



# NEWS

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

VALERIE A. ARKOOSH, MD, MPH, CHAIR  
KENNETH E. LAWRENCE, JR., VICE CHAIR  
JOSEPH C. GALE, COMMISSIONER

**Contact:** Teresa Harris | Public Affairs Manager | 610.278.3062 | [tharris@montcopa.org](mailto:tharris@montcopa.org)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

#### **Five Outstanding Projects and an Exceptional Advocate for the Planning, Preservation, and Stewardship of Montgomery County's Valuable Green Spaces Receive 2019 Montgomery Awards**

**Norristown, PA (November 13, 2019)** – Five outstanding projects and their creators and a dedicated advocate, who leads, motivates, and energizes others to enhance and protect our communities and the environment, were honored today 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 and design, advocacy, and environmental stewardship in Montgomery County and acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.

The five projects receiving Montgomery Awards were Crest Manor in Abington Township, the Innovation and Discovery Center at Ursinus College in Collegeville Borough, Stoneleigh: *a natural garden* in Lower Merion Township, Walk & Bike Pottstown in Pottstown Borough, and the Asplundh Cancer Pavilion in Upper Moreland Township, which was the recipient of the 2019 Environmental Stewardship Award. In addition to these outstanding projects, Catherine M. “Kate” Harper, Esq. received a 2019 Planning Advocate Award.

This year marks the 52nd anniversary of the Montgomery Awards Program. Since it began in 1967, 215 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.

In 2017, 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.

“These award-winning projects are excellent examples of transformative and sustainable development, realizing the community’s vision through extensive collaboration. All of our winners touch on the goals and themes of Connected Communities, Sustainable Places, and Vibrant Economy contained in *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, Montgomery County’s comprehensive plan. They also reflect topics that our planning commission is focused on—green and resilient design, historic preservation, multimodal communities, and an inclusive development approach,” said Jody L. Holton, AICP, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission.

**Crest Manor**, an attractive affordable housing community in Abington Township, received a 2019 Montgomery Award for successful redevelopment, sustainable and universal design, and collaborative efforts. Built in 1963 by the Montgomery County Housing Authority (MCHA), many of the units in Crest Manor required major functional and aesthetic improvements. Through the efforts of the Montgomery County Housing Authority, Pennrose, and other partners, six additional units were added, and Crest Manor now offers 46 rental units—30 renovated twins and 16 new twins and apartments located in appealing and efficient buildings. This project is fully compliant with Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards requirements. The units incorporate traditional neighborhood design features that include covered porches and new exterior building treatments, which complement the fabric of the neighborhood in terms of color, material, bulk, and scale. The original community building and two units were removed from the floodplain and relocated, significantly reducing flood damage risk to the property and neighborhood. Crest Manor is an exceptional example of how a successful collaborative process can preserve a neighborhood while providing affordable housing, enhancing the lives of residents and the community. This redevelopment, which created modern and efficient units while embracing sustainable and universal design, has become a model for similar future projects.

**The Innovation and Discovery Center (IDC)**, a successful addition to the Ursinus College campus in Collegetown Borough that resulted in a new educational complex, received a 2019 Montgomery Award for creative master planning, thoughtful site design, and complementary architecture. With an emphasis on providing space and resources for student research, collaboration, and interdisciplinary thought, the IDC is ideally located in the heart of campus, confirming the college founders' vision that science would be an integral part of the liberal arts experience. The IDC, built to LEED Silver standards, serves as a keystone physically and ideologically between two buildings constructed at different times for different disciplines. The choice of the IDC's modern materials and finishes complements the exteriors of the other buildings, seamlessly creating a unified complex. The center accommodates contemporary science curriculums and promotes collaborations and synergies among the faculty and students. The Innovation and Discovery Center has successfully achieved the interdisciplinary vision of Ursinus College by creating spaces and opportunities that foster creative thinking and innovative approaches to learning. The creation of the IDC was critical to creating this essential educational complex, which will benefit students now and for generations to come.

**Stoneleigh: a natural garden**, a significant cultural and natural landscape in Lower Merion Township, received a 2019 Montgomery Award for the preservation and transformation of a historic 40-acre estate into a new public nature preserve and garden. Stoneleigh is a testament to the conservation stewardship ethic of the Haas family. The family sought to ensure the preservation of the estate and its landscape as a natural retreat for environmental education focusing on native plants, which resulted in the charitable gift from the family of the estate to Natural Lands in 2016. The 41.8-acre garden is home to a grand stone Tudor Revival mansion and a landscape designed by the Olmsted Brothers, a nationally acclaimed landscape architecture firm, which includes the Great Lawn, the Meadow, and the Rockery. Natural Lands envisions the property as "a showcase for blending the aesthetic beauty of the designed gardens with the natural richness of native habitats that are essential to the health of the planet." Stoneleigh, with improvements including porous pavement pathways, refurbished landscapes, and over 500 new shade trees, has become a cherished part of the fabric of the community. Through the generosity of the Haas family and the successful collaborative efforts of many, this beautiful estate will forever welcome generations of visitors.

**Walk & Bike Pottstown**, an outstanding multimodal transportation planning and improvement project in Pottstown Borough, received a 2019 Montgomery Award for collaborative vision, transportation design, and community enrichment. This innovative project has created a safe environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists and has provided tangible benefits for the health and wellness of the residents of Pottstown and nearby communities. In collaboration with many stakeholders, including the Pottstown Health & Wellness Foundation, the Pottstown Area School District, and the nonprofit organization Save Our Land, Save Our Towns, the borough leveraged and expanded its traditional walkable sidewalk network to include protected and buffered bike lanes, shared roadways with sharrows, and sidewalk improvements along key streets providing low-stress pedestrian and bicycle connections to key community destinations. Walk & Bike Pottstown is an exceptional example of a multimodal network that provides active lifestyle transportation options for pedestrians and bicyclists and improved safety for the most vulnerable road users of all ages and ability while still accommodating motorists. This progressive, collaborative project, one of the first in the county and state, promotes health and wellness for Pottstown residents and visitors and can serve as a model for projects in the future.

The **Asplundh Cancer Pavilion** at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center at Abington - Jefferson Health in Abington Township received the 2019 Environmental Stewardship Award for excellence in environmental and sustainable design for the redevelopment of its property in the Schilling Campus at 3941 Commerce Avenue in Willow Grove. The pavilion is an outstanding example of how the natural environment can have a positive effect on healing. This exceptional redevelopment project includes a dramatic, new 86,000-square-foot building with associated parking and driveway facilities that improve campus traffic flow, pedestrian accessibility, and parking capacity. It also includes an extensive stormwater management system of underground detention and rain gardens that encourages infiltration and improves the water quality of the Pennypack Creek. The green design of the Asplundh Cancer Pavilion campus, which is under review for LEED Certification, benefits patients and the environment alike, creating a garden-like setting for patients and families. The two-story windows and the birch bark and moss stairway successfully invite the scenic outdoors inside, adding an important element to the healing process. The sustainable stormwater elements, including the underground infiltration system and attractive rain gardens, protect the environment while providing appealing outdoor spaces. The Asplundh Cancer Pavilion, with its sustainable design approach, is an excellent example of the future of the design of innovative health care facilities.

**Catherine M. “Kate” Harper, Esq.**, a dedicated advocate for the planning, preservation, and stewardship of Montgomery County’s valuable green spaces, received the 2019 Planning Advocate Award. She has embraced leadership roles in the protection of the environment through development and implementation of sound policy and proactive planning. Kate, a practicing attorney for over 30 years, is a partner with Timoney Knox, LLP, but her passionate avocation is protecting the natural world and promoting green, healthy communities. Kate combines her skills as a negotiator, litigator, and promoter to motivate, lead, and energize others to enhance and protect our communities and the environment. She has a unique willingness to spearhead an effort and then let others take the credit for the success. Coupled with unbounded energy and a terrific sense of humor, Kate has the right blend of skills to rally forces in protecting some of our most cherished places. Her most celebrated accomplishments include the preservation of Penllyn Woods in Lower Gwynedd Township and the Stoneleigh Bill, which helped to preserve the integrity of Stoneleigh: *a natural garden* in Lower Merion Township. Through her tenacity, dedication, and skill, Kate has championed legislation and community initiatives that have served to protect, implement, and fund environmental causes, the hallmark of a dedicated planning advocate.

Visit [www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards](http://www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards) for more on the 2019 winners, the awards program, and previous award recipients. For further information, contact Rita McKelvey at [rmckelve@montcopa.org](mailto:rmckelve@montcopa.org) or 610-278-3753.

###