



# Hourglass Quarterly

Summer 2022



**CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN  
LANCASTER COUNTY**

**PLACES2040 SUMMIT**

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT FORUM**

**FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS**

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# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Hourglass Community,

I hope this issue of the Hourglass Quarterly finds you enjoying everything Lancaster County has to offer in summer. I have been kayaking and tubing in our creeks and streams, buying local produce at our farmers markets, and enjoying the live music and festivals of our historic cities and towns.



Hourglass recently hosted a board retreat at the beautiful Southern Market Center. One of the things we discussed is that **as we strive for a high quality of life in Lancaster County, it makes Lancaster an attractive place to live and work.** This contributes to growth and prosperity, but if we're not thoughtful stewards, can also erode the very characteristics that make Lancaster unique. In this issue you'll learn about how our neighbors are working to protect our natural lands and the farmland that make Lancaster County special.

However, at Hourglass, we don't believe in just looking to the past to protect and preserve. We know there are opportunities to improve our community for the future. In this issue you'll read about efforts to expand our broadband infrastructure, increase affordable housing, and to further cooperation between the 60 municipalities that call Lancaster home. To reflect **the importance of looking back and looking forward** we added two important words to our vision statement at this year's board retreat. Our vision now reads: To protect **and enhance** Lancaster County's unique character and enviable Quality of Life.

We thank you for joining us in this vision and your support of Hourglass.

Respectfully,  
Diana Martin

**P.S.** To stay in the loop on Lancaster issues like smart growth, clean water, local government, affordable housing, farmland preservation and much more, sign up for our email list at [hourglasslancaster.org/newsletter](https://hourglasslancaster.org/newsletter), or give us a follow on social media!

# BROADBAND

## Closing the Digital Divide in Lancaster County

At our May First Friday Forum Hourglass heard from Lisa Riggs, President, and Ezra Rothman, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, at the Economic Development Company of Lancaster County about closing the digital divide in Lancaster. Since early 2021 EDC, in partnership with the Lancaster STEM Alliance, has spearheaded an effort to develop a broadband strategy for Lancaster County. The effort included a study by national consultant CTC Technology & Energy.

### **What the Study Found:**

The study looked at three key areas for Lancaster County: broadband infrastructure, affordability, and adoption.

*Infrastructure:* The study found that approximately 11,000-17,700 addresses in Lancaster County are unserved, meaning they don't have access to basic 25/3 Mbps broadband to support a single internet user, let alone modern internet needs like video conferencing or e-commerce applications. The faster 100/20 Mbps is often considered the minimum speed needed, while increasingly fiber optic networks are the ideal standard.

*Affordability & Adoption:* Additionally, broad stakeholder groups such as local libraries, K-12 schools, higher

education, healthcare and social services have identified affordability and digital literacy as significant challenges for parts of our community. Universities cited examples of students taking online college courses on a cell phone, and libraries have been putting hot spots in their parking lots so kids can complete homework afterhours.

The study found that \$50/month is the starting price for internet in Lancaster, with services ranging up to \$200/month for households. One service provider, Comcast, does offer discounted service for low-income households, called "Internet Essentials," at \$10/month. However, Comcast does not serve all of Lancaster County. Additionally, the study found that only .01% of Lancaster County is enrolled in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provides a \$30/month subsidy for internet services for low-income households, despite 10% qualifying. The study also found a computer device gap of around 26,000 devices in Lancaster County.

**Recommendations:** The study outlines key recommendations for next steps including:

1. Engage in a competitive process to identify one or more Internet

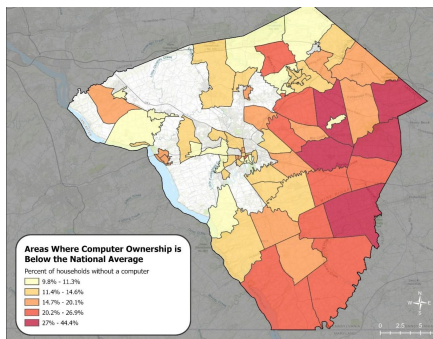


Service Provider partners to address the County's unserved areas and explore institutional user options.

2. Ensure Lancaster County residents are accessing federal subsidies enabling low-income individuals to access broadband services.
3. Consider a bulk-purchase agreement with Comcast for Internet Essentials to support low-income residents.
4. Develop a County-wide coalition of stakeholders to drive solutions around affordability and adoption. This coalition could tackle device recycling programs or a digital literacy curriculum.

The conversation around closing the digital divide in Lancaster County is particularly timely as state and federal funding is being allocated towards broadband projects. For example, Pennsylvania will receive \$278 million through the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund and at least \$100 million through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program. "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fix our broadband infrastructure," said Rothman. "We can't solve this by leaving each individual institution in our community to put band aids on it." Broadband projects are also eligible for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

"Broadband is no longer a nicety," said Riggs. "We need access to high quality, high speed internet for our whole community."



**Image: Areas where computer ownership is below national average. Dark red represents 27%-44.4% of households without a computer.**

### Other Local Broadband Efforts:

For context, creating a broadband network has been a priority for neighboring York County. The York County Commissioners established a YoCo Fiber Optic Task Force in February 2021 to develop and implement a countywide broadband strategy, and allocated up to \$25 million of its American Rescue Plan Act funding for local broadband efforts. Additionally, Lancaster City is reviving plans for a citywide broadband network. The city took full ownership in May 2021 of an unfinished broadband network that includes 16 miles of fiber, two remote switching stations, and about 160 customers for the residential internet service known as LanCity Connect after parting ways with MAW Communications. Lancaster City recently received bids from 5 companies interested in helping to build and manage the network.

*To watch EDC Lancaster's First Friday Forum presentation, or to access their powerpoint slides, visit [HourglassLancaster.org/resources/first-friday-forums/](https://HourglassLancaster.org/resources/first-friday-forums/).*



# PLACES2040 SUMMIT

## Thinking Beyond Boundaries

By Matt Johnson, Lancaster2040 Steering Committee Consultant



On March 31 a first-of-its-kind summit brought together the business, nonprofit, government and education sectors to discuss Lancaster County's most pressing challenges and opportunities. **The Lancaster2040: Thinking Beyond Boundaries Summit** asked participants to think beyond the physical and ideological boundaries that silo our efforts and to imagine what the County could achieve if we moved beyond thinking in terms of the 60 townships, boroughs and cities that Lancastrians call home. The result was a full-day of problem solving, pragmatism and a genuine interest in working together to achieve the best for Lancaster. The Summit brought to life Places2040, Lancaster County's Comprehensive Plan, with 15 speaker sessions on topics ranging from zoning and density to census data and language access.

### **5 Takeaways from the Summit**

#### **1. People Want to Talk about Planning**

As we organized the Summit, we heard from many well-meaning folks that there was no way we'd get close to capacity for the event. Pandemic anxiety combined with a perceived

lack of interest in Summit topics made people skeptical. To our delight, we sold out (280 tickets) ten days before the event and had to turn people away at the door. 95% of survey responders said they would like to see another summit. About the same percentage suggested topics for future summits and volunteered to present.

#### **2. Affordable Housing is a Great Challenge—And a Crucial Necessity**

While many topics of the day were contentious, almost everyone agreed that Lancaster County must address affordable housing. Residents need it. Nonprofits want to finance it. Builders want to build it. To achieve the nearly 1,100 new units of affordable housing a year experts say we need to keep up, everyone agreed that federal, state, and local governments must play a larger role. One for-profit builder laid it out plainly: "it feels sometimes like the government makes it illegal to build affordable housing." Parking minimums, density requirements and resident pushback make it feel impossible to meet the need. Many suggested a full day Summit on the topic!

#### **3. Forget What You Think You Know**

My favorite part of the Summit was upending narratives about planning work in Lancaster County. Nowhere was that more apparent than in South-

ern Lancaster County, or “The Southern End.” Since I was born and raised in Holtwood, I know that Southern Enders cherish their fields and forests and don’t like being told what to do. That’s why we were so happy to highlight the efforts of several municipalities who have come together to create a regional plan. Working across township and borough lines allows them to empower farmers, protect natural lands and create uniform zoning. Leaders from the Southern End gave kudos to the Lancaster Planning Department who, in their words, stopped “telling them what they must do, and instead helped them achieve the goals they had set together.”

#### **4. Data and Stories Must Coexist**

Sometimes people like to think that you’re either a touchy-feely “story person” or a hard-nosed “data” person. “Story people” say data can miss the living, breathing people that inhabit an area. Data people worry that stories can be misleading and propagate unhelpful myths.

What we learned from the Summit was that stories and data can (and MUST) coexist to get a full picture of Lancaster County. During a panel on the Lancaster County Community Foundation’s work with neighborhoods, we heard about the surprising similarities between neighborhoods in Southeast Lancaster City and Paradise Township. On paper (i.e., in “data world”) these two areas couldn’t be more different. But as residents from both areas discussed their neighborhood needs, community building and problem solving, what emerged was a story of common resilience and shared need.

On the other hand, data has the power to shift harmful narratives that have become all-too entrenched. We heard from poverty experts that the “story” that poverty only exists in Lancaster City means government and nonprofits often don’t take it seriously enough in the rest of the county, where a full 2/3 of poverty exists. Their data also showed that ALL economic development suffers when a significant portion of the population is below the poverty line.

#### **5. Lancaster can be a Model**

Lancaster has led the way on issues ranging from veteran homelessness and refugee resettlement to organic farming and green infrastructure. The attendees and presenters of the Lancaster2040 Summit believe there’s more opportunity for Lancaster County to be a national example. Eric Sauder of the nonprofit RegenAll believes that Lancaster County’s mix of agriculture, suburban development and urban centers makes it the perfect place to show the nation how disparate groups can come together to reach the cost-saving, soil-preserving and quality-of-life-improving effects of carbon neutrality. From Language Access Plans to watershed cooperation, the Summit featured blueprints for how communities all across the country could benefit from looking at Lancaster!

*Hourglass was proud to be a sponsor for the Lancaster2040 Summit. Videos of the event will be posted soon. In the meantime, learn more at [places2040summit.com](https://places2040summit.com).*

*Matt Johnson is a civic engagement consultant and works as Community Partnerships Officer for CWS Refugee Resettlement in Lancaster.*



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## Hourglass Community Forum



On April 27 Hourglass hosted a community forum at the Ware Center on food and agriculture entitled “Food For Thought.” The evening included a reception, several local and regional speakers, and keynote speaker George Steinmetz, photographer behind the global project “Feed the Planet.” While Lancaster County has long been considered a national leader in agriculture and a destination for foodies, the goal of the forum was to connect the dots between our food system and quality of life issues such as health, the environment, entrepreneurship and the future of our community.

**George Steinmetz, a regular contributor to National Geographic and the NYTimes Magazine,** is best known for his aerial photography. He presented a dazzling slideshow of images taken of food production around the world: fields clear cut out of the

Amazon jungle to raise soybeans, the world’s largest chicken farm (tended largely by robots), and even images from Plain Sect farmers in Lancaster County. The goal of the Feed the Planet project is to show how our food is produced so that consumers can make more informed decisions.

### **Additional Speakers:**

Attendees also heard from **Joe Arthur, Executive Director of the Central PA Food Bank**, about food insecurity in our region. The Central PA Food Bank serves 27 counties including Lancaster. Food insecurity peaked during the COVID pandemic—32,550 people in central Pennsylvania became newly food insecure since 2019, an 11% increase. The food bank has been partnering with local farmers to acquire more fresh food and rescued 32 million pounds of food in the last year.

The next speakers were **Chris Ballentine**, community relations manager for Willow Valley Communities, and **Jessie Tuno**, owner of **Butter & Bean coffee shop**, who spoke about how the new Southern Market Center is offering opportunities for food entrepreneurs. Southern Market was originally built in 1888 under the famous local architect C. Emlen Urban. The building is now owned by Lancaster Equity, was developed by Willow Valley, and partners with ASSETS on business training for the 10 local chefs in the food hall who are part of an incubator program for culinary startups.

We heard from **Alex Wenger**, a seed grower, farmer, and plant-breeder from the **Field's Edge Research Farm** in Lititz. Alex spoke about how he works with local chefs to increase agrobiodiversity, or the variety of crops that are grown in our region. Alex grows specialty crops, including unique heirloom varieties, that are healthier, that command a price premium and that are more resilient for our climate. Alex also works with new Americans and refugees that are living in Lancaster to grow their culturally significant foods.

The next speaker was **Mark Bryer**, **Chesapeake Bay Program Director at the Nature Conservancy**, who spoke about oyster reef restoration in the Bay. Oysters, in addition to being delicious, provide many ecosystem services including filtering pollutants like nitrogen and sediment that come from Lancaster County farms. Native oysters were decimated in the Bay, but now the Chesapeake Bay is home to the largest oyster reef restoration projects in the world.



At the forum Hourglass recognized three local food changemakers: **Hawa Lissanah**, whose organization **DECA City Farms** has growing plots in Lancaster County Central Park and operates a pay-what-you-can farmers market in Lancaster City, **Shauna Yorty**, a local artist who has spearheaded the **Garden in the Light** community garden in Lancaster City's Mussertown neighborhood, and **Zeshan Ismat**, an F&M professor whose organization **Blackbirds** is connecting families of color to environmental issues and working to install backyard methane digesters. Each changemaker received a \$3,000 grant to support their projects from the GIANT Companies.

The forum also included a video about Mount-Joy based **Brubaker Farms**, an 1,800-acre preserved farm that is home to 1,300 dairy cows and 52,000 broiler chickens. Brubaker Farms won the 2021 Pennsylvania Leopold Conservation Award for practices including riparian buffers, no-till and cover cropping, an anaerobic manure digester, solar panels and much more.

*Find all the videos from the Food For Thought Forum on our website at [Hourglass-Lancaster.org/resources/community-forums/](https://Hourglass-Lancaster.org/resources/community-forums/). Thank you to our sponsors The GIANT Companies, Clark Associates, C'est La Vie/Josephine's/Belvedere Restaurant Group, Lancaster Local Provisions, Monty & Molly Milner, Paul Mueller and Kinectiv.*





# HOURLASS FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

## Highlights From Recent Forums

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WEALTH ADVISERS

In addition to our May First Friday Forum with EDC Lancaster on closing the digital divide, other recent First Friday Forums include:

### **March 4, 2022—Affordable Housing in Lancaster County**

**Presenters:** Dana Hanchin, President and CEO, and Tammie Fitzpatrick, Director of Real Estate Operations, HDC MidAtlantic

This First Friday Forum focused on the need for affordable housing in Lancaster County, how it is funded, and the plans for a new mixed-use, mixed-income development in Lancaster City at the former UPMC/St. Joes Hospital site on College Avenue. HDC MidAtlantic currently has 24 communities totaling 1,282 apartments in Lancaster County. The average rent for a 2-bedroom is \$592-\$835. Lancaster County needs 7,000 apartments for families at 30% Area Median Income (\$24,900 for household of 4) and 2,500 apartments for families at 50% Area Median Income (\$41,500 for household of 4). You can stay up to date on HDC's new College Avenue development at [collegeavenueplanning.com](http://collegeavenueplanning.com).



### **April 1, 2022—The State of Tourism in Lancaster County**

**Presenter:** Ed Harris, President & CEO, Discover Lancaster

Ed outlined how local tourism has been impacted by the pandemic, Discover Lancaster's innovative marketing campaigns for Lancaster County, and the outlook for 2022 tourism. Tourism has a \$3 billion annual economic impact on



Lancaster County, and in a typical year we receive 9 million visitors. In 2020, tourism was hit hard by COVID. We saw visitation and economic declines of 36% or more. Discover Lancaster received \$1.3 million in CARES Act funds, \$1.5 million in DCED tourism marketing grant funds, and \$1.03 million in ARPA funds. However, in Q1 of 2022 demand was up more than 20%, website traffic was up 70%, and revenue was up more than 35% from pre-pandemic levels.

### June 3, 2022—Protect & Restore our Natural Lands

**Presenters:** Phil Wenger, President, and Fritz Schroeder, Senior Vice President of Community Impact, Lancaster Conservancy

The Conservancy shared details about their efforts to protect & restore natural lands and streams in Lancaster and in York Counties and what their new \$21 million campaign will fund. The Lancaster Conservancy is over 50 years old and currently protects 8,200 acres of natural lands including 50 preserves, 45+ miles of trails, 39 miles of streams, and 1.6 million trees. Lancaster County has the least amount of forested land in the state, with less than 15% of our overall landscape forested. The Conservancy's "Protect and Restore" campaign goals include raising \$11 million to acquire an additional 5,000 acres, \$7 million for new infrastructure, habitat restoration and a stewardship endowment, and \$3 million to educate more than 10,000 people annually at the Climber's Run Nature Center. Facility improvements to Climber's Run Nature Center will include increased on-site parking, bridge crossings, sustainable trails, and outdoor classrooms.



Watch forum recordings at [HourglassLancaster.org](https://HourglassLancaster.org) or on our Youtube channel. To attend forums like these, become an Hourglass member at [HourglassLancaster.org/membership](https://HourglassLancaster.org/membership).



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Hourglass provides local, reliable information to Lancaster County leaders, ensuring informed decisions, and making Lancaster a better place to live and work.

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