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Arcadia Reading Corner

[The Option of Urbanism](#)

by Arcadia partner, Christopher B. Leinberger.

Americans are voting with their feet to abandon strip malls and suburban sprawl, embracing instead a new type of community where they can live, work, shop, and play within easy walking distance.

[Views of Seaside](#)

by Seaside Institute.
A book about the iconic community of the New Urbanism-- Seaside-- developed by Arcadia partner, Robert Davis.

[Last Harvest](#)

by Witold Rybczynski.
A book about American development told through the lens of Arcadia's New Daleville community in Chester County.

Greetings!

Happy Thanksgiving!

With the mid-term elections behind us, we hope the shrill debates over Federal economic policy will fade away and make room for more intelligent conversation about job creation and growth.

Housing should be central to these discussions. For years the [Joint Center for Housing at Harvard](#) has reminded its readers about how housing construction has historically led the American economy both into and out of recession. Other work by [Steven Gjerstad and Vernon Smith](#) (2010) indicates that the initial catalyst of economic recovery in the United States since 1920 has been the purchase of new homes. Specifically, interest rate cuts improve home affordability, which in turn drives sales, construction activity and that initial jolt of job creation and consumer demand that eventually emanates through the entire economy. As housing goes, so goes the economy.

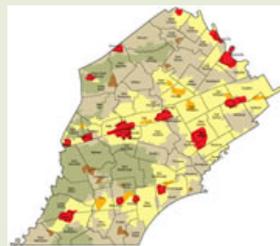
The solution isn't another homebuyer tax credit that merely shifts demand forward in time. Arcadia partner, Chris Leinberger recently wrote in the [Washington Monthly](#) about how a shift in Federal transportation policy towards existing centers could catalyze "smart growth" investments in areas desired by baby boomers and echo boomers. Entrepreneurs like [Reid Hoffman](#) (of LinkedIn fame) have called for significantly relaxing immigration restrictions for educated foreign workers in the tech industry while economists like [Gary Shilling](#) have suggested granting residency status to foreign investors willing to purchase homes. It seems to me that new policy ideas that promote *genuine* growth -- by increasing population, by promoting a more educated and productive workforce, and by catalyzing new entrepreneurial activity -- is what housing in particular and our economy in general need.

We shared our Thanksgiving dinner this year with two foreign students studying business at Temple University. Both were obviously highly intelligent, conscientious and ambitious. What a blessing it would be if these students choose to stay in the United States and contribute their skills, knowledge and hard work to a newly resurgent American economy. And, with any luck, one day they'll buy a new home.

With thanks,



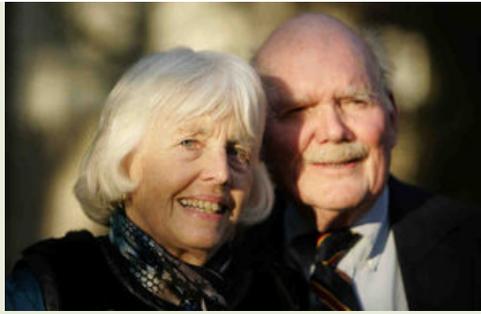
Jason Duckworth



Chester County, Pennsylvania: leadership in land-use.

Say the words "Chester County" and images of rolling equestrian farms in Unionville, the brick sidewalks of West Chester Borough or perhaps the economically dynamic Route 202 corridor come to mind. Chester County is the envy of planners nationwide for its successes in open space preservation, business expansion, and quality of life.

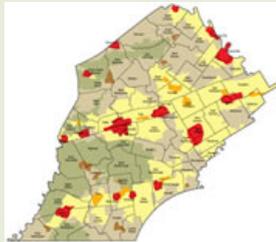
The achievements of Chester County, however, are no accident. Individuals, not-for-profit organizations and governments have taken deliberate steps to shape development patterns over the last forty years--protecting natural and agricultural resources from development and channeling growth towards existing centers with appropriate infrastructure. Why are there so many weekday diners in restaurants in West Chester? Because decision-makers decided to keep the new courthouse downtown. How have the open spaces of Willistown or Newlin townships escaped development? Because local preservationists raised funds, petitioned their local governments, and secured conservation easements over important natural lands.



Nancy Mohr and, husband, John. Photo:DAVID SWANSON, Philadelphia Inquirer

One of Chester County's first citizens, Nancy Mohr, was honored at a function recently for her longtime efforts to preserve open space and to promote civil dialogue on contentious land use issues. Nancy was critical to one of the great conservation achievements in modern times, the preservation by the Brandywine Conservancy of the King Ranch lands near Unionville. (See Philadelphia Inquirer [article](#).)

Chester County has also enjoyed effective elected leadership. The county's new [Landscapes2](#) comprehensive plan was adopted in 2009 and has already received two awards for its effective public outreach. Most recently, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) gave its 2010 Courthouse Award for Planning Excellence to Chester County for Landscapes2.



Chester County, Landscapes2 map

Landscapes2 was prepared with an extensive public input process. The plan calls for concentrating development in existing urbanized areas with infrastructure and building in forms that are denser, more walkable and have a mix of uses. At the same time, the plan heightens the call to protect both natural landscapes and agricultural landscapes, critical to the environment and economy of Chester County.

What's most remarkable about Chester County, however, is that notwithstanding its success it hasn't rested on its laurels. The efforts of its citizens, professional staff and elected leaders to improve land use in the county are continuous; each generation has sought to learn from past mistakes and to improve future development patterns. Many municipalities and counties could learn from Chester County's example.

Arcadia has had a long history of volunteer service to Chester County. Arcadia's Jason Duckworth served as co-chair of the Landscapes2 Steering Committee and, earlier, founding partner, Joe Duckworth, served as the chair of the Chester County Planning Commission when the original 1996 Landscapes comprehensive plan was prepared and adopted.

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