

MONTGOMERY AWARDS

Planning Advocate
2017 Award Winner

Celebrating
50 years

Abington Township Environmental Advisory Council Abington Township

The Abington Township Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) is a dedicated volunteer-led group committed to improving sustainability in the township by offering community environmental programs. The EAC collaborates with local partners, including Abington Township staff, to promote awareness and build support. Since 1974, the EAC has offered public events, volunteer opportunities, and educational programs that focus on best practices for protecting and preserving the environment. Many of the programs, which include rain barrel distributions, park cleanups, and stream bank restorations, are free of charge and open to the community.

As a result of the outstanding collaborative efforts and leadership of the EAC, Abington Township received 3-STAR Community certification from the STAR (Sustainable Tools for Assessing and Rating) Community Rating System™. STAR is the nation's leading comprehensive framework and certification program for evaluating local sustainability, encompassing economic, environmental, and social performance measures. Abington is the second municipality in Pennsylvania to be awarded, and the township's application was the first led by volunteers rather than a governmental unit. The STAR evaluation, which provided an assessment of Abington's strengths and weaknesses in seven focus areas,



provided a roadmap of areas for Abington to work on to become more sustainable. The Abington EAC is using this to guide future efforts, notably in the STAR objectives of Climate and Energy, Natural Resources, and Environmental Justice.

The award was the direct result of the Environmental Action Committee's yearlong collaboration with 50 community partners—an effort led by EAC Vice Chairperson Cakky Braun-Evans, who has been an EAC member for 10 years. 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. Without the support of Cakky and the EAC, the township did not have the staffing to accomplish this on its own. The community partners include the Shade Tree Commission, elected officials and township staff, Abington Township Economic Development Committee, the school district, Penn State Abington, Abington Art Center, Abington- Jefferson Health, Holy Redeemer Hospital, Redeemer Valley Garden, and the Montgomery County Health and Workforce Housing Departments.

The EAC will continue to build on its successful collaboration with the township and community partners to support policies, plans, education, events, and projects that contribute to a sustainable, healthy, and energy-efficient environment. The EAC meets monthly to review the STAR program and check in with partners. Abington will use the rating system's evaluation measures to assess its current level of sustainability, set targets for moving ahead, and measure progress along the way.

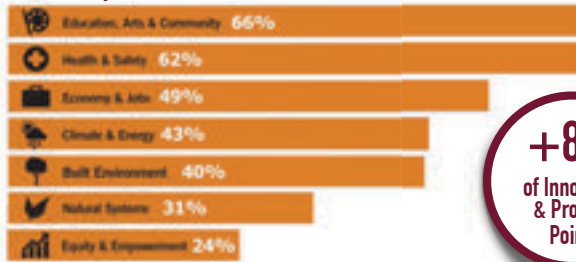


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Abington Township is the second municipality in Pennsylvania leadership and is the highest rated community in the Tri-State on economic, environmental and social factors to measure s

334
POINTS ACHIEVED

Points by Goal Area



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-STAR EMENT



ia to be awarded a STAR Community Rating for sustainability
te area. STAR Communities™ evaluates local governments
sustainability and living standards.



Points of Pride Outcomes:

- ★ Educational Opportunity & Attainment; Creative Industries; Venues
- ★ Emergency Response; Safe Communities; Quality Healthcare
- ★ Increased Business, Annual Sales & Employment; Living Wages
- ★ Waste Minimization; GHG Mitigation; Community Resource Efficiency
- ★ Public Spaces; Stormwater & Wastewater Mgt.; Transportation Safety
- ★ Civil & Human Rights; Voter Turnout - Civic Engagement
- ★ Exemplary Safe Community & School District. Waste Minimization, & Stormwater Management Outcomes; Innovative Educational, Local Economy & Vocational Programs & Human Rights Policies

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The EAC engages the public through extensive outreach. Continuing EAC achievements include:

- **Rain Barrel the Town Program.** To assist the township's engineering department in meeting MS4 goals, the EAC has helped to educate the public and make stormwater management more affordable for both residents and businesses. The EAC developed the Rain Barrel the Town (RBTT) program to offer inexpensive rain barrels. Since 2011, 565 barrels have been placed in the community, exceeding the goal of 1 million gallons of rainwater captured per year.
- **Go Green Rewards Card.** For the last two years, the EAC has teamed up with the Abington Township Economic Development Committee and local businesses for the Go Green Rewards Card, a program that encourages citizens to take environmental actions and shop locally to support the community.
- **Improving Open Space.** Partnering with the township and community groups, the EAC has helped to improve open space by hosting beautification and cleanup events at parks, roadways, and other public open spaces. Last spring, the EAC celebrated Earth Day by cleaning up

and beautifying parks and public areas throughout the township—498 volunteers cleaned up 1,297 pounds of trash. These cleanups bring the community together and make a difference.

- **Stream Bank Restoration.** Working with diverse partners, the EAC helps to protect the township's numerous stream systems by supporting the creation of riparian buffers in the township. In 2016, the EAC worked with Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership, Inc. to enhance the riparian buffer at Abington Friends School and added a rain garden. The EAC also helps maintain several existing riparian buffers.
- **Supporting Water Quality and Control Projects.** EAC members participated in a field-scoping meeting to help evaluate potential stream restoration project sites along the Sandy Run tributary of the Wissahickon Creek as part of funding opportunity with the USACE, Section 566 program.

The annual Montgomery Awards recognize the best in planning, design, and advocacy in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The program acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.

www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards



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