

Comprehensive Plan for

# Whitpain Township

## Whitpain 2035 4 Villages within a Community

### Township Vision

*Whitpain Township is a community that embraces the future while cherishing our heritage. We will continue to be recognized for our diversity, fiscal responsibility, and leadership in resource conservation. We shall never waver in our collective commitment to ensuring public safety and enhancing the quality of life of all our fellow citizens.*

Town Hall Meeting #4  
Recreational Factors  
Wednesday, March 25, 2015, 7:00 pm



# **Agenda**

- 1. Welcome – Fred Conner, Supervisor, Whitpain Township**
- 2. Keynote Speaker – Drew Gilchrist, Regional Advisor, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Southeast Regional Office**
- 3. General Introduction to Trail and Park planning**
- 4. West Ambler Village**
  - Existing conditions, Characteristics, Challenges
  - 2013 Neighborhood Revitalization & Action Plan - Recap and progress updates
- 5. Your Comments, Opinions, Ideas, and Suggestions**



An aerial photograph of a region in Virginia, including parts of Loudoun, Fairfax, and Arlington counties. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue layer. Faint labels like "EAST NORRITON" and "UPPER DUBLIN" are visible on the map. The text "Drew Gilchrist" is centered on the map in a bold, yellow, underlined font.

## **Drew Gilchrist**

**Regional Advisor, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Southeast Regional Office**



## **Project Consultants**

### **Simone Collins Landscape Architecture**

Planners and Landscape Architects

**Peter Simone**

[psimone@simonecollins.com](mailto:psimone@simonecollins.com)

610-239-7601

**Jared Lowman**

[jlowman@simonecollins.com](mailto:jlowman@simonecollins.com)

610-239-7601

### **McMahon Associates**

Transportation Planning

**Sandy Koza**

[skoza@mcmahonassociates.com](mailto:skoza@mcmahonassociates.com)

215-283-9444

### **Urban Partners**

Economic Market Research and Analysis

**Chris Lankenau**

[clankenau@urbanpartners.us](mailto:clankenau@urbanpartners.us)

## **Township Contact**

**Jim Blanch, Township Engineer**

[jblanch@whitpaintownship.org](mailto:jblanch@whitpaintownship.org)

610-277-2400



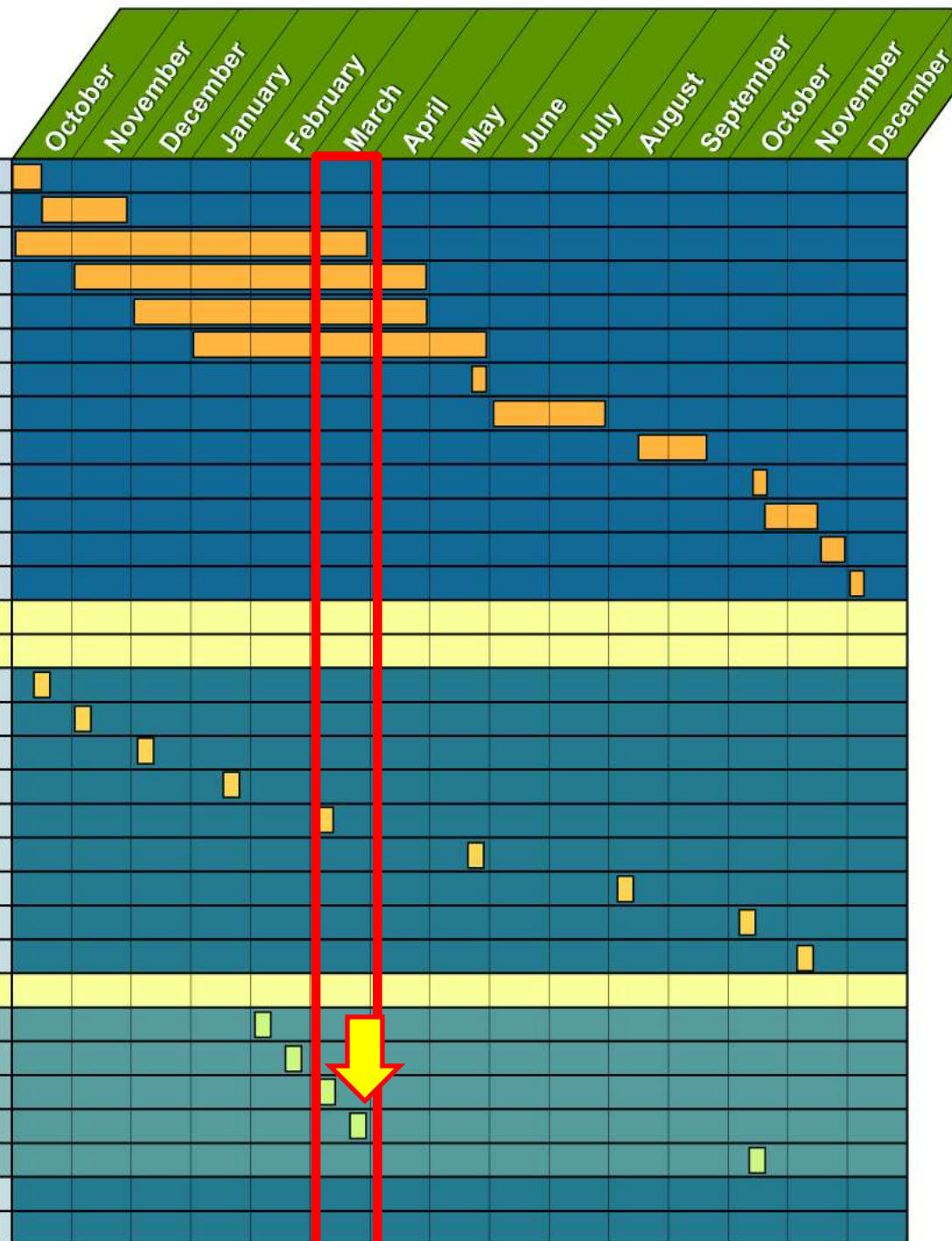
# **Project Committee Members**

<b>Jim Blanch</b>	<b>Township Engineer</b>
<b>Fred Conner</b>	<b>Chairman, Board of Supervisors</b>
<b>Ken Corti</b>	<b>Chairman, Planning Commission</b>
<b>Jaime Garrido</b>	<b>Associate Vice President of Facilities &amp; Construction, Montgomery County Community College</b>
<b>Dillon Horwitz</b>	<b>Wissahickon High School Student</b>
<b>Greg Klucharich</b>	<b>Assistant Engineer / Sustainability Coordinator</b>
<b>Joan Knies</b>	<b>Vice-Chair, Shade Tree Commission</b>
<b>Ed Lane</b>	<b>Chairman, Zoning Hearing Board</b>
<b>Bill Lutz, Jr.</b>	<b>Chairman, Board of Appeals</b>
<b>Cathy McGowan</b>	<b>Business Community Perspective</b>
<b>David Mrochko</b>	<b>Assistant Township Manager</b>
<b>Susan Mudambi</b>	<b>Chairperson, Park &amp; Open Space Board</b>
<b>Melissa Murphy Weber</b>	<b>Board of Supervisors</b>
<b>Roman Pronczak</b>	<b>Township Manager</b>
<b>Robert Whittock</b>	<b>Historical Perspective</b>



# Comprehensive Plan for Whitpain Township

Project Schedule- Revised 3/2/15






# Meeting Schedule

## (9) Committee Meetings (All meetings to be held at **5:30pm**)

- Wednesday October 15<sup>th</sup>
- Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>
- Tuesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>
- Tuesday, March 3<sup>th</sup>
- **Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup>**
- **Tuesday, August 4<sup>th</sup>**
- **Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup>**
- **Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>**

## (5) Town Hall Meetings (All meetings to be held at **7:00pm**)

- Wednesday, Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> - Town Hall #1 – Broad Axe – Lifelong Learning
- Wednesday, Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> – Town Hall #2 – Blue Bell – Environmental Factors
- Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> – Town Hall #3 – Centre Square – Economic Factors
-  **Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> – Town Hall #4 – West Ambler – Recreational Factors**
- **Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup> – Town Hall #5 – Draft Plan Presentation**



# Five (5) Town Hall Meetings

## Town Hall #1 - February 4<sup>th</sup> - Lifelong Learning

- Village Focus – Broad Axe Village
- Keynote Speaker – Tom Hylton

## Town Hall #2 – February 25<sup>th</sup> – Environmental Factors (Cultural & Natural Factors)

- Village Focus – Blue Bell Village
- Keynote Speaker - Dr. Jeff Featherstone, Professor of Community & Regional Planning, Temple University – Ambler Campus

## Town Hall #3 – March 11<sup>th</sup> – Economic Factors

- Village Focus – Centre Square Village
- Keynote Panel –
  - Victor Meitner, Jr., P.C., Attorney at Law, Victory Builders, LLC, Meitner Homes, LP
  - John Zaharchuk, Summit Realty Advisors, LLC

## Town Hall #4 – March 25<sup>th</sup> – Recreational Factors

- Village Focus – West Ambler Village
- Keynote Speaker – Drew Gilchrist, Southeast Regional Advisor, DCNR - Bureau of Recreation and Conservation

## Town Hall #5 – Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> – Present Draft Comprehensive Plan

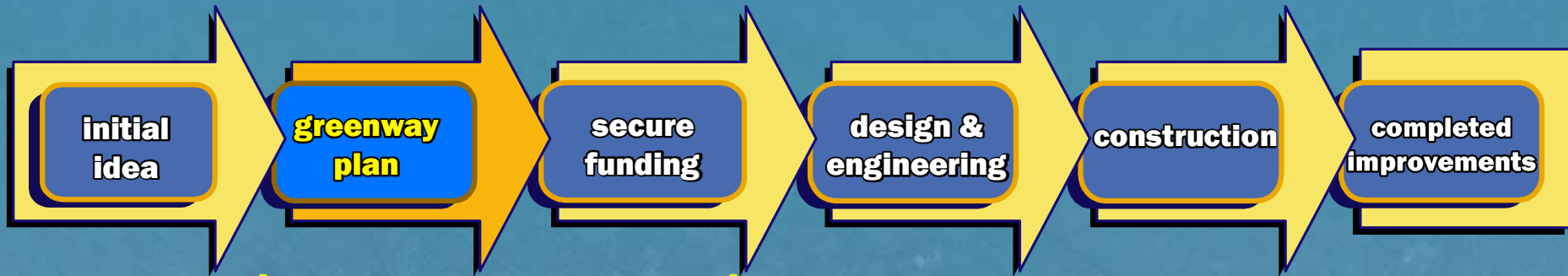


An aerial photograph of a suburban area in Dublin, Ireland, featuring a grid of streets and green spaces. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "Trails 101" is prominently displayed in the center in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font with a black drop shadow. Faint labels for "DUBLIN", "UPPER DUBLIN", and "EAST DUBLIN" are visible in the background.

# **Trails 101**



# Trail Planning and Implementation Process



*.... Then repeat .....then repeat.....  
.....then repeat .....then repeat ....*

Most Trail Planning and Design Projects are multi-phase, multi-year, sometimes multi-generational projects that require vision, patience, and a good master plan that will keep changing governing bodies on track year after year after year.



## Trail Types

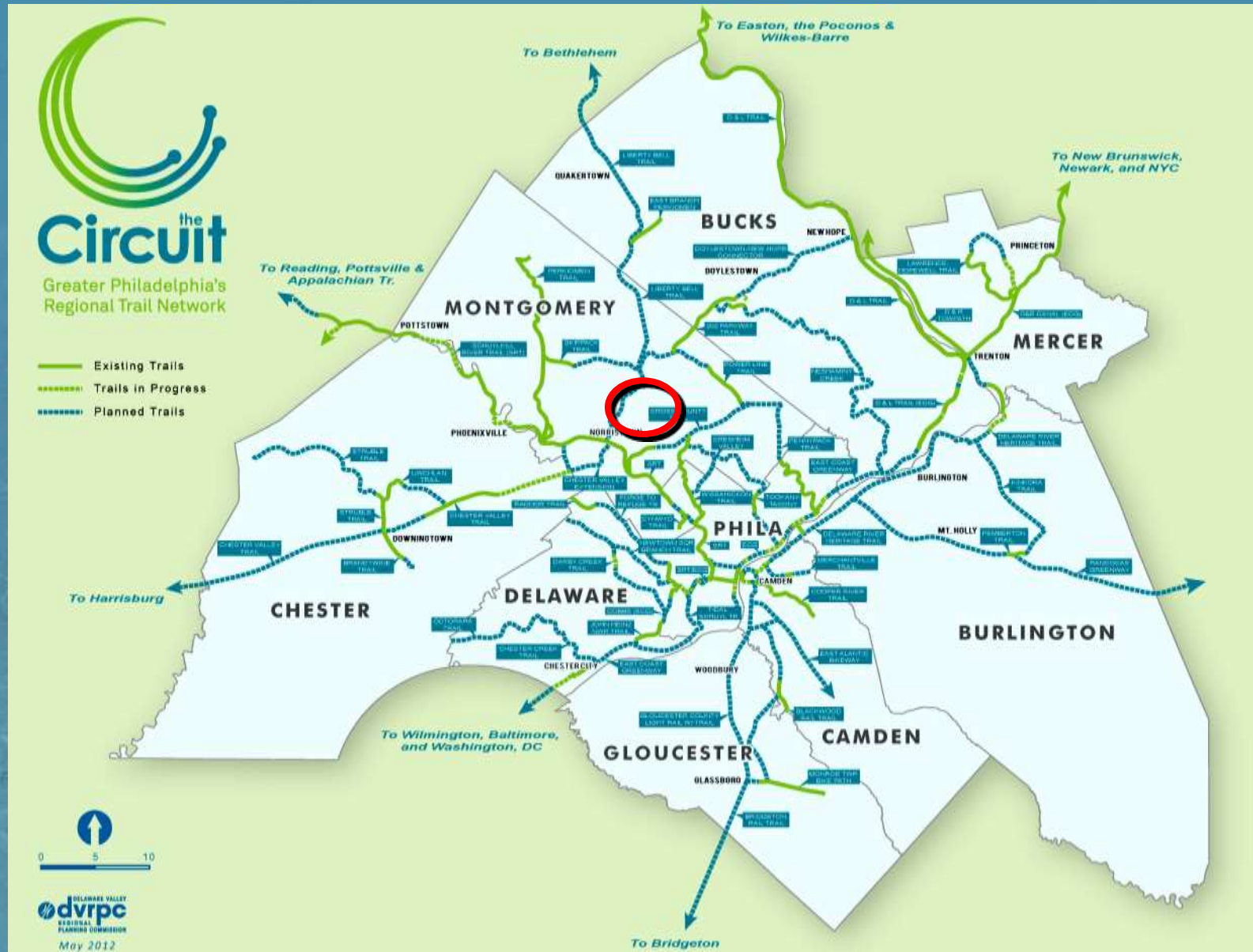
- **Land Trails** and **Water Trails**

## Trail Systems

- **Municipal (single jurisdiction)**
- **Multi-municipal – (stronger funding applications)**
- **County**
- **Multi-County**
- **Regional – The Circuit**
- **State Bike Routes - Alphabet Soup**







Current opportunity for funding Design & Engineering



A map of the Schuylkill National Forest area, showing various trails and towns. A red diamond highlights the area labeled "Whitpain". Other trails shown include Liberty Bell Trail, 300 Parkway Trail, Power Line Trail, Cross County Trail, Cresheim Valley Trail, SRT, Forge to Refuge Trail, Cynwyd Trail, Wissahickon Trail, Tookany Tacony Trail, Radnor Trail, Chester Valley Trail, Chester Valley Extension, Schuylkill River Trail (SRT), and Skippack Trail. Major towns labeled are Montgomery, Phoenixville, Norristown, and Philadelphia.

# Whitpain

## Current opportunity for funding Design & Engineering



# Land Trail User Groups (cyclists)

## Adult Cyclists

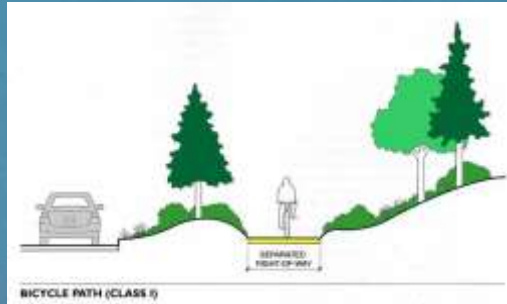
- ***Experienced and Confident*** (*Advanced Bicyclists*) - Generally use their bicycles as they would a motor vehicle.
- ***Casual / Less Confident*** (*Basic Bicyclists*) – Less confident adult riders may also be using their bicycles for transportation purposes, but prefer to avoid roads with fast and busy motor vehicle traffic.



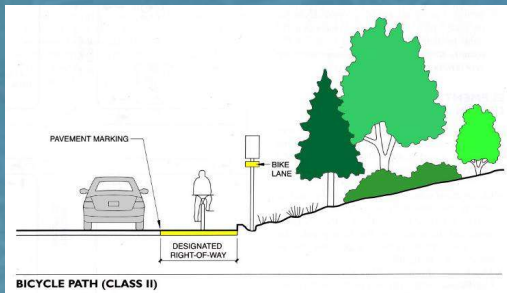
**Child Cyclists** – Riding on their own or with their parents, Child Cyclists may not travel as fast as their adult counterparts but still require access to key destinations in their community.



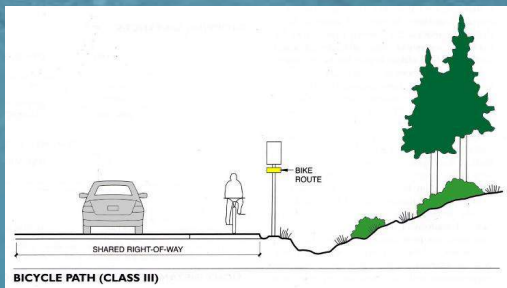
# Bicycle Pathway Classifications



- **Class 1** – Completely separated from the roadway. Also known as ‘off-road trails’, ‘greenways’, ‘shared use paths’, and/or ‘multi-use paths’.



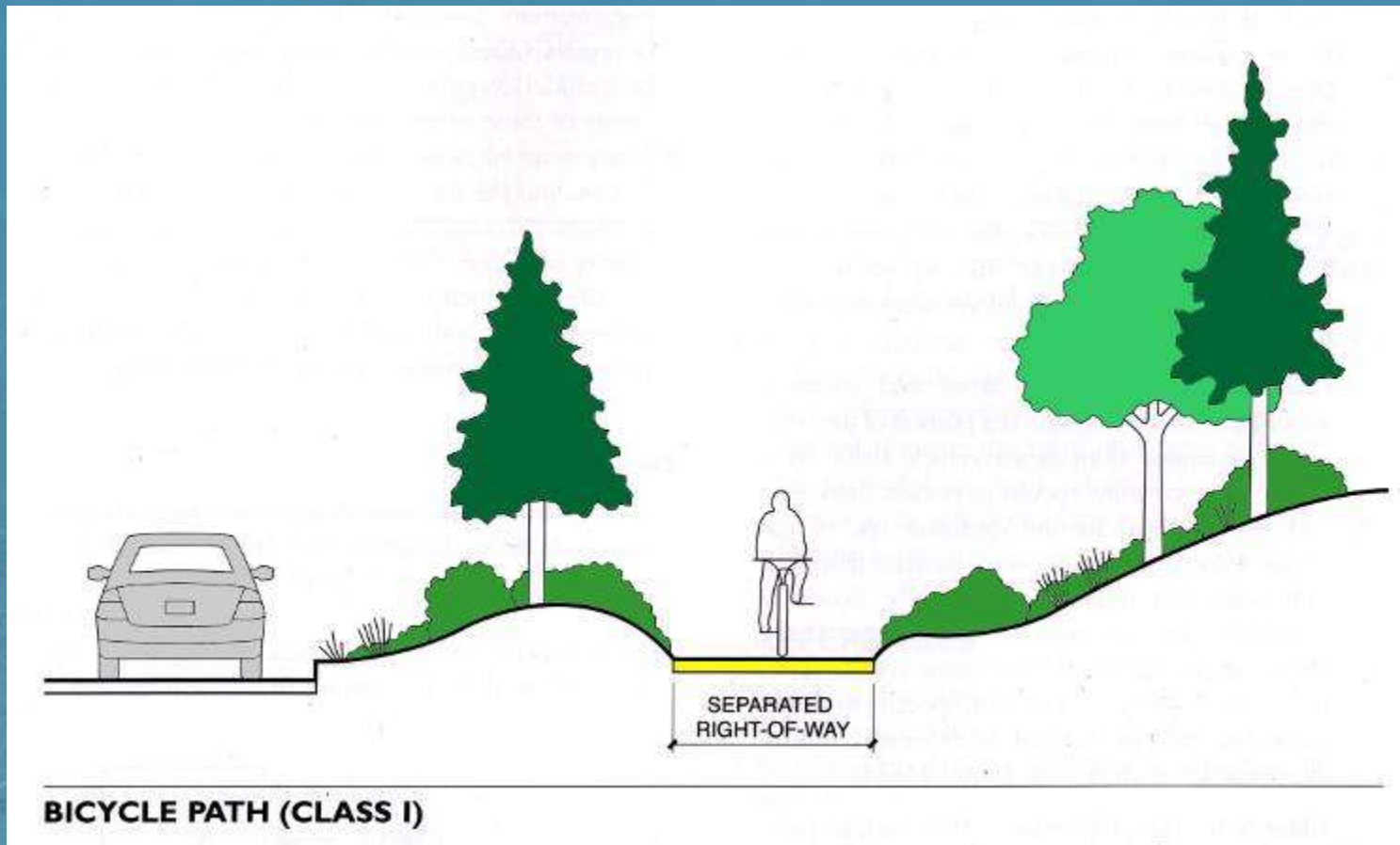
- **Class 2** – Designated bicycle lanes within a roadway for exclusive use of the cyclist. Contains special pavement markings and signage. Bike lanes are one-way flowing in the direction of motor vehicle traffic.



- **Class 3** – Bike Routes. Contains no special accommodation for the cyclist. Signs are used to define the route and the cyclist shares the roadway with vehicular traffic.



# Multi-Use Trail – Off Road



- **Class 1** – Completely separated from the roadway. Also known as 'off-road trails', 'greenways', 'shared use paths', and/or 'multi-use paths'.



## Multi-Use Trail (Class 1: A,B,C)



Radnor Township Rail Trail



## Hiking Trails

Clearing Limits

Do not cut trees over \_\_\_ in. diameter if they are over \_\_\_ feet from the centerline (both sides).

Clearing Limit Uphill

Clearing Limit Downhill

Vertical Clearing Limit

Trailway

Trailbed

Saw branches

Clearing Limits (Ft.)

Station	Uphill	Downhill	Height

Stump Height Requirements\* (inches)

Stump Position	Side Slope	Uphill	Downhill
Stumps left in place between the trailway and clearing limits	Side slope less than 10%		
	Side slope over 10%		
Stumps outside the clearing limits	Side slope less than 10%		
	Side slope over 10%		

Trail Name \_\_\_\_\_

Trail Number \_\_\_\_\_

\*All heights measured from uphill side of stumps.





# Trail Surfaces



- **Asphalt (impervious / porous)**
  - **Pavers / Concrete**
- **Stone Dust / Stone screenings**
  - **Rubberized Surfaces**
  - **Compact Earth**
- **Mulch / Boardwalks (wetlands)**



# Greenways

Greenways are corridors of land preserved for recreational use, bicycle or pedestrian, or natural resource protection.

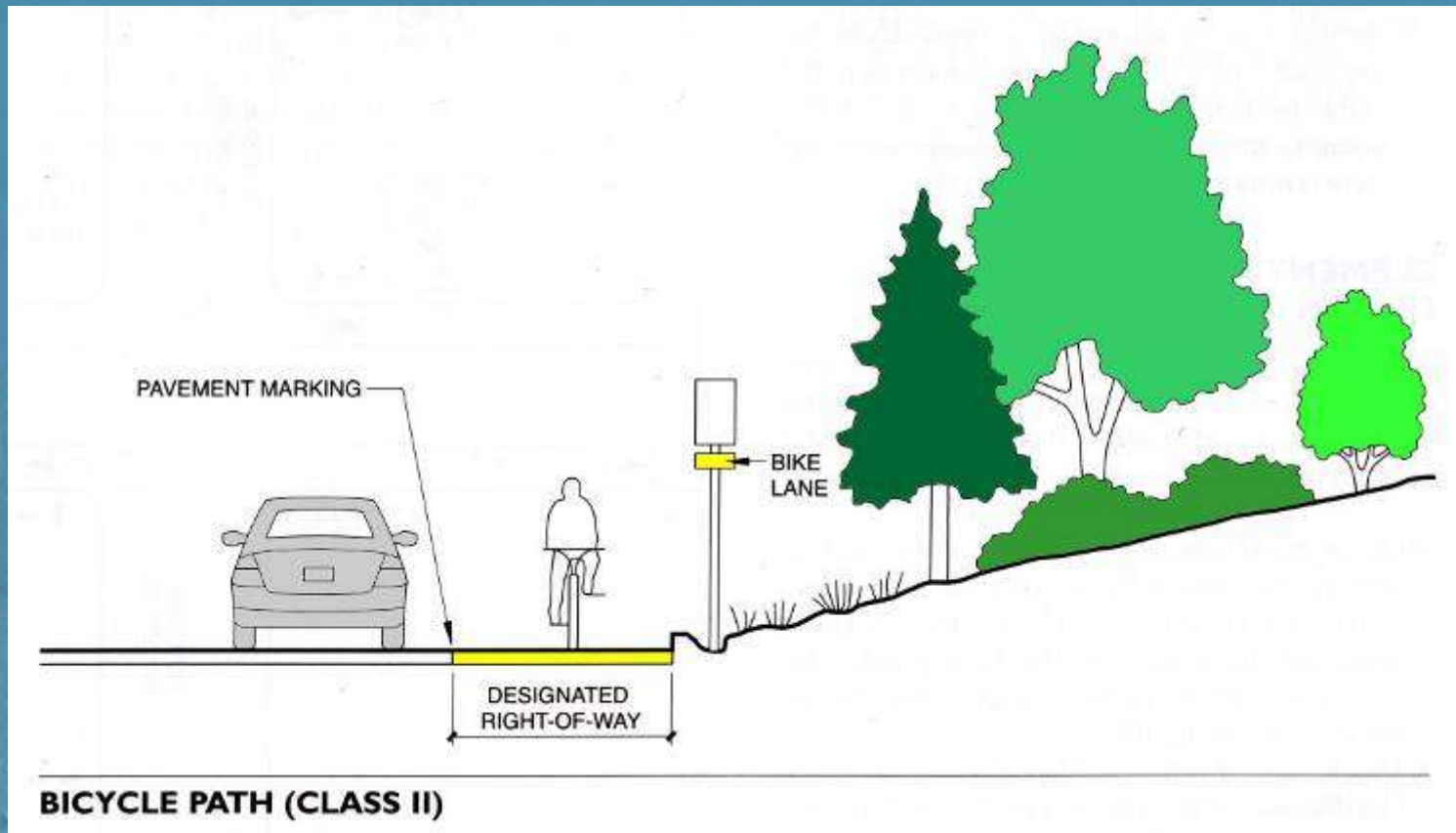


1. Trails
2. No Access  
(Riparian Corridor Protection)





# Bike Lanes



- **Class 2** – Designated bicycle lanes within a roadway for exclusive use of the cyclist. Contains special pavement markings and signage. Bike lanes are one-way flowing in the direction of motor vehicle traffic.

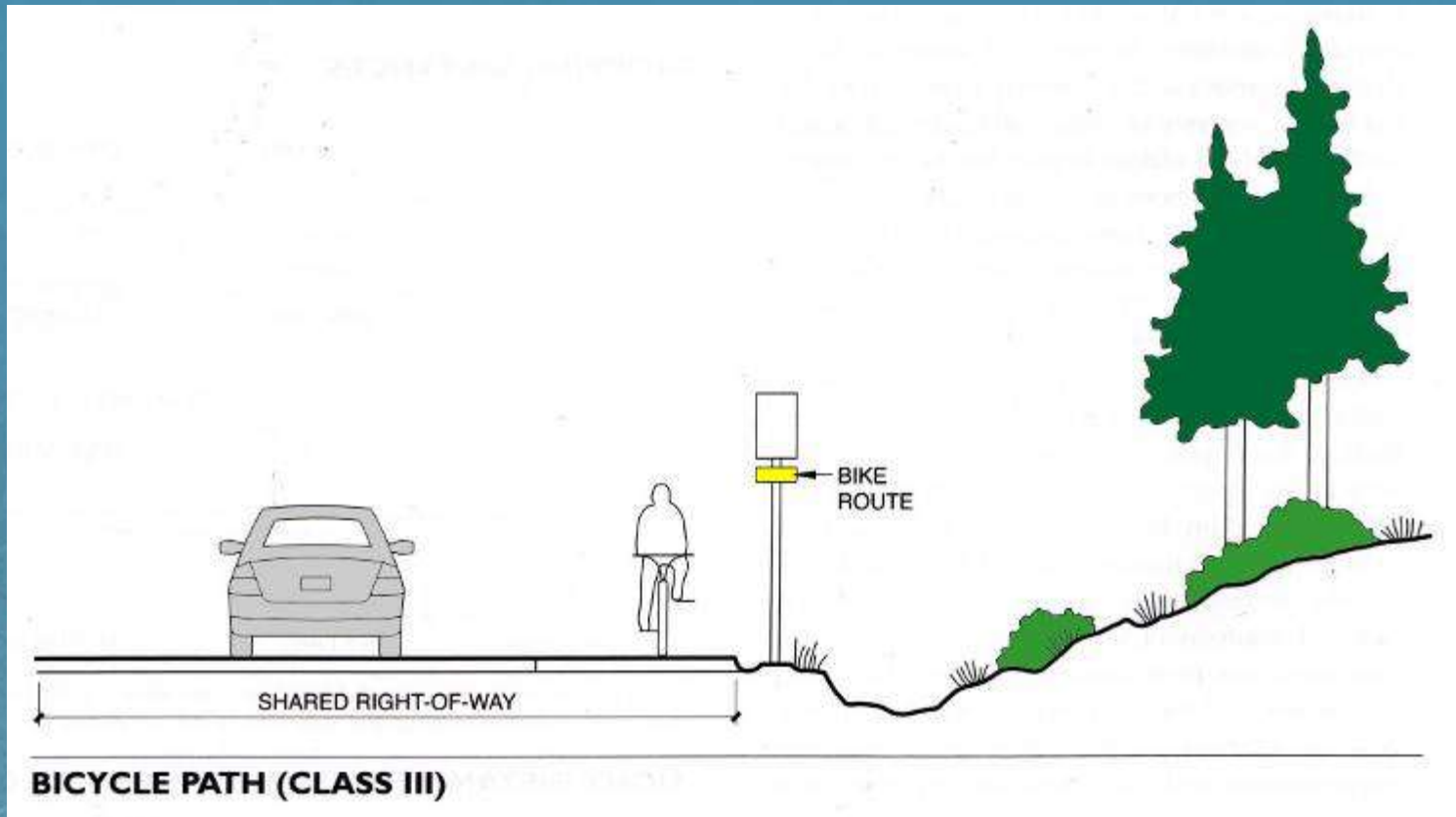


## Bike Lanes (Class 2: A&B)





# Bike Routes



- **Class 3 – Bike Routes.** Contains no special accommodation for the cyclist. Signs are used to define the route and the cyclist shares the roadway with vehicular traffic.



## Bike Routes (Class 3: A)



Improved Shoulder



Sharrows

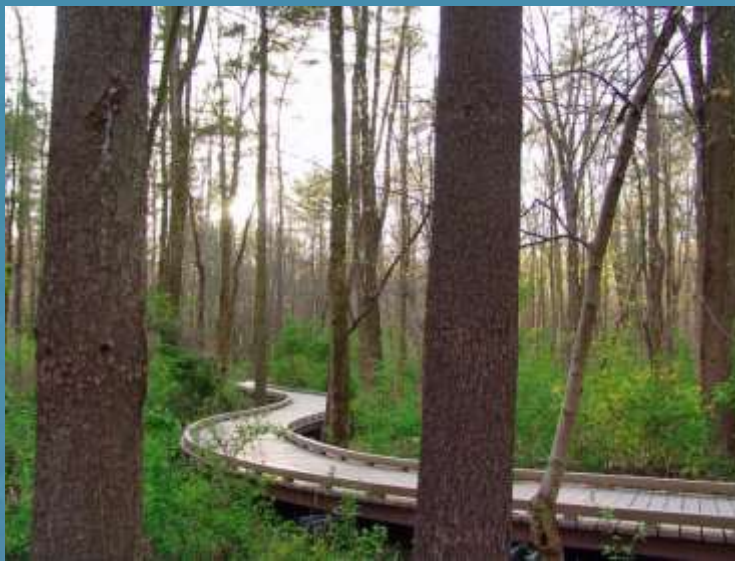


# Trail Infrastructure

Infrastructure is typically required where trails face linkage obstacles to itself or other community and neighborhood features. Infrastructure needs can be simple or complex.



# TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE



“Simple” infrastructure can include boardwalks and trail-head parking lots. Easy & relatively quick. .



# Types of complex infrastructure

*for trail & pedestrian facilities*

- At-grade crossings
- Bridges
- Tunnels
- Underpasses
- Roadway reductions





# Why Trails and Parks?

## What has led to an increased demand for better and safer bicycle and pedestrian connections?

- Development patterns & sedentary lifestyles have created a fitness and obesity epidemic. Access to and use of Trails and pathways can help make us healthier physically and mentally.
- Increased productivity / fewer sick days & decreased health care costs
- Can improve the quality of the environment & protect and enhance natural resources
- Attract and keep residents and businesses in a community
- These are “Quality of Life” amenities that many people want.
- PennDOT now has a multi-modal mandate for all of their projects
- Some contend that multi-modal infrastructure has gone from “nice” to “essential”





# Why Trails and Parks?

Are bicycle and pedestrian trails a “fad” or are they important transportation and recreational facilities that are here to stay? \*\*

## Nationwide

- 1,785 rail-trails that cover 21,239 miles
- Another 643 planned rail-trails that will traverse another 7,515 miles

## Pennsylvania

- 167 rail-trails that cover 1,611 miles



**\*\* according to the *Rails-to-Trails Conservancy***



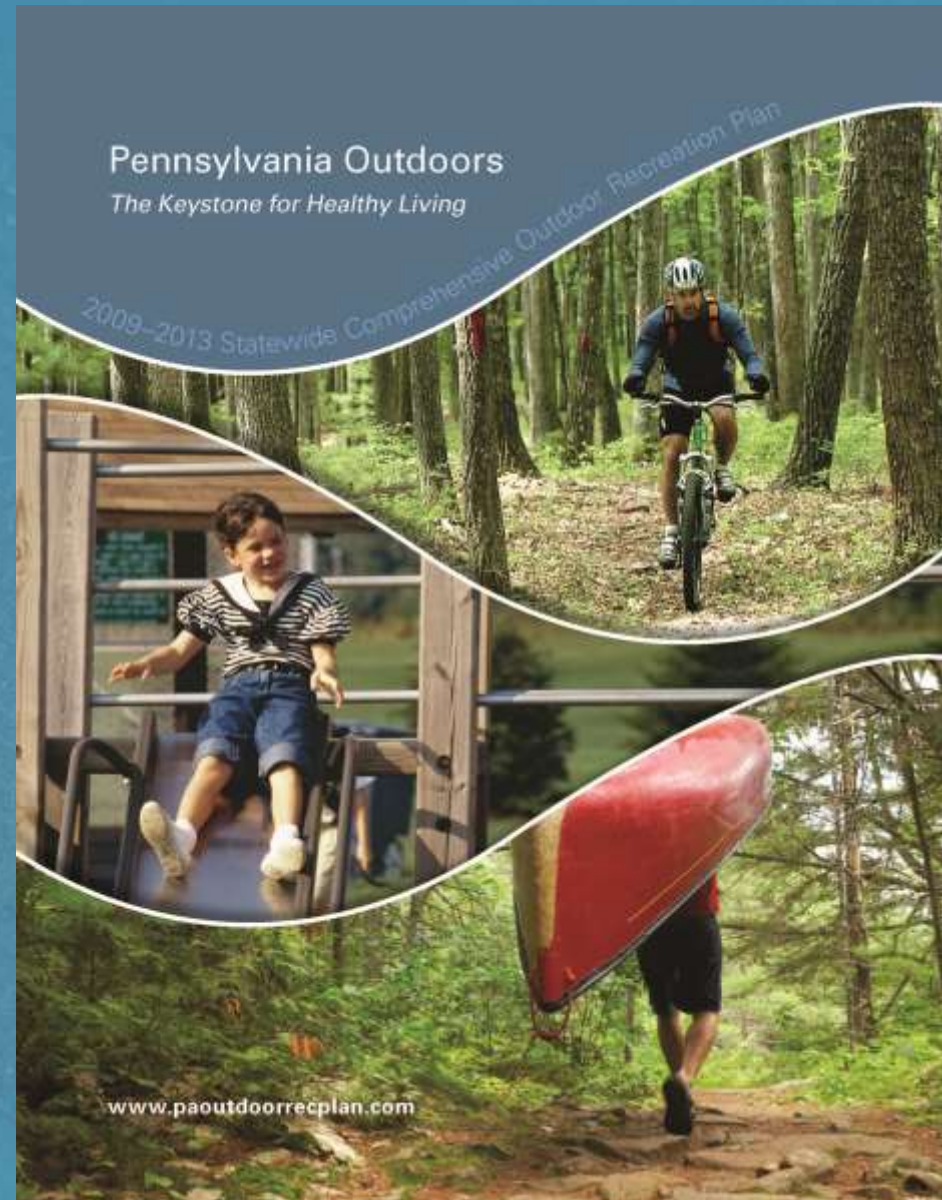
# Why Trails and Parks?

## 2009 PA Recreation Plan

**Trails - #1 most wanted recreation facilities**

**Walking - #1 most popular outdoor activity**

**Cycling – One of the most popular outdoor activities**





# Park and Open Space Facilities

Many facility types, sizes and activities





# Active Recreation

- Soccer
- Football
- Basketball
- Baseball
- Softball
- **Field Hockey**
- **Lacrosse**
- Volleyball
- **Rugby**
- Etc...





# Passive Recreation

- Walking / Dog walking
- **Dog parks**
- Hiking
- Jogging
- Biking
- Boating
- Swimming
- Fishing
- Bird watching
- Gardening
- Playgrounds
- **Nature based playgrounds**
- Picnicking
- Community events
- Civic spaces
- Etc...





# Other types of park / open space facilities and benefits

- Nature preserves
- Wildlife habitats
- Stormwater management areas
- Greenways
- Riparian corridor protection
- Flood protection
- Erosion control
- Enhanced viewsheds / aesthetics
- Gateways
- Etc...





# Why Trails and Parks?

## Economic Value of Open Space & Parks

**Source: *Return on Environment, The Economic Value of Protected Open Space in Southeastern Pennsylvania* by DVRPC, 2011**

### 1. Open space enhances home values

- Open space adds \$16.3 billion to the value of southeastern Pennsylvania's housing stock.
- Protected open space generates \$240 million annually in property tax revenues to support county and municipal governments and local school districts.





# Why Trails and Parks?

## Economic Value of Open Space & Parks

*Source: Return on Environment, The Economic Value of Protected Open Space in Southeastern Pennsylvania by DVRPC, 2011*

### **2. Open space protects property, filters drinking water, and cleans the air**

- Southeastern Pennsylvania realizes nearly **\$61 million** in annual cost savings from protected open spaces' ability to naturally filter out pollutants and replenish water supply.
- The total annual benefit generated by natural flood mitigation services is more than **\$37 million**.
- Trees on protected open space are estimated to provide **\$17 million** in annual air pollution removal and carbon sequestration services.



# Why Trails and Parks?

## Economic Value of Open Space & Parks

Source: *Return on Environment, The Economic Value of Protected Open Space in Southeastern Pennsylvania* by DVRPC, 2011

### **3. Open space furnishes low or no cost recreation that saves money and improves health**

- Responses to the 2009 statewide outdoor recreation survey indicate that, on average, **41%** of moderate or strenuous physical exercise is performed in a park or on a trail.
- Each household in the region saves **\$392** per year by having open space available for recreation and exercise.
- The health-related cost savings resulting from physical activity on protected open space amount to **\$1.3 billion** per year including avoided workers' compensation costs and avoided productivity losses.
- **\$795 million** of those health-related cost savings are medical cost savings.



# Why Trails and Parks?

## Economic Value of Open Space & Parks

*Source: Return on Environment, The Economic Value of Protected Open Space in Southeastern Pennsylvania by DVRPC, 2011*

### **4. Open space creates jobs and attracts people who spend in our communities**

- Economic activity associated with protected open space in southeastern Pennsylvania results in more than 6,900 jobs and \$299 million in annual earnings.
- Economic activity associated with protected open space generates \$30 million per year in state and local tax revenue.



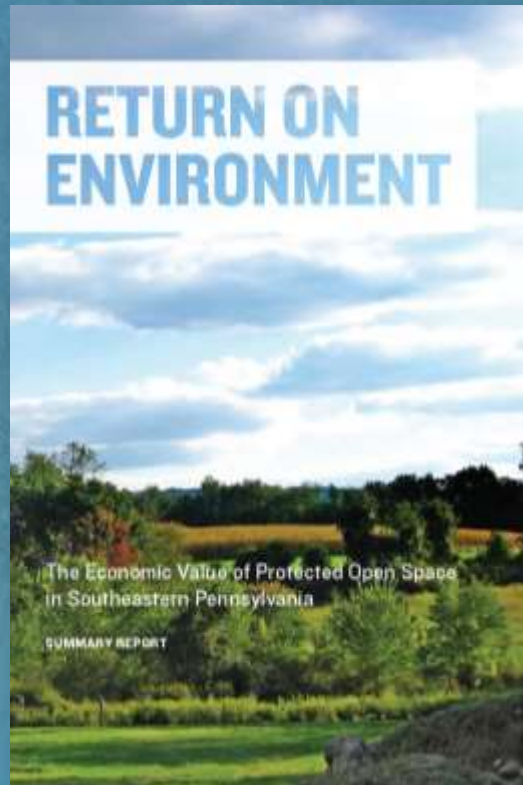
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## Economic Value of Open Space & Parks

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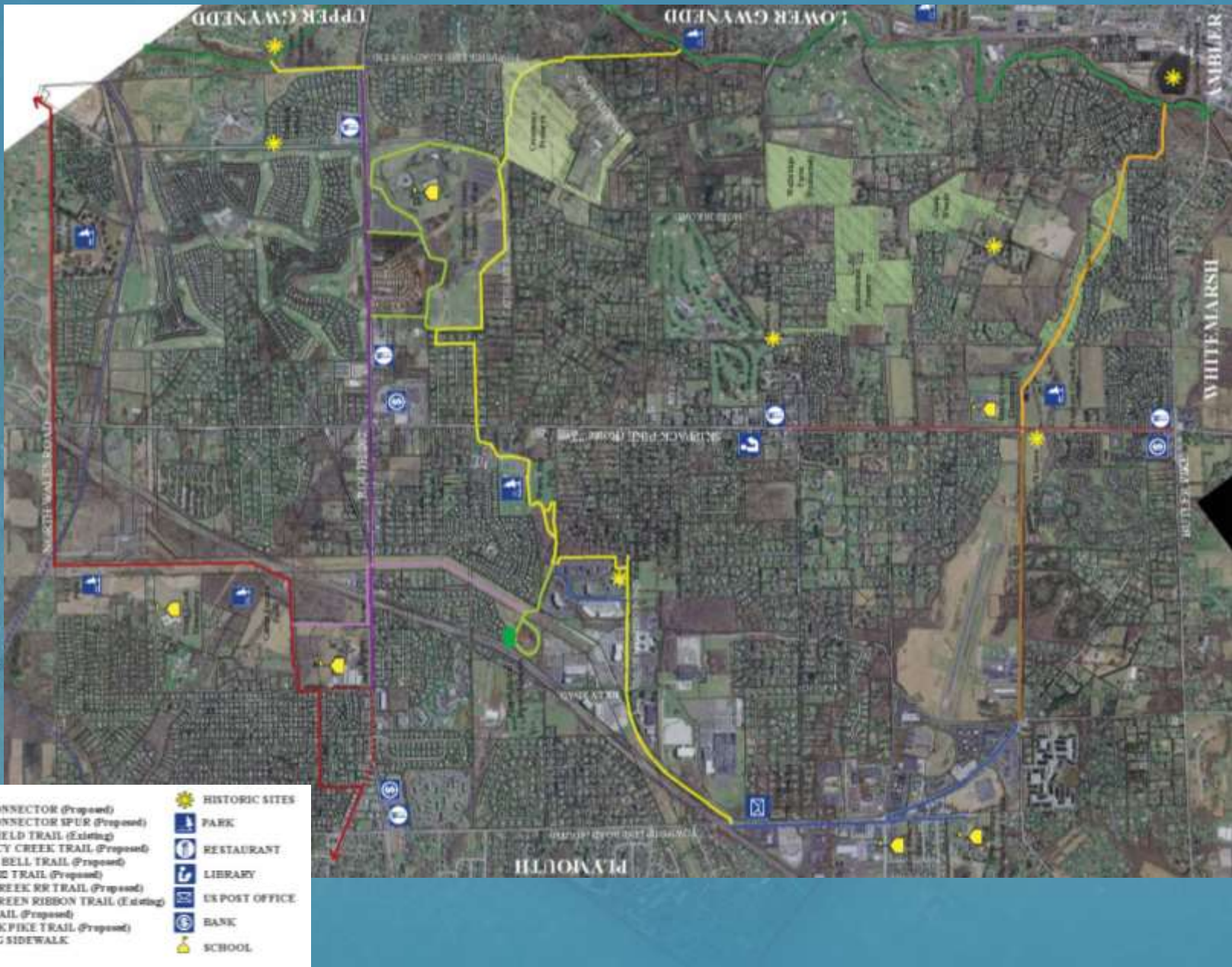
For more information on the study:

[www.greenspacealliance.org](http://www.greenspacealliance.org) or [www.dvrpc.org/openspace/value/](http://www.dvrpc.org/openspace/value/)



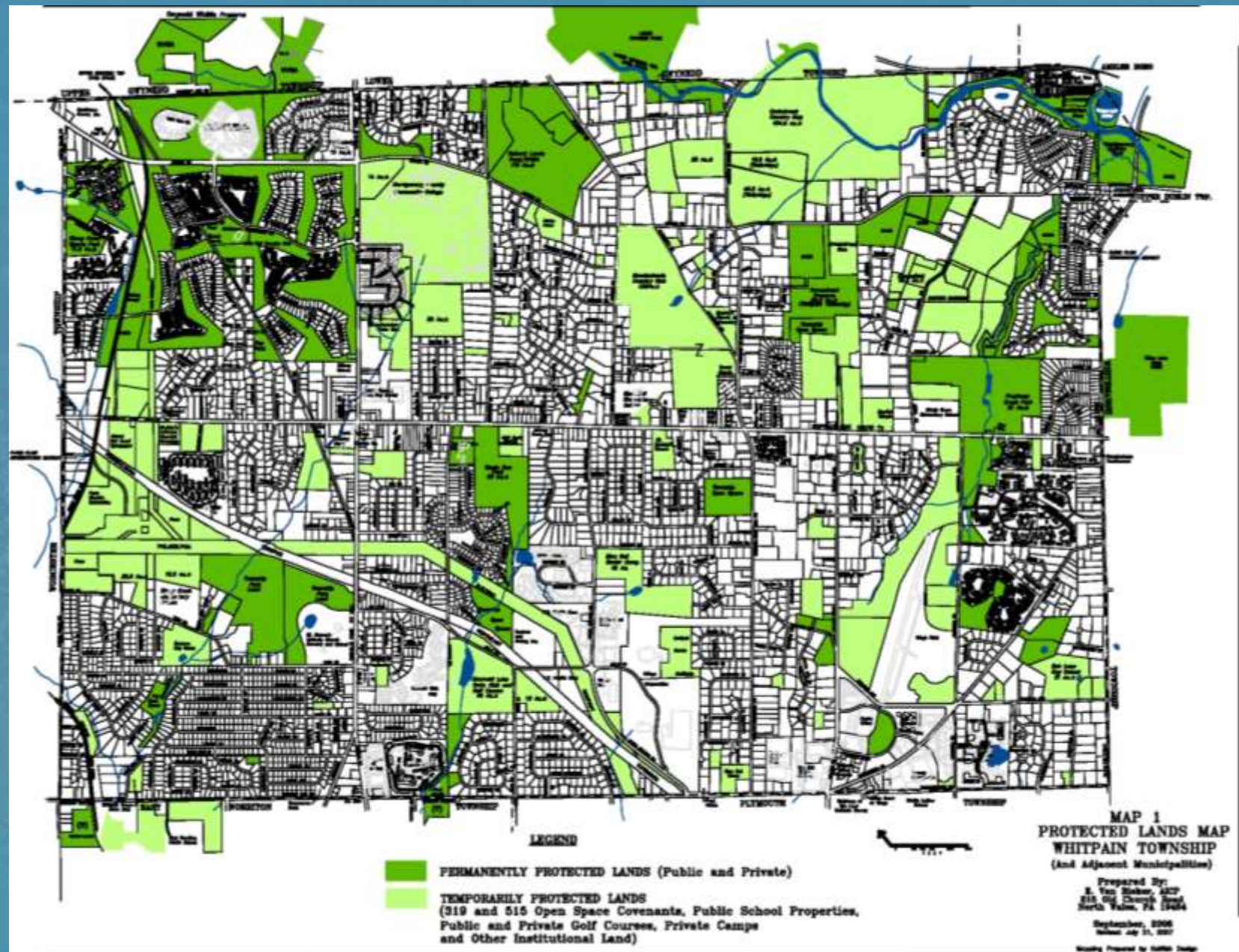


# Current Whitpain Trails Plan....Good Starting Point





# Current Whitpain Park & Open Space Plan

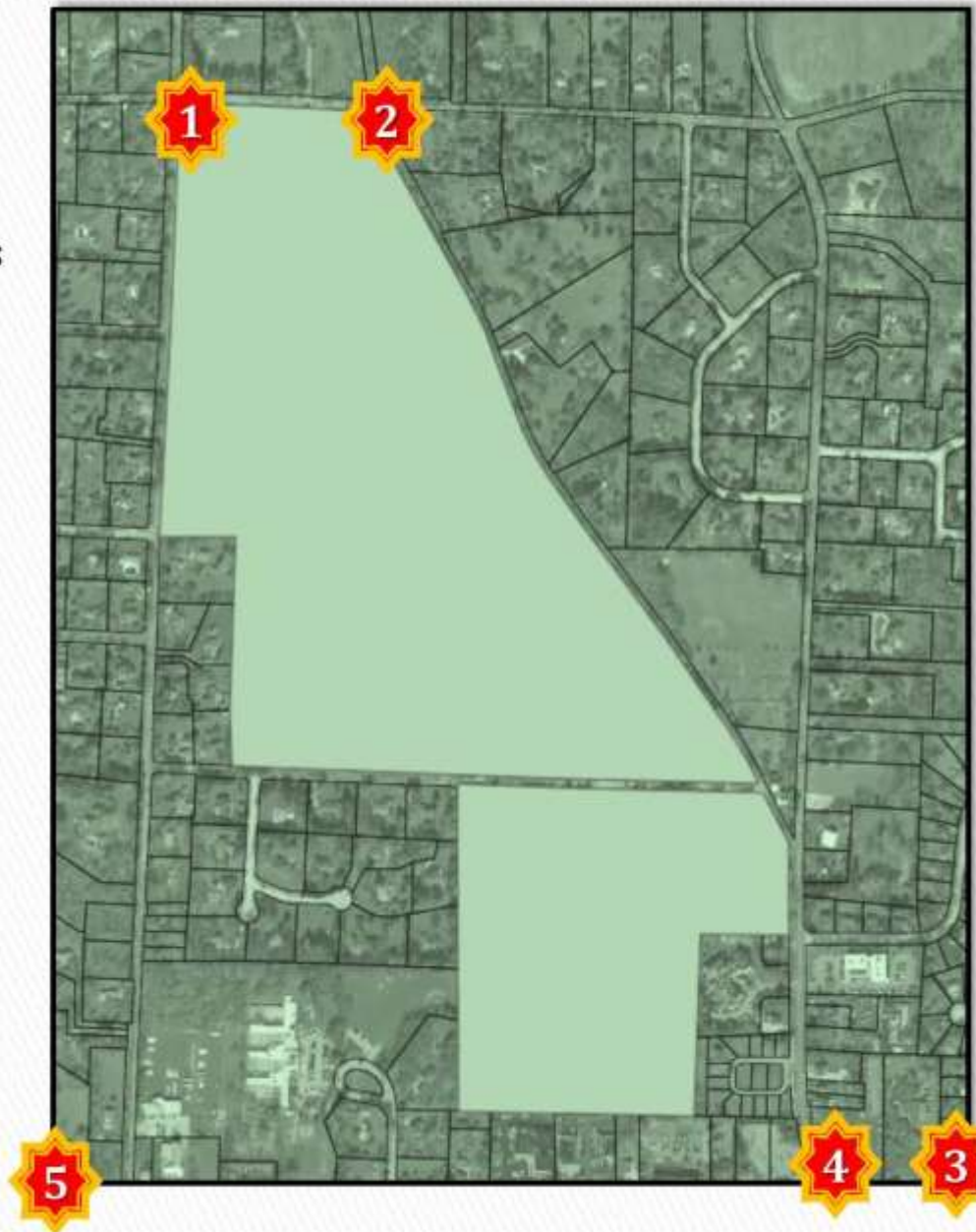




## Meadowlands Tract

- ▶ Meadowlands CC is a 125-acre tract in the heart of Blue Bell that is zoned as "Park and Recreation"
- ▶ Scenic woodland habitat and viewsheds that contribute significant value to all nearby properties and the wider community
- ▶ Headwaters of Willow Run, an important tributary to the Wissahickon Creek
- ▶ Historically significant buildings next to and near (*i.e. Boehm's Church & cemetery and Blue Bell Inn*)
- ▶ Traffic gridlock daily at each of the surrounding intersections and beyond

- 1 Morris Rd/School Rd (*Rated "F"*)
- 2 Morris Rd/Plymouth Rd (*Rated "F"*)
- 3 Skippack Pk/Walton Rd (*Rated "F"*)
- 4 Skippack Pk/PBB Pk (*Rated "F"*)
- 5 Skippack Pike/Union Mtg Rd (*Rated "F"*)



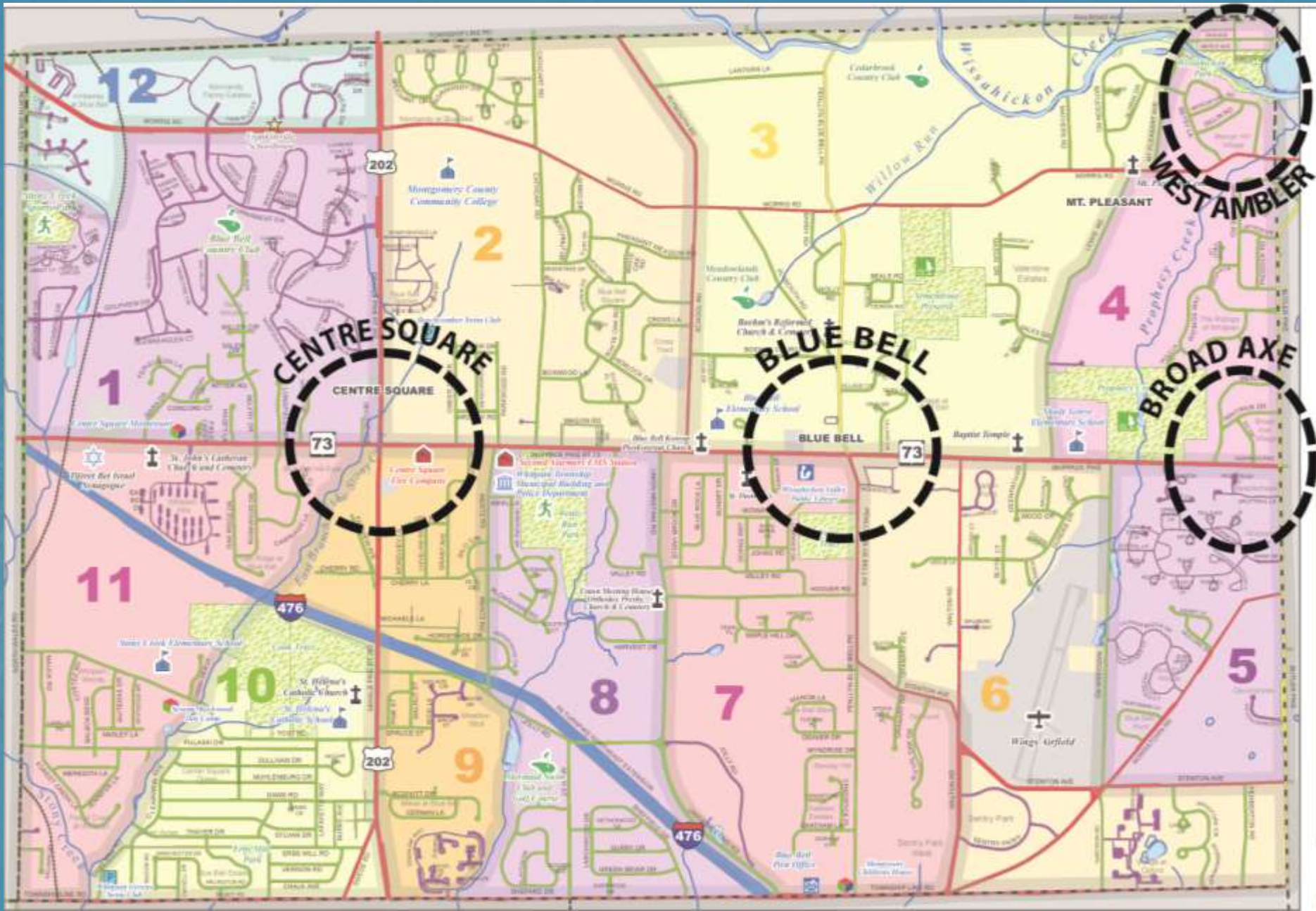


An aerial photograph of a suburban area, likely Whitpain, Pennsylvania, is shown with a semi-transparent blue overlay. The text is centered in the upper half of the image. The text is in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. The first line is underlined, and the second line is also underlined. The background shows a grid of streets and some green spaces.

# WHITPAIN 2035 4 VILLAGES WITHIN A COMMUNITY

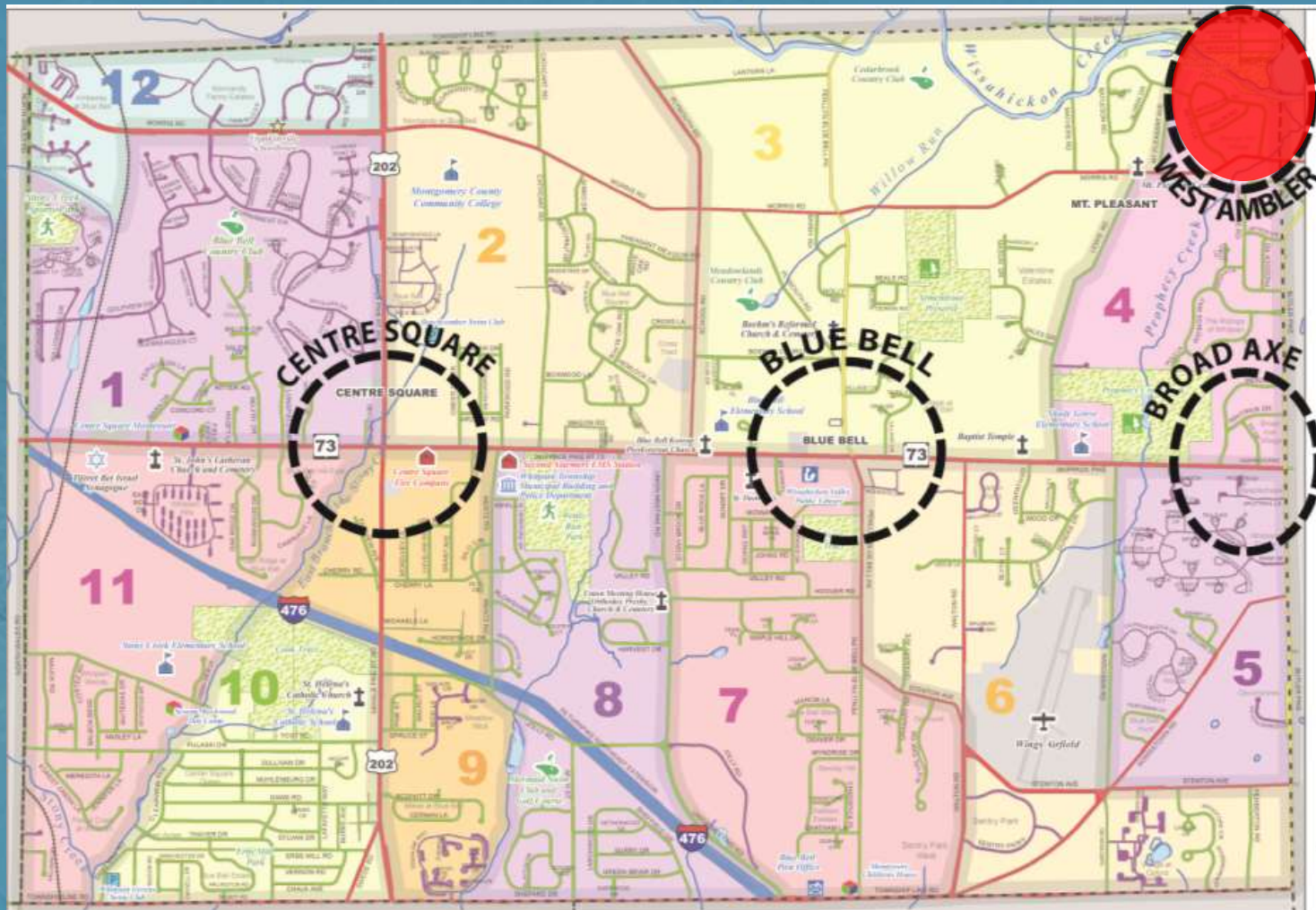


# Whitpain Township's 4 Villages



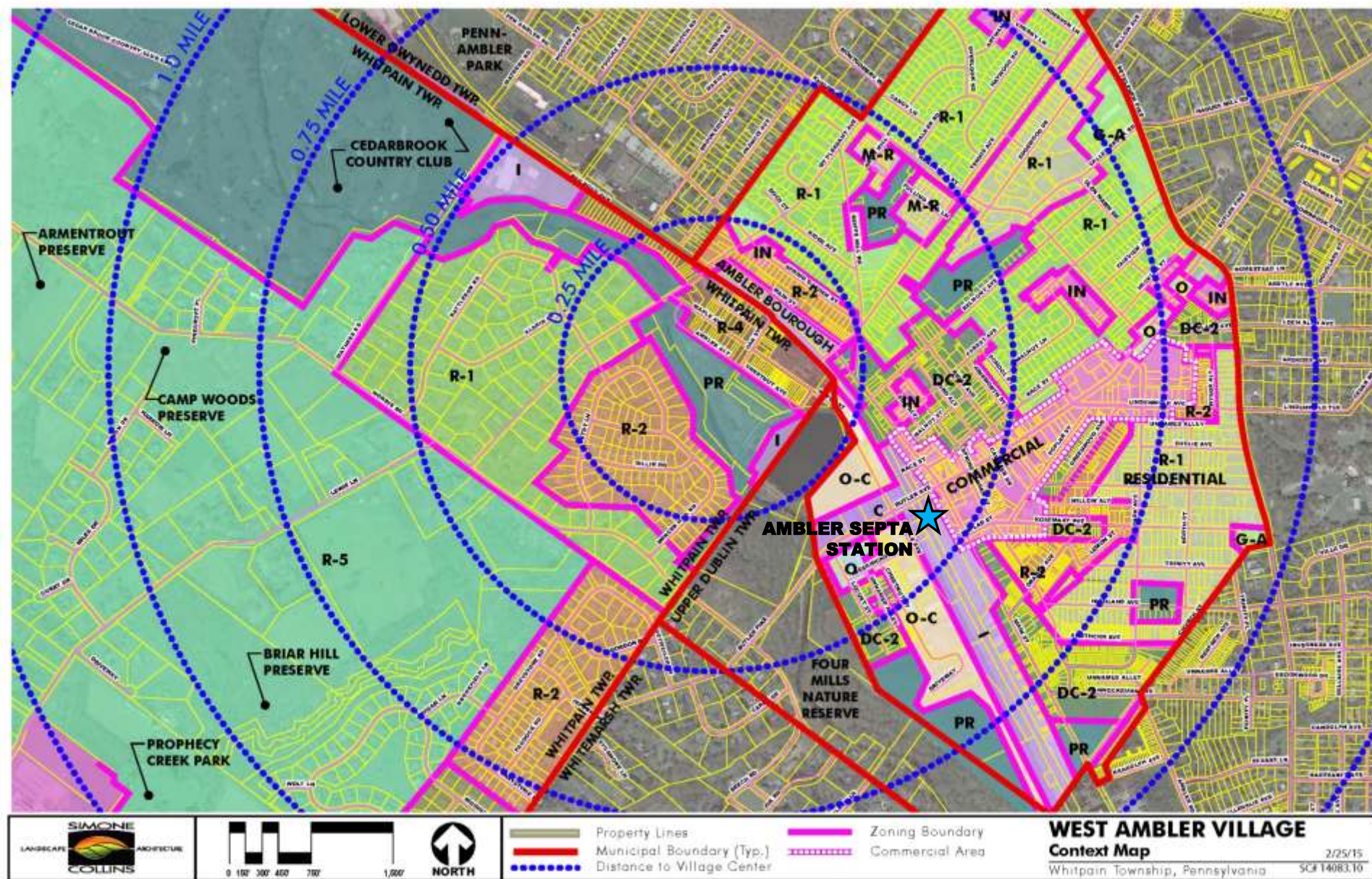


# VILLAGE FOCUS: WEST AMBLER VILLAGE



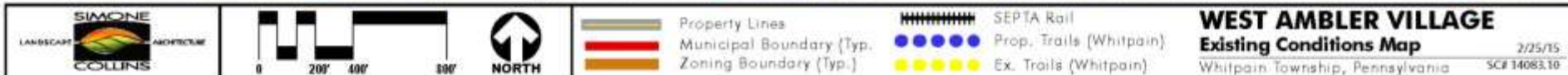


## West Ambler Village - Distances to Village Center



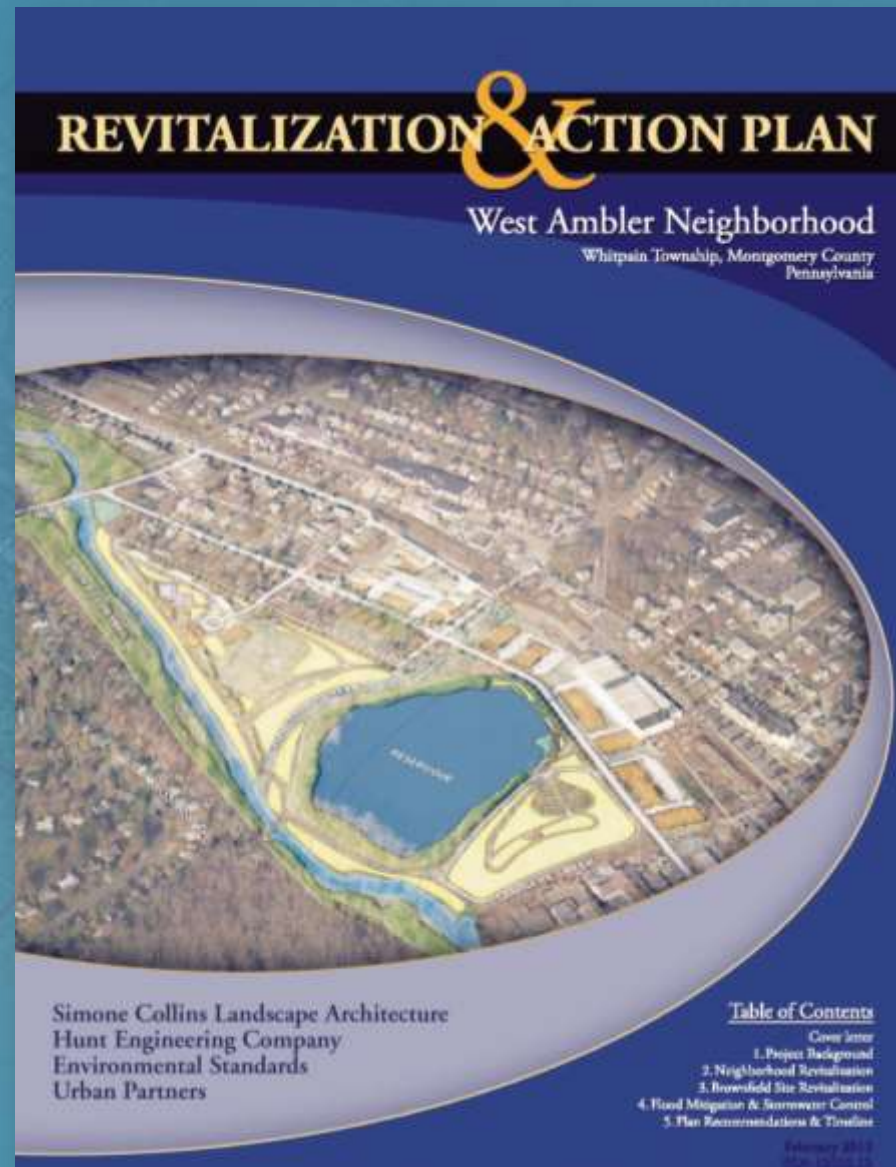


# West Ambler Village - Zoning & Land Use



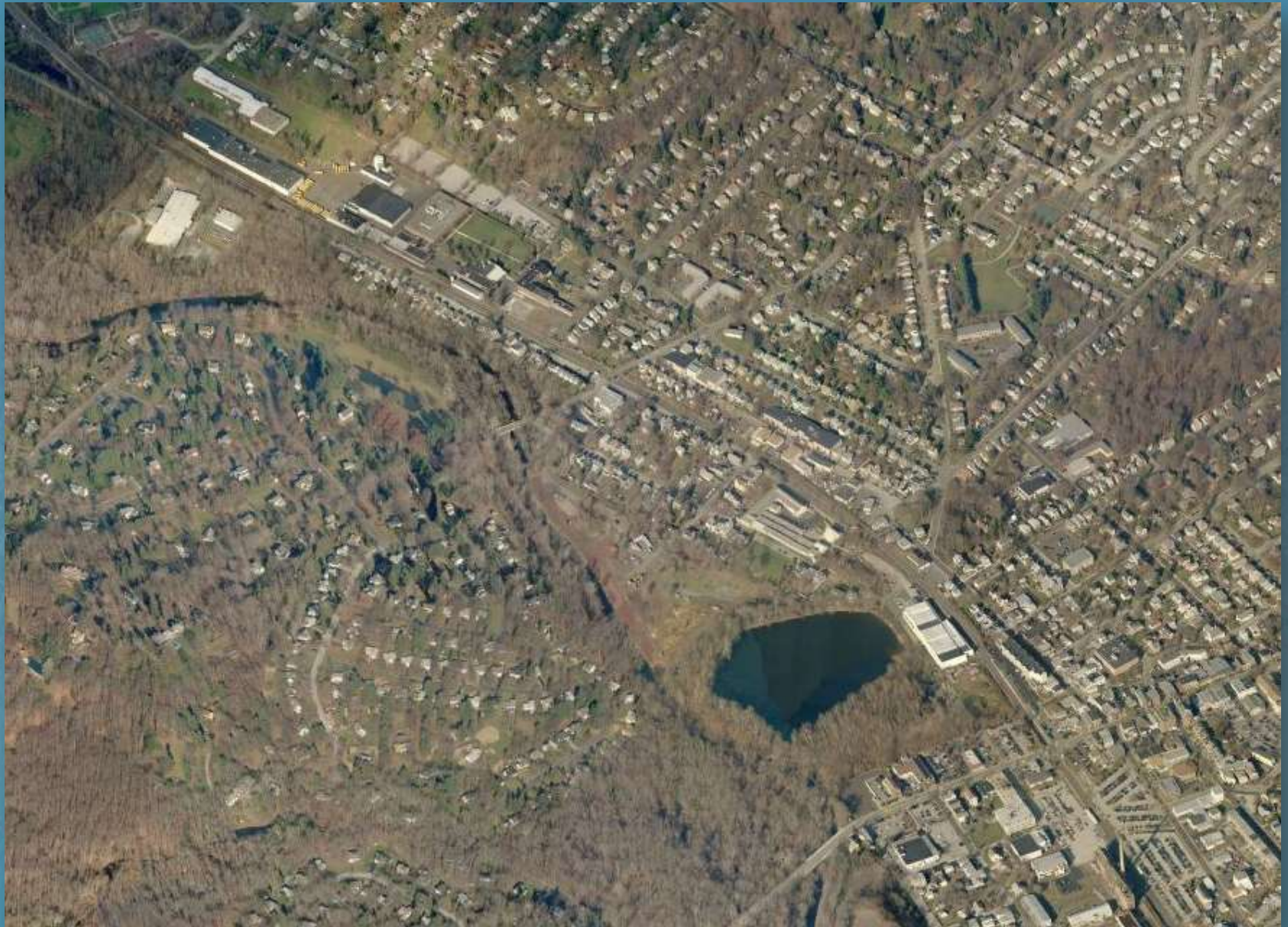


# West Ambler Village Revitalization & Action Plan – 2013





# West Ambler Village





# West Ambler Village



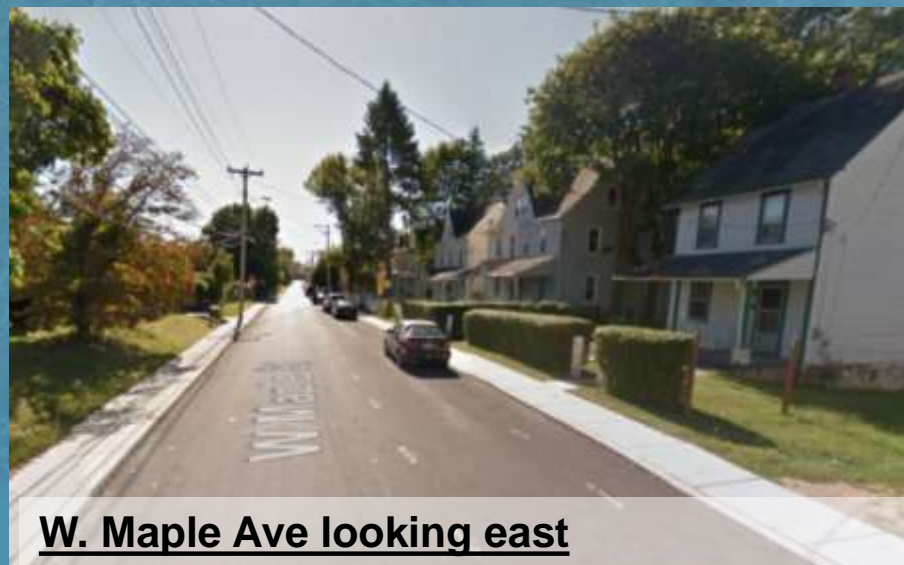
Railroad Ave looking east



E. Mount Pleasant Ave looking south



W. Maple Ave at Mt. Pleasant Ave



W. Maple Ave looking east



# West Ambler Village



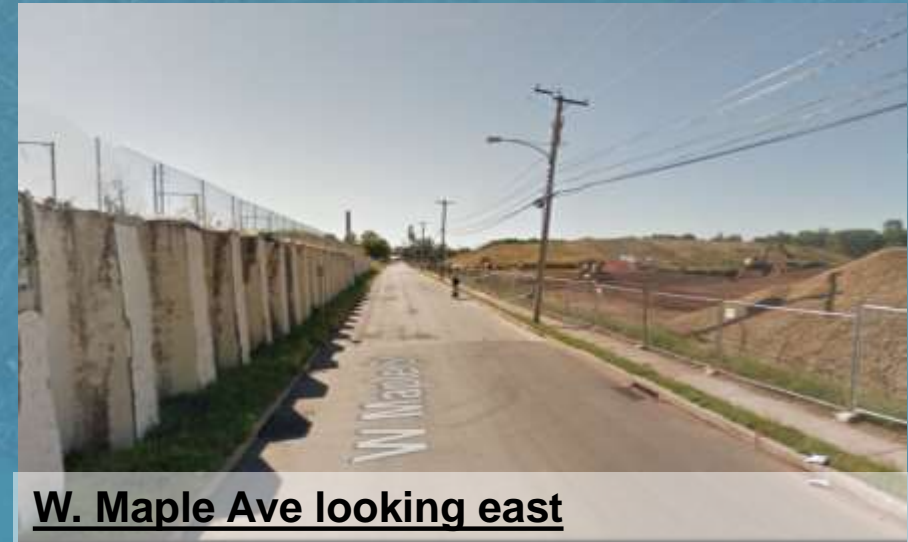
Ambler Ave looking west



Oak St. looking south



Butler Pike at Maple St. looking north



W. Maple Ave looking east



# West Ambler Village - BoRit Superfund site



Bo-Rit Superfund site



Wissahickon Creek at Bo-Rit Superfund site



Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve



"The Pile"



# Concept Plan





# Plan Recommendations

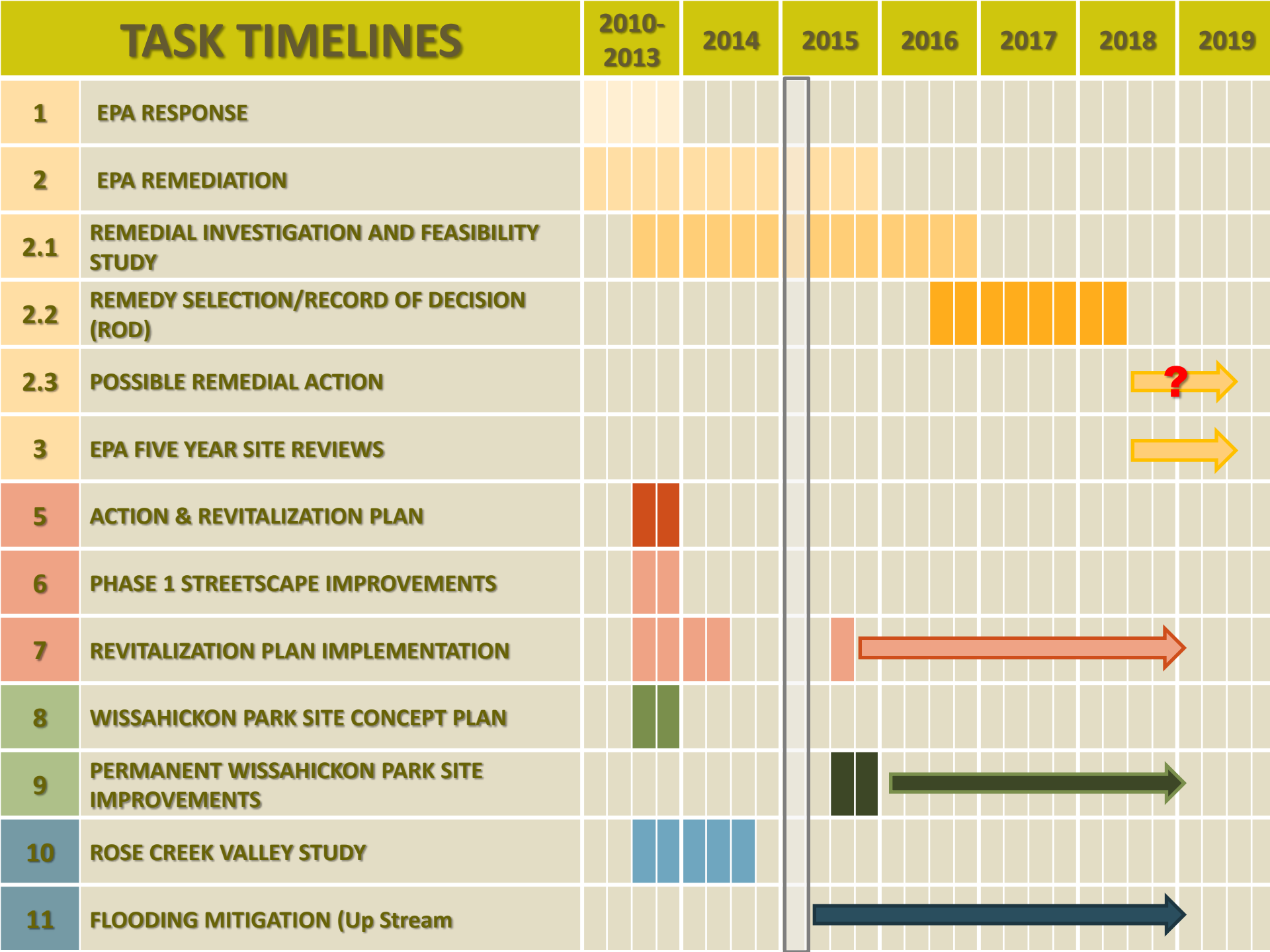
<u>RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS</u>	<u>ACCOUNTABLE ENTITY</u>	<u>APPROXIMATE COST</u>	<u>SHORT (1-2 YRS)</u> <u>MEDIUM TERM (3-6 YRS)</u> <u>LONG TERM (7-10 YRS)</u>
Traffic and Stop Signs	Whitpain Township	\$12,000	Short Term ✓
Add Road, Trail , Stormwater Management and Infrastructure Improvements to Township Official Map	Whitpain Township	\$2,000	Short Term
Possible Temporary Park Improvements	Whitpain Township	\$200,000	Short Team
Evaluate and Revise Zoning	Whitpain Township	\$5,000.00	Short Term
Streetscape Improvements	Whitpain Township	\$2.0 million	Short, Medium, Long Term ✓ Phase 1
Beech Alley Extension	Whitpain Township	TBD	Medium & Long Term
Park Master Plan for Entire Superfund Site	Whitpain Township	\$50,000	Short Team
Roadway Directional and other changes (some part of streetscape)	Whitpain Township	\$10,000	Short & Medium Term ✓
Storm sewer Infrastructure	Whitpain Township	\$246,900	Medium Term
Additional Earthen embankments around reservoir perimeters for long-term tree replanting	EPA , Wissahickon Waterfowl Association	TBD	Medium to Long Term ✓ In process



# Plan Recommendations

<u>RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS</u>	<u>ACCOUNTABLE ENTITY</u>	<u>APPROXIMATE COST</u>	<u>SHORT (1-2 YRS)</u> <u>MEDIUM TERM (3-6 YRS)</u> <u>LONG TERM (7-10 YRS)</u>
Wissahickon Park Improvements (approximate cost includes community building)	Whitpain Township	\$2.6 million	Medium Term & Long Term
Wildlife Preserve Improvements	Wissahickon Waterfowl Association,	\$82,000	Medium & Long Term
Flood Mitigation & Flood Claims Assistance	Whitpain Township, FEMA, PEMA,	TBD	Medium & Long Term
Residential Infill Development	Private Sector Whitpain Township	Unknown	<b>New project started:</b> Medium & Long Term <b>4 units at 319 W. Maple Ave</b>
Improvements at The Pile	TBD	\$323,000	Medium & Long Term
Boys and Girls Club (possible)	Ambler Area Boys & Girls Club Committee	\$5 million	Long Term <b>Probably not</b>



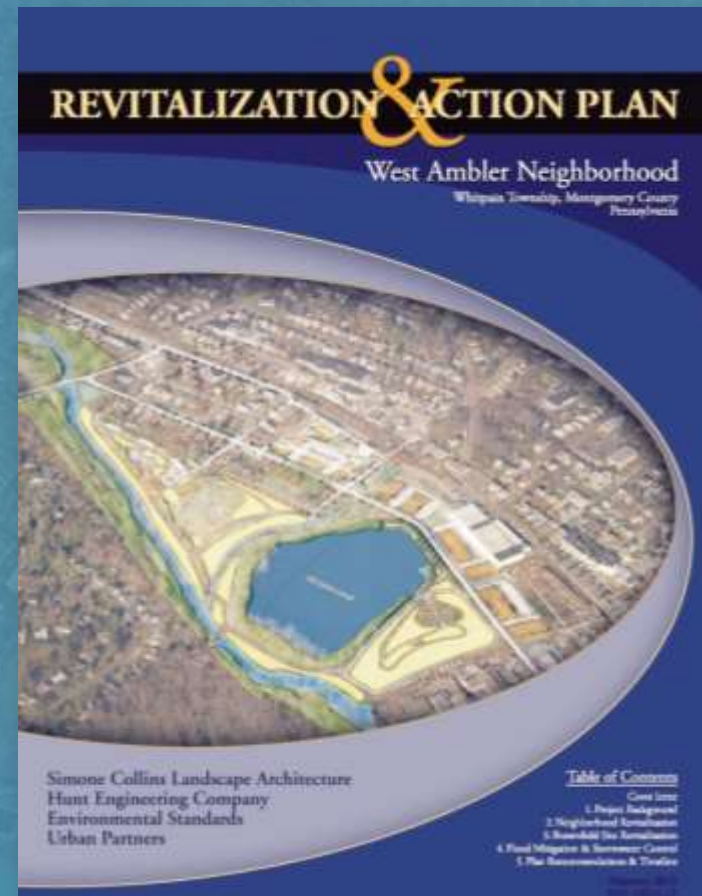




# West Ambler Village Revitalization & Action Plan – 2013

For more information on the plan please visit:

[http://whitpaintownship.net/pages/news\\_westambler.php](http://whitpaintownship.net/pages/news_westambler.php)





# **West Ambler Village Opportunities and Challenges**

- **Completion of EPA remediation**
- **Improvements of Wissahickon Park / Wildlife Preserve / “The Pile”**
- **Tennis Avenue extension / Streetscape improvements**
- **Stormwater management / flood mitigation improvements (upstream)**
- **Residential infill development (market forces at work)**
- **Walkability, safe pedestrian routes, and trail connections**
- **Connections to Wissahickon Park, Ambler business district, Ambler SEPTA station, Green Ribbon Trail, Prophecy Creek Park, Broad Axe Village, Cedarbrook Country Club**
- **Eliminate short vehicular trips to village / downtown Ambler**
- **Appearance of future development & redevelopment is important**
- **Marketing and identity of West Ambler Village**



## **Community Survey (407 responses to date)**

Obtaining feedback from the community is vital to the planning process. We would appreciate you taking the time to complete the following 26 question survey. It should take about 10-15 minutes.

**To take the online survey, please use the link below:**

**<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WhitpainCompPlan>**

or go to **<http://www.whitpaintownship.net/>**



# Now, your ideas, comments, and suggestions.

## Brainstorming – Card Technique

### GOALS

**Goals and priorities for the project** — initially broad, then specific: “Enhance Village Areas” or “Improve Traffic Safety”

### FACTS

Existing **land use**, **roadway conditions**, **natural resources**, **Township destinations**, **development projects**, **trails**, all the various interest groups / **Partners** involved in the project

### CONCEPTS

**Ideas for attaining project goals** — “Create Safe Pedestrian Sidewalks”, “Enhance Marketing of Villages”, or “Enhance Stormwater Management”



# **Next Town Hall Meeting: Wed. October 14<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm**

**Topic:** Presentation of Draft Comprehensive Plan

**Location:** Montgomery County Community College

College Hall, Rm 144 / 148, 340 Dekalb Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422

## **Upcoming Committee Meetings (Open to public)**

**All committee meetings held at 5:30 pm at Township building**

- **Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup> – Present Draft Plan**
- **Tuesday August 4<sup>th</sup> – Receive comments on Draft Plan**
- **Tuesday October 6<sup>th</sup> – Present 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft Plan**
- **Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> – Receive comments on 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft Plan**



# Next Town Hall Meeting: Wed. October 14, 7:00 pm

Montgomery County Community College, College Hall, Rm 144 / 148

340 Dekalb Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422

## Comprehensive Plan for Whitpain Township

Project Schedule- Revised 3/2/15

