

Plan Implementation and Correlation

This concluding chapter documents how the township intends to implement the policies recommended in this plan and describes how the plan relates to the Comprehensive Plans and other relevant documents or policies of adjacent communities.

Implementation

This section is divided into four basic subsections: land use; transportation; parkland, recreation and natural resources; and housing and historic preservation.

Land Use

To implement the land use policies contained in this plan, the following actions or policy decisions should be considered by the township.

- Implement the policy actions proposed by the strategic plan in Chapter 7, Proposed Land Use Plan. These include the following:

Rezoning

- Change the spot commercial zoning in residential neighborhoods throughout the township.
- Change the heavy industrial zoning to low density residential at the radio tower site near the intersection of Joshua and Flourtown Roads.
- Change the single-family residential and industrial zoning along Butler Pike, between Plymouth Meeting and Conrail tracks to allow park and light industrial zoning.

Develop New Zoning

- In Plymouth Meeting, a new zoning district should be created that would allow the owners of the old houses to convert the property to offices or apartments. Design standards should be included in this district to preserve historic facades, limit overbuilding on a lot, and encourage shared driveways and common parking lots. This district would be known as the R-O Residential Office District.
- Along Germantown Pike in Lafayette Hill, Bethlehem Pike in Fort Washington, and Butler Pike in Harmonville, various commercial areas should be rezoned from their current intensive commercial zoning to a village commercial district that allows the existing uses, but limits the intensity of development. This district would be known as the V-C Village Commercial District.
- Enact the Growing Greener program for the township's A-AAAA Residential Zoning Districts.

Transportation

To implement the transportation policies described in this plan, the following actions and policy decisions should be considered by the township.

- Implement the roadway recommendations section of Chapter 8, Transportation Plan. These include the following:

Existing Road Improvement Projects

- Work with the county and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PADOT) on implementing the following projects: Fort Washington Project, Ridge Pike Project, and Cold Point Village⁽¹⁾.
- Continue to work with Upper Dublin Township’s rescape committee to promote streetscape beautification and pedestrian safety along Pennsylvania Avenue in Fort Washington and with the Flourtown/Erdenheim Enhancement Association to promote similar efforts along Bethlehem Pike in the township’s Flourtown section.

Traffic Impact Fee Ordinance

- Utilizing Act 209, the township should adopt an impact fee ordinance, which should allow assessing developers a fee in order to fund off-site road improvements necessitated by their land development project.

Township Ordinances

- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to encourage shared parking and common access drives for non-residential development.
- Amend the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to limit the number of houses in a development with only one access point and encourage that road connections be made to existing stub streets in new subdivisions.

Coordination of Road Classifications with PADOT Standards

- Amend the 1993 Official Map to reflect changes to township roads. (Such as down grading the now dead-end Hagy’s Mill Road.)
- Change roadway terminology on the map and in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to reflect PADOT terminology.
- Work with the county and PADOT to get certain roads, such as Spring Mill Road and Crescent Avenue, upgraded to reflect their importance in the township road network.

Scenic Roads

- Encourage conservation easements and promote innovative zoning techniques to preserve the views along the scenic roads designated in the 1996 Open Space Plan and amended by this plan.

Proposed Intersection Improvements

- Numerous intersection improvements are recommended throughout the township. To promote efficient traffic flow, these should be implemented as much as possible.

(1) This final improvement and realignment project would also involve working Plymouth Township. A recommended action in the 1965 Comprehensive Plan, its implementation is one of the township’s most important road projects.

- Implement the alternative transportation modes improvements recommended in Chapter 8, Transportation. These include the following:
 - Future Rail Line Proposals - Begin a dialogue with PADOT and the county regarding the township's concerns of the potential closing of the Miquon train station on the R-6 Line and the implementation of the Cross County Metro rail line.
 - Bike Pathways - Work with the county on implementing the Bicycle Mobility Program and ensure that the township's recommendations for including additional Whitemarsh roads in this program are realized.
 - Pedestrian Pathways - Require sidewalks or hard surface pathways for all land development projects; implement the sidewalk connections proposed in Chapter 8.

Parkland, Recreation and Natural Resources

To implement the parkland and recreation policies found in Chapter Ten, Parkland, Recreation and Natural Resources Plan, the following actions and policy decisions should be considered by the township.

- **Parkland Policies:** Addressing Parkland Deficiencies
 - As identified in this plan, the township will be deficient 147 acres of parkland, based on buildout projections. To rectify this, the township will amend the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to require that all residential land developments make a mandatory land dedication or pay a fee-in-lieu of this dedication.
 - Preserve land by encouraging voluntary dedication of open space, enacting the Growing Greener program, and purchasing land for neighborhood parks.
- **Recreation Policies:**
 - Continue to assess the recreation programs of the township to address new needs.
 - Implement the specific master plans or recommendations for the township's existing parks.
- **Open Space Policies:**
 - Use the Map of Conservation Features to develop a series of interconnected greenways.
 - Work to preserve Erdenheim Farm and open space in the Miquon and Broad Axe sections of the township.
 - Work with neighborhood and conservation groups to preserve open space.
 - Update the 1996 Open Space Plan.
 - Pursue funding strategies for the Open Space Fund.
 - Work to obtain easements for existing, informal trails and bridle paths.
 - Promote flexibility and innovation to optimize open space preservation.

- **Natural Resources** - Preservation Policies: Techniques for Their Preservation
 - Adopt a riparian buffer ordinance requiring setbacks from stream corridors and wetlands.
 - Amend the institutional overlay district to preserve significant portions of open space.
 - Adopt Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater detention basins to promote cleaner streams and aquifer recharge.
 - Adopt a natural features and critical areas impact ordinance to preserve natural features throughout the township.
 - Revise the township's buffer requirements and plants list.
 - Promote landscaping along Germantown and Ridge Pikes.
 - Landscape utility corridors and obtain trail easements for them.

Housing and Historic Preservation

To implement the policies described in Chapter 11, Housing and Historic Preservation Plan, the following actions and policy decisions will be considered by the township.

- **Housing.** To implement the housing goal, and its objectives, the following will be enacted:
 - Objective One:* Provide a varied housing stock that addresses the needs of all residents.
 - Adopt an elderly housing ordinance to permit this use.
 - Allow apartments in the proposed R-O and V-C Districts.
 - Modernize the residential conversion standards to more easily allow these where appropriate.
 - Allow a variety of housing types in some of the districts impacted by the Growing Greener program.
 - Allow housing as an option in the Riverfront Redevelopment District.
 - Objective Two:* Ensure that the existing housing stock remains desirable.
 - Implement the strategic plan in Chapter 7, Proposed Land Use Plan.
 - Continue to enforce building and property maintenance codes.
 - Objective Three:* Ensure that infill development is compatible with the surrounding existing housing stock and its density.
 - Prevent over development on lots by adopting impervious surface and building coverage standards.
 - Infill residential should:
 - Provide landscape buffers.
 - Orient housing in relation to the existing dwellings.

Historic Preservation

Objective One: Promote flexibility for old houses:

- Adopt the R-O District for Plymouth Meeting and monitor Cold Point to see if such zoning is warranted.

- Explore reuse options such as bed and breakfasts.
- Create a local historic district for Cold Point Village and consider one for Spring Mill and Fort Washington.
- Ensure that the Growing Greener program is designed to require the documentation of all structures threatened by development that are 50 years or older.

Correlation

This section examines the comprehensive plans and other documents or policies of adjacent communities in regard to their impact on Whitemarsh.

Springfield Township

In 1998 the township adopted a comprehensive plan, updating earlier plans adopted in 1958 and 1968. Most of this update does not recommend any major changes along the common border with Whitemarsh Township. However, in two areas, several new land use policies are recommended that could impact properties along the border. They are:

- **Sandy Run Country Club.** Recommended to remain as a golf course, it is suggested that if it ever develops that it should either be cluster residential, low-rise office campus, or mixed office and residential use. In Whitemarsh, it is adjacent to McNeil Laboratory's site. None of Springfield's proposed development scenarios would negatively impact this area of the township.
- **Erdenheim Farm/Whitemarsh Country Club.** These properties, which are located in both townships, are proposed to remain open space. This is consistent with Whitemarsh's policies. However, if these properties do develop, it is recommended as either cluster residential or low-rise office campus. Whitemarsh proposes only the Growing Greener conservation subdivision for these sites. It should be noted that much of the Dixon Farm, along the townships' common border, is preserved open space owned by the Natural Lands Trust.

Upper Dublin Township

The township's plan was adopted in 1966 and selectively updated in 1976, with the transportation section further updated in 1990. This recent update recognized PADOT's current program to improve Pennsylvania Avenue's on/off ramps with Route 309, which is also documented in Whitemarsh's plan. It also recommended the need for a sidewalk along Pennsylvania Avenue; something that any new land development in Whitemarsh would be required to do. Three Whitemarsh land use policies in regard to the shared border with Upper Dublin need to be noted:

- Commercial zoning along Hollywood Drive should be changed to residential to reflect the existing land use.
- New commercial zoning will be enacted along Bethlehem Pike to prevent the development of intensive commercial uses and to better address the existing character of the corridor.
- Incentives will be created along Pennsylvania Avenue near Bethlehem Pike to allow area by the train station to intensify its development density. The rest of the corridor will now preclude auto-oriented land uses and to promote this area as an employment center. These incentives will be in concert with design standards that will promote the ideas of the Fort Washington Streetscape Committee.

Whitpain Township

Whitpain's original comprehensive plan dates from 1970, it was updated in 1984. Regarding land use, it recommends low density residential along the two townships' common border, with the exception of Broad Axe Village where the classification is commercial. This is similar with the designations in the Whitemarsh Plan. The transportation element recognizes problems at Butler and Skippack Pikes because of numerous curb cuts for commercial sites. Township-wide, Whitemarsh proposes to limit curb cuts for non-residential development through amendments to the Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances. Recently, Whitpain adopted a traffic impact fee; Whitemarsh proposes to do the same.

Plymouth Township

More than any other adjacent community, Whitemarsh and Plymouth have numerous common issues. They share a school district and coordinate on recreational programs. The Plymouth Meeting and Cold Point historic districts are in both townships.

In 1990, the township adopted a comprehensive plan, supplementing its 1972 plan. In regard to land use, much of what was proposed reflects existing uses. However, several issues need to be addressed:

- Whitemarsh's proposed R-O Residential/Office District for Plymouth Meeting reflects Plymouth's land use designation and zoning for its section of the village.
- Whitemarsh's proposed office and light industrial zoning for the existing single-family residential and industrial zoning along Butler Pike, south of the railroad line, is more reflective of Plymouth's office designation for this area.

Perhaps the most important issue the two communities share is the relocation of the intersection of Plymouth and Flourtown Roads with Butler Pike. This relocation is addressed in both Plymouth's and Whitemarsh's plans. While Plymouth's plan calls for a direct connection of Plymouth and Flourtown Roads to be made in Whitemarsh, it now also seems reasonable to relocate Butler Pike from the center of Cold Point to an area west of the village. It is recommended that both communities work with the county and PADOT to resolve the traffic problems that plague Cold Point.

Conshohocken Borough

Sharing a school district, several developed neighborhoods, and an old industrial area, the biggest issue facing these two communities is the redevelopment of the riverfront industrial area. Whitemarsh recognizes that it is only a matter of time before the redevelopment occurring in the borough will spill into the township. Similar to Conshohocken, efforts are being made to preserve open space along the river and install a riverfront walkway in Whitemarsh Township.

Whitemarsh will also be updating its residential zoning to prevent overdevelopment of lots; especially of the smaller lots found adjacent to the borough. Conshohocken's Comprehensive Plan dates from 1964 and proposes no policies that negatively impact Whitemarsh.

City of Philadelphia

Whitemarsh borders the City's Andorra section. The land in the City that is adjacent to the township is largely owned by Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education. Currently, the Center, in conjunction with the immediate neighborhood, is working on a master plan to preserve open space and limit development in this area. Given the township's intention to preserve open space at the Eagle Lodge and to implement natural

features preservation techniques, to preserve environmentally-sensitive areas such as those found along Manor Road, the objectives of their master plan and this one appear consistent.

Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan

Adopted in 1979, the county comprehensive plan was a multi-volumed document prepared to guide the county's growth into the 21st century. Currently being rewritten, the update will examine the policies contained in this document to provide direction regarding Whitemarsh Township. An examination of the existing plan has determined that this plan generally conforms with its policies, particularly the county land use plan.