Five outstanding projects in Montgomery County will receive a 2012 Montgomery Award

Norristown, PA (November 14, 2012) – 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 and revitalization in Montgomery County and acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.

The program has two major award categories. The Land Development Award focuses on excellence in land development and planning concepts. The three projects honored in this category were Cold Point Manor in Whitemarsh Township; Germantown Academy, Phase 1 in Whitemarsh Township; and, Cynwyd Heritage Trail in Lower Merion Township. The Revitalization Award recognizes successful revitalization projects and programs. The award winners in this category were Cannon Square in Lansdale Borough, and Glenside Commercial District Streetscape Enhancements in Cheltenham Township.

**Cold Point Manor** received a 2012 Montgomery Award for extensive collaborative efforts and effective site design. The project demonstrates how a public/private partnership can result in a well-designed development while accomplishing important transportation improvements. This small townhouse development places dwellings in small groupings of five units surrounding an attractively landscaped open space area. The compact design and distinctive architecture contribute to its human scale and sense of neighborhood. Extensive buffer plantings along the perimeter provide privacy for residents. Sidewalks and the construction of a portion of the county’s Cross County Trail were also installed as part of this development.

Extensive collaboration between the developer and township resulted in a site design that addressed the goals of the township while meeting the needs of the developer. The township’s goal was to
alleviate traffic congestion at the offset intersection of Butler Pike, Flourtown Road, and Plymouth Road. The result of this collaboration was the realignment of Flourtown Road and the development of the site to allow townhouses. The leadership and financing efforts of the developer were instrumental in formulating a public/private partnership, which included Whitemarsh Township, Plymouth Township, PennDOT and the Montgomery County Planning Commission, to complete this important realignment. Cold Point Manor is an outstanding example of a successful collaborative effort between a municipality and developer. This partnership created an appealing neighborhood and accomplished much-needed road improvements.

**Germantown Academy** received a 2012 Montgomery Award for environmentally sensitive site planning, sustainable building design, and restoration of natural features. This outstanding project successfully integrates the school’s natural environment into the campus design and incorporates environmental education into the academic curriculum.

The project, phase 1 of a master plan, involved removing outdated buildings and inappropriate uses along the Wissahickon Creek, which runs through the property, constructing a new 160,000-square-foot upper/middle school, reconfiguring the athletic complex, and restoring natural habitats. School buildings, using innovative green building practices, were reoriented to face the creek, and service areas and athletic fields were relocated from riparian and floodplain areas. The original administration building was preserved and renovated and connects to the new school building by a glass-enclosed walkway, successfully blending the old with the new. An appealing feature of the new building is the mixing of materials such as stone, glass, and steel. An attractive entry plaza serves as the main entrance and gathering area. Germantown Academy hopes to attain gold LEED certification for its new building.

As part of the sustainable goals of this project, a new athletic complex was created. Several athletic fields were relocated out of the floodplain adjacent to the Wissahickon Creek, allowing for the creation of a 6-acre area known as the Preserve. The Preserve contains restored wetlands, ponds, wet meadows, woodlands, walking trails, and wildlife habitats. This exceptional project demonstrates Germantown Academy’s commitment to sustainable design, environmental stewardship, and the education of future community leaders.

The **Cynwyd Heritage Trail** received a 2012 Montgomery Award for an innovative planning concept, preservation of open space, and outstanding collaboration. This successful project transformed an abandoned rail line into an approximate 2.5-mile contemporary linear park that connects the community with its heritage and other natural and recreational amenities. Constructed along the former SEPTA Cynwyd regional rail line, the trail provides connections to neighborhoods, commercial
areas, parks, and institutional properties. The trail is the first phase of a plan aimed to connect the growing regional trail system. A key design feature is that the trail is actually two in one—a paved main trail and a secondary gravel trail. Environmental sustainability was an important design component. Stormwater is captured and directed into swales and rain gardens. The abandoned Barmouth Station was redeveloped into an attractive trailhead, and the historic Cynwyd Station was preserved.

The creation and continued development of the trail has been an extraordinary collaborative effort and is the result of years of planning by the township and many public and private stakeholders. Key to the trail completion was the creation of The Friends of the Cynwyd Trail, a volunteer group that assists the township in advocating and maintaining the trail. The township secured funding for this project from various sources and partnered with numerous organizations, businesses, and community groups. Thousands of hours of volunteer labor has been essential to the trail’s success. This popular trail provides a new public open space, connects the community to its cultural heritage, and is an important future link in the regional trail system.

**Cannon Square**, a new townhouse development, received a 2012 Montgomery Award for the successful transformation of a former industrial property into 28 townhomes that fit seamlessly into their residential surroundings. This project has had a significant impact on the borough, providing new market-rate housing, in what could otherwise be a built-out community, and new residents to support the downtown business corridor. These new homes fill the 1.34-acre site at the intersection of Second and Cannon Streets. Garages that face alleys and common green spaces give this project a more urban feel, appropriate for its surroundings. Its location near the Lansdale train station and the heart of the borough’s downtown has made this a popular place for young families and empty nesters to purchase homes.

Although this development was privately funded, the developers worked closely with the borough to create a final product that suited all parties. The borough made some minor zoning changes to allow this project to move forward quickly, and this has opened the door to future planned redevelopment. Cannon Square is one of several redevelopment projects that W.B. Homes, Inc. has undertaken in the county, and another Lansdale-based project is already in the works. This project, which brought new housing and residents, additional jobs, and an economic boost to the downtown, demonstrates how an underutilized property can be transformed into a community asset.

The **Glenside Commercial District** received a 2012 Montgomery Award for streetscape enhancements that have revitalized the Easton Road corridor, which runs through the heart of Glenside. This excellent project has helped reinvigorate a popular, walkable, aesthetically pleasing neighborhood
where residents and visitors are excited to shop and support local businesses. The improvements run the length of the Easton Road corridor between Arcadia University and the Glenside train station, with the addition of Wesley Plaza to the east.

The creation of Wesley Plaza and the Easton Road streetscape improvements, which include new paver block sidewalks, granite curbs, street furniture, street trees, and wayfinding signage, have helped attract at least ten new businesses to Glenside over the years. This corridor is now home to several special events throughout the year, bringing new patrons, an increase in commercial activity, and new jobs to the area. These changes have also helped to leverage the operation of a seasonal farmers’ market, located at the train station’s parking lot off of Easton Road. Cheltenham’s dedication to this project, as well as its outreach to business owners and local institutions, has helped make downtown Glenside a focal point of the surrounding neighborhoods. This successful project adds new liveliness to the Glenside community, attracting new businesses and providing an enjoyable destination for residents and visitors.

Visit www.planning.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards for more on the 2012 winners, the awards program, and previous recipients. For further information, contact Rita McKelvey at rmckelve@montcopa.org or (610) 278-3753.