

Prepared by the West Conshohocken Planning Commission
with and for the Borough of West Conshohocken

WEST CONSHOHOCKEN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2016



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WEST CONSHOHOCKEN BOROUGH

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2016

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208 Ford Street, West Conshohocken

Credit: Montgomery County Planning Commission

Aerial view of West Conshohocken and Matsonford Bridge

Credit: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Environmental Protection

Borough Hall from Ford Street

Credit: Montgomery County Planning Commission

Open Space between rail tracks and Schuylkill River

Credit: Montgomery County Planning Commission

Cedar Avenue from Ford Street, West Conshohocken

Credit: Montgomery County Planning Commission

[Reserved for resolution of adoption]

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WORKS CONSULTED

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Welsh, Phillip and Sharon. Conshohocken in Vintage Postcards. Arcadia; 2002.

West Conshohocken Revitalization Plan: A Vision for Civic & Community Renewal. Kise Straw & Kolodner; September 2001.

Photo credits:

Gamble = Laura Gamble, consultant

Kise Straw Kolodner = Kise Straw & Kolodner

MCPC = Montgomery County Planning Commission (public domain)

PA DEP = Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Environmental Protection

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Unknown = source and photographer are unknown at time of publication

WC Centennial = unattributed photos from the West Conshohocken publication West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, Centennial, 1874—1974

1. INTRODUCTION



A Comprehensive Plan provides an overall vision for the community.



The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a guide or blueprint for borough initiatives, a framework for reviewing development proposals and as a legal foundation for zoning and land development ordinances.

Purpose:

West Conshohocken is already a great place. The task of this plan is to outline the ways the borough can preserve its best qualities, build on those qualities, and make West Conshohocken an even better place to live, work, and play.

Comprehensive Plan Structure:

This plan is structured slightly differently than most Comprehensive Plans in that it is organized around the community's goals. The plan begins with an overview of the borough's history and population, followed by a chapter that identifies the goals of the plan. Following this chapter on goals and objectives is a chapter on each goal and the chapters often contain a brief history of the subject and finish with recommendations and an implementation strategy to reach the goal. The last chapter indicates the consistency of West Conshohocken's plan with those of surrounding municipalities and the county.

Planning in West Conshohocken

In 1973 the borough established a planning commission to deal with the issues arising from the construction of major highways. In September of 1973, the borough signed a contract with the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) to provide planning assistance for the preparation of a comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance. MCPC worked with the new borough planning commission, studies for the plan were completed, and a land use plan map was adopted by borough council on March 11, 1975. The zoning ordinance was adopted one year later, and in 1977 the subdivision and land development ordinance was adopted as well.

With the publication of its first comprehensive plan, West Conshohocken established the basic tools for guiding land use decisions in the borough. As no plan or zoning ordinance can be considered final, revisions are required from time to time to deal with changing conditions in the region and in the borough. Borough officials have been reviewing the comprehensive plan every few years to determine whether it continues to serve its function as a guide for meeting the needs of West Conshohocken residents.

Due to major changes in the borough, including construction of the Blue Route and the new high-rise office buildings, Borough Council decided in 2003 to re-write the comprehensive plan. Much effort and deliberation among Planning Commission members and Town Council has gone in to creating this plan. Recently a survey was distributed to residents to help guide the goals and vision of this plan (see APPENDIX for blank survey). This plan is the product of that decision.

A Comprehensive Plan for West Conshohocken

A comprehensive plan provides an overall vision for a community along with tools to implement that vision. It replaces the usual patchwork of hopes and schemes of this month's latest ideas, or deals in this or that neighborhood, block or parcel with a careful, comprehensive consideration by the community of many interrelated factors.

The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for the community's leaders as they make land use policy, such as zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, capital improvements plans, redevelopment or revitalization programs, buying parkland, housing renovation programs, and parking regulations. It also provides a framework for reviewing individual development proposals, and many other such actions.

STATE MANDATE

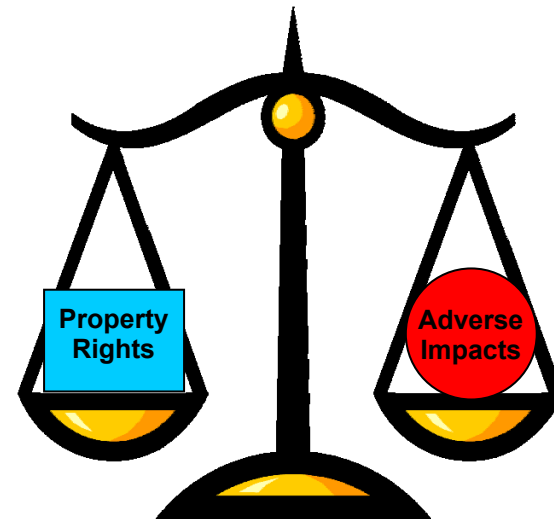
Although a Comprehensive Plan is tailored to each individual municipality, certain elements are required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be included in a Comprehensive Plan.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) is the state Act that allows and regulates municipal planning, including zoning. As such, the MPC outlines the following required elements for a Comprehensive Plan:

- Statement of objectives
- Land use plan
- Housing plan
- Transportation plan
- Community facilities and utilities plan
- Statement of interrelationship of plan components
- Short- and long-range implementation strategies,
- Compatibilities with neighboring municipalities
- Natural and historic resources protection plan
- Identification of land uses relative to natural resources
- Identification of regionally important land uses
- Farmland plan
- Historic preservation plan
- Water supply plan
- Planning surveys (characteristics and trends)



Developing a Comprehensive Plan fosters community interaction.



A Comprehensive Plan can help balance individual property rights with the desire to limit adverse impacts on the community.



Parking is one of the issues of concern in the community.



The transportation infrastructure itself is also a community concern.

In addition, the following elements are optional: identification of future growth and development and an energy conservation plan. The Borough has concluded that an energy conservation plan is not necessary at this time.

Other elements can be included if a municipality wishes, and the organization of the plan elements and the thoroughness of any part of an element is left to be determined by the municipality.

Why Complete a Comprehensive Plan?

In addition to the state requirement to create a comprehensive plan there are several compelling reasons to adopt one including the promotion of community interaction and providing a sound basis for zoning.

COMMUNITY INTERACTION

The preparation of a comprehensive plan gives residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to come together and talk about their municipality. They can develop a consensus about how their community should look and function in the future. When a community and its leaders come together, the likelihood of making positive changes dramatically increases.

GOOD ZONING

Zoning is one of the most visible acts of a community's leaders and can be quite contentious. West Conshohocken, as most other Pennsylvania communities, utilizes zoning as an implementation tool. Zoning is legally required to be based on the goals, objectives and plans from the community's Comprehensive Plan. If a community does not have a Comprehensive Plan, or relies on one that is outdated, its zoning ordinance might be legally questionable.

Proper and effective zoning can help a community achieve a balance between securing the rights of a property owner and allowing community leaders to limit adverse impacts of development and promote projects that benefit the municipality as a whole. A good quality comprehensive plan is the first step toward a sound zoning ordinance.

Other Plans for West Conshohocken

West Conshohocken has adopted a Comprehensive Plan in the past and has also completed several other related, but generally more focused, plans. The information in these plans will serve as background to this new Comprehensive Plan.

These plans are:

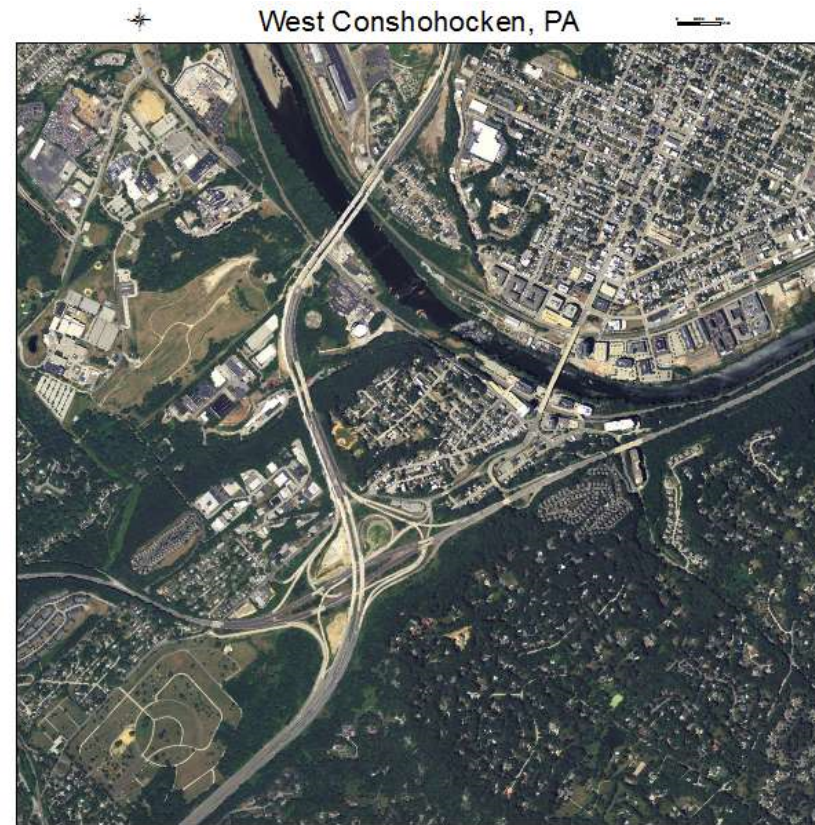
- 1980 Comprehensive Plan
- 1980 Neighborhood Improvement Study
- 1990 Redevelopment Proposal for the Riverfront Redevelopment Area
- 1994 Open Space and Recreation Plan
- 2001 Revitalization Plan
- 2002 Fiscal and Management Study and Implementation Plan
- 2005 Open Space Plan

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS PLANS

The plans above have indicated that the following issues are of greatest concern in the community:

- Parking
- Economic Development
- Transportation / Infrastructure
- Housing and Development
- Public Safety
- Recreation and Open Space

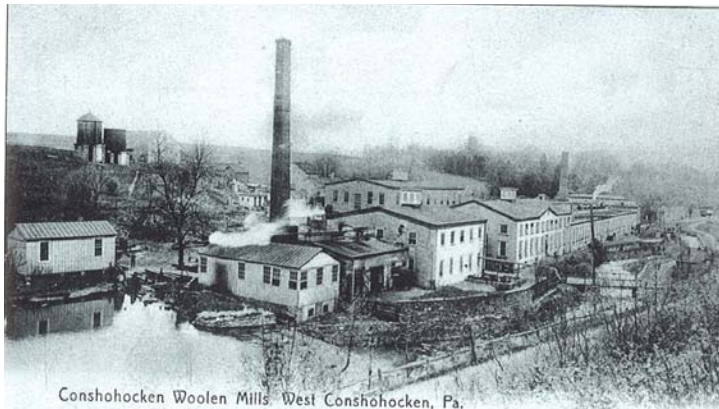
This Comprehensive Plan addresses these and other land use and planning issues of importance in West Conshohocken. Furthermore, results from a recent survey to residents yielded very similar, if not identical, results as those previously mentioned plans.



The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a guide or blueprint for borough initiatives, a framework for reviewing development proposals and as a legal foundation for zoning and land development ordinances.

2. RECENT HISTORY, POPULATION, & INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

The name “Conshohocken” is said to have come from the Indian words meaning “edge of hill” or “pleasant valley.”



Conshohocken Woolen Mills, West Conshohocken, Pa.

Conshohocken Woolen Mills. Source: Conshohocken in Vintage Postcards, 2003

Introduction

Before any meaningful plan can be developed for West Conshohocken, it is important to understand the recent history of the borough. This chapter on history, population and industry development covers these topics, as well as a brief section on the history of planning in the borough.

INDUSTRIALIZATION

“The borough incorporated on October 6, 1874, its territory taken nearly equally from the townships of Upper and Lower Merion. Residents wanted a separated government suited to the community’s industrial character, which was totally unlike the other parts of the two townships.”²

Twentieth-Century West Conshohocken

In the 20th century, West Conshohocken continued to change in response to new lifestyles, economic conditions, and decisions made by higher levels of government. The blacksmith and wheelwright shops as well as the coal yards became obsolete and disappeared. The new large shopping malls have forced many of the local stores out of business in the borough as well as elsewhere. The location of major highways in and near West Conshohocken has attracted many industries to the area.

Though the river was a prime factor in the early development of the borough, more recent pressures for development have come from highways. In 1950, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation began construction of the Schuylkill Expressway, part of which was to pass through the borough. The construction of the expressway, which was opened in 1952, caused the demolition of about twenty homes. Its interchange within the borough brought more regional traffic. The building of the Mid-County Expressway (Blue Route) and its interchange within the borough has caused the loss of an estimated 100 additional homes. A new and improved concrete Matsonford Bridge was constructed in the 1980’s.

The most prominent changes, however, have been the replacement of the mills along the river with high-rise office buildings and a high-rise hotel. These changes have not only significantly changed the visual landscape of the borough, but also the traffic, economic, and fiscal landscapes of the borough.

West Conshohocken in the New Millennium

The recent changes detailed above will continue to affect the borough and those who live here throughout the new millennium. This section describes who will be affected by exam-

ining the demographic characteristics of borough residents beginning in the year 1990.

POPULATION TRENDS

An analysis of West Conshohocken’s population is necessary to determine who lives here now and what the composition of the population is likely to be in the future. Population trends and density, age profiles, household types, education, income and occupation are the main components of this analysis.

Between 1990 and 2000, the total population increased by nearly 12 percent. The greatest percentage change in the population occurred in the first decades of the last century, declining slightly from the 1930’s through the 1960’s, then declining more sharply between 1970 and 1990. Between 2000 and 2010 the population decreased from 1,466 to 1,320.

West Conshohocken’s residential areas are generally developed at a high density compared to the county, region, state, and nation. However, a large amount of the borough based on geography, businesses and industry, the density of the borough as a whole is not high. The population is not anticipated to grow beyond 1,500 residents based on current development and feasible development on undeveloped land

AGE PROFILE

Although the total population did not increase much between 1990 and 2010 there were large gains seen between 1990 & 2000 before declines through the early twentieth century. Over this time period the US Census Bureau shows that the greatest percentage of losses occurred in school-aged children, while great increases were seen in the 25-34 year and 45-64 year age ranges. The increase in elderly population may generate a need for a community center geared toward older adults; it may also mean an increase in the number of people who are on fixed incomes. On the other end of the spectrum, the loss in very young population may preclude the need for new playgrounds or tot lots. The largest segment of the population continues to be between 25 and 34 years old. See Figures 2.1 and 2.3.

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

The average household size nationally has been declining since 1960. This has been caused by the increasing numbers of elderly, the declining birthrate and the number of young people who are living alone or with one other person. West Conshohocken has also experienced this trend. In 1990 the average household size was 2.76. By 2000 it had declined to 2.40–

Figure 2.1

AGE	1990	2000	2010
0-4	88	62	62
5-17	220	193	122
18-24	154	182	105
25-34	246	287	393
35-44	174	222	170
45-54	98	196	158
55-64	122	125	160
65-74	132	99	81
75 +	60	80	69
TOTALS	1294	1446	1320

Source: US Census Bureau, Census of Population & Housing, 1990, 2000, 2010

Figure 2.2

INCOME	1989	1999	2009
PER CAPITA	\$17,834	\$30,627	\$46,187

Source: US Census Bureau: Census of Population & Housing, 1990, 2000, 2010

Figure 2.3

Historical population		
Census	Pop.	%±
1880	1,462	—
1890	1,666	14.0%
1900	1,958	17.5%
1910	2,202	12.5%
1920	2,331	5.9%
1930	2,579	10.6%
1940	2,464	-4.5%
1950	2,482	0.7%
1960	2,254	-9.2%
1970	2,194	-2.7%
1980	1,516	-30.9%
1990	1,294	-14.6%
2000	1,446	11.7%
2010	1,320	-8.7%

a decrease of over 13 percent. In 2010 the average household size again decreased to 2.23.

EDUCATION

Between 1990 and 2010, West Conshohocken attracted more educated residents. In 1990, 72.6 percent of the population had earned at least a high school diploma, and 15.5 percent had received a post-secondary degree. In 2000, those numbers rose to 85.2 percent and 36.6 percent, respectively. In 2010 the numbers rose to 93.8% with a high school diploma and 55.8% with a post-secondary degree.

A better-educated population benefits the borough for many reasons. Educated individuals tend to have higher incomes and attract higher-quality businesses. They may also attract employers who are looking for potential workers with specific educational backgrounds.

INCOME LEVELS

Between 1990 and 2000, the borough's per capita and median income levels have increased substantially; there was a 71.7 percent increase in per capita income (from under \$18,000 in 1989 to over \$30,000 in 1999); in 2010 the per capita income was \$46,187. See Figure 2.2.

History of Business & Industry

WEST CONSHOHOCKEN'S MILLS

According to historian Sylvia Fesmire's account from about 1980, "numerous mills once lined the Gulph Creek, which empties into the Schuylkill at West Conshohocken. Additional mills used the waterpower of the Schuylkill.

"George Bullock, West Conshohocken's first burgess, operated two mills in the late nineteenth century. Bullock's Mill, a large textile mill on Balligomingo Road along Gulph Creek, turned out high quality blue woolen cloth for the federal government for army uniforms [including for the Civil War]. ... Still standing, this mill later housed the operations of the Glassine Paper Company, the Westfield River Paper Company, Inc. (makers of laminated papers), and the West Conshohocken Paper Mills.

"Bullock's second mill was the Conshohocken Worsted Mill, a spinning mill along the riverfront near Matsonford Bridge. This plant wove olive-drab material for uniforms used by American soldiers in World War II. After 1960 George W. Hepworth & Company made synthetic fibers there. Milton Shapp owned the plant before running for governor."

OTHER EARLY BUSINESSES

Fesmire also documents other early businesses. “Another early business was the William Davis Jr. and Company Lumber and Coal Yard, founded in 1850. It remained until 1970, when it moved to Conshohocken.

“The Dougherty Quarry on River Road, was a prosperous business many years ago. The stone, known as Conshohocken or Merion Blue stone, was of superior quality.

“United Gas Improvement Company acquired the quarry in 1919 and built a coke plant called Rainey Wood Coke Company to hold gas manufactured in Norristown. Now gas is brought from Texas and Oklahoma two hundred days of the year and compressed into a liquid. The Philadelphia Electric Company has owned the plant since 1929.

“Nearby was a quarry that was operated for many years... Then a group of cement manufacturers from Catasauqua, Lehigh County, purchased the quarry and established the Valley Forge Cement Company, which later became the Allentown Portland Cement Company.

“The James Hall Carpet Mill was located on Bliss Street, just east of the Arrowmink Creek, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

“Grocery stores included American Stores Co., John Fernside, Toles, Kruszynski’s, McCabe’s, Sower, and Zimmerman’s.

“Other businesses through the years included the following: Barr’s drug-store; Mrs. Browne’s dry goods and merchandise; J.S. Derr and C.H. Smith, confectioners; Wm. E. Penn-dorf, hosiery; and Phillip Gray, M. Fisher, John McLaughlin, Felix O’Brien, McGuirer’s, Williams, and Lizzie Reddington cigars.”

OTHER MORE RECENT BUSI- NESSES

Ms. Fesmire also described the development of industrial parks in West Conshohocken. “In the 1960s the Union Hill Industrial Park developed on a former farm. In the late 1960s and into the 1970s the Gulph Creek Industrial Park replaced the Westfield River Paper Company mill on Balligomingo Road. The most recent industrial complex occupies former vacant land on Portland Road. Begun in the 1970s, it is known as the Balligomingo Industrial Park.

“In 1982 the Union Hill Industrial Park housed twenty-eight firms; Gulph Creek eight; Merion Mills thirty-two; and Balligomingo twelve.

“Larger firms in these industrial parks and elsewhere in the borough in 1982 included Archibald Allan and Associ-



Conshohocken (or Merion Blue) stone was mined at the Dougherty Quarry on River Road.



As West Conshohocken’s mill industries waned, they were replaced in the 1950’s and 1960’s by light industrial facilities.



U.S. Supply on Portland Road is housed in an existing light industrial area.



In the 1990's and early 2000's High-rise office buildings and a

ates, printing and direct mail; Color Processing Company, advertising displays Louis H. Hein Company, hydraulics and industrial lubrication equipment; Penjerdel Refrigeration Company, mechanical contractors, employing 100; and Production Specialties, Inc., sheet metal fabrication. The Production Specialties building was purchased by Birney Corporation and now houses three separate businesses.”¹

The most prominent changes, however, have been the replacement of the mills along the river with high-rise office buildings and a high-rise hotel. These changes have not only significantly changed the visual landscape of the borough, but also the traffic, economic, and fiscal landscapes of the borough.”

Labor Force

RESIDENT LABOR FORCE

Since the Census Bureau did not either collect or widely circulate detailed labor data until 1970, any information about the occupations of West Conshohocken’s workers before 1970 will be conjecture based on relatively limited mobility and therefore will need to assume most of the borough’s workers worked in or near their homes. Therefore, it is likely that between the mid 1800’s to the mid 1900’s most of the workers living in West Conshohocken were factory workers. The town grew up from a scattering of farms along the banks of the Schuylkill River to a hillside factory town. That growth determined the character that the town has today — a grid of streets with homes tightly packed together.

Post-war, the industrial parks started to be built and therefore some of the population worked there, but the construction of the Schuylkill Expressway removed many homes, decreasing the town’s population. That construction did bring some temporary construction jobs.

The 1970 census shows the beginning of the change to today's workforce. Although the largest group of workers were still manufacturing, other jobs were taking a larger portion. Of the 862 workers living in the borough in 1970, the top four categories of work were:

- Operatives (which includes most manufacturing jobs such as assemblers, machine operators, sewers, sorters, and manufacturing inspectors, but also includes some non-manufacturing jobs such as gas station attendants and dry wall installers)(30.9%),
- Craftsmen (for example carpenters, mechanics, masons, pressmen, machinists, jewelers, and telephone linemen)(18.9%),
- Clerical workers (16.2%), and
- Service workers (including janitors, restaurant workers, nursing aides, hairdressers, hotel maids, and police)(12.8%).

Meanwhile, Professional workers (such as engineers, doctors, registered nurses, clergy, teachers, technicians, and entertainers) are one of the lowest categories with only 3.6% of the workers.

In 1980 the census shows some changes, the first of which is the reduction of the number of workers to 674:

2.8% Operatives, 22.1% Clerical, 17.8% Craftsmen, and 12.3% Services workers.

Although in 1990 the Census Bureau adjusted the labor categories, the shift from manufacturing to other jobs can still be seen. Again, there were even less workers (669) but by this time Clerical jobs had taken over the top spot: Clerical 21.7%, Craftsmen 15.2%, Operatives 14.8%, and Others (Services) 13.9%. Professionals now had moved up to the fifth spot with 10.3% of the workers who live in West Conshohocken.

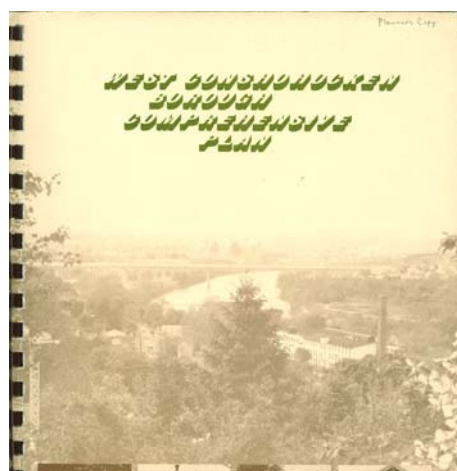
The workforce of the Borough of West Conshohocken is now well-rounded, with its resident workers holding an array of occupations. In 2010, most members of West Conshohocken's labor force were employed in Sales and related occupancies (17%) and Managerial (15%) positions. The remainder were employed in the Business (12%), Maintenance (7%), Construction (7%), Computer (6%), and Production (6%) sectors.

Additionally, it should be noted that the number of workers working within the Borough increased dramatically between 2000 & 2010 with the development of the two riverfront towers. Discussed further in the section on Transportation, note that the increase in daytime population in the borough is about 3,000 largely due to these business towers.



The Philadelphia Marriott West is a large service worker employer located on Crawford Road.

3. GOALS



West Conshohocken
Revitalization Plan



A Vision for Civic & Community Renewal

Kise Straw & Kolodner
September 2001 Architects Planners Historians Architects

S. Huffman
Associates

The 1980 West Conshohocken Borough Comprehensive Plan and the 2001 West Conshohocken Revitalization Plan have been important in guiding the borough's planning efforts.

2016 Comprehensive Plan Goals

The Planning Commission reviewed plans that are currently adopted in the Borough. Based on previous goals as well as current and future needs, they have chosen to adopt the following seven goals and related objectives for the Borough of West Conshohocken's 2016 Comprehensive Plan:

1. ENHANCE TRANSPORTATION; DECREASE TRAFFIC

- Continue to work for improved vehicular and pedestrian circulation, separating regional from local traffic where possible.
- Decrease traffic congestion.
- Enforce speeding regulations through local, neighborhood roads.
- Improve transit service, facilities and connections within the borough and to neighboring communities.

2. UPGRADE NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

- Meet active and passive recreational, educational, cultural and religious needs of borough residents and workers.
- Inventory current infrastructure

and prioritize future infrastructure improvements. Protect existing elements of the community that enhance its visual quality.

- Maintain adequate police, fire, sewer and other public services taking into account the boroughs unique situations.

3. ALLEVIATE PARKING DEMANDS

- Alleviate on-street parking needs.
- Add borough-owned & borough-maintained off-street parking lots.
- Address and assess current parking regulations to increase, decrease or maintain existing parking standards based on location within the Borough.

4. IMPROVE COMMUNICATION THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH

- Modernize and improve communication methods between the Borough and it's residents.

5. CREATE A TOWN CENTER

- Create a well-defined and vital town center with a strong sense of place and community identity that offers goods and services to meet local needs while accommodating the demand for additional off-street parking in downtown while maintaining existing community character.
- Evaluate the zoning map and maintain updates to meet the needs of parking and development of a Town Center, with Zoning Hearing Board and Council.

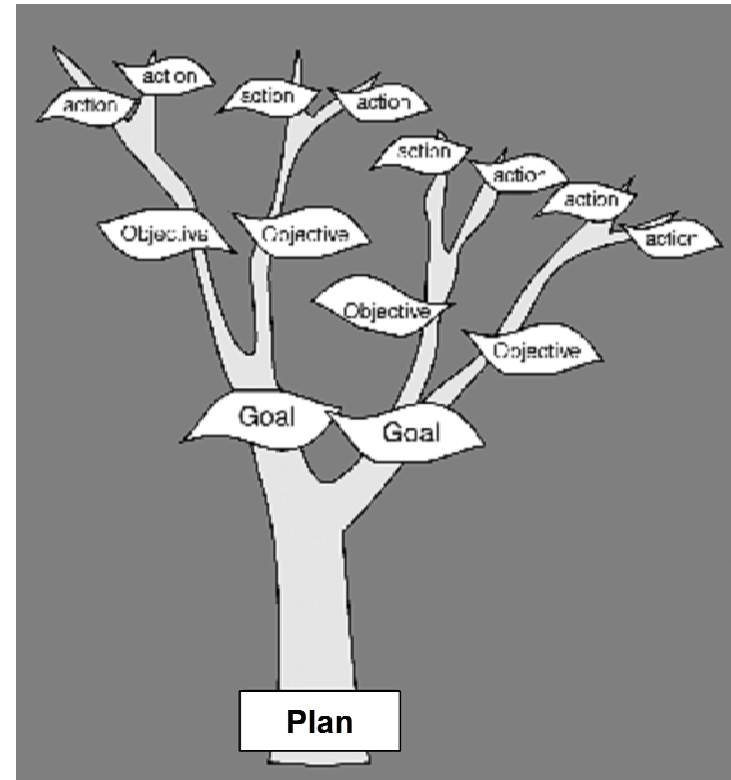
6. IMPROVE HOUSING

- Improve the condition of owner-occupied and rental housing throughout the borough while retaining and strengthening West Conshohocken’s unique character.
- Ensure adequate off-street parking, open areas and recreational facilities for residents of multi-family housing.
- Reevaluate ordinances to reflect the existing character of neighborhoods and socially interactive and responsible building design.
- Encourage a mix of residential types, sizes and costs.

7. FOCUS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

- Ensure clean air and water and preserve the land from degradation.
- Strictly regulate floodplains and steep slopes so that development will be consistent with good stormwater and soil management.
- Prevent or reduce flooding, ensure groundwater recharge, and avoid health problems in accordance with local and regional stormwater planning.
- Encourage energy conservation throughout the borough.
- Strictly enforce ordinances limiting industrial emissions into both air and water.
- Ensure development meets within local and state regulations/guidelines.

These goals are more fully developed within the following chapters.



The goals in this plan become the basis for forming objectives and action items.



Creating a vital town center is a prominent goal of this Plan.

Previous Goals

Like the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, many plans and studies previously completed for West Conshohocken contain goals. With so much to consider when creating a plan, goals help to focus and even prioritize ideas. Goals from some of the borough's key plans that acted as guiding principles are listed below.

2001 REVITALIZATION PLAN GOALS

In 2001 West Conshohocken completed a Revitalization Plan. Using a combination of surveys, stakeholder interviews, and public meetings, the following goals and objectives were created for the borough:

Create a Town Center

Create a well-defined and vital town center with a strong sense of place and community identity that offers goods and services to meet local needs while accommodating the demand for additional off-street parking in downtown.

Create Access to/along Riverfront

Create strong and convenient access between the riverfront and residential neighborhoods, the town center, and municipal parks, and explore the potential for expanding public access along the riverfront.

Improve Housing

Improve the condition of housing throughout the borough, and encourage more owner-occupied housing.

Mitigate Traffic Congestion

Engage a broader base of support to locally mitigate traffic congestion.

Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure

Improve community infrastructure in residential areas, including recreation facilities, lighting, sidewalks, and road surfaces.

1980 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 1980 Comprehensive Plan also had a number of goals. West Conshohocken has changed quite a bit since 1980 and some of these goals may have been met, some partially met, and others changed, ignored or discarded over the many years since their formulation. The goals from that plan were:

Community Development

To confine industrial uses to those areas of the borough obviously committed to such land uses, to control commercial uses, and to protect and preserve residential neighborhoods.

Environment

To work toward maintaining clean air and water, and preserving the land from degradation.

Housing

To preserve and revitalize residential areas of the borough.

Transportation

To continue to work for improved vehicular circulation, separating where possible, regional from local traffic.

Community Facilities

To improve the quality of community facilities and services for the benefit of the present and future residents of the borough.

ZONING ORDINANCE GOALS

The current Zoning Ordinance also contains a “Statement of community development objectives” that was adopted in 1976 and refers to an adopted land use map prepared in 1974 and adopted in 1976, and amended in 1984, 1986 & 2009, lists the following objectives:

Community Development

Industrial uses should be confined to those areas of the borough obviously committed to such land uses; commercial uses controlled; and residential neighborhoods protected and preserved. Nonresidential development must be controlled so that it complements, rather than downgrades, the residential uses. Regional commercial uses should be differentiated from those which primarily serve borough residents.

Environment

Borough regulations should work toward maintaining clean air and water and preserving the land from degradation. Floodplains and steep slopes shall be strictly regulated so that development will be consistent with good flood plain and soil management.

Housing

Adequate housing opportunities should continue to be available for people of all ages and incomes. New housing should always provide adequate off-street parking. Multifamily housing should also have adequate open areas and recreational facilities.

Transportation

Improved vehicular circulation will entail separating, where possible, regional from local traffic.

Community Facilities

Continued improvement of the level of community facilities should be fostered. The amount of open land in the borough for active and passive recreation should be increased.



unknown

New construction and façade improvements can help to improve the overall condition of the housing stock.



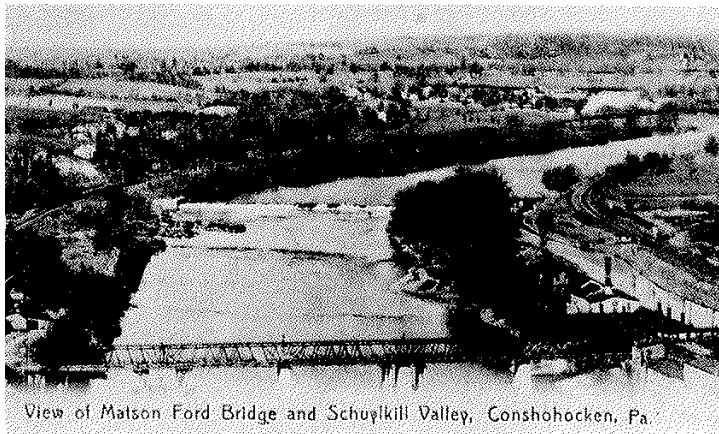
www.pedbikeimages.org/ Portland Office of Transportation

Improved pedestrian access and vehicular circulation would help to improve the transportation system.

4. TRANSPORTATION & PARKING



Timetable for the Reading Railroad circa 1961.



View of Matson Ford Bridge and Schuylkill Valley, Conshohocken, Pa.

Matsonford Bridge 1872, as shown in the 1974 West Conshohocken Centennial.

Today's Roadway System

ROADWAYS

Street Network

While portions of West Conshohocken have a highly interconnected street network, much of the borough is cut-off by major highways. An interconnected street network allows traffic to be dispersed on a number of streets, rather than forcing it onto one or two main streets. It also improves the ability of the municipality to provide services, such as trash collection, mail delivery, and emergency response, in an efficient manner. The street network also makes it possible for pedestrians to walk between neighborhoods, to work, and to local commercial destinations. As indicated in the goals set forth in this chapter, West Conshohocken lacks the development of an interconnected street network and looks to improve this going forward.

Highway Functional Classification System

The Highway Functional Classification System is a hierarchical grouping of roads based on a road's function, service and traffic capacity level. This system is a useful planning and programming tool as planners can easily determine a road's regional significance and utilize appropriate design guidelines.

The functional classification of roads includes expressways, arterials, collectors, and local roads. In West Conshohocken, I-76 and I-476 are classified as expressways; Front Street (River Road) and Matsonford Road are considered minor arterials, and Balligomongo Road is a major collector. The remaining streets in the borough are all considered local roads.

ROADWAY PROJECTS

West Conshohocken aims to protect its street network assets by maintaining and improving its roadways. This is to be accomplished by working with PennDOT to create a highway plan and implementation program.

PennDOT uses the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) to propose the budget for state-funded projects in the Philadelphia region. The budget is called the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and includes all the projects anticipated to receive federal funding within the next 1-4 years.

One project in West Conshohocken was placed on the 2007 TIP, the intersection of Front Street (Route 23) and Balligomongo Road has in recent years been completed.

The 2015 TIP does not specifically identify any projects in West Conshohocken, but the Borough should remain vigilant to ensure roadway

projects are brought to the attention of the Montgomery County Planning Commission & DVRPC.

Another source of roadway project planning is Montco 2040: A Shared Vision, the county's Comprehensive Plan. This plan identifies projects in one of three priority levels: first, second, and third. Several first priority projects are identified for West Conshohocken.

One first priority project is the Matsonford Bridge and Matsonford Road improvements, which includes bridge and road widening and interchange improvements. Another first priority project is actually a study, the Schuylkill River Bridge Study, which is to investigate the existing bridges over the Schuylkill River and the potential for a new bridge somewhere between Norristown and City Line Avenue.

PROBLEM INTERSECTIONS

The streets of Front and Matsonford is the most plagued intersection with regards to traffic. Front Street and Moorehead Avenue is also a difficult intersection.

Recent efforts to improve the Ford Street and Front Street intersections was successful in allowing local traffic to enter the busier arterial more readily.

TRAFFIC VOLUME

Since large employment centers are located in or near West Conshohocken, traffic congestion is a big problem for the borough. The focus of this congestion is at the intersection of Front Street and Matsonford Road at the foot of the Matsonford Bridge.

Traffic volumes for this intersection were estimated by the DVRPC as an Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), or vehicles per day averaged over the entire year, to be:

For the Matsonford Bridge in 2015:
30,272 total trips per day in each direction

For Front Street (from George Street to Matsonford Road) in 2009:

11,666 trips per day in each direction

For Front Street/Route 23 (from Matsonford Road to Crawford) in 2009:

12,243 trips per day in each direction.

Concerns regarding traffic volume include safe walkability based on the speeds of vehicular traffic, appropriate response times for emergency responders, and the headache of getting to intended destinations with relative ease.



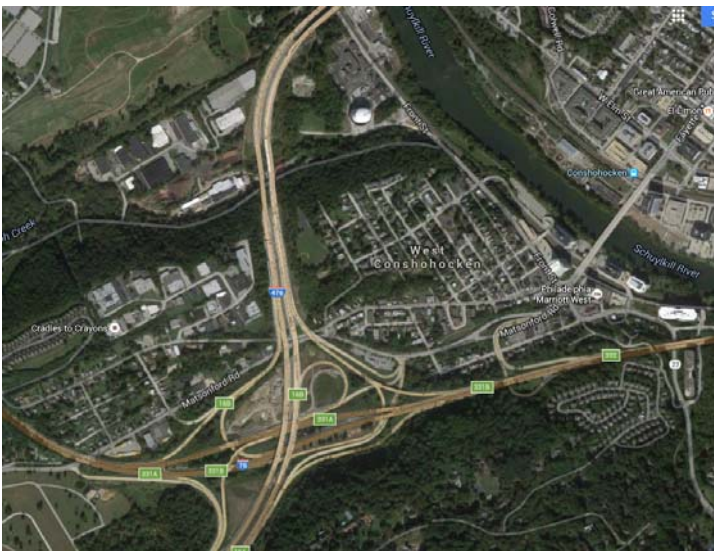
The Schuylkill Expressway , 1978– twenty-seven years after it first opened. Photo by Scott M. Kozel



The Blue Route in 1976, prior to its completion. Photo by Scott M. Kozel



Two well-traveled interstates intersect in the Borough of West Conshohocken.



Highway development takes up a large part of West Conshohocken's land and contributes to its traffic volume.

PARKING

When parking facilities are poorly designed, congestion and safety problems can arise. Therefore it is important that any new parking facilities are interconnected with one another and maintain good circulation. West Conshohocken has a number of existing on- and off-street parking facilities.

Existing Lots and Garages

The high-rise office buildings and hotel each have their own parking garages, the light industrial and commercial businesses have their own off-street parking lots, and many residents have off-street garages or driveways, but many residents depend on very limited on-street parking spaces. The 600 households have over 1,000 vehicles available for their use and these vehicles need a place to stay every night and weekends.

On-Street Parking

It is this dependence on the limited amount of on-street parking that has become a major issue for the borough. The parking requirements for new townhouses has been increased, off-street parking for student housing has been enforced, and several parking studies, discussions, and proposals have been made over the years to address this problem. The borough needs to ensure parking demands and zoning is enforced.

Traveling in West Conshohocken

Aside from the parking issue and the 100's of thousands of vehicles passing through West Conshohocken on the interstates every day, the most significant transportation issue is commuting. To grasp this concept, this part of this chapter starts with a look at some journey to work information.

JOURNEY TO WORK

According to the 2010 Census, the average commuting time to work for someone living in West Conshohocken is 26.7 minutes, this closely aligns with other Pennsylvanians. Despite its close proximity to the highways. This reinforces the traffic issues found in the Borough. The vast majority of Montgomery County residents work in the county, while most other popular job locations are Philadelphia County and then Bucks and Chester Counties.

Since 2000 two large office buildings have opened adding over 400,000 square feet of floor space and are filled with over 1,000 more workers than before. Nearly 5 times as many people commute to West Conshohocken for work than those who commute out of the borough to work elsewhere. This concentration of workplaces creates challenges for transportation.



Congested traffic waiting on the Matsonford Bridge to enter the Front and Matsonford intersection.



An aerial view of the intersection of Front Street and Matsonford Road at the end of the Matsonford Bridge. This photo was taken on Sunday, April 10th, 2005 which explains the lack of traffic congestion in the intersection in the photo.

TRANSPORTATION MODE CHOICE

Today, most people who live in the borough utilize automobiles for travel. In fact, data from 2013 indicates nearly 90% of working residents that live in the borough drive their car to work, of that less than 10% carpool. The remaining 10% are split amongst those that work at home and those that take the railroad.

MASS TRANSIT

Today SEPTA serves West Conshohocken with the number 95 bus-Penn Square to Gulph Mills- which provides a connection to the Route 100 high speed rail line in Gulph Mills as well as the Norristown/Manayunk regional rail line across the river in Conshohocken. The bus runs approximately every 30 minutes during weekday morning and afternoon rush hours, and about once per hour during weekday midday and evening hours and on weekends. The regional rail train stops at Conshohocken approximately every half hour during peak periods, and about once per hour during weekday midday and evening hours and weekends.

PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

The borough is also the location for rail lines along the river. Currently they are freight lines; freight travel is expected to increase in the coming decades. Nevertheless, either with or

without improved pedestrian and bus service from the Conshohocken train station, development and construction of new passenger rail service and a new station along these tracks would add another, more convenient, mobility choice to West Conshohocken residents, workers, and visitors. Considering these factors, a passenger rail service for West Conshohocken might only be possible if West Conshohocken were the last stop on an express route to Philadelphia. Other nearby stops could be: near Swedeland and River Roads (to service the Glaxco Smith Klein pharmaceutical plant and the Inquirer newspaper presses), Bridgeport, Port Kennedy, and Phoenixville.

BICYCLE MOBILITY

Another important but often overlooked means of transportation is bicycling. Although some think that bicycling is solely a recreation activity, many people in fact bicycle to work or on errands. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, nationally, approximately 40% of all bicycle trips were for work, personal business, family business, school, or civic purposes.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) formulates guidelines for accommodating all bicyclists under a variety of road conditions. They prescribe four basic types of road improvements to accommodate bicy-

clists on public roads, including shared lanes, wide curb lanes, shoulders, and bike lanes. Some roads within the borough are already bikeable, while others need to be retrofitted gradually as they are scheduled for other improvements.

A basic strategy for encouraging bicycle transportation is to create a bicycle network that provides safe and direct access from people's homes to places they want to go on a daily basis. The 2005 Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan identified 2 potential destinations within West Conshohocken, and 3 key bicycling corridors Front Street (River Road), Ballingomingo Road, and Matsonford Road.

TRAILS

Trails are an important place for people to walk, and should be connected with the sidewalk network. Often, local trails provide shortcuts for pedestrians that are not available in the street system as well as routes to destinations. They also can be a wonderful recreational amenity. Although not within the borough, the Schuylkill River Trail System is just a bridge away in Conshohocken. Recent adoption of

The Land Use & Transportation Link

Transportation needs and concerns are not created in a vacuum; rather,

they are directly related to where and how people live, work, and shop. Through the land use planning process, West Conshohocken can influence the location and design of new development. These land use decisions, in turn, have a great impact on transportation concerns and needs.

For example, a better jobs-housing balance allows people to have shorter commutes and to utilize non-vehicular means of transportation to get to work. Mixing land uses also makes it possible for people to walk or drive a short distance to their destinations. Concentrating land uses into higher intensity areas provide places that are walkable and accessible to public transportation. Commercial development concentrated in nodes rather than stripped out along roads has a similar effect, as does transit-oriented development.

History of Transportation

RAILS & TRANSIT

According to Sylvia Fesmire's account in 1980, "the Reading Railroad was built from Reading to Pottstown down the west bank of the Schuylkill River and by December 5, 1839, the service reached the present West Conshohocken."

A passenger station stood on the east side of the tracks, but service was dis-



On-street parking condition in West Conshohocken. Empty spaces are very hard to find.

continued (probably around 1950) because of diminished use and the availability of bus service. In the 1920s buses ran between West Conshohocken and Conshohocken. In 1933 the Schuylkill Valley Lines, Inc. included West Conshohocken in the route connecting Bridgeport, Conshohocken, and Norristown. This route operated until 1982 as part of SEPTA's Frontier Division." The Auch Bus Line also served West Conshohocken until the 1970s.

ROADS AND BRIDGES

Streets have always been one of the foremost considerations in West Conshohocken. The first ordinances pertaining to streets were passed in the late 1800's.

It wasn't long before vehicles traveling on these roads began to get out of hand and two more ordinances were passed in 1890 and 1891 "to prohibit fast and reckless driving or riding on the public streets of the Borough," and "to regulate the riding of bicycles and tricycles on the public streets of the Borough, and to provide a penalty of speed in excess of 5 miles per hour."

Feswick documents, "when West Conshohocken was incorporated, the streets were not paved. Soon streetlights were installed and new streets provided. Grading was important because of the hilly terrain. Paving in the 20th century, funded partly by the

county, improved the streets. By 1930 Crawford Avenue was paved with concrete, eliminating a treacherous section, and Front Street was vastly improved."

Earlier Feswick accounts, "a concrete bridge over the Schuylkill, built by contractors Seeds and Derham, was started in 1919 and opened to traffic on Armistice Day (November 11), 1921. It was promoted by the Conshohocken Improvement Association formed in 1908, and replaced an iron bridge built in 1872. Higher than the 1872 bridge, it eliminated the railroad grade crossing in West Conshohocken and the Schuylkill Canal Bridge in Conshohocken." A new and improved concrete Matsonford Bridge was constructed in the 1980's.

HIGHWAYS

Though the river was a prime factor in the early development of the borough, more recent pressures for development have come from highways.

Feswick once again describes, "in 1950, Moorehead Avenue became a state highway thirty-three feet wide to be used as an access road for Route 76- the new Schuylkill Expressway. After proposals and counterproposals for the expressway route, the borough and the state agreed on a route that spared the Calvary Cemetery but took about twenty residences from the south side of the borough. The West



Improved transit services will help residents and workers get around more easily.

Conshohocken section of the Schuylkill Expressway (route 76) formally opened to traffic on December 8, 1952.

Another superhighway, known as the Blue Route, the Mid-County Expressway, and Route 476, bisects the borough. ... In 1978 the Blue Route necessitated a new location for MacKenzie Park, which had been established in 1956 on Elizabeth Street with a bequest from the MacKenzie family. PennDOT needed the parkland for a ramp linking Matsonford Road with the Blue Route and the Schuylkill Expressway. In exchange for taking the parkland, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gave money toward a new MacKenzie Park at Bullock and Church Streets.

By 1981 about three miles were finished, from Ridge Pike in Plymouth Township to the Schuylkill Expressway, relieving traffic between West Conshohocken and Conshohocken, which had reached 38,000 vehicles per day.” The building of the Blue Route and its interchange within the borough has caused the loss of an estimated 100 homes, and has brought much more regional traffic to the Borough.

Goals & Recommendations

GOAL 1

Enhance the Transportation System Implementation:

- Support and work with others to help implement the I-76 Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Deployment Plan, such as:
 - Allowing traffic signal upgrades
 - Supporting anticipated reconstruction of I-476 (“Blue Route”)
- Support and work with other municipalities and the state to investigate and possibly locate and build a new bridge over the Schuylkill River
- Support and work with other municipalities and the state to investigate and possibly implement a widening of Matsonford Bridge including considering creating a business assessment district to fund the widening
- Continue participation in the “Montgomery Crossroads Task Force” to address regional traffic problems
- Initiate efforts in the borough and with neighbors to resolve more detailed congestion problems that cross borough lines





Areas in the Borough need continuous sidewalks for pedestrian access.



- Form a “traffic committee” to address local traffic problems
- Improve existing bus stops/shelters
- Work with SEPTA to determine if additional bus stops might be appropriate
- Investigate increasing existing bus and train services.

GOAL 2

Improve Infrastructure

- Improve and add pedestrian crossings across major roads and at the major intersections.
- Repair or replace any deteriorated or missing sidewalks to improve the interconnected street network.
- Include sidewalk improvements in any new town center projects.
- Improve pedestrian crossings and signals in any new intersection projects

GOAL 3

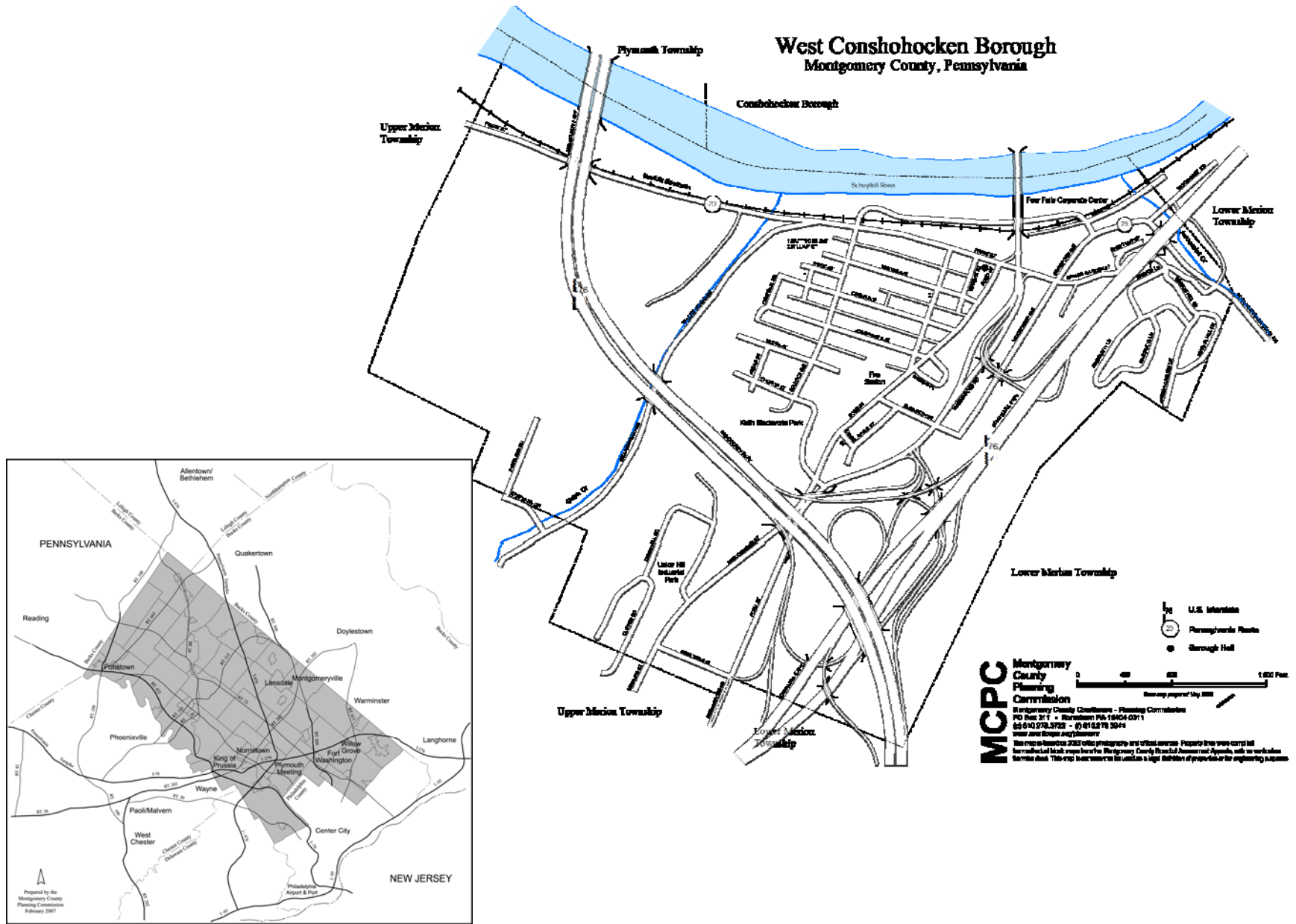
Alleviate the On-Street Parking Demand

- Encourage or require land owners to provide more off-street parking, preferably from the alleys to minimize any loss to existing on-street parking spaces.
- Propose incentives so that property owners will want to build new park-

ing facilities along the alley

- Construct new on-street or off-street public parking near problem areas
- Negotiate agreements with businesses and institutions for use of parking facilities during non-peak times or when the business or institution is closed
- Work with developers of new construction to alleviate on-street parking demand

Figure 4.1: Map of West Conshohocken's Roadways



5. COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES



George Clay Fire Company, 1914. Source: Borough of West Conshohocken 2005 Calendar, pub: Coll's Custom Framing.



Telephone service came to the borough in 1881.

History

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Gas

Gas service has been available since 1881, when it was used for street lighting. In May 1927 the Counties Gas and Electric Company, a forerunner of Philadelphia Electric, completed gas service in the borough.

Electric

In May 1910 the Borough of West Conshohocken Electric Light Company was established. A year later it was sold to the West Conshohocken Gas Light Company, and in 1912 that company was sold to Counties Gas and Electric.

Telephone

In 1881, before Bell Telephone Company acquired telephone service, a line was in operation from Norristown to Conshohocken which served West Conshohocken. Bill Neville operated the switchboard at First and Fayette Streets, Conshohocken, in the drugstore of James W. Harry. At that time there were 11 telephones in the area. In 1932 the number was 2,300. In 1981 the number of telephones reached 32,000 in the Conshohocken-West Conshohocken area.

Water

A committee first inquired into the feasibility of public water service for West Conshohocken in 1882. A group of investors from Reading provided capital for the project, which was run by John Fernside. The West Conshohocken Water Company along Wilson Creek (also known as Fox Run) was located close to two large reservoirs near upper Ford Street. The water company merged with the Philadelphia Suburban Water Company on September 28, 1897.

Sewer

The West Conshohocken Sewer Authority was established in 1988. The borough is serviced by the Conshohocken Wastewater Plant, which is part of the Conshohocken Sewer Authority.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Fire Protection

The first fire protection came from the Washington Hose and Steam Fire Engine Company of Conshohocken. In 1876 the roadway of the Matsonford Bridge had to be replaced to enable the company to enter West Conshohocken and extinguish fires. In 1878 the clerk of council presented a petition asking for a wharf or landing for the steam fire engine to stand upon while in service in the borough.

In 1898, forty-seven West Conshohocken citizens met in Odd Fellows Hall to take preliminary steps to organize a fire company. The apparatus committee discussed a proposal from John Clay of Philadelphia: to present the fire company with a hose carriage built for \$800, provided that the company erect a suitable building to cost not less than \$1,500 and that the company be named for Clay's brother George. George Clay Fire Company still serves West Conshohocken.

The most disastrous fire ever to hit the borough occurred 71 years later. A gas explosion on Front Street at about 9:45 on the night of January 27, 1971 caused fifteen houses to be completely destroyed. Twenty-five others were damaged. Fifty persons were injured and taken to nearby hospitals. Five persons were killed, including a nineteen-year-old fireman, Joseph Powers.

The new development in the borough has kept the Fire Company very busy. Tractor trailers roll-overs and HazMat incidents have required closing of the highways for several hours.

Today, in addition to extinguishing fires, firefighters train for vehicle accidents, river/water rescues, and hazardous material incidents, and are an integral part of the borough's public safety system.

Ambulance

Although West Conshohocken had its own ambulance service before, the borough then shared the services of Pleasant Valley Ambulance with the borough of Conshohocken. In 1999, it merged with Narberth Ambulance to create the Volunteer Medical Service Corps (VMSC), which provides coverage to Lower Merion, Narberth, Conshohocken and West Conshohocken. In 2001, VMSC teamed up with the Radnor Fire Company to provide medic responder services to the citizens of Radnor Township.

In 2004, VMSC responded to over 7,200 emergency calls - on average within three to six minutes. VMSC is an organization built on the countless hours of work from its volunteers and career staff, working together for sixty years. Growing from one station with 2 ambulances into an EMS service incorporating 3 stations, 7 ambulances & 2 responder vehicles, VMSC now responds to over 7000 calls a year. Today, the staff includes 30 full time employees and over 70 volunteers, continuing to give time & service to the residents of Lower Merion, Narberth, Conshohocken, West Conshohocken, & Radnor.

Police

The West Conshohocken Police Department began with "High Constables" and the first Constable was hired in 1874. Originally working from



A scene from the 1971 fire



2005's twenty "Most Active Firefighters" from the George Clay Fire Company.

their homes and then housed in Borough Hall, since 1995 the Police Department was relocated to a new facility at 1001 New DeHaven Street. The department provides patrol, investigation, traffic details, and juvenile services including active participation in the Montgomery County Narcotics Enforcement Team program.

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES & FACILITIES

Government

West Conshohocken has three municipal buildings: Borough Hall on Ford Street, the municipal garage adjacent to the police station on New DeHaven, and the storage and restroom building in Keith Mackenzie Park. Built in 1900 to house the West Side Branch Trust Company, Borough Hall has housed the police station, the borough manager's office, and a meeting room for Borough Council and municipal commissions since 1936.

Parks

Public parks started in West Conshohocken in 1947 when a group of concerned citizens formed the West Conshohocken Recreational Council to secure funds for recreational programs, develop and maintain a park and playground, and to provide recreational activities. In June of that year, they secured a piece of property along Elizabeth Street from Keith MacKenzie.

The construction of the Blue Route (I-476) would take almost all of the land of the park and the so the State provided some funds to acquire the land for a new park. That land, located at the top of the hill in town at Church and Bullock Streets, was secured in December of 1975 from Emil Wosczyn and the Edna Wosczyn estate. This is the Keith MacKenzie Park today.

Keith Mackenzie Park is the borough's primary active recreation area. It is also the largest piece of permanently protected land in the Borough. The total acreage of the park and adjacent parcels owned by the Borough is approximately 11.3 acres. Facilities at this park include a large multi-purpose field, three full-sized basketball courts (which can be used as a skating rink in the winter), a playground, restroom facilities, a storage building, a covered outdoor picnic area, and a small parking lot. Activities at this park include: a Spring Egg Hunt, a Flea Market/Auction, Park Dances, Community Day, a Halloween activity, a Children's' Holiday Party, and a Senior Citizens Dinner.

The Borough also owns the former Keith Mackenzie Park, located on the east side of Elizabeth Street, north of Matsonford Road. This area is a long and narrow strip of land of about 2.5 acres between homes on Ford Street and Matsonford Road. The area is likely to be used as a modestly sized park for dogs and short walks. For



Borough Hall

more information on parks, see the Parks and Recreation chapter of this plan, as well as the 2005 West Conshohocken Borough Open Space Plan.

When the Borough acquired St. Gertrude's School, it demolished the old school building and created another park for youngsters more centrally located to the Borough's residents.

Churches

Evangelical Christian Church & St. Gertrude's Roman Catholic Church

The Evangelical Christian Church building was completed for the dedication service held on Sunday, November 6, 1888. The name was changed to Holiness Christian Association; in 1897 to Holiness Christian Church; in 1976 to Evangelical Christian Church. It is now closed.

St. Gertrude's Roman Catholic Church was founded in 1888, and the building was erected at the same time. In 1957 a new convent was built on Bullock Avenue across from the church, it was converted into a home for boys. St. Gertrude's Park is there now. The church building still exists but is no longer open for services.

Primitive Methodist Church

The Primitive Methodist Church was

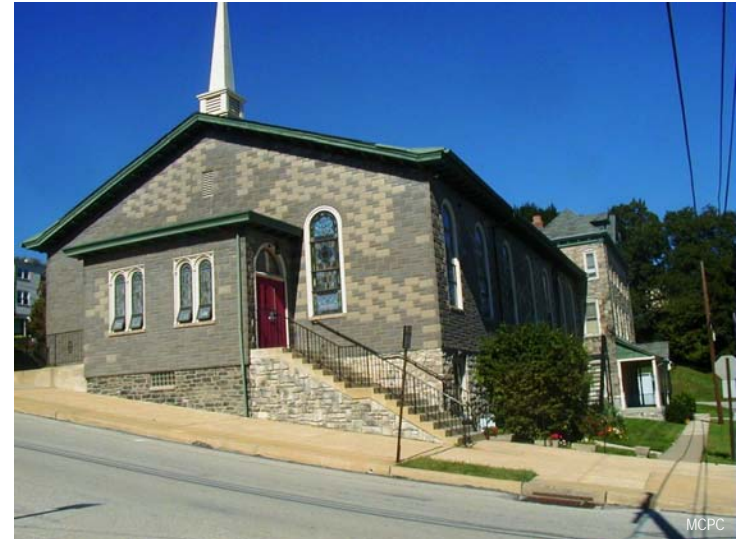
organized in West Conshohocken as part of the Free Baptist denomination on February 24, 1894. The present site was purchased, and work on the foundation of the new building started immediately. On December 8, 1895, the cornerstone was laid, and the church opened for worship in June 1896. In 1960 work began on an addition to the church, which was rededicated in 1964.

Balligomingo Baptist Church

The Balligomingo Baptist Church is located at 217 Ford Street. A stately stone structure, it was built in 1907, succeeding churches built in 1825 and 1889. In 1982 the church had eighty members. It is now the Chinese Baptist Church of Philadelphia.

Schools

The first school board, appointed by the Montgomery County Court in 1874, consisted of five members. The first school in West Conshohocken was a building on Balligomingo Road, a short distance above River Road (Front Street). It was a two-story building with one room on each floor and was known as the Institute. Later, after incorporating, the borough acquired a plot of ground, the highest elevation in the borough, from George D. Bullock. The Bullock School was built on the plot and opened in 1875. All four rooms were put to immedi-



St. Gertrude's Roman Catholic Church



Balligomingo Baptist Church



WC Centennial

The former West Conshohocken High School, as pictured in the West Conshohocken Centennial, 1974.



WC Centennial

St. Gertrude's School as pictured in the West Conshohocken Centennial, 1974.

ate use. By the mid-1920s it had become inadequate, so a new and modern high school was planned. The school was opened for the 1930-31 term, next to the Bullock School.

By 1947 the school population had dwindled so much that it had become too expensive to continue operation. The school board decided to forgo high school education and send the students to Conshohocken High School. The West Conshohocken High School then became the elementary school.

The Bullock School building had been abandoned and was rented to Slavic Candy, which used it of about a year to manufacture candy products. The building was razed during the 1950-51 school term, and the ground became an attractive part of the remaining school's campus. The school bell from the old Bullock School was the only item salvaged and has found a home in the borough hall.

With the end of the school term on June 14, 1963, West Conshohocken Elementary School closed forever. Pupils then attended Upper Merion Area schools. In 1982 the school building housed the Adelpia Automatic Sprinkler Company.

St. Gertrude's Roman Catholic Church held its first school classes around 1888 in four classrooms in the church's basement. The children were

taught by lay teachers followed by the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who commuted from St. Patrick's Parish in Norristown. Later the nuns lived in two places in West Conshohocken (300 Bullock and Merion and Bullock) until St. Gertrude's parish bought the Moir homestead at 141 Merion Avenue for its convent and school. School was held in this building until a new school was built in 1954. This school offered eight grades. In 1977 St. Gertrude's school closed.

Today, West Conshohocken is part of the Upper Merion School District, which also includes Bridgeport Borough. Children from West Conshohocken attend kindergarten at Candlebrook School and the remaining elementary school grades at Swedeland Elementary School. They go on to junior and senior high school at Upper Merion Junior and Senior High near Brandywine Village in Upper Merion.

Community Facilities in the Future

RECREATION

Recreation is more fully covered in the Open Space chapter, but for the purposes of this chapter it should be noted that investments by the borough to improve or increase its recreation facilities is not just an amenity but an investment in the quality of life

of the residents and in community life for decades to come. As the American standard of living increases so does the demand for a variety of good recreation opportunities. However, recreation takes land and over time less and less land is available to acquire and develop for recreation.

Therefore, the Borough would like to pursue the acquisition and improvement of land for this purpose.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

West Conshohocken has a long history of good quality emergency service coverage. As the borough and its residents and businesses have changed over the years, so have these services.

These services have not only saved lives, they have also added significantly to the life and character of the borough through its various events and celebrations over the years.

As the makeup of the residents and businesses continues to change, the Borough would like to continue to update and expand these excellent services as needed.

SEWER AND WATER

Not many years ago, there was no water and sewer service in West Conshohocken. Now, with the last area added to the sewer system, the entire built area of the borough is served

with a relatively new system. There remains only a very few individual parcels that may need sewer and/or water service in the future. Some areas of the surrounding townships, however, because they are somewhat isolated from the rest of their townships may need water or sewer connections in the future.

The Borough, therefore would like to ensure the quality and capacity of the water and sewer systems continues into the future. The Borough would also like to ensure these systems stay above standard with regard to environmental protections.

ENERGY AND COMMUNICATION

A discussion regarding energy production and consumption is included in the natural resources chapter. Utilities and communications systems, whether utilities or not, should be as safe as possible, be distributed as equitably as possible, and, other than the service they provide, impact the community as little as possible.

Therefore, the Borough would like to establish strict regulations to protect the safety and the quality of life of its residents. The Borough would also like to coordinate and work with the utilities and various agencies to accomplish this as harmoniously as possible.

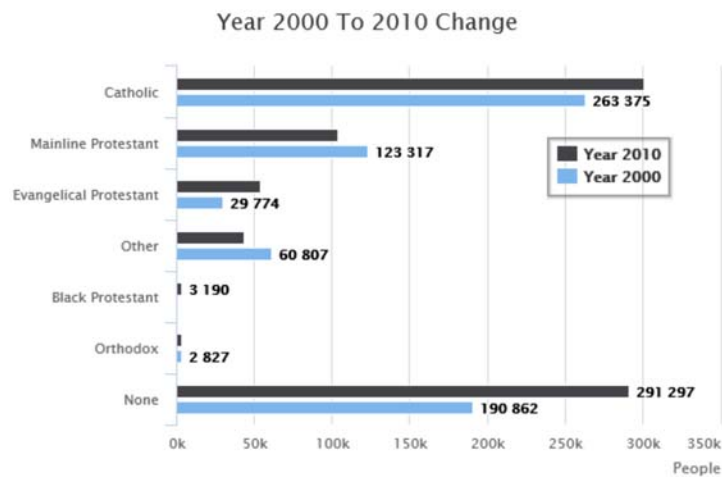


George Clay's Utility Truck and Swift Water Boat and other new equipment helps keep the company top-notch.



Police and other community services should maintain their high quality.

Figure 5.1



Montgomery County Residents' Religious affiliations identified by City-Data.

TRASH AND RECYCLING

While trash will always be a factor for humans, it needn't have huge negative impacts nor continue to be produced in the massive quantity it has been.

For this it makes sense for the Borough to ensure that all solid waste facilities, existing or new, be as safe as possible and impact the community as little as possible. This is particularly true if the borough becomes a proposed or future location to handle more than their own trash or recycling.

In recent years the Borough adopted a single stream recycling policy that provides services to all residents within the borough.

CULTURAL & EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES: A TOWN CENTER

Not only are educational facilities essential for the community, cultural facilities nourish the community, too. To this end, a diversity of educational & cultural offerings should be developed. As previously mentioned public schools no longer exist within the borough but opportunities for some trainings and certifications can still happen. Art in its many forms (music, painting, dance, photography, poetry, drama, and sculpture to name a few) is shared and nurtured when a place is provided where the learned can show and teach and the ones observing or learning can share their own interpre-

tations and grow.

Cultural facilities may also include the past in addition to the present. In history, long and short, we also learn about people who can provide hope and direction to our lives.

The Borough would like to encourage a large variety of cultural and educational experiences. A community center would allow education, history and the arts a place to be presented. The Borough would also like to ensure that zoning requirements do not preclude the establishment of cultural facilities in the borough.

RELIGIOUS FACILITIES

It is often said that the desire for religious freedom is responsible for a great part of the founding of our country.

In that light, the Borough would like to ensure that all faiths are allowed to express themselves in the borough. To ensure this, the Borough would like to continue to provide in its zoning code provision which allow religious facilities of any kind to exist in the borough.

Goals & Recommendations

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL 2

Upgrade Infrastructure/Facilities

- Support up-to-date training and equipment for emergency service providers for the borough.
- Expand or reduce emergency services where and when necessary to meet the needs of borough residents and businesses.
- Inspecting, updating, or installing water and sewer lines to protect Borough residents, businesses and visitors.
- Where feasible, require utilities and non-utility communication systems to share common facilities, such as wireless telephone towers.
- In the event of a new utility or non-utility communication system facility proposal: requiring applicants to demonstrate a need in West Conshohocken for the facility; require appropriate setbacks and buffers; strictly limit the amount of noise, vibration, pollution, and light generated by these facilities; and locate the facility in an area that will have a minimum

impact on residential and business areas.

- New and existing utility facilities and non-utility communication systems should be hidden from sight (buried, buffered, enclosed inside buildings, or camouflaged) as often as possible.
- Support and expand hazardous waste collection programs.
- Continue using a single stream trash collection and disposal entity.
- Promote and ensure zoning allows day care facilities, evening educational classes and career training in the borough.
- Support the establishment of new community educational facilities including a temporary, part-time, or full-time library or training center.
- Increase the amount and/or quality of town festivals and activities.
- Use existing or develop new venues and groups for the performance arts.

Community Facilities Summary

With continued progress in the operation and development of its community facilities, West Conshohocken will remain to be a highly valued community for its residents and its businesses in the near and distant future.

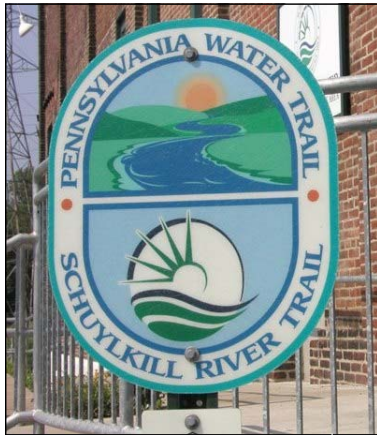


Day care facilities or early childhood education could be provided in the borough



Job training could be provided in the borough

6. RECREATION & OPEN SPACE



The Schuylkill River Trail runs along the northeast side of the river. West Conshocken hopes to bring a trail to the southwest side as well.

Figure 6.1
Public and Private Open Space

Open Space Type	Map Key	Name	Protection Type	Acres	Active / Passive Use
Public Open Space	1	Mackenzie Park	Permanent	11.3	Active
	2	Old Mackenzie Park	Permanent	2.5	Passive
	7	St. Gertrude's Park	Permanent	1.6	Active
Private Open Space	3	Oliver Tyrone Pulver Corp.	Permanent	3.3	Active
	4	Upper Merion Township	Permanent	5.9	Passive
	5	Cedar Pointe	Permanent	8.3	Passive
	6	Merion Hill	Permanent	10.6	Passive
	8	GlaxoSmithKline	Temporary	60	Passive

2005 Open Space Plan

In 2005, the Borough adopted a new open space plan. This Comprehensive Plan officially incorporates the 2005 West Conshohocken Open Space Plan as an integral part of this Comprehensive Plan. This chapter, therefore, augments and is largely based on that plan. For more specifics, please see the final version of that plan.

Municipal Parks

KEITH MACKENZIE PARK

The history of this park was detailed in the Community Facilities chapter.

Keith Mackenzie Park is the borough's primary active recreation area. It is also the largest piece of permanently protected land in the Borough. (See Figure 6.1) The total acreage of the park and adjacent parcels owned by the Borough is approximately 11.3 acres. In 1996, the Borough purchased two undeveloped parcels abutting the park at its southern end. The 1.26 acre tract extended the park's passive open space, but also has potential as a scenic view.

The central area of Mackenzie Park has been leveled and contains a large playing field for a variety of sports.

There is also a large paved area containing three full-sized basketball courts. The courts can also be used as a skating rink in winter. The park contains a playground with equipment, restroom facilities, a storage building, a covered outdoor picnic area, and a small parking lot.

OLD KEITH MACKENZIE PARK

The history of this park was detailed in the Community Facilities chapter.

The Borough owns the former Keith Mackenzie Park, located on the east side of Elizabeth Street, north of Matsonford Road. This area is a long and narrow strip of land of about 2.5 acres between homes on Ford Street and Matsonford Road. (See Figure 6.2) The existing land is what remains from when PennDOT took much of the Old Mackenzie Park to build Matsonford Road as part of the construction of the Blue Route and its interchange with the Schuylkill Expressway. A townhouse development has been built next the site and the area is used as a modestly sized park for dogs and short walks.

ST. GERTRUDE'S

This 1.6 acre piece of land between Merion Ave and Cedar Ave south of Bullock St. and north of a townhouse development, Nob Hill, was recently acquired from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to preserve this open

space within the town center. The Borough developed the parcel as St. Gertrude Park.

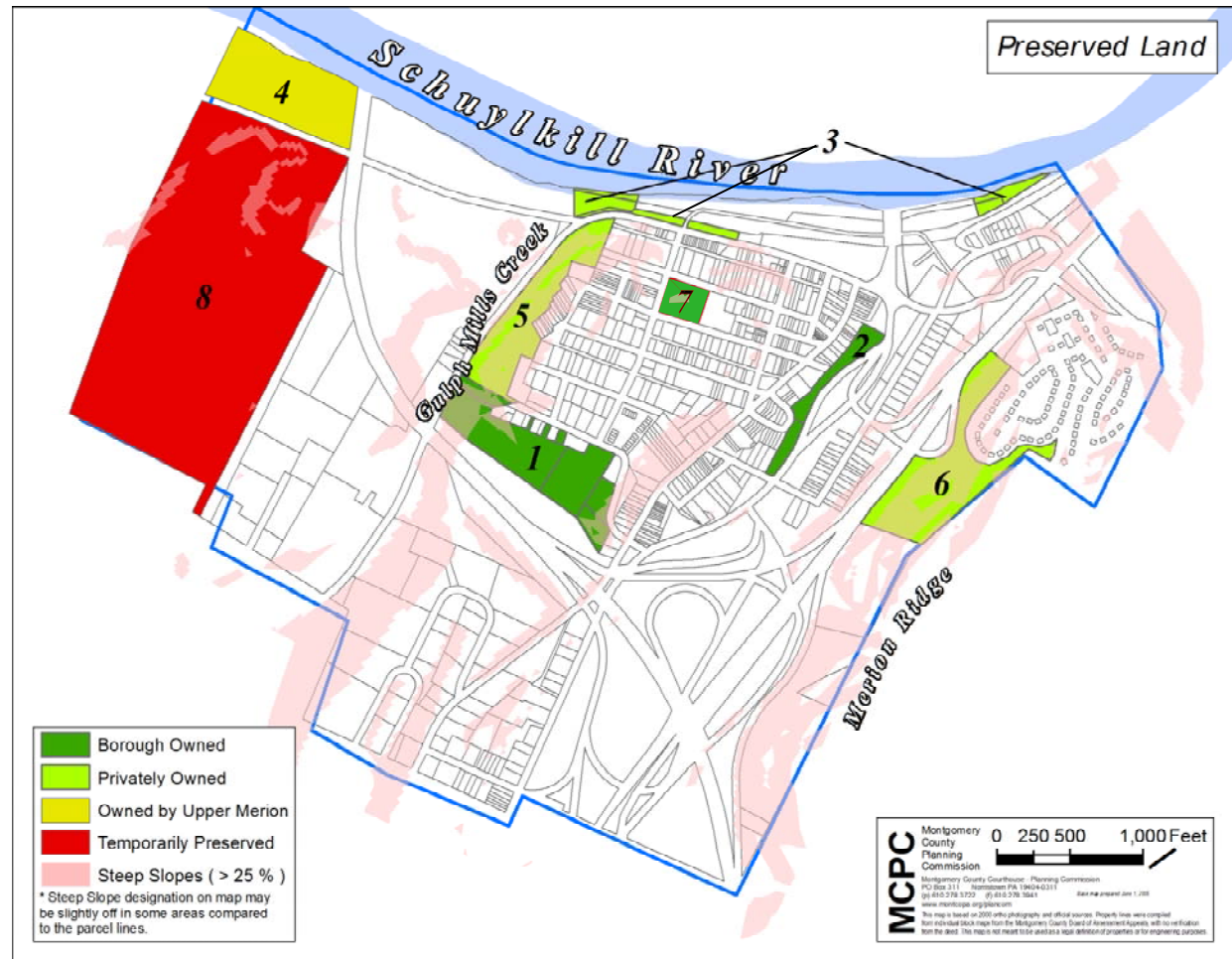
Other Open Space

RIVERFRONT

The office developments built during the 1990s along the waterfront were required to designate ten percent of the land as open space. According to the approved plans, the developer, Oliver Tyrone Pulver Corporation, set aside three areas to remain undeveloped. Two of the open space areas are located at each end of the waterfront development. A third area is a strip of land between the Norfolk Southern railroad and Front Street, beginning at Balligomingo Road and continuing past Bullock Avenue.

A paved pedestrian trail, or river walk, was also installed along the waterfront, connecting the first two open space areas. The attractive trail includes benches, picnic tables, and landscaped plantings along its length. The river walk has recently come under question with regards to how much access the general public is entitled. Building the trail was identified as a recommendation of the 1994 Open Space Plan, and it was included on the master plan of the Pulver Corporation's development plans. However, the plans do not specify that the central section of the trail was to be

Figure 6.2
Existing Preserved Open Space



- 1 Keith MacKenzie Park
- 2 Old Keith MacKenzie Park
- 3 Public open space easements along the riverfront
- 4 Land owned by Upper Merion Township, to be preserved as open space
- 5 Private open space owned by the developer of Cedar Pointe townhouses at the top of the hill
- 6 Private Open Space owned by the Merion Hill Homeowners Association
- 7 St. Gertrude's property, acquired by the Borough
- 8 GlaxoSmithKlein property



View from proposed sitting area in Mackenzie Park



Mackenzie Park Playground

designated full public access. Security agents for the Pulver Corporation have reportedly asked members of the public to leave the premises during midweek daytime hours. The status of the trail needs to be clarified so that this asset remains a borough amenity on a full time basis.

UPPER MERION

Upper Merion Township owns a 5.9 acre parcel on the waterfront at the northern end of the borough. This parcel was given to them by GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals as part of a development proposal in Upper Merion. The Township has identified it as permanently preserved open space in their open space plan. It is considered passive open space because there are no facilities or formal access points on the property.

CEDAR POINTE DEVELOPMENT

This 15 unit townhouse development located along Campbell Drive includes approximately 8.27 acres designated as open space. The undeveloped tract extends from the rear of the townhouses to Balligomingo Road between Front Street and Mackenzie Park. Most of this land consists of mature woodland and steep slopes making development difficult even if it were not designated as open space. Additionally, the deed for the property

does contain a dedicated easement given to the borough for the use of installing a future trail along the hillside.

MERION HILL DEVELOPMENT

This development on the east end of the borough was built with a designated open space area consisting of approximately 10.6 acres. The development's homeowners association owns and maintains the land. The area consists of mostly woodlands and some steep slopes. It is bounded by the Schuylkill Expressway and the Lower Merion Township line to the north and south.

SMITHKLINE / MONTGOMERY COUNTY LANDFILL

At the northwestern end of the borough are two sanitary landfills that were in use between 1970 and 1985. The landfills have since been capped and the land is now owned by the GlaxoSmithKline pharmaceutical company. The tract is approximately 60 acres and leads into the GlaxoSmithKline facilities located in Upper Merion Township. Development over the landfills is not anticipated at this time due to physical and statutory limitations. GSK has made no indication that they wish to use the land in any manner other than as a buffer to their research facilities.

OTHER PRIVATELY OWNED LAND

There are other smaller parcels of land that encompass the steep slopes in the borough. One major area is along the Merion ridgeline, which continues past the preserved open space of the Merion Hill development. Some of this land is privately owned, and some is owned by PennDOT. The other major area is along Gulph Creek and Balligomingo Road past the preserved open space in the Cedar Pointe development. The undeveloped areas on these steep slopes have several owners and extend from the developed portions of parcels used for light industrial purposes.

The map of existing open space, Figure 6.2, also identified all areas where the slope is over 25 percent. These areas should be considered temporarily protected open space. The Borough does have a steep slope ordinance intended to protect these areas from development. However, a variance could always be sought, and, if granted by the Zoning Hearing Board, the land could be developed.

Trails

An important aspect of open space is the accessibility of that space to community residents and to the region as a whole. Trail linkages can tie together open space within West Conshohocken Borough and connect to



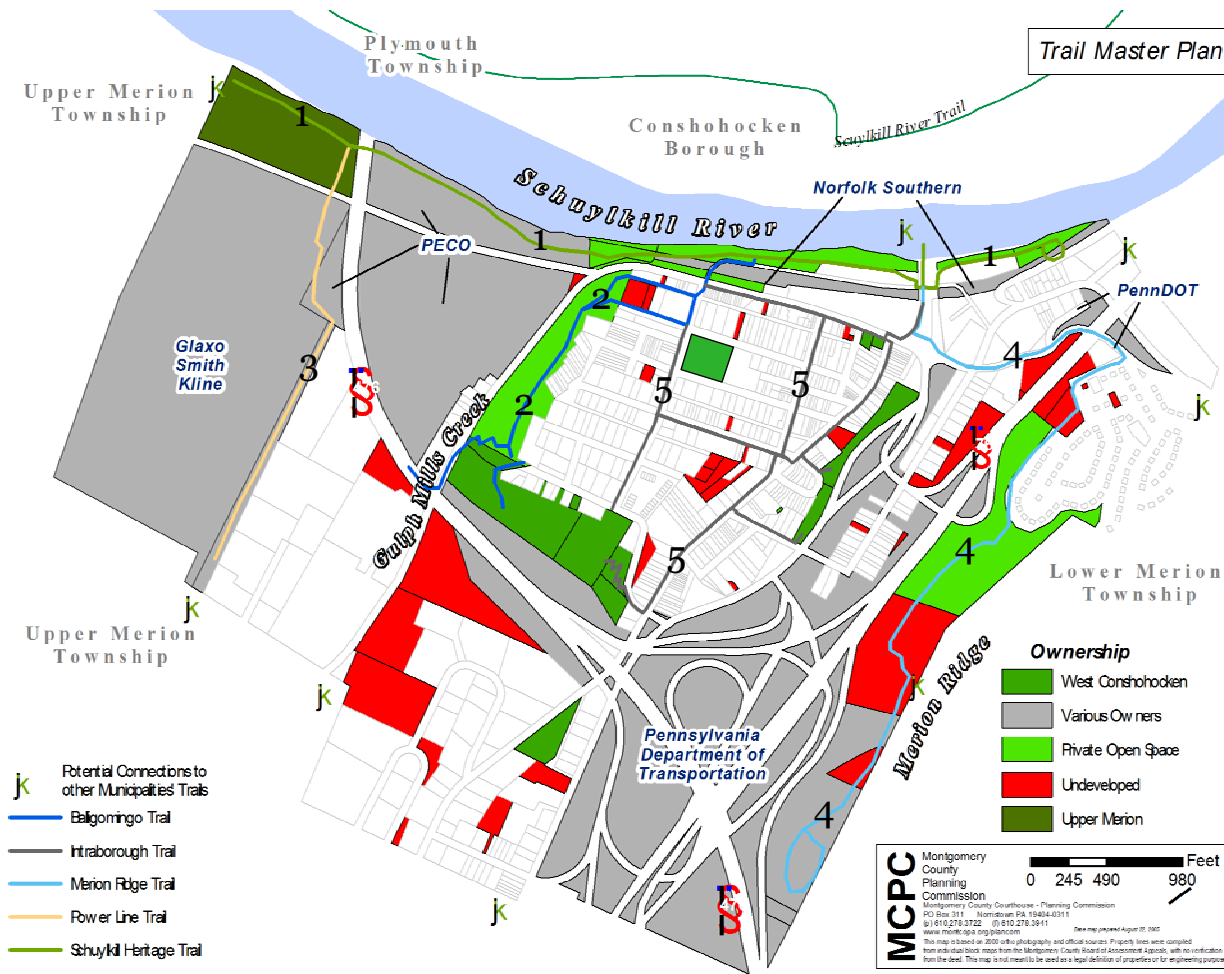
open space in adjacent communities. Such connections help form a comprehensive open space system and contribute to the creation of a more effective and enjoyable regional network. They can increase the accessibility of parks by allowing off-street pedestrian and bicycle access and can offer recreational opportunities in and of themselves. Examples of potential linkages include utility corridors, stream valleys, abandoned rail lines, and sidewalks.

The region’s most utilized trail system, Schuylkill River Trail is just over the Matsonford Bridge. Schuylkill



Trails provide valuable outdoor recreation activities

Figure 6.3
Trail Master Plan



- 1 Schuykill West Heritage Trail
- 2 Balligomingo Trail
- 3 Powerline Trail
- 4 Merion Ridge Trail
- 5 Intraborough Trail

West Trail has also been proposed and is a feasible new trail system that neighboring communities and West Conshohocken can develop.

Figure 6.3 proposes several open space linkages. The goal of these linkages is to increase access to the important natural and historic amenities in West Conshohocken for residents of the borough and neighboring municipalities. The intended side effect of this plan is to increase foot traffic around West Conshohocken. Business owners and residents will benefit alike.

This plan recognizes that such development is contingent upon fostering connections with neighboring municipalities. Four points of contact are identified in this plan: the Matsonford Bridge connecting to Conshohocken, Gulph Creek connecting to Upper Merion, and the Schuylkill River connecting to Lower and Upper Merion. The latter two connections along the Schuylkill are regionally significant efforts supported by the neighboring municipalities of Lower Merion, Upper Merion, and Bridgeport. Ongoing efforts are intending to connect these communities along the river with a multiuse trail.

In addition to the specific trails outlined in the 2005 Open Space Plan, the Borough would like to develop pedestrian facilities within the core residential and commercial areas be-

tween Mackenzie Park and the waterfront. Over time, streetscape improvements in this area including trees, improved sidewalks, public spaces and furniture will enhance additional connections to the inter-municipal trail system. Overall it is critical to the residents of the borough to have safe and continuous sidewalks; several streets in the borough have sidewalks that suddenly stop and/or are inadequate for safe walking.

Figure 6.3 indicates preliminary locations of proposed trails. Trail alignments have been chosen to maximize access to significant areas and minimize barriers to implementation such as steep slopes, railroads, and busy roads. Specific details about these trails are in the 2005 Open Space Plan.



Trails are used by all sorts of people for recreation

Goals for Recreation & Open Space

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL 2 & 4

Enhance & Upgrade Infrastructure;
Create a Town Center

Implementation Actions:

- Work with Conshohocken Borough to improve pedestrian and bicycle access across Matsonford Road Bridge.
- Improve pedestrian access across



The Schuylkill Riverfront south of the Matsonford Bridge. The wooded hillside is in Lower Merion and the office buildings are in West Conshohocken



Tree-planting can be a community event and if it involves children, an investment in more than the future of the trees

- Front Street at Ford Street and throughout the central business district / town center.
- Any new development should provide pedestrian access and pedestrian facility improvements.
- Improve lighting on the Matsonford Bridge for safety and beautification.
- Expand usage of MacKenzie Park with greater prominence and programming in the community, providing more adult activities.
- Create a more central park / plaza as a public gathering place
- Create a looped walking trail within the Borough that also connects to the county trail system and neighboring municipality trails.
- Beautify the streetscape of major roads in conjunction with future roadway projects.
- Encourage a “greening” of the core traditional neighborhood between Matsonford and Balligomingo Roads.
- Revise Section 102-36 (B) of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to improve standards pertaining to the preservation of existing trees and vegetation during land development. The present ordinance actually encourages removal of trees with no provisions for replacement.
- Start a borough-wide tree planting program.
- Revise landscape standards in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance with regards to street trees to require more trees per linear foot in the downtown area. Current code requires one tree per 40 linear feet while the revitalization plan recommends 20–30 foot spacing.
- Apply for grants to support a Town Center development, i.e. for signage, landscaping, lighting.
- Require dedication of open space or fee in lieu for subdivision and land development in the borough. Section 102-37 of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance presently requires a park and recreation fee but no dedication of open space. Dedication of open space is only required in the TH–Townhouse District, GA– Garden Apartment District, O-1 Office District.
- Form a multi-municipal trail working group, or coordinate with an existing group, to coordinate applications, design, engineering, and construction of pedestrian, bicycle and trail facilities.

7. COMMUNICATION



CURRENT MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

When a survey was taken of residents, communication was one of the critical goals going forward, yet it hasn't existed in any previous plans.

Traditionally, West Conshohocken's government has communicated with its residents via meeting minutes and agendas posted per the Sunshine Law in newspapers and on their website, by distribution of mail, and papers via drop off at doorsteps.

Modern ways of communication can be adopted and the current means of communication is encouraged to be modified for several reasons:

1. Reduce the cost of printing and mailing out information.
2. Reduce the environmental impact of printing on paper.
3. Increase the pace with which to share news and information.

MODERNIZED COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Maintaining the Borough's website is critical to maintaining sound communication with residents. Although this duty may take away from other job duties of a borough employee, that same employee would have had to invest time in mailers. The Borough

can also seek interested volunteers to support this endeavor of keeping communications up-to-date and more consistent.

Neighboring municipalities have also taken to social media to keep residents informed, most specifically to developing Facebook pages. Some entities and departments within the borough already have such pages and are linked through the Borough website; creating one for the entire borough is a natural next step.

Another tool used by neighboring municipalities is NextDoor; residents sign-up and can post about local events or lost dogs, while the borough can post about snow removal, a newly scheduled meeting, meeting minutes and agendas, an emergency situation, etc.

When a survey was put out to the residents for feedback on this comprehensive plan many residents supplied their email addresses for future communication.

One concern with implementing these more modern communication strategies is that not all residents have or know how to use these tools, they also might not have a computer or smart phone. In order to overcome this concern, a computer could be placed in Borough Hall to overcome this issue. Wifi could also be

made available to the public while in Borough Hall to further enhance the availability of these newer strategies.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

GOAL 4

Improve Communication

Implementation Actions:

- Support residents with computer training for improved communication strategies.
- Conduct multiple requests for email addresses to modernize communication strategies.
- Update communication methodologies, and increase website activity and updates.
- Create an ordinance to allow more modern ways of communicating with residents.



8. REVITALIZATION

West Conshohocken voted Best Suburb in America in 2015 - Niche



Borough Hall today is located at the center of town just like many of the great towns and cities of the world.

Revitalization

In 2001, the Borough adopted a revitalization plan. This Comprehensive Plan officially incorporates the 2001 West Conshohocken Revitalization Plan as an integral part of this Comprehensive Plan. This chapter, therefore, augments and is largely based on that plan. For more specifics, please see the final version of that plan.

A TOWN CENTER AND STREETSCAPES

The two most important goals for revitalization in West Conshohocken are creating a town center and improving streetscapes. Therefore, this chapter has been subdivided into these two main parts, A and B, and each followed by their own goals and recommendations.

A. Creating a Town Center

A town without a center is like a person without an identity. A town center represents that town and its people.

TOWN CENTER HISTORY

West Conshohocken once had a town center, a memorial traffic circle, a bank, a dry goods store, and several other stores, too.

The town started slowly from a group of nearby farms, but by the time the textile mills were established, a town

was also in existence. The town center was located much where it is today, although somewhat more southeasterly to include the major intersection at the end of the Matsonford Bridge where, in 1921, a memorial was installed marking simultaneously the entrance to and center of the town. Important events happened at that memorial, too. Parades marched by this spot. Ceremonies and memorial services were held here. Speeches were made here.

The town center is also, of course, the center of economic activity. Most of the retail and service businesses were located here and so it also became not only the important symbolic center, but the everyday social and business center. There were other businesses located elsewhere in the borough, but this was the hub.

The Borough would like to revitalize the area of the borough around Borough Hall to be that long lost center again.

Town Center Goals & Recommendations

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL 5

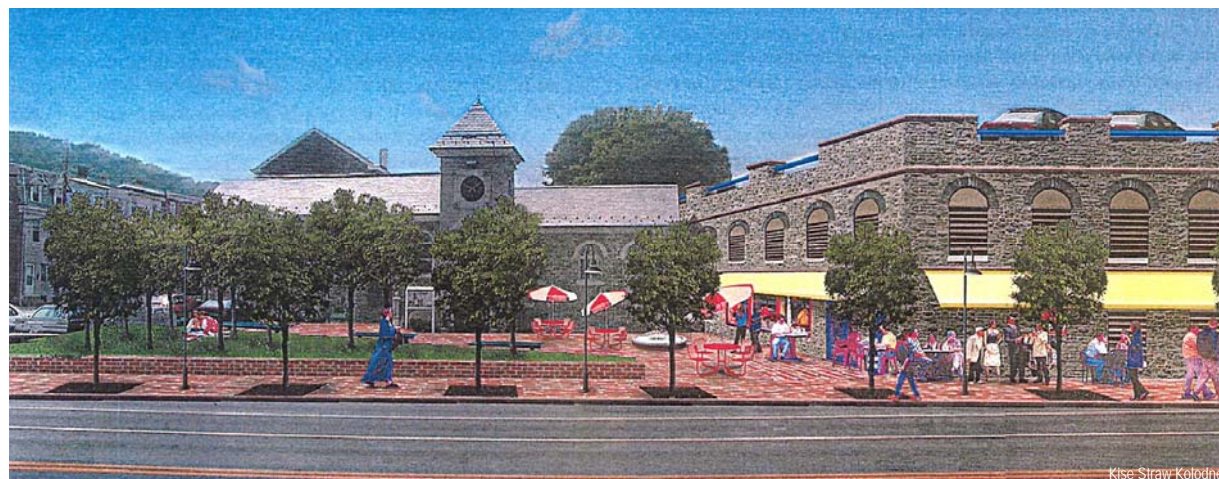
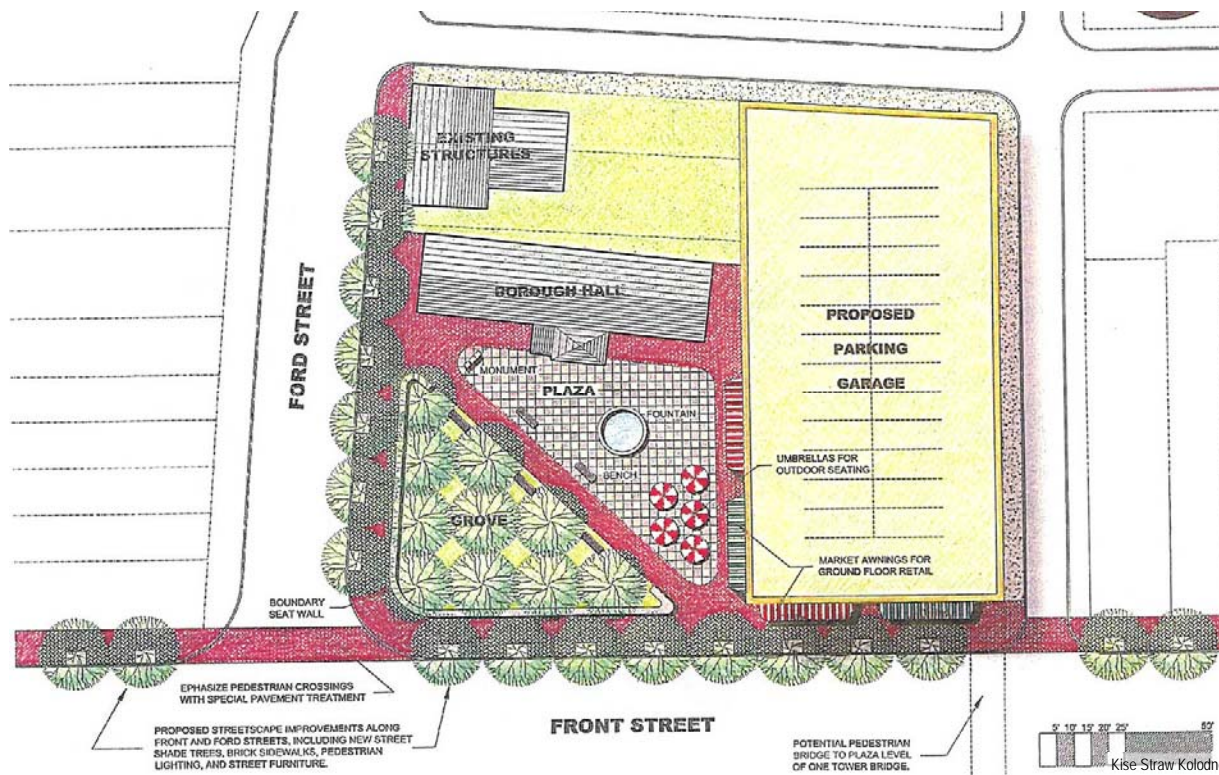
Create a Town Center with Parking

Implementation Actions:

- Promote and facilitate the construction of a retail, housing, and parking structure along Front Street adjacent to Borough Hall.
- Reconstruct the parking area in front of Borough Hall as a new public plaza.
- Promote and facilitate the conversion of the buildings along Ford Street, between Front and First Alley, into retail and personal service shops.
- Improve the streetscape along Front and Ford (to Merion) to be more attractive, safe, and pedestrian and business friendly.
- Work with landowners to develop a vision and a strategy for these kinds of businesses in this area.
- Revise the zoning code to provide incentives and restrictions to accomplish this.
- Encourage, possibly with loans or grants, revisions to existing buildings to accommodate the needs of these uses.



This photo of the town center in the early 20th century shows the intersection of what is now Front Street and the Matsonford Bridge on the right. The former veterans' memorial is in the traffic triangle with the lumber yard behind it and the mills behind the tall smokestack.



- Improve pedestrian connections to this area from the office buildings and from the residential areas of the town.
- Encourage, possibly with loans or grants, small businesses to be established in this area.
- Require existing buildings to be reused.
- Promote and facilitate the construction of a new parking lot behind the Front Street buildings.
- Investigate hiring a professional consultant to advise the borough as to its options and the costs and benefits of each.
- Continue to improve the condition of existing roads.
- Except to accommodate the parking structure along Front Street, do not vacate any roads.
- Continue to improve the condition of borough sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Provide pedestrian connections with sidewalks and/or trails from the town center to residential areas outside the central area of the borough, such as Merion Hill and Union Hill.
- Encourage non-business pedestrian destinations (perhaps a library, museum, or training center) to establish in or adjacent to the town center area.

- Facilitate promoting the town center businesses and destinations to residents, office workers, and Conshohocken businesses and residents who might walk or ride bikes to West Conshohocken.
- Provide bike facilities in the town center.

B. Improving Streetscapes

The quality of a community's streetscape can influence the area's economic success or failures by enticing businesses, shoppers and residents into the area. For this reason, West Conshohocken would like to embark upon streetscape programs in various areas.

"Streetscapes" are made up of sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian scale lighting, and objects in the "furniture zone" such as benches, bicycle stands, trash receptacles, and portable signs.

Sidewalks

The most important part of any streetscape is the sidewalk. Almost all trips begin or end with walking; therefore providing the means to walk is very important. Sidewalks must be in the right location, have the appropriate width, be free from obstructions, and be ADA accessible.

Sidewalks should be provided wherever people might be expected to walk. They should be required in commercial, office, industrial, and residential areas on both sides of the street. Sidewalks must be designed to encourage comfortable, safe, and frequent use by all potential walkers, including people with disabilities.

A sidewalk survey noting existence and condition of the sidewalks in the borough was completed by borough planner in October, 2005. This survey should be the basis for making improvements to the sidewalk network.

Street Trees

The Benefits of Trees

Trees and other forms of landscaping are an important part of green infrastructure, and provide environmental benefits, save municipalities money, help provide a sense of community, and enhance real estate values.

Each year, 10,000 trees in a given municipality typically store 500 tons of carbon dioxide, remove 50 tons of pollutants, and reduce stormwater runoff by nearly 10 million gallons, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. Trees minimize heat islands, thus reducing residential and commercial annual air-conditioning usage by up to 30 percent, as well as winter heat-



A surface parking lot for the office buildings located along the Schuylkill River.



Small access areas like this one allow fishing and boat entry to the Schuylkill River.



West Conshohocken would benefit from public access to the Schuylkill River like this area in Pottstown.

ing usage and costs by 10-25 percent (USDA).

Trees also save municipalities money: for example, a town with 40% tree cover can reap \$21 million in air quality benefits and over \$1 billion in stormwater benefits each year. West Conshohocken's tree cover is currently between 10% and 20%, according to Treevitalize's Tree Cover Map.

Trees give neighborhoods, town centers, and entire communities their own identity and a sense of place. Tree-lined streets can do more to beautify a town than any other single element. Shaded sidewalks encourage people to leave their homes, offices, and cars and walk, socialize, and play, strengthening their connection to the community. Finally, trees enhance real estate values. In fact, large specimen trees can add 10 percent or more to property values, not only because they are beautiful, but also because they demonstrably reduce energy usage and air-conditioning costs.

Trees that may be appropriate in the borough can be found in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

Lighting

Good outdoor lighting can create and encourage a pedestrian friendly environment, which is especially beneficial to neighborhood business districts. Pedestrian-scale lights improve

walkway illumination for pedestrian traffic and enhance community safety and business exposure. Typically, the light is concentrated on the sidewalk, rather than the street, and the light fixtures are located about 12 to 15 feet above the ground.

Street Furniture

Benches, bicycle stands, trash receptacles, portable signs, newspaper stands and other elements can be located in a streetscape's "furniture zone" (the area between the clear zone, or sidewalk, and the building façade) or the "planting strip" (the area between the clear zone and the curb). These are functional elements that provide character and help promote active street life. Design guidelines can be developed for street furniture, and West Conshohocken is interested in creating a unified theme for street furniture within commercial areas.

Crosswalks

Crosswalks, whether located at intersections or mid-block, must be designed with visibility, length, and safety in mind. In order to be highly visible, crosswalks can be painted in a prominent zebra or ladder style; made of materials with different textures and colors such as pressed or stamped concrete or asphalt or brick pavers; include signs or flashing lights; be raised; or contain movable signs or

cones in the street highlighting the crosswalk.

Shorter crosswalks, which are easier and more comfortable for pedestrians to use, can be created by narrowing streets, adding corner bulb-outs, tightening curb radii, or adding refuge islands or wide medians. Crosswalks at traffic signals should provide adequate time to cross the street, and pedestrians shouldn't have to wait too long to cross. All push button mechanisms for crosswalks should be fast acting, which results in pedestrians crossing at the appropriate time. All crosswalks must be ADA accessible with ramps leading from the sidewalk to the crosswalk. Ideally, two separate curb cuts should be provided for these ramps at each corner.

- Investigate funding sources to implement the streetscape improvements and “Matsonford Square” improvements of the 2001 Revitalization Plan.
- Review the survey conducted on the existing conditions of sidewalks and implement a plan to address improvements and continuity of the sidewalks. Revise the Subdivision and Land Development ordinance, particularly to require larger sidewalks with planting strips in the town center area.

Streetscapes Goals & Recommendations

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL 2

Improve Infrastructure

Implementation Actions:

- Revise the Subdivision and Land Development ordinance, particularly to require larger sidewalks with planting strips in the town center area.



Pedestrian scale street lights and street furniture create a pleasant and inviting business district.



Crosswalks are an important safety feature in business districts for pedestrians and vehicles alike.

9. HOUSING



CEDAR-FORD"—WEST CONSHOHOCKEN, PA.

Still standing today, Cedar-Ford was built circa 1900.



New contemporary townhomes are being built in the borough.

History

West Conshohocken really grew up as a hillside mill or factory town. Most of the housing today was built for the families of people who worked in the factories and other businesses in town. It is this housing and the streets and alleys that were laid out to accommodate them that gives West Conshohocken a very large part of its character today.

After World War II, more new housing was constructed in West Conshohocken, but occurs at the edges of the core historic housing area.

West Conshohocken experienced a decline in its housing stock beginning in the early 1950s with the construction of the Blue Route and the Schuylkill Expressway, as well as a gas explosion on Front Street. With improved vehicular access came growth in several industries. Non-residential development began to encroach on historically residential areas, further constricting the already diminished housing stock.

Now, there is increased market pressure to build even more housing since West Conshohocken is so conveniently located at the crossroads of two major interstate highways in the region. This pressure has been driving up property values and has encouraged the replacement of older, traditional homes with new, modern ones.

These newer homes are now built by developers with generally suburban experience using home designs that do not fit the character of the borough. In addition, the zoning and the subdivision and land development codes are written with some suburban setbacks and other standards.

Modern life today also means the ownership of several cars whereas many of the homes have street frontages only large enough to accommodate 1 car. Luckily, alleys provide a second location for cars for most, but not all, of these properties. Nevertheless, some parts of the borough have a critical shortage of parking spaces and consideration is being made to tear down a few buildings to create parking lots.

As a result, the community is worried that they may lose the character that is unique to West Conshohocken; being replaced by suburban-style homes and streets.

Housing Characteristics

HOUSING TYPE

According to the 2010 Census, there are 658 housing units in West Conshohocken. Nearly half of these units are single-family detached houses. Over 38% are single-family attached homes; about 10% are 2-4 unit multi-family buildings, and the remaining 5% are multi-family structures with 5

Figure 9.1
Housing Units by Type

	WC	Rank*	County	Region	PA	USA
Single-Family Detached	46.3%	45	56.0%	42.3%	55.9%	60.3%
Single-Family Attached	38.4%	5	18.7%	31.4%	17.9%	5.6%
2 – 4 Unit Structure	10.4%	22	7.8%	9.6%	9.8%	9.0%
5 + Unit Structure	4.4%	50	16.6%	15.6%	11.3%	17.3%
Mobile Homes	0.5%	21	0.9%	1.0%	4.9%	7.6%
Other	0.0%		0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Total housing units	658					

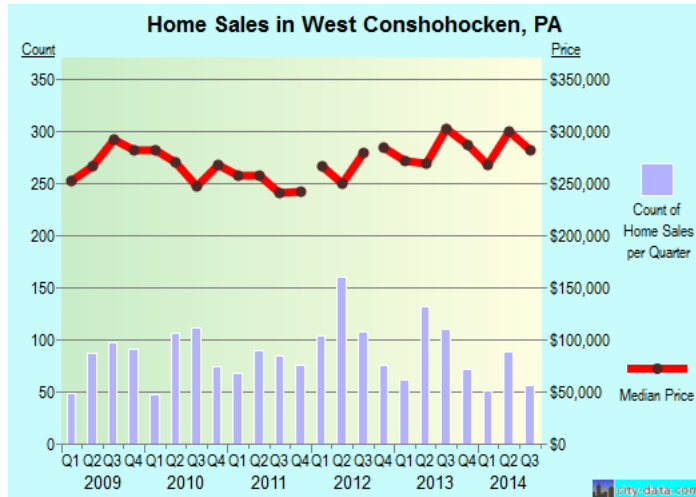
* rank compared to 62 total municipalities in the county





A modern house built in the Merion Hills neighborhood of West Conshohocken

Figure 9.2



or more units. This mix of housing is generally comparable to that of other municipalities in the region.

HOUSING VALUE

In 2000, the majority of these homes were modestly valued at under \$150,000, with the median value being \$124,700. As of 2013 the average value of homes was \$314,729, more than doubling the 2000 Census figures.

Residents who rent homes in the borough paid on average \$750 per month, with the majority paying between \$500 and \$999 per month. This was only slightly less than the median gross rent for the county as a whole, which was \$707 per month in 2000. Today this value is \$1,450 according to City Data.

HOUSING AGE

West Conshohocken has an aging housing stock in varying degrees of repair. Nearly 60% of all homes in West Conshohocken were built before 1950. Only about 2.5% of homes are considered overcrowded and 3.2% are considered sub-standard according to the 2010 census. Additional homes could be considered in need of maintenance, and these generally fall into two categories – houses belonging to elderly or disabled people who do not have the physical or financial ability to make the necessary repairs,

and those belonging to landlords who are not adequately maintaining their rental properties.

In 2001 the borough developed a revitalization plan with consultants Kise Straw & Kolodner. A task force was formed, which identified proliferation of apartment conversions to be the principal housing problem. Single family homes are rapidly being converted into multi-family buildings to house students, which has had a negative impact on the character of the neighborhoods due to the lack of maintenance of these houses.

However, improvement can be observed. Despite a lull in the 2008-2011 timeframe several new developments have risen.

Additionally, many of the older homes have been remodeled and improved, providing modern, up-to-date and marketable housing in existing, older homes that not only fit in their neighborhoods, but improve their appearance, too.

Borough Action

For the more problematic cases, the Borough might consider taking action.

REHABILITATION

The Borough could provide grants to buy, rehabilitate, and resell some of the most problematic homes. The University of Pennsylvania has done

this to 20 properties. Homes chosen strategically for this action can improve the values of many homes nearby, possibly leading to further improvements by private investment.

Goals

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL 6

Improve Housing

Implementation Actions:

- Engage a professional firm to review non-confirming lots and uses throughout the borough as compared to the existing zoning map to establish an updated map and inform future applications that require variances regarding use.
- Adopt a remodeling and demolition permit process that encourages remodeling rather than demolition.
- Institute a housing rehabilitation grant program to improve the condition of owner-occupied and rental housing.
- Improve code enforcement efforts and local property maintenance codes to improve and maintain the quality of all dwellings, especially rental properties.
- A rehabilitation code can be established to encourage the rehabilita-

tion of existing homes and to retain their character.

- Adopt improved code provisions to ensure that when new housing units are to be built, the new housing will retain the character of the neighborhood.
- Modify Borough codes and ordinances to continue to ameliorate the parking impacts of multiple tenant dwellings.
- Modify Borough codes and ordinances to ensure multi-family housing provides some on-site open space and recreation areas.
- Improve the condition of older houses and discourage demolition wherever possible.
- Conduct an inventory and study of housing characteristics which is to be used to inform codes, guidelines, and standards.
- Investigate incentives for the installation of energy conservation measures such as improved insulation, solar panels, lighting alternatives, etc.

Housing Summary

Housing in West Conshohocken has had some significant changes over time. First, scattered homesteads, then factory workers' houses and owners' mansions. Many of these



were not removed as the population decreased in the decades after WWII. So, the character of the town today is due largely to the large number of pre-WWII housing still in existence. More recently, the attractive location at an interstate crossroads is increasing development in the town but it is often foreign in character and does not fit in. Many of the single family homes are being replaced with townhomes to increase the number of housing units in the Borough. (See photos to right of all 21st century townhomes built within the Borough). The Borough would like to upgrade the condition of existing homes in disrepair and enforce the development of new housing to fit within the character of existing homes.



Recent housing construction within the Borough has been focused on townhome development increasing the number of housing units in West Conshohocken.



10. NATURAL RESOURCES



Open space along the Schuylkill River in West Conshohocken



The Schuylkill River and a portion of the West Conshohocken Riverfront north of the Matsonford Bridge

Natural Resources

In order to plan for the future of the borough, it is important to understand the existing natural environment. The borough of West Conshohocken covers only about 0.9 square miles or about 576 acres. It is subdivided into approximately 750 parcels. West Conshohocken has been largely developed for some time and most of the open areas remain so because of unique physical features—steep slopes and periodic flooding.

Two major areas are explored in this section, including:

- Land resources—topography, soil types, vegetation and underlying geologic formations.
- Water resources—streams, rivers, lakes and ponds.

LAND RESOURCES

Topography

The slope of an area can be by dividing the amount of change in vertical elevation by a specified horizontal distance. The following list defines slope categories and their development potential:

- Flat Terrain (0-2 percent slope). In West Conshohocken, such land lies in the floodplain, where construction must be carefully regulated.

- Gentle Slopes (3-8 percent slope). This land is ideally suited for development, and according to the United State Geological Surveys (USGS) all land in this category has already been developed.
- Moderate Slopes (8-15 percent slope). These land areas are ideally suited for single-family detached residential development.
- Steep Slopes (15-25 percent slope). Development in these areas becomes increasingly costly and the provision of roads and utilities can be difficult.
- Excessive Slopes (over 25 percent). Ideally, these lands should be preserved as open space. The remaining vacant land south of Balligomingo Road and much of the area between the Schuylkill Expressway and the southern boundary line of the borough are as steep as 33 percent.

Much of West Conshohocken is characterized by moderate to steep slopes. Figure 10.1 illustrates the slope in West Conshohocken. Areas in yellow indicate a 15-25% slope, while areas in red indicate a slope of more than 25%. The topography has had a very important effect on the borough because some of the steepest slopes have precluded development. Even the practice of developing on moderate slopes has aggravated problems of erosion

and stormwater runoff. For example, some of the development on Union Hill has caused severe erosion problems because of unwise use of steep slopes.

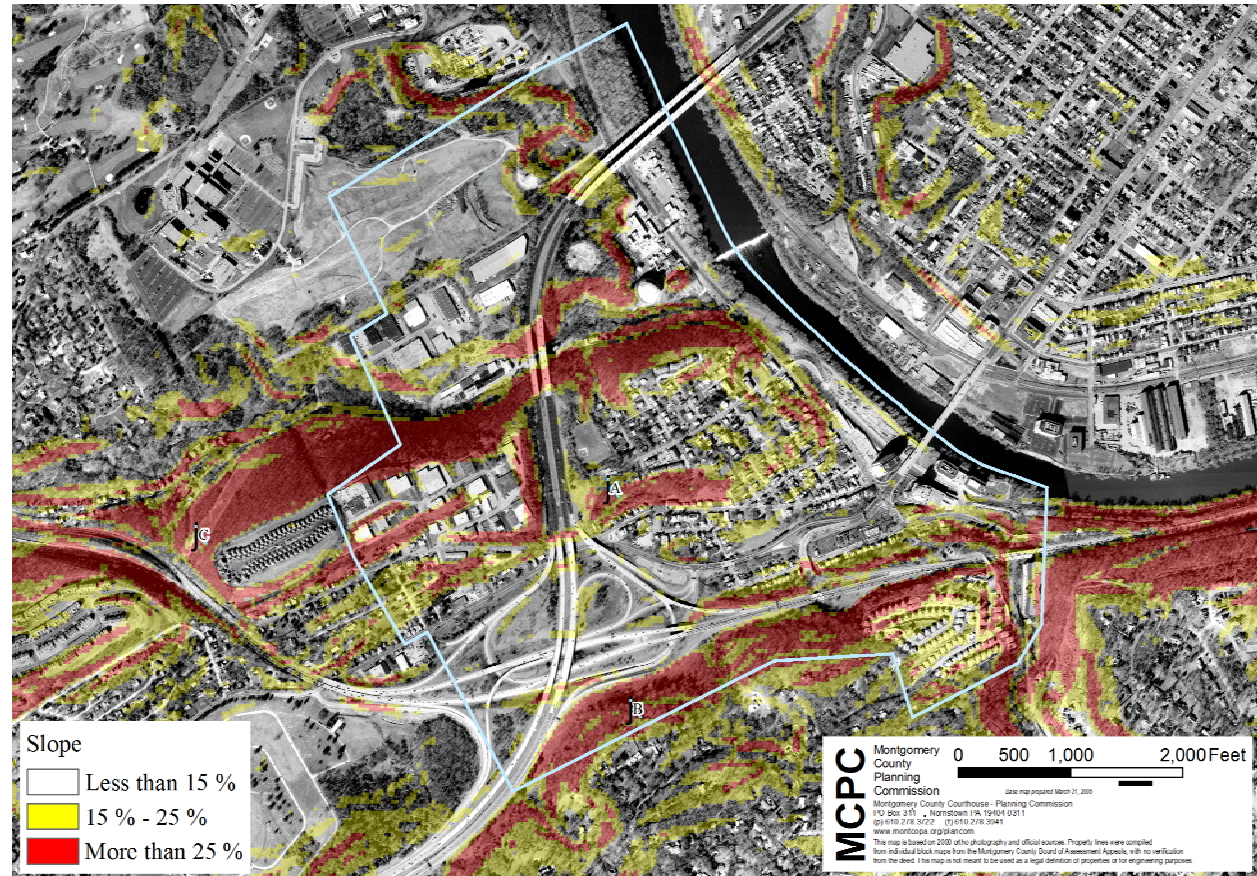
Due to this type of problem, West Conshohocken has adopted a Steep Slope District within its zoning ordinance. This district ensures that future development of slopes is not detrimental to other properties. The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance also regulates the grades of new roads.

Some slopes are so steep that they should never be developed (mainly those over 25 percent). In this case, there are several steps the borough can take, in addition to the regulations in the Zoning Ordinance, to ensure that such areas remain undeveloped. The borough can acquire land outright or purchase easements over the land now held by private owners for the borough park system, and it can encourage more intensive development on plateaus where there is less danger of erosion in lieu of developing on steeper slopes.

Soils

Knowledge of the borough’s soil types and geologic formations is helpful in determining the suitability of new development or redevelopment of land in the borough.

Figure 10.1
Slope



Since West Conshohocken is largely developed, the description of its soils is fairly simple and straightforward. The majority of the borough falls into one of the several “made land” categories of the Soil Survey of Montgomery County. This means that these areas have been substantially altered such that no rea-



Heavy vegetation on steep slopes slows runoff to prevent flooding, reduce soil erosion, and increase groundwater recharge.



Re-seeding steep slopes helps prevent future erosion.

sonable determination can be made as to the fertility, drainage, or stability of the soil without an on-site inspection and analysis. The made land category is the least suitable for structural development because it is generally unstable and susceptible to erosion.

Alluvial soils are those that have been carried downstream by watercourses and have been deposited where flooding has occurred. Flooding on these soils can be expected every 3 to 5 years, thus they are unsuitable for construction. Alluvial soils and soils with limited drainage can be found along the Gulf Creek, Schuylkill, and Arrowmink corridors.

It must also be noted that there are activities, such as the extraction of minerals and commercial agriculture production, that impact water supplies and soils, they are governed by statutes in Pennsylvania's State Water Plan and must be strictly adhered to.

Vegetation

West Conshohocken is a borough that has been largely developed over a long period of time and, as can be seen in Figure 4.3, does not have large areas of natural vegetation except in those places where development has been restricted by steep slopes or periodic flooding.

Heavy vegetation on steep slopes is valuable in several ways. Plants help to slow down water runoff during

storms. Slower runoff also prevents flooding of the immediate area and lessens the amount of water that flows into storm sewers which could cause flash flooding at the point of the sewer discharge. Finally, soil erosion is greatly reduced because the roots of the plants help hold the soil in place.

The construction of the Mid-County Expressway and interchange with the Schuylkill Expressway has required much grading in areas where prolific vegetation existed. Some of the grading of the highway left steep slopes that require reseeded to help prevent erosion in the future.

However, there are still areas of locally significant woodlands, including the southern banks of Gulph Creek and the Merion Ridge. In addition, portions of the Smith Kline Beecham tract near the border with Upper Merion Township is heavily wooded. Areas such as these are important ecological anchors for the community because they function as reservoirs of habitat for plants and animals.

WATER RESOURCES

Four distinct waterways are located in West Conshohocken: the Schuylkill River, Gulph Creek, Arrowminko Creek (mostly in a culvert), and Arrowmink Creek. (See Figure 10.3) The three creeks drain into the Schuylkill River. The borough's development has always been influenced by these wa-

terways and will continue to do so in the future.

Schuylkill River

Originally a primary mode of transportation, it had become more important as a source of water for industries in the borough and as a disposal site for wastes. The Schuylkill River and its banks are increasingly regarded as important resources for recreation—boating, picnicking and hiking trails are examples. A portion of the Schuylkill has been designated as a component of the Pennsylvania Scenic Rivers System by the Legislature and a study was published in 1979. The section of the river in West Conshohocken is part of the Schuylkill River Greenway and has been classified as “conditional modified recreational.” This means that the potential for recreation exists, but the water and the riverbanks will have to be cleaned up.

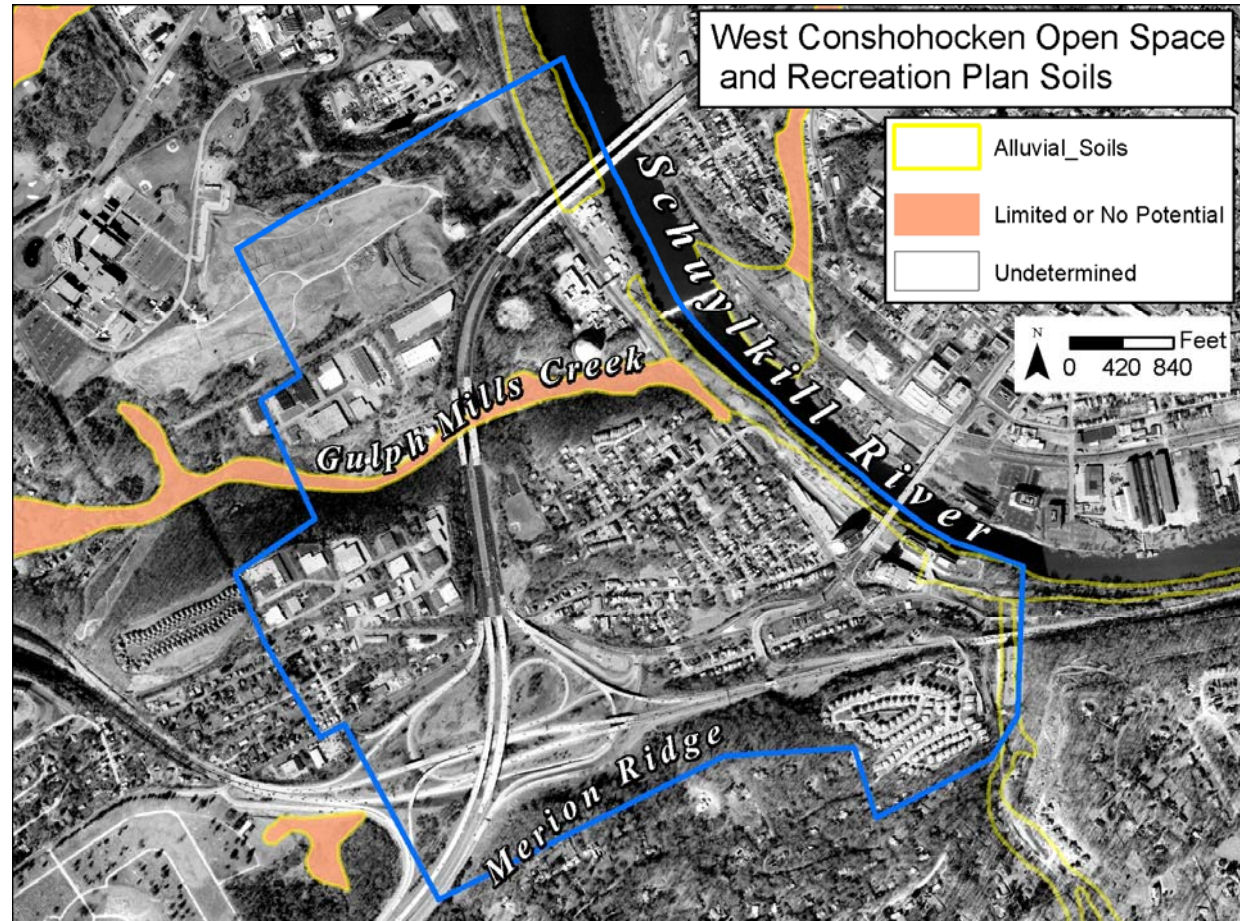
Gulph Creek Valley

The Gulph Creek runs through the borough close to Balligomingo Road.

Other Creeks

Arrowminko Creek is now almost completely enclosed throughout the borough in a box culvert because of the construction of the two expressways in West Conshohocken. The Arrowmink Creek, which flows

Figure 10.2
Soils



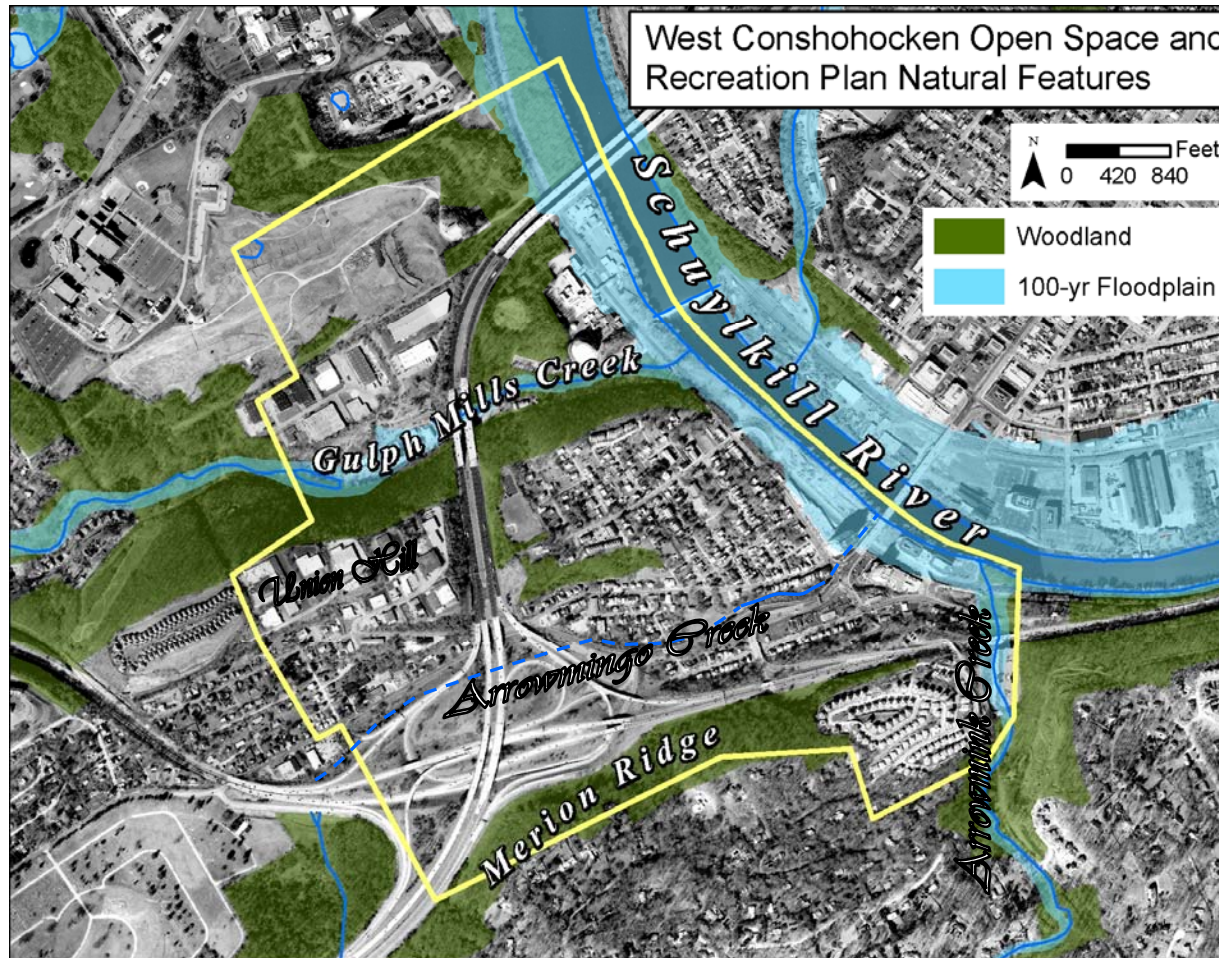
through the eastern end of the borough, creates a waterfall.

Floodplain Characteristics

It is a mistake to consider problems of flooding separate from development

practices and land use. When land is developed with buildings and roads, vegetation is removed and soil is covered. This causes stormwater that ordinarily would be absorbed into the ground to flow into the watercourses in greater amounts, and in a much shorter period of time, which results in greater and accelerated flooding. Erosion, aggravated by under-

Figure 10.3
Floodplain and Woodlands



ground storm sewers which drain water quickly off the land and deliver it rapidly and directly to the river, increases flooding further.

Regardless of development, periodic flooding of watercourses is natural. Luckily there is another natural phenomenon that helps to ease the force of the flood. Surrounding many rivers is a broad, flat area known as a floodplain. When flooding occurs in the river, the plain receives the floodwaters and slows the velocity of the flow by allowing the water to spread and by acting as a reservoir until the flood waters subside. In these cases, the floodplain acts as a buffer zone and protects higher land from damage.

Buildings and highways in the floodplain reduce its capacity to act as a reservoir. Even levees and floodwalls which restrict the area where water can flow worsens flood conditions upstream (since water cannot flow down freely) as well as downstream. Therefore, each instance of construction in a floodplain affects other property owners adjoining the watercourse.

Floodplain Regulation

Federal involvement in the regulation of flood hazard areas is increasing because flood damage has cost taxpayers millions of dollars in the past. And, as described above, development

of these areas increases the frequency and severity of floods. West Conshohocken is certified under the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program, PL 93-234, which means that borough property owners can purchase federally subsidized flood insurance. As part of its involvement in the program, the borough has received a Flood Insurance Study which delineates those areas within its boundaries subject to flooding.

Floodplain Conservation District

At the time West Conshohocken passed its first zoning ordinance, the Flood Plain Conservation District regulated development in those areas shown to have alluvial soils in the Soil Survey of Montgomery County, as well as areas indicated to have flooded previously as shown in the Department of Interior Studies of the Schuylkill River.

Flood Insurance Study

These delineations of the areas subject to flooding have been superseded in the Flood Plain Conservation District by the Flood Insurance Study. The study outlines three different boundaries: the 500-year flood, the 100-year flood, and the floodway. The 500-year and 100-year flood boundaries are the level of a flood that has a statistical probability of 0.2 percent and

1 percent, respectively of being equaled or exceeded in any one year.

The 100-year flood has been adopted by the Federal Insurance Administration (FIA) as a base flood for determining the limits of the program's required management measures. The 500-year flood boundary indicates additional areas of flood risk but no restrictions are required by the FIA in those areas. The floodway is the channel of a stream and includes any adjacent floodplain areas that must be kept free of encroachment so that the 100-year floodplain can be carried without substantial increases in flood heights. The FIA requires limiting creases in flood heights to no lmore than one foot provided that hazardous flow velocities are not produced.

The area between the floodway and the boundary of the 100-year flood is called the floodway fringe. The FIA permits construction in the floodway fringe as long as the construction is properly "flood-proofed." Flood proofing includes sufficient anchorage to prevent flotation and lateral movement, reinforcement of walls to resist water pressures, and the construction of any water supply and waste treatment systems in such a way as to prevent the entrance of flood waters. However, municipalities are permitted to institute regulations which are more stringent than those of the FIA for areas subject to flooding and it is generally accepted that structures



Floodplains, like this one in Springfield Township, are a part of the natural stormwater management system.



Gulph Creek runs through West Conshohocken.



On September 29, 2004 the Schuylkill River flooded. This photo was taken on Kelly Drive in nearby Philadelphia.



FEMA is the organization that oversees the National Flood Insurance Program.

should be permitted in the floodway fringe only in cases where undue hardship is demonstrated by the property owner. West Conshohocken has taken this last approach in the Flood Plain Conservation District.

Underground Water Supply and Water Tables

Precipitation (rain or snow fall) is the source of all groundwater. This precipitation may be local or it may have traveled to the area in streams whose channels are cut into water-bearing beds, groundwater drains from the uplands toward the valley and is discharged through springs or seeps along the valley walls and into streambeds. In some areas, ground water, withdrawn through wells, is the source of water used by residents. In West Conshohocken, however, public water is available throughout the borough so that there are few, if any, wells still operating.

Of more direct concern to West Conshohocken is the water table of various soils because of its effect on development. A seasonal high water table limits development because it severely hampers on-site sewage disposal. Much of the soil in West Conshohocken has seasonal high water tables .

ANALYSIS FOR NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION

This portion identifies important re-

sources and proposes priorities for their preservation. Generally the items listed in each priority category are based upon the quality and demand for the resource as well as its contribution to community identity.

Composite Analysis of Resources

The Borough of West Conshohocken is endowed with a number of natural resources including stream and river corridors, wooded areas, and dramatic topography. These assets were identified earlier in the chapter. These resources are compiled along with the open space linkage system outlined in Chapter 6 to produce the map in Figure 10.4. This map employs a model that quantifies the various resources types into a single layer of information that demonstrates the underlying open space value of the area depicted. Since this is not an entirely objective process, the method employed will be explained in detail.

METHODOLOGY

The following four types of information were used as inputs to the open space value model used to create the resource analysis map: steep slopes, proximity to planned or existing trails, stream corridors, and woodlands.

Steep Slopes

Because West Conshohocken is located at the margin of two distinct geologic formations, steep terrain exists throughout the municipality. These areas are ecologically and recreationally important since they are heavily wooded and undeveloped. According to the Borough's Steep Slope Ordinance (Section 113– 70) development is prohibited on areas steeper than 25% and limited to conditional use standards on slopes between 15% and 25%. Therefore a value of 0 was assigned to areas of less than 15% slope, a value of 5 was assigned to areas between 15% and 25%, and a value of 10 was assigned to areas greater than 25%.

Proximity To Trail System

The master trail plan outlined in Chapter 6 was used to create a layer of information depicting areas within 300 feet of any given trail. Areas that were more than 300 feet away were assigned a value of 0 while areas within 300 feet were assigned a value of 5.

Stream Corridors

Stream corridors are essential ecological, historic, and recreational features in the borough. Stream corridors were derived from FEMA floodplain maps and include all areas between the 500 year floodplain and the stream or river. This layer of information generally describes the streambank and its adja-

cent riparian area. Areas outside of this area were assigned a value of 0, areas within the 500 year floodplain were assigned a value of 5, while areas within the one hundred year floodplain, floodway or stream were assigned a value of 10.

Woodlands

Woodlands are important areas of habitat that offer unique passive recreation opportunities. Some of these areas are relatively large within the borough, These areas were identified in Figure 10.3 using information from the DVRPC and Montgomery County Planning Commission staff review. Areas not within woodlands were assigned a value of 0, areas within woodlands were assigned a value of 10.

SUMMARY OF RESOURCE ANALYSIS

The resource analysis map adds together the values ascribed to the four layers of information outlined above. Therefore, areas with steep, wooded terrain that were also adjacent to stream corridors and the planned trail system received the highest possible score.

PRIORITIZATION OF AREAS FOR PRESERVATION

The resource analysis map was the first step in creating the priority map

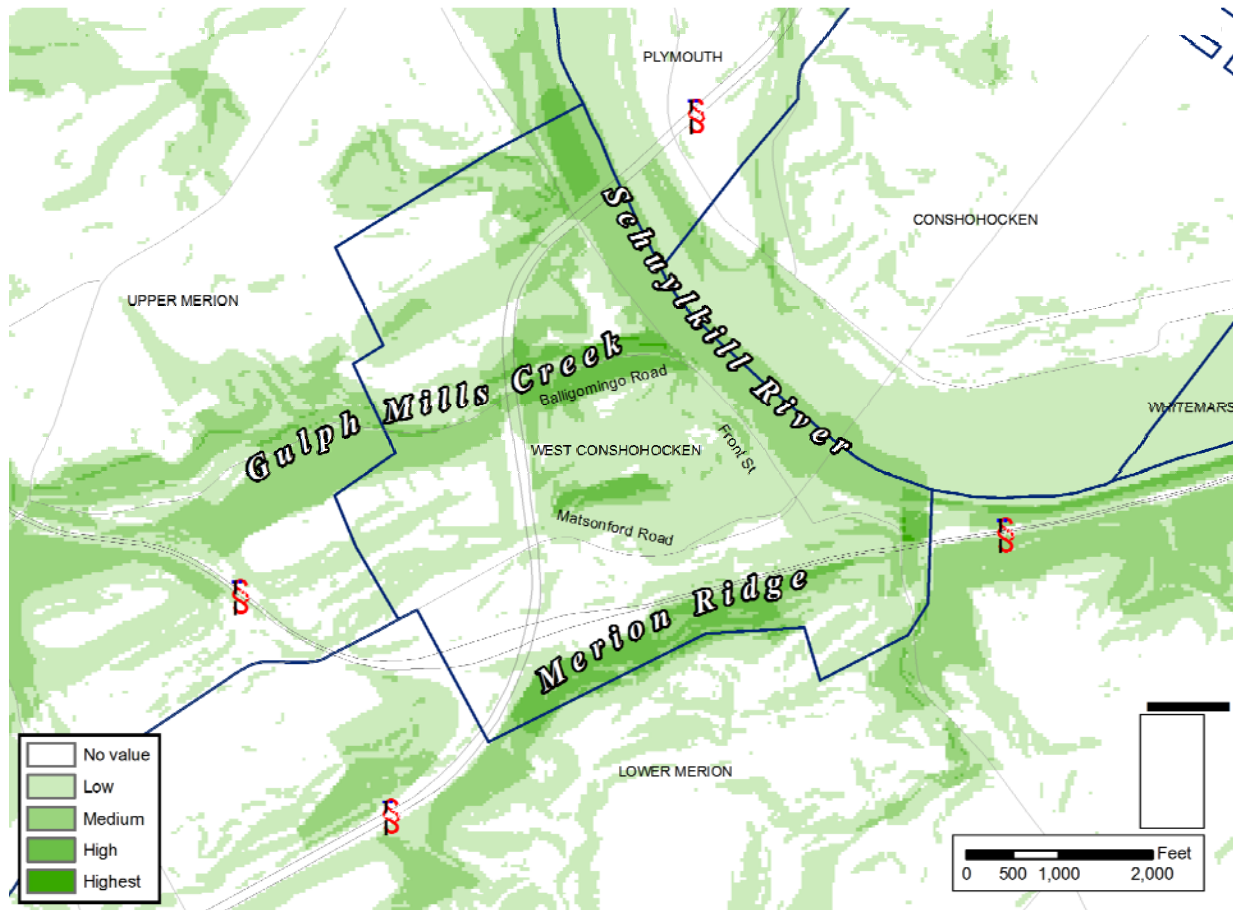


Woodlands in West Conshohocken



Railroad bridge over Gulph Creek in West Conshohocken

Figure 10.4
Natural Resource Analysis



source analysis map was a mostly objective process– the creation of the priority map introduces subjective, qualitative assumptions derived from goals in the 2005 Open Space Plan. The priority map is the basis for the implementation strategy that will be outlined in later in this Comprehensive Plan.

Highest Priority Areas

The Schuylkill River Corridor, Mackenzie Park, the historic core area of the borough including St. Gertrude’s Church and the Gulph Creek Corridor comprise the highest priority areas within the borough. These areas have some of the highest open space value areas in the borough, fulfill specific goals of this Plan and the Open Space Plan, and will provide the most impact. The Schuylkill River Corridor is especially noteworthy for its regional significance as an open space and recreation area. Properties owned by and adjacent to St. Gertrude’s Church are also of high value to the borough due to their ideal location for an urban park and the limited supply of public open space within the historic core area of the borough. The Open Space Committee has also expressed interest in developing the Gulph Creek Corridor as a secondary open space and recreation area that will connect Mackenzie Park to the Schuylkill Riverfront via a trail through one of the natural areas in the borough.

shown in figure 10.5. The second step in the creation of the priority map was to consider the open space goals outlined in Chapter 6. As a result some areas with lower open space value are described as medium or high priority areas. While the creation of the re-

Medium Priority Areas

These areas comprise an on-street trail and shade tree system connecting the historic core of West Conshohocken as well as the neighborhood west of I-476 to the waterfront and park. These focus areas will receive immediate attention but may not be the subject of implementation projects until areas in the high priority category are addressed.

Lowest Priority Areas

These areas have been explored in some detail and generally involve secondary trail connections to neighboring municipalities along Merion Ridge, Conshohocken State Road, the Powerline Trail and the westernmost parts of the Gulph Creek Corridor. These areas will be addressed as time and funding permit. Most of the proposed projects in these areas like Matsonford Road pedestrian improvements, the Powerline Trail, Merion Ridge Trail, and the Upper Gulph Creek area should be undertaken in conjunction with efforts by neighboring municipalities.

Energy Resources

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, “American cities and towns account for over 80 percent of national energy use (DOE, 1996). Land use patterns, including the density, arrangement and mix of land uses in the

community, strongly influence the efficiency and demand for local energy. Community design opportunities, including landscaping, site design, and building orientation also provide significant opportunities to improve energy efficiency and reduce consumption. Street trees, for example, reduce heating and cooling costs by blocking hot summer rays and providing shelter from cold winter winds.

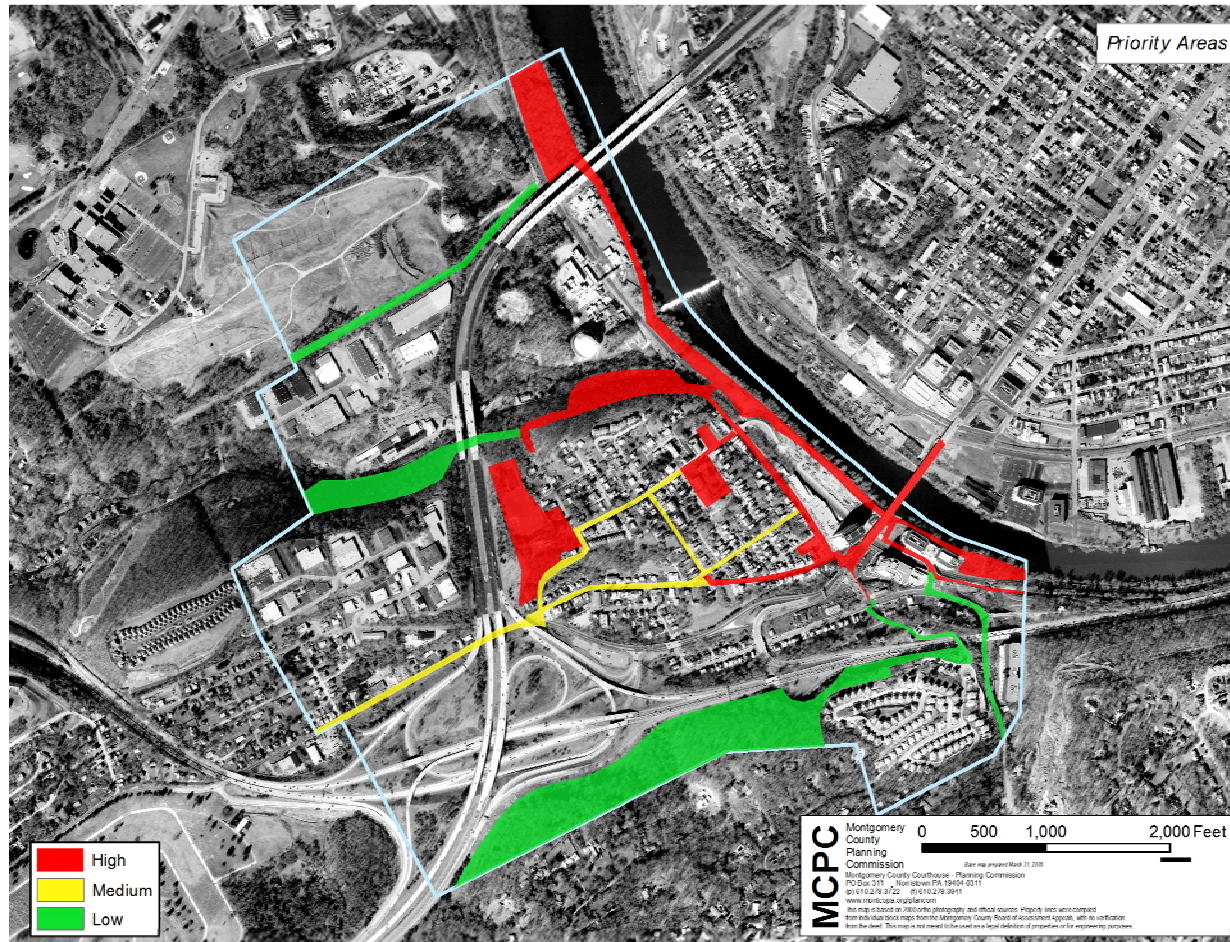
Local energy choices influence all aspects of community life, including the environment, economy, and overall quality of life. More efficient travel patterns, for example, result in shorter commuting times, reduced traffic congestion and lower air pollution. Likewise, homes, businesses and government buildings that are more efficient produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions. Many conservation measures designed to reduce energy consumption, such as cluster development, trails and greenways also serve to protect our valuable natural resources. Vegetation, in the form of landscaping, street trees, forests, agriculture and other green space, act to reduce ambient air temperatures, thereby resulting in lower energy costs.

From an economic standpoint, energy is also crucial. Provision of safe, reliable and affordable energy supplies, which depends on the proper siting and maintenance of energy facilities, is a key to local economic develop-



The Schuylkill Riverfront is a high priority preservation area

Figure 10.5
Natural Resource Conservation Priority Map



ment. Furthermore, when households, businesses and local governments cut energy expenditures, they have more money to reinvest in the local economy. Energy savings, in turn, can serve as disposable income for individuals,

working capital for local businesses, and surplus funds required by local governments to provide essential services and infrastructure.

The argument for energy planning is compelling. Through local planning and design choices, local communities can influence up to 70 percent of local energy demand, or 56 percent of the national total (DOE, 1996). By considering opportunities for energy conservation (using less energy) and energy efficiency (reducing wastes) within a comprehensive plan, local residents and governments save money, reinvest in the local economy, improve environmental quality, and ensure clean, safe and reliable energy supplies for future generations.”

Wind

Wind power can provide cost-effective and reliable clean energy in the United States. Pennsylvania has good wind resources in portions of the state.

West Conshohocken is in a wind power class area 2, which is generally too low for significant wind power, however local conditions, such as hills, can improve or reduce the actual power that can be generated. Therefore, wind power should be investigated for small to medium sized wind generation facilities.

Supporting renewable forms of electric generation such as wind energy

can provide true value to residents, businesses and organizations. A purchase of PECO Wind service signals a commitment to the environment and positions the purchaser as a leader. With their purchase, they can leverage the benefits of wind energy into:

- Recognized leadership and public support
- Increased employee and resident loyalty resulting from recognized action
- Clear demonstration of community values and mission

Solar

Solar energy can be used with passive or active methods. Passive methods rely on building siting and the design of its form (such as window orientation and thermal mass for heat storage) to collect, store and use as much of the energy from the sun as possible. Active methods use equipment such as solar panels to collect, store and use as much sun energy as possible.

Federal tax credits are available for solar energy systems. Homeowners are eligible for tax credits for qualified solar water heating and photovoltaic systems. Solar water heating systems produce hot water, photovoltaic systems produce electricity. Businesses are eligible for similar credits for solar equipment, including certain solar lighting systems.

The tax credits go to individuals who install qualifying systems on homes they use as a residence, and to businesses that install solar equipment for their use.

Energy Conservation

Energy is no longer understood to be cheap. People have become more aware of the financial and environmental costs of producing and using energy. Every effort to conserve energy also conserves natural resources and finances.

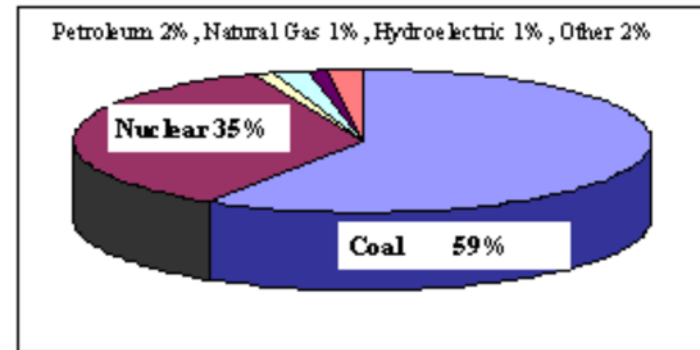
Federal tax incentives are available for conserving energy in homes, vehicles, and businesses. In addition, there are also state incentive programs for energy conservation. (See: <http://www.dsireusa.org>.)

Land Use

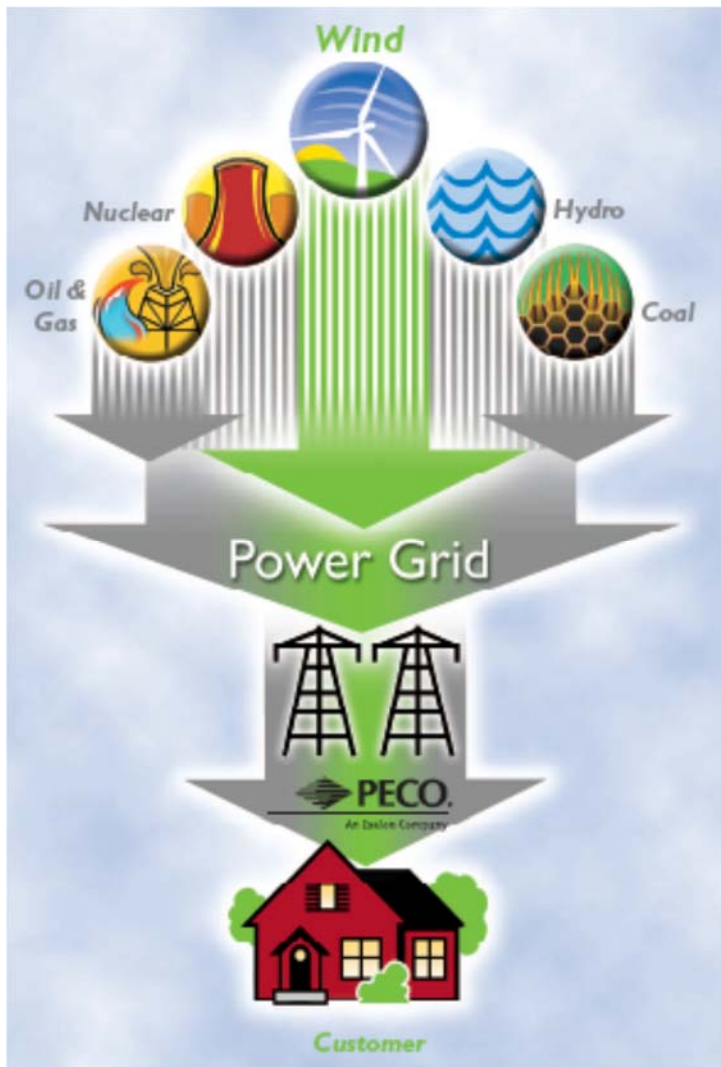
The community can improve the efficiency of its use of energy by the way in which its land uses are organized, upgraded, and expanded. Several key ways for West Conshohocken to make the entire community more energy efficient is with:

- Mixed Use Development
- Infill Development
- Redevelopment
- Compact Development
- Consider LEED for Neighborhoods

Pennsylvania's Current Energy Sources



Continuing this trail along the Schuylkill River into neighboring communities would encourage more walking



PECO customers of all sizes can purchase wind power from the system

Transportation

Transportation currently is one of the most energy consumptive activities of our society. These issues can be addressed to improve energy efficiency of West Conshohocken's citizens:

- Street and Parking Design
- Multi-modal Transportation
- Travel Alternatives

Housing Opportunities

Since West Conshohocken is a compact, well-located town, as the borough's housing stock responds to the market demand it can relieve some of the pressure for housing elsewhere such as in the remote, rural areas of the region where green fields are turned into multi-acre house lots and the owners are required to drive for every single local need. The borough can address this with:

- Housing Supply and Demand Studies
- Modified code requirements to encourage energy efficient and market attractive homes
- Encouraging remodeling to modernize existing homes
- Consider allowing various types of housing

Community Facilities

The borough can initiate its own energy conservation program taking advantage of the savings possible with:

- Borough Administration
- Building Efficiency
- Facilities Management
- Fleet Efficiency

Business and Industry Opportunities

The borough's character is significantly driven by the character of its businesses, especially its retail businesses. Businesses use a considerable amount of energy resources and could be a significant source of energy and energy efficiency.

- Business Recruitment and Retention
- Revitalization
- Infill
- Industrial Ecology
- Renewable Energy and Recycling
- Facilities, Production, and Technologies
- Regulations and Incentives

Goals & Recommendations

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL 7

Focus on the Environment

Implementation Actions:

- Encourage and support various “smart transportation” initiatives such as PennDOT’s I-76 ITS improvements, improving traffic congestion.
- Investigate the feasibility for a bus shuttle to and from the Conshohocken train station and the West Conshohocken high rises.
- Provide more extensive and higher quality, low pollutant transportation alternatives such as transit and trails.
- Upgrade borough-owned or supported vehicles and buildings to decrease pollutants.
- Update borough stormwater requirements to improve water quality methods.
- Evaluate alternatives for winter road treatments.
- Upgrade floodplain regulations.
- Continue to enforce recently revised steep slope regulations.
- Conduct a study to identify strategic landscaping methods that can

be carried out by the borough, developers, or land owners to protect the borough’s steep slopes and riparian corridors.

- The borough’s stormwater ordinance should include BMPs for volume control and water quality improvements.
- Adopt the Lower Merion Drainage Area (which includes most of West Conshohocken) requirements with regard to volume control.
- Provide for more plantings in floodplains and on steep slopes.
- Level areas should provide as much stormwater management as possible, potentially taking the responsibility of other areas.
- Develop an Energy Conservation and management Plan.
- Maximize energy conservation by borough offices and employees.
- Take advantage of State energy conservation information, initiatives, and funding.
- Investigate LEED certification for neighborhood development.
- Upgrade borough street and traffic lighting to use less energy, provide sufficient light where it is needed and not where it is not needed.
- Encourage the Conshohocken wastewater treatment plant to become more energy efficient.



Courtesy of AeroVironment, Inc., www.avinc.com



unknown

Wind turbines are being developed for many different applications and locations such as on commercial rooftops like at Logan international Airport (top) or on homes (bottom).



Clean air and water are basic environmental necessities.



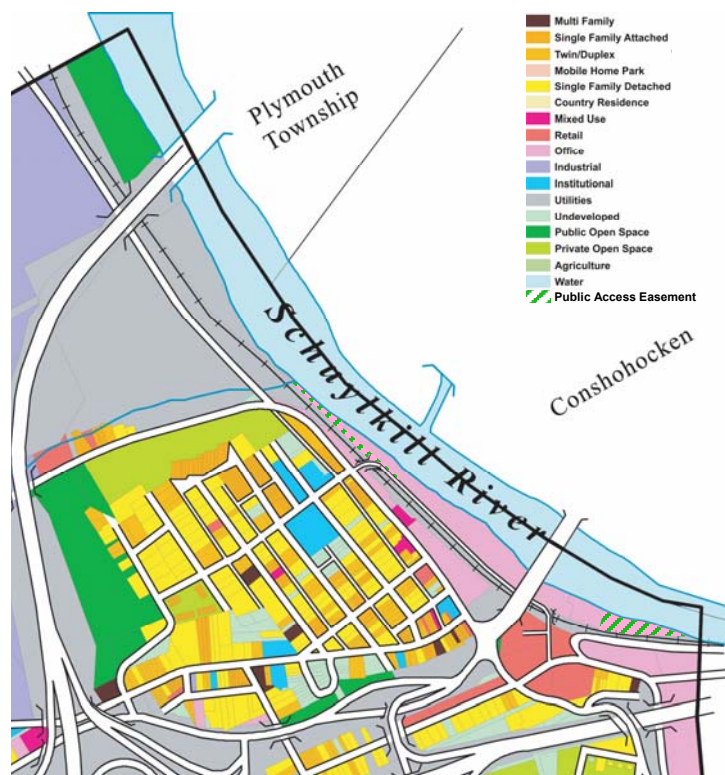
Improved stormwater planning can reduce flooding and enhance groundwater recharge.

- Conduct public workshops or public education efforts to encourage energy conservation.
- Pursue grants to purchase trees.
- Develop a Town Center with services that, due to their proximity, result in decreased transportation and energy needs.
- Conduct a public education effort regarding trash and recycling such as an information booth at Community Day where residents can also receive a new recycling bin or turn in used batteries.
- Investigate the possibilities for alternative energy sources for borough facilities and vehicles.

Natural Features Summary

West Conshohocken's natural features will continue to strongly influence future development in the borough. The steep slopes and floodplains present severe constraints for the development of most of the remaining vacant land but they also enhance the visual qualities of the residential environment. In addition, presently vacant floodplains may be utilized in the future as recreation areas. Vegetation on steep slopes and in floodplains helps to prevent soil erosion, slow down stormwater runoff, reduce the possibilities of flooding, and help to create a more interesting landscape. The Borough, its businesses and residents, have opportunities to conserve energy and produce and use alternative energy, positioning the borough for progress in the new century.

11. LAND USE



Currently, much of the riverfront only has private access.

Land Use

Figure 11.1 illustrates how each parcel of land was being used in the Borough in 2006. The assigned land use categories are derived from Montgomery County Board of Assessment parcel data.

RESIDENTIAL

Analysis indicates that 0.1 more acres were used for residential purposes in the borough in 2010 than in 1990. This is a 0.1% decrease. This is mostly a result of the Merion Hill Residential Development which was developed in the late 1990s. Land that had been previously classified as residential was subdivided and dedicated to the local homeowner's association as open space.

COMMERCIAL/OFFICE

Although commercial and office floor space increased dramatically in the borough, acreage did not. The Tower Bridge Development created over 700,000 square feet of net leaseable area in the borough while the Marriot Hotel added another 190,211 square feet of hotel and conference space.

INDUSTRIAL

Industrial acreage changed little since 1990 and continues to comprise roughly one quarter of the borough. Roughly fifty percent of the borough's 148 acres of industrial land consists of

the landfill and former quarry now owned by Smith Kline Beecham along the northern edge of the Borough. The Gulph Creek Industrial Park off of Balligomingo Road accounts for 35 acres while the Union Hill Industrial Center also has about 35 acres. All of these large industrial areas are separated from the rest of the Borough by the Blue Route and the steep, wooded hillside along Balligomingo Road and Gulph Creek.

INSTITUTIONAL

Institutional uses comprise a very small portion of the borough with only ten parcels for a total of 5.9 acres. These parcels are mostly located in the central portion of the Borough. The Borough acquired about 1.6 acres from St Gertrude's Church, which retains about 1 acre on adjoining parcels. The slight growth in institutional acreage is accounted for by the acquisition of 1.45 acres of light industrial land at 112 Ford St by the Borough in 1995.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

Open space recorded the largest percentage and actual growth of any category since 1990. This is due largely to the dedication of 24.4 acres as private open space through the Merion Hill development. In addition, the Borough acquired 1.26 acres of public open space as an extension of Macken-

Figure 11.1
2016 Existing Land Use

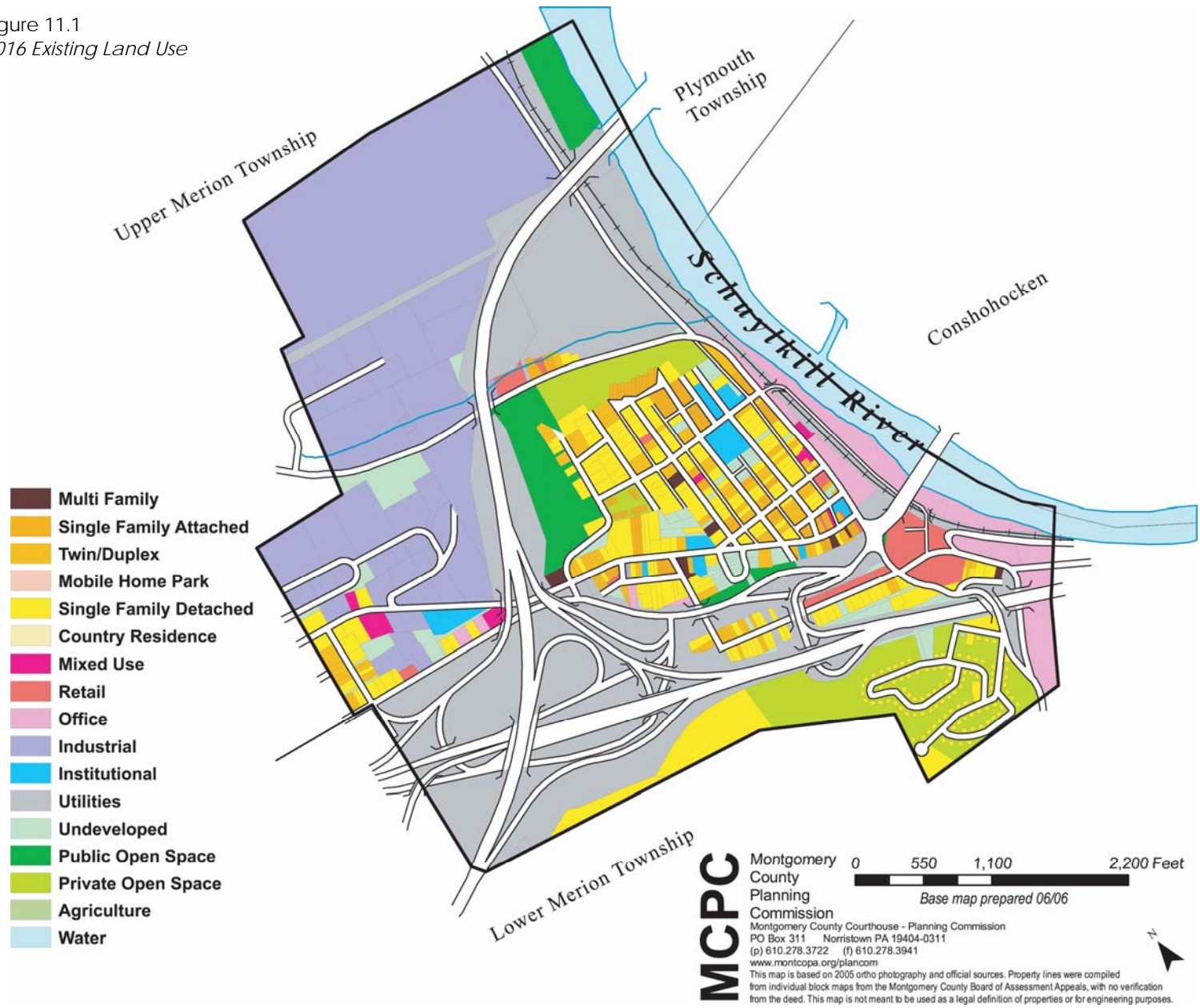


Figure 11.2



113 Attachment 1:1

11 - 01 - 2014

zie Park at Church Road with the help of a grant from the 1993 Montgomery County Open Space Program as well as about 1.6 acres acquired in 2006 for public open space from St. Gertrude's Catholic Church using funds from the 2003 Montgomery County Open Space Program. Since 2006, the Borough has demolished two buildings on that former St. Gertrude's open space parcel, thereby increasing the open space on the parcel. The Borough has also received by donation 4.5 acres of wooded hillside between Union Hill and Balligomingo Road.

UNDEVELOPED LAND

Undeveloped land is scattered throughout the Borough in a number of small and large parcels. Most of the land is either land within the Schuylkill River or within the Steep Slope Conservation District defined as slopes of greater than 15%.

EXISTING LAND USE SUMMARY

Land use in West Conshohocken is highly segregated into distinct industrial, residential and commercial districts. These districts are separated from one another by natural and man made features. Integrating the disparate areas of the borough is one of the goals of this plan.

Future Land Use

Not only does the Borough want to accomplish certain goals, but the Borough has certain areas where they would like to accomplish them. Therefore, the future land use is not only a combination of all the policies discussed so far in this plan, but also a comprehensive vision for the future of land use throughout the entire borough.

This vision is represented by the Future Land Use Map, Figure 11.2. Each of the goals is indicated below.

Goals & Recommendations

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL 5

CREATE A TOWN CENTER WITH PARKING

The Future Land Use Plan, Figure 12.4, indicates, with the areas labeled as Town Center, Offices, and Gateways, the areas of the borough where this goal is to be implemented.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL 6

IMPROVE HOUSING

The Future Land Use Plan, Figure 11.3, indicates, with the area labeled as Housing & Neighborhood Infra-

structure, the area of the borough where this goal is to be implemented.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
GOAL 1**

ENHANCE TRANSPORTATION

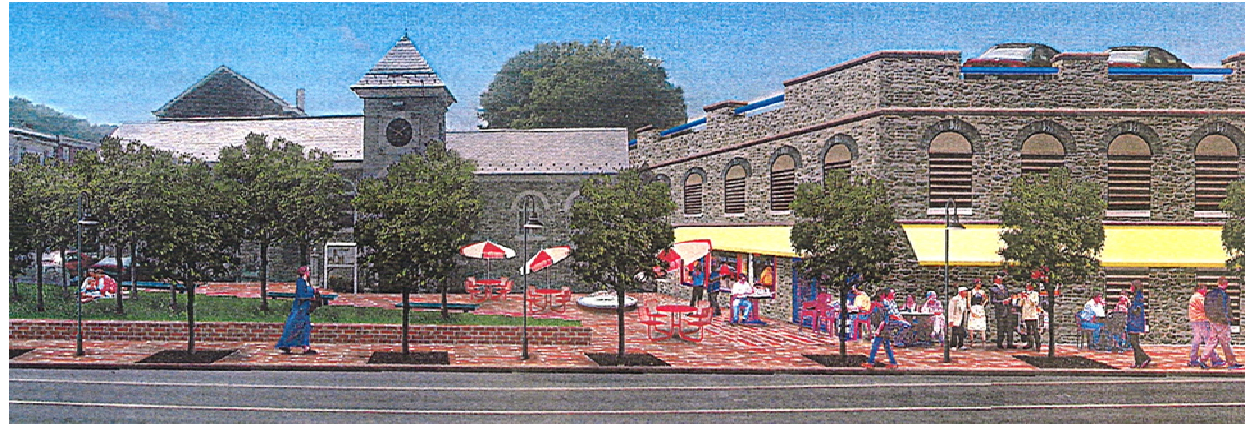
The Future Land Use Plan, Figure 11.3, indicates, with the area labeled as Transportation, the area of the borough where this goal is to be implemented.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
GOAL 2**

**UPGRADE NEIGHBORHOOD
INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNI-
TY FACILITIES & RECREAC-
TION & OPEN SPACE**

The Future Land Use Plan, Figure 11.3, indicates, with the area labeled as Housing & Neighborhood Infrastructure, Recreation & Open Space, and Community Facilities is the area of the borough where this goal is to be implemented. It also indicates, with the areas labeled as Recreation and Open Space and Trails, the areas of the borough where this goal of enhancing community facilities is to be implemented.

This plan also encourages the Borough to engage a professional firm to review non-confirming lots and uses throughout the borough in comparison to the existing zoning map to es-



This rendering from the 2001 Revitalization Plan represents the vision in the plan for a new town center which includes a new retail and parking garage building (on the right), a new public plaza in front of Borough Hall, and new, beautified streetscape. These improvements would provide new businesses and services, additional parking, and attract pedestrians and other customers from the nearby office buildings, hotel, and residential neighborhood.

establish an updated map and inform future SALDO reviews that require variances regarding use.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
GOAL 7**

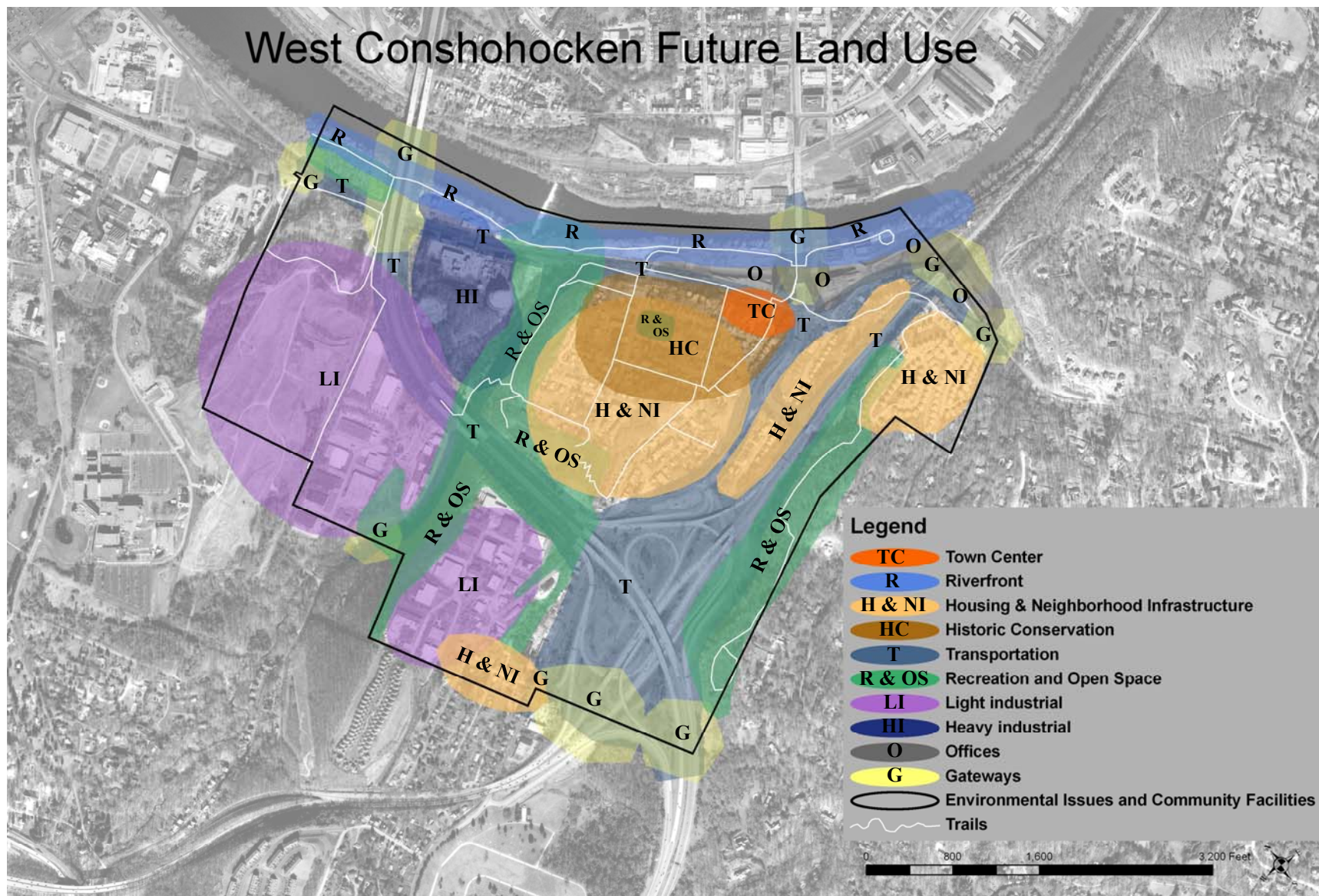
**FOCUS ON THE
ENVIRONMENT**

The Future Land Use Plan, Figure 11.3, indicates, with the area labeled as Environmental Issues and Community Facilities, that this goal is to be implemented throughout the entire area of the borough.

Future Land Use Summary

Future land use in West Conshohocken will take advantage of its location along a river and along two interstates, the existence of the foundation for a town center, its historical resources and character, its topography and other natural resources, its gridded street structure that includes alleys, the character of its housing and other buildings, and the existence of a variety of employment opportunities.

Figure 11.3
Future Land Use



12. NEIGHBORING MUNICIPALITIES



West Conshohocken's Riverfront looking north



1906 View of the Schuylkill River with West Conshohocken on the left, Conshohocken on the right, the Matsonford Bridge between them at the bottom, Upper Merion along the top. (photo from Conshohocken in Vintage Postcards, Phillip and Sharon Welsh, Arcadia Publishing, © 2002.)

History

Each of the surrounding municipalities influences West Conshohocken in various ways. This has always been so. Here are a few of the most significant influences that have been given to West Conshohocken over the years.

CONSHOHOCKEN

Certainly Conshohocken has provided West Conshohocken with the most influences over time. At first West Conshohocken was known as Matson's Ford, but officially became West Conshohocken 24 years after Conshohocken was named by pulling the name out of a hat. This underscores the connection between the two boroughs at the time. Both had become industrial river towns and the main street in Conshohocken extended directly across the river to the center of West Conshohocken as it does today. Perhaps it was the severe depression that hit Conshohocken's iron mills in 1873 that led to West Conshohocken's beginning in 1874. The fortunes of both boroughs were undoubtedly intertwined during this time. Even today much business by West Conshohocken residents is conducted in Conshohocken.

The shared border is the river and desirable views across the river exist from one community to the other. They are like two brothers, similar but

separate, different and connected, looking at each other.

This border, the river, has been the scene of some of the most dramatic changes in both boroughs. Near their beginnings it was the location of the bridges and industrial mills. The river also was an undesirable place since it was so polluted. The mills were later abandoned, the bridges replaced and upgraded and the river has become much cleaner. It is now perceived as a great asset— as an attractive feature, and for fishing, hiking and other recreation and both boroughs are pursuing actions to take advantage of this common asset.

The common planning issues build on this relationship and are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP

West Conshohocken was created from land in Lower Merion and Upper Merion Townships. The Lower Merion area around West Conshohocken has mostly always been primarily rural or, later, residential. It was this difference of town and country that led the founders to seek incorporation. So, the influences from Lower Merion are less significant than the other neighbors.

Nevertheless, one of the major road entrances to the borough, Route 23, is from Lower Merion and most recently

a new housing development in the price range of Lower Merion was built on this side of West Conshohocken. Some of these new residents have become involved in borough administration.

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP

Upper Merion also provided some of the land for the borough, and at that time there were a few common industries along the Schuylkill River and the Gulph Creek, although along the Schuylkill most of these were steel or mining-related or were otherwise relatively far apart, not at all urban. The influences of Upper Merion are more recent.

Since the development of the massive diversity of retail and other businesses in King of Prussia, West Conshohocken residents have been conducting a large amount of their shopping and other transactions in or with Upper Merion businesses. In the 1950's the riverside Route 23 and Balligomingo Roads were usurped by the Schuylkill Expressway to provide even faster and more direct access to and from King of Prussia. It is now difficult to justify a new business in the borough since so many residents go to King of Prussia (or Conshohocken) for their needs.

Some of the older industries along the Schuylkill River near West Conshohocken have been replaced or upgraded to high-tech pharmaceutical,



This aerial photo shows the surrounding municipalities. Notice the less developed and residential areas along the bottom of the picture in Lower Merion Township, the open green space that straddles with Upper Merion which was a quarry, then a landfill and now has been capped and is owned by the pharmaceutical adjacent to it. West Conshohocken's industrial mills are gone, except for one, but here you can see that the borough still has a large amount of light industrial buildings that were built mostly in the 1950's and 1960's. The new skyscrapers are just off the picture to the right.



King of Prussia Mall and nearby businesses and homes



The riverfront redevelopment

newspaper printing, or other modern industries.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

While not a neighboring municipality, the county has played a major role in West Conshohocken's history. In the late 1980's and early 1990's the county's Redevelopment Authority arranged to have the abandoned or underused riverfront industrial building demolished and replaced with several modern, skyscraping office buildings.

These buildings and the two freeways have been very significant in transforming West Conshohocken into what it is today.

Neighboring Municipal and County Plans

CONSHOHOCKEN

Current Governing Plans

The Comprehensive Plan for Conshohocken was adopted in 2007 and proposes no policies that negatively impact West Conshohocken. It closely aligns with many of the goals proposed in this document.

In 2011 Conshohocken adopted a Revitalization plan that reflected updates from the 2002 plan. It has also developed a Train Station Plan and Open Space Plan in recent years.

The biggest issue facing these two communities is the bridge and the redevelopment of the riverfront area. West Conshohocken recognizes that both municipalities (and many others) depend on the transportation and pedestrian connection across the river. Similar to Conshohocken, efforts are being made to preserve open space along the river and install a riverfront trail.

Statement of Consistency

This West Conshohocken Comprehensive Plan is generally consistent with the goals of the Conshohocken Comprehensive Plan, Revitalization Plan, and Open Space Plan, and supports the development of the Train Station Plan.

LOWER MERION

Current Governing Plans

Lower Merion Township adopted a Comprehensive Plan in early 2016, prior to its adoption, like West Conshohocken, their Comprehensive Plan was outdated.

The Revitalization Plan for Lower Merion was adopted in 2000. This plan primarily focused on the Ardmore section of the township and so is not relevant to West Conshohocken. Lower Merion adopted an open space plan in 2005.

Statement of Consistency

This West Conshohocken Comprehensive Plan is generally consistent with the goals of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, 2000 Revitalization Plan, and 2005 Open Space Plan.

UPPER MERION

Current Governing Plans

In 2005, Upper Merion Township adopted a vision plan, entitled Vision 2020 to guide future planning and the creation of a new comprehensive plan. This multi-page vision statement addresses issues such as lifestyle and character, economic vitality, parks and open space, neighborhood enhancement, resource stability, and transportation advancement; similar to a Comprehensive Plan. Upper Merion has begun work on their Comprehensive Plan.

Statement of Consistency

This West Conshohocken Comprehensive Plan is generally consistent with the goals of the 2020 Vision Plan, and 2005 Open Space Plan.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Comprehensive Plan

Montgomery County's current governing plan is Montco 2040: A Shared Vision. The plan's major objectives are to create connected communities, establish sustainable places and maintain and enhance a vibrant economy.

Statement of Consistency

This West Conshohocken Comprehensive Plan is generally consistent with the goals of Montco 2040, as many of the goals and implementation techniques listed under the objectives align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.



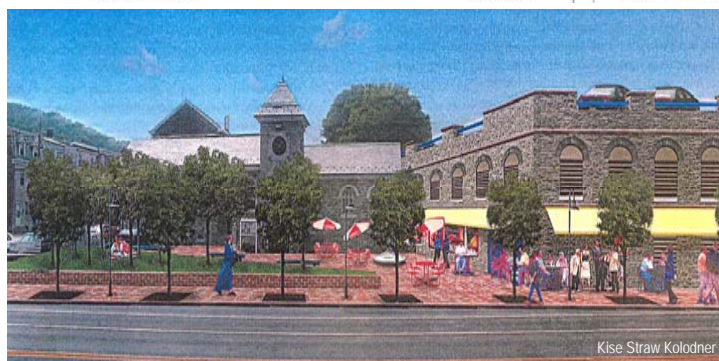
West Conshohocken's Riverfront looking south from the Matsonford Bridge

13. TASKS & ROLES

West Conshohocken is already a great place. The task of this plan is to outline the ways the borough can preserve its best qualities, build on those qualities, and make West Conshohocken an even better place to live.

This plan has laid out the basis for its future actions in the previous chapters. Even though the desire may be there, not everything can be done immediately.

This chapter includes information regarding many of the entities that have a task to do in getting these implementation tasks complete and working towards the goals set forth in this plan.



ASSIGNING GOALS & TASKS

Many of the goals and implementation actions identified in the previous chapters rely on elected officials, employees, and volunteers in the borough working towards the success of these common goals. It is important to address many of the tasks to particular entities for success of the plan and continued enhancement and growth of the borough.

Goal 1: Transportation

It is imperative that the borough manager and borough engineer continue to assess grant availability for the betterment of traffic flow.

Zoning Hearing Board and Planning Commission, with the support of Borough Council, work to ensure that new development within the borough does not negatively impact the already snarled traffic situation present throughout the borough.

Additionally, review of current development, especially review of the subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO), be taken into consideration and potentially amended.

Goal 2: Improve Infrastructure

The borough's streets and works department is doing a good job, additional funds should be allocated to continue to improve the character of the streets ensure appropriate trash removal and clean-up any accidental spills.

The Shade Tree Committee should work to get additional grants and

funding for additional plantings in parks and along street corridors.

As concerns regarding infrastructure and community facilities are brought to Council and the borough manager, assessment and addressing of the need should be responded to. This can be enforced through the adoption of an ordinance that requires written response within 30 days of issue being brought to council/borough manager.

Goal 3: Parking

Zoning Hearing Board and Planning Commission, with the support of Borough Council, work to ensure that new development within the borough does not negatively impact the already difficult parking situation present in particular areas of the borough.

Additionally, review of current development, especially review of the subdivision and land development ordinance, be taken into consideration and potentially amended to revise parking requirements by location.

New parking lots and properties should be investigated and sought by Borough Council to help alleviate the parking demands in more parking plagued areas.

Goal 4: Communication

Volunteers or dedication of an employee should be sought by Council and the borough manager to improve and modernize communication methods.

Goal 5: Create a Town Center

Zoning Hearing Board and Planning Commission should work to amend and support the development of a Town Center location.

Council should seek interested developers, and the availability of grants, to develop the borough's Town Center.

Goal 6: Housing

Planning Commission should work to amend the SALDO to revise bulk standards and design requirements for new housing developments.

Enforcement of code requirements for housing standards be amended and enforced by the borough's code and building department.

Goal 7: Focus on the Environment

Borough Council should work to development an ordinance and invest funds to increase the energy efficiency and reduce the environmental impact of its buildings and vehicles.

Incentives should be offered for the development of projects utilizing smarter green practices, SALDO can be revised by Planning Commission and Zoning Hearing Board to support more environmentally conscientious development.

As everyone works together towards these goals by implementing actions through committees, ordinances, and ascertaining funding West Conshohocken will continue to be a great place to work, live and do business.

APPENDIX

FIGURES

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APPENDIX

SURVEY TO RESIDENTS

AS A HOUSEHOLD, PLEASE IDENTIFY BY MARKING ALONG THE LINE, 10 BEING MOST IMPORTANT AND 1 BEING LEAST IMPORTANT, WHERE YOU FEEL THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SHOULD RANK EACH GOAL:

Improving the Parking Situation

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Creating a walkable community/Improving infrastructure

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Addressing/Alleviating Traffic

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Developing Town Commerce/Town Center

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Modernize/Enhance Communication between Borough & Residents

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Increase (Zoning Map) Plan development flexibility

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Improve Housing

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Focus on the Environment

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Improve Community Facilities

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Other Ideas/Comments: _____
