

PLANNING PERSPECTIVES



Focusing on Planning in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

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Report Shows 42% Increase in Housing Units Built

The latest [report](#) on housing units built in Montgomery County is a strong indicator of a strengthening economy in the county. The 1,441 units constructed in 2013 represent an improving housing market, with growth occurring in all housing types: single-family detached, attached, and multifamily housing.

The most rapid growth occurred in multifamily housing—311 percent from 2012. A large portion of that growth occurred as a result of the Bridgeview apartment development in Kulpsville. Since 2012, the number of single-family detached homes built grew by 19 percent, and the number of attached housing grew by 12 percent.

These increases indicate a positive future for the housing market in Montgomery County. Throughout 2014 more new residential development plans have been filed for review, and several substantial residential development projects have broken ground. Continued strong housing numbers are expected over the next few years, particularly with increases in multifamily rental apartments.

The report provides information on municipal totals and details on age-restricted units, the characteristics of new single-family detached housing, and how new development meets the goals of the existing county comprehensive plan. It is available in MCPC's online data portal at www.montcopa.org/planningdataportal.



Montco 2040 - Share the Vision!

The draft Montgomery County Comprehensive plan—[Montco 2040: A Shared Vision](#)—is ready for public review and comment. We hope you'll give us your comments on the draft by completing a comment form or by placing comments on our three new interactive maps. Check out our presentation on Montco 2040 as well as videos from our recent public meetings.

Montco 2040, an important plan that sets a future vision for the county, focuses on three major themes: Connected Communities, Sustainable Places, and a Vibrant Economy. Recommendations made within these three themes will be used to help guide the future growth of the county and assist community leaders in making the right decisions. The plan, maps, and an online comment form are available at www.montcopa.org/Montco2040.



DVRPC Approves Up to \$1.1 Billion for Future Transportation Projects in County

On July 24 the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) approved up to \$1.1 billion in future transportation projects for Montgomery County in the

four-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Twelve Year Transportation Program (TYP). Between 2015 and 2026 the southeastern region of Pennsylvania, consisting of Bucks, Chester, Philadelphia, Montgomery, and Delaware counties, expects to receive \$8 billion in highway funding and \$7.1 billion in transit funding. Montgomery County expects to see \$403 million for transportation-related projects in the first four years of the 12-year period.

Two of the largest projects to receive funds are the Route 202 reconstruction and widening between Norristown and Montgomeryville and the replacement of the Route 422 bridge over the Schuylkill River at Betzwood. Several other important road highway projects will be developed throughout the county under this funding.

The money will also go toward transit improvements to enhance service provided by SEPTA including parking garages at Lansdale, Noble (Abington), Conshohocken, and Ardmore stations in the regional rail system, as well as improvements to the Norristown, Hatboro, Jenkintown, Roslyn, and Willow Grove train stations. Surface parking lot expansions will be completed at train stations in North Wales, Gwynedd Valley, and Philmont. [Check out all of the great Montgomery County projects on the TIP.](#)



Rain Gardens: Learn How to Manage Stormwater in a More Environmentally Friendly and Attractive Way

MCPC and the Montgomery County Division of Parks, Trails, & Historic Sites invite you to come to Lower Perkiomen Valley Park on Saturday, September 27, to learn how to create a rain garden and discover how they can be used to clean rainwater and create wildlife habitat! This family-oriented event, which will take place from 10:00 a.m. to noon, will offer useful information for residents as well as municipal employees interested in installing a rain garden in their community. Two presentations on rain gardens and how to select and plant the appropriate plants will be repeated at 10:00 and 11:00, followed by an opportunity to help install a rain garden at the park. Participants will get their hands dirty planting native plants that provide food and habitat for important insects and animals. The site will be pre-excavated, and plants, tools, and other equipment will be provided. Ages 6 and up can

join in the planting. There is a suggested donation of \$2 per person (collected at the event). Pre-registration is required. [Register online](#) or by contacting [Rita McKelvey](#) at 610-278-3753. The event will be held weather permitting. Participants should meet at the Main Pavilion. If you're interested in watersheds and stormwater management, check out MCPC's [new interactive watershed map!](#)



Get Out and Go Montco

MCPC staff, working with the Montgomery County Division of Parks, Trails, & Historic Sites and the Montgomery County Health Department, has launched a "Get Out and Go Montco" initiative to encourage more people to use our excellent county parks and trails. With a new display tent and promotional banners, funded through a grant made possible with the county's nomination of the Schuylkill River as the 2014 Pennsylvania River of the Year, county staff has hit the road to encourage more Montgomery County residents to add parks and trails to their lifestyle. "Get Out and Go Montco" promotes health and fitness and better connections with our community and environment. Pop-up appearances of "Get Out and Go Montco" have occurred at events such as National Trails Day at Lower Perkiomen Valley Park, Bike to Work Day in Norristown, the Schuylkill Sojourn in Royersford, and along the Schuylkill Trail on weekends in July and August. Look for more "Get Out and Go Montco" appearances in the future!





Join Us for *The Course in Zoning*

We are sponsoring *The Course in Zoning*, which will be taught in three consecutive Thursday sessions—October 23, 30, and November 6—in the Upper Dublin Township Building, 801 Loch Alsh Avenue, Fort Washington, PA. Though this popular course deals with the most complex topic in local planning, 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.

The course begins the fundamentals for developing a sound zoning ordinance using the authority granted in the *Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code*. Course topics include the relationship of zoning to comprehensive plans, key terms used in zoning and how they are applied, critical issues in drafting a zoning ordinance and map, procedures for adopting and amending ordinances, and basic zoning administration. It also explores techniques such as overlay districts, performance zoning, traditional neighborhood development, and planned residential development as well as the options available through regional planning.

The course is limited to 25 persons, and pre-registration is required. The \$90 registration fee includes a light meal at each session. [Click here](#) for further information and online registration.



Expanding Our Trails

Residents value the great trail system in Montgomery County. Trail users will be glad to know that the trail system will soon expand by about 10 miles. Currently, a 3.5-mile section of the Pennypack Trail is being constructed to create an incredible trail experience from Rockledge to Byberry Road. The Schuylkill River Trail is being expanded with a 1.75-mile section of the tow path to be built between Port Providence and Mont Clare. This historic tow path is being designed for walkers and some recreational bikers. Other bikers can continue to use the safe road connections between Port Providence and Mont Clare. In Pottstown, a section of the Schuylkill Trail is being designed from Yost Road to Hanover Street with construction slated for 2015. This section fills in a critical missing gap and readies the county to complete the trail when the US Route 422 bridge over the Schuylkill River is complete with a separate trail bridge. The final design work is under way for a 4-mile section of the Chester Valley Trail from Norristown to South Gulph Road in Upper Merion Township. This missing link will complete the Chester Valley Trail from Norristown to Exton. In addition to the sections of trails being designed and built in the next few years, we are exploring the feasibility of other trails, which should also be under design and construction soon.

Providing Professional Services to Municipalities and School Districts

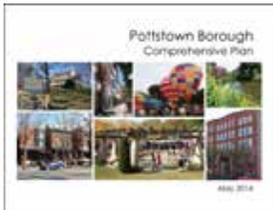
Our staff uses their [professional expertise](#) to help municipalities and school districts in a variety of ways. We've developed a [new series](#) that details our many services and resources. Some recently completed [community planning](#) projects are highlighted below:

Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Comprehensive Plan Update

The Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Planning Commission, which consists of representatives from Colledgeville, Lower Frederick, Perkiomen, Schwenksville, Trappe, and Upper Frederick, adopted an [updated regional comprehensive plan](#) to guide their future growth and development. The updated plan reflects the region's changing market and demographic profile, a focus on areas

of established infrastructure and existing development (such as the boroughs and villages), and a new focus on economic development and promoting the efficient use of resources.

Pottstown Borough Comprehensive Plan Update



The new [Pottstown Borough Comprehensive Plan](#), adopted on May 12, provides a clear overall future vision for Pottstown along with strategies for achieving that vision. This attractive plan will be an important document for Pottstown as it continues its successful efforts

to make the borough an attractive destination to live, work, and play.

Montgomery Township - Like Living in a Park: A Comprehensive Update to the Park and Recreation Plan

Montgomery Township has an excellent parks system, which it hopes to make even better with the guidance of a new master plan prepared by our staff. This comprehensive plan contains both recommendations for specific parks and for township-wide strategies that would promote active and engaging lifestyles throughout the community. An appealing, informative [plan summary](#) was also created to spread the word about the plan recommendations.

School District of Springfield Township - School Population Projections

The School District of Springfield Township now has a better handle on the future with the school population projections study prepared by our staff—a popular [new service](#) offered by MCPC. The study provides demographic information about the school district and makes forecasts for future enrollment. It shows that enrollment could expand by as much as 309 students by the 2023/24 school year. With this study, the district is better able to plan for future facilities and staffing needs. [Check out a presentation on the study.](#)

Norristown Zoning Ordinance

A comprehensive and form-based zoning ordinance for Norristown was adopted on April 29. This code acknowledges Norristown as a fully built out community with older development that predates zoning and establishes realistic standards that will enable revitalization efforts that build upon the past and embrace the future and the unique attributes of the borough such as the Schuylkill River, transportation access, and the trail system. The form-based zoning meets the following objectives: maintain existing walkable neighborhoods, ensure that new infill housing respects the traditional character and scale of the neighborhood, encourage transit-oriented development with a mix of housing and commercial uses, beautify existing neighborhoods with street trees and landscaping. [Check out the ordinance here.](#)



Planning on Two Feet - Walkability Audits in Collegeville

On June 18, nearly the longest day of the year, our planning commission conducted two innovative walkability audit workshops in Collegeville. The 40 participants at the two workshops had a chance to learn first-hand about what makes a community more safe and attractive for walking and biking. After receiving an overview of walkability, participants took a guided 1-hour walk through parts of Collegeville to see successful pedestrian- and bike-friendly designs as well as areas needing further improvements to enhance walkability. After the walk, the participants reconvened to discuss their experience and highlight potential improvements to be made along their walking route. In 2015, we will be conducting other walkability workshops around the county. Be sure to check out our walkability primer, [Walkability and Your Community - Health, Safety, and Economics](#).



MCPC Board Meets with Leaders in Education

The Montgomery County Planning Commission Board held an important meeting with several college and university leaders at Ursinus College on June 11 to better understand the important role these institutions play in Montgomery County's future. Joined by Vice Chair of the Montgomery

County Board of Commissioners Leslie Richards and Economic Development Director Brian Regli, the board heard from Dr. Bobby Fong, President of Ursinus College; Dr. Kathleen Owens, President of Gwynedd Mercy University; Dr. Vicki Lewis McGarvey, Vice Provost For University College and Acting Director, Temple University Ambler; Dr. Karen Stout, President of the Montgomery County Community College; and Dr. Karen Wiley Sandler, Chancellor at Penn State Abington. The group discussed many issues, such as job skill training, access to transportation systems, sustainable campus development, green building design, stormwater management, and housing and business development in the area surrounding college campuses, at this important meeting. The information gained will be used in the development of *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, Montgomery County's new comprehensive plan.

(MCPC was saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. Bobby Fong. We offer our sincere condolences to Dr. Fong's family and Ursinus College.)



Congratulations to Our Staff!

Congratulations to our staff members who reached a major milestone in service to the county! The group was honored for their years of contribution to the county at a June 27 service pin ceremony. Seated (L-R): Barry Jeffries, Senior Planner (15 years); Holly Mager, Section Chief: Design (25 years); Mike Narcowich, Principal Planner (10 years). Standing (L-R): Matthew Edmond, Principal Planner (10 years); Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Principal Planner (10 years); Michael Stokes, Assistant Director (25 years), Scott France, Principal Planner (10 years); Jody L. Holton, Executive Director. Missing from the photo are Sean Metrick, Senior Planner (10 years) and Anastasia Somers, Principal Designer (10 years).



Historic Joint Meeting with Chester County

The Montgomery County Planning Commission Board and the Chester County Planning Commission Board held an historic first joint meeting at Penn State Great Valley School of Graduate Professional Studies in Malvern on July 9. The meeting was an excellent opportunity for the two counties to meet and learn about significant planning initiatives in both counties and to discuss important regional issues. The group focused on transportation issues along US Route 422, US Route 202, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike—all important transportation corridors within both counties. They discussed topics such as reinventing older business parks, changing commuter patterns, and trail connections, such as the Schuylkill River Trail and the Chester Valley Trail.

Both boards expressed enthusiasm for future collaborative opportunities. "This was a great first meeting with Chester County. Our board and staff look forward to continuing to work together with Chester County on important regional issues," said Marc Jonas, Chair of the Montgomery County Planning Commission Board. Last fall, the Montgomery County Planning Commission Board held a successful meeting with Bucks County.



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