

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION
Building and Planning Committee
Issue Briefing

Topic: City Avenue District Amendments

Prepared By: Christopher Leswing, PP, AICP, Assistant Director, Building & Planning

Date: March 3, 2017

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

Consider the City Avenue District ordinance for authorization to advertise, hold a public hearing, and possible adoption on April 19th. The proposed ordinance clarifies the required greening standards in the City Avenue District and incentivizes mixed-use buildings or multiple-use developments by amending the maximum impervious surface and building height requirements.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

Authorization of advertisement of a public hearing and notice of intent to adopt an ordinance requires Board action.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

Periodically reviewing and refining the Zoning Code and the Subdivision and Land Development Code advances the following recommendation of the Township's Comprehensive Plan:

LC65 Continue to refine the City Avenue District provisions and Official Map as necessary to ensure that future development is consistent with the established intent of the ordinance and desired land use and form of the district.

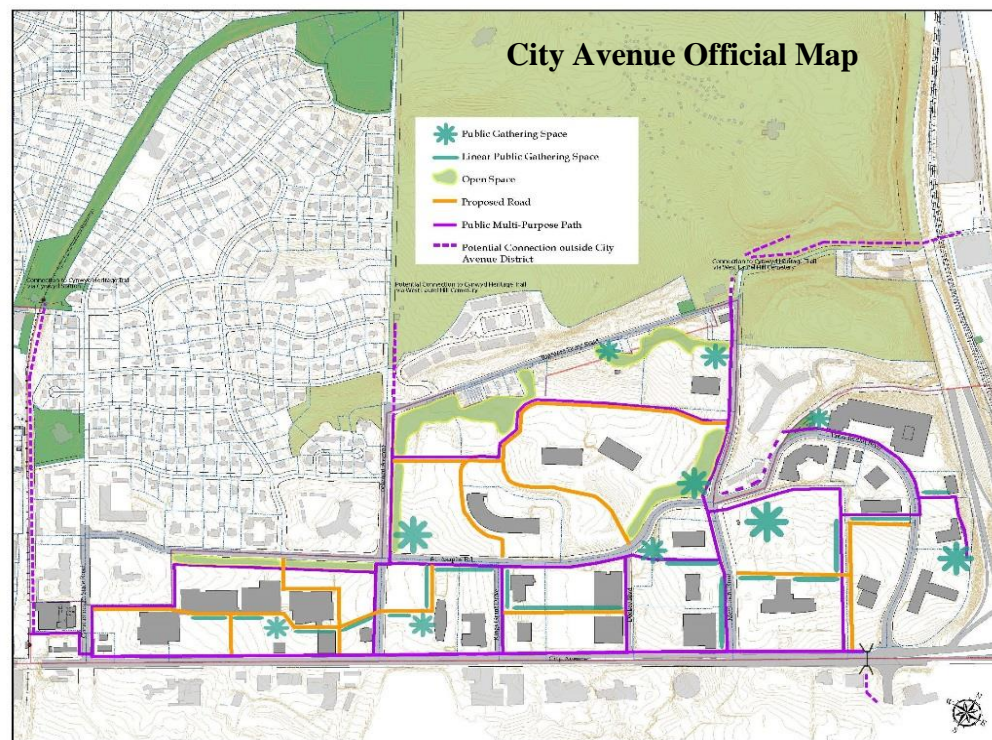
IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

The City Avenue District was enacted nearly five years ago in April 2012 following several years of planning and civic engagement. The Township has seen a handful of development proposals in the years since the enactment of the City Avenue District ordinance. In applying the zoning provisions staff has identified opportunities to improve the district requirements. For example, the City Avenue District indicates in §155-217 C (7) that the greening standards in §135-41.4 shall apply. However, the table in §135-41.4 was not updated to indicate which standards applied to the City Avenue District. The proposed ordinance clarifies which greening standards apply and also includes text amendments clarifying the lot width requirements.

The impervious surface and building height amendments summarized below will address some of the concerns raised by the property owners in this district and the residents living in buildings

abutting this area. Some residents in this area have expressed concern about building height in this district. The increased impervious surface permitted by this amendment also provides an opportunity to address the building height concerns. Any property owner taking advantage of the permitted increase to impervious surface will also be subject to a 20% reduction in the maximum building height permitted in the City Avenue District. The increased impervious surface and reduced building height provide benefits to both the property owners in this district and the residential neighbors.

The amendment to **§155 -217 C (6) (b)** incentivizes mid-rise mixed-use buildings or multiple-use developments by excluding the land area required to provide new streets from the maximum impervious surface calculation when the height of any building on the lot is at least 20% less than the maximum height. The City Avenue District requires the construction of new minor streets when a lot exceeds 600 feet in width with the intent of breaking up large mega-blocks and making the area more pedestrian friendly. The preferred location of the new streets is provided on the City Avenue Official Map.



The amendments to **§155 -217 C (6) (b)** also allows public gathering space authorized under § 155-217E (1) and public, multipurpose pathways authorized under § 155-217E (9) to be excluded from the maximum impervious surface limits when the height of any building on the lot is at least 20% less than the maximum height. Excluding the public gathering space and the public multipurpose pathways from the impervious surface calculations is in keeping with zoning provisions in this area as a similar exemption is currently applied in the nearby M-District. The proposed ordinance limits the total impervious surface on a lot to 85% of the net lot area.

The addition of public trails, public gathering space, and new pedestrian-scaled streets are key infrastructure improvements necessary to reduce the prevailing auto-orientation of the City

Avenue District. Incentivizing these improvements through private redevelopment is in the public interest.

V. Impact On Township Finances:

These amendments would have no impact on Township finances.

VI. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends authorizing the advertisement of a public hearing and notice of intent to adopt the proposed ordinance.