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PLAN NH ANNOUNCES 2023 MERIT AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Plan NH Merit Awards of Excellence

On June 28, 2023, Plan NH announced the 2023 Merit Awards of Excellence winners:

- *Berlin Riverwalk, located in Berlin, NH*
- *Harmony Place, located in Durham, NH*
- *Makers Mill, a Community Makerspace & Vocation Hub, located in Wolfeboro, NH*
- *Pope Memorial Library Addition & Renovations, located in North Conway, NH*
- *Ruth Lewin Griffin Place, located in Portsmouth, NH*
- *Rethinking Pleasant Street, located in Claremont, NH*

Merit Award winners represent outstanding projects that incorporate good planning, design, and/or development and have had a positive impact on their respective communities. Each year, a distinguished jury of industry professionals reviews each nomination and determines those that are truly outstanding and deserving of recognition. The 2023 winners were announced at the Plan NH Awards Evening on June 28 at The Hotel Concord alongside the Plan NH 2023 Scholarship & Fellowship recipients.

Information on each winning project can be found below and on www.plannh.org. Respective photos of the awarded projects and project teams are available for download [via this link](#). More photos may be available upon request.

1) Berlin Riverwalk - Merit Award of Excellence

Constructed in 2022, the Berlin Riverwalk stretches nearly 4,000 feet along the banks of the Androscoggin River, immediately adjacent to Main Street in downtown Berlin. This multi-use path features decorative benches, picnic tables, scenic overlooks, and lighting, as well as handrails, level platforms, ramps, and sections of split rail fencing to create an accessible and safe riverside corridor for people of all ages. Several crosswalks directly connect existing downtown storefronts to the riverwalk, adding to the visibility of this exciting new amenity. Requiring years-long engineering coordination with the NH Department of Environmental Services to protect the Androscoggin River and collaboration with the NH Department of Transportation to ensure accessibility and safety on the riverwalk, and between the riverwalk and Main Street, the Berlin Riverwalk is already a valued community feature enhancing the city's social, economic, and environmental condition.

Community collaboration was central to this project and resulted in a design that promotes the historical significance of the Androscoggin River and the City of Berlin's heritage, preserves the character of the river and the viewsheds while removing invasive species, and preserves existing green spaces while also creating both passive and active recreation areas. These design

elements include a decommissioned turbine “sculpture” from a local hydroelectric plant, “no mow” zones to reestablish native vegetation, and scenic overlooks that provide seating and gathering spaces for people to observe and experience the river.

Project Name, Location, and Completion Date

Official Project Name: Berlin Riverwalk

Project Location: Berlin, NH

Completion Date: October 2022

Owner

Name: City of Berlin
Address: 168 Main Street, Berlin, NH 03570
Phone: (603) 752-8587
Email: plaflamme@berlinnh.gov

Key Team Members

Pamela Laflamme	City of Berlin	Owner/Berlin Economic Development Authority
Eric Grenier	HEB Engineers	Lead Consultant/Project Manager
Jeffrey Hyland	Ironwood Design Group	Landscape Architect
Steven Binette	Ray’s Electric & General Contracting	Contractor
Jason Beaudet	CMA Engineers, Inc.	Construction Engineer
Anthony Puntin	NH Department of Transportation	NHDOT Project Manager

Jury Comments:

- Wonderful addition to the City of Berlin.
- This project re-establishes the river as a valued community resource.
- The Riverwalk not only enhances connectivity but creates a community connection with art and historic artifacts included along the way - actively telling the story of Berlin as a person passes through the site.
- Impressive collaboration between all the stakeholders.
- This project checked all the boxes!

2) Harmony Place - Merit Award of Excellence

When John Randolph, owner of Harmony Homes Assisted Living and Memory Care, began exploring creative ways to stabilize his business in an industry that is struggling with staffing ratios and turnover, he had no idea that he would eventually build Harmony Place - a mixed-use, affordable housing project, complete with administrative offices, childcare facilities, and seven residential units designed exclusively for his staff.

Located in Durham, NH on the same 28-acre parcel that is home to Harmony Homes, Harmony Place was thoughtfully designed and engineered by GSD Studios and Horizons Engineering. High contractor bids threatened to shut down the project before it even got off of the ground however. In response, Randolph launched GSD Construction, allowing him to keep the project within budget and offer residents a greater level of affordability.

Since opening in August 2021, Harmony Place has proved to be more successful than originally expected. Each of the seven apartments are full, with a waiting list, and volatility in

staffing has dropped dramatically. The residents of Harmony Place are able to walk to work, utilize the childcare facilities, and take advantage of the outdoor common spaces for socializing and relaxing. An ultimate product of necessity, Harmony Place not only created a solution for one specific business, but spawned the creation of new companies that continue to explore workforce solutions through the creative design and build of affordable housing.

Project Name, Location, and Completion Date

Official Project Name: Harmony Place

Project Location: 55 Briggs Way, Durham, NH 03824

Completion Date: August 2021

Owner

Name: GSD Communities

Address: 22 Jady Hill Ave, Exeter, NH 03833

Phone: (603) 834-2317

Email: john@gsdnh.com

Key Team Members

John Randolph	GSD Communities	Owner
John Randolph	GSD Construction	General Contractor
Maggie Randolph	GSD Studios	Architect
Mike Sievert	Horizons Engineering	Civil & Structural Engineer

Jury Comments:

- This project took a lot of commitment and hard work for everything to fall into place, and resulted in a phenomenal living space.
- Creative solution to the employment/housing/childcare problem; great idea for maintaining staffing levels.
- This project creates its own "neighborhood" of like-minded individuals who are trying to establish a life in a place that would otherwise be unaffordable.
- Impressive collaboration between local government, businesses, and individuals.

3) Makers Mill, a Community Makerspace & Vocation Hub - Merit Award of Excellence

Occupying a former small engine sales and repair building just off of downtown Wolfeboro, Makers Mill is now a community makerspace and vocation hub where people come together to cultivate and share a wide variety of crafts, skills, technologies, and arts. Makers Mill includes a studio for creative arts, a fully equipped wood shop and metal shop, conference and private office space, multipurpose meeting and presentation space, and space for a future café. Makers Mill also includes a "Repair Café" where attendees can bring in their broken items, such as clothing, electronics, small appliances, bicycles, etc., and skilled volunteers will provide free repair services and advice, and even teach attendees how to repair their items independently in the future.

This project team designed a high-performance building shell, worked to retain lots of natural daylight and reduce the need for artificial light, and incorporated a solar system with battery storage. Very much in the spirit of Makers Mill, they also leveraged creative partnerships such as with the Lakes Region Technology Center, where students in the Construction Trades class

came together to construct the main entrance to the building. The well-thought-out design and functionality of the art studio, shop space, and multipurpose spaces ensures that the possibilities within Makers Mill are endless! From students to hobbyists to professionals, all levels of makers are welcome to this special place of collaboration, mentorship, and learning exchange.

Project Name, Location, and Completion Date

Official Project Name: Makers Mill, a Community Makerspace & Vocation Hub

Project Location: 23 Bay St, Wolfeboro, NH 03894

Completion Date: April 2022

Owner

Name: Makers Mill
Address: PO Box 2267, Wolfeboro, NH 03894
Phone: (603) 569-1500
Email: info@makersmill.org

Key Team Members

Josh Arnold	Makers Mill	Owner/Executive Director
Matt Beaulieu	Milestone Construction	Construction Project Manager
Steven Hoffman	Simon's Architects	Architect
Leslie Benson	Leslie Benson Designs	Architect

Jury Comments:

- Great space for bringing people together and fostering collaboration among the makers!
- The Repair Café is really impressive - something that should be replicated in every Town.
- Creating a place like Makers Mill allows individuals to come together over common interests and learn skills they otherwise may not be able to.
- Rehabbing an existing building helped integrate this project into the community and offered new ways for local residents to be involved in project development.

4) Pope Memorial Library Addition & Renovations - Merit Award of Excellence

The addition and renovations to the existing Pope Memorial Library stand out as a project that was challenged with not only meeting the changing needs of the community, but also maintaining, enhancing, and celebrating the historic charm that so often characterizes main streets across New Hampshire. By repairing and enhancing the existing building, the project honored the importance of preserving and complementing the stately yet approachable granite edifice that anchors the building on Main Street, and struck a careful balance of meeting the library's growing needs while maintaining an inviting human scale.

With the challenge of creating additional space, the project team expertly integrated three generations of architecture into one cohesive design. Additional enhancements included added parking, ADA accessibility, landscaping, patios, sculpture arts, group meeting space, a reimagined childrens' room, new staff areas, a centralized circulation desk, and more. Centrally located in North Conway, the Pope Memorial Library serves all sixteen communities of the Mount Washington Valley Region, and while privately funded, it is free and open to the public. In fact, 100% of their operating budget is funded through donations - a strong indicator that the value of this library to members of the wider community cannot be overstated.

Project Name, Location, and Completion Date

Official Project Name: Pope Memorial Library Addition & Renovations

Project Location: 2719 White Mountain Hwy, S Main St, North Conway, NH 03860

Completion Date: February 2021

Owner

Name: Pope Memorial Library

Address: 2719 White Mountain Hwy, S Main St, North Conway, NH 03860

Phone: (603) 356-2961

Email: staff@popelibrarynh.org

Key Team Members

Ed Bergeron	Pope Memorial Library	Owner/Building Committee Chair
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Kathy Bergeron	Pope Memorial Library	Owner/Trustee & Treasurer
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Eric LeBlanc	Lavallee Brensinger Architects	Architect
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Jeffrey Parks	Bauen Corporation	Project Manager
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Jury Comments:

- This unique library is an architectural gem in downtown North Conway; its renovation and restoration celebrates the historic architecture while reinforcing it as a vital community space.
- Thinking outside of the box resulted in creative collaboration to meet the parking needs of the project.
- Building an addition allows the design to blend in with its surroundings while allowing for important upgrades.
- A wonderful rejuvenation of a critical community center for the Mount Washington Valley Region.

5) Ruth Lewin Griffin Place - Merit Award of Excellence

Ruth Lewin Griffin Place (Ruth's Place) is a remarkable project aimed at meeting an urgent need in Portsmouth, namely the lack of affordable housing options for members of the city's vital workforce. Through this project, the Portsmouth Housing Authority converted underutilized land in the heart of downtown Portsmouth into 64 one-bedroom and two-bedroom rental units - representing the single largest investment in affordable housing in the city of Portsmouth in nearly a half century. All of the units are financially accessible to members of the workforce making at or below 70% of the Area Median Income (AMI), and of those, 24 of the units are set aside for residents making under 50% AMI.

Ruth's Place offers many additional benefits for those who live there. It is walkable to thousands of jobs in Portsmouth's downtown as well as to vital city services - offering low-income residents the opportunity to forgo long commutes from distant affordable communities. It is LEED-Gold Certified and was recognized by the US Green Building Council - New Hampshire Chapter as Building of the Year for achieving the highest LEED score in the state in 2022. Additionally, Eckman Construction preserved portions of a historic building located on-site and incorporated it into a green space which, along with first-floor community gathering rooms, beautify the space and further integrate the building with the existing neighborhood.

This project utilized technical assistance, financing, and Low-Income Tax Housing Tax Credits thanks to the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority; along with the Federal Home Loan

Bank of Boston, Portsmouth-based bankProv provided tax credit equity, construction, and permanent financing; and over 30 local businesses stepped up to invest in the project by purchasing New Hampshire Community Development Tax Credits allocated by the State CDFA. The list of project partners, lenders, and other supporters goes on and on. On top of the high level of coordination required to make the financing a reality, the project itself faced delays including a yearlong permitting appeal and pandemic-related staffing and materials shortages. Despite all of the challenges, the Portsmouth Housing Authority saw a need and met that need with Ruth's Place - a workforce housing development to be enjoyed by the very people who have helped to build a world-class creative economy right here in Portsmouth.

Project Name, Location, and Completion Date

Official Project Name: Ruth Lewin Griffin Place
Project Location: 160 Court Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801
Completion Date: May 2022

Owner

Name: Portsmouth Housing Authority
Address: 245 Middle Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801
Phone: (603) 436-4310
Email: info@nh-pha.com

Key Team Members

Craig Welch	Portsmouth Housing Authority	Owner/Executive Director
Mark Lentz	Portsmouth Housing Authority	Owner/Facilities Director
Peter Roche	Development Synergies, LLC	Development Consultant
John Deloia	Eckman Construction Company, Inc.	Project Executive
Jonathan Krygeris	Eckman Construction Company, Inc.	Project Manager
Craig Myslivy	Eckman Construction Company, Inc.	Site Supervisor
Carla Goodknight	CJ Architects	Principal in Charge
Bill Bartell	CJ Architects	Architect Project Manager
John Chagnon	Ambit Engineering	Civil Engineer

Jury Comments:

- This project built on the work of many people to develop affordable housing in the heart of downtown Portsmouth, which is notoriously unaffordable.
- Portsmouth Housing Authority is truly moving the needle for affordable housing!
- This project supports the neighborhood by incorporating historic preservation with new affordable places to live.
- Impressive level of coordination to make the Community Development Tax Credit program work for this project.

6) Rethinking Pleasant Street - Merit Award of Excellence with Honor

Motivated by the success of the Millyard on Water Street, the City of Claremont decided to pursue the reimagining of the downtown-located Pleasant Street from a vehicle-centric thoroughfare to a pedestrian oriented environment. In an effort to jump start economic development, social interaction, and community pride, placemaking became the ultimate goal for this underutilized and less than desirable area.

Part of a designated truck route through the city, it was necessary to rethink existing traffic patterns in order to truly transform Pleasant Street. Community engagement was a vital and extensive aspect of this project, eventually leading the project team to focus on a configuration that narrowed the roadway to one southbound lane. The project involved reconfiguring truck routes and traffic signals, adding angled parking on one side of the roadway, and most importantly, widening the sidewalks on both sides of the street. The wider sidewalks, benches, street furniture, and architectural seating areas ensure that the sidewalks are now a place for people to gather, spend time, and experience Pleasant Street in a whole new way. Stone and brick pavers and other treatments create a unique sense of place in keeping with the ambiance already in place in Claremont's Historic District, and additional enhancements include shade trees, shrubs, other plantings, bicycle racks, and modern LED light fixtures.

Impressively, this project included an entire overhaul of the underground utility infrastructure, which was reaching the end of its useful life. Claremont has seen that making investments in the form of reconstructed pavement, sidewalks, utility lines, lighting, and other amenities can stimulate development and that is what they hope to see along Pleasant Street. As the project was recently completed, the kind of positive change that the City envisions is just beginning, but already three large buildings have changed owners and are being rehabilitated for new uses. These are just the beginning of great changes in Claremont thanks to this exciting project!

Rethinking Pleasant Street was awarded the **2023 Merit Award of Excellence with Honor** for its standout contribution to the built environment here in New Hampshire.

Project Name, Location, and Completion Date

Official Project Name: Rethinking Pleasant Street

Project Location: Pleasant Street, Claremont, NH 03743

Completion Date: August 2022

Owner

Name: City of Claremont

Address: 14 North Street, Claremont, NH 03743

Phone: (603) 504-0340

Email: nmerrill@claremontnh.com

Key Team Members

Nancy Merrill	City of Claremont	Owner/Director of Planning & Economic Development
Brian Colburn	McFarland Johnson	Project Manager
Kevin McMahon	McFarland Johnson	Construction Inspector
John Amodeo	IBI Group	Landscape Architect
Mitch Cummings	GM2 Associates	Principal Surveyor
Tim St. Pierre	B.U.R. Construction	Construction Project Manager

Jury Comments:

- This was a complicated project that required great levels of collaboration.
- Impressive that this project was done with local funds; it will pay back tenfold.
- The outdoor space created by the widened sidewalks lends itself to social, environmental and inclusivity impacts.
- The reimagined downtown area will spark economic impacts now and into the future!
- The addition of new infrastructure will lend itself well to economic expansion in the

future.

- This is what revitalization is all about!

Plan NH Scholarship & Fellowship Program

The Plan NH Scholarship and Fellowship Program recognizes and honors outstanding students who call New Hampshire home and who are studying a field that supports the Plan NH mission to *foster excellence in planning, design and/or development of New Hampshire's built environment*. These students truly represent the future of design, architecture, engineering, and construction in the Granite State.

The Plan NH Scholarship & Fellowship Committee, in partnership with the NH Charitable Foundation, awarded a total of \$29,500 to the following scholarship and fellowship recipients:

2023 Alfred T. Granger Student Art Trust Fund Recipients

Abigail Randall	Art/Fine Arts	University of New Hampshire
Abigail Sprague	Art/Fine Arts	Maine College of Art & Design
AJ Orringer	Art/Fine Arts	Clark University
Allyson Kitchens	Architecture/Civil Engineering	New Hampshire Technical Institute
Emily Heath	Art/Fine Arts	Keene State College
Maisie Hilliard	Art/Fine Arts	Plymouth State University
Pascal Zabayo	Art/Fine Arts	Plymouth State University

2023 Paul and Ann Harvey Scholarship Fund Recipients

Crystal Giard	Architecture	Syracuse University
Eric Caron	Architecture	University of Hartford
Eric Parnell	Architecture	Keene State College
Kei Kan	Architecture	Ithaca College
Morgan Burke	Mechanical Engineering	Tufts University

2023 Plan New Hampshire Fellowship Fund Recipient

Andrew Lawpaugh	Environmental Studies	University of New Hampshire
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These students were acknowledged alongside the Merit Awards of Excellence winners during the Plan NH Awards Evening on June 28, 2023. If you or your company are interested in contributing to the Plan NH Fellowship Fund, we encourage you to contact us at 603-452-PLAN, or email: tiffany@plannh.org.

Questions and additional information can be found on PlanNH.org or by contacting the Executive Director of Plan NH, Tiffany Tononi McNamara at PO Box 1105 Portsmouth, NH 03802; via phone at 603-452-PLAN, or email: tiffany@plannh.org.