



# NEWS

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## **Five Outstanding Projects and an Exceptional Leader in Open Space Planning Receive 2016 Montgomery Awards**

**Norristown, PA (November 10, 2016)** – Five outstanding projects and their creators and an exceptional leader and advocate of open space planning and preservation in Montgomery County were honored last night at the Montgomery Awards ceremony sponsored by the Montgomery County Planning Commission. This annual program recognizes the best in planning, design, and advocacy in Montgomery County and acknowledges the high-quality work and commitment of communities, organizations, and professionals.

The five projects receiving Montgomery Awards were The Courts at Spring Mill Station in Whitemarsh Township, Narberth Place in Narberth Borough, Einstein Medical Center Montgomery in East Norriton Township, the Sustainability and Innovation Hub of Montgomery County Community College in Pottstown Borough, and Reliance Crossing in Souderton Borough. In addition to these projects, Paul W. Meyer, The F. Otto Haas Executive Director of the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania, received a 2016 Planning Advocate Award.

“This year’s award winners are examples of excellence in planning and design with important project characteristics such as transit-and trail-oriented development, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and sustainable site design. All of our winners, including our exceptional planning advocate award recipient, Paul Meyer, have a positive impact in our communities and show that Montgomery County is growing and adapting in valuable ways,” said Jody L. Holton, AICP, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission.

**The Courts at Spring Mill Station** received a 2016 Montgomery Award for creative site planning, pedestrian amenities and enhancements, and positive community reinvestment. This successful transit-oriented redevelopment project, located adjacent to SEPTA’s Spring Mill Station and the Schuylkill River Trail, offers convenient pedestrian access and scenic views of the Schuylkill River. The Courts at Spring Mill Station

transformed a former industrial property into 385 luxury apartments. This was the first project to be developed under Whitemarsh Township's Riverfront Development Overlay District. The project, consisting of two four-story apartment buildings, involved innovative garage placement and design. The architectural details of the buildings reflect the area's industrial heritage. This development provides many amenities, such as a resort-style pool, clubroom, and fitness facilities. It also provides community amenities including public parking and inviting outdoor gathering areas. A well-designed courtyard, located between the apartment buildings, serves as a convenient pedestrian connection from Hector Street to the train station and trail. The project also included the preservation and transformation of the historic 1770 Miller's House into a bike shop and café. The Courts at Spring Mill Station is an outstanding transit-oriented development that provides its residents and the public with convenient access to transit and recreational amenities.

**Narberth Place** received a 2016 Montgomery Award for exceptional adaptive reuse, historic preservation, creative site design, and successful community collaboration. This outstanding project preserved and creatively transformed two historic landmark buildings in Narberth – the United Methodist Church of Narberth and its parsonage – into unique residential condominiums and enhanced the property with new complementary townhouses. The developer worked closely with the borough to save these iconic buildings and to convert them into residences. A façade easement was placed on both the church and parsonage, permanently protecting architectural details and materials. The impressive stone church, with its stunning stained-glass windows, was creatively transformed into six luxury condominiums and is now called Elm Hall. Many of the church's original architectural features were preserved and incorporated into the elegant residential design. The basement of the church was converted into parking for residents and provides convenient access. The 1881 Barrie House, the former parsonage, was converted into three condominiums. Its historic architectural details, including seven original fireplaces, a stone porch, and a Juliet balcony, were preserved. Designed to resemble a turn-of-the-century manor house, Vauclain Manor consists of three new townhomes that blend with the adjacent Barrie House and the historic character of the neighborhood. Narberth Place demonstrates how successful adaptive reuse can preserve treasured buildings in our communities in a way that respects the past while embracing the future.

**Einstein Medical Center Montgomery**, an outstanding twenty-first century healthcare facility, received a 2016 Montgomery Award for creative vision, sensitive site planning, and sustainable design. Built on a former golf course across from the scenic Norristown Farm Park, the vision for the design of this medical campus as a landscape for healing was inspired by the natural beauty of the surrounding area. The project involved a natural and sustainable design approach that included the sensitive placement of buildings near the center of the site, preserving much of the property as open space. This 82-acre campus includes a five-story hospital and an adjacent two-story medical arts building. Berms planted with native grasses, wildflower meadows, and many trees surround the site and naturally screen adjacent residences. The stunning architecture of the hospital adds a dramatic element to the natural landscape. An impressive five-story open atrium with a striking glass wall provides abundant natural light and pleasant views to the neighboring farm park. This project combined innovative site planning and green building practices to earn Silver LEED certification. Other sustainable design features include an exceptional green parking lot that uses stormwater best management practices. An inviting healing garden, with lush landscaping, a pergola, seating, and a unique

fountain, creates a pleasant outdoor space. Installed sidewalks connect the campus to Germantown Pike and the neighboring Norristown Farm Park. The project also involved the creation of a walking trail in the farm park. Einstein Medical Center Montgomery, a result of successful collaboration, provides positive economic impacts and is an asset in the community.

**The Sustainability and Innovation Hub** of Montgomery County Community College received a 2016 Montgomery Award for sustainable design, successful restoration, vision, and collaborative efforts. This unique adaptive reuse project transformed a former PECO energy substation and brownfield site into an impressive center for education, innovation, and conservation. The borough had long envisioned redevelopment of this property located adjacent to Riverfront Park and the Schuylkill River Trail. Over the years, the property had experienced improvements including converting the building into offices with the assistance of state, county, and local governments and the Montgomery County Lands Trust. The Schuylkill River Heritage Area relocated its offices to the site in 2002. In 2007, the college took ownership and began rehabilitating the site to expand its campus. The initial phase included the design of an innovative green parking lot, which is shared with visitors to the adjacent park and trail. The college installed LED lighting throughout the parking lot and four wind turbines on the site, which produce enough energy to power the lighting. The project involved extensive building renovations and remediation. Improvements included a green roof, a new accessible entrance, energy-efficient windows, and water and sewer services upgrade. The final phase, completed in 2016, involved the construction of the Sustainability and Innovation Hub. The first floor features an innovative Aquaponics/Hydroponics teaching laboratory. The second floor is the Engineering Design Center. The third floor provides flexible innovation space for collaboration. This project involved extensive collaboration with many private and public partners. The college partnered with the Schuylkill River Heritage Area to develop an interpretive center, and many partners helped create Pottstown RiverWalk, an adjacent one-mile trail that connects to the Schuylkill River Trail. This state-of-the-art center offers opportunities for the community to learn, share information, and work together to create a healthy and sustainable environment.

**Reliance Crossing**, a well-designed affordable housing community, received a 2016 Montgomery Award for sensitive site design, appealing architectural details, and positive community impact. This attractive rental community created affordable housing for families with a range of income levels in Montgomery County. The property, a focus of the borough's redevelopment plans, had the appropriate zoning and available utilities and was one of the last remaining redevelopment opportunities in Souderton Borough. The project, a result of successful partnerships, received major funding from the state and county. This well-designed development contains 56 apartments in 10 buildings and was designed with architectural details inspired by Souderton's historic architecture. The buildings blend with the character of the neighborhood and enhance the streetscape. The residential-scale buildings are designed to be accessible to persons with disabilities. Each appealing residence has a private entry and a small patio, porch, or deck. Reliance Crossing also contains a village green, tot lot, community building, and rain gardens. This pedestrian-friendly neighborhood offers access to public transit and is in walking distance to many destinations in the borough. The project, which brings much-needed affordable housing to this area, has become a true community asset.

**Paul W. Meyer** received a 2016 Planning Advocate Award in recognition of his exceptional leadership and advocacy in the planning, preservation, and stewardship of Montgomery County's special natural places. During his 40-year tenure at the Morris Arboretum, he has played a significant role in transforming the arboretum into a world-class public garden. As a visionary, Paul shares his knowledge and expertise and excels at building relationships among various public and private stakeholders. He has worked successfully with the county, communities, many organizations, and others for the betterment of the county and region. Paul has dedicated 18 years of service to Montgomery County, serving on its open space task force and open space board, where he helped to develop the county's first open space program and the Green Fields Green Towns program. In his work with the board and his role at the Morris Arboretum, Paul has been instrumental in successfully preserving the iconic Erdenheim Farm and scenic landscape of the surrounding Wissahickon Valley. Under his leadership, the arboretum constructed the award-winning Platinum LEED Horticulture Center, demonstrating a long-term commitment to sustainable practices. He is an internationally recognized plant explorer, has written many publications, is active with many organizations, and has received various awards. Paul's many achievements come from his passion of ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to be inspired by the natural world and his desire to connect people, places, and plants through greenways and trails, parks, and preserved open spaces.

Visit [www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards](http://www.montcopa.org/MontgomeryAwards) for more on the 2016 winners, the awards program, and a searchable database of all award recipients. For further information, please contact Rita McKelvey at [rmckelvelve@montcopa.org](mailto:rmckelvelve@montcopa.org) or 610-278-3753.