



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

Annual Report 2008

**To: County Executives, Lehigh and Northampton counties
County Commissioners, Lehigh County
County Council, Northampton County**

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission is pleased to present our annual report for 2008. This annual report documents our activities during the past year and identifies the work we hope to complete in 2009.

Over the past year, a major focus has been on addressing environmental, housing and land preservation issues in the Lehigh Valley. LVPC staff has developed a number of model regulations that municipalities can adopt including riparian and wetland buffers, steep slopes, inclusionary zoning and cottage housing development. We plan to hold workshops during 2009 to present the model regulations to the municipalities and others interested.

Work began on the preparation of a stormwater management plan for the Perkiomen Creek Headwaters under a new bi-county grant contract with the PA Department of Environmental Protection. The plan will be completed in early 2009.

LVPC staff completed an update to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that identifies the high priority list of highway, bridges and transit projects in the Lehigh Valley.

During 2009, our work on developing model regulations will continue and will involve woodlands, mixed uses, density bonuses and conservation by design. Additional work scheduled for 2009 includes updates to several stormwater management plans in the two counties, a review and evaluation of smart transportation strategies in the Lehigh Valley, and continued involvement with New Jersey Transit on the Pennsylvania component of the Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study.

We have a lot to accomplish in 2009 and would like to thank both counties for their continued support of our work program.

Terry J. Lee
Chair, 2008

DECEMBER 31, 2008

LEHIGH COUNTY

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Percy H. Dougherty, Chair
Board of Commissioners

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

John Stoffa, County Executive
Ann McHale, President
County Council

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(See Commission photo on page 8)

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF

PLANNING STAFF

TECHNICAL AND GRAPHICS

Michael N. Kaiser, AICP	Executive Director
Geoffrey A. Reese, P.E.	Assistant Director
Olev Taremäe, AICP	Chief Planner
Joseph L. Gurinko, AICP	Chief Transportation Planner
Thomas K. Edinger, AICP	GIS Manager
Lynette E. Romig	Senior GIS Analyst
Susan L. Rockwell, SEO	Senior Environmental Planner
Michael S. Donchez	Senior Transportation Planner
David P. Berryman	Senior Planner
Teresa Mackey	Senior Planner
David J. Totten, MPA	Senior Planner
Travis I. Bartholomew, EIT	Stormwater Planner
Cara N. Purcell	Land Use Planner

Wilmer R. Hunsicker, Jr.	Senior Planning Technician
Bonnie D. Sankovsky	GIS Technician

ADMINISTRATIVE AND CLERICAL

Anne L. Esser, MBA	Administrative Assistant
Alice J. Lipe	Planning Technician
Kathleen M. Sauerzopf	Secretary
Nicole S. Workoff	Secretary
Devan M. Stewart*	Secretary

*No longer on staff.

Comprehensive Planning

The Comprehensive Planning section's actions in 2008 concentrated on efforts to implement the Commission's adopted plans. In particular, the efforts focused on the *Comprehensive Plan The Lehigh Valley ... 2030, An Affordable Housing Assessment of the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania* and the *Lehigh Valley Greenways Plan*. The continued completion of guides and model regulations provide a practical means for implementing these plans. These guides and model regulations explore a multitude of smart growth techniques that can be used to help create the type of community fostered by the county comprehensive plan. The guides and model regulations explain the techniques and make recommendations for their use. Draft zoning provisions are provided to help municipalities that might be interested in using these techniques.

In 2008, the Commission approved and released the *Inclusionary Zoning Guide/Model Regulations*. Inclusionary zoning is a means of both helping fulfill the Lehigh Valley's need for affordable housing and meeting community development objectives. It creates affordable housing with minimal public expenditure and in a way that avoids the creation of pockets of low or moderate income households in a community. Inclusionary zoning describes a variety of techniques that either encourage or require developers to incorporate a certain percentage of affordable units in their developments. A development subject to or participating in inclusionary zoning must scatter units within that development that are priced to be affordable to, and reserved for, income eligible households. The construction is undertaken by the developer/builder, not by a government agency or government hired contractor.

Another smart growth technique approved by the Commission in 2008 is covered in the *Cottage Housing Development Guide/Model Regulations*. This report details a new type of smart growth development for the Lehigh Valley. Cottage housing is a type of higher density housing involving smaller houses. The model regulations call for

cottages to be no bigger than 1,200 square feet. These 1,200 square foot homes are often built at densities approaching multi-family housing, but the cottages are detached structures. The houses are clustered around a shared open space and often share parking or other services. Their small size makes them energy efficient and, potentially, affordable.



Photo courtesy of rosschapin.com.

Other activities for 2008

- Completed 2007 Subdivision and Building Activity report
- Implemented multimunicipal comprehensive plan for Nazareth Area Council of Governments (NAZCOG), prepared annual report and conducted reviews for consistency with multimunicipal plan
- Completed 2008 Lehigh Valley Profile and Trends report
- Completed 2008 Municipal Profiles report
- Published LVPC newsletters
- Responded to data requests from the public
- Completed 86 reviews of municipal zoning ordinances, SALDOs, other ordinances and comprehensive plans; completed 689 reviews of subdivision and land development applications in conjunction with municipally adopted SALDOs; administered the Lehigh and Northampton County SALDO in connection with 3 applications
- Provided review and rating of applications for Northampton County 21st Century Open Space Initiative and performed administrative duties
- Assisted Lehigh County on park planning
- Participated in housing planning including work on the creation of a Community Land Trust
- Defined the Highlands project
- Completed the 2008 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Completed the Northampton County property inventory

Riparian and Wetland Buffers Guide/Model Regulations

was the first of two reports dealing with environmental features approved by the Commission in 2008. Riparian buffers are a natural, effective means of protecting Lehigh Valley watercourses. The buffers filter polluted runoff,



Photo courtesy of Michael Kaiser.

stabilize streambanks, reduce erosion, store floodwaters and provide a transition zone between water and our use of the land. There is renewed interest in preserving existing riparian buffers or restoring them in places where they have been cleared. The LVPC encourages the restoration of riparian buffers on lands that border rivers and streams.

Steep Slopes Guide/Model Regulations was the second of two reports dealing with environmental features approved by the Commission in 2008. Some of the remaining undeveloped land in the Lehigh Valley is on steep slopes. While these steep slope areas may provide opportunities for home sites, they also present special challenges in designing development that is environmentally sound and maintains the qualities of hillsides that contribute to the Lehigh Valley's natural beauty. The county comprehensive plan classifies 15% slopes or over as steep. The regulations permit development on slopes of 15% but less than 25% as conditional uses, but prohibits development on slopes of 25% or greater.

Projects scheduled for 2009

- Mixed Uses Guide/Model Regulations
- Woodlands Guide/Model Regulations
- Density Bonuses and Minimum Densities Guide/Model Regulations
- Conservation by Design Guide/Model Regulations
- Quarterly newsletters
- Planning services for NAZCOG
- 2008 Subdivision and Building Activity report
- Lehigh Valley Profile and Trends report update
- Municipal Profiles report update
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy report update
- Assistance to Lehigh and Northampton counties on park planning
- Promote adoption of model regulations
- Density examples report
- Zoning provisions for protecting Appalachian Trail and Blue Mountain

Environmental Planning

The LVPC staff began work on a new bi-county Act 167 grant contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The contract extends five years, from 2007 to 2012, and includes work in 16 different watersheds. Work proposed includes updating the hydrologic model in the Bushkill, Saucon and Monocacy Creek watersheds. Act 167 Ordinances are proposed to be written and adopted in the Perkiomen Creek, Maiden/Sacony creeks and Tohickon/Delaware River North watersheds, which have not previously been subject to Act 167 ordinances created by the LVPC. The Perkiomen Creek Headwaters Act 167 Plan has been under development for much of 2008 and is nearing completion. This plan will cover nearly 30 square miles primarily in Upper and Lower Milford townships in Lehigh County, as well as parts of Berks, Bucks and Montgomery counties that flow into Lehigh County. The Perkiomen Act 167 Plan will be completed in early 2009.

The LVPC, with the assistance of the county emergency management agencies (EMAs), prepared the *Hazard Mitigation Plan Annual Report 2008* in August. The 2008 annual report serves as the first annual report since the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved the *Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Other activities for 2008

- Reviewed 70 projects involving Act 537 plan updates and planning modules, solid waste, Act 67/68, Delaware River Basin Commission, Lehigh County Authority and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Reviewed stormwater management portions of approximately 160 subdivision and land development plans
- Served on the RENEW Lehigh Valley Water and Wastewater Regionalization Committee
- Responded to data requests from the public

Lehigh Valley, PA in April 2007. This plan provides for an annual monitoring and evaluation process to ensure the plan remains an active and relevant document. Further, LVPC staff worked with the county EMAs to submit a grant application to receive \$1 million in federal earmarked funds to be used for flood disaster mitigation purposes in the two



Photo courtesy of the City of Easton.

counties. A FEMA approved hazard mitigation plan is a requirement to receive any federal hazard mitigation funding. Twelve projects that are included in the hazard mitigation plan were submitted for funding. FEMA is in the process of reviewing the projects for eligibility.

The LVPC completed the *Lehigh Valley Regional Action Plan* in February 2008. The Regional Action Plan was developed under the Commonwealth's "Land Use, Transportation and Economic Development" (LUTED) program, that seeks to better integrate state agency policies and actions to make more efficient use of state resources at the regional level. The Regional Action Plan outlines recommendations for improved state agency cooperation and highlights three priority projects that provide opportunities for state agencies to work collaboratively on project implementation. The priority projects selected by the Regional Action Plan Steering Committee were urban revitalization projects in Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton. The steering committee consists of LVPC staff and representatives from DCED, DCNR, DEP, PennDOT and PA Department of Agriculture. Since plan completion, the LVPC has organized two meetings to facilitate interagency communication with the cities related to the three priority projects. The LVPC plans to continue hosting these implementation meetings on a semi-annual basis.

Key GIS projects completed in 2008 include the release of GIS data disc version 4.2. Pictometry oblique imagery (proprietary imagery developed by Pictometry International Corporation) covering Northampton County was obtained from the county and updated into the LVPC GIS. Pictometry imagery has now been obtained for both Lehigh and Northampton counties and is used by LVPC staff for various planning tasks including subdivision reviews. LVPC GIS staff worked with GIS staff at both counties to make parcel and street centerlines join at the common county boundary. Routine LVPC GIS layer updates included subdivisions reviewed by the LVPC, parks, schools, municipal zoning, agricultural easements and security areas, traffic signal devices and traffic counts. New layer updates included eligible historic places originating from the PA Historical & Museum Commission, Bureau of Historic Preservation. New Soil Survey Geographic Database data originating from the Natural Resources Conservation Service was updated into the LVPC GIS and replaces prior historical soil data from both counties. GIS staff is working with Lehigh County to capture housing data to map and report on housing construction and sales activity.

Projects scheduled for 2009

- Coordinate with county emergency management agencies to prepare 2009 Hazard Mitigation Plan annual report
- County adoption and DEP approval of Perkiomen Creek Headwaters stormwater plan
- Finalize modeling and create draft plan updates for the Maiden and Sacony creeks stormwater plans
- Complete modeling, release rates and draft plan update for the Bushkill creek stormwater plan

GIS activities for 2008

- Profile and Trends report mapping
- Act 167 Stormwater mapping for the Perkiomen Creek Watershed
- Northampton County Property Inventory review
- Lehigh Valley Crash Facts and Statistics Analysis
- Natural Lands Trust Smart Conservation data review and analyses
- Model regulations mapping
- Lehigh County Green Future Fund application review and rating
- Pennsylvania Highlands — South Mountain Project evaluation and mapping
- Update GIS maps to LVPC Map Library

GIS projects for 2009

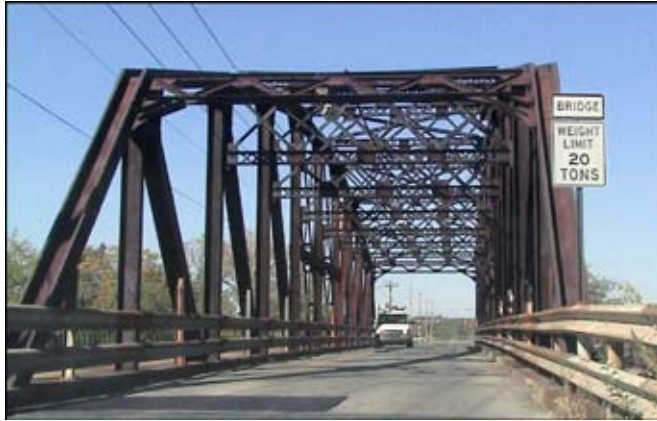
- GIS data disc release 4.3
- Housing layer updates
- Profile and Trends report updates
- Pictometry Imagery 2009 updates
- Regional Open Space Inventory
- Work with the U.S. Census to update Census Geographic Boundaries as needed for 2010 Decennial Census
- Coordinate with DVRPC to finalize specifications for obtaining digital orthophotography for both counties in spring 2010

Transportation Planning

The Transportation Planning staff worked on a variety of projects this past year with the development of the 2009 Transportation Improvement Program, the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) Regional Public Transportation Development Plan, and the development of the Pennsylvania component of the Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study heading the list.

The **2009 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** is the locally-endorsed high priority list of highway, bridge and transit projects to be implemented with Federal assistance in the next four years. It was adopted by the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Lehigh Valley, in July. The four-year program is updated every two years. The staff worked closely with PennDOT to create a draft list of priority projects that was fiscally constrained,

as required by Federal law. Major highway projects in the TIP include the pre-construction phases of the Route 22 Improvements from 15th Street to Airport Road and construction of American Parkway and New England Avenue to increase access to downtown Allentown, both



*Lynn Avenue Bridge, Bethlehem City, due for replacement.
Photo courtesy of Michael Donchez.*

in Lehigh County. Projects on the TIP in Northampton County include the construction of the Route 412 Improvements and Second Street Ramp, Route 33/Freemansburg Avenue Interchange, Route 33/Route 512 Interchange, and both the Route 33 and Route 412 Park and Ride lot expansions. This update to the TIP focused on repairing structurally deficient bridges. The final TIP lists 57 Lehigh Valley bridges for repair over the life of the program. Notable Lehigh County bridges with construction scheduled during this program cycle include the replacement of the Route 22 Bridge (Fullerton Avenue), replacement of the Ward Street/15th Street Bridge in Allentown, the rehabilitation of the Tilghman Street Viaduct, rehabilitation of the Coplay-Northampton Bridge, and the Lehigh Street Tri-bridges in Whitehall Township. Notable Northampton County bridges scheduled for construction include the replacement of the Messinger Street Bridge in Bangor, replacement of the Route 33/Route 191 Interchange Bridge, replacement of the Route 611/Bushkill Creek Bridge, and the replacement of the Tatamy Bridge. An air quality analysis was also conducted for all major construction projects listed in the TIP that were deemed to be air quality significant in status. The analysis demonstrated that the TIP meets the requirements of the Clean Air Act.

The LVPC will collaborate with LANTA on the implementation of some aspects of their **Regional Public Transportation Development Plan**. The plan includes a review of Lehigh Valley land use as it relates to providing efficient and effective

Other Activities for 2008

- Developed FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program
- Provided Access Management Program assistance to selected municipalities
- Participated in a Federal Certification review of the LVTS transportation planning process
- Completed 97 traffic counts for the Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) program and 16 traffic counts for the regional travel demand forecasting model
- Inventoried 168 highway segments under the HPMS program to update physical characteristics of the roadways
- Developed the 2007 Traffic Trends report
- Participated on various committees to promote transportation planning and projects in the Lehigh Valley, including:
 - Statewide Air Quality Conformity Working Group
 - American Parkway Extension Project Development Meetings
 - Route 412 Improvements Project Development Meetings
 - Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee
 - Allentown and Bethlehem Citizens Traffic Advisory Committees
 - Statewide Financial Guidance Work Group

Projects Scheduled for 2009

- Begin update process for the Lehigh Valley Surface Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program
- Participate in PennDOT's efforts to streamline the project development process

Projects cont. on p. 7

transit services. It is well documented that dense, compact land use patterns are much easier to serve with public transportation than sprawling, low density patterns. As part of this effort, the LVPC has been working with LANTA on developing a memorandum of understanding that will coordinate the LVPC's land development reviews done under the Municipalities Planning Code with LANTA's staff. Land developments that meet established criteria (i.e. type, location and/or intensity of the proposed land use) will be forwarded to LANTA's staff for their review. Any comments provided by LANTA will be made part of the LVPC's review comments to the municipality. Also as part of this effort, LANTA and LVPC staff will have more of a presence at municipal planning commission and elected officials meetings to encourage municipalities to provide a land use pattern that will better support public transportation.

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority completed **Phase I of the I-78 Corridor Transit Study** in 2008. Phase I looked at the need, impact and feasibility of various transit options for the I-78 Corridor from Somerset County, New Jersey to Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. Recommendations include new and expanded park and ride lots along the corridor and giving preferential treatment to busses in the corridor, such as allowing busses to use the shoulders of I-78 during times of high congestion. Phase II, the Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study is managed by New Jersey Transit. The study will look at an extensive and detailed environmental and planning assessment of the possible extension of rail service west toward Phillipsburg and the Lehigh Valley. The technical work for the New Jersey portion of Phase II is ongoing. Findings and recommendations are expected by mid-2009. The Lehigh Valley portion is expected to begin in early spring of 2009. The study is expected to be wrapped up by the end of 2009.

Projects (cont. from p. 6)

- Review Smart Transportation Strategies and evaluate their effectiveness in the Lehigh Valley
- Continued involvement in the Route 22 Environmental/Preliminary Design Work – Section 400
- Continued involvement in the Route 412 Improvements Design work and American Parkway/New England Avenue project
- Continue working with New Jersey Transit on the Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study
- Work with LANTA in the promotion of their regional transit development plan
- Revise the regional travel demand forecasting model to incorporate transit service changes resulting from LANTA's regional development plan
- Document the TIP project selection process
- Continue to enhance the GIS by developing additional transportation data coverages and applications

Local Government Academy

The Local Government Academy was created in 1993 to promote intergovernmental cooperation and education opportunities for municipal officials and others interested in government planning. During 2008, the Local Government Academy sponsored two courses: the Basic Course in Subdivision Review and the Basic Course for Zoning Officials. The Local Government Academy will sponsor a variety of training courses in 2009. These courses include subdivision and land development review, zoning administration, model environmental ordinances, smart transportation and smart growth techniques for municipalities.

Administration

In January 2008, the LVPC adopted an Action Plan and Budget for the year. The Action Plan is the staff work schedule for the year. The LVPC budget is prepared by the Executive Director and approved by the Commission at its January meeting. There was one staff change during 2008. Devan Stewart resigned from the LVPC staff. Nicole Workoff joined the staff in May, replacing Ms. Stewart as secretary. In July 2008, the redesigned LVPC website was up and running. The annual update of the Municipal Officials Mailing List was prepared and is available on our website at www.lvpc.org. During 2008, the LVPC purchased expandable hard drive space for the server to accommodate the Pictometry Imagery obtained from the two counties.

Beginning in 2009, the LVPC Newsletters and Annual Report will be sent electronically to all those interested in receiving news about LVPC plans and activities, saving on costs and materials associated with printing and mailing. An audit report is being prepared by Buckno, Lisicky and Company. It will be available by June 2009.

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
961 Marcon Boulevard, Suite 310
Allentown, Pennsylvania 18109

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Members



Seated left-to-right: Joyce H. Losee, James E. Flemming, Steven L. Glickman, Terry J. Lee, Robert A. Lammi, Benjamin F. Howells, Jr., Becky Bradley. **Standing left-to-right:** Kent Herman, Norman E. Blatt, Jr., Esq. Charles L. Fraust, William Leiner, Sr., Matthew Glennon, Stephen Repasch, John N. Diacogiannis, Glenn M. Taggart, Michael Reph, Michael D. D'Amore, Michael C. Hefele.