



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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FutureLV and Municipal Partnerships Will Mark 2020

The Year 2019 will go down in LVPC history as one of our most momentous. We laid the foundation for 30 more municipalities to work together on comprehensive plans, worked to create the first ever bicycle and pedestrian masterplan, adopted a \$2.5 billion Long-Range Transportation Plan and partnered to create a Blight Reversal Plan for Northampton County, among a list much too long to detail on one page.

And by the way, we crafted *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, creating a blueprint carrying the Lehigh Valley to 2045 and beyond.

But 2020 figures to be an extension of that busy year after the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission board Thursday adopted a 2020 Workplan that includes implementing the policies of FutureLV, completing comprehensive plans for 26 communities, helping to assure a complete count for the 2020 Census, bolstering the LVPC's DataLV online project and adopting a more than \$400 million Transportation Improvement Program. That is added to the usual day-to-day tasks – such as reviewing every development plan filed in the region, educating prospective community leaders and municipal workers and facilitating more than \$100 million a year in transportation projects – that come with being the two-county Planning Commission and serving as the staff for the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study, which serves as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization.

“We have a lot from 2019 to be proud of, but there's a lot of work ahead,” said LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley. “We have a new Regional Plan to implement and a lot of communities that want to work together. I'm excited and encouraged about what we have ahead in 2020.”

Implementing the policies of FutureLV is something that will carry well beyond 2020. The new plan, adopted by Lehigh and Northampton counties in November, recommends managing growth by building along the region's already-developed Centers and Corridors, while preserving the farmland, open space and natural resources that have helped define the Lehigh Valley's identity. It also includes policies designed to repurpose failing retail shopping areas into mixed-use centers where office, retail and residential development can co-exist, and recommends ways to make communities more welcoming to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Among the biggest opportunities for the year is completing the ten-community Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Plan, the ten-community Nazareth Area Multi-Municipal Plan and the six-community Northern Lehigh Multi-Municipal Plan. All three are expected by year's end, with municipal adoption expected in 2021.

In addition, work is expected to begin on a four-community River Central Multi-Municipal Plan that will include East Allen Township, North Catasauqua Borough, Catasauqua Borough and Hanover Township, Lehigh County.

All of the plans will look to tackle issues that cross municipal borders and build new partnerships, while enabling each municipality to maintain its autonomy.

“Helping to bring about more multi-municipal collaboration has become one of our core objectives,” said LVPC Director of Environmental Planning, Geoff Reese, who is managing the Nazareth Area Plan. “Many of our communities have a long history of working together and we can build on that to help them better prepare for the future, including the development pressures most of them are facing.”

By approving the 2020 Workplan, the Commission approved the annual budget, which is funded by Lehigh and Northampton counties, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, US Department of Transportation, special project contracts and fees paid for LVPC services.

Other tasks laid out in the Workplan include serving as the official Census Bureau affiliate, holding dozens of public information and strategy sessions on issues like housing, water, freight and transportation, and devising a new Transportation Safety Plan for the region.