

Planning Commission
April 18, 2018

Present: Rex Brien, Elizabeth Jenkins, Don Jones, Chris De Bruyn (Chair), James Levine, Steve Minton, Laura Poltronieri, Nancy Templeton

Absent: David Virgil

Swarthmore Centennial Foundation Strategic Plan Presentation – Vision for the next 20 Years

-Did focus groups with SRA Board, Planning Commission, Senior Citizens Assoc., Town Center, Rotary, Ad hoc young parents group

Who We Are

- community of engaged citizens
- great place to raise kids
- real town center
- Swarthmore College
- green spaces – 18% of the Borough is well maintained parks and open space
- SEPTA provides easy access to Center City

What We've Accomplished

- 1999 revitalization plan – were able to accomplish a lot (below)
- added the Inn
- roundabout
- amphitheater
- Co-Op reconstruction
- underpass to get to SRS
- zoning: have zoning to encourage density and mixed use, pedestrian friendly

Things are Changing

- from 1990 to 2016 – the population “bump” is in the 55-64 group vs. the 35-44
- 98% of housing is occupied. Are there places for empty nesters to downsize?
- nationally, the way we live is changing: ADUs, co-housing (smaller homes, shared space), senior housing, tiny house
- online is changing the way we shop – change the way we think about retail?
- shared economy
- travel and parking is changing – Uber, autonomous cars, parklets
- may be experiencing more big storms

Our Vision

- vibrancy
 - No empty storefronts
 - People on the streets, more diversity, variable ages, weekdays and weekends
 - Big and small events bringing people into town center

- Public art

-places to go

- Quirky
- More Restaurants – variety of price points
 - 30% of the existing storefronts are services
- Performance/arts spaces
- Community center (plus intergenerational activities)
- More indoor and outdoor spaces
- Maker space

-places to work

- We Work/Co-Working Space
- Maker space
- Lab space/Penovation/Coworking Labs

-places to live

- Good quality downsize options
- senior housing
- density near the train/transit oriented
- Older houses turned into shared houses

-easy to get around

- More bike lanes
- Good sidewalks
- Train station accessibility
- Connection to other towns (Media, Wallingford, Healthplex)

-maintained parks

- Well maintained parks, playground, recreational spaces
- More shade trees
- Add more public spaces? Dog park, pickle ball, etc.
- Green stormwater management – raingarden (make it easier for people to do), drought tolerant plants (don't have to water), street trees
- Electrical Wires Underground

What are the Key (Perceived) Obstacles to Making Things Happen

1. Resistance to change
2. Zoning
3. Town Center Property Owners
4. Taxes
5. Physical Barrier (tracks in the center of town)
6. Lack of a Clear Vision

Moving Forward

- What is realistic?
 - What kind of housing options do we need for older age groups and for younger families

- Retail analysis – how can town center be more vibrant
- How to provide better pedestrian connections

Discussion by Planning Commission and public attendees regarding thoughts on plan. Final product will be a vision document. How do we make sure that more than the 150 most engaged can weigh in on this matter to make sure that this is truly reflective?

Co-Housing

-Thoughts from a community member: Would like to see more than just a specific area designated for co-housing. Having houses be connected through co-housing but not necessarily the same house (connected properties, not even on the same block, etc). Different groups have different legal structures, would recommend flexibility there.

ADUs – General Questions for Planning Commission to Get a Sense of Where We Are

-ADU amendment – would you be interested in it being the entire town (with conditions)? 7 yeses

-ADU amendment – can it be a separate structure (with conditions)? 6 yeses

*Make sure that the language is clear in conditions

-ADU amendment – would you allow rentals, not including family members or in-kind service (babysitter, caregiver) (with conditions)? Generally no. Borough Manager: It's not realistic to have the Borough looking into who is a family, who is paying rent. So, would likely have to include rentals.

Co-Housing

"Cogregate housing for the elderly" definition already exists in the zoning code.

"Congregate housing for the elderly" means a structure containing two or more dwelling units and rooming units limited in occupancy and occupied by persons sixty-two years old and older, their spouses or surviving spouses, except for rooms or units occupied by resident staff personal, providing indoor, conveniently located, shared food preparation service and major dining areas, and common recreation, social and service facilities for the exclusive use of all residents."

Congregate Housing for the Elderly is allowed by Special Exception in the AL Alternate Residential, TC Town Center, and IN-A Institutional Zoning Districts. → Very limited in scope

Meeting Adjourned