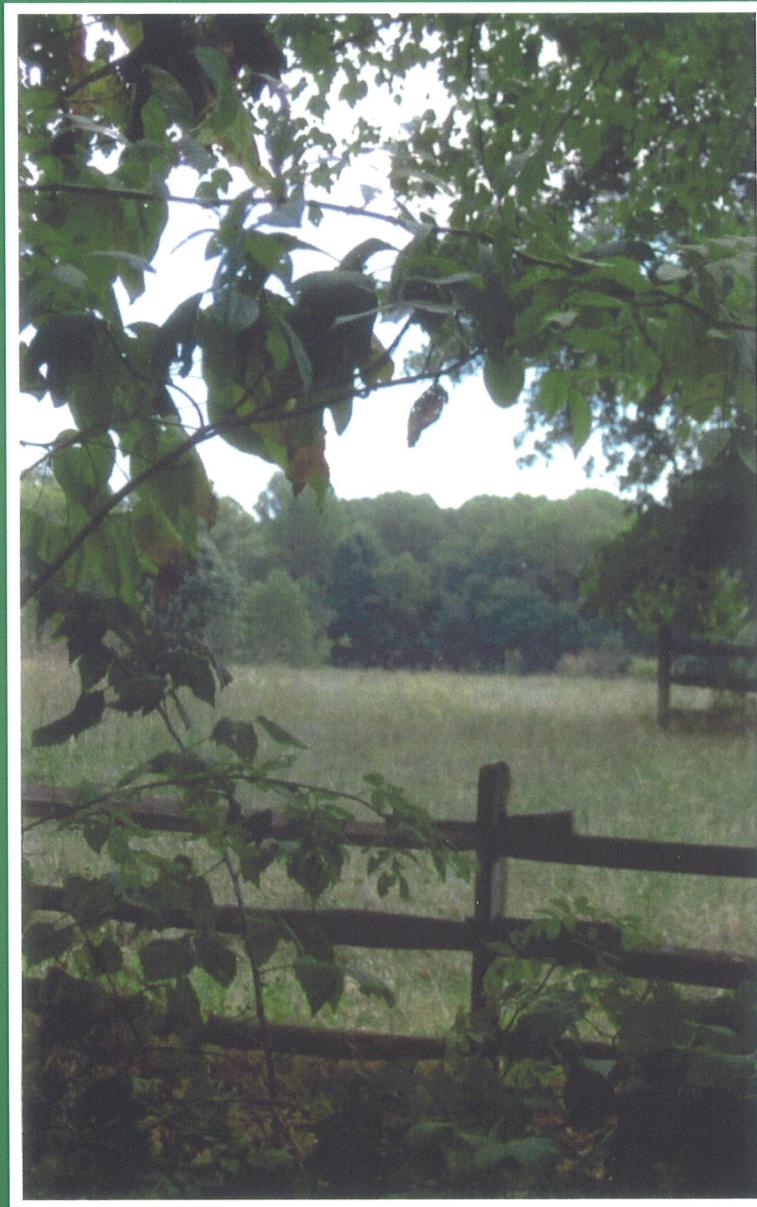


Whitpain Township
Open Space Preservation Plan
2005 Update

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



**TOWNSHIP OF WHITPAIN
COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

RESOLUTION NO. 799

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE
PRESERVATION PLAN 2005 UPDATE**

WHEREAS, under the provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act 247 of July 31, 1968, as reenacted and amended, the Township of Whitpain is authorized to prepare and maintain plans for community open space preservation, community facilities, public grounds, parks and recreation, and pedestrian and bikeway systems; and

WHEREAS, on December 18, 2003, the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners established the Green Fields/Green Towns Program which provides grant funds for open space preservation; and

WHEREAS, the Green Fields/Green Towns Program requires the preparation of municipal open space plans and provides grants which may be used by any municipality in Montgomery County for the preparation of an open space plan; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors of Whitpain Township, seeking to update its Open Space Plan adopted by Whitpain Township in 1995, authorized the preparation of an updated Open Space Plan for the Township of Whitpain; and

WHEREAS, the Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Committee was created and delegated the responsibility to conduct the Open Space study; and

WHEREAS, the Township Open Space Preservation Committee, with the assistance of Township staff, representatives from Montgomery County Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, consultants and public input, held meetings for the preparation and evaluation of the Open Space Preservation Plan. Such meetings were duly advertised and held on July 7, 2004, August 26, 2004, September 23, 2004, November 12, 2004, January 21, 2005, March 22, 2005, June 23, 2005, September 27, 2005, November 29, 2005, April 21, 2006 and July 13, 2006; and

WHEREAS, the Township Open Space Committee has completed the study and published its findings and recommendations in a document entitled "Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update" in accordance with the guidelines established for the Green Fields/Green Towns Program; and

WHEREAS, the said document has been reviewed and is considered to be compatible with municipal objectives expressed in the Whitpain Township Comprehensive Plan Update; and

WHEREAS, the Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Committee has recommended that said document be adopted by the Supervisors of Whitpain Township; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Open Space Board has reviewed the plan in accordance with guidelines established by the County, and accordingly approved the Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update, subject to final adoption by Whitpain Township, on June 27, 2006 and approved text amendments and additional exhibits on September 26, 2006.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of Whitpain Township accepts and adopts the document entitled "Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update", including all maps, charts and textual matter.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the recommendations of said document shall serve as short-term and long-range objectives for meeting the open space needs of the Township of Whitpain.

ENACTED and RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of Whitpain Township in a public hearing this 17th day of October, 2006.

**WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**



Leigh P. Narducci, Chairman



Anthony F. Greco, Vice Chairman



Brian W. Young, Secretary



William L. McKernan, III, Treasurer



Joseph J. Palmer, Asst Secretary

ATTEST: 

Rhyllis C. Lieberman,
Township Manager

RESOLUTION # 2006- 29

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY OPEN SPACE BOARD
APPROVAL OF THE WHIPAIN TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE PLAN**

WHEREAS, On December 18, 2003, the Commissioners of Montgomery County established the Green Fields/ Green Towns Program which provides grant funds for open space preservation; and

WHEREAS, the Green Fields/ Green Towns Program requires the preparation of municipal open space plans and provides grants which may be used by any municipality in Montgomery County for the preparation of an open space plan; and

WHEREAS, Whipain Township has prepared an open space plan in accordance with guidelines established for the Green Fields/ Green Towns Program; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Open Space Board has reviewed the plan in accordance with guidelines established by the county.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Open Space Board hereby approves the Whipain Township Open Space Plan subject to final adoption by Whipain Township.

Resolved and Adopted by the Open Space Board June 27, 2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The preparation and evaluation of the Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update was a joint effort including the following municipal individuals and consultants:

Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors

Leigh P. Narducci, Chairman
Joseph J. Palmer, Vice Chairman
Anthony F. Greco, Secretary
William L. McKernan, III, Treasurer
Brian W. Young, Assistant Secretary

Whitpain Township Manager

Phyllis C. Lieberman

Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Plan Committee

Kurt Baker
Sheila Bello
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Anthony Greco
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Bob McDugall
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Nancy Heiland Munn
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Whitpain Township Planning Commission

Kathy Pape, Chairman
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Consultants:

E. Van Rieker, AICP
Kathleen Fisher, Graphics

Advertised meetings were held:

July 7, 2004
August 26, 2004
September 23, 2004
November 12, 2004
January 21, 2005
March 22, 2005
June 23, 2005
September 27, 2005
November 29, 2005
April 21, 2006
July 13, 2006

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INTRODUCTION

This Open Space Preservation Plan is prepared as an update to the Open Space Preservation Plan adopted by the Township Board of Supervisors in December 1995. This report is funded through and follows the program established in December 2003 by the Montgomery County Green Fields/Green Towns Open Space Task Force. The task force established a County goal of requiring municipalities to update their original municipal Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan prepared in 1995 pursuant to the requirements of the Montgomery County Open Space Program, which establishes plan elements and guidelines to help the municipality and its Open Space Committee to thoroughly reevaluate the existing Open Space Plan.

Goals of the Program

Open space includes land and water areas that are undeveloped or predominantly undeveloped and permanently set aside or reserved in a natural state for public or private use and enjoyment. Preservation purposes include:

- Providing recreation opportunities including trails.
- Conserving natural features.
- Preserving historic or cultural landscapes.
- Maintaining scenic quality.
- Protecting water resources.
- Stimulating the revitalization of developed communities with green infrastructure.
- Shaping the form of land use and development.
- Preserving agricultural land.

The Township Open Space Committee with the assistance of Township staff and representatives from Montgomery County Planning Commission have met on a regular basis eleven times through the summer of 2006 at public meetings and discussed various preservation and recreation opportunities as well as receiving input from the public in attendance.

In addition, the Planning Consultant has coordinated with adjoining municipalities and their consultants in order to identify relationships and areas of mutual concern that should be included in the Plan. The maps appended in the rear pocket of this report identify the inventory of priority properties recommended for preservation and include a master plan for local and regional trails, including interconnections with adjacent municipalities.

The chapters that follow include information identified in the Green Fields/Green Towns recommendations as appropriate and necessary for the Open Space Preservation Plan Update.

Existing Municipal Open Space Plan Audit

The following properties were preserved pursuant to recommendations of the Whitpain Township 1995 Open Space Plan:

- Armentrout Preserve, Morris Road (58.4 acres* in conjunction with additional acreage protected by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.
- Marsh tract, Skippack Pike.* 1.3 acres.
- Prophecy Creek Park (Thomson property). 81.8 acres.
- St. Helena's surplus open space. 34.6 acres.

Pursuant to Chapter 10, Implementation of the 1995 Open Space Plan, Whitpain Township passed an Open Space Bond which was utilized in the acquisition of these properties.

The Montgomery County Open Space Board approved this plan on June 27, 2006 and on September 26, 2006 approved additional text and exhibits. Approvals are conditioned upon each municipality formally adopting the Open Space Preservation Plan. The Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on October 17, 2006 and enacted Resolution No. 799 adopting the Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update.

*Denotes lands fully or partially acquired through the Montgomery County Open Space Program (1993-2003).

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Introduction

The municipality of Whitpain is a medium-sized township consisting of 12.9 square miles located in the near geographic center of Montgomery County and is a member of the Wissahickon School District. The Township is traversed by major roads including Skippack Pike (Route 73) which runs east/west in a near straight line through the middle of the Township. This road is among the longest continuing road network in all of Montgomery County and extends generally from the Philadelphia border in Cheltenham to the far westerly end of the County at Gilbertsville. There are three major roads that run in a north/south direction and the most important of these is DeKalb Pike (Route 202). This highway is an inter-County roadway running through Bucks, Montgomery and Chester Counties in southeastern Pennsylvania. Other north/south roadways include Butler Pike, which runs along the easterly boundary of Whitpain Township with Whitemarsh Township; and North Wales Road, which runs along virtually the entire westerly edge of the Township and forms the boundary with Worcester Township.

In addition to Skippack Pike, other major east/west roads include Morris Road, generally running along the northerly edge of the Township, and Township Line Road, which runs along the southerly edge of the Township adjacent to East Norriton and Plymouth Townships. These local, major and secondary roads, as well as a section of the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, result in Whitpain Township being characterized as a major crossroads community within Montgomery County.

The 2000 Census of Population indicated 18,562 persons resided within the Township. This yields a density of 1,439 persons per square mile.

Whitpain is among the oldest townships in Montgomery County. In Holme's Map of 1681 it was called Whitpains Creek and by 1701 it appeared in public records as Whitpain's Township. It is of interest to note that Whitpain Township was part of Philadelphia County until Montgomery County was formed on September 10, 1784. The Township is a composite of several small communities established before and after the American Revolution, the major ones being Center Square, Blue Bell, Broad Axe, Custer, Franklinville, Washington Square, and Belfry.

Regional Context

Whitpain Township, a second-class township established in 1701, is located near the center of Montgomery County. Whitpain Township is approximately 12.9 square miles. Upper Gwynedd and Lower Gwynedd Townships are to the north of Whitpain. Ambler Borough, Upper Dublin and Whitemarsh Townships bound Whitpain to the east. East Norriton and Plymouth Townships are south of Whitpain and Worcester Township forms the border to the west.

The Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike (Route 476) runs through the western section of the Township. The closest interchange, approximately two miles south of Township Line Road in Plymouth Township is with the Pennsylvania Turnpike (Route 276). Whitpain Township is a member of the Wissahickon School District along with Ambler Borough and Lower Gwynedd Township.

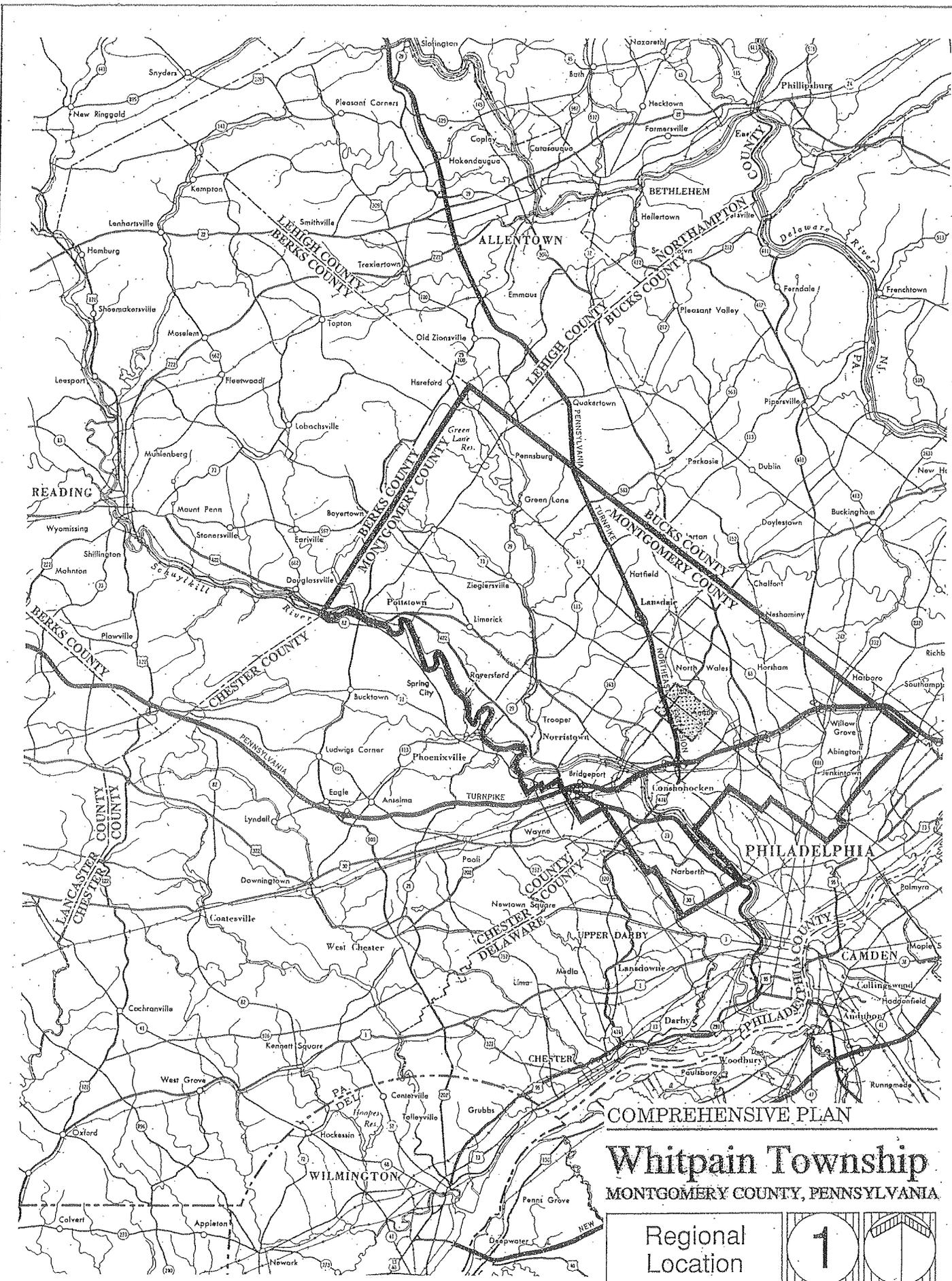
The most significant natural feature within the Township is the Wissahickon Creek and its tributaries, which together form the significant creek valley which influences topography and drainage through the southeasterly corner of the Township.

The largest land holdings include four golf courses (which together exceed 450 acres); the Montgomery County Community College (approximately 140 acres), Wings Field (a private air field consisting of approximately 219 acres); the office park community stretching along the east side of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Northeast Extension including operations such as Henkels & McCoy, U.S. Healthcare, Welex, Unisys, Merck, CertainTeed Corporation, and numerous office buildings adjacent to Harvest Drive; and private and public preserved open space which together currently accounts for approximately 400 acres of open space. These land holdings account for almost 1,200 acres of open space.

Development Trends

In 1880 farms covered most of the Township and Whitpain grew very little until about 1950. From 1910 to 1950 the dairy industry accounted for large farms which raised feed for cattle and livestock and produced milk and other dairy products. Both dairy farming and crop production were the predominant land uses within the Township, along with a series of small villages which provided corner stores, post offices, and small residential communities such as Belfry, Center Square, Blue Bell, and Broad Axe. Historic inns evolved into popular restaurants located at the crossroads of major roadways, such as the Broad Axe Tavern situated at Butler and Skippack Pikes and the Blue Bell Inn situated Skippack and Penllyn Pikes which have served the public since 1743, and the Waggon Inn which became known as the Center Square Hotel just west of Skippack and DeKalb Pikes. The first residential communities were in the Broad Axe region, followed by Blue Bell Gardens and Center Square Green.

Most business and industries came to Whitpain Township after World War II. The Ronco Corporation began in 1952 and in 1967 moved to its current site, until recently, on Norristown Road. The world headquarters for Sperry Univac located on a 150 acre site at Township Line Road and Union Meeting Road began construction in 1961 followed by additional phases in the 1970s. At its peak, over 4,000 employees worked at the Sperry Univac facility in Blue Bell, now known as the Unisys Corporation. A number of other large businesses moved to Blue Bell in Whitpain Township in the mid 1960s. These include Philco-Ford at Union Meeting Road which in the mid 1970s became the CertainTeed Corporation; Henkels & McCoy on Jolly Road next to the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike; and the Yarway Corporation situated on a 35 acre tract bounded by Norristown, Narcissa and Township Line Roads.



Base Source: Montgomery County Planning Commission, Norristown, PA
 Updated: Waetzman Planning Group

Figure 1-1

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Whitpain Township
 MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Regional Location

1

NORTH

0 2 MI 4 MI 8 MI 12 MI
 DATE: Feb, 1999
 SCALE: 1" = 8MI

Prepared by: THE WAETZMAN PLANNING GROUP®
 1230 County Line Road, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-1594
 Telephone: (610) 527-0600, Fax: (610) 527-0445

Since the 1970s numerous large office buildings and office campuses, such as Blue Bell West on Skippack Pike, Whitpain Office Campus at Walton and Township Line Roads, the Blue Bell Office Campus, Sentry Park, Union Meeting Industrial Park, Sentry Park West, and one of the largest employers within the region, U.S. Healthcare, have moved into the Township generally in the south-central portion of the Township.

The Township also saw its greatest increases in population growth during the period 1960 to 1980. More recently, in 1990 the percentage of population change from 1980 grew at a rate of 33.1%, which ranked as the seventh greatest in percent of increase over 1980 in all of Montgomery County. At the same time, the absolute population increased 3,901 which was the fourth greatest increase in numbers of people for a township within Montgomery County during that period.

During the same period, Whitpain added over 1,600 dwelling units for an increase of 41% from 1980 to 1990, which was also among the very highest within the County.

Of the eight municipalities contiguous with Whitpain, only Lower Gwynedd grew at a faster pace. From 1980 to 1990, Whitpain was second to Lower Gwynedd in both percentage of increase for population and housing units. The rate of growth for Whitpain Township for both population and housing was significantly greater than the County average of 5.4% and 14.3% respectively.

Figure 1-6 lists housing information for Whitpain Township from the 2000 census. More than three-quarters of all housing units in 2000 were owner occupied. The median value of owner occupied housing, \$248,600, was considerably higher than the County average of \$160,700. The largest percentage of housing type is single family detached, which accounts for 45.4% of the total housing units.

Since 1990, a number of residential developments have been constructed including: Normandy, 80 single family lots; Blue Bell Country Club, a planned golf course residential community consisting of a mix of single family lots, carriage homes, and townhouses (now complete, consisting of 850 dwelling units), townhouse communities known as Steeplechase and Pheasant Run (a total of 94 units); the Ridings, a single family cluster community of approximately 70 lots; and numerous small vest pocket subdivisions containing fewer than a half dozen lots each.

A number of large apartment communities were developed in Whitpain Township in the 1970s and these include the Village of Oxford, Townline Apartments, and Meadow Wick, followed in the 1980s by townhouse communities including High Gate, Blue Bell Woods, Whitpain Farm (a past winner of the Montgomery County Planning Merit Award), Whitpain Hills, Steeplechase, four residential townhouse pods in Blue Bell Country Club, Pheasant Run townhouses, and Yorkshires at Blue Bell. Townhouses and apartments account for over 2,100 units within the Township as of 1995. Currently, the newest apartment community, Amberley at Blue Bell, is under construction along Morris Road and is proposed for 119 apartment units. The townhouse community of Foxcroft II is nearing completion along North Wales Road and will consist of 24 units when complete. Both of these communities are situated in the westerly section of the Township.

Existing Land Use Patterns

Land Use

Whitpain continues to be among the fastest growing municipalities in Montgomery County. Between 1990 and 2000 there was an increase in housing units of over 28%. This follows the 40% increase in housing units between 1980 and 1990. Of the municipalities directly adjacent to Whitpain, only Worcester experienced a larger growth rate with a 65% increase in housing units. As a result of this growth, existing land use has a significantly different appearance than the existing land use map from the 1984 Comprehensive Plan. Areas that were vacant in 1984 are now developed, and as can be seen in Figure 1-4, less than 14% of the Township is presently classified as unprotected open space or vacant. This compares to nearly 47% in 1984. Figure 1-4 shows that 69% of the Township is developed. (The percentages are based on an overall Township acreage of 7,603 derived from the GIS mapping.) The Township has, however, seen a steady increase in protected open space largely due to the continued Township acquisitions of open space.

Whitpain enjoys a balanced complexion of land uses. With a relatively high percentage of office and commercial uses, people can live, work and shop within the Township. Whitpain is not just a bedroom community. Whitpain also enjoys a high percentage of open space to complement the other uses for the enjoyment of its residents and employees working in the Township.

Residential

As shown in Figure 1-2, the majority of land, 51.3% of the total area, in Whitpain is devoted to residential use. In comparison, approximately one-third of the land in the Township was devoted to residential use in 1984. In fact, the most significant change in land use since the last comprehensive plan has been in the residential category. There have been several new townhouse developments along with single-family detached developments and a great deal of in-fill development. Residential land comprises 72% of the developed land in the Township.

Figure 1-2 Land Use

Land Use	% of Township
Single Family Detached	45.4
Other Residential	5.9
Retail	2.1
Mixed Commercial	0.3
Office/Office Campus	5.0
Institutional	5.2
Industrial	1.4
Protected Open Space	14.1
Unprotected Open Space	12.3
Vacant	1.6
Utility	5.6
Not Categorized	1.0
Total	100%

Source: GIS mapping

Source: Comprehensive Plan Update for Whitpain Township, draft date October 2003.

Figure 1-3
Township-Wide Existing Land Use

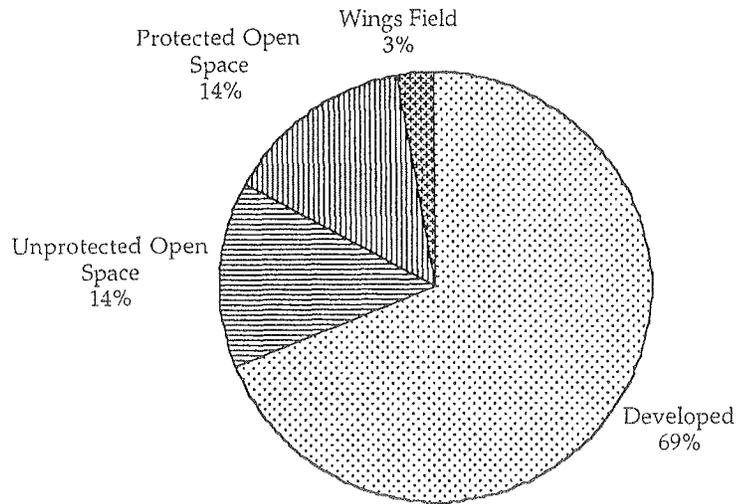
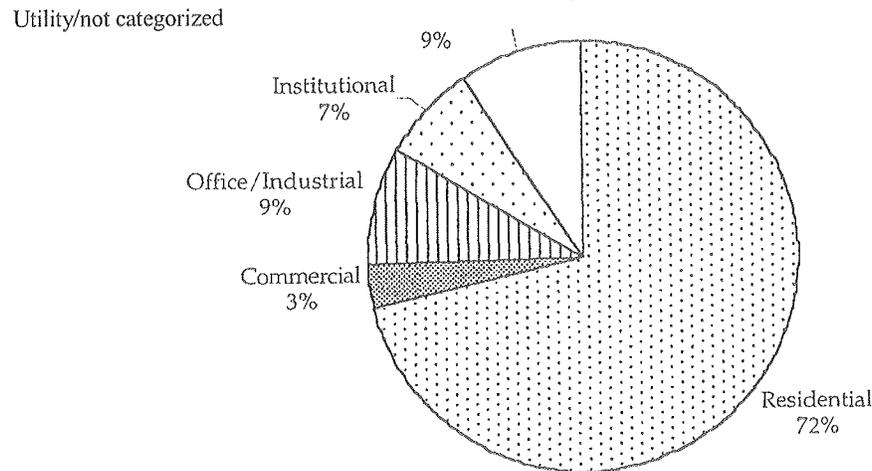


Figure 1-4
Developed Land



Source: Comprehensive Plan Update for Whitpain Township, draft date October 2003.

The northern portion of the Township, largely agricultural land at the time of the 1984 Comprehensive Plan, has probably seen the most pronounced change. Blue Bell Country Club, a golf course community with a mix of housing types (850 units total) occupies a 500 acre tract in this area of the Township. Two new single family detached developments, Normandy Estates and Windermere, are also located at Morris Road and Route 202.

There are several townhouse neighborhoods that have been completed since the previous comprehensive plan. High Gate at Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike and Skippack Pike, Pheasant Run on Skippack Pike, Steeplechase Townhouses on Butler Pike just south of Skippack Pike, Blue Bell Woods on Norristown Road, and Whitpain Hills south of Skippack Pike west of Centre Square.

Single family detached houses have been built in all areas of the Township since 1984. Some of the larger developments include the area in the westernmost area of the Township off of Pulaski Road, on the east side of DeKalb Pike south of Meadow Wick, on the north side of Arch Street near Township Line Road, and along Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike south of Skippack Pike. There has also been considerable single family detached development in the eastern portion of the Township along Butler Pike, along Township Line Road (south) adjacent to the Village of Oxford Apartments, and along Norristown Road adjacent to Narcissa Road

Commercial/Office

There has been a considerable increase in the amount of land devoted to commercial and office use since the 1984 plan. More than 7% of the land in the Township is currently used for commercial or office uses as compared to less than 3% in 1984.

Commercial development has increased along the DeKalb Pike (Route 202) corridor, particularly in the southern portion of the Township in the area between DeKalb Pike and Swede Road, as well as at the intersection with Skippack Pike. The section of DeKalb Pike south of Skippack Pike has also seen an increase in office use and conversions to office and mixed commercial. The only commercial at the northern end of DeKalb Pike is a mixed use office and inn/catering establishment that has been approved on the north corner of DeKalb Pike and Morris Road. This development will utilize existing Normandy Farm. buildings.

The Skippack Pike Corridor has also seen an increase in commercial and office uses. Along with the area surrounding the intersection of Skippack Pike and DeKalb Pike, the area in the vicinity of the intersection of Skippack Pike and Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike has changed significantly. In addition to new retail and office uses, there have been a number of residential conversions to retail and office in the area.

The most significant new office uses are in the south central portion of the Township off of Union Meeting Road and Jolly Road, where there is a new office campus and the US Healthcare complex. There has also been additional development in the Walton Road, Norristown Road, and Township Line Road area in the vicinity of the Sentry Park West Complex. The area west of Sentry Park West remains unchanged.

Demographics

Population

The population from the 2000 Census for Whitpain Township is 18,562, as shown in Figure 1-5 Population Trends. This is an increase over the 1980 census population (11,772) of 58% and an increase over the 1990 population (15,660) of 19%. The population for Montgomery County, as a whole, grew approximately 11% between 1990 and 2000. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) produces population forecasts for the region, the most recent in February of 2002. The forecast population for Whitpain Township for the year 2010 is 19,860. This would be an increase of 7.0% over the 2000 census. This compares to a 6.4% increase projected for the County as a whole. The census figures and DVRPC projections are shown in Figure 1-5 below.

Figure 1-5
Population Trends

	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Projection
Whitpain Township	11,772	15,660	18,562	19,860
Montgomery County	643,621	678,193	750,097	797,990

Population Density

The 2000 Census shows a density of 1,440 people per square mile in Whitpain Township. This density is lower than the overall County density of 1,553 people per square mile.

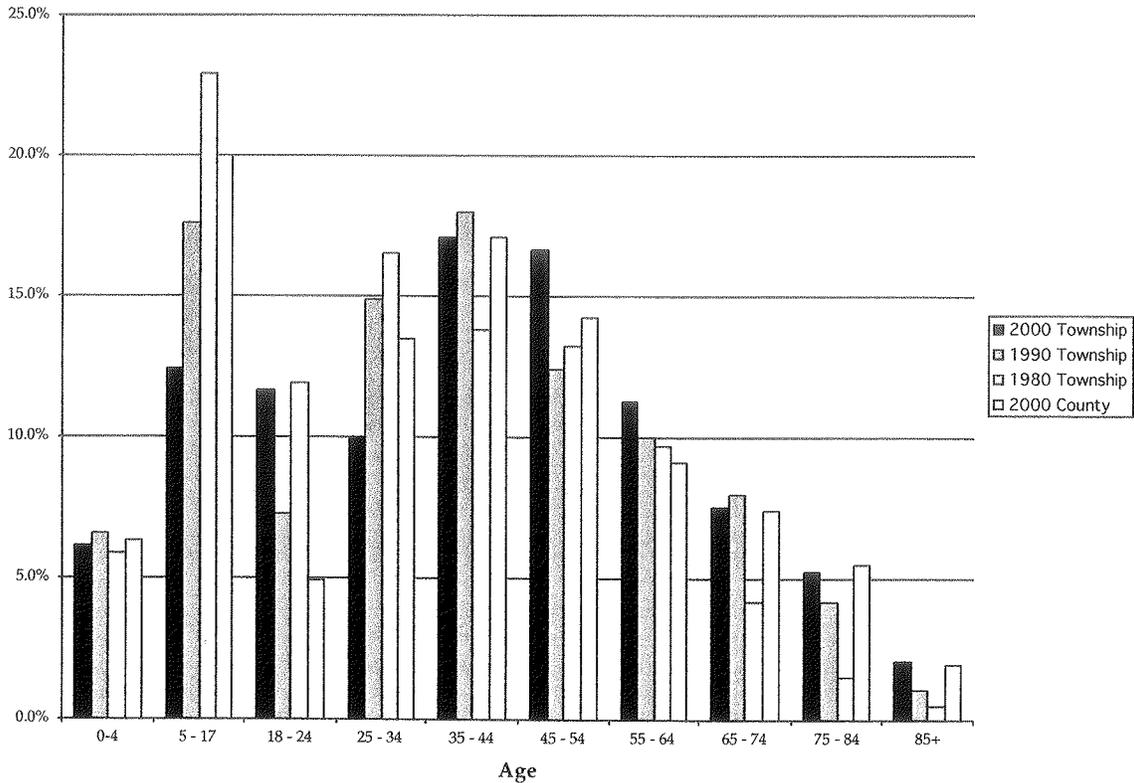
Age Cohorts

The population, broken down by age, is shown in Figure 1-6, Age Cohorts. There has been a percentage increase of people over the age of 45 in the Township, while the percentage of people between the age of 18 and 35 has been steadily declining in the past 20 years. In 1980, slightly over 29% of the Township's population was over age 45. The 2000 census shows that currently 43% of the Township's population is over the age of 45. The under 24 year old age group has fallen from more than 40% of the population in 1980 to slightly more than 30% of the population in 2000. The median age for the Township in 1990 was 37.0, just slightly higher than the County median age of 35.8. The median age in 2000 has increased to 41.1, several years higher than the County median age of 38.2.

Figure 1-6 - Age Cohorts

Age	1980		1990		2000		2000	
	Whitpain Population	% of Total Population	Whitpain Population	% of Total Population	Whitpain Population	% of Total Population	County Population	% of Total Population
under 5	700	5.9%	1,040	6.6%	1,135	6.1%	47,290	6.3%
5 to 17	2,691	22.9%	2,758	17.6%	2,300	12.4%	131,507	17.5%
18 to 24	1,401	11.9%	1,144	7.3%	2,162	11.6%	55,437	7.4%
25 to 34	1,945	16.5%	2,331	14.9%	1,851	9.9%	100,931	13.5%
35 to 44	1,623	13.8%	2,825	18.0%	3,167	17.1%	127,953	17.1%
45 to 54	1,549	13.2%	1,938	12.4%	3,094	16.7%	106,735	14.2%
55 to 64	1,144	9.7%	1,565	10.0%	2,089	11.3%	68,447	9.1%
65 to 74	495	4.2%	1,247	8.0%	1,402	7.5%	55,562	7.4%
75 to 84	171	1.5%	658	4.2%	978	5.3%	41,518	5.5%
85 +	53	0.5%	167	1.1%	384	2.1%	14,717	2.0%
Total	11,772	100.0%	15,673	100.0%	18,562	100.0%	750,097	100.0%

Figure 1-6A - Age Cohorts Graph



Housing

The 2000 Census shows 7,327 housing units in the Township. This is an increase of 1,624 units over the 1990 Census of 5,703 housing units or a 28% increase in 10 years. The previous 10-year period from 1980 to 1990 saw a similar increase of 1,658 units. As shown in Figure 1-7 Housing Units 2000, 4,364 or 59.6% were single-family detached units, and another 1,832 units, or 25% were single-family attached units. The percentage of single-family units in the Township, 84.6%, is higher than the overall County percentage of 74.7%. The percentage of owner occupied units is higher in the Township than in the County as a whole.

Figure 1-7- Housing Units 2000

	Whitpain Township	% of Total Housing Units	Montgomery County	% of Total Housing Units
1 unit detached	4,364	59.6%	166,543	56.0%
1 unit attached	1,832	25.0%	55,745	18.7%
2 to 4 units	185	2.6%	23,107	7.8%
5 to 9 units	193	2.6%	9,641	3.2%
10 or more units	736	10.0%	39,680	13.3%
Mobile home, trailer or other		0.2%	2,718	0.9%
Total	7,327	100.0%	297,434	100.0%
Vacant Units	339	4.6%	11,336	3.8%
Owner Occupied Units	5,089	69.5%	190,477	64.0%

The average household size was 2.64 persons per household, down from 2.80 in 1990, 3.06 in 1980 and 3.92 in 1970. This follows a national trend to smaller household size. The average household size for the County as a whole is somewhat smaller than the Township at 2.54 persons per household.

The 2000 median owner-occupied housing unit value was \$248,600. This is considerably more than the County median of \$160,700.

Household Income

The 1999 median household income (from the 2000 census) for the Township was \$88,933. This is a 45% increase from the 1990 census. The median household income for Montgomery County is \$60,829. The median family income is \$103,613, while the median family income for the County is \$72,183. Ninety families, or 1.7%, were below the poverty level in 1999.

Resident Labor Force

<u>Industrial Sector</u>	<u>Township</u>		<u>County</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Agriculture	28	0.3%	1,039	0.3%
Construction	466	4.8%	21,691	5.6%
Manufacturing	1,298	13.5%	57,831	15.0%
Wholesale	503	5.2%	15,069	3.9%
Retail	944	9.8%	43,445	11.3%
Transportation	117	1.2%	12,384	3.2%
Information	324	3.4%	13,412	3.5%
F.I.R.E.*	1,247	13.0%	38,494	10.0%
Services	4,409	45.8%	170,862	44.4%
Public Administration	287	3.0%	10,461	2.7%

*Finance, Insurance and Real Estate

The Resident Labor Force for Whitpain Township generally follows the characteristics for Montgomery County. The most significant departures are in the areas of F.I.R.E., where there is a *greater* percentage of the work force in Whitpain Township in this sector and in Transportation, where there is a *smaller* percentage of the work force in Whitpain Township in this sector

Occupation Status

<u>Occupation Status</u>	<u>Township</u>		<u>County</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
White Collar	8,137	84.6%	279,202	72.6%
Blue Collar	892	9.3%	64,385	16.7%
Other	594	6.2%	41,101	10.7%

With regard to Occupation Status, Whitpain Township has a higher white collar percentage in the Township and a lower blue collar and other.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

Figure 1-8
Top 10 Employment Municipalities in Montgomery County: 2000

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Total Employment, 1990 Census</u>	<u>2000 Forecast</u>	<u>Rank, 2000</u>	<u>% of All County Jobs, 2000</u>
Upper Merion Twp.	46,428	50,600	1	10.3%
Lower Merion Twp.	42,889	42,850	2	8.7%
Abington Twp.	28,414	26,350	3	5.4%
Horsham Twp.	23,283	26,050	4	5.3%
Plymouth Twp.	19,460	22,850	5	4.7%
Upper Dublin Twp.	20,111	21,000	6	4.3%
Montgomery Twp.	15,732	20,400	7	4.2%
Whitpain Twp.	17,316	19,700	8	4.0%
Upper Moreland Twp.	14,338	17,100	9	3.5%
Hatfield Twp.	15,584	16,250	10	3.3%

Figure 1-9
Top 10 Employment Municipalities in Montgomery County: 2025

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Total Employment, 2000 Forecast</u>	<u>2025 Forecast</u>	<u>Rank, 2025</u>	<u>% of All County Jobs, 2025</u>
Upper Merion Twp.	50,600	60,250	1	10.6%
Lower Merion Twp.	42,850	41,950	2	7.4%
Plymouth Twp.	22,850	32,000	3	5.6%
Horsham Twp.	26,050	31,000	4	5.5%
Montgomery Twp.	20,400	29,450	5	5.2%
Abington Twp.	26,350	25,000	6	4.4%
Upper Dublin Twp.	21,000	24,500	7	4.3%
Hatfield Twp.	16,250	23,000	8	4.1%
Whitpain Twp.	19,700	21,000	9	3.7%
Upper Moreland Twp.	17,100	17,500	10	3.1%

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Population and Employment Forecasts, 2000-2025, 9-County DVRPC Region, Publication #73, March, 2002.

Status of Relevant Plans

Whitpain Township is currently involved in a broad based update to the 1984 Township Comprehensive Plan. Whitpain Township expects to complete its Comprehensive Plan Update in 2006 and the plan contains numerous goals and recommendations in connection with future open space preservation. . The draft Land Use Recommendations are provided in the Appendix.

Whitpain Township has also recently completed the preparation of its Township Parks and Recreation Plan: Recreation 2020, published 2003. This Plan represents the Township's commitment to parks and recreation in response to the public's expressed opinions. It complements the Township's Open Space Plan by setting forth the vision for how the Township can conserve and make best use of its parks, recreation facilities, and open space.

Appended to this report are two maps which are an important product of the Park and Recreation Plan: Facility Inventory Map and Recommendations Map.

The Whitpain Township Zoning Ordinance contains numerous cluster options, which in the R-5 and R-6 Districts are mandatory – or include the mandatory protection of restricted natural features; the Park and Recreation Zoning District requires a large percentage of open space and limited uses for various public and private recreation components within the Township.

The Whitpain Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance includes mandatory dedication of open space or payment of fee in lieu of for residential developments.

CHAPTER 2

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives provide the basis for land use policies, for the creation and evaluation of the zoning, subdivision and land development ordinances, and for assessing proposals for both new development and preservation in the Township. The goals contained here incorporate the goals from the 1995 Whitpain Township Open Space Plan and the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Community Character/Land Use

1. To maintain a rural-suburban character within the Township.
 - a. Promote the retention of the few agricultural lands remaining.
 - b. Preserve environmentally sensitive and ecologically fragile lands.
 - c. Improve water quality through the use of riparian buffers and other watershed means.
 - d. Protect significant scenic views and scenic roads from the encroachment of development.
 - e. Retain major physiographic features such as stream valleys and wooded watershed hillsides through the subdivision and land development review process.
 - f. Encourage County government to provide economic incentives to permanently preserve open space elements of private golf courses.
2. To discourage typical suburban development which consumes open space and "hides" distinctive characteristics of the Township.
 - a. Confine major commercial expansion to locations near existing centers.
 - b. Encourage private development to respect environmental features that contribute to the overall scenic and visual quality of the Township.
 - c. Coordinate the location and development of new open spaces with other existing and projected land uses or existing open spaces so that they enhance one another and provide trail connections where practicable.

- d. Promote creative development and good, responsible design techniques, i.e., zoning concepts such as cluster development and planned residential development; to create a desirable living and working environment.
 - e. Promote an open space preservation option as mandatory for the large golf course properties should they be developed.
3. To plan development compatible with the continued operation of Wings Field as an airport.
- a. Plan for new uses consistent with the existing residential development.
 - b. Incorporate surplus land into the Prophecy Creek Heritage and Open Space District.
4. To identify and preserve vital wildlife habitat and green infrastructure.

Historic Preservation

1. To preserve Whitpain Township's social, economic, and military history, and the Township's resulting quality of life by protecting its abundant and significant visual historic resources and the historic landscape they project.
- a. Evaluate these resources for architectural and/or historic significance, based upon a detailed survey.
 - b. Create a workable resource protection strategy for protecting historic resources as well as the historic landscape.
 - c. Provide proactive incentives for preservation of historic properties.
 - d. Recommend future development patterns that provide buffers and are compatible with the chosen resource protection strategy.
 - e. Encourage reuse of historic resources through recommendation for appropriate zoning regulations, such as bed and breakfast inns.

Township Parks and Recreation

1. To plan for the optimum use and location of land for recreation, parks and open spaces.
 - a. Ensure a premier system of parks, recreation facilities, and greenway trails for public use throughout the Township.
 - b. Set aside open space to accommodate both the current and future needs of Township residents at build out.
 - c. Locate open space close to established and developing residential areas.
 - d. Centrally locate recreational open space within population centers to provide safe, easy access for the age groups the sites are designed to serve.
 - e. Develop a diversified system of parks that are intended to satisfy the needs and interests of all sectors of the citizen population, considering both active and passive uses.
 - f. Establish a system of interconnecting open space areas between neighborhoods with trail opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - g. Foster the involvement of all public, quasi-public and private groups in the provision of open space and recreational opportunities.
 - h. Master plan park sites to maximize both active and passive recreational potential.
2. To establish a priority of preservation of open space land. Over the last several years, the Township has been actively pursuing the purchase of critical parcels of open space.
 - a. To acquire land for Township or County parks and recreation if funding becomes available and sites are of a high priority.
 - b. To assess appropriate means to fund the acquisition of any additional open space.
 - c. To achieve a balance between active and passive open space.
 - d. To permanently preserve historic sites of regional importance and incorporate into public park lands where practicable.

- e. To preserve areas of scenic beauty and valuable natural resources.
- f. To promote the Ambler Conservation Area with the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.

Improve Walkability

To reduce amount of automobile trips by integrating uses, encouraging mass transit, and improve walkability opportunities within the Township.

Objectives:

- 1. Encourage walking and protect pedestrians by providing sidewalks in new developments and existing streets.
- 2. Identify and improve vital sidewalks along major highway arteries and link to trail network to connect residential neighborhoods to retail services, employment centers, and institutional uses such as hospitals, parks and places of worship.
- 3. Encourage jitney service to link homes, retail stores and institutional uses such as hospitals.
- 4. Provide local trail links to regional trails such as: Green Ribbon Trail and Liberty Bell Trail.
- 5. Corridor Studies.
 - a. Incorporate trails along scenic roads and viewsapes where possible (see Scenic Road Plan).
 - b. Plan for and provide areas to accommodate landscaping and other street amenities.

Municipal Administration

- 1. Monitor growth and development in the Township.
- 2. Continue to update the Open Space Plan.

CHAPTER 3
IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING PROTECTED LANDS

1. Existing public and private permanently protected open space would fall into the following forms of ownership:

Municipal Parks and Open Space Land

This is land that is owned and used by Whitpain Township or one of its authorities. Properties consist of developed and vacant park land, as well as small pockets of open space devoted to retention basins and stormwater management. These properties include:

Wissahickon Park: 17.20 acres. (Presently closed due to presence of abestos.)

Wissahickon Park: 10.00 acres.* Access from Mt. Pleasant Avenue or Batleson Road.

Mt. Pleasant: 2.00 acres. Access from Batleson Road.

Valentine Estates: .90 acres. Access from Miles Drive.

Valentine Estates: 1.00 acres. Access from Lewis Lane.

Streper Karr III, Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4: 3.97 acres. Access from Hemlock Drive or Butternut Circle.

Blue Bell Knoll: 1.19 acres. Access from Hemlock Drive or Hickory Drive.

Blue Bell Knoll: 1.21 acres. Access from Hemlock Drive.

Belfry Meadow: 2.24 acres.* Access from a dead end.

Yost Road: 1.40 acres. Access from Yost Road.

Blue Bell Estates: 1.28 acres. Access from Thayer Drive and Arlington Road.

Cooke Tract: 62.40 acres.* Access from Yost Road or DeKalb Pike.

Blue Bell Run: 1.03 acres. Access from Silo Circle.

Blue Bell Run: 15.81 acres.* Access from PECO right-of-way, Henkels/McCoy.

Blue Bell Run: 3.59 acres. Access from Wentz Run Park.

Township Building: 7.62 acres. Access from Wentz Road or Anvil Lane.

Wurtz Tract: 20.00 acres.* Access from Penllyn Pike.

Village Circle: 8.0 acres. Access from end of Village Circle.

Blue Bell Crossing: 8.83 acres.* Access from Shepard Drive or Township Line Road.

Forest Creek: 10.89 acres.* Access from Thayer Drive or Columbus Road.

Longfield: 7.26 acres.* Access from end of Ritter Road.

Wentz Run Park: 49.87 acres.* Access from Skippack Pike or Anvil Lane.

Stony Creek Sports Park: 12.0 acres.* Access from North Wales Road.

West Side Park: 0.2 acres.*

Prophecy Creek Park: 81.8 acres.*

Armentrout Preserve: 58.8 acres.*

St. Helena's Open Space: 34.6 acres* (adjacent to Cooke tract).

Total – 425.09 acres. However, only those sites indicated with an asterisk qualify as net usable acreage, which equal 374.7 acres active or passive recreation.

Private Recreation Lands (Zoning Restricted)

Blue Bell Country Club: 260.0 acres.

Total - 260.0 acres.

Natural/Passive Open Space: Conservation Associations

Harris Natural Lands Trust: 62.5 acres.

Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, including fee simple and easement lands: 137.0 acres.

Cadwalader Subdivision – Preserved area: 17.0 acres.

Total - 216.5 acres.

Natural/Passive Open Space (Zoning Restricted, Privately Held By Homeowners' Associations)

Whitpain Farm: 30.0 acres.

Blue Bell Woods: 9.9 acres.

Village of Oxford Apartments: 4.5 acres.

Normandy Cluster Subdivision: 20.0 acres.

Normandy Farms Retirement Community: 53.0 acres.

Yorkshires of Blue Bell: 30.0 acres.

Whitpain Shopping Center: 3.1 acres.

Townline Apartments: 4.6 acres.

Mallard Circle: 2.8 acres.

Leslie Lane Rural Cluster: 4.0 acres (net).

Total - 161.9 acres.

2. Temporarily protected open space would fall into the following categories:

Act 319/ 515 Lands that are not listed in another land use category

Eugene P. Leoni: 11.48 acres. 1002 DeKalb Pike.

James Cheston, IV: 23.35 acres. 599 Lewis Lane.

James Armentrout: 20.0 acres. 548 Morris Road.

Robert Ayerle: 22.40 acres. 235 Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike.

William Donahue: 10.60 acres. 1860 Skippack Pike.

James Nutt, III: 21.94 acres. 475 Skippack Pike.

James Stratton: 22.52 acres. 535 Skippack Pike.

Martha Ferguson: 9.80 acres. 1895 Skippack Pike.

C. Cresson Wistar: 10.64 acres. 527 Stenton Avenue.

Donald Spacht: 14.00 acres. 1819 Yost Road.

Total – 166.73 acres.

Golf Courses

Meadowlands Country Club: 128.0 acres.

Cedarbrook Country Club: 188.5 acres situated in Whitpain Township.
(Total acreage, including Lower Gwynedd, equals 202 acres.)

Total - 316.5 acres.

Private Recreation Lands

Mermaid Lake: 62.0 acres.

Sesame Day Camp: 21.7 acres.

Blue Bell Senior Camp: 40.5 acres.

Oak Lane Day School: 28.0 acres.

Beachcomber Swim Club: 18.2 acres.

Whitpain Green Swim Club: 3.8 acres.

Total - 174.2 acres.

Large Institutional Land Holdings

Baptist Temple: 12.5 acres.

St. Dunstan's Church: 8.3 acres.

St. John's Lutheran Church and Cemetery: 5.5 acres.

Boehm's Church and Cemetery: 9.4 acres.

Tiferet Bet Israel Synagogue: 11.0 acres.

Shady Grove Elementary School: 24.0 acres.

Blue Bell Elementary School: 17.0 acres.

Stoney Creek Elementary School: 32.0 acres.

St. Helena's Catholic Church and Convent: 58.4 acres.

Montgomery County Community College: 177.0 acres.

Total - 355.1 acres.

Surplus Open Space Adjoining Wings Field

60.0 acres.

See rear pocket for Plan of these Temporarily and Permanently Protected Lands (Map 1).

CHAPTER 4

INVENTORY OF POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE RESOURCES

Land Forms and Geology

Topography and land forms help shape the manner in which a community develops. These land forms, along with the soil characteristics and geologic formations such as steep slopes, wetlands, ponds and lakes, and floodplains, also establish the pattern of natural features.

Bedrock geology, along with the hydrologic cycle, is responsible for the changes in elevation, steep slopes, location of water courses, and orientation of the land forms within the area. The bedrock material has a great influence on the type of soil formed. Montgomery County is located in the Triassic Lowland and Piedmont Upland section of the Piedmont Physiographic Province of the Appalachian Highlands.

The formations underlying Whitpain Township are described below:¹

1. Stockton Arkosic Sandstone, Conglomerate, and Shale formation underlies 85% of the Township. This formation occurs in a band about 4 miles wide across the south-central part of the County. The Stockton formation consists of light-gray or buff, coarse grained arkosic sandstone and conglomerate of brown sandstone and red shale. As a rule, the Stockton formation is soft and highly weathered and near the surface. The groundwater resources in this formation are the best of any formation in the County - a fact which has aided the rapid development of the area.
2. Lockatong, Argillite and Shale formation underlies the northern tip of the Township. This is part of a larger band, several miles wide, which runs from the Mont Care area to the Montgomery Township border. Resistant to weathering, these rocks form the prominent ridge which runs between Worcester and Upper Gwynedd Townships to the north. In former years, building stone was quarried in these areas but now crushed stone is quarried in isolated areas in Montgomery and East Norriton Townships.

¹ Soil Survey of Montgomery County, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 1967.

There are three soil associations which characterize Whitpain Township's surface geology.²

1. The broad central portion of the Township, including both sides of Skippack Pike, is identified as Lawrenceville-Chalfont-Doylestown Association: Deep, moderately well drained to poorly drained soils formed in windblown silt deposits; on undulating uplands.
2. The areas characterizing the immediate Wissahickon Watershed and lower elevations of the Township draining toward Whitemarsh or East Norriton are characterized by the Lansdale-Penn-Readington Association: Deep and moderately deep, well drained and moderately well drained soils underlain by shale and sandstone; on rolling uplands.
3. The northwesterly edge of the Township, generally beyond Route 202, is identified as Abbottsville-Readington-Croton Association: Deep, moderately well drained to poorly drained soils underlain by shale and sandstone; on undulating uplands.

Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI)

There are significant natural areas in Montgomery County which provide benefits to the residents of the County by purifying groundwater, controlling erosion, maintaining plant and animal diversity, providing educational opportunities, and containing scenic vistas. In order to plan for the wise use of these natural areas, and the important resources they contain, the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) was established in 1982 as a joint venture of The Nature Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. The PNDI has become Pennsylvania's chief storehouse of information on outstanding natural habitat types, sensitive plant and animal species, and other noteworthy natural features.

PNDI Sites In Whitpain Township

The PNDI specifically identifies the best natural areas and the locations of all known animal and plant species of special concern (i.e., endangered, threatened, or rare). Currently, Whitpain Township does not contain any sites listed on the PNDI.

² Soil Survey of Montgomery County, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 1967.

However, the Nature Conservancy is currently conducting a systematic search of the County, as part of a Natural Areas Inventory (NAI). The NAI will supplement the current PNDI listings, provide a summary of the highest quality sites, and suggest protection and conservation options for all sites. Therefore, the NAI, when completed, will be considered an addendum to this portion of the Whitpain Township Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan.

Wetlands

Wetlands have value and are worthy of protection due to a number of characteristics. However, it is easier to discuss the benefits of wetlands than it is to delineate the wetland itself. Some wetlands are easily recognizable by most people because the presence or influence of water is obvious. However, many wetlands are subject only to seasonal flooding. For much of the year, surface water may not be present. Still other wetlands develop in areas where the soil is saturated for long periods, but never flooded. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers have defined wetlands as: "Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions".

Depending on where they are located, wetlands may serve one or more beneficial functions. Almost all wetlands provide habitat for birds, amphibians, and fish. These in turn support other wildlife. Wetlands also mitigate flooding, by holding back floodwater and slowing stream velocity. Wetlands improve water quality too. As water flows through a wetland, it slows and drops much of its sediment load. In addition, nutrients that can cause algae blooms and other pollution problems are taken up by wetland vegetation. Wetlands located in depressions often encourage infiltration of stormwater, contributing to groundwater recharge.

Whitpain Township has a slight amount of wetlands, based on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. Most of these are located within or immediately adjacent to the 100 Year floodplains which adjoin the Wissahickon Creek and its primary tributary, the Prophecy Creek, in the easterly half of the Township and the Stony Creek in the westerly half of the Township (see Figure 4-1, Floodplains and Wetlands). Smaller isolated areas are located on a wooded section of the Harris property in the northerly section of the Township and a low land drainage area between the Village of Oxford and Governor's Estates adjacent to Township Line Road along Plymouth Township. Most wetlands are located within areas identified as 100 Year Floodplain.

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

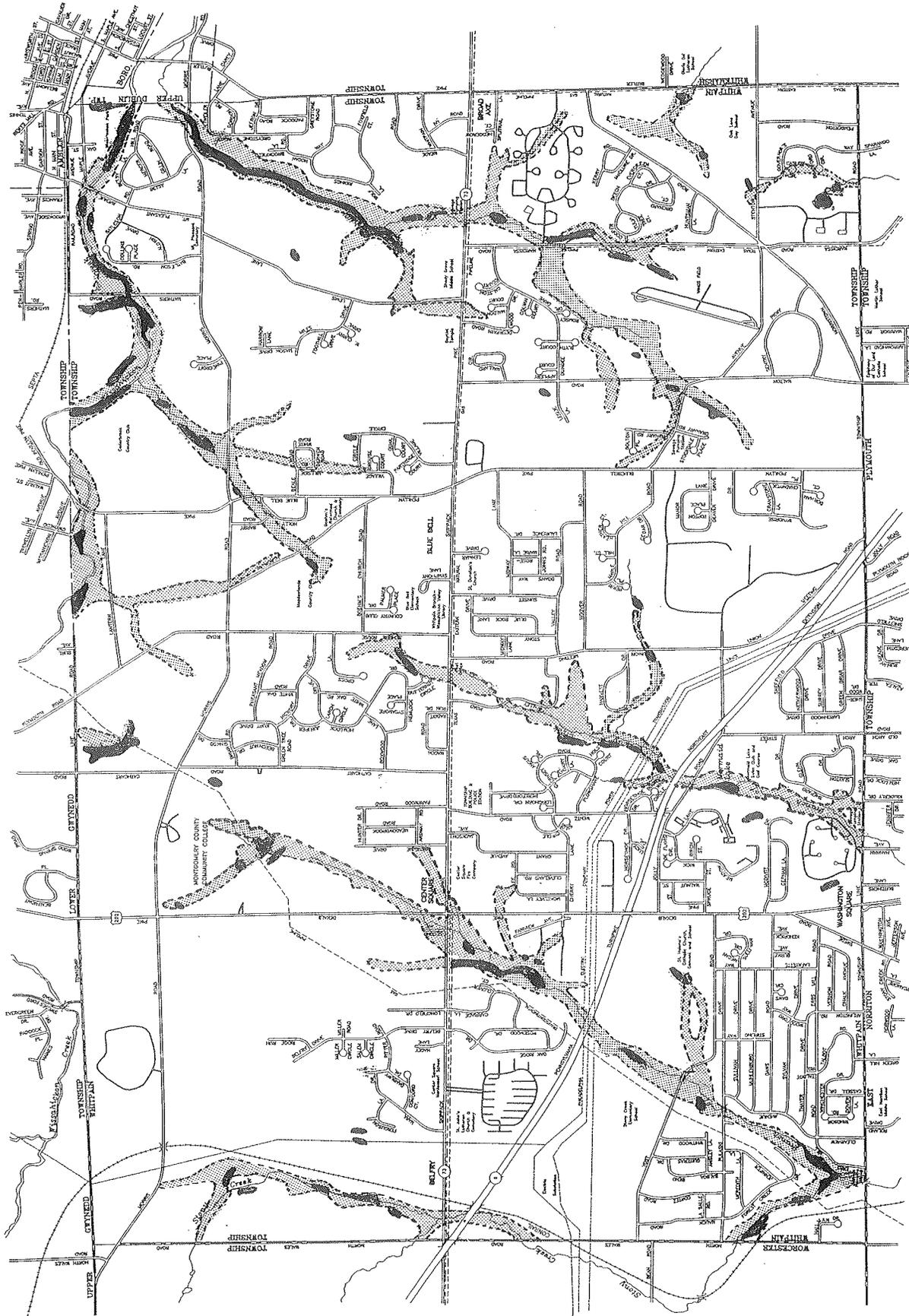


Figure 4-1 - FLOOD PLAINS & WETLANDS

PUBLIC ROAD
 PRIVATE ROAD
 U.S. ROUTE
 PENNSYLVANIA ROUTE

BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION
 MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
 NORRISTOWN, PA.
 REVISED JULY 1977
 REVISED OCTOBER 1981

0 500 1000 1500 2000 2500 3000 3500 4000 4500 5000 5500 6000 6500 7000 7500 8000 8500 9000 9500 10000
 FEET

The NWI offers a broad based, generalized overview of wetlands; other wetlands may exist in Whitpain Township. Hydric soils, primarily Bowmansville, Croton, Doylestown, Hatboro and Watchung soils, may also indicate the presence of wetlands. The Army Corps of Engineers or a qualified consultant should be enlisted for a final determination where wetlands are suspected to be present.

Wetlands in Whitpain Township are typically of the Palustrine Ecological System and are typically of the following sub classes:

1. Wissahickon Creek Floodplain: Forested, broad-leaved deciduous, non-tidal temporary; or
2. Stony Creek Floodplain: Open water, non-tidal intermittently exposed/permanent; or
3. Small Isolated Ponds: Emergent, narrow-leaved persistent, non-tidal saturated or seasonal.

Steep Slopes

Steep slopes are natural features of the landscape which cause limitations to development and provide community character. Steep slopes are also environmentally sensitive areas.

The slope and soils present on steep slopes are in balance with vegetation, underlying geology, and precipitation levels. Maintaining this equilibrium reduces the danger to public health and safety posed by unstable hillsides. The Soil Conservation Service Soil Survey for Montgomery County has four classifications for slopes: 0 to 3%, 3 to 8%, 8 to 15%, and 15 to 35%. Not all sloping areas fit neatly into these four classes of slopes, and slopes do not always exhibit the same characteristics. Generally speaking, as the slope increases the depth of topsoil and the ability of the soil to support structures usually decreases.

Steep slopes (in excess of 15% slope) often have a combination of vegetation, climate, soil and underlying geology that differs from the surrounding area. Frequently, this means that the environmental sensitivity of the steep slope is different as well. Susceptibility to erosion and mass movement may be greater than the surrounding area, especially if vegetation is removed. Increased runoff and sedimentation from disturbed slopes require increased public expenditure for flood control and stormwater management. Also, different species of plants and the associated wildlife that depends on these plants may be present only on the slopes, creating unique recreation opportunities.

The USGS Topographic Quadrangles show that Whitpain Township has a very slight amount of steep slopes and virtually no slopes in excess of 15% except for edges along the water courses in creek valleys, particularly the edges of the floodway of the Wissahickon and Prophecy Creeks. These have generally been mapped on the Composite Map, Figure 4-4. Slope changes in Whitpain Township are generally gradual and at their steepest gradient are typically within the 5 to 8% slope range, which is considered moderate rather than steep.

Woodlands and Scenic Resources

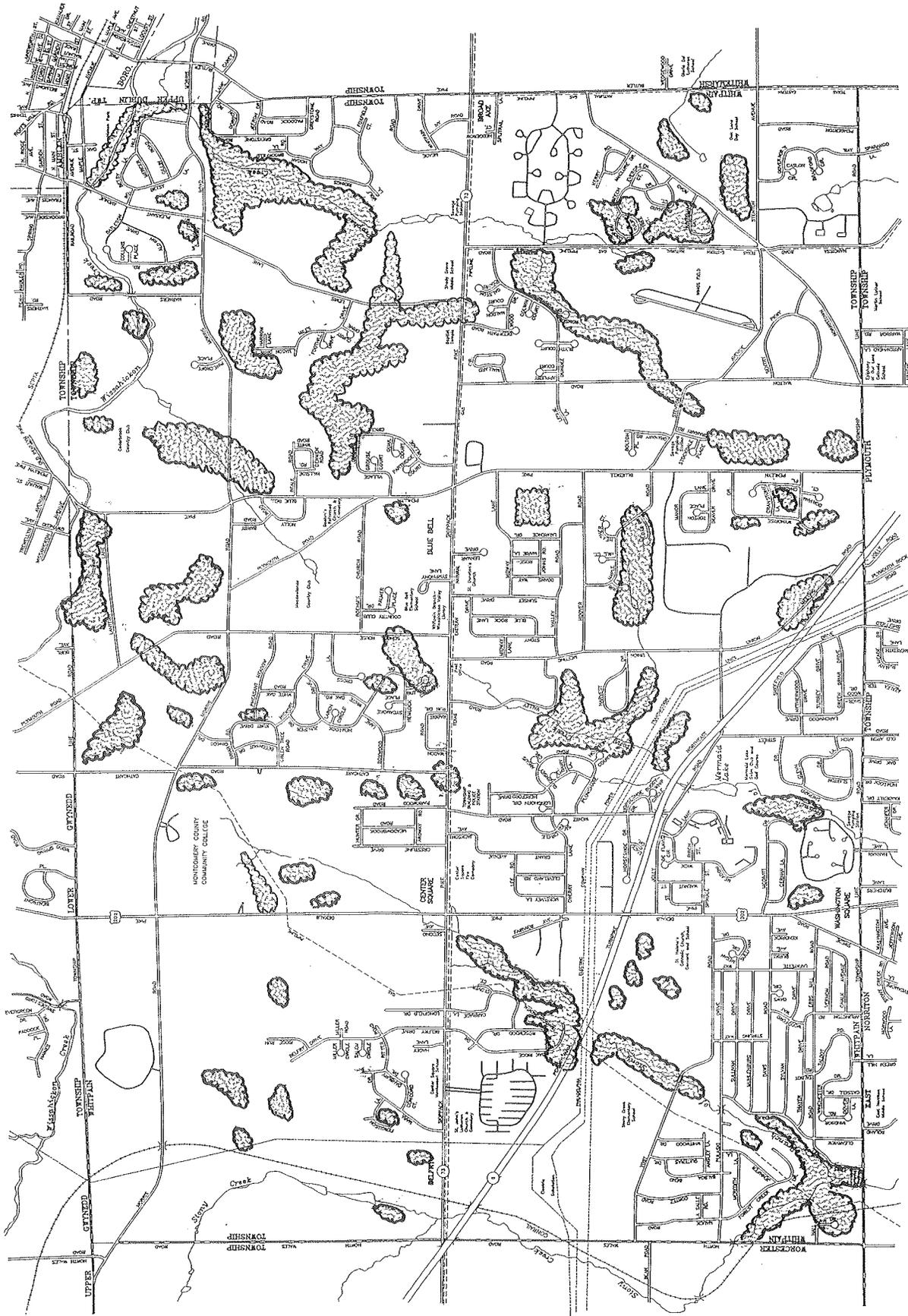
Wooded areas, some providing a continuous canopy for more than 80 contiguous acres, are interspersed throughout the Township. Approximately 30% of the vacant and undeveloped portions of the Township are substantially wooded consisting of mature deciduous forests (areas of 10 acres or greater). See Figure 4-2.

Historic Resources

The rich history of Whitpain Township has been documented in the publication Whitpain . . . Crossroads In Time written by the Whitpain Township Bicentennial Commission and published in 1977. This publication documents the early churches, homes, inns and taverns that are still currently preserved within the Township. This publication documents over 80 historic sites as well as an early history of Whitpain Township. Most of the sites remain to this day and are being identified on a map currently being prepared by the Whitpain Township Historical Society. More recently, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation had identified a number of historic buildings and sites which are determined eligible to be placed on the Register of Historic Places by the History and Museum Commission of Pennsylvania. A partial list of these sites is listed below and shown on Figure 4-3.

1. Dawesfield, Lewis Lane in Blue Bell.
2. Normandy Farms (Franklinville inn), 1451 Morris Road.
3. Gormly House, 1597 DeKalb Pike.
4. McGlathery House, 1651 DeKalb Pike.
5. Reiff House, 1410 DeKalb Pike.
6. Whitpain High School, Skippack Pike and School House Lane.
7. Center Square Historic District, Route 202 and Skippack Pike.
8. Washington Square Historic District, Route 202 and Township Line Road.

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



4-7

BASE MAP PROVIDED BY THE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
COURT HOUSE

REVISED JULY, 1977
REVISED OCTOBER, 1981

Figure 4-2, - WOODED AREAS

LEGEND:
 PUBLIC ROAD
 PRIVATE ROAD
 U.S. ROUTE
 PENNSYLVANIA ROUTE

SCALE: 0 500 1000 1500 2000 2500 3000 3500 4000 Feet

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

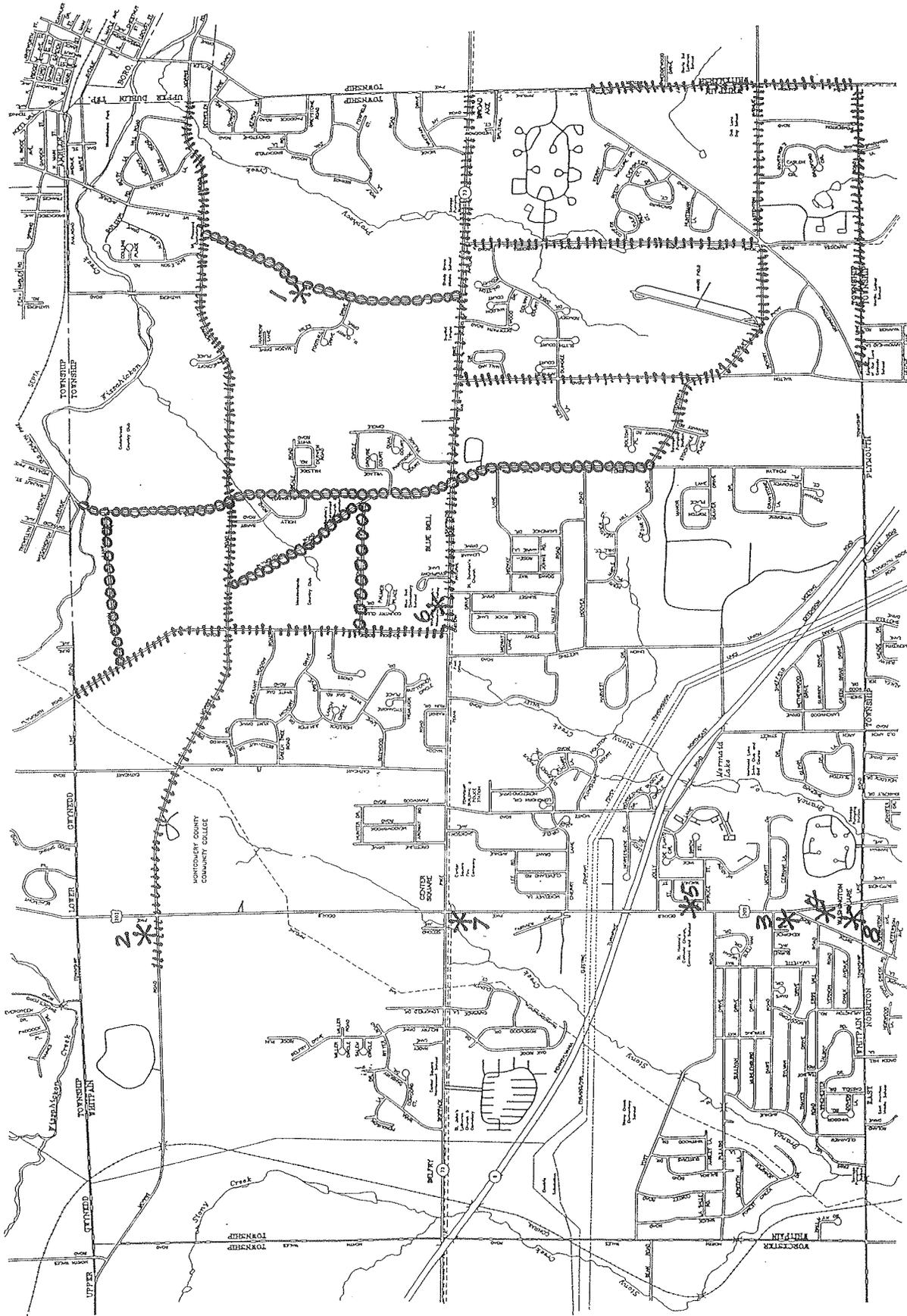


Figure 4-3 - SCENIC ROADS AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

PUBLIC ROAD
 PRIVATE ROAD
 U.S. ROUTE
 PENNSYLVANIA ROUTE
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 1000 Feet

MAP WAS PREPARED BY THE
 MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
 COURT HOUSE
 NORRISTOWN, PA.

DATES: 1971, 1977
 REVISED: OCTOBER, 1983

1ST PRIORITY 0000000
 2ND PRIORITY IIIIIIIII

Whitpain Township received its name from Richard Whitpain, a citizen of London, England who probably never came to this land³, but many of his descendants including his daughter, Ann⁴, did journey to this country during the late 1600s. The grave of Ann Whitpain McCarty is located along Skippack Pike on permanent open space owned by Whitpain Farm, a retirement community of 113 acres. The original farm house, barn, and springhouse of the original McCarty homestead have also been preserved and are used as offices by the maintenance staff of the Whitpain Farm community.

Most of the major roads in the Township were started in pre-Revolutionary times. Skippack Pike is one of the country's oldest east-west highways. It was built at the request, dated 1713, of twenty-nine German settlers living in Skippack to enable them to have access to Farmer's Mill in Whitemarsh. Several years later, in 1725, the road was extended out beyond Skippack to Swamp Creek.

Morris Road was laid by the court order of September 1741 to commence at Garret Clemens' Mill in Upper Salford Township and end at Samuel Morris' Mill on the Wissahickon in Whitemarsh Township. The same Clemens family reside in the area today and own the Clemens Supermarket chain.

Butler Pike, which forms the southeastern boundary of Whitpain and is the main street of neighboring Ambler and Conshohocken, was constructed about 1739. It connected Matson's Ford (now West Conshohocken) on the Schuylkill River and Butler's Mill in Chalfont. DeKalb Pike, which was formerly called by the names Old Swedes' Ford Road and State Road, was laid out in 1730.

One railroad ran through the Township just one hundred years ago. The Stony Creek Railroad was chartered in 1868, April 14, and opened to traffic January 1, 1874. The line commenced at Main Street in Norristown and connected with the Reading Railroad in Lansdale, running across the entire width of the northern part of the Township, with a station at Yost Road, named Custer, and one at Belfry.

The Township had two churches prior to the Revolution. Boehm's Reformed Church, founded by John Phillip Boehm, was erected in 1740 in its original form as a small stone building. St. John's Lutheran Church was founded west of Center Square in 1773. Both churches served as hospitals after the Battle of Germantown and soldiers who died of wounds or disease were buried in their churchyards.

³ Whitpain . . . *Crossroads in Time*, page 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

Early Villages⁵

Center Square was previously known as The Waggon and is located at the intersection of DeKalb Pike formerly known as State or Swedes' Ford Road, and Skippack Pike. Nicholas Scull mentions the Waggon Inn on his map of 1758 and the British also called it by that name on their maps of 1777. Thomas Fitzwater was the first recorded inn-keeper of the Waggon Inn; in 1762 he is recorded in the tax register. In 1777, John Porter was the inn-keeper and requested the protection of his premises by soldiers of Washington's army in order to keep American soldiers from entering. This action by "Tory John Porter" caused resentment by the local population and resulted in the failure of the business.

Blue Bell is situated at the intersection of Blue Bell-Pennlyn Pike and Skippack Pike. In Scull's map of 1758, the White Horse Inn was located there and was called by that name in the British maps of 1777. This is the present day Blue Bell Inn which was founded in 1743. A "sister inn", the Black Horse, was built in 1774 by James Bartleson as a private home on the west side of Skippack Pike. It was licensed as an inn at the May sessions in 1796. Writing in the book commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Center Square Fire Company, Mears noted that Blue Bell could never have been described as a one horse town as its two colonial inns were horses.

For many years Blue Bell was known as Pigeontown. The name was supposedly derived from the presence of large flocks of pigeons in the area. Morgan Morgan, a resident of the area, was noted for pigeon trapping and for his gun smithing. Not until 1840 was the name changed to Blue Bell, probably after the Blue Bell Inn.

Broad Axe is situated in the eastern end of the Township at Skippack and Butler Pikes, immediately adjacent to Whitmarsh Township. The name derives from the Broad Axe Inn established at least as early as 1681 and appearing on Reading Howell's map of 1792 by that name.

Belfry is located near the Worcester boundary line, dividing that township from Whitpain and Skippack Pike. It had in 1880 a post office, a steam mill for grinding grain, a flour, teed, coal and lumber yard owned by Theodore Harrar; a blacksmith shop and several houses. The former station of Belfry on the Stony Creek Branch of the Reading Railroad once existed there.

Franklinville is situated in the northwesterly portion of the Township at the intersection of Morris Road and DeKalb Pike. In 1880 it contained an inn, the country estate and model farm of William M. Singerly that is now Normandy Farms, a store operated by W. Corson, a blacksmith shop, and five dwellings.

⁵ Whitpain . . . Crossroads In Time, p. 34.

Washington Square is partially in East Norriton Township, located at the intersection of Township Line Road and DeKalb Pike. In 1880 it had one inn (now known as Mr. Ron's), a school house, and five dwellings.

Prior to the Revolution, two schools appear to have been established in Whitpain. The first school house was located near Skippack and Union Meeting Road and was taught by W. Knox as early as 1766. The other was attached to Boehm's Church and was a parochial school in the tradition of the early German settlers. Nicholas Korndoffer taught the school in 1777.

American Revolution

Whitpain Township's overall role in the Revolutionary War was minor, but George Washington and many of his Generals did spend time in the Township in the fall of 1777 following the Battle of Germantown, where General George Washington moved the army into camp in Whitpain Township at "Camp Morris" with his headquarters at "Dawesfield", the home of James Morris. The original campsite consisted of James Morris' 350-400 acre farm.⁶ The original house along with 22 acres is still standing today, situated along Lewis Lane a short distance north from Skippack Pike. Washington's headquarters at Dawesfield was also occupied by the Marquis de Lafayette, Brigadier General Anthony Wayne, and Generals Muhlenberg, Weedon, Conway, and Huntington. While at the camp, Brigadier Generals Robert Howe and Alexander McDougal were both promoted to the rank of Major General. Later, this encampment would move to Valley Forge for the winter of 1778.

Men who died during these times are buried in Boehm's and St. John's churchyards in unmarked graves and it is said that Hessian soldiers who died following a skirmish in the area of Cheston Farm (now Whitpain Farm community) lie buried on the hillside overlooking the Prophecy Creek adjacent to the grave stone of Ann Whitpain.

A detailed description of Dawesfield, including its history as well as its prominent architectural features and profile of the Morris family, whose descendants are owners of the property to this day, is detailed on pages 153-166 of Whitpain . . . Crossroads In Time, published in 1977 by the Whitpain Township Bicentennial Commission.

⁶ Whitpain . . . Crossroads In Time, p. 48.

Scenic Roads

Scenic roads are valuable assets to the community which wishes to preserve its rural and historical character.

Existing scenic roads and associated qualities, such as expansive views, stream crossings, adjacent ponds or lakes, unique vegetation, historic buildings and bridges, village streetscapes, and significant woodlands, etc. have such unusual quality that their unique character and beauty should be preserved. Certain roadways within the Township should be exempt from excessive engineering and/or road widening which could obliterate interesting features and cultural resources, and for this reason most scenic roads should be low volume, low speed, two lane roadways.

In 1989 and 1990, the Township Planning Commission prepared a strategy for the implementation of scenic roads and established two priorities for scenic roadways in Whitpain Township:

1. First priority scenic roads - Low volume roads with little or no improvements:
 - a. Plymouth Road (south of Morris Road).
 - b. Lewis Lane.
 - c. Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike (Township Line Road south to Stenton Avenue).
 - d. Lantern Lane.
 - e. Boehm's Church Road.
2. Second priority scenic roads - Medium to high volume roads with limited improvements:
 - a. Morris Road (from westerly edge of Normandy Farm wall to Butler Pike).
 - b. Plymouth Road (north of Morris Road).
 - c. Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike (Stenton Avenue to Butler Pike).
 - d. Skippack Pike (School Lane to Butler Pike).
 - e. School Lane.

- f. Stenton Avenue (Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike to Walton Road).
- g. Stenton Avenue (Narcissa Road to Butler Pike).
- h. Narcissa Road.
- i. Township Line Road south (Norrstown Road to Butler Pike).
- j. Butler Pike (Norrstown Road to Township Line Road).
- k. Walton Road (Stenton Avenue to Skippack Pike).
- l. Mt. Pleasant Avenue.

However, it is important that certain scenic roads are able to absorb some of the increase in traffic volume caused by continual growth within the region. Thus, it would be necessary to permit intersection improvements, deceleration lanes, and remedial steps to correct local hazards such as limited sight distance or stormwater problems. Previously, the Township Traffic Safety unit has commented that certain of the above recommended scenic roads such as Morris Road, Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike (Stenton Avenue to Butler Pike), Skippack Pike (School Road to Butler Pike), Stenton Avenue (Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike to Walton Road), and Narcissa Road are heavily traveled roadways and may need some widening and shoulder improvements in order to accommodate additional volumes of vehicular traffic.

Figure 4-3 identifies the scenic roads suggested for Whitpain Township in conjunction with historic resources, and it should be observed that a large number of the documented historic resources within the Township are adjacent to these proposed scenic roads.

Old Trees of Whitpain Township

Whitpain Township is fortunate that its Shade Tree Commission had documented and recorded trees of magnificent size, significant age and unusual species. The Commission published The Whitpain Township 2001 Tree Registry in conjunction with the Township's 300th anniversary commemoration. In order to support this project, the Commission:

- Visually inspected each identified tree;
- Permanently recorded all pertinent tree information including location, species, owner and history;
- Properly measured the circumference;

- Photographed each tree;
- Employed a certified arborist to provide an expert evaluation and inspection of select trees.

The Whitpain Township 2001 Tree Registry is appended to this Open Space Plan report.

Whitpain Township has been designated as a Tree City USA community by the National Arbor Day Foundation since 1994. This is a national recognition for communities that effectively manage their public tree resources. Since 1999, Whitpain Township has annually received the Foundation's Growth Award, which is the next level of recognition that Tree City USA communities can achieve. Only seventeen Pennsylvania communities achieved this award in the past year.

Farms and Areas of Prime Agricultural Soils

At one time commercial farms flourished in Whitpain Township. Most of the larger farms have been developed for residential subdivisions, institutional uses, or industrial parks. A few smaller parcels remain which are tilled for agricultural purposes.

The largest and most spectacular farm in the Township was the Normandy Farm, which at one time encompassed more than 600 acres along both sides of Morris Road. This site, which consists of a large working barn and the former home of Ralph Beaver Strassburger, continues to be a focal point situated at the intersection of Morris Road and DeKalb Pike. In the course of various subdivisions through the 1980s and 1990s, the Normandy Farm parcel has been converted to: Blue Bell Country Club, Normandy Farms retirement community, Windermere 73 lot subdivision, and Normandy Farm Inn and Conference Center. The historic school house along Morris Road was permanently preserved and dedicated to the Whitpain Historic Society.

Prime agricultural soils within the Township have been identified in the 1977 Vacant Land Study and remaining components of prime agricultural soils typically considered to be Capability Class I or II soils as identified in the Montgomery County Soil Survey are identified on Figure 4-4, Composite Map of Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

Composite Map of Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Figure 4-4 presents a composite map of the environmentally sensitive areas discussed in this chapter, which include the 100 Year floodplain, wetlands, areas of woodland vegetation, areas having slopes in excess of 15%, and areas of high scenic value marked by prime agricultural soils.

The northeast quadrant of the Township possesses the highest concentration of high value woodlands, floodplains and wetlands, significant riparian corridors, and scenic roadways. A high number of priority preservation properties exist and are proposed in this quadrant.

WHITPAIN TOWNSHIP MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

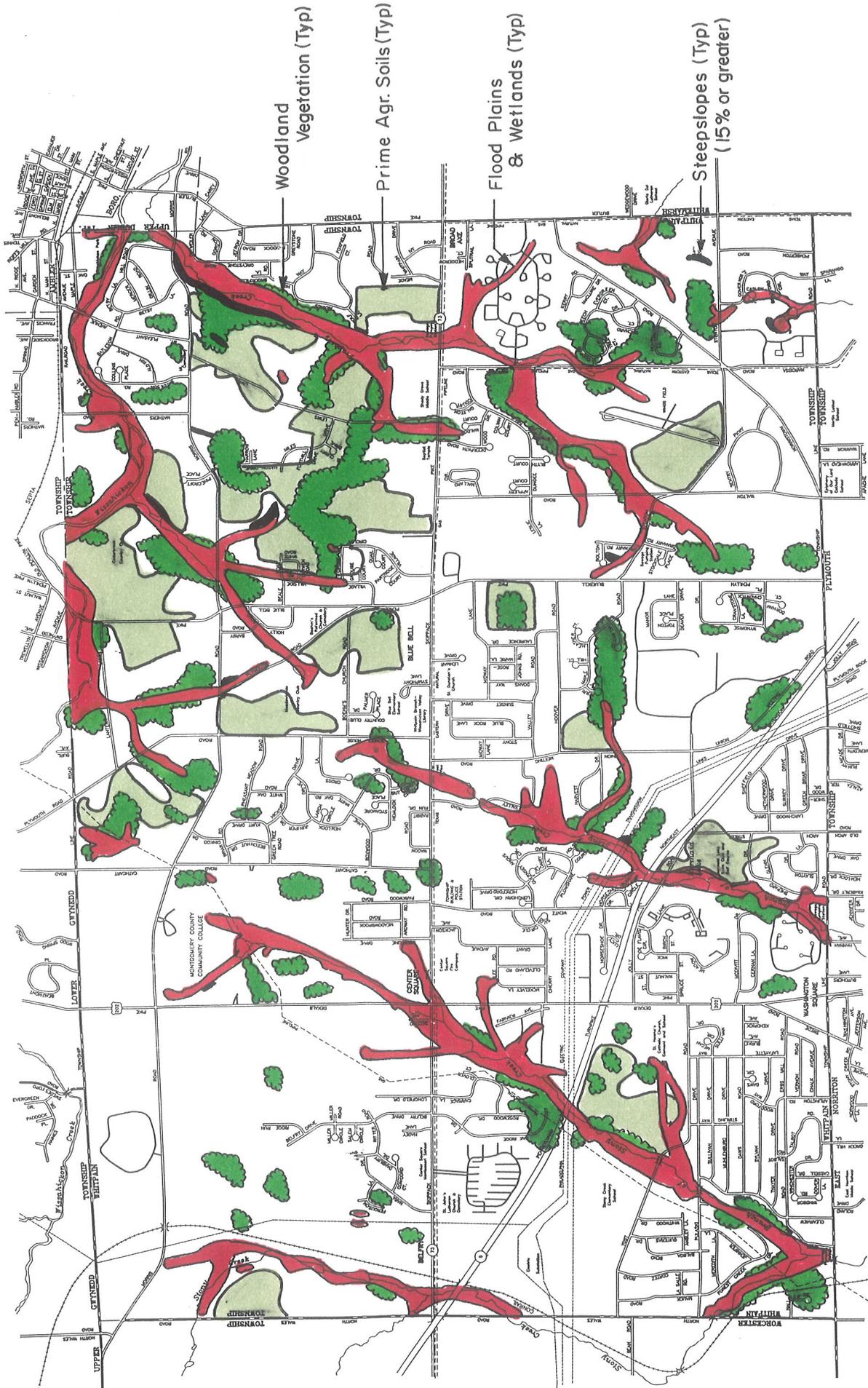


Figure 4-4 - Composite Map -
Environmentally Sensitive Areas

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 PRIVATE ROAD
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 PENNSYLVANIA ROUTE
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CHAPTER 5

POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE LINKAGES

The Montgomery County Planning Commission in conjunction with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission has developed a Regional Trail Strategy for Montgomery County which identifies existing trails and potential trails and the manner in which they could link up with major park areas.

The Regional Trail Strategy proposes a potential trail identified as the Liberty Bell Trail utilizing the now abandoned trolley right-of-way that ran from Norristown as far north as the Souderton Telford area within the County. The current preferred route is shown on the Recommendations Plan and for an extensive length runs along the westerly side of North Wales Road. Such a trail would function as an inter-municipal trail and at its widest points would link the Schuylkill Trail south of Norristown with Bucks County.

A second trail which meanders along the Wissahickon Creek is identified as the Wissahickon Green Ribbon Trail and much of this network is presently in place. The trail ultimately connects with the upper reaches of Fairmount Park in the Chestnut Hill area of Philadelphia and runs through Whitemarsh, Whitpain, Lower Gwynedd and Upper Gwynedd Townships. This trail would be implemented and maintained by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. A short distance north of Whitpain, the Green Ribbon trail will link with the proposed Power Line Trail at Parkside Place Park in Upper Gwynedd Township. The Power Line Trail is proposed largely within the PECO right-of-way which extends from Evansburg State Park to Blair Mill Road in Horsham Township.

Within the Township itself, there are numerous locations ideal for hiking/biking trails. These are described below:

1. It is desired to interconnect Wentz Run Park with the Cooke property, also a Township park. These two parks are approximately 1 1/2 miles apart and presently not connected. It is proposed that an off-road walking trail connect the southerly and most natural edge of Wentz Run Park, basically south of the soccer fields in an area that will subsequently be developed as a nature walk, through other lands owned by the Township, passing under the Turnpike via Wentz Road and then along Turnpike rights-of-way and by way of an easement along Township park land previously acquired from St. Helena's Catholic Church property, thence to connect with the Township park land (the Cooke tract) in the westerly sector of the Township. This trail could extend all the way to Stony Creek Elementary School.

2. A trail link is also proposed between Wentz Run Park and the Montgomery County Community College via Cathcart Road along its wooded westerly frontage. Acquisition of easements over sixteen properties would be required where existing road rights-of-way have insufficient width. This trail has two alignments – one through Beachcomber Swim Club and a second along the riparian corridor through the Montgomery County Community College.
3. A walking trail emanating along the Prophecy Creek starting at Sentry Parkway, which is a popular walking area for employees of the Sentry Park Office Campus, would meander through existing vacant and preserved properties of Wings Field, Whitpain Farm, the Prophecy Creek Park (formerly the Thomson property), and thence along lands held by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association and ultimately link up with the existing Wissahickon Trail in the vicinity of the wildlife reservoir situated in both Whitpain Township and Ambler Borough. There would be a second branch from this trail that would interconnect the historic property of Dawesfield and Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association lands beyond to the main trail running along the Prophecy Creek. This trail would have an overall length of approximately 2 1/2 miles.
4. A third walking trail is proposed between Dawesfield and the Wissahickon Creek in a northeasterly direction. This walkway would follow the scenic corridors of Morris Road and Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike and along the Walbridge property and is detailed on the Recommendations Plan found in the rear pocket of this report.
5. A bike trail is proposed within the superbloc bounded by Morris Road, the Liberty Bell Trail, Township Line Road North, and the Normandy Farms compound. Such a trail would be separated from adjoining vehicular road traffic and provide for the opportunity of a continuous trail for avid bicycle riding on a paved surface of approximately 10 feet in width, having a total length of approximately 1.7 miles. Such a trail could utilize adjoining road rights-of-way as well as open space patterns which exist and are a part of the Normandy Farms retirement community and future open space which may result during the development of the Normandy Farms subdivision situate at the intersection of Morris Road and Route 202.
6. Whitpain will cooperate with the adjacent townships of Worcester and Plymouth to implement a regional trail using the PECO right-of-way. Plymouth Township consultants have indicated an interest in connecting to Whitpain north of Township Line Road and thence along the PECO right-of-way: One tributary easterly into the former Unisys property (now Blue Bell Corporate Office Park) and a second tributary route through the Blue Bell Senior Camp and thence along a riparian corridor to Wentz Run Park.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF UNPROTECTED RESOURCES

Vacant Land Study

There are thirty-seven parcels in the Township that are either vacant or contain a single family house and that either singly or combined with adjacent parcels are ten acres or larger and several key parcels of a slightly smaller size. These parcels represent the areas in the Township that could receive new development. These parcels are shown as temporarily protected land or vacant land on the Protected Lands Map (see rear pocket of this report) and summarized in Figure 6-1. This study is excerpted from the 2003 Draft Whitpain Township Comprehensive Plan.

Note that where the property includes an historic resource, these have been identified as Class I or Class II (see Historic Site Survey Map on page A-6).

Properties subject to floodplain limitations are so noted. (See the Recommendations Plan in the rear pocket of this report for illustration of floodplain locations throughout Whitpain Township.)

Figure 6-1 - Vacant Land Study

Ma. #	Area	Block	Unit	Zoning	Historic	Land Use	Flood	Location
1	9.2	009	007	R-6	Class II	Unprotected Open Space		1895 Skippack Pike
2	12.7	007	011	R-1 R-2	Class I	Unprotected Open Space		1750 Skippack Pike
3	5.1	008	010/024/ 029	R-1		Single Family Detached		1809 Yost Rd
4	32.1	008	001/003	R-1	Class II	Unprotected Open Space/SFD		1819 Yost Rd
	37.2							
5	19.6	001	011	R-2		Unprotected Open Space	●	1702 Yost Road
6	9.0	006	031	R-1 R-2		Unprotected Open Space	●	1421 Cherry Lane
7	6.4	006	055	R-1 R-2		Unprotected Open Space	●	1151 Fairview Road
8	15.0	006	014	R-1 R-2		Unprotected Open Space	●	1486 Skippack Pike
9	7.2	006	014/015 018/044	R-1 C		Vacant	●	1462/1486 Skippack Pike
	28.6							
10	11.8	004	004	R-1 C		Institutional		1010 DeKa1b Pike
11	10.2	011/ 011B	003/005	R-1	Class I	Unprotected Open Space/SFD		980 Morris Rd
12	46.5	016	009/025	R-5		Unprotected Open Space		243 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike
13	61.4	017	001/004	R-5	Class I	Unprotected Open Space	●	230 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike
	107.9							-
14	10.4	017	005	R-5	Class I	Single Family Detached	●	225 Mathers Rd
15	16.8	018	005	R-5		Unprotected Open Space		480 Morris Rd
16	3.9	018	007	R-5		Unprotected Open Space		353 Lewis Lane
17	15.7	023	003/023	R-5	Class I	Unprotected Open Space/SFD		560 Lewis Lane
18	87.0	023	001/004 /019/02 7	R-5	Class II	Unprotected Open Space/SFD	●	700 Lewis Lane
19	9.2	023	019	R-5		Unprotected Open Space	●	560 Lewis Lane
20	21.1	018	008/080 /088/09 0	R 5	Class I	Unprotected Open Space/SFD		485 Lewis Lane
21	3.4	018	043	R 5	Class II	Single Family Detached		585 Lewis Lane
	140.3							

Map #	Area	Block	Unit	Zoning	Historic	Land Use	Flood	Location
22	24.4	018	026	R-1		Unprotected Open Space		535 Skippack Pike
23	20.2	018	049	R-5	Class I	Unprotected Open Space		475 Skippack Pike
24	1.8	018	033	R-5	Class I	Unprotected Open Space		481 Skippack Pike
25	14.3	018	021	R-5	Class II	Unprotected Open Space		453 Skippack Pike
26	10.5	018	020	R-5		Single Family Detached		795 Lewis Lane
	71.2							
27	51.9	019	004/005/ 029/030/ 031/032/ 049/059/ 060	R-5	Class II	Single Family Detached		560 Leslie Lane
28	10.9	019	006	R-5		Single Family Detached		1201 Walton Rd
29	10.1	019	041	R-5	Class II	Single Family Detached		27 Stenton Avenue
	73.0							
30	16.9	021	003	R-5		Single Family Detached		120 Norristown Rd
31	23.2	021	063/064 /065	IN		Institutional		137 Stenton Avenue
32	3.0	021	062	R-5	Class II	Unprotected Open Space		1551 W. Butler Pike
	43.1							
33	10.8	014	010/035	R-1	Class II	Unprotected Open Space/SFD		1799/1781 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike
34	17.5	014	008	R-E		Unprotected Open Space		785 Jolly Rd
35	39.6	014	017	R-1	Class II	Unprotected Open Space	*	898 Hoover Rd
36	58.0	003/0	019/007	P-R R-1	Class II	Unprotected Open Space	*	1002 Jolly Rd
37	11.8	014	001	R-1		Unprotected Open Space		
	69.8							
Total	738.7							

Site photographs follow which provide a visual inventory of salient characteristics of selected Priority I properties that have been prioritized for preservation and are more fully described in Chapter 9, Recommendations.

In addition, photographs of valued scenic roads: Lewis Lane, Morris Road (east of Penllyn Pike) and Skippack Pike are also provided. These scenic roads exhibit beautiful viewsheds and valuable natural features. However, perhaps their greatest asset is their close proximity to Class I Historic properties and numerous Priority I properties such as Walbridge, Armentrout and Haas Gravagno. For more detail, see discussions starting at page 4-12.



Walbridge - Wooded Section Viewed From Morris Road



Walbridge - High Fields/Meadow Along Penllyn Pike



Prophecy Creek Park



Skippack Pike - Scenic Road



Haas Gravagno Property



Morris Road - Scenic Road (Adjacent to Walbridge)



Haas Gravagno Property Viewed From Lewis Lane



Lewis Lane - Scenic Road



Haas Gravagno Property - South Parcel



Harris Woods (From Unisys)



Harris Woods



Harris Camp Site From Hoover Road



Harris Camp Property Viewed From Union Meeting Road



Haas Gravagno Property From Lewis Lane



Walbridge Riparian Area Along Morris Road



Armentrout Property - View From Morris Road



Shady Grove Fields (Prophecy Creek Park Behind)

CHAPTER 7
EVALUATION OF GROWTH AREAS NEEDED FOR
NEW DEVELOPMENT THROUGH 2025

Housing Plan

The major goal of the housing plan is to provide a diversity of residential opportunities. Of particular concern is the ability to provide affordable housing for a range of income groups and to give options for a variety of housing types. The density ranges for residential development, as previously described in the land use plan section, are as follows:

Single Family Residential	0.4 to 3 units per acre
Medium Density Residential	2 to 5 units per acre
High Density Residential	up to 8 units per acre
Other Residential	up to 4 units per acre
Golf Course Residential	up to 1.8 units per acre

The 2000 census figures show a total of 7,327 housing units in Whitpain. When broken down by unit type, the housing in Whitpain is as follows:

59.6% Single family detached
25.0% Single family attached
15.2% Multifamily
0.2% Manufactured homes

Growth in a developed municipality such as Whitpain is largely in the form of infill in existing residential areas. In Whitpain, with the exception of several vacant parcels of land in the medium density residential category, the vast majority of land available for additional housing units is vacant or underutilized lots in the single family residential category (see the Vacant Land Study in Chapter 6).

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) projection of population for Whitpain Township in 2010 is 19,860 people, an increase of nearly 1,300 people over the 2000 population. Assuming a household size of 2.64 (the 2000 Census household size), the Township will need to provide an additional 492 housing units by the year 2010. In the Land Use Plan element of the draft Comprehensive Plan, a portion of the undeveloped area designated as medium residential is currently proposed or under construction for 73 townhouses. On the remaining land designated as medium residential, it can be estimated that 57 additional townhouses, for a total of 130, could be constructed.

Since the 2000 Census, Whitpain has added one R-3 Apartment District which is currently under construction and will yield approximately 170 dwelling units.

In addition to those units, there are slightly more than 300 acres of land identified in the Vacant Land Study with single family residential use as the primary recommendation. Assuming the maximum density permitted by zoning on the net acreage (total acreage minus 20% for roadways and lotting inefficiency) of each parcel, approximately 220 housing units are possible on those 300 acres. The build-out for the vacant land parcels is shown below in Figure 7-1. Map numbers refer to Vacant Land map.

The 170 apartment units, along with the 130 possible townhouses and the lots listed below are more than adequate to meet the population needs of the Township over the next ten years. It should be noted that in addition to the housing possible on the vacant land parcels, there would be infill development on parcels that were not large enough to include in the Vacant Land Study. For purposes of this analysis, it is assumed an additional 15 lots could be created via the subdividing of oversized lots, or a total of 235 single family lots.

Figure 7-1 - Build-out for Vacant Land

Parcels Residential as a Primary Recommendation

Map #	Area	Net Area	Zoning	Recommended Land Use	Density (du/acre)	Units
6	9	7.2	R-1, R-2	Residential (Environmental Constraints)	3.485	25
11	10.2	8.16	R-1	Residential	1.452	12
12	46.5	37.2	R-5	Low Density Residential	0.363	14
14	10.4	8.32	R-5	Residential (Environmental Constraints)	0.363	3
16	3.9	3.12	R-5	Residential	0.363	1
17	15.7	12.56	R-5	Cluster Residential w/#18	0.363	5
19	9.2	7.36	R-5	Residential	0.363	3
26	10.5	8.4	R-5	Residential	0.363	3
27	51.9	41.52	R-5	Low Density Residential	0.363	15
28	10.9	8.72	R-5	Low Density Residential	0.363	3
29	10.1	8.08	R-5	Low Density Residential	0.363	3
34	17.5	14	R-E	Residential	1.452	20
35	39.6	31.68	R-1	Residential	1.452	46
36	58	46.4	P-R, R-1	Residential	1.452	67
Subtotal Residential - Primary Recommendation						220

Potential Build Out Analysis

A Potential Build Out Analysis Plan has been prepared. It assumes but does not recommend development of temporary open space pursuant to existing zoning. However, the plan respects Park and Recreation Zoning Districts which are currently superimposed on two private golf courses: Cedarbrook Country Club and Meadowlands Country Club; and the public golf course/recreation facility of Mermaid Lake. In addition, the potential build-out assumes a minimum of 160 additional acres which are currently identified as future protected lands and are zoned and used for institutional or private recreation purposes and/or zoned for residential but would include some significant open space preservation pursuant to prevailing cluster development options.

	<u>Estimated Additional Yield</u>
Future Protected Lands	160 acres
Park and Recreation Zoning District*	300 dwelling units
Single Family Low Density	235 lots
Attached Residential Medium Density	130 dwelling units
Institutional Expansion and Redevelopment	550,000 square feet
Commercial, Office or Industrial Development Or Redevelopment	1,200,000 square feet

See rear pocket for Potential Build-Out Analysis Plan which illustrates the yield summarized above.

*Consists of 356 acres. If all or a portion of these properties (golf courses and support club house with parking and recreation facilities) are ever developed, then Township should require use of “open space preservation techniques” to promote preservation of significant environmentally sensitive and major physiographic features of the property.

CHAPTER 8

EVALUATION OF OPEN SPACE NEEDS

This chapter examines the Township's overall needs for open space as determined by community standards for neighborhood and community park land.

Park Standards Analysis

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has developed guidelines for resident recreation needs based on the size of population. The DVRPC recommends four types of local parks for a municipality equivalent to the size and make up of Whitpain Township. Figure 8-1 shows the types and acreages of parks appropriate for the Township, based on population for 2000 and projected population estimates to the year 2025. These are standards that have been developed to establish park and recreation needs, based on how many acres of each park should be provided per 1,000 population.

Figure 8-1
Park Standards Analysis

<u>Park Type</u>	<u>PRS*</u>	<u>Population</u>	
		<u>2000</u>	<u>2025</u>
Community Park Acreage	2.5	46.4	56.2
Community Play Field Acreage	2.0	37.1	50.0
Neighborhood Park Acreage	2.0	37.1	50.0
Neighborhood Playground Acreage	1.5	27.8	33.7
Total	8.0	148.4 Ac.	190 Ac.

*Park and recreation standard per 1,000 population. **2000 population = 18,562
2025 population = 22,480 estimated population at build out.

DVRPC divides local parks into two categories: Neighborhood and community parks. Neighborhood parks serve the immediate neighborhood, usually within one-quarter mile radius, with tot lots and small playgrounds, and should be accessible by walking or by bicycling. Small naturalistic areas are included in this category.

Community parks are larger than neighborhood parks and serve a larger population area, typically a one to two mile radius. These parks should be centrally located within the community and provide larger facilities and in greater numbers, such as sports fields, walking trails, and parking for residents who will need to drive to the park.

According to the Parks Standards Analysis, Whitpain Township should have approximately 148.4 acres of community and neighborhood parks and playgrounds in 2000. In the year 2025, the Township should have 190 acres. These are the facilities that local governments are expected to provide which are closest to home. At present, the Township currently has 374.7 net usable acres, not including any of the sports fields associated with the Wissahickon School District. Using the Park Standards Analysis developed by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission as outlined in this chapter, the Township actually exceeds open space needs when projected to the year 2025 population.

For the purposes of this calculation, golf courses, private swim clubs, and country clubs were separately enumerated and were not considered as currently available to serve the needs of the population. The main reason for this decision is that these recreation areas either utilize vast acreages or serve only a limited clientele. Large tracts, such as a golf course, could easily skew the results of a deficiency calculation based on acreage. In addition, public and private school grounds were not considered to be available to satisfy a municipality's demand for recreation. Of course, the importance of the four golf clubs which provide an oasis of 653 acres in an area otherwise of moderate density (two of which are open to the public for golf and other recreational activities) must be considered.

The standards developed by DVPRC specifically exclude schools. These facilities may not be available, particularly during the school year, and restrictions on the use of sports fields could limit Township activities. However, the presence of three Wissahickon School District facilities at geographically important sections within the Township cannot be ignored. The Stoney Creek, Blue Bell, and Shady Grove Elementary Schools serve the residential neighborhoods nearby and provide a vast array of sports fields, tennis courts, and walking/running trails and courses which provide an important recreation component for the Township.

The projected population to the year 2025, which has included a virtual “build-out” analysis, suggests that under this worst case scenario approximately 190 acres would be required using recreation standards developed on the basis of park acreage per one thousand population. Currently the Township has approximately 374.7 acres as municipal parks and open space land, so at present there is a surplus of recreational land for needs projected to the year 2025.

However, not all of the existing open space lands owned and operated by Whitpain Township are necessarily conducive to active recreation needs of the future residents, nor does the open space preserved to date represent all of the valuable natural resources including cultural/historic sites that are recommended for future preservation. Therefore, the DVRPC standards are considered to be minimum guidelines and the Township will endeavor to provide additional open space, allocated perhaps more evenly to the existing census tracts within the Township and also with an eye toward preservation of valuable natural resources as well. The Open Space Committee also wishes to add acreage adjacent to existing park lands wherever practicable in order to provide for greatest efficiency of future use of these park sites.

As previously discussed, institutional uses such as Montgomery County Community College and public school facilities do satisfy a portion of the recreation needs that would be generated by Township residents. It is clear that Whitpain enjoys a strong "support group" of private, public and institutional facilities that help satisfy recreation needs of Township residents. However, there is a need for caution. At present the shared future use of school facilities is not guaranteed.

With the growing popularity of soccer and softball for both boys and girls, Whitpain is taking steps to identify additional sites for active recreation, which could include acquisition of vacant lands or preservation of existing properties that provide the resources for active recreation.

In addition, Wentz Run Park provides opportunities for passive recreation and outdoor activities such as walking for pleasure, picnicking, and active recreation for children and adults.

Whitpain is expected to add 1,300 employees by the year 2025, which would yield a total of approximately 21,000 employees working in the Township. The existing and future office and business complexes occupy the central and southerly sections of the Township - including the Unisys complex which is expected to undergo vast redevelopment and expansion.

CHAPTER 9

RECOMMENDATIONS

At meetings held during 2004 through fall of 2005 the Whitpain Township Open Space Committee, in conjunction with their Planning Consultant met to finalize a list of priorities regarding acquisition and preservation of open space properties within the Township. Each site was visited by the Committee. The Township was evaluated by geographical section in order to determine need versus availability for active and passive recreation in the hopes that new open space could be preserved close to the concentrations of population which could best benefit from the recreation facilities. Since the Township is nearing “build-out” all existing open space is important. The Township was also evaluated by determining those natural features worthy of protection and ranked them using the following priority system:

- Priority I: High - These are the most important properties which should be secured for permanent open space by fee simple acquisition, easement, or long term lease.
- Priority II: Medium - These are sites that are only slightly less important than Priority I. Not all priority II sites would necessarily be preserved for permanent open space but portions of each site have value.

Priority Properties would not necessarily be purchased by the Township. However, these are sites that should be preserved, at least in part, either by purchase by the Township or dedication during the process of subdivision and land development; or perhaps acquired by some other party such as a local conservancy, the School District, or thru conservation easements.

Guidelines for priority preservation are summarized below:

Priority I - High Preservation Properties

- Properties that provide a vital link to complete a trail connection or serve as a necessary link in a future trail connection.
- Preservation of natural features and habitats that preserve vital areas including the following: rare old growth forests, areas considered to be the most important natural habitats in a region, places of large specimens of valued vegetation, such as Red Maple, Sweet Gum, Black Gum, Sweet Bay Magnolia, Red or White Oaks and American Holly. Places where rare and valued animals live and birds roost are also considered vital priorities, especially a high quality wildlife refuge.

- Preservation of historic or cultural landscapes, especially if identified on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Properties that maintain scenic qualities, especially if identified in Township documents including the Comprehensive Plan or Open Space Plan as preserving a scenic viewscape.
- Properties that protect water resources, especially floodplain areas, riparian buffers, streams, creeks, waterways and which generally contribute to watershed quality. These priorities shall be especially significant if the preservation area also serves as a current or future trail connection including properties that are part of greenways, either streamside or contiguous to wooded areas.
- Properties that preserve significant agricultural land that is threatened by development.
- Properties that are contiguous to existing private or public open space.
- Note that for Whitpain, a high concentration of properties having high value Priority I qualities are identified and grouped into the High Value Prophecy Creek Heritage Open Space District.

Priority II - Medium Preservation Properties

- Properties that complete a trail or sidewalk connection or may complete a future connection.
- Preservation of natural features and habitats that preserve natural areas including the following : forests, areas of considerable vegetation, and greenway connectors where wildlife congregate.
- Preservation of locally important historic or cultural landscapes as determined by the Township.
- Properties that maintain scenic qualities.
- Properties that protect water resources, especially floodplain areas, riparian buffers, streams, creeks, and waterways.
- Properties that serve as pocket parks or address recreational needs of a specific demographic area of the Township’s residents.

The Recommendations Plan (located in the rear pocket of this report) identifies the properties which are the subject of recommendations which are discussed below.

Areas of Special Consideration

The Whitpain Township Open Space Committee recommends that the following areas continue receiving special consideration in the Township's land-use planning process. Because that process both guides the physical development of Whitpain and affects surrounding communities, the Committee recognizes that an ongoing and proactive approach towards open space preservation is necessary. Periodic meetings of the Open Space Committee, along with the formation of subcommittees and/or task forces as appropriate, will be useful in the implementation of the recommendations contained herein.

1. Wissahickon Creek High Value Conservation Area

Wissahickon Park is located in the northeast corner of the Whitpain Township, along the Wissahickon Creek between "West Ambler" and the Mercer Hill neighborhood. This seventeen (17) acre park has been closed for over 15 years because of asbestos contamination. The Township's intention has always been to reopen Wissahickon Park if funding could be secured to safely remediate the site. Today, the preservation of adjacent open space and park land in both Whitpain and neighboring communities has created a unique opportunity for multi-municipal conservation. The park adjoins an emerging and potentially significant regional conservation area, including WVWA's Waterfowl Preserve and adjacent open space and park land in Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, Upper Dublin, and Whitemarsh. Whitpain Township is eager to work with Montgomery County, Ambler Borough, and Lower Gwynedd, Upper Dublin, and Whitemarsh Townships to designate this as the Wissahickon Creek High Value Conservation Area, and to clean up and protect this important natural area. This multi-municipal conservation effort should be designated as a County priority (see Figure 9-1, Wissahickon Creek High Value Conservation Area).

2. Prophecy Creek Heritage and Open Space High Value Preservation District

This area consists of more than 350 acres stretching along both sides of the Prophecy Creek in Whitpain Township. It includes historic elements such as Dawesfield, the early log house on the Haas/Gravagno property, the scenic character of Lewis Lane, and the cemetery and historic church walls at the intersection of Morris Road opposite Lewis Lane.

This area also features a number of high value, Priority I properties including those that have been identified for permanent preservation and those already permanently preserved through acquisition by either Whitpain Township or the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association. Adjoining residential properties, while not individually important for preservation purposes, contribute to the overall character, architectural tradition, and natural environment of the area (see Figure 9-2, Prophecy Creek Heritage and Open Space High Value Preservation District).

3. Trail Systems

The existing and proposed trail system will connect Whitpain open space areas, link local trails to regional trails, provide access along scenic roads, and enhance the overall walkability of the Township. To support this effort, an advocacy committee should be formed to promote trail partnerships, alternative funding sources, and volunteer opportunities. Programs like “Adopt-A-Trail”, “Rails to Trails”, and “Friends of the Trails” have been successful in many communities. The formation of a committee to advocate for trail partnerships, best management practices, and volunteer support would contribute much to the Whitpain trail system.

4. Golf Course Open Space Program

It is suggested that the County develop a special program to help preserve the many open space assets (i.e. stream valleys, riparian corridors, wetlands, major physiographic features such as wooded hillsides and areas of steep slopes) located on and near golf courses. The purchase of development rights from clubs willing to participate would be a powerful incentive for preserving valuable open space. Whitpain Township has three private golf courses which total over 400 acres that would benefit from this program.

5. Scenic Corridors

As Whitpain has grown and changed, there has been increased development and redevelopment pressures along some of the most heavily used roadways in the Township. The once exclusively residential areas have evolved in recent years to include some office/commercial uses. From a heritage point of view, this plan recommends that the most valuable historic resources be protected and or reused in a manner that retains the historic character where practicable. Scenic roads should be accorded special treatment to ensure their protection. The Township Comprehensive Plan Update identifies the Corridor Areas that are of particular importance:

- a. Skippack/DeKalb Pike Corridor.
- b. Township Line Road Corridor.
- c. Morris Road.
- d. Lewis Lane.

6. **Wings Field**

Wings Field is a private airport surrounded by existing development. Wings Field is a non-conforming use in a residential area. Adjacent to Wings Field is an area designated as unprotected open space. This area should remain as permanent open space. The formation of a task force on Wings Field open space issues will help to protect this important area of the Township.

7. **Preservation Priorities**

Properties identified for preservation have been prioritized and located on Map 2 – Recommendations Plan (rear pocket of this report). Trail locations – both local and regional – are identified as well.

Recommendations
Whitpain Township Open Space Plan Update
Proposed Preservation Areas

<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
P-1 10 acres - Normandy Farms. Consists of historic buildings including original Franklinville Inn, Franklinville school house and Strassburger barn; includes Normandy wall design along Route 202 and Morris Road.	Historic preservation and re-creation; part of commercial inn, restaurant and banquet facilities.	I	Preserved per conditional use zoning approval. Continue to monitor.
P-2 14 acres along southeast intersection of Morris Road and Route 202, consists of ornamental trees and low land.	Natural area along MCCC; provides open space along all four corners of major intersection.	II	To be determined as part of MCCC master plan.
P-3 30 acres situate southern edge of MCCC, largely open and level. Access via internal loop road. Shared parking available.	Suitable for active recreation for both MCCC activities and community organizations.	II	To be determined as part of master plan. Notify MCCC of proposed open space use.
P-4 O & F property - 8.0 acres. Commercial garden center on front half, wooded on rear half. Contiguous to Wentz Run Park.	At minimum, acquire rear half and join with adjacent community park.	I	Year 1

<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
P-5 Rear of Stony Creek Elementary School, approximately 15.5 acres. Presently used for recreation and sports fields.	Neighborhood park	I	Negotiate preservation should School close.
P-6 20.5 acres adjacent to P-5 (above). Parallel to PECO lines. Use as extension of Liberty Bell Trail.	Trail connection	I	Year 1 - 5
P-7 Bruno property. 6 acres consists of farm house and wooded tributary of Stony Creek.	Add to Township I park land	I	Year 1 - 5 Negotiate purchase when offered for sale.
P-8 Mermaid Lake Swim Club and Golf Course. 46 acres including small property between Jolly Road and Northeast Extension of Pennsylvania Turnpike.	Preserve wetlands, existing pond and floodplain corridor. Utilize golf course for public recreation.	I	Year 1 - 5 Preserve open space via cluster development option.
P-9 Mermaid Lake Swim Club recreation field. 12 acres between Arch Road and Northeast Extension Pennsylvania Turnpike, generally open and slopes under 5%.	Neighborhood park	I	Year 1-5 Preserve open space via cluster development or Township purchase.
P-10 Blue Bell Senior Camp. 42 acres, strategic location of heavy woodlands, pond and camp between Unisys and Certain Teed Corp. and residential neighborhoods along Hoover Road and Maple Hill Drive.	Natural preservation area, neighborhood park	I	As becomes available. Possible use of cluster zoning or TDRs.

<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
P-11 Walbridge property. 74.6 acres with scenic frontage along Penllyn Pike and Morris Road. Consists of a variety of upland meadow, agricultural land and heavily wooded riparian corridor along tributary of Wissahickon Creek.	Natural preservation area, community park, or support private protection as part of Agricultural Security Area.	I*	Establish Negotiating Committee; join with WVWA to help preserve all or part of property.
P-12 Armentrout. 15 acres including elegant farm house and specimen trees. Adjacent to previous lands preserved by Township partnership with WVWA.	Frontage used for scenic trail. Balance used for passive park and recreation.	I	As opportunity arises. Negotiate right of first refusal. Partnership with WVWA.
P-13 Estate properties between Armentrout and Skippack Pike. About 37 acres - various owners.	Trail easements. Natural area.	I**	Partnership with owners
P-14 Prophecy Creek and buffer lands along northerly boundary of Wings Field.	Natural buffer area. Negotiate conservation easements.	I**	Partnership with Wings Field
P-15 Shady Grove School park area. 12 acres to rear of school property. Wooded area and recreation facility. Active use by School and Township soccer programs. Adjacent to Prophecy Creek Park.	Natural buffer. Include walking trail, active play fields.	I**	Negotiate with School District

*Suggest noteworthy as County priority for preservation. The Walbridge family is seeking ways to preserve all or part of the property as agricultural open space in perpetuity. At present, the property has been incorporated into the Worcester Agricultural Security Area (see Appendix).

**These properties are incorporated into the Prophecy Creek Heritage and Open Space High Value Preservation District. Consists of approximately 350 acres – see Recommendations Plan.

<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
P-16 Dawesfield. 18 acres including private residence and barn of historical significance (circa 1777 home of Elizabeth and James Morris) amongst specimen trees along Lewis Lane.	Preserve Class I historic buildings and site.	I*, **	Public/private partnership (including County or State agencies).
P-17 Haas-Gravagno properties along Lewis Lane with more than 3,000 feet of frontage along the WVWA protected lands of the Prophecy Creek.	Natural areas, conservation protection along Wissahickon tributaries; trails.	I**	As opportunity arises, partner with WVWA. Preserve open space via cluster development or Township purchase.
P-18 Wissahickon Creek Conservation Area. Consists of Whippain's Wissahickon Park, the WVWA's Waterfowl Preserve and adjacent open space and park land in Ambler Borough and Lower Gwynedd, Upper Dublin and Whitemarsh Townships.	Natural area, improve access.	I*, **	Partner with County and neighboring municipalities to clean up, connect and preserve this area.
P-19 Oak Lane Day School. 21 acres, active Day School along Stenton Avenue. Valuable woodlands and vacant land at Butler Pike.	Natural area	II	Partnership with Day School
T-1 <u>Proposed Liberty Bell Trail</u> Part of a 28 mile long recreational trail for walkers and bicyclists, links the Norristown Farm Park (Montgomery County) to Quakertown Borough (Bucks County). Planned by Montgomery County Planning Commission.	Regional	I	Coordinate with adjoining municipalities, request County funding approval.

*Suggest noteworthy as County priority for preservation.

**These properties are incorporated into the Prophecy Creek Heritage and Open Space High Value Preservation District. Consists of approximately 350 acres – see Recommendations Plan.

<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
<p>T-2 <u>Green Ribbon Trail</u> Part of a regional trail recommended and developed by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, runs generally parallel to Wissahickon Creek and connects Borough of Lansdale to such points south as: Fort Washington State Park, Morris Arboretum, and Fairmount Park in Philadelphia. Locally, the trail provides a visit to the historic Evans-Mumbower Mill along the banks of the Wissahickon at Swedesford Road in Upper Gwynedd Township, and via a proposed trail network to the Gwynedd Wildlife Preserve also in Upper Gwynedd Township.</p>	Regional	I	Coordinate with WWA.
<p>T-3 <u>Penllyn Blue Bell Pike to Wentz Run Park Trail</u> Provides walking connections through residential neighborhoods and employment centers through the mid section of the Township, including a connection to the Wentz Run Park natural walkway trail and link to the Inter-Municipal PECO Trail (see T-6 below).</p>	Local scenic, walking trail	I	Negotiate easements with property owners, preserve trail links as development opportunities permit.
<p>T-4 <u>Local Spur Trails from Green Ribbon Trail</u></p>			
A. Prophecy Creek to Skippack Pike	Local nature trail	II	Negotiate easements with property owners
B. Lewis Lane to Prophecy Creek	Local scenic trail	II	Negotiate easements with property owners
C. Penllyn Pike, Morris Road to Dawesfield to B (above)	Local scenic trail	II	Negotiate easements with property owners
D. Prophecy Creek south of Skippack Pike to Sentry Park	Local scenic trail	II	Negotiate easements with property owners
E. Montgomery County Community College link via Cathcart and Township Line Roads along preserved Harris National Lands Trust property.	Local scenic trail	II	Negotiate easements with property owners

<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
T-5 <u>Normandy Farms Trail</u> Provides walking and connections to T-3 and T-2.	Local walking trail	II	
<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
T-6 <u>PECO Trail</u>	Inter-municipal	II	Coordinate with Plymouth Township
T-7 <u>Intra-Parks Trails to Montgomery County Community College</u>	Local walking trail	II	

CHAPTER 10 COMPARISON TO COUNTY AND ABUTTING MUNICIPALITY PLANS

Comparison to County and Abutting Municipal Plans

A municipality's open space plan, to be totally effective and comprehensive, should compare favorably with the County's comprehensive plan and should be compatible with abutting municipalities' open space plans. The Whitpain Township Open Space Preservation Plan's main goals are aimed at achieving the Montgomery County's goals for land use, aesthetics, environmental sensitivity, and community identity.

Montgomery County's Comprehensive Plan

The Montgomery County Vision Plan, Shaping Our Future, A Comprehensive Plan For Montgomery County 2004 was adopted by the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners on September 9, 2004 and represents an updated guide dealing with the growth of housing, transportation, economic development, community facilities, and natural and cultural resource management.

The Vision Plan does identify numerous significant local or rural features such as natural areas inventory sites, hydrologic features and areas of hydrological and terrestrial convergence along the main branch and east branch of the Stony Creek in the southeasterly portion of the Township, and the Wissahickon Creek and its tributary, the Prophecy Creek, in the northeasterly corner of the Township.

Whitpain Township is identified as an important employment center (in combination with Plymouth Township) and contributes to Montgomery County's status as the leader in the State of Pennsylvania in high-tech jobs (high-tech jobs include pharmaceuticals, computer and office equipment, electronic components, space vehicles, and laboratory apparatus, etc.)

The 2025 Growth and Preservation Plan identifies Wentz Run Park, the Cooke tract, the Wurtz tract, and the Harris property as significant "existing preserved open space". Areas of "Proposed Open Space" generally coincide with recommendations and present preservation effort of this Open Space Plan.

Major land use concerns identified for Whitpain Township as a suburban community are:

- Preserve community open space.
- Revitalize and improve shopping centers.
- Encourage compatible development.

Important proposed interconnected County-wide regional trail system is also identified and traverses Whitpain Township at numerous locations which are identified on the Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update, particularly the proposed Liberty Bell Trail which would run from The Norristown Farm Park to Quakertown and the Wissahickon Green Ribbon Trail which runs parallel to the main branch of the Wissahickon thru the easterly corner of the Township a length of approximately 1.5 miles.

The most important potential major road improvement identified for Whitpain Township is the future widening of Route 202.

The Open Space, Natural Features, and Cultural Resources Vision (Chapter 4 of the Vision Plan) identify numerous goals which are included in both the 1995 and current 2005 Open Space Preservation Plan Update for Whitpain Township. These are briefly summarized below:

- Goal 11, Preserve large interconnected areas of significant open space.

Action: Whitpain has pursued preservation and expansion of interconnected areas at numerous locations:

- Along the Wissahickon Creek and its principal tributary, the Prophecy Crossing.
- Along the Wentz Run Creek from Skippack Pike to Township Line Road along the East Norriton boundary.
- Along the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike /and PECO right -of-way from Route 202 to North Wales Road.

- Goal 12, Protect and manage wetlands, streams, steep slopes, woodlands and natural habitats.

Action: These characteristics are most notable in the aforementioned areas of open space which have been previously preserved and incorporated in permanent protected open space. Future residential development in the Township's R-5 and R-6 Districts should preserve a minimum of 50% of each site (with focus on stream valleys, woodland and steep slopes) by utilizing the Open Space Residential Overlay Option.

- Goal 13, Create a greenway system along rivers, creeks and other sensitive and historic features.

Action: Whitpain Township has recommended floodplain and riparian corridor preservation concepts to coordinate trail links along the Stony Creek, and Wissahickon Creek and Prophecy Creek stream valley corridors.

- Goal 14, Develop a County-wide network of interconnected trails.

Action: The 1995 and Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update embrace a comprehensive and detailed trail plan which represents regional and local interests and needs. It should be noted in working Ambler Borough, Upper Gwynedd and Worcester Townships the trails are committed to interconnecting with abutting municipalities.

- Goal 15, Provide park facilities to meet the public's recreation needs.

Action: The 1995 Open Space Plan and Open Space Preservation Plan and the 2005 Update provide a detailed inventory and analysis of existing and future recreation facilities to meet the public's recreation needs.

- Goal 16, Preserve farm land and farming.

Action: The Recommendations chart entitled "Proposed Preservation Areas" identifies the few remaining farm operations in the Township and these have been or are proposed for preservation.

- Goal 17, Protect scenic roads, vistas and viewsheds.

Action: The Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update includes important scenic roads and their vistas and viewsheds when considering the identification of Priority I and II properties. It should be noted that the Township Planning Commission has adopted a Scenic Roads program circa 1990 and three "daily-use scenic roads" have been identified at Figure 45 of the County Open Space, Natural Features, and Cultural Resources Plan. These are: Penllyn Pike, Morris Road, and Skippack Pike.

- Goal 18, Protect historic resources and cultural landscapes.

Action: The Open Space Plans have identified important historic buildings and sites, and in addition the Township has identified the historic preservation and Whitpain Township has enacted zoning ordinances to encourage reuse of historic properties. Class I historic properties in the Township have been identified in Appendix I of the Whitpain Township Zoning Ordinance.

See Historic Site Survey appended to this report for the location of the Class I sites recited above, and Class II sites as well

Ambler Borough

Ambler is adjacent to the Township in a small area along the easternmost portion. The area is compatible with the Township's Land Use Plan in the area with similar uses of industrial and high density residential.

Open Space Update: Ambler's Open Space Plan 2005 identifies as a goal: Establish linkages to parks and trails outside the Boro. These include trail connections to the Wissahickon Creek Trail and linkages to The Armentrout Preserve; The prophecy Creek Trail; The Prophecy Creek Park; and land owned by WVWA along Morris Road.

East Norriton Township

East Norriton shares the Township Line Road border with Whitpain to the southwest. Uses on the East Norriton side of Township Line Road are residential and institutional for the most part. In the area between DeKalb Pike and Swede Street residential and professional offices are proposed in the latest Plan. There is a commercial corner at North Wales Road and an office use at the corner of Swede Road. The uses on the Whitpain side of Township Line Road are residential, for the most part, with the exception of the area in the vicinity of DeKalb Pike and Swede Street. This area is an existing commercial area. The commercial use at the corner of North Wales Road on the East Norriton side coincides with an area designated as Limited Non-Residential Conversion in the Land Use Plan.

Open Space Update: East Norriton has recommended the perpetual use and preservation of Stony Creek Middle School ball fields (along Township Line Road) and ranked as Priority I the preservation of ten acres of dense woodland opposite Clear View Avenue

Lower Gwynedd Township

Lower Gwynedd borders the Township along Township Line Road to the north from the border with Ambler to just north of the intersection with Route 202. Land uses on the Lower Gwynedd side are compatible with adjacent uses in Whitpain. Uses are, for the most part residential with lower densities to the north of DeKalb Pike. Higher density residential and industrial uses are closer to the Ambler border and are compatible with adjacent industrial and high density residential uses in the Township.

Open Space Update: 2005 is not complete at this time.

Plymouth Township

Plymouth shares the southern Township Line Road border with the Township, just southeast of East Norriton Township. On the east side of Walton Road the uses are very low density residential, low density residential and institutional. These uses are opposite existing residential and Office/Office Campus and industrial off of Norristown Road. In the triangle area created by the Northeast Extension and Walton Road in Plymouth, offices and limited industrial is shown with residential to the west of the Northeast Extension. This coincides with the Office/Office Campus, Single Family Residential and Institutional in Whitpain. The area just east of the Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike on Township Line Road is also designated as an area of Limited Non- Residential Conversions. This is partially to address the offices uses designated on the Plymouth side of Township Line Road.

Open Space Update: 2005 Update is not complete at this time. A draft open space plan entitled "A Plan For Open Space And Natural Resource Protection" dated May, 1995 was reviewed for consistency with Whitpain Township. Reference is made to the Linkages chapter which includes a discussion of potential open space linkages to adjoining municipalities.

Upper Dublin Township

Upper Dublin borders Whitpain along a small portion of its eastern border in between Ambler and Whitmarsh. The border is, for the most part, open space and recreation land with some residential land off of Morris Road. These uses are similar to the Land Use Plan on the Whitpain side.

Open Space Update: Awaiting a copy of draft plan.

Upper Gwynedd Township

Upper Gwynedd Township shares a border with Whitpain Township between Swedesford and North Wales Roads in the northern corner of the Township. The Upper Gwynedd Land Use Plan shows this area as open space preservation along the Wissahickon Creek and moderate density single family residential in those areas outside of floodplain and alluvial soils. Buildable areas in this part of Upper Gwynedd Township are largely developed and no significant new development is contemplated. The Upper Gwynedd Wastewater Treatment Plant is situated along the Wissahickon Creek a short distance from Township Line Road and services the easterly half of Upper Gwynedd Township as well as a few small areas in Whitpain and Worcester Townships.

Open Space Update: Located just north of the Wissahickon Creek is the Gwynedd Wildlife Preserve of approximately 230 acres that has been preserved as open space. Upper Gwynedd has proposed trail links to the Gwynedd Wildlife Preserve which would be accessible to Whitpain residents at Morris Road and Township Line Road

Whitemarsh Township

Whitemarsh borders the Township along Butler Pike from the border of Upper Dublin Township just below Morris Road. The draft of the new Whitemarsh Comprehensive Plan shows low density residential in this area of Whitemarsh with the exception of the area at the intersection of Butler Pike and Skippack Pike. This area is medium density residential with commercial/office at the intersection. This coincides with the Mixed Commercial and High Density Residential on the Whitpain side of Butler Pike.

Open Space Update: Awaiting copy of draft plan

Worcester Township

Worcester shares a border with Whitpain along North Wales Road. The Worcester Land Use Plan shows varying densities of residential use along North Wales Road. Medium and higher density residential is shown on the northern portion of North Wales Road, which coincides with the Medium Density Residential and Golf Course Residential on the Whitpain side of North Wales Road. Lower density residential and parkland along Stony Creek coincide with Single Family Residential on the Whitpain side. Only a small portion of Whitpain along North Wales Road, north of Morris Road is shown other than residential. This area at the intersection of Morris Road and North Wales Road is designated Office/Office Campus.

Open Space Update: Worcester has requested interconnections with Whitpain Township Trails:

- 1. Interconnect with horse trails adjacent to the Wissahickon Creek.*
- 2. The placement of the Proposed Liberty Bell Trail along the west side of North Wales Road – Worcester will propose an interconnection in the vicinity of the PECO Right- of-way, and thus a connections south toward the Norristown Farm Park.*

CHAPTER 11 POLICIES AND METHODS FOR PROTECTING OPEN SPACE OTHER THAN THROUGH ACQUISITION

There are a number of techniques that communities can use to preserve open space without actually taking title to the land in fee simple. These options are listed below:

1. **Zoning techniques.**

Cluster residential development: This is a zoning technique which allows the subdivider to cluster the location of homes on the buildable portions of a property while reserving vulnerable natural resources and land suitable for active or passive recreation into common open space. Common open space can be held by a homeowners' association or in total or in part offered for dedication to the township. This technique usually results in little or no additional dwelling units nor does it result in a change in the required single family detached lot, but rather allows the lot size and width to be reduced in exchange for open space.

Township action: Whitpain Township has created a cluster option under the R-1 Zoning District. In addition, numerous development options under Residential R-5 and R-6 promote the preservation of common open space, typically in a range of between 50o and 65%.

Institutional Zoning District: Spacious institutions such as hospitals, places of worship, colleges and universities, and convalescent and retirement homes normally require relatively large sites with low percentages of building coverage and impervious surfaces. Special regulations such as generous setbacks for property lines and street frontages and control of proposed vehicular access can often result in attractive development plans at a relatively low intensity of use.

Township action: Whitpain Township has previously created an Institutional Zoning District and the district has been applied to all substantial institutional properties including churches, schools, synagogue, and the Montgomery County Community College. The IN District anticipates a spacious utilization of the property by requiring large setbacks and requires a minimum of 60% of each site to be reserved in permanent green area.

Residential Golf Course Community District: This is a technique that has gained recent popularity in suburban townships which allows basically a planned residential development permitting a mix of single family and attached houses at a moderate density while also requiring a substantial amount of open space in the form of active and passive recreation. The active recreation component would include a regulation 18 hole golf course. This is a method by which interest in land planning can be achieved through the mix of mixed residential housing types and permanent open space to be used and maintained as active recreation.

Township action: A Golf Course Residential Community is a permitted use on tracts of ground zoned R-6 Rural Residence having a minimum of 250 acres. This land use has been implemented pursuant to the Blue Bell Country Club residential community and has resulted in over 260 acres of permanent common open space.

Low Density Residential Zoning: This technique is used in the northerly and westerly sections of the Township where public sewer and public water are not readily available.

Township action: This is a technique that is handled very carefully in Whitpain Township since large lot zoning may be held unconstitutional in certain circumstances. Lot sizes of 80,000 square feet are required in the R-5 District, which includes most of the territory adjacent to the Wissahickon Creek watershed. However, there are numerous development options at higher density provided a greater amount of open space is protected pursuant to conditional use approval.

Floodplain Conservation District: This is a district modeled after requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which requires the protection and avoidance of development within floodplain areas defined by hydrologic studies or defined alluvial soils which represent 100 Year Floodplains. This regulation normally precludes most types of intensive development and permits subtle or benign activities within the floodplain and carefully controls the nature of grading and filling within these areas. For municipalities such as Whitpain, such a zoning overlay can result in long green belt linkages of protected and undeveloped open space areas, which protect both vulnerable natural resources such as stream banks, woodland edges, wetlands, and wildlife habitats, but also result in protection of the health and safety of the residents by avoiding development in floodprone areas and reducing downstream impacts from new development.

Township action: Whitpain Township has adopted and has the Floodplain Conservation District to provide for very careful regulation of development and by and large the preservation of areas within the 100 Year Floodplain.

Transfer Development Rights: This is a zoning procedure authorized by the 1991 amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code which provides for the attaching of development rights to specified lands which are desired by a municipality to be kept undeveloped, but permitting those rights to be transferred from those lands so that the development potential which they represent may occur on other lands within the municipality where more intense development is deemed by the municipality to be appropriate. Article VI of the Municipalities Planning Code permits provisions for regulating transferrable development rights, on a voluntary basis, in accordance with express standards and criteria set forth within the Ordinance.

Township action: Whitpain has elected not to implement a TDR - Transfer Development Rights program at this time. While the concept sounds good, there are difficulties in terms of expressing the value of transferred rights and establishing sending and receiving areas so that the transferrable rights go to sections of the Township in which higher density is desired. This plan recommends that the TDR program be carefully monitored and considered during a subsequent zoning update, if the procedures prove to be manageable.

Park and Recreation Zoning District: This is a zoning procedure which restricts properties developed and utilized for park and recreation purposes to only those uses. A large percentage of each tract must be devoted to landscaped green areas and building coverage percentages are kept to a minimum.

Township action: Whitpain has adopted a P-R Park and Recreation District which has been applied to publicly owned and privately owned park and recreation facilities within the Township. Residential uses are not permitted and a minimum of 70% of each lot shall be kept as green area while not more than 20% of the total lot area shall be occupied by buildings or structures.

Other Non-Acquisition Open Preservation Techniques: A strategy such as a Riparian Corridor Preservation Ordinance should be considered.

Township action: Evaluate and consider adopting a Riparian Corridor Preservation Ordinance in connection with the preservation of the Stony, Prophecy and Wissahickon Creeks in order to mitigate flooding and protect water quality.

2. **Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.**

Woodland protection and landscaping regulations: This is a natural feature protection ordinance which requires that a certain percentage of woodlands be preserved and requires further that new development avoid areas of existing trees and heavy woods. Where protection is not practicable, then tree replacement is required, typically along the perimeter of properties or in other open spaces preserved as a part of the development process.

Township action: The Township has adopted a stringent Landscape Ordinance which includes protection and replacement provisions.

Implement a scenic road policy. The purpose would be to preserve important features of scenic corridors through the use of selective public acquisition, scenic easements, restrictive covenants, and land development techniques, as well as certain design considerations.

Township action: Whitpain Township through the Township Planning Commission has implemented a scenic road policy since 1990, subject to specific design and engineering recommendations by the Township Engineer and the Township Traffic Safety Unit.

Require developments to dedicate open space or pay a fee in lieu of dedication. This is a procedure typically following the preparation of a Recreation and Open Space Plan, wherein the developer of a property is required to reserve a certain percentage of the property for permanent open space or, in the alternative, pay a fee to the township which would be used to acquire or improve open space situated elsewhere within the township.

Township action: Whitpain Township has enacted a mandatory dedication of payment of a fee in lieu of for the preservation of open space. The size and location of open space to be dedicated is subject to the review and approval of the Township Park and Recreation Board.

3. **Establish a local land trust or environmental advisory council.** This is an agency that would be appointed by Township Board of Supervisors and function as an intermediary in terms of working with the Planning Commission and Park and Recreation Board for the specific purposes of advising techniques and standards for the protection of the environment and providing an agency that could receive and manage open space properties dedicated to the Township through cluster development, mandatory open space dedication, or donated by nonprofit or charitable trusts.

Township action: Upon completion of the Open Space Plan, the Township will consider the creation of a local land trust/environmental advisory council. This council would also interface with local and County watershed associations and conservation groups.

- 4. Meet and consult with landowners of large, undeveloped properties, including public and private schools and institutions as well as vacant and agricultural properties, in order to encourage the preservation of portions of the land which are environmentally sensitive such as wetlands, woodlands, and floodplains or areas of unique historic or cultural value on a voluntary basis.** One method would be to acquire a conservation easement in lieu of actual fee simple acquisition.

Township action: The Open Space Committee recommends that "Monitor Committee" be established to follow up and report back on special projects that are subject of future preservation. Examples would be the Walbridge Property and the Wissahickon Park which present long term challenges for preservation worthy of continued study.

- 5. Participate in the creation of agricultural security areas.** The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania allows groups of farmers subject to municipal approval to create Agricultural Security Districts. These districts must comprise at least 500 acres, although all the farms and agricultural land need not be contiguous. Farms located in agricultural security areas are protected from new ordinances and nuisance regulations that would restrict normal farming operations. Once created, condemnation of land in an agricultural security area is more difficult such as would be associated with municipal authorities, school boards, and other purposes as may be deemed appropriate by the governing body. Once created, farmers may be willing to sell their development rights or participate in the agricultural easement program, either with Montgomery County or in a transferrable development rights with the township. Such a program would permanently reserve farmland for agricultural purposes, creating permanent but privately owned open space.

Township action: The Township has agreed to work with local farmers and landowners to create an Agricultural Security District.

- 6. Comprehensive Planning: The 1982 Municipal Comprehensive Plan, revised in 1984, should be updated to define growth areas and identify key policies to preserve and enhance future properties for park, recreation, and preservation purposes.**

Township action: The Township is currently considering a draft Comprehensive Plan which is expected to be adopted in 2006.

7. Methods of acquisition, including variations on fee simple approach:

Installment Buying.

Installment buying is an acquisition method whereby the government agrees to purchase a set number of acres annually until the full parcel is acquired. In return, the full site is removed from the tax rolls when the initial agreement is signed. The owner may choose to remain on his land until it is completely sold and paid for. The advantage of this method is that benefits accrue to both government and the landowner. To the public agency with limited funds, installment buying spreads the costs over a period of years. The owner is relieved of real property responsibilities when the agreement is signed.

Long Term Lease with Option to Buy.

Long term lease with option to buy involves the negotiation of a lease price with a property owner and includes conditions for use and possible purchase of the property. The primary advantage of this method is that it permits flexibility. In the future, if the property is not needed for open space/recreation purposes it returns to the owner.

Purchase and Lease-Back.

Purchase and lease-back is the practice of buying land and leasing it back to the owner in accordance with agreed-upon policies for the use and protection of the land. Its chief advantage is that it permits purchase of property before prices rise or before the property is lost to development. It also permits flexibility, in that once purchased the land can be used for another public purpose, sold, or exchanged for another parcel.

Purchase and Resale.

Purchase and resale is similar to the above method, except that the parcel is purchased with the sole intent of reselling the property under conditions or restrictive covenants. If the property is obtained at a low cost, the resulting profits help repay initial purchase costs and can be used to acquire additional land. Another advantage is that after resale the government is relieved of ownership and maintenance responsibilities and the land is taxable.

Leasing.

Leasing is a popular, relatively inexpensive way to acquire recreation areas, especially if the land is not likely to be developed (i.e., reservoirs and utility lands). The term of the lease usually ranges from 20 to 50 years. A period should be established which is long enough to finance capital improvements. The owner of the leased property prescribes conditions and terms under which the property can be used and the lessee is required to carry liability insurance covering bodily injury and property damage.

Easements.

Easements are a successful way to save public funds, yet receive open space/recreation benefits. An easement is a limited right over land owned by another person. Legally, a person has the right to use his property subject to zoning laws, subdivision regulations, etc., however, he may sell to the government his right to use the land in specific ways.

The costs of easements vary with the type acquired. Easements can be affirmative or negative. Affirmative easements grant limited rights to the public to use land for public purposes, such as hiking, fishing, or riding. Negative easements do not allow public access, but restrict the owner in his use of the property. A scenic easement requires the owner to preserve the "openness" or natural beauty of a site, for example.

Use of easements is generally more limited and complicated than land acquisition, but it can retard or prevent destruction and premature development of scenic areas. Easements should be selectively used and tailored to fit the requirements of each particular situation. Affirmative easements can be used effectively to obtain public use of private lands for trails and access to water-based recreation facilities. Negative easements should be used along many of the municipality's visually attractive rural roads.

Donations.

Donations of land for open space and park purposes should be encouraged. A resident may be willing, even eager to donate property, but may hesitate unless approached by public officials. Land donations can be encouraged by granting lifetime occupancy rights and by pointing out certain tax advantages to the owner.

Not all land that may be offered for dedication is suitable for park purposes. Some sites may be inaccessible, or inappropriately located, or maintenance costs may be prohibitive. Land unsuitable for open space and park purposes that is accepted can be sold or exchanged for more desirable sites.

Land Trust and Conservancies.

Land trusts and conservancies are private, nonprofit, tax exempt trusts, usually organized by a citizen supported, nonprofit agency. Their funds can be used to provide future park lands and facilities and protect stream valleys and other important natural areas. Administration and management of the lands are the responsibility of the service agency.

Private nonprofits have an advantage in that they can often move faster to acquire property than a government agency can. Frequently a public-private partnership is formed in which the private agency acquires land and then resells it to a government agency at a later date.

8. **Relief approaches as a method of preserving open space and natural features through tax relief.** Listed below are brief explanations of various tax mechanisms:

Tax Exemption.

Tax exemption is sometimes given to privately-owned land that is open to the public. In New Jersey, land that provides public benefit, such as historic places, hunting and fishing areas, or forest preserves, and that remains undeveloped and available for public use, is granted tax exemption.

A statute like this does not exist in Pennsylvania, but if it did perhaps additional public benefits could be obtained without acquiring land. There has been talk in the General Assembly of modifying Pennsylvania's law to allow a similar tax exemption to publicly-owned private land where usage fees are not charged, and the municipality should be supportive of such legislation.

Deferral of Taxes.

Deferred taxation is applied to a landowner's property if the landowner is willing not to develop the property as it is presently zoned. The local taxing bodies and the owner of the land agree that land which is designated as open space, farmland, woodlands, or other similar uses in the comprehensive plan will be kept in its present use for a long period of time (10+ years) and that it will be assessed at its current value. The taxes will, therefore, be lower because the owner is being taxed on the present use and not the future potential use.

This is a fiscal policy that should be explored by the municipality because it does not lose money in the long run. When the landowner wishes to develop the property, the difference between the controlled rate and the normal rate, plus an agreed upon interest rate, must be paid back to the taxing bodies. Another advantage of deferred taxation is that it is not only applicable to farmland, but can be used to preserve existing recreation facilities (stables, rod and gun clubs, shooting ranges, or ski areas) that are likely candidates for development.

Preferential Assessment.

Preferential assessment is similar to the above tax concept except that it applies to selected land uses: agriculture, forestry, recreation, water supply, and the like. In this approach, land is assessed at its limited use value in order to remove tax pressures on the owners to sell at a speculative price for profit. Time constraints are usually assigned to the preferential assessment. Two acts are available for use in the municipality.

Act 515 - Allows counties to covenant with landowners for preservation of land in farm, forest, water supply, and open space uses. The covenant runs for a period of ten years and the real property tax assessment reflects the fair market value of the land as restricted by the covenant. The covenant can be renewed and terminated under conditions set forth in the Act.

Act 319 - Allows an owner of farmland or forest land, ten acres or greater (2 acres where it is showing an income), the benefit of having the land valued for tax purposes at its current use value. The Act provides for the payment of rollback taxes when the use of the land is changed. The program differs from Act 515 in that the applicant does not have to have permission from the local taxing bodies for the potentially reduced assessments.

CHAPTER 12 IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

Upon the completion of the Open Space Plan, the Township will endeavor to do the following:

1. Institute the Open Space Board on a permanent basis. The major functions of the Board will be to:
 - a. Monitor the progress of the acquisitions outlined in the Open Space Plan.
 - b. Meet regularly.
 - c. Interface with Township Board of Supervisors and Township Planning Commission on open space matters.
 - d. Maintain and revise the plan as may be necessary.
 - e. Work and report on Task Force Areas of Special Concern:
 - (1) Wings Field.
 - (2) Scenic corridor areas.
 - (3) Wissahickon Park.
 - (4) Golf course preservation incentives.
 - (5) Prophecy Creek Heritage and Open Space Preservation District.
 - f. Coordinate with adjacent municipalities and County to implement joint projects.
2. For Round One years 2005 to 2008, the Township will be active in the following tasks:
 - a. Secure Priority I properties.

- (1) Attempt to acquire long term leases or easements for those Priority I properties from landowners who are willing and agreeable for those properties already devoted to park and recreation uses, particularly in the eastern section of the Township as well as elementary school recreation facilities.
 - (2) Support property owners who wish to become a part of a multi-municipal Agricultural Security Area – as a first step toward permanent preservation of agricultural land. The Walbridge property is one of these opportunities.
- b. Upon the completion of the above, attempt to acquire fee simple interest in Priority I properties which rank high for future parks and recreation or scenic/natural features preservation.
 - c. Acquire Priority I properties through eminent domain in the event negotiated acquisition is unsuccessful.
 - d. Upon the completion of the acquisition of Priority I properties or in the event some Priority I properties are difficult or impossible to acquire on a friendly basis, secure those Priority II properties from landowners who are willing and agreeable to a sale at a reasonable price in an expeditious manner.
 - e. Identify Funding Sources.

Whitpain Township will pursue other grants available from Montgomery County, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNA), Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Keystone Recreation, Park & Conservation Fund, and the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC).

- f. Pursue land donations from existing landowners who desire to dedicate their properties, who desire special treatment on inheritance taxes, or which may be a part of a benevolent or a charitable nonprofit group.
- g. Work with the WVWA (Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association) in a manner that would further the preservation of watersheds within the immediate region of the Township; meet with WVWA representatives to determine and identify properties and trail easements that help implement WVWA master plan. Partner with WVWA in order to maximize available funding.
- h. Work with other watershed agencies and Montgomery County Lands Trust to further watershed and preservation goals.

3. Historic Preservation Ordinances.
 - a. Whitpain Township may consider the adoption of an Historic Preservation District which would encourage preservation of noteworthy buildings and sites by establishing zoning techniques which would review and regulate proposed changes to buildings located on the Class I List of Historic Resources.
 - b. The Planning Commission has employed a scenic road policy since 1990 which waives mandatory road widening and curbing for all or most of certain designated roads except as may be deemed necessary by the Township Engineer or Township Traffic Safety Unit in order to safely accommodate increased traffic volumes.
 - c. The Township Comprehensive Plan Update recommends that an official scenic road policy be incorporated into the plan and adopted as official policy by the Board of Supervisors.
4. Round Two, 2008 and beyond.
 - a. Continue to monitor and update the Township Open Space Plan as necessary.
 - b. Important Priority I, Priority II or subsequent properties deemed of high priority by the Open Space Committee will be acquired utilizing Round Two funds as may be made available by the County Open Space Board.
 - c. Acquire donations/dedications of land from developers as a part of cluster residential development.
 - d. Continue work of the Township Open Space Task Force Areas of Special Concern (see Item 1.e above).
5. Township Open Space Funding.
 - a. Although Whitpain Township has undergone rapid development coupled with an increase in residential and nonresidential development over the last twenty years, there remain valuable open space lands in terms of natural resources as well as historically important sites and buildings that should be preserved to the benefit of Township and County population.

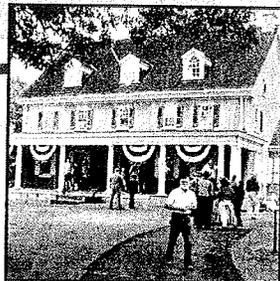
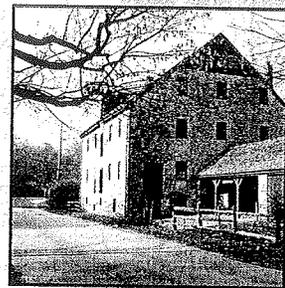
- b. Previously, the Township passed its own Open Space Bond that has provided additional monies for fee simple purchase or acquisition of conservation easements on properties deemed to have a high priority for preservation in the Open Space Plan.
6. Montgomery County Open Space Funding.
- a. It is also recommended that Montgomery County continue to participate in preserving open space parcels, particularly those with noteworthy historic buildings and extensive natural features. Of priority consideration should be sites which could be consolidated in a park link concept, particularly along the Prophecy Creek or Wissahickon Creek stream valleys, the Walbridge property, or in the westerly end of the Township in the vicinity of the Stoney Creek Elementary School where the potential exists to assemble over 150 contiguous acres extending from DeKalb Pike to North Wales Road.

APPENDIX

Open Space, Natural Resources, and Cultural Resources Plan

Shaping Our Future

A Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County



Green Hill Road Woods

(Skeppack and Worcester Townships)

One of the best populations in the county of a locally rare shrub (recently dropped from the species of special concern list) occurs west of Stump Hall Road within Evansburg State Park. In addition to the shrub, the site includes hemlock, beech, oak and cherry. Keeping the forest cover and minimizing disturbance can help to maintain the quality of this site.

Collegeville Floodplain

(Collegeville Borough)

This site, found south of Second Avenue along the Perkiomen Creek, is part of the county's Central Perkiomen Valley Park. The site is a locally significant floodplain community comprised of woods, swales and gravel bars. The canopy consists of sycamore, red maple and box elder with a diverse herb layer including sedges, grasses and wildflowers such as water lily, monkey-flower, forget-me-not, and stonecrop. The site serves as a buffer along the Perkiomen Creek but is impacted by runoff/nutrient input, ATV's and clearing for adjacent development.

Fruitville Road Floodplain

(Upper Hanover Township)

Located west of Water Street, this locally significant floodplain forest (silver maple, walnut, box elder) helps to protect water quality and fisheries within Perkiomen Creek. The site also provides wildlife habitat for birds, odonates, and amphibians.

Big Oak Woods

(Abington Township)

Protected within the county's Lorimer Park, this scenic site contains a small woodland area with mature red and white oaks and exhibits good community structure. The site also includes sugar maple, tulip poplar, flowering dogwood, mountain laurel, and spicebush. Maximizing the buffer around this area can help to preserve the natural quality of this site and help to prevent further encroachment of non-native, invasive plants.

Harris Woods

(Whitpain Township)

The majority of this site, located east of Morris Road, is protected within Crossways Farm, a Natural Land Trust preserve. The site is a locally significant example of a mesic forest community and contains an island of mature beech, oak, tulip poplar and ash surrounded by farmland and encroaching suburban development.

Stony Creek Meadow

(East Norriton Township)

An old field/meadow habitat within the county's Norristown Farm Park, this site provides a potential nesting area for grassland birds such as meadowlark and sparrows and contains an abundance of nectar and host plants (e.g. dock, thistles, dogbane, violets, etc.) that may support a diversity of butterfly species. Infrequent and late mowing (e.g. annual mow in fall) maximizes value to the bird and butterfly species.

Ivy Rock Cliffs

(Plymouth Township)

The limestone outcrops on this site support locally significant flora including alum root, ebony spleenwort (a fern), and columbine. Located along the Schuylkill River the site provides scenic interest along the Schuylkill River Trail. While weedy species (Japanese honeysuckle, garlic mustard) have crowded out some native plants, keeping the tree canopy and minimizing other disturbances (except possibly to remove exotics) can help to maintain conditions favoring the native plants.

Historic Resources, Class I Properties, Whitpain Township

543 Butler Pike
901 Butler Pike

340 DeKalb Pike
811 DeKalb Pike
901 DeKalb Pike
956 DeKalb Pike
1410 DeKalb Pike

957 East Township Line Road

737 Hoover Road

353 Lewis Lane
485 Lewis Lane
525 Lewis Lane
555 Lewis Lane
560 Lewis Lane

225 Mathers Road

480 Morris Road
1411 Morris Road
1701 Morris Road

275 Norristown Road

230 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike
571 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike
1399 Penllyn Blue Bell Pike

580 School Road

350 Skippack Pike
475 Skippack Pike
481 Skippack Pike
564 Skippack Pike
598 Skippack Pike

601 Skippack Pike
602 Skippack Pike
731 Skippack Pike
799 Skippack Pike
1098 Skippack Pike
1099 Skippack Pike
1149 Skippack Pike
1205 Skippack Pike
1451 Skippack Pike
1475 Skippack Pike
1510 Skippack Pike
1520 Skippack Pike
1530 Skippack Pike
1540 Skippack Pike
1810 Skippack Pike
1999 Skippack Pike

1215 Union Meeting Road

1220 Wentz Road

276 West Mount Pleasant Avenue
299 West Mount Pleasant Avenue
264 West Mount Pleasant Avenue