

PLANNING PERSPECTIVES

Focusing on Planning in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

AUGUST 2012—Volume 10, Issue 3



Housing Units Built Report



New housing construction in Montgomery County decreased for the fifth time in the last six years due to the economic downturn. The 1,237 total housing units constructed in 2011 represented a decrease of 22 percent from 2010 and was the lowest number since 1982.

Single-family detached homes saw the greatest decline over the last six years. These larger and, often times, more expensive homes have dropped from nearly 1,800 built in 2002 to only 377 built in 2011. In 2011, slightly more single-family attached (townhouses) and multifamily units were constructed than single-family detached houses. A large portion of the multifamily units built was age-restricted.

The slowdown in housing is a symptom of the national economic conditions. Availability of money for home mortgages and building loans has had an impact on housing sales. Developers have had to pursue smaller projects. Also, buyers of new homes have had to wait in order to sell their existing homes. So far this year, there appears to be more new housing construction as a few new development projects have been opened. Check out the full [report on housing units built](#).

Mary Jo Daley Appointed to Planning Board



The Montgomery County Board of Commissioners appointed Mary Jo Daley to the planning commission board on July 19 to fill a vacancy left by the resignation of Pat Mascaro. Mary Jo is a resident of Narberth Borough where she served on the borough council for twenty years, ten of which she was president. She currently works for the University of Pennsylvania where she holds degrees from the Wharton School of Business and Fels Center of Government. Her service on the planning commission will add to her already impressive history of municipal and county service.

The Latest From Harrisburg

In the usual flurry of activity before the end of the state fiscal year and the summer recess, the Pennsylvania General Assembly adopted a new budget and enacted several new laws that impact planning activities.

Act 97 Municipalities Planning Code Amendment

As part of [Act 97](#), municipalities will be required to provide monthly updates to school districts regarding developments that have received final approval. The act also requires development applicants to notify wastewater system operators meeting certain conditions. Comments raised by the wastewater system operators must be considered by the municipality during the review process.



The extension applies to any approvals, agreements, or permits that relate to development or construction, though some exceptions do apply.

The Course in Subdivision and Land Development Review



Act 88 Public-Private Partnerships

Newly enacted [legislation](#) provides a key first step toward modernizing the procurement of infrastructure projects in Pennsylvania by expressly authorizing public-private partnerships (P3) for road, transit, and other transportation-related projects. This law provides an alternative to advancing needed transportation projects without relying exclusively on tax revenue. The act covers transportation facilities, such as bridges, roads, and parking lots, but also includes multimodal facilities, airports, terminals, and ports, together with their associated structures. The act also includes intelligent transportation systems and other property needed to operate or related to the operation of a transportation facility.

MCPC is sponsoring *The Course in Subdivision and Land Development Review*. This comprehensive course will be taught in three Monday sessions—September 10, 24, and October 1—in Public Meeting Room A of the Whitpain Township Administration Building, 960 Wentz Road, Blue Bell from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The course focuses on the work of planning commissions in the subdivision and land development review process, from pre-application meetings through project completion. It is designed for both new and experienced planning commission members and is also useful to other municipal officials, individuals in the development sector, and engineers and surveyors. Participants get hands-on experience reviewing plans and designing alternative solutions. Topics include the *Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC)* requirements governing subdivision and land development regulation, the importance of subdivision regulations to municipalities and to developers, procedures for reviewing applications, design considerations, requirements for approving and denying plans, project completion and follow-up, and new approaches to project design. We have reached our registration limit for this popular course.

Historic Tax Credit

Pennsylvania became the 30th state in the country to offer a state [historic tax credit](#) when the Historic Preservation Incentive Act was signed into law at the end of June. This tax credit will be a companion to the very successful federal tax credit program. Under this law, property owners can receive up to a 25 percent state tax credit for the rehabilitation of qualified income-producing buildings that are also receiving the federal tax credit. By leveraging the existing 20 percent federal tax credit with an additional 25 percent state credit, the program should be able to stimulate investment in older communities throughout the state. Data show that states offering tax credits tend to have an advantage over states that do not have tax credits in attracting investment in historic rehabilitation.

PA Trails Advisory Committee

Temporary Ban on Drilling and Permit Extensions

A four-year moratorium on drilling for gas and oil in the South Newark Geologic Basin, located in Bucks and Montgomery Counties, was established through the budget approval process. Though there have been no drilling proposals made for parts of the South Newark Basin in Montgomery County, no well permit can be issued by the state for that area until after January 1, 2018.

Michael Stokes, deputy director, was selected as a member of the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee, which was formed to assist in the development of a statewide network of land and water trails. The Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee is comprised of other members who represent horseback riders, bicyclists, ATV riders, off-road motorcyclists, trail walkers, mountain bikers, snowmobilers, trail builders, people with disabilities, water trail users, cross-country skiers, and trail planners. The committee's responsibilities will include advising the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) on the use of federal trails funding in Pennsylvania, reviewing and ranking

Also through the enactment of the state budget, property owners and developers with zoning, subdivision, or building approvals and permits have been granted a reprieve until 2016, which will extend the life of those permits and approvals.



trail project applications, and presenting an annual report to the secretary on the accomplishments of the preceding federal fiscal year.

Matt Edmond Attains Planning Certification



Matthew Edmond has become certified through the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). In attaining certification, Matt met professional experience and education criteria as well as successfully passed a rigorous exam. In attaining this important accomplishment in the planning profession, he joins the other seven staff members who have been acknowledged through the AICP.

Montgomery County Planning Commission

P.O. Box 311
Norristown, PA 19404-0311

Montgomery County Board of Commissioners

Joshua D. Shapiro, *Chair*
Leslie S. Richards, *Vice Chair*
Bruce L. Castor, Jr., *Commissioner*

Planning Commission Board Members

Marc D. Jonas, *Chair*
Dulcie F. Flaharty, *Vice Chair*
Jill Blumhardt
Mary Jo Daley
Scott Exley
Roy Rodriguez, Jr.
Charles J. Tornetta
Reverend John H. West, III
V. Scott Zelov