

MONTGOMERY AWARDS

Excellence in Planning and Design

2022 Award Winner



The Willows at East Greenville

East Greenville Borough

The Willows at East Greenville received a 2022 Montgomery Award for housing equity, adaptive reuse and historic preservation, and community collaboration. This exceptional adaptive reuse project, which created 71 high-quality units

of mixed-income rental housing in the heart of the Upper Perkiomen Valley, transformed a deteriorated building listed on the National Register of Historic Places into an appealing and affordable place to live.



Housing Equity

The Willows at East Greenville was developed as a partnership between a nonprofit affordable housing advocacy group focused on revitalizing older communities and a leading affordable housing developer with a history of adaptive reuse projects. These partners conducted community outreach from the outset of the project to ensure community concerns were addressed throughout the development process. Hundreds of applications were received when the development first opened, clearly demonstrating the local need for this type of housing. This project also addressed an overall housing need in the community and offers market-rate as well as affordable rental units to the area.

Contributing to this high-quality living experience, the project includes a renovated carriage house, courtyard, community room, fitness center, and playground, as well as passive open space. Located just blocks from East Greenville's Main Street and directly adjacent to a school, the project's sidewalk additions connect to the downtown, positioning The Willows at East Greenville to be a seamless part of the borough and the region.

Adaptive Reuse & Historic Preservation

The developer, with a history of successful adaptive reuse projects, saw the unique potential in bringing new life to the former Boyertown Casket Company facility, which specialized in the manufacture of hardwood and cloth-covered softwood caskets. Posters highlighting celebrities who were buried in Boyertown Casket Company caskets are displayed throughout the building's common areas and hallways as an homage to the facility's heyday in the early 20th Century.

The distinctive brick complex was built in three separate stages in 1880, 1919, and 1925. National Park Service guidelines required existing historical elements in each wing of the building to be retained and exposed, creating design challenges for the development team to address as the project progressed. Each of the three building sections had a different structural system and ceiling heights, so each unit throughout the building is unique. Interior common areas and hallways showcase the building's industrial history through the preservation of a historic staircase and elevator shaft, exposed brick walls, industrial



columns and beams, and other authentic features, such as the original fire doors between the various wings of the building. As a requirement to meet historic preservation guidelines, over 500 new windows were specially designed and constructed to fit the existing openings and were all composed of black metal framing to provide continuity between the three wings.

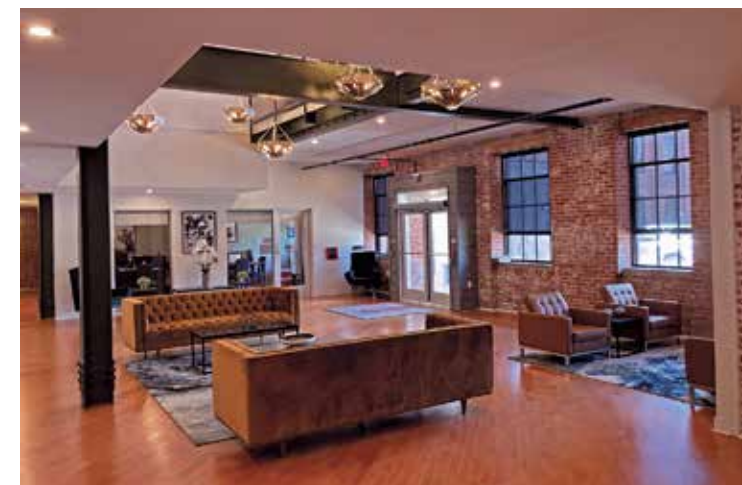
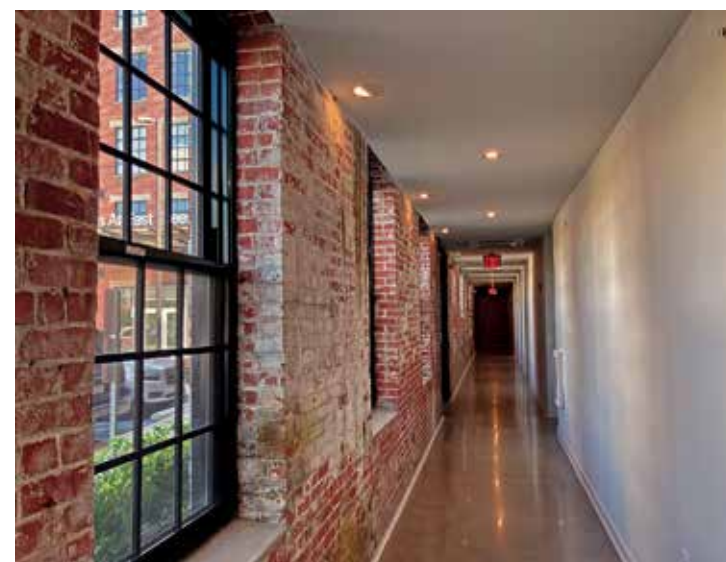
A variety of unique floor plans offers fully equipped kitchens, large windows, and energy-efficient appliances. Some units feature vaulted ceilings and preserved features from the original structure, further enhancing the site's visual historical references. The Willows at East Greenville is certified to meet Enterprise Green Communities criteria, a national affordable housing standard for green building, while also being designed to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Community Collaboration

When approached about the opportunity to adaptively reuse the former manufacturing facility, East Greenville Borough agreed to modify its zoning to permit multifamily conversions of large buildings built prior to 1940 in the Limited Industrial zoning district. Borough officials recognized this unique opportunity to meet multiple community needs by providing high-quality, attainable housing while also repurposing the prominent historic building in a way that would positively contribute to the neighborhood.

The development was partially funded by Historic Preservation Tax Credits, the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program, and by Montgomery County HOME and Housing Trust Funds. This combination of creative financing further demonstrates the level of collaboration that made this successful mixed-income housing development possible.

The Willows at East Greenville is an outstanding example of how collaboration between private and public entities and the community can result in the successful adaptive reuse and historic preservation of a deteriorated prominent and iconic building. Through the historically sensitive renovation work and extensive local collaboration, the property was transformed into an energy-efficient and attractive residential project. This exceptional project provides much-needed and affordable housing for dozens of Montgomery County families and contributes to the vibrancy of East Greenville Borough.



Location

401 W. Fourth Street
East Greenville Borough
Montgomery County

Project Data

Land Use

Residential

Tract Size

4.29 Acres

Zoning

Limited Industrial District

Building Area

97,981 SF (71 Dwelling Units)

Parking

121 Spaces

Key Features

- Affordable Housing
- Historic Preservation/Restoration
- Adaptive Reuse
- Collaborative Effort

Owners/Developers

Genesis Housing Corporation
1430 DeKalb Street, Suite 2020
Norristown, PA 19401

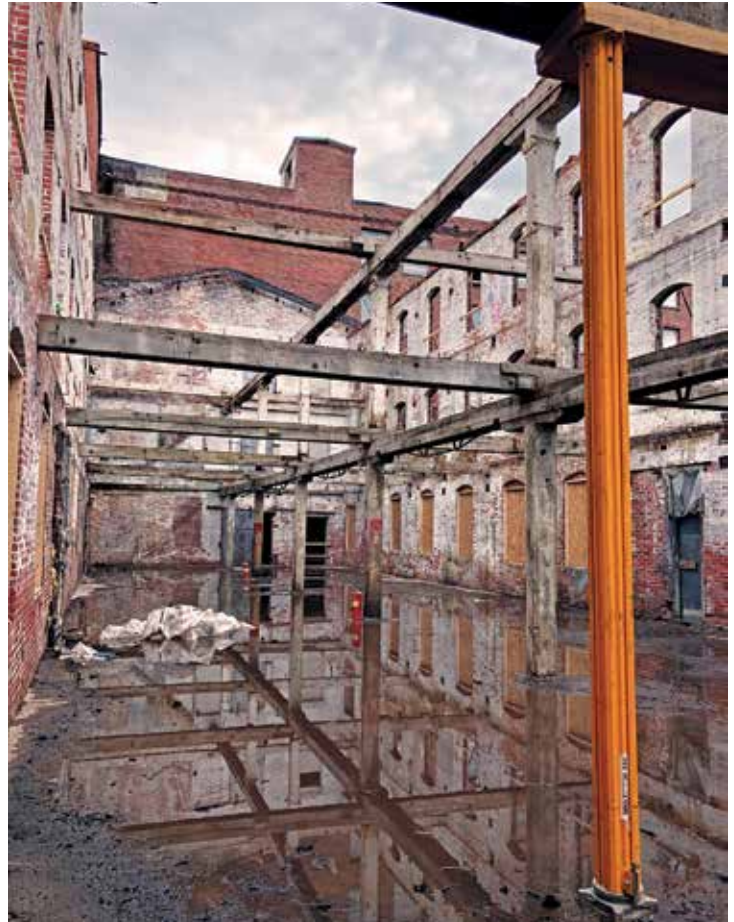
Ingerman/MBI Development Company, Inc.
5 Powell Lane
Collingswood, NJ 08108

Engineer

Bohler Engineering
1600 Manor Drive, Suite 200
Chalfont, PA 18914

Architect

Donovan Architects
9 Tanner Street, Suite 201
Haddonfield, NJ 08033



The 1880 wing of the building was in such a state of disrepair that much of the interior of the building had to be completely rebuilt, while the outside brick walls were preserved and exposed.

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



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