MONTGOMERY AWARDS

Excellence in Planning and Design

2018 Award Winner

Lions Gate at Penn State Abington

Abington Township

Lions Gate at Penn State Abington, a transformative redevelopment project that culminated in a unique student living facility for Pennsylvania State University, received a 2018 Montgomery Award for innovative design, community investment, and sustainable practices. This project involved the repurposing of a vacated site, creative and sensitive design, and important community connections.

Community Investment

Lions Gate is the first residential facility at Penn State Abington. Located along a spur of the Route 611/Old York Road corridor, approximately a mile from the college campus, this unique student living apartment complex expands the university's public presence in this historic community while confirming its place as a prominent stakeholder. The university

collaborated with Old York Road Temple-Beth Am synagogue, a neighbor to the south, to create additional parking along the Old York Road spur and participated in neighborhood and public meetings to ensure community support. The project received a grant from the Multimodal Transportation Fund and collaborated with municipal leadership to create a walkable environment. Its proximity to campus, a shuttle van, and a sidewalk and trail system through the neighborhood reduce student commuter impacts on traffic and parking. Its location is also close to the Noble Town Center and station, as well as the library, YMCA, and Abington Hospital – Jefferson Health, and promotes walking and bicycling to shops, restaurants, and transit. This former car dealership property now houses 400 students who shop locally for supplies, food, and entertainment.

Innovative Design

The 5-story building, which has 86 apartments containing 400 beds, provides a hybrid living experience for first-year students, integrating the social aspects of traditional dorm life with private apartment living. The unique Z-shape configuration on the site minimizes the mass of the building by making it impossible to experience the entire structure from one viewpoint. This unique design also creates usable space and a sense of place. The internal angle at the front becomes the perfect place for the long, covered entrance that creates a sense of arrival. This is complemented by connecting walkways, seating walls, and appealing gathering spaces, which are enhanced by the beautiful and functional rain gardens that create natural places for students to socialize. The internal angle at the rear creates a place for a more private sitting

area and lawn for informal games. Although the viewer only sees a restful green space, this area also doubles as a fire lane. The building materials used, including a variety of brickwork, local Wissahickon schist, and exposed steel, combine to create a sleek, modern building that successfully blends into the fabric of the neighborhood. This building not only provides for much-needed student housing but also has transformed a neglected site into a community asset.

Sustainable Practices

This 2.7-acre site, which is surrounded by a residential neighborhood as well as the synagogue, was formerly an automobile dealership with approximately 95 percent impervious coverage and no stormwater management. Now with approximately 50 percent impervious coverage, the environmentally sensitive site design integrates the unique building configuration with just enough parking for staff. This new sustainable landscape combines usable outdoor space with attractive and functional bioretention swales and rain gardens. Two underground detention basins also contribute to stormwater management, dramatically reducing the total runoff from the site. The LEED Gold certified building, which includes extensive daylighting with operable windows, low-flow/dual-flush plumbing fixtures, and energy recovery units in each wing, was constructed using 100-year durability guidelines. This state-of-the-art sustainable student housing seamlessly accommodates the needs of the contemporary student.

Lions Gate at Penn State Abington is an outstanding example of successful site reuse and sustainable design. This exemplary redevelopment project transformed a neglected site into a community amenity that helps to complete the fabric of Penn State University and Abington Township.

SMP Architects

Location

1001 Old York Road
Abington Township
Montgomery County

Project Data

Land Use
Institutional - School

Tract Size
2.71 acres

Zoning
PB - Planned Business District

Building Area
140,850 square feet

Parking

53 spaces

Key Features

- Redevelopment
- Site Planning
- Architectural Design
- Environmentally Sensitive/Sustainable Design
- LEED/Energy Efficiency

Owner/Developer

Pennsylvania State University
201 Old Main
University Park, PA 16802

Engineer

Pennoni
1501 Main Street, Suite 220
Warrington, PA 18976

Architect

SMP Architects
1600 Walnut Street, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Landscape Architect

Viridian Landscape Studio
3868 Terrace Street
Philadelphia, PA 19128

MEP Engineer

H.F. Lenz Company
1407 Scalp Avenue
Johnstown, PA 15904

Structural Engineer

Build Form LLC
304 Country Club Drive
Wilmington, DE 19803

Construction Manager

Turner Construction Company
1500 Spring Garden Street, Suite 220
Philadelphia, PA 19130

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