

Merion

Civic Association



Telephone/Fax 610.664.0441

E-mail: merioncivic@yahoo.com

Merion Station, PA 19066

Neighbor to Neighbor: Lecture Series

Presents Mike Weilbacher on Preserving the Nature of Lower Merion

Preserving our quality of life, the natural environmental and historic buildings remains one of the most important issues for our community. On Wednesday evening, February 13th, Merion Civic Association's *Neighbor-to-Neighbor* series will continue with Mike Weilbacher, executive director of the Lower Merion Conservancy. Mr. Weilbacher will present an overview of a variety of preservation issues in Lower Merion and offer updates on open space, historic preservation, clean streams, environmental protection, and more. He also will include plenty of time to answer your questions and concerns about the full gamut of preservation issues our township faces, from individual street trees to large landscapes. Light refreshments will be served.

Mike Weilbacher has been the Conservancy's founding director since 1994. His preservation work earned him the title of "Citizen Hero" from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* in December 2000 and the Conservation Award from the Delaware Valley Ornithological Society in 2005. Mike also makes regular appearances on WXPB's live call-in show "Kid's Corner" as "Mike the All-Natural Science Guy," answering kids' questions about science, nature and the environment, and regularly visits WHYY's "Morning Edition" to discuss environmental issues. His Natural Selections column on local preservation issues appears each Thursday in the *Main Line Times*. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Mike traveled America teaching about science and the environment through participatory vaudevillian theater, using magic, juggling, poetry and more to perform before hundreds of thousands of students in schools, museums, parks, and environmental education centers, work that earned him numerous honors.



Merion Civic Represents Our Community in Township Planning Process

By Cynthia DeStefano

Lower Merion Township is in the process of reviewing its Comprehensive Plan and has been seeking community involvement by holding public workshops led by Assistant Director of Building and Planning, Christopher Leswing. The Comprehensive Plan Update will take several years to complete and will examine historic preservation, form and scale of new construction, economic development, storm water management, parking, population density, property rights, code maintenance and regional cooperation. The Township set up meetings with groupings of civic associations over the last several months with Merion's meeting, along with the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd, Merion Park, Belmont Hills, Narberth and Penn Valley Civic Associations being held on December 17, 2007.

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President's Message

By Margot Flaks



Merion Walks

Streets, Lights, Traffic and Potholes!

Renee Hill, chairperson of the Merion Civic Association's Streets, Lights and Traffic Committee would like to hear from you if you have any problems on your street with street lights, traffic, and now that it is winter, any potholes which need to be filled. Contact her via the Civic Association at 610-664-0441.

Let It Snow???

Although, as we go to print, it has been a mild winter, in the event of a snow storm, please remember to clear your sidewalks to a width of 30" within 24 hours of the end of snowfall.

Lower Speed Limit On Hazelhurst Avenue

Please note the new speed limit on Hazelhurst Avenue. It has been **reduced** to 25 miles per hour to ensure the safety of all residents.

New Residents Reception

March 9th, 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM. All new neighbors and their families are invited to attend. RSVP 610.664.0441 or merioncivic@yahoo.com

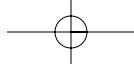
While chatting with a couple of friends and neighbors recently, I became concerned that these good people knew so little of the activities of our Merion Civic Association and thus had not participated. We do try to keep our neighbors informed, not only with regard to social activities, but also about local issues, meetings, forums, and workshops that are likely to affect us as residents of Lower Merion. As sources of information, we use our newsletter, postcards, and even posters placed at the library, train station and at some of the local commercial establishments. Perhaps some of you may have even better ideas as to how we can provide you with information and encourage your participation. Let us know.

It has been a busy fall, beginning with our fall cleanup at the station, the Annual Meeting that featured an exciting discussion of the Barnes by Robert Zaller, a sold-out repeat of one of the Merion Walks and a delightful evening with Pat Ciarrocchi, co anchor of CBS 3's News at Noon during the *Neighbor-to-Neighbor* series. Those who attended these events told us how much they enjoyed meeting their neighbors and learning more about this very special community.

There have also been a number of important meetings and workshops within the Township to which we have sent representatives. Budget hearings informed us of the need to increase our real estate taxes (which was not unexpected) and provided us with copies of the budget and a breakdown of uses of funds and sources of revenue. How many know that the largest single budget item in the 2008 budget is for public safety? Workshops and cluster meetings regarding Lower Merion's Comprehensive Plan have provided opportunities for citizens to ask questions, make suggestions, voice concerns about future development in the Township. (Please see the related article on the cover page). And, in October, prior to the November elections, there were two forums at which School Board candidates presented their ideas and addressed audience questions. At all of these meetings I was impressed by the wealth of information and the careful consideration given to citizens' interests. But, where were the many people who could have attended? During the School Board presentations at Bala Cynwyd Middle School less than half the auditorium was occupied. Attendance was even less at the Comprehensive Plan Meetings. As costs for maintaining services rise together with the urgency for more housing and greater economic development and institutions continue to grow, it becomes ever more important for our residents to stay active and informed.

My wish for greater community involvement brings me once again to the possible relocation of the Barnes Foundation. Wherever I go, whenever the subject of the Barnes arises, people ask why so many of the residents of Merion have remained so quiet about the loss of this very unique institution, a cultural treasure and part of our own social history. Art critics all over the country have called its removal from its tranquil home in Merion a travesty – a desecration.

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Excavations of Tracks at Merion Botanical Park and City Avenue Sites Complete

By Gil Karash

Late last year you may have noticed a lot of earthmoving machinery at the south end of the Merion Botanical Park on Merion Road and at the corner of Merion Road and City Avenue. Amtrak excavated the sites to alleviate flooding from rain runoff from the south side of the tracks. The original plan was to place culverts under the tracks to divert the water into Valley Stream. To do this, Amtrak inactivated two tracks at a time to excavate for the pipes. The park section of the project was completed in October and, as promised by Amtrak, the damage from the machinery was nicely restored, including new grass. Soon thereafter the plan was changed and it was decided to bore under the tracks rather than disturb them and so, back to "square one", the damage to the landscape was repeated. However, we are happy to report that all the work at the Botanical Park has been completed and that, once again, Amtrak nicely restored the park after completing its work.

Meanwhile the separate project involving shoring up the railroad embankment near City Avenue has been completed and the machinery removed. The two fenced-in trailers that are remediating leftover pollution from the former gas station site will remain for some time to come.



Train tracks across from Merion Gardens/St. Joe's dorms in late November.



Newly repaired lawn in Merion Botanical Garden in early January.

Merion Civic Represents Our Community

Continued from page cover

Merion was well represented by having six of its Civic Association's Directors attend this meeting. The director's listened, learned, and offered their opinions and observations on behalf of our community to the Township representatives. Various representatives of the other civics offered their concerns and issues about their individual areas as well as taking a wider view by offering suggestions for improving the future for the entire Township. The meeting touched on points from the previous Comprehensive Plan which have served our community well over the last number of years while encouraging this level of vision for the next several decades. The goal is for new policies, programs and projects, including potential zoning changes, to ultimately emerge from the updated comprehensive plan.

The public meetings will continue over the next several months. To keep informed of the progress, visit www.lowermerion.org and click on "What's New" and then "New Items" and then "Comprehensive Plan Update". Merion Civic representatives will also continue to attend and contribute to future meetings.

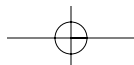
From the Lower Merion Information newsletter, December, 2007:
To involve the community in the Township's ongoing Comprehensive Plan Update Process, each resident will be mailed a Township Map during the month of January. This full-color, detailed publication can be used as a street map or to identify parks or libraries and will be a useful tool for residents. The map is being provided at no cost to the Township thanks to the generous support of local businesses.

President's Message

Continued from page 2

Yet why has there been no large public outcry here in Merion? How many have written letters to the news media or to public officials? How many have contributed money or time to the effort? I do believe a few dedicated, active people can affect the course of history, but it's so much better when there is a huge outpouring of support. Silence, apathy and indifference have never rewarded any cause.

Let me then wish you all a happy, healthy, active New Year. And, of course, I hope to see you at some of our events or meetings and at some of the important Township meetings as well.





Commissioner's Report

By Brian Gordon

Please Join the Merion Civic Association

Enclosed are my/our dues for 2008:

- \$15.00 Individual
- \$25.00 Couples
- \$35.00 Family
- \$50.00 Business
- \$100.00 Institutional
- \$100.00 Patron
- \$500.00 Sponsor
- Other _____

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone Number

E-Mail

Your dues will help your Civic Association

- Hold public meetings with the community and members of the school board
- Work with St. Joseph's University
- Work with the Friends of the Barnes Foundation
- Monitor the condition of street lights, trees and roads
- Sponsor Historical Walking Tours
- Keep abreast of Township issues
- Sponsor various concerts and speakers
- Beautify the train station and post office grounds

Merion Civic Association is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your dues are tax-deductible. Please ask your company if they will match your donation.

Please make checks payable to **MCA** and return with this form to:

**Merion Civic Association,
Merion Station, PA 19066**



As many of you know, the Township has been engaged for years in an effort to revitalize Ardmore along and near Lancaster Avenue. The impetus for this revitalization was, and is, a number of vacant storefronts, buildings in decline, and landlords who are slow to invest money to attract quality tenants. There have been some beautiful renovations over the past two years. But there is also a sense that Ardmore can become more like Bryn Mawr, Wayne, Haddonfield or other small towns which are closer to achieving their full potential.

In 2005, the Township Commissioners (including my predecessor Jim Ettelson) hired one of the finest urban planning organizations in the United States, the Urban Land Institute, to assess Ardmore's potential and to draw a roadmap for the future. A team of architects and urban planners fanned out across Ardmore, interviewed residents and business owners, looked at existing architecture, and analyzed economic data. They presented their vision for Ardmore as follows:

"Ardmore is already a successful community whose residents enjoy a high quality of life, but the panel believes there is the potential for the Historic Ardmore district to develop an enhanced identity as a place with a distinctive urbanity in a suburban setting. Adding expanded lifestyle choices to the already unparalleled access - by train, bus, automobile, bike, or foot - to high-quality local regional destinations would be a powerful draw. To be able to do so in a village setting with enhanced public spaces - public plazas, expanded sidewalks, pocket parks - would create a unique market niche for the district."

The report went on the comment on the ever successful Suburban Square in Ardmore's future, "This vision...does not pit Historic Ardmore against Suburban Square. Instead it capitalizes on the differences between these two districts."

On the subject of how to achieve that vision, the report continued, "place making is an art, not a science, but it is informed by simple principles. People gravitate to places where other people are. The design of public spaces affects the activities that these spaces will support; focused spaces make it comfortable for people to linger, interact, and observe each other are likely to sustain higher activity levels."

Based, in large part, upon these principles, the Township circulated a Request for Proposals (RFP) to many developers to take Ardmore's public land (mostly surface parking lots) and use them to jumpstart development to revitalize Historic Ardmore.

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Thank You!

The Merion Civic Association would like to thank all residents who have paid their Association dues promptly. A special thanks is extended to those residents who have contributed in excess of the recommended amount.

Commissioner's Report, Continued from page 4

The RFP elicited responses from five developers. Their proposals are currently under consideration by the public and the Commissioners. The proposals are exciting and dynamic. From the standpoint of preserving the character of Historic Ardmore and keeping traffic flowing, however, the proposals are worrisome. Each of the proposals has "add ons" to benefit the community in exchange for the use of valuable public land. These "add ons" include public art, a movie theatre, and a center for the arts. One proposal by EBL&S includes a boutique hotel (currently above the train tracks) to sop up demand created by six area colleges and universities. One proposal creates a narrow thoroughfare between the stores along Lancaster Avenue and the train tracks. The developer who has the vision which is most compatible with the ULI study is Strategic Development. Strategic's architectural renderings are beautiful. They present picturesque views of village greens surrounded by appropriately scaled mixed use structures. From an environmental standpoint they go beyond transit oriented development with "live-work" housing which encourage property owners to have their offices (mostly professional offices) on the ground floor and live above them. Talk about an easy walk to work without pollution? This is it!

On the cautionary side, the proposals may be too much of a good thing. The height density and number of units could snarl traffic along Lancaster Avenue and through the Anderson Avenue underpass. The scale must be kept low on the south side of Lancaster Avenue so as not to overpower and damage the character of surrounding communities.

The financial strength of each developer to complete what they have started is also an issue.

Decision time is coming soon. Intensive negotiations will follow as we hammer out the details of a vision for each parcel and of the plan as a whole. Stay tuned.

As always, I welcome your ideas. Please write or call, Brian Gordon.
briangordon4@aol.com • Home 610.667.4500 • Cell 215.939.1441

Save the Date

Wednesday, April 2nd at 8:00 PM, the Merion Civic Association will host its third *Neighbor-to-Neighbor* Lecture Series for the 2007-2008 season at the Merion Tribute House. The Association will present an informal talk by Mr. Rolf Charlston speaking about French influences on architecture in Philadelphia. Rolf Charlston is an outstanding lecturer, well versed in both history and architecture. He has led tours for the Foundation for Architecture, Walk Philadelphia, Inc. and Merion Civic. He has also been a professor of English, an Academic Dean, a lecturer in art, architecture, and music, and a choral director. Many of us already know and enjoy his mellifluous voice on Saturday mornings on Temple University's WRTI. Refreshments and further discussion will follow the talk.

For more information call the Civic Association at 610-664-0441.



Please Remember to Pick Up After Your Dogs... and Dispose of the Waste Appropriately

To those residents...and there are many of you...who pick up after your dogs in our neighborhoods, **THANK YOU!** To the few of you who do not, please

understand that cleaning up after your pet is the law in Merion.



In addition, please dispose of your dog's waste at your home. It has been brought to our attention that a number of people throw dog waste in the trash cans at the Train Station which makes for a pungent wait for trains, especially in the summer months.

Keeping the Merion Train Station Grounds Sparkling

By Scott Feuer

Every Sunday morning, even in the winter months, a small cadre of dedicated citizens gather at the Merion Train Station to clean and spruce up the station grounds. Please consider coming out, once or twice, to help them especially as the weather gets nicer. On **Sunday, May 4 at 9:30 AM**, join your neighbors to keep the station sparkling. Bring gloves, rakes and clippers. Children are welcome and refreshments will be served.





Merion

Civic Association
Merion Station, PA 19066
Email: merioncivic@yahoo.com

U.S. Postage
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Merion Station, PA
19066
Permit No. 28

The Merion Civic Association

Meets at 7:45 PM (7:30 PM in winter months) the fourth Tuesday of each month except December, July and August at the Merion Tribute House. (call 610.664.0441 to confirm time). To address the association, please call 610.664.0441 and request to be added to the agenda. Community members are always invited to attend the meetings, contact the Association with a concern or submit articles of community interest to the newsletter (c/o Merion Civic Association, Merion Station, PA 19066).

Officers and Directors of The Merion Civic Association

President	Margot Flaks
1st Vice President	Scott Feuer
2nd Vice President	Kevin Murphy
3rd Vice President	Janet Rutzel
Treasurer	Bob Levin
Secretary	Cynthia DeStefano
Ann Bagley	Gil Karash
Randy Blakeney	Harriet Lam
John Brogan	Lauren Lavin
Lita Cohen	Robert Marmon
Bruce Eisenberg	Martin Piltch
James Ettelson	Frances Quinn
Peter Gardner	Jim Stevenson
Brian Gordon	Nancy Tompkins
Renee Hill	

Newsletter Committee

Janet Rutzel, editor
Scott Feuer, design & layout
Cynthia DeStefano, distribution
Margot Flaks
Lauren Lavin, photography

Merion Civic Association Meetings at Merion Tribute House:

February 26, 7:30 PM
March 25, 7:30 PM
April 22, 7:45 PM
May 27, 7:45 PM

Community Calendar

February 13, 8:00 PM Neighbor-to-Neighbor Lecture Series

Presenting, Mike Weilbacher, Director, Lower Merion Conservancy. Mr. Weilbacher will give a talk entitled Preserving the Nature of Lower Merion. Light refreshments will follow Mr. Weilbacher's presentation. Merion Tribute House, Hazelhurst Avenue, Merion



March 9, 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM New Residents Reception

Hosted by the Directors of the Merion Civic Association. Merion Tribute House, Hazelhurst Avenue, Merion.

March 21, Good Friday

There will be no refuse or recycling collection. All town Libraries will be closed.

April 2, 8:00 PM Neighbor-to-Neighbor Lecture Series

Presenting Mr. Rolf Charlston speaking about Merion's storied past. Refreshments and further discussion will follow the talk. For more information call the Civic Association at 610-664-0441.

April 19 and April 20, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Spring Clean-up Weekends

Free disposal of refuse and recycling material at the Lower Merion Public Works Complex, 1300 Woodbine Avenue. NO HAZARDOUS WASTE. Proof of Residency required.

May 3 and May 4, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Spring Clean-up Weekends

Free disposal of refuse and recycling material at the Lower Merion Public Works Complex, 1300 Woodbine Avenue. NO HAZARDOUS WASTE. Proof of Residency required.

May 4, 9:30 AM Merion Train Station Spring Planting and Clean-up

Merion Train Station. Bring Trowels, gardening gloves, rakes and shovels.

Monday May 26, Memorial Day

There will be no refuse or recycling collection. All town Libraries will be closed.

