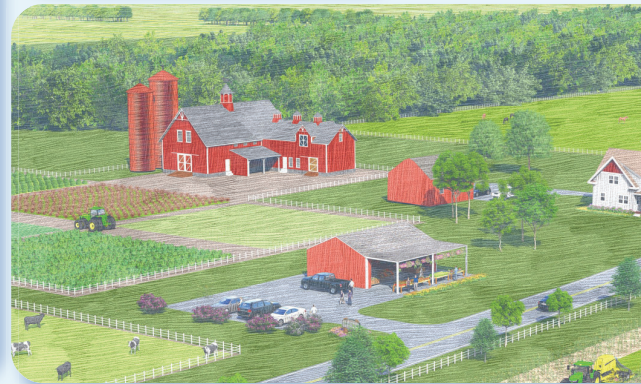




2024

Annual Report





Chairman's MESSAGE



Michael Heaberg, Chair

The Chester County Planning Commission is pleased to submit the annual report for the calendar year 2024. During the 5th year of Landscapes3, the Planning Commission took time to review the progress made under our guiding policy plan and was pleased to see how much has been accomplished in conjunction with our many planning partners. Highlights for 2024 under the goal areas of Preserve, Protect, Appreciate, Live, Prosper, and Connect include:

PRESERVE: Open space preservation continued with 151,000 acres, or 31.2% of the county, preserved at the start of 2024 with additional protected agricultural and conservation land added throughout the year. To support municipal open space initiatives, county staff partnered with local land conservancies to provide each municipality with an inventory of current open space while identifying additional open space tools they could consider implementing.

PROTECT: Through the efforts of the Sustainability Division, Chester County was awarded a gold designation under the national SolSmart program for providing support for creating solar-friendly communities. A Sustainability Summit for Homeowners Associations (HOAs) was held in the Spring with great attendance by HOA members and informative discussions on managing woodlands, creating sustainable landscapes, and allowing rooftop solar in HOAs.

APPRECIATE: Chester County celebrated the 30th year of Town Tours and Village walks. In total, over 1,700 attendees participated in the popular summer walking tours that explore the fascinating history of the county. The 250th Commission continues to plan for America's 250th anniversary in 2026, including encouraging municipal support and engagement.

LIVE: The annual housing report showed a continued rise in the county's median housing value which rose to \$492,000 - the highest inflation adjusted sales price on record. The Housing Choices Committee sponsored the annual A+ Homes Forum to discuss current efforts, programmatic gaps, strategies and tools to address the difficult and complex issue of housing unaffordability in Chester County.

PROSPER: The annual county economy report fully transitioned to an online dashboard that describes resident, employment, business, and real estate characteristics, gross domestic product data, and key industry groups. Overall, the county economy remained strong and diverse in 2024 with over 900,000 square feet of non-residential development built during the year.

CONNECT: Two major multi-modal transportation plans were completed in 2024. The Trails Master Plan was created to assist the county and its many trail development partners with the planning and development of an interconnected, county-wide public trail network. The Public Transportation Plan addresses the SEPTA system redesigns for both their new bus network and regional rail service, including the introduction of micro-transit or 'on demand' bus service zones and eventual increased frequency of regional rail service in the county.

These efforts, and many more, are highlighted in this annual report and available on the Planning Commission's website, www.chescoplanning.org. On behalf of the Planning Commission Board, I would like to sincerely thank the staff for their hard work and ongoing commitment to our county and its quality of place. Further, we sincerely appreciate the dedicated service and exemplary leadership of Brian O'Leary, who retired in November after almost ten years as the CCPC Executive Director.

We look forward to working with our many partners and welcoming a new Executive Director in 2025 in keeping Chester County a great place to live and work.

Very respectfully,

Michael C. Heaberg, Chairman
(2022 to 2024)

The Chester County Planning Commission is a nine-member advisory board appointed by the board of County Commissioners.



Nathan M. Cline, P.E., Vice-Chair



Roberta Consentino



Stephanie Duncan



Douglas A. Fasick, DC



Matthew Hammond, P.E.



Molly Morrison



Andy Wright, AICP, PP, PTP



Frank Furman

Achieving the **VISION**



How We **PRESERVE**

How We **LIVE**

How We **PROTECT**

How We **PROSPER**

How We **APPRECIATE**

How We **CONNECT**

Implementing *Landscapes3*

Landscapes3, Chester County's comprehensive plan, seeks to balance growth and preservation. The plan was adopted in 2018 and provides guidance and direction for the Planning Commission's work program.

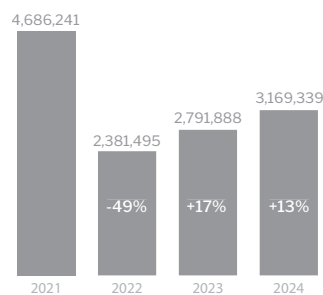
Following from Landscapes3, six design guides were envisioned to help shape, direct, and foster new development in the County. In 2024, staff completed the sixth and final design guide, the Agricultural Landscapes Design Guide. This document focuses on the maintenance of a low-density development pattern and conservation of agricultural lands and sensitive environmental resources.

Development Proposals and *Landscapes3*

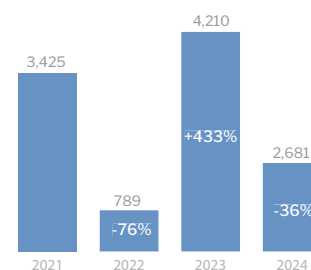
Consistency with the Landscapes Map and the planning principles in Landscapes3 is part of the Act 247 review process for subdivisions, land developments, ordinances, and plans. In 2024, 99% of all relevant subdivision and land development plan submissions were consistent with Landscapes3. Approximately 78% of proposed dwelling units were in Landscapes3 growth areas. For nonresidential proposals, 91% of the square footage was in growth areas. For ordinance and comprehensive plan submissions in 2024, all the submissions relevant to Landscapes3 were determined to be consistent with Landscapes3 policies.

Excluding second reviews, the County Planning Commission reviewed 201 subdivision and land development plans during 2024, which was slightly lower than the number reviewed during 2023 (211). Excluding second reviews, the number of proposed residential lots/units for the entire County during the same timeframes decreased from 4,008 to 1,484. Single family residential lots and townhouse lots/units accounted for 35 and 33% of all proposed residential development in 2024, respectively. The remaining units consisted of apartments (24%) and twins (8%). Proposed non-residential structural square footage increased from 2,791,888 in 2023 to 3,167,339 in 2024.

Proposed Non-residential Square Footage



Proposed Lots/Units



VISION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Advancing community planning initiatives since 1996


Municipal Partnerships

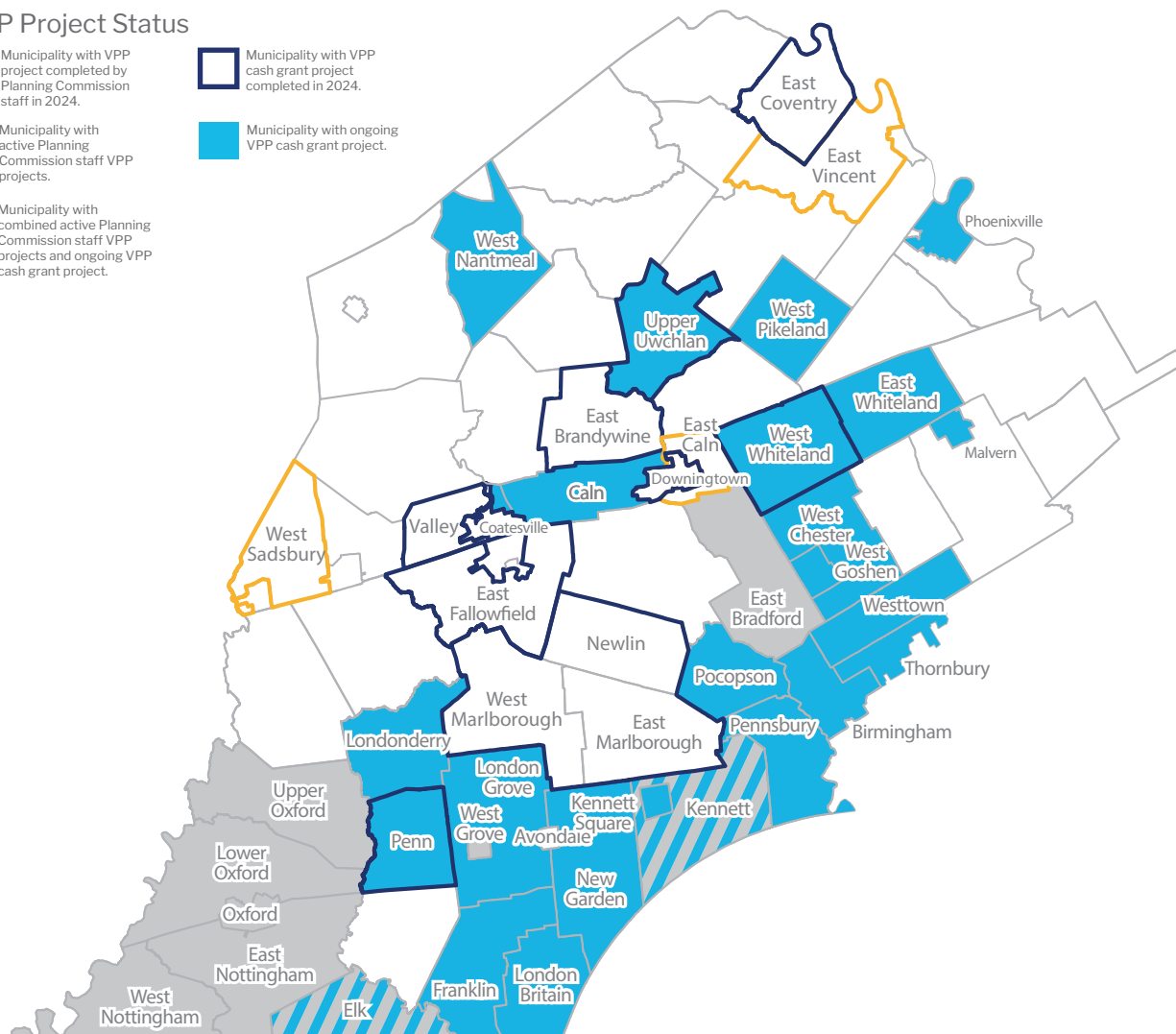
Grant funding and technical assistance is provided to municipalities through Chester County's Vision Partnership Program (VPP) to support implementation of Landscapes3 by facilitating municipal comprehensive plan updates, ordinance revisions, and special studies. There may be 30 or more active VPP projects at any time, and Chester County Planning Commission staff is involved in all of them as either project lead or as monitor to a professional planning consultant selected by the municipality. In 2024, 12 projects, including one multi-municipal project, were completed.

Four new VPP cash grants were awarded in the spring and three VPP cash grants were awarded in the fall of 2024 to begin work in 2025. At the close of 2024, 15 single municipality and five multi-municipal projects were active and continuing into 2025.

The Chester County Commissioners allocate \$250,000 per year for VPP cash grants. Chester County Planning Commission staff welcomes the opportunity to discuss potential projects with municipalities.

VPP Project Status

-  Municipality with VPP project completed by Planning Commission staff in 2024.
-  Municipality with VPP cash grant project completed in 2024.
-  Municipality with active Planning Commission staff VPP projects.
-  Municipality with ongoing VPP cash grant project.
-  Municipality with combined active Planning Commission staff VPP projects and ongoing VPP cash grant project.





How We **PRESERVE**

open space • farmland • nature preserves •
parks • forests • scenic views

Open Space Preservation

At the start of 2024, over 151,000 acres, or 31.2% of the county, was protected open space, according to the Planning Commission's annual tracking of land preservation by the county, land trusts, municipalities, and other preservation partners. Properties protected during 2024 included the 95-acre Keen easement in East Nantmeal Township, the 89-acre Kestrel Hill Preserve property in Willistown Township, and the 156-acre Embreeville acquisition in West Bradford Township.

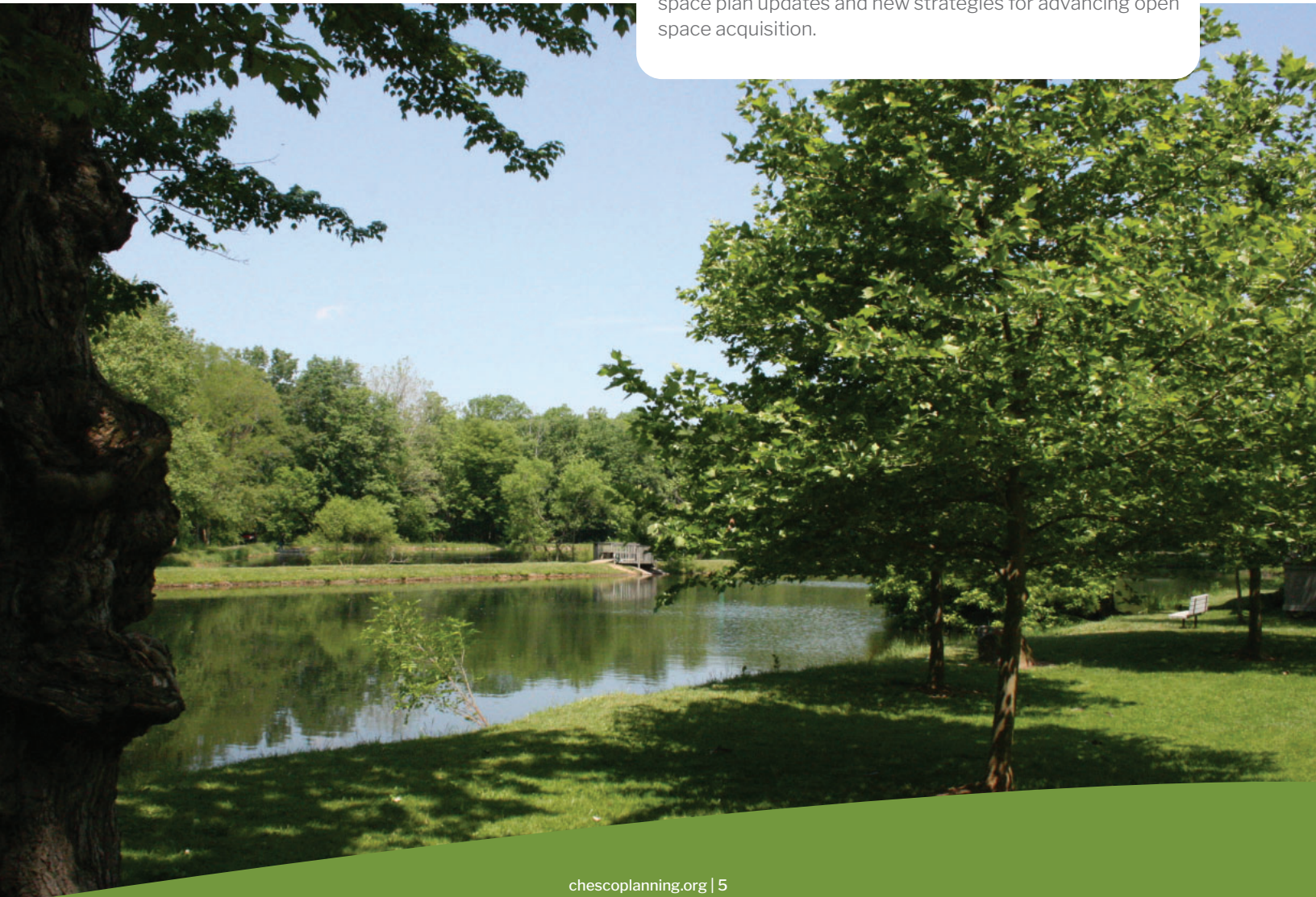
31.2% of the county is
protected
open space

Open Space Accelerator Program

The Planning Commission was awarded funding through DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) to create a mini-grant program to fund municipalities' development of quick, low-cost, implementation plans to advance their open space priorities. The Open Space Accelerator program is set to launch in Summer 2025.

Municipal Open Space Outreach

To encourage municipalities to preserve more open space, county staff partnered with local land conservancies to provide each municipality with a holistic inventory of their open space efforts while also identifying additional open space tools they might want to consider. Although direct impacts of this outreach are difficult to track, staff met with 16 separate municipalities' staff and elected and appointed officials, and several municipalities reported pursuing open space plan updates and new strategies for advancing open space acquisition.





How We PROTECT

woodlands • streams • wetlands • soil health
• steep slopes • natural heritage areas

Sustainable HOAs

In Spring 2024, CCPC staff hosted a Sustainability Summit for residents and leadership of Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) to share information on topics of interest to them, including managing woodlands in common open space areas, sustainable landscape maintenance, and rooftop solar. Over 200 people registered for the event. Four follow-up topical workshops were offered over the summer, culminating in the release of a template HOAs can use to create their own Sustainability Action Plan.

<https://chescoplanning.org/Environmental/HOA/Introduction.cfm>

Solar Energy

Under the leadership of CCPC's Sustainability Division, Chester County received a Gold designation from the national SolSmart program by meeting established criteria that are based on national best practices for building solar-friendly communities. Chester County completed a host of activities to promote solar-friendly regulations and increase awareness around solar power, including the creation of a solar webpage and map of solar installations in the county.

Urban Tree Canopy Outreach

Trees benefit our urban landscapes by providing relief from summer heat and creating attractive streetscapes and green spaces for residents, businesses, and visitors. To support growing and protecting the urban tree canopy, detailed woodland cover maps and an urban tree canopy brochure were created as a resource for each of Chester County's urban areas.

- “[Growing the Urban Tree Canopy](#)” brochure explains the benefits of urban trees and provides information on how to increase their chance of surviving and thriving.
- The Urban Tree Canopy maps include the current tree canopy (as of 2018), impervious surfaces (structures and paved areas) as well as public land and floodplain areas. This information can help identify gaps along streets, public areas, and in neighborhoods that could benefit from additional shade trees.

The Chester County Woodlands and Tree Protection [webpage](#) was also updated and expanded to provide a wide range of information on maintaining new trees, tree planting funding sources, and a special section focused on urban trees and shade tree commissions.



Climate Action Plan Metrics

The County's 2021 Climate Action Plan included potential indicators for tracking implementation of the plan. Over the past several years the Sustainability Division further defined those metrics and in 2023 launched a new webpage that shares the county's progress toward implementing the plan. Most metrics will be updated annually.



How We APPRECIATE

historic buildings • historic viewsheds • cultural
landscapes • villages • historic town centers

Heritage Preservation

Adaptive Reuse Guide

In October the Adaptive Reuse Guide was launched online providing information and support for those interested in adaptive reuse. The guide encourages protecting and enhancing community character while investing in underused properties to change the perception of aging buildings from eyesores to resources. Landscapes3 was the foundation, establishing a vision for preservation and growth for the county's 73 municipal partners, specifically, to implement the APPRECIATE Goal through the promotion of adaptive reuse and compatible development in historic areas to preserve vitality and diversity and respecting a historic sense of place.

Village Preservation Guide

One of Chester County's defining characteristics is its villages and hamlets. With many villages changing or disappearing over time, it's important to preserve the county's villages while allowing them to change and grow to remain relevant in their communities. The new Village Preservation Guide was published in 2024 to help communities in Chester County learn more about these important places and how to preserve them.

<https://chescoplanning.org/Historic/Guides.cfm>

Heritage Tourism Plan

Formally adopted in April of 2024, the Heritage Tourism Plan is intended to increase heritage tourism as an economic factor; encourage preservation of and investment in heritage sites and resources; and raise public awareness of the significance of historic communities and landscapes. In conjunction with preservation partners, the plan focuses on the concept of "Chester County Originals" which will highlight community identity, conservation and regional stories.

<https://chescoplanning.org/Historic/HeritageTourism.cfm>

Town Tours and Village Walks

The summer events theme for 2024 was "Celebrating 30 years of Town Tours". The free summer walking tours kicked off with a celebration in May at the Chester County History Center in West Chester Borough. From June through August, ten tours guided visitors through historic walks exploring the rich history of Chester County and concluded in Yellow Springs in West Pikeland Township. In total 1,721 attendees participated joined us to celebrate 30 years of Town Tours and Village Walks!

250th Commission

The Chester County America250 Commission is encouraging support for activities, community engagement and programming at the municipal level in anticipation of 2026 when America celebrates its 250th anniversary! The Commission highlighted the upcoming anniversary and provided a resolution for municipalities to adopt to support these goals. Over 70% of Chester County municipalities had adopted the resolutions by the close of 2024.

<https://america250chesco.org/>

Brandywine Battlefield Plan

In support of the Brandywine Battlefield region's land conservation, historic resource protection, and heritage interpretation efforts, CCPC studied two combat areas – Chadds Ford area and Birmingham Road area. Entitled "The Battle Ensues" – Eastern Battlefield Strategic Landscapes Plan. The in-depth study is the third phase of an effort by Chester and Delaware counties to shine a light on the battlefield for focused planning purposes and continuing heritage interpretive educational information. The project was wrapping up at the end of 2024 for release to the public in early 2025.

<https://chescoplanning.org/Historic/BattleBrandywine.cfm>



How We LIVE

neighborhoods • housing • community facilities • parks and recreation • community health

Housing Data

The annual Housing Report showed significant changes between 2022 and 2023. The median housing value rose to \$492,000, which was a 5.5% increase over the prior year and is the highest inflation-adjusted sales price ever for the county. 1,637 units were built in 2023, with about 40% of those attached, and single-family detached and about 30% multi-family housing. CCPC completed a housing assessment to further understand current housing needs and to project what that need is likely to be in the future. The results of this data will be available in early 2025.



SINGLE FAMILY
601 UNITS BUILT



SINGLE FAMILY ATTACHED
625 UNITS BUILT



MULTI-FAMILY
411 UNITS BUILT

Housing Forum

The county's Housing Choices Committee sponsored the annual A+ Homes forum. Housing organizations from around the county participated in discussions around current efforts, programmatic gaps, strategies and tools that can be used to address housing unaffordability in Chester County. The result of these robust conversations was a set of strategies that will be completed in 2025.

A+ Homes Adaptable Guide

The draft for the A+ Homes adaptable guide was completed in 2024. This guide is undergoing final reviews and will be released in 2025.

Starter Home Initiative

As part of the county's ongoing A+ Homes initiative, the planning commission wrapped up the Starter Home Initiative, which focused on local municipalities and actions that can be taken to encourage affordably priced housing. CCPC provided zoning recommendations for six municipalities to encourage Missing Middle housing typologies. As a result of the initiative, municipalities incorporated these recommendations into zoning updates ranging from singular parcels to full zoning code updates.

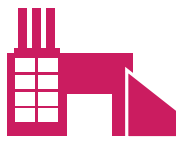
Chester County Land Bank

The planning commission continued researching, applying for funding, and investigating the best approach for the creation of a county land bank to acquire land for affordable housing projects.



Nonresidential Construction

The county's Nonresidential Construction Report showed that nonresidential construction was moderate in 2023, with about 915,348 square feet built and with institutional and commercial development accounting for most of the new building square footage. Two projects, a Kaolin building and Greater Valley School District center were over 150,000 square feet.



INDUSTRIAL
108,098 SF BUILT



COMMERCIAL
293,505 SF BUILT



INSTITUTIONAL
312,565 SF BUILT



AGRICULTURAL
201,180 SF BUILT

Economy Dashboard

To keep data fresh, the annual county economy report has transitioned to an online dashboard that describes resident, employment, business, and real estate characteristics, gross domestic product data, and key industry groups. Overall, the county economy remained strong and diverse in 2024.

Urban Centers Forum

In October, the Planning Commission held its annual Urban Centers Forum in a regional format with forums held at Parkesburg (Western Region) and West Grove (Southern Region). Ten urban centers participated in a round table discussion citing success stories and talking through emerging challenges. The County's Community Revitalization Program funding for urban center capital improvements was recognized at the round tables as being an extremely valuable resource to the urban centers.

Chester County Farm Guide

The county's annual Farm Guide is released each spring, highlighting stories about local farmers and ag-related happenings across the county. The 2024 Guide included stories about eating local, the Miller Family of Birchrun Hills Farm, family-friendly recipes from Penn State Extension's Nutrition Links Program, as well as a map of locations where residents can purchase locally produced agricultural products.



How We CONNECT

roadways • sidewalks • trails • public transportation • airports •
freight • communications • utilities • energy • pipelines

Transportation Project Planning

Chester County fared very well during the FY25 Transportation improvement Program (TIP) update which includes the addition of the following projects:

- Chester Valley Trail Extension to Downingtown in the former Philadelphia & Thorndale (P&T) rail corridor
- Pocopson Rd. @ Street Rd. (PA 926) intersection in Pocopson Township.
- North Caln Rd. / Olive Rd. / Lincoln Highway intersection in Caln Township
- County Bridge #38 – Pusey Bridge, carrying Pusey Mill Road over Big Elk Creek in Upper Oxford and Penn Townships
- PA 41 bridge over White Clay Creek in Avondale Borough
- St. Peters Road Retaining Wall project in Warwick Twp

In addition to those highway funded projects, the track work necessary for restoration of SEPTA service to Coatesville was programmed in the Transit portion of the TIP.

Public Transportation Plan

The 2024 update to the 2014 Public Transportation Plan addresses the SEPTA system redesigns for both their new bus network and regional rail service, including the introduction of micro-transit or ‘on demand’ bus service zones and eventual increased frequency of regional rail service along the Keystone Corridor. Planning Commission staff will be working with municipalities looking to improve the public transit environment in Chester County by upgrading the facilities at our most heavily used bus stops.

Trails Master Plan

The Trails Master Plan was created to assist the county and its many trail development partners with the planning and development of an interconnected, county-wide public trail network. The Plan presents an overall vision for the trail network supported by resources and recommendations to advance implementation. Developing this county-wide public trail network will create new and improved opportunities for trail-based transportation and recreation and strengthen the connections between our communities and the county’s vast collection of natural, recreational, historic, and community resources.

Trail Work

The Multimodal Transportation Planning division took on the responsibility of advancing the design phase for four separate trail development projects, including:

- P&T Corridor – Chester Valley Trail (CVT) Extension to Downingtown
- CVT IVa: one mile extension of the CVT to Oaklands Corporate Center
- CVT West: Enola Low Grade Trail extension into Atglen Borough
- Struble Trail Extension to Marsh Creek State Park

A new webpage was developed to provide status updates for each of CVT projects that may be found here: <https://www.chescoplanning.org/transportation/cvt-ProjectStatus.cfm>



Director's MESSAGE



Matthew Edmond, AICP

New Face, Same Mission

With Brian O'Leary's retirement in 2024, you've probably already noticed that for the first time in nearly a decade there is a different face and name gracing the Director's Message. Change is one of the few constants in life, but the Chester County Planning Commission and its

excellent staff are carrying on full-speed ahead.

In times of change, our 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" keeps us anchored and focused. In 2025 you'll see the commission continue to tackle today's challenges head-on – complex issues such as affordable housing, climate action, multi-modal transportation, sustainable energy, agricultural planning, neighborhood design, and community revitalization. The goal will always be to improve the quality-of-life for every person and municipality in Chester County.

As for me, I'm a local guy, born and raised in the Delaware Valley. I bleed Phillies red and Eagles green. I'm also a longtime veteran of county government, having spent my entire career at a neighboring county planning commission. I've seen how the CCPC can make real and tangible improvements in our citizens' lives. I'm a big believer in county-level planning.

We are grateful for Brian's long tenure of leadership to Chester County. He made a positive impact on our communities and accomplished many things that will endure. Looking forward, I'm incredibly honored to be chosen to lead this agency and its exceptional staff. The Chester County Planning Commission has a long history of excellence that we will continue well into the future.

Matthew Edmond, AICP
Executive Director



Budget

Expenditures	2022	2023	2024
Personnel Services	\$3,266,106	\$3,361,124	\$3,336,180
Materials & Services	\$170,416	\$187,135	\$253,574
Contributions, Grants, Subsidies	\$170,910	\$188,290	\$188,290
TOTAL	\$3,607,432	\$3,736,549	\$3,778,044

Revenues	2022	2023	2024
Federal	\$263,466	\$254,218	\$266,812
State	\$20,425	\$38,530	\$1,045
Local	\$45,475	\$63,056	\$64,740
Subdivision/Land Review Fees	\$175,849	\$233,118	\$209,564
Miscellaneous	\$1,250	\$12,650	\$1,700
TOTAL	\$506,465	\$601,572	\$543,861

* Remaining revenue comes from Chester County

Chester County Planning Commission
601 Westtown Road • Suite 270
P.O. Box 2747
West Chester, PA 19380-0990
610-344-6285

Email
ccplanning@chesco.org

Web
www.chescoplanning.org

We're social! Follow us

 **Facebook**

 **X.com**

 **LinkedIn**

 **Flickr**

 **YouTube**

 **Instagram**

 **Threads**

Staff

Administration Services

Matthew Edmond, AICP, *Executive Director*
Brian N. O'Leary, AICP, *Executive Director**
Carol J. Stauffer, AICP, *Assistant Director*
Beth A. Cunliffe,
Office & Communications Manager
Carolyn Oakley, *Communications Supervisor*
Elle Steinman, *Communications Coordinator*
Nancy Shields, *Administrative Coordinator*
Jenn Kolvereid, *Land Development Analyst*
Angela Dracup, *Administrative Support*
Patti Strauber, *Administrative Support**
Sally Warren, *Administrative Support*

Agricultural Development Council

Ann Lane, *Program Coordinator**

Community Planning

Bill Deguffroy, AICP,*
Community Planning Director
Bambi Griffin Rivera,
Community Planning Director
David Blackburn
Heritage Preservation Coordinator
Katherine Clark, AICP, *Community Planner**
Mark Gallant, *Community Planner*
Libby Horwitz, AICP,
Housing & Economic Planner
Kevin Myers, *Urban Planner*
Chris Patriarca, AICP, *Community Planner*
Elise Davis, *Community Planner*
Jeannine Speirs, *Community Planner*

* Former staff

Multimodal Transportation Planning

Brian Styche, RLA, AICP,
Multimodal Transportation Planning Director
Stephen Buck, RLA, *Trails Planner*
Jake Michael, AICP, *Demographer*
Patricia Quinn, *Transportation Planner*
Alex Sankaran, *Transportation Planner*

Sustainability Planning

Rachael Griffith, RLA, AICP,
Sustainability Director
Carolyn Conwell, AICP, *Environmental Planner*
Ryan Mawhinney, *Sustainability Planner*

Design & Technology

Geoff Creary, *Design & Technology Director*
Paul Fritz, RLA, AICP,*
Design & Technology Director
Glenn Bentley, *Plan Reviewer**
Wes Bruckno, AICP, *Plan Reviewer*
Paul Farkas, *Plan Reviewer*
Albert Park, *Design Planner*
Gene Huller, *Technical Services Supervisor*
Colin Murtoff, *GIS Planner*
Richard Drake, *Technical Services Specialist*
Diana Zak, *Graphics Supervisor**
Christopher Bittle, *Graphics Specialist*
Guinevere Duli, *Graphics Specialist*



County Commissioners
Josh Maxwell
Marian Moskowitz
Eric Roe