

North Penn Commons breaks ground at official ceremony

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Officials behind the incoming North Penn Commons held a groundbreaking ceremony at the site behind the Lansdale Area Family YMCA, 608 E. Main St., June 10 at 1 p.m. [Click Here for more photos](#)

The \$27.5 million project, according to a press release, will include 60 finished, affordable homes for seniors managed by Advanced Living Communities; a larger, upgraded space for Manna on Main Street to operate its soup kitchen, a choice food pantry and the North Penn Commons public café; and the PEAK Center, which will offer programs to help older adults live independently and remain active. Additionally, the North Penn YMCA will be upgraded and expanded to house a zero-entry family pool, a six-lane multi-purpose pool, new locker rooms and modern program spaces. The campus will be connected by an all-access lobby, which will serve as the heart and hub of activity for all residents, members, clients and community members.



Pre-kindergartners from the Lansdale Branch of the YMCA sing a song for officials and guests gathered for the groundbreaking of the North Penn Commons in Lansdale. Tuesday, June 10, 2014. (The Reporter/Geoff Patton)

Construction is set to begin on a new partnership project between four organizations in the North Penn

Among those in attendance for the ceremony were Montgomery County Board of Commissioners Josh Shapiro and Leslie Richards; Lansdale Borough Manager Timi Kirchner; Mayor Andy Szekely; Joanne Kline, executive director of Montgomery County Aging and Adult Services; Kathy Phifer, executive director of Montgomery County Housing & Community Development; and Barbara Stephens, public affairs officer of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.

"It is indeed a pleasure to be here today," Shapiro said. "Commissioner Richards and I along with Commissioner [Bruce] Castor recognize that the key to progress in Montgomery County is creating great partnerships. And cementing those partnerships around great ideas and ideas that are consistent with the vision and goals that are clearly articulated and are put in a position to be successful going forward.

"This project here in Lansdale," he continued, "is really a great example of that partnership, the vision, bringing everyone together to cement it place and make it possible. The partnerships with Advanced Living and Manna on Main Street, of course, with the Y, and the PEAK Center, with the great leadership of people like Russ Johnson [president of the North Penn Community Health Foundation], and his organization, enable us to be here today."

Shapiro praised the fact that the project is partnership with the public and private sectors, with \$1.7 million coming from the county.

"The story here is the way the public and private sector came together to make change in Lansdale and make change in Montgomery County," he said.

Shapiro said this project helps tackle a number of needs the county has identified including more housing for seniors and for those with developmental disabilities, more senior services in the North Penn area and more human services delivery "out from the walls in Norristown" and into the communities across the county.

Lastly, Shapiro said the county is committed to "revitalizing our aging boroughs" and this project is an investment toward that effort.

"So it all fits together," he said. "It fits together around this new development, and it fits together around this vision we all share and it fits together around the commitment we have made in the public sector and private sector toward funding this great project."

Richards began by saying she has a background in planning and these projects are her favorite.

"Lansdale has always had a special place in my heart," she said. "There are so many things, so many resources, so many special qualities that make this such a special borough here in Montgomery County. We have transportation, we have choices in housing, we have great organizations that have worked together, we have walkability, we have so many things, Main Street, cultural resources, historic sites and it all adds together to make this such a special place."

Richards praised the fact that the new project has an "inter-generational focus" by offering something for every age group.

"This will truly be the heart of a community that already has a lot of heart," she said.

Louise Shaheen, of the PEAK Center, said she was proud to work with the other organizations to bring the project to life.

"[The new campus will] provide social activities for seniors, and will provide wellness and fitness programs, cultural and educational activities and community resources," she said. "I think this facility is going to be a great addition to the Greater North Penn Area."

Thomas Pone, of Manna on Main Street, described his personal story of being laid off from his job and turning to Manna on Main Street for food and help in pulling himself up by his bootstraps.

"North Penn Commons will provide a sense of security, because people will know they can come and get their food and other services," he said, "and most of all feel like part of the community."

Carole Rossi, a resident of Advanced Living Communities, said she loved the fact the community "feels like family" and was excited for the new apartments because they will be convenient and affordable for residents.

"The PEAK Center, Manna and YMCA all in one area," she said, "will be so convenient for many people."