

Road to Ridley Creek. Calling this project “Beautify Baltimore Avenue,” the Media Shade Tree Commission used the funding to purchase the native tree stock, while the borough’s Department of Public Works selected the specific tree planting sites along the corridor. The bulk of this section of Baltimore Avenue is located primarily in the Borough of Media; however, each partner municipality was responsible for organizing and implementing the tree planting activities in their section. In the past, Media encountered several challenges with tree planting and maintenance. Before getting help from programs such as TreeVitalize and support from PennDOT, funding for tree purchases and installation was extremely scarce. Additionally, while most residents enjoyed the presence of trees in their community, many lacked adequate tree maintenance education and often rejected the notion of new trees on their property. Media also continues to work with developers to save existing trees on new development sites, to plant new trees as part of the development process, and to use pervious surfaces whenever possible.

Despite these challenges, Media has a track record of many successful tree projects. With the support of the borough’s Department of Public Works, the Media Shade Tree Commission and Tree Warden are actively involved in increasing the community’s tree cover and maintaining the existing tree stock. A Tree Warden is a person who is responsible for managing shade trees on public land within



photo courtesy of Lansdowne Borough

the municipality. At the time of the Municipal Forestry Incentive Grant application in 2007, the borough completed a planting of over three hundred trees in the community, many in sites with dead or previously removed trees. The borough also planted many trees in Houtman Park, a borough-owned park located in Upper Providence Township.

Media also participates in “Tree City USA,” a program run by the Arbor Day Foundation. To obtain and maintain this designation, participating communities must establish a ‘Tree Board,’ or Shade Tree Commission, that includes a professional forester. This board must draft a tree care ordinance and a community forestry work plan, and must establish an annual budget for the community forestry program. Tree City USA cities must also organize an annual Arbor Day tree planting event. Much of the success of Media’s “Beautify Baltimore Avenue” project comes from Media’s past strength as a Tree City USA, and the strong multi-municipal partnerships established for this project.

In addition, Media has an active Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) that works closely with the Shade Tree Commission to support tree planting events and tree management projects. In 2006, the EAC created a public education brochure called “Stormwater, Trees, and Our Drinking Water” along with other citizen outreach educational materials*. The borough also has elements of tree protection and maintenance written into its zoning code, tree ordinance, stormwater management ordinance, and subdivision and land development ordinance.

In addition to the outstanding municipal tree planting efforts that have already occurred in Yeadon, Lansdowne, and Media, the Morris Arboretum, with support from the William Penn Foundation, is coordinating the planting of another 80 trees along Baltimore Avenue over the next few years. These trees will help fill in the gaps between those municipalities, including Upper Darby, East Lansdowne, and Clifton Heights. With such successful multi-municipal partnerships in place, Baltimore Avenue is headed toward a greener future. ●

* <http://www.mediaborough.com/environment>

“Tree Tenders” is a registered trademark of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

The following case study is part of a series highlighting successful projects funded by the TreeVitalize Municipalities Municipal Forestry Incentive Grant Program. For more information on the series, contact Patty Elkis, DVRPC, at pekis@dvrpc.org.

TreeVitalize Municipalities is a partnership program of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the Penn State School of Forest Resources Cooperative Extension, and the Morris Arboretum. For more information on the TreeVitalize Municipalities Program, please contact Michael Leff at TreeVitalize_PHS_mleff@pennhort.org.

For more information on Baltimore Avenue tree projects, please contact Craig Totaro, Lansdowne Borough (610-623-7300 ext. 214, totaroc@borough.lansdowne.pa.us).

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TreeVitalize Municipalities

A partnership to restore tree cover in Southeast PA

Municipal Forestry Incentive Program

Case Study: Baltimore Avenue (Lansdowne, Yeadon, Media), Delaware County

As a link between Philadelphia and Baltimore, Maryland, Baltimore Avenue historically served as a main thoroughfare for millions of residents, visitors, and merchants, carrying travelers out of West Philadelphia and through numerous communities in Delaware County. Over time Baltimore Avenue grew into one of the busiest commercial and residential thoroughfares in the region. Increases in auto-oriented, strip-style commercial developments, coupled with growing vacancies in traditional storefronts and blocks devoid of trees have created a bleak environment in many stretches of the corridor. However, where Baltimore Avenue runs through certain boroughs, blocks still retain some historic ‘Main Street’ character.

Keys to Baltimore Avenue’s Success:

- ◆ Recognize tree canopy as part of community economic development
- ◆ Utilize outside resources: TreeVitalize, Philadelphia Water Department, Morris Arboretum, Tree City USA, foundations, and volunteer support
- ◆ Educate residents on tree maintenance and the importance of trees in the community
- ◆ Work with developers to save existing trees, plant new trees, and to use pervious surfaces



photo courtesy of Lansdowne Borough

Baltimore Avenue presents a unique corridor planning challenge. Given Pennsylvania's highly fragmented system of local governance, this road cuts through many different political jurisdictions – each with different zoning laws, parking rules, and overall maintenance strategies. In November of 2001, DVRPC published “Baltimore Pike Revitalization Assessment – Building a Case for Community and Economic Development.” This was followed by the “Baltimore Avenue Corridor Revitalization Plan,” in 2007, a collaborative effort spearheaded by DVRPC, produced by consulting firm McCormick Taylor, and funded by the William Penn Foundation. Recommendations from the original study and the subsequent revitalization plan included tree planting and greening along the corridor, and emphasized the importance of trees in community revitalization. Using these recommendations, several municipalities are pursuing increasing tree canopy along their section of Baltimore Avenue. With the participation of the City of Philadelphia, the

received by the county and neighboring municipalities, particularly because of its relationship to greening efforts happening in other communities along the corridor, efforts also linked to recommendations in the 2007 revitalization plan.

While tree plantings happen in many municipalities each spring and fall, typically trees are planted in areas with the least amount of resistance – on public land and places with grass, such as lawns and parks. Baltimore Avenue, with its narrow concrete sidewalks, provides a prime example of a more challenging site, and one desperately in need of increased tree cover. On hot days the street feels like an oven, with little to no shade available along the route. During rain events, stormwater collects in the roadway and rushes off to the nearest drainage. Lansdowne Borough realized that planting trees along Baltimore Avenue, while a more difficult process, will have a positive impact toward improving

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Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Morris Arboretum, and other local partners, these communities are emphasizing tree planting as a tool for improved environmental quality, economic development, and sense of place. The following sections highlight municipal tree projects along Baltimore Avenue in Lansdowne, Yeadon, and Media.

Lansdowne

At the intersections of Baltimore and Lansdowne Avenues, the streetscape character becomes more pedestrian-friendly and is surrounded by town center-compact development. Lansdowne Borough views this type of physical environment as an asset to preserve and build on. Using the positive momentum created from the previous corridor studies, the borough focused planning efforts on enhancing this character along the avenue, particularly through projects like tree planting. On November 22, 2008, the borough planted 60 large street trees provided by TreeVitalize along Baltimore Avenue. This project was well-

stormwater management, providing shade, and increasing economic development by enhancing the street's character.

The borough also emphasized trees as a way to bring groups of people together, including community members who received Tree Tenders® training and volunteered at the planting events, and state, regional, county and municipal officials who gathered to celebrate the planting.

With 60 new trees now in place, future planning and development efforts along Baltimore Avenue will continue to promote a green and walkable streetscape in Lansdowne and surrounding communities.

Yeadon

Yeadon's part in greening Baltimore Avenue was a partnership effort between the Borough of Yeadon, the Philadelphia Water Department, and the Fairmount Park Commission. A TreeVitalize Municipalities Municipal Forestry Incentive

Grant provided funding for this ambitious project, which supplemented a generous match from the Philadelphia Water Department.

Yeadon's proposal, a multi-municipal gateway project, focused on greening and stormwater management where Baltimore Avenue crosses the Philadelphia / Yeadon Borough line. Despite this site's geographic importance as the boundary between Philadelphia and Yeadon (and Delaware County), no formal visual transition existed between these two municipalities. To remedy this issue, the borough proposed installation of signage and landscaping to create a greater sense of arrival by visually announcing the traveler's departure from Philadelphia and entrance into Yeadon. Another aspect of the Yeadon proposal on Baltimore Avenue focused on improving stormwater management. At this location, Baltimore Avenue crosses over Cobbs Creek, a tributary of Darby Creek and the Delaware River. The land around the creek in this area is part of Cobbs Creek Park, a major section of the Fairmount Park system that acts as a vitally important natural and recreational resource for residents in West Philadelphia, Yeadon, and neighboring communities. Stormwater management elements for this site included new designs for tree planning pits, curb bump-outs with stormwater management tree trenches, and other improved designs for collecting, detaining, and filtering the runoff that typically ends up in Cobbs Creek.

In addition to these new stormwater management designs, the Yeadon project also included a traffic calming element in order to improve safety at the intersection of Baltimore Avenue and the Cobbs Creek Recreational Trail. This is a paved, multi-purpose path that follows Cobbs Creek Parkway and the edge of the park itself for four miles, starting near Market Street and 63rd Street and ending at Cobbs Creek Parkway and 70th Street. Appropriate signage, street marking, and landscaping will alert drivers to the trail's presence.

Lastly, this project proposed new signage at the site to educate passersby about the riparian zone at this intersection. At the time of the proposal, the only connection that existed between the urban and riparian environment was the bridge over Cobbs Creek and two sewer outfalls – little indication to the public of the valuable role that trees and vegetation play in stormwater management.

The Yeadon component of the Baltimore Avenue project found success in the strong multi-municipal partnerships between the borough, the Philadelphia Water Department, and the Fairmount Park Commission. Each partner had clearly defined roles and areas of expertise: The borough will provide the long-term care for the newly planted trees and stormwater management systems; the Philadelphia Water Department provided design services for the stormwater management systems on both the Yeadon and Philadelphia sides, along with a sizeable financial match (partially made possible through an EPA grant); and the Fairmount Park Commission used TreeVitalize money to fund the riparian planting, while also recruiting volunteers and supervising tree plantings. The Fairmount Park Commission is also responsible for providing the long-term maintenance of the Philadelphia side of Cobbs Creek.

Media

The Borough of Media, further west on Baltimore Avenue from Lansdowne and Yeadon, partnered with the neighboring communities of Upper Providence and Nether Providence to implement a successful multi-municipal tree planting project along the corridor. Using over \$15,000 from the TreeVitalize Municipalities Municipal Forestry Incentive Grant to supplement a \$7,000 match, this project planted 70 native trees along Baltimore Avenue from the intersection of Beatty



photo courtesy of Lansdowne Borough