

A quarterly newsletter on revitalization and economic development in Montgomery County's traditional towns



## POP-UPS ARE A HOT COMMODITY

Pop-ups are all the rage these days – mostly because these temporary events, stores, and placemaking efforts are low risk (and hopefully reap big rewards). Montgomery County and the surrounding area has seen the emergence of pop-up parks, street festivals, and retail shops. This not only brings people (and dollars) to underutilized and under-appreciated areas, but it also creates publicity and new momentum.

Pop-up retail shops bring a unique retailer or an exclusive brand to a new location for a limited amount of time. This is not dissimilar to a huge retailer like Target bringing in a limited run of a designer line – but even on a smaller scale, this approach can have an outsized impact. UNIQLO opened a permanent store in the King of Prussia Mall last spring, but not before rolling out a pop-up beforehand to build enthusiasm. On an even smaller scale, local retailer Duke and Winston opened a pop up shop in Bryn Mawr in November 2013 and closed up in early January 2014. A vacant storefront and a landlord open to a non-traditional lease allowed this retailer the opportunity to expand his sales exponentially (while giving the landlord a share of his sales, rather than paying rent, on the off-chance this venture didn't succeed). Both sides assumed little risk in this venture, and both the retailer and the landlord profited from this pop-up. Now the retailer is looking at pop-ups in Washington DC's Georgetown neighborhood and Los Angeles to test the market in these two cities.

Pop-up events bring a unique experience to an area for a short period of time – sometimes a night, sometimes as long as a season. Not that different than a park that offers ice skating on an outdoor rink during the winter season – only to see it disappear once the weather warms up. The Food Trust's Night Market is an excellent example of this concept. A one-night outdoor food marketplace which happens several times over the course of a year, these events draw thousands of visitors – as well as food trucks and other local

vendors - to varied neighborhoods around Philadelphia. This event has allowed the Food Trust to build awareness of the work they do while giving vendors the opportunity to grow their brands and customer loyalty. Other recent pop-up events range in scale



*Food trucks often appear at pop-up events*

from the food trucks that occasionally pop-up outside of the Montgomery County Courthouse to the Spruce Street Harbor Park, which debuted in the summer of 2014 to

such acclaim that it's returning for another go-round in 2015. The Spruce Street Harbor Park was (and will be!) a temporary summer program with a boardwalk, urban beach, fountains, and misting areas along the Delaware River Waterfront.

Lastly, pop-up planning allows communities to try out new ideas before committing to a big investment of time or money to make changes. We've highlighted some of these ideas before – parklets that take up an on-street parking spot but provide a public amenity and a place for a chat or a break, seating options that can be moved around a downtown area, or planters that provide a cheap (and easily undone) way of trying out a reconfigured crosswalk, traffic island, or bulb out.



*Pop-up furniture can be moved around*

Although there will surely be challenges to creating any pop-up, there are also many benefits. For a municipality – it can reduce vacancies, increase local revenue, increase visitors, improve foot traffic, and create buzz around an area. For a property owner – it provides a low risk way to find new revenue while showing what's feasible in the space to a longer term tenant. For someone with a fledgling business – it gives them a chance to scale up while limiting financial risk. Even well-established businesses need to experiment with a new look, a new product, or a new market. There's no reason why local artisans and small business proprietors can't be afforded the same opportunity to get a bigger break.

For more resources on pop-ups, we encourage you to check out these publications for more information:

DVRPC's publication "The Pop-Up Economy: Municipal Implementation Tool #26".

<http://www.dvrpc.org/reports/MIT026.pdf>

Philadelphia Mobile Food Association – which works to facilitate a healthy relationship between the City of Philadelphia and the ever-growing fleet of food trucks and carts which roam the city.

[www.phillymobilefoodassociation.com](http://www.phillymobilefoodassociation.com)

PopUp Providence – An example of a successful pop-up experience in Providence, Rhode Island.

[www.providenceri.com/planning/popup-providence](http://www.providenceri.com/planning/popup-providence)



## MONTCO 2040 IS ADOPTED!

Montco 2040: A Shared Vision, the new comprehensive plan for Montgomery County, was adopted by the county commissioners on January 15, 2015. It's now the official policy of the county.

The plan has lots of recommendations that affect the county's traditional towns, from housing to trails to revitalization. This plan will not be sitting on a shelf, and the county has already prepared a 2015 Implementation guide. Here are a few of the 2015 actions:

- Meeting with all 62 municipalities about comprehensive plan implementation.
- Preparing a walkability plan for the county.
- Working with the Pottstown and Norristown school districts to improve the ability to walk and bike to school.
- Assisting 5 to 10 municipalities in planning for revitalization and using economic development tools to attract investment.
- Providing new art along the county's trails.
- Reviewing municipal floodplain ordinances for consistency with federal requirements.
- Preparing a report on adaptively reusing churches and schools.
- Preparing an issues guide for infill development.
- Connecting county farmers with local restaurants, businesses, and consumers.



## check out what's happening!

Local food is having its moment in Montgomery County. Whether its new restaurants which focus on local farms (the newly reopened Mainland Inn comes to mind), small scale producers of hyper-local products, or the growing interest in purchasing produce, meat and dairy from local farms, there is a lot of interest in keeping local agriculture strong. The Collegeville Economic Development Corporation's "**Farmer and the Chef**" event (coming up soon on March 12<sup>th</sup>) is a great example of using local agriculture to build downtown momentum. Chefs from some of the area's most sought-after restaurants and gourmet food trucks will be teaming up with the Collegeville Farmers' Market to provide an evening of amazing cuisine using fresh, locally grown products in their signature dishes. Interested in local food promotion in Montgomery County? Contact Anne Leavitt-Gruberger at 610-278-3727 for more information.



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