

PLANNING INSIGHT

A Newsletter of the Bucks County Planning Commission



GRANTS INSIGHT

The **Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)** provides loans to help businesses keep their workforce employed during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Application deadline: March 31, 2021.** More information: sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources#section-header-3

HUD offers the **Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program**, to expand affordable housing opportunities, allowing seniors to age in place. **Application deadline: May 26, 2021.** More information: hud.gov/program-offices/spm/gmomgmt/grantsinfo/fundingopps/fy20_section202

DCNR offers several conservation and recreation grants to build connections between residents and the outdoors. **Application deadline: April 14, 2021.** More information: brcgrants.dcnr.pa.gov/

The **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** is accepting proposals for the **Delaware River Program** grants. **Proposal deadline: April 1, 2021.** More information: nfwf.org/programs/delaware-river-program/delaware-river-program-2021-request-proposals

The **Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program** grants fund economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects. **Application deadline: March 31, 2021.** More information: [RACP \(pa.gov\)](https://racp.pa.gov/)

The **COVID-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program** will supply aid to Bucks County hospitality industry businesses. **Application deadline: April 2, 2021.** More information: bcrda.com

BUCKS TRIVIA

Which Bucks feature received its namesake from lead mining?

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Greetings, I hope this finds you well. This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to the subject of housing, specifically aging in place and accessory dwelling units. As we look back upon a year of stay-at-home orders, social distancing, and quarantine, we emerge with a new appreciation for the importance of family and keeping loved ones close by. Our community housing options and choices are certainly one way to accomplish this.

This month we also mark the anniversary of the

AGING IN PLACE

“Aging in place” is the process of growing older in one’s home for as long as possible. It encourages self-sufficiency, preserves dignity, and discourages social isolation amongst the older populations. Promoting successful living for seniors will have a positive impact on all residents in a community.

AARP reports that nine out of ten Baby Boomers wish to stay in their homes among their community of friends and family for as long as possible. As the Boomer generation begins to reach the age of retirement, it is crucial for municipalities to address issues regarding housing, transportation, healthcare, social services, universal design, and land use.

Single-family dwellings have proven to be burdensome to seniors due to the maintenance required and the cost of taxes, yet this is the most dominant housing type throughout the county. To encourage aging in place, municipalities can provide a mix of housing types, costs, and densities to meet the varied needs of seniors in the community. Accessory

COVID-19 Pandemic. One year ago, our GIS staff embarked on our journey to develop and maintain the County’s COVID-19 information portals. We offer our sincerest condolences to the families of the 1,000 plus Bucks County residents who have lost their lives to the virus. We find hope in the release of vaccines to protect us.

As always, my door is open, and I may be reached via phone 215.345.3401, or email at estone@buckscounty.org. I look forward to hearing from you and welcome your feedback. Enjoy *Planning InSight!*

dwelling units are an example of a housing type that is appropriate for encouraging seniors to age in place. Building homes with universal design creates a space that is inclusive of everyone regardless of age or ability, and ensures that the home remains livable as the resident's needs and abilities change.

To age in place successfully, seniors must retain their independence to travel throughout the community. As seniors lose their ability to drive safely, transportation planning should have a focus on walkability and shared services, such as public transit. Transit-oriented development encourages compact, walkable, mixed-use communities that creates a higher quality of life for not only seniors, but for all residents. Encouraging a mixed-use community will ensure that the needs of older residents can be met.

With the expected increases in the 65+ population in the coming decades, there is a need, now more than ever, to create age-compatible communities. Aging in place not only benefits older generations, but also benefits everyone in the community by keeping this vital demographic a part of the neighborhood.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are smaller, independent housing units located on the same lot as a single-family dwelling. Whether it be an above-the-garage apartment, a basement in-law suite, or a detached carriage house, an ADU has its own separate entrance, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and living space. ADUs can be found anywhere, from city streets to suburban neighborhoods, to rural areas, and can be converted from existing structures or built from new construction.

Over much of Bucks County’s history, property owners were free to build homes and apartments with little restrictions. In response to housing shortages and economic needs, homeowners would expand their houses or divide them into separate apartments to take in family members or borders. ADUs commonly supplied housing to the influx of war industry laborers during World War II, serving a critical need in American history.

But with the boom of suburbanization and the broad implementation of zoning during the mid-twentieth century, ADUs ceased to be legally constructed. Residential zoning codes began to implicitly emphasize the nuclear family by restricting multifamily housing to certain areas and mandating large lot sizes for single-family dwellings. Accessory units are once again rising in popularity across the country, as ADUs have proven to be affordable, flexible, size appropriate, environmentally sound, and community compatible.

ADUs are suitable for all ages and can be used in many ways, as the owner’s needs and circumstances evolve. They offer younger generations affordable entry-level housing choices, allow for empty nesters to downsize, can provide supplemental income to homeowners looking to rent their property, can house a caregiver, a nanny, or family members in need, and are beneficial for older generations who wish to remain in their communities to “age in place.”

Today’s downsized, childless homes account for nearly two-thirds of all households in the United States, yet larger homes on single lots continue to be constructed across the country. The average ADU measures between 600 and 1,000 square feet, making it size appropriate for the smaller, affordable dwellings that are in more demand. These low-impact units tend to use fewer resources than the average single-family dwelling, requiring less energy, which keeps utility costs low and reduces carbon emissions. ADUs are a prime example of infill development that is sustainable by making use of existing resources and infrastructure.

ADUs can improve housing affordability and create community-compatible living spaces in already established neighborhoods. They can add diversity to already existing housing stock without contributing to sprawl or disrupting the area’s aesthetic integrity.

Due to the increasingly high cost of housing, as well as the belief that landowners should have more freedom with their property, there is once again an interest at the local level to encourage the use of ADUs. Like many other zoning use regulations, the guidelines for ADUs differ by municipality, county, and state. To encourage this use, local officials can allow ADUs to be permitted by-right, simplify the building process, and waive or reduce permit and impact fees.

The Bucks County Planning Commission will continue to explore creative ways of keeping housing attainable for working– and middle-class Bucks County families. For more information on ADUs and how they can help meet housing needs in your community, check out AARP.org/ADU.



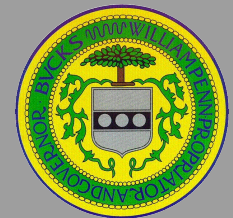
▲ Accessory dwelling units (or ADUs) come in many shapes and styles.



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Trivia Answer:

Lake Galena

