

Lower Gwynedd Comprehensive Plan

Review of Comments on Draft Plan

Claire Warner, Senior Community Planner, MCPC

May 21, 2025



Planning Process

	2023									2024								2025						
	Jan-Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun-Jul	Aug-Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar	Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr-July		
Steering Committee Meetings	Kickoff Steering Committee Meeting	Beacon Property focus	Meeting topic: public outreach	Beacon Property focus	No meeting	Meeting topic: housing & demographics	No meeting	Meeting topic: review of community outreach	No meeting	Meeting topic: transportation	Meeting topic: trails, parks, open space	Meeting topic: natural features & infrastructure	Meeting topic: vision statement & focus area	Meeting topic: community facilities institutions, historic resources	Meeting topic: community facilities and institutions, Future Land Use, Bethlehem Pike Corridor Focus Area	Meeting topic: Future Land Use, review materials for open house		BOS Presentation	Meeting topic: review draft vision, recommendations, FLU map, Bethlehem Pike	NO MEETING	Review Implementation Table, Bethlehem Pike Focus Area	Review Draft Plan, Public Comment period, Adoption		
Public Engagement							Open House 1									Open House 2 (October 28)								
					Community Survey									Vision Survey										
Plan Development			Research & Analysis											Draft & Review Plan							Final Plan Development & Adoption			

Plan Organization and Topics Covered

- **Introduction and Vision Statement**
- **Future Land Use Plan and Implementation**
- **Place and People** (demographics, jobs and employment)
- **Housing and Neighborhoods** (housing trends, affordability)
- **Transportation** (commuting patterns, traffic calming, walkability)
- **Open Space Trails and Parks**
- **Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure** (natural resources, water/sewer, energy, waste reduction)
- **Historic and Cultural Resources**
- **Community Facilities and Institutions** (schools, health and social wellbeing)
- **Bethlehem Pike Focus Area**

Implementation Plan

Community Vision



Goals



Recommendations



Action Steps

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)	Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
		Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
		Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
Housing Chapter Goals, Recommendations, and Steps towards implementation											
Goal: Maintain the overall scale and character of the township's established residential neighborhoods.											
R	Encourage the preservation of existing housing stock. <i>See Historic Preservation chapter for recommendations related to preservation of historic buildings.</i>										
S	Conduct an audit of the existing residential zoning standards to ensure any new infill development is compatible with each neighborhood's existing scale and character and consider allowing infill development where it isn't currently permitted.	x							short	Planning Commission	
S	Consider zoning updates to encourage the reuse of existing buildings through density bonuses.	x							short	Planning Commission	
R	Improve the walkability and pedestrian connections within existing neighborhoods. <i>See the Transportation chapter for more information and recommendations.</i>										
S	Conduct an audit of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to ensure the design of residential neighborhoods and subdivisions encourages walkability and active transportation generally.		x					x	short-ongoing	Planning Commission	
Goal: Meet the housing needs of current and future residents.											
R	Expand the housing opportunities in areas that are appropriate for higher-density residential development along Bethlehem Pike.										
S	Conduct an audit of the existing zoning along the Bethlehem Pike corridor, including the Lower Pike Overlay District to promote mixed use and residential development and ensure any new development is of the desired scale and character. <i>See the Bethlehem Pike Focus Area chapter for more information and recommendations.</i>	x				x			short	Planning Commission	
R	Expand the housing opportunities in areas that are appropriate for higher-density and more attainable residential development within one-quarter mile of the Regional Rail stations.										
S	Consider revising the existing MT Mass Transit Overlay District to include all areas within one-quarter mile of the Penlyn and Gwynedd Valley train stations. Evaluate allowing moderately higher-density residential land uses within the MT overlay, where appropriate. <i>See the Transportation chapters for more information on transit-oriented development.</i>	x				x			short	Planning Commission, Montgomery County, SEPTA	

Draft Plan Comments



Topic	Comment Summary
Sidewalks and trails	Sidewalks and trails plan is not included in the comp plan
Future Land Use Map and Categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change “Town Center Mixed-Use” category of the future land-use map to “Mixed-Use” - Future Land Use Map - Town Center Mixed Use should only be for Bethlehem Pike - Berkadia property not consistent with the comp plan and another land use category should be considered for this area that is more consistent with what is being proposed. Apartment is not mentioned in connection with the BET proposal. - Ambler Yards and William Penn Inn should be different land use category
Future Land Use Overlays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greenway Corridor is too stringent. Generalize the language, or just include language elsewhere about the value of riparian buffers - The Future Land Use identifies the main areas for changing land uses as within ¼ mile of Penllyn and Gwynedd Valley train stations. Is this appropriate for Lower Gwynedd?
Bethlehem Pike Focus Area Vision	The Bethlehem Pike corridor from Spring House to Ambler could become more vibrant and cohesive, but that might be less likely to happen where there is a stretch of a suburban 5-lane highway corridor. Is a “town” the only conceivable vision for the Bethlehem Pike corridor? Can a smartly planned and revitalized suburban highway corridor have character?
Vision Statement - Bethlehem Pike Focus Area	Vision Statement - Town Center element of Bethlehem Pike - “Lower Gwynedd strives to create redevelopment opportunities for the Bethlehem Pike corridor as a town center.” Is this a good description and goal?

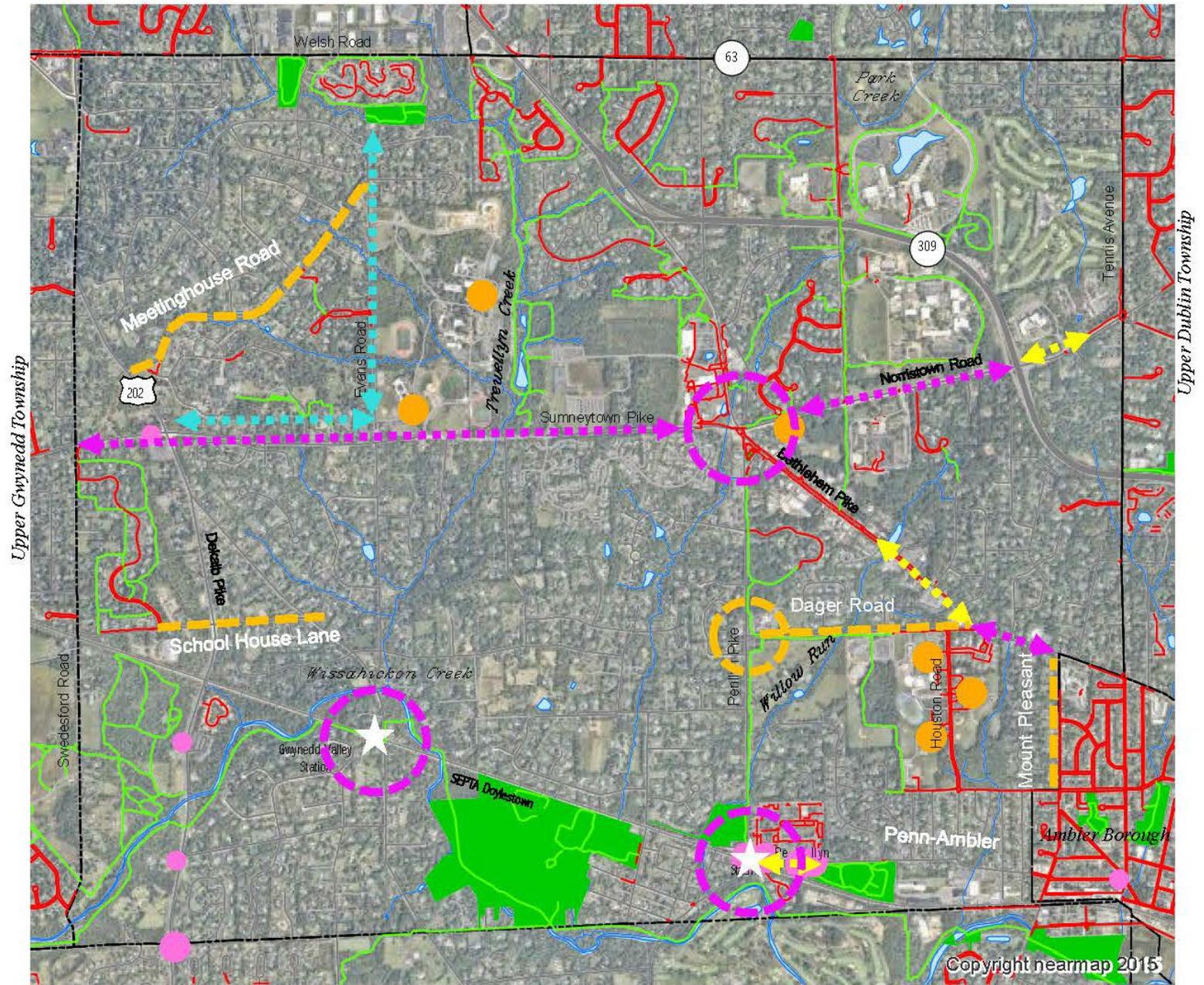
FOR DISCUSSION: Walkability Map

Comments:

Sidewalk and trails plan and that it is not included in the comp plan.

Comprehensive plan will include references to the sidewalk and trail plan and recommendations to complete a sidewalk and trail plan.

-  SEPTA Bus Stops
-  Schools
-  Sidewalks
-  Trails
-  Parks
-  Priority Pedestrian Connection
-  Potential Trail Connection
-  Traffic safety (i.e. speeding) areas of concern
-  Township Pedestrian Improvement Project



FOR DISCUSSION: Future Land Use Map

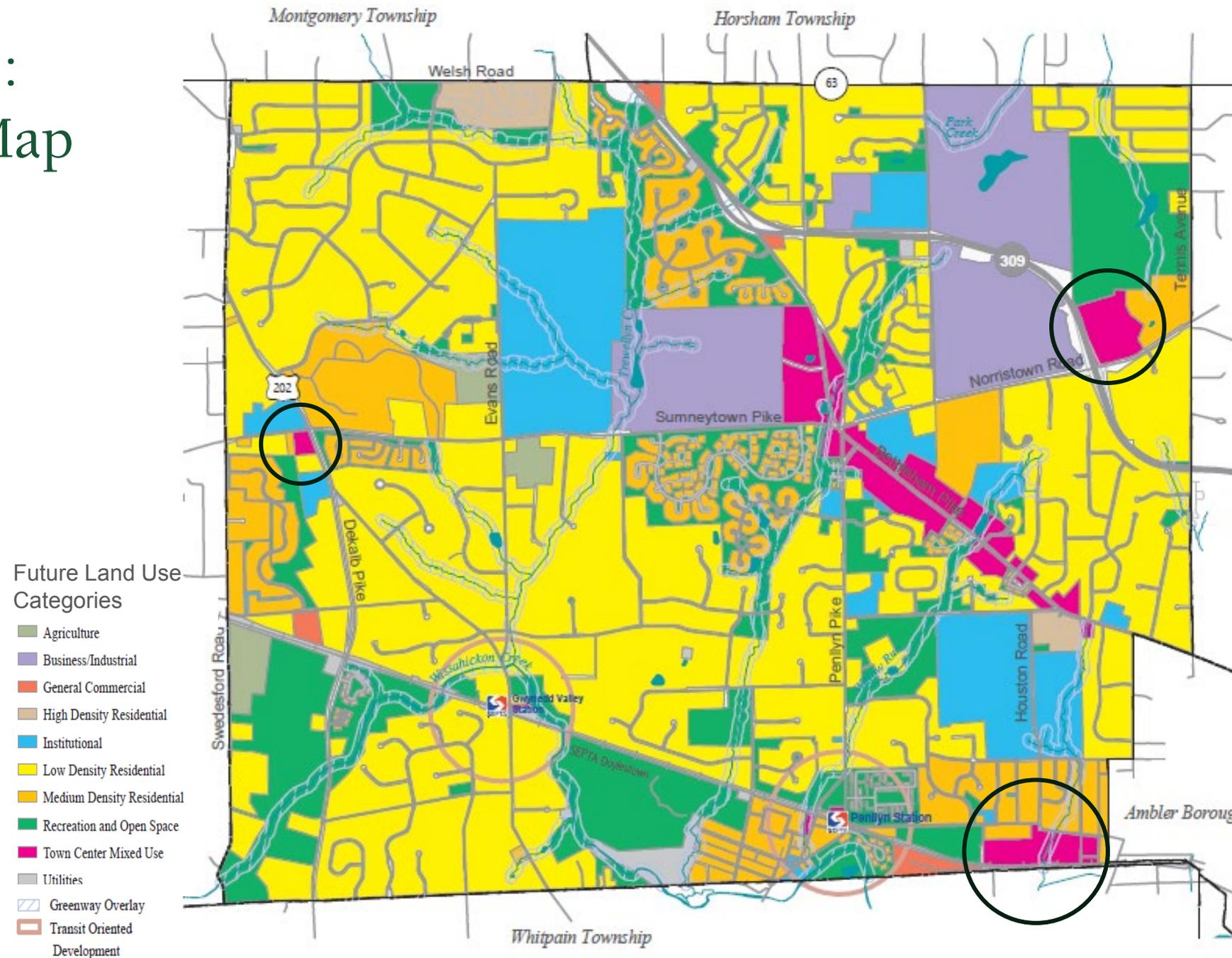
Comments:

Town Center Mixed Use Category

- “Town Center Mixed Use” should just be “Mixed Use”
- “Town Center Mixed Use” should only be for Bethlehem Pike
- Consider another land use category that is more consistent with what is being proposed at the Berkadia property.
- Ambler Yards and William Penn Inn should be different land use category.

Overlays

- How much emphasis should be put on the train stations (TOD)?
- Is it appropriate to highlight the riparian corridors in the FLU map?



FOR DISCUSSION: Future Land Use Map

Steering Committee Responses:

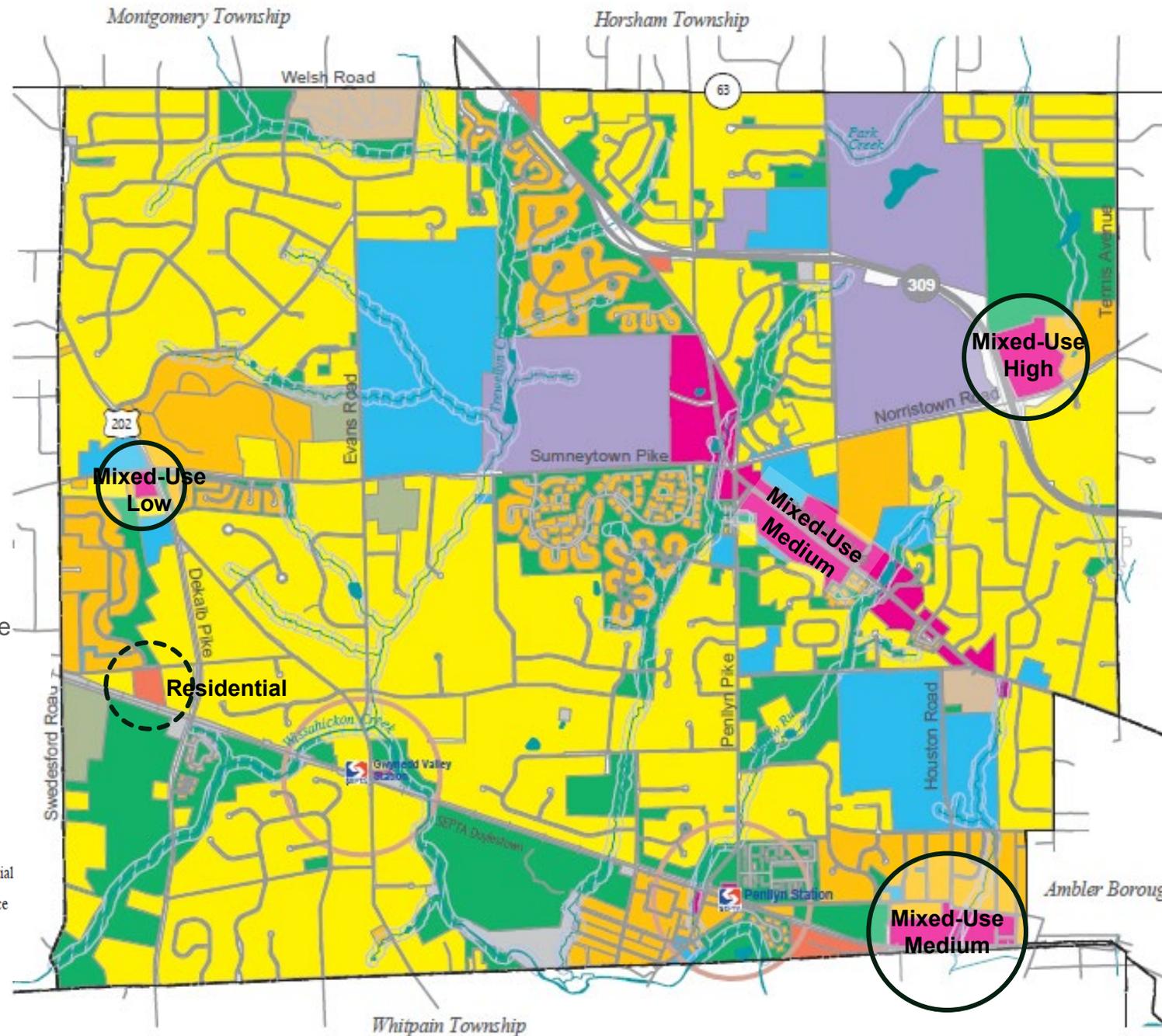
- The “Mixed Use” Future Land Use category will have tiers to account for different contexts:
 - High
 - Medium
 - Low

Overlays – not land use category

- 1/4-mile radius around train station: appropriate for future gentle density increases, general station area improvements and supportive neighborhood-serving businesses
- Greenway Overlay illustrates where development is not appropriate

Future Land Use Categories

- Agriculture
- Business/Industrial
- General Commercial
- High Density Residential
- Institutional
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Recreation and Open Space
- Town Center Mixed Use
- Utilities
- Greenway Overlay
- Transit Oriented Development

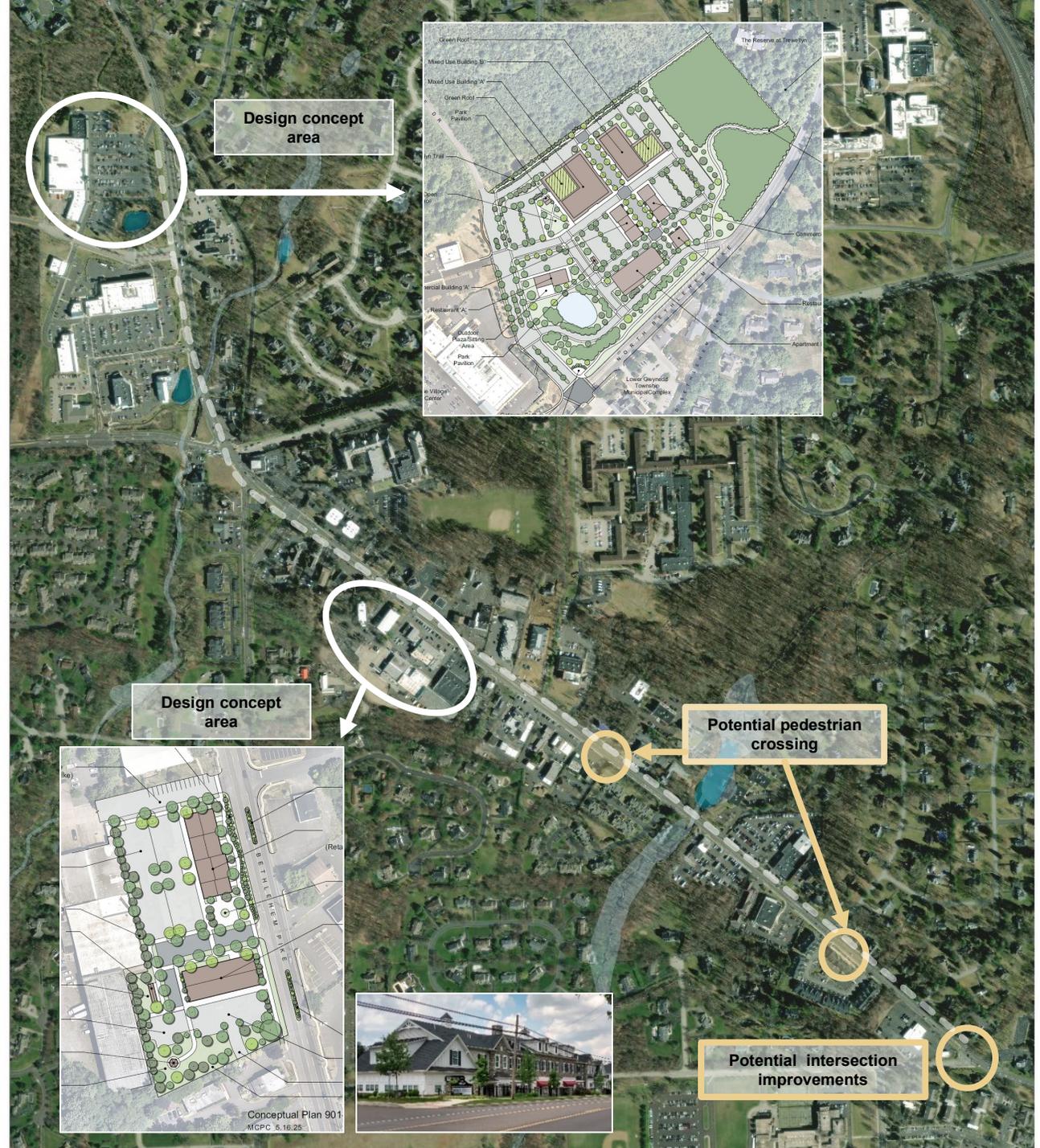


FOR DISCUSSION: Bethlehem Pike Focus Area Vision

Comments:

The Bethlehem Pike corridor from Spring House to Ambler could become more vibrant and cohesive, but that might be less likely to happen where there is, and will continue to be, a relatively short stretch of a suburban 5-lane highway corridor. *Is a “town” the only conceivable vision for the Bethlehem Pike corridor? Can a smartly planned and revitalized suburban highway corridor have character?*

Steering Committee Response: Focus on the elements of a walkable community but minimize the emphasis on “town”. Consider how Bethlehem Pike will be a revitalized suburban corridor into a place that has character and destinations and is safer for pedestrians.



What's Next:

- MCPC to prepare final draft and sent to township
- Advertisement for public hearing begins the 45-day required public review period
- Presentation at public meeting

If you have questions or comments, contact:

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