
Bucks County Planning Commission

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<i>Lisa M. Wolff</i>	<i>Community Planner</i>
<i>David C. Zipf</i>	<i>Community Planner</i>



Bucks County Planning Commission

2008

Year in Review

◆ Department Overview ◆

The planning commission's mission is to provide the best possible services, information, and guidance to the residents of Bucks County, the 54 municipal governments, the County Commissioners, and other county agencies, on planning, land use, zoning, and community issues, with the goal of providing for good and prosperous communities and protecting the character and environment of Bucks County.

1. **Assist the County Commissioners** with policy development and decision making by providing information and technical assistance.
2. **Perform state-mandated review role** - The planning commission is mandated by law to perform planning and review tasks. Our responsibilities include: review of all proposed developments in the county and provide comments for municipalities; review and comment on all proposals for plans and ordinances to be adopted by municipalities; review and comment on all wastewater plans
3. Prepare and keep up to date state-mandated watershed-based **stormwater management plans** for the entire county to meet Department of Environmental Protection regulations. This is an on-going process that requires continuous attention.
4. **Secure transportation funding** - Commission works with PennDOT and other agencies to plan and fund transportation improvement projects in the county.
5. **County comprehensive plan** - Commission prepares and maintains the county comprehensive plan, as mandated by the state under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, by issuing periodic updates and amending documents.
6. **Assistance to 54 municipalities** - Commission assists municipal governments with their planning programs through formal contracts or assistance on special projects.
7. Provide **information to the public** and to other county agencies, through speaking engagements, displays, seminars, and publications.
8. Commission staffs and operates the **agricultural land preservation program, the open space program, and the recycling program.**
9. Commission maintains **Geographic Information System (GIS)** that is used for analysis in planning programs and is used by other county agencies. Staff support is provided by the BCPC to other county agencies with GIS programs.
10. **Joint projects** - Commission works closely with the Redevelopment Authority, SEPTA, PennDOT, Economic Development Corporation, Health Department, Board of Assessment, Board of Elections, and other groups to provide staff assistance on projects, data, or maps.

◆ Land Preservation ◆

Agricultural Land Preservation Program

- * Preserved 11 farms totaling 794.37 acres in 2008.
- * Total farms preserved are 123 farms totaling 10,725.44 acres since 1990.
- * Waiting list for 2008 containing 72 farms totaling 4,447.26 acres

Open Space Program

Municipal Open Space Program

- * Last project under '97 bond settled = Trumbauersville Borough acquired 2.8 acres to expand its existing park.
- * Totals under '97 bond: 95 acquisition projects = 2,581 acres, \$18,576,950 in grants; 9 planning grants = \$70,587
- * Guidelines for new funding (Open Space Plan Updates and Grant Applications) released in Spring 2008.
- * Held workshops for municipal representatives throughout County
- * 7 municipalities have updated their Open Space Plans (5 rewrites, 2 supplements)
- * Draft Delaware Riverfront Guidelines under review by Open Space Review Board. Program expected to be launched in Spring 09.

Natural Areas Program

- * Settled one project = Roaring Rocks, Tinicum Township 199 acres
- * 3 additional settlements scheduled by year's end
- * Program Totals: 68 projects = 2,890 acres, \$10,405,994
- * New Guidelines released Fall 2008. 10 applications submitted = 536 acres, \$2.8 million

◆ Special Projects/Studies ◆

Countywide Park, Recreation, Greenway, and Open Space Plan

We are preparing a countywide plan that involves surveys of all county, state, and local plans, with goal of setting priorities for county parks, trails, and preservation.

Seminar for Municipal Officials

The seminar was a big success, with about 80 people present and representatives from about 20 municipalities from all parts of the county, from Riegelsville and Durham to Bensalem and Bristol. Speakers were good and seminar was well received.

Geographic Information System ◆ and Transportation Planning ◆

Senior Mobility Task Force

Assisted Task Force with survey on transportation needs as well as development of report.

Transportation Improvement Program

PennDOT continued to make cuts to the TIP and to defer projects, due to funding shortfalls and huge cost overruns on projects. Act 44, passed last year, was based on the potential income from tolling I-80 to generate the \$900 million that has been programmed for road and bridge improvements in Pennsylvania. Because I-80 cannot be tolled, the concept of leasing the Pennsylvania Turnpike is on the table. The big items funded in Bucks are the Route 202 parkway and the I95-Turnpike connection, along with a lot of bridges.

Quakertown Rail Line Study

Ridership projections, cost estimates, potential federal assistance, and briefings for the two counties were accomplished this year.

Route 202 Parkway

The groundbreaking was held in Montgomery Township on Nov. 21. There were many speakers, and everyone was pleased with the start of this new road.

SEPTA

Ridership is way up; new rail cars are arriving in 2010; and plans are in the works for automated ticketing.

Bicycle Task Force meeting

The Bicycle Task Force held its first meeting on July 15 and continues to meet monthly to develop a work program and a countywide bike plan.

Geographic Information System Activities

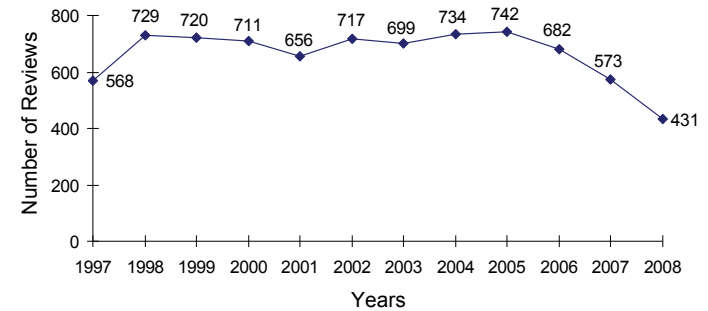
- * GIS staff to meet with Emergency Health Services to discuss proposal for linking GIS data with their data to meet EHS needs.
- * Coordinated contracts for use with 9-1-1 and Board of Assessment
- * GIS staff developed a guidelines for a pilot project for sharing on a cost basis the GIS data with municipalities
- * Assisted agencies with data and mapping.
- * Produced mapping for community planning contracts and open space, farmland preservation projects.
- * Created interactive Public Transportation map which is now on County website

◆ Community Planning ◆

Act 247 Reviews

Proposed development lowest point in over 10 years.

Review Activity, 1997 to 2007



Municipal Assistance Requests are up. Many communities are using the lull in development to revise plans and ordinances. Hot topics are video signs, trails, and preserving historic character and buildings and update of Open Space Plans. Planning assistance has been and continues to be provided to the following communities:

Bedminster Township (<i>adopted Comprehensive Plan</i>)	New Hope Borough
Bristol Borough	Newtown Area Joint
Bristol Township (<i>adopted Comprehensive Plan</i>)	Newtown Borough
Buckingham Township	Pennridge area
Chalfont Borough	Perkasie Borough
East Rockhill Township	Plumstead Township
Hilltown Township	Quakertown area
Hulmeville Borough	Sellersville Borough
Langhorne Borough	Solebury Township
Lower Makefield Township	Tullytown Borough
Milford Township	Warminster Township
Morrisville Borough (<i>adopted Comprehensive Plan</i>)	Warwick Township
New Britain Borough	West Rockhill Township
New Hope Borough	

Highlights

- * Newtown Area Joint Planning Commission and Zoning Council 25th Year Anniversary
- * Added new communities to our planning services program
- * Began work on second round of open space plans

Environmental Planning

Bucks County Employee Green Initiative (BEGIN) Committee

Continued to co-chair and serve on the County Commissioners' BEGIN Committee. The BEGIN Committee (sometimes referred to as the "Green Committee") is currently working on a wide variety of "green" topics such as:



- * County Employee Alternative Commute Survey being used to assess need for carpooling and vanpooling.
- * Research on adding Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles to the county fleet and developing a CNG fueling station on county property.
- * Prepared draft RFP for solar feasibility study and solar panel installation projects for county health department building and courthouse.
- * Landscape Subcommittee members worked on the Neshaminy Manor Center landscape conservation management plan. Plan includes activities such as retrofitting and naturalizing existing stormwater basin, alternative landscaping to reduce areas needing mowing, reduced mowing in selected areas to save fuel, reduce pollution, and naturalize the grounds. Delaware Valley College is partnering with the county on this project.
- * Lightbulb replacement program in courthouse continues to save energy and electricity costs.
- * Bucks County became the first county in Pennsylvania to enact a "Cool Counties" resolution in conjunction with the Sierra Club's Cool Counties/Cities Program within which communities make commitments to become increasingly "green".

Pennridge Water Resources Plan

Continued to assist the Pennridge Area Coordinating Committee with implementation of the *Pennridge Water Resources Plan*. Current topics include Source Water Protection Plan preparation, research on quarry regulations, multimunicipal leaf and yard waste composting, stormwater basin retrofit demonstration, and a proposed multimunicipal intergovernmental agreement. Also partnered with the Heritage Conservancy to conduct an educational workshop on water resources.

Bucks County Municipal Waste Management Plan and Recycling Program

Assisted municipalities and waste haulers with continued implementation of the solid waste plan and recycling program. The county's Solid Waste Advisory Committee meets four times each year to discuss topics and issues related to implementing the plan.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program

Conducted six Household Hazardous Waste collection events around the county between May and September. Each event was very well attended. The electronics collection aspect has increased each year with a tremendous amount of computers, monitors, and other devices being collected.



Water Resources and Sustainability Roundtable, sponsored by the BCPC and Heritage Conservancy, will be held on January 17. This is an exciting program, bringing together water resources (in all its facets: wastewater, stormwater, drinking water, streams) and development issues. Municipal officials have been invited, and the speakers are quite good.

Delaware River Flood Task Force met throughout 2008, formulated recommendations, and continued to monitor and comment on actions affecting flooding.

Proposed PPL Transmission Line through Upper Bucks County-County prevailed in getting PPL to reroute the proposed line away from county-preserved open space. We continue to monitor the hearings before the PUC.

Stormwater Best Management Practice Tour

Organized tour for municipal officials of several stormwater management sites in Bucks County in April 2008. It was a well attended bus tour to sites in Buckingham, Middletown, Churchville Nature Center, and Bowman's Hill Wildlife Preserve.