

Ask the ... township manager

Doug Cleland

Lower Merion Township
manager

Question: You were just at the Ardmore Crossing groundbreaking (July 21). What's important about this new affordable senior housing community?

Answer: It's the first that we've done in over 20 years. It really more than doubles the amount of senior residential units. There's a substantial need for this type of living for the elderly.

Also, there will be some townhouses that will be facing the elderly apartments that will allow for intergenerational lifestyles. About a handful of the townhouses will be subsidized. We're hopeful that they will have a purchase price, for those eligible, of below market rate.

Q: What are the challenges of running an affluent community when money isn't as much of an issue?

A: We haven't had to implement service reductions, but we want to maintain services or see them improved. Whether you are affluent or struggling, you still need to deliver services.

Q: During your time as township manager since 2002, has this been the most controversial period — given issues like Ardmore's

revitalization and the proposed expansions of Bryn Mawr and Lankenau Hospitals and Harriton and Lower Merion High Schools?

A: I think it's been a very interesting period in the Lower Merion community, one that's been very exciting.

Q: But has it been the most controversial?

A: I don't look at it from a controversy side but see it from the side of opportunities.

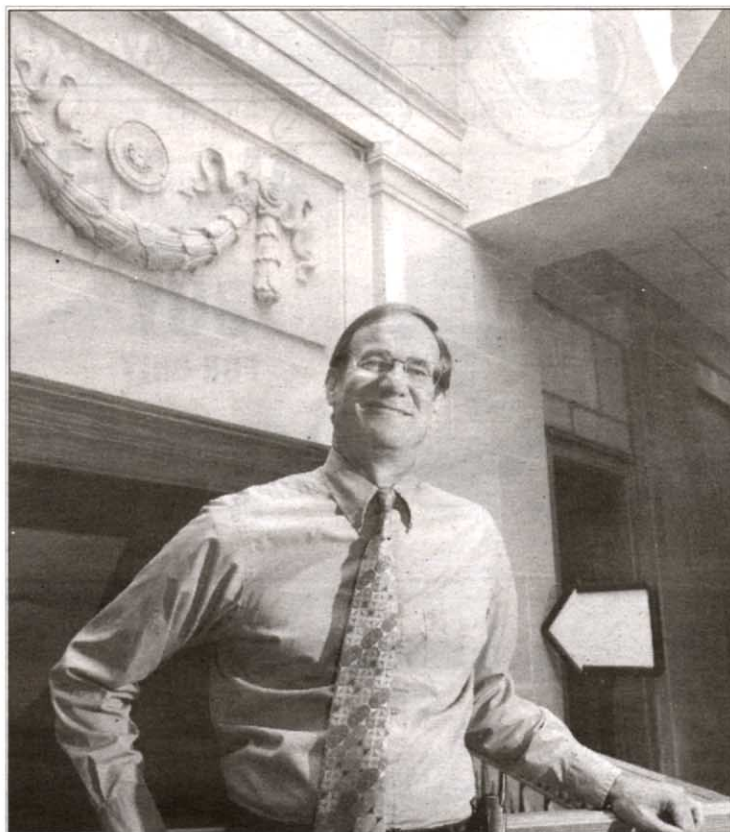
Q: What challenges are there with being a neighbor to Philadelphia? Say, crime? Or with City Avenue, have houses on the Lower Merion side been difficult to sell?

A: I think that the property values in Lower Merion and in the Delaware Valley have increased in the last few years. I haven't seen anything but property values going up in Lower Merion.

I think that Philadelphia is a good neighboring municipality. We have good cooperation with Philadelphia public safety forces and communication with elected officials. Lower Merion and Philadelphia benefit from each other.

Q: In what ways?

A: By having some of the commercial establishments in Lower Merion that they use. They benefit from our parks. Their property values benefit from our property values.



ROSE HOWERTER / Inquirer Suburban Staff

Lower Merion Township manager Doug Cleland said when it comes to change, he considers opportunities rather than controversy.

We're a community that provides many workers in downtown Philadelphia.

Q: What's an issue you've been most passionate about?

A: We're working on trying to address some of the economic development in some of the commercial areas. That has been a priority. We're trying to do that in Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, Merion, on City Avenue.

We're trying to help revitalize older settlements. It's a challenge to keep all the balls in the air.

Q: Where do you live?

A: Upper Merion. Since we moved here in 1984 [from Columbus, Ohio], we've lived in Upper Merion. That's just where my home is. I grew up in Kalamazoo, Mich.

— Julie Shaw

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