



Germantown Station Request for Information (RFI)

SEPTA's Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Program



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Summary Site Information	4
Central Germantown, Philadelphia.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Planning and Zoning Context	6
Project Site Definition	7
Scope of Inquiry	10
Scope of Inquiry Elements	112
RFI Questions for Respondents	Error! Bookmark not defined. 4

INTRODUCTION

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (“SEPTA” and “Authority”) is seeking information to advance SEPTA’s Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Program at Germantown Station, specifically the vacant property at 120-28 East Cheltenham Avenue in the City of Philadelphia. As with other joint development efforts under SEPTA’s TOC Program, SEPTA is seeking a development that promotes SEPTA ridership and drives non-farebox revenues for the Authority.

SEPTA’s Transit Oriented Communities program supports complementary land use, zoning, development, and multi-modal access to SEPTA’s services. SEPTA’s TOC Program encourages equitable and sustainable community development around our services, allowing more people to live and work near high-quality transit. This effort includes stations, such as Germantown Station, and high frequency surface transit corridors, like Cheltenham Avenue. The Site is considered a “Frequent Node” under the TOC Guideline’s station and corridor typologies.

SUMMARY SITE INFORMATION

Location:	120-128 East Chelten Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144
Parcel Address:	Primary Site: 120-128 East Chelten Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144 Potential Additional Sites: Former rail bridges over East Armat Street and properties adjacent to the Chestnut Hill East Regional Rail Line including 5547 Lena Street and portions of 5510-18 Bayton Street to the west/south of the Chestnut Hill East Regional Line contiguous with 120-128 East Chelten Avenue.
Approximate Lot Area:	120-128 East Chelten Avenue is 1.419 acres Potential Additional Sites: Approximately 0.817 Acres
Zoning Classification:	CA-1, Auto-Oriented Commercial

CENTRAL GERMANTOWN, PHILADELPHIA

Germantown boasts a rich history and is home to a dynamic and diverse community. SEPTA's Germantown Station, a Regional Rail station on SEPTA's Chestnut Hill East Line, is in the heart of Historic Germantown, "Freedom's Backyard", and serves as a gateway to the Central Germantown Business District. This walkable community is comprised of both small and large businesses next door to 300-year-old historic buildings and significant American Revolution sites.

Recognizing the prime location of the Germantown neighborhood, commercial and residential investments within a half-mile radius of Germantown Station have greatly surpassed five-year averages for the region. The half-mile radius around the Germantown Station houses 15,000 residents, with just 11% of these residents over 65. This average is younger than the US average of 16%. (American Community Survey 2023). About 90% of the population is minority and 33% are low-income, compared to the US average of 27% and 9% respectively.

The station area contains a parking area and a large unobstructed, vacant lot along Cheltenham Avenue. **The East Cheltenham Avenue lot is 61,821 square feet, approximately 1.4 acres.** Located at 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue, the Site has traditionally been in railroad use since the early 19th century property and then was briefly the location of the beer distributor before becoming vacant.

A predecessor of the current Germantown Station was originally built in 1832 by Philadelphia, Germantown and Norristown Railroad which eventually became a part of the Reading Company. As a railroad property, the Site historically had track that led to Germantown Avenue. In the 1930s, the current station was built by the Reading Company as a part of a modernization program to grade separate and electrify the line. The Site at 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue was elevated as a part of the Project.

Germantown Station is just 6 miles north, although typically at least a 45-minute drive, from Center City Philadelphia. Germantown is seeing a rebound in transit ridership and Regional Rail access to Center City provides a shorter commute time at rush hour than driving (24 minutes at 5:00 pm vs 45 minutes by car). The Germantown neighborhood has very high transit use, with over 3,500 daily bus trips in the station area, but relatively few people use Regional Rail. People may choose the four nearby SEPTA bus routes, 23, 26, 41 & K, to take instead of Regional Rail, for either fare, frequency, or trip destination reasons.

Support for development and improvements at the Site has been echoed by the residents and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission through the years in planning documents. SEPTA has been approached multiple times over the years about developing this property to strengthen the Cheltenham Avenue commercial corridor, provide housing options, and activate the station area, and promote economic development.

PLANNING AND ZONING CONTEXT

Germantown has a strong planning and zoning context that supports mixed-use, transit-oriented redevelopment of the SEPTA parcels. The station properties have been previously identified for revitalization by various planning efforts:

- Philadelphia2035, Upper Northwest District Plan (2018)
- Central Germantown Business District Beautification Plan (2012)
- Germantown and Nicetown Transit-Oriented Plan (2008)
- The Hub at Germantown (2007)

Most recently in 2018, the City of Philadelphia adopted the Upper Northwest (UNW) District Plan. The UNW District Plan recognizes Germantown Station's potential in the overall revitalization strategy for Central Germantown, which is the subject of one of the plan's focus areas. The plan calls for redeveloping vacant and underutilized properties around the station into mixed-use, mid-rise buildings. Changing the zoning from auto-centric low-density to mixed-use and transit-oriented districts is recommended to enable this redevelopment. The plan also envisions using the inactive rail right-of-way to create a green pedestrian path connecting SEPTA services, the Cheltenham Avenue commercial corridor, and nearby Vernon Park. SEPTA's Germantown Station Area Concept reflects these recommendations.

In 2025, SEPTA and the City conducted public outreach to advance the Germantown Station Area Concept and this Request for Information, as well as a zoning remapping for the station area including SEPTA's properties. The zoning for 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue was proposed to be remapped CA-1, auto-oriented commercial, to CMX-3, commercial mixed use, to encourage compatible redevelopment with previous planning efforts. Remapping is under consideration as SEPTA gathers additional information through this RFI.

CMX-3 is a floor area ratio (FAR) based zoning district that allows for more height and density through various FAR based bonuses that encourage public art, public space, mixed-income housing, and transit improvements. CMX-3's intent is to allow mid-rise, mixed-use development that is community- and region-serving.

PROJECT SITE DEFINITION

The Germantown Station Project includes three location components: the 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue property (primary Site), the East Armat Street bridges, and 5547 Lena Street and 5510-18 Bayton Street. Respondents must include 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue; the other properties are optional.

120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue

The primary Site is 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144. The property is approximately 1.419 acres. The Site is vacant, paved, and partially wooded near the back of the property towards East Armat Street. The property has a retaining wall separating it from East Cheltenham Avenue and a driveway serving Germantown Station. The property slopes up to the inactive railroad bridges that cross over East Armat Street.

The entirety of the Site is not available for redevelopment. A development envelope has been determined based on the setbacks and access that ensure SEPTA's operational and maintenance needs are maintained:

- Accessible pedestrian and micro-mobility paths to the station.
- A minimum 12-foot setback from SEPTA's station buildings, facilities, and retaining walls along the Chestnut Hill East Line right of way.

As envisioned by the Germantown Station Area Concept and supported by the zoning, the development concept for 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue includes:

- Ground floor commercial along East Cheltenham Avenue.
- Upper floor apartments with a strong affordability component.
- Germantown Station access.
- Public amenities such as usable open space, improved streetscape, and stormwater management.

SEPTA's East Armat Street Bridges and Associated Wooded Properties

SEPTA's East Armat Street Bridges, 5547 Lena Street, and portions of 5510-18 Bayton Street are former railroad right-of-way that served the railyard at 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue. These properties are raised from surrounding streets and are at the same level as the rear of 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue and the Chestnut Hill East Regional Rail Line. As such, these properties are only accessible through 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue via the inactive Armat Street bridges. Due to their elevation these properties are only accessible from 120-128 East Cheltenham Avenue. The East Armat Street Bridge, 5547 Lena Street, and portions of 5510-18 Bayton Street have not been in active railroad use for decades and are wooded.

5547 Lena Street and 5510-18 Bayton Street are zoned I-2, General Industrial. As a part of the zoning remapping proposed by the City in 2025, these properties were recommended to be

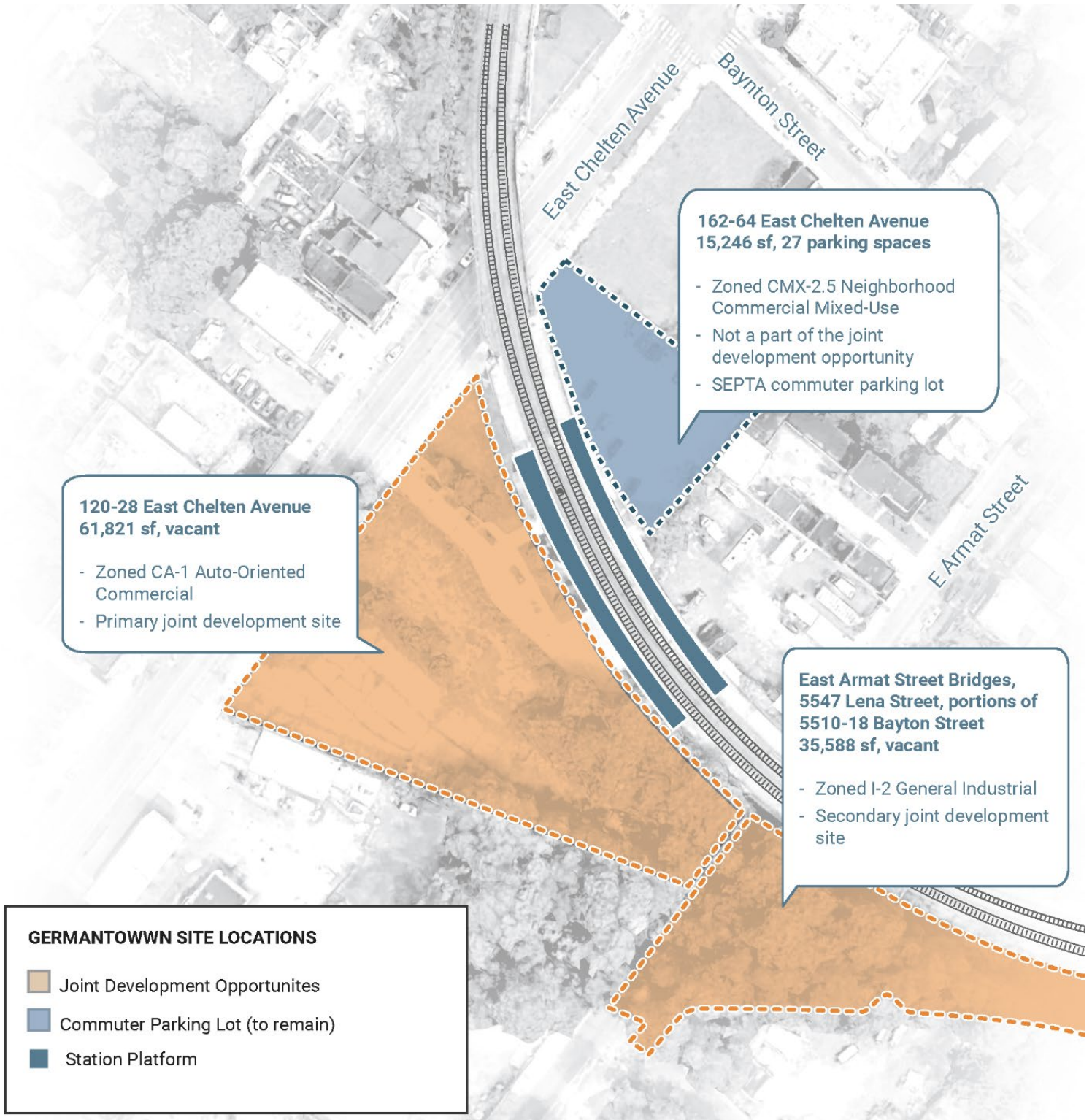
remapped to IRMX, Industrial Residential Mixed-Use, which permits a mix of low-impact industrial, artisan industrial, residential, and neighborhood commercial uses.

The Upper Northwest District Plan envisioned the inactive railroad bridges and associated properties (5547 Lena Street and portions of 5510-18 Bayton Street) providing an open space connection much like a mini [High Line](#) or [Rail Park](#) connecting Cheltenham Avenue and new transit-oriented developments. SEPTA supports this vision in the Germantown Station Area Concept, particularly to provide open space for the mixed-use development of 120-12 East Cheltenham Avenue. SEPTA is open to creative ideas for how these properties can be utilized to advance transit-oriented communities at Germantown Station.

162-164 East Cheltenham Avenue

SEPTA's 162-164 East Cheltenham Avenue will remain SEPTA commuter parking to support ridership at Germantown Station. This property is not a part of SEPTA's joint development opportunity.

SEPTA PROPERTY AT GERMANTOWN STATION



SCOPE OF INQUIRY

SEPTA seeks additional information to advance SEPTA's and the community's vision for a mixed-use development on the primary Site fronting East Cheltenham Avenue. SEPTA expects respondents to be creative in their project information approach to balance community benefit while also considering market and public-sector financing under current conditions.

Pertinent documents for review include:

- Germantown Station Area Concept Plan
- Germantown Station Public Open House Boards
- Germantown Station Open House Summary
- Title 14 of The Philadelphia Code (the Zoning Code)

As laid out in the [Germantown Station Area Concept \(SAC\) Plan](#), SEPTA and the community envision a mixed-use development that includes ground-floor retail that extends the Central Germantown commercial corridor to SEPTA's Germantown Station property, upper floors with apartments, and new open space that maintains a highly visible and attractive station entrance.

GERMANTOWN STATION AREA CONCEPT (SAC)



SCOPE OF INQUIRY ELEMENTS

Station Access and Circulation

Station access and circulation are crucial aspects that must be carefully considered by developments to ensure continued SEPTA pedestrian and cyclist station access, as well as railroad operations and maintenance. An Indego bikeshare station is planned for installation on the sidewalk in front of the station entrance and should be incorporated into the proposal concept. SEPTA requires a 12 ft setback from station buildings, facilities, and retaining walls along the Chestnut Hill East Line right of way.

Affordable Housing

SEPTA and local stakeholders have expressed a strong interest in incorporating housing affordability as part of redevelopment at Germantown Station. *A target of 35% of units at or below 50% of area median income (AMI) for the City of Philadelphia* has been set at the community level.

SEPTA recognizes that achieving deep levels of affordability may require public subsidy, specialized financing tools (e.g., LIHTC), and/or non-profit structuring or partnerships that can impact project feasibility, timing, and delivery.

Through this RFI, SEPTA is seeking input from the development community on:

- Feasible affordability levels under current market conditions
- Trade-offs between affordability, density, and project viability
- Financing tools or partnerships required to support affordability
- Potential sources of public funding
- Alternative mixed-income or phased approaches

Responses will help inform how affordability goals may be structured in a future solicitation.

Open Space, Trees, and Stormwater

The Upper Northwest District Plan envisioned the inactive rail bridges over East Armet Street and setback area from the Chestnut Hill East Line as usable open space connecting the community to the train station, redeveloped properties, and the Germantown and Cheltenham shopping corridors. SEPTA has carried this idea into the SAC. This proposed open space can be used to meet potential upzoning zoning code requirements and unlock potential density bonuses. The public has expressed a strong desire that mature and native trees be retained wherever possible. Additionally, there is currently no stormwater management on the Sites, this must be addressed as a part of any redevelopment.

Design and Energy Standards

The scale and design of a proposed Project should create an attractive, well-designed development that will complement the surrounding community. Respondents are encouraged to incorporate sustainable, "green" design features and materials and to consider green building

certifications, performance objectives, and Energy Star's design guidelines that integrate energy efficiency.

Team Composition

SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia are interested in understanding potential approaches to promoting economic opportunity through the inclusion of small and local firms as part of project teams for the Project's development and construction. Respondents are encouraged to describe strategies for team composition that incorporate Germantown's cultural legacy, community character, and engagement with local stakeholders, and how these considerations could support the Project's advancement.

RFI QUESTIONS FOR RESPONDENTS

Development Team & Experience

1. Describe the types of expertise and partnerships you believe would be important for successfully redeveloping the Germantown Station Site. If applicable, briefly identify the organizations that may comprise your team and their anticipated roles.
2. What public-private partnerships have you found most effective for transit oriented development projects on publicly owned land?
3. Based upon your experience, what ground lease, joint development, or partnership structures would be most conducive to redevelopment of the Site?
4. What strategies have you found effective for including local, minority-owned, women-owned, and disadvantaged firms on development and construction teams? What opportunities or challenges do you foresee in achieving meaningful participation on this project?
5. What community engagement approaches do you believe would be successful to achieve transit oriented community development at Germantown Station given the community's history and the Site's context?

Market Outlook

6. What is your outlook on the Germantown market and this site's development potential (opportunities, risks, constraints)?
7. What types of uses and development concepts do you believe are most viable for this site today?
8. Are there market conditions or project constraints that would hinder achieving the TOC vision as currently described, and what adaptations would you suggest to align community goals with market conditions?
9. Are there specific uses that you believe should be avoided based on market conditions, community, or operational concerns?

Development Concept

10. Describe your team's vision for redevelopment of 120–128 East Cheltenham Avenue and how it advances Transit Oriented Communities at Germantown Station.
11. Describe a preliminary plan, including the size of the buildings, number of units (and percentage of affordability, if applicable), project type, density, populations served, ground floor and upper floor uses, parking, open space, etc.
12. What key site, zoning, or policy factors most influence the feasibility the Site redevelopment? What changes or flexibility would improve project viability?
13. How does the proposed CMX-3 zoning remapping improve the feasibility of your proposal? Which CMX-3 bonus opportunities (public space, mixed-income housing, public art, transit improvements, etc.) would your team likely pursue?
14. If the East Armat Street bridges and associated wooded properties are incorporated into redevelopment concept, how would you envision using them? What challenges or opportunities do you associate with adaptive reuse of the bridge structures?
15. How could pedestrian, bicycle, and micro-mobility access to Germantown Station be maintained? How can the planned Indego bikeshare station be integrated into the project?
16. How could stormwater management be approached on the Site?
17. What sustainable building systems, green infrastructure, or resiliency measures could work with this Site?

Affordable Housing

18. Recognizing the community's goal for affordability, how would you approach incorporating mixed-income or affordable housing at the site?
19. What partnerships, public support, public funds or other forms of subsidy have you found to be successful for meeting affordable housing goals?
20. What levels of affordability are feasible under current market conditions?

Financial & Implementation Considerations

21. What key considerations regarding project financing and project management would you want to clarify in the future RFP process?
22. What approximate development timeline would your team anticipate from entitlement through substantial completion and what are the key risks or barriers to implementation?

SEPTA-Specific / Strategic Questions

23. What information or due diligence materials regarding the site, SEPTA operations and maintenance, or other information would be helpful to review in a future RFP process?
24. Are there innovative approaches, partnerships, or uses SEPTA should consider that are not currently reflected in the Germantown Station Area Concept?
25. Would your team be interested in participating in a future developer roundtable, site walk, or industry outreach session?

You may also submit any additional information you believe SEPTA may find helpful as a part of this RFI.