

PLANNING INSIGHT

A Newsletter of the Bucks County Planning Commission



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Where does the time go? As you read this edition, summer has unofficially ended, the Grange Fair has come and gone and we are headed into the fall, “Pumpkin Spice and Planning” season. We have been exceptionally busy and I am keeping my remarks short to showcase all the good planning work we have to share.

We are exceptionally grateful to our summer intern, Eric Harris and his contributions to our work this summer.

As always, my door is open, and I may be reached via e-mail or phone at estone@buckscounty.org or 215.345.3401.

I look forward to hearing from you and welcome your feedback. Enjoy *Planning InSight!*

GRANTS INSIGHT

DVRPC offers the [Regional Trails Program](#) grants, which support the efforts to plan, design, and construct multi-use trails and community connections. Trails must be fully open to the public. **Deadline: November 10, 2022.**

Pennsylvania’s Coastal Resources Management Program (CRMP), through the DEP, offers the [Coastal Zone Grants](#). Grant awards are used to fund projects within the coastal zone and Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Program (CNPP) boundaries. **Deadline: October 17, 2022.**

The DEP offers the [902 Recycling Grant](#) which offers assistance to recycling and education programs. **Deadline: October 28, 2022.**

The [PA Agriculture & Youth Grant Program](#) supports projects, programs, and equipment purchases to conducted or made by an organization composed mainly of youth, or an organization with programs that benefit youth. **Deadline: September 30, 2022.**

National Park Service offers the following grants: The [African American Civil Rights Grant Program](#) to preserve and protect sites associated with the struggle for equality from the transatlantic slave trade. **Deadline: November 8, 2022.**

The [History of Equal Rights Grant Program](#) preserves sites related to the struggle for any or all people to achieve equal rights in America. **Deadline: September 14, 2022.**

The [PECO Green Region](#) grant assists open space projects and promotes equal access to nature for all. **Deadline: October 12, 2022.**

BUCKS TRIVIA

Where in Bucks County can you find a building that has eight sides?

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

There is a nationwide housing shortage that is worsening and not expected to abate any time soon. This issue is particularly evident in Bucks County, with the most significant shortage in “attainable workforce housing.” This type of housing can be broadly defined as economically affordable housing specifically marketed to working individuals and families whose incomes are too high for subsidized housing and are priced out of market-rate options in terms of rent or home ownership. These housing units are generally smaller in size, built on smaller lots, and are often built in a multi-family arrangement. Mixed-use developments are an effective way to increase the supply of attainable workforce housing while also promoting walkability, bicycling, and access to green space.

The traditional zoning model of creating multiple but separate zones for housing types reduces opportunities to provide attainable workforce housing units. As our municipalities are responsible for land use and zoning policy and have a history of addressing the unique needs of their communities, one way to combat the issue is to promote and develop mixed-use development projects.

The Bucks County Commissioners want Bucks County to be an ideal, affordable, and accessible place for families to raise children; for young, working adults to buy their first home; for seniors and retirees on fixed incomes to downsize; for veterans to call home, and for people with disabilities to reside comfortably. To assist in this effort, the BCPC created [Mixed-use Development Performance Standards](#) as a guide to developing zoning ordinances to permit mixed-use development in Bucks County. Mixed-use Developments are defined as those in which a variety of principal residential and non-residential commercial land uses, such as retail and eating establishments, are permitted to coexist within a single building or development site. Twenty-four municipalities in Bucks County have adopted mixed-use ordinances, or components thereof, as a way to combat sprawl, promote economic sustainability, and address the looming attainable/affordable housing crisis in Bucks County. The performance standards represent the primary objectives that should be achieved in developing zoning ordinances to permit mixed-use development throughout the county.



INTRODUCING THE SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT



Exciting changes have occurred at the Bucks County Planning Commission with the creation of a new Sustainability Department!

Neale Dougherty is the BCPC's Director of Sustainability and holds an inaugural position designed to exemplify Bucks County's commitment to these important efforts. Born and raised in Bucks County, Neale is a lifelong resident who has been working for the county since 2017, where he served as the County Controller from 2018 to 2022. Neale knows the county inside and out and is passionate about making Bucks a healthy, thriving community for generations to come.

This team will develop a comprehensive framework to achieve sustainable outcomes with consideration given to the natural environment, social equity, and economic factors.

With support and funding from the PADEP, through the Local Climate Action Plan program, and partnership with Penn State University professors and students, work has

begun on a County Climate Action Plan. Work also continues on the County's Sustainability Plan.

Other projects in the works include restarting the [Ready-for-100](#) Committee and working towards a Sol-Smart Designation, which will give the county knowledge and technical assistance for promoting solar installations. These undertakings are a step toward clean energy goals and creating a cleaner, brighter future for Bucks County.



Welcome Cassandra Goodmansen, the BCPC's newest Environmental Planner. Cassandra has a deep understanding of the natural world with her undergraduate work in native pollinator ecology and her graduate work in natural resources and climate change. Cassandra joins us all the way from Idaho where she worked with her local government, university, and an indigenous tribe to bring forth climate action policies and programs, improving the sustainability and resilience of these communities. She looks forward to doing even more for Bucks County.

BUCKS COUNTY PARKING STUDY

Issues surrounding land development remain as top priorities for the BCPC as we continue to develop the [Bucks2040, Building Our Future, Together](#) comprehensive plan. The provision of off-street parking through minimum parking requirements is one land use issue that demands a closer look.

Historically viewed as a benign public good, there is increasing awareness and criticism of the many downsides created by off-street parking. Local land use regulations are written with the intention of ensuring an adequate number of parking spaces for

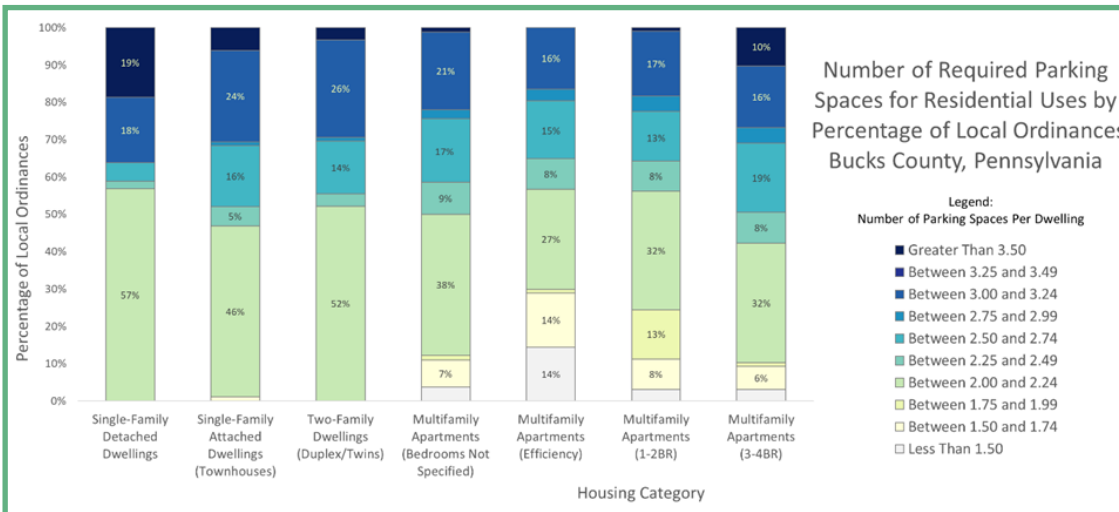
different land uses. However, in many cases, parking is oversupplied, wasting land and adding unnecessary impervious surfaces.

High parking minimums also increase the costs of construction, limit further development opportunities, encourage car dependency, and prioritize vehicles over pedestrians.

To better understand this issue, the BCPC conducted an inventory and analysis of parking requirements for major land uses in all 54 municipalities. Not

surprisingly, we found that Bucks County municipal ordinances vary greatly in how many spaces they require for different uses:

For residential uses, the difference among municipalities can be up to a space-and-a-half per dwelling, and for commercial uses, the difference can be up to four spaces per 1,000 square feet. **Continued...**





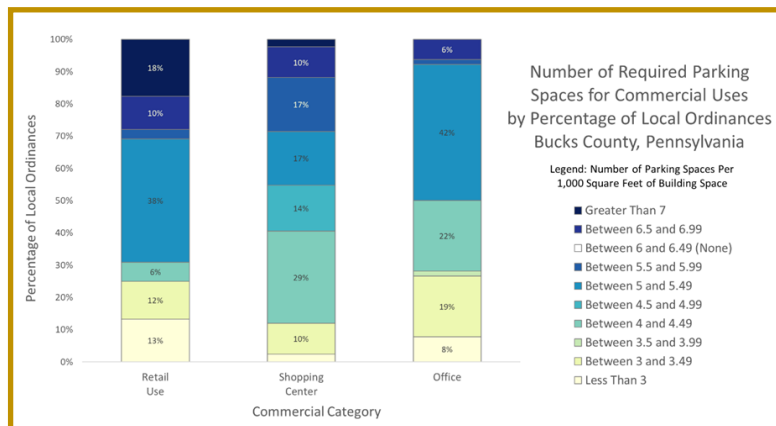
BUCKS COUNTY PARKING STUDY CONTINUED...

For a representative development of 50 dwellings, this would mean that the number of parking spaces required by different municipalities could vary by 75 parking spaces. For a 50,000 square foot commercial building, parking spaces required by different municipalities could vary by 200 parking spaces.

Warehouse uses, in particular, show a high level of variability in the provision of parking. Based on a representative 100,000-square-foot warehouse, the number of parking spaces required could vary by over 300(!) spaces, depending on the municipality it's developed in.

Even so, an initial analysis of Bucks County parking requirements (as compared to thresholds established by Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), Institute of Transportation Engineers

(ITE), and Urban Land institute (ULI)) shows that municipalities on the lower end of the scale, in terms of required spaces, may still be oversupplying off-street parking. Conventional parking minimums based on land use are overly simplistic and ignore factors such as density, transit availability, and parking management opportunities. This study points to parking requirements as an area of opportunity for land use regulation reform. We will continue to explore the issue of parking and other important land use issues as we engage in the [Bucks2040](#) comprehensive planning process.



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Bucks County

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The [Octagonal Schoolhouse](#) is a historic one-room schoolhouse located in Wrightstown Township.



IMPORTANCE OF REQUIRING TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDIES

All municipalities have a responsibility to ensure public health, safety, and welfare. For new development, redevelopment, and rezoning projects, these responsibilities are managed through various planning and engineering review processes.

Depending upon the size and scope of the development, it is sometimes necessary to include a review of the potential traffic impacts that will be caused. Because new developments typically generate additional vehicle trips that use will use the existing roadway system, a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) should be developed to help determine the extent of these impacts.

A Traffic Impact Study provides a review of existing conditions, site access, internal and external circulation, as well as the effects these new trips could have on nearby roadways and intersections. They also help identify potential transportation infrastructure problems.

They also forecast the additional traffic associated with a development and identify potential problems that might influence development decisions. These assessments help plan for multimodal transportation, including public transit and pedestrian facility needs.

A Traffic Impact Study can help to identify necessary improvements that help reduce the negative effects the proposed development could have on the neighboring community. It also ensures the transportation network can accommodate the expected traffic increase.

Safety should be a top priority for any land development project. A Traffic Impact Study helps ensure safe and reasonable traffic conditions once the development is complete. This protects the community's substantial investment in its roadway system. Traffic Impact Studies must be prepared by qualified consultant traffic engineer.