

MONTGOMERY AWARDS

Excellence in Planning and Design

2021 Award Winner



Whitemarsh Station Whitemarsh Township

Whitemarsh Station received a 2021 Montgomery Award for contemporary design concept, collaborative planning, and innovative stormwater management. This successful infill project, consisting of 23 single-family zero-lot-line homes, is a unique development for Montgomery County. Through outstanding collaboration, this project has been marketed as

an alternative to a traditional townhouse community. While it has homes similar in size to a townhouse community and a homeowners association, Whitemarsh Station has no party walls and offers private backyards, an inviting streetscape, and views to a large, attractive rain garden.



Contemporary Design Concept

This appealing zero-lot-line community, located along Butler Pike, represents a planning concept that is not often used in the region. The single-family detached homes are built with one wall placed along the boundary line of the lot, creating a side yard between homes that belongs to one homeowner only and offers greater usability. Placing the single homes on smaller lots, averaging only 6,100 square feet, provides the benefits of efficient land use and the ability to meet the townhouse market for size and affordability. This creative infill project utilizes a loop road, with homes nestled along both sides of the street, creating the feel and intimacy of a small neighborhood. The neighborhood feeling is enhanced by a village architectural style and an inviting streetscape that includes street trees and other landscaping, which is often lacking from traditional townhouse developments. Each home has a backyard and deck with some bordering the rain garden, which is centrally located along with guest parking.

Collaborative Planning

Effective collaborative planning, enhanced by an established public-private partnership, was key in the success of this development. The site was originally zoned CLI, Campus-type Limited Industrial District, a light industrial/office district in the township. The developer approached the township with the inspired idea of rezoning this somewhat unusable industrial property to allow for a zero-lot-line housing alternative. The



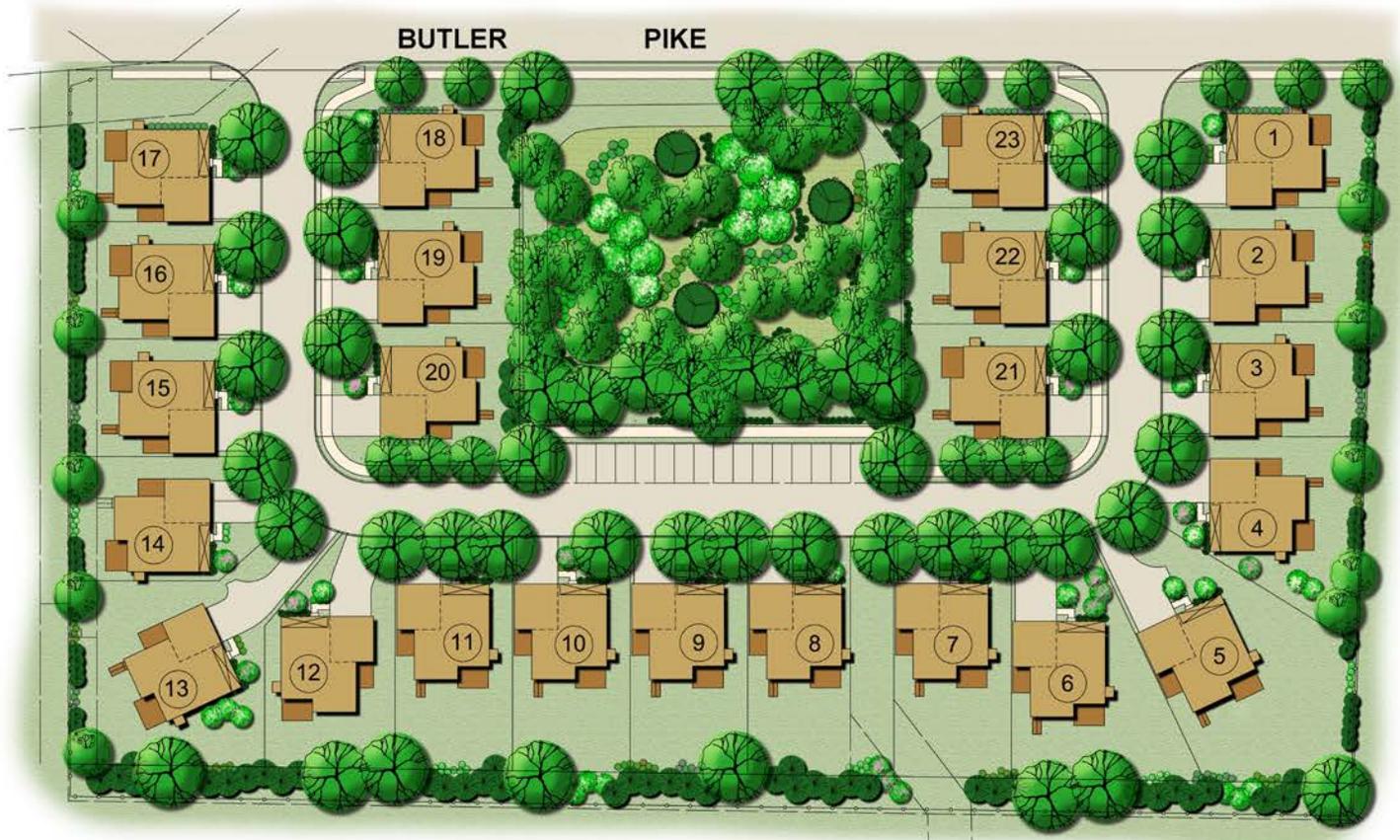


township, which had collaborated many times with the developer over the years, was open to investing in this positive land use change. Municipal officials and the Whitmarsh Township Planning Commission, working cooperatively with the developer, determined that the approach should be to rezone the property to the AD, Attached Dwelling District, with a text amendment to add single-family zero-lot-line homes as a permitted use. They also ensured appropriate dimensional standards were included and investigated the potential applicability for similarly zoned properties in the future. In addition, collaboration with the owners of the adjoining industrial use to the rear of the property resulted in the replanting of a required buffer on the industrial property to provide more usable backyards for the homeowners.



Innovative Stormwater Management

A key feature of this project is the large, centrally located rain garden that prominently borders Butler Pike and is the heart of the project. This beautifully landscaped stormwater management area was thoughtfully designed to replicate the wooded portion of the site. The design approach of this appealing focal point was to have a naturalized basin instead of the typical basin with mown turf and an obtrusive outlet structure. An enhanced rain garden design was accomplished with amended soils, an innovative approach to grading to accommodate its size, and an extensive native plant palette. Ridges were created in the middle to allow for shade trees and



woody shrubs that would not survive in a wet bottom, and water-loving species were selected for the wet areas to add diversity to the rain garden. One of the challenges in creating the rain garden, a gas pipeline under Butler Pike, resulted in an elevated basin outfall and the shallow, yet effective design of the rain garden.

Whitemarsh Station, an excellent example of the value of vision and the establishment of public-private partnerships, has transformed this area of the township into an appealing residential community. This successful infill project, which has created a unique neighborhood offering the privacy of single-family detached home living, an impressive rain garden, and the luxury of associated maintenance, can serve as an exceptional model for an alternative to townhouse developments.



Location

5130-5136 Butler Pike
Whitemarsh Township
Montgomery County

Project Data

Land Use

Residential

Tract Size

4.60 Acres

Zoning

AD Attached Dwelling District

Density

23 Dwelling Units (5 per acre)

Parking

61 Spaces (2 per unit; 15 visitor spaces)

Key Features

- Innovative Planning/Zoning Concept
- Streetscape Enhancement
- Innovative Stormwater Management
- Collaborative Effort

Developer

Sal Paone, Builder/Phipps Station Group, LLC
1120 N. Bethlehem Pike
Spring House, PA 19477

Architect

Luce Architects
5502 N. Easton Road
Doylestown, PA 18902

Landscape Architect

InFocus Planning, LLC
7715 Crittenden Street #343
Philadelphia, PA 19118

Engineer

Charles E. Shoemaker, Inc.
1007 Edge Hill Road
Abington, PA 19001

The annual Montgomery Awards recognize the best in planning, design, and advocacy in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

The program acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.

www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards



Montgomery County Board of Commissioners

Valerie A. Arkoosh, MD, MPH, *Chair* • Kenneth E. Lawrence, Jr., *Vice Chair* • Joseph C. Gale, *Commissioner*



Montgomery County Planning Commission, P.O. Box 311, Norristown, PA 19404-0311 • www.montcopa.org/planning