

Chester County Planning Commission Annual Report

2015



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.

Our Strategy

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.



"The Chester County Planning Commission plays a key role in supporting Commissioners' initiatives including the award-winning open space program, the Vision Partnership Program and the Pipeline Information Center."

Commissioners Terence Farrell, Michelle Kichline, and Kathi Cozzone





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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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Chairman's message — year in review



The Chester County Planning Commission is pleased to submit this annual report for the calendar year 2015. This past year's work at the Planning Commission

continues to reflect its mission — to provide future growth and preservation plans to citizens, so that they can enjoy a Chester County that is historic, green, mobile and, prosperous. 2015 was a busy year that brought change.

First off, I would like to acknowledge the retirement of Ronald Bailey in June. He served as the Executive Director for over eight years. Ronald worked tirelessly to make the Planning Commission not only the envy of planning Departments throughout the Country, but to make the County a better place for all who work and live within its borders. Ronald represented the County in numerous speaking engagements, presentations, and events and did so in a manner that presented the County as a leader, not a follower. Ronald earned the respect of countless individuals and agencies throughout the Country due to his knowledge and ability to address the issues at hand. I am proud that I was able to know Ronald. The County is a better place because of him.

Following the announcement of Ronald's retirement, the Planning Commission preformed a search for an individual that would serve the County in the same capacity that we have been accustomed to with Ronald at the helm. I am pleased that we were able to find such an individual. In October we welcomed Brian O'Leary to serve as our new Executive Director. Brian brings almost three decades of experience from his various roles served at the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Brian has hit the ground running since joining the Planning Commission and I look forward to working with him in the years to come.

The Planning Commission published a number of documents in 2015. These documents include *The Multi-Modal Circulation Handbook for Chester County* which is a consolidated reference guide on how to incorporate all transportation modes into contemporary land development site design, *Baltimore Pike for Everyone* which aims to transform Baltimore Pike into a "complete street" by recommending improvements to increase the safety of any user regardless of their mode of travel, age, or ability,

and the *Housing Costs Profile* which displays housing sales data on three aggregate levels: county, sub-county regions, and municipalities. It is based on information from Chester County assessment office records. All of these documents can be found on the Planning Commission's website.

In 2014, The Chester County Commissioners tasked the Planning Commission with creating the Chester County Pipeline Information Center (PIC) website. The PIC provides residents with a central location to find information on all aspects of pipeline issues including pipeline safety, the pipeline review process, and the latest information on pipeline project activity within Chester County and the surrounding region. In 2015, the Planning Commission expanded the information available to the public and worked with many pipeline operators, interest groups, agencies and the public to better understand pipelines and pipeline activity in Chester County and the surrounding region.

The Vision Partnership Program was, again, fully funded in 2015. Several municipal projects were assisted through two grant rounds. These projects include ordinance updates, economic development studies, parking management studies and bicycle & pedestrian facilities plans, just to name a few.

As 2015 came to a close, the Planning Commission started to plan for an update to Landscapes2, the County's award winning Comprehensive Plan. By law, the County's Comprehensive Plan requires an update every 10 years. We will be working with the residents, business owners, municipal officials, agencies, etc. to provide an updated County Comprehensive Plan for 2019. In addition, the Planning Commission has been working hand in hand with the Chester County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) on the goals outlined in the County's Economic Plan, VISTA 2025.

We are looking forward to a prosperous 2016.

Matthew Hammond, PE
Chairman



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.



Matthew Hammond, P.E.
Chairman

Resident:
 West Bradford Township

Occupation:
 Executive Vice President, Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.

Affiliations:
 Past Chair, Institute of Transportation Engineers Parking Council; Past member, West Bradford Township Planning Commission; Past Chairman, The Pledging Tree Foundation; Member, Institute of Transportation Engineers; Member, International Council of Shopping Centers; Past President, American Society of Highway Engineers–East Penn Section.

Appointed:
 June 2010



Dr. Douglas Fasick
Vice Chairman

Resident:
 East Nottingham Township

Occupation:
 Chiropractor

Affiliations:
 Board, Oxford Area Chamber of Commerce; President, Delaware Chiropractic Services Network; Member, Pennsylvania Chiropractic Association; Member, Chiropractic Fellowship of PA; Member, Oxford Athletic Association.

Appointed:
 June 2010



Judy L. DiFilippo
Immediate Past Chairman

Resident:
 Tredyffrin Township

Occupation:
 Public Official

Affiliations:
 Former 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; Treasurer, Tredyffrin Historic Preservation Trust; Chair, Main Line School Night Board of Directors.

Appointed:
 June 2002



Nancy Mohr

Resident:
 East Marlborough Township

Occupation:
 Writer

Affiliations:
 Chester County 2020, emeritus, Community Conversations; Keep Farming First, Master Planner Program; Former Brandywine Conservancy's Headwaters Area Conservation Program.

Appointed:
 June 1998



Kevin C. Kerr

Resident:
 Upper Uwchlan Township

Occupation:
 Private Investor/Public Official

Affiliations:
 Upper Uwchlan Township Board of Supervisors; First Vice President, Chester County Association of Township Officials; Chairman, Finance Committee, PA State Association of Township Supervisors.

Appointed:
 January 2013



E. Martin Shane

Resident:
 East Goshen Township

Occupation:
 Retired, PECO Energy Company

Affiliations:
 Chair, East Goshen Township Board of Supervisors; Board Member, Chester County Association of Township Officials, 2007–2015; Member, Selective Service System Local Board, 2007–present.

Appointed:
 June 2011



Daniel DiMucci, RLA, ASLA

Resident:
 West Goshen Township

Occupation:
 Senior Vice President, Pennoni

Affiliations:
 Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects; The American Planning Association; The Penjerdel Council; The Central Philadelphia Development Corporation; Member, Board of Directors of the Arts and Architecture Society at the Pennsylvania State University, for Holy Family Home, and for the Charter High School of Architecture and Design.

Appointed:
 June 2011



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; Member, National Association of Realtors; Member, Urban Land Institute.

Appointed:
 June 2005



John C. Washington, III

Resident:
 South Coatesville Borough

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

Affiliations:
 Past President, South Coatesville Borough Council; Member, South Coatesville Borough Council, 1980-2013; Past President of the Association of Boroughs; Democratic Party of South Coatesville; Chairman, Borough of South Coatesville Economic Development Committee; Vice-President, Western Chester County Regional VCC Appeals Board.

Appointed:
 January 2002

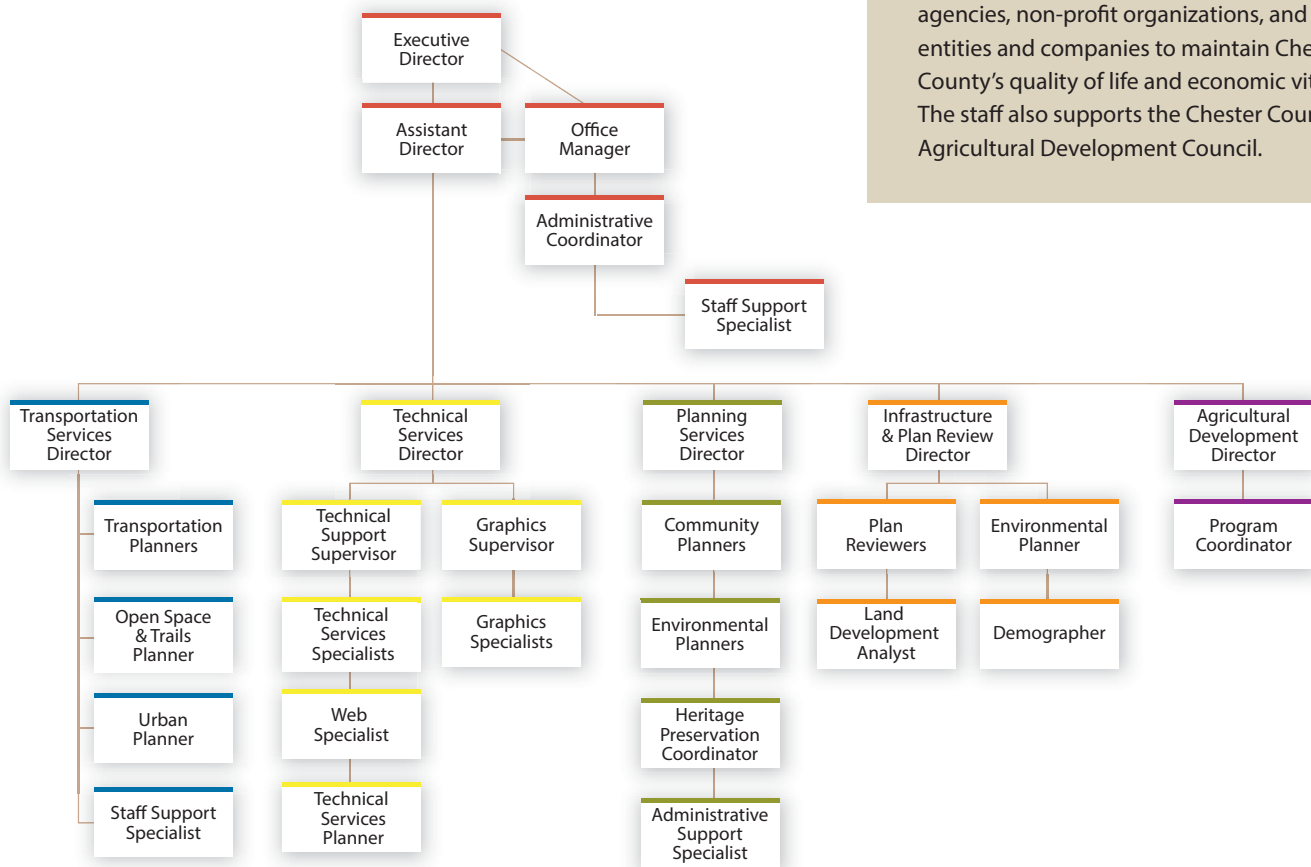
delivering

Delivering our Services

The Planning Commission prides itself on delivering professional services. The Planning Commission is comprised of a nine member commission made up of dedicated volunteers and a staff that is professionally trained to deliver a wide range of services.



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

Transportation and Information Services

- Randy Waltermeyer, AICP,
Transportation Services Director
- Brian Blacker, *Transportation Planner*
- William Deguffroy, AICP, *Transportation Planner*
- Justin Smiley, AICP, *Urban Planner*
- Brian Styche, RLA, AICP, *Open Space & Trail Planner*
- Patti Strauber, *Administrative Support*

Technical Services

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

Agricultural Development

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

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 Kolvereid, *Land Development Analyst*
- Carolyn Conwell,
Environmental Planner
- Jake Michael, *Demographer*

Planning Services

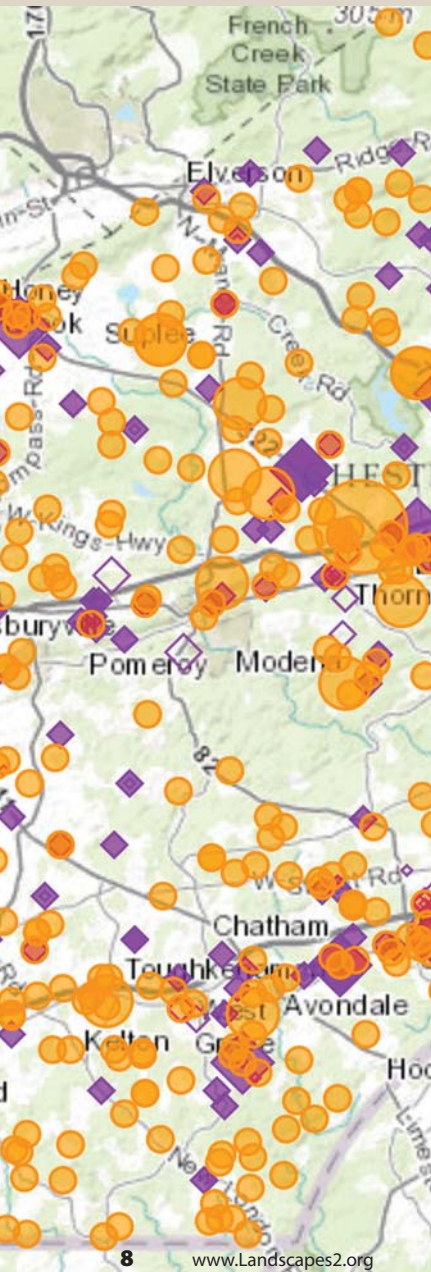
- Susan Elks, AICP
Planning Services Director
- Mark Gallant, *Community Planner*
- Jamie Larzelere, *Community Planner*
- Karen Marshall, *Heritage Preservation Coordinator*
- Kevin Myers, *Community Planner*
- Sean O'Neill, AICP, *Community Planner*
- Jeannine Speirs, *Community Planner*
- Yvonne Guthrie,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

* Resigned
** Retired

improving

Improving Communications

The Planning Commission strives to provide useful and contemporary services for our partners and the general public. These include up-to-date information and data, quality reviews, and user-friendly products.



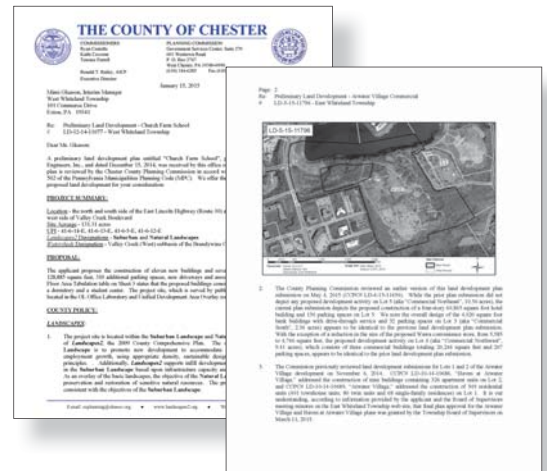
Enhancing plan reviews

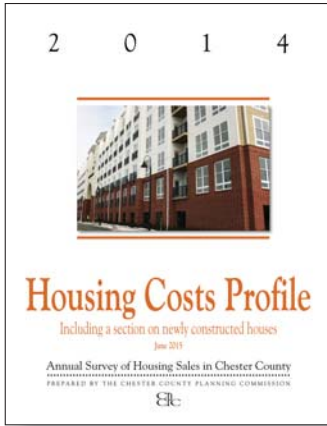
All plan reviews conducted by the Planning Commission under federal and state mandates and regulations are completed within the Infrastructure and Plan Review Division. An important purpose of these reviews is to determine consistency with Landscapes2 and to provide guidance for improving consistency between local and county planning policies.

In 2015, several improvements to the review letters were implemented to make the letters more informative and reader-friendly. Email delivery of the Act 247 review letters was also implemented so the letters can be provided more efficiently.

These reviews include:

- Planning reviews completed under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247) primarily consisting of subdivisions, land developments, land use ordinances, and comprehensive plans. Over 425 Act 247 reviews were completed in 2015.
- Sewage facilities reviews completed under the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act (Act 537) for major and minor sewage facilities plan amendments and updates. Thirty-two Act 537 reviews were completed in 2015 including two major revisions to municipal sewage facilities plans.
- Facilities and infrastructure consistency letters completed under the Act 67/68 amendments to Act 247. These submissions primarily consist of earthmoving activities that require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit. Over 150 Act 67/68 reviews were completed in 2015, a significant increase from 2014.
- Agricultural Security Area reviews for seven year reviews of municipal ASAs (Act 43) and additions to existing ASAs. Twelve additions to municipal ASAs were reviewed in 2015.
- Pipeline related reviews as needed, primarily when a pipeline project falls under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission review and public input process. Comments were provided through the Act 67/68 process on the Sunoco Logistics Mariner East 2 proposal.





Planning data and information

The Planning Commission offers a variety of data and information related to planning in Chester County:

- Collection and analysis of U.S. Census and American Community Survey information.
- Updates to the Chester County Community Profiles for housing, economic data, and community facilities presented on the Planning Commission website.
- Annual Inventory of the protected open space acreage in the county.
- Responses to data requests from staff members, county and state agencies, and the public.
- Annual updates to the Landscapes2 Index information which measures the progress in achieving the goals of Landscapes2 and the commissioners' strategic plan.

Expanding online marketing

The Planning Commission has made great strides communicating online. Marketing improvements include refinements of web-based systems and social media outlets (see next page), the rollout of a new [eTools App](#) that connects users to planning tools, and the completion of updates to [POST](#) (Protected Open Space Tracking).



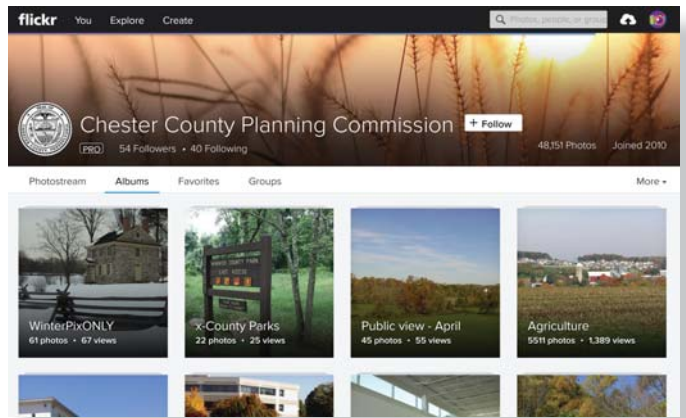
Social media

The Planning Commission broadcasts news of planning events, products, and information using [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Flickr](#), and [Twitter](#).

Flickr

The Planning Commission hosts thousands of photographs about Chester County and planning programs on Flickr. This is one of the most sought after resources of the Planning Commission. In fact, in 2015 there were over 351,000 hits to our account.

www.flickr.com/photos/ccpcphotography/albums



Online publications

The Planning Commission's online publications provide high quality printable documents infused with searching, linking, and dynamic media capabilities. Some smaller reports consist entirely of a webpage designed to be printed while others, such as the [Multi-Modal Circulation Handbook](#), consist of a website and companion document. Collections are categorized under familiar planning topics, drawn from Landscapes2. Visitors can use the search feature to find documents best suited to their interests. The archives section was created to host older publications from the Planning Commission library. These documents provide a fascinating historical view of planning in and around Chester County.





Promoting pipeline information

Pipelines have been a part of Chester County's infrastructure for many years with some pipelines dating back to the 1930s. Much of the pipeline infrastructure was installed in the 1950s and 1960s when the county was largely rural causing limited conflicts with existing land uses. However, with the increase in shale gas extraction in the Marcellus shale areas of Pennsylvania, proposals for new pipelines and the expansion of or repurposing of existing pipelines to transport the shale gas became an issue of concern within Chester County.

At the direction of the Board of County Commissioners, the Planning Commission created the [Pipeline Information Center](#) website. The Pipeline Information Center provides information on projects and operators, regulatory agencies, the regulatory process, safety issues, and pipeline locations. Information, maps, and announcements about active pipeline projects are posted

to the website on a regular basis. The pipeline point of contact (POC) facilitates communication between residents, municipalities, and pipeline operators and provides a central location where municipalities, residents, operators, and other stakeholders can go with questions relating to pipelines. The POC can be contacted at ccpipelines@chesco.org or 610-344-6285.

Pipeline projects continued to be active through 2015 with the completion of the Columbia East Side Expansion in central Chester County and the on-going activity of the Sunoco Logistics Mariner East 2 project which would extend from Elverson Borough through Westtown Township and into Delaware. A full summary of projects, including maps and current activity is located on the [Active Pipeline Projects](#) page.

A [Landowners Resources](#) webpage was added in 2015 specifically to assist residents and property owners who have an existing or proposed pipeline right-of-way on or near their property.

Information provided on the webpage includes:

- Finding pipeline locations and operators
- Finding pipeline easements through the Recorder of Deeds
- Landowner resources for pipeline easements and rights-of-way
- Website and publication resources for landowners

The [Landowners Resource Guide for Easements and Rights-of-Way](#) was published this year and may be of particular interest to those landowners within active pipeline project corridors.

The Chester County Planning Commission was awarded a second PHMSA Pipeline Grant for 2015/2016 to further support the county's pipeline planning efforts.

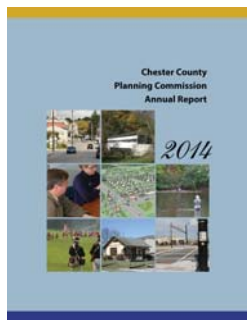


Publications created during 2015

The following publications were produced by the Planning Commission and can be viewed online:

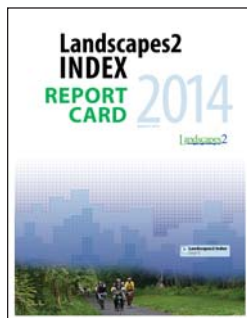
Annual Report, 2014

Official report to the Chester County Board of Commissioners providing a summary of planning activities during the year.



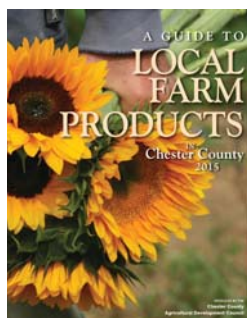
Landscapes2 Index Report Card, 2014

Document measures progress being made to achieve the goals of Landscapes2.



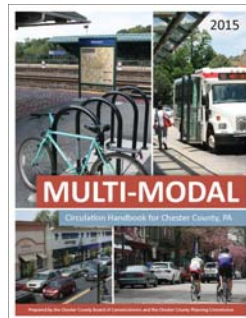
Guide to Farm Products, 2015

A product of the Agricultural Development Council that includes a list of over 100 producers within the county.



Multi-Modal Circulation Handbook for Chester County, PA

A consolidated reference guide on how to incorporate all transportation modes into contemporary land development site design.



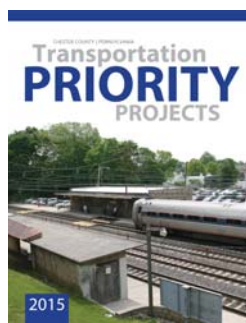
Baltimore Pike for Everyone — Complete Street Strategies for Baltimore Pike, Chester County, Pennsylvania

Improvements are recommended to increase the safety of any user regardless of their mode of travel, age, or ability.



Chester County Transportation Improvements Inventory 2015

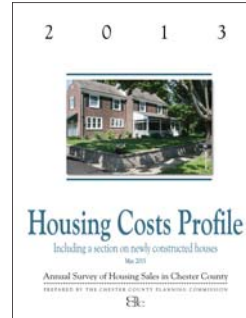
A comprehensive record of known transportation needs and projects within Chester County.



Housing Costs Profile 2013

Housing Costs Profile 2014

Housing sales data on three aggregate levels: county, sub-county regions, and municipalities.



Chester Valley Trail Map & Guide

Trail information includes points of interest, historical background, trail heads, mile markers, and parking.



building

Building Partnerships

The success of the Planning Commission can be directly credited to the partnerships that have been developed with its many different partners, including local, county, state and federal agencies and governments. It is through these partnerships that the principles of Landscapes2 can become a reality.



Vision Partnership Program (VPP)

The Planning Commission implements the principles of Landscapes2 through partnerships with local municipalities. This assistance is primarily accomplished through the Vision Partnership Program (VPP), a competitive grant program that encourages sound growth management and coordinated planning programs.

Through VPP, municipalities can receive professional planning services and financial assistance to improve consistency with Landscapes2 and achieve municipal planning goals. Municipalities may seek VPP reimbursable cash grants to retain the services of a professional planning consultant, or seek an in-kind grant to retain Planning Commission staff for professional planning assistance.

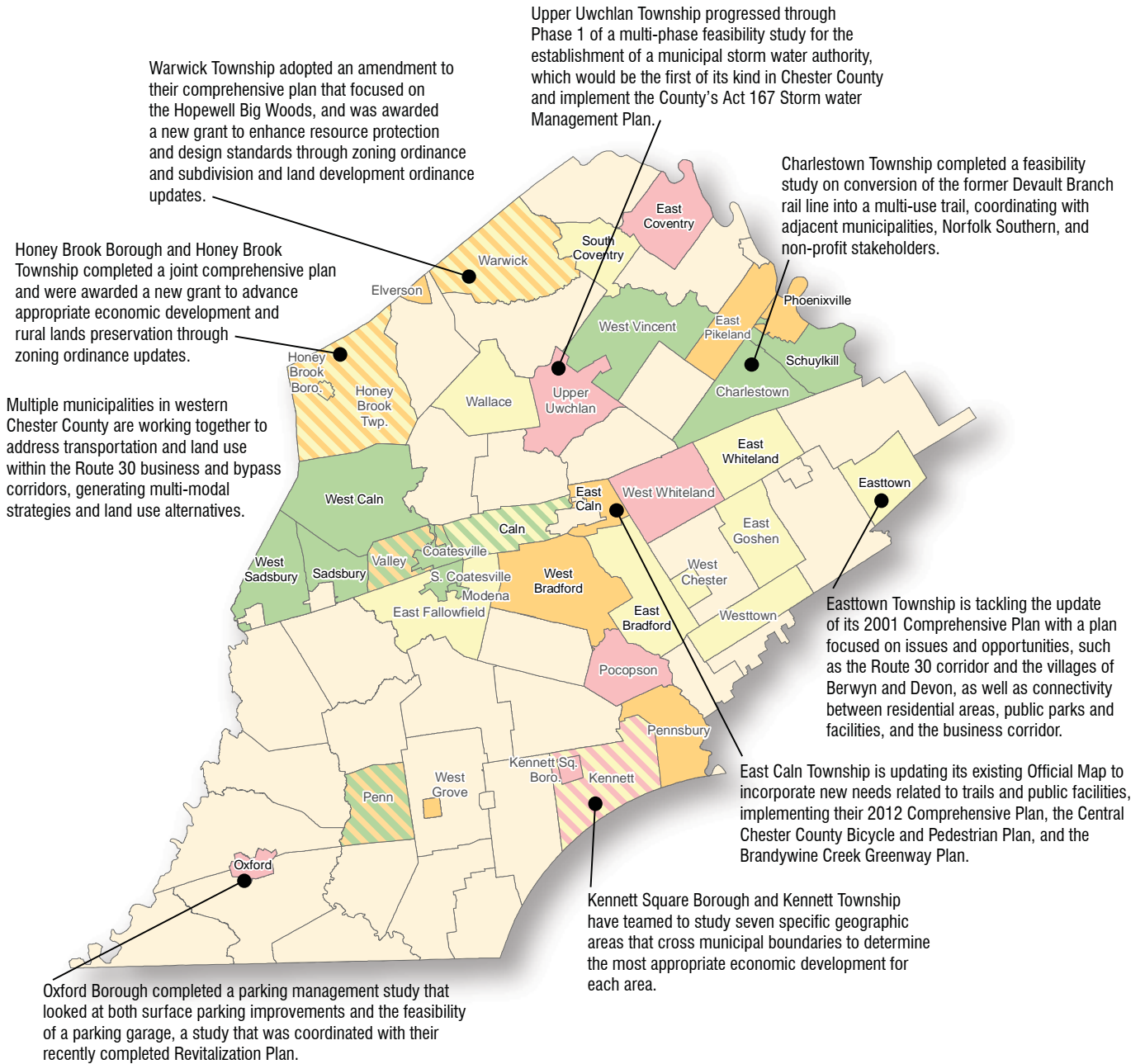
In 2015, nine projects were awarded reimbursable cash grants and two projects were awarded in-kind grants, totaling over \$289,000 in award funds and leveraging over \$149,000 in matching funds. There were 43 projects active in 2015, including the newly awarded projects.

Project highlight — Honey Brook Joint Plan

Honey Brook Borough and Honey Brook Township completed one project that was funded through VPP in the first half of 2015, and were awarded a new grant in the fall of 2015. A joint comprehensive plan was adopted by both municipalities that addressed land use, the revitalization of the borough, natural and cultural resources, parks and recreation, transportation/circulation, and community facilities. The plan promotes the two municipalities as an agricultural and economic center in northern Chester County through retention of the agricultural industry and advancement of the borough's community and economic revitalization. Among the action items of the plan were multiple zoning amendments to implement land use objectives and to achieve consistency among the ordinances and plan.

With the new award, a multi-municipal task force will again team with Brandywine Conservancy and amend both zoning ordinances. The update process will promote desired land uses along the shared municipal boundary, investigate the location and extent of industrial zoning, more clearly address building conversions and mixed use, and address building and site design standards in specific zoning districts.

2015 Vision Partnership Projects



- Comprehensive plan
- Ordinance update
- Official map
- Connectivity study/plan
- Other plan/study



Revitalizing our urban centers

Revitalizing our urban centers is a core vision of Landscapes2. Urban centers, as characterized in Landscapes2, are diverse areas of economic activity, civic and cultural uses, residential neighborhoods, and historic resources. During 2015, the Planning Commission expanded its planning assistance and new urban center initiatives to improve and help revitalize these important growth areas.

Defining a future for Oxford Borough

The Borough of Oxford, with the Planning Commission's assistance, updated its twelve-year-old revitalization plan. The plan, adopted in November 2015, was the result of a collaborative effort with the plan's taskforce which included borough staff, Oxford Main Street Inc., local businesses and organizations focused on improving the downtown and quality of life for residents of the borough. The plan calls for a parking garage and mixed use development downtown.

Facing revitalization challenges

In September 2015, the Planning Commission, along with the Chester County Department of Community Development, and the Chester County Economic Development Council hosted the first Urban Center Forum for the 16 urban centers. The forum discussed and explored options on how to establish and implement economic development strategies in urban areas. Attendees consisted of representatives of each urban center, local, state and federal elected officials, county departments, local mains street managers, and local businesses.

With the success of the forum, attendees uniformly agreed that additional forum/workshops should be organized and an information portal for urban centers should be created. The county has agreed to host bi-annual urban center workshops to promote revitalization and future growth and development in response to the urban centers. These workshops will be centered on specific topic areas the pose both challenges and opportunities for the urban centers. They are designed to promote data sharing and comparing experiences with one another through friendly communication. The next workshop is tentatively scheduled for April 2016.





Marsh Creek State Park

Improving the environment

The Planning Commission promotes the protection and conservation of natural resources throughout Chester County. These resources are essential to the quality of life for the county’s residents. Planning Commission staff review proposed development activities to reduce potential negative impacts of land development on natural resource systems. Individual land developments are reviewed under both the Act 247 (Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code) process and the Act 537 (Sewage Facilities Act) process.

Providing municipal sewage facilities planning assistance

In Pennsylvania, municipalities are required to develop, adopt, and implement sewage facilities plans to ensure that wastewater is properly treated and disposed of in a responsible way. These plans address public sewer systems, infill, and redevelopment projects, failing on-lot systems, and new land developments. The Planning Commission reviews sewage facilities plans to determine their completeness and consistency with the goals and policies of *Landscapes2* as a part of the overall approval system for sewage facilities planning.

In 2015 there were two major updates to sewage facilities master plans (Act 537 plans) that required reviews by the Planning Commission:

- East Whiteland Township
- West Caln Township

Additionally, a total of 30 minor plan reviews were performed, with approximately 90 percent determined to be consistent with *Landscapes2*.

Managing stormwater through a county-wide plan

All municipalities in the county have updated their stormwater ordinances to reflect the minimum standards of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) approved Countywide Act 167 Stormwater Management Plan Addendum. This addendum contains the minimum control measures that municipalities are obligated to meet to fulfill the requirements of the Stormwater Management Act (PA Act 167), as well as a way to reduce stormwater runoff and impacts associated with runoff.

The countywide plan also provides a means by which municipalities can meet certain NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) Phase II MS4 (small municipal separate storm sewer system) requirements related to ordinance standards. This cooperative strategy has again proven that the county and its municipalities can achieve regulatory mandates in a comprehensive and efficient way by working together. For more information on the Plan and other water resource topics and issues, please visit www.chesco.org/water.

Providing consistency reviews

The Planning Commission conducts consistency reviews for a variety of programs, including those for the PA DEP, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Additionally, during 2015, the Planning Commission completed 12 Agricultural Security Area (ASA) individual farmland parcel reviews and 166 DEP (Act 67/68 Reviews) permit applications for consistency with the Chester County Comprehensive Plan.

Preserving our heritage

The Planning Commission provides a wide range of historic preservation services. The County's Historic Preservation Coordinator works in collaboration with a variety of non-profits, municipalities, and individuals to advance the preservation of Chester County's historic resources. Highlights of activities include:

Tours and Village Walks

In its 21st year, the Town Tours and Village Walks program attracted over 2,600 attendees to ten tours highlighting Chester County's rich, diverse and intriguing African American history, from enslaved Africans held by founder William Penn, to Quakers and freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad, to the county's role in the American Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement.



West Vincent Town Tour

Technical assistance

Direct technical assistance ranged from responding to residential and business inquiries on the historic status of specific properties, to the dedication of historic markers. Historic resources determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places included Carver Court, the Eusebius Barnard House, and the Westtown Inn. Working with the Kennett Underground Railroad Center, the Longwood Progressive Meetinghouse was placed on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. The Planning



Longwood Progressive Meetinghouse

Commission assisted in holding a one-day nationally recognized training program for the county, which 34 municipal historical commissions and historic architectural review boards attended.

County historic reviews

Active county bridge projects continue to be reviewed by the Historic Bridge Committee and recommendations provided to the County Bridge Engineer. Historic resource identification assistance is provided during Act 247 reviews. Eighty-two properties were reviewed for historic, scenic and environmentally sensitive qualities for the Open Space Department.

Brandywine Battlefield Strategic Landscapes Plans

Individual plans for the Brandywine Battlefield were developed for the northern portion of the battlefield, covering much of the British flanking movement and the crossing of the west and east branches of Brandywine Creek. With funds provided through the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) of the National Park Service, research provided new and verified information that was used to develop appropriate preservation and interpretation strategies.



Brandywine Battlefield

DVRPC 50th anniversary celebration

One of our key planning partners is the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). They serve as the region's metropolitan planning organization and provide a clearing house for federal funds, including transportation funds. This year, DVRPC celebrated 50 years of service to the region. DVRPC held an event on December 9, 2015 to celebrate five decades of planning and regional cooperation. During the evening's program, DVRPC Board members recognized Landmarks: County Milestones that Shaped the Region.

Chester County was recognized for its success with balancing growth and preservation through Landscapes, the county's comprehensive plan, dedicating funding to farmland preservation and infrastructure investment in its urban centers.

As a result, the county's urban centers have experienced significant reinvestment through infrastructure funding assistance. To date, over \$54 million was awarded to 15 boroughs and the City of Coatesville for revitalization projects. This has resulted in urban centers experiencing a five percent increase in property values over the past four years.

Chester County recognized the importance of protecting open space resources for future generations. An open space initiative was established in 1989 with an ambitious goal to preserve 30 percent of the county by 2019. Chester County has dedicated over \$188 million, and as of 2014, over 26 percent, a total of 127,250 acres, of the county is protected.



Commissioner Michelle H. Kichline speaks at the DVRPC 50th Anniversary Celebration.



*From left to right:
Former Planning Commission Directors
George W. Fasic, William H. Fulton, and
Ronald Bailey, current Director Brian O'Leary.*

tracking

Tracking Change

The Planning Commission maintains a pulse on the County by keeping track of both growth and preservation.

Reflecting on proposed development activity

The level of proposed development activity is reflected in the number of submissions of subdivision and land development plans for review by the Planning Commission under the state enabling legislation, Act 247. The level of overall review activity increased slightly from 230 plans reviewed in 2014 to 246 plans reviewed in 2015; however, there was a significant decrease in the number of lots/units proposed during the year with 3,343 lots/units proposed in 2014 compared to 2,539 in 2015, which represents a 24 percent decrease. The location of ninety eight percent of submissions was consistent with Landscapes2.

Several trends have occurred in development proposals during 2015:

Multi-family projects

Multi-family residential development continued to be the focus of residential development proposals in Chester County. Proposals for 2,013 multi-family units were reviewed by the Planning Commission, which is slightly down from the 2014 figure of 2,212 multi-family units; while the single family unit figure dipped to 257, down from 817 single family units reviewed in 2014.

Non-residential projects

Structural square footage of proposed land developments increased slightly in 2015 with a total of 2,755,233 square feet compared to 2,742,361 square feet proposed in 2014. The eastern portion of the County saw the majority of non-residential land development proposals in 2015:

- **East Whiteland Township** submitted two major commercial office building proposals for "6 Great Valley Parkway" and "8 Lee Boulevard" (which was reviewed twice). These submissions accounted for 241,552 square feet of proposed office space.
- **Tredyffrin Township** submissions included: a 109,800 square foot two-story office building with parking for 655 vehicles, a three-story Lifetime Fitness Center totaling 135,965 square feet with parking for 624 vehicles and a five-story assisted living facility totaling 181,481 square feet with 196 beds and parking for 98 vehicles.



Comparison of lots/dwelling units proposed 2014 and 2015

Single Family		Multi-Family		Mobile Home		Commercial		Industrial		Institutional		Totals	
2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
862	257	2,212	2,013	85	0	135	127	16	17	33	62	3,343	2,539

Ordinances reviewed 2014 and 2016

	2014	2015
Zoning	115	147
SLDO	26	17
Comp Plans	11	16
Official Maps	2	3
Miscellaneous	15	7
Total	169	190

The Planning Commission reviewed 190 zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances and amendments, comprehensive plans and amendments, official maps and other miscellaneous proposals in 2015. The most common topics addressed in zoning ordinance amendments in 2015 were: wireless telecommunications, protection of historic resources, and signage and billboards.

Protected open space

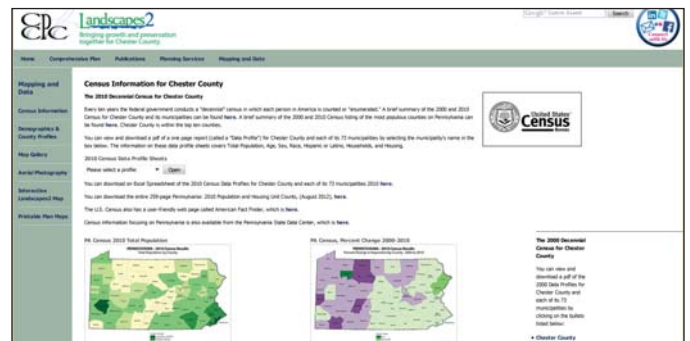
To better understand trends in open space preservation within the county, the Planning Commission has developed the Protected Open Space Tracking (POST) database. In 2015, this system was upgraded and now can be accessed via the internet by municipalities and non-profit land conservation trusts. Beginning in 2010, there was a slowdown in the acreage of open space protected. However, the amount of open space protected each year has now stabilized, typically ranging between 2,000 and 3,000 acres annually.



In 2015, the protection of the Pew Property was funded through the county's Preservation Partnership Program.

Preliminary results indicate that in 2015, roughly 2,000 additional acres of open space were protected in Chester County. Updated GIS mapping of protected open space, due to be completed in spring 2016, will likely include even more open space protected.

Tracking change



Demographic, economic, and other information relating to Chester County is posted annually on the Planning Commission webpage. In 2015, this webpage was redesigned to be more user-friendly, and upgrades will continue well into 2016. The goal of this webpage update is to make information available in an easy-to use format that will be useful to local governments, community groups, and businesses within the county as part of grant applications or marketing research.

Measuring the success of Landscapes2

The Planning Commission regularly reports on the progress of the goals of Landscapes2. The most recent Landscapes2 Index showed no net change from the previous year. Highlights of the index include a continued rise in protected farmland. Also, proposed housing units in designated growth areas rose to 94 percent, well above base level. Measures trending downward mostly focused on housing density and non-residential development. Housing density dropped for the third straight year after having experienced a few years of prior growth. The percentage of square feet of proposed non-residential development within the county's growth areas decreased modestly from 93 percent to 88 percent. The non-residential development that did occur was primarily in the suburban landscapes and suburban centers, suggesting these locations continue to be attractive to developers.

moving

Moving Around the County

The Planning Commission partners with transportation agencies to improve our transportation network and provide more choices to our residents.



Improving transportation choices

Multi-Modal Handbook

The Multi-modal Circulation Handbook for Chester County, completed in 2015, serves as a reference guide for municipal officials, planners, traffic consultants, designers, land owners, and developers on how to incorporate all modes of transportation into land use/land development design. The handbook outlines how to:

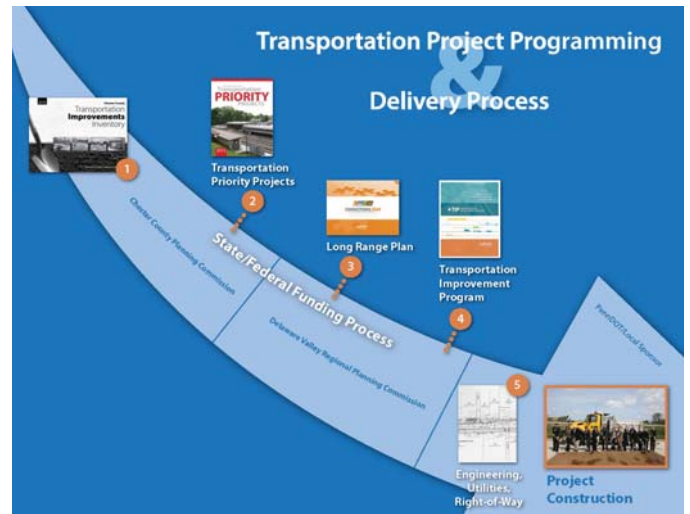
- Establish municipal policy for complete streets
- Prepare site plans that incorporate all travel modes
- Prepare subdivision ordinances and traffic studies,
- Review proposed subdivision and land development ordinances.

A [website](#) was created for the Multi-modal Handbook that contains all of the information included in the print version. Funding for the development of the Multi-modal Handbook was provided by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission as an implementation strategy of the Chester County Public Transportation Plan (2014). Starting in 2015 and continuing into 2016, Planning Commission staff is working to heighten professional and municipal awareness and encourage use of the Multi-modal Handbook throughout Chester County.



Complete Street Strategies

Following-up on a direct recommendation of the Southern Chester County Housing and Transportation Study (2014), the Chester County Planning Commission in 2015 completed a plan for accommodating all transportation users on Baltimore Pike: Baltimore Pike for Everyone — Complete Street Strategies.



Advancing critical transportation improvements

Every two years, Chester County assesses transportation needs across the county and identifies the most critical transportation projects for funding. This process revalidated that the transportation needs in Chester County continue to be great: 517 projects were identified with a combined funding need of \$4.7 billion. Eighteen of the highest-ranking projects were identified as priority projects. These projects included:

- Plans to improve seven of Chester County’s train stations.
- Extend the County’s Schuylkill River and Chester Valley trails.
- Widen/reconstruct key highway corridors such as US 1, US 30, and US 422.

Advancing the county’s priority projects is a key emphasis of the Chester County Planning Commission as it participates with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) to update the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is the four-year program that formally programs over \$5 billion of combined state and federal transportation funding. The updated Transportation Improvement Program is slated for adoption by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in June/July 2016.

Expanding trail options

The county had many trail projects completed or underway in 2015 that would provide additional bicycle and pedestrian recreation and transportation options for Chester County residents, as well as expanding the Greater Philadelphia Region's Trail Network, also known as the "Circuit."

Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) Phase II

Work continued on developing the last remaining section of the SRT in Chester County as the final alignment determination is near completion and negotiations have begun for securing the necessary right-of-way. Final design and engineering of this TIP funded project will begin in 2016.

Chester Valley Trail (CVT) Phase IVa

Final design and engineering is underway for this one mile extension of the CVT from Exton westward to the Oaklands Corporate Center. In July, the DVRPC Regional Trails Program with funding from the William Penn Foundation awarded the project \$200,000 to be used towards trail construction.

Devault Line Study

A VPP funded feasibility study for converting an existing inactive railroad corridor to trail use was completed by Charlestown Township. If developed as a trail, this corridor has the potential to connect the Borough of Phoenixville with the Great Valley and be part of a future connection that would link the existing Schuylkill River Trail and Chester Valley Trail and form an extensive loop.

Paoli Pike Trail

A feasibility study was completed by East Goshen Township to develop a multi-use trail to parallel Paoli Pike throughout the Township. This project was identified as a priority implementation project by the Planning Commission's Central Chester County Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation Plan completed in 2013. East Goshen Township is currently seeking grant funding towards the trail's design/ engineering and construction.

Freedom Trail

This ongoing VPP funded feasibility study by Schuylkill Township is investigating the potential for establishing a trail connection between Valley Forge National Historic Park and the Borough of Phoenixville. Completion of the study is slated for early 2016.

Northern Struble Trail Feasibility Study

Chester County Planning along with Parks/Facilities and the Brandywine Conservancy substantially completed the study in December 2015. Recommendations include a 3.7 mile extension of the existing multi-use trail from Dorlan's Mill Road to Marshall Road and Marsh Creek State Park that will include an adjacent bridle path for equestrian use.

Chester Valley Trail Extension Study

Work began on this study partially funded by PA DCNR in July 2015 that will determine a recommended alignment for extending the Chester Valley Trail from Exton into the Borough of Downingtown and establishing connections to the existing Struble and East Branch Brandywine Trails. The abandoned Norfolk Southern owned Philadelphia & Thorndale Branch, a former low grade freight line constructed by the Pennsylvania Railroad between 1903 and 1906 is one of the alignment alternatives being investigated. This is the same railroad corridor that includes the Whitford Parker truss bridge that carries the line over the Amtrak Keystone Corridor and the Brandywine Valley Viaduct (Downingtown Trestle) over the Brandywine Creek and US 322. The study is scheduled for completion in December 2016.



*The NS Philadelphia & Thorndale Branch:
exposed mica schist geology
nearest Boot Road.*

budget

The Planning Commission was successful in balancing the 2015 budget while maintaining the department's work program. This resulted in the department coming in under the allocated budget of \$3,237,964. As a result, the Planning Commission ended the year under the net budget by \$136,086 nearly a 5 percent reduction.

A majority of the funding for the Planning Commission comes from the county general fund, and is supplemented by various grants and fees. Revenues increased during 2015, in part, due to a revised fee schedule for Act 247 reviews. This was the first time in ten years that the schedule had been revised. The new schedule is comparable to those of surrounding counties.

Expenses were kept in check through sound fiscal management. Staff expenditures were reduced, in part, by having several staff vacancies during the year, including a gap between executive directors.

Budget	2014	2015
Budgeted	\$3,248,604	\$3,237,964
Expended	\$3,138,152	\$3,135,897
Revenues	\$523,229	\$550,955
Net expended	\$2,614,923	\$2,584,942

Revenues	2014	2015
Federal & State	\$393,484	\$351,754
Local	\$17,245	\$22,390
Publications	\$443	\$1,050
Subdivision fees	\$110,038	\$174,557
Other	\$2,019	\$1,204
Total revenue	\$523,229	\$550,955

With its location in Southeastern Pennsylvania, Chester County is uniquely-situated, providing a link between Philadelphia and central Pennsylvania. This unique location

has given Chester County the best of both worlds—the county not only has strong high-tech and financial industries, distinctive cultural institutions, and attractive residential communities but also has a robust agricultural industry, amazingly-beautiful rolling countryside, and vibrant villages and towns. Both of these worlds have given Chester County a high quality of place that is worth embracing and protecting as new growth and change inevitably occur. Planning seeks to balance this growth and preservation, providing excellent choices for county residents, businesses, and visitors to live, work, and travel.

The county's high quality of place is not accidental, not just the result of geography and happenstance. Instead, Chester County has such a high-quality of place because of the hard work residents and leaders have done to preserve open space, build roads and trails, create quiet residential neighborhoods, and improve towns and communities. This hard work always begins with planning, and Chester County has a strong tradition of planning, which can be seen in the county's current comprehensive plan, *Landscapes2*, and the County Commissioners' implementation of this plan through open space, planning, and urban revitalization grants.

Chester County has 73 municipalities, each doing its own planning, and each having its own zoning and subdivision ordinances. So, what is the role of the County Planning Commission? The County Planning Commission has three broad roles:

- To provide advice and support to local municipalities in their growth management strategies.
- To address issues that transcend local boundaries, such as traffic congestion, housing needs, public transportation, economic development, and pipeline development.
- To support county government projects, such as trail construction, water management, bridge replacement, farmland preservation, and park improvements.

As can be seen throughout this annual report, the staff at the Chester County Planning Commission does a lot of

high-quality, nuts-and-bolts planning work. In addition to providing extensive data information, mapping resources, and planning guides, we offer:

- Development and plan review services
- Historic resources services
- Municipal assistance services
- Pipeline education services
- Planning education services
- Transportation services

Planning work is never done, because change will happen. It's important to get in front of this change, to be ready for it when it does arrive. On the planning front, the county needs to continue addressing classic planning issues like traffic congestion, sprawl, smart growth, revitalization, and open space and historic preservation. New issues are emerging or older ones are becoming more important, especially since the Great Recession. These include the changing economy, new development patterns, alternative transportation, workforce housing, trail development, climate change resiliency, an aging population, young adult preferences, pipelines, technology, and place-making.

We're very excited to be tackling these issues in 2016, helping the county and its partners prepare for the future. In 2016, the Chester County Planning Commission expects to implement multi-modal recommendations, plan for preservation of Brandywine Battlefield areas, expand pipeline information services, continue trail planning, highlight successful affordable housing developments, examine how to reinvent commercial landscapes, and continue a host of other activities. Most importantly, we will begin the update of *Landscapes2*, the county comprehensive plan, by reaching out to the public and our partners to identify important planning issues facing the county. We look forward to working with you on this update and our other planning projects.

Brian O'Leary, AICP
Executive Director





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