



# ISSUES REPORT

## APPENDIX E: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ISSUES REPORT WORKSHOPS

2010-2011

**Prepared by**

*Lower Merion Township Planning Staff*

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A successful Comprehensive Plan (the “Plan”) is developed with the input of the citizenry of the community. The Planning Commission hosted 10 public workshops between September 2010 and October 2011 to discuss the recommendations of the Issues Report, which was prepared to serve as the foundation of the Plan. The input received at these workshops has been categorized into the Plan element that it most directly relates to. These five elements include: Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Community Facilities & Infrastructure, and Water & Energy Resource Conservation. Additional categories have been added for comments relating to historic preservation, general comments and vision statement comments.

At the final workshop in October staff laid out a multi-year process to complete the proposed action driven, solution-oriented Comprehensive Plan, beginning with a one year process to complete a Historic Preservation Element. However, the Planning Commission and members of the public attending this meeting indicated that they would prefer a higher level, broad stroke Comprehensive Plan that could be completed in an expedited timeframe. It was determined that incorporating historic preservation into the Land Use and Housing Elements would be the most effective and efficient way to address historic preservation within this expedited timeframe instead of preparing a standalone element.

The Planning Commission directed staff to develop a program and project timeline to complete the Comprehensive Plan within one year. Due to the amount of research and analysis contained in the Issues Report the Planning Commission indicated that this document could essentially serve as a draft of the Comprehensive Plan. In order to ensure continued public participation in this process Comprehensive Plan sub-committees will be created to assist staff in developing each of the elements. These committees will be comprised of approximately 10 volunteers and will be chaired by a Planning Commission member. It is anticipated that the committees will incorporate the public input received and summarized in the following section into each of the plan elements.

## **LAND USE**

- The land area consumed by single-family detached homes exceeds the amount of land used by multi-family developments. The subdivision of land should be further discouraged. The Land Use Element should include recommend strategies to discourage the subdivision of significant parcels while encouraging

development in transit oriented corridors. The Township could possibly use the Transfer of Development Rights as a mechanism to help owners recoup value.

- Many of the civic associations here have fought against commercial area or institutions encroaching on the residential community.
- The discussion about residential land uses typically includes three areas of concern: light, noise and traffic. An additional topic includes the Residential - R6A zoning designation.
- In the codes there should be a list that says “Thou shalt not build a 165’ cell tower.”

#### LAND USE RELATED TO COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- The car dealerships are one of the biggest problems. Are the car dealerships required to put anything back on the street (i.e. street trees, sidewalks, benches, etc.)? Is it a requirement that they provide some sort of community benefit?
- The BMW dealership in Lower Merion Township is the highest grossing dealership on the East Coast, yet there is nothing in the existing Code to require them to put something back into the community. The street looks like strip mining.
- Can the unsightly aspects of car dealerships be modified through targeted changes to the Zoning Code?
- Anything that changes should complement and not conflict with the existing neighborhood. Another important aspect of new development is the landscaping and the planting of trees.
- The vision for Rock Hill Road was that it was supposed to become a mixed-use area and a gateway into the Township, yet when there was push back from the developer that the mixed-use component wouldn’t work the Township gave in. Now the ordinance allows for 600,000 square feet of single use residential buildings before mixed-use even comes into play.
- Redevelopment efforts should be done in smaller increments instead of taking on massive redevelopment initiatives that are unlikely to be put into place.
- The commercial areas on Lancaster Avenue, such as Ardmore and Bryn Mawr, don’t have community gathering places. The Township owns a lot of the property in these areas that are currently used for parking lots, and these areas could be used to create gathering spaces for the community. Additionally, the historic buildings give them a tremendous sense of place.
- If the Township starts with smaller changes it may have a large impact on the community as a whole. For example, if Bala Avenue was landscaped and if flags were put up to give it a gateway feel, it would improve that street greatly. Putting together the big plans without modest investments will keep anything from happening.
- Without any planning at all real estate has a way of evolving on its own to develop niche markets. The Township should not interfere with that. There will be a natural evolution of a market place without planning.
- The Township has a wealthy population that has retail habits that don’t support the commercial areas. More commercial spaces are not needed.
- How has Narberth managed to thrive despite the regional shift to the western suburbs and the development of the King of Prussia Mall?
- Narberth allows for community serving businesses like the dance class studio and the yarn studio to be located in the commercial area. It’s become a place where parents drop their kids off and then go and shop.

The zoning in Lower Merion Township actually forbids some good, viable uses from being located on the ground floor.

- Lancaster Avenue is to Ardmore what I-95 is to the waterfront. The infrastructure is set and there are structural barriers in place that prevent many commercial areas in the Township from reaching their full potential.
- Ardmore was built as a walkable area and the same thing happened in Wayne. The reason the commercial areas should work is because you can walk to them from the residential areas.
- The Township has more in place than most people think. The commercial areas could become more vibrant by having higher density development closer to the train tracks. Things developed primarily because of the train stations. They established places as commercial or residential and in a sense planned what would happen by allowing commercial development to occur around train stations. We don't know what would've happened without the train stations and the zoning. The planning that was put in place has lasted 80 years.
- One key component that drives Wayne and other areas are the cultural studios and institutions that are geared towards art, which promote neighborhood revitalization.

#### Analysis for the Comprehensive Plan

- The Comprehensive Plan should encapsulate what the community should look and feel like. Residents are not professional planners, so they need the help of professional planners to tell them how to retain what they have. The residents are battle weary veterans, because they have been through the planning process, but it boils down to the political will. Concrete solutions should be proposed.
- The Comprehensive Plan should specifically say what the community wants the commercial areas to look like so that when something like City Avenue comes forward the citizens can come forward and say that it either does or does not match the stated community vision.
- Commercial areas such as Manayunk and Narberth and some other nearby communities where residents shop should be considered with the Comprehensive Plan.
- It seems that all of the Township's problems are being stuffed into the Comprehensive Plan, but each neighborhood needs its own plan.
- Consider smaller projects, because smaller projects have had the greatest impact on the commercial areas. Ardmore is still waiting for a transit center.
- Tax revenue is going down because there are deteriorating commercial areas throughout the Township. A key part of the Comprehensive Plan may be what changes can be made to the Zoning Code to improve the condition of the commercial areas and to ensure that the tax base doesn't deteriorate.
  - The Township is spending at a rate that the community cannot afford. Zoning and planning should not be focused on solving the existing spending problem of the Township.
- It all comes down to the small businesses. In order to retain the tax base the Township has to maintain the places like Bryn Mawr and Ardmore.
- A community survey may be helpful to understand what the residents want: those who attend meetings may oppose density, but there may be many others who do not attend meetings who may be in favor of a certain level of development. Not everyone will be as educated on the issues as this group, but more simple questions could be posed and it could be structured so that both sides of particular issues are discussed.
- Categorization of Business Areas. Some residents were in favor and some were opposed to using the following categories to characterize different commercial areas: Regional Center, Village Center, Shopping Center, Village Core, and Neighborhood Commercial District.

- If the zoning matched the typology the commercial areas may function better and new development would fit better within the existing built environment.

### Zoning / Codes

- The Zoning Code definitions should be evaluated. The Zoning Code allowed a Dunkin Donuts to be put in an inappropriate location, because the definitions are outdated.
- The current zoning isn't as effective as the community would like it to be. The Township may look to refine the Zoning Code, so that is more nuanced for each commercial area.
- People want a master plan that provides advice to the Board of Commissioners with respect to the Zoning Code.
- The Township needs to focus on the scale. The Zoning Code allows the scales to be taken completely out of balance. The opposition to the Bala Avenue and City Avenue rezoning stems from the fact that the scale is being changed and the neighborhood that the residents have invested in is being changed.
- The Township has to figure out how to protect and buffer residential communities from new commercial development.

### Relationship between traffic and commercial uses

- The first thing that should be looked at is whom the commercial districts are serving and where the patrons are coming from.
- City Avenue is huge in terms of land area and redevelopment of this area could significantly impact the amount of traffic through the Township, particularly the northwest to southeast flow of traffic.
- The community has to face the reality that residents don't like walking; they like driving.
- People do get into their cars to get to the grocery store, but they would like to be able to walk their children to school. The Township needs to plan for these different modes of transportation.
- The sticky wicket is the traffic. Residents do not want more density or more traffic.

### Relationship between infrastructure and commercial uses

- Infrastructure may dictate when a commercial area is at capacity.
- Instead of considering a massive rezoning that the Township could work slowly on a project that will improve the infrastructure.

## LAND USE RELATED TO RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT:

### Capacity / Density

- The Township has grown by just under 3,000 units in 40 years, but roughly 1,000 units have been approved in the past five years according to the tables. How many units are too many and when does the Township turn off the lights?
- Density is dictated by the capacity of the infrastructure. The capacity of the infrastructure should be analyzed to determine how much new development could occur.

### Zoning / Codes

- There seems to be a mismatch between the existing zoning and what really exists today. It seems as if all the Township needs to do is realign the Zoning Map to match existing conditions. This would not allow for

additional subdivisions and it would not be a taking. If the current zoning code can't preserve the existing character, then it needs to be changed.

- The Township could consider down zoning.
- Due to a series of developments that came in where single family dwellings were bought and torn down and apartments were developed thereby affecting the character of the neighborhood, the R6A Residence Districts should be re-evaluated.
- Residents requested to see some sort of track record in the United States regarding Form Based Codes before it is considered for pilot neighborhoods in Lower Merion.
  - Form Based Codes should be enacted in areas that aren't historic districts.
  - If Form Based Codes are used throughout the Township to encourage conformity then the Township won't get those eclectic neighborhoods anymore.
- Conservation zoning should be explored in addition to Form Based Zoning.
- Transfer of Development Rights ("TDR") should be explored as a tool to fund the conservation goals of the Township.
- The zoning of existing historic districts should be evaluated against the built environment and amended to promote the preservation of the existing mass, scale and relationship to the street.
  - The Haverford Station Historic District failed miserably at maintaining the existing character of the street. It was undermined by the existing zoning.
- The R3 Residence District and the R4 Residence District have similar problems. These are already dense areas. Allowing for the modernization of older homes with minor expansions would lead to a reduction in the amount of open space if additional impervious surface was allowed. Perhaps if a property owner goes over the maximum impervious surface, then they could either provide for stormwater management or pay a fee.

### Design Standards

- Design guidelines should be considered for neighborhoods with unique features that may not qualify for historic district designation.
  - Having certain requirements may deter sustainable design.
  - Residents value the pattern and the eclectic nature of the Township.
- Design guidelines for new structures in historic districts in residential neighborhoods should be considered.
- One of the challenges when trying to develop new residences in this railroad suburb is how to accommodate the car without the new development sticking out.
- Many neighborhoods are pedestrian oriented and that aspect needs to be built into this. The Township doesn't need the car to disappear to say that residents want the pedestrian to be a priority.
- There is a tension between new development and what exists especially when transit and village-oriented development is encouraged, because traditional transit developments were not built or designed to accommodate cars. Today the market demands that cars be accommodated. The Township should do whatever it can to reduce the amount of space that is devoted to cars if the whole idea is to promote transit oriented development. Cars also account for a lot of impervious space in a transit oriented development.

## LAND USE RELATED TO INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

### Zoning / Codes

- An institutional overlay could be explored. This may require a change to the Zoning Map when an institution purchases and/or occupies a property outside of the overlay district. The current Special Exception process is not working and an overlay district is an interesting strategy to address these problems.
  - If the institutions become boxed in, the Township could lose some of those institutions that are so important.
  - An alternative to the existing circumstances and regulations would be created under the overlay so that that the problems or issues created by institutional expansion would be handled more innovatively by the institutions instead of having them encumbered or forced upon the neighbors.
- An institutional district could be explored instead of a new overlay district, because an overlay gives people two bites at the apple. Institutions could then choose to develop either to the underlying zoning or to the standards of the overlay.
- If institutions were allowed to increase their impervious surface, they may not have to move into the neighborhoods.
- There needs to be a bit of give and take that would involve greater protections to the neighborhood and allow institutions to grow within their existing campus.
- The Zoning Code amendments from 1998 should be reviewed. These included queuing requirements, because it was recognized that there were a lot of drop-offs. Now may be a time to look at those provisions and see what works and what doesn't work.
- The institutions permitted by special exception don't need a variance, but they're also not permitted by right. Their use is allowed by special exception, if they can prove that they meet reasonable conditions. Some residents would not be in favor of giving that up for an overlay. The capacity of the Zoning Hearing Board to add those additional requirements is essential, because each institution is unique and embedded in the neighborhood. The residents would lose too much if the Special Exception process were no longer utilized.
- Mediation between the residents and institutions works (i.e., Baldwin).
- Explore creating some type of trigger to limit expansions (i.e., trip generation).
- The use of Transferrable Development Rights (TDR) should be explored, but the sending and receiving zones should be located in the same areas of the community.
- All institutions are under considerable pressures and face all the same regulations as the universities. Yet the smaller colleges and institutions have much less staff and resources to handle them. The Township should keep in mind that there are different types of institutions throughout the community. If changes are made to the Zoning Code small institutions should be considered separately from the larger institutions so that the changes will not hamper the ability of the smaller institutions to exist.

### Capacity

- The compatibility between institutions and their residential neighbors at this point is stretched to a fore point and the neighborhoods feel that they are maxed out.
- One of the suggestions of the Issues Report is that the Township explore ways to allow for residence halls, but maybe the community is already maxed out.
- There needs to be a predictable path regarding the capacity of the site so that the residents know what to expect and the institutions know to which point they are able to expand.

- A fundamental question of the Comprehensive Plan will be how to mitigate impacts on residents versus the ability of institutions to grow.

## HOUSING

- Initially it appears that more of an emphasis is placed on the creation of new affordable housing units than sustaining the existing housing stock. The Planning Commission wants to be sure that the emphasis is a balanced one. It is equally important to preserve older neighborhoods.
- What is meant by preserving older neighborhoods? Does that mean that teardown/rebuilds would be prevented?
- There are pockets in the Township where the housing is over 100 years old. These older neighborhoods are an integral part of the Township. The preservation of the older housing stock can go hand-in-hand with encouraging affordable housing. In Ardmore there are wonderful smaller homes with real signs of deterioration. If preservation of these historically more affordable homes could be encouraged then these neighborhoods would not be lost. Many property owners are wrestling with the challenges of owning and maintaining an older home.
- How will staff go about determining the number of existing accessory dwelling units if they have not been tracked in the past?
- Should H-17, which states – “Review the Township’s codes to ensure that provisions encourage new development that is appropriately scaled, well designed and properly located in order to accommodate the increased density resulting from potential new multi-family development”, be more generic to include more than multi-family development? Can this recommendation be expanded to explore historically sensitive infill that is architecturally compatible with the existing neighborhood?
- Has Tax Increment Financing been looked into as a tool to provide Affordable Housing?
- It would be helpful to hear from colleges and universities in regards to student housing. A number of colleges are located within the Township and both Haverford College and Villanova impact the Township.
- A lot of the recommendations are focused on affordable housing. What does “affordable” mean? It would be helpful to have a defined term.
- The Township is lucky to have such lovely housing stock.
- Developers won’t build affordable housing in Lower Merion.

## CIRCULATION

- There has been an increase in traffic and the Circulation Element should identify how to manage traffic better. Managing traffic is the biggest issue.
- What are the “designated growth areas” referred to in recommendation Circulation-6? The Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan designated the areas of Ardmore, Bryn Mawr and City Avenue as designated growth areas. The studies that have already been completed with these areas are proposed to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.
- How will the sale of O’Neil’s property along Rock Hill Road affect roadway improvements in that area?
- It is concerning to look at the long term plans which seem to overlook the smaller solutions that can be accomplished today. For example, the traffic lights at 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and City Avenue are out of sync every day. This is a problem that could be improved immediately.

- It seems that at the most basic level the community members must determine what is desired of Lower Merion Township before the issue of circulation may be discussed in any meaningful way. Do residents want to see Lower Merion become more like a King of Prussia or should it remain as a bedroom community?
- Would it be possible to come up with alternative scenarios that could illustrate what the community may look like if it is kept as it is, if it becomes like King of Prussia or if it becomes something in between? Planning Commission members advocated for alternative scenarios to be provided to help residents consider the options and decide what needs to be done.
- The busing system is completely misaligned. The routes that are serving Lower Merion Township have serendipitous routes through the neighborhood making them completely ineffective. Additionally, buses stop at nearly every single intersection which contributes to congestion.
- There should be long haul bus routes and jitneys to handle the shorter routes.

**The following comments relate to the Official Highway Map:**

- A 20 year projection today is very difficult to do and the chances of being accurate are pretty slim. The timelines for the Circulation Element should be shorter.
- The Circulation Element has to take into consideration that the Schuylkill Expressway (I-76) is possibly the worst main artery ever. No one wants to drive on the Schuylkill which is why the Township has so much cut through traffic.
- The Circulation Element should not overlook the impact of the freeways. There is presently a question of whether or not to widen the Schuylkill Expressway at the regional level.
- The Circulation Element should include an inventory and analysis of alleys in the Township.
- Has the Bike Share phenomenon been explored? It seems that such a program may work at 1, 2 or 3 Bala Plaza.
- The Township needs a jitney service that would run to and from the Bala Station to the major employment center at 1, 2 and 3 Bala Plaza and the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center. People won't take the train if they have a long walk from the station to work.
- It would be great to have a map when reviewing the recommendations in the Issues Report to see where all the institutions are, since they are large traffic generators.
- Another thought in terms of the "one less car" idea is to consider including a recommendation that when institutions are expanding that they be mandated to require that students carpool and that certain numbers of staff and students take transit.
- A recommendation should be included to encourage the use of sidewalks that are already there. For example, as the Lower Merion High School "Walk Zones" were established kids who used to be able to walk are now going to be bused to the other side of the community.
- Research completed by the Lower Merion School District revealed that in 1919 the Pencoyd, Mt. Pleasant and Fairview public schools closed because busses were purchased by the school district. The use of busses allowed the Lower Merion School District to close the smaller, neighborhood schools since students no longer needed to walk to school.
- Has the Township completed any survey of private schools and/or colleges and universities regarding where people are coming from?

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Would it be possible to have some kind of survey performed to gather public input?

### Analysis for the Comprehensive Plan

- Linking the Community Facilities inventory to the Capital Improvements Plan seems like a good idea.
- The Township should plan for the new financial reality of reduced state and federal funding.
- The long term effects of waste management should be explored. In five years regulations will be tougher and there will be higher costs for waste and the municipal facility. The costs for its maintenance and overall operation will go up.
- The big picture matrix showing all of the necessary capital improvements and discussion items will be helpful to make long term decisions.
- Alternative grass-roots approaches to enhance the Township's green infrastructure through the planting of street trees should be explored. The Shade Tree Commission does not have a budget to plant street trees and property owners occasionally do not desire to have street trees planted on their property. A good/better approach is to have homeowners come together and build/plant the trees on their own.
- Incentives for planting street trees should be explored.
- The Community Facility Element should have a large component which will deal with the issue of keeping up with technologic advances. The Township should ask for more from the private telecommunications companies if they are requesting to come into the Township.
- The Township still needs the valuable resource of the newspaper. This media resource should be acknowledged along with the other media resources, such as the TV station and radio.
- The Township website could become more important and be a more useful tool since the community continues to get a lot of information from their computers. It would be more helpful to have all of the volunteer information in one place.
- A community survey is needed to understand the priorities of the residents. If a statistically valid survey cannot be completed due to costs, then running a survey in the newsletter may be an option.
- Better and further education of the township residents is needed in order to see the value of Historic Resources and street trees in the community.

### Capacity

- A part of the Comprehensive Plan should be to look at the build out, as it relates to different elements.
- Capacity of each of the utilities: water, sewer, electric and gas should be explored in the Comprehensive Plan.
- The shortage of playing fields may be an indication that the Township is at capacity. Capacity of the Lower Merion School District should be explored in the Comprehensive Plan.

### Volunteerism

- Volunteer efforts still take some time to coordinate, and they need to be coordinated in order to save money.
- It would be beneficial to explain and possibly to expand the EAC's role as a community resource. The role of all advisory bodies should be reviewed to see how they can take a more active role.
- The Township also has the valuable resource of the Narberth ambulance and the Lower Merion community watch group which are both different types of individuals; one highly skilled and the other just homeowners assisting the police, but nevertheless both valued assets to the community.

## WATER AND ENERGY RESOURCES CONSERVATION

### Energy Conservation, Lighting and Noise

- Noise and sound are two entirely different subjects. They have a lot in common but shouldn't be lumped together.
- The term "light pollution" is a superset of things that include sky glow; it's when you see the bar of light along the East Coast.
- The greatest need for regulation is where commercial properties border residential properties or where institutional properties border residential uses. Different uses have different needs. Lighting can also go the other way where residences impact other uses.
- If there is good lighting design it is efficient, sustainable and converts electrons to photons most efficiently.
- A Civil Engineer could prepare a lighting plan. Fortunately the global market has changed and companies can't manufacture things that aren't energy efficient, so the manufacturers are changing. Codes have been going the same direction. Codes are forcing stringency in a lot of ways. Now you can't waste photons and the conversion from electricity to light has to be the best available technology, which is the same concept as "Best Management Practices".
- Does it make sense to not revise the lighting ordinance until the new national lighting standards are introduced? The international ordinance on lighting may not happen next year; it is possible that it may not be adopted until 2012. If the Township sticks with what they're doing now they will continue to limit light intrusion at property lines where commercial uses come to residential properties. The Township will look at what is proposed under the draft international code and work from that but there is a lot of pushback from the code because it is so stringent.
- The Township needs to put some band aids on what is occurring now. The price of energy for nighttime lighting is dirt cheap right now, but when the price goes from 5 cents to 15 cents per kilowatt per hour you'll be less likely to leave lights burning.
- Can the Township impose stricter standards by using conditional use for lighting?
- There are so many things converging right now that will come together in 2011 or 2013 in terms of lighting. The new codes will be extremely stringent and very sustainable and will incorporate a lot of things that LEED has without having to pay a lot to hang a plaque on the wall.
- The same thing applies to noise as lighting; the Township needs a consultant. The noise technologies are evolving slower but the current ordinance is more out of date than the lighting ordinance. One thing that happens is that as soon as safety is spoken it is assumed that more lighting is safer; however, more lighting is not safer. The patterns of lighting may achieve safety and be beautiful.
- The Montgomery County Planning Commission staff has noted that over lighting can be a problem and it can make commercial areas look more like a runway than an inviting place to shop. A revised lighting ordinance should also look at whether or not there are second story residential uses.
- One idea is that if the Township takes away some of the lights on the streets that the neighborhoods may be just as safe. The Township should look at Bala Avenue and determine what they want.
- If the Township could get the Lower Merion School District to turn off their lights at the high school they could pay for planting new trees with the money they'd save on energy.

### Solid Waste Reduction

- The EAC has recently started a homeowner composting program and there was a huge positive response initially. The Township is far ahead in Pennsylvania, but far behind compared to states like California where composting is mandatory. There is a program in State College that is a pilot program funded with a grant regarding composting.

- The Township could actually sell compost and could also require new developers to put in composting facilities.
- There is a points program for recycling that Philadelphia is using.
- Some buildings on City Avenue aren't properly recycling and they should really be investigated.

### Stormwater Management

- The Codes should be reviewed to determine how to encourage tree plantings on large properties. Lawns aren't very permeable. If additional trees are planted on expansive lawns such as Lankenau's it may help to reduce the amount of runoff.
- Is it possible to use pervious parking spaces similar to that used in Riverbend?
  - Maybe it's time to let developers get credit for using pervious pavement. The same thing could be done with trees.
- Philadelphia has a good point system, but it's hard for engineers to measure the actual benefit some of these measures may have.
- The Township should really lead by example. It would be easy to put little rain gardens into the Township parking lot. The Township should follow its own Codes if other people will be required to comply with the Township's Codes. It's a change of mindset for the Township.
- The Township could use pervious parking on their own lots and see what happens.
- The Township needs to step back and say what the issues are; where are the issues and how do we address them. If we want to reduce the flow to Mill Creek then we need to key in on those areas upstream. The Township could go to the commercial areas and tell them that the commercial properties are contributing "x percent" to the runoff and show them what their piece of the puzzle is.
- One cause of the increased runoff is that the Code currently permits residential structures to expand by up to 1,500 square feet without providing any stormwater runoff controls. The Township is also starting to see some of the stormwater management systems fail. The Township has taken steps to mitigate the stormwater runoff; this is a humungous issue. Property owners may say that they're not the cause of the problem and this may not be an appropriate view.
- The State recently tried to push the responsibility for all stormwater management systems along the state roadways onto the Township.
- The Township does have a role to play. A Comprehensive Plan element that includes infrastructure should adequately address the stormwater management.
- The proposed title for the "Energy and Water Resource Element" seems to exclude vegetation. The Open Space Plan doesn't deal with the Natural Features Code.
- Water quality needs to be a part of the discussion. Have other communities have looked at the issue of sustainability? Seattle also addresses the issue of sustainability. The Township should do something comparable.
- Seattle required rain barrels on the balconies of all apartment buildings. All sorts of things are being explored across the nation.
- A challenge is to change the mindset.
- Presently the Township Codes make the assumption that the parking lots have to be paved, salted and repaved. Rhetorically asked if the community wants to encourage the use of pervious pavers and asked how far the Township can push that in terms of being more sustainable.

- With the Philadelphia plan, they talked a lot about working with the water department. The Township does not have much collaboration with Aqua Pennsylvania. The Philadelphia Water Department is now known for stormwater management and they also talked about greening schoolyards.
- Some of the Township's schoolyards, such as Penn Wynne could use more green.
- Philadelphia has a stormwater management fee and that some EAC Members have been pushing for that in Lower Merion Township. Creating a stormwater authority is still questionable in terms of legality in Pennsylvania.
- Lower Merion Conservancy stated that the problem isn't with new development but with older developments that don't have stormwater management facilities. Everyone wants others to improve stormwater runoff upstream. The Conservancy has an Environmental House Calls program where she goes to the property to speak with the owner about the issue at hand. There is something that everyone can do; Kansas City has a "*10,000 Rain Gardens Campaign*" with an eventual goal of 10,000 individual gardens throughout the city to help with stormwater runoff. A lot of individual actions may be taken on older properties to reduce runoff.
- It is also important to identify problem areas and prioritize where the Township can get the most bang for their buck.
- When he looked at parking lot greening with the EAC he found that many of those requirements are tied to landscaping plans.
- The condition of the degraded Mill Creek Watershed is partially because people mow right down to it. The Township should be able to mandate that either people don't mow all the way down to the stream bank or require that they plant water absorbent grasses.
- The Lower Merion Conservancy has come to realize that the biggest thing for people to overcome is that it is really expensive; in some cases it costs \$50,000 to develop a stream bank restoration plan. It would be helpful to prioritize areas and complete a lot of outreach would help. It would also help to get an "off the shelf plan" together to help residents restore their stream banks, since it's on the homeowner to make the improvements and otherwise the cost is so prohibitive. It would be helpful to find a way to incentivize stream bank restoration.
- Just not mowing 40' from the edge of the stream could help, at first it may look like a mess but then it will take on its own natural beauty. The Montgomery County Planning Commission has a model riparian buffer ordinance that many municipalities have adopted and it is something for the Township to consider.
- Why is the current Stormwater Management Plan off the table? The Township has the best stormwater management in the state, although that is not saying much. An item of concern is that currently there's only a little more than \$4,000 allocated each year in terms of stormwater management improvements. Some kind of intervention on a massive scale is required. Stormwater shows up in little ways, but it seems that the Township is thinking small on something that requires larger scale thinking.
- Stormwater management is the Township's responsibility, but the Issues report doesn't identify what should be done to improve stormwater management.
- The biggest problem with stormwater exists in the commercial areas where the entire lot is paved because the improvements to the site were completed prior to the creation of the current stormwater management regulations. There are areas where new, affirmative police power could be used to require that the existing businesses comply with these regulations. What could be done to make a substantial difference in regards to the existing stormwater problems?
- North Ardmore gets all the runoff from the existing apartment buildings. Additionally the stormwater runoff from the Lower Merion High School gets dumped into the creek and that is the issue. The Township needs to build a large retention system.

- The EAC Action Plan recommended that the Township consider implementing a stormwater utility fee. Research has been completed on communities who have applied such a fee and almost all of these communities are successfully managing stormwater and creating stormwater management facilities.
- Even in the best of situations where new Best Management Practices are applied there are still stormwater management problems. With the amount of impervious surface in Lower Merion Township it seems like a bigger fix is needed.
- A stormwater management action plan is needed. Doing little things here and there will not help; the Township needs to have a systematic approach to solve the problem.
- Chicago has an innovative plan to reduce stormwater flooding. They use permeable surfaces in basketball courts and parks which help to reduce runoff.
- When someone removes trees and cannot replace the trees on-site a fee could be submitted in-lieu of tree replacement to create “Green Streets”. The Township should look for creative ways to allow property owners to do things to improve stormwater management.
- As far as improving the Natural Features Code he feels that there needs to be a more integrated approach between the Stormwater Management Code and the Natural Features Code. The existing Codes don’t have contemporary standards for preserving vegetation. One could integrate stormwater management with so many issues. For example, planting trees may calm traffic while also reducing runoff.
- Why there should be an incentive for providing riparian buffers? Riparian buffers should be mandatory. The Township should start looking at the Mill Creek agreement area to see if the Township has any power to do any stream bank improvements in that area.
- The MCPC created a model Riparian Buffer Ordinance that the Township could review. It does make sense to discourage development in the floodplain.
- Explore the possibility of linking best management practices for stormwater with the planting of canopy trees.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### Long Range Plan

- A Historic Preservation Plan is required in order for the Township to maintain its current status as a Certified Local Government (“CLG”). A Historic Preservation Element could meet that need.
- The Township needs to have a plan for historic preservation because it has an incredibly unique asset in the number of historic properties throughout the community and the character of the built environment.
- This report is another way to get people to understand what the value of historic preservation is.
- Economic benefits of historic preservation should be further explored and potential benefits should be explained to property owners.
- Each component (Comprehensive Plan Element) should include an implementation plan.

### Design Guidelines/Community Character

- Many residents didn’t move to Lower Merion Township because of historic preservation, but more because of the patterns of life. For example, a Planning Commission member chose to live in a neighborhood where he could walk with his children to the train and the bus.
- Historic preservation is not just about preserving one historic building; it is preserving the character of the community.

- Residents would like to have a better understanding of the existing community fabric as new development applications are reviewed.
- The Lower Merion Conservancy's *Historic Preservation Best Practices, a White Paper for Lower Merion Township* includes recommendations geared to maintaining the traditional character of a neighborhood without using the historic district designation. One of the biggest challenges in the community is maintaining the character that makes the Township unique, especially in those older neighborhoods that may not have the integrity needed for historic district designation.
- People choose to live in the community because of the tangible qualities, such as the walkability and character of Lower Merion Township. The designation as a historic district makes investing in the area more predictable because it is a way to protect the character of the community.
- In many ways the intangible values are as important as the tangibles. The character represents the feel of the entire community.
- The preservation of a building is not critical as compared to the compatibility of the rest of a new development to the neighborhood.
- Historic preservation is not the most difficult thing affecting the quality of life in the Township; it is the encroaching of the commercial developments into the neighborhoods. People are upset when there is more traffic on their street resulting from new development.

#### Prioritization of Comprehensive Plan Elements

- Economic Development and the Land Use Element will do more to preserve the quality of life than historic preservation. Aside from maintaining property values historic preservation also fosters economic development.
- Neighborhood conservation could also be explored as one of the subsets of the Land Use Element just as easily as the Historic Preservation Element. Neighborhood conservation is the umbrella under which historic preservation falls.
- There are so many important issues beside historic preservation. The other elements should not be put on hold until the Historic Preservation Element is completed. A more aggressive time schedule should be used. There may be some buildings that are important to be preserved, but the rhythm of the neighborhood should not be disrupted by new development in the meantime.
- The Historic Preservation Element does not need to be a standalone plan.

#### Zoning/Codes

- There is a need to look at zoning and historic preservation. There was a conflict with the underlying zoning at Haverford Station Historic District where the underlying zoning doesn't support the form of the historic district.
- All properties, regardless of whether they are historic or not, are required to be sufficiently maintained under the Township Code. It is unfortunate that the Township does not have the personnel to enforce those requirements.
- The Township needs to close the loopholes of by-right applications.
- The use of historic districts should be included as a tool to ensure the architectural compatibility of infill development.
- Explore additional methods to deter demolition of historic properties.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

- The different elements of the Comprehensive Plan should be completed on parallel tracks and within a one year timeframe. The Planning Commission would prefer a higher level Comprehensive Plan than has been proposed by staff and recognize that some of the perfection will be given up in order to get the plan done in the expedited timeframe.
- The Comprehensive Plan is a plan of vision; not a plan of solutions. The vision of the plan should be used as a guideline; not a solution.
- Solutions should not be completed in a plan; they ought to be done as a project. The plan should set up the parameters to do the project.
- The plan should identify the problems and how to fix them, but not actually fix them in the document.
- Community members should be used as committee members for each of the elements to ensure adequate public comment within the one year timeframe.
- Residents do not want to have a beseeching plan, but a clear set of guidelines as goals. The goals should be listed as items, because if the Township doesn't have a backbone that is the bedrock from which every land use decision is evaluated, then the Township doesn't have anything. The community is asking for a set of defined goals.
- The goals and visions should be established and then the Township Codes should be the articulation of the community vision. The goals come first then the Code needs to be amended or adjusted to meet those goals.
- The Issues Report should be turned into a Comprehensive Plan and it should be considered a draft of the plan in its current form.
- The recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan should be explicit and clear, and the recommendations should have teeth. The Comprehensive Plan will be a reflection of the community and the recommendations should be clear so the Comprehensive Plan can be used to tell whether or not projects are in line with the community's desires.
- How can the Comprehensive Plan be used? Could the Township require that the Zoning Code be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?
- The Comprehensive Plan is not just about land development. It's designed to provide guidance for the entire Township. It is an opportunity for the community to come together and identify community goals. The Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document, but triggers should be put into place so that it is not just followed when it's convenient. There is an opportunity to make sure that zoning and land development are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan; however, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code ("MPC") does not require the Zoning Code to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Will the economic feasibility of recommendations within the Comprehensive Plan be taken into consideration?
- When crafting a plan for the future the fiscal side of the equation has to be considered. The economy will color what can and can't be done.
- There are a lot of competing goals in this document. For example, it is indicated that it would be beneficial to have more sidewalks; however, it is also stated that mature trees should be preserved. It will be necessary to prioritize the goals. How will that be accomplished?
- Does the comment on Housing-15, which states – "Explore the issue of density and examine appropriate levels of capacity", pertain to Housing or Land Use? It's a simple sentence but it's a big topic.
- Having a draft goal for each element would be helpful.
- The Comprehensive Plan should be broken down into manageable plans.

- This process needs to be simpler. The things that can be done immediately should be included in the plan.

## VISION STATEMENT

*“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 woods and valleys. Its services, public and private, are well and efficiently managed. It is a good place to live in.” - A Plan for Lower Merion Township, 1937*

- It may be important to ask what is different today from 1937. There about 20,000 more people living here and there is a lot less open space and more traffic.
- While most of the institutions that are in the Township today were probably there in 1937 they are probably more important than they were in 1937.
- The type of housing has also changed and there are probably a lot more condominiums today. There are also elderly housing developments today that probably did not exist in 1937.
- There may also be more commercial activity now although the uses may have changed in the different villages. Certainly there is more commercial activity on City Avenue now than there was in 1937.
- While the vision does reflect where we want the community to be in part it does need to be updated. The vision statement should reflect the high quality institutions that the community has. A couple of years ago the community decided that they wanted to keep Bryn Mawr Hospital in Lower Merion and the zoning was revised to enable them to stay. The institutions are enormously important to the Township and warrant a mention in the vision statement.
- The Township also has transit-oriented development and housing. Some of it is historic, and looking forward this type of development is important to maintain and encourage. In regards to the commercial uses, commercial activity is important, but perhaps it should stay limited. The commercial activity should be community serving.
- When planning for the future of the Township the tax issue and commercial development shouldn't come into the vision. There are issues beyond taxes. The Township could bring in commercial uses everywhere that it can, but there would still be a shortage of funds, because the expenditure of the revenue is the problem. Changing the character of the Township by expanding the commercial areas for the purpose of lowering taxes will compromise neighborhoods. Residents would like to see the focus on neighborhoods and keeping them intact. There should be more of an overarching vision.
- The thing that people love most about the Township is their neighborhoods. In Merion Station people have bought worn out houses and they have meticulously restored the homes built in 1880s. As these neighborhoods age people fall more deeply in love with what they have.
- In terms of planning, people want to preserve the character of their neighborhood; they love how the neighborhood has changed over time, and that type of goal is captured in this document.
- The Township's population is relatively stable, yet the residents have been drawn to the big suburban malls and now something like 30% of all shopping occurs on the internet. The Township has a lot of empty stores, which should be taken into account. It is possible that the Township doesn't need more retail space.
- Lower Merion is really a bedroom community for Philadelphia and the western suburbs and the community doesn't have transit to support travel out to the suburbs.

- How can the Township continue to grow and yet at the same time keep the things that residents love about Lower Merion Township? The current growth is eating around the edges of what makes Lower Merion Township special. Lower Merion Township isn't beautiful because of anything anyone in this room has done. The Township was already well laid out. The Township should be in preservation mode. The current activity that is occurring in an incomprehensive way may gobble up those parts of Lower Merion Township that residents love.
- Cambridge Square is a good example of a smaller, transit oriented, residential development; it may be beneficial to look at converting commercial districts into residential areas and encourage the conversion of commercial sites to residential uses.
- Wayne is a model for all of the community's commercial development along Lancaster Avenue. The Township doesn't have all the attributes that Wayne has but in many ways that is a model.
- The Merion commercial district should look like Chestnut Hill and Wynnewood should look more like Wayne. It is possible that the Township may not need any more commercial development.
- A vision statement isn't about how things are now; it is about how the community wants things to be. A vision statement would not state that Lower Merion Township is perfection, rather it would state that these are the things that are important and through each of the elements policies can be directed to areas that are not functioning properly. The statement from the 1937 Comprehensive Plan is not current with the Township as it exists today. The vision statement could be updated and it should include something about the quality of the institutions.
- The words like "quiet woods and valleys" and "Open country" aren't as reflective of the Township today. The vision statement needs to be updated.
- The vision statement does reflect the residential side of the Township but is silent to the commercial areas. It might make sense to separate those aspects.
- The residential side should be kept feeling the same as a practical matter. Developers have recently been able to cannibalize different residential neighborhoods because there is a tendency on residential developments to give property owners a wide swath of rights.
- Residents would not be in favor of codes that locked into place how the house sits on the property, but they may be in favor of more restrictions to protect the form of the overall neighborhood.
- On the commercial side there seems to be a slide to a bad place. The vision statement could capture two different aspects; one that fits the residential areas and one that is different for the commercial side.
- There are places that provide community gathering areas in the different neighborhoods.
- There is a tradeoff in Lower Merion Township for the car; it seems as if the general population has decided that they want to use the car to get to the commercial areas. The question was asked to those present if they want to continue in the direction of the automobile or if they want to change that.
- Should there be one comprehensive vision statement; or should the vision statement be different for each unique neighborhood? What can be done to support the neighborhood, yet accommodate necessary changes that have to take place?
- Traditional Neighborhood Development would allow for different types of development in different neighborhoods.
- All across Lower Merion Township residents like the character of their neighborhood. The preservation aspect is really important certain parts of the Township should not be carved out for the purpose of creating additional commercial areas. Such efforts could undermine the desirability of places in the Township. The Township is eating around the edges of certain areas and once one area falls, other neighborhoods will become susceptible.

- Even at the high level the Planning Commission needs to understand the choices they're making. The vision statement should include the institutions. The institutions are incredibly important to the Township; they're close to the residential communities and they should be supported. Transit oriented development is also very important and should be encouraged.
- Institutions should be encouraged but they can also seriously change the character of the neighborhood. Another important aspect is to preserve the character of the neighborhood. Institutional expansions are desirable in some ways, but they should not compromise the residential neighborhoods. Commercial or institutional development should only be allowed when it doesn't compromise or erode the residential character of the neighborhoods.
- The vision statement that was provided described a much more genteel Lower Merion and the community has moved beyond that. This vision statement doesn't reflect the tensions that already exist and the statement needs to be spunked up a little bit.
- Lower Merion Township is more fully developed so the vision statement could be more focused.

A modified vision statement was presented at a subsequent workshop that stated, *"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."* This Vision statement had a nice second part with regard to a vision for 2030.

The second part of the vision statement read that, *"In 2030, Lower Merion Township will still have beautiful, classic residential neighborhoods, including institutions, parks, and the natural environment, while also having revitalized village cores and walkable, transit friendly, and well-designed commercial areas."*

- A Planning Commissioner drafted the revised vision statement with the intent of narrowing things down and breaking it into two halves to reflect the desire to preserve the residential neighborhoods, and to address the commercial and village areas. The absence of the words "Historic Preservation" was noted and it was requested that they be added to the vision statement. The vision statement is a great effort, but it may be too light about the residential neighborhoods, because it's something that is being lost or hurt the most in the Township. The importance of the residential neighborhoods needs to be beefed up a bit. The term "Historic Preservation" should be in the vision statement.
- The term 'Sustainability' should also be used in the vision statement, but there was a concern that it may confuse people.
- The vision statement really has three most important things, including residential, commercial and institutions. It would be helpful to have a situation where all the institutions attend a workshop so that their needs can be better understood.
- It is good to preserve institutions; however, it is their nature to continue to expand. It is important to balance the bedroom community character with the need of the institutions to expand.
- It seems that the vision statement could lean one direction or another. A couple of years ago the residents of the Township were asked how important it is that the hospitals remain in the community and the residents responded that it is absolutely necessary. As a result the Zoning Code was revised to permit the hospitals to remain. It's also important to maintain institutions, including places of worship throughout the Township. If one thinks of the recreational clubs and open spaces that they provide one realizes that it's all important.

## APPENDIX E: PUBLIC ISSUES REPORT WORKSHOPS 2010-2011

- A Planning Commissioner stated that he is in favor of institutions growing and evolving even at the expense of a few residences; others may disagree as it seems to be the most controversial point in the Township.
- For the purpose of the vision statement it may be possible to do both and not necessarily come down on one side or another.
- The vision statement should highlight the importance of institutions. Institutions are important to the Township and the hospitals and schools stay here not at any cost.
- Saint Joseph's University ("SJU") had not provided adequate parking to accommodate their growth and it is impacting residents in Wynnefield. The Hauge School of Business opened and SJU expanded its night school programs the residents are having parking issues, because many residents don't have driveways.
- In Lower Merion Township what has happened is that institutions have been given preferential treatment and the neighborhoods located along the fringes of the institutions are falling. When institutional expansion is unbridled, it degrades the neighborhoods. A good point is that they do not want an undue cost to fall on the residential neighborhood similar to the example where the parking problem was imposed on the local residents. The other side is that the institution leaves altogether.
- The residential community feels stretched and that the fabric is fraying and in many instances the residents are feeling it the most around the institutions. It is important to preserve the institutions, but the Township can't preserve everything. The Township needs to make an effort to preserve institutions and include them in a vision statement and they also need to recognize the fragility of the residential neighborhoods as well.
- It's a balancing act and like anything else the institutions need to be able to change.
- In reviewing the language here and technically, the statement seems to include all of the types of properties in the Township. When the vision statement is modified, it should include something about the evolution of institutions.
- The vision statement should indicate something to the effect of institutions being vital to the quality of life in Lower Merion Township and that they should be allowed to evolve. The Township can't expect them to stay stationary; the Township has to expect them to evolve.
- If there's truly interest in maintaining historically important residential neighborhoods on the fringes then the limits should be clear in terms of institutional expansion. The support for institutions should not be at the expense of residential neighborhoods.
- There is a default assumption that it is better to allow an institution to expand than to allow for residential development because of open space and greening and so on. The premise needs to be questioned on the basis of the expansion instead.
- If one were to take all of the existing institutional properties and put residential developments on them, the community wouldn't be the same as it is today; there is a balance.
- Clearly there is a need to balance. The residential neighbors need to be protected, but the community also needs to have schools, hospitals, etc.
- Affordable housing hasn't been talked about, yet Bryn Mawr Hospital recently took out a whole neighborhood of affordable housing. It is important to make sure that the Township is not reducing affordable housing overall and to also make sure that the Township is not pursuing contradicting goals.
- Goals will inherently conflict. For example, affordable housing sometimes conflicts with preserving land, but that is a part of the balance.
- The revised vision statement should include something about the evolution of institutions and the recognition that Township is changing. The housing types change and likewise institutions evolve because people use them differently than they used to. The ways that the commercial areas are used are also changing.

- The vision statement should include something about the culture of stewardship and about having residents get more involved. It is more philosophical than practical, but having the people who live here also take care of their surroundings and environment makes a big difference.
- There is a tension in the community and the vision statement should reflect a resolution. Balance is a lovely concept and may reduce the tension that is felt. Some would argue that balance hasn't worked and there has been a degradation of the neighborhoods surrounding institutions.
- There are residents who love Lower Merion Township the way it is and that they expected the special exception ordinance to protect residents from institutions for the quiet enjoyment of their property, for the character of their property, for property values and traffic and parking. Unfortunately neighbor after neighbor has realized that the special exception process isn't working and the neighborhoods are degraded.
- Bala Cynwyd seems to be that fringe. Living near City Avenue and with the rezoning process, some residents feel that the protections they thought the neighborhood had, they don't have. Seeing what happened to Episcopal when Saint Joseph's University came in it does not seem that Lower Merion gives the satisfaction that residents are protected. There isn't that security.
- This conversation shows the tension that exists. The vision statement as worded is about preserving residential neighborhoods; all that is happening is recognition of importance of institutions. The community may want to put the emphasis on the residential uses but it is important to also balance the three uses. Both the institutions and the residents are property owners.
- What the group is trying to do is to think about this statement based on experience. They are trying to find out how to preserve residential neighborhoods while working with businesses and institutions. If institutions leave the character of the Township suffers, but the other side could also be argued.
- The vision statement should use the term "evolve".

A new vision statement was drafted based on the feedback received and presented to the public at the next workshop. The revised vision statement read, *"Preserve Lower Merion's traditional residential neighborhood pattern, defined by high quality architecture and civic infrastructure of parks, libraries and cultural institutions. Continue to invest in the Township's natural environment, village cores and commercial areas to improve walkability, expand transit use, and promote sustainability and stewardship of natural and cultural resources."*

At the same workshop a Planning Commissioner presented a revised statement that he had taken some liberties with and lengthened abit. The revised vision statement stated; *"Preserve Lower Merion's traditional residential neighborhood pattern, defined by high quality architecture and civic infrastructure of parks, libraries, and religious, educational and cultural institutions. Selectively accommodate new types of high quality residences in response to changing demographics of the community where appropriate infrastructure exists in proximity to village cores, transportation hubs and corridors, and where such new residences will not compromise the existing traditional neighborhoods. Continue to strategically invest in the township's natural environment, village cores, infrastructure and commercial areas to support economically healthy residential neighborhoods and commercial areas that compliment and support the residential communities and that improve walkability, expand transit access, and promote sustainability and stewardship of natural and cultural resources."*

The Planning Commissioner also presented an alternative draft statement that stated, *“Lower Merion Township is a highly attractive suburban residential community defined by a traditional residential neighborhood pattern, high quality architecture and civic infrastructure of parks, libraries, and religious, educational and cultural institutions. Selectively, in response to changing demographics, the Township accommodates new types of high quality residences in proximity to village cores, transportation hubs and corridors, where such new residences will not compromise the existing traditional neighborhoods. The Township is characterized by extensive parks, open space and natural areas that are preserved in perpetuity, quality infrastructure, and attractive economically sustainable village cores and commercial areas that compliment and support the residential community. The community strives to create walkable neighborhoods and pedestrian access to commercial areas and transit locations. The community is committed to environmental sustainability and stewardship of natural and cultural resources.”*

- The Township is confronting new, different types of development and that there is a unique network of institutions throughout the Township that are an important part of the fabric of the community. The community cannot ignore infrastructure and that it has to be a continual part of our emphasis.
- As part of the vision, the importance of preserving these open spaces in perpetuity should be preserved emphasized.
- The Township needs attractive, economically sustainable commercial cores. The Township has to have functioning commercial cores in order to support the services that residents love.
- A vision statement should be a shorter, condensed statement for the community.
- Would it be possible to pull a few of the key points from this statement into one?
- When a community has a more concise vision statement, it is easier to tell whether or not a new development application complies with the statement.
- How are new multi-family developments in Ardmore and along Rock Hill Road dealt with? It would have been great to have had a vision statement when those development applications came before the Planning Commission.
- In terms of residential neighborhoods the Township will preserve as much as they can and in other areas revitalization may occur.
- The question is whether or not the form and scale of the new building is appropriate for the location.
- The community wants compatibility between the existing neighborhoods and new development.
- Some of the things that are included in the vision statement would fit better into a mission statement. The vision statement is meant to show where the community wants to go and a mission statement shows ways to get there.
- There could be a greater emphasis on the importance of maintaining tree-covered streets. Where it says which attributes define the community, the first item that should be included is that the community is “defined by *tree cover and natural habitat*” in order to put the green piece up there with the importance of architecture. The tree canopies over the streets and the natural environment is what sets Lower Merion Township apart.
- The second sentence, which states “Selectively accommodate new types of high quality residences in response to changing demographics of the community where appropriate infrastructure exists in proximity to village cores, transportation hubs and corridors, and where such new residences will not compromise the existing traditional neighborhoods”, in this proposed vision statement is great.

- While this is a well thought out statement, it doesn't capture Merion and the statement captures more of downtown Philadelphia. This statement doesn't say that this is a great place to live, walk your dog and experiment with tomatoes in your garden.
- The 1937 vision statement is not reflective of Merion. It may be more reflective of Gladwyne, but not the entire Township.
- The quality of life issue should be included in the vision statement.
- Merion should look more like the 1937 vision statement than Center City Philadelphia.
- Maybe the word 'suburban' should be added to the statement.
- The vision statement should say that it's 'historic'. It is not just fine homes, but the historic architecture that sets Lower Merion Township apart.
- Safe neighborhoods that do not have an excessive amount of traffic are important. It's much harder to put those things that contribute to a quality of life into words. So many people move out of the city to find a place where they can have a yard for their dogs and raise their kids.
- There are also people who move back into the City, because they don't want to deal with the deer and whatnot that comes with having more open spaces.
- Should the words "*historic, suburban*" be included before residential neighborhood?
- The vision statement should get to the quality of life things like having a larger yard. The Comprehensive Plan should deal with the quality of life issues.
- If you go back to the 1937 Plan and take the first sentence and continue onto the next sentence "With extraordinary accessibility to a great city" and add that to the 2011 vision statement it may be more in line with what everyone is looking for.
- This statement is leaning towards Lower Merion being a bedroom community. The 1937 plan says it better.
- The trouble with the 1937 plan is that it doesn't help to tell the community what to do.
- There are other ways that people experience Lower Merion Township. People drive through the community and the vistas should be preserved.
- Preserving those vistas is a part of a larger, holistic idea, which is why words such as "pattern" are used in the vision statement. Lower Merion Township was one of William Penn's original Green Country Towns.
- This vision statement is essentially describing Lower Merion, but it should be more concise. The vision statement should be "*Preserve and enhance Lower Merion Township's unique quality of life.*" Then a mission statement should be added.
- This vision statement could apply to every community in the country.
- A mission statement could then be added to the vision statement. The vision is that the community wants to keep what they have.
- Agonizing over the vision statement is wasting everyone's time. How many times had anyone reviewed the 1937 vision statement before staff pulled it out? Probably no one had.
- This vision statement is motherhood and apple pie; it doesn't tell us anything.
- There is a lot of word-smithing going on that is taking a lot of time, but at least now everyone is on the same page.

## APPENDIX E: PUBLIC ISSUES REPORT WORKSHOPS 2010-2011

- The Planning Commission and staff have a lot of information that has been brought up by this group. There are threads of consistency. The Planning Commission will take a vision statement from each of the civic associations and review them at the next meeting.

### CONCLUSION

As no consensus could be reached on a vision statement it was determined that a set of community development objectives would be utilized instead. It was recommended that this list be focused, concise, and limited in number to 10. The community development objectives will establish the overarching vision for the community and will incorporate the needs of Township's citizens, business owners and institutions.