



Bringing growth and preservation together for Chester County

# Public Opinion Survey Analysis

## Detailed Analysis by Respondent Characteristics

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## Introduction

The Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) is in the process of updating Landscapes, the County Comprehensive Plan Policy Element (1996). The plan established a strategy for managing change within the county. While this policy plan has served the County well over the past ten years, significant changes have occurred within the County that warrants CCPC to revisit the plan.

The first phase of the update process involved a series of events designed to help us understand the contemporary concerns, issues, and perspectives of the citizens of Chester County. One of the main components of the public input process was an on-line public opinion survey. This was the first online public survey in Chester County to poll residents and workers in every municipality about growth and preservation issues and priorities for the next ten years.

The survey was open to Chester County residents and workers of all ages and was accessed in two ways. First, online at [www.landscapes2.org](http://www.landscapes2.org). Second, printed copies were available at all municipal offices, public libraries, and many County facilities, and could be returned by mail.

The web-based survey ran from January 22 through March 31, 2007 and asked six questions, plus an open ended question allowing respondents to express their concerns. It was designed to take about six minutes to complete. The survey questions were modeled after a similar survey conducted in 1995 for the original Landscapes plan. This allowed us to measure changes in public opinion over this period. CCPC attempted to minimize bias in the wording of questions and by allowing an open-ended response on every question.

While the survey cannot be considered a statistically valid random sample, the number of responses reflects opinions of our residents and workers about planning issues facing the county. These issues will be considered and addressed during the plan update process.

CCPC prepared a survey report, Preliminary Results, in May 2007. The initial report presented the overall survey results for all respondents as a whole.

This second report provides a more detailed analysis of the survey results to determine the perspectives of selected groups of respondents. Surveys were analyzed for groups of respondents based on the following categories:

### **Municipal Representatives**

### **Geographic Areas**

### **Urban Centers and Townships**

### **Years Lived in Chester County**

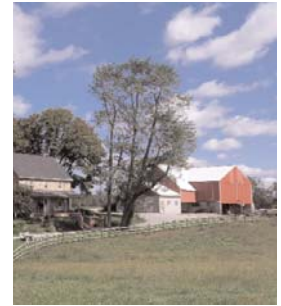
### **Age Groups**

## Introduction

Overall, the analysis of the surveys for these categories showed a high level of agreement across all groups. All categories of groups agreed on:

- Farmland, rural character, and natural beauty is what all groups like most about Chester County.
- Managing new growth and development and open space/farmland preservation are the most important issues facing Chester County.
- Future development should be encouraged in existing urban centers.
- Traffic congestion was the main feature people prefer to see less of in Chester County.

Although there was a great deal of consensus, there were questions where groups expressed different opinions. This report identifies these areas of agreement and disagreement.



*All groups liked farmland, rural character, and natural beauty the most about Chester County.*



*Managing new growth and development is one of the most important issues.*



*Every group agreed that future development should be in existing urban centers.*



*Traffic congestion was the issue people liked least in the County.*

## Municipal Representatives

Survey respondents were asked if they have an affiliation with a municipal government. A total of 285 respondents indicated they were municipal elected officials or planning commission members, referred to in this report as municipal representatives. Their responses are shown in this section of the report in comparison to all responses.

### Summary of findings

Overall areas of consensus: Municipal representatives agreed with all respondents on the top choices for each of the six questions. They preferred farmland, rural character, and natural beauty the most (Question 1) and would prefer to see this retained (Question 5). They like traffic congestion least (Question 2) and would prefer to see less of it (Question 6). They agreed managing new growth and development is the most important issue (Question 3) and that future growth should be encouraged in existing urban centers (Question 4).

Following are additional findings for each question.

#### Question 1: What do you like most about Chester County?

Municipal representatives gave a higher importance to cultural and historic sites and a lower importance to public parks and recreational amenities than all respondents.

#### Question 2: What do you like least about Chester County?

Municipal representatives identified the same three leading choices as all respondents for this question: traffic congestion; loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty; and property tax rates. However, representatives identified a greater concern about limited public transportation and less concern about the high cost of housing than all respondents.

#### Question 3: What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?

While the percentages of municipal representatives selecting each choice were similar to the total response, one noticeable difference was the higher priority the representatives gave to revitalizing urban centers.

#### Question 4: Where in the County should future development be encouraged?

The overwhelming preference for future development was in existing centers, just as it was for all respondents. However, municipal representatives identified existing villages as the second priority and existing suburban areas third, which was the reverse of the overall survey results.

#### Question 5: What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?

In addition to more farmland retention and open space conservation, municipal representatives also agreed with the overall results that they would like to see more downtown revitalization, also. In contrast, representatives had a significantly higher percentage for more cooperative planning between local governments than the total survey results.

#### Question 6: What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?

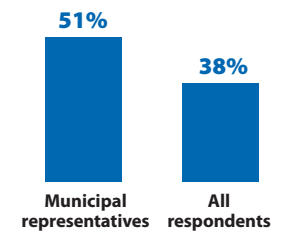
The preferences of municipal representatives generally corresponded to the total countywide results. A difference was the percentage identifying a preference for less housing in rural areas was much higher among the representatives, although it ranked third for both groups.



Compared to all respondents, municipal representatives had a greater concern about limited public transportation.



Revitalizing urban centers was given a much higher priority than all respondents gave it.



Municipal representatives had a significantly higher percentage for more cooperative planning between local governments than the total survey results.

## Municipal Representatives

Total Number of Respondents	Municipal Representatives	All Respondents
	285	8024

### Question 1:

#### What do you like most about Chester County?

(check up to four)

Farmland rural character, and natural beauty	88%	88%
Ease of travel by automobile	17%	20%
Public transportation (bus and rail)	2%	3%
Variety of housing types	11%	13%
Cost of housing	5%	6%
Shopping and entertainment opportunities	19%	22%
Jobs/business opportunities	18%	17%
Quality of schools	37%	44%
Property tax rates	7%	8%
Crime rate/safety and security	42%	40%
Cultural and historic sites	52%	43%
Public parks and recreational amenities	31%	43%
Clean air and water	47%	43%
Other	9%	7%

### Question 2:

#### What do you like least about Chester County?

(check up to four)

Loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	66%	68%
Traffic congestion	70%	70%
Physical condition of roads (road surface, maintenance)	29%	31%
Limited public transportation (bus and rail)	46%	31%
Limited variety of housing types	7%	6%
High cost of housing	28%	37%
Limited shopping and entertainment opportunities	6%	7%
Limited job or business opportunities	5%	4%
Quality of schools	6%	5%
Property tax rates	49%	46%
Crime rate/lack of safety and security	4%	4%
Limited cultural and historic sites	2%	3%
Limited public parks and recreational facilities	10%	8%
Problems with water or air quality	11%	8%
Other	11%	10%

## Municipal Representatives

	Municipal Representatives	All Respondents
<b>Question 3:</b>		
<b>What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Open space/farmland preservation	64%	68%
Managing new growth and development	78%	78%
Revitalizing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	46%	33%
Housing needs and affordability	19%	23%
Employment opportunities	5%	7%
Natural resource protection (water/air/woodlands)	45%	49%
Traffic congestion and road conditions	50%	51%
Providing more transportation choices (public transit/bike paths/walking paths)	28%	23%
Controlling taxes	40%	42%
Providing parks and recreational opportunities	9%	10%
Historic resources protection	18%	15%
Other	7%	4%

<b>Question 4:</b>		
<b>Where in the County should future development be encouraged?</b>		
(check up to two)		
In existing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	86%	83%
In existing suburban areas	29%	34%
In existing villages	35%	26%
In new villages or towns	11%	7%
In undeveloped rural areas	3%	6%
Other	7%	7%

## Municipal Representatives

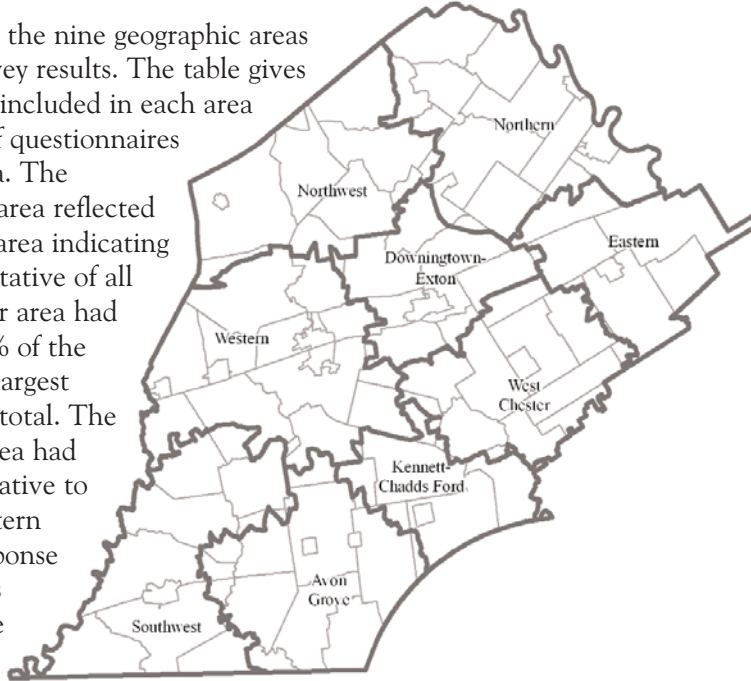
	Municipal Representatives	All Respondents
<b>Question 5:</b>		
<b>What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Farmland retention and open space conservation	66%	71%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	37%	29%
Housing in rural areas	2%	2%
Greater variety of housing types (smaller houses/townhouses/apartments)	11%	11%
Affordable housing	25%	26%
Retirement housing opportunities	11%	9%
Downtown revitalization	59%	56%
Office buildings/business parks	5%	3%
Retail stores/shopping centers	1%	6%
Job opportunities	6%	8%
Opportunities to walk or bike to places	33%	37%
Shorter trips between work, home, and shopping	8%	8%
Public transportation options	29%	23%
Parks and recreational facilities	20%	21%
Healthcare facilities	5%	6%
Cooperative planning between local governments	51%	38%
Other	6%	5%

<b>Question 6:</b>		
<b>What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Farmland retention and open space conservation	3%	2%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	8%	14%
Housing in rural areas	62%	49%
Residential development in any location	31%	38%
Vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas	78%	71%
Office buildings/business parks	25%	27%
Retail stores/shopping centers	35%	33%
Traffic congestion	81%	78%
Parks and recreational facilities	1%	1%
Other	5%	4%

## Geographic Areas

In order to compare responses from different areas of Chester County, surveys were tabulated for nine geographic areas based on zip codes. This section of the report gives the results of the survey for those nine areas.

The County map shows the nine geographic areas used to analyze the survey results. The table gives the zip codes that were included in each area and the total number of questionnaires returned from each area. The response rates for each area reflected the population of each area indicating the survey was representative of all areas. The West Chester area had the most responses, 24% of the total, and also had the largest population, 22% of the total. The Downingtown-Exton area had the highest response relative to population and the Eastern area had the lowest response with 10% of the surveys compared to 15% of the population.



**The response rate for each area reflected the size of the population of each area.**

**The Downingtown-Exton area had the highest response relative to population.**

Geographic Areas	Zip Codes	Survey Responses	Percent of Total Responses	Percent of County Population in Area
Avon Grove	19311, 19318, 19346, 19347 19350, 19352, 19360, 19374 19390	638	8%	8%
Downingtown-Exton	19335, 19341, 19353, 19354 19480	1,335	17%	13%
Eastern	19073, 19087, 19301, 19312 19333, 19345, 19355	814	10%	15%
Kennett-Chadds Ford	19317, 19348, 19357, 19375	408	5%	5%
Northern	19421, 19425, 19432, 19442 19457, 19460, 19465, 19475 19481, 19482	1,127	14%	14%
Northwest	19343, 19344, 19371, 19520	414	5%	5%
Southwest	19330, 19362, 19363	334	4%	5%
Western	17527, 19310, 19316, 19320 19358, 19365, 19367, 19369 19372, 19376	919	12%	12%
West Chester	19319, 19342, 19366, 19380 19382, 19383, 19395	1,884	24%	22%

## Geographic Areas

### Summary of findings

Overall areas of consensus: There was a great deal of consensus among all the areas with regard to the top choices for each question, except Question 2. All areas agreed that what they liked most about Chester County was the farmland, rural character, and natural beauty (Question 1). The most important issue in all areas was managing new growth and development followed by open space/farmland preservation. The only variation of this was in the Northwest area where these two issues both were selected by 80% of respondents (Question 3). All areas agreed future development should be encouraged in existing urban centers (Question 4). All areas would most prefer to see more farmland retention and open space conservation (Question 5). All areas identified traffic congestion as what they would prefer to see less of, except the Southwest area, which gave its highest percentage to less vacant buildings in downtown/commercial areas (Question 6).

Following are additional findings for each question, highlighting differences between the areas.

#### Question 1: What do you like most about Chester County?

The percentage of respondents selecting quality of schools varies greatly from area to area. This choice ranked second among the things people like best in the Eastern and Downingtown-Exton areas with over 55% selecting it. Less than 20% selected quality of schools in the Southwest and Western areas.

Clean air and water was the second highest ranked choice in five areas: Northwest, Southwest, Avon Grove, Northern, and Western. Cultural and historic sites were the second highest ranked choice in two areas: Kennett-Chadds Ford and West Chester.

There were differences among the areas regarding their opinions about shopping and entertainment opportunities. At least 25% of respondents in the Downingtown-Exton, West Chester, and Western areas, but less than 10% in the Kennett-Chadds Ford, Avon Grove, and Southwest areas selected this choice as something they liked most.

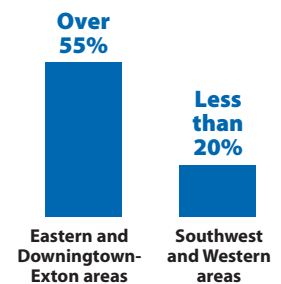
There were also differences concerning public parks and recreational amenities. Approximately 50% selected this choice in the Downingtown-Exton and Northwest areas, but only around 30% in the Avon Grove, Southwest, and Kennett-Chadds Ford areas.

#### Question 2: What do you like least about Chester County?

Loss of farmland, rural character and natural beauty, and traffic congestion were the things people like least in most areas. However, property taxes were what people liked least in the Western area. In the Avon Grove and Southwest areas, property tax rates ranked second ahead of traffic congestion in response to this question. These three areas have limited tax bases relative to population and student growth. The Eastern and West Chester areas, which have large non-residential tax bases, had the lowest percentage of responses identifying property tax rates.

The high cost of housing had high percentage responses, especially in the Downingtown-Exton, Western, and West Chester areas. Other choices

**The most important issue in all geographic areas was managing new growth and development.**



*In response to Question 1, the percentage of respondents selecting quality of schools varies from area to area.*

**Asked what they liked least, people from the Western area said property tax rates.**

## Geographic Areas

with high percentage responses were limited public transportation, especially in the Kennett-Chadds Ford, Northern, and West Chester areas, and the physical condition of roads, especially in the Western, Avon Grove, West Chester, Downingtown-Exton, and Southwest areas.

In the Southwest and Avon Grove areas, much larger percentages of respondents were concerned about limited shopping and entertainment opportunities than in the other areas. These are developing areas, which may be attracting new residents from developed areas containing plentiful commercial areas.

**Question 3: What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?**

Managing new growth and development, and open space/farmland preservation were the top two issues identified in all areas. Natural resource protection was a highly rated issue in most areas, but it received lower percentages in the Downingtown-Exton and Western areas than other areas. Traffic congestion and road conditions were another important issue in most areas, but this received lower percentages in the Avon Grove, Kennett-Chadds Ford, and Southwest areas than other areas. Controlling taxes was an important issue, especially in the Western and Avon Grove areas, which are rapidly growing areas with smaller amounts of non-residential property for the tax base. Revitalizing urban centers was an important issue in the Western area.

**Question 4: Where in the County should future development be encouraged?**

There is strong agreement among all areas of the County that future development should be encouraged in existing urban centers. This response was similar to the 1995 public survey, but the responses to that survey were more equally divided between “in town centers” and “around already-developed areas” as the top two choices.



*Open space/farmland protection along with managing new growth and development were the top two issues in all geographic areas.*



*All geographic areas agreed that future growth should be encouraged in existing urban centers.*

## Geographic Areas

### Question 5: What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?

Farmland retention and open space conservation was the leading preference, and downtown revitalization was the second highest preference in all areas. In the Western area, which includes Coatesville, downtown revitalization rated nearly as high as farmland, rural character, and natural beauty.

Cooperative planning between local governments was the third or fourth highest choice in all areas. Opportunities to walk and bike to places received high percentage responses in most areas. This response to walking and biking was highest in the Eastern and West Chester areas, which have high densities of development. Affordable housing received a higher response in the Western area, where it was the fourth most selected choice, than in any other area.

### Question 6: What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?

There is agreement among all geographic areas on the things they would prefer to see less. Traffic congestion and vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas were at the top of the list. Less housing in rural areas ranked third in all areas. Residential development in any location and retail stores/shopping centers also received high percentages in all areas. From these responses, it appears people would like to see less development in general.



*Farmland and open space rated highest of what most people would like to see more of in Chester County.*



*A high percentage of respondents in the Eastern and West Chester areas would like to see more opportunities to walk and bike to places.*

## Geographic Areas

	Avon Grove	Downingtown-Exton	Eastern	Kennett-Chadds Ford	Northern	Northeast	Southwest	Western	West Chester
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>1335</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>1127</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>919</b>	<b>1884</b>

**Question 1:**  
**What do you like most about Chester County?**  
 (check up to four)

Farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	92%	83%	82%	93%	92%	96%	93%	90%	84%
Ease of travel by automobile	24%	23%	20%	21%	17%	15%	23%	22%	16%
Public transportation (bus and rail)	0%	3%	10%	1%	1%	1%	0%	4%	2%
Variety of housing types	10%	13%	13%	11%	13%	10%	6%	18%	16%
Cost of housing	10%	6%	4%	3%	5%	6%	13%	9%	4%
Shopping and entertainment opportunities	4%	33%	21%	10%	19%	15%	3%	25%	30%
Jobs/business opportunities	6%	20%	18%	12%	16%	16%	9%	20%	19%
Quality of schools	46%	56%	61%	47%	42%	32%	19%	19%	50%
Property tax rates	3%	5%	15%	3%	6%	4%	7%	1%	14%
Crime rate/safety and security	44%	47%	49%	37%	42%	37%	36%	28%	38%
Cultural and historic sites	38%	32%	37%	58%	45%	49%	43%	42%	51%
Public parks and recreational amenities	31%	51%	45%	29%	39%	49%	31%	42%	46%
Clean air and water	52%	37%	40%	45%	51%	56%	53%	44%	36%
Other	7%	5%	7%	10%	7%	6%	9%	6%	6%

**Question 2:**  
**What do you like least about Chester County?**  
 (check up to four)

Loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	71%	66%	66%	71%	70%	77%	69%	60%	68%
Traffic congestion	49%	76%	75%	64%	76%	79%	47%	67%	71%
Physical condition of roads (road surface, maintenance)	35%	33%	27%	23%	26%	28%	32%	38%	34%
Limited public transportation (bus and rail)	24%	28%	29%	40%	36%	31%	28%	25%	36%
Limited variety of housing types	5%	6%	7%	9%	5%	4%	2%	4%	6%
High cost of housing	25%	43%	32%	33%	31%	32%	23%	43%	42%
Limited shopping and entertainment opportunities	19%	3%	5%	6%	6%	4%	21%	8%	4%
Limited job or business opportunities	9%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	10%	7%	2%
Quality of schools	5%	3%	1%	2%	4%	6%	14%	20%	2%
Property tax rates	64%	51%	30%	45%	48%	54%	51%	73%	28%
Crime rate/lack of safety and security	3%	3%	1%	3%	2%	2%	4%	15%	4%
Limited cultural and historic sites	3%	4%	3%	2%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Limited public parks and recreational facilities	8%	9%	10%	11%	8%	4%	10%	6%	6%
Problems with water or air quality	14%	6%	8%	10%	8%	7%	13%	5%	6%
Other	11%	8%	13%	11%	10%	10%	9%	8%	10%

## Geographic Areas

Avon Grove  
 Downingtown-Exton  
 Eastern  
 Kennett-Chadds Ford  
 Northern  
 Northeast  
 Southwest  
 Western  
 West Chester

**Question 3:**  
**What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?** (check up to four)

	Avon Grove	Downingtown-Exton	Eastern	Kennett-Chadds Ford	Northern	Northeast	Southwest	Western	West Chester
Open space/farmland preservation	75%	64%	66%	72%	72%	80%	73%	61%	66%
Managing new growth and development	83%	78%	77%	80%	80%	80%	83%	71%	76%
Revitalizing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	19%	31%	32%	33%	33%	31%	29%	52%	32%
Housing needs and affordability	16%	25%	20%	26%	17%	20%	15%	29%	29%
Employment opportunities	8%	6%	5%	6%	6%	6%	11%	13%	6%
Natural resource protection (water/air/woodlands)	58%	42%	55%	55%	52%	55%	56%	39%	49%
Traffic congestion and road conditions	42%	58%	52%	39%	53%	55%	36%	52%	51%
Providing more transportation choices (public transit/bike paths/walking paths)	13%	20%	28%	27%	25%	18%	17%	17%	27%
Controlling taxes	58%	45%	32%	41%	41%	44%	47%	59%	31%
Providing parks and recreational opportunities	10%	13%	12%	12%	9%	8%	11%	7%	10%
Historic resources protection	13%	11%	16%	19%	17%	18%	12%	12%	15%
Other	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	6%	4%	4%

**Question 4:**  
**Where in the County should future development be encouraged?** (check up to two)

	Avon Grove	Downingtown-Exton	Eastern	Kennett-Chadds Ford	Northern	Northeast	Southwest	Western	West Chester
In existing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	76%	80%	85%	86%	86%	83%	81%	87%	82%
In existing suburban areas	35%	34%	35%	27%	33%	36%	33%	34%	36%
In existing villages	29%	23%	31%	34%	24%	21%	28%	23%	25%
In new villages or towns	7%	8%	9%	8%	7%	4%	5%	6%	7%
In undeveloped rural areas	6%	7%	5%	3%	5%	6%	5%	6%	6%
Other	8%	7%	7%	6%	7%	7%	7%	5%	6%

## Geographic Areas

Avon Grove  
 Downtown-Exton  
 Eastern  
 Kennett-Chadds Ford  
 Northern  
 Northeast  
 Southwest  
 Western  
 West Chester

**Question 5:**  
**What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?**  
 (check up to four)

	Avon Grove	Downtown-Exton	Eastern	Kennett-Chadds Ford	Northern	Northeast	Southwest	Western	West Chester
Farmland retention and open space conservation	76%	68%	68%	76%	78%	80%	75%	67%	68%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	29%	25%	36%	38%	28%	28%	25%	20%	30%
Housing in rural areas	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	4%	2%	2%
Greater variety of housing types (smaller houses/townhouses/apartments)	9%	12%	14%	14%	9%	7%	6%	11%	14%
Affordable housing	18%	29%	19%	28%	17%	24%	18%	34%	30%
Retirement housing opportunities	8%	10%	11%	6%	8%	9%	7%	10%	10%
Downtown revitalization	43%	58%	56%	53%	64%	49%	59%	65%	53%
Office buildings/business parks	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	4%	5%	2%
Retail stores/shopping centers	16%	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%	13%	10%	4%
Job opportunities	8%	9%	4%	6%	6%	7%	10%	17%	6%
Opportunities to walk or bike to places	32%	38%	48%	34%	36%	30%	26%	28%	42%
Shorter trips between work, home, and shopping	9%	8%	7%	5%	9%	10%	8%	11%	7%
Public transportation options	15%	19%	23%	28%	25%	22%	20%	20%	28%
Parks and recreational facilities	24%	24%	24%	21%	20%	19%	18%	19%	21%
Healthcare facilities	7%	7%	6%	5%	4%	7%	3%	8%	4%
Cooperative planning between local governments	37%	34%	40%	39%	42%	44%	40%	38%	37%
Other	5%	5%	6%	4%	6%	7%	3%	5%	5%

**Question 6:**  
**What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?**  
 (check up to four)

	Avon Grove	Downtown-Exton	Eastern	Kennett-Chadds Ford	Northern	Northeast	Southwest	Western	West Chester
Farmland retention and open space conservation	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	17%	14%	12%	11%	15%	16%	13%	20%	13%
Housing in rural areas	54%	42%	48%	61%	54%	59%	57%	45%	45%
Residential development in any location	45%	37%	33%	38%	41%	43%	44%	34%	36%
Vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas	61%	72%	72%	69%	72%	67%	70%	77%	72%
Office buildings/business parks	27%	27%	33%	24%	27%	22%	26%	22%	31%
Retail stores/shopping centers	31%	35%	36%	40%	35%	35%	31%	24%	35%
Traffic congestion	71%	81%	81%	72%	80%	83%	66%	80%	78%
Parks and recreational facilities	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Other	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%

## Urban Centers and Townships

The questionnaire asked residents to identify if they lived in a borough or the City of Coatesville (places with a small town or urban character), or a township (more suburban or rural in character). This section compares the responses of residents of Coatesville and boroughs, referred to as urban centers, to those who live in townships. Eighty-five percent of the survey respondents lived in townships and fifteen percent lived in urban centers. This is representative of the total population of Chester County where eighty-two percent lived in townships and eighteen percent lived in urban centers according to Census Bureau estimates for 2006.

### Summary of findings

Overall areas of consensus: Residents of urban centers and townships agreed on the top choices for all six questions. They liked farmland, rural character, and natural beauty the most (Question 1) and would prefer to see this retained (Question 5). They liked traffic congestion least (Question 2) and would prefer to see less of it (Question 6). They agreed managing new growth and development is the most important issue (Question 3) and that future growth should be encouraged in existing urban centers (Question 4).

Following are additional findings for each question, highlighting differences between the residents of urban centers and residents of townships.

#### Question 1: What do you like most about Chester County?

Although residents of both urban centers and townships agreed that farmland, rural character, and natural beauty were clearly what they liked best, they disagreed on other choices. The second most important characteristic for urban center residents was cultural and historic sites (54%), but only 41% of township residents selected this choice. Township residents identified quality of schools as the second most important characteristic with 47%, compared to only 34% of urban center residents selecting this choice. Townships also gave higher percentage responses to clean air and water and crime rate/safety and security than the urban centers. Public parks and recreational amenities received a higher response from urban center residents than township residents.

#### Question 2: What do you like least about Chester County?

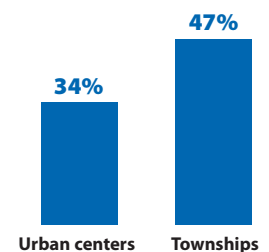
Traffic congestion, and loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty were the things people liked the least regardless of the type of community they live in. Higher percentages of urban center residents identified the high cost of housing and limited public transportation than township residents did. Township residents were slightly more concerned about property tax rates, 48% compared to 41%.

#### Question 3: What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?

Regardless of the respondents' community type, managing new growth and development, and open space/farmland preservation were the most important issues. Township residents believed traffic congestion and road conditions, and natural resource protection were the next most important issues, whereas urban center residents ranked revitalizing urban centers as the third most important issue.



Quality of schools ranked high with township residents.



Township residents ranked quality of schools higher than did residents of urban centers as a characteristic that they liked most about Chester County.



Urban center residents believe revitalizing urban centers is a more important issue than did township residents.

## Urban Centers and Townships

**Question 4: Where in the County should future development be encouraged?**

All residents strongly agree that future development should be encouraged in existing urban centers. There were no significant differences between the other choices either.

**Question 5: What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?**

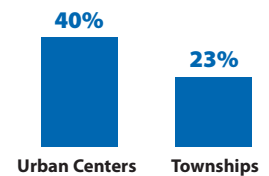
Although both categories agreed that farmland retention and open space conservation was the top choice for this question, urban center residents identified downtown revitalization as a close second choice. Another difference was a significantly higher percentage of urban center residents than township residents would prefer to see more affordable housing.

**Question 6: What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?**

Both categories agree they would like to see less traffic congestion and less vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas. There were no significant differences for this question.



*Affordable housing is an important issue to residents of urban centers.*



*There was a significantly higher percentage of urban center residents who preferred to see more affordable housing in Chester County.*

## Urban Centers and Townships

	Urban Center Residents	Township Residents
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>1152</b>	<b>6517</b>

**Question 1:**  
**What do you like most about Chester County**  
 (check up to four)

Farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	84%	89%
Ease of travel by automobile	19%	19%
Public transportation (bus and rail)	3%	3%
Variety of housing types	20%	12%
Cost of housing	7%	6%
Shopping and entertainment opportunities	30%	21%
Jobs/business opportunities	22%	16%
Quality of schools	34%	47%
Property tax rates	5%	8%
Crime rate/safety and security	29%	43%
Cultural and historic sites	54%	41%
Public parks and recreational amenities	47%	42%
Clean air and water	33%	45%
Other	7%	6%

**Question 2:**  
**What do you like least about Chester County?**  
 (check up to four)

Loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	61%	69%
Traffic congestion	66%	71%
Physical condition of roads (road surface, maintenance)	36%	31%
Limited public transportation (bus and rail)	42%	29%
Limited variety of housing types	6%	5%
High cost of housing	49%	34%
Limited shopping and entertainment opportunities	7%	6%
Limited job or business opportunities	5%	4%
Quality of schools	6%	5%
Property tax rates	41%	48%
Crime rate/lack of safety and security	9%	4%
Limited cultural and historic sites	3%	3%
Limited public parks and recreational facilities	7%	8%
Problems with water or air quality	9%	7%
Other	8%	10%

## Urban Centers and Townships

	Urban Center Residents	Township Residents
<b>Question 3:</b>		
<b>What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?</b> (check up to four)		
Open space/farmland preservation	62%	69%
Managing new growth and development	69%	79%
Revitalizing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	47%	31%
Housing needs and affordability	36%	21%
Employment opportunities	11%	6%
Natural resource protection (water/air/woodlands)	40%	51%
Traffic congestion and road conditions	44%	52%
Providing more transportation choices (public transit/bike paths/walking paths)	30%	21%
Controlling taxes	36%	44%
Providing parks and recreational opportunities	10%	10%
Historic resources protection	15%	14%
Other	4%	4%

<b>Question 4:</b>		
<b>Where in the County should future development be encouraged?</b> (check up to two)		
In existing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	82%	83%
In existing suburban areas	36%	34%
In existing villages	24%	26%
In new villages or towns	7%	7%
In undeveloped rural areas	7%	5%
Other	5%	7%

## Urban Centers and Townships

	Urban Center Residents	Township Residents
<b>Question 5:</b>		
<b>What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Farmland retention and open space conservation	64%	73%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	26%	29%
Housing in rural areas	3%	2%
Greater variety of housing types (smaller houses/townhouses/apartments)	15%	10%
Affordable housing	40%	23%
Retirement housing opportunities	9%	9%
Downtown revitalization	60%	56%
Office buildings/business parks	2%	3%
Retail stores/shopping centers	7%	6%
Job opportunities	10%	8%
Opportunities to walk or bike to places	33%	37%
Shorter trips between work, home, and shopping	9%	8%
Public transportation options	30%	22%
Parks and recreational facilities	18%	22%
Healthcare facilities	6%	6%
Cooperative planning between local governments	35%	39%
Other	5%	5%

<b>Question 6:</b>		
<b>What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Farmland retention and open space conservation	2%	2%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	16%	14%
Housing in rural areas	44%	50%
Residential development in any location	32%	39%
Vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas	75%	70%
Office buildings/business parks	27%	28%
Retail stores/shopping centers	29%	34%
Traffic congestion	79%	78%
Parks and recreational facilities	1%	1%
Other	4%	4%

## Years Lived in Chester County

This section compares the responses of those who have lived in Chester County less than ten years with those who have lived here longer to determine if newer residents view things differently than longer-term residents. Those who have lived here less than ten years moved here after the County adopted Landscapes. Seventy-three percent of the respondents have lived in Chester County ten years or more and twenty-seven percent have lived here less than ten years. The findings show that, overall, there is little difference in the responses of these two groups.

### Summary of findings

Overall areas of consensus: Both the newer residents and longer-term residents liked farmland, rural character, and natural beauty the most (Question 1) and would prefer to see more farmland retention and open space conservation (Question 5). They agreed managing new growth and development and open space/farmland preservation are the most important issues facing Chester County (Question 3). They agreed that future growth should be encouraged in existing urban centers (Question 4). Both groups would prefer to see less traffic congestion and fewer vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas (Question 6).

Following are additional findings for each question, highlighting differences between the newer and longer-term residents.

#### Question 1: What do you like most about Chester County?

There is very little difference between these groups on any of the choices.

#### Question 2: What do you like least about Chester County?

Both groups agree that traffic congestion and the loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty are what they like least. However, the percentages of respondents selecting these two choices were higher for residents who have lived here ten years or more. This may suggest that longer-term residents have witnessed greater changes in traffic and are more aware of the loss of open areas. The longer-term residents were more concerned about the physical condition of roads, also. A higher percentage of the newer residents cited limited shopping and entertainment opportunities although the percentage was low for each group.

#### Question 3: What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?

There were no significant differences concerning any of the issues.

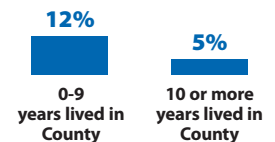
#### Question 4: Where in the County should future development be encouraged?

Again, there were no significant differences between the two groups concerning the future development choices.

**73% of the respondents have lived in Chester County ten years or more.**



*A higher percentage of longer-term residents expressed a dislike for traffic congestion and the loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty.*



*Although the concern was ranked low, a higher percentage of the newer residents chose limited shopping and entertainment opportunities as what they liked least about the County.*

## Years Lived in Chester County

**Question 5: What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?**

Both groups of residents would prefer to see more farmland retention and open space conservation followed by downtown revitalization. Residents who have lived here ten years or more selected cooperative planning between local governments as their third highest preference and opportunities to walk and bike to places was their fourth highest preference. Residents who have lived here less than ten years reversed the order of these two choices.

**Question 6: What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?**

Both groups would prefer to see less traffic congestion and less vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas. Higher percentages of longer-term residents would prefer to see less housing in rural areas and less retail stores/shopping centers.



*Both groups would prefer to see less vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas.*

## Years Lived in Chester County

Number of Respondents	0-9 Years 2111	10 or More Years 5756
<b>Question 1:</b>		
<b>What do you like most about Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	85%	89%
Ease of travel by automobile	20%	19%
Public transportation (bus and rail)	3%	3%
Variety of housing types	13%	14%
Cost of housing	11%	4%
Shopping and entertainment opportunities	23%	22%
Jobs/business opportunities	16%	17%
Quality of schools	42%	46%
Property tax rates	9%	7%
Crime rate/safety and security	41%	40%
Cultural and historic sites	40%	44%
Public parks and recreational amenities	45%	42%
Clean air and water	41%	44%
Other	6%	7%

<b>Question 2:</b>		
<b>What do you like least about Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	60%	71%
Traffic congestion	60%	74%
Physical condition of roads (road surface, maintenance)	26%	33%
Limited public transportation (bus and rail)	30%	32%
Limited variety of housing types	6%	6%
High cost of housing	33%	38%
Limited shopping and entertainment opportunities	12%	5%
Limited job or business opportunities	6%	3%
Quality of schools	6%	5%
Property tax rates	43%	47%
Crime rate/lack of safety and security	4%	4%
Limited cultural and historic sites	4%	3%
Limited public parks and recreational facilities	9%	7%
Problems with water or air quality	9%	7%
Other	10%	10%

## Years Lived in Chester County

	0-9 Years	10 or More Years
<b>Question 3: What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County? (check up to four)</b>		
Open space/farmland preservation	66%	69%
Managing new growth and development	76%	78%
Revitalizing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	33%	33%
Housing needs and affordability	19%	25%
Employment opportunities	6%	7%
Natural resource protection (water/air/woodlands)	49%	50%
Traffic congestion and road conditions	48%	52%
Providing more transportation choices (public transit/bike paths/walking paths)	24%	22%
Controlling taxes	41%	43%
Providing parks and recreational opportunities	13%	9%
Historic resources protection	14%	15%
Other	4%	4%

	0-9 Years	10 or More Years
<b>Question 4: Where in the County should future development be encouraged? (check up to two)</b>		
In existing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	82%	83%
In existing suburban areas	37%	33%
In existing villages	25%	26%
In new villages or towns	7%	7%
In undeveloped rural areas	6%	5%
Other	5%	7%

## Years Lived in Chester County

	0-9 Years	10 or More Years
<b>Question 5:</b>		
<b>What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Farmland retention and open space conservation	69%	72%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	27%	29%
Housing in rural areas	2%	2%
Greater variety of housing types (smaller houses/townhouses/apartments)	10%	12%
Affordable housing	21%	27%
Retirement housing opportunities	6%	11%
Downtown revitalization	58%	56%
Office buildings/business parks	4%	2%
Retail stores/shopping centers	10%	4%
Job opportunities	9%	8%
Opportunities to walk or bike to places	41%	35%
Shorter trips between work, home, and shopping	12%	7%
Public transportation options	21%	24%
Parks and recreational facilities	26%	20%
Healthcare facilities	5%	6%
Cooperative planning between local governments	31%	41%
Other	4%	6%

<b>Question 6:</b>		
<b>What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?</b>		
(check up to four)		
Farmland retention and open space conservation	2%	2%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	14%	15%
Housing in rural areas	44%	51%
Residential development in any location	38%	38%
Vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas	70%	71%
Office buildings/business parks	27%	28%
Retail stores/shopping centers	25%	37%
Traffic congestion	76%	79%
Parks and recreational facilities	0%	1%
Other	4%	4%

## Age Groups

The surveys were tabulated for five age groups: 29 and under, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65 and over. The most responses (35%) were from the 50 to 64 age group (this group accounts for just 16% of the total population of the county). The 40 to 49 age group returned 28% of the surveys (this group accounts for 17% of the total population). The 30 to 39 age group returned 18% of the surveys and the 65 and over age group returned 12% of the surveys (these rates were roughly equal to their shares of the total population). The 29 and under age group was underrepresented in the survey with just 8% of the responses (14% of the population is between the ages from 18 to 29).

### Summary of findings

Overall areas of consensus: All age groups liked farmland, rural character, and natural beauty the most (Question 1) and would prefer to see more of this retained (Question 5). They liked traffic congestion and the loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty the least about Chester County (Question 2). All ages agreed managing new growth and development and open space/farmland preservation are the most important issues facing Chester County (Question 3). They agreed that future growth should be encouraged in existing urban centers (Question 4). All age groups would prefer to see less traffic congestion and fewer vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas (Question 6).

Following are additional findings for each question, highlighting differences between age groups. In general, the 29 and under age group varied the most from the other age groups.

#### Question 1: What do you like most about Chester County?

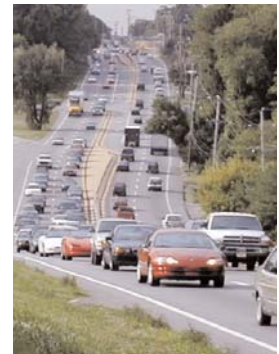
All age groups selected farmland, rural character, and natural beauty as the most liked feature, but the 29 and under age group had a lower percentage selecting this choice than the other age groups. The 30 to 39 and 40 to 49 age groups had a higher percentage than the other groups selecting quality of schools, making this their second most important feature. The youngest two age groups showed an interest in public parks and recreational amenities, and the other three age groups ranked clean air and water higher. The youngest age group had the highest percentage selecting shopping and entertainment opportunities.

#### Question 2: What do you like least about Chester County?

All age groups identified traffic congestion as what they like least followed by loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty (the 65 and over group ranked them equal). The percentages selecting these choices increased with age. The youngest age group ranked the high cost of housing nearly as high as the top two choices of what they like least, but they were less concerned about property tax rates than the other age groups. This may reflect that they have a lower rate of homeownership and, therefore, do not pay property taxes directly. The other four age groups all ranked property tax rates third highest among the things they like least. The 30 to 39 age group was more concerned about the high cost of housing than the three older groups, but not as concerned as the 29 and under group.



*The youngest age group had the highest percentage selecting shopping and entertainment opportunities as what they liked most about Chester County.*



*All age groups identified traffic congestion as what they like least about Chester County.*

## Age Groups

**Question 3: What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?**

All age groups ranked managing new growth and development the most important issue, and open space/farmland preservation second, but the youngest age group rated them nearly equal. The two youngest age groups identified revitalizing urban centers as more important than the other three age groups did. The youngest age group found housing needs and affordability more important, and traffic congestion/road conditions and controlling taxes less important issues than the other groups did.

**Question 4: Where in the County should future development be encouraged?**

There is nearly unanimous agreement among all age groups on where future development should be encouraged, with existing urban centers the leading choice.

**Question 5: What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?**

All age groups agreed they would like to see more farmland retention and open space conservation than any other choice. All groups selected downtown revitalization second, except for the 65 and over age group, which would like to see more cooperative planning among local governments. A higher percentage of the 29 and under age group than the other groups would prefer to see more affordable housing.

**Question 6: What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?**

A large percentage of all age groups identified traffic congestion first, and vacant buildings in downtown/commercial areas second among things they prefer to see less. Housing in rural areas was the third highest ranked selection with the percentages going up steadily by age.



*The two youngest age groups identified revitalizing urban centers as more important than the other three age groups did.*



*Affordable housing was an important issue for the 29 and under age group.*

## Age Groups

	29 and Under	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 64	65 and Over
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>1427</b>	<b>2220</b>	<b>2797</b>	<b>939</b>

**Question 1:**  
**What do you like most about Chester County?**  
 (check up to four)

Farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	76%	85%	89%	90%	90%
Ease of travel by automobile	20%	19%	19%	19%	22%
Public transportation (bus and rail)	4%	3%	2%	3%	4%
Variety of housing types	16%	14%	11%	15%	14%
Cost of housing	6%	8%	6%	5%	4%
Shopping and entertainment opportunities	35%	25%	18%	21%	22%
Jobs/business opportunities	27%	20%	16%	16%	11%
Quality of schools	42%	50%	49%	40%	38%
Property tax rates	3%	9%	8%	8%	8%
Crime rate/safety and security	34%	40%	42%	42%	36%
Cultural and historic sites	44%	38%	40%	47%	48%
Public parks and recreational amenities	49%	48%	43%	40%	40%
Clean air and water	37%	37%	44%	45%	50%
Other	6%	5%	7%	8%	6%

**Question 2:**  
**What do you like least about Chester County?**  
 (check up to four)

Loss of farmland, rural character, and natural beauty	56%	62%	68%	71%	72%
Traffic congestion	61%	65%	71%	73%	72%
Physical condition of roads (road surface, maintenance)	38%	31%	30%	31%	33%
Limited public transportation (bus and rail)	32%	27%	29%	34%	35%
Limited variety of housing types	9%	5%	5%	6%	6%
High cost of housing	55%	42%	33%	35%	29%
Limited shopping and entertainment opportunities	8%	10%	7%	5%	4%
Limited job or business opportunities	5%	6%	5%	4%	3%
Quality of schools	5%	8%	6%	4%	3%
Property tax rates	35%	47%	45%	47%	51%
Crime rate/lack of safety and security	7%	6%	3%	4%	3%
Limited cultural and historic sites	4%	4%	4%	3%	2%
Limited public parks and recreational facilities	10%	9%	9%	6%	5%
Problems with water or air quality	6%	8%	7%	8%	9%
Other	7%	9%	11%	10%	10%

## Age Groups

	29 and Under	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 64	65 and Over
<b>Question 3:</b>					
<b>What issues do you believe are the most important facing Chester County?</b> (check up to four)					
Open space/farmland preservation	63%	66%	70%	68%	70%
Managing new growth and development	60%	73%	81%	80%	82%
Revitalizing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	39%	40%	32%	31%	28%
Housing needs and affordability	34%	23%	19%	24%	22%
Employment opportunities	7%	8%	6%	7%	6%
Natural resource protection (water/air/woodlands)	44%	45%	49%	51%	53%
Traffic congestion and road conditions	41%	49%	53%	52%	51%
Providing more transportation choices (public transit/bike paths/walking paths)	26%	22%	22%	24%	19%
Controlling taxes	33%	43%	41%	42%	48%
Providing parks and recreational opportunities	15%	13%	10%	9%	8%
Historic resources protection	17%	13%	14%	15%	15%
Other	3%	3%	4%	5%	4%

<b>Question 4:</b>					
<b>Where in the County should future development be encouraged?</b> (check up to two)					
In existing urban centers (i.e., boroughs, City of Coatesville)	78%	83%	85%	82%	82%
In existing suburban areas	39%	37%	34%	33%	34%
In existing villages	20%	23%	24%	27%	30%
In new villages or towns	9%	7%	5%	8%	7%
In undeveloped rural areas	7%	7%	5%	6%	6%
Other	5%	5%	7%	7%	6%

## Age Groups

	29 and Under	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 64	65 and Over
<b>Question 5:</b>					
<b>What would you prefer to see more of in Chester County?</b> (check up to four)					
Farmland retention and open space conservation	65%	69%	72%	72%	75%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	21%	24%	25%	32%	39%
Housing in rural areas	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Greater variety of housing types (smaller houses/townhouses/apartments)	15%	10%	10%	12%	11%
Affordable housing	42%	25%	21%	26%	26%
Retirement housing opportunities	3%	3%	6%	14%	17%
Downtown revitalization	51%	62%	59%	54%	48%
Office buildings/business parks	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%
Retail stores/shopping centers	9%	10%	6%	4%	3%
Job opportunities	9%	10%	8%	7%	7%
Opportunities to walk or bike to places	40%	41%	40%	34%	28%
Shorter trips between work, home, and shopping	12%	13%	9%	6%	5%
Public transportation options	26%	19%	20%	26%	26%
Parks and recreational facilities	25%	28%	24%	18%	14%
Healthcare facilities	5%	4%	5%	6%	8%
Cooperative planning between local governments	20%	29%	37%	44%	49%
Other	4%	5%	5%	6%	5%

<b>Question 6:</b>					
<b>What would you prefer to see less of in Chester County?</b> (check up to four)					
Farmland retention and open space conservation	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Clustered residential development with preserved open space	19%	17%	16%	12%	9%
Housing in rural areas	38%	41%	46%	54%	60%
Residential development in any location	37%	37%	42%	37%	33%
Vacant buildings in downtowns/commercial areas	68%	71%	70%	70%	75%
Office buildings/business parks	30%	27%	29%	27%	25%
Retail stores/shopping centers	26%	26%	33%	38%	36%
Traffic congestion	76%	76%	78%	80%	79%
Parks and recreational facilities	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Other	3%	4%	3%	5%	5%

