

JANUARY 29, 2018 | LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The first of three public meetings for the Upper Northwest District Plan took place on January 29, 2018 in the Brossman Center at the Lutheran Theological Seminary. Despite being rescheduled due to inclement weather, the event attracted over 350 attendees.

This meeting served a dual purpose. The first was to educate the public about the District Planning process and the existing conditions of the Upper Northwest District. The second was to gather community input on planning preferences and priorities to create a foundation for district plan content. Boards communicating existing conditions using maps, charts, and photos were displayed for public viewing. A presentation was also made about the district's existing conditions and the planning process in general. Afterwards, Planning Commission staff led small groups in a mapping exercise to garner community input.

The group exercise enabled residents to identify the important physical attributes of their community. Groups were asked to identify **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **barriers**, and **opportunity** areas within the Upper Northwest District. After these four attributes were identified, trace paper was laid over the maps so that groups could identify potential planning **focus areas** for the Upper Northwest District Plan.

Planning **focus areas** are areas where multiple layers of public intervention (e.g. zoning changes, land sales or acquisition, infrastructure improvements, business incentives, etc.) can come together to create positive momentum and revitalize specific intersections, corridors, or neighborhoods.

The results of the group mapping exercise are summarized on the following pages. The feedback obtained from this exercise will inform the recommendations for the Upper Northwest District Plan.

The second community meeting will be held on March 26th, 2018 at Germantown Friends School.

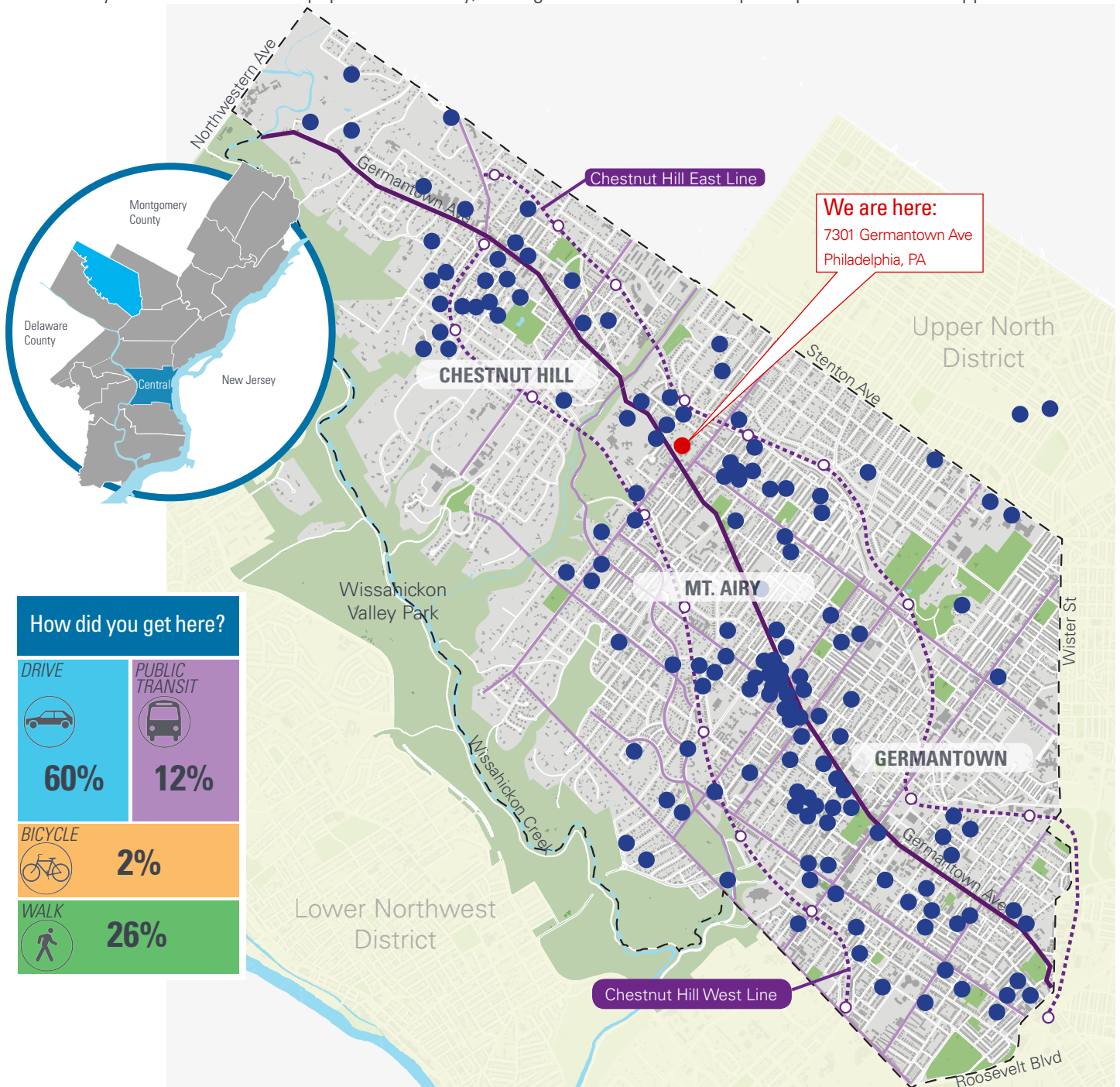


Existing conditions being presented to the large crowd of attendees

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

When they arrived, residents were asked to participate in a **“Where Do You Live”** welcoming activity. This activity assesses what areas of the Upper Northwest District participants represented. Owing to the large attendance, however, not everyone participated in this activity.

Meeting participants came from all areas within the district, although attendance was lowest from eastern Germantown and Mount Airy. Commensurate with population density, the highest concentration of participants came from upper Germantown.



STRENGTHS

Participants were asked to share **strengths** within the district. These can be popular destinations, parks, transportation amenities, commercial corridors, education or job facilities, health institutions or frequently visited retail locations.

Identifying strengths helps the staff take the temperature of the district and understand local perspectives about recommendations that might emerge as part of the plan.

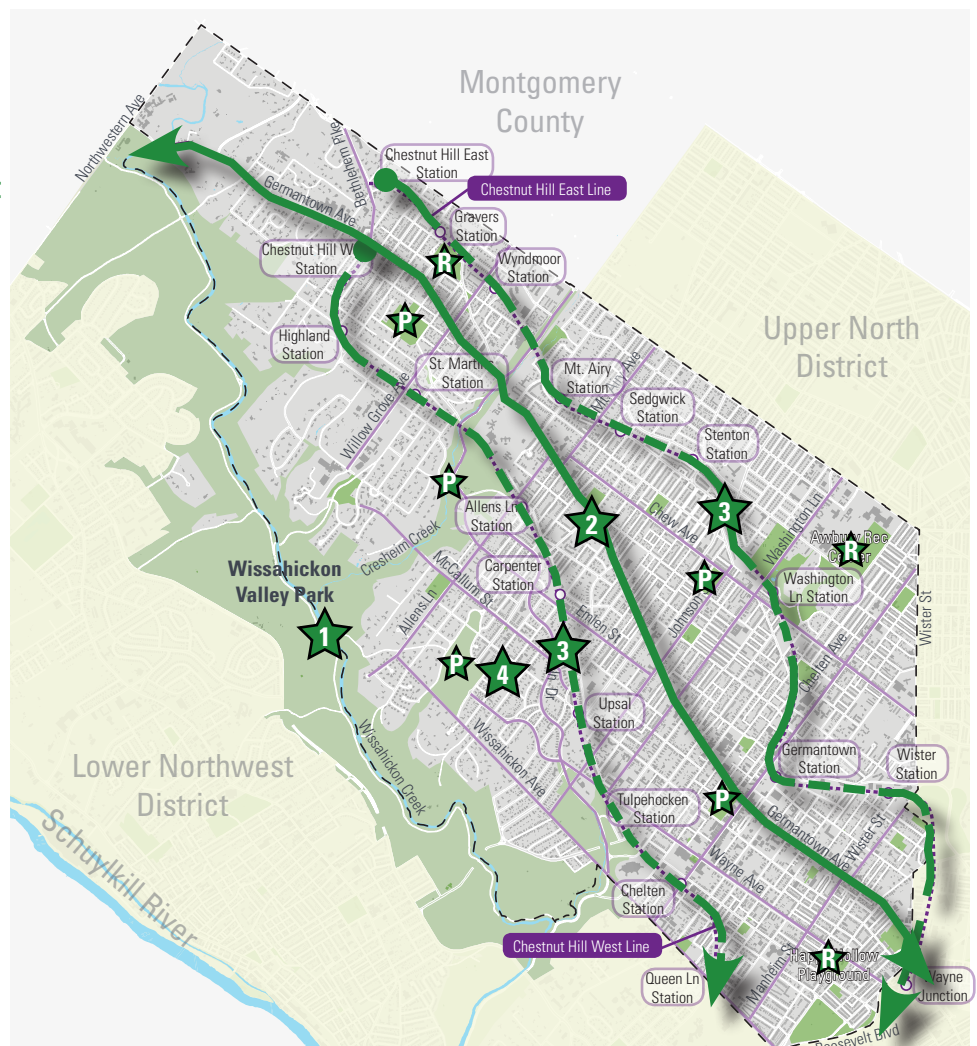
Five public parks (P) and three recreation centers/playgrounds (R) were identified as strengths. In addition to recreation amenities, the following were the most commonly identified as **strengths**:

1. **Wissahickon Valley Park**
2. **Germantown Avenue Commercial Corridor**
3. **SEPTA Chestnut Hill East & West Regional Rail Lines**
4. **Mt. Airy Village**

DISTRICT-WIDE STRENGTHS



- Historic Properties/Districts
- Public School Activism
- Neighborhood Social Capital
- Tree Cover



WEAKNESSES

Participants were asked to share **weaknesses** within the district. These can be areas of concentrated vacancy, under-performing commercial centers, areas lacking in accessible public open space, or physical features that are unsafe.

Identified weaknesses might warrant additional public investment or other attention in order to mitigate their negative influence on the district.

The following are the seven most identified **weaknesses**:

DISTRICT-WIDE WEAKNESSES

- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Speeding, Road Conditions
- Poor Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections to Parks and Transit

1. Infrequent Regional Rail service
2. Areas of flooding
3. Germantown High School



BARRIERS

Participants were asked to share the factors (environmental, physical, social) that create **barriers** within the district. Barriers might be physical attributes that the city could work on to improve over time through engineering interventions, better urban design, or other changes. They could also be psychological barriers, such as safety due to poor lighting or lack of street life.

The following are the eight most identified **barriers**:

DISTRICT-WIDE BARRIERS

- Speeding, Road Conditions
- Poor Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections to Parks and Transit
- Blight/Vacancy
- Crime

1. Washington Lane
2. Lincoln Drive
3. Wissahickon Avenue
4. Cheltenham Avenue



OPPORTUNITIES

Participants were asked to share areas of **opportunity** within the district where planning and design interventions can have a positive effect. Opportunity areas are specific sites, corridors, intersections or neighborhood centers that the community sees changing positively over the next 10 years.

The following were the nine most commonly identified opportunity areas:

DISTRICT-WIDE OPPORTUNITIES

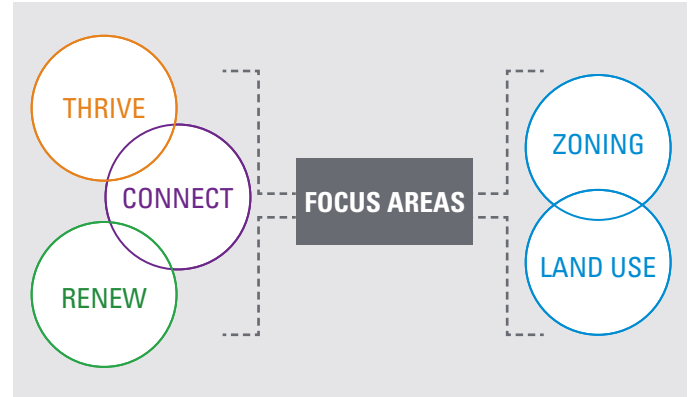
- Playground and Park Improvements
- Educational Opportunities and Workforce Development
- Preservation and Reuse of Historic Buildings
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections to Parks and Transit

1. **Central Germantown (including Germantown High School, Town Hall, and Cheltenham Avenue)**
2. **Wayne Junction**
3. **Happy Hollow Playground**
4. **Cheltenham Avenue**



FOCUS AREAS

Based on the participants' recommendations for opportunity areas, we have defined two specific focus areas that will move forward in the Upper Northwest Plan. These two areas, both capturing SEPTA Regional Rail stations, will be developed to enhance the economic and cultural vitality of the Germantown neighborhood.



1. The Central Germantown Focus Area features the existing commercial corridor along Germantown Avenue and the declining storefronts along Cheltenham Avenue. As the main intersection sits between Cheltenham Station along the Chestnut Hill West Line and Germantown Station along the Chestnut Hill Station Line, Central Germantown has the opportunity to become a transit hub surrounded by an active mixed-use center that embraces the historical character of the neighborhood.

2. The Wayne Junction Focus Area surrounds the historic Wayne Junction Station along the Chestnut Hill East Line. This area has an opportunity to reconnect to surrounding residential and open spaces.



APPENDIX OF COMMENTS

In addition to the exercises, participants left comments on separate boards about the Upper Northwest District that they would like to see addressed in the plan. These included:

Protecting The Environment

- "Train your Block Captain"
- "Ensure funding for Street Tree program"
- "Storm water Bump-outs and Traffic Calming!"

Street Safety For All Modes

- "Playground to housing: Wrong! Still no playground" —Penny Pulaski
- "Bike Patrol from Chew St & Upsal St to Chew St & Meehan St #CommonSense"
- "Germantown: Impossible to cross safely" (at Phil Ellena Street)
- "We need more town watch"
- "To slow traffic down, traffic lights need to be replaced from Berkeley to Coulter"
- "Connect the Bike Network!!"
- "Repaint existing bike lanes"
- "Chew St: Crosswalk/Stop Sign BADLY NEEDED" (at Phil Ellena Street)
- "School Zone & No Cross Walks" refers to area along Wayne Ave and Tulpehocken Station
- "Lighting on Walnut Lane"
- "Traffic calming on Walnut Lane near Tulpehocken Station; near 4 Freedoms/Bus Stop"
- "Traffic calming on Germantown Ave & Cresheim!"
- "Better bus connections to Regional Rail station (west)"
- "Increase bike lanes. Find safe routes with fewest hills"

Aging Homes & Historic Sites

- "Consider tax abatements for Preservation and Conservation Easements on Historic Development properties"
- "E. Mt Pleasant from Germantown to Sedgwick Train Station: some beautiful old homes in disrepair"
- "Use designs for new uses that preserve and honor our history. STOP TEARING DOWN!"
- "More homeowners need assistance with repairs"
- "We should not tear down old buildings to construct new ones with 10 YEAR TAX ABATEMENTS!"
- "Need demolition delay"
- "This needs to be addressed with economic support to families to remove lead point" refers to Percent of Children with First-Time Diagnosis of Elevated Blood Lead Levels

APPENDIX OF COMMENTS

General Comments

- "Keep residential areas residential"
- "Development pressures at Tulpehocken Station"
- "Place more buildings on Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Better beef up the Historical Commission Staff"
- "Better training for block captains and background checks!!"
- "Preserve green space, especially in the lower part of the district when there is less green space (Wayne Junction Wister Germantown Station)"
- "Respectful development a must"
- "Staying on top of/Repairing great housing stock"
- "Provide tax abatement for renovation/preservation/adaptive re-use"
- "Recognize value of easements"
- "Less parking and more biking"
- "Preserving and creating affordable housing: in all areas for more equitability in terms of race"
- "No CMX-3 Zoning in residential areas"
- "Support Germantown Avenue Commercial Corridor"
- "Protect the history of the Neighborhood"
- "Impact of the loss of the Lutheran Theological Seminary, we are now United Lutheran Seminary. You are here"
- "Avoid billboards—more permeable surfaces (roads/sidewalks)"
- "Impact of large, unwieldy condominiums being built on Germantown Avenue: No more new construction"
- "Don't forget about Chew Avenue!!"
- "Any chance we could bring back the 23 Trolley in some form?"
- "Upgrade living conditions in lower Germantown"
- "Revive the multicultural Heritage Corridor Study (Patty Aden's)"
- "Long range planning must include plans for net zero emissions"
- "Support residential solar with grid upgrades"
- "Maintain income diversity"
- "Better outreach/communication to lower income residents that don't have internet—they should be part of planning process"
- "Remember to consider the effects of changes to the lower income/poverty residents"
- "Make sure Southwest Germantown (a high poverty area) gets resources"

