



Chester County
Planning Commission

2019 ANNUAL REPORT





CHESTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION BOARD

Nine-member advisory board appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. Standing from left: Douglas A. Fasick, DC, Vice-Chair; Nathan M. Cline, P.E.; Matthew Hammond, P.E.; Kevin C. Kerr, Chair; Angela Thompson-Lobb; Stephanie Duncan; and Michael Heaberg. Sitting from left: Molly Morrison and E. Martin Shane.

Implementing the plan

I am pleased to submit this annual report for the Chester County Planning Commission representing calendar year 2019. A majority of the efforts at the Planning Commission focused on the implementation of *Landscapes3*, the county's comprehensive plan. Major planning activities centered on the six goal areas of *Landscapes3*:

PRESERVE: The preserve goal was highlighted at the Open Space Summit on May 2nd, celebrating 30 years of successful open space and farmland preservation (29%) in Chester County. The *Return on Environment* report, unveiled at the summit, documents the many ways that open space enhances economic value to Chester County.

PROTECT: Under the protect goal area, we began the important work of updating the county's *Climate Action Plan* to be completed in summer 2020. The Planning Commission is also providing support to the Chester County Water Resources Authority on its update of *Watersheds*, the county's integrated water resources plan.

APPRECIATE: Town Tours and Village Walks celebrated its 25th anniversary of free summer strolls through historic neighborhoods, hamlets, and villages. This provides a fun way to learn about and appreciate the county's rich history. With eleven different tours and two dinner armchair tours, I highly recommend these events. We had over 2,200 attendees this year.

LIVE: The live goal was supported by the efforts of the Housing Choices Committee and the fall housing forum held on November 14th. The Creating A+ Homes event featured speakers with experience advocating for and building attractive, affordable, accessible, adaptable, and aging-friendly homes.

PROSPER: A highlight of the prosper goal was the Your Town as a Destination forum held on October 8th. This forum provided valuable information on how more people want to encounter unique experiences in our urban centers, such as breweries, tasting rooms, farmers' markets, short-term rentals, and food trucks. In 2019, we created an economic development staff position, broadening our ability to assist municipalities with economic opportunities.

CONNECT: The connect goal for transportation was featured at the Trails, Trains, and Traffic forum held on December 4th. This forum included an open house and presentations on the complexities of the transportation funding process, updates on county trail activities, the status of major roadway improvements, and work on municipal active transportation planning.

While this represents a large portion of the work that was done in 2019, many other objectives were also accomplished and can be accessed via the Planning Commission's website, www.chescoplanning.org.

Balancing all the treasures that we currently have in Chester County with the need to continue to have a vibrant and growing economy can only be achieved with the assistance of the number one asset in Chester County—it's people! We look forward to working with everyone to continue to make Chester County the best place to live, work, play, and raise a family.

Thank you!

Kevin C. Kerr, Chairman

BOARD RETIREES

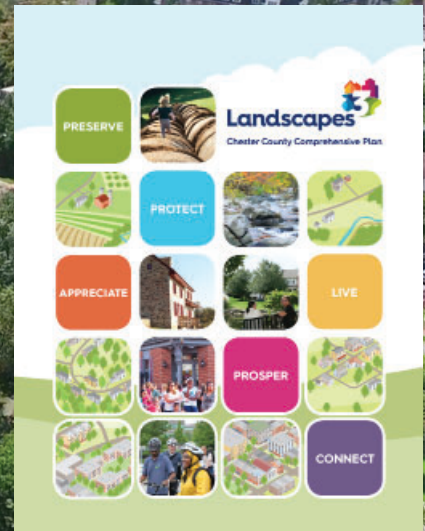
The county thanks (L to R) Joe Tarantino (2005–2018) and Daniel DiMucci (2011–2019) for their many years of service to the county and Planning Commission.





Implementing Landscapes3

With the adoption of *Landscapes3* in November 2018, the Planning Commission pivoted its work program to focus on implementation of the county's new award-winning comprehensive plan, which seeks to balance growth and preservation. During the year, 65 of the county's 73 municipalities formally endorsed *Landscapes3*, and another two municipalities acknowledged the relevance of the plan. This great support shows the importance of *Landscapes3* as a guiding document for the county and its many diverse communities.



Development Consistency with Landscapes3

Consistency with the *Landscapes Map* is part of the Act 247 review process for proposed subdivisions, land developments, ordinances, and plans. In 2019, ninety-nine percent of all relevant subdivision and land development plan submissions were consistent with *Landscapes3*. Approximately 91% of proposed dwelling units were in *Landscapes3* growth areas, with 9% proposed for Rural or Agricultural landscapes. Most of the residential units in the non-growth areas were in cluster developments that will permanently preserve 208 acres of open space.

For non-residential proposals, 87% of the square footage was in growth areas. While this was a slight decrease from the previous year, the non-residential development proposals in the Rural and Agricultural landscapes were consistent with *Landscapes3*, mostly comprising agricultural uses, such as mushroom houses or indoor riding rings, or institutional uses, like a new elementary school.

Overall, 2019 was a mixed year on development proposals. The number of actual reviews dropped slightly to 236, while the number of proposed residential lots/units (excluding second reviews) dropped 41% to 2,159 units, which is the lowest number of proposed lots/units since 2015. Most of these proposed units, 58%, were apartments.

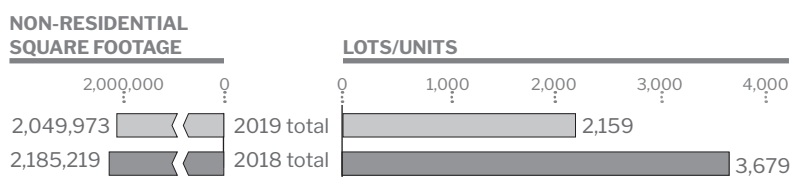
Non-residential square footage (excluding second reviews) increased slightly to 2,185,219 square feet, and proposed comprehensive plans and ordinance amendments also increased, rising to 170 reviews.



TOP
Aerial view of West Chester Borough.

ABOVE TOP RIGHT
The cover from Landscapes3, Chester County's Comprehensive Plan.

ABOVE RIGHT
Image from the Urban Center Design Guide which highlights planning principles and design elements that will improve the character of new development in the county's urban centers. The Planning Commission completed this guide in 2019 and is continuing to create design guides for each of the Landscapes Map categories.



RIGHT
 Chris Patriarca, Community Planner, at a public meeting in Parkesburg Borough.



Partnering with Municipalities

The **Vision Partnership Program (VPP)** is one of the county's primary means of partnering with municipalities to encourage smart growth and effective preservation. The VPP relies on two components to implement *Landscapes3*: technical service grants and cash grants. For technical service grants, Planning Commission staff members act as planning consultants to municipalities, and three such projects were completed in 2019 (of seven active technical service projects).

The cash grant program provides reimbursable cash grants to municipalities to hire a private planning consultant, with the county providing a grant monitor to support the project. Grant monitors attend project meetings to ensure consistency with *Landscapes3*, provide connections to available information and resources, and offer technical guidance. Municipalities and their consultants completed nine cash grant projects in 2019, with 31 municipalities involved in active cash grant projects across the year.

NORTH COVENTRY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

addressed senior housing around the mall area, mixed uses in its commercial core, resource protection needs, and open space preservation



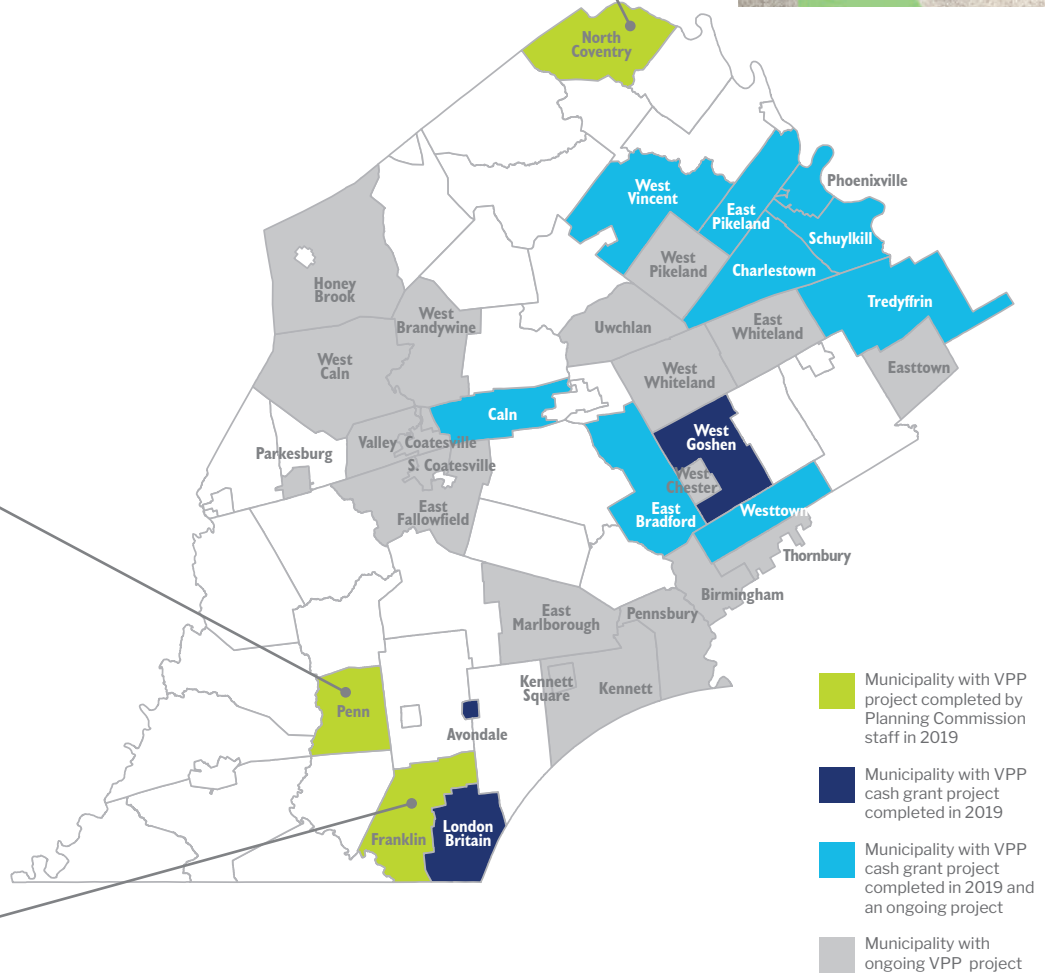
PENN TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE

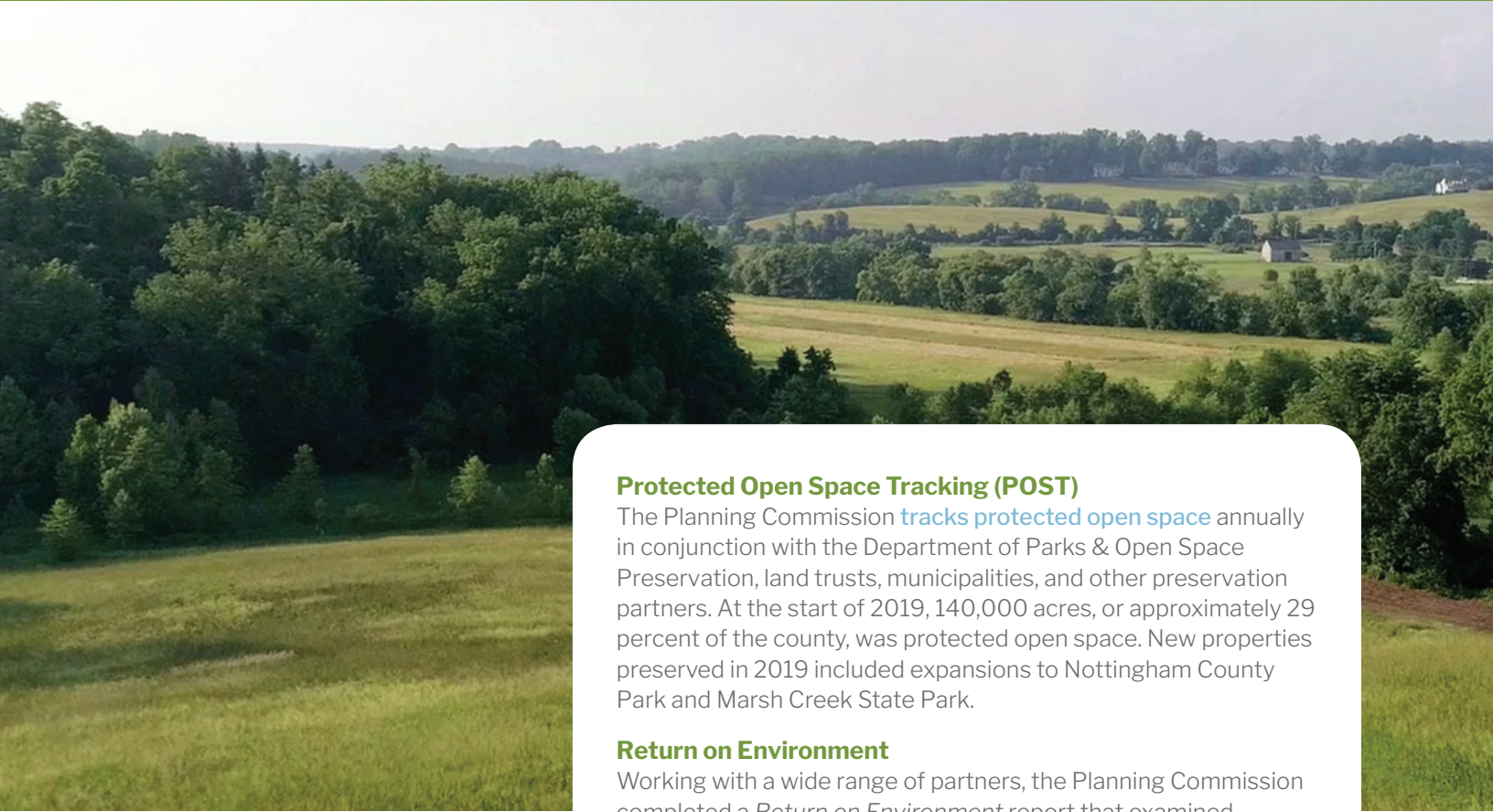
strengthened historic resource, natural resource, and healthcare related land use standards



FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP LAND USE ANALYSIS

examined evolving housing needs in relation to the township's status as a primarily rural community with declining growth pressure





ABOVE
The picturesque scene from Stroud Preserve in East Bradford Township.

BELOW LEFT
Planning Commission staff and Natural Lands staff at May 2 Open Space Summit at ChesLen Preserve.

BELOW RIGHT
Agricultural land at Bryn Coed Preserve in West Vincent Township. Photo credit: Mark Williams.

Protected Open Space Tracking (POST)

The Planning Commission **tracks protected open space** annually in conjunction with the Department of Parks & Open Space Preservation, land trusts, municipalities, and other preservation partners. At the start of 2019, 140,000 acres, or approximately 29 percent of the county, was protected open space. New properties preserved in 2019 included expansions to Nottingham County Park and Marsh Creek State Park.

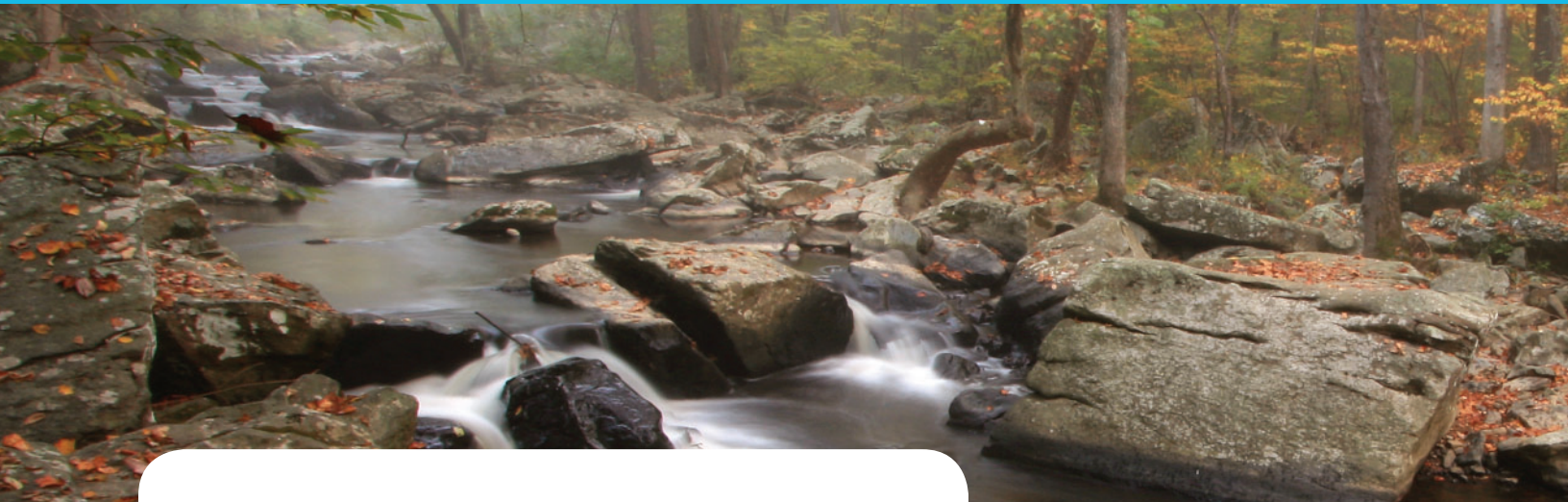
Return on Environment

Working with a wide range of partners, the Planning Commission completed a *Return on Environment* report that examined the economic value of open space in Chester County. This econometric analysis showed that preserved open space increases housing values, provides environmental benefits that would be very expensive to replicate, saves residents money by providing free places to exercise and by avoiding medical costs, generates jobs and income from agriculture and tourism; and provides more in tax revenue than it generates in costs.

Open Space Summit

The county commissioners celebrated 30 years of open space preservation in Chester County with an open space summit at ChesLen Preserve that was attended by approximately 300 people.





Act 537 Sewage Facility Reviews

Thirty-six sewage facility plan updates and amendments were reviewed, including seven major updates.

Inventory of Natural Resources

The Planning Commission updated its inventory of municipal natural resource ordinances which regulate floodplains, riparian corridors, wetlands, steep slopes, and woodlands.

Partnership on Watersheds Update

The Water Resources Authority has started the process of updating *Watersheds*, the county's integrated water resources plan and *Act 147 Stormwater Plan*, with support from the Planning Commission.

Climate Action Plan

The county took the first step in creating a climate action plan, which will replace the county's 2010 *Greenhouse Gas Reduction Report*, by working with CCPC staff, a consultant, DVRPC, and students from Millersville University on a greenhouse gas inventory.



TOP
*West Brandywine Creek in
Hibernia Park.
Photo credit: Michael Lawrence*

ABOVE RIGHT
*Planning Commission staff visit to
Bryn Coed.*

BELOW LEFT
*Nottingham Park Serpentine Barrens
in West Nottingham Township.*



Protection of Historic Bridges

The Planning Commission continued to serve as a resource for identifying ways to protect the county's historic bridges.

Town Tours and Village Walks

In 2019, the county celebrated the 25th anniversary of the [Town Tours and Village Walks](#) program, which introduces the public to the great and varied historic resources around the county. More than 2,200 people attended 13 events focused on the county's villages, then and now.

Coordination with Preservation Network

Two events, a leadership luncheon and spring workshop, were held in coordination with the Chester County Historic Preservation Network. Training at these events touched on the Americans with Disabilities Act, new state processes, and historic preservation resources and ordinances.

National Register Interactive Map

Working with our partners in the historic preservation community, the Planning Commission prepared an interactive map that shows national historic register listed and eligible properties.

Brandywine Battlefield Protection

Plans for the preservation and interpretation of the Brandywine Battlefield continued to be developed in cooperation with the National Park Service and local municipalities, including a revised animated map that shows the British and American approach to the battle.



ABOVE LEFT

Hosts along the Warwick Village Walk on June 27 in Warwick Township.

ABOVE RIGHT

Interior view of a covered bridge in West Bradford Township.

BELOW LEFT

Karen Marshall of the Chester County Planning Commission leading a tour in Marshallton, West Bradford Township.



Housing Data

The *Annual Housing Report* indicated the median housing value in 2018 rose to \$340,000, a 1% increase over the prior year. A total of 1,355 units were built in 2018, with 45% of these single-family detached, 46% single-family attached, and 9% multifamily.

Housing Choices Committee

To address the need for affordably-priced housing, the county convened a Housing Choices Committee comprised of municipal representatives, housing advocates, land use professionals, and developers.

Housing Tools for Municipalities

The Planning Commission completed a large number of housing eTools that provide guidance to municipalities on topics like accessory apartments, affordable housing bonuses, age restricted housing, and residential conversions.

Housing Opportunities Map

The Planning Commission prepared an interactive map that shows where medium to higher density housing is allowed in Chester County by municipal zoning.

A+ Homes Forum

The many housing efforts in the county culminated in the A+ Homes forum, which featured ways to have attractive, affordably-priced, adaptable, aging-friendly, and accessible homes.

2020 Census Complete Count Committee

Because much federal funding is population based and because political representation is based on the number of residents, getting an accurate U. S. Census count of county residents in 2020 is critical. To support this effort, the county created a Census Complete Count Committee. The Planning Commission worked extensively with this committee and created a variety of supporting documents for this effort.

ABOVE

Brian O'Leary, Executive Director, introducing A+ Homes to the community on November 14.

BELOW

One of the posters created to promote the U.S. Census count in Chester County.

BOTTOM

Community Planning staff tour in Sadsbury Township.





Urban Centers Assistance

The Planning Commission's urban centers planner provided technical support to the urban centers, coordinated meetings between municipalities and economic development advocates, and updated infrastructure project lists.

Urban Centers Forum

In partnership with the Department of Community Development, the Planning Commission supported the [Urban Centers Forum](#), which focused on breweries, food trucks, farmers' markets, and short-term rentals.

Municipal Guidance on Economic Development

Planning Commission staff prepared eTool guidance for municipalities on mixed use development, secondary farm businesses, short-term rentals, and adaptive reuse.

Partnership with Agricultural Development Council

Staff continued to support the Ag Council's mission and assisted with projects, including the annual [Farm Products Guide](#).

Nonresidential Construction

For the first time, the Planning Commission collected information on non-residential construction. In 2018, the county added 1,259,000 square feet of nonresidential building square footage, with more than half of this consisting of commercial space.



TOP
King's Potato Farm in Londonderry Township.

ABOVE LEFT
Urban Center Forum held on October 8 at Victory Brewing Company in West Sadsbury Township.

BELOW RIGHT
A stop in Kennett Square Borough on June 12 during the Planning Commission board tour.





Transportation Project Advocacy

To assist in the county's advocacy for transportation improvements, the Planning Commission completed the *Transportation Improvement Inventory*, which documents all needed transportation projects in Chester County. The 2019 inventory includes 533 projects with a total estimated cost of \$4.4 billion. As a follow-up to this inventory, staff prepared the *Transportation Priority Projects* list, which is signed by the county commissioners, all members of the county's state house delegation, and all members of the county's state senate delegation. One great success in 2019 was SEPTA's announcement that it would resume service to Coatesville after the new train station is completed.

Brandywine Water Trail

In partnership with the Brandywine Conservancy, the Planning Commission completed the *Brandywine Water Trail Study*, which shows how access to and use of the Brandywine River can be improved.

Trail Expansion Assistance

Working with the Facilities Department, the Planning Commission continued to support trail expansion, providing technical assistance for the *Warner Spur Trail Master Plan*, the *Schuylkill River Trail* project, and extensions of the Chester Valley Trail to the west.

Pipeline Information Center

Planning Commission staff continuously updated the Pipeline Information Center with new information.

Trails, Trains, and Traffic Event

To inform the public and municipal officials about transportation issues in the county, the Planning Commission held a Trails, Trains, and Traffic event.

Significant Grant Support

With technical support from the Planning Commission, local municipalities and organizations received \$23 million from state and federal programs.



ABOVE LEFT

Staff participants in the annual "Bike to Work" event held on May 17.

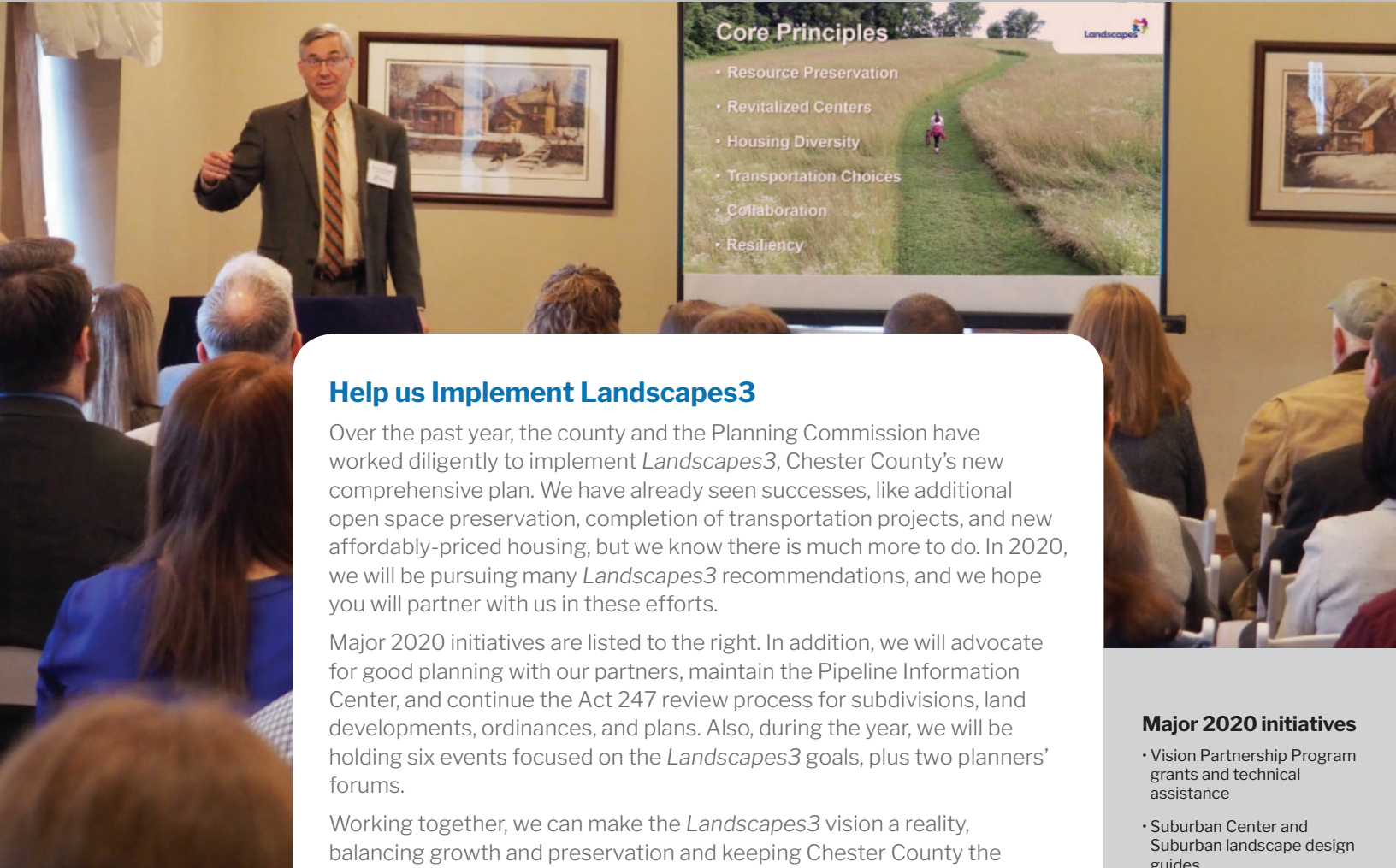
ABOVE RIGHT

Train arriving at the upgraded Paoli Station in Tredyffrin Township. The station is now handicapped accessible.

BELOW

Brian Donovan, Transportation Planner, on December 4 at the Trails, Trains, and Traffic event in West Whiteland Township.





Help us Implement Landscapes3

Over the past year, the county and the Planning Commission have worked diligently to implement *Landscapes3*, Chester County's new comprehensive plan. We have already seen successes, like additional open space preservation, completion of transportation projects, and new affordably-priced housing, but we know there is much more to do. In 2020, we will be pursuing many *Landscapes3* recommendations, and we hope you will partner with us in these efforts.

Major 2020 initiatives are listed to the right. In addition, we will advocate for good planning with our partners, maintain the Pipeline Information Center, and continue the Act 247 review process for subdivisions, land developments, ordinances, and plans. Also, during the year, we will be holding six events focused on the *Landscapes3* goals, plus two planners' forums.

Working together, we can make the *Landscapes3* vision a reality, balancing growth and preservation and keeping Chester County the wonderful place that it is.

Brian N. O'Leary, AICP
Executive Director

Major 2020 initiatives

- Vision Partnership Program grants and technical assistance
- Suburban Center and Suburban landscape design guides
- Inventory of open space ordinances
- Climate action plan
- Support to municipalities on natural resource protection
- Guide to green and sustainable suburbs
- Adaptive reuse design guide
- Town Tours and Village Walks
- Housing tools for affordably-priced housing
- Analysis of housing needs for an aging population
- 2020 Census outreach
- Reinvestment opportunities map
- Main Street commercial landscapes guide
- Analysis of municipal active transportation
- Trail feasibility study for southern Chester County
- Inventory of non-transportation infrastructure needs

Budget

Expenditures	2017	2018	2019
Personnel Services	\$2,887,173	\$3,024,233	\$3,046,147
Materials & Services	\$226,035	\$216,112	\$205,825
Contributions, Grants, Subsidies	\$179,859	\$179,859	\$174,669
TOTAL	\$3,293,067	\$3,420,204	\$3,426,641

Revenues	2017	2018	2019
Federal	\$295,350	\$251,158	\$317,115
State	\$20,984	\$29,016	\$5,000
Local	\$27,134	\$45,706	\$129,754
Subdivision/Land Review Fees	\$204,473	\$230,749	\$187,980
Misc.	\$913	\$595	\$865
TOTAL	\$548,854	\$557,224	\$640,713

* Remaining revenue comes from Chester County



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
 www.chesco.org/planning

We're social! Follow us

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Flickr
- YouTube
- Instagram



Marian Moskowitz
Josh Maxwell
Michelle Kichline

Staff

Administration Services

Brian O'Leary, AICP, *Executive Director*
 Carol J. Stauffer, AICP, *Assistant Director*
 Beth A. Cunliffe, *Office & Communications Manager*
 Carolyn Oakley, *Communications Supervisor*
 Danielle Lynch, *Communications Specialist**
 Suzanne Wozniak, *Administrative Coordinator*
 Marie Celii, *Information Specialist*
 Jenn Kolvereid, *Land Development Analyst*
 Nancy Shields, *Administrative Support*
 Patti Strauber, *Administrative Support*

Agricultural Development Council***

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

Community Planning

Susan Elks, AICP, *Community Planning Director*
 Katherine Clark, *Community Planner*
 Mark Gallant, *Community Planner*
 Mason Gilbert, *Community Planner*
 Libby Horwitz, AICP, *Housing & Economic Planner*
 Karen Marshall, *Heritage Preservation Coordinator*
 Kevin Myers, *Urban Planner*
 Chris Patriarca, AICP, *Community Planner*
 Jeannine Speirs, *Community Planner*

Environment & Infrastructure

Brian Styche, RLA, AICP, *Environment & Infrastructure Director*
 Brian Donovan, *Transportation Planner*
 Rachael Griffith, RLA, *Trails and Open Space Planner*
 Eric Quinn, *Transportation Planner*
 Carolyn Conwell, AICP, *Environmental Planner*
 Jake Michael, AICP, *Demographer*

Design & Technology

Paul Fritz, RLA, AICP, *Design & Technology Director*
 Glenn Bentley, *Plan Reviewer*
 Wes Bruckno, AICP, *Plan Reviewer*
 Paul Farkas, *Plan Reviewer*
 Gene Huller, *Technical Services Supervisor*
 Doug Meneely, *GIS Specialist**
 Colin Murtoff, *GIS Planner*
 Albert Park, *Design Specialist*
 Diana Zak, *Graphics Supervisor*
 Christopher Bittle, *Graphics Specialist*
 Polly Chalfant, *Graphics Specialist***

* Former staff

** Retired

*** The Agricultural Development Council staff is part of the Planning Commission and its budget but is not under the oversight of the Chester County Planning Commission's advisory board.