

PLANNING PERSPECTIVES



Focusing on Planning in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

DECEMBER 2017—Volume 15, Issue 4



Congratulations to Our 2017 Montgomery Award Winners!

This year, the Montgomery Awards Program celebrated its 50th anniversary. The annual Montgomery Awards recognize the best in planning, design, and advocacy in Montgomery County. Since 1967, the program has presented 203 awards that acknowledge the outstanding efforts and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals in achieving excellence. This year, MCPC partnered with the Montgomery County Conservation District to present an Environmental Stewardship Award as part of the Montgomery Awards. This award recognizes a project that exemplifies the practices of environmental stewardship and conservation for water and soil quality. We honored our 2017 winners on November 15 at an awards presentation at the Elmwood Park Zoo in Norristown. The seven award recipients, highlighted below, demonstrate the great quality of development taking place in Montgomery County and the value of planning advocacy and environmental stewardship. For more on the program, a list of all award recipients, a 50-year retrospective slideshow, a searchable database, and a new awards story map, visit www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards.

Bryn Mawr Village

Lower Merion Township

[Bryn Mawr Village](#) received an award for creative vision, effective site design, and successful collaboration. This impressive adaptive reuse project, a result of decade-long planning efforts and development initiatives, transformed a vacant, underutilized site located in the heart of the Bryn Mawr business district into a vibrant mixed-use center. The project resulted in over 52,000 square feet of retail/office space including 35,000 square feet of new retail space

and 17,000 square feet of office. Redevelopment involved a new 30,200-square-foot building and the adaptive reuse and expansion of a prominent garage. This new, appealing retail and office space, which successfully created a more unified business district, serves as an economic catalyst for the community.



Crossways Bridge & Trail

Lower Gwynedd and Whitpain Townships

[Crossways Bridge & Trail](#) received an award for innovative planning, environmentally sensitive design, and extensive collaboration. This successful multiuse trail, which connects people and nature by providing opportunities for walking, running, bicycling, and horseback riding, is a critical link to the regional trail system. The project created a 1.3-mile, 8-foot-wide paved multipurpose trail that connects Lower Gwynedd's Penllyn Woods Park, the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association's Crossways Preserve, and the Montgomery County Community College to the county's Green Ribbon Trail. The wooded trail navigates diverse habitats and different trail surfaces, including an elevated boardwalk. This appealing and inviting community asset is an excellent example of how collaborative efforts can result in an enhanced public amenity that is certain to be a regional treasure.



Lansdale Municipal Complex

Lansdale Borough

[Lansdale Municipal Complex](#) received an award for creative planning and vision, exceptional redevelopment, and successful community engagement. This stunning, state-of-the-art complex combines municipal services for sustainability and efficiency and preserves the heritage of the community while embracing the future. This project successfully preserved portions of the historic borough hall and constructed a new 35,000-square-foot contemporary municipal complex, which was awarded LEED Silver Certification. Its location will offer future access to SEPTA bus service and the proposed Liberty Bell Trail, ultimately creating a pedestrian corridor. This attractive and welcoming community center demonstrates the borough's revitalization vision, respect of its heritage, and a commitment to community reinvestment and sustainability.



Perkiomen School

Pennsburg Borough

[Perkiomen School](#) received an award for creative vision, extensive planning, and a sustained commitment to growth and transformation. Over the years, this small, private institution has achieved many campus enhancements to continue moving forward into the future. The school developed two master plans that have resulted in a new academic center, renovation of existing buildings, new athletic facilities, a major landscaping program, an award-winning meditation garden, improved pedestrian and

vehicle circulation, and improved faculty housing, student dormitories, and dining hall. The Perkiomen School demonstrates how excellent planning and persistence over time can achieve an important vision. Through foresight and many successful accomplishments, this prestigious educational landmark in the community has created an appealing twenty-first century campus and continues to focus on a sustainable future.



SEPTA Lansdale Parking Garage & 9th Street Station

Lansdale Borough

[SEPTA's Lansdale Parking Garage & 9th Street Station](#) received an award for successful collaboration, significant expansion of transit facilities, and positive community reinvestment. The project created a new regional rail station and a new 4-level parking structure with an overpass to carry pedestrians over the rail tracks into an anticipated TOD development across from the Lansdale Station. The 680-space garage complements the historic Lansdale Station, reflects the borough's railroad and industrial heritage, blends with the surrounding community, and was designed to meet the sustainable standards of the Green Parking Council. The 9th Street Station features an attractive steel entrance canopy, a paved plaza, sidewalks, accessible high-level platforms, heated waiting shelter, benches, real-time parking and train schedule information, bicycle facilities, electric vehicle charging spaces, landscaping, and stormwater management. These important transportation projects, which will bring economic development and job creation to Lansdale, are an asset to the community and the entire county.

Abington Township Environmental Advisory Council

Abington Township

The [Abington Township Environmental Advisory Council \(EAC\)](#), a volunteer-led group committed to improving sustainability in the township, received a 2017 Planning Advocate Award. Since 1974, the EAC, which collaborates with local partners, has offered public events, volunteer opportunities, and educational programs that focus on best practices for protecting and preserving the environment. The outstanding leadership of the EAC has resulted in Abington Township receiving 3-STAR Community certification from



the STAR Community Rating System™, the nation's leading certification program for evaluating local sustainability. The award was the direct result of a yearlong collaboration with 50 community partners—an effort led by EAC member Cakky Braun-Evans. Cakky formulated a framework to use the STAR model to craft a sustainability plan and create a sustainability culture throughout the township that benefits citizens, enhances Abington's reputation for sustainability, and attracts future investment.



Thompson Lexus Willow Grove Upper Moreland Township

[Thomas Lexus Willow Grove](#) received a 2017 Environmental Stewardship Award for outstanding comprehensive and well-maintained conservation practices that successfully improve water quality and stormwater runoff and help to protect the Pennypack Creek. Mill Creek, a tributary to the Pennypack Creek, runs through the southwest corner of the property and has had a history of flooding homes and a shopping center downstream. The site has been designed so that rain will infiltrate through porous pavement and be filtered through attractively vegetated rain gardens, as well as be captured in underground detention basins. This provides significant water quality improvement in addition to reduction in runoff to Mill Creek. The exemplary conservation practices in this project exceed the water quality and rate requirements imposed by ordinances and regulations and significantly benefit the watershed.



2018 Cycle of Montco 2040 Implementation Grants Now Open

The county is now accepting applications for the 2018 cycle of the [Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program](#). This cycle has an increased funding allotment of \$1.5 million. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2018. This is the third year of the program, which supports municipal projects that accomplish the goals of [Montco 2040: A Shared Vision](#), Montgomery County's comprehensive plan. A new focus category, Adaptation and Resiliency, has been created to address negative environmental changes through projects such as floodplain mitigation, streambank restoration, green streets, and community gardens. In addition, our categories for Walk Montco and Bike Montco and Support for Downtowns and Community Destinations are still open. As always, well-planned projects that address the goals of the Montco 2040 plan will be competitive in this grant program. To date, the program has provided 27 grants totaling over \$2 million throughout Montgomery County.



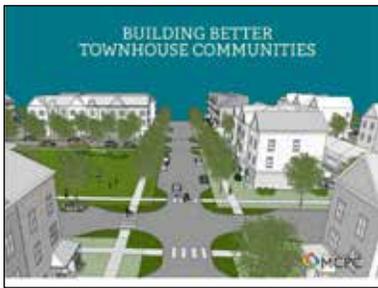
Federal, state, and local officials broke ground on December 7 for the third phase of the Lafayette Street Extension Project

Phase 3 of the Lafayette Street Extension Project Begins!

Groundbreaking for Phase 3 of the [Lafayette Street Extension Project](#) took place on December 7. This phase will reconstruct Lafayette Street between Barbadoes Street and Ford Street, widen the street and sidewalk, relocate part of the Schuylkill River Trail, and create a new trail hub in Norristown. This important project, which is considered the largest local infrastructure project in the Commonwealth, is an effort to improve highway access and mobility into downtown Norristown and Plymouth Township. It is being headed by the Montgomery County Planning Commission in association with PennDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the PA Turnpike Commission.

New Guidebook on Building Better Townhouse Communities

MCPC has created a new guidebook, *Building Better Townhouse Communities*. The guidebook contains design standards that can be used for all types of townhouse developments. It looks at the evolution of the townhouse, townhouse trends in Montgomery County, and the impacts of townhouse communities.



The guidebook, which was released at an October 25 event focused on the topic, details townhouse design elements and provides recommendations for best practices. Approximately 50 people attended the event to learn how careful attention to site planning, design, and architecture is needed to ensure successful townhouse projects. Several typical elements in townhouse developments, including designs for front yards, driveways, landscaping, pedestrian amenities, trails, road circulation, visitor parking, and other considerations, were discussed. Developers with experience in townhouse development offered their perspectives on the topic and cited examples from projects in which they were involved.

The county also spoke on the topic from the point of the view of the county's comprehensive plan. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions during a panel discussion. This event, provided as part of [Planning Smarter Montco 2017](#), corresponds to the Sustainable Places theme contained in [Montco 2040: A Shared Vision](#), the county's comprehensive plan.

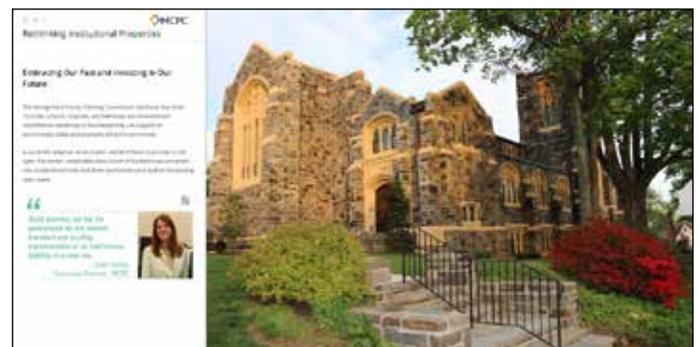


Valley Forge Business Center - West Norriton Township

MCPC Adds New Business Parks Inventory

MCPC compiles and continually updates data as it relates to [age-restricted housing](#), [multifamily and attached housing](#), and [shopping centers](#). We recently added a new [inventory of business parks](#). In our first year of tracking

business parks, we recorded over 45 million square feet devoted to office, industrial, or flex space. Going forward, indicators, such as decreasing vacancy and rising jobs, may lead to growth within this category. We annually update all of our inventories. Age-restricted housing has grown over the years and is likely to continue growing as the baby boomers age. In 2017, there were over 17,000 units spread over 113 developments across the county. Another category that has seen increasing rates of growth is multifamily and attached housing. In the last two years, 27 of these types of developments were constructed (11 multifamily and 16 single-family attached). The last inventory MCPC updates annually relates to shopping centers, which in 2017 contained over 29 million square feet of leasable space for retail, entertainment, and other uses. All of these inventories can be found in the [Montco Planning Data Portal](#).



New Story Maps Available

MCPC has added two more story maps to the county's online [map gallery](#), which provides information on a variety of topics through interactive maps, narrative text, images, and videos. The new story maps focus on the [Montgomery Awards](#), which recognize excellence in planning, design, and advocacy, and [Rethinking Institutional Properties: Embracing Our Past and Investing in Our Future](#), which looks at the adaptive reuse of institutional properties in the county. The [Montgomery Awards story map](#) allows users to see where award winners are located in the county. Winners can be searched by categories such as residential; nonresidential; municipal/organization programs and initiatives; redevelopment/infill; and park, recreation, open space, and environment. When the user clicks on a winner, an image, information, and a link to a profile on the winner are displayed. The [story map on rethinking institutional properties](#) provides narrative on the topic and a map showing where institutions have been successfully adapted in the county. It also provides case studies that are detailed through information, images, and videos. Other story map topics in the gallery include Arts and Culture, Commerce & Economic Development, Commercial, Shopping Centers, Transportation, Natural Features, Parks and Trails, and Residential.



MCPC at MCCC West Campus in Pottstown

Sharing Information at MCCC Sustainability Days

MCPC participated in Sustainability Day at both the Montgomery County Community College main campus in Blue Bell and the Pottstown campus in October. We enjoyed chatting with students and others who stopped by our table and sharing information on topics such as [Bike Montco](#), [Walk Montco](#), the [renewable energy series](#), the [Planning by Design](#) sustainable design issues, our [green parking lots guidebook](#), and [county recycling information](#).



Maggie Dobbs presenting at APA PA Conference

MCPC Presents at APA PA Annual Conference

MCPC planners took part in the APA PA Annual Conference in State College in October with two presentations:

Connecting with the Community: Maximizing Public Participation in Planning Initiatives

Mike Narcowich, Principal Planner II, and Maggie Dobbs, Planner II, joined with a member of a municipal diversity/outreach committee to share their ideas and varied methods on how to better engage the community, including efforts to draw underrepresented groups into the planning process. The session focused on challenges, rationale for methods used, and analysis of their effectiveness, as well as audience participation in sharing information about successful outreach methods.

Applying New GIS Mapping Tools Across Municipal Functions – Economic Development, Land Use, Asset Management and More

Maggie Dobbs, along with Graham Copeland, Economic Development Specialist for Upper Dublin Township, and Brian Berdel, CSM, Chief Information Officer of McMahon Associates, Inc., presented this topic, which focused on the work MCPC did with the ArcGIS [online interactive map](#) for the Fort Washington Office Park. This tool was designed to demonstrate the added value to parcels using the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program in the office park.



Creative Community Outreach

Eric Jarrell, Assistance Section Chief II: Community Planning, and Chloe Mohr, Community Planner, participated in Hatboro's Annual Holiday Parade on November 19 with a float featuring the Hatboro comprehensive plan process. This creative outreach opportunity offered a way for our staff to hand out postcards about the plan, a link to a community survey, and information on upcoming meetings.



Pattie E. B. Guttenplan, RLA, AICP

Welcome Back Pattie!

Pattie E.B. Guttenplan, RLA, AICP, has joined MCPC as Section Chief of Design Planning and Graphic Design. Pattie began her professional career at our commission shortly after graduating with a degree in Landscape Architecture from Penn State University. She has since spent the last 30 years working in land development and planning for

various engineering, architecture, and planning firms. She is looking forward to joining the awesome staff at MCPC and is excited to bring her experience gained from working in the private sector. Pattie, who hails from Muncy, Pennsylvania, is a resident of Hatfield Township. She volunteers for several organizations, including her church, a local school board, and the Boy Scouts of America. She enjoys cooking, singing, sewing, acting, and taking walks with her dog, not necessarily in that order.



Julia Detwiler



Jack Byerly

MCPC Welcomes Two Community Planners

We are pleased to welcome Community Planners Jack Byerly and Juli Detwiler to MCPC. Jack has a Master's Degree in City Planning, concentrating in land use and environmental planning, from University of Pennsylvania (PennDesign). In addition to conducting community planning projects in Philadelphia and Baltimore during graduate school, he has previously worked as a planner with PennPraxis, which is PennDesign's center for applied research, as well as with Philadelphia's Department of Parks and Recreation. Jack is an avid runner and looks forward to exploring the rich network of trails throughout Montgomery County. Julia is originally from California and received her Bachelor of Science in Biology from Ursinus College and a Master of Landscape Architecture from Temple University. She is a self-described "plant enthusiast" and has had several internships with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society prior to accepting this position. Julia enjoys creating artwork and spending time with her husband and dog.



Janet Arcuicci, AICP



Sarah Richardsen

Good Luck Janet and Sarah!

MCPC recently said goodbye to two excellent staff members: Janet Arcuicci, AICP, Senior Multimodal Transportation Planner, and Sarah Richardsen, Planner II. Janet, who was with MCPC for approximately 2.5 years, co-managed the [Bike Montco](#) project, designed a bus shelter program, and tracked grants. She enjoyed interacting with the stakeholders and the public as well as elected officials and county staff. Janet is moving to Lansing, Michigan to work for the Capital Area Transportation Authority. As a System Planner, she will work with area stakeholders on a transit-oriented development pilot project as well as plan future capital projects. Sarah Richardsen, who was part of MCPC's Design Section, was with MCPC for three years. She worked on several projects including [Rethinking Institutional Properties: Embracing Our Past and Investing in Our Future](#), the [Horsham Business Parks Master Plan](#), the [Main Street Schwenksville Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines](#), and park and gateway designs for municipalities including Jenkintown and Ambler. Sarah has taken a job as a City Planner with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. We thank Janet and Sarah for their excellent work at MCPC and wish them the very best in the future!



Many Thanks to MCPC Intern John Toner

John Toner, who has been an intern at MCPC since September 6, will be completing his internship in late December. John, who is from Fort Washington, is working on a Bachelor's Degree in Planning & Community Development from Temple University. He has been a great help in assisting with the [Bike Montco](#) plan by gathering and organizing data from public surveys and mapping specific bike routes throughout the county. He also

gathered information about other municipal bicycle plans. After his expected graduation in spring 2018, John plans to pursue a career in planning, focusing on preservation of open space and wildlife management since many of his hobbies include outdoor activities such as hunting, hiking, and fishing. Thanks for all of your hard work John!



MCPC Choir members in the back row are (L-R) Shane Greenburg, Robert Cartier, Crystal Gilchrist, Juliana Guarna, Matthew Popek, and in the front row (L-R) Jack Byerly, Barry Jeffries, Chloe Mohr, and Danielle Weiden

MCPC Has Talent!

Nine MCPC staff members showcased their vocal talents at this year's annual county holiday concert, which took place on December 13 on the grand staircase of the Montgomery County Courthouse. Our MCPC choir members were Jack Byerly, Community Planner; Robert Cartier, GIS Coordinator; Crystal Gilchrist, Principal Multimodal Transportation Planner; Shane Greenburg, Open Space Planner; Juliana Guarna, Principal Designer; Barry Jeffries, Senior Planner; Chloe Mohr, Community Planner; Matt Popek, Transportation Planner II; and Danielle Weiden, Farmland Preservation Administrator. Our singing group even had a solo at the festive concert!



Celebrating the Holidays

MCPC celebrated the holidays with a lunch at Dino's Pizza & Pasta in Bridgeport. We were entertained by the MCPC ensemble of the Montgomery County Court House Choir, who sang three songs for our group, making us act out the Twelve Days of Christmas! Later we enjoyed playing the White Elephant gift exchange game. But mostly, we enjoyed being together and sharing a good time. Happy holidays everyone!



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