

VISION PLAN Downtown Prospect Park



June 2018

Downtown Prospect Park Vision Plan

June 2018

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Downtown Awakening is a multi-phase program to help municipalities stimulate reinvestment in Delaware County's Central Places. This project is a part of the initial phase of the program to create a series of long-range vision plans, each with a specific and coordinated strategic action plan for implementation. This program is an implementation effort of Delaware County 2035, the County's comprehensive plan.

This project was funded in part by a grant from the Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI), administered by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

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Lincoln Avenue, Prospect Park, Pa. 1938

SECTION 1:
INTRODUCTION

Section I: Introduction

This plan will outline a vision for Downtown Prospect Park based on community input and provide a detailed implementation strategy. It is important to note that this plan is intended to build on recent efforts and current momentum in the community – not replace it. The history of the study area, summary of recent planning efforts, and a review of current trends at the national level will provide important insight to accomplish this effectively.

STUDY AREA

The study area (see Map 1 and Map 2) is located in the center of Prospect Park Borough, along Lincoln Avenue from the SEPTA/Amtrak railroad tracks to the north, to Chester Pike in the south, and including a few side streets such as Maryland Avenue. The study area is mostly commercial and includes the Prospect Park regional rail station and the municipal complex, as well as a few residential areas that immediately abut commercial uses.

Context

Prospect Park is in close proximity to a number of other communities that developed as primarily residential commuter suburbs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Ridley Park, Norwood, and Glenolden. Although these areas were originally planned as discrete communities, subsequent development has made the residential areas nearly contiguous.

The main north-south corridor through the study area is Lincoln Avenue, Route 420, which connects to a number of other major routes including Route 291, Route 13/Chester Pike, MacDade Boulevard, and Baltimore Pike. The study area is about a mile from the nearest entrance to I-95 and less than 2 miles from the Delaware River. It is less than 5 miles from the Philadelphia International Airport.

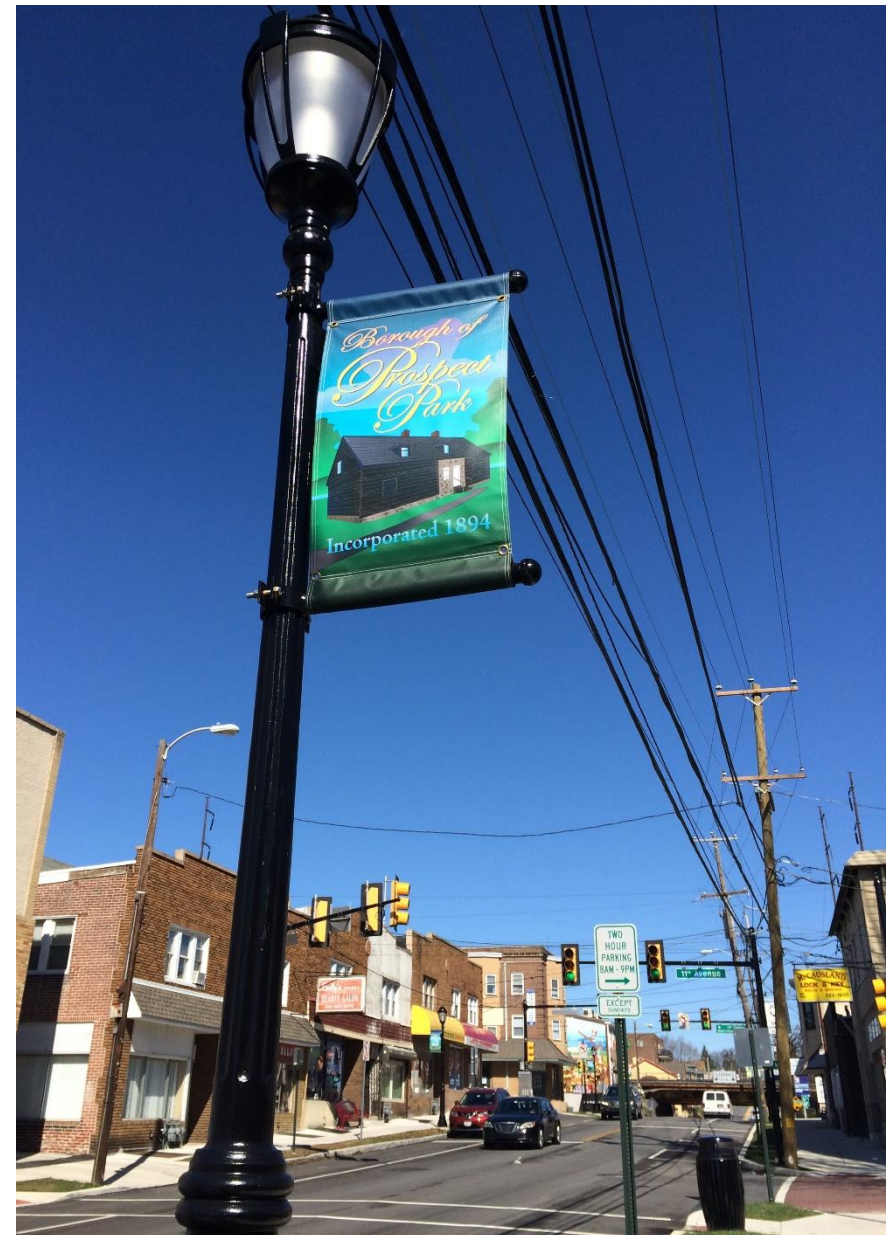


Figure 1: The heart of downtown Prospect Park at 11th Avenue

Map I: Study Area



Map 2: Study Area Aerial



 Study Area



History of Study Area

Prospect Park was once a portion of Ridley Township, and through the first half of the nineteenth century the area that would become the borough had a few roads and a handful of farmsteads. There were also a few small crossroads developments, including one near what would become Chester Pike and Lincoln Avenue. This rural character began to change in 1872, when a rail line was laid between Philadelphia and Chester by the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railway Company. James L. Moore, an English immigrant and businessman in Philadelphia, owned a large piece of land through which the rail line ran, and granted the railroad right of way as well as a piece of land for a

station, which was named Moore's Station. Railroad access made the area a convenient location for suburban housing and an attractive market for speculative real estate development. In 1874, a developer named John Cochran purchased and subdivided a large tract of land west of Lincoln Avenue (then known as Moore Avenue) between the railroad and Chester Pike to the south. In the late 1880s, James Moore's heirs subdivided their land east of Lincoln Avenue near Moore's Station and began selling off lots. The piecemeal nature of Prospect Park's early subdivision is evidenced today in the way cross streets are offset on either side of Lincoln Avenue in the study area, as seen in the historic map in Figure 2.

The town incorporated in 1894 as residential development continued. A few buildings in the study area remain from the period preceding the borough's incorporation to the turn of the twentieth century, including the Masonic Hall (1889) and Prospect Hill Baptist Church (1895), as well as 1110 Lincoln Avenue (pre 1892) and 1111 Lincoln Avenue (c. 1890).

As the community flourished in the first half of the twentieth century, additional development built up along Lincoln Avenue. Other landmark buildings from the early part of the twentieth century include St. James Episcopal Church (1910) and the current

Prospect Park Moore Station (1911), which replaced an earlier building. A firehouse was built on the corner of 10th Avenue and Lincoln Avenue in 1908 (it was later replaced by a modern building in 1963 on the same site). By the 1930s, Lincoln Avenue's character as a commercial corridor was solidifying through the increasing development of mixed-use buildings, built to the front property line, with commercial on the

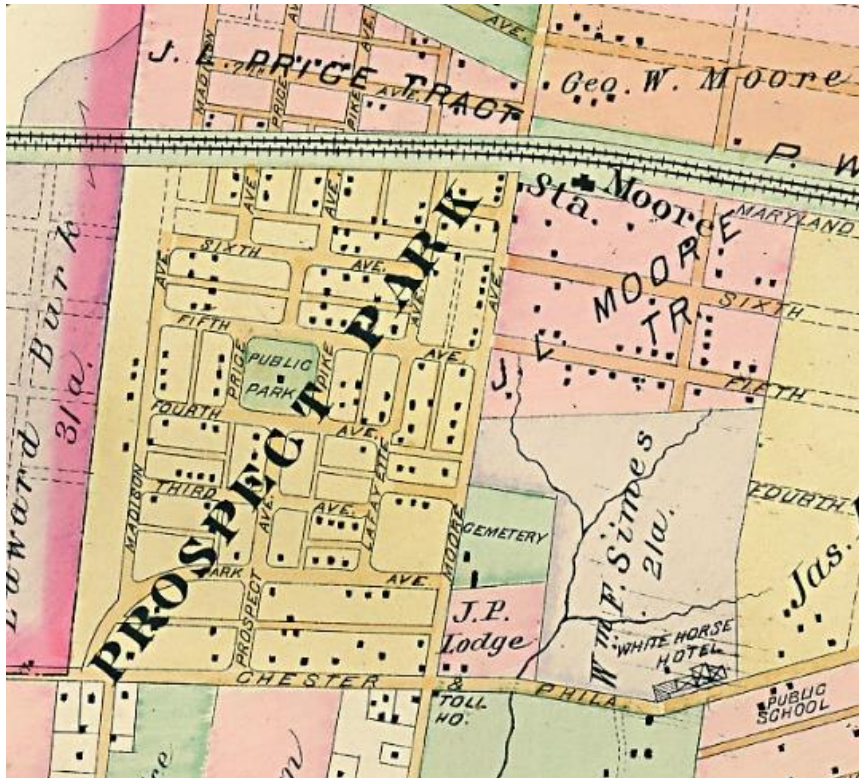


Figure 2: 1892 Sanborn map (via delawarecountyhistory.com)

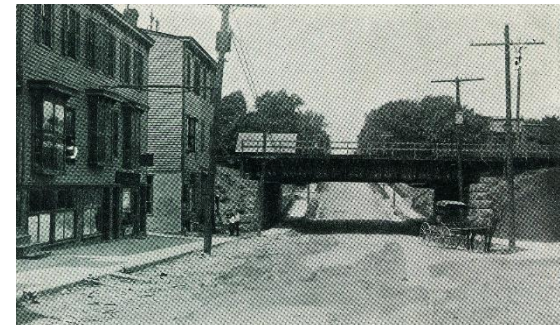


Figure 3: Lincoln Avenue at Maryland Avenue looking north, 1904 (Via Keith Lockhart)

ground floor and offices or apartments above. Notable, intact examples of mixed-use development from this period include 1013-1015 Lincoln Avenue as well as the rows at 1008-1016 Lincoln Avenue and 1036-1038 Lincoln Avenue.



Figure 5: The east side of Lincoln Avenue at 11th Avenue looking north, 1921 (via Keith Lockhart)

By about 1960, the majority of the structures in the study area had been constructed and/or remodeled. The character of Lincoln Avenue was now solidly commercial, but with some residential still remaining from the residential development boom in the first part of the twentieth century. Many former residences had been converted into commercial structures through the addition of one-story storefronts that extended to the property line. Some buildings in the study area were demolished for parking.

In the years since 1960, new commercial development in the area has taken on a very different character from earlier development. Properties such as 1020 Lincoln Avenue (Traub's Bakery), 913-921 Lincoln Avenue (Brittany Square) and 817 Lincoln Avenue (Wawa), are

low (generally one story), set back from the property line, with multiple curb cuts from the street, and parking in front.



Figure 4: The Prospect Park Free Library, 1948 (via Keith Lockhart)

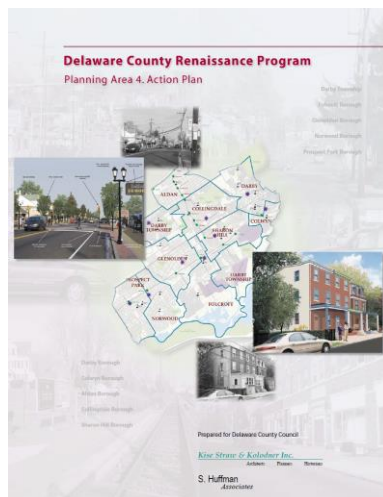
PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

Zoning Ordinance

Prospect Park's zoning ordinance was first adopted in 1970, amended in its entirety in 1994, and amended in parts in 1999. The majority of the study area is in the C-1 Commercial zoning district, with a small portion in the C-2 Commercial zoning district along Chester Pike. The primary difference between C-1 and C-2 is that automotive repair and gas station uses are restricted in C-1. A few areas along Lincoln Avenue and immediately west of the commercial district are zoned R-2 Residential, which provides an area for "multifamily residential uses designed to blend with adjacent residential and commercial districts." A small portion of the study area near the municipal building is zoned R-1 Residential, low- to medium- density residential designed to maintain a suburban atmosphere. The zoning ordinance is fairly standard, but reflects outdated development patterns, some of which may be detrimental to the future of Prospect Park's downtown. For example, the C-1 District area and bulk regulations require significant setbacks from all streets, which is not conducive to pedestrian-oriented development in a downtown.

Delaware County Revitalization Program

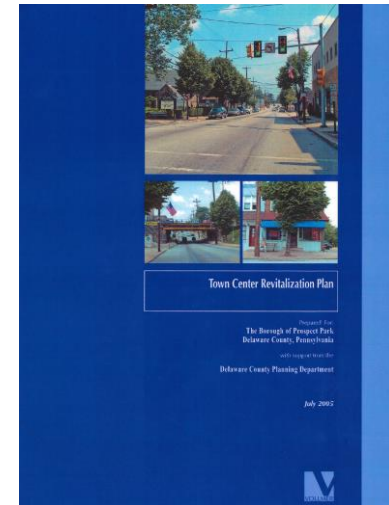
Delaware County established the Revitalization Program in the early 2000s with the goal of assisting communities in eastern and southern Delaware County in enhancing their economic viability and livability. Action plans for five Revitalization Planning Areas identified and analyzed the most pressing needs of each area, and Prospect Park participated as part of Planning Area 4. The primary project identified in the borough as part of the 2003 Area 4 Action Plan



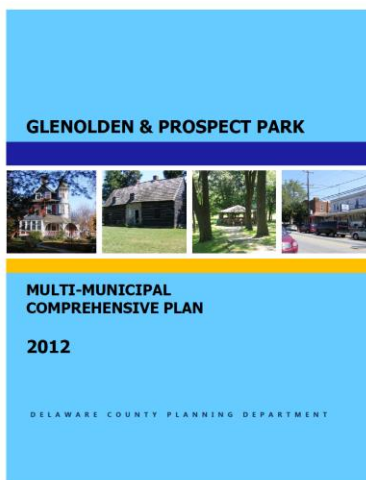
was a Town Center Revitalization Project. The project proposed improvements in two phases to Lincoln Avenue between Chester Pike to the south and the SEPTA/Amtrak railroad overpass to the north. The proposed improvements included streetscape amenities and traffic calming as well as a façade improvement program and design guidelines for the business district.

Town Center Revitalization Plan

In 2005, Prospect Park contracted with planning and design consultant Vollmer Associates, LLP (now part of Stantec, Inc.) to undertake a Town Center Revitalization Plan addressing the borough's business district, including Lincoln Avenue from the SEPTA/AMTRAK railroad overpass to Chester Pike. The plan analyzed the existing conditions, opportunities, and constraints in downtown Prospect Park and identified key improvements as well as general revitalization concepts for the borough to consider. This plan goes into more detail than the project described in the 2003 Area 4 Action Plan mentioned above.



Many of the streetscape improvements recommended in the 2005 Town Center Plan – including sidewalk improvements, lighting and street furniture upgrades, enhanced crosswalks, and striping of parking lanes – were carried out in 2016 with the assistance of a PennDOT grant the borough received in 2014.



Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan

In 2012, Prospect Park completed a multi-municipal comprehensive plan with Glenolden Borough. The plan examines and provides recommendations on issues related to the boroughs' natural and historic resources, housing stock, community facilities, transportation systems, recreation and open space amenities, and general land use. It establishes a shared vision for the future:

Glenolden and Prospect Park desire to be economically and socially vibrant communities that encourage ongoing growth and redevelopment, efficiently utilize public resources and value their unique, local heritage.

A number of the plan recommendations are related to downtown revitalization, including those encouraging rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings, as well as regional economic development and marketing initiatives.

Other Plans and Studies

The borough has been included in recent watershed, greenway, and recreation plans, including Darby Creek Watershed Conservation Plan, Greenway Plan for Darby Creek Watershed, and Improving Pedestrian and Bicycle Access to Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, but most of the recommendations are not directly related to downtown revitalization.

NATIONAL TRENDS

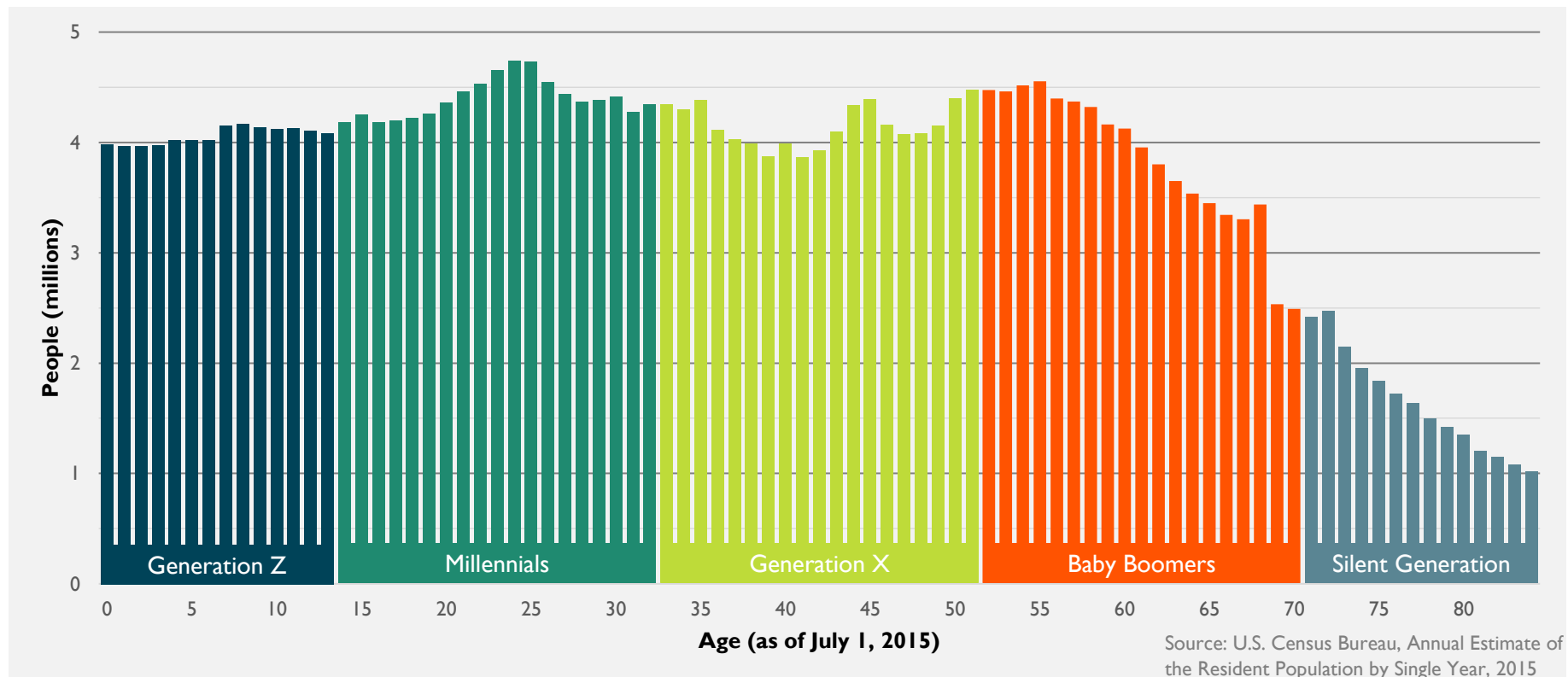
Research of trends occurring around the country helps to provide insight to changing patterns and attitudes locally. It also helps to predict future pressures that may affect local communities. As such, it is important to have a broad understanding of several key national trends in order to understand the context of local trends.

Changing Population

Grouping population by age cohorts, commonly referred to as generations, helps to make trends appear more clearly. These cohorts, which are used commonly in demographics and marketing, consists of population groups that generally come of age during similar circumstances and go through major life events at relatively the same

time. As such, individuals within a cohort mostly have similar preferences and tendencies that are often evident in market driven indicators, such as how many single family homes were constructed in a given year.

Currently, millennials and baby boomers make up the two largest age cohorts and both are entering into very important and unique stages of life that are likely to have an impact on society in general in the coming decades. Baby boomers are entering into retirement age while millennials are in the early years of their careers and family formation. As each cohort progresses through the stages of life, their preferences and needs change, and these changing preferences drive market forces that affect the way society lives and spends its money.



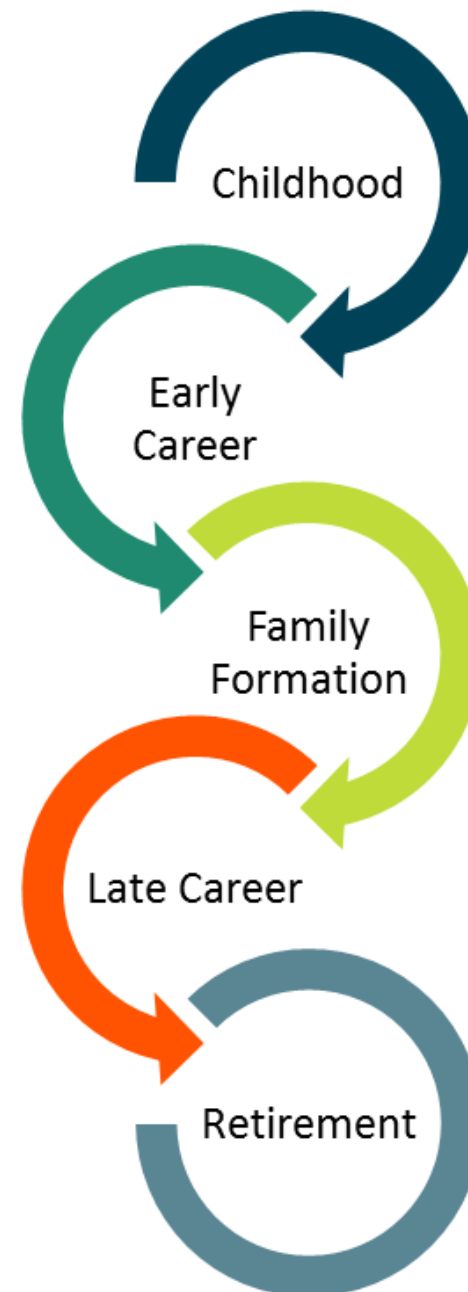
Generation Z: Generally born prior to 2001 (approximately 73.6 million people); the oldest of this generation are in college now. At this time, much is still unknown about this cohort because of their relatively young age; however, this will change rapidly. They are growing up as the most connected generation to-date and do not know a world without high-speed internet.

Millennials: Generally born between 1983 and 2001 (approximately 75.3 million people); account for the largest generation. Broadly speaking, they are more educated and more diverse than any previous generation; however, they have a substantial amount of student loan debt. This is significantly influencing how they live out early-adulthood and delaying major purchases, such as home-buying.

Generation X: Generally born between 1964 and 1982 (approximately 65.7 million people); they grew up during a time of rapidly increasing labor-force participation by women (i.e., their mothers). Many purchased single-family homes during the housing boom of the 1990s and early 2000s. They were subsequently affected heavily by the housing crash then following in the mid- to late-2000s.

Baby Boomers: Generally born between 1945 and 1963 (approximately 74.9 million people); many were born as veterans returned from World War II. They were the largest generation until approximately 2015. Many grew up during and/or led the significant cultural changes of the 1960s and 70s. They are entering into retirement age, changing the workforce and consumer market.

Silent Generation: Generally born prior to 1945 (approximately 26.4 million people); they grew up during two of the most influential time-periods in U.S. history – the Great Depression and World War II. Many went on to be serve in World War II and are often referred to as “The Greatest Generation.” Both of these events immensely influenced how they lived and the value they placed on community.



Housing

With significant changes in the age of population comes a need for different housing types. As the number of people 65 years and older continues to grow rapidly, there is more demand for smaller housing units with less maintenance. At the same time, millennials entering the workforce are looking for high-quality units in locations that provide good access to jobs and flexibility in case they need to move for another job.

Ten to fifteen years ago this demand may have been met through the construction of age-restricted housing and single-family homes. In the post-recession market, however, it has been increasingly in the form of “age-targeted” luxury apartments. Age-targeted apartments are designed to accommodate boomers looking to downsize as well as millennials who are not yet ready to purchase a house. Age-targeted apartments are often built with high-end fixtures and common space amenities that frequently include gyms, pools, and club rooms. Most residential units only have one or two bedrooms.

Chart I: Homeownership Rate



Homeownership

The economic recession that hit the country in 2008-09 has created a vastly different housing market than the years prior. Homeownership, which hit an all-time high in the early- to mid-2000s, has dropped off significantly and is at the lowest rate across the country in decades. This was the result of both the economy and shifting cultural preferences. As mentioned above, rental units are attractive to many boomers who are looking to downsize and desire no-maintenance living. At the same time, many millennials came of age during the economic recession and were hesitant to commit to long term mortgages. Many lived at home with parents longer than previous generations while others preferred rental units that were more affordable than buying a home and provided greater flexibility. Due to these shifts, an increase in rental properties is a national trend and decreasing homeownership numbers should not necessarily be seen as a generally negative indicator for a community.

Workforce

The cultural shifts that are occurring as a result of the economic recession and changing population of the country are significantly altering the workforce. Even though millennials are presently the largest generational cohort and are just starting their careers, it is likely that there will be a labor shortage in the near future as boomers continue to retire. As such, wages will likely increase, particularly for the younger generations, as employers strive to remain competitive in order to keep talent. Since millennials are on the verge of comprising the largest portion of the workforce, employers will also locate offices and employment centers in areas where millennials want to live and work – namely areas with a mix of uses and access to transit. As competition for talent between employers continues to grow, it is likely that the younger generations will continue to switch jobs much more frequently than any previous generation.

Coworking

The changing economy is also affecting the types of jobs that people have. Many people are self-employed or work on a contractual basis for larger companies. As a result, more flexible office and workplaces have become more popular. Coworking spaces provide space available for short-term rent/leases (from as short as a few hours to as long as several months). Delaware County has partnered with HeadRoom, a coworking space in Media and Wayne, and SCORE, an organization of experienced volunteers dedicated to providing free counseling and seminars to help small businesses grow. The County sponsors qualifying start-ups and small businesses to use HeadRoom's facilities to incubate and develop their businesses. Makerspaces are similar to coworking spaces but emphasize sharing tools and space to create products or prototypes.

Retail

It is widely understood that the retail industry has been changed by the exponential growth of online shopping over the past decade. Many nation-wide retailers have started to close physical stores to devote

more resources to online commerce. At the same time, however, some online retailers have also started to develop physical stores. Online retail is changing the perception of in-store shopping from a 'chore' to a 'leisure experience' to be enjoyed. As millennials are less likely than boomers to spend on houses, cars, and other big expenses, they have more expendable income, feeding into their preference for spending more for higher quality and better experiences. At the same time, boomers entering retirement have more time for leisure activities.

Younger generations place greater emphasis on product reviews, the quality of goods, and the word of friends and family. Because of this, millennials have a sense of "brand loyalty." Many retailers are focusing their marketing efforts on becoming cultural icons. They often concentrate high-quality stores in locations of cultural significance in order to help build their brands, as with amazon books. Millennials also prefer brands that are socially conscious, so charity and giving back to the community are valuable branding opportunities.

Lifestyle Centers

Lifestyle centers function as outdoor malls and consist of stores built around pedestrian spaces. Often times, they include specialty stores anchored by movie theaters or similar entertainment destinations. These key features try to cater to the new trend of shopping as a leisure experience and mimic the advantages of older towns like Prospect Park.

Transportation Disruptors

New technologies in the twenty-first century are poised to significantly alter the way that people get around. Perhaps the most disruptive change is the invention of autonomous vehicles. While these are still in a developmental stage, it is increasingly likely that they will become mainstream in the coming decades. At this time, it is unknown what the real impacts of autonomous vehicles will be. In the meantime, transportation network companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft, offer rides as a service. They act similar to a taxi, except that they are hailed

via a mobile phone application. Due to their ease of use, many communities will see an increase in drop-off/pickoff traffic. In fact, this is already noticeable in several communities, particularly those with a high concentration of restaurants/bars or larger cultural attractions such as a theater. Continued increase of TNCs may also decrease some pressure on downtown parking while increasing the need for designated drop-off areas.

The increase in online retail and changing shopping patterns is also changing freight movement as high volumes of smaller consumer goods and local deliveries are necessary. This changes the amount, types, and frequency of freight vehicles that are making downtown and neighborhood deliveries, particularly in higher density areas. Many freight companies are increasingly using smaller vans to provide more frequent delivery service throughout the day. As this continues to progress, it may have impacts on required delivery locations and loading zones.

Alternative Transportation

Many boomers and millennials prefer housing that is located within walking distance to shopping, dining, and other cultural attractions. Millennials, in particular, emphasize proximity to transit as being important in housing location. As a result, both boomers and millennials emphasize access to transit and other amenities when selecting a place to live. Increasing walkability and developing complete streets will help to make communities more attractive to potential renters and buyers.

Summary

It is clear that changing demographics are already significantly influencing communities across the country. An increased market for experiences is likely as boomers continue to enter retirement and millennials have more expendable income. Demand for apartments and smaller housing units, particularly in walking distance to transit, shopping, dining, and cultural attractions will continue to push development back toward

downtown areas. Retailers will continue to emphasize online retail; however, many will also invest heavily in storefronts that highlight their brand as a cultural icon. As part of a long-range vision plan, it is important to consider and prepare for the potential impacts of these overarching trends. Communities will need to remain flexible in identifying goals and implementation strategies as the impacts of these trends continue to change over time.



SECTION 2: INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Section 2: Inventory and Analysis

Before developing a vision for the study area and proposing a plan to achieve that vision, it is critical to first take stock of existing conditions. This section looks at a number of features and issues in downtown Prospect Park in order to assess the area's strengths as well as areas in need of improvement.



LAND USE

Typical of many small downtowns of its age and size, downtown Prospect Park is mostly made up of mixed-use buildings.

The existing land uses shown in Map 3 are current as of January 2018, and were surveyed during the development of this plan. Most of the multi-story buildings facing Lincoln Avenue are mixed-use, meaning they have residential or office uses above the primary commercial space on the ground level; however, the map only highlights the ground level use.

The commercial activity in downtown Prospect Park is mostly service-oriented retail, such as salons and barber shops, professional services, and medical or dental offices. There are a handful of goods-oriented businesses, that is, those selling products directly to consumers; however, a few goods-oriented businesses closed during the course of this plan.

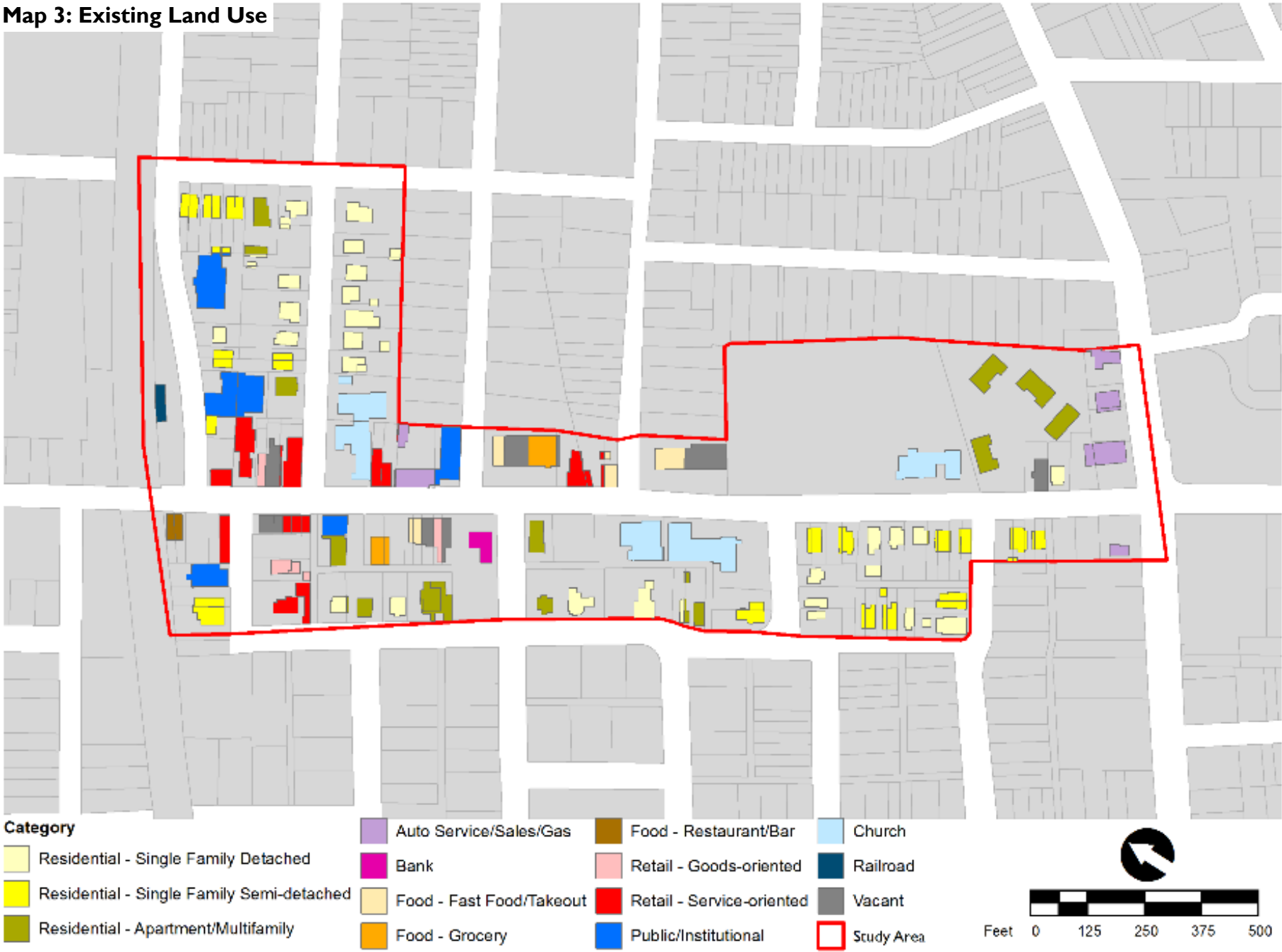
The food service establishments in downtown Prospect Park are mostly fast food or takeout, including a few national chains (Wawa and Dunkin' Donuts). There is one bar/restaurant, a beer distributor, and a specialty bakery. With the exception of the bar, there are no sit-down restaurants in the downtown; most of the fast food establishments don't even have space for tables.

The land uses along Chester Pike at the south end of the study area are primarily single-use and cater to automobiles, including gas and service stations, and auto sales and parts. There is one auto parts establishment farther up Lincoln Avenue in with more of the mixed-use businesses.

There are several large institutional uses, such as borough offices, the fire house, a district court, and a post office, within the study area. There are also three churches and a masonic lodge. These large uses are an integral part of the fabric of downtown Prospect Park and should be encouraged to actively participate in its revitalization.

At the time of the development of this plan, a total of 8 commercial spaces were vacant.

Map 3: Existing Land Use



CIRCULATION

Road Network

Lincoln Avenue, also known as Route 420, is a major north-south corridor that connects the study area to surrounding communities. Route 420 connects to a number of other major routes including Route 291, Interstate 95, Route 13/Chester Pike, MacDade Boulevard, and Baltimore Pike. Route 13/Chester Pike, which forms the bottom boundary of the study area, connects to Chester City to the west and eventually joins with MacDade Boulevard in Collingdale.

Within the study area, minor side streets off of Lincoln Avenue are offset from one another, leading to limited east-west circulation. These streets primarily serve the residential neighborhoods to either side of Lincoln Avenue and most of them either dead end or T with other collector roads.

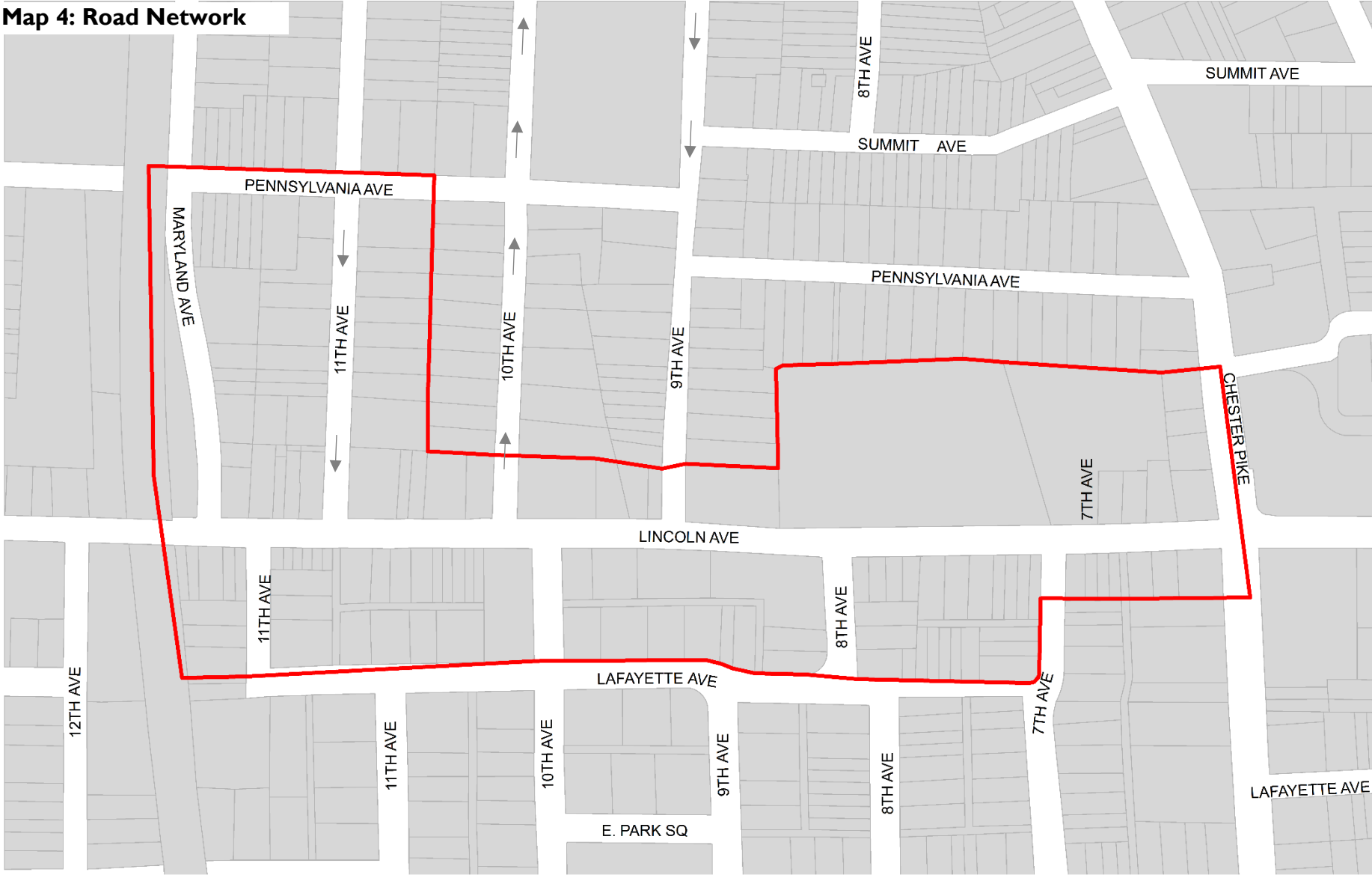



Figure 6: The intersection of Lincoln Avenue (Route 420) and Chester Pike (Route 13).



Figure 7: Lincoln Avenue through the study area is a long straightaway with extended sight distances.

Map 4: Road Network



 Study Area



Sidewalk Network

The sidewalk network in Prospect Park as a whole and especially in the study area is essentially complete, as is visible in Map 5. The borough recently undertook a \$1.3 million infrastructure improvement project in the Lincoln Avenue corridor that included improvements to sidewalks as well as street lighting, curbs, and crosswalks. As part of this project, the borough also added street furniture such as benches, plantings, and trashcans in the study area.



Figure 8: Streetscape amenities such as benches and trashcans were included in recent improvements.

Crosswalks

The streetscape improvement project implemented improvements to crosswalks at major intersections, including textured sidewalks across side streets along Lincoln Avenue that serve to provide continuous connectivity along each side. Striped crosswalks are provided across Lincoln Avenue at most major intersections, even though not all of

these are protected by signals. The 2005 Town Center Revitalization Plan recommended putting bump-outs at key crossings at the south end of the study area to slow down traffic and provide greater visibility to pedestrians who are crossing. The recent improvements involved striping buffer areas to restrict parking adjacent to crosswalks, which preserves the visibility of pedestrians but may not have the same traffic-calming effect as a physical bumpout.

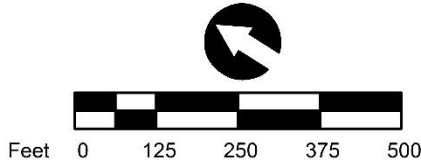


Figure 9: The crosswalk at 8th and Lincoln Avenues features a painted buffer area but could be expanded as a physical curb bump-out.

Map 5: Sidewalk Network



- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Study Area



PARKING

Prospect Park has an abundance of private parking, especially considering its size and proximity to transit. More than 200 parking spaces are provided off-street, serving only the businesses to which they are attached. Non-metered, time-limited on-street parking is available along most of Lincoln Avenue, although it is frequently precluded by curb cuts or turning areas in proximity to intersections. Residential areas on side streets are generally free from permit parking restrictions.

The SEPTA commuter lot provided adjacent to the Prospect Park station provides about 30 spaces, which are fully utilized almost every day of the week.



Figure 10: The payment system at the SEPTA lot at Prospect Park station.



Figure 11: Some businesses with off-street parking have erected fences to separate the parking area from the sidewalk.

Map 6: Parking



TRANSIT

The study area is well served by transit on both the north and south ends of Lincoln Avenue. However, there is a lack of transit through the center of the study area, and the two major transit services are not well connected to one another.

Regional Rail

To the north is Prospect Park station on SEPTA's Wilmington/Newark regional rail line. This line connects Prospect Park to the city of Philadelphia as well as to Chester City and Wilmington and Newark in Delaware. The SEPTA line shares its right of way with Amtrak tracks, and although Amtrak does not provide direct service to Prospect Park, the regional rail line does connect commuters to Amtrak stations in Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Newark.

Prospect Park station is staffed by a SEPTA agent who sells tickets and passes and provides information on weekdays from 5:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The platform has never been modernized with a high platform to

provide ADA-compliant access to trains. Additionally, due of the presence of higher speed Amtrak tracks sharing the right of way with the SEPTA tracks, in order to cross between the inbound platform and the outbound platform, it is necessary to follow the path down a steep hill from the station and cross under the underpass along Lincoln Avenue.

Bus Route

To the south of the study area, the Route 114 SEPTA bus route has several stops along Chester Pike, including at the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and Chester Pike. The Route 114 bus originates at the Darby Transportation Center with links to multiple other routes. It also passes through the Chester Transportation Center before heading north along Concord Road into Aston. The far end of the route is at Penn State Brandywine in Middletown.




Figure 12: SEPTA's Prospect Park station serves the study area with Regional Rail access.

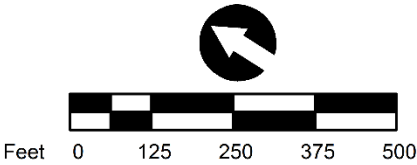


Figure 13: The route 114 SEPTA bus serves the study area along Chester Pike.

Map 7: Transit Network



 Study Area



CIRCULATION CONFLICTS

Although the major artery of Lincoln Avenue flows straight and relatively unobstructed through the study area, there are a number of potential conflicts to circulation.

To the north of the study area, where the railroad bridge crosses Lincoln Avenue, the road is sunken and the clearance under the bridge is only 12'6". The low clearance has the potential to cause truck accidents, and the limited sight distance caused by the grade change makes it impossible to provide pedestrian crossings at Maryland Avenue.



Figure 14: The low area beneath the railroad bridge on Lincoln Avenue produces limited sight distances for south-bound traffic, and can also be a hazard due to standing water.

There are only two signalized intersections in the study area, meaning that certain areas are at risk for increased vehicle speed. Additionally, the offset street crossings along Lincoln Avenue make for a number of

potential circulation conflicts, both for vehicles and for pedestrians. The offset intersections at 11th Avenue are managed relatively well, as both signals are controlled by one controller that results in combined movements. There is a peak-hour left-turn restriction for northbound traffic on Lincoln Avenue to reduce backups at this one-lane intersection.

The intersection at 9th Avenue is the first signal north of Chester Pike. The crosswalk here is heavily used due to access to the schools from the neighborhoods to the west as well as local pedestrian access to the Wawa. The intersections at 10th Avenue, 8th Avenue, and 7th Avenue have pedestrian crossings but no signals or other protections. The intersection at 8th Avenue is of particular concern, as motorists heading north on Lincoln Avenue have well over 1000 feet to gain speed before they reach the signal at 9th Avenue. Additionally, 8th Avenue is just north of the crest of a hill on Lincoln Avenue which limits visibility for drivers. The borough recently striped on-street parking spaces along Lincoln Avenue between Chester Pike and 8th Avenue, which should serve to narrow the visual aspect of the travel lane and could have the effect of causing drivers to slow down. However, a previous study recommended sidewalk bumpouts at this intersection to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance and make the crossing more visible to motorists.

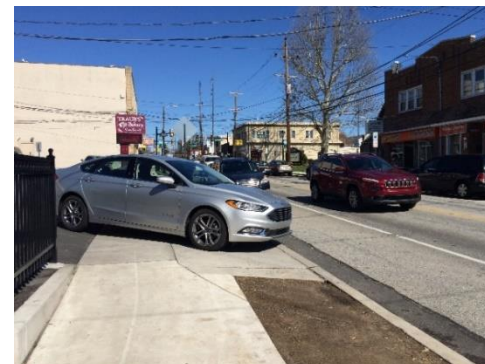


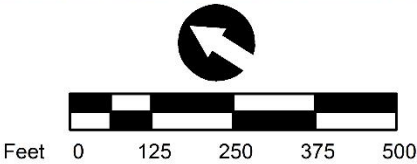
Figure 15: Curb cuts interrupt the pedestrian flow and can create traffic hazards as well.

Another concern throughout the study area is the number of curb cuts to access business parking lots and driveways that interrupt the flow of traffic. Curb cuts can be risky for drivers and pedestrians alike, and reduce the amount of on-street parking that can be provided.

Map 8: Circulation Conflicts



- Study Area
- Curb Cuts
- Intersections of Concern



GATEWAYS

Gateways serve as the entrance point into a downtown or neighborhood. They should be thought of as the “front door” and, as such, should be welcoming and create a noticeable threshold for visitors to recognize that they are entering a distinct area. A gateway can also set the tone for expectations for an area. A gateway can be achieved through a variety of methods, including signage, streetscape design, and building design.

Official welcome signage to Prospect Park borough is located at the municipal boundaries along Lincoln Avenue/Route 420, one just south of the CSX tracks to the north of the study area, and one near the bridge over Darby creek to the south. Each of these gateway signs is located about a half mile from the edge of the study area, and thus visitors traveling by car pass through residential portions of the borough before entering the downtown core. There is potential for additional signage welcoming visitors to the downtown, which may help strengthen downtown’s identity as a destination.

Northern Gateway

The SEPTA/Amtrak railroad bridge is one potential location for a gateway to the downtown. The bridge structure could be used to

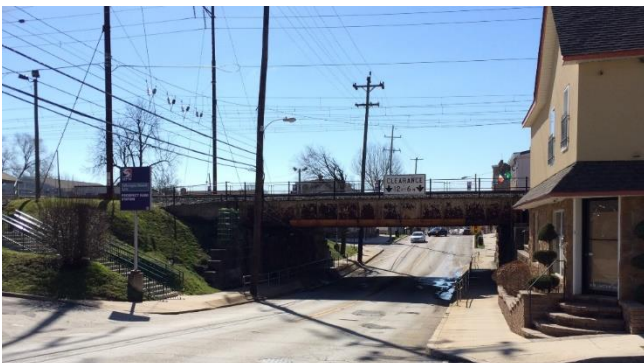


Figure 16: The railroad bridge on Lincoln Avenue establishes a physical gateway into downtown for southbound traffic.

mount low signage or lettering, similar to the way it is done in downtown Ardmore. This would establish a more formal gateway, and the distinctive visual cue could serve

to slow down traffic traveling under the bridge.

Prospect Park Station is a gateway in its own way. As mentioned previously, the station is fairly utilitarian as a commuter station.

However, a few pedestrian improvements or enhanced signage could make it an enticing entry to the downtown core.



Figure 17: For visitors arriving by train, the Prospect Park SEPTA station presents a gateway to the downtown.

Southern Gateway

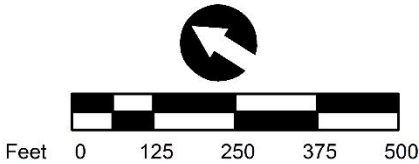
The southern end of downtown, where the commercial activity along Lincoln Avenue gives way to residential uses, is the area around 8th Avenue. A previous study recommended sidewalk bumpouts at the crosswalk in this area as a means to not only provide traffic calming and pedestrian security, but also to serve as a visual gateway to the southern end of the downtown.

There is currently no gateway signage for the borough along Chester Pike, likely owing to the contiguous highway commercial character of the route which runs through several communities. There is potential for signage along Chester Pike approaching Lincoln Avenue to entice traffic to make the turn and explore the downtown. Similarly, traffic heading north on Lincoln Avenue from the I-95 interchange could be directed towards the downtown core.

Map 9: Gateways Map



 Study Area  Potential Gateways



NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The downtown Prospect Park study area contains four distinct character areas as shown in Map 10. Stretching from the railroad tracks to the north to about 10th Street to the south and including the block of 11th Avenue to the west of Lincoln Avenue, the Downtown Core is the location of the densest commercial development and concentration of buildings from the early twentieth century. Immediately south of the Downtown Core to about 8th Street is the Downtown Edge, where buildings are larger, newer, and are surrounded by parking. While there is good pedestrian accessibility throughout the study area, the Downtown Core has much more of a pedestrian scale than the Downtown Edge. However, due to traffic issues, there is more on-street parking available in the Downtown Edge than the Downtown Core. The other commercial zone in the study area is the Highway Commercial zone adjacent to Chester Pike, but this has a much different character than the downtown. The Highway Commercial zone is heavily auto-oriented and largely contains auto-oriented businesses. The remainder of the study area, including some areas along Lincoln Avenue, is Residential Buffer. Some Residential Buffer areas may contain low-impact non-residential uses such as the library and municipal building, churches, or home-based businesses, but they are primarily made up of residential uses. The focus of the recommendations in this plan is the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge, although the background analysis includes the entire study area.

Buildings

Ages and Styles

The buildings in the study area date from the late nineteenth century through present day. Prospect Park initially developed as a residential commuter suburb starting in the 1870s. The oldest residential buildings in and adjacent to the study area developed in the Second Empire style, characterized by a mansard roof with dormers and decorative woodwork. Other common historical residential building styles include

late Victorian styles such as Italianate, Greek Revival, and Colonial Revival.



Figure 18: The tile roofs, decorative parapets, and ornamental medallions of this commercial building from the early twentieth century are suggestive of a Mediterranean Revival style.

Many of the commercial buildings on Lincoln Avenue developed later, around the 1920s, and either replaced or retrofitted the housing that had first developed there. The commercial architecture that did develop in the early part of the twentieth century is relatively plain and not strongly indicative of any one architectural style. Many feature or show signs of having once featured elements of a Mediterranean Revival style, such as tile pent rooves, wooden brackets at the eaves, decorative parapets, and ornamental medallions inset into brickwork. Later architecture is also very plain, in what can be described as a “Minimal Traditional” style (see Figure 19).

Map 10: Neighborhood Character

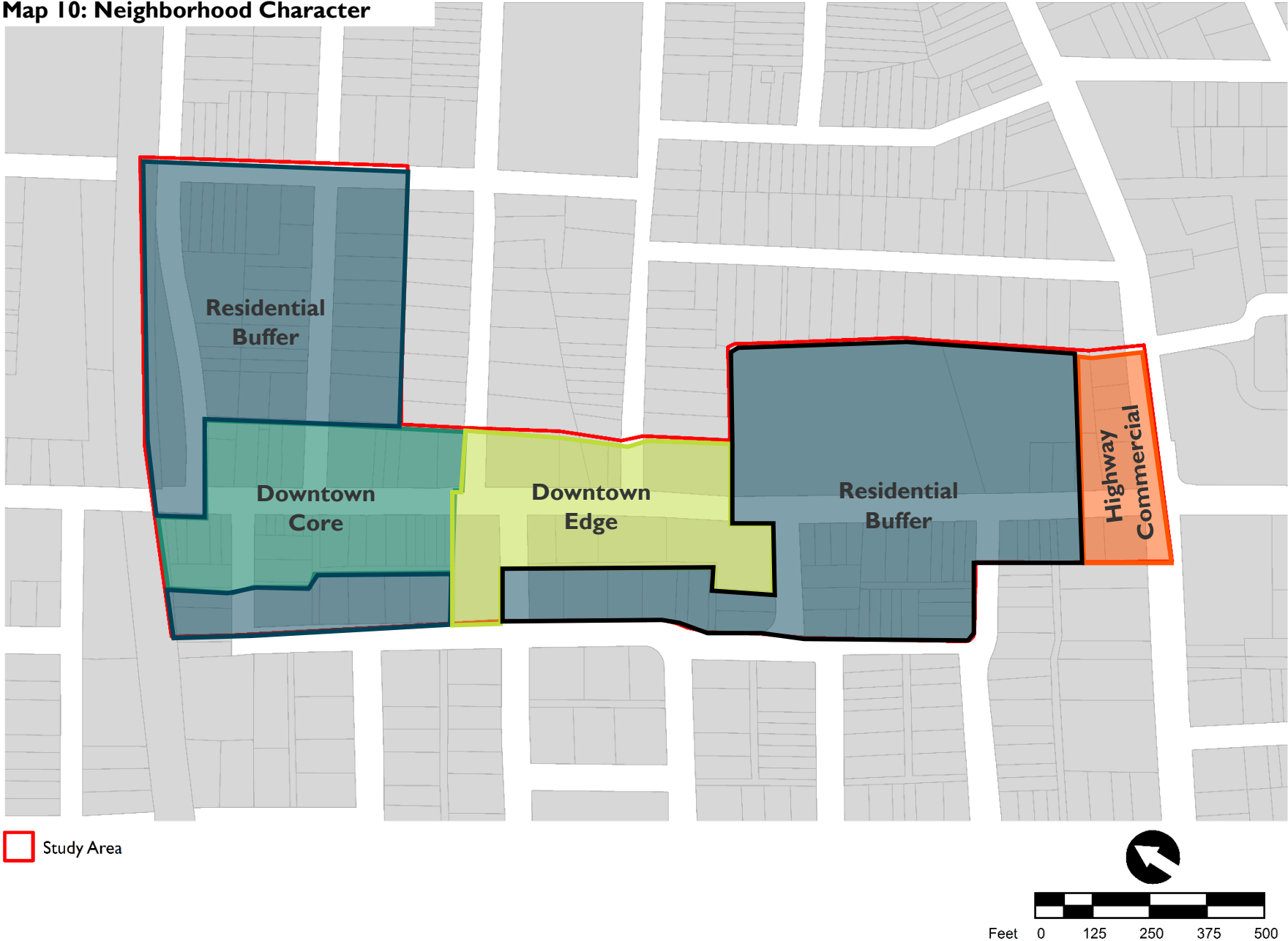




Figure 19: Minimal Traditional is a mid- to late-twentieth century style that features plain design but incorporates elements of earlier architectural styles. The faux-mansard roof on this building is reminiscent of the Second Empire style of residential architecture found throughout Prospect Park.

Sizes and Facades

The older buildings in the study area, particularly those in the Downtown Core, are relatively small in terms of modern retail standards. They are built to the edge of the property line and tend to be 1 to 2 stories, or about 15-25 feet high. The historic residential buildings in the study area are generally 2½ to 3 stories tall, and thus the buildings along Lincoln Avenue and 11th Street that were converted from residential to commercial uses are slightly taller than some of the later commercial construction. The building at 1100 Lincoln Avenue is the only commercial building built to a full 3 stories, but appears to be no taller than 35 feet. Most of the older buildings in the study area are about 20 to 25 feet in width, although some of the storefronts in older strips of shops are even narrower than 20 feet.

The more recent construction is generally lower, wider, and set back much farther than the historic construction in the study area. Zoning currently allows for a maximum height of thirty-five (35) feet throughout the study area.

Signage

Businesses and organizations within the Prospect Park study area advertise in a variety of ways. Vinyl printed awnings are common, some with internal illumination. Some of the newer construction in the study area features pole or pylon signs advertising one or more businesses. The churches in the study area tend to have low wooden monument signs, some featuring changeable copy reader boards.



The windows of the storefronts are frequently incorporated into the signage for businesses in the study area, often with neon or LED lighted signs. Some businesses effectively utilize vinyl lettering decals applied directly to the window, while others clutter the window area with hand-made signs and other product advertisements.

Prospect Park has a sign ordinance that establishes signage standards, but it has several issues. The ordinance prohibits anything but internally-illuminated signs, but this precludes the opportunity to create attractive vintage-style signs tastefully lit with flood lights or goose-neck wall lamps. Consequently, there is an over-abundance of internally-illuminated plastic or fiberglass signs in the study area, which does not contribute to the area's aesthetic appeal.

The ordinance also prohibits swinging or hanging signs, but this type of sign is very common with projecting hanging signs dotting the streetscape throughout the study area. It may be that many of these extant hanging signs have been grandfathered in as nonconforming signs from before the sign ordinance was written. Although many of these hanging signs are in poor condition or could benefit from aesthetic upgrades, allowing projecting or hanging signs in the study area contributes to the vintage feel of the downtown's original period of development.

There appears to be a recent influx of LED display signs within the study area despite the fact that the borough's sign ordinance prohibits "Flashing, blinking, twinkling, animated or lighted moving signs of any type, except those portions of signs which indicate time and temperature changes." These signs must have been granted exceptions to the ordinance, or else it is being inconsistently enforced. The borough should discourage the further proliferation of this type of sign as they are distracting to drivers and aesthetically unappealing.

Streetscape

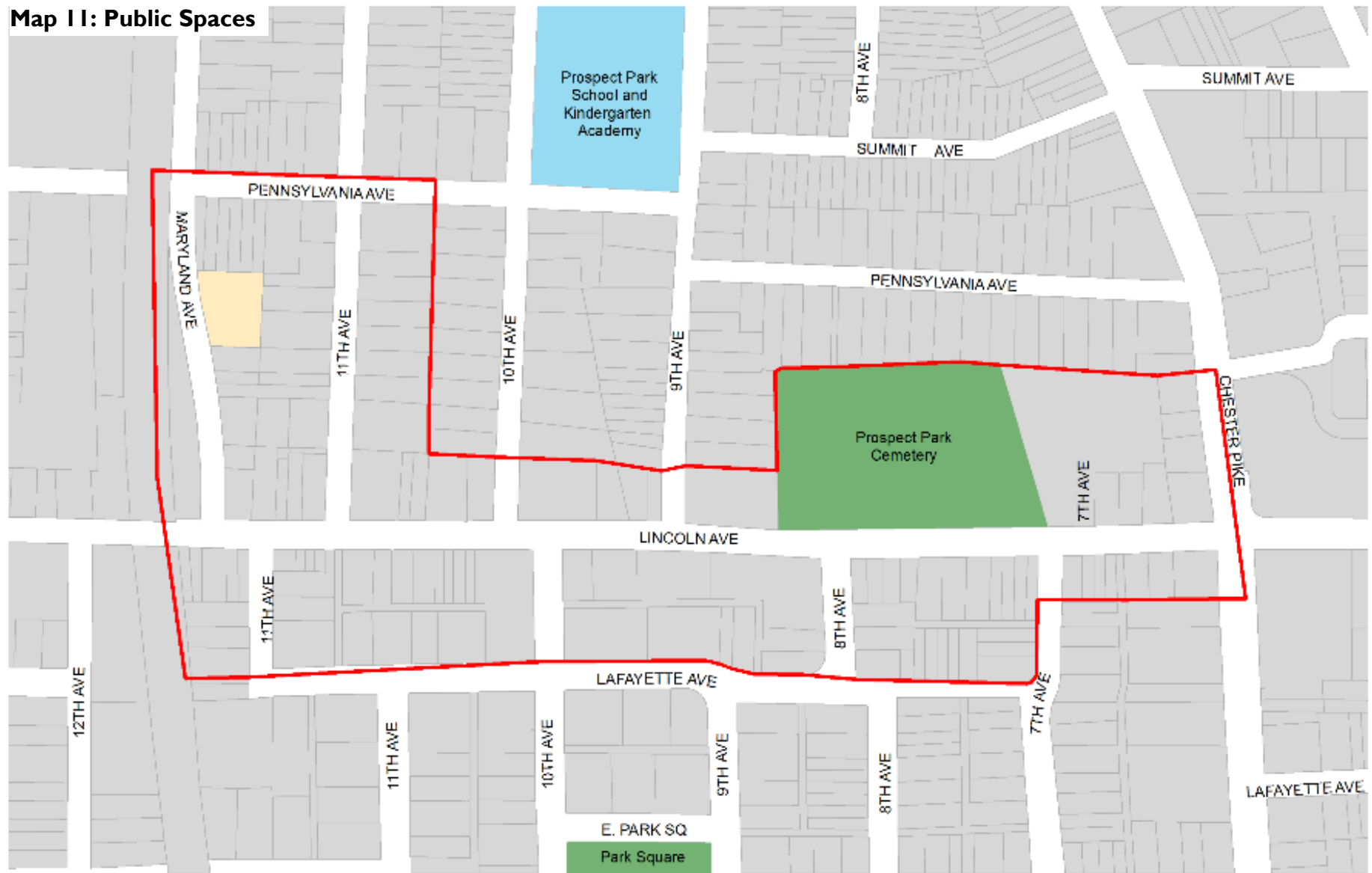
The borough recently undertook a \$1.3 million streetscape improvement project that included new roads, curbs, road striping,

traffic signals, streetlights, sidewalks, and crosswalks, as well as street furniture such as benches and trashcans. The improvements included a vegetated strip between the sidewalk and street, however, there are currently no street trees remaining along Lincoln Avenue in the study area. Street trees and other plantings provide shade, physical separation, and traffic calming effects that make commercial areas more hospitable to pedestrians. Proper maintenance and selecting varieties of trees appropriate for dense urban areas minimizes potential negative impacts of street trees such as utility line interference, sidewalk damage, and intrusion into pedestrian areas.

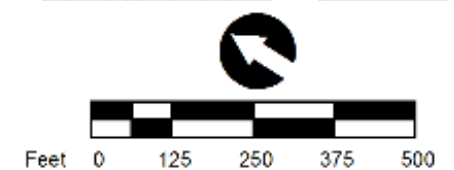
Public Spaces & Open Space

The primary public space within the study area is the Prospect Park Library/Borough Hall/Police building. The Prospect Park cemetery provides a large area of open space right along Lincoln Avenue, creating a dramatic break in the building pattern along one side of the street. Additionally, there are a few of adjacent public spaces that have a significant impact on the study area. Just two blocks west of Lincoln Avenue is Prospect Park Square, a green space surrounded by residential streets. Although the square is in a residential zone, its proximity and easy access to the downtown make it a potential venue for events and activities that can bolster the downtown such as farmer's markets, street fairs, and food festivals. A few blocks east of the study area are Prospect Park School and Kindergarten Academy. These uses likely generate a significant amount of traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular, passing through or near the study area.

Map 11: Public Spaces



- Open Space
- Municipal Building
- School
- Study Area



DEMOGRAPHICS

Analysis of existing conditions is made more complete by considering demographic factors and statistics that affect the study area and surrounding community.

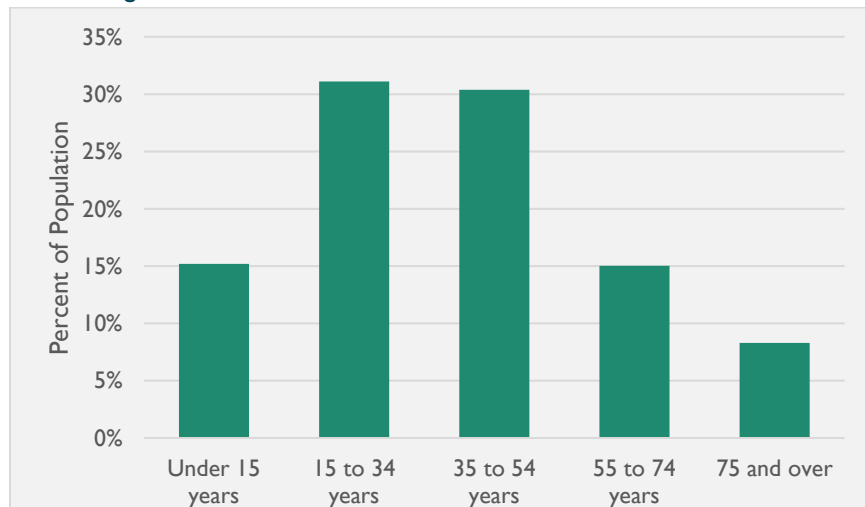
Population

Prospect Park experienced its greatest population boom in the early part of the twentieth century, with its population increasing by more than 50% each decade from 1900 to 1920, and nearly doubling from 1920 to 1930. The population continued to increase modestly through 1970, when the population peaked at 7,250 people. Following this peak, the population decreased slightly and since then has held relatively steady. According to 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates, the current population estimate is 6,468.

Age

As discussed in Section I, much of the country's population is concentrated in the age cohorts referred to as Millennials (those generally born between 1983 and 2001) and Baby Boomers (those

Chart 1: Age



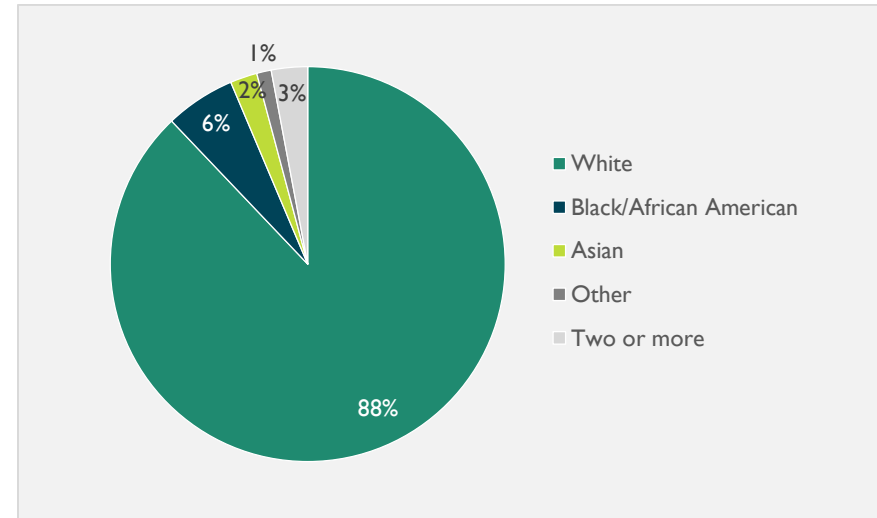
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2010-2014 Five-Year Estimates

generally born between 1945 and 1963). Prospect Park's population skews younger than the national population, with 31% of its population made up of millennials, and another 30% of the population in the Generation X cohort. Only 15% of the borough's population falls in the Baby Boomers cohort. The median age in the borough is 36.8, which would fall in the Generation X cohort. This may reflect a population made up of families with teenage to young adult children still living at home, as well as young families just starting out. The majority of the older population may have already downsized and moved out of the borough.

Race/Ethnicity

Prospect Park has a primarily white population, with only small percentages of the population identifying as Black or African American, Asian, or other races. Only 3% of the borough's population identifies as Hispanic.

Chart 2: Race



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2010-2014 Five-Year Estimates

Income

The median household income in Prospect Park is \$59,977, which is slightly lower than the County's median household income of \$65,123.

Housing Data

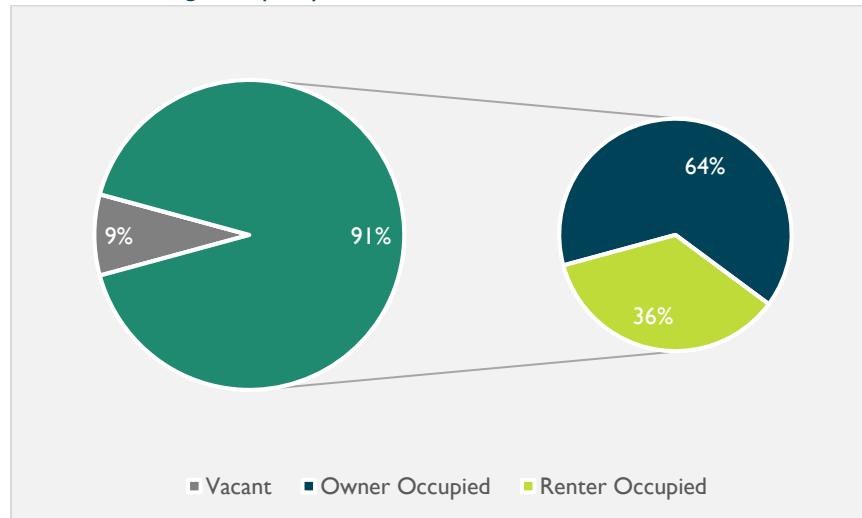
Housing Occupancy

Of an estimated 2,728 housing units in Prospect Park, nearly 91% are occupied while only 9% are vacant. Some vacancy is to be expected in a community given natural housing turnover periods and is not considered indicative of any negative trend.

Housing Tenure

Prospect Park is a majority homeowner community, with two thirds of occupied housing units being owner-occupied and only a third renter-occupied. This allows for a good range of housing options for various demographics.

Chart 3: Housing Occupancy and Tenure



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2010-2014 Five-Year Estimates

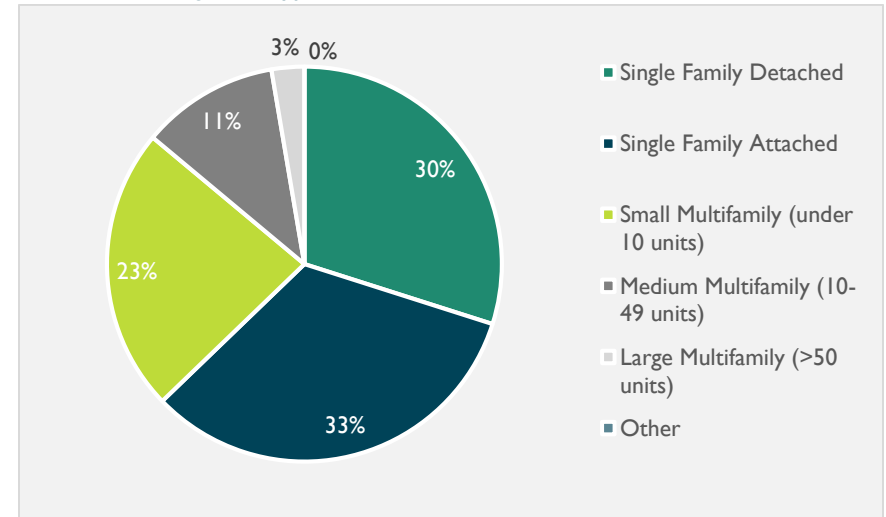
Household Size

The average household size in Prospect Park is 2.54 people. Owner-occupied housing units have slightly larger households on average, at 2.79 people. These households may be more likely to be families with children. The average household size for renter-occupied housing units is 2.09, and may represent more single people or couples.

Units in Structure

Most of the housing in Prospect Park is made up of single-family homes, either attached (33%) or detached (30%). Single family attached units could be twins or townhouses. Another 23% of the housing stock is small multifamily units, most of which are only 3 or 4 units. This could be accounted for by the common practice of dividing the type of large, stately homes common to the early development of Prospect Park into a number of smaller units given the lack of a market for larger homes in the area.

Chart 4: Housing Unit Type

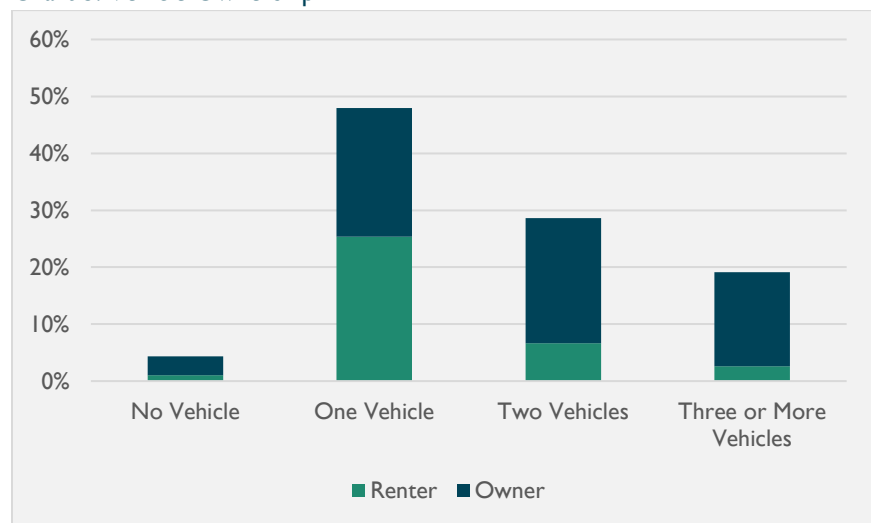


Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2010-2014 Five-Year Estimates

Vehicle Ownership

Although it is a walkable suburb with transit access, Prospect Park is still a suburb that relies heavily on automobile usage. Fully 96% of households have at least one vehicle. Renter-occupied households are more likely to only have one car, while many owner-occupied households have two or even three or more vehicles.

Chart 5: Vehicle Ownership

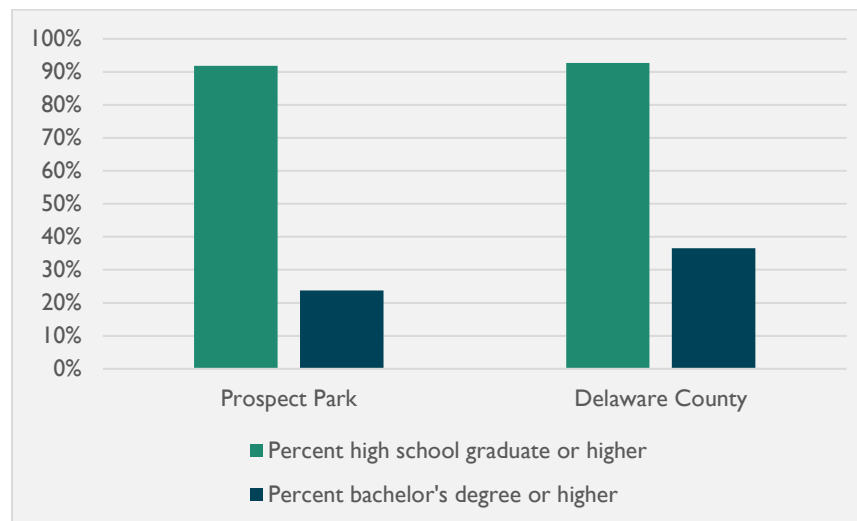


Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2010-2014 Five-Year Estimates

Education

Prospect Park has a relatively well educated population. Close to 92% of the population 25 years or older has at least a high school degree, with nearly a quarter of the population having at least a bachelor's degree. This is close to the education levels for the County as a whole, though with a slightly lower percentage of college-educated people.

Chart 6: Educational Attainment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2010-2014 Five-Year Estimates

ECONOMICS

Employment

As discussed previously, Prospect Park's population is fairly young. According to 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates, 70% of the population aged 16 years or over in Prospect Park is in the civilian labor force. Prospect Park has an unemployment rate of 5.5%.

Prospect Park residents are employed in a number of diverse fields. The top five industries employing the civilian labor population 16 or over are: Educational Services and health care and social assistance (28.0%); Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management (14.8%); Retail trade (12.4%); Transportation, warehousing and utilities (10.4%); and Construction (7.0%). These figures represent the major employers of Prospect Park residents, not necessarily the employers located within Prospect Park, which is discussed below.

Major Employers

National Establishment Time-Series (NETS) data on employment in the study area is available for 2013. While NETS data is often considered the best available source for this type of data, it is important to note that the data includes a number of businesses that may locate jobs in other areas (e.g., temporary staffing agency, in-home nursing, etc.). Additionally, the data includes several limited-liability corporations (LLCs) which list one or more employees; the reality is that many of the businesses are simple holding businesses that do not have employees. Specific numbers are not listed due to the accuracy concerns; however, this data can help provide general insight into the number and types of jobs in the study area.

The single largest employer in Prospect Park is the Borough of Prospect Park, which falls under the Public Administration industry category. The next largest employer is Wawa, which falls under the Retail Trade industry category. The Steering Committee identified The Prospect Park Rehabilitation Center and Interboro School District as having a

significant number of employees, although these employers did not show up in the NETS data.

Industry/Business Mix

According to 2013 NETS data, businesses in Prospect Park employed a total of 331 people. The top five industries employing people in Prospect Park are Retail Trade (18.1%); Manufacturing (13.3%); Public Administration (10.6%); Other Services (except Public Administration) (10.6%); and Construction (8.2%). The "Other Services" industry category includes businesses such as auto body and automotive repair; dry cleaning and laundry services; hair, skin, and nail care; and religious organizations.



Figure 20: The Borough of Prospect Park is the largest employer in Prospect Park.

CREATING A VISION FOR PROSPECT PARK

Prospect Park possesses a number of assets that make it a desirable place to live, work, and do business. It has a strong community of young families and a stable housing market with a variety of housing options. The downtown has some well-used businesses and services but also a high number of vacancies and a lack of diversity in business types. Downtown Prospect Park retains some of the traditional architecture that was developed during its heyday as a commuter suburb in the early twentieth century, and has the opportunity to embrace and highlight that historic character to promote its charm and sense-of-place.

Given these factors, the community-driven visioning process highlighted in the next section explores what people would like to see happen in Prospect Park. This information in turn helps to guide the community in creating a realistic action plan to achieve the community vision.



SECTION 3: PLANNING PROCESS

Section 3: Visioning Process

In order to develop a community-based vision for the future of Downtown Prospect Park, outreach was conducted through a number of efforts including a steering committee, public survey, and community events. These efforts provided community members the opportunity to voice opinions early in the process, prior to the development of potential improvements.

OUTREACH

Steering Committee

In June 2017, a steering committee was assembled of community representatives from Borough Council, Borough Planning Commission, the local business community, and other borough committees and organizations. Discussion at the June meeting centered around Prospect Park's existing assets as well as its potential for the future. The committee members also reviewed a map of the study area and identified site-specific issues and assets.

Community Events

Throughout October 2017, the project was discussed at a number of public events and meetings. The Beautification Committee reviewed the project at one of their regular meetings and offered feedback on the Borough's assets and issues. At Prospect Park Fire Company's Fire Prevention Night as well as Prospect Park Community Day, the study area map was displayed and attendees had a chance to offer their feedback and get more information on the survey.

SURVEY AND RESULTS

An online public survey was made available on October 4, 2017 and remained open through October 31, 2017. It was widely advertised, particularly through various social media accounts and the borough's website (see Appendix B).



Figure 22: Steering committee members marked up a map of the study area with notes on issues and assets.

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Gender

Female: 73.20%

Male: 26.29%

Age

Under 15: 0.52%

15 – 34: 29.38%

35 – 54: 53.09%

55 – 74: 17.01%

A total of 194 people participated in the online survey. The majority of the participants (84%) were residents of Prospect Park, but a number of participants were from surrounding municipalities in Delaware County. This reflects the fact that Downtown Prospect Park currently draws in some outside business, but mostly serves the adjacent community.



Figure 23: Graphics were used to help grab attention and advertise the survey.

3+ For this next section, please rate how much you would like to see each of the following ideas in Downtown Prospect Park.

a. Outdoor dining*



1

2

3

4

5

No thanks, there are more important things.

I would love outdoor dining.

4+ For this section, please select the image that best fits what you would like to see in Downtown Prospect Park.

a. Building design*



A Traditional

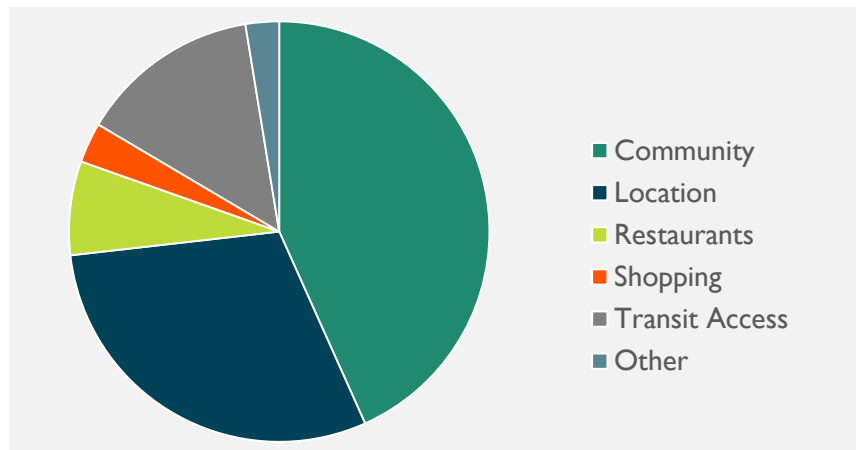


B Modern

Figure 24: The online survey allowed participants to voice their opinions in a user-friendly manner.

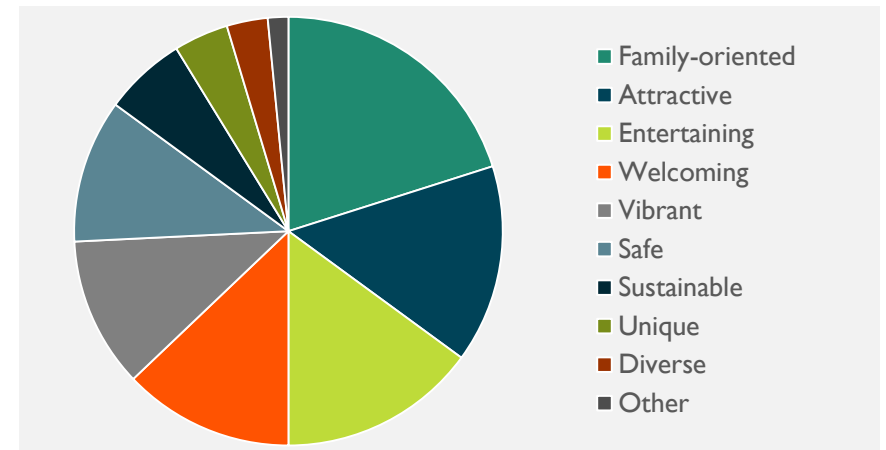
The first question on the survey asked participants to identify their favorite part of Downtown Prospect Park. “Community” was selected by a substantial number of participants (43%), indicating the extent to which Prospect Park is a predominantly residential borough. “Location” was a close second choice (30%), which also ties into the borough’s residential identity. Participants also appreciated the borough’s “Transit Access” (14%) and “Restaurants” (7%).

Chart 7: What is your favorite part about Downtown Prospect Park today?



The survey also asked the participants to describe what they would like Downtown Prospect Park to be like in the future. The three standouts, which accounted for half of the total responses, were “Family-oriented” (20%), “Attractive” (15%), and “Entertaining” (15%). These responses reflect the desire of the borough to be a high-quality residential community served by a welcoming downtown that adds to its appeal.

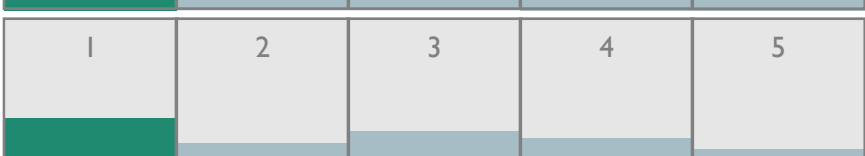
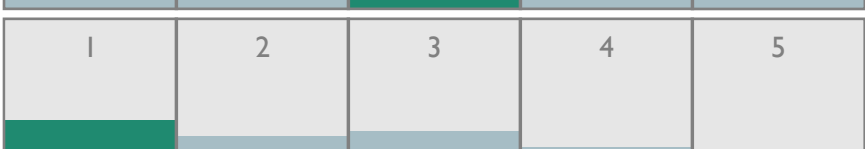
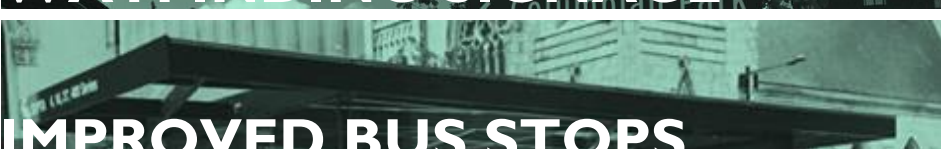
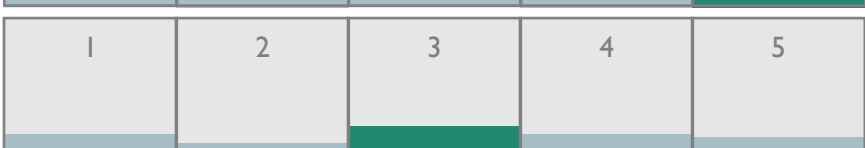
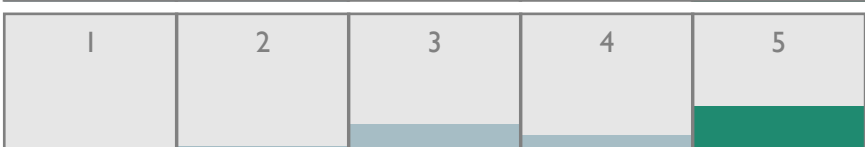
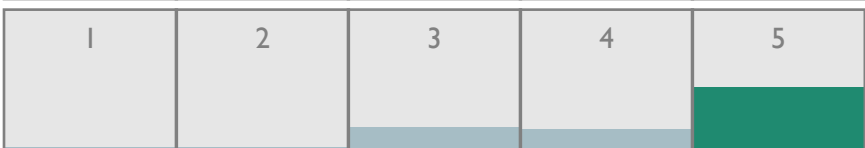
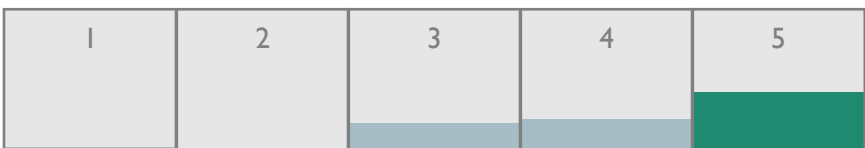
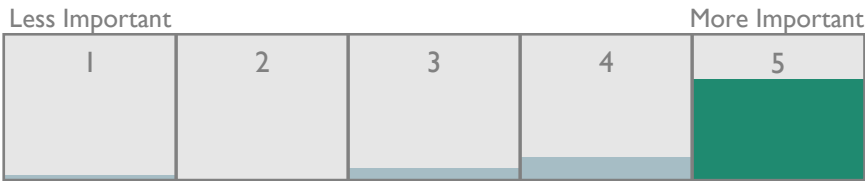
Chart 8: In the future, I would like to see a Downtown Prospect Park that is...



Participants were also asked to weigh in on the importance of certain factors commonly found in successful downtown communities (see following page). Participants showed a strong desire for some amenities but were ambivalent or opposed to others. The elements that ranked highest (a rating “4” or “5”) were special events (87%), outdoor dining (71%), landscaped areas (69%), and gathering and seating space (67%).

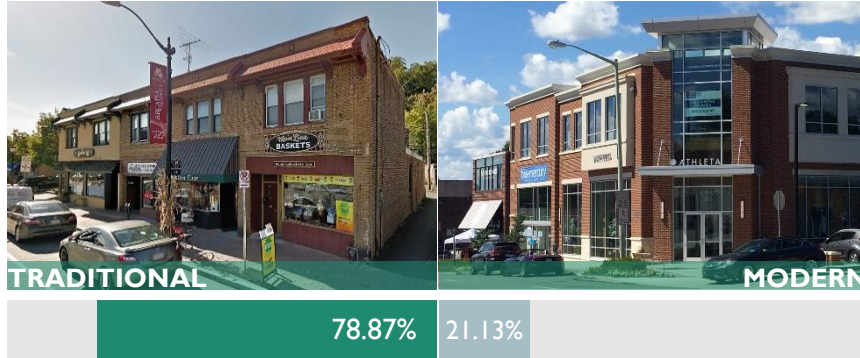
Street trees were ranked modestly (57% rated them a “4” or “5”), while improved bus stops and bicycle facilities were ranked as relatively low priorities. Wayfinding signage was the element that was most evenly ranked across the board.

How important are the following in Downtown Prospect Park?

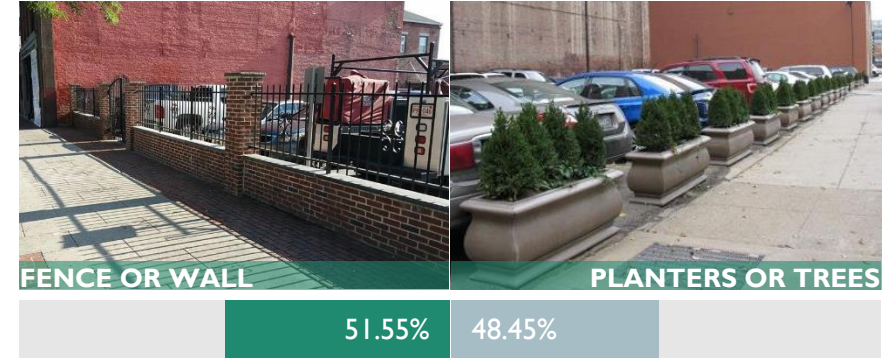


Select the image that best fits what you would like to see in Downtown Prospect Park.

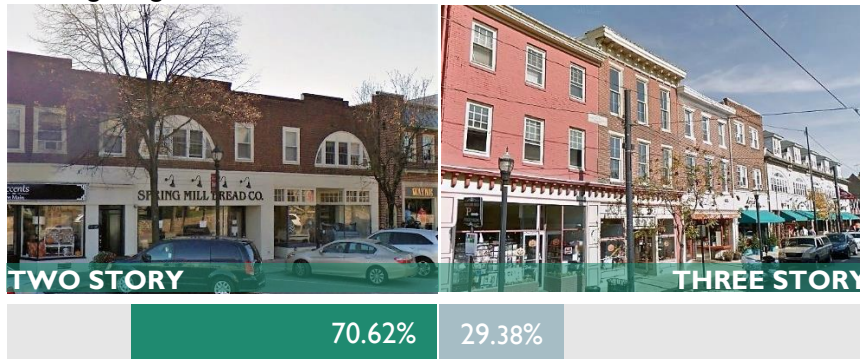
Building Design



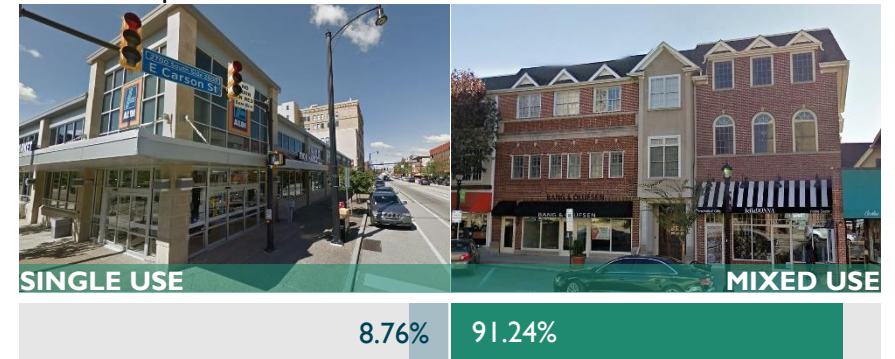
Parking Screening



Building Height



Infill Development



Survey participants showed a strong preference for preserving the traditional styles found in some of the earliest commercial buildings in the downtown area rather than incorporating a great deal of modern construction. There was also a strong preference for keeping a majority of the buildings at a two-story height to match the existing heights. However, the strongest preference expressed in the survey was for building mixed-use infill development rather than single-use infill, a sharp contrast to the more recent developments in the downtown. The survey showed fairly even preferences for methods of screening surface parking lots, but with a strong desire expressed for future mixed-use infill, there may be an eventual reduction in surface parking.



SECTION 4: VISION SUMMARY

Section 4: Vision Summary

The vision presented in this section is to be used as a guide for creating the type of downtown experiences that community members desire, rather than be specific. It is important to recognize that this is a long-range vision that may take 20 to 30 years to be fully realized. The Action Plan (See Section 5) details out the strategy of short-term or ongoing actions that enable Prospect Park to work towards this vision while remaining flexible to inevitable changes.

The long-range vision is organized into three main components:

The **Vision Statement** serves as the overarching goal of this plan.

The **Vision Themes** serve as the guiding principles – not specific actions or projects – for working towards the community vision. As needs and market demands change over time, so too will the projects; the Vision Themes provide broad principles to help decision-makers remain flexible while still building out the community vision.

The **Vision Realized** section shows examples of what downtown Prospect Park can become based on the community vision. These examples are not explicit projects; rather, they are intended to summarize the ideas and desired experience of the community vision.

VISION STATEMENT



Downtown Prospect Park will serve as the “Front Porch” of the community – a lively and appealing gathering point for residents and visitors alike.

The Vision Statement essentially serves as the overarching goal of this plan. Prospect Park is a primarily residential municipality with a strong sense of community defining its identity. The downtown has the potential to showcase that community identity to visitors and those just passing through the borough while also serving the needs and desires of the community itself. Prospect Park has a strong community made up of families of all sizes, and its citizens are very involved and committed to the borough’s success and prosperity. The downtown should serve as the face of that community.

VISION THEMES

The four Vision Themes listed on the following pages serve as guiding principles for working towards the community vision. Specific actions or projects that come out of these Themes are detailed in the Action Plan (see Section 5). Projects may change as needs and market demands change over time, whereas the Vision Themes provide broad principles to aid in working towards the community vision help while still allowing decision-makers to remain flexible.

WELCOMING

UNIFIED

EXPERIENTIAL

CONNECTED

A WELCOMING Downtown

Prospect Park's small-town character and community feel create a draw that attracts people and businesses to the downtown. Visitors entering the downtown by car, bike, on foot, or from the train, feel a sense of arrival that makes them want to stay and enjoy what the borough has to offer.

Establishing a sense of place is an important aspect of getting people to want to spend more time in downtown. Prospect Park residents are very proud of their community, and they want to see a downtown that better reflects the pride they feel to visitors and those just passing through. Especially given its location on a busy route like 420, it is important to establish a sense of arrival in the downtown – that is, cues to let people passing through know they have arrived somewhere special.

A welcoming downtown contains a mix of local businesses – a unique blend of storefronts and restaurants that are not located everywhere; this contributes to a vibrant and diverse downtown experience that will attract visitors from across the region.

Welcoming also includes establishing a good business environment by creating and continuing incentives for local businesses to invest in downtown Prospect Park. This may mean working with business owners to help them understand what is allowed under current zoning laws as well as streamlining the review and permitting process for projects that contribute to the community vision.

A UNIFIED Downtown

Downtown Prospect Park's aesthetic appeal is enhanced by coordinated efforts to unify the style of building design and signage. Traditional commercial buildings are restored to highlight their unique features and establish a sense of the borough's history. Where infill or redevelopment opportunities exist, new construction is reflective of the traditional building styles and patterns.

The outreach process revealed that people desire an attractive downtown, and that signage and visual clutter are identified as issues in downtown as it is now. There is an overwhelming preference for traditional styles of architecture such as what is seen in some of downtown Prospect Park's older commercial buildings and residential architecture. The historic commercial architecture in downtown is relatively plain, with elements of a Mediterranean Revival style, while the nearby residential neighborhoods feature a number of Victorian styles. Future development in the downtown does not necessarily need to be in the same style; rather, the community should encourage good, high-quality traditional design for buildings and public spaces.

There are several sites downtown that are currently underutilized, such as surface parking or one-story buildings. Although an appropriate level of parking is necessary downtown, surface parking does not offer any interest to pedestrians and detracts from the overall experience. Parking should be located behind other uses when possible, and may need to be consolidated in a municipal parking lot that does not front Lincoln Avenue.

An **EXPERIENTIAL** Downtown

Downtown creates a draw for residents and visitors with engaging shopping and dining opportunities as well as activities programmed by the borough or other organizations. Prospect Park offers a sense of place and the kind of retail experience that sets it apart from conventional shopping centers.

Online retail has significantly changed the shopping patterns of consumers; consequently, many people now treat in-person shopping as a leisure activity rather than just a chore. Traditional downtowns have a competitive edge in this environment, as standard shopping malls try to reinvent themselves to capture more of the charm and character of a traditional neighborhood downtown.

People are looking for an experience that cannot be found everywhere else, with unique things to do and see. A mix of local stores and restaurants, special events, pop-up markets, and effective use of the sidewalk space can create this experience for people. Stores and restaurants should embrace the public realm with outdoor dining and transparent storefronts that pique the interests of passers-by.

Special events, such as festivals, are an important component of curating an experience for people. They help to create a vibrant and active downtown that attracts people. Regularly scheduled events, such as farmers' markets, contribute similarly. Park Square, located just a few blocks from the downtown core, is already the site of some community events and gatherings; however, locating some events in closer proximity to downtown or directing traffic from the downtown towards the square could be a great way to get passers-by to stop and engage in the community.

A **CONNECTED** Downtown

Whether walking, biking, driving, or taking the train, visitors to downtown Prospect Park feel safe and accommodated. The pedestrian experience is improved through better separation from vehicular traffic. Sufficient parking is provided in appropriate locations, encouraging visitors to park once and walk to multiple shops or restaurants.

Prospect Park was designed as a commuter suburb but has become more auto-oriented over the years. With some targeted adaptations, the existing infrastructure can be revived to better support all modes of transportation.

Emphasizing pedestrian and bicycle access into surrounding neighborhoods will make it easier and more comfortable for local residents to travel downtown without driving. People will generally walk about 10-20 minutes (approximately 0.5 miles to 1 mile) to destinations such as a transit stop or downtown; increasing safe and comfortable bicycle access can extend this distance to up to 3 miles. These connections will reduce the need for parking downtown while also embracing connections to the surrounding community. While there are sidewalks and crosswalks throughout downtown and into the surrounding community, they should be enhanced where possible to increase the comfort level of pedestrians and cyclists. Similarly, the comfort of pedestrians while downtown should be the priority for all public realm improvements – if people are not comfortable, they will not spend time downtown.

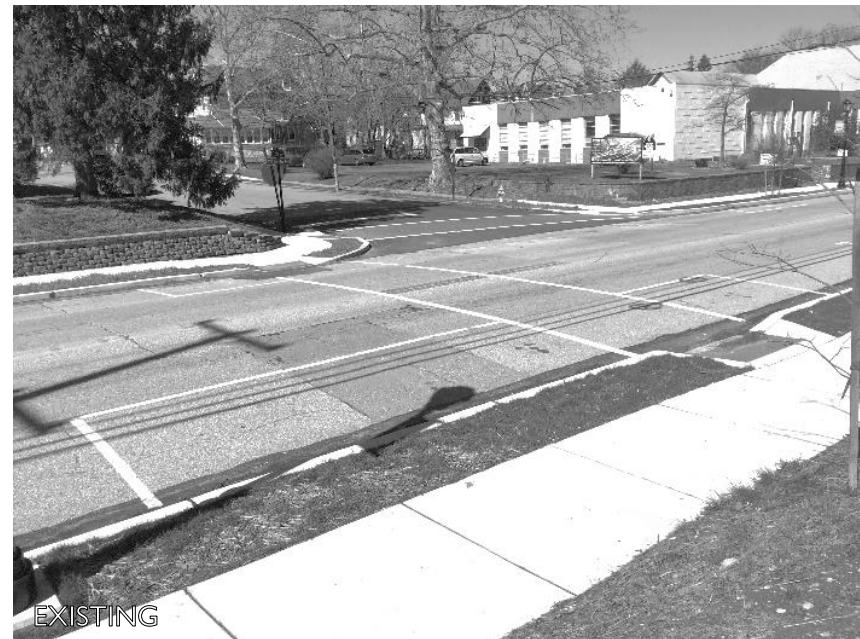
Commercial and mixed-use buildings create a more walkable community that reduces the need to drive everywhere. New projects and developments should further support the patterns of the existing built environment by maintaining the dense scale of development and pedestrian orientation.

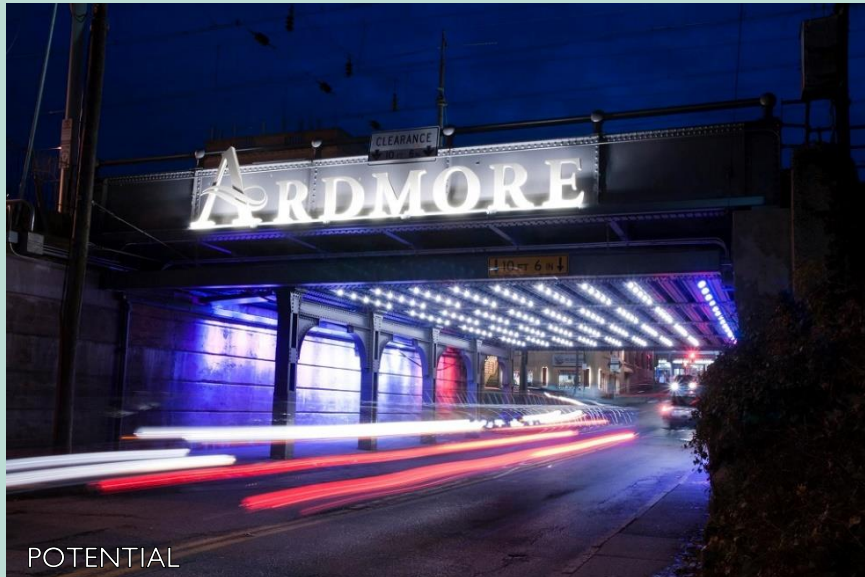
VISION REALIZED

This section shows existing conditions and examples of projects that can be implemented in Prospect Park to fulfil the themes of the vision. These images show conditions as they currently exist in downtown Prospect Park and compares them with examples from communities that have successfully carried out the kinds of improvements that are proposed by the vision.

Improved Gateways

Establishing visual cues at the entrances to downtown makes traffic slow and creates a sense of arrival for visitors. The northern and southern ends of downtown are the “gateways” to the downtown; that is, the first thing visitors see when traveling to or through the downtown (see the Gateways map on page 30). In order to move towards the vision, there are a number of ideas that could be carried out in these areas. Improvements such as painting, lighting, and signage could make a big visual impact at this northern gateway near the railroad bridge and SEPTA station. There is an opportunity to recruit businesses that serve commuters, such as a coffee shop across from the train station (as seen in Swarthmore). To the south, the entrance to downtown could be made more distinct by narrowing the road at the crosswalk at 8th Avenue, offering a visual cue to drivers to slow down and also the opportunity to install more landscaping and possibly a small welcome sign.





Community Events

To enliven the streets of downtown and attract more visitors, the vision promotes encouraging special events in the downtown. Although Lincoln Avenue may be too busy to close down for a street fair or community event, an alternative approach would be holding events on side streets such as 11th Avenue (or possibly in the parking spaces along Lincoln Avenue). There are lots of types of events that communities have done with success (craft fairs, food truck festivals), and Prospect Park could set itself apart with a more unique event, such as a flower market. Special events not only serve the desires of the community, they also promote the community to visitors and encourage them to return to the downtown or remain after the event. They could even provide opportunities for businesses to discover the downtown and ultimately decide to locate there.





Streetscape and Façade Improvements

In the heart of downtown Prospect Park, there are some excellent examples of commercial architecture from the early twentieth century. To move towards the vision for the downtown, people want to see more clean, unified, traditional-style signage, with overhead lighting, and canvas awnings. The traditional architectural features of older buildings should be restored, rather than covered up, for more visual impact. The pedestrian environment could possibly be improved by creating more buffers between the sidewalk and the street such as planters, or even by expanding the pedestrian area into the street either through permanent expansion or temporary installations. For guidance, see the Design Guidelines on page 64.





Enlivening Vacant Storefronts

Downtown Prospect Park, like many other downtowns, is currently dealing with a number of vacant storefronts, and while there are a number of things that can be done to attract more businesses to downtown, there are also some creative ways to address these vacancies in the meantime. One emerging idea for downtowns with vacant retail space is what's called a "pop-up shop," which is a short-term, temporary retail event (similar to those Halloween stores or tax-prep offices you may have seen). Pop-ups offer small businesses or artists the chance to showcase their goods temporarily and recruit new customers without having to invest in permanent space, although sometimes pop-ups do become permanent tenants. Pop-ups should be advertised as temporary to build excitement and draw visitors, and also to make sure they are not mistaken for a failing business. Another simple but innovative idea for storefronts would be to display art or photography done by community members or community children in vacant windows in order to improve the visual appeal of the downtown to people passing by.





New Development in Traditional Styles

Some longer-term improvements that work toward the vision would be to consider the way new development is addressed. Currently the newer development in downtown is very car-oriented, with a low profile, set back with parking in the front. People expressed a desire for a better pedestrian experience, which is improved by buildings that are built up to the sidewalk, as well as for 2-3 story, traditional style architecture that fits with the older development in the downtown. This type of construction should be promoted in the future for any development or redevelopment opportunities in the downtown. Delaware County produced a Model Zoning Ordinance for Central Places that can serve as a guide for updating zoning to encourage a more traditional style of development in downtowns like Prospect Park's.





DESIGN GUIDELINES

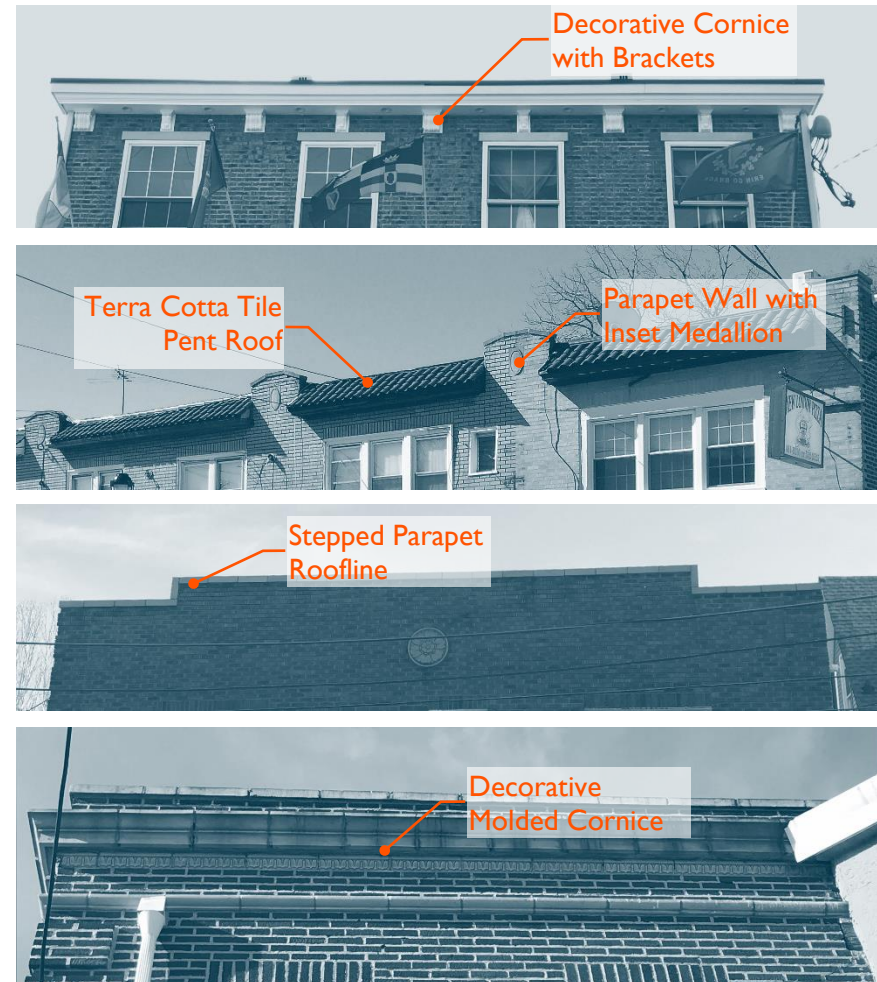
These design guidelines are intended to summarize standards for future improvements and treatments that fit within the community vision. The information contained in this section does not constitute a complete set of guidelines; rather, it serves as a starting point for implementing more comprehensive guidelines. It identifies some of the major points that developed during the visioning process (e.g., building height and traditional design) and other design elements that significantly impact the experience of pedestrians downtown. Some elements, excerpted here from the Central Places Model Zoning Ordinance, can be codified and regulated in the borough's zoning ordinance. Other features can be regulated through a more formal set of design guidelines that are related to and support the zoning ordinance.

Architectural Styles & Defining Features

Existing historic buildings should retain the elements of their original style, or be restored to a close approximation of that style wherever possible. Historic design features should not be covered or removed, unless they are replaced with exact replicas if necessary. New development does not necessarily need to be a copy of earlier building styles but should incorporate features of traditional styles in a way that compliments existing historic structures.

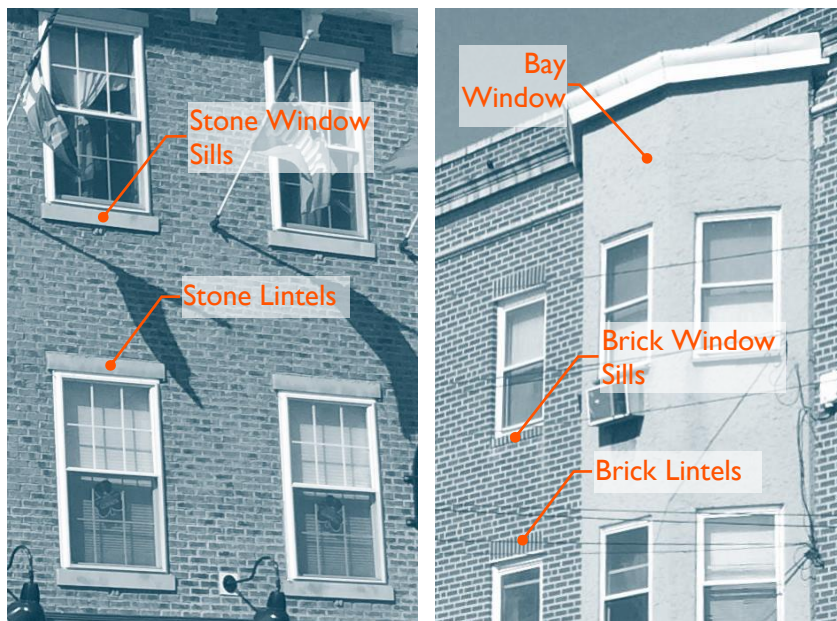
Cornices and Rooflines

Traditional commercial and mixed-use buildings in downtown are characterized by flat or low-sloped roofs with decorative cornices or rooflines. These features are important to repeat in new development.



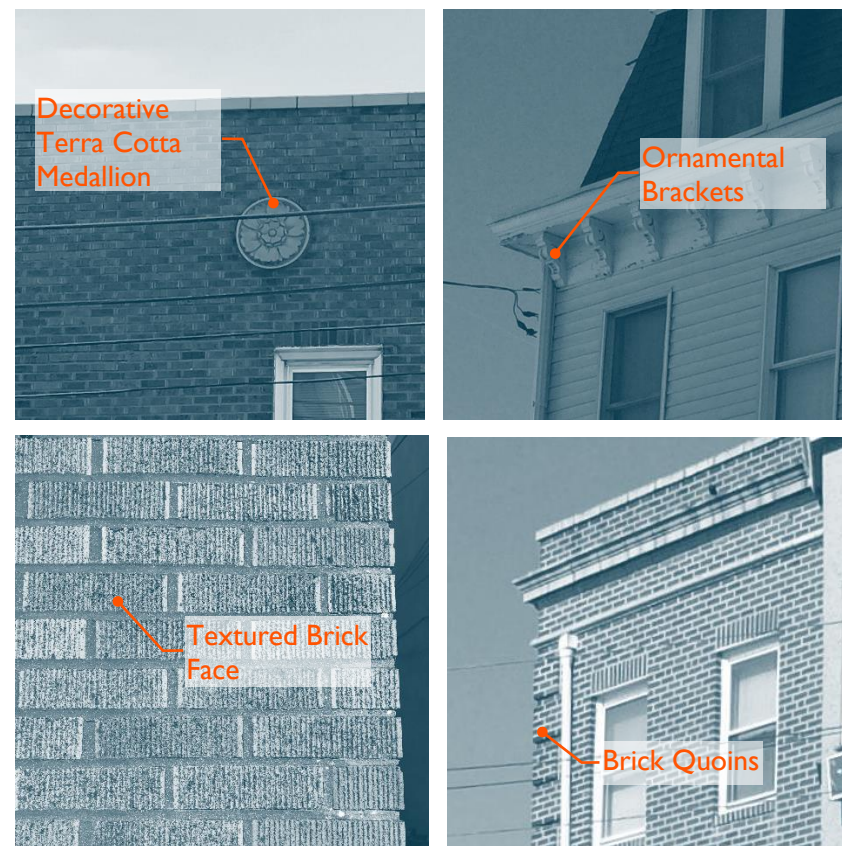
Window Surrounds

On the ground floor, windows are an integral part of the storefront, and should remain large and transparent. Dark tinted glass or reflective glass in windows should be prohibited. Windows on upper floors should be accentuated with sills and lintels; bay windows are an appropriate feature for upper floors.



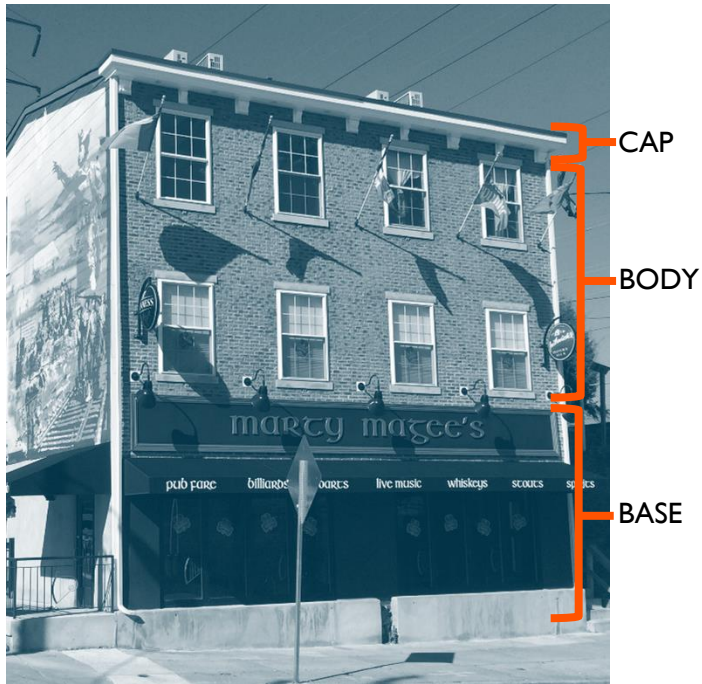
Textures & Details

The consistent use of textures, materials, and stylistic details can have a major impact on the overall visual unity of a streetscape. Traditional commercial and mixed-use buildings in downtown Prospect Park are most often faced with brick, sometimes with stucco accents.



Base, Body, and Cap

Buildings should be composed of a base, body, and cap similar to existing historic commercial buildings. The scale, storefront, sign placement, window placement, and cornice height should continue the rhythm established by older buildings.



Model Zoning Ordinance

Delaware County produced a Model Zoning Ordinance for Central Places that serves as a guide for local communities to implement a contemporary zoning ordinance and understand the implications of various options within the zoning ordinance text. It includes model text that can be modified to maintain and enhance the unique development and design character of each Central Place while supporting economic development. A few of the elements it contains are particularly relevant to the goals of downtown Prospect Park.

Building Height

Minimum Height: 24 feet or 2 stories

Maximum Height: 36 feet or 3 stories

Establishing a building height minimum can ensure new development is compatible with the desired scale and character of downtown. New construction should be within 15% of the perceived height of the average height of buildings within a 250-foot radius.

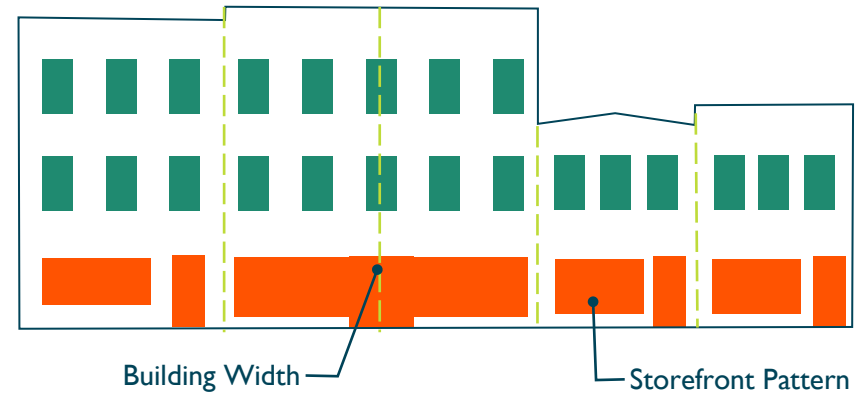
Building Orientation and Entrance

The front façade of buildings should be oriented toward the principal street or thoroughfare with the main public entrance in this front façade.

When buildings are located on corners, the entrance should be located on the corner with an appropriate building articulation, such as a chamfered corner, turret, canopy, or other similar building feature.

Building Size and Width

New construction should have a vertical rather than a horizontal feel and be consistent with the pattern of small-scale storefronts in the downtown. Where new construction has a large street frontage, façades should be articulated to match the character of the existing storefronts.



Build-to Line

The build-to line is where the property line meets the public right-of-way. Buildings should be developed up to the sidewalk in a downtown, leading to a consistent building line and promoting foot traffic.

Buildings should be:

- Built to the sidewalk; or
- The setback should be the average of the two closest structures on the same side of the street with a maximum setback of 20 feet; or
- Setback from the sidewalk a maximum of 20 feet for the purpose of a plaza, square, courtyard, recessed entrance, or outdoor dining space.



Parking

Surface parking should be located to the rear of the principal building whenever possible; or, if not possible, to the side of buildings. Parking should not be located between a building and the main street. Access to parking should be from a side street or alleyway where possible.

Parking areas on abutting nonresidential lots should be interconnected by access driveways.

Signs

Signage area should be proportional to the size and scale of buildings. Coordination in style and design of signs provides a unifying element to downtown, enhancing the visual appeal and distinctiveness of the streetscape. Lighting for signs should be discreet and unobtrusive. Gooseneck style exterior lighting is preferred while backlit “box-style” signs should be restricted.



Horizontal
Blade Sign

Flat Sign

Awning Sign

The use of flashing, pulsating, or moving lights should be prohibited.

Awning signs should be traditional fabric foldout awning and not permanently affixed backlit awnings.

Transparency

Ground Floor: Minimum 60% transparency

Second Floor and above: Minimum 35% transparency

A minimum percentage of the area of building frontage should contain windows. The transparency created connects the activity inside of a building to pedestrians outside. This helps draw pedestrians into businesses and creates an interesting and inviting streetscape for people.

Blank, solid walls along building frontages should be avoided downtown. Building frontage should contain the principal entrance to a building as well as windows to create visibility into downtown establishments.

Additionally, exterior security gates or roll-down security doors should be prohibited. Link or grill type security devices could be permitted only if installed on the interior of the building, within the window or door

frames. Such security equipment should be recessed and completely concealed during regular business hours, and be predominantly transparent to allow maximum visibility of the interior.



SECTION 5: ACTION PLAN

Section 5: Action Plan

The strategic action plan that follows will guide the community in achieving this long-range vision. It will require a long-term, coordinated effort that involves many public, private, and non-profit partners that should remain flexible over time. This action plan should be used by the borough and its partners to plan projects and budgets in the coming years.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

There are a number of principal players responsible for carrying out the objectives and actions recommended in this chapter.

Borough of Prospect Park

The staff and elected and appointed officials of the borough of Prospect Park play a crucial role in working towards the vision established through this project and implementing the actions proposed in this plan. The borough oversees and administers codes and ordinances that affect the wellbeing of the downtown. It grants permits for businesses and events within the borough. The borough budgets for public improvements and can obtain funding from grants and other sources to help implement special projects.

Business Association

An active business association is an integral part of a healthy downtown. Prospect Park should work with local businesses and property owners in the downtown to create a business association to share information, coordinate marketing efforts, achieve economies of scale, and even host events that promote the downtown.

Downtown Revitalization Committee

To oversee the implementation of this project, the borough should create an umbrella committee of volunteers from other boards and committees within the borough to spearhead or coordinate activities focusing on the downtown. These activities could range from a community-wide cleanup or beautification event to a street fair or

festival to bring visitors to the downtown. Their efforts would be distinct from the business association in that they would focus on marketing the community, while the business association focuses on promoting the businesses themselves.

Objectives & Action Items		Implementation Lead	Cost Estimate	Funding Sources	Time Frame	Vision Themes
1. Raise the profile of downtown Prospect Park in the region						
1.1. Marketing Materials: Develop a fact sheet highlighting the borough's demographics, recent improvements, and assets and publicize the information online and through social media		Borough	\$	Borough	Short	Welcoming
1.2. Developer and Realtor Outreach: Increase developer and real estate community awareness through marketing materials and outreach		Borough	\$	Borough	Short	Welcoming
1.3. Pop-Ups in Vacant Storefronts: Allow artists, crafters, and other small, independent retailers to set up in vacant storefronts for temporary sales or events		Borough, Business Association	\$	Private	Ongoing	Welcoming, Experiential
1.4. Business Demonstration Projects: Encourage businesses to activate outdoor spaces through events or temporary installations in underutilized spaces		Borough, Business Association	\$	Businesses	Short, Ongoing	Welcoming, Experiential
2. Foster a business-friendly environment in the borough						
2.1. Online Business Resources: Provide easy access to resources for businesses to make the process of locating a business in Prospect Park more clear and smooth		Borough	\$	Borough	Short, Ongoing	Welcoming, Unified
2.2. Borough Coordination with Businesses: Encourage businesses to work closely with the borough early on in the business development process		Borough	\$	Borough	Ongoing	Welcoming, Unified
2.3. Updated Zoning: Address issues within current zoning that affect the health of downtown, such as parking requirements and building setbacks		Borough	\$	Borough	Short	Welcoming, Unified
2.4. Sign Ordinance: Develop a sign ordinance using best practices for small towns to encourage more unified and aesthetically appealing signage in the downtown		Borough	\$	Borough	Short	Welcoming, Unified
2.5. Financial Incentives: Offer tax or permitting fee breaks to encourage new businesses to locate in the borough, or to reward existing businesses that make improvements		Borough	\$	Borough	Ongoing	Welcoming, Unified
Key	Costs: \$ - less than \$5,000; \$\$ - \$5,000 to \$50,000; \$\$\$ - greater than \$50,000		Time Frame: Total project duration. Short – less than 2 years; Medium – 2 to 5 years; Long – longer than 5 years			

Objectives & Action Items	Implementation Lead	Cost Estimate	Funding Sources	Time Frame	Vision Themes
3. Promote the borough's unique identity					
3.1. Downtown Festival or Event: Generate interest and demonstrate investment by hosting an event to draw people to the downtown, such as a street fair, food truck festival, or flower market	Borough, Downtown Revitalization Committee	\$\$	Borough	Medium, Ongoing	Welcoming, Experiential
3.2. Art in Vacant Storefronts: Arrange to display local artwork in windows of vacant storefronts	Borough, Downtown Revitalization Committee	\$	Borough	Ongoing	Welcoming, Experiential
3.3. Parking Space Projects: Set up temporary green space in parking spaces along Lincoln Avenue	Borough, Downtown Revitalization Committee	\$	Private	Ongoing	Welcoming, Experiential
4. Continue progress on aesthetic and infrastructure improvements					
4.1. Design Guidelines: Develop Design Guidelines for buildings in the downtown commercial district as a companion to updated zoning	Borough	\$	Borough	Short	Unified, Welcoming
4.2. Façade Grants: Offer grants to business and property owners in the downtown to make improvements to the façades of their buildings, including signage	Borough	\$\$	DCED, Borough, Private	Medium	Unified, Welcoming
4.3. Northern Gateway: Make aesthetic improvements to the Amtrak-owned bridge such as painting, improved lighting, and signage	Borough	\$\$\$	Borough	Medium	Welcoming, Connected
4.4. Southern Gateway: Enhance the southern gateway into downtown in the area of Lincoln Avenue and 8 th Avenue to slow traffic and establish a sense of arrival	Borough	\$\$	Borough	Short	Welcoming, Connected
4.5. Municipal Parking: Provide municipal off-street parking to serve the downtown	Borough	\$\$\$	Borough, CDBG	Medium	Connected, Welcoming
4.6. On-street Parking: Adjust timing and cost of parking on Lincoln Avenue to promote healthy turnover that benefits businesses in the downtown	Borough	\$	Borough	Short	Connected, Welcoming
4.7. Aesthetic Improvements to SEPTA Station: Work with SEPTA to implement short-term improvements to the station such as plantings, benches, and parking lot improvements	Borough, Beautification Committee, Downtown Revitalization Committee	\$\$	Borough, SEPTA	Short, Ongoing	Welcoming, Unified, Experiential, Connected

Objective 1: Raise the profile of Downtown Prospect Park in the region

1.1. Marketing Materials

In a region of similar communities, it is important to distinguish the specific advantages of living and doing business in Prospect Park. Prospect Park borough has many assets including a stable middle class population, a strong sense of community, and a convenient location within the region. The recent streetscape improvements that were undertaken by the borough demonstrate a level of investment in the borough's wellbeing. Developing marketing materials to highlight the assets of the community is a simple way to raise awareness of the competitive advantages of Prospect Park.

Considerations:

- Simple marketing materials can help highlight the assets of the borough as well as the recent improvements the borough has undertaken to spread the word about the many benefits of Prospect Park
- Sharing information online through existing channels such as the borough's website and social media accounts is an effective way to reach a broad audience

1.2. Developer and Realtor Outreach

Downtown Prospect Park has a large number of small retail spaces. There can be high rates of vacancy among retail spaces, and some spaces have remained vacant for extended periods of time. Often these vacant spaces are leased directly by the landlord and only advertised by a "For Rent" sign in the window of the storefront. Without the benefit of working with a realtor, these spaces may suffer from a lack of exposure to a broader retail market. The borough can take a more active role in attracting retail to the downtown by working with landlords to collectively market available retail spaces to commercial retailers.

Some communities have tried the strategy of hosting an event where landlords can promote their spaces to realtors or potential business owners. For this type of event, Prospect Park may want to consider joining with surrounding municipalities to market multiple commercial districts and create a larger draw for invited investors.

Considerations:

- Marketing available retail spaces collectively may increase the amount of interest in the downtown – the borough or the business association should work with landlords to prepare spec sheets for available spaces
- The borough can be proactive by reaching out to local commercial realtors to attract interest in downtown Prospect Park, and share marketing materials on benefits of locating in the borough



Figure 25: Downtown Prospect Park should market the improvements it has already made.

1.3. Pop-Ups in Vacant Storefronts

Pop-ups are short-term, temporary retail events that are an innovative way to make temporary use of vacant space in downtowns while also increasing the visibility of new small businesses. Cities as diverse as New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and New Haven, Connecticut have established programs to encourage pop-up retail in vacant storefronts. As the nature of retail evolves, pop-ups offer an exciting way for retailers to connect with consumers. Businesses that operate mostly online may want to host a pop-up to increase their visibility and expand their customer base. Start-up businesses may want to test the market for their business idea through a pop-up, but could eventually become full-time tenants.

Prospect Park has seen a number of businesses open and close in a relatively short amount of time. By encouraging and allowing for pop-ups, the borough could help new businesses test the market before starting up. Pop-ups also generate excitement and interest in the downtown. Potential types of pop-ups that would be appropriate for downtown Prospect Park include:

- Art gallery
- Clothing sales
- Handmade goods
- Yoga, dance, or fitness event
- Paint night
- Musical performance
- Pet Adoption event

Considerations:

- To accommodate pop-ups, the borough should allow the issuance of special event permits rather than requiring an occupancy permit for temporary events in retail spaces
- Landlords should be encouraged to offer rents on a weekly or monthly basis
- Plan for successful pop-ups by establishing standards and procedures:
 - Pop-ups should be open for a few days to a few weeks
 - Pop-ups may not make any permanent changes to property, and must remove all signage, displays, equipment, etc. at conclusion of event
 - Be sure to advertise pop-ups as a temporary, limited-time event, perhaps through signage indicating the number of days remaining for pop-up to be open (so as to avoid perception that the pop-up is a failed business)



Figure 26: Example of a pop-up shop selling a variety of goods



Figure 27: Clear advertising is key to a successful pop-up.

1.4. Business Demonstration Projects

Temporary installations or demonstration projects can be a low-cost way to gauge interest in a particular project prior to investing in the full project. In downtowns, demonstration projects can be used to boost business activity. Downtown Prospect Park has a number of underutilized spaces that could be activated through such projects. Off-street parking lots could be used to host a beer garden or outdoor dining area. On-street parking spaces or spaces precluded from parking could be set up to serve as café seating or expand the sidewalk area. One local example is the Craft Brewer's Festival at Iron Hill in Media, which takes place in the parking lot beside the restaurant every year.

Considerations:

- Installations could be recurring based on the success of the initial project, or eventually lead to a permanent development
- Working with businesses to plan and promote this type of project is a good inaugural activity for the Business Association



Figure 28: A temporary public plaza, known as “Lansdowne Landing” was installed in a parking lot in Lansdowne as a test project to gauge community interest.

Objective 2: Foster a business-friendly environment in the borough

2.1. Online Business Resources

Posting as much information as possible online is a good way to save time and increase transparency. Although the borough has a website with many useful forms and documents online, it could take further steps to tailor the website to the needs of incoming businesses. For example, the Upper Darby Township and Haverford Township websites both feature tabs specifically devoted to doing business in those townships. The websites include information such as the benefits of locating there and resources for business assistance, as well as relevant forms, taxes, zoning, and code information.

Considerations:

- Providing a “one-stop shop” for businesses in Prospect Park helps to foster a more business-friendly environment and allows businesses to be more prepared when approaching the borough
- In addition to sharing relevant forms and ordinances that businesses need to know about, an online business information tab on the borough’s website is an excellent place to advertise the competitive benefits of locating in Prospect Park
- By posting resources and guidance for small businesses, the borough can encourage incoming businesses to plan for greater success in their business endeavors

2.2. Borough Coordination with Businesses

In addition to making resources available, the borough should examine its current processes when dealing with new businesses to make sure they are clear and open. By encouraging and cultivating a greater relationship between the borough and new businesses, the borough can have a greater hand in ensuring the success of incoming businesses. The borough may want to establish a business liaison to be a resource and point person for new and existing businesses. Concord Township takes the approach of assigning an elected official to be a point of contact for new businesses and to usher the business through the process of getting established in the Township.

Considerations:

- Make available and encourage businesses to have “sketch plan” meetings with the borough prior to applying for official occupancy permits
- Consider establishing a business liaison from borough staff or elected officials to help see businesses through the process

2.3. Updated Zoning

In order to boost Prospect Park’s appeal as an attractive, traditional downtown, the underlying land use controls should codify the type of traditional, pedestrian-friendly development that characterized the downtown during its early development. Current zoning contains some standards that are out-of-date for creating a vibrant downtown, such as requiring setbacks from the sidewalk and minimum parking requirements. Updating zoning to better reflect the borough’s vision for its future gives incoming businesses and developments a clearer idea of what the borough wants without having to go through a confusing variance process.

Considerations:

- Updated zoning provides businesses with a clearer idea of the borough’s goals and standards, leading to less confusion down the road
- The Central Places Model Zoning Ordinance produced by the Delaware County Planning Department provides a good starting place for crafting the type of zoning that fits Prospect Park’s vision

2.4. Sign Ordinance

Signage standards in the current zoning code do not encourage high-quality, aesthetically appealing signs in the downtown. The borough should develop a sign ordinance to replace the current zoning standards. The new sign ordinance should promote best practices for traditional-style signage to encourage a more unified and appealing experience in the downtown. The borough should develop a sign ordinance to replace the current zoning standards.

Considerations:

- Signage should fit the scale of the façade, utilize traditional materials, and be lit by exterior rather than interior illumination
- An updated signage ordinance provides businesses with a clearer idea of the borough’s goals and standards, leading to less confusion down the road

2.5. Financial Incentives

Financial incentives, such as breaks on taxes or fees, are an important tool for Prospect Park Borough to help incentivize businesses to locate downtown by reducing some risks. Incentives can focus financial benefits in the early years of a business to help offset startup costs and investments in capital projects – this can help a business gain a strong foundation for future growth. It also helps the borough to fill vacant store fronts and encourage investment in capital projects to improve buildings and storefronts. For example, the borough waived building permit fees for owners investing in their buildings during the streetscape reconstruction project along Lincoln Avenue.

Considerations:

- Incentives should be offered to new businesses looking to locate in Prospect Park
- Incentives should also be offered to existing businesses or property owners looking to invest in their properties (as long as it contributes to the community's vision)
- Incentives should be phased out over a set period of time for each business
- Tax breaks or other similar financial incentives could be offered to existing businesses if they make improvements to their buildings according to established design standards

Objective 3: Promote the borough's unique identity

3.1. Downtown Festival or Event

Events in downtown are an excellent way to generate interest and demonstrate investment in the downtown. Through the visioning process, survey respondents indicated a strong interest in special events and a more entertaining downtown Prospect Park. Other communities in the area host regular events in their downtowns, such as Media's many street festivals or Swarthmore's Food Truck-a-thon. Prospect Park could replicate these events or host a less common type of event, such as a flower market, to help establish a unique identity without competing with other similar events. A flower market also builds on the efforts by the borough Beautification Committee to promote gardens in town.

Considerations:

- Hosting an event on a side street such as 11th Avenue would allow for visibility from Lincoln Avenue without impeding traffic
- The event could take over parking spaces on Lincoln Avenue without impeding traffic
- Make sure participants in the event (crafters, vendors, food trucks) are aware of the available space in downtown



Figure 29: Rittenhouse Square Flower Market is a unique springtime event.

3.2. Art in Vacant Storefronts

Vacant storefronts in the downtown can create a sense of disinvestment. Even while the borough works to proactively encourage new businesses in downtown Prospect Park, temporary steps such as placing art in vacant storefronts increases Lincoln Avenue's visual appeal and shows investment in the downtown. Places like Center City Philadelphia and Syracuse, New York, have started programs to spotlight local talent while also enlivening the streetscape by holding art competitions and displaying the winners in vacant storefronts.

Considerations:

- The borough, through the Beautification Committee, could host photo or art contest for borough residents, with winners being displayed in storefronts
- Coordinate with local schools to display student art or have a student art contest
- Focus on art that highlights special people or places in the borough
- Focus on one piece per display window to avoid visual clutter and allow for visibility by traffic passing by on Route 420
- Make sure display areas are clean and arrange to collect or remove the art after a set time period to avoid displays getting stale



Figure 30: A program in Syracuse, New York, held a competition for local artists and displayed the winners in vacant storefronts.

3.3. Parking Space Projects

On a busy street like Lincoln Avenue, a buffer of plantings along the street can create a more secure feeling for pedestrians. Although on-street parking is necessary for downtown Prospect Park, there may be areas that could have increased greenery to improve the pedestrian experience. PARK(ing) Day is an annual event in Philadelphia and other areas that transforms on-street parking into parks or other green space for a day. PARK(ing) day spaces are often organized by local committees or non-profit organizations, and used as an opportunity to share their message as well as provide green space for their fellow citizens.

Considerations:

- Encourage groups in Prospect Park to “adopt” a parking space in downtown for a day or longer to set up green space for public enjoyment
- PARK(ing) Day participants should get permission from the borough to legally occupy the space for the day
- PARK(ing) Day occurs annually on the 3rd Friday in September

Objective 4: Continue Progress on aesthetic and infrastructure improvements

4.1. Design Guidelines

The borough has made significant improvements to the streetscape in recent years with new sidewalks, lighting, and benches. The aesthetics of many surrounding buildings, however, was a noted concern of residents, business-owners, and property-owners throughout the planning process – particularly storefront signage. Design guidelines, which should be coordinated with zoning ordinances, can help to address these concerns by setting standards that help to make sure building treatments are at the appropriate size and scale for downtown Prospect Park. Section 4 of this plan contains design guideline recommendations that can be a starting place for developing design guidelines for the borough.

Considerations:

- Guidelines should be focused on the experience of pedestrians
- Guidelines should remain flexible so that each building can be unique

4.2. Façade Grants

In order to assist with aesthetic improvements downtown, the borough should offer small grants (less than \$5,000) to business and property owners in the downtown. Façade grants usually require the grantee to match at least a portion of the grant. These grants could be used to make improvements to the façades of their buildings, including signage. In order to ensure that the grants go towards improving the aesthetic appeal of the downtown, the program should establish clear design guidelines with regards to materials, colors, and signage styles that are considered appropriate.

Funding specifically for façade improvement grants is currently available through the Keystone Communities Grant Program through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). In 1998, Darby Borough set up a façade improvement program using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

Considerations:

- Funding available from Keystone Communities Grant Program through the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)
 - Max grant amount \$5,000 with 50/50 match required
 - Need to establish design guidelines
 - Preference given to designated Main Street and other Keystone Communities
 - The Keystone Communities Program application period is usually in late summer/fall

4.3. Improve Northern Gateway

The Amtrak-owned railroad bridge near Maryland Avenue serves as the northern gateway into downtown and thus creates an initial impression of the downtown for visitors traveling south along Lincoln Avenue. The borough should implement a number of high-impact improvements in the vicinity of this bridge in order to establish a sense of arrival. Improvements may include painting or improved lighting on the bridge or signage, landscaping, and similar treatments immediately surrounding the bridge. Improvements should reflect the unique character of Prospect Park and create a welcoming point for visitors.

Considerations:

- Amtrak does not prioritize aesthetic improvements, so the borough must seek other channels for funding
- May be permissible for the borough to paint the bridge and/or the area underneath the bridge
- Height restriction safety measures may preclude signage on the bridge itself – look at options for signage on adjacent SEPTA property



Figure 31: The Northern Gateway to downtown Prospect Park.

4.4. Create Southern Gateway

The southern gateway into downtown in the area of Lincoln Avenue and 8th Avenue currently provides few visual cues to indicate that visitors are entering downtown. In order to slow traffic and establish a sense of arrival, the borough should implement a number of high-impact improvements in this area. A physical curb bump out would enhance pedestrian safety at the crossing and also provide additional space for beautification efforts such as planting and signage. A simple post sign could welcome visitors to Prospect Park's downtown. As with the northern gateway, improvements should reflect the unique character of Prospect Park and create a welcoming point for visitors.

Considerations:

- This intersection marks the southern end of the densest commercial uses in downtown
- Traffic coming north on Lincoln Avenue has a long stretch to build speed, with limited sight distance over the hill



Figure 32: The Southern Gateway to downtown Prospect Park.

4.5. Municipal Parking Lot

Traditional downtowns like Prospect Park often face the issue of a perceived lack of parking keeping away potential visitors. Having a municipal parking lot helps to address this concern by providing dedicated parking to downtown visitors beyond the available street parking.

Considerations:

- Arrange agreements with PNC Bank, churches, and/or the Masonic Lodge to utilize parking lots for public parking during hours they are not utilized by the organization (such as weekdays)
- An official map ordinance identifying a location for a municipal parking lot gives the borough one year to provide fair offer that the land owner is required to consider
- Including fee-in-lieu of parking with zoning requirements allows for the creation of a fund for a municipal parking lot
- Visitors need to feel that a municipal parking lot is inviting and well connected to their destinations for it to be successful
- A municipal parking lot could also serve business employees who are parking longer-term and willing to walk farther than visitors



Figure 33: The PNC lot at 10th and Lincoln Avenues is a potential area for the development of a municipal parking lot.

4.6. Adjust On-street Parking

On-street parking is how most visitors to Prospect Park will park while visiting downtown and this system needs to function well to give a good impression. On-street parking in the borough is currently free in all areas and time-restricted in some. Although free parking may seem like a convenience, it can limit turnover of parking for shorter trips where there is not a time restriction. Time restrictions can also discourage people from spending time at multiple businesses when visiting downtown because they need to leave to avoid getting a ticket. Adjust timing and cost of parking on Lincoln Avenue to promote healthy turnover that benefits businesses in the downtown.

Considerations:

- Examine how parking is being used and adjust timing and cost of parking on Lincoln Avenue as necessary
- Parking time limits should allow visitors the opportunity to visit multiple businesses in Prospect Park without feeling rushed, but discourage business employees from taking parking spots ideally suited for their customers
- Downtown employees should have a clear idea of where they can park long term
- Charging for parking can encourage parking turnover without limiting hours that people can park by giving a financial incentive for employees to park farther away and walk
- Parking kiosks make it easier to allow visitors to add to parking from their mobile devices and help reduce the visual clutter of individual parking meters

4.7. Aesthetic Improvements to SEPTA Station

The Prospect Park SEPTA station provides a gateway into downtown and the borough could work with SEPTA to implement short-term improvements to the station. These improvements will help create a good impression for SEPTA commuters and improve their experience of downtown Prospect Park.

Considerations:

- Adding landscaping and plantings to the existing station are relatively easy improvements
- There may also be opportunities to add benches and parking lot improvements to the station
- Obtaining permission for vendors to sell coffee and other refreshments at a stand on the station property could lead to more permanent businesses downtown
- Coordination between SEPTA and the borough should also involve the business association and the downtown revitalization committee



Figure 34: Prospect Park Station could be improved with additional landscaping and amenities.



SECTION 6: APPENDICES

Section 6: Appendices

Appendix A: Steering Committee Meetings

Steering Committee Meeting I

June 28, 2017

Prospect Park Borough Hall

Attendees:

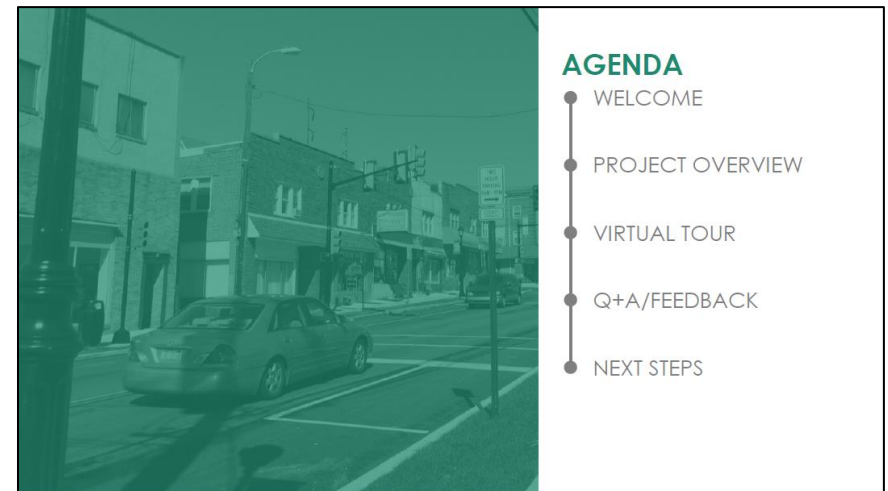
- Jeff Harris, Prospect Park Mayor
- Eleanor Kloss, Prospect Park Beautification Committee
- Joe Magee, Prospect Park Planning Commission & local business owner
- Pat O'Connell, President, Prospect Park Borough Council
- Greg Hume, Revitalization Committee
- Christina Arlt, DVRPC
- Ryan Judge, DCPD
- Sam Haber, DCPD
- Rebecca Ross, DCPD

Summary:

At this introductory meeting of the Prospect Park Downtown Awakening Steering Committee, the Delaware County Planning Department gave an overview of the project and the proposed schedule. Steering Committee members discussed what they like about Prospect Park today and what improvements they would like to see in the future. Key issues identified were:

- Encouraging more foot traffic
- Improving facades and generally cleaning up
- Encouraging better business mix

Presentation:





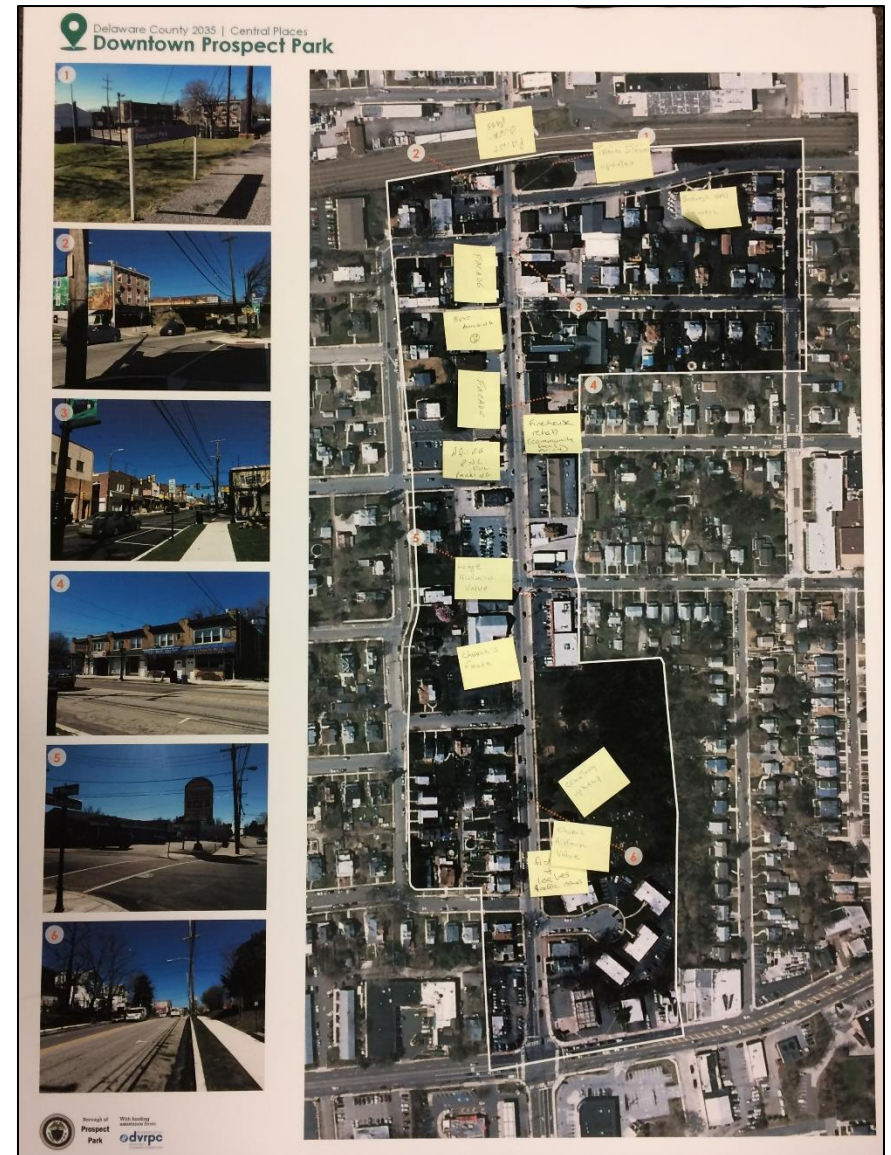
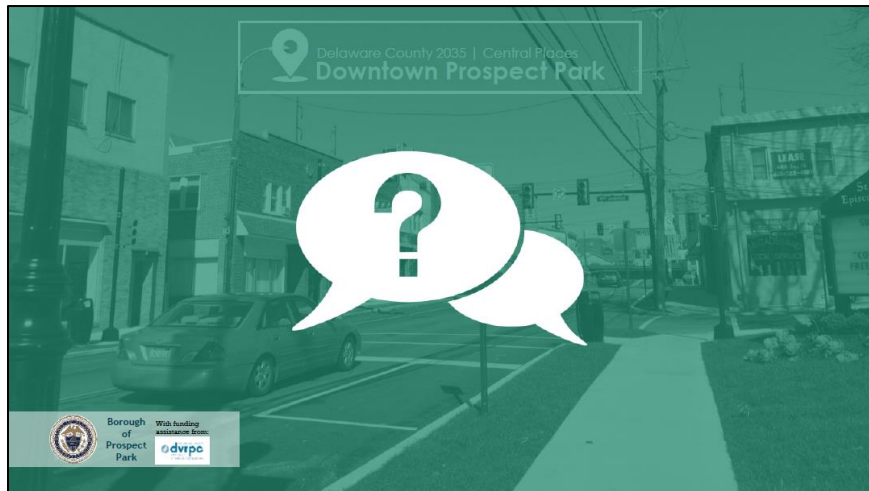
- What do you like most about downtown Prospect Park?
- What do you want downtown Prospect Park to be in the future?

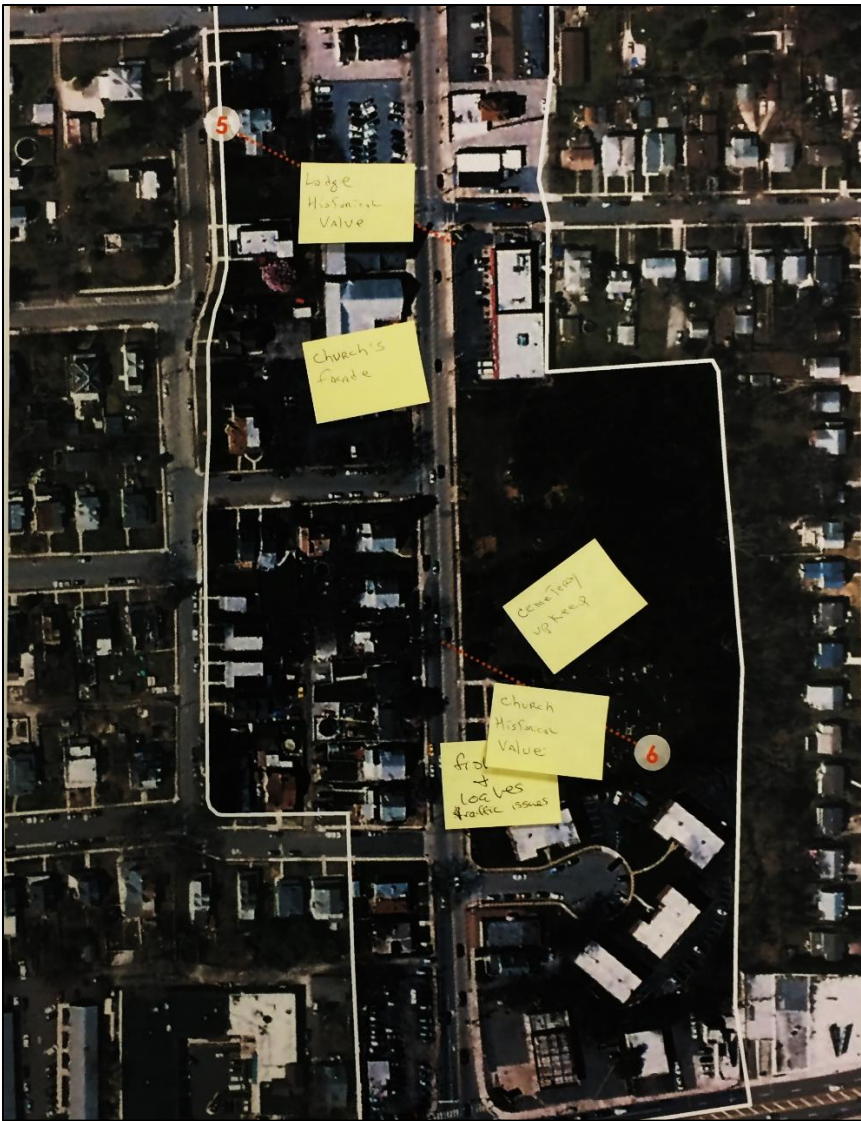
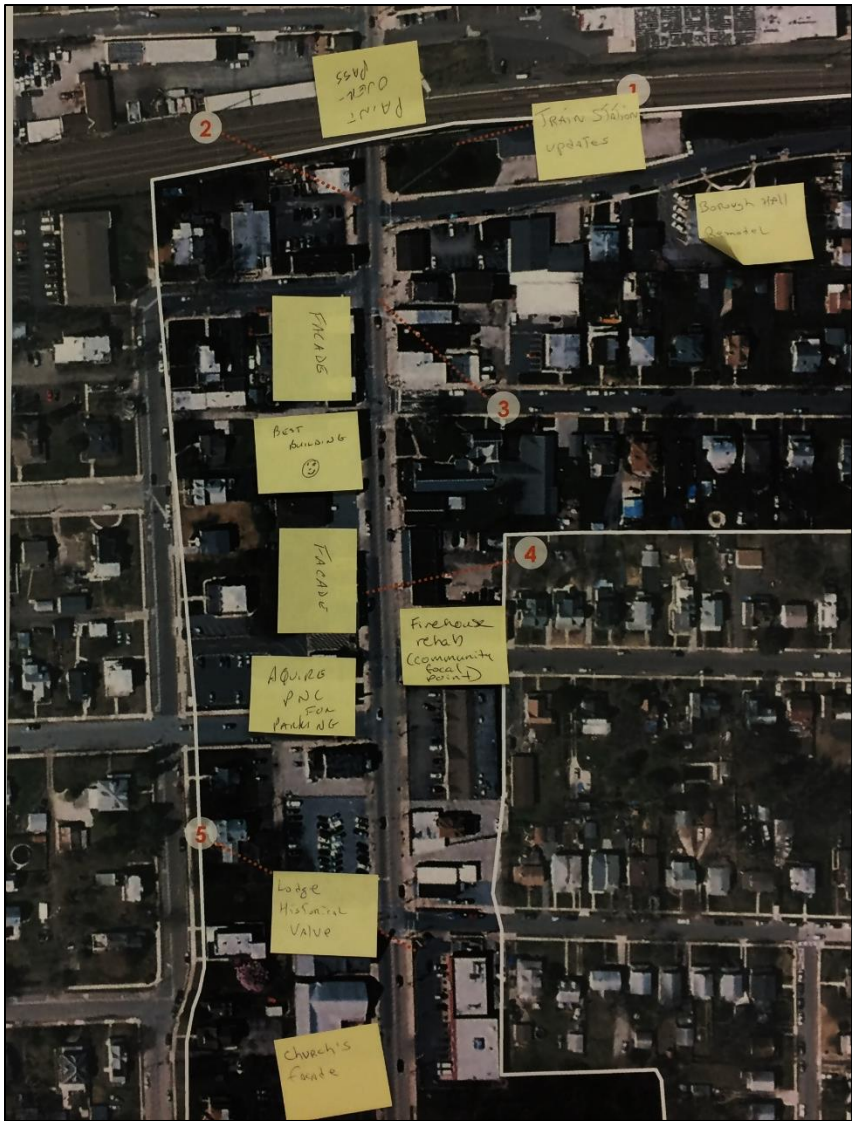






Poster Board:





Steering Committee Meeting 2

January 25, 2018

Prospect Park Borough Hall

Attendees:

- John Bradley, Prospect Park Borough Council Buildings & Parks liaison
- Joe Daniels, Prospect Park Townwatch & business liaison
- Greg Hume, Revitalization Committee
- Eleanor Kloss, Prospect Park Beautification Committee
- Joe Magee, Prospect Park Planning Commission & local business owner
- Pat O'Connell, President, Prospect Park Borough Council
- Rebecca Ross, Delaware County Planning Department
- Ryan Judge, Delaware County Planning Department

Summary:

At this meeting, the Steering Committee heard about the results of public outreach and the public survey. Steering Committee members reviewed and approved the draft Vision Statement and Vision Themes that were developed based on the results of public input.

Handouts:



Draft Vision Summary

Vision STATEMENT

Downtown Prospect Park will serve as the "Front Porch" of the community – a lively and appealing gathering point for residents and visitors alike.

Vision THEMES

A

WELCOMING

DOWNTOWN

Prospect Park's small-town character and community feel create a draw that attracts people and businesses to the downtown. Visitors entering the downtown by car, bike, on foot, or from the train, feel a sense of arrival that makes them want to stay and enjoy what the borough has to offer.

A

UNIFIED

DOWNTOWN

Downtown Prospect Park's aesthetic appeal is enhanced by coordinated efforts to unify the style of building design and signage. Traditional commercial buildings are restored to highlight their unique features and establish a sense of the borough's history. Where infill or redevelopment opportunities exist, new construction is reflective of the traditional building styles and patterns.

AN

EXPERIENTIAL

DOWNTOWN

Downtown creates a draw for residents and visitors with engaging shopping and dining opportunities as well as activities programmed by the borough or other organizations. Prospect Park offers a sense of place and the kind of retail experience that sets it apart from conventional shopping centers.

A

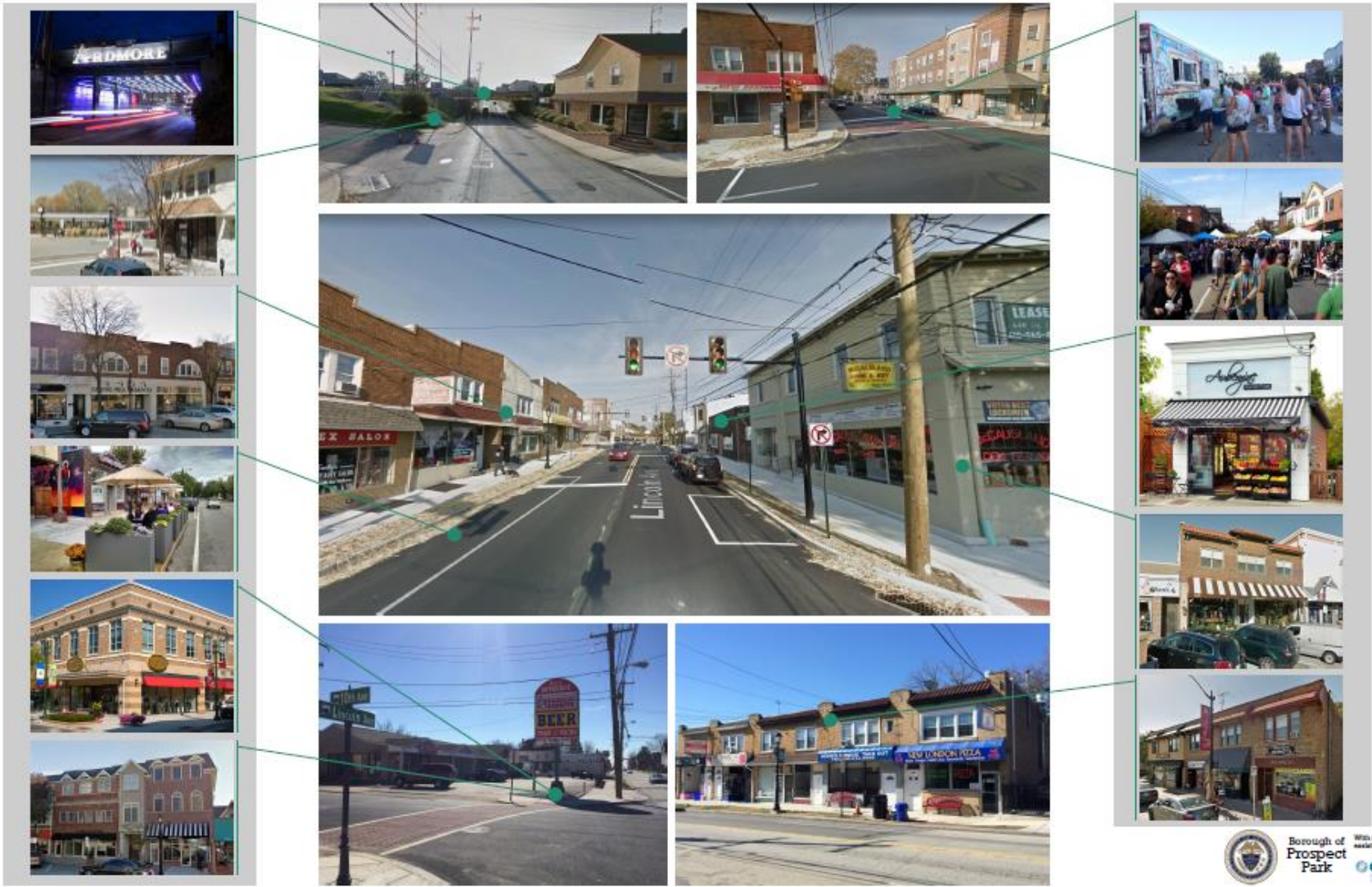
CONNECTED

DOWNTOWN

Whether walking, biking, or driving, or taking the train, visitors to downtown Prospect Park feel safe and accommodated. The pedestrian experience is improved through better separation from vehicular traffic. Sufficient parking is provided in appropriate locations, encouraging visitors to park once and walk to multiple shops or restaurants.

 Prospect Park 2019 Planning Project
Downtown Prospect Park

Draft Vision Concepts



Steering Committee Meeting 3

February 21, 2018

Prospect Park Borough Hall

Attendees:

- Jeff Harris, Mayor
- Joe Daniels, Prospect Park Townwatch & business liaison
- Greg Hume, Revitalization Committee
- Eleanor Kloss, Prospect Park Beautification Committee
- Pat O'Connell, President, Prospect Park Borough Council
- Rebecca Ross, Delaware County Planning Department
- Ryan Judge, Delaware County Planning Department

Summary:

The Steering Committee reviewed the draft Action Plan provided by the Planning Department and offered a number of suggestions. The Planning Department made edits to the Action Plan based on the feedback provided.

Steering Committee Meeting 4

March 14, 2018

Prospect Park Borough Hall

Attendees:

- Joe Daniels, Prospect Park Townwatch & business liaison
- Joe Magee, Prospect Park Planning Commission & business owner
- John Bradley, Prospect Park Borough Council Buildings & Parks liaison
- Eleanor Kloss, Prospect Park Beautification Committee
- Pat O'Connell, President, Prospect Park Borough Council
- Rebecca Ross, Delaware County Planning Department
- Ryan Judge, Delaware County Planning Department

Summary:

The Steering Committee reviewed and approved the revised Action Plan and discussed potential ways to carry out the recommendations in the plan. The Steering Committee agreed to have the Planning Department present the draft vision plan at the next regularly-scheduled Prospect Park Planning Commission meeting.

Appendix B: Public Survey

An online public survey was made available on October 4, 2017 and remained open through October 31, 2017. It was widely advertised, particularly through various social media accounts and the borough's website. A total of 194 people participated in the online survey.

The image is a composite of two parts. The left part is a photograph of a street scene with a black lamppost in the foreground. A banner hangs from the lamppost, featuring the text "Borough of Prospect Park" in a script font, a small illustration of a house, and "Incorporated 1894" at the bottom. A green banner at the top left of the image contains a location pin icon and the text "Delaware County 2035 | Central Places Downtown Prospect Park". Large white text on the right side of the image reads "SHARE YOUR VISION!". Below this, white text says "Tell us what you want to see at tiny.cc/DowntownPP". At the bottom left, there are logos for the Borough of Prospect Park and "With funding assistance from: dvrpc". The right part of the image is a screenshot of a Facebook post from the "Borough of Prospect Park" page, dated October 12. The post text says: "To take this survey, please copy and paste this into your browser or just click on the provided link. Thank you." followed by the link "www.tiny.cc/DowntownPP". The post shows 12 likes and 22 shares, with a comment box at the bottom.

Prospect Park Borough - x
 https://prospectparkboro.com

Prospect Park Fire House
 (1001 Lincoln Ave)
 Doors open @ 6 pm
 Bingo starts @ 7 pm

f
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 +

Delaware County 2035 | Central Places
Downtown Prospect Park

**SHARE
 YOUR
 VISION!**

Tell us what you want to see at tiny.cc/DowntownPP

Borough of Prospect Park
 With Funding Assistance From
 edvrpc

Please click on the picture to be directed to the survey. Thank you for your participation in advance.

Survey Results

What is your favorite part about Downtown Prospect Park today?

194 out of 194 people answered this question

1	Community	84 / 43%
2	Location	58 / 30%
3	Transit Access	27 / 14%
4	Restaurants	14 / 7%
5	Shopping	6 / 3%
6	Other	5 / 3%

In the future, I would like to see a Downtown Prospect Park that is...

194 out of 194 people answered this question

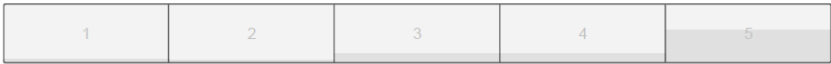
1	Family-oriented	39 / 20%
2	Attractive	29 / 15%
3	Entertaining	29 / 15%
4	Welcoming	25 / 13%
5	Vibrant	22 / 11%
6	Safe	21 / 11%
7	Sustainable	12 / 6%
8	Unique	8 / 4%
9	Diverse	6 / 3%
10	Other	3 / 2%

For this next section, please rate how much you would like to see each of the following ideas in Downtown Prospect Park.

Outdoor dining

194 out of 194 people answered this question

Average: 4.06



No thanks, there are more important things.

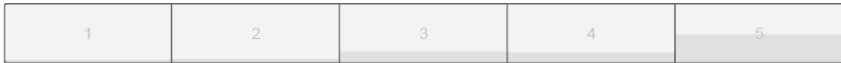
I would love outdoor dining!

5	108 / 56%
3	30 / 15%
4	30 / 15%
1	15 / 8%
2	11 / 6%

Gathering and seating space

194 out of 194 people answered this question

Average: 3.96



No thanks, there are more important things.

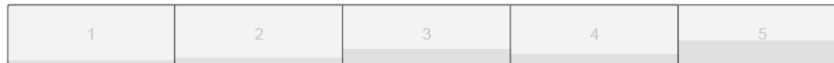
We need some more seating areas!

5	94 / 48%
3	39 / 20%
4	36 / 19%
2	13 / 7%
1	12 / 6%

Street trees

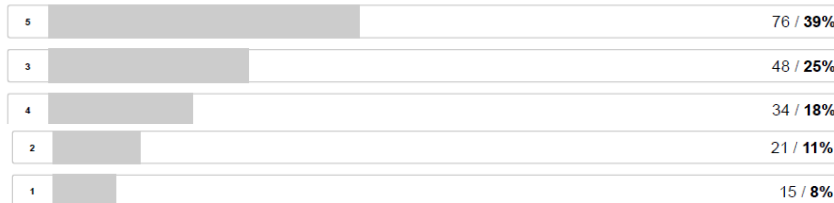
194 out of 194 people answered this question

Average: 3.70



No thanks, there are more important things.

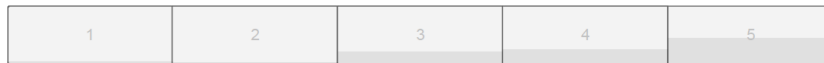
I would love more street trees!



Landscaped areas

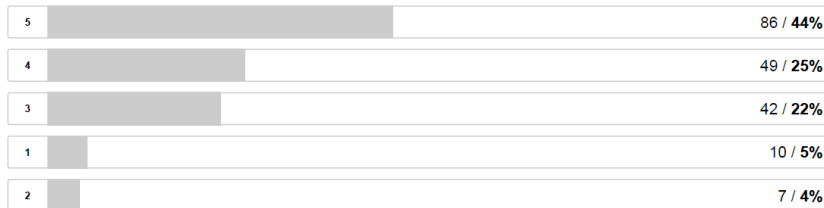
194 out of 194 people answered this question

Average: 4.00



No thanks, there are more important things.

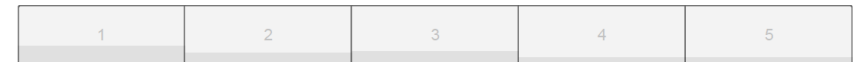
I would love more of this!



Improved bus stops

194 out of 194 people answered this question

Average: 2.52



No thanks, there are more important things.

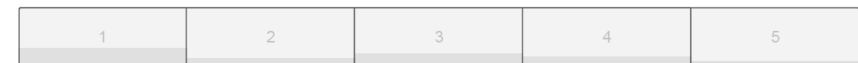
This bus stop would be great!



Bicycle lanes and bicycle parking

194 out of 194 people answered this question

Average: 2.62



No thanks, there are more important things.

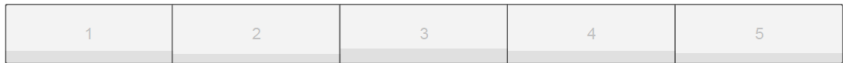
I would love some bike lanes!



Wayfinding signage

194 out of 194 people answered this question

Average: 2.99



No thanks, there are more important things.

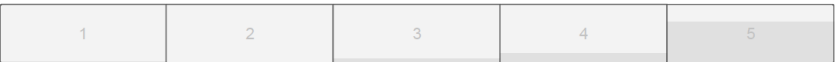
I would love more of this!



Special events such as street festivals or farmers' markets

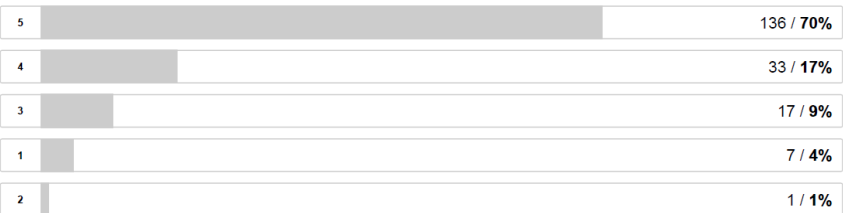
194 out of 194 people answered this question

Average: 4.49



No thanks, there are more important things.

These sound fun!



For this section, please select the image that best fits what you would like to see in Downtown Prospect Park.

Building design

194 out of 194 people answered this question



Building height

194 out of 194 people answered this question



Parking Screening

194 out of 194 people answered this question



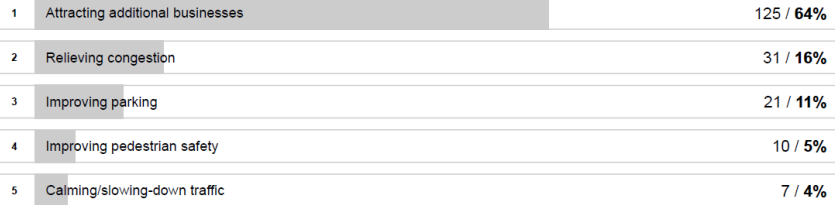
Infill Development

194 out of 194 people answered this question



Which one improvement would you emphasize for Downtown Prospect Park?

194 out of 194 people answered this question



With which gender do you identify?

194 out of 194 people answered this question

1	Female	142 / 73%
2	Male	51 / 26%
3	Other	1 / 1%

Appendix C: Public Presentation of Draft Vision

Prospect Park Planning Commission Meeting

April 5, 2018

Prospect Park Borough Hall

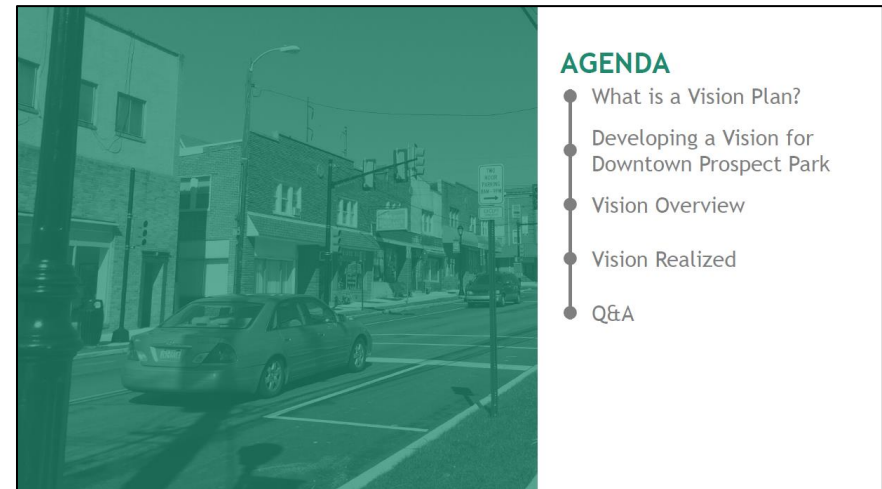
Notable Attendees:

- Prospect Park Borough Planning Commission
- Pat O'Connell, Borough Council President
- Jeff Harris, Mayor
- Beautification Committee Members
- Zoning Hearing Board Members
- Borough Council Members
- Business Owners
- Justin Dula, Delaware County Planning Department
- Rebecca Ross, Delaware County Planning Department
- Ryan Judge, Delaware County Planning Department

Summary:

Approximately 23 people attended this regularly-scheduled meeting of the Prospect Park Planning Commission, at which the Delaware County Planning Department was invited to present. The Planning Department shared information about the process of developing the vision plan and shared the draft vision. Attendees had an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the vision.

Presentation:



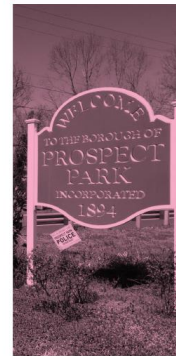
WHAT IS A VISION PLAN?

- Community-based
- Builds on existing strengths
- Vision for 20+ years in the future
- Actions now to reach vision



DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION

Welcoming



What People Want:

- Sense of community
- Attract more businesses and visitors to the downtown
- A sense of arrival

"I would love to be able to walk the street and check out different stores and cafes."

"Please make it a destination that many people of all ages want to come to live and visit."

CREATING A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK

- Background Research
- Building on previous plans and projects
- Community Involvement
 - Steering Committee
 - Community Events
 - Public Survey



DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION

Unified



What People Want:

- A visually appealing downtown
- Unified styles and building design
- Traditional architecture

"Update signage of stores...make it look more attractive... more greenery and landscaping."

"Make the stores more uniform."

DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION

Experiential



What People Want:

- Engaging shopping and dining experiences
- Special events
- Unique experiences that set Prospect Park apart

"I especially love the idea of more local dining and a farmer's market or fair!"

"I would love to see the vacant businesses filled with vibrant vendors."

DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION



Downtown Prospect Park will serve as the "Front Porch" of the community - a lively and appealing gathering point for residents and visitors alike.



DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION

Connected

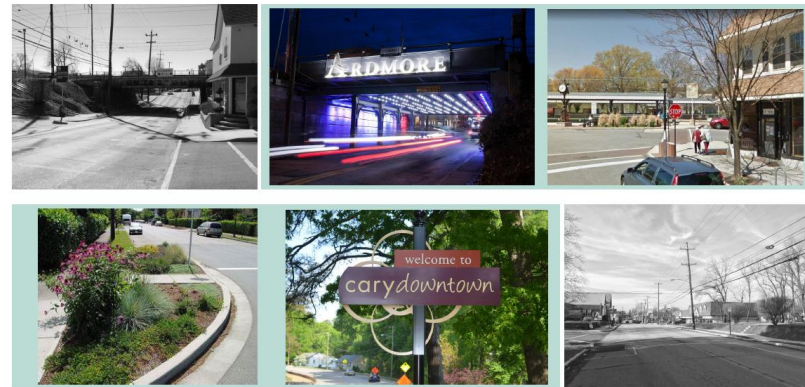


What People Want:

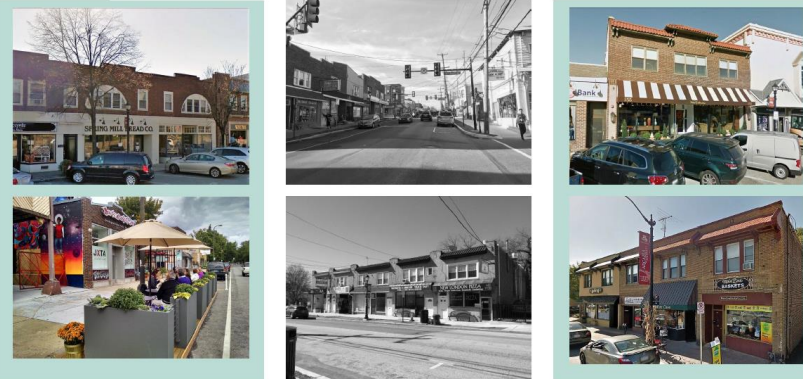
- Improve the pedestrian experience
- Sufficient parking in appropriate locations
- Park once and walk to multiple locations

"Many folks walk or ride bikes. More eating places would be great that we can walk to."

DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION REALIZED



DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION REALIZED



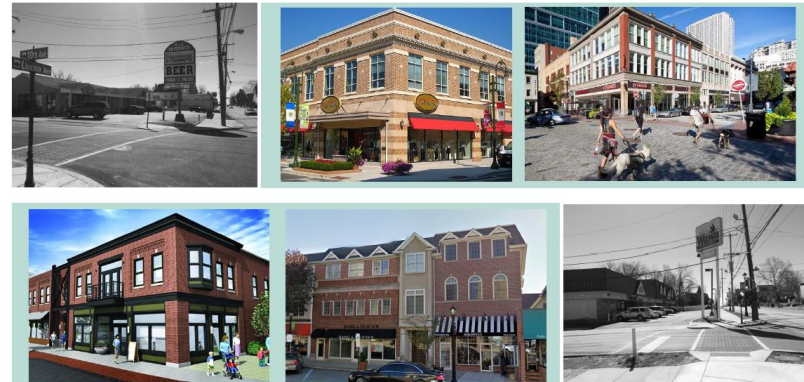
DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION REALIZED

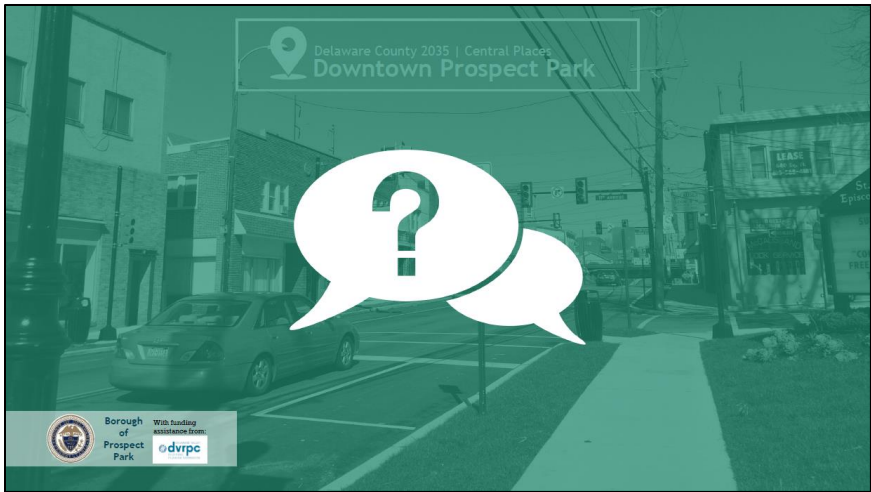


DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION REALIZED



DOWNTOWN PROSPECT PARK VISION REALIZED





Photos:



