



# OVERBROOK FARMS CLUB



## OVERBROOK FARMS COMMUNITY PLAN

**Developed under the guidance of the  
Overbrook Farms Club Board of Directors**

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## INTRODUCTION

For most of its history, Overbrook Farms Club has sought to maintain the character and quality of life in this small city neighborhood by attacking individual problems as they arose. Notable recent exceptions were the Club's success in obtaining a nomination to the National Registry of Historic Places and restoration of the Train Station, two outstanding achievements that benefit the entire neighborhood. To attain these achievements it took perceptive leaders who could foresee the benefits to the entire community by bringing change of a comprehensive and enduring character. The Club now hopes to contribute to these past accomplishments with similar far-reaching ideas.

Since 2005, the Club has begun a more concerted effort to attract and retain home owners who will live in their houses, attract and keep families who want to raise their children here, improve overall quality of life and beautify and enhance our historic neighborhood. The Club leadership has devoted time to looking at a number of factors in developing a community plan, such as: 1) use, improvement and development of green/open space; 2) traffic and parking; 3) redevelopment of the commercial strip; and 4) programs to assist in preserving the historic fabric of the community and the restoration of historic structures.

The first step in bringing these ideas to life is to develop a plan for our community, a picture of what we all would like our community to look like. Wendell and Holmes gave us all a great foundation that we now want to preserve, but we must recognize that we must deal with the reality of modern times and invasions / alterations that history has dealt us since the start of our *Suburb Deluxe*. Although we all have a pretty good idea of what our neighborhood should look like based on our wealth of historic documents, we face now, and will again in the future, questions about how to incorporate modern society while at the same time keeping the look, character and quality of our community. This is why a community plan is necessary, to provide our roadmap for the future development and maintenance of our neighborhood.

What the Club seeks to do by way of this community plan is ensure that improvements we implement today will be lasting, sustainable and beneficial to the community as a whole for many years to come. But the plan cannot be developed or implemented by a few board members or interested community members. This community plan requires, as its very foundation, community input, community participation and community support.

At each step in the development of this community plan, and for each of its major components, community input and review will be required. Then again, this plan is not intended to remain static, but will continue to evolve and change to best reflect the intentions of the community and take into account what the future brings. So, this plan will never be "finished," but will be our best guide to preserving and protecting the historic fabric of our community and maintaining our quality of life.



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## **PART I** **GENERAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES**

- I. COMMUNITY-ORIENTED EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN AND GROWTH**
- A. Contribute to the improvement of neighborhood quality of life through creation of a diverse, vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, residential urban community that is appealing to both residents and visitors.**
  - B. Encourage the retention of existing home owners through life cycle changes, and encourage a diversity of household types, emphasizing owner occupied, residential property use.**
  - C. Accommodate reasonable growth in population, development and increase in density, at appropriate locations without adversely impacting the existing residential community.**
  - D. Encourage development that responds to the specific context of each Overbrook Farms neighborhood sub-area, in terms of land use, building height, scale, and urban design.**
  - E. Respect the existing daylight, sunlight, air, views, and visual privacy of existing residents.**
  - F. Maintain and encourage visually attractive pedestrian-friendly street frontages, both at street level and above for all new and rehabilitated developments.**
  - G. Maintain appropriate sunlight and daylight access to public rights-of-way and open space in all new development.**
- II. PRESERVE HISTORIC ASSETS**
- A. Preserve historic assets that contribute to the unique character of the community.**
  - B. Conserve the scale and character of established residential communities.**
  - C. Preserve the historic context of the original planning ideals that informed the plan and layout of the community.**



### **III. CONNECTIVITY WITH ADJACENT COMMUNITIES**

- A. Enhance physical and community linkages between Overbrook Farms, adjacent neighborhoods, nearby institutions and West Philadelphia.**

### **IV. INNOVATIVE OPEN SPACES AND HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC AMENITIES**

- A. Enhance existing recreation and encourage the creation of new public open space and recreation, as well as semi-private, and private open space and recreation, as a resource for residents, particularly families with children.**
- B. Within appropriate locations, encourage a wide and diverse range of pedestrian-friendly retail stores and services and entertainment uses to serve both residents and visitors.**
- C. Within appropriate locations, promote high-quality, physically attractive pedestrian-oriented neighborhood schools and institutions.**
- D. Promote a high-quality public environment, including utility infrastructure, sidewalks, streets improvement, lighting, street tree planting, landscaping, flower boxes/planting, and under-grounding of aerial utilities.**

### **V. EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS**

- A. Assure an adequate supply of off-street parking to serve the real market determined needs of home owners, residents and visitors, consistent with maintaining a high-quality pedestrian environment.**
- B. Eliminate the adverse visual, physical, and pedestrian impacts of off-street parking and loading in all existing and new development.**
- C. Minimize loss/increase supply of on-street parking through minimization of curb cuts, and improved on-street parking management.**
- D. Discourage unnecessary automobile use within the Overbrook Farms neighborhood through the use of various traffic calming controls and enhancement of alternate transit modes such as bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways.**
- E. Minimize adverse impacts of vehicle traffic through traffic calming and promotion of quiet non-polluting alternates to existing buses.**



**VI. IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS, CLEAR GOALS, AND FUNDING RESOURCEFULNESS**

- A. Evaluate feasibility of non-traditional funding sources for Overbrook Farms Neighborhood Projects, such as Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RCAP), Philadelphia Welcome Fund Program, or development impact fees.**
- B. Form partnerships with other neighborhood groups, city agencies, and corporations to implement the planning principles**
- C. Promote development controls and guidelines that are easily understandable and enforceable and reflect community goals in terms of land use, density and urban design.**
- D. Assure that the governmental development approval process respects community goals and aspirations, and established community development controls and guidelines.**

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## **PART II**

### **COMMUNITY GENERATED PLANNING CONSIDERATION**

#### **I. GREEN SPACE**

##### **A. Underlying Themes:**

1. More cooperative efforts
2. More education
3. More opportunities to work and have fun together

##### **B. General Streetscape / Landscaping Concepts**

1. Trees
  - a. Develop a tree pruning plan, especially for around street lights (city & private)
  - b. Develop a tree planting and education plan that discusses tree lifespan and care
  - c. Develop a local tree replacement ordinance [for ex.: if you remove a tree you must plant 2]
  - d. Invite a tree advisory service or arborist to provide group consultancy to achieve knowledge and discounts
2. Landscaping
  - a. Encourage use of native plants and plan for use in common areas
  - b. Develop plan for education signage
  - c. Organize a “Garden Club” and/or organize “Best of” contests
  - d. Work together as a block(s) on landscaping design for colors and uniformity landscaping
  - e. Develop plan for Landscape of train station (Work with SEPTA/Amtrak and CASSD)
3. Non-Green Alternative Landscaping/Beautification
  - a. Murals, Mosaics, stones and sculptures for low maintenance and high visibility
  - b. Work with a local art council for education and resources



4. Curbs and Sidewalks
  - a. Develop a community plan to repair broken sidewalks
  - b. Pedestrian friendly- reduce / trim overgrown hedges
5. Lighting
  - a. Develop a plan for creative or unique lighting  
– more of a streetscape throughout the community – Historic Street Lamps
  - b. Develop plan for placement of lighting more appropriate for neighborhood curbs and side walks
  - c. Develop plan for use of lights in the walkways in Morris Park (Coordinate with MPRA and FPC)
6. Signage
  - a. Develop plan for use of Historic Markers throughout the neighborhood  
(distinguished individual's home / points of interest)
  - b. Develop plan for restoration / replacement or procurement of historic street signs
  - c. Develop community ordinance for regulation of signage

### **C. Community Recreation/Entertainment Facilities as Gather Places**

1. Work with existing facilities such as schools, churches;
  - a. Green space / playgrounds (Overbrook School for the Blind)
  - b. Community Spaces (local churches)
2. Train Station
  - a. Create a play ground at Overbrook train station
  - b. Develop plan for use of train station parking lot for farmers market
3. Use of an existing property in Overbrook Farms for:
  - a. Farmer's market
  - b. Community garden
  - c. Community Center- club house- use churches existing community spaces
  - d. Community / family pool
  - e. Community basketball court / athletic field
4. Other community development / gathering ideas
  - a. Porch party [involving one or more houses]
  - b. Expand activities of beautification committee



- c. An English Pub
  - d. Develop plan for increased / better use of block captains
5. Morris Park
- a. Develop plan for long-term preservation of guard house (66<sup>th</sup> and Sherwood)
  - b. Use of Morris Park (147 acres) as meeting place, educational center, recreation (hiking, biking, dog walking or horse back riding)

**D. Other**

- 1. Work with Streets / Water Departments to develop a plan to control water drainage at Woodbine underpass (Amtrak) and at 66<sup>th</sup> & Sherwood
- 2. Locate and maintain a central location(s) to post event flyers (community bulletin boards)
- 3. Develop a plan to acquire properties, especially modern properties, for other uses {See I(C)(3)}
- 4. Develop or seek enforcement of motorcycles noise ordinance
- 5. Develop or seek enforcement of dog litter ordinances
- 6. Develop a plan for use and upkeep of centrally located dog poop bag dispensers

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## **II. TRAFFIC AND PARKING**

### **A. Pedestrian safety**

1. Develop an overall plan for increased pedestrian safety, which includes:
  - a. Pedestrian safe cross walk lights at traffic light controlled intersections
    - controls with remaining time left to cross.
  - b. Lights in cross walk – push button to flash
    - similar to “Walk” lighted signs by the movie theater in Ardmore, crossing Lancaster).
  - c. Controlled pedestrian crossings at the firehouse at 63<sup>rd</sup> & Lancaster.

### **B. Traffic Planning for Reduction of “By-Pass” Traffic From City Ave to Woodbine (Into West Phil.) and Overbrook (to the Train Station)**

1. Identification of concerns about heavy traffic in neighborhood
  - a. Safety issue for children playing in neighborhoods
  - b. Car count on Overbrook between 64th & Lancaster is increasing
    - 335 cars over 2 hours counted recently
  - c. Major traffic jam caused by cars turning left off Lancaster onto Woodbine (traveling East on Lancaster, turning left to go under the railroad tracks)
2. To Reduce Train Station “By-Pass Traffic Patterns, Develop a Community Traffic Plan That Includes:
  - a. “One Way” on Overbrook between 63rd & Lancaster
    - directing traffic away from the train station
  - b. Use of “Do Not Enter” signs on streets that open to City Avenue
  - c. Traffic lights on 64th street at each intersection
3. To Reduce Woodbine “By-Pass” Traffic Patterns (Lancaster Ave, Woodbine and 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor), Develop a Community Traffic Plan that Includes:
  - a. Plan and implement a “No Parking” lane on Lancaster
    - for turn lane (on inbound side of Lancaster)
  - b. Synchronize the traffic light timing on Woodbine at Lancaster and 63<sup>rd</sup> street - to assist with left turns and avoid the backups on Woodbine.
  - c. Plan and implement a “No Parking” lane on Woodbine between Lancaster & Upland Way
  - d. Plan and implement two traffic lanes on Woodbine between Lancaster Avenue and Upland Way
    - to help more cars get through the Woodbine/Lancaster/63<sup>rd</sup> intersection.



### **C. Overall Neighborhood Traffic Planning**

1. Develop plan for implementing 4 way stops and other desired traffic controls throughout the neighborhood
2. Develop plan for use of speed bumps, bump outs or other traffic calming devices on Woodbine Avenue, 64<sup>th</sup> street and other streets with excessive traffic speeds.
3. Develop plan for use of signs
  - “Children at play”
  - “Speed Limit”
4. Support use of “little people” signs at cross walks and throughout neighborhood.
5. Work with Streets Department on a plan for better water drainage at Sherwood Ave and 66<sup>th</sup> Street and at Woodbine underpass

### **D. Reduction of Parking Problems**

1. Develop a plan for one-side street parking on Overbrook Ave. between 64<sup>th</sup> & Lancaster
  - Street is too narrow to support parking on both sides.
2. Develop a plan for use of Parking Permits
  - a. To limit amount of cars parked in neighborhood
  - b. May help restrict illegal boarding houses from having too many cars
  - c. Potential problems with parking permit plan:
    - i. Cost
    - ii. Visitor parking
3. Work with SEPTA to get free parking at Train Station for evenings and on weekends
  - to help businesses and evening visitor parking.
4. Develop plan for greater enforcement of parking regulations:
  - a. Parking too close to driveways
  - b. Parking too close to end of streets / intersections
  - c. Parking too close to fire hydrants

### **E. Develop a plan to account for near neighborhood school walkers at several intersections.**

1. Malvern & 63<sup>rd</sup>
2. Malvern & Lancaster
3. 62<sup>nd</sup> & Woodbine Ave.



### **III. COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR –**

See Master Plan for Implementation of the below Planning Considerations

#### **A. Planning Considerations For General Improvement of 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Commercial Corridor**

1. Develop a plan for to improve the attractiveness of existing businesses that includes:
  - a. Open up windows – removal of grates / plexi-glass
  - b. Use of outdoor seating / sidewalk tables
  - c. Use of historically appropriate colors and signage
2. Develop a plan to use historic streetscape lighting  
- potential to work with City Avenue Special Services District
3. Develop a plan to create natural gathering places in or around business
4. Develop a plan to increase available parking that includes:
  - a. Working with SEPTA to get free parking at Train Station for evenings and on weekends
  - b. Use of parking lot behind medical center in the evening hours
  - c. Possible use of the railroad right of way near Woodbine
5. Develop a plan for increased security of commercial strip, particularly at night  
– possible extension of City Ave Special Services District security  
– possible increase in St. Joes Security patrols
6. Consider varied or later operating hours at some stores.

#### **B. Develop a plan to encourage the use of commercial space to include:**

1. Bakery / Coffee Shop
2. Interior Design Shop
3. Green Grocer / ability to pick up bread & milk
  - a. St. Joe’s sponsored Co-op business
  - b. “Weavers Way” type Co-op
4. Bar / Restaurant – no liquor take out
5. Arts Theatre – Arts Center



6. Bookstore – Chain like Barnes and Noble or Borders
7. Ice Cream Shop
8. Community Center
  - a. Permanent meeting place for Overbrook Farms Club,
  - b. Historical museum / Archive

### **C. Other Planning Considerations**

1. Conduct a survey of Overbrook Farms home/property owners, residents and students.  
- Potential that St. Joes could be a partner to assist in conducting the survey and analysis.
2. Develop a Commercial or Business Association as forum for a dialog with existing businesses to:
  - a. look at product expansion and help with improving existing products and offerings.
  - b. use their combined buying power to obtain services at a bulk rate
  - c. OFC take the lead with the existing merchants to start the dialog.
3. Evaluate if the current uses of the buildings is “proper” under current zoning.
4. Work with SEPTA to determine why Overbrook Station is Zone 2 and determine if it can be changed to Zone 1.
5. Create directory of Businesses in print and web versions
6. Potential use of the old ACME warehouse as a data center

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#### **IV. PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF HISTORIC FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY.**

Preserving the historic fabric of our community recognizes that the historic value of this community is in both the individual structures themselves as well as the collection of structures as a complete, planned community. Therefore, the features and programs developed under this portion of the community plan consider how best to preserve both historic structures and, to the extent possible, the overall historic plan, while taking into consideration contemporary issues of use, planning and development.

##### **A. Zoning and Use**

1. **Community Planning:** Overbrook Farms is considered a residential community. As such, it will adhere to the established R1/R2/R5 zoning, except to the extent the Commercial Corridor Master Plan considers alternative uses appropriate. This plan acknowledges that R15/R16 zoning exists within confined areas of the community and the Master Plan will seek to take advantage of the density and historic nature of these structures where possible and as contemplated by the Commercial Corridor Master Plan.
2. **Requests for Variances:** Property owner requests for variances will be considered on a case by case basis within the context of the overall community plan and whether the planned use meets with the overall vision of the community plan.
3. **Existing Variances:**
  - a. **Illegal Variances.** The community plan envisions supporting efforts to bring illegal non-compliant properties into compliance with current zoning and use regulations.
  - b. **Legal Variances.** The community plan envisions developing programs to return properties, where appropriate, to owner occupied, single family, residential use.

##### **B. Education**

The community plan envisions the development of various programs to provide education about the historic nature of the community, the current community plan and prospects for development within the context of the historic fabric of the community. Those programs may include:

1. Historic Document Archive Project
2. Publication of a Photo-Book / History Book
3. Joint Education Programs with area schools and universities.



### **C. Financial Support**

The community plan envisions various financial programs to assist home owners in the preservation and/or rehabilitation of their homes, reclamation of deteriorating homes and the preservation of greenspace. Those programs may include:

1. Low interest home repair/restoration loans
2. Grant program for historic renovations of properties designated locally as historic by the Philadelphia Historic Commission.
3. Acquisition of abandoned or foreclosed properties.
4. Acquisition of properties in violation of zoning ordinances (existing legal or illegal variances) to return them to owner occupied, single family use.

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