

Norristown Comprehensive Plan

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

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Norristown Comprehensive Plan 2009

Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Chapter 1

Introduction



A Comprehensive Plan provides an overall vision for the community.



The Comprehensive Plan will serve as a framework for reviewing development proposals.

Norristown's Comprehensive Plan

The Municipality of Norristown Planning Commission was established August 9, 1961 in order to carry out the planning functions authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Beginning in 1964 and extending through 1969, the municipality adopted its first comprehensive plan in five separate volumes. While many other planning activities have taken place since that time, the comprehensive plan itself had not been updated. In 2005 the municipality endeavored to begin that process.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan provides an overall vision for a community along with tools to implement that vision. It begins by assessing the current state of a municipality, establishes goals and objectives for how it should look and function in the future, and then proposes actions to implement the goals and objectives.

The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for the community's leaders as they make land use policy such as zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, capital improvement plans, redevelopment or revitalization programs, parkland development, housing renovation programs, and parking regulations. It also

provides a framework for reviewing individual development proposals.

State Mandate

Although a Comprehensive Plan is tailored to each individual municipality, certain elements are required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be included in a Comprehensive Plan. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) is the state Act that allows and regulates municipal planning, including zoning. As such, the MPC outlines the following required elements for a Comprehensive Plan:

- Statement of objectives
- Land use plan
- Housing plan
- Transportation plan
- Community facilities and utilities plan
- Statement of interrelationship of plan components
- Short- and long-range implementation strategies
- Compatibilities with or buffering for neighboring municipalities
- Natural and historic resources protection plan
- Identification of land uses relative to natural resources and use of existing minerals
- Identification of regionally important land uses
- Farmland plan
- Historic preservation plan

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- Water supply plan
- Planning surveys (characteristics and trends)

Other elements may be included, and the organization of the plan elements and the thoroughness of any part of an element is left to the discretion of the municipality.

Planning in Norristown

In 1961 Borough Council created the Norristown Planning Commission to develop a community comprehensive plan which would serve as a guide for the orderly future development of the municipality. The zoning ordinance was first enacted in 1933 and the subdivision regulations in 1955. In 1964 Borough Council and the Borough Planning Commission entered into its first contract with the Montgomery County Planning Commission to prepare a comprehensive planning program. This relationship with the county continues today.

Today Norristown has a Planning and Economic Development Department in addition to a seven-member Planning Commission. The Department annually administers multiple grant funds for a range of programs from park and open space improvements, to streetscape enhancements and community policing.

Other Plans for Norristown

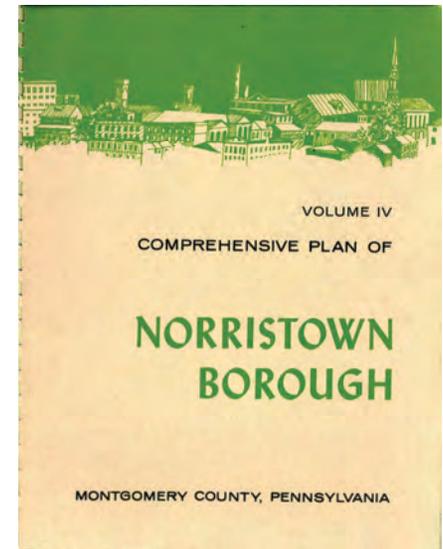
Since the adoption of the final volume of the previous Comprehensive Plan in 1969, many studies have been completed, some of the most influential of which include:

- Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy (2000)
- Plan for the Riverfront Redevelopment Area (2002)
- Area Mobility & Industrial Corridor Re-use Study (2005)
- Norristown Open Space Plan (2005)
- Municipality of Norristown 2005-2009 Consolidated Plan
- Lafayette Street Land Use Access Study (2006)
- Norristown Marketing Strategy (2008)
- Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy Update (2008)

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan will draw heavily from these previous plans, as well as from the documents listed in figure 1.1 at the end of this chapter.



A wayfinding and signage program grant is administered by the Department of Planning and Economic Development.



Norristown's first comprehensive plan was adopted in five volumes between 1965 and 1969.



The Economic Revitalization Strategy's vision resulted from a consensus process involving a variety of stakeholders.

The Lafayette Street Corridor Study recommended extending Lafayette Street to the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy and 2009 NERS Update

The Economic Revitalization Strategy recognizes that Norristown has many fine attributes to offer, including its historic architecture, a traditional main street, proximity to the Schuylkill River, access to a regional highway network, and access to a variety of modes of transportation.

The Strategy's vision resulted from a consensus process involving County and Municipal officials, the local business community, civic and neighborhood groups, and local citizens. This vision addresses a full range of quality-of-life issues affecting Norristown's neighborhoods and its business area. The vision builds on substantial prior work, which is embodied in past plans examining issues ranging from riverfront parks to transportation.

The Economic Revitalization Strategy has at its heart a plan to create a new regional gateway and attraction for Norristown on the riverfront. As activities return to the civic and commercial heart, programs will be in place to spread these benefits throughout Norristown's neighborhoods.

Lafayette Street Extension Project

The Norristown riverfront has been targeted as an area for redevelopment and revitalization. Improved access to the riverfront area is vital to the ongoing commitment of local and regional officials to enhance the appearance of Norristown and to encourage business growth in the redevelopment district, as well as throughout the County Seat.

To develop alternatives that improve vehicular access to the riverfront area and satisfy both economic development and quality of life priorities in Norristown, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, in association with a team of consultants, initiated the Lafayette Street Extension Project.

The project includes extending Lafayette street from Ford Street to Conshohocken Road where it will connect to a full interchange with the PA Turnpike. The road will be widened and up-graded with sidewalks and on-street parking. The existing Schuylkill River Trail will be realigned as part of the improvements.

Periodic newsletters concerning this project are written in English and Spanish to reach a wide audience. This project has also spawned a follow-up study to create a land use plan for the Lafayette Street corridor and the riverfront, authored by the consultant group of Edwards & Kelcey (now Jacobs Engineering).

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Redevelopment Plan for the Riverfront Redevelopment Area

The redevelopment plan was created in response to a recommendation made in the first Economic Revitalization Strategy, adopted by the municipality in October of 2000. As a result of this plan, the Overlay Zoning Districts were adopted. These districts permit and encourage uses that are compatible with and complementary to the historic character of the community and it's downtown and assists in its revitalization. Pedestrian-oriented uses and an urban character of design are permitted and encouraged, while automobile-related uses and design qualities that promote a suburban mall or strip commercial appearance are restricted.

Area Revitalization Mobility & Industrial Corridor Reuse Study: Norristown, Plymouth, Conshohocken

The purpose of this plan is to evaluate the planning issues facing three municipalities that are experiencing a range of development and/or transportation-related changes, to recommend strategies to assist in their growth, and to improve their existing assets. This plan, completed by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in March 2005, identifies three main goals:

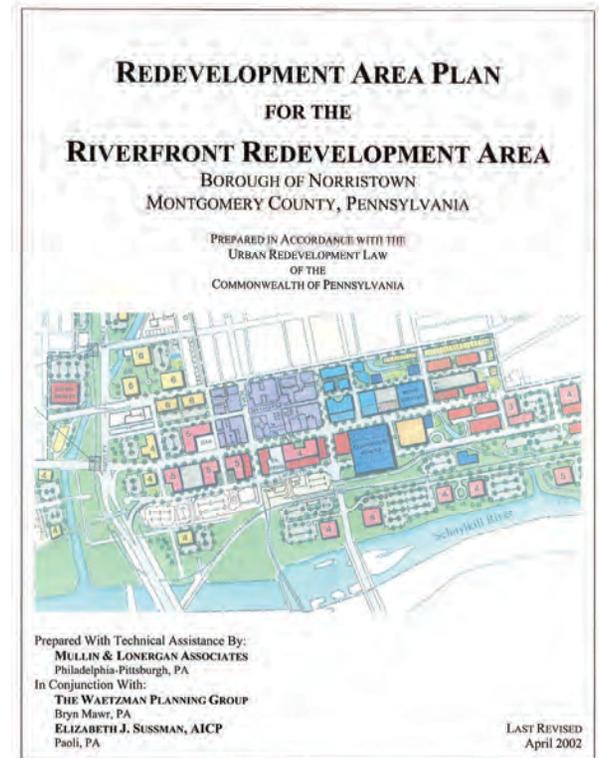
- Ensure that future development in the study area enhances the quality of life for residents while generating new economic

activity without being a detriment to the livelihood of presently stable businesses:

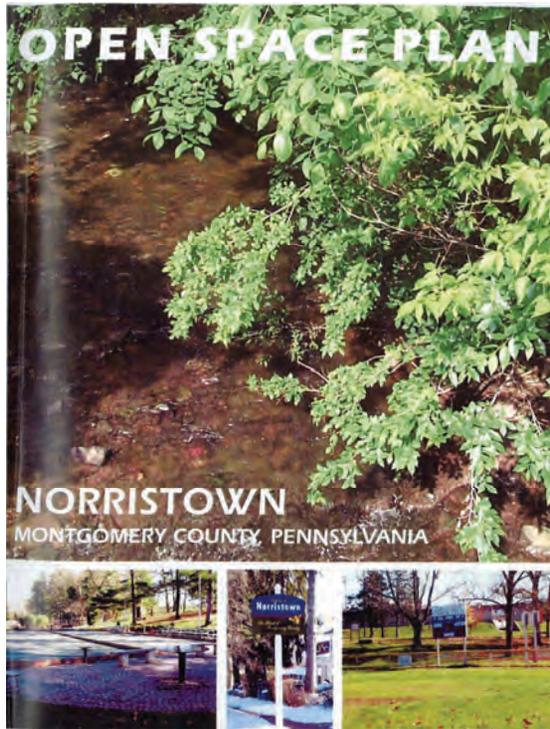
- Maintain a coordinated system of roadways and multi-modal options that accommodates both local and regional traffic, facilitates the continued growth of desirable new development and that is responsive to the needs of the area residents; and
- Support the transportation projects currently underway. Support may include maximizing and building upon the benefits that will be created by these transportation projects, through additional economic development, residential option, pedestrian linkages, streetscape improvements and public transit services and amenities.

Open Space Plan

The Norristown Open Space Plan, adopted in September of 2005, was developed to serve as a guide to the municipality in acquiring new open space, forging connections through existing open space via an enhanced trail network, and developing programs and policies to preserve and maintain active and passive open space in Norristown. It was partially funded by the Montgomery County Green Fields/Green Towns Program and was designed to take advantage of the funds allocated to the municipality for implementation of the plan.



The Redevelopment Plan for the Riverfront Redevelopment Area and the Open Space Plan will help guide how public areas are utilized.



Improvements to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and amphitheater, a top priority in the open space plan were completed in 2007.

Norristown’s top priorities included improvements to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, relocation and expansion of the Weirman Field Softball facility, improvements to playgrounds, and the design and construction of new trails. Improvements to Thomas Barone Park, Poley Park, and the Saw Mill Run Dam are also high priorities. The municipality plans to implement these projects utilizing a variety of funding sources over the next five to ten years.

Municipality of Norristown Consolidated Plan

The National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 mandates that every local jurisdiction and state receiving housing assistance directly under this Act and under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program submit a Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) and a non-housing community development plan to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Consolidated Plan merges together required plans and application materials for several HUD programs.

The Consolidated Plan replaces several documents that had previously been submitted separately. These documents include the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), the non-housing community development plan and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Budget and Final Statement. This Plan covers a

five-year period beginning with 2005 and continuing through 2009 with a one-year Action Plan for FY 2005. The Annual Action Plan is prepared and publicized each year. This is the third consolidated plan submitted by the Municipality of Norristown. Planning is now underway for the 2010 Consolidated Plan.

Issues

The plans above have indicated that the following issues related to economic development and physical redevelopment are of greatest concern in the community:

Riverfront Gateway/Transportation Center: Create a new gateway and regional attraction on Norristown’s riverfront, incorporating a new riverfront park, housing, and employment opportunities.

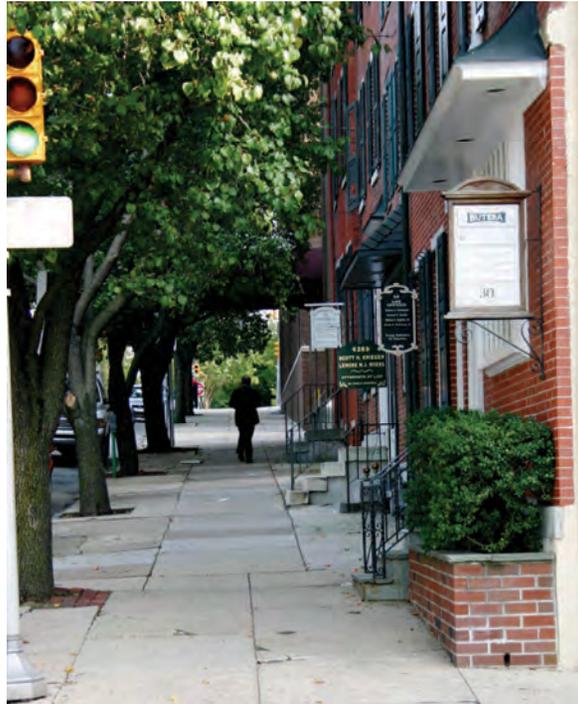
Downtown: Leverage the existing historic quality and downtown employment base; create a pedestrian-scaled retail environment that encourages walking; attract new office and mixed-use development to increase the critical mass of downtown development.

Neighborhoods: Craft a strategy to stabilize all of Norristown’s neighborhoods. In addition, distressed neighborhoods should be targeted for comprehensive intervention. Community members and law enforcement should be made partners in crime prevention.

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Municipality-wide: Undertake strategies that will improve the climate for investment throughout the Municipality.

This Comprehensive Plan addresses these and other land use and planning issues of importance in Norristown.



Leveraging the existing historic quality of Norristown and maintaining a pedestrian-scaled retail environment will help to revitalize the municipality.

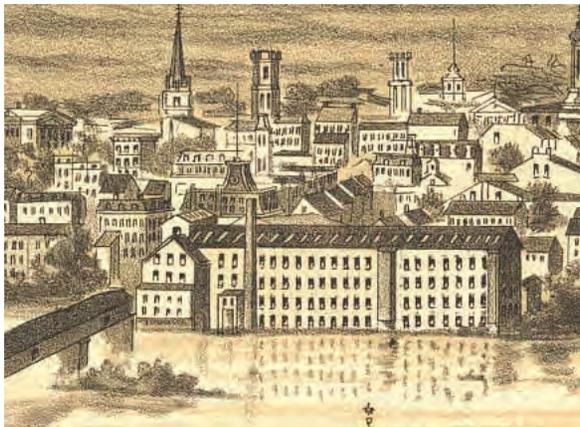
Plan/Study Name	Date	Author
Municipal Wide Parking Study	2009	Chance Management, Inc.
Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy Update	2009	Urban Partners, Inc.
Norristown Marketing Strategy	2008	The Osiris Group
Norristown Seed Revitalization Plan - Update	2008	Urban Partners, Inc.
Poley Park Master Plan	2008	Pickering, Corts & Summerson, Inc.
Stony Creek Redevelopment Area	2007	The Reinvestment Fund
Downtown Strategy Development Study	2007	Wallace, Roberts & Todd, LLC, ECONCONSULT, Inc., Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority
Lafayette Street Land Use Access Study	2006	Edwards & Kelcey Corporation
Open Space Plan	2005	MCPC
Stony Creek Corridor Revitalization Plan: Phase I	2005	The Norristown Preservation Society
The DeKalb Street Project for the DCED Elm Street Program	2004	MCPC
West Marshall Street Revitalization Vision Statement	2003	West Marshall Street Merchant's Association; Converse Winkler Architecture
Elmwood Park Zoo Facility Master Plan	2003	Simone Jaffee Collins
W. Elm Street Study Area Alternative Considerations	2003	Unknown
Norristown Design Guide	2002	Lynch Martinez Architects
Norristown Seed Revitalization Plan	2002	Collaboration, Borough
Redevelopment Area Plan for the Riverfront Redevelopment Area	2002	Mullin & Lonergan Associates; The Waetzman Planning Group; Elizabeth J. Sussman, AICP
Lafayette Street Corridor Study	2001	MCPC; McMahon Associates; Simone Jaffee Collins; Skelly and Loy, Inc.
MLK Jr. Memorial, Scagg Cottman and Simmons Parks Master Plan	2001	Simone Jaffee Collins
Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy	2000	Abeles Phillips Preiss and Shapiro, Inc; Real Estate Strategies, Inc.
Redevelopment Plan Proposal for the East Main Street Redevelopment Area	1999	Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County
Enterprise Zone Building and Land Survey (Volumes 1-3)	1998	MCPC
Markley Street Advisory Task Force Report	1995	Boles, Smyth Associates
1994 Open Space and Environmental Resource Plan	1994	MCPC
Norristown Farm Park Master Plan	1992	MCPC
Central Norristown Economic Opportunities Program	1991	The Greater Norristown Corporation
Norristown State Hospital Farm Traffic Study	1991	Traffic Planning & Design, Inc.
Norristown Riverfront Study	1990	MCPC
Norristown Area School District- Analyses	1988	PA Economy League
Norristown Downtown Traffic Study - Dannehower Bridge Off-Ramp	1987	Chilton Engineering, Inc.
Norristown High Speed Line Parking Analysis	1986	DVRPC
Norristown High Speed Line Passenger Survey	1985	DVRPC
Downtown Urban Design Plan	1984	Urban Research and Development Corp.
Norristown Integrated Transportation and Development Study	1984	Kopple Sheward and Day
Norristown High Speed Line: System Development	1983	SEPTA
Norristown Public Transit Surveys	1981	SEPTA
Norristown Design Guide	1980	Norristown Preservation Society
Survey and Design Guidelines for Norristown, PA	1980	John Milner Associates
Comprehensive Plan	1969	MCPC

Chapter 2

History & Population



Isaac Norris is the namesake of Norristown.



As Norristown grew, it became a major retail, industrial and transportation center in central Montgomery County.

Introduction

The municipality of Norristown, like many municipalities in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, was part of a land grant given to William Penn. The area was first settled by the Dutch, German, Swedish, Welsh, and English and was known in Penn's time as the "Manor of William Stadt." The tract which includes present-day Norristown and East and West Norriton Townships was given to Penn's son who sold the land to William Trent and Isaac Norris. Trent, a Philadelphia merchant, later founded the city of Trenton. In 1712, Norris became the sole owner of the land. Norris, who never lived in the town, became a justice in the Philadelphia County courts in 1715 and a member of the governor's council.

After Norris' death, the land passed to heirs who later sold 543 acres to John Bull of Limerick Township. Bull sold most of his land, including Barbadoes Island, to Doctor William Moore Smith for the use of what was to become known as the University of Pennsylvania; the university sold the land to Montgomery County when it was separated from Philadelphia County in 1784 and Norristown became the county seat. The first courthouse was located in what today is the courthouse square. This public square is now owned by the County with the stipulation that it remain open forever. The university sold the other portion of the land to Dr. Smith in 1789. John Markley purchased the land

from the son of Dr. Smith and in 1801 offered much of it for sale in small lots or farms.

As the land developed and population increased, the town became large enough for incorporation. On March 31, 1812, Norristown became the first borough in Montgomery County. The area of the borough at the time of incorporation was about one square mile with a population of about 500. By 1853, the borough had expanded to its present boundary with a population of over 6,000.

Early Development

As a river port, Norristown had an active early development. Textile and paper mills were located along the river to take advantage of the convenient shipping corridor. Norristown's strategic location was reinforced by the coming of the rail lines: not only did Norristown benefit from the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroads running along the Schuylkill, but it also became the terminus for an early commuter rail line, the present-day Norristown High Speed Line, which connected the Borough with Philadelphia, spurring residential as well as industrial development. As the borough developed, it grew into a major retail, industrial, and transportation center. Growth emanated from the borough's original area bounded by Lafayette, Cherry, Airy and Green streets. By 1880, Norristown had grown to a population of over 13,000 with almost 200 stores, 15 clothing and

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material factories, three foundries and iron works, two breweries, a brickyard, and various other works.

Development in the Twentieth Century

Norristown continued to grow and prosper into the early part of the twentieth century because of its diversified commercial and industrial establishments. Unlike those in many other communities, the banks in Norristown did not fail during the Great Depression of the 1930's.

In the 1930s trolleys were replaced by buses, and the railroads were electrified. Although the economy of the borough was spurred by two world wars, after World War II commerce and industry followed suburbanization to surrounding communities which had open land for development. After a series of damaging floods the Saw Mill Run flood control program was created in the 1960s.

After World War II, the surrounding communities' growth in population and new developments set the trend for the 1950s through the 1990s. Fed by highways and the mass exodus of population from the City of Philadelphia, the population of Montgomery County outside of the borough soared. Following the population, major commercial and office developments sprouted along the primary traffic arteries and at highway

interchanges, the construction of which had completely bypassed Norristown.

The King of Prussia malls sprang up at the intersection of I-76, the Turnpike and Route 202 and were, at the time of their construction, the largest retail developments in the nation. Land near highway interchanges yielded big development sites for office and industrial parks. Norristown, with its small sites, old buildings, and traditional retail streets, simply could not compete in an environment that favored massive single-use developments and their attendant provisions for the circulation and storage of large numbers of automobiles.

Norristown's charming housing stock, with its row houses, twins, and Victorian homes, likewise could not keep pace with the rapid construction of single-family detached housing in the surrounding area. Norristown's housing was either too small and lacked substantial yards, or it was excessively large and ornate, requiring expensive upkeep that only the wealthy could afford.

Because many of the wealthy residents had already moved elsewhere, portions of Norristown's housing stock were subdivided and converted over to rental units to satisfy a new demand for affordable rental housing. With the increase in low income rental units, fueled in part by Federal housing programs and abetted by the concentration of social services



Fed by highways, the population of surrounding Montgomery County soared while Norristown's dropped.



The King of Prussia mall was the largest retail development in the nation when it was constructed.

located in Norristown, the municipality has come to house much of the poorer population of Montgomery County.

Norristown in the New Millennium

Today, Norristown encompasses an area of 3.69 square miles and is fully developed. Most of the industries and stores that had opened to serve the growing population in the early years left after World War II, when Norristown began to lose residents and businesses to nearby suburbs. Ever since, the municipality's economic base and population have changed significantly.

Population Trends

Between 1990 and 2000, the Municipality experienced a population increase of about 533 people (1.7%). Although a relatively small increase, it is a preliminary indication of a reversal of the population loss experienced between 1980 and 1990 of 11% (3,935 individuals), and represents the only increase in the population of a Borough in Montgomery County during this time period.

According to the 2000 Census, white residents comprised 54.3% of Norristown. In Montgomery County and in the Five-County Area, whites made up 86.5% and 70.5%, respectively. Black residents accounted for 34.8% of the Norristown Population, 7.5% of Montgomery County and 21.8 of the Five-County Area. The Hispanic population of the

Municipality was 10.5%, while that of Montgomery County was 2.0% and of the Five-County Area was 4.7%. The Asian population in Norristown was less than 3%, while 4% in Montgomery County and one third of the regional population. The large increase in the Hispanic population, as well as a modest increase in the Asian population, has created a need to further tailor strategies to address special needs unique to the population.

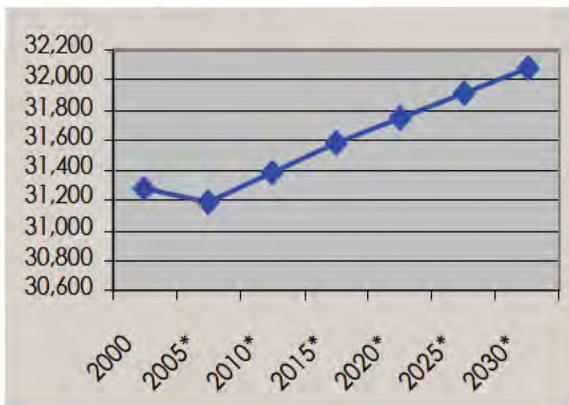
The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) serves as the region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO), and in conjunction with the Montgomery County Planning Commission provides population and employment forecasts through the year 2030 (figure 2.1).

According to these reports, during the next 25 years the population of the Municipality of Norristown is indeed projected to increase modestly by approximately two percent. More localized projections, which take into account recent levels of development and redevelopment as well as recently proposed development, tend to forecast a slightly larger population increase.

Population Classification

Population classification refers to those segments of the population either in households or in group quarters (institutions). More than 96 percent of the Municipality's population live in households while the proportion of residents in group quarters decreased slightly by 6.5 percent.

Figure 2.1 Population Projection



*Indicates projected population.
Source: Montgomery County Population Forecasts, 2005-2030 (July, 2007)

Age

A community’s age profile can be an important measure of growth and change over time.

Among other things, shifts in the distribution among age groups can have significant impacts on the provision of social services, housing, school enrollments, park and recreation needs, and the labor force. Figure 2.2 summarizes changes in Norristown’s age profile from 1990 to 2000. It shows that the fastest growing age groups were middle-aged adults (45-55), school-aged children (5-17) and adults (35-44). Negative growth was seen among the seniors (65-74) and young adults (25-34).

Income

Figure 2.3 shows changes in per capita and household incomes from 1989 to 1999 (in 1999 dollars). Among other factors, changes in income reflect the state of the economy overall (recession or growth) and social changes such as the maturation of the baby boom generation (expanded labor force).

Per capita income is a per person average computed for every man, woman, and child in a given area. It also accounts for persons living alone, a growing segment of the population that is excluded from family income tabulations. While the percentage of the population earning income has increased, the per person average has not: In Norristown, per capita income declined by 0.8 percent between 1989 and 1999 to just under \$18,000.

Median household income refers to the income of the primary householder and incomes from all other persons over the age of 15 in the home, regardless of their relationship to the householder. Because households of unrelated individuals can be a fairly large proportion of all households, this measure may be a better indicator of the typical income for an area than the family income measure. Also, since many households consist of only one person, this measure is usually lower than median family incomes. Norristown’s median household income also decreased, with a change of -6.9 percent.

This information indicates that Norristown’s economy did not grow between 1990 and 2000, which is consistent with overall trends in the

Figure 2.2 Age Profile

Age	1990		2000		% Change
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	1990-2000
0-4	2,392	7.8%	2,148	6.9%	-10.2%
5-17	4,699	15.3%	5,699	18.2%	21.3%
18-24	3,124	10.2%	3,273	10.5%	4.8%
25-34	6,325	20.6%	5,157	16.5%	-18.5%
35-44	4,190	13.6%	5,029	16.1%	20.0%
45-54	2,765	9.0%	3,747	12.0%	35.5%
55-64	2,780	9.0%	2,535	8.1%	-8.8%
65-74	2,584	8.4%	1,930	6.2%	-25.3%
75+	1,890	6.1%	1,764	5.6%	-6.7%
Total	30,749	100%	31,282	100%	1.7%
Median Age	33.0	-	33.7	-	5-17

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Census of Population and Housing, 1990, 2000.

Figure 2.2a Gender Profile

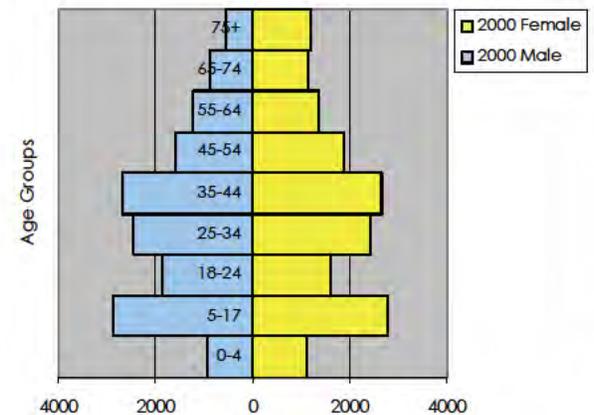


Figure 2.3 Median Household Income

Income	1999	2008 Dollars	% Change
Median Household	\$35,714	\$46,071	29.0%
Per Capita	\$17,977	\$23,190	29.0%

Delaware Valley. While Montgomery County realized 3.8 growth in real income over this time period, urban Norristown more closely mirrored Philadelphia’s decline of real income (-6.7%).

Special Needs Groups

Certain groups within Norristown have special needs that should be considered in determining services that may be necessary. Because definitions of persons with disabilities have changed between the 1990 and 2000 censuses (the most recent definition has broadened to include sensory, physical, mental, self-care, and go-outside-home disabilities), a direct comparison for these groups could not be made. However, in 2000 approximately 25 percent of Norristown’s population between the ages of 16 and 64 had some type of disability (Figure 2.4), compared with 12.5% of residents of Montgomery County. Over the past decade, the number of people over age 65 has decreased by over 17%, while the number of people under age 18 has increased by nearly 11% in Norristown.

Figure 2.4 Special Needs Groups

Special Needs Group	1990		2000		% Change
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	1990-2000
Persons 16-64 with Disabilities			7,886	25.2%	N/A
Persons 16-64 with Mobility and Self Care Limitations	1,377	4.5%			N/A
Over 65 Years of Age	4,474	14.6%	3,694	11.8%	-17.4%
Under 18 Years of Age	7,091	23.1%	7,847	25.1%	10.7%
Income Below Poverty Level	2,838	9.2%	5,238	16.7%	84.6%
Total Population	30,749		31,282		1.7%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Census of Population and Housing, 1990, 2000.

The level of poverty increased in all areas within the Philadelphia Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) in the 1990s. In Norristown, the number of people with incomes below poverty level increased dramatically over the ten year period by nearly 85%, comprising nearly 17% of the total population in 2000, up from 9.2% ten years earlier.

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In Montgomery County, the percentage of families who fall below the poverty level was 2.8%. Again, Norristown stands apart from the rest of Montgomery County, and more closely resembles Philadelphia’s poverty level of 18.4%.

Education Level

Residents of Norristown have become better-educated over the years (Figure 2.5). Nearly three-quarters of the population has at least a high school diploma, almost 15% have a college degree, and over 4% have obtained graduate or professional degrees. Since 1990, the number of people possessing less than a 9th grade education has dropped by almost 30%. Yet this still compares unfavorably with education levels in Montgomery County, where nearly 90% have at least a high school diploma, almost 40% have a college degree, and about 16% hold graduate or professional degrees.

Household Types

A household is defined by the Census Bureau as a person or persons occupying a single housing unit. It can be broken down into two categories: A family household is two or more related persons living in a single housing unit; a non-family household is occupied by a single person or a group of unrelated persons. Nationally, as well as locally, households are changing. There

Figure 2.5 Education Level

Educational Level	1990		2000		% Change
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	1990-2000
Less than 9th grade	2,169	10.4%	1,524	7.6%	-29.7%
9th through 12th grade, no diploma	4,624	22.3%	4,194	20.9%	-9.3%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	7,333	35.3%	7,252	36.1%	-1.1%
Some college, no degree	3,203	15.4%	3,299	16.4%	3.0%
Associate degree	780	3.8%	1,143	5.7%	46.5%
Bachelor's degree	1,899	9.1%	1,836	9.1%	-3.3%
Graduate or Professional degree	772	3.7%	844	4.2%	9.3%
Total Pop. 25 years and older	20,780	100%	20,092	100%	-3.3%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Census of Population and Housing, 1990, 2000.

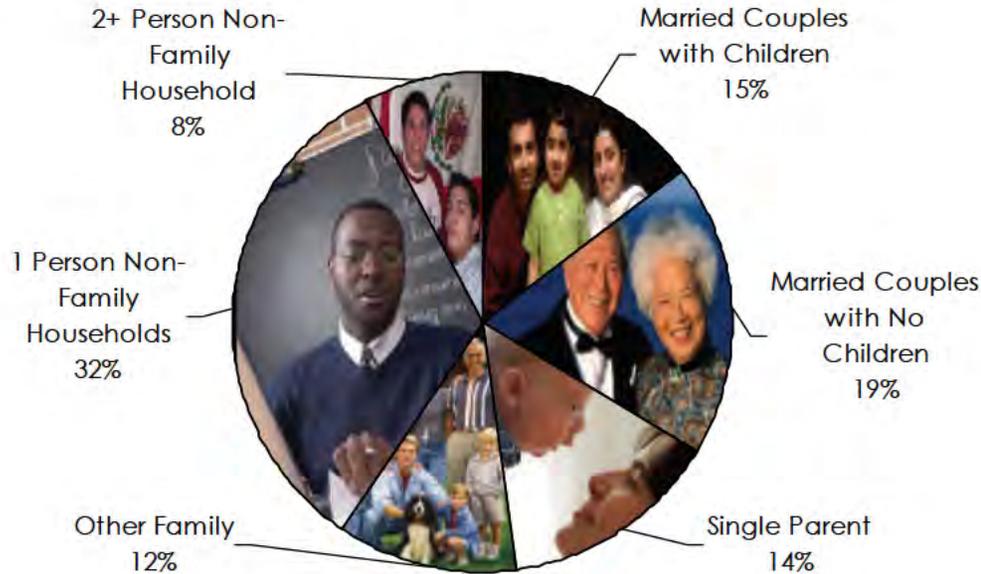
has been an overall increase in non-family and single person households since the 1970s. Fragmentation of the family unit through divorce, death of a spouse, or children leaving home to form their own households has contributed to an increase in the number of households and a decrease in the size of households. However, Norristown seems to be the exception to the rule, exhibiting a decrease in the number of households and an increase in the size of households.

And yet the trend away from traditional households to non-traditional households is in fact alive and well in the Municipality. For example single parent households in Norristown increased by 26 percent



In 2000, almost 15% of Norristonians had a college degree, and over 4% had obtained graduate or professional degrees.

Figure 2.6 Household Types



in 1990 to 2.52 in 2000—an increase of over 3 percent. This may be due to the cultural differences in household makeup exhibited by the various ethnicities represented in the Municipality, as well as the impact of economics on the households, perhaps delaying the departure of grown children from a household, caring for elderly parents at home, or taking in relatives or family friends during hard times.

Employment and Labor

As used here, employment figures refer to the number of workers in a given area, and can serve a variety of purposes. These figures inform the public of current and anticipated future economic conditions and may serve as decision-making input for current and potential employers and investors in the region. Because an area's growth and activity is related to its economy, employment data can also be tied to land use and transportation planning.

In recent years Montgomery County has experienced a significant change, transforming from a bedroom suburb for Philadelphia commuters into a major employment center. The county's central location in the region and its major road network are the main reasons for this transformation. Evidence of this is found in the office, industrial, and commercial development in Fort Washington, Plymouth Meeting, King of Prussia, and Willow Grove—areas easily accessible from Norristown.



While most areas have experienced a decline in household size, Norristown has experienced an increase.

between 1990 and 2000. Norristown has also seen non-related households of 2 or more persons increase by roughly 32 percent, and households consisting of “other family” members increase by nearly 47 percent. The traditional household of married couples with children account for fewer than one in seven households in the Municipality.

The average household size is the number of persons in households divided by the number of occupied housing units. This too has seen a national decline as households continue to diversify. However, Norristown has seen the average household size increase from 2.44 people

Occupations

The types of occupations held by residents in 1990 and 2000 are shown in Figure 2.7. The wide range of occupations listed have historically been classified as “white collar” (managerial), “blue collar” (operative), or “other” (farm workers).

Although this has generally been a useful distinction in terms of income, educational requirements, etc., the lines of distinction have become less marked as the nation’s economy has moved from being industrially based to information and service based. This change is evident nationally with the proportion of the U.S. labor force in white collar jobs increasing from 37 percent in 1950 to 60 percent in 2000.

Due to this shift, the census has implemented a new system for compiling labor force statistics, making it difficult to draw a comparison between categories from 1990 and 2000. However, general comparisons can be made for white collar positions in Norristown. For example, over half of all jobs (51.5%) were white collar positions in 2000, a decrease of over 7 percent since 1990 (figure 2.7).

Employment Forecast

As with population, the DVRPC and MCPC provides employment forecasts for the area.

Employment in Norristown is expected to grow from approximately 15,300 jobs in 2000 to 16,319

Figure 2.7 Labor Force by Occupation

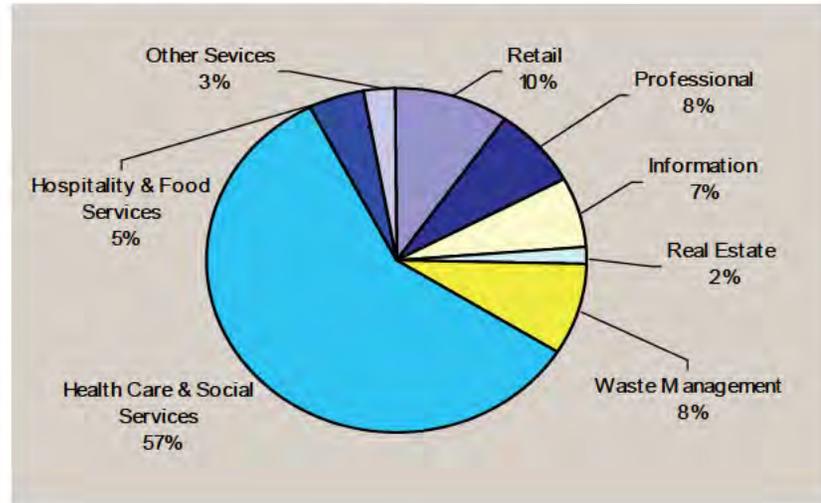
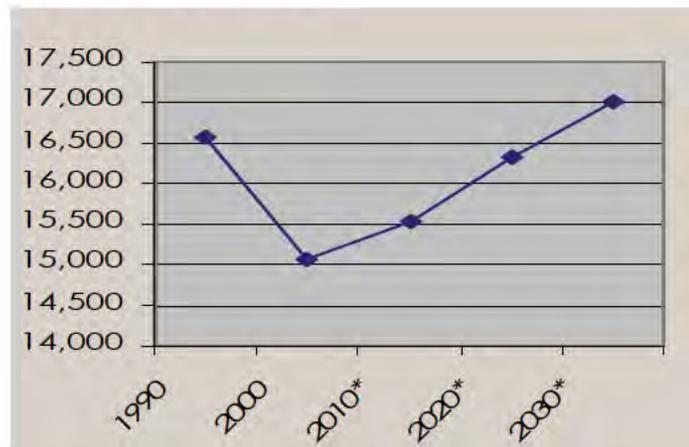


Figure 2.8 Employment Forecast



* Indicates projected employment

The Future of Norristown

In spite of the decline of Norristown, the municipality still occupies a place of importance in the county. First and foremost, it is home to over 31,000 people. Second, it is the seat of county government, home to the county courthouse and government offices. Third, the historic transportation links—the bridges over the river and the commuter rail lines—are still in place and have been enhanced by the high-speed service to Philadelphia and SEPTA’s investment in a Transportation Center in Norristown.

Norristown is now facing a new period of challenges and opportunity. Proposed investments in transportation have the potential to improve access to the municipality. A growing shortage of good development sites in the surrounding region, coupled with anti-growth sentiment, could help to focus development back into traditional centers such as Norristown. In addition, Americans are beginning to rediscover the pleasures of traditional Main Street shopping environments, a trend that, when coupled with good planning, is helping to revive downtowns across the nation.

The opportunity also exists for new investments in the municipality, both public and private, including Riverfront and Downtown Redevelopment that would serve as a regional destination, and targeted reinvestment in

jobs in 2020, representing 6 percent growth over 20 years (see figure 2.9). This trend is likely attributed to Norristown’s status as the county seat that generates a consistent job base in the courts and government services and assumes new jobs will be added when the riverfront develops.

Major Employers in Norristown

The top private sector employers in Norristown continue to be Montgomery Hospital, Central Montgomery Health and Mental Retardation Center, US Maintenance, Gretz Beverage of Montgomery County, Inc., Genesis Eldercare, and Fargo Assembly of PA, Inc. Indicative of the national trend toward a service economy, all of the top employers are in the government and service sectors. Montgomery Hospital, Norristown’s largest private employer, is currently making plans to move to a new facility in East Norriton Township. According to the 2002 Economic Census of the U.S. Census Bureau the private sector employment in Norristown fell into the following categories: retail sector employed 736; the information sector employed 499; professional services employed 564; waste management employed 631; health care and social services employed 4,374; hospitality and food service employed 353; other services provided 214 jobs.



Norristown’s transportation links, including regional rail, buses, and high speed rail service, are an enormous asset to the municipality.



Americans are beginning to rediscover the pleasures of traditional Main Street shopping environments.

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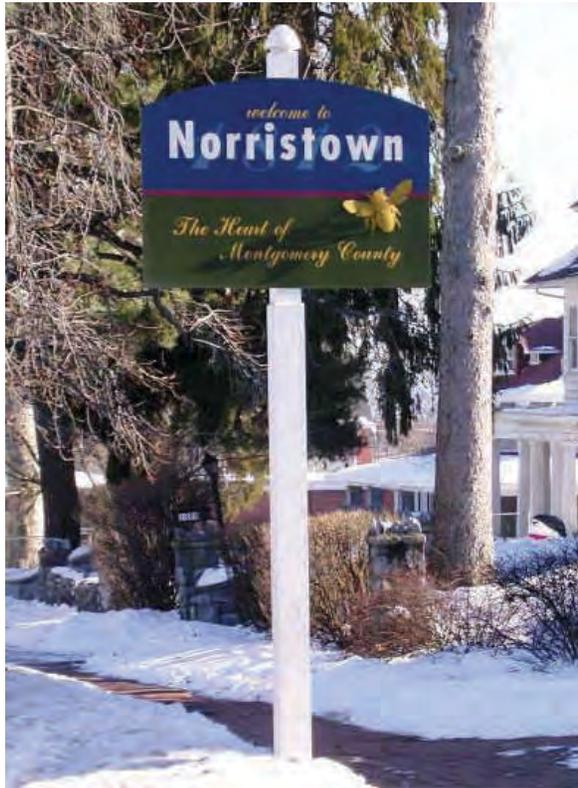
Norristown's neighborhoods as part of a comprehensive effort to reverse years of decline.

The municipality also plans to carry out the recommendations included in the 2009 Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy Update. It addresses a full spectrum of economic and development issues. It builds on existing assets (namely the riverfront and the downtown) and relates them to the neighborhoods in which Norristown's people live. It also addresses quality-of-life issues such as housing, land use, social services, transportation, and crime.

This comprehensive plan builds on these and other recommendations, and will serve as a complete source of information for all planning activities.

Chapter 3

Goals, Objectives & Strategies



Implementing these goals is the responsibility of everyone who has a stake in Norristown's future.

Introduction

Although the future cannot ultimately be controlled, it can be shaped and directed by the municipality, businesses, nonprofit organization, and individual residents. Based on a vision for the way Norristown should be in the future, the goals developed for different subjects of concern in Norristown can be implemented with the support of all stakeholders.

Vision

Norristown is a municipality that is looking toward the future, without forgetting its past. A municipality with a clear focus on smart growth, particularly through transit oriented development, building on its assets of a public transportation center and its strategic location near major highways. A municipality that cherishes its green infrastructure and other environmental assets and embraces environmentally sustainable practices.

A vision with a far reaching network of green spaces (parks, gardens, tree-lined streets); a strong network of volunteers; and a cadre of public employees who are well trained and highly capable of serving as stewards of these open spaces. A municipality that maintains a strong link to the Schuylkill River and recognizes the importance of water to its past and its future. A municipality with a healthy and inviting downtown area.

A municipality with a good quality of life where people will want to live, work and play. A municipality that's the pride of Montgomery County.

Business District Goals

The following goals have been developed to help the municipality implement its vision:

Economic Development & Revitalization Of Downtown Norristown

Improve and enhance the downtown to recreate a strong business district that serves as an attractive hub for Norristown and as the County Seat, a viable destination for the surrounding region.

Objectives and Strategies

Conserve, maintain and strengthen the streetscape character of downtown Norristown to promote a small-city/big town identity.

- Attract/recruit new businesses, offices, restaurants and the resulting jobs, to add vitality to the downtown and riverfront.
- Upgrade facades, storefronts and the streetscape to improve the appearance of Main Street and DeKalb Street corridors.
- Improve signage to make the downtown more attractive.

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- Extend store hours so that people can shop in the evening and on weekends.
- Encourage the development of new restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues in the downtown to improve Norristown's role as a cultural destination.

West Marshall Street and Other Neighborhood Business Districts

Conserve, maintain and strengthen the streetscape character of all of the neighborhood business districts that serve the needs of the local residents.

Objectives and Strategies

- Upgrade facades, storefronts and the streetscape to improve the appearance of the neighborhood business districts.
- Improve signage to make the streetscape more attractive and highlight the distinctive character of the neighborhood.
- Promote the success of the Norristown Merchants Association.
- Create a mentoring program within the Norristown Merchants Association in association with the Small Business Office to encourage local entrepreneurs to start new small businesses.

Residential Goals

Existing Residential Neighborhoods

Maintain existing walkable neighborhoods, and protect their traditional character.

Objectives and Strategies

- Maintain walkability within the neighborhoods.
- Preserve the character of older homes that gives neighborhoods distinctive charm by upgrading and rehabilitating those that need it.
- Enhance and beautify the neighborhoods with improved landscaping and streetscapes.
- Preserve the character and charm of existing neighborhoods and houses.
- Encourage infill housing that maintains the existing character and scale of immediate neighborhood.
- Encourage redevelopment of select industrial/commercial buildings for new housing.
- Promote Traditional Neighborhood Development as a means of emulating the character of the neighborhoods that have been sustained for over 100 years.
- Encourage housing near train Stations, as a form of transit oriented developments, as mixed use residential and commercial places,
- Allow housing in commercial areas as an important mixed-use element near public transportation.



Facade enhancements and a unified painting scheme improve the look of this apartment building on Main Street.



Landscaping and well-maintained sidewalks enhance the pedestrian experience in Norristown.



Norristown is a walkable community and a hub of multi-modal transportation that includes high-speed rail, light-rail, local and regional bus service and access to regional bike trails.



- Encourage home ownership throughout Norristown.
- Maintain the character of residential neighborhoods by minimizing conversions of single-family dwellings to multi-family dwellings.
- Limit conversions in predominantly single-family neighborhoods.

Industrial Goals

Redevelopment of Industrial Buildings and Vacant Lands

Adaptively reuse existing noteworthy buildings, revitalize sites that are vacant or underutilized, and create new attractive development in scale and proportion to the traditional character of Norristown.

Objectives and Strategies

- Create new business opportunities through redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties.
- Encourage reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings for a mixed uses, including live/work space and artist lofts.
- Create new uses at vacant and underutilized industrial sites along the Riverfront and Stony Creek corridor to add value to Norristown for needed parking, commerce and recreation.

- Reuse vacant industrial lands for open space and recreation.
- Reuse vacant industrial land for new mixed residential and commercial development, including new restaurants and retail.

Transportation Goals

Transportation Center (Lafayette Street)

Beautify the transportation center plaza and attract more retail and personal service shops in and around the train station area.

Objectives and Strategies

- Improve pedestrian access to and around the SEPTA transportation center and the parking garage.
- Improve the appearance of the transportation center with landscaping and pedestrian amenities.
- Encourage development of small shops and cafes in or close to the transportation center to increase patronage of local businesses in the downtown area.
- Improve vehicular circulation and safety.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian circulation and safety.
- Promote multi-modal transportation with local employers.

Community Facilities

Maintain and enhance existing community facilities such as municipal hall, schools, police and fire stations, municipal parking facilities, parks and recreation buildings and other civic spaces and assets.

Objectives and Strategies

- Maintain and enhance services at existing community facilities.
- Provide high-quality emergency services and health care.
- Promote municipal community facilities as regional assets.

Recreation and Open Space

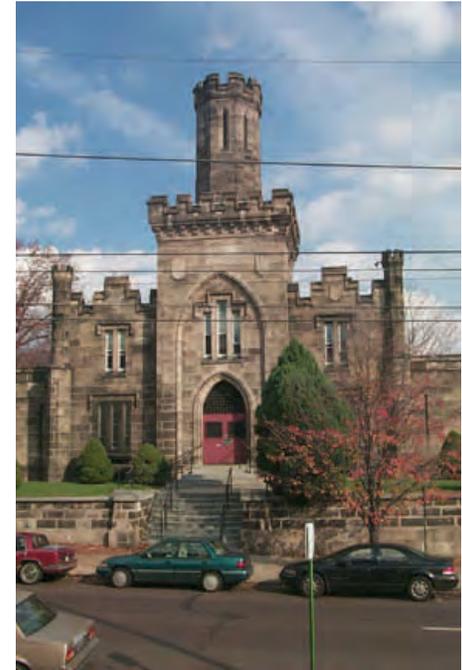
Parks and Recreational Areas

Maintain and enhance existing parks and recreational areas, upgrade the landscaping and expand programs for all age groups.

Objectives and Strategies

- Maintain the parks to the maximum extent possible.
- Explore partnerships with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Morris Arboretum and other similar organizations with expertise in landscape design and urban forestry.

- Protect, maintain, and reforest existing parks and stream corridors.
- Explore acquisition of parcels along stream corridors that create connectivity between parks.
- Explore new trail connections between parks and linkages with neighboring communities and the county trail system.
- Evaluate existing street trees and add new trees fill in gaps in the downtown and in neighborhoods.
- Create and enhance the signage program in the municipal park system that provides wayfinding and environmental educational messages.



Historic & Cultural Preservation

Historic Resource Protection

Protect and preserve historic resources in order to maintain the character and charm of the historic districts and stimulate new economic development.

Objectives and Strategies

- Discourage demolition of viable buildings.
- Promote adaptive reuse of buildings.
- Encourage restoration of historic buildings to maintain the traditional character of the residential neighborhoods.



Preserving attractive Victorian homes enhances the character of residential neighborhoods.



Cultural and Hospitality Development

Enrich the quality of life in Norristown through cultural resource development and hospitality.

Objectives and Strategies

- Promote Norristown as a cultural node in the region.
- Create an arts and cultural district.
- Actively promote local visual and performing arts venues.
- Increase the number of cultural and arts programs for all age groups.
- Encourage visual and performing artists to locate studios and live-work spaces in Norristown.
- Promote local hospitality services.
- Promote heritage tourism.

Wayfinding and Signage

Continue to maintain and enhance the wayfinding signage program throughout town.

Objectives and Strategies

- Reduce signage clutter, especially of freestanding signs.
- Strengthen the gateway treatments at all entryways to the municipality.
- Coordinate directional signage in terms of size, color and graphics.



- Coordinate with PADOT and the PA Turnpike Commission to improve the wayfinding into the municipality on "distance and directional" signage.
- Implement the branding signage program proposed in the Norristown Marketing Strategy.

Design Elements

The popularity of corporate chain store construction across America has created an identity crisis for our older more developed towns. Such development often undermines the heart of our towns, and diminishes their historical quality and sense of place. It is the intent of these guidelines to establish for property owners and prospective developers the design elements that the Municipality has identified as important to enhancing and complementing the overall character of the community.

Objectives and Strategies

Building Placement & Orientation

Setbacks for new construction should be reflective of those of existing buildings. In blocks where a "streetwall" has been established, new construction should occupy the entire lot width. Buildings on corner lots should front on the street with a higher classification. Primary entrances should be located at the front of the building, facing the sidewalk.

Parking Facilities

With much of the land available for infill/redevelopment being small in size or being constrained in some manner, providing options for shared parking, both on and off street is important. Development should have the minimal amount of parking necessary to address needs, while contributing to a safe pedestrian-friendly environment.



New Construction

New construction should pay attention to setbacks, architectural style, materials, color, parking arrangement, and landscaping. Consistency with existing structures will help to better complement the existing character.

Building Height

Both rehabilitation of old buildings and new construction should respect the predominant heights with the town and to adjacent properties. Two and three-story buildings should continue to dominate, with a minimum height of 20 feet. In comparing adjacent properties with differing heights, an average height should be used.

Building Scale and Mass

New construction should respect the existing scale and mass of existing buildings. For residential infill development, structures should mimic the scale and mass of adjacent homes on the block. In the downtown, larger buildings should be divided into several smaller vertical segments and should be built with a base, middle and top.

Storefronts

Storefronts are an important element of a pedestrian-friendly environment. As such, storefronts should provide large display windows on the first floor. Paint or other materials should not be used to cover the windows. Display windows should be utilized to help attract pedestrian traffic and cus-





tomers. Window signs should be of a professional quality, with hand-drawn signs discouraged.

Residential-Character Buildings

When renovating a residential building for commercial use, the building's residential characteristics should be maintained. New commercial buildings outside of the downtown core should contain characteristics of residential structures. The original door and window placement should be maintained and porches should not be enclosed.

Architectural Style

Without directly copying the past, it is possible to take the best aspects from older architecture and to incorporate them into new construction and renovations. All renovations should maintain the scale and proportion of the original building, including roof shape and height, structural framework, cornice, sign band, and window size and symmetry.

Building Materials and Colors

The exterior materials used in a building's design create impressions of both the individual building and the image of Norristown as a community. The use of high-quality materials and neutral colors are encouraged to ensure compatibility with adjoining buildings and the neighborhood. Traditional materials, such as wood, brick, and stone should be used in both new construction and renovations.



Windows and Entrances

The materials, proportions, and color of entrances and windows should complement the full building façade. Entrances should be clearly defined, inviting, safe, and readily accessible. Building facades should provide architectural detail and contain windows at the ground level in order to create visual interest. Entrances should be located at the front façade or at the corner of the buildings.

Awnings and Canopies

Awnings serve many purposes including, shade, protection from rain, and signage. They also add color and can dress up a building. Fabric awnings are preferred and should not span numerous bays, windows or storefronts. Awnings should complement a building and add definition and should not obscure, detract or hide architectural features.



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Rooflines

Roofs of new buildings should reflect and complement the established rooflines and cornice treatments of adjacent buildings. Sloping roofs should employ the use of dormers and gables on the front façade. Breaks and fluctuations in the roofline can be used to highlight important areas of the building such as the entry, and break up longer facade areas.

Blank Walls

Walls fifty or more feet in length facing streets or visible from residential areas where windows are not provided should have architectural treatments. Some options include: colonnades, the use of masonry, projecting cornices, decorative pilasters, and tile work, variations in paint color, artwork, landscaping, lighting fixtures, etc.

Streetscape, Landscaping and Open Space

A well-landscaped streetscape and carefully landscaped properties will draw people to Norristown. Property owners should provide trees, shrubs, and ground covers noted for longevity, low maintenance requirements, attractive appearance and screening ability. Existing plants should be preserved and incorporated into the overall landscape plan. On larger-scaled projects, open space should include landscaped plazas, courtyards and pedestrian amenities.





Signs

Signs communicate location, type of business, and image. Signs in the downtown should not only create an image for their business but for all of Main Street. Good design considers all of the following factors: scale, layout, composition, materials, color, letter size, graphics and logos, typeface, borders, installation, placement, lighting, and context. In the downtown, wall and projecting signs will be encouraged while free-standing signs are discouraged. Signs should be kept as simple and straightforward as possible, so as not to give a cluttered appearance.

Lighting

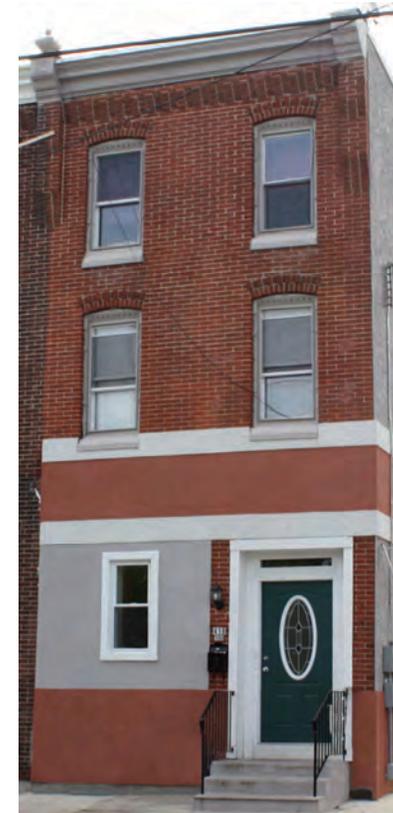
Exterior lighting fixtures should be traditional, "period" style, in keeping with the character of the building. Lighting used for landscaping and signage should be kept of comfortable levels (0.5 foot candles) at the property line.

Utility Structures

Mechanical devices such as HVAC units, meters, machinery, transformers, dumpsters, antennas, etc. should be screened from view. Air Conditioners should not be on the façade of the building, unless it is flush with the building wall or hidden appropriately. Rooftop equipment should be concealed by making them the same as the roof or by screening.

Rehabilitation

Alterations and additions to existing properties should not be discouraged when they do not destroy significant architectural, historical or cultural material. Such design should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the



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property, neighborhood and environment. For rehabilitation on buildings located in the Historic District, The Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation should be used.

Note: For additional design elements refer to the Norristown Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances.

Chapter 4

Land Use



More than any other municipality in Montgomery County, Norristown resembles a city.



West Main Street in the early 1900s.

Existing Land Use

The existing land use analysis focuses on the current land uses within the municipality, enabling a more in-depth focus of patterns of use. In addition to the existing land use map (Figure 4.1), Figure 4.2 details the acreage of each category and the percent change from 1994 to 2008. The assigned land use categories are derived from Montgomery County Board of Assessment parcel data. These numbers are also useful in understanding changes in land use patterns.

Development Patterns

More than any other municipality in Montgomery County, Norristown resembles a city. Its land use conforms to traditional urban patterns and shapes. The Municipality has an identifiable downtown business district, which is surrounded on three sides by residential neighborhoods that gradually decrease in density as one travels away from the downtown area.

The downtown has a main street, along which are street level storefronts built right to the sidewalk. Above the stores are either apartments or professional offices. Most of the buildings are three or four stories and share a common wall. The building density is very high, and the only open areas are the public square and vacant lots.

As the county seat, the downtown also contains the courthouse, whose dome is one of Norristown's most recognizable landmarks. Redevelopment activity includes a transit center that serves as a hub for SEPTA's buses, regional rail, and high speed rail line, as well as a LEED certified green building for the State Department of Environmental Protection.

Adjacent to the downtown and radiating out in a semicircular pattern is a transitional neighborhood that contains both residential and commercial uses. It is roughly bounded on the west by Markley Street, on the east by Arch Street, and on the north by Oak Street. It largely consists of mid-19th century row houses of either two or three stories. Many have been converted to offices, commercial uses, or apartments. Former industrial buildings have been converted to office or commercial uses.

The remaining residential areas are located in the West End, East End, North End, and Norris Hills. While each of these areas has unique characteristics, such as the Victorian mansions along West Main Street or the 1910-1930 era period revival houses along DeKalb Street, all areas share the common characteristic of higher density toward the center of town and lower density along the outskirts.

Close-in areas consist largely of row houses and twins, the larger of which have been transformed into multi-family dwellings. Commercial uses are generally located at intersections or along traditional

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commercial corridors such as West Marshall Street. These commercial and office uses differ from those in the downtown in that they are neighborhood-oriented. Closer to the edges of the municipality, single-family detached homes with large yards, suburban style garden apartments, and strip shopping centers dominate the landscape.

The riverfront is another important area in Norristown. Extending the entire width of the municipality, much of it is separated from adjoining areas by physical or intangible barriers. On the East End, railroad tracks and industrial, private or unkempt open space give the area an uninviting appearance. Only Riverfront and Crawford Parks in the West End permit interaction with the river. Any future riverfront redevelopment should connect the riverfront to the rest of Norristown in a way that permits public access.

Residential

Residential development exists throughout Norristown, although there are several distinctly residential neighborhoods, as described above. Figure 4.2 shows that in 2008, 39% of Norristown's land was used for residential purposes.

Commercial/Office

Commercial and office uses comprise about 11% of the Municipality. Centers of commerce include

Downtown, the West Marshall Street Business District, the Logan Square Shopping Center, and numerous strip and scattered commercial sites. Much of the commercial/office uses are actually mixed use, and contain residences above or behind shops and offices.

Industrial

While industrial uses once played a major role in Norristown's economy, over the past ten years the amount of land devoted to industrial use has remained relatively stable at around 5%.

Institutional

Institutional uses comprise about 8% of the township. Such uses include the courthouse, county offices, schools, hospitals and other medical facilities.

Parks/Recreation

Approximately 32% of the Municipality is designated as open space, consisting of both active and passive recreational and natural area. This category includes Norristown Farm Park; Elmwood Park; Bartasch; Simmons & McCann Parks in the East End; Saw Mill Run Dam; the County Trail; and numerous other pocket parks, squares, playgrounds, and fields. The Blue Mill Tract, Thomas Barone Park, and Washington Street Park were acquired since publication of the 1994 open space plan.

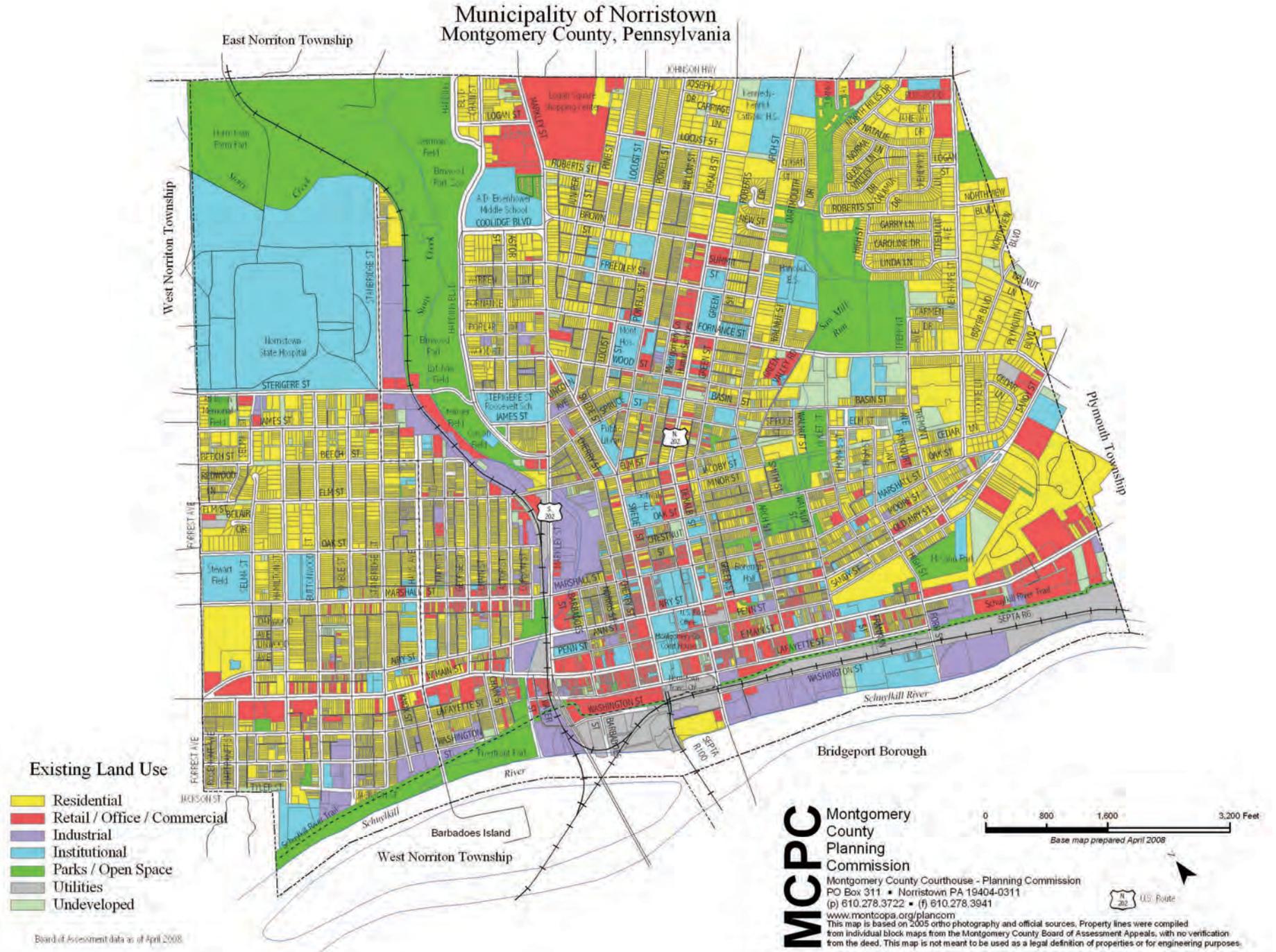


Institutional uses comprise 8% of the municipality.



The Human Services Building houses several county government offices.

Figure 4.1 Existing Land Use Map



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Utilities

Utilities comprise about 3% of the Municipality. This category includes substations, rail corridors, and other lands owned by utility companies and authorities.

Agriculture

Although farming activities once took place at the outskirts of Norristown, by 2000 virtually no land was devoted to agriculture.

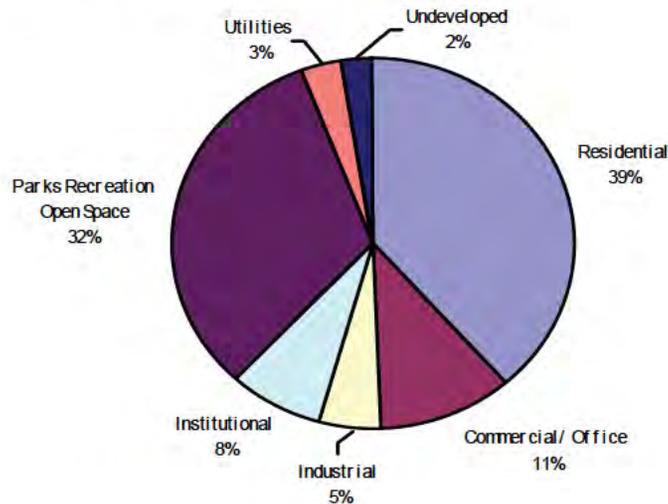
Undeveloped Land

There is very little undeveloped land in Norristown (2%). This land is located in scattered sites predominantly in the East and North Ends. Vacant land in an urban environment can have a significant impact on a community's image, and should be put to productive use whenever possible.

Land Use Shift

The most significant land use changes over the past years have been the increase in preserved open space as well as an increase in number of single-family detached units and units in smaller multi-family buildings. As Norristown is a built-out municipality, these changes represent a shift in land uses rather than overall growth.

Figure 4.2 Existing Land Use Percentage



Areas of Regional Impact

Government

As the county seat, Norristown exerts regional impact since it houses many government offices in buildings such as the county courthouse, One Montgomery Plaza, human services, the Department of Environmental Protection Agency's southeast regional office. Workers from all over Montgomery County, and the region travel to work in Norristown's government offices five days per week.

Hospitals

Norristown is served by three area hospitals including Montgomery Hospital, Mercy Suburban Outpatient Center, and the Norristown State Hospital. Related offices and other medical facilities located near Montgomery Hospital comprise a large portion of the current Health Care District located just north of the downtown.

Shopping centers

Norristown contains one suburban-style shopping center on Johnson Highway as well as the Historic West Marshall Street Shopping District, a pedestrian-friendly retail area. Other small-scaled strip-type shopping areas are scattered along secondary roads that serve as gateways to Norristown. These shopping centers attract local customers and commuters from West Norriton, East Norriton, and the surrounding communities.

Recreation

Norristown is fortunate to have several regional recreational amenities including the unique Elmwood Park Zoo, Elmwood Park itself (which contains ball fields, bocce courts, a bandshell, and picnic areas), and the Weirman Field softball facility, which attracts roughly 375 players annually to compete in nearly 400 games. Another great amenity is the Schuylkill River Trail, which connects walkers, runners, bicylists

and skaters from Philadelphia to Valley Forge. A new Trail Head is planned for where the Chester Valley trail will intersect with the Schuylkill River Trail at Lafayette and DeKalb Streets.

Norristown's parks and trails attract people from adjacent and surrounding municipalities all year long.

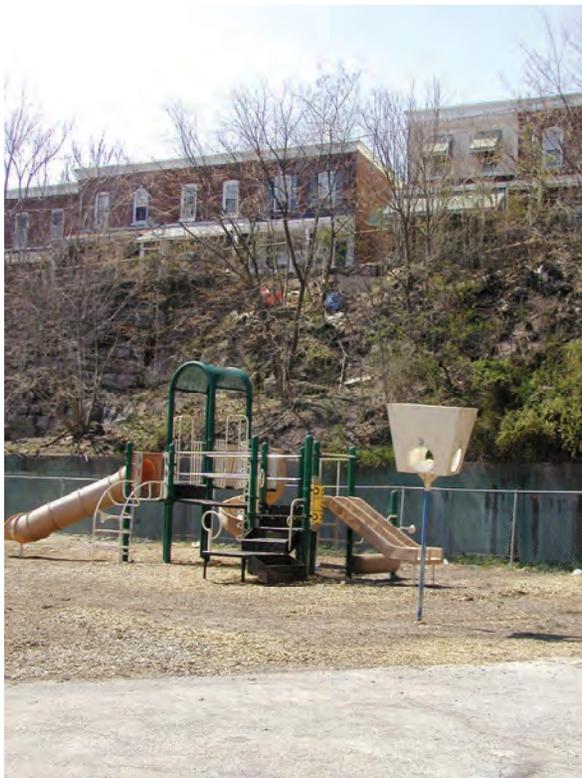
Transportation

The Norristown Transportation Center is a major regional transportation hub where regional rail, high speed rail and regional buses converge. U.S. Route 202 is the dominant road that passes through the municipality providing a north/south connection adjacent communities whereas Main Street and Airy Street provide access from the east and west.

The Lafayette Street Extension Project will connect downtown Norristown to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. This will make Norristown more accessible to the region and will be instrumental in its revitalization.

Future Land Use

While Norristown is already a highly developed municipality and does not expect a vast amount of new development, land uses will continue to shift over the course of time. In certain areas, Norristown wishes to maintain existing land uses, whereas it plans to change them in others.



Parks and Open Space account for nearly 32% of the municipality.

Residential

Lower Density Residential

The municipality plans to maintain its four areas of lower density residential development (which is defined as between 2 and 7 dwelling units per acre). Single family detached houses on 6,000 to 15,000 square foot lots will continue to be present in the eastern area along New Hope Street; in the north from Johnson Highway to Brown Street between Willow and Arch Streets; in the small pocket between Elmwood Park and Chain Street, and in the area just south of the State Hospital grounds. Institutional uses will continue to be permitted by special exception.

Medium-Density Residential

Medium-density residential development of between 7 and 12 dwelling units per acre will continue to be a strong presence in the North Hills area, the West End, and the North End. Housing types to be found in this area include single family detached, semi-detached (twin), and attached (row house) units.

Institutional uses, day care facilities, and, retail/office establishments under 3,000 square feet will continue to be permitted by special exception.

High-Density Residential

Closer to the downtown core, higher density residential development of 7 to 29 dwelling units per acre is encouraged. Mid-rise and high-rise multifamily dwellings as well as residential mixed-uses are permitted. Retail, restaurants, hotels, theaters, art galleries, studios, personal service shops, professional and government offices, schools, public transit facilities, parking garages, and apartments located above non-residential uses are encouraged.

Mixed Use

Lower-Intensity Mixed Use

Lower-intensity mixed-use areas are found along the waterfront south of Washington Street; on West Main Street; in the Historic West Marshall Street Shopping District; along DeKalb Street between Airy and Jacoby; and at the Norristown State Hospital grounds should that area be developed in the future.

A mix of uses should be encouraged in this area, including offices, restaurants, health clubs, parks, spaces for the arts, child care facilities, studios, personal service shops, and medium density residential uses. Multiple uses are encouraged within single buildings. Building height should be limited to four stories.



Houses like these in Lantern Hill are suitable for low density residential areas in Norristown.

Medium-Intensity Mixed Use

Medium-intensity mixed-use development is encouraged in the older industrialized area of the municipality south of Elmwood Park; the area between Spruce and Penn Streets, and Astor and Cherry Streets; the area surrounding the Regatta Apartments, and the area roughly between Airy and Main, Green and Walnut Streets.

These should include a variety of retail establishments, offices, banks, transit terminals, restaurants, parks, small recreational facilities, parking facilities, spaces for the arts, services, and day care facilities. Multiple uses are encouraged within single buildings. Buildings should not exceed four to six stories.

High-Intensity Mixed Use

The highest intensity and variety of uses should be found in the town center and downtown riverfront areas on main street and along the waterfront, roughly between Penn Street and the Schuylkill River from Stony Creek to Ford Street. These include the uses described above in the medium intensity mixed use area plus hotels, larger recreational facilities, museums, and high rise apartment buildings. Multiple uses are encouraged within single buildings. Buildings should not exceed 10 stories, with the exception of Pinnacle buildings, which should not exceed 15 stories.

Retail

The Logan Square Shopping Center located in the north end of town will continue to be a small suburban style shopping center with mix of uses that include retail, restaurants, offices. The former Sears building with attached garage provides an opportunity for a larger scaled new anchor store or office facility.

Downtown Norristown is a high-priority redevelopment area that will seek to attract a full spectrum of mixed uses to its traditional main street, including large and small scaled retail including shops for clothing, food, furniture, banks, drugstores, photocopying centers, hardware, cameras, electronics, personal service shops such as barbers, hair salons, dry cleaners and exercise studios.

Neighborhood commercial districts such as West Marshall Street will continue to evolve with a mixture of small-scaled retail and personal service shops that serve the local neighborhood. Neighborhood retail along municipal gateway roads will continue as small-scaled retail centers.

Office/Institutional/Health Care

This area covers DeKalb Street from Elm to Brown Streets (and a few blocks to the west), the block bordered by Logan, Pine, Roberts and Locusts Streets, and the southwest corner of Fornance and



Developments like this one in Dallas would be appropriate in the high density residential areas of the municipality.

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Tremont Streets. Appropriate uses include medical facilities, administrative and professional offices, medical laboratories, medical and nursing schools, government offices, nursing homes, ambulance services, and low-density residential uses. Buildings in these areas should be limited to 4 to 6 stories.

Recreation/Open Space

All existing parks as well as new areas along the riverfront should be maintained as lands for recreational and open space use. These areas should be open to the public and used for active and passive recreation including playing fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, swimming pools, ice-skating rinks, fishing and boating marinas, picnic areas, community events, and walking/hiking/biking trails. Redevelopment of the riverfront, which is expected to contain some recreational areas, will provide an additional regional draw to Norristown.



Elmwood Park has many recreational facilities such as the bocce courts above.

Future Development

With the exception of the riverfront, most development in the downtown is expected to come in the form of rehabilitation, adaptive reuse of existing buildings, or infill development. This expected redevelopment provides Norristown with an opportunity to improve its appearance and functionality by adopting new regulations and guidelines to direct this revitalization.

Hybrid Zoning

While future land use is important, the form of future buildings is just as significant. For this reason, Norristown is looking into an alternative to the traditional zoning codes that currently regulate development because these codes focus mainly on use. Hybrid zoning is emerging as a possible solution to issues arising with the redevelopment of Norristown.

Hybrid zoning is a term used to describe a combination of traditional zoning (focused on use) and form-based codes (focused on massing, height and location of buildings). Hybrid zoning is suited to communities that are already built out but ripe for redevelopment, by guiding new development to fit in seamlessly with historic structures.

Hybrid zoning can apply form-based elements to specific areas of the Municipality while not changing the zoning review process of the existing code. It may combine an overlay district and design guidelines into a more traditional element of the zoning code. These hybrid codes pay special attention to the location of parking, the pedestrian experience, and the design of public spaces.

Unlike conventional zoning codes that can be lengthy and difficult for the average person to read, hybrid codes also use graphics and photographs that are more user-friendly.

Goals & Recommendations

Goal 4.1—Enhance the Form of Various Land Uses

- Create hybrid zoning districts for all of Norristown, beginning with the town center, riverfront redevelopment area, gateway redevelopment and neighborhood redevelopment areas, to improve the design and functionality of infill and redevelopment projects.
- Adopt design standards in each zoning district that addresses building façade orientation, the use of traditional building materials, streetscape design, and other accepted principals of urban design.



New medium intensity mixed use buildings like this one in Berkeley would be a welcome addition to the municipality.



A mixed use development like this one in Hoboken, with retail below and residential above, would be appropriate in the high-intensity mixed use areas.

Goal 4.2—Encourage Redevelopment to Occur in the Downtown and Riverfront Areas



Retail buildings can be integrated into the traditional streetscape.

- Update zoning regulations to permit and encourage a mix of uses that are compatible and complementary with the historic character of the community and its downtown.
- Permit and encourage pedestrian-oriented uses and an urban character, while restricting automobile-related uses and design qualities that permit a strip-commercial or suburban mall appearance.
- Preserve the existing streetscape by requiring new development and redevelopment to utilize traditional building materials and accepted principals of urban design, and by placing all new buildings close to the edge of the sidewalk.
- Implement recommendations made in the 2009 Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy for the downtown and riverfront districts.

Goal 4.4—Preserve, Enhance and Connect Parks and Open Spaces

- Implement the recommendations from Norristown’s 2005 Open Space Plan.
- Update the landscaping, buffering and street tree requirements in the municipal subdivision and land development ordinance
- Identify opportunities for new linkages between existing parks, trails and recreational areas as redevelopment occurs.

Goal 4.5—Protect Sensitive Natural Features

- Continue to enforce and update ordinances that protect natural features such as floodplains, riparian areas, wetlands, urban woodlands, street trees, and steep slopes.

Goal 4.3—Preserve the Character of Existing Traditional Residential Neighborhoods



Public access to the riverfront for recreation purposes is vital to the future of the municipality.

- Encourage infill development to be compatible and complementary to existing neighborhood in terms of building façade orientation, scale, massing, the use of traditional building materials, and the location of streetscape features such as sidewalks, curbing, street trees and onand off-street parking.

Chapter 5 Housing



Norristown has many beautiful twins, like these on East Fornance Street, built in the 1920s.



A variety of housing types can be found in Norristown, such as this quaint single family detached house located on Coolidge Boulevard.

Neighborhoods

Norristown's neighborhoods have evolved in a grid pattern over the last 200 years from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic enclaves, some of which still exist today. Although there are no clearly defined neighborhood boundaries, the north end of town generally has single-family detached homes, twins, and some apartment buildings on larger lots and wider streets. Most residents have to drive, take the bus, or walk a distance to reach retail stores and service establishments.

The West End has a variety of housing stock including single and two-family detached and semi-detached homes and small townhomes. The Historic West Marshall Street Business District evolved as a more traditional neighborhood center with stores, personal services, churches and schools in walking distance.

Norristown's central core and downtown is more densely developed around larger medical institutions, government offices, and other service agencies. There are predominately single-family attached, multi-family and mixed-use buildings, typically with dwellings located above shops or offices.

Housing Supply

Despite sharing many of the challenges faced by many older, inner-ring suburban communities, Norristown has many well constructed homes with interesting architectural features. More than half of the housing units in Norristown were built prior to 1950. Although Norristown is essentially a built-out community, by 2030 it is expected to have 32,074 people, a modest increase of 2.54%. New housing needs could be met through housing rehabilitation, by adding new units to the downtown and riverfront revitalization areas and also through adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized buildings. Additional infill development on scattered sites throughout the neighborhoods of Norristown would also be appropriate.

Trends

Between 1990 and 2000 nearly 570 multi-family units were added to the housing stock, while the overall number of single-family attached units decreased. Mobile homes, trailers, and homes in the "other" category virtually disappeared from Norristown, comprising 1.1% of the housing stock in 1990 to only 0.1% in 2000.

Between 2000 and 2008 there was an influx of infill housing, mainly concentrated in the east end of Norristown. Included in the 148 new units built was a multi-family apartment complex, 26 condo-

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miniums, 6 single-family detached homes, and single-family attached units.

There is a growing interest in the region for housing in urban areas with strong public transit connections. Norristown is in a good position to capitalize on this trend if it can continue to provide new homes and housing types with modern amenities.

Owner-Occupied Units

From a height of 56% owner-occupied dwellings in 1980 to a low of 48% in 2000, Norristown has been losing its homeowners. By comparison, Montgomery County has a 73.5% owner-occupied rate, 25.5% higher than Norristown's current rate.

Rental Units

The 2000 Census found that over half of the 12,029 housing units (51.9% or 6,243 units) were defined as rentals (figure 5.2). By comparison, in 1990 rental units comprised 45% of the total housing units.

Norristown records indicated there were approximately 7,200 licensed apartment units of which 330 units are from the Regatta Homes, a new upscale apartment and townhouse rental complex.

While it is appropriate and expected to have more rental units in a large town/small city with many transportation options such as Norristown, the local housing market has suffered from too much de-

Figure 5.1 Housing Types

Housing Types	1990		2000		% Change
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	
Single-Family Detached	1,124	8.6%	1,490	11.0%	32.6%
Single-Family Attached	6,796	52.0%	6,425	47.5%	-5.5%
Multifamily (2-4 Units)	2,234	17.1%	2,738	20.2%	22.6%
Multifamily (5 or More Units)	2,787	21.3%	2,851	21.1%	2.3%
Mobile Home/ Trailer/ Other	139	1.1%	19	0.1%	-86.3%
Total Housing Units	13,080	100%	13,523	100%	3.4%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Census of Population and Housing, 1990, 2000.



ferred maintenance and too little investment in new housing stock.

or the ability to “trade up” to a larger home more difficult for most Norristonians.

Figure 5.2 Number of Rental & Owner-Occupied Units

	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census
Total units	12,343	12,187	12,029
Rental	5,479	5,490	6,243
Owner -occupied	6,864	6,697	5,789

Affordable Housing

Cost of Housing

Norristown has an abundance of affordable housing stock. Figure 5.3 illustrates the change in median housing values from 1960 to 2000. After adjustment for inflation as defined by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the median home value of \$10,500 in 1960 would translate into a value of \$66,391 in 2003.

The median value of a Montgomery County home in 2000 was \$160,700. That same year, the median home price in Norristown was \$85,400. In 2007 the median home price in Norristown had risen to \$124,500 while the County median home price rocketed to \$278,000.

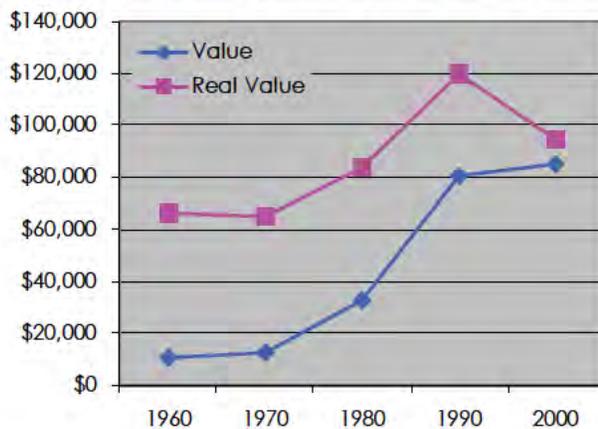
While there was a decrease in valuation between 1990 and 2000, since then, the overall increased values coupled with a decrease in household income, exacerbates the problem of low levels of homeownership. Such an increase for the 55.6% of residents whose income falls into the low to moderate category has made the dream of homeownership

Subsidized Housing

The Montgomery County Housing Authority divested itself of public housing in Norristown many years ago and there are no new programs that would apply to the municipality. There was however, an increase of housing choice vouchers in Norristown of nearly 100% between March 1994 and March 2004.

In 2005, Norristown, which has less than 5 percent of the county's population, has 53 percent of its subsidized rental units. This means that some 700 to 800 privately owned residential rental units in the municipality were receiving housing choice vouchers subsidies. On a percentage basis, this amounts to about 12% of the rental housing units in Norristown. This disproportionate amount of subsidized housing is seen by some as an obstacle to revitalization. Short of a radical change in federal policy concerning the housing voucher program, Norristown does not otherwise foresee a decrease in the number of housing vouchers certificates available.

Figure 5.3 Median Housing Values & Values Adjusted for Inflation



Neighborhood Housing Conservation

Housing Rehabilitation

Norristown's housing stock is older than the Montgomery County median age. 58% of Norristown homes were built before 1950 compared to only 29% of Montgomery County.

In 2008, The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) estimated that 34% of residential properties are in need of improvements. It is estimated that 10% of the Owner and Renter occupied units and 50% of the Owner and Renter vacant units cannot be rehabilitated, meaning that they have severe structural and systems defects that do not meet municipal building code and cannot be rehabilitated at a cost that does not exceed one and one half times the value of the property.

TRF estimates that 90% of all substandard occupied units, renter and owner-occupied, are suitable for rehabilitation and 50% of all vacant units would also be suitable for rehabilitation. It was also estimated that lower income persons occupied 50% of the substandard units suitable for rehabilitation.

Norristown, through the Montgomery County Housing Program have worked to reduce the number of substandard units. The program is funded through Pennsylvania's HOME program and provides funding in the form of grants and low interest

loans for repair and rehabilitation and reconstruction of owner-occupied housing.

Housing Programs

Norristown's First-Time Home Buyers Program

This program provides down payment and closing costs (\$7,500) to applicants whose income is below 80% of the area median income. Applicants must remain in the home for a minimum of five years. The program is administered by the Municipality of Norristown. Participants must also take part in the Homeownership Counseling Program.

Montgomery County Housing Programs

Department of Housing and Community Development

This department offers such programs as the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Homebuyers Program, and housing rehabilitation program.

Tenant Based Rental Assistance

TBRA is available to residents of the County who are victims of a disaster or emergency circumstances.

Office of Aging and Adult Services

Rental assistance programs are offered to older adults that are employed but may have become homeless or are facing eviction.



Public education courses can inform residents about housing renovation and first time home buyers programs.





Five new carriage homes were constructed in 2008 by Habitat for Humanity with each new homeowner contributing 200 hours of sweat equity .



While many rental units are in converted single-family homes, others are in small apartment buildings like this one on North Hills Road.

HOME/Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

An owner-occupied housing program, which has been in operation for 23 years, assists approximately 20-30 homeowners each year with costs associated with bringing their homes up to code. The waiting list for this program is approximately four years.

Elm Street Program

The Elm Street Program was created in 2004 to strengthen the older historic neighborhoods that characterize many of Pennsylvania’s communities. An area bounded by Fornance, Cherry, Marshall, and Arch Streets was designated for this program to promote stabilization, improve safety, promote homeownership, to preserve and enhance historic properties, and create economic opportunities, jobs and businesses for the area. Funds from this program were used to replace deteriorated sidewalks, improve lighting, plant street trees, and install crosswalks.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity, Montgomery County is a nonprofit organization that has been rehabilitating housing since 1989. They primarily focus on rehabilitation of existing homes. They recently completed the construction of 5 new townhomes in Norristown.

Special Needs Housing

Some residents have special housing needs including the elderly, frail elderly, and persons with disabilities, persons with alcohol or other drug habits, persons diagnosed with AIDS and related diseases, victims of domestic violence, and families lacking economic stability. Norristown has numerous supportive housing facilities that assist persons who are not homeless and request supportive housing services.

Seniors

Background

The senior population (65+) is expected to grow dramatically over the next 20 years as the baby boomer generation ages. The 55-64 age group, which qualifies for age-restricted housing, is also expected to grow significantly.

Housing Types

- **Private housing** - Regular homes that might be owned by people of any age, including senior citizens.
- **Age-restricted independent living** - A housing complex—multifamily, single-family, or a combination, that is age restricted and caters

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to senior citizens, with minimal or no services. Examples include:

- The Rittenhouse School Apartments are a 44-unit, income restricted, age restricted, independent living multi-family facility established in 1996.
- Sandy Hill Terrace is a 176-unit, income restricted, age-restricted, multi-family facility established in 1980.
- **Assisted Living Facility (Personal Care Home)** - A facility in which food, shelter and personal assistance or supervision are provided for a period exceeding 24 hours in matters such as dressing, bathing, diet, financial management, and medications prescribed for self-administration. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare licenses personal care homes.
- **Nursing Home** - a long term care facility licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health that provides skilled or intermediate nursing care .
- **Continuing Care Retirement Communities** - CCRCs typically offer a variety of independent living arrangements for residents, together with medical and nursing services, full central dining accommoda-

tions, and educational, recreational, and social activities. CCRCs are issued a Certificate of Authority by the Pennsylvania Department of Insurance.

Assisted Living Facilities

There are three assisted living facilities located in Norristown. Montgomery County Assisted Living provides 19 assisted living beds; Maxett Care provides 13 assisted living beds; and NuOptions provides 19 assisted living beds.

Nursing Homes/Long Term Care Facilities

There are also three nursing homes located in Norristown. Montgomery Hospital Skilled Nursing Unit is a non-profit corporation providing 19 skilled nursing beds; Regina Community Nursing Center is a for-profit corporation providing 121 skilled nursing beds; and The Rittenhouse Pine Center is also a for-profit corporation providing 120 skilled nursing beds.

Housing for the Homeless

Background

Norristown is part of a county-wide approach to address issues related to homeless needs. The Continuum of Care Consortium has led to an in-depth



New townhouses and single-family detached homes are attracting new residents and providing opportunities for growing families to move up and remain the community.



The Rittenhouse School is a good example of adaptive reuse of a former public school building. Redeveloped in 1996, it contains 44 independent living apartments for senior citizens.



A former Cigar Factory in the Historic West Marshall Street Business District has been converted to market-rate apartments.

analysis of homeless needs in Norristown and across the county. To accommodate the homeless population, five shelters operate in Norristown and 12 shelters operate county-wide.

Programs & Agencies

Montgomery County HPRP Program

The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program is intended for those at risk of homelessness or recently experienced homelessness who can be rapidly re-housed. There are 7 priority populations targeted for this program: households with some income that could be stabilized with some support; households that can locate permanent housing; those timing-out of transitional housing; victims of domestic abuse; households being served by emergency tenant based rental assistance; households who are homeless for the first time; and those holding Section 8 or housing vouchers at risk of eviction.

Coordinated Homeless Outreach Center of Montgomery County (CHOC)

Through a partnership between the Montgomery County Office of Behavioral Health and Resources for Human Development (RHD) CHOC provides overnight shelter for up to 50 individuals that reside throughout the county. The program is located on the grounds of the State Hospital and serves adults only.

Missionary Sisters of Charity, Norristown

This organization provides shelter for women and children.

Halfway There

Formerly known as the Montgomery County Supportive Housing Program, Halfway There provides housing and case-management services to homeless individuals with mental illness.

The Salvation Army Family Residence

Provides housing and other services to homeless families striving for self-sufficiency.

Laurel House

Laurel House provides shelter and comprehensive care for victims of domestic violence and their children.

Workforce Housing

The idea behind workforce housing is that teachers, healthcare workers, police officers, childcare workers, municipal employees and retail workers may not be able to afford to live near their place of employment. Typically, workforce housing is provided by the private sector or through public-private partnerships. This housing is aimed at middle and moderate income households making between 80% and

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100% of the area's median income. These workers tend to make too much for traditional housing subsidies but not enough to afford market-rate homes. Due to Norristown's proximity to regional transit, roadways and job centers, new construction and adaptive reuse of vacant buildings for workforce housing is a viable option for Norristown's downtown and riverfront districts.

Recent Housing Activity in Norristown

Adaptive Reuse

Tyson Shirt Factory

This former four-story shirt factory located in the Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) on Corson Street was converted into 27 rental apartments.

Cigar Factory

The Cigar Factory contains 40 loft style rental apartments. It was converted in the early 1990s.

Rittenhouse School Apartments

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, The former David Rittenhouse Junior High School, circa 1928, was developed into senior housing. The school's colonial revival architecture remains intact as a fine example of typical design features com-

monly found in early 20th century school building architecture.

Holy Saviour School

The former elementary school is planned for conversion into 22 age-restricted rental units.

New Construction

Regatta Apartments

The Regatta Apartment complex consists of 17 buildings with a total of 306 apartments. A portion of this project may eventually be sold as condominiums.

Townhomes

In scattered sites on Marshall, Thomas and Cedar Streets, 36 new townhomes were constructed. Sandy Street received 26 new condominium units and 29 new townhomes were constructed on vacant land previously owned by the school district on Markley Street.



The Regatta Apartment Homes has been a successful addition to Norristown's rental housing stock with garden apartment and townhouses units ranging in size from 769 to 2000 square feet.



New townhomes with garages complement the character of Norristown's traditional neighborhoods.



Priority should be given to programs that promote home ownership.



The Good Neighbor Next Door Program offers homeownership to police officers, firefighters, EMTs and teachers who want to live in revitalization areas.

Goals & Recommendations

Based on the information gathered in this chapter, the municipality has created several goals and recommendations to improve housing, including the following:

Goal 5.1—Increase Home Ownership

Recommendations:

- Norristown's most significant current need is to increase homeownership. As demonstrated elsewhere in this plan, the level of homeownership has steadily declined.
- Give priority to programs that promote homeownership, such as the First Time Home Buyers program, the Owner Occupied program, and County-administered home ownership programs.
- Work with the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority to undertake various aspects of homeownership programs including acquisition, planning, design, finance, construction, and marketing.
- Support Habitat for Humanity, which rehabilitates condemned or substandard houses with volunteer labor and donated materials. It offers low-income families a no-interest, 20-year mortgage.

- Work with realtor organizations to better understand the local real estate needs of middle- and upper-income home buyers and seek ways to attract them to invest in the municipality.

Goal 5.2—Ensure Appropriateness of New Housing Types

Recommendations:

- Promote construction of new townhouses and other types of single-family housing that meet the needs of today's singles, families and seniors.
- Add design standards to the zoning ordinance to ensure that new construction fits into the existing neighborhood context.

Goal 5.3—Rehabilitate Housing Stock

Recommendations:

- Continue to rehabilitate owner-occupied substandard housing inhabited by low-income households.
- Create incentive programs to avoid unnecessary demolition of standard and substandard units suitable for rehabilitation in order to preserve the affordable housing stock.

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- Increase housing stock by rehabilitating vacant units and selling them to families who intend to reside in them.
- Improving code enforcement efforts on owner occupied and rental properties.
- Continue to have a dialogue with county, state and federal agencies to encourage expanded efforts to fund the rehabilitation of existing rental and owner occupied properties.

Goal 5.4—Encourage Reverse Conversions of Multifamily Homes

Recommendations:

- Create a program to encourage reverse conversions of multifamily homes back into single-family homes in targeted areas.

Goal 5.5—Encourage New Residential Construction

Recommendations:

- Create a program for ten year tax abatement for new residential construction of mid-rise condominiums in the downtown and riverfront redevelopment districts.
- Create a land banking program to develop new mixed residential and retail use along the East Main Street business corridor.

Goal 5.6—Promote the Development of New Market Rate and Workforce Housing

Recommendations:

- Work with regional employers, colleges and universities, health care facilities, school districts and state and local governments to offer incentives for employees to reside in Norristown.

Goal 5.7—Promote Neighborhood Stabilization

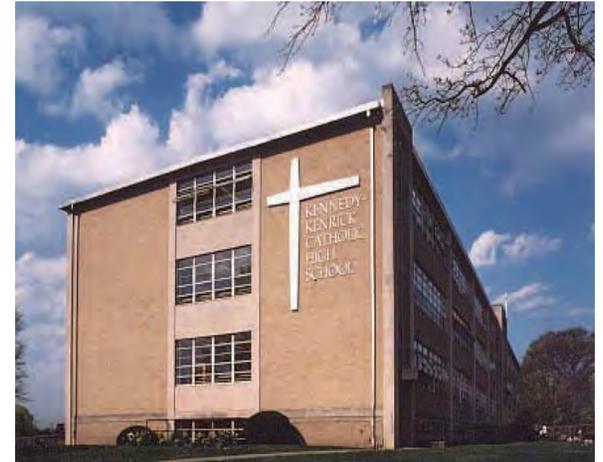
Recommendations:

- Work with the government sector and other anchor institutions in Norristown, such as, SEPTA, the county and state to enhance the public space in and around their properties.

Goal 5.8—Address Regional Affordable Housing Needs

Recommendations:

- Engage in discussions with leadership in governments agencies and advocacy groups to de-concentrate Section 8 vouchers and continue efforts to spread affordable housing throughout Montgomery County.



Kennedy-Kenrick Catholic High School is slated to relocate and the existing school will close in 2010.



Norristown will continue to encourage de-concentration of HUD subsidized housing vouchers.

**Goal 5.9—Continue to Address
Housing for Homeless**

Recommendations:

- Provide financial assistance to at-risk families through the County Department of Aging and Adult Services Housing Assistance program grant.

**Goal 5.10—Address Future Reuse of
Kennedy Kendrick High School and Other
Vacant and Underutilized Buildings**

Recommendations:

- Engage the Archdiocese and community leaders in discussions regarding the potential and preferred future use of the site.
- Engage other property owners and the development community in discussions about incentives and options to donate, sell or provide long-term leases below market rates for land or structures that could be developed or redeveloped for workforce housing.
- Ensure zoning regulations permit adaptive reuse for housing in all districts containing suitable structures.

Chapter 6 Transportation



The Schuylkill Canal began operation in Norristown in 1826.



The original rail station on DeKalb and Lafayette Streets.

History

Transportation has had a significant impact on Norristown's economy, quality of life, and development patterns. The transportation network of Norristown, as well as of other communities in the Schuylkill Valley, has gone through a number of cycles including river transportation, railroads, and development of a road system.

The Schuylkill River and Canal

In 1791, because of poor seasonal navigation on the river, a company was chartered for the purpose of developing the Schuylkill Canal. The canal was completed in 1826, and was used to haul freight, especially coal, iron and other bulk items from the coal regions of Pennsylvania to markets in the Philadelphia area and to such industrial centers at that time as Reading, Pottstown, Bridgeport, Norristown and Conshohocken.

At its peak the canal was used by 600 inner ports including Norristown, which had a public wharf on the river. Although passengers used the canal, the mainstay of business was freight service. The use of the canal continued until 1918 when it was abandoned for more convenient forms of transportation.

Railroads

Railroads stimulated growth in Norristown and other river towns and were a major factor in their development in the late 1800's. Industry was attracted to the area because of the railroads which provided, for that time, a flexible year-round form of transportation at a lower freight rate than the canal could offer.

The first railroad to provide service to Norristown from Philadelphia was known as the Philadelphia, Germantown, and Norristown Company. The railroad was built in 1835 to supplement the canal because of the large volume of coal being shipped. The tracks crossed the Schuylkill River from Norristown to Bridgeport in 1848 over the Ford Street bridge, providing service westward to Pottstown, Reading, and into the heart of the coal region. This railroad was later purchased by the Reading Railroad.

In 1889, the Pennsylvania Railroad built its tracks parallel to the Reading tracks along the Schuylkill River, bringing trains to the north side of the river, west of Norristown for the first time.

The North Penn Railroad Company financed the construction of the Stony Creek Railroad, connecting Lansdale with Norristown. The Stony Creek Railroad Company was incorporated in 1868 and sold much of its stock to Norristown residents. The extension of the railroad from Lansdale to

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Doylestown served a need to connect the county seats of Bucks and Montgomery. After the Reading Railroad acquired control of the Stony Creek Railroad their tracks were connected. The line was first used primarily for pleasure excursions to various picnic areas. By the late 1960's, the line became used primarily for the shipment of limestone to Bethlehem from the vicinity of Norristown at the rate of one train per day.

Trolleys

To serve the needs of an increasing population in the Schuylkill Valley, a number of trolley companies were formed. In 1884, the Norristown Passenger Railway Company was incorporated and operated horse-drawn cars on DeKalb and Main Streets with a spur to the Pennsylvania Railroad station. Eventually, tracks were extended to form a loop on Brown, Powell, Swede and Airy streets. In 1887, the Citizens Passenger Railway Company was incorporated to serve the west end, operating horse-drawn cars along Main Street from Ford Street to the Montgomery Cemetery with an extension to the state hospital on Stanbridge, Astor and Marshall Streets.

The trolley lines were electrified in 1893. At about the same time, the Norristown Company's line was extended across the DeKalb Street bridge through Bridgeport to Swedeland, and the Citizens

Company line was extended west to Jeffersonville and east to Conshohocken. Eventually, the various trolley companies between Chestnut Hill and Boyertown were merged into the Schuylkill Valley Traction Company, which was absorbed into the Reading Transit Company in 1910. Trolley service was abandoned in successive stages, and in 1933 this company became the Schuylkill Valley Lines and began bus service in Conshohocken, Norristown, Bridgeport, and Collegeville.

In 1902, the Montgomery Traction Company built a trolley line on DeKalb Street between Norristown and Lansdale. The Philadelphia and Western Railway Company extended its line from Villanova to Norristown in 1912. The P & W connected with the Lehigh Valley Traction Company to provide service from Norristown to Allentown. The Montgomery Company's line was rebuilt on a private right-of-way, abandoning the DeKalb Street route in 1912. In 1939, the Lehigh Valley Company's Liberty Bell Line provided high speed service between Philadelphia and Allentown. The Philadelphia Suburban Transportation Company-Red Arrow Lines acquired the route only to abandon the line north of Norristown in 1951. Today, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) operates the high speed rail line between Upper Darby and Norristown, ending at the Transportation Center.



The Liberty Bell Trolley no. 1008 turning from southbound Markley Street to eastbound Airy Street in 1951.



Today the Norristown Transportation Center accommodates SEPTA's seven bus routes, Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line, the Norristown High Speed Line, a new inter city bus terminal, and the Schuylkill River Trail.

Today's Roadway System

Streets & Highways

Street Network

Norristown has a highly interconnected street network which allows traffic to be dispersed on a number of streets, rather than forcing it onto one or two main arterials. It improves the ability of the municipality to provide services, such as trash collection, mail delivery, and emergency response in an efficient manner, and makes it possible for pedestrians to walk between neighborhoods, to work, and to local commercial destinations. Many streets are narrow, making it difficult to provide convenient parking in some locations and ample space for bus routes.

Highway Functional Classification System

The Highway Functional Classification System is a hierarchical grouping of roads based on function, service, and traffic capacity level. This system is a useful planning and programming tool that determines road width, speed, design, and pedestrian features. The functional classification of roads includes expressways, arterials, collectors, and local roads. Norristown roads are classified as local roads except as follows:

Principal Arterial Roads

- Markley Street
- DeKalb Street

Early Roads

The municipality is served by an extensive road system which enables motorists to reach all portions of the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Ridge Pike (Main Street in Norristown), constructed in 1706, connects Philadelphia through Norristown and Reading. John B. Sterigere was instrumental in creating and improving many streets in the 1830's. That year, a road known as DeKalb Pike was constructed from New Hope in Bucks County to the state of Maryland. Today, it is also known as U.S. Route 202—a major regional road.

River Roads & Bridges

Prior to the construction of DeKalb Pike, Swede's Ford, situated at the end of High Street in Norristown and Ford Street in Bridgeport, was used to cross the river. Swede's Ford was important during the Revolutionary War because of its proximity to Valley Forge. A number of streets were constructed near the Schuylkill River to provide access from industries to the railroads and canal. During its development, Norristown was served by two bridges spanning the Schuylkill River. In 1830 a bridge was built at DeKalb Street and toll collections were taken. After a fire destroyed it, the bridge was rebuilt. A toll bridge was also constructed at Ford Street, which was also destroyed by a fire in 1924, but was not rebuilt. In 1970 the Dannehower Bridge was constructed at Markely Street, providing Norristown with two river crossings.



Norristown's earliest bridges were made of wood and prone to destruction by fire.



Today, the DeKalb Street Veterans Memorial Bridge is one of Norristown's two spans over the Schuylkill River.

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- Johnson Highway
- Main Street

Minor Arterial Roads

- Airy Street

Major Collector Roads

- Stanbridge Street
- Harding Boulevard
- Swede Street
- Arch Street
- New Hope Street
- Sterigere Street
- Fornance Street
- West Marshall Street

Highway Access

Norristown has indirect access to the major highways. Interstate 476 can be accessed from Ridge Pike in Plymouth Meeting. The Pennsylvania Turnpike can be accessed from US Route 202 in King of Prussia and the Schuylkill Expressway (Interstate 76) is proposed to have access via Henderson Road in Upper Merion. Lack of good highway access has contributed to Norristown's decline.

Roadway Projects

Norristown aims to protect its street network assets by maintaining the existing roadways and improving access to regional highways.

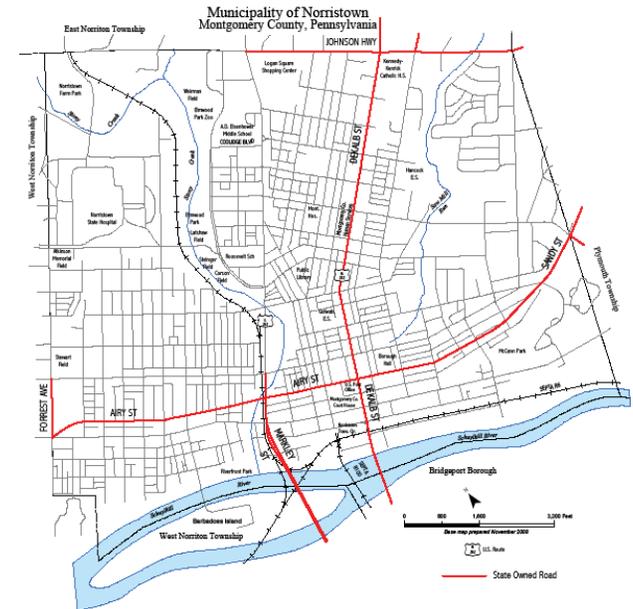
Transportation Improvement Projects

Several projects in Norristown are on the current PADOT Twelve Year Plan and the Philadelphia region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which allocates federal and state funding. These projects include the Lafayette Street Extension Project, U.S. 202 South improvements (Markley Street and Johnson Highway), and the replacement of the Stanbridge Street bridge over Stony Creek in the Norristown Farm Park.

Lafayette Street

The purpose of the Lafayette Street Extension Project is to create convenient access between downtown Norristown and the region's highway system as a way to spark economic development. It will also transform Lafayette Street from an industrial corridor into a welcoming gateway for motorists, commuters and users of the regional trail system.

Montgomery County, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, plan to invest over \$120 million into extending Lafayette Street beyond its present terminus at Ford Street to connect to the Pennsylvania Turnpike at a new EZ-Pass only slip ramp.



U.S. 202 DeKalb Street, Airy Street and portions of Johnson Highway and Markey Street are owned and maintained by PADOT.



Extending Lafayette Street to the Pennsylvania Turnpike will help provide improved vehicular and pedestrian access to the downtown and the waterfront.



The Norristown High Speed Line (Route 100).

The project is expected to be underway in the mid-2010's. A concluding effort to connect Lafayette Street with the US 202 Dannehower BridgeMarkely Street is a longer-term final phase that will be undertaken when the bridge is replaced by PADOT.

Markley Street

Markley Street is scheduled for a full depth reconstruction from West Johnson Highway to Main Street. From West Johnson Highway to Harding Blvd, Markley Street will be widened slightly to create a center turning lane and parking bays with new street trees and lighting. The area from Harding Boulevard to Marshall will also be widened to allow for 2 southbound lanes. Finally the section from

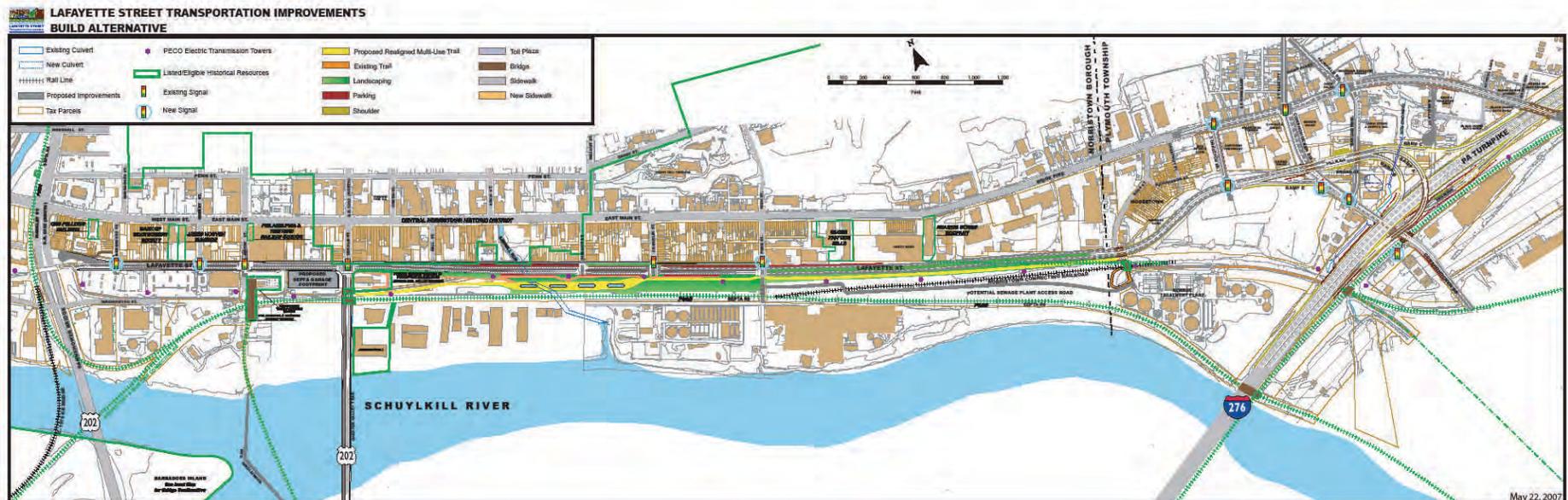
Marshall Street to Main Street will see bridge replacement and reconstruction over the Stony Creek.

Parking Facilities

Norristown has a large number of on- and off-street parking facilities.

On-Street Parking

In order to protect on-street parking for residents a parking permit program was created for specific residential areas adjacent to businesses/industry. Generally, the areas to which these permits apply also have posted time limits for parking for non-permit vehicles or parking meters. The majority of on-street parking spaces is are unregulated. The



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largest number of regulated spaces are “timed” spaces that limit parking for a certain amount of time with signage only. Additionally, there are several hundred metered parking spaces located primarily around the County Courthouse.

Structured Parking

There are four parking garages located in downtown Norristown to serve visitors and employers. County-owned garages include one under the Courthouse, the garage adjacent to the DEP building, and the new parking garage at Main and Cherry Streets. A new SEPTA garage is located on Lafayette Street next to the transportation center and contains 520 parking spaces.

Surface Parking

Whenever possible, surface parking facilities should be shared between adjacent uses. New surface parking should be interconnected with existing facilities to improve vehicle circulation.

Traveling in Norristown

Vehicle Ownership Rates

The majority of workers in Norristown (nearly 79%) have one or more vehicles available in their households. Over one-fifth of workers do not have a vehicle, and must depend on public

transportation, others willing to carpool, or their own two feet to get them to work (see figure 6.1)

Transportation Mode Choice

Most trips to work are made by automobile (see figure 6.2). In fact, according to the 2002 Census, nearly 81% of workers drive alone, carpool, or take a taxi. Just over 8% of workers in Norristown take public transit to work, with about 6.7% taking the train and 1.5% taking the bus, trolley or subway. Only about 1.1% of residents walk to work. While there is no data on non-work trips, it is likely that more work-day errands and other mid-day trips are taken on foot.

Travel Time to Work

Data on travel time to work is collected in the census. Nearly 12% of workers get to their jobs in less than 10 minutes. It takes over 38% of residents between 10 and 19 minutes to get to work while almost 20% require 20-29 minutes to get there, and over 30% take 30 minutes or more.

Public Transportation

Mass transit has many benefits for Norristown. Bus stops and train and trolley stations can serve as hubs of economic activity. Diverse demographic groups use public transportation, including students, the elderly, citizens who cannot afford cars, and those who prefer the convenience of not having to drive.



Metered parking is common in the downtown area, particularly near the County Courthouse.



The above rendering by Gannett Fleming and Tim Haahs Associates depicts the new SEPTA parking facility completed in 2008.

Figure 6.1 Vehicle Ownership Rates

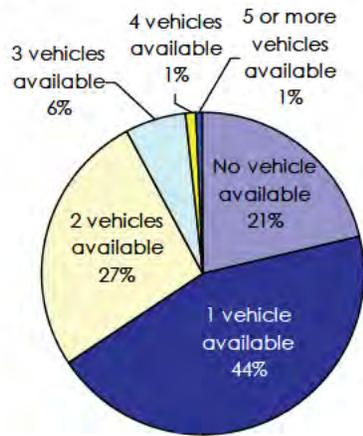
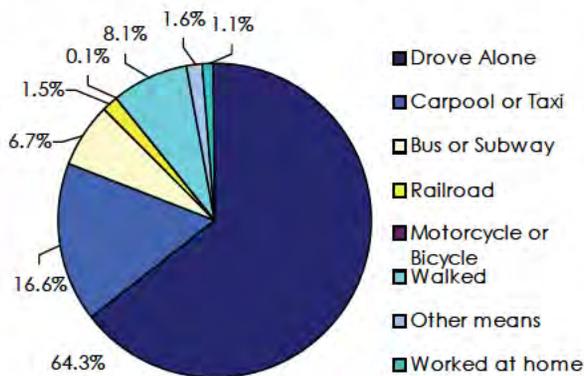


Figure 6.2 Transportation Mode Choice



Norristown is in the enviable position of having many public transportation options available. SEPTA’s services in the municipality include the Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line, the Norristown High Speed Line, and 7 bus routes (see figure 6.4). Between 1990 and 2000, the number of people using public transportation in Norristown grew by 45%.

The Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line stops at the Transportation Center and Main Street stations before terminating at Elm Street. It runs approximately every hour at off-peak times and every 20-30 minutes during peak periods. In 2007, these three stations saw approximately 2,745 passengers get on and off each day.

The Norristown High Speed Line connects Norristown to Bridgeport, Upper Merion Township, Lower Merion Township (including the Main Line), and Haverford Township (Delaware County) before terminating at the 69th Street Terminal in Upper Darby, where it connects to the Route 101 and 102 trolley lines, 17 bus routes, and the Market-Frankford Elevated/subway line.

SEPTA buses that pass through the municipality (all of which stop at the Transportation Center) include the 131 to the Valley Forge Conference Center, the 99 to Royersford via King of Prussia, the 98 to the Willow Grove Mall, the 97 to Barren Hill, the 96 to Lansdale/Telford, the 93 to Pottstown, the 91 to Graterford Prison, and the 90 to Plymouth Meeting

Mall. According to SEPTA, combined daily ridership on these routes was 6,785 in 2009.

The Pedestrian Environment

Because of its grid street layout and traditional development pattern, Norristown is a very pedestrian-friendly place. Nearly every street has sidewalks on both sides, and many major intersections have crosswalks and pedestrian signals.

Street crossings can be improved by adding zebra or ladder-style painted lines, colored pressed concrete or asphalt, good street lighting, signs or flashing lights that warn vehicles of an upcoming crosswalk, raised crosswalks or intersections, proper sight distance for vehicles at corners, and movable signs or cones in the street highlighting the crosswalk. Shorter crosswalks are easier and more comfortable for pedestrians than longer ones. Narrower streets, corner bulb-outs, tight curb radii, refuge islands, and landscaped medians can help to shorten crosswalks.

Street design factors such as block length, street pattern, vehicular speeds, and sidewalk design also affect pedestrians. Shorter blocks make it easier for pedestrians to cross a street or move around a neighborhood. An interconnected street system makes it easier to reach nearby destinations. Walking along streets designed for lower speeds, ideally 25 miles per hour, is safer and more comfortable, and wide sidewalks easily allow two

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people to pass each other. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all sidewalks to be designed and constructed according to ADA guidelines that make them accessible and usable for people with disabilities.

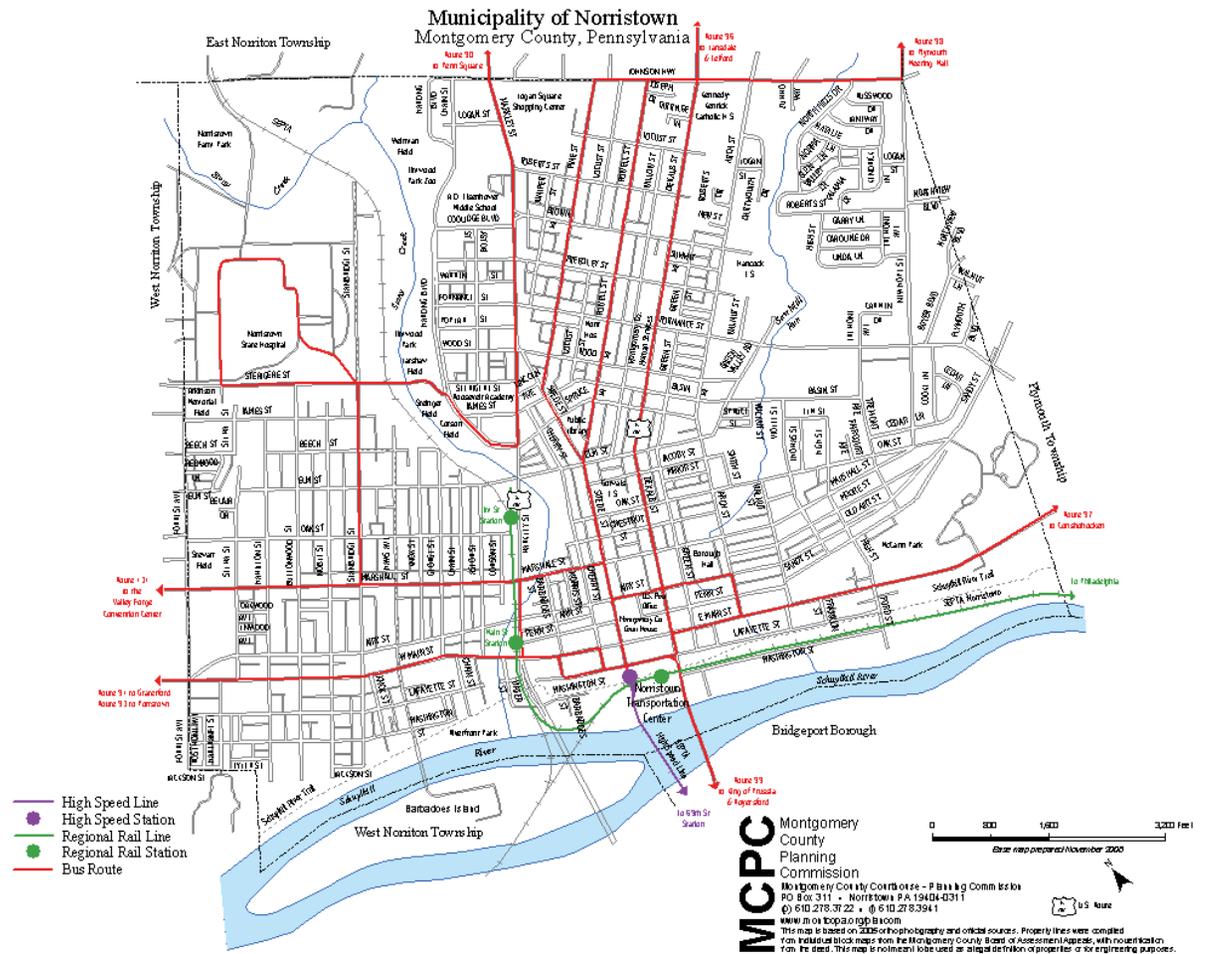
Bicycle Mobility

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

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) formulates guidelines for accommodating all bicyclists under a variety of road conditions. In the 1994 FHWA publication, *Selecting Roadway Design Treatments to Accommodate Bicycles*, three types of bicyclists are identified:

- **Group A** (Advanced), experienced riders who can operate under most traffic conditions
- **Group B** (Basic), casual adult or teens that are confident of their ability to operate in traffic
- **Group C** (Child), preteen riders who use the roadway under adult supervision.

Figure 6.3 SEPTA Transit Routes





State law requires that vehicles must yield to pedestrians in official in mid-block crossings.

The FHWA prescribes four basic types of road improvements to accommodate bicyclists on public roads, including shared lanes, wide curb lanes, paved shoulders, and bike lanes. Some roads are already bikeable, while others need to be retrofitted gradually as they are scheduled for other improvements.

PADOT has adopted FHWA's guidelines as recommended standards and Montgomery County's Bicycle Mobility Plan endorses these standards as well. A basic strategy for encouraging bicycle transportation is to create a bicycle network that provides safe and direct access from peoples' homes to places they want to go on a daily basis. Montgomery County's Bicycle Mobility Plan identifies 29 potential destinations and key bicycling corridors within Norristown, including:

- Johnson Highway
- Harding Boulevard
- Haws Avenue
- Markley Street
- Swede Street
- DeKalb Street
- Arch Street
- New Hope Street

- Fornance Street
- Sterigere Street
- West Marshall Street
- Airy Street
- Main Street
- Lafayette Street

The potential destinations include work sites of major employers; academic destinations like public and private schools; recreational destinations such as local and regional parks and trails; and intermodal destinations, such as transit hubs and regional rail stations.

Trails

Several regional trails wind through Norristown, providing both recreational facilities and alternative transportation options. These trails are open year-round to walkers, runners, bicycle riders, and skaters.

The Schuylkill River Trail, which connects Philadelphia to Valley Forge, runs along the town's riverfront. The Chester Valley Trail will eventually connect Norristown to Downingtown. More information about the trails can be found in Norristown's 2005 Open Space Plan.



Countdown signals help pedestrians gauge whether or not they can safely cross an intersection.

Goals & Recommendations

Goal 6.1—Manage Traffic Congestion

Recommendations:

Establish a municipal committee to review:

- Roadway maintenance and resurfacing.
- Traffic signal timing.
- Ensure traffic signals and signage are appropriately located.
- Promote public transit usage.

Goal 6.2—Improve Traffic Safety

Recommendations:

- Create an access management plan for the Riverfront Redevelopment Area.
- Continue to implement road maintenance plans
- Work with County Planning Commission to move first and second priority transportation projects in Norristown from the county comprehensive plan into the region's TIP.
- Use traffic calming techniques on local streets to slow traffic.
- Examine traffic calming and streetscape beautification for Main Street— an important gateway.
- Advocate with PADOT to retain on street parking along Johnson Highway, which provides needed parking and slows traffic.

Goal 6.3—Improve Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Recommendations:

- Examine and retrofit (if necessary) the bicycle corridors identified in this plan.
- Add bicycle lanes or shoulders to roads where feasible
- Add pedestrian hand signals and count-down timers to all signalized intersections.
- Provide adequate sidewalks and road crossings throughout the municipality.
- Add and maintain crosswalks along DeKalb, Markley, Main and Airy Streets.
- Develop a comprehensive sidewalk inventory and improvement plan.

Goal 6.4—Increase Opportunities to Utilize Non-Automotive Transportation Means

The Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan proposes expanding public transportation facilities through Norristown, including the extension of the existing regional rail lines.

Recommendations:

- Support extension of the Manayunk/Norristown Regional Rail Line to the Reading area.
- Support rehabilitation of the Stony Creek Line and eventual restoration of passenger service to Landsdale.

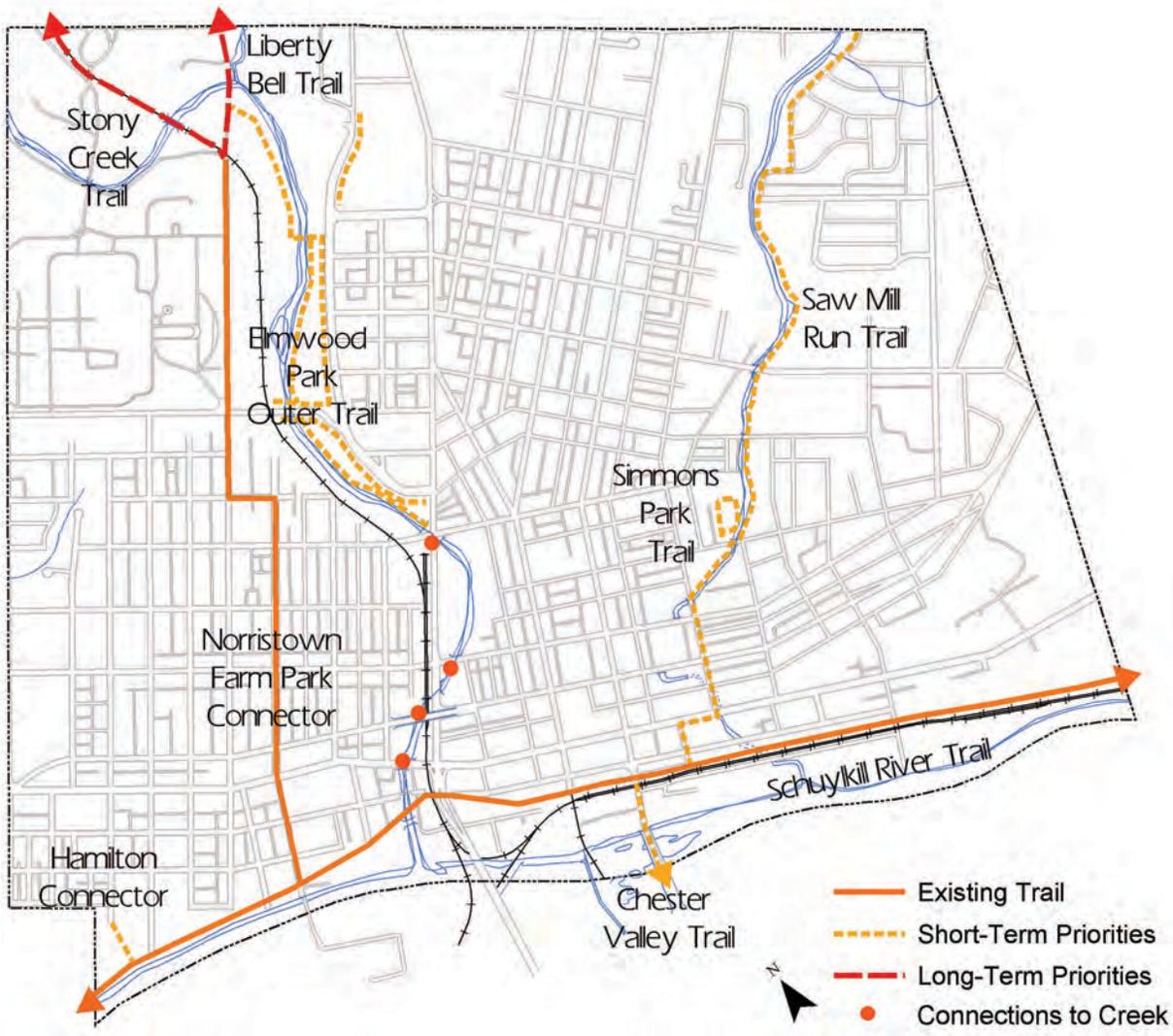


A bicycle network that provides safe and direct access between destinations encourages bicycle transportation.



Convenient bicycle parking is another important aspect of bicycle mobility.

Figure 6.5 Trail Network*



* from the 2005 Norristown Open Space Plan



A comprehensive sidewalk inventory and improvement plan is a first step toward improving the pedestrian environment.



The Schuylkill River Trail, which runs along the riverfront, connects Norristown to Philadelphia and Valley Forge.

Chapter 7 Community Facilities & Services



Municipal Hall houses municipal administration offices.

Introduction

There are numerous public services and facilities which must be provided by local government to meet the daily health and safety needs of the community. Community facilities are those public, semipublic, and private services and structures which are provided on a neighborhood or regional basis. Examples of such facilities are emergency services, schools, police protection, solid waste disposal, sewer and water service, governments offices and libraries. The responsibility for the provision of community facilities rests largely on local government, supplemented by private resources.

Community Services

Water Facilities

Water facilities, and the provision of a clean and reliable water supply, are important aspects of the overall infrastructure needed to accommodate residential development allow for economic growth. Water purveyors are essential for maintaining a safe, reliable water supply.

Pennsylvania-American Water

Pennsylvania-American Water Co. (PAWC) was founded in 1886 as the American Water Works & Guarantee Company and reorganized in 1947 as

American Water Works Company, Inc.

The majority of the company's activities are centered in locally-managed utility subsidiaries that are regulated by the state in which each operates. These state utilities are supported by the resources of American Water and are an integral part of the communities they serve.

PAWC operates the Norristown Water Treatment Plant, which draws up to 18 million gallons of water from the Schuylkill River per day for its 81,000 Norristown-area residential, commercial and industrial customers. The water supply is withdrawn from the pool created by the Norristown Dam.

Usage of the water from the Schuylkill River is regulated by the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC). DRBC's Comprehensive Plan of July, 2001 and the Water Code of 2009 govern the conservation, development and utilization of all Delaware River Basin water resources. Lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities.

Sewerage Facilities Waste Water Treatment Plant

Sewage facilities are one of the most important and expensive public services that a community provides for the health of its residents and

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protection of the environment. These facilities ensure that all waste is properly collected, treated and disposed. However, if not operated and maintained properly, negative health and water quality impacts can result. The entirety of Norristown is served by public water and sewer.

All of the Municipality of Norristown is considered a sewer growth area. The municipality utilizes the Montgomery County Official Sewage Facilities plan, the purpose of which is to provide for the safe and efficient collection, treatment and disposal of existing and future sewage flows generated within the service area, as well as to provide protection for both the groundwater and surface waters in the municipality.

The waste water treatment plant is currently located on Washington Street and discharges into the Schuylkill River. This plant has the most available capacity in the Norristown Region, although its age makes the actual amount of excess capacity uncertain. Plans to move the plant and transform it into an expanded regional facility have been discussed for several years. The municipality is explore ways to feasibly fund upgrades and/or to relocate the plant.

Stormwater Collection System

Stormwater enters the stormwater collection system and is discharged into local streams such as the Saw Mill Run, Stony Creek and eventually to the Schuyl-

kill River. Storm water can cause streambank erosion, excessive siltation in the waterways ultimately having a negative effect on water quality. Norristown participates in the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program administered by the PA Department of Environmental Protection. The Public Works department maintains the storm water collection system through regular inspections and street sweeping to keep the stormwater lines clear of unwanted debris. The program also requires public outreach and education to residents and business owners about actions they can take to reduce their stormwater pollution-potential.

Emergency Services

Police & Public Safety

Norristown Police Department

The Patrol division has 48 uniformed officers working in shifts. Patrol services are provided 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As the backbone of the police department, the Patrol Division is tasked with the initial response to any call for service. The primary task of the Patrol Division is the immediate protection of life and property, whether in an emergency or in situations which may become emergent without police intervention.

The Criminal Investigations Division is responsible for major case investigations, follow-up



The Norristown Police Department is located in Municipal Hall.

investigations to lesser offenses, and internal investigations. Staffed by 6 full-time detectives and the CID Commander, these sworn officers bring to CID expertise in different areas, which has resulted in the Norristown Police Department having one of the highest clearance rates for crimes committed. The detectives are also tasked with assisting other agencies as needed when criminal activity has a connection to Norristown.

Weed & Seed

Norristown has been designated as a Pennsylvania Weed & Seed site. In 2000, the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) Operation Triggerlock, which serves as the “Weed” portion of Weed and Seed, began. It is a comprehensive program designed to remove violent felons, illegal firearms, and illegal narcotics from a target area .

The “Seed” portion of the Weed & Seed program refers to a comprehensive revitalization planning process that identifies strategies and resources for improving education, economic development, housing, family strengthening/youth development, community relations, recreation, crime prevention/public safety, and health and wellness.

Norristown Fire Department

The Norristown Fire Department is a combination fire department consisting of approximately 80 Pennsylvania State Certified Career and Vol-

unteer Firefighters. These include the Fire Chief, Volunteer Deputy Fire Chief, 4 Volunteer Assistant Fire Chiefs, 3 Career Battalion Fire Chiefs, and a Fire Marshal.

There are an additional 180 active members who support the department as probationary firefighters, engineers, divers, fire police and administrative officers and staff. In addition to firefighting, the department provides Dive Rescue, Heavy Rescue, and Fire Police services. The Fire Department responds to over 1200 calls each year. The department's members spend countless hours responding to these calls for service, along with many hours of training each year. The department is made up of five fire companies they are the:

- Norristown Hose Company
- Montgomery Hose Fire Company
- Humane Fire Company
- Fairmount Engine Company No. 2
- Hancock Fire Company

The Fire Chief Thomas M. O'Donnell heads the department. Each company has an assistant chief that handles the firefighting and a president that handles administrative duties.

The Norristown Fire Department participates in both the Pennsylvania Fire Service Voluntary Certi-



Norristown has 5 firehouses to serve the community.

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fication Program and the Voluntary Rescue Service Recognition Program. The purpose of the Certification Program is to identify and recognize emergency service personnel whose accomplishments in training and education meets or exceeds National Fire Protection Association standards. Professional Qualifications identify the minimum requirements for a person at a particular level of progression. A person certified to one of the Fire Service Professional levels will have demonstrated competency in the knowledge and skills required to perform at a particular level. The service that is offered to the citizens of Norristown and surrounding communities will be enhanced by the professional competency attained through these certification processes.

The Norristown Fire Department participates in this Voluntary Pennsylvania Water Rescue Accreditation Program. The purpose of this program is to identify and recognize emergency service personnel and organizations whose accomplishments in training and education meets or exceeds nationally recognized standards. The standards for emergency service organizations identify the minimum requirements for a team at a particular level of progression. An organization accredited to either of the two recognized levels will have demonstrated competency in the knowledge and skills required to perform at a particular level, and possess the necessary equipment in order to perform the level of rescue. The service that can be offered to the citizens and communities of the Common-

wealth will be enhanced by the professional competency attained through this accreditation process. To date, there are 20 Pennsylvania emergency organizations accredited at one or more levels.

Ambulance Service

Plymouth Ambulance is a private non-profit, providing emergency ambulance service to Plymouth, Norristown, East and West Norriton, Bridgeport, Whitpain, Worcester and portions of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. They also provide critical care transport between area hospitals. The Plymouth Ambulance Tactical Team is equipped to provide pre-hospital emergency care in tactic environments such as hostage situations, any situation involving law enforcement or rescue operations where standard emergency medical service units are inappropriate.

Plymouth Ambulance Bike Team attends large outdoor events to provide rapid EMS while awaiting arrival of the ambulance which may be hampered by crowds or terrain.

Hospitals

Norristown State Hospital

In May 1876 the Pennsylvania Legislature called for the establishment of a state mental hospital to serve the Southeastern District of Pennsylvania. Norristown State Hospital was the first of the Pennsylvania state hospitals to construct its



Montgomery Hospital is a 210-bed facility and the largest private employer in Norristown.



The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Southeast Office is housed in a new environmentally-friendly LEED certified building.

buildings in a style following the "cottage" model developed in Gheel, Belgium, rather than the large-scale single structure Kirkbride Model composed of multiple "wings."

Norristown State Hospital (NSH) presently serves three populations: adult psychiatric, geropsychiatric, and adult forensic. It serves both men and women from Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties in the Civil section, as well as men from 19 counties women from 35 counties in the hospital's Forensic Center.

Montgomery Hospital

Founded in 1889, Montgomery Hospital is the oldest suburban hospital in southeastern Pennsylvania. Today, the Montgomery Hospital Medical Center is a 210-bed comprehensive community hospital, staffed by more than 1,000 health care professionals, who meet the needs of approximately 10,000 inpatients and more than 100,000 outpatients each year. It is the largest private sector employer in the Norristown.

The physician practices of the Montgomery Healthcare System offer a network of primary care and specialty physicians, caring for more than 80,000 patients throughout central Montgomery County. Montgomery Hospital has been nationally ranked as a top 100 hospital for critical care medicine.

In May 2005, Montgomery Hospital announced it was exploring a partnership with Albert Einstein Healthcare Network that will likely relocate the hospital. Einstein has proposed building a new regional healthcare facility a few miles away in East Norriton that will contain a state-of-the-art neonatal unit among other specialties. The future of the existing facility and the Health Care District as a whole remains unclear at this time and presents a new challenge for Norristown.

Mercy Suburban Outpatient Center

The Norristown Regional Cancer Center provides Mercy Suburban Hospital's outpatient cancer care. Clinical services include laboratory, chemotherapy administration, and radiation therapy. A support group, patient educational programs, and psychosocial support are available. The main Mercy Suburban Hospital is a catholic institution also located in East Norriton.

Institutional Services & Facilities

Government Facilities

Municipal Hall

Municipal Hall, houses administrative offices for the tax clerk, parking ticket clerk, building inspection and code enforcement, planning and economic development, police headquarters,

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public works, and council chambers and the sewer authority.

Post Office

The Norristown Post Office was built in the Art Deco style by James Wetmore and Harry McMurtie in 1932. It has a lobby adorned with WPA murals by Paul Mays and aluminum Deco/Classical metalwork. It serves zip codes 19401, 19403, 19404, 19488, and 19489, which includes the Municipality of Norristown as well as East Norriton, West Norriton, parts of Lower Providence and Worcester.

Montgomery County Court House

The County Court House was built in 1849 in the Greek Revival Style by Napoleon LeBrun. The original steeple was replaced by the dome in a substantial renovation of 1904. The interior of the Court House dates largely from 1904, when the stained glass ceilings in courtrooms A, B, and C were installed. The murals in courtrooms D and E are by WPA artist Harding, who also painted the WPA murals in the Philadelphia Customs House.

Montgomery County Government Offices

As the Montgomery County Seat, Norristown is home to County government offices from Aging and Adult Services to Consumer Affairs, and from Planning to Veterans Affairs. These departments and other are housed in the Health and Human

Services Building on DeKalb Street, One Montgomery Plaza on Swede Street, and in the County Courthouse itself.

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Southeast Office

Located at the corner of Swede and Main Streets on a former brown-field site, the DEP building has a 2005 Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Version 2.0 Gold Level Certification. It was designed to reduce resource consumption while providing a comfortable work place for approximately 300 employees. It reuses a historic railroad building, maintaining 100% of the façade. Tours of the building include such features as a demonstration green roof, a four-story atrium that provides daylight to the building interior, and a cistern rainwater collecting system.

Parks & Recreation

Elmwood Park Zoo

Elmwood Park Zoo was founded in 1924, when a private landowner donated a small piece of property and a handful of white-tailed deer to the Borough of Norristown. In 1985, the Norristown Zoological Society became an official non-profit organization, and assumed control of Elmwood Park Zoo from the Borough of Norristown. Today, Elmwood Park Zoo welcomes over 130,000 visitors annually.

A new 20-year master plan was approved by the



The Montgomery County Courthouse is a focal point and a large employment center in the municipality.



The Norristown Post Office was built in 1932 and has a lobby adorned with WPA murals and aluminum DecoClassical metalwork.



Elmwood Park Zoo exhibits over 120 animals in naturalistic, animal-appropriate habitats.



Hancock Elementary School.



Eisenhower Middle School.

Norristown Borough Council in 2003. In it, the Zoo will expand from its present 16 acres to over 42, adding exhibits that would more than double the Zoo's present exhibit space. It will also expand parking and concessions areas, and create a state-of-the-art Animal Care and Conservation Center where the Zoo's veterinary staff will treat their patients, and interactive exhibits will teach visitors about animal medicine. The new master plan comes with a price tag of over \$60 million, which must be raised from community, government, and corporate donations, and is in addition to an annual operating budget of more than \$1.5 million.

Municipal Parks

Norristown offers recreation programs for the Winter, Spring, and Fall seasons including soccer, basketball, karate, football, cheerleading, yoga, baseball, and orienteering, among others. It also runs a summer playground program for children. More information regarding Norristown's various public parks can be found in the 2005 Open Space Plan and Chapter 8 of this plan.

Places of Worship

Norristown is home to over 80 places of worship representing many faiths such as African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Catholic, Church of God, Lutheran, Muslim, Nazarene, and Presbyterian. Many of these structures are historic examples of a

variety of architectural styles. Several places of worship also provide community and social services such as food cupboards and homeless shelters.

Schools, Universities & Daycares

Schools are the largest community investment in terms of both capital outlay and yearly operating expenditures. The kind and extent of educational facilities depend upon the number of children in different age brackets; therefore, to plan for schools requires periodically updated forecasts of enrollment. A school is no longer just a place for students to study five days a week. Schools have become, in many ways, a hub of community living, and in the future their role will probably continue to expand.

According to the 2000 census, there are approximately 7,000 school-age children in the municipality of Norristown. An analysis of family structure indicates that 52% of family households are married couples with children and 48% are single parent households. Many of these families are headed by working parents. The Pennsylvania Department of Education reports that for the 2004-2005 school year, 56.5% of the student enrollment was from low-income families.

Public Schools

The Norristown Area School District (NASD) serves Norristown and adjacent East and West

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Norriton townships. NASD is comprised of 12 individual schools: two high schools (one located in Norristown), three middle schools (two located in Norristown), six elementary schools (two located in Norristown) and a new kindergarten facility. Each school is equipped with state-of-the-art resources, enabling the faculty to use the latest in computer technology in their classroom instruction.

According to Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Service, in 2004 the graduation rate for the Norristown Area School District was 76.7%, as compared to a rate of 86.9% for the state and 93.7% for the county. The district is not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act, mainly because of the low graduation rate. On average, all students, with the exception of those who have disabilities, are achieving AYP in math and reading proficiency and participation.

Hancock Elementary School

The Hancock Elementary School, was established in 1898, although the present school building was constructed in 1962. The school houses approximately 500 K-5 students. The school building is used by the community for basketball leagues, and Boy and Girl Scouts. Along with their own programs, the school has become a focus of the area.

Gotwals Elementary School

Gotwals Elementary School has a student population of approximately 400 students in grades K-5. One-on-one tutoring is provided by volunteers from Citizen Bank, Eastern College students, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Delta Sigma Sorority, and Foster Grandparents. Summertime and Saturday academic classes are held to strengthen skills in reading and math.

Eisenhower Middle School

The Eisenhower Middle School has a student population of over 600. Through a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, Eisenhower has an after-school program from 3-6 p.m. free to all students with priority given to those needing academic support. Through the coordination of this program, a Butterfly Garden Program was implemented.

Stewart Middle School

Opened as a junior high school in 1925, Stewart was converted to a middle school in 1973. All Stewart's 600+ students reside within a 1½-mile walking distance of the school Stewart may be regarded as one of the few remaining neighborhood schools in the region.

Roosevelt Alternative High School

Roosevelt School, which is a historical landmark, was built in 1914. It became an



Roosevelt Alternative High School.



Kennedy-Kenrick Catholic High School.



The Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library provides many services such as public access computing.



Norristown State Hospital.

Alternative School in 1980. Today, Roosevelt School provides four different programs for approximately 200 students. Choices available to students from within the district and outside NASD boundaries are the Roosevelt Secondary Program, the Expectant and Teen Parent Program with an onsite daycare, the CARE Program, and the TR Extended Day Program. All programs are tailored to address the academic and social-adaptive needs of the student population.

Private Schools

Norristown's private/parochial school system is served by the Philadelphia Archdiocese and includes one elementary and one high school.

- St. Francis of Assisi Parochial School
- Kennedy Kenrick Catholic High School

Additionally, the municipality is served by other religious affiliated schools and daycare programs.

Montgomery County Community College Resource Center

MC3 has opened a resource center located in downtown Norristown. The center provides information about campuses in Montgomery County, admissions, programs, and financial aid.

Daycare Centers

Daycare centers serve a vital role in today's economy by providing a service to the working parents as well as creating local jobs. Norristown and the surrounding region provide many alternatives in childcare. In addition to traditional centers such as Head Start and kindergartens, there are before and after-school programs, nursery schools, preschools, and summer day camps that contribute to fulfill the childcare needs of Norristown residents.

Libraries and Historical Society

Montgomery County/Norristown Public Library

The library began in 1794 with the founding of the "Norristown Library Company" by 90 families residing in the area. One of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Thomas McKean, signed the charter issued in March 1796 establishing the corporation.

In 1962 the library was designated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as a district library center, now one of 29 throughout the state. In 1968 a merger established the Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library (MC-NPL) with its current three role structure: local library with its four branches; county library servicing municipalities where no state aided library exists; and

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district library supporting the work of all independent public libraries in Montgomery County and the Borough of Telford (Bucks County).

Services provided by the library system include public access computing, interlibrary loans, public meeting rooms, photocopiers, book mobiles, books by mail, videos and CDs, and children's story hours in addition to typical library services.

In 2002, the library completed "Navigating the Future: A Strategic Plan for Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library." The strategic plan provides a basis for future development of Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library through 2008. The vision of "Navigating the Future" is the creation of a library that is relevant and responsive to community needs and is able to serve the public for the next hundred years.

Montgomery County Law Library

The Law Library of Montgomery County, established by an act of the state legislature on March 12, 1869, is located in the lower plaza level of the Montgomery County Courthouse. It is one of the largest county law libraries in Pennsylvania. The Law Library serves the legal

research needs of the courts, governmental agencies, the practicing bar, and the public.

As a public facility, this library is open to everyone to fulfill the need for citizens to have legal materials available for general interest, for knowledge about legal transactions, and for educational information.

Montgomery County Historical Society

The Montgomery County Historical Society was established in 1881. Its mission is to preserve the county's rich heritage. It offers a range of programs, speakers, exhibits and tours and has a library collection of books and archival materials.

Boards, Commissions and Authorities

Norristown is governed by a Municipal Council which consists of seven members. There are four districts and three at-large positions. Each member serves a four-year term and can be re-elected two times. As Council members, their main job is to create new legislation, adopt ordinances, resolutions, motions and approve an annual budget. Council serves their constituents not only for the present, but also to prepare the community for the future. Council directs activities through a municipal manager, who in turn supervises all departments. The



Montgomery Hospital has been a community institution since 1889.



George Washington Carver Community Center on Jacoby Street.



The Montgomery County Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) on Arch Street helps the unemployed and underemployed.

manager works closely with all departments to insure the health and welfare of the residents. Norristown takes great pride in being a full service governments operation consisting of Administration, Building and Code Enforcement, Finance, Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Planning and Economic Development. The following are some of the various boards, commissions, and authorities:

- Planning Commission
- Zoning Hearing Board
- Historic Architectural Review Board
- Design Review Board
- Shade Tree Commission
- Norristown Sewer Authority

Other Facilities

George Washington Carver Community Center

The Carver center is located in the East End and offers a gymnasium, kitchen, offices, and the only public swimming pool in Norristown. It provides a number of programs for residents including an ACE abstinence program, girl scouts, cub scouts, Kids Café food service, line dancing, Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, Sunday church

services, basketball tournaments, GERT (grandparents raising their own), and additional seasonal programs. The Carver Center is wholly supported by donations.

Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC)

The mission of the OIC is to help the unemployed and underemployed obtain the necessary literacy skills and job training to become self-supporting individuals. The OIC is an affiliate of a 33 year old grassroots organization, founded in 1965 by the Rev. Dr. Leo Sullivan in Philadelphia. The center has been located in the current facility since 1966 and has trained over 10,000 individuals in basic education, computers, English as a second language (ESL) and vocational skills.

Police Athletic League Center

The PAL has recently found a home in Elmwood Park in the former General Thomas J. Stewart Memorial Armory, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Center is a beautifully renovated facility with 7 classrooms, a fitness/wellness center, a gymnasium, a community room/board room, a computer lab with internet service, bathrooms, and shower facilities.

The center offers an After School Club, Wrestling Club, Tae Kwon Do, Drama/Theater for Youth,



The PAL Center offers many sports and educational programs for children and adults .

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Winter Basketball League, Sewing classes, Boxing programs, Computer Skills classes, family counseling, parenting classes, and a variety of other programs. While some programs/facilities require a membership fee, others are free and open to all residents of Norristown.

Social & Economic Development Services

A large number of social and economic development services are available in Norristown, including the following:

- **ACLAMO (Action Committee for Latino Americans of Montgomery County)** provides services for Hispanics in the Norristown area including classes in ESL.
- **Agape Improvement and Development Corporation** is a non-profit that offers budget and credit repair counseling.
- **ASSETS Montco** provides training in small business start-up.
- **CADCOM (Community Action Development Commission)** provides job preparation classes, subsidized housing, transportation assistance, and educational programming.
- **Food Cupboards** are operated by the Patrician Society, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Opportunity Board, Catholic Social Services, and the Salvation Army.
- **Gateway Employment Services, Inc.** links persons with disabilities with employers

- **Genesis Housing Corporation** is a Community Housing Development Corporation that acquires, rehabs and sells homes.
- **Habitat for Humanity** rehabilitates substandard houses and constructs new homes for low-income families.
- **Halfway There Supportive Housing Program** provides transitional housing for formerly homeless individuals.
- **Hedwig House Shelter** offers case management and rental subsidies.
- **ICN (Interagency Council of Norristown)** provides information related to education services.
- **Literacy Council of Norristown** offers one-on-one tutoring for basic literacy skills, GED and ESL.
- **Montgomery County Career Link** offers education, employment and training services.
- **Montgomery County Community College (MCCC)** sponsors classes at the Central Presbyterian Church.
- **Montgomery County Cultural Center** offers programs and summer camp.
- **Montgomery County Day Care Services** provides information on day care services in Norristown.



Habitat for Humanity rehabilitates homes in Norristown.



Norristown's Recreation Activity Programs include boys and girls softball.



Education resources, especially those for ESL families, need to be improved. Photo by Mark Psoras, Norristown, PA.



After-school and Summer programs need to be expanded.

- **Montgomery County Housing Coalition** includes a committee examining permanent housing opportunities for the disabled.
- **Montgomery County Intermediate Unit 23** provides services for special needs students.
- **Montgomery County Mental Retardation/Case Management Office** provides early intervention, education, counseling, employment, and family services.
- **Norristown Family Center** provides informational workshops, onsite tutoring, Head Start, Resource Mom project, etc.
- **Norristown Initiative** is a citizen advocacy group in Norristown.
- **Norristown Recreation Activity Programs** offers fall, winter and spring sports programs for children and adults.
- **Office of Children and Youth** provides education to children in the juvenile system.
- **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation** offers education, employment and training services.
- **Overnight Shelters** include the Salvation Army, Missionary Sisters of Charity, Interfaith Hospitality Network, and Laurel House.
- **REDI (Ramsey Education Development Institute, Inc.)** offers classes for GED, job preparation, and specific job skills.

- **The Salvation Army** offers day care, before and after-school programs, and summer youth programs.
- **Senior Adult Activities Center** provides senior activities, meals on wheels, and adult daycare.
- **Tenant Based Rental Assistance** provides rental subsidies until an individual can obtain a Housing Choice Voucher.
- **Victim Services Center of Montgomery County, Inc.** provides services related to child abuse, law, family/individual counseling, education, and employment & training.

Goals & Recommendations

Goal 7.1—Improve the Physical Plant of All Municipal Facilities

Recommendations:

- Create an annual work plan for all municipal facility for maintenance and cleaning.
- Provide regular training for public works employees in best management practices.

Goal 7.2—Improve Education Resources

Recommendations:

- Provide services for ESL families including a Spanish language telephone line for

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school registration and interpreters to assist families when dealing with their child's educational program.

- Recruit volunteers to serve as tutors, particularly for language and literacy skills.
- Provide a Spanish language program for professionals who deal with the Spanish-speaking community.
- Provide airtime on local cable TV station for ESL and SSL instruction.
- Expand existing summer and after-school programs including continuing education and inter/intramural sports.
- Promote a common curriculum for preschool/daycare centers such as the Delaware Valley Child Care Council pilot program.

Goal 7.2—Enhance Cultural Resources

Recommendations:

- Form a Arts and Cultural Task Force with members from a multi-disciplinary, multi-regional background.
- Hold an annual 4th of July Parade
- Explore the reuse of the old County Prison for cultural events and activities.
- Attract more cultural organizations and events to the downtown.

- Appoint a committee to program community-wide activities to celebrate the upcoming Norristown bicentennial.
- Program cultural events sponsored by the municipality.
- Promote the arts and cultural resources available in Norristown.

Goal 7.3—Increase the Number of Recreational Programs

Recommendations:

- List all activities and programs on Norristown's website.
- Upgrade existing facilities to make them more flexible and adaptable for a greater variety of uses.
- Establish more programs geared toward teens.

Goal 7.4—Continue to Provide High-Quality Regional Health and Emergency Services and Programs

Recommendations:

- Work with the County Health Department and other providers to ensure that health education programs are tailored to community needs.
- Establish more peer-to-peer programs geared toward teen and young adult health issues.



Calvary Baptist Church is located on West Marshall Street.



St. George's Coptic Church on Dekalb Street is an example of Greek Revival architecture, and was built in 1863 as Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Chapter 8 Natural & Historic Resources



Stony Creek has been designated for Trout Stocking Fishes.

Introduction

Natural and historic resources provide recreational and cultural opportunities that improve the quality of every day life. In addition, these resources bring economic benefits through tourism and by making the municipality a more attractive place to live and work.

Natural Resources

Although Norristown is a well-developed, urban municipality, there are many natural resources worthy of protection including woodlands, streams, floodplains, and wetlands. These resources are essential to the health and vitality of the community.

Woodlands

In Norristown, areas of dense woodlands include parts of Elmwood Park, areas along the Schuylkill River, sections of the Stony Creek and Saw Mill Run corridors, and some of the steep slope areas in the East End. Those woodlands located in the western parks and in Riverfront Park are permanently preserved as public open space.

Waterbodies

Norristown contains three watercourses: Stony Creek, Saw Mill Run, and the Schuylkill River.

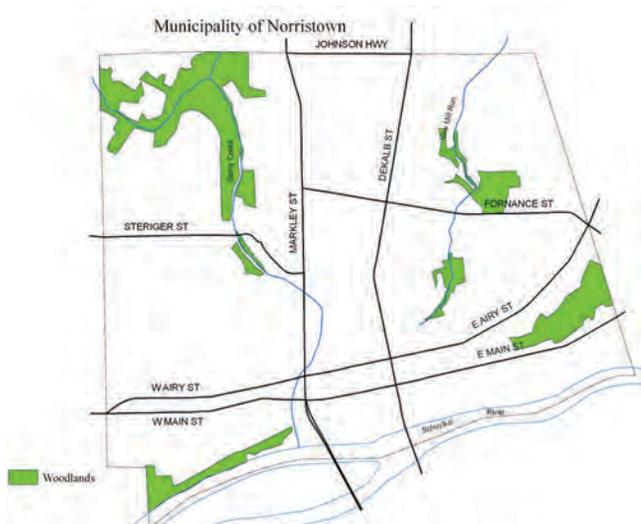
Saw Mill Run

The Saw Mill Run flows to the Schuylkill through the Municipality's East End. At its entrance into Norristown, the corridor is largely undisturbed. It is protected through Bartasch Park until it reaches the Dam, which was constructed in the 1970s to impede its flow during periods of excessive rain fall. It then continues its path through private yards and open space areas to Marshall Street, where it is channeled underground. From that point on it lacks public access and surfaces only intermittently until it reaches the river.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has established water quality standards that need to be maintained to protect designated water uses. The protected water use designation for a given waterway is an indicator of its value for the protection and propagation of aquatic life. Saw Mill Run has been designated as a stream for Warm Water Fishes.

Stony Creek

Stony Creek flows to the Schuylkill River through the west end of Norristown. It enters the municipality through the Norristown Farm Park. It flows through Elmwood Park in a fairly natural wooded state and provides a pleasant buffer through a dense urban area. Stony Creek has been designated for Trout Stocking Fishes and the creek is permanently protected in this area. After the intersection of Elm



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and Markley Streets Norristown's industrial development from a bygone era has impacted the Stony Creek's banks and woodlands and lacks areas with good public access.

Schuylkill River

One of the most significant water bodies in the Delaware Valley, the Schuylkill River was one of the primary factors in Norristown's location. In the past, the river was viewed as a transportation corridor and a facilitator for industrial development. Today, the river is viewed as a significant potential recreational amenity. While the majority of the waterfront is currently industrial in nature, Riverfront and Crawford parks do provide permanent and temporary open space protection, respectively.

The Schuylkill River has an additional designation for migratory fishes that provides protection for the passage, maintenance, and propagation of anadromous and catadromous fishes and other fishes which ascend to flowing waters to complete their life cycle. Additionally, it is also the first river in Pennsylvania designated as "scenic" under the Pennsylvania State Scenic Rivers Program.

Norristown, West Norriton, Upper Merion, Bridgeport, West Conshohocken, Lower Merion, Conshohocken, Plymouth, and Montgomery County have acknowledged that public access and trail connections are priorities that need to be addressed.

Floodplains and Wetlands

Floodplains

Norristown's riverfront located in the 100-year floodplain. During heavy storms the floodplain stores and conveys stormwater. By limiting impervious surfaces within the floodplain the carrying capacity of the land is increased. Preserving and improving the carrying capacity of the floodplain reduces the potential for property damage and loss of life. Floodplains in the municipality identified by the Federal Emergency Management System (FEMA) are found along Saw Mill Run and Saw Mill Run Dam, Stony Creek, and the Schuylkill River bank. (Figure 8.1)

Wetlands

Wetlands have value and are worthy of protection. However, it is easier to discuss the benefits of wetlands than it is to delineate the wetland itself. Almost all wetlands provide habitat for birds, amphibians and fish. These in turn support other wildlife. Wetlands also mitigate flooding by holding back floodwater and slowing stream velocity. Wetlands improve water quality too.

Norristown has wetland areas based on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI). The NWI offers a broad based, generalized overview of wetlands. Hydric soils may also indicate the



The Schuylkill River is one of the most significant water bodies in the Delaware Valley.

Figure 8.1 - Floodplains and Wetlands

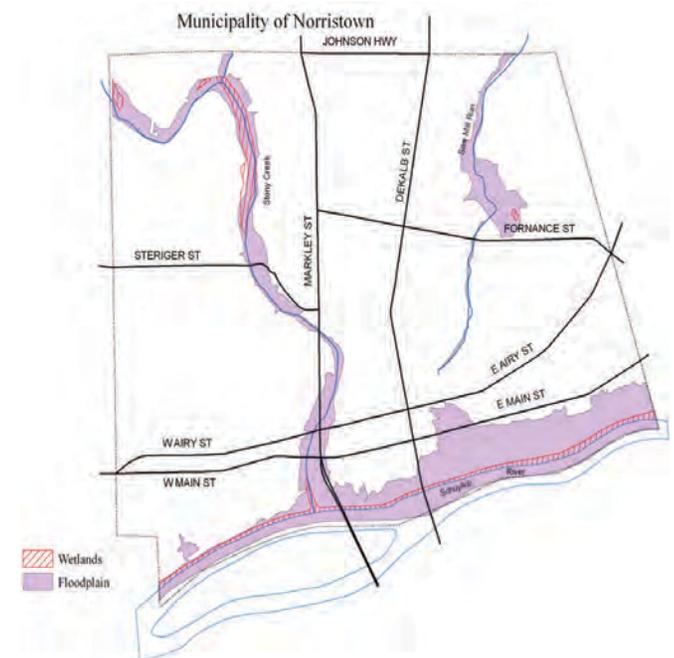
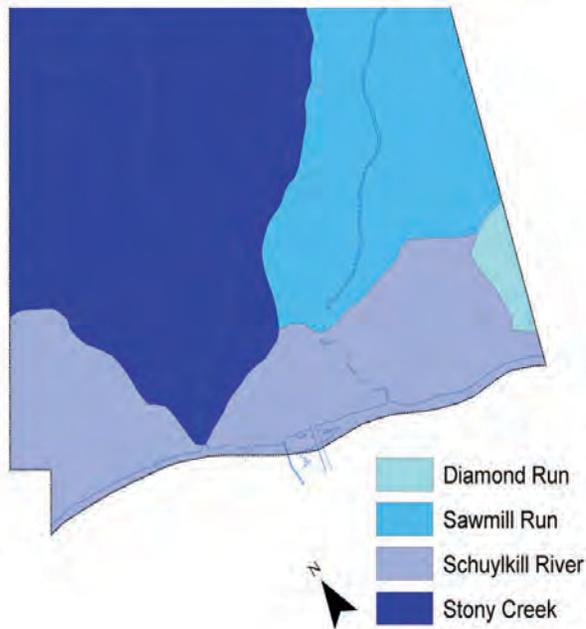


Figure 8. 2 - Watershed Sub Basins



This riparian meadow in the Norristown Farm Park is an integral part of the stormwater management system.

presence of wetlands; therefore other wetlands may also exist in the municipality. In Norristown, wetlands are located along Stony Creek in the northern portion of Elmwood Park and along the entire length of the Schuylkill Riverfront.

Watersheds

Schuylkill Watershed

The entire municipality is within the Schuylkill Watershed, which includes the Diamond Run, Sawmill Run, Schuylkill River and Stony Creek sub basins. Because watersheds are usually larger than one community, an interrelationship exists whereby municipalities that are upstream contribute surface water flow to Norristown, while the Schuylkill directly receives the municipality's flow. With this in mind, Norristown should aim to maintain the natural conditions of its drainage system, such as through preservation of open space along watercourses.

Stormwater Management

In 1991 the Montgomery County Planning Commission completed an Act 167 Stormwater Management plan for the Stony Creek/Saw Mill Run Watershed. The creation of this plan was a coordinated effort geared towards

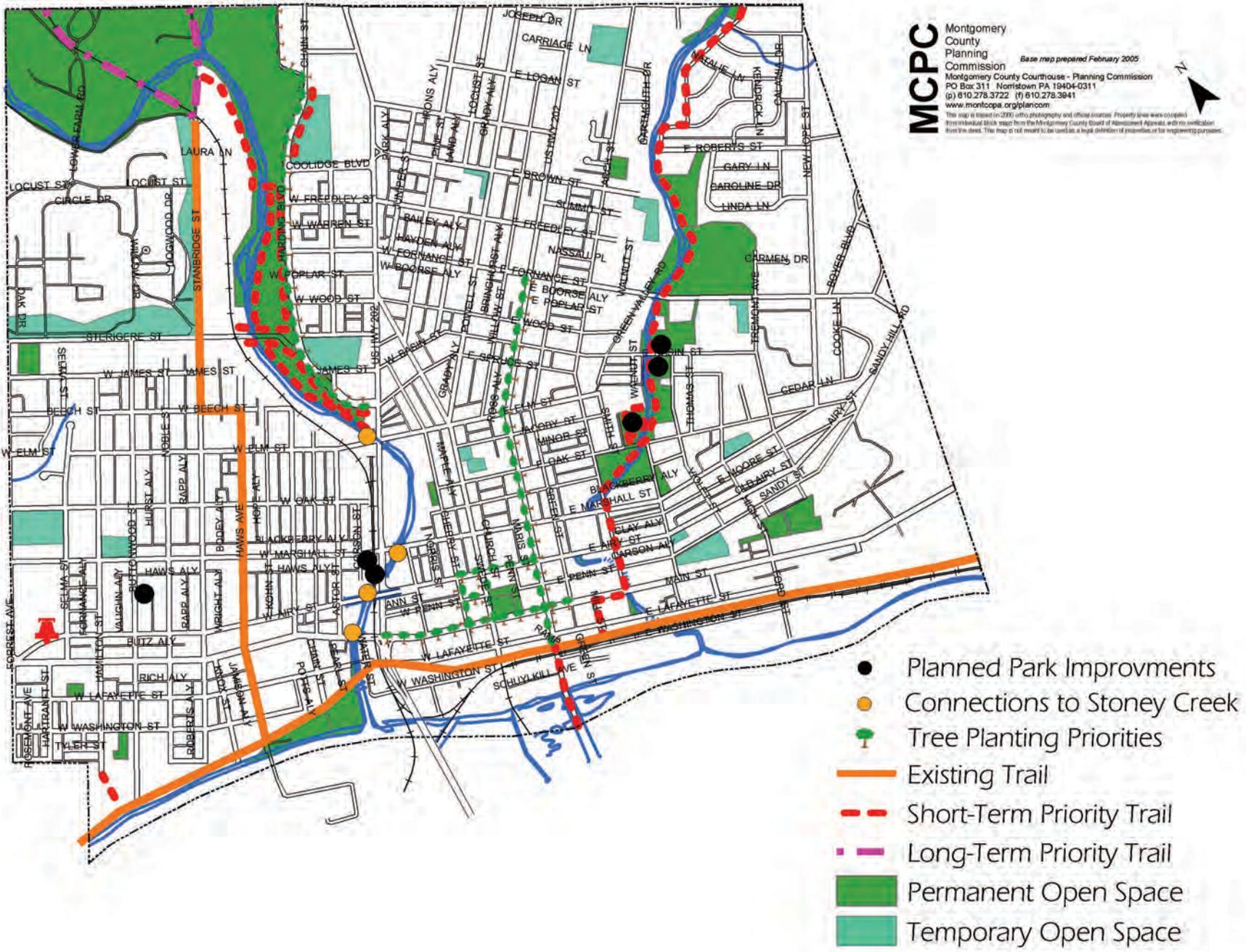
preventing an increase in stormwater problems. It was adopted by ordinance by all of the municipalities in the watershed.

Open Space Plan

Norristown adopted its second Open Space Plan in 2005. The plan was developed to serve as a guide to the municipality in acquiring new open space, forging connections between existing protected open space through an enhanced trail network, and to develop programs and policies to preserve and maintain active and passive open spaces in Norristown. Having an open space plan in place allows the municipality eligible to apply for funding through the Montgomery County Green Fields/ Green Towns Program.

The plan begins with a detailed examination of existing conditions and demographics. Based on established goals and objectives, the plan provides recommendations for a number of projects, including new trails, active recreation in existing parks and playground, street tree plantings, pedestrian amenities, and historic preservation activities. For more information about existing and future parks, trails, recreation areas and open space, please see the 2005 Norristown Open Space Plan.

Figure 8.3 - 2005 Open Space Plan Recommendations





The Selma Mansion's preservation is a priority of the Norristown Preservation Society.



The Corson House is one of the two oldest buildings in the municipality.

Historic Resources

Historic Districts

In December 1984, two areas within Norristown were placed on the National Register of Historic Places (see Figure 8.4) creating the West and Central Historic Districts. They contain many Greek Revival and Italianate structures built between 1800 and 1920, and late Victorian structures built between 1855 and 1934. Together, the two districts include nearly 5000 structures. National Register status for these two Historic Districts contributes to preserving historic properties in the following ways:

- Recognition that the property is of significance to the nation, state or community.
- Given consideration in the planning of projects that receive federal assistance.
- Eligible for federal tax benefits.
- And, qualification for federal assistance for historic preservation.

Upon establishing the historic districts, Norristown appointed a Historical Architectural Review Board, also known as a HARB. It consists of a registered architect, a licensed real estate broker, a building inspector, and two or more persons with interest and experience in historic preservation from the community.

The HARB acts as an advisor to the municipal council, recommending approval or disapproval of certificates of appropriateness for new construction, demolition, and work within the historic district which would alter the exterior appearance (visible from a public right of way). Final authority to approve or disapprove the issuance of permits rests with the governing body.

Historic Buildings

In addition to buildings in the Historic Districts, Norristown has historically significant structures that lie outside of the districts. The Globe Knitting Mills at 660 and 694 E. Main Street, the David Rittenhouse Junior High School at 1705 Locust Street, and the General Thomas J. Stewart Memorial Armory (now the Police Athletic League Center, PAL) at 340 Harding Boulevard are all listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

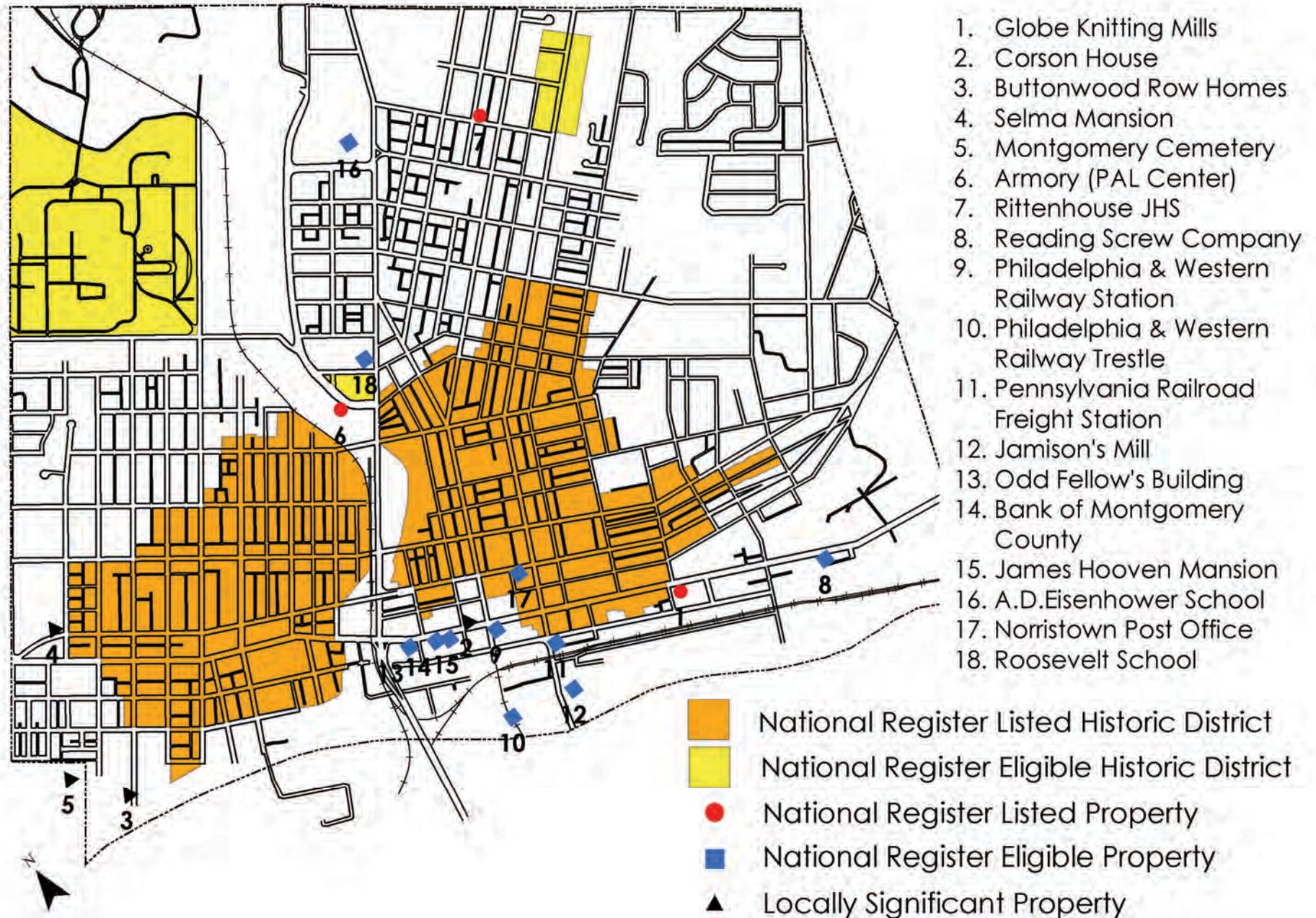
Other locally significant buildings include the Selma Mansion on Selma Street, the Corson House on E. Main Street, and the row houses at the southern end of Buttonwood Street. (see Figure 8.4).

Programs

Historic Marker Program

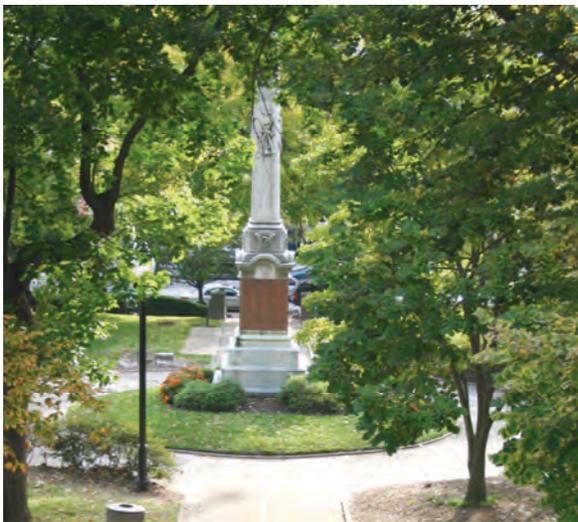
The Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission administers a program of historical markers to cap-

Figure 8.4 - Historic Districts and Selected Historic Structures, Source: 1980 John Milner Report





The 9/11 memorial, unveiled on September 11, 2005, was created utilizing a mangled I-beam from the World Trade Center.



A monument honoring Civil War General Zook and the 51st Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers is situated in the Hancock Square in front of the Courthouse.

ture the memory of people, places and events that have affected the lives of Pennsylvanians over the centuries since William Penn founder the Commonwealth. Norristown is home to two historical markers and could be nominated for many more. When dedicated, new markers provide an opportunity for community members and leaders to celebrate and better understand their heritage.

Historic Façade Program

The Historic Façade Program affords owners of commercial and multi-family residential properties the opportunity to enhance their building's historic façade. Properties must be located in the Central and West Norristown Historic Districts, or must have been built prior to 1940 to qualify for the matching funds. Since 1999 this Program improved over 25 historic facades within the two Historic Districts.

The Lynch Martinez Architectural firm earned a Merit Award for administration of this program. The firm created Design Guidelines for address signage, awnings and improvements including façade cleaning, brick repointing, painting, repairing, and replacing architectural details. All renovations done through this program are required to observe strict municipal codes and standards, maintain the architectural integrity of the buildings, and follow the Secretary of the Interior's, Guidelines for Renovating Historic Structures.

West Marshall Street Historic Façade Program

Similar to the Historic Façade program, the West Marshall Street Historic Façade Program targets the Historic West Marshall Street Shopping District (between Corson Street and Haws Avenue) and provides matching funds for qualifying properties.

Façade Easements

Another means for preserving historic structures is to donate a facade easement to a qualified non-profit organization like the Conservancy of Montgomery County. A facade easement is an agreement between a property owner and a non-profit organization which accomplishes three things:

- Specifies the restoration and maintenance requirements for the building;
- Imposes restrictions upon any changes to one or more of the facades of the building;
- Provides for monitoring and enforcement of the easement by the non-profit organization.

Property owners can also benefit from a tax deduction for the value of the donated easement since it is considered a charitable deduction. But the property must be listed individually or be a significant or contributing structure in a district in the National Register of Historic Places.

Organizations

Norristown Preservation Society

The Norristown Preservation Society was founded in 1983 to help preserve, promote and protect Norristown's rich History and historical buildings and heritage. Since that time, the Society has continued its goal of restoring the Selma Mansion, conducted house tours of Norristown homes and architectural tours of Victorian Era buildings, and conducted lectures and classes on building maintenance, local architecture and history.

A self-guided walking tour of the County Courthouse area presented by the Preservation Society can be found online at: <http://www.montcopa.org/montco/walkingtour/> Each year, the Norristown Preservation Society presents awards for buildings which have gained recognition because of renovations, restorations or tasteful decoration.

Historical Society of Montgomery County

On May 11, 1883, the Historical Society of Montgomery County was chartered. Its mission is to preserve the civil, political, and religious history of the county and to promote the study of history. The Society holds three General Meetings each year that feature programs of county-wide interest. Workshops are held on such topics as reading eighteenth-century

German documents, speaking Pennsylvania Dutch, dating old houses and plotting land tracts.

Other activities include bi-annual outings to historical sites, and activities to promote and upgrade historic Montgomery Cemetery. The Society operates a library, which is located at 1654 DeKalb Street in Norristown. It also maintains the Montgomery Cemetery which is located in West Norriton but is accessible through Norristown.

Goals & Recommendations

Goal 8.1—Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Natural Resources Including Woodlands, Streams, Wetlands, Steep Slopes, Scenic Views, and Wildlife.

Recommendations:

Stream Corridors & Wetlands

- Create a riparian corridor protection ordinance improve one of Norristown's greatest natural assets.
- Create a connected trail system along the Saw Mill Run, Stony Creek that links to local parks and the Schuylkill River and the proposed Liberty Bell Trail.
- Support activities of local groups like the Stony Creek Anglers, that adopt stream corridors for



The Historical Society of Montgomery County is located on DeKalb Street.



Civil War Reenactment held in Hancock Square.



A tree planting program will help augment Norristown's existing tree canopy.



Stream corridor protection ordinance should be created.

the purpose of recreation, protection, and maintenance.

Woodlands

- Conduct a municipal-wide tree inventory to identify existing conditions of individual heritage trees and tree stands in need of protection.
- Prepare a municipal-wide tree planting and maintenance plan that identifies and prioritizes; dead, diseased, or hazard trees for removal; a schedule for tree replacement; and recommends tree species suitable for planting in local conditions.
- Initiate a tree planting program for municipal parks. This would include a tree replacement program for Elmwood Park designed to replace trees coming to the end of their natural life span.
- Continue to work with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Treevitalize and similar programs designed to increase the tree canopy in Southeast Pennsylvania to identify new tree planting opportunities in Norristown.
- Update landscaping requirements in the zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance to protect existing trees and augment the municipality's existing tree canopy.

Goal 8.2—Encourage New Recreational Opportunities

Recommendations:

- Hire workers with expertise in landscaping and urban forestry and provide advanced training for those responsible for park maintenance.
- Seek out new sources for dedicated funding to support the long term maintenance of all the municipal parks, trails and recreation fields.
- Conduct a feasibility study to explore how to improve access to and create new recreation opportunities in Riverfront Park.

Goal 8.3—Honor & Maintain Historic Sites

Recommendations:

- Initiate historic plaque program to honor those buildings constructed in the 19th and 20th century that are not formally recognized (outside of the Milner report) to help foster community identity.
- Commemorate structures and paths used by escaped slaves as part of the underground railroad during and after the civil war.
- Consistently enforce historic district standards to help ensure fair and equal treatment among different redevelopment projects. Review of

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proposed work should be maintained throughout the progression of the projects to prevent deviations, particularly major deviations, of approved rehabilitation.

- Support the Norristown Preservation Society efforts to preserve and sustain the Selma Mansion.
- Reexamine historic district boundaries to ensure that Norristown’s Historic assets are protected. Currently, a handful of significant structures lie just outside the boundaries of these districts.
- Consider a historic preservation overlay zone, which can be used to serve as a supplement to the underlying zoning provisions in a historic area. An overlay zone can work even in areas having different uses and zoning districts since it supplements, rather than replaces, the existing zoning regulations.
- Work with the Montgomery County Historical Society to enhance the Montgomery Cemetery. Although the cemetery itself is located in West Norriton, it can be accessed through Norristown. Additional efforts should be made to connect this historic site to amenities at the Schuylkill River via Hamilton Street.
- Explore creation of a residential façade program for homeowners in the downtown core, which could be another way to spur economic

development by improving the appearance and increasing the value of all downtown properties.

Goal 8.4—Promote Heritage Tourism

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.” Heritage Tourism preserves, restores and interprets existing assets such as historic and cultural sites as well as natural resources, and markets these areas to tourists. Awareness through tourism can ensure that our most valued treasures are conserved and maintained for current and future generations. Historic Tourism also offers positive social and economic impacts.

Recommendations:

- Create a Heritage Tourism Program based on the resources that are on the national Register of Historic Places.
- Link destinations together to create theme tours and trails (such as the underground railroad trail).

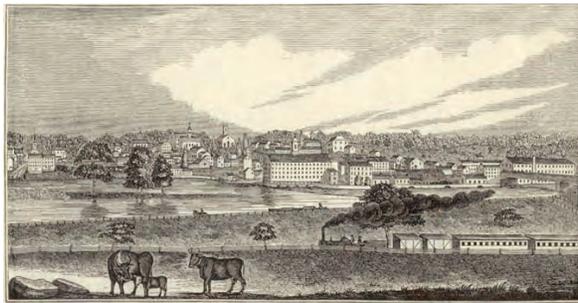


A historic preservation overlay would protect historic structures outside of the Historic Districts.



These buildings have benefited from the façade improvement program. Expanding the program to include other residential buildings could help to improve the appearance and value of more downtown properties.

Chapter 9 Economic Development & Revitalization



Its strategic location on the Schuylkill River made Norristown a prime location to live and work.



Norristown's value was enhanced by its designation as the County Seat.

Economic History

Strategic Location

Norristown's economic history stretches back into the 19th century and was tied to its strategic location for industry and commerce along the Schuylkill River. Textile and paper mills took advantage of the vicinity of the river, an important shipping corridor before the rise of rail, to locate in Norristown. The municipality's strategic location was reinforced by the coming of the rail lines: Not only did it benefit from the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroads running along the Schuylkill, but it also became the terminus for an early commuter rail line which connected the borough with Philadelphia, spurring residential as well as industrial development. The bridge across the river leading to Bridgeport further established Norristown's central place within the region's transportation system.

The County Seat

Norristown's value as a central place was further enhanced by its designation in the 18th century as the County seat. The County offices and County Courthouse were, and still are, major generators of traffic in the downtown, and helped fuel the vitality of Main Street and DeKalb Street retail businesses. As a result, Norristown became a prosperous borough, with fine Victorian homes, impressive public buildings, and a waterfront lined with active industry.

Missed Transportation Investments

Once a center of the county's transportation network, Norristown missed out on the region's phenomenal growth. The new highway improvements constructed in the 1950s and 1960s largely bypassed Norristown. Commuting by private car became more common and municipality lacked a convenient exit connecting it to the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-276), Schuylkill Expressway (I-76), or The Blue Route (I-476).

Today's Economic Environment

Norristown is located in one of the Pennsylvania's most affluent and rapidly growing counties. According to the 2000 Census, Montgomery County's population was 750,097, making it one of the third largest County in the State. The Norristown Region consists of the Townships of East and West Norriton, Plymouth, Bridgeport, and Upper Merion. Within minutes of Norristown's downtown are some of the County's largest employers in King of Prussia, Plymouth Meeting, Blue Bell and Conshohocken.

As Norristown enters its third century, there is a renewed interest in urban style living and walkable communities. Norristown has an ample supply of affordable homes and businesses, is walkable by design and is positioned to take advantage of the growing trend. The municipality is determined to

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revitalize its business districts and neighborhoods and in recent years several documents have been drafted to help guide Norristown's rebirth.

Obstacles to Revitalization

Norristown recognizes that future development of the Municipality is often hampered by its poor image, disproportionately large concentration of the County's low income population and the amount of assessed land that is exempt from real estate taxes. It is a problem of both perception and reality. Some of the factors affecting the municipality's image are:

- Proximity to and concentration of institutional, social service and judicial facilities, such as the courthouse, Norristown State Hospital, shelters and drug treatment facilities;
- The constrained disposable income of its residents;
- Its property tax rate, which is one of the highest in the county;
- The limited budget of the municipality; hampering Norristown's financial support toward infrastructure improvements, economic development programs and general revitalization.

Montgomery County Economic Development Plan and Program

Montgomery County has been an economic engine,

leading the state in high-tech and manufacturing employment. The County Economic Plan directs growth to older developed municipalities and focuses on three areas: 1) redeveloping industrial land; 2) reinvigorating downtowns; and 3) revitalizing old shopping areas.

In April 2009, the Montgomery County Commissioners expanded the county's economic revitalization program and adopted with Strategic Economic Development Policy and Guidelines. The expanded program, implemented over 7 years will target revitalization communities like Norristown for grants and loans to support large and small redevelopment and infrastructure projects, streetscapes, green building practices, housing, safety, workforce training and placement, business relocation and master planning.

Brownfield Redevelopment

Development of older industrial sites are beneficial to society as a whole. Development on brownfields sites relieves development pressure from greenfield sites, cleans up lands that may be hazardous, and brings new economic development to older communities.

Streetscape Programs

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



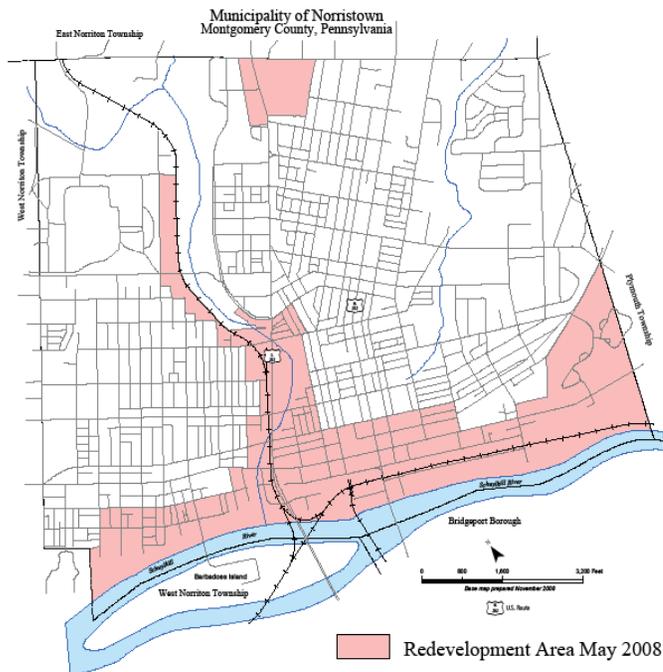
The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Keystone Principles gives preference to reuse and redevelopment of previously developed sites and supports rehabilitation of historic buildings for compatible contemporary uses. Above, the Department of Environmental Protection Southeast Regional office is located in a former transit station. Below, a new parking garage was constructed with first floor retail shops that serve the downtown offices and the County Courthouse.





Redevelopment of the downtown and the riverfront is Norristown's highest priority.

Figure 9.1 - Redevelopment Areas



The quality of a community's streetscape can influence the area's economic success by enticing businesses, shoppers and residents into the area. Norristown has improved a number of downtown streetscapes and will continue to cultivate its partnership with the business community.

Main Street

Improvements to the main shopping corridor entailed new sidewalks, historic lighting, new urban-friendly trees, traffic light signalization and other amenities. This project was funded by grants through Norristown Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, Montgomery County Revitalization funds and federal TEA-21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century) funds.

DeKalb Street and the "Norristown Arts Hill"

The first phase of improvements to the DeKalb Street corridor enhanced several blocks of the historic district with new curbs and sidewalks, period lighting, street trees, and other amenities. The final phase will connect the Historic District to future Lafayette Street Corridor Project, and will create unique streetscape treatments that define the "Norristown Arts Hill" Cultural District. These projects were funded by grants through Norristown Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, Montgomery County Revitalization funds

and the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

West Marshall Street

This project encompassed seven blocks in the Historic West Marshall Street Shopping District and provided new brick-stamped sidewalks, historic lighting, new urban-friendly trees, buried utility lines, new planters, new benches and other amenities.

Wayfinding/Directional Signage

The Wayfinding/Direction Signage Project has made navigating the streets of Norristown easier for visitors and residents alike. This sign project provides direction to selected Norristown destinations such as Municipal Hall, the Montgomery County Courthouse, Martin Luther King Jr. Park and the Elmwood Park Zoo. Also included are gateway signs welcoming visitors and residents to historic Norristown destinations.

Green Infrastructure

Trees and landscaping make up a town's green infrastructure. It provides residents and visitors with a pleasant pedestrian experience, environmental benefits, and helps create a sense of place. Green infrastructure also enhances real estate values.

Each year, every 10,000 trees in a given municipality typically store 500 tons of carbon dioxide, remove

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50 tons of pollutants, and reduce stormwater runoff by nearly 10 million gallons, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. Trees minimize heat islands, thus reducing residential and commercial annual air-conditioning usage by up to 30 percent, as well as winter heating usage and costs by 10-25 percent (USDA). Trees also save municipalities money: for example, a town with 40% tree cover can reap \$21 million in air quality benefits and over \$1 billion in stormwater benefits each year.

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

Goals & Recommendations

Goal 9.1—Attract and Keep Businesses in the Downtown

New businesses are needed that cater to both employees and residents. Services that link employees and office buildings, residents and

their homes, future visitors to the downtown and waterfront area, businesses and transportation are needed.

Recommendations:

- Provide incentives, subsidies and low interest loan programs to help businesses locate in downtown such as, tax incentives through a tax increment financing (TIF), direct grants or loans through HUD Section 108 loans or Community Development Block Grants.

Direct Business Locations

- Pennsylvania passed the Downtown Location Law, giving preference to downtown areas for state offices, particularly in historic buildings. Because of this, the Southeastern Regional Headquarters of the PA Department of Environmental Protection was located within the former rail station building at Main and Swede Streets.
- To encourage new businesses to locate downtown, an inventory of potential development sites can be accessed through the Montgomery County Industrial Development Corporation's (MCIDC) website: www.mcidc.com.

Provide Parking

The location, ownership, design, management, coordinating, signage, and enforcement of existing



New and rehabilitated buildings should add to the character of the pedestrian-scaled environment



A combination of signage and streetscapes improvements, along with crosswalk enhancements, can be used to signify a person's arrival to downtown Norristown. Directional signage at the corner provides visitors with an understanding of the location of the different amenities in the area. Photo simulation by Brown & Keener Urban Design.



New streetscapes help create a sense of place.



Crosswalks improve pedestrian safety.

on and off-street parking areas impacts an area’s economic activities. New parking facilities at Main and Cherry Streets and the Norristown Transportation Center and have provide the much-needed parking in the downtown area. The Municipality has completed a municipal-wide parking study to address the additional needs of residents and businesses.

Create a Business Improvement District

- Norristown previously completed a Business Improvement District (BID) feasibility study with funding through DVRPC’s TCDI program. The formation of a BID among the area businesses could help offset the labor and costs to the municipality.

Employ Local Workers

- Furthermore, incentives should be provided to encourage employers to hire qualified existing local residents, with additional consideration given to employers who also provide training to potential local workers.

Goal 9.2—Improve Norristown Housing

Recommendation:

- Increase Homeownership.
- Encourage new market-rate housing in the downtown and near train stations.

- Reduce the number of multifamily conversions in the Residential Districts.
- Increase the number of reconversion of multi-unit dwellings back into single family dwellings in all residential districts.
- Create larger dwellings with off-street parking by allowing two smaller homes to be renovated into a single dwelling.
- Preserve historically significant homes from demolition and undesirable reuse.

Establish a Live Where You Work Program

- The municipality should also assist in creating a basis for interaction between its residents and its businesses/workers. Ideally, a significant percentage of its workers would relocate to the municipality to live.
- This can be aided by the establishment of a “live where you work” program that provides incentives to employees who change residency and/or employers who encourage their employees to relocate to Norristown.
- Montgomery County currently has such an employer assisted housing program that provides an interest-free forgivable second mortgage for those who move to Norristown and remain in their homes for eight years.

Goal 9.3—Streamline the Development Process

- To remove some of the uncertainty associated with redevelopment projects, Norristown can make the process as easy and straightforward as possible for developers, offering them a “one-stop” development process and using redevelopment plans and specific plans as a guide to developers.
- The municipality can also update its zoning ordinances to reduce the number zoning hearing board reviews for variances.

Goal 9.4—Improve Norristown’s Public Infrastructure

Streetscapes

- Extend the target area for streetscape improvements along the commuter corridors including: East and West Main, Airy, Marshall, Markley, Lafayette, and Swede Streets.

Implement Traffic Calming & Improve Pedestrian Crossings

- To encourage walking among downtown destinations, street crossings should be made more safe by adding crosswalks at every signalized intersection.

- Vehicle traffic can be slowed down with the traffic calming devices described in the Transportation Chapter to improve pedestrian safety and to give drivers an opportunity to see businesses.

Ensure Appropriate Building Design Scale and Visual Character

- Downtown Main Street and West Marshall Street have a different character than other suburban shopping centers, strip commercial and regional malls areas. New and rehabilitated buildings should add to the unique architectural character and be a pedestrian-scaled environment. Design guidelines can be followed more closely, or Form Based Codes can be developed for these special areas.

Preserve Historic Buildings

- When structurally sound historic buildings should be rehabilitated and reused, reinforcing the unique character of the Norristown.

Continue Façade Improvement Programs

- Norristown should seek new funding sources and continue its successful façade improvement programs.



The Historic West Marshall Street Shopping District has benefited from an investment in streetscape improvements.



Streetscapes can positively influence an area’s economic success.



Trees have many benefits, including the ability to increase property values.



The Conshohocken area has benefited from a variety of government infrastructure projects, grants, subsidies, and tax incentives.

Improve Signage

- Business districts need to have well designed signs and be free of excessive clutter. Norristown’s sign ordinance has recently been updated. A sign program that provides education, sign design review and support to the business community would support revitalization efforts.

Goal 9.5—Promote Positive Information About Norristown

Strengthen the Marketing Program

- Downtown and Main Street areas need to be marketed, not only to customers but also to potential tenants. Marketing efforts can include web-based documents and linkages; brochures, posters, flyers; press releases and newspapers advertising; quarterly and semi-annual newsletters; and special events and promotions.

Hold Special Events

- Building on Norristown’s success with annual events held in Elmwood Park, special events held downtown help reinforce the area’s status as the center of the community. In addition to the parades and farmer’s market, these events might include: seasonal festivals; car shows; holiday celebrations; bike races; outdoor music or theater;

auctions; food tasting; dog shows; historic reenactments; Oktoberfests; special seminars; and variety of other well-advertised events.

Expand Public Relations & Marketing

- Norristown’s image is based on people’s perceptions, whether these perceptions are accurate or not, and whether these perceptions are out-of-date or not. Norristown can let the press and public know about the good things that are happening such as, store openings, special events, and streetscape projects.
- Continue to support and strengthen the Norristown Marketing Strategy, the goal of which is to promote a higher level of civic pride among current residents and businesses, and to achieve greater economic diversity that will stimulate further investment. The campaign projects an image that Norristown is a vibrant place to live, work and visit.
- Ensure the local newsletter be distributed to every home and business to provide positive news and helpful information for the citizens of Norristown.

Goal 9.6—Redevelop Industrial Areas

Redevelop Brownfields

As a community that developed around manufacturing industries, Norristown contains

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some brownfields that are environmentally unsafe and take up land that may otherwise be used for something socially and economically productive. Nicolette Industries, a former asbestos manufacturer, is an important brownfield site located along the waterfront.

- The current efforts to redevelop particular brownfield sites need to continue in order to maximize the municipality's land use and quality of life.
- To encourage redevelopment in existing brownfields, the municipality needs to help alleviate the burden of environmental clean-up for those businesses with a genuine interest in redeveloping these sites, but which lack the financial means to shoulder the full expense of clean-up.
- Preparatory actions that Norristown may engage in include testing for and assessing contamination and inventorying these sites for development-readiness.
- Aside from hiring experts to do the actual clean-up and the benefits available through the KOZ and Enterprise Zone designations, Norristown may provide a combination of incentives for developers, such as partial funding for environmental clean-up, the

donation (assuming government ownership) of the parcels for redevelopment and municipal recruitment of future tenants.

- The municipality may also try to come to an agreement with banks that will not penalize developers for the current contamination of these brownfield parcels.

Redevelop Other Industrial Areas

- Redevelopment of the waterfront industrial areas should be accomplished using tax incentives and subsidies, improving transportation access, assembling land for redevelopment, amending zoning ordinances, and improving infrastructure.

Norristown Revitalization Strategy

Norristown recently completed an update to the Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy which provides detailed priorities and initiatives that are new and ongoing. It provides a vision with a policy framework in which to guide economic development for the next 5-10 years. The vision supports seeks to improve the quality of life for Norristonians and promote Norristown as a vibrant place to live, work and visit. Strategies include supporting opportunities for tax ratable development, encour-



Businesses such as Designer's Furniture and Interiors located in downtown Norristown.



Public parking helps downtowns compete with other areas, for both customers and businesses.



Employing residents improves the local economy.



Streamlining the development process can help with revitalization efforts.

ages reuse of key vacant or underutilized properties; addresses key housing issues; supports improved public infrastructure.

The plan is broken into high and medium priority initiatives and each initiative is further divided into high medium and low action items. The highest priority initiatives include physical developments such as: the Lafayette Street Extension Project; downtown, riverfront and Stony Creek development; the reuse of key vacant facilities; strengthening supportive services and civic engagement; the infrastructure initiatives. Each initiative is followed by action items and lists project partners, timeframes, cost estimates and potential funding sources.



Chapter 10 Statement of Interrelationships

Relationship of Plan Components

Each plan component relates in some way to the municipality's economic development and revitalization efforts by tying together land use, transportation, housing, open space, and community facilities.

Compatibility with the County Comprehensive Plan

The existing and proposed development of Norristown is generally consistent with the objectives and plans of the 2005 Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan. Norristown also adopted the county plan in 2005.

Vision Statement

In anticipation of the expected growth of residential development, traffic, and the economy, Montgomery County plans to focus on controlling sprawl and traffic congestion, preserving open space and natural areas, and revitalizing older boroughs and townships. Norristown's comprehensive plan supports this vision.

Land Use Plan

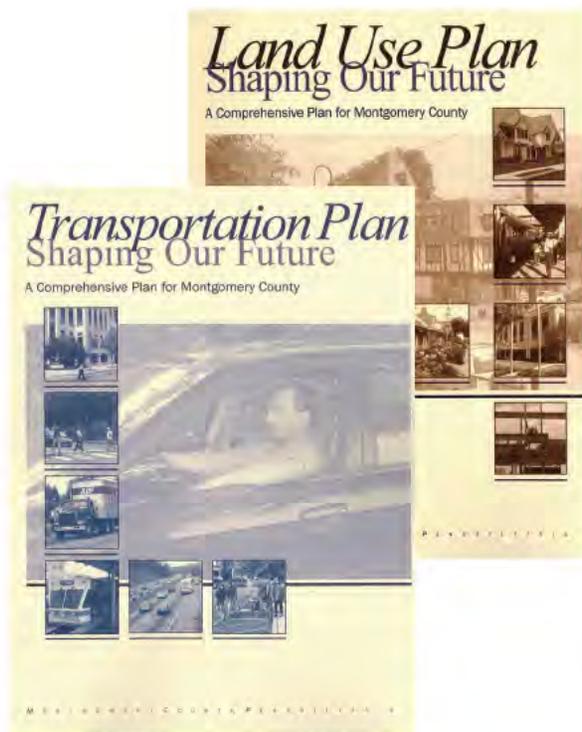
The County's Future Land Use Plan proposes to guide growth and development to appropriate

locations, revitalize and enhance older areas, protect existing residential neighborhoods, reinforce a sense of community and place, and encourage better design of new development. As a major development center, Norristown is identified on the future land use map as an area with a considerable town residential area as well as town centers along the waterfront and at West Marshall Street, two small areas of community mixed use and services, suburban residential areas at the borders, and significant areas of open space. Norristown's future land use map is consistent with the county comprehensive plan.

Transportation Plan

The county's Transportation Plan is intended to guide transportation decisions to the year 2025. It lists specific transportation improvements and government policies that will help manage traffic congestion and create more transportation choices for county residents. It focuses on ways to effectively link transportation and land use, improve sidewalks and walkability, expand bicycle mobility, keep freight moving, improve public transportation, and improve the road and highway network.

Specific to Norristown, it identifies projects and facilities including the Stony Creek Trail, twenty-nine potential bicycle destinations, eleven key bicycling corridors, two Class 1 freight railroad lines, public transportation routes and facilities,



Norristown's Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan.

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and nine priority highway and bridge improvement projects.

Housing Plan

The Housing Plan lists specific housing policies that will help provide an adequate amount of new housing with a variety of types, densities, and prices while also protecting existing residential areas throughout the county. In the Norristown Area, which encompasses Norristown, East Norriton, Worcester, Lower Providence, and West Norriton, 4,100 new housing units will be needed over the next 25 years.

The plan suggests that towns and redeveloping areas add housing at a density of 5 to 8 dwelling units per acre. The plan encourages new housing to locate in existing developed area and designated growth areas near amenities including employment centers, commercial areas, parks and recreational facilities, community services, public transportation, and existing public sewer and water services. All of Norristown's recommendations pertaining to housing are consistent with the county's Housing Plan.

Economic Development

Goal 40 of the County Comprehensive Plan is to "Revitalize the County's Downtowns and Main Streets." Norristown contains two such areas. Recommendations for revitalization are divided into

two broad categories: attracting and retaining new businesses and improving the downtown image and services. Many of these strategies will be employed to assist in Norristown's revitalization. In addition, Norristown is identified as an existing development center in the County Comprehensive Plan.

Open Space, Natural Features and Cultural Resources Plan

The County Comprehensive Plan identifies high priority areas that should be preserved to establish an interconnected open space system that benefits everyone. In Norristown, the following resources are identified: greenways along the Schuylkill River, Saw Mill Run, and Stony Creek; National Register listed and eligible properties as well as historic districts; and existing and proposed open space areas. These resources are also identified in this plan, as well as in Norristown's 2005 Open Space Plan.

Community Facilities

This portion of the County Comprehensive Plan looks at community facilities and services and



In the Norristown Area, 4,100 new housing units will be needed over the next 25 years.



The County Comprehensive Plan identifies high priority areas that should be preserved to establish an interconnected open space system that benefits everyone.



The Water Resources Plan proposes ways to provide an adequate supply of water and promote better stormwater management practices.

their relationship to the county's growth and development. Its goal is to have adequate facilities to meet the county's needs that operate safely and cleanly by 2025.

Norristown's Comprehensive Plan is consistent with that of the county in that it plans to focus public sewer and water improvements in existing and designated growth areas; provide environmentally safe sewer facilities and solid waste disposal facilities that have a minimum negative impact; provide high-quality emergency services and health facilities; and integrate educational and cultural facilities into the wider community.

Water Resources Plan

The Water Resources Plan proposes ways to provide an adequate supply of water, improves water quality, reduces water pollution, limits the impact of flooding, and promote better stormwater management practices. Norristown plan is generally consistent with the county's water resource plan.

Compatibility with Neighboring Municipalities

The existing and proposed development of Norristown is compatible with plans in contiguous portions of the neighboring municipalities.



Riverview Landing apartments in West Norriton Township.

West Norriton

West Norriton Township became a first class township on November 15, 1924. It was primarily undeveloped with the exception of a strip of commercial and residential development along Ridge Pike. With the completion of the Schuylkill Expressway and the general development of Norristown, the township became increasingly residential. In addition, in the late 1960s, some industrial development became noticeable. Today, West Norriton has a nice balance between residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational areas. West Norriton's zoning map, updated in 1986, designates the area adjacent to the State Hospital and Farm Park as rural residential. Medium density and apartment residential districts stretch along Forrest Avenue to West Main Street, where commercial and limited industrial zoning can be found down to Jackson Street. Montgomery Cemetery is zoned rural residential as well. While Norristown has designated several of these areas as mixed use rather than purely residential or commercial, the land uses are generally compatible.

East Norriton

East Norriton Township was incorporated on March 9, 1909. The township experienced substantial development over the past decades. Once a farming community in the 1920s and

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1930s, today East Norriton combines stores, offices, professional buildings, a industrial and institutional uses. In addition, East Norriton offers a variety of housing from single family homes to modern apartment buildings that 13,211 people call home.

East Norriton adopted an update of its original 1960 Comprehensive Plan in 1994. East Norriton's zoning map, revised April 6, 1995, designates the area immediately north of Elmwood Park and the Farm Park for institutional uses. Between Swede and Pine/Second Street, the corridor is zoned commercial with an area of business and professional offices extending to DeKalb Street. A mix of residential commercial, and institutional districts make up the remainder of the border with Norristown. This is consistent with Norristown's future land uses categories of open space, lower density residential, medium density residential and retail uses along Johnson Highway.

Plymouth

Plymouth Township is one of the oldest townships in Montgomery County, dating back to 1686. Now a developed suburban township, it experienced regional economic expansion in the mid-1980s causing it to focus on ways to encourage commercial and industrial development while preserving the quality-of-life for its residents. The future land use plan calls for low

density residential (1.5 to 3 dwellings per acre) development along most of the township's border with Norristown. medium-high density residential (12-20 dwelling units per acre), open space (Plymouth Country Club and the Schuylkill River Trail) and general commercial land uses comprise the remainder of the area immediately adjacent to Norristown. These uses are virtually an extension of Norristown's future land use map.

Bridgeport

Bridgeport Borough was incorporated on February 27, 1851. As early as 1723, Swedish and Welsh immigrants were settling in what is today's Bridgeport. The borough grew into a center for industry between the late 1890s and 1950. During the years to follow, however, the borough lost much of its industrial production. Today, small service and wholesale companies are providing jobs. An older but well-maintained housing stock provides ownership and rental opportunities for area residents.

Bridgeport's most recent comprehensive plan dates back to 1970. The future land use plan calls for recreational open space along the entire riverfront with a high density commercial area to the south along DeKalb Street between the township line and Depot Street, and a light industrial area between Depot Street and Coates Street.



Aerial view of East Norriton Township.

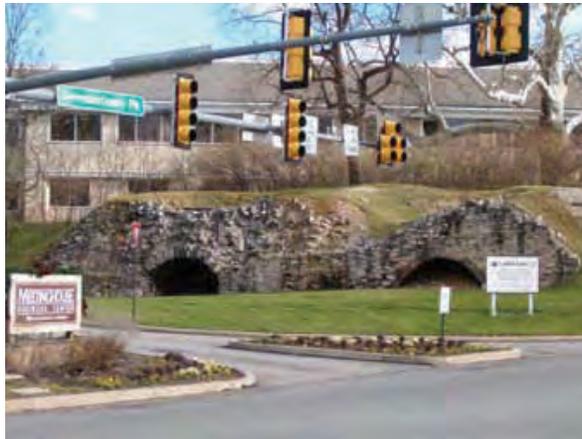


Winter sunrise over the dairy barn in the Norristown Farm Park in East Norriton. Photo by Joe Gallagher.



New townhouses in Bridgeport Borough.

Bridgeport's 1984 zoning map indicates light and heavy industrial areas along the riverfront with a commercial corridor along DeKalb Street. This is not generally compatible with either Bridgeport's own future land use map (which calls for open space in this area) or Norristown's future land use map, as it hopes to redevelop the waterfront as a mixed use area with ample public space.



Limekilns at Germantown Pike in Plymouth Township.

Chapter 11 Recommendations & Implementation

The municipality’s Comprehensive Plan sets forth an agreed upon “road map” for improvement, enhancement, and development during the next ten-year period. It is the product of efforts of residents, staff, the municipal planning commission, municipal council, and other members of the Norristown community.

In many ways the planning process in Norristown is ongoing as the community adopts the plan and continues to take actions to implement the recommendations. It is the intent of this plan, that the recommendations will be used by municipal officials, residents, business owners, and private investors when making decisions related to housing, economic development, open space, and design. This section presents the recommended Implementation Action Plan, which is intended to help the municipality organize and initiate the plan implementation process.

Overview of the Action Plan

The Action Plan, which is summarized in Table 11.1, highlights the implementation aspects of the municipal Comprehensive Plan’s improvement and development recommendations. This Action Plan consists of several components:

- A listing of projects or actions that should be undertaken to maintain, enhance, and improve the municipality in the future.

- The suggested priority for each project or action, based upon a 10-year horizon.
- An indication of other public and private sector responsibilities for participating in each project. Each Action Plan component is briefly described below.

Projects and Actions

The Action Plan provides a summary of the improvement and development recommendations of the new Comprehensive Plan. Recommendations are grouped into six categories:

- Economic Development and Revitalization
- Housing
- Transportation
- Community Facilities and Services
- Natural and Historic Resources
- Administrative

This is only a summary of the recommendations prepared during the planning process. Other sections of the plan provide more detailed descriptions of the various planning and policy recommendations. Additionally, Norristown has completed separate plans for open space and revitalization that can be referenced.

Priority and Schedule

The Comprehensive Plan provides a long-range

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program for improvement and development within the Municipality of Norristown. The recommendations contained within the plan cannot be accomplished all at once; projects and actions will have to be scheduled over a period of years.

Consequently, the Action Plan ranks the recommended priorities. Understanding that any one of a number of variables (e.g., funding, market changes, changes in local government, etc.) can effect the ability to achieve these items, timeframes for completion are not included. It is strongly encouraged that the municipality evaluate the recommendations on an annual basis to determine their progress and re-prioritize them, if necessary. In addition, as required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), municipal comprehensive plans are required to be updated every ten years. This should be considered as the annual evaluation is conducted.

The Action Plan suggests three priority rankings for project implementation, as described below. However, the implementation schedule should be flexible, and should be modified and updated to reflect changing needs and conditions.

Highest—the projects are most crucial in improving the municipality as a place to live and do business.

High—these tend to be projects that will enhance the natural, cultural and economic environments of the municipality.

Medium—the projects while important, tend to be longer rang issues whose completion is not crucial.

It should be emphasized that some projects may either move forward or backward, depending on changes in market conditions, funding sources, or local priorities.

Action Responsibilities

In order for the Norristown Comprehensive Plan to be successful, it must be based on strong partnership between the municipality, other public agencies, residents, the local business community, non-profit groups and organizations, and the private sector.

Key participants in the implementation process should include the following:

- Municipality of Norristown
- Municipal residents
- Local organizations
- Other governmental agencies (county, state and federal)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local businesses and institutions

- Cultural and educational institutions
- Lending institutions
- Developers and builders

While the municipality will be initiating and monitoring each project, the above list identifies other participants that may be involved in one or more phases. This is only a representative list of major participants; many others maybe involved in certain projects or actions.

1. Economic Development & Revitalization *(for detailed plan see 2009 Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy, NERS)*

Project or Action	Priority	Rank	Role of Norristown	Other Possible Participants
Support development opportunities that generate tax ratables for the municipality—particularly in commercial real estate—so that the various programs and operations of the municipality can be improved.	Highest	1.1	Work with area realtors to create and maintain a business locator directory to help new enterprises relocate to Norristown and to improve communications with existing businesses.	Local realtors, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Greater Norristown Corporation, Norristown Merchants, Small Business Administration.
Bring a greater mix of uses to the downtown and riverfront areas including new construction of high-density residential. Attract and recruit new businesses that will add vitality to the municipality.	Highest	1.2	Provide tax and other incentives for targeted mixed-use infill development in the downtown and riverfront areas.	Private and nonprofit developers, Norristown Area School District, Montgomery County Housing Trust Fund, CDBG, PHFA Homeownership Chioce, HOME, DCED, County Revitalization Program, Commonwealth Financing Authority.
			Encourage redevelopment by streamlining the development review and permitting process.	Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, PA Association of Township Solicitors.
			Promote the transportation services available and the walkability of Norristown.	SEPTA, corporations, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, smart growth organizations.
Strengthen/rebrand Norristown’s image to that of a community that is diverse, has a unique historic town character, and has great access to the metro area via public transit and the regional highway system.	Highest	1.3	Grow the public relations & marketing program and work with the media to promote positive information about Norristown.	DCED, media outlets.
			Continue to improve the parking management program throughout the town.	
			Establish and promote a Live Where You Work incentive program.	Businesses, NASD, Montgomery County.

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Project or Action	Priority	Rank	Role of Norristown	Other Possible Participants
Encourage the development of new restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues to support cultural destinations.	Highest	1.4	Continue to support the growth of the Norristown Merchants Association. Encourage the merchants association to establish a mentoring program to encourage small business creation. Work with the existing shops and restaurants to encourage extended business hours of operation into weekday evenings and weekends in the core downtown area.	Small Business Administration, merchants association, corporate sponsors, businesses.
			Encourage new infill mixed-use development with residential or office uses located above retail.	Developers.
			Hold special events in the business districts.	Businesses, SEPTA, Colleges/Universities.
			Open a welcome center on Main Street with information on Norristown’s government, businesses, organizations, events, tours, the zoo, the cultural center, and transportation facilities. Street maps, telephone numbers and website addresses should also be available.	
Upgrade facades, storefronts, and the streetscape to improve the appearance of the business districts.	High	1.5	Seek out partners to support funding the streetscape and building façade improvements program.	CDBG, DCED, County Revitalization Program, PADOT.
Find appropriate reuse for key vacant or underutilized properties in the municipality. This includes, but is not limited to, Montgomery Hospital, Kennedy Kendrick High School, the old county prison, and the State Hospital campus.	High	1.6	Engage and strengthen communications with various entities. Encourage a reuse study and strategy for key facilities.	Montgomery Hospital Planning Committee, Philadelphia Archdiocese, Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority, Commonwealth of PA, affiliate organizations, Norristown Farm Park, Elwood Park Zoo, Montgomery County Cultural Center, Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance.

2. Housing Actions (see also *Norristown Consolidated Plan and 2009 NERS*)

Project or Action	Priority	Rank	Role of Norristown	Other Possible Participants
<p>Address various issues related to housing such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase home ownership opportunities. • Attract market-rate housing for both rental and homeownership. • Protect existing single-family dwellings from being subdivided into multifamily units. • De-convert existing multifamily units into single-family dwellings. • Encourage the renovation of smaller dwelling types into single-family dwellings with off-street parking. • Preserve historically significant homes from undesirable uses or demolition. 	Highest	2.1	<p>Give priority and funding to programs that promote homeownership, such as the First Time Home Buyers program, the Owner-Occupied program, and county-administered home ownership programs.</p>	<p>Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Development, realtors, private and non-profit Developers, Landlords, CDBG, HOME, County Housing Trust Fund, Local CDC, CHDO, and other housing providers.</p>
			<p>Support Habitat for Humanity, which rehabilitates existing homes and builds new houses with volunteer labor and donated materials.</p>	<p>Habitat for Humanity, affiliated organizations.</p>
			<p>Utilize public relations and marketing program channels to attract developers and middle- and upper-income home owners to the municipality.</p>	<p>Realtors, residential developers, media.</p>
			<p>Update municipal ordinances to support desirable housing regulations and code enforcement.</p>	<p>Montgomery County Planning Commission.</p>
<p>Preserve the character, charm, and safety of existing neighborhoods.</p>	Highest	2.2	<p>Support the Weed & Seed Block Captain program.</p>	<p>Weed & Seed program.</p>
			<p>Continue to utilize CDBG funding to increase the quality of housing stock by rehabilitating vacant units and selling them to families who intend to reside in them.</p>	<p>HUD, DCED, County Housing programs.</p>
			<p>Continue to utilize CDBG funding increase rehabilitation of existing rental housing.</p>	<p>HUD, DCED, County Housing programs.</p>
			<p>Continue to work with agencies/partners to continue efforts to fund the rehabilitation of rental properties.</p>	<p>HUD, DCED, CADCOM.</p>

Project or Action	Priority	Rank	Role of Norristown	Other Possible Participants
Address affordable housing & homeless needs.	Highest	2.3	Continue to stress de-concentration of housing vouchers to spread affordable housing throughout Montgomery County.	HUD, County, Local and State Legislators.
			Direct at-risk families to the various County Housing Assistance programs.	Montgomery County Housing & Community Development Department.
			Continue to support fair housing policies and practices by working with and supporting housing advocacy agencies.	Regional and local Fair Housing Agencies.
			Continue efforts to improve code enforcement for all residential and commercial properties.	Property owners, realtors, neighborhood advocates.
			Promote traditional neighborhood development in residential neighborhoods.	Developers.
Ensure appropriateness of new housing types.	High	2.4	Through the land development process ensure that new residential construction is compatible with the existing neighborhood scale, setbacks, and building materials.	Developers.

3. Transportation Actions

Support the Lafayette Street Extension Project.	Highest	3.1	Seek support for the project from state and federal legislators.	Montgomery County, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, PADOT, DVRPC.
Improve Traffic Safety.	Highest	3.2	Use traffic calming techniques on all streets in the business districts.	PADOT, DVRPC.
			Add crosswalks to all intersections near schools, parks, and playgrounds.	PADOT–Safe Routes to School Program, DCNR, School District.
			Add crosswalks to all signalized and signed intersections.	
			Add street trees and other pedestrian amenities throughout the business districts.	PADOT, DCNR, County, PHS/Treevitalize.
			Continue municipal initiatives for street reconstruction and maintenance.	

Project or Action	Priority	Rank	Role of Norristown	Other Possible Participants
Beautify the area in and around the Norristown Transportation Center and the Elm Street train station.	Medium	3.3	Improve landscaping around the train stations.	SEPTA, PHS/Treevitalize.
			Encourage development of shops, cafes, and other services near transit stops.	Montgomery County Revitalization Program.
			Improve pedestrian access and safety around all transit stations.	SEPTA, PADOT.
			Maintain parking lots and improve signage around train stations.	SEPTA, PADOT sign program.
Manage traffic congestion.	High	3.4	Continue to work with transportation agencies to mitigate peak-hour traffic congestion along Main, Markley, DeKalb Streets, and West Johnson Highway.	PADOT, DVRPC, MCPC, county, adjacent municipalities.
			Promote public transit use and access with schools, businesses, and residents.	DVRPC, public and private schools, colleges and universities, merchants association, media.

4. Community Facilities & Services Actions

Maintain existing community facilities such as Municipal Hall, police station, fire houses, municipal parking, parks, recreational areas, and other civic assets.	Highest	4.1	Maintain and enhance services at existing community facilities.	
			Promote the municipality’s facilities as regional assets.	Montgomery County Parks and Heritage.
Improve education in language, literacy and civic engagement in Norristown.	Highest	4.2	Work with the school district, daycare providers, churches and merchant’s associations to promote ESL programs in the community. Provide airtime on NASD’s cable TV station for ESL and SSL instruction.	NASD, Montgomery County/Norristown Public Library, churches, merchant’s association.
			Utilize municipal website and newsletter to recruit volunteers to serve as tutors for language and literacy skills.	County Workforce Development, Temple University Retired Teacher’s Association, AARP.
			Work with the school district to expand existing voluntary summer school and after-school programs for children of all ages.	NASD.

Norristown Comprehensive Plan

Project or Action	Priority	Rank	Role of Norristown	Other Possible Participants
Support recreational programs.	High	4.3	List all activities and programs on Norristown’s website.	
			Upgrade existing park facilities to make them more flexible and adaptable for a greater variety of uses.	DCNR, private foundations.
			Establish more programs geared toward teens.	
Provide high-quality emergency services and health facilities.	High	4.4	Attract and encourage a continued presence of high-quality medical facilities in the health care district.	Plymouth Ambulance, Montgomery Hospital, Albert Einstein Medical Center, Montgomery County Emergency Services.
Keep residents informed of municipal events, regulations, and local officials contact information.	High	4.5	Continue to distribute a semi-annual municipal newsletter to every home. Create a Spanish-language version for Latino residents, church members, and business owners.	Media.
			Keep the municipal website up-to-date and promote it with residents, schools, and the business community.	NASD, GNC, merchant association, churches, and civic organizations.
Promote public safety.	High	4.6	Increase staffing and capacity of the police department. Add officers and provide training in drug enforcement, truancy abatement and community relations. Strengthen Town Watch program.	Weed and Seed program, Montgomery County Commissioners.

5. Natural & Historic Resources Actions *(see also 2005 Norristown Open Space Plan)*

Add trees to the municipality.	Highest	5.1	Initiate a tree management and planting program for municipal parks designed to replace trees coming to the end of their life span.	Norristown Shade Tree Commission, Morris Arboretum, PHS/Treevitalize, DCNR, Montgomery County Conservation District.
			Continue to work with Treevitalize to plant new trees throughout Norristown.	PHS/Treevitalize, DCNR.
			Support tree replacement requirements and encourage species diversity through the land development process to	Montgomery County Planning Commission.
Protect natural resources.	High	5.2	Create a stream corridor protection ordinance to safeguard the Saw Mill Run and Stony Creek.	Montgomery County Planning Commission.
			Promote natural resource awareness through special events, outreach, and education.	DCNR, County Conservation District, NASD, colleges, and universities.

Project or Action	Priority	Rank	Role of Norristown	Other Possible Participants
Honor & maintain historic buildings and sites.	High	5.3	Consistently enforce historic district standards.	Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC).
			Commemorate structures and paths used by escaped slaves as part of the underground railroad during and before the civil war.	PHMC, Norristown Preservation Society, Montgomery County Historical Society.
			Work with interested parties to preserve the Selma mansion.	
			Consider a historic preservation overlay zone in targeted areas to protect historically significant structures and areas that are outside of the HARB district boundaries. Honor those buildings constructed in the 19th and 20th century that are not formally recognized (outside of the Milner report) to help foster community identity.	Norristown Preservation Society, the West End Association, Cabrini College volunteers.
			Reexamine historic district boundaries to ensure that Norristown’s Historic assets are protected.	
Promote heritage tourism.	Medium	5.4	Take part in a study to create a heritage tourism program that includes resources that are on the national Register of Historic Places and links trails and destinations together to create theme tours.	Schuylkill Valley Greenway Association, Norristown Preservation Society, Montgomery County Historical Society, Montgomery County Parks and Heritage Department.

6. Administrative Actions

Enhance the forms of various land uses.	Highest	6.1	Update zoning code and subdivision and land development ordinance with design standards for all of Norristown to improve the aesthetics and functionality of redevelopment projects.	Montgomery County Planning Commission.
Support high-quality human services.	High	6.2	Continue to work in collaborative ways with other governmental and community-based organizations that reside in Norristown.	County and state agencies, nongovernmental community-based organizations.
Preserve the character of the Municipality.	High	6.3	Continue to enforce code requirements and review procedures for all building renovations. Ensure infill development is compatible with existing development.	

