

PLANNING PERSPECTIVES



Focusing on Planning in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

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Photo by Pattie Guttenplan

Joining Jody Holton, MCPC Executive Director, in receiving the award for Montco 2040 are (L-R) John Cover, Section Chief of Community Planning; Matthew Edmond, Section Chief of Transportation; and Brian O'Leary, President of the PA Chapter of APA.

MCPC Wins Two Planning Awards

The Montgomery County Planning Commission received two awards from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association (PA-APA) on October 20 at an annual conference in Pittsburgh. MCPC won the prestigious Daniel Burnham Award for the county's new comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. The award represents the best and brightest work in Pennsylvania planning in 2015. The [PA Turnpike Corridor Reinvestment Project](#) also received a planning excellence award due its innovative approach to revitalizing business centers along the Pennsylvania Turnpike corridor in Montgomery County.

The Daniel Burnham Award is the fourth award that Montco 2040 has received this year. The plan, developed through a dynamic two-year community visioning process, was created through input from county residents, local leaders, and a 28-member steering committee. MCPC staff performed all of the research, public outreach, marketing, and plan preparation. Since its adoption, the plan has been widely recognized as an excellent vision tool for local leaders.

The PA Turnpike Corridor Reinvestment Project was conducted to identify strategies to revitalize seven key business centers along the turnpike in Montgomery County. The project's [study](#) recommended new land use and development policies and ordinances to reinvigorate existing business parks and reposition them as desired locations for companies looking to expand or locate new businesses. The report provides concept designs for seven new turnpike access ramps and recognizes that public-private partnership strategies and all electronic tolling will enhance design and construction of the selected new turnpike access alternatives.



Pennypack Trail Opening

Under sunny skies on September 18, the Montgomery County Commissioners officially opened the new 2.7 miles of the [Pennypack Trail](#) from Welsh Road to Byberry Road. With this addition, the trail now runs about 5.4 miles from its beginning in Rockledge Borough. This very scenic and shady trail is quickly becoming one of the most popular in the county. The county is working on future extensions of the trail into Bucks County and Philadelphia.



Schuylkill River Canal Towpath Opening

On July 28, with the sun glistening on the Schuylkill Canal, the Montgomery County Commissioners made the completion of the Schuylkill River Trail from Philadelphia to Phoenixville official. The newly opened portion of the trail along the restored towpath was developed by the county in addition to other improvements that make the 2.5-mile Schuylkill Canal located in Mont Clare and Port Providence a great place for recreation.



Municipal Waste Management Plan Revision Completed

The [draft Montgomery County 2015-2025 Municipal Waste Management Plan](#) revision completed under The Pennsylvania Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (Act 101) is available for public comment. The plan contains information on the county municipal waste management system, waste generation volumes and disposal needs in Montgomery County over the next ten years, designated facilities for waste processing, and the county recycling program. The draft plan revision was sent to all municipalities and public libraries in Montgomery County. Written public comments will be accepted through December 11, 2015 and may be submitted to Drew Shaw, AICP, MCPC Section Chief: Environmental Planning, at dshaw@montcopa.org.



FYI: MPC Amendment

Did you know that an amendment to the *Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code* was approved by the Governor on October 7 allowing municipalities to appoint alternates to their planning commissions? [Click here to learn about Act 42.](#)

Walk Montco: Navigating Montgomery County on Foot

More than 100 people attended Walk Montco, a seminar focused on making communities safer and more attractive for walking, at the Ambler Theater on October 26. Montgomery County Commissioner Vice Chair and Interim Medical Director of the Montgomery Health Department, Dr. Valerie Arkoosh, began the presentations by highlighting the importance of safe pedestrian infrastructure as a key component of healthy communities. The event featured two nationally recognized experts in establishing walkable communities. Scott Bricker, Executive Director of America Walks, described how he has worked around the nation to help communities develop active transportation programs that respond to a growing interest in pedestrian mobility. Chris Zimmerman, Vice President for Economic Development, Smart Growth America, described his experience as a former county board member from Arlington County, Virginia and how he has successfully advocated for traffic calming and neighborhood conservation, transportation infrastructure, and public safety for more than 20 years. Montgomery County Planning Commission staff gave an overview of the newly released [draft Walk Montco report](#), which highlights the successes and challenges in making Montgomery County a more walkable place. This report is the start of an important county initiative to improve walkability in all county communities. Attendees had an opportunity to provide insights and suggestions to guide the Walk Montco initiative. Event partners included the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association (GVFTMA), and The Partnership TMA (PTMA). Event materials are available at www.montcopa.org/WalkMontco.

MCPC Develops New Guidebook on Green and Sustainable Parking Lots

MCPC has created a new guidebook on [Green and Sustainable Parking Lots](#). The guidebook was released at a September 30 event at Arborcrest in Blue Bell where approximately 50 people came out to hear all about how to transform parking lots. The evening got off to a great start with Fred Conner, Chairman of the Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors, telling the audience about some of the successful collaborative efforts in the township. Joseph Sikora, a landscape architect and president of Sikora Wells Appel, provided an interesting examination of his landscape and parking lot design at the new Einstein Medical Center in East Norriton Township. Barry Jeffries, Senior Planner, and Michael Stokes, Assistant Director, gave a presentation on the new guidebook, which provides detailed information and guidelines on how to green parking lots, discusses the benefits of green parking lots, looks at parking demand management, and offers recommended plant lists. Andrew Welker, Project Manager, COPT Development & Construction Services, concluded the event with a virtual tour of the [award-winning Arborcrest](#) office campus, highlighting various green elements in the parking lots.



the workshop focused specifically on The Courts at Spring Mill Station. Charles Guttenplan, Director of Planning and Zoning at Whitmarsh Township, and Donald Hague, Senior Vice President of Development, Home Properties, described how the project was developed involving required zoning changes and land development approval. Attendees enjoyed touring the new facility after the workshop.



MCPC and Partners Bring PARK(ing) Day to Norristown!

Workshop Focuses on Transit-Oriented Development

MCPC's workshop on attracting great new transit-oriented development near existing train stations was a great success. The October 6 event took place at The Courts at Spring Mill Station in Whitmarsh Township—a new 385-unit apartment development adjacent to the Spring Mill Station on the Norristown Regional Rail Line. Steven Kline, MCPC Board Chair, welcomed the attendees. Jody Holton, Executive Director, discussed the event topic and gave an overview of transit-oriented development in Montgomery County. Byron Comati, Director of Strategic Planning at SEPTA, described how the transit agency is working to better link to developments in areas near existing stations. The rest of

PARK(ing) Day occurred for the first time ever in Norristown on September 18. MCPC partnered with the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Agency (GVF), the Municipality of Norristown, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to transform several ordinary parking spots on Main Street in front of the courthouse into creative public spaces. These fun and informative “parklets” invited passing pedestrians and motorists to visit and rethink the way streets are used and how we can creatively reshape our infrastructure to improve our quality of life and protect our environment. The public spaces focused on green roofs, the environment, parks and trails, recycling, farmland preservation, and art. PARK(ing) Day began in 2005 and is celebrated around the world by artists, activists, and citizens.

Best Wishes to Three Long-Term MCPC Staff Members

This autumn MCPC said goodbye to three staff members with a long and distinguished history with our commission. We sincerely thank them for their years of service to Montgomery County and wish them well in their future endeavors.

Brian O’Leary, Section Chief of County Planning, resigned on October 2 to become the new Chester County Planning Commission Executive Director. Brian began his nearly 29-year career at MCPC as an intern and received several promotions during his tenure. During his career, he accomplished many things including the preparation of *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, Montgomery County’s new award-winning comprehensive plan, establishing the agricultural lands preservation and revitalization programs, and developing several award-winning publications. In considering how Brian would like to be honored, the staff had a farm-to-table potluck lunch on his last day and presented him with a gift.



Brian O’Leary (center) is in good company at his luncheon celebration with (L-R) MCPC Board member Scott Exley; Michael Stokes, MCPC Assistant Director; Jody Holton, MCPC Executive Director; and Steven Kline, MCPC Board Chair.

Beth Pilling, Senior Open Space Planner, retired on September 1 after more than 20 years of county service. Beth handled numerous challenges to protect open space and to create public recreation areas and trails for people to enjoy for centuries. She worked continuously with various municipal and private conservation partners, the Montgomery County Open Space Board, and the Montgomery County Parks Department staff to preserve the best parts of Montgomery County. As a result of Beth’s tireless service, Montgomery County is a much greener place. To honor her service, the staff sent a \$500 donation to the George Washington Carver Community Center in Norristown.



Beth Pilling displays her staff retirement gift.

Bill Morgan, Administrator, retired on September 11 after serving the county for more than 34 years. As Administrator, Bill worked on MCPC’s budget and together with his staff handled the tasks that keep the planning commission functioning such as purchasing, invoicing, recruiting, payroll attendance, account management, public assistance, and supportive services to MCPC boards and staff. MCPC staff honored Bill with a retirement luncheon and gift.



Bill Morgan (seated in red shirt) enjoys his retirement celebration.



MCPC Welcomes New Community Planner

Jamie Magaziner joined our staff as a community planner on September 28. Jamie is a recent graduate of Temple University’s Community and Regional Planning program with a concentration in Sustainable Communities Planning. She also received her undergraduate degree from Temple in Environmental Studies and Geography and Urban Studies. She has a strong interest in environmental issues and how to incorporate sustainability into community planning. She will be working on the Multi-Regional Greenway and Stewardship Study and will be working with Marlborough Township and the Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Planning Commission.



Robin McLean (front center) receives her 35 year service pin.

Staff Milestones

The Montgomery County Commissioners honored several MCPC staff members for their years of dedicated service. Robin McLean, Administrator, has kept things running at the planning commission for over 35 years. John Cover, Section Chief of Community Planning; Rita McKelvey, Communications Coordinator; Juliana Guarna, Principal Designer; and Ron Feick, GIS Coordinator, have accomplished many things for the county over the past 30 years. Beth Pilling, Senior Open Space Planner, faithfully served the county making it a greener place for the past 20 years. Matt Schelly, Senior Planner, has been logging many night meetings as a community planner for the past 15 years, and Tina McLay, Planning Technician II, has provided us with over 10 years of service since returning in 2004. Hearty congratulations to all!



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