



**Lehigh Valley Planning Commission**

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## **Lehigh Valley Growth and Resiliency on National Display**

Consumer goods, warehouses, trucks, and well, people have been flowing into the Lehigh Valley in increasing amounts in recent years. So, how does a region remain resilient in the face of extreme growth and extreme weather?

The answer is education, planning and investment, LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley told more than 50 directors from Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) from across the country October 29, during the National Association of Regional Council's Executive Director's national conference.

Because of its strong commitment and focus on the environment and resiliency and its efforts in helping to prepare a growing region for extreme weather and disaster, the LVPC was invited to make a presentation on "Promoting Regional Resiliency."

"It's an honor to be recognized by peer organizations, including many larger than our region, as a leader on resiliency," Bradley said. "The balance between environmental land use, hazard mitigation, open space, climate change and even the economy has put the work of the LVPC on the map."

Other presentations included one on a climate change flood mitigation partnership by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, and one on an innovative regional climate change assessment by the Triangle J Council of Governments from North Carolina.

Bradley told the group of MPO directors of the region's recent growth, and what municipal and community leaders are doing to protect their assets. Among that growth is nearly 40 million square feet of new industrial space proposed since 2014, air cargo that's up 337% in just two years, an expected 96% increase in freight by 2040 and a growing local economy anchored by such international companies as Air Products, Mack Trucks, Olympus, FedEx, Crayola and Ocean Spray. All that, even as the region grows by 4,000 to 6,000 people a year.

Managing that growth and protecting all of the assets starts with planning and research and continues with community outreach that includes dozens of public meetings and strategy labs every year, such as the LVPC's Planning + Pizza sessions and general assemblies for municipal officials. It continues with education such as the Lehigh Valley Government Academy and model ordinances that communities can use, and with a wealth of plans designed to promote and protect the environment.

The groundbreaking 2014 *Return On Environment* Report showed in dollars and cents how our natural resources and environment benefits the region by \$1 billion a year by doing everything from improving property values to reducing health issues.

Bradley also explained how LVPC reports such as *Green Infrastructure Guidelines*, *Livable Landscapes* and *Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation* plans use preserving the environment as a tool to protect the many regional assets that make the Lehigh Valley an attractive place to live work and play.

Attended by executive directors from some of the nation's largest regions, the presentation appeared to be well-received.

“How do you demonstrate the value of resilience work? @LVPlanning Executive Director Becky Bradley is sharing how LVPC has found success engaging Return on Environment assessments, strategic communications and integration of resilience planning with other planning efforts” the National Association of Regional Council's tweeted out during the presentation.

The LVPC is engaged in several other resiliency efforts, including a new Water Working Group for water-related issues, the creation of the first ever bicycle and pedestrian Active Transportation Plan and *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, which makes protecting natural resources, open space and farmland a key component of the Lehigh Valley future. More information on LVPC programs and reports is available at [lvpc.org](http://lvpc.org).