



NEWS

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Five Outstanding Projects in Montgomery County Receive 2013 Montgomery Awards

Norristown, PA (November 13, 2013) – Five outstanding projects and their creators were honored today at the annual Montgomery Awards ceremony sponsored by the Montgomery County Planning Commission. This annual program recognizes the best in planning and design in Montgomery County and acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.

The five projects receiving awards were Ambler Boiler House in Ambler Borough, Arborcrest in Whitpain Township, Arbor Heights in the Municipality of Norristown, Mosaic Community Garden in Pottstown Borough, and Whitehall Townhouses in Lower Merion Township.

Ambler Boiler House received a 2013 Montgomery Award for the successful revitalization and adaptive reuse of an historic industrial structure into a state-of-the-art office building that incorporates sustainable building design. This transit-oriented project, once a brownfield site, recognizes Ambler's industrial heritage while advancing the borough's revitalization efforts, and providing environmental and economic benefits to the community.

The Ambler Boiler House, formerly the Keasbey and Mattison Boiler House, was built in 1887. Over the years, the building had deteriorated. The site became an eyesore and a reminder of the hazardous contamination left behind after years of asbestos manufacturing. In 2011, extensive remediation and environmental cleanup was conducted. This project preserved and carefully restored the historic building shell and totally renovated the building interior into multi-tenant office space. Many aspects of the original building were preserved, including the brick façade, the distinctive smokestack, and the large window openings. Another feature of this development is its convenient location within walking distance of public transportation. The Ambler Boiler House earned platinum certification under the

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. Sustainable strategies and innovative design were used in the rehabilitation of the entire structure, the building systems, and the site.

This project is the result of an extraordinary collaborative effort involving years of planning by the borough and many public and private stakeholders. Ambler Boiler House has had a significant positive impact on the community by attracting new businesses and jobs, enhancing environmental safety, and contributing to the continuing revitalization efforts of the borough.

Arborcrest earned a 2013 Montgomery Award for a successful office campus redevelopment that incorporates environmentally friendly site improvements, sustainable building design, and positive community reinvestment. This exceptional project has brought new life into an older business park by creating a contemporary and sustainable campus.

Arborcrest transformed an aging business park into a modern office development with an emphasis on sustainability, energy conservation, and environmental sensitivity. The buildings, including a large warehouse, were converted into office facilities using green building and sustainable techniques. This phase includes the renovation of three buildings—Lakeside I, Hillcrest I, and Hillcrest II.

An outstanding feature of this project is the comprehensive approach to greening the buildings and campus. All buildings were converted into LEED-certified buildings, and a new amenities center was provided. An entry drive, designed with a landscaped median, roundabout, and new signage, welcomes visitors. Another distinctive site improvement was the redesign of parking lots to incorporate new trees. Landscaped pedestrian walkways create a green corridor and provide safe connections to building entrances. Other project features include the conversion of a parking area into an attractive outdoor plaza, the addition of landscaping to buffer adjacent residences, and the use of best management practices (BMPs) throughout the site to reduce stormwater runoff.

Arborcrest is an exceptional redevelopment project that has had a positive economic impact in the community by revitalizing an office park into a well-designed and appealing campus. This project, with its extensive building renovations and many green features, has provided a sustainable community asset.

Arbor Heights received a 2013 Montgomery Award for successful redevelopment efforts, collaboration, and community revitalization. This outstanding project, which has created an appealing, pedestrian-friendly residential community, has been a catalyst for Norristown's continued revitalization efforts.

Arbor Heights is located along DeKalb Street in a neighborhood that once consisted of magnificent Victorian homes. Over time, this area declined, and many homes were converted to multifamily housing. This project has transformed a blighted site into an attractive, affordable townhouse community. Located within walking distance of public transportation and downtown Norristown, Arbor Heights consists of 12 units in two separate buildings. Built at a density of 30 dwelling units per acre, the developer used the concept of stacked townhouses to design the site. This small infill development was constructed on both sides of a preserved residence. The two new buildings, designed to resemble Victorian mansions, blend seamlessly into the neighborhood. All homes have a private outdoor living area and one off-street parking space. Landscaping and fencing surround the residences, and a small pocket park provides a pleasant gathering area.

The completion of Arbor Heights has been the culmination of years of planning and collaboration among many local, county, state, and federal organizations. This successful project has had a significant impact on Norristown by providing new housing, encouraging home ownership, and preserving historic character. Arbor Heights has transformed this area of Norristown and created an attractive asset that benefits the entire community.

Mosaic Community Garden earned a 2013 Montgomery Award for creative vision, successful collaboration, strong community involvement, and positive neighborhood impact. This popular garden offers an attractive gathering place for residents to grow a variety of produce and learn about healthy living.

Mosaic Community Garden, located at 423 Chestnut Street, was created in 2011 by the Mosaic Community Land Trust (CLT). The lot was previously a neighborhood park but had become dilapidated and unsafe. In 2011, the site was donated by the Pottstown School District for a community garden. The garden features 30 garden plots, new fencing, a stone patio, a bee hive, and a wooden pergola. A tool shed, water, seeds, plants, and mulch are provided for gardeners. A farm stand was constructed by volunteers to sell produce raised in the garden. Twenty-two families and eight organizations currently have garden plots and pay a small annual fee to lease their plot. The garden provides educational workshops for new and experienced gardeners and sponsors many activities for adults and children. The recent hiring of a garden manager to oversee maintenance, coordinate activities, and plan future development demonstrates the success of this project.

The creation of the garden and its continued growth has been an extraordinary collaborative effort with many individuals and partnerships with organizations in the Pottstown area. The Mosaic Community Garden, developed through creative vision and extensive collaboration, has contributed to revitalizing Pottstown and establishing a sense of community. The success of this project has

motivated the Mosaic Community Land Trust to open a second community garden in the neighborhood.

Whitehall Townhouses received a 2013 Montgomery Award for extensive planning and collaboration, creative site design, and attractive architectural features. This well-designed infill project demonstrates how a successful public-private partnership can create an appealing, walkable community while accomplishing important community goals.

Whitehall Townhouses were developed as part of a master plan to transform the Bryn Mawr Hospital into a modern medical campus. Lower Merion created the Bryn Mawr Medical District to guide the expansion of the hospital and redevelopment of the surrounding area. The townhouses were designed as a transitional use from the more intense medical office use to the existing single-family residences. The 28 townhomes are located on 2.7 acres. Directly behind the townhouses is a large parking garage, and across the street are existing residences. The challenge was to successfully integrate this project while respecting the adjoining neighborhood. The 4-story townhouses were designed to visually screen the garage. Outstanding project features include an appealing streetscape design and distinctive townhouse architecture. Front porches and balconies overlook the street, encouraging interaction with neighbors and creating a sense of community.

This project was successfully completed through extensive collaboration between the owners, developer, township, and residents. The site design reflected the goals of the township and the local community while meeting the needs of the owners. Whitehall blends nicely into the existing neighborhood and is within walking distance of public transportation and downtown Bryn Mawr. This project has provided positive economic impacts and is an asset to the community.

Visit www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards for more on the 2013 winners, the awards program, and previous recipients. For further information, contact Rita McKelvey at rmckelve@montcopa.org or 610-278-3753.