

3. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following describes existing conditions for Warren County's socioeconomic situation; land use patterns and transportation network; and natural, cultural and historic resources.

I. SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A. Population

Warren County has experienced a wide range of population change over the past decade as illustrated below in **Table 1** below. Its geographic location and proximity to key employment centers were contributing factors.

TABLE 1 – POPULATION: 1990 AND 2000

Municipality	2000 Population	1990 Population	% Increase 1990- 2000
Warren County	102,437	91,607	12
Allamuchy	3,877	3,484	11
Alpha	2,482	2,530	-2
Belvidere	2,771	2,669	4
Blairstown	5,747	5,331	8
Franklin	2,768	2,404	15
Frelinghuysen	2,083	1,779	17
Greenwich	4,365	1,899	130
Hackettstown	8,984	8,120	12
Hardwick	1,464	1,235	17
Harmony	2,729	2,653	3
Hope	1,891	1,719	10
Independence	5,603	3,940	42
Knowlton	2,977	2,543	17
Liberty	2,765	2,493	11
Lopatcong	5,765	5,052	14
Mansfield	8,072	7,154	11
Oxford	2,307	1,790	29
Phillipsburg	15,166	15,757	-4
Pohatcong	3,416	3,591	-5
Washington Borough	6,712	6,474	4
Washington Township	6,248	5,367	16
White	4,245	3,603	18
Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau			

In 2000, the County had a population of 102,437. This represents a 12% growth since 1990. With the exception of three townships, all municipalities within the County grew during 1990 to 2000. The Township of Greenwich had a 130% increase in population representing the largest increase in the County. The Township of Independence and the Township of Oxford each had the next highest population growth with 42% and 29%, respectively.

The three municipalities that experienced a decrease in population are adjacent to each other in the southwest portion of the County. Pohatcong experienced the largest decline with a 5% decrease in population between 1990 and 2000. Phillipsburg had a 4% decrease in population and Alpha had a 2% decline in population.

B. Population Projections

Warren County developed population projections based on trends in the U.S. Census of Population, building permits, the build out analysis discussed in Chapter 4 and the Highlands Act. The County's population is expected to increase to 136,666 persons by the year 2030. This represents a steady increase in population. According to the Warren County projections, all municipalities are projected to grow through the year 2030. **Table 2** (see next page) shows population projections for each municipality located within Warren County. Population forecasts are important in gauging potential population growth into the future. This can assist in planning land uses as well as planning for sufficient infrastructure and services.

C. Income and Poverty

The median household income in Warren County in 1999 was \$56,100 as shown in **Table 3** (see page 13). The Township of Greenwich had the highest median household income of all municipalities with \$87,613. Washington Township (\$77,458), Frelinghuysen (\$72,434) and Hardwick (\$72,167) had the next highest median incomes. The lowest median household income in Warren County was \$37,368 and can be found in Phillipsburg. Alpha and Washington Borough also had comparatively low median household incomes with \$42,209 and \$47,000, respectively.

As Table 3 illustrates, approximately 5.4% of persons in Warren County were below poverty as defined by the U.S. Census. The U.S. Census determines poverty by using a set of money income thresholds that vary according to family size and composition. The 2000 poverty rate for the U.S. was 10.1%. Allamuchy had the lowest percentage of persons below poverty at 1.8%, while Phillipsburg had the highest percentage of persons below poverty at 13.4%. In addition to Phillipsburg, high percentages of people below poverty tended to be focused in the more densely populated areas of the County such as Alpha (7.6%), Lopatcong (6.4%) and Washington Borough (5.6%).

TABLE 2 – POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Municipality	2000	2005	2010	2020	2030
Warren County	102,437	112,206	116,436	126,834	136,666
Allamuchy	3,877	4,077	4,233	4,727	5,288
Alpha	2,482	2,534	2,623	2,960	3,123
Belvidere	2,771	2,821	2,920	3,296	3,703
Blairstown	5,747	6,092	6,312	7,120	8,001
Franklin	2,768	3,227	3,350	3,743	4,188
Frelinghuysen	2,083	2,215	2,307	2,596	2,921
Greenwich	4,365	5,380	5,601	6,293	6,700
Hackettstown	8,984	9,545	9,926	9,936	9,967
Hardwick	1,464	1,630	1,699	1,911	2,151
Harmony	2,729	2,863	2,951	3,269	6,621
Hope	1,891	1,986	2,065	2,325	2,615
Independence	5,603	5,885	6,043	6,685	7,389
Knowlton	2,977	3,201	3,348	3,759	4,234
Liberty	2,765	2,967	3,039	3,301	3,568
Lopatcong	5,765	8,119	8,629	8,930	8,930
Mansfield	8,072	8,682	8,941	9,936	11,033
Oxford	2,307	2,658	2,742	3,035	3,361
Phillipsburg	15,166	15,387	15,923	16,455	16,455
Pohatcong	3,416	3,487	3,565	3,897	4,253
Washington Borough	6,712	7,016	7,290	8,212	9,035
Washington Township	6,248	6,914	7,243	8,096	9,102
White	4,245	5,521	5,772	6,352	7,029
Source: Warren County Planning Department					

TABLE 3 – INCOME AND POVERTY

Municipality	Median HH Income	# Persons Below Poverty	% Persons Below Poverty
Warren County	\$56,100	5,492	5.4%
Allamuchy	\$70,107	71	1.8%
Alpha	\$42,209	187	7.6%
Belvidere	\$52,792	93	3.4%
Blairstown	\$64,809	261	4.5%
Franklin	\$69,115	86	3.1%
Frelinghuysen	\$72,434	46	2.3%
Greenwich	\$87,613	106	2.4%
Hackettstown	\$51,955	475	4.8%
Hardwick	\$72,167	38	2.6%
Harmony	\$60,977	122	4.5%
Hope	\$61,319	36	1.9%
Independence	\$67,247	158	2.8%
Knowlton	\$63,409	103	3.5%
Liberty	\$62,535	95	3.5%
Lopatcong	\$50,918	350	6.4%
Mansfield	\$61,763	251	3.9%
Oxford	\$53,359	92	4.0%
Phillipsburg	\$37,368	2,009	13.4%
Pohatcong	\$52,189	148	4.3%
Washington Borough	\$47,000	375	5.6%
Washington Township	\$77,458	189	3.1%
White	\$54,732	201	4.9%
Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau. Please note that some figures may reflect inaccurate Census counts in Hackettstown and Mansfield.			

D. Economic Statistics

As shown below in **Table 4** below, between 1990 and 2000, Warren County experienced a 2.75% growth in private sector employment. This represented a relatively slow growth in comparison with New Jersey, which experienced a 9.84% increase during the same time period. During 2001, the annual average employment included 49,400 jobs. The total labor force included an annual average of 51,200 residents. The unemployment rate for Warren County was 3.6% in 2001, which remained below the state unemployment rate of 4.2%. In addition, due to its growing population, employment in retail trade in Warren County is anticipated to continue to expand.

Also shown in **Table 4** are manufacturer's shipments and retail sales. Manufacturer's shipments in Warren County for 1997 were upwards of \$1.982 billion and retail sales, according to the NJ Department of labor, were more than \$862 million.

TABLE 4 – ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT DATA

Category	Warren County	New Jersey	County % of NJ Total
Private sector employment, percent change 1990-2000	2.75%	9.84%	NA
Labor force (2001 annual average)	51,200	4,179,500	1.2%
Employed Residents (2001 annual average)	49,400	4,003,800	1.2%
Unemployed Residents (2001 annual average)	1,800	175,700	1.0%
Unemployment Rate (%) (2001 annual average)	3.6%	4.2%	NA
Manufacturers shipments (\$1,000), 1997	\$1,982,259	\$97,060,800	0.2%
Retail sales (\$1,000), 1997	\$862,193	\$79,914,892	1.1%
Retail sales per capita, 1997	\$8,789	\$9,922	NA
Minority-owned firms, 1997	479	102,295	0.5%
Women-owned firms, 1997	1,587	155,345	1.0%
Source: Warren County Fact Sheet, NJ Department of Labor			

E. Local Finances

Warren County maintains a countywide Abstract of Ratables (i.e., income from taxes). The abstract indicates a significant change in the mix of ratables over the past two decades. In 1985, the six leading taxpayers were national companies involved in manufacturing. In 2000, only three among the top six were manufacturers. Of the largest 25 taxpayers, only eight were manufacturers, with shopping centers, apartment complexes, utilities and nursing homes representing the majority.

The largest tax paying entity in Warren County is the Merrill Creek Reservoir, a 1.1 square mile reservoir built by a consortium of seven regional electric utilities. Mandated by the Delaware River Basin Commission and completed in 1988, the reservoir holds water that can be used to replenish the river during times of drought, replacing the water used by the power companies at their generating facilities along the Delaware River. The Reservoir includes a 290-acre nature preserve and a visitor's center that are open to the public.

Warren County's equalized property valuation for 2004 is approximately \$9.2 billion in comparison with a 2000 equalized property valuation of approximately \$6.2 billion.

F. Housing Characteristics

As shown in **Table 5** (see next page), the county had 41,157 total housing units and a vacancy rate of 6.1% in 2000. There were 38,660 occupied housing units and 2,497 vacant units. Vacancy rates in all municipalities ranged from 2.9% to 11.8%. Independence had the lowest rate (2.9%). Mansfield and Washington Township had the next lowest vacancy rates each with 3.4%. The highest vacancy rate is found in Lopatcong at 11.8%. Liberty, Knowlton and Phillipsburg have the second and third highest vacancy rates with 9.9%, 9.4% and 9.1%, respectively. The higher vacancy rates in Liberty and Knowlton are most likely due to the high number of seasonal housing units.

Of the occupied housing units in Warren County, 28,109 (73%) were owner-occupied while the remaining 10,551 (27%) were renter occupied. Most municipalities in Warren County had a relatively high percentage of owner-occupied housing units. Greenwich had the highest percentage of owner-occupied units with 92%, while Washington Borough had the lowest percent of owner-occupied units with 52%.

TABLE 5 – HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Municipality	Housing Units	Occupied Units	Vacant Units	Vacancy Rate	Owner-Occupied Units	% Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied Units	% Renter Occupied
Warren County	41,157	38,660	2,497	6.1%	28,109	73%	10,551	27%
Allamuchy	1,774	1,692	82	4.6%	1,439	85%	253	15%
Alpha	1,034	989	45	4.4%	703	71%	286	29%
Belvidere	1,165	1,088	77	6.6%	727	67%	361	33%
Blairstown	2,136	2,040	96	4.5%	1,737	85%	303	15%
Franklin	1,019	972	47	4.6%	843	87%	129	13%
Frelinghuysen	755	722	33	4.4%	638	88%	84	12%
Greenwich	1,477	1,421	56	3.8%	1,310	92%	111	8%
Hackettstown	3,788	3,603	185	4.9%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hardwick	530	502	28	5.3%	452	90%	50	10%
Harmony	1,076	1,010	66	6.1%	892	88%	118	12%
Hope	747	697	50	6.7%	622	89%	75	11%
Independence	2,210	2,146	64	2.9%	1,693	79%	453	21%
Knowlton	1,135	1,028	107	9.4%	898	87%	130	13%
Liberty	1,088	980	108	9.9%	872	89%	108	11%
Lopatcong	2,429	2,143	286	11.8%	1,635	76%	508	24%
Mansfield	2,974	2,811	163	3.4%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Oxford	938	886	52	5.5%	746	84%	140	16%
Phillipsburg	6,651	6,044	607	9.1%	3,448	57%	2,596	43%
Pohatcong	1,411	1,341	70	5.0%	1,162	87%	179	13%
Washington Borough	2,876	2,724	152	5.3%	1,411	52%	1,313	48%
Washington Township	2,174	2,099	75	3.4%	1,877	89%	222	11%
White	1,770	1,668	102	5.8%	1,328	80%	340	20%
Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, Warren County Planning Department. NA=Data Not Available								

In comparison with the State of New Jersey in 2000, Warren County had a higher percentage of owner-occupied units as shown in **Table 6** below. For the state, 65% of all occupied units were owner-occupied. Warren County also had a lower vacancy rate than New Jersey. New Jersey had a 2000 vacancy rate of 7.5% in comparison with the County's 6.1% vacancy rate.

TABLE 6 – COMPARISON OF HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS:
WARREN COUNTY AND NEW JERSEY

Area	Total Housing Units	Occupied Units	Vacant Units	Vacancy Rate	Owner-Occupied Units	% Owner-Occupied
Warren County	41,157	38,660	2,497	6.1%	28,109	73%
New Jersey	3,310,275	3,064,645	245,630	7.5%	1,813,381	65%
Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau						

As **Table 7** illustrates below, the total number of residential housing units authorized to be built in the County between 2000 and 2003 was 3,123 units.

TABLE 7 - TOTAL RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED 200-2003

Municipality	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Warren County	896	765	877	585	3,123
Allamuchy	13	11	4	32	60
Alpha	1	3	1	4	9
Belvidere	1	5	0	1	7
Blairstown	28	29	23	15	95
Franklin	57	56	25	13	151
Frelinghuysen	6	8	12	12	38
Greenwich	129	83	39	15	266
Hackettstown	111	3	22	13	149
Hardwick	15	17	7	14	53
Harmony	5	11	12	10	38
Hope	7	14	4	5	30
Independence	30	21	10	11	72
Knowlton	10	12	19	22	63
Liberty	15	12	23	15	65
Lopatcong	246	231	392	108	977
Mansfield	28	24	25	25	102
Oxford	49	38	21	14	122
Phillipsburg	11	9	5	3	28
Pohatcong	1	4	2	8	15
Washington Borough	0	20	37	46	103
Washington Township	15	34	72	82	203
White	118	120	122	117	477
Source: NJ Department of Labor					

Lopatcong Township had the highest number of housing units authorized between 2000 and 2003 with 977; far exceeding the next two municipalities with the highest number of housing units authorized: White Township with 477 and Greenwich Township with 266. Approximately 48% of the total number of units authorized (1,484) were in the southern region of the county followed by the central region with 1,348 or 43% of the units authorized, and the northern region with 282 or 9% of the units authorized. Following Greenwich Township there were five municipalities that had between 100 and 200 units authorized; Washington Township (192), Franklin (151), Hackettstown (150), Oxford (124), and Mansfield (102) and all but one of these municipalities Franklin Township were in the central region. Belvidere with 7 and Alpha with 9 had the lowest number of approved housing units authorized. The vast majority of housing units approved in the county during this time were single-family units.

A variety of housing and settings are available within the county. Settings range from urban or suburban communities to rural areas (see **Table 8** on next page). According to www.warrennet.org, housing values range from \$60,000 to \$600,000. This wide diversity of housing and settings, in addition to the relative affordability of Warren County has enabled people at all income levels to achieve home ownership. Land and taxes are less expensive in Warren County than in other areas of northern New Jersey.

New developments are generally located in the southern portion of the county near I-78. The northern part of the county, which is crossed by I-80, is still primarily made up of large sites with custom-built homes. New developments are often close to existing communities and accessible to highways, schools and shopping by automobile.

Warren County's housing stock also includes 1,251 units for affordable housing according to the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). These are in accordance with the affordable housing requirements set forth in the New Jersey Supreme Court ruling in Southern Burlington County NAACP versus the Township of Mount Laurel. According to the *Guide to Affordable Housing in New Jersey*, there are 22 developments in 10 municipalities within the County providing family, senior and handicapped housing. Affordable housing units can be found in Alpha, Belvidere, Greenwich, Hackettstown, Lopatcong, Oxford, Phillipsburg, Washington Borough, Washington Township and White. Of the 1,251 affordable units, all are rental units with the exception of 70 family units in Greenwich that are saleable.

The New Jersey COAH has established regional income limits for 2003. Warren County along with Essex, Morris and Union Counties form Region 2. **Table 9** (see next page) illustrates the income limits for Region 2.

TABLE 8 - HOUSING TYPES

Municipality	1 Unit Detached	%	1 Unit Attached	%	2 Units	%	3 or 4 Units	%	5-9 Units	%	10-19 Units	%	20 or More Units	%	Mobile Home etc.	%	Total
Warren County	27,216	66.1	4,634	11.3	2,384	5.8	1,447	3.5	1,549	3.8	1,864	4.5	1,593	3.9	470	1.1	41,157
Allamuchy	746	42.1	788	44.4	39	2.2	39	2.2	125	7.0	19	1.1	18	1.0	0		1,774
Alpha	626	60.5	136	13.1	107	10.3	70	6.8	34	3.3	27	2.6	35	3.4	0	0.0	1,034
Belvidere	709	60.9	81	7.0	102	8.8	105	9.0	93	8.0	32	2.7	43	3.7	0	0.0	1,165
Blairstown	1,907	89.3	29	1.4	117	5.5	36	1.7	28	1.3	7	0.3	7	0.3	5	0.2	2,136
Franklin	895	87.8	27	2.6	25	2.5	25	2.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	47	4.6	1,019
Frelinghuysen	726	96.2	8	1.1	13	1.7	2	0.3	2	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	0.5	755
Greenwich	1,326	89.8	52	3.5	64	4.3	35	2.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1,477
Hackettstown	1,915	44.1	257	5.9	334	7.7	266	6.1	412	9.5	727	16.7	429	9.9	7	0.2	4,347
Hardwick	501	94.5	16	3.0	6	1.1	7	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	530
Harmony	1,033	96.0	17	1.6	16	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	0.9	1,076
Hope	719	96.3	11	1.5	11	1.5	4	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.3	747
Independence	1,200	54.3	554	25.1	51	2.3	72	3.3	71	3.2	128	5.8	120	5.4	14	0.6	2,210
Knowlton	1,001	88.0	12	1.1	40	3.5	12	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	73	6.4	1,138
Liberty	951	87.6	25	2.3	37	3.4	5	0.5	0	0.0	5	0.5	0	0.0	62	5.7	1,085
Lopatcong	1,873	77.1	100	4.1	38	1.6	8	0.3	55	2.3	195	8.0	160	6.6	0	0.0	2,429
Mansfield	1,687	69.9	222	9.2	66	2.7	68	2.8	65	2.7	191	7.9	84	3.5	32	1.3	2,415
Oxford	669	71.3	110	11.7	18	1.9	20	2.1	12	1.3	6	0.6	9	1.0	94	10.0	938
Phillipsburg	2,801	42.1	1,584	23.8	788	11.8	470	7.1	385	5.8	201	3.0	422	6.3	0	0.0	6,651
Pohatcong	1,217	86.3	107	7.6	26	1.8	42	3.0	19	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1,411
Washington Borough	1,314	45.7	380	13.2	385	13.4	149	5.2	217	7.5	215	7.5	216	7.5	0	0.0	2,876
Washington Township	1,973	90.8	103	4.7	55	2.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	0.3	36	1.7	2,174
White	1,427	80.6	16	0.9	46	2.6	12	0.7	31	1.8	111	6.3	43	2.4	84	4.7	1,770

TABLE 9 – 2003 REGIONAL INCOME LIMITS
REGION 2: ESSEX, MORRIS, UNION & WARREN COUNTIES

	1-person	2-person	3-person	4-person	5-person
Median	\$56,210	\$64,240	\$72,270	\$80,300	\$86,724
Moderate	\$44,968	\$51,392	\$57,816	\$64,240	\$69,379
Low	\$28,105	\$32,120	\$36,135	\$40,150	\$43,362
Source: Council on Affordable Housing (COAH)					

A moderate household income as defined by COAH is 80% of the median household income. A low household income is 50% of the median household income.

G. Educational Facilities

Warren County has multiple educational facilities providing elementary, secondary and college level educational opportunities. The county has eight secondary educational schools - six are public and two are private. A county operated vocational-technical high school is one of the public schools. Private schools include Blair Academy in Blairstown and the Good Shepherd Christian Academy in Washington Township. There are 34 public elementary and middle schools. In addition, there are eight private elementary and middle schools. **Table 10** identifies the educational facilities within Warren County.

TABLE 10 – EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES IN WARREN COUNTY

Educational Facilities	Number of Facilities
Public Elementary Schools	34
Private Elementary Schools	8
Public High Schools	6
Private High Schools	2
Four-year Colleges	1
Two-year Colleges	1
Source: www.warrennet.org	

Warren County Technical School was established in 1959 and offers a full array of technical and vocational training as well as basic educational courses. Located in Franklin Township, the school has an excellent job placement percentage for its graduates, and is generally highly regarded among employers.

There are two institutions of higher learning in the county. These are Centenary College, a four-year college in Hackettstown, and Warren County Community College, a two-year college located in Franklin Township. In addition to educational facilities located within Warren County, there are sixteen colleges within a 50-mile radius of the county.

Warren County Community College was founded in 1981 and opened its permanent campus along Route 57 in Washington Township in 1996. The College offers a range of programs, including transfer degrees to four-year institutions, associate degrees and certificates in several career fields, on-line courses, and a variety of community services.

The Community College and the Technical School have merged to form a Center for Career and Personal Development. The Center offers short-term training and adult education courses. In addition, the Community College hosts the Skylands Small Business Development Center. The Business Development Center is an organization that provides counseling, training and information to small businesses in a five-county area.