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LVPC Wins Statewide Innovation Award for FutureLV

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) is receiving the Governor's Award for Local Government Excellence, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Secretary Dennis Davin announced earlier this month.

The LVPC's award is for creation and implementation of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, in the category of Innovative Planning and Sound Land Use Practices, and was among ten communities, five organizations and eight individuals statewide to win the awards issued by Gov. Tom Wolf's administration.

Davin also cited the LVPC's work with helping Allentown School District establish connectivity for thousands of students during the Pandemic, and for developing an online Eviction and Foreclosure Risk Tool designed to identify the areas of the region where families are struggling to pay their rent or mortgages.

Other winners from the Lehigh Valley included Northampton County, Fountain Hill Borough, Plainfield Township, South Whitehall Township and LVPC Commissioner Kathy Rader.

"After being faced with an unprecedented pandemic that impacted communities across the state, this year's awards truly speak to and honor the resilience and proactive efforts of the inspiring Pennsylvania community leaders and groups that we are celebrating today," Davin said. "From tackling homelessness, to addressing limited personal protective equipment supplies for older adults and students' access to online education, and more, these projects have brought critical services and assistance to residents in need statewide and in many cases position communities for long-term success in their project areas."

In the announcement, Davin cited *FutureLV* for being "among the few in the nation to link comprehensive planning to transportation infrastructure funding, enabling the region to put the force of its \$2.5 billion Long-Range Transportation Plan behind its land use recommendations," the news release stated.

"Further, when COVID-19 mitigation efforts closed schools, through a partnership with the LVPC, the local district identified families that didn't have connectivity and where they lived through LVPC Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping so computers and hot spots could be directed to students in need," Davin said. "The partnership connected thousands of students to virtual learning. Additionally, through a unique partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, the LVPC developed a regional tool to identify households struggling with housing and individuals at risk of losing their jobs. The LVPC's Foreclosure and Eviction Risk tool is providing governments, non-profit and community leaders the tools they need to direct limited resources to where they can have the greatest impact."

FutureLV, including its interactive maps, can be found at <https://lvpc.org/comprehensive-plan.html>

LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley thanked Gov. Wolf, Davin and staff at the state DCED.

“It is gratifying to see *FutureLV*’s impact in the community and we’re honored to accept this recognition from Governor Wolf,” Bradley said. “The County Executives, Lehigh County Commissioners, Northampton County Council, Lehigh Valley Planning Commissioners, Lehigh Valley Transportation Study members, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, US Department of Transportation and over 9,400 community members worked for two years to develop a consistent, quality, balanced and collaborative direction for our fast-growing region. In and of itself a remarkable feat, given the complexities and size of the Lehigh Valley. The fact that even during a global pandemic that has tested the way we live, work and play, *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*’s implementation is working and is a testament to the strong leadership of everyone who created this policy and investment plan.”

Other winners in the Lehigh Valley include:

- Former upper Macungie Township Supervisor and LVPC Commissioner Kathy Rader for her commitment to public service and the community.
- Northampton County for its Community Mediation Eviction Diversion program’s effectiveness in preventing homelessness during the Pandemic.
- Fountain Hill Borough and Borough Manager Anthony Branco for securing millions of dollars of grants to make improvements to municipal operations, including enhancements to a public works facility, vehicle upgrades for the fire department, security measures in the Borough office and a reconstruction of a major roadway.
- Plainfield Township for installing the LifeAire Systems UV Biological Remediation System at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, utilizing CARES Act funds to reduce the exposure of officials, public employees, law enforcement officers and any visitors of the Municipal Building to airborne pathogens, including COVID-19, effectively assisting the Township with resuming normal public service delivery and operations.
- South Whitehall Township, and Township Board of Commissioners President Christina “Tori” Morgan, for creating a community that invites cooperation and innovation across municipal boundaries and has led and conceptualized many projects, including the Jordan Creek Greenway, which have fostered and developed beneficial outcomes for all organizations involved.

The awards will be given during a virtual ceremony at 9 am, May 19.

