

TOWN CENTER NEWS



A quarterly newsletter on revitalization and economic development in Montgomery County's traditional towns

Fall 2015



Cheltenham is home to a growing Korean community.

- Provide strong public schools—especially those which function as community or municipal service hubs
- Provide access to affordable, high-quality childcare and preschool programs
- Ensure that neighborhoods are safe and clean with adequate green spaces for gatherings and increased perception of safety
- Have an up-to-date retail district plan, which helps newcomers fill niches they might not otherwise recognize
- Provide access to required training, whether it's food safety or local regulatory standards
- Promote existing assistance programs, which may include social services, language assistance programs, housing assistance, or job coaching
- Facilitate business start-up funding and favorable business tax laws—banks may not have the ability to start relationships with immigrant communities (with residents unfamiliar with how financing works here), but municipalities can urge these relationships forward

IMMIGRANTS & DOWNTOWNS

Montgomery County is home to 13 percent of the region's immigrant population—second only to Philadelphia. How can the county both cater to the needs of this changing demographic AND provide a warm welcome to the entrepreneurs and business owners among them?

In addition to growing the county's population and adding to our workforce, immigrants encourage economic development by opening businesses at a higher rate than native born people (per the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy). Immigrants also make up a significant part of "Main Street" businesses. West Marshall Street in Norristown is an excellent example of this principle in action. These retail, food, and service businesses that make up our downtowns also make our downtowns more attractive places to live and work.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) recently published a report on "Attracting Immigrant Newcomers." The following are some of the top recommendations the surveyed immigrant business owners felt would help foster welcoming communities. Not surprisingly, they are the things that most people want in a welcoming community.

- Provide/support English as a second language (ESL) education for adults, which includes classes that are inexpensive/free, outside of normal work hours, and in transit-accessible locations



Norristown's thriving Latino community has reshaped West Marshall Street.

Most importantly, be welcoming! According to DVRPC, immigrant business owners specifically cited the visible presence of minorities in municipal roles to be crucial in communicating a feeling of shared values. And they all felt comfortable going to the municipal building and speaking with municipal staff. Keep up the good work!



For additional information, contact the Montgomery County Planning Commission at 610-278-3722 or visit www.montcopa.org/planning



TAP FUNDING

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's (PennDOT's) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding application opened on November 2, 2015. Approximately \$7.5 million will be available for the five-county Southeastern Pennsylvania region, and a minimum of \$9 million will be available statewide.



There are plenty of potential projects that are eligible for funding, including bicycle or pedestrian facilities, conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails, and historic preservation or the rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.

Projects in Montgomery County that received funding during the 2014 round include the Liberty Bell Trail Connection, Walk and Bike Pottstown, and King of Prussia's First Avenue Road Diet.

Local governments, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, natural resource or public land agencies, school districts, local education agencies or schools, and tribal governments are eligible to apply for these funds.

The TAP application link and program guidance can be found below. The application period will close at 4 p.m. on January 8, 2016. Anyone with questions can contact Joe Banks at jbanks@dvrpc.org or 215-238-2898.

For more information:

- Information Session Handouts
- PowerPoint Presentation

Check Out *WHAT'S HAPPENING*

The holidays are happening around Montgomery County. Here are some fun events to ring in the season:

Join the Downtown Ardmore business community at the 2nd Annual Cricket Cringle—December 4 and 5—with an open air marketplace, food, and other festivities. More information at <http://www.downtownardmorepa.com/cricket-cringle>.

Skippack Village celebrates with Illuinaire Nights, when the village is lit by luminaries and participating shops and businesses will be open until 9 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays through December 23.

The Collegeville Economic Development Corporation is sponsoring Collegeville's Third Holiday House Tour on December 6 from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. See some of the area's most distinctive houses. More information is available at <http://www.collegevildevelopment.org/collegevilles-most-distinctive-homes-to-once-again-open-doors-to-area-residents-dec-6th>.



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