

# The Future of Development in Our Community

Press Release: For Immediate Release

## **A Non-technical Workshop for Local Government Elected Officials, Borough & Township Managers, Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards & Solicitors**

On April 26, 2002, the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County held a free workshop for Montgomery County government officials called *The Future of Development in Our Community*. Over 60 people attended with sweeping representation from across the county—from Pottstown to Lower Merion to Norristown, the county seat. The attendees also brought a wealth of knowledge with them coming from community planning and development positions throughout the county such as planning commissions, building & zoning, code enforcement and township management.

The first topic, Development in Our Community, was presented by Dorothy Ives Dewey, Ph.D., an expert in community planning and development. Dr. Ives Dewey presented pertinent data on how the Delaware Valley region has been developing coupled with demographics and economic statistics.

The second topic, the PA Model Building Code, was presented by Mitch Hoffman, a local government policy expert with DCED—PA Department of Community & Economic Development. Mr. Hoffman presented on overview of the new PA Model Building Code, reviewed changes in zoning and code enforcement under the Code, and discussed the Code's impact on planning and development.

The last topic, Fair Housing, was presented by Sara Pratt, an attorney and civil rights and fair housing expert. Ms. Pratt discussed rights and responsibilities under the fair housing laws. She explained: who is protected from housing discrimination; that fair housing laws apply to all types of housing; what actions are violations of the law; and what persons are exempt under the law.

After the three main topics were presented, two breakout sessions were held simultaneously. The sessions were: Local Government Liability—understanding fair housing to minimize liability (with Sara Pratt and Mark Levin, Regional Housing Legal Services); and PA Model Building Code—incorporating accessibility into the new model building code (with Mitch Hoffman, and Cheryl Kent, Special Advisor for Disability Policy with the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.)

The workshop met with great success. The Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County would like to thank everyone who helped in planning the workshop as well as those who attended.