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Keswick Village in the Context of Glenside, PA

This second map includes the context of the several neighborhoods surrounding Keswick Village, along with the major roads, railroads, and parks, and schools that are in the area. These physical aspects along with the social demographics and interactions evident in the area create a good sense of the atmosphere of the space. As talked about in class, there are both physical and social forms of inclusion and exclusion that are also worth noting when analyzing a communal area such as this one.

One aspect worth noting is the central location of Keswick village in the context of the surrounding neighborhood. It is near the northern edge of the town of Glenside; however, it is centrally located with respect to the neighborhoods of Wyncote, Glenside Gardens (sub-neighborhood of Glenside), North Hills, and Jenkintown. Residents of any one of these areas do not need to travel substantially farther than any other neighborhood if they want to go to a restaurant or a shop in Keswick Village. This point coincides with Clarence Perry’s description of adequate shopping or commercial areas in a neighborhood unit. He writes, “Shopping districts, … should be … at traffic junctions and adjacent to similar districts of adjoining neighborhoods” (Perry 489). While Keswick is not necessarily at the edge of Glenside - on the contrary, it is semi-central - it is still easily accessed by major roads in the area which are highlighted on my map, such as Easton Road, Keswick Avenue, or Jenkintown Road.

Another interesting geographical aspect of Keswick is the central location with respect to the parks and schools in the area. There are five parks and two schools on my map, all within one mile of the area of interest. This surely cannot be coincidence; the physical location of the restaurants and shops with respect to the schools and recreational areas provide easy access to food, entertainment, and shopping either after school, athletic events, or simply a nice day outdoors at a park. This idea of accessibility is extremely important when thinking about the physical inclusion and exclusion of the space as well.

In some sense, the physical aspects of the space promote inclusion for people from the area and outside of the area. The presence of several main roads gives anyone the opportunity to enter this section of town even if they are not local and do not know the area. The Keswick Theatre invites guests from all over to come and watch shows through advertisements directed at a wider range of people than simply the neighborhood residents. Indeed, the street is a very crowded and inclusive place on nights when there are performances at the theatre. Additionally, the presence of two SEPTA stations present a sense of inclusion in two opposite ways: they provide easy access for individuals traveling by public transportation into the area, and they also give individuals living in Glenside and the surrounding neighborhoods access to Philadelphia and other areas. These physically inclusive aspects are opposed by several aspects that promote exclusion. For example, there is a definite lack of parking available both in the form of street parking and parking lots causing the majority of visitors to enter the area via walking or bicycling. Additionally, this parking is all paid either in the form of parking meters or kiosks. This lack of parking creates problems of exclusion for those who can only get to Keswick by driving as a result of living farther away.

Regarding the social atmosphere of the space, there is a definite sense of pride in being from Glenside. There are signs throughout the space promoting the town and displaying pride in the area. Many people tote shirts supporting the neighborhood and its activities and events. Furthermore, the family-owned businesses and small shops create a sense of belonging in the area. It is not uncommon to know several people who work in a store, own a restaurant, or frequent the village. I personally worked in the locally-owned grocery store in Keswick Village, and I saw someone that I knew nearly every day that I had a shift. These social relationships and norms of being a local patron of Keswick Village create a strong sense of inclusion for the people of the area and exclusion at the same time for those coming to the space from farther away. Additionally, the people of the area are primarily of the middle or upper middle socioeconomic class, and while the area is fairly diverse, white people are the majority of people in Keswick Village at any one time. It is interesting to look at the racial and socioeconomic makeup of the Glenside area in comparison to that of North Philadelphia, a short 15 minute drive away. This is a clear result of redlining and a history of racial segregation in the Philadelphia metropolitan area (Blumgart 1). The socioeconomic and racial demographics of the Glenside area create social exclusion for those of lower classes or do not fit the “typical” individual or family that frequents the space.

There is clearly a lot to unpack in both the physical and social elements of Keswick Village. The openness of the space and its central location gives access to people from both in town and out of time and gives a sense of convenience in connection to the schools and the recreational areas. Proximity to main roads and public transportation creates physical inclusion as well. There are several instances of social exclusion however, highlighted by the similarity of most of the people who are typically in Keswick Village and a sense of town pride present in the local people and the owners of the businesses.

