



West District Plan

Public Meeting Feedback and Formal Written Comments

THRIVE - From the Public Meeting:

- Diversify dining options beyond fast food and steak shops
- 4601 Market Street as a retail hub
- Tie landbank priorities to investments in infrastructure
- Allow easier access to dilapidated city owned property to be purchased and renovated for purchase by homeowners
- Just cause for eviction legislation
- Rent control to keep it affordable
- Clean water most important
- Philadelphia land bank should partner with community land trusts to hold land in perpetuity and keep housing affordable
- Track down owners of unused vacant land and make it available for neighbors to purchase!
- Look to effective models for mixed income housing like Toronto. Seattle is a mess – their model isn't working. If City Planning tells Council to stand up they will
- Grants for homeowner repairs
- Allow neighbors adjacent to vacant land first option to purchase through the land bank
- More communication about these programs for homeowners and 2nd and 3rd generation homeowners on how to access the equity in the properties
- Keep homeowners in their homes. LOOP extensions are a start, we need to keep communities together
- Revitalization of the mixed commercial use properties within the more residential neighborhoods
- Needs to be LEED certified homes
- 56th and north of Market St – any redevelopment activity involving site acquisition/relocation?
- Counseling re: title entanglement
- Lighting on street and bike mobility
- Interest in robotic and science needs to be prominent

- 2nd generation homes transition to successive families
- Buying new homes for first time ownership fund assistance for 2nd generation

THRIVE - Formal Written Comments:

- Also would like better access markets and maybe a vegetable market.
- Page 28 - When talking about Lancaster Ave are you leaving out Lower Lancaster Ave? It starts at 40th & Lancaster Avenue.

CONNECT - From the Public Meeting:

- Can you put a red light on 63rd street from 63rd and Lancaster to 58th and Baltimore (Cobbs Creek Parkway) so that speeders get a ticket? Thank you
- Every possible street needs bike access!!!
- Route 64 needs to go back to original route, 46th Street
- Consider urban agriculture orchards on all new green space
- Expand Indego
- ADA Improvements to trolleys
- The more protected bike lanes, the better. Much safer for all.
- Don't bring trolley mod to 52nd and Lancaster. Too congested!
- All streets need to be smooth for bikers, also visible bike lane separation
- Pervious pavements
- Add 52nd and Haverford to rec # 17

CONNECT - Formal Written Comments:

- Identify opportunity to reduce transportation gaps from 62nd Malvern Ave. (SEPTA) Transit Hub) to 52nd & Lancaster Avenue (currently, no public transit on the thoroughfare). Possibly include with item #11 - references investments to 62nd & Malvern Ave. trolley loop?
- SEPTA - For Recommendation No. 15: When major corridors such as Chestnut and Walnut are proposed to have a travel lane removed for bike travel (protected bike lanes), there should be a traffic study done to determine the travel time impact on SEPTA buses or trolleys and on general traffic. The study results should be shared with SEPTA. This is similar to the traffic study being done on Roosevelt Blvd to determine if a BAT lane is feasible in the right hand lane.
- As a walker and a consistent user of public transportation, my comment concerns the indifference shown in the city to the dangers and inconvenience posed by the horrible condition of our sidewalks. Century old trees planted in narrow strips are destroying our

neighborhood walkways. The dangers posed by deteriorating, heaving, or missing blocks of concrete, brick, or slate are enormous. They are a threat to walkers and violate the ADA by making them unusable by wheelchair users. It's about time that some agency - whether it's City Council, Streets, L&I or PCPC - to focus on the matter. PCPC could help by at least acknowledging the problem in all of its District Plans. Sidewalk repair in our neighborhoods is too big and too expensive to leave solely in the hands of residential property owners.

RENEW - From the Public Meeting:

- Environmental Resources:
 - Trees are important
 - Ensure trees are native and right sized
 - Will features impact parking?
 - The trees along the El line are up to the el line and should come down – thanks
 - North of Market along Cobbs Creek can use stuff too
 - Lighting and bike access
 - Cobbs Creek Parkway Green Stormwater Infrastructure Plan
 - Be mindful that the plants can create visual challenges by blocked view
 - Where are 56th 57th, 58th and Market streets on the map?
- Open Space:
 - Looks good :)
 - Large trees on small, one-way streets (65th) make for unsafe walking conditions like broken pavements
 - Urban farms and gardens
 - Natural pesticides on Rec Park Fields and/or drained artificial fields
 - Cathedral Park – 49th and Lancaster
 - 54th-60th along Market
 - Lighting streets, parks, and trails
 - 61st and Lancaster needs open space where dry cleaners was
 - Be clearer about how gaps will be filled
 - Keep community gardens, help them with title problems
 - Callout of gap in walkable access to green, open space
 - They have trees/yards, don't need public green space
 - Neighborhood Parks and Recreation recommendations
 - 24: Belmont and Cobbs Creek are good ideas
 - 23: Add Holly St Gardens at 4116 Ogden Street
- Historic Preservation:
 - Other buildings that should be nominated/potential for preservation:
 - Walnut Park Plaza at 6250 Walnut

- St Cyprian Church at 63rd and Cedar
- Paul Robeson House at 50th and Walnut, NE corner
- West Phila Title & Trust at 40th and Walnut
- The Historic Crystal Bird Fauset residence at 5403 Vine, unique architecture in neighborhood
- House at 41st and Fairmount, potential for preservation where bridges have been reopened
- St Ignatius Church Mother Convent – Drexel
- Legacy – 644 N 43rd, final pocket of mill creek
- Question concerning Hestonville Houses at Hunter Street
- Lighting on streets 48th, bike access every block
- 4601 market:
 - Halfway house potential
 - Used millions of dollars and the building is empty
 - Reuse up-in-the air is wasteful and needs to be reused
- Overbrook high school
- Expand Mural Arts along El Line
- Will you be working along with L+I for the vacant building, 52nd and Spruce ___ building
- Locust Theater:
 - Is there incentive to do something? With Locust Theater and adjoining property
- More trees and holiday lights in parks and green spaces
- Improve lighting at train/El stations

RENEW - Formal Written Comments

- There is no mention of urban trees. West Philly is full of old trees that have outgrown their homes - pulling up sidewalks.
- More trees and getting folks better educated about exercise food health
- Water Quality #29 – Add the Overbrook Environmental Education Center/JASTECH as a GSI resource
- Add reference to City of Philadelphia’s Cooling Centers in the West District as part of the Health Department’s response to climate adaption (temperature rise) and Heat Island Effect. (See links - <https://beta.phila.gov/services/mental-physical-health/cooling-centers/>)
- Page - 58 (Sample of Urban Design) can you add the Collaborating Team to the write up (Collaborators - Belmont Alliance Civic Assoc., Temple U, Community Bible Deliverance Temple Church, City of Philadelphia (Funder - William Penn Foundation & Kaboom)
- The should include a sense of community cultural identity. Names are very important to the morale, destiny, and design of an individual. Even more so to a collective (e.g. community).

I propose a name/community identity pitch comparison. I submit New Freedom: continuing the Freedom struggle for human community excellence. Thank you

- We would like to recommend that the West District Planning Commission included the Lancaster Ave Historic New Freedom District into the West District Plan to preserve the cultural legacy and history of that area.
- The Lancaster Ave Historic New Freedom District goes from 32nd to 48th Streets west on Lancaster Avenue and the surrounding area in West Philadelphia. The goals are to highlight and preserve the rich cultural history of African American institutions, organizations, events and individual achievements in their quest for self- determination and freedom, justice & equality.

West Mill Creek Board

- Bike lanes not prominent
- Not safe, a lot of shootings and car break ins
- Poor lighting in mill creek
- Raccoon and possums out of control
- The new Mill Creek Center is too small for the community
- More safety patrols just like Drexel has
- 48th block/Wallace/Fairmount: vacancy-garages, want housing

Mantua Greenway Board

- Can we reintroduce walkway from 34th to West River Drive
- Needs signage, lights, use
- Bad corner for greenway
- Solving a problem that does not exist on traffic calming
- Show existing track
- More Lighting
- 37th Street Triangle - Will there be seating in this space?

FOCUS AREA - From the Public Meeting:

- CCP (just off 46th, between Chestnut and Sansom)
- Signage for pedestrians and motorists is very important
- Safety Improvements:
- Protected bicycle lanes
- Lighting and safety patrol 24 hours
- 60th Street Gateway render:

- Find more local artists and collaborate with outside installation
- Very nice! Looks good! Good idea!
- El/Fresh Grocer wall render:
- How about a mural? Also can be needed badly!!
- Bottom of El supports planters
- Yes!
- Street furniture:
- Concerns about benches
- Development:
- More large scale mixed use housing will keep housing affordable for everyone. Love this idea.
- Large recreation field at Salvation Army needed to be reactivated rather than housing
- Any development needs to remain affordable. Rent control and just cause for eviction should be priorities
- More commercial development is needed! Not housing!
- Open Space and Plazas
- Drainage important! Do rain gardens near mall parking lots
- Use porous pavement
- Trash cans are badly needed. Amen! Improve emptying schedule!
- More dog parks!
- Assigned trash cans and bedbug control

PROPOSED ZONING

- From the Public Meeting:
- Robotics technology use
- Science labs health center use
- Parking and lighting
- More fresh products availability
- Quality commercial for strong economic activity—not bars and adult entertainment
- Less pop stores and delis
- Commercial for stronger economic activity
- Inclusionary zoning for new development, 50% affordable
- 52nd Street and Haverford to Girard is multifamily
- Mill Creek Center too small, need size like Kroger Center
- Lucien Blackwell Rec is too small
- Streets improvements
- Single family zoning
- Flag lot 51st and Spruce → RSA-5

Formal Written Comments

- Vast chunks of the neighborhoods are recommended to go from multi-family to single-family, I imagine a lot community members would approve of that (though some local house flippers might be less excited!)
- It looks like most of Market Street, as well as 52nd St between Market and Arch, would be up zoned to CMX-3 to encourage TOD? That sounds good.
- It looks like 52nd Street between Market and Chancellor is downzoned from CMX-4 to CMX-3, and the residential portions of those adjacent blocks are re-zoned to reflect their current use. That looks great.
- Then for the portion of 52nd Street between Chancellor and Pine, it looks like it's recommended to be taken down from CMX-3 to CMX-2 and 2.5? Again, I agree with this change.
- corrective zoning recommendations, as they apply to Garden Court:
- The North and South sides of the 5000 block of Spruce are 3 story Victorian homes in various conditions. There has been at least 2 that I can recall that have been demolished and subdivided. Given the large square footage of these buildings and lots, it could be advantageous to up-zone this block to RM-1 or RTA-1. This could also serve as a good transition from the 52nd St corridor to the 48th & Spruce commercial corridor
- Thank you for recommending that the Flag Lot at 303 S 51st be RSA-5. The dimension requirements of multi-family housing will make this lot difficult to build on by-right. Given that the lot is surrounded by the back yards of families, a single-family residence makes the most sense.
- I also have the following comments for areas outside of the specific Garden Court boundaries:
- I do not think we should have any single-family zoning on the following streets: Baltimore Avenue, 52nd St, 60th St, Spruce St, Chestnut St, Walnut St.
- Up-zoning these areas, and mandating mixed use (where appropriate) would then allow the single family housing stock to flourish in those areas outside of the major corridors

PROPOSED LAND USE - From the Public Meeting:

- Regular folks involved in decision making, advisory comments, zoning, etc.
- Improvements to community centers/institutions
- Preservation of property taxes for homeowners
- Fair cost of living for existing residents
- Belmont needs more amenities to draw and keep new buyers
- This map is inaccurate!
- FOCUS AREA - Formal Written Comments

- I like the focus area on West Market Street and the transit stations. Hopefully some of those goals and improvements can actually be realized over time.

GENERAL COMMENTS - From the Public Meeting:

- Most schools within a mile of me have no science labs
- New rec center in mill creek too small for community, need to be bigger
- Formal Written Comments about the draft Plan
- Thank you much for the great work that you have done and what you are doing for the City of Philadelphia.
- I expect a plan to lay out a clear course of action and that was not the case with this document.
- Clearly, it was not written for the long-term residents of West Philly. The formatting and style of the document make it dense and difficult for lay people to follow. Jargon throughout the document makes it hard to understand (like the recommendation to "map stations in TOD zoning overlay").
- The caption on the timeline near the beginning of the document, "African Americans arrive from the south and service begins on the Market Frankford line", contains two distinct thoughts. Either pick one or put a period between the 2 ideas.
- Historical and contextual facts are mixed in with recommendations making it difficult to navigate. I suggest that you use white space to break up dense content and "chunk" the material. Background information should go into a separate document or into an appendix.
- Page - 25 (Characteristics - Shouldn't it show Belmont's open spaces in green on the existing zoning map?)
- Page - 17 (Question - In 2012 I submitted to the Planning Commission a draft for the Belmont Commons an outdoor social space. The site is located at 4123 - 4131 Westminster Avenue - Can this be added as a space to be preserved for open space.)
- Page - 13 (Institutional Connections) We can connect to U of Penn & Drexel via the #31 & #40 Bus and #10 Trolley
- Page - 13 (Commercial Corridors) Lancaster Avenue is not mentioned as a neighborhood serving retail corridor
- Page - 7 (The timeline) the Obama Admin information could be under year 2013
- Recent official designation for 52nd Street (from Arch to Pine) as a Main Street with PA DCED, which will open up some new funding opportunities for projects over the next few years.
- Under Major Opportunities section, there is no mention of Lancaster Avenue (bt. 56th – 62nd). This section of the district has some of the most underutilized and marginalized commercial potential? Also, as represented in the Metropolitan and Regional Centers Goal: Support the growth of economic centers-The language suggests that the West District is

“well linked” however, it does not reference the “transportation gaps” between 52nd to 62nd on Lancaster?

- MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES - Economic development opportunities in the West District include:

There is a significant amount of vacant and underutilized land around the Market-Frankford Line stations within the district. These represent major opportunities for investments in transit-oriented development.

- The City of Philadelphia is currently renovating the Provident Mutual Life Insurance building and campus at 46th and Market. While the end-user has not been identified, this will almost certainly involve the relocation of several hundred jobs to the West District. This will not only bring more employment opportunities in close proximity to West District residents, but will boost retail spending potential and make the rental or purchase of homes in the district more attractive to employees relocated to this site.
- As housing prices rise and development pressures rise in University City, there is opportunity to leverage additional economic development elsewhere in the district. In particular, the 52nd Street commercial corridor is poised to capture additional retail spending and support new small businesses.
- Working with the major institutions in the nearby University City Southwest District can be used to craft workforce development programs that link West District workers to employment opportunities.
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (SPECIFIC TOPICS) - Metropolitan and Regional Centers Goal: Support the growth of economic centers.
The district is well linked to the Metropolitan Center through public transit, including five Market Frankford Line stations, three trolley lines (the 10 on Lancaster Avenue, Lansdowne Avenue, and 63rd Street; the 34 on Baltimore Avenue; and the 15 on Girard Avenue). There are no limited access highways within the district, but State Route 3 (Chestnut and Walnut Street), US 13 (Baltimore Avenue), and US 30 (Lancaster Avenue) provide direct roadway connections from the West District to the Metropolitan Center. The Schuylkill Expressway, which is just outside of the District provides access to the region’s
- Be sure to include Guion Bluford on your list of notable Overbrook High grads.

Personal Letter

28 February 2018

Mr. Brian Wenrich
Plan Manager • Philadelphia2035

Dear Mr. Wenrich,

I am writing to you about the Philadelphia 2035 plan for the West District, since it borders the University Southwest District where I have lived for nearly 16 years. I was not aware of the comment period for the University Southwest District plan, which apparently has been adopted by the City. Thus, the following remarks are directed at the plans for both districts, and are relevant for the City of Philadelphia as a whole.

My wife and I bought our current property in 2002 through the enhanced mortgage program offered by the University of Pennsylvania, and have been renovating the property ever since this time. Having dealt with the consequences of the previous rezoning process as well as the vagaries of L&I zoning decisions about property development in the area, I am concerned about the development plan for the West District (which I have read in its entirety) and its impact on that area of the city and neighboring districts. Accordingly, I am writing to express these concerns, with the hope of receiving a direct response to them.

Zoning decisions. Over the past ten years, our block has experienced zoning decisions favoring property owners who violated zoning laws and policies. These individuals have shown themselves to be disinterested in being good neighbors or following zoning laws unless caught and forced to observe them. How will these kinds of problem be dealt with in the context of future plans for the West District? What kind of oversight mechanism will be created to monitor the L&I board decisions, which we know are sometimes political in nature? Furthermore, many decisions about property classification in the last rezoning process were undertaken without any in-person visits to the properties that were being reclassified. This inaction led to various conflicts in construction and modification of properties in this neighborhood, particularly in relation to those zoned as mixed use. Collectively, these decisions have compromised the integrity of our neighborhood and potentially affected the property values of our homes. This most certainly will be an issue for the development of the West District.

In this regard, I was interested to see discussion of Corrective Zoning in the West District plan, and think it should be employed in all districts within the larger development plan. Which office will be responsible for this process, and how will decisions about "incorrect zoning" be formally dealt with?

Prior property modifications. On our block, as well as many others in the city, there are grandfathered property modifications that represent zoning violations. These include illegal extensions across property lines, the use of residential properties for commercial purposes, improperly wired and plumbed properties, and so forth. The question here is how the City of Philadelphia is going to handle these issues, since they create complications in dealing with home renovations by newer property owners adjacent to them.

Slumlords. For years, we have dealt with slumlords who will not maintain their properties

in the neighborhood. Their neglect of these houses diminishes property values in the immediate area, not to mention that these houses are eyesores for everyone living in the neighborhood. Certain of these houses may be HUD properties through which these properties are making money through subsidization of their property expenses. The question here is whether and how the City will penalize this behavior and motivate better care for the neglected properties. We have repeatedly reported these properties to L&I and the City of Philadelphia through the 311 webpage and telephone number, and have had limited success in making these property owners attend to the problems at their houses through the city offices tasked with monitoring and correcting these practices. What other recourse do residential and commercial property owners have in dealing with this kind of problem? This issue will not go away regardless of the scale of the plan to revitalize the West and University Southwest Districts.

The Health Rowhouse Project will certainly help to improve the conditions of homes in West Philadelphia, and the West District in particular, as well as improve the overall quality of life for residents there. Homeowner Assistance Programs may also facilitate the maintenance and improvement of homes in the region. In light of the recent federal tax cuts, will these programs have sufficient funds to be implemented broadly across the West District? Will there be any enforcement mechanisms in the development plan to penalize property owners who face to conform to building and zoning regulations and mandates to maintain properties across the City?

Vacant properties. The many vacant properties and lots in the city are a problem for various reasons. They are potential sites for development projects that would satisfy residential needs for quality housing, yet remain empty. Their use as residential, commercial or perhaps recreation spaces would also improve the appearance and integrity of the West District. In addition, since many of these vacant properties contain dilapidated houses or empty lots, a considerable amount of trash and refuse accumulates in them, making them eyesores for the neighborhoods in which they exist. Trash is a major problem for the city as a whole, but in some neighborhoods or areas it is a more significant one. The improved upkeep and development of these properties, and a major focus on greening the City through trash removal and other means will make Philadelphia a much more attractive place to work and live. And, programs such as CPTED will also make these neighborhoods safer.

Commercial corridors. While understanding the historical significance of the major thoroughfares running through West Philadelphia, and their traditional use as conduits from Philadelphia to other towns and cities, they are not simply places where only commercial activities take place. For example, Baltimore Avenue is considered a commercial corridor in the development plans, but there are numerous residences along both sides of the street from 40th through 52nd Streets and well beyond in the West District. In fact, our backyard faces Baltimore Avenue, as does that of the neighboring properties, and we enter our properties from both the Cedar Avenue and Baltimore Avenue sides. Therefore, Baltimore Avenue should not be viewed as uniformly having only commercial properties along its extent through West Philadelphia.

This is an important factor in considering zoning variances requested by property owners wanted to modify homes and buildings along Baltimore Avenue from 38th through 52nd Street (with which I am most familiar) and then into the West District.

Bike routes. The City is making a big effort to become bicycle friendly, and I think that this is a great idea. Bike riding promotes healthy lifestyles, reduces automobile traffic in the area, and reduces the City's carbon footprint, environmentally speaking. However,

Philadelphia drivers don't always show respect for bike riders, often use the bike lanes for passing cars making left turns or to get around slow drivers, and sometimes crowd the bike lanes when driving, making bike riding somewhat hazardous. In fact, I have been nearly hit by cars multiple times in the past few years, and colleagues of mine haven't been so lucky, sustaining significant injuries as a result of contact with moving automobiles. Therefore, creating protected bike lanes such as those on Chestnut Street will be important for supporting expanded bicycle traffic in the City, including the West District. In addition, the enforcement of traffic laws against double parking and illegal U-turns in the middle of a street will also prevent bike-car accidents.

Greening the district. The plan to make the West District a greener part of the City through the Renew initiative is really important. As outlined in the initiative, it will enhance the air and water quality of the area, improve its appearance, create sites for outdoor activities and gardening, and make it a more attractive place to live. We are involved in similar initiatives through the Philadelphia Horticulture Society and other organizations (Rails-to-Trails), and see this work as essential for improving the quality of life in the City and being good citizens environmentally speaking. The Mantua Greenway is an example of the transformative potential that greening initiatives can have for neighborhoods and cities.

Historical neighborhood. The area of West Philadelphia in which we live is considered part of the historic trolley suburbs of the city. Many of the homes here are over 100 years old and considered to be architecturally distinct relative to those found in other parts of the city. This area also has several smaller parks situated in different areas of the larger neighborhood, and there is also Clark Park that serves as a community green space. Given the distinctive features of this area of the city, we are keenly interested in maintaining its residential character and also the architectural look of its homes and buildings . Allowing the construction of

buildings that exceed several stories in height and/or are comprised of glass and steel will detract from the neighborhood's character, as it has already in certain locations. In fact, neighborhoods around Penn have felt pressure from various developers about commercial projects for many years now.

Personal note. For our part, we have worked to restore our home to its original form. This effort includes using paint colors dating to the early 20th century, and also recently building a cedar fence in our backyard that has received an award from the University City Historical Society. We have also contributed to the University City District to support its neighborhood development plans, including the revamping of Clark Park. These are our own small contributions to the effort of maintaining the integrity of the neighborhood, and we hope that the Planning Commission will respect these efforts and related concerns about the quality of building construction in this part of the city.

Please let me know if you have any questions about these remarks.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Schuss", is written in a cursive style.