



# Westtown Township

## Chester County, PA

Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental  
Resources Plan Update

**ADOPTED:  
May 5, 2014**



Natural Lands Trust

with **Toole Recreation Planning**



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### Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan Update

May 2014



Natural Lands Trust

Hildacy Farm Preserve  
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Media, PA 19063

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with **Toole Recreation Planning**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

## A BLUEPRINT FOR WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP'S OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

### Purpose

In 2012, the Westtown Township Board of Supervisors initiated this update to the 1993 *Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan*. This update is intended to provide a rational basis for municipal decision-making on matters related to protecting community values and providing adequate services related to natural resource protection, parkland and recreational activities for residents. Through this plan, Westtown Township sets the course for protecting and providing for open space and recreation within the Township. Funding for this project was provided by the Township and a grant from the Chester County Vision Partnership Program.

Guidelines from the Trust for Public Land and the National Recreation and Park Association provide insight into the factors that contribute to the success of public parks and recreation systems. Those guidelines, that served as a model for Westtown Township include:

1. The park must rank high on the political agenda to get funded.<sup>1</sup>
2. The public is involved in the planning, design and operation of the park.
3. The design conveys a strong vision and purpose for the park.
4. The park is programmed with many and varied activities for visitors of all ages.

<sup>1</sup> Harnik, Peter. (2000) *Inside City Parks*. Washington, D.C.: Trust for Public Land. p xi.



Photos (top to bottom): Oakbourne Mansion, by Tom Foster; Westtown Township Building, by Wikimedia Commons; Girls playing soccer by Gary Bevilacqua; Tyson Park by Gary Bevilacqua; On cover: Oakbourne Mansion, by Tarra Campbell, NLT staff

5. The park and all of its facilities are clean. Clean, attractive appearance is crucial to a park's success and positive perception by the public and the business community.
6. A mix of public and private funding sources supports park improvements and operation.
7. Parks are an organizing element for initiatives such as economic development, increasing livability of the region, tourism and so on.
8. Parks and Recreation Departments, boards, directors and staff must play a leadership role in insuring that parks are part of overall community and economic planning.<sup>2</sup>

### A Strategic Approach to Open Space, Parks and Recreation in Westtown Township

To be effective, the *Plan* needs to be strategic. Enumerating a laundry list of tactical actions will only serve to dilute the major directions that Westtown Township needs to address. Focusing on accomplishing a few important things will foster success. This plan identifies implementation strategies in Chapter 7. Three strategies have been identified for immediate action, ideally beginning within six months of adoption of this plan. Those strategies include:

1. Make better use of the existing Township parks by moving forward with an analysis of existing facilities at Oakbourne, Larchbourne, Pennwood, Edgewood Chase and Tyson Parks.
2. Evaluate trails, with assistance from the Parks and Recreation Committee (or a newly appointed subcommittee devoted to trails), identifying trails in need of repair, as well as priorities for new trails that connect existing parks, schools and neighborhoods.
3. Purchase land adjacent to existing parks, trails and open spaces, for the purposes of creating an interconnected open space network. Investigate options such as partial acquisition, or acquisition

of trail easements, in order to keep acquisition costs low. As needed, reconvene the Open Space Task Force as a sounding board on land acquisition priorities.

### A Framework for Decision-Making

The plan serves as Township policy, recommending an approach to achieve an open space, parks and recreation system that conserves our scenic beauty and serves our citizens throughout their lifetime, close to home, with diverse recreation opportunities year-round. It suggests management strategies and policies to protect our natural resources and provide quality recreation opportunities. The *Plan* will serve as a reference for Township officials, management and advisory boards; community organizations; the West Chester Area School District; and other interested parties. It is a guide for future actions and decisions. Recommendations will require further discussion, public involvement, and approval for the actions to be undertaken.

### Aligned with County Goals

On September 26, 2013, the Chester County Commissioners released *Chester County Priorities and Goals* (CCPG). Westtown Township's implementation of this plan would advance many of the Chester County priorities including improving community health (CCPG, p. 3), managing stormwater and flooding (CCPG, p. 4), improving water quality (CCPG, p. 4), and preserving soil quality (CCPG, p. 4) through retaining working agricultural lands. Preserving the few remaining agricultural lands also helps the Township contribute to the County goal of improving the economy (CCPG, p. 8) by encouraging agricultural production. The recommendations for trails and non-vehicular transportation options developed by Westtown Township contribute to the CCPG transportation goal of creating choices other than vehicular travel (CCPG, p. 9). This plan also strives to manage growth (CCPG, p. 10) in order to preserve and optimize the quality of life in the community. The CCPG goal to enhance community facilities is also a cornerstone of this plan. As stated in the CCPG:

<sup>2</sup> Garvin, Alexander and Berens, Gayle. (1997) *Urban Parks and Open Space*. (New York: Urban Land Institute) pp 36-40.

**Goal:** By 2019, increase access to facilities such as community centers, libraries, public parks, and recreational assets in proportion to the growing population and changing demographics.

**Citizen Benefit:** Facilities such as libraries, public parks, and trails are the face of the County of Chester to many and form the core of neighborhoods and communities. These facilities provide critical services and add to the quality of life of residents.

**Metrics:** This goal requires establishment of a baseline, and then growth in facilities/access to facilities in proportion to population growth and demographic changes. Items that could be measured include visits to facilities, participants in programs, website visits, number and square footage of libraries, number and acres of parks (active and passive), and mileage of trails. Additional measures may be possible and should be developed in coordination with relevant County departments.

Throughout the process of developing the Westtown Township Plan, Task Force members and community participants stated the need to apply smart financial management to all initiatives, a stated goal of Chester County (CCPG, p. 11).

## The Community Supports Parks and Recreation

Westtown Township residents treasure the community's scenic character, natural resources, and opportunities for recreation and sports. Through a robust public participation process, many residents and community organizations participated in voicing their ideas, concerns, and suggestions regarding the kinds of facilities and services that are important to them as well as their ideas for supporting the parks and recreation system in the future. The public participation process included an Open Space Task Force, online questionnaire for public comment, key person interviews, focus groups, and public meetings. The online questionnaire, although not statistically valid, provides an insight to the opinions of 648 households who chose to complete the questionnaire. Over 80 percent of the respondents to the online questionnaire about parks, recreation and open

space reported using Oakbourne Park. About 52 percent were willing to pay more in taxes ranging from \$5 to \$15 per person annually for parks and recreation. About 42 percent want to support parks and recreation at its current level. Only five percent wished to decrease support for parks and recreation. The core values expressed by the citizens, who participated through the on-line questionnaire and in person at public meetings, regarding public recreation, include the following:

- **Community Identity**—Strengthening the sense of community through parks and recreation is essential in supporting Westtown Township as a very special place in which to live.
- **Community Enrichment**—Enriching lives through recreation.
- **Scale**—Fitting the parks, recreation, and open space system to the size, interest and support of the community.
- **Health and Wellness**—Providing and promoting healthy lifestyle opportunities.
- **Quality**—Striving for quality in parks, facilities, resource protection, and recreation opportunities.
- **Safety**—Ensuring safe and secure environments in the parks.
- **Stewardship**—Conserving natural resources and scenic beauty.
- **Fiscal Responsibility**—Making the best use of township resources in order to serve the public in a fiscally responsible and accountable way.

Conservation of natural resources emerged as a top priority. The survey findings indicated that focusing on enhancing parks and recreation facilities and programs to appeal to people throughout their lifetime is important, not just for youth and sports, as a priority for capital improvements.



## Vision and Mission

Through the planning process, the Township established the following vision and mission statements for parks, recreation, and open space. These statements are the synthesis of the findings from public outreach. They should be used as the basis for decision-making for recreation programs, facilities, conservation and management in the future.

### Vision Statement

*Our parks and recreation system conserves our open space, protects our natural resources, celebrates our scenic beauty, and creates opportunities for active healthy living to promote a way of life unique to Westtown Township.*

### Mission Statement

*We will accomplish our vision through public and private partnerships in planning, managing, operating and supporting our parks, recreation and open space system for the benefit of our citizens today and for many generations in the future.*

### Three Goals

The *Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan* provides recommendations to improve the quality of life in Westtown Township over the next ten years. It strives to conserve our precious natural resources, take good care of what we have, expand parks and facilities in accordance with community need, enhance recreational services, and increase public awareness about recreation opportunities.

The *Plan* recognizes that Westtown Township cannot do all of this on its own or at once—partnerships, time, and funding are essential. Collaboration with others and an approach to funding that continues to use public and private support will be crucial in carrying out this plan successfully. The *Plan* develops the broad vision for open space, parks and recreation into three goals that emerged in the planning process.

**Goal 1**—Make Westtown Township “Forever Green” by preserving natural, historic and scenic places.

**Goal 2**—Foster fitness, wellness and play, with programs and facilities for Westtown Township residents.

**Goal 3**—Westtown Township implements this open space plan update, “making it happen” by allocating financial and human resources that support the plan.

## Conclusions: The Basis for Implementation Strategies

Specific strategies, set forth in Chapter 7 of this plan, emerged from the following conclusions reached by the Task Force and consultants:

1. **Use the factors of successful parks and recreation systems cited above as the philosophy for parks and recreation in Westtown Township.** This will enable the key stakeholders to focus on what matters and avoid distractions that would take up precious time and resources.
2. **Take care of what we have.** Oakbourne, Larchbourne, Tyson, Pennwood and Edgewood Chase parks serve as the heart of the community’s open space network. Caring for lands already owned emerged as a high priority. Strategies regarding a formalized maintenance management system for parks and recreation facilities, the importance of partnering with volunteers, community groups and sports providers emerged as critical strategies outlined in Chapter 7.
3. **Use a mix of public and private resources to support parks and recreation.** Strive to allocate a minimum of 2.14 percent of the township’s operating budget to parks and recreation. The Township currently funds parks and recreation at \$67,900 or 0.7% of the budget not counting the labor cost for park maintenance (not tracked at present). Use this to leverage non-tax support through user fees and charges, grants, gifts, donations, partnerships, sponsorships, and collaboration with the private sector. Another benchmark is \$27 per capita for parks and recreation, which would total \$292,329.



4. **Continue to improve our existing parks and recreation facilities.** Prioritize projects that would improve the parks through professional design and high quality features. Re-configure existing sports fields to meet the need for additional ballfields. Work with the West Chester Area School District on sports field planning, development, and maintenance. Add facilities such as pavilions, benches, pathway mileage markers, and so on that make parks attractive and comfortable places in which to spend time.
5. **Make conservation of natural resources a priority and focus on engaging citizens in experiencing nature close to home.** The master plans recommended for all public parks include natural resource management.
6. **Create a Volunteer Program.** Due to the small staff and limited resources of Westtown Township, focus volunteer efforts on group volunteers and not on individual volunteers. Use the Parks and Recreation Commission to oversee the volunteer program. As the volunteer program grows, consider designating a portion of a staff member's time to volunteer management or consider hiring a part-time person for this function. This is likely to result in a payback to the Township's investment in part-time salary costs. The value of a volunteer hour as of 2013 is \$21.25.
7. **Develop a strategic program plan.** Without a parks and recreation staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission plans and offers public recreation programs. While programs have been successful and should continue, the Commission needs to operate programming under a planned strategic framework to ensure long-term success. To be successful over the long term, programs must be consistently available. Offering a smattering of programs that is variable can impair success.

Successful programming formulas require the majority of programs to be ongoing from year to year, specific seasonal programs and the introduction of new programs to be at a maximum of 20 percent. A strategic program could define the Commission's primary roles in recreation programming to be:

- a facilitator of programs by others
- a promoter of recreation opportunities
- an advocate for increasing public awareness about the benefits of parks and recreation, and
- a direct provider of a few key signature events that would be established and come to be expected by the public

In fulfilling these targeted roles, the Commission's efforts would be productive, conduits of building public support, and manageable for volunteers. Unless the Commission can hire part-time staff, it is best not to start offering programs run by volunteers that may stop and go without the consistency required to build public support.

8. **Establish a Capital Improvement Program for parkland acquisition, park improvements, and conservation.** This enables sound multi-year planning to make the best decisions regarding the allocation of resources. Consider an open space referendum, after ascertaining the level of community support. Having local funds for Township open space acquisition allows a Township to be more competitive, leveraging local funds with state, county and foundation grants.
9. **Based upon this Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan Update, review all agreements and policies related to park operations.** Use the findings to adjust agreements where necessary and possible.

## Implementation: Moving Forward

While it might appear that the job is complete because the plan is written, the work has only begun. Implementing the Westtown Township *Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan* will be an ongoing process of planning, doing, assessing effectiveness, and beginning the process anew over the next ten years. To implement the *Plan*, an operational program is needed. An operational program will describe the specific actions that will be taken to accomplish each objective identified in the *Plan*.

The operational program, included in Chapter 7 as an implementation strategy, will identify timelines, responsible parties, resource allocations and sources, and an evaluation plan that will identify specific outcomes to be achieved. The *Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan* focuses on the **what**. The operational plan focuses on the **how**. The operational plan should focus on the first year of implementation. It may include only a few things. The key is that they must be practical, achievable and likely to achieve successful completion. It is better to do a few things well in order to build a track record of success and momentum. Include the following:

- **Action Items**—Identify the specific tasks that should be done to achieve the identified objective.
- **Responsible Parties**—Designate who will be responsible and accountable for accomplishing each task. Be specific.
- **Schedule**—Create the exact dates and duration for accomplishment of the task. Set milestones for important accomplishments by specific date.
- **Resource Requirements and Sources**—List all of the funds, materials, equipment, facilities, and so on required to accomplish the task. Provide the source of these resources including Westtown Township, partners, sponsors, fees, charges or others.
- **Outcomes**—Specify the anticipated results to be achieved by the designated timeline.
- **Evaluation Measures**—Establish indicators to show if the effort has been successful.

## Ensuring Success for the Operational Plan

Keep this *Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan* before key stakeholders. This plan should be taken out and used regularly in all Township planning and decision-making. Boards such as the Supervisors, Township Administration, and the Planning Commission all need to have the *Plan* and refer to it regularly.

As an adopted plan, it serves as a guide; it is not carved in stone. It is intended to seize opportunities and meet emerging needs as circumstances warrant. The process of implementing the *Plan* is ongoing and continuous, not a one time event, as set forth in the operational plan.

Westtown Township should move ahead with the *Plan* as adopted, but be prepared to adjust and switch strategies as necessary. Flexibility, patience, and adaptability will be essential in creating the parks and recreation system that suits a community the caliber of Westtown Township. With a tangible plan and a sound implementation process in place, Westtown Township is likely to enhance the parks and recreation system that is recognized far and wide as a community treasure.

# 1 INVENTORY

## CONTEXT

Westtown Township is located near Chester County's boundary with Delaware County. Its municipal neighbors include Thornbury, Birmingham, East Bradford, Willistown, and East and West Goshen Townships in Chester County. Edgemont and Thornbury Townships in Delaware County also border Westtown. West Chester Borough is completely surrounded by East Bradford and West Goshen Townships and therefore does not directly abut Westtown. However, this population center is close enough to the Township to affect it.

Route 926 provides the Township's southern boundary. Route 202 provides a major north south artery in the western portion of the Township, while

Route 3 cuts across the Township's northeast corner. A "Sunday service" SEPTA railroad right-of-way also runs north and south through the center of the Township. The existing pattern of roads provides good north and south circulation through the Township. However, it is difficult to travel east and west through the central and northern third of the Township.

The Township grew greatly between 1980 and 2000, to the point that very few large, developable parcels remain. Single family detached homes are the predominant housing type. The 2010 Census states that 72.4 percent of township homes are single family detached, with the remaining 27.6 percent made up of multi-family units. There are no mobile homes

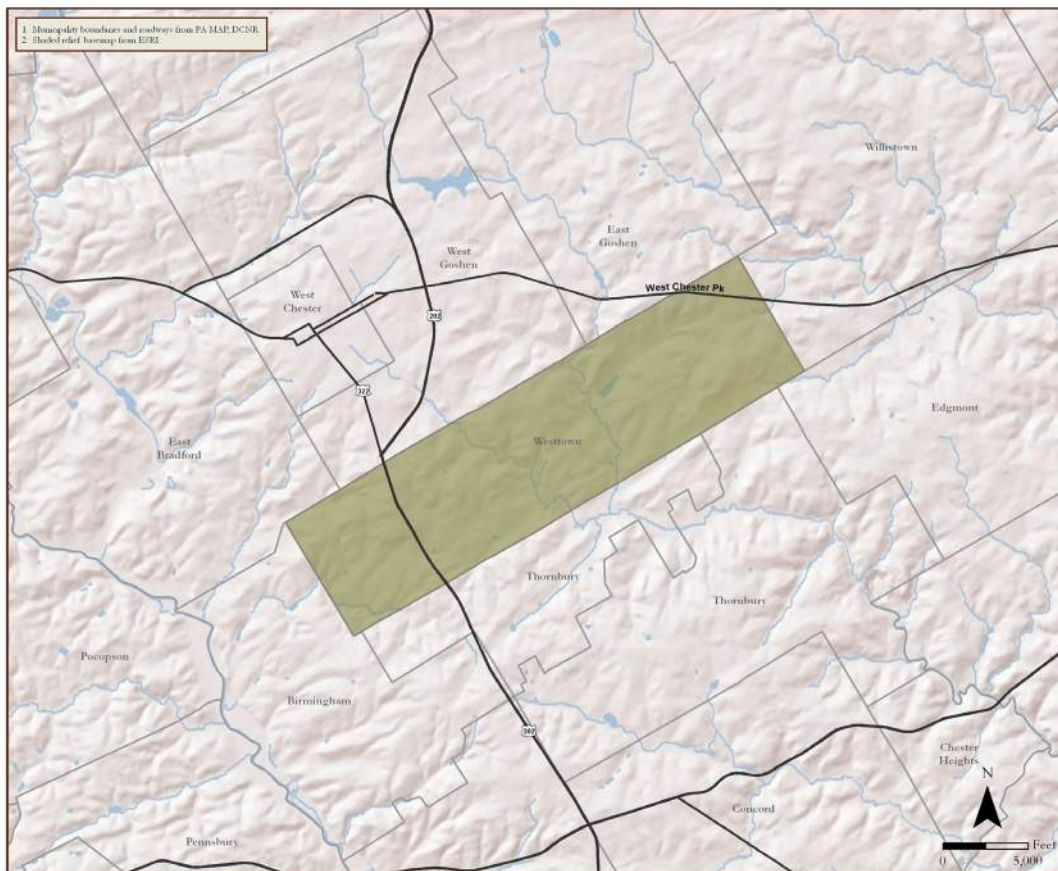


Figure 1.1: Westtown Township Location Map

within the Township. The single family units typically exist on lots between 0.10 and 1.0 acres, with a few larger single family parcels scattered throughout the Township. The lack of developable land limits the opportunities for providing trails or community open spaces through future development (See Map 1).

A few large, undeveloped parcels are also visible on the aerial photo (Map 2). The largest is Westtown School, a private school whose property runs from the northern to the southern township boundary, bisecting the Township. Westtown School's property encompasses approximately 580 acres. Bayard Rustin High School is bordered by Route 926 to the south, in the middle of the Township. Its property contains approximately 160 acres of natural areas, agriculture, playing fields and other recreational facilities. Many other schools on properties of various sizes are spread across the Township. These schools unofficially provide some open space and recreation opportunities to the residents.

## **Municipal Properties**

Westtown Township owns and maintains 22 park and open space properties, containing approximately 318 acres. They vary in size from the 93-acre Oakbourne Park West, to the tiny, 0.14-acre Goodwin Lane parcel. Open spaces within developments, such as the Spring Line Drive natural area, provide residents with the opportunity to walk out their front doors and enjoy nature. Others, such as the Westwood Drive parcel, are more hidden and difficult to access, making them useful only to a few residents. Some of the parcels, such as the Cobblefield open space, are more utilitarian. Cobblefield holds a pumping station, while many others contain stormwater management facilities. While many of these small properties are spread across the Township disparately, there are also some groups of parcels, such as the Pleasant Grove and Westbourne-Wood Road open spaces, which could provide a framework for a larger, connected system of greenways and nature trails. Westtown's variety of municipally owned parcels gives it residents the opportunity to enjoy many different experiences on their Township owned land (See Table 1).

## **Protected Lands**

Many municipalities create an interconnected open space network, linking municipally owned properties, privately owned lands under conservation easement, lands owned by land trusts or conservancies, and land owned by other government entities such as county, state or national parks. In Westtown Township, no other government entities, land conservancies or private landowners have protected land in the Township. However, opportunities abound for existing Township parks to connect with Homeowners' Association (HOA) open space, public rights of way and schools, extending access to an open space network to many more Township residents (See Map 1).

## **Semi-Public Lands**

Opportunities exist for partnerships with semi-public owners of large parcels, including schools, churches and HOA's. Westtown Township contains no fewer than eleven HOA's, collectively owning approximately one-hundred acres of land. These HOA properties vary in size from Chesterfield's twenty wooded acres, to the 2.5 acres of mowed land owned by Westtown Mews. Westtown is also home to five public schools and one private school which have their own land and recreational facilities. The Westtown School, the largest landowner in the Township, owns 580 acres of land, containing working agricultural lands, a lake and an array of recreational fields and facilities. Five other schools, owned and operated by the West Chester School District, also hold a combined 255 acres of land, containing agriculture, natural areas and recreational fields and facilities. These semi-public facilities can provide additional facilities and links within Westtown's open space and greenway network (See Table 2).

## **Historic Resources**

A five-member Historical Commission exists to raise awareness of significant historical resources. The Commission inventories and celebrates historic resources within the township. Currently, no resources within the township are on the National Register of Historic Places, though some locations may be eligible. Important historic resources within the



township include approximately 98 homes built prior to the 20th century, a POW Camp associated with the Battle of Gettysburg and a portion of the Brandywine Battlefield. These resources could be integrated with a connected network of open spaces and trails. Historic resources would act as destinations along a trail or greenway system or, in some cases, be preserved as open space.

## Existing Trails, Paths and Sidewalks

Many of the Township's parks, schools and HOA lands feature trail systems of varying sizes. Some of the HOA's, such as Chesterfield, feature simple loops around their perimeters. Visitors to Oakbourne Park can enjoy a wonderful paved trail system, which will lead them around the active recreation areas and bring them to the historic Oakbourne Mansion, children's play areas and community gardens. The paved trails also connect to the earthen trails through the Oakbourne Park natural areas. At Bayard Rustin High School, paved paths run along Shiloh Road and weave through the site, connecting the school to the playing fields and facilities and offering casual walkers a variety of routes and loops. At the Westtown School, a combination of paved driveways, service roads and trails connect to unpaved, mowed grass trails, which provide access to much of the site. Oakbourne Park, Bayard Rustin High School and the Westtown School represent the three best places for walking in the Township.

While these three large properties offer beautiful trail systems, getting to them on foot proves to be a challenge. Some of the local roads feature sidewalks on one side, but the vast majority of streets in the township lack sidewalks. Some of the local roads may be suitable for walking, but mixing pedestrians with vehicles always presents a potential for conflict. The major roads, including South New Street, and Routes 202, 926 and 320, all lack adequate pedestrian amenities. Without trails or sidewalks, pedestrians use the shoulders or walk in the roads.

## Hydrology

Westtown Township exists entirely within the Delaware Bay Major Basin. The West Branch

Brandywine Creek flows to the west of the Township. Chester Creek is the major waterway which flows through the center of the Township. Ridley Creek flows just east of the Township. Tributaries from these three streams stretch across Westtown (See Map 3).

Radley Run is a tributary of the West Branch Brandywine Creek. It flows through the southwestern corner of the Township, including the Crebilly Farm property. To the north Plum Run feeds the Springline Drive open space, while another smaller tributary from Radley Run feeds the Dunvegan Road Open Space. Chester County lists both streams as impaired, with levels of Chlordane and Polychlorinated biphenyl's (PCB's) that exceed the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). A series of smaller tributaries drain the remainder of the area west of Route 202.

East Branch Chester Creek flows through the center of the township. Hickman Run, a tributary which flows through the northern portion of the township feeds Westtown Lake and the Wickerton Drive open space. Westtown Run, another tributary of the East Branch Chester Creek, originates in the Pennwood Park open space.

Goose Creek originates in West Goshen, flows through West Chester and meets Chester Creek in Thornbury. Goose Creek and its tributaries flow through many township owned properties just west of the SEPTA rail line. Numerous ponds are also fed by Goose Creek and its tributaries. However, the main branch of Goose Creek is classified as an impaired stream, with a Phosphorous TMDL. The tributary which flows through the Marshall Jones Woods open space is also listed as impaired.

Tributaries of Ridley Creek originate in the far eastern portion of the township. The PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) designated Hunters Run, in the northeast corner, as a High Quality (HQ) tributary. George Smedley Run originates in the Green Lane Village open space, feeding the pond there, before flowing into Hunters Run in Willistown Township. This tributary is listed as a TMDL impaired stream. Stackhouse Mill Run originates in the southeast corner of the Township, feeds the Stratton Tract pond, and then flows into Ridley Creek within Edgmont Township.

Most of the watercourses within the Township have either floodplains or hydric soils associated with

them. The most significant floodplains are associated with Goose Creek and the East Branch Chester Creek. While most of the floodplains are contained within wooded, undeveloped areas, some could benefit from additional buffering or reduced mowing. Some of the headwater tributaries, most notably those which feed the Westtown Lake, have neither floodplains nor hydric soils associated with them.

## Wetlands

According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Wetlands Inventory, wetlands are scattered throughout the Township. Most are associated with the waterways and floodplains. The same fifteen wetlands listed in the 1993 plan have remained unchanged. However, the NWI now also includes 12 ponds existing throughout the township. Some are within the existing floodplains. All appear to be manmade farm ponds. The ponds have been added to Table 3, wetlands are shown on Map 3.

## Woodlands

Westtown Township is largely developed with residential dwelling units, shopping centers and schools. Some of the undeveloped lots are still in productive agriculture. Although Westtown is not typically thought of as a wooded township, there are many significant woodlands throughout the Township on public and private land (See Map 4).

Many of the woodlands follow the stream corridors. They have been preserved during development due to their slopes and soils. As the stream corridors stretch out across the township, so do the woodlands. Important to the health of the streams, these "riparian buffers" help stabilize stream banks and reduce erosion. Riparian buffers also reduce the level of pollutants in streams, protect properties from damage due to flooding, promote stormwater infiltration that improves water quality and lower water temperature thereby improving habitat for fish and amphibians. These factors contribute greatly to the health of the stream systems and the quality of the groundwater.

The largest contiguous woodlands are located on the northern and central Westtown School properties. These woodlands surround the East Branch Chester

Creek and some of its tributaries, including Hickman Run, which feeds Westtown Lake. Many smaller woodlands exist at the headwaters areas of Hickman Run and other small tributaries of the East Branch Chester Creek. Most of these woodlands are within Township owned open spaces in the eastern portion of the Township.

In the central portion of the Township, between Shiloh Road and Route 202, woodlands exist along the Goose Creek stream system corridors and along the SEPTA rail line. Oakbourne Park contains an arboretum and woodlands, with the northeast corner of the park containing a particularly notable stand of trees. In addition to Township owned woodlands, several HOA owned lands also contain significant woodlands. These woodlands form a nearly circular corridor, with only a few small gaps. There is not a contiguous corridor of protected properties, but tree cover extends over public and private properties.

## Steep Slopes

Steep slopes of 15 to 25 percent and greater than 25 percent grade still exist along the stream corridors, within woodlands and in the larger agricultural parcels (See Map 5). As the stream corridors stretch across the entire township, the associated steep slopes do as well. However, the slopes here do not resemble the rolling hills typically associated with Chester County. The decades of residential development has likely modified the historic slopes.

## Soils

The township contains sixteen different soil types in a patchwork pattern (See Map 6). The development of the township has had a significant effect on the soils. Nearly all of the soils beneath the residential development areas are classified as Urban Lands, though it was likely Prime Farmland soil prior to development. Nearly all of the soils under undeveloped areas, except for wetland and hydric soils are either Prime Farmland soils or Farmland Soils of Statewide Importance. The majority of the remaining Prime Farmland Soils and Farmland Soils of Statewide Importance exist within the Crebilly Farm property, Oakbourne Park, Bayard Rustin High School and Wynnorr Farm.



# 2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## DEVELOPING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: AN OVERVIEW

The Westtown Open Space Task Force worked with the consultant team in order to establish goals and objectives for this plan. A public forum—wherein residents offered views on open space issues, trends and opportunities—informed the process, as did public input received online, in response to a questionnaire.

### Shaping the Goals

On November 8, 2012, the Township held a public forum on open space, parks and recreation. The Task Force introduced participants to the planning process and invited them to give their ideas regarding issues, opportunities and trends, an exercise that the Task Force had completed on September 25th. Combined responses from the Task Force and public produced a wide range of responses, with overlapping themes. A summary of each discussion topic follows:

1. **Issues** the *Plan* should address. The following issues were included in the responses: a desire to address both passive open space and active recreation needs; fiscal responsibility and avoiding tax increases; a desire to see scarce, remaining open lands preserved; the need for facilities and activities for children and teens; and, a shortage of safe pedestrian and bicycle trails.
2. **Trends** the *Plan* should address. Popular responses to this question included a perception that the population is aging, raising questions regarding demographics; a perception of increased demand for athletic facilities; an observation that public/private partnerships offer cost savings; and that the past 20 years of development have resulted in increased traffic and decreased open land.
3. **Opportunities** the *Plan* should address. The task force and public offered ideas (sometimes conflicting) which the Township could take

advantage of regarding open space, parks and recreation. Those ideas included: extending trails employing many techniques, ranging from sidewalk improvements, to connecting trails in parks, to bridging Route 202, to using the SEPTA railroad as a trail system; developing new recreation fields on the few remaining undeveloped Township properties; relying upon adjoining Townships and school properties as the solution to Westtown's recreation needs; better utilizing the existing park system; being fiscally responsible, especially through partnerships with corporations, local organizations and schools; and, recognizing that the Township faces the last opportunities to conserve agricultural and other open lands that define the rural character.

Appendix Document 2 contains the full list of responses received at the forum.

In addition to the opportunity to attend the public forum and Open Space Task force meetings in person, residents participated through an online questionnaire. The purpose of the online forum was to provide an easy way for citizens to offer their opinions, ideas and concerns for consideration in planning the parks, recreation, and open space. The Township posted the questionnaire link on the website and publicized it in the Township newsletter. Open Space Task Force members sent email “blasts” out notifying their contacts about the opportunity for participation. This process resulted in 649 responses. The most notable findings of the questionnaire included:

- **Open Space**—Respondents clearly indicated the importance of open space conservation.
- **Recreation Experiences**—Walking, fitness and wellness, and experiencing nature were the top three experiences that the respondents seek when using parks.

- **Regional Perspective**—Respondents view parks and recreation regionally more than an effort by each municipality on their own. The respondents would prefer continuing regional parks and recreation efforts.
- **Park Visitation**—Oakbourne Park was identified as the most used park followed by parks outside of the Township.
- **Blocks to Participation**—Not knowing about parks and recreation opportunities was chosen as the top reason why respondents do not participate in parks and recreation.
- **Level of Satisfaction**—Respondents are generally not fully satisfied with parks and recreation in Westtown Township. They frequently cited parks in other communities as models for what they would like to have in Westtown Township.
- **Important Facilities**—The most important facilities were trails, comfort facilities, nature areas and playgrounds.
- **Public Awareness**—More outreach to promote parks and recreation opportunities would be a most valuable public service. The township newsletter, e-mail and the website are important methods for outreach in the near term.
- **Support for Parks, Recreation and Open Space**—Respondents indicated their willingness to support parks and recreation. About 52 percent were willing to pay more in taxes ranging from \$5 to \$15 per person annually for parks and recreation. About 42 percent want to support parks and recreation at its current level. Only five percent wished to decrease support for parks and recreation.

A detailed summary of the online participation is contained in Appendix Document 3 in *Westtown Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Public Online Comment Report*.

## Goals

As a result of the public forum, online participation and discussions at the September 2012 through April 2013 Task Force meetings, the Task Force adopted three overarching goals:

- **Goal 1**—Make Westtown Township “Forever Green” by preserving natural, historic and scenic places.
- **Goal 2**—Foster fitness, wellness and play, with programs and facilities for Westtown Township residents.
- **Goal 3**—Westtown Township implements this open space plan update, “making it happen” by allocating financial and human resources that support the plan.

## Objectives

For each of the Goals, the Task Force developed the following objectives:

**Goal 1**—Make Westtown Township “Forever Green” by preserving natural, historic and scenic places.

### Objectives

- Preserve and enhance water quality in Chester and Goose Creeks.
- Manage Township lands in a green and sustainable manner, through measures such as riparian buffer restoration, invasive plant management, and deer management.
- Establish working relationships with landowners of the largest remaining undeveloped tracts in order to encourage conservation.
- Preserve the remaining working farms and investigate opportunities to expand the Township agricultural security district.
- Preserve the remaining large parcels in Westtown Township.

- f. Amend Westtown Township land use regulations to enhance the conservation of open space, natural resources and the expansion of recreational facilities.
- g. Provide homeowners' education on how to manage lands in a green and sustainable manner. Where possible, partner with others, such as through the Chester County Master Composter program, TreeVitalize, Audubon Bird Town, etc. (Such education also assists Westtown Township in meeting NPDES permit requirements.)

**Goal 2**—Foster fitness, wellness and play, with programs and facilities for Westtown Township residents.

#### **Objectives**

- a. Ensure that Township parks are safe and accessible to all residents through communication, signage, and facility improvements.
- b. Engage residents in completing master plans for neighborhood parks, evaluating how the park is used, determining an appropriate theme and recommending programs, land management and facilities, as appropriate.
- c. Look for opportunities to create a Township-wide interconnected park system through selective acquisition and voluntary donations of land and easements.
- d. Work with schools in the Township as a means of enhancing active and passive recreation opportunities for Township residents.
- e. Identify gaps and determine opportunities to meet needs for playing fields.
- f. Create a network of pedestrian and bicycle trails in Westtown Township.
- g. Promote and expand community gardens as sources of healthy, locally-grown food.

**Goal 3**—Westtown Township implements this open space plan update, “making it happen” by allocating financial and human resources that support the plan.

#### **Objectives**

- a. Outsource and collaborate with other providers for fitness, wellness and play. Investigate users' fees as a means of expanding services.
- b. Collaborate with schools (public, private, surrounding municipalities) to provide facilities and programs.
- c. Work with PennDOT and SEPTA regarding trails and park accessibility.
- d. Continue leasing township land to farmers, thereby keeping land in agriculture and producing revenue.
- e. Engage neighbors in master planning for their neighborhood park.
- f. Encourage neighborhood and community involvement in events, programs, and activities (beyond those events at Oakbourne).
- g. Recruit volunteers (using online survey respondents) and investigate sources of funding to invigorate the Oakbourne Friends group.
- h. Investigate staffing for parks, recreation etc., including the use of interns from area universities.

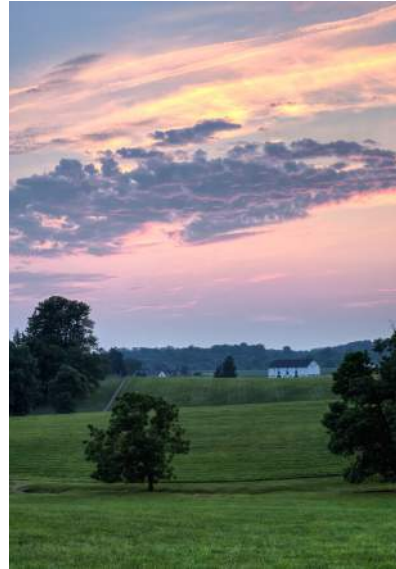
# 3 PLAN FOR OPEN SPACE

## VULNERABLE RESOURCES WORTHY OF CONSERVATION

The unique natural, cultural and historic features that define Westtown Township have been previously detailed in Chapter 1, Inventory. Given the suburban nature of the Township, the few remaining natural areas, historic sites, and places to play become all the more cherished by Township residents. In developing a plan for open space, it is useful to think about those resources vulnerable to change.

### Vulnerable Resources Categories

- **Contiguous natural areas**—Woodlands, hillsides, and surface waters provide for stormwater recharge, flood control, passive recreation and wildlife habitat. The developed nature of the Township makes these remaining resources all the more critical to preserve. Natural area *restoration* is also needed to alleviate flooding, reduce erosion and create better environments for people as well as nature.
- **Working agricultural lands**—Views over farmland provide a link to the Township’s agrarian past. Working farms serve multiple purposes, producing locally-grown food, preserving scenic views, conserving historic structures in their context, providing for groundwater recharge and requiring fewer Township services than densely developed lands. In fact, Township-owned farmland produces revenue generated by leases to farmers.
- **Safe places to walk or bicycle**—Few Westtown neighborhoods provide sidewalks or bicycle paths. Route 202 divides the Township, a major regional arterial road that carries significant volume on a daily basis. The Township lacks a safe network of places for non-vehicular travel. Whether a path from a Township park to a school; a sidewalk connecting a neighborhood to a commercial area; or, an adaptive reuse of a rail line; the Township would benefit from a network of trails and greenways, offering relief from the high traffic volumes and associated hazards.
- **Places for active recreation**—In spite of its park system, the Township is challenged by the changing nature of organized sports that includes requirements for dedicated fields, longer playing seasons, younger players, and more female athletes. This adds up to increased demands for active recreation fields. Options are quite limited as “they aren’t making land anymore,” especially when community parks can require as much as 50 acres of flat ground. Solving active recreational needs will require creative partnering with schools and institutions, and potential adaptive reuse of developed ground. Specifics on active recreation are outlined in Chapter 5, Recreation Opportunities.
- **The view from the road and historic resources in appropriate settings**—Considering the view from the road, as new



*Views from the Township roads, to working farms, offer a rare glimpse of the Township’s rural, agrarian past. (Photo by Evan Gross)*



developments occur, can retain some of the “rural” character that residents value. Conservation design can assist in setting aside special features in preserved open space. Giving developers incentives to conserve historic buildings, offering additional uses and allowing them to count as open space, can ensure that such historic resources are preserved as development occurs. Designing new development so that their more formal “fronts” face public roads enhances community character.

## Priorities for Land Protection

Given the scarcity of undeveloped land in Westtown, priority should be given to:

- **Large parcels**—Saving the last large, remaining tracts, is a priority as they present the last opportunities to conserve these tracts from being subdivided into house lots and streets. Given the developed nature of the Township, five (5) acres constitutes a “large” parcel (See Map 7).
- **Connections**—In public forums, meetings with stakeholder groups and in Open Space Task Force discussions, the importance of linking open space—both natural areas and trails, became evident. Therefore, parcels that connect to an existing open space system are of high priority for conservation.
- **Financial leverage**—The high cost of real estate in Westtown Township means that public funds will play only a supplementary and supporting role in an interconnected open space network. Projects that involve private and non-profit partners who bring funding to the project; projects that can leverage County and State grant programs; and projects where the landowner is making a donation (such as through a bargain sale) should be elevated to a high priority.
- **Green infrastructure**—“Green Infrastructure” uses natural processes to replace some, but not all, mechanical, chemical or structural engineering. For Westtown, “green infrastructure” could include tree planting, and restoration of degraded

forests and stream banks. Such greening improves water quality, reduces stormwater runoff impacts such as flooding and improves habitat for plants and animals. In the process, green infrastructure contributes to the quality of life for residents. Making “green infrastructure” a priority could also take the form of greening in new developments such as adding rain gardens to commercial parking lots and using development open space for stormwater infiltration.

Proposed measures for protecting open space are listed at the end of this chapter. In addition, this plan suggests an interconnected greenway and trails network, formed around the Township park system, as a means of conserving open space for Township citizens.

## Creating a Network of Greenways and Trails

### Trails

Previous sections have inventoried Westtown’s existing sidewalks, paths, trails and open spaces. These existing features can provide a framework for a diverse trail and greenway network, providing transportation and recreational opportunities to the Township residents. In order to utilize these existing township properties and amenities, it will take the strong local support and the involvement of many people



*Trails serve residents of all ages and abilities, connecting people to the outdoors.*

and entities—the Board of Supervisors, Park and Recreation Commission, residents, a task force, trail advocates, consultants, PennDOT, and Septa.

### First Steps

The creation of a greenways and trail network will require a major undertaking by the Township, beyond the adoption of this plan. It would require the creation of a *Township-wide Trails Master Plan*, adopted as an official Township document. It should become a reference for decision making regarding development. Ideally, the Township would work with a planning consultant to guide the Board of Supervisors, the Park and Recreation Commission, and likely a subcommittee or task force, along with the public, to determine the Township's needs and means to meet those needs. Such plans consider the population being served (children, elderly, families), the modes of transportation (walking, scooters, wheelchairs, strollers, bicycles), and level of interpretation (fitness equipment, interpretive signs) as well as priorities (such as connecting schools to neighborhoods).

This plan calls for master plans for the four primary Township parks (Oakbourne, Larchbourne, Pennwood and Tyson) as well as a *Township-wide Trails Master Plan*. Such plans should prioritize trail rehabilitation and new construction, link the park trails into a larger network, and propose trail rerouting as needed in order to connect to the surrounding community. The existing well used trail network at Oakbourne Park may be improved or expanded, while the much smaller, neighborhood scaled Tyson Park, may require only the addition of a small walking loop. In each case, additional trails within the parks can become building blocks of a larger trail network, serving the surrounding community.

Westtown has the opportunity to create a trail and greenway network that provides safe routes for recreational walking, running and cycling, to recreation areas, schools and businesses. Creating safe, non-vehicular transportation routes can help residents move freely without getting into their cars, perhaps even slightly reducing traffic congestion. Variety of scenery, terrain and overall character is vital to any successful trail or trail network, and Westtown has the ability to provide it. By linking the existing parks and

open spaces, trail users in Westtown can experience every positive aspect of the Township while simply out on a nice walk.

### Many Types of Trails

Variety is vital to any trail network, as trail users have different needs and desires. Even the same trail users may have different needs on different days. For example, a trail user might want to quickly get from point A to point B by bike on one day and enjoy a slow walk through the woods the next. Therefore, trails should offer a variety of experiences through nature trails, neighborhood trails, connector trails and destination trails.

Nature trails would traverse the natural areas spread throughout the township, such as stream corridors and woodlands. These trails would have packed earth surfaces and be meant for use by walkers, hikers, birders, dog walkers, and similar low intensity users. This type of trail would likely get the most use from surrounding neighbors. While they would be a part of the official township wide trail network, they would likely not draw many people from other parts of the township, due to their short lengths. The existing nature trails serve as a framework for any desired expansion of the network.

In contrast to the slow and casual nature hike, many people view trails as a place to exercise. While endurance athletes prefer long, uninterrupted trails, the average user is likely to prefer short measured loops. Walking loops in the neighborhood parks provide a place for residents to fit in a short run or brisk walk, all without getting too far from home. Having this sort of amenity close to home makes exercise convenient for both seniors, who may not want to drive to a park, and families, whose young children may force an unexpectedly early return home, made convenient by proximity. Additionally, because cyclists rarely use shorter loops, conflicts with walkers and runners are rare. These neighborhood walking loops also can act as a secondary sidewalk, a place for neighbors to meet, say hello, and build a stronger sense of community.

The third level of trail, the connector trails, may be the most difficult to implement in the township-wide network, due to existing constraints on much of



the Township land. The planning process begins by identifying activity hubs, the places to which people are going, and then use connector trails to connect those places. Examples of hubs include Oakbourne Park, businesses along Route 3 and West Chester University. Connector trails would likely be wide, paved trails, lined with trees, intended for use by all residents of the Township and neighboring townships. These trails connect people to places. This type of trail should be considered in places where people often walk in or along busy roads to get to their destinations. Should business redevelopment occur along Routes 202 or Route 3, portions of the trail network could be installed on these properties at the developer's expense.

Westtown Township holds the potential to create a trail in the last category, destination trails, by considering a rail trail in the Township. At destination trails, the trail itself is the main attraction, rather than its surroundings. These trails may be a part of a regional network, but they often stand alone. Destination trails are typically longer than neighborhood trails, providing at least a few miles of uninterrupted, off road trail, which is well suited to cyclists, runners, walkers and families. Amenities such as water fountains and restrooms are often provided at destination trails, as they are essentially linear parks and must provide similar amenities. The Chester Valley Trail and the Struble Trail are two examples of destination trails within Chester County.

### Community Building Blocks— Township-Owned Accesses

In undeveloped communities, trail and greenway networks often emerge through the development process, in those communities that require open space set-asides in new development. However, in a developed community like Westtown, few such opportunities remain. Westtown faces the challenge of piecing together existing open lands and retrofitting the Township's twenty properties, including parks, open spaces and municipal uses, as well as paper streets and remnant parcels, which can contribute to the network. Many other landowners can contribute greenway building blocks as well. There are numerous trails, paths, and open lands throughout the township,

many of them privately or quasi-publicly owned. These trails and lands can also support vital pieces of a trail network. In order to incorporate these important pieces, the Township will need to form partnerships and work with private and public schools, HOAs, government agencies and private landowners.

### Parks and Open Spaces

The park master park plans should include trail planning. For example, the large trail network at Oakbourne Park may be expanded to cross Concord Road, while the much smaller, neighborhood scaled Tyson Park, may require just a small walking loop. In each case, additional trails within the parks can become building blocks of a larger trail network while appropriately serving the surrounding community.

The Township owns over 20 properties, totaling over 300 acres in area. Three open spaces are particularly intriguing in terms of establishing a township wide trail network. The Pleasant Grove, Westbourne-Wood and Plumly open spaces are somewhat linear in shape, loosely follow stream corridors and have the potential to link up major hubs or trail routes with multiple neighborhoods or schools. When viewing these parcels together with the existing parks, schools and the SEPTA line, one can begin to visualize a trail loop connecting many of the township's residents to nature, school and recreation, in Westtown Township and beyond. These open spaces should be incorporated in planning for a township wide trail network plan.

### Schools

The most important partners may be the West Chester School District and Westtown School. These two entities own nearly 800 acres of land in the Township. The two largest properties, the Westtown School and Bayard Rustin High School, already have trails built. A partnership with these two school systems would provide access to existing trails at little or no cost to the Township.

Additionally, these two properties have frontage on Route 926, a major pedestrian obstacle. Cyclists and pedestrians sometimes use the shoulders of 926, creating a potentially dangerous situation, as fast moving traffic uses the road. Partnership with

Westtown School and Bayard Rustin High School could lead to creation of trails on their properties along Route 926, thereby alleviating the safety problem for significant stretches.

Furthermore, Westtown School stretches from Route 926 at its southern end, all the way to the Township's northern border. Any east-west trail connection would travel through Westtown School's property. Existing paths, driveways and limited access roads may provide this connection in a cost effective manner if a partnership can be forged. Whether public or private, schools increasingly must address security issues and any exploration of a trails network must consider this important obligation.

Smaller schools in the West Chester School District can also play a role in a trail network. The combined lands of the Starkweather Elementary and Stetson Middle Schools could also provide linkages using existing pathways or additional trails. The neighborhoods surrounding the schools lack sidewalks and offer few places to walk. A loop trail on the school properties could provide a safe amenity for the neighborhoods and the schools. "Paper streets," reserved public rights of way that have not been constructed, and Township owned open spaces, connect to the school properties from Hidden Pond Way, Supplee Way, and the Dunvegan open space.

These properties could provide safe walking routes to schools for children and neighborhood access to the playgrounds and other school facilities for neighbors. The numerous schools within the Township offer unfound potential as building blocks of a trail and greenway network, which would benefit the schools themselves as well as the surrounding communities.

### Homeowners' Associations

With 11 Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) which own a combined total of over 100 acres within the Township, HOAs could be an important segment of a trails network. These open spaces vary in size and character. The P&B Developers townhomes on South Concord Road, contains only a few acres of landscaped buffers and stormwater basins. Other HOA lands, such as Chesterfield and Arborview, already have trails on the ground. These trails could be used to bring people safely off of the major roads nearby

while also providing front door access to the trail system for residents of those developments. Still other HOA's, such as Avonlea, hold undeveloped, mowed areas which could easily be reconfigured as part of a network of trails.

### SEPTA and PennDOT

There are many barriers to crossing the long, rectangular Township including South New Street, Route 202 and a railroad. However, these barriers could become important north-south segments in a trail system with SEPTA and PennDOT as partners.

The SEPTA rail line presents the most significant opportunities, spanning Westtown Township and continuing north through West Goshen before terminating in West Chester Borough. Going south, the rail line connects to parks and open spaces in Thornbury Township before connecting to the Elwyn train station in Middletown Township, Delaware County. The rail line holds the potential to connect multiple municipalities and form the backbone of a major destination trail.

In Westtown, the rail line is adjacent to many potential trailheads or additional segments. These include, from North to South:

- Wild Goose Farms HOA Land
- Wedgewood Swim Club
- Oakbourne Park East
- Westbourne-Wood Open Space
- Bayard Rustin High School
- Privately owned properties which may also contribute to a trail or greenway network

This rail line is particularly interesting as it currently has limited service, presenting the opportunity to create a trail while maintaining the current level of train service. This would require in-depth discussions, negotiations and legal agreements with SEPTA. This sort of arrangement is gaining popularity across the country and is typically referred to as "Rails With Trails." As further evidence of the popularity and state agency support of Rail Trails, in September 2013,

the Rails to Trails Conservancy published a report, funded by Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), *America's Rails With Trails: A Resource for Planners, Agencies and Advocates on Trails Along Active Rail Corridors*. Mentioned in earlier Westtown Township open space and comprehensive plans, the rail trail has never been seriously considered by the Township. With state and national interest in rail trails, perhaps the rail trail time has come in Westtown.

The Westtown rail line could provide the amenities of a 1.75-mile trail to Township residents. If connected to the Elwyn Station, residents could walk or bike to the train station, potentially alleviating some pressure on SEPTA's parking lots while reducing car traffic to and from the station. This opportunity requires further study during a township wide trail planning exercise, but Westtown has the unique opportunity of being a champion for an exciting destination rail trail.

Westtown will also need to partner with PennDOT in creating a regional trail network. South New Street and Route 202 could be priority areas for establishment of trails. West Chester University students walk along South New Street, where there is little shoulder. The Township owns the Shenandoah and Spring Line Drive open spaces along South New Street, but nothing else. The Church of the Loving Shepherd is a large landholder at the southern end of the road, but otherwise, single family homes front or back up to the street for most of its length. Therefore, in order to establish any path or trail along South New Street, PennDOT right-of-way will likely need to be utilized.

Route 202 could also be a priority trail area as it provides access to neighborhoods, schools and businesses. Pedestrians walk along the shoulders of the road, creating potentially dangerous conflicts with vehicles. Trails along Route 202 could also allow residents to walk safely or ride their bikes. While a trail along Route 202 would certainly not cure the traffic issue there, every car trip removed from the road would help. Route 202 is also a major barrier to pedestrians and bicyclists trying to move east and west, across the township. Only Skiles Boulevard, which connects to the Stetson and Starkweather Schools driveway, and Route 926 offer intersections

which permit crossing of Route 202. In order to implement a township-wide trail system, safe crossing areas must be provided, potentially through tunnels under, or bridges over, the highway. View PennDOT as a potential partner in providing safe places to walk or bicycle along and across major roads.

## MOVING FORWARD

### New Development

As Westtown Township is almost fully built out, there are few remaining opportunities for large scale development and reservation of open space, with Crebilly Farm being the obvious exception. A few opportunities exist for small to mid-sized developments, subdivisions, and redevelopments. Westtown cannot depend on new development to build a Township wide trail system, but it is not too late for development to contribute. The Appendix and page 23 of this Chapter contain suggestions on using regulations to protect open space and green new development in the Township.

Using Crebilly Farm as an example, the developer could be required to install a simple perimeter path around the development, potentially nearly three miles long. This trail would be a much needed amenity for the western end of the Township, currently cut off from so many recreation opportunities by Route 202. A trail system in the development could also connect to the Arborview community and the surrounding neighborhoods, then through to Starkweather and Stetson Schools. This could provide not only a recreational amenity, but also a safe route for new schoolchildren in the Crebilly development.

In addition to viewing residential properties as trail links, many commercial areas of the Township could undergo revitalization in the near future. Small lot commercial uses could be redeveloped or combined. Large shopping centers, constructed in the 70's, 80's and 90's could soon be redeveloped. As redevelopment occurs, Westtown can require trails or greenways as part of the design. Redevelopment could provide an excellent opportunity for the Township to provide safe walking routes from commercial areas to neighborhoods, enhancing the Township's commercial areas.

In this scenario, partnerships would be vital with PennDOT, businesses, developers and other private landowners. Westtown's combination of existing land uses and potential for new development presents opportunities for private funding to contribute to construction of trails, greenways and township gateways. The large population presents a constituency in close proximity to local businesses.

## Greenways

*Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County* loosely defines the term "Greenway" as any linear open space. The word green evokes images of woodlands and trees, but greenways can also contain meadows, agriculture, wetlands, lakes, streams and other natural features. Trails often run through greenways, but not all greenways contain trails. Some are intended for people, others are strictly natural areas. In Westtown, greenways are in both publicly and privately owned land. Their protection provides habitat for wildlife, performs critical environmental services and improves the quality of life for residents. Other elements in a community contribute to a greenway—the community forest, made up of all of the street trees, yard and park trees and other plantings. The community forest presents its own set of challenges for maintenance and stewardship. The permanently protected open spaces and community forest extend greenways throughout the township, with Westtown containing a few areas of great potential for a connected greenway network.

### Publicly and Privately Owned Greenways

Westtown Township owned open spaces are already the foundation of a greenway network. The open spaces are somewhat linear, and many have the potential to be connected, to form a larger greenway network. In many instances, the greenways follow streams, providing riparian buffers. Often hidden behind homes as the unbuildable lands along streams, such lands were treated as leftover wastelands, rather than as community amenities. The greenways can be elevated as an important part of the Westtown Township park system by increasing public awareness

of their existence and importance.

Many developed properties, particularly multi-family developments, maintain greenways on the undeveloped portions of their properties. Public access could connect apartment dwellers to the greenway and even without public access, the natural resources still contribute to a system of habitat corridors and patches as well as to the general health of the township ecology.

## Habitat

Greenways serve to protect a large portion of the Township's environmental resources including woodlands, old fields and important stream tributaries. These habitats are important to the Township's insect, bird, fish and mammal species. Preservation of greenways helps to keep the local ecology in balance. When habitat is lost, humans and mammals come into contact more frequently, sometimes with poor results. For example, when bird and bat habitats decline, mosquito populations may rise.

In Westtown, many of the remaining greenways follow the dendritic patterns of the Chester Creek, Goose Creek and their tributaries. The presence of streams makes the preservation and maintenance of the accompanying greenways even more important. Large trees provide shade that lower stream temperature, essential for many local species of fish. The woodlands also provide habitat and cover for birds and mammals that depend on the streams for drinking water and as a source of food, as they may feed on aquatic insects, fish or amphibians. Trees and shrubs which shade the streams also provide cover for fish and amphibians, protecting them from predators. Wetlands, vernal pools and other wet areas may exist in the greenways, which provide habitat for species such as salamanders, frogs and toads.

## Environmental Services

Greenways are natural Best Management Practices (BMP's). In addressing erosion, sedimentation and flooding, Townships often design and create BMP's or stormwater control measures (SCM's) to mimic natural systems such as wetlands and floodplains. Design and installation of BMP's is costly, so conserving greenways, which provide water filtration,



flood mitigation and cleansing of the air, serves an economic purpose.

Most notably, as a natural BMP, riparian buffers consist of vegetation that slows the overland flow of stormwater, infiltrating water into the ground rather than directly into a stream. Additionally, water flowing through thick vegetation is more likely to have pollutants filtered out prior to reaching streams. Slower moving runoff is also less likely to erode soil and carry it into streams. Sedimentation of streams due to the effects of stormwater runoff is a major issue in the area, which contributes to poor water quality, flooding and reshaping of stream channels over time. The existing greenways protect Westtown's streams from these negative effects.

Floodplains and wetlands within the greenways help mitigate flooding during major storm events. As water levels rise in streams during or after a storm, naturally occurring, wide and shallow floodplains can accommodate this increased volume. Erosion and sedimentation, as well as piping of streams and overdevelopment across the region have led to the destruction or reshaping of floodplains. In Westtown, greenways protect many floodplains, soaking up floodwaters like a sponge. Similar to floodplains, wetlands are often wide and shallow. These depressions are able to capture and infiltrate floodwaters into the ground. Even disturbed, eroding floodplains and wetlands can be restored to protect the Township's streams and nearby properties.

### A Connected Greenway Network

The greatest potential to establish a large greenway loop exists at the heart of the Township, centered on Oakbourne Park (See Map 8). This greenway could contain both trails and natural areas. Westtown Township owns Oakbourne Park, and the Pleasant Grove and Westbourne Wood open spaces. Oakbourne Park is also adjacent to the SEPTA line, as is the Westbourne Wood open space. The Pleasant Grove open space is separated from Oakbourne by residential lots, but could be accessed on street. The Pleasant Grove open space then stretches east towards the railroad, Bayard Rustin High School, Westtown Thornbury Elementary School and other school district-owned properties.

These properties can be a framework for a greenway loop, but additional work is necessary to make it a reality as additional privately owned properties may need to be acquired or eased. Agreements with the school district may be necessary to permit access or to affect positive stewardship. Township owned natural areas may also need to be stewarded and maintained differently to enhance the greenway. These properties all present interesting challenges and opportunities which must be considered in creating a central greenway loop, especially if the SEPTA rail line is incorporated into the vision.

### Suburban Forestry

Developed, suburban communities often feature mature private landscaping, or "community forest" as is the case in many Westtown neighborhoods. This community forest is a key feature of the community's character, with trees cleaning the air, acting as traffic calming devices and cooling homes and streets in the summer. Evergreens act as windbreaks in the winter. All of the vegetation provides food and habitat for the birds, insects and animals. The U.S. Forest Service found that trees can increase property values as much as ten percent.

In Westtown, the community forest may be the second most important environmental resource besides the Township park system. Westtown may wish to establish a Shade Tree Commission to oversee the care of trees in public rights of way. By partnering with the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association (CRC), or Pennsylvania Audubon, the Township can encourage private landowners to plant trees and care for vegetation, a low cost means of greening Westtown.

### Tree Commission

Pennsylvania has a rich heritage of tree planting, with Philadelphia ordaining tree planting in 1700. Enabling legislation in Pennsylvania grants municipalities the ability to establish a tree commission, made up of volunteer citizens, charged with addressing tree related issues in the township (See Appendix Document 5). As explained by PennsylvaniaTree.org:

*"Pennsylvania state enabling legislation provides for the formation of tree commissions and spells out the legal*

*authority and responsibilities a municipality has related to trees within the public right-of-way and other public spaces such as parks. By forming and empowering a tree commission or committee of dedicated volunteers with various backgrounds and talents, a community can develop a comprehensive long-term program that will perform the following functions:*

- *advise community leaders on tree related issues*
- *conduct a street tree inventory and develop a management plan*
- *reduce community liability by identifying and removing hazardous trees*
- *design tree plantings with species that minimize conflicts with utilities, sidewalks, signs and other infrastructure*
- *settle community disputes, review tree removal requests and commercial planting plans*
- *solicit funds from various sources including grants and donations for tree plantings and maintenance*
- *develop street ordinances designed to protect trees from improper care and unwarranted removals*
- *inform, educate, and involve the public in community tree care*
- *foster cooperation between municipal departments, homeowners, utility companies, contractors, and developers”*

Commissions often undertake tree planting projects using grant funding from sources such as TreeVitalize or the Arbor Day Foundation’s Tree City, USA program. Some municipalities divert tree replacement fees, or other fees tied to development, directly to their tree commission to fund planting or beautification projects.

Tree commissions are typically made up of three to seven members. A few members should possess in depth knowledge of plant materials and design. The township should seek landscape architects, horticulturalists, botanists, landscapers, arborists, and similarly trained residents. A few residents not formally trained in plant related fields should also be

members. A diverse commission may provide different approaches and opinions, valuable for addressing different situations.

Professionally trained members are important when dealing with issues such as disease or pest infestation. The United States is currently being invaded by the Emerald Ash Borer, an Asian beetle which seeks out ash trees. The insect’s larval young are raised within the tree, which disrupts its water and nutrient transportation, ultimately killing the tree. The Emerald Ash Borer is making its way east and will likely arrive in Westtown in the near future. A tree commission made up of professionally trained volunteers may be the appropriate body to address an issue such as this. Appropriate steps to be undertaken by a tree commission may include preparing an inventory of the existing ash trees within the township, preparing a management plan, identifying areas for replacement plantings or hiring a consultant to undertake these tasks.

### Techniques Available to Protect Open Space

At the heart of this plan is the premise that the Township will find better ways to preserve land than reacting on a piecemeal basis. Townships that are successful in conserving open space employ a variety of techniques to reach their goals. Here are the measures for preserving open space relevant to Westtown Township:

- **Purchase/fee simple acquisition**—The most common means for a municipality to own and fully control land is through fee simple acquisition. Acquisition may be the best solution for a township to provide parkland and trails for its residents. Where facilities, such as playing fields, are involved, municipalities often partner with organizations (recreation providers, for example) who could undertake physical improvements in return for the right to use the facilities under certain lease or other terms. Due to the high costs of acquisition, townships can seldom rely solely upon this technique to meet their open space and recreation goals. A conservation referendum is often used to fund municipal acquisition programs. The referendum enables residents to vote to



establish a dedicated tax for open space protection or to approve borrowing beyond normal debt limits for conservation projects.

- **Conservation easements**—In addition to purchasing land outright, townships purchase conservation easements to meet local open space goals. A conservation easement limits certain uses on a property (such as development) in order to advance conservation purposes while keeping the land under private ownership and control. Conservation easements relieve the municipality of the burden of managing the land. Conservation easements are often used to preserve farmland, prohibiting future subdivision and enabling the farmer to live on and farm the property. Another use of the conservation easement technique would be to purchase a trail easement, thereby allowing public access in an interconnected trail network. The Township would want to ensure that the easement permits the Township (or group responsible for the trail) to maintain the trail. Because the land remains in private ownership, the cost of purchasing the conservation easement is lower than the cost of purchasing the property in total.
- **Private land conservation measures**—There are federal income, gift, and estate tax reductions that offer incentives for private landowners to conserve their ground. These mechanisms can go a long way towards preserving lands otherwise destined for development. To date, Westtown Township does not have lands preserved by private means. The types of land donations include: 1) outright gifts of land; 2) gifts of land with retained life estate; 3) bargain sales of land; 4) gifts by codicil; and 5) conservation easement donations. A landowner outreach program could help the Township gain insight into the potential success of this tool. Even one donation makes this tool worth considering.
- **The role of land use regulations**—Land use regulations, in the zoning and subdivision and land development (SLDO) ordinances, play a critical role in conserving open space, enhancing green infrastructure, conserving natural resources and providing for recreation lands, at little to no public

cost. The Open Space Task Force report, *Conserving Open Space with Regulations*, included in Appendix Document 4, provides a detailed guide to the types of revisions that would add to the Township open space network. The following types of land use regulations would assist Westtown Township in meeting open space goals:

- i. **Conservation Subdivision Design**—An updated version of the current “flexible development” ordinances, this technique applies to residential subdivisions, requiring that half of the ground is preserved as permanently protected open space, in addition to those severely constrained lands that can’t be developed anyway. The landowner achieves the same number of homes, reducing impervious cover and earthmoving costs and keeping tax revenue neutral. The open space that is preserved as part of the development can provide for passive or active recreation; can buffer environmentally sensitive slopes and streams from the impacts of construction; and, in some instances, can connect to other protected open space.
- ii. **Natural Features Conservation**—The Township has sophisticated regulations for conserving natural areas. A review of the effectiveness of the current standards and some minor updates noted in the report, are in order.
- iii. **Commercial Development Standards**—Requiring open areas in commercial development and greening parking lots with planting areas and stormwater infiltration areas reduce the impact of impervious cover associated with commercial development; and, provide microclimate and aesthetic benefits to the commercial corridors in the Township. Many opportunities exist for Westtown Township to “green” commercial areas as existing retail and office centers are redeveloped. In addition, the Township trail network could be expanded by extending trails from new commercial development to adjoining neighborhoods.

- iv. **Trees**—Townships that require trees in new development leave a legacy of green, leafy streets. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission published a Fact Sheet on the economic benefits of planting trees, attached in Appendix Document 6.
  - v. **Recreation and Free in Lieu Ordinance**—The Municipalities Planning Code authorizes Townships that have adopted a recreation plan to adopt a mandatory dedication of recreation lands, or to permit a fee in lieu, to offset the impact of development. Westtown has mandatory open space and fee in lieu requirements. This plan recommends that the fee be updated to reflect the open space goals in this plan and that the standards apply to non-residential development. See Appendix Document 7 for more information on this technique.
- **Official Map**—In addition to the land use regulations, above, a township can adopt an Official Map, authorized under the Municipalities Planning Code. Traditionally used to plat public street extensions, Official Maps allow a municipality to formally express an interest in acquiring specific land (or easements thereon) for trails, streets, parks, open space networks and other public purposes by establishing an “Official Map” that “reserves” this land. If a landowner seeks to develop reserved land, the municipality has one year to pursue acquisition of the land from the owner before the owner may freely build or subdivide. The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association reports that, as of 2011, 64 Townships had adopted Official Maps. Official Maps are most successful when backed by a funding mechanism whereby a municipality has the financial wherewithal to support its map designations when the time comes. Published in June 2011, *The Official Map: A Handbook for Preserving and Providing Public Lands and Facilities* (PA Department of Transportation et al.) gives a very detailed road map on how townships can adopt an Official Map as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. For Westtown, the Official Map would be a logical outcome of a Township-wide trails study, capturing the critical linkages in a Township-wide trails network.
  - **Management of Public Parkland and Private Open Space**—Management of public parkland has been the responsibility of the Public Works Department. This study also recommends an appointed Township administrative or other professional staff also involved with master planning for parks who participates in decision-making regarding plantings, invasive plant removal, signage and aesthetic decisions, assuring that the Township park system retains an integrated look and approach to land management. Partnering with organizations such as the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association can provide additional expertise, make Township parks more sustainable and serve as examples to local residents.
  - **Historic Fabric Programs**—Oakbourne Mansion serves as the signature historic landmark in Westtown Township. Less than a year old, the recently formed Historical Commission was created to foster an appreciation of the rich and varied history of the Township. The Historical Commission would be a logical participant in the master plan for Oakbourne Park and in integrating history into the appreciation of open space. Preserving historic structures in their context occurs through acquisition, private conservation efforts and can be assisted by regulatory techniques, such as zoning, that provides additional uses as an incentive to retain historic structures. The Historical Commission’s role as leading the documentation and conservation of historic structures serves as an important complement to other open space, parks and recreation efforts.
  - **Environmental Education**—The Township is fortunate to have a local non-profit organization, the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association (CRC) in nearby Media. The Township should continue to partner with CRC to take the lead on environmental education in the Township. The school district also provides environmental education curriculum.

- **Partnerships**—Given the demands for active recreation sites, partnering with recreation providers and the school district is essential to the success of this plan. Served by dedicated volunteers, the local and regional sports organizations bring substantial skills, monetary value and time to providing Township residents of all ages with recreation opportunities. Another partnership opportunity is with neighboring townships. Westtown Township staffs at an efficient level and currently has no staff dedicated to recreation needs. The 2013 National Recreation and Park Society (NRPS) Conference included a presentation on municipalities contracting with neighboring municipalities for recreation services. Simpler than entering into multi-municipal agreements, Westtown might consider relying upon staff in a neighboring municipality to facilitate recreation programming in Westtown parks.
- **Eminent Domain**—Pennsylvania Act 153, the Open Space Lands Act, defines when and how a municipality may preserve open space. The act states that, “local government units other than counties or county authorities may not exercise the power of eminent domain in carrying out the provisions of this act.” This language appears to clearly state that eminent domain may not be utilized to preserve open space. The Second Class Township Code expressly permits the use of eminent domain to preserve land for park and recreation uses. Eminent domain may be used where townships intend to use open space for a park or recreation area. This plan does NOT recommend eminent domain as an open space preservation tool in Westtown Township.
- **A Community Land Ethic**—Although not a specific technique, a community land ethic evolves as residents become aware of their land resources and help to put into place the planning, programmatic, and regulatory mechanisms needed to protect those resources. As the conservationist Aldo Leopold simply and eloquently stated, the “land ethic” is really a concept of community. Across the country, residents speak from their hearts, demonstrating that the public really cares about this nation’s lands

and their future. Offering Westtown residents many venues for learning more about lands in Westtown and for expressing their values is paramount to the success of this plan.

Protecting open space in Westtown will require the commitment of the elected Board of Supervisors, support from professional Township staff and volunteer time from Township residents, most logically in the form of a Township-appointed advisory committee. The high cost of real estate in Westtown Township means that public funds will likely play only a supplementary and supporting role in establishing an interconnected open space network. Leveraging limited County and State dollars and obtaining support from private landowners is essential.

While the Township Manager and staff will have a role in the general oversight regarding open space protection, the Parks and Recreation Commission and Public Works department will be responsible for individual plan elements. The Township may wish to consider an annual or bi-annual “Conservationist Agenda” which brings stakeholders to the table to discuss strategies and progress on the *Plan*. This approach keeps progress on the *Plan* in the public eye, can serve as a check-in for public support and can inform budget priorities.



# 4 PARK & RECREATION FACILITIES

## ANALYSIS

The five open spaces formally identified as parks provide Westtown Township residents with a variety of facilities, from high school level athletic fields to rustic nature paths. The largest, Oakbourne Park, provides a little bit of everything—athletic fields and courts, trails, a community garden, children’s play areas, natural areas and agriculture. It draws residents from across the Township. Tyson and Larchbourne Parks serve the neighborhoods which surround them, with playground equipment and open grass areas. Pennwood and Edgewood Chase Parks are less formal, unprogrammed areas, with limited access, serving the neighbors who border the properties. These parks provide a solid framework for a coordinated system of parks.

This framework can be developed into an even more impressive system of parks. A master plan of the entire park system would ensure consistency in design and coordination of uses and facilities. An overall master plan would ensure that each park functions at the appropriate level. The five parks would be planned simultaneously, to ensure that they collectively provide residents with the facilities they need, considering geographic locations and balancing the maintenance and staffing abilities of the Township.

The parks operate as discrete facilities resulting in the lack of a truly interconnected park system. For example, the parks would benefit from a common signage system and connections via trails and pathways where possible. Master planning of the four smaller parks as a unified planning effort, would make the most efficient use of Township funds and also take a system wide approach to the park planning. Due to its size, historic structures and multiple uses, Oakbourne Park should undergo its own master plan. A more unified parks system would create a stronger identity for the parks, forging a greener identity for the Township.



*Consistency in signage throughout the Township’s parks would help unify them as a park system.*

The parks master plans would result in conceptual designs to act as a guide for final designs and construction documents. Individual master plans would also incorporate rounds of public input. For Oakbourne Park, township-wide public input would be very valuable, while smaller groups would be sought out for input regarding the neighborhood scale parks. Master planning would include an ecological inventory of natural features on the site, and in the context of larger ecological systems such as watersheds and woodlands. Master planning would address park system wide issues such as coordination and consistency of signage as well as site specific issues including landscaping and management of stormwater. The following park profiles identify issues that may be addressed through the master planning process.

## Service Areas

The National Recreation and Park Association recommends service radii for parks as follows:

- Mini Park—less than ¼ mile
- Neighborhood Park—¼ to ½ mile
- Community Park—½ to three miles

Accessibility to the parks is an important criteria. Ideally they should be centrally located and accessible by walking, cycling or auto. A person's propensity to use a park is greatly reduced if they perceive it to be difficult to access or not within a reasonable distance. Two areas in Westtown Township present challenges in terms of park accessibility. Both east of South Chester Road (Route 352) and west of Wilmington Pike (Rt. 202) have limited access to parks due to the barriers created by these roads. Traffic speed and volume are impediments to park accessibility due to the great volume and speed of traffic as well as public perception of these roads as barriers. Community input found that residents feel that their part of the township lacks parkland and they are forced to travel to other communities' to use parks and recreation facilities. Therefore these two sections of Westtown Township merit special consideration for the location of parks and require the acquisition of parkland to meet the needs of the residents close to home (See Map 9).



## OAKBOURNE PARK

Type: Community Park  
Location: South Concord Road  
Size: 90 acres  
Service Area: 3 Miles  
Uses: Active and passive recreation

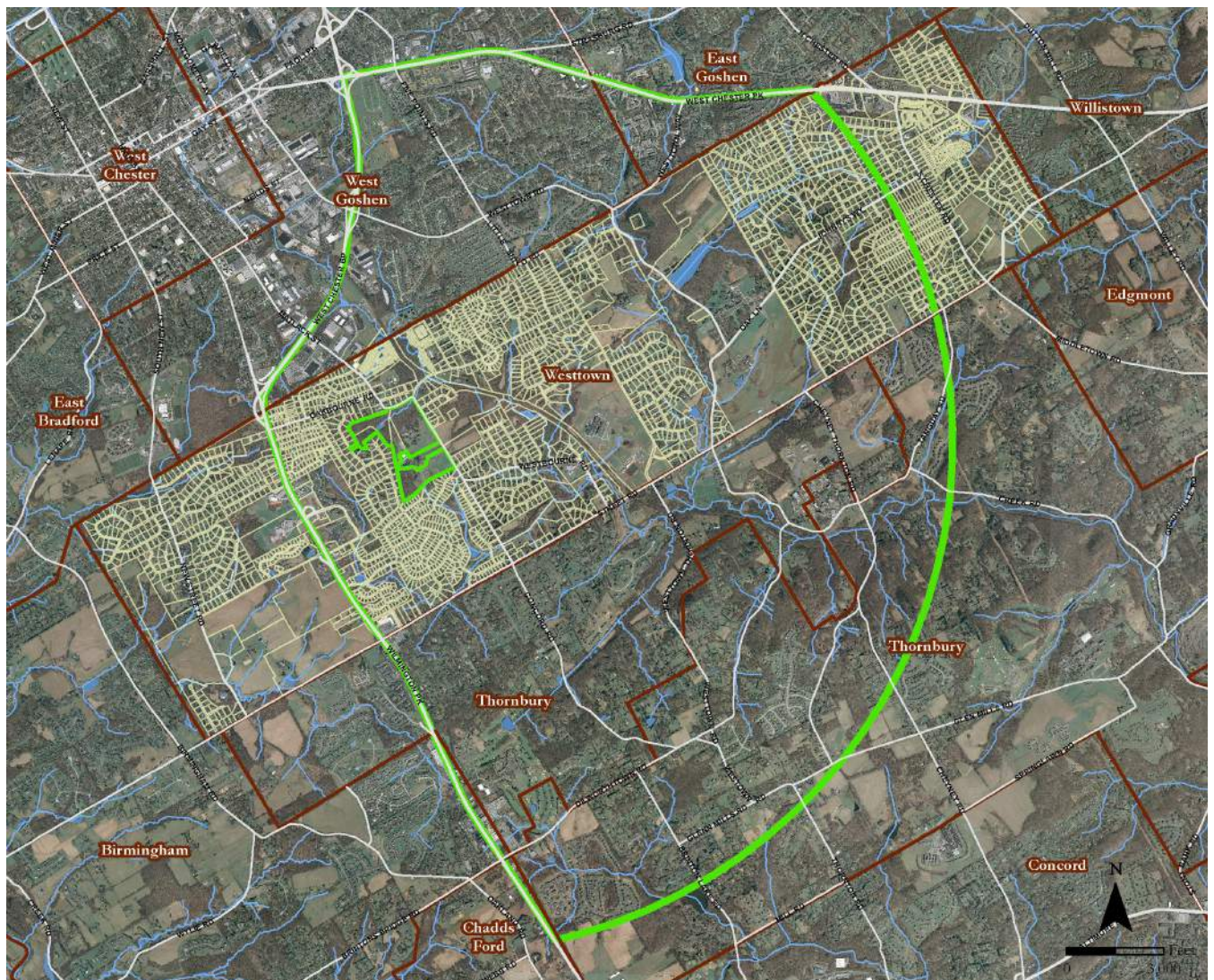


Figure 4.1: Oakbourne Park Service Area



Oakbourne Park is Westtown Township's flagship park, a very special place. The largest park in the Township network, Oakbourne is well loved by active and passive recreation facility users. The Oakbourne Mansion and the Water Tower are defining features of this park that provide the park with a unique identity and serve as a source of pride for the community. The variety of sports facilities, coupled with the community gardens and trail system draw residents of all ages and backgrounds to the park. The visitor's experience at Oakbourne Park can be enhanced through implementation of the following measures:

### Vision and Mission for the Park

The 90-acre park is centered around the mansion and the water tower. The stately buildings and grounds of the mansion make it a highly desirable rental facility for weddings and other social events. The ballfields, gamecourts, trails, community gardens and playground serve as community park facilities. For this park to serve its optimum potential a clear vision and mission need to be established in order to guide decision-making, facility planning and design, programming and operations. A business plan for the mansion should be established. A park master plan should be established to carry out the vision and mission of this special park. The master plan should include a design guide for park furnishings and signage to ensure that it is harmonious and advances the theme of the park.

### Issue

Gaudenzia House helps people affected by chemical dependency, mental illness and related conditions. Oakbourne Park surrounds the privately owned residence that appears to visitors to be a part of the park. Ideally, this property should be acquired if it comes up for sale. In the meantime, it should be buffered and be demarcated as a separate property.



*The grounds surrounding Oakbourne Mansion, including the water tower and fountains, are the centerpiece of the park.*



*The paths throughout the park should be upgraded to meet ADA standards for slope and surface.*



*The basketball court area should be assessed to determine whether an additional court and amenities are warranted.*



*Playing conditions at the tennis courts can be improved through simple additions such as fabric backdrops and shade trees.*

## Accessibility

(in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act)

- **Accessible routes**—Not every trail or path in the park is required to be ADA accessible. However, each area of the park should be served by at least one accessible route. Accessible routes must meet minimum requirements for surface stability, grade and clearances, among other things. It does not appear that all areas of the park are served by an accessible route.
- **Accessible route surfaces**—An outdoor accessible route must meet the standard of being firm, stable and slip resistant in wet weather. It appears that many of the trails at Oakbourne do not meet this standard, as many of them are made of loose gravel, much of which has eroded. The trails should be assessed to determine whether minimum ADA requirements for firm, stable and slip resistant surfaces are being met.
- **Accessible parking spaces**—Two ADA spaces exist near Oakbourne Mansion, but it is unclear whether they meet current ADA standards for size and markings. It is also unclear as to whether it connects to an accessible route leading to an accessible entrance to the building. The other parking areas have no dedicated ADA accessible parking spaces. The other lots should be upgraded to include ADA accessible parking spaces which connect to accessible routes leading to the other facilities.

## The Batting Cage

- **Additional Landscaping**—Plantings around the batting cage would help screen the cage from the surroundings. Planting could also provide a better backdrop behind the pitching machine. Additionally, the bare slope between the cage and the parking area should be landscaped to better control stormwater.

## The Basketball Court

- **Resurface the court**—The existing asphalt has settled and sagged in some areas, creating puddles, rather than sheet flow of stormwater.



New asphalt or other materials should be considered. Incidentally, it has been found that pervious paving tends to reduce the noise created by a dribbled basketball.

- **Properly grade the court**—The surface should be pitched at least 2 percent to ensure sheet flow of stormwater. The court grading should be planned in conjunction with stormwater control measures such as rain gardens or meadows to capture the runoff.
- **Assess the current layout**—The basketball court currently is paved to a width of 1-½ courts. The layout should be assessed. Either the paved area should be expanded to provide two full courts or decreased to accommodate only one court with no extra impervious surfaces.
- **Assess the amenities**—Assess the need for providing permanent amenities such as player benches, spectator seating or water fountains.
- **Assess the barn wall**—Assess the safety, structural integrity, and historic importance of the existing barn wall.

### The Two Tennis Courts

- **Resurface the court**—The existing surface has settled and sagged in some areas, creating puddles, rather than sheet flow of stormwater. New surface materials should be considered.
- **Properly grade the court**—The surface should be pitched at least 2 percent to ensure sheet flow of stormwater. The court grading should be planned in conjunction with stormwater control measures such as rain gardens or meadows to capture the runoff.
- **Provide a solid backdrop**—A fabric or landscaped backdrop should be provided along the fence at the endlines of the courts. This will allow the players to better see the tennis ball and improve the overall playing conditions.

- **Provide shade**—There is no landscaping around the tennis courts, leaving them completely exposed to the sun during the heat of the summer. While being careful not to fill the courts with autumn leaves, some strategically placed shade trees could provide respite for players between sets.

### The Soccer Field

- **Provide endline fencing and landscaping**—A stretch of split rail fence backed with weld wire mesh in conjunction with a row of shrubbery or flowering trees placed behind each endline would provide a backstop for errantly kicked balls, as well as add beauty to a section of the park which lacks landscaping or other aesthetic features. One section of fence currently exists below the slope, along East Pleasant Grove Road, which keeps soccer balls from reaching the street. Additional fencing could keep soccer balls from reaching the slope.

### The Baseball Fields (One Senior, One Little League)

- **Additional landscaping**—While the baseball fields are a utilitarian area, they should still be beautiful. This portion of the park is lacking in landscaping. Additional landscaping, such as shade trees beyond the outfield fences, will beautify this area, without negatively affecting the function.



*Additional landscaping at the baseball fields can improve conditions for the players and spectators.*



The tot lots at the park should be upgraded to meet current safety standards. A destination playground could be established.



The trails are a major feature of Oakbourne Park, which should be maintained and periodically assessed.

- **Batter's eye**—Darkly colored evergreens could be planted behind the centerfield fences of the baseball fields in order to provide a batter's eye, allowing the batters to better see pitched balls.
- **Backstop plantings**—Similar to a batter's eye, darkly colored plantings could be planted behind the home plates, in order to provide the fielders with a backdrop, allowing them to better see batted balls.
- **Shade for spectator**—The lack of landscaping provides very little shade for the spectators, particularly at the little league sized field. Shade trees provided along the sides, set back from the fences, would provide additional shade for spectators.

### Tot Lots

- **Upgrade for safety**—Bring up to Consumer Product Safety Commissions guidelines and conduct regular safety inspections.
- **Consider establishing a destination playground**—A destination playground is an appropriately designed large scale play area that serves residents township-wide. Design the playground with a theme reflective of this park with features that are responsive to the nature of children's play and family interaction, beyond the selection of play equipment out of a catalog.

### Trails

- **Provide trails (as part of a larger township-wide network)**—All of the township parks provide an opportunity for Westtown to show that it really believes in the importance of establishing a township wide trails network. By establishing trails on the township parks first, it shows that Westtown is willing to invest its own funds, before asking developers to spend their money on providing trails. Additionally, these township controlled properties don't require acquisition of land or easements. At Oakbourne Park, trails could be provided along Concord and East Pleasant Grove Roads, providing pedestrians and cyclists with a safer, off road option. Where trails already exist in



close proximity to the roads, additional spurs could be constructed to connect to the roads, allowing people to walk from the roads to the main trails.

- **Surface assessment and maintenance**—Three different trail surfaces are present: paving, packed stone, and earth. The paved surfaces should be inspected to determine whether they are contributing to erosion alongside the trails. The earthen and packed stone trails should be inspected for erosion of the trail itself. The trails and trail sides should be repaired as necessary.
- **Grading and stormwater control measures**—Where erosion is an ongoing issue, stormwater control measures such as rain gardens, swales and meadows, should be considered to help alleviate the issues.
- **Provide walking loops**—The trails at the park connect the different areas and provide one large loop around the park, in addition to a spur along Oakbourne Colony Hospital Road. The addition of local loops, such as a loop around the soccer field and baseball fields, means that parents could fit in a walk or run around the loop while their children attend practice.
- **Trail and mile markers**—The existing main trail loop starts at the East Pleasant Grove parking area, travels through the athletic fields, across the front lawn and then around the mansion, past the tot lots and community gardens, behind Gaudenzia House, through the woods and back to the parking area. This large loop is approximately one mile in length with additional spur trails within the larger woodlands to the north. Trail planning should name and identify all sections of the trails. Mile markers could also be added to the large loop at each quarter mile to benefit fitness walkers and runners. Additional loops could also be added at measured distances, such as  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. Additionally, the pedestrian entrance from Dogwood Lane could be better marked.



*Additional landscaping around the community gardens could beautify the area as well as improve conditions within the garden.*

## Community Gardens

- **Assess agreements and organization**—It does not appear that any major issues surround the community gardens. However, the Township should review the gardener agreement documents to determine whether they spell out the opening and closing dates, gardener responsibilities, work days, maintenance and other important information.
- **Additional plantings**—A perennial or shrub border around the perimeter of the garden would benefit the garden and park by screening the garden during unsightly off seasons. Shrub plantings could also help block wind in the garden, potentially warming the garden's microclimate. Perhaps most importantly, border plants, especially those with attractive flowers, would attract pollinators such as bumblebees and hummingbirds. They could also provide additional habitat for beneficial insects such as praying mantises and ladybugs.

## Natural Areas

- **Perform a Stewardship Assessment**—Natural areas in parks are often considered low maintenance. However, they should not be considered NO-maintenance. The woodlands at Oakbourne Park should be assessed and a maintenance plan development that addresses the invasive species that have begun to take over the understory and the vines climbing into the tree canopies. Full stewardship assessments would recommend a comprehensive approach for maintaining the natural areas.

## Agricultural Areas

- **Agricultural stewardship**—The agricultural area on the east side of the park should be periodically assessed to determine whether it is being stewarded adequately. A tributary to the Chester Creek flows through the adjacent woodlands on the property. Aerial photographs reveal several smaller channels flowing from South Concord Road, through the agricultural fields into the woodlands. Additional Best Management Practices (BMP's) such as vegetated swales or riparian buffers may be necessary to infiltrate stormwater before it flows through the agriculture area. This would reduce erosion, sedimentation and pollution of the waterways.
- **Organic and sustainable agriculture**—The Township should determine whether there is an interest in encouraging organic or otherwise sustainable agriculture. This could include a reduced use of pesticides or herbicides, the implementation of an integrated pest management system or other measures intended to benefit the local ecology. Any changes in policy would then need to be incorporated into the lease agreements with the farmers.

## Parking Areas

- **Assess the size**—It's unclear whether the parking areas are adequately sized for the many uses. A master plan should assess the number of spaces provided in the park overall and in each area of the park in accordance with the facilities and frequency of use. Active and passive recreation as well as the formal functions held at Oakbourne Mansion, should be considered in this assessment.
- **More landscaping**—Utilitarian parking areas can still be beautiful. Additional landscaping would help improve the aesthetics of the parking areas while providing shade and infiltrating stormwater runoff.
- **Assess stormwater management**—While the parking areas are not paved, it is likely that compaction over time has reduced the permeability of the stone. The parking areas should be inspected for puddling and erosion. Grading should be undertaken to improve any flow issues. Stormwater control measures should be installed where water is flowing off of the parking areas. Vegetation or stormwater control measures should also be installed where water may be flowing onto the parking areas.



*Many areas of the park, including stormwater control measures, may be mowed less frequently, thereby saving money spent on maintenance.*

## Mowed Areas

- **Reduce mowing areas**—Acres of turf grass at Oakbourne Park, which are not used as athletic fields or as informal play areas, could be planted with trees to establish wooded areas or mowed less frequently to establish meadows. Seasonal mowing, in which a field is mowed only in the spring and fall, would save time, allowing staff to devote their energies to other township activities such as invasive plant removal or assistance with recreation programs.
- **The Mansion's front yard**—The area between the mansion and South Concord Road contains approximately 12 acres of mowed lawn. At least some of this area could be converted to meadows or other vegetation which require less maintenance. This could save the township time and money while beautifying the area and improving stormwater management.
- **Hillsides**—There are numerous hillsides throughout the park, including the area surrounding the basketball court and above the Little League sized baseball field. These hills are not used for recreation and could be planted in meadows or other vegetation which requires less maintenance. This could save the township time and money while beautifying the area and improving stormwater management.
- **Stormwater control measures (SCMs)**—The park contains many basins and swales which are currently mowed on a regular basis. These SCMs should all be assessed to determine whether they can be naturalized without negatively affecting their functionality. This could potentially save time and money as well improving infiltration of stormwater.

## Stormwater Control Measures

- **Assess existing conditions**—The existing stormwater management areas, including basins and swales, should be assessed to determine whether they are still in working condition. Over time, many basins fail as settling occurs and structural elements sink below their intended elevations, or when soil settles around inlets, leaving the inlets as high points. All stormwater control measures should be assessed to ensure that they are still functioning properly.
- **Assess existing capacity**—As conditions at Oakbourne Park have changed over time, the capacity of the stormwater control measures should be assessed to determine if additional measures are necessary. If so, additional basins or swales may need to be built, or additional areas may need to be naturalized to reduce runoff and increase infiltration.
- **Assess maintenance schedule of SCMs**—The park contains many basins and swales which are currently mowed on a regular basis. These SCMs should all be assessed to determine whether they can be naturalized without negatively affecting their functionality. This could potentially save time and money as well improving infiltration of stormwater.



## TYSON PARK

Type: Mini Park  
Location: Oakbourne Road and Tyson Drive  
Size: 5 acres  
Service Area: ¼ Mile  
Uses: Active and passive recreation

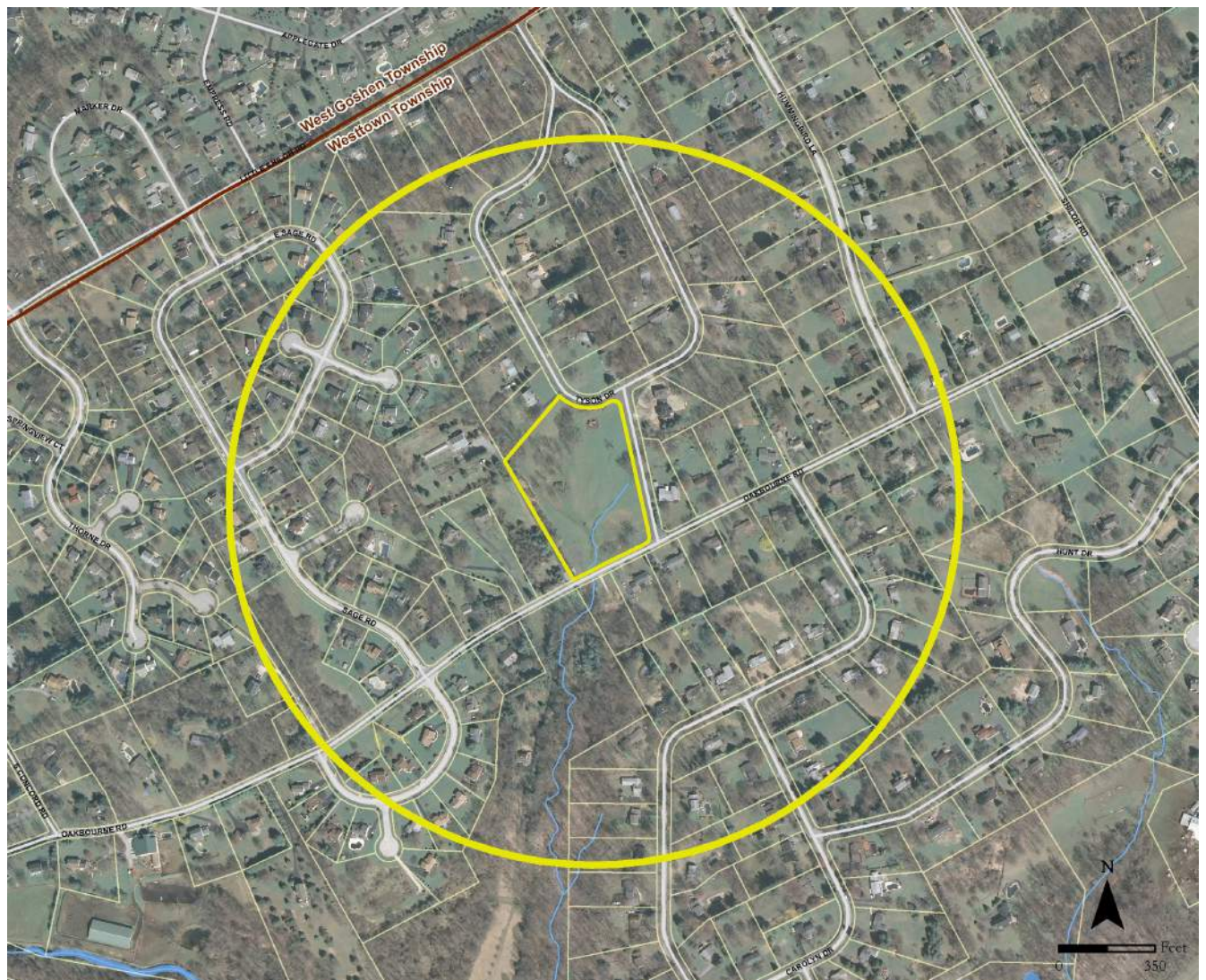


Figure 4.2: Tyson Park Service Area

This 5-acre park at the entrance to the Tyson Drive neighborhood is largely undeveloped and holds the potential to be a great neighborhood park. Five undeveloped acres in a developed, small lot neighborhood is a rare commodity. The park currently features children's play equipment, grills and a pavilion. The property is maintained as lawn. A master plan for Tyson Park may examine the following aspects of park design.

- **Gather public input**—Tyson Park is a neighborhood scale park and in order to program and design the park in the best way possible, the public, specifically the neighbors, should be invited to participate in the design process. The people who would potentially use the park would provide the best direction as to how to design the park.
- **Add a walking loop**—Like most neighborhoods in Westtown, Tyson Drive lacks sidewalks. A simple walking trail loop around the park would provide a safe place for residents to walk and for children to ride bikes without conflicting with cars.
- **Relocate play equipment and grills**—Public input would ultimately determine whether to remove the play equipment and grills. However, it appears that many of the neighbors have play equipment and grills in their own backyards and may not have a need for these public amenities. This equipment may be better used at a different park.
- **Plan for accessibility**—The park does not have any formal entrances from the road. The mowed grass of the park meets the edge of the asphalt road. As the park currently has no formal access area or accessible paths, a master plan should design for ADA accessibility. The required curb cuts, ramps, paths and other features would also be very useful for parents pushing strollers, people riding bicycles or children in wagons or on scooters.

- **Naturalize wet areas**—Tyson Park is the headwaters of an unnamed tributary to the East Branch Chester Creek. The tributary flows from Tyson Park, under Oakbourne Road, through an undeveloped parcel and under the railroad tracks, before emptying into the East Branch. It is important that the headwaters are protected and properly buffered in order to keep pollutants and sediments out of the tributary. A master plan should assess the wet areas and how to implement appropriate best management practices.
- **Provide additional landscaping**—Parks are an ideal location for the Township to demonstrate its commitment to providing street trees and maintaining the suburban forest. Street trees and other additional landscaping should be provided in order to provide park users with shade and to beautify the park and the entrance to the neighborhood.



*Tyson Park is very much a blank slate, which can be reinvigorated through work with the surrounding neighborhood.*



## LARCHBOURNE PARK

Type: Neighborhood Park  
Location: Larchwood Road  
Size: 2 acres  
Service Area: ½ Mile  
Uses: Active and passive recreation

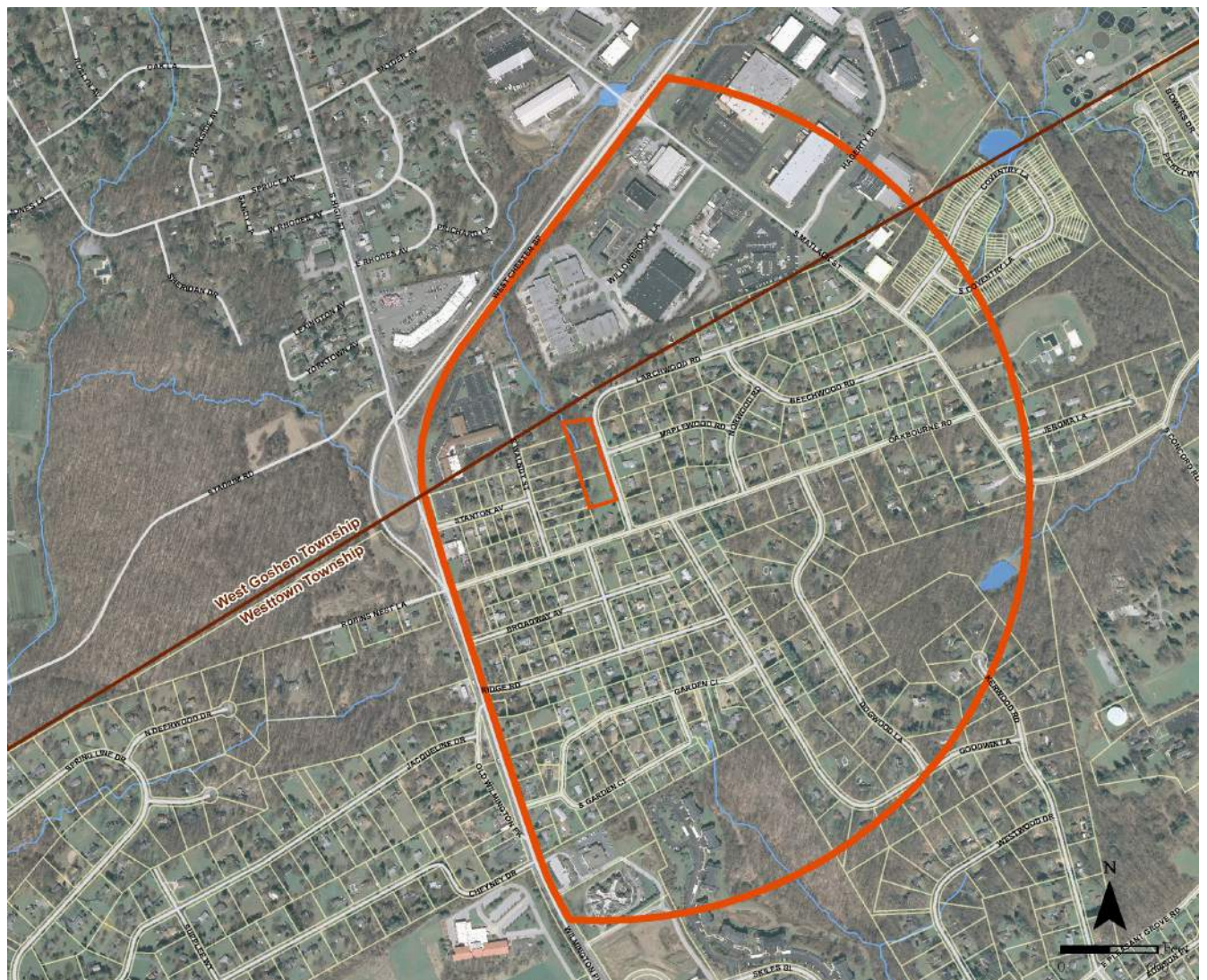


Figure 4.3: Larchbourne Park Service Area



Three parcels along Larchwood Road, totaling 2.02 acres, combine to make up Larchbourne Park. Approximately half of the park consists of naturalized woodland, while the other half is mowed lawn. The park features playground equipment, including standard swing sets and a tire swing that do not meet Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines. This small park serves the surrounding neighborhood.

- ***Delineate park boundaries***—It appears that neighbors have encroached on the park property along the rear lot lines. The park has no boundary delineations where it abuts neighboring properties. In many cases, the mowed grass of the park simply meets the mowed grass of neighboring properties. The boundary lines should be delineated with landscaping, fencing, monuments or other measures to ensure that the neighbors do not encroach on the park and also so that park users do not inadvertently trespass on the surrounding private properties.
- ***Assess layout***—The current location of the play equipment is set far back on the parcels. This requires visitors to cross wet areas in the center of the park to get to the play equipment. There are no trails or paths from the street to the play areas. Additionally, the play equipment is closer to the neighboring private properties than necessary, increasing the potential for conflicts.
- ***Plan for accessibility***—Larchwood Road features concave curbing, meant to convey stormwater along the edge of the road. This curbing does not meet ADA requirements and would act as a barrier for people in wheelchairs. As the park currently has no formal access area or accessible paths, a master plan should design for ADA accessibility. The required curb cuts, ramps and other features would also be very useful for parents pushing strollers, people riding bicycles or children in wagons or on scooters.



*Stewardship planning should be utilized at Larchbourne Park to identify invasive species and plan for maintenance of natural areas.*



*Larchbourne Park is lightly developed and has the opportunity to be improved through master planning and community involvement.*

- ***Spatial planning***—The area along Larchbourne Road, where the natural area meets mowed grass, appears to be a leftover space. The grass areas are too small to be used for recreation. It may be more cost effective for the township to naturalize these areas, thereby requiring less frequent maintenance. The rest of the park should also be assessed to determine whether mowing and ongoing maintenance can be reduced.
- ***Assess suitability and safety of play equipment***—The play equipment should be assessed for damage and to determine whether it meets current safety requirements.
- ***Manage invasive species***—The naturalized wooded areas contain some invasive species. These should be removed. Vines should also be cut before they reach the canopies of the trees.
- ***Address wet area***—A wet area exists in the center of the park. Currently, anyone wishing to use the play equipment has to walk through or around this large area. Redesign of the park or regrading of the land should be undertaken to address this issue.
- ***Provide additional landscaping***—Parks are an ideal location for the Township to demonstrate its commitment to providing street trees and maintaining the suburban forest. Street trees and other additional landscaping should be provided in order to provide park users with shade and to beautify the park and the entrance to the neighborhood.



PENNWOOD PARK

Type: Neighborhood Park  
Location: Carmac Road  
Size: 16.95 acres  
Service Area: ½ Mile  
Use: Passive recreation



Figure 4.4: Pennwood Park Service Area

Three parcels totaling 16.95 acres make up Pennwood Park. The park exists to the east of Penn Wood Elementary School. Road frontage is along the dead end spur of Carmac Street and access is from Johnny's Way. This park appears to have no marked public access and no dedicated uses. The previous open space plan stated that the park was used for baseball and soccer, though it appears that those uses no longer take place there.

- **Assess level of activity**—Active recreational uses previously took place at the park, but have been discontinued and much of the park has been allowed to naturalize. However, it appears that some mowing is still taking place. A master plan will assess the appropriate level of activity and determine whether the park should accommodate active or passive uses, natural areas, or some combination of the three. The level of activity would be based on factors such as the extent of natural features, access and proximity to neighbors.
- **Plan for uses**—Based on the outcome of assessment, plans must be put into place to establish the proposed uses. Should the parcels be planned as natural areas, trails, planting, stewardship and succession plans should be prepared. Remnant equipment from the previous athletic uses would be removed. If active recreation is reestablished at the site, the existing equipment should be assessed for usefulness and safety and a detailed design plan should be prepared.
- **Work with partners**—Consider a partnership with the School District to plan and develop this as a Community School Park.



## EDGEWOOD CHASE PARK

Type: Mini Park

Location: East Street Road (Route 926) in the Edgewood Chase Subdivision

Size: 3.6 acres

Service Area: ¼ Miles

Use: Passive recreation

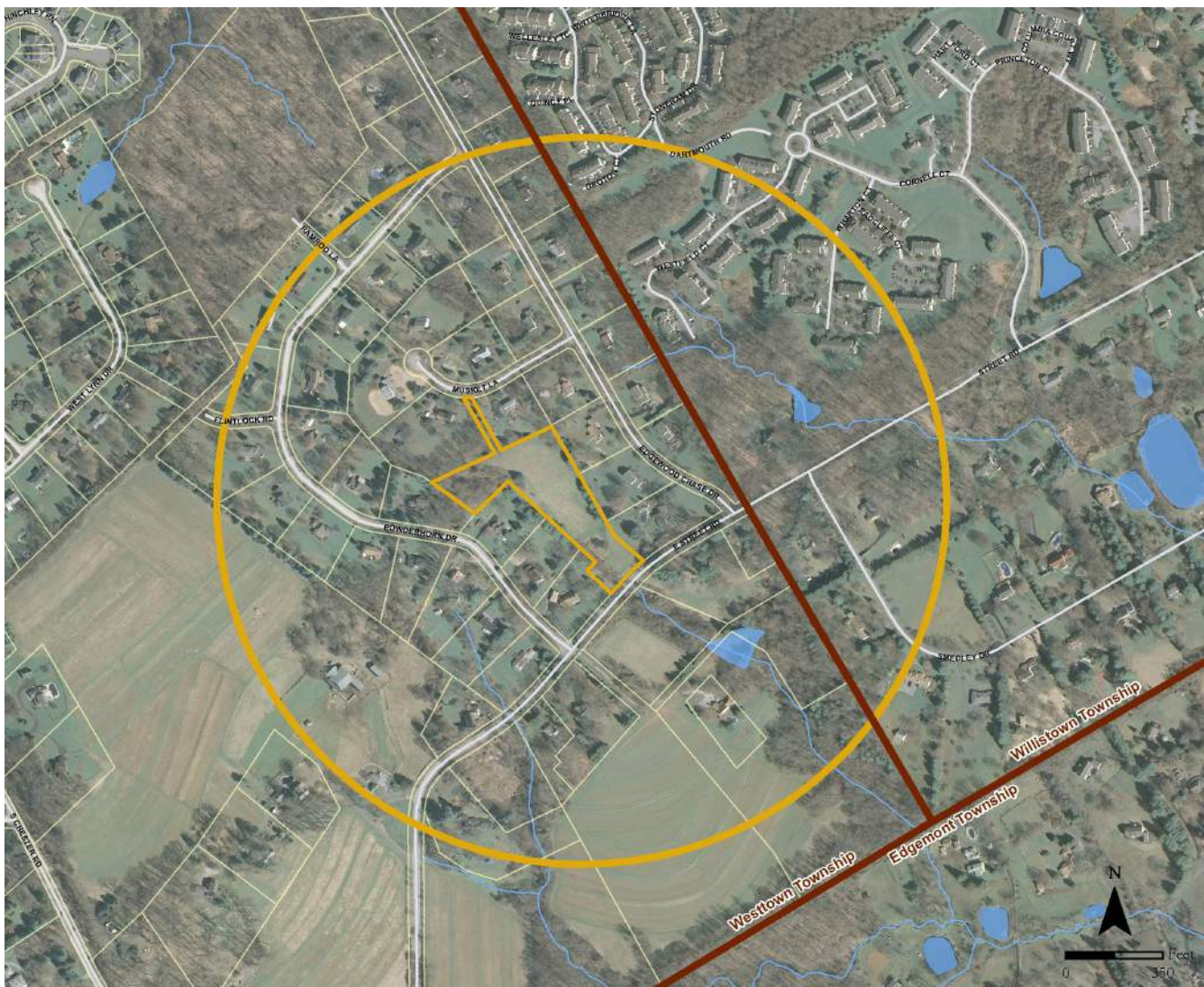


Figure 4.5: Edgewood Chase Service Area

This 3.6-acre park exists behind the homes in the Edgewood Chase subdivision. This mowed area appears to be used only by the residents of the surrounding homes. The park has a pedestrian access to Musket Lane which is unmarked. The southern end of the property borders on Route 926, though there is no parking area there. It is unclear how the park is used.

- ***Assess level of activity***—As part of the master planning process, public input should be gathered to determine how the park is used now and how the nearby neighbors would like to use the park in the future. Detailed plans should follow to establish the appropriate uses.
- ***Naturalize wet areas***—Edgewood Chase Park is the headwaters of an unnamed tributary to Ridley Creek. The tributary flows from Edgewood Chase Park, under Route 926, and through the Stratton Farm open space before leaving the Township. It is important that the headwaters are protected and properly buffered in order to keep pollutants and sediments out of the tributary. A master plan should assess the wet areas and how to implement appropriate best management practices.

# 5 RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

## ANALYSIS

Recreation is an important element of a vibrant healthy community. Recreation provides important social, economic, economic and individual benefits. Citizens rely on Westtown Township's parks and recreation opportunities to engage in active healthy living, connect with nature, socialize with family and friends and to feel a sense of belonging.

### Regional Opportunities

Parks and recreation opportunities are available in the West Chester area in state, county and municipal parks in other communities as well as private facilities such as YMCA's. The planning process for this *Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan* update found that Westtown citizens do, in fact, use parks and facilities outside of the Township for recreation. Oakbourne Park is the preferred recreation destination of Westtown citizens followed closely by state and county parks. Citizens also go to East Goshen, West Goshen, Thornbury, and West Chester Borough parks. West Chester Area school district facilities are also important locations for recreation. This is evident at the high school campus in the evening with its many visitors of all ages enjoying recreational pursuits.

### Recreation in Westtown Township

While it is important to note that regional recreation provides important recreation opportunities, it is equally important to recognize that citizens need opportunities in their own community as well. To that end, this section focuses on township services. Should the Township elect to explore regional recreation, based on the fact that the citizens do use facilities elsewhere, that should be a separate study (grant funding is available for that purpose from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources).

Recreation opportunities are available 365 days a year in Westtown Township's parks. The role that the Township plays in recreation is following the traditional path of small suburban municipalities with limited staff and budget. The Township primarily:

- Facilitates recreation by providing parks and recreation facilities,
- Supports the efforts of other providers who offer organized scheduled programs, and
- Promotes parks and recreation through the township's website and newsletters.

The focus of organized scheduled programs is primarily youth sports. Youth sports are usually the precursor of a broader range of recreation opportunities when resources, other partners or community organizations, or staff becomes available to provide this service. The recently formed Parks and Recreation Commission adopted a creative approach to offering scheduled recreation programs and events in the community.

## Organized Sports

Six main sports organizations play in Westtown Township. Table X presents the list of the leagues, participation, facilities used and trends.

Table 1. Sports Leagues in Westtown Township				
LEAGUE	PARTICIPATION	PLAYING SEASON	FACILITIES	TREND
West Chester United Soccer	3,500+ Boys Girls and Adults.  Waiting list	Winter, Spring, Fall, and Year Round travel	Thornbury Soccer Park, Delacy Soccer Complex, WCASD turf field, WCASD elementary and middle school fields, East Bradford Township, West Goshen Township, West Chester University indoor field, West Chester School indoor and outdoor fields, Phelps School Malvern indoor and outdoor fields, USTC Downingtown indoor and outdoor fields, Fellowship Turf Field Chester Springs	Fields are overused.  Pay \$100,000 in facility rental fees annually.  Pay \$175,000 for maintenance annually.  Need turf and lighted fields and an indoor facility.  400+ volunteers
East Side Little League	1,505 with 350 from Westtown Township  Boys & Girls  Waiting list	Spring and Fall	Own field at South Concord Road. Use fields at South Concord Road, WCASA Complex, Flag Field, Cloud Field, Oakbourne park, Rustin High School, and Willistown Park. Rents all facilities except the one they own.  Will lose fields in 2014 leaving 5-6 year olds without a place to play	Participation increasing by 2-5% annually with a project of 2,110 in 2018.  Number of games played has decreased since 2009 due to lack of fields.  No practices. \$65,000 annually in rental fees. \$10,000 annually in field improvements.



West Chester Lacrosse Association	700 Boys & Girls Waiting list	Spring	Stetson, Pierce, Fugett, Garrett Mill Park, West Goshen Park, Lambert Park, Kelly Field, Rustin High School, Henderson High School.	Increasing participation with 1,000 by 2018.  \$10,000 on field rental annually. \$6,000 on field maintenance annually.
Chester County Slo Pitch League	240 Adult males Waiting list	Spring and Summer	West Chester Area Sports Association, and Lambert Park	Participation more than doubled since 2009. Limited by field availability. Need restrooms.  All sports fields should have playground and shade.  \$2,500 on maintenance annually.
Ches-Del Senior Softball/Brandywine Valley Senior Softball	225 Adult Males Waiting List	Year round indoors and outdoors	Kelly Complex Greenfield Park East Bradford-Copeland School Garret Mill Lambert Field Concord Park	Only suitable field for their league is in Downingtown.
Chester County Ultimate (Frisbee)	530 Males and Females Waiting list	Spring, Summer, and Fall	Immaculata Open Field, Kennett Square TINO Lino Park, any flat field at Stetson and Peirce Middle Schools, USTC turf lighted field	Projecting 600+ by 2018 with enough field space. Pay \$6,000 annually in field rental.  Need restrooms.
Total	5,200 total WT residents			



*Organized sports are an integral part of the community in Westtown Township. As in so many communities, meeting the demands the playing fields presents challenges and calls for partnerships between the Township, school district and sports providers.*

In addition to the main sports organizations, two additional regional sports organizations serve the area.

- Pattison Sports Group is a lacrosse organization that focuses on tournaments. With over 10,000 participants, the tournaments are held in southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The organization is growing and is seeking more fields. While they are looking for a tournament quality facility, the minimum that works for a tournament is a site with at least three fields.
- West Chester Sports and Social Club (WCSSC) is a for-profit adult softball league with more than 500 players per season in the spring, summer and fall. The organization has tripled in participation since 2009 and, based on trends and demographics, expects to increase by another 50 percent by 2018. One of the organization's challenges is that its for-profit status appears to be a challenge in securing the use of public facilities. The organization provides an important service to young adults, which is typically a difficult age to program for. While fields are limited overall for specific community leagues, regional and for-profit leagues can be considered in sound municipal policies in field allocation as well as in fees and charges policies that include a range of facility permittees from private non-profit to for-profit with fees adjusted accordingly.

### West Chester Area School District

The West Chester Area School District is committed to supporting community recreation and the use of school district facilities for the public good. School district facilities are important to the community for both education and recreation. Community organizations use school district facilities for sports and special events. The School Superintendent reported in an interview for this plan that school ballfields and gymnasias are booked to capacity. Challenges to this mainly arise when people drive by and see fields unused but they are scheduled for use.

In terms of involvement, about 70 percent of the student body is involved in recreation related school district programs. There are 26 varsity and junior varsity teams in the Bayard Rustin High School and 120 various clubs.

### Westtown School

Westtown School occupies a significant area of Westtown Township. The school has private recreation facilities but there is no formal agreement for shared use.

## Senior Centers

Chester County offers six senior centers including a senior center in West Chester Borough:

West Chester Area Senior Center  
530 East Union Street  
West Chester, PA

This is the closest center to Westtown Township residents. The center operates Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The trend in services for future generations of active aging adults is toward multi-generational community centers that people use throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis once they retire.

## Private Recreation Services

In the school district region, there are about 35 private camps. They provide services for children and youth during the summer.

## Recreation Values

Community recreation values were determined through input through the public involvement process. There is no expectation that Westtown Township should directly provide recreation programs and services other than programs determined by the Parks and Recreation Commission as feasible to offer within their own capacity to do so. They include the following:

- Service for citizens of all ages,
- Opportunities for citizens that are mainly self-directed,
- Partnerships with other public and private entities in community recreation service,
- Information about recreation opportunities that is timely and accessible,
- Strengthen relationships and sense of community, and
- Provide safe, accessible and welcoming spaces to all people.

## Programs and Services Analysis

Public recreation opportunities in Westtown Township are primarily oriented to outdoor recreation, sports leagues, and programs offered by the Westtown Township Parks and Recreation Commission. What citizens want most is to be able to go to parks that are close to home to play, socialize, experience nature and engage in fitness activities such as walking and bicycling in safe places.

Residents are not seeking urbanized types of full-service organized scheduled programs. Supporting community recreation providers is important and a fitting role for the Township.

## Recreation Preferences

The top recreation interests that emerged during the public participation process were walking, bicycling, experiencing nature and fitness and wellness. This applied across all age groups.

## Recreation Concerns

Three areas emerged with major concerns: services for senior adults, the needs of community sports organizations for more facilities, and the community's desire for a trail system.

1. **Senior Adults**—About 19 percent of the Westtown population is age 60 or older. This group would like the parks to include facilities to have a focus on the senior citizens as well as for younger people.
2. **Sports Organizations**—There are not enough sports fields to accommodate play at present, much less in the future with growing participation. Fields are being lost and it is anticipated that children age five and six will not have enough baseball fields to play on in the coming years. Gymnasium space is also at a premium.
3. **Trail System**—Planning and developing a trail system would provide opportunities for active and passive recreation as well as safe walking and bicycling routes to the majority of the residents.



## Role of the Township in Recreation Opportunities

Given the size of the population and level of staffing and budget, the Township's role in directly providing recreation opportunities is limited. There is no staff to promote, plan, direct, carryout and evaluate organized recreation programs and events. The Parks & Recreation Commission is exploring ways to provide more recreation programs and events through their volunteer committee.

## Recreation Opportunity Recommendations

1. **Westtown Township can serve as point of contact for the public regarding information about parks and recreation.** This can be one of the most important yet least costly ways to serve the public. Planning and carrying out ways to increase public awareness can be a function of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Continue to use the link on the Township website for parks and recreation.
2. **Continue in the role of facilitator of recreation opportunities, not as a direct provider of services.** Foster relationships with community organizations that can plan, direct and implement public recreation programs. Supporting important organizations such as sports leagues is crucial.
3. **Ensure that all agreements for public use of facilities by community organizations comply with standard operating procedures.** This would include proper background checks, insurance liability requirements, and philosophies that strive to create healthy social environments for all involved.
4. **Develop a program plan for the Parks and Recreation Commission.** The Parks and Recreation Commission should develop a program plan that would focus on a three-year plan with an action plan for the first year. While it is laudable for volunteers to provide programs, in order to build a strong public recreation system, the programs must be consistent, of high quality, well advertised, and evaluated. Volunteers have limitations as well as frequent turnover. It is best for a volunteer board to focus on a few signature events that work very well until a part-time recreation coordinator can be hired.  
  
In the meantime, important functions that the Commission can provide in addition to the signature programs or events, is promoting parks and recreation facilities, engaging the community in parks and recreation planning, and facilitating programs offered by community based organizations through public private partnerships. Since children and youth appear to be well served, focus on active aging senior adults. Since this is a family oriented community, focus events with family-oriented themes. In terms of program areas, focus on fitness and wellness, connecting people with nature, and the arts.
5. **Focus recreation opportunities in experiences in the great outdoors.** Focus on creating opportunities for self-directed recreation rather than on organized, scheduled programs. This would be through the provision of facilities and the promotion of information on where people can enjoy nature, safely walk and bicycle, and socialize with family and friends.

# 6 ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT AND FINANCING

According to the Pennsylvania Second Class Township Code, the duty of the Board of Supervisors is to secure the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Township. The municipal parks and recreation operations help to fulfill that duty and are concerned with community welfare, improving quality of life, service to the public, enriched community life, wide use of leisure, and protection and conservation of the environment.

Recreation and parks systems are organized specifically to meet the objectives of those they serve. To be successful, parks and recreation organizations must emphasize quality, doing more with less, technology and social media, and rapid discontinuous change, coupled with a more sophisticated citizenry. This requires municipalities like Westtown with their parks and recreation system to be flexible and have a responsive organizational structure featuring networking, collaboration, coalition building, teaming, and establishing partnerships. Recreation, parks, and leisure service organizations must play the role of facilitator, encourager, and visionary rather than policy enforcer, controller, or director.

The organizational work of municipalities in the area of parks and recreation will be to encourage the best efforts of others rather than to provide all services directly. The productive management of any recreation and parks organization is greatly dependent upon the ability of its leadership and those involved at various levels of service delivery to work with and through people to achieve organizational goals.

## Westtown Township Organizational Structure

As a Township of the Second Class, Westtown Township operates with a three member Board of Supervisors. As the elected officials, they are responsible for setting policy. The Board of Supervisors appoints the Township Manager who is responsible for implementing the policy set forth by the Supervisors and managing the operation of the Westtown Township municipal services.

## Enabling Legislation for Parks and Recreation

The organization and management of Parks and Recreation in Westtown Township functions within the framework of the enabling legislation set forth for townships of the second class by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The *Second Class Township Code* provides for the establishment of parks, recreation centers, shade trees, and forest systems<sup>1</sup> in Townships of the Second Class, which includes Westtown Township. This legislation enables Westtown Township to acquire land, construct, improve, maintain, care for, regulate and govern the public parks and recreation system.

The *Second Class Township Code* enables Westtown Township to vest the authority to operate, manage and program parks and recreation facilities in a park or recreation board including the following responsibilities:

- Acquire and designate land and buildings for parks and recreation;
- Develop land and buildings for recreation;
- Supervise, maintain and regulate parks;
- Regulate the use of public parks and recreation facilities;
- Jointly purchase, develop, equip, and maintain public parks and recreation facilities in partnership with other townships, the county or school districts;
- Acquire and manage lands for forests;
- Equip, operate and maintain the parks, recreation areas and facilities, and
- Employ play leaders, recreation directors, supervisors, superintendents, or other officers or employees.

<sup>1</sup> Second Class Township Code. Act of May 1, 1933 (P.L. 103, No. 69). Reenacted and amended November 9, 1995 (P.L. 350, No. 60). As Amended Harrisburg, PA. Article XX. Sections 2201–2207. Parks, Recreation Centers, and Forests.

## Second Class Township Code and Recreation Boards

The Board of Supervisors may by ordinance create a recreation board to supervise, regulate, equip and maintain township-funded recreation programs and facilities. The recreation board has only those powers specifically delegated to it by the Board of Supervisors. Recreation boards, when established, shall consist of five, seven or nine persons. The members shall be appointed by the board of supervisors and shall serve for terms of five years or until their successors are appointed, except that the members first appointment shall be appointed so that the terms of not more than two members expire annually. Members shall serve without pay but may be reimbursed by the township for all expenses incurred in performing their duties.

All persons appointed shall serve their full terms unless voluntarily resigned or removed by the board of supervisors for dereliction or neglect of duty. Vacancies occurring other than by expiration of term shall be for the unexpired term and shall be filled in the same manner as original appointments. The members of a recreation board shall elect a chairman and secretary and select all other necessary officers to serve for a period of one year. The recreation board may adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of all business within its jurisdiction and exercise powers and functions concerning parks and recreation facilities as may be delegated to it by the board of supervisors. The recreation board shall submit an annual report to the board of supervisors, including an analysis of the adequacy and effectiveness of community recreation areas, facilities and leadership. (2204 amended Nov. 19, 2004, P.L.843, No.106) (53 PS. §67204)

## Parks and Recreation Organization and Management

Westtown Township does not have a parks and recreation department. The functions of parks and recreation are split among several township employees and volunteers in the community.

### Policy

The Board of Supervisors sets forth policy regarding all township parks and recreation functions including parks, land, recreation facilities, rules and regulations, fees and charges, planning, goal setting, and administration.

### Administration

The Township Manager implements parks and recreation policy established by the Board of Supervisors, oversees daily parks and recreation operations such as park maintenance, coordinates volunteer efforts, provides financial management and offers advice to the Board of Supervisors regarding parks and recreation.

### Park Maintenance

The Westtown Township Road Crew performs park maintenance functions. The Department has ten employees. The Township contracts out grass mowing. The crews perform routine maintenance as well as emergency repairs such as the repair of trail washouts.

### Westtown Township Parks and Recreation Commission

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Commission is to advise the Board of Commissioners regarding all matters affecting the parks, parks facilities and recreation budget. The Commission is empowered to consult with and advise the Township Manager and the Board of Supervisors in matters affecting recreation services policy, programs, finances, lands and properties related to the total community recreational services program, facility development, facility maintenance and to the long range, projected programs for recreation services.

The Westtown Township Board of Supervisors appoints seven members to the Parks and Recreation



Commission. They provide recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for actions related to parks, recreation, trails, greenways, open space and the management and support mechanisms required. The Commission plans, directs and carries out recreation programs and events for the public.

### Friends of Oakbourne

The mission of the Friends of Oakbourne is to work to develop and promote optimal recreational and educational utilization of the Westtown Township's Oakbourne Park and Mansion with diligent regard to the enhancement of its pastoral, historic and arboreal aspects. The Friends seek the broadest possible private, public organizational and governmental involvement in these endeavors. The Oakbourne Garden Club, originally formed as a member of the Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania, now operates as part of the Friends of Oakbourne.

### Friends of Larchbourne

The Friends of Larchbourne Park work to support and improve this park. They work in partnership with community organizations such as the Boy Scouts to improve the park through efforts such as Eagle Scout projects.

### Agricultural Security Area (ASA) Advisory Committee

Westtown Township participates in a state-enabled program to help preserve its agricultural open spaces and farming activity. Agricultural Security Areas are a tool for strengthening and protecting quality farmland from the pressures of urbanization. Westtown's ASA encompasses more than 600 acres of land in which landowners—including Westtown Township—have voluntarily enrolled.

The five-person advisory committee includes four citizens and one supervisor. The duties of this board include:

- Review of the land enrolled in the ASA every seven years to make sure it qualifies
- Adding new parcels of qualified farmland at any time

- Ensuring land enrolled in the ASA receives statutory special consideration regarding:
  - o Local ordinances affecting farming activities
  - o Nuisance complaints
  - o Review of farmland condemnation by state and local government agencies

### Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trail Related Organizations

Westtown Township is fortunate in having several organizations that provide important services related to parks and recreation.

### Chester County

The Chester County Board of Commissioners established the Vision Partnership Program in 1996 to promote cooperation between the County and local governments in the implementation of *Landscapes*, the County's comprehensive policy plan. Following the adoption of *Landscapes2* in 2009, the Vision Partnership Program (VPP) was fully updated to achieve better alignment with *Landscapes2* and the *County Strategic Plan*. Grants awarded to municipalities under the Vision Partnership Program help them in achieving consistency with the principles of *Landscapes2* through their local planning programs.

### Linking Landscapes

Chester County is very progressive and supportive of parks, recreation, open space, trails and planning in this arena. *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County*, is a component of the *Chester County Comprehensive Plan* and follows the policies set forth in *Landscapes: Managing Land in Chester County 1996–2000*, the Policy Element of the *Chester County Comprehensive Plan*. *Linking Landscapes* provides a vision for multi-municipal open space planning on a countywide basis. It presents a set of actions to coordinate the activities of the various County government departments involved with open space planning. It also provides municipalities with general guidelines they can use to responsibly protect open space, since Pennsylvania law grants them,

and not the County government, with the ultimate authority regarding land use. This countywide vision focuses not only on planning and protecting open spaces, but also on restoring and maintaining them so as to ensure that they will retain their ecological and recreational qualities in perpetuity.

### Technical Assistance and Trails

The Chester County Planning Commission produced a number of technical assistance publications for open space, parks, recreation and trails. These include *Trail and Path Planning: A Guide for Municipalities*; *Open Space Planning: A Guide for Municipalities*; *Land Stewardship Guidebook*; and *Preserving our Places, Historic Preservation Planning Manual for Chester County Communities*. The County has advanced trail planning and establishment through its work on the Chester Valley Trail, the Schuylkill River Trail and the development of a countywide Bike Map and the Central Chester County Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation Plan.

### Hands-On Support

The Chester County Planning Commission fosters excellence in planning and implementation through the hands-on technical assistance provided by its professional planners to municipalities and partner organizations undertaking planning and implementation projects related to open space, parks, recreation, and trails. The planners provide information, examples, encouragement, thoughtful questions and discussion and participate in community meetings to help move planning along. Through their diligence, municipalities are able to develop plans that advance their own municipal goals as well as play a role in regional efforts recommended in *Linking Landscapes*.

### West Chester Area School District

West Chester Area School District is a 75-square-mile suburban, urban, and rural area in central Chester County, Pennsylvania known for its many diversified businesses and beautiful historic countryside. The district is comprised of the West Chester Borough and the surrounding townships of East Goshen, West Goshen, East Bradford, West Whiteland,

Westtown, and Thornbury in Chester County, as well as Thornbury Township in neighboring Delaware County.

The mission of the West Chester Area School District is to educate and inspire their students to achieve their personal best. The School District has a strategic plan that includes two goals relate to the community and to parks and recreation:

#### Goal Number Four: Communication

*The West Chester Area School District will improve internal and external communications to foster strong and inclusive relationships, celebrate achievements, and recognize the contributions made by all members of our community. We will do a better job communicating with our community including students, faculty, staff, parents/guardians, area businesses, and citizens throughout the region. We will improve connectivity and inclusion. We will broaden distribution to eliminate barriers for those with limited access, including language and technology obstacles. We will celebrate achievements of all sorts, academic as well as non-academic.*

#### Goal Number Five: Community Engagement

*The West Chester Area School District will strengthen the integration of local, national, and global resources to benefit our students, staff, and community. We envision robust strengthened and new community and business relationships with for-profit and non-profit organizations, educational organizations, and service organizations. Elements will include mentorships, internships, transportation, financial, professional, educational support and student volunteer activities.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> West Chester Area School District Strategic Plan. [http://home.wcasd.net/pages/West\\_Chester\\_Area\\_SD/About\\_Us/Strategic\\_Plan](http://home.wcasd.net/pages/West_Chester_Area_SD/About_Us/Strategic_Plan). Accessed 15, 2013.

### Community Use of School District Facilities

The community uses school district sports fields and gymnasiums for recreational sports and league play. The Superintendent reported that fields are used to their maximum and that there is a need for more ball fields. While lacrosse is increasing dramatically, there are no fields to accommodate lacrosse leagues. In addition to more sports fields, finding safe ways for students to get to school via walking or bicycling is another need.

### Community Sports Organizations

Westtown Township is fortunate in having many sports organizations that provide youth sports leagues for adults and youth through volunteer services, fees, and fundraising. The Township, West Chester Area School District, other municipalities and the private sector provide facilities and support services such as facility maintenance and public awareness to support the leagues.

Leagues that serve the people of Westtown include: East Side Little League, West Chester Lacrosse Association, West Chester United Soccer Club, Pattison Sports Group, West Chester United Soccer Club, Chester County Slo-Pitch League, West Chester Area Sports Association Complex, Ches-Del Senior Softball, Brandywine Valley Senior Softball, West Chester Sport and Social Club, West Chester Area Softball Association, Little All American Football Association, Philadelphia Area Disc Alliance, and Chester County Ultimate.

### Financing

The following section presents information on parks and recreation revenues and expenditures. It also includes comparisons on parks and recreation financing with other municipalities in the West Chester Area School District. Generally, funding for public parks and recreation systems falls into two major categories: capital funding and operational funding. Capital funding is generally regarded as expenditures more than \$10,000 for improvements that last more than five to seven years. Operational funding is for the day-to-day maintenance and operation of the public parks and recreation system. This includes park maintenance, programs and services, advertising, staffing, utilities, equipment, supplies, and materials.

### Benefits of Youth Sports

Youth sports can have positive effects in the lives of the participants. The skills children develop while participating in sports translate to their other activities and commitments, including school performance and family relationships. These include:

- Self-discipline
- Self-confidence
- Fitness and health
- Deterrence to substance abuse
- Family bonds
- Lie-long healthy lifestyles
- Strong relationships with peers and adults



### Revenue Sources

Westtown Township generates revenues through parks and recreation. Table 2 presents non-tax revenues for 2013.

Table 2. Westtown Township Parks and Recreation Non-Tax Revenue Sources	
SOURCE	AMOUNT
Rents and Royalties	
Township park/land fees	\$3,500
Oakbourne Field Lease	\$3,400
Oakbourne Mansion Events	\$7,500
Total	\$14,400.00
Recreation Program Fees	
PAG Program Fees	\$800
Community Garden Fees	\$150
Community Garden Annual Dues	\$350
Total	\$1,300.00
Contributions/Donations	
Contributions	\$150
Mansion ARC Note cards	0
Donations – Oakbourne Mansion	0
Total	\$150
TOTAL	\$15,850

Table 3 presents a comparison of Westtown Township's operating budgets for the municipality and for parks and recreation.

Table 3. Westtown Township Parks and Recreation Budget 2013	
SOURCE	AMOUNT
Culture and Recreation Administration	
Park & Recreation Commission	\$3,000
Oakbourne Mansion Commission	\$1,500
Special Tourism Marketing Initiative	\$6,500
Park Playground Equipment	0
Total	\$11,000
Township Parks	
General Park Expense	\$1,500
Park Supplies	\$1,500
Special Park Projects	\$1,200
Park Tool & Equipment Purchase	\$250
Park Equipment Repair & Operation	\$900
Equipment Rental	\$3,200
Parks – Lawn Maintenance Contract	\$28,000
Community Garden Shared Cost	\$350
Total	\$36,900
TOTAL	\$47,900

Out of the annual \$47,900 operating budget for parks and recreation, Westtown Township recovers \$15,850 in revenues or 33 percent of the budget.

In addition to the parks and recreation budget, Westtown Township also invests \$20,000 in forestry management.

Table 4 presents a comparison of Westtown Township's operating budgets for the municipality and for parks and recreation.

Table 4. Comparison of 2013 Municipal and Parks and Recreation Operating Budgets in the Westtown Township Area					
Township	Population (2010)	Parks & Recreation Operating Budget	Township Operating Budget	Per Capita Investment in Parks & Recreation	Ratio of Parks & Recreation Budget to Township Operating Budget
<b>Westtown</b>	<b>10,827</b>	<b>\$47,900</b>	<b>\$5,936,489</b>	<b>\$4.42</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
East Bradford	9,942	\$64,450	\$3,210,080	\$6.48	2.0%
East Goshen	18,026	\$460,820	\$7,710,399	\$25.56	5.9%
Thornbury (Chester County)	3,017	\$33,485	\$1,717,917	\$11.10	1.9%
West Bradford	12,223	\$254,135	\$3,300,454	\$20.79	7.7%
West Chester Borough	18,461	\$684,436*	\$19,772,057	\$37.07	3.5%
West Goshen	21,866	\$1,395,016	\$13,264,158	\$63.80	10.5%
Regional	94,362	\$2940,242	\$54,911,554	\$31.16	5.3%
State Average				\$27.00	N/A
National Average				\$64.00	2.14%
Thornbury (Delaware County)	8,028	N/A	\$1,800,000	N/A	N/A

\*includes \$312,000 in revenues raised through fees and charges.



Table 4 presents the following findings:

- As a region, the municipalities of the West Chester Area School District spend seven times more than Westtown Township in their per capita operating budget for parks and recreation.
- The ratio of Westtown Township's operating budget for parks and recreation is only 15 percent of the regional average.
- These comparisons reflect municipalities with and without parks and recreation departments. Since Westtown Township has a population of about 10,827, it is not sufficient to have a full-time parks and recreation department such as West Bradford, East Goshen, West Bradford, and West Chester. Generally a population of about 15,000 would be the benchmark for having a parks and recreation department.
- However, the Westtown Parks and Recreation budget does NOT include labor which is in the Public Works budget. Should the amount of time spent on park maintenance be calculated, these figures would no doubt increase. Based upon parks and recreation work elsewhere, using a projection for the level of work conducted based upon equipment and supply expenses provides a reasonable guess. Using a figure of \$4 in materials and supplies for every hour of labor translates into 2,225 work hours.

### Organization, Management, and Financing Analysis

In this time of economic crisis and increasing accountability from all levels of government, decision-makers, staff and citizens alike expect efficient and effective operating systems. The following analysis includes the strengths challenges and opportunities regarding parks and recreation organization, management, and financing.

### Organization, Management, and Financing Strengths

- **Westtown Township Professional Management and Staff**—Westtown Township is fortunate in having a dedicated, professional township manager and support staff. The Manager performs many functions including that of parks and recreation. As the parks and recreation system grows, there will be a limit on the amount of time he can offer within the overall municipal functions he must provide.
- **Creative Outsourcing**—Westtown Township contracts out mowing. This eliminates equipment purchase and maintenance costs. It is in fact a best management practice to contract out about 20 percent of park maintenance work. Routine quantifiable tasks such as mowing make then suitable for outsourcing.
- **Accomplishments**—Westtown Township restored the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commission serves in an advisory capacity and plans and provides recreation programs. The Commission also oversees Oakbourne Park and Mansion.

The Township undertook this major planning effort to update a parks and recreation plan that was about 20 years old and very outdated. The Township sought and received funding for this project from the Chester County Vision Partnership Program. The Township also received a PECO Green Region grant to help improve Tyson Park.

Westtown Township does a lot with a little in terms of the quality of park maintenance. The parks look clean and attractive. People rate the quality of maintenance favorably. The challenge is that the Township is not able to provide more intense maintenance needed such as sports turf management.

- **Township Organizational Capacity**—Westtown Township operates within a framework of trying to create maximum organizational effectiveness using staff as a team to deliver excellent public service within a climate of fiscal austerity and accountability.

- **Support**—The Township is fortunate in having a strong cadre of volunteers in important areas of overall parks and recreation as well as in community sports.
- **Funding Sources**—The Township has been creative in pursuing outside sources of funding including grants from Chester County, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the PECO Green Region Open Space program.
- **Investment in Conservation**—Westtown Township has a \$20,000 forestry management budget. This line item is an important indicator that Westtown Township supports conservation.

## Management Challenges

- **While there is no parks and recreation department, the Township is not of sufficient size to have a full-time director.** The Township can consider part-time staff for recreation and parks, designating an existing staff person to have formalized recreation and parks responsibilities with a specified time allotment for this function, or working with adjoining municipalities in a regional parks and recreation consortium with shared parks and recreation staff.
- **There is no workload cost-tracking system for park maintenance.** Without information about park costs in terms of staffing, it is very difficult to make informed decisions about park planning, resource allocation, and fees and charges policy. In a relatively small township with a relatively small park system in which park maintenance falls under public works, it would not be unusual that workload by park and task is not tracked. It would be very helpful as the system evolves to establish workload cost tracking as a practice.
- **Roles and responsibilities of the Parks and Recreation Commission need to be formalized.** Since the re-establishment of the Commission members have been operating full-steam ahead but their role and function has never been formally defined and vetted.

- **Park planning is not a designated function with defined parameters and requirements.** Park planning has been undertaken informally, without the involvement of key stakeholders, a public participation process, and professional consultants early enough in the project. Major projects go forward without a plan in place that has been developed through a thoughtful and creative planning and design process. Park projects have not addressed the long-term responsibility for maintenance, programming, financial and human resources, potential partners or alternatives to traditional support by the Township.
- **Communication tends to be fragmented and disjointed among elected and appointed officials and the citizenry.** No formal communication system is in place. As a result, discussions about important issues appear to be reactionary and result in conflicts, ineffective relationships, and challenging policies.

## Management Opportunities

- **Making the Case for Parks and Recreation**—The planning process for this project found that there are varying levels of understanding and some misconception about the importance of parks, recreation, open space and trails. One of the most valuable things that the Parks and Recreation Commission and related organizations such as the park friends groups and sports leagues would be to joining forces in a strategic effort to document why parks and recreation is vital to this community and then to promote their findings.
- **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan Implementation**—Having an adopted parks and recreation plan in place will foster efficient and effective ways of operating since a common mission, goals and recommendations will be in place. Capitalize on the adoption of this plan by implementing the action plan through the designation of roles and responsibilities for actions that include a mix of township resources and partnerships with organizations in the public and private sectors.

- **Successful Parks and Recreation Partnership Potential**—Westtown Township’s staff and budget are too small to provide everything that is needed in parks and recreation. Collaboration with others will help to leverage existing township support for enhanced facilities and services. It is important to set a positive and welcoming tone to attract people of all ages, interests, and abilities. Seeking partnerships with people with expertise in advertising, fundraising, natural resources, trails, programming and other such functions would help to advance township goals in parks and recreation.
- **Parks and Recreation Commission Strategic Plan**—The Parks and Recreation Commission should develop a strategic plan to help implement this *Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan* as the driving force for community parks, recreation, open space and trails. The strategic plan should specify roles, responsibilities, action steps, partnerships, expertise needed, sources of resources and other topics of importance. The strategic plan should be practical and achievable in recognition of the resources available. Any small step and accomplishment will advance the Township and create momentum for future action and more partner involvement. Small successes over time build major positive change.
- **Park Planning Strategy**—Develop a strategy for park planning that is holistic, prioritized, has broad public support, includes public involvement, professional park planning services, and the development of a capital improvement program.
- **Maintenance Management System Formalization**—A formalized park maintenance management system should be developed, implemented and computerized. Four distinct areas of maintenance could be addressed in the maintenance management system: parks, recreation facilities, natural resources and trails. By organizing maintenance into these areas, decision-making regarding staffing, financing, training, setting priorities and partnerships could be enhanced.
- **Natural Resources Management**—This should be a function of maintenance and park and recreation planning. Continue to integrate natural resource management with overall community planning. Provide training to workers involved with park maintenance.

# 7 IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WITH DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter presents short (within three years) and long term (three to ten years) implementation recommendations, organized by the three goals. The Open Space Task Force also identified three recommendations for immediate action by the Township. The three highest priority recommendations, recommended to begin within six months of adoption of this plan, include:

### Immediate Action Steps

(to begin within six months of adoption of this plan by the Board of Supervisors)

1. Make better use of the existing Township parks by moving forward with an analysis of existing facilities at Oakbourne, Larchbourne, Pennwood, Edgewood Chase and Tyson Parks.
2. Evaluate trails, with assistance from the Parks and Recreation Committee (or a newly appointed subcommittee devoted to trails), identifying trails in need of repair, as well as priorities for new trails that connect existing parks, schools and neighborhoods.
3. Purchase land adjacent to existing parks, trails and open spaces, for the purposes of creating an interconnected open space network. Investigate options such as partial acquisition, or acquisition of trail easements, in order to keep acquisition costs low. As needed, reconvene the Open Space Task Force as a sounding board on land acquisition priorities.

## Implementation Recommendations

### Goal 1

Make Westtown Township “Forever Green” by preserving natural, historic and scenic places.

**Objectives**—A developed, suburban community, Westtown Township values the remaining natural areas and historic, agrarian landscape. The Township works to retain the remaining working farms and largest remaining undeveloped tracts, as open space. Paramount to success is establishing working relationships with the landowners of the largest remaining tracts. The local land use regulations help meet the goals of conserving open space, natural areas and water quality. Conserving open space and managing Township lands in a green and sustainable manner helps to conserve and enhance water quality in Chester and Goose Creeks and Radley Run. In addition to leading by example, the Township educates homeowners’ on land management, establishing partnerships with private and non-profit organizations to do so.



<b>GOAL 1: FOREVER GREEN—SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (within 3 years)</b>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>	
G1-ST1	Use the Tyson Park wetlands restoration project as an opportunity to involve neighbors in the park and to educate the public about sustainable land management.	BOS	P&R, CRC and contractor	PECO grant in-hand	
G1-ST2	Pursue the acquisition of properties that enhance the open space, trail or greenway networks.	BOS	P&R, staff	Township, Chester County	
G1-ST3	Provide “greening” of development through updated landscaping standards in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance that apply to all land development applications in the Township.	PC	Consultant	Chester County VPP program	
G1-ST4	Develop a 5–7 year Capital Improvement Program.	BOS	P&R, Township staff	Sports organizations, community groups	
G1-ST5	Protect natural areas from the impact of new development and improve water quality by improving the natural resource protection standards, including riparian protection, in the Zoning Ordinance.	PC	Consultant	Chester County VPP program	
G1-ST6	Set aside open space in new development, in addition to those lands that can’t be developed due to environmental constraints, by updating the Flexible development standards in the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate conservation subdivision design. Periodically review and update ordinances to meet Westtown’s needs.	PC	Consultant	Chester County VPP program	

GOAL 1: FOREVER GREEN—LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (3–10 years)				
Item	Recommendation	Lead Party	Assistance	Potential partners/funding
G1-LT1	Establish a Shade Tree Commission to care for the Township's existing trees, work with landowners on tree maintenance, and coordinate new tree plantings.	BOS	Township manager, staff & solicitor	STC would be a volunteer committee, relying on citizens as members
G1-LT2	Investigate Audubon PA Bird Town status, encouraging landowners to provide bird habitat, by using a Township site as an example of habitat restoration.	BOS	Audubon PA	To be determined, but local costs are minimal
G1-LT3	Pursue a permanently protected open space corridor from Oakbourne Park to Rustin School, through fee simple acquisition, easements and voluntary donations.	BOS, P&R	School District	Public and private partnerships

## Goal 2

Foster fitness, wellness and play, with programs and facilities for Westtown Township residents.

**Objectives**—Westtown Township will strive to provide residents with a safe and accessible park system with opportunities for fitness, wellness and play. The Township will pursue opportunities to improve the park system by engaging residents in master plans for parks and by looking for opportunities to expand and connect the parks through selective acquisition and voluntary donation of land and easements. In meeting the active recreation needs of residents of all ages, the Township will identify gaps and determine opportunities to meet the needs for playing fields, including working with private recreation providers and the school district to enhance recreational opportunities. The Township encourages passive recreation for residents, and will strive to improve and expand pedestrian and bike trails; community gardens; and opportunities for school district partnerships that encourage active, healthy living.

<b>GOAL 2: FOSTER FITNESS, WELLNESS AND PLAY—SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (within 3 years)</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>
G2-ST1	Use the Trust for Public Land model of successful park and recreation systems in guiding the improvement of Township parks, recreation and open space.	P&R, BOS	Township staff	Community organizations
G2-ST2	Ensure the dedication of open space, including unconstrained lands suitable for playing fields, as the Crebilly Farm development plan proceeds.	BOS	PC	Developer and recreation providers
G2-ST3	Appoint a Township representative to enter into discussions with the school district regarding playing field construction on the parcel adjacent to Rustin School.	BOS	PC, P&R, solicitor	No cost
G2-ST4	Complete master plans for Tyson, Larchbourne and Pennwood Parks, (the Township pocket parks). Include comprehensive inventories of environmental features, and an evaluation of the park context and potential connections to surrounding neighborhoods and public lands.	P&R	BOS, Township staff, consultant	DCNR grant to match Township funds
G2-ST5	Complete a master plan for Oakbourne Park, which considers its role as a community park, and as an historic site.	P&R	BOS, HC, Friends of Oakbourne, Twp staff, consultant	DCNR grant to match Township funds
G2-ST6	Complete a maintenance and management plan for the Oakbourne Mansion, Tower and Estate area. Ensure all agreements for public use of facilities by community organizations comply with standard operating procedures.	P&R	Consultants, BOS, Friends of Oakbourne, Twp staff, HC	PHMC/Keystone grant to match Township funds
G2-ST7	Establish an umbrella sports organization in which the leagues work collaboratively on township wide sports issues while operating leagues independently.	P&R, sports organization volunteers	Township staff	Volunteer and staff time
G2-ST8	Develop a program management plan in which the Parks & Recreation Commission adopts the role of facilitator of recreation programs provided by others, promoter of opportunities and the “go-to” organization for information about parks & recreation, and the direct provider of a few seasonal events. Focus on promoting self directed outdoor recreational opportunities.	P&R	Township manager and dedicated staff person	Volunteer and staff time

<b>GOAL 2: FOSTER FITNESS, WELLNESS AND PLAY—SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (within 3 years)</b>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>	
G2-ST9	Formalize the roles and responsibilities of Westtown Township staff in parks and recreation. Designate a single point of contact for information and input parks and recreation.	Township manager	Dedicated staff person	Staff time	
G2-ST10	Develop a public awareness program about community recreation opportunities.	P&R	Parks & Recreation Commission with support from Township manager and dedicated staff person	Volunteer and staff time	
G2-ST11	Adopt a policy that Westtown Township will serve in the role of facilitator of recreation opportunities through facilities, information, and promotion of activities and services. Organized scheduled programs would be limited to a few signature events and activities that recur annually to build consist high quality community events under the auspices of the Parks & Recreation Commission.	P&R Commission	P&R Commission	Volunteer and staff time	
G2-ST12	Develop policies and operational guides for the use of township parks and recreation facilities.	P&R Commission in development with Township Supervisors reviewing and adopting agreed upon policies and guides.	Township Manager; input from community organizations and related recreation providers such as sports leagues.	Volunteer and staff time	



<b>GOAL 2: FOSTER FITNESS, WELLNESS AND PLAY—LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (3–10 years)</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>
G2-LT1	Plan, design, build and install a township-wide parks and recreation signage systems.	P&R	Township manager or township staff assistance	Design the system as a whole then build and install the signage over time as park improvements are undertaken. Cost to be determined.
G2-LT2	Develop a township bicycle and pedestrian mobility plan, trail feasibility study and trail maintenance plan.	Trail Advisory Committee to be appointed by BOS	Township manager and designated staff person	DCNR or foundation grant
G2-LT3	Implement trails recommended in park master plans and within this plan.	P&R	Public Works	DCNR, Chester County
G2-LT4	Identify parcels for easement acquisition or fee simple purchase necessary to implement township wide trails plan.	BOS, PC & P&R	Attorney and consultant	Land Trust, DCNR, Chester County private contributions
G2-LT5	Hire a part-time parks and recreation coordinator.	BOS, P&R	Township manager	\$20,000–\$30,000. Township funding. Programs would generate revenue to offset salary costs.
G2-LT6	Develop policies on fees and charges.	BOS	Use examples of policies from other parks and recreation organizations; assistance of township staff person	Volunteer time and potentially staff time
G2-LT7	Develop a formal volunteer program.	P&S	Township staff	Represents a cost savings

### Goal 3

Westtown Township implements this open space plan update, “making it happen” by allocating financial and human resources that support the plan.

**Objectives**—In determining how to provide the financial and human resources to carry out this open space plan, the Township balances fiscal responsibility with community needs. The Township will investigate staffing necessary to provide residents with parks and recreation, using Township employees and interns from local universities, as well as user fees as a means of providing services. In order to leverage scarce Township funds, Westtown Township will look for opportunities to outsource and collaborate with other providers for fitness, wellness and play. Schools remain a critical partner for collaboration for both shared facilities and programs. The Township hopes to continue leasing land to farmers as it both keeps land in agriculture and produces revenue for the Township, a “win-win” situation. Our residents are our greatest resource and their involvement in planning for their local parks, and in volunteering at community events, will be invaluable to the success of this plan and quality of the community.

<b>GOAL 3: MAKING IT HAPPEN—SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (within 3 years)</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>
G3-ST1	Establish a strategic plan for the Parks & Recreation Committee.	P&R	Consultant	Consider obtaining a RecTAP grant of \$2,500 to undertake this project. Add township funding of about another \$2,500.
G3-ST2	Develop a holistic park planning strategy that involves the public, professional park planning services, the establishment of priorities and a 5–7 year Capital Improvement Program.	P&R	Consultant	Westtown Township, Chester County, DCNR
G3-ST3	Contact local universities for interns to assist with Parks and Recreation projects.	BOS	Township manager	Township
G3-ST4	Continue to lease farmland, encouraging working farms and generating Township revenue.	BOS	Township staff/solicitor	Revenue generating
G3-ST5	Using the names gathered in the on-line public comment form, as part of this plan, recruit volunteers to invigorate the Friends of Oakbourne and populate other Township committees.	P&R	BOS, HC, Township staff	Cost savings
G3-ST6	Establish a subcommittee of the Park & Recreation Commission to assist the Township with landowner outreach and other open space related issues.	BOS	Township manager, solicitor, consultant (limited role)	The subcommittee would be made up of members of the P&R Commission.
G3-ST7	Conduct an exit survey at the November 2014 (or other appropriate) election polls, or via a “super voter” mailing, determining local support for an open space referendum that would fund open space acquisition.	BOS	Volunteers	No cost beyond printing of questionnaire
G3-ST8	Update the Township mandatory dedication/fee in lieu requirements in the Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance, in order to collect appropriate impact fees as residential and non-residential development occurs.	PC	Consultant and Township solicitor	Chester County VPP grant, or Township
G3-ST9	Budget for and commence a phased implementation of the recommendations in the Tyson, Larchbourne, Pennwood and Oakbourne Park master plans.	BOS	P&R, OFG, HC, Township staff	DCNR

<b>GOAL 3: MAKING IT HAPPEN—SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (within 3 years)</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>
G3-ST10	Make the case for parks and recreation by promoting the benefits and value of Westtown Township's park and recreation system.	P&R	Township staff	Public and private organizations
G3-ST11	Phase in public and private support of the parks and recreation system. Work on increasing the township's investment in parks and recreation over the next ten years as facilities are developed or improved. Strive to reach three to five percent of the operating budget or \$27 per capita. Strive to recover about 50 percent of the budget through fees, charges, rentals, sales donations, bequests, etc.	BOS	Township staff, P&R	To be determined
G3-ST12	Formulate a planned maintenance management system, including a natural resources management plan. Develop a workload cost tracking system for parks and recreation.	Public Works and Twp mgr	Maintenance staff and P&R. Outside support from consulting park maintenance management expert.	Consider seeking a DCNR or DCED grant to develop the planned maintenance system ranging from a \$10,000 grant or a peer study up to \$25,000–\$35,000 50/50 technical assistance grant.

<b>GOAL 3: MAKING IT HAPPEN—LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (3–10 years)</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Potential partners/funding</b>
G3-LT1	Consider a multi-municipal parks and recreation consortium.	BOS	Elected and appointed officials in surrounding townships	Peer Study Grant of \$10,000 from DCNR to be matched by \$1,000 split among municipal partners.
G3-LT2	Consider an open space referendum in order to leverage count and state funding opportunities.	BOS	Township solicitor	To be determined.
G3-LT3	Consider creation of a land disposition policy, clearly stating the terms under which the Township may divest itself of property.	BOS	Township solicitor	To be determined.

BOS – Board of Supervisors  
 PC – Planning Commission  
 P&R – Parks and Recreation Commission  
 HC – Historical Commission  
 CRC – Chester Ridley Crum Watershed Association  
 OFG – Oakbourne Friends Group



# APPENDIX

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*Disclaimer: These maps are not surveys. The information imparted with these maps is meant to assist Natural Lands Trust, Inc., describe the placement of certain retained, reserved, or excluded rights and to calculate acreage figures. Property boundaries, while approximate, were established using the best available information, which may have included: surveys, tax maps, field mapping using G.P.S., and/or orthophotos. Natural Lands Trust, Inc., makes no representation as to the accuracy of said property lines (or any other lines), and no liability is assumed by reason of reliance thereon. Use of these maps for other than their intended purpose requires the written consent of Natural Lands Trust, Inc.*



- 1. Municipality boundaries, waterways, and roadways from PA MAP, DCNR.
- 2. 2010 parcel boundaries from Chester County.
- 3. Public and Protected Lands (2012) from Chester County.

Map 1:  
Public and Protected Lands

**WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP**  
OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

Chester County, PA

Municipal boundaries

Parcel boundaries

Waterways

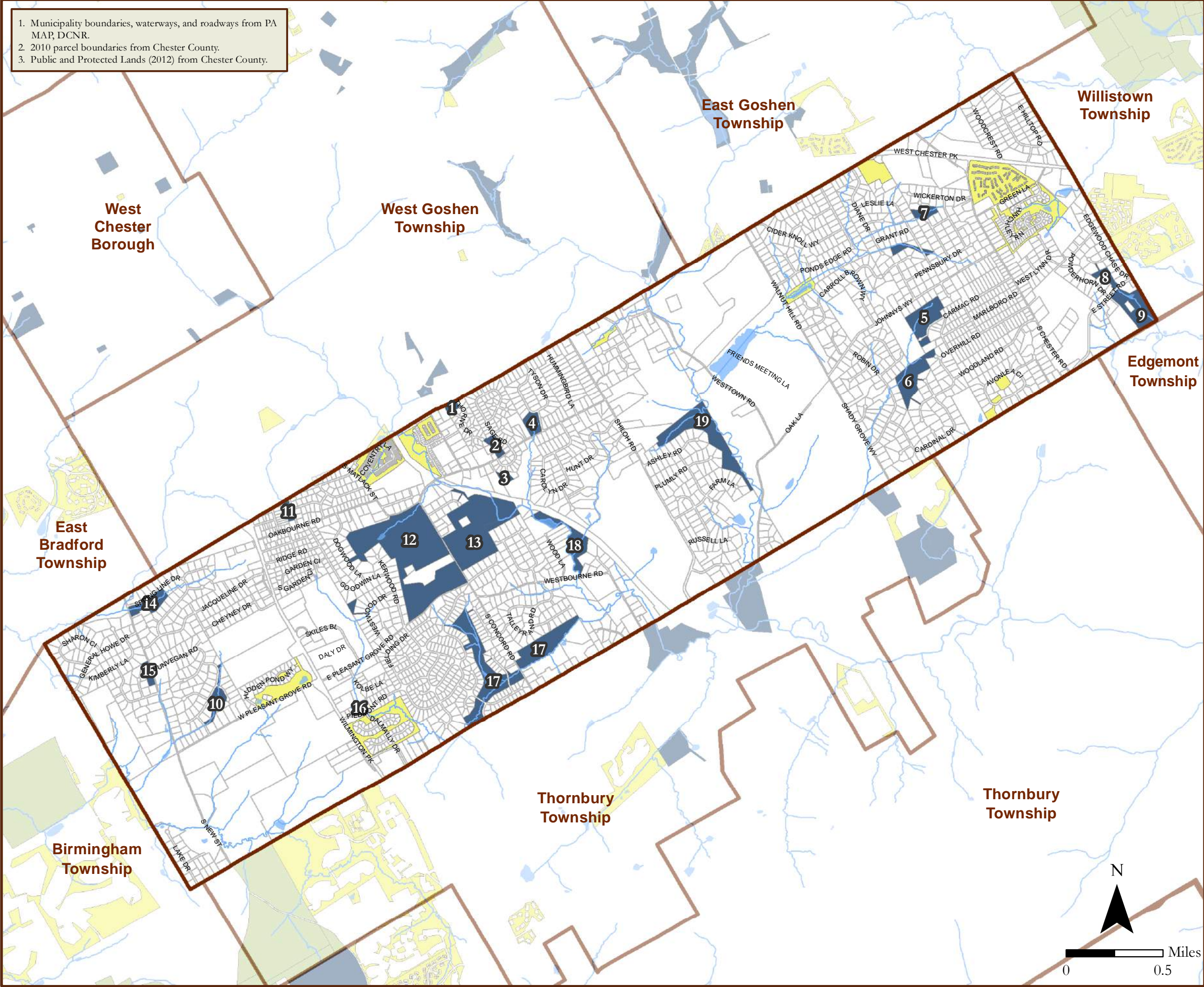
Public and Protected Lands

HOA Protected Open Space

Land Trust Open Space Easement

Municipal Open Space

- 1: Springview Court (+/- 1.8 acres)
- 2: Sage Road West (+/- 2.8 acres)
- 3: Sage Road Cul De Sac (+/- 1.9 acres)
- 4: Tyson Park (+/- 5.0 acres)
- 5: Pennwood Park (+/- 14.3 acres)
- 6: South of Pennwood School (+/- 14.3 acres)
- 7: Wickerton Drive (+/- 3.4 acres)
- 8: Edgewood Chase Park (+/- 3.4 acres)
- 9: Stratton Tract (+/- 14.9 acres)
- 10: Dunvegan Rd (+/- 5.0 acres)
- 11: Larchbourne Park (+/- 2.1 acres)
- 12: Oakbourne Park West (+/- 91.5 acres)
- 13: Oakbourne Park East (+/- 50.3 acres)
- 14: Plum Run/Spring Line Drive (+/- 7.3 acres)
- 15: S. New Street/Shenandoah (+/- 2.6 acres)
- 16: Pleasant Grove (+/- 2.5 acres)
- 17: West Pleasant Grove (+/- 48 acres)
- 18: Marshall Jones Woods (+/- 13.6 acres)
- 19: Plumly Open Space (+/- 27.9 acres)







- 
1. Municipality boundaries, waterways, and roadways from PA MAP, DCNR.  
 2. 2010 parcel boundaries from Chester County.  
 3. 2010 Aerial photography from DVRPC.
- Map labels include: WEST CHESTER, EAST BRADFORD, WEST GOSHEN, EAST GOSHEN, WEST GOSHEN, WEST CHESTER PK, WILLSTOWN, THORNBURY (DELAWARE COUNTY), EDMONT, CHEVNEY RD, WESTTOWN THORNTON RD, S CONCORD RD, BIRMINGHAM, THORNBURY (CHESTER COUNTY), S NEW ST, WILMINGTON PK, W PLEASANT GROVE RD, E PLEASANT GROVE RD, OAKBOURNE RD, S CONCORD RD, S MATLACK ST, S HIGH ST, S FIVE POINTS RD, WESTTOWN RD, WALNUT HILL RD, JOHNNY'S W, S CHESTER RD, DUTTON MILL RD, E STRASBURG RD, N CHESTER RD.
- Scale: 0 to 0.5 Miles. North arrow pointing up.

# WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP

## OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

 Municipal boundaries  
 Parcel boundaries  
 Waterways





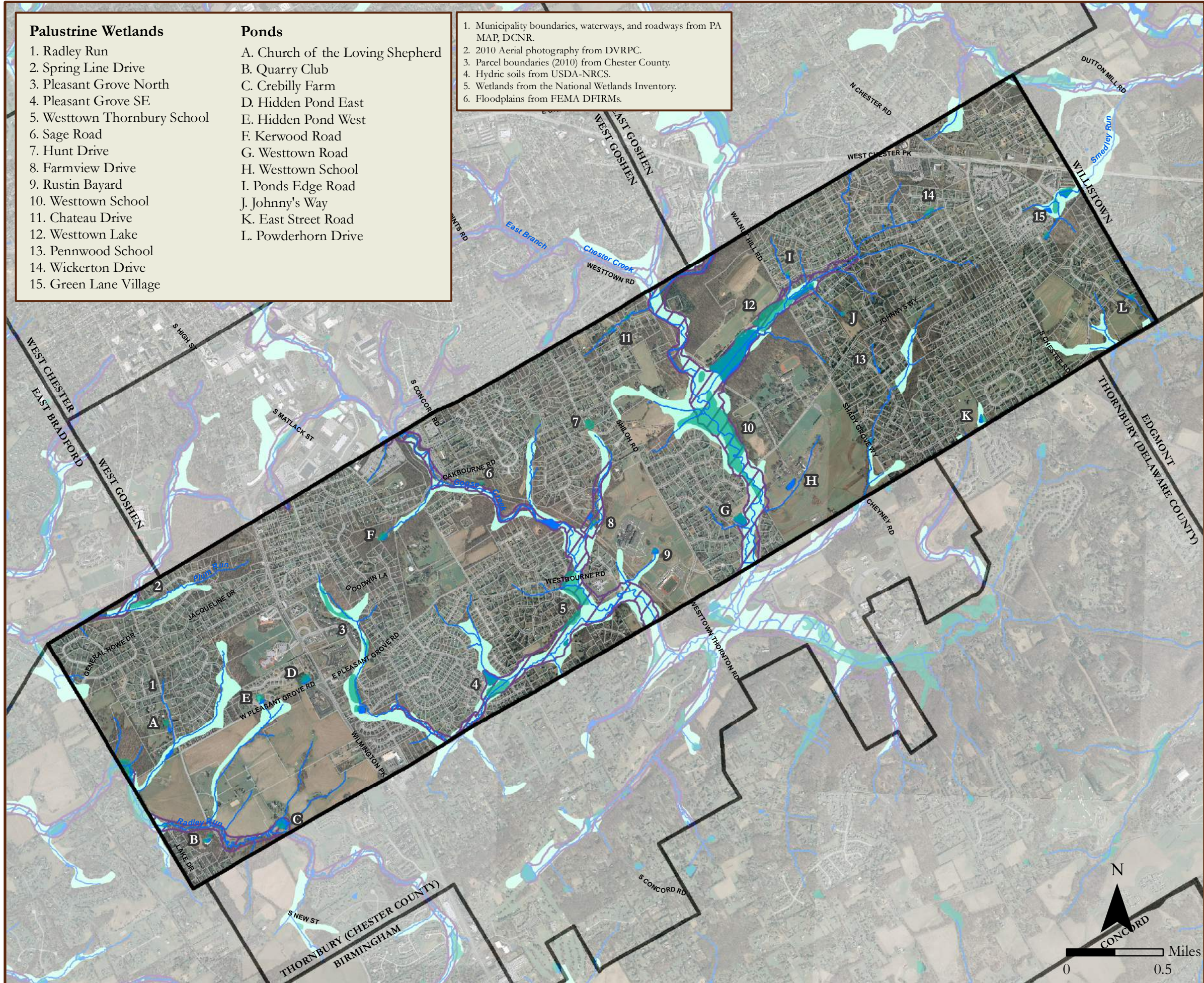
Palustrine Wetlands	Ponds
1. Radley Run	A. Church of the Loving Shepherd
2. Spring Line Drive	B. Quarry Club
3. Pleasant Grove North	C. Crebilly Farm
4. Pleasant Grove SE	D. Hidden Pond East
5. Westtown Thornbury School	E. Hidden Pond West
6. Sage Road	F. Kerwood Road
7. Hunt Drive	G. Westtown Road
8. Farmview Drive	H. Westtown School
9. Rustin Bayard	I. Ponds Edge Road
10. Westtown School	J. Johnny's Way
11. Chateau Drive	K. East Street Road
12. Westtown Lake	L. Powderhorn Drive
13. Pennwood School	
14. Wickerton Drive	
15. Green Lane Village	

- | Palustrine Wetlands          | Ponds                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Radley Run                | A. Church of the Loving Shepherd |
| 2. Spring Line Drive         | B. Quarry Club                   |
| 3. Pleasant Grove North      | C. Crebilly Farm                 |
| 4. Pleasant Grove SE         | D. Hidden Pond East              |
| 5. Westtown Thornbury School | E. Hidden Pond West              |
| 6. Sage Road                 | F. Kerwood Road                  |
| 7. Hunt Drive                | G. Westtown Road                 |
| 8. Farmview Drive            | H. Westtown School               |
| 9. Rustin Bayard             | I. Ponds Edge Road               |
| 10. Westtown School          | J. Johnny's Way                  |
| 11. Chateau Drive            | K. East Street Road              |
| 12. Westtown Lake            | L. Powderhorn Drive              |
| 13. Pennwood School          |                                  |
| 14. Wickerton Drive          |                                  |
| 15. Green Lane Village       |                                  |

Palustrine Wetlands	Ponds
1. Radley Run	A. Church of the Loving Shepherd
2. Spring Line Drive	B. Quarry Club
3. Pleasant Grove North	C. Crebilly Farm
4. Pleasant Grove SE	D. Hidden Pond East
5. Westtown Thornbury School	E. Hidden Pond West
6. Sage Road	F. Kerwood Road
7. Hunt Drive	G. Westtown Road
8. Farmview Drive	H. Westtown School
9. Rustin Bayard	I. Ponds Edge Road
10. Westtown School	J. Johnny's Way
11. Chateau Drive	K. East Street Road
12. Westtown Lake	L. Powderhorn Drive
13. Pennwood School	
14. Wickerton Drive	
15. Green Lane Village	

- | Palustrine Wetlands          | Ponds                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Radley Run                | A. Church of the Loving Shepherd |
| 2. Spring Line Drive         | B. Quarry Club                   |
| 3. Pleasant Grove North      | C. Crebilly Farm                 |
| 4. Pleasant Grove SE         | D. Hidden Pond East              |
| 5. Westtown Thornbury School | E. Hidden Pond West              |
| 6. Sage Road                 | F. Kerwood Road                  |
| 7. Hunt Drive                | G. Westtown Road                 |
| 8. Farmview Drive            | H. Westtown School               |
| 9. Rustin Bayard             | I. Ponds Edge Road               |
| 10. Westtown School          | J. Johnny's Way                  |
| 11. Chateau Drive            | K. East Street Road              |
| 12. Westtown Lake            | L. Powderhorn Drive              |
| 13. Pennwood School          |                                  |
| 14. Wickerton Drive          |                                  |
| 15. Green Lane Village       |                                  |







1. Municipality boundaries, waterways, and roadways from PA MAP, DCNR.
2. 2010 Aerial photography from DVRPC.
3. Parcel boundaries (2010) from Chester County.
4. Hydric soils from USDA-NRCS.
5. Wetlands from the National Wetlands Inventory.
6. Floodplains from FEMA DFIRMS.



# WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP

## OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

Chester County, PA

- 
-  Municipal boundaries  
 Parcel boundaries  
 Waterways  
 Hydric soils  
 Wetlands  
 Floodplains (100-year)



Natural Lands Trust

1031 Palmers Mill Road, Media, PA 19063

610-353-5587 ~ [www.natlands.org](http://www.natlands.org)




Compiled By: MEB 12/04/13



- 
1. Municipality boundaries, waterways, and roadways from PA MAP, DCNR.  
 2. 2010 Aerial photography from DVRPC.  
 3. Woodlands digitized in GIS by NLT using 2010 aerial imagery.
- Map labels include: E STRASBURG RD, EAST GOSHEN, WEST GOSHEN, N CHESTER RD, WEST CHESTER PK, WALNUT HILL RD, DUTTON MILL RD, WILLISTOWN, S FIVE POINTS RD, East Branch, Chester Creek, WESTTOWN RD, S HIGH ST, WEST CHESTER, EAST BRADFORD, WEST GOSHEN, S MATLACK ST, S CONCORD RD, OAKBOURNE RD, S HILLTOP RD, WESTBOURNE RD, THORNBURY (DELAWARE COUNTY), EDGMONT, CHEVNEY RD, SMDY GROVE WY, JOHNNY'S WY, WESTTOWN THORNTON RD, S NEW ST, THORNBURY (CHESTER COUNTY), BIRMINGHAM, WILMINGTON PK, E PLEASANT GROVE RD, W PLEASANT GROVE RD, JACQUELINE DR, GENERAL HOWE DR, Radley Run, and Lake PR.
- Scale: 0 to 0.5 Miles. North arrow pointing up.

# WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP

## OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

-  Municipal boundaries
-  Woodlands (+/- 920 acres)
-  Waterways





1. Municipality boundaries, waterways, and roadways from PA MAP, DCNR.
2. Contours from LiDAR data (2008) from PA MAP, DCNR. Slopes created in GIS using LiDAR data.

Map 5:  
Steep Slopes

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

Chester County, PA

Municipal boundaries

Waterways

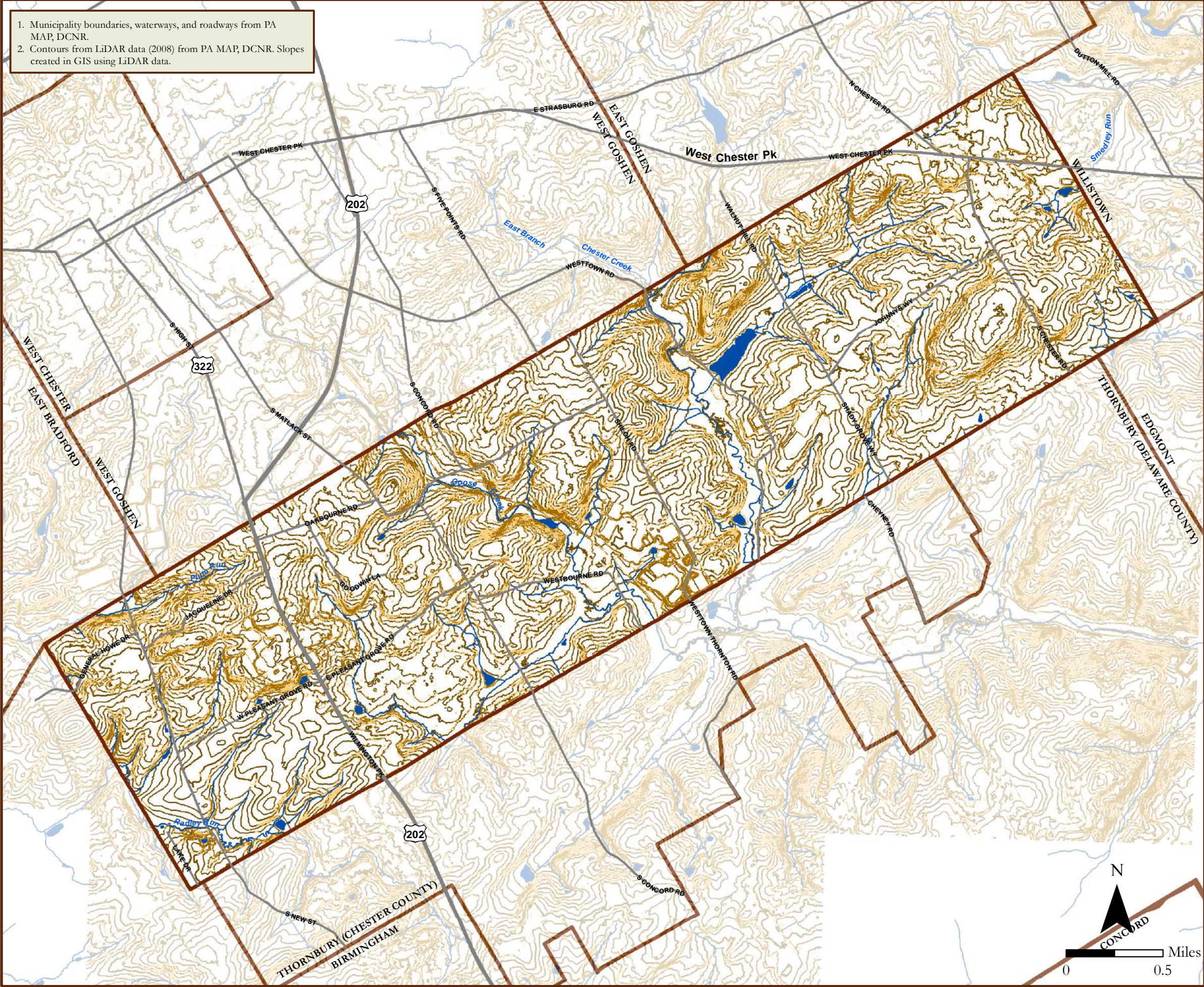
Contours (10ft interval)

Slopes

0 -15%

15% - 25%

> 25%



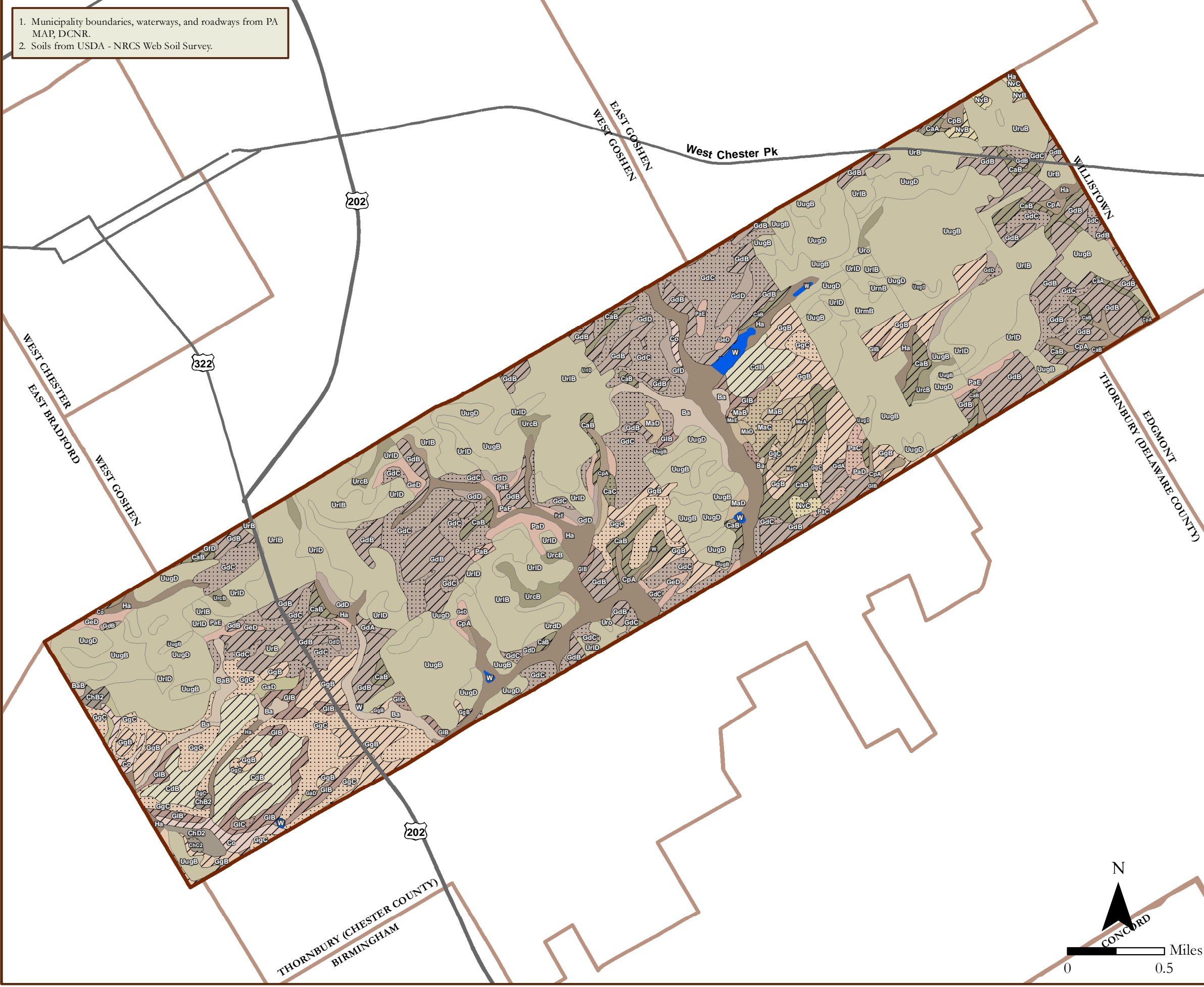
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Map 6:  
Soils

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

Chester County, PA



1. Municipality boundaries, waterways, and roadways from PA MAP, DCNR.
2. Soils from USDA - NRCS Web Soil Survey.

Municipal boundaries

Prime farmland

Farmland of statewide importance

Soil Types

Baile (Ba, BaB)

Califon (CaA, CaB, CaC, UrcB)

Chester (CdB)

Chrome (ChB2, ChC2, ChD2)

Codorus (Co)

Cokesbury (CpA, CpB, CqB)

Gaila (GaD)

Gladstone (GdA, GdB, GdC, GdD, GdE)

Glenelg (GgB, GgC, GgD)

Glenville (GIB, GIC)

Hatboro (Ha)

Manor (MaA, MaB, MaC, MaD, MaE)

Mount Lucas (MLB)

Neshaminy (NvB, NvC)

Parker (GeD, PaB, PaC, PaD, PaE, PaF)

Urban land (UrB, UrdD, UrIB, UrID, UrmB, UrnB, Uro, UrtB, UugB, UugD)

Water (W)



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Compiled By: MEB 12/04/13



- 1. Municipality boundaries, waterways, and roadways from PA MAP, DCNR.
- 2. Parcels (2010) and protected lands from Chester County.

Map 7:  
Parcels Greater Than Five Acres

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

Chester County, PA

Parcels > 5 acres

Municipal boundaries

Parcel boundaries

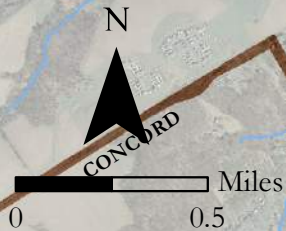
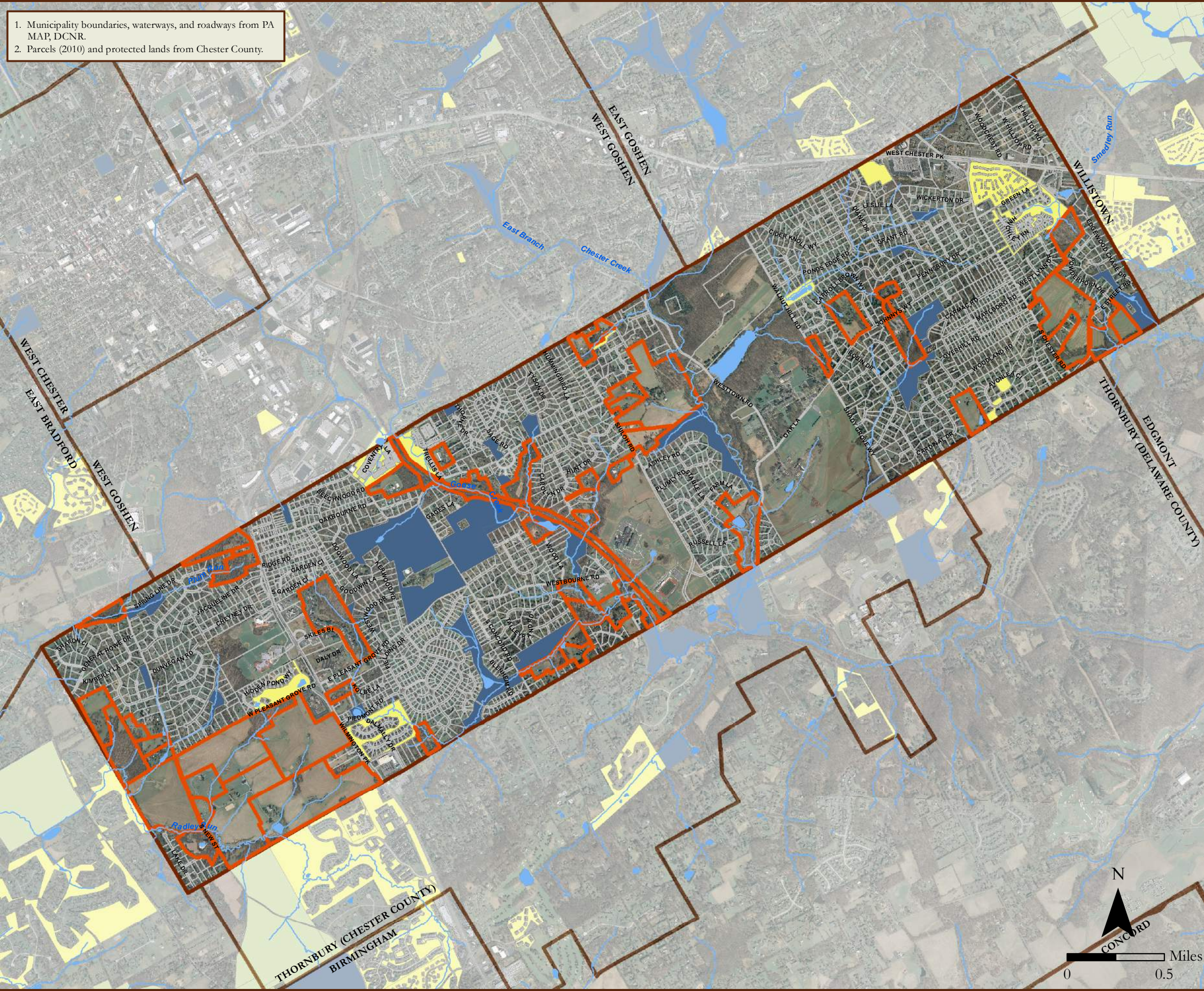
Waterways

Public and Protected Lands

HOA Protected Open Space

Land Trust Open Space Easement

Municipal Open Space





- 1. Municipality boundaries, waterways, and roadways from PA MAP, DCNR.
- 2. 2010 Aerial photography from DVRPC.
- 3. Woodlands digitized in GIS by NLT using 2010 aerial imagery.
- 4. Municipal and institutional lands from Chester County.

Map 8:  
Potential Greenway

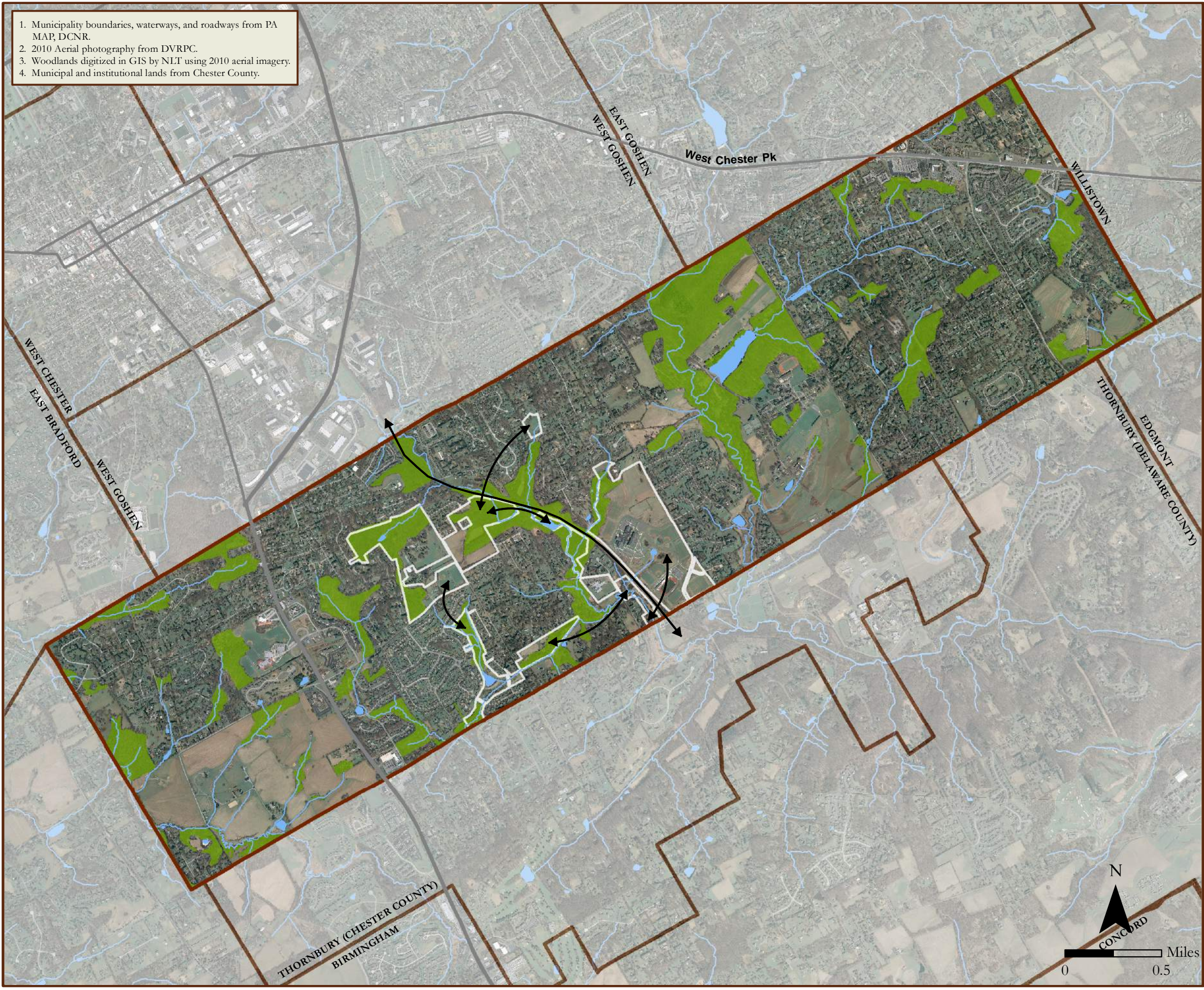
**WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP**  
OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN  
Chester County, PA

Municipal & Institutional Lands for Potential Greenway

Municipal boundaries

Woodlands (+/- 920 acres)

Waterways



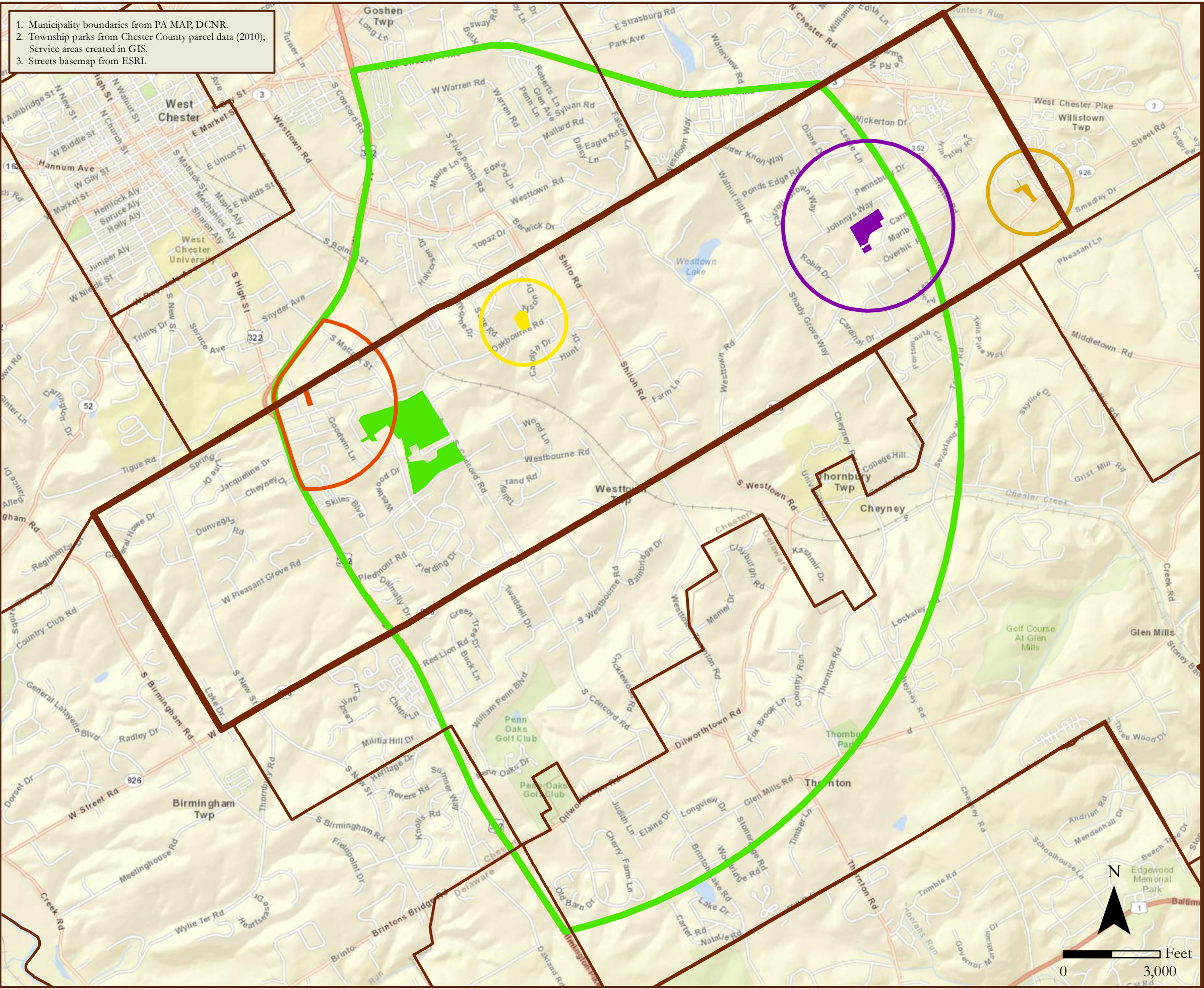


1. Municipality boundaries from PA MAP, DCNR.
2. Township parks from Chester County parcel data (2010); Service areas created in GIS.
3. Streets basemap from ESRI.

Map 9:  
Township Parks & Service Areas

**WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP**  
OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLAN

Chester County, PA





Appendix Table 1. Township-Owned Lands Recommendations

#	NAME/LOCATION	SIZE	USE	MAINTENANCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
1.	Springview Court	1.7	Storm Basin	None	No Change
2.	Sage Road West	3.3	Open Space	Mowing 3x Month	Neighborhood Park/No Facilities
3.	Sage Road Cul-de-sac	1.5	Pump Station/ Storm Basin	Edges Mowed	No Change
4.	Tyson Park	4.9	Play Equipment/ Open Space	Mowing	Neighborhood Park AD: T-Ball, Slide, Jungle Gym, Benches
5.	Pennwood Park	13.9	No Active Uses	Limited Mowing	Assess for proper use
6.	South of Pennwood School	14.5	Open Space/ Nat'l Area	None	Retain as Natural Area
7.	Wickerton Drive	3.5	Open Space/ Wetlands	None	No Change
8.	Edgewood Chase Park	3.3	Open Space/ Storm Basin	Mowing	Assess for proper use
9.	Stratton Tract	12.6	Leased Farmland	Limited Mowing	No Change
10.	Dunvegan Road	5.2	Open Space/ Woodlands	None	No Change
11.	Larchbourne Park	6.2	Open Space/ Play Field	Mowing	Develop Master Plan for recreation, uses and stewardship
12.	Oakbourne I & II (West)	93.8	Community Park & Open Space	Extensive Mowing/ Upkeep	Prepare Park Master Plan
13.	Oakbourne II (East)	54.4	Leased Farmland/ Open Space	None	Assess for agricultural and natural area stewardship
14.	Plum Run/ Spring Line Drive	7.4	Natural Area/ Wetlands	None	No Change
15.	South New Street/ Shenandoah	2.3	Open field	Mowing	Naturalize or assess for other uses
16.	Pleasant Grove Open Space	2.4	Open Space, Pond	Mowing	No Change
17.	West Pleasant Grove	46.5	Open Space, Storm Basin	Mowing	Master Plan for Stream Valley Network, Trail Linkage to Oakbourne Park
18.	Marshall Jones Woods	13.2	Open Space, Woodlands	None	Retain as Natural Area, plan for trail linkage
19.	Plumly Open Space	26.6	Open Space, Wetlands	Limited Mowing	Retain as Natural Area, Wetlands Interpretation, plan for trail linkage

Appendix Table 2. Home Owners Association-Owned Open Space				
#	NAME/LOCATION	SIZE (AC)	USE	RECOMMENDATIONS
A.	Arborview	12	Paved trail & ponds	Reduce mowing, establish meadows or woodlands
B.	West Glen Community Assoc.	11.3	Woodlands	Consider installation of trail network within woodlands, naturalize stormwater areas, monitor for invasive species
C.	Coventry Village	11.5	Woodlands & Pond	Reduce mowed areas, manage woodlands for invasive species
D.	Wild Goose Farms	11.6	Stormwater basins & woodlands	Naturalize basins for filtration and infiltration, monitor encroachments
E.	P & B Developers	3.8	Buffer plantings and stormwater basins	Naturalize basins for filtration and infiltration
F.	Shiloh Hill Assoc.	2.5	Woodlands & Pool	Monitor woodlands for invasive species
G.	Pennwood Civic Assoc.	6.3	Woodlands, ponds, stream and wetlands	Reduce mowing along pond and stream banks, eliminate encroachments
H.	Westtown Mews	2.36	Mowed grass	Reduce mowed areas, establish meadows
I.	Avonlea	4.62	3 Lots, mowed grass, stormwater area	Establish meadows, naturalize basins
J.	Chesterfield	20.98	OS and common area, paved loop trails, shade trees	Reduce mowing, establish meadows and shrub layers
K.	Green Lane Village	17.4	Paved trails, wetlands, mowed areas	Reduce mowed areas
	Total:	104.36		



Appendix Table 3. Wetlands and Ponds

Palustrine Wetlands		
1.	Radley Run	An area of approximately 14 acres adjacent to the west boundary with Birmingham Township.
2.	Spring Line Drive	A small area of about 2.5 acres between Spring Line Drive and the East Bradford Township line.
3.	Pleasant Grove North	Three (3) areas along creek just north and south of Pleasant Grove Road. Approximately 10 acres.
4.	Pleasant Grove SE	An area of about 5 acres adjacent to the confluence of Goose Creek and the stream through Pleasant Grove.
5.	Westtown Thornbury School	Three (3) areas along Chester Creek and a tributary just west of the school. Approximately 17 acres.
6.	Sage Road	About 1/2 acre area just east of Chester Creek, west of Sage Road.
7.	Hunt Drive	About 1/2 acre area north of Hunt Drive west of Shilo Road.
8.	Farmview Drive	Small area, less than 1/2 acre, just SSE of the cul-de-sac.
9.	Rustin Bayard	Less than 1/2 acre area near the intersection of Farm Lane and Dunning Drive.
10.	Westtown School	Largest contiguous wetland area in the Township at over 25 acres. Most are on Westtown School property.
11.	Chateau Drive	Two (2) small areas just north and east of Chateau Drive.
12.	Westtown Lake	About 5 acre area along the stream, just east of Westtown Lake.
13.	Pennwood School	Less than 1/2 acre area on the school property.
14.	Wickerton Drive	Small headwater area, less than 1/2 acre, south of Wickerton Drive.
15.	Green Lane Village	Small, less than 1/2 acre area just southeast of Green Lane Village.
Ponds		
A.	Church of the Loving Shepherd	A pond on the church property, on the west side of South New Street.
B.	Quarry Club	Two adjacent ponds on the swim club property.
C.	Crebilly Farm	The large farm pond at the intersection of the Crebilly Farm driveway and West Street Road.
D.	Hidden Pond East	A pond existing east of Hidden Pond Way, at the intersection with West Pleasant Grove Road.
E.	Hidden Pond West	A pond existing within the woodlands at the northwest corner of West Pleasant Grove Road and Wilmington Pike.
F.	Kerwood Road	A pond existing within the woodlands at the end of Kerwood Road, south of Oakbourne Road.
G.	Westtown Road	The large pond within open space between the Russell Lane cul-de-sac and Westtown Road.
H.	Westtown School	The oblong pond on the Westtown School property, approximately 1/4 mile behind Pete's Produce Stand.
I.	Ponds Edge Road	A small pond on private property at the northwest corner of the intersection of Ponds Edge Road and Nectar Lane.
J.	Johnny's Way	A small pond on private property at the end of a private drive off of the north side of Johnny's Way, between its intersections with Evie Lane and Carol Brown Way.
K.	East Street Road	The pond on private property, north of East Street Road, across from the intersection with Portsmouth Way.
L.	Powderhorn Drive	A pond near the township boundary with Willistown Township, south of Street Road, on private property.

## Westtown Township OSRE Task Force Meeting # 3

### Summary of Demographics

The 1993 OSRE Plan features a chapter dedicated to the demographics of Westtown Township, based on the 1990 US Census data. The chapter includes a series of charts which are to be updated for the new plan. However, in some cases, the 1990 census data is organized differently than the 2000 and 2010 data. Some of the age categories have been altered to include different spans, while education and employment categories have been revised to be more specific.

This summary information should be considered to be in draft form. The 1993 Plan included additional charts regarding industry and employment which will be addressed at a later time. This summary addresses the following:

Table 3: Westtown Population Characteristics

Table 3A: Population Trends by Age

Table 4: Population Trends

Table 5: Major Area Employers

Table 5A: Major Area Industries by % Employed

#### **Table 3: Westtown Population Characteristics**

- The total population has grown from 9,937 (1990), to 10,352 (2000) to **10,827** (2010).
- The median age has risen from 34.6 in 1990 and 2000 to **40.6** in 2010.
- The Township has gotten slightly more racially diverse in 2010, with % Caucasian dropping from 94% in 2000 to 91% in 2010. The greatest increases were amongst blacks and Asians, each increasing by 1.2 % of the total population.
- Household population size has remained steady: 2.79 in 2000, 2.78 in 2010. These are each a decline from 1990, when household population was at 3.07.

#### **Table 3A: Population Trends by Age**

- Between 1980 and 1990, all age groups showed growth, with the greatest growth among 25-44 year olds.
- Between 2000 and 2010, the population was in much greater flux.
- From 2000-2010, the population of young children, Under 5, 5-9, 10-14, all decreased, with 10-14 showing the greatest decrease, by 157 children.
- From 2000-2010, teenagers (15-19) and young adults (20-24, 25-34) showed growth, with teenagers showing the greatest growth, by 282 people.



- Middle age population dropped significantly, with 35-44 yr olds showing the greatest decrease of any age group, losing over 500 people from 2000-2010.
- Older adults, including 55-59, 60-64, 65-74, 75-84 and 85+, all showed increased population from 2000-2010. The 60-64 category showed the greatest increase of any age group, by 310 people.

**Table 4: Population Trends**

- From 1960 to 1990, Westtown Township has grown faster than the surrounding region and Chester County. However, since 1990, the Township has shown slower growth than the region or the County.
- From 2000 to 2010, the Township has grown by 4.6%, while the West Chester Region has grown by 6.6% and the County has grown by 15.1%.

**Table 5: Major Area Employers**

The County has numerous employers with 500 or more employees, however, Township specific data has been as yet unavailable.

**Table 5A: Major Area Industries by % Employed (Township)**

- No major changes have occurred from 2000-2010, with Education (23%), Professional/Scientific (15%), Retail Trade (14.8%) and Manufacturing (14%) the leading industries for employment of township residents.
- Only Wholesale Trade, Finance/Real Estate and Arts/Entertainments showed decreases from 2000-2010.

**Responses to Questions Regarding Open Space and Recreation in Westtown Township**

**Task Force Meeting # 1, September 25, 2012**

**and**

**Public Forum #1, November 8, 2012**

1. Task Force Members

a. What are the three most important **opportunities** the OSRER plan should address?

- Open space next to communities that could be used as parks
- Existing trails that be extended
- Work with state and county commissioners
- Maximize WCASD fields
- Evaluate existing open space for improved use
- Potential of expansion and/or development of recreational space in any new development
- 3 sizeable parks which could be utilized better
- Crebilly Farm
- Railroad R.O.W.
- Regional context and opportunity
- Partnerships with local organizations
- Partnerships with local corporations
- Partnerships with our populace
- More use of school facilities for general public and sports groups
- Establish a regional approach for fields, programs, etc.
- Protect agriculture and natural character with more emphasis on needs of groups involved in these issues
- Discover the needs of OSRER
- Determine a level of priorities of these needs
- Discuss and decide upon the best way to achieve these needs

b. What are the three most important **issues** the OSRER plan should address?

- Recreational vs passive
- Passionate people vs resistant to change people
- Financial
- Varying opinions on where and how to spend resources
- Balancing rural atmosphere/ progressive pressure to urbanize environment with fiscal responsibility
- Need for open space
- Need for recreation
- Need for environmental resources and impact of the other issues upon the environment



- Not enough trails/ sidewalks
- Speeding on roadways
- DE residents using S. Concord Road
- Financial and volunteer/staff personnel
- No sense of community
- Very limited funds with no likely change due to tax base issues, economy and demographic trends
- Rights of residents for property, privacy, quiet enjoyment
- Vocal minorities pushing agenda over less involved residents
- Access
- Use
- Security, safety and liability
- No sidewalks
- Lack of knowledge of existing trails
- Not enough playing fields for children
- Resident needs vs ability to meet those needs
- Resistance to change/openness to ideas

c. What are the three most important **trends** the OSRER plan should address?

- Population growth?
- Population age/demographic trends (stated twice)
- Growth of athletic population (little league, soccer, etc.)
- Runners/bikers on Rt 926
- Need for more nature trails
- Increase in needs for more sports participants
- Nature trails/walkways/greenways/bike trail
- Sports facilities
- Playground w/ swingsets for younger age demographic
- People moving in from DelCo
- Bikes and runners on 926/ Westtown Road/Crossing S. Concord to use trail
- Seniors in community increase, who is moving in?
- Population- growth, ages
- Use of private and public land
- Existing and future trends
- Demographic shift to older people, fewer children, smaller households
- Outsourcing rec to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, like YMCA

## 2. Public Forum Responses

a. What are the three most important **opportunities** the OSRER plan should address?

- Fields for sports/parks & trails/ponds & creeks

- Keep all open land as is and untouched
- Preserve open space and this should increase home values in future
- Purchase open land from existing open space residences
- Don't turn this area into Delaware County
- Keep rural character – don't change os
- Be fiscally responsible
- Underutilized pocket parks. . . Larchbourne and Tyson
- Utilize historic structures for paying events. . . Oakbourne Mansion
- Connect Rustin HS to Oakbourne Park via rail lines or trails
- Trails/ponds & creeks/playing fields
- Preserve agricultural production – farmland
- Opportunity to leave land untouched
- More public use of school facilities
- Regional approach to recreation
- Protecting what is left or rural, agricultural land
- Better use of existing facilities and public facilities (schools and high schools), so we are not creating more of what we have and don't need (sports fields, etc.)
- Expand the existing walking trail at Oakbourne to the east towards Rustin and Squire Cheyne (maybe along the RR tracks?)
- Include bike trails
- Work together for all families/community

b. What are the three most important **issues** the OSRER plan should address?

- Protect privacy
- Protect safety
- Preserve private property rights
- Baseball, soccer, recreation opportunities for children, families. More fields
- Utilize mansion and park around it!
- Find an appropriate balance between active and passive recreation space
- Don't touch every acres! Leave open space alone.
- Keep open space as open space as is!
- Financial/Tax constraints
- Vocal minorities taking too much attention
- Silent majority getting overwhelmed
- Protecting private property rights
- What does this mean financially – taxes
- If using open space – make sure it's not in floodplain
- Township needs to provide more opportunities to build community
- Children are overlooked in this community (I agree w/this assessment)
- Compared to other townships, Westtown doesn't have opportunities for children activities
- Costs and taxes – cannot afford increased taxes, especially with older population and current economy
- Many people have wants and call them needs – distinguishing the difference is key – no luxuries



- Should not be spending \$ we do not have
- Residents came here to enjoy rural character – retain that (not become Delaware County)
- Outsource recreation to YMCA
- Better utilize school fields
- More agricultural utilization
- Recreation should be regional
- Ensure a majority of resident’s opinions are heard – need to reach out to all to gather opinions
- Natural open space vs. manicured open space requiring chemical treatment
- Pressure on homeowners to cede property (ie Crebilly Farm)
- Provide baseball and soccer fields for residents
- Schools should maximize use of athletic facilities – open up ball fields for community use along with other facilities
- Keep pristine areas pristine – that’s the main reason many people moved here.
- Be cognizant that many pensioners live here – taxes are an issue.
- Taxes. What is best for community utilize what we have.
- Provide baseball and soccer fields for residents.
- How to plan for PennDOT’s long term plans to make 202 a limited access highway
- No more billboards (especially electronic!)
- Provide funds to maintain historic buildings in Oakbourne Park
- Larchbourne Park is being slowly acquired by private, adjacent property owners. No playground equipment in this park was added after older equipment was removed.

c. What are the three most important **trends** the OSRER plan should address?

- Development happened quickly over past 20 years.
- Disagreement of residents as to best use of available space – active vs. passive
- Little to no open lands – leave them be
- Fewer people understand where their food comes from and the importance of local foodshed
- New families with young children moving into Township
- Township catering to assisted living development w/o growth plan
- 202 becoming more developed
- PennDOT long term goal to make 202 a limited access highway
- Newer families w/young children
- More development along 202
- Houses are being rented instead of sold. These houses are not being kept up, renters don’t have ties to the value of the area.
- Aging population
- Fewer children
- Need real, true quantification, by count not median age, of demographics, not an assumption.

- Detrimental economic/budget outlook
- More sharing of resources with other municipalities, private groups
- Diminishing environment for pheasants and myriad other wildlife
- Diminishing open vistas as tracts have been developed
- Increased use of toxic pesticides on “open” playing fields
- Division between generation/community needs to come together
- No activities for family or children
- Potential loss of property value if Township does not address issue for older and younger families – people will move to other Townships
- Graying of Westtown – yes! Second this as important
- Negative financial pressures
- Diminishing property values
- Roads are more crowded

3. Themes identified at public forum (in order of number of “votes” as most important to address).

- Parks and Recreation for the Future: Active and Passive (23)
- Open Space Conservation (15)
- Partnerships: School District and Regional Recreation Providers/“Y” (15)
- Can’t Afford Additional Costs (9)
- Environmental Protection (9)
- Respecting Private Property Rights (9)
- Preservation of historic/scenic/rural character (7)
- Community Connections via Trails (5)
- Listening to Everybody/The Good of the Community (2)
- Best Use of Existing Facilities (1)



**Westtown Township  
Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Plan  
Public Online Comment Report  
2013**

*Prepared by:*

Toole Recreation Planning  
6081 Honey Hollow Road  
Doylestown, PA 18902  
(267) 261-7989

*in association with:*

Natural Lands Trust  
1031 Palmers Mill Road  
Media, PA 19063  
610-353-5587

## Public Online Comment on Parks, Recreation & Open Space Summary

Westtown Township posted an online questionnaire in which citizens provide their ideas, opinions and concerns about parks, recreation and open space.

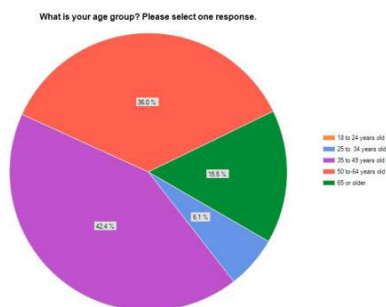
### Comment Parameters

Only township residents were permitted to complete the questionnaire. This was not a random survey but instead was a method for any citizen to provide comments from the convenience of their home. The questionnaire was set up to allow one response per ISP address. It appears to reflect the community at large and not any one special interest group. While the information provides one more source of public opinion, it is not statistically reliable or valid in accordance with research methodology. Online comment is generally the preferred alternative to a costly direct mail survey in the present difficult economic conditions when government is trying to make the best use of every dollar.

### Purpose

The purpose of the online comment was to provide an easy way for citizens to offer their opinions, ideas and concerns of the residents for consideration in planning the parks, recreation, and open space. The online comment is one component of a six-part citizen engagement process that also includes a Study Committee, interviews, focus groups, public meetings and publications in the township newsletter. Findings from public outreach will help guide the development of the Westtown **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan**. The plan will serve as a ten-year guide for improving the quality of life in Westtown Township thorough parks, recreation and open space.

### Results



The completed online questionnaires totaled 649. Of these, only six appear to have skirted the requirements for residency and single responses.

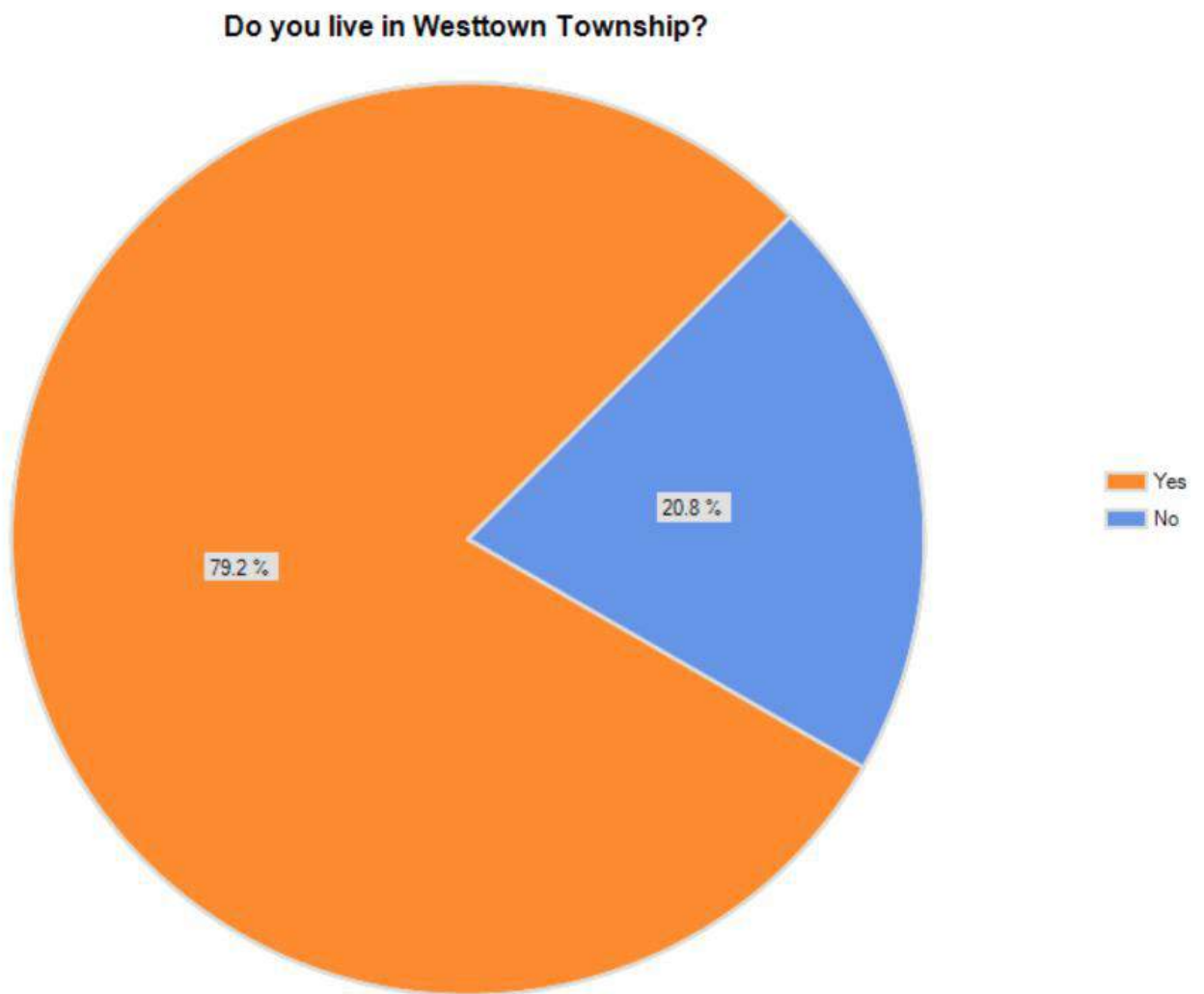
About 52 percent of the respondents were male and 48 percent female. Two out of three respondents reported having children. About 27 percent had senior citizens living in the household. Nearly half have dogs.

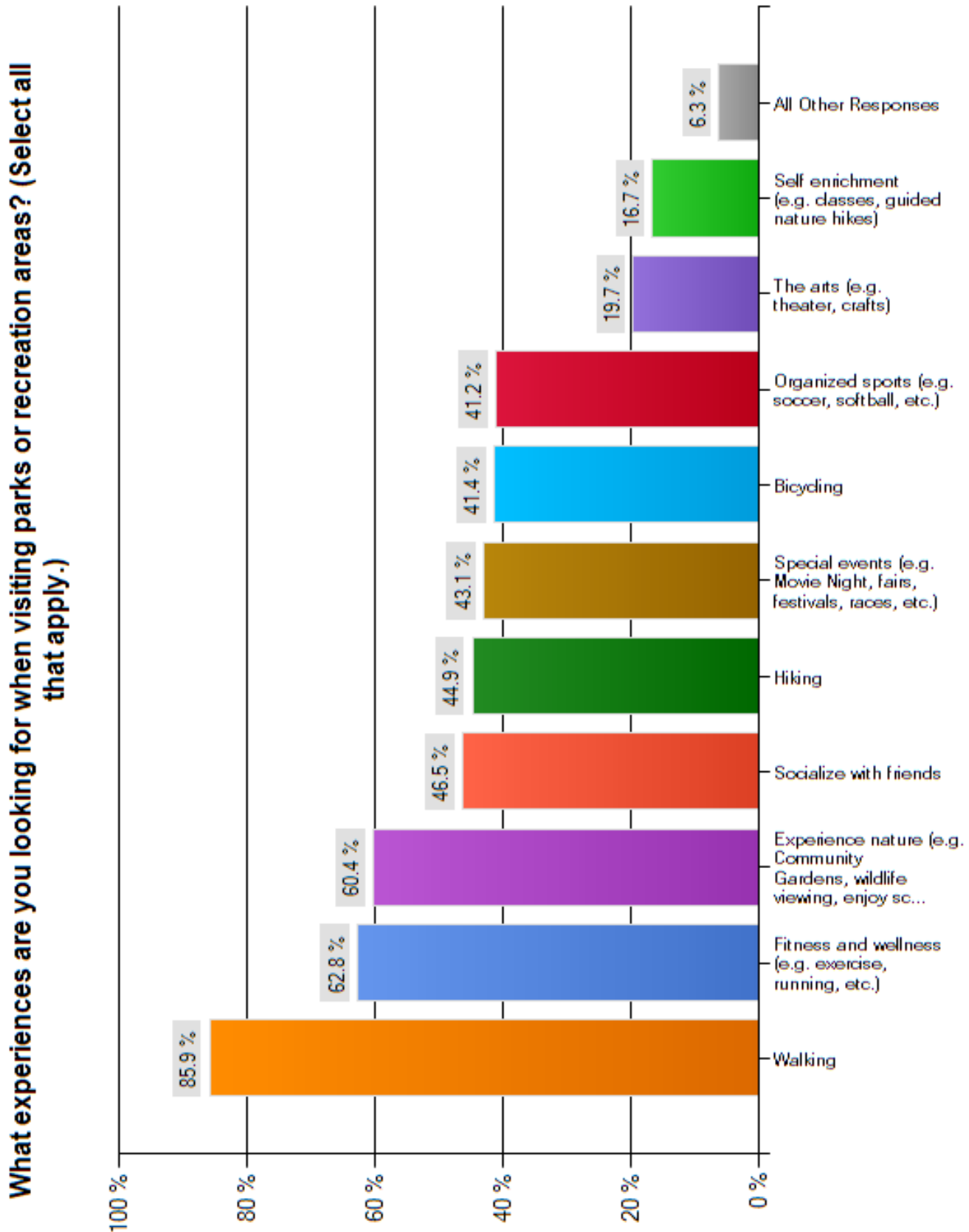
### Findings and Future Directions

- **Open Space**— Respondents clearly indicated the importance of open space conservation.
- **Recreation experiences** – Walking, fitness and wellness, and experiencing nature were the top three experiences that the respondents seek when using parks.
- **Regional Perspective** - Respondents view parks and recreation regionally more than an effort by each municipality on their own. The respondents would prefer continuing regional parks and recreation efforts.
- **Park Visitation** - Oakbourne Park was identified as the most used park followed by parks outside of the Township.
- **Blocks to Participation** – Not knowing about parks and recreation opportunities was chosen as the top reason why respondents don't participate in parks and recreation.

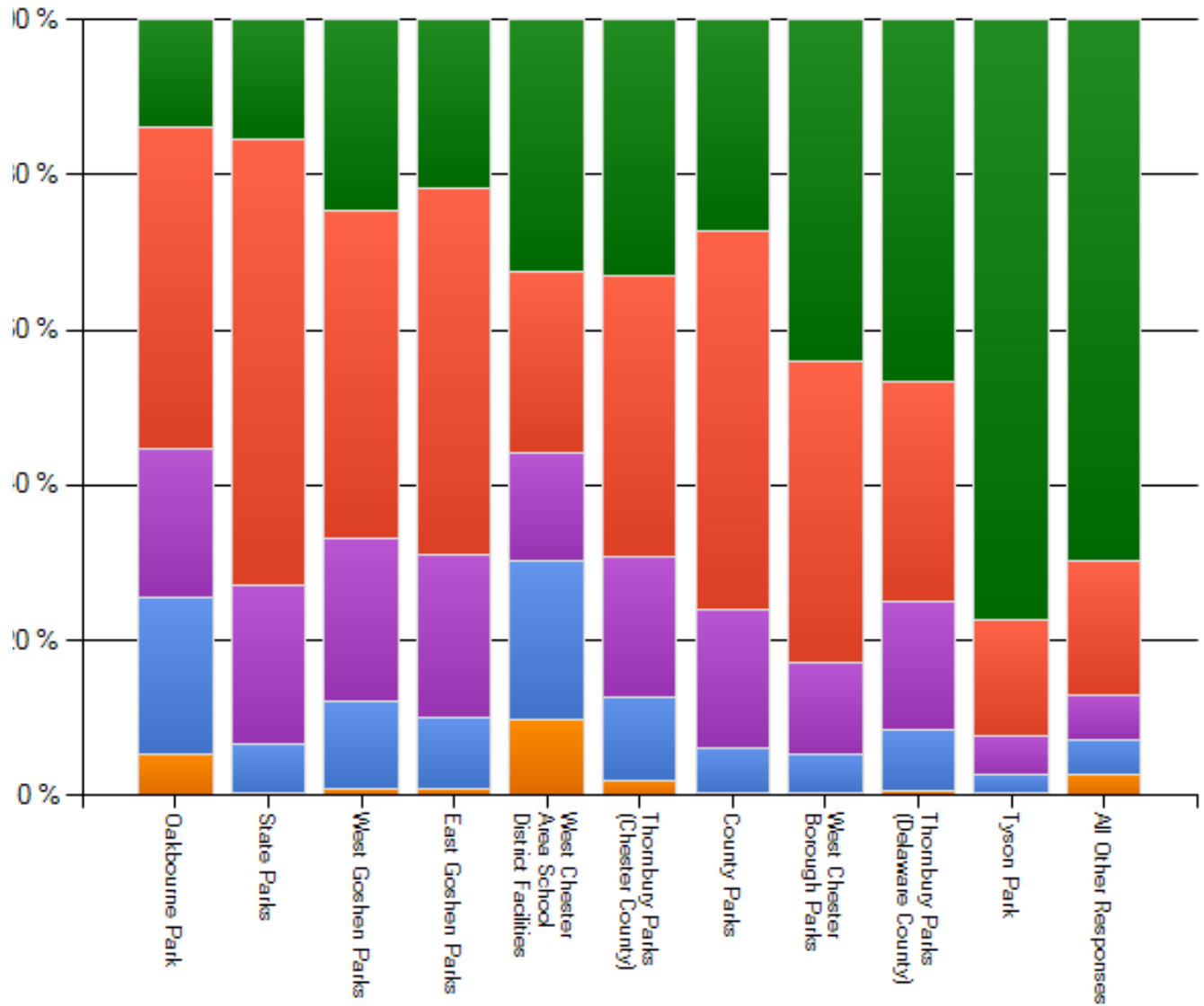
- **Level of Satisfaction** – Respondents are generally not satisfied with parks and recreation in Westtown Township. They frequently cited parks in other communities as models for what they would like to have in Westtown Township.
- **Important Facilities** – The most important facilities were trails, comfort facilities, nature areas and playgrounds.
- **Public Awareness** - More outreach to promote parks and recreation opportunities would be a most valuable public service. The township newsletter, e-mail and the website are important methods for outreach in the near term.
- **Support for Parks, Recreation and Open Space** – Respondents indicated their willingness to support parks and recreation. About 52 percent were willing to pay more in taxes ranging from \$5 to \$15 per person annually for parks and recreation. About 42 percent want to support parks and recreation at its current level. Only five percent wished to decrease support for parks and recreation.



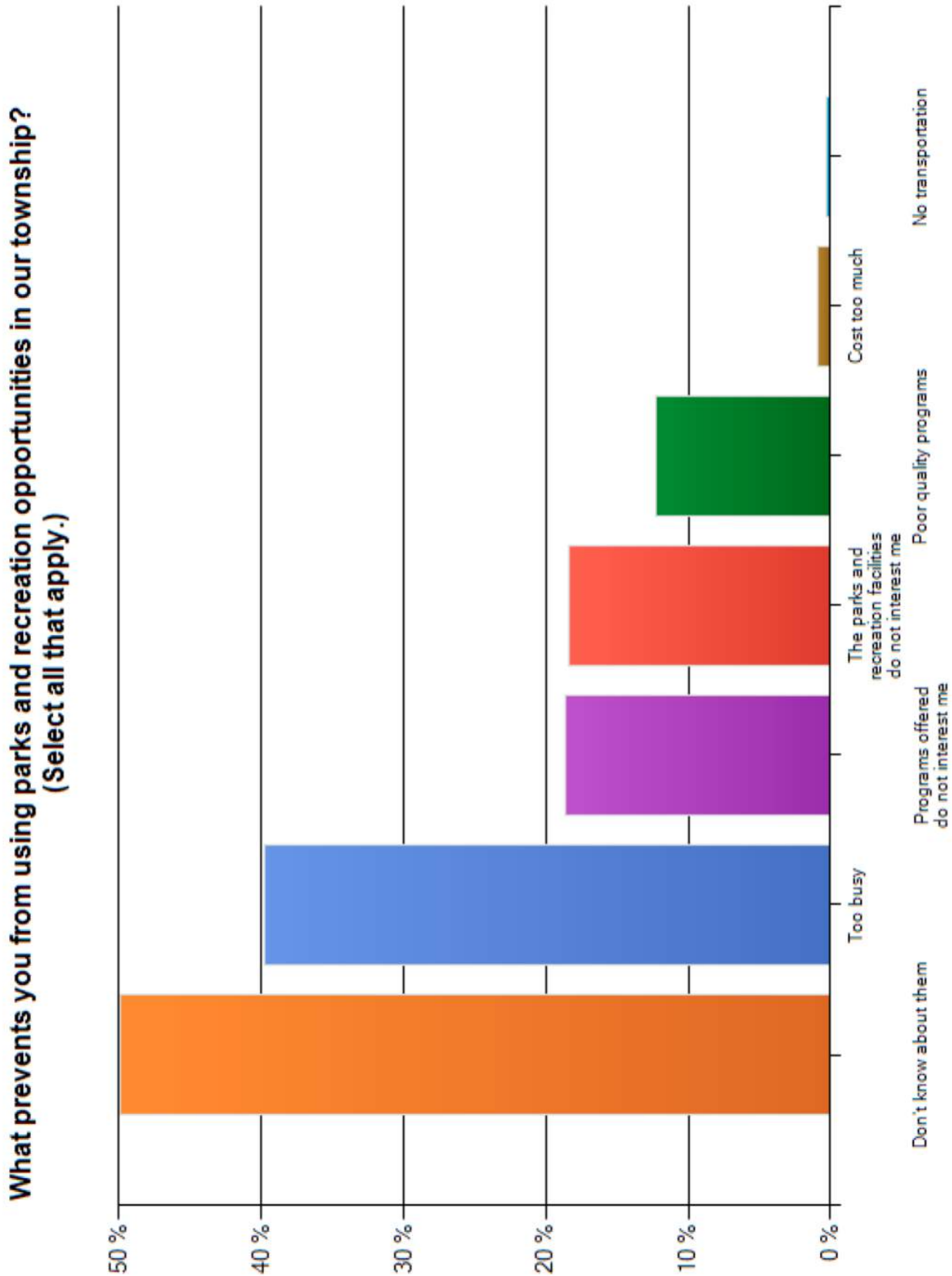




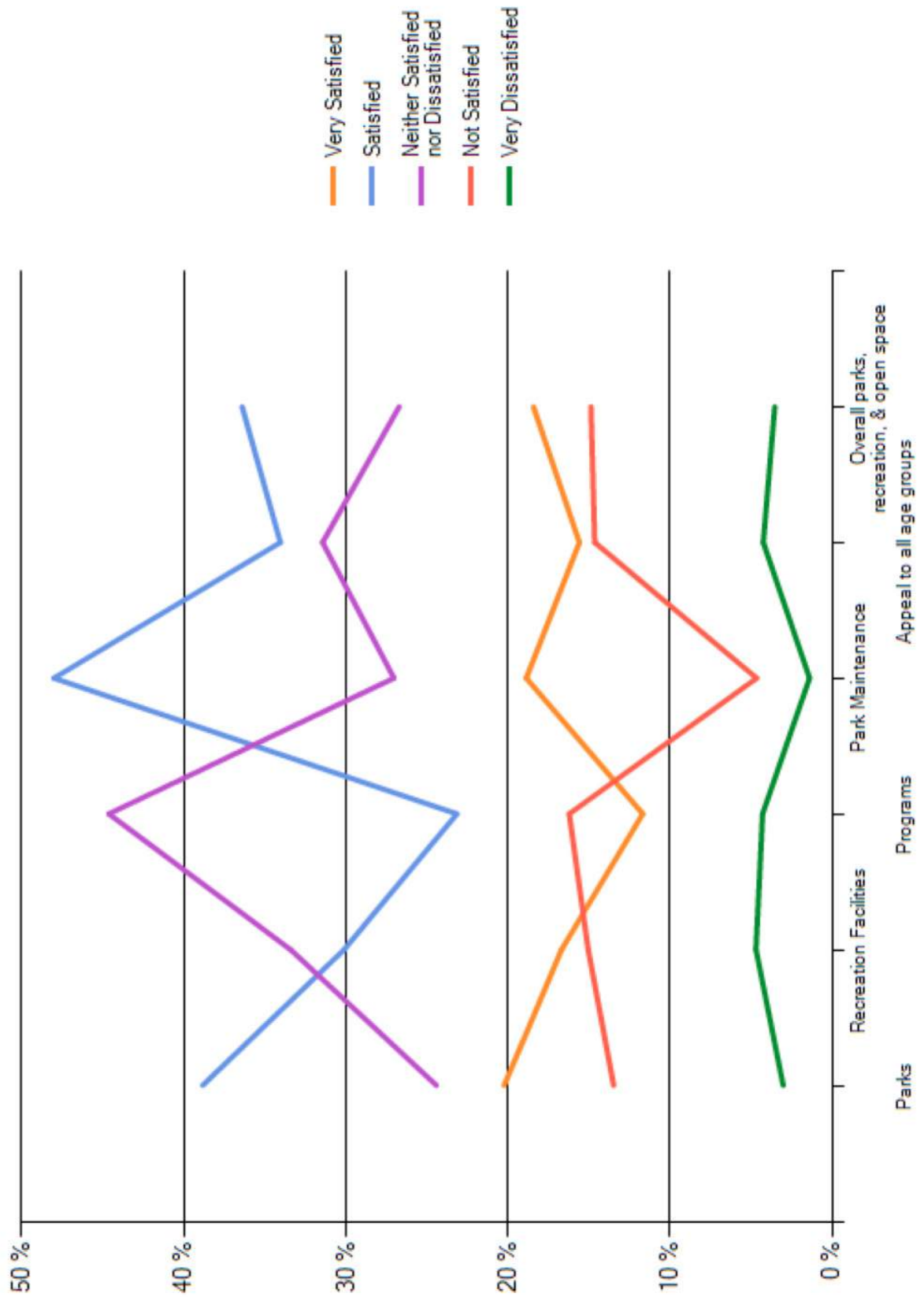
### How often do you visit the following types of recreational facilities? (Choose one response for each.)







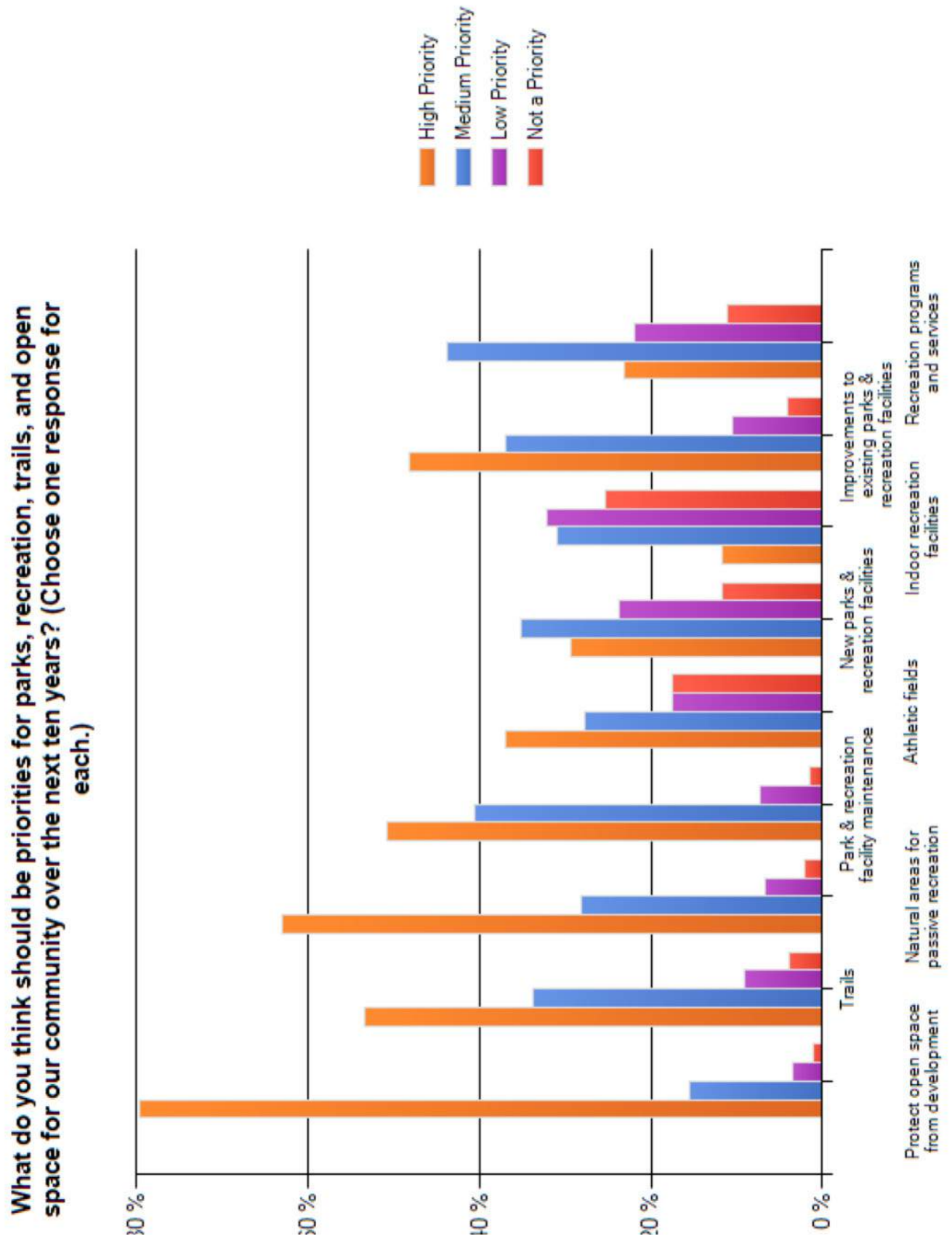
**How satisfied are you with the following aspects of park, recreation and open space in our community? (Choose one response for each.)**



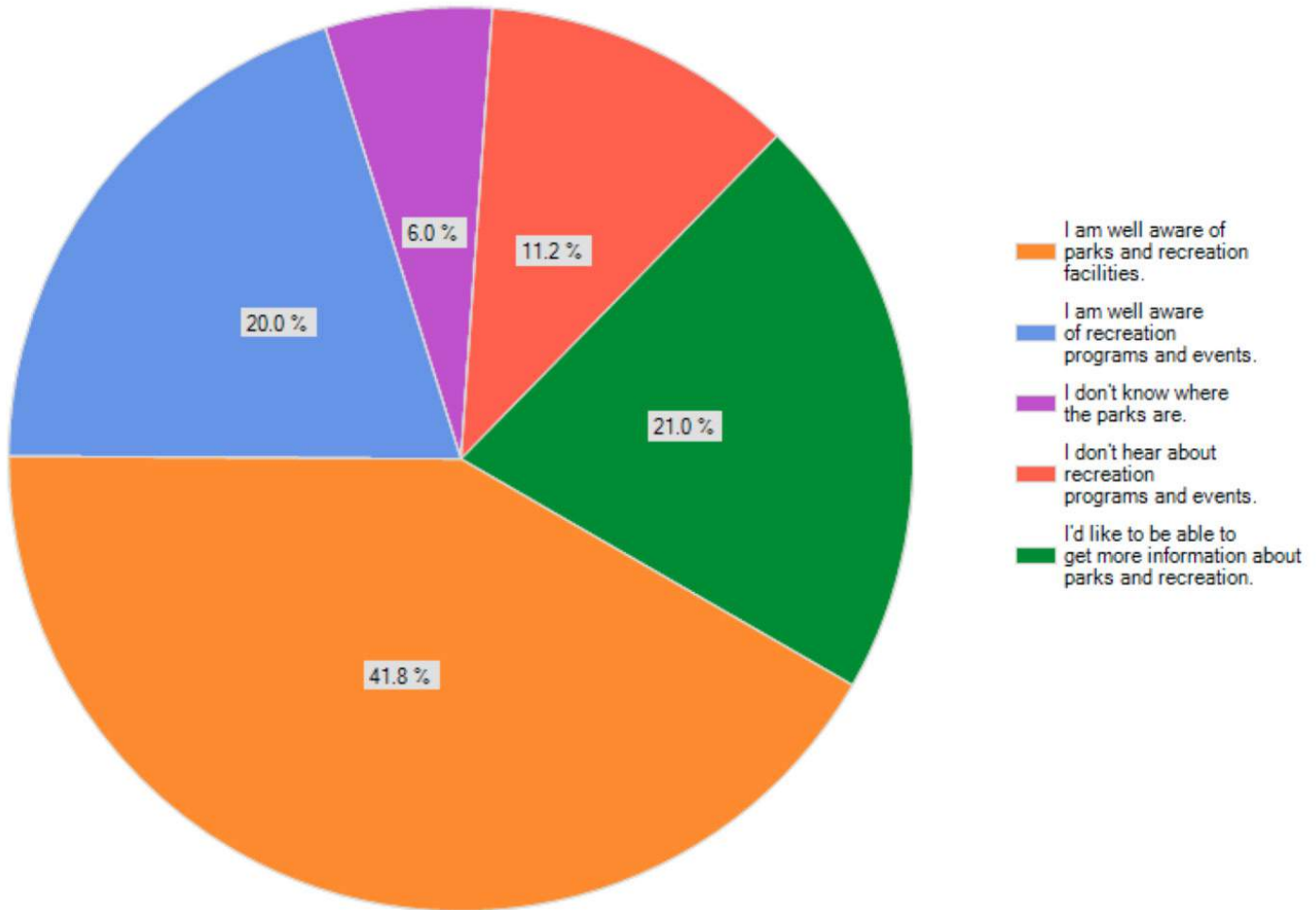
How important is it to provide for the following recreational opportunities in our community? (Please choose one response for each.)

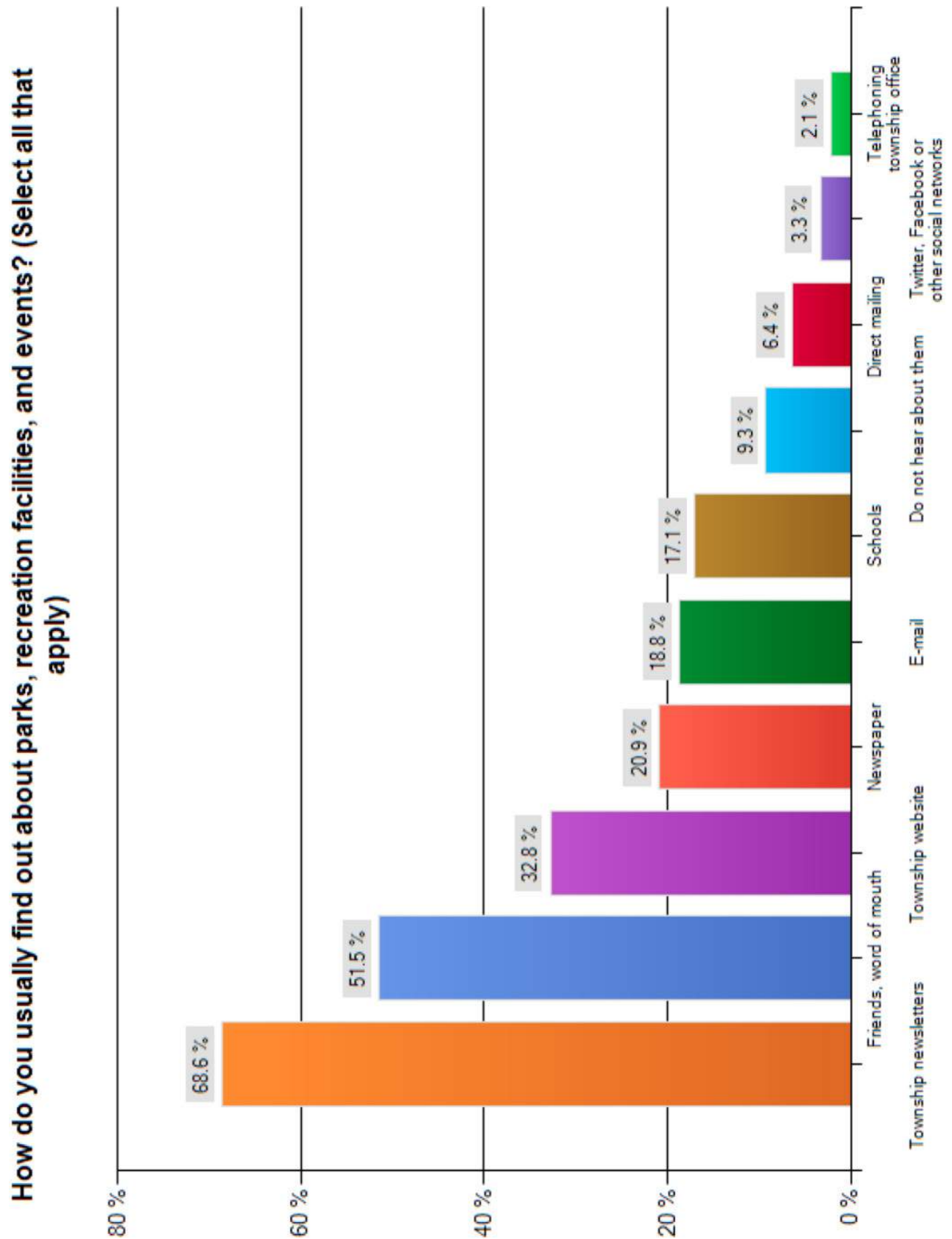
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Needed
Access to school facilities for recreation	<b>46.2%</b>	34.6%	14.5%	4.7%
Studio Arts (painting, needle work, crafts, sculpture etc)	11.6%	38.9%	37.7%	11.8%
Performing Arts (plays, dance, concerts)	20.4%	<b>49.0%</b>	23.6%	6.9%
Music	24.6%	<b>47.2%</b>	22.9%	5.4%
Bicycling - on road	29.5%	<b>42.7%</b>	20.6%	7.2%
Bicycling - off road on trails	34.7%	<b>41.6%</b>	18.2%	5.4%
Walking paths	<b>76.7%</b>	19.7%	2.2%	1.4%
Environmental opportunities such as community gardens	31.2%	<b>42.8%</b>	20.6%	5.4%
Nature based recreation (wildlife watching, fishing, hiking, orienteering)	<b>48.1%</b>	37.4%	10.9%	3.6%
Dog park	25.8%	35.5%	25.1%	13.6%
Organized team sports (baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, football, basketball)	<b>44.5%</b>	26.4%	17.1%	12.0%
Non-organized sports that you play on your own (tennis, volleyball, running, etc.)	<b>45.1%</b>	36.8%	11.5%	6.6
Action sports (skateboarding, hockey, BMX)	7.4%	31.4%	37.0%	24.2%
Disc golf	4.5%	24.7%	<b>42.9%</b>	27.8%
Self-enrichment programs	10.3%	38.1%	37.8%	13.8%
Entertainment/ special events	22.7%	<b>50.2%</b>	21.2%	5.9%
Exercise/fitness	42.0%	<b>43.9%</b>	9.0%	5.1%
Horseback riding	3.3%	20.1%	43.6%	<b>33.1%</b>
Indoor year round recreation	17.3%	32.0%	30.8%	20.0%
Organized recreation programs such as summer or holiday camps for children	27.6%	<b>41.8%</b>	20.8%	9.8%
Playgrounds - traditional playgrounds with manufactured play apparatus	<b>47.4%</b>	36.7%	11.0%	4.9%
Natural play areas - with features found in nature to connect children to nature	<b>46.1%</b>	39.7%	9.1%	5.1%
Picnicking	40.8%	<b>42.7%</b>	13.1%	3.4%
Socializing with family and friends	41.8%	<b>42.3%</b>	12.5%	3.4%
Comfort facilities such as restrooms and drinking fountains	<b>59.0%</b>	31.8%	7.0%	2.2%
Service activities to help our community	35.8%	<b>41.2%</b>	17.8%	5.2%



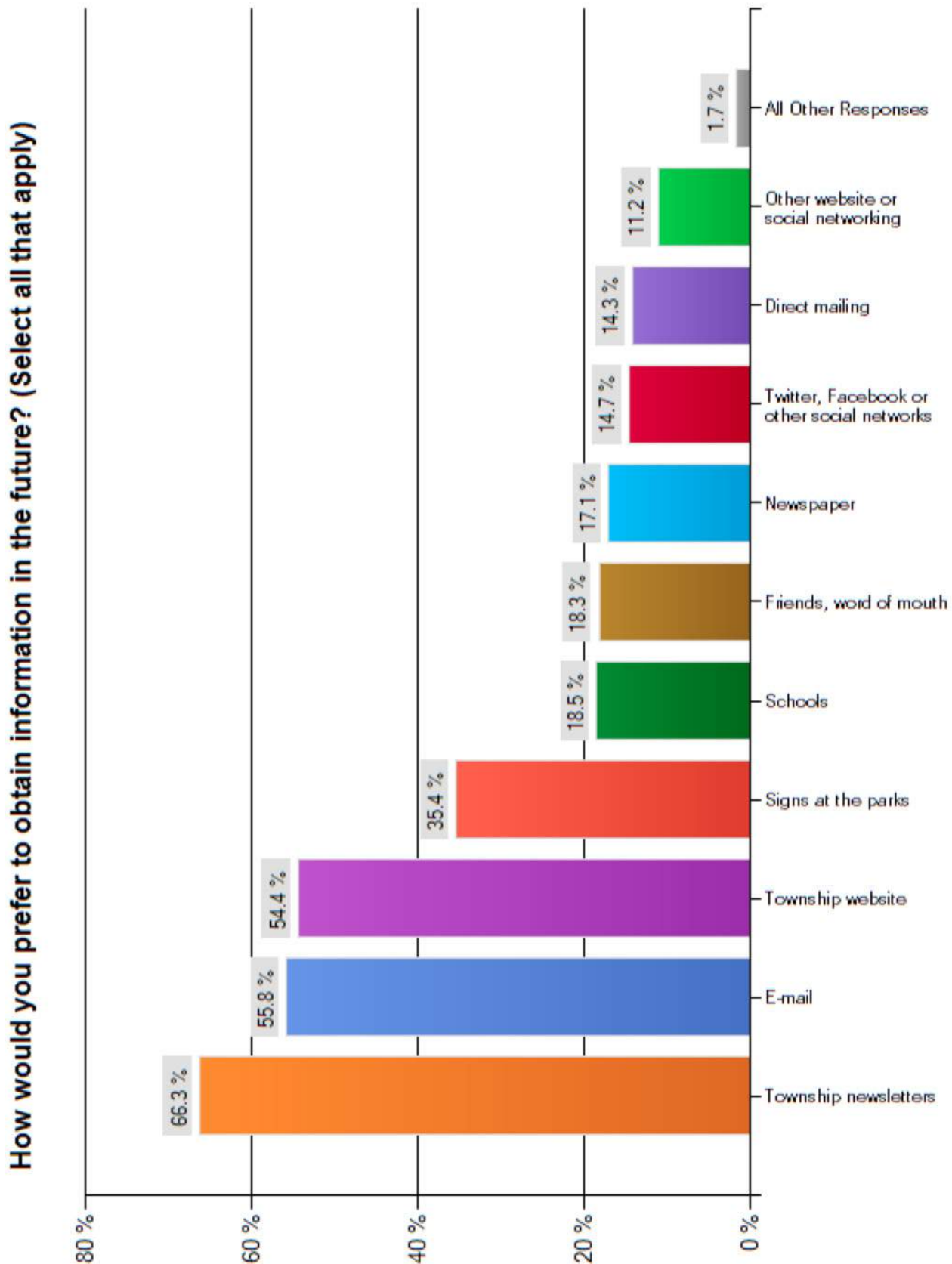


**How aware are you about parks and recreation in our community? (Select all that apply.)**

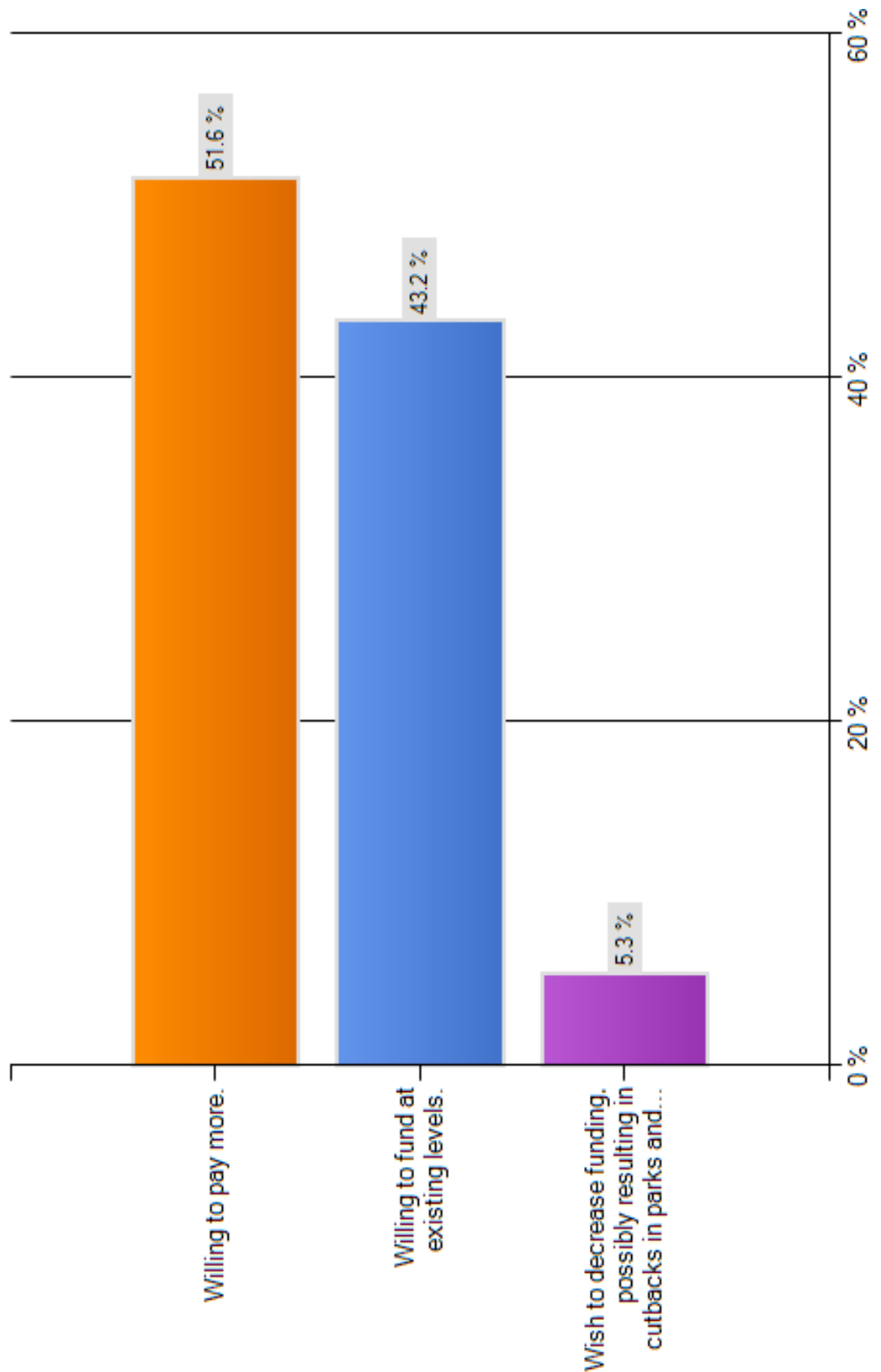








Westtown Township spends \$47,900 annually on parks and recreation with an average of \$4.42 per resident. The average annual municipal expenditure per capita for parks and recreation among the municipalities of the West Chester Area School District is \$26.56 with a range of \$4.42 in Westtown to a high of \$63.80 in West Goshen. How willing are you to use your local tax dollars to pay for parks and recreation? Please choose the response below that best describes your opinion.



## Conserving Open Space, Greening the Community and Enhancing Recreation with Land Use Ordinances

**Introduction.** Land use regulations help to implement the goals in Township plans, by requiring natural resource conservation, open space reserves and new landscaping whenever land is developed/redeveloped. In addition, Pennsylvania’s Municipalities Planning Code, the enabling legislation for local land use control, also permits the Township to require a set aside of active recreation land or a fee in lieu when new development occurs, thereby offsetting the impact of the additional residents on the community’s recreation facilities. In general, Westtown Township has fairly sophisticated land use ordinances, so suggestions herein call for a “tune up” of current standards. (Note: The Township website is the source for all land use regulations reviewed in this report.)

**Zoning Ordinance suggestions.** Zoning regulations apply to existing parcels as well as those created in the process of subdivision, or single parcels redeveloped through the land development process. The following updates could help Westtown Township enhance open space and recreation.

1. 170-102 Community Development Objectives. This section references the Township Growth Management/Comprehensive Plan, which will be amended with the open space work currently underway. The Open Space Update should be referenced.
2. Article IV, Natural Features Article. This article is fairly comprehensive as written and having the standards in one article makes the ordinance more user-friendly than many Zoning codes. The following updates could improve Article IV:
  - Amend Section 170-400, the Statement of Intent to state that it is the goal of this article to protect those natural features identified in the Township Open Space Plan Update.
  - In Section 170-403 Wetlands, consider adding a 25 ft. buffer against wetlands.
  - The riparian setback in subsection 407, of 75 feet, appears appropriate for a suburb. However, more specific planting standards along with some allowance for road crossings and stream access, should be added to the Zoning Ordinance. As with landscape plans required in other ordinance sections, this one should be prepared by a registered landscape architect.
  - With the adoption of the Chester County Act 167 Plan, Townships will now require stormwater permits at consistent thresholds across the county. That threshold requires stormwater permits for new development, redevelopment and earth disturbance. The ordinances may exempt: activities that involve less



than one thousand (1,000) square feet of new impervious surface and less than five thousand (5,000) square feet of earth disturbance; or, specific exempt activities such as emergency repairs, maintenance to stormwater systems, existing landscaping, gardening, agriculture, forestry, paved surface maintenance, replacement of a residential dwelling on the exact footprint, and replacement of impervious surface. As Westtown completes the mandatory stormwater ordinance update, the Township may wish to consider using the same threshold for reviewing natural features disturbance as regulated in Article IV.

3. Article IX. Flexible Development. This option, which requires open space in return for building an increased (bonus) number of homes on small lots presents one of the greatest opportunities to achieve greenway and open space connections on the last remaining developable parcels in the Township. However, there are a few flaws with the current approach that should be remedied if the Township wishes to use land use ordinances to conserve land. Those deficiencies include:

- Flexible development is limited to the AC and R-1 districts and is subject to the Conditional Use process. Making the land conserving technique available only through a burdensome Conditional Use process is a common mistake that discourages its use.
- One of the great criticisms of older “cluster” ordinances was the increased density bonus afforded this development type. Adjoining residents came to dislike having additional units, especially if they did not benefit from being near the open space. We encourage the Township to offer flexible development at the density of the underlying district (2 dwellings per acre in the AC and 1 dwelling per acre in the R1), absent the bonus. Equally important would be adding a *disincentive* to the land-consumptive conventional development currently permitted by-right. We suggest that the conventional development be allowed at half the underlying density, thereby offering an incentive for conservation design.
- The ordinance rewards applicants who preserve historic buildings with more dwelling units. Another approach is to allow the land area under the historic buildings to be counted as open space. Using this approach means that the historic buildings will not be as crowded by the additional units offered as a density bonus.
- Open space in conservation subdivisions (an updated form of cluster) would be calculated based on both the constrained land (recently subtracted 170-1519, but very difficult to find in the ordinance and not correctly referenced in the districts) and the buildable land. In other words, open space is all of the unbuildable lands such as wetlands, floodplains and steep slopes, plus a

percentage (usually 60% or 50%) of the buildable ground. Adding this provision would ensure that open space in new developments is actually usable by Township residents.

- The ordinances require a site analysis in 170-905 A. (1), not imposed upon other forms of development. Subjecting flexible development to a more cumbersome analysis just doesn't make sense. The Township should level the playing field and require a site analysis of all new development, not just development with open space.
- The zoning ordinance also includes a "four-step" design process in 170-1617 that was originally written and published by Natural Lands Trust and requires that the open space is identified first in the subdivision process, rather than relegating leftover lands as open space. However, these standards are more appropriate in a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, not in zoning as Westtown has adopted them.

Making these changes to flexible development to achieve conservation design would mean that remaining tracts would be developed with open space, providing links to existing networks and perhaps opening new trails and green areas in new neighborhoods. Such approaches have been widely adopted in Chester County Townships for as long as 20 years.

4. Section 170-1507 Landscaping and Site Design. More on this section later, in SLDO. A few additional standards for parking lot design in non-residential developments (shopping centers, office parks) could help green Westtown.
5. Section 170-1616 Farm-Related Businesses. Given the desire to encourage agriculture in the Township and likelihood of specialty farming (such as pick your own, CSA's, etc.) are the current standards working for local farmers. For example, the current ordinance limits sales to 20 hours per week, is this too restrictive?
6. Article XVII - Off Street Parking and Loading. Given the mixed-use, high density residential, continuing care and commercial zoning district, careful attention to parking lot design and landscaping can go a long way towards greening Westtown. Specific improvements we recommend include:
  - The planting areas in 170-1703 A (6) of one island per 20 spaces are half the standard we usually see (one island per 10 parking paces). In addition, by permitting the planted areas to be depressed, they can be used as rain gardens, improving stormwater infiltration.
  - The number of required spaces is also a little on the high side and excess parking results in additional impervious cover and stormwater runoff. Specifically, Westtown requires 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of indoor retail space, while

4. Street Trees. We did not find a specific requirement for street trees (frontage trees?) requiring them to be placed in tree lawns between the sidewalk and curb. Tree-lined streets cool walkways, reduce air conditioning bills and increase property values. Section 149 - 0924 does require compensatory planting, a good standard. We suggest that street trees (deciduous shade trees) be required along all: new streets, sidewalks, pedestrian pathways, as well as shared driveways in commercial and multi-family housing developments.
5. Commercial Landscaping. In addition to the Zoning requirements, we suggest greening non-residential developments as follows:
  - Adding “softening” buffers along property perimeters, permitting gaps for sight distance, vehicular access, utilities and pedestrian access.
  - Requiring perimeter planting at a ratio of 4 shade trees and 8 shrubs for each 100 feet of perimeter, with provisions for some evergreen and ornamental landscaping.
  - Requiring one shade tree for every 10 parking spaces. For large-scale commercial developments, the ordinance should provide for divider islands with pedestrian pathways to the front entrance of the store. Parking lots with more than 250 parking spaces should also provide 2,000 square feet of landscaped area and bicycle parking.

These considerations, as recommended by the Task Force, can be added to the implementation section of the Open Space Update.



# Urban and Community Forestry in Pennsylvania

## Municipal Tree Commissions

**F**orming a tree commission is one step that a community can take to create and sustain an urban forestry program. The powers and responsibilities of a tree commission are based on state statute and are assumed by local government. By forming and empowering a tree commission, a community can place the responsibility for important community decisions in the hands of unpaid volunteers with designated powers.

Tree commissions are either advisory or administrative and may have various responsibilities, including the following:

- Lessen the involvement of a municipal council for tree-related matters
- Advise community leaders and staff on administering the community forest
- Stimulate and organize tree planting and maintenance
- Develop and implement urban forest inventories, management plans, and ordinances
- Lessen liability by arranging to remove hazardous trees and repair damage caused by trees

- Settle community disputes caused by tree removal, planting, or maintenance

**I**n Pennsylvania, a tree commission created by municipal ordinance as a decision-making body has exclusive control over a community's shade trees. No tree can be planted or removed within the public right-of-way except under the auspices of the tree commission. This includes public trees that may be planted or removed in conjunction with subdivisions or approved development plans. Tree commissions can be given additional power within a municipality by a council, including:

- Control over all public trees such as trees within community parks
- Review and approval of landscaping proposed in development plans

**F**ormation of a tree commission and development of a comprehensive urban forestry program usually take place together. While working with community officials to start a tree commission, citizens also can undertake other aspects of a community tree program, such as fund-raising and developing tree



inventories. A tree commission should reflect the values and standards of the community and should help champion a community forestry effort. The formation and empowerment of a tree commission can be a crucial element in developing broad-based support for community trees and ensuring long-term success and continuance of a community forestry program.

The following steps may be taken in forming a tree commission:

1. Organize interested citizens and informally outline problems and opportunities for a tree commission to address. Identify specific occurrences or situations (such as tree failures, tree removals, pruning, sidewalk damage, or tree planting) that have caused community conflict or liability. Describe benefits that are expected to result from an organized tree program (such as lower community liability, higher

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real estate values, more attractive commercial areas, and healthier trees).

2. Contact other communities with tree commissions or other experts, such as the Department of Community Affairs or Penn State Cooperative Extension offices, for advice and support.
3. When ideas and plans are well organized and fairly complete, contact local government leaders and identify a municipal official who is interested in working with the group. It is important to include municipal officials early in any effort to organize a tree commission.
4. Hold informal meetings with concerned citizens and local officials to discuss ideas and plans. Contact the municipal solicitor to discuss how a tree commission can be legally established within a community.
5. Identify and agree upon the powers, authority, and responsibilities of the tree commission, through meetings with municipal council members, officials, and the solicitor.
6. Involve community members through public hearings and other opportunities for public participation and response.

7. Develop or rewrite the ordinance that legally establishes the tree commission and defines its authority and powers.

8. Seek the council's approval of the ordinance at a public hearing.

**M**unicipal ordinances establishing and empowering tree commissions should contain the following sections:

- number of commission members
- experience or expertise required of members
- place of residence
- compensation, if any
- length of terms
- rotation of terms
- vacancies
- duties
  - adjudicate tree-related matters
  - approve permits for tree removal, planting, or pruning
  - review hazardous trees every year
  - provide educational opportunities and materials
  - arrange for tree planting
  - arrange for tree and stump removals
  - oversee pruning and other maintenance

- power
  - advisory or managerial
  - trees on public right-of-way or all public property
  - landscape plans for street trees or include development sites

**O**rdinances establishing shade tree commissions also can:

- mandate a municipal arborist or forester position
- mandate and outline the creation of a municipal forestry master plan
- outline required standards and guidelines for tree planting and maintenance

**T**ree commissions can have a great impact on a community's appearance and image as well as its public safety and comfort. Commissions help champion and coordinate a comprehensive and expert program to manage and sustain public trees. They provide long-term, stable management for a valuable, long-lived resource. By forming a tree commission in your community, you can help improve the attractiveness of your community and its quality of life and environment.

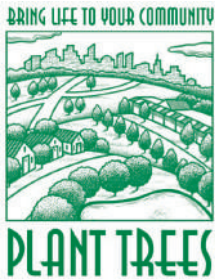
The Pennsylvania Urban and Community Forestry Program is a cooperative effort of the state Department of Environmental Resources (DER) Bureau of Forestry and Penn State with leadership provided by the Pennsylvania Urban and Community Forestry Council.

For more information, contact the Extension Urban Forestry Program, School of Forest Resources. The Pennsylvania State University, 108 Ferguson, University Park, PA 16802; (814) 863-7941.

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## Statistics Sheet

### The Value of Trees

Studies prove that trees have a positive effect on many aspects of people's lives, including their health, homes, businesses, communities, drinking water, and air quality.

#### Economic Contributions

- Research shows that shoppers in well-landscaped business districts are willing to pay more for parking and up to 12% more for goods and services.<sup>27</sup>
- Landscaping, especially with trees, can significantly increase property values. Here is one example: A value of 9% (\$15,000) was determined in a U.S. Tax Court case for the loss of a large black oak on a property valued at \$164,500.<sup>12</sup>
- Trees reduce runoff and erosion from storms by about 7% and reduce the need for erosion control structures. In urban areas with trees, the use of smaller drainpipes can save cities on materials, installation and maintenance.<sup>11</sup>
- Desk workers with and without views of nature were surveyed. Those without views of nature, when asked about 11 different ailments, claimed 23% more incidence of illness in the prior 6 months.<sup>6</sup>
- Amenity and comfort ratings were about 80% higher for a tree-lined sidewalk compared with those for a nonshaded street. Quality of products ratings were 30% higher in districts having trees over those with barren sidewalks.<sup>28</sup>
- In the United States over 200 million cubic yards of urban tree and landscape residue are generated every year.<sup>26</sup> Of the 200 million cubic yards of urban tree and landscape residue, 15% is classified as "unchipped logs." If these logs were sawn into boards, they theoretically would produce 3.8 billion board feet of lumber, or nearly 30% of the hardwood lumber produced annually in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

#### Energy Savings

- The net cooling effect of a young, healthy tree is equivalent to 10 room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day.<sup>20</sup>
- Trees properly placed around buildings as windbreaks can save up to 25% on winter heating costs.<sup>5</sup>
- As few as three trees properly positioned can save the average household between \$100 and \$250 annually in energy costs.<sup>23</sup>
- Fifty million shade trees planted in strategic, energy-saving locations could eliminate the need for seven 100-megawatt power plants.<sup>10</sup>
- Shade from two large trees on the west side of a house and one on the east side can save up to 30% of a typical residence's annual air conditioning costs.<sup>17</sup>
- Annual benefits provided by parking lot trees in Sacramento, California, (8.1% tree shade) were valued at approximately \$700,000 for improved air quality. By increasing shade to 50% in all parking lots in Sacramento, the annual benefits will increase to \$4 million.<sup>9</sup>
- Rows of trees reduce windspeed by up to about 85%, with maximum reductions increasing in proportion to visual density. Because even a single row of dense conifers can cause large reductions in windspeed, effective windbreaks can be planted on relatively small house lots. Compared with an open area, a good windbreak that does not shade the house will save about 15% of the heat energy used in a typical home.<sup>4</sup>

Urban and Community Forestry Appreciation Tool Kit  
USDA Forest Service NA-IN-02-04



## Statistics Sheet *continued*

### Environmental Contributions

- Modest increases of 10% canopy cover in the New York City Area were shown to reduce peak ozone levels by up to 4 parts per billion or by nearly 3% of the maximum and 37% of the amount by which the area exceeded its air quality standard. Similar results were found in Los Angeles and along the East Coast from Baltimore to Boston.<sup>8</sup>
- Leafy tree canopies catch precipitation before it reaches the ground, allowing some of it to gently drip and the rest to evaporate. This lessens the force of storms and reduces runoff and erosion. Research indicates that 100 mature tree crowns intercept about 100,000 gallons of rainfall per year, reducing runoff and providing cleaner water.<sup>25</sup>
- Trees reduce noise pollution by absorbing sounds. A belt of trees 98 feet wide and 49 feet tall can reduce highway noise by 6 to 10 decibels.<sup>13</sup>
- Trees in Davis, California, parking lots reduced asphalt temperatures by as much as 36 degrees Fahrenheit, and car interior temperatures by over 47 degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>16</sup>
- Philadelphia's 2.1 million trees currently store approximately 481,000 metric tons of carbon with an estimated value of \$9.8 million.<sup>14</sup>
- A typical community forest of 10,000 trees will retain approximately 10 million gallons of rainwater per year.<sup>24</sup>

### Social Contributions

- Views of nature reduce the stress response of both body and mind when stressors of urban conditions are present.<sup>15</sup>
- Trees in urban parks and recreation areas are estimated to improve outdoor leisure and recreation experiences in the United States by \$2 billion per year.<sup>3</sup>
- Trees reduce crime. Apartment buildings with high levels of greenery had 52% fewer crimes than those without any trees. Buildings with medium amounts of greenery had 42% fewer crimes.<sup>7</sup>
- Hospital patients recovering from surgery who had a view of a grove of trees through their windows required fewer pain relievers, experienced fewer complications, and left the hospital sooner than similar patients who had a view of a brick wall.<sup>21, 22</sup>
- Americans travel about 2.3 billion miles per day on urban freeways and highways. Studies show drivers exposed to roadside nature scenes had a greater ability to cope with driving stresses.<sup>29</sup>
- Symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children are relieved after contact with nature. Specifically, ADHD kids are better able to concentrate, complete tasks, and follow directions after playing in natural settings. The greener the setting, the more relief.<sup>18</sup>
- Trees help girls succeed. On average, the greener a girl's view from home, the better she concentrates and the better her self-discipline, enabling her to make more thoughtful choices and do better in school.<sup>19</sup>
- Trees and forests in urban areas convey serenity and beauty along a number of sensory dimensions, often surrounding the individual with nature in an environment where natural things are at a premium.<sup>2</sup>

## Statistics Sheet *continued*

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## Recreation and Fee in Lieu

### Objective

Adopt a Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinance for parks and recreation in accordance with Section 503(11) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code.

### Background

Westtown Township includes provisions for some aspects of both open space conservation dedication and fees-in-lieu of open space dedication in its Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The purpose of the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland is specifically to secure land to meet the recreational needs of the future residents. Since open space can apply to many uses other than parkland, we recommend that Westtown Township sever the existing ordinance currently used for open space conservation and establish two separate ordinances with one addressing open space and the other, parkland.

### Recommendation

1. Use the Westtown Township Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan to support the adoption of a Mandatory Dedication of Land Ordinance by setting the standard for community parkland. Westtown Township would create the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinance and include it in its Subdivision and Land Use Ordinance (SALDO). Figure 1 presents excerpts from Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code related to the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland.
2. Use 31 acres of land per 1,000 residents as the parkland standard for parks and recreation. This is based upon the current township acreage available for recreation. To calculate the amount of parkland needed for each household proposed for development using the following formula:
  - Use the average household size of 2.5 people based upon the 2010 United States Census.
  - Divide the targeted 31 acres of parkland by 1,000 residents to derive the amount of parkland equivalent per person:
 
$$31 \text{ acres of parkland} / 1,000 \text{ persons} = .031 \text{ acres of parkland}$$
  - Multiply the number of acres of parkland required per person by the number of people per household to get the amount of parkland needed per household:
 
$$.031 \text{ acres of parkland per person} \times 2.5 \text{ number of persons per household} = .08 \text{ acres of parkland required per household.}$$
  - For a development of 20 households, multiply 20 households  $\times$  .08 acres of parkland required per household resulting in 1.6 acres for this particular example. Since 1.6 acres of parkland is not sufficient to create a public park based upon the Westtown Township standards, a fee-in-lieu parkland would be preferable. The Township may *request* a fee-in-lieu of dedication. The developer *may consent* to provide a fee-in-lieu of dedication. The value of the fee would be calculated using the information described in #4 below.



3. Set forth criteria for the type of land that Springfield Township desires for parkland as follows. Community parks should be 10 to 50 acres in size and serve the residents township wide within a desirable service radius of two miles. Land for community parks should be relatively flat and well drained to accommodate the development of recreation facilities. Parkland should be well located with convenient and safe road access and not cause adverse impacts on adjoining properties.

**While Westtown Township may *mandate* the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland, it can only *request* fees-in-lieu and the developer may consent as shown in Figure 1 Section 503 (11).** Set the fees-in-lieu of dedication of parkland in accordance with the market value of land. The value of the fee-in-lieu should bear a direct relationship to the value of the type of land that would otherwise be dedicated. Westtown Township can simply state in its mandatory dedication ordinance should be equal to the average fair market value of the land otherwise required to have been dedicated as determined at the time of the filing of the subdivision of the land development application. The responsibility for determining the value of the land may be placed on the developer with Westtown Township able to verify or dispute the value. If Westtown Township should dispute the applicant's fair market value, the Township may obtain a certified appraiser at the applicant's cost to verify or adjust the applicant's fair market value to the appraiser's value.

4. When fees in lieu of dedication are generated, deposit the fees in an interest-bearing account with the interest being made part of this account. The account must specify the recreation purposes for which the fees will be used. Use the fees within the three-year period required by the Municipalities Planning Code or the developer can request that the fees be returned with interest.
5. Use the fees for the following purposes to serve the needs of future residents by:
  - Purchasing targeted parkland,
  - Developing infrastructure for recreation,
  - Buying recreational equipment for new parks,
  - Making improvements to existing parks, or
  - Providing a combination of the above.

*Source: Governor's Center for Local Government Services. (2009) Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Harrisburg, PA: Department of Community and Economic Development. p.35.*

6. Consider the inclusion of commercial and industrial property in the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinance. Municipalities such as Newtown Township in Bucks County have established Mandatory Dedication of Parkland ordinances that include residential, commercial and industrial development. Newtown Township requires 750 square feet of parkland per 1,000 square feet of building area. It would be important to document the recreational needs of the non-resident employees of these future businesses to support such an ordinance.

7. When Westtown Township develops a trail plan, consider including trails in the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinance as a recreation facility. The trail plan should be similar to the Parks and Recreation Plan in including inventory, analysis, and the development of standards, goals, and recommendations. The standards would include acreage standards just as for parkland. The trail plan would identify trail corridors and these could be located on an Official Map of Westtown. Developers would be required to dedicate the land for the trail within the development. If a trail corridor lies beyond the development, the Township could request that the developer provide a fee-in-lieu of dedication of the land for the trail.
8. Work cooperatively with developers in anticipation of land development plans and during the process. Outreach and working together often results in advances for both the developers and the township in terms of providing parkland and recreation facilities and meeting municipal regulations. Involve the Planning Commission, EAC and Parks and Recreation Board to in review and provide comments on proposed land development to the township management and elected officials.
9. Seek guidance from the Westtown Township Solicitor regarding the development and adoption of the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinance.