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SUBJECT: Draft Chapter 13: Future Land Use

TO: Comp Plan Development Team

FROM: Mike Narcowich, AICP, Community Planning Assistant Manager

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Introduction

This chapter will make recommendations for Abington’s future land use and serves as the heart of “Vision2035.” Chapter 4: Existing Land Use, Chapter 9: Environmental Management and Resilience, Chapter 11: Transportation, and to varying degrees, all other chapters of this plan, serve as the foundation for the recommendations made in this chapter. The future land use recommendations herein will be implemented through implementation mechanisms such as zoning, the subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO), and other chapters of

Link to Plan’s Vision

This chapter has important linkages with the following plan themes:

- *“Desirable Residential Areas”*
- *“A Thriving, Equitable Community”*
- *“Vibrant Destinations”*
- *“Healthy People and Environment (think clean, green, and healthy)”*

the municipal code. Additional topic-specific studies such as fiscal-impact or neighborhood revitalization studies may be appropriate to help determine the specific course that best implements this chapter’s recommendations.

As noted in Chapter 4: Existing Land Use, Abington is ninety-eight percent built-out and little undeveloped land remains to accommodate new development. Therefore, most future development in the township will consist of infill development (for example, new development on a vacant lot in an otherwise developed area) and redevelopment of existing developed sites. The township has numerous train stations—some of which are suitable for, and would meet demand for, walkable, transit-oriented development with greater intensity of development than currently exists. And it has numerous shopping centers. As trends in the retail sector have changed, it is likely that some of these centers will be reinvented as highly-walkable, mixed-use developments with a greater intensity of development than currently exists.

This chapter provides a short summary of land use policies implemented by the comprehensive zoning rewrite of 2017. That process involved extensive visioning and work to establish zoning districts’ intent. The chapter then summarizes still-relevant recommendations from adopted township plans, including the comprehensive plan of 2007. Informed by the analysis presented in Chapter 4: Existing Land Use, this chapter then presents future land use categories, which correspond to the future land use map. Each of

the following future land use categories and their characteristics are described, as they are envisioned into the future:

- Residential. This includes neighborhoods where the predominant land use is housing
- Recreation/Conservation.
- Mixed-Use Corridors. These are portions of principal and minor arterial roads such as Old York Road and Jenkintown Road and other “main streets” that host a variety of land use types in a linear configuration.
- Village Centers. Small-to-medium-sized, mixed-use, walkable centers in the form of nodes
- Town Centers. These areas include the mall and major shopping centers and are the largest concentrations of nonresidential and mixed-use development in the township. They are configured as nodes located on principal arterial roads.
- Industrial/Employment. This land use category provides for industrial, research & development (R&D), biotech, and office uses. The largest such area is located on Highland Avenue in Glenside.
- Industrial/Employment (Neighborhood). These include small areas in Crestmont and Willow Grove with industrial or similar use types.
- Transit-Oriented Overlay. Areas suitable for transit-oriented development, near selected train stations.
- Mixed Residential Overlay. These areas are located where development centers border residential neighborhoods. Over time, they will allow a greater range of housing types, allowing for smoother transitions in density.

The chapter concludes with comprehensive future land use goals and recommendations for the township.

Note: for the township's existing land use, see Chapter 4: Existing Land Use.

Land Use Policies Implemented by Zoning ¹ ²

Abington's zoning ordinance (2017, with amendments) built on past and contemporaneous planning to greatly enhance design standards for commercial, mixed-use, village center, and shopping center areas. In these locations, it introduced elements such as the “build-to-line,” and “street wall” to encourage pedestrian activity and walkable, transit-supportive uses having a building and site design intended to reinforce and enhance community character.

Following are some of the important changes to land use regulations made by the ordinance:

¹ For plans, see <https://www.abingtonpa.gov/departments/engineering-and-code-department/planning-documents>

² For zoning and map, see <https://www.abingtonpa.gov/departments/engineering-and-code-services/zoning-ordinance-and-maps>

- Strengthened emphasis on building, landscape, and streetscape design
- Strong support for pedestrian transportation and safety, and de-emphasis of the personal automobile's impact on the built environment
- Greater attention to the streetscape in nonresidential and mixed-use areas
- Enhanced transit-oriented development near train stations
- The reorganization of zoning for commercial and mixed uses into three districts: Main Street High Density/Intensity, Main Street Low Density/Intensity, and Main Street Village Center district, based upon hierarchy of scale and design treatment
- First requirements regulating infill and expansions of single-family residential uses
- Creation of riparian corridor conservation district
- Provision for and regulation of renewable energy sources
- Allowance for significantly greater range of uses, where compatible with surrounding area
- Use of the "bonus" mechanism to incentivize provision of amenities which help attain township's planning goals

Land Use Recommendations from Adopted Plans ³ ⁴

Walk-Park-Train Abington Plan (2017)

The Walk-Park-Train Abington Plan made connectivity, parking, and land use recommendations for train stations and the areas within ¼ mile of the stations. In 2017, it noted that, around the **North Hills** station, there is "good potential for TOD [transit-oriented] development over the next 10 to 20 years." It highlighted (p.91) seven parcels (i.e., lots or properties) that it considered potentially ripe for redevelopment.

In **Crestmont**, it commented that "there is an opportunity for higher density residential and mixed uses in the area between the station and Old York Road and bordered to the north and south by Tremont Road and Roy Avenue." It also commented that keeping the land zoned "Suburban Industrial" located on the west side of Rockwell Avenue, between Rubicam Avenue and Hamilton Avenue, "is not the highest and best use for this area directly adjacent to the station" since this light industrial property is isolated from any other such uses.

Recommendations for **Ardsley** include potential redevelopment of ten properties around the train station which front on Tyson Avenue, and consideration of a possible satellite parking lot for the train station.

³ For plans, see <https://www.abingtonpa.gov/departments/engineering-and-code-department/planning-documents>

⁴ For zoning and map, see <https://www.abingtonpa.gov/departments/engineering-and-code-services/zoning-ordinance-and-maps>

The plan remarked that, concerning the **Roslyn** station area, “...if private sector interest for more intense development surfaces, it should be considered by the township.” It noted that the greatest constraint for such development appears to be steep slopes and many small sized parcels that would require land assembly.

Noble Transit-Oriented Development Plan (2012)

The Noble Transit-Oriented Development Plan developed a preferred development concept for the area around Noble station. The preferred concept consisted of:

- A mixed-use five-story building (residential over retail),
- A parking garage “wrapped” in the mixed-use development to minimize the view of parking.
- A new tree-lined, pedestrian-oriented street connecting Old York Road to The Fairway (see illustration).
- Open space, to include a park on the south side of the tracks near Rodman Road and plaza spaces along the new road.

Old York Road Corridor Improvement Plan (2010)

The Old York Road Corridor Improvement Plan made corridor-wide recommendations. These included visual continuity; improved mobility; access management⁵; addition of street trees, median landscaping, and other greenery; acquisition and conservation of open or civic spaces; the creation of pocket parks at shopping centers and multi-use properties; and improving conditions for pedestrians and transit users.

The plan identified “priority areas” where the plans’ authors felt that the greatest potential for development and investment existed. Following are still-relevant site-specific recommendations for Old York Road at the following cross streets:

1. The Fairway. Recommendation: creation of a new, walkable, mixed-use town center focused on Noble station. The center would include new streets and buildings located near the street. *Update: The township’s comprehensive zoning ordinance adopted in 2017 was designed to facilitate this and allowed the greatest intensity of development on the “Triangle” area defined by the zoning ordinance-- the area where the train station is located, up to Old York Road and the Fairway. The township should consider whether increasing the allowable density-intensity in this vicinity (in the Business Center zoning district) would be appropriate.*
2. Susquehanna Road. Recommendation: reconfiguration of the intersection to improve its function for vehicles (including transit), pedestrians, and those with disabilities, while supporting infill development to enhance the utility of retail and

⁵ Access management means limiting and strategically directing vehicular access points to promote efficient and safe transportation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists alike.

service businesses to the neighborhood. *Update: the township obtained funding of \$2.3 million for this project and is working with the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority on project implementation.*

3. Old Welsh, Chester, Roy, and Rubicam Roads/Avenues. Recommendation: Improve pedestrian and vehicular safety, create a village environment with neighborhood-serving retail, and create a new, green, open space along the east side of the road. *Update: The township's comprehensive zoning ordinance adopted in 2017 promotes access management, and has design standards for buildings, sites, and the streetscape while emphasizing pedestrian safety.*

The plan identified these areas as appropriate ones for application of shared themes, including sustainability, healthy living, creation of an Abington Town Center, and broadening of types of commerce along the corridor. It made the creation of a Priority Area Task Force to guide implementation the highest priority.

Roslyn Revitalization Plan (2010)

Train Station

The plan recommended moving the entrance to the train station fifty feet to the south to reduce vehicular-pedestrian conflicts, and recommended extending Roslyn's streetscape improvements south to the train station.

Anchor

The plan advocated for the attraction of an anchor attraction to be the centerpiece of the Roslyn business district. At the time, the township was attempting to acquire new land for the Roslyn branch of the township library. The plan recognized that a new anchor might take the form of the relocated library or a full-service restaurant. It also recommended enhanced pedestrian connections and the orientation of buildings in this area be designed to create a plaza with seating for nearby dining establishments, a new bus shelter, wider sidewalks on Easton Road, and a streamlined pedestrian connection that better links the residential area west of Bradfield Road with Easton Road, south of the intersection of Easton and Bradfield.

Design

The plan recommended many land use, site design, streetscape, and architectural design features that were included in the comprehensive township zoning rewrite adopted in 2017.

The plan also recommended the following, still-relevant recommendations:

- Preparation of a detailed wayfinding signage⁶ plan

⁶ Wayfinding signage includes directional and/or distance information to points of interest around the community. It typically uses an attractive design to enhance the community's identity.

- Location of buildings close to the sidewalk, with parking to the rear on some properties. The zoning ordinance encourages this in Roslyn, but allows for land developments to locate property along the street, provided that it is screened by a low, decorative wall, fence, and landscaping (and street trees)
- Requirement that conversions of residential structures to commercial uses maintain the appearance of residential structures

Grove Park

The plan recommended numerous improvements to Grove Park, including stormwater management, parking, pedestrian paths, and other amenities. It also recommended the park be used for activities such as farmer’s markets and performances. These recommendations should be revisited when the township prepares its Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

Abington Township Comprehensive Plan (2007)

The last Abington comprehensive plan made the following recommendations that are still-relevant:

- Master Plans: Use these for large properties to develop potential regulatory changes and use classifications that will enhance the surrounding neighborhoods and the township.
- Nodes of Development: Evaluate zoning districts and the zoning map to develop nodes (centers or hubs) of similar and complementary uses so that these nodes can thrive and the businesses within them can support each other. *Update: the township’s zoning strengthened nodes using (1) a variety of zoning text changes that further placemaking and the image of town and village centers, and (2) realignment of commercial zoning districts to establish more of a hierarchy of intensity, density, and design, with nodes such as shopping centers and village centers getting the strongest treatment.*
- Regional Planning: The plan recommended that the township, “Consider regional planning and creation of a specific plan to “allow for site-specific development plans to be pre-approved by the municipality and developed strictly in accord with that plan. Such an effort would also enhance grant application status for shared development projects, and would increase the likelihood for unified development, at least along major access corridors such as Old York Road.”
- Transition Zones: The plan recommended creation of transition zones between our residential neighborhoods and commercial districts. *Update: The zoning rewrite process completed in 2017 considered this issue. Commercial corridor zoning was modified with a linear hierarchy of intensities, but opportunities still exist to create*

transition zones between (a) predominantly commercial areas and (b) residential neighborhoods by allowing mixed-dwelling type, residential-office, and live-work units in those transition areas.

- Commercial Corridors: Develop centralized parking to reduce the amount of impervious parking area for individual properties (specifically smaller properties).
- Commercial Corridors: Develop guidelines that will create continuity between properties (internal lot connections, pedestrian walkways, architecture and street treatment). *Update: the township did this for Old York Road with the Old York Road Corridor Improvement Plan (2010)*
- Housing: Target development of housing that will encourage aging residents to stay in the Township.
- Housing: Develop tools that will enable current owners of large properties or buildings to seek adaptive reuse options that will diversify the township's housing stock.
- Housing: Develop design guidelines for small subdivisions so that the new homes constructed are not a complete departure from the vernacular of the neighborhood. *Update: zoning now requires single-site infill development meet certain design and dimensional requirements based on the characteristics of adjacent homes.*
- Opportunity Sites: Identify specific properties that will pose a challenge in the future due to vacating of the current owner/tenant and sale of the property and the attempt to create tools that will guide a suitable/viable replacement for that property. *The comprehensive zoning update addressed numerous large opportunity sites as part of the new Business Center District, and additional changes have been proposed for the Willow Grove Park Mall.*

Future Land Use Areas by Category

Following are the general, conceptual-level land use recommendations for Abington, by future land use category. These categories are depicted on the *Future Land Use Map, Fig. _____*, and the categories are described below. These recommendations are intentionally broad and the boundaries of each future land use area shown on the map are intended to be interpreted flexibly; they are not intended to be exact. These policies represent a vision that will serve as a guide for future, more specific implementation measures (e.g., zoning map and text amendments, other land use plans) and for the township as it reviews future land developments.

To contrast the future land use map with existing land use, see *Chapter 4: Existing Land Use Map, Figure.____*

Residential

This future land use category includes neighborhoods of a predominantly residential character, and represents the areas which are most cherished by Abingtonians. Abington's existing, tree-lined, residential neighborhoods add much to the township's character. Many existing neighborhoods consist of low- or relatively-low-density single-family homes (detached, and in some cases, attached units (twins)). Some of these neighborhoods' homes were built in the 19th or early 20th century. Other neighborhoods were built during the postwar suburban housing boom. Large residential neighborhoods are found in many places in Abington, and comprise much of the communities of North Hills, Crestmont, Huntingdon Valley, Glenside, McKinley, Roslyn, and many other neighborhoods.

The residential future land use category also encompasses medium-density, high-density, and institutional residential types (such as continuing care communities). These higher-density housing types include townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, quadruplexes, garden apartments, midrise apartments.

Future development in the residential future land use category should occur in the following manner:

- New homes and other buildings should be designed to fit well with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Neighborhoods should be well-served with sidewalks and other pedestrian connections internally, and should be interconnected with surrounding development and land uses.
- Residential development and neighborhoods should include abundant tree canopy and substantial landscaping. In the interest of reducing heat islands, enhancing the character of neighborhoods, and improving stormwater management and ecosystem services, residents should protect, maintain, and expand tree canopy; and are encouraged to minimize lawn area and maximize landscaping with native trees, shrubs, perennials, and grasses (this is especially important in the Residential future land use area since it occupies such a large percentage of the township's land; as noted in the existing land use chapter, residential uses make up 62 percent of the township's land area).
- To accommodate the diversity of housing types and needs, differing household sizes, and changing market preferences, land use policy will accommodate a range of housing types and sizes at varying price points. Zoning will be adjusted to accommodate a greater variety of residential lot sizes, while respecting the characteristics of existing development. A greater range of housing types is appropriate near commercial and employment centers, and near transit.
- Gradual transitions will occur between areas of (1) low density residential and (2) higher-density residential and commercial or mixed-use areas.

- In the future, should the township adopt a historic district, as recommended by Chapter 6: Historic Preservation, infill development in historic areas should employ architecture consistent with the established historic local development style.

This land use category includes most of the community service (institutional) uses in the township, including schools, a college and university, health care institutions, religious uses, and cemeteries. These uses contribute to the township's quality of life by providing a variety of important municipal, health care, education, and other services. Cemeteries even contribute to quality of life of surrounding areas by providing a unique form of open space with ample trails, trees, vegetation and wildlife that those living or working nearby have come to appreciate. Convenient access to institutional and open space land uses can enhance the appeal of residential areas.

Community service development within the Residential future land use area should occur in the following manner:

- Adequate setbacks and landscaping should be used to prevent negative impacts on nearby residential neighborhoods and areas.
- For large institutional uses located in or abutting residential neighborhoods, stepped-down building heights near residential uses and architectural design standards will be used to ensure institutional buildings' compatibility with residential uses.
- Where former institutional uses with historic, architectural, or community significance are redeveloped for other uses, redevelopment should preserve and reuse the building(s).
- Large institutions will be required to submit master plans to the township when they undergo land development or expand. Such plans will be subject to strengthened zoning requirements to help ensure that institutional development and expansion will occur in a manner compatible with surrounding residential areas.

Note: Residential uses are also an important part of the Mixed-Use Corridor Land Use Category.

Recreation/Conservation

This land use category includes land designed to serve active recreation, passive recreation, and environmental conservation purposes. These areas should be preserved, maintained, and enhanced in the following ways:

- Abington will soon begin to prepare an update to its 2006 Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resource Conservation Plan.⁷ This will identify opportunities for expanding and enhancing the township's extensive parks and open space system.
- Conservation areas should undergo stewardship to maintain or restore optimal ecological quality.
- Park and open space areas primarily used for active recreation should have unused portions of the property returned to a natural state.
- Appropriate areas should be identified and used for stormwater best management practices (BMPs), and educational signage used to explain their function.
- Environmental education opportunities should be identified and educational signage added.
- Parks and open space areas should be well-connected with trails and pathways to adjacent residential and other areas, so that nearby residents, employees, and visitors can easily access them. This is important for quality of life and public health.
- Where private open space areas are sold to a new owner, residential development should only occur as part of a residential cluster development. The development would be required to preserve environmentally-sensitive areas, viewsheds, and greenways.

Mixed-Use Corridors

Much of Abington's principal and minor arterial roads serve as its main streets. These roads do and will continue to host retail and service uses, office, institutional, and high-density residential uses. Development in these areas is usually linear, and includes areas that traditionally developed in a more suburban-style of development, such as the following:

- Old York Road between Moreland Road and Edge Hill Roads
- Easton Road, northeast of Hamilton Avenue
- Township Line Road near Church Road
- Mt. Carmel Avenue, east of Limekiln Pike
-

Generally, land uses here are located on small or modest-sized lots, with lower intensity than in the Town Center future land use category. The land uses will continue to be local-serving, convenience oriented uses. These include restaurants and take-out businesses, pharmacies, gas stations, repair shops, small stores and shops, fitness studios, and consumer services, among other uses. Institutional uses are an acceptable use; these take the form of uses such as libraries, hospitals and medical offices, emergency and government services, and religious uses. Residential uses in this category will preferably be located in a

⁷ 2006 Abington Open Space Plan, Recreation, and Environmental Resource Protection Plan:
<https://www.abingtonpa.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/17179/637822605122470000>

mixed-use building with and above nonresidential uses, but they may also be located in small-to-medium freestanding apartment buildings.

Development in the Mixed-Use Corridors will:

- Be transit-supportive and walkable.
- Conform with the township's zoning ordinance requiring better building, site, signage, and streetscape design, as sites redevelop.
- Add more green areas, including public open space. Larger properties will be required to dedicate a generous portion of their land for such space.
- Include ample landscaping and tree canopy in verges, medians, buffers, gardens, along building foundations, in open space areas, and other locations.
- Provide open space in the form of parklets and plazas.
- Include artisanal manufacturing or "maker" space (for more on these uses, see the Industrial/Employment future land use category, below).

Village Centers

This land use category includes small-to-medium-sized, mixed-use, walkable centers in the form of nodes, the origination and growth of which often occurred around a train station or important intersection. These centers feature neighborhood-serving or specialty (niche) retail uses, restaurants, services, entertainment, professional office uses, community services, and apartments (the last preferably located above nonresidential uses).

Development in the Village Centers will:

- Have a strong mixed-use component.
- Have densities greater than surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Be consistent with updated zoning standards which further strengthen well-designed, pedestrian-friendly, and transit-oriented development.
- Be guided by conceptual master plans (in selected locations), which address ideal density and intensity, land use mix, public open space, and in some cases, updated design standards to reflect the unique character of individual villages. Where villages extend across municipal boundaries, the township will invite the neighboring municipality to participate.
- Include artisan manufacturing or "maker" space (for more on these uses, see "Industrial Employment" future land use category, below).
- Include ample landscaping and tree canopy in verges, medians, buffers, gardens, along building foundations, in open space areas, and other locations.
- Provide a generous amount of open space, parklets, plazas, pavilions, and gathering areas, some of which will be open to the public.
-

Town Centers

These areas apply to the shopping centers in Abington. These are nodal areas located on principal arterial roads. All are served by public transit, including two areas that are located at or near regional rail stations. Although they typically consisted of shopping areas, they are in a state of transition.

Over time, it is likely and desirable that some or all of these transition into mixed-use town centers, with increasing amounts of nontraditional uses for malls and shopping centers. In fact, some of these centers have already incorporated such uses in the last decade, such as medical centers, offices and brewpubs. The Pavilion-Foxcroft-Acme area already includes a substantial number of residential units and is adding more, while apartments are planned immediately to the rear of Baederwood Shopping Center.

Uses in the Town Center future land use category might take the form of an increasing number of some or all of the following:

- Mixed use buildings which include residential uses
- Services, such as fitness centers, academic institutions, and medical services
- Entertainment, performance venues, and indoor recreation
- Hotels (possibly the “boutique” variety)
- Community center
- Artisanal manufacturing or shared industrial arts workspaces

In some of these areas, greater intensity of development may be appropriate, provided there is an adequate transportation network (multimodal in nature, and preferably served by transit) and where not incompatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods. As noted in Chapter 7: Housing, since Abington is 98 percent built-out, there are few areas remaining that can accommodate anything but limited numbers of new residents. These town center areas comprise, through redevelopment, a large portion of the land remaining that might accommodate such growth.

Such areas play an important role in changing a postwar tendency for new suburban commercial growth to sprawl along highways, with never-ending blacktop, little character, and areas which are unpleasant and/or unsafe to walk along and few interconnections or pedestrian facilities. Instead, focusing development and redevelopment in a more nodal form in town centers allows for the development of more walkable, mutually-reinforcing, mixed land uses, with plentiful landscaping, walking paths, and common plazas and courtyards for public gathering space. High design standards, placemaking, and programming will be important considerations in these areas.

Development in Town Centers will:

- Be pedestrian-oriented and transit-oriented (rail and/or bus).
- Consist of a mix of uses, such as retail (including dining and entertainment), residential, office, community services, public open space.
- Be medium-to-high intensity/density in scale.
- Require major residential projects to submit fiscal impact studies and transportation impact studies, in the interest of ensuring that such development will not unduly burden the township and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Include ample landscaping and tree canopy in verges, medians, buffers, gardens, along building foundations, in open space areas, and other locations.
- Provide a generous amount of open space, parklets, plazas, pavilions, and gathering areas, some of which will be open to the public.
- Be subject to master plans, with recommendations calibrated to the appropriate character of each Town Center location, that portray a coherent, interconnected development for the center over time. Such plans would address ideal density and intensity, land use mix, and public open space. Where town center areas abut another municipality, the township will invite the neighboring municipality to participate.
- Demonstrate exceptional standards of building and site design.
- Be highly interconnected, and connected to surrounding areas with pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks.
- Allow artisan manufacturing or “maker” space (for more on these uses, see “Industrial Employment” future land use category, below).

Industrial/Employment

This land use category provides for industrial, research & development (R&D), biotech, and office uses. It is located on Highland Avenue in Glenside. Although limited in extent, it is important for Abington to protect this land use category, as it allows the township to maintain a presence in the industrial sector, along with related jobs and economic development. That helps its economy be more diverse, and provides options for employment and economic development outside of commercial and other sectors, making the local economy more resilient to downturns affecting retail or office sectors.

Industrial jobs include many that are high-paying; for example, at the time of the last Economic Census the average manufacturing job paid 25% more than the average job in Montgomery County⁸. Additionally, opportunities for manufacturing and other industrial uses may increase as the nature of the industry, technological innovation, and federal trade policy change.

Accordingly, residential uses in the largest portion of this land use area, in Glenside, will be limited so as to protect the limited land in Abington available for industrial/employment uses.

An increasingly important role for industrial areas is to host artisanal manufacturing, “maker,” or business incubator space. Incubators and “maker” space allow for entrepreneurs in industrial, culinary arts, or other fields to practice and hone their expertise in an industry in a way that requires less investment, in a manner in which multiple users of the space may share equipment and a workspace. It also provides for training and education in industrial, technical, and related fields. Such space can help entrepreneurs launch new businesses and provide an area for training new workers in these fields.

Another major issue affecting industrial areas is the rapid growth of distribution centers for online retailers. Regulations for distribution centers should be updated accordingly, and located where they will have the least impact on residential areas and the transportation system.

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017).

Town Centers and Master Plans

Master plans will be created for areas that might undergo redevelopment.

These could illustrate the conceptual:

- Road and driveway networks, reconfigurations, and connectivity improvements,
- A greater mix of land uses,
- Development intensities,
- Building heights,
- Ample parks and open for use by the public,
- Extensive areas for landscaping and green areas with abundant tree canopy and naturalized stormwater management features,
- Transit connections,
- Pedestrian walkways, trails, and safety measures
- Complete streets (for use by all users)

Development in the Industrial/Employment area should be occur in the following manner:

- With adequate setbacks, landscaping, and safeguards to protect nearby residential areas from truck traffic, noise, odors, and any other impacts associated with industrial uses.
- The small portion of the Suburban Industrial zoning district abutting suburban homes will be rezoned as residential. Artisanal manufacturing and maker space should be added to the list of uses in the zoning ordinance, and use regulations added. This should be allowed throughout the SI-Suburban Industrial District. These uses have become increasingly popular and can help promote or foster small businesses, facilitate education and training, allow for shared use of expensive equipment and resources, and serve as a place for budding artists to practice or rehearse.
- Regulations for distribution centers should be updated to reflect the rapid growth in such centers for online retailers and their related land use and transportation impacts.

Industrial/Employment (Neighborhood)

The small industrial areas in Crestmont and Willow Grove (currently zoned “SI Suburban Industrial-W”) will have their permitted uses reviewed to ensure that lumber yards and similar potential nuisances are not allowed due to their location in a residential neighborhood. Intensity of industrial development allowed in this future land use category will be lesser than that allowed in the Industrial/Employment future land use category.

Transit-Oriented Overlay

Abington has seven SEPTA Regional Rail stations—second only to Lower Merion in Montgomery County. Six of these are suitable for transit-oriented development (TOD), and are

SEPTA’s Transit-Supportive Communities

The Transit-Supportive Communities program promotes transit-oriented, mixed-use, sustainable, and equitable development. It summarizes its benefits (which apply to TOD generally) as follows:

- Economic development by revitalizing downtowns and urban neighborhoods, enhancing tax revenue
- Reducing household spending by lowering household driving costs
- Reduced household driving, lowering congestion, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions
- Walkable and accessible communities, promoting healthy and active lifestyles

Source: (accessed 8/10/2022)
<https://planning.septa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SEPTA-TSCD-Program-Statement-designed-v6.pdf>

assigned to the transit-oriented overlay future land use category. These include: Noble, Crestmont, North Hills, Roslyn, and Ardsley. Rydal station is appropriate for TOD for the nearby portions of the Fairway and Rydal Road. Although the station for Glenside is located outside the township's boundaries, overlay areas in Abington have been applied for it as well.

In these areas the township will build upon the TOD provisions of the comprehensive zoning ordinance adopted in 2017 and the recommendations of the Walk-Park-Train Abington plan, as well as examine further refinements to the zoning ordinance to require appropriate building and site design, building height, and development density and intensity. Zoning will ensure that development in these areas is designed best to contribute to transit. Buildings and sites will be designed in a way that make it easy to use transit and will use extensive pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Additional consideration should be given to high-frequency bus lines such as the Route 55 on Old York Road, the recommendations of the Walk-Park-Train Abington plan, Montgomery County Planning Commission's new Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) model ordinance⁹, and SEPTA's new Transit-Supportive Community Development Program.¹⁰

Mixed Residential Overlay

The Mixed Residential Overlay future land use category applies to areas where a more gradual hierarchy of uses and development intensities or densities will be allowed to develop over time. This may mean twins, duplexes, triplexes, and possibly townhomes in the following situations:

1. On blocks in single-family residential districts (R2, R3, or R4 Residential Districts)

Impacts on Public Schools

The Mixed Residential Overlay would provide more options than just single-family *detached* homes by providing for single-family *attached* homes. These homes tend to have less of an impact on public school districts and resulting costs than single-family detached homes do. As noted in the Abington School District Enrollment Projections by MCPC (2016), there were more than four times as many school-aged children per unit in new single-family detached units as in new single-family attached units.

Children of school age by unit type for new units, Montgomery County:

- Single-family detached: 0.93
- Single-family attached: 0.21

<https://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/24905/Abington-SD-Projections-Report-2016>

⁹ MCPC Model Ordinance for Transit-Oriented Development (2021): <https://www.montcopa.org/3907/Transit-Oriented-Development-TOD>

¹⁰ SEPTA's Transit Supportive Communities Program: <https://planning.septa.org/projects/transit-supportive-communities/>

where three or more of those dwelling types already exist.

2. On blocks in single family residential districts that lie within one-quarter mile of the center of each Town Center and larger Village Center future land use areas. Alternately, this could be applied to any block in single-family residential districts which directly abuts a specified Town Center or Village Center future land use area.

Controls would be put in place to ensure that any new units including the types described

above would have a perceived density (scale) not to exceed that of single-family detached homes on the same block. Many twin, duplex, triplex, and quadruplex units are already designed to appear like single-family detached homes, with entrances spaced apart or located in discrete locations.

The township will ensure that teardowns do not become an issue—particularly teardowns of historic structures. It will review minimum lot sizes to ensure that they are not so high as to be overly restrictive (and thus, less affordable) in places where smaller lot sizes are the norm.

Multiple Abington planning initiatives have recognized that many parts of the township undergo an abrupt transition from commercial-mixed use areas and transit facilities to low-density residential areas, with little transition. The township will evaluate and introduce a more gradual hierarchy of land uses and intensities/densities over time, so that abrupt changes in land use are lessened and land use patterns in such areas become more cohesive and compatible with one another.

Development in the Mixed Residential Overlay area will:

Twin Units and Property Taxes

The Mixed Residential Overlay would provide for twin units and possibly other unit types. Although twin units might be more affordable than single-family detached homes, they can still contribute a significant amount to the tax base.

A sample of randomly selected homes of the same age in Roslyn and Crestmont showed that twin homes had an assessed value per acre that was 21 percent higher than single-family detached homes.

[Note: Sample used 10 single-family detached and 10 twin homes; all homes were built in the same year].

- Provide for a greater range of dwelling types in areas close to town and village centers, which also leverages the locational benefits of those areas' proximity to transit and major roads.
- Provide greater housing choice, accommodating varied household sizes, consumer preferences, and often-changing market trends.
- Provide more customers for businesses and services offered in town and village centers.
- Ensure that the perceived density of new twins, duplexes, or triplexes is no greater than single-family detached homes on the same block, to ensure that the new homes fit with their surroundings.
- Not lead to teardowns of existing homes—particularly historic ones.

The township will evaluate the idea of introducing low-impact offices and live-work units in these areas as well, provided that they do not have a negative impact on the character of the neighborhood. Landscaping and other forms of buffering are important to minimize impacts of higher intensity areas on adjacent areas of lower-density development in areas of existing sharp differentials in land use intensities. Strong pedestrian linkages between such areas should help tie these areas together, as recommended by multiple township plans. Traffic calming measures are appropriate in these areas to mitigate the impact of traffic from high intensity development in nearby residential neighborhoods.

General Future Land Use Initiatives¹¹

Zoning Codification and Other Updates

Zoning should be updated as follows:

- To codify zoning amendments adopted since 2017 (merging them into the comprehensive zoning ordinance),
- To respond to evolving land use case law, ensuring the legal defensibility of the ordinance,
- To make adjustments based on the experience of applying the new zoning ordinance and feedback received from the zoning officer in the interest of improving enforceability of the code,
- To further strengthen the requirements for landscaping. Some of these improvements will address:
 - Retrofitted parking lots,
 - Naturalized stormwater management facilities,
 - Habitat value and improved ecosystem services,
 - Increased tree canopy,

¹¹ Not limited to any one future land use area.

- To incentivize green buildings, meeting LEED for Neighborhood Development standards, and
- To implement the latest in zoning best practices.

Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO)

The township recently prepared a comprehensive update to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance based on Montgomery County Planning Commission’s model Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. This adds the latest in SALDO best practices, including those for:

- Adding a chapter for engineering,
- Design and greening of parking lots, promoting stormwater best management practices,
- Requirements for transportation and other impact studies,
- Recommended landscape planting lists,
- Required plantings for stormwater basins and riparian corridors,
- Open space ownership and maintenance requirements, and
- Specifications for trails, bicycle routes and bicycle lanes.

After obtaining additional input as determined by the Board of Commissioners, this ordinance will be formally considered for adoption.

Increase Open Space Requirements

The township code will be modified to require more park and open space land (some which must be publicly-accessible) through the land development process. This can take the form of:

- Using zoning-- to obtain open space as a percentage of the land undergoing development. This may include parks, parklets, plazas, gardens, and pavilions. These can be important community gathering spaces, enhancing quality of life and community identity.
- Using the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) to require mandatory dedication of recreation facilities or fees-in-lieu. The next Abington parks, recreation, and open space plan should specify standards for determining the proportion of a

More open space and greenery in land developments.

Public feedback for Vision2035 and at land development meetings in recent years has shown that Abingtonians feel as if large land developments should provide more:

- Parks and open space (including parklets, landscaped plazas, gardens, pavilions and activity areas, including publicly-accessible spaces)
- Landscaping and tree canopy, and
- Stormwater best management practices

development to be provided for recreation land and for determining a fee-in-lieu amount¹².

- Requiring more landscaping, tree canopy, and naturalized stormwater management. This will include new requirements for retrofitting parking lots.

Provide Additional Provisions for Newer Land Uses

The township will update zoning to provide more detailed provisions for newer land uses. Some land uses have become more popular or evolved significantly in recent years, making it important to update zoning to adapt accordingly. Recent land use changes of note include those related to changing trends in the workplace, housing, and artisanal production. Uses which might be addressed include:

- Stacked townhomes
- “Maker space” and artisanal manufacturing. These land uses provide areas where artists and producers of crafts can practice or get a start in their industry or hobby. These can play an important role in supporting the growth of the arts—be that culinary, musical, painting, woodworking, jewelry, or other.
- Co-working centers. The pandemic has led to changes in demand for office space. While the demand for traditional office space has dropped, the demand for co-working centers that provide space for individuals, start-up businesses, or those in need of office space on a flexible basis dropped initially. However, demand has since rebounded and co-working centers have taken on additional roles serving users with more extensive spatial needs.
- Business incubators. This land use is not new, but it may would be appropriate to evaluate providing for it as a specified use, rather than address it under a broader office or industrial use category. These serve businesses in formation and development and can provide an important boost for their initial growth. In Abington, these might have a relationship to Penn-State Abington, Manor College, or other local college or university.
- Live-work uses. This use provides additional options for professionals, accommodating a dedicated residence in one part of the structure and a dedicated workplace in another part.
- Beekeeping. There has been increased demand for allowing this use in suburban areas, which helps preserve the declining honeybee population and promote biodiversity while providing a new hobby.
- Mixed-Residential Development. New housing developments should be allowed to include mixed-unit-types in the interest of facilitating creative and efficient infill

¹² Consistent with the Municipalities Planning Code, Section 503.

developments while providing a greater range of housing choices in the Village Center, Town Center, and Mixed-Use Center future land use areas.

- Solar energy generation fields. This would allow a solar installation at scale; zoning currently allows solar energy generation as an accessory use.
- Home-based baking or other food-based businesses.

Encourage Housing that is Affordable, Attainable, and Accessible

As discussed in the section above on the Residential future land use category and in Chapter 7: Housing, Abington will take steps to encourage housing that is more attainable to a range of households and families than that which currently exists in the township. In addition to the steps above, Abington will develop zoning incentivizing developers to make a portion of a new housing development available to households with moderate incomes or lower.

Additionally, Abington will evaluate techniques to encourage the provision of more accessible and visitable housing¹³. This will make it possible for Americans with disabilities to live in, and visit, more homes in the township, and also make it more feasible for Abingtonians to age in place. Specifically, the township will consider incentivizing accessible and visitable housing in zoning and using a publicly accessible database to advertise the location of available (for sale or rent) accessible units.

Land Use “Pop-Up” (a.k.a., “pilot) Projects

Abington will utilize “pop-up” projects to introduce and test land use concepts, and activate public spaces. Examples of pop-up projects include:

- Outdoor dining in place of on-street parking spaces or part of a parking lot.
- A parklet in place of underutilized yard area in commercial or mixed-use areas.
- Street festivals. These can be used to test the desirability and practicality of temporary street closures to activate downtown areas and draw customers to restaurants, entertainment, and shops.

If a pop-up project is well-received, its successful demonstration could help the township win grant funding for future implementation. An ordinance may help streamline pop-up project implementation.

¹³ Visitable housing is sometimes referred to as single-family housing with an accessible ground floor. The National Council on Independent Living describes it as having three basic components: “One zero-step entrance, doors with 32 inches of clear passage space, and one bathroom on the main floor you can get into in a wheelchair.”