



STEPHEN REPASCH
Chair

JOHN DIACOIANIS
Vice Chair

STEVEN GLICKMAN
Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

July, 2018

Lehigh Valley Residents Value Open Space

Lehigh Valley residents may live here to be close to family or work or urban areas like New York City, but they stay here because of its rural and open space character.

In our first regionwide survey in four years, 61% of residents surveyed said what they like most about living in the Lehigh Valley is its parks, trails and recreation activities. Running a close second, at 59%, is the region's natural lands and farmlands.

"It really ties into what people see as the identity of the Valley, and their anxiety about what's potentially being lost in this new economy," said LVPC Principal Community Planner John von Kerczek.

Administered by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) and taken by nearly 1,200 people, our first Valleywide survey since 2014 has provided vital information that can be used as the LVPC drafts a new plan for the region.

The survey included 23 questions designed to probe opinions about everything from transportation to housing to education.

The survey was designed to test and prioritize the information the LVPC gathered from thousands of participants during outreach efforts over the past year. The survey responses will be used to help craft the goals, policies and implementation strategies for *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. In addition, the LVPC is creating development scenarios based on this feedback. The scenarios, which will project several different futures for the region based on what priorities we set, will be released later this year. FutureLV will be completed in 2019.

The survey results provide a revealing look at the region's evolution. For example, the third most popular response about what people liked most, at 55%, was accessibility to New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey – a response that was number one when we asked the same question in 2010.

That suggests a growing appreciation for the type of outdoor and agricultural resources that make the region unique. It also appears to be the source of what worries respondents most.

When asked what they liked least about living here, the responses weren't surprising. Leading a lengthy list was truck traffic, congestion, warehouses, and the loss of farmland and natural resources – in that order.

The survey results also show that the Lehigh Valley remains an auto-centric region.

“Driving alone was overwhelmingly the dominant way of travel,” von Kerczek said as the survey was unveiled Wednesday during a Planning and Pizza session. “Three-quarters of respondents reported spending more than half of their travel time alone in their cars. Just a quarter of respondents reported traveling by bike for any part of their travel week.”

That would seem to conflict with what residents would like to see in the future. When asked what strategies were important for the region’s future mobility needs, the No. 1 answer, at 90%, was designing walkable and bikable communities, followed by installing new sidewalks at 85% and promoting walking, biking and carpooling to work at 84%. Building or widening roads did finish a close fourth at just less than 84%.

In response to a question asking how job opportunities can be increased, more than 90 percent of respondents said it was important to match education with training, foster small business development and ensure access to high-speed internet service.

Also included in the survey were questions about how people would like to see development progress, what they value in choosing a place to live and what they believe the most important planning will be over the next decade.

More survey results can be found at http://www.lvpc.org/futurelv_presentations.html