

DRAFT

April 22, 2015

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:
FOR PRESERVATION, INFILL,
AND REDEVELOPMENT

for

LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

April, 2015

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Parks and Recreation



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Introductory Remarks to the 1937 Comprehensive Plan from the Planning Commission

Lower Merion Township has long been recognized as one of the most attractive suburban residential sections of the country. With extraordinary accessibility to a great city, it combines the charms of beautiful open country, fine houses, good roads, quiet roads and valleys. Its services, public and private, are well and efficiently managed. It is a good place to live in.

All of these advantages have naturally attracted people to the Township. The same factors will undoubtedly insure a continued growth.

This growth, viewed in retrospect, is startling. Yet so gradually has it taken place from day to day, and year to year, and over so wide an expanse of territory, that it has been scarcely perceptible to the casual observer.

Growth is not an unmixed blessing. It creates problems. Significant changes necessarily take place. The great estates of years ago move farther out and their places are taken smaller and more numerous holdings. More homes are built. More homes demand roads, utility and fire services, schools, parks, playgrounds, sewers and the many other services and facilities which are rightfully expected by the citizens. Unless, through wise foresight and planning, the extension of these services and facilities is kept ahead of the growing demand, critical conditions are created. They take the form of traffic congestion, inadequate housing, insufficiency of open space and the like.

These critical conditions like the growth which produces them, are frequently as imperceptible, in the making as growth itself. Once they become acute, they are apparent to all, and call loudly for correction. But almost always the correction is costly to the Township and to the citizens, and often the cost is well nigh prohibitive.

If fifty years ago it has been possible to foresee the requirements of the Township, as they exist today, most of the critical conditions which are now so evident could have been avoided, with little effort or cost. Where now there is serious traffic congestion, ample space could have been provided. Where open spaces, parks and playgrounds are now so clearly needed, land could have been had at the price of open fields. Buildings which now obstruct the opening of clearly needed relief roads could easily have been located a few feet to one side.

The failure to anticipate such conditions is a mistake of the past. The results are stern facts, which now have to be faced, and it is no use to think of what might have been. But surely in the light of what has happened in the past, it should be possible to see clear evidence of what is likely to happen again in the future. It therefore seems simple wisdom to look as best we may into the future, to try to see its problems, and to anticipate them before they in turn arise to plague our successors or us.

This is the true function and purpose of planning. It is not to set up a picture of how the things which now exist may be replaced by an ideal which is either impossible or impracticable, but to devise a way to avoid the cost of future mistakes. Your Commission has not tried to envision a grandiose scheme of parkways, monumental civic centers, and great public structures, requiring huge outlays of capital, and for that reason only faintly possible of accomplishment. It has rather tried to present a picture of the problems which will arise as growth continues, and to suggest orderly ways to meet them at the least cost and inconvenience to the citizens.

PLAN PROCESS



PLAN STRUCTURE

HOUSING	CIRCLUTION	COMMUNITY FACILITIES		WATER RESOURCES	LAND USE	
Neighborhood Preservation	Vehicular	INFRASTRUCTURE	Roadways & Bridges	Infrastructure	Institutional	
Transition Areas	Pedestrian & Bicycle		Sanitary Sewer	Fire Services/ems	Codes	Commercial
Affordability	Public Transportation		Storm Drainage	Public Safety	Retrofits Education	Residential
Special Needs	Air & Freight		Solid Waste	Libraries		Historic Preservation
			Shade Trees	Public Schools		Open Space
			Recycling	Township Holdings		
			Organizational/ Governmental Coordination			
			Parks and Recreation			

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INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive plan is a generational planning document reflective of the position and aspirations of a community at a point in time. The comprehensive plan provides the community an opportunity to work together to establish a collective vision and plan for future circumstances. It provides a roadmap for future policies, programs and projects that will affect the character of the community and the quality of life for its residents.

VISION

“Preserve Lower Merion’s classic residential neighborhoods, including the Township’s institutions, parks, and natural environment, and reinvest in the township’s village cores and commercial areas to improve walkability, expand transit use, and encourage design excellence.”¹

Encompassing approximately 24 square miles and containing nearly 60,000 residents, Lower Merion Township is one of the geographically largest and most affluent residential suburbs in the Philadelphia metropolitan region. For over 75 years, the Township’s twelve ‘villages’ (geographically, culturally and economically discrete centers) have been united through the simple, yet

elegant vision of Lower Merion Township as a ‘Great Place to Live’. This idea of a ‘Great Place to Live’ is immediately evident by the attractive neighborhoods, high property values, beautiful natural setting and excellent quality of life enjoyed by all Township residents. Lower Merion Township is a special place that its residents love and a community which its residents are passionate about.

While the idea of a ‘Great Place to Live’ can mean different things to different people, it is generally agreed that a ‘Great Place to Live’ is defined by a few fundamental characteristics - safe, attractive residential neighborhoods; exceptional public schools; well-maintained roads and commu-

nity infrastructure; convenient public transportation, high quality services, parks and libraries; and locally-oriented commercial districts - all of which are developed in harmony with the natural environment. The characteristics of a great place universally apply to all members of the community at all stages of life.

This document is a plan to perpetuate Lower Merion Township as a ‘Great Place to Live’ by maintaining and enhancing the Township’s fundamental characteristics while addressing future challenges. This Comprehensive Plan is broad in scope, reflecting the diverse interests and concerns of the Township’s numerous stakeholders, including

¹ 2010 Planning Commission Vision Statement

residents, business owners and institutions, while also being sufficiently detailed to address specific concerns. This plan establishes a framework to weave together individual issues along with communal aspirations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Throughout the community's comprehensive planning conversation, several aspirational themes emerged defining the unique characteristics of Lower Merion Township. These broad characteristics have been translated into Guiding Principles for this Plan. The Guiding Principles embody the qualitative characteristics of the Township which the community has expressed that it wants Lower Merion to be. Taken together, the five Guiding Principles define core values important to the Lower Merion community while also describing the essential qualities of a *suburban* place; a place which has the conveniences of urban living and the charms of rural life, but is not urban, nor rural. Each of the recommendations contained within this plan embodies one or more these aspirational principles.

Safety: Physical 'safety', including freedom from crime, fire and flood, is an essential function of local government and is one of the overriding reasons that many people choose to live in suburban environments, such as Lower Merion. As a planning principle, safety expands upon the traditional concept of physical safety to also include personal safety concerns which comprise a good place to live such as great schools, secure property

values and the simple pleasure of being able to safely walk to the store or train station if you choose. Safety includes government services, such as police and fire, as well as, the proper design of the built and natural environment to ensure physical safety of all community members.

Efficiency: Lower Merion Township is a community of high expectations and is not a place where people settle for less than the best. Efficiency is the principle of maximizing resources to meet community desires. Efficiency is a communal approach to maximize the use of available funds and a broad commitment to maintaining and enhancing the high qualities and services which define the Township.

Creativity: Creativity is a complementary principle to efficiency and articulates a commitment to problem solving. Many of the issues confronting the Township are complex and defy easy, off the shelf answers. The Township has a long history of adopting new tools and approaches as evidenced by being the first municipality in Pennsylvania to adopt a zoning code in 1927, the application of the Capital Improvement Program in 1954, and the use of the Official Map in the City Avenue District in 2012. Creativity is the open approach to new ideas, innovative tools and imaginative systems to most effectively meet the community's needs and desires.

Intimacy: The Township has the second largest suburban population in the Philadelphia region, but the Township also has one of the low-

est suburban population densities in the region in the western portion of the Township. Lower Merion also has one the highest per capita average household incomes in the entire state. The Township's large population and overall wealth provide urban advantages, such as plentiful public transportation access and higher quality commercial opportunities, without many of the disadvantages of urban life.

However, despite the urban advantages available to Township residents, there remains an almost universal desire throughout the community to retain the small town character of the Township. While a relatively low population density contributes to the Township's suburban character, Lower Merion's compact commercial areas and neighborhood-oriented community facilities, such as libraries, parks and fire companies, reinforce the small town qualities that a majority of residents prefer. The neighborhood scale and orientation of community facilities creates a sense of local intimacy usually not found in municipalities the size of Lower Merion Township.

Beauty: There is a consensus among Township residents that Lower Merion is a special place. Much of the Township's charm comes from the high quality of built environment combined with an attractive natural setting. Historic architecture, winding, tree lined roads and graceful natural features are defining characteristics of the community and are a major reason why real estate in the Township retains its value. The preserva-

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tion and enhancement of the Township's inherent beauty should remain a priority and be calculated into future maintenance, development and service provision decisions. Beauty is not a discretionary quality of the community which can be ignored when convenient; beauty is integral to maintaining Lower Merion Town-

ship as a place worth continuing to care about.

Taken together, the five principles articulate the essential qualities which define Lower Merion Township as a unique, primarily residential *suburb* within the Philadelphia metropolitan region. In order to retain the Township's distinctive character and com-

petitive position within the region, planning efforts should be directed towards achieving suburban-scaled solutions, which recognize the existing historic residential neighborhood patterns and direct future growth based on the principles of this plan.

LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The Township's Community Development Objectives provide the governing body and the community at large with clear guidance regarding the preferred location, intensity and character of development and redevelopment in Lower Merion. The Community Development Objectives in conjunction with the planning assumptions, planning principles, and recommendations contained within this Plan form the rational basis for the creation and/or revision of zoning, subdivision and other land use ordinances as well as capital improvements designed to enhance the established community character and development pattern.

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The Community Development Objectives are based on the following Planning Assumptions:

- The Township has a well-developed land use pattern primarily consisting of single-family residential neighborhoods of different scales and character. The Township's residential neighborhoods also include a significant number of established institutional uses which provide educational, religious and cultural amenities for township residents. The Township's land use pattern also includes regional health care and employment centers, clusters of multi-family housing and commercial nodes of varying intensity and character primarily located along major transportation corridors;
- The Township is substantially at capacity and new development will occur through modifications to existing buildings, infill of vacant properties or redevelopment of existing properties;
- Lower Merion contains a wide variety of historic resources, tree lined streets, and open spaces which are defining features of the Township. Preservation and repurposing of historic resources and open spaces and conservation of mature street trees is crucial to maintaining community character;
- Lower Merion's location in relation to the regional transportation network, including two interstate highways and numerous train stations and public transit stops throughout the community, reinforces the Township's desirability as a commuter suburb as well as providing opportunities for regional employment uses.
- The Township's internal circulation pattern is primarily auto-oriented, which generates undesirable conditions regarding traffic volume, traffic speed and parking availability. Auto improvements of a limited nature and in particular non-automotive circulation improvements, such as public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian enhancements must be undertaken and will occur through retrofitting the existing development pattern to relieve the undesirable conditions.
- The Township includes a variety of commercial areas of different sizes scales and orientations, which satisfy local and some regional needs. Commercial areas within the Township also provide important contributions to the local tax base.

- The majority of development within the Township occurred prior to the enactment of stormwater management controls. The Township recognizes the important role that trees, existing natural systems and new green infrastructure contribute to stormwater management.
- The Township's physical infrastructure requires constant maintenance and upgrading to reflect changing technologies and community use patterns.
- Many of the Township's problems relating to affordable housing, open space, transportation and community infrastructure cannot be solved internally and will require regional cooperation.
- The Township will become increasingly reliant upon the assistance of community groups and residents to provide additional assistance with maintaining existing community services as funding sources decline.
- The demographics of the population will continue to shift and the population of the Township will continue to age. The Township will have to address the needs of this aging population.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1. To preserve and enhance the unique character and high quality of life for all residents in all parts of the Township. This will support the Township's primary role as an attractive suburban, residential community with a wide range of housing choices for all income levels.
2. To guide future land development, consistent with the Future Land Use Map, to ensure that new development is compatible with the mass, scale, intensity and use of existing villages, neighborhoods and other developments and to create appropriately scaled, livable transitions between commercial and residential neighborhoods.
3. To provide high quality community facilities, such as libraries, parks, public schools, senior centers and fire stations and to promote the creation of public space for civic purposes that are accessible to all Township residents and meet the needs of each neighborhood.
4. Maintain the vitality and diversity of private institutions, including colleges, universities, religious institutions, hospitals and private schools, recognizing their value to the quality of life of the residents and their importance as community resources, while balancing their needs with those of the surrounding neighborhoods.
5. To continue to provide a safe, convenient and efficient multi-modal transportation system. This may include an integrated and coordinated system of roadways, trails, walkways, bikeways and public transportation systems both within the Township and on a regional basis.
6. To achieve a diverse and sound economic base and to preserve high property values to permit the continuation of the high standard municipal services and ongoing maintenance of the community's infrastructure without requiring undue tax burdens and to ensure that new development is compatible with the mass, scale, intensity and use of existing villages and to create appropriately scaled, livable transitions between commercial and residential neighborhoods.
7. To recognize the linkage between the health of the commercial areas and the residential neighborhoods, while also enhancing commercial activities of various scales in selected core areas, consistent with the Future Land Use Map, to increase employment opportunities and serve the needs of both local residents and non-residents.
8. To coordinate public and private efforts to preserve natural, historical and cultural resources in the Township, which are essential to the character of the Township. Recognize the natural constraints preventing development in certain areas, such as flood plains, steep slopes, and erosion-prone land, and the necessity of preserving and enhancing these critical areas for the benefit of all citizens through the use of appropriate land use management.
9. To achieve/maintain a diverse population composition with equal opportunity for safe and quality affordable housing, in part through the preservation of existing neighborhoods. Develop strategies to allow Township residents to age in place and continue to contribute to the community and to add complementary, attractive, high quality housing affordable to a wide range of households at appropriate densities through infill and redevelopment.
10. To promote public participation at all levels of government recognizing the importance of civic engagement.
11. To strengthen regional services and conservation efforts.

Vision

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APPROACH

PLANNING PROCESS²

This Plan is the result of an extensive planning process with a 'bottom-up' issues-based approach focusing on addressing specific concerns in detail, which complemented the traditional 'top down' comprehensive planning approach of visioning resulting in the establishment of broad, community-wide objectives. This juxtaposition of the general and the specific presents a plan that is uniquely suited to serve the stakeholders of this particular community at this particular time. The result is a plan for the Township as a whole, but which also reflects the diverse backgrounds and particular concerns of individuals and business owners across the community.

The 'issues-based' approach allowed participants to plug into the process by focusing on topics which specifically concern them and allowed participants to work through specific or localized issues while gaining an understanding and appreciation for other issues of civic importance, which they may not have been previously aware. The issues-based approach seeks to identify potential solutions to complex problems so that appropriate actions can be taken. This approach is intended to assist participants in efficiently utilizing available resources to address communal needs and wants in coming years.

² Insert graphic showing number of meetings

This Plan is the result of a community-wide exercise in problem solving and visioning. This Plan contains the creative ideas generated by a diverse cross section of the community to solve existing and anticipated local problems. The public visioning and problem solving components of the plan have been married with the less glamorous, yet vitally important, functional maintenance necessary to deliver core services and meet the basic purposes of government, such as public safety, road repaving and sewer repair. The result is a unified plan which merges the desire to be beautiful with the need to be pragmatic. The resulting plan is aspirational, practical and functional.

SUBURBAN FOCUS

For over 75 years the physical development of Lower Merion Township has been in accordance with the Township's 1937 Comprehensive Plan and subsequent Plan updates of 1954, 1962 and 1979. The 1937 *Plan for Lower Merion Township* has directed capital investments and guided regulatory policies to transform Lower Merion from fields, valleys and large estates into a *particular* type of suburb. The suburban environment promoted by the Township's Comprehensive Plans recognized the geographic and social diversity of a 24-square mile municipality, but placed great emphasis on creating a singular Township by promoting quality design, walkability, access to public transportation, personal convenience, efficient and exceptional

Public Participation in the Planning Process

Public participation is crucial to the development of a successful comprehensive plan. Between 2010 and 2014 over 100 public meetings were held to engage the public in the comprehensive planning process. A series of 10 public workshops were hosted by the Planning Commission in 2010-2011 to formulate recommendations to the Board of Commissioners regarding the order and content of the Comprehensive Plan Elements. In 2012, five citizens' advisory committees, comprised of 63 dedicated volunteers, were appointed by the Board of Commissioners to assist in the preparation of the Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Community Facilities and Water Resources elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The citizens' advisory committees also broke into smaller subcommittees to tackle topics, such as historic preservation and codes affecting water resources. All the committees met regularly from 2012-2014 and worked with staff to establish the goals, objectives and recommendations for each of the elements. They also provided regular updates to the Planning Commission throughout the planning process. The committee meetings ensured continued engagement of Township residents and business owners throughout the planning process and offered numerous opportunities for members of the general public to share their ideas with staff and committee members.

services and private development constructed in harmony with the natural environment. Consistent implementation of the 1937 Plan has resulted in the Lower Merion Township that residents enjoy today featuring stable neighborhoods, compact commercial districts, winding, tree lined streets, great schools and high property values.

The Township's planning efforts have also resulted in the preservation of large residential lots and the conversion of former estates to institutional uses in the western part of the Township. The preservation of the estate-like character of Bryn Mawr, Rosemont/Villanova and Gladwyne makes Lower Merion unique among the region's suburbs.

DEFINING LAND USE PATTERN CHARACTERISTICS³

The current land use and circulation patterns of Lower Merion Township are the result of six distinct eras of growth and development. Development in each of the Township's growth eras occurred in specific lo-

cations relative to the prominent mode of transportation at the time and embodied particular design intent. These eras were defined in the 1990 *Comprehensive Historic Sites Mapping Project*, which identified the age of each structure in the Township and categorized the era during which growth occurred in the municipality. Staff updated the map in 2015 using GIS data and refined the eras of development for the purpose of this Plan. Each of the growth eras exhibited distinct architectural and site planning characteristics which have been continually layered upon as subsequent redevelopment occurs.

The Streetcar/Commuter (1914-1939) and Early Auto Oriented (1940-1959) growth eras encompass the majority of the growth and development of the Township to date. The Conservation/Open Space Design & Infill of Residential Neighborhoods era and the Mixed Use Redevelopment of Commercial Areas era spanning from 1990 to present day represent a reaction to the general lack of land planning and architectural detail characterized by the Auto Oriented era. The most recent era of development represents an effort to emphasize sustainable environmental planning practices and high quality physical design characteristics which define Lower Merion.

³ Insert photos of a residential and a commercial example to illustrate each era: Railroad Suburb – Pennswood/Bryn Mawr College. Street Car Suburb – Bala or Wynnewood neighborhood/Suburban Square. Auto Oriented Suburb-Penn Valley, Ardmore West Shopping Center. Conservation Design Era – Fenimore. Mixed Use Era – Bryn Mawr or CVS Rock Hill Road.

Agrarian Characteristics (1680-1851):

Approximately 320 structures remain, which comprise 1.6% of structures in the Township.

- *Location within Township* – Widely distributed throughout the Township with a cluster in Gladwyne primarily along Youngsford Road, Black Rock Road and Mill Creek Road.
- *Design Intent* – Earliest period of development. Lower Merion was predominantly a farming community, with early industrial mill activity along Mill Creek.
- *Site Design Characteristics* – Buildings were primarily located on large tracts of land. Architectural resources remaining from this period include scattered farmhouses, barns and other farm outbuildings, springhouses, mill and mill ruins and mill-workers' housing. By 1851 the Township population and character were beginning to change due to the introduction of rail transport in the 1830s.⁴
- *Architectural Characteristics* – Styles include examples of Colonial, Federal and Greek Revival. Buildings are vernacular, executed in stone or stucco and often do not possess the high-style detailing typical of these styles elsewhere, perhaps because of the Quaker influence.⁵
- *Commercial Areas Characteristics/Relationship of Commercial Areas to Residential Areas* – During this era the community supplied food to the growing Philadelphia market. The commercial areas provided access to local producers for commerce and communication.



Gladwyne was the first walkable, country village in the Township. Inns, taverns and blacksmith shops were also located along Old Lancaster Road, Old Gulph Road and Lancaster Road, which provided access to Philadelphia. Taverns also served as places to vote, as post offices and general stores.⁶

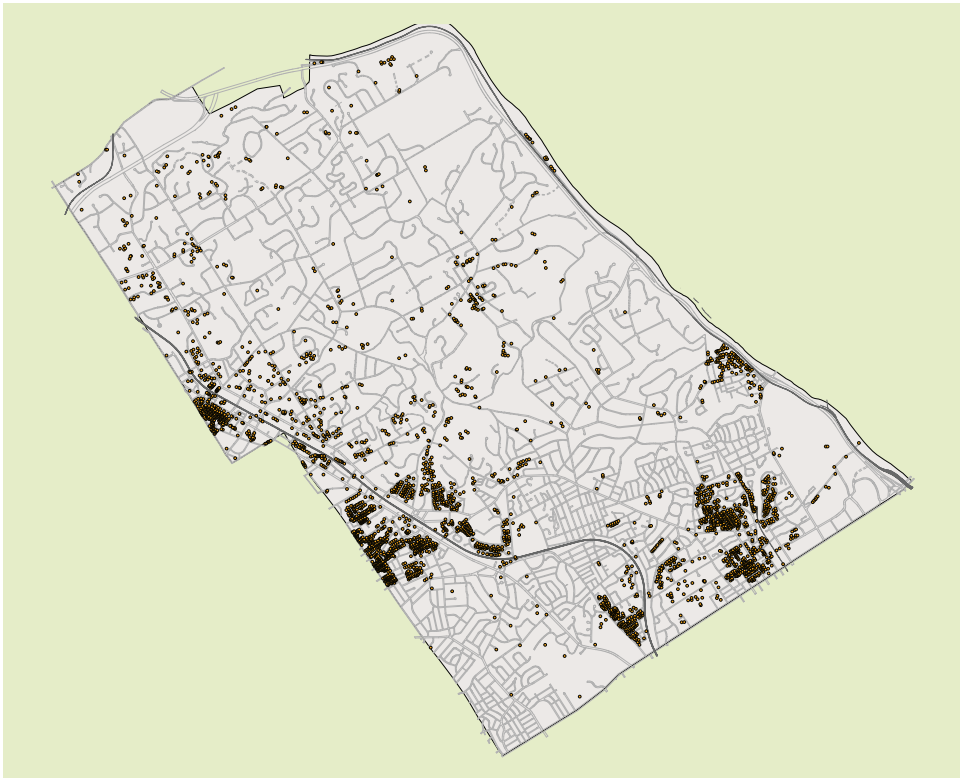
- *Public Space/Community Facilities* – In 1835 the first public school was opened in Lower Merion. Prior to that education was generally provided at home or by private institutions.⁷
- *Purpose of Institutional Uses and Relationship of Institutional Uses to Residential Uses* – Institutions served as the focal point and primary gathering space in the community.

4 Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation. Comprehensive Historic Sites Mapping Project Township of Lower Merion. Page 8

5 Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation. Comprehensive Historic Sites Mapping Project Township of Lower Merion. Page 8

6 The Lower Merion Historical Society. *The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion*. Diane Publishing Co., 2000, page 123

7 The Lower Merion Historical Society. *The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion*. Diane Publishing Co., 2000, page 123



Railroad Suburb Characteristics (1851-1914):

Approximately 3,140 structures remain, which comprise 15.6% of structures in the Township.

- **Location within Township** - Clustered around the Ardmore, Merion, Haverford, Bryn Mawr and Rosemont train stations and also along Montgomery Avenue.
- **Design Intent** - Highly designed as attractive, semi-rural, residential commuter villages, with a full range of building types from modest worker housing to elaborate mansions on large estates built for wealthy businessmen.
- **Site Design Characteristics** - The railroad brought tremendous growth and changed the area from a scattered settlement of farms and mills to a suburban community. Estates were platted along winding, tree lined roads following contours of land. Private developers purchased farms and subdivided them into residential neighborhoods platted on smaller
- **Architectural Characteristics** - Architecture consisted of lavish country styled estates on large properties. Many homes individually designed by signature architects. Extensive use of natural materials and decorative elements. Buildings were designed in Victorian, Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Shingle and Tudor Revival styles.⁸
- **Commercial Areas Characteristics/Relationship of Commercial Areas to Residential Areas** - Commercial areas clustered around train stations. Buildings generally 2-3 stories in height with residential units above ground floor commercial space. Commercial areas located within walking distance

of residential areas. Commercial areas serve immediate residential areas and elite summer boarders escaping the City of Philadelphia's summer heat.

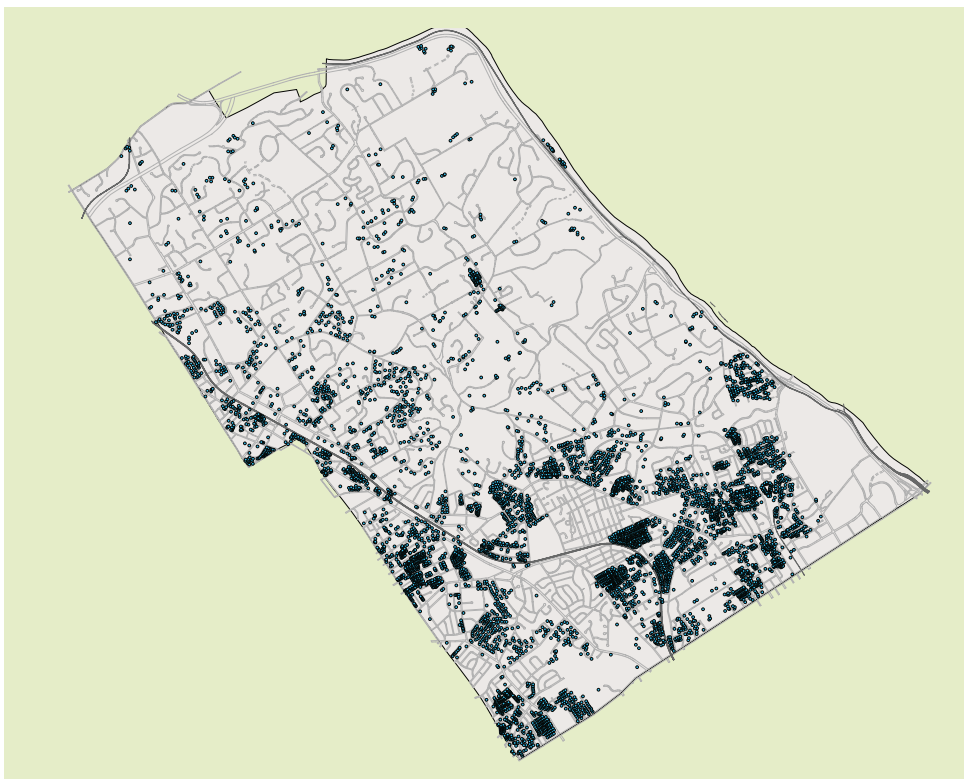
- **Public Space/Community Facilities** - Limited public space, most open space and communal gathering areas provided in private clubs and facilities. Public open space/parks added to preserve low density character of area as larger estates and farmland are subdivided.
- **Pedestrian Environment** - Sidewalks constructed to link train stations and commercial areas with residential areas. Sidewalks were not typically developed in the lower density, rural residential areas.
- **Purpose of Institutional Uses and Relationship of Institutional Uses to Residential Uses** - Institutional uses developed to support and complement local residential character. Institutions feature attractive architecture and complementary site design to surrounding neighborhood.
- **Significant Planning Events** - 1900: Lower Merion Established as a First Class Township

⁸ Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation. Comprehensive Historic Sites Mapping Project Township of Lower Merion. Page 9

Streetcar/Commuter Suburb Characteristics (1914-1939):

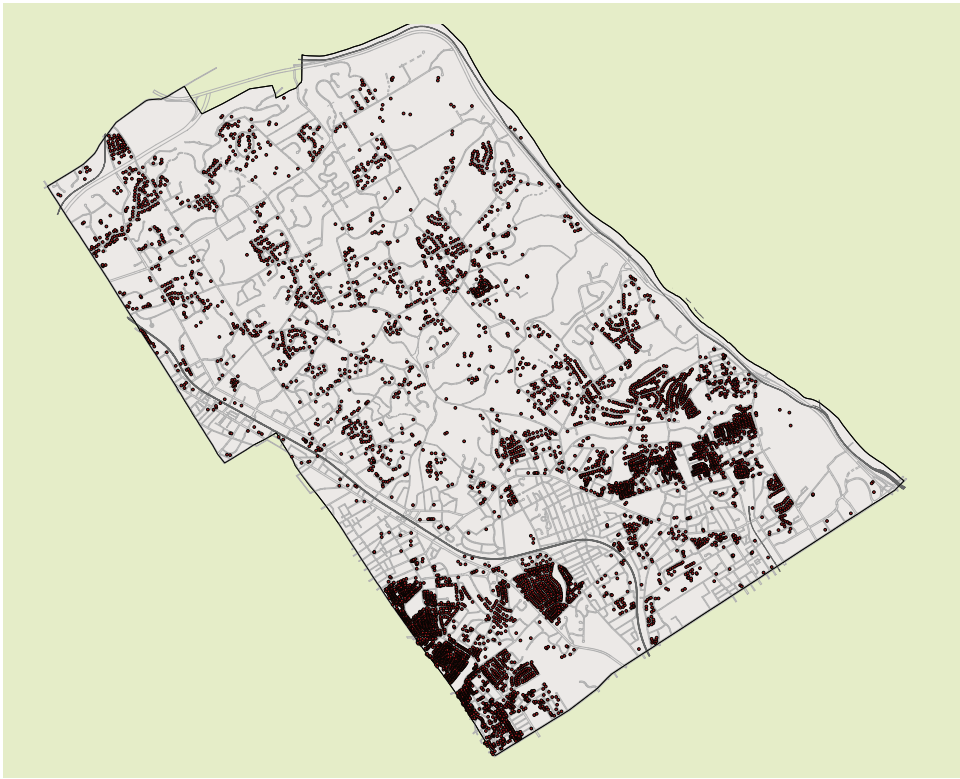
Approximately 6,240 structures remain, which comprise approximately 31.1% of structures in the Township.

- *Location within Township* – Primarily concentrated in the eastern part of the Township with scattered neighborhoods radiating farther from the core areas. Entire neighborhoods developed around the rail stations and existing Railroad Suburbs.
- *Design Intent*- High-quality, single-family neighborhoods and apartment houses for upper middle class professionals commuting to Philadelphia by rail, streetcar and automobile. Row houses and twin homes constructed in working class neighborhoods.
- *Site Design Characteristics* - Continued railroad era practice of estate houses platted along winding, tree lined roads following contours of land. Further subdivision of farms into residential neighborhoods platted on smaller lots in close proximity to the train stations. Development begins to radiate farther from the train stations with the introduction of the automobile allowing for an easy commute into Philadelphia.
- *Architectural Characteristics* – Neighborhoods designed as a unit of complementary buildings with similar mass, scale, setbacks and materials. Garages to rear or side, but not prominent. Distinctive neighborhood pattern created through rhythm of platting and setbacks. Colonial Revival and Tudor continued to be the most popular style; however, houses from the Cotswold area in England also became models for large, comfortable homes with all fieldstone facades.⁹



- *Commercial Areas Characteristics/ Relationship of Commercial Areas to Residential Areas* – Well-designed shopping centers featuring multiple tenants, but managed under common ownership. Suburban Square exemplifies an ideal Streetcar Suburb shopping center with attractive architecture, shielded parking and direct pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhoods.
- *Public Space/Community Facilities* – Neighborhood scaled and oriented, including parks, public schools and libraries. High level of civic design to complement surrounding residential character.
- *Pedestrian Environment* – Sidewalks are integral to connecting with residential areas with amenities, including transit, public space, schools and commercial areas.
- *Purpose of Institutional Uses and Relationship of Institutional Uses to Residential Uses* - Institutional uses developed to support and complement local residential character. Institutions feature attractive architecture and complementary site design to surrounding neighborhood. Institutions feature 'green edges' and serve as large open spaces to perpetuate low density character of surrounding neighborhood.
- *Significant Planning Events* - 1927: First Zoning Ordinance Adopted; 1934: Planning Commission Established; 1937: First Comprehensive Plan.

⁹ Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation. Comprehensive Historic Sites Mapping Project Township of Lower Merion. Page 9



Early Auto Suburb Characteristics (1940-1959):

Approximately 6,154 structures remain, which comprise approximately 30.6% of structures in the Township.

- **Location within Township** – Significant period of growth. Primarily Post World War II infill tract developments in Penn Wynne, and Wynnewood. Dispersed neighborhood development also occurs in the western end of the Township. Completion of Schuylkill Expressway in 1957 spurs development in Bala Cynwyd.
- **Design Intent** – Single-family tract developments for upper middle class professionals commuting to Philadelphia by train or automobile. Previously permitted row house development is prohibited.
- **Site Design Characteristics** – Development transitions from compact neighborhood design with pedestrian connectivity to increasingly auto-oriented design. Some early residential developments still include front porches, alleys

and walkways, but later developments provide off-street parking, no sidewalks and curving streets. Neighborhoods designed as a unit of complementary buildings with similar mass, scale and setbacks. Developments feature local roads feeding to arterial roadways. Lots were generally larger and the houses placed further apart than during the Streetcar Suburb era.

- **Architectural Characteristics** – Neighborhoods exhibit a wide variation of architectural styles. Garages generally to rear or side, but newer infill homes include front loading garages. Neighborhoods of “Colonial” style farmhouses, ranch houses, and contemporary houses.¹⁰
- **Commercial Areas Characteristics/Relationship of Commercial Areas to Residential Areas** – New auto oriented shopping centers

constructed to accommodate additional population, including the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center and the Wynnewood Shopping Center. Auto-oriented shopping centers exhibit less design details than centers constructed under previous development eras.

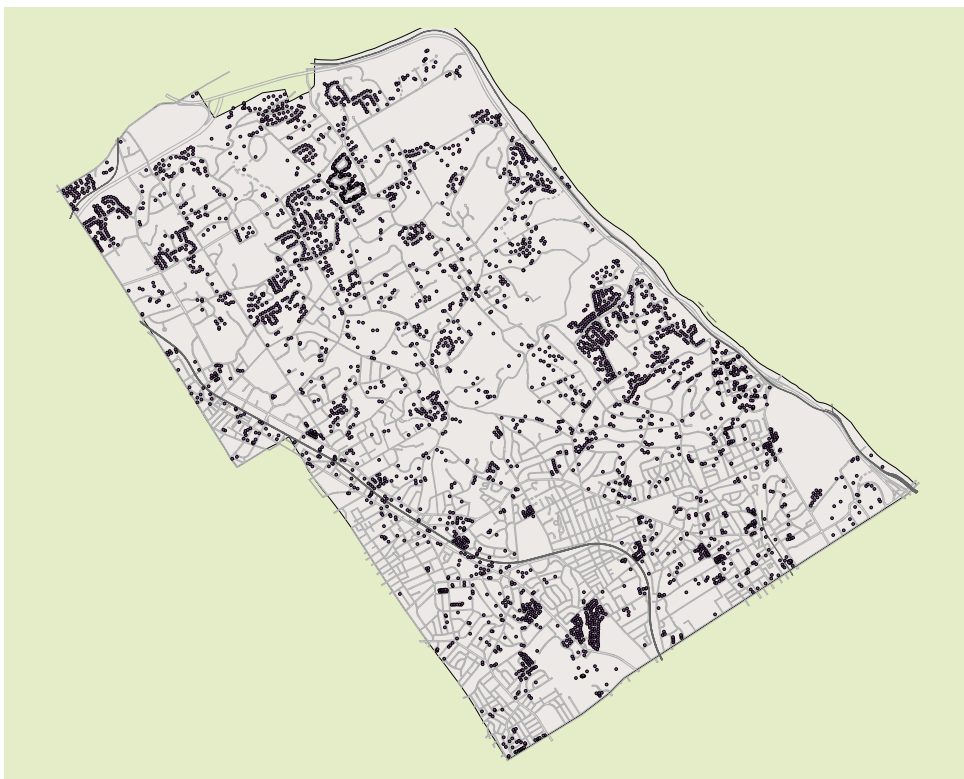
- **Pedestrian Environment** – Generally sidewalk and street tree requirements were waived within neighborhoods. Public facilities generally embedded in residential neighborhoods. Pedestrians and bicyclists share cartway with automobiles within subdivisions.
- **Purpose of Institutional Uses and Relationship of Institutional Uses to Residential Uses** – Institutional uses exhibit a variety of architectural styles and do not necessarily relate to surrounding residential context. During this period numerous properties were acquired by the Township for civic uses including pump stations, administrative offices, public parking lots and parklands. The Lower Merion School District also underwent a period of significant growth.
- **Significant Planning Events - 1955: Comprehensive Plan Update**

¹⁰ Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation. Comprehensive Historic Sites Mapping Project Township of Lower Merion. Page 10

Late Auto Suburb Characteristics (1960-1990):

Approximately 3,483 structures remain, which comprise approximately 17.3% of structures in the Township.

- **Location within Township** – Completion of the Mid-County connector (I-476) drives development in Villanova, Penn Valley and Gladwyne areas. Additional mid-to high-rise development occurs along City Avenue. Scattered infill development occurs throughout the Township.
- **Design Intent** – Single-family tract developments and influx of apartment houses/condominiums for upper, middle class professionals commuting to Philadelphia by automobile. Townhouse development becomes a permitted residential use in 1972.
- **Site Design Characteristics** – Generally developed as stand-alone single family residential subdivisions and small, infill developments. Houses platted along curving streets. Street tree and sidewalk requirements often waived. Neighborhoods designed as a unit of complementary buildings with similar mass, scale and setbacks. Generally larger lots and houses placed further apart. Infill townhouse development and apartment buildings often incongruent with existing neighborhoods. After 1977 stormwater managed through on lot systems. The Floodplain District was enacted in 1972 limiting development potential within the floodplain¹¹.
- **Architectural Characteristics** - Neighborhoods exhibit a wide variation of architectural styles. Off-street parking and front loading garages become standard form.

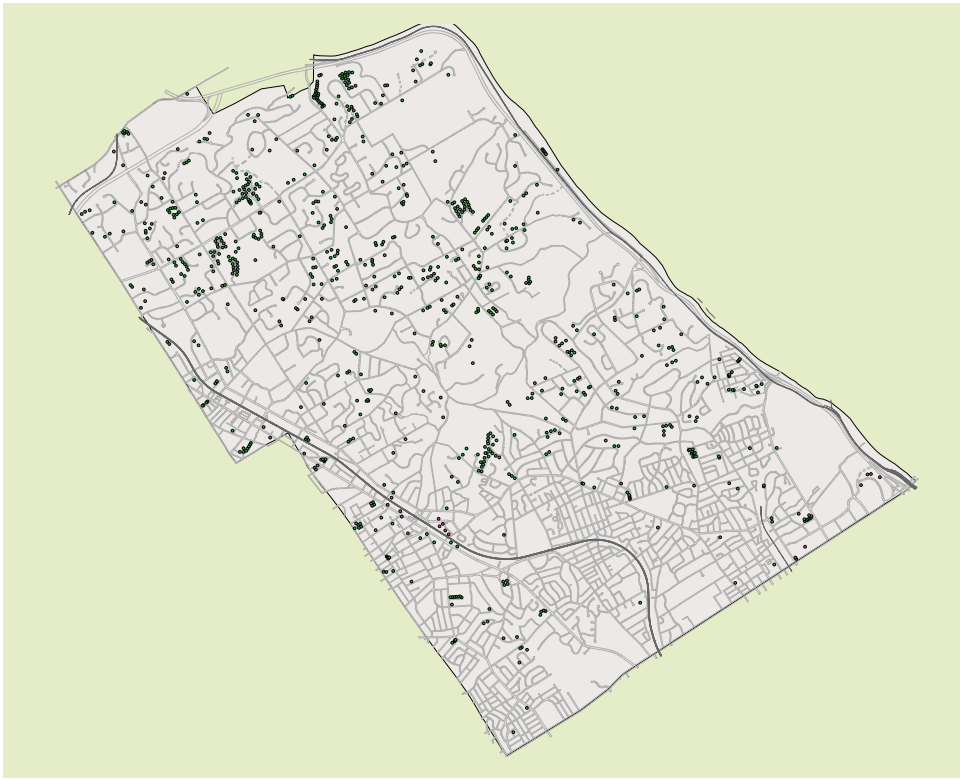


Neighborhoods of ranch houses, French inspired stucco houses, “Colonial” style farmhouses and contemporary houses.¹²

- **Commercial Areas Characteristics/ Relationship of Commercial Areas to Residential Areas** –Continued development of auto oriented shopping centers with parking in front of the buildings. Auto-oriented shopping centers exhibit less design details than centers constructed under previous development eras and often lack pedestrian connections.
- **Pedestrian Environment** – Minimal attention given to the pedestrian environment. Generally sidewalk and street tree requirements were waived within neighborhoods. Pedestrians and bicyclists share cartway with automobiles within subdivisions.
- **Purpose of Institutional Uses and Relationship of Institutional Uses to Residential Uses** - Institutional uses developed with larger service area accessed by automobile. Institutional uses exhibit a variety of architectural styles and do not necessarily relate to surrounding residential context.
- **Significant Planning Events** - 1962: Comprehensive Plan Update; 1973: Floodplain Overlay District Established, 1975: Watercourse Code Enacted, 1977: Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Code Enacted, 1979: Comprehensive Plan; 1989 Natural Features Conservation Code Enacted

¹¹ Insert year that stormwater regulations were enacted.

¹² Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation. Comprehensive Historic Sites Mapping Project Township of Lower Merion. Page 10



Conservation/Open Space Design & Infill Of Residential Neighborhoods (1990-Current):

Approximately 751 structures, which comprise approximately 3.7% of structures in the Township.

- *Location within Township* – A handful of multi-family developments primarily occurring in eastern portion of Township with scattered infill of single-family residential development occurring throughout the Township.
- *Design Intent* - Specific regulations enacted to produce better quality, more environmentally responsible site design for subdivision of larger estate properties. Preservation of historic resources and open space incentivized to integrate new development into established fabric.
- *Site Design Characteristics* – Generally small residential developments arranged around cul-de-sacs with green belts of open space along edges on former es-

tate properties. Infill development meets current zoning standards; however, the zoning standards are regularly inconsistent with the existing residential neighborhoods developed prior to the enactment of the Zoning Code. Stormwater management is provided on-site and the Open Space Preservation District overlay requires that half the land be set aside as open space on properties exceeding five-acres.

- *Architectural Characteristics* – High quality single family residential architecture. Neighborhood developments of former estates generally designed and constructed by a single builder to create unity of design within development. Infill developments exhibit a variety of architectural styles with greater emphasis on interior living space than exterior architecture. Infill developments are generally bulkier and less articulated than surrounding residences. Garages generally to rear or side, but

newer infill homes include front loading garages.

- *Historic Preservation* - Emphasis on integration of historic structures in site design.
- *Commercial Areas Characteristics/Relationship of Commercial Areas to Residential Areas* – General auto oriented strip development of commercial corridors between established commercial areas exhibiting less design details than centers constructed under previous development eras.
- *Pedestrian Environment* – Sidewalk and street tree requirements frequently waived. Little pedestrian connectivity to public facilities. Pedestrians and bicyclists share cartway with automobiles within subdivisions.
- *Purpose of Institutional Uses and Relationship of Institutional Uses to Residential Uses* – Transition of Institutional uses during this era from neighborhood scale to regional scale. Regionally scaled institutional uses including private schools, hospitals and continuing care facilities expanded and intensified. Many neighborhood scaled institutions lost neighborhood orientation due to changing demographics. Specific regulations enacted to address intensification of hospitals and continuing care facilities and to permit residential conversion/historical preservation of smaller neighborhood-scaled institutions.
- *Significant Planning Events* - 1990: *Comprehensive Historic Sites Mapping Project*, 1990: Open Space Preservation District Adopted, 1993: *Scenic Road Corridor Study*, 1998: Conservationist Agenda; 2000: Historic Resource Overlay District Adopted

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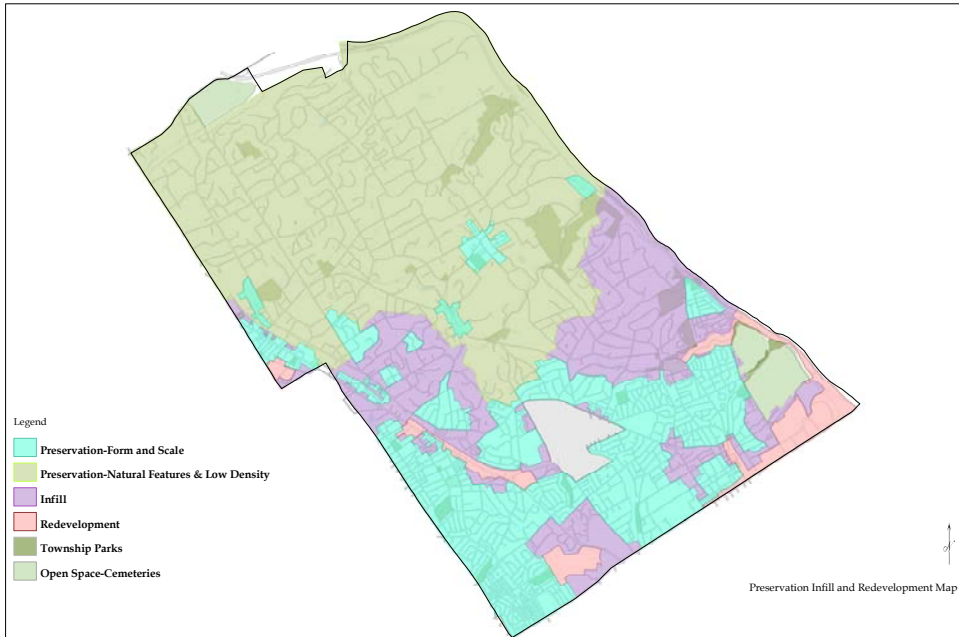
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Mixed Use Redevelopment of Commercial Areas (1990-Current)

- *Location within Township* – Ardmore Business District, Rock Hill Road, Bryn Mawr Village, City Avenue District, Bala Village.
- *Design Intent* - Provide for the modernization and revitalization of existing village scaled commercial districts and the redevelopment of auto-oriented commercial districts.
- *Site Design Characteristics* – Promote traditional pedestrian oriented scale and mixed use form of commercial districts with buildings placed in front and parking to rear and inviting sidewalks along the street.
- *Architectural Characteristics* – Architectural standards enacted to promote a pedestrian scaled environment and high quality design. Ground floor requirements regulating building entrance location and amount of glazing. Building mass deemphasized through step backs of upper floors.
- *Historic Preservation* – Emphasis on adaptive reuse and modernization of historic structures.
- *Open Space* – Emphasis on creation of pocket parks as public gathering spaces, primarily achieved through private development. Greening standards enacted to enhance commercial landscaping.
- *Relationship of Commercial Areas to Residential Areas* – Standards enacted to maintain traditional physical transition between higher intensity commercial uses and lower intensity residential uses. With the exception of City Avenue the orientation of revitalized commercial areas remained towards local service areas.
- *Pedestrian Environment* – Design emphasis on traditional pedestrian character through sidewalks and streetscape requirements. Efforts to reestablish traditional pedestrian links between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods through sidewalks, trails and intersection improvements.
- *Purpose of Institutional Uses and Relationship of Institutional Uses to Residential Uses* - Integration of neighboring institutional uses such as Bryn Mawr Hospital to achieve planning/economic synergies where practical.
- *Significant Planning Events* - 2006: Mixed Use Special Transportation District Adopted; 2006: Rock Hill Overlay District Adopted; 2008: Bryn Mawr Village District Adopted; 2014: City Avenue District Adopted



FUTURE LAND USE APPROACH

The Comprehensive Plan is based on the fundamental assumption that Lower Merion is an established, high-quality residential suburb and that future growth strategies should primarily be focused on fulfilling the original design intent of the neighborhood patterns which make Lower Merion Township such a uniquely, wonderful place. Within the context of fulfilling the original design intent of this Plan provides opportunities for logical evolution of the existing land use and circulatory framework while also providing opportunities for targeted redevelopment of commercial areas consistent with the pedestrian-scaled, transit-oriented character of the Township.

Preservation

The idea of Preservation presented by the Plan is rooted in the practical belief that the overwhelming majority of Lower Merion Township works very well and should not be materially changed. Preservation, in

terms of this Plan, is to be considered as a means towards the logical and appropriate evolution of the community to meet changing needs. While preservation is sometimes seen as focusing on specific properties or individual buildings, this plan is focused on preserving the larger patterns which the individual historic elements collectively comprise as well as preserving individual historic resources. The preservation of Lower Merion Township as a series of distinct neighborhoods each reflecting specific building eras is crucial to maintaining the character and value of the Township as a whole.

Several of the strategies contained within this Plan, particularly regarding historic preservation, residential land use and institutional land use, are focused on allowing the defining physical and natural features of the Township to continue to evolve without being unnecessarily replaced or without placing an undue burden upon their neighbors. Because of the unique nature of many of the

Township's architectural and natural resources, specific policies will be required for specific preservation circumstances.

Infill

While the vast majority of the Township is already developed, there are numerous scattered 'infill' parcels throughout the Township which can still be developed. In order to complement the existing pattern, it is crucial that infill development properly fit within existing neighborhoods in terms of mass, scale and form. This Plan contains numerous strategies, particularly concerning housing, residential land use, open space and water resources focused on ensuring that new development is consistent with existing development and that new development promotes the original neighborhood design intent.

Issues associated with many infill developments can be addressed through design regulations requiring architectural compatibility. However, there are instances where new infill construction occurring through subdivision of existing residential properties may potentially compromise the surrounding residential pattern, particularly in areas where the established pattern is comprised of larger lots. The large lot, estate-like pattern of the western part of the Township is special to Lower Merion and unique to the region. The preservation of the Streetcar/Commuter Suburb residential pattern of Bryn Mawr and Ardmore is also integral to the preservation of Lower Merion as a whole. This Plan includes recommendations and strategies directed towards limiting inappropriate subdivisions which together could result in the loss of the identity of the Township.

Redevelopment

While the majority of the Township's land use pattern should be preserved, there are several select areas of the Township, particularly along Rock

Hill Road and City Avenue which are appropriate for some degree of redevelopment. Redevelopment offers the opportunity to remake older areas to meet future needs. The Township's commercial areas are well established and may also include features worthy of preservation within them. This Plan identifies specific areas and includes specific strategies for the targeted redevelopment of commercial areas and the inclusion of historic and natural resource protections within those districts as anchors for the establishment of new patterns.

The purpose of the redevelopment strategies is to promote the livability of the Township and to provide better transitions between commercial uses and the prevailing residential fabric.

PLAN

REGULATORY POLICES

Regulatory polices play a crucial role in implementing the goals of a comprehensive plan. Many of the specific issues raised during the planning process have been addressed through a regulatory policy recommendation. This plan contains numerous individual regulatory policy recommendations. Many of these recommendations are refinements of existing polices, while some of the recommendations propose new polices to address new issues.

The number of recommended regulatory policies and policy amendments to address specific issues raises a larger issue; namely that the Township's existing regulatory policy framework needs to be comprehensively updated, not merely amended, in order to effectively implement this new Comprehensive Plan.

The Township's Zoning Code was first enacted in 1927, ten years prior to the adoption of the 1937 Comprehensive Plan. The 1937 Plan resulted in significant amendments to the

Zoning Code to bring the codes into consistency. Over the years both the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code have been continually amended and updated¹³.

While the update of Comprehensive Plans and the amendment of the Zoning Code are relatively routine municipal actions, starting around 2004 Lower Merion Township has enacted a significant number of major zoning amendments involving the creation of new zoning districts and overlay districts. The increase in land use regulatory activity is the direct result of a *new kind* of development pressure facing the community, particularly growth issues associated with preservation, infill and redevelopment.

Similar to the 1937 *Plan for Lower Merion Township*, the *Lower Merion Zoning Ordinance of 1927* is primarily oriented towards the growth and the development of the Township through subdivision of larger properties and the development of vacant land. The Township's current regulatory code reflects the assumption that growth will occur through large scale subdivision and the development of vacant land. The existing code framework is not oriented towards effectively addressing the fine grained, lot by lot growth challenges currently facing Lower Merion, which will continue in coming years. The existing code cannot easily be improved through the continued amendment of existing documents. A new, more user-friendly Zoning Code should be prepared to effectively address future growth.

In addition to clarifying and coordinating regulatory actions, a new Zoning Code will implement two major goals of this new comprehensive plan. First, a new Zoning Code should be oriented towards achieving a significantly smaller ultimate population than is currently achieved

through the Township's zoning ordinance. Secondly, a new code should incorporate detailed design standards to ensure that new development is either consistent in form with the prevailing pattern, where desired, or that the form of new development promotes the vision of the new Comprehensive Plan where the prevailing pattern may be changed.

1937 Comprehensive Plan Population Projection

"The continuing good government enjoyed by Lower Merion, its excellent school system, its freedom from public debt and its low tax rate are other features that will continue to attract residents within its borders. A comparatively rapid growth therefore is estimated for the next thirty years. After that time, the population growth is expected to taper off towards a maximum of approximately 90,000 persons."

Ultimate Potential Population

The ultimate potential population is the hypothetical population which would occur if the Township was developed to maximum yield allowed by the Zoning Code. Staff estimates that under current Zoning the Township's ultimate potential population could be approximately 90,000 persons, which is significantly more than the Township's 2010 population of approximately 58,000. Realization of the ultimate potential population could occur via the subdivision and development of vacant land, particularly in the western portion of the Township; through the redevelopment of existing neighborhoods in the eastern part of the Township; through assembly and demolition of existing homes; and the intense redevelopment of commercial areas and

¹³ This information is included with the Background in the next chapter

institutions. It assumes that every lot in the Township would be developed to its maximum capacity under existing zoning. Although a full build-out of the Township will never occur, this study was prepared to compare the results of the 1937 population projections with current figures. Without proper protections, realization of the ultimate potential population may result in significant disruptions to the Township's existing land use pattern, circulation system, service structure and natural environment. Realization of the potential ultimate build out may result in the urbanization of Lower Merion and result in the loss of the Township's unique suburban identity.

The Zoning Code reflects the ultimate potential population envisioned by the 1937 Plan. The ultimate potential population is the underlying source of many of the issues identified throughout the planning process, including unwanted subdivision, loss of open space, demolition of historic resources, stormwater damage and traffic congestion. The 1979 Comprehensive Plan update anticipated that the Township's population could potentially reach 69,000 by 2000, through subdivision of estates and apartment construction, but did not recommend revising the zoning code to match a lower ultimate population. For approximately 25 years, the Township has been amending the code to address specific con-

cerns resulting from this development pressure without addressing the root issue that potentially more development is permitted by the community's regulatory controls than is desired by the community. A new zoning code should be prepared to reflect the assumptions and vision of this Plan which presents an ultimate population closer to the existing population based on neighborhood preservation, quality infill and targeted redevelopment.

In 2014, staff completed a new ultimate build out scenario using GIS software based on current zoning regulations for the residential chapter of the Land Use Element. The full details of the scenario are included in this chapter, a summary is provided below. The new ultimate build out scenario projected the population at approximately 90,000 under existing zoning. These current projections are consistent with the 1937 projections. The current build out also supports the need for a new Zoning Code to achieve a significantly lower ultimate population than the projected 90,000. The build out represents a theoretical maximum, and the build out presented may not ever be realized due to small lot size, existing building locations, and fragmented property ownership. The build-out includes the following assumptions: all structures will be demolished and a new structure will be built on the property with the exception of iden-

tified Historic Resources, all existing institutions will cease to operate and would convert to the underlying residential use, all commercially zoned/overlay properties would develop as mixed use, and if the maximum yield was already achieved with the existing land use of the property those units were not included in the scenario. It is the intention with the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan that the target population be no more than 70,000. This Comprehensive Plan includes strategies which can mitigate potential impacts of increased development, while reinforcing the vision of this Plan

1979 Lower Merion Comprehensive Plan Population Projection

"By the year 2000 the township's total population is estimated at about 68,000 to 69,000 people."

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TABLE I.1 VILLAGE POPULATION CHANGE 2000-2010 - ULTIMATE BUILD OUT

Village	2000	2010	Ultimate Population Projections	
	Population	Population	2015 Build Out	1937 Historical Projections
Rosemont	5,147	5,178	7,318	7,930
East Bryn Mawr	2,218	1,853	4,839	4,240
West Bryn Mawr	2,636	2,517	3,735	4,240
Gladwyne	5,399	5,020	7,011	7,000
South Penn Valley* (22)	4,756	4,634	5,935	8,140
Merion	4,880	4,752	5,387	5,800
West Ardmore	1,750	1,867	5,421	3,490
Haverford	2,933	2,848	4,479	4,120
North Ardmore* (10)	6,057	6,000	11,398	9,630
Bala	2,454	2,434	9,170	4,950
Cynwyd	3,237	3,241	4,904	5,050
North Penn Valley	2,260	2,173	2,401	
Belmont Hills/College Park	3,350	3,402	4,757	7,290
Penn Wynne	4,595	4,827	6,159	
East Ardmore	3,732	3,514	5,960	
Wynnewood	3,340	3,565	4,046	17,440
Totals/Average	58,744	57,825	92,920	89,320

(1) Former South Ardmore Census Tract comprises current census tracts of East Ardmore, Wynnewood and Penn Wynne.

(2) Former Pencoyd Census Tract comprises current census tracts of North Penn Valley and College Park.

 INPUT

TABLE I.2 HOUSING UNITS CHANGE 2000-2010- ULTIMATE BUILD OUT

Village	2000	2010	Ultimate Build Out	
	Housing Units	Housing Units	Housing Units Additional	Total Housing Units
Rosemont	1,785	1,904	1,106	3,010
East Bryn Mawr	841	759	1,811	2,570
West Bryn Mawr	834	837	638	1,475
Gladwyne	2,036	2,112	863	2,975
South Penn Valley* (22)	1,618	1,641	629	2,270
Merion	1,718	1,519	292	1,811
West Ardmore	871	988	2,157	3,145
Haverford	1,347	1,345	736	2,081
North Ardmore* (10)	2,767	2,790	3,002	5,792
Bala	1,263	1,322	5,312	6,634
Cynwyd	1,244	1,250	834	2,084
North Penn Valley	1,146	1,137	94	1,231
Belmont Hills/College Park	1,320	1,345	992	2,337
Penn Wynne	1,814	1,984	548	2,532
East Ardmore	1,801	1,806	1,650	3,456
Wynnewood	1,294	1,356	198	1,554
Totals/Average	23,699	24,095	20,862	44,957

“Lower Merion has a modern zoning ordinance which reflects existing land use patterns, street patterns and natural features. The ordinance should not need any significant amendments to be compatible with the Comprehensive Plan. Because of the comprehensiveness of the zoning ordinance and the wide range of uses and densities permitted, the land use patterns suggested in the Plan can be readily implemented under existing zoning provisions.”

1979 Lower Merion Comprehensive Plan

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The Form and Scale of New Development

Revising the Zoning Code to reflect a more realistic potential ultimate population will address many of the concerns associated with the quantitative issues surrounding new development. Fully integrating design guidelines and preservation obligations and incentives will address qualitative issues. Many of the amendments to existing zoning districts and nearly all of the new zoning districts and overlay districts created since 2004 have included significant design requirements. Design guidelines are crucial to ensure that new development fits with the established architectural/site design context and does not inadvertently reduce the value or functionality of surrounding properties. It is envisioned that future development regulations will utilize the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) provisions of the Municipalities Planning Code to transition growth regulations from a conventional development orientation towards a form based approach.

Preservation of the Prevailing Pattern

A new Zoning Code will be required to achieve the goal of preserving and enhancing the existing built environment by making the adaptive reuse and modernization of existing structures, landscapes and neighborhoods integral to future growth efforts. It is recommended that historic preservation be fully integrated throughout future regulatory efforts.

MAINTAINING AND RETROFITTING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT FOR MODERN REALITIES

While a major focus of this Plan is directed towards guiding new development, this plan places an equally important emphasis on guiding public investments, both for ongoing maintenance of public infrastructure, as well as, enhancements to the public realm, and promoting private investments to retrofit developed properties to meet modern realities.

Maintenance

To be a truly good plan, a plan needs to address the day to day, functional needs of a community as well as considering practical issues and aspirational desires. Core services constitute a significant percentage of the municipal budget and are the items that local governments have the most control over. Maintaining core services at acceptable levels and at reasonable cost will become increasingly challenging in coming years. In reality, the major issue facing the community is figuring out how best to maintain what the community already has in face of inflationary pressures and increasing community expectations. Aspirational desires and practical solutions to potential issues must be balanced with the pragmatic realities of municipal management.

Many of the municipal core services, such as road paving and public safety, were evaluated in preparation of the Community Services and Infrastructure Element. The Community Services and Infrastructure Element

includes strategies for improving efficiencies and also identifies priorities, particularly the sustainability of the current Fire Services model, which will need to be addressed in coming years. Some of the recommendations require short term investments in maintenance, staff or systems which are intended to result in longer term cost savings. Even more effectively, this plan reconfirms the Township's long standing practice of incremental improvements necessary to enhance system efficiency and maintain the high quality of core services.

PUBLIC ENHANCEMENTS

Public projects, particularly transportation, recreational and open space projects provide the connective tissue necessary to weave the numerous neighborhood subdivisions and commercial areas together into a cohesive community. This Plan proposes a modest program of *new public investments* intended to improve functionality and the quality of life for Lower Merion residents. Public investments are implemented through the Capital Improvement Program and may be funded through local resources, grants, developer contributions or a combination thereof. There are three particular focuses where Township investments in new projects can address current and future transportation needs.

The first area where the Township can make significant public improvement is by continuing to provide a safe, convenient and efficient transportation system, while balancing

alternative modes of transportation, including bikeways and walkways into this construction. The 'nuts and bolts' of the maintenance of the roadway network will be ongoing. Targeted investments for implementation of the strategies to retrofit the existing network for bikes and pedestrians are necessary to create a fully functioning transportation network.

The second area where the Township can make a significant public improvement is by coordinating and investing in the construction of structured parking adjacent to train stations. The Township's original design intent was as a commuter rail suburb. While many strategies are proposed in this plan to improve access to public transportation facilities, targeted investments to increase the supply of parking in Ardmore and Bryn Mawr would support the Township's superior transportation advantage. To achieve this goal the Township can continue the established prudent practice of coordinating public/private transportation investments.

The third area where the Township can make a significant public improvement is through continued development of the Township trail network in the Bala Cynwyd area. The Cynwyd Heritage Trail serves as the foundation of Township's trail network. Many new trails planned in the City Avenue District and Pencoyd waterfront will be implemented through redevelopment of existing office and manufacturing buildings into a mixed use community. Targeted public investments are necessary

to create a fully functioning network that provides Township-wide recreation, connections to the regional trail network and also links existing and new development with regional transportation hubs.

RETROFITS

An analysis of the historical growth patterns of the Township revealed deficiencies in the form of commercial and residential development during the Auto Suburb Era. A significant portion of the built environment constructed during this era lacks site amenities and conveniences that current residents consider important. The wholesale redevelopment of these areas is unlikely, so surgical retrofits to these areas on a property-by-property basis will be required.

There are many instances throughout the Township where properties have been previously developed without sidewalks, stormwater management or off-street parking but where those improvements would prove beneficial to the greater community. However, retrofitting the existing built environment on private property is one of the most difficult challenges facing the community in coming years. Obstacles to retrofits include potential property owner opposition to the improvements themselves as well questions over the responsibility for the costs of construction and maintenance. This Plan recommends various strategies where the communal benefits can be realized over time through pub-

lic leadership. The first step towards implementing targeted retrofits of the built environment is the identification of each project as being in the Township interest and then educating the public concerning what is required to achieve the public goal.

This Plan identifies several areas where sidewalks do not currently exist but where there is public interest in seeing sidewalks installed to improve public safety. The Circulation Element includes a discussion of the issues involved with sidewalk retrofits, as well as, potential implementation options.

This Plan also proposes a broad set of strategies to increase stormwater management on public and private properties currently without stormwater management. The Community Services and Infrastructure Element includes recommendations for integrating natural stormwater improvements into the Township's circulation network. The Water Resources Element includes numerous recommendations for modest improvements to enhance stormwater management on existing commercial and residential properties. Most importantly the Water Resources Element proposes the preparation of a Comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan..

PARTNERSHIPS

A high degree of civic involvement is a key attribute of a successful, desirable community. Lower Merion Township is fortunate to have a well-educated population, which is

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highly engaged in a wide variety of civic topics including land development, historic preservation, affordable housing and open space/recreational development.

The participation of citizens, business owners, institutions and nonprofit agencies in civic affairs significantly extends the ability of a local government to improve the quality of life for all residents. Partnerships between the local government and extra governmental agents represent a tremendous community resource that can result in increased service efficiencies and synergies. Like any resource, partnerships need to be properly planned and coordinated to achieve the maximum result.

This Plan includes several recommendations directed towards capitalizing upon potential synergies from civic participation, such as creating a Volunteer Coordinator in the Department of Parks and Recreation and improving coordination with the Lower Merion Conservancy.

STRUCTURE

FORMAT OF THE PLAN

In order to fully address the expectations and needs of the community, this Comprehensive Plan is both broad in scope and specific in detail. As a result, a tremendous volume of background material has been prepared resulting in numerous recommendations and strategies addressing broad topics such as Land Use and Circulation and specific issues such as institutional evolution, traffic

calming and historic preservation. In order to make sense of the vast amount of information produced during the planning process, the Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in two separate volumes; the Plan and the Appendix.

The Plan has been prepared as a functional, user friendly document and includes the core text, maps and charts necessary to serve as the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan is divided into three sections Introduction, Elements and Implementation. The Introduction presents the foundations, assumptions and essential background information on which the Plan is based. The Elements section is the substance of the plan and includes five separate elements addressing Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Community Services and Infrastructure and Water Resources. Each of the elements includes a summary of the issues and goals and presents a set of broad recommendations including specific strategies. The implementation section will be provided at the conclusion of each element, which will prioritize recommendations and present estimates on actions/resources required to implement the recommendations and strategies.

An appendix has also been prepared as a reference resource to support the various recommendations and also to provide a detailed analysis of specific recommendations, which would be impractical to include in the Plan. The appendix includes committee work and reference materials including previous planning

studies which helped to form the recommendations. It should be noted that this Plan was not created as a blank slate but this Plan rather is a compilation and synthesis of previous comprehensive plans, master plans and other planning studies undertaken over many years. This Plan is comprehensive in scope, but coordinated in approach.

IMPLEMENTATION

This is a broad sweeping plan to guide the future growth and evolution of the Township over the next 20 years. Some of the ideas within this plan are obvious improvements while the implications of some of the other ideas are significant and will require careful consideration of the financial and property ramifications to Township finances, as well as, to financial expectations of private property owners which comprise the Township.

This Plan does not take the impact of the recommendations lightly and it includes a discussion of the public benefits compared to the private costs of several of the more significant ideas, particularly the installation of sidewalks on private properties which currently do not have sidewalks, the establishment of specific regulations for institutions over five-acres, creation of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) districts, and the removal of existing higher density zoning in established neighborhoods to deter speculative property assembly and demolition.

This is a plan which the Township will grow into over many years. Some of the recommendations will require pilot projects or additional study before they can be realized. Some recommendations will be phased as resources permit. It is anticipated that many of the recommendations will be further refined or no longer be relevant as circumstances change. In the end, the recommendations in this plan are a guide towards building a better suburb and advancing Lower Merion Township as a Great Place to Live.

The following are the primary mechanisms by which this Plan will be implemented:

Municipal Government - This Plan makes the general recommendation that municipal government should continue to respond to changing community needs. The reality is that inflationary pressures will force the municipal government to do more with less. A key recommendation of this Plan is for the municipal government to invest in the human capital necessary to maintain public service expectations.

Civic Relationships - Lower Merion has a long tradition of civic engagement and its residents play an important role in community affairs. Citizen involvement is a tremendous civic resource and should be maximized. This plan makes several recommendations to strengthen and improve civic participation through greater communication and leadership training.

Code Modifications

Zoning Code – The Zoning Code is the primary regulatory tool to control the location, use and intensity of future growth. In the long-term, the format of the Code should be overhauled to improve its usability and to more effectively reflect the Township's desired location and character of future growth.

Subdivision and Land Development Code (SALDO) – The SALDO is currently used as an effective tool for the development of vacant land. In the long term the *Subdivision and Land Development Code* should be updated to better address infill and retrofit challenges.

Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Code (Stormwater) - Similar to the SALDO, the Stormwater Code is primarily a tool for new development. In the long term the Stormwater Code should be updated to better address infill and retrofit challenges. If a Stormwater Utility is undertaken by the Township, the Stormwater Code can also be utilized as a complementary implementation tool.

Natural Features Conservation Code (Natural Features) - The Natural Features Code is also currently used to regulate new development. In the long term, the Natural Features Code should be updated to better address infill and retrofit challenges and to integrate landscape design and environmental sustainability.

Targeted Improvements

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) - This document establishes a modest program of capital investments, many of which can be incrementally added over time. It is recommended that the CIP and the Comprehensive Plan be better coordinated.

Official Map – The Township currently uses the Official Map as a regulatory tool for the City Avenue District to indicate the location of circulation and open space improvements. The Official Map should be applied to the Township in coming years to assist with the orderly development of public improvements and to identify areas where retrofits to the built environment should occur.

Official Highway Map/Functional Classifications of Roadways Map – This Plan recommends changes to the Official Highway Map and the creation of a complementary Functional Classification of Roadways Map to implement the goal of safe, complete streets.

Stormwater Plan - This Plan proposes the preparation of a Township-wide Comprehensive Stormwater Plan and the feasibility of potential sources of funding, which could potentially encourage private on-site stormwater improvements or contribute to a fund which could be applied towards township-wide stormwater improvements.