



# NEWS

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### Contact:

Kaitlyn Foti, Public Information Officer

610-278-3062 [kfoti@montcopa.org](mailto:kfoti@montcopa.org)

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### **Six Outstanding Projects and an Exceptional Organization Committed to Environmental Sustainability Receive 2017 Montgomery Awards**

**Norristown, PA (Nov. 16, 2017)** – Six outstanding projects and their creators and an exceptional organization that advocates for environmental sustainability in Montgomery County were honored Wednesday evening at the Montgomery Awards celebration sponsored by the Montgomery County Planning Commission and the Montgomery County Conservation District.

This annual program recognizes the best in planning, design, and advocacy in Montgomery County and acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.

The six projects receiving Montgomery Awards were Bryn Mawr Village in Lower Merion Township, Crossways Bridge & Trail in Lower Gwynedd Township and Whitpain Township, the Lansdale Municipal Complex in Lansdale Borough, the Perkiomen School in Pennsburg Borough, the SEPTA Lansdale Parking Garage and 9th Street Station in Lansdale Borough, and Thompson Lexus Willow Grove in Upper Moreland Township, which was the recipient of the first Environmental Stewardship Award presented under the Montgomery Awards Program. In addition to these projects, the Abington Township Environmental Advisory Council received a 2017 Planning Advocate Award.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Montgomery Awards Program. Since it began in 1967, 203 awards have been presented throughout Montgomery County. Over the years, many types of projects have been awarded including residential, office, and commercial developments; redevelopment projects; community revitalization efforts; transportation improvements; historic preservation projects; and open space and park planning. All of these winning projects are best practice examples of planning and design in the county.

This year, the Montgomery County Planning Commission partnered with the Montgomery County Conservation District to offer an Environmental Stewardship Award. The award specifically recognizes a project that exemplifies the practices of environmental stewardship and conservation for water and soil quality. This award is presented by

the Montgomery County Conservation District.

“For 50 years Montgomery County has recognized exceptional projects and the partnerships that create them. These places and our winning projects this year enhance our communities and show that Montgomery County is growing and changing in sustainable ways,” said Jody L. Holton, AICP, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission.

**Bryn Mawr Village** received a 2017 Montgomery 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 adaptive reuse of this 3.1-acre site, which contains a distinctive 1920s-era garage and parking lot, presented a significant opportunity to fill a missing link within the downtown. The vision for the site’s redevelopment began in 2004 with several planning studies. In 2006, the township adopted the Bryn Mawr Master Plan and embarked on a rezoning effort for the business district. The new Bryn Mawr Village zoning promotes reuse of existing buildings in a way that maintains the historic architecture, visual character, and scale of Bryn Mawr—resulting in a pedestrian-oriented, interconnected, and vibrant Main Street environment. This project provides over 52,000 square feet of retail and office space. Redevelopment involved a new 30,000-square-foot building in addition to sensitive restoration of the historic garage. Site design features include a parking lot with multiple access points that improves traffic circulation, attractive pedestrian-friendly connections, a vertical green wall, and a prominently located public plaza with seating. This outstanding infill redevelopment project, which has unified the business district, has become an appealing destination in the community.

**Crossways Bridge & Trail** earned a 2017 Montgomery Award for innovative planning, environmentally sensitive design, and extensive collaboration. This successful multiuse trail demonstrates how effective collaboration can result in a popular public amenity. Together, Lower Gwynedd Township and Whitpain Township created the 1.3-mile paved multiuse trail, which traverses 9.7 acres of open space and connects people and nature. Visitors can walk, run, bicycle, or ride horses on the trail. The trail connects Penllyn Woods Park in Lower Gwynedd, the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association Crossways Preserve, and the Montgomery County Community College to the county’s Green Ribbon Trail. The 8-foot-wide trail navigates diverse habitats with different trail surfaces, including a low and elevated boardwalk, and an 80-foot-long pedestrian bridge over the Wissahickon Creek. This environmentally sensitive project used sustainable trail materials and construction techniques to protect wetland, woodland, and floodplain environments. The boardwalks were created from prefabricated concrete that was assembled in place, allowing for fast construction and minimized removal of mature trees. The project used land assembled with many partners focused on the shared goal of a regional trail network for residents. Lower Gwynedd and Whitpain shared construction costs and grants as well as costs for signage, maintenance, and management of the boardwalks and asphalt trails. This project, which created an important link to the regional trail system, is certain to become a regional treasure.

**Lansdale Municipal Complex** was presented with a 2017 Montgomery Award for creative planning and vision, exceptional redevelopment, and successful community engagement. This outstanding project, which created an attractive state-of-the-art facility, demonstrates Lansdale's revitalization vision, respect of its heritage, and a commitment to a sustainable future for its residents. Lansdale Borough Hall, located in the heart of the central business district, has been an important civic space in the borough's history. Originally a post office, the building was renovated into the borough hall in the 1980s. The adjacent police station, formerly the library, was renovated in the 1960s. Following a facilities study, both buildings were determined to be insufficient. Several options were proposed for redevelopment, and throughout the public process, the community expressed a strong desire to keep the historic borough hall and to preserve this established public space. The project combined both buildings into a new 2-story, 35,000-square-foot contemporary municipal complex that was awarded Silver LEED Certification. Portions of the historic borough hall were enhanced and seamlessly blended into the modern complex, which features a glass façade and impressive 2-story lobby. Site design elements include decorative sidewalks, street trees, benches, and attractive public plazas. The front entry plaza features a large outdoor area for community gatherings. Sustainability features include green walls and a rain garden planted with native vegetation. Placed adjacent to Railroad Avenue and the Lansdale SEPTA line, the new complex will offer future access to SEPTA bus service and the proposed Liberty Bell Trail, ultimately creating a public pedestrian corridor. This excellent project successfully preserves the heritage of the community while embracing the future.

**Perkiomen School** received a 2017 Montgomery Award for creative vision, extensive planning, and a sustained commitment to growth and transformation. This prestigious educational landmark, which embraces long-term planning through its master plans, has achieved many campus enhancements to continue moving forward into the future. Through foresight and many successful accomplishments, this private school has created an appealing twenty-first century campus and continues to focus on a sustainable future. A major turning point for the school occurred in 1994 when a devastating fire destroyed the iconic Kriebel Hall, which was home to the administrative offices, classrooms, and student residences. The school immediately committed to rebuilding the hall and embraced longer term planning to achieve its future vision. It completed its first campus master plan in 1998. Achievements under this plan included acquiring 58 acres to provide for future growth, constructing a new academic center, transforming a science building into a new middle school, adding a new baseball field and tennis complex, enhancing safety and security for pedestrians throughout the campus, creating an award-winning meditation garden, and refurbishing the main floor of the 100-year-old Carnegie Library. A second master plan was completed in 2011. Achievements under this plan included renovating the athletic center and natatorium with a new fitness center, lobby, and pool; purchasing ten nearby properties for improved faculty housing; constructing cottage-style dormitories, refurbishing the dining hall; and renovating the lower floor into an innovation lab for a new entrepreneur program. This exceptional project demonstrates how excellent planning and persistence over time can achieve an important vision.

**SEPTA Lansdale Parking Garage and 9th Street Station** earned a 2017 Montgomery Award for successful collaboration, significant expansion of transit facilities, and positive community reinvestment. These important transit improvements have been integral in helping to achieve Lansdale's redevelopment vision. Lansdale envisioned revitalizing its downtown by building a transit-oriented mixed-use development on the Madison Parking Lot, where SEPTA customers were parking to access the train station. To accommodate its customers, SEPTA proposed constructing a new parking garage with a pedestrian overpass that would connect with the anticipated development. The garage would share parking with residents of the development during evenings and weekends. The new 4-level parking structure contains 680 spaces, increasing parking by 398 spaces. The garage design complements the historic Lansdale Station, reflects the borough's railroad and industrial heritage, and blends with the surrounding community. A unique feature of the pedestrian overpass is a stairway and elevator tower with a visually striking glass-and-steel design. The garage and surface parking lots were designed to meet the sustainable standards of the Green Parking Council including stormwater best management practices. Other elements include real-time parking and train schedule information, bicycle facilities, and electric vehicle charging spaces. The 9th Street Station is an important part of the borough's revitalization strategy and SEPTA's plan for additional parking. While this station was initially constructed to offset the temporary loss of parking due to the construction of the new garage, SEPTA, Lansdale, and the Stoltz Property Management Group collaborated on the longer term vision for the station to be a catalyst for redeveloping a 100-acre industrial site and increasing transit ridership. The station includes accessible high-level platforms, a heated waiting shelter, a covered bicycle shelter, and four bioretention areas planted with native vegetation. These important transportation projects represent a significant regional investment, achieve major transportation goals of Montco 2040: A Shared Vision, and will be a catalyst for economic development.

**Abington Township Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)** received a 2017 Planning Advocate Award in recognition of its commitment to improving sustainability in Abington. Since 1974, this progressive, volunteer-led organization, which collaborates with local partners to promote awareness and build support, has been offering public events, volunteer opportunities, and educational programs that focus on best practices for protecting and preserving the environment. Abington Township recently received 3-STAR Community Certification from the STAR (Sustainable Tools for Assessing and Rating) Community Rating System™, the nation's leading certification program for local sustainability. The award was the direct result of the EAC's yearlong collaboration with 50 community partners—an effort led by Vice Chairperson Cakky Braun-Evans, who has been an EAC member for ten 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. Ongoing EAC achievements include developing the Rain Barrel the Town 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); teaming 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; partnering with the community to help improve

open space by hosting beautification and cleanup events (last spring, 498 volunteers cleaned up over 1,000 pounds of trash); and working with partners to protect and maintain the township's numerous stream systems.

**Thompson Lexus Willow Grove** was presented with the Environmental Stewardship Award for outstanding comprehensive and well-maintained conservation practices that successfully address water quality and stormwater runoff and help to protect the Pennypack Creek. This project, which constructed an integrated stormwater management system involving rain gardens and underground detention and infiltration structures, provides several levels of water quality and flow reduction and exceeds the water quality and rate requirements imposed by ordinances and regulations. Mill Creek, a tributary to the Pennypack Creek, runs through the southwest corner of this 9.9-acre site. Over the past several decades, the creek has had a significant history of flooding homes and a shopping center downstream. Recognizing the critical impact from flooding and polluted runoff into the Mill Creek, Upper Moreland Township worked carefully with The Thompson Organization to create plans for the car dealership, which involved effective stormwater management facilities that would address water quality as well as the rate and volume of runoff during rain storms. The site has been designed so that rain will infiltrate through porous pavement or will be directed into attractively vegetated rain gardens. The rainwater flowing through the porous pavement is routed to rain gardens and a pair of underground detention basins from which it infiltrates into the ground or is slowly released to the stream. This provides significant water quality improvement and reduction of runoff to Mill Creek. The exemplary conservation practices in this project provide several levels of water quality and flow reduction. As a result of the project's improvements, flow reductions of over 30 percent for all storm events will be achieved while protecting water quality and providing volume reduction.

Visit [www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards](http://www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards) for more on the 2017 winners, the awards program, and a searchable database of all award recipients. For further information, contact Rita McKelvey at [rmckelvey@montcopa.org](mailto:rmckelvey@montcopa.org) or 610-278-3753.

**Cutlines:**

**IMG\_4547:** Six outstanding projects and an organization were honored Wednesday evening at The Montgomery Awards.

**IMG\_4638:** John Thompson, Vice President of The Thompson Organization, accepted the award for Thompson Lexus Willow Grove, which is located in Upper Moreland Township. Pictured with him are Dr. Val Arkoosh, chair, Montgomery County Commissioners and Eric Miller, District Manager of the Montgomery County Conservation District, as well as project team members and representatives from Upper Moreland Township.