

# PLANNING PERSPECTIVES



Focusing on Planning in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

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*Steven Kline (right) and David Cohen recently joined the MCPC Board. Steven was selected as board chair.*

## Annual Summary of Land Development

During 2014, development activity continued to rebound from the post-recession dip experienced from 2010 through 2012. The number of plans approved in 2014 increased to the highest level since 2008. The 452 applications for subdivision, land development, and zoning ordinances and map amendments received in 2014 represented a slight decline from 2013, but were substantially higher than the three previous years. Similarly, the number of acreage proposed for development declined in 2014. This can be partially attributed to the types of development projects being proposed.

There were 2,470 residential units proposed in 2014. While this shows a decline in proposed units from 2013, it still represents more housing units than the previous years, dating back to 2006. 2014 marked the first year since 2008 that multifamily housing unit proposals did not constitute the largest number of housing types proposed. Attached housing units, including twins, duplexes, and townhouses, were the dominant housing type proposed.

Nonresidential development proposals were modest in 2014, accounting for 1,488,532 square feet. One proposal alone, the Fedex Ground Distribution Facility in Upper Merion Township, accounted for 315,897 square feet. Commercial development, including retail, hotels, and self-storage facilities, accounted for the largest amount of nonresidential space proposed. Already in 2015, a substantial amount of nonresidential development has been proposed.

In 2014, MCPC continued to review many zoning code and map amendments. Typically, zoning activity is a precursor to proposed development projects to be submitted under new zoning.

## New MCPC Board Chair Steven Kline

The Montgomery County Planning Commission has selected Steven Kline as the 12th board chairperson since the planning commission was formed in 1950. Steve is interested in fostering economic development, expanding regional planning throughout the county, promoting innovative stormwater management strategies that enable municipalities to comply with the municipal separate storm sewer system (MS-4) requirements, and broadening the planning commission's communications with municipalities, schools, and other county agencies. Steven, a professional architect, also serves as a commissioner in Abington Township.

## Meet New Board Member David Cohen

Newly appointed board member David L. Cohen, AICP, was introduced at the March meeting. David brings substantial professional planning experience to the board. As a certified professional planner and very much a numbers guy, he currently serves as Senior Manager of the Program, Analysis and Development Group at the Ben Franklin Partnership. He has 25 years of experience in program development, management, and implementation across grant writing, policy research, and economic development. David has previously served as the Director of Development for the North Philadelphia Health System and as Executive Director of City Avenue Services District.

David also uses his considerable planning and organizing skills to assist various local community initiatives. He is President of White Pines Productions, Chairman of the Cheltenham Township Economic Development Task Force, and is a member of the Cheltenham Township Select Committee on Zoning, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning

Commission (DVRPC) Public Participation Task Force, and the DVRPC Greater Philadelphia Futures Group. He is also a founding board member and Treasurer of Cheltenham Township Community Development Corporation.

David earned an MBA from Saint Joseph's University, a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Illinois, and a B.S. degree in Communications, Politics and Law from Emerson College. He lives in Cheltenham Township where he is a very active member of the community.



## Submit an Entry for the 2015 Montgomery Awards!

This annual program recognizes the best in planning, design, and advocacy in Montgomery County and acknowledges the high quality work and commitment of municipalities, community leaders, organizations, and professionals. By showcasing outstanding design and innovative planning projects in Montgomery County, this program provides educational resources to help better plan development in all communities. The program specifically recognizes the best new land developments, revitalization efforts, open space enhancements, environmental sustainability, and transportation improvements.

Last year the program was expanded to include a Planning Advocate Award, which recognizes an engaged citizen, appointed/elected official or board, or community organization that has made significant contributions to advancing or promoting planning in Montgomery County. Any individual, group, or organization that has demonstrated an outstanding leadership role in promoting excellence in planning and has made significant and sustained contributions to advancing or promoting planning in Montgomery County is eligible. This award is specifically designed to recognize the exceptional work being done by the many volunteers, public officials, and nonprofit groups/organizations.

All nominations must be submitted by May 1, 2015. Visit [www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards](http://www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards) for an online entry form and nomination requirements and to learn about the program and previous winners. For more information, contact [Barry Jefferies](mailto:Barry.Jefferies@montcopa.org) at 610.278.3444.

## May 6 - Business Park Revitalization Seminar

Business parks, like everything else, can grow stale and out of touch with current market needs. To remain vital and competitive in today's rapidly changing global economy, it is essential that business parks, the economic engines of



the county economy, evolve and grow to meet the needs of future companies.

Join us on Wednesday, May 6, from 2-4 p.m. at the Upper Dublin Township building to learn how to revitalize business parks. The informative event is being offered as part of *Planning Smarter Montco 2015*, a Montgomery County initiative offering planning education events throughout the year.

This information-packed seminar will illustrate effective strategies for bringing new life to older business parks such as strategic infrastructure improvements, new development and zoning codes, marketing, and improved mobility and access. The event will feature presentations and a panel of business and design professionals with extensive experience in reinventing business parks. Participants will also be among the first to get a look at MCPC's new Turnpike Corridor Reinvestment Study—one of many local initiatives designed to guide the future revitalization of business parks in Montgomery County.



## Apartment Boom in Montgomery County

There is a huge apartment construction boom going on in Montgomery County—with much more yet to come. At this time, it appears that apartment communities with approximately 2,000 new apartments are being rapidly constructed to meet rental demand. Additionally, several older

apartments are being totally refurbished to meet the lifestyle needs of new apartment residents. The new Montgomery County apartment developments are different from previous apartments in both design and location. Though generally popular among millennials, these new apartments are being built for active adults of all ages who are looking for excitement and locations that offer options such as transit and walkability. Being accessible to county trails is a real asset for apartments.

Apartment amenities found in some of the newly constructed Montgomery County apartment locations include resort-style pools with spas and tanning decks, fully equipped outdoor kitchens with grilling areas, common areas with free WIFI, community gardens, large 24/7 fitness clubs with men's and women's massage rooms, yoga rooms, scenic walking paths, multipurpose game rooms with billiards, high-definition theaters, bocce courts, dog parks with indoor dog-washing stations, outdoor fire pits with lounges, sand volleyball courts, electric car charging stations, indoor basketball and volleyball courts, bicycle storage areas, and large community rooms for entertaining complete with catering kitchens. Apartment units offer flexible space to fit various lifestyles with wood flooring, gourmet kitchens with stainless steel appliances and granite counter tops, balconies, and high ceilings. Garage parking with direct access to apartments is also a popular apartment feature offered in many newer apartments in Montgomery County.



## New Planning Assistance Contract Started in Jenkintown

The Montgomery County Planning Commission has just begun a new 3-year contract with Jenkintown Borough, an attractive community with less than 5,000 residents and its own school district. The primary work item for this contract will be the drafting of a full comprehensive plan with a focus on economic development and sustainability. Though Jenkintown's last comprehensive plan was adopted in 1962, the borough has continued to do extensive planning work in the last 15 years to address economic revitalization of its downtown commercial area. The new comprehensive plan will be developed through extensive public engagement that will be led by MCPC planners Marley Bice and Maggie Dobbs, who will be completing professional planning services under the Jenkintown contract.



## Maggie Dobbs Joins Our Staff

We are very pleased to announce that Margaret Dobbs has joined our professional planning staff. Maggie recently earned a master's degree from the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. Her interest in planning was cultivated through her undergraduate studies at Gettysburg College and her work as a culinary arts professional. Maggie will serve as a community planner in Douglass Township, Lower Providence Township, and Rockledge Borough. She will also be assisting on the Jenkintown Borough contract as well as helping with the Central Perkiomen Valley Region.



*(L-R) MCPC Executive Director Jody L. Holton, AICP; Brian O'Leary, Section Chief: County Planning; and Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Principal Planner, proudly display the national award MCPC received for Montco 2040: A Shared Vision, Montgomery County's new comprehensive plan. The award was presented to the planning commission by the American Planning Association (APA) County Division and the National Association of County Planners on April 19.*



Montgomery County Planning Commission  
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