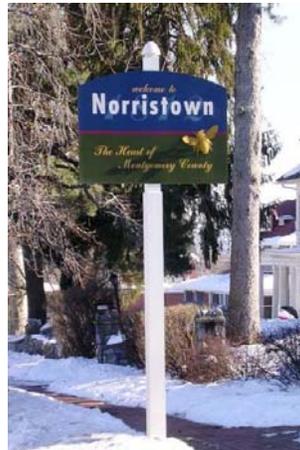


# OPEN SPACE PLAN

**NORRISTOWN**  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



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## **MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

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Saw Mill Run, Cover Background  
Gateway at West Main and Airy Streets, Cover Foreground

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# **DRAFT**

**NORRISTOWN**

## **OPEN SPACE PLAN**

**AUGUST 2005**

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Montgomery County Planning Commission

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# INTRODUCTION

## NORRISTOWN'S 2005 OPEN SPACE PLAN

### DEVELOPING A PLAN

"In the past, many communities assumed that open space was land that had simply not been developed yet, because no one had filed a subdivision plan for it. Communities that planned for open space primarily thought about preserving land for parks. And these parks were often viewed as a community amenity, an extra, even a frill. Likewise, until recent years, most open space preservation efforts were site-specific in their orientation: develop a park here, protect a natural area there. Today, however, a growing number of communities are recognizing not just that green space is a basic community necessity, but that it should be planned and developed as an integrated system.\*" This plan represents Norristown's effort to create such a system.

### PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

This plan was developed for two major purposes. First, it 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.

Second, this plan was created to fulfill a requirement in order to be eligible to apply for funding through the Green Fields/Green Towns program. In 2003, a referendum to fund open space and green infrastructure projects was passed in Montgomery County. This funding was distributed to

municipalities, private non-profit conservation organizations and the county to preserve more open space and enhance the livability of existing communities throughout the County. A similar referendum was passed in 1993. At that time, Norristown drafted its 1994 Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan, which has served as a valuable guide to the Municipality's open space activities for the past eleven years.

Under the new program, Norristown is eligible to receive a total of \$1,897,926 for open space plan-

\* McMahon, Edward T. Green Infrastructure. Planning Commissioners Journal. Number 37, Winter 2000, p.4.

ning and implementation. This grant requires matching funds equal to ten percent of project costs from the municipality. The County grants come with several conditions. The most important condition is that any land purchased with grant money must be permanently preserved as open space or for active recreation. Another condition is that Norristown must complete and adopt an updated Open Space Plan. This plan must be approved by the County's Open Space Board before grant money can be disbursed.

## THE OLD PLAN VS. THE NEW PLAN

Norristown's previous open space was vital in guiding the Municipality's open space development. That plan mainly emphasized land acquisition, gateways, and streetscapes. As a result of the plan, several projects were implemented, including the acquisition of the Blue Mill Tract, Thomas Barone Park, and Washington Street Park, the inclusion of trail requirements in the Unified Development Overlay Zoning District, signage for the Norristown Farm Park Connector, Streetscape implementation on West Marshall and Cherry Streets, funding of a restoration study at Selma, funding of the Historic Façade Program, gateway installation, and formation of a Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB).

In addition to acquisition and streetscapes the new plan emphasizes revitalization of Green Infrastructure such as park improvements, enhanced tree-planting activities, and trail development. It also focuses on Heritage Resource Conservation, and County Trail Connections. These items were not previously eligible for funding through County Open Space grants, and are a new feature of the 2005 Green Fields/Green Towns Program.

## THE OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

In October of 2004, the Norristown Open Space Committee was formed according to the requirements of the Green Fields/Green Towns Program. Members included representatives of the Planning Commission, Municipal Council, Parks and Recreation Committee, Recreation Department, Norristown Area School Board, Stony Creek Anglers, and residents. Liaisons from the Township as well as the Montgomery County Planning Commission

also served on the committee. The Open Space Committee held six meetings to develop this plan. The committee presented a draft version to the Board of Commissioners during a regularly scheduled meeting, as well as to the community during a public hearing. Comments were solicited from the public and incorporated into the final document.

The 2005 Open Space Plan will be reviewed and approved by the County Open Space Board prior to adoption by the Municipality. This assures that many of the plan's recommendations are eligible for funding through the Green Fields/Green Towns program (this does not, however, guarantee that any specific project will receive funding). In addition to County Open Space grants, grants from other agencies will be sought to implement many of the recommendations in this plan. Upon completion of this plan, the Municipality of Norristown will embark on implementing the recommendations listed in Chapters 10 and 11 by writing specific project proposals and applying to various organizations and agencies for grants.

The Open Space Committee made every effort to consider all aspects of open space planning relevant to Norristown. However, in the event that a project, program or policy was overlooked, the plan may be amended by following the procedure outlined in section 302 (a) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Open Space Committee has included almost thirty recommendations for open space projects, programs and policies. Each recommendation is described in detail in Chapters 10 and 11. It is also listed along with its priority level, the party responsible for implementation, and potential funding sources in the implementation matrix in Chapter 12.

## WORKING WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

Norristown has been working with its neighbors, including West Norriton, East Norriton, Plymouth, Bridgeport, and Upper Merion, to develop this open space plan. It will continue to work with them to implement the recommendations of this plan and to work on planning efforts in the future.

# CHAPTER 1

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Community Profile Chapter of the Norristown Open Space Plan is designed to provide residents, planners and officials the necessary background information to make well-informed decisions regarding the future preservation of natural and cultural resources within their community. It consists of three parts:

1) the Community Context section, which examines the community's historical background and regional setting, 2) the Existing Land Use Analysis, which details the use of each property in the Municipality, and 3) the Community Demographic Analysis, a study of the demographic trends in Norristown.

### COMMUNITY CONTEXT

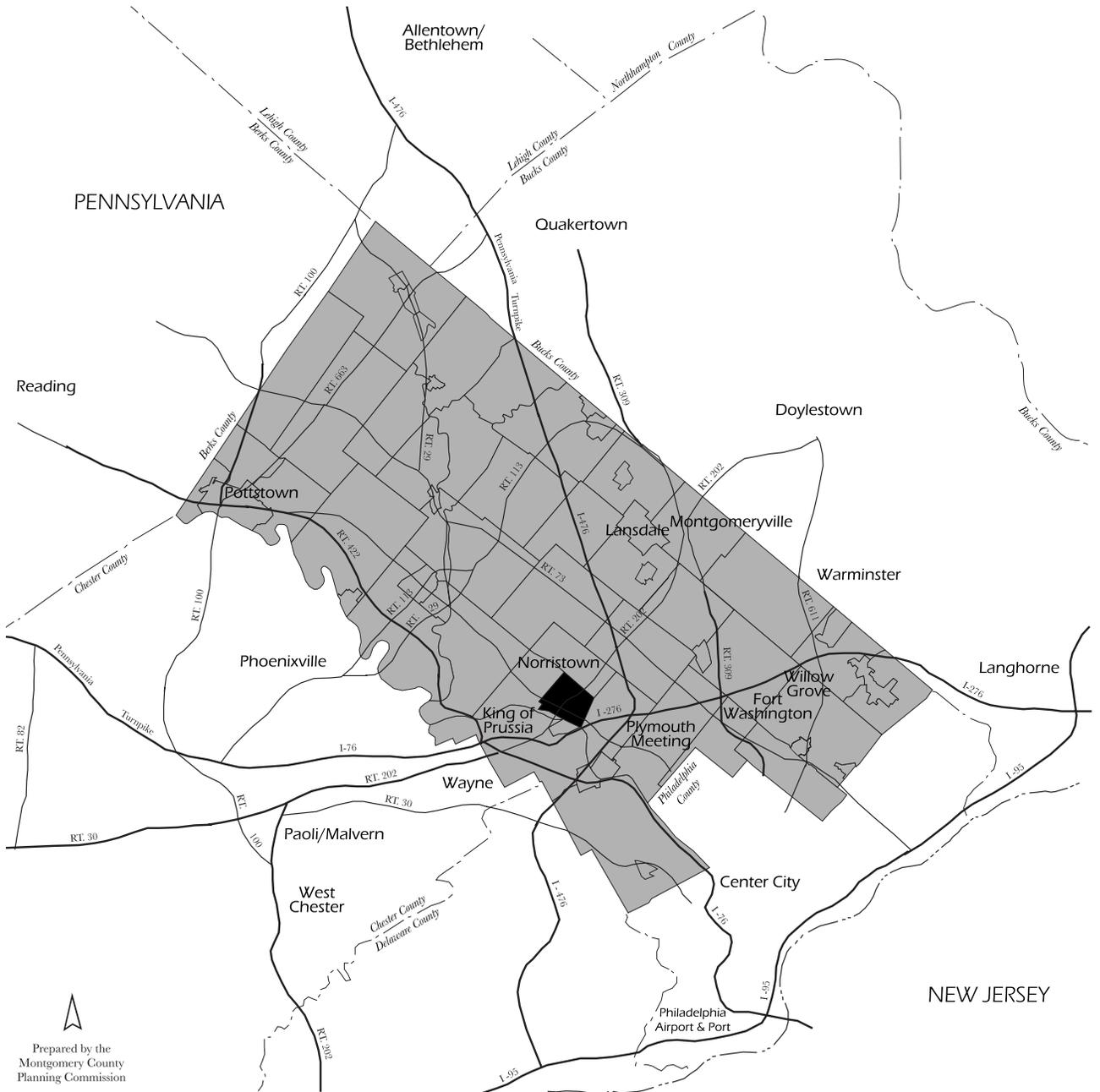
#### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

*Adapted from "Montgomery County: The Second Hundred Years,"  
Montgomery County Federation of Historical Societies, 1983*

In 1812, the Borough of Norristown was incorporated, expanding in land area several times to its present day size. By 1880 the town had progressed from a notch in the riverfront wilderness to a bustling town deriving its strength from four sources: industry, retail business, banking and insurance, and the county government. While Norristown's industrial base was varied, its primary industry was textile mills. These mills once lined the riverfront and provided borough residents with a variety of skilled and semi-skilled jobs.

Additionally, the borough also served as the shopping center for much of the county. Its downtown streets were lined with stores that bustled with commercial activity. Over the years, steady immigration and industrial expansion kept builders busy, constructing the buildings that even today comprise a majority of the borough. Between 1900 and 1940 many open space between downtown and the outer reaches were filled with row and semidetached houses, many with front porches and quite a few single family

Figure 1  
*Regional Settings*



bungalows. After World War II a great flurry of home and apartment building filled most of the remaining vacant spaces.

From the late 1700s until the beginning of World War II Norristown had grown at a steady pace. Along with the rest of the nation it had endured recessions and depressions, but the trend was always up. But by 1980 the borough was burdened by a host of economic and social problems. With the flight of industry away from urban areas

and to foreign shores, the industrial base that sustained Norristown and the other river boroughs disappeared. Norristown in particular suffered immensely from this change. Factories and textile mills have closed, and with the advent of suburban shopping centers, particularly in King of Prussia and Plymouth Meeting, the downtown shopping district has been decimated, leaving it with vacant storefronts and uninviting streets as well as a poverty-stricken population.

Recently, Norristown seems to be on the upswing. A Main Street program has assisted new businesses in getting established and has spurred long time owners to renovate their buildings. Even more significant is the somewhat recent appearance of many minority owned retail businesses, which are giving new life to the municipality's commercial corridors. While the overall economic picture of the borough remains uncertain, there are tentative signs of improvement.

## REGIONAL SETTING

Norristown is the largest of a series of river boroughs that once formed the industrial base for the region. It is located on the Schuylkill River in central Montgomery County (see Figure 1). It encompasses 3.6 square miles. As the county seat, it functions as a regional center for government, law, and health services.

## EXISTING LAND USE ANALYSIS

The Existing Land Use Analysis focuses on the current land uses within the municipality, enabling a more in-depth focus of municipal land use patterns. In addition to the Existing Land Use Map (Figure 2), Figure 3 details the acreage of each category and the percent change from 1994 to 2004. The assigned land use categories are derived from board of assessment parcel data. These numbers are useful in understanding changes in land use patterns and help to identify potential open space and/or recreational needs.

## DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

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.

Downtown Norristown embodies most of the characteristics of a large town or small city. It 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. A few buildings, particularly those constructed more recently, contain as many as a dozen floors. 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 the future home of a Greyhound station, and 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 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, when they exist, are located at intersections or along traditional 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 this area is separated from adjoining areas by either physical or intangible barriers. On the East End, railroad tracks and industrial

Figure 2  
*Existing Land Use*

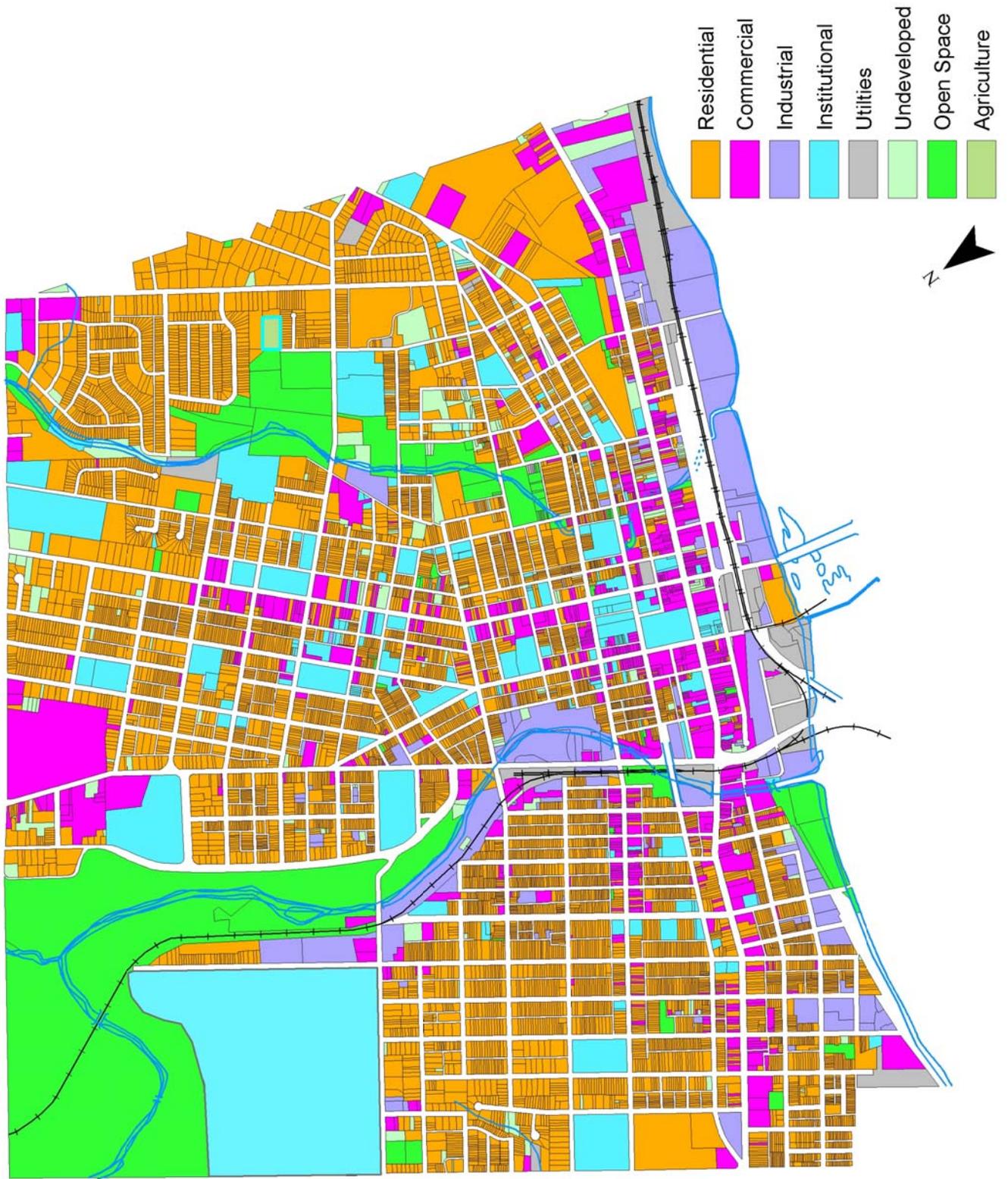
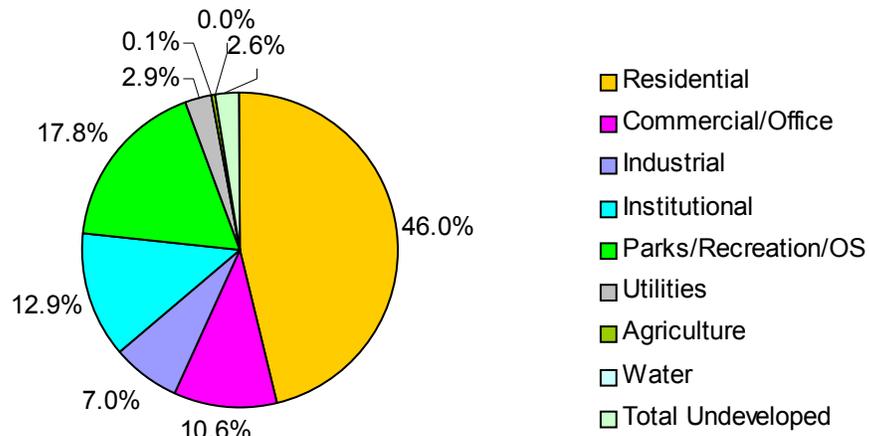


Figure 3  
Existing Land Use Comparison: 1994 and 2004

Land Use	1994	2004		% Change
	% Total	Acres	% Total	1994-2004
Residential	52.6%	831	46.0%	-12.5%
Commercial/Office	15.4%	192	10.6%	-30.9%
Industrial	6.0%	126	7.0%	17.1%
Institutional	6.2%	234	12.9%	110.0%
Parks/Recreation/OS	12.4%	321	17.8%	43.1%
Utilities	1.7%	53	2.9%	76.0%
Agriculture	0.0%	2	0.1%	0.1%
Water	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Total Developed</b>	<b>94.2%</b>	<b>1,759</b>	<b>97.4%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
<b>Total Undeveloped</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>-55.3%</b>
<b>Total Acreage*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,806</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

Source: Montgomery County Planning Commission Land Use Maps.

\*Discrepancies due to digitization of parcel information.



uses create a physical barrier. In the Downtown area, private or unkempt open space gives the area an uninviting appearance and forms a more intangible barrier. Only Riverfront and Crawford Parks in the West End permit interaction with the river. Any future riverfront redevelopment, whether for economic revitalization or parkland, should connect the riverfront to the rest of Norristown.

### RESIDENTIAL

Residential development exists throughout Norristown, although there are several distinctly residential neighborhoods, as described above. Figure 3 shows that in 2000, 46% of Norristown’s land was used for residential purposes, down from nearly 53% ten years ago.

## COMMERCIAL/OFFICE

Commercial and office uses comprise about 11% of the Municipality- a decline of roughly 31% since 1994. 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 7%.

## INSTITUTIONAL

Institutional uses comprise about 13% of the township. Such uses include the courthouse, county offices, schools, hospitals and other medical facilities. The seemingly large increase in institutional land between the two censuses is likely a result of digitization of the land use files and re-categorization of some parcels.

## PARKS/RECREATION

Approximately 17.8% (321 acres) of the Municipality are designated as open space, consisting of both active and passive recreational and natural. This category includes Norristown Farm Park, Elmwood Park, Bartasch, Simmons & McCann Parks in the East End, Saw Mill Run Dam, 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 previous open space plan.

## 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 (2.6%). 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.

## HOUSING TYPES

Figure 4 shows a breakdown of the residential land use category by housing types. Although there is a predominance of single-family attached dwellings, a wide range of housing types is available, from single-story row houses, to multi-family apartments, to gracious single family detached homes. 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 nearly disappeared from Norristown, from comprising 1.1% of the housing stock in 1990 to only .1% in 2000.

## CONCLUSION

Since the last Open Space plan for the Municipality was completed in 1994, Norristown has changed slightly from a land use perspective. The most significant changes have been the increase in preserved open space (43%) and the reduction in undeveloped parcels (55%), as well as the increase in number of single-family detached units (33%) and units in smaller multi-family buildings (23%).

## COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

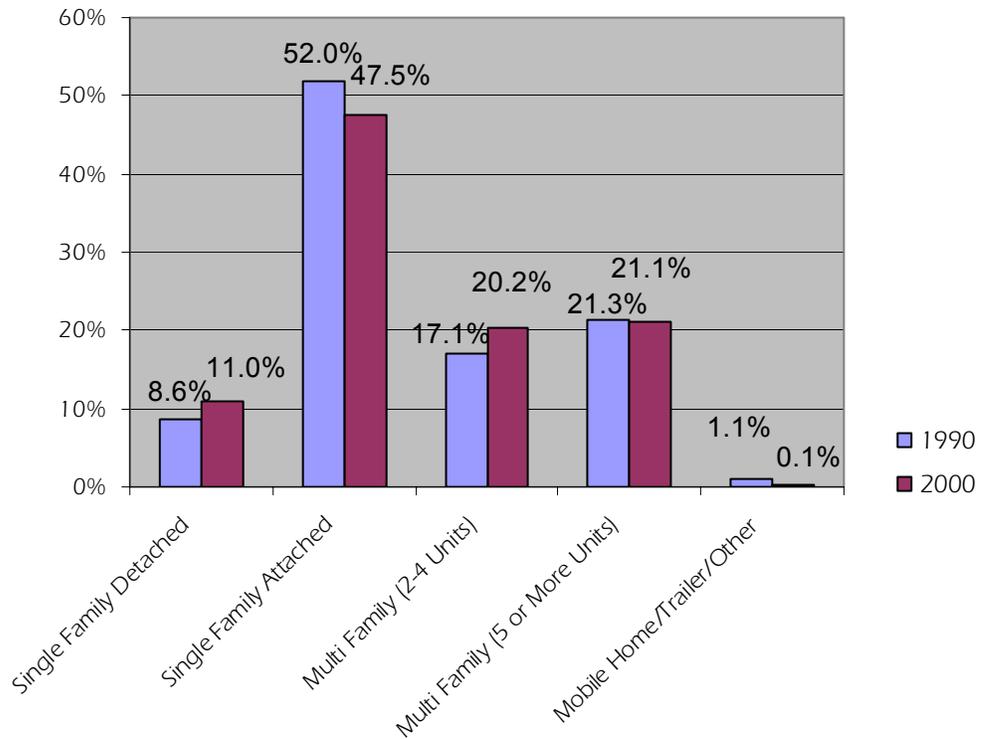
The Community Demographic Analysis consists of information relating to Norristown's population, housing, and economics. With few exceptions, the source of the information is the decennial U.S. Census and other reports of the Census Bureau.

Demographic characteristics provide insight when planning for open space preservation and recreational development. They can assist in determining not only how much land should be preserved, but also where. Additionally, this information can further assist a municipality in

Figure 4  
*Housing Types*

Housing Types	1990		2000		% Change
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	1990-2000
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%
Multi Family (2-4 Units)	2,234	17.1%	2,738	20.2%	22.6%
Multi Family (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%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>13,080</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13523</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>

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



determining what type of recreational facilities, if any, should be placed on the preserved land.

**POPULATION TRENDS**

The rate of municipal population change (relative population increase or decrease) is an important measure of the magnitude of population change that has occurred over time. Figure 5 shows population trends in Norristown.

Between 1990 and 2000, the Municipality experienced a population increase of about 533 people (1.7%). Although a relatively small in-

crease, it indicate a possible 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.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) serves as the region’s metropolitan planning organization (MPO). Among other reports, it provides population and employment forecasts through the year 2025. According to these reports, during the next 20 years the population of the Municipality of Norristown is projected to continue declining, but at relatively

Figure 5  
*Population Classification*

Population Type	1990		2000		% Change
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	1980 to 1990
Household Population	29,685	96.5%	30,287	96.8%	2.0%
Group Quarters Population	1,064	3.5%	995	3.2%	-6.5%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>30,749</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>31,282</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Census of Population and Housing, 1980, 1990.

low rates. In fact, if projections hold true, the population would decrease by approximately 4.6% between 2000 and 2025 to approximately 29,8620 residents. These projections will be addressed in further detail in Chapter 7. More localized projections, which take into account recent levels of development and redevelopment as well as recently proposed development, tend to forecast a stabilized or slightly increased population over the next 20 years.

**POPULATION CLASSIFICATION**

Population classification refers to those segments of the population either in households or in group quarters (institutions). Figure 5 shows that more than 96 percent of the Municipality’s population continues to be in households. Between 1990 and 2000 the proportion of residents in group quarters decreased slightly by 6.5 percent.

**AGE**

A community’s age profile over time can be an important measure of growth and change. 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 6 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). In the long term, since families with children make up the bulk of the population, housing (demand for larger units), transportation and recreation needs may be affected.

**INCOME**

Figure 7 shows changes in per capita and house-

hold incomes for 1989 and 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. Per capita income also accounts for persons living alone, a growing segment of the population that is excluded from family income tabulations. As the percentage of the population earning income has increased, so has the per person average. In Norristown, per capita income grew by nearly 33 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 person 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 grew by nearly 25 percent to over \$35,000.

**SPECIAL NEEDS GROUPS**

Certain groups within Norristown have special needs that should be considered in determining how much open space is needed, the type of open space that is needed, and the specific design of the open space development. In particular, the very young, the very old, those with incomes below the poverty level, and people with disabilities have special needs that will affect the need for and development of open space. Because defini-

Figure 6  
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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,749</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>31282</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

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

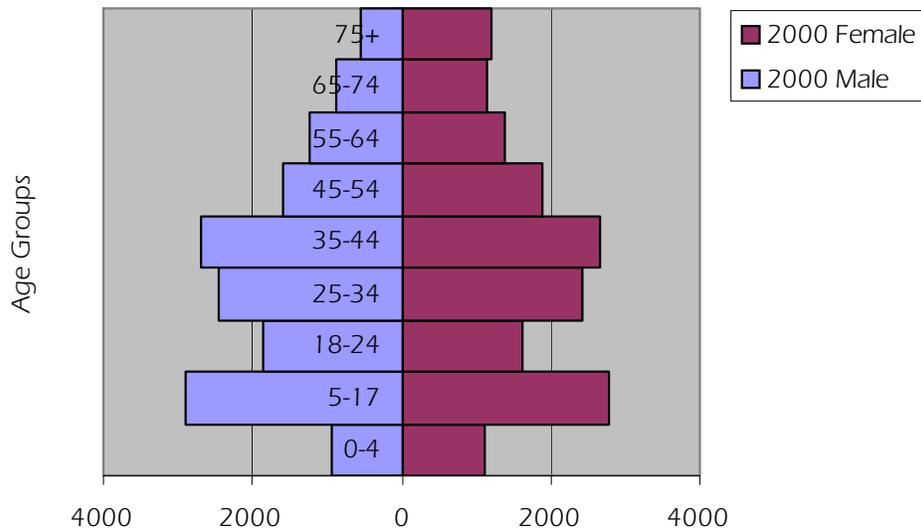


Figure 7  
Income Levels (1999 \$)

Income	1989	1999	% Change
<b>Per Capita</b>	\$13,527	\$ 17,977	32.9%
<b>Median Household</b>	\$28,643	\$ 35,714	24.7%

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

tions of persons with disabilities have changed between the 1990 and 2000 censuses, 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 8). Over the past decade, the number of people over age 65 has decreased by over 17 percent, while the number of people under age 18 has increased by nearly 11 percent. The number of people with incomes below poverty level has increased dramatically over the ten year period by nearly 85%, comprising nearly 17% of the total population in 2000.

**EDUCATION LEVEL**

Residents of Norristown have become better-educated over the years (Figure 9). Nearly three-quarters of the population has at least a high school diploma, almost 15 percent have a college

degree, and over 4 percent have obtained graduate or professional degrees. Since 1990, the number of people possessing less than a 9th grade education has dropped by almost 30 percent.

**HOUSEHOLD TYPES**

A household profile is defined by the Census Bureau as a person or persons occupying a single housing unit. A household can be broken down into two categories. A family household is two or more related persons living in a single housing unit, and 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 has been an overall increase in non-family and single person’s households since the 1970’s. 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

Figure 8  
*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%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>30,749</b>		<b>31,282</b>		<b>1.7%</b>

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

Figure 9  
*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%
<b>Total Pop. 25 years and older</b>	<b>20780</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>20092</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>-3.3%</b>

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

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, Figure 10 shows that Single Parent Households in Norristown have increased by 26 percent 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 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. As one aspect of the

economy, they serve to 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 as it has gone from being principally a bedroom suburb for Philadelphia commuters to an area that is a major source of jobs. The county’s central location in the region and its major road network that permits direct access from surrounding counties are major 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.

**OCCUPATIONS**

The types of occupations held by residents in 1990 and 2000 are shown in Figure 11. The wide range of occupations listed have historically been classified as being “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

Figure 10

*Household Types*

Household Types	1990		2000		% Change
	Number	% Total	Number	% Total	1990 to 2000
Married Couples with Children	2,300	18.9%	1,776	14.8%	-22.8%
Married Couples with No Children	2,577	21.1%	2,277	18.9%	-11.6%
Single Parent	1,333	10.9%	1,680	14.0%	26.0%
Other Family	964	7.9%	1,415	11.8%	46.8%
1 Person Non-Family Households	4,291	35.2%	3,929	32.7%	-8.4%
2+ Person Non-Family Household	722	5.9%	951	7.9%	31.7%
<b>Total No. of Households</b>	12,187	100%	12,028	100%	-1.3%
<b>Average People per Household</b>	<b>2.44</b>		<b>2.52</b>		<b>3.4%</b>

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

Figure 11  
*Labor Force by Occupation*

Occupation	2000	
	Number	% Total
Management	1,337	9.0%
Professional	2,171	14.6%
Sales	1,552	10.4%
Clerical/Office	2,602	17.5%
Construction	1,466	9.8%
Production/Transportation	2,315	15.5%
Farming	80	0.5%
Services	3,369	22.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,892</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

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.

**EMPLOYMENT FORECAST**

As with population, the DVRPC provides employment forecasts for the area. Employment is projected to shrink from approximately 15300 jobs in 2000 to 14500 jobs in 2025, representing an overall decline of about 5 percent over 25 years (see Figure 12).

**MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN NORRISTOWN**

The top employers in Norristown continue to be Montgomery County, Montgomery Hospital, and the Regina Nursing Home. Indicative of the national trend toward a service economy, all of the top employers are in the government and service sectors.

**STATUS OF RELEVANT PLANS  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Norristown’s five volume Comprehensive Plan was adopted in stages between 1965 and 1969. This

plan is still in effect. Its primary open space goals were improving existing parks and preserving stream and river corridors.

**ZONING AND SUBDIVISION & LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCES**

The Municipality first adopted zoning in 1933. The ordinance was substantially overhauled in 1970 to address the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. The ordinance is being further revised on an ongoing basis to address current needs and realities.

The Subdivision Ordinance was first adopted in 1955. It was revised pursuant to modern subdivision principles in 1990 and adopted in 1991.

**NORRISTOWN RIVERFRONT STUDY**

Another important plan, adopted by Borough Council in 1991, was the Riverfront Study. It was a comprehensive study of the Schuylkill Riverfront with major goals including:

- Encourage economic development in the riverfront area.
- Establish/improve public access between the riverfront and adjacent neighborhoods.
- Improve/enhance/expand riverfront recreational opportunities for residents, workers, and the general public.

**REDEVELOPMENT AREA PLAN FOR THE RIVERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

Completed in 2002 in accordance with the Urban Redevelopment Law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this plan creates a new land use plan and standards, a site plan of the area, proposed zoning changes, and estimated costs of acquisition and redevelopment of the riverfront. Adoption of this document authorizes the Redevelopment Authority to facilitate the plan’s implementation by private developers.

**NORRISTOWN ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION STRATEGY**

A collaboration between the Municipality and the County, this document was completed in the Summer of 2000. It created a vision for Norristown and devised strategies to create a new regional gateway and attraction for the Municipality on the

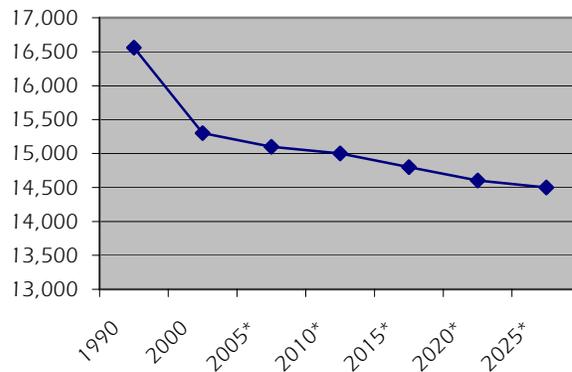
Figure 12

*Employment Forecast*

Year	Total Employment
1990	16,559
2000	15,300
2005*	15,100
2010*	15,000
2015*	14,800
2020*	14,600
2025*	14,500

Years	% Change
1990-2000	-7.60%
2000-2010	-1.96%
2010-2020	-2.67%
2000-2025	-5.23%

\*Source: DVRPC Forecasts



riverfront, revitalize commercial areas, increase public safety and the perception of safety, and stabilize neighborhoods

**NORRISTOWN WEED & SEED PROGRAM**

The Weed & Seed Program’s mission is to develop and implement a strategic plan to revitalize Norristown by identifying existing resources and creating new ones where necessary; improving communications; developing a safe, healthy environment; improving the economic standard of living and community image; and creating partnerships to meet these goals. The plan was created in 2002 and has been a collaborative effort among several different groups.

**SCHUYLKILL RIVER GREENWAY STEWARDSHIP STUDY**

This study was published in the Spring of 2003. It is a comprehensive study of the river as it traverses sixteen municipalities in Montgomery County. This report envisions a greenway community of various stakeholders— developers, naturalists, canoeists, landowners, business owners, etc— who all must become stewards of this great resource. The vision for the greenway includes rediscovering its hidden beauty, promoting a riverfront renaissance, protecting open space, providing recreation, and promoting economic development, among other things. Cooperation among greenway partners is key, and Norristown supports this effort.

**OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE PROTECTION PLAN**

Prior to the update of the comprehensive plan, the first Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan was developed in accordance with the Montgomery County Open Space Preservation Program Guidelines and adopted in 1994. For the past ten years it has served as a guide for open space

preservation activities, enabling Norristown to use its open space acquisition funding allocation included in the County Program. This plan serves as the basis for this 2004 update, and contains many of the same sections. Among the key recommendations from this plan were:

- Preserving existing and creating new open space.
- Protecting sensitive natural features.
- Enhancing the natural environment and existing streetscapes.
- Creating and preserving small green spaces.
- Addressing recreational needs.
- Providing improved access to open space areas.

As part of the update of this plan, these and other recommendations were reviewed in detail as part of an audit process. The results of the audit are explained in Chapter 2.

# CHAPTER 2

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### THE 1994 OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE PLAN

Norristown adopted an Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan in 1994. At that time a series of goals and objectives was developed to address issues regarding the preservation of open space and the protection of environmental and cultural resources. As a part of the update process required by the Montgomery County Open Space Program, Norristown has evaluated its previous goals and objectives to address whether the goals are still valid and to evaluate why some of the last plan's recommendations were not implemented. Below are listed the previous recommendations that have been acted upon with accompanying explanations of their status and proposed future action where applicable.

#### ACQUISITIONS AND ACTIONS

- **Project: Blue Mill Tract**

**Status:** 4.5 acres and Bambi Tract - 2.4 acres  
 – The Blue Mill tract was acquired in the late 1990s. Originally proposed as a playing field, this vacant tract is proposed to be developed with a ball field. The adjacent Bambi tract (containing 3 separate parcels) was not purchased due to cost and difficulties encountered during negotiations (the various tracts were owned by different family members). This tract is likely no longer available for purchase.

**Future Action:** It may be possible to engage in a land swap, trading the strip of property that leads to Fornance Street with a strip of equal size along Saw Mill Run. This strip can then be incorporated into the greenspace linkage system along the creek.

- **Project: Thomas Barone Park**

**Status:** Located at the corner of Buttonwood and Noblewood Streets, this parcel was obtained as a pocket park.

**Future Action:** Currently undeveloped,



*Washington Street Park was developed under the 1994 Open Space Plan.*

Norristown intends to create a park with funds obtained through the updated plan.

- **Project: Washington Street Park**  
**Status:** Obtained and developed under the 1994 plan, this small park has a walking path and ornamental trees, and preserves a section of a wooded stream corridor.
- **Project: Hancock Square**  
**Status:** This square was redeveloped with the new Department of Environmental Protection Building.
- **Project: Exercise Path**  
**Status:** Originally slated for Kennedy Kenrick High School, an exercise path is being developed for Martin Luther King Park, which is located in a nearby densely-populated area with few existing recreational opportunities.
- **Project: On-Street Trail Signage**  
**Status:** Directional Signs have been installed for the Norristown Farm Park Connector.
- **Project: Enhance Streetscapes**  
**Status:** Norristown has implemented streetscapes in commercial (West Marshall Street) and residential (600-1000 blocks of Cherry Street) areas, and plans to extend streetscapes in strategic areas throughout the Municipality.

**Future Action:** The Elm Street Program for Dekalb Street has recommended that decorative sidewalks, period lighting and street trees be installed along Swede Street from Downtown to the Hospital and on Main Street in the Downtown area.

- **Project: Preserve Small Green Spaces**  
**Status:** Norristown has worked to retain the fountain at Brown and Markley Streets, and has purchased Thomas Barone and Washington Street Parks.
- **Project: Enhance Community Level Recreation**  
**Status:** The PAL Center at Elmwood Park has been completed.
- **Project: Protect Historic Resources**  
**Status:** The ongoing Historic Façade program has already benefited over twenty properties, predominantly on Main Street. Norristown has also funded a restoration study at Selma.
- **Project: Enhance Open Space Linkages**  
**Status:** A segment of the Elmwood Park Outer Trail has been installed along Harding Boulevard.  
**Future Action:** This trail should be extended to the Zoo and along Sterigere Street.
- **Project: Other Gateway Improvements**  
**Status:** Gateway and Trail signage at the five gateways identified in the previous plan (Main/Airy/Forest; DeKalb/Johnson; Markley/Johnson; DeKalb at Schuylkill River Bridge; East Main at Plymouth Township) has been implemented. Additional landscaping and hardscaping of these and other gateways will be examined in the new open space plan.

**POLICY ACTIONS**

- **Action: Begin dialogue with West Norriston Regarding Montgomery Cemetery.**  
**Status:** The Cemetery is now owned by the Historical Society of Montgomery County, and no further action is necessary.

- **Action: Maintain dialogue with County Regarding Improvements to Schuylkill River Trail**

**Status:** This dialogue is ongoing. The Municipality has worked with the County on signage between the trail and the Farm Park, which was installed in the fall of 2004.
- **Action: Create Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB)**

**Status:** An ordinance to create a HARB has been approved, and formation of a committee is underway.
- **Action: Maintain dialogue with Crawford Park Trustees**

**Status:** This dialogue is ongoing, and the Municipality has created a good relationship with the Trustees.
- **Action: Preserve Riverfront**

**Status:** New redevelopment zoning mandates setbacks and open space preservation along the river. In effect, it requires a continuous trail along the riverfront.

**Future Action:** Norristown is interested in working with the County to create a park at the Dam site.
- **Project: Enforce Floodplain Ordinance**

**Status:** This ordinance has been updated per FEMA requirements.
- **Project: Encourage Traditional Borough Appearance for Infill Development**

**Status:** Norristown has worked to address this by requiring new development to be built to the sidewalk in the Downtown area, and to encourage brick or stucco building facades.
- **Project: Mascarò Junk Yard**

**Explanation:** Norristown decided against purchasing this tract due to site contamination and the exorbitant costs associated with the purchase price, the necessary site cleanup and the relocation of the existing business.
- **Project: Gateway Improvements (Markley/Main and Marshall/Main)**

**Explanation:** The municipality intends to reexamine this proposal in the new plan. In particular, it is interested in purchasing the parcel at Marshall and Markley with the intent of removing the billboards and enhancing this gateway area with landscaping.
- **Project: Selma Open Space**

**Explanation:** This project was not eligible for funding under the County Open Space Program. In the past, Norristown has funded restoration work at this site. This project will be reexamined in the new plan.
- **Project: Acquisition of Vacant Lot at DeKalb and Basin Streets**

**Explanation:** The owner of this parcel was not willing to sell and has since created a proposal for redevelopment.
- **Project: Create a Downtown Park at the PECO Tract (5.6 acres)**

**Explanation:** Although Norristown has not been successful in establishing open space at this location, it supports the County's efforts to develop a passive riverfront park on this tract.
- **Project: Elmwood Park/Norristown Farm Park Trail Connection**

**Explanation:** This is proposed as part of the Elmwood Zoo's new master plan. It would allow access to the trail from the west End Neighborhood. Norristown supports this plan and the trail connection.
- **Project: Schuylkill Trail Connection at the Terminus of Hamilton Street**

**Explanation:** The Municipality will re-examine this idea in the new plan.

**OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since the last plan was adopted, Norristown was not able to successfully address all of its recommendations and/or goals. Following is a list of such projects and actions :

- **Project: Institutional Overlay Zoning District**  
**Explanation:** This has not yet been created.
- **Project: Active Recreation Area in Lower West End**  
**Explanation:** It has been determined that this area is already being served by Crawford Park. If future opportunities arise, the Municipality will consider them.
- **Project: Historic Plaque Program**  
**Explanation:** This issue has become dormant but will be pursued based on the recommendations in the new plan.
- **Project: Saw Mill Run Dam Improvements**  
**Explanation:** The issues of visual appearance and creation of walking trails in the basin have become dormant.
- **Project: Elmwood Park Inner Trail (Stony Creek Trail)**  
**Explanation:** This proposal needs to be re-considered. It could cause disruptions to both recreational areas and vegetation. Individual and separate connections, in the form of steps, pathways or scenic overlooks may make more sense, and will be examined in the new plan.
- **Action: Steep Slope Ordinance**  
**Explanation:** After weighing the pros and cons of such an ordinance, Norristown has decided against its creation, as it could limit much-desired redevelopment activities. The Municipality has decided to focus on waterfront redevelopment instead.
- **Action: Create a Shade Tree Commission**  
**Explanation:** While a shade tree commission has not yet been created, Norristown has been active in planting new street trees as sidewalks are repaired or replaced. The County has been closely involved in this process.
- **Action: Barbados Island Dialogue**

**Explanation:** A dialogue with West Norriton and PECO regarding Barbados Island has not been established. PECO has previously stated that it is not interested in selling the land or opening it up for public access.

- **Action: Comprehensive Plan for State Hospital Dialogue**  
**Explanation:** The State has temporary halted its planning process. Norristown will participate when the process is resumed.
- **Action: Impervious Surface Limitations in Residential Areas**  
**Explanation:** The Municipality is interested in looking into this in the future.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE 2005 OPEN SPACE PLAN

The Open Space Committee has evaluated the goals and objectives of the previous plan and revised them to reflect issues identified during the audit process. This chapter will serve as the framework for Norristown’s plan for open space preservation and protection of natural resources. Goals are provided regarding creation and retention of open space, enhancement of existing facilities, addressing recreational needs and improving access to open space areas followed by a series of objectives. Action items related to these goals and objectives were created throughout the open space planning process and are included in the recommendation and implementation chapters of this plan.

### GOAL 1: PRESERVE EXISTING OPEN SPACE

Norristown is a community with a relatively high population and building density. Therefore it is important to preserve and enhance existing open space areas given the difficulty on creating new ones.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- A. Preserve the Municipality’s existing parks and continue to enhance them.
- B. Encourage the preservation of open space around schools and historic buildings.

**GOAL 2: CREATE OPEN SPACE IN THE REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

While Norristown is largely built out, the creation of open space areas is still possible through the acquisition of undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels in the redevelopment area. Increasing access to these areas through linkages will help to better utilize this open space.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- A. Acquire and preserve designated areas of the riverfront as open space as part of redevelopment projects.
- B. Attempt, wherever possible, to link parks by beltways of open space.

**GOAL 3: PROTECT SENSITIVE NATURAL FEATURES**

Floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, and steep slopes serve important environmental functions, contribute to the quality of life and add to the desirability of an area. The Municipality desires to preserve and enhance areas containing these features.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- A. Continue to enforce Norristown’s floodplain ordinance and update it as necessary.
- B. Continue to enforce and update, as necessary, the Municipality’s subdivision ordinance, which encourages tree preservation and requires the replacement of removed trees.

**GOAL 4: ENHANCE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND EXISTING STREETSAPES**

To many people, Norristown is defined by its traditional small town atmosphere— particularly in the oldest areas of the Municipality. Preserving and enhancing this atmosphere will help Norristown to preserve its character, history, and property values.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- A. Encourage infill development to maintain a traditional borough appearance, through

sidewalks, curbs, street trees, etc.

- B. Enhance streetscapes through the installation of landscaping and street furniture that is sympathetic to the architectural character of the surrounding area.
- C. Through tree planting programs, enhance streetscapes to benefit the natural environment and complement the built environment.
- D. Create impervious surface coverage regulations in the Residential zoning districts.

**GOAL 5: CREATE AND PRESERVE SMALL GREEN SPACES**

Realizing that small green spaces in high density areas offer aesthetic and environmental benefits, the Borough desires to create, improve and maintain such spaces.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- A. Encourage the preservation of existing green spaces and the creation of new ones on parcels not suited to economic development activity.

**GOAL 6: ADDRESS RECREATION NEEDS**

An important part of any open space plan is ensuring that the recreational needs of all residents are met.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- A. Expand community level parks so that more recreational facilities can be provided.
- B. Continue to work with the County to implement the Norristown Farm Park Plan.
- C. Add various types of playing fields to the Municipality at the Blue Mill Tract and other locations.

**GOAL 7: PROVIDE ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE AREAS**

As Norristown is relatively built out, it is not possible or feasible to create bikeways/walkways throughout the Municipality. Furthermore, Norristown’s extensive sidewalk system precludes the

need for such things. However, the creation of multi-use trails through open space areas is important for increasing their accessibility to all residents.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- A. Ensure that bikeways and walkways are in the public right-of-way to make open space areas accessible to all residents.
- B. Work with the County on physically connecting Elmwood Park with the Farm Park across Stony Creek.

**GOAL 8: MAINTAIN DIALOGUES WITH VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS TO IMPLEMENT SHARED OPEN SPACE GOALS**

**OBJECTIVES**

- A. Coordinate with other Riverfront communities.
- B. Work with local organizations to carry out open space programs

**GOAL 9: PROTECT HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**OBJECTIVES**

- A. Promote the existing historic and cultural resources within the municipality.
- B. Integrate historic and cultural assets into the open space network.

# CHAPTER 3

## EXISTING PROTECTED LAND

A key component of the open space plan is a review of existing open space. Some of the open space utilized by residents is permanently protected, while other areas are not permanently preserved, and are in essence temporary open space. Permanently protected land refers to land preserved for active or passive recreation use and/or for environmental conservation purposes. In addition to municipally-owned areas, it can include land preserved by private conservation groups and private open space preserved as part of residential or non-residential development. Permanently preserved open space puts limitations on development and provides permanent resource protection— this land will continue to exist much the way it does today for future generations.

Temporary open space also makes an important contribution to the overall recreation base of a community by providing open space, sheltering significant natural features, and/or providing recreation facilities that do not require municipal involvement in maintenance. However, temporary open space can easily be lost through development or degradation. Creating this plan involves making choices about temporary open space and determining which of these areas the municipality wants to permanently preserve.

### PERMANENT OPEN SPACE

Currently, there are approximately 284 acres of permanently protected open space in Norristown (see Figure 13). This land is owned by a variety of public and private institutions and individuals, such as the municipality, county, and state, private trusts and homeowners associations. This land consists of everything from ball fields and play-

grounds to bocce courts and a zoo. Following is a description of this highly valued land.

### MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE

Norristown's existing system of parks and open space has grown over the past ten years with the

Figure 13

*Permanent Open Space*

Map Key	Name	Acreage	Location	Owner	Facilities
1	Atkinson Field	3.30	Sterigere Street	Municipality	Baseball Field, Soccer Field, Playground Equipment, Basketball Court, Pavillion
2	Riverfront Park	4.30	Haws Avenue	Municipality	2 Boat Ramps, Fishing Dock, Picnic Area
3	Guardino Park	0.70	Lafayette Street	Municipality	Playground Equipment, Picnic Area
4	Elmwood Park	118.00	Harding Boulevard	Municipality	4 Baseball/Softball Fields, Basketball Court, Playground Equipment, Band Shell, Picnic Facilities, Zoo, 2 Bocce Courts, Football Fields, Soccer Fields, 2 Volleyball Courts, Bathrooms
5	War Memorial Square	0.10	James & Astor Streets	Municipality	None
6	Downtown Public Square	0.70	Main & Swede Streets	County	Picnic Area
7	Bartasch Park	5.90	High Street & Linda Lane	Municipality	2 Baseball Fields, Soccer Field, Sporting Equipment Storage, Playgournd Equipment, Bathrooms, Stream Corridor
8	Simmons Park/ Martin Luther King Memorial Amphitheater	5.20	Oak Street	Municipality	Amphitheater, 2 Basketball Courts, Baseball Field, Picnic Grove, Playground Equipment, Stream Corridor
9	McCann Park	5.90	Piazza Street	Municipality	Baseball Field, Basketball Court, Playground Equipment, Picnic Area, Vista of Schuylkill River Corridor
10	Walnut Street Playground	0.40	Walnut & Marshall Streets	Municipality	Playground Equipment
11	Scag Cottman Park	2.70	Basin & Violet Streets	Municipality	Baseball Field, Playground Equipment, Stream Corridor
12	Albert P Parker Memorial Park	0.40	Cherry Street	Municipality	Basketball Court, Playground Equipment
13	Haws Lane Median	0.11	Haws Lane	Municipality	None
14	Blue Mills Tract	6.90	Basin Street	Municipality	None
15	Thomas Barone Park	0.99	Buttonwood Street	Municipality	None
16	Washington Street Park	0.98	Washington Street	Municipality	None
17	Courthouse Square	0.50	Main & Swede Streets	County	Picnic Area
18	Unit 25	0.10	Near High Street	Municipality	None
19	Unit 26	0.08	Near High Street	Municipality	None
20	Norristown Farm Park	89.70	Stanbridge Street	State	Trails
21	Saw Mill Run Dam	26.13	Fornance Street	Municipality	None
22	Poley Park	0.01	Marshall & Corson Streets	Municipality	None
<b>Total Public Land</b>		<b>273.10</b>			
23	Crawford Park	5.00	Main Street & Stony Creek	Crawford Park Trustees	Basketball Court, Playground Equipment, Picnic Area
24	Kenrick Hills HOA	3.50	Zummo Drive	Kenrick Hills	None
25	Saw Mill Run Condo HOA	1.00	Arch Street	Saw Mill Run Condo	None
26	Saw Mill Run Condo HOA	1.00	Arch Street	Saw Mill Run Condo	None
<b>Total Private Land</b>		<b>10.50</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>283.60</b>	

Sources: County Board of Assessments; MCPC field checks, 1994, 2004.



*The Bocce Courts at Elmwood Park*



*Corson Field at Elmwood Park*

acquisition of the Blue Mill tract, Thomas Barone Park, and Washington Street Park (see Figure 15). Today, a total of 20 parks and open spaces are owned and maintained by the municipality. An additional 2 parks are owned by the county and the state. These parks comprise approximately 273 acres of land, 145 of which are considered active recreational space. The active open space includes amenities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, basketball courts, tot lots, picnic areas, and ball fields. Each offers community residents important recreational opportunities and scenic amenities.

**PRIVATE OPEN SPACE**

Approximately 10.5 acres of permanently protected land

are in private ownership. This includes land owned by home owners associations and a private trust.

**TEMPORARY OPEN SPACE**

Over 71 acres of open space are temporary in nature (see Figures 14 and 15). This land falls into several categories including schools, churches, medical facilities, etc.

**INSTITUTIONAL**

Norristown has a substantial amount of recreational open space offered by several institutions. Public schools including Gotwals, Roosevelt, Logan, and Hancock provide open space in the form of playing fields, basketball courts, tennis courts and open fields. In addition, private schools such as Kennedy Kenrick High School, Holy Saviour and St. Francis provide both passive and active open space. Norristown Hospital, Sacred Heart Cancer Center, and Regina Nursing Home also provide some passive and active open space.

These open spaces differ from the municipally owned spaces because they may not remain open forever. First, land use decisions for public schools are not made by the municipality. Therefore, as enrollment patterns in the region as a whole change, the local schools could be closed. When this happens, the school district may use the schools for other purposes, including offices or apartments, and the recreational and open space could be lost. Second, if the institutional space changes hands, there is no guarantee that the new owners will want or be able to offer the same open space for public use.

Despite their temporary nature, these sources of open space are still important to Norristown as they offer residents a greater range of choices to meet their recreational needs. They also add an aesthetic quality to the township by opening up views and providing some relief to the intensely developed landscape.

In total, Norristown has a significant amount of total open space: nearly 355 acres. This land provides residents with many opportunities to enjoy all that open space can offer – recreation, tranquility, beauty, and a sense of community.

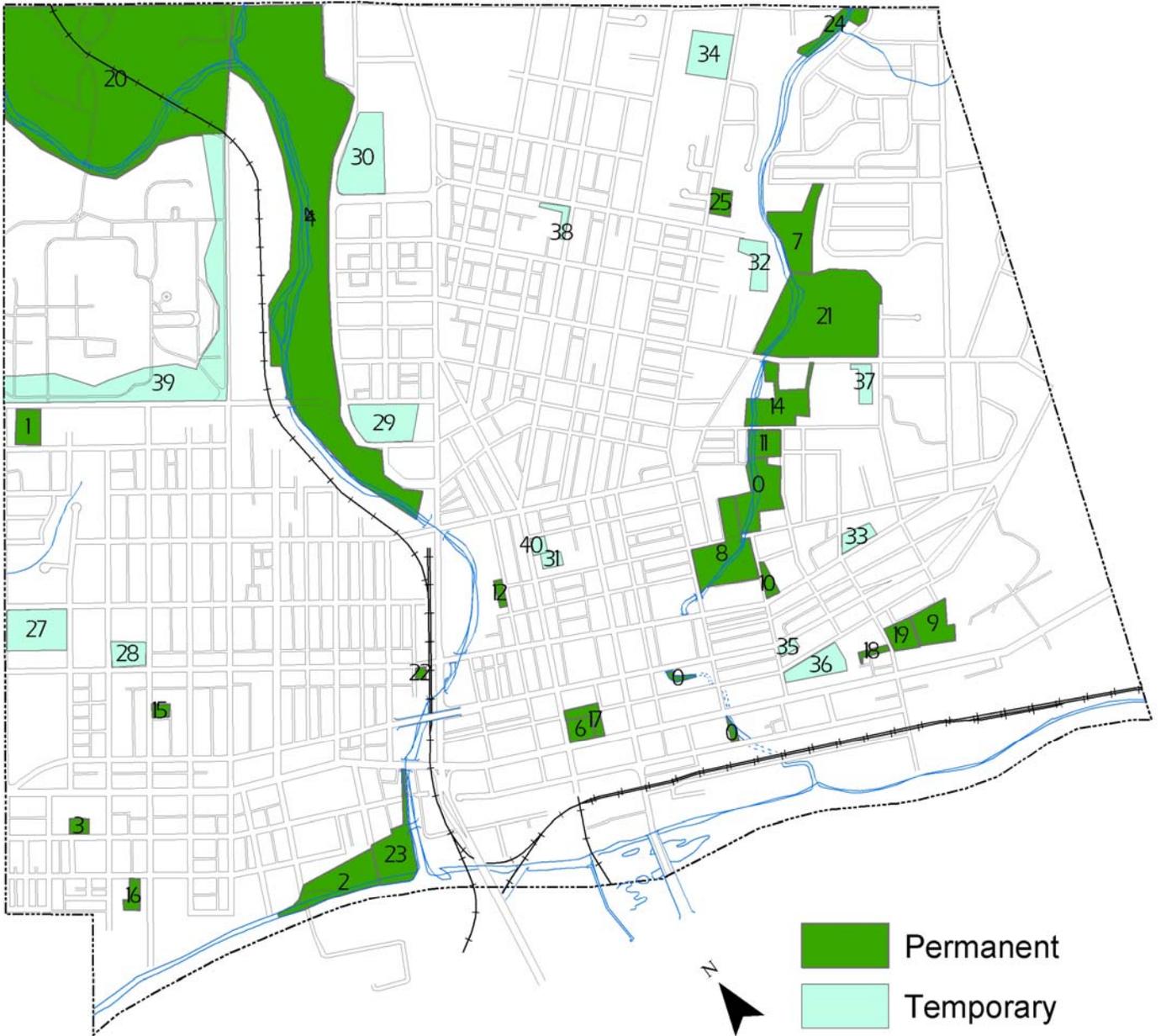
Figure 14  
*Temporary Open Space*

Map Key	Name	Acreage*	Location	Owner	Recreational Facilities
27	Stewart Field	2.0	Forest Avenue & Oak Street	Norristown School District	Baseball Field, Football Field
28	St. Francis Church and School	0.5	Marshall & Buttonwood Streets	Archdiocese of Philadelphia	Multi-Purpose Field
29	Roosevelt Field	1.0	Harding Boulevard & Sterigere Street	Norristown School District	Football Stadium, Track
30	Logan Field	5	Harding & Coolidge Boulevards	Norristown School District	6 Tennis Courts, Football Field, Soccer Stadium, Baseball & Softball Fields
31	Gotwals School	0.2	Swede Street	Norristown School District	Playground, Basketball Court
32	Hancock School	1	Summit Street	Norristown School District	Playground, Basketball Court
33	Community Day Care	1.0	Marshall & High Streets	Private	Playground
34	Kennedy Kenrick School & Field	3.0	Arch Street	Archdiocese of Philadelphia	Football Field, Walking Path
35	Holy Savior School	0.2	Walnut Street	Archdiocese of Philadelphia	Playground
36	Penna Associates (Sandy Hill Terrace)	5.0	Sandy & Walnut Streets	Home Owners Association	Green Areas
37	Regina Nursing Home	2.0	Fornance Street	Regina Nursing Home	Green Area, Patio, Gazebo
38	Sacred Heart Cancer Center	0.1	Brown & Powell Streets	Sacred Heart Hospital	Green Areas
39	Norristown State Hospital	50.0	Sterigere & Stanbridge Streets	State	Football Field, 2 Softball Fields, Soccer Field
40	Meetinghouse	0.3	Swede & Jacoby Streets	Religious Society of Friends	Historic Building, Small Green Area
<b>Total</b>		<b>71.3</b>			

\*Estimated (only large open space areas were calculated, not yards)

Sources: County Board of Assessments; MCPC field checks, 1994, 2004.

Figure 15  
Existing Open Space





# CHAPTER 4

## INVENTORY OF POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE RESOURCES

A key component of the open space plan is an inventory of potentially vulnerable resources. Such an inventory examines natural resources including geology, topography, soils, surface waters and hydrology, vegetation and wildlife, as well as historic and cultural resources. Identification of these sensitive areas is a first step toward determining priorities in open space planning.

### GEOLOGY

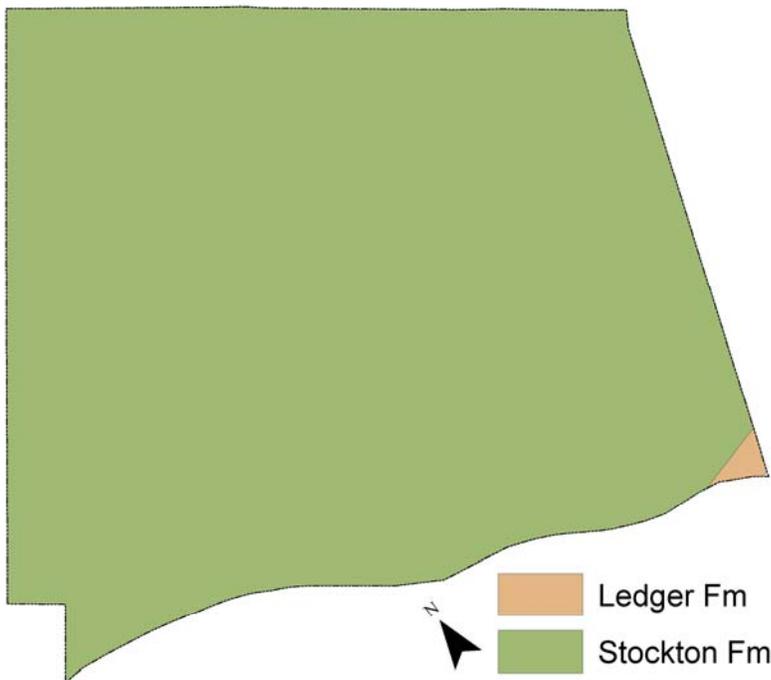
In order to understand the township's natural resources one must understand its geology. The foundation of the natural resources in the township is provided by the unique characteristics of the bedrock. In combination with the local climate, geological characteristics of the rock, both physical and chemical, influence hydrologic and terrestrial features such as local soils, wetlands, surface and ground water, vegetation, and topography. Subsequently, their characteristics may impact woodlands and wildlife.

Montgomery County is located in the Triassic Lowland and Piedmont Upland section of the Piedmont Physiographic Province. The Triassic Lowlands are primarily red shales and sandstones, with intrusions of diabase. Four formations - Stockton Sandstone/Conglomerate /Shale, Lockatong Argillite/Shale, Brunswick Shale/

Sandstone, and Diabase - comprise the Triassic Lowlands. The formations underlying Norristown are described below and shown in Figure 16:

- Ledger Dolomite/Elbrook/Conestoga Limestone forms a limestone valley that extends eastward from Lancaster County through Chester County, tapering off in Abington Township. The soils formed from this parent material are fertile, and the groundwater yields are good when solution channels (underground streams) are tapped. This formation covers only the southern-most tip of the Borough.
- Stockton Sandstone, Conglomerate, and Shale– The Stockton formation is primarily coarse sandstone, which tends to form ridges resistant to weathering. The groundwater resources in this formation are the best of any formation found in the county. This rock is a good source of brick, floor tile, and sintered aggregate material. This formation covers virtually the entire Municipality

Figure 16  
Geology



**TOPOGRAPHY**  
**STEEP SLOPES**

Slope, or frequency of change in elevation, is an important environmental condition. When expressed as a percentage, slope is defined as the amount of change in vertical elevation over a specified horizontal distance. For example, a three foot rise in elevation over a one hundred foot horizontal distance is expressed as a three percent slope. These changes in elevation throughout a community contribute a great deal to its appearance and natural diversity.

This is especially true of the steep slope areas of a community, which also cause limitations to development. The slope and soils present on steep slopes are in balance with vegetation, underlying geology and precipitation levels. Maintaining this equilibrium reduces the danger to public health and safety posed by unstable hillsides. Steep slopes often have a combination of vegetation, climate, soil and underlying geology that differs from the surrounding area. Frequently this means that the environmental sensitivity of the steep slope are different as well. Susceptibility to erosion and mass movement may be greater than the surrounding area, especially if vegetation is removed. Increased runoff and sedimentation

from disturbed slopes require increased public expenditure for flood control and stormwater management. Also, different species of plants and the associated wildlife that depends on these plants may be present only on the slopes, creating unique recreation opportunities.

Overall, steep slopes are not a major feature of Norristown. Using soil types from the Soil Survey as a general guide, Figure 17 shows that a concentration of steep slopes occurs in the south-easter portion of the Municipality in the vicinity of the Regatta Apartments, as well as west of Stony Creek in Elmwood Park, in areas of the Farm Park, and in portions of the Elmwood Park Zoo.

While development has already occurred on or near the steep slopes in the eastern portion of Norristown, the slopes in the western portion are protected from development, as they are located within permanently protected public open space.

**WOODLANDS**

The original vegetation of Montgomery County was a dense forest of hardwoods which covered over 99 percent of the county. Oaks were the dominant species, but chestnut, tulip poplar, hickory, ash, red maple, and dogwoods were also present. Several hundred years of clearing and cultivation, and in more recent times the rapid development of houses and commercial facilities, have reduced woodlands to a shadow of their former extent. The principle types of woodlands remaining in the county are:

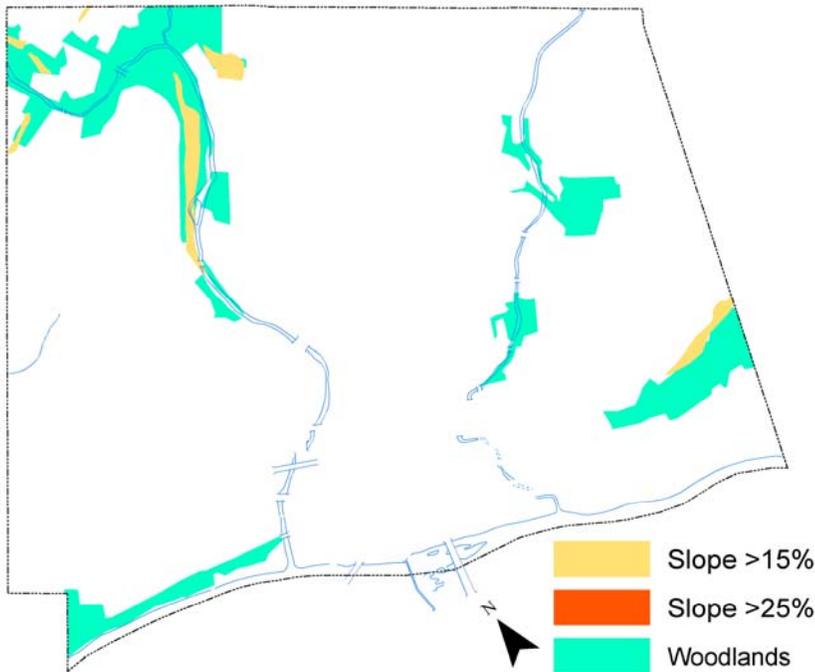
Red Oak - About 60% of all remaining woodlands. Northern Red Oak is predominant, but Black, Scarlet and Chestnut Oak are also abundant.

Ash/Maple/Elm - About 19% of all woodlands. Local mixtures will vary, and include minor species, such as the Slippery Elm, Yellow Birch, Black Gum, Sycamore, and Poplar.

Eastern Red Cedar - 18% of the county's wooded acres are covered with this species and associated species: Gray Birch, Red Maple, Sweet Birch, and Aspen.

Sugar Maple/Beech/Yellow Birch - The remaining three percent of woodlands is comprised of this association. Associated species include Red Maple, Hemlock, Northern Red oak, White Ash, and Tulip Poplar.

Figure 17  
Topography



Woodlands and hedgerows serve many purposes, both functional and aesthetic. Woodlands prevent erosion, provide habitat for wildlife, provide buffers for creeks, and offer recreational opportunities for residents. Hedgerows and wooded corridors prevent erosion also, and provide cover for wildlife movement, shelter, and migration.

The distribution of woodlands in Montgomery County can be described in three different patterns. Small, widely scattered stands can be found east of the central county ridge, often strung along alluvial soils. Long, linear stands along streams and on alluvial soils are typical in the central part of the county. Large forested blocks of land, often hundreds to thousands of acres in size, are found on ridges in the central and northern areas of the county.

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. As with steep slopes, those woodlands located in the western parks and in Riverfront Park are permanently preserved as public open space. Figure 17 shows the location of significant topographical features in the Municipality.

## SOILS

Soils are a natural assortment of organic materials and mineral fragments that cover the earth and supports plant life. The composition of soils changes slowly over time, due to weathering of rock and activity of soil organisms. As a consequence, soils vary with respect to depth to bedrock, depth to groundwater, color, mineral characteristics, fertility, texture, and erodibility. One of the most influential natural features, soils are a result of the hydrology and the weathering capacity of the underlying geology in a given area. They are also influenced by the orientation of the land and the types of vegetation that grow in them. Conversely, the type of soil influences the vegetative cover of the land, which effects the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater, wildlife diversity, rates of erosion, and the aesthetic quality of the landscape.

Though soils are diverse, soil scientists have classified the soils found in Montgomery County into several groups called soil series. Soils listed within the same series will display similar subsurface characteristics. The surface characteristics of soils within a particular series can vary in slope, degree of erosion, size of stones, and other easily recognizable features. Although a variety of soil types exist in all parts of the Township, the most extensive type is "made land" from several soil series (Duffield, Lawrenceville, Chester, and Manor, for example).

In addition to the soil mapping units, soils can also be divided into prime and important agricultural soils, hydric components, and alluvial soils. The groups of soil pertinent to the Municipality are described below.

### PRIME AND IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL SOILS

The agricultural capability of soil is measured based on fertility, depth to bedrock and groundwater, texture, erodibility, and slope. Soils are classified as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, and other land, based on these characteristics. Prime farmland includes deep, well drained, and moderately sloped soils that can support high yields of crops with little management. Farmland of statewide importance includes soils that support cultivation but require careful crop management. The remaining soils

are best used for pasture and woodlands.

Figure 18 shows that while the majority of land in the Municipality is made-land, there are several areas containing soils suitable for agricultural use, including a number of areas with prime soils. Many of these areas are already permanently protected, included the Farm Park, Elmwood Park, and portions of the land surrounding Saw Mill Run.

However, as can be expected in an urbanized area, agricultural uses do not exist and therefore are not an important part of Norristown’s character. As a result, preserving open space in these areas will not be to protect the land for farming, but for other purposes, such as to protect other natural features or link open space areas.

**ALLUVIAL SOILS**

Alluvial soils are frequently, but not always, located within a floodplain. They have been deposited by flowing water and are not stable as a result of their texture and composition. The presence of alluvial soils is only one indicator of a floodplain. Changes in the tributary drainage area or slope of the adjacent stream may create a floodplain that is either larger or smaller than the area of alluvial soils. Also, alluvial soils do not indicate the probability of recurrence of a flood (for example, a 100 year flood). An important aspect of alluvial soils is that they often form aquifer

recharge areas. Alluvial soils in the Municipality can be found buffering Stony Creek in Elmwood Park and the Farm Park.

**HYDRIC SOILS**

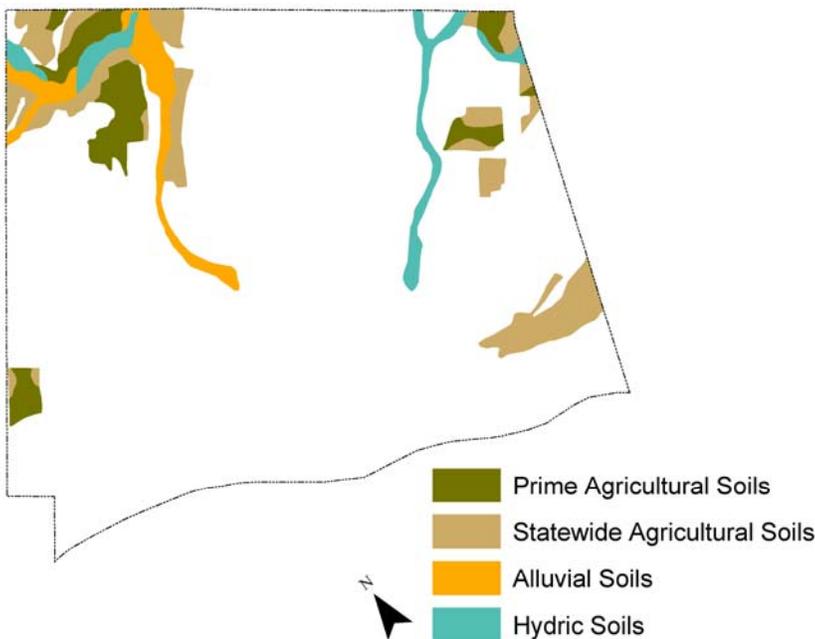
In general, soils that are saturated with water at or near the ground surface, particularly during certain times of the year, are considered to have a high water table. As would be expected, such areas often exist near water bodies and watercourses and may be part of wetlands. Because of wetness, these soils present a major constraint for development wherever on-site subsurface sewage treatment is utilized, as in many rural areas, since treatment depends largely on adequate water percolation through the soil. In Norristown this is not an issue since it is completely sewered, and such soils exist only in small concentrations along Saw Mill Run and Stony Creek. (Figure 18). Remaining vacant land containing hydric as well as alluvial soils and those of agricultural importance should be a priority for preservation.

**SURFACE WATERS AND HYDROLOGY**

Water is a valuable resource, consumed by people and industry, enjoyed at recreation facilities, employed in the assimilation of treated sewage, and integral to the landscape. The average rainfall in the county varies from 43 inches near City line Avenue to 47 inches in the vicinity of the Green Lane Reservoir.

It should be noted that in any given year, annual precipitation can vary from the average by as much as ten inches. Generally speaking, 25 percent of precipitation becomes direct runoff, 50 percent evaporates or is transpired by plants, and 25 percent replenishes groundwater. The surface water that falls on or is carried through Norristown affects the topography, soils, vegetation, and groundwater and comes from two natural sources: direct runoff and groundwater. A third, manmade source, may also contribute to stream flow: effluent from sewage treatment plants, which tends to dampen the variation between high and low flow periods.

Figure 18  
Soils

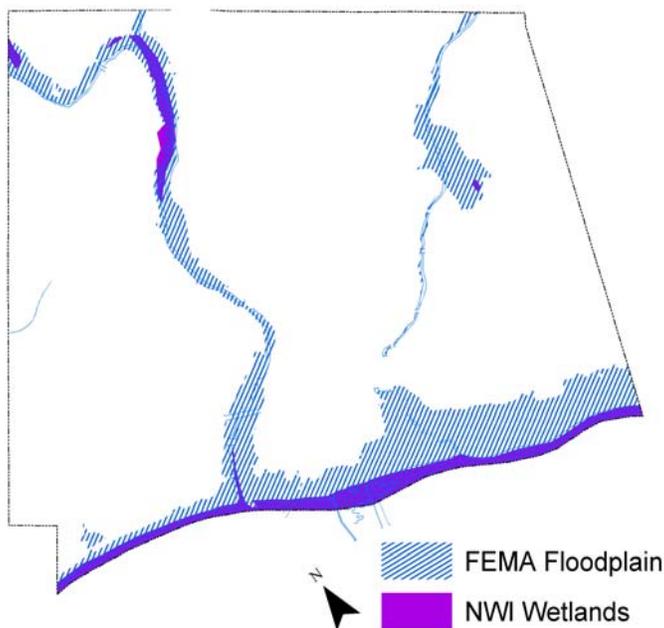


## TOWNSHIP WATERCOURSES AND WATERBODIES

Norristown contains three watercourses: Stony Creek, Saw Mill Run, and the Schuylkill River (Figure 19). The Saw Mill Run runs south to the Schuylkill through the Municipality's East End. At its initial entrance into Norristown, the corridor is largely undisturbed. It is protected through Bartsch 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 surfaces only intermittently until it reaches the river.

Stony Creek runs through the middle section of the Municipality. Although it has not been directed underground, its banks have been somewhat impacted by industrial development, particularly near its confluence with the Schuylkill. It enters the Borough through the State Farm Park and flows through Elmwood Park in a fairly natural state. It is permanently protected in this area. However, near the intersection of Elm and Markley Streets, 19th and early 20th century industrial developments begin to impact the creek. Much of its banks remain wooded however, and provide a pleasant buffer through this dense urban area.

Figure 19  
*Hydrology*



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 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.

## FLOODPLAIN AND STREAM CORRIDORS

The 100-year floodplain is a feature that will affect the health, safety, and welfare of township residents. Much of the time, it is dry. During storms, however, the floodplain stores and conveys floodwater. Development within the floodplain reduces the carrying capacity and increases the height and destructive ability of floodwater. In addition to carrying floodwaters, the floodplain and stream corridor serve other important functions. The condition of the stream corridor itself is important in minimizing erosion and water pollution, protecting water quality (temperature and velocity), and providing animal habitat and recreation opportunities. Floodplains in the Borough 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.

Well vegetated corridors will reduce pollutant loads to streams, shade the stream, and provide habitat for wildlife. If vegetation is preserved along the banks of feeder streams as well as the main stem, pollutant loads are greatly reduced. Wetlands that filter and impede stormwater and provide a habitat for aquatic life are frequently found along stream corridors. Unconsolidated gravel and stone deposits along corridors allow for groundwater recharge. People also benefit from protected stream corridors, as they provide opportunities for trails and other forms of recreation.

## WETLANDS

Wetlands have value and are worthy of protection due to a number of characteristics. However, it is easier to discuss the benefits of wetlands than it is to delineate the wetland itself. Some wetlands area easily recognizable by most people because

the presence or influence of water is obvious. However, many wetlands are subject only to seasonal flooding. For much of the year, surface water may not be present. Still other wetlands develop in areas where the soil is saturated for long periods, but never flooded. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers have defined wetlands as, "Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions."

Depending on where they are located, wetlands may serve one or more beneficial functions. 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. As water flows through a wetland, it slows and drops much of its sediment load. In addition, nutrients that can cause algae blooms and other pollution problems are taken up by wetland vegetation. Wetlands located in depressions often encourage infiltration of stormwater, contributing to groundwater recharge.

The borough has substantial wetland areas based on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI). The

NEWI offers a broad based, generalized overview of wetlands, therefore other wetlands may also exist in the municipality. Hydric soils may also indicate the presence of wetlands. The Army Corps of Engineers or a qualified consultant could be enlisted for a final determination of where wetlands are in fact present. 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**

The entire Municipality is within the Schuylkill Watershed, which includes the Diamond Run, Sawmill Run, Schuylkill River and Stony Creek sub basins, as shown in Figure 20.

Because watershed basins 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.

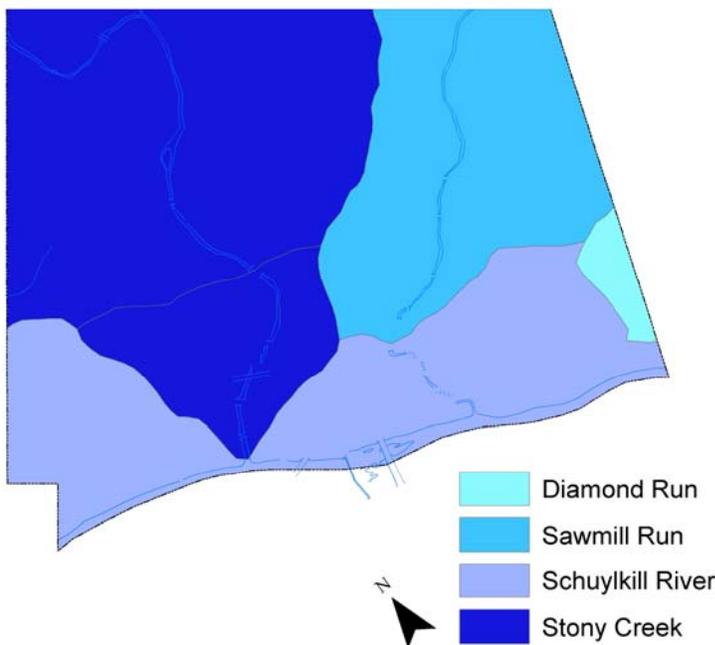
**PROTECTED WATERCOURSES**

Pennsylvania, as required by the Federal Clean Water Act, has established water quality standards that apply to all streams and other waterbodies in the Commonwealth. The water quality standards, codified in Title 25 PA Code Chapter 93, establish water quality criteria that need to be maintained to protect designated water uses.

Discharges to waters of the Commonwealth are evaluated to assure that water quality standards are complied with. Where needed, effluent or other discharge limitations are established to assure that water quality criteria are achieved and designated uses protected. Non-point source discharges are required to incorporate Best Management Practices.

The protected water use designation for a given waterway is an indicator of its value for the protection and propagation of aquatic life. Since each protected use has chemical and biological characteristics, and other stream conditions that need to be maintained, the designations are also indicators of stream quality. Therefore, the

Figure 20  
Watersheds



designations can be used to prioritize the unprotected stream and stream valley resources in a municipality.

Below is a list of the protected water uses in Norristown, including a statement on what the water quality criteria is based on. The list is prioritized from the lowest designation (QWWF) to the highest (EV).

- **WWF: Warm Water Fishes**— Maintenance and propagation of fish species and additional floral and fauna which are indigenous to a warm water habitat.
- **CWF: Cold Water Fishes**— Maintenance and/or propagation of fish species including the family Salmonidae and additional flora and fauna which are indigenous to a cold water habitat.
- **TSF: Trout Stocking Fishes**— Maintenance of stocked trout from February 15 to July 31 and maintenance and propagation of fish species and additional flora and fauna which are indigenous to a warm water habitat.
- **EV: Exceptional Value Waters**— A stream or watershed which constitutes an outstanding national, State, regional or local resource, such as waters of national, State, or county parks and forests, or waters which are used as a source of unfiltered potable water supply, or waters of wildlife refuges or State game lands, or waters which have been characterized by the Fish Commission as “Wilderness Trout Streams,” and other waters of substantial recreation or ecological significance.

Norristown contains one WWF stream: Saw Mill Run. The Stony Creek has been designated as TSF. The Schuylkill River, a major waterway in the Borough and the county, 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 scenic under the Pennsylvania State Scenic Rivers Program.

## GROUNDWATER

Groundwater behaves much like surface water, flowing like a stream, only much slower. Groundwater is tapped as a source of drinking water and for industrial purposes where surface water is unavailable.

Groundwater replenishment occurs slowly, as precipitation and in some cases stream water seeps through the soil, down to the aquifer. Open, undisturbed land is essential to groundwater recharge, since vegetation serves to retain precipitation where it falls, allowing it to soak into the soil rather than run off the surface. Impervious surface from development prevents infiltration of precipitation.

Norristown obtains its water supply from Pennsylvania American Water Company, the largest regulated water utility in the state. The company’s water supply is provided principally from surface water supplies such as rivers, streams and lakes through allocation permits from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and several river basin commissions. Water is also supplied from wells and through purchase contracts and interconnections with other water providers.

## SCENIC ROADS AND VISTAS

Scenic resources are elements of the natural and/or built environment that stand out among all the attributes of a community. They tend to be the most pleasant and interesting places, such as historic sites, natural features like lakes or creeks, recreation areas and pleasant urban landscapes.

Although the process of identifying a scenic resource is largely dependent on the observer’s own opinions and preferences, information collected from a community group, such as a planning commission, can provide a relatively broad inventory. Wherever possible, these areas should be preserved and linked to the community’s open space and recreation system.

While most scenic views and streetscapes in Norristown are the result of a harmonious interaction between the built and natural environment, the Municipality does have several areas that remain in their natural or semi-natural state. Scenic resources in Norristown are summarized below

and are mapped in Figure 21. The defining element or feature for each resource is noted.

1. Schuylkill River Corridor: The Dannehower and DeKalb bridges over the Schuylkill River provide picturesque views of the wooded areas located along the river's banks.
2. Riverfront Park: This park provides a pleasant view of wooded areas along the banks of the Schuylkill River.
3. Stony Creek Corridor: All along the Stony Creek there are wooded areas that provide scenic views of the creek corridor as well as a natural buffer through the built environment.
4. Buttonwood Street South of Washington Street: A surprisingly rural scene for Norristown, this block of Buttonwood gently descends into a wooded stream valley. Running along some historic row houses, the streetscape opens up to provide a view of the stream valley and an old spring house.
5. West Main Street 600-1200 Blocks: All along this section of Main Street are views of large old houses set back from the street and flanked by mature trees. Although somewhat inconsistent, this streetscape offers some impressive views providing a good example of the interaction between the built and natural environments.
6. North Terminus of Stanbridge Street: At the point where Stanbridge Street ends at the State Farm Park, there are views of woodlands, stream corridors, and fields. Similar to Buttonwood Street, this area provides a rural character that is very rare in the Municipality.
7. Harding Boulevard North of Roosevelt Field: A traditional tree lined boulevard, this is Norristown's best example of the City Beautiful Movement. One side of this inviting stretch of road contains Elmwood Park, while well-kept houses overlook it from the opposite side.
8. Corner of Brown and Markley Streets: This pleasant green space contains a fountain that serves as a traffic divider.
9. War Memorial Park and Harding Boulevard and James Street: This small triangle park contains green space and several war related

monuments. The obelisk is traditional and urbane, while the tank is startling but inviting— especially for inquisitive children. This is a good example of a small neighborhood park.

10. DeKalb Street between Freedley Street and Johnson Highway: This stretch of DeKalb is characterized by large period revival houses overlooking large lawns and mature trees. Similar to, but more consistent than West Main Street, this formal streetscape is one of the most impressive in the Municipality.
11. Tremont Cemetery: This location provides a vista of the Schuylkill River over a variable roofline and treetops.
12. Fornance and Tremont Streets: This intersection provides a bucolic view of the open space along Saw Mill Run behind the dam as well as a more urban view of Norristown rooftops extending across the horizon toward the western part of Montgomery County.
13. Downtown Public Square: This is the Downtown's only green space and its focal point.

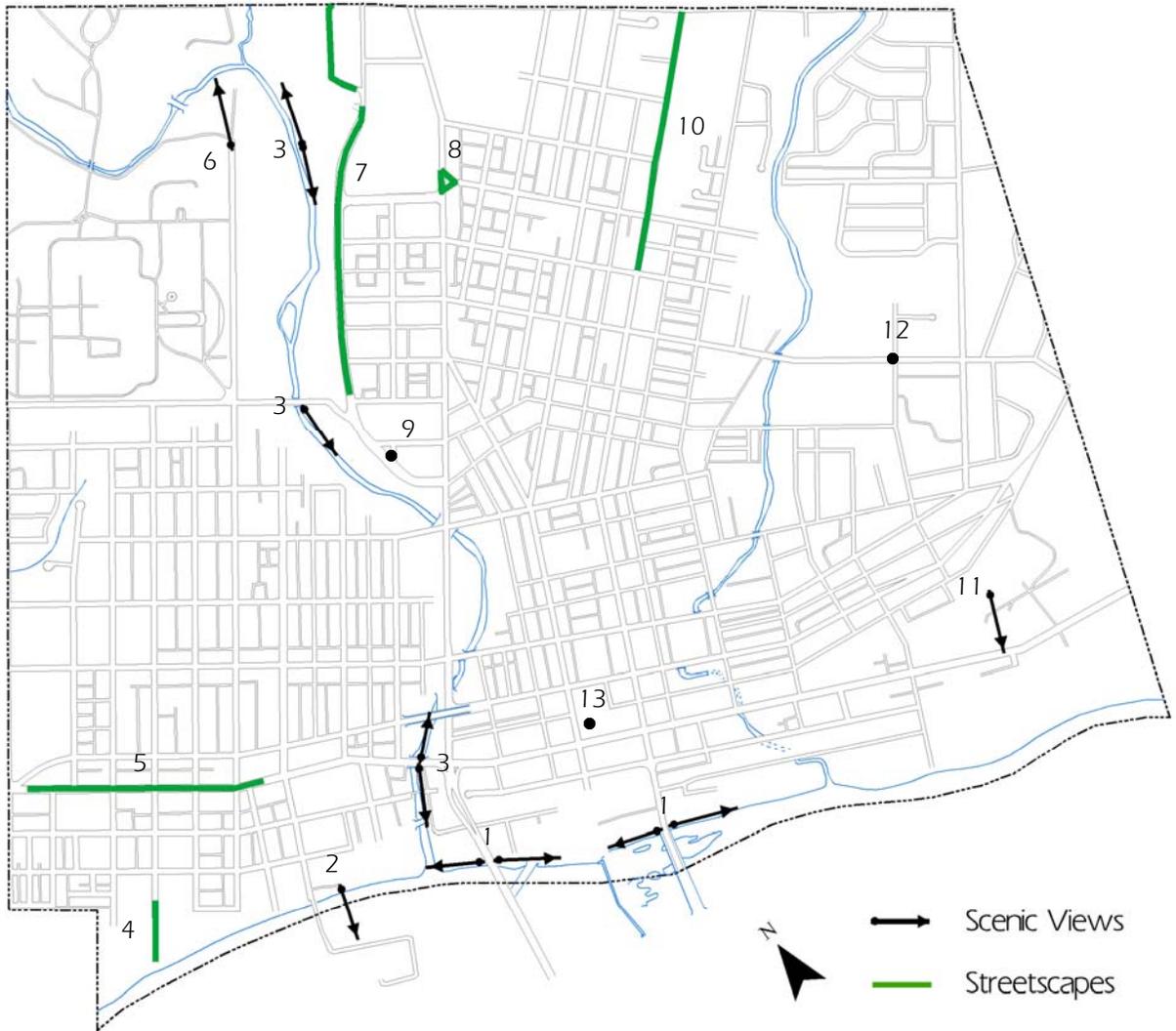
## GATEWAYS

In addition to marking the boundaries of a municipality, signed gateways placed at strategic locations can be a symbol of the character and quality of a community. Norristown has several gateway locations, the enhancement of which would greatly improve the visual appearance of the area and provide a positive first impression for motorists and pedestrians entering Norristown.

Gateways containing signs proclaiming "Welcome to Norristown" should be enhanced with landscaping and/or landscaping at the following intersections:

- Main and Markley Streets
- DeKalb Street and Johnson Highway
- Markley Street and Johnson Highway
- DeKalb Street at the Schuylkill River Bridge
- East Main Street at the Plymouth Township border
- Airy Street, West Main Street, and Forrest Avenue

Figure 21  
*Scenic Roads & Vistas*



## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic sites are another important vulnerable resource in a community. Historic structures and places are an important element in creating and maintaining a community's sense of place. These historic resources add to an area's quality of life by providing a community with pride and ownership of its past. They also make a valuable contribution to an area's current educational, cultural, and social environment.

Preservation also makes good economic sense. Long considered the "ultimate in recycling," historic preservation allows for the re-use of existing

buildings and infrastructure, while retaining the heritage that defines a community.

## NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICTS

In 1980 the architectural firm of John Milner Associates released an architectural and historic survey of Norristown. Dividing the Municipality into seven study areas, it provided an extensive documentation of Norristown's built environment. This survey led to the creation of two National Register Historic Districts in 1984: The Central Norristown Historic District and the West Norristown Historic District.

The Central District contains a diverse cross sec-

tion of buildings of various architectural styles. Encompassing over 245 acres and over 1900 structures within some 40 square blocks, the district includes most of the commercial and government buildings in the downtown and the residential areas directly north and east of the downtown. This district represents an area that was originally developed between the late 18th century and 1910.

The West District, generally referred to as the West End, is predominantly residential. It contains almost 1700 structures within a 32 block area. This area was primarily developed between the 1870s and the 1920s. It represents the ever changing tastes in domestic architecture during this time. The location of these districts is shown in Figure 22.

**OTHER HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Outside of these districts, there are several individual structures that also merit acknowledgement.

**SELMA**

Located at the corner of Selma and Airy Streets, this one time country house was built by Andrew Porter in 1787. Porter was a General in the Revolutionary War. One of his sons was a Governor of Pennsylvania, while another was the Secretary of War under President Tyler.

**BUTTONWOOD ROW HOUSES**

The row houses located at 1-11 Buttonwood Street are reported to be the oldest row houses in

Figure 22  
*Historic and Cultural Resources*



Norristown. They were constructed circa 1782 as housing for mill workers.

**CORSON HOUSE**

Built circa 1770, this house is located at the corner of Main and Cherry Streets. It is rumored to be the only surviving structure from Isaac Norris's Norristown Plantation and the oldest building in the Municipality.



# CHAPTER 5

## POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE LINKAGES

An important aspect of open space is the accessibility of that space to community residents and to the region as a whole. This section of the plan identifies potential open space linkages that can tie together open space sites within the Municipality and connect to open space in adjacent communities. Such connections help form a more comprehensive open space system for residents and contribute to the creation of a more effective and enjoyable regional network. They can increase the accessibility of parks by allowing off-street pedestrian and bicycle access and can offer recreational opportunities in and of themselves as passive, natural recreational space. Examples of typical linkages include utility corridors, stream valleys, abandoned rail lines, sidewalks, and similar linear features.

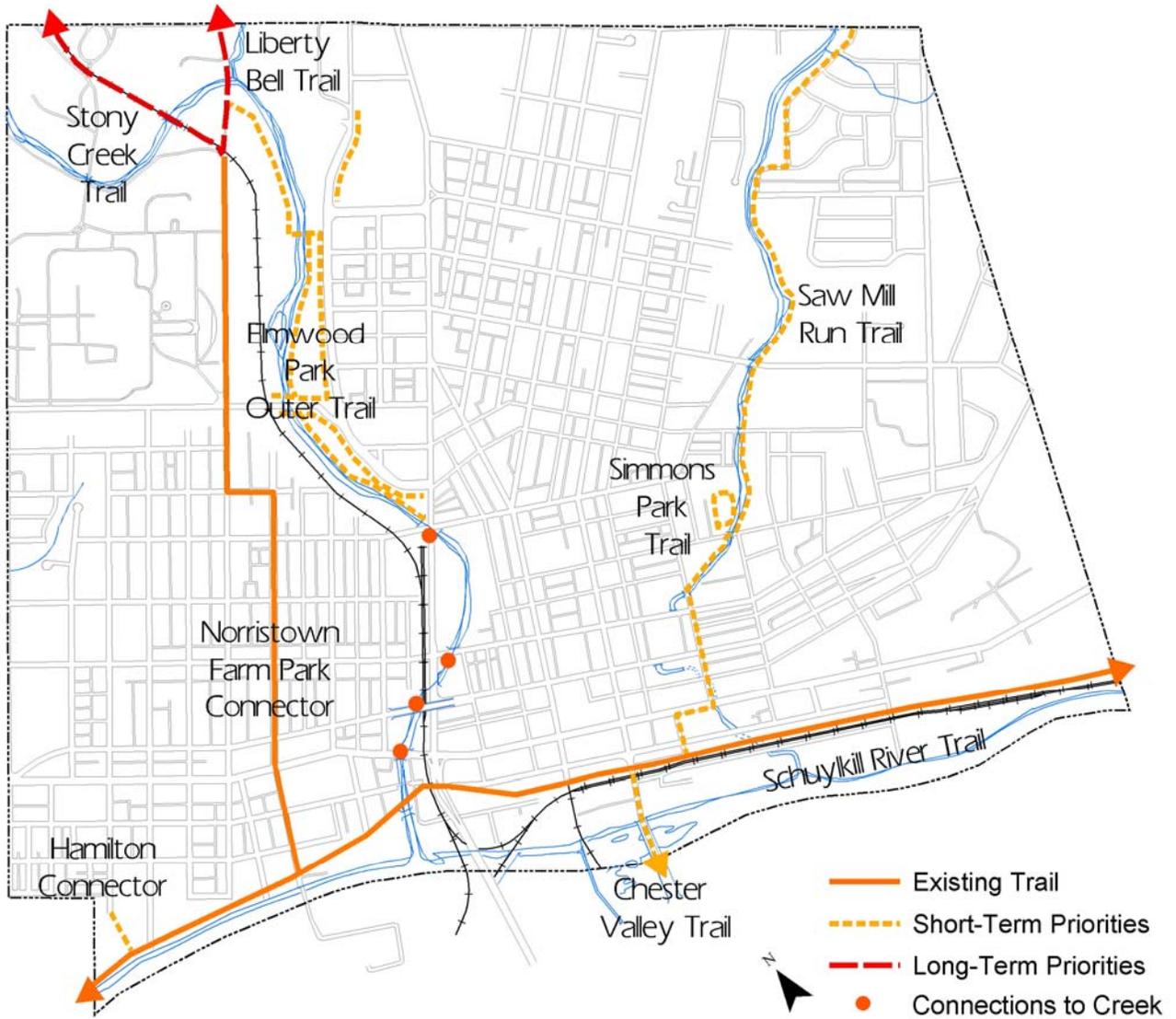
### LINKAGES

However, in Norristown, the extensive network of sidewalks essentially precludes the need for most other types of linkages. A highly developed system of trails or paths is not only unrealistic, but unnecessary. Rather, it is the goal of the Municipality to ensure that the existing linkage system provides pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle access to all open space and recreation areas. Also in certain situations, these areas should provide interior trails or paths. These would provide residents with further opportunities for walking or biking. A good example of this type of trail is the Norristown Farm

Park Connector, on which a way-finding system has recently been installed.

Two exceptions to this general rule are the Schuylkill River Trail and the Saw Mill Run Trail. The Schuylkill River Trail is a paved multi-purpose trail extending from Philadelphia to Lower Providence Township, where it becomes the Perkiomen Trail and links to Upper Hanover Township. It extends along the entire southern border of Norristown, increasing pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle access to the County Seat. The Municipality views

Figure 23  
Existing and Future Trails



this trail as a significant recreational amenity and desires to improve accessibility to it. The Saw Mill Run Trail, a short-term priority, is described in further detail in this chapter.

In addition to local linkages, identification of potential linkages on a regional level will help to contribute to Montgomery County's vision of a Countywide Trail System. Portions of three County Trails are proposed in Norristown. These are described below and shown in Figure 23. Both County and local linkages have been prioritized into two categories: short-term and long-term priorities. Linkages in the short-term priorities category should be planned within the next two to five years, and long-term priorities within five to ten years. Eight linkages are proposed in this chapter.

## SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES

### A. ELMWOOD PARK OUTER TRAIL

Trails extending along Harding Boulevard and Sterigere Street should be created. Along Harding Boulevard, the trail would extend from Markley Street to the zoo's access drive at Coolidge Boulevard (any further north would create a conflict with the plans for the new zoo). The trail would also extend west on both sides of Sterigere Street to existing sidewalks. It should be noted that due to a steep grade and numerous mature trees, the trail should bypass the northwest intersection of Harding and Sterigere. Instead, the trail should connect to the foot path behind the Columbus Monument. Also, at Sterigere field, the trail should



*Portions of the sidewalk are missing at Elmwood Park along Harding Boulevard. New sidewalks would complete the link from the Zoo to Downtown.*

be designed to avoid any conflicts with the existing parking area.

**B. SIMMONS PARK TRAIL**

A trail linking the proposed exercise loop around the Martin Luther King Jr. Amphitheater and the Amphitheater itself to the Oak Street sidewalk should be created.

**C. SAW MILL RUN TRAIL**

This trail would connect the Schuylkill River Trail to Plymouth Township via a path along Saw Mill Run when possible, and along nearby sidewalks. It would provide a scenic walkway along the creek and connect three important East End parks: Simmons, Scag Cottman and Bartasch. The trail would also cross over Fornance, Basin and Oak Streets and would connect to the sidewalks along these streets. Also, in the state-owned area east of the dam, Norristown should consider some walking trails. Several informal dirt paths currently exist in the rear.

This trail would approximate the route used by escaped slaves following the Underground Railroad. Given this historic connection, the trail should be appropriately marked with a commemorative plaque.

**D. CHESTER VALLEY TRAIL**

The Chester Valley Trail would connect the Schuylkill River Trail to Bridgeport and Upper Merion and points south via the DeKalb Street Bridge. Montgomery County is currently conducting a feasibility study for the adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of the railroad freight transfer station at the corner of DeKalb and Lafayette Streets. This building would serve as a trail head as well as a home for park offices and public facilities. It is scheduled to open in 2006/2007.

**E. HAMILTON CONNECTOR**

A connection is proposed between Hamilton Street in West End and the Schuylkill River Trail. This connection would provide an additional access point from the street network to the trail. It would also provide a pedestrian connection from Historic Montgomery Cemetery to the river.

**LONG-TERM PRIORITIES**

**F. STONY CREEK TRAIL**

The Stony Creek Trail is proposed along a rail corridor that is intertwined with Stony Creek. It would also connect the Schuylkill River Trail via the Norristown Farm Park Connector to nearby Townships including East Norriton, Worcester, and Whitpain before connecting into the Liberty Bell Trail. Currently, this rail corridor is utilized by freight trains. However, if the rail line were ever to be abandoned, the County would be interested in creating a multi-use trail as part of its proposed Primary Trail Network.

**G. LIBERTY BELL TRAIL**

The County has proposed a trail along the route of the old Liberty Bell Trolley, which ran from Norristown to Allentown. The Liberty Bell Trail would connect the Schuylkill River Trail to East Norriton and other nearby municipalities, on into Bucks County. The alignment in Norristown would begin at the Norristown Farm Park Connector, and snake along Stony Creek and existing trails into Norristown Farm Park. This trail is included in Montgomery County's Proposed Primary Trail Network. While this trail is still in the early stages of development, Norristown supports the idea and will assist the County in its eventual implementation.



*Access to Stony Creek can be taken at several points.*



*An informal trail already exists along the western bank of Stony Creek*

## **H. CONNECTIONS TO CREEK**

In the past, a trail along the entirety of Stony Creek has been proposed. In an effort to preserve the creek’s natural environment, it may be more beneficial to allow pedestrian access at several locations along the creek instead. In particular, the Stony Creek Anglers (SCA) are interested in creating more areas suitable for fishing. SCA holds trout tournaments as well as an annual creek cleanup (2005 will mark the 20th consecutive year), and the creek is very important to the organization. Possible locations for these access points include the

intersections between the creek and Elm Street, Marshall Street, Airy Street, and Main Street.

The Consortium for Sustainable Design and Research for Southeastern Pennsylvania is teaming with several local nonprofit groups, including the SCA, to begin planning the first phase of a project to revitalize Stony Creek and the surrounding area. One goal of this project is to build a walking pathway from the west end of town to the Schuylkill River and Trail. The alignment of such a trail has not been finalized.

# CHAPTER 6

## ANALYSIS OF UNPROTECTED RESOURCES

This chapter identifies areas where vulnerable resources are not permanently protected, proposes priorities for their future preservation, and establishes specific protection goals. Generally, the priority categories are based on the extent of resources found in a given area, particularly where a concentration exists, their location and contribution to community identity, and the open space goals established in chapter two. These priorities are only based on vulnerable resources, and may not be the same as the priorities established in the implementation portion of this plan.

### VULNERABLE RESOURCES

Norristown contains both natural and man-made vulnerable resources. Natural resources in need of protection include stream corridors, urban woodlands and large open space areas. Man made, or cultural resources include historic districts and buildings. Protection of these resources will be prioritized into two categories: Highest Priority and High Priority.

corridors. Saw Mill Run and Stony Creek provide a bucolic landscape in the midst of an urban environment (see Chapter 4, Figure 19). These assets must be protected. In the past, and even in the present, creeks are channeled into pipes and the surrounding banks are paved over to accommodate development. This practice is no longer acceptable in Norristown, and a stream corridor protection ordinance must be created to end it.

### HIGHEST PRIORITY RESOURCES

1. **Stream Corridors-** Norristown’s highest priority for natural resource protection is its stream

2. **Historic Resources-** Protection of Norristown’s historic resources is of the utmost im-



*The banks of the Saw Mill Run should be protected by a stream corridor protection ordinance.*

portance. In addition to the resources within the two established Historic Districts, many historic buildings remain outside the districts, and are not afforded any protection (see Chapter 4, Figure 22). Textbook examples of a number of architectural styles can be found in the municipality, and these should be highlighted.

Due to the abundance of buildings built in the 19th and 20th century, many of these structures are not recognized as historic. Norristown would like to undertake a historic plaque program to honor these buildings and the historic events they may represent.

In addition, Norristown was home to a portion of the underground railroad during and after the civil war. Structures and paths used by escaped slaves should also be commemorated with plaques or special signage.

## HIGH PRIORITY RESOURCES

1. **Urban Woodlands**– Norristown has been developed for 2 centuries, and had lost the majority of its stands of trees long ago. How-

ever, stands and groupings of trees remain, including street trees, and these should be protected as urban woodlands (see Chapter 4, Figure 17).

There are many documented benefits provided by trees in urban areas, including decreased stormwater runoff, improved climate, attractive pedestrian environments, and increased home values. For these reasons, Norristown would like to implement a tougher tree replacement ordinance, wherein trees that are removed for development purposes must be replaced at a greater rate than is currently required.

2. **Large Open Space Areas**– While much of the municipality is currently developed, a few large open space areas do remain such as the Saw Mill Run Dam, the grounds of the Norristown State Hospital, and school grounds. Although these open spaces may not be in their natural state, they are nevertheless assets that should be protected. Not only are they attractive landscapes, they are also swaths of pervious surface that aid in stormwater drainage.

# CHAPTER 7

## EVALUATION OF GROWTH AREAS

In addition to establishing open space preservation areas, it is important to identify areas that can accommodate any projected community growth. While virtually all of Norristown is built out, there is some room for both residential and non-residential infill development. This chapter examines the direction of population and employment changes expected in Norristown and evaluates whether the municipality needs to identify specific growth areas.

### POPULATION, HOUSING, AND EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Norristown has been an urbanized area for much of its history, and as such the entire municipality has experienced cycles of growth and decline. As revealed by the 2000 decennial census, Norristown grew in population while most urban areas lost residents. However, by the year 2025, DVRPC

projects Norristown's residential population to be 29,860 persons, about 1422 less than the municipality had in 2000\* (Figure 24). In addition, DVRPC projects about 14,500 persons employed, down from 15,300 in 2000 (Figure 25). However, data from the Pennsylvania Department of

\*Population projections illustrate plausible courses of future population change based on assumptions about future births, deaths, international migration, and domestic migration. Because they are based on assumptions, they are inexact at best, and in some circumstances actual population may differ markedly from projections.

Figure 24  
Population Projection

Year	Population
1990	30,749
2000	31,282
2005*	30,880
2010*	30,710
2015*	30,320
2020*	29,990
2025*	29,860

Years	% Change
1990-2000	1.73%
2000-2010	-1.83%
2010-2020	-2.34%
2000-2025	-4.55%

\* Projected population

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Census of Population and Housing, 2000; DVRPC projections.

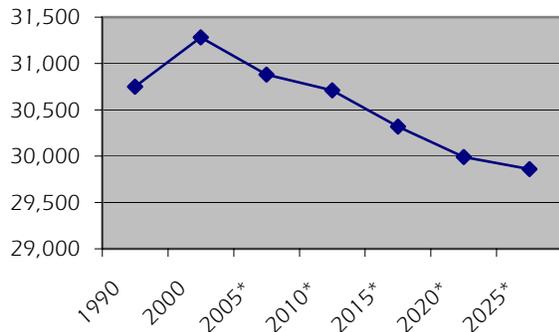
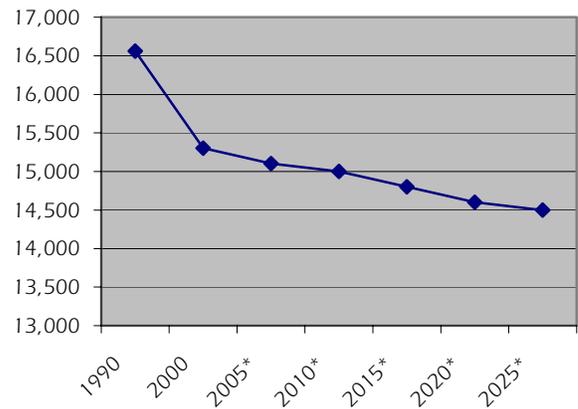


Figure 25  
Employment Forecast

Year	Total Employment
1990	16,559
2000	15,300
2005*	15,100
2010*	15,000
2015*	14,800
2020*	14,600
2025*	14,500

Years	% Change
1990-2000	-7.60%
2000-2010	-1.96%
2010-2020	-2.67%
2000-2025	-5.23%

\*Source: DVRPC Forecasts



Labor and Industry estimate that Norristown employed 15,665 in 2000, increasing to 15,726 in 2003. In addition, based on data collected by local social groups, it is likely that future employment will be higher than predicted by DVRPC. This illustrates that population and employment may increase slightly by 2025, and will likely remain stable. Coupled with a stable or increasing population, a projected decrease in Norristown’s average household size will lead to a decrease in new units needed (Figure 26). Therefore, no particular future growth area needs to be delineated for Norristown.

Rather than real growth, Norristown is expected to experience revitalization. While the number of residents in Norristown may not increase much over the next twenty years, changes in demographics are expected. For example, younger families with children are expected to replace the aging population, and a concentration of housing in the downtown area is expected to arise. New and existing residents will come to expect advances in the municipality such as improvements in housing, retail, and passive and active open space areas.

Figure 26

*Residential Buildout Estimate*

<b>Residential</b>	<b>2025</b>
Projected Population in HHs	28,910
Future Average HH Size	2.45
Total Households	11,800
Existing Households (in 2000)	12,028
New Households	-228
Vacancy Rate	7.3%
New Units Needed	-245



# CHAPTER 8

## **EVALUATION OF OPEN SPACE NEEDS**

This section of the plan examines the amount of existing public open space and types of recreation facilities in relation to current and expected future needs. Recreation-oriented organizations such as the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommend that municipalities strive to meet their open space needs independently of other providers, such as schools and private developments. Therefore open space provided by quasi-public establishments is considered only peripherally. An analysis of recreational public open space considers how open space land is distributed in addition to showing if a deficit exists or will occur in the future. The results of the analysis should help guide decisions concerning future open space preservation and facilities planning.

### **RECREATION STANDARDS**

In 1983, the NRPA has published the Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines. These standards have been widely accepted and used for many years. In 1996, the NRPA developed new guidelines based on the systems approach to facility planning. This approach is based on level of service (LOS) and the recognition that the residents of each community should be given the right to determine the size and use of land set aside for parks and recreation facilities. The new process requires use of a complex formula, and

therefore many municipalities use a combination of the 1983 and 1996 standards when determining open space need.

Both sets of standards mainly apply to recreational uses, rather than passive or natural open space (of which there is no standard minimum or maximum). The 1983 standard utilizes the population ratio method, or the number of acres of parkland per 1,000 people. The NRPA estimates that a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of municipally

owned and developed open space per 1,000 people is a useful guide. Generally speaking, the more densely populated an area is, the higher the ratio should be. Therefore a more developed municipality like Norristown might apply a higher ratio than a rural municipality such as New Hanover Township.

For the purposes of this plan, both the low and high ratios are used to create a range for evaluating existing conditions and to perhaps establish an acreage goal for the community. For example, the midpoint value of the recommended range may be a good target.

Further, the NRPA recommends that the developed open space consist of a core system of parkland, distributed among neighborhood parks and community parks. Each of these components are of a certain size, have a defined "service area", and provide for certain uses (active and/or passive). Figure 28 shows a .25 and .5 service area for each public park. Most people are able and will to walk between one quarter and one half mile to reach a destination. Open Space acreage in Norristown has been broken down and compared to the NRPA standards to determine if a particular need exists now

or may develop in the future. Figure 27 shows the results of applying these standards.

## PARK TYPES

As shown, Norristown's current total open space acreage falls right in the middle of existing and future recommended ranges. While the amount of Community Open Space is below the recommended minimum, Neighborhood Open Space is well above even the maximum recommended acreage. These numbers, along with the service areas shown in Figure 28, illustrate that Norristown is well served by existing open space.

## EXISTING PARKS AND FACILITIES

Norristown's parks can be placed into two main categories: Community-level and Neighborhood-level. Typical characteristics of community-level parks are large size (serving more than one neighborhood), a central location, a good range of facilities/amenities (creek and woodlands corridor, ballfields, playground equipment, etc.), and parking.

Figure 27  
*Minimum Open Space Needs*

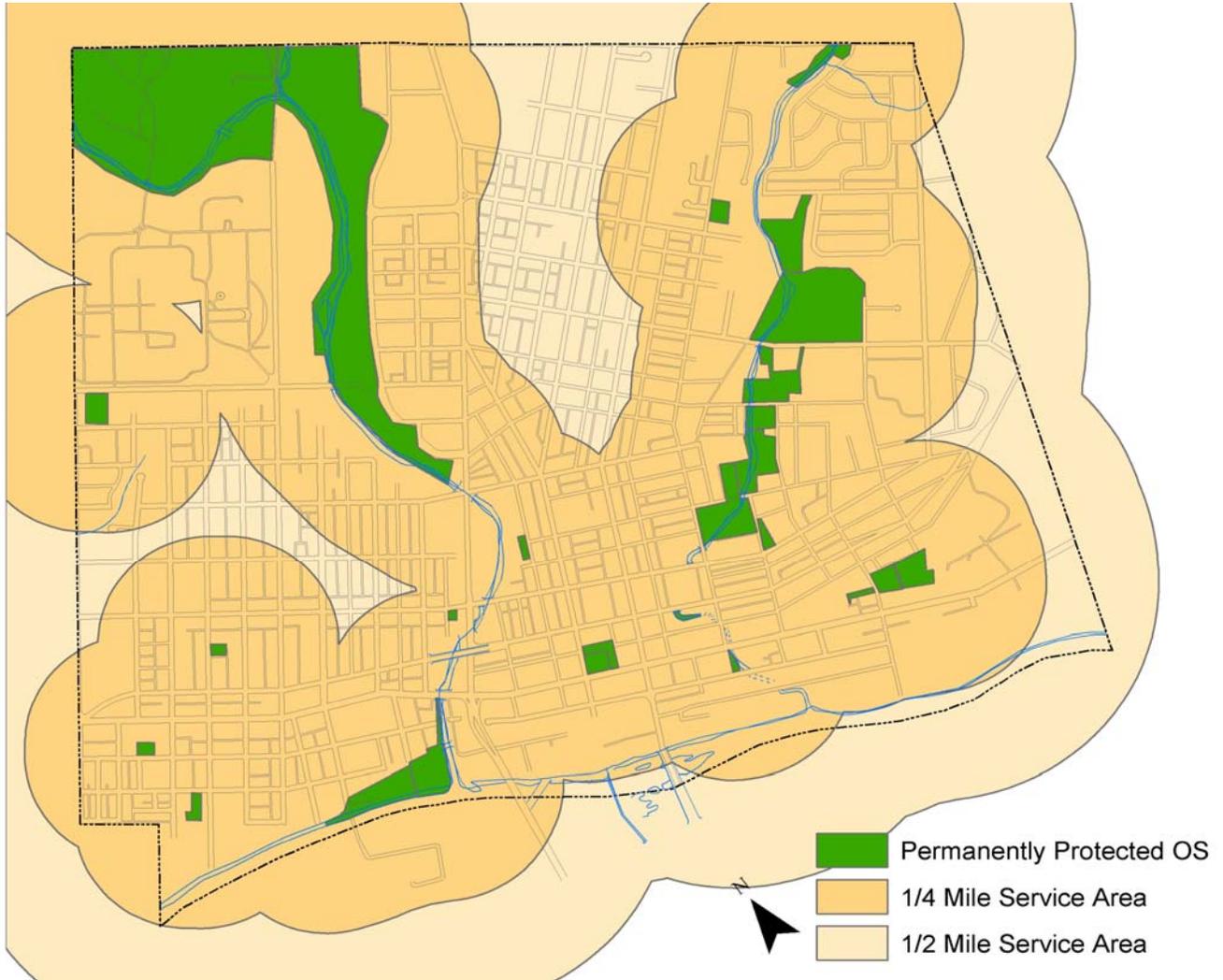
Projected Population*	2000		2010		2025	
	31282		30710		29860	
Range	From	To	From	To	From	To
<b>Recommended Acreage**</b>						
Community	156	250	154	246	149	239
Neighborhood	39	78	38	77	37	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>Existing Acreage</b>						
Community	122.3		122.3		122.3	
Neighborhood	150.62		150.62		150.62	
<b>Total</b>	<b>272.92</b>		<b>272.92</b>		<b>272.92</b>	
<b>Difference</b>						
Community	-34	-128	-31	-123	-27	-117
Neighborhood	112	72	112	74	113	76
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>-56</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>-50</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>-41</b>

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; MCPC; NRPA

\* Projected Population

\*\* Recommended Acreage - Range per 1000 persons as follows: Community Level = 5.0 - 8.0 acres; Neighborhood Level = 1.25 - 2.5 acres; Total = 6.25 - 10.5 acres

Figure 28  
Open Space Service Areas



Two sites - Elmwood Park and Riverfront Park- belong in this category. With over 122 acres of community level open space, Norristown does not meet the NRPA standard for this category. This indicates that Norristown may wish to pursue new open space that serves the entire municipality in order to meet the national standard. We must keep in mind, however, that whole sections of Norristown were constructed prior to the open space and parkland movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and it therefore simply does not contain large amounts of potential open space and parkland. Therefore adding new community level parks to the open space system is not feasible. Instead, improvements to existing community parks and increased accessibility of these areas through open space linkages are more appropriate goals for the Municipality.

Neighborhood-level open space refers to smaller areas that serve a particular area of the community (typically one neighborhood), a concentrated or limited population or specialized group such as elderly or tots, and provide for quiet, informal recreation as well as facilities for short term, frequent and active use. Good examples are playgrounds, tot lots, and pocket parks (small green space within a highly developed area), and they are most valuable in areas that are not conveniently served by larger sites because of distance or a natural or man-made barrier (hills, train tracks, etc.). Also included in this category are larger areas of open space with few amenities, such as Saw Mill Run Dam.

The Municipality has 18 neighborhood-level sites that are well located to serve residents' needs. These sites account for over 150 acres of perma-



*The Stony Creek Dam is part of the Norristown Farm Park.*

and the Saw Mill Run Dam. No additional passive open space areas have been identified in Norristown for reasons mentioned earlier.

## RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Figure 29 summarizes the results of applying specific recreational facility standards to Norristown and compares the results to the supply of existing municipal facilities. It should be noted that some results shown as fractions are rounded up to a whole number; for example, .3 football fields means 1 football field should be provided. As can be seen, Norristown falls short of the recommended levels for all but two of the facilities. Some of these, however, are available through the schools, including playing fields, playgrounds, and running tracks.

Since these are national standards and are not tailored to regions or individual localities, the Municipality need not try to meet all of these standards, but rather should focus on several that can more realistically be accomplished, such as adding soccer fields, picnicking areas, and playgrounds. In addition, Norristown can focus on connecting existing facilities to increase access to these sites.

nently protected open space, which is well above the range recommended by the NRPA.

### PASSIVE OPEN SPACE

As mentioned earlier, unlike active open space needs, there is no standard to determine how much acreage to devote to passive open space. Currently, Norristown has approximately 116 acres of passive open space at Norristown Farm Park

Figure 29  
*Recreational Facility Needs*

Standard Per 1,000 Population		2000 Population	2025 Population*	Permanently Protected Facilities	2025 Deficit
		31,282	29,860		
Basketball Courts	0.2	6	6	6	0
Tennis Courts	0.5	16	15	0	-15
Volleyball Courts	0.2	6	6	2	-4
Baseball/Softball Fields	0.4	13	12	11	-1
Soccer Fields	0.1	3	3	3	0
Football Fields	0.3	9	9	2	-7
Running Track (1/4 mile)	0.05	2	1	0	-1
Swimming Pools	0.05	2	1	0	-1
Playgrounds	0.6	19	18	9	-9
Picknicking Areas	0.24	8	7	4	-3
Multipurpose Fields	0.3	9	9	0	-9
Nature Areas	0.24	8	7	4	-3
Golf Courses	0.04	1	1	0	-1

\* Projected

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, MCPC; NRPA

# CHAPTER 9

## **EVALUATION OF COUNTY AND ABUTTING MUNICIPAL PLANS**

The preceding chapters investigate the resources, needs, and opportunities that exist within the municipal bounds of Norristown. With this information, recommendations can be made to effectively serve Norristown's residents. However, the land use decisions that the municipality makes affect the larger region just as decisions made in neighboring municipalities affect Norristown. Therefore, this open space planning effort should consider surrounding planning efforts.

This chapter compares the recommendations of this plan with those in the County comprehensive plan and the comprehensive, open space, and revitalization plans of abutting municipalities. The intent is to prevent conflicts between plans and to encourage collaboration of efforts. By gaining an understanding of how Norristown's plan will fit into the larger open space and trail linkage picture, partners can optimize both the quantity and quality of future open space preservation and management.

### **COMPARISON TO COUNTY PLANS**

In 2001, Montgomery County began updating its Comprehensive Plan. Nearly complete, this plan will help guide the growth of housing, transportation, economic development, and natural & cultural resource management through 2025 and beyond. Each of these factors could potentially bear great significance on open space needs and opportunities in Norristown

Within this plan is the Vision of the County in 2025. This Vision sets up four issues as the highest priority for action:

- Controlling sprawl
- Controlling traffic congestion
- Preserving open space/natural areas
- Revitalizing older boroughs and townships

Norristown’s Open Space Plan addresses all of these issues by setting a future course for wise land use, increasing linkages and accessibility, promoting revitalization, and preserving open space.

The draft version of the Comprehensive Plan lists 48 goals that describe and expand upon the Vision of the County in 2025. Several of these goals parallel those in this Open Space Plan, adding strength to the recommendations set forth here.

**LAND USE**

- Enhance Older Developed Areas
- Encourage Sound Land Use Planning and Design
- Preserve and Create Community Identity and a Sense of Place

**OPEN SPACE, NATURAL FEATURES, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

- Preserve Large Interconnected Areas of Significant Open Space
- Protect and Manage Wetlands, Streams, Steep Slopes, Woodlands, and Natural Habitats
- Create a Greenway System along Rivers, Creeks, and Other Sensitive Natural and Historic Features
- Develop a Countywide Network of Interconnected Trails
- Provide Park Facilities to Meet the Public’s Recreation Needs
- Preserve Farmland and Farming
- Protect Scenic Roads, Vistas, and Viewsheds
- Protect Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes

The County also identifies potential trail corridors. Already accommodating the Schuylkill River Trail, the Stony Creek and Liberty Bell Trails would also pass directly through Norristown, and the Chester Valley Trail has its origin here. As a result, the usability of the trail and the parks will be enhanced.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Revitalize the County’s Downtowns and Main Streets

**RELATION TO PLANS OF ABUTTING MUNICIPALITIES**

Three townships ( West Norriton, East Norriton and Plymouth) and one borough (Bridgeport) abut Norristown. Upper Merion Township also lies within close proximity. The past and current open space policies and other pertinent information of each municipality are summarized below. Adjacent, yet incompatible land uses may result in conflicts while potential linkages could lead to cooperative partnerships between municipal neighbors.

Based on the Montgomery County Open Space Program in 1993, these municipalities developed an Open Space Plan soon thereafter. In the past ten years since the last update of open space plans, several parcels have been preserved, trails proposed and developed, and the needs of the community have changed. It is therefore vital that Norristown keeps abreast of the continually evolving planning efforts of its neighbors and the county. The plans and progress in these municipalities is listed below:

**WEST NORRITON TOWNSHIP**

West Norristown Township is currently updating its open space plan. Their 1994 plan focused on the preservation of historic Montgomery Cemetery as well as the future land use of Barbadoes Island, both important items in Norristown’s Open Space Plan.

**EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP**

East Norriton’s 1994 plan proposed several projects that would have an impact on Norristown. They are:

- To preserve as Open Space the old water works site at the northeastern corner of DeKalb Street and Johnson Highway.
- To construct a segment of the Liberty Bell Trail along the former Liberty Bell Trolley line between Swede Street and Germantown Pike (in progress: the Township has participated in the County’s Trail Feasibility Study).
- To transfer land in the Norristown Farm Park

to the Township to increase opportunities for active recreation. This area would border Elmwood Park (in progress).

- To work with the county to extend a trail through the Farm Park to connect to Norristown Area High School (accomplished).

**PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP**

In its 1994 plan, Plymouth identified two trail links that relate to Norristown. One would connect the Black Horse area to the Schuylkill River via an on-street system along Ridge Pike (Main Street) and Ross Street. The other trail is proposed to extend along Fairfield Road to Sandy Hill Road, making a future connection possible at Norristown’s border.

**BRIDGEPORT BOROUGH**

Bridgeport is also in the process of updating its 1994 Open Space Plan. That plan was specifically concerned with preserving the remains of the old canal and providing for recreational opportunities along the Schuylkill River and in the Borough. The emphasis on the riverfront and recreational opportunities is consistent with Norristown’s Plans, and would be physically connected via the Chester Valley Trail.

**UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP**

The 1994 plan contains broad language regarding open space preservation along the Schuylkill River.

Specifically, the township would like to increase public access to the river and preserve more environmentally sensitive land along the river. This is consistent with many of the objectives of Norristown’s plan.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL OR MULTIMUNICIPAL COOPERATION**

Schuylkill River Communities— Along with Norristown, the Boroughs of Bridgeport, Conshohocken, and West Conshohocken have teamed up with the Townships of Upper Merion, Plymouth, Lower Merion, and Whitemarsh to examine their relationship to the Schuylkill River. These municipalities have shared their goals and recommendations with one another to help identify shared projects and resources. This group has met several times and corresponded via an email newsletter. Norristown plans to continue working with this group throughout the implementation process and beyond.



*Bridgeport’s Memorial Park*



# CHAPTER 10

## RECOMMENDATIONS: PROJECTS, PROGRAMS & POLICIES

Norristown's Open Space needs lie mainly in developing existing open space into recreational assets and improving existing park space. In this highly developed municipality, very little land is available for acquisition. In the previous plan, Norristown recommended acquisition of several sites, including the Blue Mill tract, Thomas Barone Park, and Washington Street Park. Since these sites have been acquired, this Open Space Plan's recommendations focus mainly on non-acquisition projects, policies and programs. This is a way to enhance existing underutilized open space and to promote open space characteristics appropriate for urban environments. However, several small spaces, if acquired as open space, would add to the existing extensive network of open space areas. These are also described in this chapter.

### HIGHEST PRIORITY PROJECTS

#### MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

##### WALKING PATH

Simmons Park is located on the eastern side of the municipality near the intersection of Oak Street and Saw Mill Run, across the street from Scag Cottman Park. These two underutilized parks were the subject of a study by Simone Jaffe Collins. As a result of this study, it was determined that Sim-

mons Park needed improvements to make it safe, useable and accessible, including a new entry plaza, a gazebo, play structure, parking area, lighting, trees, benches, and a walking path around the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Amphitheater. These improvements have been specifically listed



*Simmons Park would benefit from the addition of a walking loop around the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial amphitheater.*

in the 1994 Open Space plan as well as the Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy.

The Municipality is utilizing a grant from DCNR that must be expended by June 2005. It is also utilizing Community Development Block Grant funds for these improvements. Norristown applied to the Open Space Board for emergency funding for this project in December 2004 in order to complete this project in a timely manner.

### **BLUE MILL TRACT RESTORATION**

Blue Mill Field, also known as the Engro property, is located at Basin Street east of Dutch Valley Road. It was acquired with funds from the first funding round of the Open Space program in



*Blue Mill Field will be landscaped to serve as a passive recreation area.*

2000. Formerly a brick factory, this site had been cleared and left vacant for a number of years. Saw Mill Run runs through the nearly 7 acre site. This field will be cleaned up and landscaped to become a passive recreation area. A new fence will be installed on Basin Street to control access. A portion of the Saw Mill Run Trail will be installed along the east bank of the creek.

### **SOFTBALL FIELD RELOCATION**

As part of the Elmwood Park Zoo's multi-million dollar expansion, Wierman field, the home of the Norristown Softball League and a field utilized by Eisenhower High School, has been identified as a parking area in the Zoo's Master Plan (2003) and Strategic Plan (2004). The zoo cannot embark on its expansion plans until the field is vacated. Therefore a new site for the softball field must be identified. Norristown is examining the possibility of creating a regulation field at the site of the borough's waste transfer site, just north of Weirman Field. A Phase I environmental study is underway to determine if this location would be suitable for a softball field. If this location can accommodate the field, the municipality will continue to search for a suitable location.

## **SHORT-TERM PRIORITY PROJECTS**

### **SCAG COTTMAN FIELD**

Scag Cottman Field is a vital link in the Saw Mill Run open space network. Originally developed as a baseball/softball field and playground, this 2.7 acre park has become underutilized. Norristown would like to redevelop this park to include a walking loop around the existing ball field and a trail along the Saw Mill Run connecting to the Blue Mill tract to the north and municipal land and Simmons Park to the south. The municipality would also like to explore the possibility of adding a small parking area on Basin Street that would serve Scag Cottman Field as well as facilities at the Blue Mill tract.

### **TRAILS**

Trails listed as short-term priorities in Chapter 5, including the Elmwood Park Outer Trail (together

with the Harding Boulevard Path), the Saw Mill Run Trail, the Martin Luther King Jr. Trail in Simmons Park, the Hamilton Connector, and the Chester Valley Trail should be implemented within 2 to 5 years. Other trails should be implemented on an intermediate or long-term basis.

**PLAYGROUNDS: MUNICIPALITY-WIDE**

Existing playground equipment and sports facilities need to be updated and replaced throughout Norristown to improve safety and increase usage. The Norristown Park and Recreation Committee took an inventory of park facilities and identified needed repairs in the second quarter of 2005. The following is a list of needed repairs in order of urgency with all unsafe conditions listed first:

**ELMWOOD PARK**

- Unsafe Condition: Remove bleachers at basketball court by Latshaw field
- Add new sand to volleyball court
- Paint benches & picnic tables
- Install 4 grill tops to grills in the pavilion
- Paint tot playground equipment
- Repair fence around tot playground
- Add a net to the basketball hoop behind the band shell
- Straighten crooked basketball post in court by Latshaw field

**GUARDINO PARK**

- Unsafe Condition: add wood chips to swing and sliding board areas
- Replace 2 missing swings
- Repair sitting boards on park bench
- Replace park sign
- Remove basketball poles (court has been removed)

**RIVERFRONT PARK**

- Schedule a park clean-up day

**ATKINSON PARK**

- Add wood chips to play area

- Install 2 grills near pavilion

**ALBERT P. PARKER MEMORIAL PARK**

- Repair fence
- Add wood chips to all 3 play areas
- Install park benches
- Install picnic tables
- Replace 2 missing swings in tot swing set
- Paint all playground equipment

**SCAG COTTMAN PARK**

- Repair fence
- Repair pavilion
- Add wood chips to play area
- Paint all playground equipment

**POLY PARK**

- Paint park bench

**SIMMONS PARK**

- Unsafe Condition: Remove bleachers
- Repair fence
- Paint park benches

**WALNUT STREET PLAYGROUND**

- Replace 3 missing swings
- Add wood chips to play area
- Repair fence

**SIMMONS PICNIC GROVE**

- Install 2 grills in picnic area
- Paint picnic tables

**MCCANN PARK**

- Replace 2 missing hoops and nets in basketball court
- Repair 2 park benches
- Paint playground equipment
- Schedule park clean-up day

**BARTASCH PARK**

- Repair wooden fence and replace missing pieces

- Add chips to play area
- Repair snack bar roof
- Repair bathroom roof
- Repair bathroom door
- Repair bathroom interior

**WEST WASHINGTON STREET PARK**

- Install basketball court



*Thomas Barone Park will become a quiet neighborhood park.*



*The failing retaining wall in Crawford Park affects residents' safety.*

**INTERMEDIATE PRIORITY PROJECTS**

**THOMAS BARONE POCKET PARK**

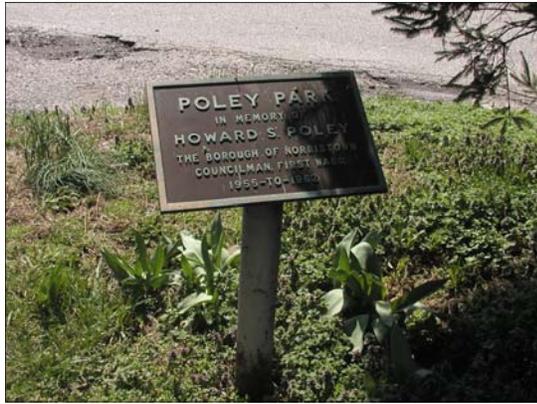
Thomas Barone Park was acquired with funds from the Open Space program in 2000. Less than one acre, this small park is located at Buttonwood and Noblewood Streets in the West End. Currently a vacant parcel, surrounding neighbors would like this to remain a quiet, low-impact pocket park. Norristown would like to landscape the parcel and add benches, trees, a flower garden, and a gazebo.

**CRAWFORD PARK**

Crawford Park has recently been updated with brand new playground equipment and new basketball courts. It also boasts several picnic tables, a manicured field, and a shaded parking area. The park is popular and well-utilized.

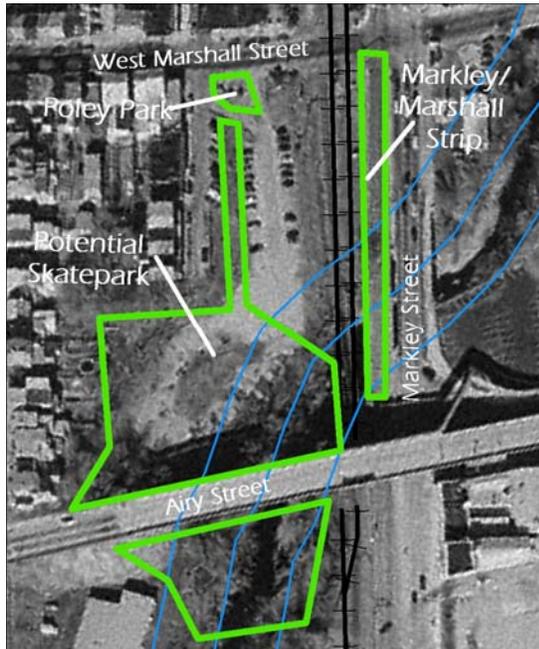
However, specific improvements could still be made, and the dialogue that has been started with the Crawford Park trustees will be continued, with a focus on the following issues:

- The connection between Crawford and Riverfront Parks needs to be improved. Currently, an informal, six-foot wide opening in the natural vegetation is the only connection between the two.
- A more formalized connection with the Schuylkill River Trail should be established.
- A formal entrance to the park from Main Street should be created, as the existing entrance to Crawford park through Riverfront park is small and uninviting.
- There are issues involving a failing retaining wall that supports the houses located above the park on Chain Street. This situation must be resolved quickly to ensure the safety of both the park and the affected homes.
- While it has been stated in the will governing the trust of Crawford Park that it remain as open space, Norristown would like to explore legal avenues that would ensure the park remains as open space in perpetuity.



**POLEY PARK**

This tiny pocket park and accompanying parking lot on the corner of Marshall and Markley Streets is essentially the gateway to the West Marshall Street Business District. Unfortunately, it has not been maintained well. The landscaping has become overgrown to the extent that use of the bench is no longer convenient and the commemorative plaque is obstructed from view. This park needs to be re-landscaped and made more inviting in order to make it a true visual amenity. In addition, period lighting and a flag pole with both an American flag and a historic district banner could be added to the park.

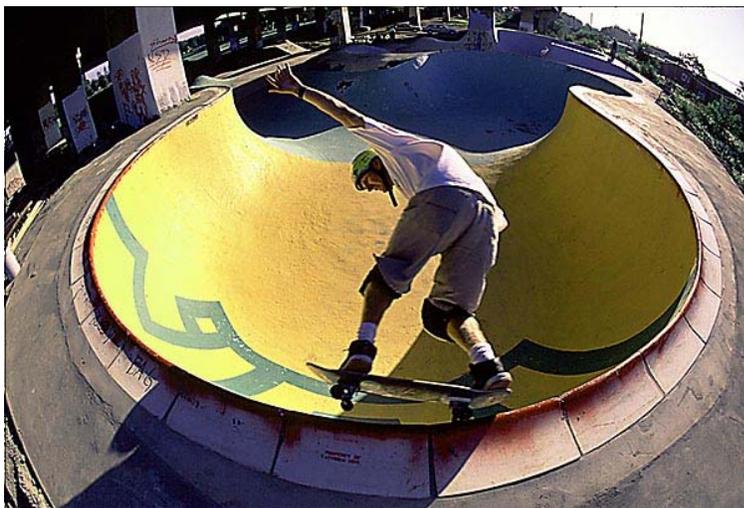


The parcel south of Poley Park, which runs along an existing parking lot and expands to the south, also belongs to the municipality. Norristown would like to entertain a proposal to install a skateboard park on underutilized land between pocket park and Airy Street Bridge, similar to FDR Skatepark in Philadelphia.

**MARKLEY & MARSHALL STRIP**

At the intersection of Markley and West Marshall Streets is a neglected area with several large billboards. These billboards currently block the vista to the Historic West Marshall Street business district and serve as visual clutter along the roadway. A large public investment (nearly \$1 million) has recently been made to revitalize the historic business district, and it would be appropriate to have an attractive gateway at the entrance to the district. Therefore, the Municipality would like to purchase this land, remove the billboards, and enhance the landscaping. This improved parcel would either become an extension of Poley Park via a pedestrian connection or be used as the basis of a future greenway.

*Poley Park, Markley/Marshall Strip, and the Skatepark.*



**SELMA OPEN SPACE**

The open space in front of the Selma mansion located at 1305 West Airy Street is all that remains of a large estate that once extended from the Schuylkill River to Germantown Pike. The Selma mansion is one of the two oldest buildings in the municipality. This historic site has been severely compromised by the construction of apartments at the rear of the property. The Norristown Preservation Society is in the process of purchasing

*A park for skateboarders similar to FDR Skatepark in Philadelphia could be created under the Airy Street overpass.*



*Removal of the billboards on Markley Street will make the gateway to the West Marshall Street Business District more attractive.*

the mansion itself with the intent to restore it and open a local history museum. Norristown is interested in exploring the possibility of purchasing the surrounding land (less than one acre) to create a passive park to serve the far West End and to preserve the mansion’s context as a visual amenity.

## **POLICIES, PROGRAMS, & LONG-TERM PROJECTS**

### **STREAM CORRIDOR PROTECTION**

An ordinance to protect the stream corridors, which are arguably Norristown’s greatest natural asset, should be created. Saw Mill Run and Stony Creek provide a bucolic landscape in the midst of an urban area, and this should be protected. The Stony Creek Anglers’ trout nursery is also linked to the creek., making its protection even more vital.

### **ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT**

An overlay zoning district for institutional uses that establishes appropriate setbacks, landscaped buffers and open space requirements has been suggested in the past, and Norristown is interested in pursuing this.

### **STATE HOSPITAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Norristown will continue the dialogue with the

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania regarding the comprehensive plan for the Norristown State Hospital. Specifically, municipal concerns over open space and recreational facilities should be addressed. Of particular interest are the connection to the State Farm Park, the recreation fields (football, softball, soccer), and the Future of Building 17.

### **TREE REPLACEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

More stringent tree replacement requirements should be created in the subdivision and land development ordinance to protect existing trees and augment the municipality’s existing tree canopy. In a municipality virtually absent of undisturbed woodlands, this policy would greatly help to maintain tree cover.

### **COMMUNITY GARDENS**

Norristown should consider using some of the vacant lots and parcels throughout the town as community gardens. They may be permanent or temporary, and would provide food and recreation for residents in addition to preventing vacant lots from becoming blights on the community. The Philadelphia Horticultural Society has expressed interest in expanding their Philadelphia Green Program into Montgomery County. This could be an opportunity to engage them as well as other sponsoring organizations to create a new asset to the Municipality.

### **TREMONT CEMETERY MAINTENANCE**

Norristown would like to ensure that a regular maintenance program for the Tremont Cemetery, currently operated by the First Baptist Church of Norristown, is established. This is a historic, non-segregated cemetery in which several civil war soldiers have been buried.

### **SAW MILL RUN DAM**

Municipally-owned Saw Mill Run Dam is located on E. Fornance Street. The grassy area covers about 23 acres adjacent to Bartasch Park and serves as an important part of the municipality’s stormwater management system. There are currently no facilities located here. Norristown would like to see the hillside planted with wildflowers,

and the flat basin dedicated to community gardens or a passive recreation area with benches and trees.

**BARBADOES ISLAND**

Barbadoes Island, across the north branch of the Schuylkill River, is part of West Norriton Township. PECO owns a power plant located on the island which is currently offline. The island is closed to the public, with private access via Haws Avenue. Even though the island is not within Norristown, all existing and proposed access points are in the municipality, providing Norristown with the strongest potential linkages to the island. It has been suggested that the island could provide additional park opportunities, potentially accessible to the Transit center area via the Norfolk Southern Bridge.

Recently, a dialogue among Norristown, West Norriton and PECO regarding future plans for the island has been reactivated. If PECO is interested in abandoning the power plant, Norristown would be interested in opening the island up to the public for passive recreation activities such as hiking, picnicking, and fishing. In addition, the municipality would like to recognize the island’s varied past (it has been the home of a farm, the host of a rabbit roundup, and the site of an amusement park, among other things) with the installation of a historical kiosk with pictures and text illustrating Barbadoes Island’s past.

**MONTGOMERY CEMETERY ENHANCEMENTS**

The municipality would like to explore the possibil-

ity of working with the Montgomery County Historical Society to enhance the Montgomery Cemetery. Although the cemetery itself is located in West Norriton, it can only be accessed through Norristown. Additional efforts should be made to connect this historic site to amenities at the Schuylkill River via Hamilton Street.

**HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARIES**

Norristown would like to reexamine the boundaries of the East End and Central Historic Districts to ensure that Norristown’s Historic assets are protected. Currently, a handful of significant structures lie just outside the boundaries of these districts.

**HISTORIC PLAQUE PROGRAM**

Many of the historic buildings built in the 19th and 20th century are not formally recognized (outside of the Milner report). Norristown would like to initiate a Historic Plaque Program to honor these buildings and the historic events they may represent. In addition, Norristown was home to a portion of the underground railroad during and after the civil war. Structures and paths used by escaped slaves should also be commemorated with plaques or special signage.

**NEW PARK ALONG THE RIVERFRONT**

The Norristown Economic Revitalization Strategy calls for a continuous greenway from the DeKalb Street Bridge to the Haws Avenue Bridge, which would include a regional, county-owned “riverfront Gateway Park” between the Dannenhower Bridge and the DeKalb Pike Bridge. This park would have facilities for regional recreation, sports, concerts, and dining attractions. Norristown supports the County in its development of a new riverfront park.

**LAFAYETTE STREET**

The Lafayette Street Transportation Improvements Project is an ambitious project to improve access to Norristown and Plymouth Township by improving access to the Pennsylvania Turnpike and US 202. It will also improve the connection between the Norristown Transportation Center, pedestrian facilities, the regional commuter rail system, the



*Barbadoes Island and Causeway*

Schuylkill River Trail, and the Chester Valley Trail. Design and acquisition are anticipated to be completed by 2007 with construction beginning in late 2007. As part of the project, the Schuylkill River Trail will be realigned, landscaped, and made more accessible at several points along the corridor. The street will have a boulevard feel, and a decorative crosswalk at Ford Street will provide one of the main connections to the Schuylkill River Trail and the riverfront in general. Norristown supports this project.

**PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHUYLKILL VALLEY GREENWAY ASSOCIATION**

The mission of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area is to "conserve, interpret and develop the historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources related to the industrial and cultural heritage of the Schuylkill River Valley of South-eastern Pennsylvania." Norristown should continue its partnership with the Schuylkill Valley Greenway Association to promote heritage tourism and to possibly take part in a "Reconnection Study."

**OPEN SPACE IN THE REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

While much of the municipality is already built out and there is not much opportunity for new open space, the Redevelopment Area presents an opportunity to create new open space amenities. The entire Redevelopment Area is subject to the

Unified Overlay District, or UDO. According to the statement of legislative intent, the purpose of the UDO "is to encourage and permit uses that are compatible and complementary with the historic character of the community and its downtown (and) to assist in its revitalization." It emphasizes a mix of uses and good urban design.

It also includes sections on riverfront access and open space, and landscaping requirements. A minimum of ten percent of the developable land area in the district must be provided and maintained as permanent open space. A building set-back of 60 feet from the riverfront is mandatory, with pedestrian access to that area also required. The landscaping section requires that shade trees are provided on all streets, parking areas must be landscaped, and buildings must be landscaped with evergreen and deciduous trees.

In addition to the measures listed above, Norristown will seek to acquire and preserve designated areas of the riverfront as open space as part of forthcoming redevelopment projects.

**TRAIL CONNECTIONS IN UDO DISTRICTS**

A requirement to connect to nearby trails, including the Schuylkill River Trail, Chester Valley Trail and all local trails, should be included in the zoning ordinance for the Unified Development Overlay Districts in the Redevelopment Area. When the riverfront between Dekalb Pike and the municipal border is developed, a loop trail connecting to the Schuylkill River Trail should be established.



*The Lafayette Street Transportation Improvement Project— Rendering of the entrance into Norristown from the east. The Schuylkill Trail is on the left.*

# CHAPTER 11

## RECOMMENDATIONS: OPTIONAL PLAN ELEMENTS

Land acquisition is one of the primary means of preserving open space. However, it is recognized that municipalities like Norristown have limited opportunities to acquire large vacant tracts of land, but have open space, tree planting, recreation development, heritage preservation, trail connection, and floodplain restoration needs. Norristown is one of these municipalities. Through the Green Fields/Green Towns Program, these alternative means of preservation are now eligible for funding through the various options described in this chapter, including Green Infrastructure, County Trail Connections, and the Schuylkill River Greenway grant options. These recommendations along with those listed in the previous chapter are shown in Figure 32.

### GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Under the 2003 Green Fields/Green Towns Program, communities with limited opportunities to purchase large vacant tracts for open space have the opportunity to improve their green infrastructure. This “green infrastructure” may include the creation of safe, usable open space, recreation areas, or public spaces through the demolition of dilapidated property or the restoration of older industrial sites into parks, plazas, trails, and natural areas. Landscaping as well as improving existing

open space and recreation areas also is included in this category.

### PARK IMPROVEMENTS

**Goal:** To preserve existing open space.

Preserving the Municipality’s existing parks and continuing to enhance them is the major objective of this goal. create gateways to enhance the entrances to the township. In order to meet this

objective, Norristown will improve its existing parks to make them safe, useable and accessible (see Figure 30. Specific improvements are described in more detail in Chapter 10: Recommendations.

**TREES**

Trees and other forms of landscaping are an im-

portant part of green infrastructure, and contribute to the quality of life in every community. Trees can be used for aesthetic purposes to add beauty and natural character to a community, soften harsh scenery, provide privacy, and increase property values. Environmental benefits include improving air quality, enhancing water quality, reducing noise, enhancing biological diversity and

Figure 30  
*Proposed Park Improvements*

Map Key	Park	Location	Proposed Improvements
A	Martin Luther King Park	Oak & Walnut Streets	Walking loop, entry plaza, gazebo, play structure, parking area, lighting, trees, & benches
B	Blue Mill Tract	Basin Street & Saw Mill Run	Softball field, Saw Mill Run Trail
C	Scagg Cottman Field	Basin & High Streets	Walking loop, Saw Mill Run Trail, Women's Softball field, parking area
D	Thomas Barone Pocket Park	Buttonwood & Noblewood Streets	Benches, trees, landscaping
E	Poley Park	Markley & Marshall Streets	Landscaping, Skateboard Park
F	Markley & Marshall Strip	Markley & Marshall Streets	Remove billboards, enhance landscaping, establish trail
-	Municipality-Wide Playgrounds	Various Locations	Remove and replace unsafe playground equipment and sports facilities



**Investments in greening and in vacant land management can increase property values by as much as 30%.**

The Determinants of Neighborhood Transformation in Philadelphia, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania's Real Estate Department, November 2004.

stabilizing local climate. According to Treevitalize, only 10-20% of Norristown has retained tree cover.

Norristown would like to 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. To begin implementation, the municipality has applied to the Treevitalize

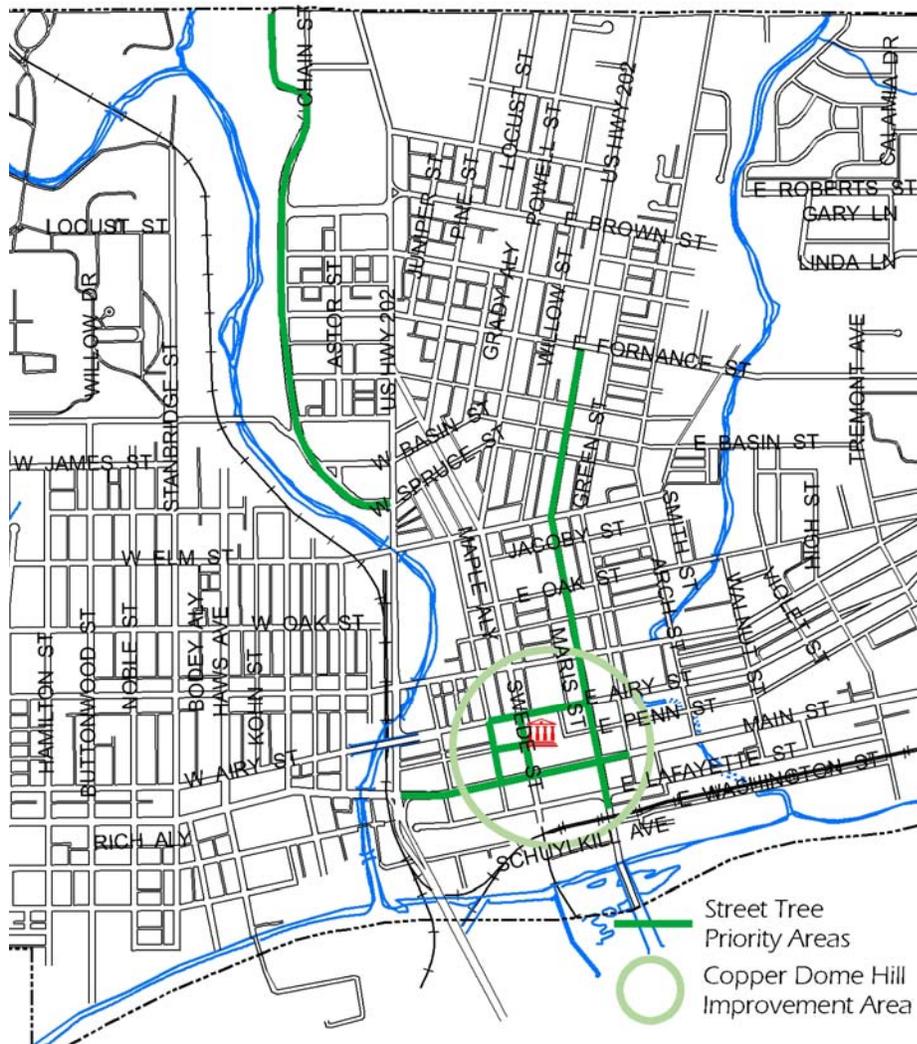
program to receive 150 trees to be planted in parks. These trees will be planted by the public works department and maintained through a "work release" program.

**STREET TREES**

Shade trees are required on new and existing streets as part of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. Because of this, Norristown has existing street trees on most blocks, although there are some scattered areas that lack trees.

Maintenance of street trees has become an issue, and shade tree species that are more compatible with an urban environment (that is, that are low maintenance) should be identified and required.

Figure 31  
*Street Tree Priority Planting Areas*



In February of 2005, Governor Rendell announced a \$1.52 million funding package to be used for Phase III of streetscape initiatives in the downtown commercial corridor. Phase III will concentrate on the blocks between Cherry Street and Swede Street in the Central Business District. This grant will allow Norristown to furnish new sidewalks, street trees, historic lighting and other amenities in the “Copper Dome Hill” area surrounding the County Court House. As Norristown is the “Heart of Montgomery County,” Copper Dome Hill will become the Heart of Norristown with the completion of planned beautification and revitalization efforts (see Figure 31).

Governor Rendell also awarded Norristown \$25,000 in Elm Street funds for sidewalk construction along the 1000 block of Dekalb Street. Dekalb Street has been singled out for redevelopment, receiving \$500,000 in DCED-administered HOME funds. In the future Norristown plans to market Dekalb Street as an “Avenue of the Arts.”

**PUBLIC TREE INVENTORY**

A tree inventory has not been completed at this time. Open Space funds could be utilized to complete such an inventory.

**GATEWAYS & SCENIC ROADS**

The landscaping improvements to the existing gateway signs at the six locations identified in Chapter 4 should be made. In addition, the following scenic roads should be maintained and improved:

**HARDING BOULEVARD**

Harding Boulevard, which runs between Elmwood Park and a residential district, was once a stately street complete with planters and shade trees. Scenic views from the road include the little league fields, the new PAL building, Roosevelt Field, park pavilions, the bocce club’s gazebo, the Zoo, and Logan field. This area is a community center representing some of the most scenic attributes of Norristown, and the municipality would like to beautify this street and help it return to its days as a community gateway. An ownership maintenance program involving adjacent property owners could help to ensure that any new additions would be cared for and protected.

**BUTTONWOOD ROAD**

The first homes ever built in Norristown are located at the end of this road. Period lighting with hanging potted plants would help enhance the street, and a plaque describing the historic significance of these original workers’ homes would serve to inform residents and visitors.

**WEST MAIN STREET**

The elegant homes of the south side of this street provide a scenic view for drivers and pedestrians. At the intersection of West Main and Airy Streets, a gateway with a flagpole, bench, and birdbath or sundial feature should be erected. It may be possible for UHaul, which is the business located at that intersection, to work with the garden club on a plaza adoption program.

**BROWN & MARKLEY FOUNTAIN**

The fountain on this pleasant green space should be returned to working order.

**DEKALB STREET**

Between Freedly Street and Johnson Highway, this stretch of Dekalb is one of the most impressive in the municipality. Adding flower pots to the planting strips would compliment the mature tree canopy and elegant homes. The Arcadia Foundation may wish to donate money for planting boxes and flowers for this area.

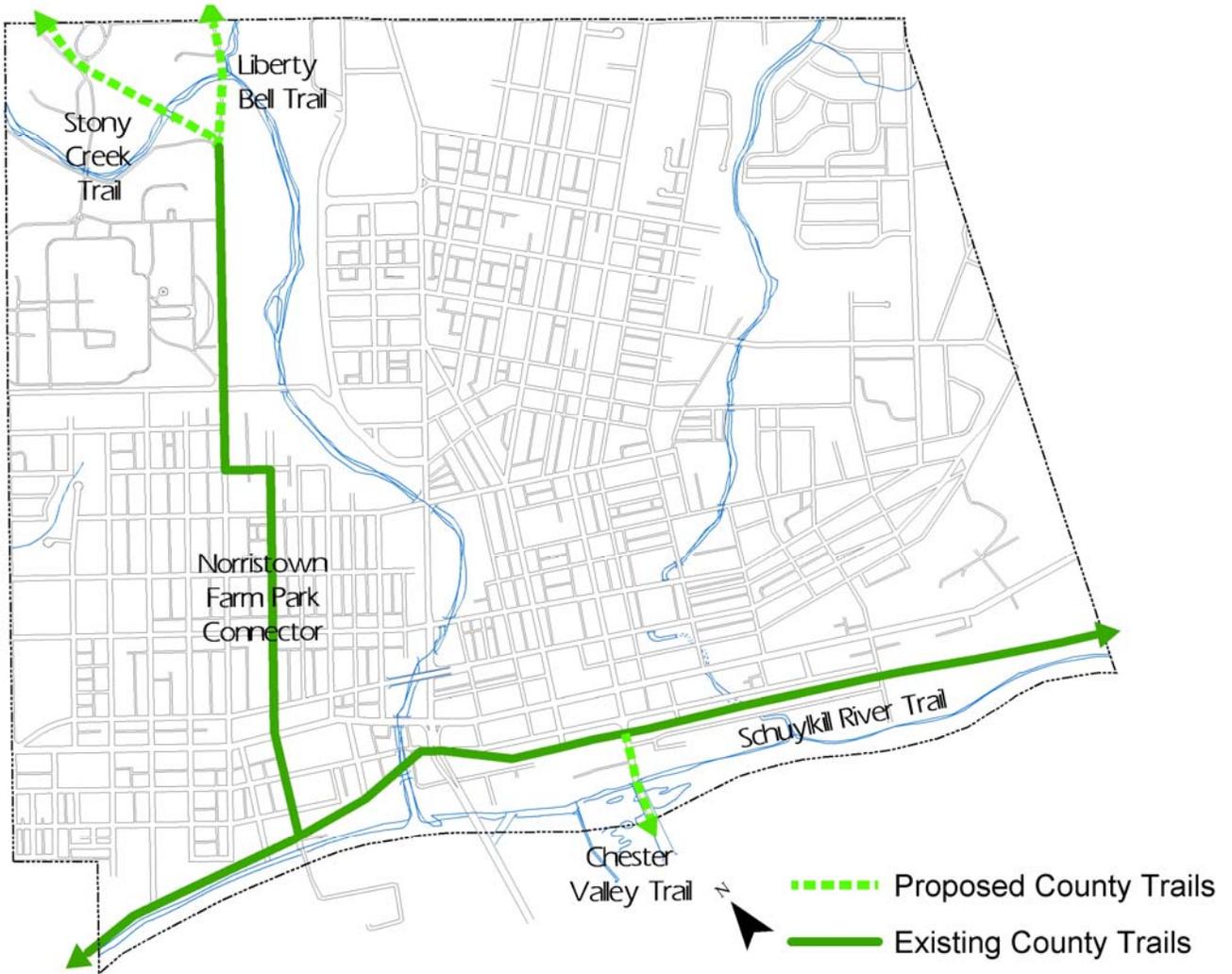
**COUNTY TRAIL CONNECTIONS**

The development of an interconnected trail and pathway system in Montgomery County will enhance pedestrian and cyclist mobility and provide increased recreation opportunities. Many trails and pathways are proposed in the County’s vision plan, and it is important to connect to, complete or expand this system at every opportunity. Norristown proposes the following trails (see Figure 32):

**A. Chester Valley Trail**

The Chester Valley Trail would connect the Schuylkill River Trail to Bridgeport and Upper Merion and points south via the DeKalb Street Bridge. Linking

Figure 32  
*County Trail Connections*



the trails in the vicinity of the intersection of DeKalb and Lafayette will echo the former Historic transit link, reinforce the significance of this location, and create a new gateway to Norristown from the west.

Montgomery County has recently conducted a feasibility study for the adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of the railroad freight transfer station at the corner of DeKalb and Lafayette Streets. Built in 1938 to serve the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Schuylkill branch, the depot is currently functioning as a wholesale food distributor. As described in the feasibility study, the depot could become an interpretive center for the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor, the Schuylkill River trail, the Chester Valley trail, and the Municipality of Norristown. It could house office space for County Park Rangers, Public Toilet Facilities, an Information Center, a Refresh-

ment Stand, Bicycle Repair Facilities, and Bike Lockers, among other things, and would effectively serve as a trail head.

**B. Liberty Bell Trail**

The Liberty Bell Trail would connect the Schuylkill River Trail to East Norriton and other nearby municipalities, on into Bucks County. The alignment in Norristown would begin at the Norristown Farm Park Connector, and snake along Stony Creek and existing trails into Norristown Farm Park. This trail is included in Montgomery County’s Proposed Primary Trail Network.

**C. Stony Creek Trail**

The Stony Creek Trail is proposed along rail corri-

corridor that is intertwined with Stony Creek. It would connect also the Schuylkill River Trail via the Norristown Farm Park Connector to nearby Townships including East Norriton, Worcester and Whitpain, before connecting into the Liberty Bell Trail. Currently, this rail corridor is utilized by freight trains. However, if the rail line were ever to be abandoned, the County would be interested in creating a multi-use trail as part of its proposed Primary Trail Network. It would also consider developing the trail along a shared corridor if possible.

## **SCHUYLKILL RIVER GREENWAY**

Montgomery County benefits greatly from the Schuylkill River's surprising scenic beauty, centuries-old heritage, and richly diverse landscapes. This section describes recommendations to protect this shared resource within Norristown.

### **SCHUYLKILL RIVER GREENWAY PRESERVATION GOALS**

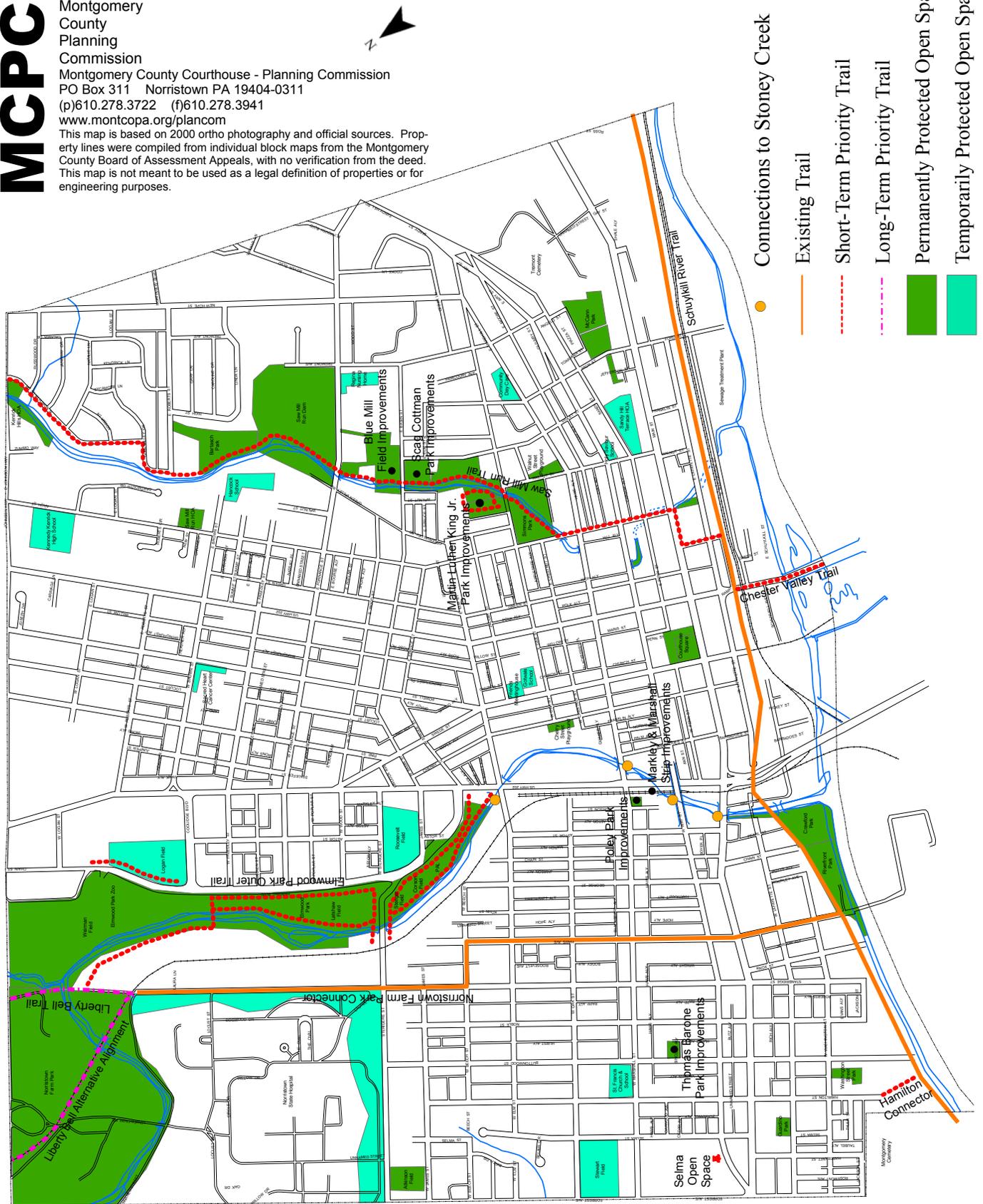
**Goal:** Provide access to open space areas.

Improvements along the Schuylkill River Trail will enhance this vital connection, promoting the scenic, cultural, and natural value of the river and facilitating open space linkages along the river. These improvements will also promote conservation and river-friendly public use.

Figure 33  
Recommendations



Montgomery County Planning Commission  
 Montgomery County Courthouse - Planning Commission  
 PO Box 311 Norristown PA 19404-0311  
 (p)610.278.3722 (f)610.278.3941  
 www.montcopa.org/plancom  
 This map is based on 2000 ortho photography and official sources. Property lines were compiled from individual block maps from the Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals, with no verification from the deed. This map is not meant to be used as a legal definition of properties or for engineering purposes.





# CHAPTER 12

## IMPLEMENTATION

### BACKGROUND

Implementation is perhaps the most important part of any plan. Having identified and examined the open space issues important to the Municipality, a timeframe for implementation is established here to guide Norristown toward achieving its goals. In essence, this chapter is Norristown’s “action plan.” In the near term, implementation principally involves securing funds from Norristown’s funding allocation under the County Open Space Program for high priority projects. This would occur over the next three to five years (2005-2009). It also means taking other, non-acquisition actions for open space preservation and recreation facility planning and development. Longer term priorities will build upon these earlier efforts, and will be implemented within the next five to ten years (2009-2014) and beyond.

### IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Figure 34 lists each recommendation that has been described in this plan along with goals and objectives achieved, method of implementation, responsible party, potential funding source, and priority. This matrix will serve as Norristown’s open space action plan.

### RESPONSIBILITY

For each proposed action, primary responsibility is proposed among the following municipal groups and consultants:

- Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC)
- Municipal Council (MC)

- Neighborhood Organization (NO)
- Norristown Historical Society (HS)
- Norristown Planning Commission (NPC)
- Norristown Preservation Society (PS)
- Open Space Committee (OSC)
- Park and Recreation Committee (PRC)
- Private Funding Sources (PF)
- Public Works (PW)
- Schuylkill Valley Greenway Association (SVGA)
- Weed & Seed (W&S)

## PRIORITY CATEGORIES

Highest Priority projects should be implemented within the next three years (2005-2008). Short-Term Priority projects, programs and policies should begin in three to five years (2008-2010), and Intermediate Priority projects, programs and policies should be implemented within five to ten years (2010-2015), and Long Term Priority projects, programs and policies should be implemented beyond 2015.

## PRESERVATION METHODS

There are a number of ways a municipality can obtain land for open space. An overview of these alternatives is provided here to serve as a guide for Norristown's future open space acquisition efforts. In the long term, all of these could conceivably be used, although at any given time one or more may be more appropriate than others for acquiring a specific site. More generally, however, they indicate that Norristown can be flexible in its approach to implementing the plan's goals.

### FEE SIMPLE ACQUISITION

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

## INSTALLMENT BUYING

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

## LONG TERM LEASE WITH OPTION TO BUY

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

## PURCHASE AND LEASE-BACK

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

## PURCHASE AND RESALE

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

## LEASING

This is a popular, relatively inexpensive way to

Figure 34  
Implementation Matrix

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Goal/ Objective Achieved</b>	<b>Method of Implementation</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Implement MLK Park walking path and park upgrades	1A, 7A, 9B	Rehabilitation	NPC	DCNR, CDBG, MCRF, MCOS	Highest
Locate site and install Softball Field	1A, 6C	Rehabilitation	NPC	CDBG, MCOS	Highest
Implement Scagg Cottman Field Improvements	1A, 6A	Rehabilitation	NPC	CDBG, DCNR, MCRF, MCOS	Short-Term
Implement municipality-wide Playground Improvements	6A	Rehabilitation	PW, NPC, PRC	CDBG, General Fund, PF3	Short-Term
Design and Build Trails: Simmons Park (MLK Jr. Amphitheater Loop) Elmwood Park Outer Trail Saw Mill Run Trail Chester Valley Trail Hamilton Connector	2B, 7A/B	Trail/Rehabilitation	NPC	MCOS, Zoo, PF2	Short-Term
Implement Thomas Barone Park Improvements	1A	Rehabilitation	NPC, NO	CDBG, MCOS	Intermediate
Commence Crawford Park Dialogue	1A, 8A/B	Not applicable	MC	Not applicable	Intermediate
Implement Poley Park Improvements	1A, 5A	Rehabilitation	NPC	DCNR, MCOS, PF1	Intermediate
Implement Markley & Marshall Strip Improvements	2B, 7A/B	Rehabilitation	NPC	DCNR, MCOS, PF1	Intermediate
Initiate Tree Planting Program	3B, 4B/C	Rehabilitation	PW, NPC	General Fund, MCOS	Intermediate
Implement Saw Mill Run Dam Improvements	1A	Rehabilitation	NPC	DCNR, MCOS, PF1	Intermediate
Examine Historic District Boundary	9A	Not applicable	NPC, MCPC	Not applicable	Intermediate
Purchase Selma Land	1B, 5A, 9B	Acquisition	NPC	MCOS, NPS	Intermediate
Require Trail Connections in UDO Districts	2A, 7A	Not applicable	NPC, MCPC	Not applicable	Intermediate
Acquire Schuylkill River Trail Management Easement	4C	Trail/Rehabilitation	MCPC	MCPC, MCOS	Intermediate
Improve Schuylkill River Trail Landscaping	2A, 4C, 7A	Trail/Rehabilitation	NPC, SVGA	MCOS, SVGA	Intermediate
Create a Chester Valley Trail Gateway	7A, 9B	Trail/Rehabilitation	MCPC	MCPC, MCOS	Intermediate
Redevelop Lafayette St. as a Pedestrian Friendly Corridor	4B/C, 7A	Not applicable	MCPC	PENNDOT	Intermediate
Continue Partnership with the Schuylkill Valley Greenway Assoc.	2A, 7A/B	Not applicable	MC, NPC, SVGA	Not applicable	Intermediate
Implement Gateway & Fountain Improvements	5A	Not applicable	MC, NPC	MCOS	Intermediate
Implement Dekalb Street & Harding Blvd Scenic Road Improvements	4B/C, 9A/B	Beautification	MC, NPC	Arcadia Foundation	Intermediate

Figure 33 Continued...  
*Implementation Matrix Continued*

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Goal/ Objective Achieved</b>	<b>Method of Implementation</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Design and Build Trails: Stony Creek Trail Liberty Bell Trail Connections to Stoney Creek	2B, 7A/B	Trail/Rehabilitation	NPC	DCNR, CDBG, MCRF, MCOS	Long Term
Create a Stream Corridor Protection Ordinance	3	Not applicable	NPC, MCPC	Not applicable	Long Term
Create an Institutional Zoning Overlay District	4A	Not applicable	NPC, MCPC	Not applicable	Long Term
Commence Dialogue Regarding State Hospital Comprehensive Plan	1B, 6B, 7B, 8B	Not applicable	MC, NPC	Not applicable	Long Term
Initiate Community Garden Program	4, 5A	Rehabilitation	PW, W&S	MCOS, W&S, PF4	Long Term
Initiate an Historic Plaque Program	9A	Not applicable	HS, PS	HS, PS,PF3	Long Term
Coordinate Montgomery Cemetery Enhancements	1B, 9A/B	Not applicable	MC, NPC	Not applicable	Long Term
Commence Dialogue Concerning Barbadoes Island	2A, 3, 8A	Not applicable	MC, NPC	Not applicable	Long Term
Support Riverfront Park (County Park)	2A, 3, 8A	Not applicable	MC	Not applicable	Long Term
Acquire Open Space in the Redevelopment Area	2A	Acquisition	NPC MCPC	MCOS, PF4	Long Term

*Funding Source Key*

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
DCNR	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
MCOS	Montgomery County Open Space Funds
MCPC	Montgomery County Planning Commission
MCRF	Montgomery County Revitalization Funds
NPS	Norristown Preservation Society
PENNDOT	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
PF1	Private foundations through the West Marshall Street Merchants Association
PF2	Non-profits that utilize the fields located in Elmwood Park
PF3	Private foundations and Commonwealth Historic Funds
PF4	Other private funding sources
SVGA	Schuylkill Valley Greenway Association
W&S	Norristown Weed & Seed Program
Zoo	Elmwood Park Zoo

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

## EASEMENTS

Easements are a successful way to save public funds, yet receive open space benefits. An easement is a limited right over land owned by another person. Legally, a person has the right to use his property subject to zoning laws, subdivision regulation, etc; however, he may sell his right to use the land in specific ways. The costs of easements vary with the type acquired. Easements can be affirmative or negative. Affirmative easements grant limited rights to the public to use the land for public purposes, such as hiking, fishing, or riding. Such easements can be used selectively to obtain public use of private lands for trails and access to water-based recreational facilities. In contrast, negative easements do not allow public access, but restrict the owner in his use of the property. For example, a scenic easement requires the owner to preserve the “openness” or natural beauty of a site; this type of easement can be effective in maintaining municipality’s visually attractive roads.

Use of easements is generally more limited and complicated than land acquisition, but they can limit or prevent destruction and premature development of scenic areas. They should be selectively used and tailored to fit the requirements of each particular situation.

## EMINENT DOMAIN

Eminent domain is the condemnation of land for a public use by due process of law. It must involve the determination of a fair market value for the property and a clear definition of the public purposes for which it is being condemned. Before exercising the right of eminent domain, a municipality should study the necessity of obtaining the particular site and the feasibility of acquiring it by

other acquisition methods. Only if all other methods fail and the property is essential to an open space system should eminent domain be considered.

## LAND TRUSTS AND CONSERVANCIES

Land trusts and conservancies are private, non-profit tax exempt trusts, usually organized by a citizen supported, non-profit agency. Their funds can be used to provide open space and to preserve natural resources such as stream valleys. Administration and management of the land are the responsibility of the service agency. Private non-profits have an advantage in that they can often move faster to acquire property than can a government agency. Frequently a public-private partnership is formed whereby the private agency acquires land and then resells it to a government agency at a later date.

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

## LAND EXCHANGES

This method involves the trading of land between one owner and another to obtain mutual advantages. An arrangement can be made between landowners to exchange land that serves their interests.

## VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS

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

## PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

If the municipality is only interested in protecting

land or designated features of a property without gaining the right for public access, then this method of acquisition of partial interests rather than full fee title in land is available. In essence, a municipality could preserve significant natural, scenic, historic, or cultural resources by purchasing a landowner's right to develop the property or otherwise alter the character of the features that are deemed worthy of protection.

### **RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL AND PURCHASE OPTION**

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

### **LIFE OR TERM ESTATES**

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

### **DONATIONS AND BARGAIN SALES**

These methods of acquisition involve obtaining land at less than its full market value. Receiving donations of the full value of land is the least expensive way for a municipality to obtain land and can, in some instances, be a wise approach for a landowner to take to directly benefit from tax incentives and the shelter effects of charitable deductions. If a full donation of land is not possible or if the landowner has an immediate need for cash through sale, then a partial donation and bargain sale might be a prudent alternative. By

selling land at a price that is less than its full value, a landowner can still receive tax benefits based on the difference between the fair market value of the land and its actual sale price. The primary benefit to these techniques is that a municipality acquires land at a lower cost while the seller obtains tax deductions.

## **FUNDING SOURCES**

In addition to the funds allocated through the County Open Space Program, Norristown is eligible for funds from a variety of sources including grants, general revenue funds, bond issues, and donations (of cash, materials, and/or labor).

### **GREEN FIELD/GREEN TOWN OPEN SPACE GRANTS (MCOS)**

In 2003, a referendum to fund open space and green infrastructure projects was passed in Montgomery County. This funding was distributed to municipalities, private non-profit conservation organizations and the county to preserve more open space and enhance the livability of existing communities throughout the County.

Norristown is eligible to receive a total of \$1,897,926 for open space planning and implementation. This grant requires matching funds equal to ten percent of project costs from the municipality. The County grants come with several conditions. The most important condition is that any land purchased with grant money must be permanently preserved as open space or for active recreation. Another condition is that Norristown must complete and adopt the Open Space Plan. This plan must be approved by the County's Open Space Board before grant money can be disbursed.

### **KEYSTONE RECREATION, PARK, AND CONSERVATION FUND (KEY)**

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

match from the recipient municipality or nonprofit organization. As of 2002, \$144 million had been granted to more than 2,100 projects. The demand on the Keystone Fund already outstrips resources by a 4 to 1 margin, and grants are extremely competitive.

### **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (DCED)**

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

- **Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)** - Provides grant assistance and technical assistance to aid communities in their community and economic development efforts.
- **Community Revitalization Program (CR)** - Provides grant funds to support local initiatives that promote the stability of communities.
- **Main Street Program** - This program provides assistance for revitalization planning and projects.
- **Elm Street Program** - Grant funds for planning, technical assistance and physical improvements to residential and mixed use areas in proximity to central business districts.
- **Industrial Sites Reuse Program** - Grant and low-interest loan financing to perform environmental site assessment and remediation work at former industrial sites.

### **PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL & MUSEUM COMMISSION (PHMC)**

Many communities value their historic resources and work to preserve them for future generations.

These resources can then be integrated into the open space network and cultural amenities of that community to enhance local image and aesthetics. The PHMC offers several programs that aid municipalities in these efforts.

- **Certified Local Government Grant Program** - Provides funding for cultural resource surveys, national register nominations, technical and planning assistance, educational and interpretive programs, staffing and training, and pooling CLG grants and third party administration
- **Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program**— Provides funding for preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation.
- **Pennsylvania History and Museum Grant Program** - Funding under this program is designated to support a wide variety of museum, history, archives and historic preservation projects, as well as nonprofit organizations and local governments with ten types of grants.

### **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (PENNDOT)**

#### **SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

This category includes projects for bicyclists and pedestrians that permit safe passage for children to walk or bike to school. This includes activities that enhance the transportation system through the construction of new facilities or the improvement of existing facilities to make them more usable for pedestrians and bicyclists. Some examples of eligible activities include: sidewalk improvements, pedestrian/bicycle crossing improvements, bike lanes, traffic diversion improvements, and off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In addition, this program may fund traffic calming measures to slow the speed of cars such as the following: curb extensions, bulb-outs, traffic circles, raised median islands, speed humps, textured or raised crosswalks. Funds cannot be used for bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are solely for recreational use.

#### **HOME TOWN STREETS**

This category includes a variety of streetscape improvements that are vital to reestablishing our

downtown and commercial centers. These will include activities undertaken within a defined "downtown" area that collectively enhance that environment and promote positive interactions with people in the area. Projects may include sidewalk improvements, planters, benches, street lighting, pedestrian crossings, transit bus shelters, traffic calming, bicycle amenities, kiosks, community "gateway" plantings, signage and other visual elements.

**DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (DVRPC)**

**TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

The TCDI program is intended to assist in reversing the trends of disinvestment and decline in many of the region's core cities and first generation suburbs by:

- Supporting local planning projects that will lead to more residential, employment or retail opportunities;
- Improving the overall character and quality of life within these communities to retain and attract business and residents, which will help to reduce the pressure for further sprawl and expansion into the growing suburbs;
- Enhancing and utilizing the existing transportation infrastructure capacity in these areas to reduce the demands on the region's transportation network; and
- Reducing congestion and improving the transportation system's efficiency.

**CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CMAQ)**

This program seeks transportation-related projects that can help the region reduce emissions from highway sources and meet National Clean Air Act standards. The program covers the DVRPC region of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania, and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey.

**TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (TE)**

Transportation Enhancement is a set-aside of Fed-

eral highway and transit funds, mandated by Congress in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) for the funding of "non-traditional" projects designed to enhance the transportation experience, to mitigate the impacts of transportation facilities on communities and the environment, and to enhance community character through transportation-related improvements.

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RIVERS, TRAILS, AND CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (RTCA)**

This program offers technical assistance only to nonprofit organizations, community groups, and local or state government agencies. Rivers and Trails technical staff offers the following types of assistance for recreation and conservation projects:

- Building partnerships to achieve community-set goals
- Assessing resources
- Developing concept plans
- Engaging public participation
- Identifying potential sources of funding
- Creating public outreach
- Organizational development
- Providing conservation and recreation information

**PECO ENERGY GREEN REGION OPEN SPACE GRANT PROGRAM (PECO)**

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

## **GENERAL REVENUE FUNDS AND BOND ISSUE**

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

## **DONATIONS**

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

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

It will be vital to involve the business community, neighborhood organizations, non-profits organizations, social clubs, and schools early on in the process to assist in design and maintenance of planned improvements and new facilities. In addition to their input, they have the unique ability to donate the time, energy, and possibly even funding required to ensure the success of open space projects in Norristown.

## **CONCLUSION**

Norristown looks forward to adopting the 2005 Open Space Plan and implementing its recommendations. The municipality believes that parks and open space contribute greatly to the quality of life of its residents, and that a “Green Town” is what Norristown strives to be. For more information, please visit the following websites:

Montgomery County Green Fields/Green Towns Program

<http://www.montcopa.org/plancom/greenfields2.htm>

The Municipality of Norristown

<http://www.norristown.org/Pages/planning.html>

Montgomery County Planning Commission

<http://www.montcopa.org/plancom/>

