



January 2017

Our New Year Resolution: Save and Protect Our Heritage



Lower Merion has a unique and rich history, and this legacy is worth passing on to future generations. Yet, social and physical change is inevitable, and during the past 300 years we have seen many changes in the Lower Merion community. Our beginnings were that of a farming community, with the building of roads and road-side inns that would facilitate the westward expansion to the frontier. Later came the Railroad Era and the blossoming of our villages into towns. We were transformed into the *Main Line*: a prosperous suburban community with elegant country houses, and various educational, religious, and cultural institutions. With the introduction of the automobile, our simple country roads evolved into highways. The most noticeable transformation was the construction of the Schuylkill Expressway, which cut through Lower Merion, thus connecting our neighborhoods to the regional highway system.

In 2017, we are about to embark on another set of social and physical changes. We are a suburban township connected to Philadelphia; and therefore, experiencing the pressures of urban sprawl which threatens our quality of life. If this trend continues, it could mean the loss of our neighborhoods due to the blending, infilling and increased density of our various towns. Just pick up your local newspaper and read the headlines to see what is happening here in Lower Merion. We read about multi-modal transportation studies, the need for structured parking, and the service cutbacks to our public transportation systems. We are bewildered by the use of acronyms to identify zoning overlays; for example, MUST (Mixed-Use Special Transportation Overlay District), ROHO (Rock Hill Road Overlap District), BMVD (Bryn Mawr Village District) and CAD (City Avenue District). In addition, the integrity of our historic districts is being challenged, the number of tear-downs are increasing, and there are numerous cases of property owners who are guilty of demolition by neglect of their historic resources.

We can still claim some of the emblems of our rich history, but our heritage is at grave risk. We, as a community, must get involved with the planning and implementation of these proposed changes that will forever re-define our neighborhoods. Good planning will

ultimately result in a better community, but if all of these changes move forward without the implementation of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan and an updated Zoning Code, Lower Merion could become a victim of the fallout of unintended consequences. All of us must strive to retain our communal identity; for what kind of benefits could we reap that would possibly outweigh our losses from the bulldozing of our heritage?

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MISSION STATEMENT OF

THE LOWER MERION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Lower Merion Historical Society is an organization dedicated to *Preserving Our Past For The Future*. This is accomplished by stewardship of local history, education of the community, preservation of historic resources and outreach to promote awareness of the cultural heritage of the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth.

