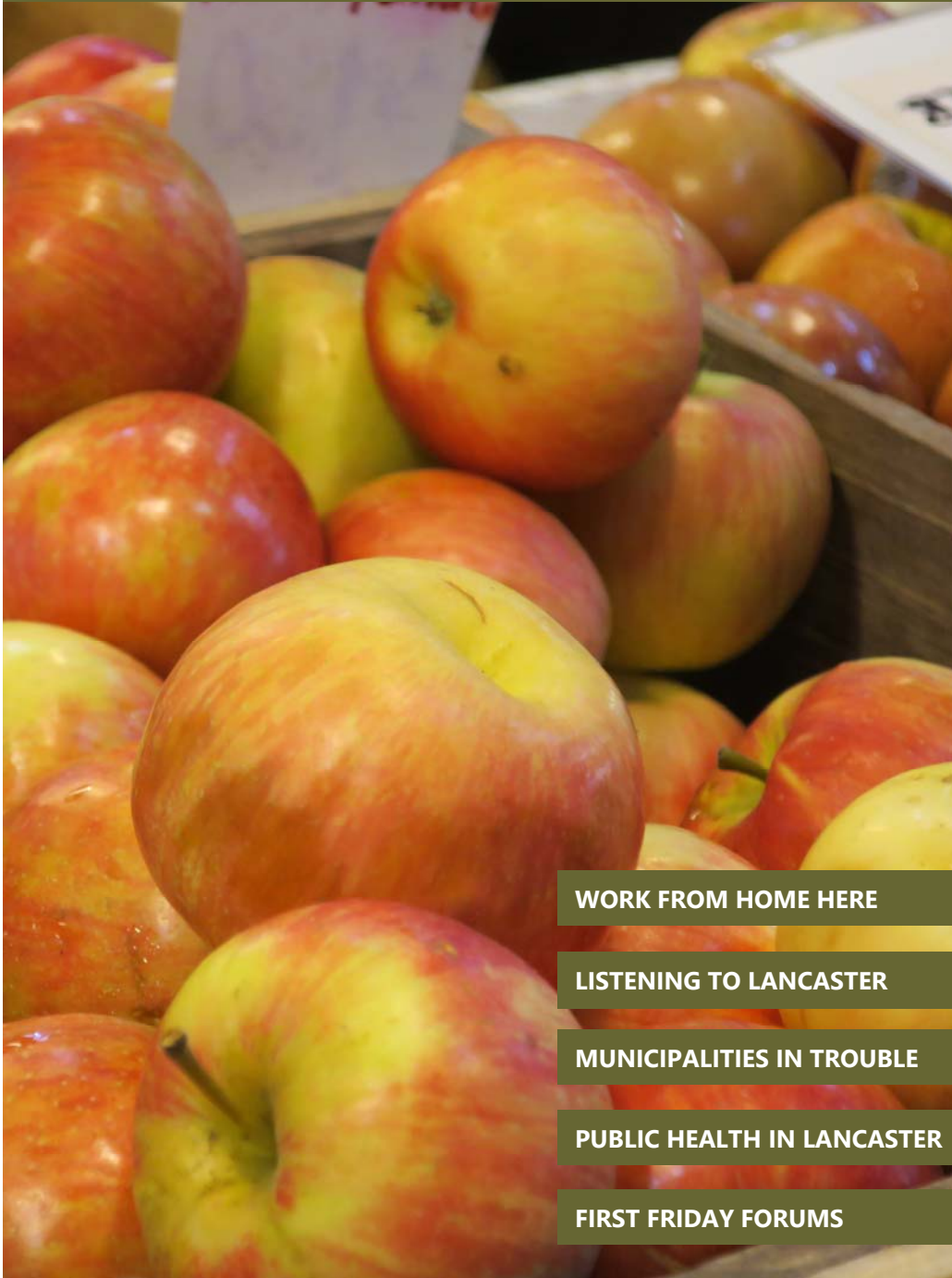


Fall 2020

# Hourglass Quarterly



**WORK FROM HOME HERE**

**LISTENING TO LANCASTER**

**MUNICIPALITIES IN TROUBLE**

**PUBLIC HEALTH IN LANCASTER**

**FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS**

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## Letter from the Executive Director

Hello,

We are now firmly in the fall season. The air is crisp, the leaves are changing, and everything seems to be pumpkin spice flavored. This changing weather mirrors the changes occurring in our world. We are certainly living in tumultuous times which makes it is easy to focus on the negativity in our lives or the things that aren't going right in our community.



At the Hourglass, we choose to focus on the opposite. Many organizations, businesses, individuals, and families have risen to meet the challenges of today while mapping out a road to success in the future. Crises can fuel innovation, and in Lancaster, it certainly has.

The Hourglass has decided to use our platform to tell stories of optimism. Our First Friday Forums have featured presentations from business and community leaders who are leveraging their organizations' strengths to continue to carry out their work. The Listening to Lancaster series features short interviews with people and organizations undertaking extraordinary work in Lancaster County.

This edition of the Hourglass Quarterly continues the theme of optimism. The first article discusses the pandemic induced work from home phenomena and how Lancaster could attract additional remote workers. We also highlight a report from the Pennsylvania Economy League on the effects of COVID-19 on municipalities across the state. This Quarterly shares an article written by Susan Baldrige, Director of the Partnership for Public Health, on the importance of public health in Lancaster County. Additionally, we provide summaries of a recent Listening to Lancaster episode and our First Friday Forums for the last three months.

We hope you enjoy these articles and that they provide you a dose of "optimism".

Happy reading!

Jonathan Russell  
Executive Director

# WORK FROM HOME IN LANCASTER

## Can Lancaster Attract Remote Workers?

The Coronavirus Pandemic has affected how we work in dramatic ways. At the beginning of the pandemic, many employers encouraged or required their employees to work remotely. In fact, prior to the pandemic only 4% of employees worked from home (NPR), a number that shot up to over 40% during the first wave of the pandemic according to the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.



### Remote Work Here to Stay?

While not all of those remotely working employees will stay away from the office, many employers have signaled that an increasing number of employees will have the option or be required to work from home. For those employees, this eliminates the geographic constraints that in-office work requires. With the need to be geographically close to the office eliminated, paying exorbitant rents in New York City or San Francisco becomes much less attractive. When employees

are working from home, home can be anywhere with a high speed internet connection and a video conferencing camera.

Thankfully, we have high speed internet here in Lancaster County. We also have a fantastic quality of life, a burgeoning restaurant scene, and easy access to New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington DC. According to rent aggregator "Rent Jungle", the average rent for an apartment in Lancaster County (\$918) is significantly cheaper than that of San Francisco (\$3,811) and New York (\$3,431) or even Philadelphia (\$1,941).

### Attracting Remote Workers

So what can we do to attract workers from cities like New York to a place the New York Post called "the new Brooklyn"? The most important component to attracting remote workers is access to high speed broadband internet. While the Federal Communications Commission indicates that





broadband internet is available to every part of Lancaster County, a study conducted by Lancaster Newspapers reveals there is still work to be done. Improving our broadband internet capacity should be a priority.

Remote workers are also drawn to alternative work spaces. A study conducted by EMSI found that 37% of remote workers choose to work from coffee shops and another 14% opt to work in coworking spaces. Having these amenities can certainly help attract people to this area.

Those who might choose to relocate to Lancaster from a large metropolitan area, would not be shortchanged on the cultural and culinary offerings to which they are accustomed. While Lancaster might not have the volume of restaurants and theaters large cities enjoy, plenty of world-class options are available here. We have big city amenities at small/mid-sized city prices.

### **Unintended Consequences**

Are there downsides to having a large population of remote workers? The same study from EMSI notes that adding remote workers from outside the area can put an increased demand on a community's housing supply, driving the price of housing upward. Putting

energy into attracting remote workers needs to be a part of a broader strategy of attracting jobs of all kinds to the community.

"So much of this is anecdotal at this point, so we are really waiting for the data that backs this up" said Ben Leshner, developer of the Stadium Row Apartments on Prince



*Pictured: Ben Leshner*

Street. "If you could work anywhere and presumably make the same wage, why wouldn't you live in a City like Lancaster?" This is part of the demographic Leshner is hoping to attract when the 104 unit Stadium Row Apartments come on line in the middle of 2021. "I think Stadium Row will attract folks from both within and outside Lancaster, including those from larger metropolitan areas."

Remote working appears to be a growing part of our employment landscape. For those remote employees looking to relocate, Lancaster County might just be the attractive alternative they are looking for.



# LISTENING TO LANCASTER

## New Initiative Highlights Work in County

When much of the world shut down in March and April of this year, many organizations used the time to implement projects that had been on the back burner. The Hourglass was no different. In May we published the first episode of Listening to Lancaster. This video interview series highlights the important work being done by non-profits, private entities, and government organizations in Lancaster County. We are overwhelmed by the positive reaction to this new initiative and appreciate your support. Since May we have recorded and released eight episodes.

In our most recent episode Scott Standish, the new Executive Director of the Lancaster County Planning Commission, sat down with Jonathan Russell to discuss the work of the Planning Commission and the progress in implementing the County's Places 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Their conversation began with an overview of the Planning Commission and how the organization has "met the moment" of the Coronavirus Pandemic. They have successfully navi-

gated the complicated remote work requirements while continuing to manage a large volume of work.

They also discussed how the Planning Commission operates in the County. According to Standish, "The only real power we have is the power of persuasion. So we've tried to work really hard with our local officials, our authorities, school districts, and Partners for Place to implement [Places 2040]. The benefit of doing that is that we then think of things from a countywide perspective." Many of the most pressing issues facing the county (land use, poverty, clean water, infrastructure) are not bound by municipal boundaries. Places 2040 "Helped define a path for us to create the future that we all want to see in Lancaster County" and a way to address these cross-boundary issues.

*The Hourglass is proud to be a Partner for Place for the Places 2040 Comprehensive Plan.*

*A full listing of all Listening to Lancaster episodes can be found by visiting our website or our YouTube page.*

*To recommend a topic to be covered on a Listening to Lancaster Episode, email Jonathan at [hourglass@hourglasslanaster.org](mailto:hourglass@hourglasslanaster.org)*





# MUNICIPALITIES IN TROUBLE

## Survey Underscores COVID's Effects

In an effort to better understand how municipalities across Pennsylvania are being impacted by COVID-19, the Pennsylvania Economy League (a statewide, nonpartisan, public policy think tank for local and state government) undertook a survey. The survey, "Municipal Survey, Effects of COVID-19", was completed in partnership with the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners, and the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors. The respondents included cities, first class townships, boroughs, second class townships, and home rule municipalities from across the State.

The survey prompted respondents to provide information on a wide variety of topics ranging from managing operations, to changing revenues and expenditures, to the fiscal health of communities. As of October 2020, approximately 40% of municipalities reported an increase in expenditures. This increase in expenditures comes in the form of COVID related equipment and supplies, increased cleaning costs,

the cost of implementing video or teleconference services, and physical alterations to municipal work spaces or public spaces.

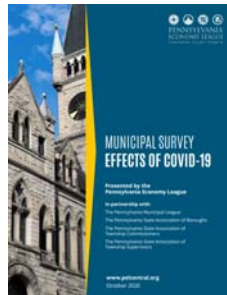
Almost half of the respondents (45%) experienced a decrease in revenues. Many municipalities expressed that it is too early to tell how revenues will be impacted in the future. However, they anticipated that if revenues are impacted in the future, it will mostly show up in the Earned Income Tax and the Liquid Fuels allocation.

Most concerning of all the survey's findings, is that a substantial number of municipalities anticipate significant budget issues in the future. Of the 430 respondents, 38 indicated that they are likely to apply to participate in DCED's Strategic Management Planning Program, a state program that offers tools and consultant services to struggling municipalities. An additional 23 municipalities indicated that they are likely to request entry into the Act 47 Program, which is essentially municipal bankruptcy.

While it is too early to tell the full extent of COVID-19's impact on municipalities in Pennsylvania, the pandemic's affects are starting to show.

Check out the full report at

[www.pelcentral.org](http://www.pelcentral.org)



# PUBLIC HEALTH IN LANCASTER

## Partnership for Public Health Makes Case



*Article written  
by Susan  
Baldrige,  
Director of the  
Partnership for  
Public Health.*

Public health is an effort to keep a community as safe and healthy as possible. This pandemic highlights the need for a public health department in Lancaster County.

Both the health of our population and even our economic survival has been significantly challenged during the COVID-19 crisis. The virus has highlighted how uniquely susceptible this county is to diseases among our retirement homes, Plain Sect families and our underserved communities. It has hit our business community and our public and private schools and threatened one of our most valuable assets – tourism. This crisis made it clear that we need health emergency preparedness with plans and supplies in place before a crisis. We also need clear and concise messaging to the public based on our Lancaster County needs. Perhaps most importantly, because we don't have our own county health department, we have no access to our

own health data. As one local physician put it recently, "the effort during the COVID-19 crisis, without a health department, has been like a pilot flying blind into a snowstorm." Our county is too large, too unique and too valuable to chance being underprepared for another wave of COVID-19, the next pandemic or any other unknowable crisis we may face in the future.

Bringing a county health department to our community does not add additional government, in fact it serves to bring health decisions down to local control and tailor them to fit our needs, rather than relying on one-size-fits-all decrees from the state Department of Health. That's what 10 other municipalities have already done in Pennsylvania and two more are looking to do so as well. When that happens, Lancaster, with its population of more than half a million people will be the largest county in Pennsylvania NOT to have its own health department, and one of the largest in the U.S.







After conversations with community leaders, the Partnership for Public Health has offered a plan for a local health department that is headed by a health strategist, someone who understands public health and can advise leaders on how to confront threats to our health and well-being. It's not enough to get data, we have to know how to use it wisely.




PARTNERSHIP FOR  
PUBLIC HEALTH

But a health department is about prevention of disease and injury, as much as it is about responding to a crisis. A healthy and productive workforce is vital to our future economy. A public health authority can help employers ensure that. Also, consider the fact that we have no single entity in our county looking at county-wide health trends like West Nile Virus, Lyme Disease, maternal death, malnutrition, obesity, asthma and a host of other communicable and environmental factors that affect our health. For instance, there may be several children in a particular geographic area who are being poisoned by lead, an irreversible condition. A health strategist would be able to see where that poisoning is taking

place and advise that the soil, water supply and household paint should be examined to keep other children from the same fate. Without a community health authority, we have to wait for the state to put out a report years after the contamination with no information about where it happened.

Those who are a fan of efficient government should take note that millions of dollars in state and federal money, a percentage paid by Lancaster County residents, goes to communities with local public health authorities. And many grants cannot be accessed here by non-profit organizations because they require the presence of a local health department.

There are many reasons that a local health department should be important to our residents. A Lancaster County public health presence just makes sense for the needs we have today and to ensure our health and safety into tomorrow.

*The Hourglass held a First Friday Forum in November, "Public Health in Lancaster County". Susan Baldrige, Dr. Jeff Martin, and Dr. Brian Barnhart participated in a panel discussion. You can find a video of the conversation on the Hourglass website or on our YouTube channel.* 

# HOURGLASS FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

## Highlights from recent forums

### August 7, 2020 - Cultivating a Local Computer Science Community

**Moderator:** Charlie Reisinger (Director of Technology, Penn Manor SD)

**Panelists:** Dr. Nazli Hardy (Associate Professor of Computer Science and the Chair of the Women in STEM Conference at Millersville University) and Joel Walker (CEO, Industrial Resolution)

Charlie Reisinger moderated a discussion about cultivating a computer science community in Lancaster. Dr. Nazli Hardy and Joel Walker provided insight into the computer science field. From high school, to college, to a career in technology, these three represented the gamut of the experiences in the field of computer science. Part of this conversation focused on the need to recruit those from diverse backgrounds to be a part of the computer science community. Dr. Hardy's Women in STEM Conference was mentioned as an example of such an effort.



### September 11, 2020 - Optimism in Lancaster County - Part 1

**Panelists:** Ken Hornbeck (Senior Vice President of Real Estate Development, High Real Estate Group), Benjamin Leshner (SDL Devco, Developer of Stadium Row Apartments), and Larry Zook (President & CEO, Landis Communities)



The Hourglass recognizes that this is a tough time for a lot of individuals, businesses, and organizations as they work to navigate their way through this pandemic. However, in this time of "doom and gloom" there are still those who are a source of positive inspiration. Ken Hornbeck, Benjamin Leshner, and Larry Zook provided us with a sneak peak at some of the projects they have proposed for Lancaster County. Ken Hornbeck spoke about the proposed Walnut Street Extension (or "Goat Path") in Greenfield as well as a proposed project at the former Toys R Us site on Harrisburg Pike. Benjamin

## FIRST FRIDAY FORUM SPONSOR



Leshner discussed the Stadium Row Apartment project that is currently underway on Prince Street next to the Barnstormers Stadium. Larry Zook provided details about the proposed Landis Place residential project on West King Street downtown. Through a discussion of these projects, the panelists shared with us a sense of optimism for Lancaster County.

### October 2, 2020 - Optimism in Lancaster County - Part 2

**Presenter:** Arthur Dodge (Chairman & CEO, Ecore), Rob Ecklin, Jr. (President, Ecklin Development), and Nelson Longenecker (Vice President of Business Innovation, Four Seasons Family of Companies)

The October First Friday Forum was a sequel to September's forum highlighting stories of optimism in Lancaster County. The forum featured a panel consisting of Arthur Dodge, Rob Ecklin, Jr., and Nelson Longenecker. These gentlemen were asked to participate because they embody "pragmatic optimism", a grounded positive approach to addressing issues and moving their organizations forward. Whether it is making hiring decisions, expanding their business, or investing in their community, these leaders shared how their organizations will adapt. They all expressed a sincere belief that Lancaster County's outlook remains positive and that we will emerge on the other side of this adversity stronger than before.



These forums took place virtually using the Zoom Webinar function. This not only allowed us to continue to host First Friday Forums during the pandemic, it also enabled us to record the presentations. We invite you to watch the videos of the forums in their entirety by visiting the Hourglass website at [www.HourglassLancaster.org](http://www.HourglassLancaster.org) or the Hourglass YouTube page.

To attend forums like these, become an Hourglass member.



**HOURGLASS**  
922 N. Queen Street  
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The Hourglass champions and facilitates sound decision-making to continue Lancaster County's prosperity while maintaining its unique character and enviable quality of life.

As a trusted source for information, innovative ideas and insights, the Hourglass helps stakeholders, elected officials and citizens make more informed and enlightened decisions.

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