



NEWS

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Montco Announces New Initiative to Enhance Walkability in Communities

Norristown, PA (April 7, 2015) – Montgomery County is kicking off Walk Montco, an exciting new initiative aimed at making communities safer and more attractive for walking. This initiative will ultimately result in the development of a countywide walkability plan. Walk Montco is supported by a Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) grant and is part of the implementation of *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, the county's new nationally awarded comprehensive plan.

A walkable community prioritizes people over cars and helps create vibrancy and connections that support local businesses and neighborhoods. Walkable communities are safer for everyone, but especially for children, the elderly, and those with mobility limitations. Walkable streets also help decrease local traffic volumes, increase access to available public transit, and increase opportunities for healthier lifestyles and recreation.

The new countywide walkability plan will focus on walkability opportunities and challenges throughout Montgomery County. It will recommend standards for improving walkability in general and will offer specific recommendations for four selected focus areas in the Safe Routes to School Category, Access to Downtowns Category, Access to Transit Category, and Suburban Commercial Category. The plan will also provide guidance on how to implement and fund walking improvements.

A major part of Walk Montco involves walkability audits in four focus areas throughout the county. In early 2015, the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) actively sought four community partners interested in examining the walkability of their communities and how to improve their pedestrian environment. MCPC received outstanding submittals from 13 municipalities in four identified categories.

In recognition of National Walking Day on April 1, Montgomery County is pleased to announce the four selected focus areas:

- Cheltenham Elementary School - Cheltenham Township (Safe Routes to School Category)
- Main Street - Hatfield Borough (Access to Downtowns Category)
- Noble Train Station - Abington Township (Access to Transit Category)
- Germantown Pike - Whitemarsh Township (Suburban Commercial Category)

These focus areas were chosen based on a variety of criteria including the density of the community, extent of infrastructure in need of improvement, local interest in walkability, and a walking demographic. Each area will have its own project team which will conduct walkability audits during late May and early June—the end result being four case studies published in the countywide walkability plan. Project teams will be comprised of public and private sector stakeholders, including municipalities, school districts, SEPTA, PennDOT, local businesses, developers, and residents.

The Walk Montco initiative includes a public workshop on October 26 in Ambler, which will feature national experts who will provide information about proven strategies that have been used around the country to enable more pedestrian mobility. The new countywide walkability plan will be released at this event. Visit www.montcopa.org/PlanningSmarter to register for the workshop and to sign up for other exciting planning events in Montgomery County.

MCPC will be launching online walkability resources and an interactive map where county residents can identify areas with walkability challenges. For more information about walkability in Montgomery County, please visit www.montcopa.org/WalkMontco. Contact: Anne Leavitt-Gruberger at 610-278-3727 or via email at aleavitt@montcopa.org.