



MONTCO 2040: A SHARED VISION

The New Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County

Draft Themes and Goals

March, 2014



WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a long-range plan required by state law for guiding the growth and physical development of a place. The Philadelphia region as a whole has a comprehensive plan, as do most of the 62 municipalities in Montgomery County. So, with all these comprehensive plans, what is the role of a county plan?

The county plan provides an overall land use and growth management framework for local municipal plans and provides guidance on issues that transcend local boundaries, such as highways, public transportation, flooding, trails, growth trends, redevelopment trends, shopping needs, impact of large developments, overall housing needs, natural systems, economic growth, etc.

WHAT IS IN MONTCO 2040: A SHARED VISION?

Montco 2040: A Shared Vision is Montgomery County's new comprehensive plan. It reflects the input of thousands of citizens, county officials, and a steering committee made up of many diverse stakeholders.

This plan provides goals and implementation steps for managing the county's built environment. It is structured around three themes:

- Connected Communities
- Sustainable Places
- Vibrant Economy

The plan's concluding chapter provides a vision for the future of the county and includes an overall transportation vision, a land use vision, and a strategic vision.



Comprehensive plans make the built environment ...



... better for the people who use it every day.

HOW WAS THE PLAN CREATED?

Montco 2040: A Shared Vision was created through an extensive research and public outreach process.

2005

County's 2005 Plan, *Shaping Our Future*, provides foundation for a new plan

Conditions in the county have changed since the early 2000s, partially due to the Great Recession. In addition, state law requires county comprehensive plans to be updated every 10 years.

2012-2013

Current conditions analyzed in *Montgomery County Today*

County planning commission staff examined existing conditions, recent trends, and future forecasts for the county. These are summarized in *Montgomery County Today*, which includes regional position, people, health, built environment, natural environment, open space, transportation, housing, the economy, infrastructure, cultural resources, and governmental structure.

Fall, 2013

Steering Committee created

The county commissioners and MCPC Board appointed a Steering Committee to oversee *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. This 28-member diverse committee includes representatives of municipal government, businesses, transportation providers, conservationists, developers, economic development, health advocates, education, housing, seniors, and farmers.

**Fall, 2013-
Winter, 2014**

Public survey made available

Over 2,200 surveys were completed. The top issues respondents wanted the county to address were retaining businesses, repairing local roads/bridges, addressing aging water/sewer infrastructure, and reducing traffic congestion.

Public workshops held

Four public workshops focused on issues identified in *Montgomery County Today* were held around the county. More than 150 people attended these workshops. In a money allocation exercise, participants gave the most money to transportation and economic development.

Other public input encouraged

Public input was also gathered online, with additional meetings to community groups, and through social media.
What issues are most important to citizens?
Transportation, jobs and the economy, infrastructure, revitalization, and taxes.

Winter, 2014

Themes and goals for the plan drafted

Using public input as a guide, the Steering Committee drafted themes and goals, which were then shared with the public, local municipalities, school districts, and other stakeholders for their comment and input. *(We are currently in this stage.)*

Spring, 2014

Implementation steps and recommendations prepared, followed by public meetings

Following adjustments of the draft goals to reflect public comment, the Steering Committee prepared implementation steps that identify what will be done, who will do it, and how it will be measured. This draft plan was shared with the public for their input and discussed at public workshops.
(This stage will happen this summer.)

Final plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, is adopted on *(date to be determined)* by the County Commissioners

PLAN THEMES

Montco 2040: A Shared Vision is designed around three interrelated themes.

Connected Communities

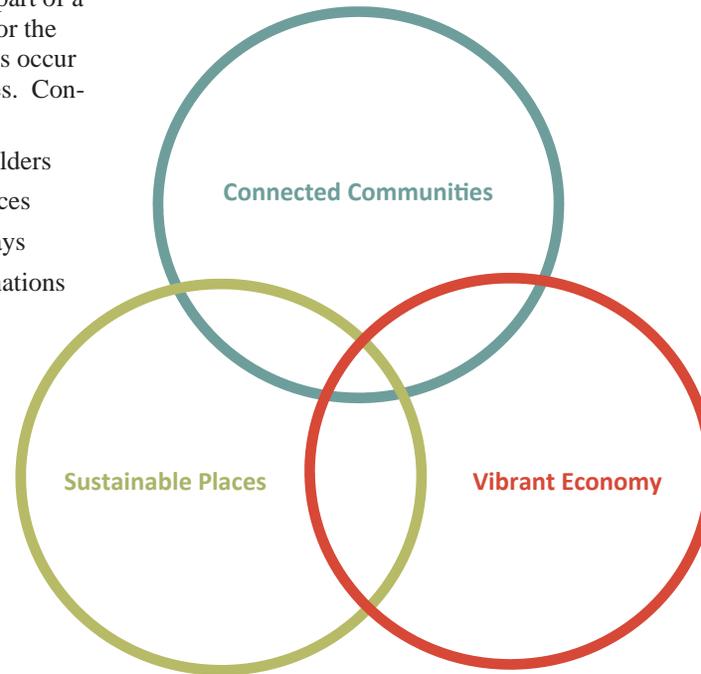
People want to be connected and part of a broader community. A key role for the county is to help these connections occur beyond local municipal boundaries. Connected communities involve:

- Collaboration among stakeholders
- Improved transportation choices
- Connected trails and greenways
- Strong downtowns and destinations

Sustainable Places

The county is full of wonderful neighborhoods and communities. These places need to be sustained and enhanced in a long-lasting and effective way. Sustainable Places involve:

- Improved stormwater management
- Modernized infrastructure network
- Conserved natural resources
- Opportunities for healthy lifestyles
- Diverse housing choices
- Enhanced community character



Vibrant Economy

A strong economy is critical for all places. With a vibrant economy, residents can earn and spend more, governments can make needed infrastructure improvements, and businesses can grow. A Vibrant Economy involves:

- Improved transportation access
- Focused development
- Marketing of assets
- Flexibility with market conditions
- Attraction and retention of businesses

INTRODUCTION

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

There are four goals under the Connected Communities theme

Encourage collaboration and partnerships among governments, businesses, institutions, and other stakeholders



Why this goal is important:

- With 62 municipalities and 23 school districts, local cooperation is critical.
- Issues are complex and funding often limited, which makes public private partnerships essential.
- Montgomery County is inextricably linked to Philadelphia and its other neighboring counties.

Improve transportation options and quality for county residents and workers



Why this goal is important:

- Many residents and workers, particularly younger ones, want options other than cars to get to work.
- Only 8.1% of county residents walk, bicycle, or take public transit to work.
- 83% of county residents are in less walkable areas.

Expand and connect county trails, local trails, greenways, natural areas, and parks



Why this goal is important:

- Trails not only meet recreation and transportation needs; they also improve personal health and the local economy.
- Two-thirds of the county's trail network still needs to be completed.
- Greenways protect and link sensitive natural areas and provide corridors for wildlife.

Support strong downtowns and community destinations, including mixed use areas, arts and culture focal points, libraries, and other gathering places



Why this goal is important:

- In interviews and meetings, people consistently say they want more physical, civic, and social connections.
- Vital downtowns and mixed use areas improve nearby property values.
- The county has many unknown arts and culture "hidden gems".

SUSTAINABLE PLACES

There are six goals under the Sustainable Places theme.

Support a modern, resilient, green, and energy-efficient infrastructure network



Why this goal is important:

- Safe and clean sewer, water, and stormwater systems and well-maintained roads and bridges protect the health and safety of county residents and provide a foundation for economic development
- Many sewer and water systems are aging and need to be upgraded.
- Communication, energy, and other infrastructure is rapidly changing and a critical concern for modern business.

Improve stormwater management and reduce the impact of flooding



Why this goal is important:

- Over the past 30 years, flooding has resulted in several fatalities and more than \$120 million in property damage.
- There are 2,600 structures, as well as much important infrastructure, located within floodplains.
- Impervious coverage and resulting stormwater runoff continues to increase.

Conserve natural resources, environmentally-sensitive areas, and farmland



Why this goal is important:

- Wetlands, woodlands, trees, and natural areas reduce flooding, protect water quality, improve air quality, and increase property values.
- Climate change and more variable weather will impact the county in many ways that can be ameliorated by conservation.
- Homes near open space have higher values, which is estimated as \$16.3 billion in additional value for Southeastern PA's housing stock.

Provide more opportunities for residents to exercise and have healthy lifestyles



Why this goal is important:

- Health is impacted by the built environment and the ability to walk and exercise conveniently.
- Diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and other chronic health concerns have increased over the past decade.
- Having access to affordable and nutritious food is an important part of being healthy and staying fit.

Support housing choices and opportunities to meet the needs of all people



Why this goal is important:

- There are increasing numbers of smaller households, those living alone, and others who prefer to live in an apartment or townhouse.
- The senior population is expected to grow 58% between 2010 and 2040.
- The percent of households spending more than 35% of their income on housing increased from 16% in 1999 to 25% in 2009.

Enhance community character and neighborhoods



Why this goal is important:

- Typically, a home is a family's largest investment.
- Many historic homes, downtown buildings, and institutional structures have been demolished over the past decade.
- Fire, police, and ambulance service are critical for protecting neighborhoods.

VIBRANT ECONOMY

There are five goals under the vibrant economy theme.

Improve transportation access to businesses



Why this goal is important:

- Transportation convenience and access is a major driver of economic development.
- Daily commute times increased over 20% from 1990 to 2010, about ten minutes a day, which equates to 40 extra hours a year sitting in traffic.
- Making it easier for workers to get to work not only helps businesses but also saves time and frustration for workers.

Encourage development and transformative investment where infrastructure already exists



Why this goal is important:

- The cost of building and maintaining infrastructure is lower where it already exists.
- Many of the county's business parks are old and need reimagining and reinvestment.
- Reusing former industrial sites cleans the environment, provides jobs, improves property values, and helps control sprawl.

Attract and retain businesses and vital community assets



Why this goal is important:

- Many businesses can locate anywhere and are not as dependent on raw materials or local markets as they used to be.
- Competition for growing businesses with well paying jobs is intense.
- Business growth depends on educated and trained workers, who typically earn better incomes than less educated peers.

Flexibly adapt to changing market conditions and demographics



Why this goal is important:

- With more people working from home and offices being redesigned into smaller, more collaborative spaces, the office market is in transition.
- Online retailing is changing both the retail and distribution industries.
- The aging population, interest of young adults in town living, and increasing diversity of the county will impact the location and type of new housing and other development.

Strengthen the marketing of the county and its assets



Why this goal is important:

- Stronger marketing will help attract businesses, investment, visitors, and residents to the county.
- Nationally, there are 18 Montgomery Counties, which can cause confusion.
- Montgomery County's identity and strong assets are not as well known as they should be in the Philadelphia region .