

# 6

## analysis of unprotected resources

As outlined in chapter four, the vulnerable natural areas such as floodplains, steep slopes, woodlands, scenic views and roads, and historic sites are found throughout the township. Since the adoption of the previous open space plan, Upper Pottsgrove has acted to protect many of these resources through land acquisition and conservation overlay zoning districts. This chapter identifies areas where these protections do and do not apply and, where resources are not permanently protected, proposes priorities for their future preservation. Generally, the priority areas are based on the concentration of resources found in a given area and whether their location presents an opportunity to contribute to the open space goals established in Chapter Two, Goals and Objectives.

### PRIORITIZATION OF AREAS FOR PRESERVATION

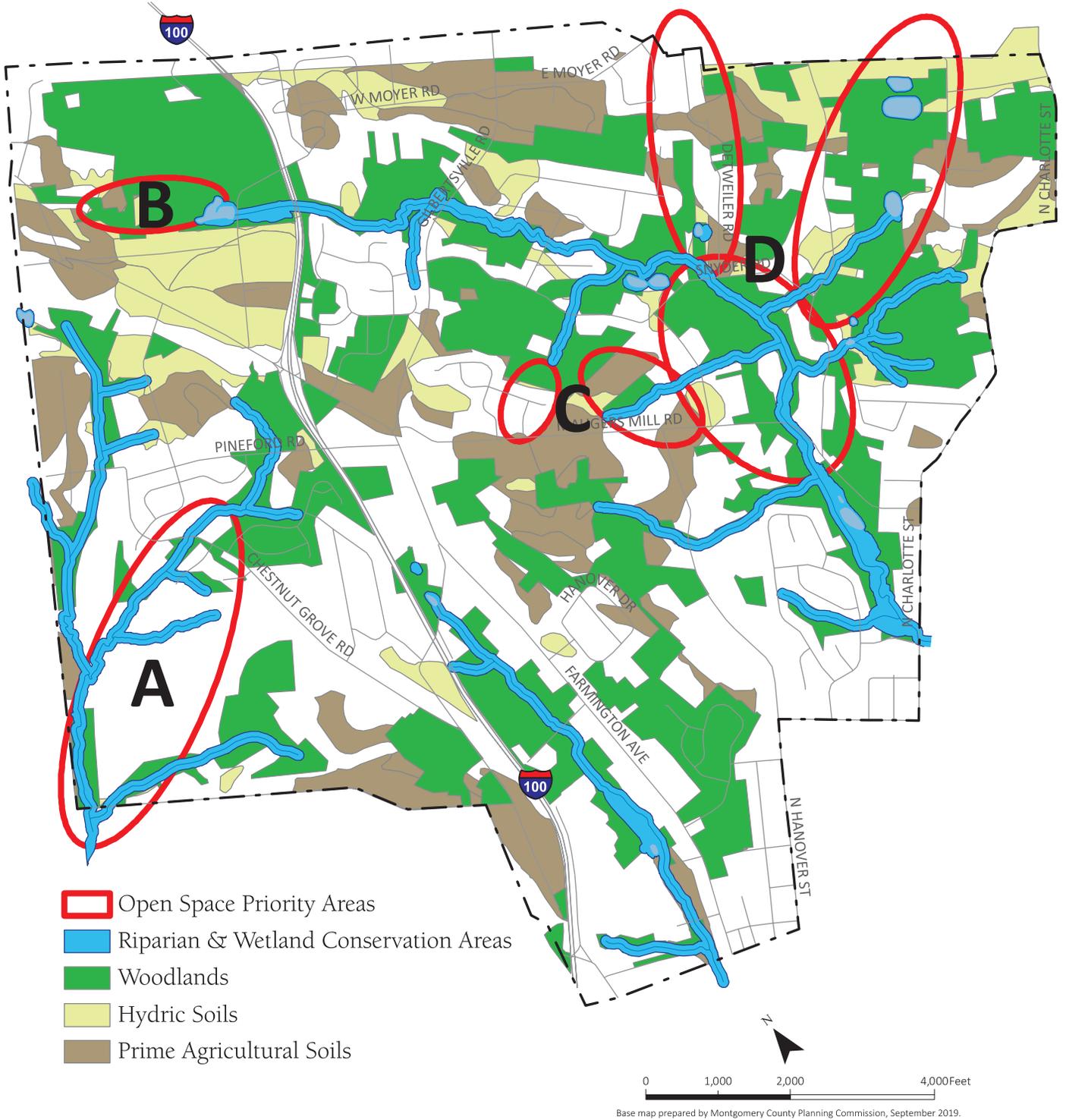
The map of resource protection areas (Figure 6.1) shows resources which Upper Pottsgrove places a priority on protecting. These include areas preserved in parks or public open space and land containing sensitive natural features such as streams, wetlands, and floodplains; steep slopes; and woodlands. Areas of convergence are higher priority areas. These areas should be protected through acquisition, conservation easements, or by regulation through the zoning or the subdivision and land development ordinances.

The following are the concentrations of unprotected areas identified by the Open Space Committee:

#### **Area A**

Western Corner – This area on the west side of the township lies along Goose Run and the undeveloped lands that are the source of its tributary streams. Vacant land and agriculture are the main land uses in this area, with a landscape characterized by open fields separated by small woodlands. This area is the gateway to connecting Upper Pottsgrove to West Pottsgrove Township. The county's proposed West County Trail and the Upper West Trail from the *Circle of Progress: Greater Pottstown Trails Feasibility Study* would enter the township in this area. Preserving land in this area would allow for the construction of proposed trails, expand the Goose Run Greenway, and help to protect the water quality of the Goose Run watershed.

Figure 6.1 || Resource Protection Areas





*Streams like Goose Run are protected by the township's Riparian Corridor Conservation Overlay, but the woodlands and fields around them are not. These areas have a high priority for conservation.*

## Area B

Northern Corner – This rural area west of Route 100 includes large undeveloped parcels and spans the area between the headwaters of Sprogels Run and the Malmberg Open Space. In this area, woodlands connect the steep slopes of diabase terrain and wetlands of township's main riparian corridor. This area contains parcels that are partly or wholly undeveloped. The proposed alignment of the Upper West Trail passes through the eastern end of this area and would provide a connection between the Sprogels Run and Goose Run greenways. Land preservation in this area would maintain the high natural value identified in this area (see figure 4.9) and help to link the Malmberg Open Space to the township's other trails and open spaces.



*Sprogels Run flows from this pond in the wooded hills of Area B.*

## Area C

Central – This upland area along Maugers Mill Road contains a significant amount of woodland, agricultural land, and private open space. This area is situated on high ground between the Althouse Arboretum, Sprogels Run Greenway and the Fox Run Trail. Preserving land in this area would ensure trail and greenway connections between the upper and lower portions of the Sprogels Run watershed and help to protect water quality in the surrounding watersheds.



*Active and former farmland represents a large portion of the township's unprotected resource areas.*

## Area D

Eastern Corner – This area includes tributaries of Sprogels Run, steep slopes, wetlands, ponds, and woodland areas. Diabase geology underlies most of this area. There are numerous agricultural parcels, country residences, and undeveloped land in this area. The proposed alignment of the Upper West Trail passes through the western end of this area. Preserving land in this corner of the township would ensure permanent protections for some of Upper Pottsgrove's largest woodlands and extend the Sprogels Run Greenway to connect with Douglass-Montgomery Co. and New Hanover townships.

# 7 evaluation of growth areas

In addition to establishing open space areas to preserve natural features, it is also important to identify areas that might best accommodate the community's growth. Upper Pottsgrove Township was traditionally a rural township, but the trend toward suburbanization has progressed throughout recent decades. In an effort to plan for the future in a regional context, Upper Pottsgrove adopted the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Plan in 2015. That plan designates future growth areas as well as conservation areas. A build-out analysis was performed to describe the type and amount of development Upper Pottsgrove can theoretically accommodate under current zoning and subdivision land development ordinances. A summary of that analysis is included in this chapter.

The township's growth (population growth, employment growth, and land development) and the subsequent impact on open space preservation is the focus of this chapter. The number of dwelling units being constructed on the limited amounts of undeveloped or underutilized land continues in Upper Pottsgrove and surrounding areas. Growth projections in the township indicate development pressure is likely to continue in the future. This will have ramifications on the township's supply of open space, recreation land, sensitive environmental features, and historic resources.



*New housing developments along the Route 100 corridor account for much of the growth in Upper Pottsgrove and neighboring communities.*

# Population, Housing, and Employment Projections

This section addresses the increases in the number of dwelling units in the township that would be needed to accommodate the population the township is projected to have in the year 2045. Certain areas of the township are designated as growth areas in the regional comprehensive plan. The land needed to supply additional projected dwelling units may be located in growth areas to balance the need to protect and preserve natural features and open space.

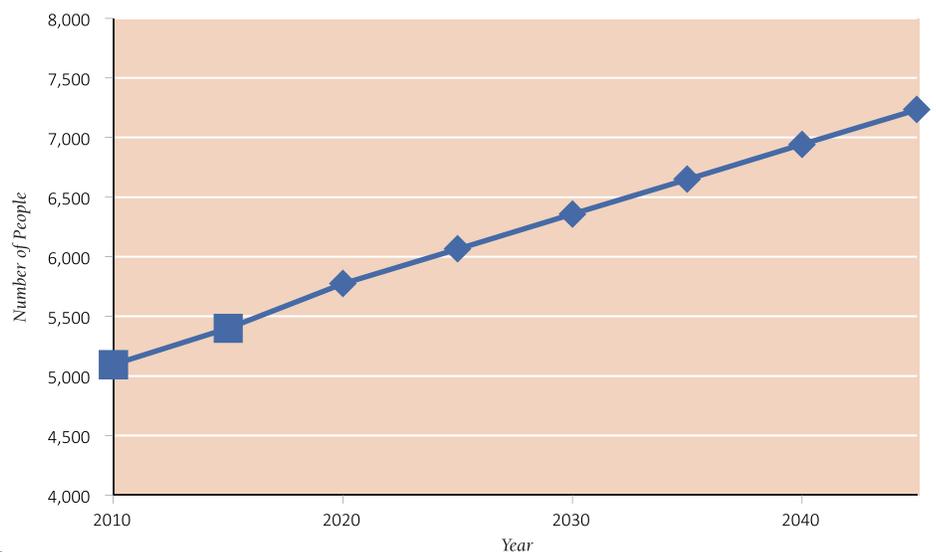
The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) periodically prepares population and employment projections for the communities of the Greater Philadelphia planning region. The latest DVRPC population projections estimate that the population of Upper Pottsgrove will increase from 5,399 persons in 2015 to 7,233 persons in 2045. This projected increase in of 1,834 persons, would be a 34 percent increase from the township’s 2015 population. Such a growth in population would accompany the construction of additional dwelling units. From 2000 to 2010, Upper Pottsgrove added 313 new housing units (a 21.5 percent increase) while its population increased by 992 persons (a 24 percent increase). These growth trends are expected to continue.

Figure 7.1 || *Population Projections*

Year	Population	Years	% Change
2010	5,094	2010-2015	5.99%
2015	5,399	2015-2020	6.95%
2020*	5,774	2020-2025	5.04%
2025*	6,065	2025-2030	4.81%
2030*	6,357	2030-2035	4.59%
2035*	6,649	2035-2040	4.39%
2040*	6,941	2040-2045	4.21%
2045*	7,233		

\*Projected population.

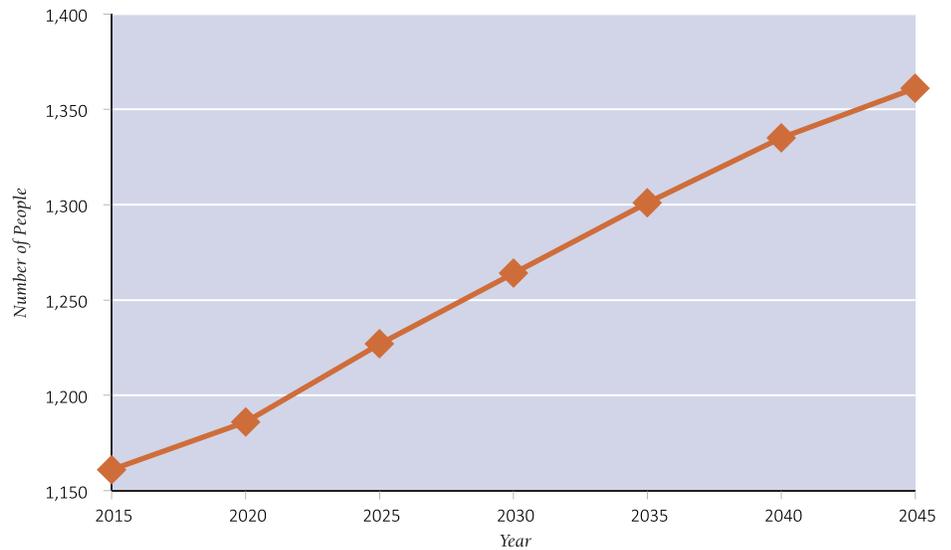
Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2010, 2015; DVRPC Projections.



Year	Total Employment
2015	1,161
2020	1,186
2025	1,227
2030	1,264
2035	1,301
2040	1,335
2045	1,361

Year	% Change
2015-2020	2.15%
2020-2025	3.46%
2025-2030	3.02%
2030-2035	2.93%
2035-2040	2.61%
2040-2045	1.95%

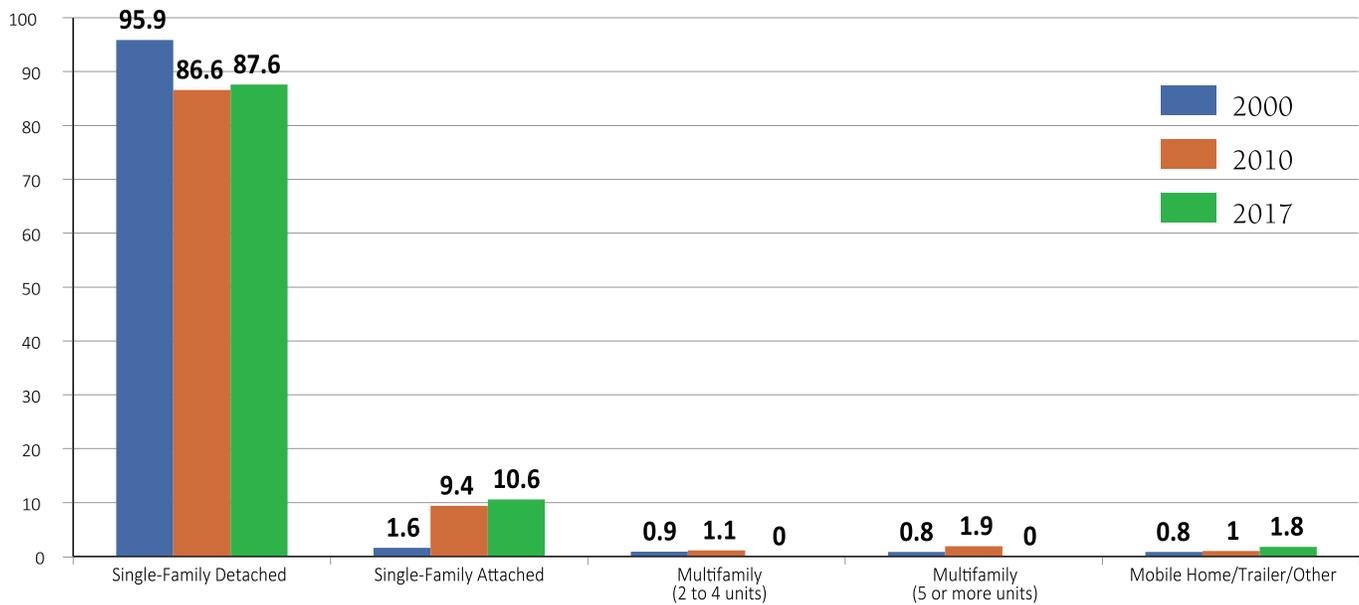
Figure 7.2 || *Employment Projections*



Source: DVRPC Forecasts

Figure 7.3 || *Housing Trends*

Housing Types	2000		2010		2017		% Change	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	2000-2010	2010-2017
Single-Family Detached	1,399	95.9%	1535*	86.6%	1598*	87.6%	9.7%	4.1%
Single-Family Attached	23	1.6%	167*	9.4%	193*	10.6%	624.2%	15.9%
Multifamily (2-4 units)	13	0.9%	19*	1.1%	0*	0.0%	49.9%	-100.0%
Multifamily (5 or more units)	12	0.8%	34*	1.9%	0*	0.0%	180.6%	-100.0%
Mobile Home/Trailer/Other	12	0.8%	18*	1.0%	33*	1.8%	47.7%	86.2%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>1,459</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,772*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,824*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21.5%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>



## Upper Pottsgrove’s Future Growth Areas

The Future Land Use Plan in the *Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan* identifies four categories of land use that allow for residential development. These are Conservation Areas, Secondary Growth Areas, Primary Growth Areas, and the Regional Core. Upper Pottsgrove contains areas of each of these future land use designations except for the Regional Core, which is almost exclusively found in Pottstown.

Most residential development is expected to occur in the designated Primary or Secondary growth areas, and the two contain sufficient undeveloped or underdeveloped land to accommodate the township’s projected future growth. Development of surrounding areas should aim to preserve any existing natural features. The small portions of the township designated as Conservation Areas are found mostly in the R-80 zoning district and correspond with higher concentrations of vulnerable open space resources.

## Build-Out Analysis

The Future Land Use Plan adopted as part of the *Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan* (see map in Figure 7.6) outlines the township’s desired growth patterns, and Upper Pottsgrove’s zoning corresponds with the standards described in that plan. The existing zoning ordinance, as evaluated in the build-out analysis performed for this plan, allows for residential development that would accommodate slightly more growth than Upper Pottsgrove is projected to experience by 2045.

The method used to determine the residential build-out examines undeveloped land (those with land use designations of country residence, undeveloped, and agriculture), but does not consider underdeveloped land (land that has development on it, but could be further subdivided or redeveloped more intensely). It was determined that the township could accommodate projected population growth without including areas that would require redevelopment. It assumes that public open space and protected natural features including floodplains, wetlands and steep slopes will not be built upon, and that approximately 20% of a site's area will be used for roads, driveways, and utilities. The method used illustrated in Figure 7.6 represents potential residential development areas with hatched lines. Public open space and areas containing natural features protected by conservation zoning are also shown.

While current zoning allows for an estimated 645 new housing units to be built in the township, the population projected for 2045 would require somewhat less than that. Assuming that the average household size in Upper Pottsgrove does not deviate from its average of the past decade, 2,9 persons, then the projected 2045 population of would require 632 new homes, and a total of 2,494 homes in the township.

Any future residential development is very unlikely to occur all at one time, and in fact will be spread out over many years. This projection shows that, at the densities currently permitted by Upper Pottsgrove's zoning, the township is able to accommodate any likely residential growth over the next 25 years, should it choose to do so.

Figure 7.4 || *Build-Out Analysis*

Zoning District	Developable Acres	Maximum Density	Maximum Units
R-80	377.9	1 per 80,000 sq. ft.	164
R-1	319.1	1 per acre	255
R-2	77.4	1 per 25,000 sq. ft.	107
RO	30.7	1 per 25,000 sq. ft.	42
R-3	7.5	5 per acre	30
R-4	4.9	12 per acre	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>817.5</b>	-	<b>645</b>

Therefore, it is projected that build-out will not be reached within the next twenty-five years. Beyond that time period, it may be possible for the township to reach the forecasted build-out if changes to the current zoning ordinance and other policies are not made.

Figure 7.5 || *Future Land Use,*  
*from Pottstown Metropolitan Area Regional Comprehensive Plan*  
 [map of Upper Pottsgrove Township future land uses from PMRPC comprehensive plan]

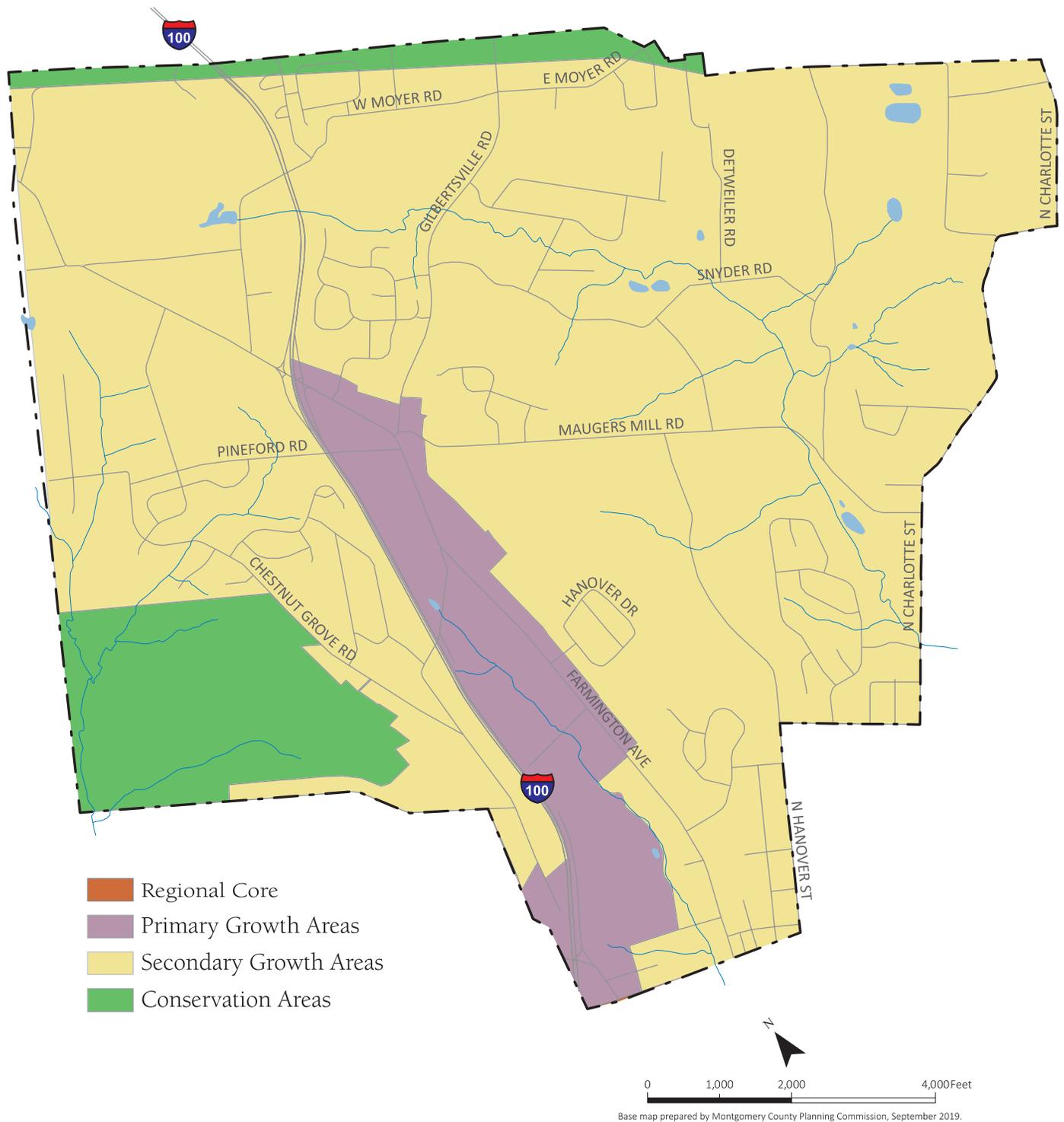
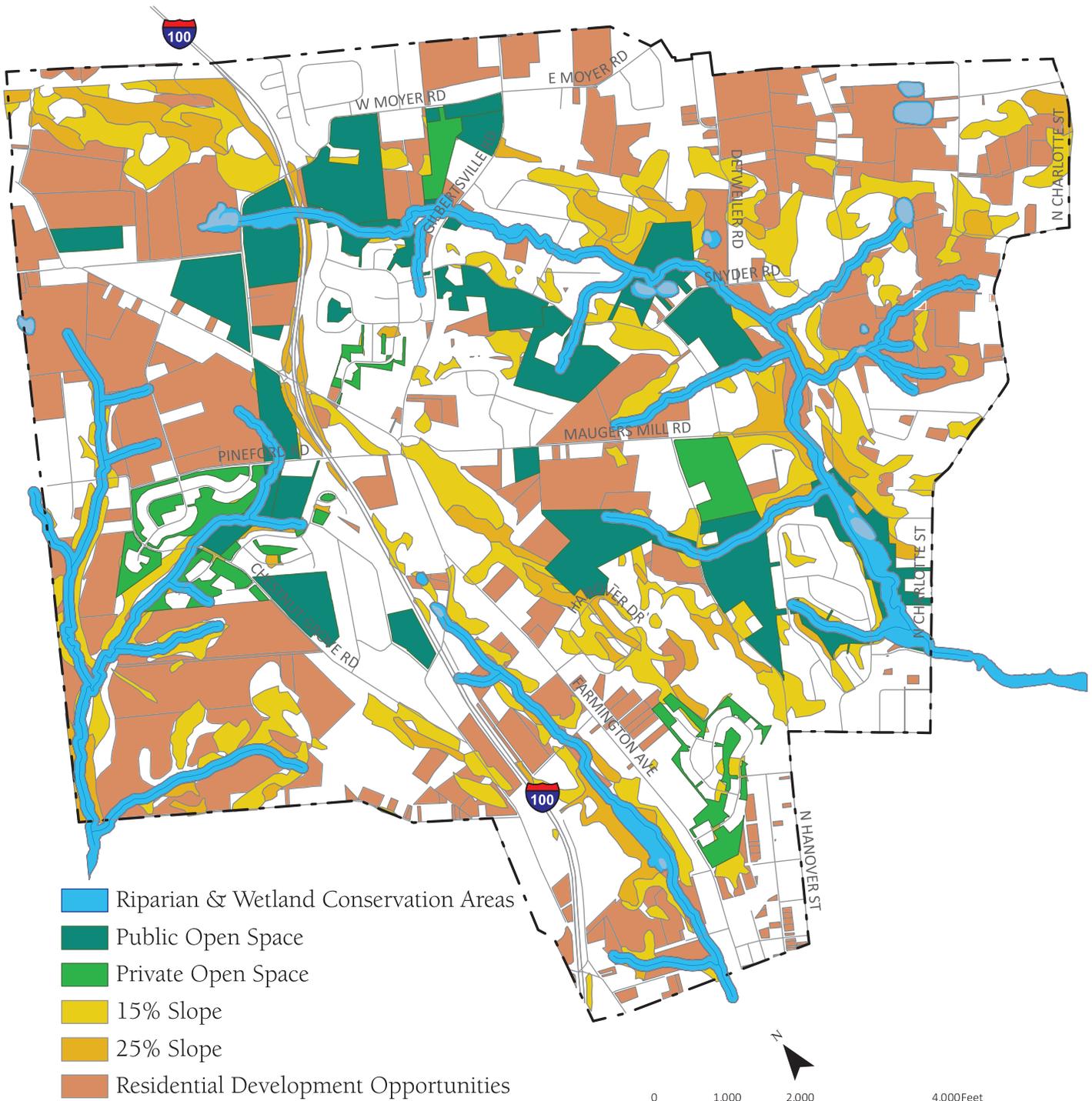


Figure 7.6 || *Build-Out*



Base map prepared by Montgomery County Planning Commission, September 2019.

## Conclusion

Upper Pottsgrove Township, in coordination with the seven other local municipalities that form the Pottstown Metropolitan Region, has committed to a policy of growth management. Knowing which parts of the township will grow and which will not enables Upper Pottsgrove to plan for its future infrastructure and open space needs. The township has taken significant steps to control residential development and prevent the loss of natural lands. The actions taken by the township could be further refined in the future.

Adding provisions for cluster development in zoning districts where this is not already accommodated would expand the potential for housing while preserving open spaces through the development process. Permitting accessory dwelling units could help to meet the needs of growing and changing families. These measures would help ensure an adequate supply of homes for the township's growing population while preserving ample recreation and open space areas for future residents.

# 8

## evaluation of parks and open space needs

### OVERVIEW

Since the adoption of the 2006 Open Space Plan, Upper Pottsgrove has acquired hundreds of acres of vacant, undeveloped, and underdeveloped land and preserved it as public open space. This near-quadrupling of land in the township's collection of parks and open space has kept ahead of the township's growth in population and developed area over the same period. In implementing the 2006 Open Space Plan, the number of parks in the township has more than doubled, presenting many new opportunities to provide recreational amenities to serve the township's growing population. Though some recently acquired land hosts new parks, the majority remains open space, to preserve the area's natural environment and rural, agricultural character. Open spaces also allow for the creation of trails to link parks together and connect them with residential neighborhoods.

### FACILITY TYPES

The publicly-owned property of the township can be categorized by the designated uses of the land. **Parks** generally host more amenities for recreation. Playgrounds, sports facilities, and multi-use lawns are common **active recreation** amenities in the parks of Upper Pottsgrove Township. Amenities like walking trails, picnic areas, and meadows accommodate **passive recreation** in parks and open space.

Within the category of parks, the size of a facility and the number of amenities that it provides correspond to the size of the population it is intended to serve. A **neighborhood park** is usually small in size and contains a limited number of amenities. A typical neighborhood park is situated within or adjacent to the residential area that it serves. Most users of these small parks live nearby, reducing the need for parking area, but increasing the importance of trail and sidewalk connections for people to access the park by walking and bicycling. The mix of rural and suburban areas found in the township has produced an abundance of recreational offerings, but only a few of these small, neighborhood-oriented parks.

Within Upper Pottsgrove, larger parks that serve the broader township are more common. These parks often contain more amenities or rarer amenities than neighborhood parks. This type of facility is designated as a **community park**, and typically features accommodations to accept the larger volume of visitors that it draws from its township-wide service area.

When a facility features amenities that are unique within its community, it may be identified as a **regional park**. These parks are often popular attractions, drawing visitors from beyond the community or surrounding area. Though

parks of this type are few in number, the township has one excellent example at the center of the township.

Land that is labeled **Open Space** may provide opportunities for passive recreational activities like hiking and bird watching in addition to their primary function of land preservation. Publicly-owned open spaces may protect natural environments or serve to maintain the township's agrarian heritage. The natural open spaces of the township are typically found along hills and stream valleys and preserve the woodlands, wetlands, and meadows of those landscapes. Farming has long been a part of life in Upper Pottsgrove Township, and open space helps to continue this tradition by reserving crop fields for agricultural use.

Figure 8.1 || *Parks and Open Space*

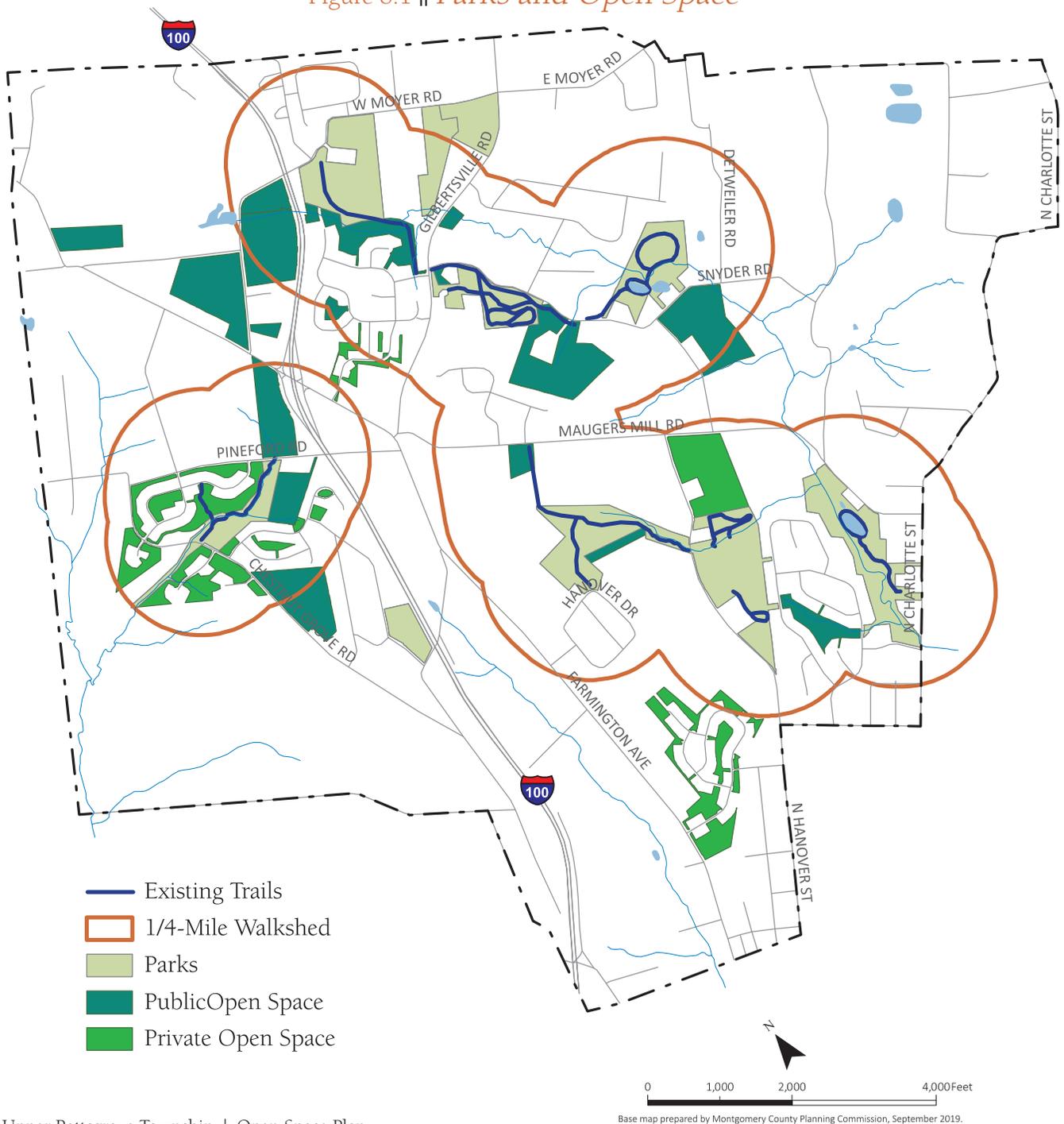


Figure 8.2 || *Parks and Open Space Inventory*

NAME	TYPE	Active	Passive	ACRES	Baseball	Soccer	Basketball	Playground	Trails	Pavilion	Picnic	Grills	Restroom	Parking	Multi-Use Field
Sunset Park	Community		x	30.2					x	1				x	x
Fox Hill	Open Space		x	27.5					x						
Prout Farm Park	Community		x	27.1					x						
Hollenbach Park	Community	x	x	24.2		2		1	x					x	x
Stauffer Woods	Open Space		x	21.5											
Schwenk	Open Space		x	18.3											
Sussell Park	Community		x	19.4					x		x			x	
Smola (west)	Open Space		x	18.7											
Smola (east)	Open Space		x	16.5											
Althouse Arboretum	Regional		x	15.6										x	
Boerner	Open Space		x	14.8											
Chestnut Grove Park	Neighborhood	x	x	13.2					x					x	x
Farmington	Open Space		x	12.1											
Cherry Tree Farms	Open Space		x	11.8											
Bealer	Open Space		x	7.0											
Malmberg	Open Space		x	6.6											
Heather Place Park	Community	x		6.4			1	1		1	x	x	x	x	x
Mocharniuk Meadows	Community		x	6.2					x						
Turnberry Farms	Open Space		x	6.2											
Kulp Field	Community	x		6.0	2										
West Moyer (north)	Open Space		x	4.7											
Hoffman Field	Community	x	x	3.7		2 or 3								x	x
Fox Hill Trailhead	Open Space		x	3.2					x					x	
Cherry Tree Park	Neighborhood	x		1.5				1							
West Moyer (south)	Open Space		x	1.4											
O'Neill	Open Space		x	1.3											
Kulp/Hoffman Parking	Open Space		x	0.76										x	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>325.9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4 or 5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>

# RECREATION FACILITY NEEDS

Upper Pottsgrove Township must adapt its parks and open space system to serve its growing population. The township's greatly expanded collection of public open space provides ample accommodations for new improvements. Input gathered from the public, consultants, township employees, and the Open Space Board supports a number of items with a broad consensus. They include:

- Providing more pavilions
- Meeting ADA accessibility standards
- Improving parking areas
- Planting for shade and screening
- Creating more walking trail connections
- Installing more signage and benches along trails
- Establishing a trail maintenance program
- Creating a disc golf course

While multiple facilities throughout the township may be suitable sites for new amenities, the number of available sites often exceeds what is needed. These amenities, and other improvements with popular and practical support, should be sited to best serve the needs that exist at the time of their implementation.

## Heather Place Park

This community park is centrally located next to the Public Works and Police Complex. It hosts many amenities for active recreation and outdoor gatherings. It has a playground, benches, a picnic pavilion with ten tables, a basketball court, and overflow parking along Heather Place.



*Recommended improvements for Heather Place Park include updates to the court and measures to separate the park from vehicles in the parking area and on Route 100.*

Potential Improvements:

- Mark and delineate the overflow parking area.
- Plant shade trees.
- Expand the pavilion or add another pavilion.
- Install additional benches.
- Mark the basketball court to also serve as a tennis court.
- Install a fence along Route 100.
- Create a demonstration garden.

## Chestnut Grove Park

Located between the Chestnut Grove and Summer Grove neighborhoods, this park is primarily a passive recreation park at present. It provides an open multi-use field and connects to the Goose Run Trail. This park is served only by small parking areas at its entrances.

Potential Improvements:

- Install playground equipment to serve adjacent neighborhoods.
- Expanded parking areas.
- Add a small pavilion and associated amenities for gatherings.
- Create a disc golf course
- Install signage to mark trailheads and park entrances, and to provide educational interpretation and directional information.

## Kulp Field and Hoffman Field

Together, these bordering parks comprise over 10 acres. Located next to the Hillside Aquatic Club, they offer several baseball, soccer, and multi-use fields. The two parks are served by a large, informal parking area.

Potential Improvements:

- Plant trees to provide shade and screen the parking area.
- Install fencing along West Moyer Road.
- Ensure ADA accessibility with paths
- Formalize or relocate the parking area.
- Add a pavilion.
- Provide exercise stations on a loop trail.
- Add a playground.

## Prout Farm Park

This large community facility is a passive park, offering scenic trails in its 27 acres of farmed fields and woodlands. As a large and new park, many uses have been suggested for this facility. Thanks to the township's partnership with Green Allies, this park will soon host many new passive recreation and educational amenities, including trails and organic gardens.

Potential Improvements:

- Create crosswalks to new neighboring residential developments.
- Expand the parking area.
- Install a disc golf course.
- Add a pavilion.
- Create an amphitheater.
- Install exercise stations along a loop trail.
- Concentrate active uses in the northern half of the park.
- Install trailhead and directional signage and benches.

## Sussell Park

Unlike most of the township's parks, this 19 acre facility is features two ponds and is largely covered in woodlands. The Sprogels Run Trail connects Sussell Park to the nearby Stauffer Woods open space and Althouse Arboretum. The park will soon host additional passive recreation and educational amenities as Green Allies expands its programs.

Potential Improvements:

- Improve parking or relocate to neighboring Schwenk open space.
- Expand trail system and connect to adjacent open space and neighborhoods.
- Add benches to trails and around ponds.
- Install a fishing dock.
- Add signage to mark trailheads and provide directional and interpretive information.

## Hollenbach Park and Mocharniuk Meadows

These neighboring park facilities occupy nearly 30 acres and provide many opportunities for passive and active recreation. The smaller Mocharniuk Meadows is an open space with a loop trail located to the north of its larger companion. Hollenbach park hosts two connected loop trails, two soccer fields, parking, swing sets, and a picnic area.

Potential Improvements:

- Add one or more pavilion.
- Create ADA accessible paths connecting the park's various amenities.
- Plant additional trees for shade and screening.
- Provide trailhead and directional signage.
- Create a crosswalks connecting to the Fox Run Trail and Pottsgrove Middle School.



- Construct an amphitheater.
- Provide tennis courts.
- Install a disc golf course.

*Hollenbach Park currently has little shade or shelter and lacks walking connections to the nearby Pottsgrove Middle School.*

# 9

## evaluation of county, regional, and abutting municipal plans

The preceding chapters investigate the resources, needs, and opportunities for open space that exist within Upper Pottsgrove Township. With this information, recommendations can be made to effectively serve township residents. However, the land use decisions that Upper Pottsgrove makes affect the larger region, just as decisions made in neighboring municipalities affect Upper Pottsgrove. Therefore, this open space planning effort should not be isolated by municipal borders, but include consideration of the planning efforts in surrounding communities.

This chapter compares the recommendations of this plan with those in *MONTCO2040: A Shared Vision*, the county comprehensive plan; the Pottstown Metropolitan Area Regional Comprehensive Plan; and the comprehensive, open space, and revitalization plans of abutting municipalities and counties. The intent is to prevent conflicts between plans and to encourage collaboration. By gaining an understanding of how Upper Pottsgrove's plan will fit into the larger open space and trail linkage picture, partners can optimize their future open space preservation and management.

### COMPARISON TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANS

In 2015, Montgomery County adopted an updated comprehensive plan, *MONTCO2040: A Shared Vision*. The plan charts a course for the county through the year 2040. It addresses growth and changes in land use, housing, transportation, community utilities and facilities, and the protection of natural and historic resources. Each of these factors could potentially bear great significance on open space needs and opportunities in Upper Pottsgrove.

The county comprehensive plan provides goals and implementation strategies for managing the county's built and natural environments, which are structured around three themes:

- Connected Communities
- Sustainable Places
- Vibrant Economy

Upper Pottsgrove's Open Space Plan addresses these issues by creating a framework for land use decision-making, improved connectivity and accessibility for all residents, natural and historic resource protection, and quality of life improvements through the enhancement of the Township's parks, trails, and open space network.

The county comprehensive plan lists 15 goals that describe and expand upon its three themes. Several of the goals (listed below) parallel those in this Open Space Plan, adding strength to the recommendations set forth here.

## CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

- Encourage collaboration and partnerships among governments, businesses, institutions, schools, higher education, and other stakeholders.
- Improve transportation quality and expand options for county residents and workers.
- Expand and connect county trails, local trails, greenways, natural areas, and parks.

## SUSTAINABLE PLACES

- Conserve natural resources, environmentally-sensitive areas, and farmland.
- Provide more opportunities for residents to exercise and have healthy lifestyles.
- Improve stormwater management and reduce the impact of flooding.
- Enhance community character and protect neighborhoods.

## VIBRANT ECONOMY

- Flexibly adapt to changing market conditions and demographics.

The county also maintains a growing strategy for trails which identifies potential trail alignments and key connections. The proposed West County Trail would pass directly through Upper Pottsgrove on its way from the Pottstown area to Douglass Township (Montgomery Co.). One of the potential routes for this trail follows Sprogels Run from Lower Pottsgrove, north to Gilbertsville Road, and on to Douglass Township (Montgomery Co.).

This trail would enhance the value and accessibility of open space along the Sprogels Run Trail and Hoffman/Kulp Fields, and provide a connection to the Goose Run Trail and several of the Township's parks. The DVRPC's proposed Upper West Trail is analogous to the West County Trail and follows a similar alignment (see Chapter 5 for additional detail).

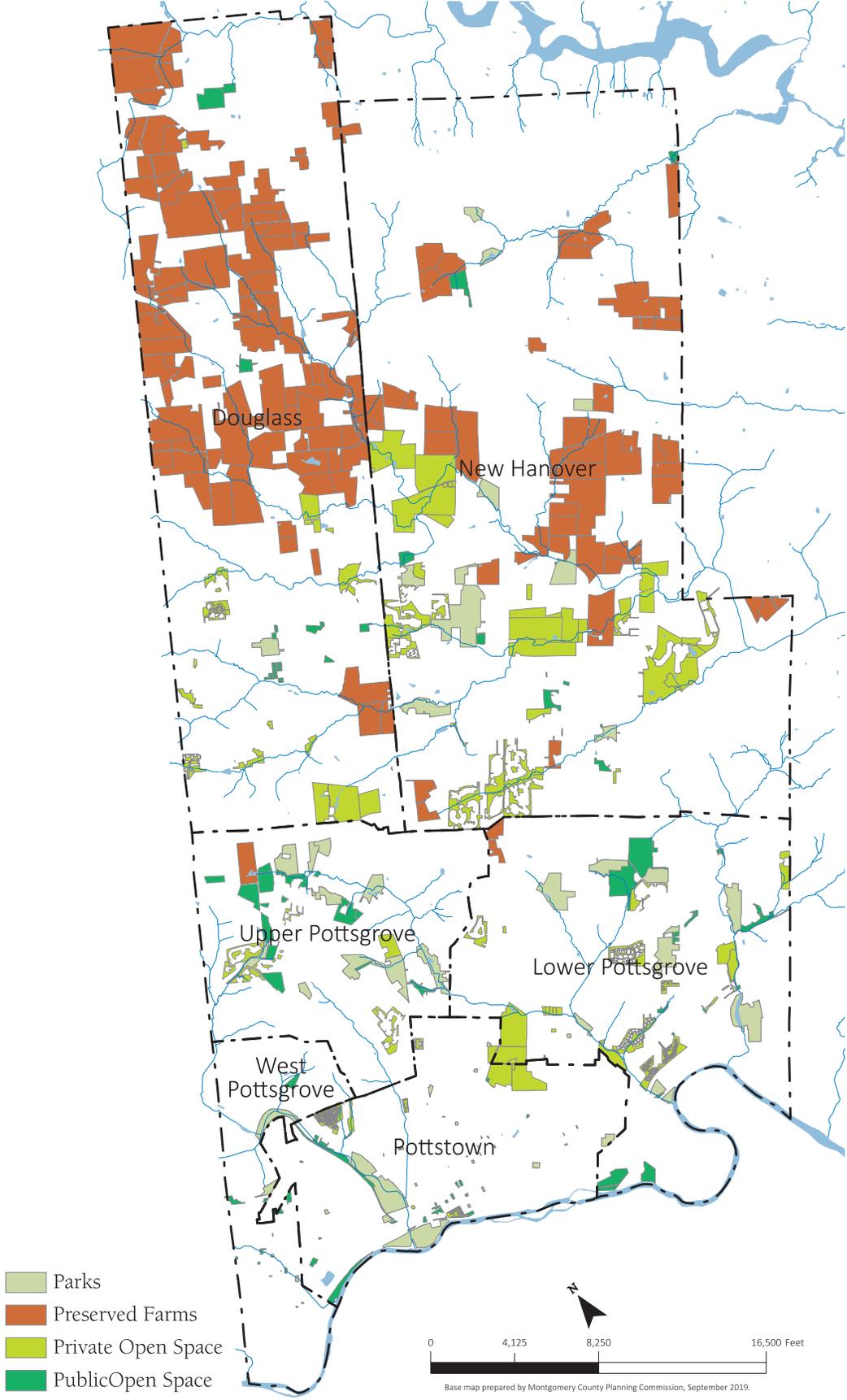


## RELATION TO PLANS OF ABUTTING MUNICIPALITIES

Upper Pottsgrove is surrounded by five townships and one borough. The open space policies and other pertinent information of each abutting municipality are summarized below. Adjacent, yet incompatible, land uses may result in conflicts, while potential linkages could foster cooperative partnerships with neighboring municipalities.

In 2003 Montgomery County residents voted to approve a \$150 million bond for the purpose of open space preservation. The resulting initiative, the Green Fields/Green Towns Program, was created to distribute grant funding across the County for improvements related to parks, open space, and historic resources. Between 2005 and 2006, nearly every municipality in the County completed an open space plan, or an update to an existing open space plan, in

Figure 9.1 || *Regional Parks, Open Space, and Preserved Farms*



order to be eligible for funding. This included Upper Pottsgrove and each of its municipal neighbors, with the exception of Douglass Twp. in Berks County.

In the ten years since the last update of open space plans, parcels have been preserved, trails have been proposed and developed, and the needs of the communities have changed. Trail, greenway, and watershed planning efforts in particular are increasingly looking to multi-municipal cooperation and coordination to attain greater effectiveness and to help ensure long-term success. It is therefore vital that Upper Pottsgrove keeps abreast of the continually evolving planning efforts of its neighbors and the county.

## **DOUGLASS TOWNSHIP (BERKS CO.)**

In the *2008 Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan*, Montgomery County's northern neighbor set goals for the year 2020 to guide the provisioning of recreational amenities and the creation of trails and greenway connections. These goals included specific recommendations for Douglass Township, including connections across its border with Upper Pottsgrove. Although the plan recognizes the rapid population growth occurring along the Route 422 corridor, it estimates that Douglass Township's quantity of open space is already sufficient to serve its anticipated future populace. The plan observes that the township's plentiful open space is primarily for passive recreation and lacks in park amenities and facilities serving active recreation. The township's Goose Run Park, located adjacent to Upper Pottsgrove, receives recognition as an ecologic resource of high value and it forms an important link in the proposed Goose Run Greenway. This riparian corridor, along with the more northerly Stone Hill Greenway, is identified as a second-level priority that would connect to Upper Pottsgrove Township.

Previously, Douglass Township (Berks Co.) amended its *1988 Comprehensive Plan* with an "Open Space and Recreation Plan Element" completed in 1998. Other findings and recommendations of the plan included the following:

- Community Parks – Ironstone Community Park plays a valuable role in the Township's recreation system. This facility is 20-acres and has baseball fields, a basketball court and other amenities. The Plan recommended a master plan be developed for Ironstone Park, and found 18 acres of additional community parkland would be needed in the township by 2000.
- Neighborhood Parks – Creation of a new neighborhood park in the lower south end of the Township should be considered. Upgrade of the Township's Municipal Park should be undertaken.
- Scenic road corridor regulations should be developed in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and an inventory should be established of scenic views along the roads.
- The plan recommended the establishment of a Parks and Recreation Committee, which has now been formed.

## **DOUGLASS TOWNSHIP (MONTGOMERY CO.)**

Douglass Township (Montgomery Co.) shares a border of 2.0 miles with Upper Pottsgrove. The Township developed their Open Space Plan in 2006.

The ten goals included in the plan are:

- Raise awareness of the importance of open space planning;
- Preserve the Township's rural identity;
- Increase active recreation opportunities;
- Actively pursue public/private partnerships to preserve open space;
- Provide linkages among communities;
- Preserve historic sites;
- Maintain tree coverage;
- Preserve greenways;
- Coordinate open space efforts with neighboring municipalities; and
- Utilize open space preservation techniques to improve stormwater management.

## LOWER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP

Lower Pottsgrove completed the *Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan* in 2005, with some revisions in 2006, 2008, and 2019. The open space issue that is most pertinent to both Lower Pottsgrove and Upper Pottsgrove is the implementation of the Sprogels Run Trail or the DVRPC's similarly-aligned proposed Pottsgrove Trail. This will ensure that a continuous, viable greenway and trail is established linking the source of Sprogels Run in Upper Pottsgrove with the Schuylkill River, and eventually the Schuylkill River Trail, in Lower Pottsgrove. To achieve this goal, the plan recommends rights-of-way be acquired from property owners along Sprogels Run from the Township's border with Upper Pottsgrove to the vicinity of the Kepler Road and Sunnybrook Road intersection.

Points of interest along Sprogels Run in Lower Pottsgrove include Pottsgrove High School, Ringing Rocks Elementary, Brookside Golf Course, Alfred B. Miles Park and Nature Area, Schuylkill River Park and, in the future, the Schuylkill River Trail. The plan urges the townships to work together to maximize grant funding opportunities for protecting the Sprogels Run corridor.

Other goals include:

- Implementing the county's proposed Schuylkill East Trail.
- Preserve natural resources.
- Expansion of Schuylkill River Park
- A potential Sanatoga Creek trail.

## NEW HANOVER TOWNSHIP

New Hanover Township shares a border of 0.8 miles with Upper Pottsgrove and, in 2015, adopted its Open Space and Recreation Master Plan. The goals of the plan are:

- Identify the best and highest use for land currently owned by the Township.
- Identify, shape and preserve the character of the Township with both suburban growth zones and rural areas including agriculture, wilderness areas, and passive recreation.
- All New Hanover residents should have easy access to a nearby park or open space.

- Identify new or additional demands for recreation and open space; identify potential property acquisitions for the Township's future.
- Calculate current developer fees and assessments for recreation in New Hanover Township.
- Explore the need and financial viability for large-scale active recreation intended for a regional draw.
- Develop a strong sense of community ownership of the parks. Encourage social organizations and citizens to get to know each other and build a strong, healthy community through participation in park-related activities.
- Stimulate the economy with regional recreation and activities that draw regional recreation spending to the Township.

Other recommendations in the plan call for the adoption of a Comprehensive Recreation, Parks and Open Space Plan and for the inclusion of the plan's recommendations in the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan. The expansions of trails and of greenways along the township's creeks are also listed as priority items.



*New Hanover, like Upper Pottsgrove, is a rural township planning parks and open space to serve a growing population.*

## POTTSTOWN BOROUGH

The Borough of Pottstown also completed its Open Space Plan in 2006 (an update of their 1996 plan). Some of the plan's key recommendations include:

- Acquire the Pottstown Metal Welding Company facility to facilitate a connection between Memorial Park and Riverfront Park.

- Enhance amenities at existing parks.
- Acquire passive open space areas to expand the Borough's trail network and to connect greenways, particularly along the Manatawny Creek, W. High Street, and the Schuylkill River.
- Promote green infrastructure and stormwater management best practices.
- Complete proposed West County Trail and Manatawny Trail connections from the Schuylkill River Trail into Upper Pottsgrove and West Pottsgrove, respectively.
- Develop internal and external linkages to the open space network.

## WEST POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP

West Pottsgrove's 2007 Open Space Plan notes a willingness to work with Upper Pottsgrove on plans for the Goose Run Trail. If it turns out not to be possible to construct a trail on the Berks County portion of Goose Run, a possibility exists of still achieving a linkage with the future Manatawny Trail via sidewalks or paths alongside West Pottsgrove roads. Since the completion of the plan, the Schuylkill River Trail has been completed through the Township and runs between W. High Street and Route 422.

Other goals of the West Pottsgrove Open Space Plan include:

- **Murgia Park** – Expansion of public lands along the Manatawny Creek adjacent to the existing park will provide permanent protection for the creek and ensure public access. Planned improvements noted in the plan included a picnic pavilion, tables, and recreation equipment.
- **Manatawny Trail** – Plans exist for public access along the creek, and protection of riparian buffers and wildlife along the creek. The Township will support initiatives to further acquire and protect these natural lands.
- **Schuylkill Riverfront** – When PennDOT plans for the relocation of the Stowe Interchange are developed, any lands available along the Riverfront and access routes to those lands should be publicly held. The Township will work with other units of government and community interest groups to secure the lands for public ownership.
- **Public access to waterways and natural habitat** – To the extent possible, the Township will request public access to waterways and the protection of areas of significant natural habitat.

## POTTSTOWN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The updated Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2015. The Pottstown Metropolitan Region includes the municipalities of Upper Pottsgrove, Pottstown, Lower Pottsgrove, West Pottsgrove, Douglass (Montgomery Co.), New Hanover, East Coventry (Chester Co.), and North Coventry (Chester Co.). The plan highlights the importance of investment in open space. Specifically, some of the plan's parks and open space objectives include: *Note: the Pottstown Area Regional Recreation Committee was created in 2014, which addresses numerous objectives below.*

- Coordinate park and recreational opportunities among the region's eight municipalities. Coordinate and connect open space areas between municipalities.
- Develop a regional trail network to connect communities, recreation areas, and the Schuylkill River Trail. *Note: The Greater Pottstown Trails Feasibility Study: A Circle of Progress was completed in 2018.*
- Implement the parks, recreation, and open space goals of municipal open space plans.
- Provide and incorporate new parks and open space with new development.
- Create well-rounded parks that can provide a full range of opportunities, including physical activities, contact with nature, social connections, and connections with history and culture.
- Prioritize parks, recreation, and open space opportunities that preserve natural linkages, environmental resources and scenic views.
- Continue to pursue private and public sector funding opportunities to enhance recreation in the region.
- Promote active transportation that includes providing safe walking and bicycling routes to parks and safe access within parks themselves.
- Increase resident awareness and promote access to the region's parks and open space facilities through the development of consistent entrance and wayfinding signage, promotional materials, and community events.
- Designate growth and conservation areas within the region to ensure preservation of open space, agricultural, and natural resource protection areas.
- Protect existing groundwater resources and encourage groundwater recharge in the designs of new development.
- Promote the stewardship of natural lands and pursue best management practices that will limit fragmentation and restore links between forests, reduce invasive plant species in the region, promote wildlife diversity, and improve water quality.

# 10

## acquisition and protection methods

This chapter makes recommendations for the protection of public open space through acquisition and other means. Focus areas are identified where open space acquisition would protect vulnerable resources and more directly support greenway and trail connection goals. Purchasing properties outright (fee simple ownership) or acquiring easements may be complemented using non-acquisition protection methods, like conservation overlays and other ordinances.

### OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES

The protection priority of potential open spaces depends upon a number of factors that determine a property's suitability as a component of the township's open space system. Potential protection areas are undeveloped, underdeveloped, or vacant lands. The amount of undeveloped land and its proximity to other undeveloped areas also raise an area's priority. The presence of vulnerable resources, including:

- Lands considered desirable for future trails (proposed trail alignments)
- Areas with greenway potential
- Woodlands
- Steep slopes
- Diabase geology
- Historic sites
- Wildlife
- Floodplains
- Riparian areas
- Water bodies
- Wetlands
- Agricultural soils

The main open space priority areas are located in the eastern corner of the township, along and near Sprogels Run and branching out to adjacent New Hanover and Douglass (Montgomery Co.) townships. These areas indicate concentrations of undeveloped land that would help to integrate existing parks and open space into the Sprogels Run Greenway and Trail and assemble the Pottsgrove, Upper West, and West County trails if they were acquired as open space.

Additional priority areas in the northern and western corners of the

township identify opportunities to lend protection to open spaces that lie at the headwaters of Sprongels Run and along Goose Run, respectively. Protecting open space in the north priority area would help to link existing township open spaces and protect the concentrated vulnerable wetlands, woodlands, water bodies, and sloped diabase terrain of the Stone Hill Greenway.

In the west priority area, potential open spaces lie in the riparian corridor of the Goose Run Greenway and present opportunities to implement the proposed West County and Upper West Trails, connecting existing township parks and trails to counterparts in Douglass (Berks Co.) and West Pottsgrove townships.

## ACQUISITION METHODS

While acquiring easements may suffice to create trails and other passive open spaces, a municipality may need to own parks serving active recreation and agricultural uses to permanently-protect them. There are many acquisition methods available to the township, although not all may be applicable or suit the needs of the township. These differing alternatives present Upper Pottsgrove with multiple options for extending the open space network and afford the township with more opportunities to achieve the goals set forth in this plan.

Acquisition methods include:

### **Fee Simple Acquisition**

This option is the most direct way to acquire open space because it simply involves negotiating with a private landowner to arrive at a mutually acceptable purchase price and then completing the deal. The municipality then has free and clear title to the property, or fee simple ownership. Because it is usually a straightforward transaction, municipalities often prefer this approach, particularly for establishing a community park.

### **Installment Buying**

With this method, the municipality agrees to purchase a set number of acres annually until the full parcel is acquired. In return, the full site is removed from the tax rolls when the initial agreement is signed. The owner may choose to remain on his/her land until it is completely sold and paid for. The advantage of this method is that benefits accrue to both the municipality and the landowner. For a municipality with limited funds, installment buying spreads the cost over a period of time. The landowner in the meantime is relieved of real property responsibilities when the agreement is signed.

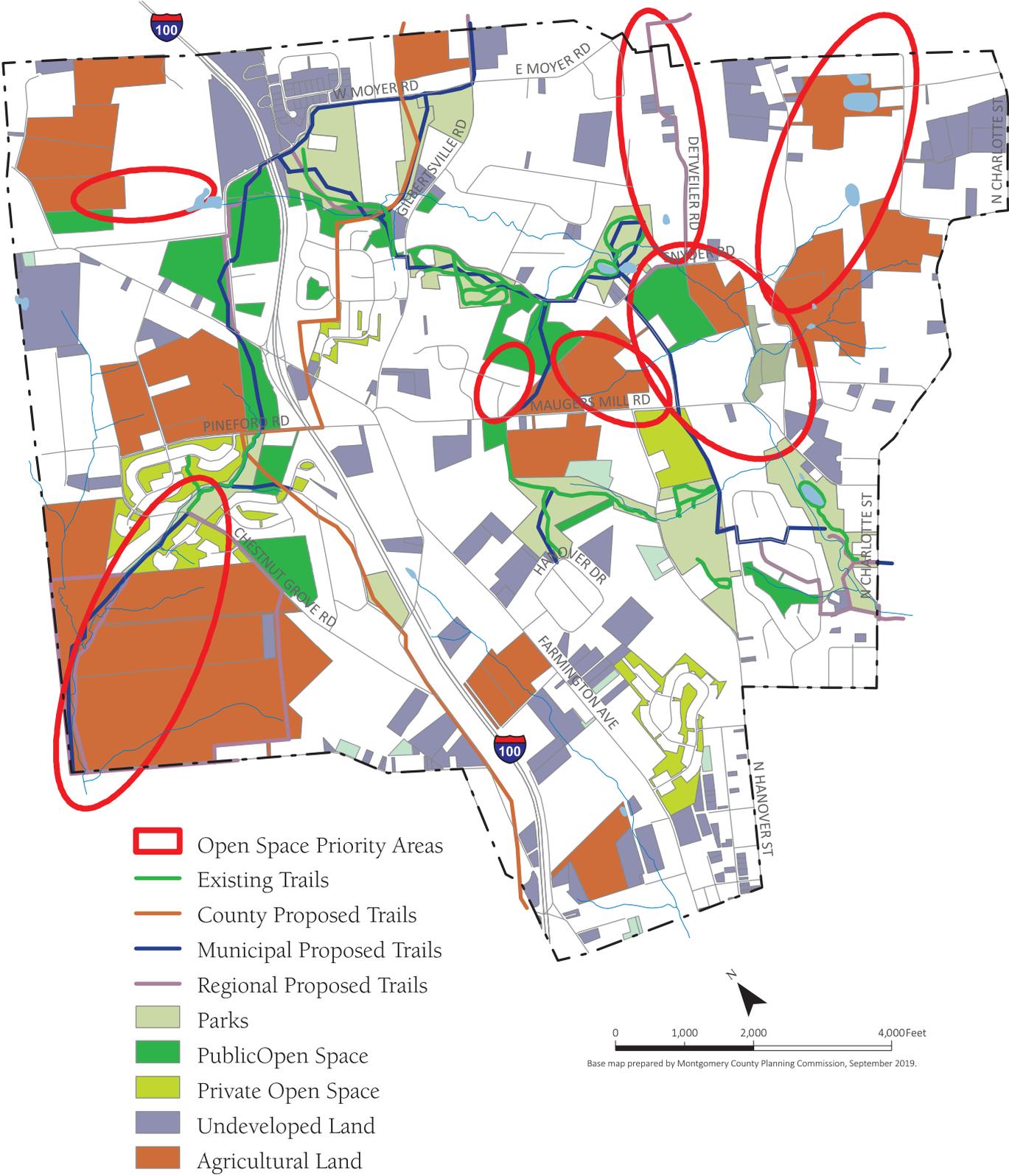
### **Long-Term Lease with Option to Buy**

This method involves the negotiation of a lease price with a property owner and includes conditions for use and possible purchase of the property. The primary advantage is that it permits flexibility; if the property is not needed in the future for open space, it returns to the owner.

### **Mandatory Dedication**

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247) enables municipalities to require that residential development dedicate land or fees in

Figure 10.1 || *Open Space Priority Areas*



lieu of land for public recreation. In order to do this, municipalities must have an adopted recreation plan and an adopted ordinance relating to mandatory dedication before land or fees can be accepted. The amount of land required must be related to the demand for recreation land typically created by new development. The required fee should reflect the fair market value of the land.

## **Purchase and Lease-Back**

Purchase and lease-back results in buying land and leasing it back to the owner in accordance with agreed-upon policies for the use and protection of the land. Its primary advantage is that it permits purchase of property before prices rise or before the property is lost to development. It also permits flexibility because once the land is purchased it can be used for another public purpose, sold, or exchanged for another parcel.

## **Purchase and Resale**

This method is similar to purchase and lease-back, except that the land is purchased with the sole intent of reselling it under conditions or restrictive covenants. If the land is acquired at a low cost, the resulting profits help repay initial purchase costs and can be used to acquire additional land. Another advantage is that after resale, the municipality is relieved of ownership and maintenance responsibilities and the land is taxable.

## **Leasing**

This method is a popular, relatively inexpensive way to acquire open space, especially if the land is unlikely to be developed (for example, reservoirs and utility land). The term of the lease usually ranges from 20 to 50 years; at a minimum, a period should be established that is long enough to finance anticipated capital improvements. The owner of the leased land prescribes conditions and terms under which the land can be used and the lessee is required to carry liability insurance covering personal injury and property damage.

## **Eminent Domain**

Eminent domain is the condemnation of land for a public use by due process of law. It must involve the determination of a fair market value for the property and a clear definition of the public purposes for which it is being condemned. Before exercising the right of eminent domain, a municipality should study the necessity of obtaining the particular site and the feasibility of acquiring it by other acquisition methods. Only if all other methods fail and the property is deemed essential to an open space system should eminent domain be considered.

## **Land Trusts and Conservancies**

Land trusts and conservancies are private, non-profit tax exempt trusts, usually organized by a citizen supported, non-profit agency. Their funds can be

used to provide open space and to preserve natural resources such as stream valleys. Administration and management of the land are the responsibility of the service agency. Private non-profits have an advantage in that they can often move faster to acquire property than can a government agency. Frequently a public-private partnership is formed whereby the private agency acquires land and then resells it to a government agency at a later date.

As noted previously, there are a number of existing conservation groups what will work with private landowners to conserve their land. However, such situations may or may not include provisions for public access. Because of this, a municipality should work closely with these organizations and landowners where public access is a goal. In this way, conservancies can function as an alternative method of acquiring open space.

## Land Exchanges

This method involves the trading of land between one owner and another for the benefit of both parties. Landowners can arrange the land exchange to serves their interests. Land exchanges often, but do not necessarily, involve adjacent properties.

## Voluntary Agreements

Voluntary agreements can be established between government agencies and owners of agricultural lands, industrial holdings, and utility lands for various purposes. They are strictly voluntary, with permission to use the land for public enjoyment in clearly specified ways. For example, a utility company might permit trail use of a power line right-of-way.

## Right of First Refusal and Purchase Option

These methods involve establishing an agreement which specifies that the land may be acquired by the municipality at a future date. A right of first refusal provides the municipality with the option to match an offered purchase price within a specified time period should a landowner receive a legitimate offer to sell. A purchase option is simply a right that the municipality holds to purchase the land by a specified date at a specified price. Both rights of first refusal and purchase option can be either donated or sold to the municipality.

## Life or Term Estates

This technique involves the acquisition of land with certain restrictions attached to the deed. A municipality may be better able to negotiate the purchase of property if certain interests in the land are reserved for the benefit of the landowner. For example, a municipality could purchase land with all rights of ownership conveyed except the right to occupy a house or a portion of the full property for a specified term (usually 25 years) or until the death of the landowner.

## Donations and Bargain Sales

These methods of acquisition involve obtaining land at less than its full market value. Receiving donations of the full value of land is the least expensive way for a municipality to obtain land and can, in some instances, be a wise approach for a landowner to take to directly benefit from tax incentives and the shelter effects of charitable deductions. If a full donation of land is not possible or if the landowner has an immediate need for cash through sale, then a partial donation and bargain sale might be a prudent alternative. By selling land at a price that is less than its full value, a landowner can still receive tax benefits based on the difference between the fair market value of the land and its actual sale price. The primary benefit to these techniques is that a municipality acquires land at a lower cost while the seller obtains tax deductions.

## Easements

Easements are a successful way to save public funds, yet receive open space benefits. An easement is a limited right over land owned by another person (often a government entity or land trust). Legally, a person has the right to use his property subject to zoning laws, subdivision regulation, etc.; however, the owner may sell his/her right to use the land in specific ways.

Conservation easements are used to preserve land with relatively low cost (without acquiring the whole property). The land remains privately owned and the easement involves the property owner voluntarily agreeing to donate or sell the right to develop the land. The property has a deed restriction on the property that is binding for future owners. It may require that there be no new buildings constructed or woodlands will be preserved and can result in tax breaks for owners.

Historic Preservation Easement or Façade Easements can be used to preserve the exterior of a historic building. Access easements allow access for the public to walk, hike, or ride bicycles along a specific area.

## NON-ACQUISITION PROTECTION METHODS

While the township may need to acquire land to create parks and protect concentrated areas of vulnerable resources, other methods allow Upper Pottsgrove to protect scattered instances of vulnerable resources and manage development through regulatory protections. The descriptions that follow are measures that the township could incorporate into the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances.

## Incentive Zoning

Communities can encourage developers through incentive zoning to provide recreation facilities or amenities, and trails. The incentives are offered in specific zoning districts, and might allow a developer to build to a higher height, higher density, or a smaller lot size than would otherwise be permitted. The ordinances should be crafted to ensure the cost of providing the amenity does not exceed the benefit received from the incentive.

# Natural Resource Protection Ordinances

Since the adoption of the previous township open space plan, Upper Pottsgrove has adopted zoning ordinances that establish conservation overlays protecting wetlands and riparian areas, floodplains, and steep slopes. These natural resource protection ordinances provide a framework for preserving greenway landscapes, but the township could consider additional ordinances to protect vulnerable resources:

## FLOODPLAIN AND RIPARIAN CORRIDOR PROTECTION

The 100-year floodplain is the area where a flood event is expected to be equaled or exceeded once during that time period (or a 1% chance each year). Township ordinances bar most development from the floodplain to reduce the severity of floods, prevent property damage, and preserve sensitive riparian habitats within the floodplain. Freestanding structures are only permitted in the floodplain by special exception or variance. The township could choose to prohibit structures even by special exception or variance if it wishes to tighten the floodplain regulations.

The township's riparian corridor protection ordinance protects the land surrounding wetlands, streams, and other water bodies within a designated 75 feet of the water feature. Riparian corridor protection ordinances help preserve a continuous plant and wildlife habitat along the stream, supporting greenway goals. Preserving riparian habitats helps to reduce erosion, improve water quality, lower stream temperatures, protect aquatic species, and mitigate flood risks.

## GROUNDWATER/WELLHEAD PROTECTION

Groundwater quality can be protected with wellhead protection ordinances or aquifer recharge ordinances. The subdivision and

land development ordinance of Upper Pottsgrove already contains standard protections for public wells, not individual wells, and regulates development in an area which could potentially contaminate the groundwater supplying that well. This area, called a wellhead protection area, can be identified in a number of ways, although the most accurate method is to conduct a hydrogeologic survey.

Development within the wellhead protection area can be further regulated by restricting certain uses, such as gas stations; by limiting the intensity of development, such as limiting the density of single-family detached homes with individual septic systems; and/or by controlling how a land use activity occurs, such as farming with specific types of pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals.

In addition, the community may impose design standards on new construction that might pollute the groundwater, including hazardous materials containment structures or areas, surface water runoff collection systems, and large impervious areas such as parking lots and buildings.

Because of the low permeability of much of the underlying geology, the Township is part of what is known as the Southeastern Pennsylvania Groundwater Protected Area (GWPA) of the Delaware River Basin. In the GWPA, the Delaware River Basin Commission's groundwater regulations are more stringent than in other parts of the Delaware River's catchment area.

# Donations of Properties for Permanent Open Space

Landowners can preserve their land by donating the full title of their property or by donating their development rights to a nonprofit land conservation group. These two methods permanently preserve open space.

Landowners who donate development rights receive tax benefits and their land must be permanently restricted from future development. Land conservation groups that operate within Montgomery County and which may accept easements or donations include: Montgomery County Lands Trust, Conservancy of Montgomery County, and the Heritage Conservancy.

## Endowment Fund

The Township itself may also accept land, easements, or donations to an endowment fund for the purchase or improvement of open space, parks, and trails. Upper Pottsgrove is interested in creating a program to honor open space donors. This might involve recording their names and a record of their gift on plaques or carved bricks on the open space site, or even naming a park, pond, open space area, or trail (or segment of a trail) after a donor.

## Performance Zoning

With performance zoning, the minimum lot size is directly related to the natural features of the site. The lot size corresponds to such features as: high water table soils, floodplains, and steep slopes. When many of these features exist on a site, the minimum lot size must be increased. If these features are not present, the minimum lot size can be smaller, such as one acre. These provisions are placed in the zoning ordinance.

An example of performance zoning is where the environmental constraints of a lot are subtracted from the net lot area. If the zoning district allowed a minimum of 1-acre lots and the applicant proposed a 2-acre lot and the lot contained 1.5 acres of floodplain, then the application would not be permitted because the net area would be 0.5 acres.

Performance zoning ordinances can also apply ratios to a wide range of environmental constraints such as floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, soils, geology, woodlands, etc. The ratio is multiplied by the constrained portion of the lot. This is then subtracted from the lot area to yield the net lot area. For example for a 5-acre lot with a ratio of 100 percent for floodplains and 50 percent for steep slopes that contains 1 acre floodplains and 1.5 acres of steep slopes:

$$1.50 \text{ (acres of steep slopes)} \times 0.50 = .75 \text{ acre}$$

$$1.00 \text{ (acre of floodplain)} \times 1 = 1.00 \text{ acre}$$

$$1.00 \text{ (floodplain)} + 0.75 \text{ (steep slopes)} = 1.75$$

$$5.00 - 1.75 = 3.25 \text{ net acres}$$

Upper Pottsgrove utilizes performance zoning in its R-1 Residential District and R-2 Residential District; however, it could also be applied to its R-80 Low-Density Residential District.

# Clustering Homes

One method to preserve open space is to cluster homes within one portion of a development and reserve the rest for permanent open space. The overall density of the site remains about the same as what the underlying district permits by placing homes on smaller lots. The open space area might serve as a recreation area; it could also be used to preserve the views, historic landscapes, farmland, or natural features of the area. The open space may then be dedicated to the township as parkland or maintained by a homeowners' association.

Through clustering, significant portions of the site can be preserved—sometimes as much as 75% or 80%. The open space may be in the developed portion of the site so that the homes have neighborhood open space. While this type of development preserves natural resources, it also benefits the developer by lowering infrastructure costs by reducing road length, stormwater facilities, and utility lines.

Upper Pottsgrove utilizes clustering in its R-2 and R-3 Residential Districts, but it would greatly benefit by adapting this development option for the R-1 Residential and R-80 Low-Density Residential districts.

# “Conservation by Design” Ordinances

Applying this methodology as it is modeled in the MCPC Land Preservation District, communities create zoning and subdivision ordinances that enable the land development process to best protect important landscape features. The Land Preservation District “offers communities an opportunity to preserve open space, sensitive natural features, and rural community character in residential developments.”

Specifically, the four step process includes the following:

1. Identify the land to be developed using the LPD
2. Perform a site inventory to identify and prioritize the resources that are present
3. Calculating yield and environmental adjustment factors
4. Design the Land Preservation Subdivision

# Transfer of Development Rights

This method of preserving rural land involves a formal procedure for quantifying and transferring the development rights of land in rural areas to land in growth areas. With a transfer of development rights program, landowners can sell the development rights of their rural land to developers looking to build in the township's growth areas.

For example, a rural landowner who has 50 acres might normally be allowed to subdivide them into twenty 2-acre lots. Instead, with a TDR program, the landowner sells the right to build these 20 lots to a developer in a growth area. The developer adds those 20 units, or more as appropriate, to the number of units normally allowed to be built. The rural landowner, who has been paid for these development rights, is then required to deed restrict the land against any future development. This process helps to preserve agricultural land and open space while also bolstering village center and existing suburban development areas.





# optional plan elements

This chapter addresses optional plan recommendations for Upper Pottsgrove, focusing on the development of connected greenways and trails and the conservation of heritage resources.

## HERITAGE RESOURCE CONSERVATION

A goal of the plan is to preserve historic sites in the township, including farms, homes, and other structures of great age or significance in local history. The township will use the following methods to achieve this:

- Consider working with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office to establish criteria by which the Upper Pottsgrove Township Historic Board may identify structures and properties of historic importance, review development proposals affecting historic properties, and recommend historic preservation standards.
- Consider purchasing sites of historic significance, possibly in conjunction with open space acquisitions. There would be special focus on historic resources identified by the township's Historic Board.
- Consider purchasing historic conservation easements, with special focus on historic resources identified by the township's Historic Board.
- Consider adopting a historic preservation ordinance to help save historic properties by permitting additional uses in historic buildings. Additional permitted uses in a residential district might include bed and breakfast establishments, home occupations, galleries, cultural studios, or antique shops.
- Consider adopting an ordinance to establish a mandatory waiting period before the demolition of any identified historic properties, and permit alternative uses of the property to be suggested to the owner by the Historic Board prior to demolition.
- Consider establishing a historic preservation overlay zone for the protection of dispersed historic sites.
- Emplace interpretive signage to identify and explain the significance of historic sites.

- Establish a fund to incentivize historic restoration work of building facades done consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Promote heritage tourism by creating maps and informational literature, and by working to establish trail connections to historic sites.



*Open space preservation can also help to preserve the township's historic resources*

## MUNICIPAL TRAIL AND PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT

### **Srogels Run Trail**

The completed segments of Srogels Run Trail generally follow the course of Srogels Run, the largest waterway in Upper Pottsgrove. It is proposed that most of the Srogels Run Trail in Upper Pottsgrove (and all of the Srogels Run Trail in Lower Pottsgrove) also serve as the route for the county's proposed West County Trail or the analogous Pottsgrove Trail proposed by DVRPC. The complete Srogels Run Trail would begin at the pond which is the source of the stream in the northwestern portion of the township, north of the intersection of Evans Road and West Moyer Road. The trail would

join the proposed West County Trail at Gilbertsville Road and proceed in a southeasterly direction to the township's southeastern boundary with Lower Pottsgrove. From there the trail would pass through Lower Pottsgrove, linking to points of interest including Pottsgrove High School, Ringing Rocks Elementary, Brookside Golf Course, Alfred B. Miles Park and Nature Area, before reaching the Schuylkill River at Schuylkill River Park.

The Sprogels Run Trail can follow undeveloped stream corridor for a large portion of its length. In some locations trail users may need to be routed along local roads. The township will investigate all trail options.

Extensions of Sprogels Run Trail could utilize existing preserved land at the following locations:

- Smola and West Moyer open spaces at Route 100
- Regal Oaks Subdivision, near the sewage treatment plant
- Schwenk open space
- Turnberry Farms subdivision
- The acquisition of various strategic parcels or access easements along the stream would facilitate trail development.

of which were discussed above). There are plans to link the Sprogels Run Trail to the Schuylkill River Trail at Armand Hammer Boulevard in Lower Pottsgrove. The Schuylkill River Trail will eventually extend from Philadelphia to Reading.

Connections to Fox Run would allow users of the Sprogels Run Trail to easily access Hollenbach Park and Mocharniuk Meadows on Hanover Street and the nearby Pottsgrove Middle School. Other connections would be made via the proposed West County or Upper West Trails (*see descriptions*).

### POTENTIAL CONNECTIONS

Development of a Sprogels Run trail would make connections to other trails and parks possible (some

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## Goose Run Trail

The proposed Goose Run Trail would begin at the source of the stream branch north of Pine Ford Road (between Kummerer Road and Route 100), and would proceed in a southwesterly direction to the township boundary with West Pottsgrove.

After leaving the township, the Goose Run flows into West Pottsgrove, Douglass (Berks Co.), and back into West Pottsgrove where it flows into the Manatawny Creek. (for more information on the Goose Run, see Chapter 5: Potential Open Space Linkages)

Upper Pottsgrove will work with West Pottsgrove and Douglass Township (Berks Co.) to investigate the feasibility of extending the trail along this portion of the Goose Run. West Pottsgrove has expressed interest in investigating such an option. A potential alternative to this extension of the trail along the Goose Run in West Pottsgrove and Douglass (Berks Co.) would be to establish a linkage along Levengood and Sell Roads connecting the future Goose Run Trail in Upper Pottsgrove to the future Manatawny Trail.

*The Greater Pottstown Trails Feasibility Study* identified this trail as a potential alignment for a segment of the proposed Upper West Trail. This trail would connect Upper Pottsgrove to its neighboring townships and tie the Goose Run and Stone Hill greenways to the distant Schuylkill River and Swamp Run greenways.

A completed segment of the Goose Run Trail was built on land set aside as part of the development process of the Summer Grove Subdivision. This cooperation with developers to establish a trail stands as an example of what is possible should land in the western corner of the township, currently owned by Waste Management, Inc., be developed.

### POTENTIAL CONNECTIONS

The completion of Goose Run trail would connect to the following places:

- Sprogels Run Trail via West Moyer Road connector (see map

of proposed trails, Chapter 5)

- Farmington and Smola open spaces
- Chestnut Grove subdivision and the Summer Grove subdivision
- Boerner open space
- Heather Place Park and adjoining municipal facilities
- The Police Athletic League (PAL) fields
- The proposed Manatawny Trail (with connections to the Schuylkill River Trail and Parkland alongside the river)
- Ralph Murgia Park

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## West County/Upper West Trails

Montgomery County's proposed West County Trail and the closely-aligned Upper West Trail would connect the Schuylkill River Trail in Pottstown with significant natural areas to the north east of Upper Pottsgrove. The West County Trail would connect with the Perkiomen Trail in Green Lane, while the Upper West Trail would join with the Sunrise Trail in New Hanover Township. Originally, the conceptual alignment of the West County Trail was planned to extend north from Pottstown Borough, passing through Upper Pottsgrove using State Road and Pine Ford Road before reaching Gilbertsville Road.

Both original plans for the West County Trail and Upper Pottsgrove's suggested rerouting of the trail would link it to the Kulp Field-Hoffman Field park facility before passing into Douglass Township (Montgomery Co.). It would pass Twin Ponds Golf Club, travel into New Hanover and Upper Frederick, and eventually reach Green Lane Reservoir. The Sunrise Trail would branch off this trail in Upper Frederick and travel along the Swamp Creek, past Sunrise Mill to Schwenksville and the Perkiomen Trail.

The township proposes altering this route so the planned trail section south of the point where Gilbertsville Road crosses Sprogels Run would instead follow Sprogels Run to West Moyer Road, where it would head south, connect with and follow the proposed Goose Run Trail, which would take it into West Pottsgrove. This proposed alteration would remove the proposed route from areas with busy roads, more developed areas, narrow roads with little room for a trail, and less scenic areas; instead it would generally follow attractive natural stream corridors, and link to Manatawny Creek and future Manatawny Trail at Ralph Murgia Park in West Pottsgrove Township. The proposed Manatawny Trail would continue downstream along the creek to Memorial Park and the central business district in Pottstown, and the Schuylkill River Trail. Upstream, the Manatawny Trail would connect to the proposed Secret Valley Trail in Berks County, following the Colebrookdale Railroad to Boyertown. The Upper West Trail includes alignment alternatives similar to those identified for the West County Trail.

# Trail Development Via the Land Development Process

Upper Pottsgrove has used the land development process to encourage the development of local trails where appropriate, and to ensure that segments of proposed township trails are constructed when land is developed along those trail alignments. The township will continue to employ this method in the future, and will also support interconnections among local paths, township trails, and the county trail system.



*The Goose Run Trail is an example of a trail that was built as part of a land development*

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION State Agricultural Security Area (ASA)

State law allows groups of farmers, with municipal approval, to create agricultural security districts. These districts must comprise at least 500 acres, although the farms do not have to be contiguous. If a municipality has farms

but cannot meet the acreage requirement, it can join another municipality's district. Landowners who join one of these districts have no obligations, but they do receive three distinct benefits.

First, farms in agricultural security areas are protected from new ordinances that would restrict normal farming operations or define farms as nuisances. However, the farm operation must use acceptable farming practices that do not threaten the public health, safety, and welfare.

Second, condemning land in agricultural security areas is more difficult. Land condemnations by the Commonwealth or local municipal authorities, school boards, and governing bodies must be reviewed and approved by a state agricultural board before any action can be taken.

Third, farms in an agricultural security area can apply to sell their development rights to the county and state. When development rights are sold, farmers receive the difference between the development value of their property and the farm value of their property. In return, a conservation easement is placed on the property, permanently restricting any non-farm development on the property. This development rights sales program permanently preserves farms.

Upper Pottsgrove will support the ASA program by educating landowners about the benefits of such a program. However, it is up to individual landowners to manage the district.

# 12 plan implementation

This chapter outlines how the goals and objectives described throughout the plan may be realized by the township. The objectives are grouped by the goals that they support and sorted by their priority. For each objective, this chapter lists the timeframe projected for its completion, the entities responsible for implementation, and potential funding sources.

Figure 12.1 || *Implementation Table*

Goal	Objective	Implementation Partners	Projected Timeframe	Potential Funding
Create Permanently Protected Open Space	Fee simple acquisition of lands identified as Open Space Priority Areas	OSR, BOC	Ongoing	Township, grants
	Acquire conservation easements	OSR, BOC	Ongoing	Township, grants
	Acquire open space through the development process	PC, BOC	Ongoing	N/A
Establish Greenways and Trails	Develop trails on current township open space	OSB	Near-term (1-3 years)	Township, grants
	Acquire new trail easements	OSB, BOC	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Township, grants
	Coordinate with developers to construct new trails	PC, OSB, BOC	Ongoing	N/A
	Adopt official trail map	PC, OSB, BOC	Near-term	N/A
	Complete Sprogels Run Trail	OSB	Mid-term	Township, grants
	Complete Goose Run/Upper West/West County Trail	OSB	Long-term (5-10 years)	Township, grants
	Complete Pottsgrove Trail	OSB	Long-term (5-10 years)	Township, grants

Enhance Local Recreation Opportunities	Improve and expand recreation amenities in existing parks	OSB, PARRC, GA	Near-term	Township, grants
	Add recreation amenities to new parks and open space	OSB, PARRC	Mid-term	Township, grants
	Conduct regular safety inspections of parks and recreation facilities	DPW, PARRC	Near-term	Township
	Develop maintenance program for parks, trails, and open space facilities	OSB, DPW	Near-term	Township
	Publicize the range of recreational program and amenities available	OSB, PARRC, GA	Near-term	Township, donations
	Work with Pottsgrove School District and neighboring municipalities to ensure access and support for wider range of recreation options	OSB, PARRC	Near-term	N/A
	Provide recreation options for residents of all ages and residents with disabilities	OSB, PARRC	Mid-term	Township, grants
Secure Funding for Open Space and Recreation Facilities and Programs	Encourage donations of land, easements, goods, labor, and services	OSB	Near-term	N/A
	Employ fees and charges	OSB	Mid-term	Township
	Apply for grants	OSB, PARRC, GA	Near-term	Township
Preserve Historic Resources	Establish a historic preservation overlay zoning district	BOC, PC	Near-term	N/A
	Adopt a historic preservation ordinance	BOC	Mid-term	N/A
	Empower the township Historic Board to participate in development reviews	BOC	Mid-term	N/A
	Nominate properties to the National Historic Register	HB	Near-term	N/A
Preserve Farmland	Support local landowners' Agricultural Security Area (ASA) membership	OSB	Near-term	Township
	Formalize township's agricultural open spaces as a farm parks	OSB	Near-term	Township
Environmental Conservation	Amend zoning ordinance to allow Cluster Development in the R-1 and R-80 Districts	PC, BOC	Mid-term	N/A
	Adopt wellhead protection and aquifer recharge ordinances	PC, BOC	Mid-term	N/A

## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

BOC – Township Board of Commissioners  
 DPW – Township Department of Public Works  
 GA – Green Allies  
 HB – Township Historical Board

OSR – Township Open Space & Recreation Board  
 PARRC – Pottstown Area Regional Recreation Committee  
 PC – Township Planning Commission

While the township officials and employees play vital roles in the implementation of each open space objective, there are many objectives that involve partnerships with outside organizations. Some of these partners work very closely with the township to operate sites and programs within the Upper Pottsgrove. Other partner organizations may include:

- The Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Neighboring Municipalities
- PMRPC
- Land Conservation Organizations
- Pottsgrove School District

# POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Upper Pottsgrove is eligible for funds from a variety of sources including grants, general revenue funds, bond issues, and donations (of cash, materials, or labor).

Upper Pottsgrove will pursue grants available from Montgomery County, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and others. These grants can be used to implement the township's plan objectives. A sampling of possible grant and funding sources is described below.

## Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

DVRPC manages several grant and assistance programs primarily regarding transportation. The Regional Trails Program is specifically focused on providing planning assistance and financial support for multi-use trail projects. The Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) supports the implementation of DVRPC's *Connections 2045* plan and has funding opportunities for projects in a variety of areas, notably bicycling and pedestrian transportation and environmental protection. Other transportation grants administered by DVRPC may become more applicable to the township's open space projects if transportation programs change to allot more funding for active transportation modes.

## Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

DCNR manages a variety of grant and technical assistance programs concerned with a variety of issues. DCNR annually awards planning, acquisition, and development grants for parks, recreation, rivers conservation, trails, greenways, and protection of open space and critical natural areas. Most DCNR grants require a 50/50 match. DCNR also provides pre-application workshops to assist applicants in the preparation of their application forms.

A priority goal of these programs is to develop and sustain partnerships with communities, non-profits, and other organizations for recreation and conservation projects and purposes. With this in mind, the Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) was established. It is a combination of several funding sources and grant programs, including the Commonwealth's Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund (KEY 93, described below), the Environmental Stewardship and Watershed Protection Act (Growing Greener, also described below), Act 68 Snowmobile and ATV Trails Fund, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Recreational Trails component of the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21)

## **Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**

The Growing Greener program has funded efforts to clean up Pennsylvania's rivers and streams, reclaimed abandoned mines and toxic waste sites, invested in new alternative energy sources, preserved farmland and open space, and developed watershed restoration programs. Thus far, Growing Greener has generated nearly \$1.50 in matching funds for the environment for every \$1.00 in state money. As the Growing Greener program evolves, it will focus on brownfield redevelopment, farmland and open space preservation, water quality improvements, enhanced state and community parks, and an upgraded fish and wildlife infrastructure. Growing Greener II will accomplish these goals while making critical investments in community revitalization and the promotion of the use of clean energy.

## **Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation Fund**

The Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Act was signed into law in 1993. It directs a portion of the state's Real Estate Transfer Tax to the Keystone Fund, establishing a dedicated and permanent funding source for recreation, parks, conservation, and other programming. Grants from this program require a minimum 50% match from the recipient municipality or nonprofit organization.

## **Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission**

Many communities value their historic resources and work to preserve them for future generations. These resources can then be integrated into the open space network and cultural amenities of that community to enhance local image and aesthetics. The PHMC offers several programs that aid municipalities in these efforts.

Certified Local Government Grant Program - Provides funding for cultural resource surveys, national register nominations, technical and planning assistance, educational and interpretive programs, staffing and training, and pooling CLG grants and third party administration.

Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program – Funding for preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation.

Pennsylvania History and Museum Grant Program – Funding under this program is designated to support a wide variety of museum, history, archives and historic preservation projects, as well as nonprofit organizations and local governments. There are 10 types of grants.

# Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development

The mission of DCED is “To foster opportunities for businesses and communities to succeed and thrive in a global economy, thereby enabling Pennsylvanians to achieve a superior quality of life.” Therefore there are several assistance and grant programs available to Pennsylvania municipalities. Often, local economic and community revitalization efforts are supported by the implementation of green infrastructure and open space plans. Below is a list of programs offered by DCED through which revitalization funds may flow to implement the recommendations described in this open space plan.

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) - Provides grant assistance and technical assistance to aid communities in their community and economic development efforts.

Community Revitalization Program (CR) – Provides grant funds to support local initiatives that promote the stability of communities.

Main Street Program – This program provides assistance for revitalization planning and projects.

Elm Street Program – Grant funds for planning, technical assistance and physical improvements to residential and mixed use areas in proximity to central business districts.

Industrial Sites Reuse Program – Grant and low-interest loan financing to perform environmental site assessment and remediation work at former industrial sites.

## PECO Energy Green Region Open Space Grants

PECO Energy, a subsidiary of Exelon, is currently involved in several environmental partnerships including “TreeVitalize,” with DCNR, clean water preservation with The Nature Conservancy, and environmental education initiatives with the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education and Green Valleys Association. Green Region grants are available to municipalities in amounts up to \$10,000. The grants can be used with other funding sources to cover a wide variety of planning and direct expenses associated with development and implementing open space programs, including consulting fees, surveys, environmental assessments, habitat improvement, and capital improvements for passive recreation.

## Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation

The Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation promotes healthy lifestyles in communities throughout the Pottstown area, identified as those within a 10-mile radius of the borough. The foundation awards grants to non-

profit organizations, so one of the township's partner organizations may apply for funds to improve the park facilities and programming. Proposals should have a goal to increase access and physical activity.

## **Delaware Estuary Grants Program**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation administers this grant program in cooperation with the Delaware Estuary Program, and other partner agencies. Grants range between \$5,000 and \$25,000, and larger amounts are awarded depending on whether the project relates directly to the action items of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the Delaware Estuary or that would improve the Delaware Estuary.

## **Watershed Action Grants**

These grants are awarded by the Conservation Fund for applicants in southeastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey for implementation of conservation plans. Grant awards are between \$2,000 and \$20,000 for projects that protect the watershed, improve water quality, or promote watershed stewardship.

## **Local Earned Income Tax**

In 2006, Upper Pottsgrove Township enacted a 0.25% earned income tax for the acquisition and preservation of open space. Since that time, the township has used that dedicated funding stream to great effect, leveraging funding from county and conservancy sources and permanently preserving hundreds of acres through acquisition and conservation easements. The revenue from this tax is largely restricted to the protection and acquisition of open space, but up to 25% may be used to develop, design, engineer, and maintain open spaces.

## **General Revenue Funds and Bond Issue**

Upper Pottsgrove has the option of using general revenue funds for open space and recreation purposes. It also has the option of issuing a bond to pay for the capital costs of parkland acquisition and development. The decision to pursue these options rests with the Board of Commissioners after being advised by the administration.

## **Montco2040 Grants**

These grants support municipal projects that implement the goals of the *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision* county comprehensive plan. The funds assist in the completion of targeted physical improvements and correspond with the plan's themes of Connected Communities, Sustainable Places, and Vibrant Economy. Grants awards vary between \$10,000 and \$200,000 and require local matching funds of at least 20% of the total grant amount. Since 2016, the grant program has awarded over \$5.5 million, supporting 56 projects in 35 Montgomery County municipalities.

# Donations

Upper Pottsgrove should encourage donations from individuals, businesses, and groups to help pay for parkland acquisition, development, and tree planting. The donations may be cash, materials, labor, or services. The township could organize special days during which local citizens and groups could gather to participate in implementing open space projects.

## LAND CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

### Brandywine Conservancy

*Chadds Ford, PA*

- Counties where acquisitions completed: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Montgomery, Philadelphia

**Mission:** The mission of the Brandywine Conservancy's Environmental Management Center is to conserve the natural and cultural resources of the Brandywine River watershed and other selected areas with a primary emphasis on conservation of water quantity and quality.

**Founded:** 1967

[www.brandywineconservancy.org](http://www.brandywineconservancy.org)

### Heritage Conservancy

*Doylestown, PA*

- Counties where acquisitions completed: Bucks, Montgomery, Susquehanna, York
- Counties where acquisitions anticipated: Northampton

**Mission:** Heritage Conservancy is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving our natural and historic heritage. Founded in 1958, it was concerned for the rapid loss of open space in Bucks County which led to the formation of the Bucks County Park Foundation, known today as Heritage Conservancy.

**Founded:** 1958

[www.heritageconservancy.org](http://www.heritageconservancy.org)

### Lower Merion Conservancy

*Gladwyne, PA*

- Counties where acquisitions completed: Delaware, Montgomery

**Mission:** The Lower Merion Conservancy acts to protect our area's natural and historic resources, open space, and watersheds for area residents and future generations. Through education, advocacy, and research, the Conservancy promotes collective responsibility for these resources.

**Founded:** 1991

[www.lmconservancy.org](http://www.lmconservancy.org)

## Natural Lands

*Media, PA*

- Counties where acquisitions completed: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia

**Mission:** Natural Lands is a non-profit, regional land conservation organization working to protect the most critical remaining open lands in the greater Philadelphia region.

**Founded:** 1961

[www.natlands.org](http://www.natlands.org)

## North American Land Trust

*Chadds Ford, PA 19317*

- Counties where acquisitions completed: Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Montgomery

**Founded:** 1992

[www.nalt.org](http://www.nalt.org)

## Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy

*Schwenksville, PA*

- Counties where acquisitions completed: Montgomery

**Mission:** The Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy is a nonprofit organization founded in 1964 by local citizens to combat pollution in the Perkiomen Creek and its tributaries. We provide an integrated approach to environmental issues of the Perkiomen Watershed area through environmental education, Watershed stewardship and conservation programs.

**Founded:** 1964

[www.perkiomenwatershed.org](http://www.perkiomenwatershed.org)



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