

# NEWS RELEASE

## ALLENTOWN TRANSPORTATION CENTER WINS 2023 AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FROM URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

### ULI's Philadelphia chapter recognizes the newly redesigned transit plaza in the award's Open Space category

**ALLENTOWN, Pa., June 16, 2023** – The Allentown Parking Authority and Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) announced today that the recently redesigned Allentown Transportation Center won the Urban Land Institute of Philadelphia's 2023 Award for Excellence in the Open Space category.

The innovative transit plaza on Church Street was developed through a partnership among the Allentown Parking Authority, LANTA, and the City of Allentown, and was funded through the Allentown Neighborhood Improvement Zone Development Authority's Public Improvement Investment Program. Phase one of the redesign was completed in the fall of 2021, with phase two following in the spring of 2022.

The 1.64-acre plaza serves as the central hub for LANTA, with 3,000 passenger trips daily. The central configuration of the pavilion allows riders to make bus transfers without leaving the platform; in the previous configuration, they had to walk two blocks to transfer.

The plaza's standout feature is its origami-inspired bus shelter pavilion, designed by the project's landscape architect, Omnes. It features an undulating green roof that captures stormwater to offset the impermeable pavement below. Because of required clearances and paving for bus circulation, the shelter uses the pavilion as a device for greening the plaza and infusing it with vibrant color. The structure reduces stormwater runoff with an approximate 7,508-gallon capacity by incorporating a living green roof consisting of more than a dozen species of sedum plants, as well as water collection and drainage along columns. The sedum planting also contributes to the reduction of the urban heat island effect.

The design team, which included Omnes, architect Bernardon, and lighting designer Diversified Lighting, worked with transportation authorities to develop signage, audio-visual placement, and LED lighting to illuminate and enhance the function of the transit hub.

On the ground, the pavilion features comfortable new ADA-accessible furnishings, as well as bike racks that double as lean rails to maximize comfort while users wait for their bus.

A new mural depicting native plants and hummingbirds adds color to the plaza, while brightly colored structural forms inspired by atomic-age signage create a nostalgic yet contemporary feel. Native grasses and bright pink plantings create lush gardens, and a mass of ferns frames the plaza with spore-producing native plants that will continue to establish over time.

The second phase of the project included a new north-south streetscape with bus pavilions, signage, and reconfigured bus bays, adding life and color to the previously dull concrete landscape.

According to Urban Land Institute of Philadelphia’s website, the plaza “prioritizes sustainable strategies and public enjoyment” and “introduces an updated, contemporary design for residents, visitors, and commuters of the Lehigh Valley, establishing a sense of joy, comfort, and safety in a place where such elements had long been absent.”

The project development team also included civil engineer RETTEW Associates, traffic engineer McMahon & Associates, electrical engineer Diefenderfer, structural engineer MacIntosh Engineering, and contractor North Star Construction Management Inc.

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**About Urban Land Institute (ULI):**

ULI is a nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the Institute now has almost 45,000 members in 95 countries, representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines working in private enterprise and public service – including leading property owners, investors, advisors, developers, architects, lawyers, lenders, planners, regulators, contractors, engineers, university personnel and students.

ULI Philadelphia is one of ULI’s largest and most robust District Councils, with about 1,000 members throughout the area, including regional satellites in Central Pennsylvania, Delaware, Lehigh Valley, and Southern New Jersey.

**Media Contact:**

Jeff Vaughan, Vaughan Communications Group, [jv@voncom.com](mailto:jv@voncom.com), 610-533-4264