

Wishes, concerns, and issues of Garrett Hill Stakeholders – the Residents – as compiled from community meetings, interest inventory, and individual comments.

Garrett Hill residents feel that they live in a special community with many assets. Their comments generally stress preservation of the treasured characteristics and features of Garrett Hill. Their main hope is that any plan for development and improvement in the Garrett Hill Overlay District will maintain, protect, and enhance those features and will not significantly change the fabric of the community by unbalancing the blend of small scale businesses and the mix of single and adjoined houses.

A Safe Walkable Environment:

A large proportion of the denser residential neighborhood around the Garrett Hill Overlay District lies within a ten-minute walk of the commercial center. Residents can walk to the eating and other service and retail establishments in the town, to vote, to attend church, and to utilize several SEPTA transit options. People approaching on foot also make extensive use of the parks and recreational facilities in the two parks within the Garrett Hill Overlay District.

As a close-knit but open community, the Garrett Hill neighborhood is generally safe and secure for pedestrians and youth.

- Residents see a need to improve pedestrian comfort and safety with additional lighting in the business district and, to the extent that it is possible, with improvement of the access infrastructure and lighting at the Garrett Hill stop in SEPTA's Route 100 line.
- Residents would like to see further traffic calming and safe crosswalk measures at the intersection of Garrett Avenue and Conestoga Road and at Clem Macrone Park.

Commercial Center:

Garrett Hill residents place high value on the small scale appropriate businesses on Conestoga Road and Garrett Avenue, many of them locally owned and/or operated. The variety of restaurants and cafes, and retail and service providers brings multi-faceted benefits to customers, employees and business-owners.

The business center functions as a safe social center for the walking young teen set and for the college student population, and a resource for the neighborhood population.

- The Garrett Hill community supports the continued operation of appropriate and varied local businesses including but not limited to food, retail, automotive, service, and cleaning operations. Residents hope to preserve a mix of practical and attractive businesses and to avoid conditions that increase the costs of business operation in the GHOD unduly. Residents prefer to restrict the boundaries of the commercial district rather than expand them.

- Because of the shortage of available parking and the problem of parking spillover into adjacent neighborhood streets, new business development should focus on operations that need limited and short-term parking. Concise and adequate engineering and planning for parking should be included in any new or redevelopment project. An equitable plan for managing residential parking permits within and outside the GHOD should be designed and implemented.

- Garrett Hill residents worry about the impact that large numbers of restaurant and bar patrons have on the neighborhood including excessive parking load and nuisance behavior. Residents would like the planners to offer a formula to derive a reasonable scale for bar and restaurant operations in the GHOD and suggest a means to structure development with respect to the limitations that the lack of parking spaces impose.

Diversity:

Garrett Hill has long enjoyed a diversity of religion, ethnicity, age, and socio-economic levels in the community that has evolved naturally. A generous supply of affordable housing currently supports the diverse community, providing a sustainable environment for retirees, young families, and people from a range of income levels and life phases.

- Residents want to maintain an affordable, family-friendly housing stock. They do not want higher density development. They do not want multi-family or luxury units in the overlay or surrounding area. Residents are committed to fostering owner-occupied housing by maintaining the moderate and affordable housing stock. Residents are concerned that ambitious development in Garrett Hill and in the rest of Radnor Township threatens the sustainable balance in the community.

- Residents are committed to limiting transient rentals to an appropriate distribution in the community by enforcing and strengthening existing student housing ordinances.

Historic Character:

The traditional housing stock and gradual development of Garrett Hill have resulted in a sense of individuality and personality in the building stock and community and a small town feel. Close neighbors, open porches and yards, a walking habit for errands all contribute to a homey feel and sense of identity.

A number of structures and features of Garrett Hill carry historic interest. Most striking is the Radnor United Methodist Church, whose sanctuary, the second RMC structure built on the site, was constructed in 1834. Also of national significance is Tunnell Field, named after Emlen Tunnell, RHS Class of 1942, the first African American elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

- Garrett Hill residents want the aspects of the district that have historic or cultural interest maintained and protected and their interest value enhanced by installing historical markers (as already exist at Emlen Tunnell Field).

Civic and Cultural Life:

Garrett Hill enjoys access to the quality schools in the township and the impact of the varied educational institutions nearby including Villanova University, Rosemont College, to mention the closest examples among many.

The location and access routes to Garrett Hill provide good proximity and ease of emergency and police services

Garrett Hill residents tend to be active citizens and appreciate the accessibility and responsiveness of the Radnor Township representative government – our commissioners and township staff.

Garrett Hill traditionally organizes a neighborhood 4th of July parade that features a children's float and bike decorating competition for neighborhood children and draws participants from around the region.

- Garrett Hill residents still regret the loss in the early 1980s of their neighborhood school, Rosemont Elementary. They feel that the fabric of the community was weakened by replacing a community school with an anonymous business campus, however functional, in part because a school can serve as a magnet to local home ownership, whereas the business facilities favors short-term connections. Residents would like to see that their values of community coherence and identity inform any planning for the GHOD.

Outdoor Recreation:

Garrett Hill is graced with two parks plus the grounds of the Radnor Methodist Church. Clem Macrone Park covers 9 acres and offers a tot lot, basketball court, baseball field, volleyball and tennis courts, a stream (Valley Run), wetlands nature preserve and trail, picnic area with grills, and open ground for frisbee or other informal activities.

Emlen Tunnell Field covers 5 acres and offers a tot lot, soccer and baseball fields with dugouts and bleachers, a walking/running track, and free space for open play.

Both Macrone Park and Tunnell Field provide facilities for Township and athletic club recreation programs including Little League baseball and softball, and Radnor Soccer Club teams. They host Township summer playground programs as well. The 4th of July parade usually ends with a concert and picnic at Macrone Park. Church and community groups use the parks for their activities and groups may reserve the picnic facilities at Macrone.

Macrone Park has been the site of ongoing environmental action programs to conserve and restore the natural environment. These activities range from workshops to remove invasive species, stream bank and wetland restoration projects, and involve the volunteer participation of community organizations such as the scouts or university groups. The projects offer volunteer opportunities in partnership with the Radnor Recreation Department and Radnor Environment Advisory Committee to citizen and student groups. Some projects have secured outside funding to accomplish more ambitious goals such as the wetland restoration.

The Radnor Methodist Church grounds do not constitute public space but do host occasional community events such as a strawberry festival in June and the flea market and auction in the fall.

- Protecting the recreational use and preserving the natural beauty of Macrone Park and Emlen Field and enhancing and maintaining their facilities are essential to the quality of life and future of the Garrett Hill community and bottom-line requirements for the GHOD.
- Garrett Hill residents appreciate the Township's current 'green' practices in the management of park landscaping that are safer for park users. They celebrate the Township's support for continued community involvement in local environmental actions and concerns.

Beautification:

Garrett Hill needs attention to the 'streetscape' aspect of the GHOD. Head in parking, overhead wires, and sidewalks and buildings in disrepair mar the aesthetic environment and pedestrian character of the commercial and overlay district.

A special blight on the entrance to Garrett Hill is the bleak scene of the SEPTA spillway on the north side of Conestoga Road. A minister of the Radnor Methodist Church in the 1880's referred to the church site as standing on "one of the most beautiful hills of Radnor." As recently as 1987, the spillway bank was anchored by a vast bed of daylilies, cheerful even if they did not prevent flooding, they did prevent erosion and eyesore.

- Garrett Hill residents hope that collaboration with SEPTA, Penn DOT and Exelon and the development of outside resources can bring some aesthetic and functional enhancement to the Conestoga Road spillway.
- Garrett Hill residents hope that the guidelines will incorporate the principles of conservation of natural resources as well. This would include the preservation, replacement, and/or the addition of trees, bushes and ground cover.
- Residents hope that guidelines for new and renovated buildings in the district conserve the small scale of the current business district while providing architectural guidelines and standards that improve the look of the district. Guidelines should incorporate flexibility and avoid placing undue financial burdens on property owners.