



**VISTA 2025 Goal 5:**

***Support critical infrastructure in targeted corridors of opportunity***

**Goal 5 Team Meeting**

**June 9, 2017**

**Meeting Notes**

**Team Members Attending:** Diane Disney, Michael Hankin, Gary Krapf, Steve Krug, Natasha Manbeck (for Chris Williams), Tim Phelps, Ed Piscopo (for Phil Eastman), Bob Schoenenberger, Paul Spiegel

**Also Attending:** Daniel Arbucias, James Logan, Brian O’Leary, David Sciocchetti

**Michael Hankin**

Welcomed Goal team members and invited introductions. Requested comments on meeting notes from prior meeting. No comments received.

**Brian O’Leary**

Commented on post card survey for Landscapes 3. Noted over 3,000 responses to date with more anticipated. Directed those interested to website for more information.

Indicated that the Commercial Landscapes Task Force series of four separate reports had just been completed. Noted that the reports focused on four targeted land use types

that were facing challenges - Brownfields, Transit Oriented Development, Greyfields and Office Parks. Added that both VISTA 2025 Goal 1 and Goal 5 called for elements included in the series of reports.

On Brownfields, noted that there were officially 592 brownfield sites in Chester County. Commented that there is often both support for and opposition to brownfield remediation. Briefly described the issues associated with redevelopment of Brownfields sites. Suggested that remedies may require incentives for redevelopment like the LERTA program.

On Transit Oriented Development (TOD), noted that there are twelve active rail stations in Chester County, five of which are also Amtrak station. Noted that concerns with TOD typically revolve around density, height, change of character and traffic. Described ways to encourage supportive development. Emphasized importance of walkability.

### **Ed Piscopo**

Asked how involved SEPTA was in TOD.

### **Brian O'Leary**

Responded that it varied with SEPTA, adding that Amtrak was not too involved and that leadership was coming mostly from PennDOT in their role with the Keystone Corridor.

Added that the County was very engaged and supportive of TOD.

On Greyfields, noted that Chester County had 21 retail square feet per person versus a national average of 23 square feet per person. Indicated that trends seem to be favoring experienced focused retail with entertainment. Commented on Exton Square Mall and their evolution to include Main Line Health and Whole Foods.

Noted that highway commercial has issues including fragmented ownership and depth of lots that make remedies more challenging.

### **Michael Hankin**

Asked the status of Whole Foods and was advised that it was still moving forward.

### **Diane Disney**

Commented that co-locating retail and residential was sometimes focused on age groups noting the proximity of Maris Grove and Brinton Lakes shopping center.

**Ed Piscopo**

Added that call centers are now using large retail spaces like closed supermarkets.

**Natasha Manbeck**

Commented that municipalities are reluctant to let go of commercial only zoning making adding residential challenging.

**Michael Hankin**

Commented on the West Whiteland Corridor Study which addressed some of these issues.

**Brian O’Leary**

On Office Parks, commented that the main driver for this focused report was VISTA 2025 which raised the concern over changing demands by office tenants. Noted that Chester County has about 30 million square feet of office space that rents for approximately \$25 per square foot. Noted the emerging need to re-invent office parks to respond to market demands. Pointed out Liberty Property Trust project to repurpose several buildings into a mixed use concept. Added that rezoning was approved by East Whiteland and plans were under review. Described several steps to follow to reinvent office parks.

**James Logan**

Updated the group on the Route 724 Corridor initiative and described the effort to support desired economic development along corridor. Described the recent breakfast where 36 attendees discussed challenges and issues facing the corridor and participated in three breakout sessions. Noted that they planned to reconvene in July, September and November to continue discussions.

**Diane Disney**

Asked about community outreach for the 724 initiative and was advised that there had been outreach to all the communities in the corridor.

### **Tim Phelps**

Provided an overview of Transit Oriented Development. Noted the US Department of Transportation and Federal Transportation Administration definition of development within one quarter to one half mile of the station with a sense of community.

Described some of the benefits of TOD noting that it can free up household income by reducing driving and lower congestion and pollution by reducing driving. In Chester County it can provide expanded access to jobs that is not dependent on the automobile from Harrisburg to Philadelphia and in between location like Great Valley.

Suggested that municipalities need to have a new vision and described ten principles for TOD:

- Put stations in location with highest potential for development opportunities
- Designate a one-half mile radius as mixed use, high density
- Create a range of densities
- Design station for seamless pedestrian connections
- Create public space as part of the design
- Create retail opportunities
- Reduce parking at station and direct pedestrian flow in front of retail uses
- Enhance multi-modal connections
- Incorporate bike shares and bike networks
- Use station as catalyst for development

Recognized that different communities will have different issues to deal with.

### **Natasha Manbeck**

Added that parking at the station may mean less need for parking for adjacent uses.

### **Tim Phelps**

Commented that there are obvious locations for TOD in Chester County along the Keystone Corridor. Raised the issue of TOD in other communities like Great Valley, Phoenixville, West Chester, Kennett Square and Oxford based on alternative means of transportation like high speed gondolas that are being looked at in several locations around the world.

Identified challenges facing TOD including perception and reaction to density, real estate ownership and the challenge of assembling developable land, identifying investors and capital, transit service times and availability, potential for gentrification, land planning for yesterday limiting options for uses in the train station area.

**Brian O’Leary**

Added that there is often tension between the developer’s site focus and the municipal planning community focus.