



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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planning
for the
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2021 Organizational Report

LVPC Annual Report Details Much Development, Much Accomplished

A deepening global pandemic didn't stop the rush of development across the Lehigh Valley, and it didn't stop the LVPC from growing its impact as a resource for the community in 2021.

The LVPC's 2021 Annual Activity Report, first released during the February 24 Commission meeting, shows the most housing development in more than a decade, continued pressure to build more industrial space and a steadily growing community adapting to new rules brought on by the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"I think what 2021 told us is we're successful as a region because of our ability to adapt to challenges," said LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley. "It's evident in the fact that we are increasingly a place where residents and businesses want to be. How we manage that growth is the key to our future."

Its place as one of the fastest-growing regions in Pennsylvania was further confirmed in 2021 with the release of the 2020 Census data, which showed the Lehigh Valley had grown to 687,508 residents – a 6.2% increase since 2010 and a number that tracks within one-fifth of 1% of LVPC projections.

The annual report shows the full effects of that growth. The 498 development plans review are the most since 2009, the 2,248 approved housing units are the most since 2007, and the 5.1 million square feet of industrial development continued a nearly decade-long run in which industrial – and particularly warehouse and logistics facilities – have made up the largest part of the region’s non-residential market.

The report also details the LVPC’s efforts to evolve with the Pandemic and grow its connection to the community. That included upgrades the Information Technology operation so the LVPC could improve its virtual meetings to give people a greater chance to participate and developing other avenues to deliver information. Those included starting a regular column focused on planning issues in the Morning Call and a new monthly radio show, Plan Lehigh Valley, on the local NPR station, WDIY.

The LVPC, in 2021, reopened its Lehigh Valley Government Academy after pausing in-person classes in 2020 because of COVID-19. That program is being expanded for 2022.

“COVID-19 made us rethink and then rethink again how we look at training and education,” Bradley said. “We retooled the program, rearranged our conference room to allow social distancing and added new classes to the program because the Pandemic showed us how important it is that we remain an educational resource to the many volunteers who sit on the region’s planning, zoning and government boards, as well as municipal staff and public works crews.”

The annual report also details key 2021 projects such as the Equity Analysis update, the \$484.7 million draft Transportation Improvement Program and implementing *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, and ongoing projects that include the \$2.5 billion Long-Range Transportation Plan, Climate Action efforts, multi-municipal plans involving 31 communities and managing growth across Lehigh and Northampton counties.

This report serves as the annual regional and multi-municipal activities report, as required by under Article XI, Section 1104 (a) (4) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

The LVPC’s Annual Activity Report is available at <https://www.lvpc.org/commission.html>, in the Commission tab, About Us.