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# 11 of the Main Line's Hottest Towns

Here's what you can expect when buying a home in the area's most desirable zip codes.

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*Media, Pa.*

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**W**hether you're buying for the first time, moving on up to your dream home or downsizing for your 55-plus years, there's a town for you—though, in this sizzling seller's market, you might have to be patient. Realtors across the area are reporting record-low inventory. But as the snow and ice melt away, agents are optimistic that warmer temps will lead to more "For Sale" signs sprouting up on front lawns all over the Main Line. Here's what you can expect in and around the area's top towns come spring.



*Photos by Philip Green Photography.*

## Ardmore

It came as no surprise to Lavinia Smerconish when the luxury condos of 100 St. Georges sold out almost immediately. Before ground was even broken in 2015 on the former YMCA site, more than 10 units were already under agreement. “People want a walk-to location,” says Smerconish, an agent with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, Realtors.

While Suburban Square has always been synonymous with Ardmore, the town itself is currently abuzz with restaurant openings and new development. Tired Hands Brewing Company’s two wildly popular locations have given the town a “refreshed hipness,” says Keller Williams Main Line Realty’s Laurent Leithead.

There’s also the long-awaited—and much debated—One Ardmore Place. And by next year, Ardmore will be the only Main Line town with a small-format Target, topped by a 35-unit apartment complex.

Ardmore continues to offer houses at a variety of price points, from rows in the mid- to high \$300,000s to estate homes for over \$1 million. “And there are plenty of buyers in each of those categories,” says Leithead.

**Selling point:** Restaurant renaissance.

**Where to buy:** Investors and flippers are scooping up fixer-uppers on Ardmore’s side streets, leaving buyers with plenty of turnkey options. Nearby Cricket Springs Crossing is a new luxury twin/townhouse community of 19 homes priced in the mid-\$700,000 range.



## Bryn Mawr

Bryn Mawr has always been highly sought after for its gorgeous estate homes, high-caliber private schools, and amenities like rail service, a top-ranked hospital and the Bryn Mawr Film Institute. But its downtown was pretty much an afterthought until Bryn Mawr Village debuted more than a year ago, with its high-end shopping options and destination eateries. “It definitely makes the town more desirable,” says John Flanagan, an agent with RE/MAX Executive Realty. “The new Danley townhouses on Old Lancaster Road are selling quickly because buyers want new construction and walkability to Bryn Mawr.”

And properties that were once dismissed are now getting a second glance because of their location. Lisa Weber Yakulis has sold a number of the older rowhomes along the smaller streets off Lancaster Avenue. First-time buyers are paying in the \$400,000 range for these. “They love the fact that they’re within walking distance to the coffee shops and stores,” says Yakulis, an agent for Kurfiss Sotheby’s International Realty. “I’ve even had some empty nesters buy them.”

**Selling point:** A little of everything.

**Where to buy:** Yakulis recommends the Conestoga Village neighborhood for its easy walk to Lancaster Avenue. “Once first-time buyers move in, they don’t want to leave,” she says.



# Havertown

In this genial town, everyone knows your name—and that’s how residents prefer it. Many of them grew up in Havertown, and they’ve returned to raise their kids there. Others are young families who overheard the buzz, choosing Havertown for its cozy vibe and proximity to both the city (a straight shot down Route 3) and Route 476—an appealing double-bonus, indeed.

Buyers can get more home for their dollar in Haverford Township than neighboring Lower Merion. Not that a house in Havertown comes cheap. Most are in the \$300,000-\$500,000 range, from older twins to center-hall colonials. Move-up homes in the \$400,000s-\$700,000s are extremely desirable and thus hard to find. Between the cute downtown restaurants and the annual outdoor festivals, once you settle in Havertown, it’s tough not to stay put. “I have a list of people in Havertown who don’t want to leave their neighborhood or school, but they’d love a bigger house,” says Nicole Klein of Keller Williams. “They’re willing to stay in their smaller houses until something larger becomes available.”

**Selling point:** Small-town feel.

**Where to buy:** If a house in the popular Merion Golf Manor neighborhood hits the market, it won’t linger long. And you can expect to pay anywhere from \$500,000 to more than \$1 million.



# Kennett Square

If you’ve yet to venture south on Route 1 to see what all the fuss is about in the once-sleepy Mushroom Capital of the World, there’s no better time than now. With a quaint downtown that’s home to high-end boutiques, dining options like the much-praised

Talula's Table, and unique family-friendly offerings like the Creamery, Kennett has officially arrived. "I remember when they rolled up the sidewalks at 5 p.m.," says Sandra Yeatman, an agent with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, Realtors who's lived in the area for 55 years. "It's an entirely different feel than it used to be."

Kennett's thriving town center has led to a frenzy of buying near the action. "Like everywhere else, inventory is very, very low," says Beiler-Campbell Realtors' Elin Green. "Many first-time buyers want to be in Kennett Square, so anything below \$500,000 is a very desirable price point."

**Selling point:** Downtown on the grow.

**Where to buy:** Bentley Homes is offering two new projects close to downtown: Walnut Walk townhouses start in the low \$300,000s, and the Stonehouse carriage homes are priced from the mid-\$400,000s.



## King of Prussia

KOP is more than just the mall. There's also the \$1 billion in economic development projects and the 2,500-plus multifamily residences either completed or underway. "For the first time in over 15 years, more commuters can live where they work," says Eric Goldstein, executive director of the King of Prussia District.

At the heart of it all is King of Prussia Town Center, essentially an instant downtown. There, Toll Brothers' Brownstones townhomes offer pedestrian access to restaurants, shops and Wegmans. "This area has just been blowing up," says realtor Matin Haghar of RE/MAX Plus. "You can't list a property, price it right, and expect it to be on the market for more than a few days."

And if SEPTA's plan for a KOP high-speed rail extension ever comes to fruition, all bets are off.

**Selling point:** Retail nirvana.

**Where to buy:** Beyond the Town Center, you'll find older townhomes and single-family ranchers in the \$200,000s-\$300,000s. At the older Valley Forge Towers condominiums, prices hover in the \$150,000-\$250,000 range. Single-family homes are typically north of \$500,000.



## Media

There are many reasons for Media's sustained success: the Delaware County Courthouse, its proximity to the Blue Route, superior public transportation, numerous bars, restaurants and festivals, and a Trader Joe's in the center of town. It doesn't get more hometown America than the trolley rolling down the middle of State Street, and families living near downtown can walk their kids to the elementary school. "We're in a good position," says Zubair Khan, executive director of the Media Business Authority. "Properties for sale don't last for more than a week on the market. The word spreads, and they're gone."

**Selling point:** Unequaled access.

**Where to buy:** West End Walk's 23 new carriage homes and townhomes start at \$480,000.





## Narberth

Former city dwellers from Philadelphia and New York have made the transition to suburban life quite comfortably, thanks to Narberth's more urban setting and amenities. With rail access that can satisfy a city itch within minutes and a downtown area that has everything from a small grocer to a movie theater, Narberth has plenty to offer young families, including the Lower Merion School District.

Limited inventory means multiple-bid situations are the norm for buyers. Duffy Real Estate's Holly Goodman advises clients not to sell their homes before they're officially listed. "You never know how much more you can get if you don't put it on the market," she says.

Narberth's small selection is largely made up of existing homes, but there are a few new-construction opportunities. Townhomes in the nine-unit Price Crossing start in the high \$800,000s.

**Selling point:** Urban suburbia.

**Where to buy:** "Any street in Narberth is hot," says Goodman.



## Phoenixville

It's been 13 years since the French Creek townhouse community debuted in Phoenixville, helping to kick off the revitalization of this former steel town. These days, Phoenixville is thriving, its restaurants, shops, distilleries and microbreweries attracting both millennials and empty nesters.

Just 20 minutes from the western Main Line, Phoenixville's affordability is a boon for first-time buyers. Single-family homes average in the mid-\$300,000s, with newer houses starting in the mid-\$400,000s. "There's a variety of housing, and the school district continues to improve," says Joe McArdle of Keller Williams.

**Selling point:** Affordable convenience.

**Where to buy:** The Phoenixville Area School District has created a campus concept, building its new elementary facility near the recently rebuilt middle school and renovated high school. Any of the neighborhoods within walking distance are a great first choice for buyers with kids.





## Wayne

The authentic family-friendly charm of Wayne is something developers wish they could emulate. “Residents feel a connection to the town,” says Long & Foster’s Sue McNamara. “The community has such a pleasant vibe. That’s what buyers want.”

Not surprisingly, Wayne’s most desirable streets are those most convenient to the numerous downtown amenities along North Wayne and Lancaster avenues. “For a house that’s listed at around \$500,000 and is in great shape, you’ll get multiple offers,” says McNamara.

And many of the historic homes in South Wayne have been the beneficiaries of full-scale interior makeovers.

**Selling point:** Perfect for families.

**Where to buy:** With plenty of single-family choices, Wayne also offers a variety of maintenance-free living options. Just a few years old, Penbroke North currently has a two-bedroom condo on the market for \$799,000. For those OK with driving, the new Parkview at Chesterbrook townhouses start in the mid-\$500,000s. And, hey, it’s still a Wayne mailing address.



## Paoli/Berwyn

The western end of the traditional Main Line will be undergoing a major revitalization in the next few years—and Paoli and Berwyn are at the center of it all. Paoli is in the initial phase of transforming its beleaguered train station into the Paoli Intermodal Transportation Center, a project on the table for three decades. A short distance from the station, Bentley Homes' Paoli Walk townhouses are welcoming their first residents, with prices starting in the mid-\$300,000s.

A few miles up Lancaster Avenue in Berwyn, Benson Homes & Development has completed the 12-unit 1067 carriage-home community next to the acclaimed Nectar restaurant. The same developer is behind Devon's luxury Berkley Road townhouse project. There are also plans for townhomes and mixed residential and retail centers on the former Fritz Lumber and Mack Oil sites in Berwyn. "It's an urban movement in the suburbs," says Dana Zdancewicz, a realtor with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach, Realtors. "Rarely do you see McMansions being built anymore in this area."

Relatively low taxes are another draw in both Paoli and Berwyn—except with new construction, "which is taxed on sale price rather than assessment," says Zdancewicz.

**Selling point:** Revamped rail service.

**Where to buy:** Paoli's Valley Greene neighborhood has homes in the \$550,000-\$750,000 range. In Berwyn, buyers love the Woodlea neighborhood for its walk-to-town access and proximity to schools. Homes there sell for as little as \$700,000 and as much as \$1 million.





## West Chester

“Very robust” is how realtor Debra Ward Sparre of RE/MAX Direct describes home sales in West Chester. “When houses in the borough come on the market, they don’t stay there for more than a few days,” says Sparre.

Buyers are clamoring to live in town, where they can walk to bars, shops, restaurants and the year-old Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center. But popularity comes at a cost. “Younger buyers are being priced out, and we don’t have enough inventory for all the empty nesters who’d like to move in,” says Sparre.

The latter problem may be partially alleviated by new luxury apartments like Eli Kahn’s Chestnut Square, with amenities that include an outdoor pool and a fitness center.

**Selling point:** Surging popularity.

**Where to buy:** Older twins listed in the \$300,000s need a lot of work—the better the condition, the higher the price. For those with a bigger budget, the north end of the borough has single-family homes from the mid-\$600,000s to more than \$1 million.

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