

2018 Annual Report

DRIVING POSITIVE COMMUNITY **OUTCOMES** IN CAMBRIA COUNTY



Cambria County



Planning
Commission



2018 Planning

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Effective Planning, Meaningful Outcomes

Without a doubt, the highlight of the past year was when the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association selected the Alleghenies Ahead / Cambria County comprehensive plan as the state's award winning comprehensive plan.

The plan was several years in the making, with conceptual conversations beginning about a regional comprehensive plan way back in 2014. The serious work started in 2016, with the selection of a consultant and formation of steering committees. Action plans and goals developed throughout 2017, while the plan was polished into final form in 2018. In June 2018, the Cambria County Commissioners unanimously adopted the Alleghenies Ahead comprehensive plan.

The accolades are certainly well deserved, for the community members who participated and the CCPC staff members and consultants who created the plan. But the most important part of this process is the positive community change the planning process initiated and continues to drive. The key outcomes are the relationships forged, the networks that converged and the initiatives that are now underway. The Alleghenies Ahead planning process not only changed the way we think about the region's challenges and opportunities, but what we're doing about them.

Some of the implementation items underway include the Cambria County blight task force, Southern Alleghenies broadband task force and a market rate housing study for downtown Johnstown. Stay tuned for updates with other unfolding initiatives on our new Alleghenies Ahead podcast, developed in partnership with Mount Aloysius College.

While it's an impressive accomplishment, there's more to 2018 than just the comprehensive plan. Towards the end of the year, staff also completed work on the first update to the county bicycle and pedestrian plan. As Cambria County residents recognize the many benefits of outdoor recreation, a new recreational culture emerges. Thinking about how our communities convey the type of experiences people now seek means serious investment in these amenities.

Ethan Imhoff, AICP
Executive Director

Subdivision and Land Development

In 2018, Cambria County Planning Commission staff reviewed 96 subdivision and land development plans and collected \$10,410.00 in review fees.

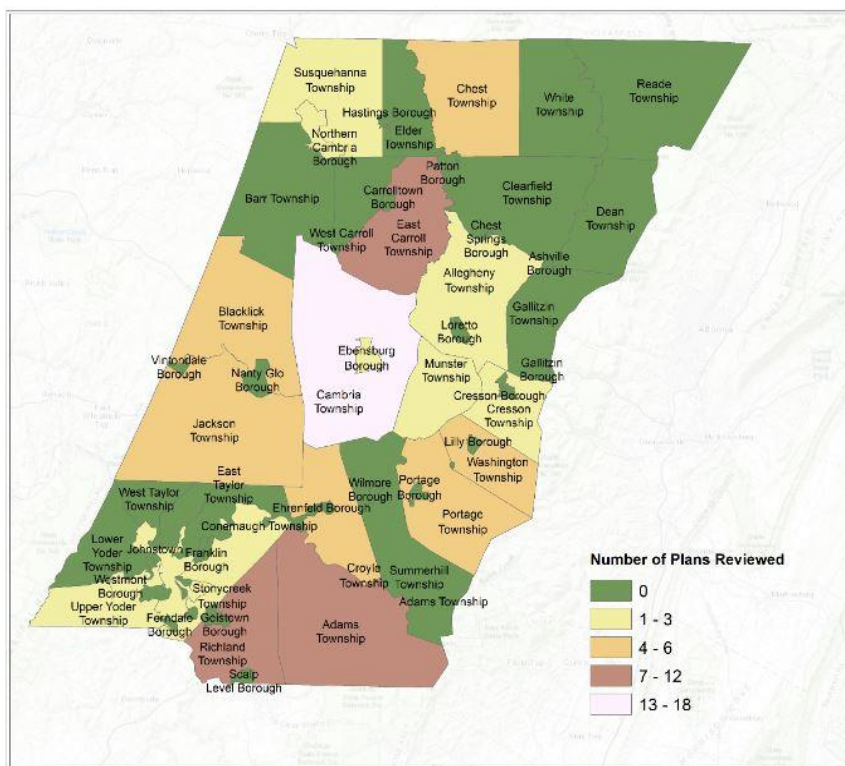
Cambria Township saw the largest amount of development with 18 subdivisions and land development plans reviewed. The township experienced commercial growth with the Ebensburg Commons retail center which includes Taco Bell, Starbucks and KFC restaurants along US Route 22.

Other significant land development plans in Cambria Township were the demolition and reconstruction of the First National Bank and the Duke Lifepoint Ebensburg Outpatient Care Center.

Noteworthy county-wide plans include an addition to the Arts Center of Cambria County in Westmont Borough and soccer field upgrades at Mount Aloysius College in Cresson Township.

Project Reviews

The CCPC reviews a myriad of applications for the Department of Environmental Protection, including mining related permits and stormwater related permits. The Planning Commission also reviews applications for funding for various public works projects from several state and federal funding sources. The table below represents the projects the CCPC reviewed in 2018.



| | |
|---|----|
| Department of Environmental Protection | 40 |
| Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST) | 4 |
| Growing Greener Grant Program | 10 |
| PA Small Water and Sewer Program | 10 |
| CFA Flood Mitigation Program | 11 |
| DCED Multimodal Program | 4 |
| Other | 6 |

Some notable applications that were reviewed include DEP applications for a KFC restaurant located in Richland Township, an outpatient medical center located in Cresson Borough, a Dollar General store located in Hastings Borough and Susquehanna Township and an extension of the Ghost Town Trail. Also reviewed were various funding requests for several sewer and water replacement projects throughout the county, local park and recreation projects and transportation connection and maintenance projects.

LTAP

Throughout the year, the Planning Commission partners with PennDOT to conduct the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) in Cambria County. LTAP provides free training courses and technical assistance to local elected officials, municipal employees and other parties involved in the maintenance of local roads. Cambria County had a successful year hosting four LTAP courses at Penn Highlands Community College in Ebensburg. These four LTAP classes had forty-five registrants total.

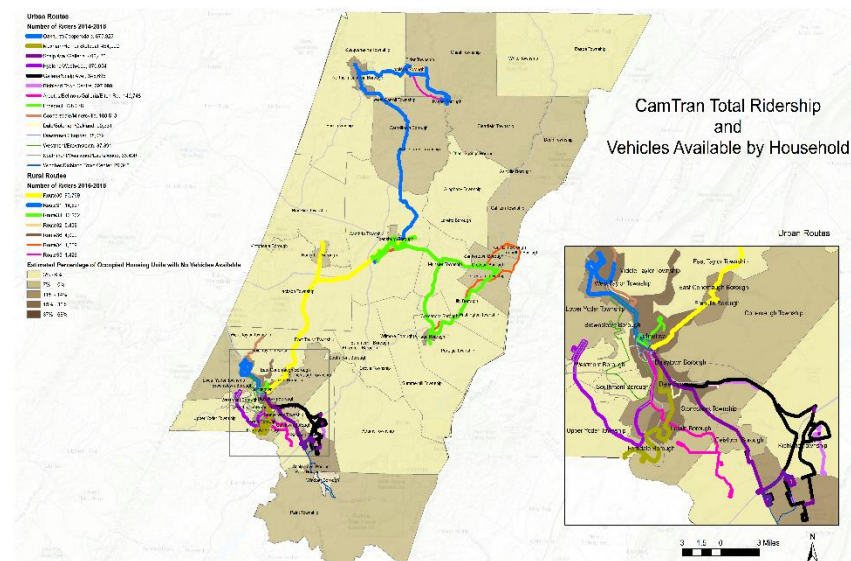
Spring 2018 Classes Held

Curves on Local Roads
Safe Driver
Managing Utility Cuts

Fall 2018 Classes Held

Pavement Preventative
Maintenance

Geographic Information Systems



Planning Commission staff created several maps to be used in the bicycle and pedestrian plan during 2018. Mapping is an integral part of the planning process to pinpoint locations where improvements could be made and to make inferences using widely available data. Due to lack of pedestrian counters and studies, CCPC staff used alternative resources to

determine where enhanced bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is needed. By using crash data, bus route ridership, and Census data depicting vehicles available by household, mapping was created to help Planning Commission staff determine where people who may need bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure the most are coming from and travelling to and identify various areas where safety enhancements could be made.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

County Bridges

The Planning Commission assists the Commissioners with coordination and maintenance on twenty-six County bridges.

2018 was another successful year for the County Bridge Program. County Bridges #20 (Cherry Bottom), and #27 (Von Lunen Street) were rehabilitated with new decks to address fascia cracking issues, thus removing their structurally deficient rating. With the completion of these projects, the County has now repaired or replaced seven structurally deficient bridges since 2017. Additionally in 2018, preliminary design and right of way acquisition was started on the bridge #7 (Chest Creek) replacement project, with construction expected in 2019.

Finally, the County took advantage of the State's RoadMap program for local bridges, which provides a 100% match for to the fee for local use. The RoadMap program will provide an additional \$2 million in State funding in 2019. This funding will be used to rehabilitate ten municipal bridges that are currently structurally deficient.

Twelve Year Transportation Program Update

The Twelve Year Program (TYP) functions as the formal guide for budgeting, design, and construction of transportation improvements. CCPC staff, in coordination with PennDOT and the Cambria County Transit Authority, completed drafts of the 2019 TYP for highways and bridges, as well as public transit projects. The drafts were presented for public review, and an air quality conformity analysis was completed. The 2019 TYP update, as well as the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Public Transit Improvement Program, air quality conformity findings, and associated documents, were approved at a combined meeting of the Cambria County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) Technical and Coordinating Committees on June 6, 2018, and went into effect on October 1, 2018.



Ribbon Cutting at the newly renovated Cherry Bottom Bridge in Portage Township (Pictured L-R: Ethan Imhoff, CCPC Executive Director; Commissioner BJ Smith; Commissioner Tom Chernisky; Commissioner Mark Wissinger; CCPC Transportation Planner Chris Allison

Corridor Plans



The Planning Commission regularly conducts corridor planning in various areas throughout the County. These are more focused transportation plans, which typically target congestion, safety, bicycle and pedestrian improvements. These plans engage local stakeholders and the public, with the objective of producing a list of implementable projects for the local communities to pursue. The Planning

Commission began work this

year on the PA 271/Old Conemaugh Borough Corridor Plan. Data on sidewalk conditions and blight was collected. Staff conducted stakeholder interviews with local residents and business owners.

The Planning Commission coordinated with PennDOT District 9-0, as well as Richland Township, in the development of a scope of work for a corridor plan on Scalp Avenue and sections of Eisenhower Boulevard in Richland Township. The plan will identify critical needs along the corridor, including operational deficiencies, safety, and mobility, and prioritize implementable improvements across all modes of transportation. The plan is currently awaiting funding approval from PennDOT Central Office.

Also in 2018, implementation of action items from previous plans continued: The Allegheny Portage Railroad Historic Site to Veteran's Park trail connector project, part of the Admiral Peary Corridor Plan, received funding and began preliminary engineering. Also part of the Admiral Peary Plan, a project to build a sidewalk connecting the Mount Aloysius College campus to the PA 53 intersection received funding, and began preliminary engineering. Finally, the intersection, pedestrian, and streetscape improvements recommended in the Route 219 Carrolltown Corridor Study moved closer to construction, and should be completed in 2019.

Highway Performance Monitoring Program (HPMS)

Staff reviewed sample sections for 2018 HPMS data verification, and a total of thirty-seven sample sections were selected for field verification. Sixteen of the sections were found to need changes or corrections, and staff subsequently submitted those corrections to the PennDOT Central Office.

Transportation Program Technical Assistance

The CCPC provides technical assistance through the Cambria County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO), and advises on numerous transportation programs. A few examples of these efforts in 2018 are as follows:

- The Planning Commission continued to provide assistance to the Cambria County Transit Authority. In conjunction with the 2019 Transportation Program update, the Transportation Planner prepared the 2018 Public Transit Financial Capacity Report. Using data provided by CamTran, staff analyzed ridership, revenues, and expenses. Staff then produced a report confirming that CamTran would be able to sustain its proposed operating and capital expenses over the next twelve-year period. The Planning Commission also assisted CamTran in their triennial review by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) by preparing materials that document CCMPO public involvement for various planning initiatives during the reporting period.
- The Transportation Planner participated in several meetings as a member of the Cambria Regional Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee. The Chamber Transportation Committee had gone dormant in past years. But in 2018, one of the initiatives of new Chamber CEO Amy Bradley was the revival of the Transportation Committee. Ms. Bradley tabbed Rose Lucy-Knoll, CamTran Executive Director, as the new chair of the Transportation Committee.
- The Transportation Planner and Executive Director held legislative meetings with State Senator Wayne Langerholc, Representative Bryan Barbin, Representative Frank Burns and Representative Tommy Sankey to discuss ongoing transportation project initiatives, plans, and priorities in the County.
- Finally, the Transportation Planner participated as a member of the steering committee for the Franklin Street Improvements Project. Conducted by PennDOT District 9-0, the project will implement sidewalk, crosswalk, signalization, and intersection improvements in order to alleviate congestion and improve pedestrian safety along Franklin Street in front of the Conemaugh Medical Center.

PennDot District 9-0 Project Manager Nicki Donahoe discusses the Franklin Street Corridor project with local stakeholders during a public meeting in August.



Alleghenies Ahead

The completion and adoption of Alleghenies Ahead remained a primary concentration moving into 2018. During the first quarter, the CCPC focused on: 1.) Finalizing the action plan for Cambria County, 2.) Vetting key concepts with the community at-large, and 3.) Building stronger, and more strategic relationships with state and federal agencies who are committed to moving the Alleghenies ahead. CCPC staff hosted two rounds of public open houses across the County to engage with communities about the key findings of the digital public survey. Input from open house attendees solidified the values and principles that were developed to help filter the way in which we make decisions for our communities moving into the future. This feedback allowed staff to move smoothly into finalizing the action plan and developing specific programs, initiatives, and projects that will advance each of Cambria's priorities.

In June of 2018, the Regional Project Steering Committee hosted a state agency round table with representatives from key departments to discuss funding availability for projects and initiatives of regional and local significance identified within the plan. At this meeting, CCPC staff introduced a proposal for a market-rate housing strategy that would assess real market demand and create a strategic plan for new residential development in downtown Johnstown. Representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (PA DCED) supported this proposal and agreed to assist the CCPC with securing funding for the study.



Commissioner Chernisky and CCPC staff, together with members of the Alleghenies Ahead Regional Steering Committee, accept the award for Best Comprehensive Plan.

By August of 2018, each of the six county planning commissions formally adopted Alleghenies Ahead as their respective comprehensive plans. Since that time, the Regional Project Steering Committee was recognized at the **2018 American Planning Association, Pennsylvania Chapter Conference** with the award for **Best Comprehensive Plan**. This was an honor and distinction that is not often awarded to agencies within our region of Pennsylvania, and the Regional Project Steering Committee is very appreciative for the recognition of the tiresome work that contributed to Alleghenies Ahead. Moving forward into 2019, the CCPC plans to implement the plan, which will include the development of a regional podcast to feature highlights in implementation activity directly from Cambria's action plan.

City of Johnstown Projects and Partnerships

CCPC staff remained engaged with the Vision 2025 Central Park Square (CPS) Capture Team throughout 2018. Early in the year, the CPS Team took advantage of a \$5,000 grant to implement two integral projects as a part of Team's established mission and goals. CCPC staff developed and submitted the grant application that paid for the installation of new Central Park banners (donning the reinvented Central Park Square logo), as well as the purchase and installation of new, LED lampposts to upgrade the quality of lighting in and around Central Park Square.

Following the Alleghenies Ahead state agency roundtable in June, CCPC staff worked to identify and secure local match funding for a PA DCED Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) grant that would support the completion of a **market-rate housing analysis and strategy for downtown Johnstown**. Thanks to

partnerships with the City of Johnstown and the Cambria County Alliance for Business & Industry, staff was able to secure local match funds and submit a grant application to the PA DCED in October.

The scope of work for this study is broken down into two phases. The first phase will provide: An assessment of the market, including household & income dynamics, as well as the financial gaps that must be addressed to enable developers to meet the current demand. The second phase will provide a full pro forma on an existing building and a new construction project. The second phase will outline a direct path for creating new market-rate units based on the socioeconomic and policy analysis from Phase 1. Staff anticipates the full funding package for this project to become available by February/March 2019.

CCPC staff also began work on another action item from the Blight & Abandoned Housing priority of Cambria County's action plan; Increase the rate of demolition. Through participation on the City of Johnstown's **Blight Task Force**, staff has been able to work with local stakeholders to identify an effective policy strategy for tackling the issue of blight within Cambria County. The Blight Task Force had their first meeting in December to discuss the extent & nature of blight and vacant/abandoned housing within Greater Johnstown. This initial meeting will inform the selection of policy tools available that the task force will ultimately vote to adopt as a part of overall blight strategy in 2019.



New Central Park Square Banners in Johnstown

Focusing on Active Transportation in Cambria County

Staff continued working to complete the **Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan** update for Cambria County, recently renamed, *Connecting Cambria*. The majority of the year was spent continuing to meet with the Steering Committee to: Assess additional quantitative data related to accessibility, as well as create a Transportation Disadvantaged Population (TDP) index, and identify the appropriate evaluation criteria for developing a decision-making framework for prioritization of future active transportation projects.

Thanks to Community Development Planner, Shanna Sosko, CCPC staff had the privilege of interviewing Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania 2018, Barb Zabloutney, and as a result, gained a fresh perspective on accessibility in Cambria County. With a renewed focus on accessibility, and viewing bicycle and pedestrian travel as a need rather than a preference, CCPC assisted Ms. Zabloutney with the planning and execution of an **Accessibility Day** event (pictured on cover page). At this event, CCPC staff was joined by PennDOT District 9 planner, Anne Stich, Johnstown Mayor Frank Janakovic, and Cambria County Commissioner Tom Chernisky to gain first-hand experience navigating a wheelchair using existing pedestrian infrastructure within downtown Johnstown. Staff quickly identified areas of challenge and concern for wheelchair users, including ramps and curb cuts near popular intersections. CCPC staff incorporated this information into the final draft of *Connecting Cambria*.

Once all data was analyzed, and the decision-making framework was developed and finalized, the Committee created a dynamic list of priority projects to implement across the county. Beyond these concrete, infrastructure-based projects, the Committee also identified action items of programmatic importance to enhance the local bicycle and pedestrian culture, and better ensure implementation of the plan and the projects identified within it. These items are generally focused around educational initiatives, flexibility in local design, consistent and updated mapping, and having the necessary regulatory framework in place. The final draft of *Connecting Cambria* was presented to the CCPC Board in December. CCPC staff will hold a public meeting to collect comment on the plan in January 2019, with adoption of the plan anticipated soon thereafter.

