



NEWS

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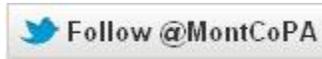
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Montgomery County Commissioners Adopt New Countywide Walkability Plan

Norristown, PA (February 19, 2016) – The Montgomery County Commissioners adopted *Walk Montco*, a new countywide walkability plan, at their February 18 meeting. The plan corresponds to the goals of *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, Montgomery County’s new, award-winning comprehensive plan. *Montco 2040* advocates for more sidewalks and pedestrian-oriented developments to improve transportation quality and expand options.

Walkability continues to be a key aspect of the growth and redevelopment of downtowns, residential neighborhoods, office parks, and retail destinations in the county. Walkability is not only good for the built environment, but essential for physical health. Walkable streets help decrease local traffic volumes, increase access to available public transit, and increase opportunities for healthier lifestyles. They support mobility for everyone throughout all stages of life and create safer communities, especially for children, the elderly, and those with mobility limitations. Walkability also has positive environmental benefits in that a reduction in vehicle trips equates to fewer vehicle emissions.

The new *Walk Montco* plan focuses on walkability opportunities and challenges throughout Montgomery County. It recommends standards for improving walkability in general and offers specific recommendations for 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 - Whitmarsh Township (Suburban Commercial Category)

The plan also provides guidance on how to implement and fund walking improvements.

The *Walk Montco* plan is a major component of the county's new walkability initiative. As part of this initiative, the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) worked closely with numerous partners including Abington Township, Cheltenham Township, the Cheltenham School District, Hatfield Borough, Whitemarsh Township, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), to provide input and formulate recommendations for improved walkability. MCPC will continue to work with municipalities in the county on this initiative.

This initiative also included an interactive map that offered county residents an opportunity to share their viewpoints on areas of the county that had good walkability and areas where walkability could be enhanced. In October 2015, over 100 people attended a public workshop on walkability, offered by MCPC, which featured national experts who provided information about proven strategies that have been used around the country to enable more pedestrian mobility.

"I commend the members of the Planning Commission for their work on the *Walk Montco* plan," said Montgomery County Commissioner Valerie Arkoosh, a physician, and Interim Medical Director of the Health Department. "Walkable communities enhance residents' quality of life by offering them more opportunities for both exercise and recreation, making Montgomery County an even better place to live, work, and play," she said.

For more information about walkability in Montgomery County and the *Walk Montco* plan, please visit www.montcopa.org/WalkMontco or contact Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Assistant Section Chief in the Planning Commission, at 610-278-3727 or via email at aleavitt@montcopa.org.