

III. LAND USE & COMMUNITY DESIGN



3.1 INTRODUCTION

Claymont is very much an urban area with a mixture of land uses typical of older communities. It contains commercial, office, residential, parks, schools, community center, public library, and vacant land uses. The Future Land Use Plan provides the following:

- *Opportunities for new development and redevelopment along the entire Philadelphia Pike transect and typical traditional downtown development, such as on-street parking and buildings within one foot of property lines for Claymont Center;*
- *A concentration of commercial uses including mixed-use development (commercial with residences or commercial with offices);*
- *Opportunities to assemble properties for redevelopment; and*
- *Destinations or focal points to draw residents, shoppers, and visitors into the commercial core.*

3.2 EXISTING LAND USE AND DISPOSITION

The Existing Land Use shown on Map #7 illustrates the uses of land for properties along Philadelphia Pike from the Route 495 right-of-way to Perking Run. One hundred twenty (120) properties were inventoried in terms of eight categories of land use:

- Residential: Single-Family
- Residential: Multi-Family
- Civic/Institutional
- Office
- Retail
- Services
- Gas Station and Auto Service
- Vacant

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These properties were further analyzed in terms of their land uses according to four aspects of their disposition:

- *Viable properties that should continue their existing uses with minor enhancements to facades, signs, landscaping, lighting, and parking;*

- *Vacant lots with no buildings on them that should be considered for infill development;*
- *Underutilized or underperforming properties that should be adaptively reused, by changing the use of the existing buildings; and*
- *Underutilized or underperforming properties that should be redeveloped with new buildings, or substantial modifications to existing buildings.*

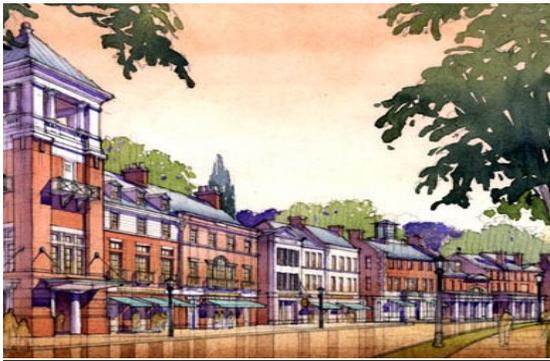


The notion here is to focus on the Vacant, Underutilized or Underperforming properties in the Community Plan relative to compatible infill development. Map #8 shows this Property Disposition.

3.3 FUTURE LAND USE

Most land use decisions and regulations rely on separation and segmentation of both uses and buildings. Land is partitioned to strictly separate housing from commercial and employment centers and buildings are required to be physically set apart from each other and the street. This established the basis for what today is considered suburban growth.

In order to provide and plan for sustainable redevelopment, the Claymont Community Redevelopment Plan reverses this land development pattern and promotes development that encourages the mixing of land uses (vertically & horizontally) and pedestrian friendly building designs. However, as in any land use plan or program, the value of land and improvements placed upon it are protected and enhanced through the continuation of justifiable and planned land use patterns.



Source: Congress for New Urbanism

Although the *Claymont Community Redevelopment Plan* does not specifically identify any changes to the existing zoning on properties, it does call for a dramatic shift in the design and construction of physical improvement upon the land. It does so through the adoption of the Claymont Hometown Overlay, which allows modifications to the New Castle County Unified Development Code to achieve these community redevelopment goals. Map #9 shows what the Claymont Community hopes to be in the future. Essentially it is the synthesis of the idealized build-out plans for Claymont Center and the Philadelphia Pike as well as the property disposition map. The combination of these resources provides an overall perspective as to what the Claymont community will look like in the future.

3.4 COMMUNITY DESIGN

In Claymont, although recent suburban development has masked the established pattern of development, there exists a community or neighborhood identity that is typical of traditional "towns". Its architecture is as rich and interesting as its community. Claymont is certainly unique and this plan looks to reestablish this community design through redevelopment, infill development and building enhancements. It is not the intention of this plan to replicate one vernacular style or require only one type of material to be used. Instead, this plan looks to continue the variety of styles and materials that very much characterize Claymont. This plan does not want to create a faux community fabric, instead it looks towards achieving a fabric that lives and breathes, supports its residents and is able to peak interest to keep visitors coming back.

When developing within the Claymont Hometown Overlay District, the design and placement of buildings in relation to the surrounding elements must be analyzed. This relationship is one of the most important elements of creating a community identity. Building design should respect surrounding buildings, sidewalks, and the orientation of surrounding streets. Sidewalks should remain the principal place of pedestrian movement and casual social interaction. Designs and uses should be complementary of that function.



Source: Congress for New Urbanism

When developing or redeveloping a vacant parcel, individual buildings should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings to form part of the larger composition of the block, street and neighborhood. Buildings should strive for a contextual approach to design that is sensitive to the surrounding built conditions and relate in similarity of scale, height, and configuration to adjacent buildings. Whenever possible, adaptive use of the valuable historic building stock should be used as an effective practice to maintaining community harmony.

Building facades should be varied and articulated to provide visual interest to pedestrians. Although discouraged in Claymont Center, when larger buildings are proposed, they must be broken down in scale by means of the articulation of separate facades. These should be well proportioned and related to create a satisfactory composition. The principal façade of commercial and mixed-use buildings should be divided into a base, middle, and top. Taller buildings also can be created by adding height in the middle tier.

Retail activities within buildings should be oriented towards the street and have direct access from sidewalks through storefront entries. The "indoors" should spill outdoors onto walkways and plazas (e.g. dining areas, small merchandise displays) and bring the "outdoors" into the building by opening interior spaces (e.g. atriums) to views and sunshine.

Figure #2 provides examples of community design that exist and can be incorporated into Claymont as a result of this Plan.

3.5 ARCHITECTURAL COMPATIBILITY

One cannot identify a single architectural vernacular that characterizes the Claymont Community. In fact,



the variation in themes and styles provides interest. Typically, there are many elements of architectural design that help to create community space. In Claymont this is very true and allows for tremendous flexibility when designing new or reusing existing buildings.

Building compatibility will be attained through the

incorporation of a combination of elements and materials present throughout the Claymont Community. Elements that can be used to achieve compatibility are contained within the Manual of Design Guidelines.

3.6 LANDSCAPING & OPEN SPACE

Although Claymont is a highly developed urban area, a large amount of green-space exists. A result of development and park dedication, these “green” resources characterize Claymont as much as it’s community design. The use of existing and supplemental landscaping and open space bolsters community design for new development and blends new development with the existing. The design and location of open space on a site is perhaps the most important determinant in a successful pedestrian environment. Opportunities to provide useable open space should be explored during each development/redevelopment project. Examples of useable open space include: outdoor café or restaurant seating, a plaza with seating, a tot lot, a picnic area, or arcades along store fronts.

A Street Tree program as shown on Maps #10 &11 has been created to add charm and beauty and to shade the streets of Claymont. Street trees provide a landscape architectural complement to the alignment of buildings in the community, especially along Philadelphia Pike.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, a shade tree program, in the long term, can ultimately save in costly heating and cooling bills for communities like Claymont. Trees provide a multitude of benefits, such as filtering pollution thereby enhancing air quality of the immediate surroundings, improving water quality, and acting as a buffer for noise pollution.