

The Small Business Council  
of the  
Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce

2007  
*Excellence in Business Awards*

Title/Position: Louis P. Pektor, III, Founder and President

Company: Ashley Development Corporation

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Category: 1 – 49 employees

Year business started: 1989

Number of employees: 27 full time, 6 permanent part-time

1. Briefly describe the nature of your business, including your mission statement.

Louis P. Pektor, III, a visionary entrepreneur, incorporated Ashley Development Corporation in 1989, to devote his career to his life's passion, real estate development. The firm's mission is viewing real estate development as an art form whether building a commercial property or residential neighborhood, and enhancing community character by creating a sense of place with each completed project. Excellence, quality, and insight are cornerstones of every Ashley project, and are mandates through every phase of its development process - from designing, planning, and building, to preserving the natural beauty of the land, making a family's dream come true, or enabling a business to grow. Every team member at Ashley believes that for a project to be successful the developer must understand the needs of the community and the impacts the project will have upon it, then develop the best plan to achieve community goals.

Over the course of two decades Ashley Development has evolved from completing residential subdivision plans with construction of single-family homes for the high-end market in Saucon Valley, to where today it is capable of implementing intricate development and financing programs for the most complex property and end-user, in a full range of real estate markets. The firm provides comprehensive real estate development services for office, retail, healthcare, mixed-use, single family, multi-family and condominium markets. Ashley Development's services follow the continuum of land development including: site selection, financing, site planning, architectural and engineering design including build-to-suit, securing approvals, construction including tenant fit-out, leasing, and management.

Lou Pektor's financial background coupled with an ambitious attitude means that Ashley Development utilizes innovative financing structures and draws upon available economic sources and programs. Through the use of strategic financial parameters, each project's success is ensured before a shovel hits the ground. These financial goals allow resilience and stability through market fluctuations. Constantly being on the industry's leading edge, intuitively bringing new and unique development types to the Lehigh Valley market, Ashley Development commands an unprecedented competitive advantage. This has aided in urban renewal and steady economic growth as the region reinvents itself following the devastating affects of the collapse of Bethlehem Steel.

Ashley Development's strategically diverse portfolio is evidence of its formula for success, demonstrating how the firm adapts development models to meet multiple goals. More than eighty substantial projects have been completed or are in a phase of development. As of 2007, Ashley Development's investments exceed \$700 million; over 12,000 acres have been developed with a significant portion dedicated as open space. More than 6,000 residential units have been constructed, and over 1.5 million square feet of commercial space have been created. Some noteworthy projects include Main Street Commons, St. Luke's at Union Station, Riverport, One East Broad Street, Dixie Lofts, Majestic Tower, the Pomeroy Building, and Longridge. This brief list is a sampling of the urban infill, historic rehabilitation, adaptive re-use, and land conservation projects that typify their work, and epitomizes the ends to which Ashley Development will go to enhance a community and help it to achieve its economic development goals.

2. How involved are you and your employees in the Chamber and the community?

Ashley Development Corporation has been a member in good standing of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce for many years. Its increased involvement with Chamber programs is commensurate with corporate growth. Ashley Development has supported programs of the Downtown Bethlehem Association, a Chamber council, and has sponsored GLVCC events throughout the years, including the Economic Outlook Luncheon, the Small Business Council Snow Ball, and the Commercial Real Estate Trends Luncheon.

While the work of Ashley Development improves the quality of life and the tax bases of the communities where it has invested, Lou Pektor believes in being involved and giving back to the community. He does so giving of his time, serving on boards, and giving philanthropically on corporate and personal levels. Employees of Ashley Development get involved, volunteer and organize fund raising efforts as well. The company supports a diverse array of causes that help make the Lehigh Valley a better place. Ashley Development Corporation supports the United Way of the Lehigh Valley perennially, pledging tens of thousands of dollars to support their beneficiary charities. Ashley Development also honors requests received directly from non-profit organizations to help them continue their work. To-date donations and sponsorships exceed \$2 million, including an underwriting of a \$1 million loan from Sovereign Bank to guarantee construction of athletic facilities for the newly expanded Liberty High School. Other beneficiary organizations include ArtsQuest, the Lutz-Franklin Schoolhouse Preservation fund, St. Luke's Hospital & Health Network, Lehigh Valley Hospital & Health Network, Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, DeSales University, Moravian Academy, Nazareth Area High School, Historic Bethlehem Partnership, the Easton Red Rovers Athletic Association, Animals in Distress, the Minsi Trail Council of the Boy Scouts, and many more. During the 2006 holiday season, Ashley Development began a new tradition of giving by asking its more than 500 guests to donate monetary gifts, non-perishable food items, toys and school supplies to families of the Allentown School District and the New Christian Covenant Church; the Ashley team was delighted by the overwhelming response.

Ashley Development encourages active employee involvement with non-profit organizations. Employees who serve on non-profit boards and committees are encouraged to organize company involvement. For example, as a member of the Bethlehem YMCA board, V.P. Richard Brooks recruited a team of volunteers to participate in a Walk for a Healthy Community, a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield initiative, to raise needed funds for YMCA programs. He also organized the involvement of the Minsi Trail Council of the Boy Scouts of America to assist the Sun Inn Preservation Association, and the City of Bethlehem with a clean up of a public courtyard in downtown Bethlehem. Marketing and sales manager Susan Brooks organizes blood drives for employees of the company and others to add to the local Red Cross supply, for this Ashley Development received the Leadership Award from Miller Keystone Memorial Blood Bank in 2005 and 2006 in recognition and appreciation for outstanding community service. All of these activities keep employees engaged in the community where their work has such great impact.

The company also engages a community organization in one of its core business activities. Teen Challenge Greenhouse of Rehersburg, PA provides job training to youths and adults committed to their substance addiction recovery program. Ashley Development purchases nearly 100% of its landscaping materials from this nursery to beautify its properties, providing direct support to Teen Challenge and enabling them to provide job training to their clients.

3. Please share how your company demonstrates excellence in customer satisfaction, and a commitment to quality.

A commitment to high quality and excellence is inextricably bound to Ashley Development's mission to enhance the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley and create a sense of place with each project completed. As of 2007, Ashley Development Corporation can count over 6,500 satisfied customers throughout the region in its residential communities and commercial buildings. In testament to excellence breeding success, the firm has grown exponentially over the course of its 18-year run and forecasts continued growth.

Innovative thinking and problem solving are requirements when endeavoring to bring about community revitalization. An understanding of the mutual benefit in achieving a community's goals is their motivation. Ensuring high quality results starts with the company's founder insisting on the highest level of design, materials, and construction. Their use of the most current technology for architectural design and modeling allows communities to see how the finished development project will appear on the landscape well before construction work begins. This allows Ashley Development to convey their vision to the public, and opens the dialogue early in the concept stages to encourage public input. Process flow technology and daily project management conferences allow monitoring, adjustment, and improvement to happen through all stages of development and is the verification method used to ensure Ashley Development's high standards are met and the community is satisfied. Ultimately, helping a community achieve its goals is Ashley Development's highest mark of success.

Ashley Development Corporation's reputation is built on excellence and a commitment to quality, which has afforded them the respect of community leaders and government officials, who've given accolades and commendations to Lou Pektor and the Ashley team. Easton's Mayor Phillip B. Mitman recently stated, "Lou – you and your family and your team at Ashley so richly deserve recognition for extraordinary, excellent, and creative development which you build for our urban centers. The Ashley team is leaving a legacy of vision and achievement. From us in Easton, I say thank you". Ashley Development's achievement of excellence has been recognized by organizations as well, including the Sales and Marketing Executives of the Greater Lehigh Valley 2007 Footprint Award, and the March of Dimes 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Commercial & Industrial Real Estate Awards. Moreover, in December 2006, Ashley Development was entrusted with the largest award of Pennsylvania Commonwealth Financing Authority loan funds to a private concern, which will be used to further improve economic conditions in the Lehigh Valley.

Ashley Development retains leasing and sales services in-house in order to maintain direct feedback from the market. Customer satisfaction is evidenced by brisk sales and leasing of projects. Even when faced with unprecedented activity levels, Ashley team members earn customer appreciation. For example, the record number of presales of Riverport Luxury Condominiums recently caused the need for an extraordinary number of closings to be scheduled upon receipt of the property's Certificate of Occupancy. Susan Brooks and the Ashley team successfully completed ten to twenty closings per week, while maintaining the high level of customer service and satisfaction that Ashley Development is known for. Many customers shared their appreciation, including Gail Warner, who stated the following in a thank you letter: "With friendly professionalism, Susan has always made certain we had timely information as we navigated through the decisions of buying and the mechanics of ownership. Even on a project the magnitude of Riverport, she handled each of our concerns as if this were her own purchase...assuring us that she was watching over our units...which she was!" Another satisfied customer, Lora Alicea wrote, "Al and I would like to thank you for the positive experience with purchasing our condominium at Riverport. We appreciate all of the time you took to address our questions and concerns. Your attention to detail and customer satisfaction is greatly acknowledged."

4. How does your company demonstrate continuous, meaningful leadership in your business?

Civic leaders turn to Ashley Development when an aggravating economic development issue stymies community progress because Lou Pektor has demonstrated leadership in the industry through the years. Ashley Development practices land development as a public-private partnership, regardless of whether government funds are allocated to a project, because they understand the impact land development has on the landscape and the economy. Creating a sense of place and enhancing the quality of life are as essential to Ashley Development's success as they are to improving a community. U.S. Senator Rick Santorum recently commented, "Through the development of new properties, the restoration of historical landmarks, and generous donations of time and capital to local organizations, Ashley Development Corporation has truly established itself as a company committed to enhancing the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley."

Being forward thinking, Lou Pektor is adept at forecasting trends and moves to create development projects that meet future demands, constantly bringing innovative products to the Lehigh Valley while striving to keep speculation to a minimum. This has resulted in a diverse portfolio of projects that demonstrates the firm's vast capabilities. Being at the forefront of real estate development in the Lehigh Valley region, this firm's competitive edge is its ability to adapt. The diversity of its development projects differentiates Ashley Development Corporation from other real estate development businesses, which typically devote their expertise to one specific market sector.

Real estate development is a high stakes business, requiring all members of the team to be committed to high standards. Openness is the firm's policy, with a goal to eliminate the intimidating hierarchy that is typically found in a corporate structure. Open dialogue stimulates each team member's creativity, results in the best possible projects. At Ashley Development, each project is organized as a profit center to stimulate efficiency and effectiveness. With employees engaged in the success of each project, a sense of making a difference in the community is imparted. This has translated to a high level of employee productivity.

Further fueling the economy is yet another mark of leadership demonstrated by Ashley Development Corporation. The flexibility Ashley Development extends to the tenants of its properties invokes the entrepreneurial spirit that has motivated Lou Pektor throughout his career, as he understands the challenges businesses face when starting and growing. Ashley Development is proud to have aided a multitude of businesses succeed in the region; the well-worn saying "a rising tide raises all boats" is certainly fitting.

Ashley Development demonstrates leadership in open space preservation. A successful partnership with the Heritage Conservancy has been implemented at Longridge, a rural residential development in Williams Township. This project includes reforestation of a former cornfield. Hundreds of trees and shrubbery native to eastern Pennsylvania have been planted to hasten the process of woodland regeneration. This goes beyond typical open space dedication because it beautifies the landscape with plant species that are known to thrive in this climate while providing essential habitat for wildlife.

Ashley Development is a member of the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation because it is committed to promoting and fostering economic prosperity in the Lehigh Valley. It also participates in Commercial Real Estate Women of the Lehigh Valley, and Lou Pektor often serves as a keynote speaker making presentations to this organization, as well as others in the region. Ashley Development is the main sponsor for Lehigh University's International Real Estate @ Lehigh (IRE@L) speaker series enabling the University to bring industry leaders to present to students, a key component of the its new Real Estate program. Lou Pektor also takes time to be a guest lecturer at Lehigh.

5. Do you have an effective marketing strategy?

Positive press reinforces a company's image and Ashley Development Corporation benefits from good coverage. Being a public process real estate development is always in the news because citizens are interested in knowing how their communities are taking shape, and because Ashley Development opens a dialogue with the public early in the process. This keeps Ashley Development, at the forefront, generating excitement about its projects, and reinforcing its strong reputation of being committed to community interests.

Meeting demand with products and services is key to marketing. Lou Pektor's insights, strong industry connections, and contacts throughout the region enable him to meet market demand, and his reputation enables Ashley Development to maintain strong relationships. Networking with industry leaders has yielded many of Ashley Development's office and healthcare facility development projects. The majority of these developments have resulted in company or facility expansion and urban revitalization. One example is Liberty Center in Bethlehem, where the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company located in 2003 to accommodate growth, continuing its relationship with Ashley Development, who developed their previous office building for them in 1994. Further, Ashley Development's on-going relationship with St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network has meant the historic rehabilitation of Union Station in South Bethlehem for healthcare facilities, and the development of the Third and Polk Street Building, also located in South Bethlehem, where St. Luke's Hospital leases two entire floors.

Ashley Development uses an aggressive marketing strategy when developing multi-tenant commercial buildings. It's team is careful to pre-sign leases to tenants who provide complementary services, ensuring a synergy of activities and convenience. For example, the Eighth & Eaton Professional Building is leased to physicians groups of the St. Luke's healthcare network. In developing urban core properties, such as One East Broad Street Ashley is careful to ensure a complement of tenants who will benefit from an interactive downtown environment and further fuel the local economy.

Lou Pektor understands opportunity in market shifts, and is cognitive of changes in demographics, making product adjustments as required. Creating unique urban living opportunities with projects such as Riverport, Pomeroy and Dixie Lofts, Ashley is generating market demand for city living. Additionally, Ashley Development is meeting the needs of the growing active adult population with properties such as Creekside Condominiums and Trio Farms.

Ashley Development proactively markets its products as well, using many methods to inform the public about its properties. The firm recently launched a new attractive, interactive website that combines information about all of its projects. Television, radio, newspaper, events and open houses, and a whole host of print marketing materials are used to reinforce top-of-mind market awareness. The Ashley team goes to great lengths to inform the public and recently hosted a free bingo event inviting 150 active adults who are 62+ to provide them with information about our communities.

Ashley Development participates with organizations as well, including the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Commercial Real Estate Women of the Lehigh Valley, and the Pennsylvania Planning Association, as well as sponsoring festivals and events. This form of outreach provides mutual benefits, keeping Ashley at the forefront.

6. Describe your commitment to training and development.

The collaborative nature of real estate development, where multi-faceted needs must be met, fuels employee development. All team members are encouraged to develop project ideas and follow leads. Strict job titles are not assigned which reinforces that team members have opportunities to be creative and engage in cross spectrum business activities which develops a strong sense of responsibility. The open environment of each development team fuels creativity, and engaging the best architects, urban planners, landscape architects, and engineers further extends learning as team members are exposed to the best practices of these disciplines. The positive impact that their work has on the region invigorates their creativity, as they feel they are part of making a difference for a community that otherwise might not have a dedicated local developer.

Lou Pektor supports employees who demonstrate the initiative to improve their careers. Ashley Development offers tuition reimbursement to employees who enroll in continuing education programs, whether they are seeking an advanced degree or a certificate. Presently, sales associate Dorrit Emerich is completing coursework to earn a real estate license, a career advancement tool that will improve her role within the company. Each year the commercial development team attends the annual Eastern Pennsylvania International Council of Shopping Centers show to gain industry insights. Additionally the company sponsors training seminars throughout the year for employees.

Some of the most unique partnerships that Ashley Development has forged with the community are multi-faceted efforts. Spearheaded by employee Jerry Reilly, Ashley Development engages a non-profit organization in one of its core business activities. Teen Challenge Greenhouse of Rehersburg, PA provides job training to youths and adults committed to their substance addiction recovery program. Ashley Development purchases nearly 100% of its landscaping materials from this nursery to beautify its properties, providing direct support to Teen Challenge and enabling them to provide job training to their clients. Ashley Development Corporation is also committed to improving the environment and has initiated unique partnerships to ensure appropriate landscaping at their properties. One example is the reforestation of a former cornfield, a project that hastens the process of woodland regeneration providing essential habitat for wildlife done in conjunction with a non-profit land conservancy and the Teen Challenge Greenhouse. Another initiative fostered by Reilly involves an Ashley Development project with interior landscaped courtyards. This property has become a learning environment in partnership with Pennsylvania State University and Cornell University, where their research into soils and plant materials has been implemented and is being monitored.

7. Why do you believe that your firm is qualified to receive this award?

Ashley Development Corporation's founder Lou Pektor, a native resident, has devoted his life's work to improving the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley region. In a short time Ashley Development has grown to be an integral part of the Lehigh Valley, developing its economy and renewing urban core areas. The exponential affects of Ashley Development's work has improved the lives of countless people in the Lehigh Valley, providing good homes, job and business opportunities, increased access to healthcare services, revitalized city neighborhoods, and increased the tax bases of communities where they have invested. Ashley Development understands that with every job, their most important client is the community. The influence of one real estate development project has a far-reaching impact, affecting residents, businesses, culture, economy, commerce and the environment. Working carefully to develop real estate that has a positive influence on a community, Ashley Development is continually seeking new opportunities to use real estate development as a platform to improve the quality of life for all who reside in it.

A successful real estate development project accomplishes more than simply meeting the needs of a client or adhering to budgets and investment strategies. To be a success, the developer behind the project must understand the needs of the community and the impact the project will have upon it. Ashley Development understands those needs. The team at Ashley understands that customer service does not end with a sales contract or the signing of a lease. Ashley Development highly values lifelong relationships with clients, which are far more mutually beneficial in the long run. Ashley Development employees take pride in that their work is making a positive impact on the community. Beyond the growing core business activities, corporate and personal philanthropy and volunteerism are encouraged as additional means of giving back to the community.

Recognition by the Small Business Council of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce would be a tremendous honor, and the members of Ashley Development Corporation are grateful for the Council's nomination for the 2007 Excellence in Business Award. The careful consideration the selection committee will take is appreciated.