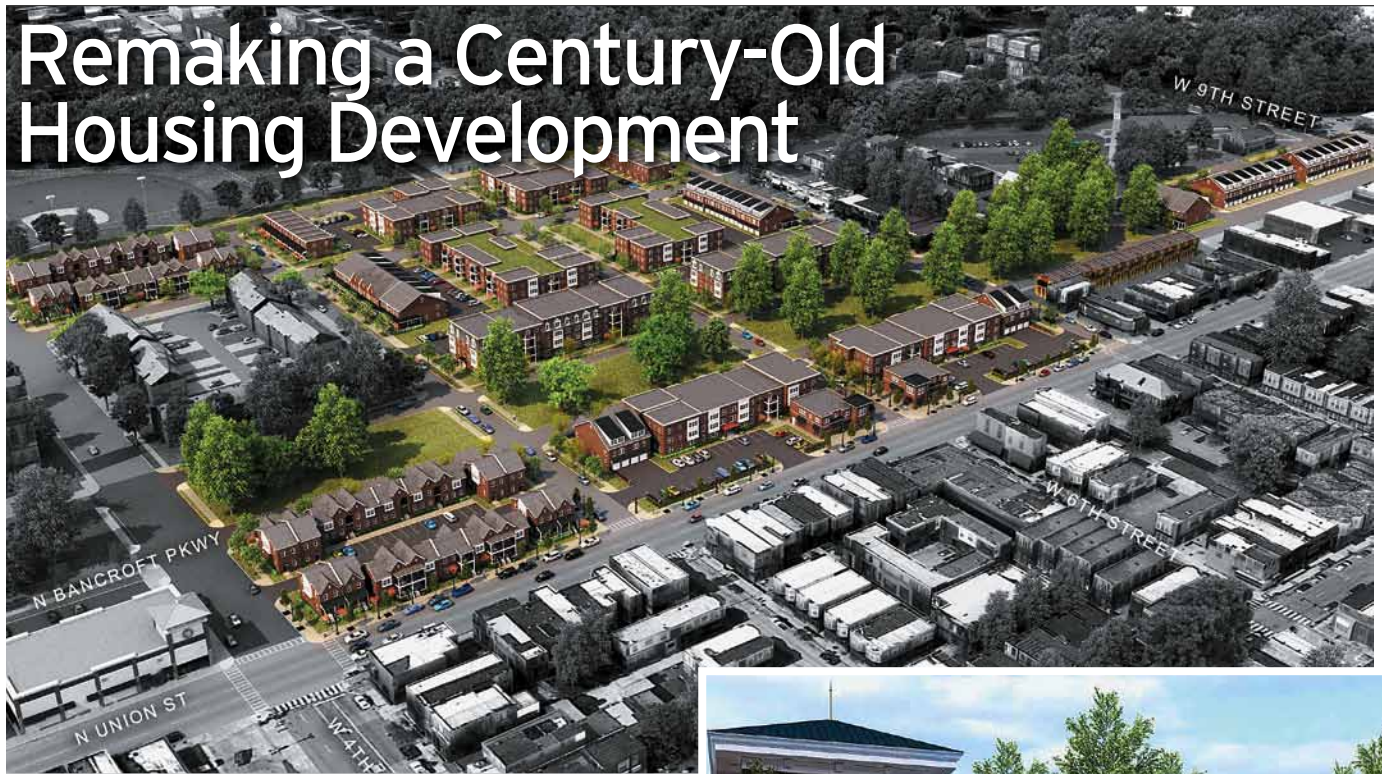


# Remaking a Century-Old Housing Development



**PROJECT:** The Flats, Wilmington, Del.  
**FIRM:** Landmark Science & Engineering, New Castle, Del.

Wilmington's The Flats neighborhood was built in 1902 as an affordable housing community for 390 Bancroft Mill families. Self-sustaining for most of its existence, its aging housing stock and rising maintenance costs took their toll over the years until the rental community could no longer pay its own way. In addition, residents' utility costs were becoming prohibitively expensive.



Ted Williams

"Renovation was considered, but functional obsolescence, lack of energy efficiency, and small, outdated floor plans served as driving forces for redevelopment," says Landmark Science & Engineering President and former ACEC Chairman Ted Williams.

In 2013, Landmark began obtaining rezoning, site amenity and historic review approvals for a \$100-plus million project that will replace the existing 430 townhomes with more than 450 residential units. By mid-July 2014, the company had begun preparing construction plans for phase I of the seven-phase project, and construction is slated to begin in March 2015. All phases should be complete in about a decade.

The project's master plan incorporates quality, low- to mid-rise, human-scaled urban housing on compact, interconnected blocks and includes several rows of attached dwellings with red brick elevations, covered porches and stoops, and shallow front yards along tree-lined streets. "Unlike many affordable housing projects, The Flats focuses on common green areas and has an emphasis on energy savings, water conservation and previously



The Flats will contain more than 450 residential units. Above: Looking down on the site of the neighborhood redevelopment.

nonexistent storm-water management," Williams says.

The design of the storm-water management system is most critical to the urban environment. The older infrastructure, which collected both sewage and storm water in a central pipe system for transport to the treatment plant, could no longer handle larger rain events, creating sewage backups that enter nearby rivers. Landmark designed a storm-water system that utilizes ground infiltration technology to reduce overall volume of storm water leaving The Flats.

Creating sufficient parking was another design challenge. "The new design provides for more than 350 off-street parking places that will be hidden from the streetscape by walls or by the dwelling units themselves," Williams says. This off-street parking will increase availability of on-street parking for nearby businesses and restaurants.

The redevelopment depends on federal low-income housing tax credits and other financing sources as well as grants and funding from the Delaware State Housing Authority. Williams says, "This project is a great example of a sustainable, urban community of opportunity that will allow continuation of the owner's mission for affordable housing well into the future."