

# City & Region

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Powdery blotches found in Phila. turn out to be markers for a running club. Page 2.

Weather

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## Demolition plan protested in Ardmore

Retailers fight \$140 million proposal that would raze an 11-building block.

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Echoing urban-renewal fights of the 1960s, with a decidedly upscale suburban twist, a plan to revive shopping in downtown Ardmore is facing an intense protest campaign that this week brought 200 demonstrators to Lancaster Avenue, the heart of the Main Line.

The Ardmore Transit Center Plan, supported by township officials and some business leaders, would spend \$140 million to remake Ardmore into a vibrant urban shopping village befitting the wealth of the surrounding neighborhoods.

But a chief component of the plan, the Gateway parking garage and retail hub, calls for the demolition of a block of 11 buildings, which has sparked outrage among family-owned businesses with decades there.

A climax of the conflict arrived Thursday night, when the Lower Merion Township Planning Commission was to approve a preliminary step of the plan: the designation of Ardmore as an official "redevelopment area."

Opponents fought hard to halt it, staging a mile-long protest march down Lancaster Avenue at rush hour to "save historic Ardmore," and crowding the meeting, held at the Haverford School.

Then came a verbal bombardment from attorney  
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## Ardmore merchants protest plan

**PROTEST** from B1

ney Glenn A. Zeitz, the man who defeated Donald Trump's casino empire in Atlantic City to save an elderly woman's home from demolition in 1998. Eight Ardmore merchants hired Zeitz, who dominated much of the night by assaulting the assumptions of township planners.

Amid not-so-subtle threats of lawsuits, it was clear the merchants had let a legal shark into the pool. And when a resident presented a petition with 3,000 signatures against the plan, it was clear the Transit Center Plan was questioned beyond the threatened block, which extends from Pennywise Thrift Shop west to Station Avenue.

Choosing a cautious approach, the unpaid, volunteer planning commission ended the meeting at 11 p.m. Members voted unanimously to table the Transit Center Plan for further study. No date for a future meeting has been set.

Afterward, Zeitz was overheard telling protesters: "It's a dangerous opponent, and you've got him on the ropes."

The following morning, proponents of the Transit Center Plan said Ardmore still needed revitalization. Township Commissioner Matt Comisky had attended the meeting and lamented the fact that opposition to one aspect, the Gateway building, was sinking the entire plan, which includes traffic improvements and a new train station that are supported in all quarters.

"I still believe Ardmore is in need of revitalization. That's clear to everyone," Comisky said. "Whether the Gateway project is the appropriate project to start with — or to ever do — I don't know."

"We've seen Ardmore decline over the years. Something needs to be done. The question is what."

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