





Vision  
Partnership  
Program

Smart Growth



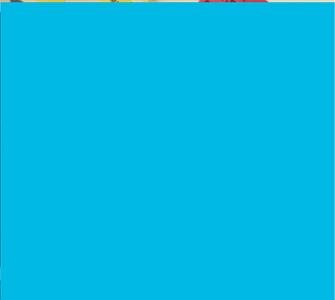
Public Outreach



Transportation  
Options



Preservation  
Efforts



Commercial  
Landscapes  
Series



## Mission Statement

To provide future growth and preservation plans to citizens, so that they can enjoy a Chester County that is historic, green, mobile and prosperous.

## Vision

To bring a balance between managed growth and preservation in the county. This will be accomplished through carrying out the recommendations of Landscapes2, the county comprehensive policy plan.

## Initiatives

The county championed three major initiatives to balance the vision of managing growth and preservation, while maintaining the quality of life and sense of place enjoyed by residents.

### **Build working partnerships**

The county will join with municipal governments and stakeholders to develop productive partnerships that champion specific actions to achieve the vision of Landscapes.

### **Create sustainable communities**

The county will work with the state, municipal governments, and other partners to build and enhance sustainable communities within designated growth areas.

### **Keep Chester County green**

The county will advocate for a green future.

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## Chairman's message

The Chester County Planning Commission is pleased to submit this annual report for the calendar year 2017. This past year's work at the Planning Commission

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

Work on Landscapes3 continued throughout 2017, with virtually every member of the staff involved in some aspect. A public outreach program was established, encouraging the public to provide us with input through a survey, a photo contest, participation in local events, and a public meeting. I applaud the residents of the county for their extensive participation! The Planning Commission held seven topic-specific stakeholders meetings to discuss issues facing the county and ways to address these issues, and began holding Steering Committee meetings to start to develop a draft vision, goals, objectives and maps for Landscapes3. Plan issues were presented to various partners such as CCATO, municipal managers, municipal consultants and DVRPC to obtain their input on the future of the county. There is still more work to be done, so we encourage all residents, stakeholders, and officials to stay involved in the process, which we hope to wrap up in late 2018.

The Planning Commission continued to work hard to enhance transportation alternatives and improve the overall transportation network. In 2017, a significant amount of time was spent on the future expansion of the county's trail network. The Planning Commission completed the Chester Valley Trail Extension to Downingtown study, began work on the Chester Valley Trail West study, completed the Mill Trail Study in the Coatesville region, and an East-West pedestrian/bicycle plan for connecting Hibernia Park with the Struble Trail. The Planning Commission developed four walking routes in three urban centers as part of the WalkWorks program. In addition to the work on the trail system, we celebrated the rapid construction of a new bridge carrying PA 926 over the Brandywine Creek in Pocopson. This was a significant and much needed improvement in this area of the county.

An aspect of the county that sometimes is overlooked by many, but is an important part of our mission, is the protection of open space and agricultural land, as well as the preservation of our historic landscapes. In 2017, the Planning Commission coordinated town tours throughout the summer, with over 2,300 total participants. We also tracked open space preservation, which at the start of 2017, stood at 27% of the county and, throughout the year, there were a number of significant open space successes, such as the preservation of the Bryn-Coed Farm. This achievement is something that everyone in the county should be proud of, to think that over ¼ of the county is protected open space.

Over the years, we have seen a tremendous amount of growth and significant investment in our Urban Centers. In 2017, the Planning Commission encouraged the revitalization of Urban Centers and underutilized suburban land, through smart growth. We completed an award-winning Commercial Landscapes Study that included policy guides for walkable, mixed-use revitalization of office parks, brownfield sites, train station areas, and retail commercial sites, supported an Urban Center forum focused on parking in the downtown areas, and provided technical support to Urban Centers through the VPP grant program. The Planning Commission coordinated meetings between municipalities and economic development advocates, and provided updates to the Urban Centers' lists of infrastructure projects.

We continue to work on improving communication with our partners and the public. The Planning Commission created a new website, which is full of information on a wide range of topics, and increased social media posts, articles, and news bulletins. We conducted additional outreach to the public and partners, including the creation of partner toolkits on various topics, and held two Planners' Forums. Doing this has made us even more aware of what is important to the county residents and stakeholders, which in turn, will help us plan for the future of the county.

We are looking forward to a prosperous 2018 and will need your help to continue making Chester County the best place to live, work, and play. Please go to [www.chescoplanning.org](http://www.chescoplanning.org) to see the latest information the Chester County Planning Commission has to offer.

Matthew Hammond, PE  
Chairman

## Who we are

### Planning Commission

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

*Standing from left: Matthew Hammond, P.E., Chair; Kevin C. Kerr; Douglas A. Fasick, DC, Vice-Chair; Daniel DiMucci, RLA and Michael Heaberg. Sitting from left: E. Martin Shane; Molly Morrison; Judy L. DiFilippo; and Joseph T. Tarantino.*



### Staff

#### ■ Administration Services

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

#### ■ Infrastructure & Plan Review

- Carol J. Stauffer, AICP, *Division Director*
- Glenn Bentley, *Plan Reviewer*
- Wes Bruckno, AICP, *Plan Reviewer*
- Paul Farkas, *Plan Reviewer*
- Jenn Kolvereid, *Land Development Analyst*
- Carolyn Conwell, AICP, *Environmental Planner*
- Jake Michael, AICP, *Demographer*

#### ■ Technical Services

- Thomas P. West, *Division Director\**
- Paul Fritz, RLA, AICP, *Division Director*
- Gene Huller, *Technical Services Supervisor*
- Steven Cummings, *Technical Services Specialist\**
- Doug Meneely, *GIS Specialist*
- Colin Murtoff, *GIS Planner*
- Carolyn Oakley, *Communications Supervisor*
- Albert Park, *Design Specialist*
- Danielle Lynch, *Technical Services Specialist*
- Diana Zak, *Graphics Supervisor*
- Christopher Bittle, *Graphics Specialist*
- Polly Chalfant, *Graphics Specialist*
- Elizabeth Kolb, *Graphics Specialist\*\**

#### ■ Transportation and Information Services

- Brian Styche, RLA, AICP, *Division Director*
- William Deguffroy, AICP, *Transportation Planner\**
- Rachael Griffith, RLA, *Transportation Planner*
- Heather Martin, *Transportation Planner*
- Justin Smiley, AICP, *Urban Planner\**
- Patti Strauber, *Administrative Support*

#### ■ Planning Services

- Susan Elks, AICP, *Division Director*
- Kaitlin Feiler, *Community Planner*
- Mark Gallant, *Community Planner*
- Jaime Jilozian, AICP, *Community Planner*
- Karen Marshall, *Heritage Preservation Coordinator*
- Kevin Myers, *Community Planner*
- Sean O’Neill, AICP, *Community Planner\**
- Chris Patriarca, AICP, *Community Planner*
- Jeannine Speirs, *Community Planner*
- Nancy Shields, *Administrative Support*

\* Resigned  
\*\* Retired

### Budget

Expenditures	2015	2016	2017
Personnel Services	\$2,859,317	\$2,848,948	\$2,887,173
Materials & Services	\$144,033	\$179,279	\$226,035
Contributions, Grants, Subsidies	\$132,548	\$179,859	\$179,859
TOTAL	\$3,135,897	\$3,208,086	\$3,293,067

Revenues	2015	2016	2017
Federal	\$287,754	\$302,357	\$295,350
State	\$64,000	\$ 23,500	\$20,984
Local	\$22,390	\$ 35,117	\$27,134
Subdivision/Land Review Fees	\$174,557	\$ 204,714	\$204,473
Misc.	\$2,254	\$ 524	\$913
TOTAL	\$550,955	\$566,212	\$548,854

## What we have accomplished

The 2017 work program was dominated by the development of the county's new comprehensive plan, Landscapes3, with virtually every person in the department involved in some aspect of the plan update.



Landscapes3 involved an extensive public participation process



**Stakeholder input**– Held seven topic-specific stakeholder meetings, bringing together partners to discuss issues and potential solutions to issues facing the county.

**Steering committee guidance**– Held steering committee meetings where members developed a draft vision, goals, objectives, and landscapes map for the plan.

**Public outreach**– Encouraged the public to provide input, which yielded:

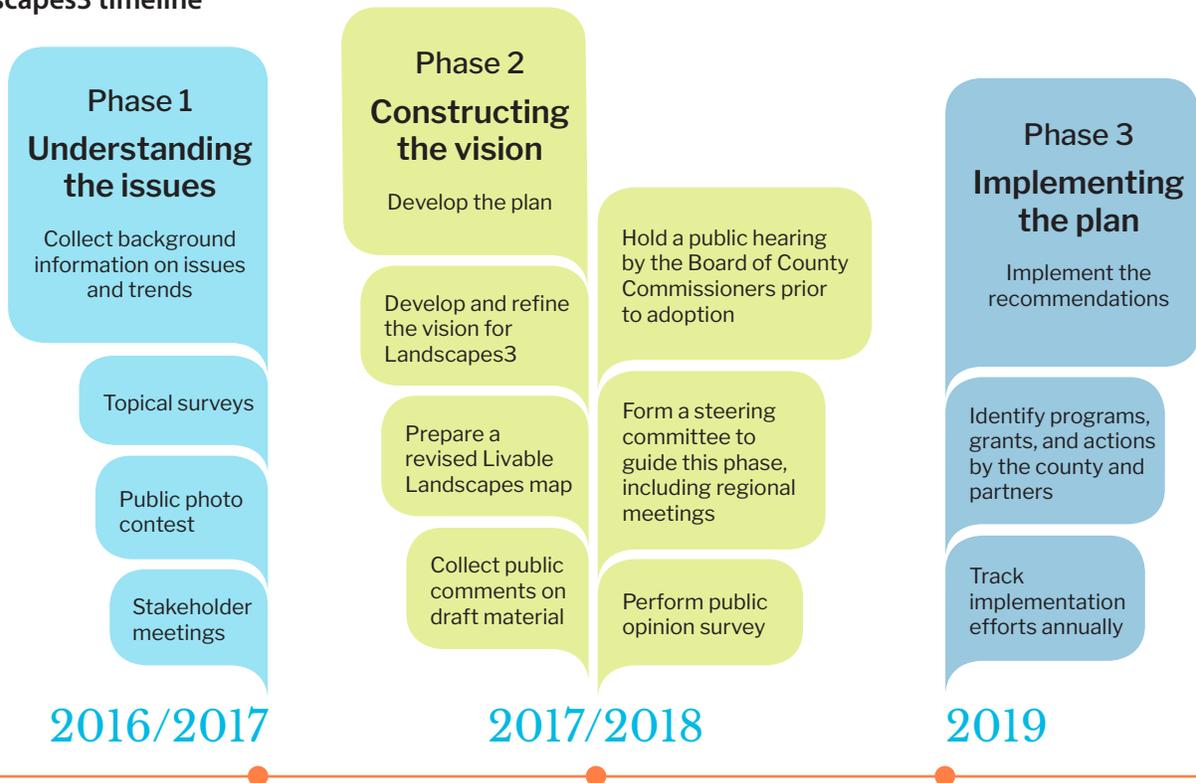
- Nearly 6,000 responses to a survey
- 250 submissions to a photo contest
- 50 attendees at our public meeting
- Attendance at 26 local events

**Presentations**– Presented planning issues to various partners, including the Chester County Association of Township Officials, municipal managers, municipal solicitors, municipal engineers, schools, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

**Video series**– Prepared a four part **video series** that highlights the role of planning in the county.



**Landscapes3 timeline**



# Providing more transportation alternatives



## The Planning Commission promotes transportation alternatives and improvements to the overall transportation network.

**Partnering with municipalities–** Working with our municipalities, the county updated the Transportation Improvement Inventory of all major projects within the county.

**Connecting Coatesville–** The Mill Trail study in the Coatesville region and an East-West Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan will connect the city with Hibernia Park and the Struble Trail.

**Promoting walkability–** Developed four walking routes in three urban centers as part of the WalkWorks program. These routes are designed to make walking enjoyable and interesting, with the hope that additional walking will improve residents' health.



**Improving traffic congestion–** Coordinated the installation of a fourth roundabout in the county at the convergence of Strasburg and Romansville roads in West Bradford.

- Expanding trail opportunities–**
- Chester Valley Trail Extension to Downtown study proposes using the inactive Philadelphia and Thorndale rail right-of-way for this trail extension.
  - Chester Valley Trail West study will determine the remainder of the alignment in Chester County to connect with the Enola Low Grade Trail in Atglen.
  - Schuylkill River Trail– Moved forward on acquiring right-of-way for the Schuylkill River Trail between Parker Ford and Pottstown.

**Improving rail access–** Started reconstruction of the Exton and Paoli regional rail stations.

**Upgrading bridges–** Celebrated the rapid construction of a new bridge carrying Route 926 over the Brandywine Creek in Pocopson.

**Partnering to secure transportation grants–** The Planning Commission partnered with municipalities to successfully advance alternative transportation through grants totaling \$19,305,000.





A key part of Landscapes success is preservation of resources that we cherish.



**Promoting our legacy**– The 2017 Town Tours and Village Walks series focused on the American Revolution’s Campaign of 1777’s 240th Anniversary. Nearly 2,400 participants made 2017 one of the top three in attendance for this annual series.

**Celebrating the Brandywine Battlefield**– Plans to implement preservation of Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark continue to be developed in cooperation with the National Park Service.

**Protecting open space**– Over 27 percent of the county was protected open space at the start of 2017, totaling 131,570 acres. During the year, there were a number of significant open space successes, including the preservation of Bryn Coed Farms.



Protecting open space,  
preserving historic landscapes,  
and retaining agricultural land

# Encouraging revitalization of urban centers and underutilized suburban land



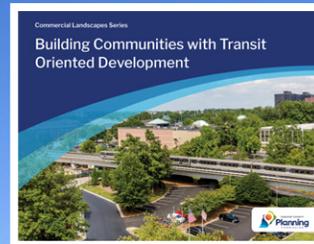
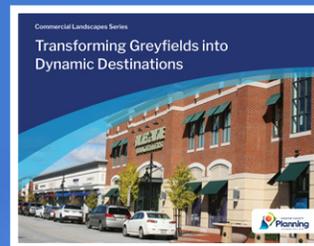
**Exploring commercial reinvestment**– Completed an award-winning Commercial Landscapes planning series that included policy guides for walkable, mixed-use revitalization of office parks, brownfield sites, train station areas, and retail commercial sites.

**Assisting our urban centers**– Provided technical support to urban centers through the VPP, coordination of meetings between municipalities and economic development advocates, and updates to the urban centers' lists of infrastructure projects.

**Supported an Urban Centers Forum**– Held a forum that focused on parking in downtown areas.

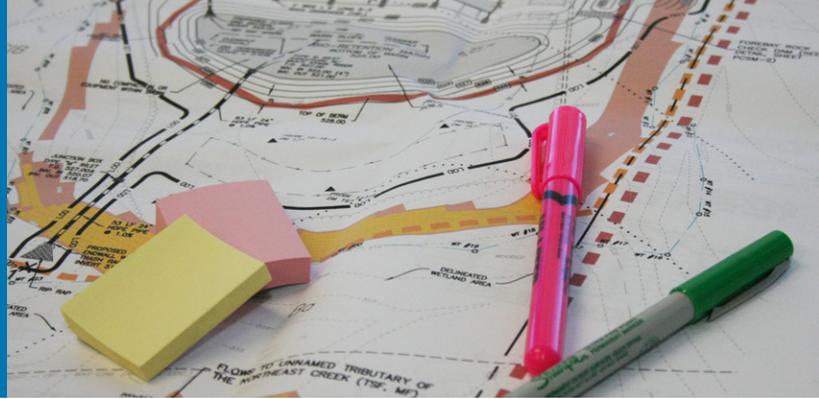


## Award Winning Commercial Landscapes Series



Smart growth involves revitalization of urban and suburban areas.

# Reviewing plans for consistency with Landscapes and smart growth principles



The Planning Commission provides reviews of all subdivision and land development proposals in the county.

**Residential proposals**– Residential unit applications dropped slightly, falling from approximately 3,400 units in 2016 to 3,100 in 2017.

**Ordinance reviews**– Municipal ordinance reviews were the highest since 2007, generated in part by updates to floodplain regulations.

**Housing mix**– As with the prior year, townhouse and apartment units significantly outpaced proposed single-family detached units. Apartment units remained the largest housing type proposed in 2017, although down in numbers since 2016 (1,449 units vs. 2,231 units).

**Sketch plan service**– We provided four informal sketch plan reviews and began providing redesigns of sites to enhance projects and preserve important site elements.

**Development pattern**– Much of the proposed development remained in core employment and development areas, including Phoenixville, Great Valley, Exton, West Chester, Downingtown, and Kennett.

**Non-residential proposals**– Non-residential square footage applications returned to its 2015 level, dropping from about 3.1 million square feet in 2016 to 2.7 million square feet in 2017.

Ordinances reviewed 2015, 2016 and 2017	2015	2016	2017
Zoning	147	109	158
SLDO	17	32	18
Comp Plans	16	4	6
Official Maps	3	3	2
Miscellaneous	7	15	24
Total	190	163	208

Comparison of proposed residential lots/units 2015, 2016 and 2017						
Year	Single Family	Twin	Townhouse	Apartment	Mobile Home	TOTAL
2015	257	19	844	1,150	0	2,270
2016	377	72	677	2,231	0	3,357
2017	661	166	809	1,449	19	3,104

Communicating our information and data is critical in planning the county's future.

**A new website**— A key initiative for improved communication included a new website, [chescoplanning.org](http://chescoplanning.org), which is full of detailed information on a wide range of topics.

**Social media presence**— The Planning Commission communicated through a strong social media campaign, using Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Flickr.

**Partner information packets**— Partners were informed about projects and initiatives through a series of communication tools, including partner information packets.



**Gearing up for the 2020 Census**— County staff worked with local municipalities and the U.S. Census Bureau to prepare for the 2020 Census.

**On-line filing of Act 247 applications**— To streamline the subdivision and land development review process, the county launched an on-line portal for electronic submission of applications.

**Informing the public on pipelines**— The county maintained the **Pipeline Information Center** that provides up-to-date information on pipeline projects and contact information. This is one of the most popular pages on our website.

**Tracking housing**— The Planning Commission analyzed housing prices and construction.



Improving communication with our partners and the public

## Where we are headed

The Planning Commission will focus on completing Landscapes3 in 2018.

Core tasks for 2018:

**Landscapes3**– With guidance from the Steering Committee, **Landscapes3** will be drafted and circulated for public review and comment, including specific recommendations for implementing the goals.

**Chester Valley Trail West**– The project will recommend an alignment for extending the trail west from Downingtown to Coatesville, Parkesburg, and Atglen.

**Expanding planning resources**– The Planning Commission will perform an update and expansion of our online planning eTools library.

**Phoenixville Region Multimodal Transportation Plan**– This project will address the limitations of current walking, biking, and transit conditions in the Phoenixville region.

**Develop a housing strategy**– The Planning Commission will prepare a housing diversity guide.



**Vision Partnership Program (VPP)**– The Planning Commission will hold two rounds of the VPP grant. This program will provide technical and financial assistance to municipalities interested in advancing their planning programs.

## Creating new goals for 2018





## Director's message

The past year was an incredibly busy one for both the Chester County Planning Commission and planning activity in the county as a whole. During 2017, the Planning Commission worked on Landscapes3, helped municipal partners, tackled key transportation projects, and broadened our outreach to partners and the general public.

Around the county, open space preservation picked up. Two significant successes were the Bryn-Coed property in the northern end of the county and the Strawbridge property in the south. Development activity has also increased, and many older projects that were delayed after the Great Recession have started again.

The question for the Planning Commission always comes down to: how do we, working together with many partners, keep what we cherish most about the county—the open vistas, historic properties, stream valleys, walkable downtowns, and beautiful countryside—while also

accommodating significant new growth? There's no easy answer, but we feel it can be done best through smart growth and good planning.

Landscapes3, which will be the county's next comprehensive plan, is the primary tool we have for addressing this need to balance growth and preservation. In 2018, the steering committee for Landscapes3 will be developing implementable recommendations for achieving the plan's goals on how we preserve, protect, appreciate, live, prosper, and connect. During the year, there will be significant public and municipal opportunities to give input, and we hope to have the plan adopted by the end of the year.

In addition to Landscapes3, we'll be doing a lot of other work in 2018 to support good planning, including continued Vision Partnership Program grants, a Phoenixville area multi-modal study, a study of extending the Chester Valley trail to Atglen, continued analysis of the Brandywine Battlefield, housing analyses and guidance, urban centers assistance, and updates to our online tools.

2018 is going to be an exciting year for planning in the county. I encourage you to get involved!

Brian O'Leary  
Executive Director





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A report to the  
Board of County Commissioners

Michelle Kichline  
Kathi Cozzone  
Terence Farrell