

Chester County
Planning Commission
Annual Report **2016**



*Celebrating 20 years
of Landscapes*



20 years

This year we celebrated the twentieth anniversary for Landscapes, the county's long-range comprehensive plan. Since its adoption in 1997, Landscapes has guided planning decisions and established programs to balance preservation and growth. These have resulted in many successes and have made positive changes in the county.



Mission statement

To provide future growth and preservation plans to citizens, so that they can enjoy a Chester County that is historic, green, mobile and prosperous.

Vision

To bring a balance between managed growth and preservation in the county. This will be accomplished through carrying out the recommendations of Landscapes2, the county comprehensive policy plan.

Initiatives

The county championed three major initiatives to balance the vision of managing growth and preservation, while maintaining the quality of life and sense of place enjoyed by residents.

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 Landscapes.

Create sustainable communities

The county will work with the state, 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 future.

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Landscapes was adopted as the first comprehensive plan for the county.

1996

Vision Partnership Program established to assist municipal planning.

AWARD

Pennsylvania Chapter American Planning Association Outstanding Planning Award for Innovation Recognition for Landscapes

1997



Chairman's message

The Chester County Planning Commission is pleased to submit this annual report for the calendar year 2016. It was another busy year that brought change.

One of the Planning Commission's largest undertakings in 2016 was the start of "Landscapes3", which is an update to the county's award-winning comprehensive plan, "Landscapes2". As you can imagine, the creation of Landscapes3 will involve a significant amount of work

by the Planning Commission, as well as all of the stakeholders involved. This process began in late 2016 and will continue through 2018. To date, the Planning Commission has developed an outreach strategy to promote public engagement, held one round of topic specific stakeholders meetings and identified important accomplishments of Landscapes and Landscapes2, which can be built upon in Landscapes3. There is still much more work to be done in 2017 and beyond. You can find all available information related to Landscapes3 at www.chescoplanning.org/CompPlan.

In 2016, the Planning Commission worked on improving communications with our partners and the public. To that end, a Communications Plan was created which allowed the Planning Commission to set specific goals related to the information that is available to our various partners and the public. A new logo has been established, as well as a new website (www.chescoplanning.org). If you have some time, I would suggest you check it out and see what the Planning Commission has to offer. You are sure to be impressed!

The Planning Commission continued to work hard to expand transportation alternatives and improve the overall transportation network. A number of workshops were held throughout the county on the Planning Commission publication "Multi-Modal Handbook". The Planning Commission also completed a study on enhancing bus stop access and design in order to provide more attractive alternatives for travel within the county and beyond. The Planning Commission celebrated the completion of Section 300 of the Route 202 widening (finally). If you have driven on the new section of Route 202, you know how much travel time has improved.

An aspect of the county that sometimes is overlooked by many, but makes the county such a great place to live and work is the protected open space and agricultural land. In 2016, the Planning Commission completed the Brandywine Battlefield Strategic Landscapes study (Phase 1), which is currently being implemented in the form of new interpretive signage and land preservation efforts. We also have tracked open space preservation, which stood at over 26% of the county at the beginning of 2016. This is something that everyone in the county should be proud of, to think that over ¼ of the county is protected open space. On the agricultural side, and in conjunction with the Agricultural Development Council, the "Farm Guide" was produced and tours of Chester County farms took place, allowing members of the Planning Commission, county staff and the commissioners to experience farming firsthand.

The Vision Partnership Program was again fully funded in 2016. Several municipal projects were assisted through two grant rounds. These projects include comprehensive plans, subdivision and land development ordinance updates, zoning ordinance updates, economic development studies, multi-modal studies and bicycle and pedestrian facilities plans, just to name a few.

We are looking forward to a prosperous 2017 and will need your help to continue making Chester County the best place to live, work and connect. Again, please go to www.chescoplanning.org to see the latest information the Chester County Planning Commission has to offer.

Matthew Hammond, PE
Chairman

AWARD

National Association of County Officials
Achievement Award Recognition for Landscapes

1998

Who we are

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From left: E. Martin Shane; Douglas A. Fasick, DC, Vice-Chair; Kevin C. Kerr; Matthew Hammond, P.E., Chair; Judy L. DiFilippo; Joseph T. Tarantino; Michael Heaberg; Daniel DiMucci, RLA, ASLA.

Planning Commission

The Chester County Planning Commission is a nine-member advisory board appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. [For more information about the board ►](#)



Nancy Mohr, retired
Years of service: 1998–2016



The late John C. Washington, III
Years of service: 2002–2016



AWARD

National Association of County Officials Achievement Award: Recognition for Chester County's historic preservation program

AWARD

American Planning Association (APA) National Planning Award - Outstanding Planning Award for a Project/Program/Tool: Recognition for Landscapes

1999

Staff

Administration Services

Brian O'Leary, AICP, *Executive Director*
 David D. Ward, AICP, *Assistant Director*
 Beth A. Cunliffe, *Office Manager*
 Suzanne Wozniak, *Administrative Coordinator*
 Marie Celii, *Information Specialist*

Infrastructure & Plan Review

Carol J. Stauffer, AICP, *Infrastructure & Plan Review Director*
 Glenn Bentley, *Plan Reviewer*
 Wes Bruckno, AICP, *Plan Reviewer*
 Paul Farkas, *Plan Reviewer*
 Jenn Kolvareid, *Land Development Analyst*
 Carolyn Conwell, *Environmental/Open Space Planner*
 Jake Michael, AICP, *Demographer*

Technical Services

Thomas P. West, *Technical Services Director*
 Catherine Sbarbaro, *Technical Support Supervisor**
 Gene Huller, *Technical Services Supervisor*
 Steven Cummings, *Technical Services Specialist*
 Madeline Schueren, *GIS Planner**
 Colin Murtoff, *GIS Planner*
 Carolyn Oakley, *Communications Supervisor*
 Danielle Lynch, *Technical Services Specialist*
 Diana Zak, *Graphics Supervisor*
 Christopher Bittle, *Graphics Specialist*
 Polly Chalfant, *Graphics Specialist*
 Elizabeth Kolb, *Graphics Specialist*

* Resigned

Transportation and Information Services

Randy Waltermeyer, AICP, *Transportation Services Director**
 Brian Styche, RLA, AICP, *Transportation Services Director*
 Brian Blacker, *Transportation Planner**
 William Deguffroy, AICP, *Transportation Planner*
 Rachael Griffith, RLA, *Transportation Planner*
 Heather Martin, *Transportation Planner*
 Justin Smiley, AICP, *Urban Planner*
 Patti Strauber, *Administrative Support*

Planning Services

Susan Elks, AICP, *Planning Services Director*
 Mark Gallant, *Community Planner*
 Jamie Jilozian, AICP, *Community Planner*
 Karen Marshall, *Heritage Preservation Coordinator*
 Kevin Myers, *Community Planner*
 Sean O'Neill, AICP, *Community Planner*
 Jeannine Speirs, *Community Planner*
 Nancy Shields, *Administrative Support*

Agricultural Development

Hillary Krummrich, Esq., *Agricultural Development Director*
 Ann Lane, *Program Coordinator*

2001

AWARD
 Pennsylvania Governor's Award for Local Government Excellence for Innovative Planning: Recognition of Chester County's commitment to land stewardship and preservation initiatives

Budget

Expenditures	2015	2016
Personnel Services	\$2,859,317	\$2,848,948
Materials & Services	\$144,033	\$179,279
Contributions, Grants, Subsidies	\$132,548	\$179,859
TOTAL	\$3,135,897	\$3,208,086

Revenues	2015	2016
Federal	\$287,754	\$302,357
State	\$64,000	\$23,500
Local	\$22,390	\$35,117
Subdivision/Land Review Fees	\$174,557	\$204,714
Misc.	\$2,254	\$524
TOTAL	\$550,955	\$566,212

Urban Center Revitalization Program (URCP) established to enhance our urban centers.

AWARD
 National Association of County Officials Achievement Award - Brandywine Battlefield Protection Strategies

2002

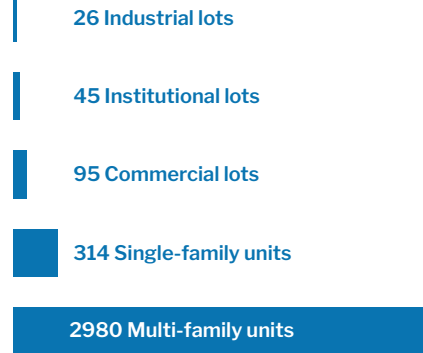
What we have accomplished

Delivering Planning Services

Plan review

Over 430 reviews were completed, proposing a total of 3520 lots/units.

[Comparison tables are available](#) ▶



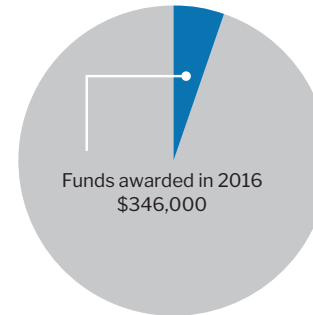
Vision Partnership Program

10 projects awarded totaling \$346,000 and leveraged \$215,000.

[For more information](#) ▶

Funds awarded since VPP inception:

\$6,000,000



VPP projects completed in 2016

- E. Bradford Comprehensive Plan
- E. Caln Official Map
- E. Whiteland Comprehensive Plan
- Phoenixville Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance
- Schuylkill Freedom Trail Feasibility Study
- S. Coventry Comprehensive Plan
- Kennett Square Borough/Kennett Township Economic Development Study
- Western Chester County Region Route 30 Multimodal Transportation Study

Housing

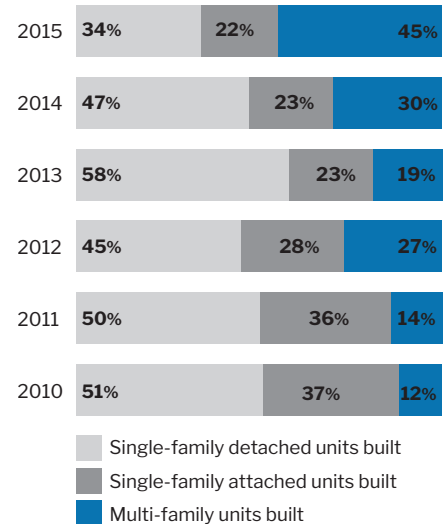
Affordable housing

In an effort to promote housing choices in the county, a series of affordable housing best practices case studies were produced.

[View case studies](#) ▶

Units built

2015 was the first time since 2010 that multi-family units were the largest percentage (45%) of all new units built.



Pipeline Information Center

The PIC was completed and operational. An outreach program took the news of the PIC to six organizations and received a state planning award. [More information](#) ▶



Ronald T. Bailey was appointed as the 5th executive director.

2006

County protected lands reached 100,000 acres.

2007

Data and information

Population and employment forecasts were developed for the year 2045 in collaboration with Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). [To view forecasts](#) ▶

New website launched

To better serve our partners and the public, and promote planning and inform residents about the preparation of Landscapes3 [To view www.chescoplanning.org](http://www.chescoplanning.org) ▶

Urban Centers

Held two Urban Center workshops:

- Spring 2016 - Redevelopment of Underutilized Properties [View presentation](#) ▶
- Fall 2016 - The Mentality of Marketing [View presentation](#) ▶

Honoring Our Heritage

Town Tours & Villages Walks

12 tours with over 2,000 participants were held around the county to celebrate the 300th anniversary of iron and steel production.



Brandywine Battlefield National Landmark

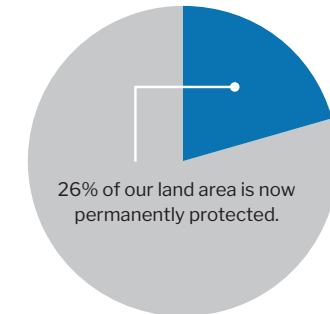
Plans to implement preservation of this battlefield of national significance are being developed in cooperation with the National Park Service. Phase 1 study has been completed. [For more information](#) ▶

Protected open space

The Protected Open Space Tracking System determined that over 129,000 acres, representing over 26% of our land area, is now permanently protected.

[For more information](#) ▶

Chester County land area



AWARD

Pennsylvania Chapter APA Award for Planning Excellence for Best Practices - Trail and Path Planning—A Guide for Municipalities

2008

Landscapes2 was adopted as an update to the comprehensive plan.

2009

AWARD

Pennsylvania Chapter APA Planning Excellence Award: Recognition of the county's public outreach process

2010

County population reached 500,000.

2011



Promoting Transportation Choices

Multi-Modal Handbook

An extensive outreach program was performed to promote transportation choices in land development planning. [View publication](#) ▶

Enhancing the Transit Environment

This document promotes safe and quality bus stops around the county. The document includes ideas for improvements at nine existing bus stops in an attempt to position these projects for grant funding or development/redevelopment opportunities. [View document](#) ▶

County protected nearly **130,000 acres**, representing over 26% of the total land area.

\$170 million in county open space funds has yielded \$355 million in other investments

Vision Partnership Program (VPP) awards exceeded \$6 million.

AWARD

Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association Sustainability Award - Silver Level: Recognition of the county's Public Transportation Plan

Brian O'Leary was appointed as 6th executive director.

2015

Chester Valley Trail Extension Study

A feasibility study was performed for extending the county trail west from Exton to Downingtown, providing connections to the existing Struble and East Branch Brandywine Trails.

[For more information](#) ▶



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Launching the Plan Update

Topic-specific surveys

By the end of 2016 more than 1,000 topic-specific surveys were completed by stakeholders and the public across the seven topics.

Photo contest

A photo contest was held to identify favorite places in Chester County. From the county's working agricultural lands to its urban main streets, participants shared nearly 400 favorite places. The contest offered a different view on what places are valued in Chester County.

Comprehensive plan update

The Planning Commission was busy throughout 2016 with the initial stages of updating Landscapes2. A first round of stakeholder meetings generated significant input, focusing on identifying issues and trends within seven different topics and discussing the overlapping interests and concerns across those topics. The seven topics were:

- Preservation
- Agriculture
- Housing
- Utilities and Infrastructure
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Community Health



Urban Centers Revitalization Program reached \$60 million in awards.

AWARD

Preservation Pennsylvania Chairman's Award: Recognition of the exceptional leadership to the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force

AWARD

Delaware Valley Smart Growth Alliance Smart Policy - Smart Growth Award: Recognition of the county's commitment to Smart Growth practices

Landscapes2 update began.

AWARD

Pennsylvania Chapter American Planning Association Best Outreach Program: Recognition of the effective outreach achieved through the Pipeline Information Center

AWARD

Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association Sustainability Award - Diamond Level (Highest level awarded): Recognition of the county's diversity in transportation choices

2016



Where we are headed



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Phase 1
#TellUsL3
Understanding the issues

Collect background information on issues and trends

Public photo contest

Stakeholder meetings

Topical surveys

2016/2017

The plan process

The plan update, titled Landscapes3, will involve a collaborative process. Progress can be accessed online throughout the process. The update will occur in three phases. There will be opportunities to offer comments, ideas, and concerns about the update throughout the process. Input is invited during all phases. [View website](#) ►

Phase 2
#GuideUsL3
Constructing the vision

Develop the plan

Develop and refine the vision for Landscapes3

Collect public comments on draft material

Prepare a revised Livable Landscapes map

Preform public opinion survey

Form a steering committee to guide this phase, including regional meetings

Hold a public hearing by the Board of County Commissioners prior to adoption

2017/2018



Activities in 2017 will include a second round of stakeholder meetings, a public survey, a second photo contest, and the formation of a steering committee to guide the development of the vision and goals for the new plan.

Phase 3
#WorkWithUsL3
Implementing the plan

Implement the recommendations

Identify programs, grants and actions by the county and partners

Track implementation efforts annually

2019

Director's message

Over the past year, the Chester County Planning Commission has continued to encourage smart growth and preservation. In 2016, we helped municipalities implement good planning, supported alternative transportation modes, strengthened preservation efforts, advocated for more housing options, encouraged urban and suburban revitalization, and provided a wealth of information and data to the public, local municipalities, and other planning partners. In the fall, we began the update of Landscapes2, the county's comprehensive plan, with a series of stakeholder meetings. During these meetings, it became clear that Chester County is a great community with a high quality of place that is unique; however, the county also faces issues that will need to be addressed, including:

- Over the next 30 years, the county is expected to add 146,000 people and 87,000 jobs. This growth will have to go somewhere.
- By 2045, there will be a lot more people age 60 and older, and many more county residents will be living by themselves.
- The real estate industry is changing, driven by evolving retail, revived interest in urban living, smaller households, and alternative office designs. The county must stay on top of these trends in order to remain a premier location for companies and residents.
- People love the county's open spaces, farmland, walkable downtowns, quiet neighborhoods, and historic sites. Preserving these important places is critical.
- Moving around the county is often challenging for walkers, bikers, and public transit users; and the whole transportation system will need to accommodate significant additional growth.
- Housing is expensive, and providing more affordable housing is difficult to do.

These are a few of the many issues raised at our stakeholder meetings. In the first half of 2017, we expect to hear more from stakeholders and the public about trends facing the county. Later in the year, we'll use this information to help formulate the goals and policies for the next comprehensive plan, Landscapes3.

Other key 2017 projects will include a Brandywine Battlefield plan, agriculture zoning guidance, a study of the Chester Valley Trail west extension, more affordable housing case studies, a commercial landscapes guide, and a Phoenixville area multi-modal plan. We'll also be continuing the Vision Partnership Program for municipal planning, reviewing proposed land developments, providing up-to-date data and mapping, and conducting lots of other projects to help keep Chester County a great place for residents, businesses, and visitors.

We're looking forward to working with the public and all of our planning partners in 2017.

Brian O'Leary
Executive Director





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Flickr (photography)
www.flickr.com/ccpcphotography

Twitter
www.twitter.com/chescoplanning

LinkedIn
www.linkedin.com/company/chester-county-planning-commission

Instagram
www.instagram.com/chescoplanning



A report to the Board of County Commissioners

Michelle Kichline
Kathi Cozzone
Terence Farrell

