

# WORCESTER TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## *Update 2022*

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



# WORCESTER TWP. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE 2022



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# WORCESTER TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## *Update 2022*

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

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# Introduction & Background

## *An explanation of the Plan and the Process*

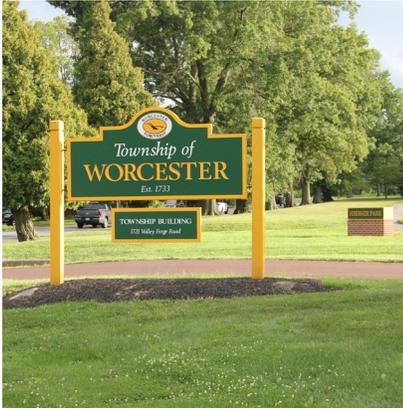
*According to the PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Comprehensive Plans should include, among other things:*

- *A statement of objectives*
- *A plan for land use*
- *A plan for the protection of natural and historic resources*
- *A plan to meet the housing needs*
- *A plan for movement of people and goods*
- *A plan for community facilities and utilities*
- *A statement of the interrelationships between plan components*
- *A discussion of short- and long-term implementation strategies*

Worcester retains much of its rural and historic charm offering a setting supportive of families and small businesses. But, as with all communities, Worcester faces many pressures fueling change. Addressing these aspects are fundamental to making a meaningful update of the comprehensive plan. First, however, we will need to discuss and define what this document intends to do, the why, and the how.

### What Is a Comprehensive Plan?

All communities must strive to plan for their futures in some way: infrastructure, adequate housing, and economic development potential all impact how ready a community is to address the myriad challenges that their constituents face. While sometimes it will make sense to create a targeted, small area plan to address specific challenges of a neighborhood or city block, the key tool that is common to all places is the *Comprehensive Plan*. Inherent in the name, such a plan is *comprehensive* in nature, in that it factors in *all* of the major issues, dimensions, and perspectives of life in a community, everything from natural resources and housing, to transportation, parks and recreation, and more. Even though state and federal laws and policies must be addressed on the local level, and not every aspect of our daily lives can be changed or determined locally, the key is to understand how so many components of our community are interconnected. How wide or long a road is can impact how desirable a neighborhood is, the types of development permitted can impact the fiscal situation of the township, and the character of preserved lands can impact climate resiliency—these are only some of the many interdependent relationships between design, policies, and regulations which impact how our community looks and behaves. While a comprehensive plan cannot radically change a community, it is able to demonstrate the interrelationships between varying perspectives and indicate where the best strategic interventions can take place to have the maximum effect.

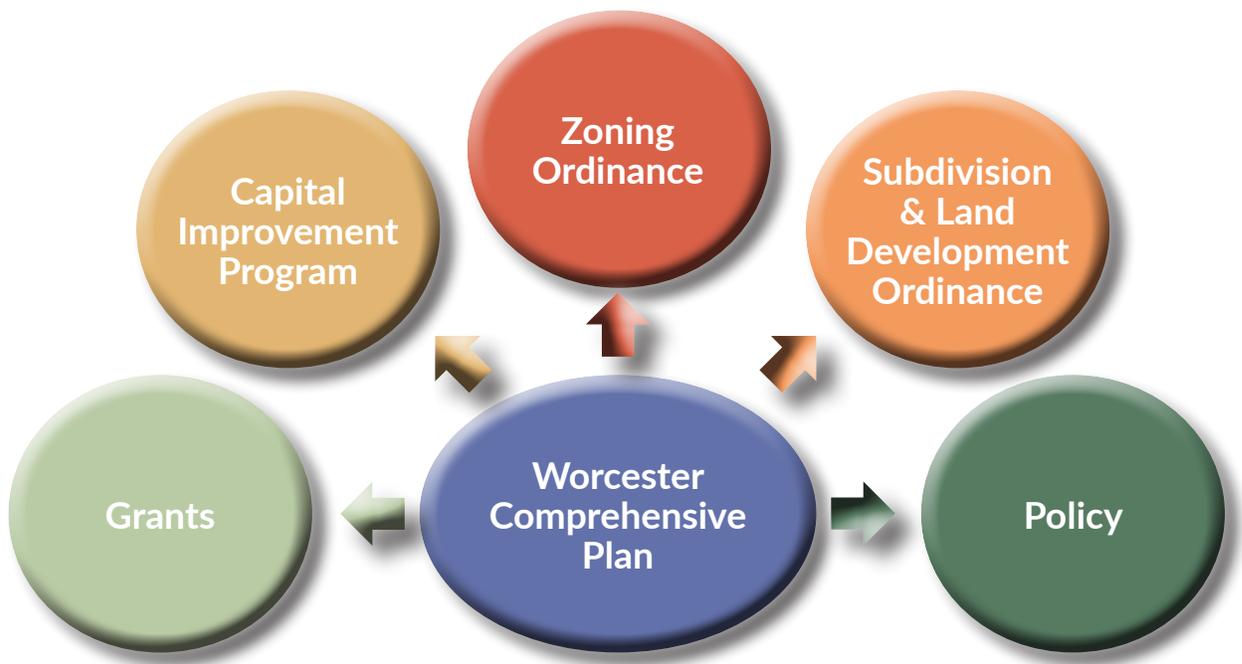


## Why Do We Need a Plan?

We like to say that a comprehensive plan is a “living document,” because it is not supposed to be etched in stone and unchangeable, but should be flexible and adaptable to the evolving needs of the township. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) is the legislation which governs how townships, boroughs, and cities plan, regulate, and approve development in the state. According to the MPC, a comprehensive plan should be reviewed and updated periodically to remain useful and relevant, which is why Worcester has embarked on this new plan. This plan is an update to the 2008 Worcester Comprehensive Plan Update.

The key uses of a comprehensive plan are to:

- ◆ Address future growth and development.
- ◆ Provide a long-range vision for the community.
- ◆ Establish policies, priorities, and guidelines to implement and achieve the community’s desired vision.
- ◆ Unify township-wide planning work and policy under a single document.



As one of the most important pieces of adopted township policy, the comprehensive plan acts as an influence for many of the township’s legal instruments, including the two major ordinances which impact the built environment: the zoning and land development ordinances. Additionally, by illustrating that municipal improvement projects have a foundation in sound planning and design, a comprehensive plan is a practical tool for change when apply for grants.

## Who Was Involved in Making This Plan?

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The plan reflects not just where the township is, but more importantly *where it will go from here*. This plan does not just reflect the opinions and expertise of just one or a few people, but of many people who live, work, and recreate in the township, who care about its future and have chosen to be co-creators of its path forward. The following groups of people played a significant part in the creation of this plan:

- ◆ **Comprehensive Plan Update Task Force:** Residents of the township who represent many different constituencies, interests, and skill sets who were appointed to be the main body responsible for reviewing the plan, establish community goals, and encourage community input and engagement.
- ◆ **Township Staff and Consultants:** Township management provided ongoing input on process, background data, current municipal projects, communication with the public, and development and dissemination of the outreach survey.
- ◆ **Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC):** Contracted by the township to lead the planning process, MCPC coordinated all aspects of plan development with township staff and task force members, including background research and analysis, public meeting facilitation, and plan preparation. MCPC also advised on planning best practices and programs.
- ◆ **The Public:** Community members provided input on community priorities and projects through both public meetings and responses to the outreach survey.
- ◆ **Board of Supervisors:** The elected legislative body of the township is the ultimate authority which approves the plan for adoption, making it official township policy. The board also appointed the task force members.



## How to Read and Use This Plan

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The plan is organized into a number of chapters. First, there is an Existing Conditions chapter, describing the state of things and the issues as they exist today in Worcester. Next, there is the Goals and Objectives chapter, which clearly states the values of this plan and the ways in which we hope to see Worcester “move the needle” on important topics. And, lastly, there are several chapters which focus on exactly *how* to move the needle, by describing strategies and tools to accomplish the goals of the plan.

While the township will be one of the main implementers of the plan, it is by no means the only actor. In fact, it will take the collective actions of all the stakeholders of Worcester to bring this plan to fruition. If you are reading this plan, then it is written for *you too*.



## Our Assumptions

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We understand that we are not able to know or definitely predict the future, even though that is frequently what writing a comprehensive plan involves. To account for this, and to manage our own expectations, we have written this plan with a number of assumptions in mind:

### EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON THE FUTURE

The most unavoidable condition under which we have been working has been the COVID-19 pandemic, which has not only altered many of the assumptions, but has even impacted the timeline of writing this plan. Because of how the spending and working habits of the average person have changed so much as a result of the pandemic, whether due to social distancing or widespread working from home, many of our basic assumptions on how life might look in the future have come into question. For instance, commuting patterns, and the resultant impacts on the transportation system, may never return to pre-pandemic levels. While vaccinations are up and signs of normalcy are returning as of this writing, we still may not be able to fully account for all the changes our economy and nation as a whole will see in the coming months or years. Nonetheless, we are obligated to consider many different future conditions in the planning process.

### UPDATE THE PLAN, KEEP THE SPIRIT

Worcester proceeded with this new plan in order to update its 2008 Worcester Comprehensive Plan Update. While this new plan may look substantially different than the 2008 plan, it is the express intent of the township that we follow the spirit of the previous plan, updating and revising the parts where things have changed or evolved, and adding complementary sections and materials which support needed incremental change.

### OBLIGATIONS OF GOVERNANCE

Planning for the future inevitably involves the balancing of concerns, analyzing the impacts and costs of a decision, and then *making* choices: the effects of Option A are different than Option B, even if they are meant to solve the same problem. All the while the township must uphold its duties and obligations under the law, which have the practical effect of constricting further the choices which are available. While it may be impossible to address every concern or desire, we intend to provide a plan that is visionary but acknowledges the unavoidable limitations.

### FOCUS ON ACTION

Far too many plans can fail to be implemented, and therefore may have the tendency to sit forgotten on a shelf. This can be for many reasons: either the plan is not specific or clear enough in its recommendations, or the plan is too encyclopedic and dense to have a widespread impact, or the plan is not relevant to the everyday decisions a community must make. We intend that this plan be *relevant* so that it provides *concrete* and *realistic actions* to tackle the issues confronting Worcester.



# Worcester: Past & Present

*A snapshot of the facts, issues, and opportunities of the township*



## A Short History of Worcester

The present township boundaries resulted from limits of the private properties of 25 landholders who banded together in 1734 to petition the court for the formation of Worcester Township. Worcester's earliest land grants were acquired from William Penn by individuals of English, Welsh, German, and Dutch origin. It was from the Methacton Hill area that General Washington's advance guard was able to observe the movement of the British Army on its march to Philadelphia for the winter of 1777. George Washington really did sleep in Worcester Township, along with some of the Revolutionary Army. Washington planned the Battle of Germantown in 1777 while staying at Peter Wentz farmstead, which is now a Montgomery County historic site and on the National Register of Historic Places. The army encamped at the Worcester Mennonite Church and cemetery near Fairview Village.

Gristmills and sawmills were among the early businesses in the township, located mainly along the Zacharias Creek. This creek may have been named for Zachariah Whitpain, an early resident of the adjoining township. A sawmill was located where the Zacharias Creek crosses Skippack Pike near Center Point and a gristmill was located on a branch of the Skippack Creek near the western boundary of the township. Zacharias Creek is the prominent stream of Worcester Township and has a course of about four miles across its northern area. The primary industry of the township was agriculture from the 18<sup>th</sup> century all the way through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Much of the trading, commercial, and assembly activity evolved around the township's three main village areas: Center Point, Fairview Village, and Cedars. Center Point received its name because it was

believed to be at the geographical center of the county. The former Center Point Hotel was the third such hotel in succession in the Center Point village. Fairview Village is at the crossroads of Germantown Pike and Valley Forge Road. The Farmers' Union Company, originally established for the recovery of stolen horses, had its headquarters at Fairview since its organization in 1835. The Fairview Village Assembly built a community hall there in 1919; the Community Hall is used today for official Worcester Township business meetings. Cedars is a small community on Skippack Pike near the western boundary of the township. It received its name in the 18th century because of the groves of cedar trees lining the road at the top of the hill. It has more recently evolved into a small commercial center, featuring small specialty shops.

## Worcester Today

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### DEMOGRAPHICS

Worcester Township saw significant population increase between the years 1990 and 2000, where the resident population rose by 66% to 7,789 people. The 2010 Decennial Census recorded 9,750 Worcester residents, a 25% increase from the decade prior, which at the time outpaced the population projected for the time period, as stated in the earlier comp plan. Between 2010 and 2020, Worcester's population only increased by 6%, much lower than previous estimates suggested, which could be due to several factors, including the overall development slow-downs caused by the 2008-9 recession.

An "age pyramid" shows how population "cohorts," or large clusters of people, age through time within a community, where the greatest concentrations of people of a certain age are, and where we may expect them to occur in future years. We are able to watch the largest cohort from the 2000 Census (those aged 40-49) move up in age 10 years later, where the 50-59 year-olds represent the largest group, seen on the next page.

This shows us, among other things, that Worcester is getting older. The median age of a Worcester resident moved from 42.3 in 1990, to 43.9 in 2000, to 47.4 in 2010. As of this writing, age cohorts for the 2020 Census are not yet available from the Census Bureau—these figures will be updated once they become available. Nonetheless, there is some indication that we expect these trends to continue. A greater percentage of older people in a community suggests that Worcester may benefit from planning for an aging population.

Like much of the county overall, the township has become more racially diverse, seeing an increase in the Asian population (to 12%). In particular, the largest groups identifying as Asian are of Asian Indian, Korean, and Chinese ancestry. This suggests that the broadening population base of the township may have new and different needs.

## WORCESTER POPULATION, PROJECTED AND ACTUAL, 1950-2040

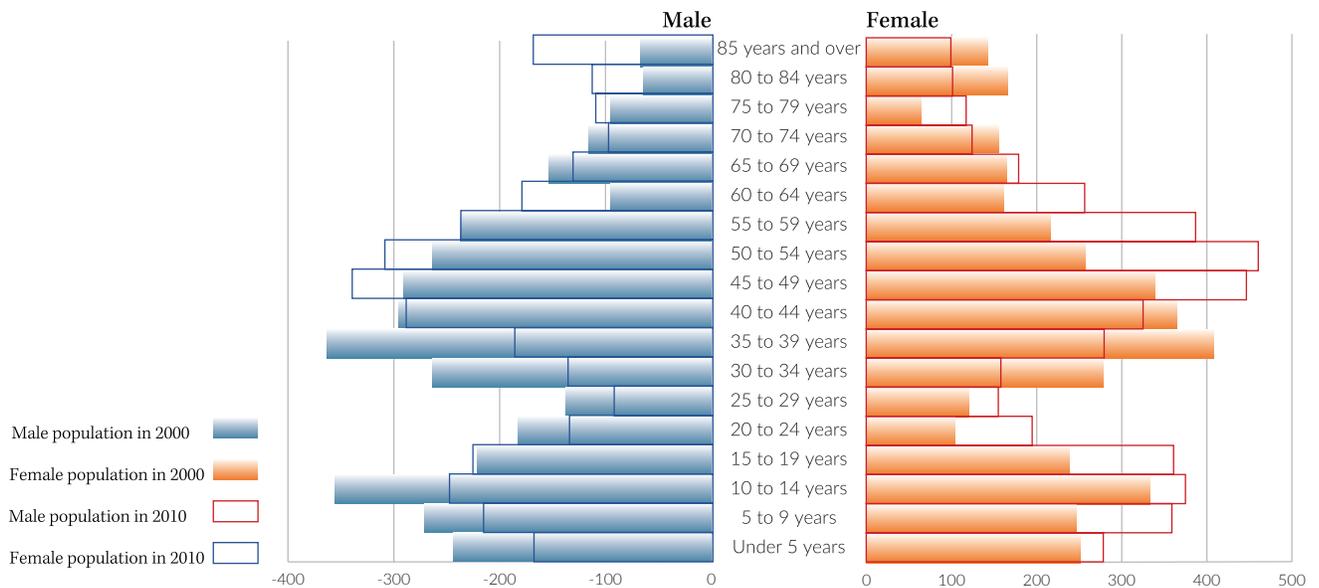
Year	Projected Population	Actual Population	% Change
1950		1,939	
1960		3,250	68%
1970		4,243	31%
1980		4,661	10%
1990		4,686	1%
2000		7,789	66%
2010	9,340	9,750	25%
2020	10,917*	<b>2019 Estimate: 10,371</b>	<b>6%</b>
2030	11,882*		
2040	12,650*		

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU, DVRPC

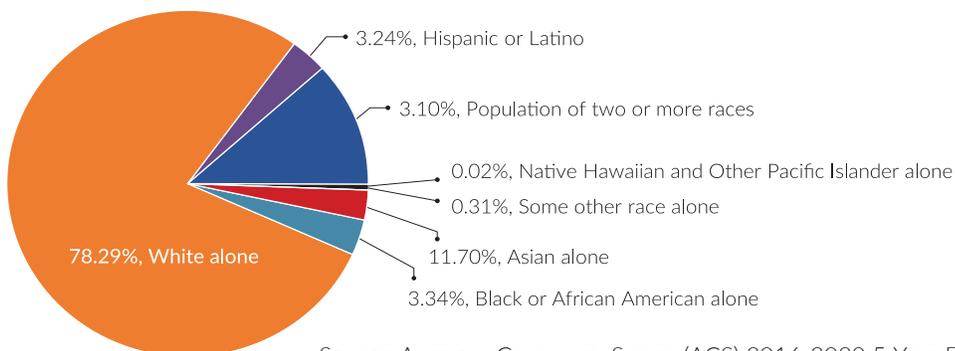
\*ACCORDING TO DVRPC'S MORE-RECENT 2016 POPULATION PROJECTIONS

## AGE DISTRIBUTION BY SEX, 2000-2010

SOURCE: 2000-2010 DECENNIAL CENSUSES



## RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2020



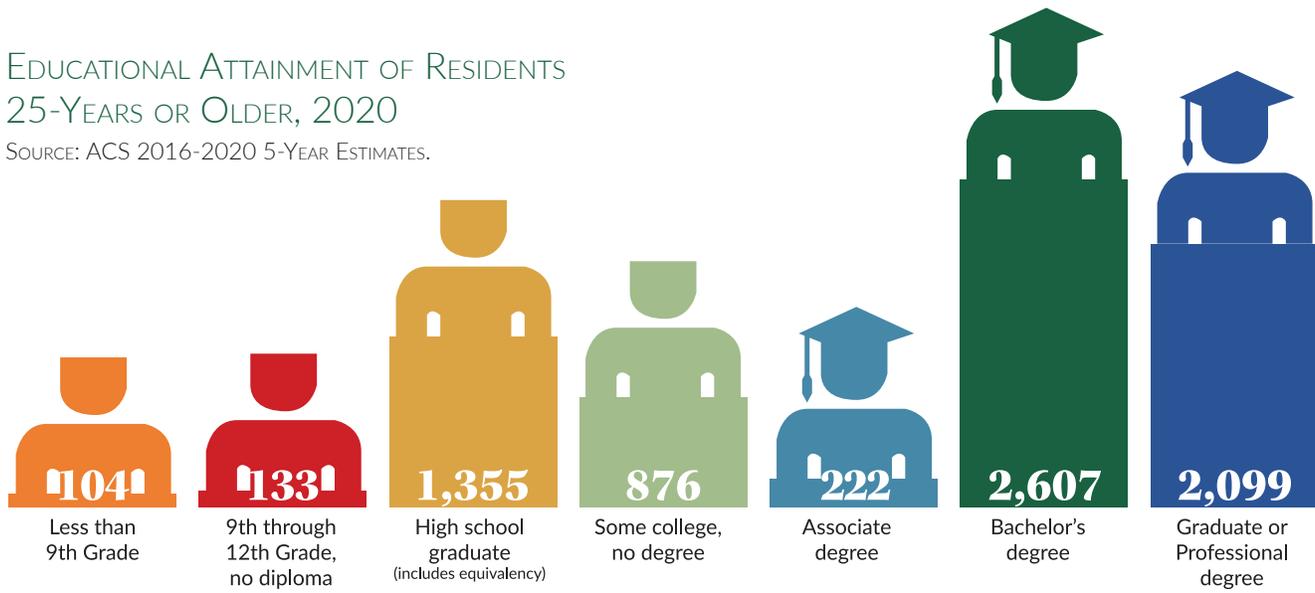
SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS) 2016-2020 5-YEAR ESTIMATES.

Overall, Worcester continues to have a highly-educated population, with well over half the adult population having at least a bachelor's degree, similar to the county as a whole. Since 2000, the percentage of the population with at least some college has continued to grow. This could be a good selling point for companies looking to locate in or near the township.

As noted earlier, the percentage of older residents has gone up in the township, which is similarly reflected here as "Residents Over 65 Years of Age."

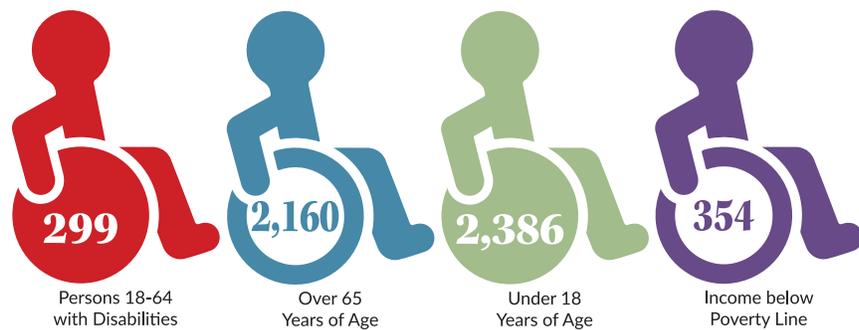
## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESIDENTS 25-YEARS OR OLDER, 2020

SOURCE: ACS 2016-2020 5-YEAR ESTIMATES.



## SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATION (# OF RESIDENTS), 2020

SOURCE: ACS 2016-2020 5-YEAR ESTIMATES.



## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND PER CAPITA INCOME, 2020



■ Median Household  
■ Per Capita

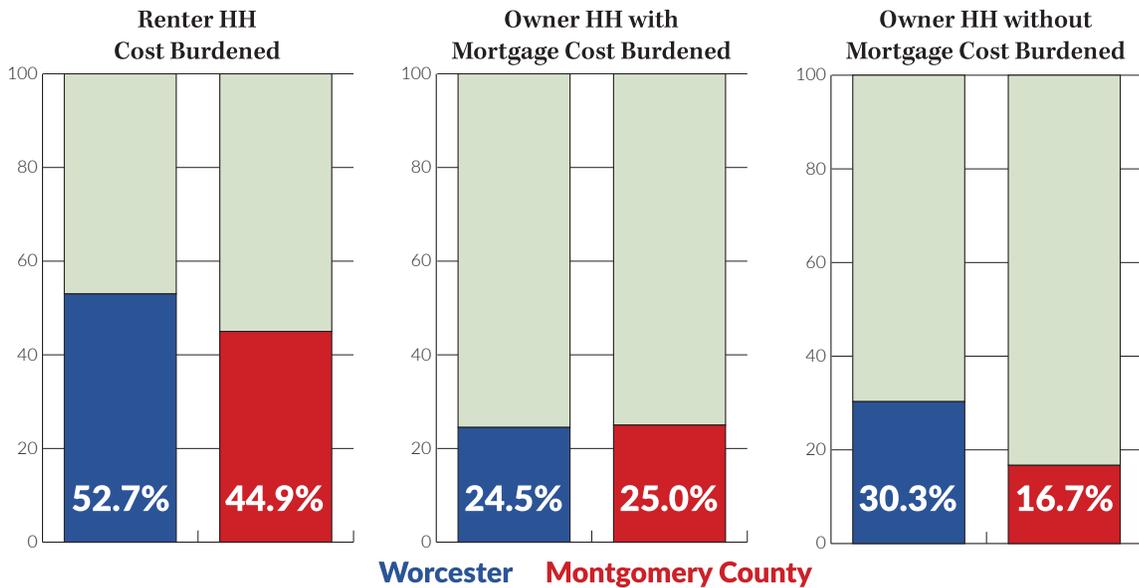
When adjusted for inflation, the median household income has remained relatively steady.

An additional indicator which should be noted is the number of people who live in households below the poverty line is **3.5%**, which is slightly below the county average of **6.8%**. Another way to measure economic challenge is by using "housing cost burden": this is defined by the Census and federal agencies as having housing-related costs (rent, mortgage payments, insurance, utility and fuel payments, real estate taxes and

condo fees, etc.) accounting for **over 30% of the household income**. Available data track households who rent, as well as those who own with and without a mortgage on their property; the data are shown below.

## RATES OF HOUSING COST BURDEN FOR RENTER AND OWNER HOUSEHOLDS (HH), 2020

SOURCE: ACS 2016-2020 5-YEAR ESTIMATES.



While Worcester tracks pretty well with renters and owners with mortgages compared with the county, the township registers a significantly higher percentage of cost-burdened owners without a mortgage than the county as a whole. We can surmise that there is likely some connection between this and the median age in Worcester: those households who own their house without a mortgage tend on average to be older, having lived in their house long enough to have paid off any previous mortgage. Nonetheless, this particular datapoint suggests that we may want to look into how Worcester can address this and other related issues.

### Key Takeaway

Worcester has begun to mature in its development, and partially as a result of this the average resident is getting older, which has significant policy implications. This is likely impacted by the relative housing stock that is available in the township, as well as the available amenities which exist in the township. We will want to ensure that the desires and services of older adults are provided for, while also contemplating how to attract more balanced demographics, particularly in attracting and retaining younger adults.

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS



When describing what the "land use" of a particular property is, we take into account what structures or activities are present (residential, nonresidential, agriculture, etc.), as well as how intensely developed that property is (vacant or open space, low-density, high-density, etc.). Each use and development type has different service and infrastructure needs, creates different traffic volumes, and impacts the quality of life of the community differently." In sum, knowing what the existing land use is, and how it may have changed, allows us to plan for the future.

The updated Existing Land Use map on the next page is based on data pulled in July 2020, which has been corrected by checking data-transcription errors, field-verifying through aerial photographs and other sources, and manual updating. Items which will need to be updated at a later date are properties which are actively under development, such as the Reserve at Center Square development. The table on page 13 is based upon these same datasets. The land use categories are described in more detail in the call out box on page 12.



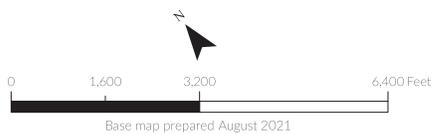
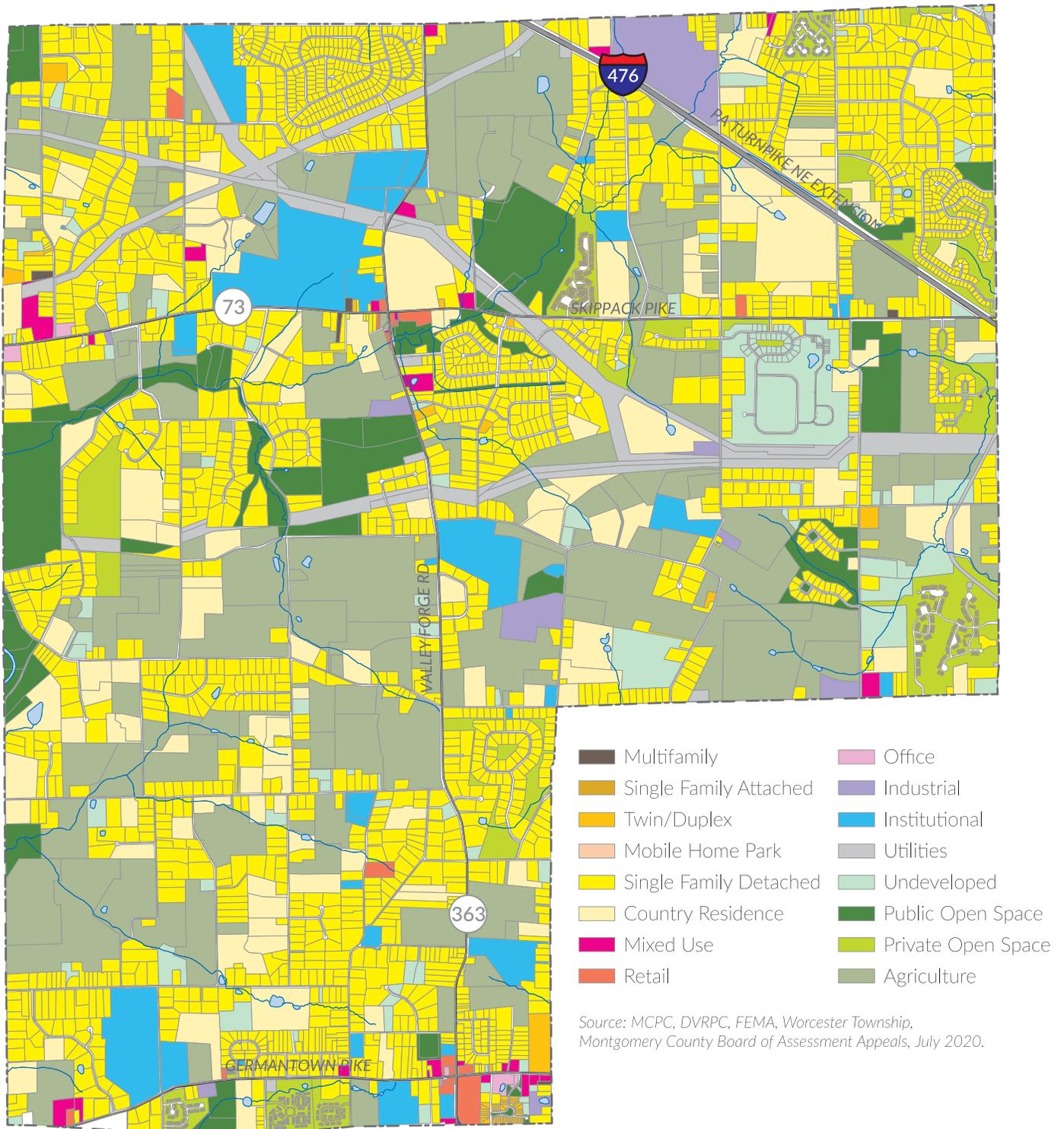
Residential land uses occupy a majority of the land area in the township, with single family detached lots the single most common individual land use, in both the number of parcels as well as in total land area. Nonresidential properties, on the other hand, appear to have declined since 2007, but this could likely be due to the reassignment of two large properties on Skippack Pike.

While the township has seen increases in preserved farmland and open space, there was a slight decline in agricultural area overall of 7%. Private open space has also declined, but this can be attributed almost entirely to the conversion of the Center Square Golf Course to residential. Public Open Space, on the other hand, has increased by 25%, which includes any publicly-accessible, publicly-owned land. In many communities, vacant or "undeveloped" land refers to infill lots in already-developed areas, but in rural townships the designation applies more often to large wooded parcels with no preferential assessment covenant, or fields or meadows not actively worked or farmed. Nonetheless, the inventory of designated undeveloped land has the tendency to fluctuate over time, since it can frequently involve land actively under development (see definition of "**Undeveloped**" on page 12), so it cannot also be a reliable indicator of greater changes in a community.



Assessing the existing land use in the township is the first step in determining what lots remain developable, and consequently what the growth potentials for the township. In determining what lands are developable, we take all lands which are categorized as Undeveloped, Country Residence, and (unpreserved) Agriculture, and combine them. While it's certainly feasible and plausible to redevelop existing land categorized under other uses, these selected land use types most often are the types which are considered "virgin" land which, when developed, are considered "greenfield" developments. This can be seen in the map "Residentially Developable Land" on page 14.

# WORCESTER EXISTING LAND USE, 2020



# MCPC LAND USE CATEGORIES

- ◆ Multifamily (MF). Residential buildings that contain more than 2 dwelling units, with units usually horizontally separated. Apartments, including garden-style apartment complexes, triplexes and quadraplexes are included.
- ◆ Single-Family Attached (SFA). Residential homes that share at least one vertical wall with a neighboring house, more commonly known as townhouses or rowhomes.
- ◆ Twins/Duplexes. Residential buildings that contain 2 dwelling units, either side-by-side or one above the other.
- ◆ Mobile Home Park (MH). Residential developments that contain mobile homes, which are also known as manufactured homes.
- ◆ Single-Family Detached (SFD). Residential homes that are completely separated from each other and have yards of varying sides on all sides.
- ◆ Country Residence. Residential areas with the same characteristics as SFD, but have lot sizes of at least 5 acres but no more than 20 acres, and which are more rural in character. Generally, they are found in areas without public sewer service. Such uses may or may not include agricultural activities.
- ◆ Mixed Use. These buildings usually are found within traditional main street or village corridors. They typically feature retail, residential, and office facilities with little separation among uses. Many of the buildings are attached to each other, and it is common to have first floor retail with apartments or offices on the floors above.
- ◆ Retail. Land that is predominately used for the sale of goods and services. Commercial strips, malls, big box stores, shopping centers, gas stations, convenience stores, and restaurants are obvious examples.
- ◆ Office. Land that is occupied by office buildings and associated parking. This category also includes research and development facilities, hotels, and convention centers.
- ◆ Industrial. This category includes heavy industrial uses—such as oil refineries, chemical plants, steel and metal fabrication facilities, and manufacturing facilities—as well as lighter industrial uses, warehousing and distribution centers, mini- storage facilities, body shops, junkyards, and other outdoor storage facilities.
- ◆ Institutional. These areas include a wide variety of governmental and non-profit services. Examples include government centers, educational facilities, places of worship, cemeteries, hospitals and medical centers, nursing homes, life care facilities, and correctional facilities.
- ◆ Utilities. These areas include power generators and substations, water filtration and storage tanks, wastewater treatment plants, landfills, and recycling centers.
- ◆ Undeveloped. Areas which are composed generally of scrub, woodlands or other vegetation, or other lands which contain no buildings or underutilized or vacant buildings. This also includes areas and parcels which are a part of an under-construction land development: the Board of Assessment (BOA) does not consider residential units built until they are at least 90% complete, even if the individual lots are already recorded.
- ◆ Public Open Space. Open land or facilities which are publicly owned by municipal, state, county or federal governments which are generally passive in nature but can also include active recreational amenities, which are generally known to be permanently preserved.
- ◆ Private Open Space. Open land and areas which are privately owned but are generally used in a recreational or passive open space manner, which may or may not be permanently preserved. Golf courses are common examples of private open space: these may have a temporary conservation covenant as a result of a preferential assessment, but ownership and use can change over time. Private open space can also be deeded, permanently preserved open space which is part of a residential subdivision or homeowners' association, or private conservation land.
- ◆ Agriculture. Land or areas which are currently used to produce crops, livestock, or other agricultural products, or land which contains barns, farmhouses or other agricultural buildings. Included in this category are lands which are covenanted under the Act 319 preferential assessment program, which include lands that are both agricultural and forested. Lastly, lots over 20 acres which include a single SFD are included in this category, regardless of whether agricultural activities occur on the site.

## EXISTING LAND USE BY ACREAGE, 2020

Land Use Description	Parcels	Acres	Percentage of Total
Single-Family Detached	2,373	3,472.14	35.27%
Agriculture	161	2,607.28	26.49%
Country Residence	121	1,135.76	11.54%
Public Open Space	53	616.15	6.26%
Institutional	37	470.55	4.78%
Undeveloped	161	414.37	4.21%
Utilities	52	400.79	4.07%
Private Open Space	48	389.07	3.95%
Industrial	11	141.66	1.44%
Mixed Use	29	58.99	0.60%
Twins/Duplexes	58	45.79	0.47%
Retail	18	41.99	0.43%
Single-Family Attached	824	31.23	0.32%
Office	5	11.10	0.11%
Multifamily	6	6.05	0.06%
Mobile Home Park	16	0.20	0.01%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,973</b>	<b>9,843.10</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

NOTE: TOTAL ACREAGE DOES NOT INCLUDE STREETS AND PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAYS.  
SOURCE: MCPC, MCBOA

## GENERAL LAND USE CATEGORIES, 2020

SOURCE: MCPC, MCBOA

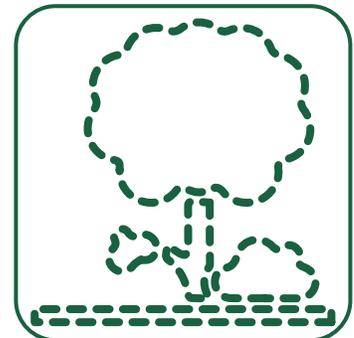


## OPEN SPACE, AGRICULTURAL & UNDEVELOPED USES, 2020

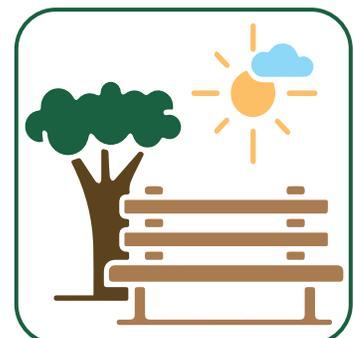
SOURCE: MCPC, MCBOA



Agriculture **65%**



Undeveloped **10%**

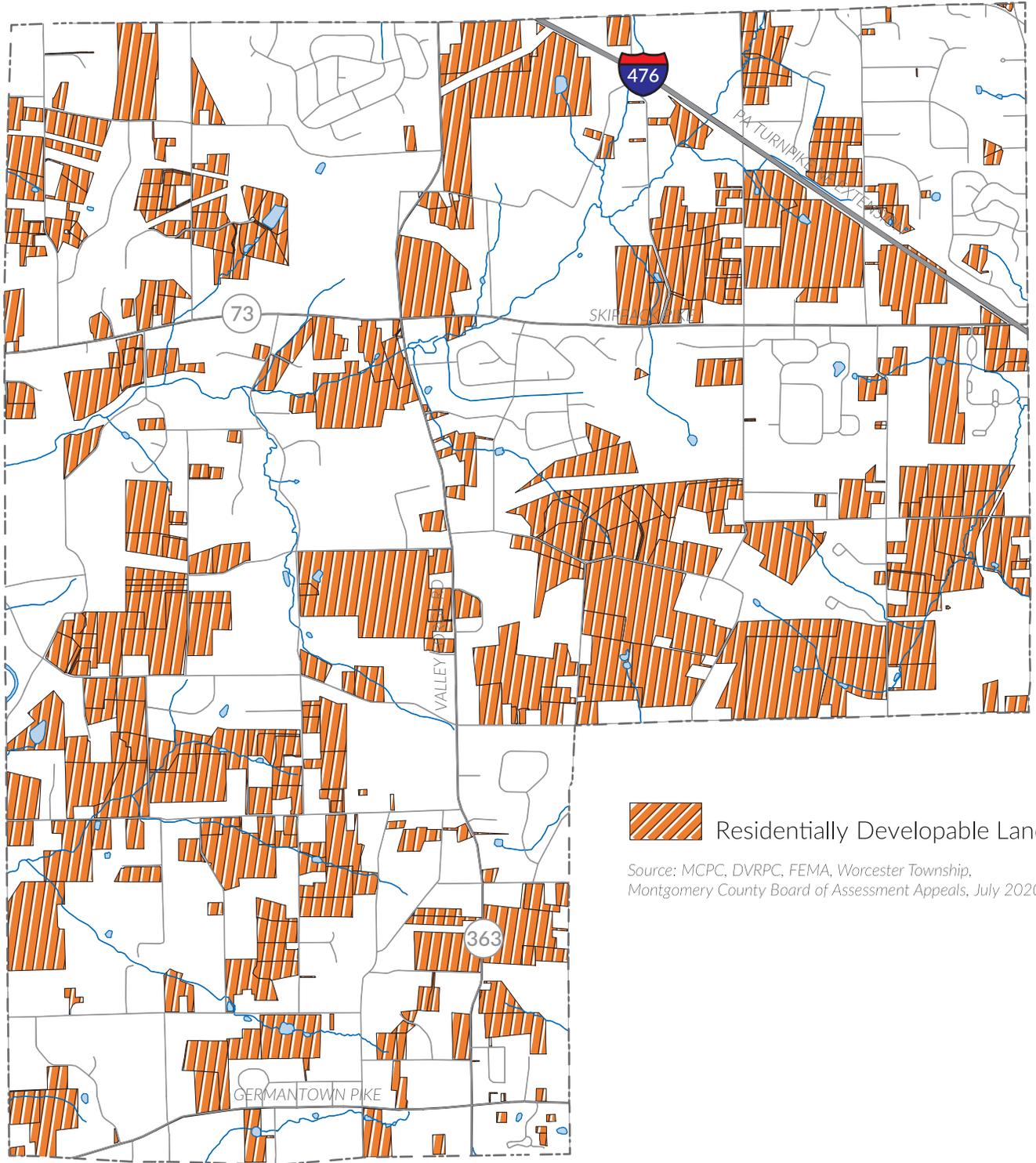


Public Open Space **15%**



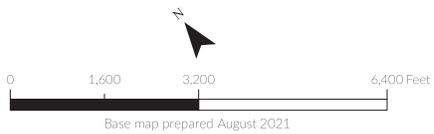
Private Open Space **10%**

# WORCESTER DEVELOPABLE LAND



 Residentially Developable Land

Source: MCPC, DVRPC, FEMA, Worcester Township, Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals, July 2020.



This map, however, likely overestimates developable parcels, in that certain large parcels may be restricted from further development through deed restrictions acquired through a past land development approval: further research would be necessary to account for these.

## Key Takeaway

There is still room to grow in Worcester, but looking closely at the development potential in the township is necessary to determine what kind of development and preservation policies may be needed to maintain fiscal sustainability and adequately account for the future service needs of the township.

## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

The possible household composition and types within the township have not changed that dramatically in the 30 years for which we have data, although it is interesting to note that the average household size has been slowly increasing. Household composition, and household size in general, is often a function of larger demographic trends in the region and the available housing in a municipality; in Worcester’s case, the prevalence of single-family detached housing may dictate this.

When Montgomery County tracks housing construction, residential land use types are condensed into four main housing types: single-family detached (SFD), single-family attached (SFA, which includes twins/duplexes), multifamily (MF), and mobile/manufactured home developments (MH). Between 2008 and 2019, **206 SFAs** and **137 SFDs** were constructed in the township, with an average of 31 units constructed per year. No multifamily or mobile/manufactured homes were constructed in that timeframe.

In terms of existing units, residential homes have increased in almost every category. Overall, **349 residential** units were added between 2007 and 2020, the majority of which were single-family attached, or SFAs, followed closely by single-family detached, or SFDs. Generally across the county we have seen a growing popularity of attached townhomes being constructed, and in many years it surpasses detached units, which applies to Worcester as well.

While there are 266 independent-living multifamily units spread among several small buildings within the Meadowood Senior Living, there appears to be only five other buildings in the townships containing multifamily apartment units, all of which are converted single residences of varying sizes. Since the Meadowood units are age-restricted, only 23 units are available to the general population in the township.

*Section 604.4 of the Municipalities Planning Code states that each municipality must provide “...for residential housing of various dwelling types encompassing all basic forms of housing, including single family and two family dwellings, and a reasonable range of multiple family dwellings in various arrangements.”*



Single-Family Attached



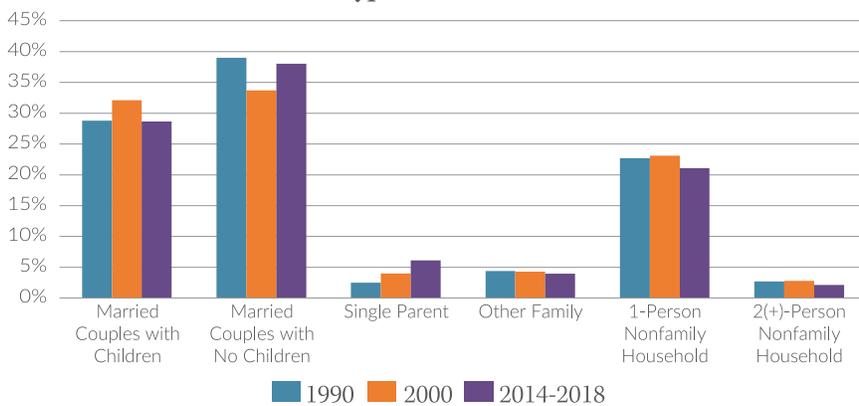
Single-Family Detached

In Pennsylvania, municipalities are required by law to permit, through zoning, a wide variety of housing types, including single-family attached units such as twins, duplexes, and townhouses; multifamily units; and mobile home parks. If a municipality does not have enough land set aside for all of these uses, it runs the risk of having its zoning successfully challenged in the courts for not meeting its "fair share" and having an aggressive corrective applied through a judgment. There is no exact percentage or amount of high density housing that satisfies this requirement for a community; it is instead established through the decisions of state courts as might be applicable to a particular situation. As of this writing, the township has just adopted a municipal curative amendment which revises the zoning ordinance to address the provision of multifamily dwellings.

## EXISTING HOUSEHOLD TYPES, 2000, 2007, AND 2020

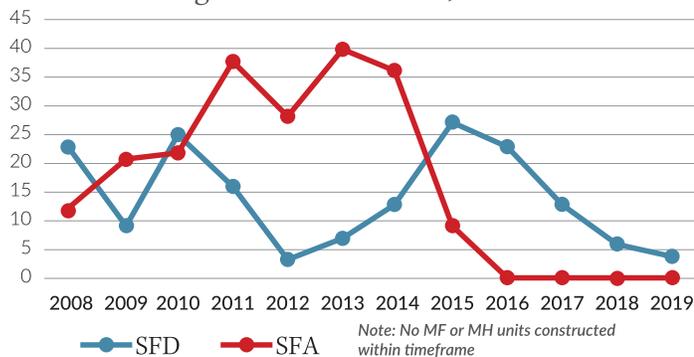
SOURCE: MCPC, MCBOA.

### Household Types over Time, 1990-2018



Residential Land Use Categories	2000	2007	2020
Multifamily		314	289
Single-Family Attached		717	823
Twin/Duplex		<i>incl in SFA</i>	116
Mobile Home Park		16	16
SFD (under 5 acres)		2216	2373
Country Residence		126	121
SFD (all lot sizes)		2,342	2,494
<b>Total Residential Units</b>	<b>3,026</b>	<b>3,389</b>	<b>3,738</b>

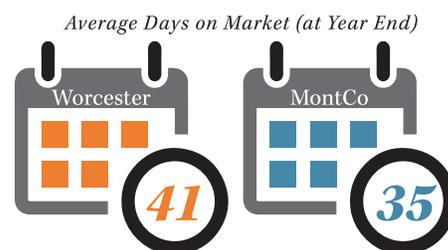
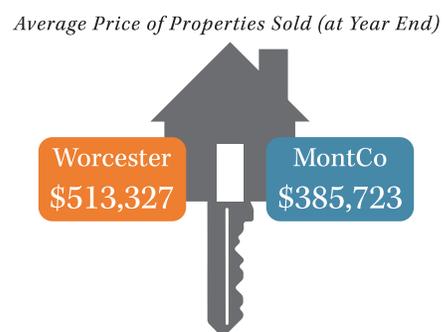
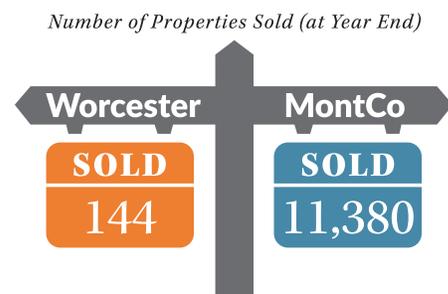
### Housing Units Constructed, 2008-2019



Housing sales in 2020 have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which have manifested mainly through a great reduction in housing inventory regionally and nationally. However, we have seen that home sales in Worcester have been increasing year on year, suggesting that the desire to move into Worcester is growing nonetheless, and not only because the total number of housing units is increasing (through construction). This is particularly supported by the average number of days a property is on the market before it is sold, which we see declining year on year, suggesting a “seller’s market.” Regionally we have seen a significant differential in the greater reductions in inventory and days on market, both in 2020 and over the past three years as well, in which Philadelphia’s reductions are much less dramatic than those of Montgomery County and the three other PA suburban counties of our region. What this may mean, overall, is that in-migration to the suburbs from Philadelphia is outpacing out-migration to the city, and that demand for housing in the county has not slackened a bit.

## SELECTED HOUSING SALES FIGURES FROM THE HOMEXPERT MARKET REPORT, 2020

SOURCE: BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOME SERVICES FOX & ROACH RESEARCH DIVISION



### Key Takeaway

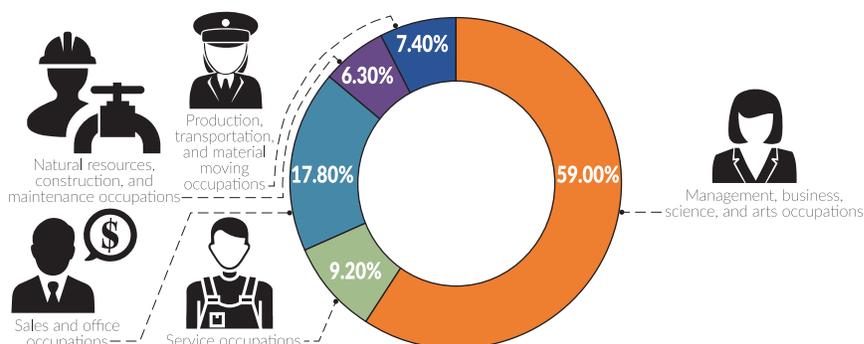
The availability and prices of housing in the township impacts the residents who will live there: we will need to ensure that the existing and future housing that Worcester accommodates will serve current and future residents according to our planning goals. Also, there is significant evidence that the typical “commuting to the office in the city” dynamic, hastened by the pandemic restrictions, is changing and may become more permanent, leading to a potentially significant shift in where people may want to live, unrestricted by where they may have to commute.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A majority of the jobs of Worcester residents are generally those of the professional or high-skill kinds. Almost 60% of Worcester residents are employed in “management, business, science and arts” occupations. The “industry” is the type of activity at a person’s place of work, while “occupation” is the kind of work a person does to earn a living.

## OCCUPATION OF WORCESTER RESIDENTS, 2016-2020

SOURCE: ACS 2016-2020 5-YEAR ESTIMATES.



## INDUSTRY OF THE PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OF WORCESTER RESIDENTS, 2016-2020

SOURCE: ACS 2016-2020 5-YEAR ESTIMATES.

INDUSTRY	2016-2020	
	Number	% of Total
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	4,820	100.00%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	53	1%
Construction	315	6.50%
Manufacturing	749	15.50%
Wholesale trade	95	2.00%
Retail trade	337	7.00%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	171	3.50%
Information	45	0.90%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	642	13.30%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	1,039	21.60%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	881	18.30%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	171	3.50%
Other services, except public administration	233	4.80%
Public administration	89	1.80%

According to Berkheimer, the EIT collector for the township, as of Q1 2020, there were 3,667 people employed in the township (both residents and nonresidents)—this information is gleaned from EIT returns. The Top Ten Employers in the township, listed below, account for more than half (54%) of all the jobs for which EIT is collected in the township. However, we should noted these totals include part-time and full-time employees, as well as employees who may only spend a portion of their day in the township.

### TOP TEN EMPLOYERS IN THE TOWNSHIP

SOURCE: BERKHEIMER, 2020

Employer Name	# of Employees
Allan Myers Inc.	581
Meadowood Corp.	368
Methacton School District	340
Merrymead Farm Inc.	161
Keystone Technologies LLC	138
First Student Inc.	96
Testequity LLC	93
Randstad US LLC	79
Fairview Village Church	77
ACS Acquisitions	66

## ONTHEMAP INFLOW/OUTFLOW ANALYSIS, 2017



SOURCE, ONTHEMAP, CENSUS BUREAU, 2017

Using another Census Bureau product, *OnTheMap*, which combines state-level unemployment insurance data with Census data, we can see that actually many more Worcester residents work outside the township than within it. Only approximately 227 people both live and work within the township, however this may not include all self-employed people in Worcester.

### Key Takeaway

Most of the people of working age in Worcester must commute outside the Township to their jobs, and most of the people who work in the Township commute from outside. Both these facts have implications for the transportation system and fiscal situation of Worcester, which can be addressed through a focus on local economic planning.

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

### Street And Motor Vehicle Facilities

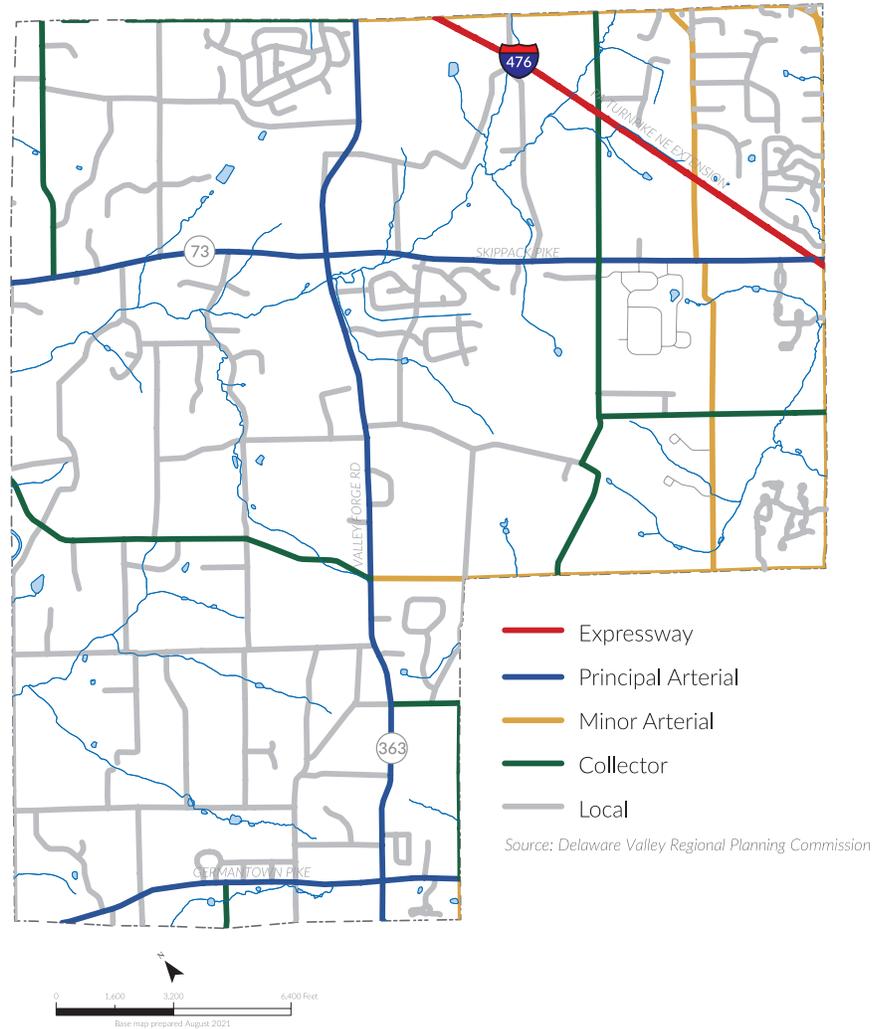
The functional classification of a road determines the overall character and design of that road, particularly in their width, design speed and number of lanes.

### STREETS BY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

SOURCE: PENNDOT

*“Functional classification” is the way roads are categorized according to their importance in either moving traffic longer distances (expressways and arterials) through the Township or enabling local access to residences or businesses (collectors and local roads). The primary list of classifications is as follows:*

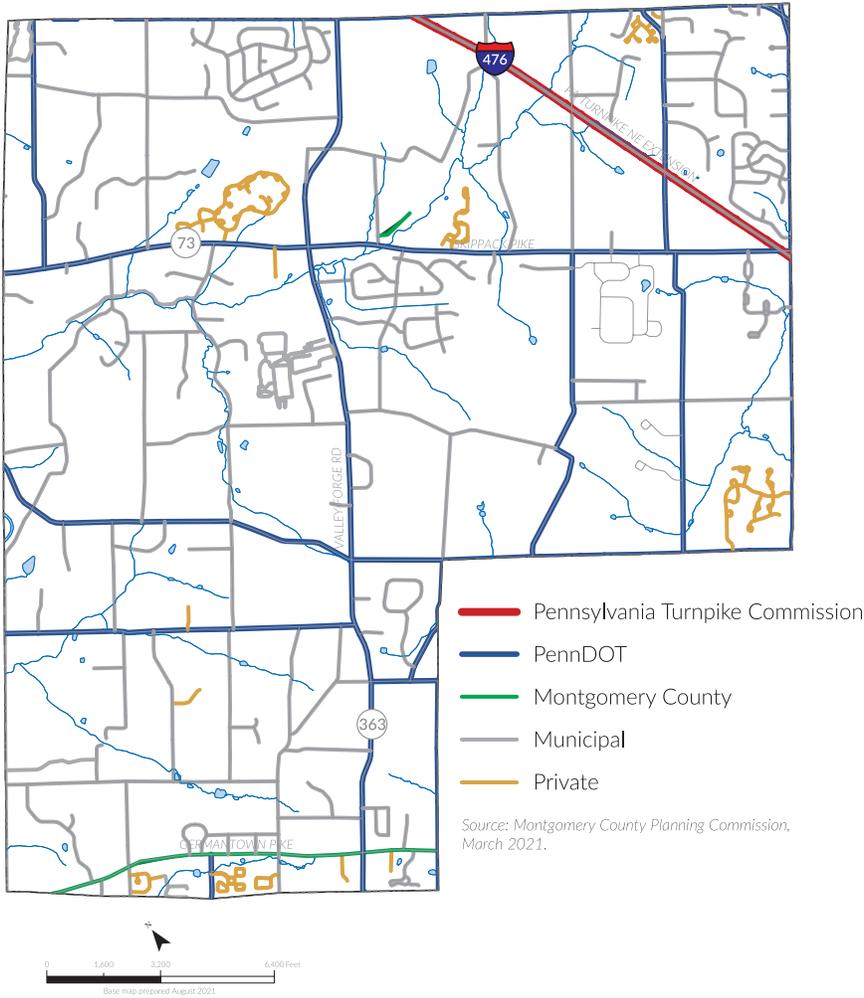
- *Expressways*
- *Principal arterials*
- *Minor arterials*
- *[Major] collectors*
- *Local roads*



Typically the responsibility of maintenance for a street is determined by what entity owns it. The state, for example, owns more roads in the township than those that are signed as such, such as Route 73 and Route 363; when the township desires to make improvements to state roads, only half of the cost can be paid for with township-generated impact fees. Only a few counties in the state own any roads: Montgomery County is one of them, which owns 75 miles of roadway in the county, including Germantown Pike and Shultz Road in the township.

# WORCESTER STREETS BY OWNERSHIP

SOURCE: PENNDOT, WORCESTER TOWNSHIP.



## Circulation and Roadway Improvement Updates

The township has an Act 209 Plan, which is the main transportation planning tool that Worcester has at its disposal. It acts as the Transportation Capital Improvements Plan for the township concerning street and intersection improvements, as well as the basis for the Traffic Impact Fee which is levied upon land developments. An analysis of roadway sufficiency, traffic volumes, and preferred Levels of Service (or how quickly a vehicle can make it through a street intersection) on township roads are comprehensively addressed in the township’s Act 209 Transportation Impact Fee Study.

Below is a map which identifies more recent traffic counts on roads in the township, ranging from 2010 through early 2020. Several counts through a number of years are taken at the same or nearby locations, in an attempt to compare change over time. In a number of locations, traffic, measured as “Annual Average Daily Traffic” (AADT), is reported at slightly increased rates. However, in many other locations traffic is recorded at lower rates, in some cases significantly lower (such as on Valley Forge below Township Line Road). These can sometimes be caused by detours or road closures.

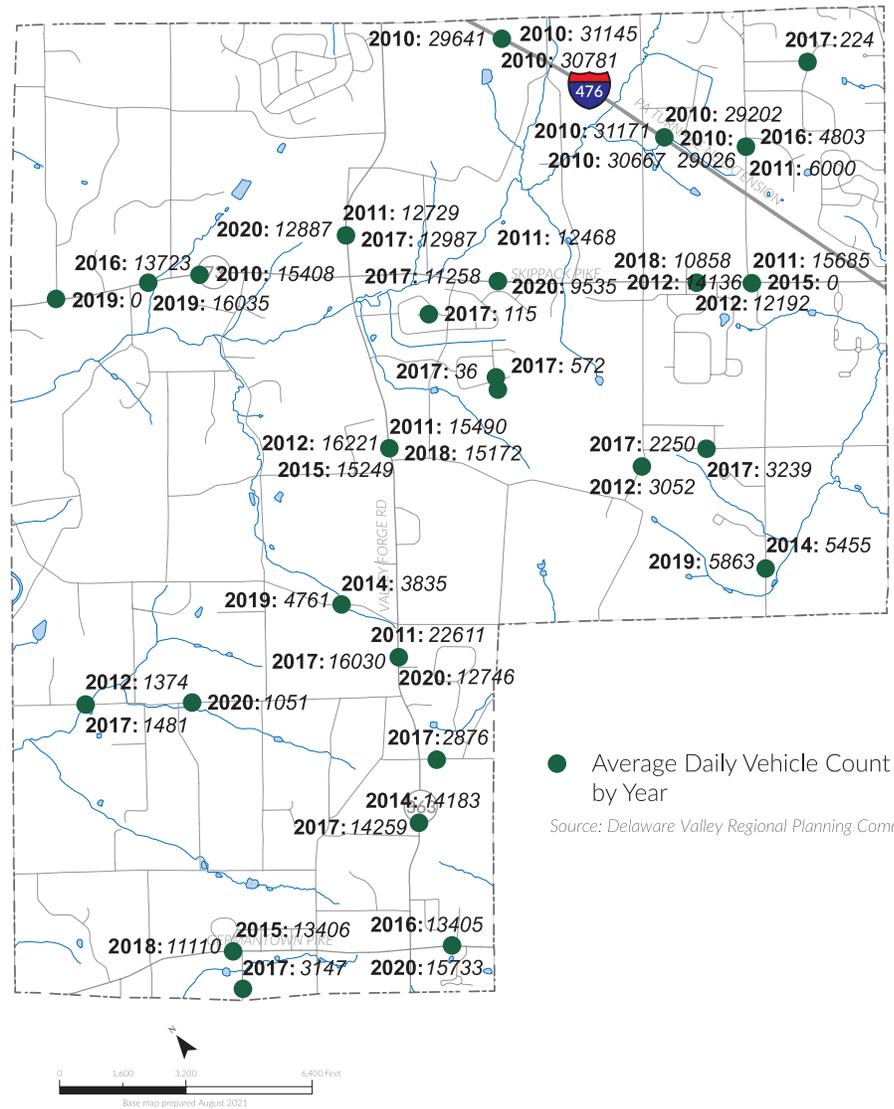


## WORCESTER RECENT TRAFFIC COUNTS (AADT) BY YEAR, 2010-2020

SOURCE: DVRPC

*From Worcester's Public Outreach Survey:*  
Which ONE roadway in Worcester Township is in the most need of improvement?

Valley Forge Road	181	31.3%
None, all acceptable	135	23.4%
Skippack Pike	83	14.4%
Germantown Pike	36	6.2%
Morris Road	21	3.6%
Other	59	10.2%
No response	63	10.9%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



Respondents from the Worcester Comprehensive Plan Outreach Survey clearly show that many residents believe some of the busiest roads in the township are also those that require the most improvement.

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**

The difference between sidewalks and trails can sometimes be slim, but there are practical reasons to distinguish them, particularly when considering their purpose. Sidewalks are typically found within the public right-of-way abutting streets, connecting houses or businesses which are denser or closer together, and are composed of cement. Trails, on the other hand, tend to connect larger distances and destinations which are further apart, generally are wider than sidewalks, and are typically composed of asphalt, gravel cinders or another natural surface.

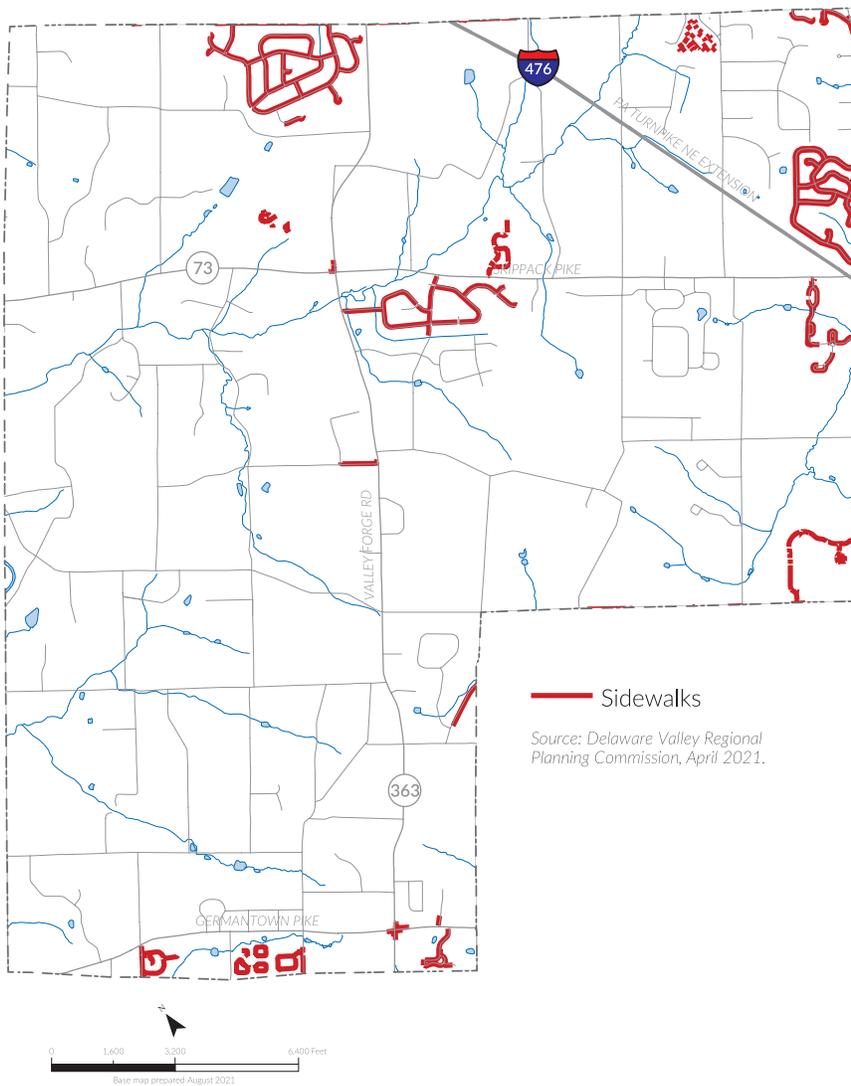
The first map shows where the existing sidewalks are in the township, and indicates whether sidewalks exist, partially or fully, on one side or both side of a street. Typically we want to see sidewalks in denser residential areas, as well as villages, town-center business areas, and other areas that we may want to become more walkable.

Sidewalks typically are first developed through the land development approval process and are generally required to be included as part of a development. The township's policy is to never waive the sidewalk requirement if a waiver is requested. If it does not make sense to install sidewalks at a particular location today, the township gets the deferral and gives future Boards the option to install if conditions change.



## WORCESTER SIDEWALKS

SOURCE: MCPC, WORCESTER.





The map to the right shows the existing and proposed trails in the township. Existing trails can be owned or maintained privately but open to the public (e.g. through an HOA) or by the township. Support for trail development in the Worcester Comprehensive Plan Survey was very high. The Future Township Trails are sourced from the township’s *Community Greenways Plan and Open Space Plan*. Some of the recently completed trail projects include those within Heebner Park and the Zacharias Creek Trail, as well as an extension of the Zacharias Creek Trail in the planning stages (and recently funded by a grant from DCNR). Longer, regional trails are represented as “County/Circuit” Trails, which in Worcester include the proposed Power Line Trail (to the north) and the Liberty Bell Trail (to the east). These trails could be planned and developed by the county or the township. The Circuit is a vast regional network of hundreds of miles of multi-use trails owned and maintained by various public entities. More information on the Circuit can be found here: <https://circuittrails.org/>.

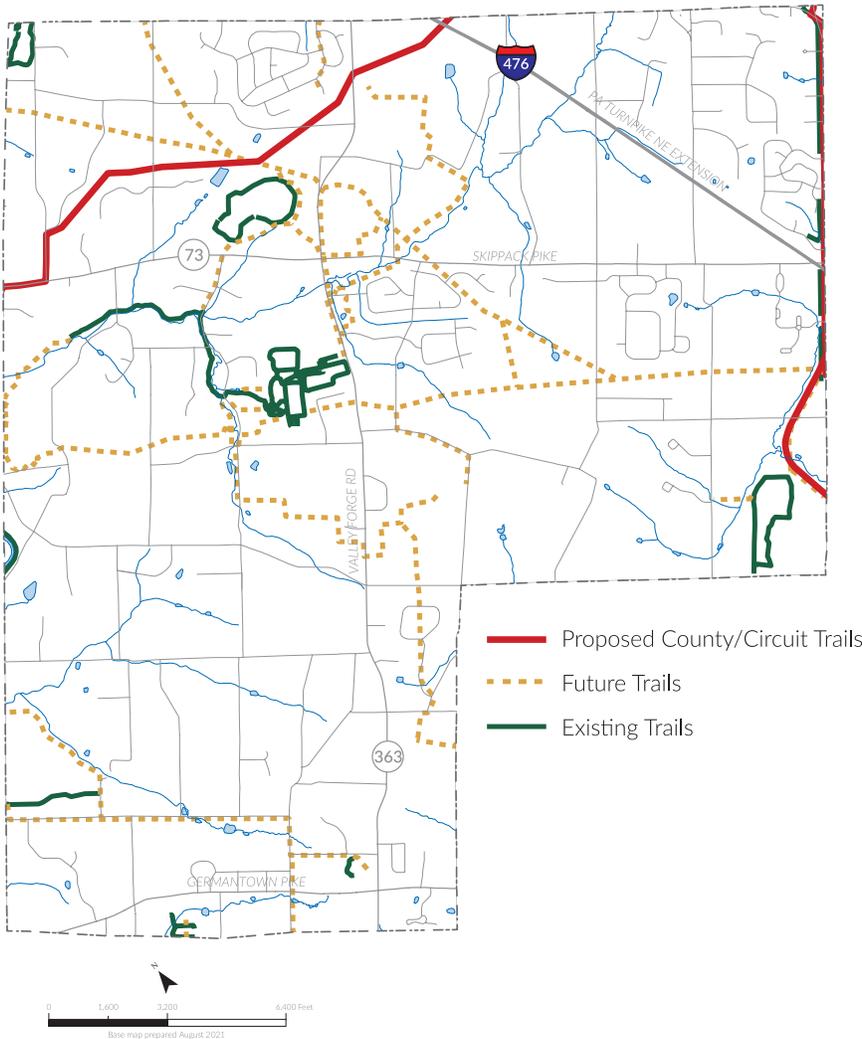
During the land development process, the township reserves and “banks” trail easements whenever possible. When a trail is installed that serves only one development—i.e., a trail that does not connect to neighboring developments—the trail is privately-owned and maintained by an HOA until it does connect to something else, in which case it is dedicated to the township. This is the same process the county typically uses for its trail system when individual, isolated segments are secured through the land development process. It is the township’s policy that public funding should not be used to support that which is effectively a private recreational facility, until it “goes public”.

## Key Takeaway

Because the few major roads in Worcester are also the busiest, cut-through traffic can be a problem. While improvements to existing roads will continue to be necessary, the township could look for ways to decrease travel demand and increase the usage of other transportation mode alternatives, particularly in encouraging walkable neighborhoods, which can help reduce congestion and make the system more resilient.

## EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS

SOURCE: WORCESTER TOWNSHIP, DVRPC, MCPC, TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACE PLANS.



*From Worcester's Public Outreach Survey:*  
Which **ONE** recreational facility does Worcester Township need more of? *(select one only)*

None, all acceptable	170	29.4%
Natural open spaces	142	24.6%
<b>Trails</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>23.9%</b>
Playground & tot lots	24	4.2%
Fields & courts	23	4.0%
Other	40	6.9%
No response	41	10.9%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## Existing Parks and Open Space

### *Parks and Preserved Open Space Inventory*

The amount of *public* preserved land has increased in the township since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. The newest parcels of land which the township now owns are located in eastern part of the township, including two smaller parcels in the vicinity of Bethel Road and the Northeast Extension of the Turnpike, as well as a large wooded tract at the corner of Whitehall Road and Skippack Pike. Also, the open space resulting from the Whitehall Estates land development was dedicated to the township.



# PUBLIC PARKS AND OPEN SPACE INFORMATION, 2020

SOURCE: WORCESTER TOWNSHIP

Name	Owner	Area (ac)	Features
Valley Green OS	Worcester Township	27.8	Zacharias Creek
Heebner Park	Worcester Township	88.6	Active & Passive Recreation and Township Building
Lenhart Tract	Worcester Township	14	Undeveloped
Fawn Creek OS	Worcester Township	22	Tributary to Zacharias Creek
Hollow Road OS	Worcester Township	17.7	Zacharias Creek
Markel Tract OS	Worcester Township	22.4	Zacharias Creek
Mt. Kirk Park	Worcester Township	17.6	Neighborhood Park
Community Hall	Worcester Township	2	Historic Meeting Hall
Nike Park	Worcester Township	9.2	Undeveloped
Sunnybrook Estates	Worcester Township	9.1	Active Recreation
Farmers Union Hall	Worcester Township	0.5	Historic Meeting Hall
Fisher Park	Towamencin Township	27	Active & Passive Recreation
Peter Wentz Farmstead	Montgomery County	88	Historic Farmstead
Evansburg State Park	Commonwealth of PA	143.6	Passive Recreation and Zacharias Creek

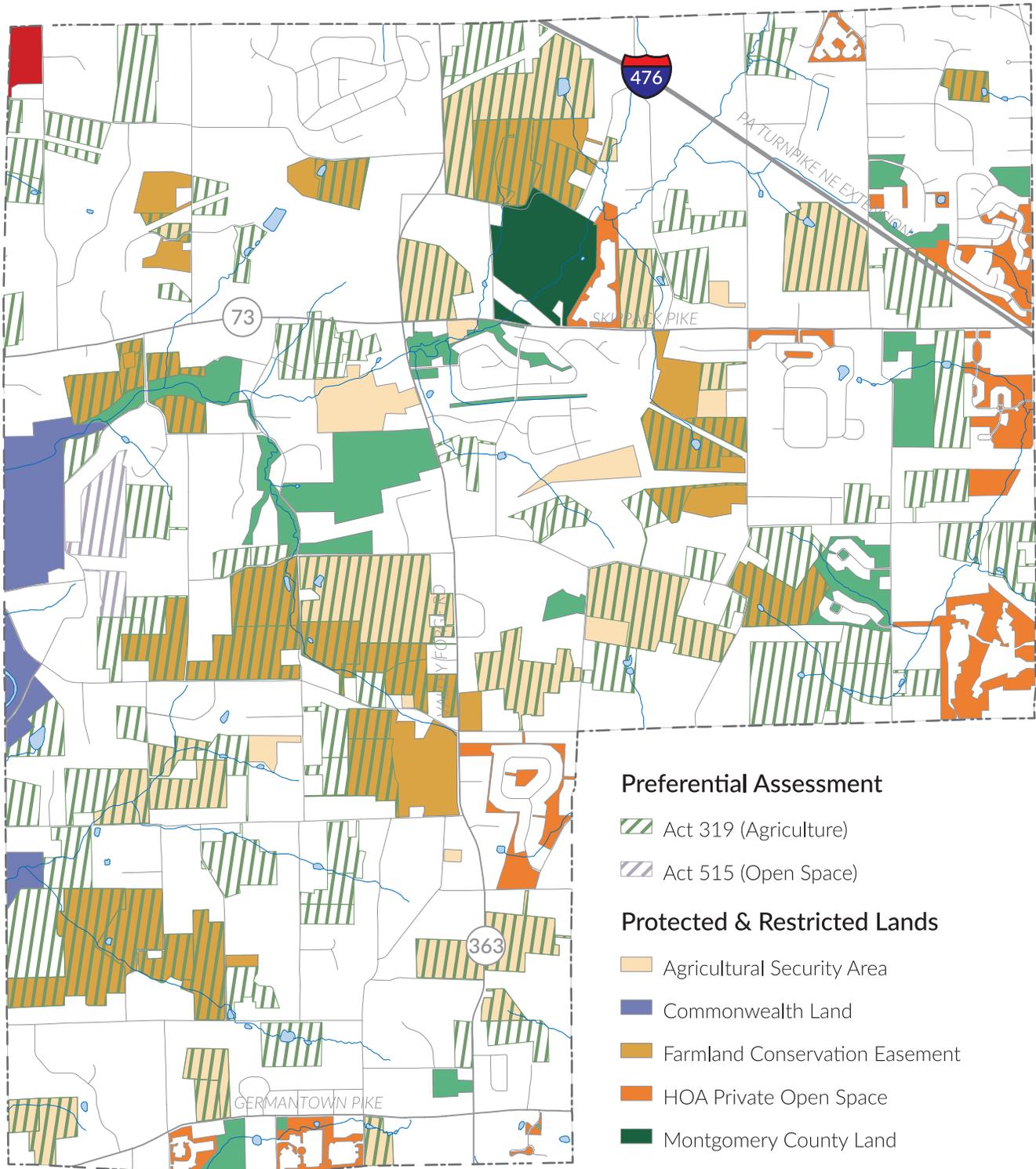
The map presents the entire gamut of preserved and conserved lands in the township, which include not just conventional parks and open space, but also conserved agricultural lands.

A significant consideration is the impact of private reservations of open space, originally created through the land development process, and how these can contribute to the total available park and open space system in the township. While privately held by homeowners’ or condo associations, these lands are deed restricted as open space in perpetuity, and often are required to be publicly accessible in some form. An example of these facilities includes the trails within the Preserver at Worcester (at Skippack Pike and North Wales Road).

Conserved agricultural lands are shown on the map as farmland conservation easements, which are typically held by the county but can also be held by the township. This land is conserved in perpetuity. Shown as well are agricultural security area (ASA) properties, which provide member properties certain privileges and protection from nuisance

# ALL CONSERVED AND RESTRICTED LANDS, 2020

SOURCE: WORCESTER TOWNSHIP

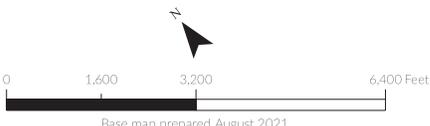


### Preferential Assessment

- Act 319 (Agriculture)
- Act 515 (Open Space)

### Protected & Restricted Lands

- Agricultural Security Area
- Commonwealth Land
- Farmland Conservation Easement
- HOA Private Open Space
- Montgomery County Land
- Towamencin Township Land
- Worcester Township Land



Source: Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals, July 2020

## TABLE OF ALL CONSERVED AND RESTRICTED LANDS, AS OF NOVEMBER 18, 2020

SOURCE: WORCESTER TOWNSHIP

Preserved Lands	Acres
Worcester Township	323.99
Montgomery County	107.66
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania	147.67
Private (HOA) Open Space	60.44
Conservation Easements	817.00
	<b>1,826.24</b>
Agricultural Security Area	Acres
Worcester Township	1,002.45
	<b>1,002.45</b>
<b>Township Area Total Acres (16.22 sm)</b>	<b>10,381.00</b>
<b>Percent Preserved</b>	<b>17.59%</b>
<b>Percent Preserved and ASA-Enrolled</b>	<b>27.25%</b>

List last updated 11/18/2020

lawsuits, and agricultural land that is preferentially assessed under Act 319. However, neither of these designations provide preservation in and of themselves. While a property tax incentive is received by Act 319 properties and a covenant is placed on a property for the duration of its enrollment, a property can voluntarily exit the program and be developed, although rollback taxes are due for the preceding seven years. Properties in an ASA are not preserved *by* that program, but membership in that program is a prerequisite for applying to the County Farmland Preservation Program.

Private properties can also voluntarily join another preferential assessment program, known as Act 515, which can provide a similar temporary conservation of a property through a property tax incentive and a covenant on the property. These properties can be agricultural, or they can be wooded working lands, private recreation (like a golf course), or otherwise properties over 10 acres with a single residence, but there is generally a requirement that there be some sort of public accessibility to the property.

### Key Takeaway

Worcester has a very good mix of preserved open space types and an understanding of the residents' desire for open space in the township. Further efforts to preserve open space and reserve park land should take into account a holistic approach considering habitat conservation, agriculture, and recreation uses, while also integrating the best practices of conservation subdivisions so the township achieves its goals.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

### Water Updates

Public water in the township is supplied by numerous suppliers, including North Penn Water Authority, North Wales Water Authority, PA American Water Company (Norristown District), and Aqua Superior Center Point. These supplies serve approximately 2,628 connections, both residential and nonresidential properties, which are further broken down in the infographic to the right.

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan recommended that those areas to be supplied with public sewer should also be served by public water, resulting in the proposed service areas for each of these public utilities to be relatively similar. Since much of the low-density and other rural areas of the township would continue to be served by private wells instead of public water, new developments can still be served by new private wells. According to survey data provided to MCPC, 37 new private wells have come online in the township since 2007. These 37 wells will yield 1,060 gallons and serve approximately 673 people. In order to continue the viability and safety of private well usage, continuing to plan for safe and effective groundwater recharge, as well as the conservation and protection overall of groundwater and surface water resources should be addressed.

Stream corridors, as well as lakes, ponds and wetlands, all maintain unique aquatic-based habitats and plant communities. The land-based resources abutting these water bodies can provide a number of ecological benefits, including the attenuation of stormwater, streambank conservation, and erosion prevention, as well as the regulation of pollutants and oxygen levels in waterways. Worcester regulates activities on the land abutting these waterways, called riparian corridors, primarily through the Riparian Corridor Conservation Overlay District (RCCD) in the zoning ordinance. These areas usually include a minimum 50-75 foot-

## PUBLIC WATER CONNECTIONS BY TYPE IN THE TOWNSHIP, 2018.



wide area, measured perpendicularly from each side of a stream.

The following map indicates the presence of the existing buffer, if any, with the:

- ◆ Full Buffer (green line): Segments with at least a 50-foot wide buffer on both sides only, with at least 50% canopy coverage
- ◆ Half Buffer (yellow line): Segments with at least a 50-foot wide buffer on one side only, with at least 50% canopy coverage.
- ◆ No Buffer (red line): Segments which do not appear to have a riparian buffer of trees and shrubs that is a minimum of 50 feet wide (on each side) and with at least 50% canopy coverage
- ◆ Culvert Area (pink line): Segments where a stream goes underground or is channelized into a culvert under a road.

Overall we see that a majority of stream corridors in the township have at least a partial buffer existing, with full buffers located along 61% of the more than 28 miles of streams in the township. The missing buffer areas occur on large-lot residential or agricultural lands, as well as near roadways; the majority of these areas are located on private property.



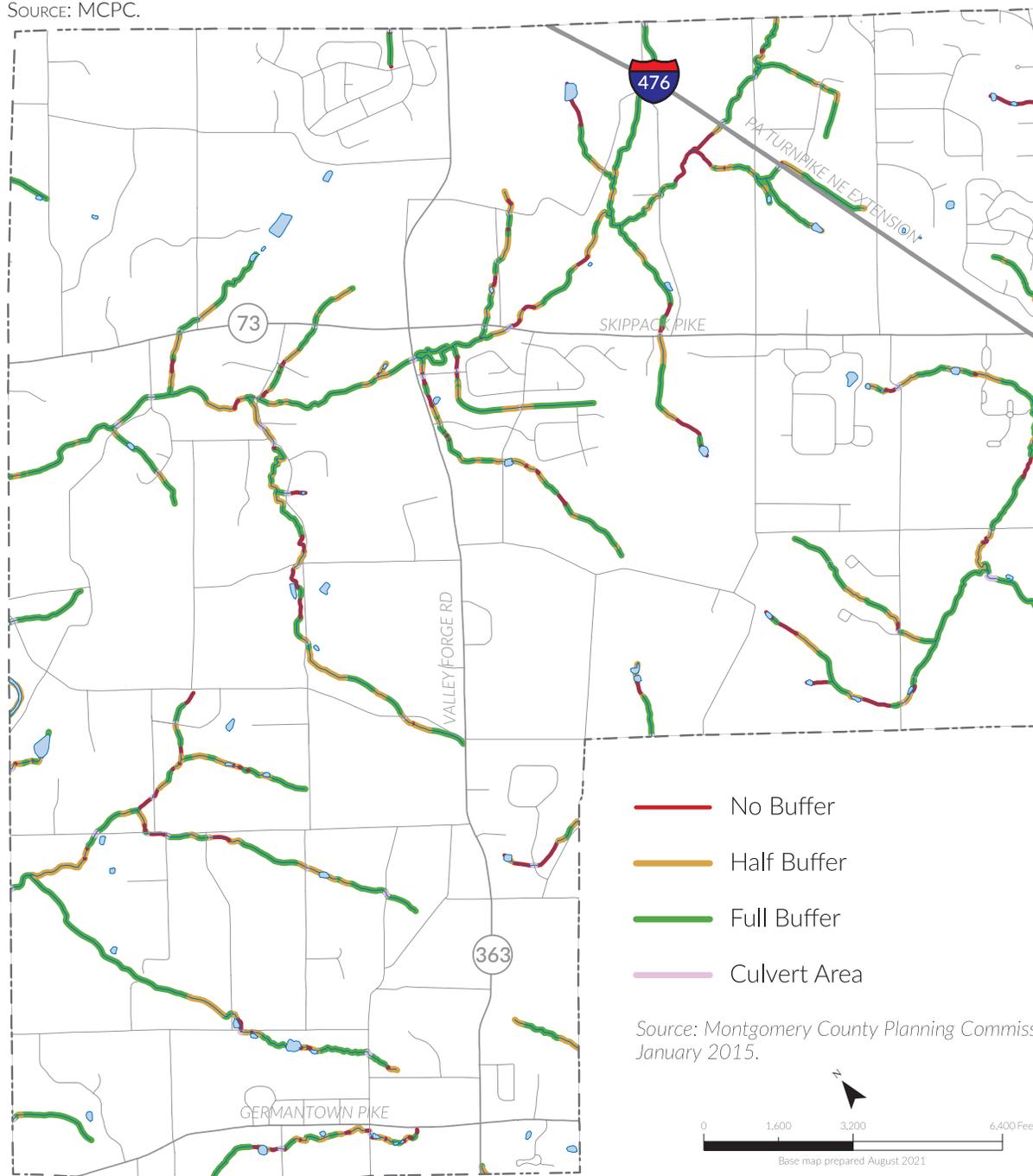
# WORCESTER RIPARIAN BUFFER QUALITY BY OWNERSHIP TYPE

SOURCE: MCPC, HERITAGE CONSERVANCY.

	Public Land		Private Land		Total	
	Length (feet)	Percent	Length (feet)	Percent	Length (feet)	Percent
No Buffer	2,408.4	10.0%	21,438.2	17.2%	23,846.6	16.1%
Half Buffer	5,127.2	21.3%	28,350.5	22.8%	33,477.7	22.5%
Full Buffer	16,427.2	68.4%	73,908.2	59.4%	90,335.4	60.8%
Culvert Area	57.1	0.2%	828.2	0.7%	885.2	0.6%
TOTAL	24,019.8	100.0%	124,525.1	100.0%	148,544.9	100.0%

# WORCESTER RIPARIAN BUFFER CLASSES

SOURCE: MCPC.



### Woodlands

The next map shows the extent of the tree canopy and overall tree cover in the township. It shows the tree coverage by the size of the “forest patch”, which generally means the greater the size of the patch, the more intact the ecological function in terms of forest health and habitat quality. We see some of the most intact and mature tree canopy along the western township boundary, adjacent to Evansburg State Park, as well as on township land, but significant woodland patches still exist on many private and undeveloped lands.

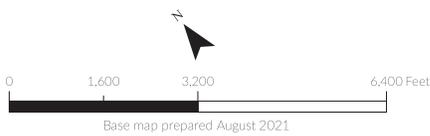
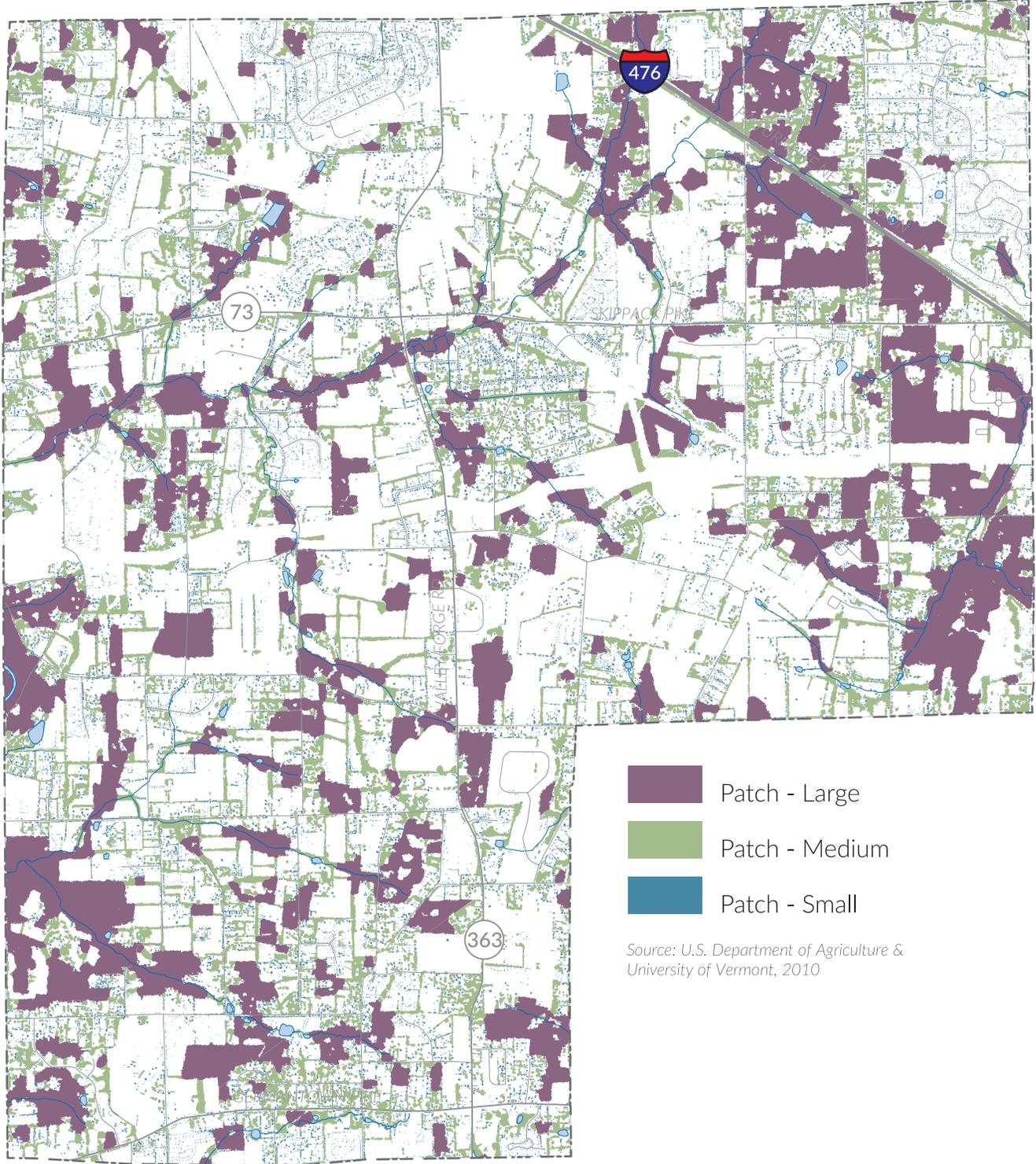
Woodlands provide habitat for numerous species of birds, mammals, and other wildlife, particularly when there is a generous interior away from streets and people. Canopy coverage near stream corridors provides needed shade to regulate water temperature and oxygen levels, as well as conserving streambanks. Tree coverage provides many benefits to humans as well, such as reducing the local surface temperature through shading, stormwater attenuation and carbon sequestration. The opportunities to regulate tree planting and removal are generally restricted to the land development process, in which trees must be planted per a calculation determined by the number of trees proposed to be removed. However, outside of this process, boosting tree planting and maintenance efforts must be done on a voluntary basis.

### Key Takeaway

**Ensuring that both natural and built infrastructure systems are maintained in a sustainable manner will be that much more important as the township continues to be built out. Further work can be done to integrate overall sustainability planning and practices into community life.**

# WORCESTER TREE CANOPY BY FOREST PATCH SIZE, 2010

SOURCE: MCPC.







# Goals & Objectives

Setting the goals for the community, and how to accomplish those goals, is an important step in the planning process. Creating goals, objectives, and recommendations is an iterative process, meaning that it involves several adjustments over time and integrating results from:

- ◆ our outreach survey,
- ◆ input from the task force, township officials, and staff,
- ◆ the findings from current conditions in the community and past plans,
- ◆ input from public meetings, and
- ◆ professional analysis from township consultants and planners.

This process was performed for the six major subject areas of this plan. Descriptions of how goals, objectives, and recommendations contribute to the planning process are described in more detail below.

**Goals.** Overarching principles or statements indicating community aspirations and long-term vision. Goals themselves do not suggest what needs to be done to achieve them, but instead simply envision an ideal outcome or state of being. For instance, desiring to “preserve farmland” does not itself suggest how the preservation will be accomplished: an objective or recommendation later will suggest the best or relevant way(s) to accomplish preservation.

**Objectives.** Measurable characteristics of a community, changes in which are attributable to a policy, project, or community action. Objectives measure *progress* to a particular goal or envisioned outcome, allowing comparison over time, or they simply track overall changes. Some examples of objectives include “increased acres in preservation,” “percentage of new housing within designated growth areas,” and “miles of trails built.” The township will investigate creating realistic benchmark metrics for these objectives when plan implementation begins.

**Recommendations.** *Specific* policy proposals, actions, and projects that should be undertaken to “move the needle” on an objective, and by extension make progress on achieving a larger goal of the plan. An implementation plan indicates who is responsible for carrying out proposals or actions, the available funding sources, and how the township should prioritize different action steps. **Recommendations for each subject area will be indicated in subsequent chapters.**

## POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will ensure that a diverse, safe, sustainable, and efficient transportation system is maintained for motorists and nonmotorists alike.*

## Transportation & Mobility

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### GOALS

- ◆ Assure that a diversity of modes of transportation are provided to improve connectivity throughout the township.
- ◆ Encourage the use of alternatives to motor vehicles.
- ◆ Reduce traffic congestion.
- ◆ Improve traffic safety for both motorists and nonmotorists.
- ◆ Provide a comprehensive network of trails throughout the township and connect to regional trails.

### OBJECTIVES

- ▷ Increase in # of miles of trail built.
- ▷ Increase # of intersections with improved level of service (LOS).
- ▷ Increase # of documented trail users.
- ▷ Decrease in # of traffic accidents.
- ▷ Increase in % of trips by walking or biking.
- ▷ Increase in # of miles of sidewalk/trails per square mile.

## Community Character

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### GOALS

- ◆ Encourage new and existing housing and amenities which are compatible with the traditional and rural character of the township.
- ◆ Provide a range of housing, densities and opportunities for enhanced amenities and neighborhood design, and ensure a mix of housing, densities and land uses as required by law.
- ◆ Support “aging in place” principles and other means by which older adults can secure or maintain appropriate housing in the township.

### OBJECTIVES

- ▷ Increase in # of housing proposed and constructed of desired types.
- ▷ Improvement in % of desired housing types in the township to desired levels.
- ▷ Increase in # of placemaking projects.

### POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will support the provision of a range of high-quality housing and neighborhoods with appropriate and desirable amenities to support existing and future residents’ needs in line with Worcester’s community character and sense of place.*

## Preservation, Open Space & Parks

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### GOALS

- ◆ Support and encourage the preservation of the unique and rare aspects of the township’s history, culture, and environment which are emblematic of community character.
- ◆ Provide for the passive and active recreational needs of township residents.
- ◆ Enhance connectivity between parks and neighborhoods.
- ◆ Provide a degree of public access of properties acquired or eased for preservation purposes, as appropriate.

### OBJECTIVES

- ▷ Increase in # of properties/# of acres purchased or eased for preservation for agriculture, sensitive environmental areas, and general open space.

### POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will support and encourage the preservation of the township’s history, culture, and environment, while supporting an interconnected network of active and passive recreation system.*

- ▷ Increase in # of participants in township park/rec programs.
- ▷ Increase in # residents rating satisfaction with township's park/rec system.

## Environmental Resources & Infrastructure

---

### POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will strive to maintain sustainable natural systems and the built environment to ensure the township's quality of life is maintained for future generations. Worcester will ensure that the functionality and maintenance of relevant infrastructure systems are sound and sustainably provided.*

### GOALS

- ◆ Preserve and conserve sensitive environmental features, such as floodplains, steep slopes, riparian buffers, forests, and wetlands.
- ◆ Restrict development from environmentally sensitive areas.
- ◆ Support practices which address climate change, including renewable energy, sustainable transportation options, low-impact development, and reductions in waste, emissions, and water and energy use.
- ◆ Provide for the sustainable management of stormwater throughout the township.
- ◆ Provide and maintain sewer and water infrastructure capacity in line with reasonable needs.
- ◆ Plan for public sewer in areas at risk for malfunctioning systems and retrofit failing systems.

### OBJECTIVES

- ▷ Decrease in % of development occurring within sensitive environmental areas.
- ▷ Decrease in rate of land converted to impervious surface.
- ▷ Increase in % tree canopy coverage.
- ▷ Increase in % of riparian corridors with full or half buffers.
- ▷ Increase in # of streambank restoration projects; # of feet of streambanks restored.
- ▷ Increase in % of watersheds in good health.
- ▷ Increase in alternative energy usage in residential and nonresidential properties.
- ▷ Decrease in # of flooding events or illicit discharge complaints documented.
- ▷ Increase in # of new connections to public water and sewer.
- ▷ Increase in # of municipal stormwater projects; amount of stormwater issues abated through projects.

## Governance & Public Services

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### GOALS

- ◆ Enable the township to sustainably and equitably provide necessary services and resources to all residents.
- ◆ Support partnerships between governments and other organizations to achieve the township's planning and development objectives.

### OBJECTIVES

- ▷ Increase in # of residents rating satisfaction with township government.
- ▷ Increase in # of municipal code self-reviews.
- ▷ Increase in # and type of partnerships established by the township.
- ▷ Increase in # and rate of complaints resolved.

## Land Use & Growth Management

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### GOALS

- ◆ Plan for a balanced land-use mix for fiscal sustainability for the township and for the residential tax base.
- ◆ Concentrate development where infrastructure and development already exists, such as in village growth areas.
- ◆ Ensure context-sensitive design of development, scaled according to its environment and surroundings.
- ◆ Promote responsible development that reduces the consumption of land.
- ◆ Balance the need to accommodate growth in the township while supporting and ensuring that land preservation is a high priority.
- ◆ Provide the physical capacity for economic growth and investment.
- ◆ Allow commercial development when it's small-scale in nature, concentrated in village growth areas.
- ◆ Support the continuing viability of agriculture in all its forms in the township.
- ◆ Support local small business development and retention, as well as entrepreneurship.

### POLICY STATEMENT

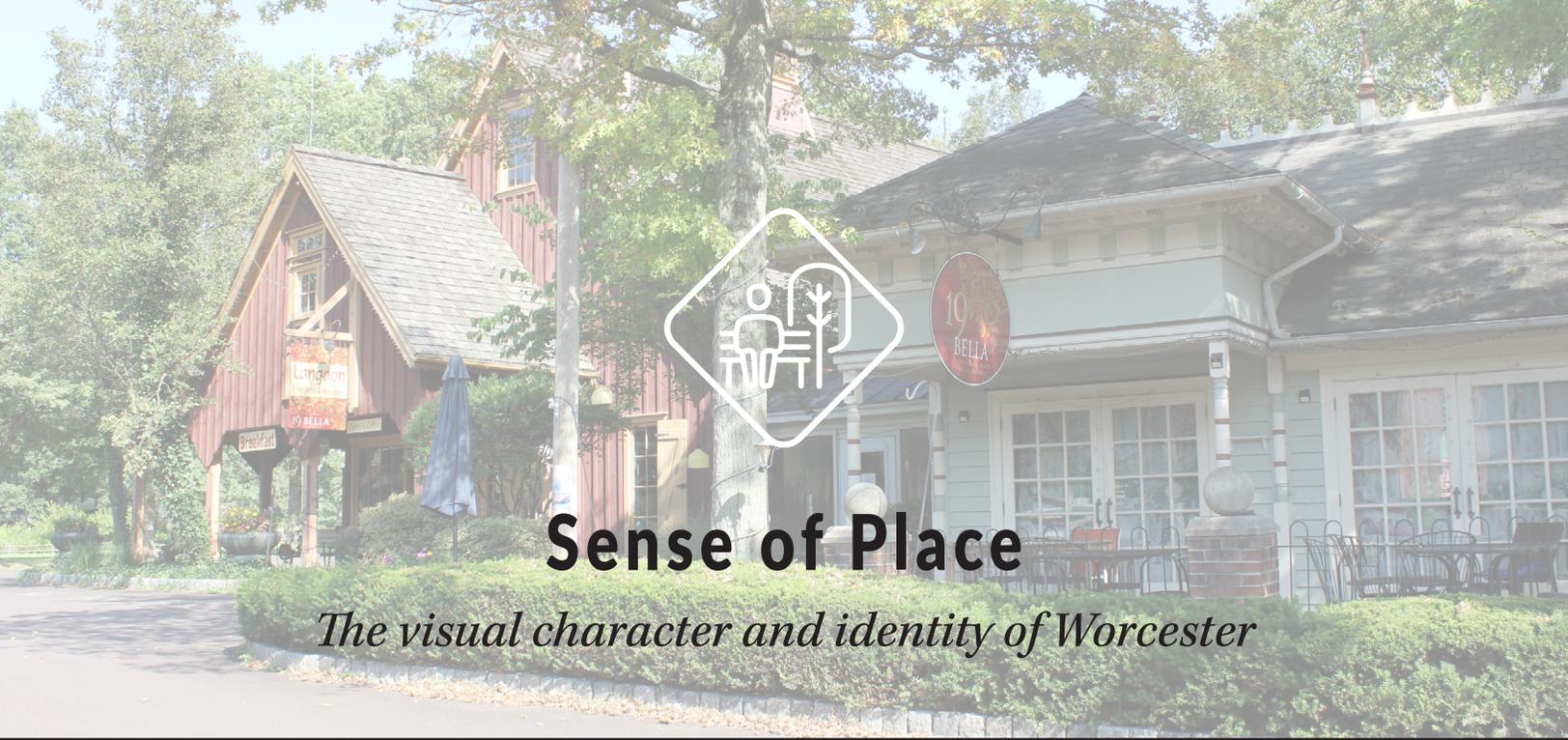
*Worcester will provide efficient services to its constituents in a manner that can be sustained for the long-term and which is resilient to economic challenges.*

### POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will support a balanced approach of responsible, context-sensitive development in order to preserve and enhance its existing assets, fiscal health, and community character. Worcester will support a local economic model which can provide a range of employment opportunities while maintaining a balanced commercial tax base.*

## OBJECTIVES

- ▷ Increase in % of developments within designated growth/village areas.
- ▷ Increase in assessed property values.
- ▷ Increase in # of acres preserved, both with and without public access as appropriate.
- ▷ Increase in # of developments whose fiscal impact is net-zero or positive per acre revenue yield of development.
- ▷ Decrease in # of developments resulting from court challenges or changed zoning.
- ▷ Increase in # of jobs within the township.
- ▷ Increase in # of business establishments.
- ▷ Increase in # of agricultural operations.
- ▷ Increase in # of agricultural-related jobs.



# Sense of Place

*The visual character and identity of Worcester*

## ***Sense of Place:***

*The experience or sensation of being in a specific, unique place in the world. Those who experience a sense of place in a community experience the attractive, special, and unique physical aspects of an area as a manifestation of that feeling. These physical aspects of a community can include natural forms such as landscapes, topography, wildlife, and plant communities, as well as human-made forms such as architecture, signage, artistic and cultural objects, and structures. Mass-produced forms and structures with little local significance, or those aspects which “can be found anywhere,” in contrast, tend not to produce a sense of place.*

Worcester is a community built of brick and clapboard, of stone walls and wood fences, and of field and forest. Residents of Worcester value the rural experience above all else and have the benefit of enjoying their own little slice of small town America—all within about 20 to 25 miles of Philadelphia. Worcester is home to a welcoming community which is reflected through the variety of housing options of its many neighborhoods and the manifold amenities that the township offers.

The township’s commitment to preserving and enhancing its community character, a most valuable resource, is shown through the many beautiful parks and trails that offer recreation opportunities to users of all ages and abilities; its excellent schools offering bright futures to those who walk the halls; its many barns and working farms that define the landscape; its preserved open space that is home to diverse ecosystems; and its quant villages that are home to a diverse mix of commercial and housing options. The people of Worcester lead rich lives filled with a variety of recreation and leisure opportunities—there is something for everyone in Worcester.

Worcester is a special place, and township residents can point out the many things that make Worcester unique. Many people believe great places “just happen,” or might happen by accident. Even though there is a fair bit of luck involved, great places are the result of a series of policy decisions, design interventions, and ongoing efforts to specifically

cultivate that *sense of place*. Four important purposes of placemaking include the following:

- ◆ *Identity:* Placemaking efforts enhance the identity of the community through unique design features which evoke the township's vernacular architecture, history, and patterns of development. When done successfully, through a mix of programming and design, no one would mistake Worcester for anywhere else, and this increases the sense of belonging among residents.
- ◆ *Orientation:* Both visitors and residents benefit from a coherent, obvious path to their chosen destination. A consistently-designed wayfinding program encourages greater and more efficient patronage of businesses, as well as recreational and natural amenities, all while supporting the community's overall design scheme.
- ◆ *Comfort:* No one wants to be in a place which feels uninviting or hostile. Improvements should not only make walking, shopping, and doing business in a village area safer, but also more comfortable. Public spaces should be inviting and intimate, encouraging people to stay longer and recreate or patronize more businesses.
- ◆ *Beauty:* People naturally want to live, work and visit places which are pleasing to behold and pleasant to dwell in. Street furniture which recalls historic forms, appropriately-scaled and -designed signs, well-articulated façade treatments, and plentiful plantings not only make the landscape attractive, but capture Worcester's spirit.

THESE ARE PREFERRED...



THESE ARE NOT...



**Residential Design:** new residential and mixed-use development should be built of materials similar to the township overall—generally brick, stone, and wood as opposed to cookie cutter designs or vinyl siding.

## THESE ARE PREFERRED...



## THESE ARE NOT...



**Commercial Design:** In many cases, existing commercial spaces can be repurposed for new uses. When this does not meet the demand for commercial space, new commercial spaces will need to be built. Cookie cutter strip malls can detract from the community, so any new construction should be of building materials sympathetic to the community character and overall architecture of the area where they are built. Vast parking areas are a visual pollutant, and can also cause stormwater issues and add to heat island impacts.



THESE ARE PREFERRED...



THESE ARE NOT...



**Signage:** Smaller scale, wooden signage is preferred to large, vinyl, or aluminum signage. Lighting for monument/freestanding signage should be limited to external downlighting as opposed to internal illumination; the same goes for wall signs, which should preferably have gooseneck lighting.

THESE ARE PREFERRED...



THESE ARE NOT...



**Street Lamps:** *Period lighting takes one back to a simpler time. Lamp posts are both aesthetically pleasing and functional, making pedestrians safer and creating a sense of place.*

## THESE ARE PREFERRED...



## THESE ARE NOT...



**Public Amenities:** Benches in public parks, along public streets, and even in shopping centers can act as refuges for those who need to rest or just want to enjoy the weather or scenery. The design of benches can mesh with the community and enhance the streetscape. Even trash and recycling bins can be beautiful and add to the overall aesthetic of the community.

## THESE ARE PREFERRED...



## THESE ARE NOT...



**Recreation:** Recreation areas are a key piece of a community. The way that parks are integrated into the community and what amenities they offer has a big impact on how much they are visited by the community. Large parks can offer a wide variety of recreation opportunities for people of all ages and can act as event spaces.



# Transportation & Mobility

*How to get around quickly, efficiently, and safely*

## POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will ensure that a diverse, safe, sustainable, and efficient transportation system is maintained for motorists and nonmotorists alike.*

## GOALS



Assure that a diversity of modes of transportation are provided to improve connectivity throughout the township.



Encourage the use of alternatives to motor vehicles.



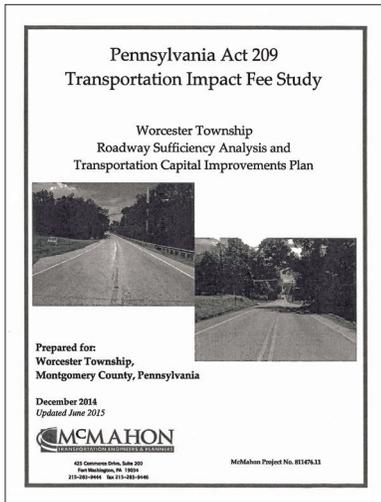
Reduce traffic congestion.



Improve traffic safety for both motorists and nonmotorists.



Provide a comprehensive network of trails throughout the township and connect to regional trails.



*The township’s Act 209 Transportation Impact Fee Study (Act 209 Study) is considered to be the governing document regarding transportation improvements (e.g., widening and other major traffic capacity-improving projects). This chapter supplements the Act 209 Study plan and provides additional improvement recommendations for transportation planning subjects that Act 209 Studies do not typically cover:*

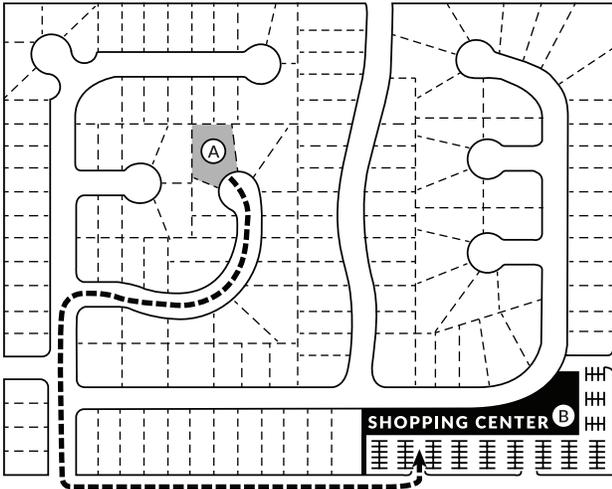
Planning for transportation and mobility is not simply about “getting from Point A to Point B.” In fact, this very thinking has, over time, too frequently created communities where the overriding consideration is how to get as many cars through town as quickly as possible. Communities, however, must make sure the transportation system works for *all*, for people of all ages and abilities.

Driving is, and will be, the dominant mode of transportation of residents in the township for the foreseeable future. However, traffic congestion is a perennial problem that almost all communities face at one time or another, and Worcester is no different. Reducing the impact of the automobile on the community will take a multifaceted, multigenerational approach, impacting both design and behavior. This chapter focuses on potential solutions to perceived issues related to existing conditions; for additional information on existing conditions, please refer to Chapter 2, Worcester Past and Present.

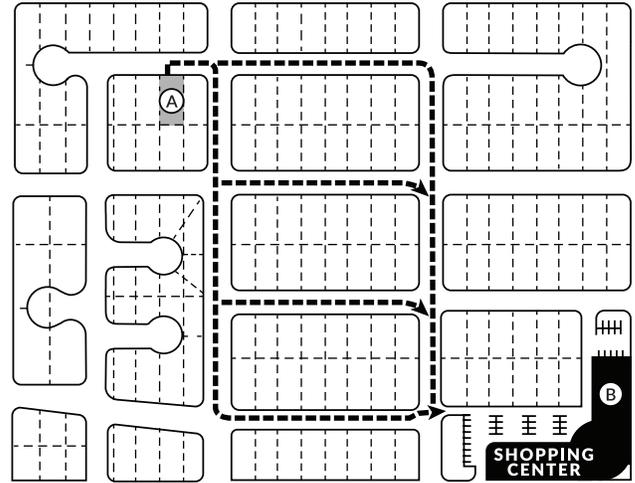
## Context Matters

How a street functions—how fast traffic goes, how useful and easy it is to use by multiple people using multiple modes—is determined by where it is in the context of the community. The context of a street involves the *kind of development* abutting the street: building design, site layout, and the land use all contribute to the context. The context determines what kind of street is most appropriate. No one would doubt the reasoning behind separating I-476, both visually and physically, from the rest of Worcester: fast, regional traffic with heavy tractor trailers does not mix well with quiet residential neighborhoods. Likewise, overbuilding facilities on a farm road would make just as little sense. Roadways offer a first impression for incoming visitors to a community: the narrow, gently curving roadways with old growth trees, wildflowers, stone walls, and other scenic natural or agricultural views hugging the roadway truly define small town, rural living.

When determining the character and design of streets, we must also consider the intended purpose of the street, and how it functions as a part of the whole community and regional network. On the next page are two examples of what a typical community street network, including in Worcester, can look like. Picture 1 is the conventional suburban model of a hierarchical street network: many local, residential roads empty out onto a small number of major roads, traffic only has a few routes to use to get to a major destination, and ultimately represents a network with relatively low connectivity but which limits traffic in residential areas. Picture 2, on the other hand, resembles historic street patterns found in older communities; notice that there are several routes one can take to their destination thereby keeping trips efficient by allowing a driver to choose an alternate route based on current traffic conditions, but which disperses traffic throughout the street network. Connectivity and availability of routes, as well as the character of our streets, can have a great impact upon the community character: we must make certain our streets serve the purposes of the community, not the other way around.



Picture 1



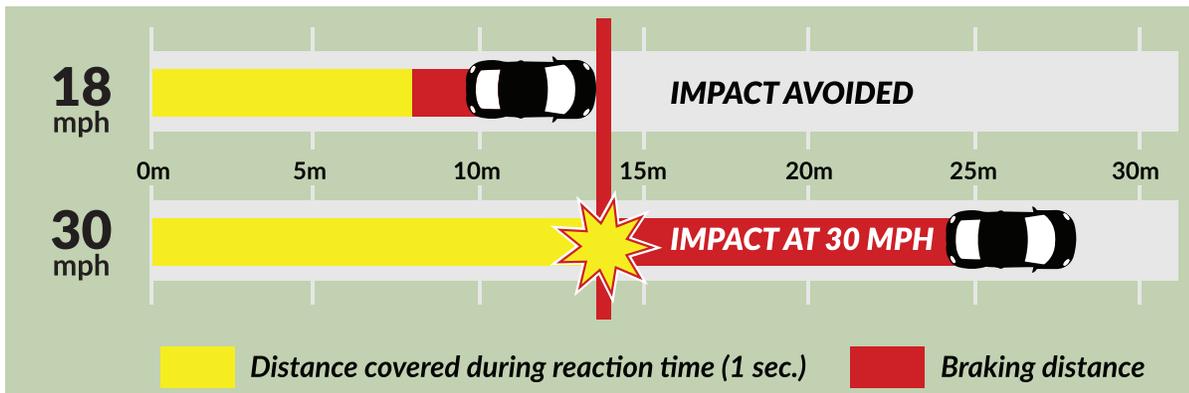
Picture 2

SOURCE: ROYCE CITY, TX

## Speed and the Design of Streets

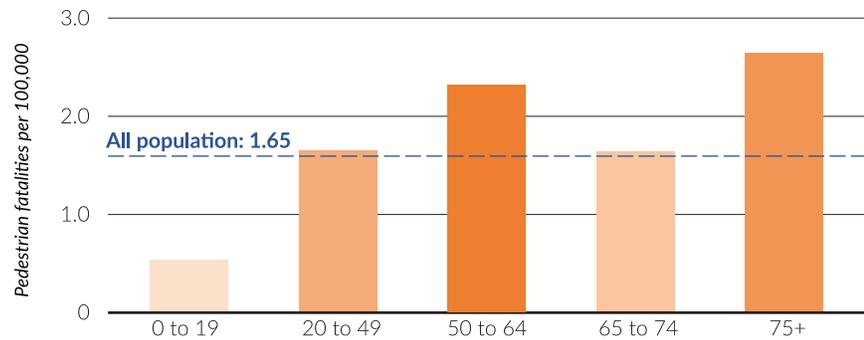
Contrary to popular belief, the posted speed limit of a street is *not* the primary determining factor of a car's speed. It is in fact the *design* of the street, the physical geometry and capacity of a street, which has the greatest impact on the speed of cars.

Speed is a predictable, yet unfortunate, indicator of how serious an accident can be. Cars driving more slowly not only have a better chance of avoiding impacts, but impacts which do occur tend to be much less fatal, particularly with pedestrian-involved accidents. A vehicle driving under 20 mph is able to stop in about half the distance of a vehicle driving 30 mph, cutting about 40 feet of braking distance during which a crash can occur (given an average reaction time of one second). Vehicle speed also has a direct and demonstrable relationship to pedestrian mortality, which increases drastically as vehicles speeds are increased: a pedestrian struck at 25 mph has about a 9 in 10 chance of survival as opposed to a pedestrian struck at 45 mph with just over a 1 in 3 chance of survival. Nationally, older adults are overrepresented in pedestrian fatalities from driver accidents, meaning that more older adults suffer from such accidents than any other age group; even more unfortunate is that this trend has worsened nationwide from 10 years ago.

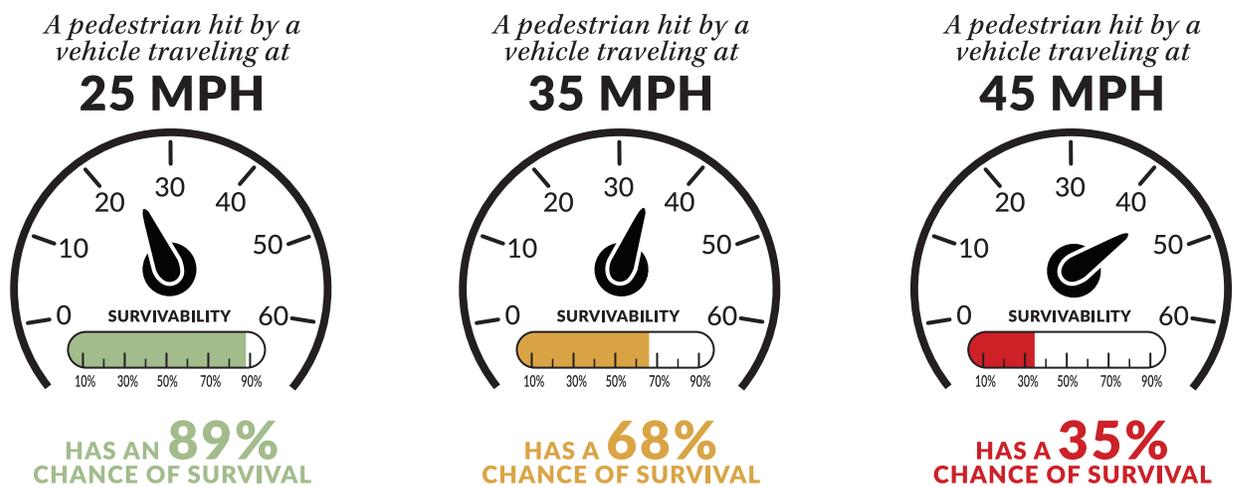


SOURCE: ROYCE CITY, TX

## PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES PER 100,000 PEOPLE BY AGE (2010-2019)



Source: Smart Growth America, *Dangerous by Design*, 2021.



SOURCE: TEFFT, B.C. (2011). IMPACT SPEED AND A PEDESTRIAN'S RISK OF SEVERE INJURY OR DEATH, AAA FOUNDATION FOR TRAFFIC SAFETY.

While drivers are certainly to blame, street design is undoubtedly involved as well. The wider the travel lane, the gentler the street curvature, and the more uninterrupted the route, the more comfortable a driver will be driving at higher speeds. One need only to ride an expressway to see this effect in action: the wide lanes and gentle curves are intentionally forgiving of “driver error” at high speeds, which helps to reduce the likelihood of crashes. However, the same logic should not be extended to other streets in the community. The picture on the next page shows two low-volume residential streets which nominally are meant to have the same speed limit, but look quite different. The difference between these two streets represents the key importance of **road side friction**, and how this concept is key to slowing down vehicles and maintaining safe neighborhoods.



Both are 25mph zones, but only one of them is designed like it.



The road in the bottom of these two pictures is narrower and has more “road side friction” with trees close to the street; its design more effectively contributes to lower speeds.

*Road Side Friction:*

*The apparent or perceived visual impact of activities or objects occurring along the side of a road as perceived by a driver. Parked cars, street trees, pedestrians, cyclists, medians, and the edge of the street itself, among other things, either narrow the actual roadway or narrow the visual field of drivers, which have the effect of increasing driver awareness and caution.*

## Complete Streets

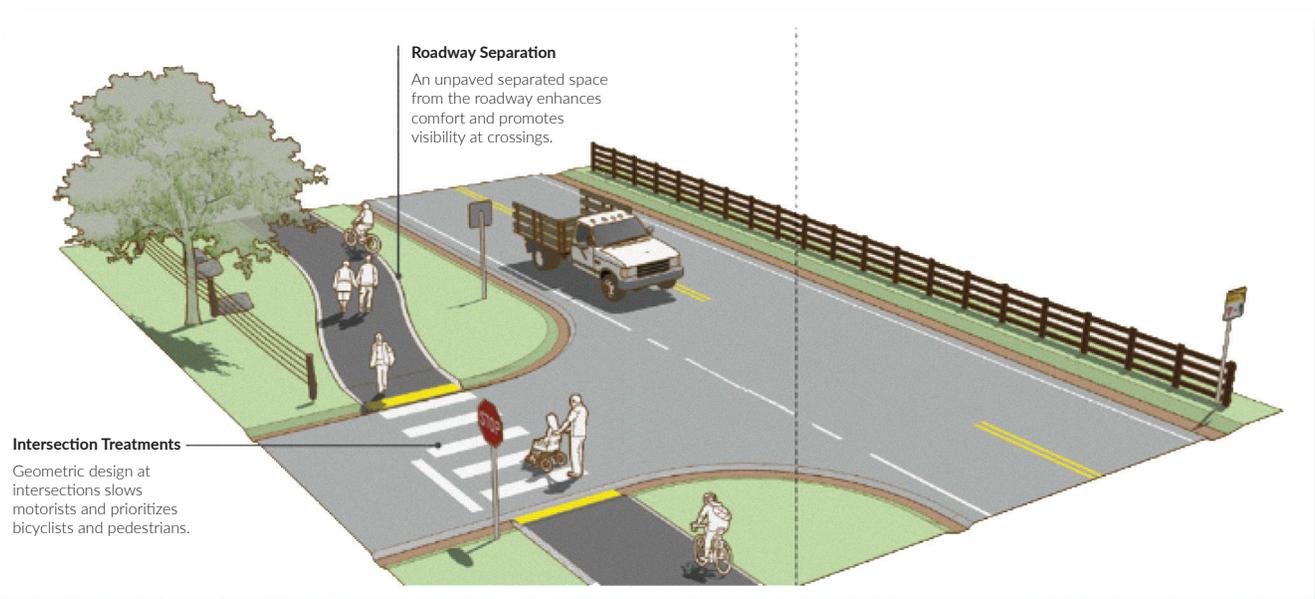
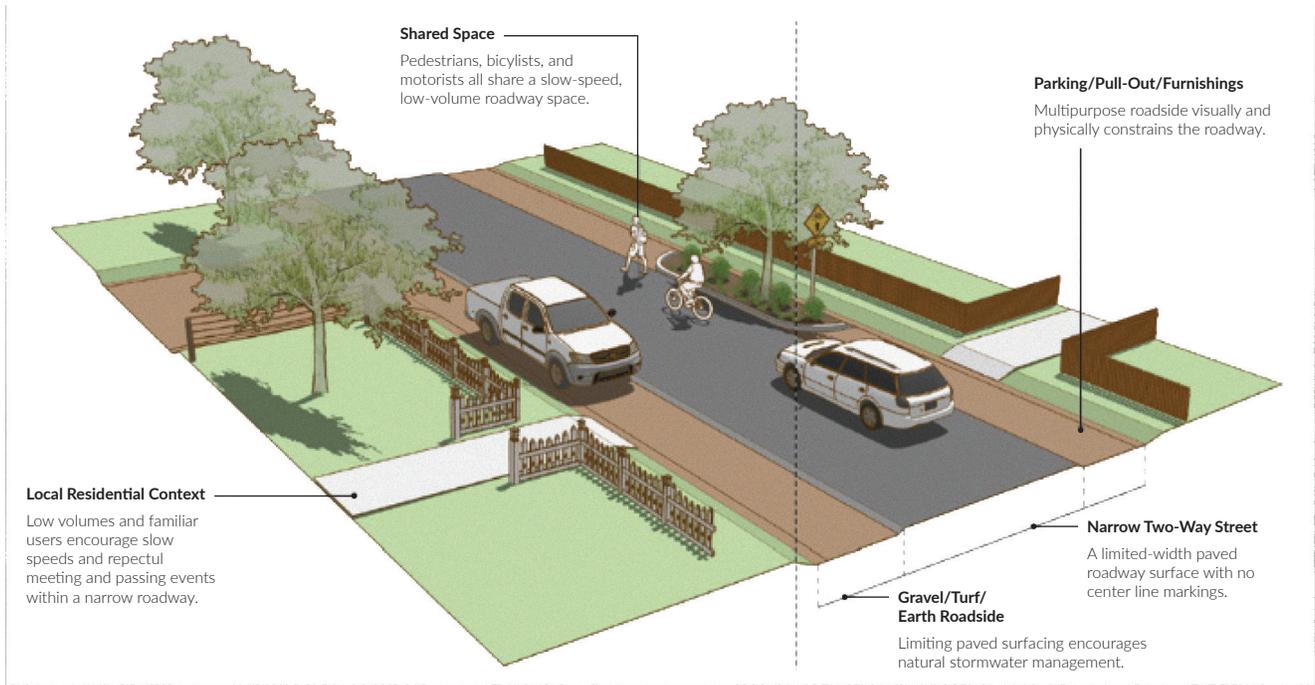
A key strategy in tempering the overemphasis on motor vehicles, and ensuring the safety of all users of the transportation system, is the idea of Complete Streets. The “complete” part of this concept refers to how we should consider all modes of transportation when designing streets, and so a street is more complete when it involves other modes, such as pedestrians, cyclists, and more. Implementing Complete Streets can take many forms, and particular improvements often depend upon the particular context, neighborhood, and street type in question, but they can be most successful when they are created through the implementation of a **Complete Streets Policy**. Such a policy is a decision-making tool which helps guide a jurisdiction on when and what kind of multimodal considerations take place during routine road projects, and whether there are any exceptions. The following two examples of Complete Streets projects may be particularly suited to Worcester’s rural character.

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania  
**Complete Streets Policy**  
 Funding for this policy was provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Health through the State Physical Activity and Nutrition Grant and Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**1.0 VISION**  
 Complete Streets are defined by this policy as enabling safe access for all users. Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, will develop and maintain safe, accessible county-owned roads and facilities that support all users. The Complete Streets policy will guide decision-making during the planning and design of capital improvement projects for roads and other county-owned facilities, as well as for projects and initiatives of the county's partners and other relevant stakeholders.

**2.0 PRINCIPLES**

- 2.1 Serve all users and modes**  
 The Complete Streets policy will promote safe, accessible, and integrated transportation options that balance the needs of all users and modes, including but not limited to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists (including motorcycle, light trucks, emergency personnel, and agricultural vehicle operators).
- 2.2 Utilize context sensitive approaches**  
 The Complete Streets policy will address the safety of all users while considering projects' physical setting as well as scenic, aesthetic, and historic concerns, and universal design principles.
- 2.3 Promote sound environmental design**  
 The Complete Streets policy will promote best management practices of stormwater management, environmental design, and placemaking. It will incorporate environmental mitigation features where practicable when implementing Complete Streets designs.
- 2.4 Apply to all phases of a project, particularly during planning and design**  
 Complete Streets designs shall be considered during the planning and design phases of county-led school, highway, and sidewalk projects, to the greatest extent practicable. County representatives shall meet regularly with Complete Streets design elements in cooperation with local and regional projects during discussions.



SOURCE: *SMALL TOWN AND RURAL MULTIMODAL NETWORKS*, US DOT FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION.

## Traffic Calming

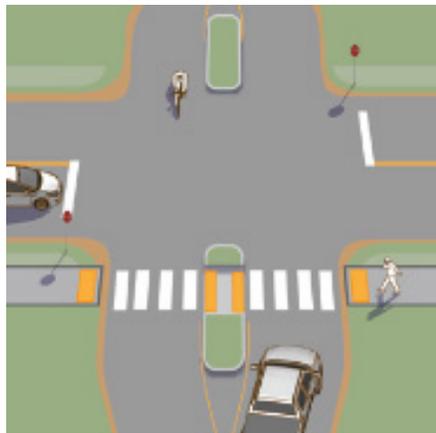
By investing in substantial improvements to major roadways, impacts of traffic to neighborhood roads can be reduced and minimized. More motorists will opt to cut through neighborhoods and back roads to avoid traffic and difficult intersections when major roads and intersections are not routinely improved with additional capacity, signal upgrades, or turning lanes. By making traffic improvements, motorists will be less likely to go off the main roadways.

Dangers of traffic on neighborhood streets, as well as major roads, can additionally be reduced through traffic calming. Traffic calming is the practice of altering the design of a roadway to reduce speeds and provides safer conditions for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Many of the practices involve the strategic constricting of travel lanes in different ways to lower vehicle speeds and incentivize more responsible driving, as well as support safer facilities for nonmotorized modes of transportation such as walking and bicycling. The size and character of the road determine which practices may best be suited for it, and there could be several streets in the township which might benefit from traffic calming practices. Four common practices are illustrated below,



Curb bumpout with Shortened Pedestrian Crossing Distance  
Source: Hillary Orr via FHWA.

- ◆ **curb bumpouts** at intersections, or **pinchpoints** along mid-block street segments, can reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians and constrict the roadway, acting as roadside friction to slow cars;



Pedestrian refuge island



Roundabout

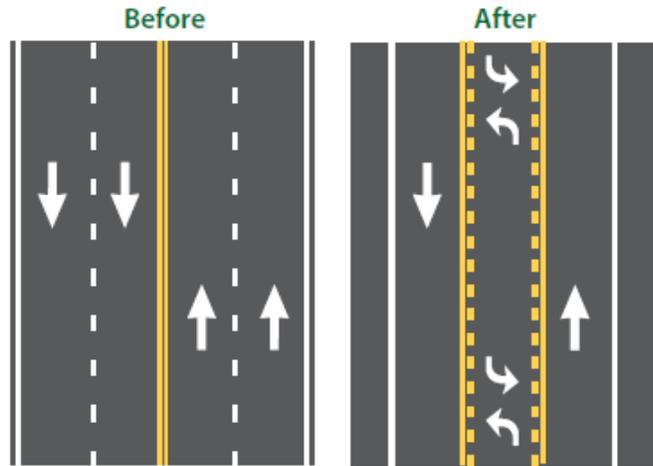
SOURCE: FHWA.

- ◆ **pedestrian refuge islands**, which provide relief for pedestrians crossing a street, enables a crossing pedestrian to only look one way at a time before crossing each of the two lanes, and also provides roadside friction to slow cars;
- ◆ **road diets**, which reduce the number of existing travel lanes on a road and can be done a number of ways, the most common of which is the reduction of four lanes to two (with a center turning lane and shoulders/bike lanes); and
- ◆ **roundabouts** on low-volume streets can slow oncoming cars and constrict the roadway; pedestrian crossings are also frequently shorter.

## Standards for Street Design

In furthering the goals of both traffic calming and accommodations for multimodal transportation options, the township may also wish to reconsider street design standards it currently maintains in its subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO). While emergency response

units with vehicles such as firetrucks and ambulances may suggest less restrictive standards than the ones mentioned below, many communities have

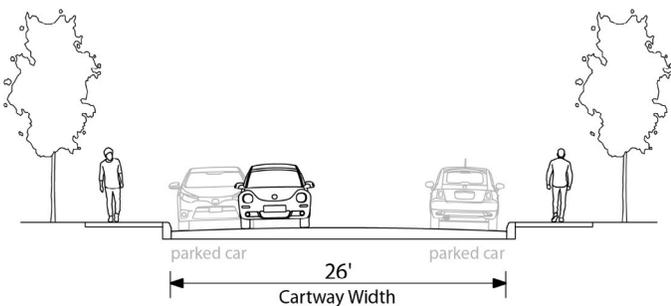


SOURCE: KINDER INSTITUTE FOR URBAN RESEARCH, RICE UNIVERSITY.

successfully worked with their emergency management services to field-test these standards with their present equipment.

### STREET WIDTHS

Overall street widths should respond to the *context* of the street. On a typical interior subdivision street, there may be little need to require paved cartways larger than 18-20 feet, especially when on-street parking will be rare or nonexistent. The reduction in unnecessary paving overall can contribute to lower long-term maintenance costs. Streets of such a width may also be appropriate when used as “yield streets”—low-volume roads which may accommodate multiple types of users while parked cars or traffic-calming structures induce incoming cars to yield to each other.



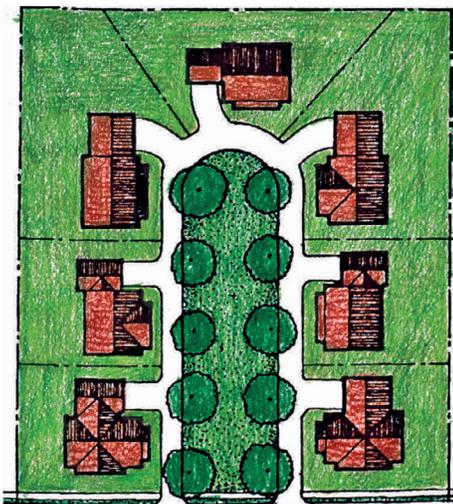
Example of a yield street

### STREET CURVES

As noted above, the softer the curve, the greater the speed. Centerline radii of 90 to 165 feet tend to be most appropriate for design speeds of 25 miles per hour and below on local streets and minor collector roads. Nonetheless, radii closer to 90 feet may be preferable.

### CUL-DE-SAC OPTIONS

While cul-de-sacs are popular and valuable streets on which to situate housing, they can unfortunately reduce connectivity between neighborhoods. One option can be to support or require cul-de-sacs to provide pedestrian connections beyond the cul-de-sac to another development or street. An alternative to the cul-de-sac is the “court” or “close” (a Scottish term), pictured at left, which is a one-way, narrow loop street at the end of a full street upon which houses front. Located at the center of the loop street is a landscaped green, which can double as a stormwater infiltration feature or recreational amenity.



SOURCE: RANDALL ARENDT, RURAL BY DESIGN.

# Proposed Projects

In addition to certain policy changes the township may wish to consider, several important improvement projects are included below, which the township would like to implement, which are shown on the map on page 59:

## STREET PROJECT PROPOSALS

1. Video Detection, Dilemma Zone Radar Detection, Emergency Preemption, Controller Cabinet, Battery Back-Up, Full Modernization at Township Line Road & Whitehall Road.
2. Video Detection, Dilemma Zone Radar Detection, Controller Cabinet, Battery Back-Up, GPS Time Clock at Morris Road & Ford Electronics Access Drive.
3. Video Detection, Dilemma Zone Radar Detection, Controller Cabinet, Battery Back-Up, GPS Time Clock at Morris Road & Berks Road.
4. Video Detection, Dilemma Zone Radar Detection at Skippack Pike & Bethel Road/Whitehall Road.
5. Video Detection, Dilemma Zone Radar Detection, Controller Cabinet, Battery Back-Up at Germantown Pike & East Mount Kirk Avenue.
6. Video Detection, Dilemma Zone Radar Detection, Controller Cabinet, Battery Back-Up at Skippack Pike & Berks Road.
7. Video Detection, Dilemma Zone Radar Detection at Skippack Pike & Bustard Road.

*Projects 1-7 are all signal upgrades for an adaptive traffic system to help more effectively move traffic through the township.*

8. Valley Forge Corridor Project – Route 363 between intersection between Woodlyn Avenue, Township Line Road, & Stump Hall Road- Construction costs estimated to be \$10-\$15 million. Currently under design.

*This project is currently underway with a multimodal grant for design and engineering work. Improvements include:*

- ◆ *widening this portion of Valley Forge Road to create a center-turn lane;*
  - ◆ *creating left-turn lanes onto Township Line Road and Stump Hall Road;*
  - ◆ *installing a new traffic signal at Woodlyn Avenue, and creating a left-turn lane onto Woodlyn Avenue;*
  - ◆ *creating separate right- and left-turn lanes exiting Woodlyn Avenue; and,*
  - ◆ *upgrading the existing traffic signals at Water Street Road and Township Line Road/Stump Hall Road.*
9. Radar Speed Display Signs at Germantown Pike & Kriebel Mill Road Methacton School Zone Flasher. *School District would install; township would assume maintenance. Project would require County Highway Occupancy Permit.*

## DEFINITIONS

**Dilemma Zone Radar Detection:** *A radar system at high-speed intersections which detects vehicles in the “dilemma zone”—the area approaching intersections where, during the onset of a yellow light, some drivers may decide to proceed and some may decide to stop. This disagreement among drivers can lead to rear-end crashes and/or right-angle crashes. The radar system detects the presence of vehicles here and adjusts the phase as necessary to minimize such occurrences.*

**Emergency Preemption:** *When a traffic signal senses an emergency vehicle approaching an intersection, the signal changes to stop conflicting traffic, thereby enabling the emergency vehicle to pass safely.*

**Controller Cabinet:** *The box attached to a traffic signal which contains the electronic controls and components for the signal's operation.*

10. Radar Speed Display Signs at Skippack Pike & Worcester Elementary School Zone Flasher. *School District would install; township would assume maintenance. Project would require PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit.*

*Both 9 and 10 are school speed signs which would have the flashing lights but also a speed detector that would display your actual speed—these would be installed by the School District and then maintained by the township.*

11. Realign intersection of Bethel/Whitehall Road and Skippack Pike into 90-degree intersection.

*A goal of the township is to try and align roadways whenever possible for better traffic patterns and safety.*

## **PEDESTRIAN PROPOSALS**

1. ADA Curb Ramps, Pedestrian Pushbuttons and Pedestrian countdown signal heads at Valley Forge Road & Skippack Pike. *Project could be constructed by future developer.*

*Currently the property at the corner (Palmer Tract) is under review and validity challenge with the township Zoning Hearing Board but if/when land development does take place—this signal upgrade for pedestrian along with other upgrades for the roadway could be done as part of this land development.*

2. Video Detection, Dilemma Zone Radar Detection, Controller Cabinet, Battery Back-Up, ADA Curb Ramps, Pedestrian Pushbuttons and Signal Heads at Germantown Pike & Kriebel Mill Road.

*Modernization of all signals is needed for an adaptive traffic system.*

## **TRAIL PROPOSALS**

1. Trail Connection from Defford Park Trail Extension to Peter Wentz Farmhouse

*Currently, there is a trail that connects Defford Park to the shopping centers behind it which is one portion of this future trail connection and was put in as part of a Montco 2040 grant. The other portion would need to go along Skippack Pike and along Shearer Road towards Peter Wentz. Some of this could be done as part of development.*

2. Trail Connection from Heebner Park to Defford Park.

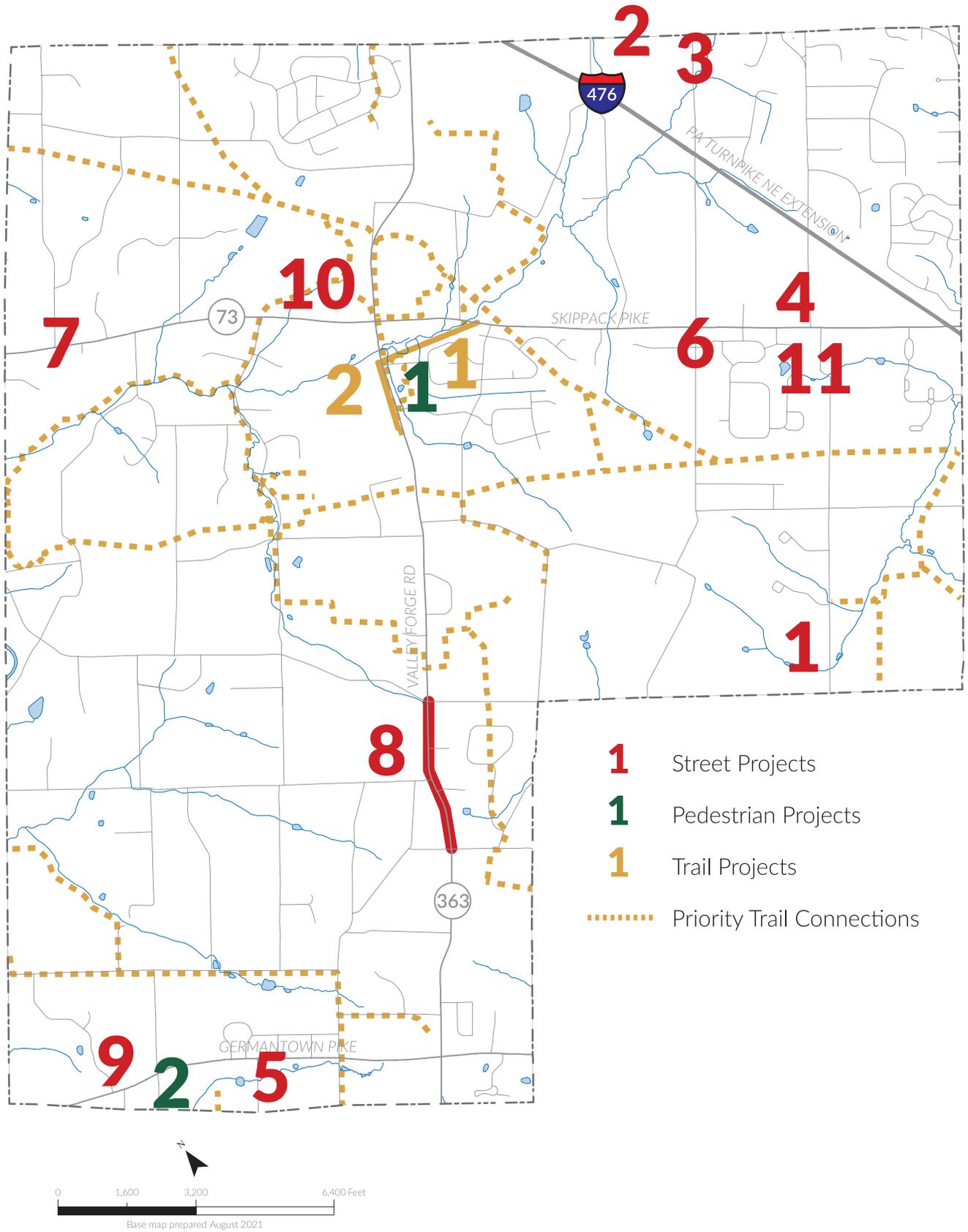
*This is a future plan depending upon future land acquisitions and developments.*

3. Priority Trail Connections as indicated in *Worcester Community Greenways Plan.*

- ◆ *Heebner Park to Evansburg State Park*
- ◆ *Zacharias Creek to Worcester Elementary School*
- ◆ *Merrymead Farm to Heebner Park*

# WORCESTER TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

SOURCE: WORCESTER TOWNSHIP



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1

*Assure that a diversity of modes of transportation are provided to improve connectivity throughout township*

- a Create Township Complete Streets Policy. *The Policy acts as a decision making tool, the process for which is triggered every time a new road is built or an existing road is proposed for improvement or reconstruction. If support exists, the township can adopt provisions in the subdivision regulations.*

---

- b Support the integration of best practices in land developments regarding street design and the provision of trails and sidewalks, when appropriate.

---

2

*Encourage the use of alternatives to motor vehicles*

- a Support programs like "Safe Routes to School," childhood health initiatives, Bike Rodeos, and other initiatives that encourage physical activity in public places like walking, running, and biking.

---

3

*Reduce traffic congestion*

- a Implement road improvement projects as indicated in this plan and in Act 209 Capital Improvements Plan. *Road and major intersection improvements can consider placemaking projects, such as those those mentioned in the Community Character chapter of the plan, right from the start of project planning. Elements such as "Gateway" treatments, which can contribute to local an regional identity, can be easily integrated if planned from the beginning.*

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- b Begin process of preparing for 2023 update to Act 209 Study.

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- c Reduce travel demand by focusing on nonmotorized transportation options.

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- d Partner with Greater Valley Force TMA and/or Partnership TMA to implement travel demand management.

---

4

*Improve traffic safety for both motorists and nonmotorists*

- a Consider changes to street design standards, including those within the SALDO, to align with recommendations in this plan.

---

- b Create a Township Traffic Calming Policy. *Such a policy can be a decision-making tool for neighborhoods within Worcester desiring traffic calming measures, if certain speed, design or community support criteria are met.*

---

**5**

*Provide a comprehensive network of trails throughout township and connect to regional trails*

- a Complete trail projects as listed in this plan, as well as those indicated in Worcester Community Greenways Plan. Update Greenways Plan to account for restrictions to PECO rights-of-way.

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- b Support the completion of the Regional Trails which are proposed within and around the township. *Upper Gwynedd Township is actively pursuing the completion of both the Power Line Trail, as well as the Liberty Bell Trail, two major regional trails identified in the County Comprehensive Plan as being of vital importance for regional trail connectivity. These trails can be pursued by the township alone or in partnership with other jurisdictions or agencies, or simply supported in more nontangible ways.*

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# Community Character

*Envisioning a community with small-town, rural character and a unique identity*

## POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will support the provision of a range of high-quality housing and neighborhoods with appropriate and desirable amenities to support existing and future residents’ needs in line with Worcester’s community character and sense of place.*

## GOALS



Encourage new and existing housing and amenities which are compatible with the traditional and rural character of the township.



Provide a range of housing, densities and opportunities for enhanced amenities and neighborhood design, and ensure a mix of housing, densities and land uses as required by law.



Support “aging in place” principles and other means by which older adults can secure or maintain appropriate housing in the township.

One of the most frequently-cited reasons residents like living in Worcester is for the “rural character” of the township. Since Worcester is overwhelmingly residential in nature, the community character of the township will likely continue to be determined by housing and neighborhood development. What kind of housing does Worcester need to achieve its goals? How do we attract a diverse set of residents who can keep Worcester strong and desirable? How do we maintain and boost Worcester’s rural character while anticipating the future? Targeted policies and improvements both inside and outside residential areas will be needed to assure that the community retains its character while providing necessary adaptations for the future. Throughout this

chapter we will explore how placemaking, diverse and attainable housing choices, and neighborhood planning can enhance the existing community while maintaining a cohesive sense of place. For examples of Worcester’s built environment, refer back to the Sense of Place chapter.

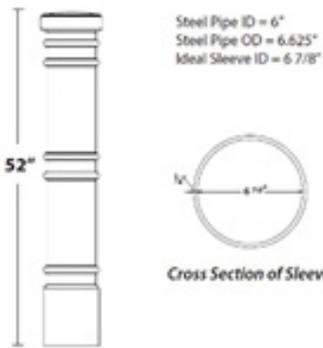
## Placemaking and Context of the Landscape

While discussion of preserving the *existing* rare and unique features of the township is the work of other chapters of this Plan, part of the work of this chapter is to imagine how the township will maintain a sense of place as Worcester grows and evolves. However, if a deliberate effort is not made to create a community that looks and feels unique, we may end up looking like every other suburb. Incorporating unique or themed elements into the design of Worcester’s public spaces, neighborhoods, buildings and signage will help the township shine brighter than its neighbors.

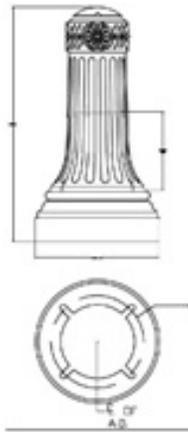
Placemaking efforts can start by developing a unique and special idea that represents the history and culture of Worcester. The township can then work to express that idea or brand through the built environment through specific public realm improvements, design guidelines for land developments, event programming, graphic design, and wayfinding signage, among other things.

Specific placemaking projects can include:

- ◆ Activate vacant or underutilized spaces, especially in highly visible areas, with park-like improvements including beautification through landscaping, street furniture, and enhanced pedestrian lighting on public property.
- ◆ Creating design guidelines for high-profile improvements to be used on projects which reflect impressive visual and historic designs (**see examples below and on the next page**).
- ◆ Adopt and install gateway signage and a wayfinding program, directing visitors to important destinations. The township has already installed new signage at its parks and facilities. (**see example on the next page**).



Source: Idealshield.



Source: Spring City Electrical Manufacturing Company.

### EXAMPLES OF TRASH RECEPTACLE & BOLLARD SPECIFICATIONS

Source: Borough of Schwenksville



PSO-4 Trash Receptacle, by Victor Stanley.  
Source: Victor Stanley.

#### Trash and Recycling Receptacles

##### MAIN STREET ZONE:

Item Specified: Protone Collection Litter Receptacle (Model PSA-32) by Victor Stanley.

Type: Recycled solid steel bar receptacle with tapered form lid.

Size: 36-gallon, 26-3/4" diameter x 37" high.

Color/Finish: Powder coated black.

Placement: Receptacles placed as needed.

- ◆ Coordination of several community-wide events to celebrate important local events and local pride.
- ◆ Support the installation of public art and community-led improvement projects
- ◆ Even effective site design review of land developments can contribute to placemaking. Reviews by the Worcester Township Planning Commission and others can incorporate considerations for vegetative buffers and scenic view protection by giving input on building placement and street design.

## EXAMPLE OF BENCH SPECIFICATIONS

Source: Borough of Schwenksville.



C-138 Bench, by Victor Stanley. Source: Victor Stanley.



CBF-138 Bench, by Victor Stanley. Source: Victor Stanley.



Existing Sierra Bench (Model 955-W6), by Ultra Site, in the Borough

### Benches

#### MAIN STREET ZONE (OPTION 1):

*Item Specified:* Classic Collection Bench (Model C-138) by Victor Stanley.

*Type:* Cast ductile iron frame with wood or recycled plastic slat seating.

*Size:* 72" length.

*Color/Finish:* Black powder coated frame.

*Placement:* Benches ideally should be every 600 feet of road frontage or every 250 feet of storefronts, or as practicable.

#### MAIN STREET ZONE (OPTION 2):

*Item Specified:* Classic Collection Bench (Model CBF-138) by Victor Stanley.

*Type:* Cast ductile iron frame bench.

*Size:* 72" length.

*Color/Finish:* Black powder coated frame.

*Placement:* Outside stores, offices, Main Street Residential, and public gathering places as practicable.

#### RECREATION/TRAIL ZONE:

*Item Specified:* Sierra Bench (Model 955-W6) by UltraSite.

*Size:* 72" length.

*Type:* Die formed stainless steel frame bench.

*Color/Finish:* Green thermoplastic finish with powder coated frame.

*Placement:* Outside stores, offices, Main Street Residential, and public gathering places as practicable.

*These examples may or may not reflect the design ultimately chosen—the point is to define a design approach that reflects Worcester's rural and historic character.*

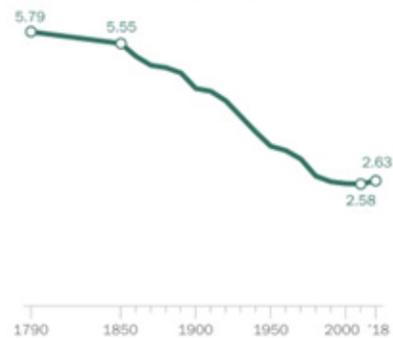
## EXAMPLES OF WAYFINDING PROGRAM

Source: City of Alexandria, VA.



**This decade will likely be the first in at least 160 years in which American households have more people**

*Average number of people per household*



Note: Data labels are for 1790, 1850, 2010 and 2018. Average household size is not available for the years between 1790 and 1850.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Census historical statistics, 2010 Census SF1 data and 2018 American Community Survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Diverse and Attainable Housing Choices

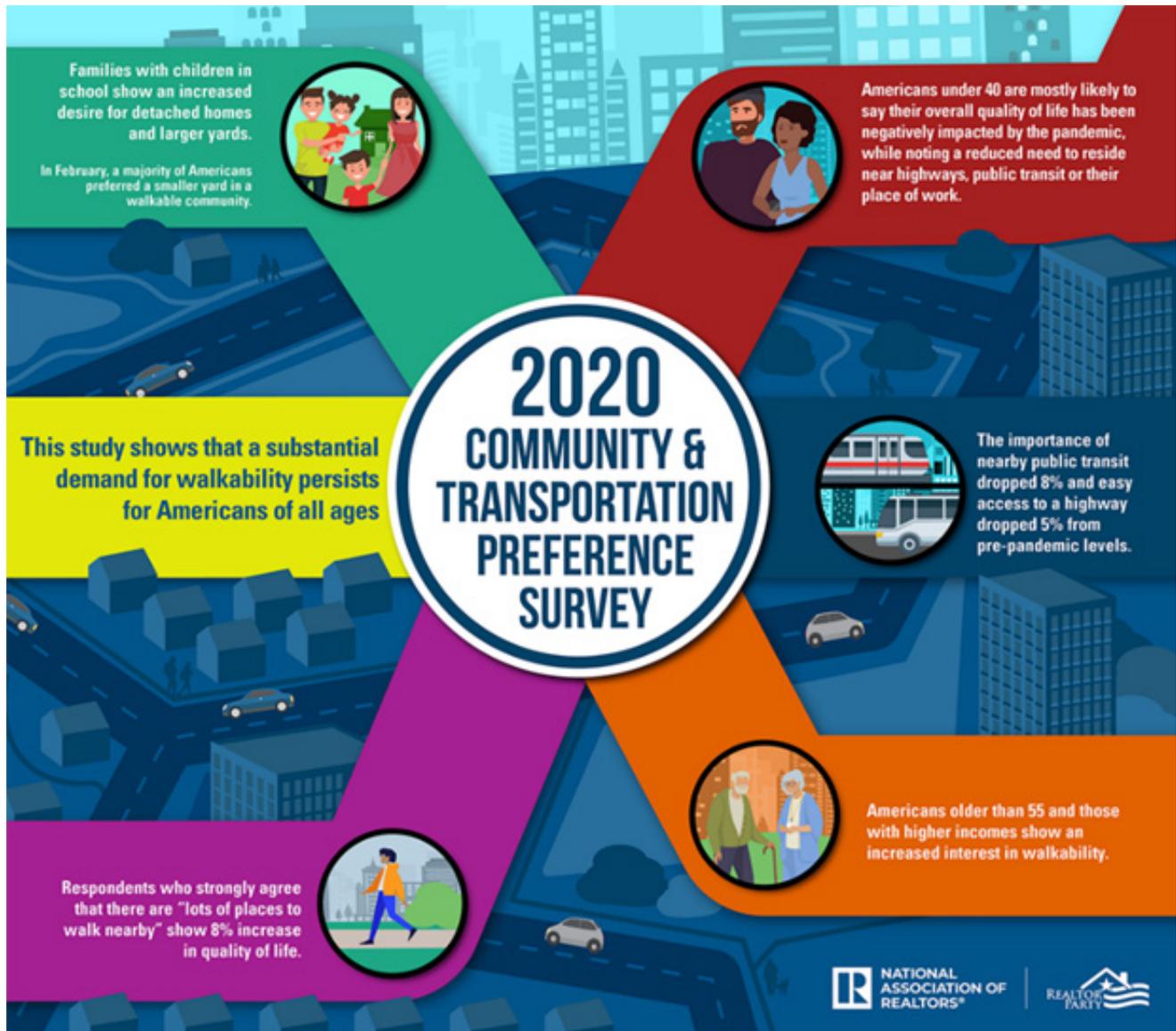
The type and inventory of available housing in the township impacts the people who can and choose to live here. It is important to maintain a diverse housing stock in order to attract and retain people of different ages, skills and abilities, and in different stages of life: this ultimately provides greater stability and resilience to the economic and tax base of the township. This means providing housing of different sizes, arrangements, price points, density, designs, and amenity structures to serve the various needs of current and future residents.

However, as we saw in **Worcester: Past & Present**, there are some hints that more can be done in Worcester to meet these needs. For instance, the number of young adults, typically those of childbearing age, has dropped significantly between 2000 and 2010: while this could be caused by many things, the current average prices of homes for sale, as well as the availability of certain housing types in the township may be suggestive of why the presence of this demographic may be diminished. Additionally, homeowner households without a mortgage in the township are burdened by the cost of their housing at greater rates than the average homeowner across the county. We can ascertain that this may be partly due to the overrepresentation of older adults in the township: older adults are more likely to have built enough equity to retire a mortgage or move into a senior living environment where mortgages are not needed. Nevertheless, it is also older adults who are more likely to be on a fixed income, who because of this may be in a more precarious situation. The availability of diverse housing choices will help residents like these stay in the township.

The National Association of Realtors tracks consumer preferences for housing, and within the last decade has seen a great increase in the amount of people, of all ages, desiring communities which are walkable, even if it means smaller yards and home footprints. While the acute stress and anxiety of pandemic lockdowns perhaps is responsible for younger adults' recent desire for larger yards and more floor space, it is undeniable that more Americans nowadays are interested in living in walkable communities, especially older adults, and that this directly contributes to a greater quality of life.

## SUMMARY OF NAR'S 2020 COMMUNITY & TRANSPORTATION PREFERENCE SURVEY

Source: National Association of Realtors.



Following are examples of housing which can broaden the choices for consumers of new housing in Worcester beyond the typical single-family detached framework. In fact, all of the following options are designed and have been implemented in rural places like Worcester, can be easily adapted to our local conditions, and ultimately incorporate the many conservation and open space elements that Worcester residents prize in their community.



## BUNGALOW COURTS AND POCKET NEIGHBORHOODS

Bungalow courts, also called “pocket neighborhoods,” is a housing type in which several smaller homes are clustered directly around a type of common green or courtyard space, creating a mix of semi-public and private green space for residents. Instead of typical front yards, successive layers of privacy are built into the design of the houses, which include porches and generous landscaping. While the idea of clustering homes is not new to Worcester, the clustering of homes in this case is meant to deliberately activate the common green as a place of near-daily interaction between neighbors. This housing pattern mimics other historic forms of village development and may be appropriate only in designated growth areas, such as the villages.



The smaller homes typical of bungalow courts, while less expensive than conventional new detached homes in the area, are well-appointed and can often be desirable for couples or small families. Parking is de-emphasized in this situation, which is frequently set apart from the houses in general. While the whole neighborhood has enough road frontage for site access, individual homes are not arranged to have the typical front yard/back yard relationship to a street; because of this, conventional zoning parameters such as side-yard and front-yard setbacks between individual homes in the development are less relevant to success. The application of this housing development provision usually enables clustering on smaller lots, conditioned on a number of requirements, such as:



- ◆ The amount of finished floor space is limited
- ◆ Houses are no taller than one and one-half stories
- ◆ Detached garages or parking spaces permitted only beyond the center of the development



SOURCE: ROSS CHAPIN, CITED IN RANDALL ARENDT, RURAL BY DESIGN.

## SMALL TWO-TO-FOUR-UNIT HOMES

It used to be that homes containing anywhere from two to four dwelling units were built right next to and amongst single-family homes all the time. These types of units allowed individuals and families smaller, affordable homes within single-family neighborhoods. Usually no one would be the wiser, since frequently these duplexes, triplexes and “fourplexes” were designed and built specifically to blend in with single-family houses: additional entrance doors could be creatively positioned just out of sight, additional porches and parking could be sited on the sides or rear of the property and, most significant of all, the buildings themselves were not double or triple the size of a single-family home—they could have similar rooflines, window placement, building footprint and massing, and could otherwise be indistinguishable from singles.

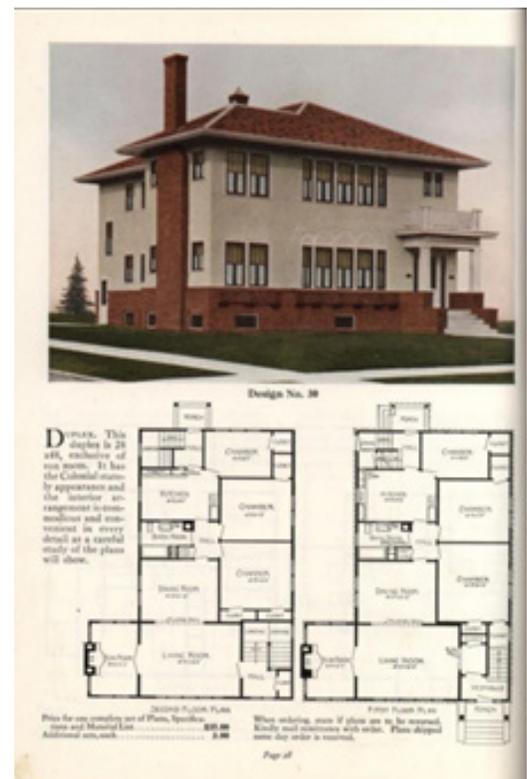
However, through the now-ubiquitous application of single-use zoning since the 1950s and 1960s, these types of homes have all but become illegal in most suburban communities. Nevertheless, these types of homes can help provide housing needs for those who prefer smaller living spaces or proximity to neighborhood services, all while assisting the township in reaching its objectives for appropriate and fair share housing densities. Currently all buildings with two or more dwelling units are considered multifamily dwellings in the township; these are only permitted in the MR Multi-Residential District.

## ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Also called “in-law suites” or “granny flats,” accessory dwelling units (or ADUs) are small living units which are located on the same lot as an existing primary residence. Typically no larger than 500-600 square feet, these units function as an independent dwelling,



*These plans for duplexes, offered in a catalogue from 1925, were designed to blend into a typical single-family neighborhood.*



## EXISTING FOURPLEX IN A RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Source: [MissingMiddleHousing.com](http://MissingMiddleHousing.com)



but frequently are not separately metered from the primary residence, therefore are still accessory to the larger house. This is another type of living arrangement that has become rarer these days due to the zoning codes of the 1950s and 1960s, but have recently risen again in popularity due to their usage as flexible housing for older adults who might still want to live independently but be close to a family member or friend for health needs. ADUs can also be suitable for young individuals who still want to live in the community but cannot yet afford a whole house. In more rural and suburban areas, ADUs can be built as small backyard dwellings or take the form of an addition to an existing house (with a separate entrance), but in older village areas ADUs can exist on the second floor of a detached garage. Currently the township only permits ADUs in very rare circumstances, but otherwise would require a variance.

## DETACHED ADU

Source: [New Avenue, Inc., www.newavenuehomes.com](http://New Avenue, Inc., www.newavenuehomes.com)



## ATTACHED ADU

Source: [New Avenue, Inc., www.newavenuehomes.com](http://New Avenue, Inc., www.newavenuehomes.com)



## Aging in Place

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Older adults, the fastest growing age group in the township, have specific housing needs which will need to be met. Both working and retired adults tend to reconsider their lifestyle needs as they grow older. Life events such as children moving out, retirement, or mobility limitations can induce a reassessment of whether an existing house still serves its purpose.

While the township maintains a number of options specifically designated for older adults, such as Stony Creek Farms at Worcester (a 55+ community) and Meadowood Senior Living (a Continuing Care Retirement Community), as mentioned earlier, other housing strategies will be necessary to accommodate Worcester's aging population. Aging in place—the desire to stay in your own home or community as one ages—provides a framework to address older adults housing needs which does not focus on creating more age-restricted housing. Programs and funding for home-based adaptations, like stair-lifts, entrance ramps, shower bars, and prepping a first-floor bedroom can make living easier, all at a more affordable price than buying a new house. Single-story homes like ADUs, particularly when living mere steps away from one's family in an existing primary dwelling, can maintain relative independence while accessible, occasional help is nearby. In all of these cases, residents can continue to live in the same community, either in the same house or perhaps mere blocks away from their original dwelling.

## Neighborhood Planning and Enhanced Amenities

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The built environment has an interesting way of impacting, both positively and negatively, the quality and value of social life in a community. We have been told that digital engagement and social media can supplement our needs to interact with other people. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to rely even more, and many times entirely upon, virtual interactions with our family and friends because we have not been able to visit them, attend gatherings, or run into them at the supermarket. While our lives have improved through the wider use of digital technologies, one thing we can perhaps all agree on is the true necessity and importance of in-person social interactions to our well-being, and how much we depend on others.

The township can require or incentivize new developments which create or locate improvements which increase engagement with other people and with the environment around them. Amenities which can be more comprehensively integrated into new and existing developments include:

- ◆ Gathering spaces
- ◆ Trails, sidewalks and usable green areas
- ◆ Recreational amenities for all ages, developed through the land development process.

### GATEWAY

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Souderton Pocket Park



### TRAILS

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Fishers Park



- ◆ Interesting architecture, public art, ornamental lighting and paving,
- ◆ Places of rest and refuge, like a group of benches or small parklets
- ◆ Walkable access to neighborhood businesses or services

**BENCHES: Station Circle, Narberth**

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**PUBLIC ART: Veterans Memorial Plaza, Lower Gwynedd**

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1

*Encourage new and existing housing and amenities which are compatible with the traditional and rural character of the township*

- a Create design guidelines that residents can implement on their own properties when renovating or developing their housing. *Guidelines can be voluntary or required, depending upon the scope and intent of the standards chosen. Guidelines based on historic, vernacular architecture can be required if the township decides to create a historic preservation ordinance; Voluntary guidelines can be more flexible but still be based on historic forms and local styles. Design guidelines and ordinance could also be considered for new residential and commercial construction.*

---
- b Implement placemaking improvements, such as gateway and parklet improvement projects to revive and activate important but underutilized spaces. *Frequently municipal or community investment in an area can jumpstart private investment, and can easily leverage 2x-5x as much private investment. Fixing dilapidated sidewalks or providing attractive streetscape features on a block can convince nearby private property owner that the time is right to invest and develop their own property.*

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- c Encourage community-led initiatives by creating a mechanism to solicit and permit interactive neighborhood projects.

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2

*Provide a range of housing, densities and opportunities for enhanced amenities and neighborhood design, and ensure a mix of housing, densities and land uses as required by law.*

- a Implement recommendations of study commissioned for the municipal curative amendment concerning multifamily housing.

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- b Routinely review potential fair share buildouts as determined by the existing zoning, and adjust zoning as appropriate.

---

3

*Support “aging in place” principles and other means by which older adults can secure or maintain appropriate housing in the township.*

- a Permit accessory dwelling units more widely in the township; consider more straight-forward permitting for ADU housing specifically for seniors.

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- b Connect residents with service providers or organizations who provide aging adult services. *The township can be a clearinghouse for information, or partner with other organizations, to spread awareness or increase effectiveness of existing programs. GVFTMA, Partnership TMA and SEPTA all provide some level of service or coordination regarding senior transportation or paratransit options, for example. that the township can work with to increase access to transportation.*

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# Preservation, Open Space & Parks

*Balancing growth with preservation*

## POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will support and encourage the preservation of the township’s history, culture, and environment, while supporting an interconnected network of active and passive recreation.*

## GOALS



Support and encourage the preservation of the unique and rare aspects of the township’s history, culture, and environment which are emblematic of community character.



Provide for the passive and active recreational needs of township residents.



Enhance connectivity between parks and neighborhoods.



Provide a degree of public access of properties acquired or eased for preservation purposes, as appropriate.

Themes that have returned among Worcester residents again and again are the numerous, high-quality open spaces and the agricultural character of the township. While paying attention to how the built environment evolves in the township is incredibly important to serve the needs of the community, paying attention to the existing environment—the existing features of both the built *and* the natural environment—is just as important to residents, if not more so. This chapter will accomplish this effort by focusing on cultural and historic preservation and open space preservation. Significant to open space is its recreational value, as well as the natural values which are bestowed on citizens.

## Historic and Cultural Preservation

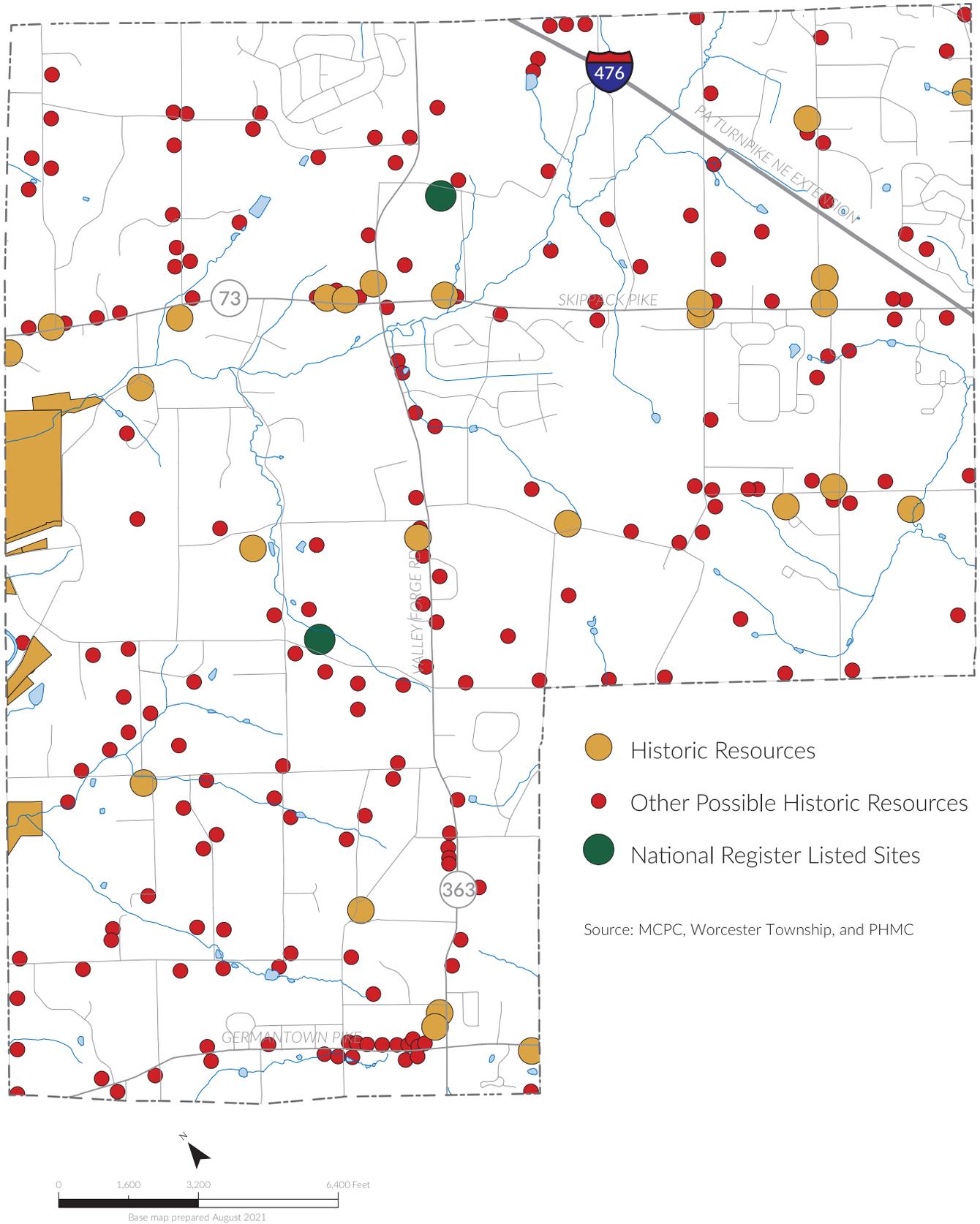
The historic and cultural forms of the township can be preserved in numerous ways. The process of preservation is not just the freezing in time of a building, a place, or a community, but to reflect and understand how our environment changes over time, and how those changes reflect back on the story of us as a society. Preservation and interpretation of the past need not be limited to physical structures. For example, the Worcester Historical Society interprets the past on behalf of the community through lectures, events and exhibits.



While any individual may take steps to protect, restore, or rehabilitate an historic property, Worcester may desire a more structured or systematic approach to assure that the historic assets of the community remain intact. Apart from the township making direct investments in historic properties to preserve them, ordinances regulating development of historic properties tend to be the most effective means of retaining historic resources in a community. Historic preservation requirements, in the vast majority of cases, comes down to the actions of individual municipalities. While the township has drafted an historic resource ordinance in the past, wider public support is still needed to adopt such an ordinance. Finding the right balance between preservation incentives and restrictions will be paramount.

On the next page is a map indicating which properties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (green), which have been identified as resources worth protecting (yellow), and which properties may be worth further investigation (red). However, it is important to note that inclusion on the National Register does not, in and of itself, preserve or protect a property from demolition: only designation on a local, municipal register as a part of a larger preservation ordinance framework, or an individual owner's desire to place an easement on their own property, can protect a resource.

# HISTORIC RESOURCES, AS PER 2006 OPEN SPACE PLAN

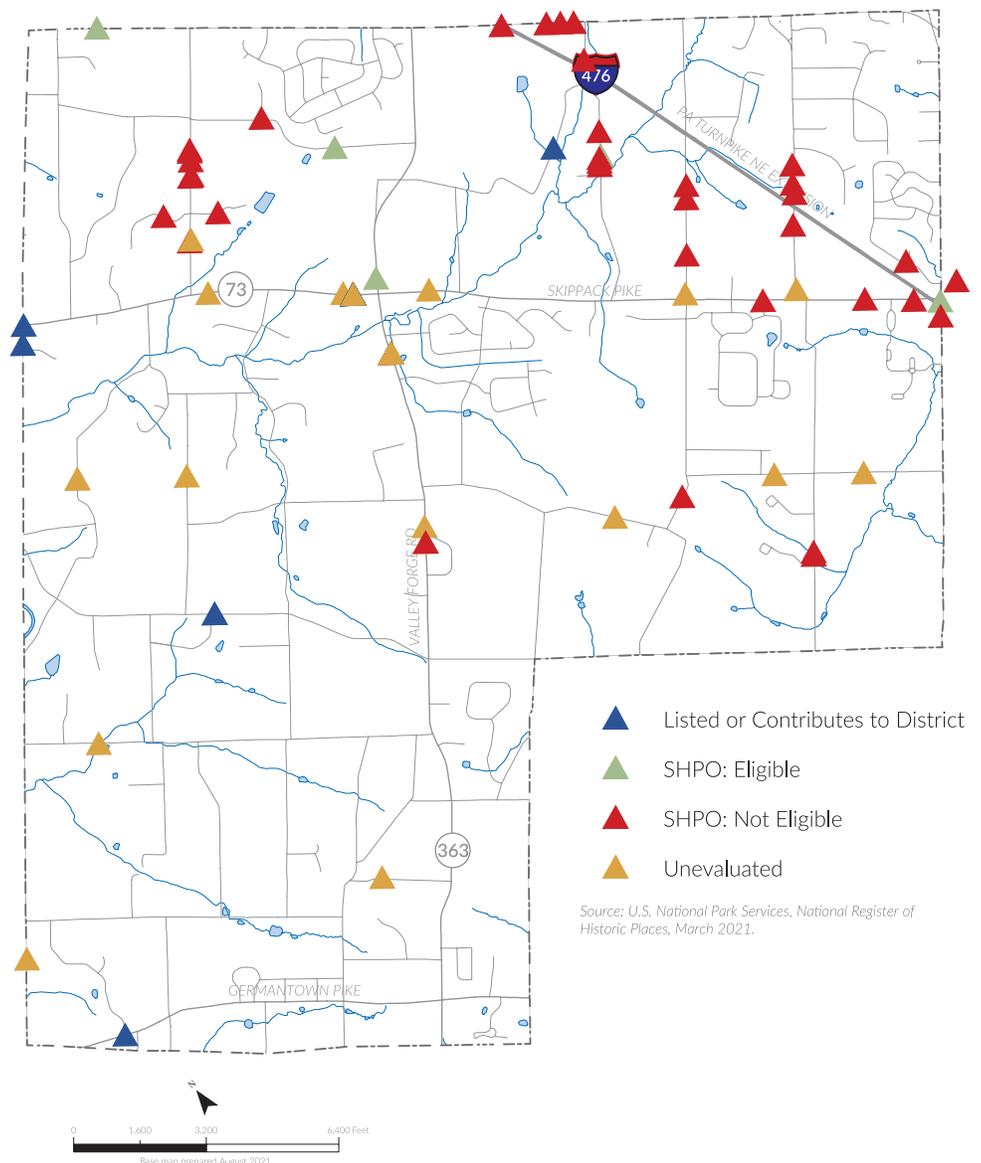


SOME OF WORCESTER'S MANY HISTORIC RESOURCES



This next map illustrates historic property data from the PA Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC), which maintains records on preservation surveys, applications, and archeological findings which have been performed since the commission's inception in the 1970s. PHMC is tasked with evaluating and accepting applications for National Register status of properties, but they can also be a resource for individuals and municipalities seeking to preserve historic resources and properties with their own municipal ordinances. The map below shows which properties have key information to potentially move to the Register (eligible properties), which are not eligible, and which are still not fully evaluated or do not have enough research or data attached to conclusively rule on a property's register status. While being on the National Register can be a point of pride for a property owner or a community, it is not required in order for an individual or community to preserve it or add it to a local register, especially if a property has uniquely local significance. In sum, even properties ruled ineligible or unevaluated may have enough value for the township to place on a local register of its own. The township can therefore use this information to build out a plan to prioritize historic resources.

NATIONAL REGISTER STATUS OF PROPERTIES IN PHMC DATABASE, 2020



## Historic Preservation Methods



### Scattered Site/Overlay Preservation (Municipalities Planning Code [MPC])

The most common method of municipal historic preservation efforts involves adding properties to a local register, enacted in a zoning ordinance through a Historic Overlay, which can provide some manner of protection. An overlay can incentivize preservation of an older building by permitting additional, low-impact uses to give flexibility to an owner. Architectural changes are generally not restricted, but if demolition is proposed there is usually a waiting period and review by the governing board, in which alternatives to demolition are sought. However, in only rare cases can demolition be stopped against the will of the owner. Worcester's previous draft ordinance utilized this overlay method of preservation.



### Local Historic Districts (Historic District Act)

Unlike a Historic Overlay, local historic district ordinances are not found in the zoning ordinance, but in their own body of law. Enabled by the state Historic District Act, historic districts generally provide greater protections to properties within a small area or neighborhood. Architectural changes are reviewed by a separate advisory body, in order to maintain the architectural and historic integrity of the district. This method also has the greater power to restrict unjustified demolitions. However, the creation of a local district requires greater documentation, as well as approval from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). This method is also not recommended for isolated historic resources across a municipality.

### Design Standards and Guidelines (MPC)

While not strictly a historic preservation method, creating design standards and guidelines in a zoning ordinance for development can help maintain the visual character of the existing built environment without the perceived onerousness of strict historic preservation regulations. These standards can be the most flexible of any available; however, they would provide no protection for resources vulnerable to demolition.

## Parks and Open Space

Parks and open space can vary in their size and form, as well as in the relative degree to which land can be preserved or conserved. Open space can be acquired outright (i.e. *fee simple*) or can be preserved through a conservation easement, where a private owner still retains ownership. When land is acquired, either in fee simple or through an easement, governmental entities (including both the township and county) are by law only permitted to pay up to the *appraised value* of the land, which is oftentimes much lower than a private developer could pay on the open market. However, open space can also be dedicated to the township through the land development process, gifted to the township or other governmental body, or dedicated or eased to a separate nonprofit or homeowners association who manages the property.

### Preserved Open Space in Worcester

Township Area, Total Acres	10,381
(16.22 Sq Miles)	
Percent Preserved	17.59%
Percent Preserved and ASA*-Enrolled	27.25%

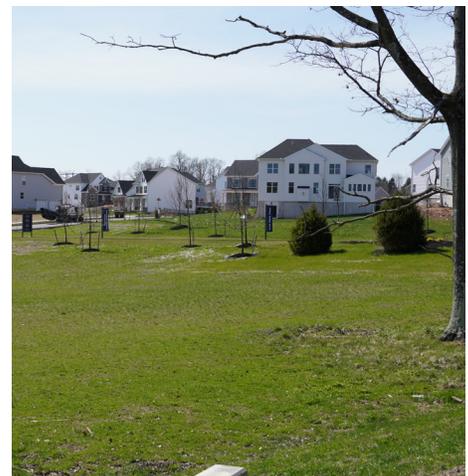
*\*Note: ASA stands for "Agricultural Security Area"—an area in a township containing registered farms. Their presence in the Security Area protects them from certain nuisance lawsuits, and is a prerequisite to being permanently preserved.*

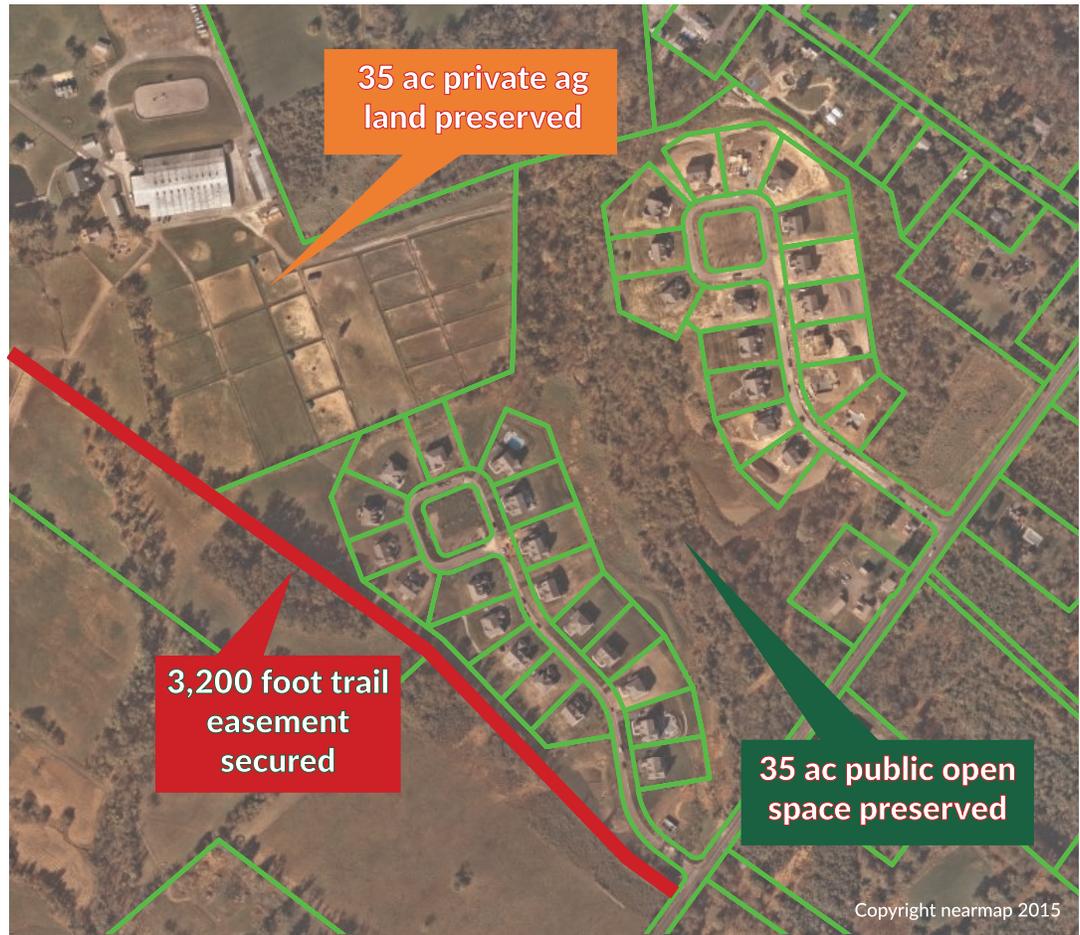
The degree to which this land is publicly accessible can also vary according to the scheme used. Lastly, there are tax incentive programs which keep land temporarily from being developed, although typically not in *perpetuity*, which will be discussed further below. No single method described is better than any other, although there are specific circumstances where cost, legal feasibility and maintenance capacity need to be considered. However, the trend has been toward HOAs owning the required open space in land developments. Passive recreational open spaces, such as naturalistic, relatively undeveloped areas, are generally much less intensive to maintain than active open spaces and sports fields, which require much more rigorous and frequent maintenance such as mowing, seeding, fertilizing, and structural repairs to facilities. Ultimately, HOA ownership and maintenance reduces the burden upon township resources to manage and maintain such a widely distributed network of spaces spread out among several separated developments.

Municipalities in the state also have the power to require the paying of fees in lieu of providing open space during the development process, if certain conditions are met. In this case, a developer would be charged a fee equal to the value of the open space they would otherwise be required to provide, which would then go to a dedicated township fund for future open space acquisition and development. However, this funding would be restricted solely for these purposes. Such a program would permit the township to redirect resources to nearby properties which may have higher-value preservation priorities or be more central and accessible to Worcester residents.

Land use planning involves the balancing of competing interests between the public interests in preservation and the private property rights of individuals to lawfully develop their lands. Open space planning is no different, and so we generally must respect the fact that the law entitles—and in certain cases *requires*—a certain level of residential and nonresidential development to occur in all communities of the commonwealth. Municipalities have the best chance of successfully preserving land when there is a predictable zoning and development process tied to rational and well-considered planning goals, which can also permit reasonable levels of accommodation and compromise between developers and communities.

A partnership and collaboration approach with developers can often be more effective in achieving planning goals than taking a more adversarial stance. When a municipality works with a developer in a collaborative fashion, backed up by ordinance and planning priorities, the preservation of greater open space than the minimum required can occur, as was the case with the Whitehall Estates development on Whitehall Road. Public open space was dedicated to the township, an agricultural property was preserved through a conservation easement, and a trail easement was secured, allowing a future trail connection to be built.





Whitehall Estates

## Open Space Resources by Type

While it is possible for any one piece of land to meet multiple open space types, there are management priorities of each type which may be contradictory and incompatible with one or more other types.

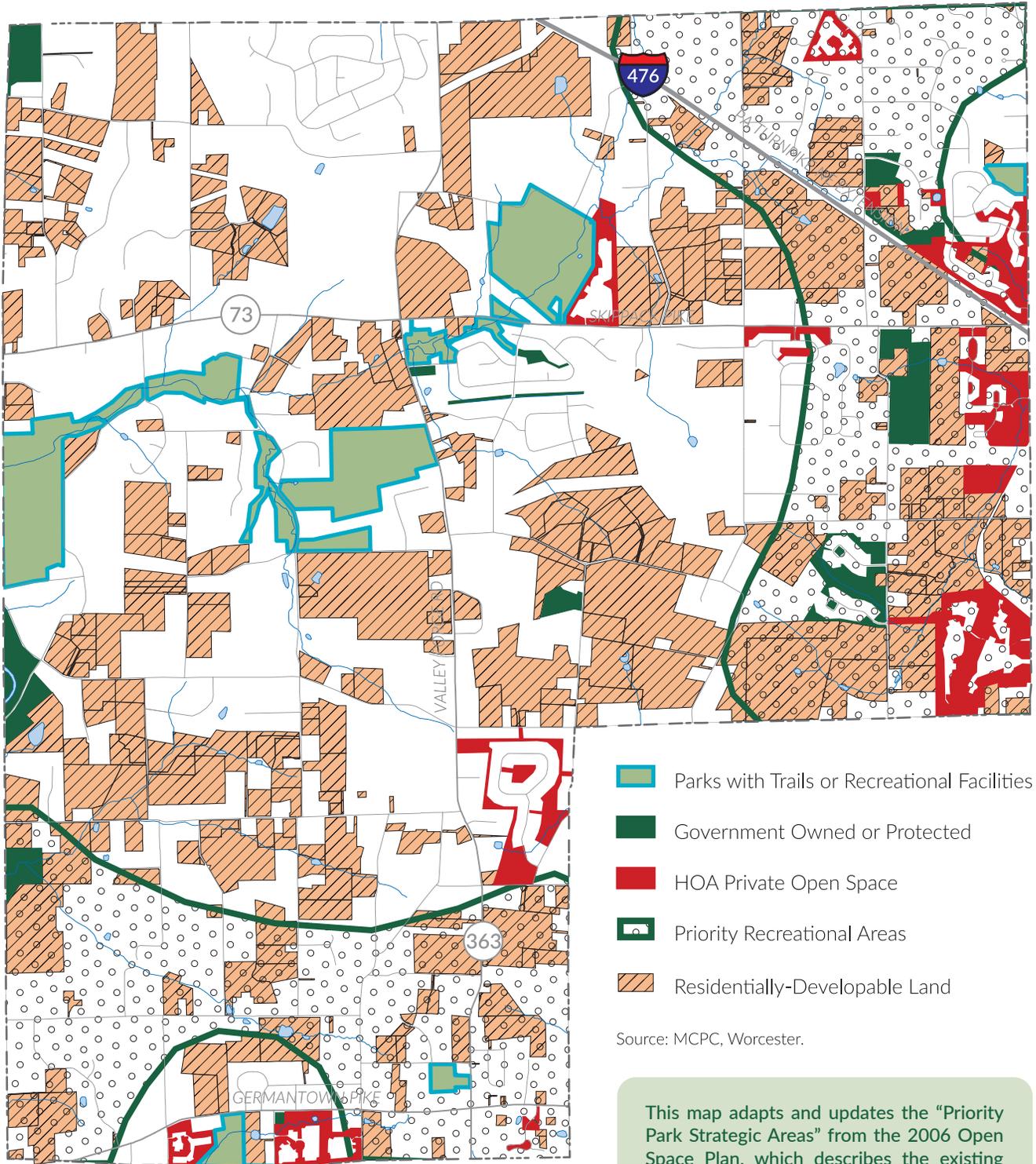
### Recreation

Active and passive recreation land is land that is *specifically* designated and designed for the use of residents and visitors for their enjoyment and leisure. This type of open space is usually the most intensively managed, which frequently includes structural or engineered features or amenities which must be installed and routinely maintained, such as baseball fields or playgrounds. Because recreation land is the most heavily used by people of all the open space types, the ongoing mitigation and maintenance costs of human impacts will be a serious consideration.

### Greenways

Greenways are simply linear parks, the purpose of which is to create connected corridors of greenspace. Frequently assembled parcels along a natural corridor such as a stream area, greenways connect people and places by way of trails, as well as providing for wildlife migration potential and watershed health. The lands and trail along the Zacharias Creek are an example of a greenway.

# PARK AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY MAP



- Parks with Trails or Recreational Facilities
- Government Owned or Protected
- HOA Private Open Space
- Priority Recreational Areas
- Residentially-Developable Land

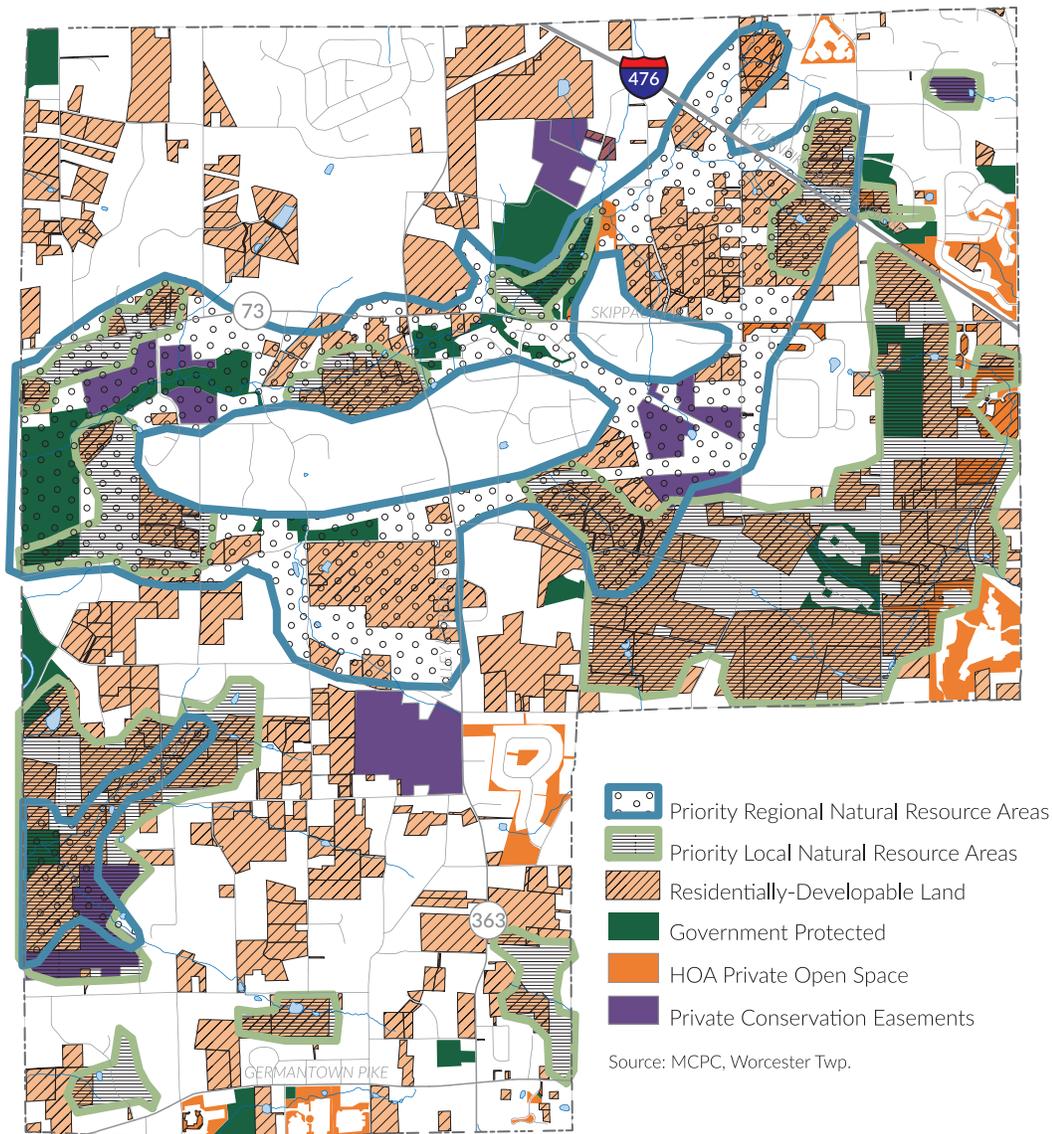
Source: MCPC, Worcester.

This map adapts and updates the “Priority Park Strategic Areas” from the 2006 Open Space Plan, which describes the existing gaps in proximity to major parks in the township. Even though the township has open space within the gap areas, many of these parcels are not accessible for recreational uses or do not accommodate any trails or recreational amenities. The township should focus on existing or new open space opportunities in these areas to invest in recreational amenities.

## Habitat and Natural Resources Conservation

Natural resource conservation lands are preserved primarily for their environmental sensitivity, such as riparian buffers, floodplains and wetlands, as well as for their benefits to wildlife and promotion of biodiversity. Planning for passive recreation or access by people generally should be kept secondary, or should be restricted entirely based on the resources at issue. Management of this type of land is typically the least intense, and is kept in a naturalized state, unless there is an active restoration plan in place. The Frank A. D'Lauro Preserve, located at the corner of Water Street and Valley Forge Road, is an example of this type of open space, which is further indicated by its being closed to the public.

### HABITAT AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

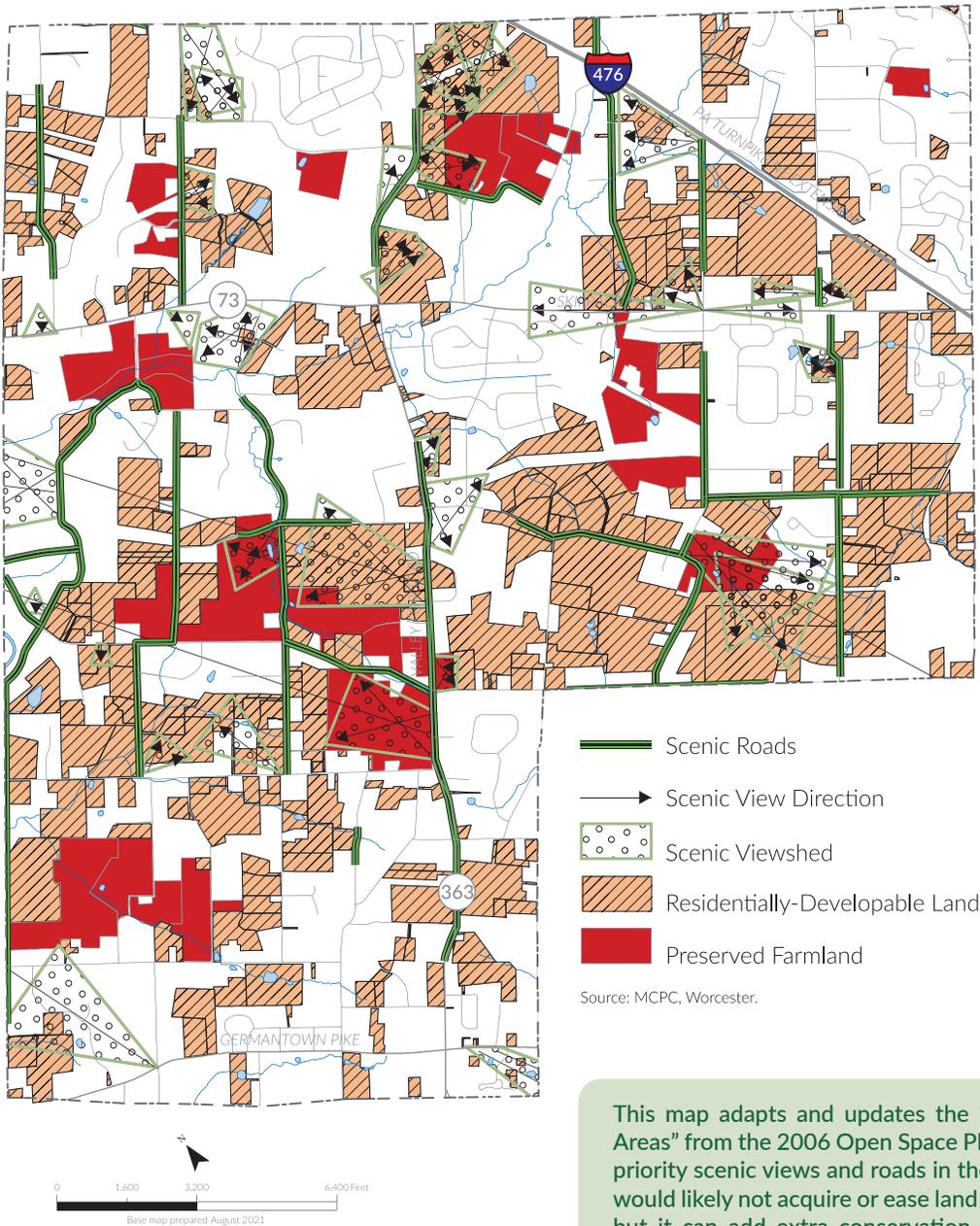


This map adapts and updates the “Priority Natural Resource Areas” from the 2006 Open Space Plan, which summarizes the priority ecological conservation values in the township, including intact interior forest, habitat and sensitive resources like floodplain areas. The township should focus on primarily habitat and natural resources conservation in these areas.

## Scenic Resources

Lands which are valuable for their scenic value are those which maintain a wide and dramatic viewshed, usually from the vantage point of a public road, or maintain rare or unique geologic features or landscapes like mature woodlands or roadside trees. These lands with scenic resources may not need to be accessible to the public; they may also have additional resource value beyond their scenic value. Many preserved farms along Valley Forge Road offer attractive scenic views to the west from the roadside. It is scenic views and roads, with their associated scenic elements, that make the significant contribution to the township's rural character.

### SCENIC RESOURCES CONSERVATION PRIORITIES



This map adapts and updates the “Priority Scenic Resource Areas” from the 2006 Open Space Plan, which summarizes the priority scenic views and roads in the township. The township would likely not acquire or ease land purely for its scenic value, but it can add extra conservation value to a project which might be “on the fence” of qualifying for priority.

## County Farmland Preservation Program

To apply to the program, a farm must:

- Contain the greater of 50 percent or 10 acres of land in agricultural production
- Join [Worcester's] Agricultural Security Area (ASA)

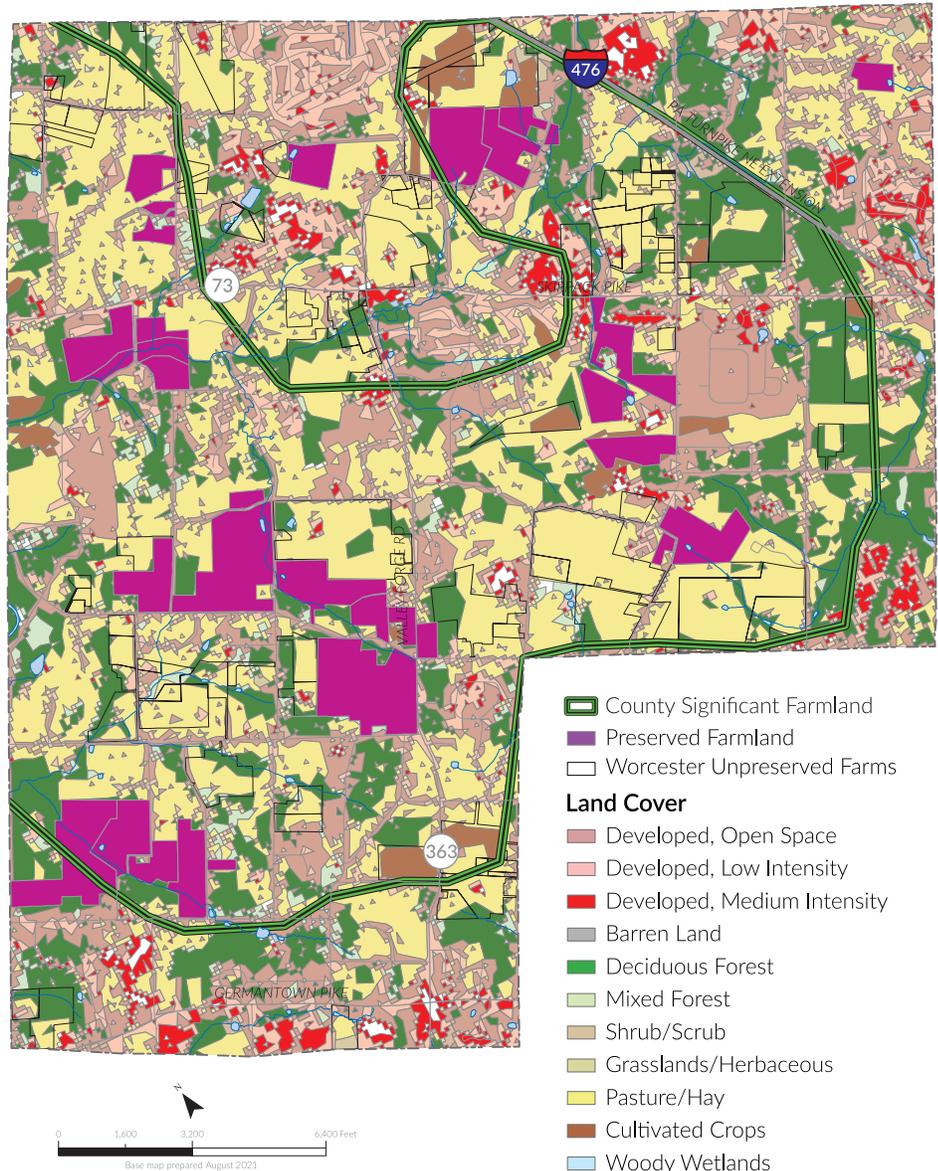
To be eligible for state funding:

- A farm must contain at least 50 percent of soils that are available for agricultural production or a commercial equine activity and are of Land Capability Classes I through IV, as defined by the USDA-NRCS.
- A farm less than 35 acres needs to be adjacent to preserved farmland or grow a crop unique to the area, as defined by the Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, including sweet corn, tomatoes, floriculture crops, eggplants, orchard crops, melons, and others. Farms 35 acres or greater do not need to be adjacent to preserved land

## Farmland

Agricultural properties are those which are actively cultivating crops or livestock, or contain a commercial equine activity. Such properties will almost always remain in private ownership, and will not be generally accessible to the public. While an agricultural operation usually intensely manages a landscape, which generally does not contribute by itself to biodiversity, it can be a compatible buffering land use of a more naturalized open space.

### AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PRIORITIES



This map compares existing unpreserved farms (i.e. those not perpetually conserved by a conservation easement), current preserved farms and existing land cover in the township, which can help determine which unpreserved properties are being actively cultivated and therefore qualify for the county and state programs.

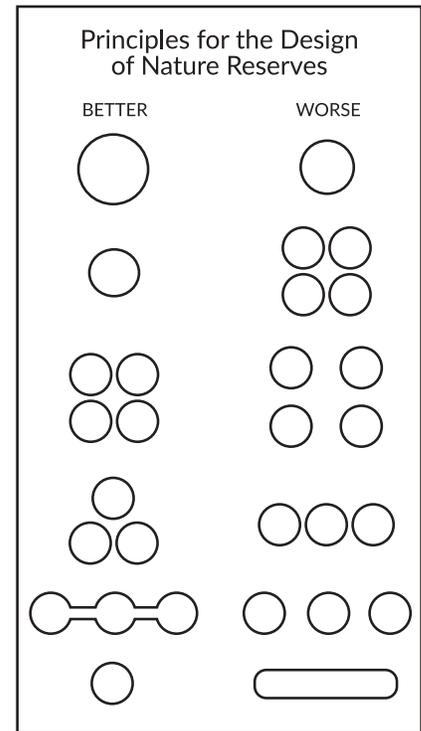
# Open Space Priorities

We live in a world of limitations, in which financial and legal resources are finite and, consequently, it is important to state upfront that it would be impossible to purchase and preserve every lot or parcel in the township that has even nominal conservation value. Recognizing these limitations allows us to consider how to prioritize the time, funding, and effort available to apply the appropriate methods to the open space type. Overall, the township prioritizes most highly the open space which meets multiple criteria for preservation and serves multiple purposes. For instance, a large park like Heebner Park provides ample recreation facilities such as fields, courts and picnic areas, while also containing ecological and habitat value in the meadow and forest lands.

## Acquisition-Based Preservation

Acquisition-based methods are achieved through government actions, such as the township or county accepting or purchasing interest in land. The following open space types ideally pair with the following methods:

- ◆ Acceptance of donations or dedications of parcels for **any open space land** offered to the township *gratis*
- ◆ Purchase of development rights (or conservation easement) of **farmland**
  - ◇ *Criteria for prioritization shall include:*
    - *Size*
    - *Soil quality, i.e. whether the soils are considered prime farmland soils of nationwide importance or of statewide importance*
    - *Proximity and adjacency to other preserved farmland*
    - *Potential for trail easement access over uneased land*
    - *Inclusion in the scenic resource priorities map*
- ◆ Purchase in fee of parcels for **park/recreation land**
  - ◇ *Criteria for prioritization shall include:*
    - *Size*
    - *Location in a “recreation facility gap” area in the township*
    - *Potential to accommodate needed recreational facilities and improvements*
    - *Adjacency to existing municipal parkland*
    - *Inclusion in the scenic resource priorities map*
- ◆ Purchase in fee or conservation easement of parcels for **habitat conservation/natural resource land** and **greenway land**
  - ◇ *Criteria for prioritization shall include:*
    - *Size*



*Above is a visual representation of preferable designs in open space parcels prioritizing habitat and natural resources conservation. Larger, connected and clustered parcels with greater interior area are preferable over smaller, disconnected and narrow parcels. Source: Benedict & McMahon, Green Infrastructure: Linking Landscapes and Communities, 2006.1.*



- *Shape*
  - » *Maximize interior land for habitat and natural resource land*
  - » *Maximum edge land for greenways and trail easement, if conservation easement*
  - » *Maximize connectivity to adjacent properties that provide corridors for habitat and natural resources*
- *Quality and size of the resources present, including floodplain, wetlands, meadows, water bodies, and woodlands*
- *Inclusion in the scenic resource priorities map*

## Non-acquisition-Based Preservation

Preservation priorities using non-acquisition-based methods are achieved through zoning and subdivision regulations, as well as transfers of development rights. The following open space types ideally pair with the following methods:



- ◆ Land Development Process
  - ◇ *Protection of **habitat conservation/natural resource land and greenway land** on parcels which, taken comprehensively, may only partially meet criteria for preservation. Ideally, land and features which are reserved from development should be judged using similar criteria as whole parcels of **habitat conservation/natural resource land and greenway land**, as described in the previous section. Features which can be reserved from development through ordinances include:*
    - *Steep slopes*
    - *Riparian corridors, wetlands, and floodplain districts*
    - *Required open space dedication through the Conservation Subdivision provisions in zoning and subdivision ordinances.*
  - ◇ *Dedication of **park/recreation land and facilities** which are open and accessible to the public.*
  - ◇ *Reservation of **any other undeveloped open space**, held by and for the use of a condominium or homeowners association (HOA) created in a land development, which may not have high existing conservation value but can be incrementally restored. HOAs hold most of the land preserved through the land development process in the township. However, such land frequently is composed of turfgrass lawns and stormwater management BMPs, which can degrade the overall use and conservation value of the land preserved.*
  - ◇ *Reservation of **trail easements**, in favor of the township*
- ◆ *Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). TDRs are an especially attractive tool because no public money need exchange hands—it can be*



*an entirely market-driven process between two or more private parties. The development rights of a “sending parcel” in a preservation area of the township can be sold to a “receiving parcel” in a designated-growth area of the township. The sending parcel is then restricted from further development, while the growth is redirected to a part of the township with the necessary infrastructure and planning in place.*

- ◇ *Farmland*
- ◇ *Habitat or natural resource land*
- ◇ *Greenway land*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1

*Support and encourage the preservation of the unique and rare aspects of the township's history, culture, and environment which are emblematic of community character*

- a Determine what level of historic protections with which the township may be comfortable enacting through ordinance amendments.

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- b Consider hiring an Open Space Consultant. *Such an advisory board would be composed of individuals, appointed by the Board of Supervisors, who could advise the Supervisors on matters relating to acquiring or preserving open space. A consultant could similarly advise the township on open space issues.*

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- c Consider creating dedicated funding sources for open space preservation, such as implementing an Open Space Tax.

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- d Create and support a preservation decision-making process which is transparent, data-driven, and based on documented justification.

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- e Support the increased usage of TDR in the township by, among other things:
  - *Adding additional areas of the township as "receiving areas" to receive additional development rights, as appropriate. These receiving areas should generally be restricted to village and designated-growth areas.*
  - *Consider using "bonuses" to incentivize the usage of TDRs in certain areas of the township, such as the TDR-bonus at Fairview Village MR Overlay District, in which a single TDR has 3x the unit value than elsewhere in the township.*
  - *Increase public awareness and outreach on the TDR program.*

---
- f Consider amendments to the Conservation Subdivision and open space development regulations, which could include, among other things:
  - *Increasing the quality and usability of open space preserved in land developments.*
  - *Requiring the use of Conservation Subdivisions in more parts of the township.*
  - *Require scenic assessments and ensure building setbacks from major scenic roads.*
  - *Limit structural stormwater BMPs allowable in required open spaces.*

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- g Provide greater guidance or incentives for HOA-owned common open space areas to be maintained more sustainably and in a more naturalized state.

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**2****Provide for the passive and active recreational needs of township residents**

- a Commission a review and analyze the suitability of current recreational facilities and future recreational needs by a recreational professional.

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- b Consider ordinance amendments which require the provision of specific recreational facilities and amenities during the land development process, and permit alternative compliance through the payment of fees in lieu of such facilities. *Fees in lieu are collected at land development approval and can only be used by the township for the development of recreational facilities at a later date.*

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**3****Enhance connectivity between parks and neighborhoods**

- a Prioritize the ability of residents to walk or bike to township parks, especially through sidewalk or trail improvements. *Planning frameworks like the Safe Routes to Parks program, sponsored by the Safe Routes Partnership and the National Recreation and Parks Association, provide tools and guidance on best practices implementing connectivity improvements. More information can be found here: <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/saferoutestoparks>.*

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- b Prioritize connectivity of new land developments' open space to existing adjacent neighborhoods and natural areas.

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**4****Provide a degree of public access of properties acquired or eased for preservation purposes, as appropriate**

- a When the township is a party to an agricultural preservation deal, consider reserving trail easements or additional reservations for public use.

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- b Assure that access to preserved private property, as well as to sensitive ecological elements of preserved property, is appropriately limited or restricted.

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# Environmental & Infrastructure

*Managing our natural and built systems*

## POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will strive to maintain sustainable natural systems and the built environment to ensure the township's quality of life is maintained for future generations.*

*Worcester will ensure that the functionality and maintenance of relevant infrastructure systems are sound and sustainably provided.*

## GOALS



Preserve and conserve sensitive environmental features, such as floodplains, steep slopes, riparian buffers, forests, and wetlands.



Restrict development from environmentally sensitive areas.



Support practices which address climate change, including renewable energy, sustainable transportation options, low-impact development, and reductions in waste, emissions, and water and energy use.



Provide for the sustainable management of stormwater throughout the township.



Provide and maintain sewer and water infrastructure capacity in line with reasonable needs.



Plan for public sewer in areas at risk for malfunctioning systems and retrofit failing systems.

*Worcester residents rated the quality of the township's natural resources among the best aspects of the whole community.*

QUESTION 7... Please rate the present quality of the following in Worcester Township, selecting all that apply (listed in order of highest to lowest rated)

Fire Service	1st
Overall Quality of Life	2nd
Natural Resources	3rd
Athletic Field & Courts	4th
Ambulance Service	5th
Preserved Open Spaces	6th
Playground & Tot Lots	7th
Internet Service	8th
Trails	9th
Water Systems	10th
Housing Choices	11th
Cellular Service	12th
Noise Control	13th
Housing Affordability	14th
Stormwater Management	15th
Sewer/Septic Systems	16th
Roadway Conditions	17th
Police Service	18th
Retail/Commercial Services	19th
Taxes	20th
Traffic Volume	21st

Worcester will ensure that the functionality and maintenance of relevant infrastructure systems are sound and sustainable. The systems that work unnoticed and behind the scenes, both manmade and natural, are vital to its quality of life. Water and sewer systems, stormwater management, and buildings and energy infrastructure contribute to daily life in frequently unseen ways, but have significant implications for the larger way of life both locally and globally. However, stewarding natural systems and improving the use of finite resources is also important. For Worcester to continue to be a resilient and picturesque community for many years to come, it is incumbent upon the township to plan, design, and maintain the developed areas and natural environments in a manner where they are mutually supportive, balanced, efficient, and functional. This includes not only focusing development in areas with existing infrastructure and excess capacity first, but also permitting new development incrementally and in a more sustainable pattern.

## Natural Resources

As has been previously discussed, the residents of Worcester appreciate the open, natural spaces of their community. Because Worcester is not yet as built out as its neighboring municipalities are, there are still numerous opportunities to guide development and protect and enhance the many natural elements which still exist in the township. Not only will scenic elements be retained and enhanced, but natural systems like air and water quality, flood abatement, and ecosystem resilience will remain functional. One of the frameworks through which to see and understand the importance of natural systems is through the idea of green infrastructure and low impact development.

### Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development

Green infrastructure is the interconnected network of green spaces, waterways, and naturalized systems that, together, provide natural regulation of several natural systems dealing with flooding, the quality of air and water, and weather and climate extremes. Green infrastructure comes in many forms, whether it is building design elements such as green roofs or rainwater harvesting systems, or site features such as rain gardens or bioswales. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a widely used green building rating system that recognizes green infrastructure techniques. Green infrastructure systems provide the most services when preserved at a watershed or regional scale by linking together stream networks, mature vegetation, conservation areas, parks, and greenways. Beyond their importance to wildlife populations, healthy green infrastructure systems generate a host of benefits for both Worcester and the larger region:

- ◆ Improved water and air quality

### LEED Credit Categories



- ◆ Increased flood attenuation
- ◆ Urban heat island effect reduction
- ◆ Enhanced esthetic value
- ◆ Greater financial savings (from reduced flood damage and decreased energy costs)
- ◆ Greater economic resilience
- ◆ Enhanced quality of life

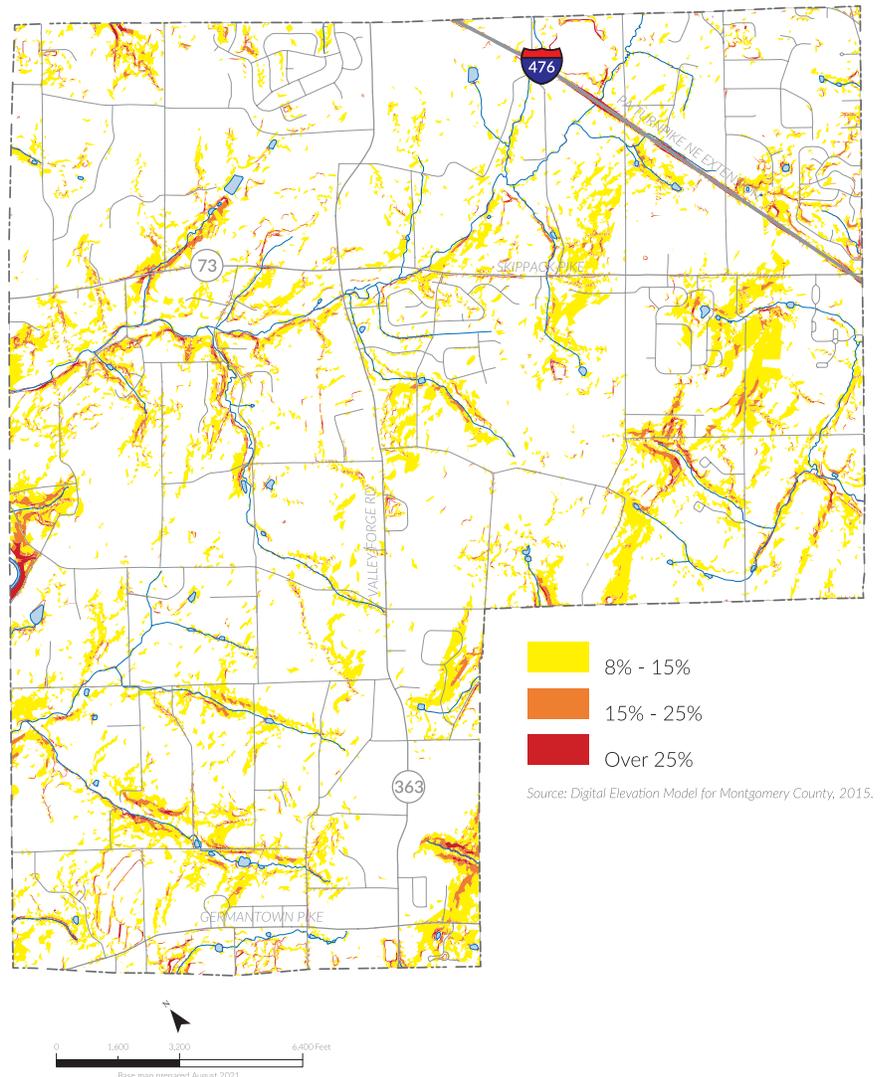


Low impact development (LID) is the land development practice that ultimately uses green infrastructure and other low-intensity strategies to serve important stormwater management functions on a site without intensive infrastructure needs. LID also uses larger site design strategies, such as reducing impervious surfaces and clustering improvements to reduce natural disturbances, to reduce the costs of infrastructure improvements.

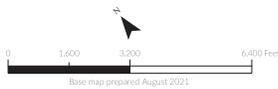
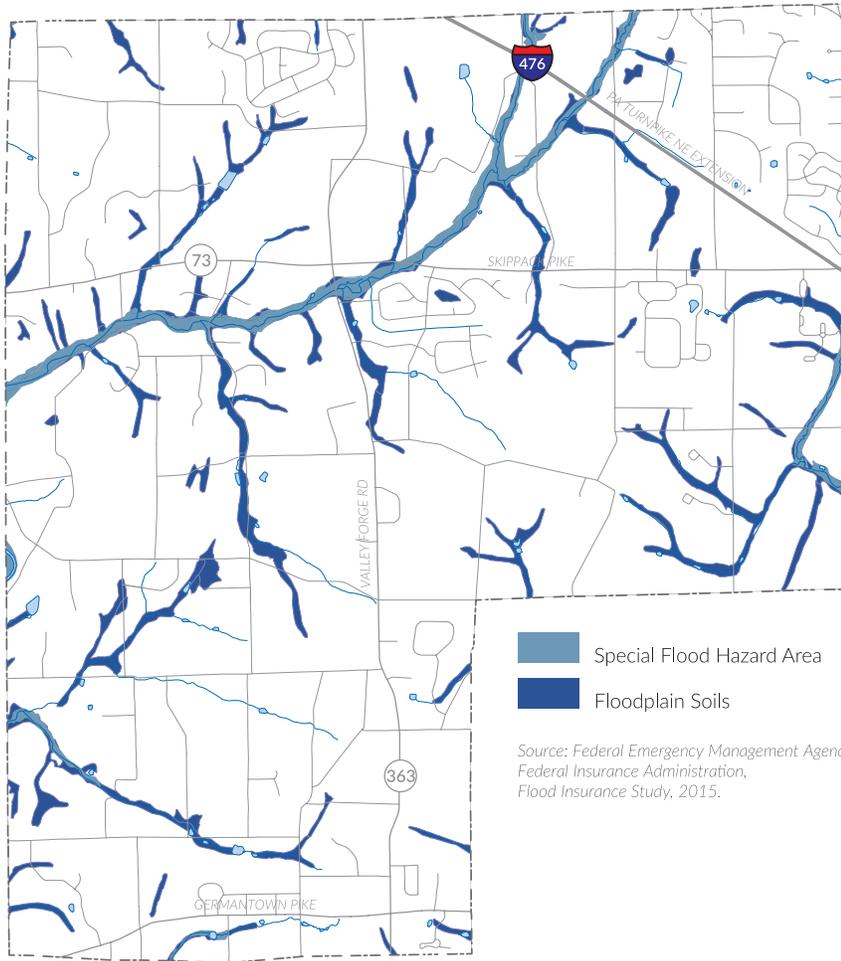
## Steep Slopes

Steep slope preservation is performed for two general reasons: to prevent the uncontrolled disturbance of slopes in a manner which will cause excessive erosion and unstable soils, and to protect the natural geology and ecology which steep slopes afford. Shown in this map, such steep slopes tend to correspond with the stream corridors. While slopes of 8-15% are still considered developable, the development of slopes 15% or over should largely be minimized or avoided. Even though steep slopes themselves might not be considered technically a part of the green infrastructure of the community, the vegetation and ecological communities they host are a significant part of the system.

## WORCESTER STEEP SLOPES



## WORCESTER SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS (SFHA) AND FLOODPLAIN SOILS



## Floodplains and Wetlands

When FEMA certified updates to the official floodplain maps that govern development restrictions (in 2016); all municipalities in Montgomery County were then required to adopt updated ordinances. The map at left indicates the mapped “special floodplain hazard areas,” (SFHA) which are identified through hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, and are present on FEMA’s Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The SFHA is defined by FEMA as the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. This 1-percent chance flood was formerly referred to as the a “100-year flood,” but do not be fooled by this misnomer: a so-called “100-year flood” has a 1 in 4 chance of occurring during a standard 30-year mortgage.

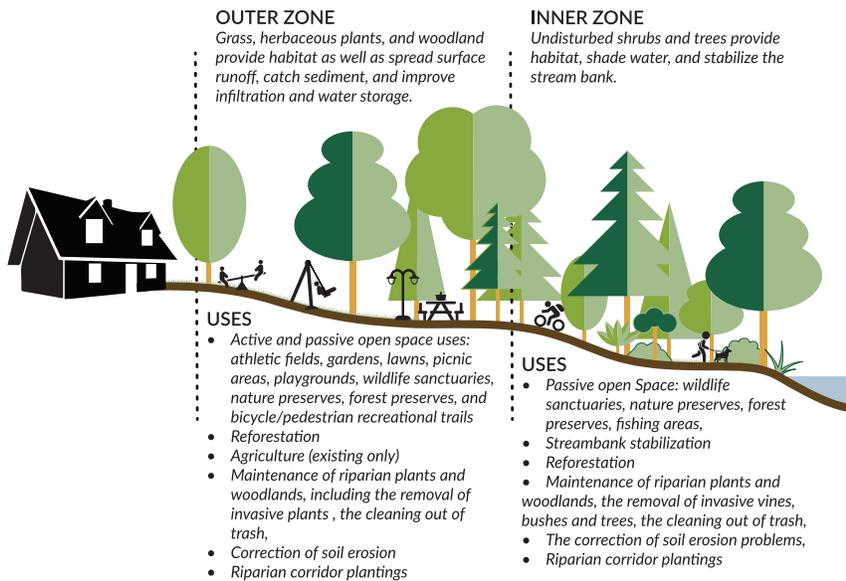
“Floodplain soils” are also identified on this map; floodplain soils, which can be poorly drained, form when rain events deposit sediment from

upstream, the presence of which can also signify future flooding risk, although no base flood elevation has been established through modeling. Floodplains are relatively flat, low-lying areas adjacent to a stream or river which are regularly inundated during rain events which are formed over time as floodwaters deposit sediment in layers. Floodplains serve as water storage during high-rain events as well as reducing the energy of high-rate flow situations. Because of the presence of nutrient-rich sediment, floodplains support especially abundant and diverse ecosystems. Maintaining natural, vegetated floodplains free of structures is vital to the health of riparian areas and the absorption of flood waters.

### DID YOU KNOW?



*Under Clean Water Act Section 404, as well as state permit requirements, permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection are required before dredged or fill material may be discharged into jurisdictional wetlands or waterways.*



## RIPARIAN BUFFER ZONES

While riparian buffer zones should largely remain free from the most intense development, there are several residential and recreational uses which are compatible to locate there. Appropriate uses differ according to how close in proximity the zone is to the stream—the closer to the stream, the more restrictive.

Source: MCPC and Royse City, TX.

While wetlands are often co-located in places subject to flooding and adjacent to stream corridors, they can just as easily occur in isolated areas with poorly-drained soils. Wetlands act as natural sponges, absorbing flood waters and slowly releasing it. Wetlands also maintain the water cycle balance above and below the ground, while also filtering the water that passes through them as well. This is particular important since so many homes in the township use private well water. Yet another important aspect of the wetlands are the ecosystem benefits: wetlands are considered to be among the most biologically diverse natural ecosystems with some unique flora and fauna that is not found elsewhere.

## Riparian Buffers

Riparian areas are those corridors adjacent to a stream or river, which sometimes coincide with floodplains but often extend beyond them. These fertile corridors become densely forested with diverse understory, and they host a wide variety of wildlife. Healthy, vegetated riparian zones improve water quality by providing water infiltration, which prevents erosion and filters pollutants, which also stabilize stream banks and maintains natural levels of stream flow.

### Priority Riparian Buffer Restoration

The following map, found earlier in the Worcester: Past & Present chapter, should be used as a guide for township-wide riparian buffer improvement. Missing or incomplete riparian buffers on public lands should be prioritized first. Meanwhile, the township can inspect existing buffers on its own lands to assess their relative health and quality, and consider replantings or invasive removal where a buffer has been degraded. Next, the township can choose to work with local property owners in areas where much of the buffer is missing.



*Property owners have an opportunity in creating new, or enhancing and protecting existing riparian areas for streams crossing their properties by planting native trees and shrubs that are adapted to floodplain soils and conditions, thus contributing to improved water quality for the receiving stream and reduced impacts from downstream flooding.*

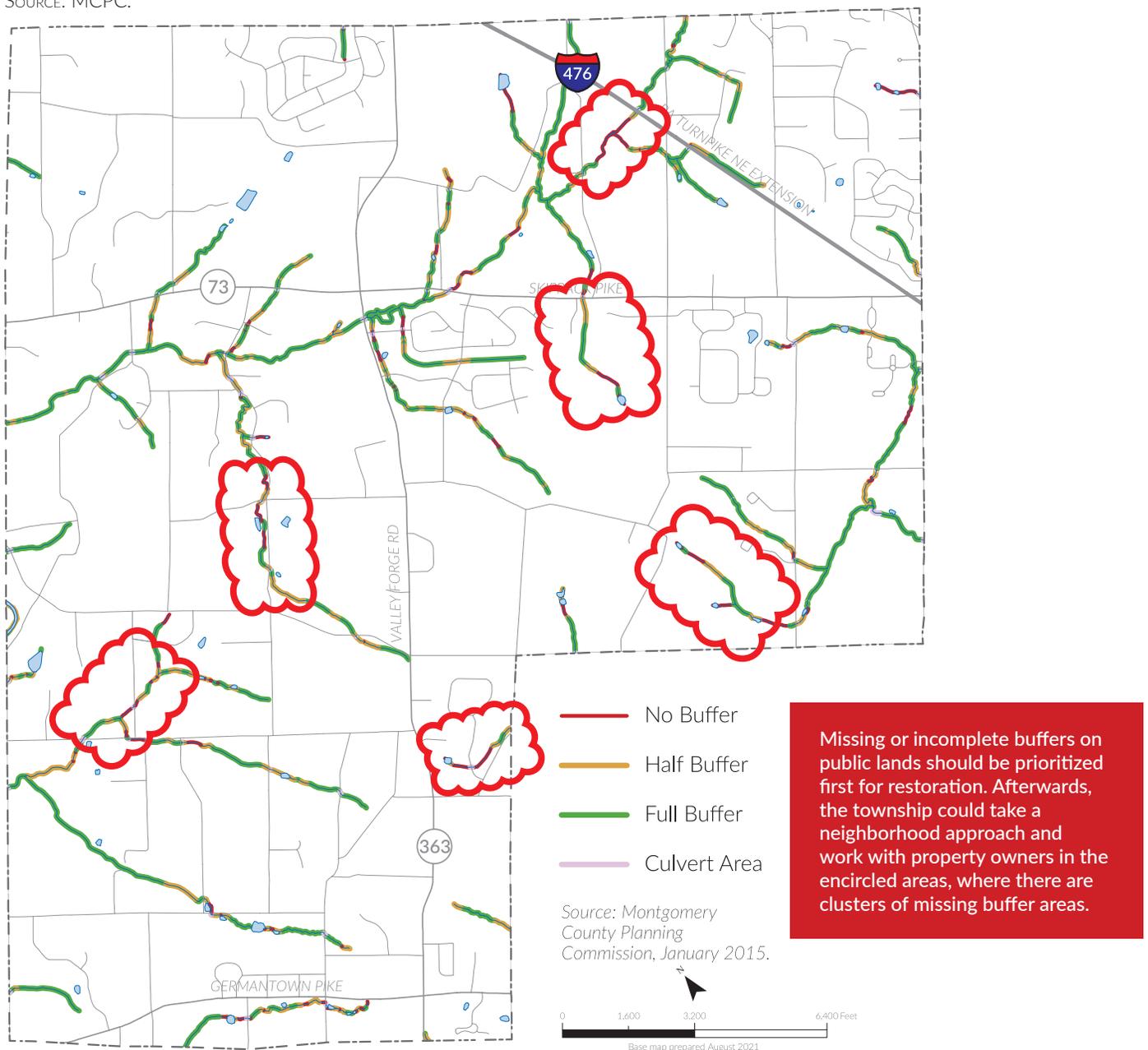
# RIPARIAN BUFFER QUALITY BY OWNERSHIP TYPE

SOURCE: MCPC, HERITAGE CONSERVANCY.

	Public Land		Private Land		Total	
	Length (feet)	Percent	Length (feet)	Percent	Length (feet)	Percent
No Buffer	2,408.4	10.0%	21,438.2	17.2%	23,846.6	16.1%
Half Buffer	5,127.2	21.3%	28,350.5	22.8%	33,477.7	22.5%
Full Buffer	16,427.2	68.4%	73,908.2	59.4%	90,335.4	60.8%
Culvert Area	57.1	0.2%	828.2	.7%	885.2	0.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24,019.8</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>124,525.1</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>148,544.9</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

# RIPARIAN BUFFER CLASSES WITH NEIGHBORHOOD FOCUS AREAS

SOURCE: MCPC.



## Stewardship and Sustainability

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Maintaining the efficacy and viability of our natural resources and environment does not only involve stewarding the physical assets in the community; practicing sound building practices and lifestyles, enacted through both behavior and policy interventions, are just as important. Designing our buildings, neighborhoods, and landscaping to be more energy efficient and water conscious, reducing the impacts derived from our vehicle and mobility choices, reducing and redirecting our waste products, and decreasing our negative impact on the climate are all part of the larger effort to steward our earth and manage our resources so that future generations may enjoy them and prosper. The impacts of our daily actions upon the environment are often so interrelated and complex that they require a more thorough planning framework to understand and address them. Several communities in Montgomery County have opted to conduct sustainability audits and plans to understand the impact of existing policies and development patterns on their communities' sustainability, which Worcester may find advantageous to commission as well.

While there are systemic changes that individuals and the community can make to enhance the sustainability of life in the township, there are additional considerations which must be made on the local level to mitigate impacts that are already happening due to climate change. In planning for how to address these impacts, MCPC has created a number of indices to project which areas of the county will receive likely increases in flooding due to increased precipitation, as well as those areas which will likely be vulnerable to increased high-temperature days. The county, as well as each municipality (including Worcester) can use this information to propose data-driven neighborhood-specific mitigation projects and implement scenario planning.

The flood risk index uses data from two sources: FEMA and Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management. These data sources provided the planning commission with seven indicators available on the census block scale: 100-YR floodplain area, 500-YR floodplain area, NFIP-insured structures with repetitive damage, compensation received by NFIP-insured structures, flood damage events reported to Montgomery County, degree (minimum to impassible) of property damaged from floods reported to Montgomery County, and 911 calls received by Montgomery County related to flooding.

*The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) projects, in their draft Pennsylvania Climate Impact Assessment 2021, that by end-of-century, the Commonwealth will see 36 percent more days with observed historical “very heavy” precipitation amounts and 67 percent more days with observed baseline “extremely heavy” precipitation. The amount of rainfall during “extremely heavy” precipitation events (which occur less than 1 percent of the time) is projected to rise by another 13 percent. In other words, climate projections show a notable increase in extreme rainfall events, at the same time duration and magnitude of these events will also increase.*

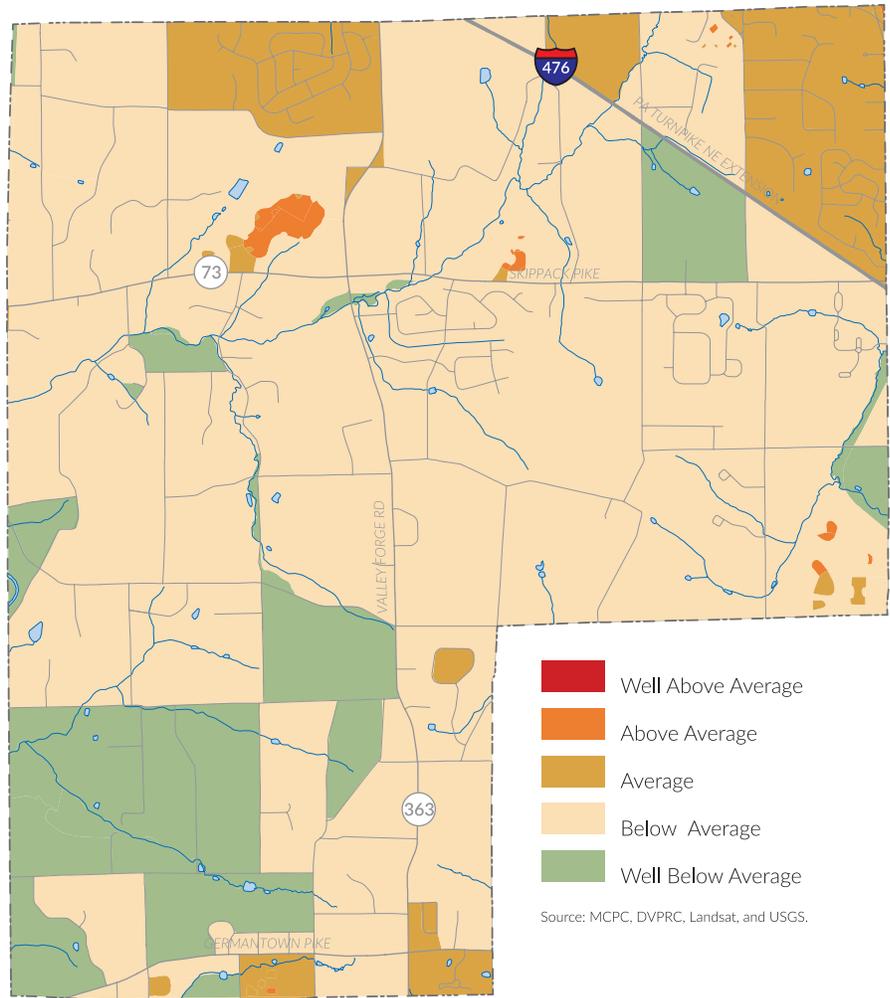
### What is Sustainability?

*Sustainability is based on a simple principle: Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations.*

SOURCE: US EPA



## WORCESTER FLOOD RISK INDEX 2021

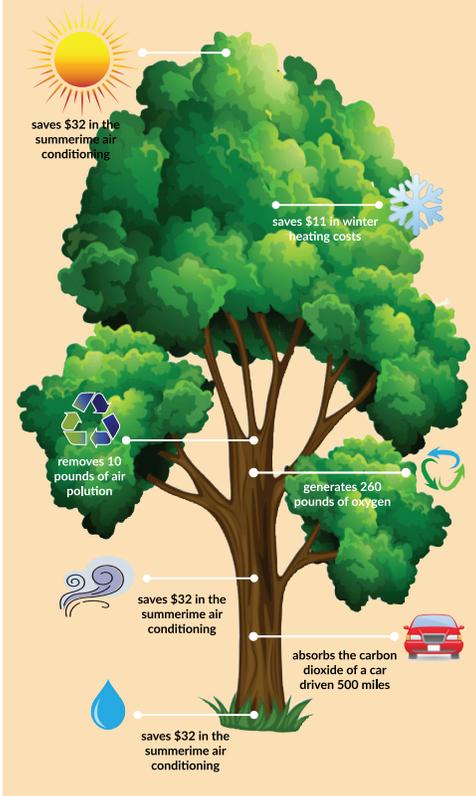


- Well Above Average
- Above Average
- Average
- Below Average
- Well Below Average

Source: MCPC, DVPRC, Landsat, and USGS.



## EVERY YEAR, ONE LARGE TREE

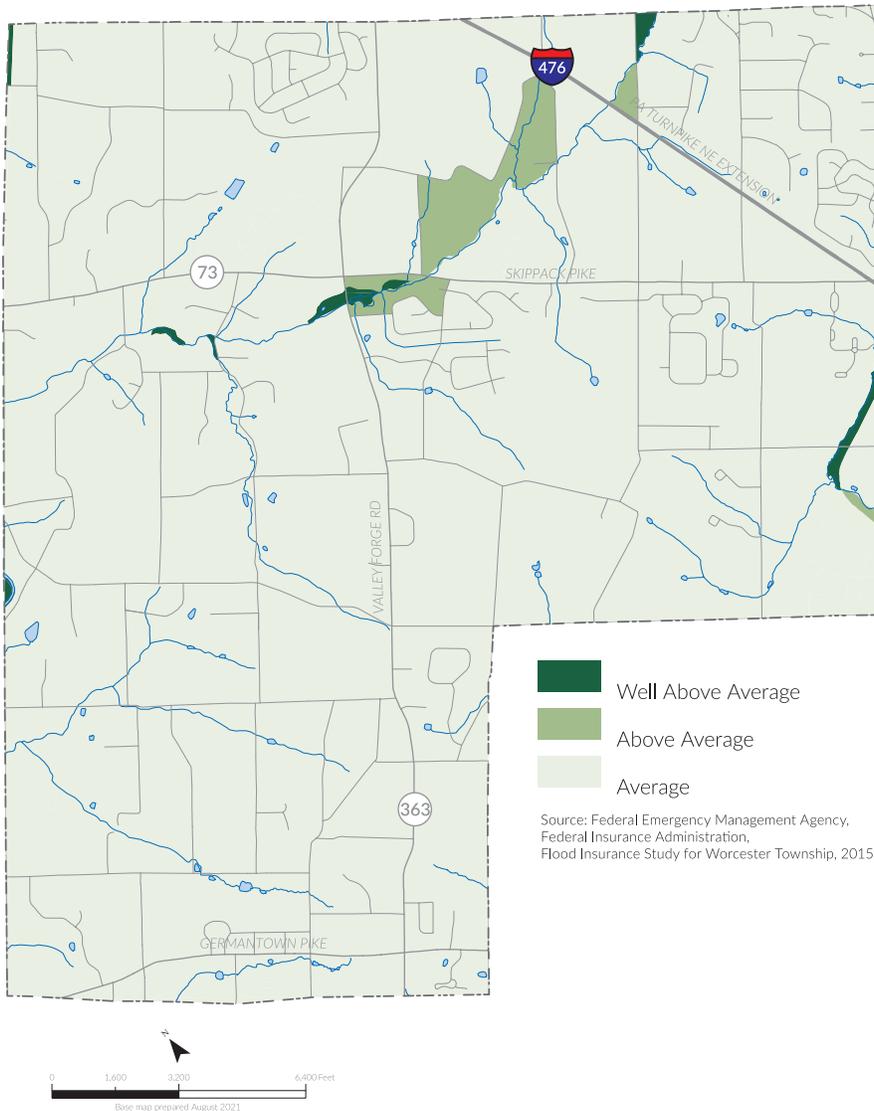


Source: MCPC.

The heat risk index map utilizes difference in average surface temperature of each census block from the county-wide mean. The mean surface temperature of census blocks was determined by Landsat satellite imagery of the eight hottest, most cloud-free days over the past 5-years. Risks from more prolonged and more frequent high-temperature days do not just include the direct risks to human health, but also include worse air quality, increased maintenance costs to transportation infrastructure, and increased loads on utilities and household energy costs.

Increased surface temperatures can frequently be attributed to the absence of tree cover, building and roof system materials, and the density of impervious surface coverage in an area, such as large parking lots or clusters of buildings. Localized patterns of higher surface temperatures caused by the absorption and re-release of heat by impervious surfaces is called the “urban heat island effect.”

## WORCESTER HEAT RISK INDEX 2021



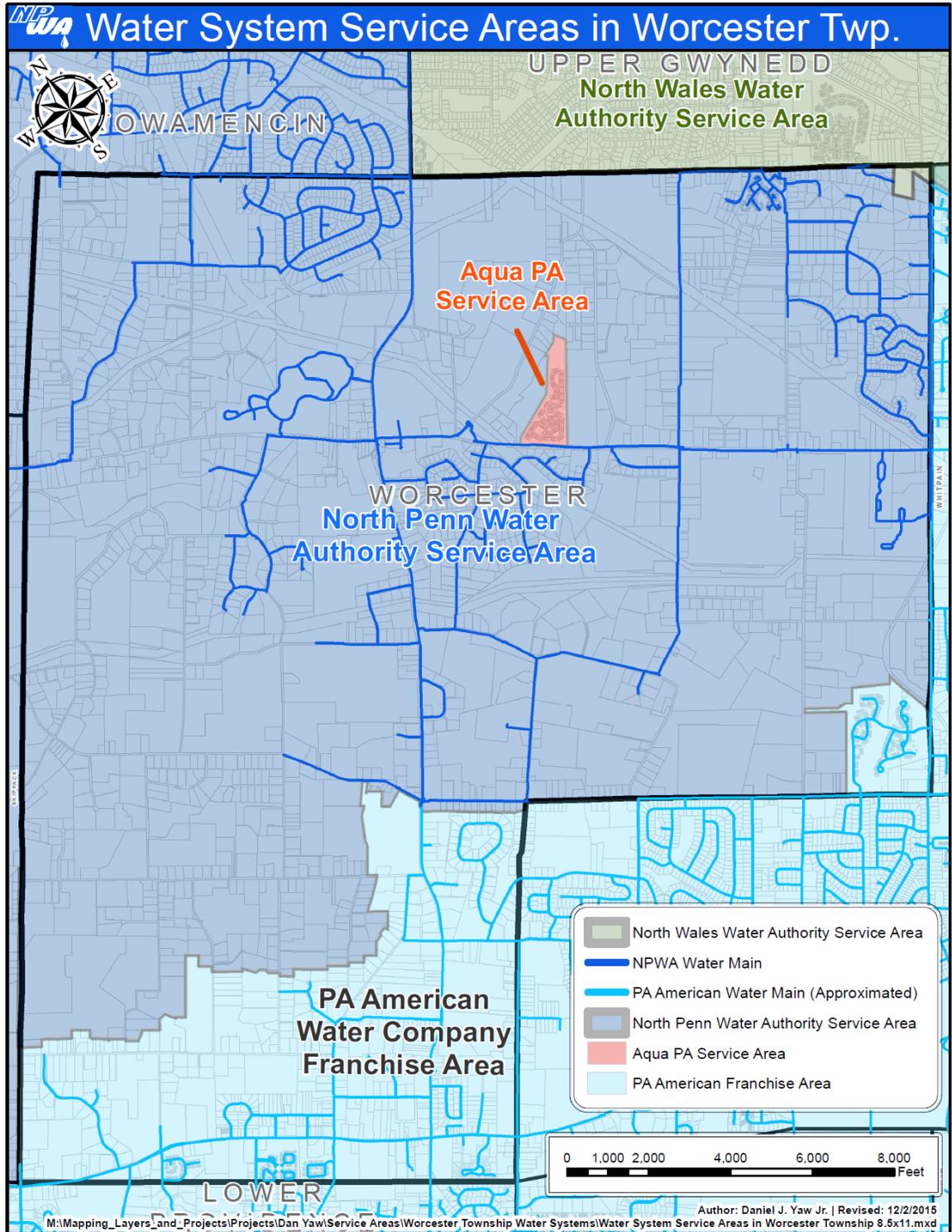
Large expansions of impervious surfaces, like parking lots, can absorb and release heat during hot days, which noticeably raises the local air temperatures. Greening parking lots can reduce the impact of this effect, called the urban heat island effect.



## Water and Sewer Improvements

In the past, in order to restrict or limit development, it was a traditional strategy to limit the expansion of municipal sewer and water service to outlying parcels far away from the needed infrastructure. While it is still a best practice overall to not overburden and overextend municipal systems, if a developer can fund the provision of such services, then the extension of these services tends to be approved. Nonetheless, the township has less control over systems it does not own, such as the public water system which, when provided, is covered by the North Penn Water Authority, North Wales Water Authority, Aqua PA and PA American Water Company, as illustrated in the map on the next page. All others in the township are served by private wells.





What is more within the township’s purview is the public sanitary sewer system. The township owns two sewer treatment plants, Berwick Place and Valley Green, and their respective conveyance systems, although the rest of the township is served by other providers, including Towamencin, Lower Providence and Upper Gwynedd Townships, as well as Aqua PA’s Stony Creek WWTP, as the next map shows. All others are served by private on-lot septic systems.

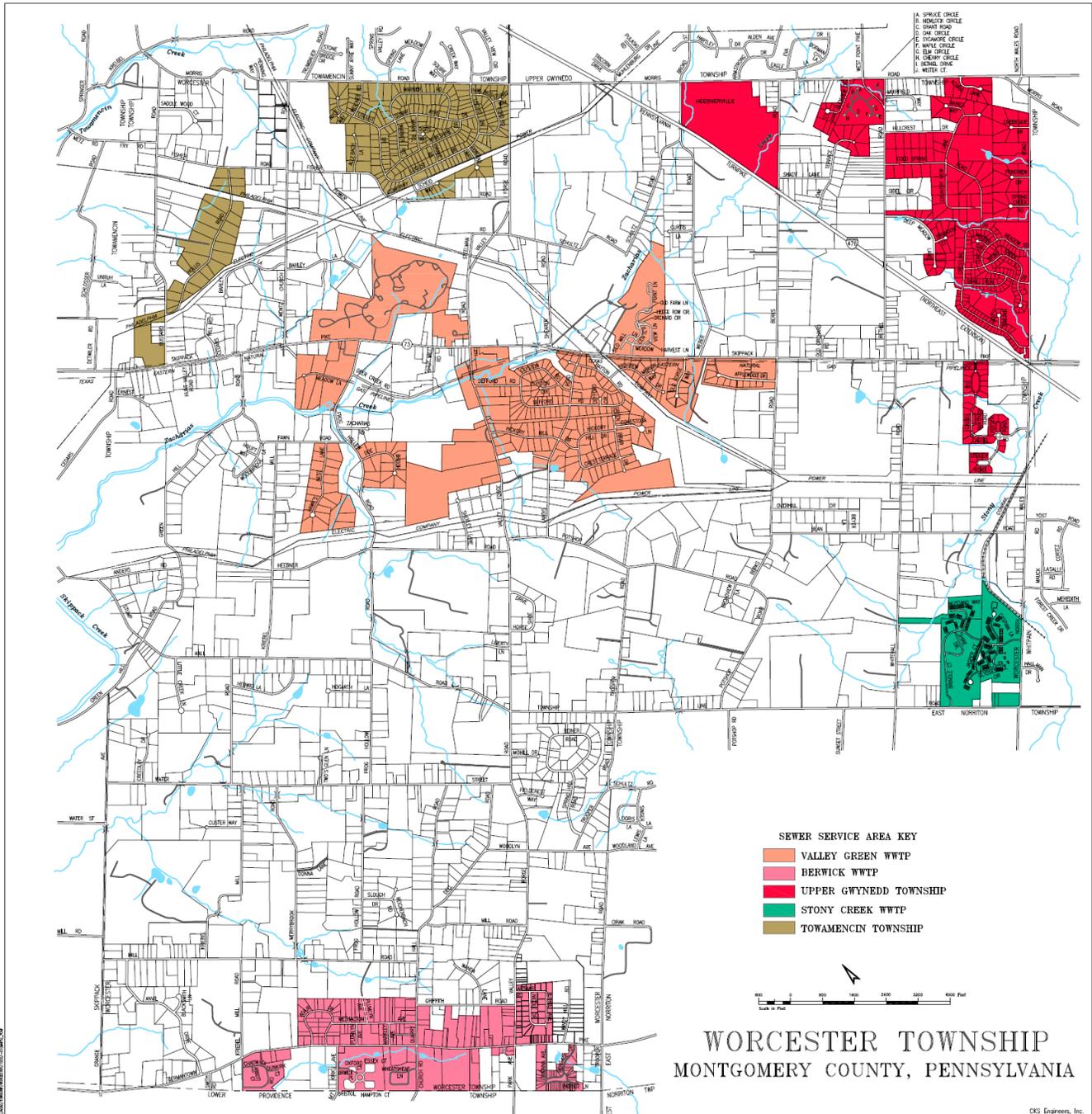
# EXISTING SEWER FLOWS AND CAPACITY OF TOWNSHIP WWTPs

	Berwick Place	Valley Green
2022 Average Flow Capacity	150,000 gallons per day	220,000 gallons per day
2022 Estimated Daily Usage Flow (May 2022)	75,900 gallons per day	123,300 gallons per day

SOURCE: WORCESTER TWP., MCPC.

Note: Flows are not only, or most significant, measure of plant capacity. Additional parameters for capacity include analysis of suspended solids, dissolved oxygen, fecal coliform, and phosphorous, which is performed daily and regularly reported to and reviewed by DEP.

## PUBLIC SANITARY SEWER SERVICE PROVIDERS IN WORCESTER



SOURCE: MCPC, WORCESTER.

## Stormwater Management



Stormwater is generated when precipitation from rain and melting snow flows over land and impervious surfaces and does not infiltrate into the ground. The runoff from streets, lawns, farms, and construction and industrial sites collects fertilizers, loose soil, chemical pesticides, oils and grease and many other pollutants, which eventually make their way into our ponds, creeks and rivers.

This untreated discharge is detrimental to the quality of both habitats as well as drinking water. Many Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as detention/retention/infiltration basins, are already in place to help keep our water clean. Stormwater BMPs also work to slow water, holding the water back to prevent the overloading and failure of municipal systems, as well as encouraging water to infiltrate into the soil before it ever makes it to a stormwater system or receiving stream—this helps to reduce flooding and drainage issues downstream.

The township regulates stormwater management which goes above and beyond typical BMPs through a permit obtained from the PA DEP through the National Pollution and Discharge Elimination System Phase II (NPDES)/Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). This is a Federal requirement from the US EPA that is administered by the PA DEP. There are target requirements to achieve within the 5-year permit timelines, and municipalities are required to administer six minimum control measures, which include:

- ◆ Construction site runoff control
- ◆ Illicit discharge detection and elimination
- ◆ Pollution prevention
- ◆ Post-construction runoff control
- ◆ Public education and outreach
- ◆ Public participation and involvement

Overall the management of stormwater in the township should adhere as closely as possible to the natural processes that attenuate stormwater. Incidentally, strategies to restore or improve natural resources, such as streambank restorations and riparian buffer plantings, are important measures to improve water quality which might be degraded by stormwater runoff and protect against erosion and sedimentation. Additionally, stormwater planning should be done on a regional or watershed basis: Worcester is currently implementing this strategy through its participation in the Skippack Watershed Alliance with Lower Providence, Skippack, Towamencin, and Hatfield Townships.

While the township must consider community-wide stormwater, new land developments and earth disturbances are still required to implement stormwater management BMPs independently of township planning projects.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1

*Preserve and conserve sensitive environmental features, such as floodplains, steep slopes, riparian buffers, forests, and wetlands*

- a Review zoning and land development ordinances to identify areas to improve natural resource preservation and stewardship.
- b Preserve open space with habitat or natural resource conservation value, as described in the Preservation, Open Space & Parks Chapter.
- c Improve tree canopy coverage through tree-planting programs or enhanced tree-planting requirements in land development review.

2

*Restrict development from environmentally sensitive areas*

- a Review existing floodplain, wetland, riparian corridor, and steep slopes regulations and practices and recommend ways to strengthen protection of these resources from future development.
- b Continue to enforce floodplain, wetland, riparian corridor, and steep slopes regulations.

3

*Support practices which address climate change, including renewable energy, sustainable transportation options, low-impact development, and reductions in waste, emissions, and water and energy use*

- a Consider implementing ordinance provisions which could incentivize the use of green building practices, such as conformance to LEED standards. Support implementation of energy efficiency in new commercial and residential building construction, as well as the deployment of infrastructure that increases access to electric vehicle charging ports.
- b Consider conducting an energy efficiency audit of existing township facilities and develop a plan to address inefficiencies and the feasibility of on-site alternative energy production, such as the use of solar, wind, or geothermal facilities.
- c Consider commissioning a Township Sustainability Plan or Sustainability Audit.

4

*Provide for the sustainable management of stormwater throughout the township*

- a Implement mitigation measures to address the township's MS4 planning requirements.

- b Incentivize and encourage the use of green infrastructure and low-impact development practices across the township, in lieu of more traditional means.

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- c Prioritize streambank restoration and riparian buffer planting projects in the township for potential implementation.

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- d Review existing inventory of detention basins for their effectiveness and need for modifications and/or retrofitting reflecting current best practices.

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- e Inventory and audit existing stormwater management structures in the township, starting with data that has been compiled by Penn State Extension. Consider a comprehensive planning effort to address neighborhood-scale stormwater issues.

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**5**

*Provide and maintain sewer and water infrastructure in line with reasonable needs*

- a Maintain current sewer and water services areas, as shown on the maps on pages 102 and 103.

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- b Focus on sewer capacity improvements to areas where the township intends to accommodate growth.

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**6**

*Plan for public sewer in areas at risk for malfunctioning systems*

- a Produce study to identify and address failing or malfunctioning septic systems in the township to provide public sewer in the interests of public health.

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# Governance & Public Services

## *Serving the Community*

### POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will provide efficient services to its constituents in a manner which can be sustained for the long-term and which is resilient to economic challenges.*

### GOALS



Enable the township to sustainably and equitably provide necessary services and resources to all residents



Support partnerships between governments and other organizations to achieve the township's planning and development objectives

When planning for municipal and public services, potential population growth can alter the existing governance and services currently offered. This section of the plan addresses township services and strategies that will ensure Worcester has personnel and resources to provide the best service possible to residents and businesses in Worcester into the future.

### Public Safety

#### Fire and Ambulance Service

The quality of both fire protection and ambulance services in the township are some of the most highly-regarded of any available services in the community. Worcester is served by the Worcester

*Worcester residents rated the quality of their Fire Service the highest of any aspect of the township.*

QUESTION 7... Please rate the present quality of the following in Worcester Township, selecting all that apply (listed in order of highest to lowest rated)

<i>Fire Service</i>	<i>1st</i>
<i>Overall Quality of Life</i>	<i>2nd</i>
<i>Natural Resources</i>	<i>3rd</i>
<i>Athletic Field &amp; Courts</i>	<i>4th</i>
<i>Ambulance Service</i>	<i>5th</i>
<i>Preserved Open Spaces</i>	<i>6th</i>
<i>Playground &amp; Tot Lots</i>	<i>7th</i>
<i>Internet Service</i>	<i>8th</i>
<i>Trails</i>	<i>9th</i>
<i>Water Systems</i>	<i>10th</i>
<i>Housing Choices</i>	<i>11th</i>
<i>Cellular Service</i>	<i>12th</i>
<i>Noise Control</i>	<i>13th</i>
<i>Housing Affordability</i>	<i>14th</i>
<i>Stormwater Management</i>	<i>15th</i>
<i>Sewer/Septic Systems</i>	<i>16th</i>
<i>Roadway Conditions</i>	<i>17th</i>
<i>Police Service</i>	<i>18th</i>
<i>Retail/Commercial Services</i>	<i>19th</i>
<i>Taxes</i>	<i>20th</i>
<i>Traffic Volume</i>	<i>21st</i>

Volunteer Fire Department which, as the name suggests, employs an all-volunteer force, and is supported by township operating and capital fund contributions. Recently, due to demonstrated declines in volunteer fire company participation across the state, the General Assembly permitted municipalities to offer income tax credits to volunteer firefighters; Worcester participates in this benefit. Additionally, monthly stipends are offered by the township to municipal employees who participate in volunteer firefighter activities.

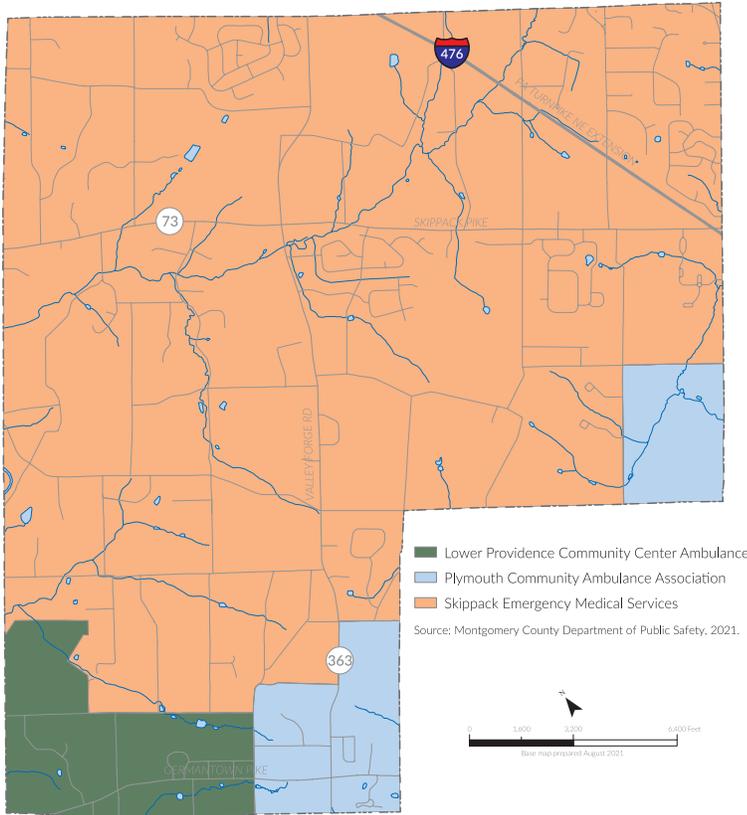
Ambulance services are provided by several area organizations, each of which cover a specific territory in the community. These companies include:

- ◆ Lower Providence Community Center Ambulance
- ◆ Plymouth Community Ambulance Association
- ◆ Volunteer Medical Service Corps of Lansdale
- ◆ Skippack Emergency Medical Services (which maintains a station at Meadowood in the township)

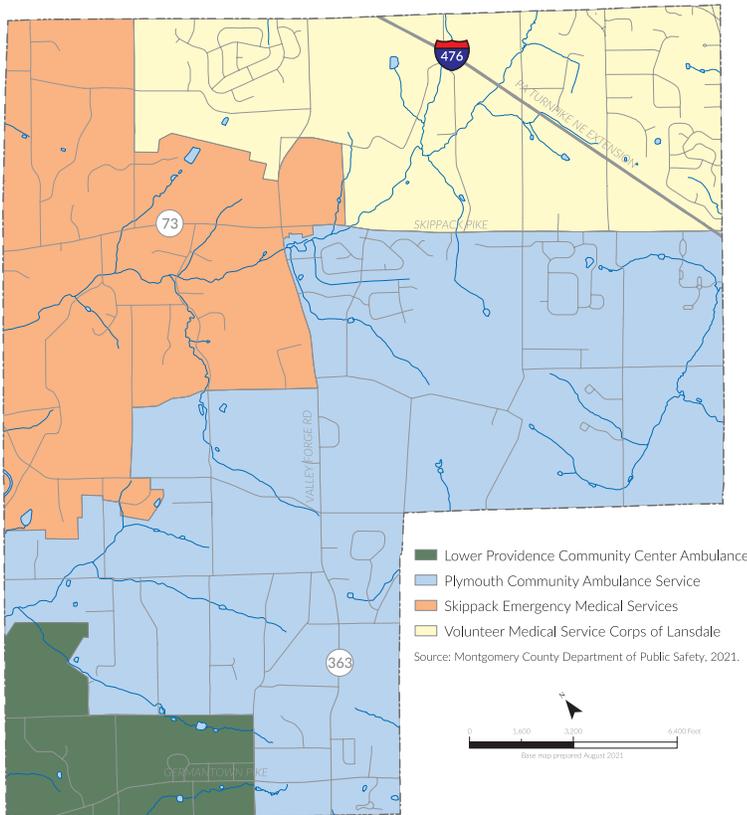
The challenges involved with maintaining fire protection services include: the costs of new equipment and maintaining existing apparatuses; the complexities of fire service in larger or growing communities; and the pursuit of recruiting and retaining volunteers, especially younger participants. Recently, the township has been investigating other ways to recruit younger volunteers, such as establishing housing for younger fire company volunteers who may have trouble finding adequate housing in the township.

Several volunteer fire companies in the county within the last 10 years have closed or consolidated with other companies, due to both increasing costs as well as the lack of volunteers to adequately run them. Some communities have partially or completely professionalized their fire protection services, which have come with increased costs. The National Fire Protection Association in a 2013 report concluded that of the total 31.9 million calls routed to U.S. fire departments, only 1.2 million (4%) were fire-related. The other 96% of calls were in response to medical emergencies, vehicle incidents, and other situations that did not require a full-size fire truck. While public safety concerns are obviously paramount, the township can always remain vigilant to cost increases associated with equipment.

AMBULANCE AND EMS COMPANIES SERVING WORCESTER:  
 MONDAY – FRIDAY 8AM – 4PM



AMBULANCE AND EMS COMPANIES SERVING WORCESTER:  
 ALL OTHER DAYS AND TIMES OUTSIDE MONDAY – FRIDAY 8AM – 4PM:



*Of all issues in the township, police service was rated the 5th-most important issue today to survey respondents.*

QUESTION 9... From the list in question 8, what are the FIVE most important issues in the township today?

Preserved Open Spaces	238	40.5%
Traffic Volume	224	38.2%
Taxes	189	32.2%
Roadway Conditions	188	32.0%
Police Service	142	24.2%
Trails	117	19.9%
Retail/Commercial Services	107	18.2%
Cellular Service	93	15.8%
Natural Resources	85	14.5%
Noise Control	84	14.3%
Sewer/Septic Systems	68	11.6%
Housing Affordability	53	9.0%
Stormwater Management	50	8.5%
Overall Quality of Life	49	8.3%
Ambulance Service	42	7.2%
Internet Service	42	7.2%
Housing Choices	35	6.0%
Fire Service	27	4.6%
Athletic Fields & Courts	25	4.3%
Water Systems	24	4.1%
Playgrounds & Tot Lots	24	4.1%
No Response (All)	89	15.2%

## Police Service

Worcester is one of only 11 municipalities in Montgomery County that utilizes the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) as their full-time police force; two additional municipalities utilize PSP part-time, in conjunction with a local police force. Utilizing PSP coverage currently does not incur any costs to a municipality. Worcester is the second-largest municipality by population in the county to use PSP full-time—only Skippack Township is more populous, which is where the local barracks is located. PSP currently provides responses to:

- ◆ Traffic and Vehicle Code violations and enforcement
- ◆ Motor vehicle accidents
- ◆ 911 emergency response
- ◆ Well-being checks (e.g. brief visits conducted on behalf of social service agencies or others when health, safety or general well-being are in question)
- ◆ Criminal complaint and investigatory services, and
- ◆ Limited patrol of township streets, parks and trails.

However, PSP does *not* enforce local “Quality of Life” ordinances such as noise, loitering, parking, animal, or nuisance ordinance complaints. The township-appointed Fire Marshal enforces complaints concerning the Fire Code and open burning.

The results from Public Outreach Survey indicated that existing police service is one of the lowest-rated services for the township, as shown on page 108. This desire for improvement is directly reflected in the answers to the next question, shown at left, which asked respondents what the five most important issues in the township are today. However, municipalities currently have very little power to influence the quality of services provided by PSP coverage. While PSP coverage is desirable for smaller or less-developed municipalities where maintaining local police forces is less feasible, such coverage is not “one size fits all” for every

municipality. Therefore, strategizing on how to improve police service may need to consider options beyond PSP coverage.

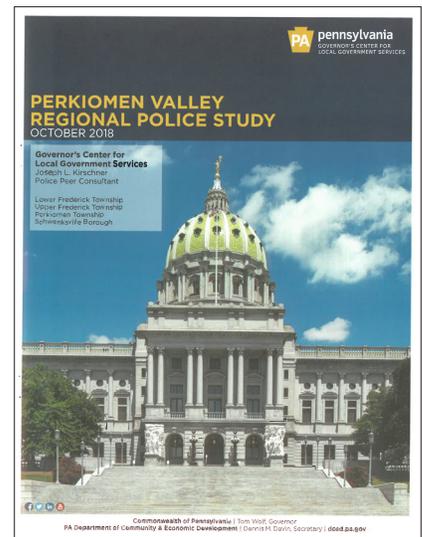
It is entirely conceivable that PSP coverage, at some point, may no longer serve the township’s needs. There are several options available to a municipality looking to invest in its existing police service, each with its own pros and cons:



- ◆ **“Buy into” another municipality’s local police coverage.** This option could theoretically be the least-expensive method to augment existing police service. Governance of the police force would continue to be managed by the originating municipality, however, and could be either full-time or part-time coverage.
- ◆ **Collaborate on a regional police force.** As opposed to buying into another municipality’s force, a regional police force would distribute governance of the police service across all participating municipalities.
- ◆ **Maintain a local part-time police force.** Instead of eliminating PSP coverage altogether, the township can either create or use a part-time police force. This option still uses PSP coverage on off-hours, typically in the evenings and weekends.
- ◆ **Maintain a local full-time police force.** This would likely be the most expensive option available, but also reflects the most comprehensive locally-controlled coverage available.

Lastly, keeping PSP coverage without any other changes remains the final option. Deciding what course of action, if any, would not be done without thoughtful consideration and planning. The Governor’s Center for Local Government Services offers assistance to municipalities interested in planning for police services, especially if regional planning is involved.

### POLICE COVERAGE TYPES IN THE REGION





## Administration

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The township currently maintains a workforce of 13 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees, which is approximately what the staffing levels were in 2014. Administration has been successful in keeping costs low and, likewise, municipal real estate taxes low, which is in fact the lowest in Montgomery County, which as of this writing is at 1/20<sup>th</sup> of 1 mill.

Into the future, township administration will continue to look for ways to ensure that its services are being adequately and equitably provided across all residents and businesses of the community.

## School District

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While not a formal organ of municipal government which makes land use decisions, the Methacton School District impacts municipal planning and land use regulation in the township. Currently the school district teaches nearly 5,000 students, approximately 25% of whom are students from Worcester, with the rest residing in Lower Providence Township. Two schools are located in the township: Worcester Elementary (whose entire catchment area is within the township itself), and Methacton High School. Facilities planning for the school district is largely determined by the projected school enrollment, for which planning generally happens every five years. But, of course, the number of school children who patronize the school district is a function of the available housing in the jurisdiction and the general demographic trends of that jurisdiction.

Currently the township has no power to impact or influence the management or funding mechanisms of the district. The school district's share of a property's total real estate taxes currently stands at 88%. Without legislative action from the General Assembly, the relationship between municipal administration and school district administration cannot change significantly. However, while they are independent of each other, the township can engage the school district on a number of issues on a more voluntary collaborative basis.

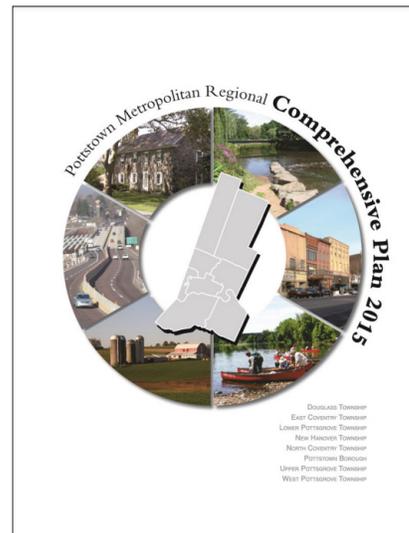


## Regional Planning

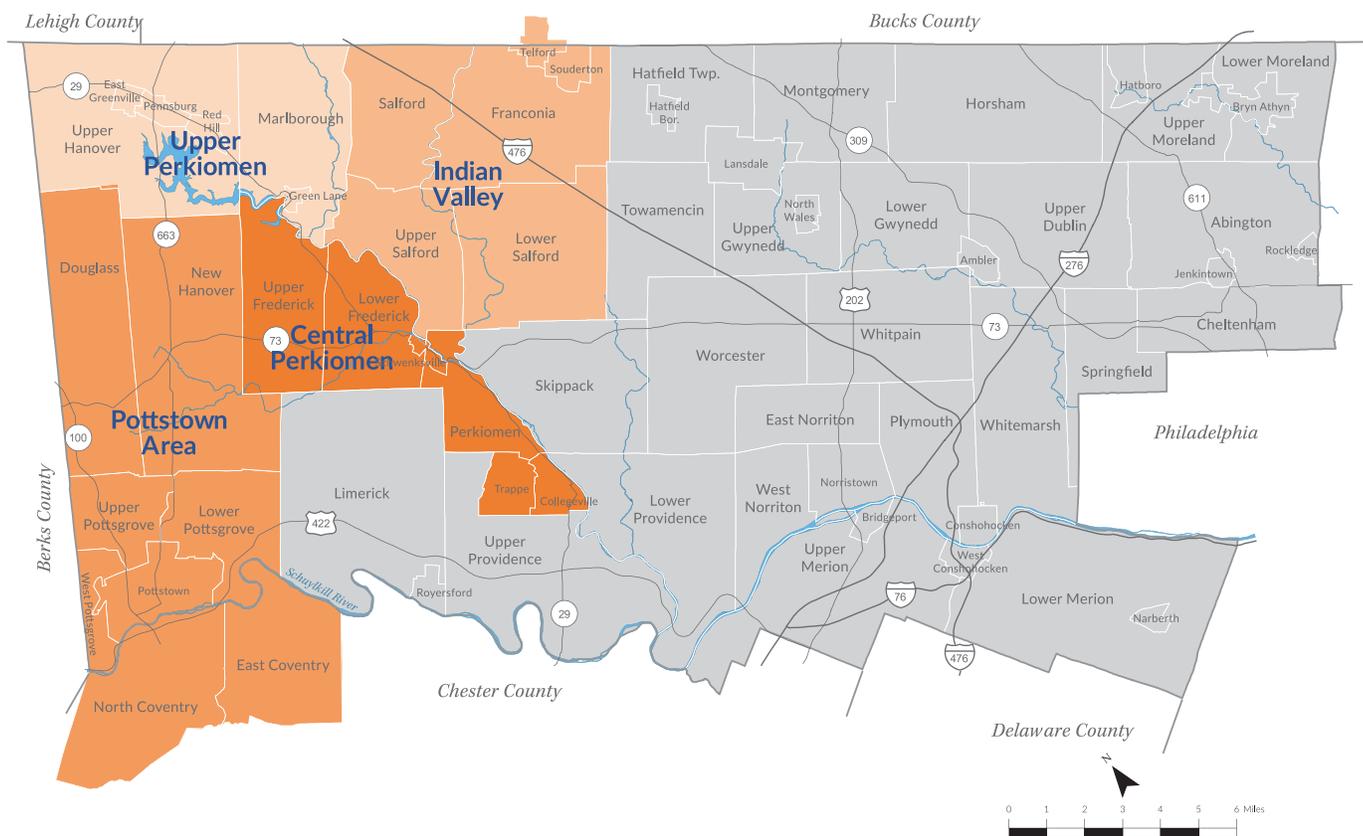
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Pennsylvania, despite being only the 33<sup>rd</sup> largest U.S. state by total land area, has the 3<sup>rd</sup> most local governments, behind only Illinois and Texas. With so many local governments, each with its own regulations and taxing power, planning for issues of regional significance beyond a single municipality's boundaries is especially difficult. Planning for regional amenities and assets like recreation and open space, housing, and transportation is made that much more difficult since, by law, every municipality must plan for and permit every legal and reasonable use, as well as their fair share of housing. Even beyond these issues, there are services which may not be feasible to deliver for a single municipality.

Because of these challenges, the state, through amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), has encouraged the use of multimunicipal planning between two or more municipalities. Instead of planning for uses only within municipal boundaries, municipalities can choose to collaborate on multimunicipal comprehensive plans, which can act as the governing plan for the community, or they can even enter into joint zoning or subdivision ordinances. Entering into joint zoning ordinances, which until recently was the only multimunicipal planning tool available, can certainly save on administration costs, but the fear of giving up local control of regulating land use is an ever-present and legitimate concern. But multimunicipal planning through a multimunicipal comprehensive plan, with an accompanying intergovernmental agreement, can be extremely beneficial to participating municipalities without the disadvantage of relinquishing autonomy. A multimunicipal comprehensive plan, produced in accordance with the MPC, permits municipalities to share the burden of permitting all legal and reasonable uses and jointly provide their fair share of housing by providing them in a *regional* manner. A fair share housing and nonresidential-use study would be commissioned on a regional basis, across all municipalities, and all municipalities would agree on how and where to provide them, which is legally assured by an adopted agreement among all municipalities, called an intergovernmental agreement. That is, individual municipalities do not, by themselves, have to independently provide for these requirements, but instead provide them as outlined in the multimunicipal plan and intergovernmental agreement.



*Montgomery County currently has four regional planning commissions, all of which receive planning assistance from MCPC.*





Beyond the realm of municipal planning, regional efforts can take many forms, especially as vehicles to share or collaborate on service provision; these can include:

- ◆ Regional recreation authorities and organizations, such as the *Pottstown Area Regional Recreation Committee (PARRC)*
- ◆ Regional police, fire or ambulance organizations
- ◆ Watershed planning partnerships (the township is currently a member of the Skippack Watershed Alliance, a multimunicipal group)
- ◆ Stormwater management authorities
- ◆ Transportation corridor planning , such as for the Germantown Pike corridor
- ◆ Other regional authorities, such as for water and sewer services

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1

*Enable the township to sustainably and equitably provide necessary services and resources to all residents.*

- a Implement metrics tracking for the comprehensive plan's objectives.
- b Establish periodic self-reviews of municipal ordinances to ensure that they are up to date and defensible in the event of legal challenges.
- c Track customer or resident complaints and service requests.
- d Consider purchasing property to house college-aged people who would like to work with the Volunteer Fire Company. *Such housing would be an extra benefit to those young people who would be interested in working with the fire company.*
- e Create a timeline for periodic reviews of whether a police services study may be warranted.

2

*Support partnerships between governments and other organizations to achieve the township's planning and development goals*

- a Continue practice of township-school district liaising, to regularly meet with school district board or administration keeping both entities "in the loop" on important issues impacting the community.
- b Continue to meet with the school district to review comprehensive plan recommendations and discuss future land use and budgetary impacts.
- c Explore available regional planning options at the township's disposal.





# Land Use & Growth Management

*Balancing growth and preservation*

## POLICY STATEMENT

*Worcester will support a balanced approach of responsible, context-sensitive development in order to preserve and enhance its existing assets, fiscal health, and community character.*

*Worcester will support a local economic model which can provide a range of employment opportunities while maintaining a balanced commercial tax base.*

## GOALS



Plan for a balanced land-use mix for fiscal sustainability for the township and for the residential tax base.



Concentrate development where infrastructure and development already exists, such as in village growth areas.



Ensure context-sensitive design of development, scaled according to its environment and surroundings.



Promote responsible development that reduces the consumption of land.



Balance the need to accommodate growth in the township while supporting and ensuring that land preservation is a high priority.



Provide the physical capacity for economic growth and investment.



Allow commercial development when it's small-scale in nature, concentrated in village growth areas.



Support the continuing viability of agriculture in all its forms in the township.



Support local small business development and retention, as well as entrepreneurship.



The most valuable resource a municipality has is its land, perhaps because it is the scarcest of its resources; as they say: they aren't making any more of it. Once land is cleared, drained, or built upon, it is very difficult to adapt it to an entirely different use without great cost. There is usually only an immediate financial consideration involved with the decision to develop buildings, but what is built ultimately has long-term impacts to the social life, environment, and fiscal sustainability of the community which may not be immediately evident. Therefore, decisions about when, where and how to permit development must be made practically, as well as with the long-term planning objectives of the township in mind. This chapter is the culmination of many of the growth and development issues examined throughout this plan. It will discuss the growth outlook of the township, the fiscal dimensions to the current land use of the township, and a plan for the future character of land in the community, and generally how it should be prioritized (or not) for development. A closer look at the villages is also considered.

## Growth Outlook and Population Forecasting

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Typically, planning for the future growth needs of a municipality, and how that municipality should anticipate the future disposition of land uses, involves forecasting the township's future population growth. This is usually performed either by using previous years' growth and trending this growth to the future, or adapting regional population modeling to the local level.

However, determining growth trends derived from modeling of geographies smaller than a county are notoriously unreliable. The township does not need to anticipate a future influx of residents because a model says that they will come—residents move to an area ultimately because 1.) the community is desirable for any number of reasons related to quality of life, schools, transportation options, etc., and 2.) because there is available housing already built or in the pipeline.

*Comparing DVRPC's Population Forecasts on the next page from both **Connections 2045**, adopted in 2016, and **Connections 2050**, just adopted in 2021, illustrates the extreme difficulty of forecasting populations of such small geographies. In the span of just five years, total growth forecasted over a 30-35-year period was drastically revised downward for Worcester, indicating the inherent unpredictability, and ultimately the rather limited usefulness, of relying on forecasting to drive municipal policy.*

## MUNICIPAL-LEVEL POPULATION FORECASTS, 2015-2045

<b>Worcester Township, Montgomery County</b>	
Absolute Change (2015-2045): 2,508	
Percent Change (2015-2045): 24.04%	
2015 Population	10,435
2020 Population	10,917
2025 Population	11,396
2030 Population	11,882
2035 Population	12,304
2040 Population	12,650
2045 Population	12,943

## MUNICIPAL-LEVEL POPULATION FORECASTS, 2020-2050

<b>Worcester Township, Montgomery County</b>	
Absolute Change (2020-2050): 1,134	
Percent Change (2020-2050): 10.90%	
2015 Population	10,368
2020 Population	10,436
2025 Population	10,470
2030 Population	10,733
2035 Population	10,962
2040 Population	11,171
2045 Population	11,347
2050 Population	11,502

How much new construction of both housing and nonresidential development (including commercial, industrial, and institutional development) that Worcester could expect in 10-20 years is largely a function of very local conditions on the ground. These conditions include the availability of land both for sale and unpreserved, the impacts of land use regulations, and even the particular motivations of a few select property owners.

Nevertheless, we can safely assume that growth and development *will* indeed happen, both because the township must anticipate that certain “fair share” housing types, particularly high-density housing, will be built through time as required by law, and because it is impossible that all remaining undeveloped land will be restricted from development.

What might be more useful is describing several factors that *could* have an effect on **growth patterns** in the township:

- ◆ **Growth of working from home.** While there will be significant areas of the economy that will always remain “in-person” and require the physical presence of workers and customers, the response of many employers to the COVID-19 pandemic work from home requirements has been to *extend* this benefit beyond the immediate public health crisis. Commuting, and motor vehicle traffic overall, could see a permanent diminishment, which can impact road maintenance funding, as well as obviate the necessity for certain future traffic capacity improvements.
- ◆ **Decline in physical, large-format general retail operations.** With the current dominance of online retail in many sectors, the



region is seeing many large-format retail stores close or convert to other uses, suggesting that general merchandise retail may continue to move online.

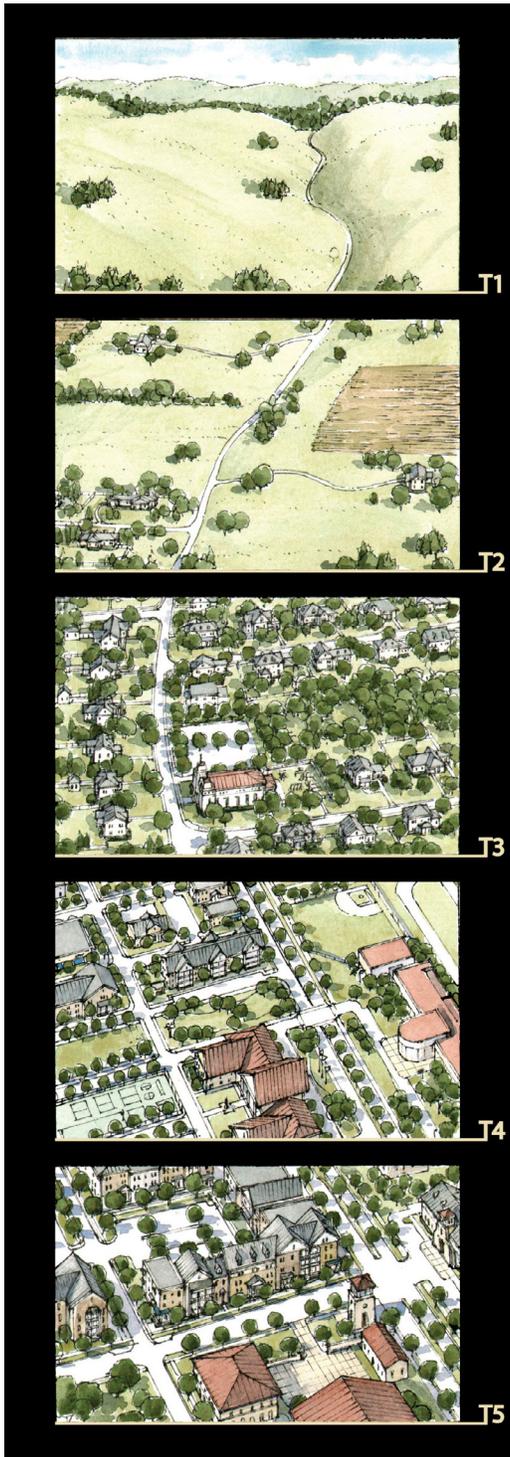
◆ **Continued desire of “main street” shopping and**

**entertainment.** While large-format general merchandise retail has seen declines, the strength of boutique or “main street” shopping and entertainment experiences has endured and is even growing in demand in the region. Worcester’s villages could benefit from this latent demand in the township by developing retail and recreation amenities.

◆ **Continued feasibility of agricultural operations in the township.** The availability of funding for agricultural preservation, and other avenues of revenue for agricultural operations in the township, could determine how many farms ultimately decide to sell and convert to residential development.

◆ **Regional housing market and generally low housing supply.** The continuing low housing supply in the area could push demand high enough in the region, including in the township, to create a very competitive market for developable land.

The rural-to-urban transect of Hayward, CA. Source: Hall Alminana, Inc. and Christopher Illustrations.



## Implementing the Development Spectrum— Right Building, Right Place

When planting a tree, it is important to take into consideration the many conditions that can factor into its growth into a mature, healthy tree: its shape and habit, the amount of water and nutrients it needs, how fast or slow it grows, and how much sunlight it needs. If you plant a young tree right next to your house that could grow into a giant canopy tree, you will have to severely cut it back or remove it entirely within the not-too-distant future. If you plant a sun-loving plant in the shade, it may struggle and remain stunted for a long time, and never reach its full potential. Think of all the lost opportunities you might have had to enjoy its fruit or shade, and the lost effort you took to plant and water it, only to have it never fully thrive its whole life because something about its ultimate location was never right to begin with. The concept of considering all the possible circumstances that could affect the growth of a tree before you plant is called, “Right Tree, Right Place.”

The same goes for a building. A building in its proper place requires a logical relation to its surroundings, proximity to other buildings and uses like it, and a connection to all the appropriate amenities it needs. In a conventional suburban municipality,

development is permitted to sprawl at roughly the same density across a wide-ranging area, with no relation to the local environmental character, specific resources, or amenities.

On the previous page is an example of a “transect”—an illustration of different development “zones”, ranging from least developed to most developed. These are meant to be spatially related to each other along a spectrum, in that rural areas transitions to suburban areas, which transitions to village centers: the least to most intense. The zones of the transect could be thought of as different “habitats” for different people—those who prefer the different levels of intensity represented by the rural to suburban to village center transition, so that walkability, housing diversity, and existing communities are prioritized. Likewise, places of village or suburban density should ideally be near other places like them, and not separated into isolated pods or pockets apart from others. The kinds of development illustrative of the different zones, such as those on the right, are specifically formulated for the scale and character of a community.

For Worcester, implementing the transect by creating desirable forms for each “zone”—in essence a design guideline for each section—would be part of a separate planning and design exercise for the township, which would then be the basis for a larger zoning implementation. However, the kernel of the idea—designating essential “character zones” in the township—could be implemented through this very plan, which is discussed on page 125 under “Future Land Use Place Types.”



## Long Term Fiscal Resilience: The Costs of Land

As we have seen, the land use of Worcester impacts many other realms of community life, including traffic, available housing, and the age and lifestyles of residents. However, it also affects the taxes and quality of life of residents as well. The fiscal impacts of land use affects the size of the local government and the scope of services it can provide, the types of equipment that must be purchased, the number of municipal and school district staff members, the number of students, the size and number of schools that must be maintained, and the tax rates municipalities and school districts must adopt.



One way to analyze these impacts is through a Cost of Community Services (COCS) ratio, which compares the tax and nontax revenues generated by different land uses to the cost of providing services to those same land uses. We will look at four major groups of land uses: residential, commercial, industrial, and farm and open land. Such an analysis can only include properties which are taxable; this will specifically *not* include land owned by governmental entities as well as exempt properties, like nonprofit institutions and school district properties. Studies of this kind which have been produced for communities both in Pennsylvania and





in other states on a relatively regular basis have found that residential land typically costs more than what it provides back in revenues, and will almost certainly cost more to service than all other types of land. Commercial, industrial, and farm and open land, on the other hand, tend to provide more revenue than they require in services. These studies, looking at tax and non-tax revenue and expenditures for both municipal and school district budgets, attribute the types of revenue typically induced by the land use type (e.g. earned income tax to residential, school and municipal real estate tax proportionally to all land use categories, etc.) and likewise attribute the appropriate expenditures typically spent on the land use type (e.g. school district expenditures to residential, road maintenance costs proportionally to all land use types by area, etc.). The result of this analysis for Worcester is as follows:

**Ratio of Revenue to Costs of Community  
Services Attributable to  
Different Land Use Types in Worcester  
(1 : x = \$1 of revenue : \$x of expenditures)**



Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Agricultural
1 : 0.84	1 : 0.26	1 : 0.19	1 : 0.17

As can be seen above, nonresidential and agricultural land uses in the township are **3-5x more fiscally beneficial** than residential lands. This is particularly important when considering where the tax burden currently lies in the township: even though nonresidential and agricultural uses produce much more revenue than they take to be serviced, there is relatively little tax base currently dedicated to these uses. Industrial and commercial uses in the township combined produce only about 5% of real estate taxes, and produce no earned income taxes—in contrast, non-agricultural residential uses account for more than 90% of real estate taxes and 100% of earned income taxes. Finding ways to increase the tax base dedicated to industrial and commercial uses could begin to relieve the pressure on residential properties to provide the vast majority of the tax revenue to the municipality and school district.



What is unusual in Worcester’s case is that, despite still costing more than all other land use types to service, residential land uses in the township are still a net *positive* fiscal benefit, which is relatively rare. There are several factors which may contribute to this situation, such as:

- ◆ Worcester’s very low municipal real estate tax millage (the lowest in the county). The largest cost driver with which most municipalities in the county contend, which Worcester does *not* have, is Police Service, and the attendant staff, equipment, and pension and benefit costs.
- ◆ Reliance on earned income tax revenue to fund 2/3 of the General Fund (which is aided by the township’s having the fifth-highest median household income in the county).
- ◆ Worcester contributes approximately 37% of the total revenue the Methacton School District receives from real estate taxes, but students from Worcester compose only about 25% of the total student body of the district. This itself could be related to Worcester’s older population in general (median age 47.7) compared to Lower Providence Township (median age 40.1), the other constituent member of the school district.

Nonetheless, while the township is in a fiscally positive place right now, we should not assume that it will stay this way forever. Even the most fiscally conservative administration of the township cannot by itself address the structural forces of land use that drive long-term fiscal sustainability. The township will need to consider the impacts of several future forces which will impact Worcester’s fiscal outlook:

- ◆ **Changes in household income trends.** Unlike real estate, people who earn income can move in—or *out*—of the township; additionally, earned income taxes tend to be more vulnerable to downward trends in the economy.
- ◆ **Continued residential land development.** It is possible that continued conversion of cost-effective agricultural land to less-cost-effective residential land will continue to squeeze the fiscal situation of the township, particularly if the residential development is of a type particularly impactful to the bottom line. Typically, larger-lot singles are less cost-effective than smaller-lot, single-family detached or attached.

Population growth, and the attendant growth of residential and nonresidential property to serve that population, is inevitable. As has been discussed earlier, state statute and case law stipulate that a municipality:

- ◆ cannot unduly restrict growth and development;
- ◆ must permit its fair share of high-, medium-, and low-density housing, and
- ◆ likewise must permit all other legal uses, including commercial and industrial uses

Understanding that there is growth that must be expected, we can manage growth conscientiously.

To grow conscientiously, we want to grow in a manner that:

1. *balances growth with the high priority of land preservation;*
2. *maximizes financial productivity of development;*
3. *minimizes future obligations for maintenance and debt financing;*
4. *balances tax base between residential and nonresidential.*

### Montco 2040 Future Land Use Areas in Worcester

**Business Areas** – Business Areas are concentrations of employment-oriented land uses, such as offices, research facilities, and industrial parks. Most office-oriented Business Areas are located near highway interchanges while industrial-oriented ones tend to have a wider range of locations, reflecting older transportation networks based on train lines. Business Areas often generate a lot of general traffic during peak times and freight traffic throughout the day.

**Village Center** – Village Centers are traditional village areas with a mix of retail, institutional, office, and residential uses. Unlike denser town centers, these centers usually have small separate buildings located close to each other, with people walking and driving from use to use. Most older buildings began as residences, although many have been converted to other uses.

**Suburban Residential Area** – Suburban Residential Areas are residential areas which depend on automobiles for transportation and often have extensive landscaping on individual properties. These areas will have a variety of housing types, with single-family detached homes the most prominent type.

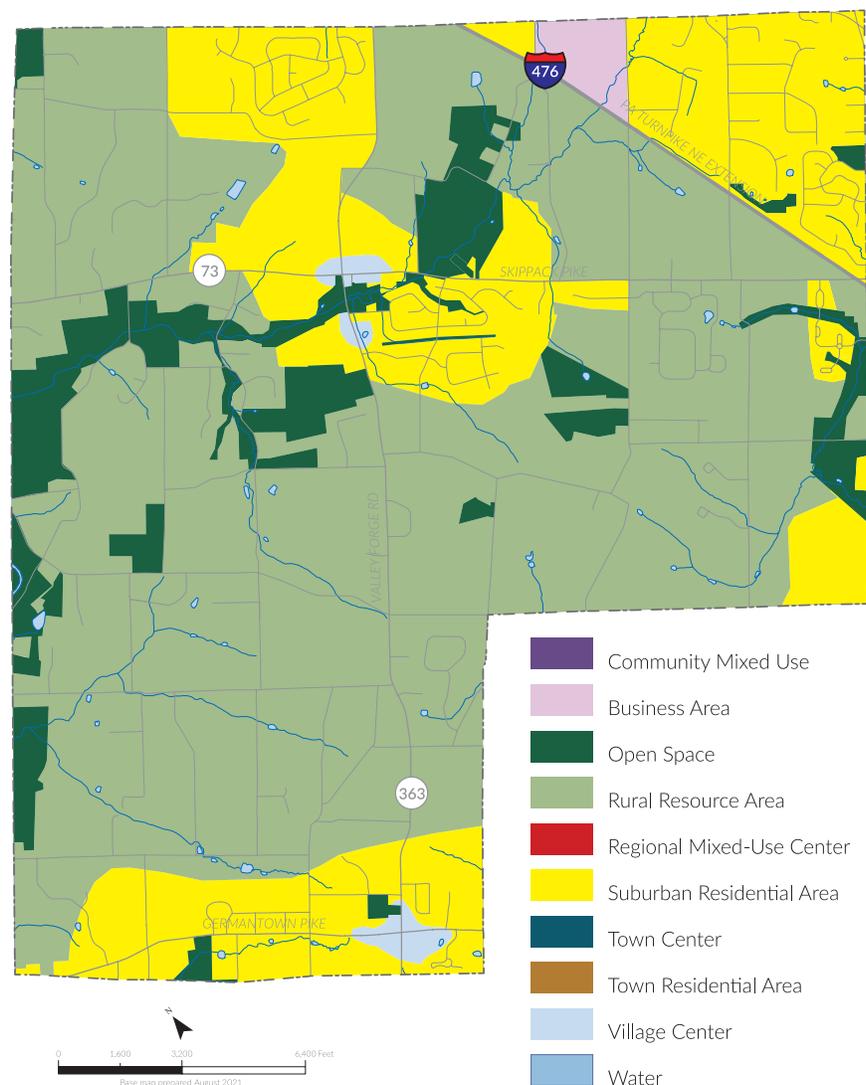
**Rural Resource Area** – Rural Resource Areas consist of open land with a traditional rural appearance that includes farms, small woodlands, some low density residential homes, and rural villages.

**Open Space/Conservation Area** – Open Space and Conservation Areas primarily consist of parks, environmentally-sensitive land, and connecting land, with little, if any, existing development.

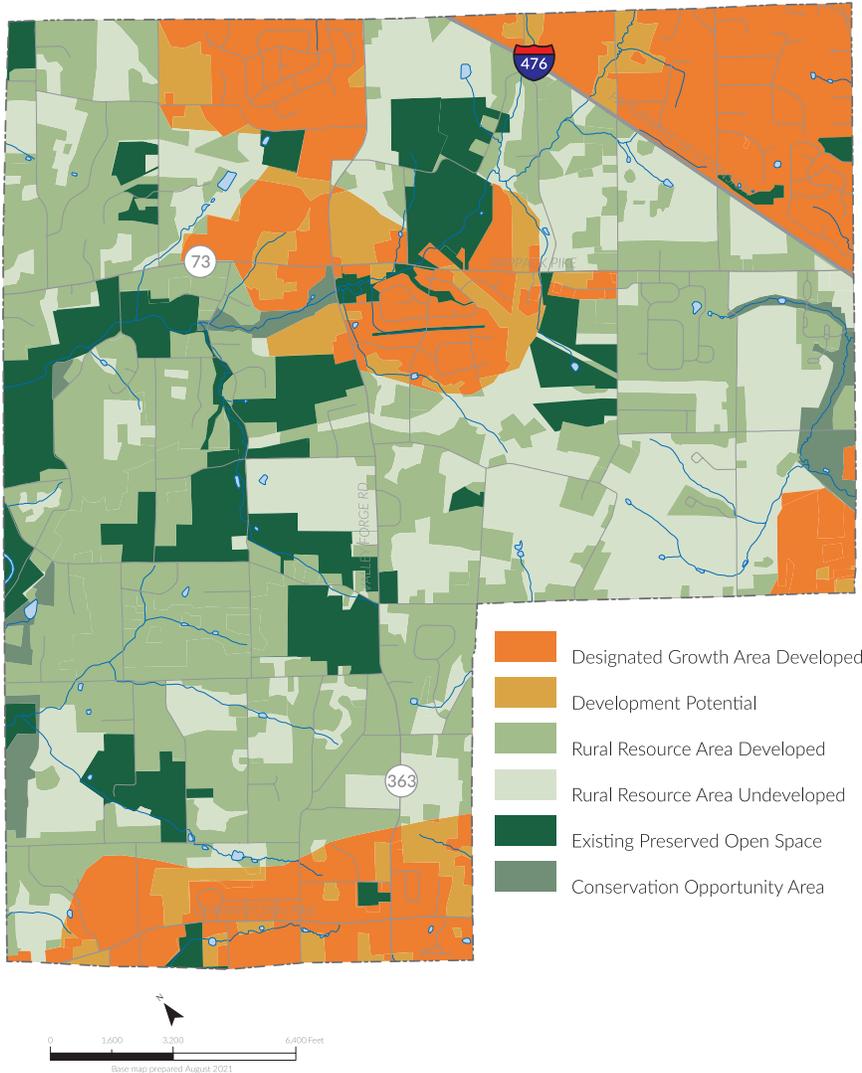
## Developing the Future Growth Management Strategy

To implement this plan, areas of the township must be designated a category that describes the desired future state of the land: how intensely developed it will be, the character of the development, and what kind of impacts can be expected from that development. Typically, this kind of plan is called “the Future Land Use Map”: all future geography-based policy in this comprehensive plan ultimately derives from this map, including future zoning text and map amendments, preservation decisions, and construction projects. Ideally this map should correspond, or at least should consult, the Future Land Use Maps of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. While there should be general consistency with the county’s Future Land Use Maps, the map produced by the Worcester Comprehensive Plan is the controlling one for the township.

### MONTCO 2040’s FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS IN WORCESTER.



MONTCO 2040's GROWTH AND PRESERVATION PLAN  
DESIGNATIONS IN WORCESTER.



**Montco 2040 Growth and Rural Resource Areas in Worcester**

**Developed Land in Growth**

**Areas** - These properties are already developed with homes, businesses, and institutions. Some Developed Land properties, such as a vacant shopping center, old office building, or underutilized industrial site, will redevelop and intensify. In addition, infill development may occur in many different locations.

**Development Potential/Developable Land in Growth**

**Areas** - Developable Land properties are currently farmed, vacant, or open. These properties may see future development, and much of the new development in the county is expected to go on these properties.

**Developed Land and Preserved Farmland in Rural Resource Areas**

- These areas are either developed with low-intensity residential, business, and institutional uses or are permanently preserved as farms. Very little additional development is expected on these properties.

**Undeveloped/Developable Land in Rural Resource Areas**

- These properties, which might be unpreserved farms or wooded properties, should remain undeveloped, although the little development that does occur in the Rural Resource Areas will most likely be on these properties.

**Existing Preserved Open Space**

- These areas are existing federal, state, county, and local parks or properties protected through a conservation easement. Except for park improvements, no new development should occur.

**Conservation Opportunity Areas**

- These environmentally-sensitive areas and greenways should have minimal development, if any.

**Future Land Use Place Types**

Oftentimes the only difference among zoning districts is the size and shape of the lots, and marginal difference between permitted uses. We should move away from the jargon of “land use” and really call them what they are. We propose a way to characterize not a single use or collection of uses, but of the *types of places* they are: this takes a more comprehensive approach to understanding areas and tries to categorize not just the uses, but the *character, style, and surrounding environment* of the development that is either existing or proposed. Following are descriptions of these place types for our Future Land Use/Place Type Plan on page 29.



Walkable, mixed-use development clusters buildings together in such a way as to have them be easily accessible to off-site pedestrians. Frequently, buildings tend to:

- have a smaller footprint
- place parking to the sides or rear of the main building, and
- are oriented to sidewalks or trails, and not to large parking lots



## Village Center

- ◆ **Description:** The most densely-developed areas in the township, villages are centers of social and economic activity in the community. Unlike most places in the township, there are significant infill and redevelopment opportunities present in these locations, since they contain many of the older, cross-road clusters of homes and businesses with reinvestment potential. To further the township's growth objectives, these will also be the sites designated for higher-density residential development, which will be supported by walkable street and trail networks. These areas will likewise support a flexible mix of nonresidential uses and services, catering primarily to local or neighborhood-based demand, which can adapt and change over time.
- ◆ **Character/Intent:** 50% residential, 50% commercial
- ◆ **Primary Uses:** Walkable, small-scale village commercial and high-density residential
- ◆ **Secondary Uses:** Civic and institutional uses, parks and open space, lower-density residential and automobile-oriented commercial.

### Small-Scale Mixed Use and Commercial Development

Due to some of the future forces described above that will impact growth patterns on the township and the region, commercial properties in village areas could see future investment and redevelopment if properly accommodated. Supporting compatible commercial development will likewise relieve some of the burden on residential properties and taxpayers.

A few ways the township can increase compatible commercial uses involve zoning and policy changes which permit a wider variety and configuration of commercial uses. However, this will need to be done carefully: for Worcester's villages, it is highly desirable that commercial uses be *small scale* in nature. Case law suggests that, while municipalities are required to provide for every legal and reasonable use, communities can still limit the *size* and *scale* of such uses and development. Therefore, it is desirable to continue to restrict "big box" style retail and conventional shopping center development through zoning. Additionally, the township may want to take a more comprehensive look at current commercial district regulations to ensure they are up to date with best practices concerning village development and are adequately business-friendly. Greater liaising with the business community in the area could also give the township additional insight as to how to increase investment in these village areas, as well as to support entrepreneurship as well.

## Suburban Residential

- ◆ **Description:** This is the most common type of residential development currently in Worcester, consisting of single-family homes and wider, automobile-oriented streets. Generally only infill or redevelopment will continue to happen in these areas, as they are already at their built-out stage.

- ◆ **Character/Intent:** 95% residential, 5% nonresidential
- ◆ **Primary Uses:** Single-family residential
- ◆ **Secondary Uses:** Parks and open space, neighborhood-based institutional uses, compatible mixed-use

### Regional Commercial/Industrial Center

- ◆ **Description:** Areas catering to the regional demand, rather than local or neighborhood-based demand, for commercial or business activity, including light industrial uses, such as manufacturing, processing, warehousing and distribution, research and development, and office parks. These areas will have access to public water and sewer.
- ◆ **Character/Intent:** 100% nonresidential
- ◆ **Primary Uses:** Light industrial uses, research and development, professional offices
- ◆ **Secondary Uses:** Regional institutional uses



### Rural Residential & Agricultural Areas

- ◆ **Description:** Areas which are primarily composed of existing low-density, large-lot residential and both preserved and unreserved agricultural properties which are situated away from the three village centers of Worcester. Further development of these areas should leave a significant amount of surrounding open space, should involve minimal infrastructure investment, and generally not be served by public water and sewer.
- ◆ **Character/Intent:** 95% residential and agriculture 5% agriculture-related commercial
- ◆ **Primary Uses:** Single-family residential, agriculture
- ◆ **Secondary Uses:** Parks and open space, neighborhood-based institutional uses



### Retaining Agricultural Operations

Worcester residents value the rural character of the township, most significantly demonstrated by the number and variety of agricultural properties. As has been discussed earlier, agricultural preservation programs through the state and county can contribute to preservation efforts in the township. However, there are several situations in which existing agricultural properties would either not qualify or be very competitive for these programs, and other circumstances where property owners may not be interested in dealing with the restrictions involved in maintaining an agricultural conservation easement on their property.

In situations where conservation is not desired or feasible, there are other ways the township can help keep agriculture viable in the community.



The township can enable additional business ventures on these types of properties which can keep them financially viable when more traditional agricultural activities may become increasingly difficult to maintain. One of these avenues is agritourism, in which the agricultural properties invite customers and visitors to participate in agricultural-related services, activities and events. These activities can include explicitly permitting, with conditions, such things as pick-your-own operations, seasonal events like fall festivals, private social gatherings, and varied other education or entertainment attractions.

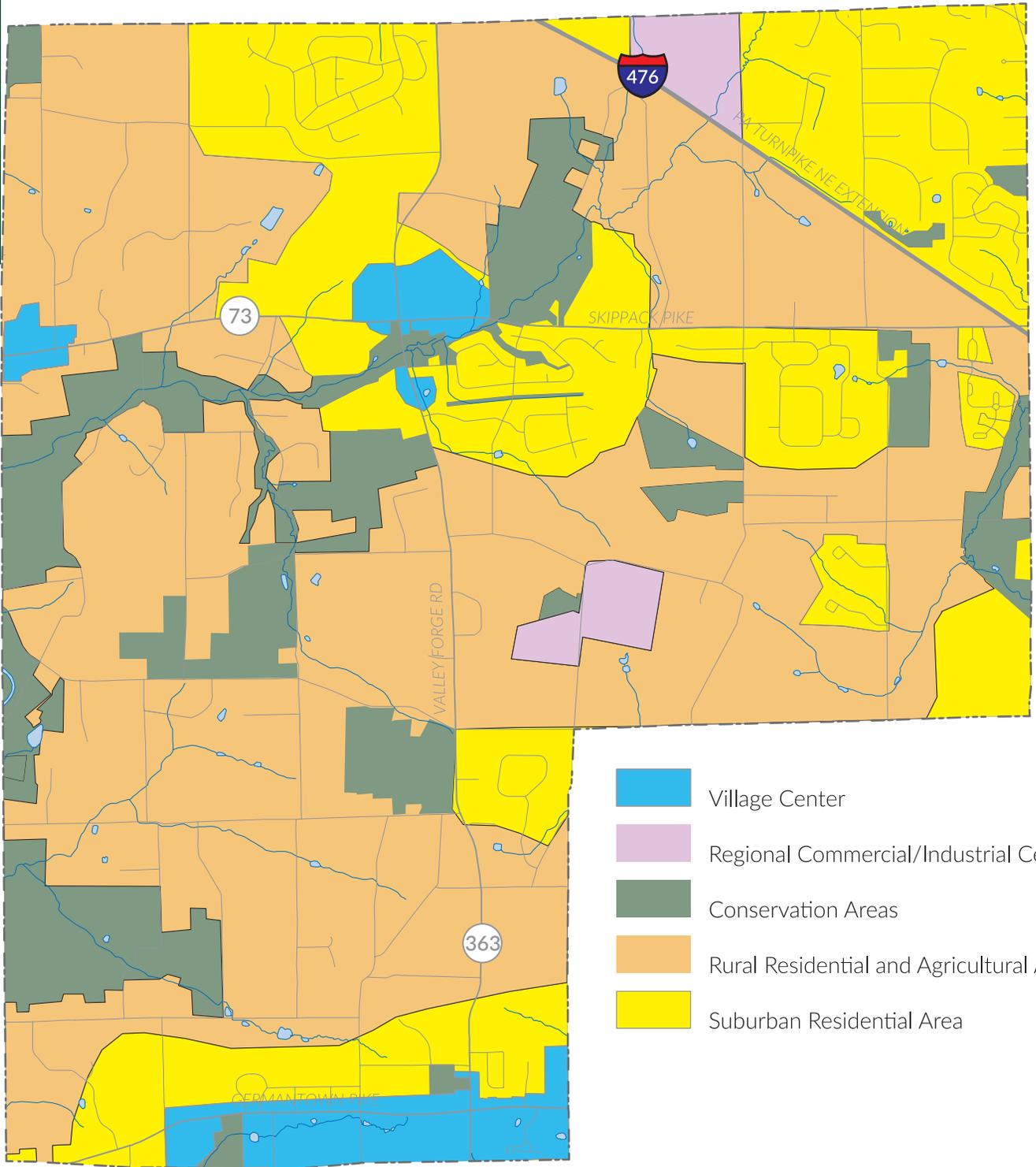
Understandably, concerns may arise as to the compatibility of such activities with nearby residential uses, whether they be noise, traffic or parking impacts. However, many, if not all, of these kinds of concerns can be alleviated through zoning and other land use regulations, which can include limitations placed on kinds and duration of activities, required buffering, and nuisance controls.

### Conservation Areas

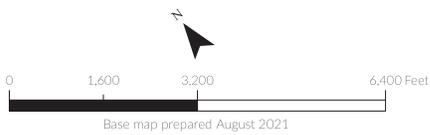
- ◆ **Description:** Lands which are already conserved, or open and undeveloped lands which may be high priorities for conservation efforts in the future. Such lands may have minimal existing development, usually in the form of an estate home and other outbuildings.
- ◆ **Character/Intent:** N/A
- ◆ **Primary Uses:** Parks and preserved natural open spaces, preserved agriculture
- ◆ **Secondary Uses:** Low-density single family detached (no longer developable).



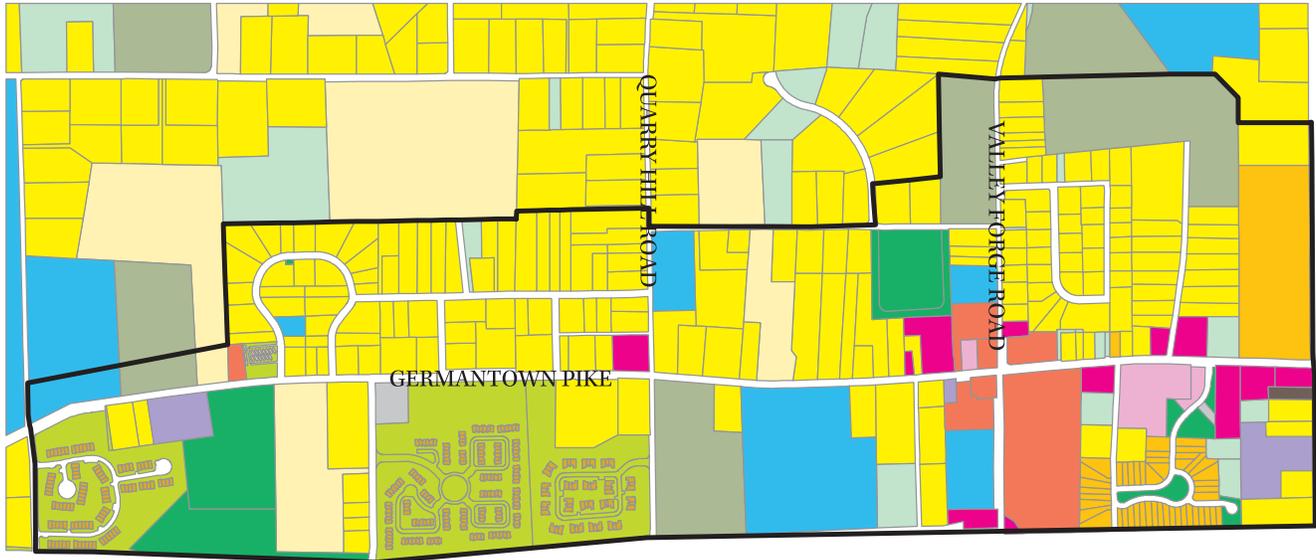
# FUTURE LAND USE/PLACE TYPE PLAN



-  Village Center
-  Regional Commercial/Industrial Centers
-  Conservation Areas
-  Rural Residential and Agricultural Areas
-  Suburban Residential Area



A CLOSER LOOK: THE VILLAGES  
Fairview Village



Existing Land Use (as of July 2021)

- |                        |               |                    |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Multifamily            | Mixed Use     | Undeveloped        |
| Single-Family Attached | Retail        | Public Open Space  |
| Twin/Duplex            | Office        | Private Open Space |
| Mobile Home Park       | Industrial    | Agriculture        |
| Single-Family Detached | Institutional |                    |
| Country Residence      | Utilities     |                    |



This village historically developed along Germantown Pike, with additional development along Valley Forge and Trooper Roads. The key commercial development is clustered at the eastern edge of the village along Germantown Pike, from Valley Forge Road moving east to the township line with East Norriton. This development includes a small shopping center, gas station, automotive services, small professional offices, a sports club, and a dollar store. While the *Montco2040* Future Land Use Map only includes the Valley Forge/Germantown intersection area as a “Village Center,” there is significant justification to designate much of Germantown Pike in this area as a Village Center. Much of the township’s densest existing housing is also located here, including four single-family attached developments south of Germantown Pike. Because this is where the recently amended MR Overlay District is also located, future multifamily developments could further increase the number of residents in this part of the village. However, despite the significant number of existing and potential higher-density homes in this area, there are few pedestrian connections between these developments or to other parts of the village. Few sidewalks also exist

within the main commercial center. The commercial areas may have a latent demand of users in these developments if the township were to focus on implementing pedestrian



SOURCE: NEARMAP.

connections. The prospect of opening up access to this area could also begin the process of revitalizing the commercial spaces and improving the public realm of the street. The township could also further study the prospect of expanding the opportunities for commercial and retail uses in this area. The proposed visual provided below gives an idea of what a potential placemaking opportunity could look like in the village: public investment to stimulate an underutilized space here could generate investment and interest from others to this area, while also emphasizing the township's identity with signage and other design motifs.



## Goals of the Cedars Village Overlay District

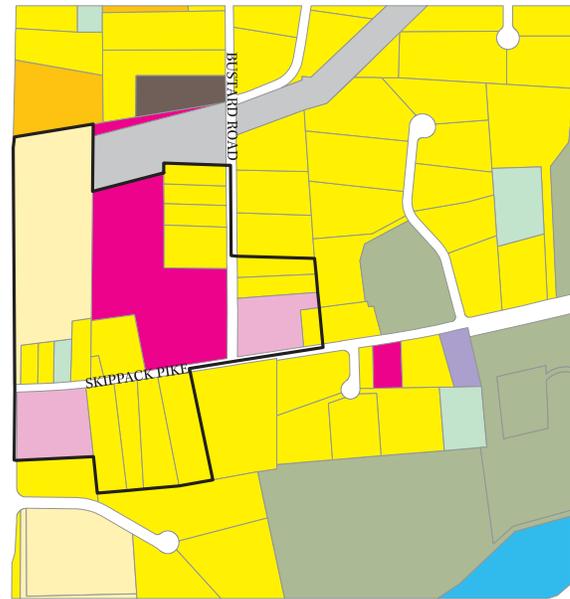
1. *Preserve and reuse the historic structures in Cedars Village, and provide for renovation and new construction that complement the existing desirable village characteristics of Cedars Village to the greatest extent possible.*
2. *Permit a variety of uses that can be accommodated by existing types of structures, lot sizes, and other physical and visual attributes of properties in the district.*
3. *Encourage development that is in keeping with the character of Worcester Township.*
4. *Prohibit development of retail commercial uses that are typically high-volume-traffic generators, have a strip-type or highway-oriented commercial appearance, contain excessive amounts of paved areas or numerous access points, have incongruous architectural styles, or do not contribute to the historic character of the village.*
5. *Encourage shared use of access driveways to reduce the total number of driveways, minimize the number of new driveways, and provide more efficient and safer access and traffic flow.*
6. *Reduce the visual impact of parking and encourage adjoining properties to share parking.*
7. *Provide safe and sufficient pedestrian access from along roadways and from parking areas to the various permitted uses in the village, and encourage the inclusion of trail connections to and throughout the village.*
8. *Minimize visual and functional conflicts between residential and nonresidential uses within the district, and protect abutting residential districts from adverse impacts.*
9. *Provide for public gathering space and public open space.*
10. *Provide for a transfer of development rights receiving area from rural and agricultural preservation areas of the township into the village, to reduce development pressures on the rural and preservation areas of the township and provide additional development options in the villages, consistent with the goals above.*

SOURCE: CEDARS OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICT ORDINANCE

## CEDARS

Existing Land Use (as of July 2021)

- Multifamily
- Single-Family Attached
- Twin/Duplex
- Mobile Home Park
- Single-Family Detached
- Country Residence
- Mixed Use
- Retail
- Office
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Utilities
- Undeveloped
- Public Open Space
- Private Open Space
- Agriculture



Of the three main villages of the township, Cedars is the least developed. The majority of what is mapped above as Cedars is residential in nature. The main nonresidential property which puts Cedars “on the map” is 3401 Skippack Pike, which contains numerous small boutique shops, restaurants, and personal service businesses, which are contained within a number of historic buildings within a picturesque setting. Since the surrounding area is relatively low density housing and there are no sidewalks or trails connecting the village, the only way to access the area is by car. Beyond 3401 Skippack Pike, other artisanal and small-scale commercial uses are permitted within the area, as well as a few additional residential uses, through the Cedars Village Overlay District. The township adopted this zoning district in 2012 to foster the further development of the village that would be compatible with its rural surroundings. However, since the ordinance was adopted, the overlay has not yet been utilized by operators seeking to further develop the village. Since trail connections to the area are anticipated by the ordinance, we recommend that the township further investigate developing regional trails connecting to this village. Also, the township may wish to explore how to further incentivize the usage of TDRs in this overlay, which are currently permitted, but may not be structured as effectively as they could be. Additionally, in reference to the illustration of a potential improvements on the next page, vehicular access to 3401 Skippack Pike could be altered so as to create a safer and more inviting entrance for both pedestrians and vehicles, which also offering a more aesthetic frontage.

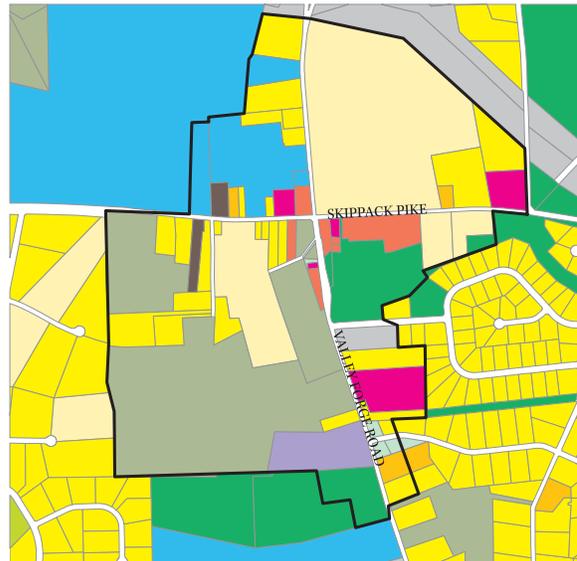


3401 Skippack Pike, Cedars

## CENTER POINT VILLAGE

Existing Land Use (as of July 2021)

- Multifamily
- Single-Family Attached
- Twin/Duplex
- Mobile Home Park
- Single-Family Detached
- Country Residence
- Mixed Use
- Retail
- Office
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Utilities
- Undeveloped
- Public Open Space
- Private Open Space
- Agriculture



Centered at the intersection of Valley Forge Road and Skippack Pike, Center Point Village has received the most planning attention as of late from the township, culminating in the master plan *A Vision for Center Point*, which was adopted in 2014 and amended in 2017. The Final Land Use Bubble on the next page, which includes the amendments to it from 2017, envisioned a mixed-use village center, which would include higher-density residential and significant preserved open space secured through transfers of development rights. While the plan still technically remains

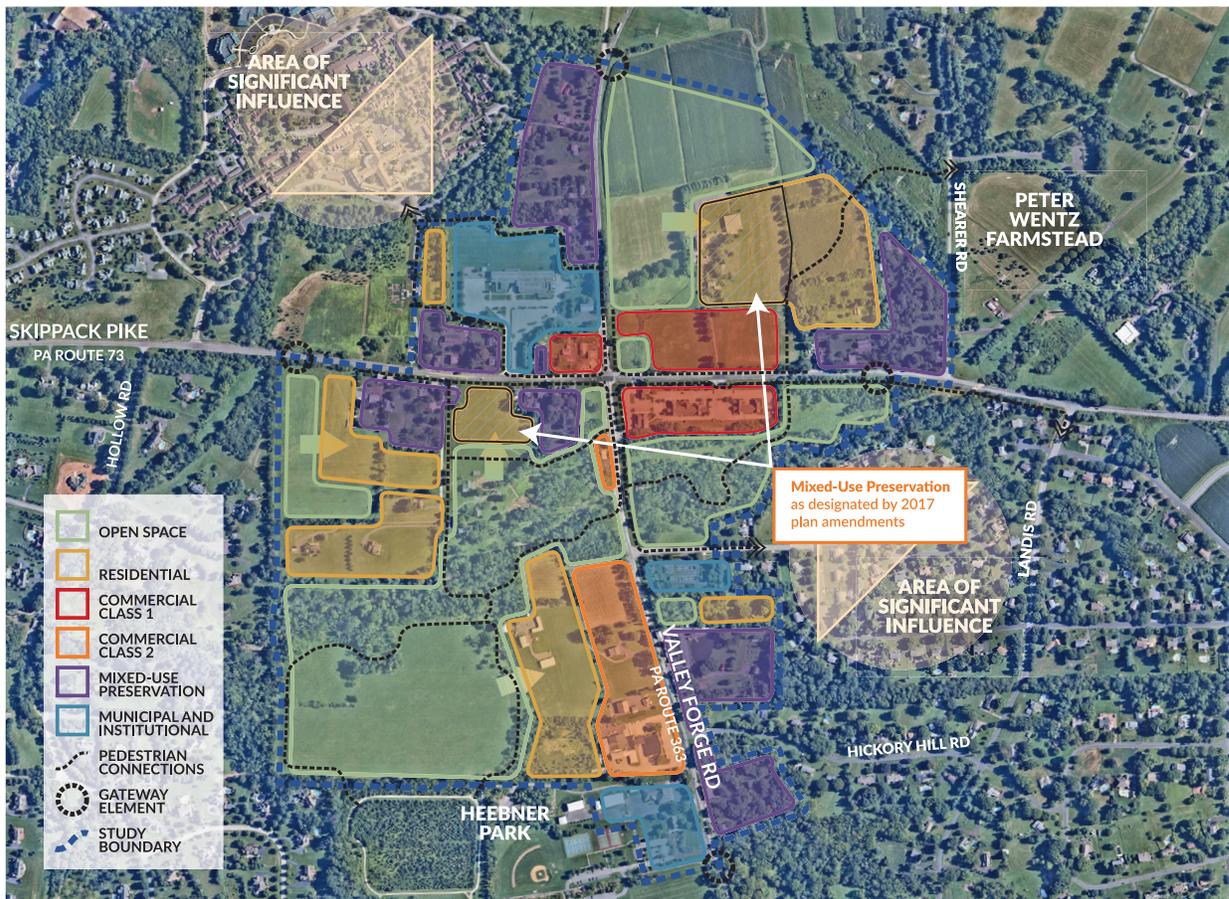
## Recommendations, Best Policies and Practices for Center Point Village from *A Vision for Center Point*

1. Create a mapped Center Point Village zoning district.
2. Include an institutional zoning designation within the village zoning district to better manage the future of lands currently used by the school district and township.
3. Allow a wider range of residential and nonresidential uses within the village zoning district.
4. Permit a base density of 2.5 dwelling units per acre on land designated for residential uses.
5. Establish density bonuses and incentives that are tied to desired improvements, such as transferable development rights.
6. Pursue an aggressive traffic planning and calming program that will protect quality of life in the village.
7. Ensure public sewer facilities are available to the entire village area.
8. Create a pedestrian circulation system that extends throughout the entire village area.

adopted township policy, the zoning revisions required to permit the various development schemes were not adopted by the township.

Nonetheless, we believe that there is still value in the existing *A Vision for Center Point* plan, although it would likely need to be slightly updated to reflect current circumstances. The idea of a mixed-use village center at Center Point Village is still in keeping with previous and current township planning goals, as well as with the goals of this comprehensive plan. We recommend that the township revisit the planning goals and process of the original plan, and reconsider its options to see if there are remaining pieces of the original zoning scheme which are salvageable, and to renegotiate points of division which may still exist in the community.

## FINAL LAND USE BUBBLE PLAN



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1

*Plan for a balanced land-use mix for fiscal sustainability, for the township and for the residential tax base.*

- a Adequately zone for an appropriate mix of both residential and nonresidential uses.
- 

2

*Concentrate development where infrastructure and development already exists, such as in village growth areas.*

- a Promote and incentivize development in specific growth areas and other areas where existing infrastructure is available and has additional capacity.
- 
- b Revisit and update the Center Point Village Vision plan and proposed overlay to meet the township's current needs.
- 
- c Promote the usage of the existing Cedars Village Overlay, and investigate potential changes to encourage its use. **Since its adoption, the Cedars Overlay has not been used by any property owners.**
- 
- d Consider future planning focused on Fairview Village.
- 
- e Update the Township Zoning Ordinance and SALDO to align with the Future Land Use Plan, policies and recommendations in this plan.
- 

3

*Ensure context-sensitive design of development, scaled according to its environment and surroundings.*

- a Restrict undesirable or inappropriate development.
- 
- b Support implementation of design guidance recommendations of the **Community Character** chapter.
- 
- c Consider creating design standards for new commercial development.
- 

4

*Promote responsible development that reduces the consumption of land.*

- a When using the Conservation Subdivision process, encourage the use of cluster development or other methods which reduce the consumption of land.
- 
- b Support wider use of Transfers of Development Rights (TDR), as discussed in further detail in the **Preservation, Open Space & Parks** chapter.
-

5

*Balance the need to accommodate growth in the township while supporting and ensuring that land preservation is a high priority.*

- a Consider incentives and bonuses for increased land preservation in land development.
- 

6

*Provide the physical capacity for economic growth and investment.*

- a Support branding and placemaking recommendations of **Community Character** chapter.
- 

7

*Allow commercial development when it's small-scale in nature.*

- a Continue to restrict “big box” style retail and shopping center development.
  - b Enable more small-scale and mixed-use development of commercial uses, emphasizing incremental changes and improvements over time, versus large-scale redevelopments or transitions.
- 

8

*Support the continuing viability of agriculture in all its forms in the township.*

- a Consider zoning and other incentives which permit additional, compatible accessory uses and businesses on agricultural properties.
  - b Investigate further studies regarding the potential growth of agritourism in the township.
- 

9

*Support local small business development and retention, as well as entrepreneurialism.*

- a Continue to maintain a liaison to local chambers of commerce, with an eye to expand outreach to potential local businesses to locate to Worcester.
-



# Appendix 1

## *Recommendations Implementation Matrix*

Topic	Recommendations	Potential Implementation Partners	Priority Level
Transportation & Mobility	Support the completion of the Regional Trails which are proposed within and around the township.	Circuit Coalition, Montgomery County, adjacent municipalities	High
	Implement road improvement projects as indicated in this plan and in Act 209 Capital Improvements Plan.		High
	Complete trail projects as listed in this plan, as well as those indicated in Worcester Community Greenways Plan. Update Greenways Plan to account for restrictions to PECO rights-of-way.	MCPC	High
	Support the integration of best practices in land developments regarding street design and the provision of trails and sidewalks, when appropriate.	Private developers	High
	Begin process of preparing for 2023 update to Act 209 Study.		Medium
	Partner with Greater Valley Forge TMA and/or Partnership TMA to implement travel demand management.	Greater Valley Forge TMA, Partnership TMA	Medium
	Consider changes to street design standards, including those within the SALDO, to align with recommendations in this plan.		Medium
	Create a Township Traffic Calming Policy.		Medium
	Create Township Complete Streets Policy.		Medium
	Reduce travel demand by focusing on nonmotorized transportation options.		Low
Support programs like “Safe Routes to School,” childhood health initiatives, Bike Rodeos, and other initiatives that encourage physical activity in public places like walking, running, and biking.	Methacton School District, private schools	Low	

Community Character	Implement placemaking improvements, such as gateway and parklet improvement projects to revive and activate important but underutilized spaces.	Private developers	High
	Implement recommendations of study commissioned for the municipal curative amendment concerning multifamily housing.		High
	Permit accessory dwelling units more widely in the township; consider more straight-forward permitting for ADU housing specifically for seniors.		High
	Routinely review potential fair share buildouts as determined by the existing zoning, and adjust zoning as appropriate.		Medium
	Connect residents with service providers or organizations who provide aging adult services.	Montgomery County Office of Aging and Adult Services	Medium
	Create design guidelines that residents can implement on their own properties when renovating or developing their housing.	Worcester Planning Commission, residents	Low
	Encourage community-led initiatives by creating a mechanism to solicit and permit interactive neighborhood projects.	Community groups	Low
Preservation, Open Space & Parks	Create and support a preservation decision-making process which is transparent, data-driven, and based on documented justification.		High
	Consider amendments to the Conservation Subdivision and open space development regulations, which could include, among other things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing the quality and usability of open space preserved in land developments.</li> <li>Requiring the use of Conservation Subdivisions in more parts of the township.</li> <li>Require scenic assessments and ensure building setbacks from major scenic roads.</li> <li>Limit structural stormwater BMPs allowable in required open spaces.</li> </ul>	Worcester Planning Commission, MCPC	High
	Determine what level of historic protections with which the township may be comfortable enacting through ordinance amendments.	Worcester Planning Commission	High
	Consider creating dedicated funding sources for open space preservation, such as implementing an Open Space Tax.		High
	Assure that access to preserved private property, as well as to sensitive ecological elements of preserved property, is appropriately limited or restricted.		High
	Provide greater guidance or incentives for HOA-owned common open space areas to be maintained more sustainably and in a more naturalized state.	HOAs, community groups	High

Preservation, Open Space & Parks	Support the increased usage of TDR in the township by, among other things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adding additional areas of the township as “receiving areas” to receive additional development rights, as appropriate. These receiving areas should generally be restricted to village and designated-growth areas.</li> <li>• Consider using “bonuses” to incentivize the usage of TDRs in certain areas of the township, such as the TDR-bonus at Fairview Village MR Overlay District, in which a single TDR has 3x the unit value than elsewhere in the township.</li> <li>• Increase public awareness and outreach on the TDR program.</li> </ul>	Private developers	Medium
	Prioritize connectivity of new land developments’ open space to existing adjacent neighborhoods and natural areas.		Medium
	Consider ordinance amendments which require the provision of specific recreational facilities and amenities during the land development process, and permit alternative compliance through the payment of fees in lieu of such facilities.		Medium
	Prioritize the ability of residents to walk or bike to township parks, especially through sidewalk or trail improvements.		Medium
	When the township is a party to an agricultural preservation deal, consider reserving trail easements or additional reservations for public use.		Medium
	Consider hiring an Open Space Consultant. Such an advisory board would be composed of individuals, appointed by the Board of Supervisors, who could advise the Supervisors on matters relating to acquiring or preserving open space. A consultant could similarly advise the township on open space issues.		Low
	Commission a review and analyze the suitability of current recreational facilities and future recreational needs by a recreational professional.		Low
	Environmental & Infrastructure	Review zoning and land development ordinances to identify areas to improve natural resource preservation and stewardship.	Worcester Planning Commission, MCPC
Prioritize streambank restoration and riparian buffer planting projects in the township for potential implementation.			High
Preserve open space with habitat or natural resource conservation value, as described in the Preservation, Open Space & Parks chapter.			High
Review existing floodplain, wetland, riparian corridor, and steep slopes regulations and practices and recommend ways to strengthen protection of these resources from future development.		Worcester Planning Commission	High

Environmental & Infrastructure	Continue to enforce floodplain, wetland, riparian corridor, and steep slopes regulations.		High
	Implement mitigation measures to address the township's MS4 planning requirements.		High
	Incentivize and encourage the use of green infrastructure and low-impact development practices across the township, in lieu of more traditional means.	Private developers, residents	High
	Review existing inventory of detention basins for their effectiveness and need for modifications and/or retrofitting reflecting current best practices.		High
	Inventory and audit existing stormwater management structures in the township, starting with data that has been compiled by Penn State Extension. Consider a comprehensive planning effort to address neighborhood-scale stormwater issues.	Penn State Extension	Medium
	Maintain current sewer and water services areas, as shown on the maps on pages 102 and 103.		Medium
	Focus on sewer capacity improvements to areas where the township intends to accommodate growth.		Medium
	Produce study to identify and address failing or malfunctioning septic systems in the township to provide public sewer in the interests of public health.		Medium
	Consider commissioning a Township Sustainability Plan or Sustainability Audit.		Medium
	Improve tree canopy coverage through tree-planting programs or enhanced tree-planting requirements in land development review.	Worcester Planning Commission	Medium
	Consider implementing ordinance provisions which could incentivize the use of green building practices, such as conformance to LEED standards. Support implementation of energy efficiency in new commercial and residential building construction, as well as the deployment of infrastructure that increases access to electric vehicle charging ports.	Private developers, residents	Low
	Consider conducting an energy efficiency audit of existing township facilities and develop a plan to address inefficiencies and the feasibility of on-site alternative energy production, such as the use of solar, wind, or geothermal facilities.		Low

Governance & Public Services	Implement metrics tracking for the comprehensive plan's objectives.		High
	Establish periodic self-reviews of municipal ordinances to ensure that they are up to date and defensible in the event of legal challenges.		High
	Explore available regional planning options at the township's disposal.	MCPC, adjacent municipalities	High
	Track customer or resident complaints and service requests.		High
	Continue practice of township-school district liaising, to regularly meet with school district board or administration keeping both entities "in the loop" on important issues impacting the community.	Methacton School District	Medium
	Continue to meet with the school district to review comprehensive plan recommendations and discuss future land use and budgetary impacts.	Methacton School District	Medium
	Create a timeline for periodic reviews of whether a police services study may be warranted.		Low
	Consider purchasing property to house young adults who would like to work with the Volunteer Fire Company.	Worcester Volunteer Fire Company	Low
Land Use & Growth Management	Adequately zone for an appropriate mix of both residential and nonresidential uses.		High
	Restrict undesirable or inappropriate development.		High
	Update the Township Zoning Ordinance and SALDO to align with the Future Land Use Plan, policies and recommendations in this plan.		High
	Consider incentives and bonuses for increased land preservation in land development		High
	Continue to restrict "big box" style retail and shopping center development.		High
	Revisit and update the Center Point Village Vision plan and proposed overlay to meet the township's current needs.		High
	Support wider use of Transfers of Development Rights (TDR), as discussed in further detail in the Preservation, Open Space & Parks chapter.	Private developers, residents	High
	Promote and incentivize development in specific growth areas and other areas where existing infrastructure is available and has additional capacity.		High
	When using the Conservation Subdivision process, encourage the use of cluster development or other methods which reduce the consumption of land.		High
	Support branding and placemaking recommendations of Community Character chapter.		High
	Enable more small-scale and mixed-use development of commercial uses, emphasizing incremental changes and improvements over time, versus large-scale redevelopments or transitions.	Business owners, private developers	High
	Consider future planning focused on Fairview Village.		Medium

Land Use & Growth Management	Support implementation of design guidance recommendations of the Community Character chapter.		Medium
	Consider zoning and other incentives which permit additional, compatible accessory uses and businesses on agricultural properties.	Worcester Planning Commission	Medium
	Consider creating design standards for new commercial development.	Worcester Planning Commission, MCPC	Medium
	Promote the usage of the existing Cedars Village Overlay, and investigate potential changes to encourage its use.	Business owners, private developers	Medium
	Investigate further studies regarding the potential growth of agritourism in the township.	Penn State Extension, MCPC	Low
	Continue to maintain a liaison to local chambers of commerce, with an eye to expand outreach to potential local businesses to locate to Worcester.	Chambers of Commerce	Low



## **Appendix 2**

### *Public Outreach Survey and Results*



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE SURVEY

**1. Why did you move to, or locate your business in, Worcester Township?**

**2. What do you like MOST and LEAST about living/working in Worcester Township?**

WHAT I LIKE MOST....

WHAT I LIKE LEAST....

**3. Which ONE recreational facility does Worcester Township need more of? (select one only)**

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. athletic fields & courts | 4. trails   |
| 2. natural open spaces      | 5. other _____  |
| 3. playgrounds & tot-lots   | 6. nothing is needed, the existing recreational facilities are adequate |

**4. Which ONE commercial service would you like to see in Worcester Township? (select one only)**

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. convenience store      | 5. professional offices   |
| 2. general retail         | 6. restaurants  |
| 3. personal service shops | 7. other _____  |
| 4. pharmacy               | 8. nothing is needed, the existing commercial services are adequate |

**5. Which ONE roadway in Worcester Township is in the most need of improvement? (select one only)**

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Germantown Pike | 4. Valley Forge Road                                     |
| 2. Morris Road     | 5. other _____   |
| 3. Skippack Road   | 6. nothing is needed, the existing roadways are adequate |

**6. How do you get news about the Township? (select all that apply)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Township newsletter                 | 4. Township website                             |
| 2. Township "Peek At The Week" e-mails | 5. Township Board of Supervisors meeting videos |
| 3. Township social media accounts      | 6. other _____                                  |



**7. Please rate the PRESENT quality of the following in Worcester Township...**

	poor	fair	good	excellent	no opinion
ambulance service	1	2	3	4	n/a
athletic fields & courts	1	2	3	4	n/a
cellular service	1	2	3	4	n/a
fire service	1	2	3	4	n/a
housing affordability	1	2	3	4	n/a
housing choices	1	2	3	4	n/a
internet service	1	2	3	4	n/a
natural resources	1	2	3	4	n/a
noise control	1	2	3	4	n/a
overall quality of life	1	2	3	4	n/a
playgrounds & tot lots	1	2	3	4	n/a
police service	1	2	3	4	n/a
preserved open spaces	1	2	3	4	n/a
retail/commercial services	1	2	3	4	n/a
roadway conditions	1	2	3	4	n/a
stormwater management	1	2	3	4	n/a
sewer/septic systems	1	2	3	4	n/a
taxes	1	2	3	4	n/a
traffic volume	1	2	3	4	n/a
trails	1	2	3	4	n/a
water systems	1	2	3	4	n/a

**8. Looking to the FUTURE, Worcester Township needs to focus more effort on improving... (select all that apply)**

- |                             |                                |                           |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. ambulance service        | 8. natural resources           | 15. roadway conditions    |
| 2. athletic fields & courts | 9. noise control               | 16. stormwater management |
| 3. cellular service         | 10. overall quality of life    | 17. sewer/septic systems  |
| 4. fire service             | 11. playgrounds & tot lots     | 18. taxes                 |
| 5. housing affordability    | 12. police service             | 19. traffic volume        |
| 6. housing choices          | 13. preserved open spaces      | 20. trails                |
| 7. internet service         | 14. retail/commercial services | 21. water systems         |

**9. From the list in question 8, what are the FIVE most important issues in the Township today?**

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ |          |

**10. Some OPTIONAL questions...**

- How many years have you lived in, or operated a business in, Worcester Township? \_\_\_\_\_
- If you live in Worcester Township, do you rent or own your home? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many people live in your household? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!**

Please return your survey to the below address before **Friday, June 26**.  
We'll post survey results to the Township website soon thereafter!

Worcester Township, Post Office Box 767, Worcester, PA 19490



**WORCESTER TOWNSHIP**

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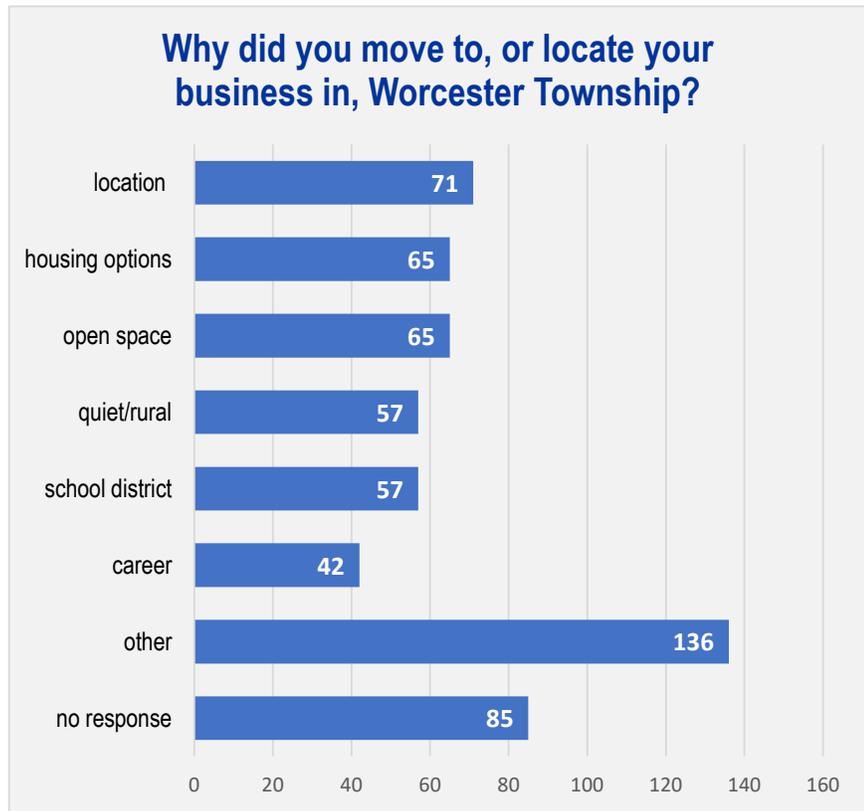
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE  
2020 COMMUNITY SURVEY**

**RESULTS**  
**July 27, 2020**

**QUESTION 1... Why did you move to, or locate your business in, Worcester Township?**

location	71	12.3%
open space	65	11.2%
housing options	65	11.2%
quiet/rural	57	9.9%
school district	57	9.9%
career	42	7.3%
other	136	23.5%
no response	85	14.7%
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

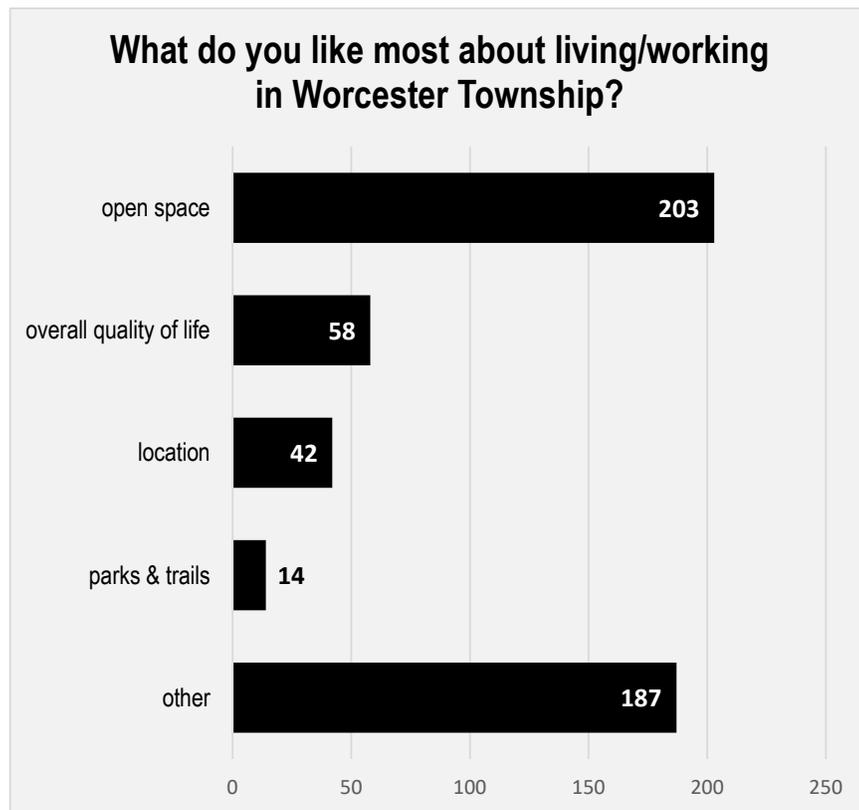
other... multiple responses (88)



**QUESTION 2a... What do you like most about living/working in Worcester Township?**

open space	203	35.1%
overall quality of life	58	10.0%
location	42	7.3%
parks & trails	14	2.4%
other	187	32.4%
no response	74	12.8%
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

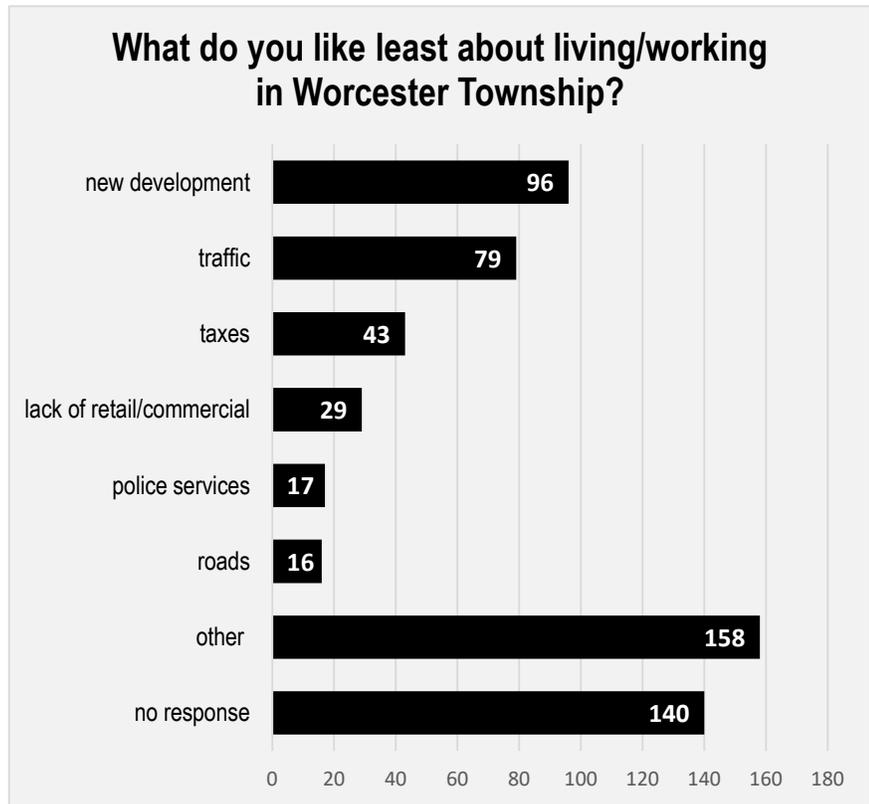
other... multiple responses (67), low taxes (7), school district (5)



**QUESTION 2b... What do you like least about living/working in Worcester Township?**

new development	96	16.6%
traffic	79	13.7%
taxes	43	7.4%
lack of retail/commercial	29	5.0%
police services	17	2.9%
roads	16	2.8%
other	158	27.3%
no response	140	24.2%
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

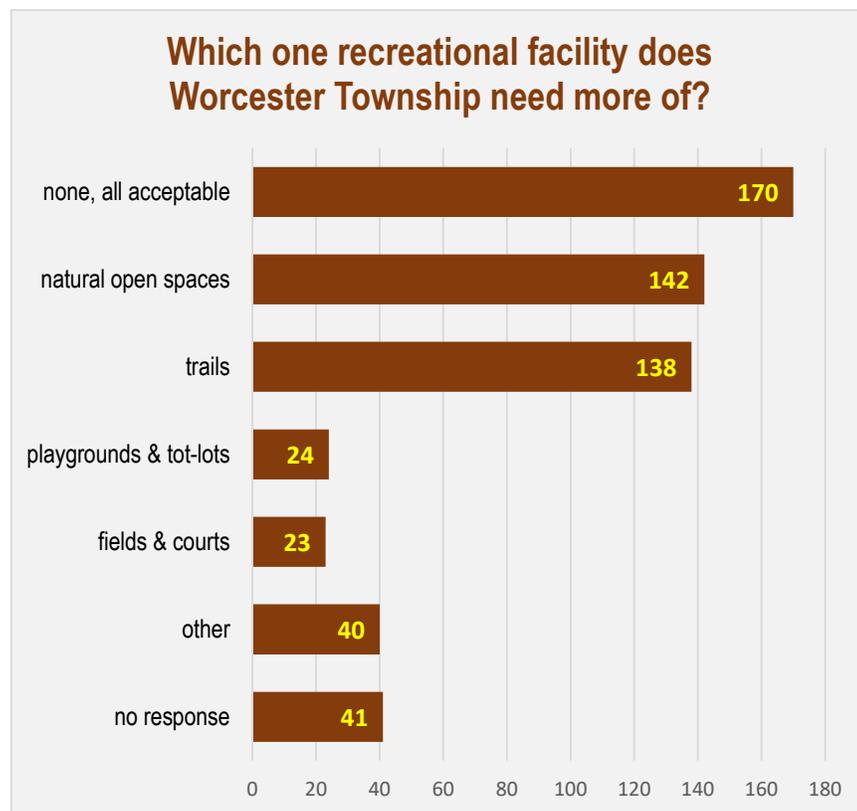
other... multiple responses (54) utilities (16), lack of walkability (8), speeding (8)



**QUESTION 3... Which ONE recreational facility does Worcester Township need more of? (select one only)**

none, all acceptable	170	29.4%
natural open spaces	142	24.6%
trails	138	23.9%
playgrounds & tot-lots	24	4.2%
fields & courts	23	4.0%
other	40	6.9%
no response	41	7.1%
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

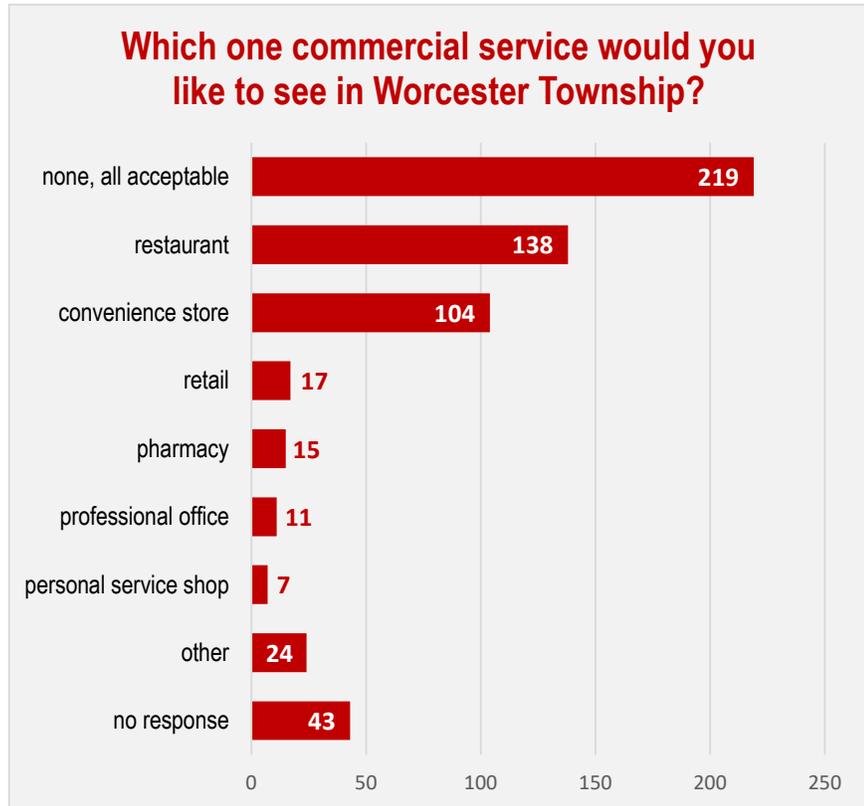
other... community pool (11), dog park (10), recreation center (7)



**QUESTION 4... Which ONE commercial service would you like to see in Worcester Township? (select one only)**

none, all acceptable	219	37.9%
restaurant	138	23.9%
convenience store	104	18.0%
retail	17	2.9%
pharmacy	15	2.6%
professional office	11	1.9%
personal service shop	7	1.2%
other	24	4.2%
no response	43	7.4%
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

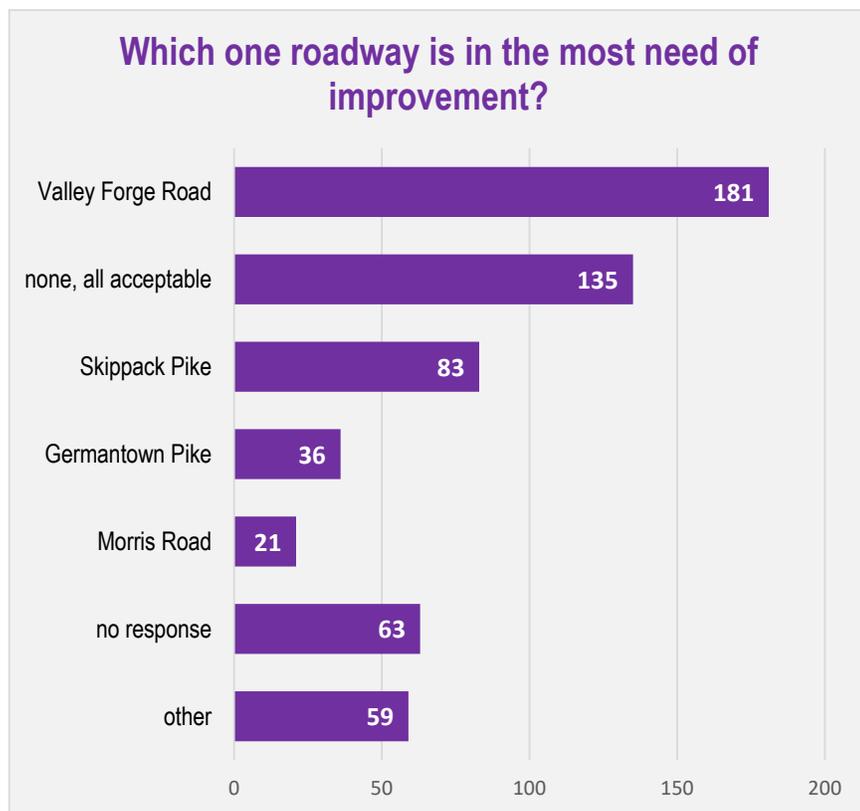
other... grocery store (9), small shops (3)



**QUESTION 5... Which ONE roadway in Worcester Township is in the most need of improvement? (select one only)**

Valley Forge Road	181	31.3%
none, all acceptable	135	23.4%
Skippack Pike	83	14.4%
Germantown Pike	36	6.2%
Morris Road	21	3.6%
other	59	10.2%
no response	63	10.9%
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

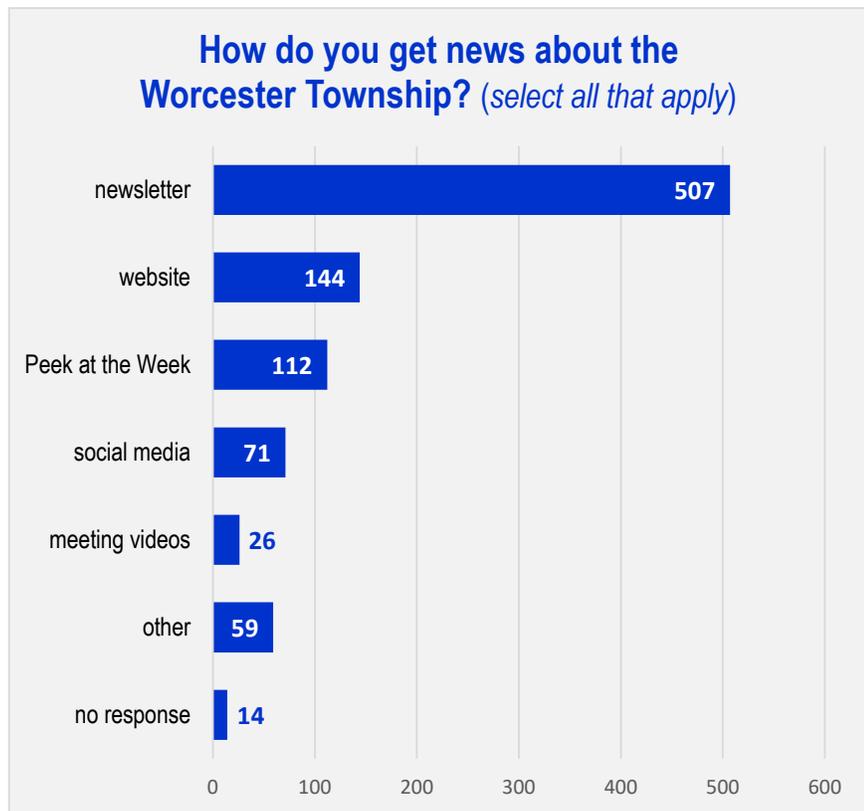
other... Bethel Road (12), Whitehall Road (7), Berks Road (6), Mill Road (4)



**QUESTION 6... How do you get news about the Township? (select all that apply)**

newsletter	507	86.4%
website	144	24.5%
Peek at the Week	112	19.1%
social media	71	12.1%
meeting videos	26	4.4%
other	59	10.1%
no response	14	2.4%

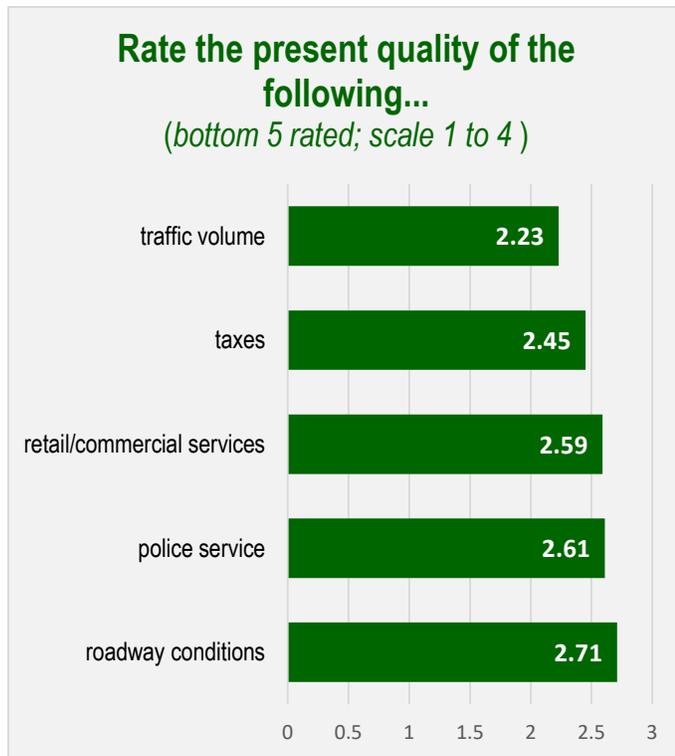
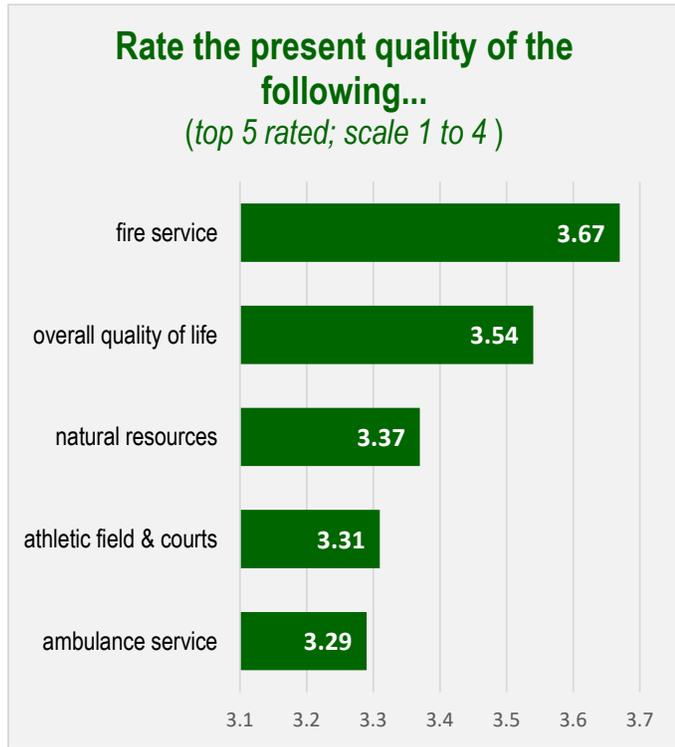
other... family/friends (18), Friends of Worcester (13), newspaper (7), word of mouth (7)  
 note... percent of the 578 respondents who selected this news source, or who did not respond



**QUESTION 7... Please rate the present quality of the following in Worcester Township... (select all that apply)**

Fire Service	3.67
Overall Quality of life	3.54
Natural Resources	3.37
Athletic Field & Courts	3.31
Ambulance Service	3.29
Preserved Open Spaces	3.25
Playground & Tot Lots	3.22
Internet Service	3.14
Trails	3.12
Water Systems	2.96
Housing Choices	2.94
Cellular Service	2.86
Noise Control	2.86
Housing Affordability	2.79
Stormwater Management	2.76
Sewer/Spetic Systems	2.76
Roadway Conditions	2.71
Police Service	2.61
Retail/Commercial Services	2.59
Taxes	2.45
Traffic Volume	2.23

no response (all) 25  
 note... scoring 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent)



**QUESTION 8... Looking to the future, Worcester needs to focus more effort on improving... (select all that apply)**

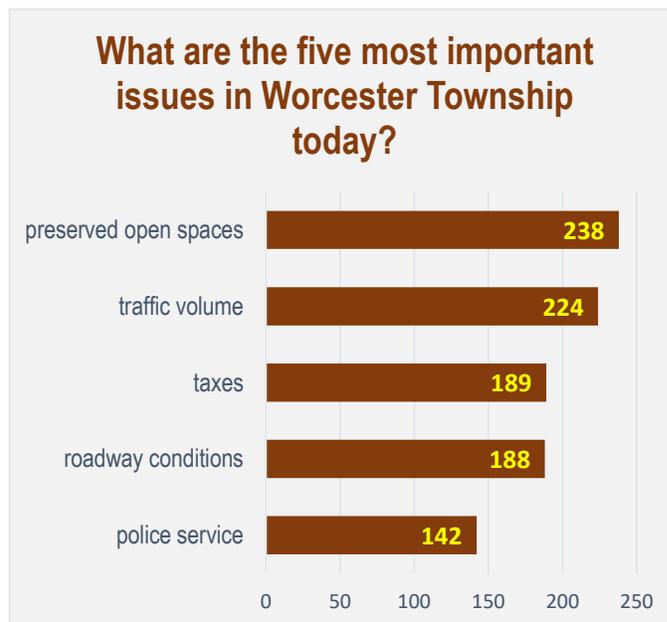
traffic volume	258	44.0%
preserved open spaces	234	39.9%
roadway conditions	198	33.7%
taxes	193	32.9%
police service	160	27.3%
trails	145	24.7%
cellular service	135	23.0%
retail/commercial services	134	22.8%
noise control	123	21.0%
natural resources	88	15.0%
sewer/septic systems	87	14.8%
stormwater management	82	14.0%
internet service	67	11.4%
housing affordability	56	9.5%
ambulance service	49	8.3%
water systems	45	7.7%
housing choices	43	7.3%
playgrounds & tot lots	38	6.5%
overall quality of life	35	6.0%
athletic fields & courts	35	6.0%
fire service	17	2.9%
no response (all)	46	7.8%

note... percent of the 578 respondents who selected this issue, or who did not respond

**QUESTION 9... From the list in question 8, what are the FIVE most important issues in the Township today?**

preserved open spaces	238	40.5%
traffic volume	224	38.2%
taxes	189	32.2%
roadway conditions	188	32.0%
police service	142	24.2%
trails	117	19.9%
retail/commercial services	107	18.2%
cellular service	93	15.8%
natural resources	85	14.5%
noise control	84	14.3%
sewer/septic systems	68	11.6%
housing affordability	53	9.0%
stormwater management	50	8.5%
overall quality of life	49	8.3%
ambulance service	42	7.2%
internet service	42	7.2%
housing choices	35	6.0%
fire service	27	4.6%
athletic fields & courts	25	4.3%
water systems	24	4.1%
playgrounds & tot lots	24	4.1%
no response (all)	89	15.2%

note... percent of the 578 respondents who selected this issue, or who did not respond



**QUESTION 10-A... How many years have you lived in, or operated a business in, Worcester Township?**

3 years or less	60	10.4%	
4 to 10 years	124	21.5%	
11 to 20 years	126	21.8%	
21 to 30 years	115	19.9%	
31 to 40 years	63	10.9%	
41 to 50 years	35	6.1%	
more than 50 years	28	4.8%	
no response	27	4.7%	
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	note... the average is 20.8 years

**QUESTION 10-B... If you live in Worcester Township, do you rent or own your home?**

own	503	87.0%	
rent	26	4.5%	
no response	49	8.5%	
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

**QUESTION 10-C... How many people live in your household?**

one	93	16.1%	
two	230	39.8%	
three	91	15.7%	
four	84	14.5%	
five	42	7.3%	
six	8	1.4%	
seven or more	6	1.0%	
no response	24	4.2%	
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	note... the average is 2.64 persons

**QUESTION 10-D...What is your age?**

30 and under	7	1.2%	
31 to 40 years	38	6.6%	
41 to 50 years	68	11.8%	
51 to 60 years	115	19.9%	
61 to 70 years	120	20.8%	
71 or more years	110	19.0%	
no response	120	20.8%	
<b>totals</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	note... the average is 60.6 years





## ***Worcester Township***

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1721 South Valley Forge Road

P.O. Box 767

Worcester, PA 19490

Phone: (610) 584-1410

