

ERECTED INTO A TOWNSHIP IN 1733
TOWNSHIP OF WORCESTER
AT THE CENTER POINT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

1721 Valley Forge Road, Post Office Box 767 Worcester, PA 19490

WORCESTER TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE TASK FORCE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020 7:00 PM
ZOOM PARTICIPATION INFORMATION

The Worcester Township Comprehensive Plan Update Task Force meeting on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 at 7:00 PM will be conducted via Zoom. All members of the Task Force, staff and public will participate remotely. The public may join this meeting by either telephone using the dial in number or entering the URL on an internet browser. Below you will find instructions on how to access and participate in the meeting:

- **Meeting Date:** Wednesday, December 2
- **Meeting Time:** 7:00 PM
- **Meeting URL:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83447020229>
- **Meeting via Zoom app:** If you have the Zoom App on your smartphone, tablet, or computer, open the program, click join a meeting, and enter the ***Meeting ID: 834 4702 0229***
- **One tap mobile: Meeting ID: 834 4702 0229**
 - +13126266799,,83447020229# US (Chicago)
 - +16465588656,,83447020229# US (New York)
- **Meeting dial in number (no video):** Dial by your location
 - +1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)
 - +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
 - **+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)**
 - +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
 - +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
 - +1 720 707 2699 US (Denver)
- **Meeting ID number** (to be entered when prompted): ***834 4702 0229***

THE PUBLIC MAY ALSO SUBMIT QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS PRIOR TO THE MEETING BY MAIL TO WORCESTER TOWNSHIP, P.O. BOX 767, WORCESTER, PA 19490 OR BY E-MAIL TO ARAQUET@WORCESTERTWP.COM PRIOR OR DURING THE MEETING ON DECEMBER 2, 2020.

Persons with a disability requiring accommodation should contact Worcester Township at 610-584-1410.

**WORCESTER TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE TASK FORCE
REMOTE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28 2020 7:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER by Stacy Crandell at 7:00 PM

ATTENDANCE

PRESENT:	STEPHANIE BAILEY	[X]
	ART BUSTARD	[X]
	WINNIE HAYES	[X]
	BURT HYNES	[X]
	MARK LANDIS	[X]
	PAUL LEIS	[X]
	ALICE MAHONEY	[X]
	GEORGE MARKS	[X]
	JAY MCKEEVER	[X]
	BRIAN NEWHALL	[X]
	ROBERT PACE	[X]
	PAT QUIGLEY	[X]
	TONY SHERR	[X]
	CHRISTENE STEERE	[X]
	JOHN WESTRUM	[X]
	DAVID ZERBE	[X]

1. September 23 Meeting Minutes – Stacy Crandell called for any comments or objections to the minutes. The minutes were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There were no public comments.
2. Transportation – Brian Olszak, MCPC, provided an overview of transportation, traffic, and roadways of the Township.

Mr. McKeever commented on cut-through roads.

Ms. Hayes commented on the CPU survey results relative to roadways.

Casey Moore, Township Traffic Engineer, provided an overview of roadway improvements to date and future roadway projects.

Matt Edmunds, Section Chief: Transportation MCPC, provided an overview of County roadways and future projects.

Brian Olszak, provided an overview of traffic calming techniques.

Ms. Hayes commented on traffic calming techniques, walkability, and Center Point Village.

Mr. Bustard commented on past plans for the intersection at Skippack Pike and Valley Forge Road.

Mr. McKeever commented on traffic flows through the Skippack Pike and Valley Forge Road.

Ms. Quigley commented on the act 209 and the Comprehensive Plan relative to roadway improvements.

Mr. Newhall commented on traffic calmers, traffic flow and traffic planning.

Brian Olszak provided an overview of bridges and culverts.

Ms. Hayes commented on future trails and equestrian trails.

Mr. Bustard commented on trails and the requirements for equestrian trails.

Mr. Leis commented on the horse population in Worcester.

Ms. Bailey commented on the Zacharias Trail and traffic in Worcester.

Ms. Mahoney commented on equestrian trails.

Matt Edmunds commented on Bike Montco 2040, future trail projects, and the MontcoPike Project.

Mr. Hynes commented on the intersection at Valley Forge and Potshop, realignment of intersections, and Heebner Road.

Matt Edmund commented on roadway realignments.

3. December 2, 2020 meeting – The Task Force discussed their next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Comprehensive Plan Update Task Force, Stacy Crandell adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Andrew R. Raquet
Codes Director; Asst. Zoning Officer

DRAFT

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

VALERIE A. ARKOOSH, MD, MPH, CHAIR
KENNETH E. LAWRENCE, JR., VICE CHAIR
JOSEPH C. GALE, COMMISSIONER



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE • PO Box 311
NORRISTOWN, PA 19404-0311
610-278-3722
FAX: 610-278-3941 • TDD: 610-631-1211
WWW.MONTCOPA.ORG

SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Parks and Other Open Space + Natural Resource Updates

TO: Worcester Comprehensive Plan Task Force

CC: Tommy Ryan, Township Manager
Stacy Crandell, Asst. Township Manager

Andrew R. Raquet, Asst. Zoning Officer; Codes Director

FROM: Brian J. Olszak, Senior Planner, MCPC

DATE: December 2, 2020

INTRODUCTION

This memo is an introduction to the main parkland, open space and environmental assets and basic issues which need to be updated from the 2008 Comp Plan, including current preserved lands and environmental features.

While trails were discussed in the previous Transportation section, their continued relevance to this section may necessitate returning to them here.

Discussing the relevant capacity for open space preservation is inevitably tied to the amount of developed (and developable) land available in an area. Nonetheless, we will first explore the range of lands currently preserved or considered for preservation, and explore the character of already developed land, as well as potentially developable land at next meeting on *Existing Land Use*. While Historic Resource preservation is passingly mentioned in the 2008 Plan, we will more address this at our next meeting on *Existing Land Use*.

The previous 2008 Comp Plan states the following goals and objectives regarding parks and open space preservation and environmental features in the Township:

- Provide community level parks
- Provide a trail along Zacharias Creek
- Develop a network of parks and trails throughout the Township, while creating passive parkland sites.
- Provide for ordinance updates which require open space, FIDO open space, and trails and easements where public plans coincide with private development.
- Preserve steep slope areas, riparian corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and woodland areas.

Additional or expanded topics under the Parks and Open Space topics that we may want to look at more closely in the Comprehensive Plan might include: identifying updated open space preservation priorities, assessments of tree canopy, or greenway delineation (similar to what Upper Salford has recently done, which can be [found here](#)).

NATURAL RESOURCE UPDATES

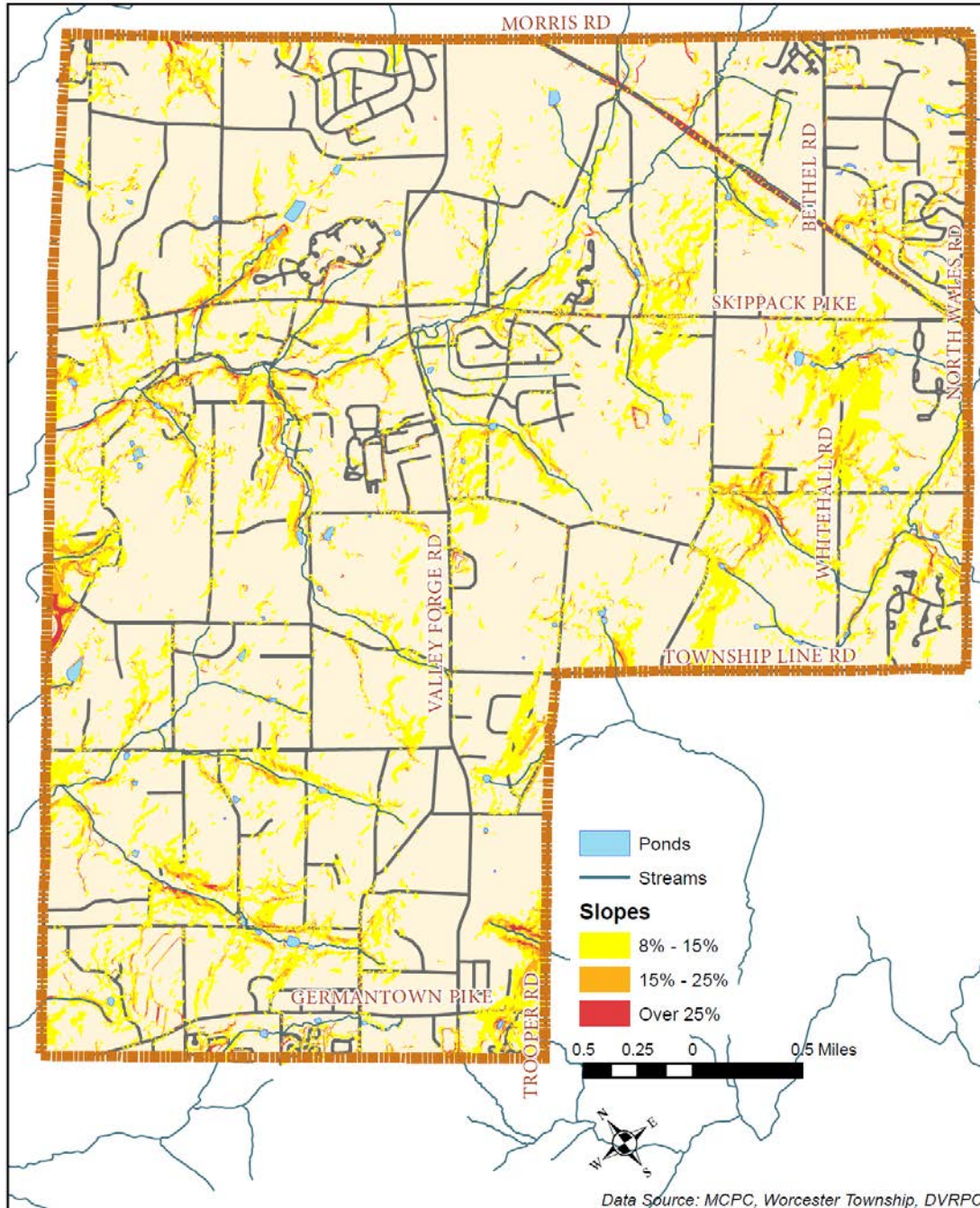
In the 2008 Plan most of the discussion of the natural resources was contained within the overview, “Community Background” chapter, a review of:

- Steep Slopes
- Floodplains
- Riparian Corridors
- Tree Cover and Woodlands

STEEP SLOPES

Steep slope preservation is performed for two general reasons: to prevent the uncontrolled disturbance of slopes in a manner which will cause excessive erosion and unstable soils, and to protect the natural geology and ecology which steep slopes afford. The first map shows below the relative steep slopes in the Township. Notice that they tend to correspond with the stream corridors. Slopes of 8-15% are included, but development of slopes 15% or over should largely be minimized or avoided.

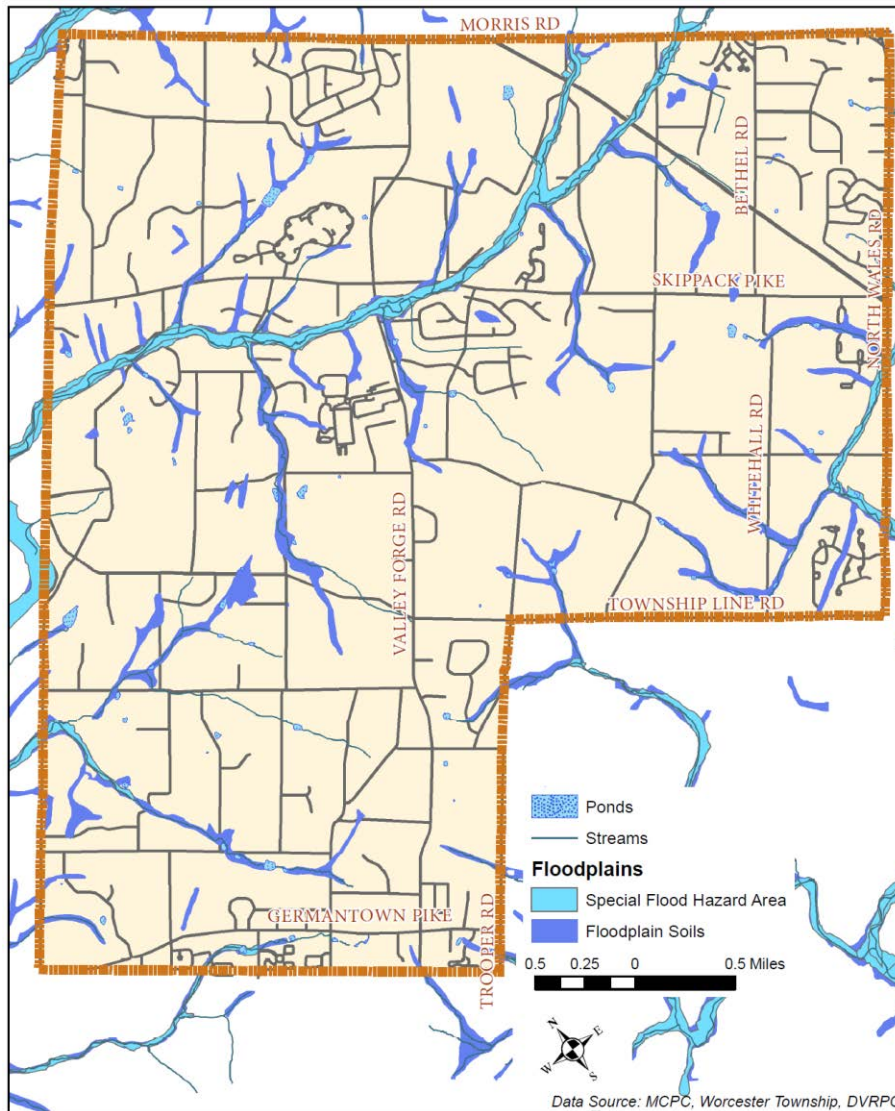
Worcester Steep Slopes. Source: MCPC



Since the last Comp Plan, FEMA certified updates to the official floodplain maps that govern development restrictions (in 2016); all municipalities in Montgomery County were then required to adopt updated ordinances. The next map indicates the mapped "special floodplain hazard areas," which are identified through hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, and are present on FEMA's Flood

Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). “Floodplain soils” are also identified on the below map; floodplain soils form when rain events deposit sediment from upstream and can be poorly drained, the presence of which can also signify future flooding risk, although no base flood elevation has been established through modeling.

Worcester Special Flood Hazard Areas (SHFA) and Floodplain Soils. Source: FEMA, MCPC, Worcester.



Stream corridors, as well as lakes, ponds and wetlands, all maintain unique aquatic-based habitats and plant communities. Not only do these resources provide habitat, but the land-based resources abutting these water bodies provide a number of ecological benefits, including the attenuation of stormwater, streambank conservation and erosion prevention, as well as the regulation of pollutants and oxygen levels in waterways. Worcester regulates activities on the land abutting these waterways, called riparian corridors, primarily through the Riparian Corridor Conservation Overlay District (RCCD) in the Zoning ordinance. Riparian buffers, themselves, refer to the presence of

appropriate vegetation along the streambanks and adjacent lands which helps to serve their ecological function, and generally refers to a minimum of 50-75 foot-wide area, measured perpendicularly from the stream.

The following map was produced with data created by the Heritage Conservancy and MCPC, which indicates the quality of the existing buffer, if any, in the following way:

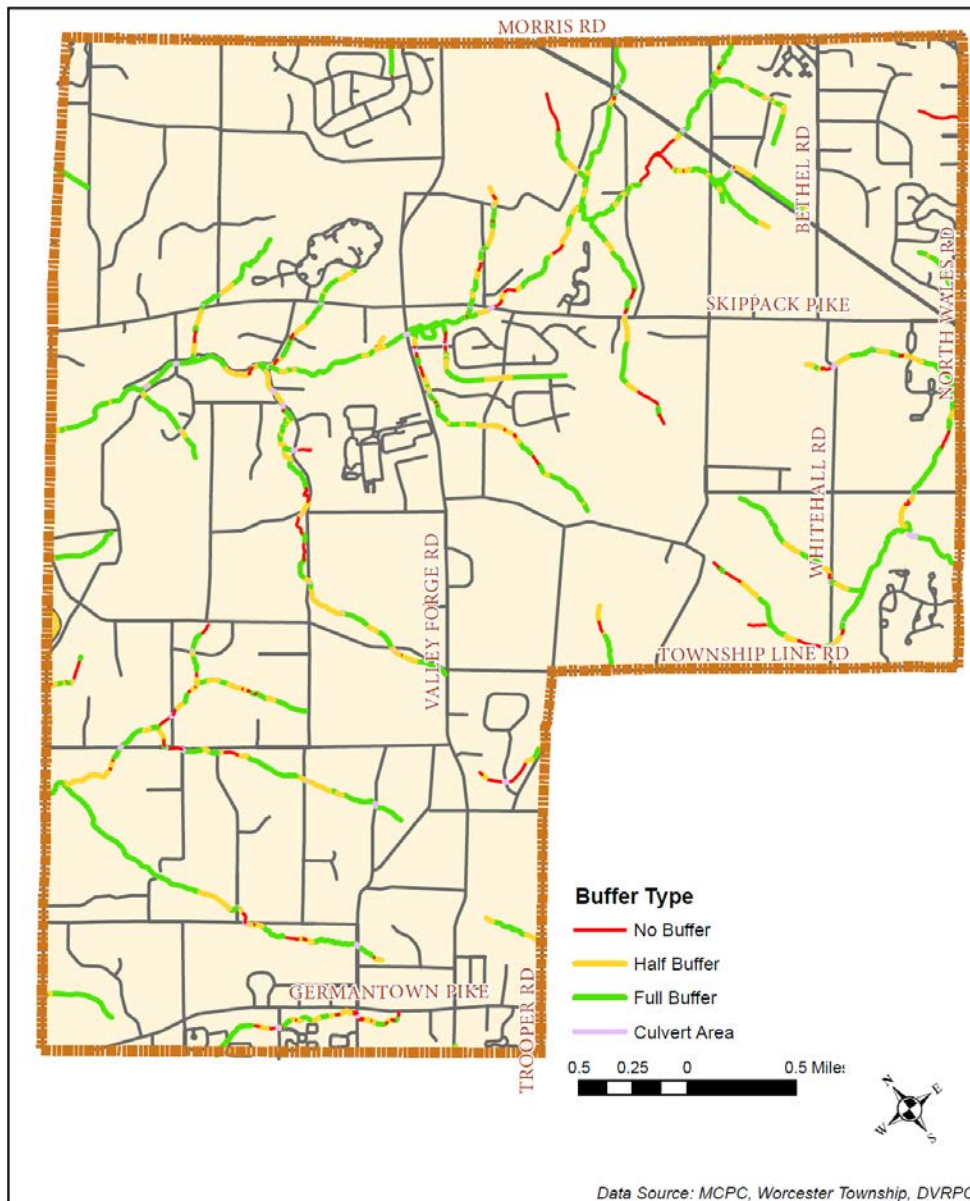
- Full Buffer (green line): Segments with at least a 50-foot wide buffer on *both* sides only, with at least 50% canopy coverage
- Half Buffer (yellow line): Segments with at least a 50-foot wide buffer on *one* side only, with at least 50% canopy coverage.
- No Buffer (red line): Segments which do not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

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

Worcester Riparian Buffer Quality by Ownership Type. Source: MCPC, Heritage Conservancy.

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

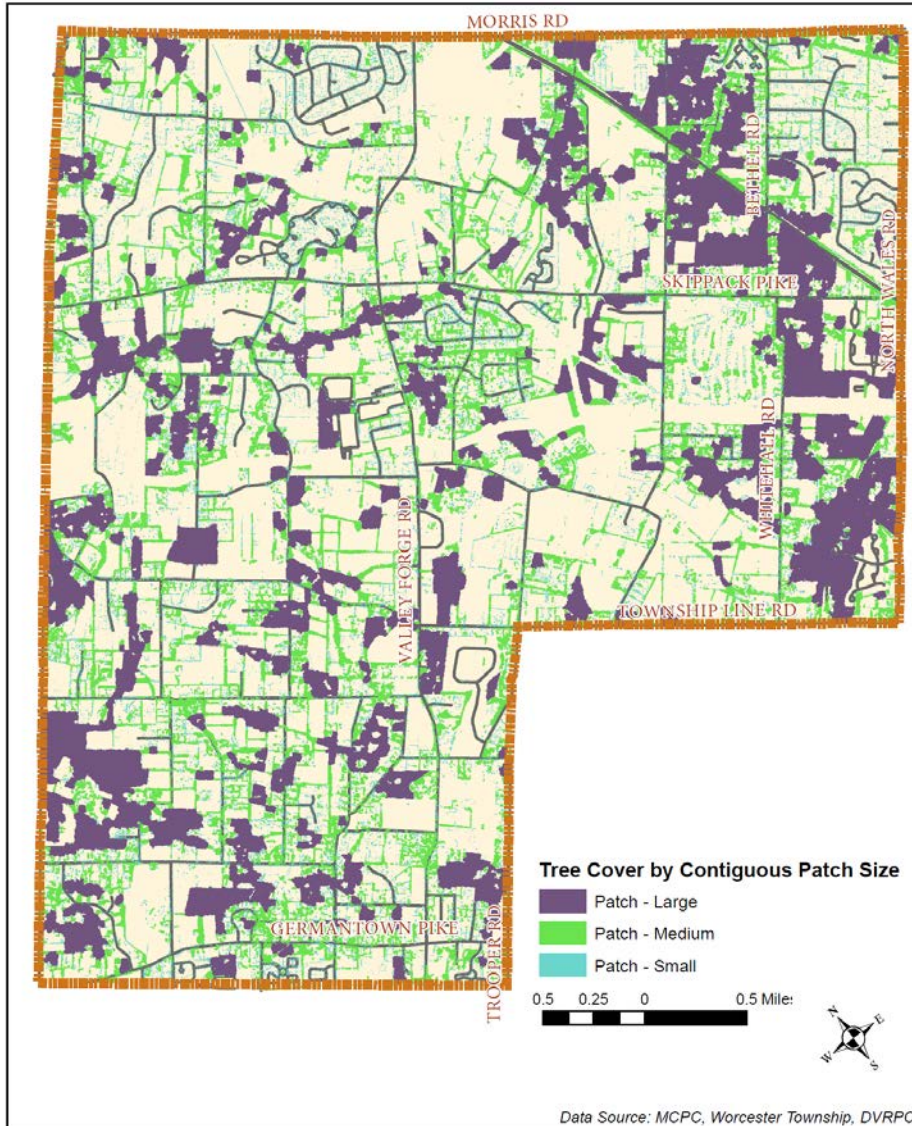
Worcester Riparian Buffer Classes. Source: MCPC.



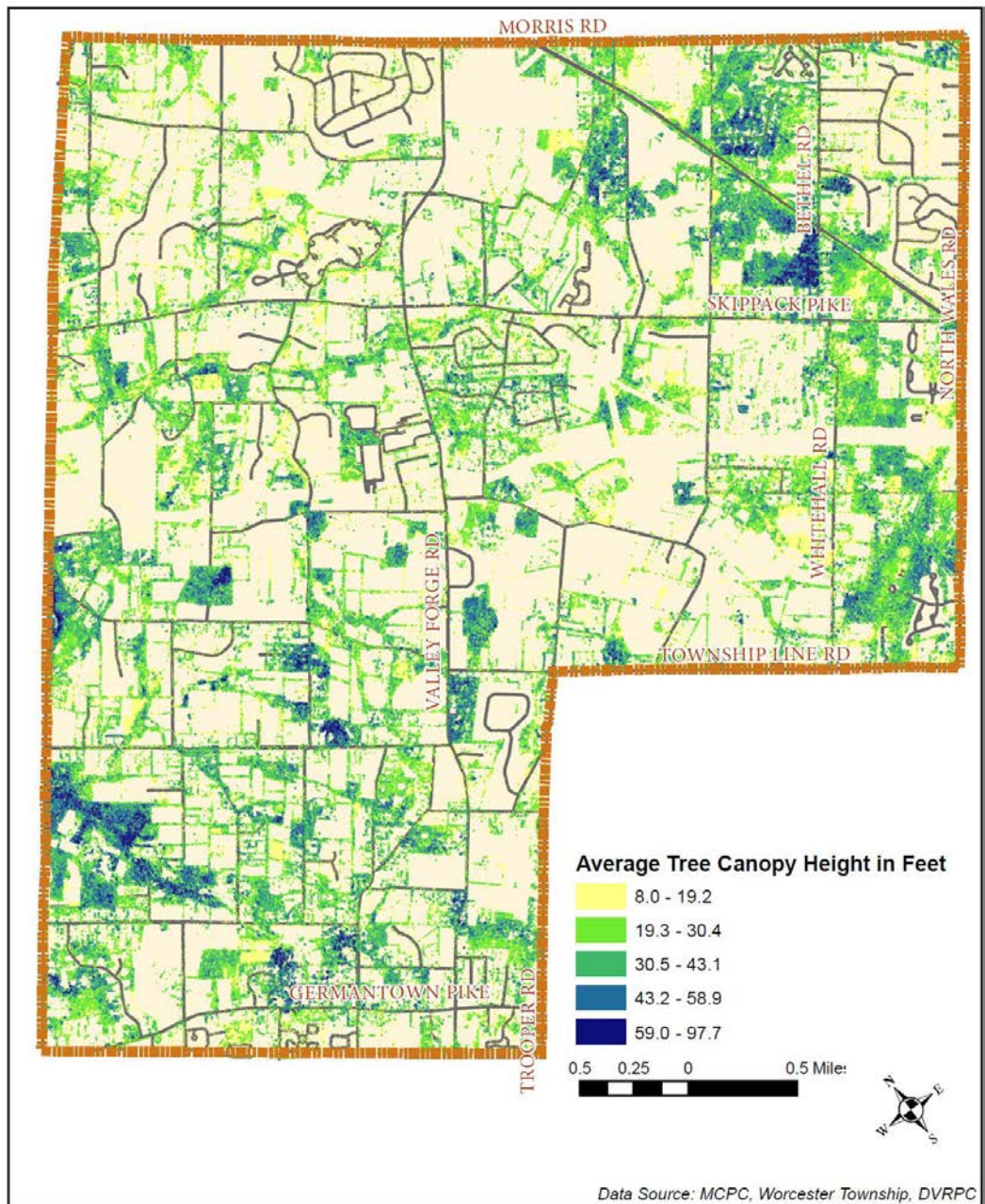
The next two maps show the extent of the tree canopy and overall tree cover in the Township. This dataset was derived from LIDAR, which is a remote sensing method that uses laser to measure ranges, or variable distances, to the ground from a satellite—this enables us to get an enhanced sense of the relative health and age of tree masses. The technology is so precise that even individual *trees* can be sensed. The first map shows the tree coverage by the size of the “forest patch”, which generally means the greater the size of the patch, the more intact the ecological function in terms of forest health and habitat quality. The next map shows the average height of tree canopy: generally the higher the average height, the more mature a woodland section is. We see some of the most intact and mature tree canopy along the western Township boundary, adjacent to Evansburg State

Park, as well as on Township land, but significant woodland patches still exist on many private and undeveloped lands.

Worcester Tree Canopy by Forest Patch Size, 2010. Source: MCPC.



Worcester Tree Canopy Average Height, 2010. Source: FEMA, MCPC, Worcester.



PARKS AND OTHER OPEN SPACE UPDATES

Overall, much of the Parks and Open Space Chapter of the 2008 Comp Plan adopted by reference the then-recently-adopted Township Open Space Plan. Almost all municipalities in Montgomery County, many with the help of MCPC, drafted and adopted new Open Space plans in the 2005-2007 period, coinciding with the county’s open space funding program. At the time, the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) promulgated benchmarks for “minimum recreation area” for which communities should strive, based upon certain population parameters. These are referenced numerous times in the Open Space Plan as well as the 2008 Comp Plan, and recommendations were based on “minimum recreation area” standards.

Since that time, however, both the NRPA and most other planning agencies have backed away from strict adherence to these standards and, instead, recommend that individual communities set their own benchmarks for how much park, open space or recreation area. This is due in large part to the evolution of public preferences relating to recreation, demographic changes, and the increasing use of private reservations or dedication of land in land developments, such as those lands privately held by a homeowners’ or condo association. Part of our work with this Chapter, and the Comp Plan generally, will be to assess the competing priorities of the Township’s continued development and chart a way forward.

In the Public Outreach Survey, distributed in the Spring, answers to several questions indicated residents’ general support and appreciation of the open space assets of the Township. In a number of these questions, when asked to rank the Township’s highest-quality assets and most important issues facing the Township, “open space,” “trails,” or “natural resources” frequently were at or near the top of the list of answers received. Full and partial responses for these questions are provided below.

Responses from Questions 2a, 3, 7, 8 and 9 from Comp Plan Outreach Survey, 2020. Source: Worcester Twp.

QUESTION 2a... What do you like most about living/working in Worcester Township?		
open space	203	35.1%
overall quality of life	58	10.0%
location	42	7.3%
parks & trails	14	2.4%
other	187	32.4%
no response	74	12.8%
totals	578	100.0%

QUESTION 3... Which ONE recreational facility does Worcester Township need more of? (select one only)		
none, all acceptable	170	29.4%
natural open spaces	142	24.6%
trails	138	23.9%
playgrounds & tot-lots	24	4.2%
fields & courts	23	4.0%
other	40	6.9%
no response	41	7.1%
totals	578	100.0%

QUESTION 7... Please rate the present quality of the following in Worcester Township... (select all that apply)	
Fire Service	3.67
Overall Quality of life	3.54
Natural Resources	3.37
Athletic Field & Courts	3.31
Ambulance Service	3.29
Preserved Open Spaces	3.25
Playground & Tot Lots	3.22
Internet Service	3.14
Trails	3.12
Water Systems	2.96
Housing Choices	2.94
Cellular Service	2.86
Noise Control	2.86
Housing Affordability	2.79
Stormwater Management	2.76

QUESTION 8... Looking to the FUTURE, Worcester needs to focus more effort on improving... (select all that apply)		
traffic volume	258	44.0%
preserved open spaces	234	39.9%
roadway conditions	198	33.7%
taxes	193	32.9%
police service	160	27.3%
trails	145	24.7%
cellular service	135	23.0%
retail/commercial services	134	22.8%
noise control	123	21.0%
natural resources	88	15.0%
sewer/septic systems	87	14.8%
stormwater management	82	14.0%

QUESTION 9... From the list in question 8, what are the FIVE most important issues in the Township today?		
preserved open spaces	238	40.5%
traffic volume	224	38.2%
taxes	189	32.2%
roadway conditions	188	32.0%
police service	142	24.2%
trails	117	19.9%
retail/commercial services	107	18.2%
cellular service	93	15.8%
natural resources	85	14.5%
noise control	84	14.3%
sewer/septic systems	68	11.6%
housing affordability	53	9.0%

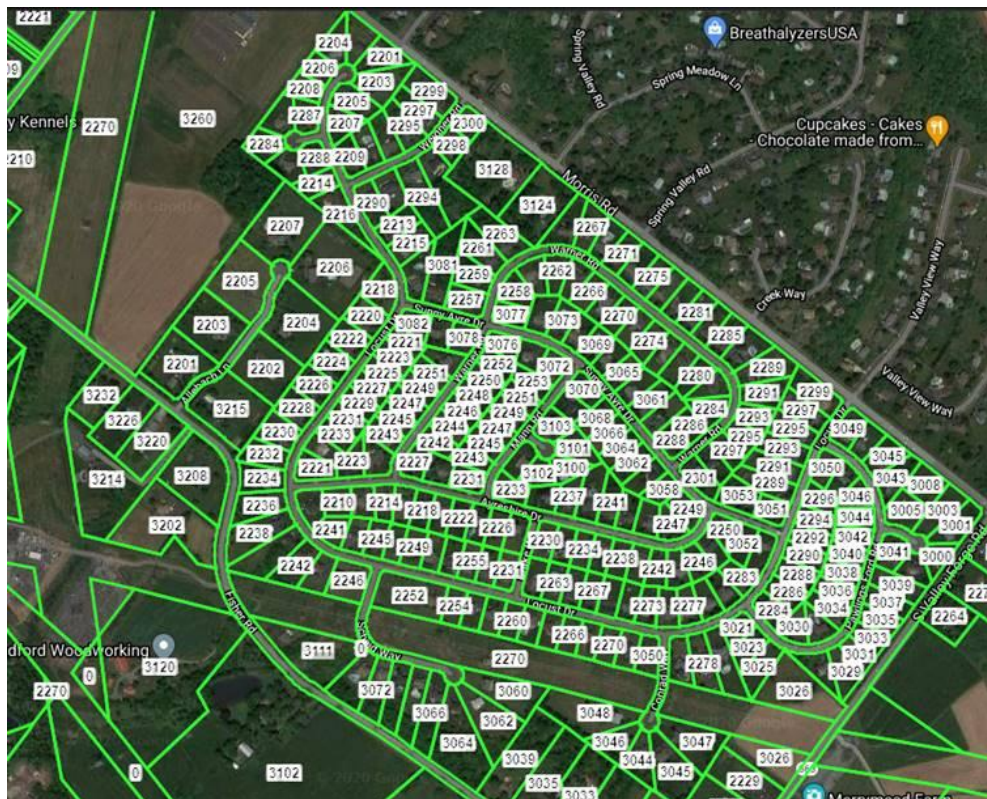
Open Space Acquisition

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

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

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

As stated in earlier meetings and memos, land use planning involves the balancing of competing interests, between the public interests in preservation and the private property rights of individuals to lawfully develop their lands. Open space planning is no different, and so we generally must respect the fact that the law entitles—and in certain cases *requires*—a certain level of residential and nonresidential development to occur in all communities of the Commonwealth. Municipalities have the best chance of successfully preserving land when there is a predictable zoning and development process tied to rational and well-considered planning goals, which can also permit reasonable levels of accommodation and compromise between developers and communities. When municipalities litigate against a development and lose, opportunities to leverage ordinance requirements and compromises for open space amenities are also lost, such as the case was for the Milestone development at Morris Road and Valley Forge Road (shown below).



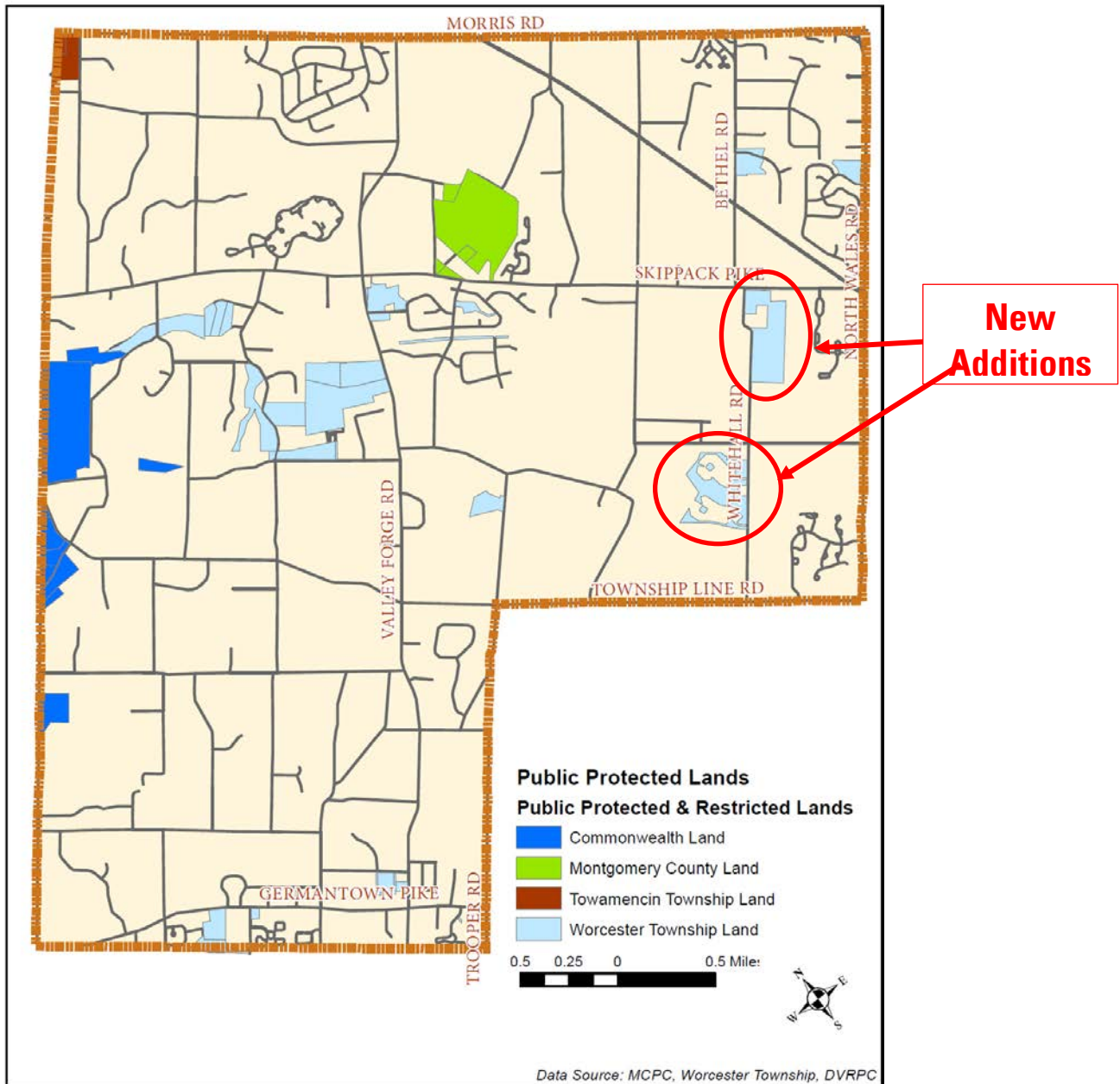
However, when a municipality works with a developer in a collaborative fashion, backed up by ordinance and planning priorities, the preservation of greater open space than the minimum required can occur, as was the case with the Whitehall Estates development on Whitehall Road (shown below). Public open space was dedicated to the Township, an agricultural property was preserved through a conservation easement, and a trail easement was secured, allowing a future trail connection to be built.



Open Space Inventory

The amount of *public* preserved land has increased in the Township since the 2008 Comp Plan. Below is a map showing those lands which were publicly-owned and accessible then, which also indicates the additional public conserved land stands added since then. The newest parcels of land which the Township now owns are located in eastern part of the Township, including two smaller parcels in the vicinity of Bethel Road and the Northeast Extension of the Turnpike, as well as a large wooded tract at the corner of Whitehall Road and Skippack Pike. Also, the open space resulting from the Whitehall Estates land development was dedicated to the Township.

Worcester Public Preserved Lands, 2008, 2020. Source: MCPC, Worcester Twp.



Public Parks and Open Space Information, 2020. Source: Worcester Township

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

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

A significant consideration which appears to have been left out of the 2008 Plan was the impact of private reservations of open space, originally created through the land development process (those parcels mapped in red below), and how these can contribute to the total available park and open space system in the Township. While privately held by homeowners' or condo associations, these lands are deed restricted as open space in perpetuity, and often are required to be publicly accessible in some form. Some examples of these facilities include the trails within both the Preserve at Worcester (at Skippack Pike and North Wales Road), and Stoney Creek Farms (at Township Line and North Wales Roads).

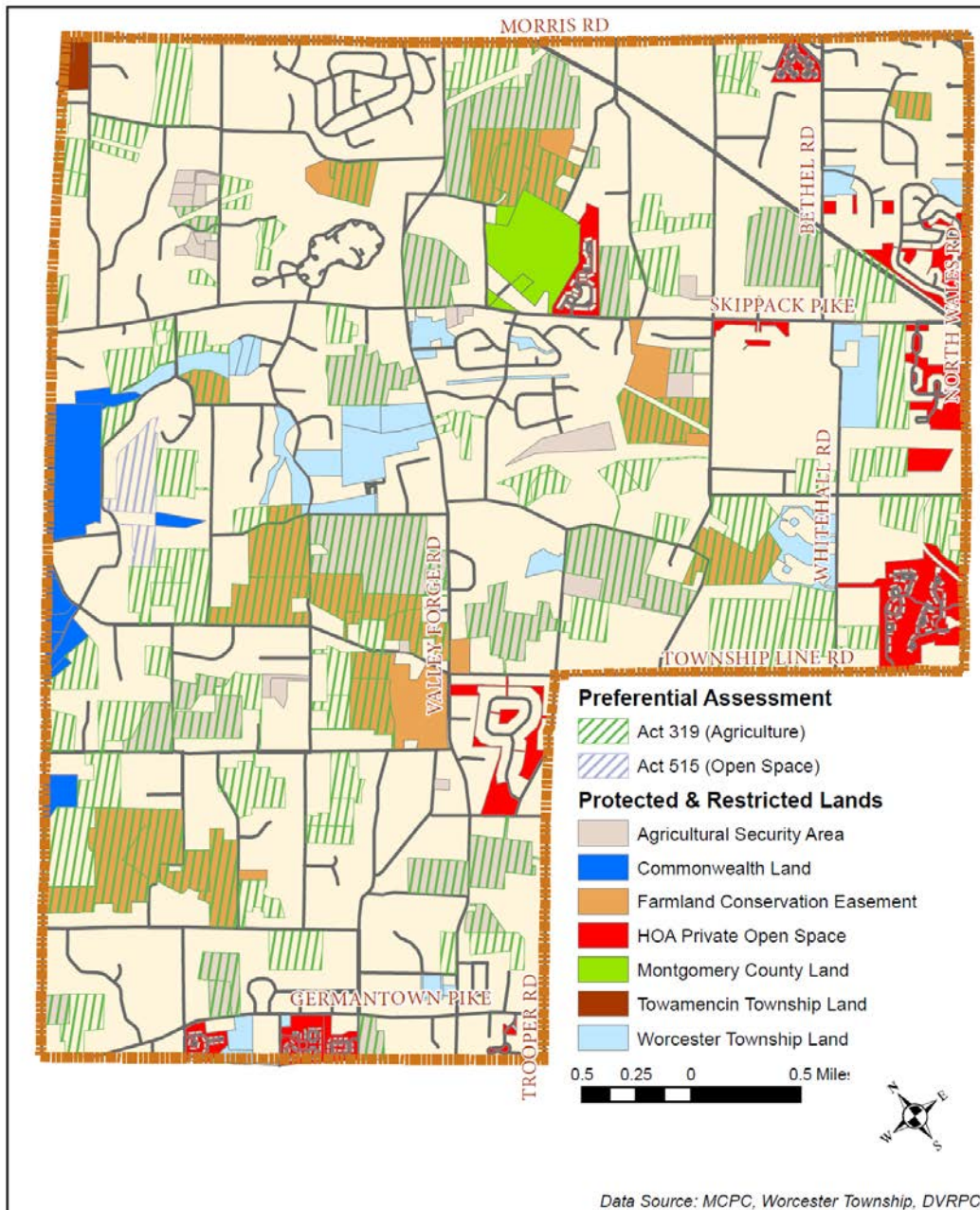
Conserved agricultural lands are shown on the map as farmland conservation easements, which are typically held by the County but can also be held by the Township (in orange). This land is conserved in perpetuity. Shown as well as agricultural security areas (ASA) (in light brown), which provide member properties certain privileges and protection from nuisance lawsuits, and agricultural land that is preferentially assessed under Act 319 (in green crosshatching). However, neither of these designations provide preservation in and of themselves. While a property tax incentive is received by Act 319 properties and a covenant is placed on a property for the duration of its enrollment, a property can voluntarily exit the program and be developed, although rollback taxes are due for the preceding years. Properties in an ASA are not preserved *by* that program, but membership in that program is a prerequisite for applying to the County Farmland Preservation Program.

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

Table of All Converted and Restricted Lands, as of November 18, 2020. Source: Worcester Township

PRESERVED LANDS	ACRES
WORCESTER TOWNSHIP	323.99
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	107.66
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA	147.67
PRIVATE (HOA) OPEN SPACE	369.48
OTHER OPEN SPACE	60.44
CONSERVATION EASEMENTS	817.00
	1826.24
AGRICULTURAL SECURITY AREA	ACRES
WORCESTER TOWNSHIP	1002.45
	1002.45
TOWNSHIP AREA, TOTAL ACRES (16.22 sm)	10381.00
PERCENT PRESERVED	17.59%
PERCENT PRESERVED AND ASA-ENROLLED	27.25%
<i>list last undated 11/18/2020</i>	

All Conserved and Restricted Lands, 2020. Source: Worcester Township



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

VALERIE A. ARKOOSH, MD, MPH, CHAIR
KENNETH E. LAWRENCE, JR., VICE CHAIR
JOSEPH C. GALE, COMMISSIONER



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE • PO Box 311
NORRISTOWN, PA 19404-0311
610-278-3722
FAX: 610-278-3941 • TDD: 610-631-1211
WWW.MONTCOPA.ORG

SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Public Outreach Plan for Worcester CPU

TO: Worcester Comprehensive Plan Task Force

CC: Tommy Ryan, Township Manager
Stacy Crandell, Asst. Township Manager
Andrew R. Raquet, Asst. Zoning Officer; Codes Director

FROM: Brian J. Olszak, Senior Planner, MCPC

DATE: December 2, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic safety measures in place, we will have to plan for socially-distanced public outreach efforts. We have already successfully implemented a Public Outreach Survey, but now that we will have reviewed much of the background data and existing conditions, there are opportunities to continue our engagement.

We at MCPC have found that it is important to engage the public not only through “live” events, but also through “asynchronous” methods—that is, strategies that can be performed or watched at any time (the Survey was this type of engagement).. This is especially important for people who may not have conventional work or school schedules, or whose lives may have been significantly altered by the pandemic. The goals of our outreach efforts should not only be to **inform**, but also to **solicit feedback** on our topic areas.

As members of the Comp Plan Update Task Force, you are tasked with not only representing your community’s best interests in the planning process, but also acting as ambassadors to your neighbors and community members on what we’re doing, and how they can participate. Your participation in these activities in partnership with MCPC and Township staff will be critical to the success of our outreach.

I am proposing that we perform one or more of the following strategies, slated to start in **February 2021**:

LIVE EVENTS

- ***Virtual Open House.*** Using Zoom, we would host a meeting where participants could speak to Task Force members and planners directly about topic areas. This method would use the Breakout Groups function of Zoom, create groups according to topic areas, and would simply stimulate conversations with participants about their preferences and answer any questions. Each room would have a planner, Township staff member, and/or Task Force members to support or guide the conversations; we'd also have the ability to screen-share visual materials like maps and posters. A short presentation may also be involved in the "main" room. Imagine we were in a large room or auditorium, where several posters on several of our topic areas were set up, where people could come and go as they please, listen to short descriptions of poster materials and have conversations with TF members—this would be the closest virtual version of that experience we could get. However, this also would be the most time- and labor-intensive, and technologically-complex strategy to use, which would include the overcoming of any technological hurdles.
- ***Virtual Webinar or Presentation.*** This method would be more linear in nature, which would consist of a Zoom webinar or presentation on the project goals and topic areas, giving participants an opportunity to ask questions during a Q & A session. Unlike the Open House method above, this method is primarily intended for informational purposes, and does not permit more in-depth conversations with participants. However, participants would still be able to enter chat questions into a chat box and could otherwise interact with presenters indirectly.
- ***Office Hours.*** This method is just like it sounds: planners, staff or TF members would hold Zoom office hours at pre-determined times for members of the public to come and ask questions. This strategy, like the Virtual Open House above, enables one-on-one communication. Since there would be minimal planning required to implement these, it's possible we could hold several, and potentially assign themes to each session.
- ***Social Media.*** Several communities have successfully livestreamed their public meetings on Facebook Live or Youtube, which could be a potential tool for us as well.

ASYNCHRONOUS

- ***Recorded Info Sessions.*** These can be a posted recording of one or more of the live virtual events listed above, or a series of shorter videos focusing on specific topics. These shorter videos would be informative in nature, and could simply be recordings of short powerpoint presentations on the plan themes.
- ***Website Resources.*** Previous meeting and topic materials could be posted on a dedicated website, where materials could be browsed at a resident's own pace. Social media posts could also be written to interact with the public on a number of plan themes. A particular interesting tool we could use includes the implementation of a StoryMap, an online tool which mixes text, visuals and maps on a user-friendly interface to interactively explain a topic, and is a tool our office is particularly experienced in using. Take a look at this recent StoryMap MCPC made which illustrates the [2019 Annual Summary of the County's Farmland Preservation Program](#).