



**COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN**

**LACKAWANNA-LUZERNE COUNTIES**

Joint Comprehensive Plan &  
Long Range Transportation Plan

JUNE 2021



**County of Lackawanna**

**Certified Copy**  
**Resolution: 21-0164**

Lackawanna County  
Government Center  
at The Globe  
123 Wyoming Ave  
Scranton, Pennsylvania  
18503

**File Number: 21-0164**

Adopting the Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan

**WHEREAS** Section 301 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act 247 of 1968, as amended, requires that every county in the Commonwealth adopt a Comprehensive Plan; and,

**WHEREAS** Act 247 requires counties update their Comprehensive Plan every ten years; and,

**WHEREAS** the Lackawanna County and Luzerne County Planning Commissions have worked jointly in the preparation of a Regional Comprehensive Land Use Plan for both counties; and,

**WHEREAS** the Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission met on February 11, 2021, and voted unanimously to forward the draft Plan to the Lackawanna County Board of Commissioners to begin their adoption process, and open a 45-day public comment period required by Act 247; and,

**WHEREAS** Lackawanna County has fulfilled the public review process as required by Act 247.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Lackawanna County Board of Commissioners do hereby approve the Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan dated January 9, 2021.

**ADOPTED** at a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Lackawanna County held on June 16, 2021.

File Number: 21-0164

COUNTY OF LACKAWANNA

  
DEBI DOMENICK, ESQ.


JERRY MOTIARIANNI

CHRIS CHERMAK

ATTEST:

  
BRIAN JEFFERS  
CHIEF OF STAFF

Approved as to form and legality:

  
FRANK J. RUGGIERO  
COUNTY SOLICITOR



**RESOLUTION R-2021-66  
LUZERNE COUNTY COUNCIL**

***A Resolution by the Luzerne County Council Adopting the 2021 Lackawanna-Luzerne  
Counties Comprehensive Plan***

WHEREAS, Section 301 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PA Act 247 of 1968, as amended and hereinafter the "MPC") requires that every county in the Commonwealth adopt a comprehensive plan, which shall consist of, among other basic elements, a general plan for land use; and

WHEREAS, the MPC further requires that a county comprehensive plan establish broad goals and general criteria to guide municipalities in the preparation of their comprehensive plans and land use regulations; and

WHEREAS, agencies of the Commonwealth are required to rely upon a county comprehensive plan when approving certain grants and permits, and to give priority consideration to applications for assistance for projects consistent with the comprehensive plan of the county; and

WHEREAS, MPC Section 302 requires counties update their comprehensive plan every ten years; and the current comprehensive plan serving Luzerne County was adopted in 2011; and

WHEREAS, the Luzerne County Planning and Zoning Department and the Lackawanna County Department of Planning and Economic Development - with the assistance of a consultant - have drafted the 2021 Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Comprehensive Plan (hereinafter the "Plan") as the framework and land use component of said comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, the Luzerne County Planning Commission met on Jan. 14, 2021 and voted unanimously to forward the draft Plan to the Luzerne County Council to begin their adoption consideration meetings process, and open the 45-day public comment period required by MPC Section 302; and

WHEREAS, the Luzerne County Planning and Zoning Department fulfilled public participation requirements opening the public comment period on Jan. 15, 2021 and closing it on Feb. 28, 2021; and incorporating comments into the Plan where appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the Luzerne County Council held public hearings pursuant to public notice on April 13, 2021 and April 27, 2021 to review the Plan; consider public comment; and consider adoption of the Plan.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the County Council of Luzerne County hereby adopts the 2021 Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Comprehensive Plan as the official comprehensive plan of Luzerne County.

This resolution shall become effective six days after adoption.

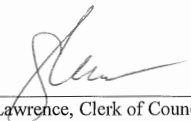
Adopted at a meeting of the Luzerne County Council held on April 27, 2021.

ROLL CALL VOTE (9-1)

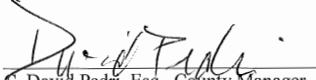
YES: Griffith, Haas, Houck, McDermott, McGinley, Perry, Radle, Schnee and Vough  
NO: SJ Urban

LUZERNE COUNTY COUNCIL

By:   
Tim McGinley, Chair

Attest:   
Sharon Lawrence, Clerk of Council

LUZERNE COUNTY MANAGER

  
C. David Pedri, Esq., County Manager

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Acknowledgments



# Preserving OUR CITIES.



# Preserving OUR LANDS.





STEAMTOWN  
NATL. HISTORIC SITE.

← Train Excursions  
Trolley Rides →

MONTAGE  
80







# ACRONYMS

The following is a summary of acronyms that are used within the document.

**ACS**

American Community Survey

**APZ**

Agricultural Protection Zoning

**BRT**

Bus Rapid Transit

**CARES Act**

The 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

**CEDDS**

Complete Economic and Demographic Data Source

**COLTS**

County of Lackawanna Transit System

**CUFCs**

Critical Urban Freight Corridors

**CRFCs**

Critical Rural Freight Corridors

**D&L**

Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor/Trail

**DCED**

Department of Community and Economic Development

**DCNR**

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

**EMS**

Emergency Medical Services

**EPA**

Environmental Protection Agency

**FAST Act**

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act

**FEMA**

Federal Emergency Management Agency

**FHWA**

Federal Highway Administration

**FY**

Fiscal Year

**GDP**

Gross Domestic Product

**GIS**

Geographic Information System

**HPT**

Hazleton Public Transit

**HARBs**

Historical Architectural Review Boards

**HUD**

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

**Lackawanna Luzerne MPO**

Lackawanna Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization

**LCTA**

Luzerne County Transportation Authority

**LTAP**

Local Technical Assistance Program

**L RTP**

Long-Range Transportation Plan

**MPO**

Metropolitan Planning Organization

**MS4**

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System

**NEPA Velo**

Northeast PA Velo

**NE Trails Forum**

Northeast Trails Forum

**OSRA**

Open Space, Greenways, and Outdoor Recreation Authority

**PA DCED**

PA Department of Community and Economic Development

**PADEP**

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

**PAWC**

Pennsylvania – American Water Company

**PennDOT**

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

**PGA**

Primary Growth Areas

**SAPA**

Scranton-Abingtons Planning Association

**SGA**

Secondary Growth Areas

**SEED**

Sustainable Energy Educational and Development Support

**THE INSTITUTE**

The Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development

**TIP**

Transportation Improvement Program

**TYP**

Twelve Year Program

**VA**

Veterans Affairs

A close-up, textured map background with a halftone dot pattern. The word "Scranton" is prominently displayed in large, bold, black letters. Below it, the word "Barre" is visible in a smaller, lighter font. The map shows geographical outlines and some other faint text like "LAKE" and "C".

Scranton

FOREWORD

AND INTRODUCTION



# FOREWORD



Collaboration, Preservation, Urban Revitalization and Growth Management are integral parts to the Lackawanna Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan, entitled “Preserving our Cities. Preserving our Lands.” By utilizing the five pillar planning process, continuously conducting engagement and collecting feedback, this Plan provided data about current conditions, future needs, development and zoning decisions, and priorities for public investments. The Plan compiles a wealth of information about the region that may be helpful to residents, businesses, developers, other governmental agencies, interest groups and others. The Plan will support the Lackawanna County and Luzerne County governments as they pursue outside funding for the public projects and programs presented in this visionary Plan.

A comprehensive plan update allows the region to respond to changing needs, challenges and opportunities. While the region has seen little growth in its population, land development is still occurring, with new warehousing, distribution centers, and health care facilities dramatically changing traffic patterns, community facility services and housing needs. The region’s population has grown more diverse in both race and ethnicity due, in part, to the new development and added jobs.

The region’s urban areas are focused on revitalization and new housing opportunities. Land preservation is a high priority in the agricultural areas outside the primary growth areas. Goods distribution and delivery is as much a threat as it is an economic opportunity within existing and new employment centers throughout the region. An already robust transportation system is poised to become the multimodal network of the future. Multimodal transportation solutions such as active transportation, transit, bus-rapid transit and passenger rail are part of a bright future for connecting residents, neighborhoods, and cities to employment centers.

Future relationship building with both regional and municipal officials is important to maintaining and implementing the Plan’s policies and projects. Growth management will be challenging for each County but integral to the Plan’s success. Collaborating on regional planning initiatives, zoning matters, ordinance changes, and project determinations is essential. This Plan is a blueprint for managing future growth, preserving assets, enhancing access to essential services and supporting livable neighborhoods.



## THE FIVE PILLAR **Plan Process**



# INTRODUCTION



The Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan entitled “Preserving Our Cities. Preserving Our Lands.” is a collective vision developed by the region’s residents, stakeholders and project planning team. The twelve sections of the Plan lay out the data, trends, stakeholder engagement, and planning implications that form the key priorities for the region over the next 10 years.

## REGIONAL PLANNING

The Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Plan states it best, “In recent years, however, there has been increased recognition that excessive localism can lead to problems at the regional level. Development in one municipality can adversely impact water quality or road congestion in another. Competition between municipalities for commercial development may encourage suburban “sprawl” and also contribute to a declining tax base in older communities. Among other benefits, regional planning can provide a way to plan for the regional impacts of development.”

One local example of regional planning is the Scranton-Abingtons Planning Association (SAPA) Comprehensive Plan. The region has been planning jointly since 2008 and are currently updating the SAPA Plan. A Cooperative Planning Agreement was signed to complete the joint planning effort.



PLAN

INTERRELATIONSHIPS





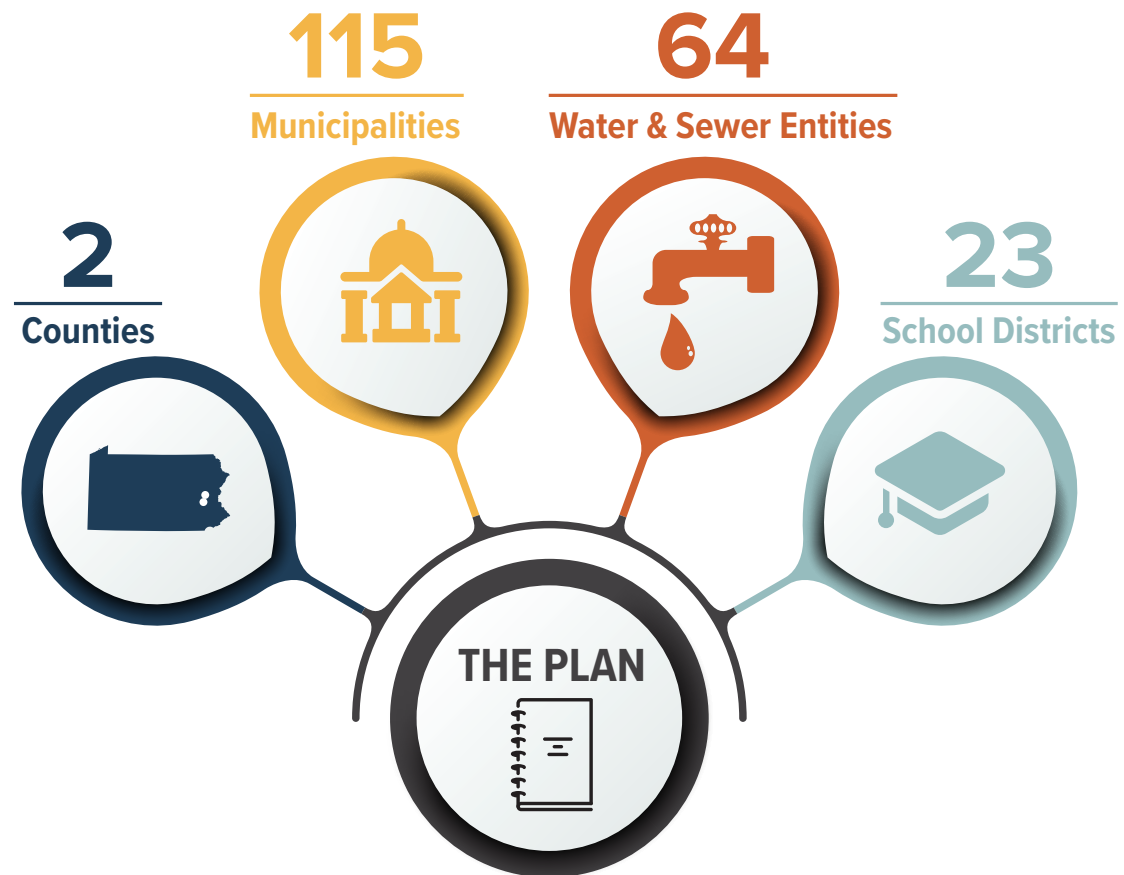
# PLAN INTERRELATIONSHIPS

The Regional Plan consists of the Comprehensive Plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan for Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. Each has its own impact and relation to the region. The Comprehensive Plan is responsible for the creation and implementation of goals, policies, and actions for both counties. The Long-Range Transportation Plan outlines overall safety, asset management and maintenance, expansion and coordination of the regional transportation system including roads, bridges, transit, trails, and rail systems. The pairing of these two Plans helps the entire Lackawanna and Luzerne region through identification of assets, sensitive lands, facilities, current and future land use, that will have coordinated influence on their path forward. The Plan serves as an advisory, collaborative, and supportive roadmap for: 2 counties, 115 municipalities, 64 water & sewer entities, and 23 school districts.

## ONE REGION – ONE PLAN

This Plan establishes a single, cohesive vision for the communities within Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. This highly intertwined region has chosen this innovative model to meld land use, community, economic, natural, agricultural, and historical resources, with housing, education, utilities, community facilities, and transportation planning. A concerted and combined strategy for the entire region will create an advanced outlook to carry the region into a prosperous future, while also making sure it addresses the distinct needs of today.

The Comprehensive Plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan were both developed in accordance with state and federal laws. They intend to comply with applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies, guidelines, requirements, and executive orders established by the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code and United States Code, Title 23.



The coordination of these two Plans helps the Lackawanna-Luzerne region focus on supporting crucial topics including:





# COORDINATED PLANNING

County and regional partners have completed or are currently working on planning processes in a range of topic areas. The goals and policies of the Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties 'Preserving Our Cities. Preserving Our Lands' is aligned with those plans and planning processes. The following plans have been recognized for their relevance to the bi-regional planning process:

## Luzerne County 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

Luzerne County's 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan revolves around five goals to reduce the risk from natural and human-made hazards throughout the County. These goals include:

- Protect lives, property, and resources
- Promote sustainable development to improve the quality of life
- Promote public understanding, support, and implementation in mitigation-related activities
- Ensure adequacy and continuity of emergency management services during hazard events
- Ensure hazard mitigation goals and objectives are consistent with goals of other plans and ordinance.

While the plan addresses 18 natural and human-made hazards, three hazards are identified as posing the greatest risk to lives and property: Flooding, Winter Storm, and Drought. The Plan also incorporates actions related to Cyber-Security, Nuclear Incidents and Pandemics.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan recommends actions at both the municipal level and the County level. Many of the County recommendations focus on tracking how the risks to different communities change over time and engaging with local officials and residents to effectively respond to these changes. The Plan recommends Luzerne County:

- Focus on four types of mitigation actions to help mitigate the risk to lives and property from hazards: 1) supporting implementation of local plans and regulations, 2) investing in structures and infrastructure, 3) protecting natural systems, and 4) improving education and awareness
- Continue to monitor local plans and regulations to ensure that floodplain management ordinances and Subdivision/Land Development Ordinances take into account the latest information on high-risk flood zones and areas protected by levee systems
- Work with municipalities to coordinate the implementation of stormwater management and groundwater protection programs to both ensure adequate groundwater recharge and prevent groundwater contamination
- Work with State agencies, professional organizations, and non-government organizations to conduct an annual workshop at key locations for private developers to ensure the timely implementation of mitigation actions. The intent of the workshop to educate private developers whom engage in hazard mitigation activities on 'safe' development practices. Practices that can be incorporated into future development proposals

# Lackawanna County 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan

The 2020 Lackawanna County Hazard Mitigation Plan provides County planners and municipalities with needed strategies that reduce the impact of various hazards to residents and property. The County worked with key stakeholders to identify and assess hazards, risks and vulnerabilities both regionally and locally. A mitigation plan was prepared using social, technical, administrative and economic evaluation criteria as the basis for prioritization. The Plan was adopted in early 2021.

The implementation plan identifies:

- Short-, medium-, or long-range action items
- Potential funding sources
- Responsible entities
- Target completion dates
- Five-Year Plan Maintenance Cycle

There were 15 hazards identified and evaluated including flooding, winter weather, wind events, wildfires, radon, drought, earthquakes, land subsidence, landslides, hazardous materials, levee failure, nuclear release, dam failure and infectious disease/pandemics. Hazard ranking and prioritization were based upon several hazard ranking criteria including probability; impacts and losses, spatial extents, warning time and duration of event. Plan goals are based on five themes:



County mitigation actions are divided into two categories: 1) mitigation actions carried over from the 2015 plan and 2) new county mitigation actions. Lead agencies include the County Emergency Management Agency, County Planning Department, DCNR, Lackawanna Hazard Coalition, Conservation District, 911 Center, and area water companies. The plan also provides complete mitigation actions for each of the municipalities.



## The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development: Living Wage Report (2016) and Report Update (2019)

In 2019, The Institute prepared an update to their 2016 Living Wage Report. The 2016 Report identified the region's living wage incomes for multiple household sizes, ranging from \$19,558 for a single adult to \$72,435 for a household of two working adults and three children. The 2019 Update to the Living Wage Report identified significant increase in basic costs, notably housing, which increased by 20% from 2016. Recommendations from the 2019 Update aimed to address the increase in housing costs include: more robust and equitable federal housing policies; expansion of region's rental assistance programs, available housing vouchers, and renters' tax credits; expansion of the supply of affordable housing to the lowest-income renters by continuing revitalization and infill efforts in the region's cities and boroughs; and, revising zoning codes to include affordable housing opportunities.

### WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

A Living Wage is defined as the level of income needed to allow the worker and his or her dependents to live in an environment where all basic needs are met in a self-sufficient manner. Living wage estimates vary as a result of geographic location and family compositions, as well as other factors. A person earning a living wage sits above the poverty level, and is not at any immediate risk of dire financial peril (such as foreclosure or homelessness).

*Data Sources: 'Living Wage Report 2016,' The Institute – 2016; 'Living Wage Report 2019,' The Institute – 2019*

## REPORT Recommendations

Raise the Pennsylvania and/or federal minimum wage rate.



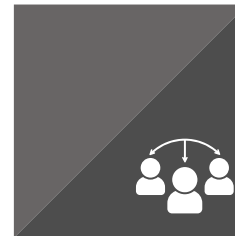
Support tax credits for low-income families

Increase economic development and workforce activities



Address housing affordability

Create strategic higher education and K-12 collaborations to ensure a match between regional skills and needs are met.



Expand access to existing social safety net programs



## Lackawanna County Blight Strategy, 2018

The 2018 Lackawanna County Blight Strategy, in collaboration with Lackawanna County Land Bank, NeighborWorks and a Blight Task Force, assessed blight conditions and identified targets throughout the region. The Strategy was developed in concert with “We Can Do this: A Five-Step, Fast Track Blight Plan,” by The Gulotta Group, LLC and published by the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania. The five-step process includes:



Lackawanna County was divided into four regions using seven measurement points as part of data collection:

- Size of the Problem
- Nature and extent of blight
- Average time the property is suspect blighted
- Problem with absentee landlords
- Foreclosure problems
- Effect of blight
- Success factors

One significant piece of data collected is that a high percentage of vacant property addresses have been vacant for over 36 months. “Nearly 53% of the vacant addresses have been vacant for more than three years in Scranton. Therefore, properties are blighted for a long-term period have caused property values to decline in the immediate vicinity and may result in the abandonment of more properties over time as values decline precipitously.” The Census analysis concluded that 39% of the County’s vacant properties are blighted. The vacant property values are worth \$167 million representing a loss of over \$1 Million in annual property taxes.

Priority Strategies include:

- Greater promotion of housing rehabilitation programs
- Enact ticket-based property maintenance code violations
- Pursue property conservatorship under state law
- Fund the demolition of properties
- Deny permits of property owners who fail to take substantial steps to correct existing code problems
- Enact programs that incentivize private development
- Develop an inventory of developable sites
- Engage municipal officials to share strategies
- Develop implementation strategies



## Pennsylvania 2018 DCNR Annual Trails Report: Creating Connections

Pennsylvania has more than 12,000 miles of trails and each year the trail system continues to grow. DCNR's goal is to ensure every Pennsylvanian has access to a trail within 15 minutes of their home. The report, developed in part by the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee, acknowledges trail accomplishments, funding awards, trail gaps, trail and river of the year award determinations, and outreach/partnerships and volunteer efforts. Top trail accomplishments in the region included 1) The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail located just north of Carbondale, in Northeastern Pennsylvania; 2) Lackawanna River Heritage Trail; 3) Susquehanna Warrior Trail in Luzerne County a 12.5 mile hiking and biking trail along the Susquehanna River from north of Berwick to Nanticoke between US Route 11 and the Susquehanna River on the corridor of the old Delaware, Lehigh and Western railroad beds 4) Trolley Trail in Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties uses a former interurban line to link several communities north of Scranton.

## Open Space, Greenways & Recreation Master Plan, 2004

The Open Space, Greenways & Recreation Master Plan for Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, was funded by DCNR, DCED, Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, The Willary Foundation, and Pennsylvania Environmental Council. The Plan provided proposed conservation areas, land conservation tools, funding sources and priorities. Trails were identified as being a priority for planning and implementation along with various land conservation. A top recommendation was for the counties to form a Luzerne-Lackawanna Regional Open Space, Greenways and Outdoor Recreation Authority (OSRA). OSRA would be governed by a Board of Directors appointed from each County.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Study for the Central Business Districts of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, 2020

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Study for the Central Business Districts of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre was a document prepared for and adopted by the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO in December 2020. The MPO has put an emphasis on multi-modal transportation and planning, and this study will guide policy going forward. It focuses on alternative pedestrian and bicyclist transportation by identifying a safe, efficient, and equitable bicycle and pedestrian network within the cities of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. The proposed network follows federal and state guidelines for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and follows guidelines set forth by the DCNR. This study and its elements have been incorporated into the development of this Plan through local stakeholder engagement to ensure regional consistency.

COMMUNITY

ENGAGEMENT



# ENGAGEMENT

## Community Engagement Matters

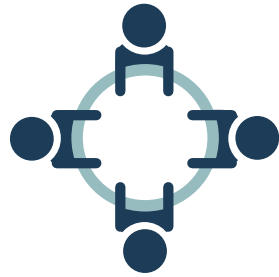
Data-driven and evidence-based planning practices are important; however, people have to implement plans, projects and programs. Therefore, engagement with community, business and political leaders is paramount to making change. Talking and listening to the community and its stakeholders is meaningful and provides a platform to:



Community engagement in the Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan began in March 2020 with the project's first Steering Committee meeting. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, both Counties and their associated Authorities, Boards, Council, and Commission meetings were held only online. Therefore, a majority of the planning activities in 2020 were also held online. Over the span of 10 months, 887 residents, government staff and officials, businesses, and other interest groups participated in engagement activities and virtual meetings.

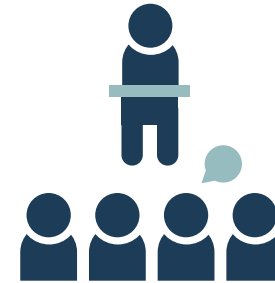


# ENGAGEMENT STATS



## MEETINGS

- 10** Project Team
- 6** Steering Committee
- 1** Public
- 4** Focus Groups



## PRESENTATIONS

- 2** MPO/LRTP
- 1** Lackawanna County Commissioners
- 1** Luzerne County Council

# ENGAGEMENT STATS



**288**  
TOTAL MEETING  
ATTENDEES



**2**  
Press Releases



**600**  
Community Survey  
Responses



30-day LRTP and 45-day  
Comprehensive Plan  
Public Review Period



County Website  
Postings

# FOCUS GROUP

## Land Use & Housing: May 7, 2020

The Focus Group convened stakeholders from the public [municipal, county, and state], nonprofit, and private sectors. The group responded to a series of questions around current and future regional land use and housing priorities, including: economic development, community infrastructure and services, and environmental hazards.





# FOCUS GROUP

## Natural Resource Protection, Recreation and Land Preservation: May 8, 2020

The Focus Group convened stakeholders from the County Conservation Districts, regional conservancies and land trusts, trail and greenway partners, area nonprofits, the National Parks Service, and private sector. The group responded to a series of questions around regional priorities and programs related to natural resources/open space, agriculture, water resources, and recreation.

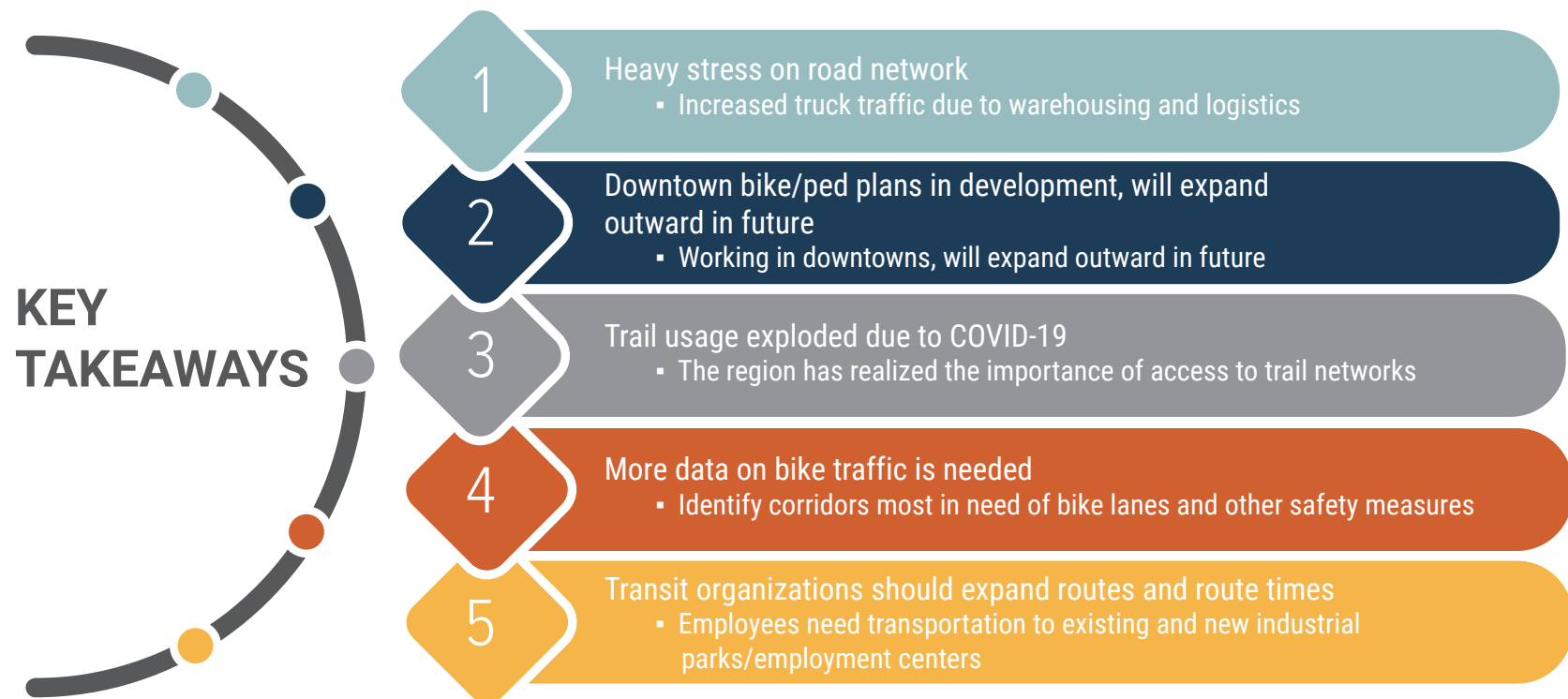
### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Land preservation is a top priority
  - Guide development away from natural areas
- 2 Natural Corridors need further protection:
  - Lackawanna River, Roaring Brook, Leggett's Creek, Susquehanna River/Greenway, Lake Scranton
- 3 Land preservation needs more funding
  - Farmland Preservation Boards, Conservation Districts
  - Look into alternate sources such as casino/gambling revenue
- 4 Increased physical connections are needed
  - North Branch, D&L access to Wilkes-Barre
- 5 Utica Shale drilling and extraction may become an issue in the future

# FOCUS GROUP

## Active Transportation and Transit: May 20, 2020

The Focus Group convened stakeholders from the area transportation authorities, municipalities, congressional offices, PennDOT, area employers, trail and greenway partners, and nonprofits. The group responded to a series of questions around regional opportunities, challenges, and trends related to active transportation infrastructure [bicycle & pedestrian] and transit.



# FOCUS GROUP

## Freight: May 20, 2020

The Focus Group convened stakeholders from municipalities, counties, area employers, developers, transportation authorities [rail and airport], and PennDOT. The group responded to a series of questions around regional strengths, weaknesses, trends, and issues related to the freight industry, with focus on: highways and bridges, rail, and aviation.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 The region's location in the northeast is a major strength
  - Access to many interstates connecting highly populated areas
- 2 There is an established workforce
  - Industrial history has carried over to freight/logistics/warehousing
- 3 The region has available land
  - Lehigh Valley is perceived to be built out, pushing freight development opportunities into the region
- 4 Increased rail access to industrial parks is needed
  - Provide shippers with modal choice
- 5 Truck parking and sidewalk improvements are needed
  - Industrial parks are not safe for pedestrians. Trucks do not have appropriate space to park while in transition



# COMMUNITY FORUM

The community forum was organized virtually to give local residents input on key topic areas such as housing, economy, and growth. Attendees also participated in an in-depth polling activity to identify key issues for the region.



## VIRTUAL MEETING July 22, 2020 @ 6:00 PM

### THE FORUM'S AGENDA INCLUDED:

- Overview of the Counties' joint planning process from Steve Pitoniak, Lackawanna County Planning Department Manager
- A 'State of the Region' report from Teri Ooms, Executive Director of The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development – a partnership of 13 colleges and universities in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metro area and the business community
- Report on Community Engagement Efforts, including the community survey that received over 600 responses
- Findings on Land Use and Development patterns in the region
- Report on the Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Live Community Polling activity to prioritize land use and transportation strategies

### THE COMMUNITY FORUM ACHIEVED THE FOLLOWING:

- Provided attendees with important updates on the comprehensive plan and long-range transportation planning process
- Identified significant regional trends and forecasted future impacts
- Provided a platform [via Live Community Polling] for community members to share their priorities for future land use and transportation strategies

SUPPORT PLANNING,  
*development,*  
AND **area transit.**

# COMMUNITY FORUM



**VIRTUAL MEETING**  
July 22, 2020 @ 6:00 PM

The following Key Takeaways highlight the updates, trends, and community feedback shared at the Forum

## POPULATION GROWTH

- The 2020 Census is forecasted to show population growth
- The region's population is aging

## ECONOMY

- COVID-19 has caused high levels of unemployment
- The region has a diverse economic base of occupations. Manufacturing is still a major employment sector.
- A vaccine for COVID-19 is the key to a quick economic recovery
- Retaining college graduates is important to the future economy. Local employer programs and downtown revitalization efforts are potential solutions to keep college graduates in the region

## HOUSING

- Affordable housing is needed. Solutions proposed included incentives for housing developers, locating new housing by employment centers, and addressing local zoning codes
- Downtown commercial space is being converted to residential units throughout the region
- Housing in the region is aging

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

- Planning and development of renewable energy sources is strongly supported

## LAND USE

- I-81 is the central spine for most existing and future development
- Multifamily housing is the predominant land use trend
- There is strong support for regional and municipal planning collaboration and model guidelines for farmland preservation and planning for logistics and distribution centers
- Urban sprawl should be minimized by creating integrated neighborhoods, focused city revitalization, increased public transit

## TRANSPORTATION

- Regionally, residents feel roads and bridges need work or need a lot of work particularly road and bridge surfaces and bridge rehabilitation/replacements
- Transit planning is directly related to land use planning
- PennDOT Connects program is important to transportation planning
- Municipal education on the implementation of bike and pedestrian connections is extremely important
- Expanding transit service to employment centers is needed
- Significant freight-related issues are congestion bottlenecks, traffic incidents, and availability of safe truck parking
- A growing number of crashes are related to distracted driving

# COMMUNITY SURVEY

## Comprehensive Plan Update & Long-Range Transportation Plan – Community Priorities Survey

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THE COMMUNITY  
PRIORITIES SURVEY WAS  
CONDUCTED TO ENGAGE  
RESIDENTS AND GATHER  
THEIR INPUT FOR THE  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

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The survey was conducted online using an interactive program created by MetroQuest. Respondents ranked their priorities and ranked proposed strategies to help guide policy creation for the region's future.

The survey was conducted online from April 6, 2020 to August 1, 2020. A total of 594 responses and 839 write-in comments were received. Optional information submitted by respondents showed that 83% of those that participated have lived in the region for 21+ years. An additional 10% lived in the region for 10-20 years, 5% for 3-9 years, and 2% for 0-2 years.

Respondents evaluated eight priority planning topics for the region. Survey respondents were asked to select their top 5 priorities, ordering the topics with 1 as most important and 5 as least important. The results showed that Economy and Jobs was the top priority for the region. This is notable since the

survey period was during the economic downfall that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Municipal Services was the least prioritized topic in the group. When respondents took the time to suggest another priority topic using a write-in option, many expressed a common desire to alleviate traffic and daily incidents on I-81.

In addition to regional planning topics and strategies, survey respondents were asked to rank strategies related to the Long-Range Transportation Planning Process. These results informed the development of the Lackawanna Luzerne MPO 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan. The LRTP is a standalone document that undergoes a separate approval process adherent to federal regulations, but the two plans were developed in concert to ensure regional consistency on the subject of transportation.

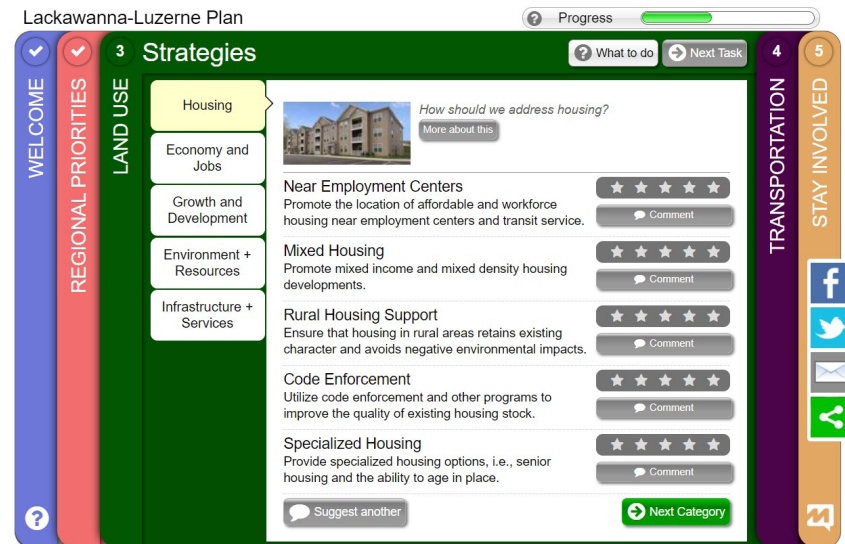


# COMMUNITY SURVEY



## Top Priorities (Based on Average Ranking)

1. Economy and Jobs
2. Infrastructure & Services
3. Growth & Development
4. Housing
5. Environment & Resources
6. Parks & Open Space
7. Resiliency & Disaster Prep
8. Municipal Services



## Planning Strategies – Highest Rated

Each regional planning topic included a list of 4-5 strategies related to the topic area. Survey respondents were asked to rate each potential strategy from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important). The respondents' ranking placed 'Retaining College Graduates' as the top strategy. The most common theme from write-in responses related to the importance and need for affordable and achievable housing, particularly for young professionals.

1. Retaining college graduates
2. Water quality protection and service
3. Water resource protection
4. Health care access
5. Downtown revitalization
6. Unemployment areas
7. Education access
8. Greenway/Trail connections



DEMOGRAPHICS &

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA



# POPULATION

This section examines population totals for the region, displaying current data and trends that may relate to the Comprehensive Plan and its strategies.

## DATA

The region's population is 529,338, according to the latest estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS).

## TRENDS

The region's population has not increased since 1980. It is significant to see that both counties have similar population trends, beginning with a decline that started in the 1980s. From 1980 to 2000, the region lost roughly 40,000 people, or -6.7% of its population. Since 2000, population numbers have remained relatively steady. The U.S. Census Bureau projects both counties will see an increase of 7.4% by the year 2040. An estimated 30% (ACS 2014-2018) of all residents have lived in the region for less than 5 years.

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*



## ENGAGEMENT

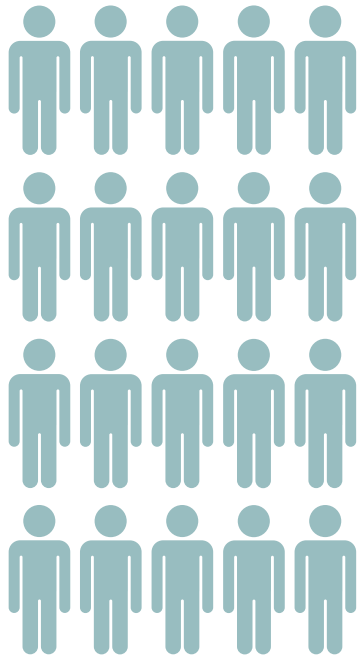
Public input has revealed that maintaining college graduates should be a priority in the region. This would help spur growth in the region, and as a result, population for the area may not be as flatlined in the coming years.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The region's strategies should encourage job creation and in emerging employment sectors to help maintain the student population and encourage local employers to hire local graduates.

PEOPLE  
in the *region*

## Regional Population Trends (1980-2018)

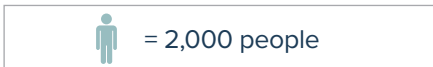


**SINCE 1980:**

Overall loss of about 40,000

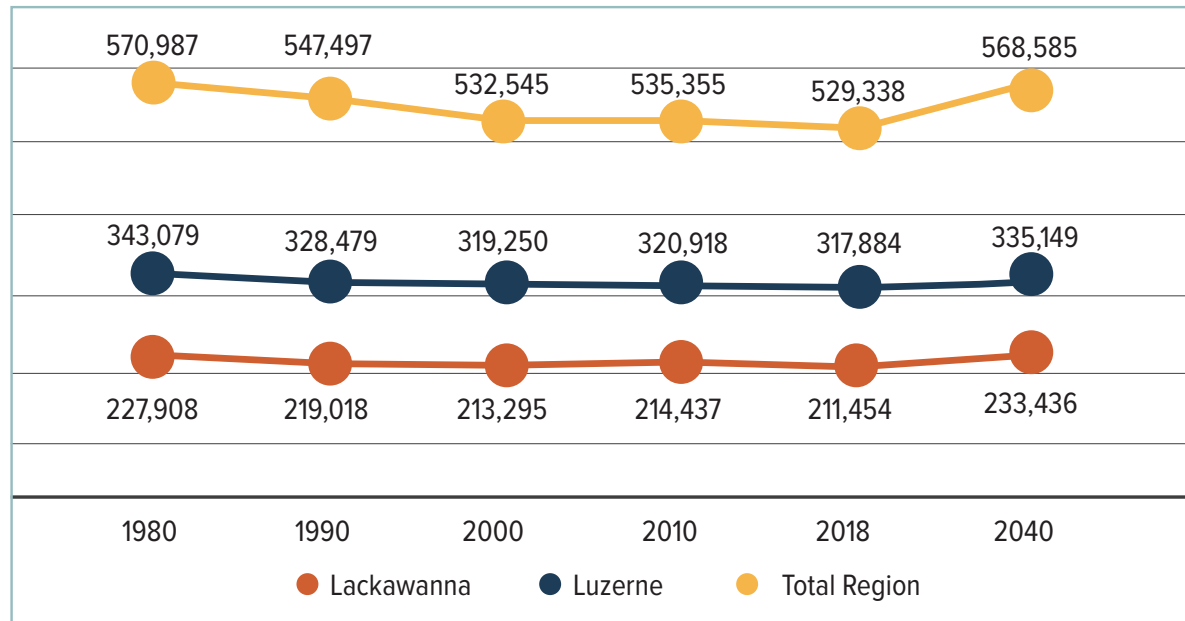
### NEW POPULATION:

30% of residents have lived in region for less than 5 years



Data Source: 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 US Census; 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Regional Population Projections to 2040



Complete Economic and Demographic Data Source (CEDDS), from Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. for 2040 projections.



# AGE

Data showing the region's age ranges and averages can help identify future trends and potential needs.

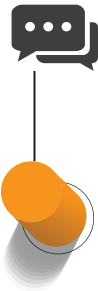
## DATA

The median age for the region in 2018 was 42.7, and the largest age cohort was 45-54, representing 13.8% of the population. Data shows that 3.7% of the population in Luzerne County and 4.6% of the population in Lackawanna County had moved into the region in the previous year. Additionally, 2,005 women in Lackawanna County and 3,448 women in Luzerne County gave birth to a child in the previous year.

## TRENDS

As shown on the following page, median age for the region has increased over the past decade, rising by 1.4%. The total number of individuals under 18 years of age decreased over this same time period by 3.4%. This decrease in the young population is paired with an increase in the aging population. From 2010 to 2018, the region's senior population (individuals 65 years or older) increased by 6%. This age individuals is projected to increase to 135,000 residents by 2040, an increase of nearly 30% since 2010. The young adult population (cohort age 20-24) decreased by 1.3% since 2010.

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*



## ENGAGEMENT

The region's aging population and projection of increased retirements from the workforce has placed an emphasis on the desire to retain college graduates from local universities.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

PennDOT crash data from the last decade shows an increase of crashes in the region that involve seniors.

*Data Source: PennDOT Crash Data 2010-2018)*

## Population Age – Total Region

	TOTAL			
	2010		2018	
	#	%	#	%
Total	532,851	100.0%	529,338	100.0%
Under 5 Years	27,880	5.23%	27,333	5.16%
5-9 Years	28,295	5.31%	28,351	5.36%
10-14 Years	31,894	5.99%	30,715	5.80%
15-19 Years	36,729	6.89%	33,034	6.24%
20-24 Years	34,200	6.42%	33,763	6.38%
25-34 Years	58,622	11.00%	65,636	12.40%
35-44 Years	71,107	13.34%	60,508	11.43%
45-54 Years	79,826	14.98%	72,884	13.77%
55-59 Years	37,750	7.08%	37,891	7.16%
60-64 Years	30,822	5.78%	36,876	6.97%
65-74 Years	44,449	8.34%	55,431	10.47%
75-84 Years	35,591	6.68%	29,856	5.64%
85+ Years	15,686	2.94%	17,060	3.22%
Under 18 Years	109,160	20.49%	105,488	19.93%
18+ Years	423,691	79.51%	423,850	80.07%
21+ Years	399,693	75.01%	401,671	75.88%
62+ Years	112,614	21.13%	123,593	23.35%
65+ Years	95,726	17.96%	102,347	19.33%
Median Age	42.1	N/A	42.65	N/A

*Source: 2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Estimate; 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimate*

### LEGEND

Increasing Population
Decreasing Population

# RACE & ETHNICITY



Data showing race and ethnicity can help show trends in the region's population.

## DATA

The region is predominantly white, representing 89% of the region's population identifies as white. About 9% of the region's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino.

## TRENDS

Data on race and ethnicity show the region is diversifying. Between 2000 and 2018, the population identifying as white decreased by 8% [from 97% in 2000 to 89% in 2018]. The population identifying as Black increased by 2.4% [from 1.5% in 2000 to 3.9% in 2018]. The population identifying as Hispanic or Latino nearly doubled, increasing by 4.5% [4.7% in 2000 to 9.2% in 2018].

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*



## ENGAGEMENT

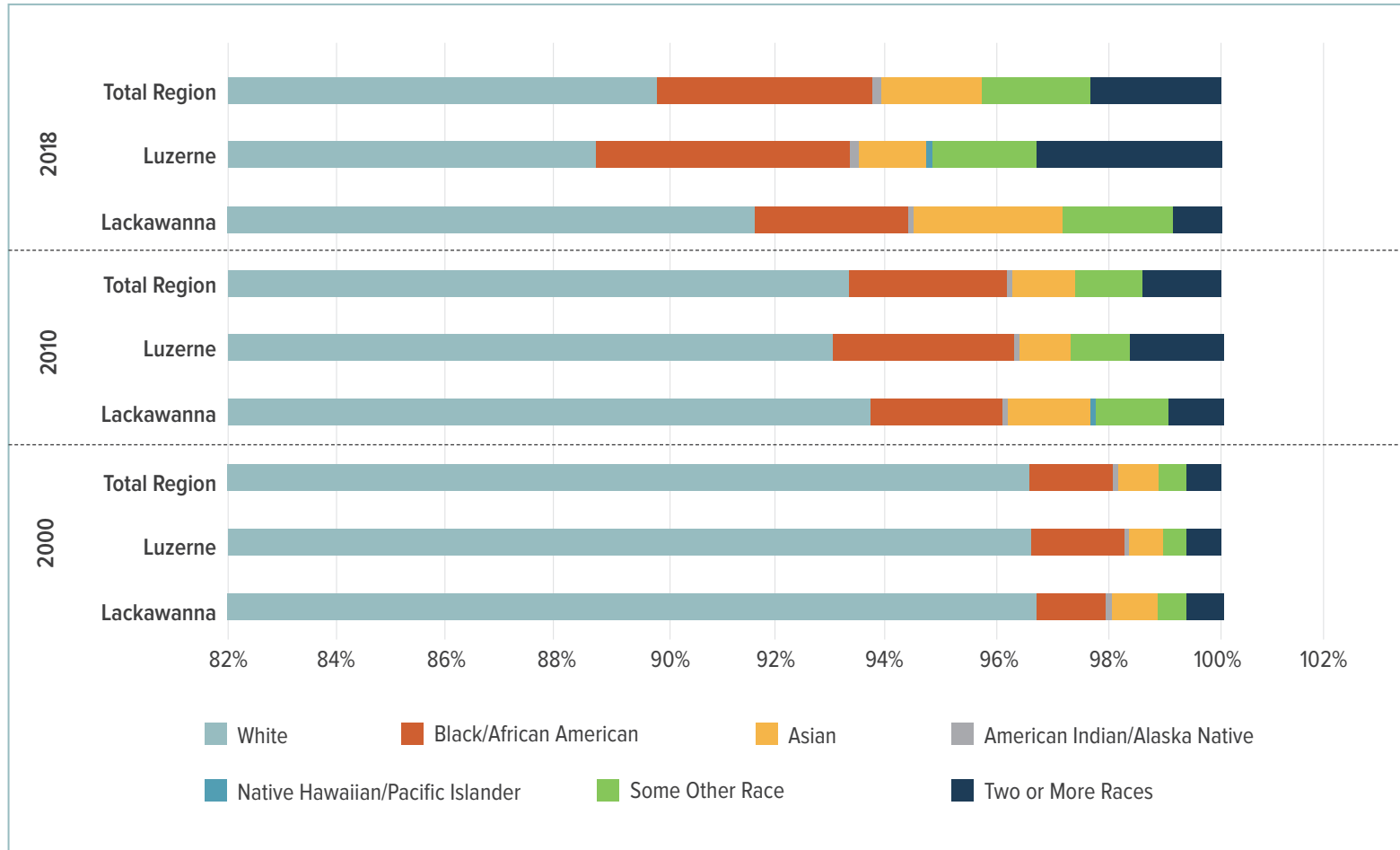
The public has noted shifts in the composition of the region's racial make-up. Diversity is valued throughout the region.



## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Regional planning needs to consider all races and ethnicities to promote the region's diversity.

### Population by Race (2000-2018)





# HOMELESSNESS

Data for the region's homeless populations shows that homelessness can affect a diverse demographic.

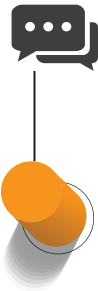
## DATA

The region's data on homelessness shows that out of 350 homeless individuals, 334 were sheltered in emergency shelters or transitional housing, while 16 remain unsheltered in 2019.

*Data Source: HUD 2019 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs – Homeless Populations and Subpopulations; 2019 Point-in-Time County for January 30th, 2019.*

## TRENDS

There are concerns across the region that the COVID-19 Pandemic will contribute to a rise in homelessness. Homelessness can affect populations across demographic and socio-economic categories. Continuum of Care programs and other support agencies should continue to be partnered with local organizations and institutions in order to best prepare for any future increases in homeless individuals.



## ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholders that participated in the planning process pointed out that homelessness does not limit itself to specific populations. Homelessness affects individuals and families from all races, ethnicities, genders, and age groups. Planning and programming should reflect support for all groups.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Planning and support programs related to homelessness need to represent the diverse demographics of the population. Homelessness is an issue that affects populations in the region regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or age.

## Regional Homeless Data (2019 Point-in-Time Count)

	Lackawanna	Luzerne	Total
Homeless Households	155	118	273
Homeless Individuals	186	164	350
<b>Sheltered/Unsheltered</b>			
Emergency Shelter	101	75	176
Transitional Housing	76	82	158
Unsheltered	9	7	16
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	119	75	194
Female	66	89	155
Transgender	1	0	1
Gender Non-Conforming	0	0	0
<b>Race</b>			
Black/African American	32	56	88
White	143	102	245
Asian	0	0	0
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0
Multiple Races	11	6	17
<b>Sub-Populations</b>			
Severely Mentally Ill	67	23	90
Chronic Substance Abuse	30	17	47
Veterans	30	14	44
Victims of Domestic Violence	14	14	28
Unaccompanied Youth	17	17	34
HIV/AIDS	0	0	0

*Data Source: HUD 2019 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs – Homeless Populations and Subpopulations; 2019 Point-in-Time Count for January 30th, 2019.*

# EDUCATION

Data about the region's educational attainment can show information about the workforce pool for local employers and identify trends in education levels of its population.

## DATA

Based on 2019 enrollment data for 22 school districts in the region, there are an estimated 72,880 children in grades K-12. Roughly 35% of the region's population has either an Associate, Bachelor, or Graduate degree. The region is home to 15 notable universities, colleges, community colleges, technical schools, and medical schools. There are an estimated 31,300 students enrolled in higher education institutions.

## TRENDS

Educational attainment in higher education is rising across households in the region. Significantly, the number of residents attaining an Associate's, Bachelor's or Graduate degrees from 2000 to 2018 increased from 24% to 35%. More women (39%) have obtained higher education than men (31%).

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*



## ENGAGEMENT

Community stakeholders feel the impact of local colleges and universities is positive and is a source of pride for the region. Higher education is beginning to impact the region's downtowns by developing branch campuses or offering classes in an urban environment. Stakeholders feel it's important to increase college and technical school enrollment. The Comprehensive Plan community survey respondents have prioritized the importance of retaining college graduates in the region.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

An educated population is directly linked to increased earning capacity. Educational opportunities can lead to higher wage rates, median income, population diversification, housing values, professions and job types, college graduate retention rates, household health, and elevated social and economic conditions.

# HOUSING





# HOUSING OCCUPANCY

## CHARACTERISTICS

Housing units are predominantly owner-occupied. The region's vacancy rate of 14% is higher than the statewide average.

### DATA

There are over 50,000 more housing units in Luzerne County (149,897) than in Lackawanna County (99,659). The region's vacancy rate is around 14%, totaling to almost 35,000 vacant units. 67% of the region's housing units are owner-occupied and 33% are renter-occupied.

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### TRENDS

The vacancy rate of around 14% is higher than the statewide average of 11.4%. The vacancy rate in the region has increased by almost 4% since 2010. Renter households are forecasted to increase in the region. Since 2010, housing trends show there has been a 3% increase in renter-occupied households, increasing from 30% to 33%.



### ENGAGEMENT

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is hypothesized that the region may see an influx in population.

### PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Development patterns are shifting from constructing owner-occupied units to rental units. The region's cities are experiencing high demand for building permits to build multifamily housing. The Institute produced the 2017 Report on the economic impact of blight in Lackawanna and Luzerne counties. The report highlighted that of the total vacant units identified in the region, between 36 to 39% of units were vacant for the following reasons: foreclosure; possibly abandoned; extended absence of occupant; and in need of repairs, but currently understanding repairs. Furthermore, the Report estimated that the total value of the blighted properties came to well above \$400M between both counties, representing over \$3M lost in the counties' portion of property taxes if the units were occupied, in good repair, and paid property taxes in full.

A majority among the Luzerne County Council believe that blight remains a persistent issue. Housing that is vacant or in disrepair is unsightly and hazardous and can hinder the potential for growth and reinvestment in the surrounding area.

*Data Source: 'Measuring the Economic Impact of Blight in Lackawanna & Luzerne Counties,' The Institute – 2017.*

### Tax Revenue Lost from Blighted Residential Properties

County	County Tax Impact
Lackawanna County	\$1,420,052
Luzerne County	\$1,827,501

*Data Source: 'Measuring the Economic Impact of Blight in Lackawanna & Luzerne Counties,' The Institute – 2017.*

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates; 2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates.*

# HOUSING STOCK

## AGE AND TYPE

The region has an aging housing stock, with the majority of units built before 1950. The majority of homes in the region are single-family detached dwellings.

### DATA

In the region, 35% of the housing stock was built prior to 1939, and over 50% was built before 1950. The older housing stock contributes to the region's 'naturally occurring affordable housing' where the housing costs for older homes and rental units are less than newer homes and units. Home values in both counties increase substantially for more recently constructed homes.

Almost 64% of housing units in the region are single-family detached dwellings. There is a higher percentage of multi-family units (2 units or more) in Lackawanna County (25.8%) than in Luzerne County (19.4%).

*Data Source: 'Implications of the Region's Aging Housing Stock,' The Institute – 2019.*

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### TRENDS

Older housing stock is located unevenly across the region. Much of the housing stock in the region built before 1940 is located near the I-81 corridor, with some located in more rural areas. The construction of apartments and multi-family housing is increasing both in the region and state. The region's downtowns are experiencing higher levels of multi-family building conversions.



### ENGAGEMENT

- As the region's housing stock ages, dilapidated housing and blighted properties in the area may increase in number if housing stock rehabilitation is not widely accomplished
- A future rail line to Hoboken, NJ and the New York City area, along with fallout from COVID-19, will have a major impact on the region's housing market

### PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The higher proportion of older homes at the lower end of the housing market indicates that potential issues related to housing costs may be disproportionately affecting homeowners and renters with low-to-moderate incomes. The aging housing stock could also contribute to health and accessibility challenges such as presence of lead paint and asbestos and lack of accessible structures for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

One lesson learned from the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019-2021 is that it is difficult to social distance within shared housing spaces. Positivity rates were high in Hazleton City where a high proportion of the housing is comprised of multi-family stock. Cases were also seen at a meat-processing facility located west of Hazleton. A majority of the Luzerne County Council recommends that, moving forward, developers of new residential, commercial, and industrial buildings consider installing robust ventilation systems, and provide adequate square footage to safely space employees and staff on-site in order to mitigate the impact of any future pandemics.

*Data Source: 'Implications of the Region's Aging Housing Stock,' The Institute – 2019.*

# HOME VALUE AND COSTS

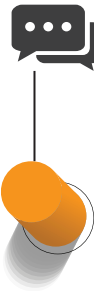
The region has seen median home values and median rent steadily increase over the past decade.

## DATA

In 2018, the median home value in the region was \$137,550 and median rent was \$773. Since 2010, the median home value has increased by 9.9%. Median rent increased by an even higher percentage, rising 26.5% since 2010.

## TRENDS

Median home values have continued to increase but are still below the state and national averages. Median rent has increased by 26.5%. The data shows disparities related to race with regards to homeownership.



## ENGAGEMENT

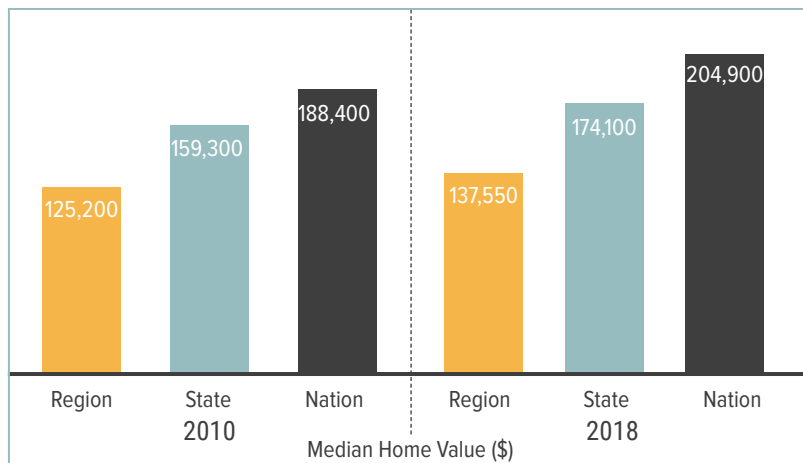
Stakeholders believe that COVID-19 impacts may decrease the amount of available rental units, and cause a spike in home prices.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Home values have increased by almost 10% since 2010. Rental costs have increased by 26.5% in the same time period, indicating a disproportionate effect of rising costs for renter-occupied households. While it may be more economical for renters to consider buying a home and building equity via mortgage payments, certain barriers such as debt and credit history may create difficulties for renters to become homeowners.

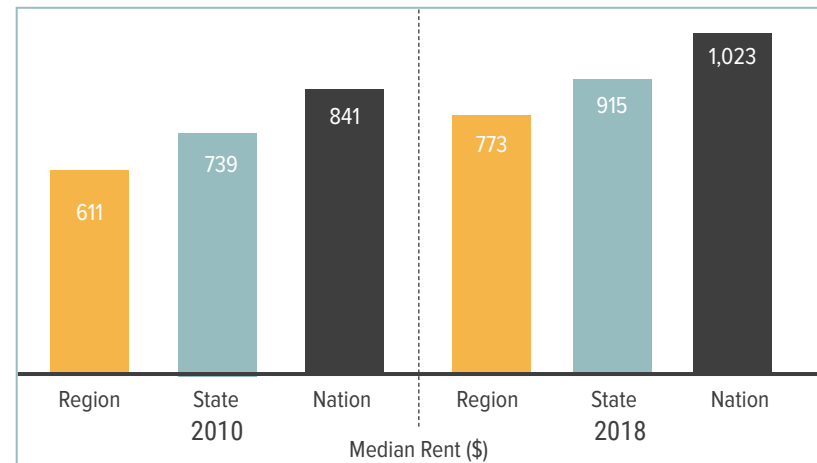
*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### Median Home Value



*Source: 2006-2010, 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### Median Rent



*Source: 2006-2010, 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

# HOUSING TRENDS

Since 2010



HOME VALUES ARE HIGHER

Region: +9.9%  
PA: +9.3%



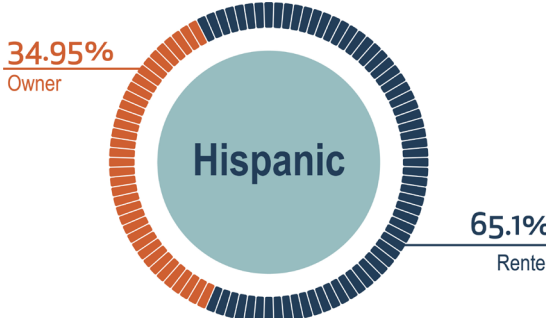
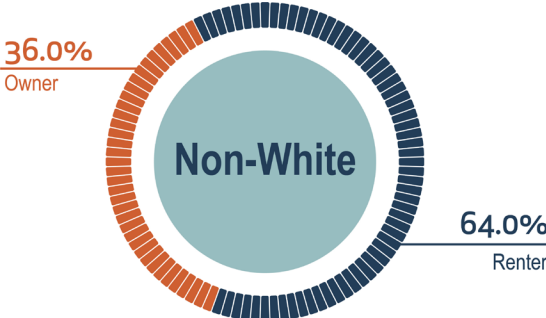
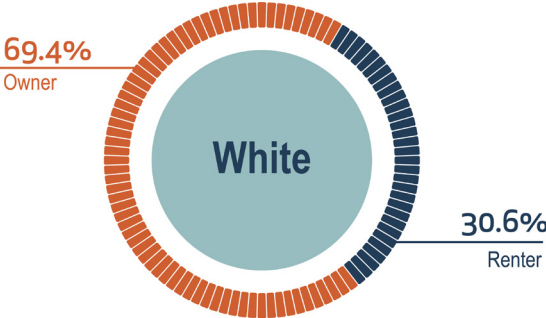
MEDIAN RENT IS HIGHER

Region: +26.5%  
PA: +23.8%

MEDIAN HOME VALUES HAVE CONTINUED TO INCREASE BUT ARE STILL BELOW THE STATE AND NATIONAL AVERAGES.

Data Source: US Census 2010; 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Homeownership by Race/Ethnicity – Total Region



Data Source: US Census 2010, 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates



# INCOME

Median income growth for the region has increased at a comparable pace to the state.

## DATA

In 2018, the region's median income was \$51,261, and the median income for the state was \$59,445.

*Data Source: US Census 2010, 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

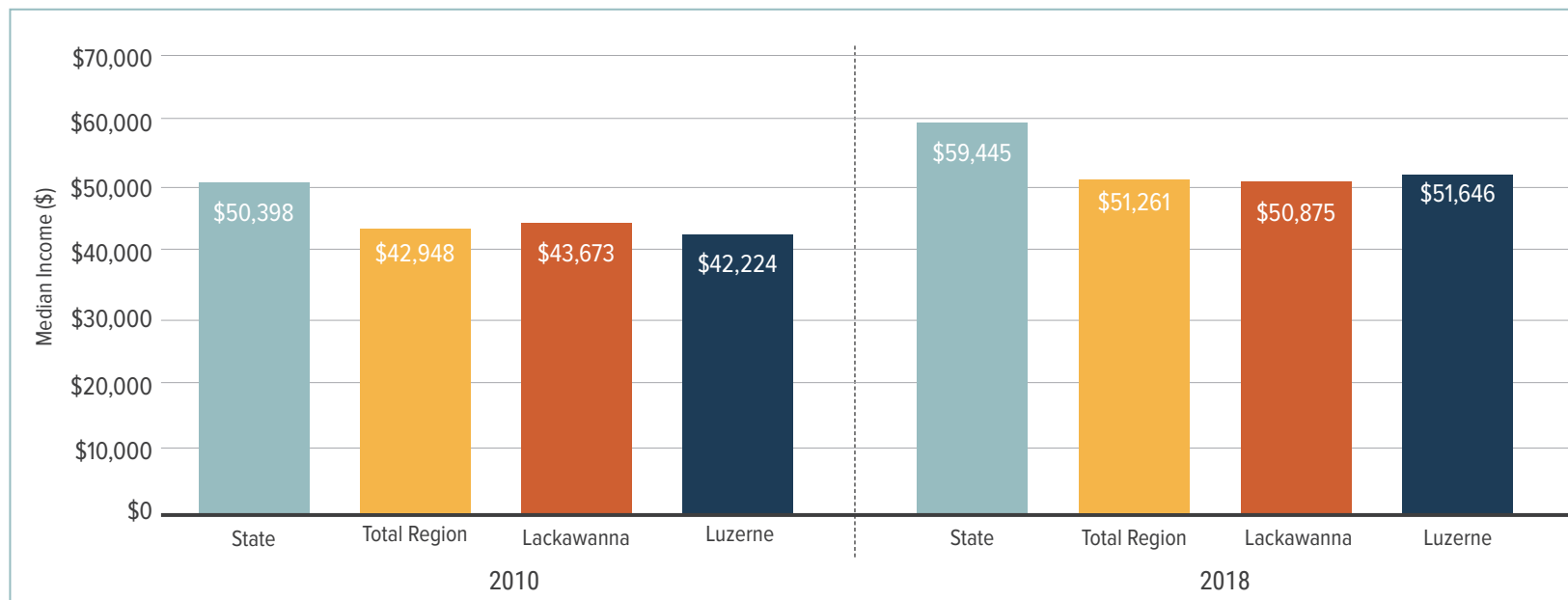
## TRENDS

Since 2010, median income has grown more than 19% and is slightly outpacing growth for the state (18%). The data indicates disparities in median income by race and ethnicity, with a higher percentage of those who identify as non-white or Hispanic/Latino earning less than \$35,000 than those who identify as white and a higher percentage of those identifying as white earning more than \$75,000 than those identifying as non-white or Hispanic/Latino.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Educational attainment and workforce training are important indicators of earning capacity.

Median Income – Total Region



*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Median Income by Race/Ethnicity – Total Region



Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

# AFFORDABILITY

In the region, almost 20% of owner-occupied households and 40% of renter households are considered cost-burdened. Policies that support ‘achievable housing’ are important to consider in the context of regional housing affordability.

## DATA

Within the region, housing is considered relatively affordable, especially when compared with other regions in Pennsylvania and throughout the nation. However, even when the housing market is affordable, individuals and households in the region can still be considered cost-burdened, spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs.

Additionally, there are an increasing number of individuals and households who are working full-time but experiencing economic insecurity – especially when earning less than a ‘living wage’ – and they are struggling to meet the costs of housing, transportation, healthcare, and [when applicable] childcare.

The Comprehensive Plan Update process identified affordability challenges across a range of incomes in the region. Very low-income households experience high rates of being cost-burdened and utilize of social assistance programs and subsidies. Additionally, the planning process prioritized the need to support the creation of ‘achievable housing’ in the region. In the Lackawanna Luzerne region, achievable housing falls within 50% to 120% of Area Median Income (AMI), recognizing that housing affordability affects individuals and families across a range of incomes.

For owner-occupied households, the median monthly housing costs in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties are \$816 and \$824

respectively, under 15% of the median income for homeowners in the counties. Similarly, rent is considered generally more affordable in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, costing about 28% of the median household income for renters in Lackawanna County, and less than 31% for renters in Luzerne County. The relative affordability of the region can be partially attributed to the occurrence of ‘naturally affordable housing’ due to the age and condition of the housing stock. For owner-occupied homes, 43% were built before 1950. For renter-occupied homes, 47% were built before 1950.

*Data Source: ‘The Housing Divide in Northeast PA’, The Institute, 2020; 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## WHAT DOES ACHIEVABLE HOUSING LOOK LIKE FOR THE REGION?

- Affordable for low-to-moderate income individuals and families (between 50-120 percent Area Median Income)
- Supports policies, programs, and subsidies that create low-to-moderate income housing, workforce housing, and achieves housing affordability for individuals and families experiencing economic insecurity

# AFFORDABILITY

However, significant disparities exist when comparing the percentage of cost-burdened households by owner-occupied and renter-occupied households. In the region, around 40% of renter households are cost-burdened compared to around 20% of owner-occupied households.

Housing Affordability for OWNER-Occupied Households			
	Median Household Income	Median Monthly Housing Costs	Housing Costs as a % of Income
Lackawanna County	\$66,126	\$816	14.8%
Luzerne County	\$66,528	\$824	14.9%
Pennsylvania	\$75,309	\$1,012	16.1%
USA	\$78,045	\$1,103	17.0%

Data Source: 'The Housing Divide in Northeastern PA,' The Institute – 2020.

Housing Affordability for RENTER-Occupied Households			
	Median Household Income	Median Monthly Rent	Rent as a % of Income
Lackawanna County	\$33,789	\$797	28.3%
Luzerne County	\$30,971	\$789	30.6%
Pennsylvania	\$35,600	\$927	31.2%
USA	\$40,531	\$1,058	31.3%

Data Source: 'The Housing Divide in Northeastern PA,' The Institute – 2020.

Cost-Burdened Households			
	All Households	Owner-Occupied Households	Renter Households
Lackawanna County	30.0%	23.7%	41.3%
Luzerne County	25.3%	18.4%	40.6%
Pennsylvania	28.2%	20.8%	44.2%
USA	30.9%	22.3%	46.2%

Data Source: 'The Housing Divide in Northeastern PA,' The Institute – 2020.

Further, even larger disparities in cost-burdened households appear when comparing the percentage of cost-burdened households by household income (inclusive of both owner and renter occupied households), with over 50% of households earning \$20,000-35,000 considered to be cost-burdened, and around 80% of households with income under \$20,000 considered to be cost-burdened.

## TRENDS

Renter-occupied households with incomes lower than \$35,000 are significantly more likely to be cost-burdened than owner-occupied households with comparatively low incomes. The gap between renters and homeowners is largest in the \$20,000 to 34,999 category, where in both Lackawanna and Luzerne counties, about two thirds of renters in this income group are cost-burdened, compared to 47% of homeowners.

The 2016 Living Wage Report from The Institute concluded that the \$7.25 federal minimum wage does not meet the living standard for any family composition as presented in their study, even when all adults in the household work full-time. Many of these individuals and families lack economic security but do not qualify for social assistance programs due to income eligibility limits. The 2016 Report highlighted that there are many families who do not earn the living wage necessary for a modest but dignified life and are not able to access the spectrum of social assistance services and programs.

*Data Source: 'The Housing Divide in Northeastern PA,' The Institute – 2020; 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates; 'The Living Wage Report 2016,' The Institute – 2016.*

Percent Cost-Burdened out of All Occupied Housing Units by Household Income					
	<\$20,000	\$20,000 – \$34,999	\$35,000 – \$49,999	\$50,000 – \$74,000	≥\$75,000
Lackawanna County	87.3%	60.3%	23.7%	10.9%	3.5%
Luzerne County	78.8%	50.6%	22.9%	7.8%	1.4%
Pennsylvania	83.4%	58.5%	34.2%	16.9%	4.2%
USA	83.2%	62.8%	40.8%	23.5%	6.9%

*Data Source: 'The Housing Divide in Northeastern PA,' The Institute – 2020.*

Percent Cost-Burdened out of All OWNER-Occupied Housing Units by Household Income					
	<\$20,000	\$20,000 – \$34,999	\$35,000 – \$49,999	\$50,000 – \$74,000	≥\$75,000
Lackawanna County	89.7%	53.3%	23.9%	15.0%	3.4%
Luzerne County	74.8%	39.2%	21.8%	9.5%	1.5%
Pennsylvania	79.8%	46.5%	30.5%	17.2%	4.4%
USA	75.6%	47.6%	33.5%	21.8%	6.9%

*Data Source: 'The Housing Divide in Northeastern PA,' The Institute – 2020.*

Percent Cost-Burdened out of All RENTER-Occupied Housing Units by Household Income					
	<\$20,000	\$20,000 – \$34,999	\$35,000 – \$49,999	\$50,000 – \$74,000	≥\$75,000
Lackawanna County	85.6%	66.8%	23.2%	3.3%	4.2%
Luzerne County	82.5%	64.7%	25.2%	2.0%	0.4%
Pennsylvania	86.0%	73.6%	41.1%	16.1%	3.2%
USA	88.5%	78.9%	50.9%	26.6%	7.0%

*Data Source: 'The Housing Divide in Northeastern PA,' The Institute – 2020.*

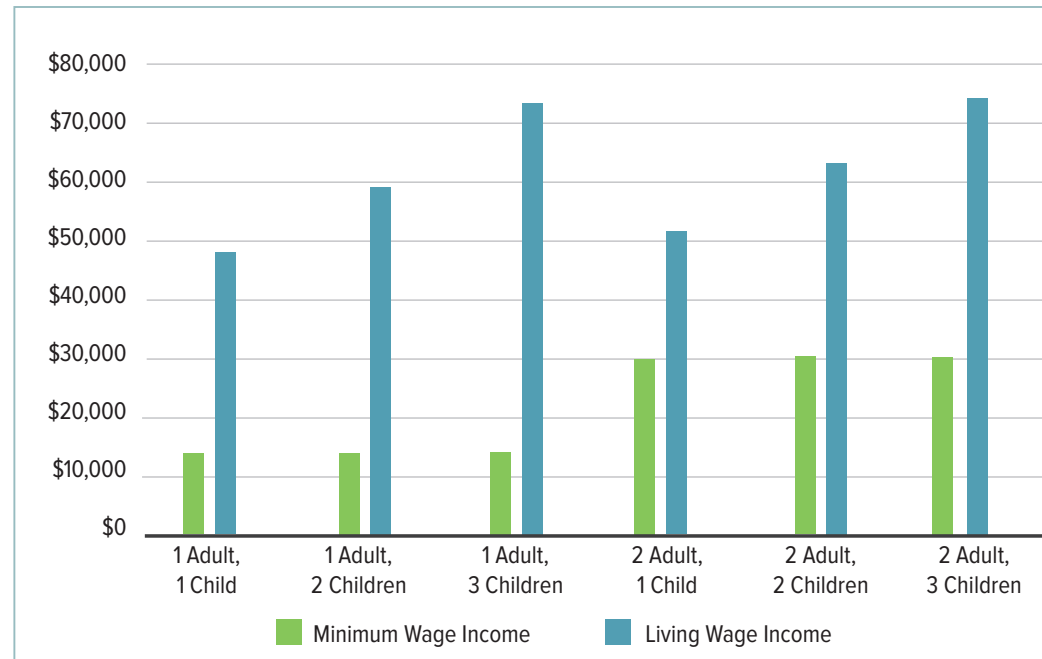




## ENGAGEMENT

- Affordable housing is needed, particularly in Hazleton. There are long waitlists for housing vouchers. Solutions could include incentives for housing developers, building new housing by employment centers, and flexible zoning codes that permit multi-family housing
- The Cranberry Creek area in Hazleton has potential for future affordable housing
- Most new housing is apartments and residential conversions of commercial space in downtowns
- Housing in the region is aging. Policies are needed for housing rehabilitation
- There is a demand for senior housing

## Lackawanna/Luzerne Minimum Wage vs. Living Wage by Family Composition



Data Source: 'Living Wage Report 2019,' The Institute – 2019

## WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

A Living Wage is defined as the level of income needed to allow the worker and his or her dependents to live in an environment where all basic needs are met in a self-sufficient manner. Living wage estimates vary as a result of geographic location and family compositions, as well as other factors. A person earning a living wage sits above the poverty level, and is not at any immediate risk of dire financial peril (such as foreclosure or homelessness).

Data Sources: 'Living Wage Report 2016,' The Institute – 2016; 'Living Wage Report 2019,' The Institute – 2019

## WHY ACHIEVABLE HOUSING:

- The region's housing costs have been relatively low, so housing can be naturally affordable without subsidy for many households in the 50 to 120% AMI range – though age and condition of housing stock is a concern
- Achievable housing is a useful lens for Northeastern Pennsylvania given the significant number of moderate income households
- Housed people have better opportunities for sustained employment thereby increasing economic impact through increased purchasing power and new tax revenue
- Increases the employee pool for local employers
- Reduces the need for social services
- Improves local health outcomes, preserves health care resources, and if sustained could lower health care costs
- Improves academic performance in children leading to a stronger workforce pipeline
- The improved economic situations of individuals may reduce recidivism and crime

*Data Source: The Institute, 2021*

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

While the region remains relatively affordable in regards to housing costs, affordability is not uniformly experienced across owner-occupied households, renter-occupied households, and between income levels. These disparities indicate that renter-households and lower-income households experience a significantly higher rate of being cost-burdened than owner-occupied households and those with incomes above \$35,000. Furthermore, as seen in the Living Wage Reports from 2016 and 2019, individuals and working families may work full-time; however, with many jobs paying less than a living wage, individuals and families experience economic insecurity. Expenses such as childcare, transportation and housing have continued to increase without an increase in wages. While there are programs providing social and financial assistance to individuals and families, there are also numerous families in Northeastern PA who fall into the gap of having too much income to qualify for meaningful assistance, but too little to achieve economic security.

Housing affordability and increasing costs paired with stagnant wages that do not meet the threshold of a 'living wage' have created a precarious economic situation for many individuals and families across the region. Achievable housing supports housing policies, subsidies, and programs that create low to moderate income housing, workforce housing, and achieve housing affordability for individuals and families experiencing economic insecurity.

*Data Source: The Living Wage Report 2019, The Institute – 2019.*

Lackawanna & Luzerne Counties Cost of Living Two-Adult Families			
Annual Expenses	2 Adults, 1 Child	2 Adults, 2 Children	2 Adults, 3 Children
Housing	\$10,008 (+20.2%)	\$10,008 (+20.2%)	\$12,996 (+22.9%)
Food	\$7,933 (-1.0%)	\$10,245 (-0.9%)	\$12,474 (-0.9%)
Transportation	\$8,341 (+5.6%)	\$9,650 (+4.2%)	\$9,540 (+47.9%)
Childcare	\$7,567 (+3.5%)	\$13,236 (+4.4%)	\$18,905 (+4.7%)
Medical	\$6,345 (+12.5%)	\$6,427 (+12.7%)	\$6,147 (+8.4%)
Other	\$5,030 (+26.2%)	\$5,855 (+21.5%)	\$5,729 (+27.3%)
Monthly Taxes	\$6,309 (+5.0%)	\$7,731 (+1.2%)	\$9,178 (+1.2%)
<b>Required Annual Income before Taxes</b>	<b>\$51,534 (+9.2%)</b>	<b>\$63,152 (+7.8%)</b>	<b>\$74,969 (+8.6%)</b>
<b>Required Hourly Wage per Adult</b>	<b>\$12.39 (+9.3%)</b>	<b>\$15.18 (+7.8%)</b>	<b>\$18.02 (+8.6%)</b>

Data Source: 2019 Update to Living Wage Report, The Institute – 2019

# HOMELESS FACILITIES

## DATA

	Lackawanna	Luzerne	Total
<b>Emergency, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing</b>			
Family Units	23	32	55
Family Beds	73	105	178
Individual Beds	78	126	204
Total Year-Round Beds	151	230	381
Overflow/Voucher Beds	32	45	77
<b>Permanent Housing</b>			
Family Units	90	101	191
Family Beds	289	287	576
Individual Beds	122	173	295
Total Year-Round Beds	411	460	871
Overflow/Voucher Beds	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Grand Totals</b>			
Family Units	113	133	246
Family Beds	362	392	754
Individual Beds	200	298	498
Total Year-Round Beds	562	690	1252
Overflow/Voucher Beds	32	45	77
<b>Subsets of Total Bed Inventory</b>			
Chronic Beds	210	34	244
Veteran Beds	94	133	227
Youth Beds	37	23	60

Data Source: HUD 2019 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs – Housing Inventory Count Report for 2019

## TRENDS

The long-term effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic may increase the need for supportive services throughout the region. These will be particularly important if an economic downturn leads to households falling behind in rent and mortgage payments, potentially leading to an increase in evictions over the coming months and years.



## ENGAGEMENT

Engagement identified homelessness as an issue that reaches many corners of local demographics, requiring a diverse and multi-faceted set of solutions. These can include different types of housing, such as transitional housing or repaid re-housing.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Support for homeless individuals and families in the area comes from many different programs and organizations aiding in the form of housing facilities and beds. This includes family units and individual beds in numerous emergency shelters, safe havens, transitional housing units, permanent supportive housing units, and rapid-rehousing programs. The housing units and beds in the table are provided by local organizations such as the Catherine McAuley Center, United Neighborhood Centers, Commission for Economic Opportunity, Community Intervention Center, Valley Youth House, Women's Resource Center, Inc., Salvation Army, Municipal Housing Authorities, Volunteers of America, Veterans Administrations, and numerous church organizations. Planning in the region should continue support of these agencies, create new partnerships and continue to search for new funding or grant opportunities.





# COMMUNITY

# FACILITIES





# EDUCATION

The region is seeing higher rates of educational attainment in post-secondary education. The increase in residents attending college and technical schools means a more educated workforce, potentially attracting new employers and economic opportunity to the region.

## DATA

Nearly 35% of the region's population had secured either an Associate, Bachelor, or Graduate degree in 2018. The region is home to 15 notable universities, colleges, community colleges, technical schools, and medical schools. The number of residents attaining an Associate's, Bachelor's or Graduate degrees from 2000 to 2018 increased from 24% to 35%. There are an estimated 31,346 students enrolled in higher education institutions. Nearly 41% of the female population age 25 or older has obtained a post-secondary degree compared to 38% of the male population. This is a significant change from 31% for females and 33% for males in 2010. There are 22 school districts in the region with an estimated 72,881 children attending grades K-12 based on 2019 enrollment data. Each county has received upwards of \$2M in 2020 CARES Act funding to address school safety needs.

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates , 2019 Pennsylvania Department of Education Enrollment and Projections.*

## TRENDS

Higher education is a rising household trend in the region particularly for females. COVID-19 has changed the way education is delivered. In 2020 and potentially through 2021 all levels of education will be primarily delivered online. Teachers and students will deliver and attend classes through remote learning platforms.



## ENGAGEMENT

Local colleges and universities represent a source of pride for the residents of the region. A major priority of the regional survey was the importance of retaining college graduates. Stakeholders also hope to increase degree attainment rates.



## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

As the percentage of residents attaining college/technical school degrees increases, there will be shifts in demographic makeup, employment sectors, professions or careers, increased college enrollment, better household health, higher wage rates, and elevated social and economic conditions.

# EMERGENCY SERVICES

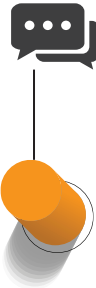
Emergency services including EMS, police, and fire are coordinated throughout the region at centralized County 9-1-1 centers.

## DATA

Both Lackawanna and Luzerne counties have dedicated emergency services, police departments, and fire departments. Emergency services are dispatched through County 9-1-1 centers. Data available for Luzerne County showed that the Luzerne County 9-1-1 Center handles calls for 76 municipalities and 174 police, fire and EMS agencies. The County averages 1,200 calls per day and 400,000 to 450,000 calls per year. Lackawanna County emergency services are coordinated across its 40 municipalities as well, seeing similar call data but at a smaller scale.

## TRENDS

Data trends show an increase in call volumes during holidays, storms, and major catastrophic events. However, call volume decreased during the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the state's phased reopening began in June 2020, call numbers started to return to normal levels.



## ENGAGEMENT

Residents believe that emergency services have adequate response times. However, emergencies that occur on major road corridors can cause severe delays. Stakeholder interviews revealed a need for increased signage related to detour routes or alternate routes. Additionally, the majority of fire and EMS services are provided by volunteers and their participation numbers have been decreasing throughout the state.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

As the roadway network becomes more crowded, the two counties and its municipalities may need to explore new emergency service routes, or look into developing uniform signage to help passengers better navigate the system more efficiently during emergencies.

# HEALTHCARE

Healthcare represents one of the fastest growing sectors in the region, with future demand for workers and services expected to rise.

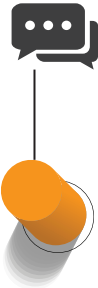
## DATA

There are 1,520 hospital beds in the region (3 hospital beds per 1,000 residents and 50 long term care beds per 1,000 residents age 65 and over). Overall, 94.4% of the population of the region has health coverage of which 50% is employee plans, 17% is Medicaid, 14% is Medicare, 12% is non-group plans, and less than 1% is military or VA plans. Geisinger is the largest health services provider in the region. Per capita personal health care spending for the region was \$9,258 in 2014. This is a 4.29% increase from the previous year (\$8,877).

## TRENDS

Healthcare is a growing employment sector, increasing its share of the workforce by over 3% since 2000. Demand for health care jobs in the region is expected to continue to rise.

*Data Source: The University of Scranton and The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development; 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates ; US Census 2000,2010*



## ENGAGEMENT

Geisinger and the region's medical schools have had a positive impact on the area. The growth in this sector has made healthcare services a strength for the region. During the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the region's healthcare services were crucial. Stakeholders emphasized that the healthcare systems were able to efficiently and safely handle the virus and support the region's population. Continued support of these systems is needed to ensure their success.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The region should continue to highlight the healthcare sector as a strength and major employer of the region's workforce. The healthcare sector presents opportunities to partner with local medical schools in an effort to provide career pathways for residents and college students. The growth of the healthcare sector will contribute to the goal of retaining college graduates in the regional workforce.

# PARKS & TRAILS

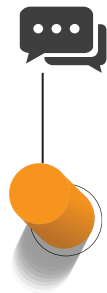
There are a vast number of parks, state game lands, and trail networks, and they are considered to be a major strength of the region. The region's parks, trails, and natural lands provide preservation and protection of valuable natural resources, and provide recreation and quality of life amenities for the region's residents and visitors.

## DATA

The region contains numerous parks, including six state parks, one state forest, 16 state game lands, and 188 local or county parks. Additionally, the region has a combined 696 miles of BicyclePA Routes, rails-to-trails routes, and other recreational trails. Major trail networks in the region include the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail, the D&L Trail, and the Susquehanna River Trail.

## TRENDS

The importance of the region's parks and trail networks has been highlighted during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Since the onset of the Pandemic in spring 2020, there has been a significant rise in trail and park usage throughout the region.



## ENGAGEMENT

Both the community survey and stakeholder outreach highlighted a desire to complete priority trail gaps in the local network. Significant additions to the network include closing critical gaps, such as extending the D&L into Wilkes-Barre and expanding the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail further south into Pittston. Overall, increasing these vital trail connections, and encouraging development proposals to account for active transportation, should be a priority for the region.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Building trails and trail connections are important to the region. In the future, new trails and trail extensions can happen through public and private partnerships during land development processes. Educating local officials on the importance of active transportation, multi-modal connections, and complete streets is a planning obstacle to overcome. Partnerships may include private developers, schools, county and municipal entities, higher education institutions, trail groups, and healthcare institutions. Increasing recreation is a positive trend that will hopefully garner increased support for expansion of the trail network to help meet current and future demands.

# COMMUNITY UTILITIES

Strong community utilities and infrastructure systems can enhance public amenities and make development more efficient and affordable.

## DATA

There are 143 water and sewer companies operating within the region with an average water and sewer bill payment of \$109 per month. The primary providers are Lackawanna River Basin Sewer Authority, Lower Lackawanna Valley Sewer Authority, Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority, Hazleton City Authority, PA American Water Company, and Aqua America.

Cable, internet/broadband, electric, and gas utilities are provided throughout the region by privately-held entities. Over 83% of the region's households have internet/broadband access; however, only 60% of households earning an income of \$20,000 or less/year have in-home internet/broadband access.



## TRENDS

The region's combined stormwater and sanitary sewer system is contributing to regional infrastructure challenges including water pollution during storm events, surface runoff, and capacity issues at sewage treatment plants. Cities are beginning to plan for sewer separation which, over time, will reduce maintenance and treatment costs.

While the process of sewer separation requires costly infrastructure upgrades, the investment enhances local water quality and significantly increases capacity at sewage treatment plants. Upgrades to water mains reduce the inflow and infiltration of ground water into water supply lines. The region's switch to private sewer and water companies has enabled large infrastructure improvements that proved too costly for local municipalities. Additionally, the use of MS4 systems have been implemented for handling stormwater throughout the region.

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimate, Doxo Market Data 2019*

## ENGAGEMENT

Combined sewer systems are a huge challenge in the region's urban areas. Investing in sewer separation is costly and puts a strain on municipal resources. Staff from local municipalities and community stakeholders agree that sewer separation should be a regional priority over the next decade.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

With the onset of major capital expenses for sewer separation, capital budget planning for both five and ten-year horizons, will help the region's urban areas afford needed infrastructure improvements. Regional capital planning for regional authorities, municipalities, and private entities may require grant funds and low interest loan funds from state and federal agencies that support infrastructure projects. The emphasis on remote and digital learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted an immediate need for increasing high-speed internet access, particularly for low-to-moderate income households and in rural areas of the region.

A majority among the Luzerne County Council believe that stormwater fees are a financial burden on the taxpayers, landowners, and businesses in the area. It is perceived that these taxes are a discouraging factor for future growth, reinvestment, and new enterprise in the County.



# HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Historical Resources include any building, natural feature, or area of the region with designated historical and cultural significance. With proper maintenance and planning they can continue to be centers of community and focal points for commerce and public institutions.

## DATA

In the region, there are 1,527 named properties of historical and cultural significance. They range from historical buildings to historic main street districts to historical properties. The properties represent focal points of urban centers and culture. Examples include the Comerford Theater in Wilkes-Barre and the prominent Dime Bank Building in Scranton. Both counties have operating historical societies that maintain museums, properties, records, documents, and exhibits.

*Data Source: National Register of Historic Places; PennDOT OneMap GIS Data*

## TRENDS

In addition to curating over 300,000 historical items and documents, the Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties historical societies are finding new ways to celebrate local culture and put on exhibits during the modern age and the COVID-19 Pandemic. For example, in addition to long-term exhibits, the Luzerne County Historical Society has created interactive online exhibits to continue celebrating the region's deep history. Another current trend is further examining, researching and celebrating local indigenous culture and previously undiscovered archaeological sites. New initiatives such as these will continue in the near future for both societies.



## ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement revealed that revitalization of urban centers should respect historic architecture and refrain from the removal of any historical properties. Strengthening areas around prominent historical properties is a key revitalization strategy to help spur development, manage growth and sprawl, and provide more opportunities for achievable housing.

Historical and  
CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE



## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Planning efforts should be cognizant of surrounding historical resources. They can represent highlighted focal points for town centers or any kind of development and their inclusion in developments is crucial to perpetuating local culture. Planning efforts should also favor proposals that maintain historical resources, instead of eliminating them. Development incentives that encourage the preservation of historical structures, facades, and sites should be created and/or utilized if they already exist for municipalities. Architectural review boards exist in both Counties, and consideration for these historical resources should continue to be encouraged, especially in designated historical districts, such as Scranton's Lackawanna Avenue Commercial Historic District.





# ECONOMY





# ECONOMY AND WORKFORCE

The economy of the region is reflected by the area's wealth, resources and existing workforce. A strong economy is supported by job growth, higher wages, low interest rates, and confident spending power.

## DATA

The region's industries employing the largest percentage of the workforce are Education, Health and Social Services (25.6%) followed by Retail Trade (12.8%). The industries that have seen the greatest increase are Education, Health and Social Services (10,000 jobs added), Professional, Scientific, Management, Administration, Waste Management (5,300 jobs added), and Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities (2,800 jobs added). Since 2000, the manufacturing industry has lost more than 8,000 jobs; however, it still represents 12.6% of the region's workforce. The region has strong education and training opportunities for healthcare professions.

In the past decade, unemployment rates for the region have decreased and at the end of 2019 the regional unemployment rate was 5%. However, the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020 significantly increased regional unemployment – bringing unemployment to 17.7%. Employment data improved in the closing months of 2020, but remains dynamic due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

There are income disparities in the region by both gender and race. On average, wages for men are 26% higher than for women. Non-whites earn less within specific occupations such as management, healthcare, education, sales, and administration.

Median household income is lower than the regional average (\$51,261) in the region's urban areas, including Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Hazleton, and portions of Pittston.

There are 40% more women than men in the region earning a college or technical degree. Over 80% of the region's college students are white and less than 5% are other races.

The majority of the region's workforce travels between 10 to 24 minutes to work. In the region, around 40% of households own two cars and 20% of households own one car.

*Data Sources: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates; 2000, 2010 US Census; US Bureau of Labor*

## TRENDS

Education, Health and Social Services is the largest industry in the region and is projected to continue its growth and expansion, particularly in the area of healthcare. As a regional industry, manufacturing continues to decline. There is a trend of more women seeking post-secondary education. Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the region's GDP showed slow growth; however, sales tax remittance has dropped substantially since the onset of the Pandemic and is expected to decline even further.



## ENGAGEMENT

- There has been a significant increase of warehousing and logistics in the region. This has created brand new employment centers, new demand for transit options, new traffic patterns, and added stress on local and regional roadway networks. ACS data shows Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities as one of the fastest growing industry sectors for the region
- The region's colleges, universities and health care facilities are looked upon favorably in the region, bringing numerous positive impacts to the area
- There is a sense of uncertainty for the area's economy due to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The lasting impacts of COVID-19 remain unknown, but will most certainly affect the region's economy. There are anticipated declines in GDP and sales tax remittance

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The growth of the warehousing and logistics industry has contributed to major changes in the regional land development and transportation patterns. Supporting stronger linkages between transportation and land use planning is needed across the region.

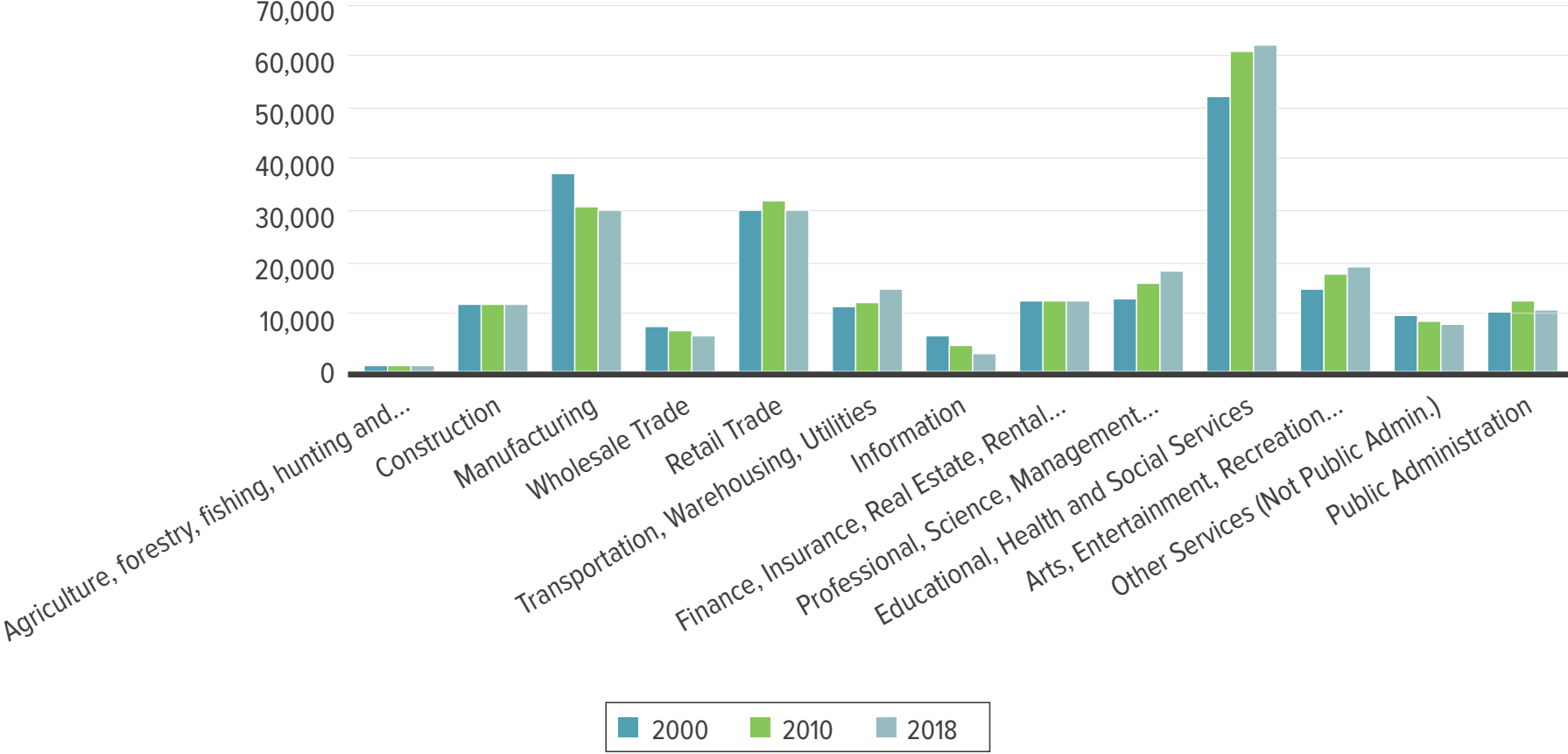




## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND INCENTIVES (2019)

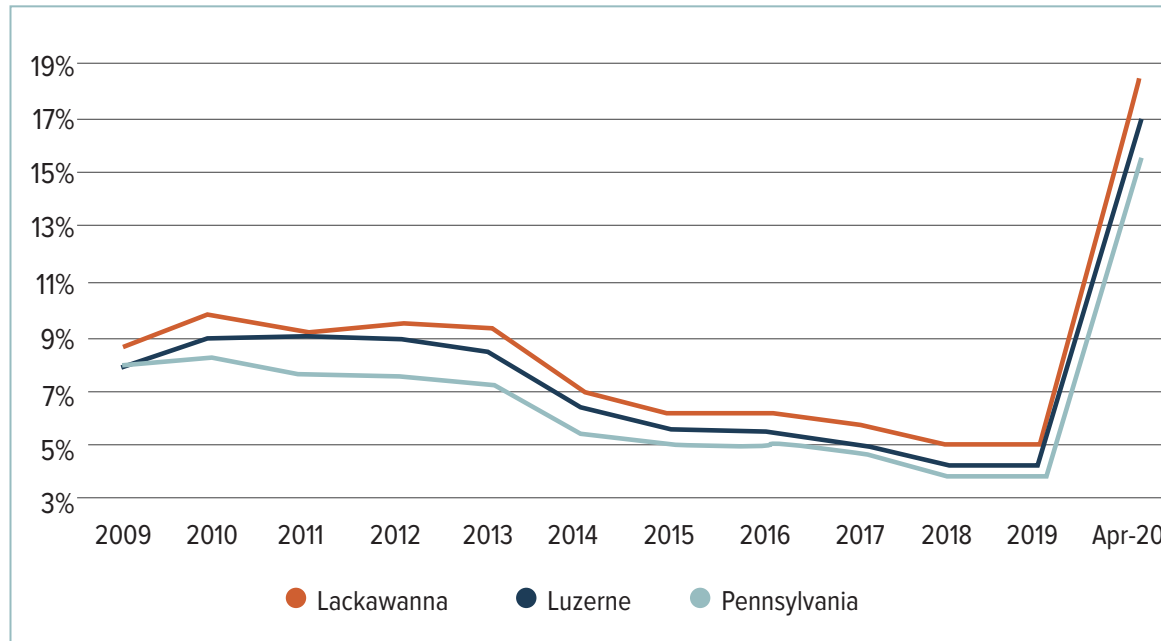
1. Luzerne County Industrial/ Business Park Incentive Program to provide loan funds that promote the sale and development business park lands
2. Luzerne County Business Development Loan Program to attract new businesses to the area as well as assist existing business owners
3. In 2019, Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties each received an EPA Brownfields assessment grant together worth \$1.1 Million

### Regional Employment Sectors (2000, 2010, 2018)



Data Source: US Census 2000, 2010; 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Unemployment Rates, 2009-2020



Data Sources: US Census 2010; 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates , US Bureau of Labor

## Unemployment Rates, 2009-2019

YEAR	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	April 2020
Luzerne	8.9%	9.9%	9.5%	9.7%	9.4%	7.2%	6.5%	6.4%	6.0%	5.4%	5.4%	18.4%
Lackawanna	8.2%	9.1%	9.2%	9.0%	8.6%	6.6%	5.8%	5.7%	5.1%	4.6%	4.6%	17.1%
Total Region	8.6%	9.5%	9.4%	9.4%	9.0%	6.9%	6.2%	6.1%	5.6%	5.0%	5.0%	17.8%
Pennsylvania	8.1%	8.4%	7.9%	7.8%	7.4%	5.8%	5.3%	5.4%	4.9%	4.4%	4.1%	15.5%

Data Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis



# MEDIAN INCOME

(2010-2018)

## in **LACKAWANNA**

In 2010,  
the median household earns

**\$43,673**

In 2018,  
the median household earns

**\$50,875**

## in **LUZERNE**

In 2010,  
the median household earns

**\$42,224**

In 2018,  
the median household earns

**\$51,646**

## in **REGION**

In 2010,  
the median household earns

**\$42,948**

In 2018,  
the median household earns

**\$51,261**

## in **PENNSYLVANIA**

In 2010,  
the median household earns

**\$50,398**

In 2018,  
the median household earns

**\$59,445**

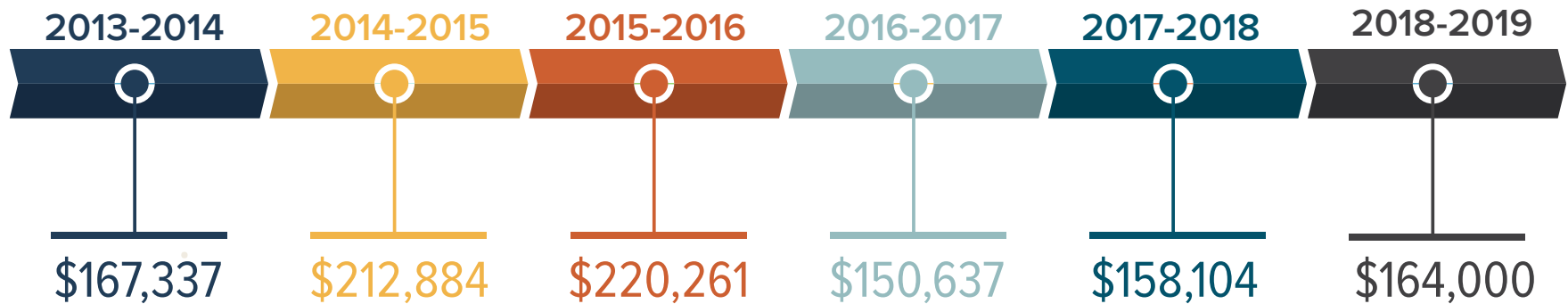
*Data Source: US Census 2010, 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### GDP (in millions of current-year dollars)

YEAR	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Region	\$22,051	\$22,678	\$23,095	\$23,558	\$24,277	\$25,330	\$26,144	\$26,658	\$27,469	\$28,912
Pennsylvania	\$577,380	\$599,313	\$618,988	\$641,317	\$663,991	\$691,188	\$711,205	\$726,163	\$744,290	\$783,168

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

### Regional Sales Tax Remittance (in Thousands)



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis



NATURAL

RESOURCES





# LAND PRESERVATION

Land preservation and conservation of the region's natural resources is considered a top priority.

## DATA

The region has many different types of protected lands including 16 state game lands, six state parks, one state forest, 188 local or county parks, 210 conservation easements, and over 100 agricultural easements. Parks, forests and game lands total 42,162.8 acres in the region.

*Data Source: DCNR, PADEP, Luzerne County Conservation District, Lackawanna County Conservation District*

## TRENDS

Conservation easements are shifting toward land trusts, with organizations such as the North Branch Land Trust acquiring easements within the counties. Overall, conservation efforts can move slowly due to application and approval processes as well as landowner hesitation to sell to a private trust versus local governments.



## ENGAGEMENT

- Stakeholders noted that landowners will sometimes make deals with private land trusts, such as the Wildlands Conservancy and North Branch Land Trust, instead of engaging in the process to obtain an easement due to the long process and limited funds
- The region should empower County Conservation Districts and County Preservation Boards by increasing funding and establishing a more expedited approval process
- Programs in the counties help partner new and emerging farmers with experienced farmers to encourage farmlands to be maintained for future generations
- The PA Department of Agriculture Conversation Easement Purchase Program offers a match to help increase preserved farmland. For every dollar given locally, the state will provide over a dollar in matching funds

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Regional strategies and actions are needed to increase land preservation efforts. More coordinated planning efforts across municipalities can work to ensure future development does not impact environmentally sensitive areas, natural areas, open space, farmland, and agricultural land.

# FARMING AND FARMLAND

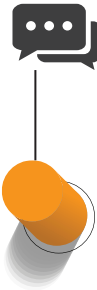
Farmland preservation is important for the region's economy and can limit large-lot residential sprawl.

## DATA

There are a total of 105 farms in the region that have been preserved, totaling over 8,000 acres. The region has acquired 29 agricultural easements, or 1,800 acres, since the 2011 Lackawanna-Luzerne Joint Comprehensive Plan. Overall, approximately 57% of lands in the region reside in either agricultural or natural resource areas.

## TRENDS

Despite funding cutbacks for farmland preservation boards, the region has been successful in preserving agricultural lands. Low density, large-lot subdivisions are the biggest contributor to the region's loss of farmland.



## ENGAGEMENT

- The region's county preservation boards are sometimes bypassed for private conservancies. Public outreach noted that land holders sometimes will make deals with private land trusts such as the Wildlands Conservancy or North Branch Land Trust, instead of following the process of obtaining an easement
- Future land preservation success relies on County Preservation Boards receiving increased funding
- There are programs in the counties that help partner young and old farmers to encourage farmlands to be passed down to new generations
- The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program offers a match program to help increase the number of preserved farm. For every dollar given locally the state will provide over a dollar in matching funds

THE REGION CONTAINS ROUGHLY  
**90,000 acres**  
OF PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS



*Data Source: DCNR, PADEP, Lackawanna County Conservation District, Luzerne County Conservation District*

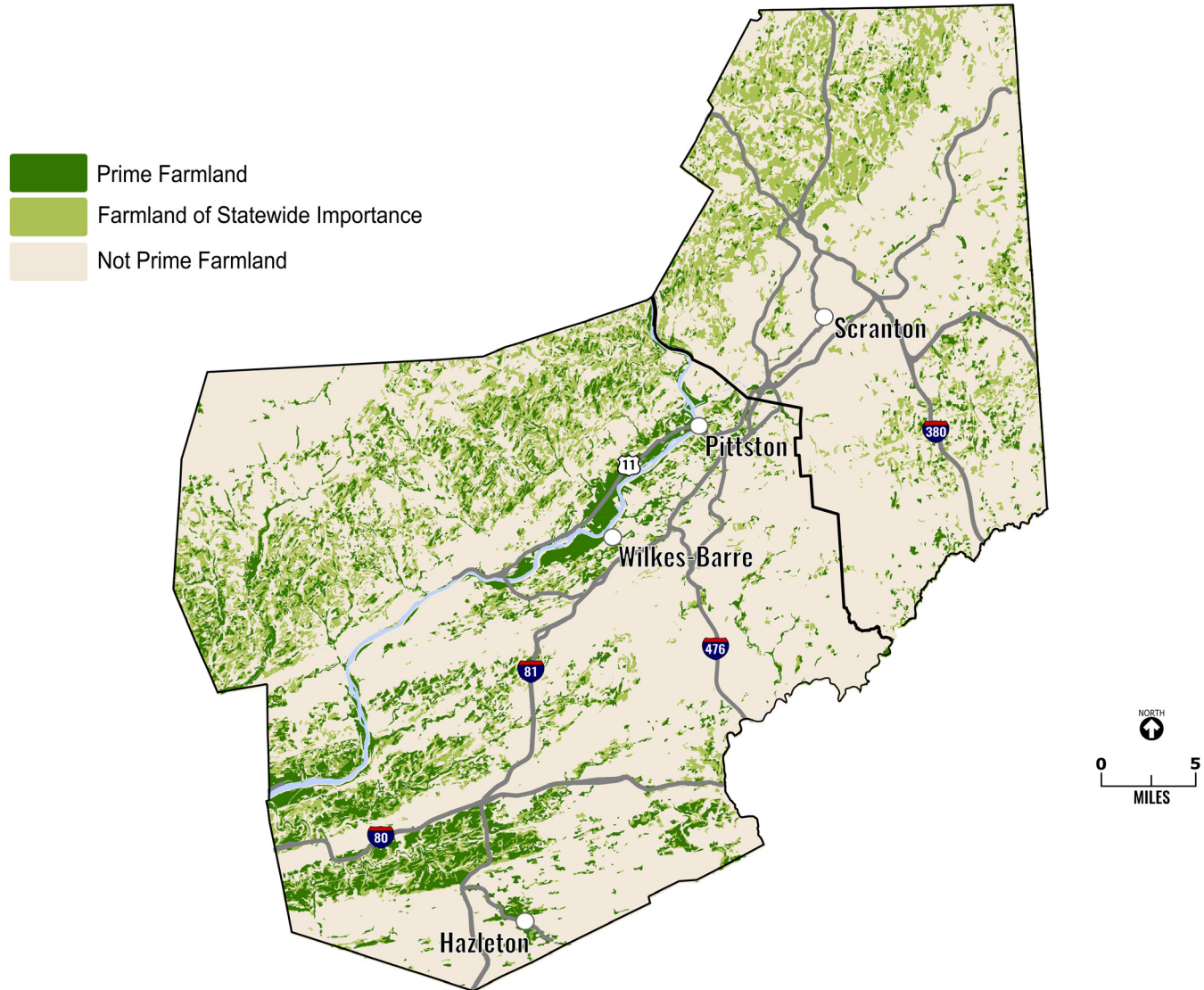


## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Regional planning strategies to preserve farmland will need to further support the county Preservation Boards and explore new areas of funding. Other initiatives can indirectly preserve farmland, such as encouraging infill development to ensure that land is available for agricultural use. For the period from 2015 through 2025, the PA Department of Agriculture estimates that there will be more than 75,000 new and replacement job openings in agriculture and food careers in Pennsylvania.



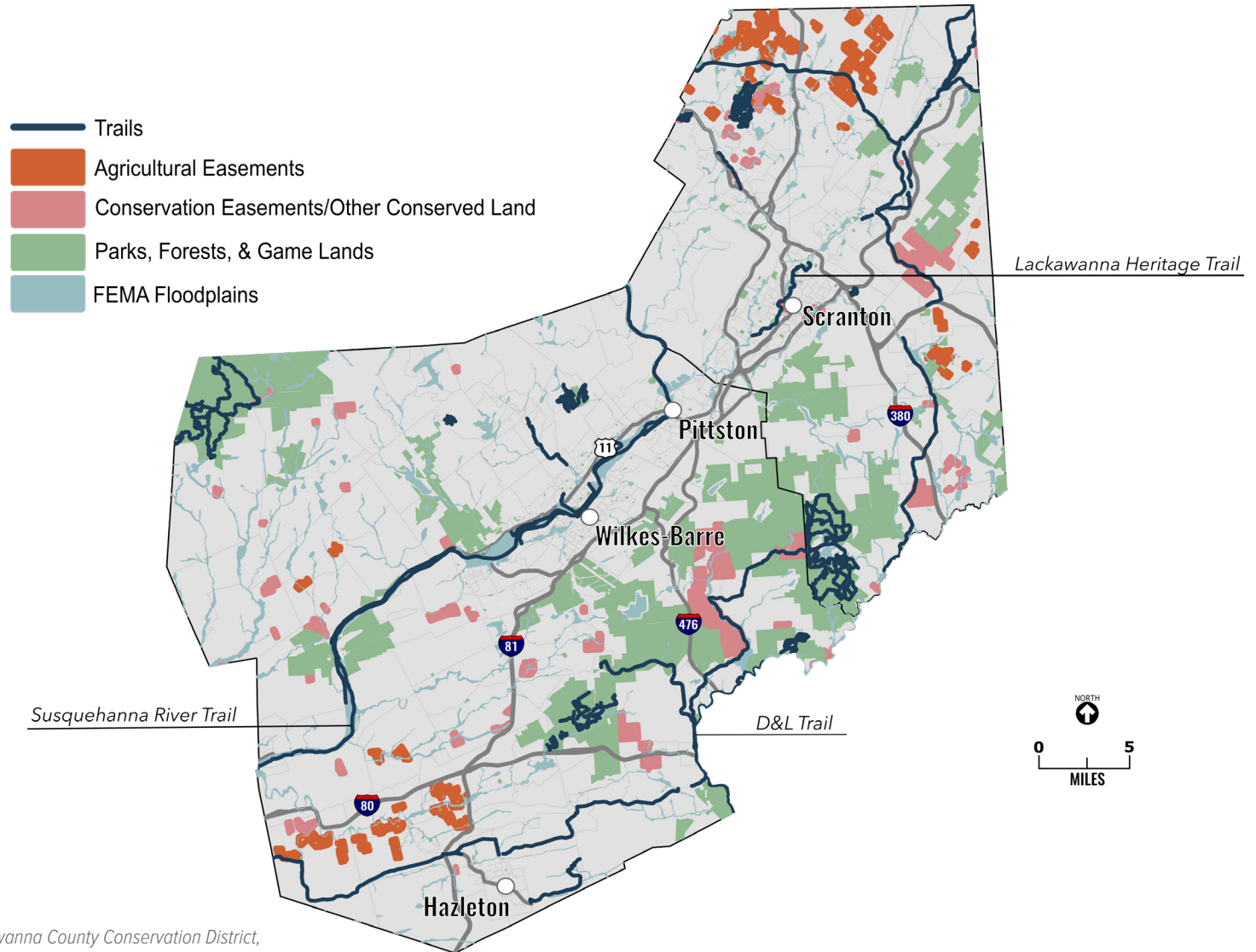
# Prime Agricultural Soils – Total Region (2020)



Source: PennDOT OneMap GIS Data, PADEP



# Land Conservation – Total Region (2020)



Source: DCNR, PADEP, Lackawanna County Conservation District, Luzerne County Conservation District, FEMA

# RURAL LIVING

Rural villages, farms, and scattered rural residential development occupy a large amount of acreage in the region. It is typical to see a village or crossroads community located in close proximity to pristine farmlands, natural lands and resources.

## DATA

Rural residential land use occupies about 17% of all acreage in the region.

## TRENDS

Single-family residential development, often seen in greenfield and more rural areas, is becoming less common. Downtown and urban areas in the region are shifting towards mixed-use land development. Regional development data from the last five years reveals that much of the region's new residential development has been multi-family units. For Lackawanna County, multi-family development has represented 41.7% of all unit developments since 2014, with just 19.6% of units being single-family. Despite the trend towards multi-family units, some rural areas, such as the North Pocono region in Lackawanna County, still are seeing higher rates of single-family development when compared with the rest of the region.

*Data Source: Lackawanna County GIS Data, Luzerne County GIS Data, Lackawanna County Planning Commission Annual Reports 2014-2019*



## ENGAGEMENT

- There is increased multi-family development and residential conversions in all major downtowns in the region
- Managing development in sustainable ways is important for preserving rural character and protecting valuable land resources

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

There is limited infrastructure, educational facilities and road networks for increased low density residential development in areas outside the Urban Core and Urban Development areas. Village and farmland preservation are more difficult to manage when pressured by suburban sprawl.

# ENERGY RESOURCES

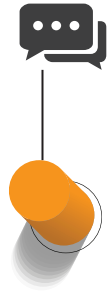
The region is slowly moving past its mining history by exploring renewable energy options including wind, solar, and hydroelectric.

## DATA

The region's ridge areas have been identified by a recent 2016 PA Department of Environmental Protection study in as ideal locations for wind turbines. Additionally, there is a presence of Marcellus Shale just outside of the region, and there is a presence of Utica Shale within the region's boundaries.

## TRENDS

Since the 2011 Lackawanna Luzerne Comprehensive Plan, coal mining continues to decline in the region. Wind turbine farms have been installed at Bear Creek Wind Farm (Luzerne County), with additional interest near Carbondale in Jefferson Township. The region anticipates receiving proposals for powerplant development to be powered by solar energy, hydroelectric energy, and/or wind energy.



## ENGAGEMENT

- Initial funding for existing wind studies and projects originated during the Rendell Administration in 2004
- There is continued interest to expand existing wind farm operations in Wayne County into the Lackawanna-Luzerne region as well as assessing the potential for other renewable energy sources
- There are various natural gas to electric conversion projects and landfill gas projects planned in Lackawanna County

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

While the vast majority of Marcellus Shale area lies outside the region, there are potential long-term impacts of natural gas pipelines within the region. Any future pipelines should be located away from residential and natural resource areas. Additionally, private and non-profit partnerships with energy companies are needed to fulfill future renewable energy goals and action strategies, such as expanding capacity for solar and wind energy.

# WATER RESOURCES

The region is a part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed where increased water resource protection helps create and sustain healthy environments and ecosystem.

## DATA

The region has over 20,000 surface acres of water bodies, including major rivers, such as the Susquehanna, and wetlands that are a part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The Susquehanna River is the watershed's largest source of iron pollution in the water supply. PAWC, the largest public water provider, provides public water service to roughly 146,535 households in Lackawanna County and 193,789 households in Luzerne County. The second largest water supplier is Aqua PA Water Company serving over 9,000 customers in the region. Routine water testing is completed by both water companies for 29 different contaminants.

A majority of the region lies within the Upper/Middle Susquehanna Watershed with a small portion located in the Delaware River Basin Watershed. These two watersheds include eight sub-watersheds including: Lackawanna River, Tunkhannock Creek, Mehoopany-Bowman Creeks, Toby-Wapwallopen Creeks, Nescopeck Creek, Catawissa-Roaring Creeks, Lackawaxen, and Lehigh Valley. The Upper/Middle Susquehanna Watershed is part of the Susquehanna Watershed and contains the largest sum of headwaters in Pennsylvania supplying the main stem of the Susquehanna River.

*Data Source: Doxo Market Data Reports, Open Street Maps*

## TRENDS

Water resource protection initiatives are underway to protect areas surrounding major rivers including the North Branch Lands Trust. Local water protection efforts to protect tributaries of the Susquehanna River include closing or managing bore hole locations present in the water system.



## ENGAGEMENT

- Local iron levels in regional water bodies and rivers are high due to the presence of open bore holes. Private companies in the region are exploring how to extract iron from the water and use it for other purposes
- There is concern over potential fracking in Utica Shale areas in the region





## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Coordinated regional efforts to protect water resources and wetlands is the best way to overcome contamination or capacity issues that extend across municipal boundaries. Specifically, recommendations are needed to minimize high iron levels in the watershed, including an approach to minimize effects of iron bore holes in local water sources.

The Lehigh River skirts the southeast borders of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. The Hazleton City Authority periodically renews a permit with the Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection to maintain the ability to withdraw up to 3 million gallons of water per day from the Lehigh River at a site near Rockport to supplant its water distribution system which serves 14 municipalities in 3 counties. The

Authority has been able to keep the Dreck Creek Reservoir full, even during dry periods over the last several years, by pumping water into it from the Lehigh River. This water is run through a treatment plant before being delivered to customers. On Jan. 9, 2020, hundreds of area residents attended a public meeting hosted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to hear about a study the Corps plans to undertake regarding various uses of the Lehigh River at Francis E. Walter Dam which may include using it to supplant the water distribution system serving New York City. A majority of Luzerne County Council believes that such plans should be monitored for possible growth-limiting implications they might have for Northeastern Pennsylvania.





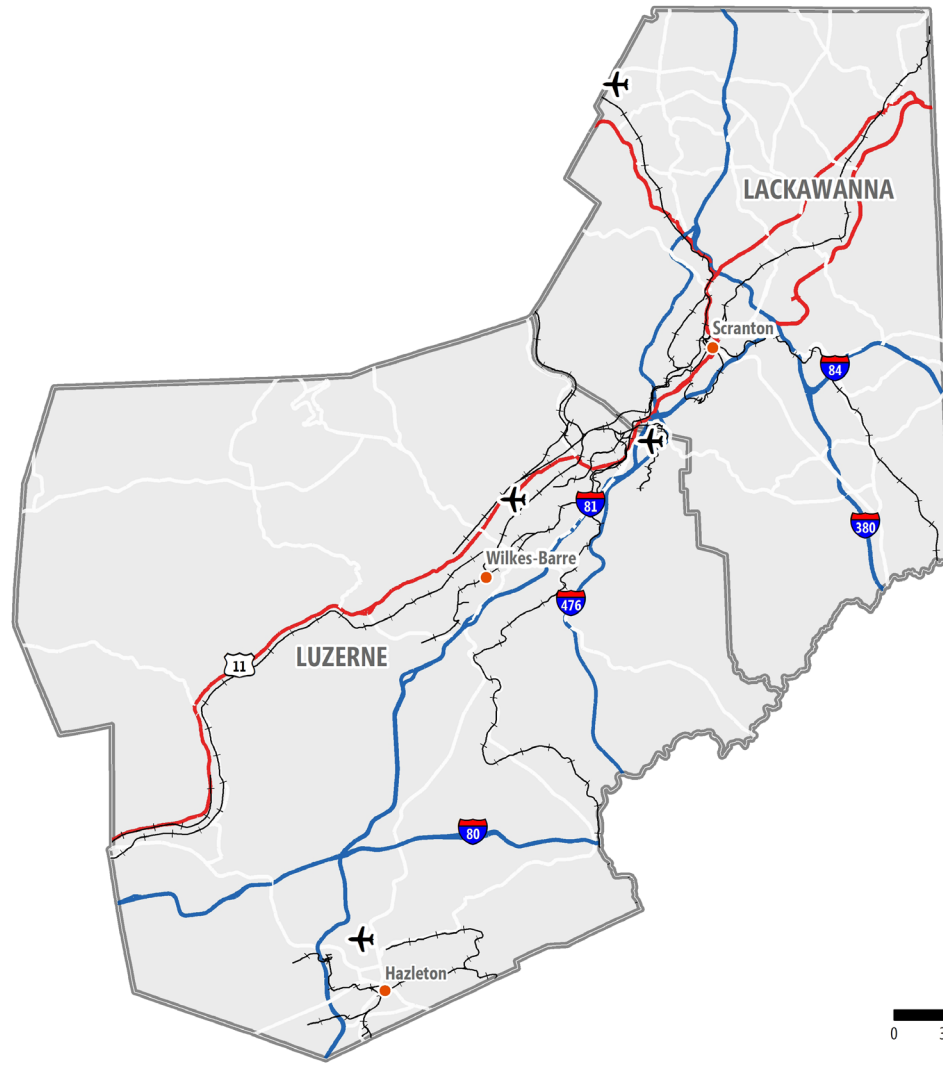
# TRANSPORTATION



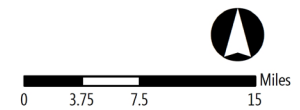
# Transportation System – Total Region (2020)

## Legend

- Interstates
- US Highways
- State Routes
- Rail Lines
- ✈ Airports (Public Use)



Data Source: PennDOT, 2018; PenDOT, 2019; HIFLD, 2020



# ROADS

The region's road network includes many classifications, with ownership being shared by the state, counties, and local municipalities. The roadway network serves as the backbone of the region's transportation system.

## DATA

The region has 4,252 linear miles of roadway. More than 30% of these miles are owned and maintained by PennDOT, while about 65% are owned by local governments. Despite a growing population, total travel demand on the region's roadways has remained relatively constant over the past decade, averaging 12.68 million miles traveled each day. The region's roadway network also includes nearly 147 linear miles of Interstates, including I-80, I-81, I-84, and I-380. The Pennsylvania Turnpike's I-476 Northeast Extension also traverses the region. The Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO is currently in the process of updating roadway functional classifications for the region. For the five-year period ending in 2018, the region averaged nearly 6,234 crashes each year and 52 fatalities per year. The total number of crashes has remained consistent in both counties, while the total number of fatalities has been increasing in Lackawanna County and decreasing in Luzerne County. Crashes among drivers age 65 or older accounts for more than 15% of all crashes.

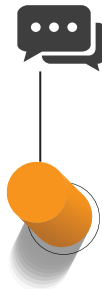
*Data Sources: PennDOT 2018 Pennsylvania Highway Statistics; PennDOT 2018 Crash Facts & Statistics; PennDOT Crash Information Tool; PennDOT 2019 Performance Measures Annual Report - 2019*

## TRENDS

Roadways in the area are aging and are under increased stress due to the increase in warehousing and distribution center development throughout the region. Funding for roadway improvements is expected to be affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Distracted driving, a significant issue statewide, has remained a consistent issue. Crashes among drivers age 65 or older are steadily increasing in the region. The region's Interstate highway pavement conditions are among the worst in Pennsylvania.

## ENGAGEMENT

- Regional Survey respondents identified their top transportation priority as roadway pavement improvements. The second priority was road infrastructure improvements
- The increase in the number of warehousing and distribution center activity is having an enormous effect on road usage, traffic volume, and new congested areas on the roadway network

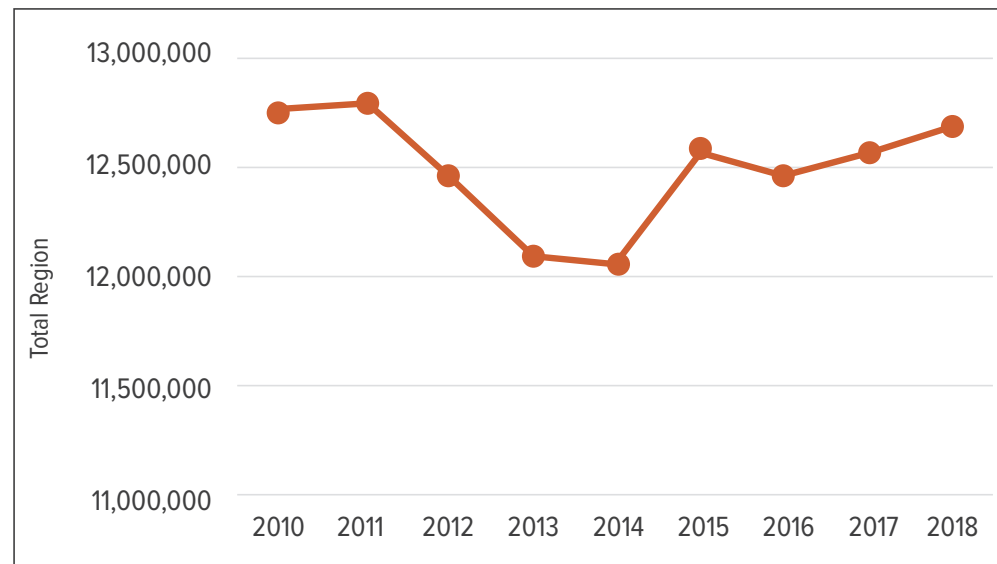




## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- Regional employment in the Transportation and Warehousing industry has increased significantly over the last several years. This brings with it an increase in truck traffic on the region's major thoroughfares
- The regional concentration of employment in the healthcare and social assistance industry illustrates the need to ensure adequate access to medical facilities throughout the region for employees as well as patients
- Improvements in highway safety depend on the efforts of many organizations as well as individual responsibility. Efforts to address safety for older drivers must be improved, given the region's aging population is anticipated to increase
- The region's functional classification scheme needs to be maintained to reflect existing development and travel patterns
- Achieving state and national goals related to dramatic safety improvements will rely in part on the implementation of autonomous vehicle technology, anticipated to be implemented well within the planning time horizon of the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan. As connected and autonomous vehicle technologies are implemented, fatality reduction goals will increase
- Autonomous vehicle technology will greatly assist in attaining safety goals. This will require improvements or changes to highway design, driver behavior, and enforcement

### Daily Vehicle Miles of Travel (DVMT)



Source: PennDOT Bureau of Planning and Research, 2018 Highway Statistics, PUB 600

## Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO Region Road Mileage by Functional Classification and Percent Share

FHWA FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION	Linear Miles			Percentage	FHWA Recommended Rural System
	Lackawanna	Luzerne	Region		
Principal Arterial: Interstate	63.2	84.6	147.8	3.5%	1 – 2%
Principal Arterial: Other Freeways and Expressways	20.0	10.9	30.9	0.7%	0 – 2%
Principal Arterial: Other Principal Arterial	59.9	80.5	140.4	3.3%	2 – 6%
Minor Arterial	113.0	250.2	363.2	8.5%	3 – 7%
Major Collector	200.1	295.6	495.7	11.7%	9 – 19%
Minor Collector	69.4	112.5	181.9	4.3%	4 – 15%
Local Road: State-Owned	63.1	91.6	154.7	3.6%	64 – 75%
Local Road: Municipal-Owned	1,032.5	1,705.6	2,738.1	64.4%	64 – 75%
Total	1,621.2	2,631.5	4,252.7	100.0%	---

Source: PennDOT Bureau of Planning and Research, 2018 Highway Statistics, PUB 600

# BRIDGES

Local bridges are aging and in need of repair. Securing funding for local projects is a top priority.

## DATA

The region has over 20,000 surface acres of water bodies, including major rivers and lakes. There are 985 state-owned bridges longer than eight feet within the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO region. Additionally, there are 173 locally owned bridges longer than 20 feet. The MPO currently allocates 55% of its 2021 TIP dollars toward addressing bridge needs.

## TRENDS

The region's bridges are aging, and many are at or beyond their usable lifespan. Of state-owned structures, 172 (17.5%) are rated as being in Poor condition. This compares to the state average of 10.%. On average the condition of locally owned bridges is improving, with the number rated as "Poor" now at 73, down from 78 in 2015.

*Data Source: PennDOT 2019 Performance Measures Annual Report - Bridges*



## ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholders in the region agree bridge repair is a priority. Securing funding for upgrades has been a slow process for the Counties and local municipalities, but the region has dozens of bridges in need of repair.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- As the region's bridge inventory continues to age, the MPO will be faced with a greater stock of bridges that will require increased maintenance and rehabilitation. Maintenance needs will accelerate as the bridges that were built during the 1950s and 1960s deteriorate to the point where rehabilitation or replacement is required
- Although a large percentage of the MPO budget is spent on bridge repair, more investment is needed to bring local bridges to a good state of repair

# FREIGHT

Warehousing and distribution center development have caused a massive increase in goods movement activity in the region. It will remain at the forefront of transportation planning in the region, to ensure the regional system can accommodate the increase in demand.

## DATA

The region annually generates approximately 25 million tons of freight, at a total value of about \$24 billion. Commodities are moved within and in/out of the region primarily by truck (92%), while rail transports the remaining 8%. The largest volume of goods moved by truck in the region are along I-80 and I-81. Rail freight service is currently provided by two Class I carriers - Canadian Pacific (CP) and Norfolk Southern (NS) – as well as four other regional and short line operators.

## TRENDS

- Freight movement is expected to increase in the region. In 2040, freight movement is projected to be 43.5 million tons with a value of \$51.3 billion
- The areas showing increased warehousing activities include the Mid-Valley, Hanover, Pittston, and Hazleton
- E-commerce has increased the demand for warehousing and distribution center space; the global pandemic has only accelerated that trend. These developments will continue to locate near urban centers like Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, as online retailers strive to shorten delivery times
- As the Lehigh Valley is built out, warehousing development will continue to blossom in the region, with the adjoining roadway network accommodating most of the freight tonnage

*Data Source: IHS Global Insights, 2011-2040 Transearch Data*



## ENGAGEMENT

- Warehousing and Logistics development is creating enormous transportation impacts, causing added stress to the road and bridge networks
- Congestion is a problem on main corridors, especially I-81, or near industrial parks on local roads
- Warehouse and distribution space is needed, caused by increased consumer demand. Proposed development in the region exceeds ten million square feet
- New warehousing developments may add new residential development outside the region's urban areas

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Planning for warehousing development and increased goods movement should be a top priority for the region. Planning initiatives should include multi-modal connections for employees and goods, truck parking, connected sidewalks and pedestrian paths, priority first- and last-mile connections, and ancillary trucking and employee uses. With the development of large logistics centers located outside of the downtown areas, critical natural areas and farmland protections are needed. A regional freight plan is needed to further understand how goods are moving into and through the region, what the needs are of shippers and receivers, and how to properly plan for the future.



# TRANSIT

Public transportation in the region is limited to fixed-route bus service and shared-ride services. There's a growing demand for expanded services to emerging employment centers.

## DATA

According to the 2014-2018 American Community Survey (ACS), about 1% of the region's resident workers take public transportation to work. The region has a diverse network of public transportation options. The main types of transit available to the public include fixed route bus service, urban bus routes, and shared-ride services. There are three agencies providing fixed route services either wholly or partially in the region, as mapped on the following page. Fixed route service hours and departure times vary by route. The agencies include County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS), Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA), and Hazleton Public Transit (HPT). COLTS and LCTA provide shared-ride services providing curb-to-curb service between any addresses within each county, provided that reservations are made at least one-day in advance. This service provides more accessible transportation alternatives for seniors and persons with disabilities living in rural areas. Together these agencies provided more than 2.3 million trips on over 60 fixed route bus routes in FY 2018-2019 riders took over 310,000 shared-ride trips in the region. A study is underway to determine the feasibility of restoring passenger rail service between Scranton and Hoboken, NJ.

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates ; PennDOT Pennsylvania Public Transportation Performance Report0 Fiscal Year 2018-19*

## TRENDS

- COLTS experienced a slight decrease in fixed route passengers between FY 2014-15 and FY 2018-19. Operating revenues per revenue vehicle hour also decreased during this timeframe. Shared-ride ridership fluctuated year-to-year but increased slightly over these five years. In FY 2018-19, COLTS provided over 1 million fixed route trips and over 120,000 shared-ride trips
- LCTA experienced a slight decrease in fixed route passengers between FY 2014-15 and FY 2018-19, while operating revenue per revenue vehicle hour remained relatively stable. Shared-ride trips decreased over the five-year period. In FY 2018-19, LCTA provided over 1.1 million fixed route trips and more than 130,000 shared-ride trips
- HPT experienced a decrease in fixed route passengers between FY 2014-15, while operating revenue per revenue vehicle hour increased. In FY 2018-19, HPT provided over 200,000 fixed route trips



## ENGAGEMENT

- There is an increased need for transit services for employees working in new industrial parks and employment centers
- Existing transit services require increased route frequency and new route times for workers on varying shifts
- Consolidation of transit providers in the region remains a future possibility



## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- In more urbanized areas such as Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Hazleton, increasing availability of public transportation correlates with reduced single vehicle traffic congestion and improved air quality
- Transit service is not currently available to all major employment centers in the region. COLTS has recently expanded services to the Jessup Small Business Center, Valley View Business Park and Mid-Valley Industrial Park, and similar expansions would help fill in more gaps. Additionally, transit providers could partner with vanpool services to serve underserved areas and “balance the system”
- Most users of shared-ride services are senior citizens. As the region’s average age increases, these services will be needed by an anticipated larger percentage of the population. Increased services will promote mobility and quality of life for an aging population
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and/or express transit routes are seen as a forward-thinking approach to improving public transit efficiencies in the region and is more affordable than Light Rail Transit. Ideally there are five routes that would connect existing communities with employment centers and commercial areas using existing infrastructure and rights-of-way
- If light rail gains more support, an ideal passenger rail line would connect Scranton to New York City via NJ Transit service’s Montclair-Boonton Line

# ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

The region is home to several regional trail systems. Trails promote social, racial, gender, and economic equity. Trails are free to use, tell local stories, promote economic development, provide recreation and can connect a person to places of work, education, and are friends and family friendly.

## DATA

According to the 2014-2018 American Community Survey (ACS), bicycle travel in the region constitutes a minute share of journey-to-work trips, while about 2.9% of the region's resident workers walk to work. The region recorded 201 pedestrian crashes during 2018—the highest number of these incidents within the last ten years. The region has averaged about 169 pedestrian crashes each year over the past decade. The region has averaged about 46 bicycle crashes per year for the decade ending 2018.

The region offers 140 miles of on-road facilities (BicyclePA), 255 miles of rail-trails and other recreational trails connecting a hiker to over 87,000 acres of State Forest, Parks, and Game Land.

## TRENDS

- Crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians increased between 2009 and 2018
- Trails and other bicycle/pedestrian facilities continue to be implemented throughout the region
- Planning to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity has become a recent priority in urban areas of the region, such as Wilkes-Barre and Scranton

*Data Source: PennDOT 2018 Pennsylvania Crash Facts & Statistics; PennDOT Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool*



## ENGAGEMENT

- Regional Survey responses identified completing trail gap connections as a priority
- Complete street planning should be widely encouraged
- Multimodal access or trail access is needed to connect workers to employment centers
- Municipal planning in many cases does not require pedestrian paths and/or sidewalks within planned industrial and commercial centers



## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

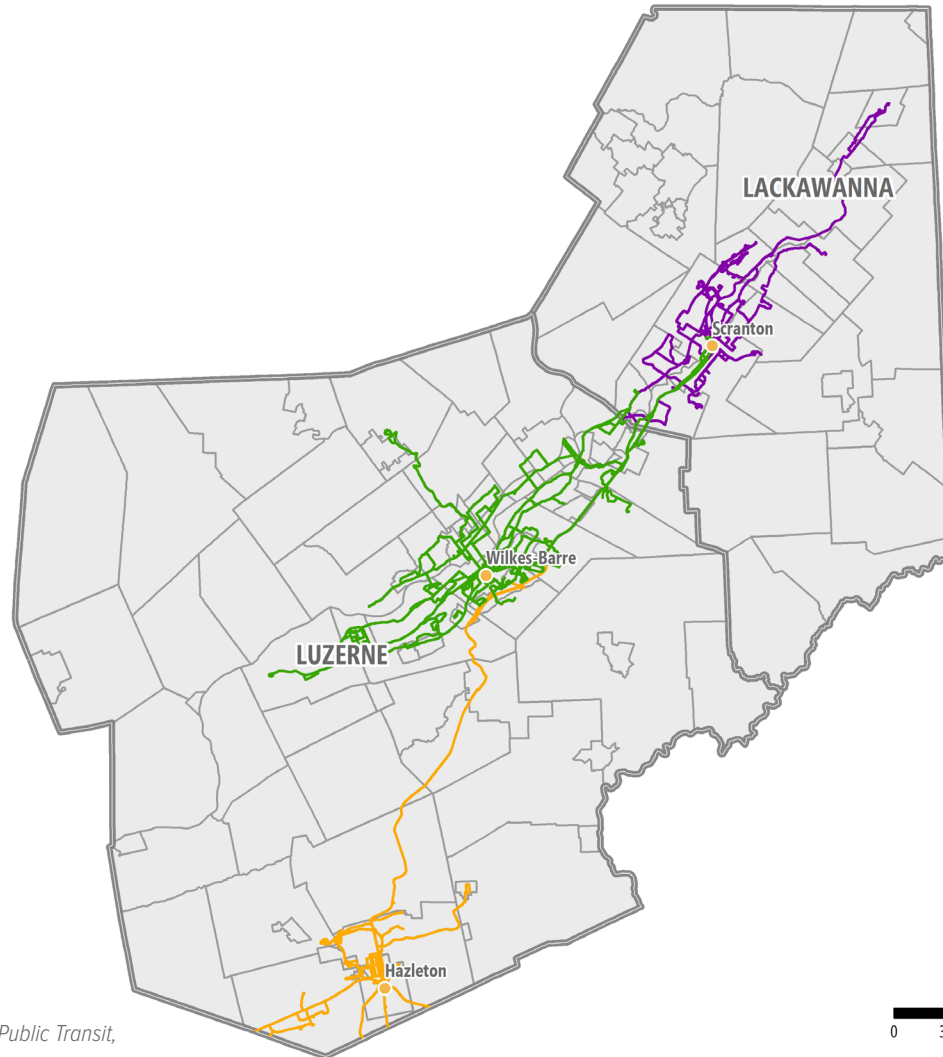
- Commuter and transit-based bicycle infrastructure is limited throughout the region. Efforts to expand and complete sidewalk and bikeway networks should be identified as a priority, incorporating pedestrian-friendly improvement projects into TIP cycles as well as requiring their provision in local zoning and land development ordinances
- Efficient, safe bicycle and pedestrian networks enhance property values and quality of life. The region has extensive regional trail networks that connect urban areas to destinations beyond the region. Priority connections should be identified 1) to parks and natural areas, and 2) employment centers and commercial areas
- Reducing trail gaps and improving accessibility will further expand the positive impact of existing trails
- The Plan acknowledges the recently completed Downtown Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Bicycle and Pedestrian Study (2020) as well as the Scranton Walkability Study that is currently under development



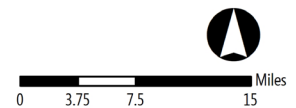
# Public Transit Routes – Total Region (2020)

## Legend

- COLTS Bus Routes
- LCTA Bus Routes
- HPT Bus Routes
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundaries



Source: County of Lackawanna Transit System, 2020; Hazleton Public Transit, 2020; Luzerne County Transportation Authority, 2020



# AVIATION

Aviation in the region serves several key purposes, including: business and leisure travel, emergency medical service, cargo transportation, private company flights, and as stations for flight school/training operations.

## DATA

The region has eight private-use airports, three public-use airports, and one international airport. Three of the public airports are located in Luzerne County, and one is located in Lackawanna County. Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport is the only airport that provides public passenger airline services. Other airports in the region are used largely for recreational activities, including skydiving and gliding, recreational flying, and aerial sightseeing. Hazleton Regional Airport, Wilkes-Barre Wyoming Valley Airport, and Wilkes-Barre Scranton International Airport are occasionally used for military exercises. The public airports support more than 135,000 operations (take-offs and landings) per year, with more than 50,000 at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport. The most popular destinations for passenger flights include Charlotte, Chicago, and Philadelphia. FedEx Express and DHL are currently the only cargo carriers that fly into and out of Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport.

## TRENDS

- In 2017, Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport had 531,854 total passengers. This is a 22.6% increase since 2010
- Allegiant Air, which previously provided non-stop service to Orlando, no longer provides flights out of Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport as of 2018

*Data Sources: US Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics; TransStats - Airport Statistics; TransStats – Airport Passengers*



## ENGAGEMENT

- There are opportunities for multi-modal freight connections surrounding the Wilkes-Barre Scranton International Airport. Connections include passenger and freight rail and pedestrian trails
- Stakeholders feel increased air freight is possible in the future

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- The region should capitalize on the presence of the Wilkes-Barre Scranton International Airport. The Airport currently provides travel opportunities throughout the country, making the region accessible and economically enticing
- Municipal zoning is not consistent with Airport Hazard Zoning. Absence of such zoning is a critical public safety concern as it can serve to protect the viability of the region's airports. The four public-use airports and their flight paths directly impact 41 municipalities, of which only eight have adopted Act 164 Airport Hazard Zoning

# REVENUE FORECAST

The Revenue Forecast is an estimate of the amount of revenue the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO can reasonably expect to receive over the life of the plan.

## DATA

This total is expected to increase by \$50 million per year until the program plateaus at \$1 billion in FFY 2028.

The Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO will coordinate with PennDOT on the development the Twelve Year Program (TYP) to begin October 2020. The region's four-year 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) includes nearly \$277 million in investment, while the Twelve Year Program (TYP) includes just over \$644 million in projects. The entire 25-year Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is estimated at a value of \$1.2 billion. The numbers included within the TYP provide the best available base to estimate the plan's projected revenue over the 25-year LRTP period. Competitive PennDOT grant programs like the such as Green-Light-Go and the Multimodal Transportation Program were excluded from the revenue forecast.

## TRENDS

- Annual revenue is expected to decrease over the next few years and plateau in FFY 2028
- It is anticipated that potential future revenues may be impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, but the extent to which remains uncertain

*Data Source: PennDOT 2021 Interstate Management Transportation Improvement Program Project List; Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO, 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan*



## ENGAGEMENT

COVID-19 Pandemic will impact the MPO's revenue forecast.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

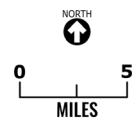
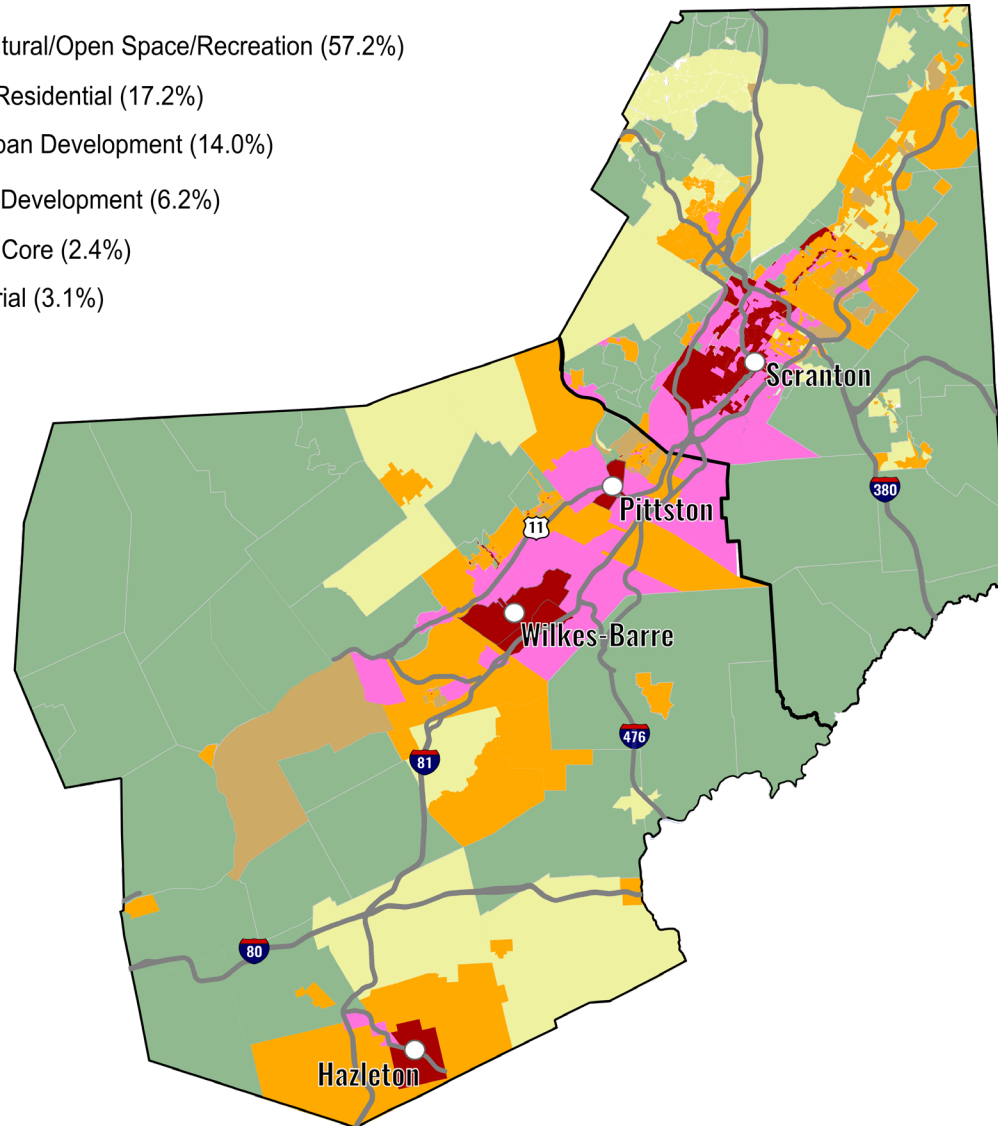
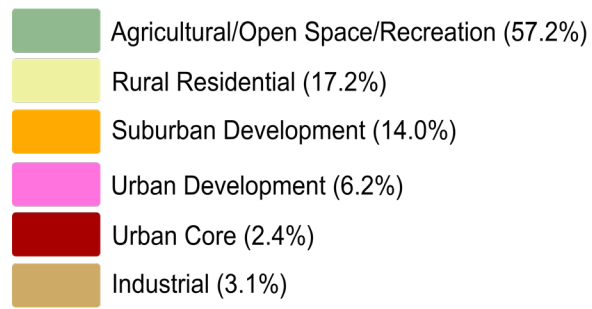
- There are fewer funding opportunities for road and bridge improvements. No new state funding acts (Act 44 of 2007, Act 89 of 2013, etc.) or increases in current funding to the state's Motor License Fund are anticipated
- The Commonwealth is investing more heavily in Pennsylvania's Interstate highways according to the FAST Act. Therefore, more funding will be needed to address backlog, modernization, and strategic capacity improvements on local state roads and highways

# LAND USE





## General Land Use – Total Region (2020)



Data Source: Lackawanna County GIS Data, Luzerne County GIS Data

# LAND USE

“ PENNSYLVANIA IS CONSIDERED A HIGH THREAT STATE, AMONGST 11 OTHER STATES, FOR SIGNIFICANT FARMLAND LOSS, HOWEVER RANKS HIGH FOR AGRICULTURAL LAND PROTECTION POLICY RESPONSE.

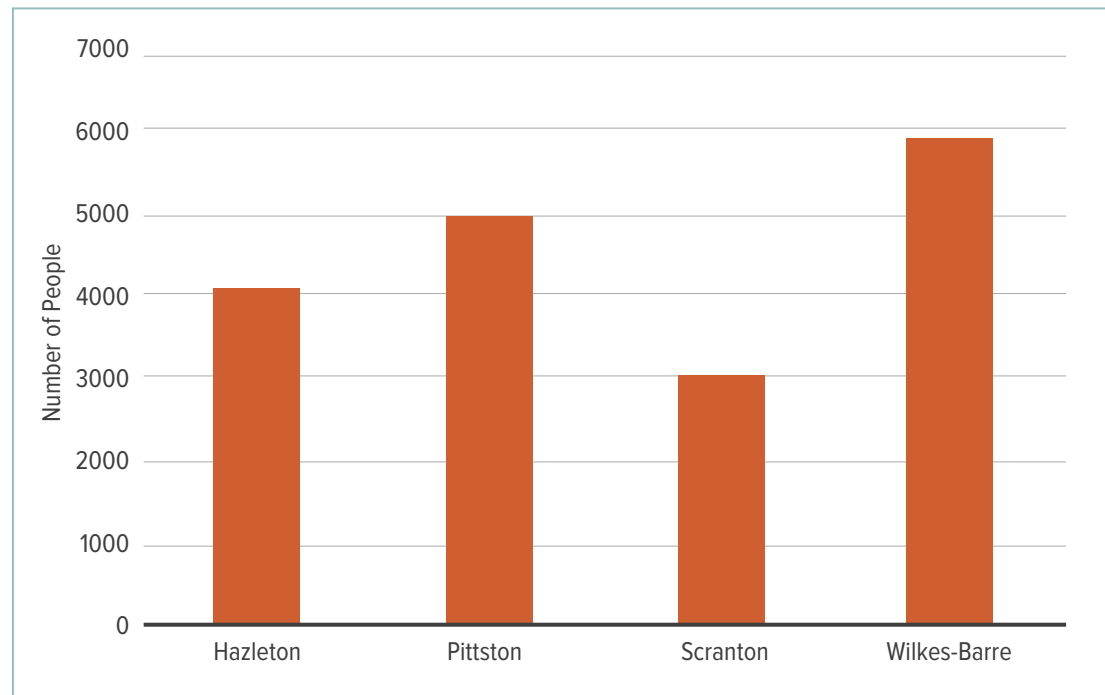


Farms Under Threat: The State of the States  
Written by Julia Freedgood, Metch Hunter,  
Jennifer Dempsey, and Ann Sorenson.  
Published by American Farmland Trust, May 2020

## DATA

Six land use classifications have been identified in the region: Urban Core; Urban Development; Suburban Development, Industrial, Rural Residential, and Agricultural/Open and Preserved Lands. The region's largest cities have anywhere from 3,000 to 6,000 persons per square mile. The Census classifies urban density as at least 1,000 people per square mile. Density is a determinant in how a land area is classified as Urban Core, Urban Development, Suburban Development, or Rural Residential. With the goal of protecting existing farmland, Pennsylvania adopted a realty transfer tax exemption when a protect farm is transferred to new owner. Additionally, Pennsylvania offers tax credits for the sale or rental of agricultural assets.

Person/Square Mile in Urban Areas (2018)



Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

# LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS



## URBAN CORE

Urban Core areas are established downtown communities with distinct identities characterized by commercial, industrial and residential land uses in close proximity to one another. These areas have most of the factors necessary to support growth or redevelopment, such as planning that permits dense development, essential professional and personal services, water/sewer/broadband infrastructure, and a transportation network. These areas are appropriate for a variety of urban uses including a mix of densely developed commercial, residential and development industrial. Beyond cities and boroughs, there are other types of compact centers including:

- Historic Villages – Centers founded around specific employment or commerce activity with a civic identity
- Crossroad Settlements – settlements founded as part of an important intersection of transportation routes



## URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Urban Development areas are the growth areas surrounding Urban Core areas usually created by critical transportation corridors or arteries. Historically, development occurred along corridor frontages and eventually connected Urban Core areas. Development then created rings around the Urban Core forming less dense residential neighborhoods with limited commercial uses. These areas are usually characterized by older roadways and homes. Homeownership and rental rates tend to be more evenly split.



## SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT

Suburban Development areas are mixed-use or residential, and can be an extension of a city or urban area or a separate residential community within commuting distance of a city. Suburban areas may have varying degrees of density depending upon proximity to a defined urban area. Such areas include limited types of residential confined to single family homes or attached homes within small commuting distance to personal and professional services. Suburban areas may contain more limited types of residential development such as single-family homes or townhomes. Suburban development has defined places for nonresidential development, and typically commercial and nonresidential development is not located in residential neighborhoods.



## INDUSTRIAL

Industrial areas contain commercial establishments, manufacturing plants, public utilities, mining, distribution of goods or services, administration of business activities, research and development facilities, warehousing, shipping, transporting, remanufacturing, stockpiling of raw materials, storage, repair and maintenance of commercial machinery or equipment, and waste management. These areas in the region are typically located just outside the Urban Core or Urban Development areas. Initially these industrial areas were located for resource extraction purposes and industrial uses related to agriculture. Today there are 23 employment centers scattered throughout the region with a high concentration in the northeast.



## RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Rural Residential areas can be characterized as having limited utilities and public infrastructure, road networks, and fire and police protection services necessary for dense development patterns to occur. Typical land uses include single family homes, limited farming operations, hobby farms, orchards and vineyards and related business, larger regional parks and open space such as state parks and game lands and potentially industrial uses that require expansive land needs.



## AGRICULTURAL/OPEN AND PRESERVED LANDS

Agricultural and preserved land areas include the areas further from the region's urban cores and urban development, and are primarily located along I-81 and I-476. Such lands include confined feeding operations, croplands and pastures, orchards and vineyards, and other ecosystems modified to produce food and fiber. This includes farmsteads, holdings for livestock such as corrals, breeding and training facilities on horse farms, farm lanes and roads, ponds and similar uses. Preserved lands include open space protected via tax incentive programs, land trusts, lands protected by conversation easements, and areas where regional conservation districts have legally purchased development rights.

“THE FUTURE OF FARMLAND IS AT A CRITICAL POINT, BECAUSE MANY OLDER FARM OWNERS WILL BE DYING OR RETIRING IN THE NEXT 15–20 YEARS AND, UNLIKE IN THE PAST, THERE ARE FEWER FAMILY MEMBERS WILLING TO CONTINUE FARMING. IT'S GOING TO BE IMPERATIVE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO MAKE THE DECISION THAT PROTECTING THEIR FARMS IS IMPORTANT FOR QUALITY OF LIFE.”

**Jeff Swinehart,**  
Lancaster  
Farmland Trust


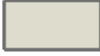









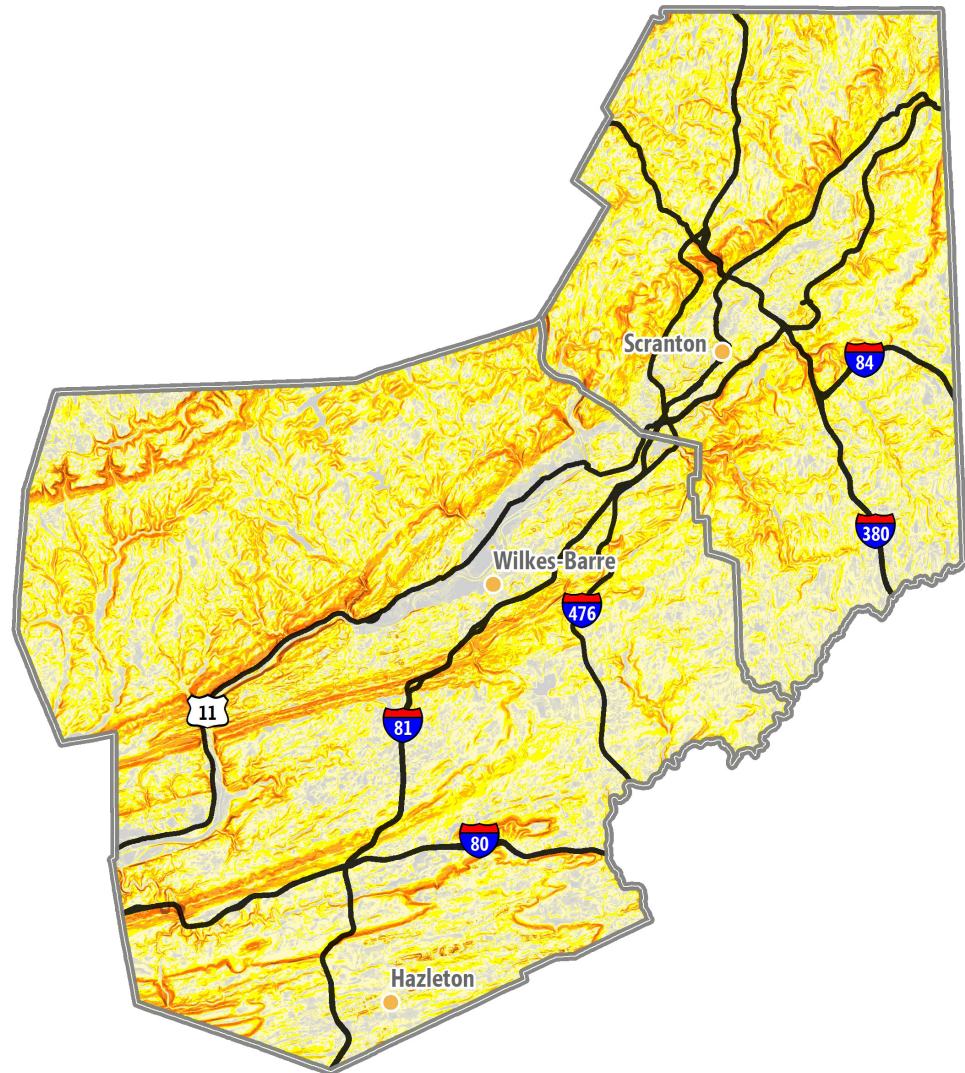
## Steep Slopes – Total Region

### Legend

#### Terrain: Slope Map

#### ClassName

	Flat (0%)
	Nearly level (0.1%-1.0%)
	Gently level (1.1%-2.5%)
	Gently sloping (2.6%-5.0%)
	Strongly sloping (5.1%-7.5%)
	Gently steep (7.6%-10.0%)
	Moderately Steep (10.1%-15.0%)
	Steep (15.1%-20.0%)
	Very steep (20.0% and above)



Data Source: PennDOT OneMap GIS Data

# STEEP SLOPES



Beyond density requirements, lot requirements, and zoning ordinances, another key consideration in determining future land use is the terrain of the land itself. Ordinances can permit or deny development based on existing slope. Both Luzerne and Lackawanna counties have zoning regulations in place for steep slopes that affect numerous municipalities. For example, in Luzerne County, 22 municipalities follow County guidelines for the protection of steep slopes. Lackawanna County has more local guidelines, with 35 of 40 municipalities developing their own plans, and conglomerate groups such as Scranton-Abingtons Planning Association (SAPA) working regionally to coordinate regulations. The map, which displays location of steep slopes, helped bolster considerations for future land use classifications by directing development away from these locations.



# FUTURE LAND USE

Urban sprawl is the outward spread of development from urban centers into rural areas. It is typically unorganized and poorly planned, making it an unsustainable form of development. Urban sprawl creates increased pollution and destroys natural resources outside urban centers. (Business Ideas, January 2019, State of Washington, Department of Commerce)

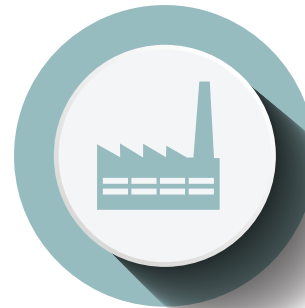
Over the past decade the region has seen an estimated 85,000 acres of development. On average the region is experiencing the following development density:



Single-Family  
development uses  
3.2 acres per unit



Multi-Family  
development uses  
0.37 acres per  
dwelling unit



One industrial  
development  
typically  
uses 22 acres  
of land



One commercial lot  
is 5 acres  
per unit

*Data Source: Lackawanna County Planning Commission Annual Reports 2010-2018*

In the overall land use framework, a majority of future growth should be directed to Primary Growth Areas, while the Secondary Growth Areas are envisioned to accommodate a much smaller proportion of total growth over the next 10 years.



## URBAN CENTERS

Urban Centers include the city and borough downtown areas and the densely developed neighborhoods that surround them. Cities have high population densities within a built out, mixed-use environment. Pedestrian accessibility and safety are paramount. Arts and culture are part of the fabric of development. Neighborhood schools, parks, and community services are an integral part of most neighborhoods.

Future land use patterns in Urban Centers should ensure pedestrian safety, contain accessible commercial storefronts, include more green buildings and green roofs, support renewable energy, provide space for arts/entertainment/leisure uses and events, and increase multi-modal opportunities. Commercial and mixed use buildings should have front facing entrances on collector streets with shared side and rear parking.



### DENSITY RECOMMENDATION

Urban Centers should not be less than 12 residential units per buildable acre. Commercial space requirements should be flexible and not bound by minimum lot size standards. Minimum lot size regulations tend to mean less uses will be allowed. Zoning in Urban Centers is encouraged to allow higher-density multi-story, mixed use and/or apartment buildings.



## PRIMARY GROWTH AREAS

Primary Growth Areas (PGAs) are areas where future growth and development is prioritized. Over the next decade, it is anticipated that growth will occur in these areas given the existing infrastructure systems and ability to accommodate new development, infill development, and redevelopment without straining the region's infrastructure. Growth and development should occur in the PGAs first before growth and development is considered in Secondary Growth Areas (SGAs).

The future land use patterns in the PGAs support multimodal transportation networks with infrastructure to safely accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and vehicles. There is an emphasis on a complete streets approach to the public right-of-way, including sidewalks, bike lanes, protected crosswalks, street trees, and pedestrian lighting. Future development will prioritize strong connections between neighborhoods, employment centers, educational facilities, essential services, and open space.



### DENSITY RECOMMENDATION

Target densities in the PGAs should be 6 dwelling units per buildable acre or greater. Flexibility should be incorporated into local zoning codes to permit mixed-use buildings, multifamily units, shared parking on lots that permit multiple commercial uses and buildings with tight footprints.





## SECONDARY GROWTH

Secondary Growth Areas (SGAs) are identified in or around emerging employment centers in the region. The locations of the SGAs correspond with growth in the transportation and warehousing industries and the expansion of new industrial parks. Over the next decade, it is expected that the SGAs will experience growth, but at a lower rate than the PGAs.

Future land use patterns in the SGAs will incorporate walkable, compact development supporting inclusive neighborhoods. Neighborhoods should include such as pedestrian and bike-friendly streets, parks and public gathering areas, and space for local services and businesses. SGAs may include regional recreation and park systems that can accommodate larger parking facilities for sporting and entertainment events.

After discussion with Luzerne County Council it was determined that communities along Route 11 in the Nescopeck Borough and East Berwick areas of the Southwestern portion of Luzerne County, are poised to experience growth, especially if natural and man-made hazards along and with the Route 11 area can be addressed. Existing issues on Route 11 such as flooding and fallen trees along with the implications of the potential decommission of the Berwick nuclear plant, should be addressed by PennDOT and the County to support future growth potential.



## DENSITY RECOMMENDATION

Target densities for new development in the SGAs should be 4 dwelling units per buildable acre or greater. Flexibility should be incorporated into local zoning codes to permit mixed-use buildings, shared parking, and lots that permit multiple commercial uses and buildings on tight footprints.



## PRESERVATION AREAS

Preservation Areas target stream corridors, floodplain areas, state parks and game lands, preserved farms, active farm parcels containing prime agricultural soils, pending farm parcels seeking Agricultural Easement Purchase, and municipalities containing a large number of active farm operations.

Future land use patterns in the Preservation Areas involve retention and maintenance of existing farmland. These areas of the region work together to implement the right planning tools to further prioritize and save precious farmland. The designation of Preservation Areas will serve to preserve existing farm operations and support the region's agrarian economy for years to come. Additionally, municipal zoning and land use development codes should promote conservation of riparian corridors and floodplain areas to better retain and improve water quality.



## DENSITY RECOMMENDATION

Various forms of agricultural protection zoning techniques are recommended that will further support agricultural production while limiting the spread of large lot residential development including:

- Exclusive agricultural zoning
- Large lot-size zoning (control farm parcel subdivisions to a minimum of 25 acres or higher)



## RURAL LIVING AREAS

Rural Living Areas (RLAs) accommodate existing large lot residential development as well as industrial, renewable energy land uses, large farm operations, farm homesteads, large and small farm businesses, farm markets, and other farm industry uses. Rural neighborhoods or hamlets, rural business centers, and “on-farm” development are typical in this landscape. Rural neighborhoods should be limited in scale and should incorporate conservation subdivision design principles and include a clear development edge. Rural business centers may exist in areas where agricultural support services, mineral extraction, or where existing industrial uses occur. Rural neighborhoods should maintain a separation distance from existing farms to limit negative impacts related to business operations.

The future of RLAs is dependent upon aggressive land preservation efforts in the region and strong limitations placed on large-lot residential development. Within existing villages and crossroad development areas a mix of residential and commercial uses are expected at similar densities.



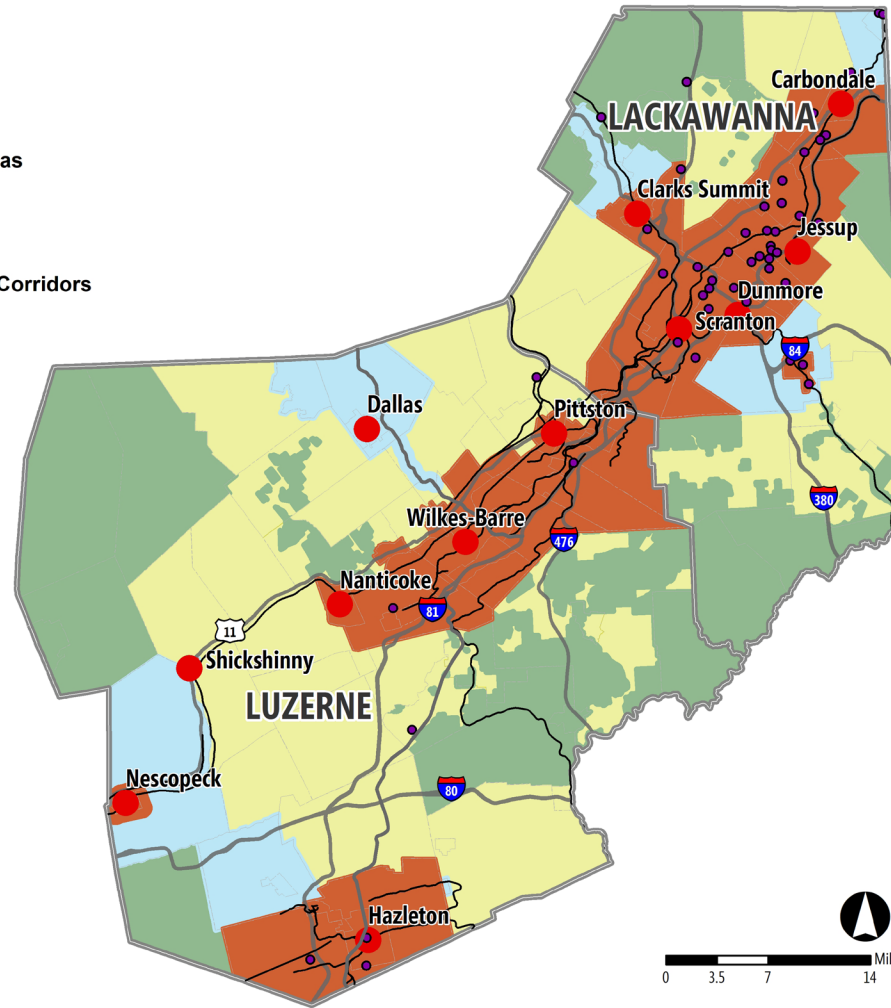
## DENSITY RECOMMENDATION

Municipalities are encouraged to refrain from permitting large-lot (1-3 acres) residential development. Various zoning techniques can be used to reduce suburban sprawl and other non-agricultural development including:

- Cluster/open space development – Open space residential design is a land development practice enabled through zoning that prioritizes areas within a property that have high preservation value and sets them aside for permanent preservation. The residential development is clustered on the remaining area of the site
- Smart growth – integrating places to live with places to work and shop
- Transitional zoning – Transitional zoning allows for an increase in density and intensity as development is planned closer to urban centers where there is adequate transportation and utility infrastructure
- Agricultural preservation zoning

# Future Land Use – Total Region

- Legend**
- Urban Centers
  - Industrial Parks
  - Primary Growth Area
  - Secondary Growth Areas
  - Rural Living Areas
  - Preservation Areas
  - Major Highways
  - Road and Rail Freight Corridors
  - County Boundaries
  - Municipal Boundaries



Data Source: PennDOT, 2019

# REVITALIZATION AREAS


The following maps represent revitalization areas within the region's major urban centers that were locally identified by city and county planners. Revitalization of these areas align with Urban Center strategies including infill development, downtown revitalization, and guiding growth to areas with existing infrastructure. These identified areas are predominantly low-to-moderate income and may have potential to receive economic development funding for adaptive reuse, business assistance, façade improvements, and streetscape improvements.

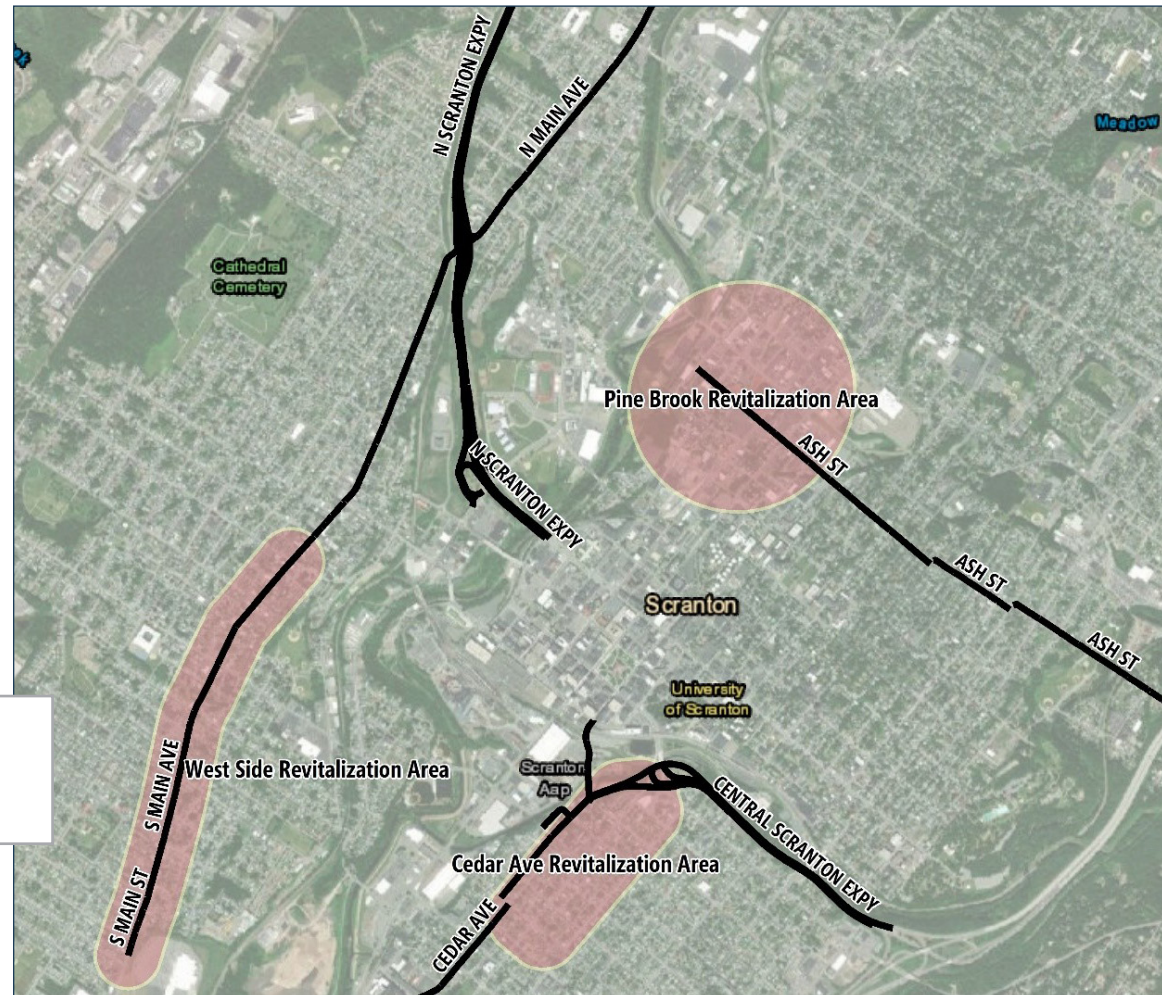
## Scranton

The City of Scranton identified several revitalization areas located near Cedar Avenue, Pine Brook and South Main Avenue in the west side. Between 20-40% of its households currently live below poverty with median incomes lower than the City's median income (\$39,066).

*Data Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

**LEGEND**

 Revitalization Area

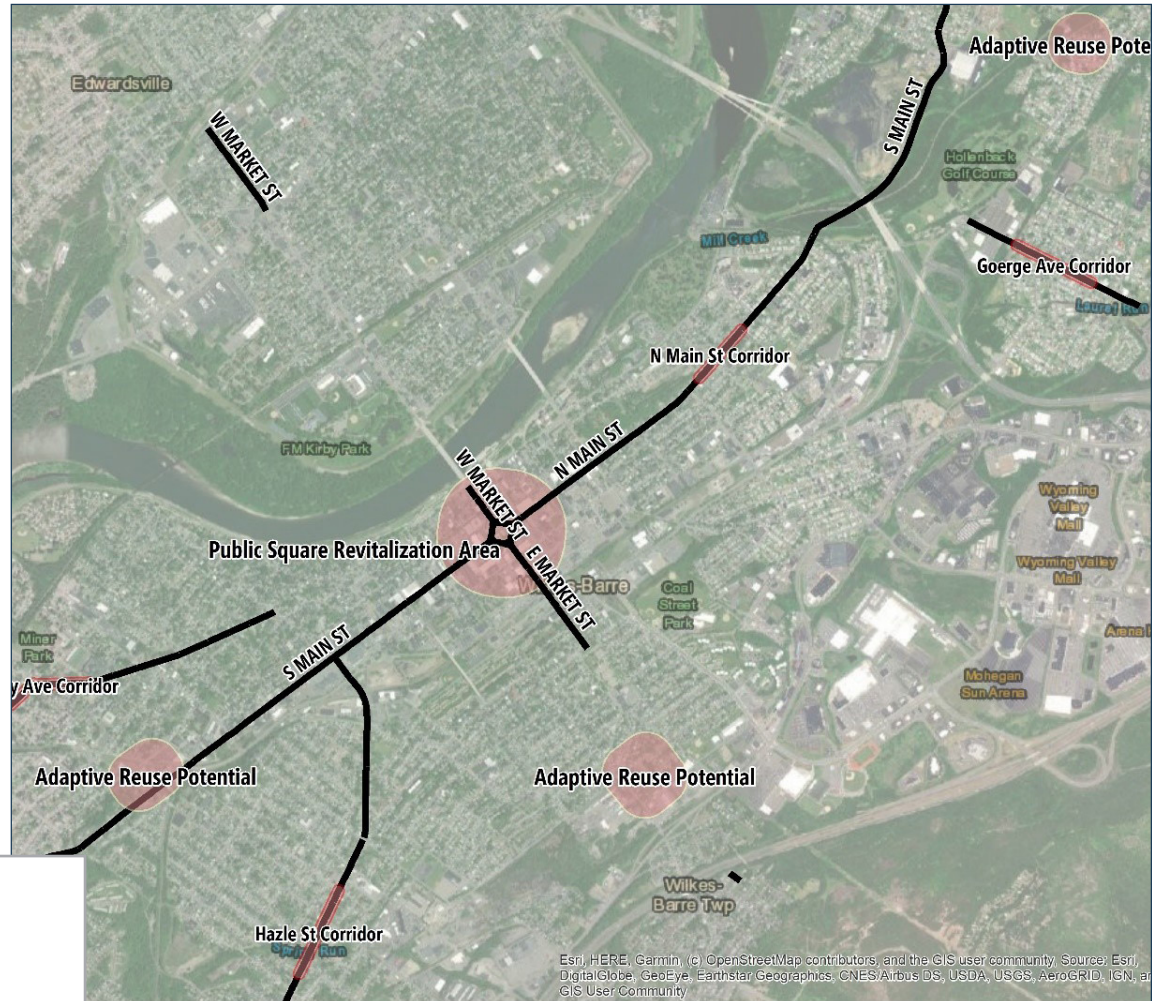






## Wilkes-Barre

The City of Wilkes-Barre identified several revitalization areas including their central business district, potential adaptive reuse areas and select corridor improvement areas.

- The central business district, or Public Square Revitalization Area, contains commercial and industrial uses within older neighborhoods
- Adaptive reuse areas include vacant lots or lots containing vacant industrial buildings
- Select road corridors located within older commercial districts and are adjacent to low-to-moderate income neighborhoods.



**LEGEND**


-  Revitalization Area
-  Revitalization Corridor

## Pittston

The City of Pittston identified its core downtown or the Main Street Revitalization area. Revitalization efforts began in 1996 when Downtown Tomorrow was created to improve the business environment. Projects undertaken included rehabilitation of storefronts, public art, new eateries, and tourism promotion. Pittston's revitalization efforts have been highly regarded throughout the region throughout the region and will continue to build upon its early successes.



LEGEND

 Revitalization Area



# Hazleton

The City of Hazleton identified several revitalization areas.

- Alter Street Business District including adjacent residential areas. Neighborhood homes are older single-family and twin homes in need of rehabilitation
- Butler Industrial Park area is a commercial area at the end of the Heights section of the City that is seeing ongoing revitalization efforts
- The Neighborhood Revitalization area is located between Church, Wyoming, Spring and Maple Streets along west Diamond Avenue. This area contains older historic homes, formerly occupied by the City's wealthiest resident, during what was known as Hazleton's "Golden Age". Several of the large residential estates are deteriorating. There are ongoing planning efforts to designate this area as a future historical district



**LEGEND**

Revitalization Area



REGIONAL

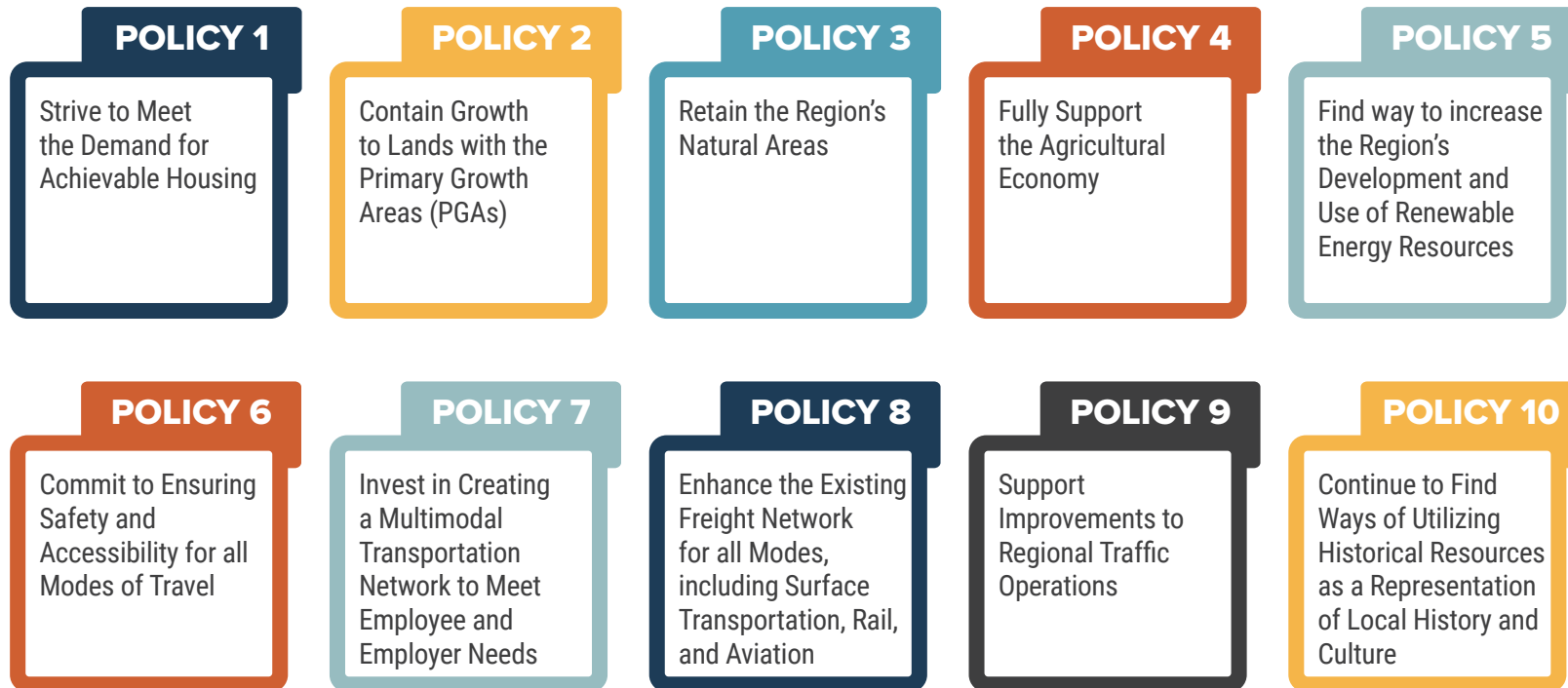
POLICIES





# REGIONAL POLICIES

Ten Regional Policies were identified and agreed upon by the Lackawanna Luzerne Bi-County Comprehensive Planning Steering Committee with the intention to establish principles to guide future actions in the two Counties. These are:



The decision to combine the Comprehensive Plan and Long Range Transportation plan results in an emphasis on regional policies recognizing that mobility and transportation infrastructure are crucial to long range planning and future growth. The policies also direct growth to occur in compact fashion near existing centers while protecting important natural resources and preserving agricultural practices and lands.

Within each policy statement, a goal or set of goals is identified and aligned with strategies for implementation. The policies, goals, and strategies form the Plan's core priorities for the region's future growth, connectivity and accessibility, and land use.

# POLICY 1

## Strive to Meet the Demand for Achievable Housing



### GOAL

Pursue achievable housing opportunities

### STRATEGIES

1. Cities should review the viability of establishment of an affordable housing trust. This would create a public-funding source to assist in low-income housing development
2. Create development incentives that increase achievable housing in the region. Understanding that achievable housing is a regional issue, and therefore education and outreach is important when creating incentive programs
  - Establish ways to offer tax credits or density bonuses to developers for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction of achievable housing targeted towards low-to-moderate income households. Density bonuses could include setting percentages for achievable housing units
  - Because high land and construction costs are a challenge for achievable housing developers, local or regional subsidies could make residential conversions or the construction of new units more affordable
  - Establish resources and funding opportunities for achievable housing impact projects. Continue to target grant funds or create a regional grant program for achievable housing developers
3. Explore model frameworks for inclusionary zoning that could potentially advocate for the inclusion of achievable housing units in new developments
4. Identify opportunities to adjust or update zoning to allow for more flexibility in where multi-family or planned achievable housing developments can occur
5. Increase homeownership for low-and-moderate income households. Create a multi-faceted regional homebuyers program that provides educational resources and prioritizes low-and-moderate income households for homeownership opportunities. Priorities could include first-time homeowners or programs for employers seeking to invest in its employees' home purchases
6. Increase household incomes towards a living wage for individuals and families:
  - Support local universities, community colleges, career services and social services focused on providing job training and job seeking services, particularly support job training initiatives targeted at local industry workforce needs
  - Prioritize commercial development that creates jobs that provide living wages and career opportunities for low-and-moderate income households

# POLICY 1



## What does Achievable Housing look like for the Region?

- Affordable for low-to-moderate income individuals and families (between 50-120 percent Area Median Income)
- Supports policies, programs, and subsidies that create low-to-moderate income housing, workforce housing, and achieves housing affordability for individuals and families experiencing economic insecurity

# POLICY 2

## Contain Growth to Lands within the Primary Growth Areas (PGAs)



### GOAL

Establish growth management strategies on local and regional levels

### STRATEGIES

1. Plan for focused development
  - 1a. Revitalize city centers by being focused on permitting a mix of uses with increased building heights and densities
  - 1b. Identify parcels for infill development in PGAs. Infill parcels typically contain connections to existing infrastructure, neighborhoods, and core commercial centers
  - 1c. Locate industrial and logistics centers near major interstates, identified truck corridors and regional transportation hubs. Provide adequate infrastructure for these uses such as:
    - Rest areas, comfort stations, and fueling facilities
    - Provide efficient and adequate road infrastructure that includes: reinforced road profiles to reduce frequency of repair, adequate turning lanes that include appropriate right of ways for safe travel, and precautions that prevent trucks from utilizing local roads
  - 1d. Support the location of offices, higher education campuses, technology startups and medical research and treatment facilities in or near city centers
  - 1e. Stabilize and connect existing and new residential areas to preserve housing quality and strengthen neighborhoods
  - 1f. Discourage the expansion of single-family neighborhoods in rural areas, instead promote lower density and clustered open space development to help maintain the region's rural and scenic character
2. Center new development around existing infrastructure
  - 2a. Capitalize on the region's core infrastructure and service areas by creating development incentives
  - 2b. Establish revitalization efforts that focus on property rehabilitation, infill development, and conversion of existing spaces into new uses
  - 2c. Concentrate revitalization efforts near or on transportation corridors with existing or planned transit options
  - 2d. Limit single-family zoning as this type of development requires expensive new infrastructure investments without the benefit of growing the tax base





3. Promote the sustainable benefits of urban living
  - 3a. Support diverse and equitable housing opportunities in cities and boroughs
  - 3b. Support zoning that provides incentives for housing affordability
  - 3c. Support infrastructure improvements in the region's cities and boroughs
    - Cities are encouraged to be “people” centric. Services, employment, and activities thrive on the people that live in cities
  - 3d. Advocate for integrated land use planning
  - 3e. Support the development of a system of connected green spaces and corridors in cities and boroughs

# POLICY 3

## Retain the Region's Natural Areas



### GOAL

Protect valuable and vulnerable natural resources

### STRATEGIES

1. Limit future encroachments caused by development
  - 1a. Promote development in the region's villages, boroughs and cities
    - Limit single-family zoning outside of the region's villages, boroughs and cities. This type of zoning creates large lot sizes and new developments can lead to outward sprawl
    - Advocate for regional planning
      - Regional planning helps offset development pressure placed on municipalities
      - Regional planning creates enhanced municipal coordination and land use sharing opportunities. Coordinated land use decisions across municipal boundaries encourages wider decision-making processes amongst residents, stakeholders, appointed officials and elected representatives
2. Preserve the region's green and natural areas composed of stategame lands, river corridors, parks and preserved open space through:
  - 2a. Continue to support local conservation districts, preservation boards, and independent organizations or associations
  - 2b. Search for ways to incorporate new preservation funding sources. An example could be a re-allocation of gambling monies
  - 2c. Encourage local land use policies that preserve green and open lands by allowing less intensive development such as passive recreation, environmental education, camping, managed forestry and other uses that clearly take advantage of scenic vistas and are focused on natural resource preservation
  - 2d. Encourage municipalities to target and prioritize green and natural areas from intensive development through an effective subdivision process
  - 2e. Identify those lands that can connect neighborhoods to the region's green and natural areas. These lands should also be targeted for future preservation efforts
  - 2f. A majority of Luzerne County Council acknowledges that litter and illegal dumping remain persistent problems in our community. Over the last several months, Wilkes-Barre Area Citizens Blight Committee members have been voluntarily cleaning up illegal dumping sites throughout Luzerne County. The pursuit of grants might be one way to support such group efforts. The strengthening of anti-dumping laws may be another solution that should continue to be explored by civic leaders

# POLICY 4

## Fully Support the Agricultural Economy



### GOAL

Prioritize actions that support and enhance farmland preservation programs

### STRATEGIES

1. Support County Conservation Districts in their efforts to preserve farmland
  - 1a. Identify and target municipalities that have active farmlands, lands containing prime agricultural soils, and protected agricultural land. Target areas should also include smaller farms that are located adjacent or near agricultural security areas and protected farms
  - 1b. To create a faster application process, identify existing municipal Agricultural Security Areas and promote expansions where needed
  - 1c. Promote the PA Department of Agriculture farmland match incentive program. Counties and target municipal governments should be informed of the opportunity
  - 1d. Utilize education systems in the region to promote PA Department of Agriculture's career and technical education programs. There are work-based education and training programs and apprenticeships available in agriculture and food careers
2. Promote Agricultural Protection Zoning (APZ)
  - 2a. Distribute data that support the case for APZ in targeted municipalities
    - Data can include: Land use, land ownership, soils, geologic features, natural features, and preserved lands
  - 2a. Achieve support and buy-in of farmers early in the APZ process
  - 2a. Support municipal governing bodies willing to enact APZ regulations
    - Identify or target contiguous farming areas of substantial size
    - Support and permit agricultural businesses, agri-processing, entrepreneurship, and agritourism/experience businesses
    - Support and permit alternate businesses that enable farm property owners to increase family incomes
      - Blacksmithing, sales of handcrafted or farm products, farm market/stands and u-pick it, veterinary offices, butcher shops, rural events and reception businesses, farm-to-table restaurants, animal training and rescue facilities, etc.
      - Renewable energy such as solar and wind farms
      - Agricultural suppliers and processors
    - Support county and state agencies such as the Cooperative Extension Service, Agricultural Preservation Boards, and food co-ops
    - Adopt zoning requirements that: limit and control property subdivisions, include key definitions and flexible use standards, permit housing for farm labor
    - Strictly limit uses that do not relate to farming such as residential and institutional uses to minimize loss of farmland and conflicts between farmers and other uses

*Data Source: PA Department of Agriculture 2015*

# POLICY 5

Find Ways to Increase the Region's Development and Use of Renewable Energy Resources



## GOAL

Study and establish new ways of providing renewable energy sources

## STRATEGIES

1. Work with state and federal agencies to study and identify the renewable energy sources that are present in the region
2. Identify the lands within the region appropriate for priority renewable resource development
3. Partner with the private sector energy companies to help site, fund, develop, and operate future renewable energy facilities



# POLICY 6

## Commit to Ensuring Safety and Accessibility for all Modes of Travel



### GOAL

Create streets that accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users of all mobility levels

### STRATEGIES

1. Adopt a Complete Streets Policy to routinely evaluate and plan for the needs of all roadway users in transportation projects, including repaving and restriping
2. Incorporate a multimodal analysis in the development review process
3. Identify priority roadway corridors and intersections for safety improvements
4. Improve railroad crossing safety
5. Continue working to identify and develop improvements to bicycle and pedestrian networks in high-priority urban areas. Explore opportunities to plan for and implement connections between areas and outline suburban and rural population centers



### GOAL

Improve connections to trails and transit

### STRATEGIES

1. Identify and implement bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections to the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail and the D&L Trail to facilitate travel to these destinations without a vehicle
2. Upgrade bicycle and pedestrian networks near transit hubs and employment centers

# POLICY 7

## Invest in Creating a Multi-modal Transportation Network to Meet Employee and Employer Needs



### GOAL

Enhance multi-modal transportation options and connections within the region

### STRATEGIES

1. Identify and implement projects to address regional transit needs, including modifying or expanding bus routes, extending hours of operation, improving connections to employment centers, implementing express bus service, and enhancing transit service between Wilkes-Barre and Scranton
2. Plan for and implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the region to better connect population, employment, and education centers
  - 2a. Priority routes for further design and analysis include:
    - Covington to Keystone College
    - Hazleton to Wilkes-Barre
    - Penn State Hazleton to Humboldt Industrial Park
    - Dallas to Wilkes-Barre to Nanticoke
    - Wilkes-Barre to Mountain Top
  - 2b. Prepare an Enhanced Transit Corridor Plan to identify:
    - Needed rights-of-way (if any)
    - Transit shelter and park and ride locations
    - Bicycle facilities and connections
    - Traffic calming
    - Safety needs, such as lighting, sidewalks, and crosswalks
3. Foster greater coordination between municipalities, transit systems, and the MPO to provide better public transportation systems and improve operational efficiencies, such as updating the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan and continuing to explore the possibility of further consolidating certain transit service functions
4. Utilize multimodal transportation to promote equitable housing and employment opportunities
  - 4a. Build or enhance pathways and sidewalks to connect places where people live to commercial areas, schools, and parks



### GOAL

Enhance multi-modal transportation options and connections outside the region

### STRATEGIES

1. Continue examining the feasibility of re-establishing a regional rail connection to New York City

# POLICY 8

Enhance the Existing Freight Network for all Modes, including Surface Transportation, Rail, and Aviation



## GOAL

Support improvements to the regional freight network

## STRATEGIES

1. Educate local officials about useful lifespans of roads and bridges and the more favorable maintenance practice of “lowest life cycle cost” versus addressing “worst first”
2. Educate local officials about the benefits and cost savings associated with performing preventative maintenance
3. Develop a regional freight plan
4. Perform a truck parking facility feasibility study
5. Continue to pursue funding and prioritize improvements for Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFCs) and Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFCs)
6. Support the provision of rail access to industrial parks
7. Improve rail access to Taylor Yard, Norfolk Southern’s intermodal transload terminal
8. Implement congestion mitigation measures in areas where bottlenecks impede the flow of freight
9. Support freight corridor improvements and intermodal connections with Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport



## GOAL

Ensure transportation assets are well managed and maintained

## STRATEGIES

1. Work with municipalities to identify opportunities to bundle replacement/rehabilitation of bridges to reduce design and construction costs and address backlog of bridges that are closed or weight-restricted
2. Prioritize maintenance of roadway pavements in a state of good repair
3. Advocate for interstate improvements before the Interstate Steering Committee
4. Perform preventative maintenance on transportation assets, including infrastructure, facilities, and transit vehicles

# POLICY 9

## Support Improvements to Regional Traffic Operations



### GOAL

Reduce congestion and improve traffic flow

### STRATEGIES

1. Undertake a coordinated regional effort to improve traffic signal coordination, particularly on suburban arterials
2. Update and implement the Regional Operations Plan (ROP) in coordination with PennDOT
3. Improve traffic incident management and first responder response time on Interstates, particularly I-81 in the Hazleton area
4. Identify pre-established detours for use during incidents on the Interstate
5. Increase wayfinding and signage for new pre-established detour routes
6. Identify and implement improvements to mitigate congestion in target locations



# POLICY 10



## Continue to Find Ways of Utilizing Historical Resources as Representation of Local History and Culture



### GOAL

Promote, preserve and maintain historical resources

### STRATEGIES

1. Increase municipal officials' knowledge of historic resources in the region, including those of Indigenous populations and important archeological sites
2. Work to increase regional planning through local partnerships and supporting local preservation efforts
3. Identify any current local protections for historic resources (i.e., Act 167 local historic districts), along with existing National Register districts and individual buildings on the National Register
4. Inform property owners and developers about incentives such as historic tax credits to encourage adaptive reuse and building rehabilitation



# IMPLEMENTATION



# IMPLEMENTATION

The Implementation Section of the Lackawanna Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan provides the framework and timeline for operationalizing the Plan's Regional Policies. The framework outlines the goals, actions, and key partnering entities to work with the Counties and local municipalities during Plan implementation. The timeline for implementation is segmented into three phases: Ongoing Actions, Actions prioritized within the first four years, and Actions prioritized within 5-12 years.

## ONGOING ACTIONS

recognize current planning, policy and development efforts that are in process and will continue over the lifetime of the Plan.

## ACTIONS PRIORITIZED WITHIN THE FIRST FOUR YEARS

include concrete steps intended to start soon after Plan adoption and be realized within a short-term timeline. They are generally more achievable and tied to crucial Plan goals that require a more immediate timeframe to be completed.

## ACTIONS PRIORITIZED WITHIN FIVE TO TWELVE YEARS

are those which require a longer planning lead time, developing partnerships and require greater participation at the State and Federal level or coordination between jurisdictions. They are intended to follow and build on immediate, short-term, and ongoing efforts.

# ONGOING

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS



### GOAL

Protect valuable and vulnerable natural resources



### RELATED POLICIES

2, 3, 5



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

County Conservation Districts  
Land Preservation Boards  
PA DEP  
Municipal and Regional  
Planning Agencies and  
local governments



### ACTIONS

1. Limit future encroachment into natural areas through promoting development in the region's existing villages, boroughs and cities and limit single-family zoning outside of these areas
2. Advocate for increased multi-municipal and regional planning, similar to the Scranton-Abingtons Planning Association (SAPA) to allow coordination and shared land uses
3. Preserve the region's green and natural areas through:
  - Support of local conservation districts, preservation boards, and independent organizations
  - Procurement of new funding sources for preservation, such as gambling monies
  - Encourage local land use policies that preserve green and open lands, and allow for passive recreation, environmental education, managed forestry and other safe uses
  - Encourage municipalities to target and prioritize green and natural areas from intrusive development through an effective subdivision process
  - Identify lands that connect neighborhoods to the region's green and natural areas. These lands should also be targets for future preservation efforts
  - Planning for the future of pipelines and development in the region that may be implemented in the coming decades due to the presence of Utica Shale in the region



# ONGOING

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS



### GOAL

Expand local knowledge about asset management and useful lifespans of transportation assets to ensure their ongoing management and maintenance



### RELATED POLICIES

6, 9



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

MPO

Local and County Planners and Engineers

PennDOT, including LTAP and PennDOT Connects



### ACTIONS

1. Educate local officials on useful lifespans of roads and bridges using resources such as Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)
2. Prioritize maintenance practice of “lowest life cycle cost” instead of addressing “worst first”
3. Advocate for interstate improvements before the Interstate Steering Committee
4. Work regionally to identify bundles of replacement/rehabilitation bridges to reduce design and construction costs to address the backlog of bridges that are closed, or weight restricted
5. Include useful lifespan in prioritizing maintenance of trails
6. Support various water and sewer initiatives that work towards large-scale infrastructure improvements, including the separation of sewer and water pipelines and maintenance of MS4 stormwater systems

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 4 YEARS



### GOAL

Support farmland preservation programs



### RELATED POLICIES

2, 3, 4



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

Local and County Planners and Municipal Governments

County Conservation Districts

Preservation Boards

Farmers



### ACTIONS

1. Support County Conservation Districts in their efforts to preserve farmland
  - Target municipalities that have active farmlands, prime agricultural soils, and farms that are already protected
  - Streamline the application process for conservation and inclusion in Agricultural Security Areas
  - Promote the PA Department of Agriculture farmland match incentive program
  - Utilize education systems to promote PA Department of Agriculture's career and technical education programs
  - Explore opportunities to pair farmland and natural resource protection for properties containing both types of resources
2. Support county and state agencies such as cooperative extension service and agricultural preservation boards and food co-op groups
  - Adopt zoning requirements that: limit and control property subdivisions, include key definitions and flexible use standards, permit housing for farm labor
3. Strictly limit uses that do not relate to farming such as residential and institutional uses to minimize loss of farmland and conflicts between farmers and other uses
4. Investigate methods for ensuring affordable prices of agricultural land

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 4 YEARS



### GOAL

Pursue achievable housing opportunities



### RELATED POLICIES

1



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

Local and County Planners  
Private Developers  
Housing Coalitions  
Land Banks



### ACTIONS

1. Work to establish an affordable housing trust to secure a public-funding source
2. Establish development incentives for the inclusion of achievable housing units. These should include:
  - Tax credits or density bonuses to developers for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction of achievable housing units
  - Targeted grant funds for achievable housing impact projects
  - Promote flexibility in regulations to permit residential uses within business districts of urban centers
3. Explore model frameworks for inclusionary zoning
4. Identify opportunities to adjust or update zoning to allow for more flexibility where multi-family or planned achievable housing developments can occur
5. Support zoning that provides incentives for achievable housing
6. Support zoning that provides incentives for housing affordability
7. Develop a model for accessory dwelling units that provide housing for students and elderly family members
8. Support diverse and equitable housing opportunities in cities and boroughs
9. Support and partner with organizations that work with homeless populations to provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing, rapid re-housing, and safe havens

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 4 YEARS



### GOAL

Stabilize existing neighborhoods and housing stock



### RELATED POLICIES

1, 2, 7



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

Local and County Planners  
Private Developers  
Housing Coalition  
Land Banks



### ACTIONS

1. Increase homeownership for low-and-moderate income households by:
  - Establishing a regional homebuyers program to educate and prioritize low-and-moderate income households
  - Supporting first-time homebuyers or employers seeking to invest in employee home purchase
2. Increase household incomes in the region towards a living wage:
  - Support local universities, colleges, community colleges, career services, and social services that provide job training and job seeking services
  - Support job training initiatives targeted at local industry workforce needs.
  - Work to retain local graduates from higher education
  - Prioritize commercial development that will provide living wages and career opportunity for low-and-moderate income households
3. Continue efforts to maintain, upgrade, and rehabilitate existing housing stock and promote adaptive reuse of existing commercial properties where appropriate
4. Set up programs that allow homebuyers to acquire adjacent vacant lots for yard space



# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 4 YEARS



### GOAL

Promote, preserve and maintain historical resources



### RELATED POLICIES

2, 3, 10



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

Historic Societies

HARBs

PA Historical and  
Museum Commission

Municipal and Regional Planning  
Agencies and local governments

Pennsylvania Main Street Program



### ACTIONS

1. Expand knowledge of historic resources in the region including those of Indigenous and less represented communities and important archeological sites
2. Support local preservation efforts
3. Identify any current local protections for historic resources (i.e., Act 167 local historic districts), along with existing National Register districts and individual buildings on the National Register
4. Inform property owners and developers about incentives such as historic tax credits to encourage adaptive reuse and building rehabilitation

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 4 YEARS



### GOAL

Design streets that accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users of all mobility levels and connect to trails and transit



### RELATED POLICIES

2, 6, 7



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

Local and County Planners/  
Transportation Planners

Pennsylvania Environmental Council

D&L National Heritage Corridor

Anthracite Bicycle Coalition

NEPA Velo

NE Trails Forum

DCNR

PA DCED



### ACTIONS

1. Evaluate routinely and plan for the needs of all roadway users in transportation projects
2. Develop a complete streets policy
3. Identify priority roadway corridors and intersections for safety improvements
4. Improve railroad crossing safety
5. Identify and develop improvements to bicycle and pedestrian networks in high-priority urban areas
6. Implement connections to the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail and the D&L Trail
7. Upgrade multi-modal options near transit hubs and employment centers
8. Employ useful life span planning for trail maintenance
9. Promote branding of regional trail network

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 4 YEARS



### GOAL

Enhance multi-modal transportation options and connections within the region



### RELATED POLICIES

1, 2, 6, 7



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

MPO

Transit Providers

Local and County Planners/  
Transportation Planners

PennDOT

Freight Industry

Rail Companies

Area Airports



### ACTIONS

1. Identify and implement projects to address regional transit needs, including modifying or expanding bus routes
2. Plan for and implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
3. Prepare an Enhanced Transit Corridor Plan
4. Foster greater coordination between municipalities, transit systems, and the MPO
5. Utilize multi-modal transportation to promote equitable housing and employment opportunities
6. Plan for the future addition of rail connections to the New York City/Hoboken area
7. Plan for an alternate corridor to relieve stress from Interstate-81

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 4 YEARS



### GOAL

Support improvements to the regional freight network



### RELATED POLICIES

6, 8, 9



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

MPO

Logistics/Distribution  
Companies

Airports

Transportation Planners

PennDOT

Local Chambers of Commerce

Rail Companies

Airport Authority



### ACTIONS

1. Create a regional freight plan
2. Perform a truck parking facility feasibility study
3. Support the provision of rail access to industrial parks
4. Pursue funding for improvements to Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFCs) and Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFCs)
5. Improve land-side roadway access to Taylor Yards
6. Identify bottlenecks and implement congestion mitigation measures
7. Support freight corridor improvements and intermodal connections with Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport



# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 4 YEARS



### GOAL

Reduce congestion and improve traffic flow



### RELATED POLICIES

2, 6, 7, 9



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

MPO

Local and County Planners/  
Transportation Planners

PennDOT



### ACTIONS

1. Develop a coordinated regional effort to improve traffic signal coordination
2. Update and implement the Regional Operations Plan (ROP) in coordination with PennDOT
3. Improve traffic incident management and response times on Interstates, particularly the I-81 corridor
4. Identify a system of pre-established detours including wayfinding and increased signage
5. Mitigate congestion in targeted locations

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 5–12 YEARS



### GOAL

Study and establish new methods for providing renewable energy sources



### RELATED POLICIES

2, 5



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

PA DEP

Private Energy Companies

Local and County Planners

Conservation Organizations

Sustainable Energy Education and Development Support (SEEDS)



### ACTIONS

1. Study and identify renewable resources that are present in the region
2. Identify lands within the region that are a priority for renewable resource development
3. Partner with energy companies to site, fund, develop, and operate future renewable energy facilities
4. Explore storage and backup facilities for off peak generation
5. Promote programs that provide incentives for small and large scale solar installations

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 5–12 YEARS



### GOAL

Promote Agricultural Protection Zoning (APZ)



### RELATED POLICIES

2, 4



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

Local and County Planners  
County Conservation Districts  
Preservation Boards  
Grassroots Organizations  
Land Owners  
Farmers



### ACTIONS

1. Distribute data points that support the case for APZ in targeted municipalities including: Land Use, Land Ownership, Soils, Geologic Features, Natural Features, and existing Preserved Lands
2. Achieve support from and early buy-in of farmers in the APZ process
3. Support municipal governing bodies willing to enact APZ regulations
4. Identify or target contiguous farming areas of substantial size as candidate areas for APZ
5. Support and permit agricultural businesses, agri-processing, entrepreneurship, and agritourism/experience businesses in centrally located areas with good access and appropriate controls to manage unintended impacts on the rural character of the area
6. Support and permit alternate accessory businesses that enable farm property owners to increase family incomes, such as: blacksmithing, sales of handcrafted or farm products, farm market/ stands and u-pick it, veterinary offices, butcher shops, rural events and reception businesses, farm-to-table restaurants, animal training and rescue facilities, etc.
7. Provide model regulations that support transferrable development rights and conservation by design as land preservation tools

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTIONS WITHIN 5–12 YEARS



### GOAL

Establish growth management strategies on local and regional levels



### RELATED POLICIES

1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10



### PARTNERING ENTITIES

Development Companies  
Local and County Planners  
County Conservation Districts  
Preservation Boards  
Development Community  
Neighborhood Groups



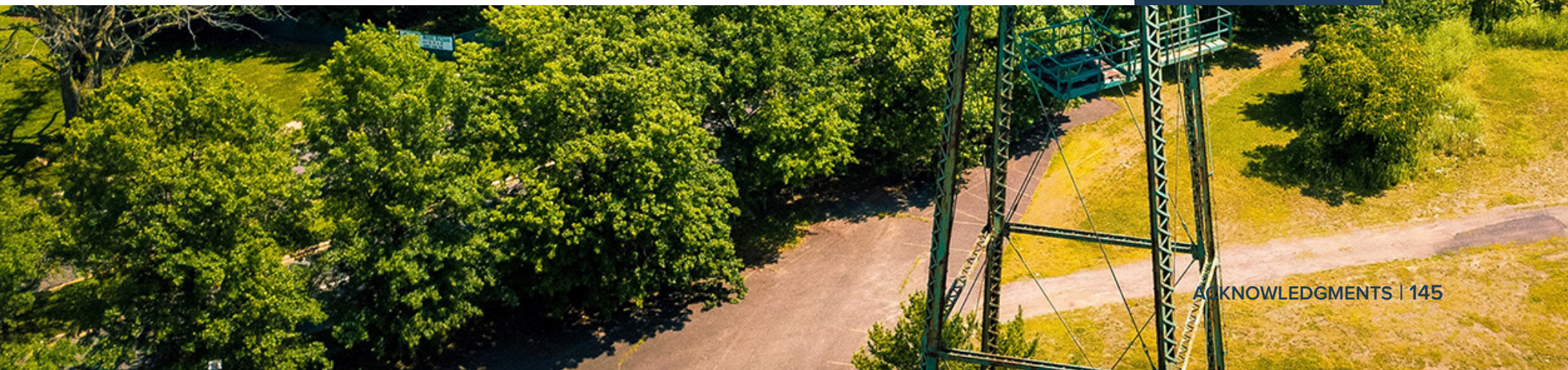
### ACTIONS

1. Plan for focused development by:
  - Revitalizing urban centers through a focus on permitting mixed uses, increased building heights, and increased residential densities
  - Identifying parcels for infill development that are connected to infrastructure, neighborhoods and core commercial centers
  - Supporting the location of offices, higher education institutions, technology startups, and medical facilities in or near city centers
2. Provide adequate infrastructure for industrial and logistics centers near Interstates, truck corridors, and transportation hubs
3. Connect existing and new residential areas to strengthen neighborhoods and improve housing quality
4. Expand and improve transit to serve urban centers and employment centers
5. Provide active transportation connections with trails, pathways and sidewalks to connect centers
6. Center new development around existing infrastructure in order to:
  - Focus on the region's core infrastructure and service areas by creating development incentives
  - Establish revitalization efforts that focus on property rehabilitation, infill development, and adaptive reuse of existing spaces
  - Capitalize on existing transportation resources and corridors within urban centers, reducing the need for expansion of roads and infrastructure
7. Limit the extent of single-family zoning in rural areas to reduce high costs for new infrastructure while limiting the tax base needed to pay for it
8. Promote the sustainable benefits of urban living by encouraging the development of connected green spaces and corridors in cities and boroughs





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS







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A large, multi-arched stone bridge spans across a wide river. The bridge is constructed from dark, weathered stone blocks. The sky above is filled with dramatic, dark clouds, with a bright orange and yellow glow from the setting sun visible on the horizon. The sun's light reflects off the water's surface, creating a shimmering path. The bridge's arches are reflected in the water below. A red diamond-shaped sign is visible on one of the bridge's piers. The overall mood is serene and historical.

*Preserving*  
**OUR CITIES.**

*Preserving*  
**OUR LANDS.**