

# PLANNING PERSPECTIVES



Focusing on Planning in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

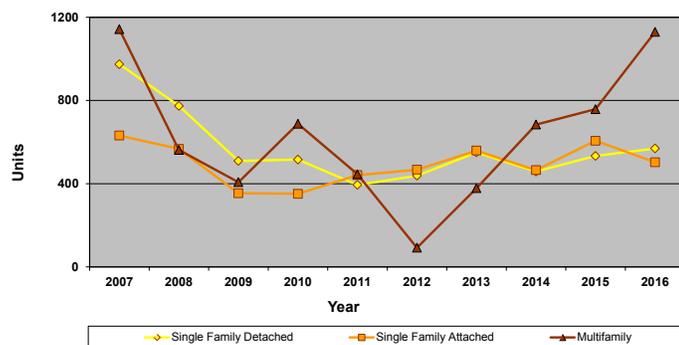
JUNE 2017—Volume 15, Issue 2

## Housing Units Built in Montgomery County Reach Highest Number in Ten Years and Nonresidential Construction Nearly Doubles

Two newly released reports by MCPC show the number of housing units built in Montgomery County in 2016 reached its highest amount in ten years while new nonresidential (commercial, office, and institutional) construction nearly doubled since 2015.

### Residential Construction

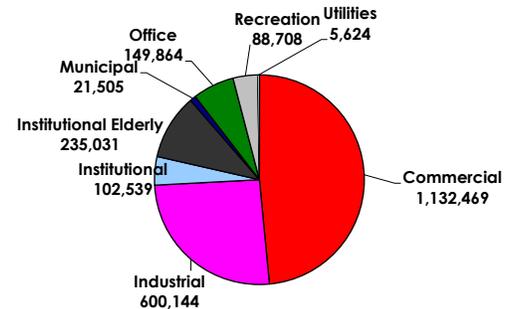
The 2,219 housing units constructed in 2016 represent a strong housing market and a growing economy in the county. The estimated taxable property value of these new units is approximately \$294 million. About half of the new housing units (1,129 units) are apartments, which is a 49 percent increase from 2015. In recent years, multifamily has been the fastest growing housing type within the county. Montgomery County has a number of sites within its transit-oriented town centers that provide opportunities for this type of infill development.



### Nonresidential Construction

In 2016, 2,335,884 square feet of nonresidential development was built in the county. This was an increase of over 1.1 million square feet from 2015 and represents the highest amount in six years. Commercial development, which includes retail, consumer services, and hotels, accounted for the highest square footage at 1,132,469 square feet and regained its position as the majority of nonresidential development built in the county. The next highest category was Industrial at just over 600,000 square feet.

Both reports show how new development meets the goals of *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, Montgomery County's comprehensive plan. Over 98 percent of nonresidential square footage and 95 percent of housing units were constructed within already developed or developable land, as recommended in the plan. The housing report provides



information on municipal totals for each housing type and details on age-restricted units. The nonresidential report provides municipal square footage totals by land use. The reports are available under "Reports" at [www.montcopa.org/MCPCPublications](http://www.montcopa.org/MCPCPublications).

## Median Housing Price Increases 2.9 Percent in County

MCPC's latest report on housing prices in Montgomery County provides a strong argument that the housing market in the county has recovered from the housing bubble that began to burst in 2007. The report shows that the overall median sales price of \$278,500 reflected an increase of 2.9 percent in 2016. A total of 11,441 homes were sold in the county last year—the most in the last nine years. The report also looks at housing in terms of existing and new units. For existing units, the median sales price increased by a rate of 3.1, which is the best gauge of actual home values. The median sales price for new units—\$448,524—grew even higher with an increase of 14.2 percent as new construction continues to produce higher value homes. The increase in sale prices was evident through most housing types. Single-family detached home prices increased by 4.8 percent while attached home prices increased 0.7 percent. The multifamily category also increased in 2016. The report, which also highlights emerging trends in the county and provides data for each municipality, is available in MCPC's online data portal at [www.montcopa.org/planningdataportal](http://www.montcopa.org/planningdataportal).



## Thirteen Municipalities Receive Montco 2040 Implementation Grants

The Montgomery County Commissioners have awarded Montco 2040 Implementation Grants to 13 municipalities in the county for the 2017 cycle of the Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program. The grants, which total \$1,040,000, are aimed at implementing the county's comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. The grant program is intended to assist municipalities in making targeted physical improvements that achieve real progress toward the goals of the plan and the plan's themes of

Connected Communities, Sustainable Places, and Vibrant Economy.

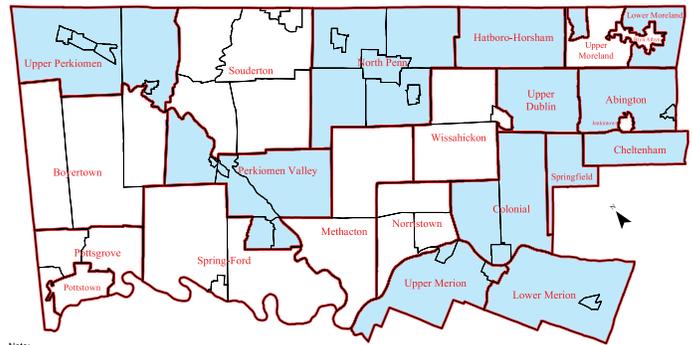
Initiated in 2016, the program has awarded more than \$2 million to projects in Montgomery County and continues to grow in popularity. Since all of this year's funds have been awarded in the first round, a potential second round of funding in 2017 will no longer be scheduled. The 13



projects that received grants in 2017 are highlighted below. [Click here](#) for more on the Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program and all of the grant recipients.

- Cheltenham - Elkins Park Wayfinding Signage Project
- Horsham - Drescher Road Sidewalks at the Pennsylvania Business Campus Project
- Jenkintown - Pedestrian and Gateway Enhancements Project
- Lansdale - Whites Road Park Streambank Improvements Project
- Lower Gwynedd - Carriages Trail Connection Project
- Pottstown - King Street Pedestrian Crossing and Bicycle Project
- Schwenksville - Main Street Pedestrian Plaza Project
- Upper Dublin - Fort Washington Cross County Trail and Road Diet Project
- Upper Gwynedd - Lighting at Pickleball Courts Project
- Upper Salford - Schirk-Hutt and Buckman Trail Project
- West Norriton - Betzwood Park Trailhead Project
- Whitpain - Township Line and Walton Road Pedestrian Crossing Project
- Worcester - Defford Road Park and Connection to Center Point Shoppes Project

## School Districts with an MCPC Enrollment Projection Study since 2013



Note:  
 Boyertown District includes the following Berks County municipalities: Bally, Bechtelsville, Boyertown, Colebrookdale, Douglass, Earl and Washington.  
 North Penn District includes portions of Hilltown and New Britain Townships in Bucks County.  
 Souderton District includes the Bucks County portion of Telford Borough.  
 Spring-Ford District includes Spring City Borough in Chester County.  
 Upper Perkiomen District includes Hereford Township in Berks County.

## MCPC Completes Two More School District Enrollment Projection Studies

MCPC continues to perform school enrollment projection studies for many of our school districts. Most recently, we completed projections for the Perkiomen Valley and North Penn School Districts. This brings the total to 15 studies completed under our School District Enrollment Planning Services. The service, which was initiated in 2013 and is performed under a community planning assistance contract, assists school districts in planning for the future. Some of our earliest clients have already come back for updates to their original study. We have now worked with 12 of the county's 22 districts. By providing this service, we are able to apply our expertise in the demographics and development trends in the county and use valuable county data to bolster our projections and insight for each district. At the same time, we get a great return on doing the work by learning about the issues facing each district and how land use and demographic changes have real effects on families, governing bodies, and taxpayers. [Click here](#) for more information on MCPC's School District Enrollment Planning Services and to view some of the completed studies.



*Perkiomen Valley High School*



# Stepping Out

Three Walkability Webinars for the Philadelphia Region

## Register Today!

### June 23 – Free Webinar: Education and Outreach to Promote Walkability

We still have a few spaces left for this informative webinar, which is the final webinar in a series of three that have focused on why walking matters and how municipalities are tackling walkability challenges. The webinar, which takes place from 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., will address how we can best reach out to the groups that need walkability the most. It is appropriate for anyone getting started on the walking path but is particularly suited for municipal employees as well as elected and appointed officials. We are not hosting this webinar at a location, so please plan on viewing this from your home or office. The webinar offers 1.0 CM credit for professional planners. [Online registration and more information on the webinar series.](#)

## Sharing Information at Earth Day Celebrations

MCPC staff took part in several community Earth Day celebrations to promote planning and discuss the future of the county. The events offered great opportunities to engage in conversation and share information.

- Janet Arcuicci, AICP, Senior Multimodal Transportation Planner; Henry Stroud, AICP, Trail Program Manager; Donna Caramenico, Recycling Associate; and Rita McKelvey, Communications Coordinator, spoke with many interested students and community members who stopped by the MCPC table at Earth Day celebrations at the Montgomery County Community College's Blue Bell campus and the Pottstown campus. They shared information on Bike Montco, Walk Montco, our renewable energy series, the green parking lots guidebook, Montco recycling information and events, and more.
- Mike Narcowich, AICP, Principal Planner II, and Brian Olszak, Planner II, participated at the International Spring Festival at the North Penn High School in Lansdale. They spoke to many people about the future of Lansdale Borough and asked for feedback on the three most important topics that should be addressed in the Lansdale comprehensive plan.



*Visitors to MCPC's exhibit table learn about Bike Montco, recycling, and other county topics at the Earth Day celebration at the Montgomery County Community College's West Campus.*

- Lauren Van Dyk, Community Planner, participated in Ambler EarthFest. She provided information on stormwater management best practices and the proposed Butler Avenue pocket park design. She created an interactive display that demonstrated stormwater filtration when using porous paver demonstration.



*Children participate in MCPC's interactive displays during "Narbearth" Day.*

- Lauren Van Dyk and Sarah Richardsen, Planner II, took part in "Narbearth" Day. Visitors to the MCPC exhibit table were asked to describe how they get to school, the library, the movies, and the park in Narberth. They placed icons representing walking, driving, taking a school bus, biking, and skateboarding, etc. on a poster. Lauren and Sarah also provided handouts on safe walking guidelines and encouraged the youngest visitors to play with toy cars, buses, and people when discussing how to cross the road safely.

## Celebrating National Bike Month

### Bike to Work Day

MCPC staff enjoyed celebrating Bike to Work Day with other riders while bicycling to the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association event at Valley Forge National Historical Park. Thanks to all of the people who worked so hard to make the event successful. Also thanks to our great county parks staff who do an excellent job maintaining the popular Schuylkill River Trail!



*Promoting the Montgomery County Trail Challenge*

### Montco Trail Challenge

MCPC staff was out along the Perkiomen Trail on a sunny Saturday in May to promote the Montgomery County Trail Challenge and the Bike Montco plan. [The Montco Trail Challenge](#), which runs until December 3, 2017, is a family-friendly way to encourage physical activity while connecting residents with the county's parks, trails, and historic sites. Thirteen Montgomery County trails are part of the 2017 challenge. The trails connect greenways, waterways, and heritage corridors throughout the county. In addition to the 13 trails, participants can visit an additional two trails, parks, or county historic sites to receive credit toward an achievement level (Explorer, Adventurer, or Trailblazer) in the challenge. Participants do not need to walk or bike the entire trail to get credit for the challenge. Happy trails to you!

### Bike Montco Workshops

Approximately 30 people attended Bike Montco open house workshops on May 23 and 24 in Skippack and Upper Dublin. Participants visited a series of displays that offered an opportunity to vote on bicycling issues. They also could place a dot on the county map to indicate destinations they would like to be able to safely bicycle to in their community and beyond. They also were invited to complete a survey and to give additional comments. We're still looking for input on Bike Montco, which will be the county's new bicycle mobility plan. The plan will recommend key policies for bicycle safety, recommend bicycle facilities, and highlight implementation opportunities and funding. Tell us what you think about bicycling in the county at [www.montcopa.org/BikeMontco](http://www.montcopa.org/BikeMontco).

## Focusing on Farming in Montco

### Another Farm Permanently Preserved in Montco

The Mashintonio #2 Farm was permanently preserved on June 1, 2017 under the [Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Program](#). The 90-acre grain farm is located on Hoffmansville Road in New Hanover Township. This newest farm brings the total to 159 farms and 9,351 acres preserved under the program, which purchases agricultural easements from productive farms in Montgomery County. When the easement is sold, the owner keeps the land, but no longer has the right to develop the property for non-farm uses. The land must remain farmed in perpetuity. The farmer may sell the land, but the new owner must continue to farm the land as well.

### Shop at a Local Farmers' Market!

Most of the farmers' markets in Montgomery County are now open for the 2017 season! These markets, which offer the freshest produce available and a variety of goods, provide an opportunity to buy great local products. We've compiled a list of 12 farmers' markets in the county where you can shop. The list includes the location, dates and hours of operation, contact information, and the website address for each market. Visit a farmers' market in the county to support local farms and businesses and to bring healthful food choices home to your family! [List of Farmers' markets](#).

### Farm Board Hits the Road to Tour Farms

The Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, along with MCPC staff, conducted a tour of the farms that were appraised for the 2017 round of applications under the farmland preservation program. The tour consisted of 13 farms in 11 municipalities. The board will make its recommendations public at the July farm board meeting. There currently are 158 farms preserved in Montgomery County under the county's [farmland preservation program](#). These farms total over 9,200 acres.



*Touring farms in the county are (standing L-R) Scott France, Section Chief; County Planning; farm board member Art Bustard; farm board chair Jonathan Rinde, Esq.; farm board member Stephen Quigley; farm board member Brett Altman; MCPC Executive Director Jody Holton; and Assistant County Solicitor John Marlatt. Front row (L-R) Danielle Weiden, Senior Farmland Preservation Administrator, and Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Assistant Section Chief; County Planning.*

## MCPC Staff News

### Janet Arcuicci and Henry Stroud Receive Awards

Congratulations to Janet Arcuicci, AICP, Senior Multimodal Transportation Planner, and Henry Stroud, AICP, Trail Program Manager, who recently received a Top TDM (Transportation Demand Management) Professional award from the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association. The award is presented to ambitious leaders under 40 in the transportation industry who are working to find creative solutions to improve our quality of life through engineering, planning, marketing campaigns, and the development of commuting alternatives.



*Janet Arcuicci and Henry Stroud*

### Meet Chloe Maryam Mohr, MCPC's New Community Planner

Chloe Maryam Mohr is excited to be a part of the vibrant and varied life of Montgomery County as a community planner at MCPC. Chloe grew up in Philadelphia and has lived in several places around the region. She has always loved parks, libraries, sidewalks, schools, trails, and other community amenities and institutions that enrich our lives and connect us to each other. Chloe has a Master's Degree in Community and Regional Planning from Temple University and worked in sustainability planning and local zoning before joining MCPC. She also has experience working for and serving on the board of several small non-profit organizations. When she's not at work, she enjoys playing for, teaching, and dancing at family barn dances and taking part in other kinds of participatory dance, music, and song.



*Chloe Maryam Mohr*



*Sarah Richardsen*

### Sarah Richardsen Recognized as Volunteer of the Month

Sarah Richardsen, Planner II, a Young Members leader with the Delaware Valley Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), was recognized as Volunteer of the Month. According to the AMC, Sarah, who was nominated by her peers, recently served the Young Members program by filling

in for the program chair, has represented the chapter at the Young Member inter-chapter retreat, and has volunteered to help increase Philadelphia resident participation in the chapter. Well done Sarah!



Montgomery County Planning Commission  
P.O. Box 311, Norristown, PA 19404-0311

Montgomery County Board of Commissioners  
Valerie A. Arkoosh, MD, MPH, *Chair*  
Kenneth E. Lawrence, Jr., *Vice Chair*  
Joseph C. Gale, *Commissioner*

Planning Commission Board Members  
Steven Kline, *Chair*  
Dulcie F. Flaharty, *Vice Chair*  
Robert E. Blue, Jr.  
Jill Blumhardt  
David L. Cohen, AICP  
Scott Exley  
Charles J. Tornetta  
Rev. John H. West, III  
Jody L. Holton, AICP, *Executive Director*