



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

Annual Report 2009

**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 2009. The annual report highlights the planning and implementation activities we have undertaken during the past year and identifies future activities for 2010.

During 2009, a major focus in Comprehensive Planning has been on implementing the affordable housing, land use and environmental protection aspects of the county comprehensive plan. We have developed a number of model regulations and have held several workshops to promote the regulations to local municipalities. There has been a lot of interest, and we will continue to promote the regulations during 2010. Also, a public opinion survey was prepared and mailed out in early 2010 to a sampling of Lehigh Valley registered voters. The opinion survey deals with a variety of land use, development and environmental issues in the Lehigh Valley. This information is useful as we consider updates to the county comprehensive plan.

LVPC staff continued to work under a bi-county stormwater management planning contract with the PA Department of Environmental Protection. Under the contract, stormwater management plans and ordinances have been prepared for the Perkiomen Creek Headwaters and the Maiden/Sacony Creek Headwaters. Updates are underway for the Bushkill, Monocacy and Saucon Creek watersheds.

The LVPC entered into an agreement with LANTA on promoting land use and development techniques to make local municipalities more favorable to public transit. Also, the planning commission staff is providing technical assistance in the development of the Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study.

During 2010, we will continue with the development of model regulations that will include wind energy, solar panels and conservation subdivisions. A report will be prepared on the results of the public opinion survey. Work will continue on updating the stormwater plans and ordinances for the remaining watersheds in the two counties. Additional work includes continued involvement with PennDOT on Route 22 improvements and with the counties and LVEDC on the Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study.

We thank both counties for their continued support of our work program.

Terry J. Lee
Chair, 2009

DECEMBER 31, 2009

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Board of Commissioners

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(See Commission photo on page 8)

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF

PLANNING STAFF

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

TECHNICAL AND GRAPHICS

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

*Resigned from staff.

Comprehensive Planning

The Comprehensive Planning section continued its initiative implementing the *Comprehensive Plan The Lehigh Valley...2030* through the preparation of guides and model regulations. The guides and model regulations are resources for Lehigh Valley municipalities, providing ideas and information about smart growth techniques and environmental protection measures. In 2009, the Comprehensive Planning section completed guides and model regulations for mixed uses, density bonuses, minimum densities and woodlands. These guides and model regulations supplement previous efforts on cottage housing, inclusionary zoning, riparian and wetland buffers, steep slopes and floodplains.

The Commission approved and released the *Mixed Uses Guide/Model Regulations*. Mixed uses, which have been discouraged by many conventional zoning ordinances, are now seen as a central component of smart growth. Mixed uses can be a means of creating livelier communities,



West Broad Street in Bethlehem

increasing business opportunities and reducing the need for and length of automobile trips. The reduced travel can lead to related environmental and health benefits. Mixed use development is a more traditional type of development that has applications in cities, rural villages and higher density residential areas. Mixed use development can take many forms ranging from single buildings that feature multiple uses to communities where buildings containing different uses stand side by side.

Two techniques for promoting higher densities are outlined in the *Density Bonuses/Minimum Densities Guide/Model Regulations*. The report was approved and released by the Commission. Density bonuses allow developers to build more housing units than would usually be allowed by the zoning ordinance in exchange for adding certain amenities for the public benefit. This incentive-based technique is an adept Smart Growth tool as it both increases housing density in areas identified for urban growth and adds public benefits at no direct cost to the taxpayers. Density bonuses can be offered in exchange for almost any public benefit. These benefits can include affordable housing, preserved open space, historic preservation, additional infrastructure and higher quality design. Minimum densities are a technique where the municipality specifies the fewest number of units that may be developed per acre. This is a good way of meeting certain community development objectives. For instance, minimum densities could be specified along transit routes where the higher densities would enable more transit ridership.

Other activities for 2009

- Completed 2008 *Subdivision and Building Activity Report*
- Prepared annual report and conducted reviews for consistency with multimunicipal plan for Nazareth Area Council of Governments (NAZCOG)
- Completed 2009 *Lehigh Valley Profile and Trends* report
- Completed 2009 *Municipal Profiles* report
- Published LVPC newsletters
- Completed 78 reviews of municipal zoning ordinances, SALDOs, other ordinances and comprehensive plans; completed 473 reviews of subdivision and land development applications in conjunction with municipally adopted SALDOs; administered the Lehigh and Northampton County SALDO in connection with 4 applications
- Completed the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy – 2009*
- Completed the *Housing in the Lehigh Valley – 2008* report
- Defined the Kittatinny Ridge boundary to prioritize land preservation efforts
- Updated the annual parks inventory
- Completed the municipal recreation and open space data sheet
- Established smart growth priorities and implementation strategies
- Promoted adoption of model regulations
- Prepared a Land Use Public Opinion Survey
- Completed the natural resources plan conservation priority acreage table

**Woodlands Guide/
Model Regulations,**

approved and released by the Commission, covers two aspects of the subject. First, the report deals with protecting woodlands in relation to the development process. Woodland protection is covered both at the community level, where wood-



Trexler Nature Preserve, T. L. Gettings, Wildlands Conservancy

land preservation is a way to enhance the environment and increase community attractiveness and livability, and at the site level. Taking into consideration how a tree functions, the model regulations include provisions that both protect remaining trees from land disturbance for long term health and set replacement standards in the event that trees cannot be preserved. Second, the report deals with timber harvesting. Regulating timber harvesting is of interest to every municipality because the PA Municipalities Planning Code requires that forestry be a use by right in each and every zoning district in all municipalities.

Better Densities, Better Communities provides positive local examples demonstrating that developments at the densities recommended in the Comprehensive Plan can fit well into communities. Permitted densities in a number of municipal zoning ordinances are lower than those recommended in the Comprehensive Plan due to concerns about the effect of higher densities on community character. The report showcases a variety of recent developments that conform to the Plan's density recommendations. Examples are provided for many different housing types. Higher density housing makes efficient use of land, allows less agricultural land to be converted to housing, reduces housing costs and reduces per unit infrastructure costs.

Projects scheduled for 2010

- Wind Energy System and Solar Panel Model Regulations
- NAZCOG planning assistance for comprehensive plan implementation
- Conservation Subdivisions Model Regulations
- Comprehensive Plan review
- Quarterly newsletters
- Trails, trailhead and bikeway inventory
- Appalachian Trail/Blue Mountain Preservation
- Update Regional Open Space inventory
- Review county park and open space projects
- Housing planning
- Sustainability research
- Energy conservation research
- *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* report update
- *Lehigh Valley Profile and Trends* report update
- *Municipal Profiles* report update
- *2009 Subdivision and Building Activity Report*

Environmental Planning

The LVPC staff continued work on a **bi-county Act 167 grant contract** with DEP. The contract includes work in 16 different watersheds. Examples of the work proposed include updating the hydrologic model in the Bushkill, Monocacy and Saucon Creek watersheds.



Sauncy Creek Headwaters

Other activities for 2009

- Reviewed 124 projects involving Act 537 plan updates and planning modules, solid waste, Act 67/68, Delaware River Basin Commission, Lehigh County Authority, Public Utility Commission, and the PA Infrastructure Investment Authority
- Reviewed stormwater management portions of approximately 90 subdivision and land development plans
- Computerized watershed models calibrated for the Bushkill, Monocacy and Saucon creeks

Act 167 ordinances have been written for the Maiden/Sacony creeks and Perkiomen Creek watersheds, which have not previously been subject to Act 167 ordinances created by the LVPC. The Perkiomen Creek Headwaters Act 167 plan is currently in the process of being reviewed and considered for adoption by Lehigh County. After the plan is adopted by Lehigh County, the Plan will be sent to DEP for final approval. This plan will cover nearly 30 square miles primarily in Upper and Lower Milford townships in Lehigh County, as well as small parts of Berks, Bucks and Montgomery counties. Act 167 plan updates have also been prepared in draft for the Maiden and Sacony Creek watersheds. Plans for these watersheds were previously created by Berks County. These plan updates will cover approximately 45 square miles in northwestern Lehigh County in Lynn and Weisenberg townships. The most significant component of the Maiden and Sacony Creek plan updates will be an updated water quality model ordinance. The Perkiomen Creek Headwaters Act 167 Plan includes the same water quality ordinance provisions.

The LVPC staff began preliminary work on a contract to evaluate **Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) alternatives** for the Sacony Creek watershed. A TMDL is a strategy for restoring the water quality of the Sacony Creek to support designated uses as defined by DEP. An analytical process defines the maximum pollutant loading the stream could receive to maintain acceptable water quality. This contract will assist DEP, which has the responsibility to create the final TMDL that will limit the maximum pollutant loading from contributing sources. The LVPC staff will create a water quality model to evaluate multiple TMDL alternatives for the watershed. The LVPC staff will be coordinating this work with the Lehigh County Conservation District which is collecting water quality monitoring data in the watershed under a separate contract.

During 2009, the LVPC entered into a contract with the **Nazareth Area Council of Governments (NAZCOG)** for planning services toward implementation of the *Nazareth Area ... 2030 Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan*. Participating municipalities include Bath, Chapman, Nazareth, Stockertown and Tatamy boroughs and Bushkill and Lower Nazareth townships. Services include a workshop on environmental protection model regulations; creation of model regulations regarding Appalachian Trail protection, conservation subdivision design and traditional neighborhood development; and an assessment of possible redevelopment sites within the municipalities involved. Half of the project cost is being provided through a Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development grant to NAZCOG. A steering committee of municipal representatives will provide direction for the project. The work program is scheduled to be completed by early 2011.

Key GIS projects completed this year include the release of GIS data disc version 4.3. This disc makes GIS layers available to the public and also provides layers for many LVPC mapping projects. New layer updates include 2008 housing data. The data contains housing characteristics in the region by total housing sales and new construction sales broken down by number of sales and median sales price by municipality. GIS was used to measure the impacts of land developments on the LVPC general land use plan which included calculating development acreage amounts inside and outside the plan urban boundary. Also, 2010 census tract and block group boundaries were delineated using GIS for the U.S. Census Bureau. Pictometry oblique imagery flown in 2009 was obtained from Lehigh and Northampton counties and updated into the LVPC GIS. Routine LVPC GIS layer updates included subdivisions reviewed by the LVPC, parks, schools, municipal zoning, agricultural easements and security areas, LANTA routes, traffic signal devices and traffic counts.

Projects scheduled for 2010

- County adoption and DEP approval of Perkiomen Creek Headwaters Stormwater Plan, and Maiden and Sacony creeks Stormwater Plan Updates
- Complete modeling, release rates and draft Plan Updates for the Bushkill, Monocacy and Saucon creeks
- Creation, county adoption and DEP approval of water quality ordinance updates for remaining watersheds in Lehigh and Northampton counties
- Development of alternatives for the Saucon Creek TMDL

GIS activities for 2009

- Profile and Trends report mapping
- Stormwater Act 167 data analysis and mapping for Perkiomen, Maiden and Sacony Creek watersheds
- Mapping and data updates for *Housing in the Lehigh Valley 2008*
- Traffic crash mapping and statistics for *Traffic Safety in the Lehigh Valley 2004-2008*
- Mapping and data updates for parks and open space inventory and park trails
- Update GIS maps to LVPC Map Library
- Existing land use updates – 2007

GIS projects for 2010

- GIS data disc release 4.4
- Migration of GIS files to ESRI geodatabase
- Inventory/migration of PA MAP GIS layers to LVPC GIS
- Housing layer updates
- Existing land use updates – 2008 and 2009
- Regional open space inventory updates
- 2010 digital aerial photography acquisition
- Stormwater Act 167 data analysis and mapping updates

Transportation Planning

The Transportation Planning staff worked on a variety of projects this past year with the advocacy for a widened Route 22, providing technical assistance in the development of the Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study, and an agreement with LANTA on coordinating land use activities heading the list.

The **Route 22 Section 400** project previously consisted of widening the portion of the roadway from 15th Street to Airport Road to six lanes. This section of roadway was deemed to be the highest priority section due to high crash rates and the high volume of traffic as identified in the *Route 22 Tomorrow* report. The most recent



Route 22 looking east toward Lehigh River Bridge

cost estimates to widen this stretch of road, as originally planned, ranged from \$200 to \$250 million. Due to State budgetary constraints, PennDOT downsized the project to encompass safety improvements to the MacArthur Road interchange. Other improvements to the corridor will be planned and executed over a longer period of time. In December, the LVPC filed a right-to-know request with PennDOT for engineering and planning studies related to the analysis and simulations of traffic flow, levels of service, environmental impacts, safety problems, interchange and mainline design analysis, pedestrian studies, and analysis of the proposed closure of the 5th Street Bridge. The request was denied under the grounds that the studies requested are currently being drafted, are not yet approved, and reflect the internal, predecisional deliberations of PennDOT and are exempt from disclosure until final approval is obtained. LVPC appealed this determination. The appeal was denied in early 2010.

The **Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study** Pennsylvania Component was started in 2009. This study is an extension of the New Jersey Transit Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study which assessed commuter bus and rail transit improvement alternatives in New Jersey. The Lehigh Valley portion of the study, funded by Lehigh County, Northampton County, and the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation will identify and assess one rail and two bus alternatives for future service along the I-78 Corridor between the Lehigh Valley and the metropolitan New Jersey/New York area. The LVPC staff has been providing technical support for this study effort. The regional travel demand forecasting model, developed and maintained by the LVPC, was provided to New Jersey Transit (NJT) and incorporated into NJT's model framework. Spatial data was shared with the study team and staff performed a license plate survey of selected park and

Other Activities for 2009

- Developed FY 2010 Unified Planning Work Program
- Completed the South 4th Street Corridor After-Action Review
- Provided Access Management Program assistance to selected municipalities
- Completed 96 traffic counts for the Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) program and 46 traffic counts for the regional travel demand forecasting model
- Inventoried 169 highway segments under the HPMS program to update physical characteristics of the roadways
- Developed the 2008 Traffic Trends report
- Completed the Draft Environmental Justice Report - 2008
- Participated on various committees to promote transportation planning and projects in the Lehigh Valley, including:
 1. Statewide Air Quality Conformity Working Group
 2. American Parkway Extension
 3. Route 412 Improvements Project Status Meetings
 4. Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee
 5. Allentown and Bethlehem Citizens Traffic Advisory Committees
 6. Statewide Financial Guidance Work Group

Projects Scheduled for 2010

- Update the Lehigh Valley Surface Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program
- Conduct roadway safety audits
- Conduct corridor studies for traffic signal upgrades

Projects (cont. on p. 7)

ride lots to determine the origins of users. Proposed right-of-way field views were conducted with the consultant team. The study identifies short, medium, and long-term improvements to address existing and projected congestion problems along the I-78 Corridor in New Jersey. The Pennsylvania options include the extension of the Raritan Valley rail line into the Lehigh Valley using the Norfolk Southern right-of-way south of the Lehigh River; enhanced bus services, including express service to Manhattan and Route 33/William Penn park and ride express bus service to Bridgewater, NJ. The consultant is now developing ridership figures and service operational details. Cost estimates will be developed as part of the final study. The study is scheduled for completion in March 2010.

The **LVPC/LANTA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** was ratified in March 2009. Its purpose is to allow for collaboration between LVPC and LANTA on promoting various land use patterns and development techniques to make appropriate areas more favorable for the use of public transit. LANTA and the LVPC will jointly evaluate standards for density and land development that will recognize and accommodate the needs of public transit operations. In addition, the LVPC will seek LANTA's comments on advisory reviews of subdivisions, land developments, zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances and comprehensive plans proposed in local municipalities. Key municipalities and development opportunities will be identified for the promotion of transit friendly design and to create a joint outreach program to further this effort.

Projects (cont. from p. 6)

- Participate in PennDOT's efforts to streamline the project development process
- 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 the Counties, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, and New Jersey Transit on the Central New Jersey/Raritan Valley Transit Study Pennsylvania Component
- Work with LANTA on the promotion of their regional transit development plan
- Continue to enhance the GIS by developing additional transportation data coverages and applications
- Coordinate with PennDOT on the provision of Local Technical Assistance Program training courses

Local Government Academy

The Local Government Academy was created in 1993 to promote intergovernmental cooperation and educational opportunities for municipal officials and others interested in government planning. During 2009, the Local Government Academy sponsored workshops on smart transportation and on model ordinances related to smart growth topics (density bonuses, mixed uses, cottage housing and inclusionary zoning) and environmental features (floodplains, riparian buffers, steep slopes and woodlands). The Local Government Academy will sponsor a variety of training courses in 2010. These courses include subdivision and land development review, zoning, planning commission, smart transportation and bike/ped safety.

Administration

In 2009, 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 was approved by the Commission at its January meeting. There were two staff changes during 2009. Nicole Workoff, LVPC Secretary, and Cara Purcell, Land Use Planner, both resigned in August to attend graduate school. The LVPC purchased eight traffic counters to assist with volume and class traffic counts. A new conference room phone was purchased that provides the ability for staff to participate in live seminars and meetings over the Internet, reducing travel costs. The LVPC purchased a web-based survey tool to automate the survey process. It will be used to analyze the results of LVPC surveys, including the 2010 Land Use Public Opinion Survey.

For 2010, an audit report is being prepared by Buckno, Lisicky and Company and will be available by June 2010.

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
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Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Members



Seated left-to-right: Liesel Dreisbach, Ron Angle, Michael C. Hefele, Steven L. Glickman, Terry J. Lee, Robert A. Lammi, Percy H. Dougherty, Sandra Vulcano. **Standing left-to-right:** Benjamin F. Howells, Jr., Ross Marcus, Edward Hozza, Jr., Donna Wright, Stephen Repasch, John N. Diacogiannis, Glenn M. Taggart, Becky Bradley, Armand V. Greco, Kent Herman, Matthew Glennon.