



Introduction

1.1 Regional Context

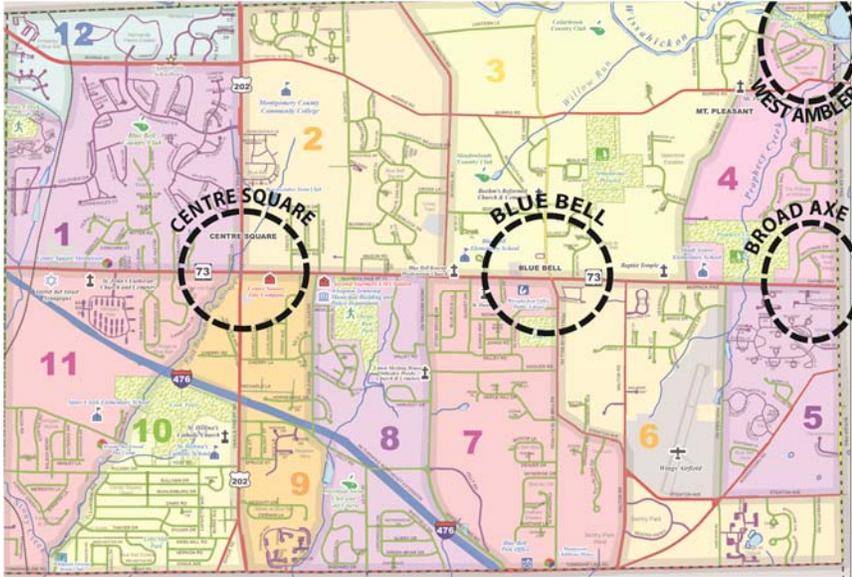
Whitpain Township is located in central Montgomery County, Pennsylvania and has an approximate size of 12.9 square miles. The Township is located 20 miles from Center City Philadelphia, 30 miles from Trenton, New Jersey, and 38 miles from Wilmington, Delaware. Whitpain is bordered by eight municipalities; Ambler Borough, Lower Gwynedd Township, Upper Gwynedd Township, Worcester Township, East Norriton Township, Plymouth Township, Whitmarsh Township, and Upper Dublin Township.

Figure 1-0: Context Map



1. Introduction

Figure 1-1: Village Locations



DeKalb Pike (Route 202) and Skippack Pike (Route 73) are Whitpain’s two primary vehicular thoroughfares that link the Township to the surrounding municipalities. Access to the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Route 476 (Northeast Extension of the PA Turnpike) is about 1.5 miles south of Whitpain. The PA Turnpike and Route 476 connect the Township to the surrounding Philadelphia metropolitan area. The Township has several public bus routes within the Township, however there is no public rail access in Whitpain. The nearest rail stations are located in Ambler Borough and Lower Gwynedd Township.

The character of the Township is primarily defined by its four historic villages: Broad Axe, Blue Bell, Centre Square, and West Ambler. Broad Axe, Blue Bell, and Centre Square were established prior to the American Revolution, while West Ambler evolved later. While the villages and the areas surrounding them have experienced considerable growth and change over the years, the villages have still maintained their own defining characteristics and sense of place. The four villages serve as the historic foundation and important organizing element of the Whitpain Township Comprehensive Plan.

Whitpain 2035
4 Villages within a Community

Mission
The mission of Whitpain Township Government is to efficiently, responsibly, and creatively provide the essential services that build value, enhance the quality of life, and protect the health, safety, and rights for all who live in, work in, and enjoy Whitpain.

Values
Whitpain Township Government seeks excellence in accomplishing every facet of our mission. In pursuit of excellence, we value most of all:
Integrity Respect Responsiveness
Stewardship Partnership

Whitpain in 2015

- Learn**
 - Introduction: Comprehensive Planning to 2035
 - Community Quality: Learning Lessons From
 - Facilitated by: Planning Commission
 - Town Hall Venue: Montgomery Co. Comm. College
 - When: February 6, 2015 at 7:00 pm
- Live**
 - Introduction: Sustainable Communities
 - Community Quality: Environmental Factors
 - Facilitated by: State-Tree Commission
 - Town Hall Venue: Main House
 - When: February 13, 2015 at 7:00 pm
- Work**
 - Introduction: Whitpain's Business Community
 - Community Quality: Economic Factors
 - Facilitated by: Chamber of Commerce
 - Town Hall Venue: Ambler
 - When: March 13, 2015 at 7:00 pm
- Enjoy**
 - Introduction: Whitpain's Recreational Community
 - Community Quality: Recreational Factors
 - Facilitated by: Park & Open Space Board
 - Town Hall Venue: Centre Square Fire Company
 - When: March 20, 2015 at 7:00 pm

2015-2016 PREPARE: Kickoff Town Meeting, Public Hearing, Recommendations
2015-2016 EDVISION: 2 Town Hall Open Sessions, Draft Plan
2016-2017 ADOPT: Complete the plan, Public Hearings, Recommendations, Approvals

4 Villages within a Community

Area = 131.6 sq. mi. (approx. 4.5 miles x 3 miles)
Population = 64,700 (2010)
Families = 2,639 Households (1st with children under 18 (2010))
Number of Jobs = 46,000
Total Millage Rate = 31% Lowest in Montgomery County

Preserved Open Space = 448 Acres
Watersheds = 2 (Delaware Creek & Skippack Creek)
Tree Canopy = 5,532.44 Acres (43% of Total)
Density = 485.2 / sq. mi.
Avg. Residential Assessment = \$110,000

Generally, Whitpain sits in a prominent location within the Philadelphia Metropolitan area with good access to area highways and other prominent destinations. For this reason, Whitpain has become a major economic driver in the area focused around the four villages and the Route 202 corridor. Whitpain also contains many office buildings and office complexes such as Sentry Park and the Arborcrest Corporate Campus that provide a multitude of employment opportunities in the Township. These office areas are home to several large employers such as Aetna, Unisys, Henkels and McCoy, and PRA Health Sciences that help drive the local economy. A complete list of the Township's largest employers can be found in the appendix of this report. Additionally, Whitpain has a privately owned airfield, several country clubs, and a good supply of open space and recreational opportunities. Whitpain is also focused around building a strong community. The mission of the Township government is to efficiently, responsibly, and creatively provide essential services that build value, enhance the quality of life, and protect the health, safety, and rights of all who live in, work in, and enjoy Whitpain. The Township seeks excellence in accomplishing every facet of their mission. In pursuit of excellence, Whitpain values integrity, respect, responsiveness, stewardship, and partnership. In all, the Township is strong economically with goals of achieving a strong community atmosphere and high quality of life in the Township. Still, the Township understands that there are many opportunities for improvement which it hopes to identify and implement through this plan.

1.2 Plan Purpose

Whitpain Township is almost completely developed. There is a strong need for the Township to ensure that future development and redevelopment remains consistent with its vision. The Township's four core villages represent the Township's rich his-

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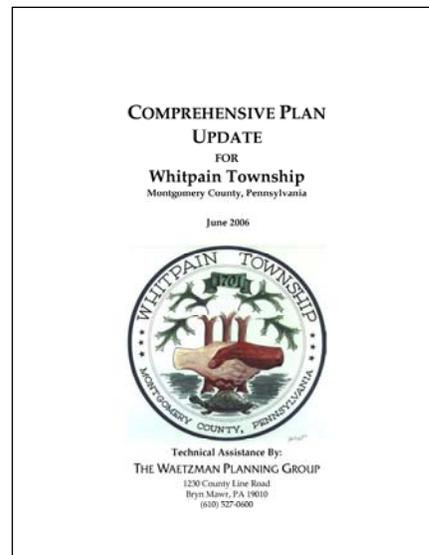
tory and will contain some future redevelopment. The Township must make decisions on how to best enhance these villages to ensure their continued success and vitality over the next 20 years and beyond.

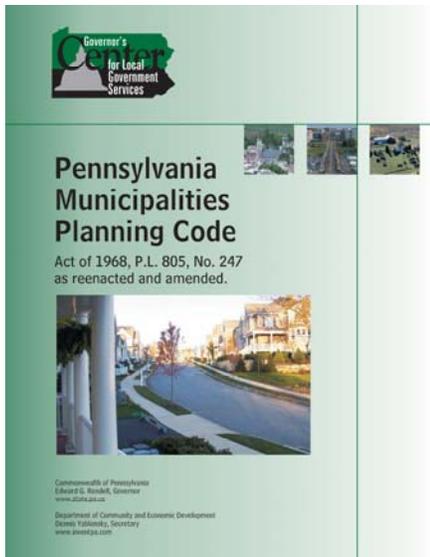
Additionally, Whitpain's prominent location in the Philadelphia metropolitan area has provided many benefits and allowed it to prosper. However, it has also created many challenges.

Transportation in Whitpain has become an important focus for Township officials as segments of roadway infrastructure no longer adequately accommodate the traffic demand. Additionally, existing infrastructure needs to provide facilities for alternative means of transportation such as walking and bicycling. The Township will need to prioritize transportation improvements and continually seek out funding for these types of projects. This Comprehensive Plan recommends a course of actions to help the Township achieve its future transportation goals.

The Township's previous Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2006. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code recommends updating the Comprehensive Plan every 10 years. The previous plan of 2006 included specific recommendations that include: create an identity for Centre Square Village; Protect environmentally sensitive land; Execute recommendations of the Whitpain Township Park and Recreation Plan- Recreation 2020; and Monitor the progress of the Turnpike improvement project and Route 202 improvement project to ensure that they are consistent with the needs and desires of Whitpain. The Township has achieved some of these goals and made strides towards accomplishing many others.

This plan will update the Township's goals based upon the changes that occurred over the past decade and the needs of a constantly evolving community. This plan provides specific action items and implementation recommendations as a guide for





the Township over the next decade and beyond.

1.3 Legal Authority

The Comprehensive Plan is a land use and growth management planning tool that serves as an official public document to help guide both public and private decisions about development in the community. The Comprehensive Plan defines a community's vision and goals for the future, recommends strategies and specific action items necessary to achieve these goals and sets forth a plan to implement these recommendations. Comprehensive Plans address many facets of the community including land use, housing, transportation, economic development, community services, natural resources, historic resources, agricultural preservation, energy conservation, and interactions with adjacent municipalities. It is intended that this plan guide future decisions by the Township staff and Board of Supervisors concerning development and redevelopment, as well as a guide for implementing ordinances and community programs.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC) requires Comprehensive Plans to include a statement of the community's future development goals and objectives. Comprehensive plans in Pennsylvania are advisory only and are designed to act as guides for future policies, decisions and actions. As only an advisory document, no action of the Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors may be declared invalid, challenged or appealed on the grounds that it might be inconsistent with any provisions of the comprehensive plan.



1.4 Community Guidance / Public Participation

The Township engaged in a nearly two year planning process to complete this Comprehensive Plan update. The process began

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in April, 2014 with the formation of a project committee. The planning consultant team of Simone Collins Landscape Architecture (land planning and landscape architecture), McMahon Associates (traffic planning), and Urban Partners (community and economic development) was retained in September, 2014. The Comprehensive Plan process lasted from October 2015 until completion in December 2015 and the adoption of the plan occurred in the early part of 2016. The information and recommendations of this plan were compiled through an extensive public participation process that included five public “Town Hall” meetings. Information and suggestions received at the Town Hall meetings were instrumental in developing the goals and future direction of the Township as presented in this plan. The planning process was driven by a dedicated 15 member project committee that included representatives from across the Township. Project committee members included:

- Jim Blanch, Township Engineer
- Fred Conner, Chairman, Board of Supervisors
- Ken Corti, Chairman, Planning Commission
- Jaime Garrido, Associate Vice President of Facilities and Construction, Montgomery County Community College
- Dillon Horwitz, Wissahickon High School student
- Greg Klucharich, Assistant Engineer, Sustainability Coordinator
- Joan Knies, Vice-Chair, Shade Tree Commission
- Ed Lane, Chairman, Zoning Hearing Board
- Bill Lutz, Jr., Chairman, Board of Appeals
- Cathy McGowan, Business Community Perspective

Comprehensive Plan for Whitpain Township

Project Schedule- Revised 3/2/15

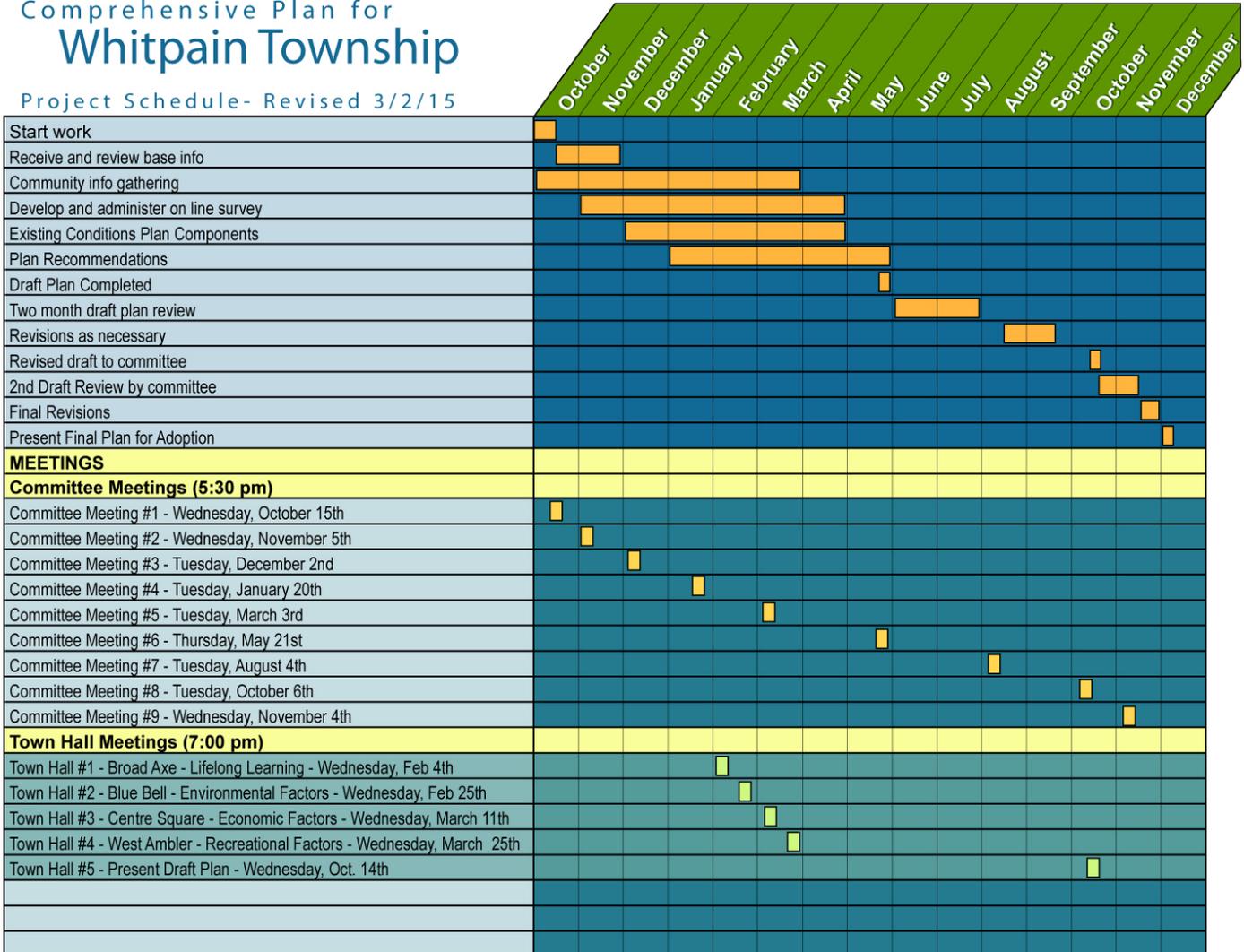


Figure 1-2: Project Schedule

- David Mrochko, Assistant Township Manager
- Susan Mudambi, Chairperson, Park and Open Space Board
- Melissa Murphy Weber, Board of Supervisor
- Roman Pronczak, Township Manager
- Robert Whittock, Township Historian (unofficial)



The committee held nine meetings throughout the planning process. All committee meetings were also open to the public, as shown on the project schedule (Figure 1-2). Notes and other information from all the meetings and the public participation

1. Introduction

process can also be found in the appendix of this report.

Town Hall Meetings

Five public Town Hall meetings were held over the duration of the project. These meetings were vital part of the planning process as it is extremely important to gather information from the residents about the current state and future direction of the Township. Each of the first four Town Hall meetings were focused around a specific discussion topic and one of the four Township villages. Each of the first four town hall meetings also had a keynote speaker who spoke about the specific topic of the meeting. The fifth Town Hall presented a draft Comprehensive Plan in order to receive comments from the community. Each of these five town hall meetings are described below.

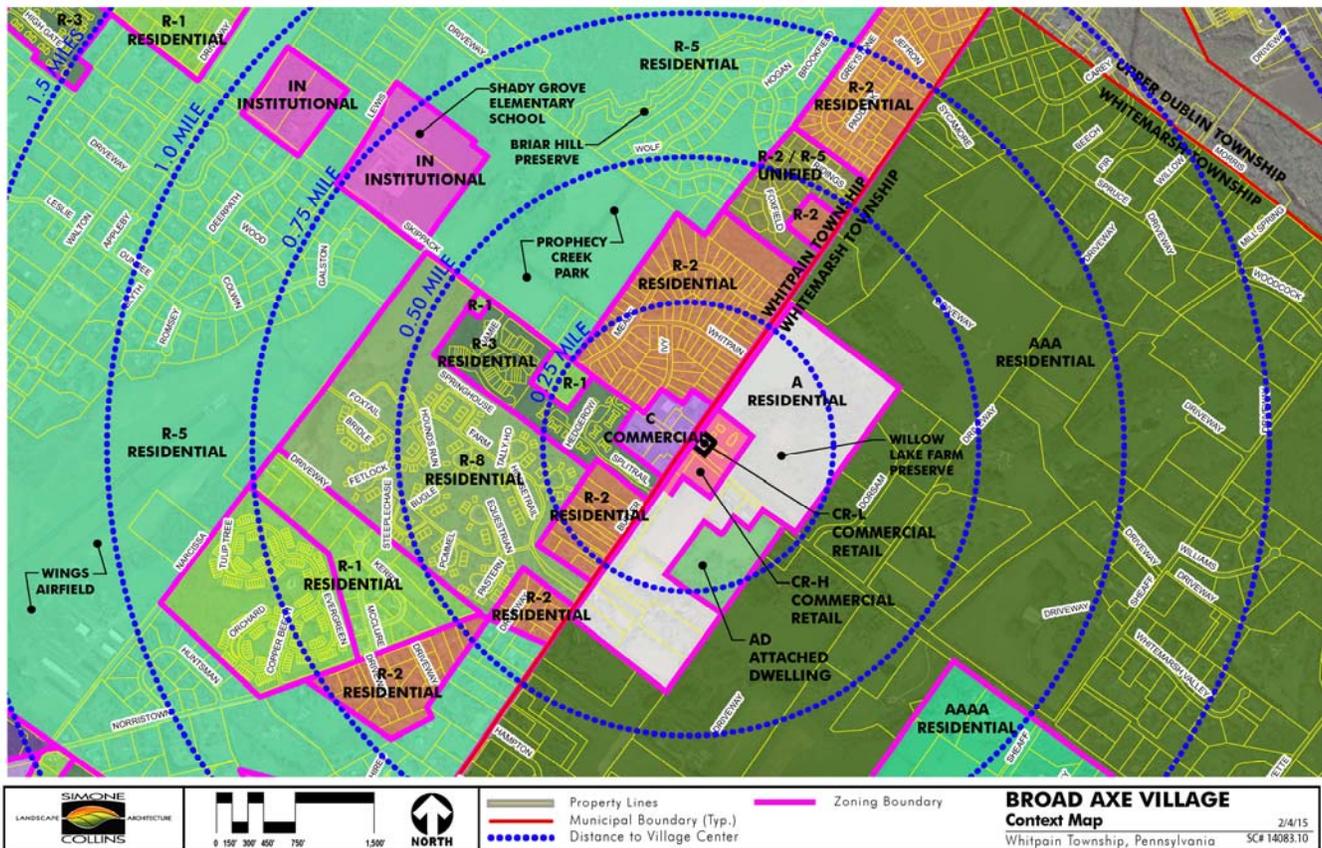
Town Hall Meeting #1

The first Town Hall meeting was held on Wednesday, February 4th, 2015 at Montgomery County Community College, College Hall, Room 144/148. The meeting had approximately 70 attendees. The meeting began with a presentation by the keynote speaker, Tom Hylton, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, author of Save Our Land, Save Our Towns, and president of Save Our Land, Save Our Towns, Inc. The overall topic of the meeting was “Lifelong Learning” which included an introduction to Comprehensive Planning and an overview of some of the Township’s existing features, and important Comprehensive Plan elements. The village focus for the meeting was the Broad Axe Village. Items discussed included the existing conditions of the village as well as potential challenges, and opportunities. The meeting was then opened up for public comment. A summary of some of the comments received at this meeting are listed herein. The entire list of comments and notes from the meeting can be found in the appendix of this report.

TOWN HALL MEETING #1 **COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

- Nearby SEPTA rail lines only run hourly at night.
- Penllyn SEPTA rail station is very dark, not safe, and has limited parking.
- There are no trails in Prophecy Creek Park.
- The gas station at Butler Pike and Skip-pack Pike has been vacant for around 10 years.
- Important to maintain their character of villages.
- W. Ambler superfund site was recently part of a revitalization effort.
- The Belfry Station was a train station in Whippain on the former Stony Creek Branch.
- There are no true boundaries to the villages.
- More regular rail service to Ambler
- Connect Broad Axe Village to Ambler with a trail and sidewalks.
- Connect Broad Axe to Prophecy Creek Park and Blue Bell.
- Walkability in the Township is an issue. Getting to existing trails is difficult.
- Options for trails include narrowing vehicular travel lanes or using PECO ROW.
- Build trails within Prophecy Creek Park.
- Create a design plan/guidelines for future development.
- Create more attractive architecture and streetscapes in the villages.
- Route 202 and Route 73 is a prominent location that needs improvements.
- Remedy traffic along with gas station development.
- Redevelopment of properties in Whippain will be needed since it is mostly built out.
- Connect currently preserved open space
- Prioritize stormwater and green infrastructure improvements.

Figure 1-3: Broad Axe Village Context Map



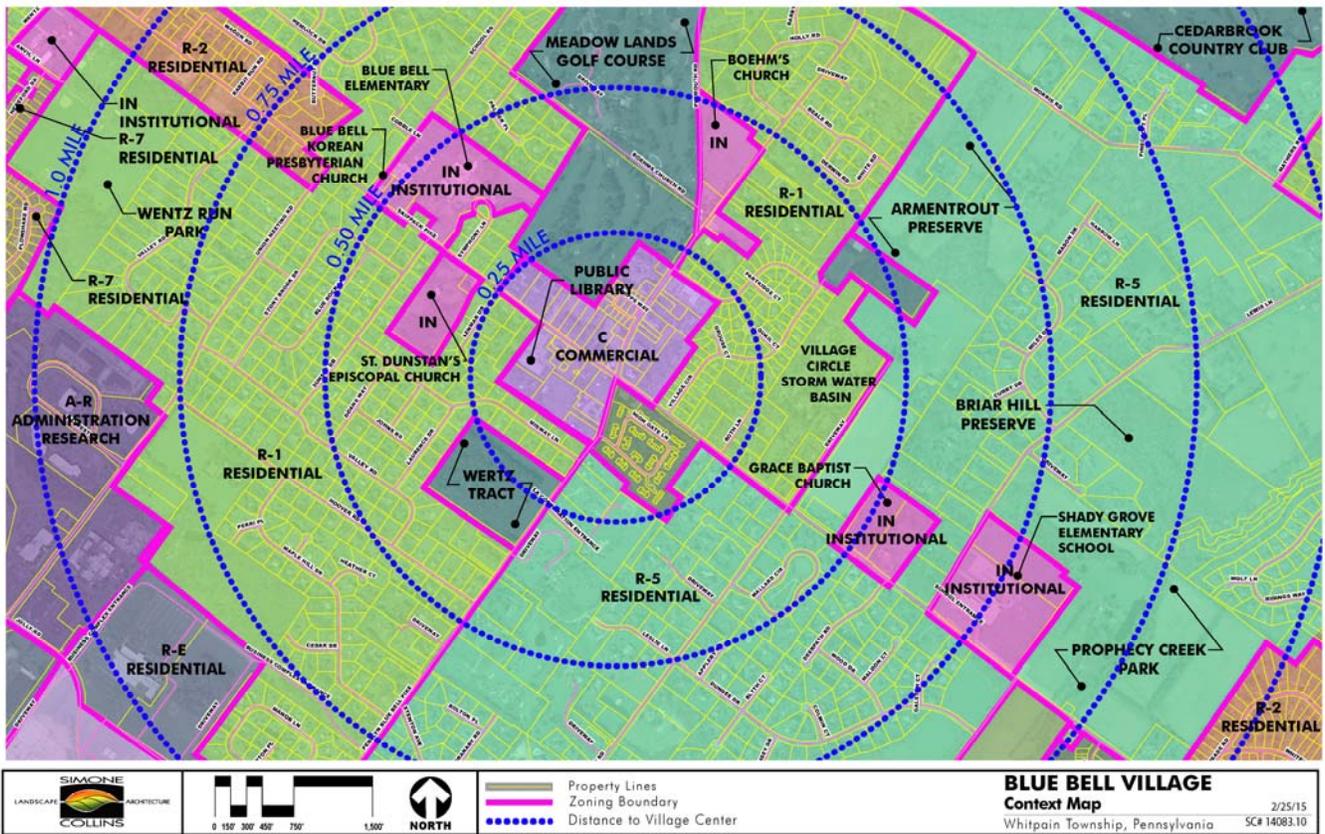
**TOWN HALL MEETING #2
COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

- Install solar systems on area shopping centers.
- Can the Township require that native species are planted?
- Certain stormwater requirements will be mandated by the State to mitigate impacts of Centre Square Commons.
- Prophecy Creek is healthy because much of it is surrounded by protected open space.
- Bump-outs with curbs and trees could help calm traffic
- There will be two new traffic signals installed as part of the Centre Square Commons development.
- Walkability and traffic are an issue in the Township, particularly in Blue Bell Village
- Bus and commuter traffic near the Community College creates traffic issues on Morris Rd.
- The Township’s historic preservation ordinance is important and should be considered as part of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Large jets at Wings Field are an issue.

Town Hall Meeting #2

The second Town Hall gathering took place on Wednesday, February 25th, 2015 at the Manor House at Prophecy Creek. Over 53 citizens attended. The topic for the meeting was the environmental factors of Whitpain Township. The meeting began by a presentation by Dr. Jeffrey Featherstone, Director of the Temple University Center for Sustainable Communities. Dr. Featherstone discussed drivers of sustainability, climate change, existing sustainable practices in Whitpain, and strategies for improving local sustainability. Following Dr. Featherstone’s presentation, the planning consultants discussed the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, gave a brief overview of the Township’s environmental features, and discussed existing conditions, challenges, and opportunities of the Blue Bell Village. The meeting was then opened for public discussion.

Figure 1-4: Blue Bell Village Context Map



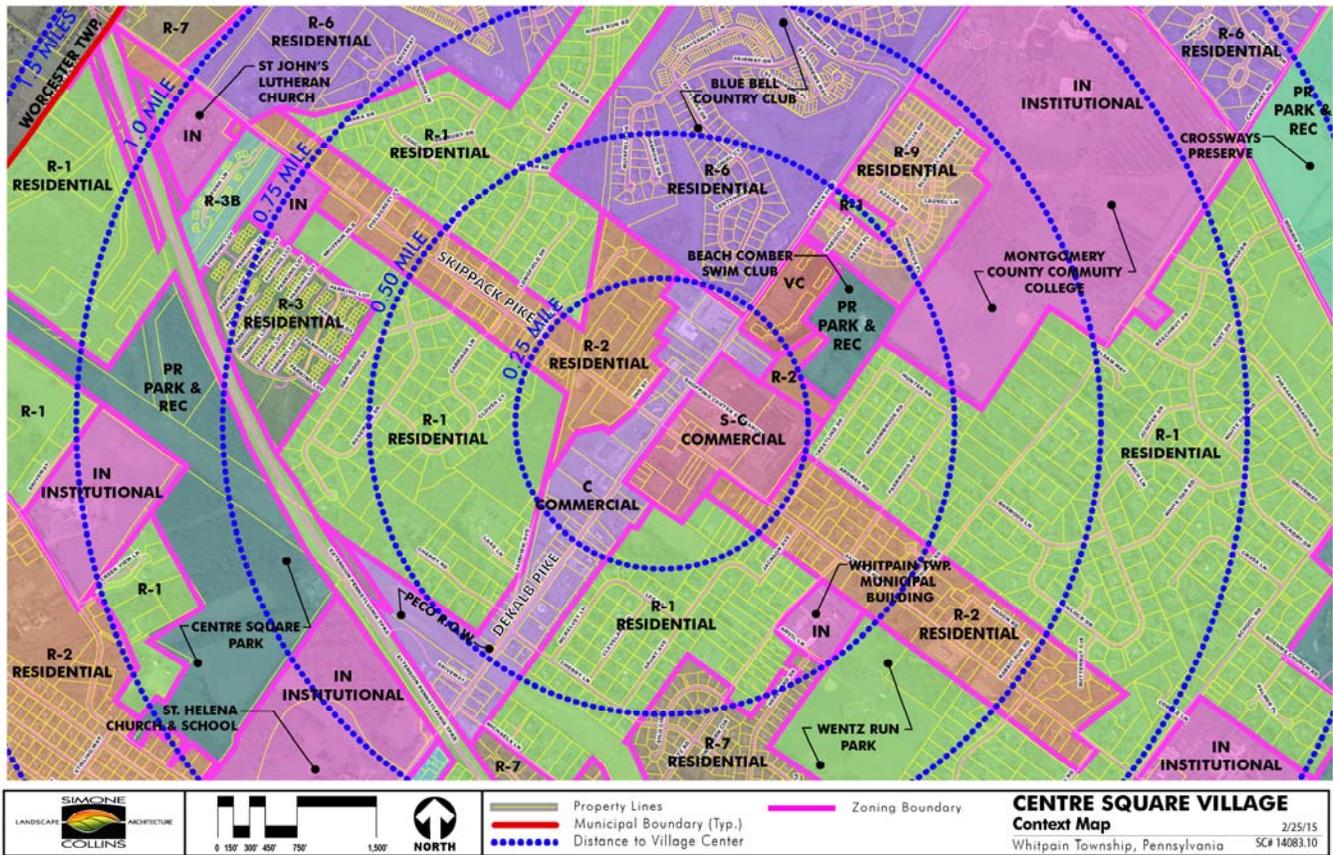
Town Hall Meeting #3

The third Town Hall meeting was held on Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at the Arborcrest Corporate Campus, Hillcrest II building located at 721 Arbor Way in Blue Bell. The meeting was attended by over 21 people. The topic for the meeting was economic factors. The meeting began with presentations and discussion with the keynote panel which included area land developers, John Zaharchuk of Summit Realty Advisors and Victor Meitner, PC of Meitner Homes and Victory Builders. Mr. Zaharchuk discussed his redevelopment work at the Ambler Boiler House and then Mr. Meitner discussed his redevelopment work at 564 Skip-pack Pike and the Broad Axe Tavern. The village focus for the evening was the Centre Square Village and included a presentation of the existing conditions, challenges and opportunities. Following the presentations, the meeting was opened for public discussion and comment.

TOWN HALL MEETING #3 COMMUNITY COMMENTS

- Mixed use development at Centre Square Village could be a good idea.
- Motion sensor lights on timers within local banks can create safety issues.
- Shared parking is an option to reduce traffic congestion and improve efficiency of parking areas.
- The Route 202 widening project is funded and is expected to be completed by 2020.
- Pedestrian safety at Centre Square will be a concern.
- The timing of redevelopment in the villages will be driven by the private sector.
- Proposed trails and road improvements are two types of improvements that should be included on the Township's Official Map.
- The Township should evaluate their signage requirements in order to adequately control the size and appearance of commercial signage in certain areas such as the villages.

Figure 1-5: Centre Square Village Context Map

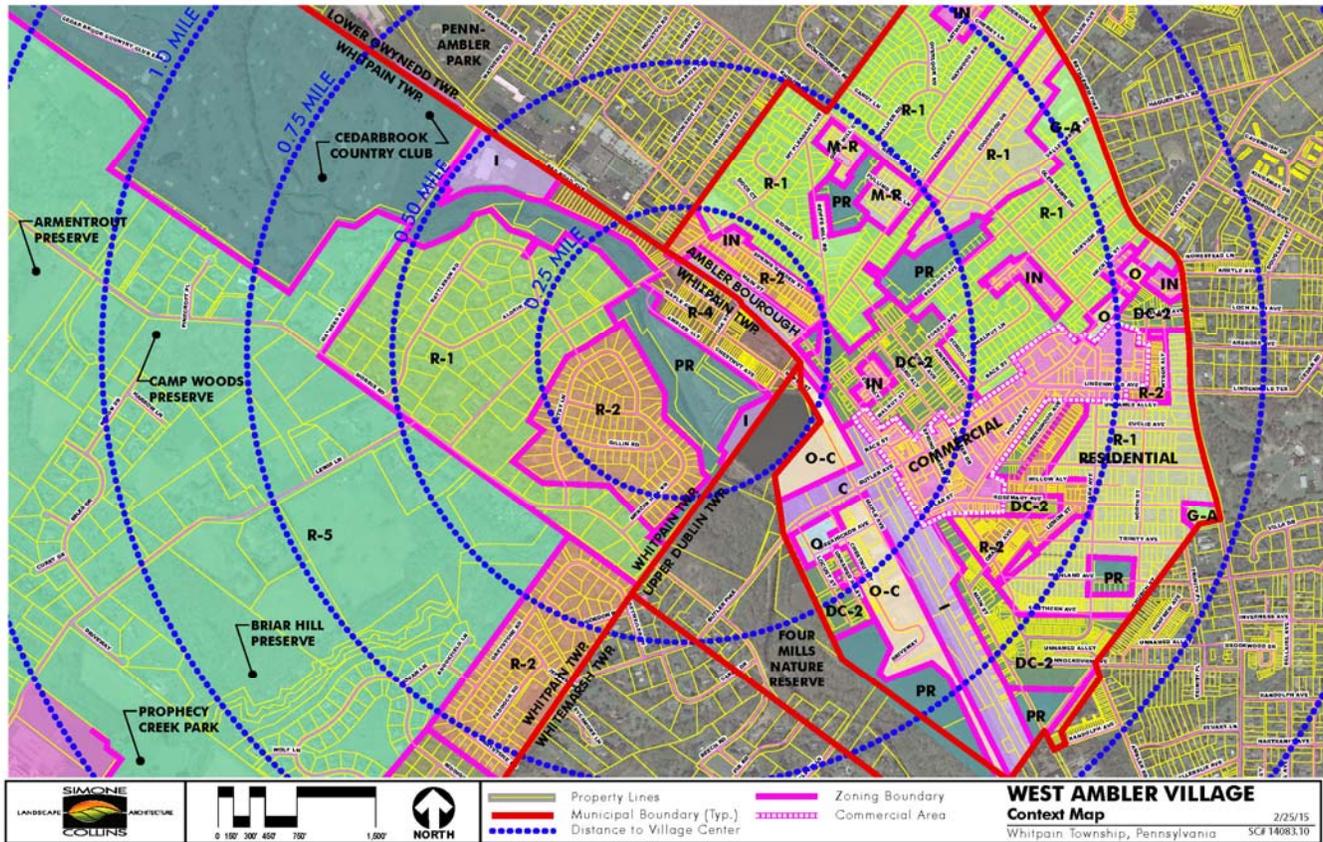


Town Hall Meeting #4

The fourth Town Hall meeting was the last in the information gathering phase of the project. Over 26 people attended. The topic of the meeting was recreational factors and the village focus was the West Ambler Village, which had recently been the subject of a neighborhood revitalization plan in 2013. The meeting began with a presentation by Drew Gilchrist, Regional Advisor, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Mr. Gilchrist discussed some of the findings of the 2014-2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the value of community recreation facilities, and recommendations for successful planning of recreational elements within communities. The planning consultants then briefly discussed the West Ambler Revitalization & Action Plan completed in 2013. The consultants updated the meeting attendees on the progress and status of the plan's recommended action items. Following discussion of the

1. Introduction

Figure 1-6: West Ambler Village Context Map



West Ambler village, the meeting was opened for public question and comment.

Town Hall Meeting #5

The fifth and final Town Hall meeting was held on Wednesday, October 14th, 2015 at the Montgomery County Community College, College Hall, Room 144/148. At this meeting, the planning consultants presented the Draft Comprehensive Plan in order to receive comments from the community. The Draft Plan was made available for review on the Township website.

Meeting notes and attendance lists for all the public meetings can be found in the appendix of this report.

TOWN HALL MEETING #4 **COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

- Healthcare facilities may be a good source of funding for recreational facility development.
- The former firehouse that was constructed in Broad Axe was repurposed because anticipated housing was not constructed.
- Whitpain Township does not have its own sewage treatment facility.
- There are existing trails within the Crossways Preserve, Briar Hill Preserve, and Camp Woods Preserve
- The Township should focus on creating a Township-wide trail map to inform the public of where they can go for recreation / trail use.
- Plastic netting at Armentrout Preserve prevents horse traffic through the area and also creating difficulties for dogs.
- There are proposed trails through and around Montgomery County Community College. These trails will link the College to The Whitpain Township building and Wentz Run Park.
- The Route 202 improvements will include sidewalks and bike lanes across the entire length of the Township.
- The proposed trails at the Montgomery County Community College will extend north through the Crossways Preserve and link to Lower Gwynedd Township.
- It is anticipated that the College parking lot will serve as a trail-head. The MCCC trail project is expected to start this summer.
- The Township trail plan also includes a proposed trail from Wentz Run Park to South Township Line Road.
- There is a dog park proposed at Centre Square Park. The dog park is expected to open in September, 2015 at the time Centre Square Park opens.
- There are issues with debris at the Jolly Road and Township Line Road intersection that makes it difficult for pedestrians. It was noted this area will be part of a future widening project that will include pedestrian facilities.
- There is a stormwater drainage issue at the Ginkgo Drive and Morris Road intersection.

1.5 Plan Implementation

It is extremely important to make this plan accessible in order to ensure the implementation of the recommendations presented herein. This plan is divided into sections, with the Implementation Plan, serving as a guide for taking action on plan recommendations. The recommendations chapter provides clear guidance on individual actions, while the Implementation Plan coordinates the recommendations by priority, responsibility, cost, and funding. Both of these sections should be referenced repeatedly by Township officials, the Planning Commission, and citizens as they consider revisions to ordinances.

The Implementation Action Plan should be used as a stand-alone document by the Township manager, Township Board of Supervisors, and others to prioritize changes to ordinances, and for capital improvements.