

PLANNING PERSPECTIVES



Focusing on Planning in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

OCTOBER 2017—Volume 15, Issue 3

Meet Our Newest MCPC Board Member!

John J. Ernst, AIA joined the Montgomery County Planning Commission Board in September. John is the Assistant Borough Manager of Lansdale Borough and also serves as the Director of Code Enforcement. In his capacity at Lansdale, John has been instrumental in development projects such as the SEPTA Parking Garage, Madison Parking Lot, and the borough



municipal complex as well as the county's Liberty Bell Trail expansion project. He also serves as the representative on the Lansdale Borough Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, Code Committee, and Economic Development Committee. Prior to joining Lansdale, John earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Temple University and worked as an architect with several regional firms, primarily designing educational and religious facilities. He still holds a license to practice in Pennsylvania to design and develop functional, safe, and sustainable construction projects. As a current member of the American Institute of Architects, he uses his skills working closely with a variety of organizations and professionals. John is honored to represent Lansdale Borough and looks forward to continuing his involvement with the county to share resources, address opportunities, provide guidance, and coordinate action.

Montgomery County Wins Diamond Award for Providing Commuting Alternatives

On September 18, Montgomery County was awarded the highest level Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Award by the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association. The Diamond level award was given in recognition of the county's work in providing sustainable commuting alternatives, such as public transit and biking to work, to those who live and work in the county. "This award recognizes the teamwork and creative thinking of our staff. It represents the diligent efforts they made in the past, the ongoing push to make our communities connected and sustainable, and the bright future for those who live and work in Montgomery County," said Dr. Val Arkoosh, Chair, Montgomery County Commissioners. MCPC and other county departments, such as Assets & Infrastructure,

(L to R) Executive Director of Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association Rob Henry, Montgomery County Planning Commission Transportation Section Chief Matt Edmond, Montgomery County Planning Commission Principal Environmental Planner Jon Lesber, Action News Reporter and master of ceremonies for the awards Tamala Edwards, Montgomery County Commissioner Chair Dr. Val Arkoosh, and Vice Chair Ken Laurence, Jr.



Information Technology, and Human Resources, collaborated to achieve these successful efforts. MCPC played a vital role in the process by reviewing the award requirements in 2016 and recognizing the county was already on pace to meet some of them, such as investing directly in transit and incorporating transportation management into short-term and long-term plans for the county, as outlined in the county's comprehensive plan, [Montco 2040: A Shared Vision](#). County staff pulled together to meet the remaining requirements, such as making concerted efforts to have employees become more aware of commuting alternatives. Building upon its success, the county will continue to strive to be more sustainable in its operations to help county employees, residents, and visitors travel in an easier, safer, and more sustainable manner.

Another Farm Permanently Preserved in Montco

Montgomery County has added another farm to its growing list of farms permanently preserved under the [Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Program](#). The newest



Soybean and corn crops - Muscara farm

preserved farm belongs to Mary Muscara, a 52-acre farm located in Towamencin Township. The Muscara farm grows corn, wheat, and hay and is surrounded by several other preserved farms. The preservation of these farms helps to implement the land use vision plan in Montgomery County's award-winning comprehensive plan, [Montco 2040: A Shared Vision](#). The county's farmland preservation program, which began in 1990, has preserved 160 farms totaling 9,282 acres in the county. Farming has not only played a significant role in Montgomery County's history, it is also integral to the county's sustainable future. The preservation of farmland and farming is important for the economy, environment, and local food availability in the county. For more information on this important program, visit www.montcopa.org/FarmlandProgram.



Ambler focus area

Bike Montco Moving Forward

Lots of work is being done to complete the [Bike Montco](#) plan. MCPC staff has collected over 2,000 surveys that provide information on bicycle preferences, and numerous other helpful comments on bicycling challenges and opportunities have been submitted on an online Wiki map over the past six months. This information, along with data gathered by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) which measures potential stress for bicyclists using various roads, past crash data, trail locations, and other information, will be used to shape a future bicycle network. In establishing the network, the plan will also address the needed

improvements to make it safer for all levels of bicyclists. The development of these improvements, such as bike lanes, will involve work by all of the road owners such as the county, PennDOT, and local municipalities. The plan will also include policy recommendations to address a variety of bicycle mobility goals established in the plan.

Throughout August and early September, the Bike Montco Plan Advisory Committee assisted the staff and consultant, Traffic Planning and Design, Inc. (TPD), in performing field views of four focus areas in the county where conceptual plans for specific bicycle mobility improvements will be developed. These four areas include Souderton and Telford Boroughs as examples of town-scale bicycling, Ambler Borough demonstrating bicycling to transit, Upper Merion and the Village of Valley Forge showing how to connect to trails, and the Montgomery County Community College showing bicycle access to institutions. The conceptual designs for bicycle mobility improvements in these areas will be incorporated into the Bike Montco plan. This phase of the plan was funded through a Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) Grant provided by the DVRPC.

The draft Bike Montco plan is expected to be completed at the end of the year. At that time, the county will conduct meetings and offer opportunities for additional public input. Plan adoption is expected in the spring of 2018.



MCPC Highlights Progress on Turnpike Corridor Reinvestment Project

MCPC recently released a [2017 Progress Update](#) for the Turnpike Corridor Reinvestment Project plan. The update shows how state agencies are already funding new interchanges and local governments have already begun to rezone their office parks. The private sector is also responding to the momentum created by these transportation investments and municipal actions.

The plan, released in 2015 by MCPC, is part of the groundbreaking Turnpike Corridor Reinvestment Project. The goal of this project is to reinvigorate the business parks along the turnpike from the Valley Forge interchange to the Willow Grove interchange. The plan makes a business case for improved turnpike access, mixed-use zoning, and new interchange investment.

The potential conversion of the PA Turnpike to cashless tolling by 2020 creates the opportunity to modify and modernize existing interchanges while providing an occasion to rethink how residents and workers access I-276. Combined with the prospect of introducing mixed-use zoning in parts of seven reinvestment areas totaling 10,500 acres between the Valley Forge and Willow Grove exits, the potential exists to reestablish Montgomery County's older office parks as premiere office centers in the Philadelphia region. The 2017 update and more on the project can be found at www.montcopa.org/TurnpikeCorridorProject.

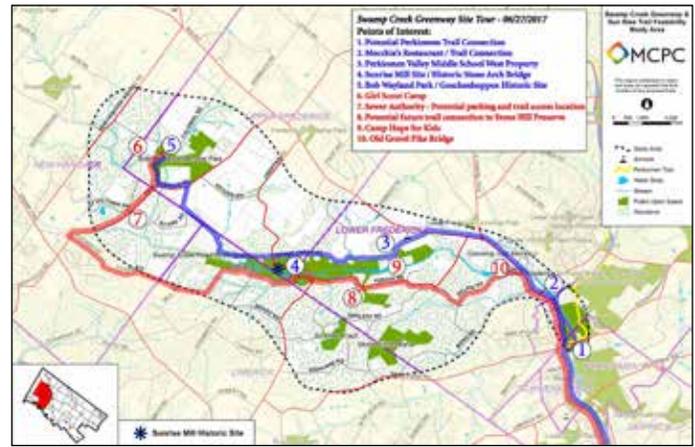
MCPC On Tour



611 Corridor Tour

In July, the Montgomery County Planning Commission Board members enjoyed an interesting tour of the 611 corridor. They were joined by all three commissioners, local economic development professionals, municipal staff, and local elected officials. The event began at Beth Shalom Synagogue where participants boarded a SEPTA bus to tour sites and make stops in Willow Grove, Abington, Jenkintown, and Cheltenham. Along the way, the group met up with municipal officials, developers, and non-profit organization representatives who helped to make projects in these communities happen. Upon its return to Beth Shalom Synagogue, the group toured the synagogue and the board conducted its monthly meeting. Tour details are below:

- Willow Grove
 - TOD proposals (PSU College Station student housing and two multifamily projects)
 - Memorial Park Drive, riparian restoration and trail
- Abington
 - Abington High School riparian buffer
 - Penn State - Abington dorms
 - Susquehanna/Old York intersection and redevelopment plan, bike lanes on Valley Road
- Jenkintown
 - Walking tour of Lindy properties around Town Square
 - York Road streetscape
- Cheltenham
 - Elkins Park station
 - Creekside Co-op

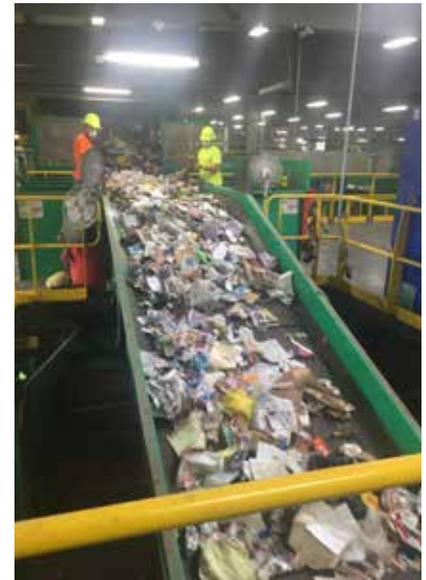


Open Space Board Tour

On June 27, the Montgomery County Open Space Board and Commissioner Chair Dr. Val Arkoosh toured the Swamp Creek Greenway/Sunrise Trail Study Area. The tour, guided by MCPC, included the Sunrise Mill property, Bob Wayland Park, and the Old Gravel Pike stone arch bridge. The tour was part of the [Swamp Creek Greenway & Sunrise Trail Feasibility Study](#), which is currently under way to study the feasibility of trails and to highlight conservation opportunities within the Swamp Creek drainage area. The feasibility study has included two public meetings to date. The next public meeting to review the draft plan of the feasibility study is expected to be held in January 2018.

Recycling Tour

Several MCPC board members and staff, along with municipal leaders, took a bus tour of the J.P. Mascaro & Sons Pioneer Crossing Landfill in Birdsboro in June. The landfill manager described the protective layers of lined landfills as well the systems that remove methane gas and leachate. The tour group visited the active cell at the top of the landfill to see trash trucks discharging their collections while landfill employees on heavy equipment arranged and compacted the new trash into the cell. Next, they took a walking tour of TotalRecycle, J.P. Mascaro & Sons state-of-the-art single-stream recycling processing center. Advanced sorting technology is used, along with hands-on quality control, to separate the mixed recyclables coming from homes and businesses into material bales to be sold into manufacturing processes. It was very helpful to see and understand where community trash and [recycling](#) goes and how it is handled.





Celebrating PARK(ing) Day 2017 in Norristown

Many Montgomery County residents and visitors stopped by to celebrate PARK(ing) Day in Norristown on September 15. The event, which took place from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Swede Street in front of the courthouse, involved MCPC, the county health department, the Municipality of Norristown, and Capt'n Chucky's food truck transforming metered parking spaces into fun public spaces. Participants had opportunities to play games, receive information, voice their opinions, win prizes, and pick up giveaways. MCPC created a livable community, featuring depictions of well-designed townhouses, a bike path, and a park space for visitors to enjoy. Staff gave out free lemonade and encouraged visitors to voice their opinion about bicycling by completing a Bike Montco survey. Norristown provided a "tailgate" space for visitors to relax, play games, enjoy music, and receive giveaways. The health department offered fun games, coloring, and sidewalk chalk. Visitors could purchase lunch from Capt'n Chucky's Crab Cake Co. food truck and enjoy it in an al fresco dining area. PARK(ing) Day is celebrated worldwide and involves individuals, groups, and businesses transforming metered parking spaces into public spaces to call attention to the need for more urban open space, encourage discussion on how public space is created and allocated, and to improve the quality of urban human habitat.

Join Us!

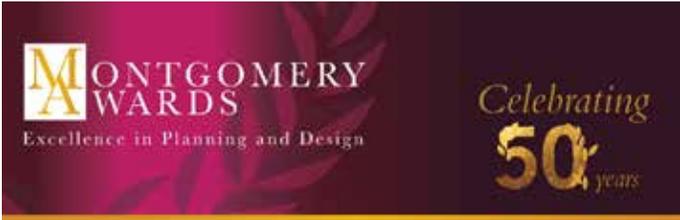
Register for "Building Better Townhouse Communities"

Join us on Wednesday, October 25, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the Upper Dublin Township building for [Building Better Townhouse Communities](#). Come learn about how careful attention to site planning, design, and architecture is needed to ensure successful townhouse projects. Townhouses have become an important housing choice in many communities within the county. Whether built as infill developments within older neighborhoods or as large development sites in suburban communities, townhouses can be designed to be attractive housing options in your community. This event will



Williamson Court - Lansdale Borough

address several typical elements in townhouse developments including designs for front yards, driveways, landscaping, pedestrian amenities, trails, road circulation, visitor parking, and other considerations. A highlight will be the premiere of a new guidebook containing design standards that can be used for all types of townhouse developments. This free event is being provided as part of [Planning Smarter Montco 2017](#), a Montgomery County initiative offering planning education and outreach, and corresponds to the Sustainable Places theme contained in [Montco 2040: A Shared Vision](#), Montgomery County's comprehensive plan. [Register today!](#)



Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Montgomery Awards!

Join us as we honor our 2017 Montgomery Award winners and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the [Montgomery Awards Program](#). This annual program recognizes the best in planning, design, and advocacy in Montgomery County. It promotes awareness of outstanding design and innovative planning in our communities by awarding successful land developments, revitalization efforts, open space enhancements, environmental sustainability, and transportation improvements. The awards program will take place on Wednesday, November 15, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Elmwood Park Zoo, 1661 Harding Boulevard, Norristown. The zoo is hosting our event and invites all attending to explore the zoo from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. At 4:00 p.m., there will be a reception where you'll have an opportunity to mingle with the award winners, municipal officials, developers, planning design professionals, and others. The awards presentation will begin at 5:00 p.m. In addition to our award winners, individuals who have completed the series of planning courses we sponsor will also be recognized. [Click here to RSVP.](#)

Planning Smarter Montco 2017 Events



Walk Montco Webinar Series Available Online

Many planners, municipal leaders and staff, county residents, and others tuned into our Walk Montco Webinar Series, which ran from April through June. The series, which was organized in conjunction with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, offered an opportunity for participants to learn more about how to make walking a safe and attractive mobility option in communities. Check out the webinars, which are listed below:

- [Why Walking Matters \(70 minutes\)](#)
- [Design Solutions for Walkability Challenges \(77 minutes\)](#)
- [Education and Outreach to Promote Walkability \(65 minutes\)](#)



Great Turnout for Our Village at Valley Forge Event

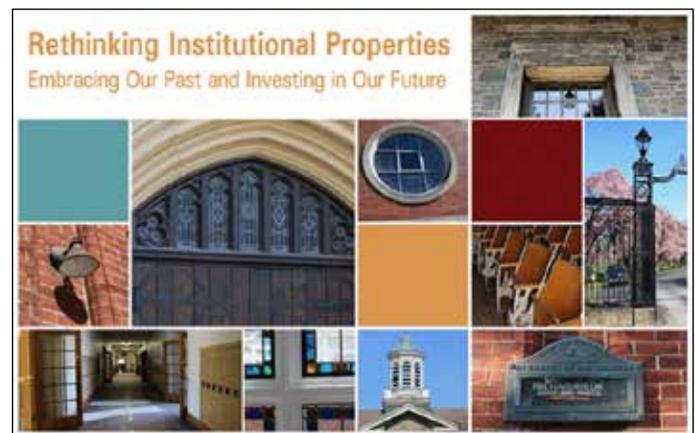
We had a large audience for *Planning on Two Feet — Eat, Sleep, Play, and Work all Within a Short Walk!* The event, which took place on June 22 and involved several [speakers](#) and a walking tour, focused on the vision, planning, design, and community impact of the Village at Valley Forge in King of Prussia. The tour of the village included innovative apartments, an active adult community, a Main Street with restaurants and outdoor cafés, various retail stores, Wegman’s grocery store, stacked brownstone townhouses, and the regional branch of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Special thanks to Dennis Maloomian, President of Realen Homes (site developer); Rob Loeper, Upper Merion Township Planner; Eric Goldstein, Executive Director of the King of Prussia District (KOP-BID); Pete Sikora, Development Manager of The Bozzuto Group; and Kenneth Macklin, Property Manager of Indigo 301 (The Bozzuto Group).

Staff News

Jody Holton Appointed Chair of PennDOT Transportation Advisory Committee



Jody Holton, MCPC Executive Director, was appointed as Chair of the PennDOT Transportation Advisory Committee in July. Jody had been on the committee, which assists the State Transportation Commission (STC) and the Secretary of Transportation in achieving the goals of the Pennsylvania Department of transportation, since April 2017.



Institutional Adaptive Reuse Guidebook Highlighted in PA Borough News Magazine

MCPC authored an article highlighting adaptive reuse of institutional properties, which was published in the July issue of the *Pennsylvania Borough News* magazine. The article, “Finding Opportunity in Vacant Buildings,” focuses on the reuse opportunities that occur when institutional properties, including places of worship, schools, and government buildings, face closure or close. These often iconic buildings, typically located in the heart of our communities, can be repurposed and transformed while maintaining many of their original architectural features. The article highlights the benefits of adaptive reuse and provides tools for success, citing the best practices included in our guidebook, [Rethinking Institutional Properties: Embracing Our Past and Investing in Our Future](#). It also features Narberth Place, a successful adaptive reuse project in Montgomery County. MCPC is always available to come out to communities to present the guidebook and speak about institutional adaptive reuse. If interested, contact [Brian Olszak](#) at 610-278-3737.

MCPC Promotions

Congratulations to our four [MCPC staff](#) members who recently received well-deserved promotions. Jamie Magaziner, a community planner; Matthew Popek, a transportation planner; and Dan Farina Jr., a county planner, all were promoted to Planner II. Anastasia Somers was promoted to Principal Graphic Designer II. Keep up the good work everyone!



(L - R) Jody Holton, MCPC Executive Director; Jamie Magaziner; Matthew Popek, and Dan Farina Jr.

Best Wishes to Holly Mager

Holly Mager, Section Chief: Design and Graphics, retired on August 25 after almost 30 years at MCPC. Holly supervised the Design Section and the Graphics Section. As a landscape architect, she was skilled at creating a variety of conceptual designs and plans. During her tenure, she wrote thousands of subdivision and land development reviews, working in every community in Montgomery County. Holly was instrumental in creating the [Planning by Design](#) series and managed the [Montgomery Awards](#), an annual program that recognizes excellence in planning and design. Recent accomplishments included working on the [Sustainable Green Parking Lots](#) guidebook and [Rethinking Institutional Properties: Embracing Our Past and Investing in Our Future](#). In her retirement, Holly plans to travel, enjoy gardening, and spend time with family and friends. We wish Holly the very best in her retirement. Enjoy every moment!



Holly Mager (seated in the center) is surrounded by former and present MCPC coworkers who came out with many others to wish her a happy retirement.



Goodbye Brandon!

Brandon Rudd, Senior Community Planner, recently left MCPC to return to Ohio. He will be working at the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, which is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Cincinnati region. During Brandon's five years at MCPC, he worked in Lower Salford, Lower Frederick, Worcester, West Norriton, Upper Dublin, Springfield, Red Hill, the Indian Valley Region, and Horsham. Major projects included subdivision and land development ordinances for Red Hill and Lower Salford, development of the walkability audits that led to [Walk Montco](#), Center Point Village Zoning, Horsham Business Parks Zoning, West Main Street Vision for West Norriton, and the update to the Indian Valley Regional Comprehensive Plan. Brandon commented that the thing he liked most about working at MCPC was the great people, both fellow staff members and those he worked with in his assigned communities. "I really enjoyed my time at MCPC and felt like I learned a lot while making a positive difference in Montgomery County communities. I'll miss all of my friends there and hope to make it back to visit," he added. Brandon will enjoy being closer in proximity to his family, including a niece who will be turning one in October. We wish him the best of luck.



Daniel Berger



Dani Blumenthal



Colin Richardson

Thanks Interns!

MCPC was pleased to have three excellent interns, all interested in a planning career, volunteering their time and

knowledge while gaining practical planning experience. The interns worked on a variety of projects, and their assistance was greatly appreciated. This summer's interns were:

- Daniel Berger of Phoenixville, who is working on a bachelor's degree from Ursinus College. He is passionate about planning and is pursuing a career as a planner or information technology specialist.
- Dani Blumenthal from Lower Moreland, who is seeking a bachelor's degree in urban planning and design from Rutgers, New Brunswick. She would like a career in the field of planning and is very interested in improving the design of communities to make them more bike and pedestrian friendly.
- Colin Richardson of Wynnewood, who is pursuing a Bachelor's of Science degree from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. He would like to work in the environmental field to improve sustainability of communities.

Thanks for all of your great work everyone!



Planning Around the World

MCPC was pleased to host Smitha Mysore, a professor of architecture and planning at the SJB School of Architecture and Planning in Bangalore, India, and her 11 undergraduate architecture students. Smitha received a M.S. in Community and Regional Planning from Temple University where she was a classmate of several of our staff members. While in the United States, her students will be working on a brownfields redevelopment project in North Kensington (Philadelphia). Our staff enjoyed speaking with this great group of students about important planning issues in Montgomery County.



Montgomery County Planning Commission
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