

MONTGOMERY AWARDS

Excellence in Planning and Design

2015 Award Winner



Dixon Meadow Preserve Whitemarsh Township

Dixon Meadow Preserve, an exceptional open space preservation project in Whitemarsh Township, earned a 2015 Montgomery Award for successful community collaboration, sustainable site design, and habitat creation. This project is an outstanding example of how extraordinary collaboration and partnerships can result in the creation of an invaluable recreational and environmental amenity in a community.

Vision and Collaboration

The Dixon Meadow Preserve, located at Thomas and Flourtown Roads, is a 14-acre naturalized area created to

manage stormwater, provide natural habitat, and offer passive recreation for the community. The preserve is located within the 98-acre Angus Tract, which is part of the 450-acre preserved Erdenheim Farm. The farm, whose name means “earthly home” in German, has been in continuous agricultural use since colonial times. It is one of the few remaining large farm tracts in southeastern Pennsylvania and the only one that still remains adjacent to Philadelphia. Erdenheim Farm is part of over 2,000 acres of continuous open space in the Wissahickon Valley and plays a critical environmental role by forming part of an important greenway system along the Wissahickon Creek. The preserve was named to recognize the



Photo by Brian Henderson



Dixon family's long stewardship of the farm. Preserving, establishing, and maintaining the farm involved a lengthy process and successful collaboration by many dedicated partners. This effort, led by the Whitemarsh Foundation, included collaboration with the property owners, every level of government, many nonprofit and conservation organizations, and the local community. Dixon Meadow Preserve, created through extensive public involvement, has achieved multiple community goals, instituted creative funding, and has become an inviting natural area.

Sustainable Site Design

A significant goal in the creation of Dixon Meadow Preserve was stormwater management. With the development of The Hill at Whitemarsh, a retirement community adjacent to Erdenheim Farm, drainage across the farm had been altered. The preserve would convert the 14 acres of farmland to a high-quality natural area while returning the stormwater flow to a more natural condition and incorporating better stormwater detention. The design manages stormwater runoff, minimizes damage from erosion, and decreases flooding along Flourtown Road. A naturalized swale traverses the preserve and directs runoff to a forebay and pond where it is retained and released slowly—helping to control runoff, reduce flooding, and improve water quality to the Wissahickon Creek. The preserve is planted with a mix of warm season grasses, wildflowers, native trees, and shrubs. The entire 14 acres were designed to become a meadow and provide valuable habitat for wildlife, birds, and insects. The fields, wetland, and pond provide diverse habitats that attract a variety of wildlife and bird species.



Photo by Brian Henderson

The Preserve

Dixon Meadow Preserve was designed as a community amenity. To encourage public access and education, a trail network was developed that included an asphalt trail and an extensive boardwalk over the wetlands. This loop trail begins at the parking lot and meanders through diverse habitats from open water to wetlands and dry upland meadows. Trail parking is provided in a small lot adjacent to the historic farmhouse on Flourtown Road. The boardwalk, constructed of recycled wood, is approximately 650 feet long with seating for viewing and nature study. This loop trail connects to a turf trail leading to The Hill at Whitemarsh. In the future, the preserve trail will be linked to the regional trail system including the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association Green Ribbon Trail and the Montgomery County Cross County Trail. Attractive signs that educate visitors about the farm history, regional open space, meadow ecology, stormwater management, environmental education, and birds and wildlife, are found throughout the preserve. Twelve bluebird boxes, built by a local resident, were placed along the trail. During the nesting season, volunteers monitor the boxes and collect data for the Cornell University Bluebird and Tree Swallow NestWatch research program. The



preserve has been identified as a Pennsylvania Audubon Bird Habitat. It serves as a living laboratory, providing opportunities to partner with local educational organizations to study early farming and agricultural life, ecology, sustainability, and land stewardship.

Dixon Meadow Preserve is a beautiful natural area that has achieved the goal of improving stormwater runoff while providing valuable native habitat. The preserve offers a tranquil place for visitors to enjoy scenic views and study wildlife and has become a haven for birders, walkers, and those who appreciate nature.



Key Features

- Collaborative efforts
- Open space preservation
- Innovative stormwater management
- Environmentally sensitive design
- Habitat enhancement

Location

548 Flourtown Road
(Intersection of Flourtown Road and Thomas Road)
Whitemarsh Township
Montgomery County

Project Data

Land Use

Preserved open space

Tract Size

14 acres - Dixon Meadow Preserve
98 acres - Angus Tract
450 acres - Erdenheim Farm

Zoning

AAA Residential

Parking

8 parking spaces

Owner/Developer

Whitemarsh Foundation
P.O. Box 538
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

Engineer

Hibbeln Engineering Company, LLC
593 Skippack Pike, Suite 300
Blue Bell, PA 19422

Metz Engineers, Inc. (trail head parking/path)
410 Derstine Avenue
Lansdale, PA 19446

Land Planner/Landscape Architect

LandConcepts Group, LLC
593 Skippack Pike, Suite 300
Blue Bell, PA 19422

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

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