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## What's New in Princeton & Central New Jersey?

Reprinted from the October 28, 2009, issue of U.S. 1 Newspaper

### Hugh Connolly: From Strange House to Dream Job

by Kristin Boyd

Hugh Connolly's interest in architecture stretches back to eighth grade when, during a classroom drawing exercise, he sketched a concept house that was inspired by the spray foam used for in-ground pools.

"It was a very strange house," Connolly says. His final design was a weird-looking, bulbous structure that not even the most eccentric person would want to live in, "but ever since then, I knew I wanted to be an architect."

In early May, after working at several area firms, Connolly opened his own in Hopewell to accommodate residential, commercial, and institutional clients with an emphasis on sustainability.

"There is more that I can offer clients when I'm on my own," he says. "I like to put an emphasis on sustainability in my projects, and having my own company makes it easier to give clients the full service they deserve."



Hugh Connolly

Connolly was raised in New Vernon, where his father was in public relations and his mother was a model. He earned a bachelor's in architecture from Cornell in 1980. Since then he has worked at several Princeton-area architectural firms, including the former Hillier Group. He has designed almost all types of buildings, from luxury custom residences, affordable housing, and elementary schools to restaurants, corporate headquarters, and courthouses. Four of his projects have won Downtown New Jersey awards.

Some of his notable projects include Pinnacle at Morris Township, a multifamily residential housing complex; Presbyterian Homes Crossroads at Howell, a senior-living facility; the Lambertville House, Tiger Inn in Princeton, and KatManDu Night Club in Trenton.

Connolly became interested in sustainability issues after joining a firm in 2002 that emphasized the importance of being environmentally friendly. "I became familiar with it, and it became my primary focus at that point," he says. "At that firm, I worked on three to four school projects that were designed for LEED Silver certification."

Connolly presents his clients with information about the financial, health and environmental advantages that sustainable design can have on a project. He also discusses options for reducing energy and water use, installing passive heating and cooling, using renewable energy, using recycled and renewable materials, and using low or no-VOC paints and adhesives that can improve indoor air quality.

"When you're doing sustainable design, you're considering the entire building, as opposed to just concentrating on just piece by piece," he says. "The obvious thing is the environment. It also has health benefits for clients, and in the long run, it can save money for clients."

In his spare time, when he's not constructing buildings, he's collecting them. Connolly has amassed hundreds of souvenir buildings, some made from whiskey or perfume bottles, and others made from cigarette lighters. He even has a salt-and-pepper shaker set of the Empire State Building with a replica of King Kong. Connolly finds the buildings at flea markets, antique stores and during an annual collector's convention.

"I have a wide variety, but compared to some people, my collection is small. Some people have 7,000," he says.

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