

CHAPTER SIX

Goals and Objectives

The “Goals and Objectives” set the framework for the Comprehensive Plan. They set forth the township’s rationale for the policies contained in this document. In general, they were formulated to preserve and enhance the township’s quality of life. More specifically, they address various issues that can affect this quality.

Land Use

Goal

To be oriented toward the preservation of Whitemarsh Township’s remaining open space, thereby maintaining the township’s traditional character, and preserving natural features, and scenic landscapes.

Rationale

While recognizing the right to develop private land, the township realizes that the best way to maintain its quality of life and to preserve its unique sense of place is to emphasize open space preservation and sustainable development. Therefore, all future land use policies should be directed toward realizing these goals.

Objectives

- Whitemarsh is primarily a residential community and, as such, will work to protect its existing residential neighborhoods from conflicting land uses and overdevelopment.
- High-density residential development and commercial development will be directed to established areas with available infrastructure.
- Revise the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances in the A through AAAA Residential Districts to ensure that all future development will follow *Growing Greener: Conservation by Design* principles.
- Revise the zoning regulations for attached residential developments to reflect modern development practices and to ensure open space preservation.
- Revise the regulations in the Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances to require sustainable development practices.
- Establish a dialogue with adjacent townships regarding land use and development issues.

Economic Development and Commerce

Goal

To provide for a strong, diverse economic base within the confines of the township’s established character.

Rationale

While essentially a bedroom community and one that is surrounded by regional shopping malls and business campuses, the township does have a limited amount of commercial and office/ industrial development. This commercial development provides for local shopping needs, while the office/industrial development provides jobs. Both are important to the tax base. The township desires to continue encouraging

neighborhood-oriented commercial development for the convenience of residents and should promote the redevelopment of the old industrial riverfront for office, commercial and residential uses.

Objectives

- Commercial
 - Focus on providing commercial development that meets the needs of local residents not the region.
 - Promote the renovation and beautification of the township's existing shopping centers.
 - Implement village commercial zoning districts to limit the intensity of development in the small commercial nodes of Lafayette Hill, Fort Washington and Harmonville.
 - Implement the policies of the 1986 Germantown Pike Study, especially those designed to prevent commercial encroachment into neighborhoods, to upgrade the appearance of the streetscape, improve pedestrian safety, and to remove the split zoning on affected parcels.
 - Continue to work with Upper Dublin Township's rescue committee to promote streetscape beautification and pedestrian safety along Pennsylvania Avenue in Fort Washington and the Flourtown/Erdenheim Enhancement Association to promote similar efforts along Bethlehem Pike in the township's Flourtown section.
- Office and Industrial
 - Promote light industrial and business campus development only in established areas.
 - Establish a dialogue with the Borough of Conshohocken concerning the riverfront industrial area and its redevelopment.
 - Encourage the redevelopment of vacant industrial sites with development that is compatible with surrounding uses.

Transportation

Goal

To promote solutions to existing road and traffic problems and encourage transportation alternatives to automobiles.

Rationale

The region's growth has created a sizeable amount of pass-through traffic on the township's roads. With existing, often historic, development precluding the ability of Whitemarsh to make massive changes to its existing road network, the township should, instead, concentrate on improving congested intersections, providing better signalization, and making, wherever possible, necessary cartway improvements and road connections. Also, the township should, with SEPTA and the County, work to provide alternatives to the automobile.

Objectives

- Implement the roadway improvements described in the Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

- Coordinate with SEPTA and the County to improve the existing transit service.
- Establish a dialogue with the County regarding the Cross County Metro rail line service.
- Work to implement the Montgomery County/DVRPC Bicycle Mobility Program.
- Implement the pedestrian trails and sidewalk connections detailed in Chapters 8 and 10.
- Draft regulations that would limit improvements along the township’s designated scenic roads to only those necessary for safety.

Community Facilities

Goal

To ensure that all areas of the township are adequately served by public safety agencies/ organizations and that the public service needs of all residents are met.

Public Safety Rationale

Issues regarding the provision of adequate public safety (e.g., fire and police protection) are important for any municipality and often have the most visible impact on residents or businesses. Therefore, to ensure that these issues are addressed, a dialogue is needed with professionals in their respective fields.

Objectives

- Establish a dialogue with various public safety professionals to address common concerns.
- Ensure that all new development is located and designed to be adequately served by public safety agencies/organizations.

Public Service Rationale

The problem of adequately addressing the public service needs (e.g. public water/sewer, schools) of all residents can be a daunting one for a municipality. However, through coordination with various outside agencies, such as the school board and the recommendations of the township’s professional staff, the existing and projected population of the township can be served.

Objectives

- Ensure that all areas of the township are conveniently served by public schools, libraries, etc.
- Establish a dialogue with the local boards, such as the school board, to provide input on the location and development of new schools, libraries, or other public facilities.
- All new land developments and subdivisions should be served by public water.
- All new land developments, except those on large estate lots, should be served by public sewer.

Natural and Historic Resources

Goal

To promote the preservation and enhancement of significant natural features and cultural resources that are important aspects of the township's environment and history.

Rationale

The preservation of natural features or cultural resources is important for maintaining the sense of place that is Whitmarsh. Natural features, such as woodlands or stream corridors, not only help to define the township but enhance its quality of life. Cultural resources, such as buildings or historic sites, distinguish the township from other suburban enclaves and provide a visual reminder of the township's long history.

Objectives

- Natural Features:
 - Enact a riparian buffer ordinance for stream corridor and wetland preservation.
 - Enact a scenic resource protection ordinance to preserve the scenic vistas described in Chapter 8.
 - Amend the shade tree protection ordinance to assist in the preservation of all large significant shade trees, wherever possible, in the township.
 - Re-examine the building and impervious coverage standards in the Zoning Ordinance to guarantee that green space is preserved on individual lots and development tracts.
 - Adopt the map of the Township-Wide Potential Conservation Land, described in Chapter Three, to serve as a guide for future residential development and natural resource protection.
 - Revise the parking standards in the Zoning Ordinance to promote shared parking and parking held in reserve to limit impervious surface coverage in parking lots.
 - Revise the township's Plant Materials List in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to limit the overplanting of one species, to remove plants classified as invasive, and to promote the use of native plants.
 - Revise the landscape buffer standards in the Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances to require better screening of development from roads and different land uses.
 - Encourage donations of land, development rights, and scenic easements to the township or land conservation groups.
 - Enact a Natural Features and Critical Areas Impact Ordinance.
 - Adopt the Commonwealth's Department of Environmental Protection's Best Management Practices for stormwater detention.
- Cultural Resources:
 - Develop a local historic district for Cold Point and consider one for Spring Mill and Fort Washington.
 - Develop transitional buffer zones for the areas surrounding the historic villages.

- Ensure that the Growing Greener regulations require an assesment for any structure older than 50 years and threatened by developoment. The regulations should promote the retention of those structures deemed significant, because of age, architectural style or relationship to an historic event.
- Provide regulations for the sensitive adaptive reuse of old houses that are no longer desirable as residential dwellings.
- Hire a Historic Preservation Consultant to perform a comprehensive analysis of all the township's buildings.

Open Space and Recreation

Goal

Building on the township's land use goals, tracts of open space should be preserved, while parkland for active or passive recreation should be created and enhanced.

Rationale

Open space preservation has been recognized as a significant factor in a municipality's quality of life. Preserved parcels provide opportunities for active or passive recreation, a habitat for wildlife, and a visual break from developed areas. Residential areas surrounded by them are invariably more desirable and houses maintain a higher resale value over time than areas without open space. In 1996, the township adopted an Open Space Plan. This plan incorporates, whenever possible, the policies and objectives of that document.

Objectives

- Enact, whenever possible, the policies of the township's 1996 Open Space Plan. Specifically the following ones which are related to open space and recreation:
 1. Complete the continuous trail through the township along the Wissahickon Creek.
 2. Establish a Sandy Run Greenway and Trail.
 3. Develop a passive recreational facility on the Schuylkill River at the county's Spring Mill Park.
 4. Develop a comprehensive recreation plan for the township.
- Update and revise the township's 1996 Open Space Plan.
- Ensure all major residential developments have convenient and safe access to open space areas.
- Establish a dialogue with the County regarding the implementation of the Plymouth Trail to ensure that the township's concerns are addressed.
- Establish a dialogue with the state, county or private agencies or trusts that own parkland in the township.
- Promote linked greenways through the use of riparian corridors, woodlands and designated open space areas.
- Draft regulations that promote the conservation of existing hiking trails and bridle paths.
- Pursue funding strategies to increase the township's open space fund.

- Adopt the Mandatory Land Dedication or Fee-in-Lieu of as described in Chapter 10 to ensure that new parkland is created or existing recreation needs receive funding as part of the land development process.
- Work with the county to enact the policies of the Schuylkill River Greenway Stewardship Study.
- Work with land conservation groups to encourage the preservation of the remaining lands of Erdenheim Farm and of the undeveloped land in the Broad Axe and Miquon areas of the township.

Housing

Goal

To encourage a range of housing types that will meet the needs of the township's residents, promote residential development in keeping with established development patterns, and ensure that the value of the township's existing housing stock is maintained.

Rationale

The township desires to provide a housing stock that meets the needs of a variety of residents. As a primarily residential community that has essentially developed since World War II, the township wants to ensure that its existing housing stock remains viable and that infill housing is placed in appropriate locations.

Objectives

- Provide for a varied housing stock that addresses the needs of all residents.
- Ensure that the existing housing stock remains desirable through code enforcement.
- Draft landscape buffer requirements, house orientation standards and stricter subdivision regulations to ensure that residential in-fill development is compatible with existing development.
- Allow a variety of housing types, such as multifamily, townhouse, and live/work units in the riverfront development area.