



GREG ZEBROWSKI  
Chair

STEVEN GLICKMAN  
Vice Chair

PAMELA PEARSON  
Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP  
Executive Director

## Gala 2020 Celebrates -- All of Us

More than 40 videos taken at some of the region's most scenic places. The willingness of all 62 Lehigh Valley municipalities to work together. A community organization of kids who represent a bright future.

And, of course, a global pandemic that forced us to do this virtually for the first time ever.

Those were just some of the ingredients that went into the 2020 Lehigh Valley Gala + Awards. It was like no event we've done before as community leaders that included Lehigh County Executive Phillips Armstrong and Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure gathered -- virtually, of course -- to celebrate a region that's worked together not only to get through this difficult year, but to make the Lehigh Valley one of the region's best places to live.

The Gala, which streamed on YouTube October 13 and has since received hundreds of views, culminated in the presentation of the LVPC's first-ever *FutureLV* Heroes Award, given to individuals or groups who exemplify the policies of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

"Our first *FutureLV* Heroes Awards goes to the students in the Youth Leadership Program at Community Bike Works," said LVPC Chairman Greg Zebrowski, who presented the award along the D & L National Heritage Corridor in Bethlehem. "They were paving the way for the policies of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* and *Walk/RollLV: The Active Transportation Plan*, long before these two ground-breaking strategies were adopted. They inspired us to plan for a balanced community, where you can walk, roll or take transit anywhere, everyone can enjoy and protect our natural environment, where everyone who works hard, stays in school and sets goals for themselves has access to an equitable and bright future. They are leading now, among their peers, and represent the next generation of regional leaders."

Since 2014, the LVPC has been holding an annual Gala to celebrate excellence in planning and collaboration at an event attended by 200 to 300 people, but the COVID-19 Pandemic prompted the LVPC to move the event to a virtual platform. And rather than the traditional format of issuing awards for planning, development and collaboration, the Gala was re-engineered to celebrate how the region's communities are working together. That led to a 72-minute YouTube video that includes municipal officials and community leaders, recording from more than three dozen of the region's most scenic places, telling stories about working with their neighbors. While Northern Lehigh Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Chairman Brian Carl spoke from a sunflower field in Heidelberg Township, Easton Mayor Sal Panto, Jr. spoke from Centre Square and Nazareth Area Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Chair Brien Kocher spoke from the historic Whitefield House in Nazareth.

Lehigh County Executive Phillips Armstrong hiked over a mile of rocky terrain and faced down a copperhead snake to make his statement from Bake Oven Knob, along the Appalachian Trail.

“This spirit of partnership and collaboration is nothing new, because our communities have a long history of working together to make the Lehigh Valley a better place to live. Through their efforts, we’ve been able to preserve what separates the Lehigh Valley from other regions – our parks, trails, recreation, farmland and open space.”

Northampton County Executive chose another scenic vista, along the Portland Pedestrian Bridge.

“Yes, we’re all in this together, but more importantly, we’re all working together to keep Northampton County, and the entire region, the kind of place that attracts people to start businesses, raise families, create, recreate and retire,” McClure said “We have it all here, because we’re all working to make it happen.”

The Gala video not only celebrates the work of all 62 municipalities, but LVPC projects over the past year. Among them are the Lehigh Valley’s first-ever bicycle and pedestrian master plan, working with 31 communities on four multi-municipal plans, one of the nation’s first Equity Analysis, the expansion of one of the region’s biggest data repository, DataLV, training and education programs, and collaboration with key partners such as PennDOT, the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority, the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley and the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, to name a few. However, a theme running through the entire event was the adoption of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, one of the nation’s first comprehensive plans that links land use policy with the region’s \$2.5 billion Long-Range Transportation Plan.

“With FutureLV’s goals, policies and actions as the foundation, the public, private and non-profit sectors are rethinking the Lehigh Valley as emerging and evolving,” said LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley. “At the core of the Lehigh Valley’s success is the ability to agree to a common set of ideals that serve as a foundation for management, preservation and growth of the region. This is reflected in the Lehigh Valley’s ability to overcome challenges like the decline in the demand for slate and closing of Bethlehem Steel. We have always come together during times of change—positive, negative and everything in between. Really, we have always been one Lehigh Valley.”

Perhaps the biggest benefit of the new format is that the 2020 Gala wasn’t a one-evening event. The full video is available 24 hours a day at <https://lvpc.org/lv-awards.html>

