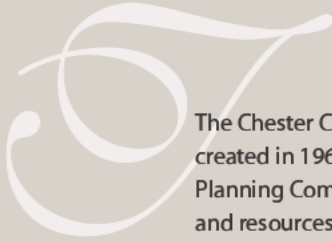


Chester County Planning Commission Annual Report

2008





The Chester County Planning Commission, a nine-member advisory board, was created in 1962 by the Board of County Commissioners. Initially the work of the Planning Commission involved inventorying and mapping the County's features and resources.

Over time, 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. Today the Planning Commission's activities are enabled, and in some matters mandated, by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

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 Planning Commission focuses its activities on twelve elements that are contained in Landscapes, the County's comprehensive plan. These elements include:

- Energy resources and conservation
- Community services
- Open space preservation and conservation
- Economic development
- Coordination of utilities and infrastructure
- Historic resources
- Natural resource conservation
- Land use
- Agricultural preservation and development
- Transportation
- Housing

During 2008, the Chester County Planning Commission performed many planning related services, but the most significant highlight of the year was completion of a draft update to Landscapes in a digital format.

Chester County Board of Commissioners

Terence Farrell

Carol Aichele

Kathi Cozzone





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

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leadership



On behalf of the members of the Chester County Planning Commission, I am pleased to present the 2008 Chester County Planning Commission Annual Report, a summary of the work of the various divisions of the Planning Commission.

As part of the Landscapes2 Committee, Planning Commission members worked double duty this past year in order to complete the draft of the updated comprehensive plan. As each section was reviewed, committee members offered constructive language changes to the document so that its intent would be understood, and that future land use in Chester County would be respectful of those citizens who live and work here today while planning for those who are yet to come. Public comments through the Landscapes2 website were also considered. When the final document is adopted by our Commissioners in 2009, as the new planning policy for Chester County, they can say without reservation that it reflects the very best collaborative work effort of its citizens, public official representatives, and of the County's own planning professionals.

I wish to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the contributions of the committee members who gave freely of their time and expertise over the past two years to help us develop the updated plan. In addition to Planning Commission members, I thank Chris Alonzo, Edward Brown, Greg Cary, Joshua Crans, Marty Detering, Dee Durham, Denis Forrest, Robert Gross, Chip Huston, Charles Jacob, Joseph McDonough, William Moore, Andy Paravis, Sarah Peck, Bridget Scanlon, Doug Schmidt, and John Theilacker. A very special thank-you goes to my committee Co-Chair, Jason Duckworth, for his outstanding leadership on this project.

Planning Commission staff continues to use innovative technology in order to provide Planning Commission board members and the public with visual data graphs and maps that aid in the interpretation of development and population trends. This Annual Report is another example of how modern communication will occur in

Chairman's message—year in review

the future. Through the means of internet distribution, we decrease publication costs, reduce the use of paper products, and demonstrate that we, too, are mindful of the current global economic crisis facing our County and our nation.

Our County remains attractive to new residents and new companies. If there is something positive to be found during an economic slow-down, it might be that for those of us who plan, there is now an opportunity to be even more prepared for the next time growth and development present us with challenges. Through the Vision Partnership Program, municipalities are using this additional time to update their own comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.

Planning Commission board members remain committed to assisting the County Commissioners and the Planning Commission staff in this very important work. We understand that good planning with good government will help us to retain the quality of life that we have all come to enjoy and worked so hard to achieve.

Judy L. DiFilippo
Chairman
Chester County Planning Commission





**Judy L. DiFilippo
Chairman**

Resident:
Tredyffrin Township

Occupation:
Public official

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

Appointed:
June 2002



**Nancy Mohr
Vice-chairman**

Resident:
Newlin Township

Occupation:
Chester County 2020, President; Writer/Consultant

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

Appointed:
June 1998



Ann C.M. Abbott

Resident:
Highland Township

Occupation:
Commercial horse breeder and farmer

Affiliations:
Highland Township Planning Commission

Appointed:
June 2005



Mark J. Blair

Resident:
West Bradford Township

Occupation:
Nurseryman, Owner of Hilo Acres Nursery

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

Appointed:
2006

What is the Chester County Planning Commission?

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



Kevin Johnson, P.E.

Resident:
Tredyffrin Township

Occupation:
President, Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.

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

Appointed:
December 2003



Caroline A. Novak

Resident:
South Coatesville

Occupation:
Senior Consultant, Novak Strategic Advisors

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

Appointed:
December 2003



Joseph J. Tarantino

Resident:
Tredyffrin Township

Occupation:
President, Continental Realty Co., Inc.

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

Appointed:
June 2005



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

Resident:
East Marlborough Township

Occupation:
Partner, Vollmer Associates LLP

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

Appointed:
June 2005



John C. Washington, III

Resident:
South Coatesville

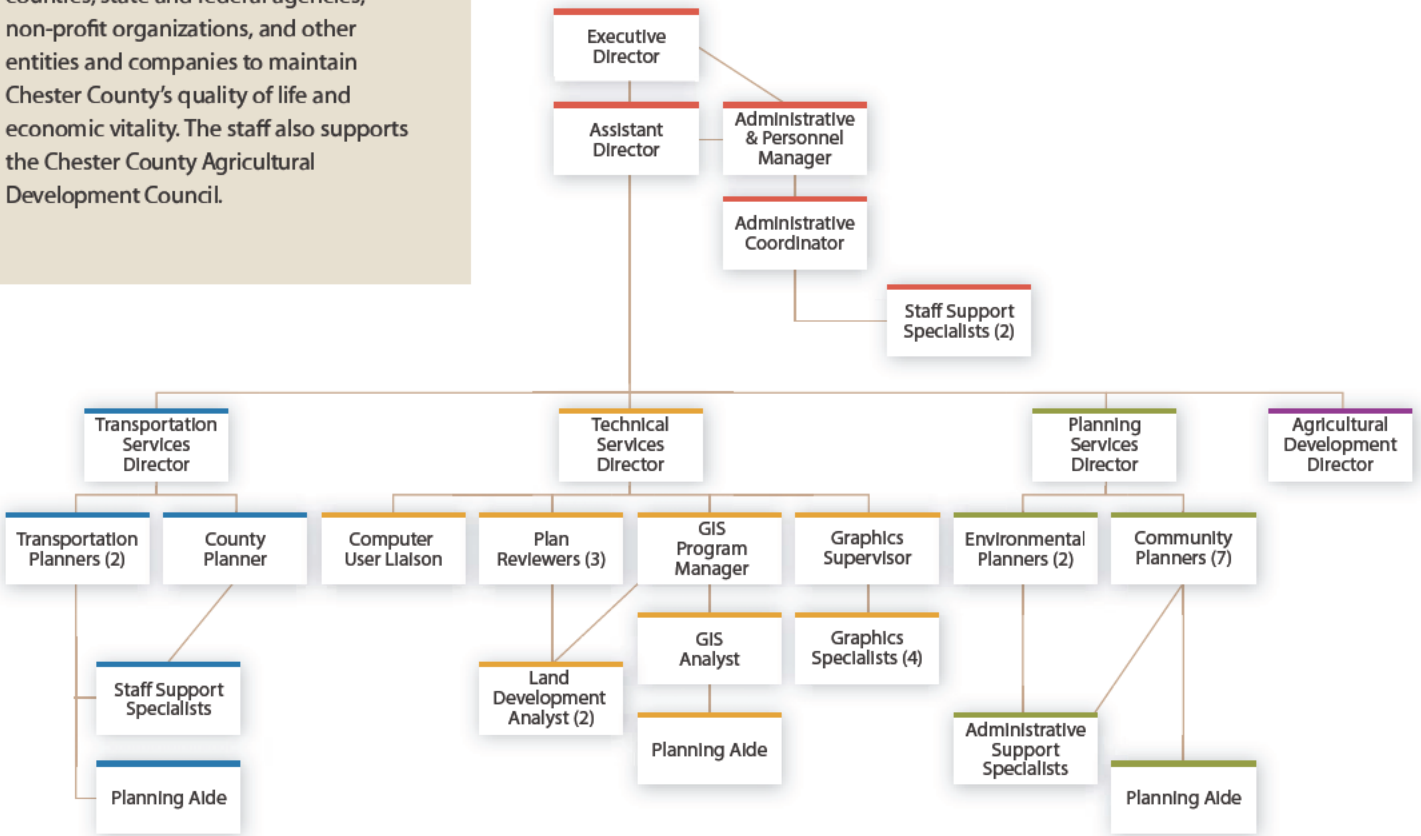
Occupation:
Instructor for Overhead and Remote Crane Safety, Ladle Crane Operator, ArcelorMittal.

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

Appointed:
January 2002

the staff

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



■ **Administration Services**

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

■ **Transportation and Information Services**

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

■ **Technical Services**

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

■ **Planning Services**

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

■ **Agricultural Development**

- Hillary Krummrich, Esq.
Agricultural Development Director

refining

Taking a close look at Landscapes

Landscapes, the County's long range policy plan, is undergoing a thorough update to provide a refined strategy for managing growth and preservation in the County.



Drafting the plan update

The update to Landscapes makes certain that the long-range policy plan is responsive to the changing needs of the County. As part of the update, the Chester County Planning Commission reviewed all aspects of the original document, to determine whether recommendations remained valid or need to be revised. New elements are also being added to the plan, including economic development and energy conservation.

Involvement

Public input and support were sought in the following ways:

Steering Committee

The Landscapes2 Steering Committee assisted in identifying the planning issues facing Chester County and served as a sounding board for ideas and solutions. The committee consisted of the nine members of the Planning Commission and 17 individuals from around the County, representing many different interests, expertise, and points of view. Meetings were held at different times and in different locations to ensure a greater familiarity with the diversity and uniqueness of Chester County.

Landscapes2 website

The Planning Commission has created a website that is dedicated to the plan. Please visit www.Landscapes2.org. The complete update is available, along with all of the background information on the plan, and links that further explore planning topics.

List service

The Planning Commission provided a monthly e-newsletter about the update process. The e-newsletter also included news stories and links concerning contemporary planning topics.

Interactive review of draft materials

A series of interactive online opportunities to review and comment on draft materials and maps relating to Landscapes2 were provided in 2008. This service allowed viewers the opportunity to see what others were saying about the plan and what planning issues were important to them.



Steering committee members discuss issues centering around community services.

Progress

During 2008, the Planning Commission accomplished:

A public opinion survey and focus groups

The Planning Commission completed, tabulated, and posted the results of our online survey and the dozen focus groups held last year to identify the issues Landscapes2 should address. This information guided work on the plan update over the past six months.

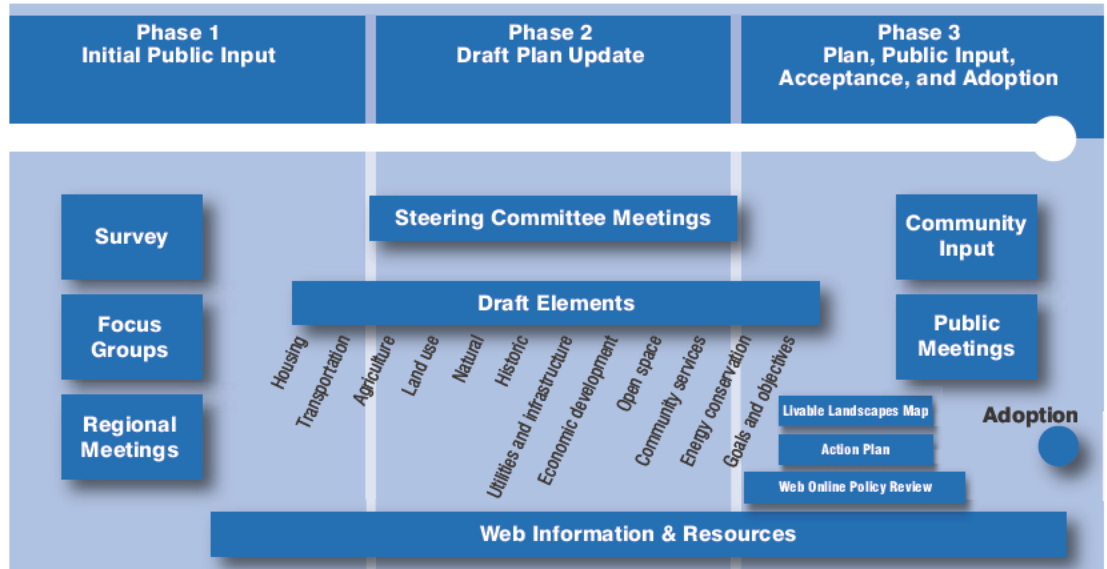
A series of issues and policies

The issues and policies related to all 12 elements of Landscapes were drafted. These issues and policies will guide the development of an Action Plan in 2009 and will assist the County in providing planning assistance to municipalities. As each draft element was completed it was posted to the internet at www.Landscapes2.org.

Moving Forward

Chester County plans to release the draft plan for review and comment in 2009. Residents, businesses, and institutions will be able to comment on the updated plan through a series of public meetings to be held around the County. Upon adoption by the Board of County Commissioners, Landscapes2 will be implemented through a series of activities outlined in the Action Plan.

Landscapes2 progress line



Staff completed phase 2 of the plan update during 2008.

changing

Understanding Change Within the County

Chester County is undergoing significant change. The attractiveness and location of the County have made us the focus of development in the state. Understanding these trends help us to better plan for the future of the County.



The value of information

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

The median housing value of owner-occupied units in the County is the highest in the state and more than double the state median value.

Noteworthy trends during 2008

- \$343,300 the median housing value of owner-occupied units in the County, the highest in the state and more than double the state median (\$155,000). Housing values have increased greatly in the County from \$328,400 a year ago and \$182,500 in 2000.
- 175,000 the number of occupied housing units in the County; 77% were owner-occupied and 23% were renter-occupied.
- \$83,146 the median household income in the County, the highest in the state.
- \$2,111 the median monthly housing costs for homeowners with a mortgage, compared to \$1,952 a year ago and \$1,503 in 2000. Median monthly costs for renters were \$1,037 compared to \$929 a year ago and \$754 in 2000.
- 86% of employed people were private sector wage and salary workers, 8% were government workers, and 6% were self-employed.
- 81% of workers drove to work alone, 8% carpoled, 2% took public transportation, 3% used other means, and 6% worked at home.
- 48% of County residents 25 years and older held a bachelor's degree or higher. This was the highest percentage in the state and it has been trending upward from 45% a year ago and 43% in 2000.
- 28.2 minutes the average time it took workers to get to work.
- 7% of people living in Chester County were foreign born; 93% were U.S. natives, including 66% who were born in Pennsylvania.
- 3% of all families in Chester County were in poverty, but 12% of families with a female head of household had incomes below the poverty level.

Chester County has had the highest increase in population among all 67 counties in Pennsylvania.

Estimating population growth

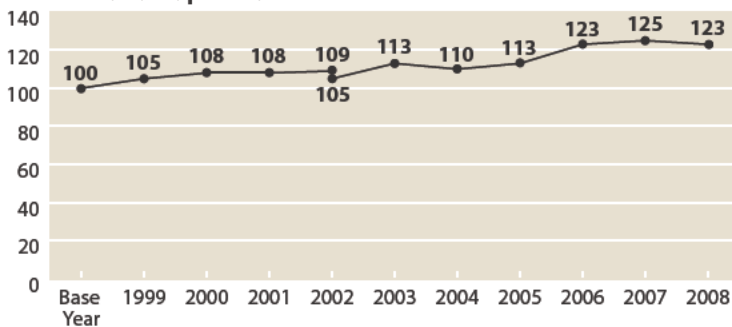
The County remains number one in population growth in Pennsylvania. The County experienced an increase of 7,355 people from 2006 to 2007 and 52,844 people from 2000 to 2007. Chester County has had the highest increase in residents among all 67 counties in Pennsylvania with a steady growth rate of about 1.6 percent each year. This growth trend has been much greater than expected. The population projection for 2010 has been increased from 483,500, based on a projection made in 2002, to a new projection of 505,100.

Landscapes Index 2008

The progress of implementing Landscapes policies is measured through the Landscapes Index. The index is composed of eighteen indicators measurable on an annual basis. A value above 100 indicates progress towards the goals of the plan. Although the index declined for 2008, it continues to show overall progress with implementing the County's policy plan, Landscapes, since the index was created in 1998.

A total of thirteen indicators demonstrated improvement since the base year values (a rating of over 100), and five declined (ratings below 100). Three indicators are largely responsible for the decline in the index from 2007: job growth was slower than normal, travel time continued to take longer, and proposed non-residential development in the rural landscape increased.

The Landscapes Index



The Landscapes Index has remained positive since its inception in 1998.

Activities that measure trends

Housing cost profile: The Planning Commission monitors housing sales activity and costs for the County and municipalities. This data provides an indication, in part, of the economic condition of the County. Housing sales activity declined with 1,000 fewer homes sold in 2007 than in 2006. The median sales price in 2007 was \$312,500, a modest increase of 3.2 percent from 2006. This was the second consecutive year of a moderate price increase after four years with increases around 10 percent annually.



New Daleville, Londonderry Township

New residential units: The Planning Commission records the number and location of new housing units constructed each year. There were a total of 2,903 new housing units added to the housing supply in Chester County in 2007. This was the lowest number of new units since the Planning Commission began collecting the data in 2000. These data help us understand housing demand and future service needs.



New construction, East Brandywine Township

Transit ridership improved: The Amtrak Keystone Corridor and SEPTA R5 rail lines provide vital passenger rail service for Chester County. Based on data compiled by the Planning Commission, there was a clear upsurge of passenger rail ridership in Chester County over the past ten years. SEPTA's R5 regional rail ridership increased 28 percent and Amtrak's Keystone Corridor ridership doubled in Chester County between 1997 and 2007. In 2008, SEPTA regional rail ridership reached a 30-year high. The Paoli station continues to be the busiest station in Chester County with over 1,200 daily R5 boardings and nearly 200 daily Amtrak boardings.



Exton station, West Whiteland Township



Land planning activity

Pennsylvania mandates that municipalities shall refer all plans for subdivision and land development to the Chester County Planning Commission for review prior to municipal action. The Planning Commission reviewed the following types of submittals:

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

Development review service

Review activity was notably less than that experienced in 2007 due in large part to the declining economic conditions. Despite this decline, the level of activity remained high, particularly when compared to other counties. The Planning Commission reviewed a total of 314 plans in 2008 compared to 361 plans in 2007. The 2008 submissions proposed 3,710 lots or units, which represents a 3.74 percent decrease in the number of lots/units proposed from the previous year. These plan applications involved 10,067 acres of land and proposed nearly 20 miles of new roads.

Development proposal trends in 2008

The following trends in development applications were witnessed in 2008:

- 3,710 lots/units proposed.
- 3.74% decrease in number of lots/units proposed during 2008 over the previous year.
- 47% in the number of sewage planning applications received in 2008 over the previous year.
- 10,067 acres of land proposed for development.
- 19.82 miles of new road proposed for development.
- 2.71 acres the average area of proposed lot.
- Of the 314 plans submitted for review, 89 percent were consistent with Landscapes.

Tracking development patterns —coordinating planning programs

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

Major application highlights

The following development proposals demonstrate consistency with Landscapes:

- Vanguard's corporate campus (Phase 1) in Uwchlan Township, which included two buildings totaling 440,000 square feet and parking for 1,764 vehicles. This project was later withdrawn.
- Uptown Worthington in East Whiteland Township is a mixed use land development where retail, office, hotel, and commercial floor areas totaling 1,021,549 square feet are proposed. Residential uses include 685 multi-family units and 68 townhouse units with approximately 287,000 square feet of open space. Parking at this site will accommodate 5,698 vehicles.
- Goshen Leisure Development proposal in West Goshen Township proposes 164,150 square feet of office/warehouse space. The plan calls for six buildings and 528 parking spaces.
- The Eagleview Crossing submission in both Uwchlan and Upper Uwchlan Townships proposed a five-story, 135 room hotel with an 8,000 square foot restaurant and parking for 356 vehicles. The site is located at the intersection of Eagleview Boulevard and Route 100 adjacent to the Pennsylvania Turnpike.



connecting

Balancing Transportation Needs and Resources

Chester County has experienced unprecedented increases in population and employment growth. This growth has been followed by an unprecedented down turn in the economy during 2008. The result has been a significant strain on the ability to fund needed transportation improvements.



Identifying transportation needs and resources

Programming of federal and state funds

The Chester County Planning Commission played an integral role in planning transportation projects within the County and the Delaware Valley by collaborating with regional and state agencies as well as neighboring counties. The Planning Commission contributed to the preparation of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that contained the regionally agreed-upon list of priority transportation projects. The TIP presents estimated costs and schedule by project phase and is financially constrained by the amount of federal, state, and local funds that will be available for transportation projects in the region.

To create the TIP, the Planning Commission encouraged municipalities and interested parties to identify projects, which are then reviewed, evaluated and ranked for priority, then negotiated with PennDOT and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) to select projects for funding.

There are over 80 projects that are programmed in Chester County, totaling over \$350 million of transportation capital investments between 2009 and 2012. The Planning Commission also monitors amendments to the TIP on a monthly basis and submits recommendations to DVRPC.

Alternatives to driving on US Route 202

Escalating traffic congestion, increasing gas prices, and a growing environmental awareness have Chester County drivers looking for alternative transportation. As part of the US Route 202, Section 300 roadway construction project, the Planning Commission helped to produce a brochure that highlighted commuter options, particularly in the Great Valley area of Chester County. The brochure included information about share-a-ride, park-n-ride lots, and transit services throughout the County and region. The Planning Commission distributed the brochure to municipalities, Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), PennDOT, and other planning partners.



Bus service to Exton, one of our suburban centers.

Promoting transit

The Chester County Planning Commission worked closely with SEPTA and Transportation Management Agencies (TMAs) to improve transit service in the County. Staff developed recommendations concerning parking improvement projects at the Exton and Malvern stations. In addition, staff participated in the regional review and ranking of Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funded transit services. JARC provides funding for transit service to areas or during time periods when it is not otherwise feasible. The 2008 program included over \$1.25 million in funding for the critical transit services in Chester County including SCCOOT, Coatesville Link, and R5 Early AM Service. The Planning Commission also participated in planning activities associated with several proposed major rail transit projects, including the Paoli Transportation Center, the R6 Extension, and the R5 Extension.

Safe Routes to School

The Planning Commission participated in the review of applications for federal Safe Routes to School projects. There were six applications for projects within Chester County that would expand sidewalk and/or trail networks to provide safe facilities for students to walk to school.

Promoting trails

In response to several draft Landscapes2 policies related to transportation, open space, and energy, the Planning Commission initiated a trails mapping project in 2008. The focus of the project was to build a comprehensive trails inventory based on adopted municipal plans and studies. As a first step, the Planning Commission coordinated information with County departments and neighboring counties. The information compiled and mapped will help to identify missing trail connections, particularly at municipal boundaries.

Pedestrian/trail successes

In October 2008, *Trail and Path Planning: A Guide for Municipalities* received the American Planning Association-Pennsylvania Chapter's Planning Excellence Award for Best Practice. Copies of this guidebook were handed out to all attendees at the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) spring 2008 workshop. The DCNR also funded a second printing of the document and distributed copies to all of the attendees at their annual PA Greenways and Trails Summit which was co-hosted by the PA Park and Recreation Society. Staff gave presentations at each of these workshops. This document now serves as the state-of-the-art guide to trail and path planning in Pennsylvania.

Activities

The Planning Commission has participated in the following activities to plan for pedestrian networks including trails, paths and sidewalks.

- White Clay Creek Corridor Multi-municipal Trail Link Study.
- Eastern Great Valley Region Multi-municipal Trail Plan (The Patriots Path).
- National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program with the Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan.
- Brandywine Valley YMCA and its "Activate Chester County" partners in their countywide trails and fitness efforts.



A well used trail system in East Goshen Township Park.

preserving

Dedication to the Environment

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



Improving our environment

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

Open space planning initiatives

The Chester County Planning Commission served as a facilitator in resource preservation. Open space planning involved a variety of initiatives and services. These efforts supported work by local municipalities, non-profit organizations, other County departments, and state and federal agencies.

Protection Activities

The Planning Commission participated in the following activities to protect open space, many of which have a regional scope:

- Developed an inventory of protected open space land and GIS mapping in coordination with 13 land trusts and 73 municipal governments.
- Provided technical assistance to the White Clay Creek National Wild and Scenic River Management Committee.
- Provided technical assistance to conservation organizations including the Highlands Coalition.
- Reviewed Municipal Agricultural Security Area applications.

Municipal coordination

Staff assisted municipalities with the preparation of plans and ordinances that promote the management and protection of open space and natural resources:

- East Bradford Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan update.
- Upper Uwchlan Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan update.
- Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Regional Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.



Municipal assistance

The Chester County Planning Commission reviewed plans for the expansion of public infrastructure. These reviews determined whether a proposal was consistent with the land use and environmental protection policies found in Landscapes. Environmental concerns, the goals of Landscapes, and objectives of the Planning Commission were coordinated with other agencies.

Coordinating sewage facilities planning activity

Staff assisted municipalities in the review of sewage facilities plans to determine consistency with the principles of Landscapes. When properly planned and sited, sewage facilities have limited impact on the environment. Stream and ground water quality, however are partially dependent upon the proper location, design, and maintenance of sewage systems and the appropriate methods of disposal.

In Pennsylvania, municipalities are required to develop, adopt, and implement sewage facilities plans as a means of insuring that wastewater is properly treated and disposed of. These plans analyze and delineate areas that are in need of centralized, or public, treatment and disposal systems, as well as identifying those areas that are to continue to utilize individual on-lot sewage. Municipalities use these plans to develop and enact policies that regulate how new sewage facilities can be established. These plans address public health issues, such as failing on-lot systems, new land developments, infill, and redevelopment.

Following progress

The Planning Commission reviews proposed sewage modules associated with most land development proposals and redevelopment projects. In 2008, the number of planning modules reviewed reflected the decreasing number of new housing units in the County. Only 46 planning module reviews were performed, roughly half of those reviewed in 2007 (97 reviews). In keeping with the trend found in 2007, many reviews occurred on smaller parcels, under 10 acres in size. The Planning Commission tracks all proposals, based upon the primary parcel involved in the application. These proposals are then displayed on a map with all other proposals for that month. These maps can be found on the Planning Commission web page in the Map Gallery at www.chesco.org/planning.

Municipal updates

With the continued recession, many municipalities have been taking advantage of the slowing housing market and have updated their existing Act 537 Plans. Work also progressed with the Valley Forge Sewer Authority, Oxford Area Sewer Authority and the Pennsylvania American Water Company on the development of regional plans. These plans collectively affect roughly 1/3 of the municipalities in Chester County. The Planning Commission conducted update reviews for the following municipalities in 2008:

- Valley Township
- Upper Oxford Township
- Pennsbury Township
- East Nantmeal Township

Conducting PUC reviews

The Chester County Planning Commission staff reviewed applications submitted to the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for the expansion of water and sewer service areas, as well as for the expansion of natural gas and energy service areas. This is an important step in guaranteeing that the environmental concerns, program goals and objectives of the Planning Commission are expressed and coordinated with other agencies. In 2008, the Planning Commission performed 10 such reviews, and noted that many of the reviews were submitted to either add existing residences or entire neighborhoods into nearby existing public service areas.

Conducting pipeline project reviews

Chester County is located in a strategic position in the mid-Atlantic Region for natural gas pipeline transmission and service. As such, significant pipeline projects were proposed within the County in 2008. The Planning Commission worked with numerous agencies, including the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, to conduct reviews for two natural gas pipeline projects proposed in the County. While one was an expansion to an existing system, the second project proposed to construct over 30 miles of new pipeline in the County that would affect over 400 parcels and 14 municipalities in Chester County. Staff worked closely with the Water Resources Authority, Conservation District, Parks and Recreation Department, municipalities and other affected agencies and property owners to ensure that all potential impacts and concerns will be addressed by both the applicant and the federal government.



Historic resources planning activity

As one of three original counties founded by William Penn, Chester County enjoys a rich and vitally important role in the history of Pennsylvania. The preservation of this unique heritage through Historic Resources Planning in Chester County is a cooperative process between County departments, local municipalities, residents, historic sites and organizations, and the Chester County Historic Preservation Network. The Planning Commission serves as a facilitator and technical assistance provider in this process, while much of the "hands on" historic preservation occurs at the local municipal level and through the cooperation of residents.

The Planning Commission participated in the following activities to promote historic resource protection and planning:

- Drafted the Landscapes2 Historic Resources Protection Issues and Policies.
- Participated on the Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark Taskforce to promote and effectuate battlefield preservation and multi-municipal protection efforts.
- Provided technical assistance to Pennsbury, West Marlborough, Thombury, and Kennett Townships in the preparation of municipal Historic Resource Surveys.
- Worked in cooperation with the Chester County Parks Department to develop the Chester County GIS Historic Resource Atlas project, which updates the Chester County Historic Sites Survey (1979-82).
- Assisted the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC) to ensure that PHMC's newly revised historic resource survey forms and digital database are easily used in the preparation of local municipal historic resources surveys.
- Partnered with the Chester County Parks Department and the Chester County Historical Society to disseminate information related to historic resources, County history, or preservation.
- Assisted the Chester County Department of Community Development in the review of federally funded projects for impacts on historic resources.

managing

Assisting Municipalities Managing Change

Successful growth management requires cooperative planning between the state, county, and local municipalities. Our goal is to achieve consistency between these jurisdictions to promote a sound and effective planning program.

Implementing the principles of Landscapes

The principles of Landscapes are implemented through the provision of assistance to municipalities in refining their local planning programs. This assistance is primarily accomplished through Vision Partnership Program (VPP) grants and planning staff that directly assist municipalities on planning projects. The VPP grant program strives to develop planning partnerships between local governments and the County to implement sound growth management and coordinated planning programs.

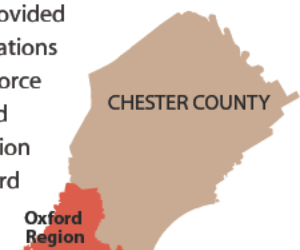
Through the Vision Partnership Program, municipalities receive professional planning services and financial assistance to help update their planning programs for consistency with Landscapes as well as to achieve municipal planning goals. Municipalities may use VPP cash grants to retain the services of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

Promoting cooperative planning

The promotion of cooperative planning among municipalities remained a primary goal of the Vision Partnership Program. Regional planning enjoyed an excellent year in 2008, with three significant multi-municipal planning initiatives, involving a total of 15 municipalities, funded and underway. The following are highlights of multi-municipal planning efforts in Chester County in 2008.

Oxford Region

The Oxford Region encompasses the municipalities of the Oxford School District including Oxford Borough and the Townships of East Nottingham, Elk, Lower Oxford, Upper Oxford, and West Nottingham. Following the endorsement of a cooperative planning agreement by all municipalities at end of 2007, the creation of the Oxford Region Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan was begun in December 2008 with the Planning Commission serving as the region's planning consultant. The municipal members of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force provided invaluable feedback on the issues, policies, and draft recommendations presented by the Planning Commission staff at the monthly task force meetings. Significant issues that were considered in 2008 included agricultural preservation, natural resource protection, transportation and infrastructure needs, and the continued revitalization of Oxford Borough.





Phoenixville Area Regional Planning Commission

The Phoenixville Area Regional Planning Commission consists of the Borough of Phoenixville and the surrounding municipalities of East Pikeland, East Vincent, West Vincent, Charlestown, and Schuylkill Townships. The multi-municipal comprehensive plan was adopted by the region in early 2008. With adoption, the region undertook a review of their municipal zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development ordinances for consistency with the regional plan. The purpose of review was to identify the revisions needed to bring municipal ordinances into general consistency with the land use and natural resource recommendations of the comprehensive plan. These actions will allow the region to move towards the ultimate goal of sharing land uses and protecting resources on a regional basis.



Eastern Great Valley Multi-municipal Trail Plan

Planning for a multi-municipal trail plan was conducted in Tredyffrin Township, East Whiteland Township, and Malvern Borough. The completed plan will play a significant role in furthering the implementation and development of the Patriots Path. The concept of the Patriots Path was fully documented in the Chester County Planning Commission report *An Evaluation of Patriots Path Trail Opportunities in the Eastern Great Valley*. The trail network will link Valley Forge National Historic Park in Tredyffrin, the Paoli Massacre site in Malvern Borough, and the Battle of the Clouds Park in East Whiteland and includes a section of the Chester Valley Trail.



Left: Bridge Street in Phoenixville Borough.

Below: A trailway in Wilson Park in Tredyffrin Township is a link in the Patriots Path.



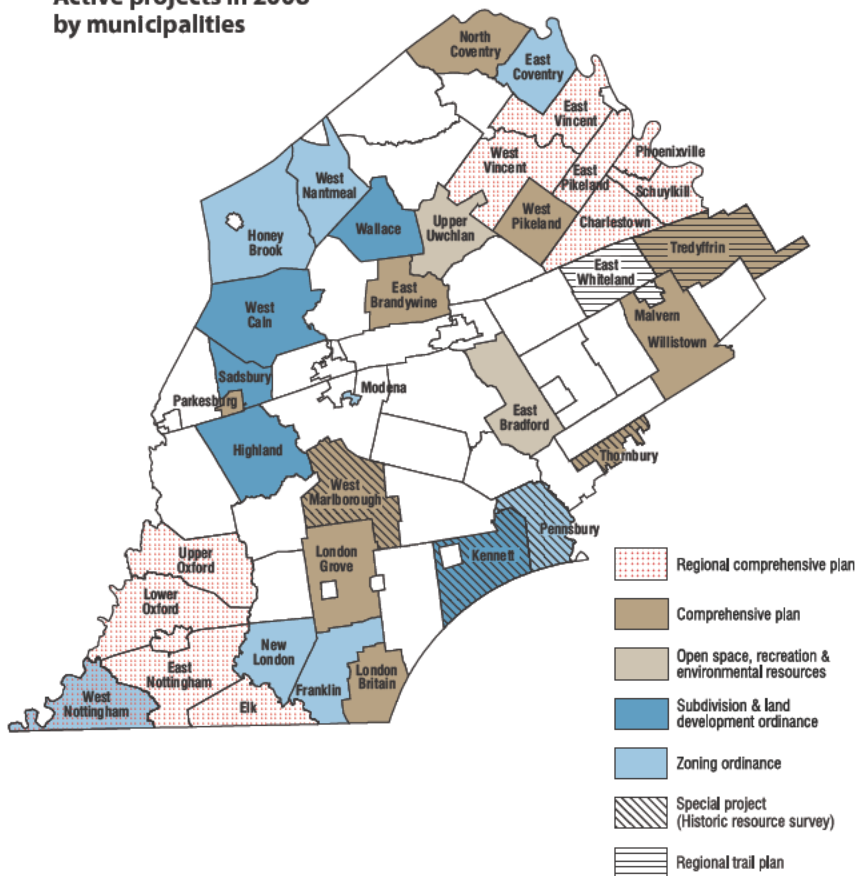
Providing service to municipalities

During 2008, a total of 25 individual Chester County municipalities actively worked on planning projects funded under the Vision Partnership Program (VPP). An additional 15 municipalities were involved in multi-municipal planning projects.

2008 VPP grant awards

The Vision Partnership Program continued to be a popular municipal program for funding innovative planning projects throughout the County. In 2008, the Chester County Planning Commission reviewed 15 planning project grant applications, up significantly from nine applications in 2007. VPP grants awarded in calendar year 2008 totaled \$422,456, a 41 percent increase over grant awards in 2007.

Active projects in 2008 by municipalities



Vision Partnership Program Active contracts (2008)

Municipality	Comprehensive Plan Update	Zoning Update	Subdivision Update	Special Project
East Bradford	■ a*			
East Brandywine	■			
East Coventry		■		
Franklin		■		
Highland			■	
Honey Brook Twp.		■		■ e*
Kennett Township	● c*		●	
London Britain	●			
London Grove	■			
Modena		●		
New London		■		
North Coventry	■ b*			
Parkeshburg	■ d*			
Pennsbury		●		■ f*
Sadsbury			■	
Thornbury	■ c*			
Tredyffrin	■			
Upper Uwchlan	■ a*			
Wallace		■	■	
West Cain			■	
West Marlborough	■ c*			
West Nantmeal		■		
West Nottingham		●		
West Pikeland	■			
Willistown	■			
Multi-Municipal Planning				
Eastern Great Valley	■ g*			
Oxford Region	●			
Phoenixville Region	■			
■ Cash grant award ● In-kind grant				
a* Update of <i>Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan</i> b* Addendum to comprehensive plan— <i>Northern Gateway Master Plan for Route 100</i> c* Historic Resource Survey and Plan Update d* Urban Center Revitalization Plan Update e* <i>Official Map</i> f* Historic Resource Survey g* Multi-Municipal Trail Plan				

communicating

Sharing Information Effectively

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



Communicating

Increased public access to information

This year marks a shift in how our information is presented in some publications and presentations. A more user-friendly communication approach acknowledges the diversity of readers in the County by including updated graphics layouts, documentary-style photography, and fewer technical terms with the intent to include and inspire the public to participate in the Landscapes2 update process.

The trend continues from print to web-based publications

While keeping up with changing times, the Planning Commission is transitioning from print to web-based publications by providing both formats to the public. As part of our evolving strategy and in response to budget needs, we expect 2009 to show a dramatic shift from print to web resulting in decreased paper, printing, and postage costs.

Landscapes website

This year, an increasing number of visitors accessed www.Landscapes2.org to review planning issues and comment on draft policies for the County comprehensive plan update. Our site received 38,572 visits in 2008 and 8,320 visits in 2007.



Implementation of wireless technology facilitates the exchange of information.



Managing information technology

This year also saw the expansion of Planning Commission technical capabilities for meetings and presentations. LCD monitors were installed in the Planning Commission's two conference rooms for meetings and presentations among County agencies, officials, groups, and citizens. The implementation of wireless technology throughout the department facilitated collaboration among staff and offered secure guest access for visiting vendors and business partners. This new equipment enabled more efficient use of the conference rooms by better utilizing wireless technology for improved participant interaction and the sharing of ideas.

Geographic Information System (GIS) service

The Planning Commission used GIS in almost all operations including map production, data analysis, and presentation. To support these activities, the technical services division assisted planners by maintaining digital data resources, and providing necessary tools, applications, and technical assistance.

In 2008 the Planning Commission participated in the preparation of a Chester County GIS Strategic Plan. Through this process, which started in late 2007, County department leaders hoped to refine GIS operations and improve strategies for new initiatives. Results from this work include a strategic vision, mission, objectives and measures of success that will guide the County as it proceeds with its GIS operations in the coming years. The benefits of GIS, especially as an enabling technology for improved efficiency and effectiveness will be realized as it is adopted and integrated through collaborative efforts.

Staff enhanced the GIS kiosk for visitors to the Planning Commission office by making historical aerial imagery dating back to 1959 available for printing at the Planning Commission's front counter. The mapping available to the public was also expanded via the internet on the Planning Commission Map Gallery at www.chesco.org/planning/mapgallery. The Map Gallery offers a wide selection of maps to the public free of charge.



The GIS kiosk at the Planning Commission is available for visitors to access maps and historical aerial imagery.

partnerships

Collaborating For A Better Future

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



Partnerships

Beyond our borders (coordination throughout the Philadelphia Region)

The Planning Commission staff coordinated regularly with the general public, municipalities, legislators, and agencies on many projects, studies, and initiatives throughout Chester County and the Delaware Valley Region.

The Planning Commission participated in many planning committees, studies, and other regional planning initiatives hosted by Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). The Chester County Planning Commission staff continued their involvement in the Regional Technical Committee, which reviews and makes recommendations on the management of the region's highway and transit capital programs. In 2008, DVRPC continued planning processes to update the region's Long Range Plan and Congestion Management Process. The Planning Commission provided input and recommendations for both regional plans that impact transportation projects and funding.

The Planning Commission provided technical feedback and comments on many studies that were conducted on an annual basis by DVRPC. In 2008, these studies included the R6 Extension Study, Paoli Transportation Center, PA 100 Corridor Study, US 322 Corridor Study, US 422 Master Plan, US 202 Section 100 Land Use Plan, and PA 10 Road Safety Audit.

Coordination with transportation partners—PennDOT, SEPTA, and TMAs

The Planning Commission staff worked cooperatively with other agencies on safety concerns, roadway maintenance concerns, and improvements to existing public transit services. Staff provided input and feedback to SEPTA for the development of their capital budget, annual service plan update, and their new strategic plan. Staff was also engaged in activities organized by the County's two Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), including PennDOT Municipalities Forum and US 422 Corridor Coalition.

Collaboration on addressing a greener future

Chester County Greenhouse Gas Reduction Task Force

The County Commissioners established a taskforce to explore ways in which the County can reduce greenhouse gas emissions to reduce its carbon footprint. The taskforce was given the charge of how to best address energy conservation and greenhouse gas reduction with regard to economic, technical, and environmental considerations:

- Actions County government can take.
- Actions recommended to the County as a whole.

The taskforce was comprised of over seventy volunteers from the community and prepared research on land use and transportation, energy, agriculture and forestry, and waste management.

The Planning Commission staff chaired the subcommittee on Land Use & Transportation which included planners, engineers, municipal officials and lawyers. The sub-committee explored the following challenges:

- Reduce energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions through sound land use options.
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Manage traffic congestion.
- Improve vehicle fossil fuel efficiency.

A draft report is scheduled for release in early 2009. Work progress can be viewed online at: www.chesco.org.

Borough Leaders United for Emissions Reduction (BLUER)

The Planning Commission participated on the Borough of West Chester's taskforce as the County representative. The BLUER committee was charged with identifying ways in which the borough could reduce its carbon footprint. A Climate Action Plan is being prepared for the borough council. This plan offers ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the borough so we can together meet our mission, based on the findings of the emissions inventory.

The mission of the taskforce is to secure a safer and more sustainable energy future by reducing community-wide CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions at least 10 percent by 2015. The draft plan is scheduled for release in early 2009. Work progress can be viewed online at www.wcbluer.org.

Chester County Historical Society Exhibit

The Planning Commission, along with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, sponsored an exhibit on open space in the County at the Chester County Historical Society. This exhibit traced the importance of open space to the character and history of the County. Landscapes principles were included within the exhibit.



about us

Planning information and support services

The Chester County Planning Commission distributes information and responds to requests from the public, other departments and the Board of County Commissioners. The Planning Commission maintains aerial photos, maps, data files, and a reference library containing approximately 4,000 volumes.

The table on this page presents the level of information requested and related activity experienced in 2007 and 2008. Increasing use of the Planning Commission's websites continued to reduce the number of office visits over the past year. (www.chesco.org/planning and www.Landscapes2.org)

To make products available from the Planning Commission more widely known to the public, our document, *Maps & Publications*, is updated annually and posted to the web.

The Planning Commission also provides support services to both the Water Resources Authority and the Open Space Preservation department. These services include clerical and graphic services to assist them in their day-to-day operations and on a project need basis.

2008 budget

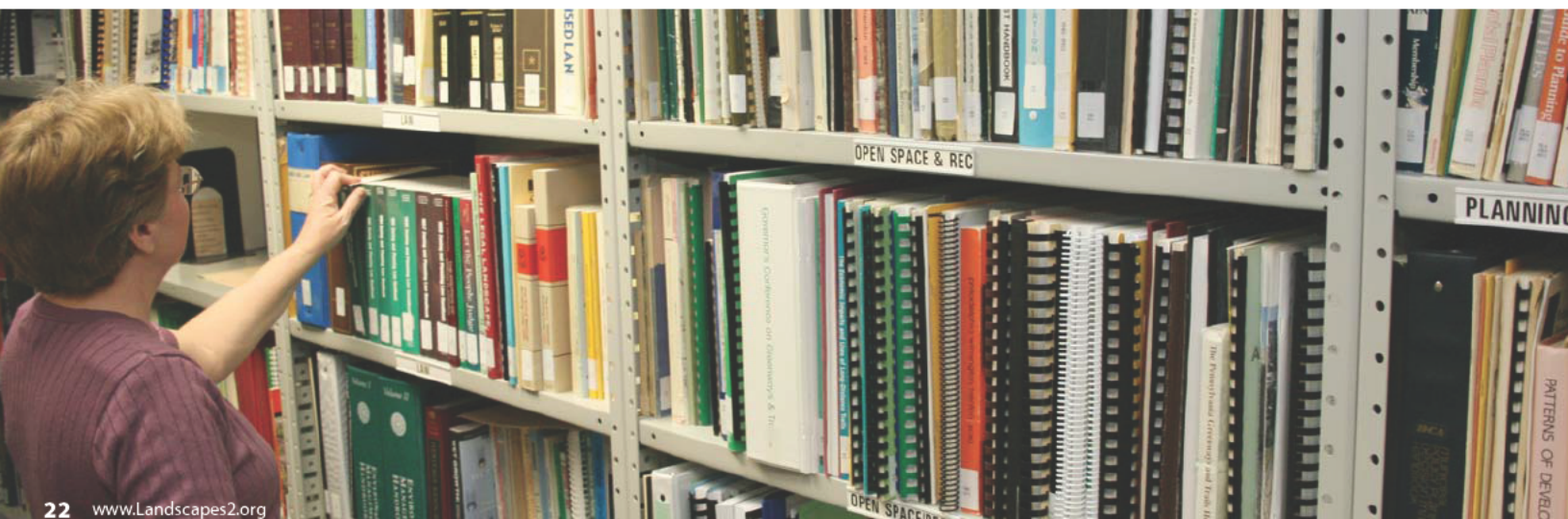
The budget for the Planning Commission is part of the overall County budget process adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. The Planning Commission general fund budget for 2008 was \$3.2 million, a slight increase over the 2007 budget. Expenditures for 2008 were \$3.1 million and included funds devoted to improving technology and promoting the update to Landscapes.

The Planning Commission maintains a reference library containing over 4,000 volumes.

Information services		
	2007	2008
Telephone requests	11,289	12,033
Visitors	638	507
Maps & publications	1,792	1960
Major mailings	12	10
Major e-mailings	1	20
Website visits	59,083	93,521

Budget		
	2007	2008
Budgeted	\$3,078,885	3,225,178
Expended	\$2,789,017	3,107,508
Revenues	\$376,984	330,673
Net expended	\$2,412,033	2,776,835

Revenues		
	2007	2008
Federal	\$154,500	172,490
State	\$0	\$0
Local	\$14,300	11,000
Publications	\$6,859	3,058
Subdivision fees	\$201,325	141,625
Total revenue	\$376,984	328,173



Director's message—Assembling a community



One hundred years ago, in 1909, the first national planning conference was held in Washington D.C. This event is considered by some to mark the beginning of the American planning "movement."

Since 1909, the planning movement has been institutionalized in many ways. Planning is a subject that is taught at many colleges and universities. The field is sometimes referred to as "city planning" or "urban planning" or "environmental planning" or "regional planning." Professional specializations include "transportation planning," "growth management and land use planning," "demographic planning," "strategic planning," "site planning and design," "historic preservation planning," "cultural resource planning," "urban design," "neighborhood planning," "housing planning," "energy planning," and a myriad of other topics.

The Chester County Planning Commission, which operates under the authority of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, is supported by a multi-disciplined professional staff with capacity and expertise in most of the specializations of the profession.

The Planning Commission, however, does not merely review development plans or craft plans and ordinances although these are important functions. The Planning Commission convenes the community in ways that influence the choices for our future.

During 2008, the Planning Commission engaged members of the community in updating the County's Comprehensive Plan, Landscapes. Unlike any previous plan produced by the Planning Commission in the past, the update to Landscapes has utilized the latest technology to involve thousands of County residents in planning for the future. The Planning Commission established a website, www.Landscapes2.org, that contains, not only the drafts of the plan, but also resources devoted to each of the twelve elements mandated by state law.

The website was created to be interactive allowing visitors to contribute comments and suggestions on each of the elements, and on the Livable Landscapes Map, directly online. The website was further designed to permit viewers to see what factors and criteria were used to develop the spatial recommendations of the map and to be able to mark the draft map and offer criticisms or changes to the draft.

Also during 2008, the Planning Commission staff provided support to the Board of County Commissioners strategic planning initiative. Among other tasks, the staff worked with the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin and Marshall College

to conduct a public opinion survey of Chester County residents on issues facing County government. This represents the first time that Chester County has polled residents on the County's performance, and the responses will significantly influence the development of a county-wide budget system that will be focused on attaining tangible results in the coming years.

Through the use of technology, the Planning Commission has developed what may be considered a virtual planning studio. Instead of just being able to read static plans and published documents that were created by others, the Planning Commission has made it possible for any resident to participate directly in the process of planning for the County through digital applications. In place of scheduling a few public meetings that might be attended by a minority of citizens, the Planning Commission has made it possible for anyone, at their convenience, to study the research that has been developed by the Planning Commission, to read the drafts of the plan as they are completed and revised, and to explore the spatial relationships that determine the form of Chester County's growth. The Planning Commission will still conduct public meetings in the traditional manner, but is also pioneering new ways to engage the public in a meaningful dialogue.

2008 was a challenging year, especially with the downturn in the economy. Nevertheless, solid progress has been made in planning for the future growth of Chester County. With new developments in technology, we have been able to involve more people in increasingly meaningful ways to plan for the continued growth and development of the County.

And 2009 promises to present even greater opportunities.

Ronald T. Bailey, AICP
Executive Director





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