

# Aston Township – Vision Plan

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## Preliminary Recommendations

June 17, 2014

### Market Opportunities

#### Retail Opportunities:

- Electronics
- Clothing
- Sporting goods
- Gift / novelty
- Specialty food
- Full-service restaurants

#### Rental Housing:

- Higher-quality/higher-rent product at higher density
- Possible redevelopment of existing housing as market permits

#### Office:

- Potential for limited medical clinic / medical office

#### Industrial/flex:

- potential for expanded industrial/flex at decommissioned sewage treatment plant

#### Light Industrial / Flex / Distribution

- Adaptive Reuse of Sewer Plant site

#### Entertainment:

- Mini Golf: potential exists
- Movie Theater: potential for a smaller venue (non-profit or movie/tavern)

#### Arts / Culture:

- Rockdale neighborhood ideas under development: increasing value by improving the cultural atmosphere through the preservation of historic architecture, promotion of historic sites, celebration of natural features, fostering artistic talent and attracting unique businesses that together position Rockdale as the cultural center for the area.

### Business Development and Retention

- Organize monthly business owners' breakfasts for Aston business owners across the community. Divide these meetings geographically with the goal of introducing owners in the same areas to each other.
- Organize an annual Township-wide business owners' breakfast so that community entrepreneurs understand the larger picture of Aston businesses.
- Seek, obtain and make available non-profit and govt. - Small Business Association (SBA) counselling expertise for existing business owners at low or no cost.
- Seek and obtain grant funding for a retail façade improvement program. Retain architectural services to assist owners with designing and implementing reasonably-priced façade improvements to aging structures.
- Identify and recruit one-of-a-kind businesses and entrepreneurs who respond to a market "gap" to locate in Aston.
- Create financial incentives for the adaptive reuse of the decommissioned Township sewer plant site so that the property has a financial advantage over regional competitors.

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## **Zoning**

Create overlay zoning districts along Pennell Road and Concord Pike. Zoning overlays should be designed to:

- Allow more than 1 primary use per lot / per building (mixed use)
- Allow increased multi-family residential densities
- Allow increased building height where appropriate
- Create incentives for parcel assembly (to create larger lots)
- Allow shared parking / reduction of parking where appropriate
- Encourage shared access and cross-access easements between adjacent lots
- Reduce the number of driveway openings on major arterials where feasible to increase safety
- Examine zoning requirements for Limited Industrial (LI) District with the adaptive reuse of the decommissioned Township Sewer Plan in mind.

Consider the adoption of an Official Map to prioritize development of the following community facilities:

- Road and intersection improvements
- Sidewalks and trails
- Open Space / Community Civic Space
- Stormwater Management Facilities

Review Institutional Zoning District to ensure that regulations are in keeping with goals of major Township institutions

## **Subdivision and Land Development**

- Strengthen street tree requirements
- Strengthen shade tree requirements for parking lots
- Institute architectural design guidelines for commercial, retail, multi-family residential and mixed-use structures

## **Transportation**

- Conduct a study to evaluate the construction of a traffic circle at Five Points Intersection
- Improvements to Bridgewater Road – (access for former sewer plant location)
- On-road bike lanes / improved shoulders throughout Township – connect to Chester Creek Branch Rail Trail
- Advance the Chester Creek Branch Trail to construction in Aston Township
- Identify and fill in missing sidewalk gaps throughout Township
- Institute traffic calming measures throughout Township
- Improve bus stop locations / add bus shelters

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## **Community Facilities**

- Expand the Community Center
  - Explore the creation of additional recreational facilities at Community Center site (mini-golf, Frisbee golf, summer food and soft drink concessions, etc.)
- Expand Library
- New Township Administration Building
- New Public Works Facility

## **Town and Gown**

- Formalize student internships opportunities with Aston Businesses
- Create a program of matching Neumann students with community projects to help satisfy student community service requirements
- Active and on-going coordination of University / Township programs

## **Housing**

- Create zoning overlays that allow greater density and height for apartments / multifamily housing to increase rental housing opportunities in the Township
- Create a formal Township / Neumann University housing program to assist the university in finding safe, affordable and quality housing opportunities for residents while maintaining the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Create a capital improvement program to improve / replace aging infrastructure in the Township's older residential neighborhoods. This primarily includes sanitary sewer lateral connections but may include other infrastructure in need of repair or replacement

## **Gateways / Aesthetics**

- Install early implementation projects to signify that there are new redevelopment / improvement activities in Aston. These may include but are not limited to the following projects:
  - Gateway signage
  - High impact, colorful, low-cost plantings of perennials at gateways and other locations that will have and pronounced visual and aesthetic effect.
  - Initiate a street tree planting program with a goal of 500 new street trees by 2020 (this will create the equivalent of new tree-lined street along both sides of 2.4 miles of roadway)
  - Create and install Aston banners in select locations in the Township to celebrate neighborhoods, historic events, cultural and entertainment venues and other unique Aston attributes.
- Create memorable civic spaces and streetscapes that identify Aston.

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## **Culture and the Arts**

- Publicize and patronize existing Aston cultural institutions and events including the Delaware County Symphony at Neumann University. Create spin-off / complimentary events coordinated with Symphony performance dates.
- Patronize and publicize Heron Crest Studios in Rockland
- Established a Rockland Cultural Center. Seek area foundation support and local donors to move this effort forward.
- Explore the establishment of a community public arts program. (examples – painted horses, bears in other communities)
- Designate specific locations for permanent community works of art. Seek local Delaware County artists and commissions to fund, build and install these works.

## **Marketing Aston Township to visitors and to new businesses and residents**

- Translate “*A Community That Cares*” into an identifiable brand
- Create a consistent media strategy
  - Aggressively utilize several platforms of social media
  - Produce well-timed press releases about Aston events, people and history
  - Work with partners to piggy-back Aston messaging off of their social media platforms

## **Enforce Property Maintenance Codes to Promote a Better Appearance**