

# MONTGOMERY AWARDS

Excellence in Planning and Design

*2013 Award Winner*



## ARBOR HEIGHTS Municipality of Norristown

Arbor Heights, a new townhouse community in Norristown, received a 2013 Montgomery Award for successful redevelopment efforts, attractive infill affordable housing, collaboration, and community revitalization. This exceptional project, which has created an appealing, pedestrian-friendly residential community, has been a catalyst for Norristown's continued revitalization efforts.

### Background

Arbor Heights, located at the intersection of Elm Street and DeKalb Street, is part of the DeKalb Street corridor. This area originally consisted of magnificent Victorian homes, once referred to as Millionaires Row, but over time declined, and many homes were converted to multifamily rental properties. Norristown considers this corridor an important gateway into its community



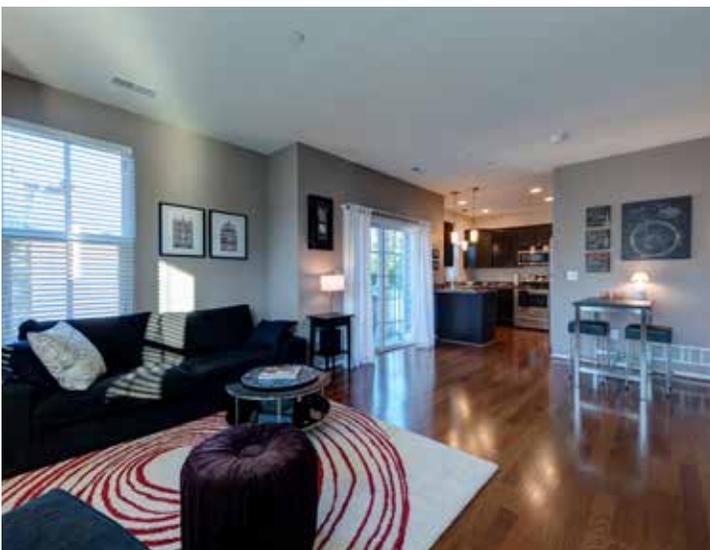
Before



and has envisioned successful building renovation, redevelopment, and home ownership opportunities in this area. In 2000, Norristown obtained funding to purchase and demolish two derelict buildings along DeKalb Street, which started the redevelopment process. In 2011, Progressive Housing Ventures, whose mission is to revitalize existing neighborhoods with new infill housing, began development of Arbor Heights.

### Concept

Arbor Heights, a pedestrian-friendly site located within walking distance of public transportation, shopping, services, employment centers, and recreational opportunities, consists of 12 units in two separate buildings. The project has transformed a blighted site into an attractive, affordable residential community. The developer used the innovative concept of stacked townhouses to creatively design the site. The stacked configuration consists of three 2-story townhouses over three 2-story townhouses in each building. Built at a density of 30 dwelling units per acre, these two- and three-bedroom units provide efficient living in less square footage and at reduced costs. The residences, built to be both affordable and sustainable, feature energy-efficient building techniques including high-efficiency mechanical systems. This development was able to incorporate existing infrastructure, such as utilities, to keep construction costs down. The municipality had recently completed extensive streetscape improvements to DeKalb Street, including new granite curbing, brick sidewalks, lighting, trees, and benches, creating an appealing streetscape for the new homes.





## Design Features

This small infill development was constructed on both sides of a century-old preserved residence. The two new buildings, designed to resemble the historic Victorian mansions existing in the neighborhood, respect historic character. These buildings blend seamlessly into the neighborhood, preserving the streetscape. The buildings feature complementary materials, colors, and architectural details to enhance the historic character. Appealing details include brick facades, varied roof lines, window design and placement, front porches, dormers, and shutters. All homes have a private outdoor living area, either a small porch or balcony. Despite the limited lot area, one off-street parking space was provided for each unit. Lush landscaping and fencing surround the residences, offering an inviting



setting. A wooden pergola planted with vines screens the adjacent neighbor, while a small rain garden manages stormwater. A pocket park on the corner provides seating, a grill, and pet station, creating an attractive gathering area for residents.

## Collaboration and Funding

The completion of Arbor Heights has been the culmination of years of planning and collaboration among many local, county, state, and federal organizations and continues the vision of Norristown. The cost of the project was \$2.9 million with approximately \$1.2 million from public funding. Funding came from several sources including the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) HOME grant from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Norristown, Montgomery County, Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The townhomes, affordably priced between \$120,000 and the low \$150,000's, had an average sale price of \$139,000. Arbor Heights promoted first-time homeownership for qualified buyers with below-market-rate mortgage financing and cash grants for down payments and closing costs. Many of the owner-occupied residences were purchased by first-time home buyers.



Arbor Heights has had a significant impact on Norristown by providing new housing, encouraging home ownership, and becoming a catalyst for the renovation and revitalization of other properties in the neighborhood. This successful project, which has preserved historic character, provided affordable housing, and transformed this area of Norristown, has created an attractive asset that benefits the entire community.

## Location

1000 & 1010 Dekalb Street  
(corner of Dekalb and Elm Streets)  
Norristown  
Montgomery County, PA

## Project Data

### Land use

Residential (12 townhouses)

### Zoning

HC-Health Care District with R-1A Residential Standards

### Tract size

.385 acres

### Density

12 total units/30 units per acre

### Building area

4,730 square feet

### Open space

.06 acres (2,720 square feet)

## Key Features

- Redevelopment
- Affordable housing
- Collaboration effort
- Architectural design
- Economic impacts
- Site design

## Developer

Arbor Heights LLC  
Five Great Valley Parkway, Suite 210  
Malvern, PA 19355

## Construction Manager

Progressive Housing Ventures, LLC  
Five Great Valley Parkway, Suite 210  
Malvern, PA 19355

## Architect

BartonPartners  
700 East Main Street, 3rd Floor  
Norristown, PA 19401

## Landscape Architect

Michael Wagoner Designs  
241 Jefferis Road  
Downingtown, PA 19355

## Civil Engineer

Advanced Geo Services  
1055 Andrew Drive, Suite A  
West Chester, PA 19380

## Structural Engineer

Elton & Thompson P.C.  
2615 Jenkintown Road  
Glenside, PA 19038

## Marketing & Sales

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Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

The annual Montgomery Awards recognize the best in planning and design in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The program acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.  
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