

**WORCESTER TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE TASK FORCE  
REMOTE MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, April 28, 2021 7:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER** by Stacy Crandell at 7:00 PM

**ATTENDANCE**

STEPHANIE BAILEY	[X]
ART BUSTARD	[X]
WINNIE HAYES	[X]
BURT HYNES	[X]
MARK LANDIS	[X]
PAUL LEIS	[X]
ALICE MAHONEY	[X]
JAY MCKEEVER	[X]
ROBERT PACE	[X]
PAT QUIGLEY	[X]
CHRISTINE STEERE	[X]
JOHN WESTRUM	[X]

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

- February 24, 2021 & March 24, 2021 Meeting Minutes – Stacy Crandell called for any comments or objections to the minutes. The minutes were approved with one minor change to March 24<sup>th</sup> minutes.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- There were no public comments.

**FOCUS AREA OF COMP PLAN FOR DISCUSSION**

- Draft Goals and Objectives
  - Public Outreach Updates
    - § Brian Olszak, MCPC explained the timeline and went over the public outreach updates. These updates include an overview of the virtual open house that took place on March 24<sup>th</sup>. He also explained some of the other tools that they are developing including a StoryMap and how we can get the word out on the website and social media accounts. Brian also asked that if the Task Force knows of any upcoming events where a table could be set up and have information regarding the comp plan update to send the information to Stacy and we can see about attending those events.
  - Growth Management Goals
    - § Brian went over the proposed goals for growth management. There was some discussion regarding if a vision statement should be added to the comp plan.

- § There was discussion over some wording in the goals and revisions were recommended. There was also a discussion regarding zoning and densities of uses.
- Transportation
  - § Brian went over the goals and objectives. There was some discussion in regards to the wording “all modes of transportation are provided for” and the concern about ATV vehicles.
- Infrastructure
  - § Brian went over the goals and objectives regarding infrastructure including water and sewer. There was a discussion regarding the wording of “demand” for public sewer and water and the concern about the impact to the Township. It was explained that the Township has tapping fees for residents who would like to connect to the public sewer system and a developer would have to pay for any additional capacity or infrastructure that would be needed for new developments. It was also discussed that the Township cannot use this as a tool to control development.
- Preservation- Open Space – Parks
  - § Brian went over the goals and objectives regarding preservation of open space and parks. There was a discussion regarding adding the wording of active and passive uses of parks. There was discussion regarding preserving natural resources.
- Environmental
  - § Brian went over the goals and objectives regarding environmental. There was discussion regarding adding something regarding supporting the use of renewal energy. There was also a recommendation to revise the wording “environmental hazard areas” to environmental sensitive areas.
- Economic Development
  - § Brian went over the goals and objectives regarding economic development. It was noted that this is a new section and it was not covered in the previous comp plan version. There was some discussion regarding the objectives and defining the numbers and percentages throughout all of the sections.
- Governance
  - § Brian went over the goals and objectives regarding governance. There was some discussion on reviewing ordinances and making sure they are up to date.
- Housing
  - § Brian went over the goals and objectives regarding housing. There was a question about the fair share study that is ongoing and the status. Stacy stated that it is ongoing and will be discussed at a Board of Supervisors meeting soon.

**NEXT STEPS AND NEXT MEETING**

- May 26, 2021 meeting – Brian Olszak provided an overview of next month’s meeting which will be a review of the draft of the first chapters. Stacy stated that other committees take off in August and that the Task Force will probably have August off which will not affect the timeline. Stacy also encouraged the Task Force Members were asked to review the Upper Gwynedd Comprehensive Plan Draft. If there are any comments that any members would like to share regarding the comp plan, they were asked to send to Stacy.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- There were no public comments.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Comprehensive Plan Update Task Force, Stacy Crandell adjourned the meeting at 8:47 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Stacy E. Crandell  
Assistant Township Manager

DRAFT

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: REVISED Proposed Comprehensive Plan Update Goals and Objectives

TO: Worcester Comprehensive Plan Task Force

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

FROM: Brian J. Olszak, Senior Planner, MCPC

DATE: May 26, 2021

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## INTRODUCTION

Based upon both the verbal feedback received at April's meeting, and the written feedback received later, I have revised the goals and objectives. Not all comments or suggestions could be included as proposed, but I attempted to either integrate as many comments as I could, although I may have needed to adjust the language in order to blend it into the draft. This is the last time that we will spend significant time on these items. The changes from last month's proposed language are in red. While we will not be creating a single vision statement for the whole Township, "policy statements" have been drafted for each goals section below which has the effect of summarizing the goals into a single "vision."

## PROPOSED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Growth Management Policy Statement

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

### Growth Management Goals

- *Plan for a balanced land-use mix for fiscal sustainability, for the municipality and for the residential tax base.*
- *Concentrate development where infrastructure and development already exists, such as in villages*
- *Ensure context-sensitive design of development, and scaled according to its environment and surroundings*
- *Promote responsible development that ~~R~~reduces the consumption of land, ~~when development occurs~~*

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

**Growth Management Objectives**

- **% of developments within designated preservation and growth/village areas ~~resource areas.~~**
- ~~% of developments within designated growth or village areas~~
- **Increase in assessed property values**
- **Increase in # of acres preserved, both with and without public access**
- **Increase in # of developments whose fiscal impact is net-zero or positive; per acre revenue yield of development**
- **# of developments resulting from court challenges or changed zoning**
- **Increase in % of land developments meeting “development” targets (i.e. meeting certain criteria or standards relating to desired development outcomes like the consumption of land, how much open space is proposed, what amenities are present, etc.)**

**Transportation Policy Statement**

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

**Transportation Goals**

- *Assure that a diversity of all modes of transportation are provided ~~for and to~~ improve connectively throughout the Township*
- *Encourage the use of alternatives to motor vehicles*
- *Reduce traffic congestion*
- *Improve traffic safety for both motorists and nonmotorists.*
- *Provide a comprehensive network of trails throughout the Township.*

**Transportation Objectives**

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

**Infrastructure Policy Statement**

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

## **Infrastructure Goals**

- *Provide the sustainable management of stormwater throughout the Township.*
- *Provide and maintain sewer and water infrastructure capacity in line with reasonable needs demands.*
- *Plan for public sewer in areas at risk for malfunctioning systems*

### **Infrastructure Objectives**

- **Decrease in # of flooding events or illicit discharge complaints documented**
- **# of new connections to public water and sewer**
- **Increase in # of municipal stormwater projects; amount of stormwater issues abated through projects**

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## **Preservation – Open Space – Parks Policy Statement**

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

## **Preservation - Open Space – Parks Goals**

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

### **Preservation – Open Space – Parks Objectives**

- **Increase in # of properties/# of acres purchased or eased for preservation for agriculture, sensitive environmental areas, and general open space**
- **Increase in # of participants in Township Park/Rec programs**
- **Increase in # residents rating satisfaction with Townships Park/Rec system**

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## **Environmental and Sustainability Policy Statement**

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

## **Environmental and Sustainability Goals**

- *Preserve and conserve sensitive environmental features, such as floodplains, steep slopes, riparian buffers, forests and wetlands*
- *Restrict development from environmentally hazard sensitive areas*
- *Support practices which address climate change, including renewable energy, sustainable transportation options, low-impact development, and reductions in waste, emissions, and water and energy use.*

### **Environmental and Sustainability Objectives**

- **Decrease in** % of development occurring within **sensitive environmental hazard areas**
- **Decrease in % and #** of acres of impervious surface **converted**
- **Increase in** % tree canopy coverage
- **Increase in** % of riparian corridors with full or half buffers
- **Increase in** # of streambank restoration projects; # of feet of streambanks restored
- **Increase in** % of watersheds in good health
- **Increase in alternative energy usage in municipal fleet**
- **Increase in # of vehicle charging stations for public use**

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### **Economic Development Policy Statement**

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

### **Economic Development Goals**

- *Provide the physical capacity for economic growth.*
- *Enable commercial development insofar as it supports small-scale nature of commercial uses.*
- *Support the continuing viability of agriculture in all its forms in the Township.*
- *Support local small business development and retention, as well as entrepreneurialism*

### **Economic Development Objectives**

- **Increase in #** of jobs within Township
- **Increase in # of business establishments**
- **Increase in #** of agricultural operations, increase or decrease
- **Increase in #** of agricultural-related jobs

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### **Governance Policy Statement**

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

### **Governance Goals**

- *Enable the Township to sustainably and equitably provide necessary services and resources to all residents*
- *Support partnerships between governments and other organizations to achieve the Township's planning and development goals*

### **Governance Objectives**

- **Increase in #** residents rating satisfaction with Township government
- **Increase in # of municipal code self-reviews**

- Increase in # and type of partnerships established by Township

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### **Housing Policy Statement**

*Worcester will support the provision of a range of high-quality housing with appropriate and desirable amenities to support existing and future residents' needs.*

### **Housing Goals**

- *Provide a range of housing types, densities and opportunities for enhanced amenities in neighborhood design.*
- *Support "aging in place" principles and other means by which older adults can secure or maintain appropriate housing in the Township.*
- *Encourage new and existing housing which is compatible with the traditional and rural character of the Township.*
- *Ensure a mix of housing types, densities and land uses as required by law*

### **Housing Objectives**

- **Increase in #** of housing proposed **and**, constructed of target types
- **Improvement in %** of **target** housing types in Township **to desired levels.**
- **Increase in %** of land developments meeting "development" targets (*i.e. meeting certain criteria or standards relating to desired development outcomes like the consumption of land, how much open space is proposed, what amenities are present, etc.*)

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT:** Draft Chapter Review Process

**TO:** Worcester Comprehensive Plan Task Force

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

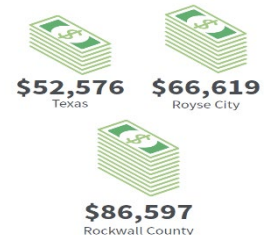
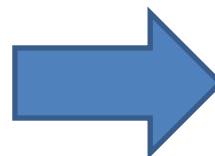
**FROM:** Brian J. Olszak, Senior Planner, MCPC

**DATE:** May 26, 2021

Starting this month, and working our way each month through the Summer and Fall, we will be reviewing Draft Chapters I have produced. The intent of these reviews are to review and discuss *substantive issues* regarding the narrative and contents of the chapters, *particularly the recommendations*. It's important that we make our way through each chapter expeditiously, given we only have one meeting a month together to review and discuss. To that end, I would kindly ask that you refrain from spending time proofreading for spelling, punctuation and formatting errors, unless it impacts your understanding of what is being communicated: there will be plenty of time in successive edits to proofread and correct such errors. I also highly encourage you to submit written comments before the meeting if you predict you'll have many comments on a subject. Fonts, colors or other graphical/formatting matters will not generally be discussed, unless members have specific comments or recommendations on the contents of a map or graphic, or if additional maps/graphics may be needed.

After each Chapter is reviewed by the Task Force, comments and suggested edits will be incorporated into the Draft and will be delivered to MCPC's Graphic Design and GIS teams, who will reformat, process and design the publication and the Plan's graphics. While I will strive to produce draft chapters which are as informative and illustrative as possible, the graphic design phase produces a refined and cohesive look to the Plan, while maps, tables and charts are recomposed to look more interesting and to fit better with the Plan's overall design scheme. In order to make information more engaging or pleasing to the eye, tables or charts may be converted into "infographics" in the Graphic Design phase; the following is an example of what one conversion might look like:

Income	1989	1999	2014-2018
Per Capita	\$45,842.00	\$ 51,691.51	\$ 62,496.00
Median Household	\$95,612.09	\$116,465.00	\$ 119,179.00



Final selection and placement of photographs for the plan will also be accomplished in the Graphic Design phase, even though I will try to place appropriate photographs in the review phase. However, suggestions from the Task Force on photograph subjects to use in each chapter are warmly welcomed!

Generally, each Draft Chapter will take no more than one meeting to review and discuss. Once a Draft Chapter is reviewed initially by the Task Force and comments/suggestions are received, the review of that Chapter is considered complete, and will not be reviewed again until the entire Draft Publication is ready for public consumption. Only in consultation with Township Staff will further meetings on a specific Chapter be considered.

# Introduction and Background

*An explanation of the Plan and the Process*

Worcester Township has a lot going for it, but there much to be done to create a better Township. We have to look deeply into the soul of the Township, its citizens, its history, its environment, and its future to learn about its strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities.

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

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

## What Is a Comprehensive Plan?

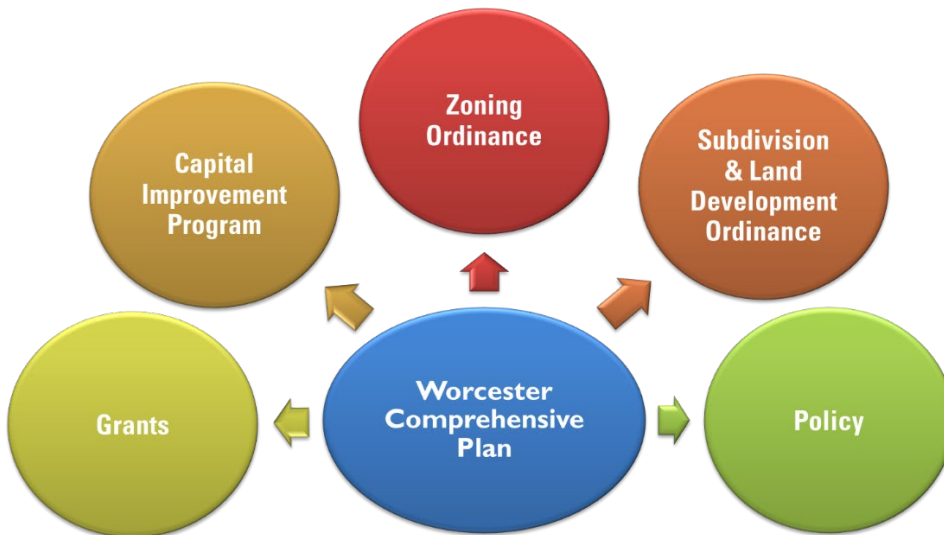
All communities must strive to plan for their futures in some way: infrastructure, adequate housing and economic development potential all impact how ready a community is to address the myriad challenges that their constituents face. While sometimes it will make sense to create a targeted, small area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

## Why Do We Need a Plan?

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

The key uses of a comprehensive plan are to:

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



As one of the most important pieces of adopted Township policy, the Comprehensive Plan acts as an influence for many of the Township’s legal instruments, including the two major ordinances which impact the built environment: the Zoning and Land Development ordinances. Additionally, grants that the Township may apply for are supported by the Comprehensive Plan, illustrating that project-based grants have a foundation in sound planning and design.

## Who Was Involved in Making This Plan?

The Plan reflects not just where the Township is, but more importantly *where it’s going*. This Plan doesn’t just reflect the opinions and expertise of just one or a few people, but of many people who live, work and play in the Township, who care about its future and have chosen to be co-creators of its path forward. The following groups of people played a significant part in the creation of this plan:

- **Comprehensive Plan Update Task Force:** Residents of the Township who represent many different constituencies, interests and skill sets who were appointed to be the main body responsible for reviewing Plan, establish community goals and encourage community input and engagement.
- **Township Staff and Consultants:** Township management provided ongoing input on process, background data and current municipal projects, communication with the public, and development and dissemination of outreach survey.
- **Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC):** Contracted by the Township to lead the planning process, MCPC coordinated all aspects of plan development with Township staff and Task Force

members, including background research and analysis, public meeting facilitation, and plan preparation. Advised on planning best practices and programs.

- **The Public:** Community members provided input on community priorities and projects, through both public meetings and responses to the outreach survey.
- **Board of Supervisors:** The elected legislative body of the Township is the ultimate authority which approves the Plan for adoption, making it official Township policy. The Board also appointed the Task Force members.

## How to Read and Use This Plan

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

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

## Our Assumptions

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

## EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON THE FUTURE

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

## UPDATE THE PLAN, KEEP THE SPIRIT

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

## OBLIGATIONS OF GOVERNANCE

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

## FOCUS ON ACTION

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

# Worcester: Past and Present

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

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## A Short History of Worcester

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

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

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

# Worcester Today

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Worcester Township saw significant population increase between the years 1990 and 2000, where the resident population rose by 66% to 7,789 people. The last Decennial Census recorded 9,750 Worcester residents, a 25% increase from the decade prior, which at the time outpaced the population projected for the time period, as stated in the earlier Comp Plan. Although the latest population estimate is from 2019, and represents only 9 years since the last Census, Worcester may return a lower population than previously projected for 2020. Between 2010 and 2019, Worcester’s population only increased by 7%, which could be due to several factors, including the overall development slow-downs caused by the 2008-9 recession.

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

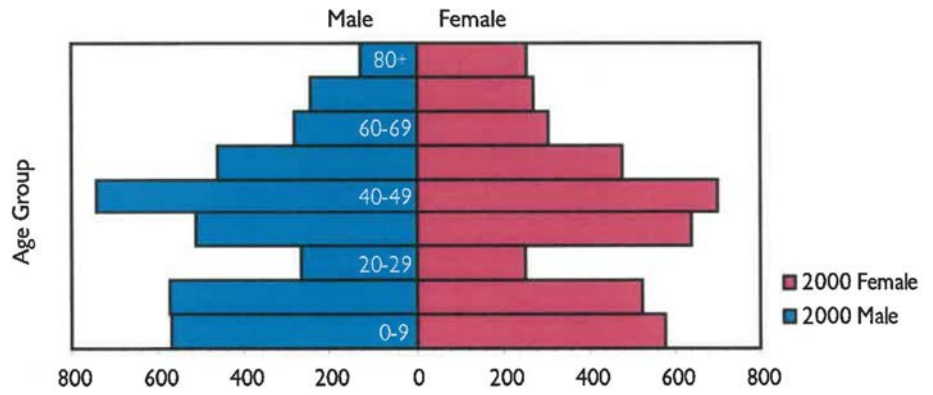
This shows us, among other things, that Worcester is getting older. The median age of a Worcester resident moved from 42.3 in 1990, to 43.9 in 2000, to 47.4 in 2010. A greater percentage of older people in a community suggests that Worcester may benefit from planning for an aging population.

Like much of the County overall, the Township has become more racially diverse, seeing an increase in the Black or African American population (to 5.1%) and in the Asian population (to 12%). In particular, the largest groups identifying as Asian are of Asian Indian, Korean, and Chinese ancestry. This suggests that the broadening population base of the Township may have new and different needs, which may need to be addressed in future planning.

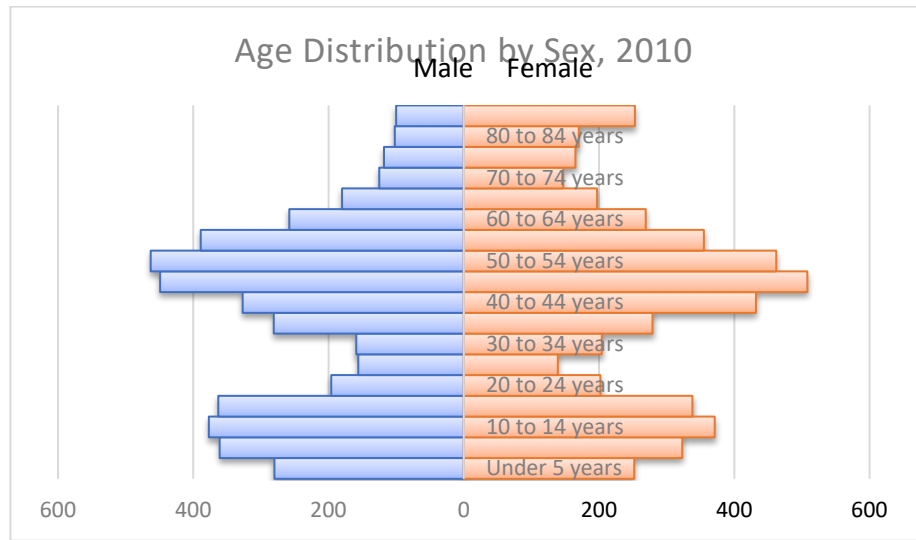
**Worcester Population, Projected and Actual, 1950-2040** Source: US Census Bureau, DVRPC

Year	Projected Population	Actual Population	% Change
1950		1,939	
1960		3,250	68%
1970		4,243	31%
1980		4,661	10%
1990		4,686	1%
2000		7,789	66%
2010	9,340	9,750	25%
2020	10,917*	2019 Est.: 10,430	7%
2030	11,882*		
2040	12,650*		

\* According to DVRPC's more-recent 2016 Population Projections

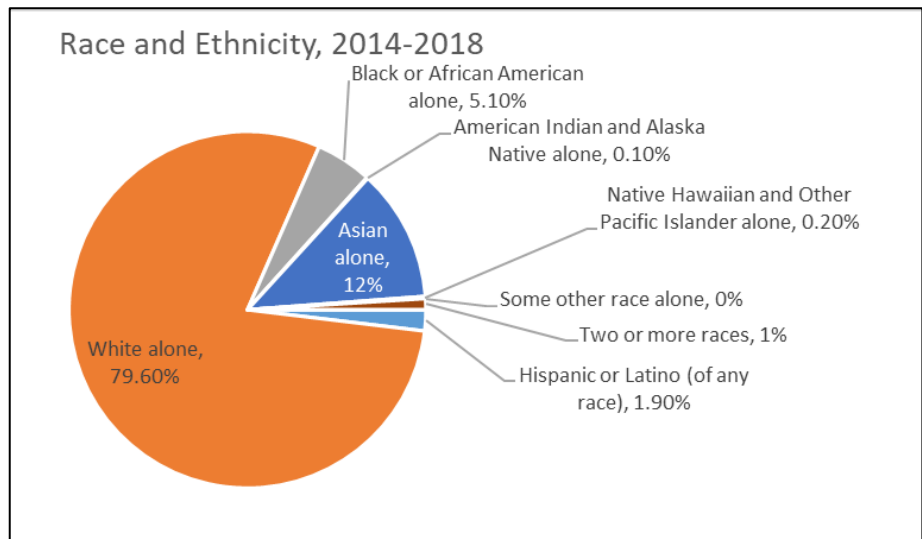


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 1990, 2000.



Age Distribution by Sex, 2000 -2010. Source: 2000 -2010 Decennial Census.

Race and Ethnicity, 2014-2018. Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates.



Overall, Worcester continues to have a highly-educated population, with well over half the adult population having at least a bachelor’s degree, similar to the County as a whole. Since 2000, the percentage of the population with at least some college has continue to grow. This could be a good selling point for companies looking to locate in or near the Township, and it could be something we want to consider in planning for the future.

***Educational Attainment of Residents 16-Years or Older, 1990-2018. Source: 2008 Comp Plan, ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates.***

	1990		2000		2014-2018	
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total
Less than 9th Grade	134	4.00%	124	2.50%	174	2.4%
9th through 12th Grade, no diploma	278	8%	214	4.30%	179	2.4%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	966	29.00%	1151	23%	1466	19.9%
Some college, no degree	547	16.40%	614	12.30%	1004	13.6%
Associate degree	240	7.20%	317	6.30%	240	3.3%
Bachelor’s degree	817	24.50%	1618	32.40%	2518	34.2%
Graduate or Professional degree	352	10.6%	957	19.2%	1784	24.2%

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

***Special Needs Population, 2014-2018. Source: ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates.***

	2014-2018	
	#	% Total
Persons 18-64 with Disabilities	357	6.10%
Persons 18-64 with Specific Disability Type*	366**	
Over 65 Years of Age	2,019	19.70%
Under 18 Years of Age	2,427	23.70%
Income below Poverty Line	504	5.00%

*\*Relevant specific types: Independent living difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, self-care difficulty*

*\*\*Estimate of certain specific disability types appears greater than total estimate of people with disability because individuals may report multiple types of disability.*

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

***Median Household Income and Per Capita Income, 1989-2018. Source: 2008 Worcester Comp Plan, ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates.***

Income	1989	1999	2014-2018
Per Capita	\$45,842.00	\$ 51,691.51	\$ 62,496.00
Median Household	\$95,612.09	\$116,465.00	\$ 119,179.00

However, an additional indicator which should be noted is that the number of people who live in households below the poverty line has increased noticeably, to **5.0%**, which is slightly below the County average of **6.8%**. Another way to measure economic challenge is by using “housing cost burden”: this is defined by the Census and federal agencies as having housing-related costs (rent, mortgage payments, insurance, utility and fuel payments, real estate taxes and condo fees, etc.) accounting for over 30% of the household income. Available data track households who rent, as well as those who own with and without a mortgage on their property: the data are shown below.

	<b>Renter HH Cost Burdened</b>		<b>Owner HH w/ Mortgage Cost Burdened</b>		<b>Owner HH w/o Mortgage Cost Burdened</b>	
	<b>#</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Worcester</b>	270	40%	545	26.4%	280	27.3%
<b>Montgomery County</b>	39,801	45%	41,380	26.6%	12,553	17.9%

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

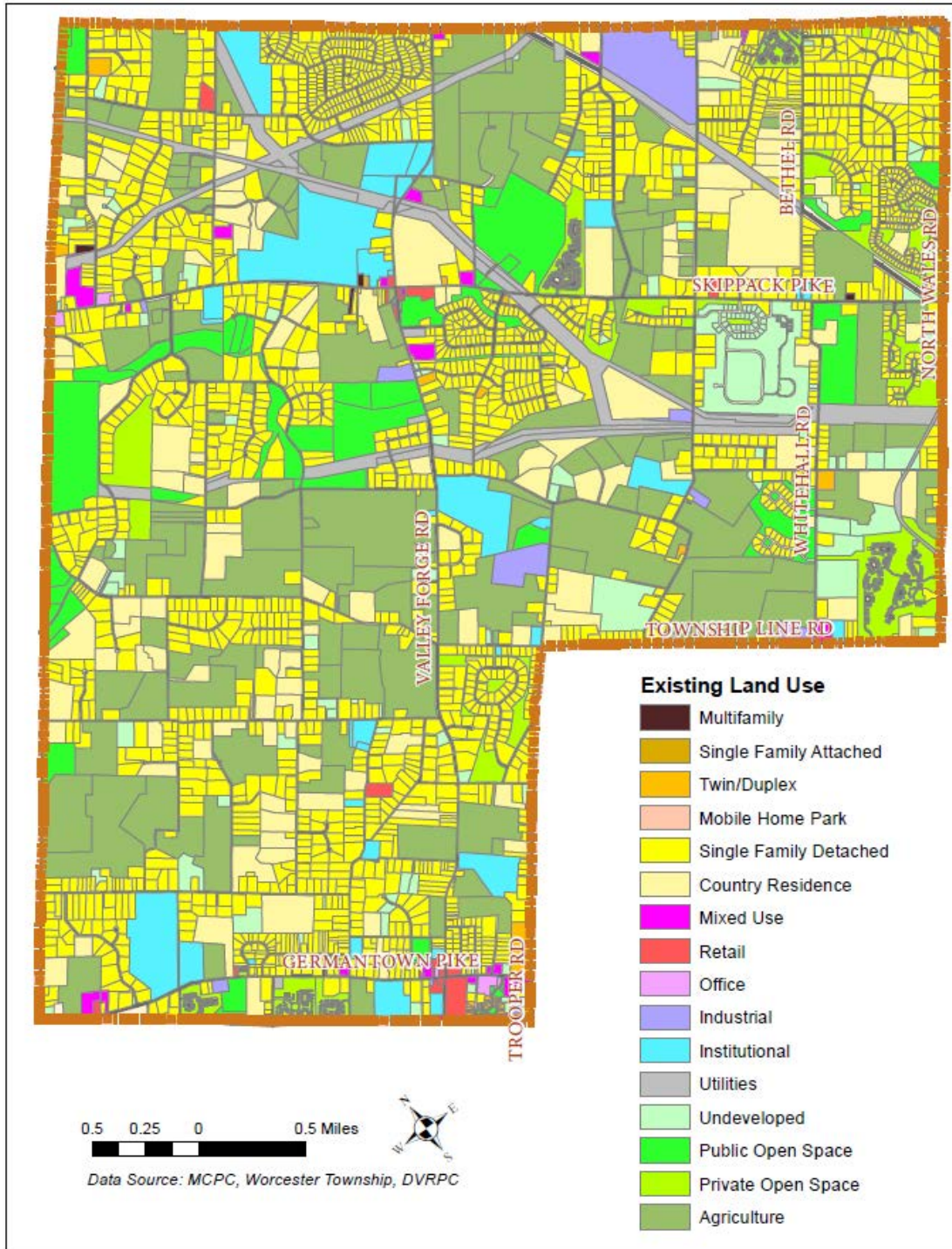
### **Key Takeaway**

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

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Land use groups related activities and structures together (residential, nonresidential, utilities, etc.), while also describing how developed a parcel may be (agricultural, undeveloped, public open space, etc.), which gives us a clue as to what the potential changes and impacts we might be able to expect as the Township continues to evolve. In sum, knowing what the existing land use is, and how it may have changed, allows us to plan for the future.

***Worcester Existing Land Use, 2020. Source: MCPC, MCBOA***



The updated Existing Land Use map above is based on data pulled in July 2020, which has been corrected by checking data-transcription errors, field-verifying through aerial photographs and other sources, and manually updated. Items which will need to be updated at a later date are properties which are actively under development, such as the Reserve at Center Square development; the map currently overcounts undeveloped land and undercounts the eventual residential units which will be constructed. The table below is based upon these same datasets. The land use categories are described in more detail in the call out box.

As can be seen from each of the above and below tables, residential land uses occupy a plurality of the land area in the Township, with single family detached lots the single most common individual land use, in both the number of parcels as well as in total land area. Nonresidential properties, on the other hand, appear to have declined since 2007, but this could likely be due to the reassignment of two large properties on Skippack Pike, both of which are circled in the 2007 map above.

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

Assessing the existing land use in the Township is the first step in determining what lots remain developable, and consequently what the growth potential of the Township. In determining what lands are developable, we take all lands which are categorized as Undeveloped, Country Residence, and (unpreserved) Agriculture, and combine them into a single file. While it’s certainly feasible and plausible to redevelop existing land categorized under other uses, these selected land use types most often are the types which are considered “virgin” land which, when developed, are considered “greenfield” developments.

# MCPC LAND USE CATEGORIES

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

Land Use Description	Parcels	Acres	Percentage of Total
Single Family Detached	2,373	3,472.14	35.27%
Agriculture	161	2,607.28	26.49%
Country Residence	121	1,135.76	11.54%
Public Open Space	53	616.15	6.26%
Institutional	37	470.55	4.78%
Undeveloped	161	414.37	4.21%
Utilities	52	400.79	4.07%
Private Open Space	48	389.07	3.95%
Industrial	11	141.66	1.44%
Mixed Use	29	58.99	0.60%
Twins/Duplexes	58	45.79	0.47%
Retail	18	41.99	0.43%
Single Family Attached	824	31.23	0.32%
Office	5	11.10	0.11%
Multifamily	6	6.05	0.06%
Mobile Home Park	16	0.20	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,973</b>	<b>9,843.10</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

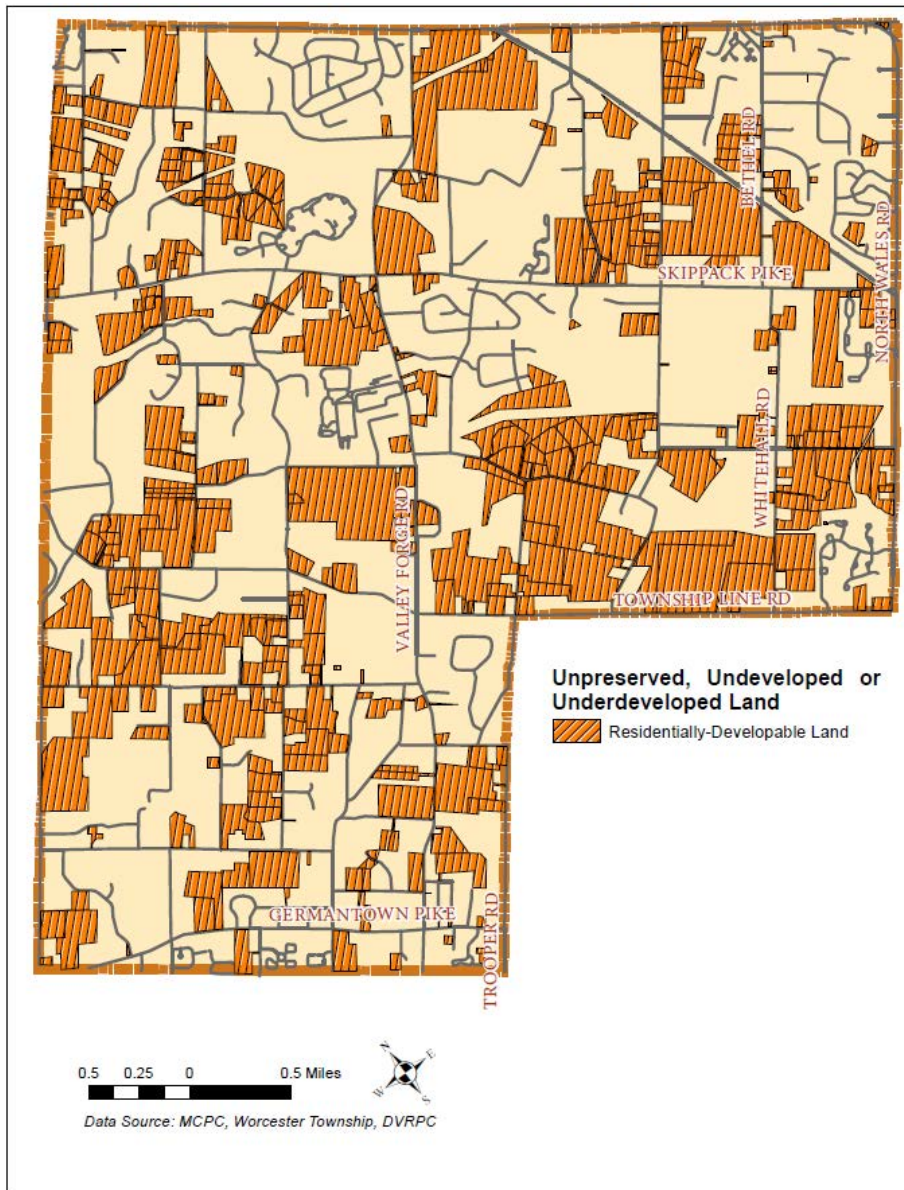
*General Land Use Categories, 2007, 2020. Source: MCPC, MCBOA*

General Land Use Categories, 2007, 2020.	2007		2020		% Change
	Acres	% Total	Acres	% Total	
Residential	4,394	43%	4,691.16	48%	6%
Nonresidential	1,329	13%	1,125.07	11%	-18%
Agricultural, Undeveloped and Open Space	4,406	43%	4,026.87	41%	-9%

*Open Space, Agricultural and Undeveloped Uses, 2007, 2020. Source: MCPC, MCBOA*

Open Space, Ag and Undeveloped Uses, 2007, 2020.	2007		2020		% Change
	Acres	% Total	Acres	% Total	
Agriculture	2,782	63%	2,607.28	65%	-7%
Undeveloped	717	16%	414.37	10%	-73%
Public Open Space	454	10%	616.15	15%	26%
Private Open Space	490	11%	389.07	10%	-26%

**Worcester Developable Land. Source: FEMA, MCPC, Worcester.**



The above map, however, likely overestimates developable parcels, in that certain large parcels may be restricted from further development through deed restrictions acquired through a past land development approval: further research would be necessary to account for these. After those items are considered, we will be prepared to show a built-out scenario once an analysis of the underlying zoning of each of these properties is performed.

### **Key Takeaway**

There is still room to grow in Worcester, but a close look at the remaining developable lots in the Township is necessary to determine what kind of development and preservation policies may be needed to maintain fiscal sustainability and adequately account for the future service needs of the Township.

## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

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

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

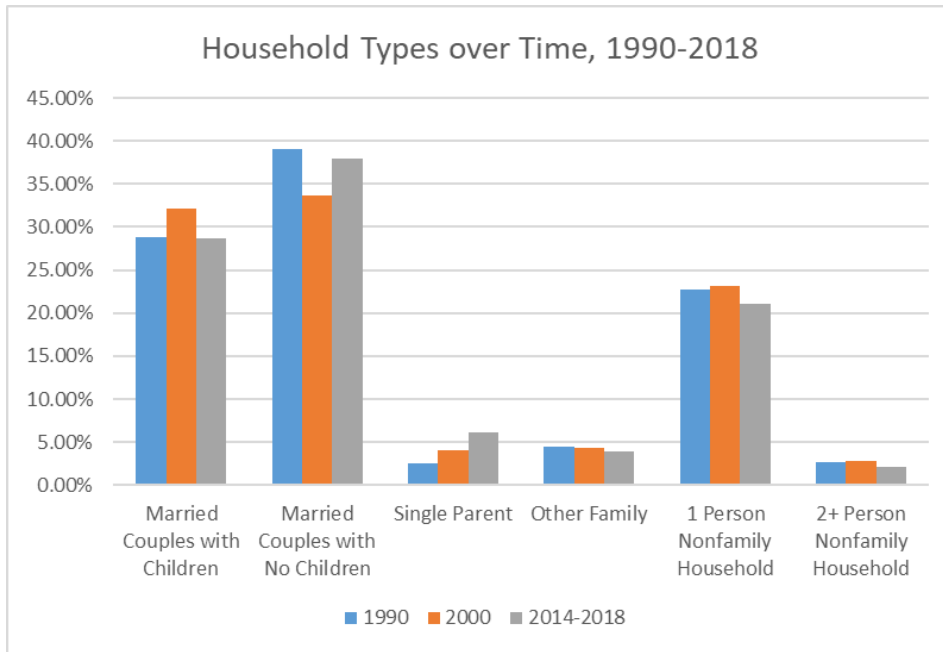
In terms of existing units, residential homes have increased in almost every category. Overall, **349 residential** units were added between 2007 and 2020, the majority of which were SFAs, followed closely by SFDs. Generally across the county we have seen a growing popularity of attached townhomes being constructed, and in many years it surpasses detached units, which applies to Worcester as well. However, there appears to be a slight decline in the number of multifamily units (not buildings), but this may be because the 2008 Comp Plan (from which the 2007 numbers were taken) may have overestimated this number of multifamily units. More information on attached and multifamily units can be seen below.

When MCPC tracks housing construction, the residential land use types described in the previous section are condensed into four main housing types: single-family detached (SFD), single-family attached (SFA, which includes twins/duplexes), multifamily (MF), and mobile/manufactured home developments (MH). Between 2008 and 2019, **206 SFAs** and **137 SFDs** were constructed in the Township, with an average of 31 units constructed per year. No multifamily or mobile/manufactured homes were constructed in that timeframe. The table and chart below shows the fluctuation from year to year.

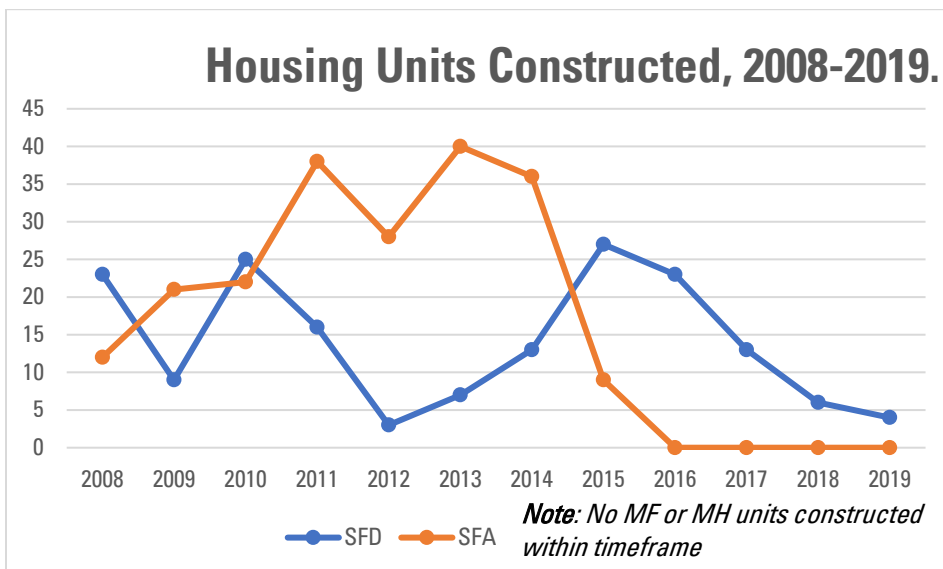
While there are 266 independent-living multifamily units spread among several small buildings within the Meadowood Senior Living, there appears to be only five other buildings in the Townships containing multifamily apartment units, all of which are converted single residences of varying sizes. Since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

In Pennsylvania, municipalities are required by law to permit, through zoning, a wide variety of housing types, including single-family attached units such as twins, duplexes, and townhouses; multifamily units; and mobile home parks. If a municipality does not have enough land set aside for all of these uses, it runs the risk of having its zoning successfully challenged in the courts for not meeting its "fair share" and having an aggressive corrective applied through a judgment. As of this writing, the Township has declared a municipal cure period in which to revise its zoning ordinance to address the provision of multifamily dwellings.

Existing Housing Units, 2000, 2007 and, 2020. Source: MCPC, MCBOA.



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



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

**Key Takeaway**

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

***Selected Housing Sales Figures from the HomExpert Market Report, 2020.***

*Source: Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach Research Division.*

<b>Number of Properties Sold (at Year End)</b>					
	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>% Change 19-20</b>	<b>% Change 18-20</b>
<b>Worcester</b>	144	125	121	15.2%	19.0%
<b>Montgomery County</b>	11,380	11,443	11,163	-0.6%	1.9%

<b>Average Price of Properties Sold (at Year End)</b>					
	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>% Change 19-20</b>	<b>% Change 18-20</b>
<b>Worcester</b>	\$513,327	\$452,581	\$462,624	13.4%	11.0%
<b>Montgomery County</b>	\$385,723	\$347,273	\$332,965	11.1%	15.8%

<b>Average Days on Market (at Year End)</b>					
	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>% Change 19-20</b>	<b>% Change 18-20</b>
<b>Worcester</b>	41	61	72	-32.8%	-43.1%
<b>Montgomery County</b>	35	43	45	-18.6%	-22.2%

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

***Occupation of Worcester Residents, 2014-2018. Source: ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates.***

OCCUPATION	2014-2018	
	#	% of Total
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	4820	100.00%
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	2855	59%
Service occupations	444	9.20%
Sales and office occupations	856	17.80%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	306	6.30%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	359	7.40%

***Industry of the Place of Employment of Worcester Residents, 2014-2018. Source: ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates.***

INDUSTRY	2014-2018	
	#	% of Total
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	4820	100.00%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	53	1%
Construction	315	6.50%
Manufacturing	749	15.50%
Wholesale trade	95	2.00%
Retail trade	337	7.00%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	171	3.50%
Information	45	0.90%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	642	13.30%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	1039	21.60%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	881	18.30%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	171	3.50%
Other services, except public administration	233	4.80%
Public administration	89	1.80%

According to Berkheimer, the EIT collector for the Township, as of Q1 2020, there were **3,667** people employed in the Township (both residents and nonresidents)—this information is gleaned from EIT returns. The Top Ten Employers in the Township, listed below, account for more than half (54%) of all the jobs for which EIT is collected in the Township.

**Top Ten Employers in the Township.** *Source: Berkeheimer, 2020*

Employer Name	# of Employees
ALLAN MYERS INC	581
MEADOWOOD CORP	368
METHACTON SCHOOL DISTRICT	340
MERRYMEAD FARM INC	161
KEYSTONE TECHNOLOGIES LLC	138
FIRST STUDENT INC	96
TESTEQUITY LLC	93
RANDSTAD US LLC	79
FAIRVIEW VILLAGE CHURCH	77
ACS ACQUISITIONS	66

**OnTheMap Inflow/Outflow Analysis, 2017.** *Source, OnTheMap, Census Bureau, 2017.*



Using another Census Bureau product, *OnTheMap*, which combines state-level unemployment insurance data with Census data, we can see that actually many more Worcester residents work outside the Township than within it. Only approximately 227 people both live *and* work within the Township.

**Key Takeaway**

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

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

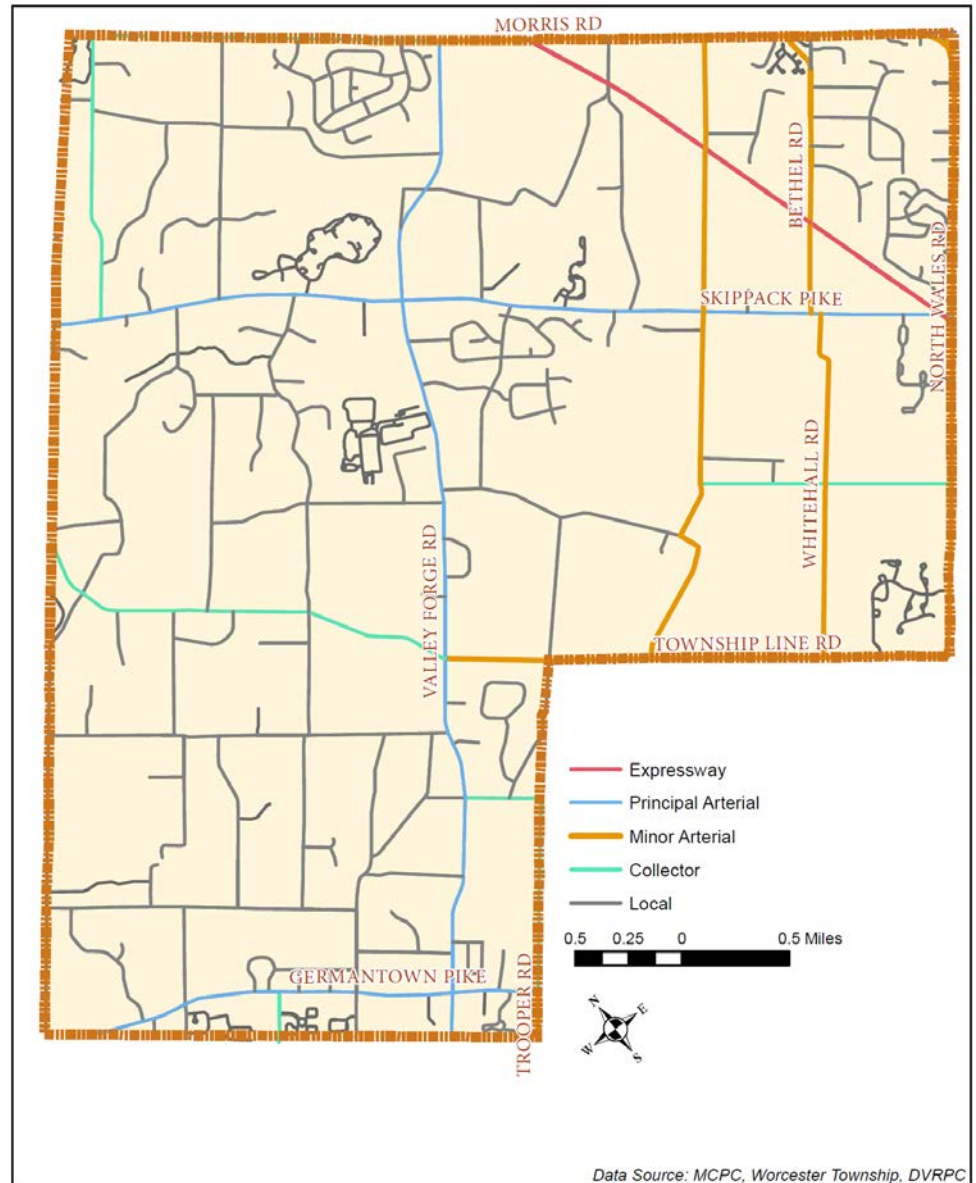
### STREET AND MOTOR VEHICLE FACILITIES

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

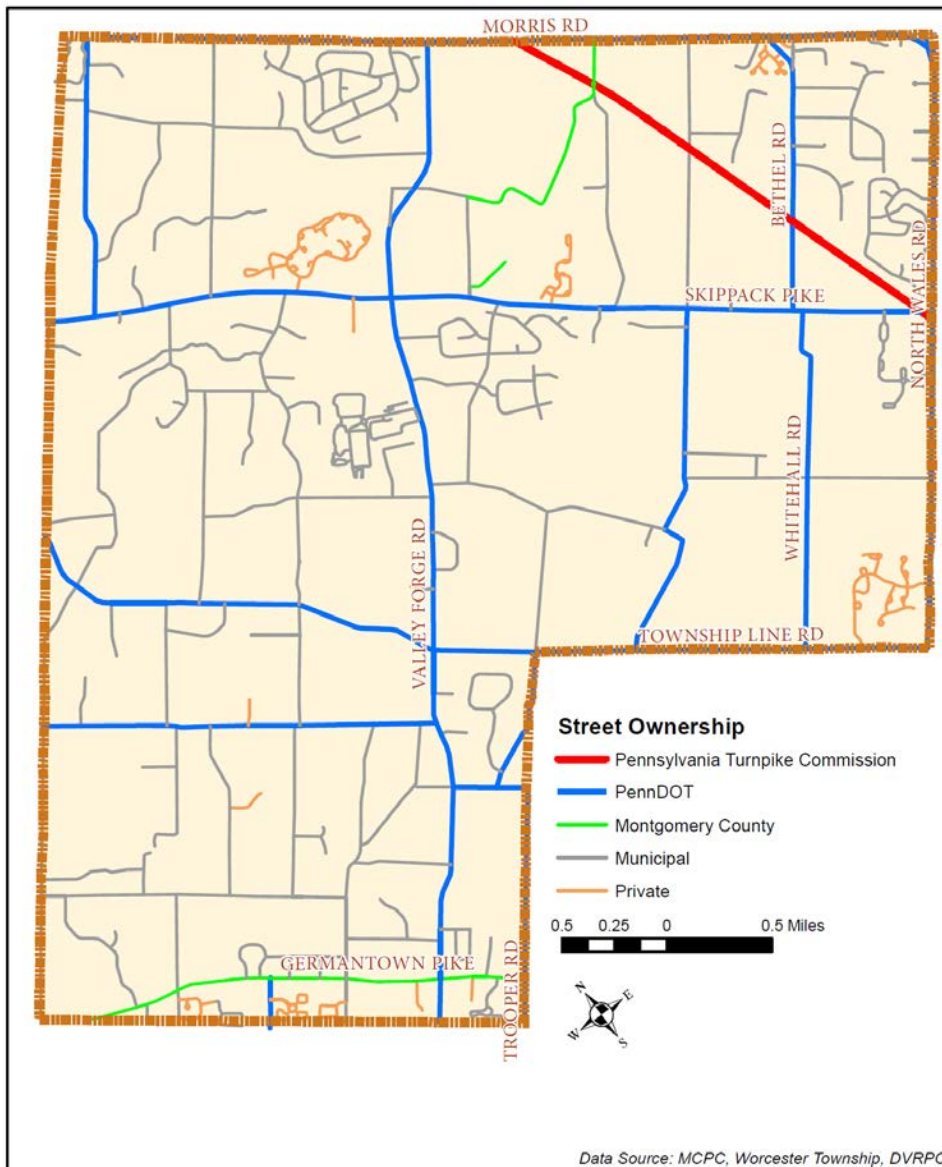
***Worcester Streets by Functional Classification. Source: PennDOT***

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

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



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



**CIRCULATION AND ROADWAY IMPROVEMENT UPDATES**

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

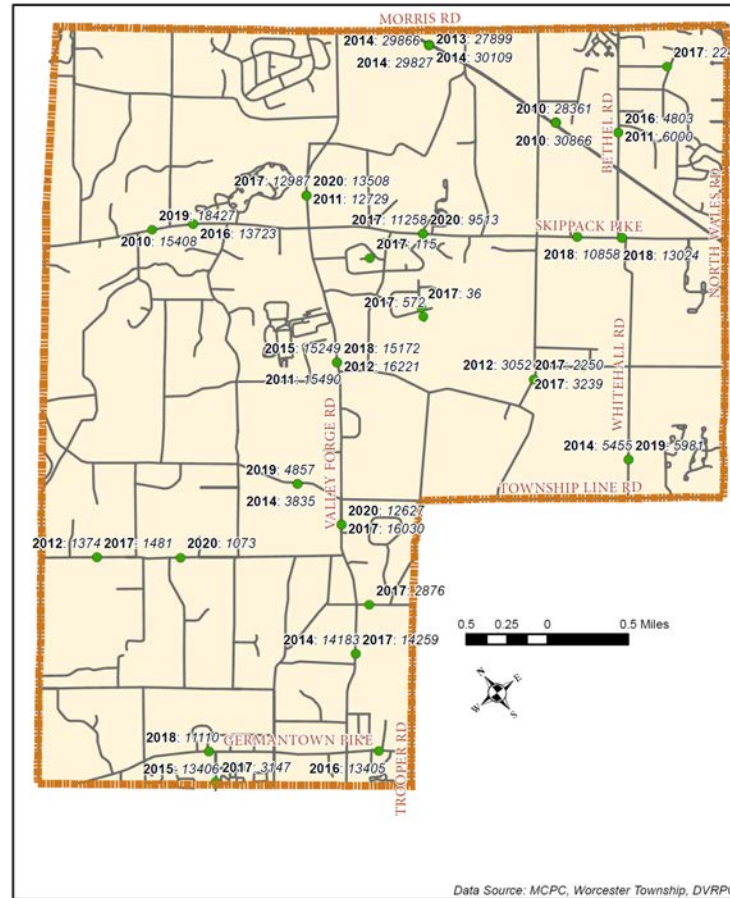
Below is a map which identifies more recent traffic counts on roads in the Township, ranging from 2010 through early 2020. Several counts through a number of years are taken at the same or nearby locations, in an attempt to compare change over time. In a number of locations, traffic, measured as “Annual Average Daily Traffic” (AADT), is reported at slightly increased rates. However, in many other locations traffic is recorded at lower rates, in some

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

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

cases significantly lower (such as on Valley Forge below Township Line Road). These can sometimes be caused by detours or road closures.

**Worcester Recent Traffic Counts (AADT) by Year, 2010-2020. Source: DVRPC**



Respondents from the Worcester Comp Plan Outreach Survey, implemented earlier this year, clearly show that many residents believe some of the busiest roads in the Township are also those that require the most improvement.

**PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES**

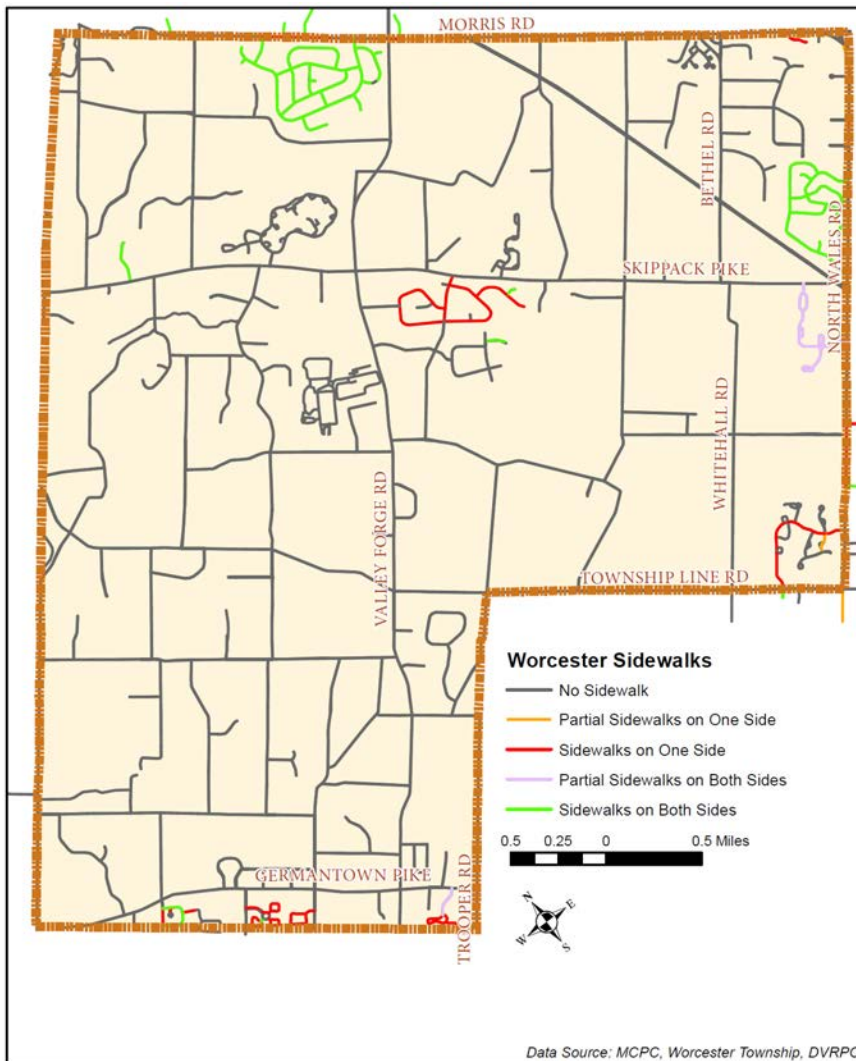
The difference between sidewalks and trails can sometimes be slim, but there are practical reasons to distinguish them, particularly when considering their purpose. Sidewalks are typically found within the public right-of-way abutting streets, connecting houses or businesses which are denser or closer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

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

Sidewalks typically are first developed through the land development approval process and are generally required to be included as part of a development. The Township’s policy is to never waive the sidewalk requirement if a waiver if

requested. If it doesn't make sense to install sidewalks at a particular location today, the Township gets the deferral and gives future Boards the option to install if conditions change.

**Worcester Sidewalks.** Source: MCPC, Worcester.



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

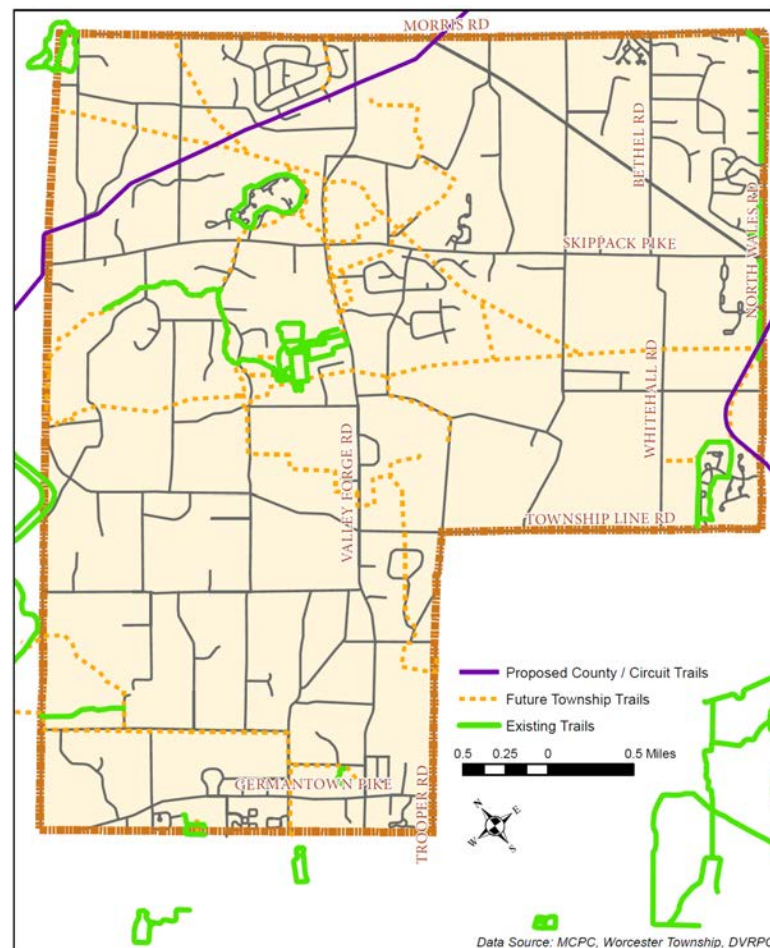
<https://circuittrails.org/>.

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

### **Key Takeaway**

Because the few major roads in Worcester are also the busiest, cut through traffic can be a problem. While improvements to existing roads will continue to be necessary, the Township could look for ways to decrease travel demand and other transportation alternatives which can help reduce congestion as well as making the system more resilient.

***Existing and Proposed Trails. Source: Worcester Township, DVRPC, MCPC, Twp. Community Greenways and Open Space Plans.***



## PARKS AND PRESERVED OPEN SPACE

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.

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.

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.



### PARKS AND PRESERVED 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.

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

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

The 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.

### **Key Takeaway**

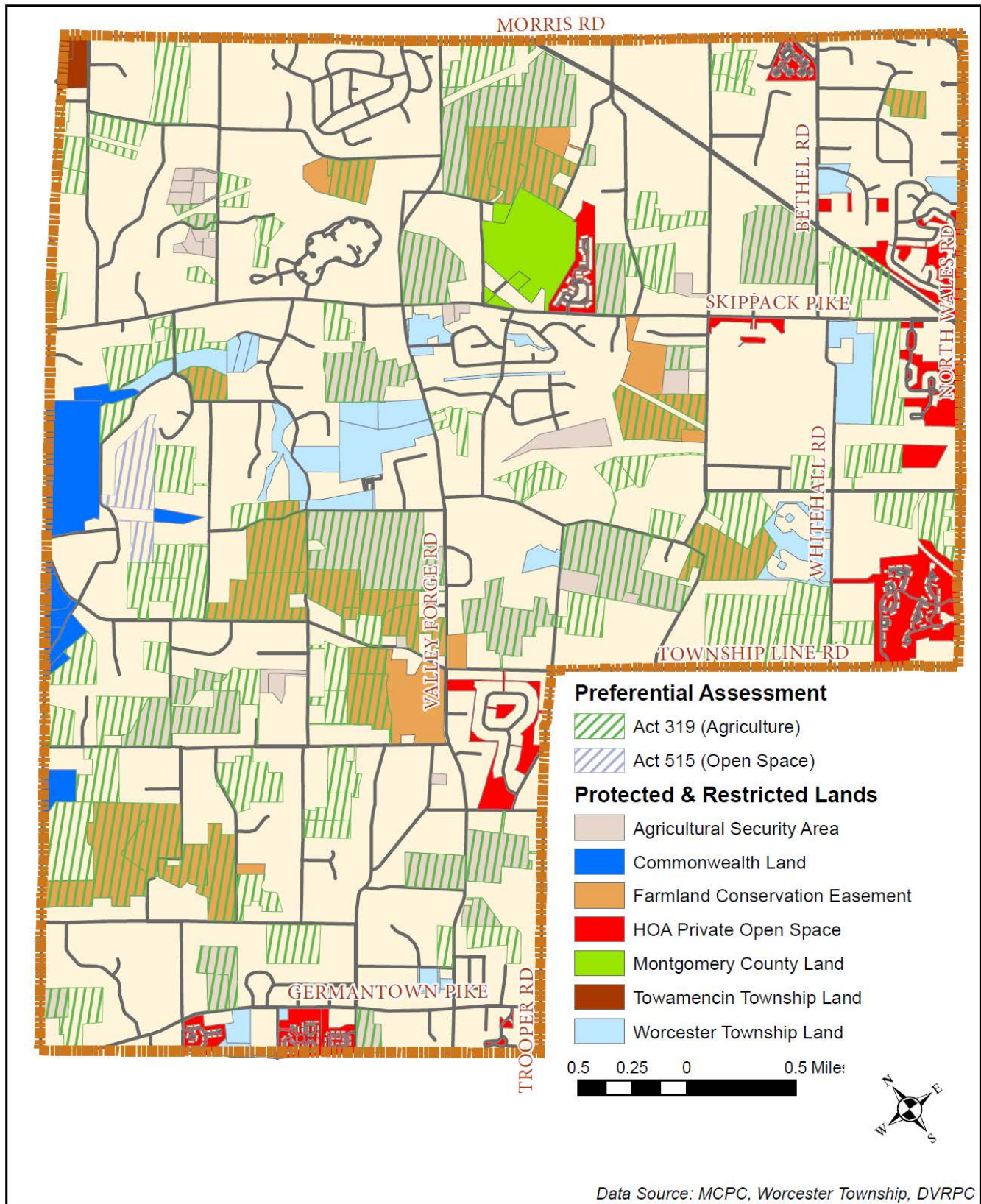
Worcester has a very good handle of the several key components of the open space system available in the Township. Further efforts to preserve open space and reserve park land should take into account a wholistic approach considering habitat conservation, agriculture, and recreation uses, while integrating the best practices of conservation subdivisions so the Township achieves its goals.

***Table of All Conserved and Restricted Lands, as of November 18, 2020.***

*Source: Worcester Township*

<b>PRESERVED LANDS</b>	<b>ACRES</b>
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
	<b>1826.24</b>
<b>AGRICULTURAL SECURITY AREA</b>	<b>ACRES</b>
WORCESTER TOWNSHIP	1002.45
	<b>1002.45</b>
TOWNSHIP AREA, TOTAL ACRES (16.22 sm)	10381.00
PERCENT PRESERVED	17.59%
PERCENT PRESERVED AND ASA-ENROLLED	27.25%
<i>list last updated 11/18/2020</i>	

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



## INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

### WATER UPDATES

Public water in the Township is supplied by numerous supplies, including North Penn Water Authority, North Wales Water Authority, PA American Water Company (Norristown District), and Aqua Superior Center Point. These supplies serve approximately 2,628 connections, both residential and nonresidential properties, which are further broken down in the table below. Further details about each individual public water provider are available in profiles of each on the following pages.

#### ***Public Water Connections by Type in the Township, 2018.***

Total Connections	Connection By Type				
	Domestic	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Other
2,628	2,286	59	3	16	264

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

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 indicates the quality of the existing buffer, if any, with the:

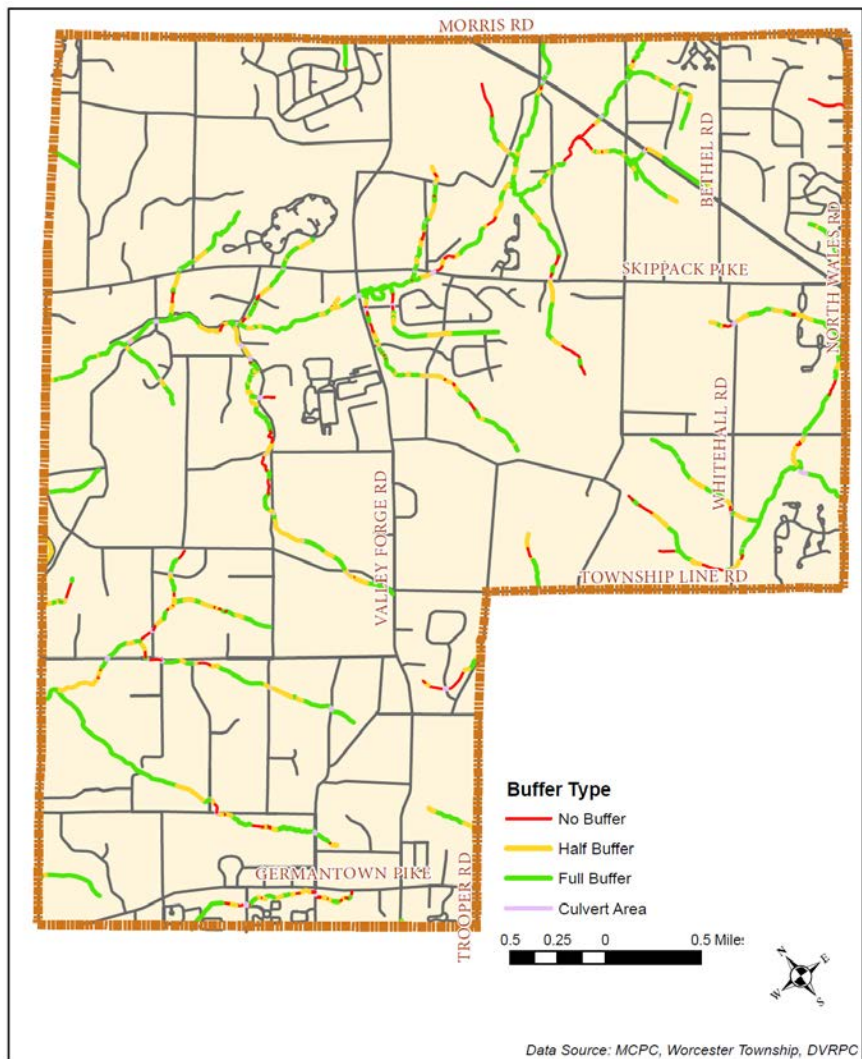
- Full Buffer (green line): Segments with at least a 50-foot wide buffer on *both* sides only, with at least 50% canopy coverage
- Half Buffer (yellow line): Segments with at least a 50-foot wide buffer on *one* side only, with at least 50% canopy coverage.
- No Buffer (red line): Segments which do not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

Overall we see that a majority of stream corridors in the Township have at least a partial buffer existing, with full buffers located along 61% of the more than 28 miles of streams in the Township. The missing buffer areas occur on large-lot residential or agricultural lands, as well as near roadways; the majority of these areas are located on private property, 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)	%
<b>No Buffer</b>	2,408.4	10.0%	21,438.2	17.2%	23,846.6	16.1%
<b>Half Buffer</b>	5,127.2	21.3%	28,350.5	22.8%	33,477.7	22.5%
<b>Full Buffer</b>	16,427.2	68.4%	73,908.2	59.4%	90,335.4	60.8%
<b>Culvert Area</b>	57.1	0.2%	828.2	0.7%	885.2	0.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	24,019.8	100.0%	124,525.1	100.0%	148,544.9	100.0%

**Worcester Riparian Buffer Classes. Source: MCPC.**



## WOODLANDS

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

### Key Takeaway

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

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

