



# MOBILIZE TO THRIVE

Chestnut Hill Regional Area Study

- Andorra
- Barren Hill
- Cedarbrook
- Chestnut Hill
- Erdenheim
- Flourtown
- Lafayette Hill
- Mount Airy
- Wyndmoor



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Steering Committee

Jennifer Barr, *Philadelphia City Planning Commission*

Karen Cilurso, *Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission*

John Haak, *Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee, Chestnut Hill Community Association*

Mary Morrison, *Montgomery County Planning Commission*

### Study Area Committee

Veronica Aplenc, *Chestnut Hill Historical Society*; Donald Berger, *Springfield Township*; James Dailey, *Springfield Township*; Alex Flemming, *SEPTA*; Darrin Gatti, *Philadelphia Department of Streets*; Bonnie Greenberg, *Chestnut Hill Business Improvement District*; Robert Gutowski, *Morris Arboretum*; Doug Heller, *Springfield Township*; Bruce Horrocks, *Whitemarsh Township*; John Ingersoll, *Chestnut Hill Parking Foundation*; Rojer Kern, *Philadelphia Department of Commerce*; Pam Learned, *Chestnut Hill Community Association*; Maura McCarthy, *Friends of the Wissahickon*; Ned Mitinger, *Chestnut Hill Community Association*; Elizabeth Moselle, *Mt. Airy USA*; Fran O'Donnell, *Chestnut Hill Business Association*; Anthony Santaniello, *Philadelphia City Planning Commission*; Mike Taylor, *Springfield Township*; Christopher Van de Velde, *Whitemarsh Township*; Greg Welsh, *Chestnut Hill Business Association*; Mike Zeock, *Whitemarsh Township*

### Consultant Team

Brown & Keener, *Lead Consultant*

Orth-Rodgers & Associates, Inc.

Pennoni Associates, Inc.

Urban Partners



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Created in 1965, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is an interstate, intercounty, and intercity agency that provides continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated planning to shape a vision for the future growth of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, as well as the City of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties in New Jersey. DVRPC provides technical assistance and services; conducts high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member state and local governments; fosters cooperation among various constituents to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determines and meets the needs of the private sector; and practices public outreach efforts to promote two-way communication and public awareness of regional issues and the Commission.



Our logo is adapted from the official DVRPC seal and is designed as a stylized image of the Delaware Valley. The outer ring symbolizes the region as a whole, while the diagonal bar signifies the Delaware River. The two adjoining crescents represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey. The logo combines these elements to depict the areas served by DVRPC. DVRPC is funded by a variety of sources including federal grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Departments of Transportation, as well as by DVRPC's state and local member governments. The authors, however, are solely responsible for this report's findings and conclusions, which may not represent the official views or policies of the funding agencies.

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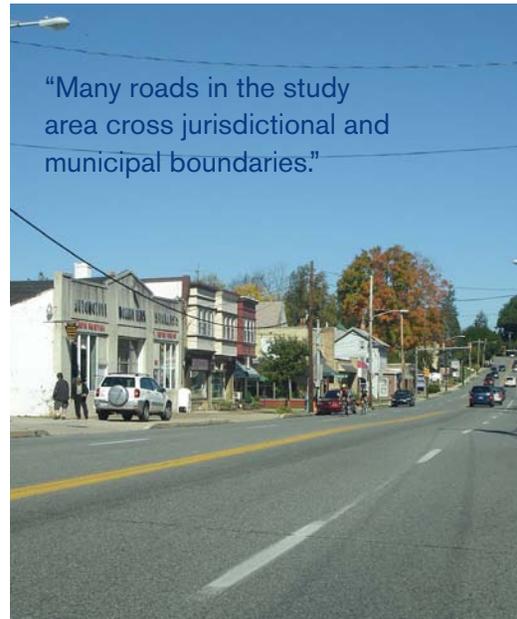
# STARTING POINTS

“By ‘thinking regionally, but acting locally,’ each of the communities will achieve stronger and more lasting results.”

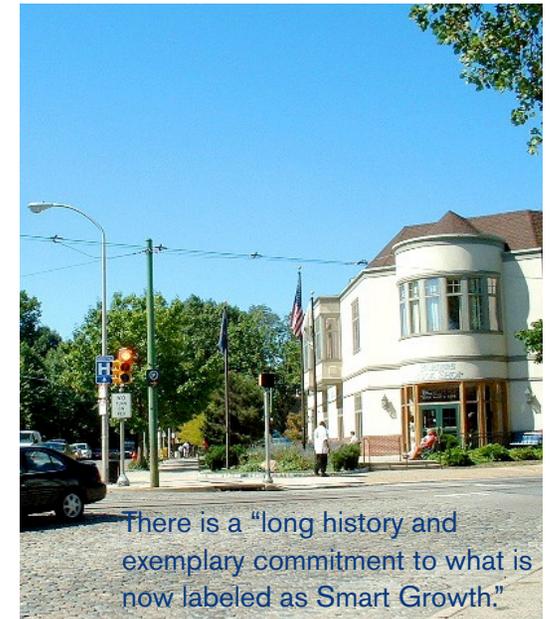


- A Network of Centers
- Historical Development of the Region
- Baseline Conditions
- Existing Studies and Ongoing Projects
- Project Partners

“Many roads in the study area cross jurisdictional and municipal boundaries.”



There is a “long history and exemplary commitment to what is now labeled as Smart Growth.”



The northwestern region of Philadelphia is celebrated for its striking natural beauty and historic centers. These commercial and civic centers have long served the residents of each local community. The historic neighborhood of Chestnut Hill for example, is a thriving Center that houses shops, boutiques, restaurants and businesses along a 12-block area. It is adjacent to many other active centers including Mt. Airy, Roxborough and Germantown in Philadelphia, Lafayette Hill and Barren Hill in Whitemarsh Township and Flourtown, Erdenheim, Oreland and Wyndmoor in Springfield Township.

Each of these centers face similar challenges of promoting economic development in the historic fabric of the district while strip malls and big box stores arise in the urban fringe. While businesses in these centers hope to prosper by serving local neighborhood residents, visitors from neighboring centers and tourists arrive from Center City to explore the beauty of the natural environment and character of the picturesque streetscapes. With similar goals for redevelopment and reinvestment in these local centers, these communities have a unique opportunity to cooperatively join their visions and place these local actions in the context of the larger region. In order for each of these centers to thrive, the unique nature of each place must be emphasized and the connections between them must be strengthened.

This study reconceptualizes this constellation of centers as a system of corridors and transportation links. It aims to coordinate infrastructure improvements, investment opportunities and design standards to improve multi-modal transportation connections and manage the impacts of land use changes. Through the enhancement of mobility throughout the region, people will be encouraged to move more freely between these centers, and in turn, more fully support the businesses and services that contribute to the unique character of each place.

## THE NETWORK OF CENTERS

With its emphasis on multi-municipal planning, this study focuses on the network of regional and local centers throughout the study area. Centers are identified in the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's *Destination 2030 Plan* as "focal points" in the regional landscape that can serve to reinforce or establish a sense of community for local residents," that have "regional significance from a governmental, service, economic or mixed-use perspective."

The centers that are identified as part of the regional context of this study, were identified for their regional



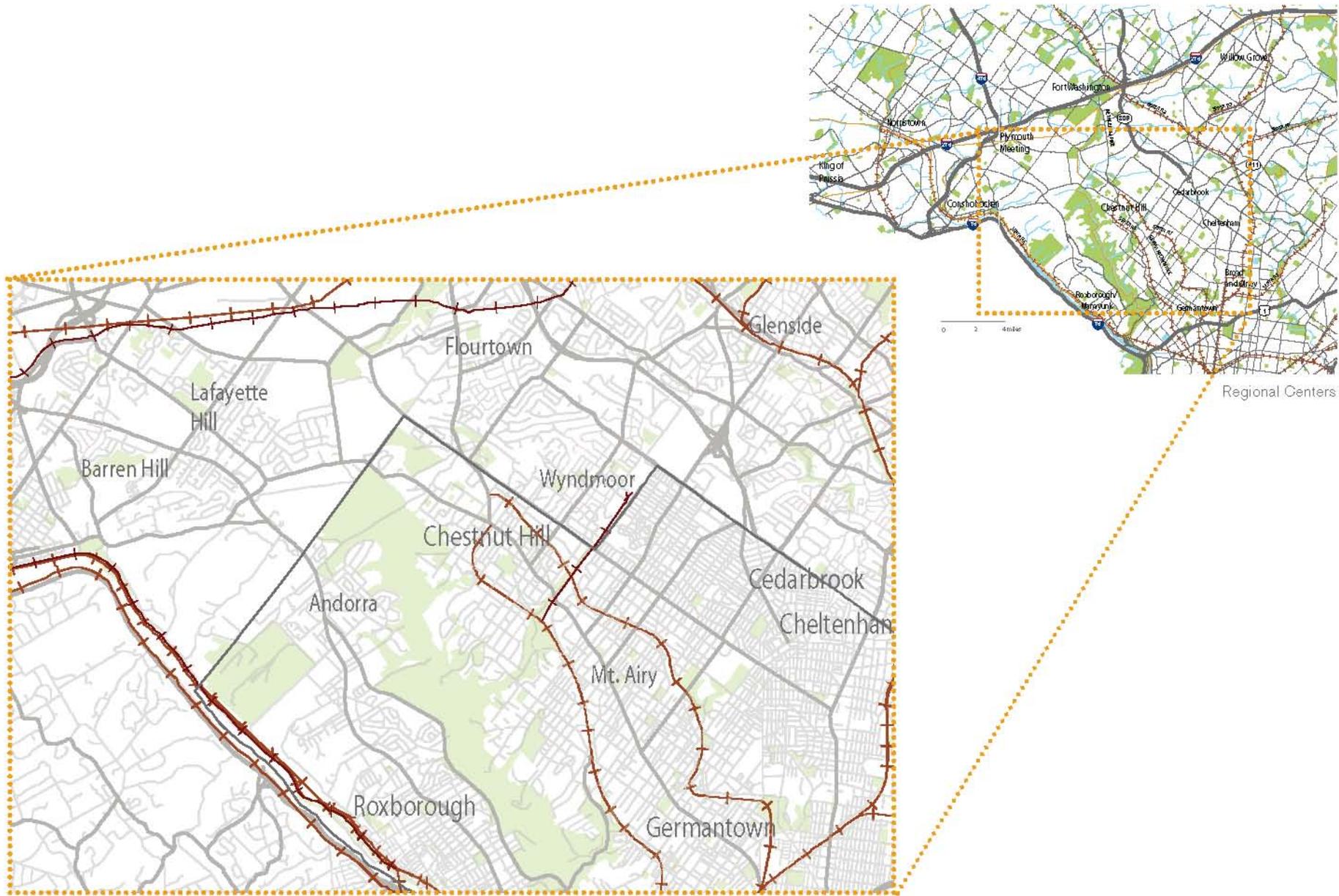
Chestnut Hill



Mt. Airy



Flourtown



Local Centers

Regional Centers

importance in the 2030 Plan. Each of these regional centers acts as a locus of civic and commercial activity. County centers, including Chestnut Hill, include older boroughs, first generation suburbs and Philadelphia neighborhoods. County centers provide services, shopping and employment for the surrounding area.

The geographic focus of this study is the constellation of local centers that surround the regional center of Chestnut Hill. For the purposes of this study, local centers are defined as those communities that have a concentration of neighborhood businesses and services. These local centers are located within a 5 mile radius of Chestnut Hill and include Andorra, Barren Hill, Cedarbrook, Lafayette Hill, Erdenheim, Flourtown, Mt. Airy, Roxborough and Wyndmoor. As the regional vision for the study evolved through meetings with stakeholders and the public, important patterns for how these local centers can be prioritized and organized began to emerge (see Chapter 2: The Regional Vision).

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION

Many of these local centers were established as small industrial and agricultural outposts in the mid-1800s. Small mills were erected along the waters of the Wissahickon and Cresheim Creeks. On the surrounding lands, farmers grew grains to be used in the manufacture of cloth. Both Germantown Pike (now Germantown Avenue within the Philadelphia city limits) and Bethlehem Pike were among the earliest transportation corridors leading from these rich farmlands to Philadelphia.

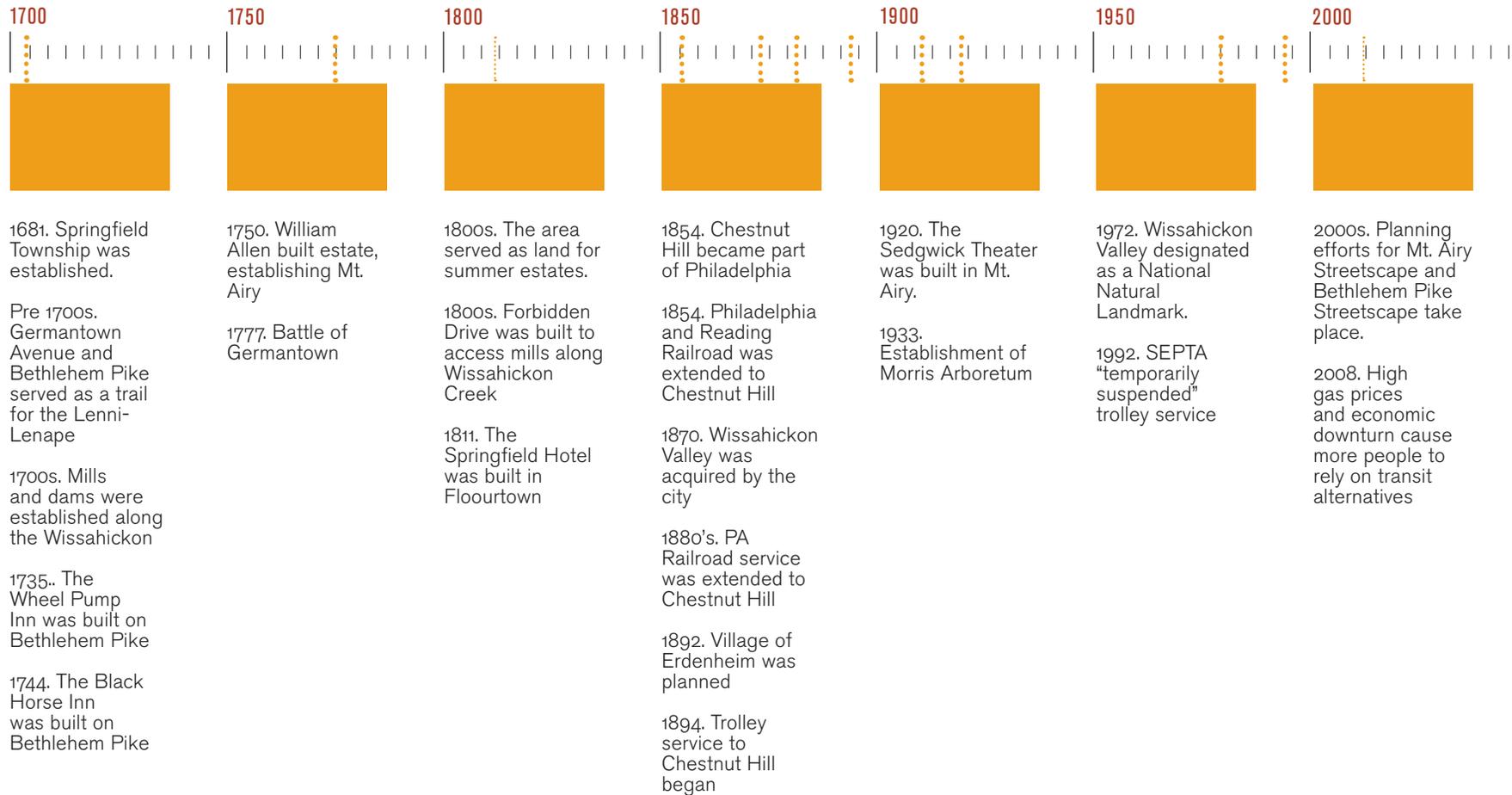
Many of these centers are bordered by the preserved lands of Fairmount Park, which were acquired by the city in the 1870s and expanded in the early 1900'; the Morris Arboretum, established in 1933; and the Erdenheim Farm, formally part of the Dixon Estate. In addition, a number of historic buildings can be found in the study area, including the Black Horse Inn (1744), the Wheel pump Inn (1725) and numerous houses and estates in Chestnut Hill, Mt. Airy and Springfield Township. As the result of extensive rail expansion to Chestnut Hill in the second half of the 19th century, Chestnut Hill and Springfield Township became the site of streetcar suburbs and country estates.

The parklike character of the land, the historic infrastructure and the established residential communities that developed from railroad expansion continue to influence the identity of the region to this day and will help to inform the recommendations that emerge through this study.



This 1753 map of Philadelphia shows the early Germantown settlement up to Allen's Lane.

# HISTORICAL TIMELINE



## BASELINE CONDITIONS

In order to understand issues of mobility and their influence on regional and local centers, an inventory of existing conditions was prepared that provides an overall look at regional and local transportation systems, land use, zoning and transportation improvement projects that are scheduled for the coming years.

Commuter rail lines weave through much of the region. The two Chestnut Hill lines provide rail access to Centers all along Germantown Avenue. Several regional centers in Springfield and Whitmarsh Townships enjoy rail service as well. Further analysis of rail schedules and user perceptions will be conducted as part of this study to understand if the lines adequately serve the needs of residents and visitors to the region.

Within Philadelphia, the road system is characterized by a network of gridded streets that are consistent with the grid in the rest of the city. In this roadway system, local traffic tends to be dispersed among several possible route choices for drivers. In Montgomery County, on the other hand, the grid gives way to a system of arterials, collector streets and local roads. Most traffic in this road system travels on the arterials and collector streets. Several important streets that parallel the Wissahickon Creek connect traffic between Center City Philadelphia and northwest Philadelphia and Montgomery County. These streets include Ridge Avenue, Lincoln Drive, Germantown Avenue, Bethlehem Pike, Stenton Avenue, Henry Avenue and Cheltenham Avenue.

Also of primary interest to the regional transportation system is the emerging regional trail system that exists throughout the region. With trails paralleling the Schuylkill River, Wissahickon Creek and the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and new trails being constructed to connect Philadelphia and Montgomery County, the opportunity for people to move around the region on foot or bike is enhanced.

### Trip Data and Counts

Annual Average Daily Traffic is the total volume of traffic in both directions of a highway or road for a year, divided by 365. AADT provides a simple picture of how busy a particular roadway is. In the transportation analysis section, AADT will be used to understand roadway congestion.



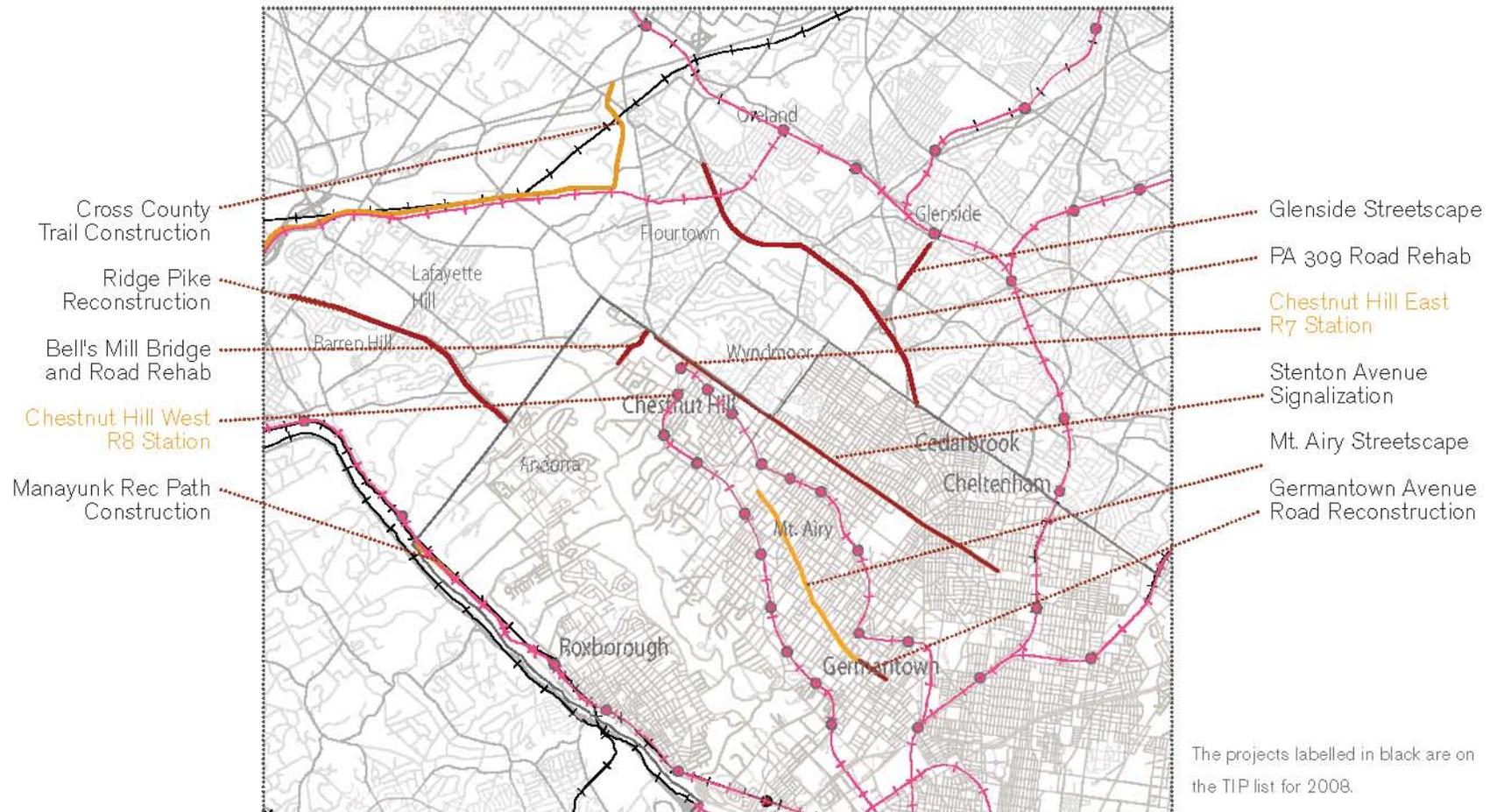
Route 309 Expressway; Source: [www.phillyroads.com](http://www.phillyroads.com)



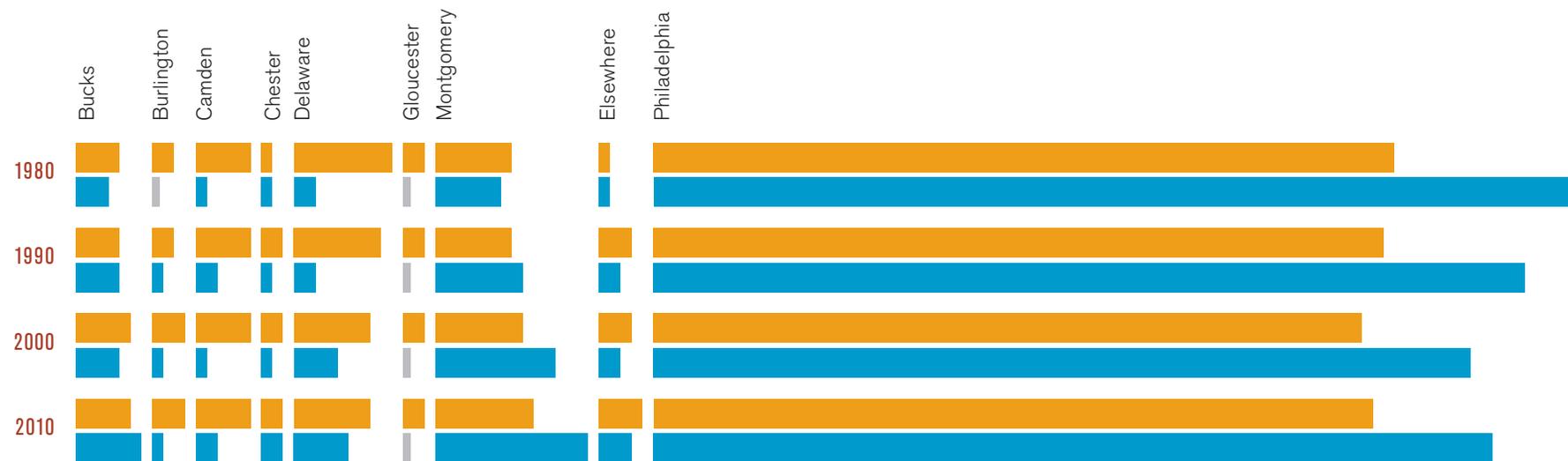
Bell's Mill Road

## Transportation Improvement Projects (TIP)

The TIP is a list of priority transportation infrastructure projects for the region. These projects include federally funded projects and non-federally funded projects of regional significance. The projects are multi-modal, including bicycle, pedestrian, traditional highway and public transit projects. It is important to note that many of the significant road corridors in the study area are planned for Transportation Improvement Projects. This will have an impact on the ways that people will be able to move around the region in the future.



**YEAR**    **PERCENTAGE OF PHILADELPHIA JOBS HELD BY RESIDENTS OF:**  
**PERCENTAGE OF WORKING PHILADELPHIA RESIDENTS EMPLOYED IN:**



### Demographics

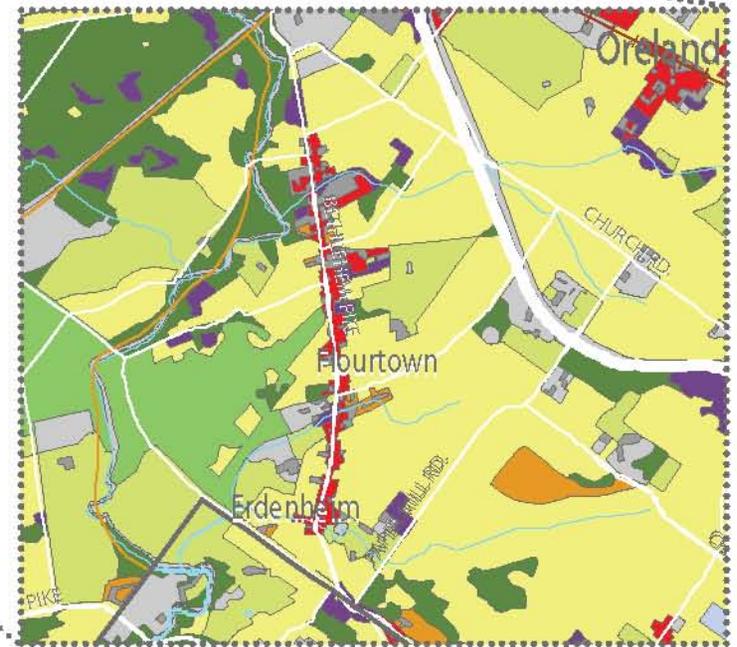
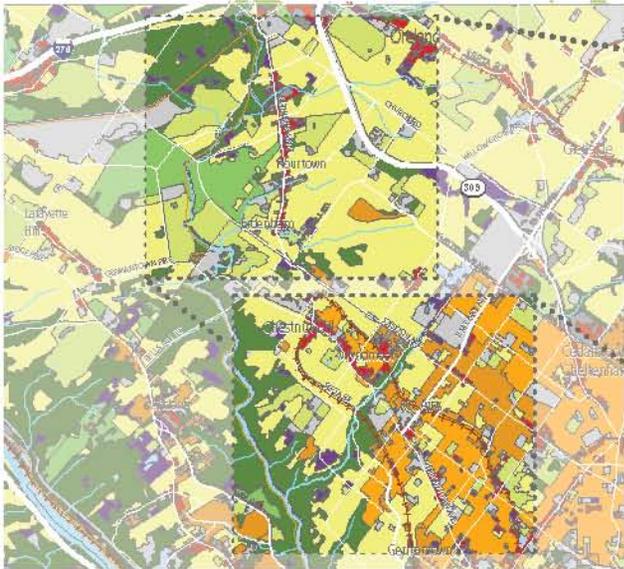
Three assumptions can be made about the demographic profile of the Study Area: 1) The trade area is almost totally built out, filled with a predominance of prosperous, stable households; 2) The housing types encourage a pattern of household turnover which keeps the area's characteristics relatively constant over the years; 3) The general physical pattern of the district will remain unchanged so that the businesses there will slowly evolve rather than face large-scale overhaul.

### Commuting Behavior

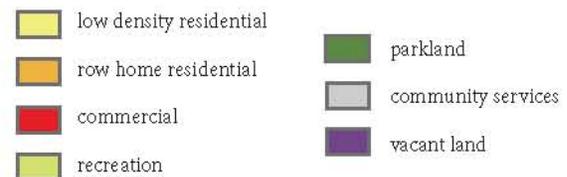
While Philadelphia County continues to be the place of work for many residents of the region, more and more people can be found commuting to surrounding counties as well. For example, between 1980 and 2010, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission projects that the percentage of Philadelphia residents working in Philadelphia will decrease from 85% to 77%. Meanwhile, the percentage of Philadelphia residents working in Montgomery County is projected to increase from 6% to 14%. This information, along with AADT, can be used to make recommendations about how transportation and other infrastructure investments should be allocated in the future.

## Land Use and Zoning

In Philadelphia, as well as Springfield and Whitmarsh Townships, most commercial uses are directed to a few key corridors. Otherwise, the study area is dominated by residential land uses, with much of that being single family residential. The land use matrix also includes a significant amount of parkland and other protected land situated throughout the study area, primarily along river and creek corridors.

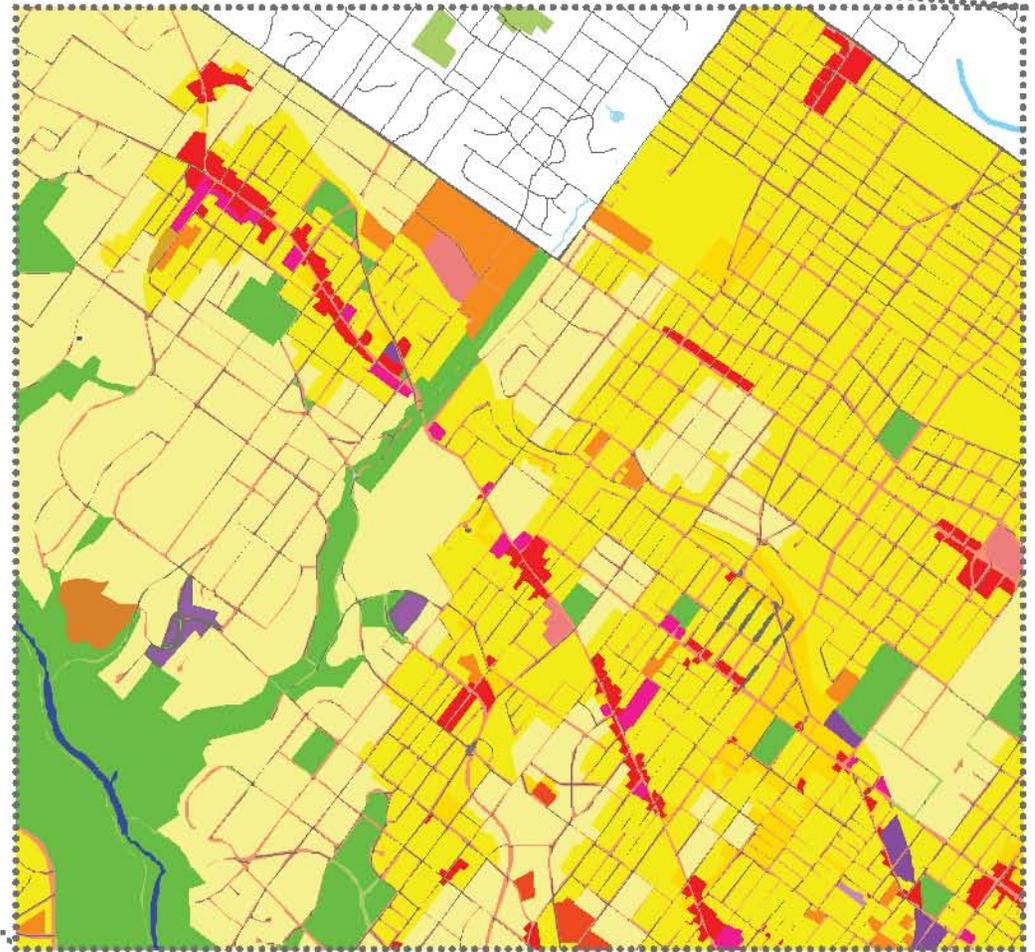
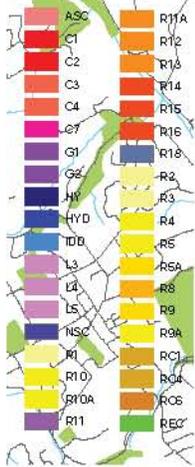


This DVRPC map, which derived land uses from aerial photographs, gives a broad picture of the land use mix in the study area.

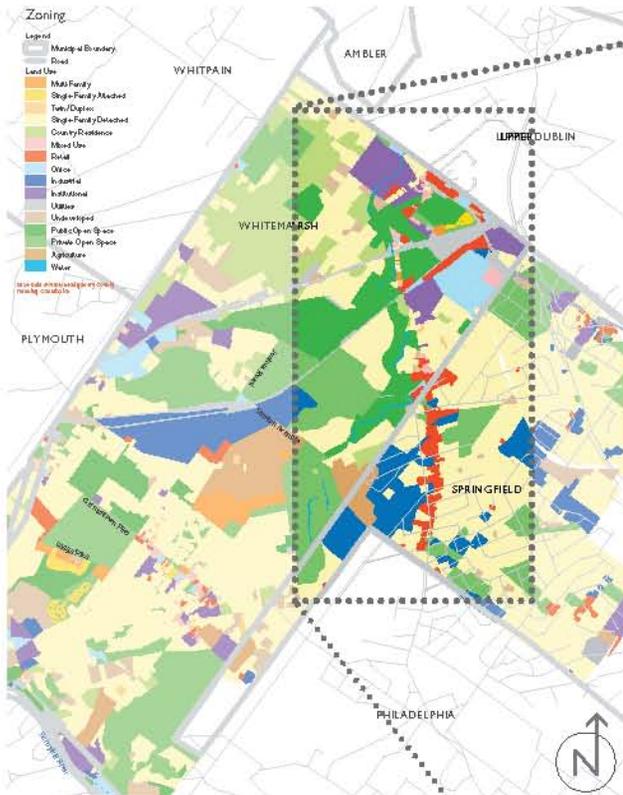




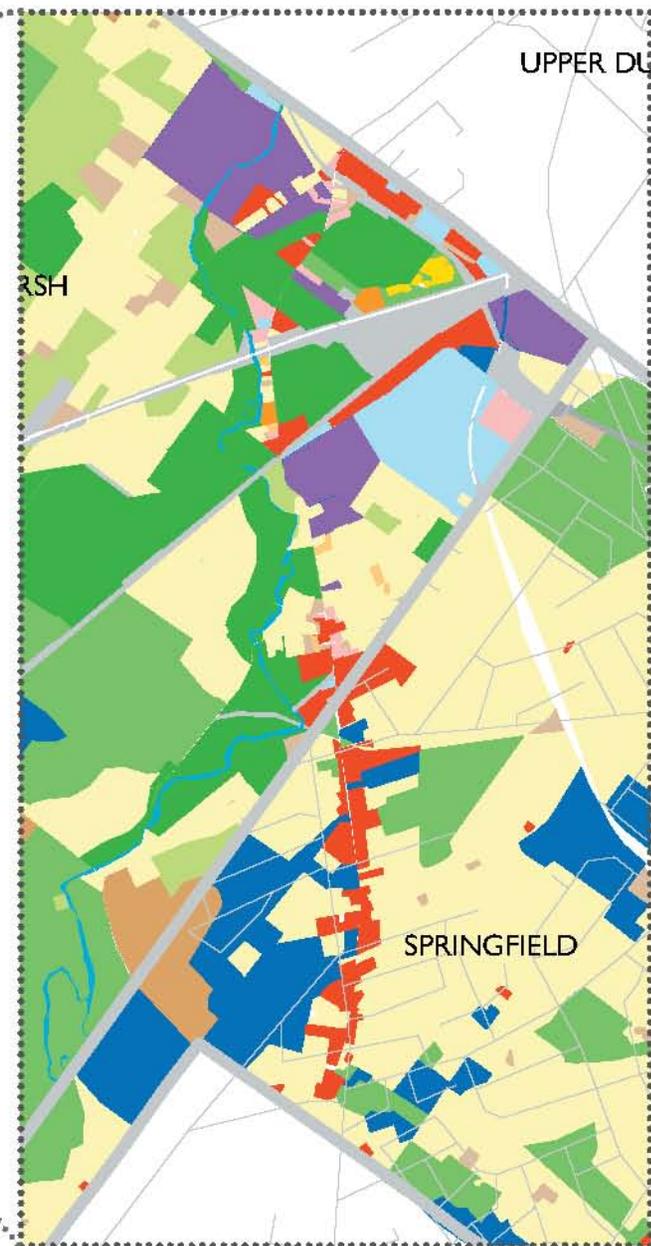
**Philadelphia Zoning**



The Philadelphia zoning map reveals how land throughout the study area is zoned and may present the most accurate portrayal of existing land uses. The larger map focuses on the commercial districts on Germantown Avenue.



Existing zoning categories in Springfield Township and Whitmarsh Township are shown here. The larger map focuses on the Bethlehem Pike corridor.



## EXISTING STUDIES AND ONGOING PROJECTS

Many studies have been completed in recent years to focus planning improvements in the region. These plans illustrate each center's commitment to managing growth and investment. The recommendations that emerge from this study will seek to build on these previous planning efforts. In the following pages, these studies are described and the current status of the recommendations are recognized.

### Chestnut Hill Land Use Guidelines

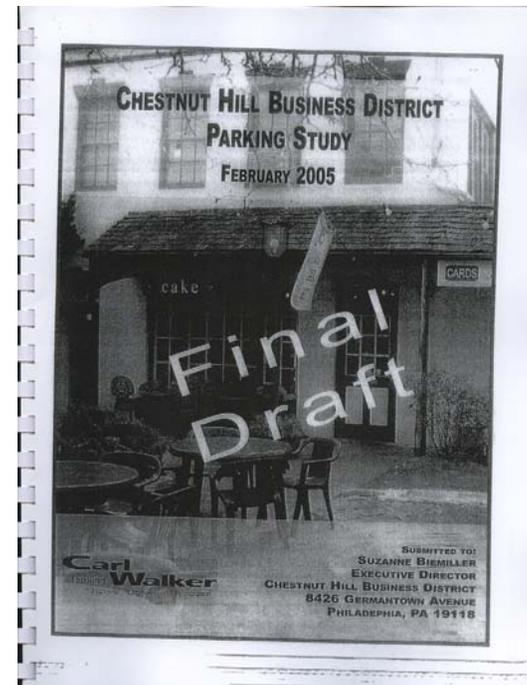
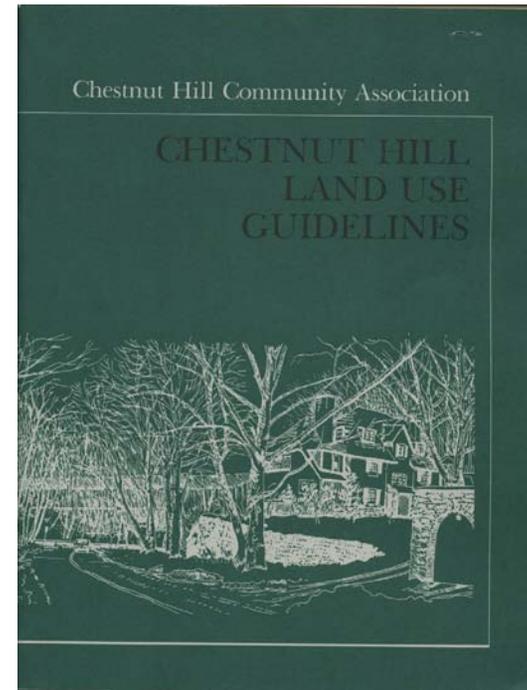
The *Chestnut Hill Land Use Guidelines* were developed by the Chestnut Hill Community Association to establish policies on the nature of future development in the neighborhood. Created in an effort to preserve and enhance the physical character of Chestnut Hill, the guidelines outline policies to guide new development, identify the impacts of development alternatives and promote development that enhances the character of Chestnut Hill rather than takes away from it. The guidelines characterize residential development, open space, commercial development, institutional areas and the transportation system, and then outline guidelines for each of these areas. These guidelines were completed in 1982.

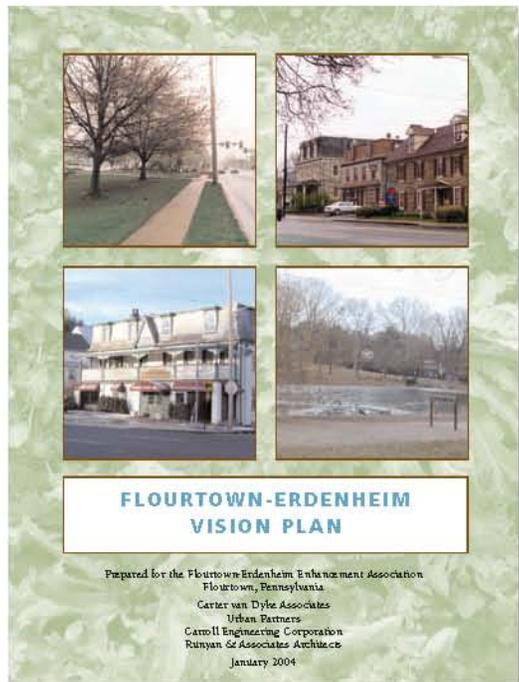
### Chestnut Hill Business District Parking Study

The purpose of this 2005 parking study was to understand and characterize the reasons why parking in Chestnut Hill has decreased in recent years and to develop a strategy for reducing personnel costs. The recommendations of the plan center around the elimination of parking attendants so that the lots offer free, time-limited parking. The plan suggests a new rate structure for local merchants to share the cost of the free parking. The plan further outlines a permanent solution that would blend these parking fees into future Business Improvement District assessments.

### Chestnut Hill Streetscape Vision Study

The *Chestnut Hill Streetscape Vision Study* started with the recognition that the district was in need of a face-lift. Its purpose was to prepare a vision and implementation strategy to help Chestnut Hill prioritize investments in the streetscape. The recommendations that emerged from the study were organized around three themes: safety and security; image and appearance; and maintenance and organization. Design interventions were prescribed for paving and curbing, lighting, plantings, site furniture and the system of graphics. This study was completed in the Fall of 2005.





### Chestnut Hill Business District Retail Market Analysis

This study characterized the retail environment in the business district of Chestnut Hill. This analysis used a characterization of retailers and a survey of merchants and customers to understand who was shopping where in the district. Through this understanding of merchant and customer attitudes, a series of retail development opportunities were identified. Opportunities that have special significance for this study include preserving Germantown Avenue as a special place with a regional profile and expanding sales capture from adjacent Mt. Airy, Whitemarsh, Springfield Township communities. This plan was completed in Fall 2005.

### Flourtown-Erdenheim Vision Plan

The Flourtown-Erdenheim Enhancement Association was established when a group of business people and neighbors joined together to recognize that the Flourtown and Erdenheim corridor of Bethlehem Pike was not operating to its full potential as newer markets in the region began to attract businesses from the corridor. The Vision Plan was created to envision the revitalization of the corridor. It recommended a series of interrelated initiatives that focused on economic development, transportation improvements, streetscape enhancements and architectural enhancements. These initiatives were coordinated among five subareas along the corridor- Valley Green, Highway Shopping Corridor, Flourtown Village, Mixed Use Corridor and Erdenheim Village. This plan was completed in January 2004.



### Mt. Airy Placemaking and Streetscape Improvement Plan

The *Mt. Airy Placemaking and Streetscape Improvement Plan* was created to guide major investments in the physical infrastructure of Germantown Avenue in Mt. Airy. Recommendations of the plan focused on four components- streetscape elements; special projects; mobility and traffic; and navigation and wayfinding. In addition to making recommendations on the physical design of the Avenue, a plan for project implementation was developed. This plan was completed in December 2007.

## ReStore Philadelphia Corridors Program

This program will help to revitalize neighborhood commercial corridors and re-establish their historic roles as central places to shop and work. This program focuses on planning and analysis related to the strengthening of corridors. It works to link physical improvements with community economic development initiatives. The \$188 million dollar program provides funds to community organizations for streetscape elements and capital improvements, acquisition of blighted corridors, pre-development and development activities, business support for facade renovations, energy conservation improvements and equipment for corridor cleaning and security and technology improvements for data collection about the corridors.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission prioritizes a multi-municipal planning approach. This cooperative spirit forms the basis for this study. With its focus on improving mobility between centers throughout the region, business and civic leaders from each of these communities have been invited to participate in the process. Other stakeholders include representatives from institutional partners, transportation agencies and regional planning organizations.

The Core Working Group met regularly throughout the process, guiding the planning effort as it moves forward.

In addition to the Core Working Group, the Study Area Committee (SAC) met twice to address key topics of the plan. The SAC includes staff representatives from each township, including Springfield and Whitmarsh, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, the Chestnut Hill Business Association, Friends of the Wissahickon, Mt. Airy USA, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, the Philadelphia Department of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, representatives of state elected officials within the Study Area and SEPTA.

The SAC meetings and other meetings with targeted groups of stakeholders were very useful in guiding the development of the project.

Members of the Core Working Group include:

- Karen Cilurso, Senior Regional Planner, DVRPC
- Jennifer Barr, Planner, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
- Mary K. Morrison, County Planner, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- John Haak, Chestnut Hill resident, Land Use, Planning and Zoning Committee, Chestnut Hill Community Association
- Project Consultants, Mark Keener and Kristen Ford, Brown & Keener; Adrienne Eiss and Dan Kueper, Orth-Rodgers; Marc Morfei, Pennoni Associates; Jim Hartling, Urban Partners

Stakeholder groups that were engaged in the process include:

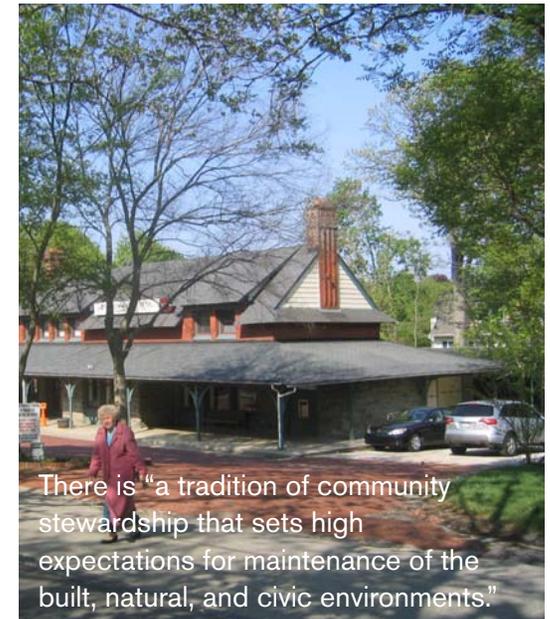
- Bethlehem Pike Streetscape Committee
- Chestnut Hill Business Association
- Chestnut Hill Community Association
- Northwest Traffic Calming Committee
- Springfield Township Shade Tree Committee

# THE REGIONAL VISION

“When I came here, I was only thinking about Springfield Township, but once I got into it, I could see how we could really work together.”



- The Place
- The Community
- Community Process
- The Big Ideas



There is “a tradition of community stewardship that sets high expectations for maintenance of the built, natural, and civic environments.”

This chapter highlights all that is special about the unique communities of the region. These insights help us to set priorities and establish shared values for this study. The section entitled *The Place* offers an overview of the character and identity of the region, describing the qualities and characteristics associated with its unique history and natural environment. The section called *The Community* describes the characteristics of the people who live in the study area and highlights the way that this composition may be changing. The *Big Ideas* that follow articulate an overall vision to guide growth and development in the region, reconceptualizing the constellation of civic and commercial centers as a system of corridors and transportation links. Derived entirely from the insight of stakeholders and community participants, these major concepts will provide a framework to guide the study's analytical process and development of recommendations.

## THE PLACE

The people of Mt. Airy, Chestnut Hill and Springfield Township have a sense of great pride in their unique communities. The commercial centers of these communities, their surrounding residential fabric and the associated network of transportation connections creates some very special places that accommodate a diverse and dynamic population. With its multi-modal transportation connections, dense village centers and nearby environmental resources, this constellation of communities truly stands out in the greater Delaware Valley region.

The winding Wissahickon Creek and its associated parkland through the landscape was a strong determinant of nearby growth and development. Native American trading paths were built along the ridgelines above the Wissahickon, becoming early turnpikes in Colonial America. Along these routes, which include Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike, commercial ventures were established to serve travelers who moved along these roads. The use of this corridor for commercial activities persists to this day. The Germantown Avenue/ Bethlehem Pike corridor remains one of the prominent commercial corridors leading out of the city.

Residential neighborhoods that developed between the creek and the Germantown Avenue/Bethlehem Pike corridor tended to be built with an attention to detail and a respect for the surrounding natural environment. Water is often expressed in the streams and swales that pass by people's houses. The forest is extended through the canopy along streets and sidewalks. The many gardens that decorate most residential yards work together to create a rolling, verdant landscape.



The Wissahickon Creek and surrounding forest contributes to the identity of the study area.



Granite blocks are characteristic of the study area.



Many buildings are made of Wissahickon schist.

While this region is characterized by so many assets, the look and feel of some recent development has not always reinforced the best qualities of the communities. In general, new development should respect the building traditions and natural environment that fills these communities with life.

## THE COMMUNITY

This region is characterized by the physical features of the place, but also by the people who live there. The people of Mt. Airy, Chestnut Hill, Springfield Township and Whitmarsh Township have long-standing connections to their communities and a strong sense of pride in the character of the place. Residents of all of these communities share the road systems, the shopping areas and natural and scenic resources of the area. Residents want to maintain their communities as lively, independent, thriving local centers. In many ways, the communities of the study area could be considered a model for how to create thriving, place-based neighborhoods.

The underlying infrastructure exists for these communities to thrive as they move in to the 21st century economy. However, as more big box stores and shopping centers open in surrounding suburban areas within and beyond the study area, residents are pulled to outlying locations to shop. The location of shopping centers, along with workplaces and schools, disperses demand for goods and services in the communities where they live, increases automobile use and exacerbates traffic congestion throughout the region. For these communities to continue to remain economically viable, they must invest in transportation improvements and attract and retain the businesses where people like to shop.



Public Workshop, March 12



Public Workshop, April 30

## COMMUNITY PROCESS

Two public workshops were held as part of this study. At these meetings, participants were introduced to the study and were invited to weigh in on its progress. The first meeting, held on March 12 at Chestnut Hill College, focused on the regional transportation network. In small groups, participants focused on one of several transportation corridors, including Bethlehem Pike, Stenton Avenue, Bell's Mill Road and Germantown Avenue. Strengths, weaknesses and opportunities were identified, and were later used to inform the transportation and land use analyses of the study.

The second public workshop, held on April 30 at the Chestnut Hill Public Library, focused on moving the generalized recommendations associated with the study toward implementation and application to particular locations in the study area. Participants reviewed twenty different "flash cards" that showed images of potential strategies, and evaluated these strategies for relevance and potential application in particular locations.

At the public meetings, as well as in discussions with the Study Area Committee and stakeholder interviews, much information was revealed about what residents, community leaders and institutional partners define as regional priorities. Comments from meetings and interviews include the following:

General comments on study outcomes tended to focus on transportation connections:

"It's important to incorporate Philly Car and Bike Share at parking lots."

"Look at how pedestrian amenities link with stormwater management."

"How can we link rail stations and ped connections?"

"Schools are being designed for cars- this should be addressed in the study"

"There should be better marketing of all transportation options."

"The overlay of public transport and trails should define the growth of the region."

"Lincoln Drive and Bell's Mill Drive are dangerous for park users."

"Priority corridors should radiate from SEPTA stations to commercial corridors."

Please join us for a **public workshop** for the

## Mobilize to Thrive Regional Study

*Let's talk about the future of the region...*

Erdenheim | Flourtown | Mt Airy | Chestnut Hill | Whitemarsh | Wyndmoor

**Bethlehem Pike | Germantown Avenue**



**Where:** Chestnut Hill Public Library  
8711 Germantown Avenue

**When:** Wednesday, April 30  
7:30 - 9:00 pm

**Who:** Everyone is welcome!

**What:** Presentation and discussion about  
pedestrian-friendly business districts;  
transportation options; coordinated  
approaches to economic development



The Study is funded and managed by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Project partners include the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, Springfield Township and the Chestnut Hill Community Association.

This flyer was used to advertise for an April public meeting.



Activities were used at meetings to discern public preferences for pedestrian amenities and development scenarios.

Springfield Township residents were especially concerned about the future of Bethlehem Pike. Comments about this corridor included the following:

“Bethlehem Pike is not easy to bike or walk around.”

“Should Beth Pike be composed of several centers or should it be a continuum?”

“Would new, bigger developments along the Pike take business away from smaller businesses?”

“We should find our own market niche that complements Chestnut Hill’s niche”

“Restoration of the Black Horse Inn is an important part of redevelopment.”

“People from Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy use the CVS, the liquor store, the Acme and Genuardi’s Supermarkets and the Farmer’s Market, all on Bethlehem Pike.”



Public Workshop, April 30

Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy residents talked about Germantown Avenue as a point of focus:

“Residents of Montgomery County are concerned about parking in Chestnut Hill- there is a perception that your car could get towed, people are not sure where to park.”

“Plans are in the works to install better signs and info kiosks.”

“Could we limit truck traffic in Chestnut Hill?”

“We need to think about the viability of our business district.”

“The trolley could hold up traffic and make congestion worse.”

“The trolley is a real and viable form of public transit.”

“Something should be created to link historic segments of Germantown Avenue.”

“Germantown Avenue, Bell’s Mill Road and Lincoln Drive do not feel safe for pedestrians because of congestion and speeding.”

## THE BIG IDEAS

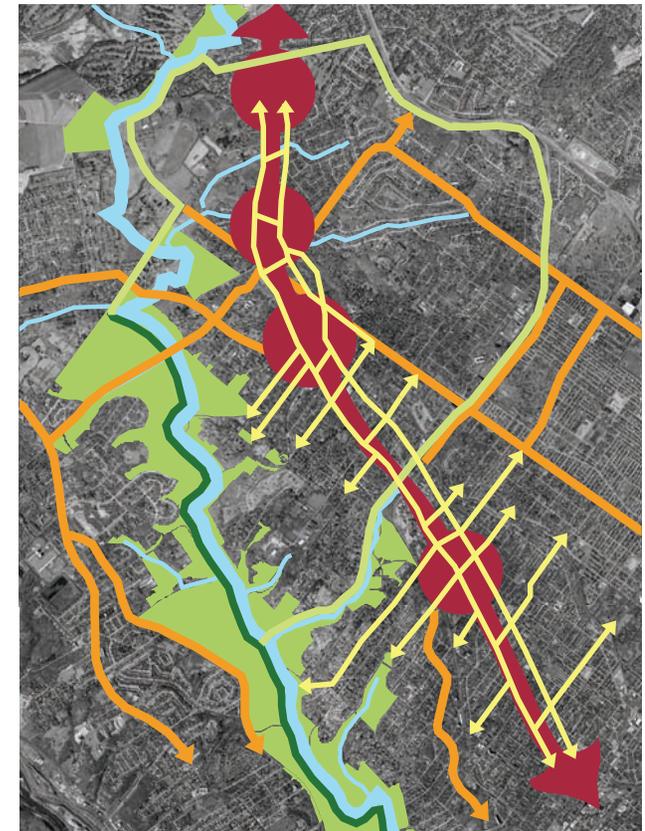
The big ideas given below will be used to guide the analysis process and inform the recommendations developed for this study. The big ideas will be applied in several ways. First, they will serve as the basis for analysis of the study area by directing the types of questions to ask. Second, they will point to specific geographic areas that deserve special attention. Third, they provide the framework for understanding the types of recommendations that are called for in the study area.

### Promote mixed-use reinvestment in the Main Street areas

For Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike circumstances have converged in fortunate ways. The high costs of gasoline and residential mortgages amplify the force of a national trend “back to Main Street” that has affected the way Americans shop, drive, and increasingly, where they choose to live and to work. As greater value is placed on more urban, walkable retailing environments like Germantown Avenue, a wider range of businesses and building types have become viable.

- Multi-story mixed-use buildings, with over-the-shop residences or offices above were the tradition in the past. This created a higher density of shopping opportunities and more diversity of businesses. However, none of the new construction along the corridor has followed this model.
- Bigger, “brand name” stores are willing to adapt their prototype plans to make for better architecture and to put the front entrance along the sidewalk rather than place a parking lot in front with the building behind, set way back from the street.
- Contiguous shop fronts help to create stronger, more cohesive districts. Code provisions that require active retail uses on first floor frontage will make for a livelier shopping street and should be adopted now since more businesses see “Main Street” retailing environments like Germantown Avenue or Bethlehem Pike as attractive locations.

These fortunate circumstances coincide with the City of Philadelphia’s commitment to overhaul Philadelphia’s archaic zoning code as well as an ongoing project initiated by neighboring Springfield Township (Montgomery County) to transform Bethlehem Pike.



Main Street Investment

Pedestrian Links

Inter-modal Transportation Linkages

In *The Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream* real estate developer, consultant, professor, and Brookings Fellow Christopher Leinberger says “the United States faces a conundrum in how to grow and provide a high quality of life that is sustainable. Walkable urbanism is a crucial part of the answer... The next American Dream is based upon the recognition that the market wants a built environment that provides choice, lines up with the new economy that is emerging and is more environmentally, fiscally, and economically sustainable.

## Enhance the pedestrian orientation of Main Streets and Station Areas

As the main economic backbone of the region, the Germantown Avenue/Bethlehem Pike spine should be targeted as a pedestrian-oriented zone. The region’s main streets and transit hubs are public investments in a future that maintains a high quality of life that is environmentally, fiscally and economically sustainable. Given that most businesses rely on customers and employees coming to a physical location for work, shopping or entertainment, an “enhanced pedestrian orientation” is valuable because it 1) encourages near neighbors to “shop local”; 2) allows customers driving from elsewhere to “park once, shop twice”; 3) it means that some may visit by transit once they see how easy it is to walk from stations and bus stops to many close-by destinations.

People should be able to:

- Move around without feeling threatened by excessive traffic speeds and volumes.
- Move easily between Germantown, Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill and Erdenheim/Flourtown.
- Utilize easy and clear pedestrian linkages from transit stations to Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike.

## Strengthen inter-modal transportation linkages throughout the region

Not only should people be able to move along this corridor on foot, but they should be able to reach this system easily from around the study area and the larger region. Advances in technology enable planners to deploy regional transportation assets as a system so that rail and roadway travel patterns are calibrated to provide choice, convenience and value. Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike should easily connect with trails, schools and neighborhoods. Intermodal transportation linkages will form a metaphoric braid around the central “Main Street” including:

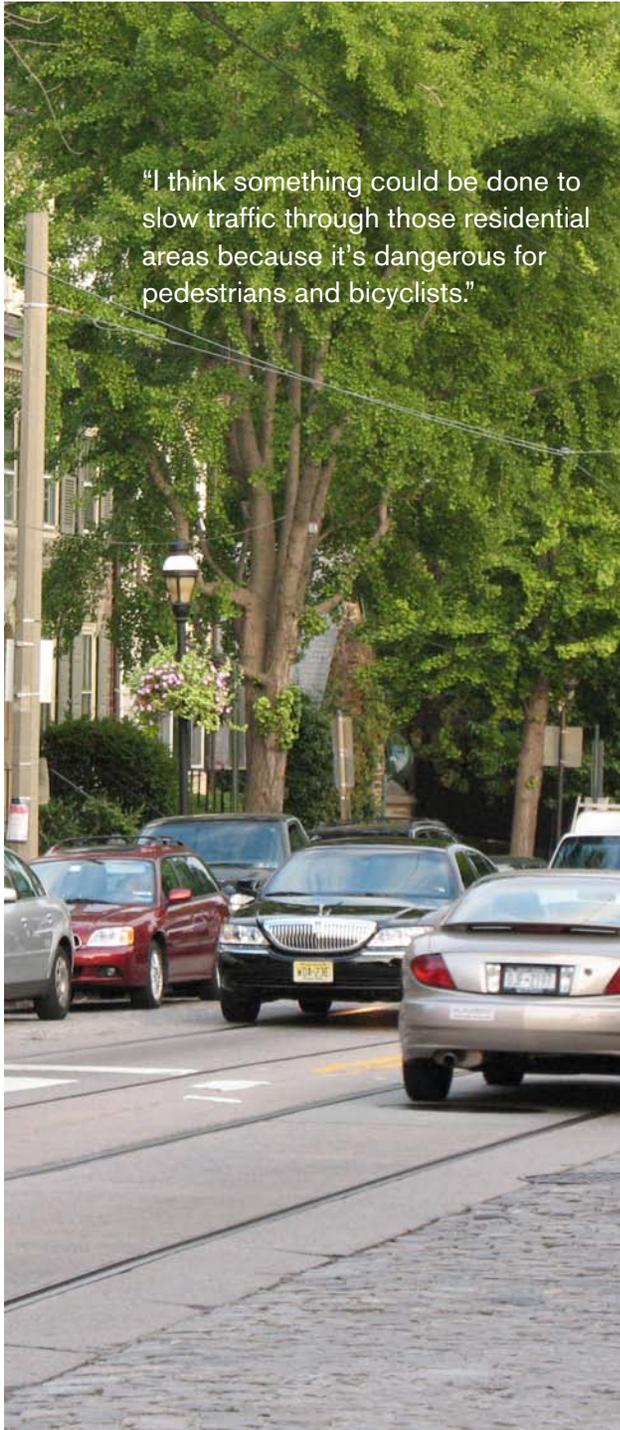
- Strengthened transportation alternatives.
- Clear linkages between transportation alternatives.
- Improvements to the road network through safer intersections, traffic calming and mitigation of congestion.



# WHERE WE ARE NOW

## Transportation Analysis

## Land Use and Development Analysis



“I think something could be done to slow traffic through those residential areas because it’s dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists.”



“It is very difficult to walk between neighborhoods in Springfield Township and Chestnut Hill.”



“We want businesses that fit the character of our neighborhood.”

The big ideas articulated in the previous section revealed the remarkable history, transportation infrastructure and established economic centers that abound in the study area. In this section, these assets will be examined in more detail to understand the strengths, weaknesses, latent potential and liabilities in the transportation system and land uses of the study area. The transportation analysis includes a look at pedestrian and bicycle mobility, transit and vehicular circulation, while the analysis of land use examines commercial districts, including relative market niche, areas of susceptibility to change and potential development sites. The items of focus for each analysis were cited most frequently by study participants as needing attention and guidance. After each section of the analysis, a set of generalized recommendations are given, which will inform the development of guidelines for the region's transportation and commercial corridors and redevelopment approaches for areas that are susceptible to change.

### Inventory of Planned Transportation Improvements

**Mt. Airy Streetscape** | Many of the planned improvements to the Mt. Airy streetscape include strategies to address pedestrian mobility. Recommendations center around amenities at signalized intersections on Germantown Avenue including the installation of marked crosswalks, pedestrian push-button signals, “No Turn on Red” signs and stop bars.

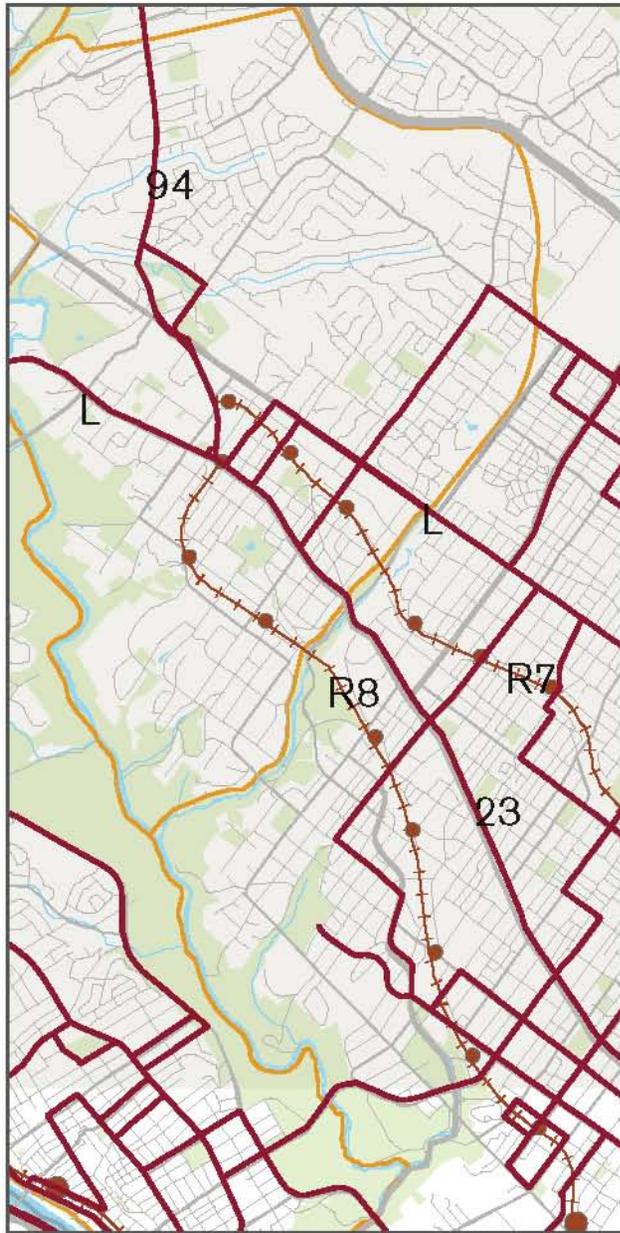
**Bethlehem Pike Streetscape** | As part of the *Bethlehem Pike Streetscape Plan*, many pedestrian amenities will be upgraded. Key among these are street tree plantings along the length of the Pike, bumpouts and crosswalks at key intersections and sidewalk upgrades.

**Cresheim Trail** | The proposed Cresheim Trail will link Springfield, Cheltenham and Whitemarsh townships to Fairmount Park in Philadelphia and, at its other end, to Fort Washington State Park. If the trail is built, it will follow the Cresheim Creek out of Philadelphia and then Route 309 into Springfield Township. It will then pass adjacent to the Flourtown Country Club and lead through an abandoned railroad bed before crossing Bethlehem Pike near the Acme shopping center. While a feasibility study has been completed for the trail, construction is not yet funded or planned.

**Stenton Avenue TIP, Signalization and Crosswalk Improvements** | Improvements are planned under the DVRPC TIP Program for the length of Stenton Avenue from Paper Mill Road to Front Street. These improvements focus on signal modernization at thirty intersections and include minor roadway improvements, pavement markings and related work.



Many pedestrian improvements are planned for Germantown Avenue in Mt. Airy.



The study area is very well-served by SEPTA rail and bus routes. The R7 and R8 are rail lines and the Route 23, Route 94 and Route L are bus lines.

## TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

### Transit

#### Level of Service Analysis

#### **Transit |**

In the 1970s, ridership on the R7 and R8 was more than double what it is today. A sharp decline in the 1980s reflects a loss of jobs in Center City and a change in job location of area residents as well as a change in the neighborhoods closer to North Philadelphia. Ridership continued to decline in the 1990s. Those trends are starting to reverse, and ridership increased from 2005 to 2007. Now, aided by a large increase in gasoline prices, SEPTA regional rail ridership is up by 10% over last year.

**Train and Bus Schedules |** Trains run at least every half hour in the commuter periods from 6 am to 10 am and 5 pm to 7 pm, and about once per hour during other periods, ending about 11 pm for trips leaving Chestnut Hill. Trains leave Center City for Chestnut Hill as late as 1 am on weekdays and 11:30 pm on weekends. On Saturdays trains run once an hour. On Sundays the interval between trains on the R8 is 90 minutes and on the R7 is hourly.

The R7 and the R8 trains depart for Center City within about 10 minutes of each other, and sometimes at almost the same time. Therefore, although there are two rail lines, more could be done to increase the practical frequency of rail service. Recognizing that a change in one train affects the rest of the rail system schedules, it is recommended that the schedules be examined to see if there are more opportunities to stagger the departure times for R7 and R8. This would be especially important mid-day and on weekends when there is less frequent service and more leeway for rescheduling.

The Route L bus between Olney and Plymouth Meeting and the Route 94 bus, that runs from Chestnut Hill to Springfield have stops at or near the train stations in Chestnut Hill, making transfer possible. Certain train departures and arrivals have good connections to bus schedules during the peak commuter times, within 5 to 10 minutes. The Route L buses run more frequently than the trains during commuter peak periods; therefore an inbound rider coming from the L bus may find himself waiting for the train. After 8:30 am and during the middle of the day when trains only run once an hour, the minimum wait may be 20 minutes if the rider plans ahead and takes the bus that arrives closest to but not later than the train departure time. Without such planning the wait may be 40 minutes.

The Route 94 buses run once per hour. The southbound buses that arrive at 7:17 am and 8:23 am have good connections to the R7 and a reasonable connection to the R8. However for the rest of the day, the inbound Route 94 arrives in Chestnut Hill just after the train has departed, and so the wait is an hour. For the outbound direction, the train arrives after the bus of the hour has departed. On the weekends when the interval between trips is longer for the buses as well as the train, good connections between bus and train are few. This limits the appeal of using transit for trips that require a transfer.

**Rate structure** | Chestnut Hill East and Chestnut Hill West are both Zone 2 in SEPTA's fare zone system. The cost of one round trip ticket between Chestnut Hill and Center City is \$8.25 purchased at the station or \$10.00 on the train. Off peak round trip is \$6.75 purchased at the station or \$10.00 on the train. Station hours vary slightly (5:45 am – 11:30 am at R7 Chestnut Hill East, 6:30 am – 12:55 am at R8 Chestnut Hill West).

At many stations the office is open only through the morning. When the office is closed, the rider must purchase a ticket on the train. In 2007, SEPTA instituted a policy of a surcharge for tickets purchased on the train, regardless of whether the office was open. This caused many complaints among riders. SEPTA has tried to address this by offering a rebate which is applied to the return trip. This policy is available for view on SEPTA's website but is not widely known. However, to get the rebate, the rider must keep his receipt, show it to the ticket agent upon purchase of a return ticket, and it must be on the same day. This makes it inconvenient and in some instances not possible to obtain the rebate. The policy encourages regular commuters to buy 10-trip tickets or a Trail Pass to avoid the extra charge of buying a ticket on the train. It does, however, penalize the occasional user and the recreational user who is travelling when the station ticket offices are not open.

The fare for a one-way ride between rail stations within the same zone at all times is \$3.00 purchased at the station or \$4.00 on the train so that it is not much less than the off peak fare to Center City. A bus fare is \$2.00 (or \$1.45 with token).

**SEPTA R7 Chestnut Hill East Rail Line** | This line terminates on Bethlehem Pike several blocks from the main retail center of Chestnut Hill. The R7 stations are in residential neighborhoods, so that it makes sense that it is used more for commuters and stays on the commuter-oriented schedule. Average ridership in 2007 of all stations on the line (trips to and from the stations between Chestnut Hill East

### R7 Weekday Departure Times

AM	PM
5:55	12:27
6:26	1:33
6:51	2:26
7:21	3:21
7:48	4:17
<b>8:06</b>	<b>5:22</b>
<b>8:33</b>	5:45
9:29	<b>6:06</b>
10:27	<b>6:45</b>
11:27	<b>7:25</b>
	<b>8:13</b>
	9:16
	10:12
	11:16
	12:22

### R8 Weekday Departure Times

AM	PM
6:10	12:51
6:42	1:51
7:07	2:51
7:38	3:34
<b>8:11</b>	4:33
<b>8:36</b>	<b>5:21</b>
9:07	5:53
9:55	<b>6:12</b>
10:55	<b>6:48</b>
11:55	<b>7:25</b>
	7:50
	<b>8:10</b>
	8:50
	9:50
	10:50

SEPTA R7 and R8 regional rail schedules. Departure times in bold leave within five minutes of the other rail line's departure time.

**Route 94 Bus  
Arrival Times to Chestnut Hill**

AM	PM
7:17	1:25
8:23	2:28
9:28	3:32
10:24	4:33
11:25	5:32
12:27	6:33
	7:30
	8:29
	9:31
	10:30

SEPTA Route 94 weekday bus schedules.

and Temple University) is 5,600 on a weekday, Saturday 1,900 on Saturday, and 1,400 on Sunday. This line might be better utilized by Springfield residents with improved pedestrian links such as improved pedestrian crossings on Stenton Avenue, improved bike links, and scheduling of bus lines to link with the train schedule. The R7 makes a direct connection with Temple University Station; the ease of travel to Chestnut Hill could be marketed to University students and staff.

**SEPTA R8 Chestnut Hill West Rail Line** | Total ridership of this line is slightly lower than the R7 as a whole, but the Chestnut Hill West station itself has 75 – 80% more boardings than the Chestnut Hill East station (481 weekday boardings vs. 270 for Chestnut Hill East station). The location of the Chestnut Hill West station at Germantown Avenue makes it the better line for a tourist connection from Center City Philadelphia. Upgrading of the Chestnut Hill West Station would assist with this. Wayfinding facilities and tourist information should be placed in the station and scheduling should be more reflective of tourist needs, with more frequent trips during the day.

**SEPTA Route 23** | This route is the longest route in the SEPTA transit system, traveling from the Chestnut Hill loop along Germantown Avenue to North Philadelphia, and along 11th and 12th Streets through Center City to Packer Avenue in South Philadelphia. It operates 24 hours a day. It runs approximately every 10-15 minutes during the weekdays, every 20 minutes in the evening, and every 30-40 minutes overnight. Saturday service is every 10-15 minutes; on Sunday every 20 minutes.

SEPTA signed an agreement with the City to restore the Routes 15, 23 and 56 to trolley service. The Route 15 on Girard Avenue which was converted to buses in 1992 was restored to trolley operation in 2005. SEPTA's chief concern regarding trolleys is that operation and maintenance is more costly compared with bus operation. The street infrastructure is in place to bring the trolley back to Route 23 and SEPTA has committed to restoring the Route 23 trolley or some sort of fixed-rail transport by 2022.

Some people perceive that a trolley is more attractive to riders than a bus and believe that reinstating trolley service in itself would draw more riders. As a practical matter, Route 23 ridership within Chestnut Hill is light. Much of the ridership is from further south going to jobs in Chestnut Hill or transferring to get to jobs further out into Montgomery County. For these riders, the quality of service, in terms of route frequency, perceived safety and overall ride comfort is more important than the type of vehicle.

From SEPTA's perspective, a tourist oriented service is different from its mission to provide mass transit. Although an historic or heritage trolley running up Germantown Avenue may be an attractive amenity for the business district, SEPTA could not divert operating funds to that type of service, and a business or political constituency would have to obtain the funding for it. A trolley vehicle used for mass transit should be accessible, which is problematic for historic trolley vehicles. For any new trolley purchase, SEPTA would want to use modern vehicles, and it would be more cost effective to combine the purchase with replacement of the Green Line subway surface trolleys.

**SEPTA Route L Bus** | The Route L runs from Plymouth Meeting Mall to the Olney Transportation Center at Broad and Olney Avenue in Philadelphia. It runs along Germantown Pike through Whitmarsh Township and into Chestnut Hill, travels to Stenton Avenue via Gravers Lane (inbound) and via Evergreen Avenue (outbound), and continues on Stenton Avenue to Broad Street. A secondary route turns north on Bethlehem Pike in Chestnut Hill rather than continuing west on Germantown Avenue. This route turns from Bethlehem Pike to Paper Mill Road and loops back to terminate at Bethlehem Pike in Erdenheim. The Route L runs approximately every 15 to 20 minutes to Plymouth Meeting; service interval to Erdenheim varies from 20 minutes to an hour.

**SEPTA Route 27 Bus** | The Route 27 runs from Plymouth Meeting Mall through Roxborough to Center City via Ridge Avenue and I-76. This route also serves the Metroplex shopping center on Chemical Road. Service is from 6 am to 11 pm and runs at 20 minute intervals during commuter peaks, 40 to 60 minute intervals at other times. A secondary route runs from Germantown Avenue at Church Road in Lafayette Hill with a similar schedule. East of where the two routes join on Ridge Avenue, bus intervals are about 10 minutes in the peak and generally 20 to 30 minutes at other times. There are connections to six other bus routes at Plymouth Meeting Mall. In Lafayette Hill the Route 27 and the Route L connect with Route 95, which runs to Conshohocken and the Norristown Transportation Center.

**SEPTA Bus Routes 9 and 32** | These routes provide additional service from Roxborough to Center City. Route 9 travels along Ridge Avenue to I-76 and routes past Amtrak's 30th Street Station. The Route 32 travels via Ridge Avenue, Henry Avenue through East Falls, and 33rd Street through North Philadelphia. Both routes run at 10 to 15 minute intervals in commuter peaks, about 20 minute intervals at most other times on a weekday, and less frequently on the weekends. Both routes connect with the Route 27 which continues west to Plymouth Meeting.



The SEPTA Route L bus.



The Chestnut Hill Loop, where buses from around the area turn around and passengers between Springfield Township and Philadelphia make their transfer.



Any rail station could be adopted by a local community group.

**SEPTA Route 77 Bus** | The Route 77 bus runs between Chestnut Hill and Jenkintown and Northeast Philadelphia via Willow Grove Avenue, Glenside Avenue and Township Line Road/Cottman Avenue. It runs once per hour each direction from the Chestnut Hill Loop, with stops on Germantown Avenue and along Willow Grove Avenue. It runs from about 6 am to 7 pm weekdays and Saturdays, and 9:30 am to 5:30 pm Sundays. The daily ridership on this line in the Chestnut Hill area is light.

**SEPTA Route 94** | The Route 94 bus runs from Chestnut Hill to Montgomery Mall via Ambler, Montgomery County Community College and Lansdale. It runs once per hour each direction on Bethlehem Pike from the Chestnut Hill loop through Springfield Township. The last trip exiting Chestnut Hill is around 8:30 pm, 6:30 pm on Sundays. This is much earlier than the time train service ends, and so the bus does not serve evening trips by transit to Center City as well as it might.

**SEPTA Route 134** | The Route 134 also runs from Chestnut Hill to Montgomery Mall and has the same route as the 94 bus up Bethlehem Pike through Springfield. This route continues north on Bethlehem Pike to Spring House, serves employers such as Rohm & Haas and Johnson and Johnson, and routes through Horsham Township on the way to the Mall. This is a limited service. Six buses travel north from Chestnut Hill on weekdays: three runs in the morning and three in the afternoon. Four buses travel southbound: one in the morning, two trips in the afternoon and one late evening. Residents of Evergreen Avenue, Gravers Lane, and Willow Grove Avenue have complained about the bus traffic speed or noise.

Bus operations on Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill delay traffic during stops for passengers, since buses cannot pull to the curb due to on-street parking. SEPTA has developed a plan showing where parking could be removed to allow buses to stop out of the traffic flow; however to date retaining parking spaces has been deemed more desirable by the community.

## Stations

Comments from stakeholders and the general public indicate that limited ticket hours at stations and a general lack of facilities at stations tends to dissuade people from using rail for their transportation needs. This is a concern for SEPTA ridership since there have been cuts in the hours of operation and ticket vending at rail stations.

The operating hours at SEPTA rail stations is not likely to change soon, so it is important to identify other ways to make stations more amenable to passengers. One approach to help this happen successfully would be to engage the local community to act as a steward for neighborhood rail stations. Under such a scheme, neighborhood groups, citizen activists and local businesses “adopt” a particular rail station to monitor and take care of. The adopting group helps to develop amenities at the station, like landscaping and signage, and updates SEPTA on how the station facilities could be improved.

This stewardship relationship already exists at several stations in the study area, including Gravers Lane and Wyndmoor. New groups would be especially useful to improve signage and amenities at target stations including the Chestnut Hill West and Chestnut Hill East stations.

## Bus Stops

**Placement of Bus Stops** | Because Springfield Township tends to be a vehicle-oriented community, it is especially important to have adequate transit facilities there, to promote transportation equity. Yet the placement of bus stops on Bethlehem Pike is haphazard, and is not responsive to the transportation needs of local workers and residents. Once streetscape improvements occur on Bethlehem Pike, bus stops may need to be relocated in some places to be responsive to the needs of bus riders in the area.

**Shelters** | A lack of shelters will influence the utilization of the bus system. Workers and residents are also more likely to ride the buses if bus stops are covered, well-lit and well-maintained. There is one bus stop in Mt. Airy that offers shelter for waiting passengers and no such amenities are available along Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill and Bethlehem Pike in Springfield Township.

The addition of shelters could be useful along Bethlehem Pike to encourage better ridership from Springfield communities. For this to occur however, the municipality would contract with a national outdoor-advertising firm that sells shelter advertising space to cover maintenance costs and generate revenue. As part of this contract, the municipality would specify that the firm would be responsible for proper maintenance of shelter facilities. In Springfield Township, where the addition of shelters would be especially beneficial, there is concern about commercialization and provocative images being associated with ads on bus shelters, so an alternative solution that draws on assistance from business owners may be more appropriate.



Shelters at bus stops encourage people to use the bus in all types of weather. This bus stop is located in Mt. Airy.



The bus stop that can be seen on the left side of the photo is located on Bethlehem Pike near a busy intersection.

## Vehicular Movement

### Traffic Movement

The transportation system in the study area is heavily influenced by the presence of the Wissahickon Creek, which runs northwest to southeast through the study area. Traffic flow through much of the area is thus channeled in the same direction.

Germantown Avenue and Ridge Pike/ Ridge Avenue are the only principal arterials in the study area. Lincoln Drive, Bethlehem Pike, Stenton Avenue, Paper Mill Road and Bells Mill Road are all minor arterials. Collectors include Chestnut Hill Avenue, Willow Grove Avenue, Cresheim Valley Drive, Ivy Hill Road, St. Martins Lane, Mt. Pleasant Street, Allens Lane, Wissahickon Avenue, McCallum Street and Emlen Street.

**Traffic Volumes** | Although Germantown Avenue is classified as a principal arterial in the study area, its daily traffic volumes within Chestnut Hill – at 11,000 to 12,000 vehicles – are lower than on many of the minor arterial and collector roadways in the study area. Volumes on Stenton Avenue east of Paper Mill are over 20,000, although they throttle back to 15,000 east of Cresheim Valley Road/ Ivy Hill Road. Paper Mill Road has volumes of 16,000 to 20,000; Willow Grove Avenue carries 14,000. The highest volumes of any roadway in the study area are on Lincoln Drive, which increase from 22,000 vehicles daily at Allens Lane to 30,000 by Wayne Avenue.

These volumes reveal the lack of a clear hierarchy of roadways in Chestnut Hill. Motorists have a variety of options in piecing together the routes that result in the shortest trip. Commuter trips converge on Lincoln Drive (the most efficient means to access Routes 1 and I-76 from the area east of Wissahickon Creek), Paper Mill Road (to access Route 309) and Germantown Pike to the west of Chestnut Hill (to reach I-476). Bells Mill Road at Germantown Avenue is significantly congested in the morning and evening peak hours because it is one of the few crossings of the Wissahickon Creek, and it serves commuters who travel from Route 309/Bethlehem Pike to I-76 and US 1 via Ridge Avenue.

Complicating any effort to manage traffic in the study area is the mix of different trip purposes in the area. Commutation in the traditional sense – from the suburbs into Center City – actually comprises a distinct minority of trips on certain roads. In the morning, for example, traffic is heavier northbound than southbound on Bethlehem Pike, or away from Center City. Similarly, traffic is heavier westbound than eastbound on Stenton Avenue in the morning peak hour.



This photo shows typical traffic loads on Stenton Avenue.



Stenton Avenue (top), Lincoln Drive (bottom) and Bethlehem Pike (not pictured) all carry heavy traffic loads each day.





Trucks on Germantown Avenue often block travel lanes during deliveries.

Based on the average daily traffic volumes, an appreciable percentage of motorists are avoiding Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill and using other routes to access the regional connections described above. Some motorists likely do so because of the moderate speeds on Germantown Avenue. With the presence of regular traffic signals, the traffic calming effect of a traditional Main Street lined with on-street parking, and the divisions of the roadway into concrete and cobblestone cross-sections, motorists are less inclined to speed on this roadway. Meanwhile, residents in the area have expressed concerns that too many motorists are using local or minor collector roadways as part of regional trips.

On Lincoln Drive, drivers exceed the 25 mph posted speed limit. The physical roadway itself does not encourage speeding – i.e. the road is not straight nor are the lanes wide. Enforcement against speeding is limited by the resources of the police department. In Pennsylvania, legislation has allowed the use of camera enforcement against red light running. However camera enforcement against speeding has not been approved. Even radar enforcement is not available to municipal police. Continued effort is needed to get legislation approved make these tools available for speeding enforcement.

**Truck Movement** | Truck traffic on Germantown Avenue has been cited as a problem by some stakeholders. During this study, all through traffic on Germantown Avenue was detoured due to road construction so data could not be collected. However, based on traffic counts on proximate roadways, trucks likely comprise less than 2% of all traffic on this roadway.

Truck drivers seek the most direct and quickest routes to minimize travel time and cost. For longer distance trips they will use expressways such as Route 309. For local destinations, Bethlehem Pike, Germantown Avenue, and Stenton Avenue provide north-south travel. Trucks utilize Germantown Avenue because Germantown Avenue has many retail and commercial establishments that receive deliveries. And as the saying goes, ‘if you bought it, a truck brought it’.

Trucks are generally permitted on any state roadway or city street. The city has the authority under the vehicle code to regulate the use of designated streets by any class or kind of traffic; an engineering investigation and an ordinance is required. For example, trucks have been restricted from using park drives in the city. However, since truck deliveries are required to service the many businesses along this corridor, a truck restriction is not practical on Germantown Avenue.

**Intersections** | At the intersection of Bethlehem Pike and Germantown Avenue, the radius at the corner opposite the newsstand is very large. This creates long pedestrian crossings and forces crosswalks to be placed farther away from the intersection than is desirable. The radius (for northbound traffic turning right onto Bethlehem Pike) could be reduced, expanding the sidewalk on that corner, and resulting in shorter crossings closer to the intersection. Traffic congestion is also a problem. The high northbound right turn volume requires a turn lane, but the trolley rails and cobblestones make it difficult to stripe a turn lane. Even though a right turn lane sign is posted and sufficient width is available, many drivers don't perceive it. Drivers' inclination is to ride on the concrete paving but avoiding the rails, which results in a single travel lane. The solution would be to remove the cobblestones in the right turn lane area and pave the lane to create a good driving surface that can be clearly marked.

Stenton Avenue has become an alternate route for City residents travelling to the shopping areas in Plymouth Meeting and Conshohocken. The newly completed relocation of Flourtown Road at Butler Pike to remove the dogleg with Plymouth Road has increased the convenience of this route. This route also bypasses Germantown Pike, where Whitemarsh Township is aiming to calm traffic. At the intersection of Stenton Avenue and Flourtown Road, the left turn from westbound Stenton Avenue to Flourtown Road has increased and westbound backups have increased. A left turn lane should be considered in order to facilitate this traffic movement.

The intersection of Stenton Avenue, Ivy Hill Road and Cresheim Valley Drive is a choke point today. Stenton Avenue is reduced from two lanes each direction to one lane each direction east of Ivy Hill Road. In addition, Ivy Hill Road and Cresheim Valley Drive are offset from each other, separated by the abandoned rail line that passes under Stenton Avenue. The offset forces the side streets to run on separate signal phases, and so increases the time that traffic on Stenton Avenue must be stopped. Aligning the intersection would involve costly bridge structures. At a much lesser cost, some delay reduction could be achieved for Stenton Avenue eastbound traffic by modifying the approach at Cresheim Valley Drive to have two lanes go straight in addition to the separate right turn lane, the left lane leading to the left turn at Ivy Hill Road.

The Department of Streets has an improvement project programmed for 30 intersections on Stenton Avenue from Godfrey to Evergreen Avenue. Due to funding constraints however, the implementation year is uncertain. In order to improve the critical locations sooner, consideration should be given to pulling them out into a smaller 'early action' project.



The turning radius at the intersection of Bethlehem Pike and Germantown Avenue is quite large.



The intersection of Stenton Avenue, Ivy Hill Road and Cresheim Valley Drive.



The approach to Paper Mill Road from Stenton Avenue.



The SEPTA-owned parking lot at the R8, Chestnut Hill West station has an abundance of empty spaces each day.

Paper Mill Road is generally one lane in each direction, with a center left turn lane. The center lane is striped as an exclusive left turn lane at certain intersections. Between Stenton Avenue and Montgomery Avenue, Paper Mill Road is striped with two southbound lanes (uphill, approaching Stenton Avenue) and one northbound lane (downhill, approaching Montgomery Avenue). A northbound vehicle turning left into Montgomery Avenue can cause long backups in peak hours because opposing traffic is heavy and there is no shoulder area for northbound through traffic to bypass a stopped vehicle. On Paper Mill Road southbound approaching Montgomery Avenue, the center lane becomes a second southbound lane which can turn left or proceed straight. There is a southbound left turn signal, with left turns also permitted on the green ball. Southbound through traffic in the left lane must wait behind left turning vehicles (or change lanes) except during the left turn signal arrow phase. The intersection can be striped with an exclusive left turn lane in each direction to improve northbound traffic flow.

### Parking

In the early 1950s when suburban shopping malls were first emerging in the Philadelphia metro area, the forward thinking merchants of Chestnut Hill pooled their resources and formed the Chestnut Hill Parking Foundation. The Foundation pieced together various real estate parcels owned by individual merchants to pave, maintain and operate surface parking lots for the customers of “The Hill”. The lots have been operating as staffed/attendant lots ever since.

Chestnut Hill Parking Foundation operates nine parking lots from the Top of the Hill to Southampton Avenue that offer about 500 spaces. The nine lots are:

- Lot #2 on East Evergreen Avenue (behind Bank of America)
- Lot #3 on East Evergreen Avenue (behind Wachovia)
- Lot #4 on East Highland Avenue
- Lot #5 at 8300 Germantown Avenue
- Lot #6 on West Highland Avenue
- Lot #7 on 8400 Germantown Avenue at rear
- Lot #9 on 8600 Germantown Avenue - entrance on Hilltop Road via Rex Avenue
- Lot #10 on Bethlehem Pike
- Lot #12 on West Evergreen Avenue (at R8 - Chestnut Hill West Station)

Merchants purchase stickers from the Foundation and provide stickers to paying customers to put on their parking ticket, allowing them to park free. Without the stickers, the first hour costs \$3.00, with each subsequent hour \$1.00. Monthly parking is also available at \$90.

Many studies have been done and they all conclude that parking is available, but people's perception of parking is an issue. Observations on a spring Saturday afternoon showed that spaces were indeed available in most of the lots. On the other hand, the metered spaces on Germantown Avenue and on side streets nearest Germantown Avenue were very full. One of the major goals of the Business Association, the Business Improvement District and the Parking Foundation is to raise public awareness that there is plenty of parking in Chestnut Hill.

While there are some green and white directional 'P' signs to parking, the system is not comprehensive, and signs are not always placed in the best location for visibility. Some are placed on the left side of the street out of the driver's field of vision; some are obscured by trees. The lots themselves are not highly visible and it is possible to drive past the entrance without seeing it. The Business Association commissioned design of an attractive parking lot identification sign. The first sign has been placed at Lot 5. Lot identification signs are an essential component of wayfinding and will greatly help motorists locate the lot entrances. Providing 'P' parking directional signs will also prepare a driver for where to look for the lot and its entrance. The advance signs must be visible to be functional; existing poles should only be used for mounting these signs if the location provides good visibility. Observations on a spring Saturday afternoon showed that spaces were available in most of the Foundation's lots.

### Parking Near Transit Stations

The R8 SEPTA Chestnut Hill West station lot on Evergreen Avenue provides 173 spaces, 115 spaces for daily parking (\$1.00) and 58 permit spaces. The spaces have only been about 1/2 occupied on the weekdays and mostly empty on the weekend. Parking is free on the weekend and on weekday evenings, however this is not apparent since signs are posted with message "Vehicles without valid permit will be towed". This lot is a significant resource for weekend retail parking if it could be advertised and signed. A significant number of spaces are also unoccupied and available on weekdays at the R8 Highland and St. Martins Stations, about 40 at each station. Those spaces are not near retail, but are a resource for new rail commuters.



The new signs at the entrances to parking lots maintained by the Chestnut Hill Parking Foundation help to alert drivers to the existence of the lots and provide wayfinding information.

The large lot at Chestnut Hill West station has dimensions suitable for structured parking. Demand by people parking for transit does not currently justify structured parking. This is a resource to keep in mind however, as SEPTA works to accommodate increased ridership demand throughout the system. Parking at this location is perfectly suited to shared parking for weekday commuting and evening/ weekend shopping and entertainment.

The R7 Chestnut Hill East station lot is smaller at 130 spaces and is generally filled on weekdays, with other parking occurring on nearby streets. Parking lots at the other R7 stations is also full on weekdays.

### Philly Car Share

Philly Car Share is a nonprofit organization that provides shared use vehicles. Vehicles are parked in community-based lots and are available for use by members by reservation. Membership is free, with an hourly rate charged for use of the vehicle, plus a mileage charge. The goal is to provide mobility while reducing people's need to own cars, which in turn acts to reduce the miles driven. Philly Car Share has eleven locations in Chestnut Hill, Mt. Airy and Germantown. Most are at train stations. Philly Car Share pays SEPTA a yearly rate per space for use of their lots. Stations on the R7 and R8 that have a pod at the station or nearby are:

- Sedgwick (R7)
- Washington Lane (R7)
- Wyndmoor (R7) - at Chestnut Hill Village Apartments
- Queen Lane (R8)
- Tulpehocken (R8)
- Carpenter Lane (R8)
- Chestnut Hill West (R8)

Other pods in the study area are located at the Chestnut Hill Parking Foundation Lot #5 at Germantown and Gravers Lane, at Germantown Ave and W. Durham Street Philadelphia Parking Authority lot in Mt. Airy, at 41 Allens Lane in Mt. Airy, and at Germantown Avenue and Maplewood Avenue PPA lot in Germantown.

The car share vehicles appear to be well used. A casual observation on a Saturday afternoon showed that the three vehicles at Chestnut Hill West Station and the two vehicles at Lot #5 in Chestnut Hill were all in use.



Car share parking lots are marked by a green Philly Car Share sign.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Analysis

### Level of Service Analysis

The study area is generally well-served for pedestrians. Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy offer a pedestrian-oriented shopping experience and residential neighborhoods that are well connected to these areas. Sidewalks are present along the large majority of roadways. While Erdenheim and Flourtown Villages tend to be automobile-dominated, the potential exists in these locations for improvements to the pedestrian environment. Current planning efforts along Bethlehem Pike are directed to this end.

The greatest impediment to pedestrian travel is at the intersection of Bethlehem Pike, Paper Mill Road, and Stenton Avenue. This essentially comprises two separate intersections, which adds to the difficulty of pedestrian crossings. The study team spoke to pedestrians approaching this intersection; these pedestrians indicated discomfort with the lack of clear direction through the intersection. Sidewalks are missing along a number of approaches, and pedestrian indications are not provided at the signals. It should be noted that pedestrian volumes are lower here than many other roadways in the study area, but there is regular activity. Pedestrian volumes may increase if a more traditional commercial corridor is realized as part of the Flourtown-Erdenheim Vision Plan.

Cyclists are less well-served in the region than pedestrians, even though the neighborhoods in the study area are located a bike-friendly distance from commercial centers and transit locations. On-street parking, narrow shoulders, Belgian block in the cartway and the hilly landscape are all factors which diminish the use of bicycles in the study area. Also, a lack of bicycle parking facilities along commercial corridors and at transit stations deters cyclists from riding their bikes for transportation purposes.

### Sidewalks

Sidewalks are the basic piece of infrastructure that enable pedestrians to move freely around a neighborhood. In locations with high pedestrian volume, sidewalks should be strategically located on both sides of the street, they should be located on streets that connect important locations and they should be adequately maintained.

The study area is generally well-served by sidewalks. For example, most of Germantown Avenue has sidewalks that are fairly well-maintained on both sides of the street. Willow Grove Avenue and Mt. Airy Avenue/Wadsworth are important connecting streets that have sidewalks on both sides of the



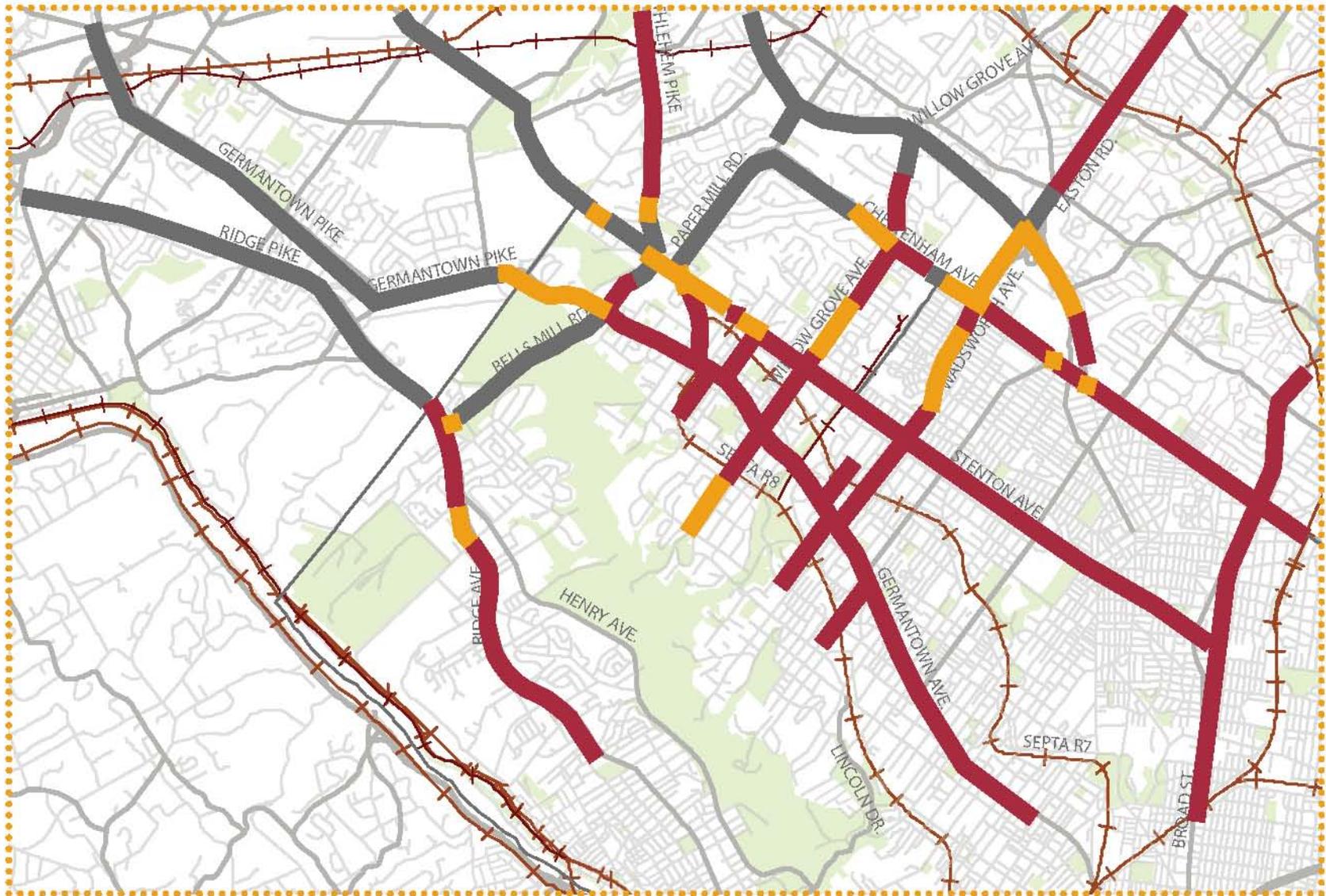
Bell's Mill Road is not a safe route for pedestrians to reach the trailhead to Forbidden Drive.



The Stenton Avenue, Paper Mill Road and Bethlehem Pike intersections can be improved through sidewalk enhancements and signalization that is geared to pedestrians.



This photo shows sidewalks that end abruptly along Bethlehem Pike.



This map reveals the existence of sidewalks on arterial and collector roads in the study area. Estimation of the existence of sidewalks was derived from aerial imagery and field observation.

- Sidewalks, both sides
- Sidewalks, one side
- No sidewalk

street for much of the length of the street between Chestnut Hill/Mt. Airy and Cheltenham Avenue. Bethlehem Pike however, is not as well-served by sidewalks and many are not well maintained. From Paper Mill Road to Gordon Road, the important gateway to Bethlehem Pike, sidewalks are missing on one side of the street. Bell's Mill Road and Paper Mill Road also lack adequate sidewalk facilities to create a safe environment for pedestrians.

### Bicycle Safety

While there are trails in the study area where cyclists like to ride, many of the roads are not geared toward bicycle safety. The landscape here is marked by steep hills, especially up to the ridge that forms Germantown Avenue. Heavy traffic and narrow shoulders characterize many of the roads. Many intersections, such as the Stenton Avenue/Bethlehem Pike/ Paper Mill Road intersection, prove very difficult for bicyclists to navigate. Also, historic materials in some roadway, such as granite block make cycling on these roads next to impossible. In an assessment of bicycle conditions throughout the greater Philadelphia region, the Central Philadelphia Transportation Management Association (CPTMA) found Germantown Avenue, Bethlehem Pike and Bell's Mill Road to be below average for bicycling. In fact, few roads throughout the study area were found to be bicycle friendly.

Residents have been split in their impressions of the need to prioritize bicycle amenities. Many people are dedicated to a vision of a bicycle-friendly community, while others have argued that pedestrian priorities should be valued over bicycle improvements. Whether or not bicycle amenities are a priority for residents at this time, improvements will continue to be advocated for in the coming years. The *Philadelphia Ped/Bike Plan* will be recommending many such improvements for areas throughout Philadelphia, including Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill. The *Mobilize to Thrive Regional Area Study* can be a first step toward directing how these communities will fit into this larger planning framework.

### Wayfinding

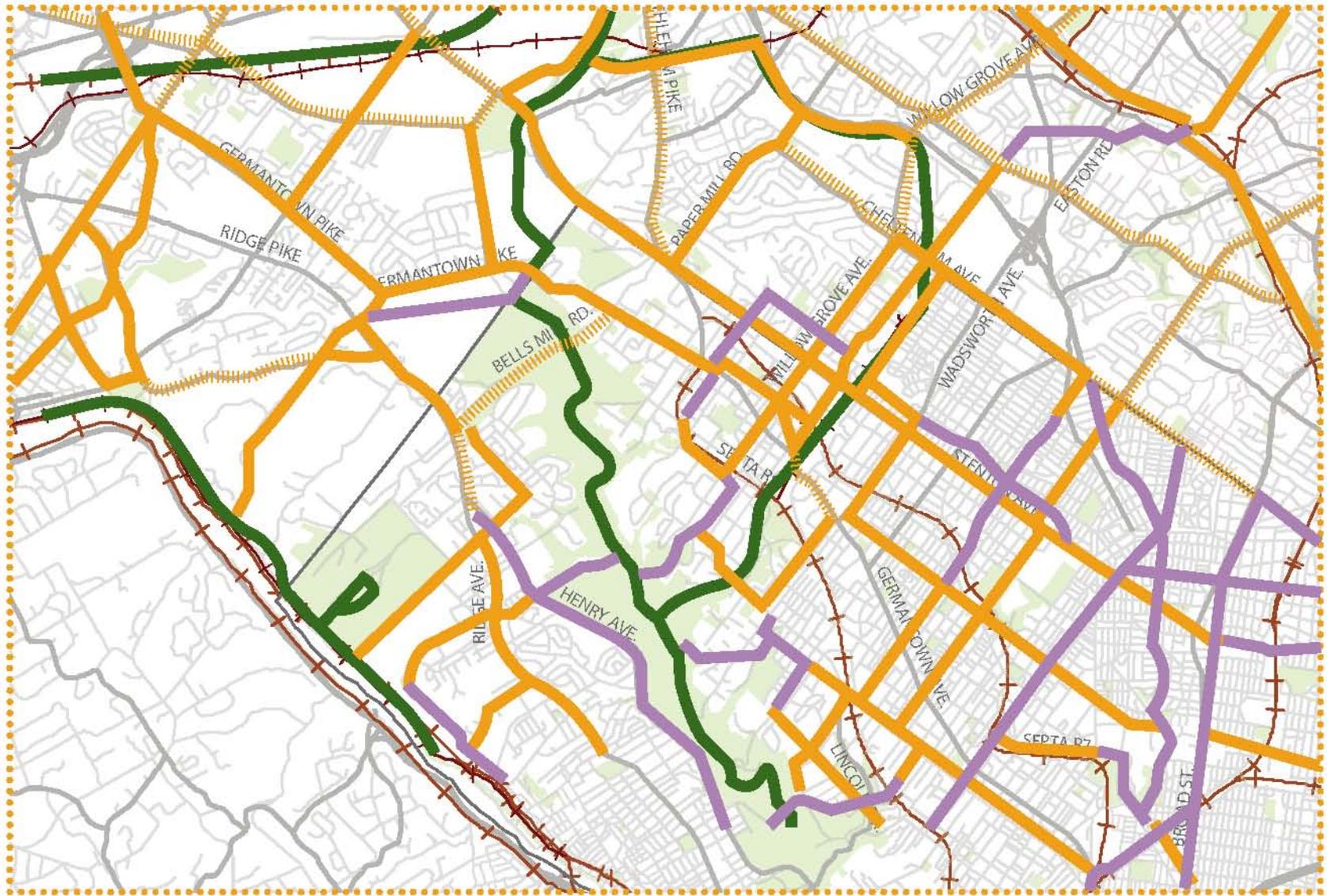
For pedestrians and cyclists to be able to move around freely through the region, they need to understand where they are going. Wayfinding signage is necessary to orient pedestrians and cyclists to transit stations and trailheads. Signs also draw attention to shopping and dining clusters and historic and cultural landmarks. In general, the study area lacks wayfinding signage. Where signs do exist, they do not connect the various centers in the region and they don't highlight the connections to transit.



The narrow travel lanes and lack of a shoulder diminishes space in the cartway for cyclists on Bethlehem Pike.



Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill has Belgian block in the parking lanes. While this material is fitting for the character of Chestnut Hill, it creates dangerous conditions for cyclists on the Avenue.



The Central Philadelphia Transportation Management Association (CPTMA) assessed the bicycle conditions on roads throughout Philadelphia in 2006. The Bicycle Friendly Routes are suitable for on-road cycling because of their wide shoulders. Routes that are deemed 'average' are moderately suitable for on-road cycling. Cyclists of lesser skill may find these routes unfavorable. Routes that are considered 'below average' are least suitable for on-road cycling.

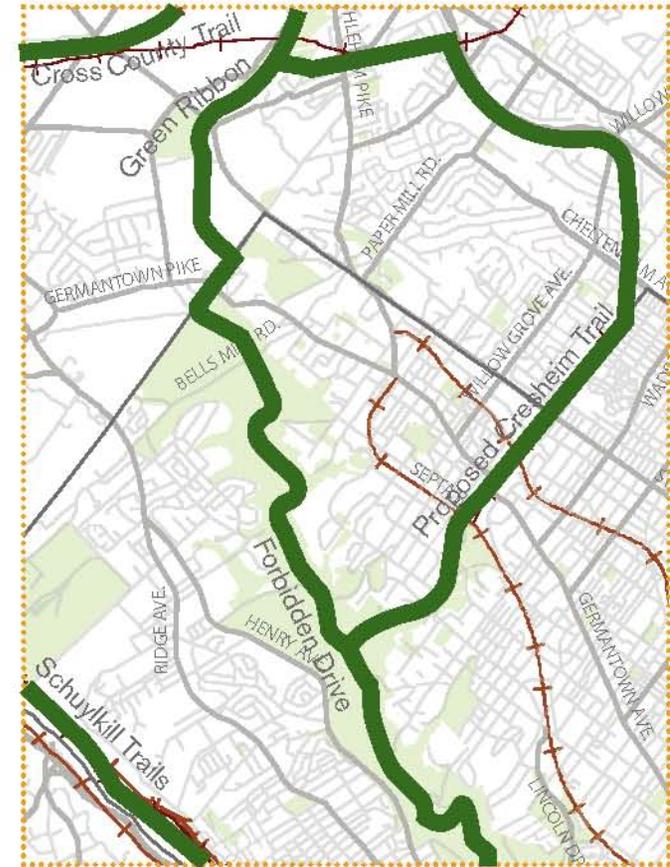
- Bicycle Friendly
- Average
- Below Average

## Trails

In addition to sidewalks, trails are an important pedestrian amenity that is part of the regional transportation system. In the study area, there is an extensive trail system and an abundance of open space resources. The Forbidden Drive trail, the backbone of the Wissahickon Valley, runs parallel to Germantown Avenue, with several connections into Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill neighborhoods. This trail offers a direct link between study area neighborhoods and Center City. Many secondary recreational trails also stem from Forbidden Drive and weave through the Wissahickon forest. The Lower Green Ribbon Trail is a multi-purpose trail that extends from Forbidden Drive to Ft. Washington in Montgomery County and then links to the Cross County Trail in Fort Washington State Park.

There are also several trail links that are in the planning stages for construction. Most notable among them is the Cresheim Trail, which will link trail fragments in Philadelphia, and Whitemarsh and Springfield Townships that are not currently connected. The Cresheim Trail, once constructed, will offer safe walking and biking routes to schools including Springfield High School, Church of the New Covenant, Houston School, Holy Cross School, Chestnut Hill Academy, Springside School, Lutheran Seminary and the Westminster Theological Seminary. In addition to schools, the proposed Cresheim Trail also provides access to many historic sites in the area, including the ruins of mills along the Wissahickon Creek, Fort Washington State Park, various historic buildings, native stone quarries and Cresheim Cottage.

The proposed Cresheim Trail will offer a model for how trails in the area can act as a regional transportation connector, linking schools, shopping areas and recreation areas. It also demonstrates how trails can be an important part of tourism infrastructure, connecting visitors to important historic sites along the way.



The proposed Cresheim Trail would connect many communities of the study area. A feasibility study for this trail was conducted by Campbell Thomas & Co in 2004.

## LAND USE, ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

### Land Use and Zoning Overview

#### Land Uses in the Study Area

Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike comprise one of the oldest commercial corridors in the region. Each of these routes served as early links between the city and farms outside of the city. The length of Germantown Avenue and the historic inns of Bethlehem Pike, were important stops on the stagecoach line. These early commercial hubs grew into the economic centers that we know today in Mt. Airy, Chestnut Hill and along Bethlehem Pike. The length of Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike comprise one of the key commercial corridors leading out of Philadelphia. (See map to the left.)

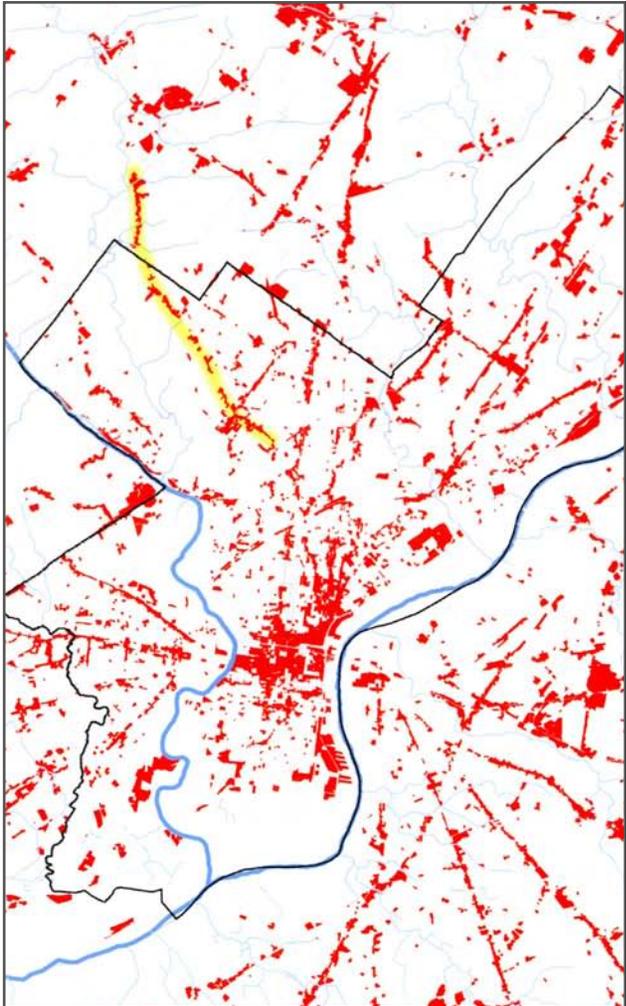
Surrounding the commercial uses of the corridor, land uses quickly dissolve into mid to low density residential land uses, with low density residential comprising the majority of the land use in the study area. This residential base represents a substantial market area to support commercial uses along the Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike corridor.

#### Zoning in Philadelphia

The zoning designations for commercial properties along the corridor have implications for how economic centers along the corridor will grow and change. There are two commercial zoning designations that predominate along Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike in Philadelphia and two key commercial zoning categories in Springfield Township.

On Germantown Avenue, C-1 and C-2 designations predominate. C-1 is mixed-use “corner store” commercial. In C-1 zoning areas, commercial activity is permitted exclusively on the first level of the building. Most retail and personal services are allowed, though restaurants, outdoor usage and large retail complexes are not permitted. First level commercial use may be converted to residential apartment living only after space can no longer be used commercially. Building height is not to exceed three stories and maximum lot occupation is regulated based on the most restrictive abutting district.

C-2 zones allow all that is permitted in C-1 zones, plus restaurants, catering, pet related uses and post offices. This zone requires less than 80% lot occupation, cannot exceed three stories, and must maintain 10% of the lot as rear yard.



This map identifies all land that is zoned for commercial uses in Philadelphia and surrounding counties. It makes visible the commercial corridors that radiate from central Philadelphia. The Germantown Avenue/Bethlehem Pike corridor is highlighted in yellow.

There are also several parcels along Germantown Avenue that are zoned for residential R-5. Uses allowed in the R-5 residential zoning category include detached, semi detached and twin dwellings. These structures may include professional offices as an accessory use, places of worship, galleries, libraries, substations in enclosed structures. Any non-specified use may be permitted if granted by the zoning board of adjustments. The minimum lot area is 2,500 square feet with 50% occupancy. It must contain eight feet of side and front yard as well as fifteen feet of rear yard.

In Chestnut Hill, land uses are also affected by The Germantown Avenue Special District Controls, 14-1613, which were adopted in the mid 1990s. The Controls include provisions for min. height (25'), max. bulk (4,000 sf net leasable), max. width (30'), setback (none allowed), and off-street parking (none in the front). These are excellent provisions for pedestrian-scaled corridors like Chestnut Hill, and they could be appropriately incorporated into updated zoning for other traditional commercial districts.

As with overlays in the City generally, 14-1613 adds a measure of inconsistency and confusion to the development process. For example, 14-1613 specifically excludes without explanation properties that are zoned C-1. Further, an overlay of this type does not ensure good design.

### Zoning in Springfield Township

B1 is the most restrictive of commercial zone in Springfield Township. These areas are restricted to small merchant use, personal office or business, minor motor vehicle parking, small restaurants, and pending exceptions for small vehicle sales and trade. No building may be erected or altered and no lot may be used for noxious purposes including chemical use, noise, odor, or smoke. Lot area is to be no less than 1,600 square feet for residential development, not to exceed 70% lot occupancy.

B2 district zones match the applied regulations of a B1 area with the exceptions of motor vehicle repair and service stations, storage, home maintenance repair services, beverage distribution, and places of amusement. Pre-existing mixed use and residential properties are non conforming. No new properties may be erected or altered and must be no less than 1,600 square with 70% or more lot occupancy.

### Zoning Reform

Philadelphia's Zoning Code is too long (600 pages) and complex (55 different zones) to effectively guide land use and design. Frustration with outmoded, unwieldy zoning regulations led to a city-wide

Purpose of the District. This special district is established in order to preserve and protect this area of the City through the enactment of the Germantown Avenue Special District Controls. It is recognized that this section of the City is unique and is a vital, mixed use district containing various residential uses and retail uses interspersed at street level and on the upper floors of buildings... Council further recognizes the need to encourage the continued vitality and historic preservation of this section of the City and therefore finds it necessary to adopt special building height, width and set-back controls to ensure the continued historic character of this area.

[From the Germantown Avenue Special District Controls]

“If businesses or homeowners seek zoning changes, variances, or nonconforming use permits, they must come before the Community Association to seek approval before the City of Philadelphia will act.” – [CHCA website]

Referendum. In the May 2007 Primary, nearly 80% of the voters approved Ballot Question Six which called for the creation of a Zoning Code Commission to reform and modernize Philadelphia’s Zoning Code. The process is expected to take about five years.

Meanwhile, it has also long been recognized that many of the provisions for the Bethlehem-Germantown corridor’s prevalent zoning districts, C-1 and C-2 in Philadelphia and B1 and B2 in Springfield are inadequate to guide design development. Additional guidance should codify how scale, detail, and placement of a limited palette of building types establish an ensemble that need not be compromised by building and site-design practices formulated for suburban roadsides. In the absence of that guidance in the code, over the years new tools and procedural work-arounds have been adopted.

By a 1995 city ordinance, the Germantown Avenue Special District Controls “overlays” commercially zoned property between Cresheim Drive and Chestnut Hill Avenue and offers a set of additional requirements related to the character of the surrounding architecture. These rules are sometimes very different than the underlying C-2 zoning. For example, buildings are to front along the sidewalk and be similar in height to surrounding buildings. However, many people, including property owners and Licenses and Inspections staffers, do not know to refer to these provisions; buried in a section of the code called “Miscellaneous”. As a result, they are sometimes not cited until late in the process, adding to confusion and the perception that the review requirements are unnecessarily complicated.

The Community Association’s Chestnut Hill Land Use Guidelines (1976, 1982) applies to all of the community, not just the Avenue. Guidance related to commercial areas focuses on architectural detail, compatible materials, landscape standards, and the social interaction to be enjoyed as a result of the proximity of homes and commerce. The document is designed to be a reference to Association members. Ultimately, most projects that involve new construction or improvements to existing structures have to be evaluated and approved by at least one, sometimes several committees of the Community Association. Since the process is time-consuming and outcomes can appear to be based on subjective opinions of a committee of laymen, proposers often conclude these reviews are unfair and obstructionist. In fact, dozens of city neighborhood associations have their own voluntary Zoning Committee that meets monthly to consider development proposals. Thought not formally empowered, developers and property owners have learned that they have real authority to slow, stop or modify development.

Springfield and Whitmarsh Township's Flourtown-Erdenheim Vision Plan (2004) lays out an ambitious program to transform Bethlehem Pike from an ordinary suburban roadway to a landscaped avenue connecting several village centers. However, the Township's B1 and B2 Business District zoning provisions establish land use and site design standards for most properties permitted to have commercial activity along Bethlehem Pike and, as the document notes, significant revisions in the zoning, subdivision, and land development ordinances are necessary to support aspirations of the plan.

## Development Opportunities Overview

### Economic Context

Germantown Avenue in the Philadelphia neighborhoods of Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill and Bethlehem Pike in the Erdenheim and Flourtown sections of Springfield and Whitmarsh Townships, Montgomery County, serve as the chief commercial spines of those communities. These two historic roads meet at the "Top of the Hill" in Chestnut Hill adjacent to the Chestnut Hill West train station and commuter rail line terminus.

This approximately 5.5 mile stretch of historic roadways includes a series of retail districts and nodes serving a nearly 80,000 person population base. Many of these commercial areas display unique architectural features, providing a character that contrasts with the routine commercial environments of the major retail centers located three to eight miles away where area residents find most of their retail shopping opportunities.

These neighborhoods also include a great variety of other economic activity, much of it along or near these commercial spines. Chestnut Hill, in particular, has a diverse employment base with Chestnut Hill College, the Chestnut Hill Hospital, and several private schools- Chestnut Hill Academy, Springside, Norwood, and Crefeld School. However, adjacent communities also include significant non-retail employers such as the Lutheran Seminary in Mt. Airy and Mount St. Joseph's and Carson Valley schools in Erdenheim/Flourtown. An on-street intercept survey conducted in 2004/5 found that 12% of persons walking along Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill had come to the area because it was their place of employment.

Much of the commercial real estate along Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike is occupied by professional and business services offices and by a wide range of banks and other financial institutions.



The Genuardi's shopping center in Flourtown.



Commercial land uses in Erdenheim.



The Acme grocery store in Mt. Airy.



The "Top of the Hill" in Chestnut Hill.

These businesses tend to be more concentrated along Bethlehem Pike in Erdenheim and Flourtown because of an attractive suburban business and employment tax structure, but substantial numbers of non-retail businesses are also located in Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy. A 2004 survey of businesses along Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, for instance, found 98 commercial (non-retail) businesses.

### Retail Market

The 80,000 person population base surrounding these commercial spines is affluent and generates a very substantial level of retail demand. As shown on Table 1, this population base is estimated to have a 2008 total income of \$3.46 billion and to generate more than \$1.5 billion in retail purchases annually. Much of this retail purchasing power migrates outside these neighborhoods to major retail concentrations in Cheltenham, Plymouth Meeting, Willow Grove and beyond.

Within these study communities, current retail activity is concentrated largely in supermarket-anchored community shopping centers and along the Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike commercial corridors. Much of this activity centers around food store purchases- the reconstructed Super Fresh in Market Square in Chestnut Hill and Acme on Germantown Avenue in Mt. Airy provide modern shopping for the City neighborhoods and the older, but still modern, Genuardi's and Acme in Flourtown provide similar anchors along Bethlehem Pike. Other important specialty food stores include Weaver's Way Coop in Mt. Airy and the farmers' markets in Chestnut Hill and Erdenheim.

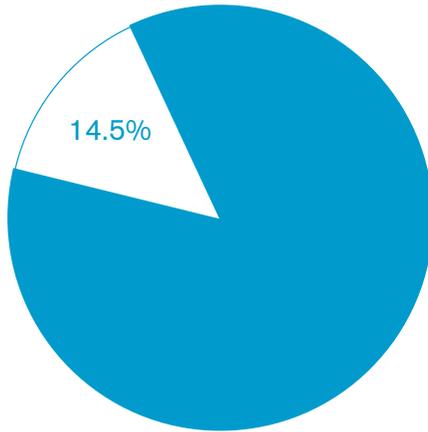
Much of the remaining retailing is community-serving goods and services, such as drug stores, convenience stores, dry cleaners and hair salons. There are several key exceptions to this pattern. The most important is the variety of full-service restaurants found throughout this area, both in concentrations such as certain blocks of Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy village and scattered at freestanding traditional locations. Other important exceptions include apparel and home furnishings concentrations in Chestnut Hill and the former K-Mart store in Flourtown.

A full assessment of retail potential is beyond the scope of this review; however, we can consider the applicability of some findings from previous market analyses in portions of this study area.

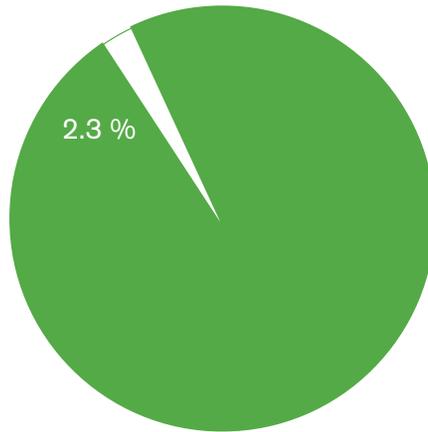
A 2002 retail market analysis of Erdenheim/Flourtown found that as of May 2002, the corridor had 74 retail businesses occupying 387,000 square feet of store space and generating an estimated \$115.8 million in annual sales. The corridor provided a broad, but incomplete, array of retail goods and services. Forty-one stores provided convenience goods and services including two supermarkets (Acme

Table 1: Community Demographics and Retail Purchases,  
Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike Corridors

	Total	Mt. Airy	Chestnut Hill	Springfield Township	Whitemarsh Township
<b>Population</b>	79,475	33,758	9,482	19,533	16,702
<b>2008 Per Capita Income</b>	\$43,524	\$35,717	\$57,323	\$42,854	\$52,254
<b>2008 Total Income (in millions)</b>	\$3,459.1	\$1,205.7	\$543.5	\$837.1	\$872.8
<b>2008 Est. Retail Purchases (in millions)</b>	\$1,506.8	\$525.2	\$236.8	\$364.6	\$380.2
Community Serving Goods & Services	\$556.5	\$202.9	\$83.0	\$135.1	\$135.5
Full Service Restaurants	\$91.5	\$31.0	\$14.8	\$22.1	\$23.6
Department Stores	\$162.3	\$55.1	\$26.3	\$39.2	\$41.8
Apparel	\$193.7	\$65.7	\$31.3	\$46.8	\$49.9
Home Furnishings & Improvement	\$258.2	\$87.6	\$41.8	\$62.4	\$66.5
Other Specialty Goods	\$156.3	\$53.0	\$25.3	\$37.7	\$40.2
Other Retailing	\$88.3	\$29.9	\$14.3	\$21.3	\$22.7



Percentage of all retail purchases by Chestnut Hill residents that is captured by Chestnut Hill businesses.



Percentage of all retail purchases by Mt. Airy, Springfield and Whitemarsh residents that is captured by Chestnut Hill businesses.

and Genuardi's), a convenience store, a fish market, a specialty food store (farmer's market), one wine and spirits store, one beer distributor a pharmacy, a personal care store, 16 restaurants and bars, nine hair salons, and six laundries. In total 26 businesses sold convenience goods while an additional 15 provided personal services. The corridor also provided a reasonably diverse array of 21 retail shopping goods stores in 17 different categories including a discount department store (K-Mart), a general merchandise store, two clothing shops, a shoe store, two jewelry stores, three home furnishings and a floor covering shop, an electronics store, a computer store, two camera shops, an optical store, two sporting goods shops, a toy/hobby store, a gift/novelty store, and a video store. Since 2002, the K-Mart has closed, along with the jewelry store, camera shop, optical store, sporting goods store and video store. These retail closures have changed the convenience availability of the adjacent neighborhoods and contributed to a "blighted appearance" in the shopping centers.

The retail offerings in the corridor were completed by 12 other retail stores, providing products in seven categories including three antique stores, two picture framers, two paint/wallpaper stores, a retail lumber yard, an auto parts store, and a pet supply store. Looking across all categories, the overall mix of stores was weighted towards convenience goods and personal services with 41 of the 74 stores in these categories. These stores catered primarily to the convenience shopping needs of the surrounding area residents in addition to the lunch-time commercial office employee market.

Similarly, a 2004/2005 market analysis for Chestnut Hill found that as of December 2004, the Chestnut Hill Germantown Avenue Retail District included 168 retail businesses occupying 387,800 square feet of store space and generating \$108.3 million in sales. The district provided a full array of community-serving goods and services to residents of the surrounding neighborhoods with 65 convenience-type stores—groceries, bakeries, specialty foods, pharmacies, optical, newsstands, video, hardware, florists, limited-service restaurants and bars, etc. Additionally, the district included 13 full-service restaurants and 23 apparel stores. Thirty seven other specialty stores provided electronics, camera and photo supplies, sewing and needlework, CD and tapes, and gift, novelty, and souvenirs. Retail offerings in the district were completed by 30 home furnishing stores.

That market analysis found that Chestnut Hill Business District merchants were capturing approximately 14.5% of all retail purchases by Chestnut Hill residents and 2.3% of purchases by Mt. Airy/Springfield/Whitemarsh residents. For store categories in which the business district competed, the capture of Chestnut Hill resident purchases was fairly uniform, ranging up to 25% of community-

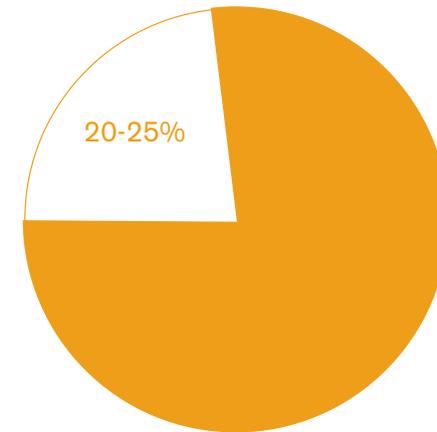
serving goods and services and 23% in home furnishings. Capture of sales from the adjacent areas was modest peaking at 4.3% in specialty goods.

Chestnut Hill retailers were also attracting 30% to 60% of their sales from more distant areas. The limitations to retail expansion in Chestnut Hill were found to involve restrictions on fitting appropriate stores into the physical constraints of the district and identifying retailers—both chain and especially independent—that can merchandise successfully in a traditional shopping district.

Finally, 2002/2003 studies of the Mt. Airy community found that only a small fraction of retail sales were being captured by businesses located within the area. Numerous opportunities were found to expand the level of retailing along Germantown Avenue to provide a more comprehensive array of goods and services to residents of Mt. Airy and nearby neighborhoods. Key identified opportunities included convenience retailing (small grocery stores, bakeries, specialty food stores, restaurants, taverns, drug stores, etc.), as complements to the recently rebuilt Acme at Sedgwick St.; shopping goods retailing (men's and children's clothing, shoe stores, jewelry stores, furniture and other home furnishing stores, appliance stores, electronics, computer and camera shops, optical stores, sporting goods stores, toy stores, hobby shops and sewing stores, music stores, book stores, gift shops, etc.); and other retail stores and personal services (hardware stores, florists and nurseries, antique stores, art dealers, hair salons, spas, barber shops, dry cleaners, laundromats, etc.).

Collecting all this information together and roughly approximating the impact of inflation during the past several years, we estimate that all the retail businesses together through this 5.5-mile Germantown Avenue/Bethlehem Pike corridor are capturing about 20% to 25% of the total of \$1.5 billion in retail purchases being made by the 80,000 area residents. This leaves a significant range of market opportunities that could be met within the corridor by stores catering to the nearby 80,000 person resident market.

Commercial district enhancement throughout the Germantown Avenue/Bethlehem Pike corridor needs to be based on an approach to development that recognizes the significant market opportunities available while respecting the physical constraints along the corridor. Land assembly for larger modern stores and parking areas may not be possible without great disruption to existing land uses. Customer parking is a significant issue for stores and other businesses that front the Avenue and the Pike and off-street parking solutions are a key element of any development strategy.



Percentage of the total of \$1.5 billion of retail purchases made by study area residents that is captured by study area businesses.



Retail stores must be fit into the existing infrastructure of the region.

Several factors shape an approach to retail and commercial development:

- First, the very substantial available market demand suggests that the right competitive retailer can be successful in a variety of categories.
- The history of many chain stores, particularly outside of the few larger shopping centers, is that overall performance does not match “mall-like” corporate expectations largely due to shorter hours and the lack of volume generated by major anchors.
- The physical constraints and character of the area require special effort in fitting specific store types to the existing and highly valued environment of the area.
- Parking must always be creatively identified and fit to individual store needs, but balanced in subdistricts and nodes to be effective (and not excessive) on specific blocks and subareas.
- Professional, financial, and business services firms are and will continue to be an important business component, but their locations must support and not compete with effective retail environments.



# IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Implementation Priorities

Actions Steps

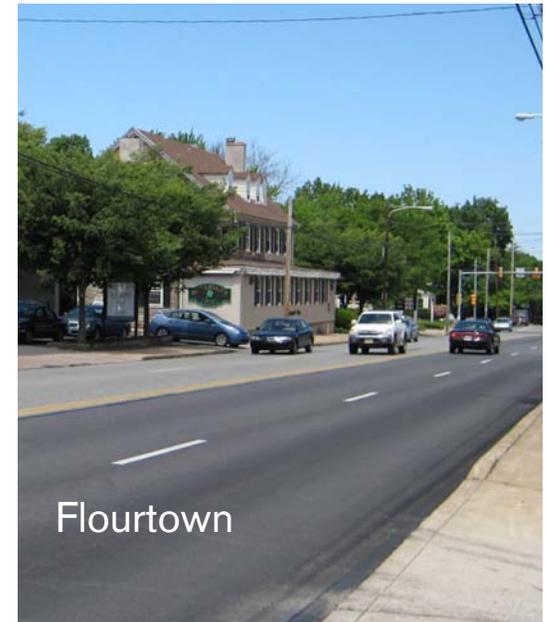
Priority Improvement Projects



Chestnut Hill



Mt. Airy



Flouertown

This study identifies opportunities for regional investment based on an analysis of the regional transportation system, land use change and economic development priorities. This chapter highlights the priority recommendations that have stemmed from these analyses. The process of implementing these recommendations will involve multiple phases over the next several years. And to realize these aspirations, participation by numerous organizational partners will be required.

On the following pages, three key *Implementation Priorities* are identified, along with eight associated *Objectives*. For each *Objective*, a series of *Action Steps* provide a pathway for how these *Objectives* can be realized. From this list of action steps, four projects have been identified as *Priority Projects* because of their relative ease of implementation, buy-in from the local community and regional significance.

### Priority Projects

- 1) Regional coordination of signage systems
- 2) Compatibility between bus and train schedules
- 3) Chestnut Hill development sites
- 4) Bethlehem Pike gateway
- 5) Flourtown Village development

The opposite page provides an overview of the hierarchy of *Implementation Priorities*, *Objectives* and *Action Steps*.



The priority projects have been chosen for their regional significance.

PRIORITY PROJECT:  
DEVELOPMENT SITES IN CHESTNUT HILL/  
ZONING AND "GREEN BOOK" UPDATES

Implementation Priority **Ensure that commercial and institutional investment in Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy is consistent with community aspirations.**

Objective 1: Promote commercial development in Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy that is responsive to market challenges and opportunities.

Objective 2: Update guidelines for commercial corridor development in Chestnut Hill.

Objective 3: Continue phased streetscape improvement and reconstruction on Germantown Avenue to reinforce designated commercial centers and blocks, enhance vehicular convenience and pedestrian safety, and increase use of transit.

PRIORITY PROJECT:  
GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS INTO  
SPRINGFIELD ON BETHLEHEM PIKE

Implementation Priority **Position Springfield Township for commercial corridor revitalization**

Objective 4: Promote commercial development that solidifies Springfield's market niche and reflects community character.

Objective 5: Adopt clear policy and expand institutional capacity to guide development approvals and the retail recruitment process.

PRIORITY PROJECT:  
FLOURTOWN VILLAGE VISIONING

Objective 6: Continue phased streetscape improvements and reconstruction on Bethlehem Pike to encourage walking between retail destinations.

PRIORITY PROJECT:  
REGIONALLY COORDINATE THE SIGNAGE  
GRAPHICS OF EACH PLACE

Implementation Priority **"Bridge the distance" between Philadelphia and Montgomery County**

Objective 7: Enhance pedestrian, bicycle and transit mobility between Philadelphia, Springfield and Whitmarsh Townships.

PRIORITY PROJECT:  
ACHIEVE COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN BUS  
AND RAIL SCHEDULES

Objective 8: Create a new coalition of public officials, private businesses and community members to encourage dialogue and action across municipal boundaries.

## Objective 1: Promote commercial development in Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy that responds to market opportunities.

Commercial district enhancement along Germantown Avenue needs to be based on an approach to development that recognizes the significant market opportunities available while respecting the physical constraints along the corridor. Land assembly for larger modern stores and parking areas may not be possible without great disruption to existing land uses. Customer parking is a significant issue for stores and other businesses that front the Avenue and the Pike and off-street parking solutions are a key element of any development strategy.

The long-term strengths of individual businesses and concentrations of businesses along Germantown Avenue suggest that the corridor can be effective in attracting a large share of this 80,000 person nearby market to make purchases. A key opportunity—in fact, the key opportunity for this corridor—is to encourage these customers, who are already visiting the Corridor, to make additional purchases. This approach is likely to be most successful in capturing the market while respecting the physical constraints and character of the Avenue, if it focuses on five key opportunities:

### Enhance the Avenue as an evening and weekend restaurant and café destination

Further evolve the restaurant concentration in Chestnut Hill and continue the growth of restaurants at certain nodes of Mt. Airy. The full-service restaurant market in these and nearby communities exceeds \$90 million in annual sales. Target some new restaurant growth to blocks where these later-evening traffic generators can be complemented by the extended evening hours-of-operation of other businesses to create an after-work and evening destination for trade-area residents.

**Implementing Partners:** Chestnut Hill Business Association, Mt. Airy USA

### Expand small-scale apparel retailing in existing small village store space

Specialty apparel, shoe stores, and jewelers have created a modest niche in Chestnut Hill (23 were identified in 2005), but the nearly \$200 million market presented by the 80,000 nearby residents offers significantly more opportunity. Most of these sales are still likely to be captured by more distant and diverse apparel store concentrations (malls, outlet centers), but there are niche markets seeking the convenience and comfort of nearby village-scale retailing (older apparel shoppers, men, families with



Chestnut Hill could support more restaurants and cafes staying open later in the evening. This picture shows a street cafe in Burlington, VT.



A community-serving grocery could appropriately serve as a new anchor store in Chestnut Hill if it was integrated into the existing character of the streetscape.

small children). In addition, larger apparel store concentrations tend to favor chains rather than independents, so the opportunity to capture apparel store entrepreneurship is also available to the Corridor. Apparel is likely to be more successful in the concentrated setting of Chestnut Hill.

### Fill voids in community-serving retailing

More than 40% of the nearby \$1.5 billion in retail purchases are for every day community-serving goods and freestanding retail needs. Food stores, pharmacies, dry cleaners, hair salons, hardware stores, florists, auto and pet supply stores, gift shops and convenience stores provide much of the retail mix in each community. However, there are specific gaps in available goods and services in each community (and for more frequently purchased items, in sub-communities) that can and should be met through additional businesses targeted to those micro-markets. Community food stores are especially important in Chestnut Hill since the Wawa and Caruso's in Chestnut Hill have recently closed.

### Diversify the range of available specialty goods

More than \$150 million in purchases are made annually by area residents in specialty goods categories such as books, music, office supplies, sporting goods, sewing, and other specialty categories. Some of these categories have become dominated by very large (category-killer) store chains (Staples, Barnes & Noble, Toys 'R' Us, Dick's, Best Buy, etc.). However, these special goods categories can still be strong supports to village-scale retailing in three ways: (1) many categories are still largely small-store based (specialty sporting goods and musical instruments, for instance); (2) niche markets often exist even within categories dominated by a few very large format chains (sewing and computers, for instance); and (3) the larger stores in some categories have mini-anchor formats that can be creatively incorporated within more traditional shopping environments (the Staples and Borders in Chestnut Hill, for instance).

### Further expand specialty home furnishings business activity

Specialty home furnishings are important store types in Chestnut Hill. These businesses tend to serve a more widespread clientele and often generate little street traffic. However, they can be successful complements to other retailing and can often fit in more difficult spaces.

## Objective 2: Update guidelines for commercial corridor development in Chestnut Hill.

To facilitate and complement efforts to promote commercial corridor development on Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill, existing guidelines and zoning ordinances should be updated.

### Update the *Chestnut Hill Land Use Guidelines* and the *Germantown Avenue Special District Controls* to encourage characteristics such as density, mixed-use and shared parking

The *Chestnut Hill Land Use Guidelines*, otherwise known as the “Green Book” were developed to guide land uses changes in and around Chestnut Hill. Because these guidelines were developed in 1982 however, they have become outdated and no longer respond to the existing economic climate in Chestnut Hill. These guidelines should be revisited and revised to address the current challenges and aspirations for land use in Chestnut Hill, including density, mixed use and shared parking.

Meanwhile, the existing Germantown Avenue Special District Controls (14-1613) should be updated to address the recent concerns related to land use change and development in the neighborhood. In particular, certain land uses could be controlled. Through the overlay, for example, a solution to the overabundance of banks in Chestnut Hill may be addressed.

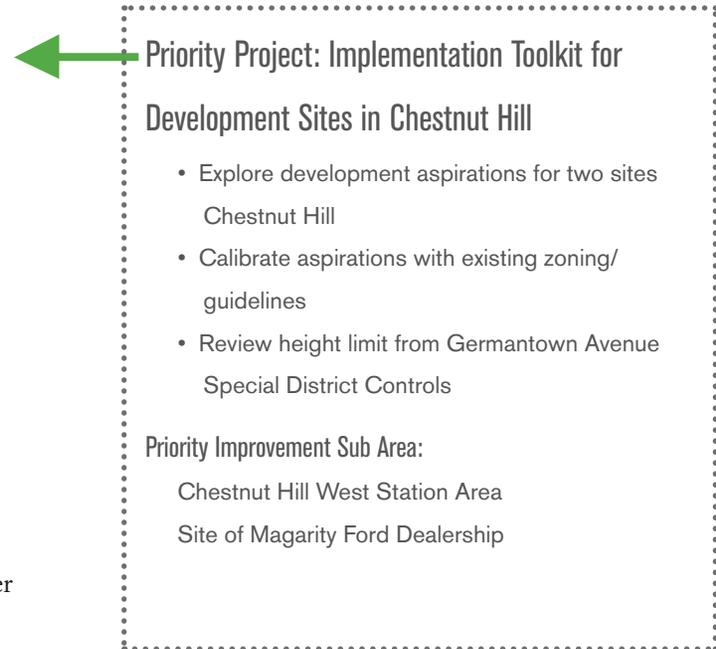
As part of the effort to update land use guidelines and special district controls, the height limit restrictions in Chestnut Hill should be tested for economic viability. This study would examine whether the existing height limit is compatible with the financial feasibility of commercial development aspired to in Chestnut Hill.

**Implementing Partners:** Land Use Planning and Zoning Committee- Chestnut Hill Community Assn.

### Evaluate existing zoning categories for their ability to direct growth in particular locations

The existing zoning categories are not always adequate for reinforcing the character of the village centers in the study area. Certain zoning categories may be too restrictive to allow growth that would support a network of thriving local centers. Zoning categories for particular parcels should be evaluated based on proposed development, community aspirations and the larger goals of this study.

**Implementing Partners:** Land Use Planning and Zoning Committee- Chestnut Hill Community Assn.



**Priority Project: Implementation Toolkit for Development Sites in Chestnut Hill**

- Explore development aspirations for two sites Chestnut Hill
- Calibrate aspirations with existing zoning/ guidelines
- Review height limit from Germantown Avenue Special District Controls

**Priority Improvement Sub Area:**

- Chestnut Hill West Station Area
- Site of Magarity Ford Dealership

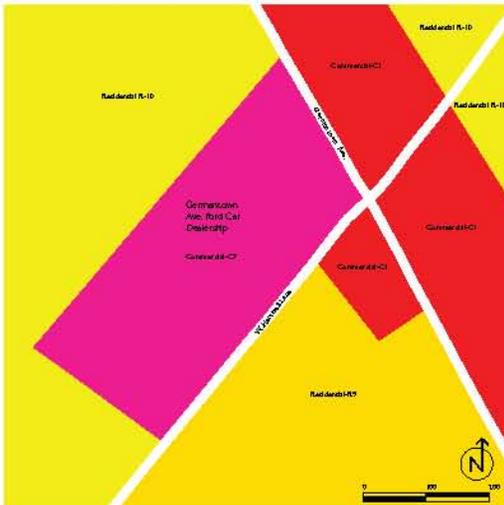
“People say that they do not want to live near where they work; but that they would like to work near where they live.” – Zev Cohen



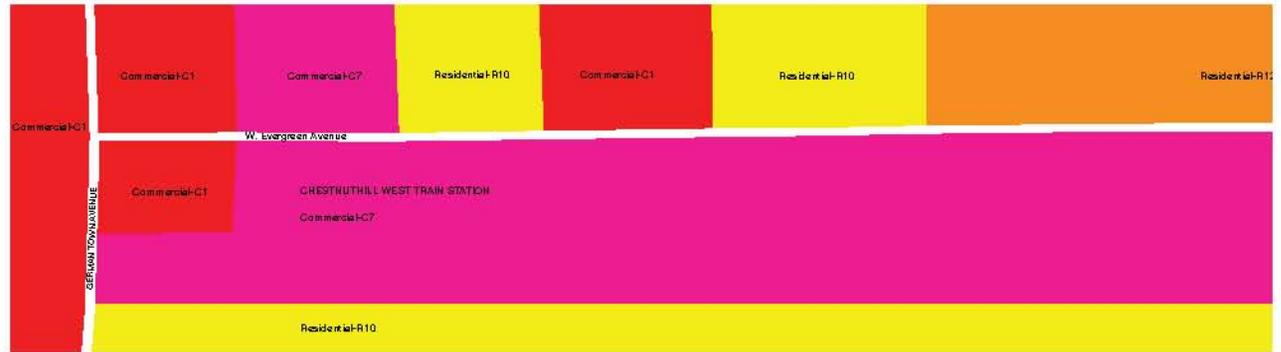
Aerial view of Lower Chestnut Hill



Aerial view of Chestnut Hill West station area



Zoning map of Lower Chestnut Hill



Zoning map of Chestnut Hill West station area

These maps of Chestnut Hill show how two sample areas along Germantown Avenue are zoned. As redevelopment opportunities in these areas are considered, it is useful to explore potential changes to the zoning code that would facilitate desired outcomes. For example, both the Chestnut Hill West parking lot and the Ford dealership are zoned Commercial C-7. According to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission document *Zoning Remapping in Philadelphia*, the C-7 district is intended to be used along arterial roads for automobile uses. A car-oriented strategy runs counter to the pedestrian-oriented uses that the community desires for redevelopment along Germantown Avenue.

## Chestnut Hill West Parking Lot

Because the existing parking lot at the Chestnut Hill West Station is vastly underused, and it sits in close proximity to the station and center of Chestnut Hill, this land represents an important opportunity to do something more spectacular with the site.

This before and after pairing shows how a new residential building could be integrated into the site while increasing walkability and reinforcing the character of the neighborhood.



before



after

## Germantown Ave. Streetscape

There are several places along the Germantown Avenue streetscape where large parcels disrupt the pedestrian-oriented nature of the Avenue. In these locations, infill developments or retrofitting should be designed as a sequence of smaller segments to mimic the narrow store frontage that is typical on the rest of the street.

One of these areas is the Magarity Ford site on the 8200 block of Germantown Avenue, which will soon close after being in business for 20 years.



before



after

### Objective 3: Continue phased streetscape improvement and reconstruction on Germantown Avenue to reinforce designated commercial centers and blocks, enhance vehicular convenience and pedestrian safety, and increase the use of transit.

A comprehensive strategy for vehicular traffic in the area calls for reducing vehicular speeds on local and minor collector roadways that are used to access regional roadways through traffic calming measures; improving traffic flow by easing “choke-points” on arterial roadways in the region, all while maintaining the existing character of Germantown Avenue.

Recommendations for improving conditions along Germantown Avenue, will involve a delicate balancing act. The goal is to evaluate opportunities for improving traffic flow along these roadways, keeping these corridors attractive as shopper destinations, while at the same time, discouraging speeding and better accommodating pedestrian and bicycle travel.

#### Revise and operationalize new streetscape guidelines for Chestnut Hill

Mt. Airy USA and Springfield Township have recently undergone focused planning processes to guide the design of the streetscape on Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike. These guidelines offer clear strategies for improving the pedestrian environment, calming traffic and spurring economic development throughout the study area. Strategies that have been recommended in these plans include improved paving and curbing, better lighting, improved crosswalks, landscape improvements and coordinated signage. Many of the recommended improvements have been funded and construction will move forward in the coming years.

Guidelines for Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill (*Chestnut Hill Streetscape Vision Study*) were completed in 2005 by Cope Linder Architects. They offer generalized design recommendations associated with paving, lighting, planting and site furniture, specific site recommendations and cost estimates for proposed improvements. Once the dust clears from the funded Mt. Airy improvements and the reconstruction of the Avenue from Allen’s Lane to Mermaid Lane, these recommendations should be applied in Chestnut Hill and coordinated with updates to *Chestnut Hill Land Use Guidelines* and *Germantown Avenue Special District Controls*.

**Implementing Partners:** Chestnut Hill Community Association, Chestnut Hill BID, Chestnut Hill Business Association



The purple crosswalks that were painted at one time in Chestnut Hill demonstrate the need for pedestrian amenities at intersections

### Develop a strategy to optimize signal coordination and safer left turns on Germantown Avenue

The timing for all signals along the Avenue should be evaluated to ensure efficient operation, at a desirable progression. It is good practice to evaluate signal timing along arterial roadways on a regular basis to ensure that the timing is set to allow progression at the appropriate speed for vehicles, and to respond to changing traffic conditions if necessary.

In addition, intersections with a high number of left turns should be identified once construction on Germantown Avenue ceases. Two approaches could be used to deal with left turns at these locations—left turn lanes can be created or on-street parking can be restricted, either for the day or during certain hours (at peak periods), so through vehicles can more easily bypass vehicles stopped to turn left.

**Implementing Partners:** Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Philadelphia Department of Streets

### Enhance pedestrian amenities at unsignalized intersections

Identify unsignalized intersections that should be modified to better accommodate pedestrian crossings. At intersections with low numbers of left turns, identify the opportunities for “bulb-outs” to better accommodate crossing pedestrians. (These reduce the ability of through motorists to maneuver around left-turning motorists, and their locations should thus be carefully selected.) These should be installed in conjunction with high visibility crosswalk markings, and signs notifying motorists to yield to pedestrians. Because the traditional Main Street appearance of Germantown Avenue has an effect on calming speeds, it will typically not be necessary to install extensive treatments to provide safe unsignalized crossings for pedestrians.

**Implementing Partners:** Philadelphia Department of Streets

### Create a truck delivery plan on Germantown Avenue

Although truck traffic cannot be restricted, one means to control truck traffic would involve creation of a truck delivery plan. The focus of this plan should be in the morning peak hour, as truck traffic diminishes in the afternoon and evening. The most desirable strategy would consist of setting aside a loading area along the roadway to get trucks out of the traffic flow. This should be reserved for trucks

only from 6 to 10 AM, and be available to parking vehicles the rest of the day. It should be noted that this plan would depend on significant coordination from area businesses and their vendors and delivery operations.

**Implementing Partners:** Chestnut Hill Business Association

### Install planned wayfinding signage along the Avenue

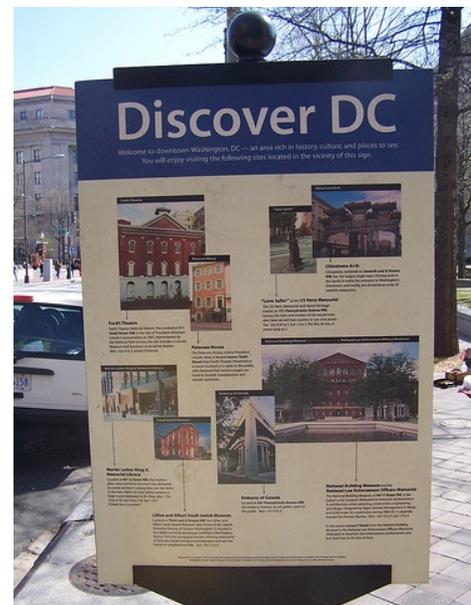
The Chestnut Hill BID, with the Chestnut Hill Parking Foundation, has developed a signage program for key locations throughout Chestnut Hill. Paid for with federal funding allocated to the Parking Foundation for implementation, signs will include wayfinding signage at key locations and three-sided information kiosks at gateways into and out of Chestnut Hill. The wayfinding signs will provide directional information at all Parking Foundation lots and along the sidewalk in front of the Jenks Elementary School. The kiosks, which will be located in front of Sovereign Bank at the top of the hill and also at the bottom of the hill, will feature information about shopping, history and cultural events. It is recommended that the wayfinding and informational signs be transit-focused signs that direct people specifically to regional rail stations. In Mt. Airy, a wayfinding signage program is also planned by Mt. Airy USA.

**Implementing Partners:** Chestnut Hill BID, Chestnut Hill Community Association, Mt. Airy USA

### Continue to explore options for the Route 23 Trolley

At this time, there is not a mandate from the Chestnut Hill or Mt. Airy communities to reinstate the Route 23 trolley along Germantown Avenue. As a streetcar, the Route 23 will make fewer stops, thus increasing the efficiency of the line. Some constituents believe that the installation of the trolley would contribute to the traffic calming agenda of residents and would increase ridership by Chestnut Hill and Mt. Airy residents on Route 23. Others are concerned that the trolley would exacerbate traffic congestion on the Avenue and would be less convenient than the existing bus.

If the trolley is reinstated, it will be the form of a modern, low boarding tram rather than the historic trolley model that was implemented on Girard Avenue a few years ago. This would allow the disabled to board much more quickly and easily, thereby complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



Wayfinding signage can help people to orient their way around the shopping district.



Any new implementation of the trolley on Route 23 would probably utilize modern light rail cars, which offer better ADA accessibility and quicker boarding.

For an exploration of the feasibility of bringing back the trolley, a citizen interest group should be convened to assess potential support from the community. This group could work with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission to develop scenarios for trolley implementation.

An alternative approach to trolley implementation would be to install a trolley for weekend or seasonal use. A program like this would be funded privately by local businesses or business associations. It would be used as a mechanism for attracting tourists or regional visitors to the Avenue for events or important shopping seasons.

**Implementing Partners:** SEPTA, Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, group of concerned citizens

## Objective 4: Promote commercial development that solidifies Springfield’s market niche and reflects community character.

Commercial district enhancement on Bethlehem Pike needs to be based on an approach to development that recognizes the significant market opportunities available while reflecting the character of the region. Customer parking is a significant issue for stores and other businesses. Because the Pike has significant amounts of parking, it should be viewed as an asset for promoting commercial development in Springfield Township and a key element of any development strategy.

### Identify preferred development strategies for particular locations on Bethlehem Pike

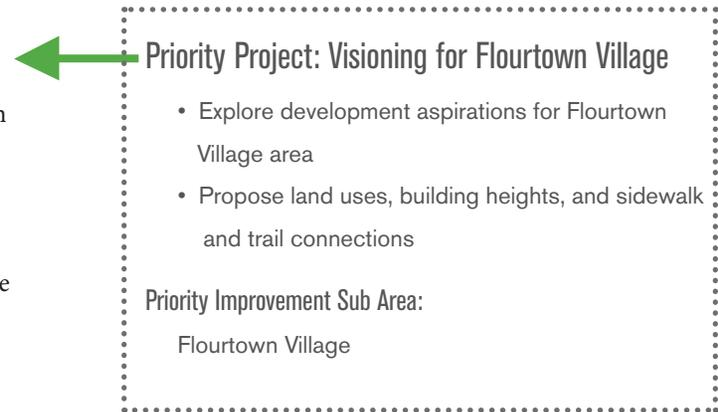
The long-term strengths of individual businesses and concentrations of businesses along the Bethlehem Pike suggest that the corridor can be effective in attracting a large share of this 80,000 person nearby market to make some purchases. A key opportunity—in fact, the key opportunity for this corridor—is to encourage these customers, who are already visiting the Corridor, to make additional purchases. We cannot and should not try to compete with the local stores that CH does so successfully, and nor can we compete with the excellent art movie house and ACT II playhouse offered by Ambler. So, apart from supermarkets, a liquor store, and a farmer’s market, the business community must figure out where to position itself.

A simple implementation study can be performed to identify those businesses that would encourage additional purchases on Bethlehem Pike. This effort can be geared to redevelopment interests for particular locations. Possible sites of interest might include the Erdenheim Village Center at the Cisco Park Gateway, the intersection of College Avenue, Bysher Avenue and Bethlehem Pike, where an intersection re-alignment has been recommended as part of the *DVRPC Traffic Taming Study* or the area around the Flourtown Shopping Center.

**Implementing Partners:** DVRPC, Springfield Township, PennDOT

### Fill voids in community-serving retailing

More than 40% of the nearby \$1.5 billion in retail purchases are for every day community-serving goods and freestanding retail needs. Food stores, pharmacies, dry cleaners, hair salons, hardware stores, florists, auto and pet supply stores, gift shops, and convenience stores provide much of the



**Priority Project: Visioning for Flourtown Village**

- Explore development aspirations for Flourtown Village area
- Propose land uses, building heights, and sidewalk and trail connections

**Priority Improvement Sub Area:**  
Flourtown Village

retail mix in each community. However, there are specific gaps in available goods and services in each community (and for more frequently purchased items, in sub-communities and nodes) that can and should be met through additional businesses targeted to those micro-markets.

**Implementing Partners:** Springfield Township, private developers, proposed Main Street manager (see below)

### Diversify the range of available specialty goods

More than \$150 million in purchases are made annually by area residents in specialty goods categories such as books, music, office supplies, sporting goods, sewing, and other specialty categories. Some of these categories have become dominated by very large (category-killer) store chains (Staples, Barnes & Noble, Toys 'R' Us, Dick's, Best Buy, etc.). However, these special goods categories can still be strong supports to village-scale retailing in three ways: (1) many categories are still largely small-store based (specialty sporting goods and musical instruments, for instance); (2) niche markets often exist even within categories dominated by a few very large format chains (sewing and computers, for instance); and (3) the larger stores in some categories have mini-anchor formats that can be creatively incorporated within more traditional shopping environments (the Staples and Borders in Chestnut Hill, for instance).

**Implementing Partners:** Springfield Township, proposed Main Street manager (see below)



New anchor stores can be scaled to fit into the context of a new village center.



Even in car-dominated street environments, shopping areas can be designed to promote walking between retail locations.

## Objective 5: Adopt clear policy and expand institutional capacity to guide development approvals and the retail recruitment process.

To facilitate and complement efforts to promote commercial development on Bethlehem Pike, existing ordinances should be updated and staff should be hired to handle the new approach to development.

### Approve the proposed Village Center Zoning District

The Village Center Zoning District is a proposed zoning district for Springfield Township that would replace the existing B-1 and B-2 zoning categories in some cases. In particular, the Village Center Zoning District would be used in the Flourtown and Erdenheim Villages described in the Flourtown-Erdenheim Village Plan. The ordinance would use a variety of design standards to promote traditional, pedestrian-oriented main street development in the village centers.

At this time, these zoning categories are being reviewed by the Planning Commission. The zoning ordinance should be approved so that village center plans can move forward in Flourtown and Erdenheim.

**Implementing Partners:** Springfield Township

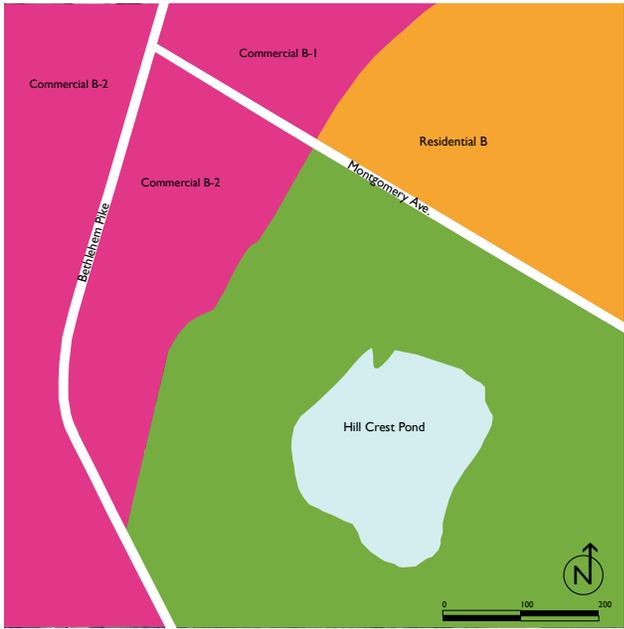
### Create a “Main Street manager” position

To attract a better blend of destinations along the Pike and manage redevelopment proposals, Springfield Township should hire Main Street manager. A Main Street manager would have several areas of focus- achieving consensus in the community to work for shared goals; designing an inviting business district; pursuing commercial development strategies that would contribute to the village center concept; and promoting Bethlehem Pike so that businesses and patrons will want to shop there.

The business community and many commissioners have been pressing for the creation of this position in recent years.

**Implementing Partners:** Springfield Township, Springfield business community

“Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is not. The question is not whether your part of the world is going to change. The question is how.” - Edward T. McMahon, author of *Green Infrastructure, Linking Landscapes and Communities*



Zoning map of Erdenheim Village



Aerial view of Erdenheim Village

These maps of Erdenheim Village and Flourtown Village show how two sample areas along Bethlehem Pike are zoned. As redevelopment opportunities in these areas are considered, it is useful to explore potential changes to the zoning code that would facilitate desired outcomes. The proposed Village Center Zoning District describes zoning changes that may be appropriate for these areas.



Zoning map of Flourtown Village



Aerial view of Flourtown Village

## Objective 6: Continue phased streetscape improvements on Bethlehem Pike to encourage walking between retail locations.

To successfully grow Flourtown and Erdenheim as village centers, the Bethlehem Pike streetscape must be improved to manage speed and volumes of traffic and to create more opportunities for walking between shops. A substantial amount of planning has been done to address these issues, including the *Flourtown-Erdenheim Vision Plan*, completed by Carter Van Dyke Associates in 2004, the *Bethlehem Pike Streetscape Master Plan*, completed by Michael Baker Engineers with Carter Van Dyke Associates in 2008, the *DVRPC Bethlehem Pike Traffic Taming Study* and the *Flourtown-Erdenheim Community Gateways* project, funded through the PennDOT Transportation Enhancements Program. These documents clearly articulate a vision for how the Pike should change in the coming years. Several of the key elements are highlighted below and should be made a priority for Springfield Township.

### Improve the gateway into Springfield Township on Bethlehem Pike

Four key elements are essential to create a strong gateway transition onto Bethlehem Pike from the south. These are 1) Improvements to the Stenton Avenue/Paper Mill intersection; 2) Traffic calming on the slope toward Erdenheim; 3) The gateway installation at Cisco Park; and 4) Commercial development at Erdenheim Village.

The transition from Philadelphia to Springfield occurs at the intersection of Bethlehem Pike, Paper Mill Road, and Stenton Avenue. While vehicular traffic flows through the intersection fairly easily, pedestrian crossing is quite difficult, if not impossible. The study team spoke to pedestrians approaching this intersection; these pedestrians indicated discomfort with the lack of clear direction through the intersection. Sidewalks are missing along a number of approaches, and pedestrian indications are not provided at the signals. It is recommended that sidewalks be installed at key approaches where missing, and at other places as feasible; that pedestrian signal indications be installed; and that all pavement markings be upgraded. The key route through this intersection would accommodate pedestrians walking on the east side of Bethlehem Pike south of Stenton Avenue; the north side of Stenton Avenue; east side of Bethlehem Pike north of Stenton Avenue.

After traffic passes from Stenton Avenue onto Bethlehem Pike, it speeds up as it moves down hill and around the corner. This condition calls for traffic calming to occur between this intersection and the proposed gateway into Erdenheim (see next paragraph) and the transition to a three lane cross section.



#### Priority Project: Gateway to Bethlehem Pike

- Pedestrian improvements to Bethlehem Pike/ Paper Mill Road/Stenton Avenue Intersection
- Traffic calming between intersection and Erdenheim Village
- Gateway installation at Cisco Park
- Commercial development strategy for Erdenheim

#### Priority Improvement Sub Area:

Bethlehem Pike, between Stenton/Paper Mill intersection and Montgomery Avenue



The Stenton Avenue, Paper Mill Road and Bethlehem Pike intersections can be improved through sidewalk enhancements and signalization that is geared to pedestrians.



The speed of traffic picks up as it rounds the corner into Erdenheim.



A new gateway installation onto Bethlehem Pike will occur in addition to potential commercial investment in Erdenheim Village.

The DVRPC Traffic Taming Study suggests potential traffic calming strategies that would be appropriate here including conversion of the existing through/right turn lane at Stenton and Paper Mill Road to a right turn only lane, installation of a curb extension and striping and the installation of banners and other placemaking elements in existing median.

As part of the Flourtown-Erdenheim Community Gateways program, two gateways are proposed to “define the business corridor and to begin the traffic calming necessary for pedestrian oriented village districts.” These installations will use street trees and new signage at Valley Green Road in the north and at Cisco Park in the south. At Cisco Park in the south, a crosswalk of imprinted asphalt will stretch across Bethlehem Pike to the entrance of the park. On either side of the street, trees, street lights, signage and an historic mile marker will be located. These treatments will signal the entrance into the village center area, slow down traffic and create a more pleasing environment for pedestrians.

In the area of this south gateway to Bethlehem Pike, a commercial development strategy for parcels in the village center of Erdenheim will complement these other efforts.

**Implementing Partners:** Springfield Township, PennDOT, DVRPC

### Manage traffic volumes on Bethlehem Pike

To keep traffic volumes on the Bethlehem Pike at a reasonable level, the proposal to reconfigure Bethlehem Pike in Springfield Township from a four-lane cross-section to a three-lane roadway (one through lane in each direction, with a center left turn lane) with parking on alternative sides of the street should be followed. This cross-section was recommended in a July 2008 report by the DVRPC and is consistent with the Flourtown-Erdenheim Vision Plan. This treatment is often referred to as a “road diet,” since it involves “slimming” a roadway. An important benefit of the road diet is its ability to reduce speeding. On a four-lane cross-section, the most aggressive motorists can easily exceed the speed limit by changing lanes and driving around more prudent motorists. On a three-lane cross-section, the prudent motorist controls ambient vehicular speeds by heading the platoon of cars. Such a treatment would greatly abet plans to create enhanced “town center” environments in Flourtown and Erdenheim.

An analysis of a three-lane cross-section by Orth-Rodgers at two key signalized intersections on

this roadway – Bethlehem Pike and East/West Mill Road, and Bethlehem Pike and Byshe Avenue – indicates that drivers would see a small increase in delays under a three-lane cross-section, but that traffic would operate at acceptable levels of service.

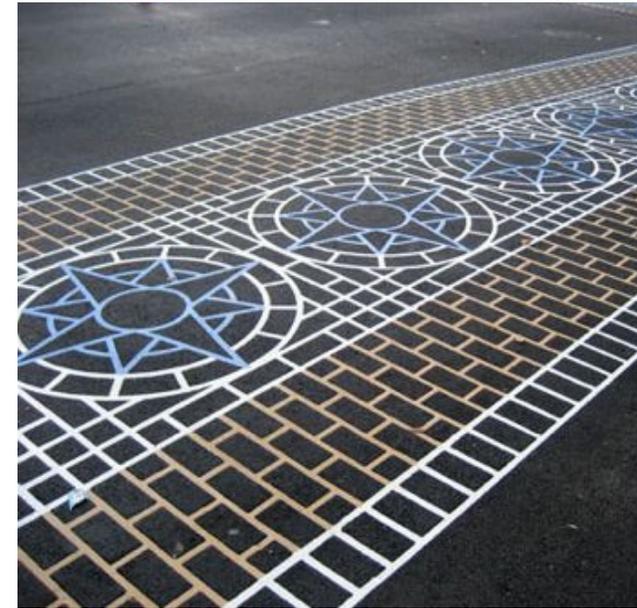
**Implementing Partners:** Springfield Township, PennDOT, DVRPC

### Reconfigure intersections to calm traffic and improve pedestrian connections

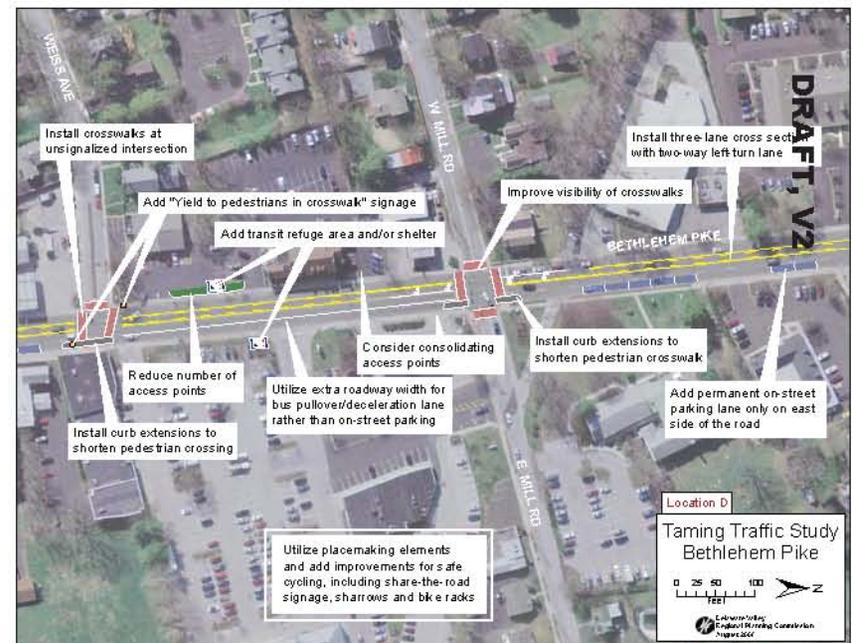
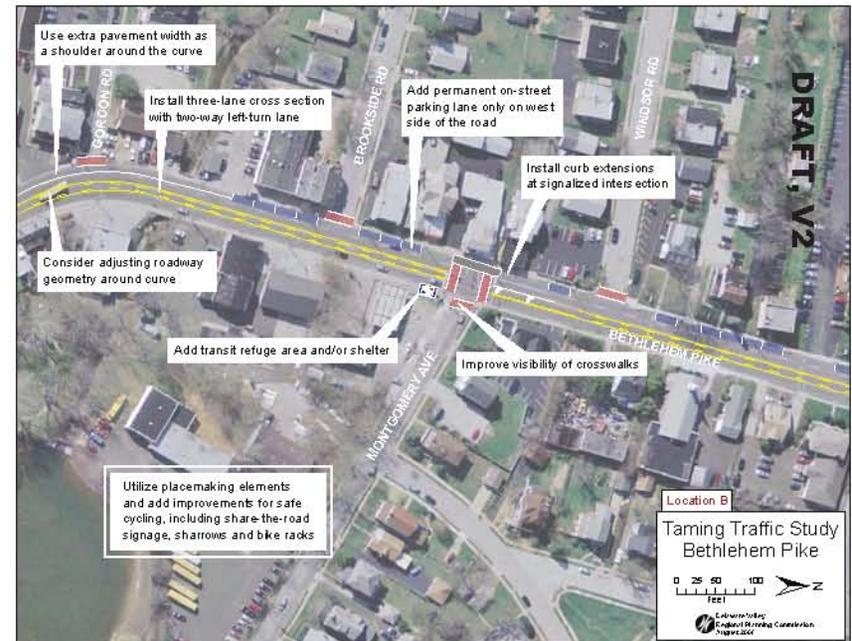
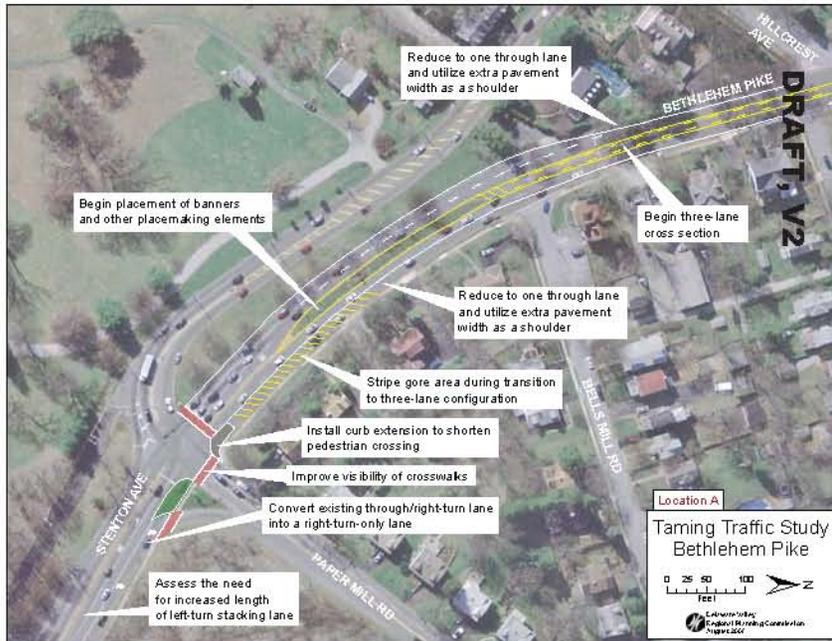
The DVRPC Traffic Taming Study points to simple changes that can be made to intersections along Bethlehem Pike to improve conditions for pedestrians. The study recommends the installation of crosswalks at unsignalized intersections such as Bethlehem Pike/Weiss Avenue and curb extensions to shorten crosswalks at existing crosswalks, including Paper Mill Road, Montgomery Avenue, Weiss Avenue and Mill Road. Such changes can do much to make walking around the area safer and more enjoyable.

Finally, an important reconfiguration to an existing intersection has been suggested as part of the DVRPC Traffic Taming Study. At this intersection, College and Byshe Avenues, which currently meet Bethlehem Pike in a dogleg configuration, would be realigned to form a four way, right-angled intersection. This realignment would open up two new development parcels across the street from the new Walgreen’s drug store and the State Liquor Store. Along with updated crosswalks and curb extensions, pedestrians could move more safely around this area.

**Implementing Partners:** Springfield Township, PennDOT, Flourtown-Erdenheim Enhancement Association, DVRPC



Crosswalks can help define unsignalized intersections.



These excerpts from the DVRPC Traffic Taming Study show locations along Bethlehem Pike where traffic volumes need to be managed.

## Objective 7: Enhance pedestrian, bicycle and transit mobility between Philadelphia, Springfield Township and Whitemarsh Township.

While there are many localized transportation improvements throughout the study area that further regional interests, these actions require regional coordination at various locations.

### Improve compatibility between bus and train schedules

Because R7 and R8 trains depart for Center City within 10 minutes of each other, more could be done to increase the practical frequency of rail service. Recognizing that changing one schedule affects the rest of the rail system schedules, it is recommended that the schedules be examined to see if there are more opportunities to stagger the departure times for R7 and R8. This would be especially important mid-day and on weekends when there is less frequent service and more leeway for rescheduling.

To more effectively link bus and train schedules, there may be an opportunity to adjust Route L and Route 94 bus schedules to better match train arrival and departure times. Also, it would benefit riders to have schedule information readily available to plan for the time of best transfer capability. While posting schedules requires a commitment to maintain and update the signs when there is a change, this would provide information to the rider to reduce uncertainty over when the next bus will arrive. Printed and on-line bus schedules also highlight those routes that easily connect with the train schedule. At R7 stations, Springfield bus route info should be posted. At R8 stations, Route 23 info should be posted.

**Implementing Partners:** SEPTA, Springfield Township, Philadelphia City Planning Commission

### Initiate a systemic traffic calming program throughout the region

To discourage inappropriate cut-through traffic on residential streets, a comprehensive traffic calming program is recommended. Speeds and traffic volumes should be monitored on those streets where residents regularly identify problems. Streets with a high degree of cut-through trips, and where 85th percentile speeds exceed the speed limit by 5 mph, should be evaluated for treatment with traffic calming measures. Traffic calming measures to be considered for Chestnut Hill would include speed humps, bump-outs, chicanes (essentially bump-outs on alternating sides of the street) and traffic circles.

**Implementing Partners:** Chestnut Hill BID, Philadelphia Streets Department



### Priority Project: Improve compatibility between bus and train schedules

- Coordinate Springfield bus schedules with train schedules
- Stagger R7 and R8 schedules, if possible
- Improve the availability of bus schedules at rail stations

#### Priority Improvement Sub Area:

Schedules associated with transit links that occur at Chestnut Hill loop, Chestnut Hill West and Chestnut Hill East

“Transit gives people the right to find jobs throughout the region.” – Henry Richmond

### Link “Main Street” sidewalks to local and regional multi-use trail facilities

The Cresheim Trail is planned to pass through neighborhood business districts at Bethlehem Pike and at Germantown Avenue. The existing Forbidden Drive Trail and planned Cresheim Trail also pass through or along the important travel corridors of Lincoln Drive, Bell’s Mill Road and Stenton Avenue. Several key elements are necessary for these trails to serve as a part of the regional transportation system. 1) There must be clear and direct sidewalk connections between trails and everyday activities like schools, shops and restaurants; 2) Trails must link directly, or through sidewalk connections, to transit stations and bus routes; 3) Sidewalks between village centers and trails must be clearly signed to indicate trail connections; 4) There must be clear links between trails and important tourist sites.

The proposed Cresheim Trail is currently planned to pass through Flourtown next to the Acme and associated shopping center. This segment will link Springfield High School and neighborhoods on both sides of Bethlehem Pike and Paper Mill Road with shopping centers in Flourtown. This trail connection will do much to support the village center concept that has been proposed for Flourtown and will support the use of trails as a viable part of the regional transportation system.

On Bell’s Mill Road, transportation improvements are planned as part of the TIP. This road restoration project includes drainage improvements, minor road widening and sidewalk improvements. Because this road leads pedestrians from neighborhoods to the trailhead to Forbidden Drive, signage and pedestrian amenities must be added to improve the effectiveness of this route to act as part of the regional trail system. Also, this route offers an attractive cut-through for commuters moving through the area, so the conflict between fast moving cars and pedestrian trail users must be addressed as a crucial aspect of TIP improvements.

On Stenton Avenue, improved signalization and crosswalks are proposed for various intersections as part of the TIP. Intersections near where the Cresheim Trail is proposed to move under Stenton Avenue should be given priority (at Cresheim Valley Road).

**Implementing Partners:** Friends of the Wissahickon, Cresheim Trail Initiative, DVRPC, Philadelphia Department of Streets, Philadelphia Planning Commission, Springfield Township

## Employ consistent visual cues and materials throughout the area

Given the multitude of architectural styles and “visual clutter” along the Germantown Avenue/Bethlehem Pike corridor, the use of consistent visual cues will add cohesiveness and promote better wayfinding. This can take the form of a consistent sign system that promotes place identity but ties the corridor together, including directional, identity, wayfinding, and interpretive signs. The use of gateway elements will also let travelers along the corridor know when they have entered the various character zones and specific town center destinations.

A logo or “blaze” to “brand” and unify the entire area should be created. This element could then be translated across multiple media. One concept that could be used for this unifying element is the mile markers that can be found along the length of the corridor that tie to the route’s historic significance.

To reduce visual clutter, the potential should be explored for new development to move overhead wires to underground utility locations to remove utility poles and lessen visual clutter.

In addition to visual cues like signage and gateway elements, the development of a specific palette of materials will ensure a coordinated look while allowing for the “self expression” of each constituent village. From color palette and paving materials to types of permitted landscaping, the formulation of design guidelines allows future development and re-development along the corridor to fit within the context of the overall main street approach. This can also be a tool to convey historic themes, by the use of certain materials as historical references. Specific architectural cues may also be developed to ensure that new and adaptive re-use of properties is consistent with overall themes.

To ensure consistency in materials use, develop a paving materials palette and implementation guidelines for sidewalks and crosswalk treatments; establish a “menu” of choices for site furnishings as to color, style and sizes; and develop a consistent landscape palette to guide such elements as street tree planting, replacements and buffering of parking lots. The use of ornamental and seasonal planting applications should also be addressed again providing a menu of choices.

**Implementing Partners:** DVRPC, Multi-Municipal Coalition, Philadelphia City Planning Commission

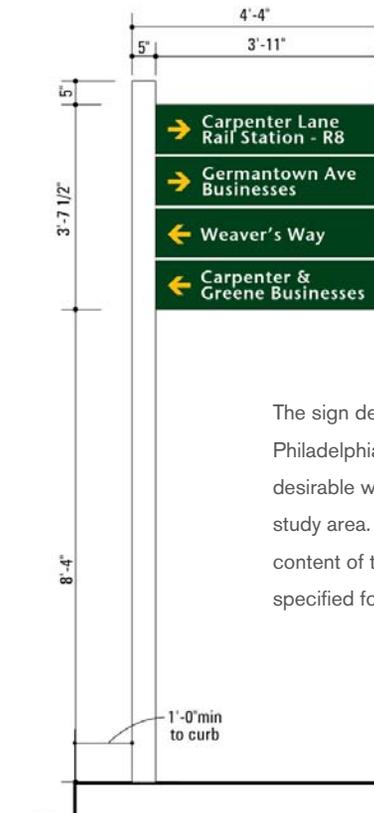


## Priority Project: Coordination of signage systems

- Reveal proposed and existing sign types
- Identify similarities and differences between signage programs
- Recommend strategies for coordination

### Priority Improvement Sub Area:

Signage systems in Mt. Airy, Chestnut Hill and Springfield Township along Bethlehem Pike

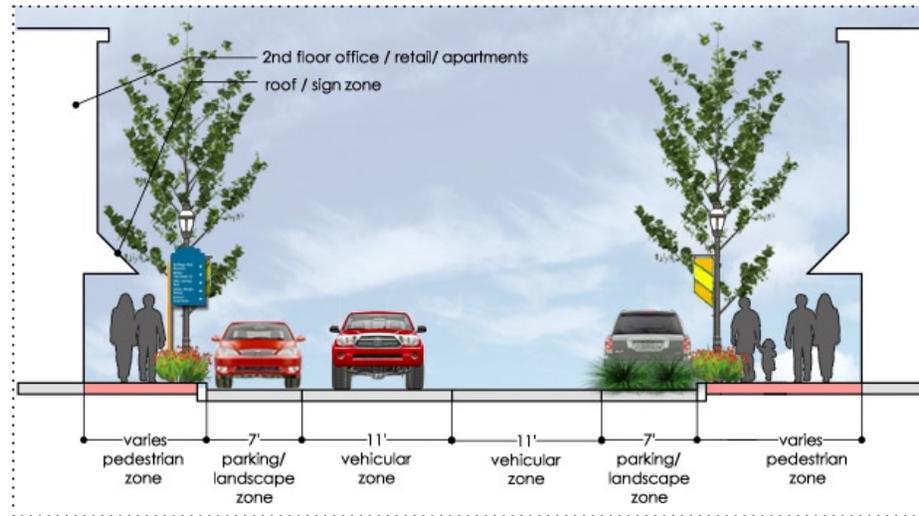


The sign design for the Direction Philadelphia program presents a desirable wayfinding template for the study area. The look, placement and content of the signs would be individually specified for each community.

## Main Street Commercial Zone

- Enhanced landscaping
- Parking behind buildings
- Public art
- Street trees
- Pedestrian scale lighting
- Short building setbacks

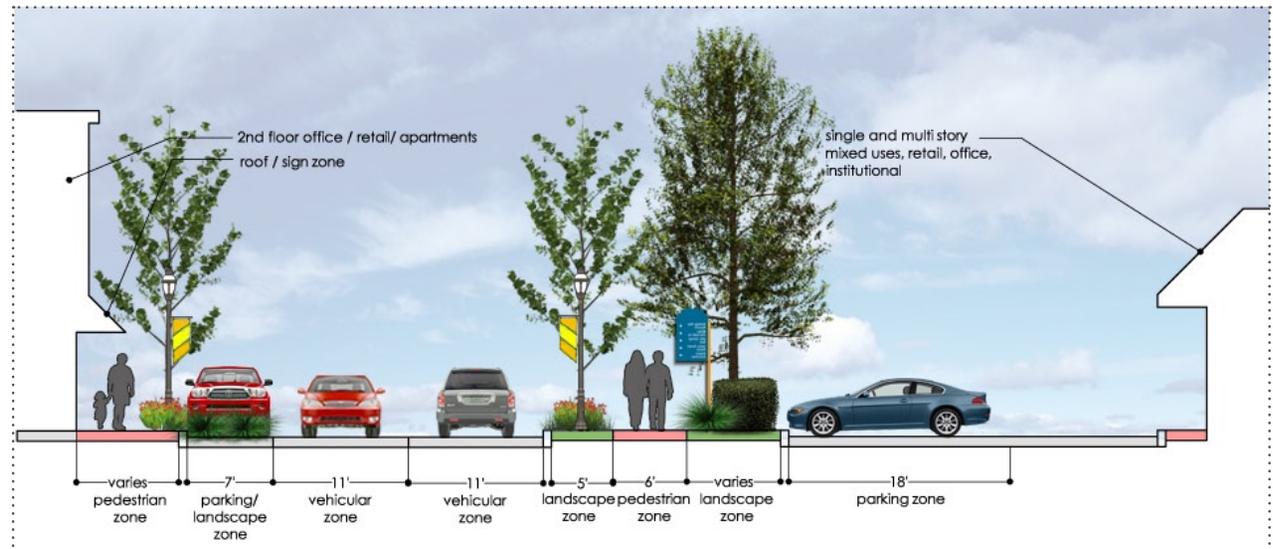
» The Main Street Commercial Zone occurs in village center areas along Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike.



## Mixed Commercial/Residential Zone

- Pavement markings at intersections
- Wayfinding signage
- Short building setbacks
- Pedestrian scale lighting

» Areas along Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike that are not within the village center areas



These example sections show how visual cues can be used consistently throughout the region.

## Improve pedestrian and bicycle linkages to rail stations

The quality and maintenance of roadway and sidewalk infrastructure that exists within 1/4 mile of a SEPTA rail station is crucial to the effective utilization of the regional rail system by residents of nearby neighborhoods and visitors to village centers.

**Implementing Partners:** SEPTA, Philadelphia Department of Streets, Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities

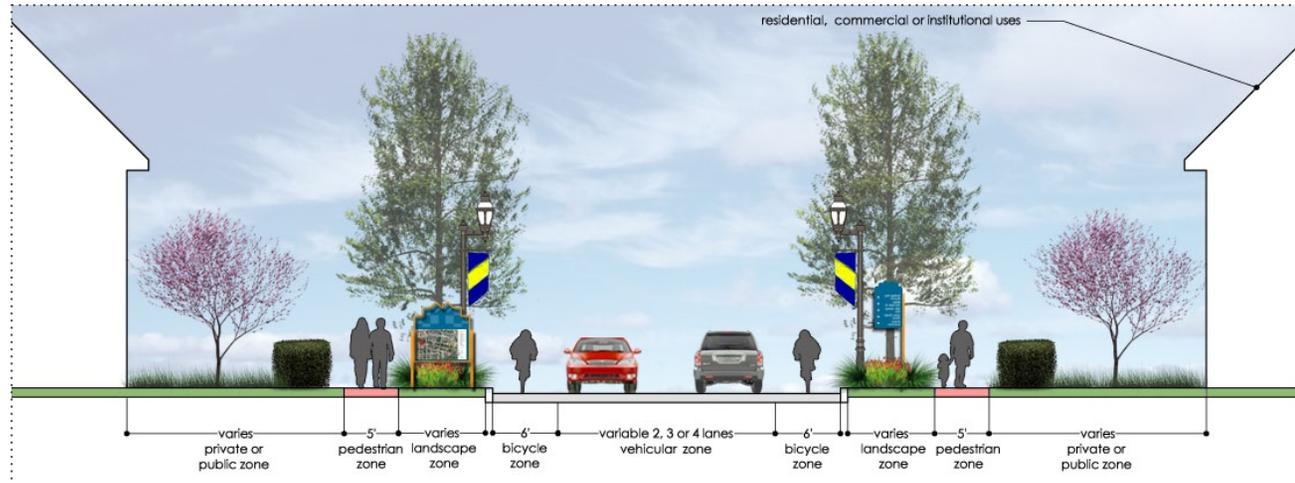
### Station Areas

- Posting of bus route information
  - Addition and maintenance of bicycle racks at stations
- » Station areas are those areas within the immediate vicinity of a SEPTA rail station.



### Station Links

- Maintenance of sidewalks
  - Wayfinding signage
  - Pedestrian scale lighting
- » Station links are roadways that connect SEPTA rail stations and main street areas.





Simple pedestrian amenities can be added to Willow Grove Avenue to create safer conditions for students walking along the street.

### Create safer pedestrian crossings on Stenton Avenue, Willow Grove Avenue and at the top of the hill

New crosswalk markings are planned by the Philadelphia Department of Streets as part of the Stenton Avenue TIP. Because these plans have not yet been implemented, the community has the opportunity to suggest what types of crosswalk improvements would be preferred by residents. For example, crosswalks should be updated on Stenton Avenue by improving pavement markings, installing pedestrian signals and adding signage that alerts drivers to the existence of pedestrians.

Another location where the crosswalks should be updated include the intersection of Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike. The Chestnut Hill Community Association, in cooperation with the Chestnut Hill BID, has received a grant from the city to add a bumpout and enhance crosswalk across Bethlehem Pike at this intersection. Plans for this crosswalk improvement project have been moving forward slowly. Meetings are planned to review working drawings and move the project forward.

Safer pedestrian crossings are also necessary on Willow Grove Avenue where Chestnut Hill Academy students cross the street to reach the sports fields.

**Implementing Partners:** Chestnut Hill BID, Chestnut Hill Community Association, Philadelphia Department of Streets



On Bethlehem Pike, a curb bumpout is planned for pedestrians walking along Germantown Avenue.

## Objective 8: Create a coalition of public officials, private businesses and community members to encourage dialogue and action across municipal boundaries.

Encouraging busy people to voluntarily work together for a mission that is broad in its focus and far-reaching geographically is not an easy task. To make this coalition a reality, membership should be drawn from existing institutional structures and reasonable expectations must be set about desired outcomes. Ideally, the coalition would find one champion in each of the following organizations- Springfield Township Board of Commissioners, Flourtown Business Association, Chestnut Hill Community Association, Chestnut Hill Business Association and the Philadelphia Planning Commission. Possible activities include:

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” – Henry Ford

### Undergo an effort to define regional identity

One of the primary tasks of the coalition will be to articulate a shared understanding of regional identity and an associated vision for how to express this regional identity in each constituent community. This definition would continue to change and be shaped by its membership.

### Organize events to strengthen understanding of issues affecting each community

Cultural events can be a good way to bring the members of the coalition together, along with interested members of the community. Such an event could use an art or music program as a vehicle to bring people together from across municipal boundaries. At public events like this, the public can be invited to share ideas about this future of their communities.

### Establish a project for the coalition to work on together

There have been many projects recommended as Implementation Priorities in this study. This new coalition could serve as the champion for one of these projects.

## **ABSTRACT**

The Chestnut Hill Regional Area Study was undertaken as part of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's Strategies for Older Suburbs initiative which examines the potential for city/suburban collaboration. The Chestnut Hill Regional Area Study is one of three areas where the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission directed this initiative, with financial assistance from the William Penn Foundation. DVRPC would like to acknowledge and thank the many public officials and private citizens who contributed to this plan. The consultant team of Brown & Keener, led by Mark Keener and Kristen Ford, drafted the plan along with Jim Hartling of Urban Partners, Marc Morfei of Pennoni Associates and Adrienne Eiss of Orth-Rodgers & Associates.

A Core Working Group of local municipal officials and community representatives contributed to the development and vision of the plan. They include:

Chestnut Hill Community Association (John Haak, Pam Learned)

City of Philadelphia (Jennifer Barr)

DVRPC (Karen Cilurso)

Montgomery County (Mary Morrison)

Springfield Township (Doug Heller)

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Barry J. Seymour, Executive Director

8th Floor — The ACP Building

190 N. Independence Mall West

Philadelphia, PA 19106

*Phone:* 215-592-1800

*Fax:* 215-592-9125

*Internet:* [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)

*Staff Contact:* Karen Cilurso AICP PP, Senior Regional Planner

*Direct Phone:* 215-238-2876

*E-mail:* [kpcilurso@dvrpc.org](mailto:kpcilurso@dvrpc.org)

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