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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

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JODY L. HOLTON, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

November 1, 2013

SUBJECT: Lower Merion Commercial Districts Goals and Characteristics Evaluation Process

TO: Lower Merion Comprehensive Plan Land Use Committee

FROM: Marley Bice, Community Planner
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At the November 12, 2013 meeting of the Land Use Committee we will be evaluating the "Tier 4" commercial districts, Penn Wynne and Gladwyne, in relation to an overall list of goals and characteristics. Attached you will find several background documents and worksheets to assist with the evaluation of each district.

Goals and Characteristics Handbook

This handbook summarizes the five goals and numerous characteristics established for the township as a whole. The level of relevance and importance of each characteristic and goal will differ for individual commercial districts. This handbook provides more detailed information, photographic examples, and suggestions of things to consider when evaluating the commercial districts in terms of each characteristic.

Goals and Characteristics Worksheet

A worksheet has been developed to help determine the current conditions of each district, where certain characteristics are applicable or not, and the level of importance which should be placed on each goal for an individual commercial district. The body of the worksheet will be the same for each commercial district. *Please keep in mind that the five commercial area goals are currently numbered as a point of reference and are not meant to indicate a level of importance or priority.*

Using the summary sheet, existing conditions maps, and any other resources, please evaluate each characteristic in terms of current conditions in that district. Please circle one number for each characteristic from the range of 1 through 5 with "1" indicating that the district is "performing well" in terms of that characteristic and "5" indicating that it "could be improved."

When you have completed your evaluation of all of the characteristics, please rank the five overall goals, in order of importance for the district, by placing the numbers 1 through 5 in the

boxes in the blue column to the left of the main table. Please enter one number in each box with “1” indicating the “most important” goal and “5” indicating the “least important,” or in some cases: “not applicable,” goal.

For the Penn Wynne district, please evaluate the Manoa Road and City Avenue sections separately.

Online Survey Input of Responses

Please consider using our online survey to input your responses for both Gladwyne and Penn Wynne by 12 pm on Tuesday November 12th. This will allow us some time to compile your responses and comments prior to the meeting.

Penn Wynne (Manoa Road section) Survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LMCommercial_PennWynne_ManoaRd

Penn Wynne (City Avenue section) Survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LMCommercial_PennWynne_CityAve

Gladwyne Survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LMCommercial_Gladwyne

Please bring your completed worksheets to the meeting. If you do not have the time to input your survey responses online prior to the meeting, we can manually input your responses at the meeting and compile all survey results to ensure a productive discussion.

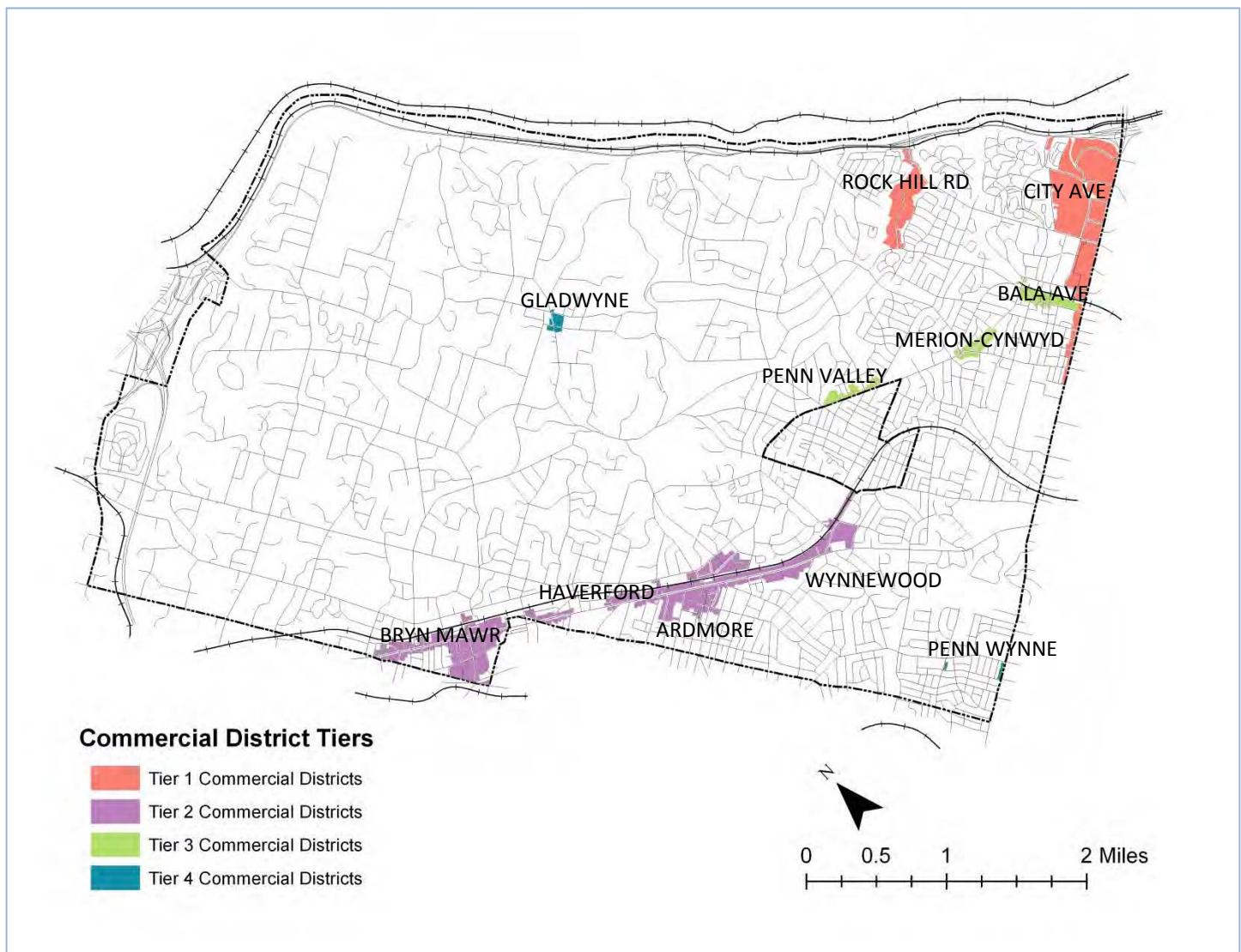
Other Resources

A summary sheet of facts, observations, and recommendations from existing studies (if applicable) has been compiled for each district. A conceptual map of existing conditions and proposed developments (if applicable) are also provided, for your reference. If feasible, a site visit may be useful for accurately evaluating each district.

Lower Merion Commercial Districts Goals and Characteristics Handbook

November 2013

DRAFT TOWNSHIP-WIDE VISION: *To maintain and enhance commercial areas to complement the surrounding high-quality residential areas; serve township residents' shopping, dining, and entertainment needs; create a sense of place and identity; preserve the township's historic character; and support the township's economy.*



COMMERCIAL DISTRICT TIER CHARACTERISTICS

TIER 1 CHARACTERISTICS

- Regional centers
- Access to major highways
- Additional development capacity

TIER 2 CHARACTERISTICS

- Transit-oriented
- Mixed use
- Along Lancaster Avenue
- Serve township-wide needs
- Civic space
- Employment centers

TIER 3 CHARACTERISTICS

- Suburban
- Auto-oriented
- Connection to residential
- Along Montgomery Avenue

TIER 4 CHARACTERISTICS

- Neighborhood-oriented
- Primarily service uses
- Walkable scale
- Connection to residential

COMMERCIAL DISTRICT GOALS AND CHARACTERISTICS

GOAL 1: Complement the surrounding high-quality residential areas

Characteristics:

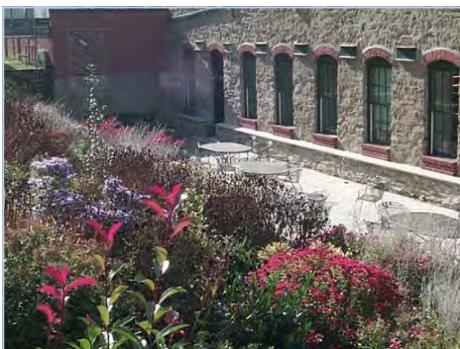
1A. Visual character

- a. Building condition and façades
- b. Streetscape (also see Characteristic 3C.)
- c. Building massing and setbacks
- d. Signage and storefronts



1B. Transitions between commercial areas and adjacent residential districts

- Appropriate physical transitions in terms of buffering, screening, density, bulk, land use, etc. especially in locations where sharper transitions exist
- Connections to bike and pedestrian networks



1C. Pedestrian connections between commercial areas and neighborhoods

- Sidewalk network (connectivity and condition)



GOAL 2: Serve & enhance township residents' shopping, dining, and entertainment needs

Characteristics:

2A. Accessibility

a. Walkability

- Sidewalk network including crosswalks (connectivity and condition)
- Number and placement of curb cuts
- Streetscape (also see Characteristic 3C.) and wayfinding signage

b. Bikeability

- Bike lanes, sharrows, trails (connectivity and condition)
- Bike parking
- Wayfinding signage

c. Access to Transit

- Access to bus shelters, train stations, etc.
- Wayfinding signage



2B. Parking distribution and appearance

- Municipal parking, private parking, transit parking
- Opportunities and barriers for shared parking
- Parking lot landscaping and design
- Wayfinding signage



2C. Commercial environment

- Retail mix
- Vacancy rate
- Façade maintenance and storefront design



GOAL 3: Create a sense of place and identity for each commercial district

Characteristics:

3A. Civic open space

- Plazas, parks, pocket parks, town squares
- Public gathering space
- Outdoor dining and sidewalk cafés



3B. Commercial area gateways

- Sense of arrival and identity
- Wayfinding signage



3C. Streetscape

- Street trees and greening
- Street furniture (benches, lamp posts, trash/recycling cans, bike racks, etc.)
- Buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic
- Storefronts built up to the sidewalk
- Outdoor dining



GOAL 3 Continued: Create a sense of place and identity for each commercial district

Characteristics Continued:

3D. Train stations

- *Where applicable*
- Pedestrian access
- Bike parking
- Car parking
- Bike/ped connection to commercial district/uses



GOAL 4: Preserve the township's historic character

Characteristics:

4A. Traditional shopping district scale and character

- *Where applicable*
- *Examples:* continuous street wall, vertical mixed use, connection to train stations



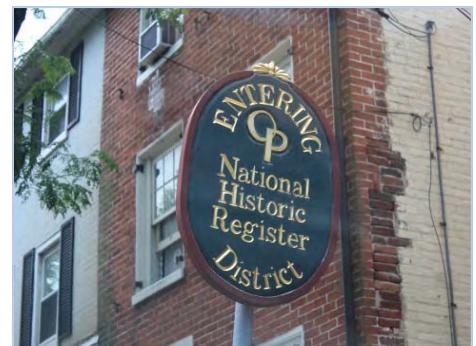
4B. Adaptive reuse of historic properties and structures

- *Where applicable*
- *Question to ask:* Are any changes needed to promote adaptive reuse in the district?



4C. Historic Districts

- *Where applicable*
- *Question to ask:* Are any changes needed to support the preservation of the historic district?



GOAL 5: Support the township's economy

Characteristics:

5A. Increased intensity of development to enhance the tax base

- *Where applicable*
- *Question to ask:* Where is there capacity for increased development?
- *Question to ask:* Are there any barriers to increased development? What incentives should/could be offered?



5B. Mixed-use development

- *Where applicable*
- *Question to ask:* Where should new mixed-use development be encouraged? What uses? What scale?
- *Question to ask:* Where should existing/traditional mixed-use development be preserved?



5C. Redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties

- *Where applicable*
- *Question to ask:* Are there any barriers to redevelopment in this district? What incentives should/could be offered?
- *Question to ask:* What should underutilized property be redeveloped as? What uses? What scale?



GOAL 5 Continued: Support the township's economy

Characteristics Continued:

5D. Transportation improvements

- *Where applicable*
- Road widening, narrowing
- New traffic signals
- Crosswalks and pedestrian-activated signals

