

**WORCESTER TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE TASK FORCE  
WORCESTER TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY HALL  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2021 7:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER** by Stacy Crandell at 7:03 PM

**ATTENDANCE**

STEPHANIE BAILEY	[X]
ART BUSTARD	[X]
WINNIE HAYES	[X]
BURT HYNES	[X]
LEE KOCH	[X]
PAUL LEIS	[X]
JAY MCKEEVER	[X]
BRIAN NEWHALL	[X]
ROBERT PACE	[X]
TONY SHERR	[X]
JOHN WESTRUM	[X]

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

- May 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes – Stacy Crandell called for any comments or objections to the minutes. A motion by Art Bustard to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Wini Hayes and it was passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- There were no public comments.

**FOCUS AREA OF COMP PLAN FOR DISCUSSION**

- Draft Chapters – Transportation
  - Brian went over the draft chapter which covered Transportation. There was some discussion regarding the chapter.
    - § There was some discussion regarding if crash data should be included. Brian explained about the Act 209 process and the information that is normally gathered during that process. The Township’s last Act 209 study was done in 2013 and the Township will look to update this in the next few years. It is recommended to be updated every 10 years.
    - § The Task Force talked about the importance of realigning roadways.
    - § It was suggested to add wording to preserve historical properties and structures of the Township whenever possible during roadway improvements. It was understood that sometimes it is not possible due to safety concerns.

- § There was a discussion about some of the illustrations in the chapter and Brian will look to revise some of the photos and illustrations. He will also include some maps.
- § Brian explained the concept of the Complete Streets Policy.
- § It was suggested that one of the goals on the first page be revised to state that in addition to providing a comprehensive network of trails throughout the Township, that Worcester should also work with surrounding municipalities for trail connections.
- § It was suggested to provide more details for the street project proposals and Brian will add that.
- § The Task Force thought it was important to add information that the goal for the traffic signals is for it to be an adaptive system.
- § There was a suggestion for a parking ordinance if one does not already exist. It was noted that there are more residents parking their vehicles along roadways rather than in their driveways.
  - Brian and Stacy asked for any photos that the group may have so they can be used in the Comprehensive Plan. Stacy also asked for any historical photos for possible use on social media.

**NEXT STEPS AND NEXT MEETING**

- July 28, 2021 meeting – The next meeting will cover the chapter for Community Character. Stacy Crandell went over the remaining schedule for the Task Force.

**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 8:09 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Stacy E. Crandell  
Assistant Township Manager

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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KENNETH E. LAWRENCE, JR., VICE CHAIR  
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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

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Scott France, AICP  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Transportation + Mobility Chapter, and Proposed Table of Contents  
and Review Timeline

TO: Worcester Comprehensive Plan Task Force

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

FROM: Brian J. Olszak, Senior Planner, MCPC

DATE: July 28, 2021

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Please find attached for your review the proposed Community Chapter Chapter of the Comp Plan Update.

A few notes regarding the content of this chapter:

- The key topics of this chapter focus on housing and neighborhoods, as well as the idea of “placemaking,” being the key components of Community Character. This involves concepts such as housing types, building design, design and provision of neighborhood amenities, walkability, public places and placemaking techniques like streetscaping.
- Discussion and recommendations regarding cluster or conservation subdivisions and development-generated preserved open space, as well as transfers of development rights and other related preservation techniques involved during the development process, *will be reserved for the Preservation – Open Space – Parks* chapter.
- Discussion and recommendations regarding levels of overall development, future growth scenarios, future land use, and most commercial and industrial uses *will be primarily reserved for the Growth Management and Land Use* chapter.

As always, I wanted to remind you that, in the final version of this chapter as with all others, MCPC will either cite the source of graphics utilized or create our own graphics illustrating the same underlying concept as is shown in the Chapter. Additional photos will be placed throughout the plan.

# Community Character

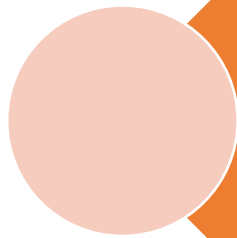
*Envisioning a community with small-town, rural character  
and a unique identity*

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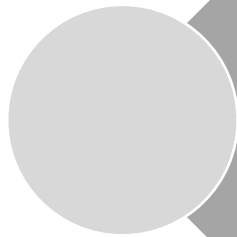
## **POLICY STATEMENT**

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

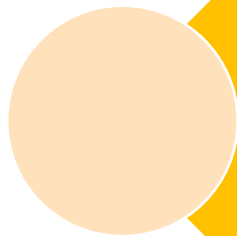
## **GOALS**



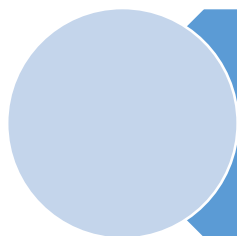
Provide a range of housing types, densities and opportunities for enhanced amenities and neighborhood design.



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 and amenities which are compatible with the traditional and rural character of the Township.



Ensure a mix of housing types, densities and land uses as required by law

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

## Placemaking and Sense of Place

Worcester is a special place, and township residents can point out the many things that make Worcester unique. Many people believe great places “just happen,” or might happen by accident. Even though there is a fair bit of luck involved, great places are the results of a series of policy decisions, design interventions and ongoing efforts to specifically cultivate that *sense of place*. While discussion of preserving the *existing* rare and unique features of the township is the work of other chapters of this Plan, part of the work of this chapter is to imagine how the township will maintain a sense of place as Worcester grows and evolves. However, if a deliberate effort is not made to create a community that looks and feels unique, we may end up looking like every other suburb. Incorporating unique or themed elements into the design of Worcester’s public spaces, neighborhoods, buildings and signage will help the township shine brighter than its neighbors. This community-wide branding process is called “placemaking.” Four important purposes of Placemaking include the following:

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

## Sense of Place:

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

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

Specific placemaking projects can include:

- ❖ Activate vacant or underutilized spaces, especially in highly visible areas, with park-like improvements including beautification through landscaping, street furniture, and enhanced pedestrian lighting.
- ❖ Creating design guidelines for high-profile improvements to be used on projects which reflect impressive visual and historic designs (see **examples below**)
- ❖ Adopt and install gateway signage and a wayfinding program, directing visitors to important destinations. The Township has already installed new signage at its parks and facilities. (see **below for example**)
- ❖ Coordination of several community-wide events to celebrate important local events and local pride.
- ❖ Support the installation of public art and community-led improvement projects

**Examples of Trash Receptacle & Bollard Specifications.** *Source: Borough of Schwenksville*



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

**Trash and Recycling Receptacles**

**MAIN STREET ZONE:**

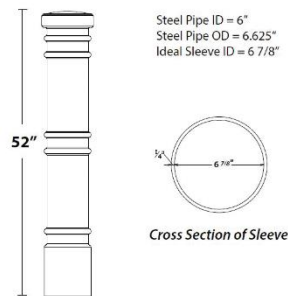
*Item Specified:* Protone Collection Litter Receptacle (Model PSA-32) by Victor Stanley.

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

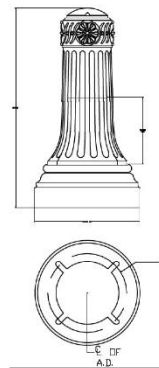
*Size:* 36-gallon, 26-3/4" diameter x 37" high.

*Color/Finish:* Powder coated black.

*Placement:* Receptacles placed as needed.



Source: Idealshield.



Source: Spring City Electrical Manufacturing Company.

**Example of Bench Specifications:** *Source: Borough of Schwenksville.*



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



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



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

**Benches**

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

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

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

*Size:* 72" length.

*Color/Finish:* Black powder coated frame.

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

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

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

*Type:* Cast ductile iron frame bench.

*Size:* 72" length.

*Color/Finish:* Black powder coated frame.

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

**RECREATION/TRAIL ZONE:**

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

*Size:* 72" length.

*Type:* Die formed stainless steel frame bench.

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

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

**Examples of Wayfinding Program.** *Source: City of Alexandria, VA.*

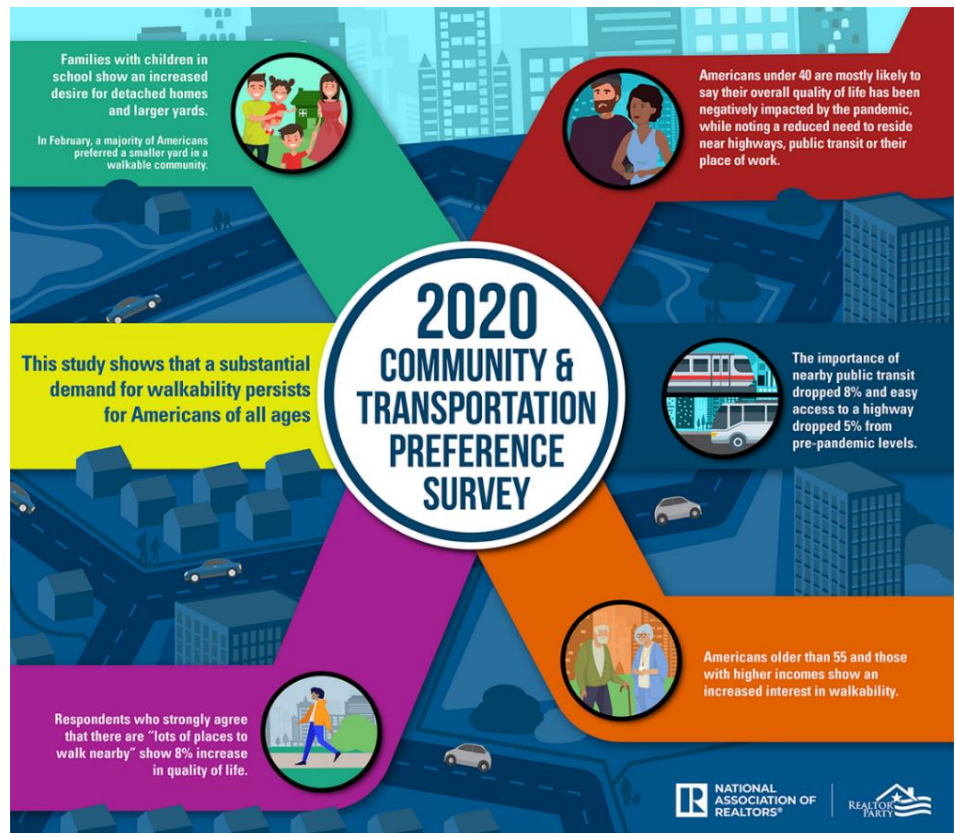


## Diverse and Attainable Housing Choices

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

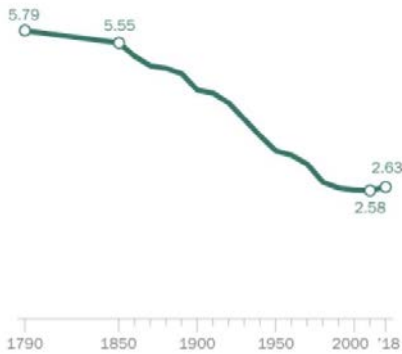
However, as we saw in **Worcester Past and Present**, there are some hints that more can be done in Worcester to meet these needs. For instance, the number of young adults, typically those of childbearing age, has dropped significantly between 2000 and 2010: while this could be caused by many things,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

### Summary of NAR's 2020 Community & Transportation Preference Survey. *Source: National Association of Realtors.*



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

Average number of people per household



Note: Data labels are for 1790, 1850, 2010 and 2018. Average household size is not available for the years between 1790 and 1850. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Census historical statistics, 2010 Census SF1 data and 2018 American Community Survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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

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

## BUNGALOW COURTS AND POCKET NEIGHBORHOODS



Bungalow courts, also called “pocket neighborhoods,” is a housing type in which several smaller homes are clustered directly around a type of common green or courtyard space, creating a mix of semi-public and private green space for residents. Instead of typical front yards, successive layers of privacy are built into the design of the houses, which include porches and generous landscaping.

While the idea of clustering homes is not new to Worcester, the clustering of homes in this case is meant to deliberately activate the common green as a place of near-daily interaction between neighbors. This housing pattern mimics other historic forms of village development.

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

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

## COHOUSING



Cohousing is a specific subset of the pocket neighborhood/bungalow courtyard concept. What defines cohousing from other bungalow courts is the specific social mission these developments typically have. Such developments are usually co-created by the future residents of these neighborhoods, with multiple individuals and family joining together. A common house, analogous to a community center in conventional cluster developments, serves as the center of these neighborhoods, which can include activity rooms and a kitchen where community dinners are frequently held.

While they are relatively rare in this region, one local example of a cohousing venture has been in the planning stages for several years in the village of Kimberton in Chester County, called the Altair EcoVillage (see below). While the tract is located adjacent to the actual village of Kimberton, about 50% of the tract is proposed for preservation. However, this type of clustered development—several homes clustered directly onto a common green area with parking separated sited on the tract from the houses—is not yet permissible in the jurisdiction, which likely requires a zoning amendment.

**Aerial View and Proposed Site Plan of the Altair EcoVillage Cohousing Development in Kimberton, Chester County, PA. Source:**

*<http://www.altairecovillage.org/>*



## SMALL TWO-TO-FOUR-UNIT HOMES

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

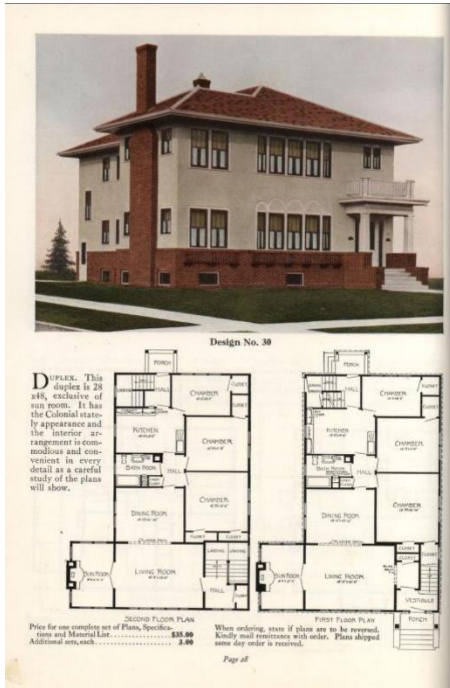
However, through the now-ubiquitous application of single-use zoning since the 1950s and 1960s, these types of homes have all but become illegal in most suburban communities. Nevertheless, these types of homes can help provide housing needs for those who prefer smaller living spaces or proximity to neighborhood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

**Existing Fourplex in a Residential Neighborhood:** *Source: MissingMiddleHousing.com*

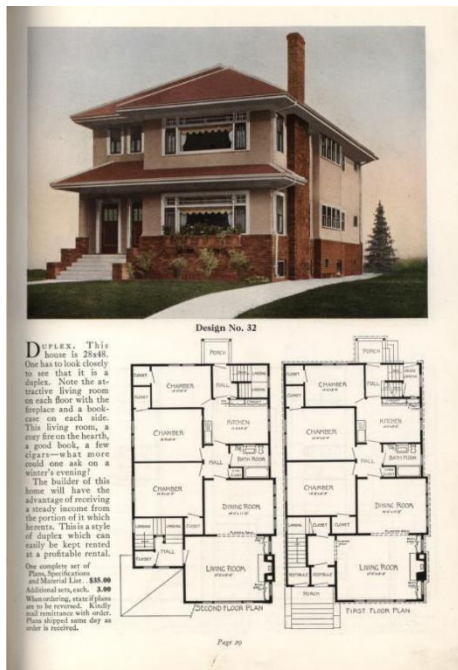


## ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Also called “in-law suites” or “granny flats,” accessory dwelling units (or ADUs) are small living units which are located on the same lot as an existing primary residence. Typically no larger than 500-600 square feet, these units function as an independent dwelling, but frequently are not separately metered



*It would take a keen eye, or nothing less than stepping inside, to be able to tell that the above and below buildings were actually duplexes, the plans for which were offered in a catalogue from 1925.*



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

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



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



## The Principles of Universal Design

### **PRINCIPLE ONE: Equitable Use**

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

### **PRINCIPLE TWO: Flexibility in Use**

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

### **PRINCIPLE THREE: Simple and Intuitive Use**

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

### **PRINCIPLE FOUR: Perceptible Information**

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

### **PRINCIPLE FIVE: Tolerance for Error**

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

### **PRINCIPLE SIX: Low Physical Effort**

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

### **PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Size and Space for Approach and Use**

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

*The Center for Universal Design (1997). The Principles of Universal Design, Version 2.0. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University*

## Aging in Place and Universal Design

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

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

Universal Design, a design concept, goes further to insist that all design decisions, from architecture to communication, should from the start be accessible in a broad way, which can be incorporated into planning and development process, so all ages and abilities are considered from the start.

## Neighborhood Planning

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

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

- ❖ Gathering spaces
- ❖ Trails, sidewalks and usable green areas
- ❖ Recreational amenities for all ages, developed through the land development process.
- ❖ Interesting architecture, public art, ornamental lighting and paving,
- ❖ Places of rest and refuge, like a group of benches or small parklets
- ❖ Walkable access to neighborhood businesses or services

## Recommendations

### Provide a range of housing types, densities and opportunities for enhanced amenities and neighborhood design.

- Encourage new housing configurations, such as those above, by permitting development types through appropriate zoning amendments. *Housing types which may result in greater densities should be redirected to growth areas.*
- Study existing development ordinances to determine the current accommodation of other housing types, such as 2-4-unit buildings, and whether they should be as limited as larger multifamily buildings.

### Support "aging in place" principles and other means by which older adults can secure or maintain appropriate housing in the Township.

- Permit accessory dwelling units more widely in the township; consider more straight-forward permitting for ADU housing specifically for seniors.
- Encourage "universal design" in public and other facilities in the township.
- Connect residents with service providers or organizations who provide aging adult services. *The township can be a clearinghouse for information, or partner with other organizations, to spread awareness or increase effectiveness of existing programs. GVFTMA, Partnership TMA and SEPTA all provide some level of service or coordination regarding senior transportation or paratransit options, for example. that the township can work with to increase access to transportation.*
- Create an advisory group to assist the township on planning and development issues that may impact seniors.

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

- Create design guidelines that residents can implement on their own properties when renovating or developing their housing. *Guidelines can be voluntary or required, depending upon the scope and intent of the standards chosen. Guidelines based on historic, vernacular architecture can be required if the Township decides create a historic preservation ordinance; Voluntary guidelines can be more flexible but still be based on historic forms and local styles.*
- Implement placemaking improvements, such as gateway and parklet improvement projects to revive and activate important but undertulized spaces. *Frequently municipal or community investment in an area can jumpstart private investment, and can easily leverage 2x-5x as much private investment. Fixing dilapidated sidewalks or providing attractive streetscape features on a block can convince nearby private property owner that the time is right to invest and develop their own property.*
- Encourage community-led initiatives by creating a mechanism to solicit and permit interactive neighborhood projects.

### Ensure a mix of housing types, densities and land uses as required by law

- Implement recommendations of study commissioned for the municipal curative amendment concerning multifamily housing.
- Routinely review potential buildouts as determined by the existing zoning, and adjust zoning as appropriate.