

AGENDA

AMBLER BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION

I. CALL TO ORDER **February 25, 2025 (7:00 PM)**

II. ROLL CALL

III. REORGANIZATION

IV. APPROVAL OF: November 26, 2024 minutes

V. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Review and adoption of the Ambler Borough Planning Commission by-laws will be done at the March 25th meeting. A draft annual report for 2024 will be presented at the March meeting for discussion.
2. Input is requested on updating the 2013 Borough Comprehensive Plan. The Borough Planning Commission hosted an open house regarding the comprehensive plan on Tuesday, January 28th. A summary of the open house and the next steps will be presented.
3. Input is requested on incorporating revisions like the recent Transit Oriented Development Ordinance to the Downtown Commercial and Commercial districts including aesthetics and architectural elements.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

NEIL K. MAKHIJA, CHAIR
JAMILA H. WINDER, VICE CHAIR
THOMAS DIBELLO, COMMISSIONER



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE • PO Box 311
NORRISTOWN, PA 19404-0311
610-278-3722 • FAX: 610-278-3941
WWW.MONTGOMERYCOUNTYPA.GOV

SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 12, 2025

SUBJECT: Borough of Ambler Comprehensive Plan – Open House Summary
TO: Ambler Borough Planning Commission; Glenn Kucher, Code Enforcement Officer
FROM: Tim Konetchy, Senior Community Planner

INTRODUCTION

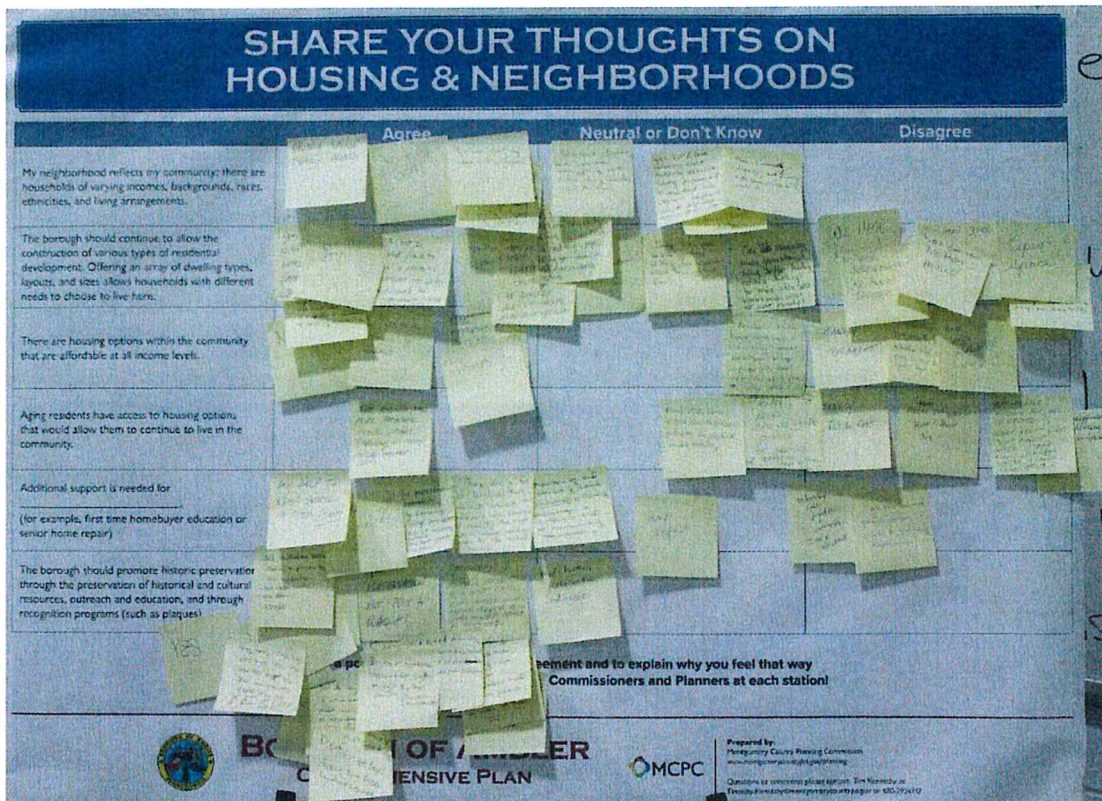
On January 28, 2025, the Borough hosted an open house event to formally initiate the public outreach phase of the comprehensive planning process. A total of 65 individuals were listed on the sign-in sheet. Full attendance is estimated to be roughly double that, as most people came as pairs or families.

The open house was organized into six stations: welcome and background information, housing and neighborhoods, transportation, natural resources and open space, economic development, and long-range vision (placemaking-placekeeping and vision wall). Each station was staffed by a combination of Ambler Borough Planning Commission, staff, and elected officials, as well as an MCPC planner. Those staffing the stations had engaging conversations with visitors and encouraged them to provide written feedback on the posters. A brief overview presentation was provided at the start of the evening.

The feedback received at the open house is summarized by station, as noted above. Some concepts/themes were provided numerous times by different individuals, while some comments were unique to a specific situation. Every comment is valuable, especially at this very early state of the planning process. Please note that some substantially similar comments were also combined, and others were edited for clarity or conciseness.



HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS



SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

1. *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.

2. *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!
- Yes, but please keep charm and character of Ambler when considering new development.
- Yes, but with height restrictions in keeping with the character of Ambler. (x2)
- Yes, 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)

3. *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.

4. *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.

5. *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)

6. *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



TRANSPORTATION

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON TRANSPORTATION

| | Neutral or Don't Know | Disagree |
|--|-----------------------|----------|
| The borough should improve _____ (street, intersection, or a mode of transportation) | | |
| The borough should prioritize improvements to bus stops and the train station. | | |
| The borough should _____ in the sidewalk network and address safety or maintenance concerns with existing sidewalks. | | |
| The borough should promote bicycling through the addition of on-road infrastructure (signage and sharrows, bike lanes, etc.) | | |
| The borough should study how/where to implement traffic calming measures. | | |

Comments of the Planning Commissioners and Planners are _____ and to explain why you feel _____

BOROUGH OF AMBLER
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

MCPC

From: _____
Comments or concerns please contact: Tim Karcher at _____

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

1. The borough should improve _____.

Agree:

- Tennis Avenue. (x3)
- Intersections. (x3)
- Better help for pedestrians to cross Bethlehem Pike. (x2)
- Work with Whitpain to create crosswalks for the Green Ribbon Trail crossing at Mt. Pleasant and Butler. (x2)
- Clearly marked bike lanes/trails for children.
- Stop sign compliance.
- 5-point intersection at Tennis/N. Spring Garden - visibility is poor.
- Street conditions and safety.

- Consider limiting right turns on red where parking limits visibility or more dangerous intersections with a history of accidents.
- 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?
- Blinking lights at crosswalks: Bannockburn/Spring Garden and Park/Butler.
- 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

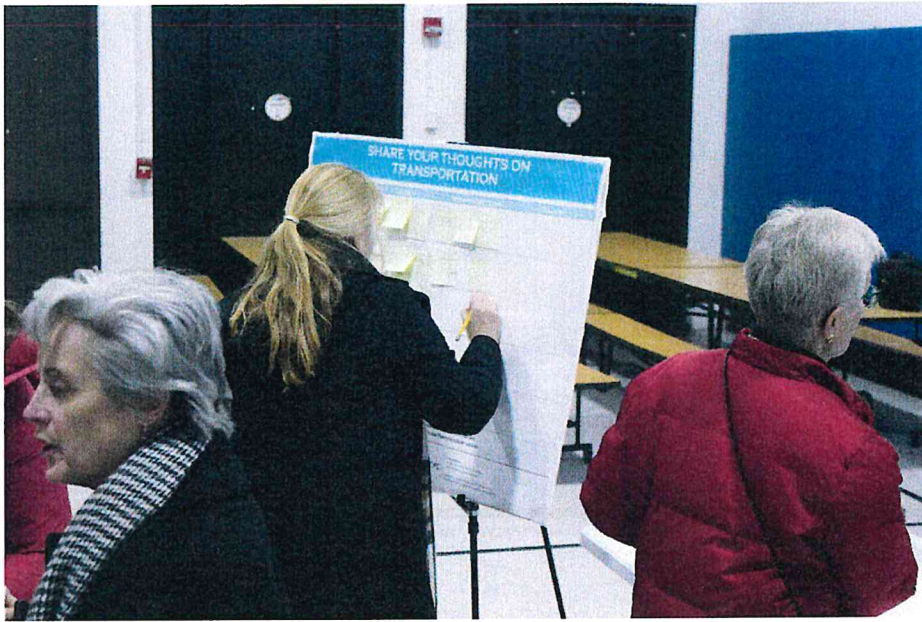
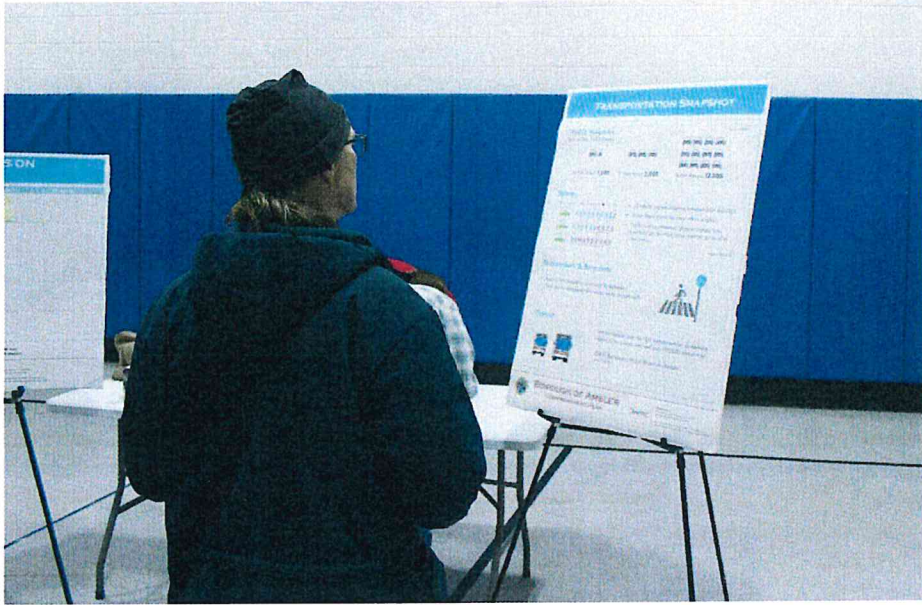
Disagree:

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

5. 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.




ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

| SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | | Neutral or Don't Know | Disagree |
|---|--|-----------------------|----------|
| <p>Ambler needs more _____ businesses.</p> <p>For example: restaurants, entertainment, clothing, cafes.</p> | | | |
| <p>Commercial areas in the borough need more _____.</p> <p>For example: benches, street lights, trees, sidewalks, landscaping, crosswalks.</p> | | | |
| <p>The businesses in Ambler are easily accessible for all users (walkers, bikers, transit-users, drivers, wheelchair users).</p> | | | |
| <p>I frequently patronize businesses in the borough.</p> | | | |
| <p>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.</p> | | | |

Please use a post-it to note your level of agreement and to explain why you feel that way
Please feel free to ask questions of the Planning Commissioners and Planners at each station!


BOROUGH OF AMBLER
 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN


 Prepared by:
 Monmouth County Planning Commission
www.monmouthcountypa.gov/planning
 Questions or comments please contact: Tom Rowland at
TomRowland@monmouthcountypa.gov or 609-291-2000

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

1. 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)

2. 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

3. 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.

4. 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.

NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE

| SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------|
| Agree | Neutral or Don't Know | Disagree |
| <p>More recreation opportunities are needed for _____ For example, school-aged children, teens, senior or another subset of the population.</p> | | |
| <p>Additional trails should be built throughout the borough and connecting to neighboring towns.</p> | | |
| <p>The borough should work to preserve and enhance open space and natural resources.</p> | | |
| <p>The borough should proactively study how to mitigate the impacts of climate change and adapt to a changing climate.</p> | | |
| <p>The borough should actively work towards increasing the tree canopy through increased planting along streets and at borough properties.</p> | | |
| <p>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.</p> | | |
| <p>Write your response in the space below and to explain why you feel that way. Share your response with Commissioners and Planners at each station!</p> | | |

Prepared by: Montgomery County Planning Commission
www.montgomerycountypa.gov/planning
Questions or comments please contact: Tom Kasper at Tom.Kasper@montgomerycountypa.gov or 610.278.6007

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

1. 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.

- While we should push to mitigate the impacts of climate change down on our level (tree canopy, renewables, etc.), it is an issue much more driven by billion-dollar companies. 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. Any open spaces should prioritize native flora, and we need to better control what flows through stormwater outfalls.

2. 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.

3. The borough should work to preserve and enhance open space and natural resources.

Agree:

- Yes (x6)
 - ... One way would be to cooperate with other boroughs on the R5 to encourage trains over driving
 - ... Especially near water bodies and existing parks. It is important to preserve our mature trees in particular, which provide many air and water quality management benefits.
 - ... involving leading by example with borough operations and practices Preserve natural and historic resources.

- ... Our open spaces and natural resource are finite and need protection
- ...stop the building near tracks.
- A borough survey covering trees that endanger nearby houses, locations that might flood, and other threats.
- Preserve natural and historic resources.

Neutral:

- Connect Ambler to easily walk/bike to Fort Washington Park and Wissahickon trails.

4. The township 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.

5. 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 yards are small and pipes are old.

6. 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.

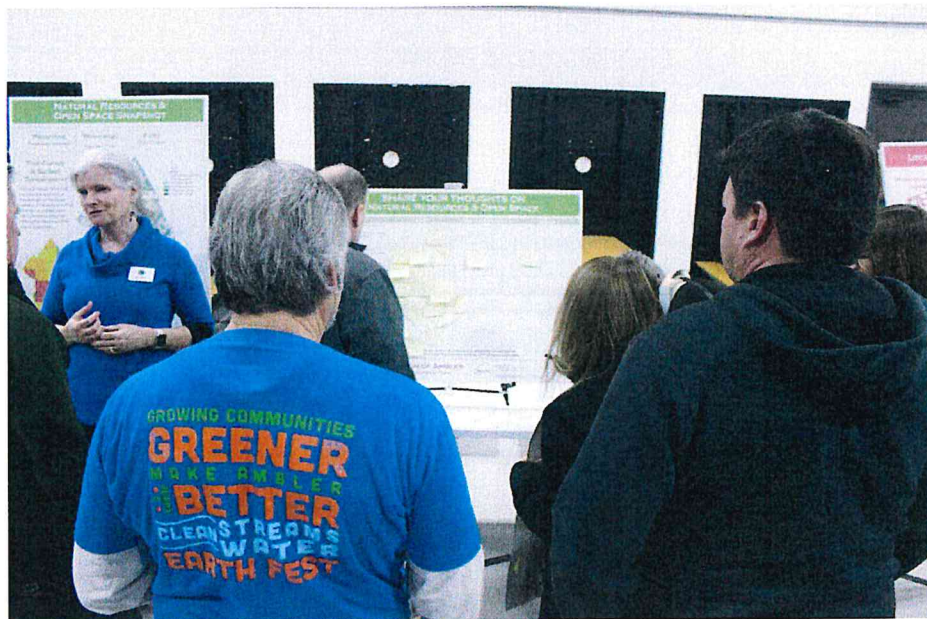
Agree:

- 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:

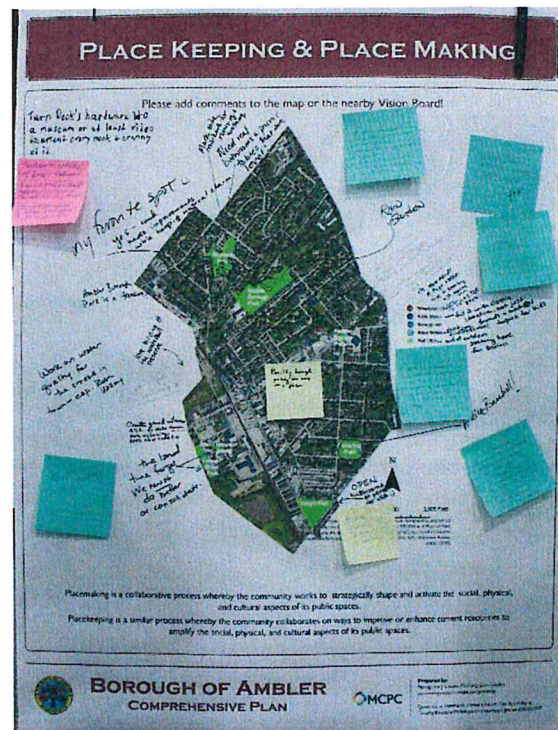
- Fix the issue. Don't just drive out homeowners.



PLACEMAKING AND 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

- 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.

VISION FOR AMBLER IN 5, 10, 25 YEARS

The comments received at this station primarily reflected a handful of underlying themes: sustainability (especially renewable energy generation), walkability, maintaining the sense of place and building on the borough’s past success. One of the comments under the question, “how are we doing?” is demonstrative of the input received at the event:

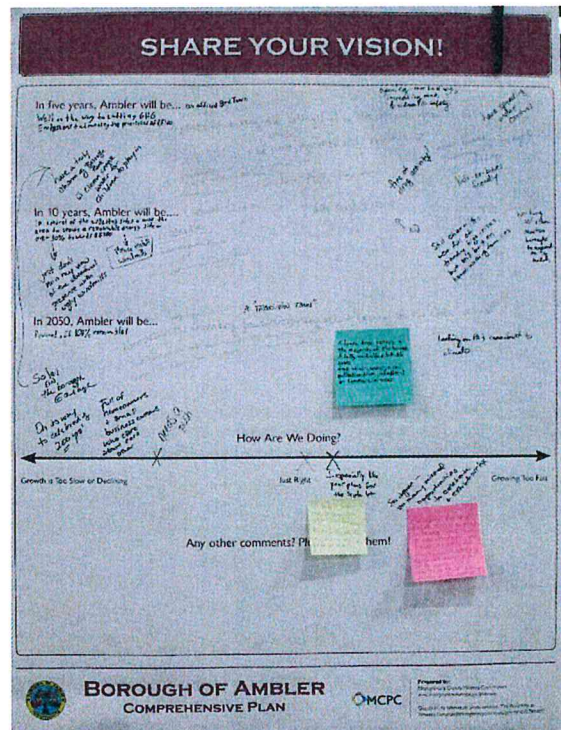
It’s tough to balance the needs of homeowners, workers, and businesses. Thank you for attempting to include us all in the future of Ambler!

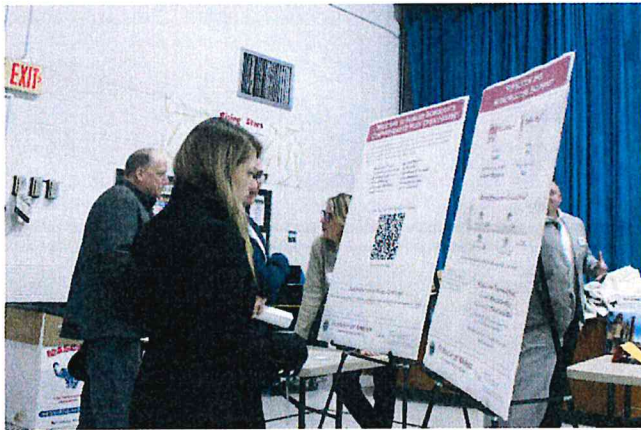
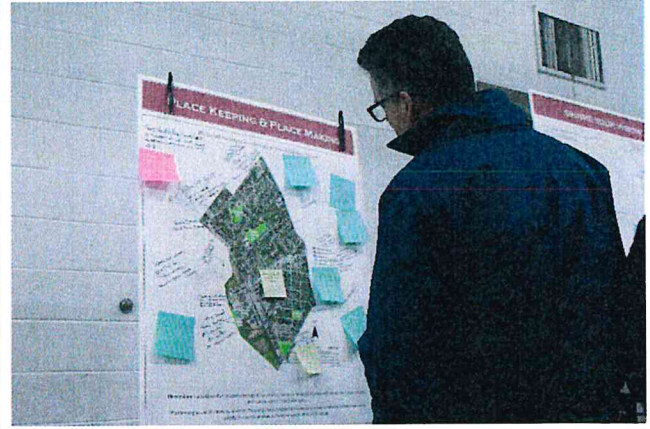
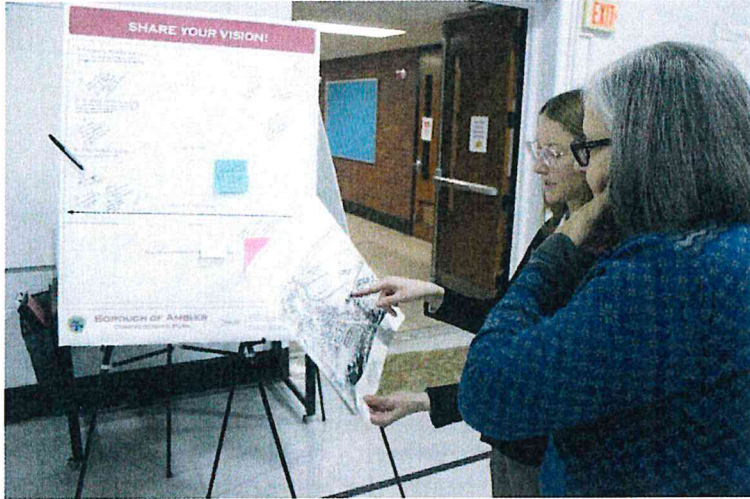
Residents had a similar vision for Ambler in 5, 10, and 25 years:

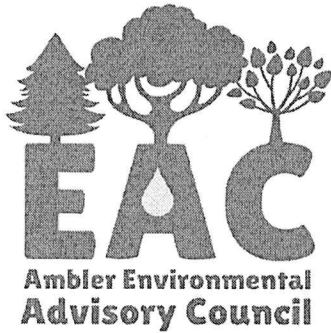
In five years, Ambler will be... well on the way cutting GHG emissions and entrenching the priorities of RF100... an official bird town... a walkable town... a place where everyone belongs, and we have affordable housing for families... opening new buildings... increasing road and sidewalk safety... 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.







Borough of Ambler
131 Rosemary Ave
Ambler, PA 19002
215-646-1000
amblereac@gmail.com
www.amblereac.org

February 20, 2025

Ambler Environmental Advisory Council Comments on the Borough of Ambler's Comprehensive Plan Revision

Dear Ambler Planning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide concepts about Ambler's comprehensive plan revision. The Ambler Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) also looks forward to providing specific comments on relevant draft sections of the plan in the coming months.

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.

Energy and Sustainability

The EAC recommends using the Ready For 100 Resolution vision for 100% renewable energy Borough Council committed to in 2020 as a major organizing principle for the sustainability

section of the new comprehensive plan. Five years have since passed, and the borough should take a fresh look at this goal, establish interim goals and milestones, and commit to a series of actions that can best achieve the goals. As part of the Sustainability chapter, the borough should recommit to the Ready For 100 Resolution goal for 100% renewable energy, and develop an Energy Master Plan, Energy Conservation Plan, and Fleet Electrification Action Plan to ensure it advances this goal. All of these plans should include specific actions the borough can take to reach measurable intermediate objectives with timelines. The comprehensive plan should establish renewable energy goals for 2030 and 2040 based on the 100% goal, to ensure we are progressing on the right trajectory. We recommend the borough include the following short-term implementation actions as part of these plans. The EAC has recently advocated for a number of these actions (please see the attached letter for more context and detail). The borough should also explore additional longer-term actions.

- **Community Choice Aggregation (CCA):** The borough should explore the opportunity to create a CCA that fits Ambler's needs, and then adopt a CCA program. CCA programs allow municipalities to procure renewable electricity on behalf of all residents and small businesses. Instead of customers paying PECO for electricity produced by coal, fossil gas, and nuclear, residents would pay PECO for electricity produced by 100% local renewable energy sources. A CCA would allow our community to realize environmental benefits of cleaner air while saving residents money on electricity bills.
- **Develop local solar projects on borough properties:** The borough should explore potential opportunities for developing rooftop or ground mount solar projects in the borough to cover the government's electricity needs, including rooftop solar on borough buildings, solar parking canopies in borough lots, and potentially ground mount systems on other parcels. The comprehensive plan could include maps showing the feasibility of developing solar on borough properties, based on available online tools.
- **Methane digester:** Explore the use of a methane digester at the wastewater treatment plant to produce renewable energy rather than venting potent greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- **Energy benchmarking:** Energy benchmarking programs are an effective way for owners of certain sized buildings to understand how much energy their buildings use over time compared with other similarly sized buildings, and explore opportunities for making voluntary energy efficiency upgrades. Local governments can require building owners to track and publicly disclose energy usage. We encourage the borough to analyze the size, quantity, and location of the building stock in Ambler to determine the potential impact or energy efficiency. Ambler should develop an ordinance to require certain buildings to disclose their energy usage. The plan could establish a timeline for the implementation of a full energy benchmarking program.
- **Solar ordinance:** According to the Ready for 100 strategic plan, "If Ambler wishes to encourage solar in the borough, allowing solar as by-right (a permitted use) in all districts should be considered. This can also be made subject to specific standards that would be reviewed by the municipal zoning officer and planning commission. Typically, municipalities that wish to encourage solar will allow solar as by-right in all districts subject to standards outlined in the ordinance." The plan points out that such ordinances

can result in cost effectiveness and compatibility with existing land uses. As part of the comprehensive planning process, Ambler should explore options for achieving its renewable energy goals.

- **C-PACE:** Pennsylvania Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) is a financing program to connect businesses with low interest loans for clean energy and energy efficiency projects that they pay back through property taxes. For more details about how to start a municipal program, see: <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/energy-programs-office/financial-options/c-pace.html>
- Purchase electric landscaping equipment or contract with a company that uses all electric equipment.

Energy Conservation Plan

- Perform energy audits of borough buildings every two to three years.
- Adopt energy efficiency measures in borough buildings that reduce energy usage (e.g., smart thermostats).
- Replace aging fossil fuel-based equipment, such as gas furnaces and gas water heaters with electric versions (e.g., heat pumps and electric water heaters).
- Adopt a Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS) to monitor and control build energy use.

Fleet Electrification Action Plan and encouraging residential EVs

- Conduct a current inventory of Ambler's municipal vehicle fleet to assess the age and remaining useful life of vehicles and determine when each one needs to be replaced.
- Perform a vehicle fleet needs assessment to determine if the number of vehicles in the fleet can be reduced in the future.
- Develop an action plan that will transition the fleet to electric vehicles by 2030. The plan should include a strategy to replace ICE vehicles at the end of life with EVs.
- Explore the possibility of leasing EVs as an action plan pilot to test various types.
- Allow EV chargers in all zoning districts and require the installation of specific amounts of EV chargers for various types of new development or redevelopment.

Community Composting

- Expand on the borough's yard waste pickup service by providing a pickup service for all compostable waste, including food-related waste.

Natural Resources and Open Space

The borough should include the following actions to preserve and enhance open space and natural resources:

- **Ambler should look for opportunities to preserve additional open space, especially flood prone properties near water bodies and existing parks.** The borough should prioritize establishing green stormwater infrastructure, including newly created or enhanced park space, to lessen the impacts of flooding, and only consider hard infrastructure when absolutely necessary. Ambler should identify parcels that would offer protection to water bodies and parcels that are frequently flooded and create an Official Map as part of an updated Open Space Plan integrated into the comprehensive plan that details the parcels the borough is interested in eventually converting into public parks. The borough should explore what types of contracts, easements or zoning ordinance changes may be needed to give the borough the right of first offer or refusal when owners of parcels are ready to sell the property. In particular, the borough should explore purchasing parcels along Rose Valley Creek north and south of Ambler Borough Park that are in the floodplain. This will not only add to the riparian buffer along Rose Valley Creek, adding new green infrastructure to a flood prone area of the borough, but will also open up new recreational and trail opportunities for residents.
- **Protecting existing mature trees should be a priority in Ambler.** Ambler should perform an up-to-date inventory of its mature trees and tree canopy, develop a policy and process to protect them, and update the Open Space plan to reflect these efforts. Specifically, Ambler should adopt a shade tree protection ordinance and establish a shade tree commission to ensure the borough and Ambler residents are making informed decisions about tree removal. Research has shown that mature trees in particular provide a number of benefits, including improving air and water quality, improving comfort of residents by providing shade and lowering surface temperatures, stabilizing soils, providing stormwater management and wildlife habitat, and increasing property values.
- **Ensure resident access to borough parks is safe, easy, and enjoyable.** The borough should consider more permanent and visible crosswalks, as well as traffic calming interventions like speed humps, surrounding parks such as Pickering Field, Knight Park, Riccardi Park, and Ambler Borough Park. This could potentially help encourage more residents to feel comfortable accessing the parks or visiting them more frequently.
- **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.** Creating more connected trails, or even more continuous sidewalks, including those that connect to other municipalities, would provide additional recreational opportunities and a healthier, less polluting alternative for residents to get to where they are going without a car.
- In response to the borough's question on the board used at the Jan 28 community meeting that stated: "The borough should proactively study how to mitigate the impacts of climate change and adapt to a changing climate," the EAC believes that we do not need more studies about climate mitigation, especially considering the urgency of the climate crisis and the fact that Ambler has already committed to a Ready for 100 goal. That said, as mentioned above, there should be an analysis of the status of those mitigation actions and whether there are new actions to take since the plan was written in 2020. In terms of climate adaptation, dealing with heat, flooding and more severe

storms are a threat to Ambler residents and the borough should spend time and resources determining actionable steps to blunt the impact of these. The above-mentioned concept about adding additional green infrastructure could help lessen these impacts.

- **Increase the tree canopy by identifying areas where trees can be planted on streets, parks, and borough properties.** This can assist the EAC focus its resources and efforts on planting trees in areas of the borough with the most need.
- Ensure appropriate native species are used as much as possible in all future plantings.

Transportation

- Work with SEPTA to encourage heated bus shelters in key locations.
- Encourage SEPTA to add a heat lamp at the existing shelter on the northbound side of the Ambler train station and a new shelter with a heat lamp on the southbound side.
- Study how to fill gaps in the sidewalk system to improve walkability in Ambler. The borough should identify grant funding or other ways to fund new sidewalk sections so that residents are not on the hook for paying for them. Ambler should also explore different ways to fund sidewalk maintenance that doesn't rely on the homeowner paying for this public asset.
- The borough should take actions to make bikers feel safer so that more Ambler residents could feel comfortable riding a bike locally instead of driving their car. While bicycle advocates have championed sharrows in the past, some are raising concerns about their effectiveness for promoting biking. The borough should explore reducing speed limits, installing protected bike lanes, and introducing strong traffic calming measures, including speed humps and curb bump-outs. Specifically, for long-term biking infrastructure, the borough should explore establishing a protected bike lane through the entire length of Butler through the borough, as well as on Main Street.

Housing

- Encourage denser development in more residential areas, especially those closer to the commercial district and train station by allowing housing types like twins and multi-unit housing in these districts. The borough could change some of the R-1 areas to R-2 or even R-3, so that over the long-term, there are possibilities for converting them to multi-family homes, or, ideally only at the end of the useful life of a single-family home, redevelopment of new denser housing options.
- Make requirements for accessory dwelling units less strict (e.g., allow them to be built on the sides of the house when the backyard is not feasible, smaller setbacks, etc).

Infrastructure and Utilities

- Methane digester: As mentioned above, Ambler should explore the use of a methane digester at the wastewater treatment plant to produce renewable energy. See Philadelphia's [Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant](#) as a case study.
- See Community Choice Aggregation concept above under Sustainability

Economic Development

- Do more to promote the Ambler farmers market to residents.
- Identify and plan for future community garden plots, potentially on underutilized sports fields such as those at Pickering Field and Knight Park.
- Encourage more businesses that produce or sell local products (e.g., Weavers Way Co-op).
- To promote a safer experience for shoppers in commercial areas in the borough, Ambler should enhance crosswalks with blinking lights and permanent pedestrian crossing signage.

Closing

Thank you for considering these comments. The EAC looks forward to engaging with you throughout this comprehensive planning process.

Sincerely,

Ambler Environmental Advisory Council Members:

Owen Baim
Rob Cardillo
William Nassau
Kirsten Puskar
Mark Setman
Matt Walker