



## MCPC Board Endorses New County Comprehensive Plan

On November 12, the Montgomery County Planning Commission Board endorsed the draft county comprehensive plan and recommended that the Board of Montgomery County Commissioners adopt it as official county policy. The comprehensive plan consists of two volumes—*Montgomery County Today*, which contains current conditions, trends, and forecasts for the county, and *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, the county road map for the future. This plan, when adopted by the commissioners, will replace the current county comprehensive plan, which was adopted in 2005.

The new draft plan was prepared by MCPC staff, who worked with a 28-member steering committee comprised of representatives from the public, nonprofit, and business communities. Successful extensive public outreach efforts over the two-year planning process included interactive social media, online maps, eight public meetings, a countywide survey, various community presentations, and a dynamic website with detailed information. A formal comment period was held on the plan after the draft was sent out to all municipalities and school districts within the county as well as all abutting counties, municipalities, and school districts. All of the comments received were considered in making revisions to the plan.

The plan will be considered by the Montgomery County Commissioners early in 2015. Once adopted, it will serve as a policy guide for the county in making important decisions about the future. [Click here](#) to view the plan.

## Congratulations to Our 2014 Montgomery Award Recipients!

Three outstanding projects and an exceptional community leader received a 2014 Montgomery Award at a November 12 ceremony, which took place at Theatre Horizon in Norristown. Approximately 80 people attended the celebration, which was enhanced by the talented students from The Culinary Arts Institute of Montgomery County Community College, who provided delicious hors d'oeuvres. This annual program recognizes the best in planning, design, and advocacy in Montgomery County and acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.

The three projects receiving awards were the Beaumont House Restoration in Lower Gwynedd Township, the Fort Washington Office Park Resilient Infrastructure project in Upper Dublin Township, and Towamencin Town Square Phase I in Towamencin Township. The program was expanded this year by creating the Planning Advocate Award. This award recognizes citizens, appointed/elected officials or boards, and community organizations that have made significant and sustained contributions to advancing or promoting planning in Montgomery County. Luanne B. Stauffer, president of the Upper Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce, was the 2014 recipient of this award.

[Beaumont House Restoration](#) received the award for successful historic preservation and restoration, coordinated transportation improvements, strong community involvement, and extensive collaboration. This restoration is an excellent example of an adaptive reuse. Through an exceptional public-private partnership, this project helped preserve the historic character of the area while accommodating necessary transportation improvements.

The [Fort Washington Office Park Resilient Infrastructure](#) project earned the award for creative vision, environmental

mitigation, economic reinvestment, and successful collaboration. This innovative project, involving substantial investment and a comprehensive approach to the sustainable redevelopment of a significant regional office park, will achieve a major community vision.

[Towamencin Town Square Phase I](#), an exceptional mixed-use project, received the award for innovative community vision and planning, extensive collaboration, effective site planning, and positive reinvestment and economic development. This project demonstrates how a successful public-private partnership can result in a well-designed development that accomplishes an important community vision.

[Luanne B. Stauffer](#) received the 2014 Planning Advocate Award. Luanne is an exceptional leader who has a sustained legacy of achievements in planning, collaboration, and community improvements. She has been an ardent advocate for the Upper Perkiomen Valley region for over 30 years, providing leadership in the community and economic planning within the region. Luanne's involvement and activities come from her enthusiasm for her community and vision of achieving fair and reasonable planning for the future of the region.

Visit [www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards](http://www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards) for more on the 2014 winners, the awards program, and a searchable database of all award recipients since the start of program in 1967.



## MCPC Continues to Serve the Local Planning Needs of the County

Planning assistance contracts have been recently approved for municipalities and regional planning organizations. The contracts, part of the Montgomery County Community Planning Assistance Program, provide professional planning services that achieve a municipality's vision for an exceptional community. The work accomplished typically focuses on smart growth, economic development, the environment, sustainability, and parks and recreation. All but the Horsham Township contract were renewals of past planning assistance contracts. The contracts and key work items are listed below:

- West Pottsgrove Township – Development of a municipal trail network and redevelopment of the Keystone Boulevard along the Schuylkill River.

- Worcester Township – Preparation of a zoning ordinance for the Village of Center Point.
- Upper Perkiomen Valley Regional Planning Commission – Completion of a multiregional greenway plan that will inventory and assess the value of the natural corridors in 24 municipalities of the four regional planning organizations—Central Perkiomen Valley Region, Indian Valley Region, Pottstown Metropolitan Region, and Upper Perkiomen Valley Region.
- Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Planning Commission – Promotion of economic development with a focus on uniting the school district, Ursinus College, the regional planning commission, and the chamber of commerce to discuss and address issues of common interest and the multiregional greenway plan.
- Pottstown Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Committee – Completion of the regional comprehensive plan update, continuation of technical support for the innovative mini-grant and circuit rider programs, and the multiregional greenway plan.



- Horsham Township – Preparation of a master plan for both the Horsham Business Center and the Pennsylvania Business Campus.
- Ambler Borough – Ongoing economic development assistance that includes selective updates to the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances.
- Lower Salford Township – Audit and update of the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances.

The Montgomery County Community Planning Assistance Program was established over 60 years ago by the county commissioners. Today, MCPC services 30 municipalities and four regional planning organizations. Many of these communities have benefited from planning assistance from the county for several decades. [Click here](#) to learn more about this program and other professional services offered by MCPC.



*Photo-simulated image of art along the Schuylkill River Trail.*



*MCPC Planners Meredith Trego (L) and Marley Bice (R) present the award-winning model sign ordinance.*

## Art on Our Trails Summit

Creative Montco and the Montgomery County Planning Commission held a summit on October 1 at the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove to determine interest in having art on the county trail system. Overall, the summit attendees strongly supported the concept and provided valuable input on how to enliven the county trail system with art.

Thirty people, representing artists, activists, arts organizations, businesses, educators, conservancies, libraries, nonprofits, foundations, tourism, parks, planning, local government, transportation management, and citizens participated. Prior to active group discussions, attendees heard presentations about trail art projects around the country, planning for art on trails, and Montgomery County's trail system. As a result of their active small group discussions at the summit, consensus emerged about goals, themes, types of art, locations for art, and implementation issues. MCPC used this valuable input to draft a master plan for the Art on Our Trails project. Additionally, a request for funding has already been initiated with a private foundation to create different forms of art at locations on the county trail system.

There are three overall goals of the Art on Our Trails project:

- **Improve the Trail Experience**  
Art would improve the trail experience by providing interest, beautifying industrial and utility areas, providing places to pause between landmarks, and educating about the local area.
- **Encourage Economic Development**  
Art could connect trail users with the towns along the trail, bringing people into towns to visit restaurants, theaters, galleries, and shops.
- **Raise the Profile of the Arts**  
The presence of art on the county's trails would provide a venue for county artists and make art accessible to members of the public who might not normally go to a gallery or museum.

## MCPC Staff Plays Major Role in Successful State Planning Conference

This year's annual conference of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association (PA Chapter of APA) held in Philadelphia on October 12–14 was very successful with over 500 attendees and three full days of informative sessions and tours. A big part of that success was due to the efforts of our planners. Pennsylvania Chapter President and Montgomery County Planning Commission Chief of County Planning, Brian O'Leary, delivered the president's address. He and eight other staff members gave informative technical presentations at the conference. Several other planners were able to attend sessions and learn new ideas from colleagues around the state. Descriptions of the MCPC sessions are below:

- Brian O'Leary and Assistant Director Leo Bagley conducted a session on the Montgomery County turnpike corridor reinvestment study, which focuses on reinventing business parks along the turnpike corridor.
- Planners Meredith Trego and Marley Bice and Assistant Director Michael Stokes presented the county's new, award-winning model sign ordinance.
- Senior Planner Matt Schelly and Assistant Section Chief of Community Planning Eric Jarrell taught attendees how to prepare effective natural resources greenway plans.
- Senior Planner Jon Leshner joined colleagues from Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission to discuss how to overcome barriers to solar energy adoption.
- Michael Stokes led a panel discussion on wireless communications.
- Leo Bagley and Principal Planner Matt Edmond shared their experience in a packed session to discuss successfully building transportation projects.



MCPC Executive Director Jody L. Holton accepts the award for the model sign ordinance. She is joined by Pennsylvania Chapter President and Montgomery County Planning Commission Chief of County Planning, Brian O'Leary, and Planners Marley Bice (L) and Meredith Trego (R), the authors of the ordinance.

## MCPC Model Sign Ordinance Wins State Award

The Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association (PA Chapter of APA) recognized the Montgomery County Planning Commission's model sign ordinance at its Annual Awards Luncheon on October 14 in Philadelphia where 500 attendees celebrated the esteemed award winners of this year's highly competitive statewide planning award program. The model sign ordinance was given the *2014 Planning Excellence – Best Practice Award* in recognition of its thorough content, attractive design, and innovative signage control strategies. The award exemplifies “the best and brightest in Pennsylvania planning in 2014.” In granting the award, the PA Chapter of APA also acknowledged the great need for this type of model ordinance and commended the planning commission staff for their progressive approach to managing temporary signs, digital signage, and billboards. Executive Director Jody Holton, joined by authors, Meredith Trego and Marley Bice, accepted the award. View the [model sign ordinance](#) and the MCPC [nationally awarded model ordinance series](#).

## Learning How to Create a Rain Garden



Approximately 30 people attended the rain garden event offered by MCPC and the Montgomery County Division of Parks, Trails, and Historic Sites on September 27. The participants learned all about creating a rain garden and then had an opportunity to plant one at Lower Perkiomen Valley Park.



## Planning Smarter Montco 2015

Exciting and informative planning education events are scheduled for 2015 as part of *Planning Smarter Montco 2015*. These education events are linked to important themes identified in the recently drafted county comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*.

Over 340 people attended events in 2014—the inaugural year of the Planning Smarter series. Even more events have been added in 2015 to address the issues that community leaders and citizens are concerned about in Montgomery County.

The *Planning Smarter Montco 2015* events include:

- Three 9-hour planning education courses covering community planning, zoning, and subdivision and land development
- Informative seminars discussing revitalizing business parks, establishing green parking lots, attracting new transit-oriented housing, form-based zoning, and safe community bike and pedestrian mobility
- Montgomery Awards

All of the events are free, except for the three planning courses, which cost \$90 per course. Details on the 2015 events, including dates, times, and locations will be provided online at [montcopa.org/planning](http://montcopa.org/planning). For more information, contact [Rita McKelvey](#) at 610-278-3753.



(L-R) Sarah Richardsen and Crystal Gilchrist

## Meet Our Newest Staff Members!

MCPC is pleased to introduce two new staff members who bring additional expertise and experience to our commission. We

look forward to the great work they will achieve and their valued contributions to Montgomery County.

Crystal Gilchrist has joined MCPC as a Principal Multimodal Transportation Planner. Crystal has been a planner in the Philadelphia area for more than 25 years. She has been the transportation planner for Bucks County, the director of planning for Lower Providence Township, and a transportation and environmental consultant for private businesses. She also led a leading conservation organization before returning to transportation planning for Montgomery County. Crystal is pleased to be helping to shape the transportation network of the area and keeping Montgomery County's travelers moving forward.

Sarah joins us as an Urban Designer/Planner, bringing four years of landscape architecture and planning experience. She previously worked as a landscape designer for a wide range of public, private, and institutional clients, and as an assistant transportation planner at Parsons Brinckerhoff. Through her work on private residential designs, Sarah gained expertise in developing site details and a sense of how built form and planted form work together. She approaches her designs with a focus on history, ecology, and context and hopes to contribute to the creation of many new public spaces that convey a unique and distinct sense of place. She is looking forward to collaborating with local professionals and community members.



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