

JANUARY 28TH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY



**BOROUGH OF
AMBLER**



AGENDA

- Attendees
- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Natural Resources & Open Space
- Placemaking & Placekeeping
- Community Vision
- EAC - Written Input



ATTENDEES

- Ambler Borough Planning Commission: John Oswald, Al Comly, Carol Ann DiPietro, Carissa Hazelton, Mary Spross, Lee Meinicke, Theresa Clement, and Isaac Kessler
- Borough Staff: Kyle Detweiler, Borough Manager; Liz Kunzier, Main Street Manager/Borough Manager's Assistant; Glenn Kucher, Code Enforcement Officer
- Borough Council
- MCPC: Tim Konetchy, Senior Community Planner; Claire Warner, Senior Community Planner; John Miklos, Senior Community Planner; Marley Bice, Asst. Community Planning Manager; Ellen Miramontes, Principal Trails & Open Space Planner; Laureen Sendel-Grant, Principal Transportation Planner; Matt Edmond, Former Assistant Director
- Residents: 65 Sign-ins



Agree

Neutral or Don't Know

Disagree

INPUT ON HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

"There is currently diversity, but I worry high home prices will erode it."

Yes + its Great!

Yes and I want my street a huge drive!

We love diversity but we see struggling with overt class activity (NW Ambler)

yes, but I have concerns about minority population being displaced or pushed into certain neighborhoods due to displacement needs to encourage...

There is currently diversity, but I worry high home prices will erode it.

S, but I would like to see a certain number of units dedicated to "affordable housing"

We need a pre-emptive charm all that residential character of Ambler when considering new development

Working in quality of life is considered.

Stop high rise building that is killing the charm that brought us here.

Can we encourage multi-generational living and/or dividing existing dwellings for more affordable homes with what we have already?

WE HAVE NO MORE development WE HAVE ENOUGH

Keep Open More Open Space NO MORE HOUSES!

NOT ENOUGH

STRONGLY DISAGREE

Need more affordable housing

The business need more affordable housing options, especially in today's market crisis.

Options for seniors and ability to age in place

STRONGLY DISAGREE

Clearer historic sign doesn't know this

helpful

There are a lot of landlords that do not ensure the details are clear of show by the rental which makes walking units for the residents of Ambler

Maintaining and attracting home ownership along encourages a different kind of community stewardship

Home repairs

enforcing light pollution + intrusion It's a nuisance

light-sound pollution is det a growing concern!

YES PRESERVATION NOT JUST A PLAQUE!

ABSOLUTELY!! HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS A MUST HAVE. MANY AMBLER HOUSE, AMBLER THEATER, ETC. (MANY OTHERS) SHOULD BE PROTECTED.

Need historic preservation ordinances

YES

Yes yes yes

history We need a way

model railroad

MY NEIGHBORHOOD REFLECTS MY COMMUNITY: THERE ARE HOUSEHOLDS OF VARYING INCOMES, BACKGROUNDS, RACES, ETHNICITIES, AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS.

■ **Agree:**

- Mainly single-family homes
- Yes, it's great!
- Yes, and I want my street to stay diverse

■ **Neutral:**

- Agree, but apartments... need to be cared for.
- Yes, but I have concerns about minority populations being displaced or pocketed into certain neighborhoods due to affordability, access to housing etc.
- There is currently diversity, but I worry high home prices will erode it.



THE BOROUGH SHOULD CONTINUE TO ALLOW THE CONSTRUCTION OF VARIOUS TYPES OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT. OFFERING AN ARRAY OF DWELLING TYPES, LAYOUTS, AND SIZES ALLOWS HOUSEHOLDS WITH DIFFERENT NEEDS TO CHOOSE TO LIVE HERE.

■ **Agree:**

- Yes!
 - ... but please keep charm and character of Ambler when considering new development.
 - ... but with height restrictions in keeping with the character of Ambler. (x2)
 - ... but I would like to see... "affordable housing." (x2)

■ **Neutral:**

- Planning and regulation of infill development.
- As long as parking and quality of life is considered... we need to give people parking spots when we add more residential housing.
- Can we encourage multi-generational living and/or dividing existing dwellings for more affordable homes with what we have already?
- Stop high rise buildings. It's killing the charm that brought us here.

■ **Disagree:**

- Open space. (x3)
- Traffic congestion during peak hours is already too heavy. More residents mean more traffic.
- Renovate existing structures.
- No more development. (x2)



THERE ARE HOUSING OPTIONS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY THAT ARE AFFORDABLE AT ALL INCOME LEVELS.

■ **Neutral:**

- Ambler itself has lots of variety now – but building high-rises for upper middle class who often have no buy-in other than cache does not benefit the community.

■ **Disagree:**

- Strongly disagree.
- Need more affordable housing. (x5)
- Affordability is an issue particularly for young adults and families – more so now than 25 years ago, sadly.



AGING RESIDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO HOUSING OPTIONS THAT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO CONTINUE TO LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY.

■ **Neutral:**

- Much of the housing would seem to present problems for people of limited mobility.

■ **Disagree:**

- Strongly disagree.
- The borough needs more affordable housing options, especially in today's housing market crisis.
- There is insufficient affordable housing for seniors on fixed incomes.
- Ambler needs more affordable options for seniors and ability to age in place.
- Housing stock doesn't allow this.
- Affordable housing for all is needed. What about some tiny homes mixed in that folks with very limited incomes could afford.



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IS NEEDED FOR _____.

■ **Agree:**

- Maintaining and attracting homeownership. Owning encourages a different kind of community stewardship.
- Any help to keep seniors in their homes.
- Younger populations facing extreme difficulty entering the housing market due to lack of inventory. Offer “First Time Homebuyer” grants and education.

■ **Neutral:**

- Home repairs.
- Light and sound pollution. (x2)



THE BOROUGH SHOULD PROMOTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION THROUGH THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES, OUTREACH AND EDUCATION, AND THROUGH RECOGNITION PROGRAMS (SUCH AS PLAQUES).

■ **Agree:**

- Yes. (x6)
- Absolutely. Without our history, we lose our character and sense of place.
- Absolutely! Historic Preservation is a must have. Mary Ambler House, Ambler Theater, many others should be protected.
- Yes, but so long as it is not an excuse to prevent construction with more density.
- QR codes on historic sites with more information. Clear map and info on website of historic sites.
- Renovate existing structures, maintain facades
- Encourage owners along Butler Avenue to restore cornices and other features.
- We need a museum with a model railroad diorama of old Ambler/Wissahickon

■ **Neutral:**

- Need historic preservation ordinance



THE BOROUGH SHOULD IMPROVE _____.

■ **Agree:**

- Locations: Tennis Avenue (x3); Intersections (x3); Blinking lights at crosswalks @ Bannockburn/Spring Garden and Park/Butler; 5-point intersection at Tennis/N. Spring Garden - visibility is poor; work with Whitpain to create crosswalks for the Green Ribbon Trail crossing at Mt. Pleasant and Butler (x2); Better help for pedestrians to cross Bethlehem Pike. (x2); blind intersection when driving at Poplar/Mattison and difficult to cross here on foot due to limited curb cuts. Can we improve visibility for both drivers and walkers?
- Consider limiting right turns on red where parking limits visibility or more dangerous intersections with a history of accidents.
- Clearly marked bike lanes/trails for children.
- Stop sign compliance.
- Street conditions and safety.
- Condition drivers to look before turning.

■ **Neutral:**

- Use a portion of the Borough Hall property for a parking garage.
- Manage salt on roads better to avoid polluting local waterways. (x3)
- Parking signage.
- More signage for pedestrians and bicyclists on side streets.



THE BOROUGH SHOULD PRIORITIZE IMPROVEMENTS TO BUS STOPS AND THE TRAIN STATION.

■ **Agree:**

- Train station - need real crosswalks where pedestrians actually cross.
- Covered areas where possible.
- Easier pedestrian access to inbound platform toward Philadelphia.
- SEPTA should coordinate schedules of local buses with rail lines
- It's very important to have early and late 94 and 95 bus times preserved; otherwise, people are late or stranded.
- SEPTA station should invite foot traffic into town, rather than just to parking lot, with landscaping.
- Bus stop shelters and bike racks.
- I take the train, and I'm worried about the proposed residential development in the parking lot.

■ **Neutral:**

- Would rely more on the 94 bus but it runs very infrequently. More runs would be a help!
- Bus shelters/benches.



THE BOROUGH SHOULD PRIORITIZE ADDRESSING ANY GAPS IN THE SIDEWALK NETWORK AND ADDRESS SAFETY OR MAINTENANCE CONCERNS WITH EXISTING SIDEWALKS.

■ **Agree:**

- Yes. (x4)
- Every street except alleys should be fully sidewalked for accessibility and child safety.
- Curb cuts for wheelchairs and strollers please.
- There is a big problem with sidewalks that lack ADA curb cuts.

■ **Neutral:**

- Can residents who work and live in the borough get a parking permit the same as residents?
- Walkable town. More grocery stores, less drug stores, pedestrian areas enhanced.



THE BOROUGH SHOULD PROMOTE BICYCLING THROUGH THE ADDITION OF ON-ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE (SIGNAGE AND SHARROWS, BIKE LANES, ETC.).

■ **Agree:**

- More bike lanes. (x6)
- More bike parking. (x4)

■ **Neutral:**

- Maybe more bikes on side streets.
- Light on Bethlehem/Lindenwold.

■ **Disagree:**

- Disagree with concept to add bike lanes on Tennis Avenue.



THE BOROUGH SHOULD STUDY HOW/WHERE TO IMPLEMENT TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES.

■ **Agree:**

- Yes. (x6)
- Enforce stop signs.
- Rosemary Avenue needs better control of illegal parking. Consider adding no stopping anytime signs.
- Calm traffic on Highland, between Park and Spring Garden.
- Need traffic measures on Mt. Pleasant Avenue from Bethlehem Pike to Morris Road.
- Tennis Avenue, 200 Block and N. Spring Garden/Mt. Pleasant need help.
- Bumpouts.



AMBLER NEEDS MORE _____ BUSINESSES.

■ **Agree:**

- Hardware store. (x6)
- Bookstore. (x5)
- Bike repair stations and shops. (x2)
- Professional organizations and jobs, such as architecture and engineering.
- Pet store.
- Affordable consignment/thrift store.
- Tea house.
- A community peace center (we used to have one).
- South of tracks, close to the station, a coffee and sandwich shop.
- A variety of businesses.
- A Korean restaurant.
- A family diner.
- Stationary and card shop.

- Child-centered businesses.
- Family-friendly pub/bar.
- Spin/cycle studio downtown.
- Authentic bagel shop.
- Store that carry cheap, everyday items such as hardware, not boutiques.

■ **Neutral:**

- More choice for groceries and less drug stores.
- Affordable general store.
- More businesses if parking is planned for and available.

■ **Disagree:**

- Less hair and nail salons. (x2)
- Too many breweries.
- Please curtail smoke/vape shops. (x2)



COMMERCIAL AREAS IN THE BOROUGH NEED MORE_____.

■ **Agree:**

- Trees. (x5)
- Crosswalks. (x4)
- Managed parking.
- Less trucks traveling through Main Street and Butler Avenue.
- EV charging/parking.
- Butler streetscape - pavers, benches, lights.
- Visitors.
- Better maintained planters.

■ **Neutral:**

- Businesses ought to be open on Sundays.



THE BUSINESSES IN AMBLER ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL USERS (WALKERS, BIKERS, TRANSIT-USERS, DRIVERS, WHEELCHAIR USERS).

■ **Agree:**

- Agree. (x2)

■ **Neutral:**

- Somewhat.
- Slightly. Had to enter some with a stroller.
- Not accessible for wheelchairs or strollers. Largely by because of uneven sidewalks.

■ **Disagree:**

- Need more bike racks x2



I FREQUENTLY PATRONIZE BUSINESSES IN THE BOROUGH.

■ **Agree:**

- Yes. (x3)
- Yes, and would do more local shopping if more options came.
- We love the toy/train store, Weavers Way, Swaddle, and the variety of restaurants.



I ATTEND BOROUGH EVENTS, SUCH AS THE AMBLER AUTO SHOW, ARTS & MUSIC FESTIVAL, FIRE AND ICE FESTIVAL, HOLIDAY PARADES, OKTOBERFEST, FIRST FRIDAYS, SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAYS, AND RESTAURANT WEEK.

■ **Agree:**

- Yes, we love them! (x4)
- Thanks Ambler Main Street!
- The borough offers a diverse array of events that appeal to different ages and interests.



INPUT ON NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE

"...The two biggest favors we can do ourselves right now are focusing on planting native plant species and improving water quality in streams, ponds, and rivers..."

PLEASE
Bird Watching.
Making Ambler into
an official Bird Town
would be excellent

Only 1/4 Ambler
Says it has
An Emerald Team
Class #1

Indeed! Every day
home owners remove
trees without replanting
There is not much
trees in Ambler
any more

More shade trees
by King of the Hill
and Tree Ambler
like all towns there
need shade trees

More trees
Ordinance to
save exist
make trees

Games/sports
- native-based
PPT

Trees
life
nectar
connect

Yes - yes
the
hear
we are
+ but

Keep
alive

More trees
Trees

More trees
after rain event

ATON
ES!
a maybe
my Soma
was PAPA
ARAR

We need
more of a
planned effort

place
more of a
planned effort

Assessment what
we already have -
Road, Greenbelt

PLEASE HAVE MORE
LAN GARDEN
and more of a
planned effort

Yes and
more of a
planned effort

We need
more of a
planned effort

place
more of a
planned effort

place
more of a
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MORE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ARE NEEDED FOR _____.

■ **Agree:**

- Toddlers.
- Children with disabilities.
- Teens (active games/sports).
- Nature-based play.
- Continue to maintain our trail and parks. (x2)
- Birdwatching. Making Ambler into an official Bird Town would be excellent.
- Pickleball.
- Support rain gardens.



ADDITIONAL TRAILS SHOULD BE BUILT THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH AND CONNECTING TO NEIGHBORING TOWNSHIPS.

■ **Agree:**

- Yes! And bike lanes. (x4)
- Connect sidewalks to the Green Ribbon and other nearby trails. (x3)
- Trail from Reiff's Mill to Ricciardi (I'm 10).
- We need a study on wildlife connectivity and build connectivity trails.
- Yes, and published to encourage alternative transportation.
- Agree. More trails – more recreational opportunities, and also healthier, less polluting alternative for residents to get where they are going in town without a car.
- Trees, trees and more trees.

■ **Neutral:**

- [It] would be more important to preserve healthy habitats...

■ **Disagree:**

- Only if it makes sense, i.e. no existing trail close by.



THE BOROUGH SHOULD PROACTIVELY STUDY HOW TO MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADAPT TO A CHANGING CLIMATE.

■ **Agree:**

- Encourage planting of shade trees.
- Yes, invest in dealing with climate change now.
- Explore green energy and mitigating climate change will keep my generation alive.
- Provide educational opportunities for homeowners to learn effective practice and implement on private land, as well.
- With federal funding evaporating from climate change, we need to step up.
- If we don't actively manage climate change, then planning will be ineffective. Acquire land in perpetuity.



THE BOROUGH SHOULD ACTIVELY WORK TOWARDS INCREASING THE TREE CANOPY THROUGH INCREASED PLANTING ALONG STREETS AND AT BOROUGH PARKS AND PROPERTIES.

■ **Agree:**

- Yes! And give private homes more incentives.
- More tree canopy is needed.
- Yes- plant more trees (x5)
- Yes – preserve and care for existing trees (x6).
- More trees help our borough be better for business and residences. Right tree in right place is a good motto.

■ **Neutral:**

- More shade trees by Knight Park
- Need tree ordinance like adjacent towns have
- More street trees. Ordinance to save existing mature trees.
- Shade Tree Commission X3
- Choose wisely! Trees that thrive, or at least tolerate, urban environments and climate changes.
- Heritage Tree Ordinance.
- People are afraid to plant trees near sidewalk because are yards are small and pipes are old.



THE BOROUGH SHOULD FOCUS ON MITIGATING FLOOD RISK THROUGH ALL AVAILABLE AVENUES: GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE, RETENTION BASINS, INCREASED LANDSCAPING, FLOODPROOFING, ASSISTING WITH GETTING PEOPLE AND PROPERTY OUT OF FLOOD-PRONE PROPERTIES (E.G., POST-DISASTER PROPERTY BUY-OUTS), ETC.

■ **Agree:**

- Yes (x7)
- S. Chestnut Street needs more attention to the floods. This is an area with higher risk of flooding. (x2)
- Storm drains seem too small and not cleaned often enough.
- Please have more rain garden/downspout planter workshops offered so folks can install them at reduced cost. That really encourages/enables participation.
- We are creating a bigger problem by permitting additional development.
- Riparian buffer ordinance
- Better stormwater management. Cleaning of salt off of streets after snow events.
- Everyday homeowners remove trees without replanting.
- Better flow control during heavy rains to keep areas near the Wissahickon Creek from flooding- particularly

intersection of Tennis, W Spring Garden, and Reiff's Mill Road. (x2)

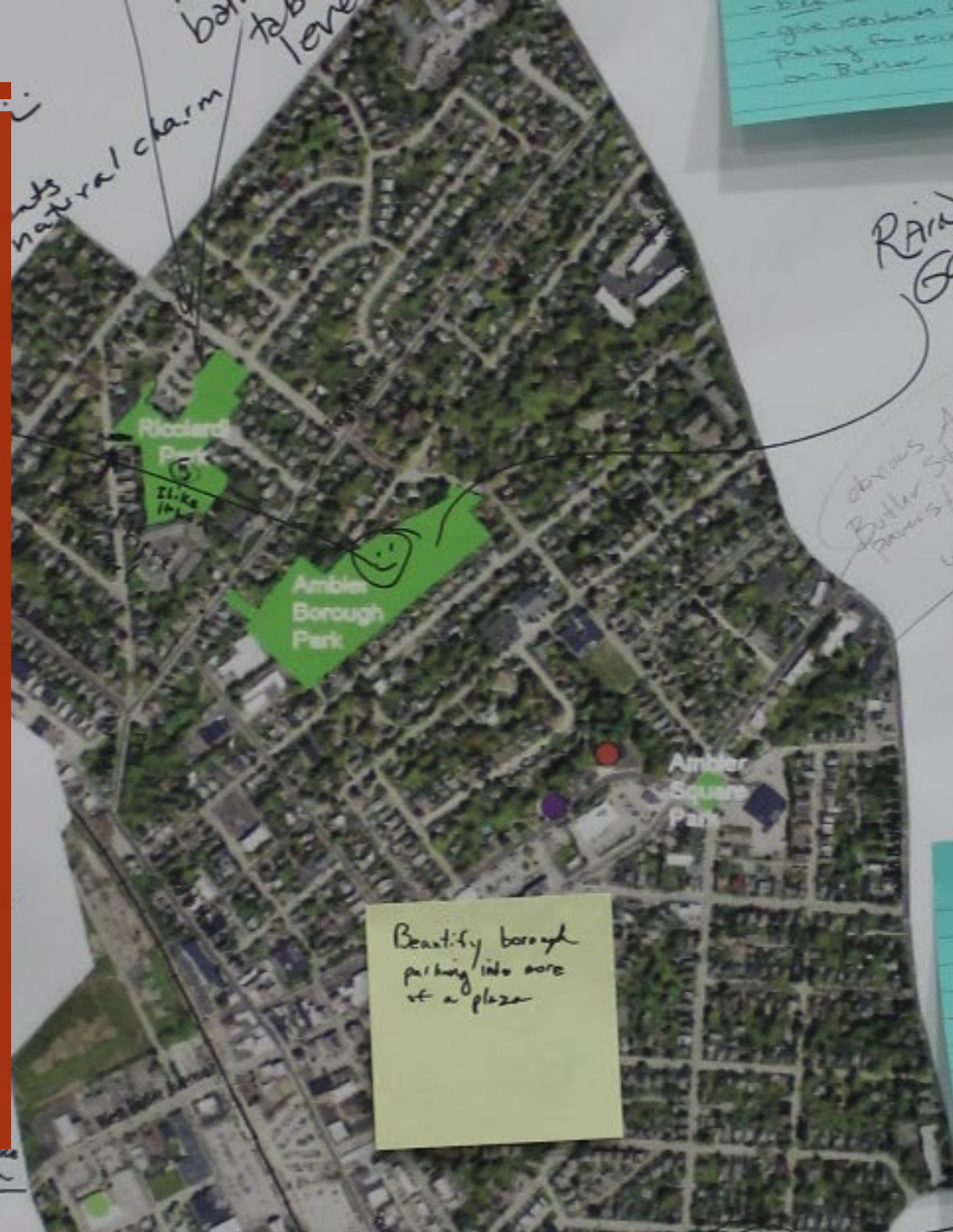
- Not enough has been done to help replace all the drainage issues caused in Ambler after all the trees were removed from St. Mary's, which caused runoff into Ambler.
- Need more concrete information on flooding and practical solutions.
- This is an issue by Pickering. We have runoff and the trees need to be saved along Park.
- Buy flood-prone areas.
- Focus on flood mitigation by Knight Park.
- Remove parking wherever possible.

■ **Neutral:**

- Fix the issue. Don't just drive out homeowners.



PLACEMAKING & PLACEKEEPING



- bus
- give residents more parking for events on Behar

LEPAC STAFFERS
Don't Bill

All Parks
Sidewalk
Wheelchairs

Rain Garden

obvious Amber
Butler Street Super
paninis/liquor/breads/light
What happened
here? Its ugly
and non-functional

How About
A Huge 5 HMB
Tree + benches
with backs.

Turn siten
down!

- Wissahickon Fire Co. — fill it with classic literature, not trends + M
- Public Library
- Borough Hall
- Police Station — shift some fundngels here! topic
- Post Office — add outdoor seating here for seniors

Beautify borough parking into core of a plaza

- create sidewalks on street segments without
- improve basketball courts + ball field for children - not dogs.

Amber Basketball

Create grand entrance arch to make town more welcoming with slow traffic

Maintain the appearance of Amber's business

natural charm
bar to b level

PLACEMAKING & PLACEKEEPING

Placemaking

- Butler streetscape - pavers/lit trees/benches/lights.
- Beautify Borough Hall parking into more of a plaza.
- Open restroom at Knight Park (x2)
- Open restroom at Ricciardi Park. (x2)
- Improve basketball courts and ball fields children.
- Create sidewalk on streets without.
- Add lit crosswalk at the Green Ribbon Trail.
- Turn Deck's Hardware into a museum or at least video document every nook and cranny of it.
- "The land time forgot" – enhance South Ambler.

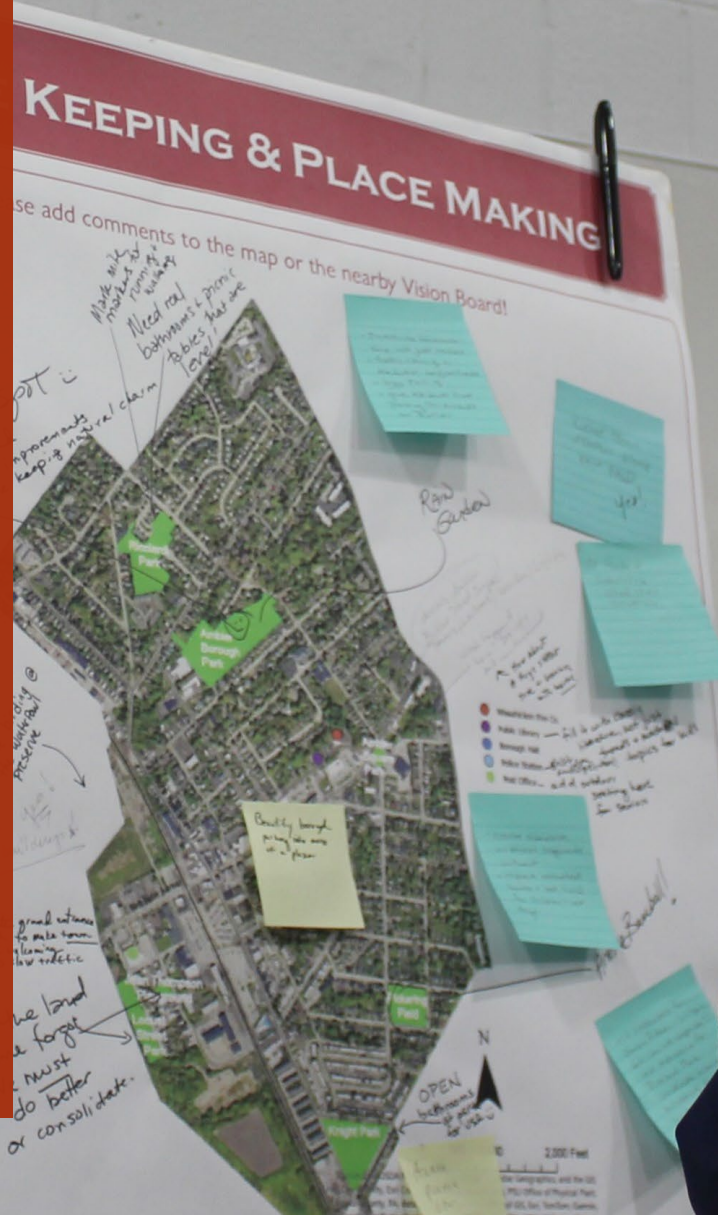
Placekeeping

- Maintain the exterior of Deck's Hardware. Any conversion should maintain as much of the interior as possible. Document the interior for historic preservation for future generations.
- Keep historic buildings (x2)
- Maintain the train station as-is, don't build (x2)
- Coordinate historical architecture for new builds/rehabs. Stop the high-rises.
- Ambler Borough Park – "My favorite spot," "a treasure."
- Rain Garden at Ambler Borough Park.
- Birding at the waterfowl preserve.
- Baseball at Pickering Field.



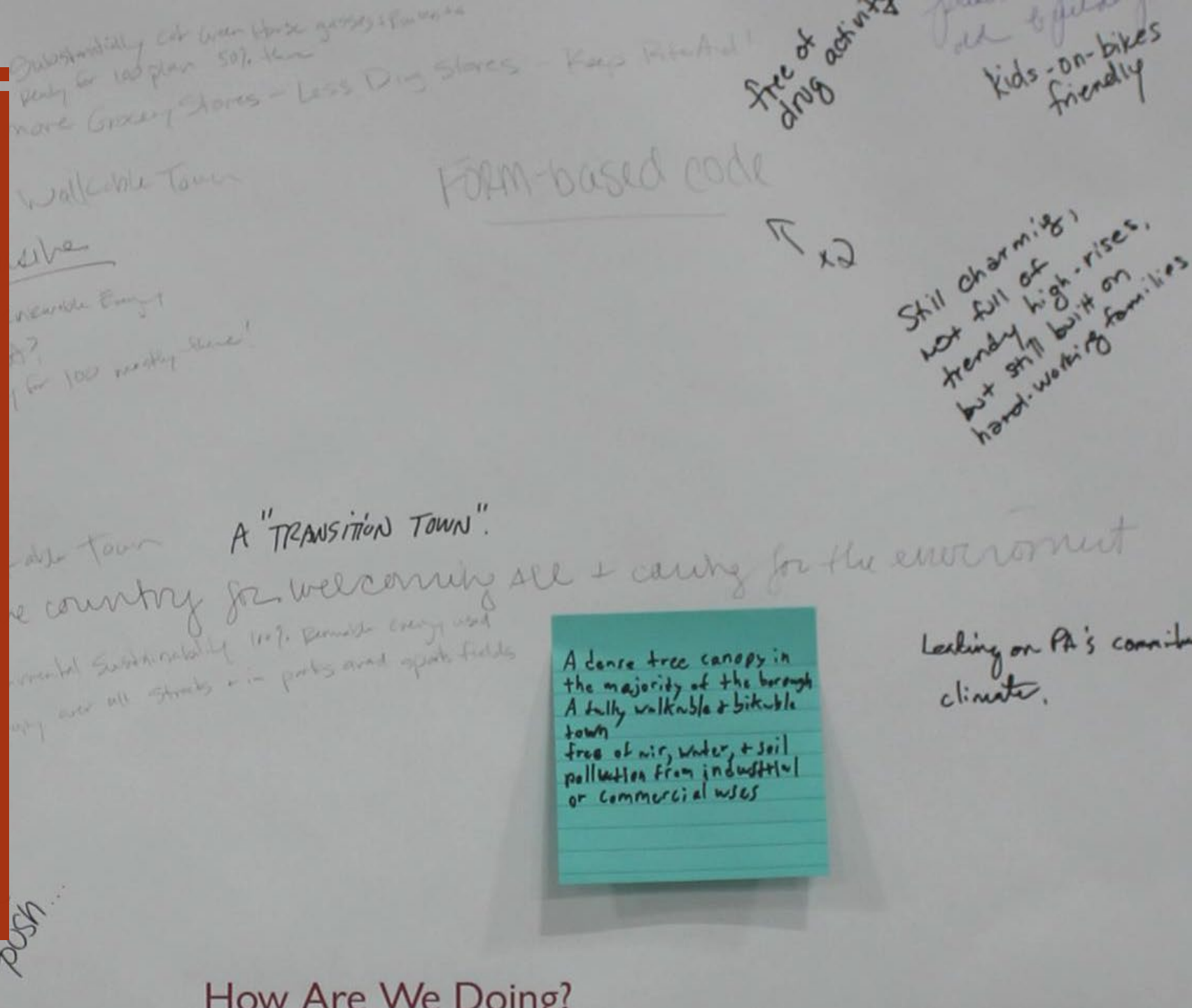
OTHER COMMENTS ON THE BOARD

- Incentivize homeownership versus rentals,
- Traffic calming in residential neighborhoods.
- Bike parking.
- Give residents free parking on Butler Avenue.
- Make all parks and sidewalks wheelchair accessible.
- Add mile markers at Ricciardi Park.
- Turn Fire Station siren DOWN.
- Police – shift funds elsewhere.
- Library – more classic literature.



SHARE YOUR VISION FOR AMBLER!

"It's tough to balance the needs of homeowners, workers, and businesses. Thank you for attempting to include us all in the future of Ambler!"



How Are We Doing?

**IN 5 YEARS,
AMBLER
WILL BE...**

*well on the way cutting GHG emissions
and entrenching the priorities of RF100...
an official bird town... a walkable town...
a place where everyone belongs, and we
have affordable housing for families...
opening new buildings... increasing road
and sidewalk safety... preserving our
wonderful old buildings.*



**IN 10
YEARS,
AMBLER
WILL BE...**

inclusive... still charming, not full of high-rises, but still built on hard-working families... walkable... have a form-based code... in control of the asbestos sites and will use the area to create renewable energy.



**IN 2050,
AMBLER
WILL BE...**

*a fully walkable and bikeable town...
powered off 100% renewables... a
model for the country for welcoming all
and caring for the environment... a
model of environmental sustainability,
100% renewable energy used... enjoying
a dense tree canopy over all street and in
parks... leading on PA's commitment to
climate... a "transition" town.*



EAC INPUT SUMMARY

■ Long-Term Vision

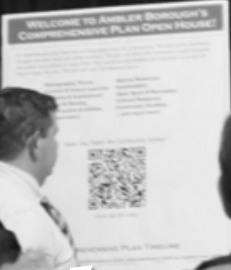
- In five years, Ambler will be well on its way to achieving its 100% renewable energy goals by advancing various renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives. The borough has also taken actions to protect mature trees and increase tree planting.
- In 10 years, the borough has control of the asbestos pile areas and uses them to produce renewable energy with solar and battery storage, further advancing its 100% renewable energy goals. Non-park borough properties and buildings all have solar on them to cover government electricity needs. The borough purchases flood prone properties and makes them into public park spaces and green infrastructure to reduce flooding.
- In 2050, Ambler will be a national model of municipal environmental sustainability. It will power everything (government, commercial, residential, vehicles) with 100% renewable energy. Ambler will have a dense tree canopy in the majority of the borough, large public parks with trail systems and safe access for pedestrians. Many residents walk or bike to get to most of the places they need to go in town. Ambler is home to a variety of businesses that sustainably produce and or sell many of the goods and services residents need. The borough has no air, water, or soil pollution from industrial or commercial uses.



EAC INPUT SUMMARY CONT.

- **Energy and Sustainability**
 - Utilize RF100 as a major organizing principle for the sustainability chapter of the plan
 - Establish renewable energy goals within the plan, and consider options (e.g., CCA, benchmarking etc.)
- **Natural Resources and Open Space**
 - Ambler should look for opportunities to preserve additional open space, especially flood prone properties near water bodies and existing parks
 - Protect mature trees and increase tree canopy; emphasis on natives
 - Ensure resident access to borough parks that is safe, easy, and enjoyable
 - Work with neighboring municipalities to create new walking and biking trails that connect to open spaces, public transit nodes, historic and cultural points of interest, and business districts
- **Transportation**
 - Encourage heated bus shelters
 - Study how to address sidewalk gaps
 - Promote bicycling through safety improvements
- **Housing**
 - Encourage dense development in more locations
 - Promote ADUs by liberalizing regulations
- **Infrastructure and Utilities**
 - Explore methane digester at the WWTP
 - CCA
- **Economic Development:**
 - Promote the Ambler Farmer's Market
 - Promote/expand community garden
 - Encourage more local products
 - Enhance crosswalks in commercial areas





Thank you to everyone who helped make the open house a resounding success!

