

**Friends of Abolition Hall**  
**UPDATE #3: Corson Homestead and Proposed Townhouse Development**  
**December 2, 2017**

A few days before Thanksgiving, K. Hovnanian Builders submitted its latest plan for a townhouse community at Butler and Germantown Pikes in the heart of the Plymouth Meeting National Historic Register District. (To view the graphic, please see the link on the Abolition Hall page under “Programs” at [preservationpa.org](http://preservationpa.org))

**Builder’s new and expanded plan**

Unlike the original plan that showed 48 townhouses, this one shows 67. The increase in the number of houses happened as a result of K. Hovnanian having signed an agreement of sale with an adjacent property owner—a parcel that fronts onto Butler Pike and shares a property line with the Corson fields. This second property, long owned by the Haub family, provides additional acreage—approximately 2.7 acres of buildable land.

Both the Corson and Haub parcels are zoned Village Commercial 2, which allows for townhouses as a Conditional Use. It is the Whitemarsh Township Board of Supervisors that has the power to grant (or deny) Conditional Use approval.

**Next steps**

Plan review starts with the Whitemarsh Township staff—Zoning Officer, Consulting Engineer, and Fire Marshall. They will circulate the plan to other entities, such as the Montgomery County Planning Commission. From there the developer will be asked to present the plan to the Whitemarsh Township Planning Commission at a public meeting. Nearby neighbors (those living within 500 feet of any portion of the two parcels) should receive a meeting notice from the Township, but the meeting is open to everyone. At each of these steps, recommendations might emerge for plan modifications, but it is at the next step that the Township’s Codes authorize the Board of Supervisors to impose meaningful changes.

**Conditional Use hearing can be pivotal**

The Conditional Use hearing, with the Board of Supervisors presiding, is critical. The code states that, “In allowing a conditional use, where such use is permitted, the Board may attach such reasonable conditions and safeguards, as it may deem necessary...” The criteria applied in evaluating a Conditional Use application include compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, impact on vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and compatibility with Township plans, such as the Open Space Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, and the Historic District Guidelines. To ensure that you are on the Township’s notification list for this hearing, send a written request to Richard Mellor, Whitemarsh Township Manager, at [rmellor@whitemarshtwp.org](mailto:rmellor@whitemarshtwp.org). You must include your email address and state that you own property located in Whitemarsh Township.

**Our objectives**

We appreciate that this new plan keeps the proposed townhouses away from the historic structures, however where we recommended the retention of open space for a Historic Plymouth Meeting Welcome Park fronting onto Butler Pike adjacent to Abolition Hall, this plan shows a large storm water basin. We also appreciate that this plan eliminates the proposed right-of-way for a realigned Butler Pike. Sadly, this plan increases the number of townhouses at an already busy area of our community. We continue to call upon Whitemarsh Township to use Open Space dollars to buy down the density. The County could step in and do likewise, using its funds to ensure access to the Cross County Trail, which is likely to emerge just across Butler Pike, adjacent to the limekilns on the Danella property.