

March 18, 2009

To: Cheltenham Township Commissioners and Manager

At the Cheltenham Township Board of Commissioners' meeting that took place on Tuesday, March 17, 2009; Ms. Janet Benton asked you several questions during the Citizen Forum. She asked you specifically about Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) and if this would be applied/created in the Jenkintown-Wyncote Station area. I cannot recall who responded, but, one of you said that you had not heard of this. (It was not Mr. Sharkey)

I would like to call your attention to the Cheltenham Township Comprehensive Plan, February 2005. All of your names appear at the beginning of the document, with the exception of Mr. Sharkey; therefore you should have replied to Ms. Benton that your Comprehensive Plan does indeed mention TRID and the Wyncote Station area. Please review Chapter 6 *Transportation*, specifically:

Policy 6.1 - The Township will create transit-oriented design guidelines.

The Township should consider adding transit oriented design guidelines and transit stop design element requirements to its subdivision and land development ordinance ***for areas along major transportation routes, just as it does for landscaping and road improvements. Transit routes should be modified to address the needs of new developments.*** The Township should also look into funding for better transit stops, shelters, and better and safer pedestrian crossings.

Policy 6.2 - The Township will create TRID concepts.

The Township will also consider the new transit revitalization investment district (TRID) concept for around the train stations and bus terminals in accordance with Act 238, Transit Revitalization Investment District legislation passed by the Pennsylvania legislature. This could be accomplished as an overlay district with requirements meeting the goals and objectives for transit-oriented development. The intent of this district is to encourage community and economic development around transit stations and increased transit ridership. It should also address the revitalization of existing station stops, platforms and shelters, and the reuse of station houses.

I have read through this plan. Your plan specifically sites the establishment of a TRID and economic development around the transit stations. Ms. Benton's questions at the Board meeting should have been answered honestly. From your own Comprehensive Plan, you do indeed intend to encourage economic development in the Wyncote community. How will you do this? With the use of eminent domain??? Do you plan on widening the roadways, demolishing homes, building stores?

I strongly suggest that you read the Cheltenham Township Comprehensive Plan. I hope you pay attention to Chapter 5 ***Historic Preservation***. Here is one excerpt:

Policy 3.1 - The Township will adopt "Visual Compatibility Standards" for its Historic Districts

In conjunction with the H-D Historical District ordinance, the Township will seek to adopt a list of "Visual Compatibility Standards" that would **guide efforts to promote redevelopment and reuse that is compatible with existing development. In assessing visual compatibility, the following "visual compatibility factors" (taken largely from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's *Model Historic District Ordinance*) would be considered in reviewing applications for new construction, alterations, additions or replacements affecting an historic landmark or an improvement within an historic district:**

Height and Scale. The height of the proposed building should be visually compatible with adjacent buildings.

Roof Shape. The roof shape of a building should be visually compatible with buildings to which it is related.

Relationship of Materials, Texture and Color. The relationship of materials, textures and color of the façade and roof of a building should be visually compatible with the predominant materials

used in the buildings to which it is related. New construction should use materials similar to what is found in existing buildings such as, brick, stone, stucco, shingles, etc.

Wall of Continuity. Appurtenances of a building such as walls, open-type fencing, or evergreen landscape masses, should form cohesive walls of enclosure along a street, to the extent necessary to maintain visual compatibility of the building and places to which it is related.

Directional Expression of Front Elevation. A building should be visually compatible with the buildings to which it is visually related in its dimensional character, whether this is vertical character, horizontal character, or non-directional character.

Exterior Features. The exterior features of a building, such as lighting, fences, signs, sidewalks, driveways, and parking areas should be compatible with the features of those buildings which it is visually related to and should be appropriate for the historic period for which the building is significant.

Gentleman:

The angst in this community is growing day by day. Hundreds of us have all been reading the Cheltenham Township Comprehensive Plan. There are a lot of intelligent professional residents living in Wyncote (as well as the rest of the Township). None of us believe that a 5 story, 700 car concrete structure, with a touch of imitation red brick or imitation stone façade, is compatible with the Historic Wyncote District as stated in the Comprehensive Plan.

Is your intent, as stated in the Cheltenham Township Comprehensive Plan, February 2005, to apply TRID to our community? TRID allows Transit Authorities = SEPTA to *establishment of "value capture" areas in which a portion of the additional tax revenues generated within a TRID may be used to pay for public transportation capital improvements, related site development improvements and maintenance. TRIDs thus create an additional incentive for transit agencies to work together with municipalities and counties on the planning and long term funding of development.*

The term "value capture" sure sounds like eminent domain to me! Are you planning to knock down the surrounding historic buildings and have someone develop the area to be compatible with the proposed transportation center - specifically this ugly massive parking garage? What are your plans for economic development in our community?

Ms. Benton deserved honest answers, as do the rest of the Wyncote and Cheltenham Township residents.

You will find the Cheltenham Township Comprehensive Plan on the Township website, www.cheltenhamtownship.org. I encourage you to go to the website that our community has created. You will see that we have all been doing our "homework." www.cheltenhamchamberofcitizens.com

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