

TOWN CENTER NEWS

Winter 2014

A quarterly newsletter on revitalization
and economic development in
Montgomery County's traditional towns



2013 MONTGOMERY AWARDS

In November, two very worthwhile projects won 2013 Montgomery Awards for revitalization—**Arbor Heights** in Norristown and the **Ambler Boiler House**.

Before



After



Arbor Heights is an attractive infill residential development that builds upon Norristown's successful revitalization efforts along the DeKalb Street corridor, which is filled with grand Victorian homes that have ultimately deteriorated. The Arbor Heights project, spearheaded by Progressive Housing Ventures, has brought new life to two of these neglected properties.

Within walking distance of Norristown's transportation hub, employment centers, and local shopping and services, the project contains 12 stacked townhouse dwellings filling two separate buildings. These two- and three-bedroom units provide efficient living space in an affordable and sustainably designed package. The development also dovetails nicely with Norristown's streetscape improvements

– including new granite curbing, brick verges, lighting, trees, and benches – along DeKalb Street. A total project cost of \$2.9 million was supplemented with \$1.2 million in public funding, including funds from the state's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as from Norristown and Montgomery County. Units sold, on average, for \$139,000 – many sold to first time homebuyers who were offered special incentives such as below market rate mortgage financing and cash grants for downpayments and closing costs.



Before

Ambler Boiler House (in Ambler Borough) won a 2013 Montgomery Award for the successful revitalization and transformation of a historic industrial structure into a state-of-the-art office building which incorporates sustainable building design and environmental features. This former brownfield-turned-transit oriented development celebrates the borough's industrial heritage

while advancing local revitalization efforts.

The Ambler Boiler House was built in 1887 as a power-generating station for the Keasbey & Mattison asbestos factory. Once a landmark, the building sat vacant for many years. In 2011, the site's contamination was



After

remediated with the help of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Now the Boiler House is home to 42,000 square feet of Class A multi-tenant office

space. Much of the original look of the building has been preserved, from the brick façade and window openings to the distinctive smokestack. A key feature of this development is that it's within walking distance of the SEPTA Lansdale/Doylestown rail



line. This \$16 million development project received approximately 75% of its financing from local, state and federal funds; the remaining 25% came from private sources.

Overall, these two projects illustrate how public/private partnerships can transform distressed properties in the heart of our older communities.



For additional information, contact the Montgomery County Planning Commission at 610-278-3722 or visit www.planning.montcopa.org

GREAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRANT FUNDS

Planning Funding Available Through the Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI)

This year, funding through the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) will become available to local municipalities for planning projects focused on improving transportation and community development. In Pennsylvania, \$1.2 million will be granted for a wide range of projects that implement DVRPC's long range plan, such as mixed use ordinances, official maps, pedestrian plans, parking management studies, green building ordinances, etc. The TCDI program guide will soon be available at www.dvrpc.org.



The Pennsylvania Gaming Local Share Account (LSA) program was established under the PA Race Horse Development and Gaming Act of 2004.

As a result of the LSA program, there is approximately \$3 million available to applicants in grants not exceeding \$200,000 (with a 25% local match) to provide grants and guarantees for projects in Montgomery County relating to water supply and wastewater infrastructure and the acquisition and development of sites in the county.

Grants are available for the redevelopment, reuse, or revitalization of previously developed land, development of undeveloped land, and projects which construct, expand, or improve water and wastewater infrastructure related to business development. Planning grants are available to fund predevelopment activities and feasibility studies for those projects. Guarantees are available in accordance with the Tax Increment Financing Act.

Applications are due between April 1st and June 30th. For more information, you can access the guidelines at: <http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/local-share-account-lsa-montgomery-county>

Funding Available Through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Funding is now available through the Transportation Alternatives Program. Two years of TAP funding totaling \$7.5 million will fund bicycle and pedestrian facilities, conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails, and stormwater management projects in Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties. Concurrently, the statewide TAP has \$26 million available. There is one application, and projects may be selected as either regional or statewide priorities.

Local governments, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, natural resource or public land agencies, school districts, local education agencies, and schools are eligible to apply for the competitive TAP funds. TAP application forms, program guidance, and more information are available at www.dvrpc.org/TAP/. The application period opened on February 3, 2014 and will close at 5:00 p.m. on April 3, 2014. All applications for the program should be submitted directly to RA-PDPENNDOTTAP@pa.gov. Please direct program questions to Joe Banks, DVRPC Senior Project Implementation Coordinator, at jbanks@dvrpc.org or 215-238-2898.

check out what's happening!

East Passyunk Avenue in South Philadelphia has undergone a dramatic resurgence in the last five years to become one of the most talked about restaurant scenes in Philadelphia. Inquirer food critic Craig LaBan has called it "a neighborhood that's evolved into the city's most exciting culinary scene." The success of the corridor didn't just happen overnight. The Passyunk Avenue Revitalization Corporation (PARC) has played an integral role in making the Avenue and its surrounding neighborhoods conducive to redevelopment by creating a main street atmosphere and beautifying the corridor. Executive Director Sam Sherman notes that the retail scene is now flourishing alongside restaurants as new businesses have capitalized on the increased pedestrian traffic. Successful stores on the Avenue are operating in smaller footprints, offering niche products, staying open during evening hours when people are more active in the neighborhood, and creating effective social media campaigns with a strong online presence.



PARC invested \$60,000 to refurbish the "singing fountain" at 11th and Passyunk. They created a more friendly gathering space for pedestrians by removing a fence around the fountain and installing new benches and planters.



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