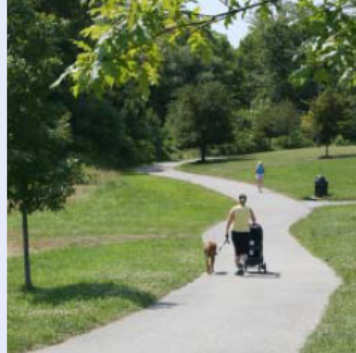


Chester County Planning Commission Annual Report

2009



Our Mission

The Mission of the Chester County Planning Commission is to provide future growth and preservation plans to citizens, so they can enjoy a Chester County that is historic, green, mobile, and prosperous.

The Planning Commission has evolved into a modern, professionally staffed, planning organization that utilizes specialized knowledge and training, along with the latest techniques and technology, to plan for the future of Chester County. The Planning Commission and its staff work in partnership with federal, state, and regional agencies and municipal governments to fulfill a mission that is devoted to preserving and improving the quality of life for all Chester County residents.



Chester County Board of Commissioners

Carol Aichele
Terence Farrell
Kathi Cozzone



.....
 C H E S T E R C O U N T Y P L A N N I N G C O M M I S S I O N

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leadership

Chairman's message— year in review

*O*n behalf of the members of the Chester County Planning Commission, I am pleased to introduce the 2009 Annual Report, a summary of the work efforts by the various divisions of the Chester County Planning Commission.

The work of the Landscapes2 Steering Committee members was accepted with great accolades in November when the final version of the updated comprehensive plan was adopted by the Chester County Board of Commissioners. The commissioners acknowledged the collaborative efforts of citizens, public official representatives, and of the county's own planning professionals whose efforts produced the updated land use policy for Chester County. They applauded its vision for balancing growth with preservation and they praised the fact that it fully coincides with the county's strategic planning goals.

Introducing Landscapes2 via its own website expands the use of the internet as a communication tool. The plan and its many resources become easily available to municipalities and to interested citizens as they address their own planning issues. Planning Commission staff continues to use innovative technology in order to provide commission members and the public with visual data— graphs and maps— that aid in the interpretation of development and population trends.

While the 2009 Annual Report summarizes last year's accomplishments, it is appropriate to look back at the trends of the decade now concluding. Though the county experienced growth in several areas— population, number of houses, and number of jobs, that growth was managed with the aid of the original Landscapes. The median price of houses increased and household income rose significantly. Improvements were made to major roadway systems and rail ridership expanded.

In spite of the recent economic slow-down, our county remains attractive to businesses and to those who want to live here. Chester County was named by Forbes.com as one of the top ten places to raise a family, a tribute

to the coordinated efforts of those who have governed the county and its individual municipalities, to those who have preserved open space and encouraged the principles of smart growth, and to those who have worked to promote cooperative land use planning.

As a new decade begins and the Planning Commission begins its work implementing Landscapes2, we will begin with a review of the Vision Partnership Program. Amendments made will reflect its successes and will encourage continued joint efforts among the county's municipalities.

Planning Commission members understand that good planning with good government will help us to retain the quality of life that we have worked so hard to achieve. We remain committed to assisting the county commissioners and the Planning Commission staff in this important work.



Judy L. DiFilippo
Chairman
Chester County Planning Commission





Judy L. DiFilippo
Chairman

Resident:
Tredyffrin Township

Occupation:
Public official

Affiliations:
Member, Tredyffrin Township Board of Supervisors; Past President, Chester County Association of Township Officials; Member, Paoli Intermodal Transit Center Study Committee; Member, Chester County 2020 Board.

Appointed:
June 2002



Nancy Mohr
Vice-chairman

Resident:
Newlin Township

Occupation:
Chester County 2020, President; Writer/Consultant

Affiliations:
Founder, former consultant, Brandywine Conservancy's Headwaters Area Conservation Program; Green Space Alliance Board Member; Keep Farming First; Master Planner Program; Community Conversations Program.

Appointed:
June 1998



Ann C.M. Abbott
Resident:

Highland Township

Occupation:
Commercial horse breeder and farmer

Affiliations:
Highland Township Planning Commission

Appointed:
June 2005



Mark J. Blair
Resident:

West Bradford Township

Occupation:
Nurseryman, Owner of Hilo Acres Nursery

Affiliations:
Chairman, West Bradford Township Board of Supervisors; Chairman, Agricultural Security District Committee; Executive Board, Chester County Association of Township Officials (CCATO), Liaison to the Chester County Planning Commission; Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, Land Use and Growth Management Committee.

Appointed:
2006



Kevin Johnson, P.E.

Resident:
Tredyffrin Township

Occupation:
President, Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.

Affiliations:
Board of Directors, SEPTA; Member, American Society of Highway Engineers, Delaware Valley Chapter; Member, Institute of Transportation Engineers; Board of Directors, Victory Bank.

Appointed:
December 2003



Caroline A. Novak

Resident:
South Coatesville

Occupation:
Senior Consultant, Novak Strategic Advisors

Affiliations:
Consultant to agricultural preservation interests; Former Commissioner, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Appointed:
December 2003



Joseph J. Tarantino

Resident:
Tredyffrin Township

Occupation:
President, Continental Realty Co., Inc.

Affiliations:
Member, PA State Real Estate Commission; Vice-chairman, National Italian American Political Action Committee; Consultant, PA Turnpike Commission; Consultant, Montgomery County Board of Commissioners; Former Chairman, Bridgeport Revitalization Committee; Member, PA Association of Realtors; Members, National Association of Realtors; Member, Urban Land Institute; Member, Lambda Alpha International.

Appointed:
June 2005



Joseph J. Viscuso, P.E., L.S.

Resident:
East Marlborough Township

Occupation:
Vice-President, Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.

Affiliations:
American Society of Civil Engineers; Chester County Chamber of Business & Industry; Chester County Economic Development Council; Home Builders Association of Chester & Delaware Counties; PA State Association of Township Supervisors; YMCA of the Brandywine Valley Board; Adjunct professor at Widener University.

Appointed:
June 2005



John C. Washington, III

Resident:
South Coatesville

Occupation:
Instructor for Overhead and Remote Crane Safety, Ladle Crane Operator, ArcelorMittal.

Affiliations:
President, South Coatesville Borough Council; Member, South Coatesville Borough Council since 1980; Past President of The Association of Boroughs; Democratic Party of South Coatesville; Chairman, Borough of South Coatesville Economic Development Committee; Grievance Committeeman, Steelworkers Local 1165 of International Steel Group.

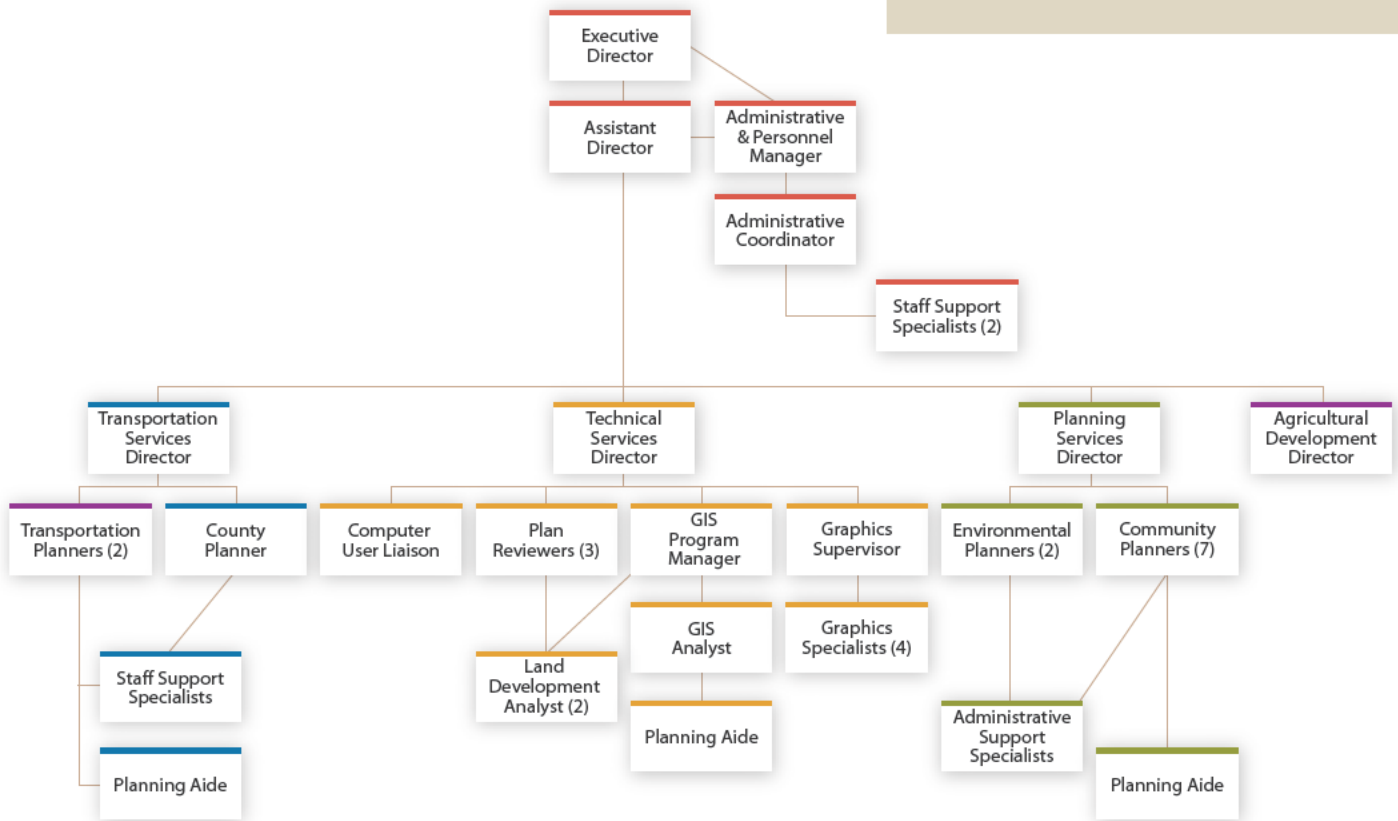
Appointed:
January 2002

What is the Chester County Planning Commission?

The Chester County Planning Commission is a nine-member advisory board appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. The members represent diverse backgrounds, volunteering to serve four-year terms. The officers are elected annually. All are dedicated to promoting coordinated growth and preservation planning for all of Chester County.

the staff

The staff of the Chester County Planning Commission are employees of Chester County who are assigned to provide all professional and support services to the Planning Commission and its programs. The staff works in partnership with municipal governments, neighboring counties, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and other entities and companies to maintain Chester County's quality of life and economic vitality. The staff also supports the Chester County Agricultural Development Council.



■ **Administration Services**

- Ronald T. Bailey, AICP
Executive Director
- David D. Ward, AICP
Assistant Director
- Beth A. Cunliffe, Administrative & Personnel Manager
- Karen Peed, Administrative Coordinator
- Marie Celii, Information Specialist
- Lavina Simeone, Librarian/Archivist Specialist

■ **Transportation and Information Services**

- Natasha Manbeck, AICP, EIT
Transportation Services Director
- Matthew Anderson, Transportation Planner
- Justin Smiley, Urban Planner
- Robert Walker, County Planner
- Randy Waltermeyer, Transportation Planner
- Patti Strauber, Administrative Support

■ **Technical Services**

- Thomas P. West
Technical Services Director
- Catherine Sbarbaro, GIS Program Manager
- Keary Larson, GIS Analyst
- Brian Sweeney, Computer User Liaison
- Steven Cummings, Planning Aide
- Glenn Bentley, Plan Reviewer
- Wes Bruckno, AICP, Plan Reviewer
- Paul Farkas, Plan Reviewer
- Suzanne Desiata, Land Development Analyst
- Jenn Kolvereid, Land Development Analyst
- Diana Gent, Graphics Supervisor
- Christopher Bittle, Graphics Specialist
- Polly Chalfant, Graphics Specialist
- Elizabeth Kolb, Graphics Specialist
- Carolyn Oakley, Graphics Specialist

■ **Planning Services**

- Carol J. Stauffer, AICP
Planning Services Director
- Susan Elks, AICP, Community Planner
- Mark Gallant, Community Planner
- Kathy McCarthy, Community Planner
- Kevin Myers, Community Planner
- Jeannine Speirs, Community Planner
- Reagan Wagner, Community Planner
- Yvonne Guthrie, Administrative Support
- Carolyn Conwell, Environmental/Open Space Planner
- Jake Michael, Environmental/Open Space Planner

■ **Agricultural Development**

- Hillary Krummrich, Esq.
Agricultural Development Director

refining

Establishing New Initiatives for the County

Landscapes, the county's long range policy plan, has undergone a thorough update to establish new initiatives for managing growth and preservation in the county.



Landscapes2—the new policy plan for Chester County

On November 9, 2009, the Chester County Board of Commissioners adopted Landscapes2 as the official long range policy plan for Chester County. The public hearing represented the culmination of three years of collaborative work involving a steering committee, focus groups, and a public opinion poll.

The plan updates and replaces Landscapes, originally adopted in 1996. Many of the core principles of the original plan have been reconfirmed and reiterated in the update. The resulting plan establishes a blueprint for bringing growth and preservation together for Chester County.

Initiating change

The plan sets in place three initiatives for guiding the future of the county. These initiatives will be accomplished through the collective implementation of the policies and actions established by this plan:

Build working partnerships

The county will join with municipal governments and stakeholders to develop productive partnerships that champion specific actions to achieve the vision of Landscapes2.

Create sustainable communities

The county will work with the state and municipal governments, and other partners to build and enhance sustainable communities within designated growth areas.

Keep Chester County green

The county will advocate for a green sustainable future.





Landscapes2 including text, mapping, and support materials is just a click away.

Communicating the plan

To successfully achieve the goals of Landscapes2, the plan needed to be easily accessible and navigable. To this end, the document has been designed as a web document to offer several features that make the document user-friendly and widely accessible. Links to supporting data, sources, relevant articles, and agencies can be accessed from any point in the document. Related resources and issues are constantly being added to the website to keep the plan contemporary and relevant to Chester County residents, local governments and businesses.

An interactive map entitled Livable Landscapes, is available using a Google map base as a reference. The map displays a variety of landscape types that comprise Chester County and help define its diversity. The map can be viewed with either a road map base, aerial photography, or a combination of map and aerial bases to orient the viewer to a particular area of the county. Although the map was developed as a tool to obtain feedback during the plan preparation and review stages, it has proven to be very popular and has been made an integral part of the online plan.

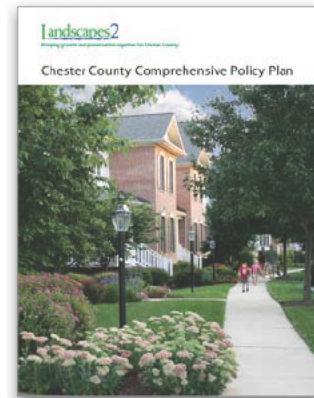
The plan is presented as an electronic book with pages that turn and includes a prominent table of contents for simplifying searches. This format allows the reader to quickly locate relevant chapters of the plan for any given topic or project.

The electronic plan offers several benefits:

- It is easily accessible via the internet.
- It eliminates the expense associated with printing costs.
- It provides tools to search or bookmark.
- It is a green solution for providing publications to the public.

The county has also developed electronic mail and social network systems to facilitate access to the plan. Work is also underway to develop versions of the plan for new eReader devices that have become increasingly popular as a source of printed information. All of these tools are maintained and refined to help ensure public participation in ongoing activities and to promote the use of the county's long range policy plan when making important growth and preservation decisions over the next decade.

For more information on Landscapes2, please go to www.Landscapes2.org.



www.Landscapes2.org/ls2online/index.html



Explore the interactive Livable Landscapes map

Customize the view that's best for you!

- Zoom in to see details.
- Turn features on/off.
- Make features lighter/darker.

www.Landscapes2.org/mapping/InteractiveMap.html

measuring

Understanding Change Within the County

Chester County is undergoing significant change. The attractiveness and location of the county had made us the focus of development in the state, yet, the recession has deterred growth and investment. Understanding these trends help us to better plan for the future of the county.



Understanding trends

The Planning Commission provides information and data to describe, measure, and analyze conditions and trends about Chester County. This information covers subjects such as population, housing, land use, economics, transportation, and community facilities and services, and helps to identify problems and develop solutions to achieve positive benefits.

Noteworthy trends for 2009

\$340,800—the median housing value of owner-occupied units in the county, the highest in the state and more than double the state median (\$164,700). Although housing values have leveled off, they have increased substantially in the county from \$182,500 in 2000.

176,600—the number of occupied housing units in the county; 78% were owner-occupied and 22% were renter-occupied.

\$85,730—the median household income in the county, the highest in the state. The median household income in the county was \$65,295 in 2000.

\$2,150—the median monthly housing costs for homeowners with a mortgage; compared to \$1,500 in 2000. Median monthly housing costs for renters were \$1,080 compared to \$750 in 2000.

87% of employed people were private sector wage and salary workers, 8% were government workers, and 5% were self-employed.

81% of workers drove to work alone, 8% carpooled, 3% took public transportation, 3% used other means, and 5% worked at home. These percentages are nearly identical to those in 2000.

49% of county residents 25 years and older held a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 43% in 2000. This was the highest percentage in the state.

28 minutes—the average time it took workers to get to work, nearly the same as it took in 2000.

92% of people living in Chester County were U.S. natives, including 63% who were born in Pennsylvania. 8% of people living in Chester County were foreign born, of whom 60% entered the U.S. before 2000.

4% of all families in Chester County were in poverty, but 22% of families with a female householder with children under 18 years of age had incomes below the poverty level.

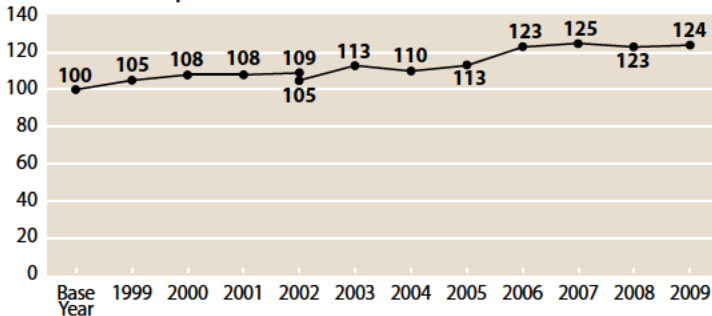
Activities that measure trends

Measuring the success of Landscapes

The progress of implementing Landscapes policies is measured through the Landscapes Index. The index is composed of eighteen indicators measurable on an annual basis. A value above 100 indicates progress towards the goals of the plan. The Landscapes Index for 2009 is 124, a slight increase from 123 for 2008, showing overall progress with implementing the county's policy plan, Landscapes, since the index was created in 1998.

A total of twelve indicators demonstrate improvement since the base year (a rating over 100) and the other six declined (ratings below 100). Indicators showing noteworthy progress in 2009 are travel time, indicating improved automobile travel, and protected farmland, indicating a continued strong commitment to farmland preservation. Indicators raising concerns are proposed housing and non-residential development, both had declining percentages consistent with Landscapes, and the reduction in residential loans in urban areas.

The Landscapes Index



Measuring housing costs

The Planning Commission monitors housing sales activity and costs for the county and municipalities. These data provide an indication, in part, of the economic condition of the county. Housing sales activity declined with over 1,400 fewer homes sold in 2008 than in 2007, a decline of 19 percent. The median sales price in 2008 is \$300,000, a decrease of 4 percent from 2007. This is the first decline in the median sales price since 1991.

Monitoring new residential units

The Planning Commission records the number and location of new housing units constructed each year. There were a total of 2,290 new housing units added to the housing supply in Chester County in 2008. This was the lowest number of new units since the Planning Commission began collecting the data in 2000. The average during that time has been 3,470 new units per year. These data help us understand housing demand and future service needs.

Monitoring land planning activity

The Planning Commission provides review services to municipalities as a means of coordinating planning and achieving consistency between local and county planning efforts. Services include reviews of all submissions from our municipalities, including:

- Comprehensive plan updates and amendments.
- Ordinance updates and amendments.
- Subdivision and land development proposals.
- Official maps and amendments.

Providing development review service

Review activity in 2009 was notably less than that experienced in 2008. The Planning Commission received 239 plans for review in 2009 compared to 314 plans in 2008. The 2009 submissions proposed 3,381 lots or units, which represents an 8.87 percent decrease in the number of lots/units proposed from the previous year. These plan applications involved 7,544 acres of land and 12 miles of new roads.



Estimating Population Growth— Chester County remains number one

Chester County remains number one in population growth among all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. The county experienced an increase of 5,900 people from 2007 to 2008 and 58,000 people from 2000 to 2008. Based on these estimates the upcoming 2010 census is expected to count 500,000 residents in Chester County.

New Daleville reflects the principles for a rural center, a project that is consistent with Landscapes2, including a village green.

Tracking proposed development trends

There was a significant reduction in development activity in 2009. The following trends in development applications were identified in 2009:

- 3,381 lots/units proposed in 2009.
- 8.87% decrease in number of lots/units proposed during 2009 over the previous year.
- 98% in the number of sewage planning applications received in 2009 over the previous year.
- 7,544 acres of land proposed for development in 2009.
- 12 miles of new road proposed for development.
- 2.23 acres – the average area of proposed lot in 2009.

Of the 239 plans submitted for review, 97 percent were consistent with Landscapes2.

Striving for consistency

Development in the county can be tracked through several of the planning services performed by the Planning Commission. These services strive to achieve consistency between municipal planning with county planning programs through the management of growth and infrastructure within the county.

The following development proposals demonstrate consistency with Landscapes2:

Makemie Ridge land development in Westtown Township was the most significant review performed in 2009, in terms of lots/units. The 610 unit community, located at the northwest corner of Routes 202 and 926, would offer accommodations from single family detached dwellings to extended care units in a suburban landscape.

Senior Housing at Eagleview was proposed at Eagleview in Uwchlan Township. The plan proposed two residential buildings containing 210 apartments and 80 condominium units sited on the east side of Rice Boulevard and the south side of Pennsylvania Drive. A 7,500 square foot community center to serve the residents will be sited close to the residential units within a suburban center.

The Honeycroft Village plan revised the number and type of units previously approved by Londonderry Township. The village is sited on the south side of Route 41, south of Cochranville. The approved plan called for 317 townhouses, whereas the revised plan proposes a total of 264 units and includes townhouses, twins and single family detached dwellings within a rural center.



Coordinating municipal land review

Tracking land records

Land records need to be coordinated between county departments in order to process applications more efficiently and effectively. The Planning Commission is actively working together with other land-related departments to implement a new approach for tracking proposed land development applications in Chester County.

A new automated records system has been unveiled that effectively ties together subdivision, permitting, and inspection records from the Conservation District and Health Department giving the Planning Commission a more efficient method to track proposed development. The new system eliminates duplicative efforts and increases efficiencies by enabling staff in the three county departments that review development proposals to coordinate reviews and key off of the same applicant information.

The new system, known as EnerGov, was put into production in late December 2009. The system is designed to answer the question “how much of the county is developed, is under development, or is proposed to be developed.” This software brings the county one step closer to answering these kinds of questions more accurately and more efficiently.

Future enhancements will allow the public the ability to log in and view and submit subdivision and land development proposals. It is anticipated that applicants will soon be able to submit information digitally, supporting a green, streamlined workflow.

Ultimately, the integration with the county’s GIS/Land Records programs will create full automation of the land development process from subdivision proposal review to assessment recordation. It is envisioned that municipalities would be able to link into the new plan review system and access county plan reviews.

connecting

Balancing Transportation Needs and Resources

Chester County experienced an unprecedented down turn in the economy as well as public funds during 2009. The result has been a significant strain on the ability to fund needed transportation improvements.



Setting transportation improvement priorities

Identifying transportation needs and resources

The Planning Commission maintains an inventory of transportation needs to assist in setting priorities for improvement projects. In 2009, the Planning Commission completed the biennial update of the Transportation Improvement Inventory (TII) and prepared a presentation of priority projects for the State Transportation Commission (STC) at the public hearing for the Philadelphia region in 2009.

2009 Transportation Improvements Inventory (TII)

The TII is a comprehensive record of known transportation needs within Chester County based on input from municipalities and other stakeholders over time. The TII is used for coordination with planning partners and to help identify potential resources to implement priority transportation improvements. During the 2009 update process, the Planning Commission received input from 85 percent of Chester County municipalities and used specific criteria to evaluate and rank projects that are consistent with Landscapes2, and DVRPC's Long Range Plan, Connections.

The 2009 TII includes 450 proposed roadway, bridge, bicycle and pedestrian, freight, and transit projects with a total estimated cost of \$5.4 billion. Since 2007, 68 projects are considered completed and 47 new projects were added to the TII based on input from municipalities and other stakeholders. The 2009 TII includes several enhancements, such as lists of projects by municipality and by legislative district. In addition, a county-wide map and six regional maps show the general location of TII projects.

2009 Transportation Priority Projects

Prioritization of transportation needs is particularly important due to the limited federal, state, and local resources for infrastructure improvements. The Planning Commission worked with elected officials and other stakeholders to identify and gain consensus on the most critical transportation projects. In addition, the Planning Commission coordinated an ad-hoc committee of representatives from various Chester County organizations to identify speakers and draft the oral testimony for the STC hearing in Philadelphia. As part of the testimony, the Planning Commission prepared a report of the Priority Projects that included letters of support from the Chester County Commissioners and Pennsylvania Senators and House Representatives from Chester County.



Significant progress occurred on constructing the Chester Valley Trail during 2009.

Executing Economic stimulus funding for transportation

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 included over \$27 billion of federal funds for investments in roads, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure. Planning Commission staff coordinated with PennDOT, SEPTA, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) to identify projects within Chester County that met the requirements the bill. There were seven transportation projects in Chester County that received an estimated \$46.7 million in ARRA funds, including the Chester Valley Trail—Phase 1 and resurfacing of US 202 around West Chester. In addition, Planning Commission staff monitored and supported applications for special ARRA funding categories, including PennDOT’s application for High Speed Rail funding for improvements to the Keystone Corridor.

Awarding grants for transportation

Staff participated in the regional review and ranking of several transportation related federal and state grant programs, including Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC), New Freedom, Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI), Efficient Growth for Growing Suburbs (EGGS). The Planning Commission reviewed 86 applications and provided input in the grant selection process. County involvement in these programs led to over \$5.6 million in grant funding awards for twelve transportation plans, infrastructure projects, and transit services in Chester County.

Preparing the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Based on Chester County’s Priority Projects, the Planning Commission provided initial input for the update of the region’s FY11–FY14 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is the regionally agreed-upon list of priority transportation projects. The TIP shows estimated costs and schedule by project phase and is financially constrained based on the amount of federal, state, and local funds that will be available for transportation projects in the region. Throughout the TIP update process, the Planning Commission advocates for the appropriate funding levels and implementation schedules to address Chester County’s transportation needs. The Planning Commission also monitors amendments to the TIP on a monthly basis and submits recommendations.

The adopted 2009 Transportation Improvements Inventory (TII) and the 2009 Transportation Priority Projects Reports are available on the Planning Commission’s website at www.chesco.org/planning/transportation.



Historic Copes Bridge on Strasburg Road underwent major restoration.

preserving

Dedication to the Environment

The successful implementation of the Landscapes vision requires the preservation of the county's unique character, including open space, natural, and historic resources. These efforts, in conjunction with greenhouse gas reduction, are at the core of making Landscapes2 preservation principles a reality.



Protecting open space

Open space preservation continues to be a core objective of the Chester County Board of Commissioners. The Planning Commission serves as a facilitator in the protection of open space resources in the county. Open space planning efforts support work being carried out in our local municipalities and with non-profit organizations, other county departments and state and federal agencies. Through partnerships, key open space resources are being protected and managed throughout the county.

Partnering to preserve open space

The Planning Commission participated in the protection of open space through the following partnerships:

Dissemination of open space data— Protected open space land annual inventory and GIS mapping in coordination with 13 land trusts and 73 municipal partners.

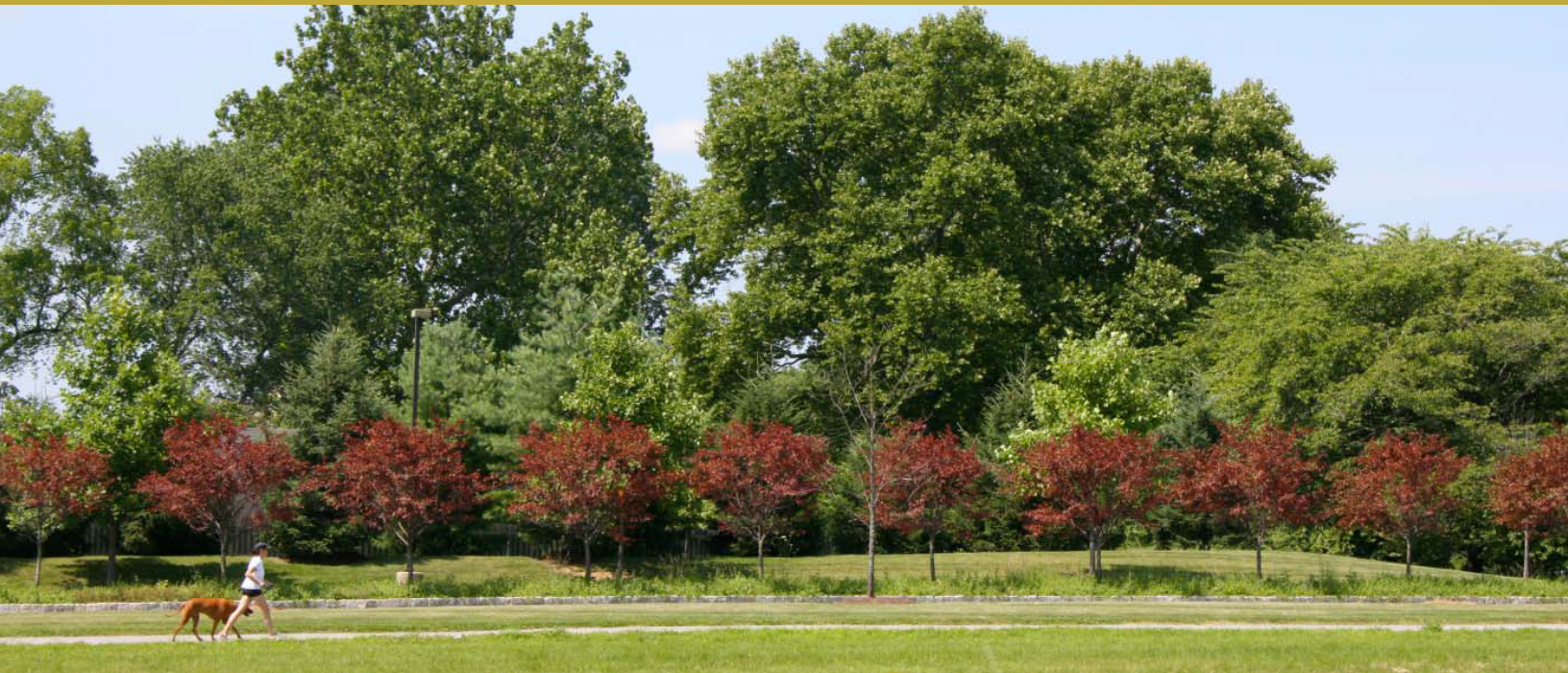
Management of nationally significant resources— White Clay Creek National Wild and Scenic River Management Committee assistance in their work in Chester County and New Castle County, DE.

Retention of municipal Agricultural Security Areas— Review of applications as mandated by PA Act 43.

Regional resource planning— Highlands Coalition multi-county planning assistance and Hopewell Big Woods Coalition assistance.

Trails planning assistance— National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program with the Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan.





Realizing pedestrian/trail successes

Throughout 2009, Planning Commission staff provided trail planning assistance for a number of regional initiatives focusing on linking cultural or natural resources with trails. Staff provided preliminary mapping to the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force, of which the Planning Commission is a member, in order to help them to determine the feasibility of the “Battle Path” that could one day link key battle sites associated with the Battle of Brandywine. Staff also worked with Malvern Borough and Willistown Township to identify possible links between Historic Sugartown and the Paoli Massacre Site. In cooperation with the White Clay Creek Wild and Scenic River Committee and the State of Delaware, Planning Commission staff continued efforts to identify viable trail corridors that could one day link the Avondale/West Grove area to the White Clay Creek Bi-State Preserve.

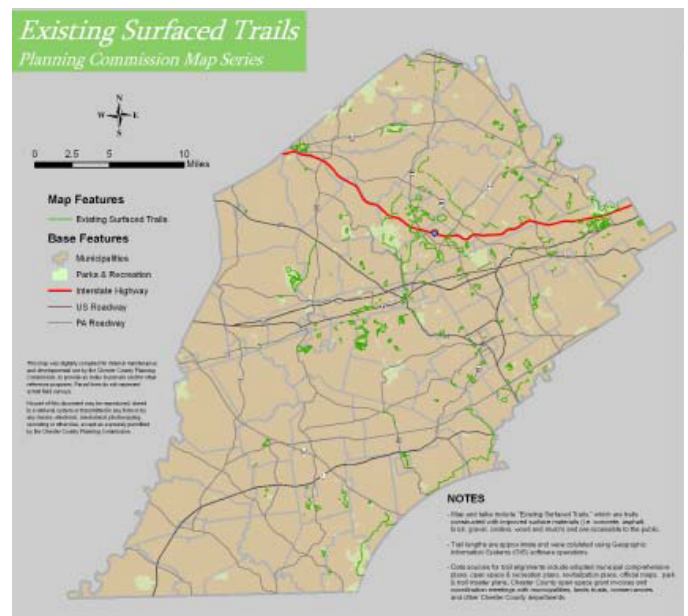
In response to several Landscapes2 policies and municipal interest in trail planning, the Planning Commission completed a trails inventory project in 2009. The focus of the project was to build a comprehensive trails layer in GIS, based on adopted municipal plans and studies. In 2009, Planning Commission staff coordinated with land trusts, conservancies, other county departments, and 73 municipalities to verify the data. The inventory includes 260 miles of existing surfaced trails in 51 Chester County municipalities.

Click on map to link to source. ▶

Providing municipal coordination

Open space planning services to local municipalities is an effective way to manage open space resources. Open space networks and corridors can then emerge. Staff assisted municipalities with the preparation of plans and ordinances that promote the management and protection of open space and recreation facilities:

- White Clay Creek Corridor Inter-Municipal Trail Link Study, London Grove, Franklin and New Garden Townships.
- Regional Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan— Northern Federation.
- Eastern Great Valley Region Multi-Municipal Trail study for The Patriots Path.



An inventory of surfaced trails was completed and is available online.



Promoting historic preservation planning

In addition to funding historic preservation planning activities through the Vision Partnership Program, planning commission staff participated in the following activities to promote historic resource protection and planning:

- Landscapes2 Historic Resources Protection Plan.
- Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark Taskforce to promote and effectuate battlefield preservation and multi-municipal protection efforts, specifically through working with municipalities to initiate planning for a greenway network connecting the landmark.
- Technical assistance to Pennsbury, West Marlborough, Thornbury, and Kennett Townships.
- Technical assistance with the Malvern Borough Comprehensive Plan and Oxford Region Comprehensive Plan, which both include new plan chapters about historic resources planning.
- Technical assistance to the Chester County Parks Department to develop the Chester County GIS Historic Resource Atlas project.
- Partnered with the Chester County Parks Department to disseminate information related to historic resources, county history, or preservation via the internet and technical assistance.
- Assisted the Chester County Department of Community Development in the review of federally funded projects for impacts on historic resources.

Improving the environment

The protection and conservation of natural resources is essential to the health, safety, and welfare of Chester County residents. The Planning Commission plays a role in this protection effort by examining and lessening the negative impacts of land use and land development on natural resource systems through the review of proposed development activities. The environmental planning activities are linked with both the land development plan review process and the Vision Partnership Program.

Providing municipal review assistance

The Planning Commission staff provides reviews of wastewater treatment infrastructure to ascertain whether the proposal is consistent with the land use and environmental protection policies found in Landscapes2. Infrastructure reviews are provided for sewer and water projects as well as gas, energy, and water service applications that are submitted to the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission. These reviews are an important step toward ensuring that the environmental concerns and the program goals and objectives of Landscapes2 are expressed and coordinated with other agencies.

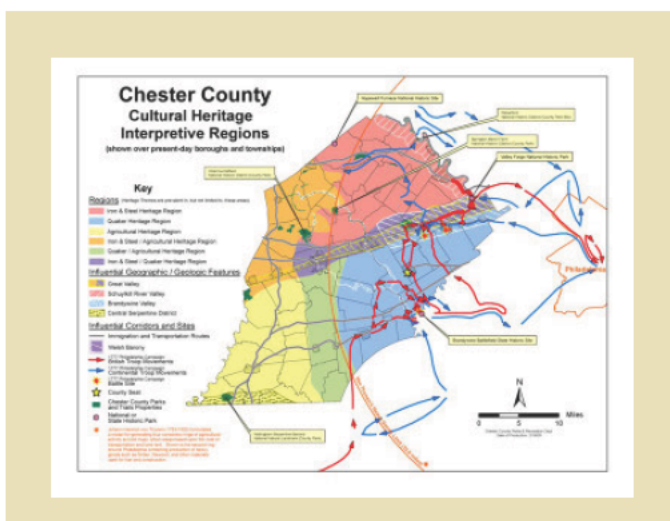
Coordinating sewage facilities planning activity

Staff provides assistance to municipalities in the review of sewage facilities plans to determine their completeness and consistency with the principles of Landscapes2. Stream and ground water quality are dependent in part upon the proper location, design and maintenance of our sewage systems, so it is necessary to properly plan for and locate these facilities.

In Pennsylvania, municipalities are required to develop, adopt, and implement sewage facilities plans as a means of insuring that wastewater is properly treated and disposed. Municipalities use these plans to develop and enact policies which regulate how new sewage facilities can be established. These plans address public health issues, such as failing on-lot systems, new land developments, infill, and redevelopment. In addition, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has added additional requirements for on-lot systems that are located within a state-designated High Quality or Exceptional Value stream.

◀ [Click on map to link to source.](#)

Cultural Heritage Interpretive Regions have been established to guide preservation planning.



Planning for sewage facilities

For the second year in a row, the Planning Commission saw an increase in the number of municipalities updating their sewage facilities master plans (Act 537 Plans). Work progressed with the Valley Forge Sewer Authority and the Oxford Area Sewer Authority regional plans. The Pennsylvania American Water Company received their Plan Update approval from DEP, with conditions, this fall. These plans collectively affect roughly one-third of the municipalities in Chester County.

The Planning Commission conducted update reviews for the following municipalities in 2009:

- Valley Township
- West Caln Township
- Pennsbury Township
- Penn Township
- Elk Township
- London Grove Township
- East Vincent Township

The Planning Commission reviews sewage facility planning modules associated with most land development proposals and redevelopment projects. In 2009, 45 applications were reviewed, which was similar to the number reviewed in 2008 (46 reviews). The percentage of applications that were consistent with Landscapes2 was 80 percent. The remaining applications were either generally consistent or inconsistent with the goals, objectives and policies of Landscapes2. The trend for applications in 2009 saw a majority of planning activities along the Route 1 and Route 30 corridors. These proposals are mapped monthly. Information is also available for the year to date. These maps can be found on the Planning Commission web page in the [Map Gallery](#).

Monitoring utility expansion

In addition to sewage facility planning, the environmental planning staff review applications submitted to the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission for the expansion of water and sewer service areas, as well as for the expansion of natural gas and energy service areas. This is an important step in guaranteeing that the environmental concerns and the program goals and objectives of the Chester County Planning Commission are expressed and coordinated with other agencies. In 2009, the Planning Commission performed seven reviews, compared to ten the previous year, and noted that many of the reviews were submitted to either incorporate existing residences or entire neighborhoods into nearby existing public service areas.

Managing stormwater

Crum Creek Watershed– Chester and Delaware Counties continued work toward the completion of the Crum Creek Stormwater Management Plan, the third plan in the county. Delaware County serves as the lead agency for this project. This plan includes four municipalities in eastern Chester County (Tredyffrin Township, Easttown Township, Malvern Borough and Willistown Township) and 14 municipalities in western Delaware County that share this watershed. This plan will ultimately make recommendations for the control of stormwater runoff from new developments taking place within the watershed from its headwaters in Chester County to the Delaware River. The Crum Creek Plan is scheduled for completion in June of 2010.

Valley Creek Watershed– The Chester County Water Resources Authority continued work on the Valley Creek Stormwater Management Plan. The Valley Creek watershed includes six Chester County municipalities: Charlestown, East Whiteland, Tredyffrin, and Schuylkill Townships, and the Borough of Malvern. The plan is slated for completion in 2010. The environmental section continued to offer support in land use information, data gathering, and reviewing draft information.



Volunteers installing plants along streambank to protect against stormwater erosion.

managing

Assisting Municipalities to Manage Change

Successful growth management requires cooperative planning between the state, county, and local municipalities. The Planning Commission seeks to achieve consistency between these jurisdictions to promote a sound and effective planning program.



Providing planning assistance to municipalities

Planning services offered by the Planning Commission encompass three primary activities:

Community planning assistance provides planning consulting and technical assistance services directly to municipalities, regional groups, governmental and non-profit agencies, and the public to assist them in the implementation of sound planning assistance that is consistent with Landscapes2 and with the Municipalities Planning Code.

Vision Partnership Grant administration provides grant review, recommendations, and monitoring services to Chester County and its municipalities so they have the funding and resources to develop plans and ordinances to implement Landscapes.

Environmental planning provides open space protection, environmental infrastructure, and natural resources consultation services to individuals, permit applicants, and governmental and non-governmental agencies so they have the information needed to protect, improve, and maintain environmental resources and locate sewer and water infrastructure appropriately.

Vision Partnership Program and community planning

The Planning Commission implements the principles of Landscapes2 by providing assistance to municipalities in refining their local planning programs. This assistance is primarily accomplished through Vision Partnership Program (VPP) grants and community planning staff that directly assist municipalities on planning projects. The VPP grant program strives to develop planning partnerships between local governments and the county to implement sound growth management and coordinated planning programs.

Through the Vision Partnership Program, municipalities receive professional planning services and financial assistance to help update their planning programs for consistency with Landscapes2 as well as to achieve municipal planning goals. Municipalities may use VPP cash grants to retain the services of a professional planning consultant. In-kind grants may be used to retain Planning Commission staff for professional planning assistance.

In mid-2009, the Vision Partnership grant program was temporarily placed on hold while Landscapes2 was being finalized and adopted. The grant program will be revised and updated in 2010 to ensure consistency with Landscapes2 and to better promote the implementation of both the goals of Landscapes2 and the county commissioner's [Strategic Plan](#).

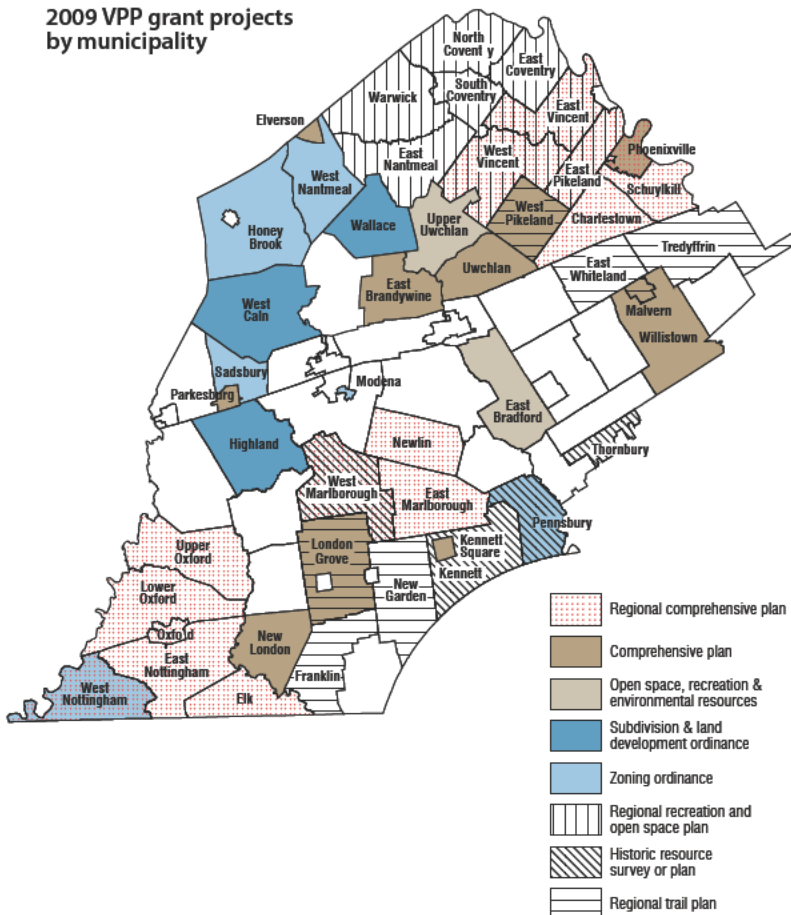
Providing grants to municipalities

In 2009, the Planning Commission reviewed nine planning project grant applications and awarded eight grants. While this number was fewer than the 15 grants awarded in 2008, three of the grants were for multi-municipal projects that provided funding for a total of 15 municipalities. VPP grant funding awarded in calendar year 2009 totaled \$371,012. This amount was only a 12 percent decrease from VPP funding levels in 2008. While fewer grants were awarded in 2009, the three multi-municipal grants accounted for 32 percent of the funding due to their higher cost and higher level of county matching funds provided for regional projects.

Active grant projects in 2009

In total, 43 municipalities were actively involved in projects funded by VPP grants in 2009. This number included 25 individual Chester County municipalities and 30 municipalities involved in multi-municipal planning projects. Some municipalities were involved in both multi-municipal and individual projects. The number of multi-municipal participants in 2009 doubles that of 2008. For a complete listing of active grants in 2009, see chart on right.

2009 VPP grant projects by municipality



Vision Partnership Program Active projects in 2009				
Municipality	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning ordinance	Subdivision ordinance	Special project
East Bradford	■ ^a			
East Brandywine	■			
Elverson	■ ^d			
Highland			■	
Honey Brook Township		■		■ ^e
Kennett Township				■ ^f
Kennett Square	●			
London Grove	■			
Malvern	● ■ ^d			
Modena		●		
New London	■			
Parkesburg	■ ^d			
Pennsbury		●		■ ^f
Phoenixville	■ ^b			
Sadsbury		■		
Thornbury	■ ^c			■ ^f
Upper Uwchlan	■ ^a			
Uwchlan	■			
Wallace		■	■	
West Caln			■	
West Marlborough	■ ^c			■ ^f
West Nantmeal		■		
West Nottingham		●		
West Pikeland	■			
Willistown	■			
Multi-Municipal Planning¹				
Eastern Great Valley (3 municipalities)	■ ^g			
Northern Federation (9 municipalities)	■ ^a			
Oxford Region (6 municipalities)	●			
Phoenixville Region (6 municipalities)	■			
Unionville Area (3 municipalities)	■			
White Clay Creek (3 municipalities)				■ ^g
■ Cash grant award ● In-kind grant				
^a Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan				
^b Neighborhood Study and Zoning Analysis				
^c Historic Resources Plan Update				
^d Urban Center Revitalization Plan Update				
^e Official Map				
^f Historic Resource Survey				
^g Multi-Municipal Trail Plan or Study				
¹ See "Advancing multi-municipal planning" on page 20 for a full description of these projects and the municipal participants.				

Advancing multi-municipal planning

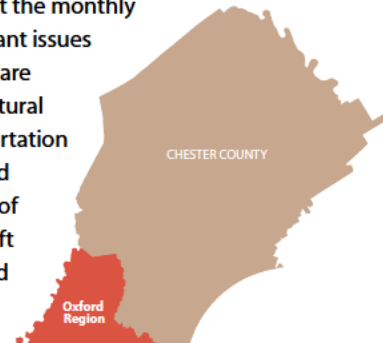
The promotion of cooperative planning among municipalities remains a primary goal of the Vision Partnership Program. Regional planning projects increased further in 2009, with six multi-municipal planning initiatives, involving a total of 30 municipalities, funded and underway. The following are highlights of multi-municipal planning efforts in Chester County in 2009.



Oxford is recognized as the urban center serving the region in the Oxford Region Plan.

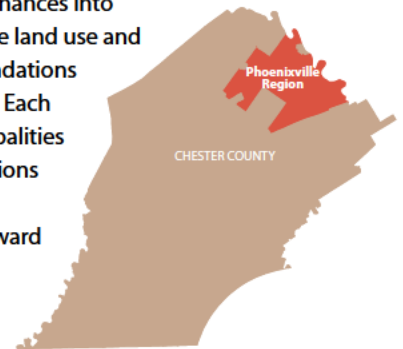
Oxford Region

The Oxford Region encompasses the Oxford School District which includes Oxford Borough and the townships of East Nottingham, Elk, Lower Oxford, Upper Oxford, and West Nottingham. Work on the Oxford Region Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan was begun in December 2008 and continued through 2009 with the Chester County Planning Commission serving as the region's planning consultant. The municipal members of the Oxford Region Planning Committee are active participants in the planning process and provide valuable feedback on the issues, policies, and draft recommendations presented by the Chester County Planning Commission staff at the monthly task force meetings. Significant issues being addressed in the plan are agricultural preservation, natural resource protection, transportation and infrastructure needs, and the continued revitalization of Oxford Borough. The full draft of the plan will be completed in 2010.



Phoenixville Area Regional Planning Commission

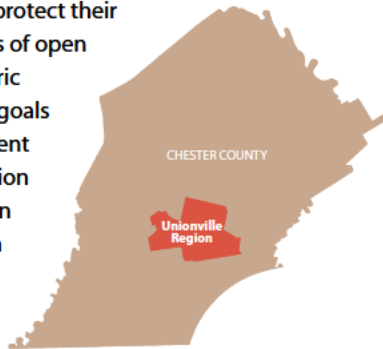
The Phoenixville Area Regional Planning Commission consists of the Borough of Phoenixville and the surrounding municipalities of East Pikeland, East Vincent, West Vincent, Charlestown and Schuylkill. Following the adoption of the multi-municipal comprehensive plan in 2008, the region undertook a review of their municipal zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development ordinances for consistency with the adopted regional plan. The analysis identified ordinance and plan revisions that would bring municipal ordinances into greater consistency with the land use and natural resource recommendations of the comprehensive plan. Each of the participating municipalities adopted the recommendations of the consistency review allowing them to move forward with sharing land uses and protecting resources on a regional basis.



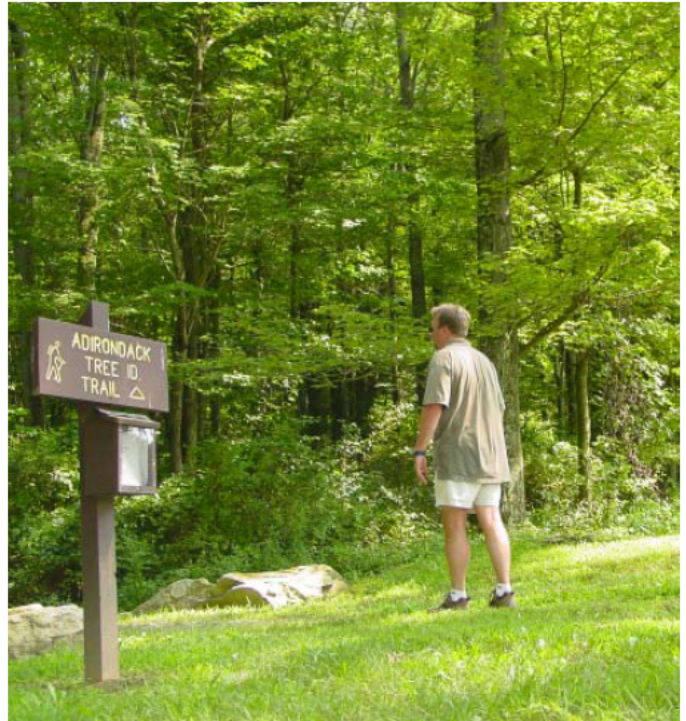
Municipal ordinances are now consistent with the Phoenixville regional plan.

Unionville Area Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan

The townships of East Marlborough, West Marlborough, and Newlin began work on a multi-municipal plan in the spring of 2009. The three townships are working together to identify common goals and strategies to direct growth towards areas that are most suitable for development. At the same time, they are working to identify and protect their important community assets of open space, agriculture, and historic and natural resources. Their goals for better growth management at the regional level, protection of resources, and the creation of a protected regional open space network all further the goals of Landscapes2. The multi-municipal plan is anticipated to be completed in 2011.



ChesLen Preserve in Newlin Township protects natural resources.

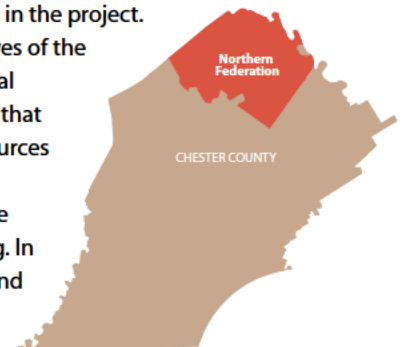


One of the goals of the Northern Federation plan is to create a regional park and recreation system.

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

In the spring of 2009, the Northern Federation began the ambitious project of creating a multi-municipal recreation plan for the nine municipalities of East Vincent, West Vincent, East Coventry, North Coventry, South Coventry, Warwick, East Pikeland, West Pikeland, and East Nantmeal. The Green Valleys Association, the French and Pickering Land Trust, and recreation leagues in the region are participating in the project.

One of the primary objectives of the project is to create a regional park and recreation system that will efficiently channel resources to high priority goals and maximize public and private park and recreation funding. In addition, the plan will expand opportunities for a regional open space and greenway system while conserving natural resources.

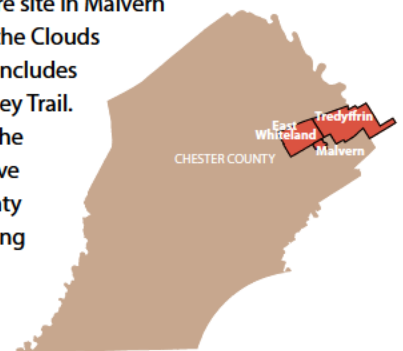




Paoli Massacre site in Malvern borough is a centerpiece of the Patriots Path.

Patriots Path Plan—Eastern Great Valley Multi-Municipal Trail Plan

This multi-municipal trail plan was undertaken by Tredyffrin Township, East Whiteland Township, and Malvern Borough. The plan was prepared in 2009 and should be adopted by the three participants in early 2010. The plan will play a significant role in furthering the implementation and development of the Patriots Path. The concept of the Patriots Path was first fully documented in the Chester County Planning Commission report *An Evaluation of Patriots Path Trail Opportunities in the Eastern Great Valley (2007)*. The trail network will link Valley Forge National Historic Park in Tredyffrin, the Paoli Massacre site in Malvern Borough, and the Battle of the Clouds Park in East Whiteland and includes a section of the Chester Valley Trail. This project demonstrates the important role of cooperative planning between the county and municipalities in reaching mutually beneficial goals.



The White Clay Creek study identifies possible links to complete a regional trail system.

White Clay Creek Corridor Trail Link Study

The townships of London Grove, Franklin, and New Garden undertook and completed a multi-municipal trail link study in 2009. The purpose of the study was to document the feasibility of providing the desired trail connections between the municipalities in the study area, while providing for a functional and sustainable process to maintain the trail connections. This study supported multiple goals of Landscapes2, Watersheds, and Linking Landscapes including creating inter-modal, non-motorized trail link opportunities, accessibility to community facilities, creating a linked open space network, and enhancing water-based recreational opportunities.



The Pennsbury Township Zoning Ordinance update focuses on the protection of the township's many natural resources and the preservation of open space.

Refining municipal planning programs

The following projects, which were either adopted or in progress in 2009, promote the goals of Landscapes:

Urban landscape planning and revitalization

The urban landscape represents diverse areas of economic activity, institutional and community uses, residential neighborhoods, and historic resources. Urban centers are vital to maintaining the character of Chester County and providing a focus for future growth opportunities. The projects below focus on preserving and revitalizing the urban landscape.

- Elverson Borough Revitalization Plan update.
- Kennett Square Comprehensive Plan update.
- Modena Borough Zoning Ordinance update.
- Parkesburg Borough Revitalization Plan update.
- Phoenixville Borough Neighborhood Study and Zoning Analysis.
- Oxford Region Multi-Municipal Plan— supporting economic development for Oxford Borough.
- Malvern Borough Revitalization and Comprehensive Plan update.

Highlight—Malvern Borough Revitalization and Comprehensive Plan updates: *Malvern Borough exemplifies a proactive urban center that is continually planning for the future of the community. The borough has successfully implemented many of the identified improvements from their original revitalization plan, necessitating the updating of the action plan portion of the plan. The action plan update was completed in 2009 and the borough is currently in the process of updating their full comprehensive plan with an emphasis on neighborhood planning, pedestrian networks, and economic development.*



Rural resource area planning and protection

The rural resource area, consisting of the rural and agricultural landscapes, contains important agricultural, environmental, and scenic resources that contribute to the traditional rural character of Chester County. These areas are appropriate for conservation and preservation activities and serve as a target for the county's agricultural and municipal open space preservation programs. The projects listed below contain large portions of rural resource areas and focus on preservation and resource protection.

- New London Township Comprehensive Plan update
- West Nantmeal Township Zoning Ordinance update
- West Nottingham Township Zoning Ordinance update
- West Pikeland Comprehensive Plan update
- Willistown Township Comprehensive Plan update
- Unionville Area Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan
- Oxford Region Multi-Municipal Plan
- Pennsbury Township Zoning Ordinance update

Highlight—Pennsbury Township Zoning Ordinance: *The Pennsbury Township Zoning Ordinance update focuses on the protection of the township's many natural resources and the preservation of open space in the remaining rural areas. A significant portion of the township open space has already been protected through extensive conservation easements with the ordinance providing additional options for open space preservation in propose developments. The ordinance provisions also allow for growth in appropriate areas as designated in the township's comprehensive plan. A new addition to the ordinance is the Route 1 Corridor Overlay District established to protect the scenic and historic resources while promoting safe and efficient traffic movement on this major transportation route that bisects the township.*



Malvern Borough has successfully implemented many improvements in its revitalization plan.

Rural center and village planning

Rural centers are focal points for accommodating limited growth anticipated in rural resource areas. Development in these areas is intended to maintain a scale compatible with the character of the surrounding rural and agricultural landscapes. Villages are enduring reminders of the county's heritage containing historic resources and providing community identity making them worthy of protection. The following projects focused on these areas:

- East Brandywine Township– Guthriesville Village Master Plan.
- Honey Brook Township– Rocklyn Station Official Map.
- London Grove Township– Comprehensive Plan update and London Grove Center Plan.
- West Nottingham Township– Nottingham Village Zoning and Design Guide.

Highlight—West Nottingham Township Zoning Ordinance: *As part of the ordinance update, a planning effort was undertaken to create a Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) zoning option for Nottingham Village. A design guide was developed to be used in conjunction with the TND provisions so that future growth would be compatible with the village scale and character. In addition, a transfer of development rights program was created as a means to protect agricultural properties within the township while directing growth to the village. Nottingham Village is a designated rural center in Landscapes2.*

Suburban landscape planning

The suburban landscape is dominated by the built environment and is largely served by public water and sewer systems and an auto-dominated transportation network. It is typically characterized by residential subdivisions and the largest employment centers in the county. The suburban landscape is a component of the growth area as designated in Landscapes2. The following projects contain significant areas of the suburban landscapes:

- Eastern Great Valley Region– Multi-Municipal Trail Plan (Patriots Path).
- Uwchlan Township Comprehensive Plan update.

Highlight—Uwchlan Township Comprehensive Plan: *Despite its highly suburbanized character, Uwchlan Township contains nearly 20 miles of surfaced trails and numerous park and recreation areas. A focus of the current comprehensive plan update is to link trails and sidewalks to destinations, such as parks and schools, to create a township-wide pedestrian system. The plan is also addressing the township transportation needs including updating the transportation capital improvement plan so that off-site transportation impacts can be better addressed.*



A planning effort was undertaken to create a Traditional Neighborhood Design zoning option for Nottingham Village, a Rural Center under Landscapes2.



Uwchlan Township comprehensive plan calls for linking trails and sidewalks to key destinations.

Natural landscape

The natural landscape overlay encompasses Chester County's natural resource network of stream corridors, steep slopes, and woodlands. Major areas of natural resources should be protected and subject to only limited development. The following projects include plans and protection measures for natural resources.

- East Bradford Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan update.
- Highland Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance update.
- Pennsbury Township Zoning Ordinance update.
- Upper Uwchlan Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan update.
- Wallace Township– Stormwater Management and updated “Conservation by Design” Standards.
- West Caln Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance update.
- West Nantmeal Township Zoning Ordinance.
- West Nottingham Township Zoning Ordinance update.

Highlight—resource protection standards: *These ordinance standards provide innovative and effective protection standards for a wide range of natural resources including woodlands, wetlands, riparian buffers, steep slopes, floodplains, ponds, watercourses, and areas of carbonate geology. The stormwater protection standards, primarily located in subdivision and land development ordinances, promote groundwater recharge, reduction of stormwater volume, natural infiltration, protection of water quality, and maintenance of the water balance.*



Comprehensive resource protection standards can promote environmental goals and enhance the quality of life.



The London Grove Meetinghouse and Penn Oak are prominent historic resources in West Marlborough Township.

Historic resource planning and protection

An important element of Chester County's character is its many historic resources and landscapes. The following projects serve to protect those important resources:

- Kennett Township– Historic Resource Survey and Plan.
- Pennsbury Township– Historic Resource Survey and Zoning Ordinance update.
- Thornbury Township– Historic Resource Survey and Plan.
- West Marlborough Township– Historic Resource Survey and Plan.
- VPP funded Comprehensive Plan updates– Historic Preservation Plan chapters.

Highlight—historic resource surveys and plan updates: *In 2009, four municipalities drafted detailed historic resource inventories and planning for historic resource preservation. These are the first historic resource surveys funded under the VPP. The inventories are undertaken by historic preservation consultants with expertise in conducting and researching historic structures and are consistent with Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission standards for Historic Resource Surveys. Historic resource inventories funded through VPP are also coordinated with the Chester County Historic GIS Atlas project, which is an update to the Chester County Historic Sites Survey (1979–1982). Updates to historic preservation plans will build on these inventories and take into account the Planning Commission publication “Preserving Our Places: Historic Preservation Manual for Chester County Communities.” Having these inventories and plans in place also supports revisions to municipal ordinances that regulate and protect historic resources.*

communicating

Making Information Easily Accessible

A key to successful planning is communications. The complex issues associated with planning require information to be presented in a fashion that is clear to our constituents. The Planning Commission prides itself on its ability to stay on top of technology in order to communicate planning issues more effectively.



Providing information on the web

A core service of the Planning Commission is the dissemination of information. To reach the broadest audience and to provide easy access to information and data, the department's publications were converted from a print format to electronic-only format in 2009. Documents can now be accessed on the web at www.chesco.org/planning.

The electronic format provides additional advantages to readers of the Chester County Planning Commission's Planning Newsletter. Information can be shared quickly, making news more relevant and contemporary. Photographs are enhanced from black & white to color and helpful hyperlinks were added to articles.

Geographic Information System (GIS) service

The Planning Commission continued to use GIS across all sections for map production, spatial analysis, and for presentations. To support these activities, the technical services division assisted planners by maintaining digital GIS data, providing necessary tools and custom applications, and by providing technical assistance.

The benefits of GIS, especially as an enabling technology for improved efficiency and effectiveness, will be realized as it is adopted and integrated through collaborative efforts. The front counter kiosk is maintained by staff and includes historical aerial imagery dating back to 1959. It's available for large format custom printing at the Planning Commission's front counter. The number of custom maps available to the public on the Planning Commission's [Map Gallery](#) was also expanded. The Map Gallery offers a wide selection of maps to the public free of charge and any of the display maps can be printed directly at the front counter.

Sharing information

Using web-based technology

The dissemination of planning information using the web has provided easy and quick access to Chester County residents. The evolution of the Landscapes2 website has brought the plan and support information to the public using contemporary technology. The site includes several slide show illustrations demonstrating each unique characteristic of the landscape within the plan. Oblique aerial photography was also a valuable asset integrated in to the presentations. The website remained active with public comments streaming directly to the webmaster and then filtered to the appropriate staff. Monthly visits to the site exceed 5000.

Creating an interactive plan

Landscapes2 has been designed as a web-based document to be easily used by municipal officials, students, and the general public. Photographs and maps have been added to enhance the understanding of the text, and links to external resources and to planning issues will keep information current. Links to the Livable Landscapes Map descriptions on the website allow for deeper exploration of the topic.

The plan document has been released as an interactive online “flip book”. This allows the user to see the document much as a book held in the hands, but has the advantages of a clickable table of contents, zoom capability, and a robust search function.

Maintaining websites

Information sharing is a primary function of the Planning Commission. The data provided by the department assists municipalities and residents alike in making sound planning decisions. Use of the web allows information to be shared quickly and efficiently. In this way, the Planning Commission websites remain contemporary and relevant.

There was a significant increase in accessing web-based data provided by the Planning Commission over the previous year:

Planning Commission

www.chesco.org/planning (119,880 visits)

Landscapes2

www.Landscapes2.org (52,139 visits)

Agriculture Development Council

www.chesco.org/agdev (27,893 visits)

Connecting through the internet

The Planning Commission continues its shift from print to web-based publications and services, resulting in increased efficiency, decreased expense and a more eco-friendly way to serve the public. This has made it possible for anyone to receive updates and to engage the community in new meaningful ways making it possible to participate at their convenience. A variety of web systems has enabled the Planning Commission to create what may be called virtual planning studio.

eSubscriptions

eNewsletter: Some of these web systems include email list services which allow the Planning Commission to email updates of our comprehensive plan, our Landscapes2 eNewsletter designed to inform the public about planning issues related to Landscapes2, as well articles and links to related topics.

ePublications: The Planning Commission created ePublications—an email subscription to notify readers when publications were available online. These emails highlighted new releases, special features, cover images, brief descriptions, and links to the online publications.

You can sign up for these eSubscriptions on our Landscapes2 website at www.Landscapes2.org.



Facebook

The Planning Commission uses social networking as another way of engaging and staying connected with the community. This has made it possible for the Planning Commission to increasingly reach more members of the community. Join the Planning Commission Facebook page by clicking on the icon to the right.



Kennett Square website

The Planning Commission has been contracted by Kennett Square Borough through the Vision Partnership Program (VPP) to update the borough’s comprehensive plan. As a part of this effort the borough requested that the county create a website dedicated to the planning process to assist in providing and distributing information to borough officials and residents. The website also contains a message board to provide an additional means of communication between borough residents, officials, and county planning commission staff. The website is available to the general public at www.chesco.org/planning/kennett.

partnerships

Collaborating For A Better Future

Partnerships are essential to achieve results. The multitude of jurisdictions and agencies that have different responsibilities makes coordination also an essential part of planning. The Chester County Planning Commission facilitates the building of partnerships to achieve the goals of Landscapes2.

Developing professional relationships

The Planning Commission has developed strong partnerships with the agricultural community through staff support to the Chester County [Agricultural Development Council](#). This support has cultivated the following activities through partnerships:

Keeping farming in Chester County

Sustaining agriculture in Chester County requires more than land preservation efforts. Farmers are needed. Through partnerships, the county's Agricultural Development Council (ADC) provides needed support services to farmers.

Coordinating with agricultural partners

The ADC and staff worked cooperatively with a variety of partners throughout the year. Staff participated in:

- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's (DVRPC) Food System Study.
- Keep Farming First annual farm summit with Chester County 2020.
- Southeastern PA Agriculture Partnership lead by the Chester County Economic Development Council.
- A marketing plan for the local food guide prepared by a group of West Chester University interns.

Managing the agricultural development work program

The ADC continued to grow their work program during 2009:

2009 community outreach initiatives

The Community Outreach Committee, comprised of several ADC members, initiated a variety of projects to educate the public about the importance of agriculture in Chester County.

Agricultural issue forums

The Community Outreach Committee of the ADC partnered with Chester County Economic Development Council to develop an Ag Issue Forum series. The three topics presented in 2009 were: 2007 Ag Census data (April 2009); results from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's (DVRPC) Food System Study (September 2009); and the Abundance of Chester County Agriculture, a look at hunger in Chester County (December 2009).





Local vendor at the Anselma Farmers' and Artisans' Market.

Local food guide

The Community Outreach Committee of the ADC partnered with Food Routes, the national organization that started the Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign, to develop a model local food guide. The guide included among other things, feature stories on and interviews with Chester County farms and their operations, as well as a listing and map of where people could buy local products. Twenty thousand brochures were printed and most of them have been distributed.

West Chester Restaurant Festival

The Community Outreach Committee of the ADC along with staff attended the West Chester Restaurant Festival to educate attendees on the role of agriculture in the county and to distribute the local food guide.

Siemens' Health Fair

Staff attended a health fair at Siemens Corporation in Great Valley, PA to educate Siemens employees on the role of agriculture in the county and to distribute the local food guide.

2009 Agricultural Inventory

The Agriculture Inventory Committee comprised of several ADC members and partners from other agricultural entities such as: Penn State Cooperative Extension, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Chester Delaware Farm Bureau, the Chester County Conservation District, and the Brandywine Conservancy are inventorying the agricultural situation and resources in Chester County.

2009 Municipal Outreach

The Municipal Outreach Committee comprised of several ADC members and partners from other entities such as: the Chester County Planning Commission, the Chester County Conservation District, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Herr Foods, Inc., South Mill Mushrooms, Honey Brook Township, and North Star Orchards are looking at how agriculture can be impacted (intentionally or unintentionally) by municipal regulations.

Recognizing excellence

Recognition of farming excellence both promotes agriculture and showcases success stories in Chester County. The following grants and awards were issued during the year:

Educational Grant

The ADC awarded Brook Himes from the Center for Arts and Technology – Pickering Campus the \$1,000.00 educational grant. (May 2009)

Ag in the Classroom Grant

The ADC sponsored Jo Ellen Cain, a 5th grade science teacher from Downingtown Area School District, with a \$700.00 grant to attend Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundations' Ag in the Classroom program. (July 2009)

Farmer of the Year

The ADC awarded both the Norman Laffey family of Glenville Farms (dairy) and Anthony and Karen Vietri of Va La Vineyards with the 2009 Farmer of the Year award. (December 2009)

Distinguished Service to Agriculture

The ADC awarded Nancy L. Mohr of Chester County 2020 with the Distinguished Service to Agriculture award. (December 2009)

Nancy L. Mohr was recognized by the Board of County Commissioners when she received the ADC Distinguished Service to Agriculture award.





The Exton Station of both SEPTA and Amtrak service to the central portion of the county.

Transportation planning and coordination

Planning beyond our borders

Coordination on a regional level is an essential element of planning, particularly transportation planning. The Planning Commission staff partnered with the general public, municipalities, legislators, and agencies on many transportation projects, studies, and initiatives throughout Chester County and the Delaware Valley region.

The Planning Commission participated in many transportation studies that have a direct impact on Chester County and the implementation of Landscapes2. In 2009, these studies included:

- Paoli Transportation Center Intermodal Access Study.
- US 322 Corridor Study.
- US 422 Master Plan.
- Taming Traffic Study for PA 896 in Kemblesville.
- DVRPC's Long Range Plan, Connections 2035.

The Planning Commission participated in many planning committees, studies, and other regional planning initiatives hosted by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). Planning staff served as Vice Chair of the Regional Technical Committee (RTC), which reviews and makes recommendations on the management of the region's highway and transit capital programs. Staff also regularly attended regional forums on Goods Movement, Safety, and Transportation Operations.

Coordinating with transportation partners—PennDOT, SEPTA, and TMAs

Safety concerns, roadway maintenance concerns, and improvements to existing public transit services are important planning issues in Chester County. Planning Commission staff partnered with the following agencies to address these issues:

- PennDOT to explore solutions to safety and maintenance problems.
- SEPTA for the development of their Capital Budget and Annual Service Plan Update, which led to route changes for the 314 Bus Route serving West Chester.
- Chester County's two Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), including a Public-Private Partnership Forum and US 422 Corridor Coalition.

Focusing on transportation operations

In 2009, the Planning Commission partnered with DVRPC, PennDOT, and Chester County Emergency Services on two new initiatives to improve transportation operations in Central Chester County. The Planning Commission participated in:

- An Operations Audit for US 202 around West Chester, which involved a team of technical experts and municipal representatives developing of low-cost strategies to improve safety and reduce congestion.
- A Route 30 Incident Management Task Force to facilitate communication and cooperation among organizations involved in responding to traffic incidents with the goals of improving safety, decreasing response times, and minimizing impacts on traffic operations.



A multi-modal station at Paoli remains a top transportation priority.

about us

Planning information and support services

The Planning Commission's General Fund expenditures for 2009 were \$3,257,269, an increase of 5 percent from 2008. This was due to an increase in personnel costs and to a payout in the Vision Partnership Program (VPP) that was made in a fiscal year earlier than programmed. Personnel cost increases were primarily due to county-wide employee and salary increases. In addition, the Board of County Commissioners created a new position, the director of the Agricultural Development Council. This position was budgeted as part of the Planning Commission's departmental budget. The early payout in the VPP program was necessary to be in compliance with a contract previously executed by the Board of County Commissioners. The early payout had the effect of increasing expenditures in 2009 over 2008, while reducing the expenditure that would have to be made in 2010.

While, the Planning Commission's personnel budget increased in 2009, the materials and services budget was cut by \$70,700. Among the areas of the budget that were significantly affected by the cut was the "publications and printing" line item. The Planning Commission compensated for this loss of funding by producing most new documents, including the final, adopted version of Landscapes2, as web documents. Municipal officials and various constituencies were informed of the switch to an electronic format by an aggressive "going e-!" campaign. "Going-e!" notified the public and Chester County businesses, institutions, organizations, municipalities and other governmental entities that the Planning Commission's publications were now available online. The Planning Commission also produced emails that were sent to individuals who voluntarily subscribed to a new e-newsletter service. The emails announced the release of new documents and advised readers on progress with updating Landscapes.

Information services	2008	2009
Telephone requests	12,033	12,328
Visitors	507	346
Maps & publications	1,960	1,141
Major mailings	10	4
Major e-mailings	2	3
Website visits	57,040	119,880

Budget	2008	2009
Budgeted	\$3,225,178	\$3,283,883
Expended	\$3,107,508	\$3,257,269
Revenues	\$330,673	\$293,196
Net expended	\$2,776,835	\$2,964,073

Revenues	2008	2009
Federal	\$172,490	\$148,685
State	\$0	\$0
Local	\$11,000	\$14,899
Publications	\$3,058	\$1,936
Subdivision fees	\$141,625	\$127,676
Total revenue	\$328,173	\$293,196



The adoption of Landscapes2, an updated version of the County's Comprehensive Plan, by the Board of County Commissioners in November of 2009 was a landmark event, and represented the culmination of several years of work by the Chester County Planning Commission and its staff.

In addition to completing Landscapes2, the County Planning Commission was engaged in many other critically important planning efforts, from developing multi-municipal comprehensive plans to programming funding for transportation projects such as reconstruction of US Highway 202.

Yet, 2009 will most be remembered as the year in which the economy plunged into a severe recession.

Chester County weathered the recession better than many regions in the United States. For instance, the home mortgage delinquency rate in Chester County was only 1.83 percent, compared to a national average of 5.81 percent. In addition, Chester County had one of the lowest unemployment rates, while still sustaining the greatest gains in population growth of any county in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Chester County also had the highest estimated median household income and the highest estimated family income in the Commonwealth.

The recession, however, clearly impacted new development throughout the county, which in turn reduced the number of new plan submissions received by the Planning Commission.

This fits the patterns of previous recessions. The number of lots/units proposed in 2009 was 3,381, which compares with previous recessionary years of 1970 (3,688), 1983 (3,814) and 1992 (3,475.) In each of the previous recessions development rebounded in the subsequent years. In 1974, for instance, development peaked at 11,251 lots/units. By 1986, following the 1983 recession, activity had returned to 11,043 lots/units. And by 1996, new lots or units had almost doubled over the number proposed in 1992.

If the past is prologue, it can be reasonably expected that development activity will increase in the coming years. The good news is that, with the adoption of Landscapes2 and through effective partnering with municipal governments, Chester County is better prepared to respond to a resumption of economic growth.

Growth is a very good thing in the right location, and the premise of Landscapes2 is that there are areas of Chester County where growth should be encouraged by creating capacity in local governance and physical infrastructure. At the same time, there are areas of Chester County that should be preserved as open space or agricultural land. These differences are the basis of the different landscapes of the county comprehensive plan.

In short, Landscapes2 calls for three primary initiatives:

- Build working partnerships.
- Create sustainable communities.
- Keep Chester County green.

The work accomplished in 2009 by the Chester County Planning Commission sets the foundation for accomplishing these initiatives.

The Chester County Planning Commission and its staff are pleased to present this report on the activities of the Planning Commission in 2009. The entire Planning Commission and staff look forward to continue serving the residents of Chester County and implementing the vision of Landscapes2 in the coming years.



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