

MONTGOMERY AWARDS

Excellence in Planning and Design

2018 Award Winner



Cheltenham Elementary School Cheltenham Township

Cheltenham Elementary School, a successful redevelopment project that resulted in a new public education campus within the Cheltenham School District, earned a 2018 Montgomery Award for community vision, creative building design, and the creation of a sustainable landscape. This excellent project involved the reuse of an existing school site, innovative stormwater measures, the preservation of mature trees, and new community connections.

Community Vision

Cheltenham Elementary School is a new K-4 complex built on the same 10-acre site as the original 1950s building. The school district, after evaluating the options of renovating the original building, building a new facility at a different location, or replacing the building on-site, decided it was important to keep the school in the community. A new





Gilbert Architects Inc.

energy-efficient school was built to provide for the district's enhanced educational program. By not relocating to an undeveloped site, which may have required additional bussing or an increase of infrastructure and services, this project gained points toward its LEED Silver certification. With the school remaining in the community and near residences, the district continues to encourage walking and bicycling to school. Bicycle racks are provided, and there is an extensive sidewalk network. As part of the school's continued community commitment, students plant and maintain several vegetable gardens and donate the harvest to organizations in the community.

Creative Building Design

Cheltenham Elementary School, a LEED Silver certified building, is the second green and sustainably designed school in the district. Through creative use of the existing site topography, the school's main entrance, which fronts on Ashbourne Road, accesses the main upper floor. A partial lower level, located to the rear, is accessible from Front Street. This building design allows for an increased population of 600 students and for the effective separation of common areas, such as the library, gymnasium, and cafeteria, from the classrooms. It also helps to safely separate car traffic in the front of the building and bus drop-off in the back. The design fosters a sense of community within the school. After entering from the upper and lower levels, students gather in the centrally located cafeteria and gymnasium before going to their classrooms. This sense of community is further emphasized by grouping each grade in a pod configuration with supporting spaces. Building orientation; emphasis on recycled, sustainable, and local materials that are durable as well as cost effective and aesthetically pleasing; and the use of high-performance systems for air, light, and water quality and usage all contribute to the building's innovation and efficiency. To honor the school's history, several historic elements, such as the original bronze





plaque located in the lobby, along with the one commemorating the new building, and a display of preserved Mercer tiles, which enhanced the fireplaces in the original building, were added to the new building.

Sustainable Landscape

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) measures utilized in this project extended beyond the building walls. Just as the community commitment extended indoors to the school environment, the commitment to sustainability and education has extended out to the gardens and to the community beyond, which is reflected in the overall site design. The original school had no stormwater facilities and limited amenities. The new facility has ample parking, new playgrounds, and an extensive stormwater system. A series of rain gardens are located in highly visible areas along Ashbourne Road and Front Street and work in conjunction with numerous underground infiltration and detention systems that provide for stormwater recharge as well as a reduction in peak flows. Two green roofs and a waterfall feature, part of a whole system connected to the building roof drains and gutters, capture rain and water the gardens, which contain native plants. In addition, an impressive 85 percent of the trees on the site were preserved. During the demolition of the former school building, materials were recycled and reused wherever possible, and recycled rubber was used for the playgrounds. Students and the community are encouraged to explore and learn about all of these sustainable features and facilities through a series of strategically placed signs and the district website.

Cheltenham Elementary School is an excellent example of innovative site reuse and building design. This exceptional project, which transformed this property into a sustainable amenity, continues to promote the district's commitment to education and neighborhood connections, retaining the school's legacy in the community.



Location

7853 Front Street
Cheltenham Township
Montgomery County

Project Data

Land Use

Institutional - School

Tract Size

10 acres

Zoning

R-4 Residential

Building Area

90,113 square feet

Parking

89 spaces

Key Features

- Redevelopment
- Site Planning
- Environmentally Sensitive/Sustainable Design
- Innovative Stormwater Management
- LEED/Energy Efficiency

Owner/Developer

Cheltenham School District
2000 Ashbourne Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027

Engineer/Land Planner/Landscape Architect

Renew Design Group
117 East Broad Street, Suite 4
Souderton, PA 18964

Architect

Gilbert Architects Inc.
626 North Charlotte Street
Lancaster, PA 17603

MEP Engineer

Snyder Hoffman Associates, Inc.
1005 West Lehigh Street
Bethlehem, PA 18018

Structural Engineer

Baker, Ingram & Associates
1547 Oregon Pike
Lancaster, PA 17601

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