in the boroughs - the community has food deserts, limited eateries, etc.

Members also noted that there is only one zoned municipality, and while countywide zoning may not be efficacious, perhaps the county could at least support municipalities that want to become zoned by providing information and potentially serving in a zoning officer capacity. Particularly due to the county's "dark sky" fame, enforcement related to BUG lighting standards could help protect the natural resource.

The Commission also noted the area could be developed as a unique place for remote work (from the PA Wilds), and use the PA Wilds Design Guide. Trail development seemed important - particularly rail trails, along with development of

## Capital Needs

### Buildings

Buildings are actually being taken care of quite effectively and commissioners and maintenance team should be commended. On the whole, almost all the buildings should look to have new Building Automation Systems. Most of the buildings could benefit from an LED retrofit.

Specific to the buildings:

#### The Gunzburger Building

The greatest opportunity is related to building envelope improvements. The windows, portions of the roof, weatherstripping and caulking (in that order) should be worked into a plan. The building could see some energy efficiency from an LED lighting retrofit and low-flow plumbing fixtures and water controls. While currently running and serviceable, the heating boiler system should be slated for replacement. Quotes for repairing or replacing them should be obtained and included in the budget soon. An update to the Fire Alarm panel to communicate over digital lines is recommended in addition to a building automation system.

#### The Courthouse

The current window office air conditioners should be replaced with mini-split units. The basement bathrooms need to be renovated. Some electrical equipment is very old and should be updated. The elevator is also old and small, and if usage justifies, could be

updated or replaced. Some shingles near the clock tower have come off and should be replaced before water damage occurs. This may be covered under warranty by the installer. A heating boiler replacement should be slated. Consider an LED lighting retrofit, as well.

#### Jail

The Jail was in fairly good condition, but does require some shingle replacement on the upper roof and a roof over the sally port is recommended for year round use and to prevent further water damage. Like the other buildings, it could benefit from an LED retrofit. There's a make-up air unit to replace. It's strongly recommended they look into low-flow plumbing fixtures with water controls.

The Roulette building: During our visit it was noted that there are underground drain issues, leaky glass block windows and the rooftop air conditioners were very old and should be replaced. There was some discussion about moving the staff there to another location. If that does not happen, then repairs should be budgeted. Of the county owned-properties, this is the most tired. It could benefit from an Building Automation System, roof and drainage resolution, an LED lighting retrofit, replacement of roof-top units, unit ventilator, and split system replacements. The county might consider selling this building and moving its team to Gunzburger or even leasing the same back from a new owner to minimize the capital volatility of owning the building while maximizing state reimbursement.

#### Fleet

The County owns over 30 Vehicles (including trailers) of various ages. We prepared a separate spreadsheet projecting the replacement time frame and approximate cost into the future. On average the county is projected to spend over \$100,000 per year on vehicle replacement. If the spreadsheet is kept up to date, it can be used to even out the costs year to year. If that is not done, some years will experience over \$200,000 in replacement costs. This should be a standard part of the budget. The EMA vehicles are some of the most expensive and grants should be sought for their replacement.

### Grant Writing & Administration

Potter County is currently missing out on numerous grant opportunities due to the lack of a dedicated office or individual responsible for grant writing and administration. Grants can provide substantial funding for various county projects, from infrastructure improvements to public safety initiatives, but the complexity of grant applications, SEFA (Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards) reporting, and the ongoing administration once grants are awarded presents significant challenges.

The existing departmental structure makes it nearly impossible for staff to focus on grant writing, as their primary responsibilities often take precedence. The urgent demands of day-to-day operations leave little time for the meticulous work required to identify, apply for, and manage grants. As a result, the county is likely leaving valuable funding opportunities on the table.

To address this gap, it is recommended that Potter County either hire a full-time grant writer (W2) or contract with an experienced firm specializing in grant writing and administration. A dedicated grant writer would be responsible for staying informed about available grant opportunities, ensuring that applications are completed accurately and submitted on time, and managing the administrative requirements once grants are awarded. This role would also involve coordinating with various departments to identify needs and opportunities, aligning grant applications with the county's strategic goals.

By centralizing the grant writing function, the county can take a more strategic approach to securing external funding, ensuring that opportunities are not missed due to a lack of capacity or expertise. Moreover, this approach would alleviate the burden on departmental staff, allowing them to focus on their core responsibilities while still benefiting from the additional resources that grants can provide. In the long run, this investment in a dedicated grant writer or firm could yield significant returns, enabling Potter County to fund critical projects and initiatives that might otherwise be unattainable.

## Record Retention & Digitization

Potter County currently maintains a sustainable physical record retention system, with adequate storage capacity and room for future growth. However, there are significant concerns regarding the county's reliance on paper-based records, especially for critical documents such as assessment records and ordinances. These records are not backed up digitally, leaving them vulnerable to damage or loss from fire, pests, or other unforeseen events. Additionally, the lack of digital copies means that these records are not easily searchable, which leads to inefficiencies in accessing information and creates unnecessary foot traffic in county offices.

To address these issues, the county should strongly consider implementing a digital record retention system that complies with the Pennsylvania Records Retention Act. Such a system would provide secure, searchable storage for all important documents, ensuring they are protected from physical damage and easily accessible to authorized personnel. This would also streamline the work of the Right to Know officer, making it easier to fulfill information requests promptly and accurately.

Moreover, a digital record retention system could include workflow automation features, which would greatly reduce the administrative burden associated with paper-based processes. For example, many applications and forms could be filled out, submitted, and processed digitally, reducing the time and resources spent on manual data entry and document handling. This transition would not only enhance operational efficiency but also improve the county's ability to respond to public inquiries and legal requirements.

In summary, transitioning to a digital record retention and workflow management system would protect the county's critical records, increase operational efficiency, and ensure compliance with state laws, all while reducing the risks associated with maintaining paper-based records.

## Government Management System

Potter County faces significant operational and legal risks due to the lack of policies and procedures across the board. Related, it lacks a centralized, comprehensive system for documenting policies, procedures, and forms across the entire organization. Currently, many essential processes are either undocumented or scattered across various departments, leading to inconsistencies, inefficiencies, and increased liability.

Implementing a comprehensive business process management system would provide a centralized repository where all policies, procedures, and forms could be stored and accessed by authorized personnel, with varying levels of access as appropriate. This system would ensure that every department operates according to standardized, up-to-date guidelines, reducing the risk of errors and inconsistencies in how services are delivered.

The absence of properly documented policies and procedures exposes the county to significant risks, particularly in today's increasingly litigious environment. Without clear documentation, it is difficult to defend the county's actions in the event of legal challenges, potentially leading to costly litigation and settlements. Furthermore, as the county faces the "silver tsunami" of retiring employees, the institutional knowledge they possess is at risk of being lost if not properly documented. A system would capture this critical information, ensuring that new employees can quickly learn and adhere to established protocols.

Additionally, a well-documented GMS would enhance operational continuity and efficiency. In times of crisis or emergency, having immediate access to well-defined procedures is crucial for ensuring a coordinated and effective response. It also

facilitates smoother transitions during staff turnover, as new employees can rely on comprehensive guides to understand their roles and responsibilities.

When signed-off properly, such policies and procedures have weight, whereas undocumented processes do not. In part, this has led to situations where elected officials wave their “1620 rights” to defy policies of human resources. Formally passing in a public meeting would better define and give human resources the tools necessary to enforce such rules.

In summary, establishing a Comprehensive Government Management System is not just a matter of operational efficiency—it is a critical step in protecting Potter County from legal risks, ensuring the continuity of services, and preserving institutional knowledge for future generations. By documenting and centralizing all policies and procedures, the county will be better equipped to navigate the challenges of an evolving workforce and a complex legal landscape.

## Codification & Publication

Potter County faces significant challenges related to the management, accessibility, and enforcement of its ordinances. The County has relatively [few ordinances](#), some of which are likely outdated, irrelevant, or in conflict with more recent regulations, creating confusion and potential legal liabilities. In some cases, ordinances that were never properly codified or passed can expose the county to risk, as they may be difficult to enforce or even legally questionable. Additionally, the current system tracks ordinances by date rather than by topic or relationship, making it difficult for county officials, legal professionals, and the public to determine which ordinances are relevant or how they interact with each other.

Most ordinances are not digitized and are instead kept in physical books that are susceptible to damage from water, fire, pests, and other environmental factors. This not only endangers the preservation of important legal documents but also hinders public access, as these records are not easily searchable or available online. The use of legalese in many ordinances further complicates public understanding and compliance, leading to inconsistency in enforcement and a lack of clarity that could result in legal challenges or public dissatisfaction.

Moreover, the lack of integration between ordinances and other governmental systems creates overlaps or gaps in regulations, which can be particularly problematic in situations requiring quick updates, such as emergencies or temporary situations. Maintaining these ordinances in their current state is resource-intensive and burdensome, particularly for a county with limited budgets and staff.

To address these issues, it is recommended that Potter County undertake a comprehensive process of codification and publication of its ordinances. This process would involve reviewing and revising all existing ordinances to eliminate redundancies, resolve conflicts, and ensure they are up-to-date and legally sound. Codification would also streamline ordinances by organizing them by topic, making them more accessible and easier to enforce. Digitizing these documents and publishing them online would not only protect them from physical damage but also enhance transparency and public access, enabling residents to easily search and understand the laws that govern them. Additionally, clearer, more accessible language would improve public understanding and compliance, reducing the risk of legal challenges and enhancing the consistency of enforcement across the county.

## Performance & Culture

One of the key challenges identified across various departments in Potter County is the presence of resentment and friction, particularly toward the commissioners' office. This underlying tension negatively impacts overall productivity and morale, making it crucial to address and improve the county's organizational culture. While individual performance evaluations are being considered, which have both benefits and drawbacks, an alternative approach focused on enhancing job satisfaction and fostering a more collaborative environment may be more effective.

Fostering a cross-departmental collaboration could prove to be restorative and create an atmosphere of respect for the work that each department does to provide the necessary services within the County ecosystem. Allowing the departments to be autonomous to perform, but also not silo them into believing they are the most important function within the system, but in fact each needs to operate with the other in mind.

Instead of traditional performance evaluations, which can sometimes exacerbate tensions, job satisfaction surveys and 360-degree review surveys could be implemented. These tools provide valuable insights into employee experiences, highlight areas for improvement, and encourage open dialogue between staff and leadership. A 360-degree review, in particular, allows employees to receive feedback from multiple sources, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect.

To boost recruitment and retention, the county could take proactive steps to show appreciation for its employees. Simple gestures like hosting holiday parties, sending birthday cards, and recognizing milestones can significantly impact making employees feel valued. Additionally, an employee recognition program could be introduced, where

outstanding performance is acknowledged through awards, public recognition, or small bonuses. Regular team-building activities, such as retreats or workshops, can also help break down barriers between departments and promote a sense of camaraderie.

Creating opportunities for professional development is another important step. Offering training programs, workshops, or tuition reimbursement for work-related courses can show employees that their growth and development are priorities. Providing clear career advancement paths can also motivate employees by demonstrating that there are opportunities for growth within the county.

Furthermore, implementing a flexible work policy, where feasible, could improve job satisfaction by allowing employees to balance their work and personal lives more effectively. This might include options for remote work, flexible hours, or compressed workweeks, contributing to a more positive work environment.

Focusing on improving communication, recognizing employee contributions, and offering professional growth opportunities can help Potter County build a more positive and collaborative organizational culture. This approach not only addresses current tensions but also helps attract and retain talented employees, leading to a more efficient and harmonious workplace.

## Collective Bargaining

Gabriel Fera PC produced a [memo](#) as of July 24, 2024 regarding collective bargaining agreements. That said, with potential decertification of some of the unions, it is a moving target.

The review of Potter County's collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) reveals several critical areas where strategic modifications are necessary to better align the agreements with the county's operational, managerial, and financial objectives. Currently, the county operates with six distinct bargaining units representing diverse employee groups, including corrections officers, probation officers, and human services employees. While some of these units have recently finalized new contracts, others remain in negotiation or have unclear contract statuses, highlighting the need for a more unified and strategic approach.

One of the primary issues identified is the gradual erosion of management rights over previous bargaining cycles. The county has, over time, conceded several rights that are essential for effective governance and operational flexibility. Key recommendations include revising provisions that currently restrict the county's ability to implement new technologies, assign tasks across different job classifications, and update job

descriptions without requiring union approval. Reclaiming these rights is crucial for the county to maintain control over its operations and respond swiftly to changing circumstances.

Consistency in employee benefits is another critical area of focus. The review found significant disparities in the benefits provided to different bargaining units, which can lead to dissatisfaction and perceived inequities among employees. The county is encouraged to standardize benefits across all units, ensuring fairness and reducing the administrative burden of managing multiple disparate agreements. This includes aligning vacation policies, sick leave allowances, and other benefits to create a more cohesive and equitable environment for all county employees.

From a financial standpoint, the review underscores the importance of revising overtime policies to ensure that compensation is aligned with actual hours worked beyond the standard workweek, and not unnecessarily inflated by less critical considerations such as compensatory time off. Additionally, the review suggests limiting the carryover of vacation leave to minimize the financial liability associated with large payouts upon termination or retirement, and adjusting sick leave provisions to reduce long-term liabilities.

Health insurance is another area where strategic adjustments are recommended. The county should seek to update its health insurance provisions to allow for greater flexibility in offering comparable coverage and establishing cost-sharing mechanisms that reflect actual costs. Moving to a percentage-based premium sharing model could incentivize employees to support cost-saving measures while maintaining access to quality healthcare.

In summary, the recommendations outlined in the CBA review focus on three main objectives: reclaiming essential management rights, standardizing and aligning employee benefits, and enhancing financial efficiency. These changes are not only necessary for maintaining effective governance but also for ensuring that the county remains financially sustainable in the long term. Implementing these modifications will require careful negotiation and may span several bargaining cycles, but they are critical steps toward creating a more balanced, efficient, and fair operational framework for Potter County.

## Regional Collaboration

Potter County should actively consider conducting feasibility studies to explore the potential for consolidating or collaborating with neighboring governments. This strategic move could significantly enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and potentially eliminate the

need for certain offices altogether. By partnering with nearby counties or municipalities, the county could streamline operations, reduce redundancies, and better allocate its limited resources.

For instance, inter-governmental cooperative agreements could be established for a range of services. Landscaping services could be managed in collaboration with Coudersport Borough, leveraging existing infrastructure and personnel to reduce overhead costs. The county might consider fully contracting out its 911 services to Tioga County, which could offer more robust support given its larger scale of operations. Additionally, the consolidation of jail services into neighboring counties could alleviate the financial and logistical burdens of maintaining a local facility, while still ensuring public safety.

Further opportunities for collaboration include contracting with other counties for services such as veterans affairs, domestic relations, and even certain administrative functions. This approach would allow Potter County to maintain high-quality services while reducing the financial strain on its budget. The county's recent experience in joining with two other counties to create a comprehensive plan demonstrates the viability of regional planning and could serve as a model for further cooperative efforts.

Exploring these options not only provides a pathway for reducing costs but also positions Potter County to adapt to its shrinking and aging population. By downsizing and potentially eliminating some offices through consolidation, the county can focus its resources more effectively, ensuring that essential services continue to be delivered efficiently. In extreme cases, the county might even consider folding certain functions into a neighboring county, effectively merging operations to ensure sustainability.

### Council of Governments

To enhance collaboration and resource-sharing among the municipalities within Potter County, the formation of a countywide Council of Governments (COG) is recommended. A COG would serve as a formalized structure for municipalities to work together on common issues, share services, and jointly pursue funding opportunities. By fostering inter-municipal cooperation, the COG could streamline operations, reduce costs, and improve service delivery across the county. This collaborative approach could also help smaller municipalities access resources and expertise they might not otherwise afford, while enabling the county as a whole to tackle larger regional challenges more effectively. Establishing a COG would provide a platform for municipalities to discuss shared concerns, coordinate on projects, and strengthen the overall governance and economic resilience of Potter County.

## Public Safety

For purposes of chapter divisions, this STMP connects the Department of Emergency Services (which includes E-911 and EMA), the Jail, District Attorney, Coroner, and Sheriff together under the heading of Public Safety not because of reporting or relationship but merely for convenience and similarly sized subchapters. Findings from management reviews of these departments are below.

### E-911

#### Introduction

MCM Consulting did an extensive management review of the 911 system which is detailed [here](#). The review was ably performed by Jeffery Steiert, primarily, and supported by Michael Rearick and advised by Michael McGrady. The team was asked to:

- Assess the state of the computer aided dispatch (CAD) with particular emphasis on the ability to operate if necessary.
- Review the ability to answer emergency and non-emergency calls on existing call handling equipment (CHE).
- Determine the general operational state and readiness to field 911 and non-emergency calls.
- Assess the emergency and non-emergency call volume presented annually.
- Assess the geographical information systems in place and the ability to support 911 requirements in both the legacy and next generational needs.
- Determine the functional capabilities of the logging recorder.
- Analyze the radio communications network.

MCM was selected due to their subject matter expertise as well as efficiency as they just completed an assessment of the towers and radio system independent of the STMP.

#### Department Overview

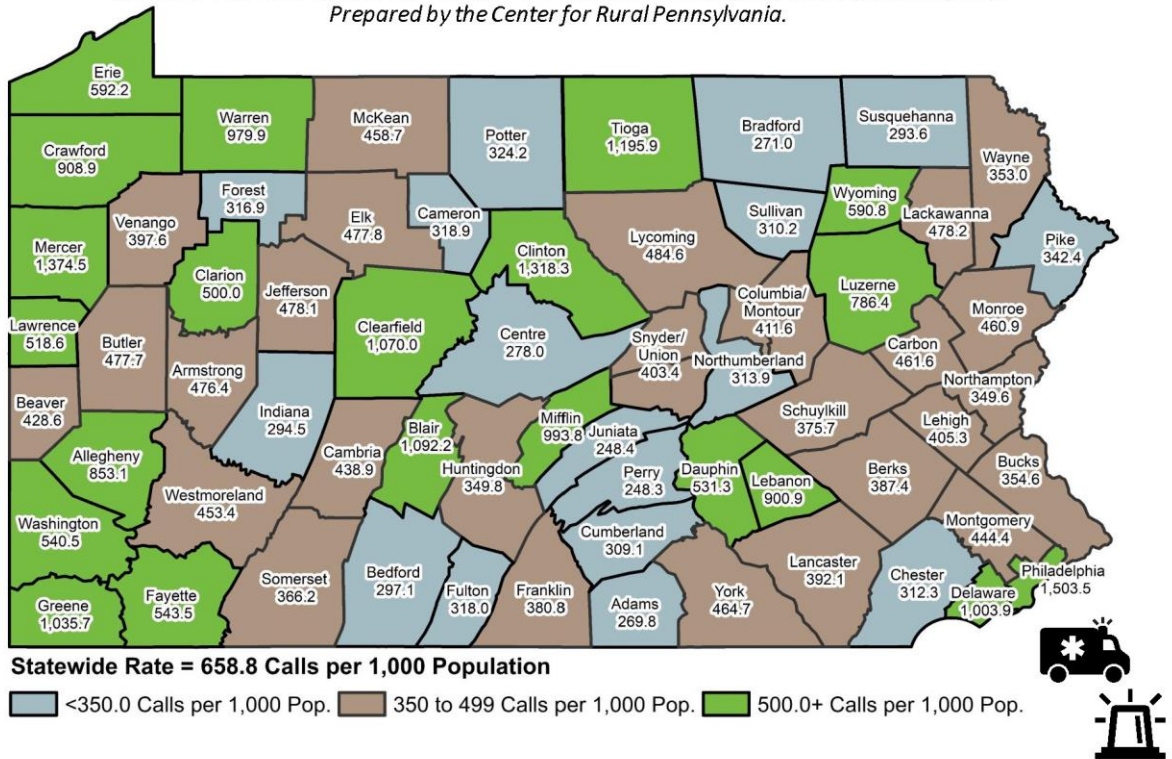
##### Mission and Functions

The E-911 office is a subunit of the Department of Emergency Services and is responsible for providing emergency communication services that ensure public safety and rapid response to emergencies in Potter County. Under Pennsylvania law, specifically the Public Safety Emergency Telephone Act (Act 78 of 1990, as amended), counties are mandated to establish and maintain an E-911 system that enables residents to access emergency services via a centralized, easily accessible telephone

number. The E-911 department functions as the critical link between the public and emergency responders, including law enforcement, fire departments, and emergency medical services (EMS). This department is tasked with receiving emergency calls, accurately determining the nature and location of the emergency, and dispatching the appropriate response teams. By leveraging advanced telecommunications technology, the E-911 department plays a vital role in safeguarding public health and safety, ensuring that help is promptly delivered where and when it is needed. The department operates under the supervision of the county commissioners and must comply with state regulations and standards to ensure effectiveness and reliability.

## Number of 911 Emergency Calls per 1,000 Population by County, 2022

*Data source: 911 Program Annual Reports, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.  
Prepared by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.*



### Leadership Team

The E-911 Office is a subunit of the Department of Emergency Services. The 911 Coordinator doubles as the Director of the Department of Emergency Services. 911 Addressing services are provided by the Planning Office’s GIS division. Notably, Potter County contracts with Tioga County to handle 911 calls which is a relatively common practice for small counties.

## Financial Condition

### Budget Overview

This fund is primarily funded by the Commonwealth and is determined by formula provided by the Commonwealth. The largest expense is contracted services.

### Funding Sources

The 911 Office is primarily funded by the “83%” money from the State’s 911 Surcharge act. Secondly, it benefits from “15%” money from the same fund for regional projects.

### Budget vs. Actual

The 911 fund paid a loan payment to the general fund in 2019, 2021 and 2022. This loan was not paid in 2023, but the increase to the contracted services made up that loan termination. Therefore, the trend is keeping pace with prior years. 2023 revenues were much lower than prior years, making the future budgeting of this fund a little more difficult to predict.

## Operations and Performance

### Key Findings

The key functions of the 911 center are largely fulfilled by the Tioga County PSAP. However, as part of the evaluation, the team observed the following findings:

- FCC radio licensing is up to date with no modifications required.
- Radio tower site and compound findings are detailed in the body of the radio needs assessment report but require moderate to significant remediation work.
- The tower site compounds are generally well maintained. Site shelters were also surveyed and found with minor remediation requirements.
- Grounding at several tower sites has loose or missing grounding components. Most tower sites and shelters were observed as not meeting R56 grounding standards. Site remediation is recommended including building maintenance and grounding. Site specific information regarding the above notes is documented in detail in the body of this report.
- Potter County PSAP contains two dispatch positions with computer aided dispatch, call handling equipment, and radio consoles, all of which appeared to be functional during the initial assessment.
- Computer aided dispatch, call handling, and radio console equipment is functional within the public safety answering point (PSAP). However, upon additional discovery within the equipment shelter, CAD servers were powered down including the battery backup systems meant to support the server equipment.

- Call handling equipment (CHE) appeared functional in the PSAP but staff were unable to articulate maintenance or use. The routing of 911 calls goes to Tioga County, then to Lycoming County if rolled over, so it is highly unlikely a 911 call would need to be re-routed to Potter County under any circumstance. No such call has happened in the last 12 years.
- The logging recorder was not powered up, and reportedly non-functional, which is an egregious position of liability for the county.
- Maintenance and support contracts were current on all systems but are not detailed in their scope of work and indemonstrable due to the inoperability of some equipment.

### Staffing

The 911 staff include the director and a quality assurance and addressing coordinator. Both are EMD certified. The department also has a list of dispatchers who are paid “on-call” to come into the two-seat PSAP if needed, though they have never been activated nor exercised. The Director indicated that it would be helpful to have even a part-time data entry clerk.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Trends

Potter County currently has less emergency calls than the state average per 1000 residents. This is likely due to the seasonal nature of the county’s population. Due to the aging population, it is expected that call volume would increase in coming years as medical calls increase.

### Opportunities

The primary opportunity for the County is to bid out all 911 services and redirect the 911 funds to more meaningful investments.

## Forecast

### Needs / Capital

The tower sites and radio equipment could use some improvements that are listed more extensively elsewhere.

## Performance

While the staff and volunteers are likely capable of pinch hitting, it has been at least twelve years since a call was routed to Potter County, and, lacking routine training, functioning systems, or training records, it is doubtful that the PSAP could stand up in a

reasonable amount of time. While redundancy is a good and needed feature of a 911 system, the current 911 configuration is not redundant - it is unusable.

They do have monitored security system in the building and at the tower sites, however, it is very basic and could be upgraded to be consistent with the other county buildings with remote user access for law enforcement, dispatch and so forth.

The County took out a large bond several years ago to upgrade this system that is inoperable. They have maintained 14 frequencies and the VHF system is digital but not P25 compliant.

#### Goals

The 911 office did not have particular goals listed.

#### KPIs

The 911 office did not provide particular key performance indicators. That said, The County recently had to pay back the state government reportedly hundreds of thousands of dollars due to ineligible or under documented expenditures from 911 Surcharge funds. One recommended KPI would be the general fund dollars spent on the 911 system.

#### Projects

The 911 office did not provide a list of specific projects.

#### Recommendations

The PSAP alleges it is capable of standing up in the event that Tioga County's system goes down, however, that does not seem to be the case.

#### Operational

- Tower Sites: Tower maintenance is needed, including, but not limited to minor maintenance, grounding with R56 standards, and the radio components need significant remediation work detailed in MCM's recent needs assessment.
- System Test: CAD servers, logging recorder, battery backup, etc. ought to be powered up regularly, updated and tested.
- Maintenance: The maintenance and support contracts are current but not detailed enough to be meaningful and should be rewritten and competitively bid.

### Financial

- CAD System: It is likely that the CAD system is inoperable and could be shut down completely with no impact to services and the regional money rerouted to more efficacious uses.
- The County needs to track 911 expenditures and their eligibility.
- The cameras at tower sites are currently running off of MiFi devices rather than using the existing fiber, which would be a cost savings.

### Strategic

- The Commissioners should consider virtually eliminating 911 as a department, bid out any remaining 911 services, appointing the contracted county's 911 Coordinator as their 911 Coordinator, and reallocating E-911 Surcharge monies toward other eligible uses, such as tower maintenance and equipment.
- Rather than maintaining its own tower and radio infrastructure, the Commissioners should consider a long-term plan to transition onto [PA STARNet](#) in conjunction with the Pennsylvania [Statewide Communication and Interoperability Plan](#).

## EMA

### Department Overview

MCM Consulting did an extensive management review of the 911 system which is detailed [here](#) ably performed by Michael Rearick, primarily, and supported by Jeffery Steiert and advised by Michael McGrady. Due to the tight working relationship between EMA and LEPC, the committee and hazardous material related issues are all dealt with in this section. Ancillary to EMA is, of course, the ten fire departments in the county, six of whom have BLS EMS, and the 2 independent BLS units along with Coudersport Ambulance which is ALS.

### Mission and Functions

The mission of the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) in a Pennsylvania county is to coordinate and manage responses to natural and man-made disasters, ensuring the safety and well-being of residents. The agency is responsible for developing, maintaining, and implementing comprehensive emergency management plans that address all phases of emergency response, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The EMA works closely with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as community organizations and the private sector, to facilitate communication, resource allocation, and logistical support during emergencies. Additionally, the EMA is tasked with conducting training and exercises for first responders and public officials, ensuring they are prepared to effectively manage crises. The agency also plays a critical role in public education, informing residents about emergency preparedness and how to respond in the event of a disaster.

The Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) in a Pennsylvania county is a crucial entity established under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) of 1986. Its mission is to enhance the county's preparedness for chemical emergencies by developing and maintaining a comprehensive emergency response plan. The LEPC is responsible for identifying potential chemical hazards within the community, facilitating communication between government agencies, first responders, and the public, and ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are informed and prepared for potential chemical incidents. The committee includes representatives from local government, emergency services, industry, environmental organizations, and the general public, working together to assess risks, coordinate response efforts, and conduct public education campaigns. The LEPC also plays a key role in overseeing the storage and handling of hazardous materials, ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations, and providing training and resources to first responders to effectively manage chemical emergencies.

### Leadership Team

EMA is also a subdivision of the Department of Public Safety and the Director is responsible for both 911 Coordinator responsibilities and serves as the Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC). That position is half funded by EMPG. Within EMA, there is another half EMPG funded position - an Administrative Assistant that has some finance and emergency planning responsibilities. In the department is a Training and Operations Coordinator, which is fully funded by general fund dollars and is responsible for supporting the county's agencies in training.

The Planning Department has a tertiary role in supporting the plans of EMA.

### Financial Condition

#### Budget Overview

(Reserved)

#### Funding Sources

EMA is primarily funded through a combination of state and federal grants, which are allocated to support emergency preparedness, response, and mitigation efforts. Additionally, the agency receives funding from the county's general fund to cover operational costs not eligible for grant reimbursement, ensuring compliance with Pennsylvania emergency management requirements and sustaining essential services.

#### Budget vs. Actual

(Reserved)

### Operations and Performance

#### Key Services

The EMA office has a successful municipal emergency management training program. They meet the requirement for an Emergency Operations Center along with the necessary corresponding equipment. All policies and procedures were in order and ready for exercise.

#### Staffing

Like with E-911, the Director noted a role for some clerical data entry support.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Trends

EMPG funds continue to decrease across the state and positions are getting defunded. In counties where the 911 coordinator is also the EMC, the state has suggested that EMPG cannot be matched by 911 Surcharge monies. They may begin to enforce that, at some point.

### Opportunities

EMA could take a more active role in supporting the recruitment and training of local agencies. There is also not a County Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), for the county generally nor the EMA office.

### Forecast

#### Needs

The Emergency Operations Center equipment should be on a replacement plan as some of the equipment comes to obsolescence in coming years.

#### Capital Needs

None known.

### Performance

#### Goals

None stated.

#### KPIs

None stated.

#### Projects

None stated.

### Recommendations

#### Operational

Enhance the EOC equipment.

#### Financial

Non known.

Strategic

- DES should look into getting a mass notification system in addition to their hotline.
- EMA should develop, in concert with Planning, a COOP for the county.

## Jail

The Potter County Jail is responsible for the secure custody, welfare, and rehabilitation of inmates serving sentences of two years less one day or less. The facility ensures the safe housing of inmates and provides services such as healthcare, mental health support, and vocational programs. The jail operates under the oversight of the Prison Board, which was established in recent years, and adheres to state correctional regulations and standards.

The facility is led by the Warden, who has served for nearly thirty years. The Warden is supported by a Deputy Warden, correctional officers, medical staff, and administrative personnel. The Warden has expressed that the Deputy Warden position may not be necessary and could present an opportunity for cost savings. The facility collaborates with local healthcare providers and external agencies for medical and psychological services to meet the needs of the inmate population.

Financially, the jail's primary funding sources include county general fund appropriations and revenues generated from inmate commissary funds. The Warden has advocated for the establishment of a dedicated technology fund, potentially funded through commissary revenue, to maintain and improve electronic systems such as surveillance cameras and telepsychiatry services. The facility operates within its allocated budget, though certain positions, such as a secretary role, remain unfilled due to budgetary constraints.

The jail currently houses an average of 20-30 general population inmates, with female inmates being housed in external facilities across multiple counties due to space constraints and the lack of female correctional officers. This arrangement presents a financial burden on the county and logistical challenges for transportation and supervision. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The jail employs nine full-time correctional officers, with one overnight position currently vacant. The facility also utilizes five to six part-time officers, a nurse, and a counselor. Filling the vacant secretary position has been challenging due to low starting wages.

While the Warden does not see an immediate need for additional full-time administrative staff, the workload remains a concern.

Challenges faced by the facility include staff retention, operational costs, and aging infrastructure. The increasing cost of housing female inmates in other counties remains a significant financial burden. The jail has implemented cost-saving measures, such as low-pressure water-saving devices, to reduce utility costs.

Looking forward, the jail anticipates an increase in medical-related inmate needs due to the aging population of Potter County. The long-term sustainability of outsourcing female inmate housing must be evaluated to determine cost-effective solutions.

Key recommendations for the jail include developing a technology upgrade plan funded through commissary revenue, seeking grant funding for facility improvements such as a body scanner and infrastructure repairs, and increasing coordination with the Sheriff's Office to optimize inmate transportation logistics without impacting jail operations. Additionally, the county should explore long-term solutions for female inmate housing, including partnerships with regional facilities or constructing a separate housing unit. Enhancing community service participation and work-release programs through judicial collaboration could also provide additional opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Overall, the Potter County Jail operates effectively within its constraints but requires strategic planning and financial investment to address ongoing challenges and ensure continued compliance with correctional standards.

## District Attorney

The Potter County District Attorney's Office is responsible for prosecuting criminal offenses, providing legal counsel to law enforcement, and ensuring justice is served within the county. The office collaborates with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to combat crime, with a particular emphasis on drug-related offenses through the county's Drug Task Force. The DA's office also plays a key role in victim advocacy and works closely with organizations such as the Child Advocacy Center to support victims of crime. Additionally, the office processes warrants, extraditions, and fine collections, which are crucial to the county's judicial system and revenue streams.

The office is led by the District Attorney, who is supported by a full-time Assistant District Attorney, a full-time County Detective, an Office Manager/Paralegal, a Victim/Witness Coordinator, and an unfilled part-time clerical position. The County

Detective, a retired Pennsylvania State Police officer, is responsible for investigating cases, preparing witnesses, and managing the evidence vault. The DA has expressed concerns regarding the department's staffing levels and the need for additional personnel to manage the increasing workload.

Financially, the District Attorney's Office operates within a constrained budget, with key funding allocated to staff salaries, operational supplies, and investigative expenses. The office also manages a forfeiture account, which supplements the budget through proceeds from seized assets related to drug crimes. However, rising supply costs and storage requirements for case files have placed additional pressure on the office's financial resources. The DA has identified potential grant opportunities that could assist with equipment upgrades and operational needs but lacks dedicated grant-writing staff to pursue them effectively.

Operationally, the office processes an average of 300 cases per year, though it was projected to reach 400 cases in 2024 before stabilizing mid-year. Staffing constraints have led to inefficiencies, particularly in processing warrants and extraditions. The County Detective provides valuable investigative support, but the office lacks modern investigative equipment, including up-to-date digital recording devices and tracking systems such as the CASPER database. Evidence storage is limited, with no routine audits of the evidence vault currently in place. The DA has no direct involvement in evidence security, relying instead on the County Detective's oversight. Additionally, security concerns have been raised regarding unauthorized access to the DA's office, prompting a recommendation for a separate keying system to improve security.

The current staffing structure includes one full-time County Detective, one full-time Assistant District Attorney, one full-time Office Manager/Paralegal, one full-time Victim/Witness Coordinator, and one vacant part-time clerical position. The DA has expressed the need to transition the part-time clerical position to full-time to handle increasing administrative demands.

Challenges faced by the office include an increase in warrant processing demands, which has placed additional pressure on the existing staff. The rise in drug-related crimes has also emphasized the need for specialized investigative equipment and resources to combat narcotics distribution effectively.

Looking ahead, the DA anticipates that the office's caseload will continue to rise, particularly in drug-related offenses and warrant work. Additional personnel and resources will be necessary to meet these growing demands effectively. The DA has outlined several goals, including enhancing office security and operational efficiency

through facility improvements, acquiring necessary investigative tools and resources, addressing staffing needs, and increasing efforts in drug enforcement through better equipment and intelligence sharing.

Key recommendations for the District Attorney's Office include implementing a scheduled audit process for the evidence vault to ensure accountability, upgrading investigative equipment to enhance prosecution effectiveness, enhancing security protocols by installing a separate keying system, securing additional grant funding to support operational needs, and transitioning the part-time clerical position to full-time. Strategically, the office should consider relocating to a larger space within the Gunzburger Building to address space constraints and collaborate with law enforcement agencies to streamline processes and improve case outcomes.

## Coroner

The Potter County Coroner's Office is one of the smallest departments and operates with minimal expenditures and staffing, reflecting the limited scope of its responsibilities. The coroner has served in the role for 30 years and maintains a pragmatic approach to budget management, having secured nearly \$100,000 in drug-related grants while keeping operating costs low. The office does not seek additional funding, salary increases, or a dedicated vehicle, highlighting its cost-conscious approach. The primary expenses are related to pathologist services, which, according to the coroner, are sometimes utilized without proper authorization by the District Attorney's office.

Despite the modest operation, certain procedural and administrative aspects require attention. The coroner does not utilize a county-issued email address, and while all records are kept securely and separately, a formal written process for managing case documentation and operational procedures should be developed to ensure consistency and transparency. Additionally, while a county-owned cooler is available and stored at the coroner's personal property, the office previously relied on hospital facilities, which may indicate a shift in operational needs over time.

Staffing consists of the coroner, his wife serving as the chief deputy—raising potential problem as probability of the coroner's unavailability and his chief deputy's being the same at the same time—and a small group of deputies who receive a stipend of \$100 each, most of whom are EMTs.

Key functions of the office include investigations, referrals, and cremation authorizations, with approximately 200 cases handled annually across these categories. Although the office does not have a formal agreement for transport services, establishing one could provide clarity and consistency in procedures. Additionally, efforts to document policies and establish clear operational guidelines would be beneficial to maintain continuity and institutional knowledge.

Overall, the Potter County Coroner's Office remains a low-cost department with a minimal operational footprint. However, improvements in formalizing processes, addressing potential conflicts of interest, and ensuring compliance with administrative best practices could enhance the efficiency and transparency of the office.

## Sheriff

The Potter County Sheriff's Office is responsible for courthouse security, prisoner transport, warrant service, and civil process duties. The office provides law enforcement support to local agencies and ensures the safety of county employees and the public within government facilities. The Sheriff's Office does not maintain a formal School Resource Officer (SRO) program, and there are currently no active constables utilized for court-related duties.

The office is led by the Sheriff, who is supported by a part-time Chief Deputy and one full-time Deputy. The Sheriff also oversees courthouse security, which includes four part-time security officers who work in pairs. Staffing levels have been a significant challenge, with two full-time Deputy positions and additional security positions remaining vacant.

Financially, the Sheriff's Office operates within a constrained budget, with primary expenses related to personnel, equipment, and maintenance of aging vehicles. The budget does not provide for large, unexpected expenses, such as repairs to the courthouse X-ray machine, which has been non-functional for several months, leading to less effective security screening measures. The Sheriff's Office relies primarily on county appropriations, but the Sheriff has identified potential funding sources, including federal vest grants and PCCD reimbursement programs, to help offset costs for needed equipment such as bulletproof vests and Tasers.

Operationally, the office struggles with maintaining financial equilibrium due to rising operational costs and unforeseen equipment failures. The Sheriff has suggested quantifying the value of employee benefits by including ghost benefits on pay stubs to improve transparency and appreciation.

Staffing shortages are a major concern, with security personnel resigning due to low wages and demanding job duties. The Sheriff has suggested hiring Act 235 certified security personnel to address the gaps. Additional equipment needs include replacing aging patrol vehicles, obtaining body and in-car cameras, and acquiring Tasers to enhance non-lethal response options. All bullet-resistant vests are significantly expired, posing a safety risk to deputies and security staff. There is also a need for improved security measures at the Gunzburger Building, with the Sheriff advocating for an armed presence and key card access control systems.

The current staffing structure includes one full-time Sheriff, one part-time Chief Deputy, one full-time Deputy, four part-time security officers (with vacancies), and one full-time

secretary. The Sheriff has emphasized the need to fill the vacant Deputy positions and explore wage increases to attract and retain qualified candidates.

The primary law enforcement challenge in the county remains camp burglaries, with local police departments operating at minimal staffing levels. The Sheriff's Office has observed a decline in employee morale due to low wages and a perceived lack of appreciation. Increasing wages to remain competitive with neighboring jurisdictions and attract qualified personnel is a key priority. Implementing security upgrades such as bulletproof panels and panic buttons at the courthouse entrance, exploring additional grant opportunities to fund equipment replacements and personnel training, and establishing agreements for prisoner transport to reduce strain on current staffing are also identified as critical opportunities.

Looking ahead, the Sheriff anticipates ongoing difficulties in recruitment and retention unless wages and benefits are improved. Additionally, the need for upgraded security infrastructure and equipment will require strategic financial planning.

The Sheriff's Office aims to enhance security measures in county buildings, improve recruitment and retention efforts, secure funding for critical equipment needs, and implement formal policies for staffing and compensation management. Key recommendations include investing in body cameras and in-car cameras to comply with law enforcement standards, prioritizing the acquisition of new patrol vehicles to replace aging fleet assets, implementing a structured compensatory time policy for salaried employees, securing grant funding to offset the cost of bulletproof vests, Tasers, and other essential equipment, increasing wages to remain competitive and fill vacant positions, optimizing budget allocation to address long-term equipment maintenance needs, and evaluating the feasibility of hiring Act 235 certified security personnel to supplement staffing needs. Relocating and reconfiguring the courthouse security checkpoint to enhance safety and efficiency and implementing electronic access control systems to improve building security at key locations are also recommended steps to ensure operational effectiveness.

## Court-Related

### Common Pleas, Probation, MDJs, and Domestic Relations

The Potter County Court of Common Pleas, along with the Probation Office, Domestic Relations Office, and Magisterial District Judges, is responsible for administering justice and overseeing various legal and rehabilitative services within the county. These offices function under the leadership of the President Judge, who has expressed concerns regarding staffing shortages, security, wages, and operational needs, all of which impact their ability to effectively serve the community.

Financially, the court system operates within the county's budget constraints, with significant reliance on county appropriations. The President Judge has suggested utilizing IV-D funds to supplement salaries and retain qualified personnel, particularly in the Domestic Relations Office, where the absence of sufficient staff has created significant operational challenges. The Salary Board's decision to reduce key positions without prior discussion has placed additional strain on the remaining staff and compromised service delivery. Additionally, long-term legal proceedings, such as an ongoing murder case, have added financial strain to the budget.

The department currently lacks a dedicated grant writer, which limits its ability to secure additional funding to support operational improvements and strategic initiatives. The President Judge has noted the need for more consistent communication with the Salary Board and commissioners to ensure funding decisions align with the court's needs. The Probation Office faces similar challenges, with a caseload ratio of 24:1, exceeding the recommended 15:1 ratio. The department's reduced staffing levels have limited the ability to provide adequate supervision and support for offenders. The Judge has suggested creating a hybrid probation officer position to oversee both juvenile and adult cases, which could help alleviate the workload. Additionally, the department has identified a need for more security measures, including a full-time security officer and enhanced security infrastructure.

The Domestic Relations Office (DRO) is currently operating with limited staffing due to the loss of key positions. The director is on maternity leave, and the remaining staff are struggling to meet the department's demands. The lack of caseworkers, who are unwilling to work for the county's low wages, has hindered the effectiveness of the office. The department has suggested revisiting the collective bargaining agreement to allow for more flexibility in funding salaries through IV-D funds.

Magisterial District Judges have highlighted concerns regarding their limited security resources and operational support. The absence of pepper spray or other protective

measures has raised concerns about staff safety. Additionally, the judges have recommended regular meetings with the commissioners to foster better communication and understanding of the challenges faced by the court system.

The court system has identified several operational priorities, including upgrading the courthouse sound system, which has caused significant disruptions in hearings, particularly for remote participants using Polycom. The President Judge has also emphasized the need to pass a resolution identifying and tracking existing positions to better manage staffing needs.

Efforts to enhance community services include exploring the establishment of a Vivitrol program to assist offenders with substance abuse recovery upon release. The court has also expressed interest in developing additional offender rehabilitation programs to reduce recidivism and improve community outcomes.

Despite the challenges faced by the court system, the Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB), chaired by the President Judge, has been actively working since 2010 to address issues related to crime prevention and rehabilitation. The CJAB has successfully secured PCCD funding to support treatment courts and other initiatives. However, there is a recognized need for additional grant writing support to maximize available funding opportunities.

Looking ahead, the court system aims to address staffing shortages, improve security measures, and enhance operational efficiency through strategic planning and improved collaboration with county officials. Recommendations include hiring additional probation officers, implementing a formal security plan, and increasing engagement with the commissioners to ensure the court's needs are adequately addressed.

Overall, the Potter County court system faces significant challenges but remains committed to delivering justice and rehabilitation services effectively. Addressing staffing, security, and financial planning issues will be key to ensuring continued success in serving the community.

## Public Defender

The Potter County Public Defender's Office provides legal representation to individuals who are unable to afford private counsel in criminal cases, ensuring the constitutional right to a fair trial is upheld for all citizens, regardless of financial status. The department's functions include defending clients in court, offering legal advice, and advocating on behalf of clients throughout the judicial process. The Public Defender's Office plays a critical role in the justice system by protecting the legal rights of the indigent population and ensuring equitable access to legal representation.

In Pennsylvania, counties are required to establish a Public Defender's Office under the Public Defender Act of 1968 (Act 180). The Potter County office operates under the jurisdiction of the county commissioners, who appoint the Chief Public Defender to oversee the department. The office is currently staffed with a Chief Public Defender and two full-time secretaries, one of whom is semi-retired and working part-time but expected to return to full-time status upon the full retirement of the current staff member. The department also contracts additional attorneys as needed to address caseload demands.

The financial condition of the office is stable, with a 2024 budget of \$480,000, compared to an actual expenditure of \$380,000 in 2023. The primary reason for the budget increase is due to rising contracted services and expenses related to a high-profile murder trial, which is considered an abnormal expense that will likely not recur at the same level in future years. The office is entirely funded by the county's general fund, with no direct revenue generation. Opportunities for securing additional funding through project-specific grants should be explored to help offset operational costs.

Operationally, the office manages a high caseload, with 233 new criminal cases in 2023 and 266 in 2022. Additionally, the department handles probation violations and some Domestic Relations Office (DRO) support cases, which they would prefer to outsource. The public defender noted that Potter County experiences a high volume of search-based cases due to its use as a training ground for the Pennsylvania State Police. The implementation of Act 244, which requires three technical probation violations before incarceration, is expected to reduce jail populations, thus decreasing the demand for legal representation in probation-related matters.

Mental health cases remain a significant challenge, as the local jail is not equipped to manage individuals with serious mental health conditions. Law enforcement often responds to mental health crises, which may lead to unnecessary criminal charges rather than appropriate treatment. The Public Defender's Office has expressed interest

in adopting programs similar to those in other counties that involve immediate intervention by mental health professionals.

Challenges faced by the office include the need for additional investigative resources, as there is no dedicated investigator on staff. The office has expressed interest in hiring an additional attorney or sharing investigative resources with neighboring counties to improve case preparation and client representation. Despite the staffing challenges, the current personnel are committed and capable, ensuring that the department remains functional and responsive to client needs.

The office participates in the Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB), which meets quarterly to address systemic issues in the county's justice system. Additionally, the department is advocating for the implementation of a Vivitrol program to assist individuals recovering from substance abuse upon their release from incarceration. Looking forward, the department aims to address operational needs by documenting internal processes and procedures to improve efficiency and ensure continuity in service delivery. Financially, the county has applied for the Indigent Defense Services grant, a non-competitive grant from the Commonwealth, which could provide additional resources for the office.

Strategically, the office should focus on succession planning, cross-training staff to ensure continuity, and exploring potential grant funding to support operational improvements. Efforts should also be made to strengthen collaboration with other county departments to enhance the overall effectiveness of the justice system. Overall, the Potter County Public Defender's Office is functioning effectively despite resource constraints and operational challenges. Addressing staffing needs, improving investigative capacity, and securing additional funding will be essential to maintaining and enhancing the quality of legal representation provided to indigent clients.

## Administrative

### Commissioners

#### Solicitor

The Potter County Solicitor serves as the chief legal advisor to the county, providing legal counsel to the commissioners and various county departments. The solicitor's role encompasses a broad range of legal responsibilities, policy development, regulatory compliance, litigation, and governance matters. As the legal landscape for counties continues to expand in complexity, the solicitor plays a crucial role in ensuring that the county operates within legal boundaries while mitigating risks.

One of the primary concerns raised by the solicitor is the inconsistency with which various county boards, such as the Elections Board and the Prison Board, meet outside of regular commissioners' meetings. Establishing a consistent and structured meeting schedule for these boards would improve governance, ensure timely decision-making, and enhance overall accountability. The county should prioritize creating a formal schedule and ensuring adherence to regular meeting times.

Financially, the solicitor's office operates with a relatively modest budget, which may not be sufficient given the increasing complexities of legal issues facing the county. It is recommended that the county allocate additional resources to the solicitor's office to accommodate evolving legal demands and provide more comprehensive support to county operations.

Another key recommendation involves enhancing communication and coordination between county departments and the solicitor's office. While the county has engaged specialized counsel for specific legal matters, there is a need for better communication to keep the solicitor informed of all legal developments, even if only as a courtesy. This improved communication would enable the solicitor to maintain a comprehensive understanding of the county's legal landscape and provide more strategic guidance when needed.

The solicitor acknowledges the value of seeking specialized counsel for complex legal issues, such as labor negotiations, environmental compliance, and specialized litigation. As the scope of legal practice continues to widen, ensuring that the county engages the appropriate expertise when necessary is critical to effective risk management and compliance.

Overall, the Potter County Solicitor's Office is fulfilling its role of maintaining legal compliance and protecting the county's interests. Addressing the identified areas for improvement will help strengthen the office's capacity to support the county's operations effectively.

## Auditors

The Potter County Auditors are responsible for ensuring the accuracy and compliance of the county's financial records, as mandated by the Pennsylvania County Code (16 P.S. § 1701). Their primary responsibilities include auditing financial transactions, preparing reports, verifying adherence to financial procedures, overseeing tax collection, and reviewing contracts and expenditures. These efforts help maintain transparency, accountability, and the proper use of public funds.

The office is managed by three elected auditors who serve four-year terms. Each auditor brings a unique skill set to the position, with one auditor in their first term after years of appointed service in the county, another in their second term, and the third serving their third term. This combination of experience provides a balanced approach to oversight and financial review.

Financially, the department's primary expenses are wages and healthcare benefits, despite the auditors being per diem employees. The department does not generate revenue and is entirely funded through county appropriations. Budgetary increases over the years have been primarily due to wage adjustments, healthcare cost increases, and mileage reimbursement rates. The budget has remained stable and predictable year over year.

The auditors' key responsibility is the submission of the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) report, which is due annually in April. However, the implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system in 2022 has presented significant challenges. The auditors believe they were not adequately involved in the rollout and that the decision not to run the old and new systems concurrently has led to data inconsistencies. The 2022 DCED report remains outstanding due to difficulties in reconciling financial records within the new system. Additional training and improved communication with the fiscal office are necessary to resolve these issues and ensure timely reporting.

Despite these challenges, the auditors have improved their internal processes by utilizing Excel spreadsheets and Microsoft Teams to facilitate information sharing and collaboration. This has enhanced their ability to track and analyze financial data effectively.

Looking forward, the auditors have identified several operational and capital needs. They have requested consistent replacement of computers, copiers, and printers to maintain efficiency and avoid disruptions. Additionally, they have expressed a desire to

relocate their office from the basement to a location with more natural light and closer proximity to the fiscal office for better collaboration.

The auditors recommend several operational improvements, including the establishment of written policies and procedures to ensure consistency and compliance with county financial standards. They also suggest the implementation of a shared drive for bank statements, payables, and receivables to improve data accessibility and transparency. The introduction of an Adobe stamp for verifying audited information would further enhance the accuracy and efficiency of financial reviews.

Financially, the auditors have highlighted the need for all bank accounts to be accounted for within the ERP system, in compliance with regulations. This would streamline the auditing process and ensure all financial data is accurately recorded and accessible.

Overall, the Potter County Auditors are committed to maintaining the integrity of the county's financial operations but face challenges related to system implementation, communication, and resource allocation. Addressing these issues through enhanced training, improved interdepartmental collaboration, and strategic investment in technology will be crucial to ensuring continued financial accountability.

## Building & Grounds Maintenance

The Potter County Building, Grounds, and Maintenance Department is responsible for maintaining the county's buildings, systems, and grounds to ensure a safe, functional, and productive workplace for all county departments. The department strives to provide routine maintenance and replacements as needed to minimize costs while preserving the longevity of county facilities.

The department is led by talented director, who oversees a team of four maintenance employees tasked with maintaining four primary buildings: the Gunzburger Building, the Courthouse, the Roulette Building, and the Emergency Services complex. While the department is also responsible for the Jail, maintenance responsibilities there are more limited due to its specific operational requirements.

Financially, the department's budget primarily consists of wages, healthcare benefits, contractor expenses, and material purchases. As a non-revenue-generating department, it operates solely on county funding. Budget trends have remained relatively stable, with occasional increases tied to wage adjustments and rising material costs.

Operationally, the department's key services include maintaining and servicing county facilities to address the physical space needs of each department, addressing minor maintenance issues promptly to prevent costly repairs, and ensuring compliance with safety regulations. During a recent review of county buildings, it was found that they are generally well-maintained, though several areas require attention.

The Gunzburger Building requires repairs to window sills, and the facade ledge around the roof's north side. Additionally, the heating boilers and the McQuay split system are due for replacement. Recommended upgrades include converting lighting to LED, installing low-flow plumbing fixtures, and updating the fire alarm panel to digital communication lines.

The Courthouse requires replacement of window air conditioning units with mini-split systems, renovation of basement bathrooms, and updates to outdated electrical equipment. The heating boiler also needs replacement, and shingles near the clock tower should be replaced to prevent water damage. Modernization of lighting and plumbing fixtures is also recommended.

The Jail is in relatively good condition but requires shingle replacement on the upper roof and replacement of the make-up air unit. Additionally, constructing a roof over the

sally port is recommended to prevent further water damage and improve year-round functionality.

The Roulette Building has several critical needs, including addressing underground drainage issues, replacing leaky glass block windows, and upgrading the rooftop air conditioning units. A backup generator replacement is also necessary to support the facility's freezers, although there are plans to relocate a unit from a cell tower site to address this need.

Challenges faced by the department include maintaining facilities in the face of Northern Pennsylvania's harsh weather conditions, where seasonal temperature fluctuations cause expansion and contraction that can lead to damage over time. Keeping rooms at comfortable temperatures while managing energy costs is an ongoing challenge.

Future needs include implementing a monitoring system to ensure fire and other safety equipment are regularly inspected. Improved coordination with tenants in shared county facilities, such as the Gunzburger Building, is also necessary to ensure adherence to safety protocols, including fire drills and clear exit routes.

Strategically, the department aims to create and maintain a schedule of maintenance tasks, monitor outside contractor expenses, and develop a comprehensive capital expenditure plan to address future facility needs. Tracking performance metrics such as scheduled vs. completed tasks and cost tracking for contractor services will provide valuable insights into operational efficiency.

Financial recommendations include developing a capital planning strategy that includes a consistent replacement schedule for essential equipment such as computers, printers, and HVAC systems.

Overall, the Building, Grounds, and Maintenance Department plays a vital role in maintaining county facilities and ensuring they remain safe and functional. Addressing identified needs and implementing strategic planning will help the department continue to meet the county's operational demands effectively.

## Information Technology

The Potter County Information Technology (IT) Department is responsible for providing secure and reliable technology solutions to support county operations. Its mission is to empower county departments through innovative and secure access to technology, optimizing operational efficiency and promoting citizen engagement. The department ensures a secure computing environment while addressing the diverse technological needs of county operations.

The IT Department is led by Dan Baker and supported by contracted outside service providers to maintain the county's network infrastructure and cybersecurity. This hybrid approach leverages external expertise while keeping costs competitive through periodic bidding processes. However, the reliance on a single internal staff member presents challenges in coverage during absences, and it is recommended that a backup be trained to provide continuity.

Financially, the IT Department is funded through the general fund budget. Budget trends indicate that expenditures remain relatively stable, with key investments focused on maintaining and upgrading infrastructure. The budget covers software licensing, hardware purchases, contracted services, and cybersecurity measures. However, there is a need for additional funding to support future initiatives such as new Polycom phones and audio/video systems for the courthouse.

Operationally, the county's IT infrastructure is a mix of on-premises servers and cloud services. Current hardware and software solutions appear to meet immediate needs, but ongoing vigilance is required to address evolving cybersecurity threats. The department must continuously adapt to emerging threats and technological advancements to prevent potential security breaches.

A significant concern is the cybersecurity risk posed by users with legitimate access to the system. To mitigate this, the department should implement several best practices:

- Mandatory cybersecurity training for all users, ensuring completion is tracked and enforced.
- Complex password requirements with periodic changes to prevent unauthorized access.
- Multi-factor authentication (MFA) to add an additional layer of security for both internal and external system access.
- Implementing a "least access necessary" principle to limit exposure in case of compromised credentials.

In addition, the department should explore several proactive measures to enhance security:

- Upgrading older terminal access software to web-based solutions to minimize vulnerabilities.
- Evaluating cybersecurity insurance coverage to understand response capabilities and cost coverage in the event of a breach.
- Implementing a separate VLAN for guest traffic to segregate non-county devices from critical infrastructure.
- Regularly testing backup systems to ensure data integrity and recovery readiness.
- Developing a formal incident response plan with documented procedures and corrective action tracking.

The IT Department should also leverage external resources, such as:

- The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) Technology Program for guidance on best practices.
- The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) cybersecurity framework for compliance and roadmap planning.
- The Department of Homeland Security's State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) to access additional funding.

In terms of staffing, the department currently consists of one full-time IT staff member. To ensure continuity and resilience, it is recommended that an additional IT technician be trained to provide support and serve as a backup. As the county's technological needs grow, increasing staff capacity will be crucial.

Future capital needs include:

- Procuring new Power over Ethernet (PoE) switches to replace aging hardware.
- Implementing additional bandwidth from Zito Media to support increasing data demands.
- Investing in updated audio/video systems for the courthouse to improve remote proceedings.

Strategically, the department aims to maintain up-to-date hardware and software while responding to user needs and keeping the system secure. Key performance indicators (KPIs) should include tracking cybersecurity incidents, monitoring outstanding and completed IT requests, and ensuring expenses remain within budget.

Overall, the Potter County IT Department is well-positioned to support current operational demands but requires continued investment and strategic planning to address evolving technology and security challenges.

## Election & Voter Registration Offices

The Potter County Elections Office and Voter Registration Department is responsible for managing voter registration, overseeing elections, and ensuring compliance with state and federal election laws. The department relies heavily on the new Act 88 funding, which provides \$57,000 to support election operations. This funding has been instrumental in paying for the election operations. They have ES&S voting machines that were certified in 2020. However, the state has since expressed concerns about these machines, and the county may need to prepare to secure funding for potential replacements. There is also interest in implementing electronic poll pads, though the estimated cost of \$100,000 presents a financial challenge.

The department currently operates with one full-time employee and one part-time staff member, which presents challenges in maintaining office coverage, particularly during peak election periods. For the sake of redundancy and succession planning, it is recommended to either increase staffing or explore resource-sharing with a neighboring county. The current director, who assumed office in August 2022, often works weekends to manage the workload, a situation that underscores the need for additional support.

Recruiting and retaining poll workers is an ongoing challenge. The county has recently increased poll worker pay for the first time in 15 years, with a Judge of Elections now earning \$150, up from \$105. The total cost of poll workers per election, including the canvassing board and mileage, is approximately \$26,000. Despite this increase, difficulties in recruitment persist, and the county should consider additional incentives or outreach efforts to attract and retain election workers.

The Elections Office has identified the need to consolidate polling locations to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Currently, there are 32 polling locations across the county, some of which require voters to bypass closer locations to reach their designated polling location. Consolidation could streamline operations and reduce logistical challenges while maintaining accessibility for voters.

Routine inspections of polling locations have not been conducted since 2008, and an annual inspection process should be re-established to ensure compliance with accessibility and operational standards. Additionally, efforts to engage with local schools to conduct voter registration drives have been unsuccessful, although student poll workers have been successfully recruited.

The department has well-organized documentation and manuals, including a comprehensive election operations schedule with links to critical files, though these are

currently stored locally. Additional standard operating procedures (SOPs) need to be developed, particularly for pre-canvassing and canvassing processes. Improvements in ballot review and L&A procedures are also recommended; currently, the director is the sole reviewer, and it is suggested that county political party chairs or the commissioners participate in the review process to ensure transparency and accuracy.

Additional recommendations include introducing a candidate training night to provide guidance on election procedures and compliance. There is also a need for dedicated training for constables to ensure they are adequately prepared to perform their election-related duties.

Financially, the department's budget has remained relatively stable, with expenses aligning closely with projections. However, strategic planning is needed to address anticipated costs associated with technology upgrades and polling place consolidation. In terms of strategic planning, the county should consider evaluating the potential benefits of centralizing election operations within a single, well-equipped facility. This could improve efficiency, enhance security, and provide a more accessible point of service for voters and election workers alike.

Overall, the Potter County Elections Office and Voter Registration Department is operating effectively but faces challenges related to staffing, funding, and infrastructure. Addressing these issues through strategic investments and process improvements will help ensure the integrity and efficiency of the election process in the county.

## Tax Assessment & Tax Claim

The Potter County Tax Assessment Office and Tax Claim Bureau are responsible for determining property values for tax purposes and managing delinquent tax collections. The Assessment Office ensures that property assessments are fair and accurate, which serves as the foundation for local government revenue. The office maintains detailed property records, conducts triggered assessments, handles exemptions and appeals, and collaborates with municipalities and other governmental entities to support equitable tax policies. The Tax Claim Bureau is responsible for collecting delinquent taxes and managing tax sales, ensuring compliance with state tax collection laws.

The Tax Assessment Office currently utilizes InfoCon software for recordkeeping but relies on a manual card system for collecting property data before entering it into the database. This hybrid approach presents challenges in efficiency and accuracy. The county's tax base year is 1977, and no comprehensive reassessment has been conducted since then. While values have increased steadily, the common level ratio (CLR) was 18% as of July 2024, highlighting a growing disparity between assessed values and market values. Despite these challenges, the office handles approximately 200 building permits annually, with no significant backlog.

The Tax Claim Bureau also uses InfoCon and manages collections efficiently through internal postings. They have explored the potential of integrating Value Pay for credit card transactions but require verification with the IT department. While the bureau operates effectively, it lacks comprehensive standard operating procedures, with most processes being verbal or public-facing only. A payment plan similar to those used by school districts has been suggested to assist taxpayers facing financial difficulties. The bureau's penalty structure includes a standard 10% penalty, and while fees were increased two years ago, there is concern that this disproportionately affects those already struggling to pay.

Staffing in both departments appears sufficient, with five employees currently supporting operations, up from four in previous years. The Chief Assessor serves as the only Certified Pennsylvania Evaluator (CPE) and manages all field assessments and GIS mapping responsibilities. There is no formal succession plan in place, and it is recommended that a second CPE be trained to ensure operational continuity in the event of staffing changes.

Several opportunities exist to enhance operations. Promoting the existing Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program could help attract commercial and industrial investment, though there is reluctance to expand it to

residential properties due to perceived limited benefits. Coordination with local school districts to implement LERTA agreements could increase participation.

Digitization of records is a priority for the office. Documents need to be scanned and indexed and converted into PDF-A format for long-term preservation. Implementing a Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) system could further modernize operations, although its effectiveness would be contingent on a future countywide reassessment. Aerial imagery and parcel fabric mapping are also identified as potential investments to improve accuracy and efficiency in property assessments.

The department should also explore automating tax billing processes and standardizing permit applications across municipalities to improve data collection. A centralized system for tracking permits and property improvements could be developed in collaboration with GIS staff or through partnerships with local universities.

Challenges remain in ensuring timely notifications from the Commonwealth regarding remittances, and improved communication channels are needed. The Treasurer's Office has suggested consolidating financial operations under their purview, but this move is not currently favored by the Tax Assessment and Tax Claim offices.

In terms of operational improvements, the office should consider developing a formal payment tracking system to monitor outstanding balances and taxpayer compliance. Establishing a customer relationship management (CRM) system could help track taxpayer interactions and improve service delivery.

Overall, the Tax Assessment Office and Tax Claim Bureau are functioning well within existing constraints but would benefit from enhanced technology, staff development, and strategic planning to ensure long-term efficiency and accuracy in tax administration.

## Treasurer

The Potter County Treasurer's Office is responsible for managing the receipt, custody, and disbursement of county funds. This includes collecting taxes from the tax collectors, issuing various licenses, and ensuring that all financial transactions are properly recorded and handled in compliance with state laws and regulations, as outlined in the Pennsylvania County Code (16 P.S. § 1702). The office plays a role as the gatekeeper for all revenues flowing into the county and distributing them to the appropriate departments through the financial software system, SmartFusion.

The office is led by an elected Treasurer who is supported by a full-time Deputy and a part-time Secretary/Clerk. The Treasurer's Office is currently not experiencing retention issues, with the existing team providing stable operations. However, the Treasurer is actively working on a succession plan to ensure continuity when she eventually retires from the position.

Financially, the Treasurer's Office budget has remained consistent over the past five years. The primary funding sources include administrative revenue generated from license sales and tax collection fees. Overall, the office operates within its budget, with expenses averaging around \$150,000 annually compared to the budgeted \$183,000. Revenue has remained flat and aligned with budget expectations, with the exception of hunting license sales, which have consistently exceeded the budgeted amount by approximately \$5,000 each year.

The primary functions of the Treasurer's Office include receiving funds, ensuring proper distribution to the correct line items across various county funds, and processing tax collections and license sales for the Commonwealth. However, the department currently lacks written policies and procedures, relying primarily on verbal processes. Efforts are underway to document these processes to support future staff transitions and ensure operational continuity.

One of the major challenges faced by the office is the current manual process for bank reconciliations. Automation and better collaboration on these reconciliations within SmartFusion would improve efficiency, reduce errors, and provide greater financial accuracy and transparency. The Treasurer has also expressed concerns regarding the current fiscal software, which has not been fully optimized since its implementation in December 2021. Additional training and support are needed to maximize the software's capabilities and ensure smooth operations.

Another operational concern is the lack of privacy within the office. The Treasurer has indicated a need for a more soundproof and private workspace to handle sensitive

financial matters. [REDACTED]  
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Looking ahead, the Treasurer has identified opportunities to streamline operations, including transitioning the dog licensing process to a statewide system to reduce administrative burdens. The office is also considering participating in a treasury management program, such as the Pennsylvania Local Government Investment Trust (PLGIT), to optimize cash management strategies.

The department is also recommending capital planning efforts to ensure consistent replacement and maintenance of essential office equipment, such as computers, printers, and copiers. Collaborating with the county IT department to implement a rotating capital schedule would help maintain operational efficiency and reduce unexpected costs.

From a strategic perspective, the Treasurer supports the idea of consolidating fiscal services by relocating the Human Services department to the Gunzberger building. This move could facilitate shared fiscal responsibilities, improve collaboration, and enhance financial oversight across county departments.

Overall, the Potter County Treasurer's Office is functioning effectively but has opportunities to improve operational efficiency through better utilization of technology, documented processes, and strategic planning for the future. Addressing these areas will help ensure the office continues to provide accurate and reliable financial management services for the county.

## Veterans Affairs

The Potter County Veterans Affairs Department is dedicated to assisting veterans and their families in securing the benefits and services to which they are entitled under state and federal laws. This includes guiding them through applications for benefits, providing information on available resources, and advocating for their rights and needs. The department operates under the authority outlined in the Pennsylvania County Code (16 P.S. § 1921), ensuring compliance with legal mandates while addressing the unique challenges faced by the local veteran community.

The department is staffed by two full-time employees, with one of the staff members having recently joined within the past year. The additional personnel has been instrumental in enhancing service capacity, and the team believes this increase in staffing will allow them to better serve a larger number of veterans in Potter County. Financially, the Veterans Affairs office is primarily funded through the county's general fund, with additional financial support derived from grant opportunities when available. The reliance on county funding presents some limitations, particularly in expanding services and outreach efforts.

One of the most pressing challenges faced by the department is transportation for veterans. Currently, transportation services are limited to emergent cases, restricting the department's ability to assist veterans in accessing medical appointments and other essential services. Expanding transportation options remains a critical need, and the department is exploring grant opportunities to enhance outreach and support services for veterans facing mobility challenges.

From a capital perspective, the department has identified the need for updated waiting area furniture, which is planned for acquisition in 2025. This upgrade aims to create a more welcoming and comfortable environment for veterans seeking assistance. The department's primary operational goals include increasing outreach efforts to connect with more veterans and ensuring they are aware of the benefits and resources available to them. Performance indicators for the department have not been formally established, but tracking the number of veterans served and the types of benefits secured could provide valuable insights into the department's impact.

Several opportunities exist for the department to improve its operations and services. Collaborating with other county departments and local veteran organizations could enhance service delivery and streamline access to benefits. Additionally, seeking dedicated grant funding for outreach programs could expand the department's ability to reach underserved veteran populations within the county.

To address current challenges and capitalize on opportunities, the department should consider developing a strategic plan to outline long-term objectives and priorities. This could include securing additional funding sources, expanding transportation services, and strengthening partnerships with local and regional veteran support organizations.

Overall, the Potter County Veterans Affairs Department is committed to serving the veteran community but faces operational and financial challenges that must be addressed to maximize its effectiveness. Addressing transportation barriers, increasing outreach efforts, and pursuing additional funding will be key to ensuring that all veterans in Potter County receive the support and assistance they need.

## Development

### Register of Wills & Recorder of Deeds

The Potter County Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds office is responsible for overseeing the probate of wills, administration of estates, issuance of marriage licenses, and recording real estate transactions. These responsibilities are outlined in the Pennsylvania County Code (16 P.S. § 1101 for the Register of Wills and 16 P.S. § 1104 for the Recorder of Deeds). The office ensures the accuracy, accessibility, and integrity of these vital public records.

The department is managed by an elected official who is currently serving their second term. They are supported by two full-time staff members, the First Deputy and the Second Deputy. The First Deputy assumes leadership responsibilities in the absence of the elected official, ensuring continuity of operations.

Financially, the department operates with consistent revenue and expense patterns year over year, with the primary expenses being wages and benefits. The primary funding source is the fees collected for filings and document processing. Annually, approximately \$13 million passes through the department in recording fees, which are subsequently remitted to the Commonwealth. The office manages four bank accounts: two owned by the state, one that flows into the general fund, and one dedicated to a small fee for the improvement fund. The department's financial stability allows for predictable budgeting; however, the 2024 budget includes a \$28,000 increase in another category, the purpose of which requires clarification.

The office currently uses Landex as its record management system and is generally satisfied with its functionality. However, the department is facing increasing annual maintenance costs, currently at \$13,500. There is an interest in acquiring an additional feature that would alert landowners to any filings against their property for an additional \$2,000 per year, with an upfront setup fee of \$6,000. Given the rising concern over fraudulent claims, such an addition could provide significant value to the community. Landex allows remote access for users, but further enhancements could improve service delivery.

Staff retention remains a concern, primarily due to the county's below-average wage structure. Despite this challenge, the department has successfully retained skilled staff. The Register and Recorder has emphasized the importance of increasing compensation to reflect the significant financial responsibilities handled by the office and to ensure continued retention of qualified personnel.

Looking forward, the department sees opportunities to improve public access through an expanded online portal. Digitization efforts funded through ARPA have successfully scanned records; however, these documents have yet to be indexed or converted to PDF/A format for permanent archival. Completing this indexing process will significantly enhance document searchability and accessibility. The department's primary capital need is to index all previously scanned documents to facilitate efficient retrieval and ensure compliance with archival standards.

Operational goals for the department include completing the indexing of scanned documents by 2025. No formal key performance indicators (KPIs) were identified, but progress on indexing and improving public access could serve as potential metrics. The department also aims to hire an intern to assist with indexing tasks and ensure the proper storage of digitized records.

Improving internal operations is another priority, with the Register and Recorder expressing a desire for consistent department head meetings to foster communication and collaboration across county offices. Financially, the department seeks more transparent communication with the commissioners during the budget process, including dedicated budget hearings to discuss and clarify funding decisions. Strategically, succession planning is an important consideration to ensure long-term stability and continuity of leadership within the department. Given the critical nature of the office's responsibilities, developing a structured transition plan will be essential for maintaining efficiency and public trust.

Overall, the Potter County Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds office is functioning effectively but faces challenges related to increasing operational costs, staff retention, and the need for enhanced digital accessibility. Addressing these challenges through improved budgeting, strategic planning, and technological investments will ensure the department continues to provide high-quality service to the community.

## Planning

The Potter County Planning Department currently encompasses several critical functions, including planning, would-be zoning, GIS/mapping, and community development. The department is well-positioned to expand into a full-service development agency under the leadership of a director who could oversee all aspects of development, including tax claim, assessment, economic development, community development, economic development, planning, zoning, and GIS/mapping. This comprehensive approach would create a centralized resource for growth and development initiatives within the county.

One of the primary recommendations for the Planning Department is to take the lead in creating and managing a countywide Council of Governments (COG). This initiative could enhance intergovernmental collaboration, improve service delivery, and provide a unified approach to regional planning efforts. Utilizing its mapping capabilities, the department could develop a site development selection map to assist with economic development and site planning, offering a valuable resource for businesses and developers.

The department should also focus on expanding and promoting the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program to attract investment and encourage property improvements in conjunction with Tax Assessment. Additionally, the Planning Department could staff economic development aspects of various county authorities and assume full responsibility for managing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs, ensuring compliance and maximizing funding opportunities.

A significant opportunity for the department lies in the creation of a Recreation Authority to oversee the development and maintenance of recreational facilities across the county. Updating the master plan for North Fork Park and developing a countywide recreation plan would help guide future investments in outdoor amenities and tourism promotion. In 2028, the department should take the lead in updating the county's Comprehensive Plan, ensuring it reflects evolving needs and priorities. Leading up to that update, the department should develop targeted plans for recreation, community and economic development, and community risk reduction to provide a framework that can be incorporated into the larger comprehensive planning effort.

Zoning and code enforcement in the county are currently limited, with minimal coverage and enforcement capabilities. The Planning Department could play a pivotal role in developing rural-specific zoning templates and code enforcement strategies tailored to the unique needs of Potter County. Providing guidance and resources to municipalities could help foster responsible development while preserving the county's rural character.

From a GIS and mapping perspective, the department could benefit from adopting parcel fabric for more accurate land records management. Other priorities include overseeing the implementation of a universal parcel identification (Parcel ID) system, conducting an aerial imagery flyover to enhance mapping accuracy, and supporting Next Generation 911 (NextGen911) efforts to improve emergency response capabilities. These initiatives would improve data accuracy, streamline property management processes, and support critical public safety initiatives.

Additionally, the department could take a leadership role in revitalizing the Industrial Development Authority and potentially establishing a county land bank to address blight and promote economic development. These entities could serve as vital tools in the county's broader development strategy, providing resources and incentives to attract and retain businesses and residents.

By expanding its scope and capabilities, the Planning Department can become a cornerstone of the county's development efforts. With a clear vision and strategic initiatives, it has the potential to facilitate sustainable growth, enhance community amenities, and position Potter County as an attractive place to live, work, and invest. Addressing these priorities with the necessary resources and strategic planning will be essential to achieving long-term success.

## Other Agencies

### Conservation District

The Potter County Conservation District (PCCD) operates as an agency of the county, with board appointments made by the commissioners and authorization granted by Commonwealth agencies. Although it is not under the direct control of the county government, PCCD plays a role in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of land, water, and related resources and coordinates closely with Planning. Established to address local environmental concerns, the Conservation District works with state agencies, municipalities, agricultural stakeholders, and local landowners to implement conservation practices and regulatory compliance measures.

The mission of the Conservation District is to address critical environmental challenges such as soil erosion, water quality, stormwater management, and agricultural preservation. PCCD functions as a bridge between state entities such as the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, providing technical assistance, education, and regulatory support to ensure compliance with environmental policies and best practices. Key services offered by PCCD include soil and water conservation initiatives, agricultural support programs, watershed management projects, education and outreach efforts, and regulatory enforcement.

The district is led by a board-appointed District Manager, supported by a small team consisting of a Communications and Outreach Advisor, a Resource Conservationist, a Low Volume/Dirt & Gravel Road Specialist, and a Watershed Technician. This dedicated team works to implement conservation programs and address environmental issues within Potter County.

Financially, the Conservation District operates with a relatively minimal contribution from the county, approximately \$45,000, which serves as a required match to leverage state funding. The bulk of PCCD's financial resources are derived from state agency grants and program funding. While the county's contribution is modest, it remains essential for accessing broader funding opportunities that support conservation projects.

The Conservation District faces several challenges and opportunities in its operations. Revenue-generating programs such as the annual birdseed and tree sales, while beneficial for outreach and community engagement, are not designed to cover operational costs. Reviewing fee structures for services such as the Erosion and Sediment Control (ENS) plans and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits could provide additional revenue to offset rising operational expenses.

PCCD has expressed interest in enhancing its digital presence by redeveloping its website and collaborating with the County's Planning, GIS, and Mapping departments to provide more comprehensive and accessible online resources. Improving the website could support public engagement efforts and provide better access to conservation-related information.

The district also has a unique relationship with the Saulter Preserve, which is currently under county ownership but partially managed by PCCD. There is interest from the Conservation District in assuming full management responsibility for the preserve, which could provide opportunities for enhanced conservation efforts and public recreational use.

Grant writing has been identified as a significant area of need for the Conservation District. Staff have expressed a desire for the county to provide grant writing and administrative support to help secure funding for various projects, including culvert replacement initiatives, which could improve infrastructure resilience and environmental protection.

Additionally, the Conservation District is exploring opportunities to expand recreational offerings within the county. Proposals include the development of canoe and kayak launch points, the creation of hiking trail maps, and even the promotion of paragliding as a potential tourist attraction. These initiatives could boost local tourism while promoting environmental stewardship.

Other potential opportunities identified by PCCD include the development of high-end cabins along scenic vistas to support tourism and enhance revenue generation. The district also sees potential in further marketing the county's dark-sky tourism assets and promoting the unique geographic feature of the Triple Continental Divide, positioning it as a key natural attraction.

Looking forward, PCCD will require continued financial support from the county, with regular increases to match inflation and ensure sustained operations. One of the district's long-term capital goals is to establish an independent facility, moving away from the current leasing arrangement with the Redevelopment Authority. Having a dedicated facility would provide greater autonomy and space for operational growth. To improve overall operations, PCCD should focus on rebuilding its website in collaboration with the County Planning office to integrate GIS mapping tools and provide easy access to conservation resources. Exploring a recycling collection program at

minimal cost could further enhance the district's community engagement and environmental impact.

From a financial perspective, the Conservation District should review its fee schedules and adjust them in line with inflation to better reflect market conditions. Strategically, the district is well-staffed compared to similar-sized counties, with funding streams tied to factors such as dirt road mileage rather than population. Expanding staff by utilizing Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) funds could further strengthen the district's capacity and potentially introduce an assistant manager role to ensure continuity and succession planning.

Regular testing of operational procedures, checklists, and cross-training efforts should be implemented to maintain efficiency and ensure resilience in service delivery. By addressing these strategic and operational recommendations, the Potter County Conservation District can continue to fulfill its mission of conserving and enhancing the county's natural resources for future generations.

## Housing & Redevelopment Authorities

The Potter County Housing and Redevelopment Authorities serve distinct yet interconnected purposes in addressing housing and economic development needs within the county. The Housing Authority is primarily responsible for providing affordable housing options, managing public housing units, and administering rental assistance programs to support low- and moderate-income residents. Meanwhile, the Redevelopment Authority (RDA) is tasked with revitalizing blighted properties, encouraging economic growth, and fostering community development.

Despite their differing missions, the two authorities share appointed board members in common. This overlap in governance presents potential conflicts in duty and loyalty, as board members may face challenges in balancing the distinct objectives of each authority. To mitigate such conflicts and promote clear accountability, it is recommended that the county consider aligning the boards completely or restructuring them to operate independently. Aligning the boards entirely would ensure unified strategic direction and streamlined decision-making, whereas separating them would allow for a sharper focus on each authority's respective goals. That said, it would continue the theme of the RDA mostly being a tool of the Housing Authority rather than the leading force in economic development.

A significant need within the community that the Housing Authority could help with is a comprehensive housing study for the county. Conducting such a study in collaboration with the county government would provide critical insights into current housing needs, market trends, and future development opportunities. This data-driven approach would enable the Housing Authority to develop targeted strategies to address housing shortages, affordability issues, and community growth.

Currently, the Redevelopment Authority lacks a dedicated operating revenue stream, effectively limiting its role to functioning as a legal mechanism for the Housing Authority to undertake certain projects. However, the RDA has the potential to play a much larger role in addressing countywide challenges, particularly in tackling the persistent issue of blight. Blighted properties are a widespread concern across Potter County, and the RDA should take the lead in formulating and implementing a comprehensive blight remediation strategy.

Looking ahead, the county commissioners may consider recommissioning the RDA to assume a more active role in economic development. Presently, economic development efforts within the county are fragmented or lacking, and the RDA could serve as a catalyst for change. Alternately, transforming the RDA into a key component of a newly commissioned Community & Economic Development office (within Planning) could

provide the structure needed to drive growth initiatives effectively. This office could potentially oversee various funding programs, including Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Pennsylvania's Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP), and ENGAGE funding, ensuring a coordinated approach to development and investment.

The underutilization of the Redevelopment Authority is creating a vacuum in economic development efforts. While funding constraints have been cited as a limiting factor, it is evident that a new approach is necessary. The county should explore alternative funding opportunities, strategic partnerships, and proactive planning to revitalize the RDA and position it as a leading force in community and economic development. Without decisive action, the county risks continuing to miss valuable opportunities for growth and improvement.

In addition to its existing functions, the RDA could expand its scope by exploring opportunities such as conducting a lithium study to assess potential economic benefits, encouraging the establishment of distilleries, wineries, and breweries to boost tourism and local industry, and building a Revolving Loan Fund and microloan fund to support small businesses. The RDA could also play a critical role in coordinating industrial roundtables and engaging commercial businesses, looking into the feasibility of EV charging stations for both revenue generation and development purposes, and overseeing the implementation of the Community & Economic Development Plan to ensure strategic and sustainable growth for the county.

## Human Services

Potter County Human Services (PCHS) operates as a comprehensive human services system, providing a wide range of assistance to county residents under a unified administrative, fiscal, and programmatic structure. Established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Potter County Commissioners, PCHS was formed to consolidate several previously separate departments, including Children and Youth Services, the Area Agency on Aging, and Mental Health Services. The integration of these services aimed to simplify access, eliminate administrative inefficiencies, and create opportunities for cost savings by sharing resources across programs.

At one time, PCHS was part of a multi-county joinder, a structure that pooled resources and administrative oversight among multiple counties to optimize service delivery. The County may benefit from reconsidering rejoining a joinder, which could provide access to broader regional resources, enhance service availability, and potentially reduce operational costs. In the interim, aligning PCHS more closely with the County's fiscal framework would enhance financial oversight and integration. Transitioning PCHS under the County's SmartFusion fiscal system and ensuring all financial operations are conducted under the County's Employer Identification Number (EIN) would clarify its position as a county agency rather than an independent entity. Currently, PCHS operates its own bank accounts and administration which creates unhelpful separation from the County's broader structure.

PCHS is primarily funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with approximately a 10% financial match from the County's general fund. This financial model allows the County to leverage state funding to provide vital services while maintaining a relatively low local financial burden. However, careful financial planning is necessary to ensure continued sustainability and compliance with funding regulations. Efforts should be made to optimize funding utilization and explore potential additional funding sources. The services offered by PCHS cover a broad spectrum of human service needs, aimed at supporting individuals and families across all stages of life. Departments within PCHS include Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs; the Area Agency on Aging; Children & Youth Services; Coordinated Services; Early Intervention; Intellectual Disabilities; Mental Health; Medical Assistance Transportation Program; Bullying Prevention; Family Collaborative Council; Transitional Housing; and Women, Infants & Children (WIC). Each of these departments provides specialized services that address critical social and health issues facing the residents of Potter County.

Despite its broad scope of services, PCHS faces several operational challenges that should be addressed to improve service delivery and accessibility. The department's website is outdated and does not effectively serve as a resource for the community.

Given the County's recent efforts to enhance its digital presence, it is recommended that the PCHS website be integrated into the County's primary website. This integration would provide a centralized hub for residents seeking services, improve accessibility, and reduce website maintenance costs.

From an organizational standpoint, PCHS operates with a dedicated team of professionals committed to the agency's vision of creating a safe, educated, and productive Potter County. Their efforts focus on fostering an environment where individuals and families can thrive by offering support, education, and intervention services. However, staffing and resource allocation remain ongoing concerns. The County should evaluate whether staffing levels are sufficient to meet current service demands and explore opportunities to enhance recruitment and retention efforts to address workforce challenges.

The operational efficiency of PCHS can also be improved through better interdepartmental coordination and data-sharing practices. Strengthening communication between the various departments within PCHS and with other County offices would create a more seamless service experience for residents and reduce redundancies in service provision. Furthermore, investing in training and development programs for PCHS staff could help enhance their ability to respond to evolving community needs and regulatory requirements.

Looking ahead, strategic planning efforts should focus on identifying opportunities for collaboration with regional partners, expanding program offerings to meet emerging needs, and leveraging technology to improve service delivery. Engaging with stakeholders, including service recipients, community organizations, and state agencies, will be crucial in ensuring that PCHS continues to effectively serve the residents of Potter County.

Overall, while PCHS provides essential services that contribute to the well-being of Potter County residents, there are several opportunities for improvement. Addressing financial integration, enhancing digital accessibility, optimizing staffing and resources, and exploring collaborative partnerships are key areas that can help strengthen the agency's impact and sustainability.

## Multi-Year Plan Adoption & Implementation

The final step of the Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP) focuses on translating the insights and recommendations gathered throughout the process into an actionable, multi-year plan. This step represents the culmination of the program, where strategic vision meets practical execution. The multi-year plan serves as a roadmap for Potter County, outlining the priorities, objectives, and specific initiatives that will guide its operations, finances, and development over the coming years.

The adoption and implementation of this plan are critical to achieving long-term sustainability and effectiveness. It requires a collaborative commitment from county leadership, department heads, and key stakeholders to ensure alignment across all levels of government. The plan not only identifies specific actions but also sets measurable goals, timelines, and responsibilities to hold individuals and departments accountable. By formalizing this process, Potter County establishes a framework for tracking progress, adapting to changing conditions, and maintaining transparency with residents and other stakeholders. This step also marks the transition from strategic planning to active governance, laying the groundwork for a stronger, more resilient county government.

This multi-year plan is a proposed framework designed to guide Potter County toward greater sustainability, efficiency, and growth. However, it is not a static document; it should be revisited and evaluated annually, ideally as part of a broader annual strategic action plan developed by the commissioners. This regular evaluation ensures the plan remains aligned with emerging challenges and opportunities, adapting to the county's evolving needs. The situation facing the county is critical, and incremental changes may no longer suffice. It is time to take bold action, embracing innovative and potentially transformative strategies. At the same time, with limited resources, it is imperative to remain focused and prioritize carefully. Not every recommendation can or should be implemented at once. The county must be strategic, concentrating its efforts on initiatives with the greatest potential impact while laying the groundwork for future successes. Bold action tempered with clear priorities will position Potter County for resilience and growth in the years ahead.

### Themes

Potter County's declining population has created a ripple effect that impacts nearly every facet of its operations and financial sustainability. Stagnant real estate development, coupled with a dwindling tax base, has left property tax revenues unable to keep pace with inflation. Unfortunately, a smaller population does not equate to

proportionately lower costs for essential services. Instead, the county faces the dual burden of maintaining services while spreading the financial load over fewer residents. This dynamic, exacerbated by recent inflation, has left the county struggling to keep up, making it increasingly urgent to adapt its strategies with a long-term perspective.

What Potter County does today must reflect the realities of tomorrow: a future with fewer taxpayers, fewer transactions, and potentially reduced service demands. To position itself for long-term sustainability, the county must embrace several overarching themes to mitigate the challenges of population decline:

### Consolidate Positions, Offices, Cross-Train

First, the county should continually refine and pyramid its organizational structure. As vacancies arise, the county must seize the opportunity to consolidate departments (as illustrated in the drafted organizational chart) and cross-train staff to maximize flexibility and resilience. Wherever feasible, services should be outsourced on performance-based contracts, ensuring that the county pays for outcomes rather than just efforts.

### Collaborate & Outsource

Second, collaboration and consolidation with neighboring local governments should become a strategic priority. By creating a Council of Governments (COG), Potter County could not only share services with municipalities like Coudersport Borough but also partner with nearby counties such as Cameron County to achieve economies of scale. Such partnerships would enable the county to deliver services more efficiently while reducing costs and administrative redundancies.

### Invest in Community Development

Third, the county must make bold, long-term investments in economic and community development. Revitalizing initiatives like "Revitalize Potter County" or using the COG structure to spearhead collaborative development projects could help create jobs, attract residents, and stimulate local economic activity. These investments would address the root causes of population decline, offering incentives for people to live, work, and build businesses in Potter County. That should include promoting LERTA.

### Increase Revenues from Fees, Grants & Services

Finally, exploring alternate funding streams is essential to offset declining tax revenues. The county should hire a dedicated grant writer and administrator to aggressively pursue state, federal, and private grants. Evaluating and adjusting fees for county services, where appropriate, could also generate additional revenue. Additionally, the

county should seek creative, non-traditional revenue sources, such as installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations to generate user fees and attract tourism dollars.

## Primary Recommendations

In order to maximize the potential of this program, both efficacy and grant revenue, appoint an Implementation Manager (likely the Chief Clerk) as soon as possible. It is also advisable to create a STMP Task Force to advise, prioritize and implement the plan. Further, use that team to create annual strategic action plans, and apply for future Phases as soon as possible.

### Recommendation 1: Enhance Revenues

1. Raise mill rate immediately
2. Do LiDAR fly over
3. Expand and promote LERTA
4. Do countywide reassessment
5. Keep portion of TPA funds
6. Lease 911 tower space
7. Divest of excess land

### Recommendation 2: Expand Community & Economic Development

1. Revitalize Industrial Development Authority, Redevelopment Authority, and/or create Landbank Authority
2. Reactivate Revitalize Potter County
3. Get a Community & Economic Development Plan in place
4. Update Comprehensive Plan (2029-2030)

### Recommendation 3: Reform Internal Operations

1. Do results-based budgeting, capital budget
2. Implement remaining modules in fiscal software
3. Consolidate Human Services fiscal into fiscal software
4. Implement a pooled cash strategy
5. Join PLGIT or otherwise increase interest rates
6. Enhance fiscal reporting
7. Simplify Chart of Accounts
8. Centralize billing (even intra-departmental) and cost allocate
9. Go through codification process
10. Scan paper records (especially tax records)
11. Build a new, unified website (\$45k)
12. Adopt document management system (LaserFiche, CiviDocs)
13. Get a constituent (contact) relationship management system
14. Write comprehensive management system policies & procedures (too numerous to list)

15. Update employee handbook, job descriptions, and compensation plan
16. Implement ticketing systems

#### Recommendation 4: Consolidate Services

1. Decommission 911 as a department, contract with other counties
2. Study closing and alternatives to incarceration (\$12.5k)
  - a. Contract pre-trial and placement services
3. Study human services rejoining the regional joinder
4. Study sharing virtually all director positions with other counties
5. Consolidate or collocate MDJ office
6. Share employees with neighboring counties through IGA (human resources director, fiscal director, tax claim, etc.)
7. Contract grant writing and administration services

#### Recommendation 5: Cut Costs

1. Cut internal auditors benefits at next applicable election
2. Bid energy, healthcare services
3. Sell DHS building and lease back
4. Consolidate polling locations

### Comprehensive Recommendations

The following list comprises recommendations and areas for further exploration. The first column aligns with the DCED's framework for the STMP recommendations, ensuring consistency with established guidelines. The next column categorizes each recommendation to facilitate sorting and prioritization. The department area identifies the office responsible for driving the recommendation forward, while the final column presents the specific recommendation itself. This document is intended to be a dynamic resource—a starting point that can be expanded and refined over time. It should serve as a tool for the county to reference annually in the development of strategic action and work plans.

**Note: The following number listing is not in recommended order of implementation.** It was merely chronologically added to the list. The table is meant to be filtered and sorted based on the reader's interest by using the preceding columns.

Identification	Type	Department Area	Recommendation
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Policy	Planning	1. Countywide Zoning Plan, Templates, and Code Enforcement
Expenditure Reduction	Excess	Elections & Voter Registration	2. Consolidate Polling Locations/Precincts
Operational Efficiencies	Capital	Commissioners	3. Agenda/Document Retention & Management Software
Revenue Enhancement	Development	Community Development	4. Encourage more tourism events
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Study	Commissioners	5. Study consolidated services for all departments with neighboring counties & municipalities
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Commissioners	6. Codify ordinances, digitize permanent files, and implement electronic signatures
Tax Stabilization	Study	Community Development	7. Expand commercial and industrial sectors via economic development to broaden the tax base and increase revenue
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	8. Create financial reports to support Commissioners' decision-making (various sub-tasks)
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	9. Move Human Services funds/departments under the County fiscal system and EIN, collaborating with the pooled cash strategy
Tax Stabilization	Capital	Tax Assessment	10. Reassessment and CAMA Software
Operational Efficiencies	Study	Commissioners	11. Compensation philosophy, study, plan, and implementation
Expenditure Reduction	Excess	Fiscal	12. Bid out Health Insurance & Energy biannually
Revenue Enhancement	Staffing	Planning	13. Grant Writing & Administration Position
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Commissioners	14. Government Management System
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	Community Development	15. Small Business Ecosystem (Market Village, coworking, incubator) with Wilds Cooperative
Operational Efficiencies	Capital	Fiscal	16. Capital Improvement Plan / Multi-Year Capital Plan with volatility analysis and SOP
Expenditure Reduction	Capital	Fiscal	17. Sell buildings (especially DHS) and lease back
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	18. Comprehensive Budgeting
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	19. Revise chart of accounts (current setup hinders reporting)
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Commissioners	20. Multi-year, annual, and monthly strategic planning & performance-driven meetings (including department heads)
Tax Stabilization	Development	Planning	21. Create a Land Bank / Recharge the RDA, IDA
Tax Stabilization	Capital	GIS & Mapping	22. Universal Parcel ID Project
Tax Stabilization	Capital	GIS & Mapping	23. Aerial Imagery (Oblique)
Tax Stabilization	Development	Community Development	24. Update the Potter County Heritage Communities Program
Tax Stabilization	Capital	GIS & Mapping	25. Parcel Fabric Project

Intergovernmental Cooperation	Staffing		26. Shared services/positions with other counties & municipal governments
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Human Resources	27. Train and upskill staff to use artificial intelligence in their roles
Tax Stabilization	Study	Community Development	28. Countywide Housing Study & Development Plan
Operational Efficiencies	Culture	Commissioners	29. Commissioners liaise with departments
Tax Stabilization	Development	Community Development	30. <a href="https://www.waynetomorrow.com/">Revitalize Potter County (akin to https://www.waynetomorrow.com/)</a>
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Commissioners	31. Communication Plan / SOP (assign PR, PIO, website, etc.)
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Information Technology	32. New website, .gov domain, and payment gateways (county, human services, tourism)
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	33. Credit Card Policy & Issuance
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Fiscal	34. Proper training on the fiscal software (SmartFusion) for budgets, expense reports, etc.
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Information Technology	35. Appropriate cross-departmental information access
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	36. Fiscal communication to all on fund interactions and approval processes
Expenditure Reduction	Policy	Commissioners	37. Acknowledge various department weeks (e.g., Public Safety Week)
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Commissioners	38. Pass a fee schedule for facility rentals, copies, etc.
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Commissioners	39. Pass tax increases aligned with inflation
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Commissioners	40. Set KPIs for the county and its departments
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Commissioners	41. Contact relationship management (e.g., Zoho) to maintain contact info and enable reverse 911
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Commissioners	42. Cell Phone Reimbursement Policy
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Commissioners	43. COOP and/or Building/Safety Plan
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	Community Development	44. Tourist attraction enhancements/marketing
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	Community Development	45. FFEE or Ice House-like programs
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	46. Promote living in Potter County among urban residents for remote work
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	47. Promote staying in Potter County for students by highlighting local career opportunities
Revenue Enhancement	Study	Community Development	48. Study population decline/brain drain and implement strategies (e.g., coworking space, PA Wilds Branding Guide)
Revenue Enhancement	Study	Community Development	49. Investigate barriers for non-white individuals living or working in the county
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	50. Encourage cooperation/consolidation of nonprofits serving the community, guided by commissioner strategic planning
Revenue Enhancement	Study	Community Development	51. Investigate ways to reduce drug overdoses
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	52. Guide students and adults toward careers providing wages above poverty level
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	53. Encourage hunting camp owners to spend more time in the county or become permanent residents
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	54. Establish a business roundtable to share job opportunities
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	55. Initiate a “buy local” campaign
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	56. Enhance historic, cultural, scenic, and outdoor sites/events to increase activities

Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Community Development	57. Promote PennDOT road improvements to interstates/population centers (truck- and tourist-friendly)
Revenue Enhancement	Study	Economic Development	58. Conduct a lithium study
Revenue Enhancement	Culture	Economic Development	59. Encourage distilleries, wineries, and breweries
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Fiscal	60. Provide high public transparency via public-facing software
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Fiscal	61. Hold biweekly fiscal and HR meetings
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Fiscal	62. Join PLIGIT, adopt pooled cash, and close multiple bank accounts
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	63. Document fund sources and permitted uses
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	64. Consolidate departments (e.g., Tax Claim & Assessment)
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	65. Reduce the median interest rate assumption from 7.5% to 7.25% or 7.0% for pension fund funding ratio calculations
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	66. Maintain employee contribution interest at 5.5%
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	67. Continue meeting 100% or more of all actuarially determined contributions
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Human Resources	68. Update the handbook
Operational Efficiencies	Culture	Human Resources	69. Create a recruitment & retention account/allocation
Operational Efficiencies	Culture	Human Resources	70. Move Coordinator role from Executive Secretary
Operational Efficiencies	Culture	Human Resources	71. Promote EAP and telehealth services
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Human Resources	**
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Human Services	
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	72. Hire a dedicated HR employee (SHRM-certified or similar)
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	73. Investigate ways to reduce Lyme disease exposure, including public warnings
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	74. Compulsory cybersecurity training with monitored completion to ensure users stay updated, as one click can let hackers in
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	75. Enforce complex, regularly changed passwords (length, upper/lowercase, numbers, special characters) to limit hacker access
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	76. Implement multi-factor authentication (MFA) for internal and external access; provide alternatives where phones aren't allowed
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	77. Use the "least access necessary" principle to limit exposure if accounts are compromised
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	78. Ensure outside vendors monitor evolving cybersecurity, freeing internal staff to focus on local needs
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	79. Update older terminal-access software to web-based systems, reducing potential breaches
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	80. Obtain cybersecurity insurance to cover incident costs and provide specialists; don't wait until after a breach
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	81. Use a separate VLAN for guest traffic to protect the primary network from malicious code
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Information Technology	82. Regularly test backups and keep them long enough to restore a "clean" state without major data loss
Operational Efficiencies	Capital	Maintenance	83. Develop an incident response plan; document each event, root cause, and corrective actions
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Planning	84. Utilize external resources (CCAP, NIST, DHS-SLCGP)

Operational Efficiencies	Exesss	Prothonotary, Clerk of Courts & Orphan's Court	85. Private meeting space for planning; add a secure wall
Operational Efficiencies	Exesss	Prothonotary, Clerk of Courts & Orphan's Court	86. Shared fleet vehicles to limit liability and increase usage (departments may resist)
Operational Efficiencies	Capital	Safety & Security	87. Consider adding staff to handle redactions for public access
Operational Efficiencies	Capital	Safety & Security	88. Consider adding file storage for hearing documents
Revenue Enhancement	Policy	Treasurer	89. Install Panic Buttons
Tax Stabilization	Policy	Tax Assessment	90. Install a facility-wide camera system
Tax Stabilization	Policy	Tax Assessment	91. Audit TPA funds and enforce the Short-Term Rental Ordinance
Operational Efficiencies	Capital	Treasurer	92. Consolidate building/demolition permits per Act 41 of 2022
Revenue Enhancement	Culture	Community Development	93. Adopt countywide rules for assessment notification
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	94. Adopt a POS system for fees (currently mostly cash/check only)
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Commissioners	95. Promote tourism assets (e.g., Purple Lizard maps, Denton GO, ATV/Susquehannock trails, Lumber Museum, Dark Skies, Route 6/Lumber Heritage)
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Commissioners	96. Develop comprehensive SOPs, including payroll policy
Revenue Enhancement	Staffing	Planning	97. Solicitor pay (\$100k): investigate judicial determination
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Maintenance	98. Meeting rules and enforcement
Operational Efficiencies	Culture	Commissioners	99. Bring CDBG administration and fees back to the county
Operational Efficiencies	Study	Commissioners	100. Implement a maintenance ticketing system
Operational Efficiencies	Study	Commissioners	101. Create a succession plan
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Human Resources	102. Study rejoining the DHS Joinder
Operational Efficiencies	Culture	Human Resources	103. Assess feasibility of closing the jail
Operational Efficiencies	Exesss	Planning	104. Demonstrate "ghost benefits" value on paychecks
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Human Resources	105. Implement Active Directory (currently not in use?)
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Human Resources	106. Consolidate Planning, GIS/Mapping, and Community Development; add Economic Development (possibly include Tax Assessment/Tax Claim)
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Emergency Management	107. Implement a universal timekeeping system (FLSA compliance, full costing)
Expenditure Reduction	Exesss	Commissioners	108. Conduct 360 reviews and performance evaluations (SOP changes needed)
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Fiscal	109. Perform safety/security walk-throughs and maintain a punch list
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Information Technology	110. Divest county-owned land
Tax Stabilization	Capital	Commissioners	111. Adopt performance-based contracting
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Study	Emergency Management	112. Conduct regular technology analysis & investment
Revenue Enhancement	Performance	Fiscal	113. Raise property taxes

Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	Planning	114. Conduct Fire/EMS study & potential consolidation; pursue Community Risk Reduction
Expenditure Reduction	Capital	Maintenance	115. Retain a portion of TPA funding
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Capital	Jail	116. Create a recreation authority and update the North Fork Park master plan (consider a countywide plan)
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Capital	Commissioners	117. Address building needs (windows, roofs, elevators, etc.)
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Human Resources	118. Establish a men’s rehabilitation center
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Human Resources	119. Hire a downtown manager (boroughs share cost)
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	Community Development	120. Promote tuition reimbursement/loan forgiveness programs
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	Community Development	121. Complete an audit of HR files, document retention, etc.
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	Community Development	122. Expand child programming (e.g., Boys & Girls Club)
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	E-911	123. Improve public transit responsiveness
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Human Resources	124. Establish an endowment/community foundation for non-county community needs
Revenue Enhancement	Staffing	Economic Development	125. Reallocate 911 funding; fully contract with Tioga
Revenue Enhancement	Development	Planning	126. Offer training in conflict management, mediation, project management, etc. for employees and municipalities
Tax Stabilization	Development	Community Development	127. Hire an Economic Development Coordinator (consider bifurcating RDA)
Revenue Enhancement	Development	Community Development	128. Expand LERTA to housing and promote it
Tax Stabilization	Development	Community Development	129. Establish a revolving loan fund for gap financing of housing developments/house builds
Tax Stabilization	Development	Community Development	130. Install EV Charging Station(s)
Tax Stabilization	Development	Community Development	131. Enhance senior programming/center (via AAA)
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Study	Planning	132. Create a site/development selection map
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Development	Community Development	133. Consider a tech center for adults and students
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Performance	Probation	134. Update the Regional Comprehensive Plan
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Performance	E-911	135. Develop a Council of Governments
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Commissioners	136. Create Pre-Trial & Rehabilitation Services (possibly nonprofit)
Operational Efficiencies	Staffing	Human Resources	137. Lease tower space on 911 towers
Revenue Enhancement	Development	Community Development	138. Provide training & conferences for elected officials
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Fiscal	139. Conduct collective bargaining

Operational Efficiencies	Performance	E-911	140. Create a Community & Economic Development Plan
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Fiscal	141. Review fee schedules
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Access to Public	E-911	142. SavyCitizen (Reverse 911)/CRM/CodeRed
Operational Efficiencies	Policy	Fiscal	143. Perform reconciliations
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Information Technology	144. Implement countywide 911 addressing (including unnamed private drives)
Operational Efficiencies	Performance	Register of Wills & Recorder of Deeds	145. Ensure ADA-compliant website and public access
Operational Efficiencies	Access to Public	Register of Wills & Recorder of Deeds	146. Implement an IT ticketing system
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Culture	Conservation District	147. Consider ownership transfer of Saulter to PCCD
Operational Efficiencies	Culture	Conservation District	148. Support PCCD in building its own educational / office
Operational Efficiencies	Access to Public	Conservation District	149. Integrate PCCD website into County's website.

# Appendices