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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

July 8, 2022

SUBJECT: Cheltenham Comprehensive Plan Public Workshop

TO: Cheltenham Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

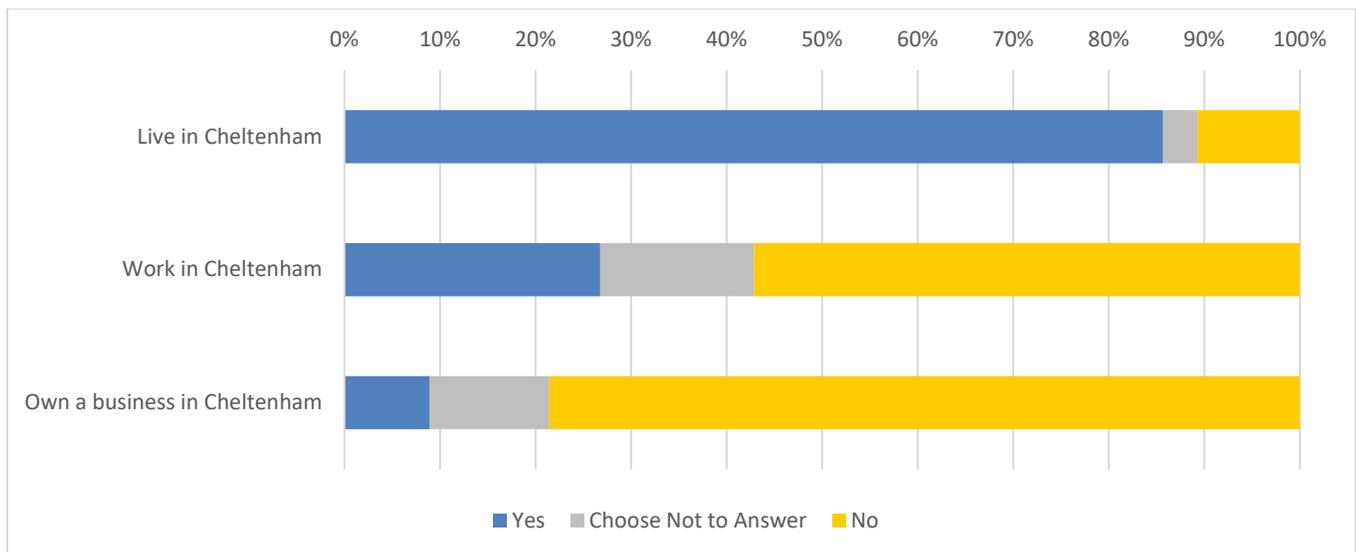
FROM: Anne Nygard, Community Planner II

This memo is intended to detail the attendance and results from the June 23, 2022 public workshop regarding the comprehensive plan.

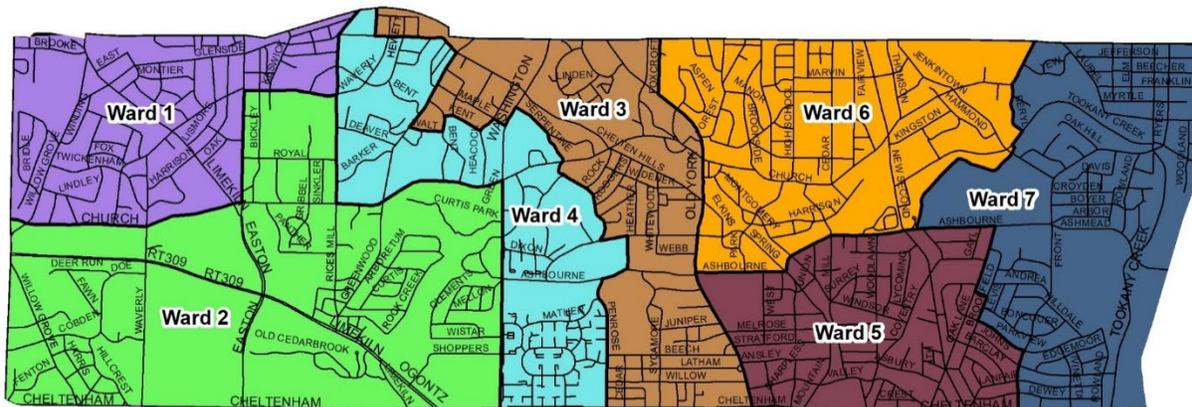
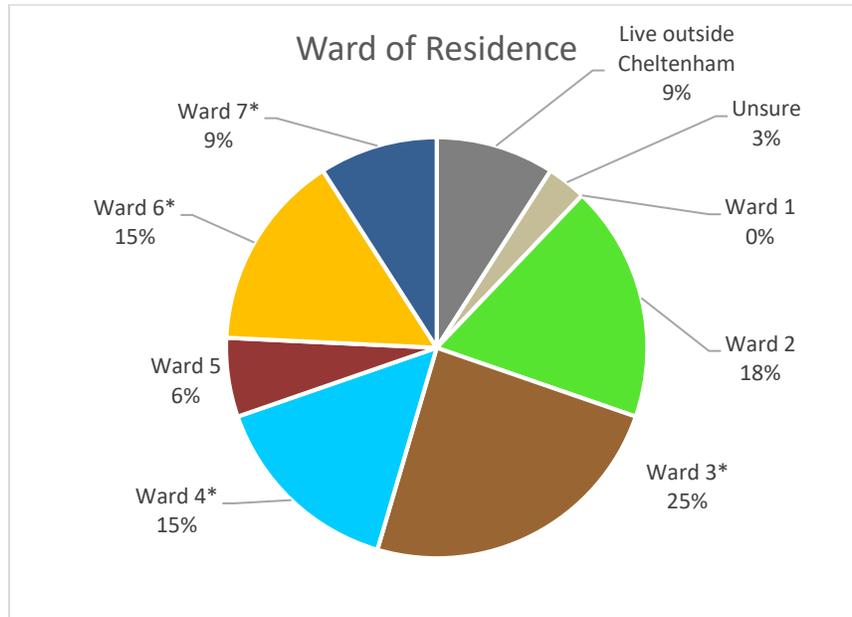
Attendance

A total of 80 individuals registered for the public workshop for the Cheltenham Comprehensive Plan. Of those 80 individuals, 56 registrants attended the meeting, and 24 registrants did not. When a follow-up email was sent to those 24 registrants, one registrant emailed in response to voice support for a disc golf course. At the time of writing this memo, no other follow-up comments have been provided.

Of those who attended and chose to answer registration questions, five owned a business in Cheltenham and fifteen work in Cheltenham. Two of the attendees were representatives of organizations that do work in Cheltenham, one from SEPTA and one from the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed. Four attendees did not work, live, or own a business in Cheltenham.



Out of the 56 attendees, 20 did not respond to the poll question asked in the introductory section regarding their ward of residence.



The attendees spent most of the workshop in breakout rooms, responding to topic-based prompting. There were six breakout rooms. Each room was comprised of one MCPC staff member, at least one member of the steering committee, and between nine and ten workshop attendees.

Overall Themes

During the course of the workshop, most of the breakout rooms returned to certain core themes and ideas across the various topic prompts that were presented.

In breakout room 1, the themes that attendees returned to were the fact that **resident’s don’t know what’s available in the township** and a need to **make connections between neighborhoods**.

In breakout room 2, the theme that attendees returned to was the need for Cheltenham to **balance its rich history with a need to look to the future**.

In breakout room 3, the theme that attendees returned to was the fact that residents feel like they **build community at community centers**, and the importance of that in maintaining the township as it is.

In breakout room 4, attendees returned to the need to **increase accessibility** to existing resources, potentially through the use of **public-private partnerships** (including interest groups formed by township residents in the definition of private), and challenges to do with a perceived **lack of code enforcement**.

In breakout room 5, as in breakout room 1, attendees returned to the fact that **residents don't know what's available in the township**.

In breakout room 6, attendees returned to the need to **improve the pedestrian experience** throughout the township.

Attendees were broadly concerned with the tax burden on residents, wanted to be more able to locate resources that the township has, and wanted more ability to move through the township on foot.

Sustainability

Concerns about sustainability were broadly similar across each breakout room, though specific emphasis on those topics varied from room to room. The topics of most concern for attendees were generally storm water, walkability, and the cost, though attendees also agreed that all aspects of sustainability are important.

In breakout room 1, attendees were most concerned about recycling and the cost of addressing sustainability on top of existing costs in the township. Plastic bags, recycling awareness campaigns, and an electronic recycling program that used to be housed at the library were discussed. The possibility of park tours to highlight and advertise the township's existing parks or an interactive map of township park facilities were also discussed.

In breakout room 2, attendees were most concerned about being able to make pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, and highlighted several areas where that was not possible.

In breakout room 3, attendees were most concerned with storm water and other issues that arise during storms. It was noted that electricity frequently goes out in the western part of town due to tree/power line conflicts in stormy weather.

In breakout room 4, attendees were most concerned with accessibility of neighborhoods, storm water, and the cost of sustainability initiatives. Attendees were also concerned with a perceived lack of community concern about issues regarding community appearance and a lack of enforcement of codes. It was noted that accessibility to commercial areas on foot is a challenge.

In breakout room 5, attendees were concerned with walkability and connections between neighborhoods, suggesting that the township could potentially incentivize sustainability actions.

In breakout room 6, attendees were concerned about the cost of sustainability initiatives and with storm water issues. It was noted that portions of the Wall Park are not laid out intuitively and that current

crosswalks are not always respected by drivers. Additionally, attendees suggested the possibility of removing street parking in areas with narrow streets and driveways.

Sidewalks

Discussions of sidewalks and pedestrian needs included identifying specific areas of need, including locations where sidewalks are missing or inadequate for pedestrian needs. Many of these discussions also indicated that trails or other paths further from roadways would be acceptable in making the needed connections, where rights-of-way and site conditions don't allow for standard sidewalks. Those locations included

- (1) Washington Lane from Wistar Drive to Asbourne Road, where the sidewalk is narrow and branches are overhanging into pedestrian space.
- (1) Cheltenham Hills Ave, from Washington Lane to Church Road, where there is no sidewalk and residents of Wyncote cannot make a connection to Elkins Park.
 - (6) Cheltenham Hills Ave
- (3) The lack of sidewalks along Church Road in proximity to schools was noted as a concern for children, in particular.
 - Specific schools were not mentioned, but this comment was presumably focused on Wyncote Elementary School and the Ancillae Assumpta Academy as those are the only schools aimed at educating children directly fronting on Church Road.
 - (4) The area around Wyncote Elementary
- (4) Cheltenham High School
- (4) The Church and Greenwood intersection area
 - Church Road near the Arboretum in general
 - (6) Church Road in general
- (4) Greenwood Avenue between 309 and the Jenkintown-Wyncote train station
- (4) Rices Mill Avenue
- (6) Meetinghouse Road
- (6) Old York Road
- (6) Spring Avenue from Ashbourne Road to Serpentine Lane
- (6) The sidewalk at the intersection of Church Road and Old York Road was noted as having challenging interactions with cars exiting the parking lot
- (1) A "Peacock Lane" was mentioned as having no sidewalk, but does not appear to exist in the township.
- (1) Accomac Road was mentioned as having no sidewalk, but appears to have sidewalks on the eastern side of the road.

Transportation

The topics that came up most frequently across breakout rooms regarding transportation had to do with sidewalks and traffic calming. Attendees generally agreed that sidewalks are unpleasantly narrow or absent in many parts of the township, and some parts of the township that have sidewalks are overgrown with no code enforcement. Attendees also agreed that speeding is an issue in many parts of the township, and that there are concerns about lack of enforcement.

Attendees also identified a lack of crosswalks in portions of the township, but did not highlight specifically lacking areas.

Attendees noted a desire for electric vehicle charging stations, and a high cost for using the Regional Rail system within the township due to fare levels. The Regional Rail stations were also noted to be challenging to park at, and not well-connected for pedestrians. Attendees had generally used Regional Rail for commuting purposes, but few of the attendees had made use of the bus system within the township.

Traffic Calming

Locations for specific requests for traffic calming were not commonly mentioned, but are listed here as given. Cheltenham does have a process through which a traffic calming request can be made¹, but it was adopted less than six months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be well-publicized to township residents yet. Additionally, the traffic calming policy is limited to streets with posted speed limits under 25 miles per hour.

- (1) Old York Road
- (1) East Willow Grove Avenue
- (1) Cheltenham Avenue from Washington Lane to Old York Road
- (1) The intersection of Old York Road and Church Road
- (1) The intersection of Washington Lane and Ashbourne Road
- (1) Turns being made at Maple and Washington Lane are blind, currently, and attendees suggested a convex mirror be placed at the intersection.
- (4) Limekiln Pike / Ogontz Avenue / 309
- (4) Easton Road through Glenside

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

In discussing needs for parks and recreation spaces, residents either were not aware of all the parks in the township or were happy with the amount of park space available. Attendees indicated a desire for more advertisement of the parks and other spaces within the township, and a desire for more connections to be made between parks. Notably, attendees in multiple breakout rooms were unaware of the ability to rent township buildings for events, and noted a desire to allow reservation of pavilions in parks.

Attendees voiced support for a dedicated space for disc golf, and noted conflicts between pickleball and tennis players for existing field space. It was suggested that the parks and recreation department encourage interest group events taking place at the parks throughout the township. Attendees also noted that many of the parks are small and would be challenging to make a varied centerpiece, while the pools are in need of updating.

Economic Development

Discussion regarding economic development centered on many of the same issues that were identified in the survey – a desire for more shopping options in the township, a desire to lower the tax burden of the residents, and a lack of knowledge of what businesses are available in the township. It was noted that several small businesses opened right before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and were unable to remain open in the time that followed.

¹ <https://www.cheltenhamtownship.org/pview.aspx?id=40824&catid=0>

Attendees discussed the challenges that new businesses face in securing EDU permits and the permitting process as part of opening a business in Cheltenham, as well as the need for advertising to draw both visitors and current residents in to patronize existing businesses in Cheltenham. For the latter, however, it was acknowledged that residents by and large chose Cheltenham to get away from businesses, making economic development a sensitive topic for many areas of the township.

The possibility of extending partnerships with Arcadia University beyond the current extent and developing neighborhood improvement partnerships with the other universities and colleges in the township was raised in several breakout rooms, as was the current lack of a hotel or motel for out-of-town visitors to stay at within the township. Attendees also noted that there is a lack of parking in Cheltenham Village and a general need to make retail areas more pedestrian friendly.

Municipal Facilities

Two different comments were made frequently regarding the topic of municipal facilities. The first was an affirmed strong desire for community centers to remain in neighborhood areas, particularly the LaMott community center. The other comment that came up frequently was, once again, a lack of awareness among residents of all the township facilities and the ways that they can be used.

Attendees strongly affirmed that community centers and gathering places should be made a priority as part of the comprehensive plan, and generally preferred keeping smaller neighborhood community centers rather than a more modern, centralized community center. Attendees recognized that the current buildings are not in good condition, but advocated for maintaining the historic nature of the recreation centers even if not retaining the current buildings. One attendee vocally supported the idea of a single recreation center, but no other attendee voiced active support for consolidation of the recreation center. It was also mentioned that the township website is difficult to navigate to gather information, but details on when the website was accessed were not provided.

Specific Ideas

As part of each of these topic areas, attendees also mentioned a number of potential projects that the township might choose to pursue. These ideas are listed here, without reference to feasibility, priority, or suitability for recommending in a comprehensive plan.

- Placing a café or other refreshment location in the libraries
- More bookstores in the township
- Make connections between parks
- Run a shuttle around the township to a centralized facility
- Welcome to Cheltenham placemaking signs at key locations
- Strengthen university partnerships
- Improve the train connections between Melrose Park and Glenside
- Streamline the business permitting process
- Implement a recycling education campaign
- Implement a plastic bag ban
- Program tours of parks in the township
- Increase the presence of businesses in Wyncote
- Promote Cheltenham as a destination
- Develop a vacant property inventory, advertise what residents want to see

- Improve tree maintenance program with PECO
- Create a business recruitment position in the township
- Enforce speeding and landscape maintenance ordinances
- Strengthen the noise ordinance
- Increased frequency of the township partnering with local groups
- Evaluate the necessity of street parking in areas with narrow rights-of-way and off-street parking
- Electric vehicle chargers at gas stations
- Implement and enforce storefront design guidelines
- The township hosting videos that residents take in various parks as part of an interactive map
- A path between the Jenkintown-Wyncote train station and the nearby bird sanctuary
- Reclaim paved area near creeks
- Create a disc golf course
- Allow reservation of pavilions, playing fields
- Encourage the use of Curtis Arboretum as a gathering space
- Digital welcome packet for new and recent residents