

# Lower Gwynedd Township

## 2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP**  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

FEBRUARY, 2026





## Acknowledgements

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# **Lower Gwynedd Township**

## **2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**



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## CHAPTER 1:

# INTRODUCTION

## A vision for Lower Gwynedd

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Lower Gwynedd Township is a suburban community with a diverse built and natural environment comprising institutions, employment centers, train stations, highway access, and open spaces, and streams that flow into the Wissahickon Creek and Neshaminy Creek. The township has opportunities for context-sensitive growth and preservation. This comprehensive plan is the foundation on which future planning decisions will be based on and provides guidelines for future policies, land uses, and development within the township.

### Previous Planning Efforts

The Lower Gwynedd 2045 Comprehensive Plan builds upon the township's past planning efforts. Lower Gwynedd completed comprehensive plans in 1961, 1974, 1987, and in 2000. Since then, the township has completed the Open Space Plan (2006), Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan (2022), Sidewalk and Trail Strategic Plan (2025), and the Forest Evaluation and Strategic Management Plan (2025).

Within this comprehensive plan, topic-based chapters explore township-wide issues, as well as a focus area that is explored in more detail. In order to create a plan that strives to generate actionable goals, the implementation summarizes the recommendations and implementation strategies for each chapter with additional information related to deliverables, potential funding sources, and partners.

### Lower Gwynedd 2045 Planning Process

The Lower Gwynedd 2045 Comprehensive Plan will serve as Lower Gwynedd Township's long-range community

vision and guide the priorities and policies. This planning document outlines the current conditions of the township, as well as the goals and strategies that were developed through research and the public engagement processes. The future vision for the community, provided in the community vision statement, creates a framework upon which goals and strategies are based. Elements of a comprehensive plan are interrelated and are examined in a manner that underscores the importance of a holistic planning approach.



The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires that a community's zoning ordinance, subdivision and land development ordinance, and capital improvements program are generally consistent with the community's comprehensive plan. All of these documents and ordinances influence the daily administration of the township and should therefore be supported by a clear and comprehensive community vision to implement the broader goals.

This plan was developed through the cooperation of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, the township staff, Board of Supervisors, and the Montgomery County

Planning Commission. The steering committee met monthly from summer 2023 to spring 2025 to review materials and provide input for the different plan elements. A well-engaged public is critical to developing the community vision and goals and building community support. Public engagement was conducted through online surveys, the township newsletter, and social media, and two public open house events to ensure that the vision and planning recommendations reflect the community as a whole.

- ▮ Social media outreach and township newsletter updates (Fall 2023 – ongoing)
- ▮ Community survey (Summer - Fall 2024)
- ▮ Public open house #1 (October 2023)
- ▮ Vision statement survey (Summer - Fall 2024)
- ▮ Public open house #2 (October 2024)
- ▮ Public meetings to discuss draft plan (Spring 2025)

*See Appendix A for a summary of public engagement feedback.*

## Community Vision and Guiding Principles

Lower Gwynedd is a suburban community that blends the preservation of neighborhoods and open space with an embrace for innovation and responsible growth. While the landscape has changed over the years since its rural agricultural past, Lower Gwynedd has become home to multiple educational institutions and medical research campuses that bring jobs, creativity, and vitality to the township.

Lower Gwynedd respects the natural resources and character of the neighborhoods, and values the quality of life of its residents and the importance of providing opportunities for people of all backgrounds to live in the township. Lower Gwynedd strives to create redevelopment opportunities for the Bethlehem Pike corridor.

Lower Gwynedd's priorities are to preserve the peaceful neighborhoods while strengthening the existing commercial



areas, promote the continued growth of research and development at institutions and businesses, encourage sustainable development practices, and protect the valuable natural resources within the township. Lower Gwynedd prioritizes actions that strengthen connections between the township, residents, community organizations, institutions, and the business community.

In 2045, Lower Gwynedd will be...

- ▮ a welcoming community that supports equitable access to housing, education, and amenities and services;
- ▮ a residential community, nestled in a green, natural landscape that embraces its historic roots while proactively planning for thoughtful and context-sensitive growth;



- ▢ an environmentally conscientious community that prioritizes environmental protection and strives to implement sustainable development practices and initiatives that build resiliency in the face of natural disasters;
- ▢ a safe, friendly, and walkable community that promotes pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure, values open space, and encourages the development of public gathering spaces;
- ▢ an innovative and engaged community that contributes to the township and supports the centers of learning and innovation, including the schools and employment centers; and
- ▢ a vibrant community that welcomes small businesses and mixed-use commercial corridors to encourage revitalization.

## Relationship to Other Plans

### MONTCO 2040: A SHARED VISION

*Montco 2040: A Shared Vision* is the Montgomery County comprehensive plan that was adopted in January 2015. Montco 2040 provides an overall land use and growth management framework for municipal plans and provides guidance on multi-municipal and regional issues such as watershed management and transportation. The Montco 2040 future land use plan is consistent with the township's future land use plan in terms of the distribution of residential and non-residential land uses, the preservation of township open space and stream corridors, and the continuation of the township's established business areas.

### MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

#### **Montgomery Township**

Montgomery Township is located northwest of Lower Gwynedd Township, the boundary of which is formed by Welsh Road between Route 202 and Bethlehem Pike. An update to Montgomery Township's comprehensive plan was adopted in 2022. In regard to future land use, Montgomery Township plans for Welsh Road to have sections of commercial and mixed uses as well as sections of lower

density residential, which is compatible with the established land use pattern of residential neighborhoods along their shared border.

#### **Horsham Township**

Horsham Township is located northeast of Lower Gwynedd Township along Welsh Road between Route 309 Expressway and Tennis Avenue. Horsham Township adopted the most recent comprehensive plan in the summer of 2025. Horsham and Lower Gwynedd share similar goals of commercial land uses for the intersection of Route 309 and Welsh Road. Most of the land north of Welsh Road is identified as Single Family Detached Residential. The Talamore Golf Club, located east of McKean Road, aligns with the business and light industrial future land use category in Lower Gwynedd.

#### **Upper Dublin Township**

Upper Dublin borders Lower Gwynedd to the east along Tennis Avenue between Bethlehem Pike and Welsh Road. Based on the 2010 comprehensive plan and the January 2025 Draft comprehensive plan, land uses along Tennis Avenue in Upper Dublin are primarily residential. Norristown Road is categorized as Residential Transition, which is generally consistent with the land uses in Lower Gwynedd. Upper Dublin Township is in the process of writing a new comprehensive plan and additional coordination may be beneficial as the vision for this area is defined.

#### **Ambler Borough**

Ambler shares a border with Lower Gwynedd in the southeast part of the township formed by Bethlehem Pike, Mount Pleasant Road, and Knight Road. Ambler's most recent comprehensive plan update is from 2013. The 2013 plan envisions the continuation of the varied residential housing types along the border with Lower Gwynedd. In addition to the municipal boundaries, Ambler and Lower Gwynedd also share portions of an established street network, most notably Bethlehem Pike, Knight Road/Hendricks Street, and Pen-Ambler Road/N. Spring Garden Street, which connects the two communities. Ambler Borough is in the process of writing a new comprehensive plan.

As the borough envisions its future land uses, coordination will help to define the relationship between the connected communities.

### ***Whitpain Township***

Whitpain Township borders Lower Gwynedd to the south. Township Line Road between Swedesford Road and Mount Pleasant Road represents the municipal line between Whitpain and Lower Gwynedd. Whitpain's most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 2016. And an update of the plan was adopted in 2024. Whitpain's "Existing and Future Land Use Map" identifies the land along the shared border with Lower Gwynedd as "Vacant", where in Lower Gwynedd, that land is preserved as open space. Additional coordination may be beneficial as potential land uses in this area of Whitpain Township are further clarified.

### ***Upper Gwynedd Township***

Upper Gwynedd Township is located to the west of Lower Gwynedd Township. Swedesford Road and a portion of Dekalb Pike/Route 202 generally follow the township line between Upper Gwynedd and Lower Gwynedd. The Gwynedd Wildlife Preserve is located in both Upper Gwynedd and Lower Gwynedd Townships. Upper Gwynedd's most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 2021. The future land use plans for both municipalities show the continuation of the established single family residential character of the shared Swedesford Road corridor. A small area of commercial land use in Upper Gwynedd is located near the intersection of Route 202 and Welsh Road.

## CHAPTER 2:

# LAND USE AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Strategies for an Implementable Plan

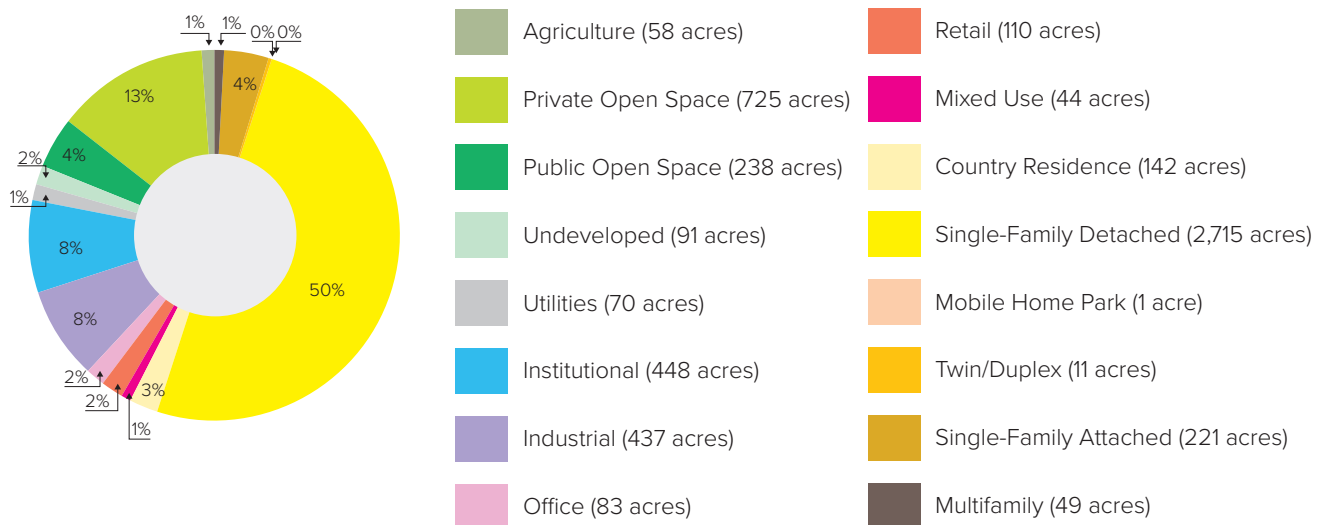
### Existing Land Use

Lower Gwynedd is a 9.4 square-mile predominantly residential community that also contains large properties consisting of institutional, industrial, and office uses. Understanding the current distribution of the township's land uses, trends in recent land development activity, and the desired future land use pattern of the township is an essential component of the comprehensive plan.

Map 2.1 shows the existing land use within Lower Gwynedd Township. Figure 2.1 illustrates the percentages of the township's total land area that is currently used for each land use category.

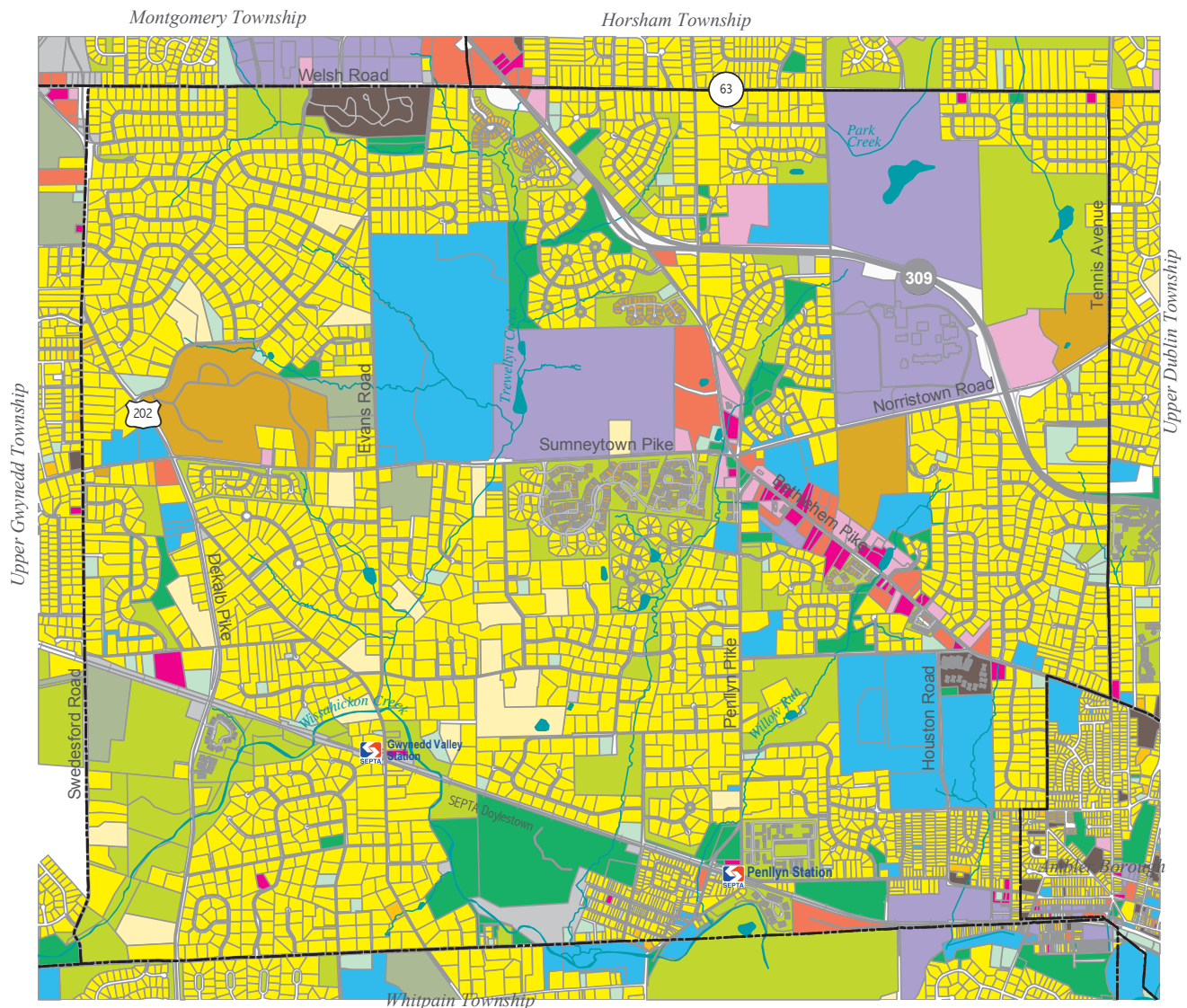


Figure 2.1: Existing Land Use





















Map 2.1: Existing Land Use

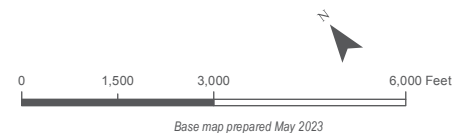


### Existing Land Use

	Multifamily		Office
	Single Family Attached		Industrial
	Twin/Duplex		Institutional
	Mobile Home Park		Utility
	Single Family Detached		Undeveloped
	Country Residence		Public Open Space
	Mixed Use		Private Open Space
	Retail		Agriculture

### Lower Gwynedd Township

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



### Residential Land

Approximately 57.7% (3,139.5 acres) of the township's land area consists of residential uses of various types and densities, including multifamily, single-family attached (townhouses), twins/duplexes, single-family detached, and country residences (which are single homes on properties of 5 acres or greater). The majority of the township's residential land use is single-family detached. There are three retirement communities in the township, which are all categorized as single-family attached.



*Single-family detached home*

### Commercial Land

Commercial land uses, including mixed-use, retail, office, and industrial properties, account for nearly 12.5% (673.5 acres) of the township's land area. While there are individual and clusters of properties dispersed around the township, commercial uses are concentrated along corridors as well as on large tracts located near Route 309. The majority of commercial land uses are categorized as industrial and make up 8% of the township's land area. The largest active industrial properties are Janssen Research and Development and Spring House Innovation Park. Other commercial uses make up a small portion of the land in the township.



*Small-scale commercial near the Penllyn Station*

Retail uses make up only 2% of the township's land area and include individual properties as well as shopping centers located along the commercial corridor of N. Bethlehem Pike. The Spring House Village Shopping Center has a total gross leasable area of 111,400 square feet, as well as scattered commercial properties along N. Bethlehem Pike. Mixed-use properties make up just under 1% of the township's land area. Mixed-use properties are primarily located along N. Bethlehem Pike. Office properties make up about 1.5% of the township's land area. Like other commercial land uses, most office uses tend to be concentrated along N. Bethlehem Pike. Additional office properties are located near access points to Route 309 and are associated with industrial uses.



*Gwynedd Mercy University*

### Institutional Land

Institutional land uses in Lower Gwynedd Township include schools (e.g., Gwynedd Mercy Academy, Wissahickon School District), religious institutions, municipal buildings, and the YMCA. Institutional uses make up just over 8% of the land area of the township and are distributed relatively evenly across the township.



### Open Space, Agriculture, Utilities, and Undeveloped Land

Collectively, private open space, public open space, and agricultural lands make up approximately 20.5% of the township's land area. Of these, private open space is the largest category (about 13%), primarily composed of land owned by Natural Lands and Wissahickon Trails. Some private open space also consists of communal lands associated with condominium and townhouse developments. Approximately 58 acres, or about 1% of township land, are currently classified as agricultural land use. Approximately 91 acres, or 1.7% of the township's land area, are undeveloped. Utilities, including the regional rail line corridor, make up 1.3% of the township's land area.

## Future Land Use

Creating a future land use map involves incorporating many elements including, existing conditions, data, and the desires of the community. The future land use map for Lower Gwynedd (see Map 2.2 on the following page) originates with existing land use and zoning, then directs development to logical and desirable locations, while accounting for land use trends and ensuring open space protection. Because Lower Gwynedd is mostly built-out and contains a significant amount of protected open spaces, infill development will continue to impact Lower Gwynedd. The importance of maintaining the township's established residential neighborhoods and preserving open spaces is reflected in the future land use map.

As described in the community vision, the residents of Lower Gwynedd desire a strong commercial corridor, open space protection, and a focus on development in existing commercial areas. The main areas with potential for land use changes are along Bethlehem Pike and, to a lesser extent, on Norristown Road.

These components work together to create the land use categories and plan. Although the Future Land Use Plan is not a zoning map and does not affect the township's current zoning ordinances or maps, it serves as a guide for future municipal ordinance amendments and regulations that relate to the township's desired land use distribution and characteristics moving forward.



*Pavilion at Penllyn Park*

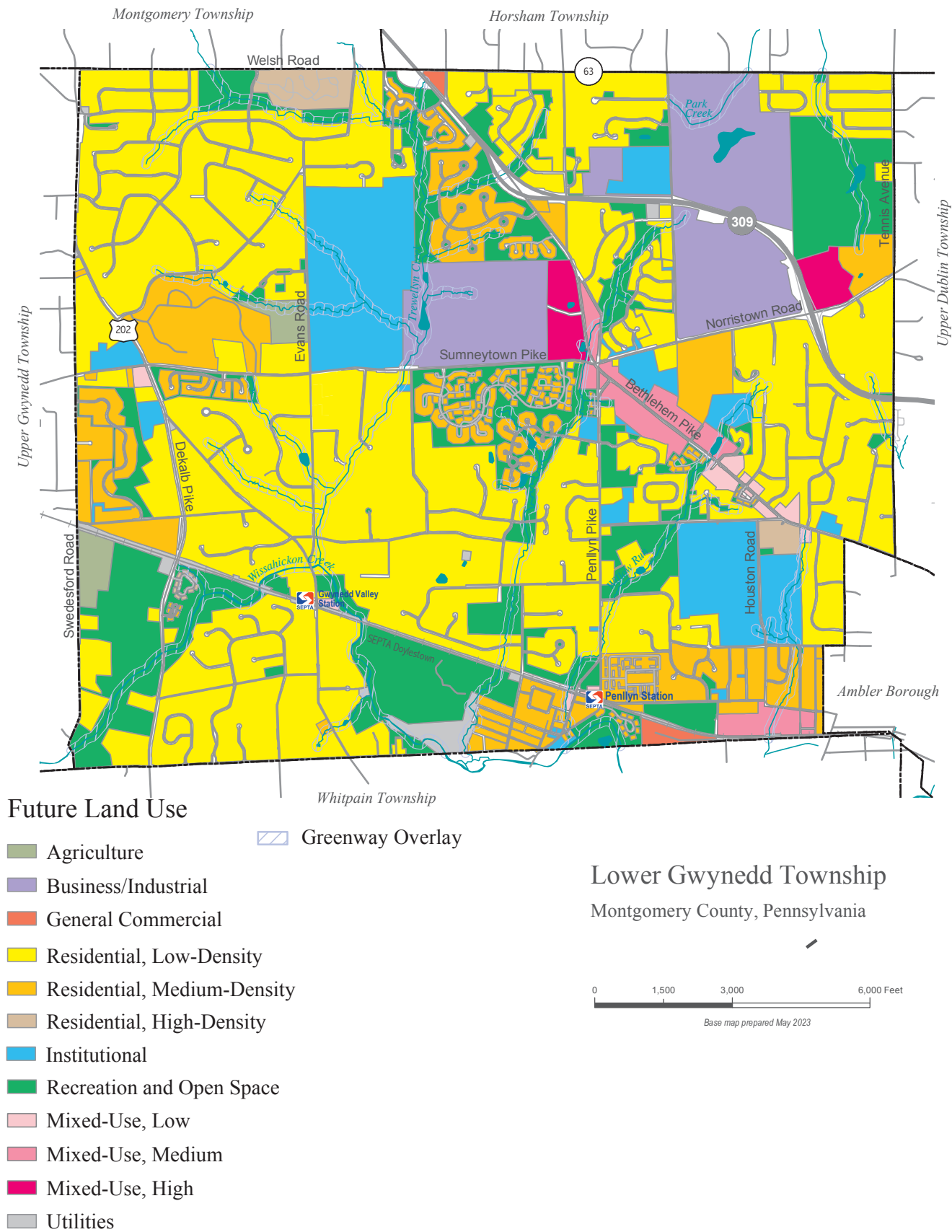
The Lower Gwynedd 2045 Future Land Use Plan, shown on Map 2.2, is generally consistent with the future land use categories in the Montgomery County Future Land Use Plan. Other than township parkland, open space, parks, preserved farmland, and other conservation lands, the entire township is shown as part of the Designated Growth Area in the "Development Potential Map" in the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan: Montco 2040: A Shared Vision.

### FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

**Residential, Low-Density** – Predominantly single-family detached homes on lots of one acre or greater. New development should match the existing character. Pedestrian connections, primarily in the form of trails, should be provided to connect to the existing trail and sidewalk network. Some neighborhoods in this land use category are developed under township regulations that allow for cluster development where smaller individual lot sizes are created in exchange for natural resource and open space preservation. For properties with historic structures or environmentally sensitive features, preservation easements will be considered to protect historic and conserve natural resources. Preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings is encouraged.



Map 2.2: Future Land Use



**Residential, Medium Density** – Single-family detached and single-family attached homes. Appropriate secondary land uses include recreation and institutional land uses. Retirement communities are included in this area. Some medium-density neighborhoods include neighborhoods that were developed under cluster development regulations, as well as neighborhoods with smaller lots. Sidewalks provide pedestrian connections between individual neighborhoods and amenities such as schools, parks, and commercial areas, as well as to the existing trail network.

**Residential, High Density** – A range of residential dwelling types, including twins, duplexes, quadruplexes, and single-family attached and detached homes on smaller lots (generally less than one-quarter acre), sometimes mixed within the same block. Appropriate secondary uses include recreation and institutional uses. Sidewalks provide pedestrian connections between individual neighborhoods and amenities such as schools, parks, and commercial areas.

**Institutional** – Established institutions, such as churches, schools, cemeteries, and municipal facilities. The continuation of the use of these lands for institutional uses is desired.

**Recreation and Open Space** – Publicly and privately owned lands used for passive recreation, sports facilities, and walking trails. Permanently preserved open space, such as lands owned by Wissahickon Trails and Natural Lands, are also shown in this category. These lands should be protected as open space and walking trails to extend the township trail network.

**Agricultural** – Lands that are actively being used for farming, or are Act 319 properties, where preservation of the land for agriculture or open space is desired.

**Mixed-Use** – Pedestrian-oriented mixed-use areas that allow for flexibility of uses to serve residents. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings is encouraged. Uses can be mixed within a building. The mixed-use future land use category is further broken down into three tiers to address the degrees of intensity regarding the uses and scale of development, based on the varied land use contexts of the surrounding area. In all levels, a high degree of building and

streetscape design will help to create attractive, walkable, and engaging places.

- ▢ **Mixed-Use, Low:** Small-scale, mixed-use areas that have neighborhood-serving commercial and office uses close to or integrated with residential uses. Uses may include food markets, cafes, personal service uses, a post office, and professional services. These mixed-use areas are located at the intersection of DeKalb Pike and Sumneytown Pike, near train stations to serve commuters and the surrounding neighborhoods, and as well as the southern portion of Bethlehem Pike to serve as a transition between higher-intensity mixed-use areas and residential neighborhoods.
- ▢ **Mixed-Use, Medium:** Moderate intensity that can accommodate three-to-four story buildings as they are located on busier roads. Uses that serve a broader audience, such as restaurants, boutique hotels, retail, smaller grocery stores, and multifamily residential are appropriate.
- ▢ **Mixed-Use, High:** Higher intensity uses and building scale can be accommodated in these areas that are located on busier roads and that are buffered from low-density residential neighborhoods. Retail, restaurants, arts and entertainment, and personal services are the primary uses on first floors, and upper floor and the rear portions of buildings can be residential or office. Multifamily buildings are permitted in the Mixed-Use, High.

**General Commercial** - A wide range of retail, restaurant, service-oriented businesses, office, and personal service uses, among other similar uses, either on individual sites or in shopping centers. Streetscape design, pedestrian connections, transit facility enhancements (where applicable), stormwater management, and green parking improvements will be encouraged in these areas as redevelopment occurs. Auto-oriented commercial uses such as drive-throughs, vehicle sales and repair, gas stations, and any type of parcel configurations with the parking lot adjacent to the street are only appropriate when located near the intersection of Welsh Road and Route 309.

**Business/Light Industrial** - Mix of office and warehouse or flex/light industrial space, office parks, business centers, and self-storage facilities. New light industrial uses such

as research and development, artisan manufacturing, and co-working are encouraged. As redevelopment occurs, additional amenities and improvements related to green parking and pedestrian circulation will be integrated. A landscaped buffer should be provided where this land use abuts a residential land use, including if the residential land use is across a street, or located in an adjacent municipality.

### Overlays

- Greenway Corridor - Areas of land within 100 feet of a stream or water body where existing vegetation should be preserved and considered during land development.

## Implementation

The implementation section of the land use plan summarizes the recommendations and strategies of the Lower Gwynedd 2045 Comprehensive Plan's chapters. The chapters of the plan address the township's major planning challenges, opportunities, and goals. The recommendations are intended to support the overarching community vision. Specific action steps are listed below the recommendations, when applicable.

Additional information is included in the tables related to the type of implementation strategy, timeframe, potential funding sources, and potential partners. The following abbreviations are used in the implementation tables:

### Potential Funding Sources

ARLE: Automated Red Light Enforcement (PennDOT)  
 C2P2: Community Conservation Partnership Program (DCNR)  
 CMAQ: Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (DVRPC)  
 GTRP: Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program (DCED)  
Main Street Matters (DCED)  
 MMTF: Multi-Modal Transportation Fund (PennDOT and DCED)  
Montco2040 Implementation Grant Program (Montgomery County)  
PECO Green Regions (Natural Lands)

PHMC: Keystone Historic Preservation Planning Grant Program (PHMC)

RTP: Regional Trails Program (DVRPC/William Penn Foundation)

SRTS: Safe Routes to School (DVRPC)

SS4A: Safe Streets and Roads For All (DVRPC)

TA Set-Aside: Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (DVRPC)

TCDI: Transportation and Community Development Initiative (DVRPC)

Trees for Watersheds grant program (PHS)

### Potential Partners

DCED: Department of Community and Economic Development

DCNR: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DEP: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

DVRPC: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

EAC: Lower Gwynedd Township Environmental Advisory Council

HAC: Lower Gwynedd Historical Advisory Committee

LGT: Lower Gwynedd Township

Natural Lands

PennDOT: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

PHMC: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

PHS: Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

PRB: Lower Gwynedd Township Parks & Recreation Board

Safe Routes Partnership

SEPTA: Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

WalkWorks, Pennsylvania Department of Health

WSD: Wissahickon School District

WT: Wissahickon Trails

WVPL: Wissahickon Valley Public Library

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Housing Chapter Goals, Recommendations, and Steps towards Implementation</b>	
<b>Goal: Maintain the overall scale and character of the township's established residential neighborhoods.</b>	
H1	Encourage the preservation of existing housing stock. See Chapter 8 Historic and Cultural Resources for recommendations related to the preservation of historic buildings.
H1a	Conduct an audit of the existing residential zoning standards to ensure any new infill development is compatible with each neighborhood's existing scale and character and consider allowing infill development where it isn't currently permitted.
H2	Improve the walkability and pedestrian connections within existing neighborhoods. See Chapter 5 Transportation for more information and recommendations.
H2a	Conduct an audit of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to ensure that the design of residential neighborhoods and subdivisions encourages walkability and active transportation generally.
<b>Goal: Meet the housing needs of current and future residents.</b>	
H3	Expand the housing opportunities in areas that are appropriate for higher-density residential development along Bethlehem Pike.
H3a	Conduct an audit of the existing zoning along the Bethlehem Pike corridor, including the Lower Pike Overlay District to promote mixed-use and residential development and ensure any new development is of the desired scale and character. See the Bethlehem Pike Focus Area chapter for more information and recommendations.
H4	Provide for a variety of housing types and densities.
H4a	Draft ordinance language to permit the addition of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on lots with existing single-family detached homes, where appropriate.
H4b	Work with Montgomery County and adjacent municipalities to explore opportunities to strategize housing affordability within the region.
H4c	Conduct a zoning audit to assess appropriate housing types and densities within each residential and mixed-use district and create opportunities and standards for additional housing types, including missing middle types of housing such as duplexes, cottage court, and townhouses.

Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
x	x							short	Planning Commission
	x					x		short-ongoing	Planning Commission
x				x				short	Planning Commisson
x	x					x		medium	Planning Commission
				x	x			medium-long	Planning Commission, DVRPC, Montgomery County, Adjacent Municipalities
x	x			x		x		short	Planning Commission

Number		
	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)	
Transportation Chapter Goals, Recommendations, and Steps towards Implementation		
Goal: Improve road safety and slow vehicle travel speeds through residential neighborhoods in the township.		
T1	Identify common high-speed streets and install traffic calming strategies to reduce incidents of speeding and cut-through traffic.	
T1a	Conduct a comprehensive traffic study to understand traffic patterns and problems, as well as to prioritize traffic calming locations and strategies.	
T1b	Continue to target speed enforcement and traffic safety improvements around school and park properties.	
T1c	Adopt zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance amendments with standards that encourage traffic calming.	
T2	Work with PennDOT and the township's traffic engineer to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of traffic signal timing along major arterial roadways.	
T2a	Continue use of real-time speed signs for traffic calming and data collection.	
T2b	Perform road safety audits each year, prioritizing intersections for study based on crash data, community input, and guidance from the Lower Gwynedd Township Police Department.	
T3	Reduce the number of curb cuts and conflict points on major roadways.	
T3a	Conduct a comprehensive traffic study to identify areas where driveways could be consolidated and more cross-access easements could be required during land developments.	
T3b	Conduct an audit of the township's zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to minimize the creation of new vehicular access points directly onto arterial roadways and to ensure that there are adequate standards for shared driveways.	
Goal: Ensure safe and accessible pedestrian and bicyclist connections between the township's residential areas and priority walkability areas: train stations, schools, parks, and shopping centers.		
T4	Continue to pursue opportunities to expand and improve the sidewalk network.	
T4a	Continue to evaluate the sidewalk gaps and prioritize gaps to fill based on proximity to community destinations, as well as on their ability to create connections and update the Sidewalk and Trail Priority Map as needed.	
T4b	Continue to pursue grant funding to fill sidewalk and trail gaps that are identified in the Sidewalk and Trail Priority Map.	
T4c	Encourage pedestrian pathways at cul-de-sacs and dead ends that allow for pedestrian and bicycle through-access.	
T4d	Conduct an audit of the township's zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure that sidewalks with grass buffers and streetscape landscaping along arterial and collector roads are built as redevelopment occurs.	
T5	Implement intersection crossing safety improvements, such as curb bump-outs at crosswalks, where traffic volumes and speeds are high.	
T5a	Identify locations that are in high need of safety improvements, based on the walkability analysis, Sidewalk and Trail Priority Map, crash data, community input, among other factors.	
T5b	Coordinate with PennDOT (through the PennDOT Connects program) and Montgomery County Roads and Bridges Department to install pedestrian infrastructure, including ADA curb ramps, on county- and state-owned roads as repaving projects occur.	
T5c	Adopt zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance amendments with standards that encourage pedestrian-friendly design.	
T5d	Work with the Wissahickon School District to pursue funding opportunities to install sidewalks, crosswalks, ADA ramps, and signage around schools through the Safe Routes to School program.	
T6	Expand the trail network to connect to existing trails and continue to build connections to destinations.	
T6a	Continue to work with property owners and developers to create pedestrian paths connecting neighborhoods to schools, parks, and trails.	
T6b	Work with major employers to increase awareness and use of the trail connections within the township for their employees' commuting and recreation.	
T6c	Consider creating an official map showing the township's planned locations of future trail connections so that future development and redevelopment projects along the trail routes can incorporate the trail right-of-way and interconnections, where applicable.	



Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
									PennDOT, Montgomery County, LGPD
				x				medium	PennDOT, Montgomery County, LGPD; Funding: TCDI Grant
							x	short	PennDOT, Montgomery County, LGPD, Wissahickon SD
x	x							short	Planning Commission
				x				medium-long	PennDOT, Montgomery County, LGPD
				x			x	ongoing	PennDOT, Montgomery County, LGPD, Traffic Engineer
				x		x		medium	Funding: TCDI Grant, PennDOT
	x							short, ongoing	Planning Commission, Montgomery County
				x	x			short	Planning Commission Funding: PennDOT, Montco2040
			x					medium-ongoing	Funding: Montco2040, PennDOT TASA, DVRPC TCDI
x	x					x		ongoing	Planning Commission
x	x							short	Planning Commission, Montgomery County
					x			short	
			x		x			medium	PennDOT, Planning Commission, Montgomery County
	x							short	Planning Commission, Montgomery County
			x					medium	WSD, SRTS Funding: SS4A
				x		x		ongoing	
							x	medium-ongoing	Partnership for Transportation, Major Employers
	x			x	x	x		medium	Planning Commission, Traffic Engineer

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic
	Recommendations to implement the goal
	Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Transportation Chapter Goals, Recommendations, and Steps towards Implementation (Continued)</b>	
T7	Ensure safe and convenient bicycling routes to destinations within Lower Gwynedd.
T7a	Conduct an audit of the zoning and/or subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure that bike parking and other amenities for all multi-family and commercial developments and redevelopments are required during land development.
T7b	Identify placement locations for new bike parking, and install bike racks on township properties (e.g. buildings, parks, and trailheads).
T7c	Continue to pursue opportunities to create pathways at cul-de-sacs and dead ends that allow for pedestrian and bicycle through-access.
T7d	Create and sign dedicated low-stress bicycle routes through the township and to important destinations, such as schools and train stations.
T7e	Coordinate with Montgomery County and adjacent municipalities to implement the general recommendations of the Bike Montco plan.
T8	Consider vulnerable road users and travel modes in any capital project, utility work, or other times at roadways are disturbed.
T8a	Use temporary installations of roadway changes to test the effectiveness of new ideas (such as for sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, curb extensions) and get feedback from road users.
<b>Goal: Encourage the use of public transportation.</b>	
T9	Improve convenience and accessibility to train stations.
T9a	Coordinate with SEPTA staff to periodically monitor the safety, usability, and comfort of existing bus stop locations and facilities, as well as to improve experiences for train riders, including the consideration of opening up the station building at Penllyn Station to transit riders and raising the platforms for easier train onboarding at both stations.
T9b	Partner with Partnership for Transportation to coordinate with employers in the township to provide shuttle service to Penllyn station.
T10	Encourage bus stop improvements during the land development process and explore installing bus shelters where ridership levels warrant.
T10a	Coordinate with SEPTA during land development process for any proposal that is located near a bus route.
T11	Install pedestrian connections with pedestrian-oriented wayfinding signage to train stations.
T11a	Continue to pursue grant funding for sidewalk and trail gap connections and for expanded wayfinding near the train station.

Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
x	x							short	Planning Commission
				x				short	LG Parks and Recreation
x	x				x	x		ongoing	Planning Commission
					x			medium	Bike North Penn, Partnership for Transportation
							x	ongoing	Montgomery County, Adjacent Municipalities
				x	x		x	medium	DVRPC, Planning Commission
				x		x		short-term	SEPTA
							x	long-term	Partnership for Transportation, SEPTA, Major Employers
x						x		ongoing	SEPTA
			x			x	x	ongoing	Funding: Montco2040, TASA, WalkWorks

Number	
	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
Open Space Parks and Trails Chapter Recommendations and Implementation Strategies	
Goal: Protect and preserve the township's remaining open space areas.	
OS1	Pursue opportunities to preserve open space areas.
OS1a	Evaluate land acquisition opportunities for open space as they become available, including historic properties, greenway corridors, and potential trail rights-of-way. Gather input from the community to determine the best use of any new open space.
OS1b	Continue to partner closely with the Wissahickon Trails on the Green Ribbon Trail and other conservation efforts related to the Wissahickon Creek.
Goal: Expand and improve upon the township's trail network.	
OS2	Enhance access to and awareness of current trails.
OS2a	Periodically update the Township Trail map.
OS2b	Install wayfinding signage on trails.
OS3	Study the connection to trails and prioritize gaps to fill to complete connections.
OS3a	Consider creating an official map showing the township's planned locations of future trail connections so that future development and redevelopment projects along the trail routes can incorporate the trail right-of-way and interconnections, where applicable.
Goal: Enhance the township's parks, recreation opportunities, open space, and natural resources.	
OS4	Continue efforts to implement the township-wide Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan and the park master plans.
OS4a	Periodically evaluate the residents' desires and needs for additional amenities within undeveloped township open spaces, such as walking trails to improve pedestrian access between the township's parks and residential neighborhoods.
OS5	Prioritize the installation of sidewalks, trails, and on-road bike facilities to improve access to parks and open spaces.
OS5a	Periodically evaluate the parks and open space land dedication and fee-in-lieu options in the township's subdivision and land development ordinance.

Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
				x				medium	DCNR C2P2, Wissahickon Trails, Natural Lands
				x				ongoing	Wissahickon Trails
				x				ongoing	DCED, WalkWorks
			x					medium	DCED, WalkWorks Funding: WalkWorks
								ongoing	DCNR C2P2
				x	x			medium	Planning Commission
			x		x			ongoing	Parks and Rec Board
			x		x		x	ongoing	Parks and Rec Board
			x			x		ongoing	DCED, DCNR Funding: C2P2
	x							ongoing	Planning Commission



Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure Chapter</b>	
<b>Goal: Protect and preserve the township's natural resources, including streams, wetlands, floodplains, riparian corridors, and woodlands.</b>	
ES1	Conduct an audit of the township's zoning, subdivision and land development, and stormwater management ordinances to identify ordinance amendments that could encourage more sustainable development practices.
ES2	Conduct an audit of the riparian and wetland conservation areas to ensure protection of sensitive areas along the township's streams and water bodies. The MCPC Riparian Corridor Conservation District Model Ordinance can be used to evaluate the ordinance language.
ES2a	Maintain an updated floodplain ordinance to comply with any changes in federal floodplain regulations and/or mapping.
<b>Goal: Preserve and enhance the tree canopy for improved air quality and ecological benefits.</b>	
ES3	Identify areas where trees are in poor health, need to be replaced, have been removed, or where there is a need for new trees.
ES3a	Consider a master tree plan to strategize how to maintain and expand the tree canopy.
ES3b	Partner with the EAC to conduct an inventory of street trees to identify streets and parking lots in the tree cover.
ES3c	Partner with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) Tree Tenders Program to plant trees along a street or at a park, yard, or other public space.
ES4	Conduct an audit of the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure adequate tree planting and tree replacement standards, as well as species requirements to ensure street tree health.
<b>Goal: Improve water quality of the local waterways that flow into the Wissahickon Creek.</b>	
ES5	Implement the "Wissahickon Creek Water Quality Improvement Plan", once completed, and support the municipal consortium.
ES5a	Continue to partner closely with the Wissahickon Trails on the Green Ribbon Trail and other conservation efforts related to the Wissahickon Creek.
ES6	Continue to pursue grant funding for streambank restoration projects to address identified areas that lack or have an inadequate riparian corridor buffer area.
ES6a	Partner with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) to plant trees along streams, transitional upland areas, and natural stormwater basins.
ES7	Encourage stormwater best management practices and water recycling as part of the township's MS4 permit requirements.
ES7a	Implement green stormwater management projects (e.g., rain gardens, riparian buffers) on township-owned properties.
ES7b	Continue to work with outside partners, such as the Wissahickon School District, to install green stormwater management projects on non-township-owned properties.
ES7c	Partner with EAC to educate homeowners on ways they can naturally control stormwater runoff on their individual properties (such as rain barrels, rain gardens).
ES8	Conduct an audit of the zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance to ensure green parking standards that encourage additional landscaping and naturalized stormwater management techniques within new parking lots and encourage green parking retrofits during land developments.
ES9	Conduct an audit of riparian corridor buffer regulations to ensure that they sufficiently enhance the greenways along the township's streams and water bodies.

Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
x	x	x						short	EAC, Planning Commission
		x						short	EAC, Planning Commission Funding: DCNR, DEP Growing Greener
		x						ongoing	EAC, Planning Commission
				x	x			medium	EAC Funding: DCNR
			x					ongoing	EAC, PHS Trees for Watersheds
							x	short-ongoing	EAC, PHS
x	x							short	Planning Commission, EAC
				x				ongoing	Montgomery County, Adjacent Municipalities, Wissahickon Trails Funding: Montco2040, DPE Growing Greener
									DCED, DCNR
				x			x	short	PHS
			x					ongoing	DEP, Montgomery County
						x	x	ongoing	Wissahickon School District Funding: Montco2040, DEP Growing Greener
						x	x	short-medium	EAC, Wissahickon Trails
x	x							short	Planning Commission
	x							short	Planning Commission, EAC

Number	
	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure Chapter (Continued)	
Goal: Reduce energy consumption.	
ES10	Encourage sustainable building practices and the increased use of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies through the township code.
ES10a	Consider creating incentives in the zoning code for sustainable building and site design.
ES11	Support electric vehicle (EV) technology as it currently exists and evolves.
ES11a	Create standards for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. Consider requiring the installation of EV charging stations for certain types or scales of development. The MCPC model EV ordinance can be used to evaluate the ordinance language.
ES12	Adopt a renewable energy ordinance to ensure the proper installation and use of renewable energy facilities.
ES13	Provide information to residents and commercial property owners regarding renewable energy and energy reduction opportunities.
ES13a	Consider creating incentives in the zoning code for sustainable building and site design.
Goal: Reduce the impacts of flooding in flood-prone areas.	
ES14	Identify and provide information on flood-proofing to property owners in or near floodplains and flood-prone areas.
Goal: Reduce the township’s overall production of solid waste.	
ES15	Increase the township’s recycling rate.
ES15a	Pursue funding opportunities through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to advance the township’s recycling and waste reduction efforts.
ES15b	Ensure recycling is available at locations where trash cans are provided.
ES15c	Continue to partner with Montgomery County to encourage residents to participate in household hazardous waste and other special collection events that are offered annually across the Southeastern Pennsylvania area.
ES16	Allow and encourage composting on private properties by ensuring ordinance support and education to residents.
ES16a	Partner with the EAC to provide educational resources to residents about composting at home and encourage the diversion of food waste from the trash stream.
ES16b	Participate in a free or discounted compost bin program, such as through an advance group sales program.
ES17	Support the evaluation of sewage sludge composting from the Ambler Waste Water Treatment Facility.
Goal: Continue to provide for the long-term maintenance and planning of integral utilities and infrastructure systems.	
ES18	Continue to maintain an up-to-date sewage facilities plan (Act 537 Plan) that reflects any zoning and/or land use changes that could impact the projected sewage treatment demand within the township.
ES19	Continue to work to implement the recommendations in the Hazard Mitigation Plan to help protect infrastructure, property, people, and natural resources.

Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
x						x		short	Planning Commission
		x						short-medium	EAC, Planning Commission, Montgomery County
		x						short	Planning Commission
						x	x		
x								short	Planning Commission, Historical Advisory Committee
				x					DEP, EAC Funding: DEP
					x		x		EAC
							x		Montgomery County
		x					x		Planning Commission, EAC
							x		EAC
					x				EAC
				x					Ambler Borough, Ambler WWTF
				x					DEP
				x					DEP, Montgomery County

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter Recommendations and Implementation Strategies</b>	
<b>Goal: Preserve locally significant cultural and historic resources, including structures and sites.</b>	
CR1	Complete an inventory of locally significant historic resources.
CR1a	Explore potential properties that may be eligible for a historic resources inventory, per the Secretary of the Interior's standards.
CR2	Continue to promote the preservation of historic properties and landmarks.
CR2a	Encourage conservation easements for historic properties.
CR2b	Conduct outreach to property owners with historic properties to provide education on appropriate preservation and maintenance techniques.
CR2c	Implement a recognition program to provide formal acknowledgment of property owners who have taken steps to preserve the historic character of their properties.
CR2d	Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission on education and outreach, as well as technical assistance.
CR3	Conduct an audit of the township zoning ordinance for historic resource protection and update, as needed, to ensure that the zoning regulations sufficiently incentivize preservation and the reuse of historic structures.
CR3a	Continue to incentivize adaptive reuse of existing buildings through bonuses, and evaluate if additional bonuses could further encourage the reuse of buildings.



Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
				x	x			medium	Historical Advisory Committee, PHMC
		x						ongoing	Historical Advisory Committee
					x	x	x	ongoing	Historical Advisory Committee
					x	x		medium	PHMC
								short	PHMC
x		x		x					Planning Commission
x		x		x				short	PHMC, Montgomery County

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Community Facilities and Institutions Chapter Recommendations and Implementation Strategies</b>	
<b>Goal: Support the township's diverse cultural and institutional facilities as important community amenities that provide essential social, spiritual, and educational opportunities.</b>	
CF1	Coordinate with the township's other institutional landowners to understand and plan for their long-term facility needs.
<b>Goal: Improve health outcomes for the community as a whole.</b>	
CF2	Encourage overall healthy and active lifestyles.
CF2a	Support projects and plans that advance active transportation. See the Transportation and Parks & Open Space Chapters for relevant implementation strategies related to walkability improvements.
CF2b	Update zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure walking and biking improvements are required during land development.
CF3	Support land development that integrates design best practices for gathering spaces and streetscapes.
CF3a	Conduct an audit of the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances and consider design standards and density bonuses for the addition of public spaces during land development, in areas of the township that are identified in the future land use map as mixed use.
CF3b	Conduct an audit of the zoning ordinance to evaluate the uses in areas identified in the future land use map as mixed use and consider permitting a broader range of uses that would encourage more businesses.
<b>Goal: Continue to provide high-quality and efficient community services to township residents.</b>	
CF4	Continue to improve coordination and cooperation with neighboring municipalities for efficient services and inspiration for government management.
CF4a	Continue to partner with neighboring municipalities and pursue multi-municipal planning efforts, as applicable.
CF4b	Partner with the school district and established community groups to increase awareness of township events and actions.
CF4c	Continue to plan for necessary improvements and upgrades to township facilities, including an expansion of the public works facility.
CF5	Periodically assess township communication strategies to ensure that all residents are aware of essential community services and facilities.
CF5a	Consider surveys or focus groups to understand how residents perceive the communication strategies.

Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
				x			x		Wissahickon School District, Gwynedd Mercy,, Wissahickon Public Library
								ongoing	
x	x							short	Planning Commission
x	x			x		x			Planning Commission
x				x					Planning Commission
				x				ongoing	Neighboring Municipalities
					x		x	short	Planning Commission , Wissahickon School District
			x					ongoing	Public Works Department
				x			x	medium	

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Bethlehem Pike Focus Area Chapter Recommendations and Implementation Strategies</b>	
<b>Goal: Encourage redevelopment of underutilized or vacant properties that creates an inviting and visually interesting streetscape.</b>	
B1	Create building and streetscape design guidelines for all new development and redevelopment.
B1a	Conduct an audit of the D Business Zoning District and the LPO Lower Pike Overlay District to evaluate the current design standards and create new building design standards (i.e., maximum height, build-to-lines or setbacks, stepbacks in façade, sloped roofs, window coverage and transparency, etc.).
B1b	Conduct an audit of the D Zoning District and the LPO Lower Pike Overlay District to evaluate the current streetscape standards and create new streetscape design standards (i.e., street trees, sidewalk widths, verge, etc.)
B1c	Consider forming a BID or similar arrangement to get money and organize around projects that improve the area.
<b>Goal: Create a safe and comfortable Bethlehem Pike for all people traveling along the corridor.</b>	
B2	Consider roadway improvements that would add greenery and calm traffic along Bethlehem Pike, and evaluate where access driveways could be consolidated.
B2a	Conduct a more detailed study of the area, including an access management study of where driveways can be consolidated and potential locations for interconnected parking with cross-access easements.
B3	Consider intersection safety improvements and potential locations for signalized and mid-block pedestrian crossings.
B3a	Conduct a study to evaluate potential locations for pedestrian crossings and to determine the types of intersection treatments.
B3b	Adopt zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance amendments with standards that encourage pedestrian-friendly design.
B4	Consider the feasibility of bike lanes along Bethlehem Pike and how they could connect with the existing pedestrian and bicycle network (e.g., sidewalks and trails).
B4a	Coordinate with PennDOT (through the PennDOT Connects program) and Montgomery County to evaluate the feasibility of bike lanes on Bethlehem Pike..



Implementation Type								Timeframe (short, medium, long, ongoing)	Potential Funding Sources & Partners
Regulatory control			Capital investment	Additional planning	Local Committee	Private Development	Education and outreach		
Zoning ordinance	Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance	Other ordinance							
x								short	Planning Commission
x								short	Planning Commission
				x	x	x		medium	Local businesses, Commerce Department of Montgomery County
					x			medium	DVRPC
			x	x	x			medium	PennDOT, Funding: DVRPC, WalkWorks
x	x							short	Planning Commission
					x			medium	PennDOT, Montgomery County Funding: Montco2040

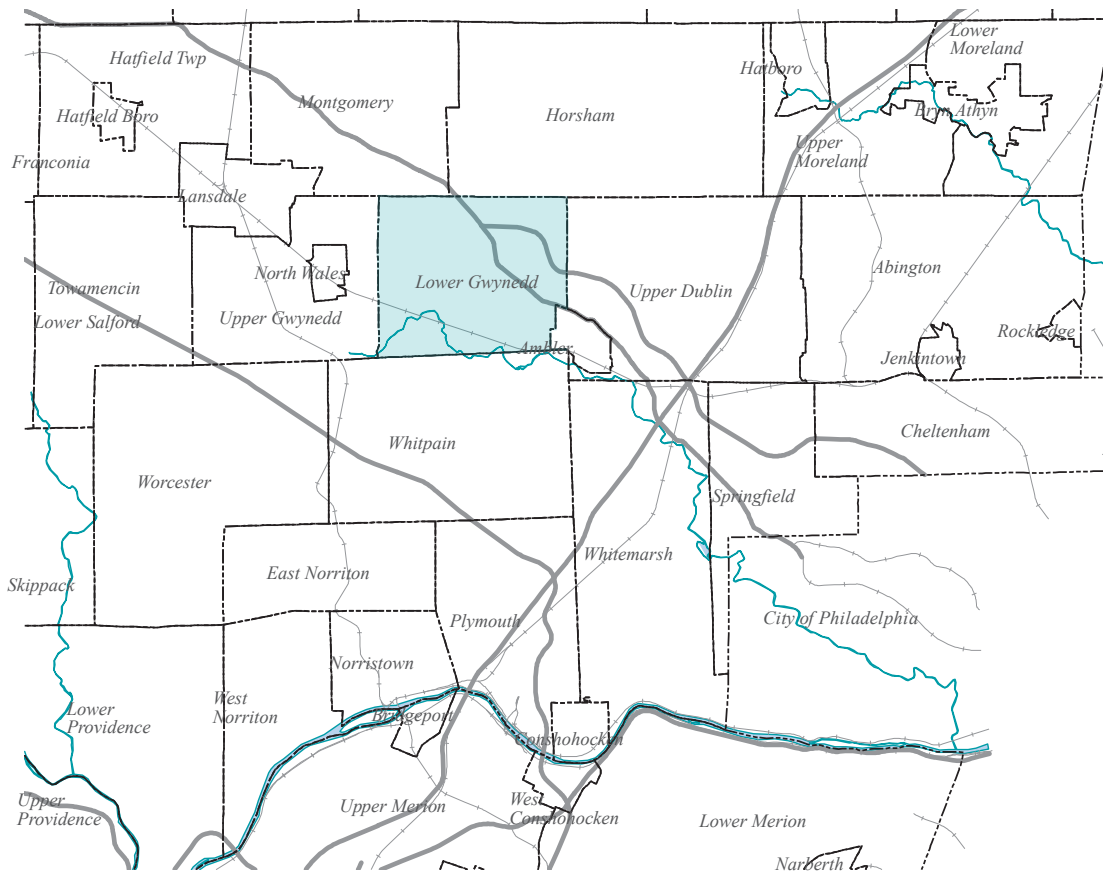


## CHAPTER 3:

# PLACE AND PEOPLE

## Context for future planning

Map 3.1: Lower Gwynedd and surroundings



## Geographic Context

Lower Gwynedd Township is 9.4 square miles containing open space, suburban neighborhoods, and varied industrial and institutional properties. Lower Gwynedd is located approximately 25 miles northwest of Philadelphia, and is bordered by six municipalities: Montgomery and Horsham Townships to the north, Upper Gwynedd Township to the west, Whitpain Township to the south, Ambler Borough to the southeast, and Upper Dublin Township to the east.

## Historical Context

Lower Gwynedd Township was once a part of Gwynedd Township. Gwynedd Township, which at its founding included Upper and Lower Gwynedd, North Wales, and parts of Ambler and Lansdale, was founded in 1698 by Welsh Quakers. Portions of Ambler and Lansdale withdrew, resulting in a smaller land area of Gwynedd, and in 1891, Gwynedd officially was separated into Upper and Lower Gwynedd.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Welsh subsistence farmers made up the majority of the population and relied on the Wissahickon Creek and its tributaries for water and to power mills. Roads were developed early, in part to connect farmers to the mills. Roads from the 18<sup>th</sup> century include Welsh Road, Sumneytown Pike, Bethlehem Pike, Plymouth Road, Swedesford Road, and Penllyn Pike. Industrial development introduced trains to the area, bringing development and population changes. Trolleys connected parts of Lower Gwynedd, including Spring House, to surrounding communities and commercial centers, enabling further growth around the station nodes. Heavy railroad expansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought more development and wealthy Philadelphia summer estate homes to the township. Penllyn Station and Gwynedd Station were opened in 1856, spurring development in the station areas.

In addition to the numerous scattered homes from early settlement, Penllyn Village is one of the older established neighborhoods, located adjacent to the rail station (now the SEPTA Penllyn Regional Rail Station). Before 1950, the only intact residential neighborhoods were those of Penllyn Village and extensions from the Borough of Ambler. Major residential development occurred in the 1950s due to increased automobile reliance and a growing desire for less dense suburban living. Completion of the 309 Expressway in 1959 attracted more light industrial companies, which developed campus-like complexes for manufacturing and offices.

The early patterns of farms, family compounds, development along travel routes, and later the large estates and railroad-fueled neighborhoods have all had an impact on the development patterns and built environment that exist in the township today. *See the Cultural and Historic Preservation Chapter for more information and recommendations related to preserving these resources.*

## Demographic Context

Changing population characteristics like age, education, and employment influence demand for infrastructure and services, which a community must provide (such as schools, utilities, roads, public recreation centers, and libraries). Understanding recent demographic trends



*Barn at Ingersoll House, sold by the township in 2024.*

in Lower Gwynedd Township is an important part of understanding the future needs of Lower Gwynedd Township. The population of Lower Gwynedd tends to be older, of a higher income, more highly educated, and slightly less racially diverse than the county as a whole, though Lower Gwynedd's population is also more likely to speak a language other than English at home.

### POPULATION

The total population of Lower Gwynedd Township in 2020 was 12,076 persons. While not approaching the speeds of growth seen in the 1950s and 1980s, the township's population has grown by 15.9% since 2000. Among neighboring townships, only Montgomery and Upper Gwynedd Townships have grown at a faster percentage in the last two decades.

Compared to neighboring townships, Lower Gwynedd has the lowest population density, with 2.03 persons per acre. Communities with high population density are typically more efficient in their distribution and use of utilities, roads, and other public services, but communities with low population density put less stress on existing utility and infrastructure systems.

Figure 3.1: Lower Gwynedd Total Population, 1930-2020

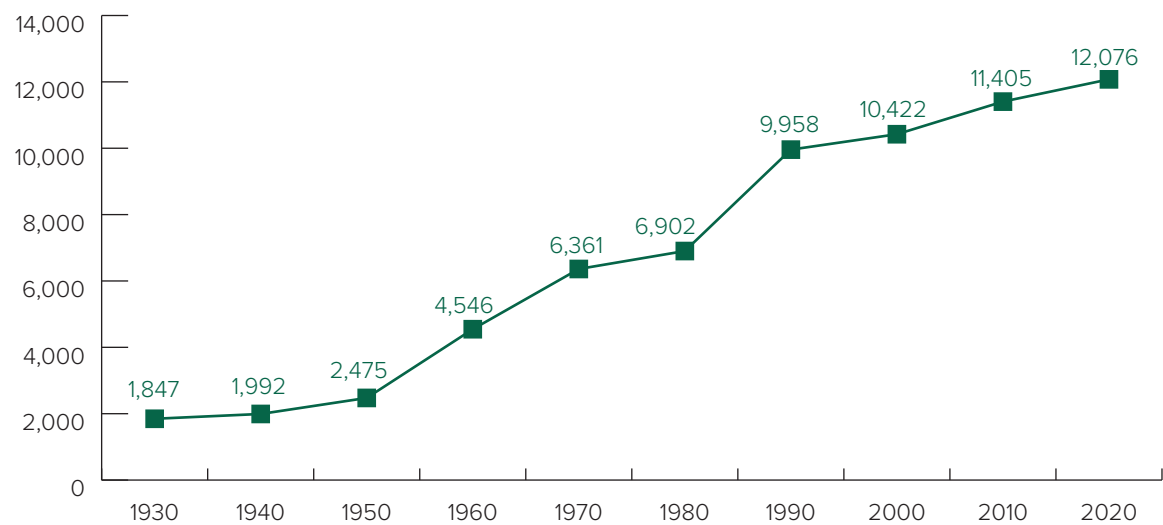


Figure 3.2: Percent Change in Population, in Lower Gwynedd and neighboring municipalities, 2000-2020

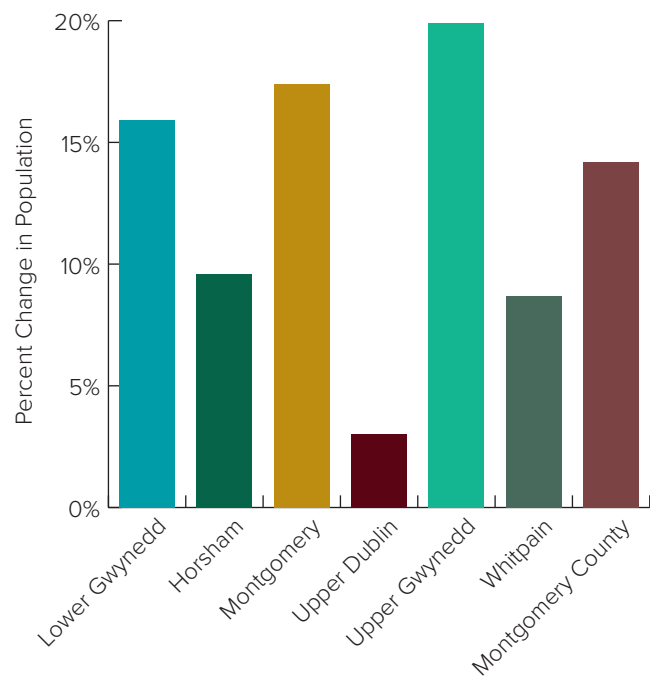


Table 3.1: Population change in Lower Gwynedd and neighboring municipalities, 2000-2020

	2000	2010	2020	NET CHANGE SINCE 2000	PERCENT CHANGE SINCE 2000	POPULATION DENSITY PER ACRE, 2020
Lower Gwynedd	10,422	11,405	12,076	1,654	15.9%	2.03
Horsham	24,232	26,147	26,564	2,332	9.6%	2.40
Montgomery	22,025	24,790	25,862	3,837	17.4%	3.80
Upper Dublin	25,878	25,569	26,665	787	3.0%	3.15
Upper Gwynedd	14,243	15,552	17,072	2,829	19.9%	3.28
Whitpain	18,703	18,875	20,333	1,630	8.7%	2.47
Montgomery County	750,097	790,497	856,553	106,456	14.2%	2.77
Philadelphia Metro Area	5,693,275	5,965,343	6,245,051	551,776	9.7%	2.12

## POPULATION FORECASTS

Based on population forecasts from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), Lower Gwynedd's population is expected to increase to 12,980 by 2045, an increase of 934 persons from 2020. Lower Gwynedd's population is forecasted to grow at a slower rate (6.22%) than Montgomery County as a whole (10.07%) for the same time period.<sup>1</sup>

## AGE GROUP TRENDS

Lower Gwynedd's population is much older than surrounding municipalities and the county as a whole. The median age of 49.8 in the township is nearly nine years greater than the county-wide median age of 41.2. This difference is likely attributed to the number of age-restricted retirement communities in the township – Foulkeways, Gwynedd Estates, and Spring House Estates – that opened between 1960 and 1976 and provide a total of 752 housing units out of the 5,029 housing units in the township (14.9%).

Table 3.2: Selected Age Characteristics in Lower Gwynedd and surrounding township, 2020

	UNDER 18 YEARS	18-64 YEARS	65 YEARS AND OLDER	MEDIAN AGE
Lower Gwynedd	21.6%	51.3%	27.1%	49.8
Horsham	23.3%	62.5%	14.2%	39.7
Montgomery	21.4%	61.9%	16.7%	44.7
Upper Dublin	22.5%	58.6%	18.8%	44.6
Upper Gwynedd	18.2%	57.2%	24.6%	46.8
Whitpain	21.0%	57.2%	21.8%	46
Montgomery County	21.7%	60.9%	17.4%	41.2

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the discrepancy between forecast and actual population is due in large part to discrepancies between the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey. The Decennial Census collects household information from every household in the country. The Decennial Census records Lower Gwynedd's 2020 population as 12,076.

The American Community Survey provides an estimate based on a 5-year collection period of responses from sampled residents. The ACS records Lower Gwynedd's 2016-2020 population as 11,512, approximately 5% smaller than the Decennial Census. DVRPC's population forecasts are based on ACS records, rather than Decennial Census records.



Figure 3.3: Age Group Proportions, Lower Gwynedd, 2020

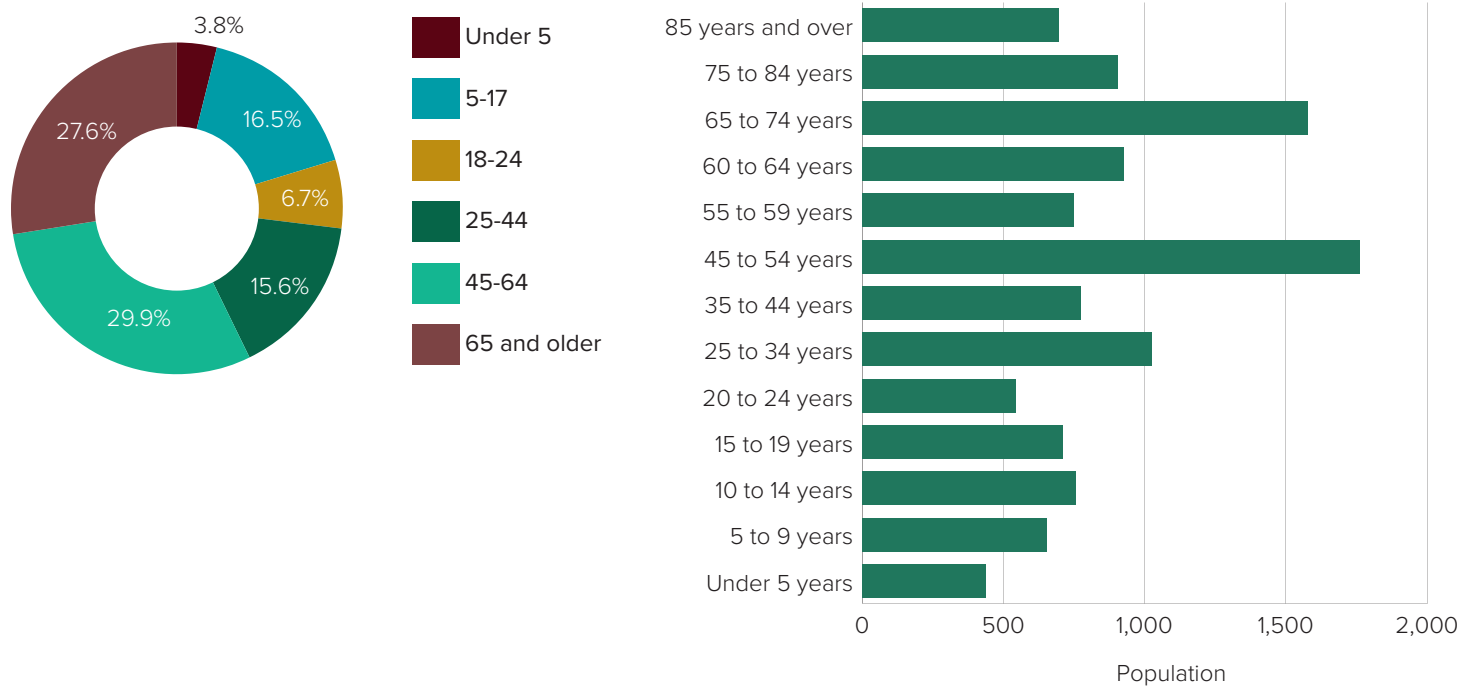
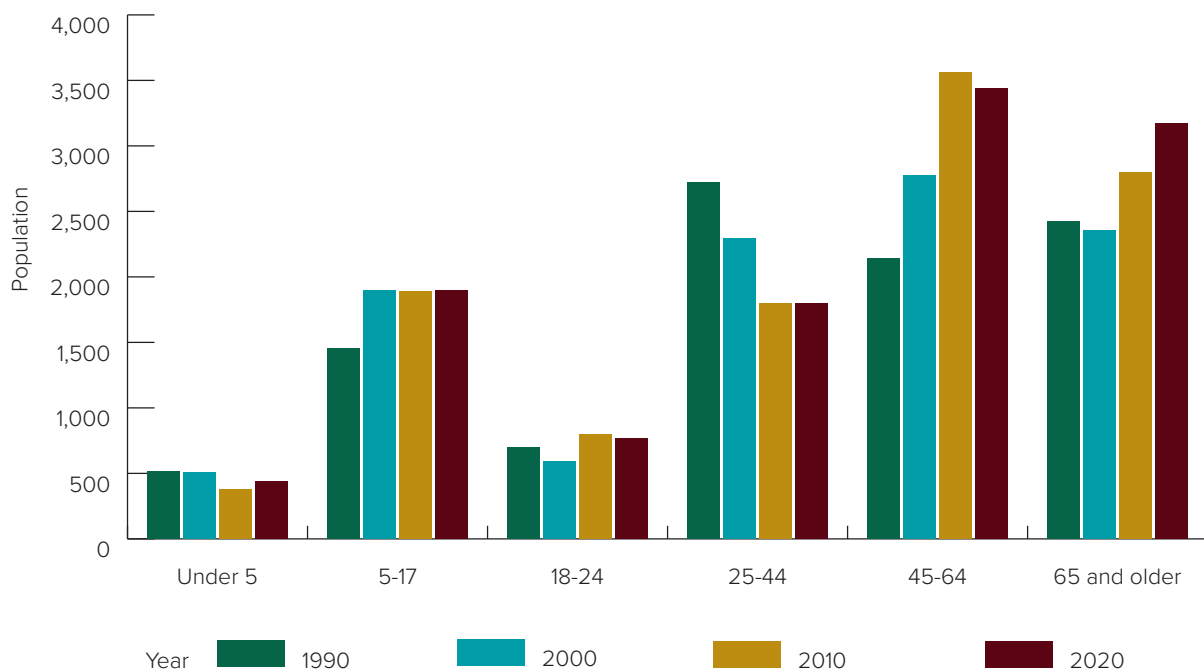


Figure 3.4: Age Group Trends, Lower Gwynedd, 1990-2020



Since 1990, the median age of residents in the township has increased by seven years, driven by a decrease in the population under 5 years of age and an increase in the population older than 65. As of 2020, children under five make up the smallest portion of the township’s residents, at only 3.8%. School-aged children (5-17 years of age) are 16.5% of all township residents, while college-aged adults (18-24 years of age) are 6.7% of all residents. Adults from 25 to 44 are 15.6% of the township, while adults from 45 to 64 are the highest proportion, at 29.9% of all residents. At the second-highest proportion, 27.6% of all township residents were 65 or older in 2020.

RACIAL COMPOSITION

Lower Gwynedd is predominantly white and non-Hispanic or Latino. The racial composition of the township is roughly equivalent to the county, with a larger proportion (11%) of Asian residents. In 2020, 3.4% of Lower Gwynedd’s population identified as Hispanic or Latino of any race, compared to 6.8% of the county’s population<sup>2</sup>. Nearly one-fifth of township residents (18.1%) speak a language other than English at home, above the county’s 13.7% of

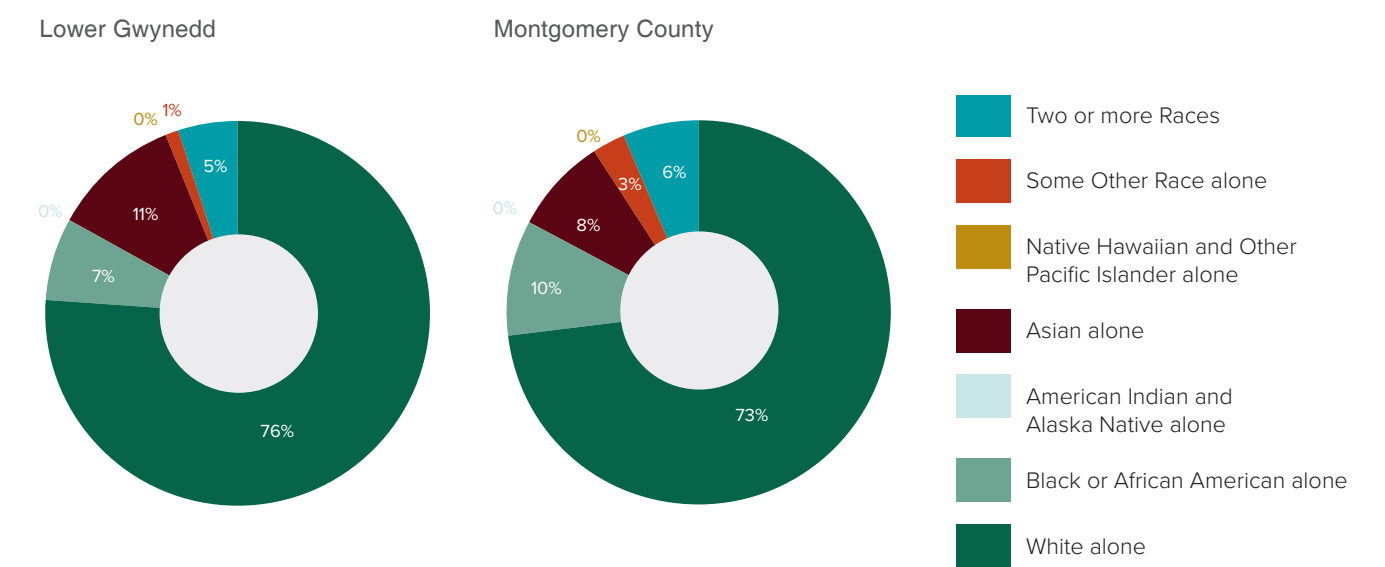
Table 3.3: Racial Composition of Lower Gwynedd over time, 2000-2020

	2000	2010	2020
Total Population	10,320	11,405	12,076
White alone	87.7%	84.0%	76.4%
Black or African American alone	7.9%	6.9%	6.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Asian alone	4.1%	7.1%	10.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Some Other Race alone	0.3%	0.4%	1.2%
Two or more	1.0%	1.5%	3.3%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	1.1%	1.9%	3.3%

residents. Spanish is spoken at home by 0.7% of township residents, while other Indo-European languages are spoken at home by 4.6% of township residents. Asian and Pacific Islander languages are the most frequently spoken category, with 11.1% of township residents speaking them at home, and 1.7% of township residents speaking other languages at home.

2 Note that Hispanic and Latino are ethnic groups, not a race, and are thus calculated separately.

Figure 3.5: Racial Composition of Lower Gwynedd and Montgomery County, 2020



## Households

There were 5,029 occupied housing units in Lower Gwynedd in 2020, up 15.3% from 2000<sup>3</sup>. The median household size (2.45) increased from 2000 to 2020, but remains lower than almost all surrounding municipalities. A significant proportion of households include at least one individual over the age of 65 (59.8%), while approximately one-quarter (26.7%) of households have at least one individual under the age of 18.

Households in Lower Gwynedd are smaller than surrounding townships, more likely to include senior adults, less likely to include children, and more likely to be a single-person household. Lower Gwynedd households are more likely to own their home than the county, though non-family households are less likely to own their home than surrounding townships.

*See the Housing and Neighborhoods chapter for more detailed information and recommendations related to households and housing in the township.*

<sup>3</sup> Montgomery County Data Portal

## Economic Context

Lower Gwynedd residents are highly educated, are less likely to participate in the workforce than the region, and are less likely to be unemployed. This may be, in part, attributed to the large number of people living in retirement communities. Lower Gwynedd residents have a higher per-capita income than the region and a low poverty rate, with a higher median household income than most surrounding townships.

Lower Gwynedd is also home to centers of employment, with more people entering Lower Gwynedd to work than leaving the township to work. Residents of the township specialize in finance, real estate, and insurance above the county, state, or country, while those who work in the township largely specialize in information and education, healthcare, and social services.

### INCOME AND POVERTY

Median household income reflects the affluence of a population and its ability to support local public facilities and services, as well as the support services that may be needed by residents. Lower Gwynedd's median household income in 2020 was \$106,602, significantly higher than the county or region median incomes, though within the range of neighboring townships. The rate of poverty is significantly lower than the county's, and the unemployment rate is much lower. Real wages have declined since 2000 in Lower Gwynedd, leaving families with lower purchasing power, but

Table 3.4: Income and Poverty Characteristics, 2020

	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME			PER CAPITA INCOME	% FAMILIES IN POVERTY
	2000, IN 2020 DOLLARS	2020	PERCENT CHANGE		
Lower Gwynedd	\$128,627	\$106,602	-17.1%	\$72,537	2.6%
Horsham	\$107,257	\$100,186	-6.6%	\$47,177	3.1%
Montgomery	\$136,589	\$103,925	-23.9%	\$52,000	2.9%
Upper Dublin	\$138,561	\$138,316	-0.2%	\$67,822	2.6%
Upper Gwynedd	\$122,965	\$96,794	-21.3%	\$52,136	2.4%
Whitpain	\$153,854	\$133,054	-13.5%	\$68,223	4.3%
Montgomery County	\$105,234	\$93,518	-11.1%	\$49,905	5.8%
Philadelphia MSA	-	\$74,825		\$40,420	11.9%

this decrease in the township is similar to the experiences in neighboring municipalities.

Poverty and unemployment are two key indicators used to characterize a municipality’s population and measure its local economy. Fewer Lower Gwynedd residents are experiencing poverty or unemployment than the county or region, and the poverty rate (2.6%) is among the lowest in neighboring townships.

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education an individual has achieved. A community’s educational attainment often indicates the community’s overall economic status and potential, with a higher level of educational attainment generally correlated to higher lifetime earning potential. Lower Gwynedd residents are

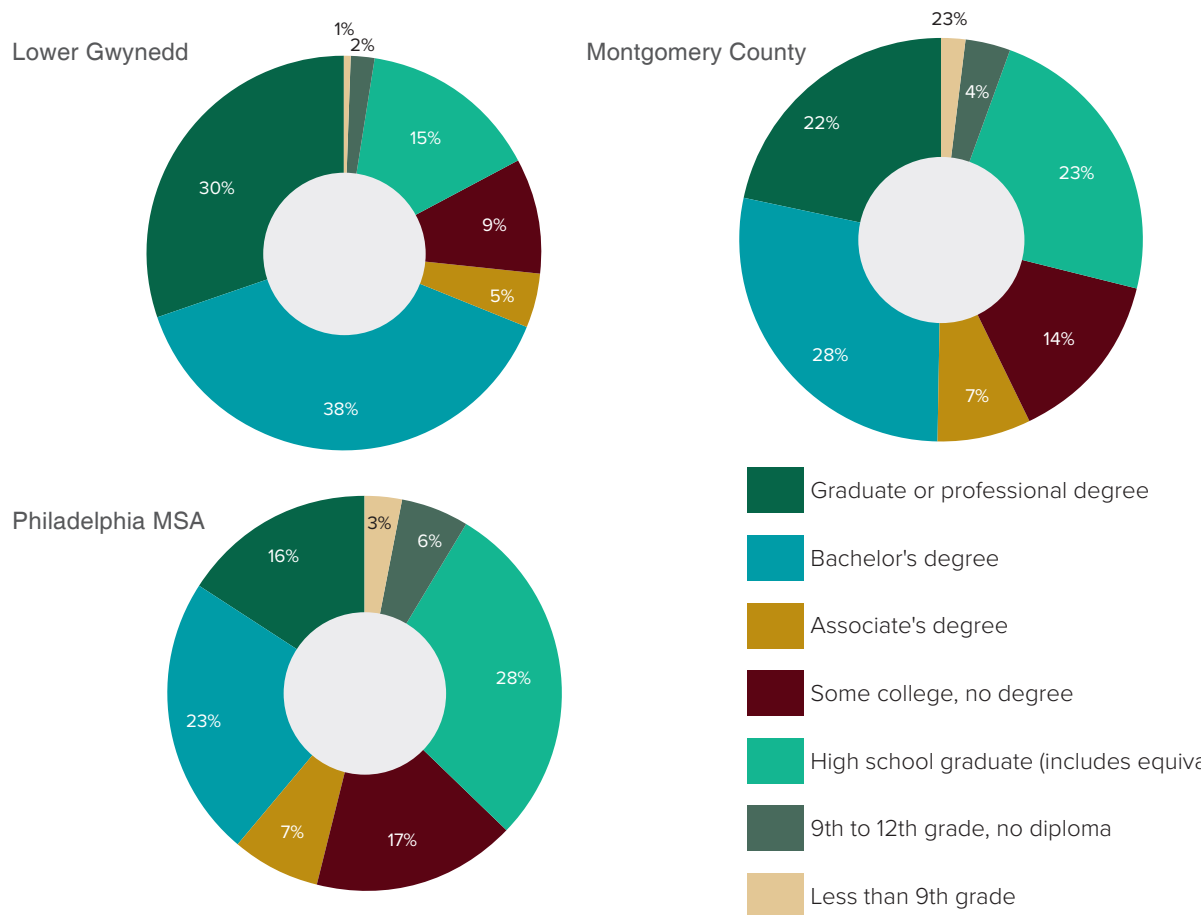
more highly educated than the county or region as a whole, with nearly 70% of township residents over the age of 25 in possession of a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to less than half of the county or the region. Only 2.8% of residents over the age of 25 had less than a high school education.

**EMPLOYMENT**

*Employment in Lower Gwynedd*

Lower Gwynedd is a destination for jobs, with 5,769 persons employed in the township in 2019, according to the Census Bureau’s OnTheMap tool. The majority of those employed in Lower Gwynedd commute from other municipalities, with only 216 residents of Lower Gwynedd employed in the township. The largest proportion of workers in the township reside in Philadelphia, followed by Lower Gwynedd, Horsham, Upper Dublin, and Abington.

Figure 3.6: Educational Attainment of Lower Gwynedd, Montgomery County, and Philadelphia MSA, 2019



Map 3.2: Commercial Land Uses in Lower Gwynedd

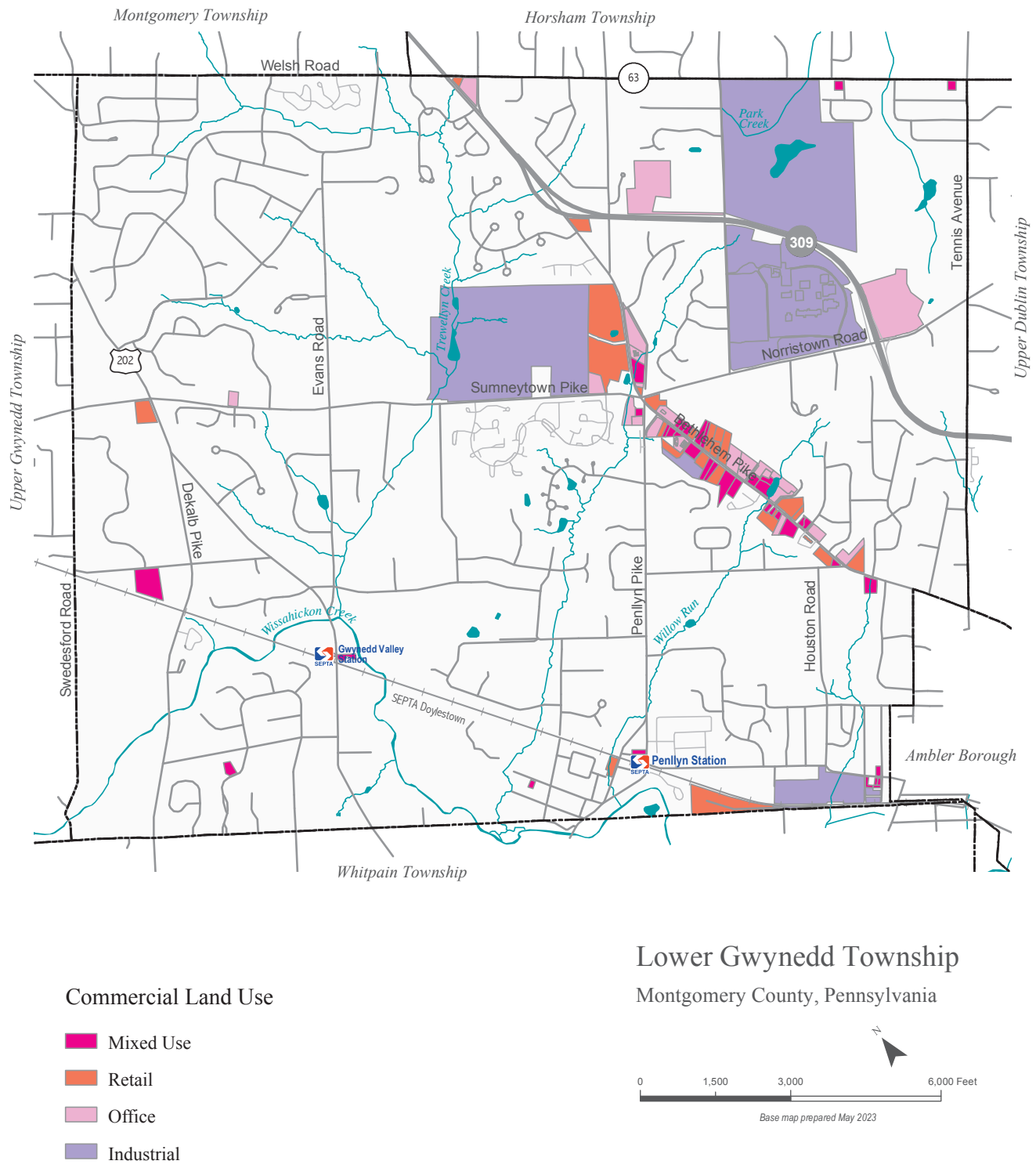


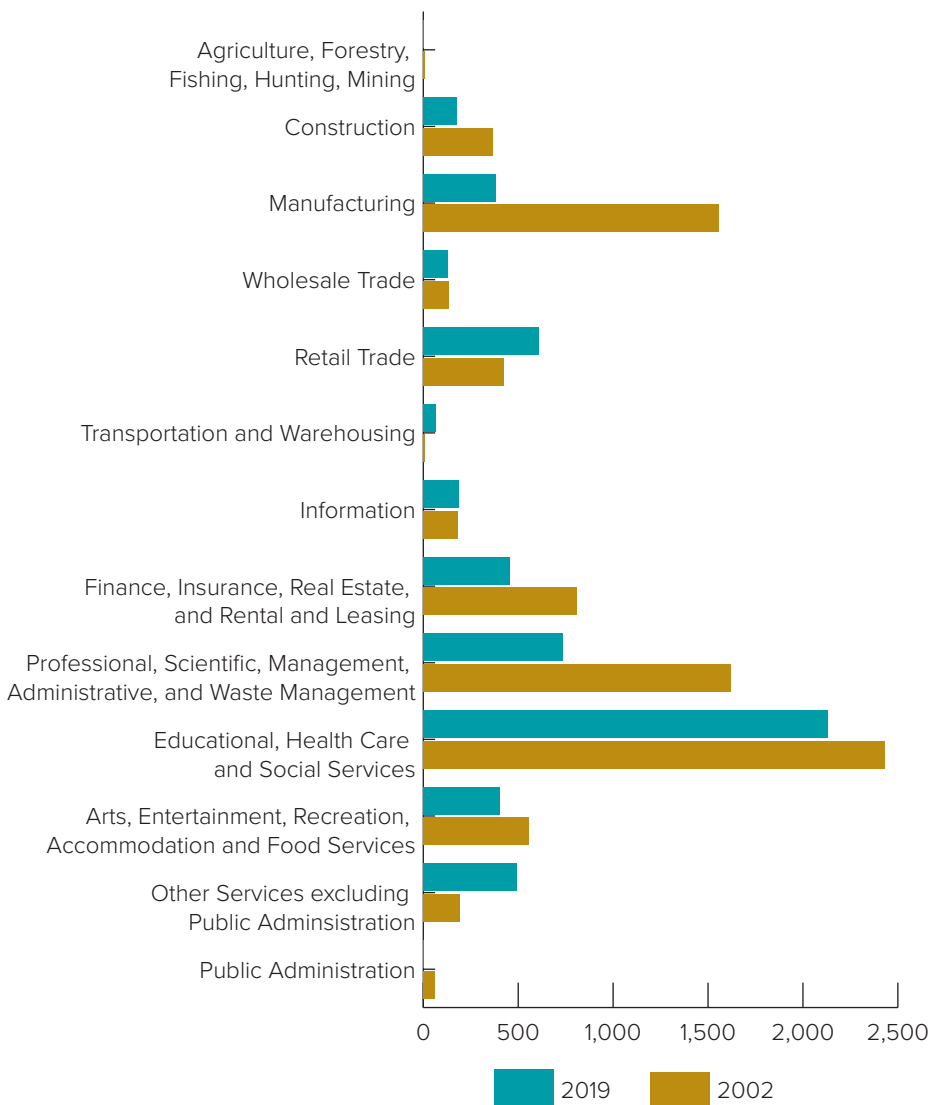
Table 3.5: Location of Residence for workers employed in the township, 2019

RESIDENCE AREA	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	PERCENTAGE
Philadelphia	746	12.9%
Lower Gwynedd	216	3.7%
Horsham	192	3.3%
Upper Dublin	187	3.2%
Abington	179	3.1%

It is worth noting, however, that while Lower Gwynedd is a destination for jobs, the number of jobs located in the township has declined by 2,500 since 2002 (the first year of data available via OnTheMap). Lower Gwynedd has strong employment in the health care and information sectors relative to the county, the state, and the country.

The majority of commercial activity takes place along Bethlehem Pike, near the Fort Washington Expressway / Norristown Road interchange, and Ambler Yards.

Figure 3.7: Sectors of Employment in Lower Gwynedd, 2002 and 2019





development on Pen-Ambler Road, as shown on Map 3.2 Commercial Land Uses. Some mixed-use, office, and retail land uses can be found in other locations throughout the township, but not in significant concentrations. Major employers in the township include the Wissahickon School District, Gwynedd Mercy University, and Janssen Pharmaceuticals.

### ***Employment of Lower Gwynedd Residents***

Roughly 5,000 Lower Gwynedd residents are in the workplace, with 54% of residents over the age of 16 reported as being in the workforce, lower than neighboring municipalities or the county. The unemployment rate among residents in the workforce (2.8%) is the lowest among neighboring townships or the county.

Only 216 residents in the workforce are employed within Lower Gwynedd. Common commuting destinations for Lower Gwynedd residents include Philadelphia, Whitpain, Upper Gwynedd, and Horsham. The median commuting duration for Lower Gwynedd residents is 32.7 minutes, 12.7% higher than the county average. *See Chapter 5 Transportation for more commuting data.*

**Table 3.6: Location of Employment for Lower Gwynedd residents, 2019**

EMPLOYMENT AREA	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	PERCENTAGE
Philadelphia	533	12.0%
Lower Gwynedd	216	4.9%
Whitpain	178	4.0%
Upper Gwynedd	177	4.0%
Horsham	155	3.5%

While the health care and information industries are more concentrated in Lower Gwynedd than the county, state, or country, among Lower Gwynedd residents, the sectors of highest concentration relative to other locations are arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (which are reported jointly to the American Community Survey) and wholesale trade. The largest sector among township residents, however, is healthcare, which has seen growth since 2000.



## CHAPTER 4:

# HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Create livable communities

---

Lower Gwynedd has historically been, and continues to be, a predominantly residential community. Previous comprehensive plans describe a “country-like atmosphere” in the township and a demand for estate-type dwellings. Lower Gwynedd is mostly developed, but there are opportunities for infill development and redevelopment of properties in specific areas that are identified in this plan as appropriate for moderate growth and gently increased density.

Community members value the quiet and private nature of the existing neighborhoods while simultaneously expressing concern over the affordability of housing in the township. Based on feedback from the community survey and vision for the township, residents value housing that is attainable for more people. In particular, there are concerns about the ability for young professionals and families, as well as retirees and people who want to downsize, to be able to afford the housing that is currently offered in the township.

Studying the housing characteristics of people living in the township is important for understanding the growth and development patterns and how to set policies that address the future housing needs.

## Housing Distribution

In 2020, there were 12,076 people living in 5,023 units. Residential land uses make up approximately 58% (3,140 acres) of the township’s land area. Map 4.1 shows the distribution of housing types throughout the township. Housing types are categorized as single-family detached, single-family attached, two-unit attached (twin/duplex), and multifamily, which can be further broken down by the number of units per building. In Lower Gwynedd, much of the land that is categorized as single-family attached is made up of retirement and assisted living communities.

## Neighborhoods and Housing Unit Characteristics

The neighborhoods of Lower Gwynedd are roughly defined as Spring House, located near the center of the township, Gwynedd in the northwestern part of the township, Gwynedd Valley on the southwestern portion of the township (train station of the same name), and Penllyn, in the southeastern part of the township (train station of the same name), close to the border of Ambler Borough.

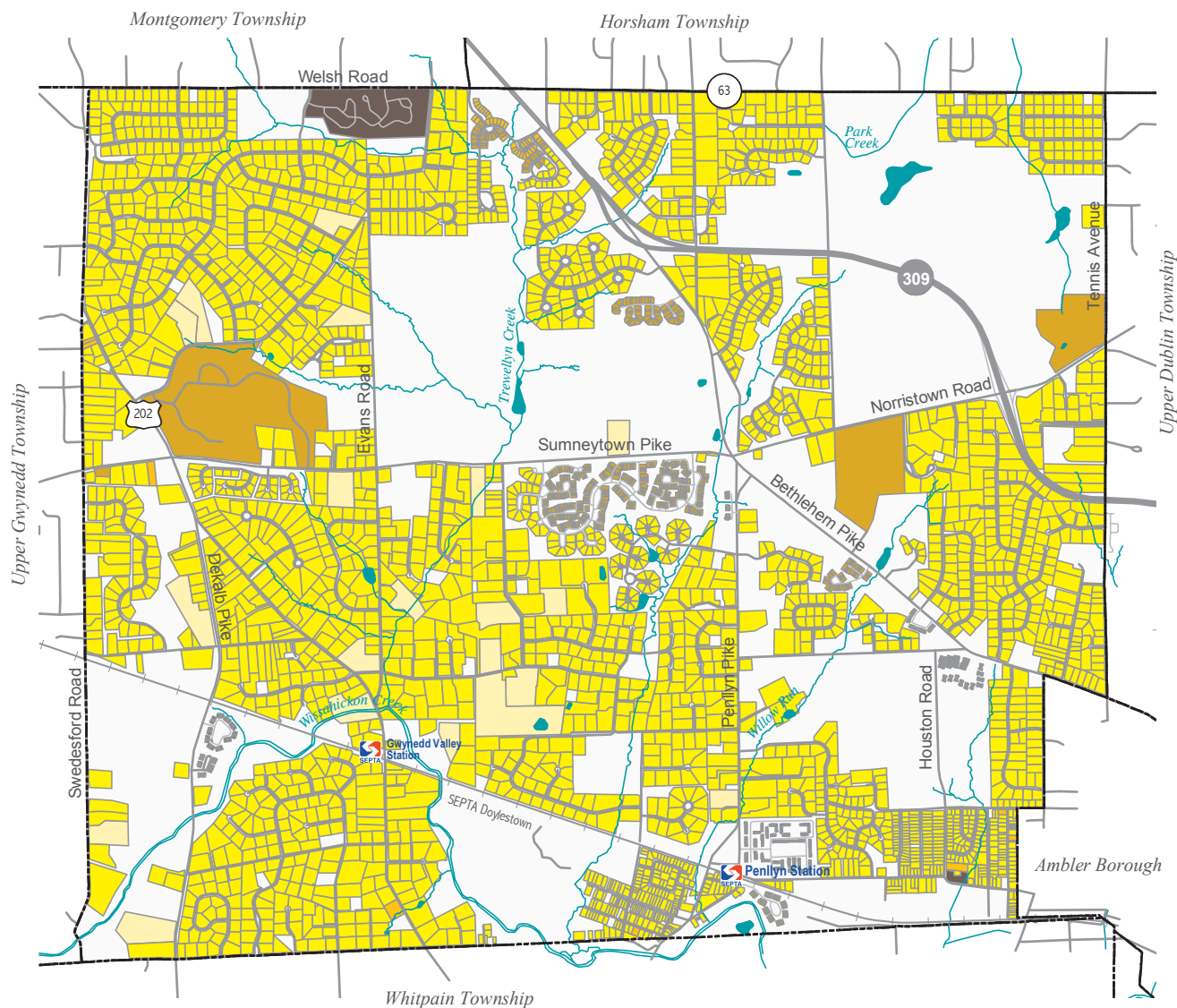
The neighborhoods have their own defining characteristics. Penllyn and the neighborhoods closest to Ambler are more similar to the smaller lots and older homes of the neighboring borough, while other parts of the township consist primarily of large-lot single-family homes.

While there are some single-family attached units (or townhouses), the housing type diversity in the township is limited. The majority of housing units are single-family detached units, at 61.5%. The second highest category is multifamily buildings with 10 or more units (16%). Single-family attached units make up 12.6% of the housing units in the township.

A number of residential neighborhoods were developed in the 1950s (such as Forest Manor, Gwynedd View, Merrill Hills) that consisted of single-family detached homes on about ¾-to-1-acre lots. In the following decades, the township experienced development of subdivisions of single-family detached homes on smaller lots and cluster developments that preserved open space.

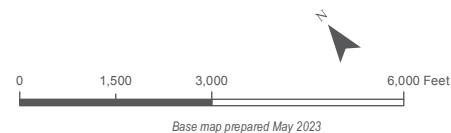
Multifamily developments, such as The Hunt Club and The Meadows, are typically garden-style complexes that are no taller than three stories.

Map 4.1: Distribution of Housing Units by Type



## Lower Gwynedd Township Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

- Multifamily
- Single Family Attached
- Twin/Duplex
- Single Family Detached
- Country Residence



Source: Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals, 2023

Table 4.1: Housing Units by Type: 2021

UNIT TYPE (# OF UNITS IN BLDG.)	NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS	% OF HOUSING UNITS
Single-Family Detached	3,093	61.5%
Single-Family Attached	632	12.6%
Twin/Duplex, 2 units	56	1.1%
Multifamily	1,227	24.4%
3-4 units/building	(178)	(3.5%)
5-9 units/ building	(248)	(4.9%)
10+ units/building	(801)	(16%)
Total Units	5,023	

ACS, 2021

## Housing Development

Lower Gwynedd remained largely rural in character into the 20th century. Beginning in the 1950s, large properties were subdivided to build predominantly one-acre single-family detached neighborhoods. The majority (88.5%) of residential development occurred after 1950, with 64% of residential development occurring after 1970 and continuing through the 1980s and 1990s. More recent housing development in the township is limited, but the new housing units that have been constructed have been both single-family detached and single-family attached, part of a trend that is being experienced at the regional level. Map 4.2 shows the year that residential properties were built in the township. The blues and greens are the older structures and the oranges and reds are the newer.

### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

A total of 213 residential units were constructed or proposed between 2005 and mid-2022. The new housing developments consisted of 57 single-family detached units and 156 single-family attached units, which include 88 units that were developed as expansions at the Foulkeways retirement community. The township's last comprehensive plan update was completed in 2000, so all of the developments included in this compilation have been completed since then.



Older single-family detached homes.

Table 4.2: Recent Residential Development, 2005-2022

LAND USE CATEGORY		NEW DWELLING UNITS
Residential	Single-Family Detached	57
	Single-Family Attached	156
	Multifamily	0
	Mobile Home	0
TOTAL		213 dwelling units

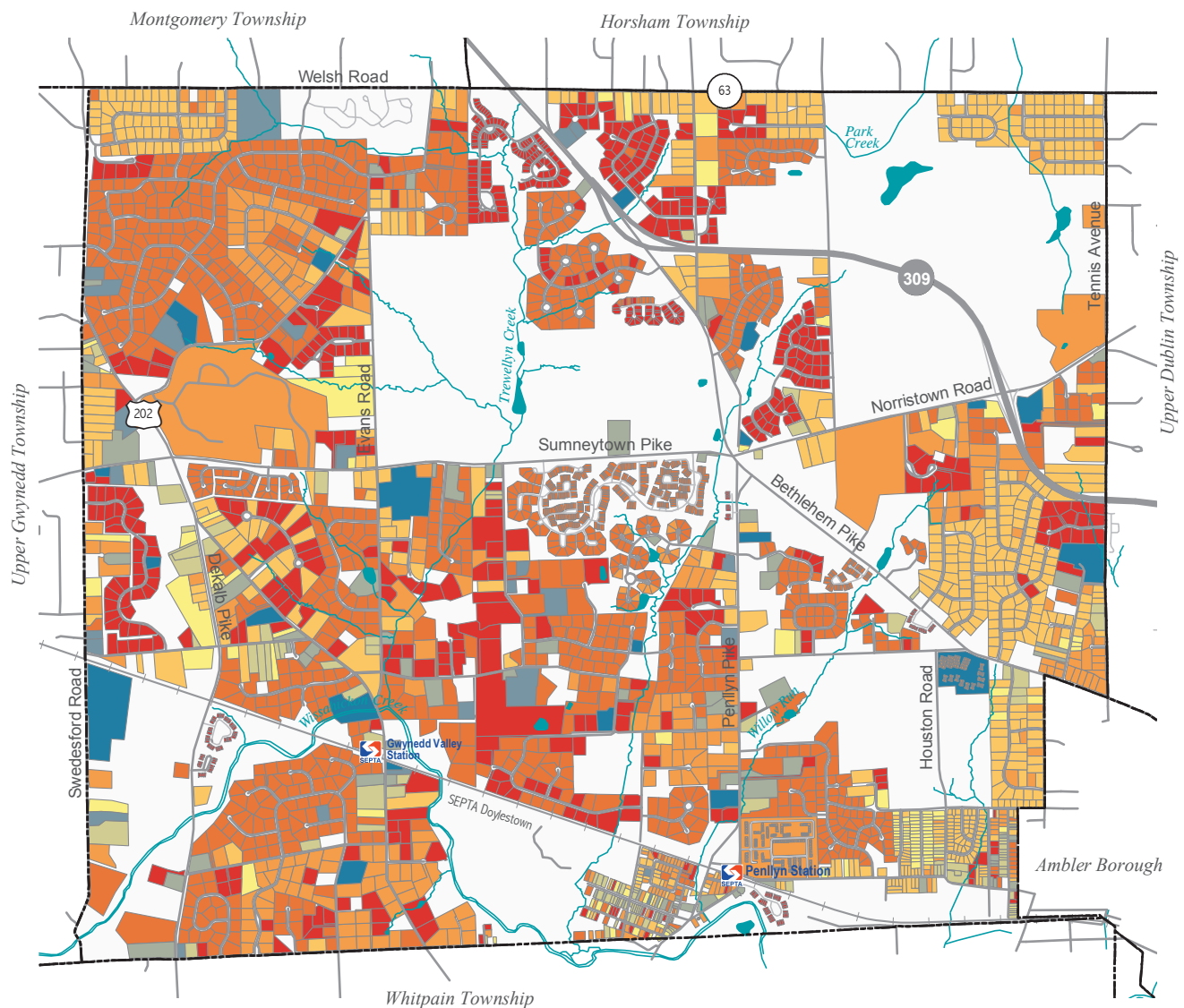
Source: Montgomery County Planning Commission, Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals



Townhouses in mixed-use development.



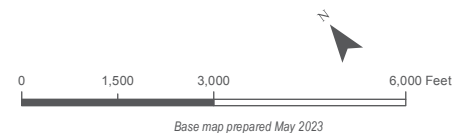
Map 4.2: Year Built of Residential Structures



### Housing Units by Year Built

- 1712 - 1800
- 1801 - 1870
- 1871 - 1900
- 1901 - 1925
- 1926 - 1941
- 1942 - 1960
- 1961 - 1976
- 1977 - 1998
- 1999 - 2023

### Lower Gwynedd Township Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



Source: Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals, 2023



# Households

Average household size in Lower Gwynedd is smaller than surrounding townships, more likely to include senior adults, less likely to include children, and more likely to be a single-person household. Lower Gwynedd households are more likely to own their home than households county-wide, though non-family households are less likely to own their home than surrounding townships.

More than half (59.8%) of households include at least one individual over the age of 65 years, while the proportion of households with at least one individual under the age of 18 (26.7%) is lower than any neighboring township except Upper Gwynedd. Since 2000, the proportion of households with individuals under the age of 18 decreased, the proportion of households with individuals over the age of 65 increased dramatically, and the proportion of individuals living alone shrunk slightly. Overall, the pattern of other characteristic shifts remained the same between Lower Gwynedd and Montgomery County. *See Chapter 3, Place and People, for more demographic information.*



Single-family detached house.

Table 4.3: Age Characteristics of Households, 2000-2020

	HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONE OR MORE PERSONS UNDER 18 YEARS		HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONE OR MORE PERSONS 65 YEARS AND OVER		HOUSEHOLDER LIVING ALONE	
	2000	2020	2000	2020	2000	2020
Lower Gwynedd	30.3	26.7	38.6	59.8	31.6	30.8
Horsham	38.9	36.7	18.7	39.8	23.2	24.8
Montgomery	41.1	31.4	20.9	43.4	19.7	22.1
Upper Dublin	40	33.6	24.9	47.6	17.8	17.4
Upper Gwynedd	35.5	26.5	22.2	52.8	21.2	26.5
Whitpain	35.5	34.6	26.8	49	21.3	19.2
Montgomery County	34	31.7	26.1	42.2	25.6	26.3

## HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Nationally, the average household size has been declining for as long as the Census has tracked the average household size, though individual municipalities occasionally show patterns that diverge from this trend. In the case of Lower Gwynedd, the average household size grew from 2.38 in 2010 to 2.45 in 2020, an increase of 2.9%. Lower Gwynedd's median household size remains

lower than surrounding townships, with the exception of Upper Gwynedd. The household size for owner-occupied units is higher (2.71 persons) than for renter-occupied units (1.49 persons).

All types of housing have some effect on local school districts in terms of the numbers of children generated. However, single-family detached homes, regardless of

whether or not they are newly constructed, generate more students per unit than other housing types. Single-family detached homes draw in large numbers of both families and married couples with children, while multifamily units generally attract young adults, empty nesters, singles, and fewer families with children. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) report, *Development Matters: Understanding the Opportunities and Impacts of Multifamily Development*, found that multifamily households are smaller and generate fewer school-age children than those in other housing types. Therefore, apartments put less demand on schools and other public services than lower-density housing. New apartments, possibly due to their size and cost, have sharply lower impacts on school enrollment.

## HOUSING TENURE

Households in Lower Gwynedd are more likely to own their homes than the rest of the county. The majority of units are owner-occupied (78.4%), and less than one-third (21.6%) are renter-occupied. Among surrounding townships, the homeownership rate ranges widely, ranging from 70.2% in Horsham to 90.2% in Montgomery Township. Among household types, non-family households in Lower Gwynedd (which include single-person households) are less likely to own their home than in any surrounding township, though still more likely than the county as a whole.

Table 4.4: Average Household Size, 2000-2020

	2000	2020	% CHANGE
Lower Gwynedd	2.39	2.45	25%
Horsham	2.64	2.82	6.1%
Montgomery	2.74	2.63	-4.0%
Upper Dublin	2.78	2.78	0.0%
Upper Gwynedd	2.63	2.44	-7.2%
Whitpain	2.62	2.59	-1.9%
Montgomery County	2.54	2.53	-0.4%

Figure 4.1: Average Household Size, 1920-2020

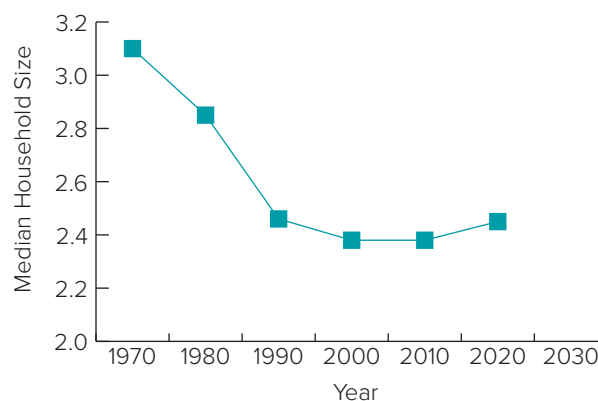


Table 4.5: Housing Tenure by Household Type, 2020

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	HOUSING TENURE	LOWER GWYNEDD	HORSHAM	MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP	UPPER DUBLIN	UPPER GWYNEDD	WHITPAIN	MONTGOMERY COUNTY
All households	Owned	78.4%	70.2%	90.2%	84.1%	72.1%	79.5%	71.9%
	Rented	21.6%	29.8%	9.8%	15.9%	27.9%	20.5%	28.1%
Married couples	Owned	90.9%	81.7%	94.5%	91.6%	100%	88.3%	86.4%
	Rented	9.1%	18.3%	5.5%	8.4%	0	11.7%	13.6%
Male householder, no spouse	Owned	88.4%	47.9%	81.8%	88.1%	65.5%	49.8%	63.3%
	Rented	11.6%	52.1%	18.2%	11.9%	34.5%	50.2%	36.7%
Female householder, no spouse	Owned	84.3%	51.5%	94%	71.5%	54.4%	66%	57.9%
	Rented	15.7%	48.5%	6%	28.5%	45.6%	34%	42.1%
Non-family	Owned	54%	55.7%	80.4%	61.5%	79.5%	61%	51.6%
	Rented	46%	44.3%	19.6%	38.5%	20.5%	39%	48.4%





*Garden-style single-family attached condominiums.*

## AN AGING POPULATION

The age of the population impacts the services and types of housing that a community needs. A diverse housing stock creates opportunities for individuals and families to move amongst different types of housing units depending on their stage in life, space needs, the cost they can afford, and other factors. For example, a young professional or couple may choose to live in an apartment or townhouse community at first; then move to a larger, single-family home as their family grows. As another family's children move out, their housing preferences may also change.

### ***Aging in Place***

Lower Gwynedd's population is on average 8.6 years older than surrounding municipalities or the county as a whole. This difference is likely attributed to the number of age-restricted retirement communities in the township that provide roughly 15% of the total housing units in the township. The township's age-restricted housing developments offer options for downsizing while maintaining access to the township's open space resources and commercial centers. Lower Gwynedd is home to three retirement communities: Foulkeways at Gwynedd, Gwynedd Estates, and Spring House Estates, which provide a range of housing type options for the township's senior residents. However, many people may choose to remain in their current home.



*Single-family detached home.*

Aging-in-place is a concept that has been gaining traction for several years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines "aging-in-place" as "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level." This definition focuses on keeping aging residents within their homes, which would generally require retrofitting the home to accommodate different levels of mobility. Another concept that the planning community has begun promoting is the broader concept of "aging-in-community", which focuses on making the community more accessible and safe (i.e., ADA-compliant) for seniors. Related is the concept of planning for the young and the old, or 8 to 80, which emphasizes designing communities that are accessible for people of all ages. Along with focusing on the infrastructure

and the built environment, these concepts promote providing a wide array of housing types. The American Association of Retired People (AARP) has an “Age-Friendly Community” program that allows communities to submit for certification if they meet certain criteria. A community can gauge their level of age-friendliness by looking to the designation requirements, and can pursue certification.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs), sometimes known as “in-law suites,” are yet another way to increase housing options. ADUs are separate from and secondary to the primary residence, and they may either be attached or detached from the home. It is fairly common for ADUs to be located in the basement of a single-family home, as well as in or above garages or carriage houses. ADUs can be required to meet certain design standards and to have maximum size requirements to ensure aesthetic compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

Forecasted Housing Need

Lower Gwynedd’s population is expected to grow by 504 individuals (approximately a 7.5% increase) to 12,980 people by 2045. In order to accommodate growth in the township’s population, new residential units will need to be constructed. Table 4.6 shows the calculation for the estimated future housing demand for the township based on the forecasted 2045 population and other demographic factors.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Based on this analysis, it is estimated that 252 new housing units would need to be constructed by 2045 to accommodate the forecasted increase in the township’s population over this time period. The estimated housing need is the minimum that would be needed, based on current trends, and the numbers may change depending on various factors. Table 4.6 illustrates how a smaller household size changes the calculation for the estimated number of units needed. The estimated housing need is the absolute minimum that would be needed based on trends.

Considering the number of units per year since between 2005 and 2022 (213 units over 17 years), the current rate is expected to accommodate the projected need. However, considerations should be put to where and what kind of housing is built. **As more families move into the township, policies should ensure that people are accommodated, including people who choose to live in smaller units (e.g., empty nesters, young professionals). The township should consider housing to meet the population need as well as how housing will fit into the overall goals and strategies for the township.**

The type of housing that is available changes the housing need equation. Analysis in the *Who Are Our Neighbors* report shows an average household size based on unit types, whether the units are new or existing. New multifamily units have an average household size of about 1.5, which contributes to meeting the housing need. However, because of the smaller household size, more units would be needed to accommodate to anticipated growth.

Table 4.6: Forecasted Housing Need

LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP		
2045 Forecasted Population Source: DVRPC	12,980	12,980
2045 Forecasted Average Household Size Source: MCPC (projection based on the 10-year trend)	2.43	2.0
2045 Forecasted Group Quarters Population Source: U.S. Census Bureau	654	654
2045 Forecasted Household Population (Forecasted population, minus forecasted group quarters population)	12,326	12,326
2045 Forecasted Number of Households (Forecasted household population, divided by the projected average household size)	5,073	6,163
Estimated Total Number of Housing Units Needed by 2045 (Forecasted number of households plus the number of forecasted vacant units (county average: 4%) (*1.04)	5,275	6,410
2020 Total Number of Housing Units Source: U.S. Census Bureau	5,023	5,023
Estimated Number of Housing Units Remaining to be Built by 2045 (Total estimated number of housing units minus housing units built as of 2023)	5,135 - 5,023 252	6,410 - 5,023 1,387



Because there is relatively little undeveloped land available for construction of new homes, additional housing units will likely be created through infill development. Infill is the development of underused or vacant land in urban or suburban areas that utilizes existing infrastructure. The Bethlehem Pike corridor is identified in this plan as an area that could accommodate development, including higher-density residential. *See the Bethlehem Pike Focus Area Chapter for more information.* In addition, allowing for some infill development near the Regional Rail stations could be considered to support transit use.

## Housing Values

Housing value is a relatively good measure of local economic health and the tax income contributes to the economic stability of the township. Lower Gwynedd's housing values are among the highest in the county, and have been increasing, demonstrating the township's desirability among local and regional homebuyers. Approximately half (51.4%) of housing units have a value of \$500,000 or more.

### DEFINING AFFORDABLE

Housing affordability is determined by the amount of income that is spent on rent or mortgage each month. Typically, housing is considered unaffordable if more than 30% of a household's income is spent on housing. The median gross rent in Lower Gwynedd is \$1,943 (2021 ACS), about 36% more than the average gross rent across Montgomery



Newer single-family detached homes.

County (\$1,428). According to the U.S. Census, more than 60% of households in Lower Gwynedd pay more than 30% of their income on rent.

Many factors contribute to the cost of living, but when reviewing housing costs alone, the data suggests that Lower Gwynedd is unaffordable for many. Based on a calculation using Freddie Mac's Housing Affordability Calculator, the typical household making the median income of \$125,931 would not be able to purchase a home at the median home sales price of \$665,000.<sup>1</sup>

Table 4.7: Median housing value (2010 vs 2021), municipal comparison

	MEDIAN HOUSING VALUE		% CHANGE 2010-2021
	2021	2010	
Lower Gwynedd Township	\$499,200	\$490,500	1.8%
Upper Gwynedd Township	\$375,800	\$330,200	13.8%
Montgomery Township	\$378,500	\$350,700	7.9%
Horsham Township	\$382,800	\$343,000	11.6%
Upper Dublin Township	\$434,200	\$413,800	4.9%
Whitpain Township	\$482,900	\$449,400	7.5%
Ambler Borough	\$319,300	\$266,500	19.8%
Montgomery County	\$380,500	\$302,200	25.9%



Detached garage in North Wales, converted to accessory dwelling unit.

<sup>1</sup> This estimates were calculated using Freddie Mac's Housing Affordability Calculator and assumes a 30-year mortgage at 5.34% APR, \$1,000 annual homeowners' insurance premium, and \$3,250 in annual property taxes. It is important to note that mortgage rates are in constant flux, and annual homeowner's insurance and property tax bills vary year-to-year.

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
	<b>Housing Chapter Goals, Recommendations, and Steps towards implementation</b>
<b>Goal: Maintain the overall scale and character of the township's established residential neighborhoods.</b>	
H1	Encourage the preservation of existing housing stock. See Historic Preservation chapter for recommendations related to preservation of historic buildings.
H1a	Conduct an audit of the existing residential zoning standards to ensure any new infill development is compatible with each neighborhood's existing scale and character and consider allowing infill development where it isn't currently permitted.
H2	Improve the walkability and pedestrian connections within existing neighborhoods. See the Transportation chapter for more information and recommendations.
H2a	Conduct an audit of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to ensure the design of residential neighborhoods and subdivisions encourages walkability and active transportation generally.
<b>Goal: Meet the housing needs of current and future residents.</b>	
H3	Expand the housing opportunities in areas that are appropriate for higher-density residential development along Bethlehem Pike.
H3a	Conduct an audit of the existing zoning along the Bethlehem Pike corridor, including the Lower Pike Overlay District to promote mixed use and residential development and ensure any new development is of the desired scale and character. See the Bethlehem Pike Focus Area chapter for more information and recommendations.
H4	Provide for a variety of housing types and densities.
H4a	Draft ordinance language to permit the addition of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on lots with existing single-family detached homes, where appropriate.
H4b	Work with Montgomery County and adjacent municipalities to explore opportunities to strategize housing affordability within the region.
H4c	Conduct a zoning audit to assess appropriate housing types and densities within each residential and mixed use district and create opportunities and standards for additional housing types, including missing middle types of housing such as duplexes, cottage court, and townhouses.

## CHAPTER 5:

## TRANSPORTATION

Provide for safe mobility and connections

The infrastructure used for transporting people and goods includes roads, sidewalks, traffic lights, crosswalks, train tracks, and trails. The style and appearance of the transportation infrastructure in Lower Gwynedd is part of the built environment and character of the township. The condition of that infrastructure influences how people choose to travel, which in turn affects pollution levels, climate impacts, public health, and overall quality of life. The public outreach process identified several common transportation concerns, including connectivity, walkability, safety, and the speed and congestion of vehicular traffic.

## Transportation Modes

Driving, bicycling, walking, and taking public transportation (SEPTA rail and bus) are the four most common transportation modes in Lower Gwynedd. The way these transportation modes are organized impacts real and perceived levels of comfort and safety. Each mode is discussed below, along with suggestions for improving safety and the quality of the traveling experience.

### COMMUTE PATTERNS IN LOWER GWYNEDD

Examining the modes that residents use to commute to work can help illuminate the typical travel patterns. Residents in Lower Gwynedd primarily use a vehicle to get to work (72.3%), either driving alone (67.8%) or carpooling with others (4.5%), and the average travel time to work is approximately 33 minutes. The percentage of people working from home was 20.9% in 2022, an increase from only 4.6% in 2015. This trend is consistent with neighboring municipalities. The percentage of people driving to work decreased from approximately 80% in 2015, in part likely due to the increase in the number of people working from home. The increased number of people working from home has also impacted the percentage of people who commute on public transit, which decreased from nearly 8% in 2015 to 2% in 2022.

Table 5.1: Commute to Work Characteristics, 2022

	% OF WORKERS 16 YEARS AND OVER						
	DRIVE ALONE	CARPOOL	PUBLIC TRANSIT	WALK	OTHER (INCLUDING BICYCLE)	WORK FROM HOME	AVERAGE COMMUTE TRAVEL TIME (MINUTES)
Lower Gwynedd Township	67.8%	4.5%	2.0%	2.0%	2.7%	20.9%	30.7
Ambler Borough	64.1%	7.3%	3.1%	4.1%	0.9%	20.3%	22.7
Horsham Township	75.1%	4.8%	2.9%	1.1%	0.2%	15.9%	27.7
Montgomery Township	70.2%	6.8%	3.9%	1.2%	0.6%	17.4%	30.2
Upper Dublin Township	67.6%	3.4%	4.8%	1.5%	0.8%	22.0%	28.1
Upper Gwynedd Township	74.6%	5.3%	2.2%	0.5%	0.8%	16.6%	26.1
Whitpain Township	65.7%	3.7%	2.4%	1.6%	1.1%	25.4%	31.2



Table 5.2: Number of Vehicles per Household, 2022

	% OF HOUSEHOLDS BY # OF VEHICLES PER HOUSEHOLD			
	NO VEHICLE AVAILABLE	1 VEHICLE AVAILABLE	2 VEHICLES AVAILABLE	3 OR MORE VEHICLES AVAILABLE
Lower Gwynedd Township	2.4%	14.0%	49.0%	34.6%
Ambler Borough	3.4%	23.0%	47.2%	26.4%
Horsham Township	1.6%	15.5%	41.1%	41.8%
Montgomery Township	0.8%	10.9%	48.8%	39.5%
Upper Dublin Township	0.5%	8.3%	55.1%	36.1%
Upper Gwynedd Township	2.0%	17.9%	48.7%	31.4%
Whitpain Township	0.4%	11.8%	52.2%	35.6%

## VEHICULAR TRANSPORTATION

Based on census data, about 2.4% of Lower Gwynedd households do not have a vehicle available. It is far more common for households to have at least two vehicles. Approximately 49% of Lower Gwynedd households own two vehicles, and nearly 35% own three or more vehicles. This is similar to most comparable communities.

### Roadway Network

One of the main east-west roadway connections through Lower Gwynedd is Sumneytown Pike/Norristown Road (Bethlehem Pike in Spring House is the north-south divide). Sumneytown Pike was originally an Indian trail connecting to the Delaware River, and by the mid-1800s, the roadway served as a primary route to and from the markets in Philadelphia. Many of the roads that exist today in Lower Gwynedd are remnants of the historic rural farming landscapes of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that have transformed over the years, and as the rate of residential development increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the road network grew. In 1958, PA Route 309 was completed, bringing expressway service to Lower Gwynedd and spurring economic development.

### Road Ownership

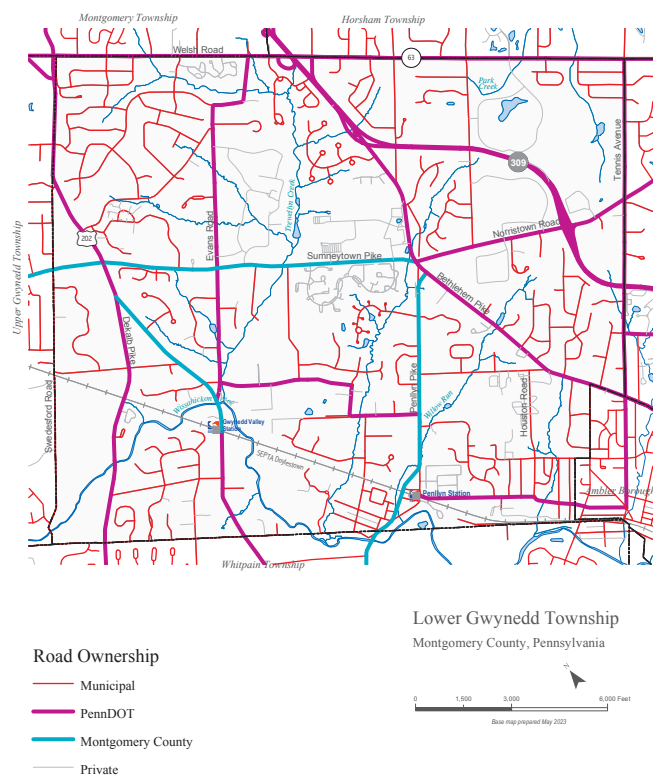
The majority of smaller residential streets within Lower Gwynedd are owned and maintained by the township; however, many of the higher-traffic roads are owned by

either Montgomery County or the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) (*See: Map 5.1. Road Ownership*). Some residential developments build roads that are maintained privately, often by a homeowner's association.

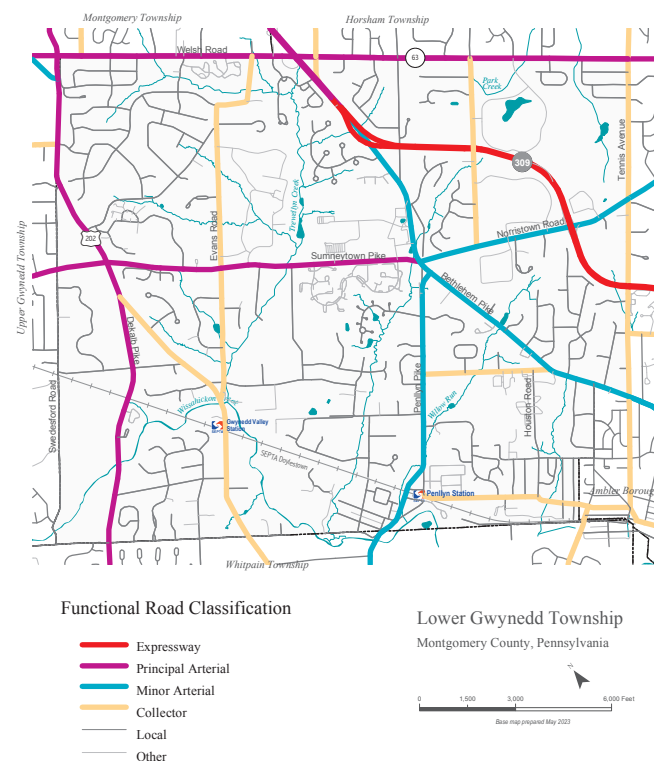
The township has a high level of control in how roads are paved and striped, what type of traffic controls are used (stop signs, lights, etc.), and where sidewalks and crosswalks are installed. The Public Works Department is responsible for many road maintenance tasks, including repaving, curb replacement, pothole repair, and snow removal. On PennDOT-owned roads, Lower Gwynedd must coordinate with PennDOT on all maintenance and projects. For example, every driveway that exits onto a PennDOT road must obtain a Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) from PennDOT. Similarly, pedestrian and bicycle amenities must be in accordance with PennDOT's policies and must obtain approval. A program called "PennDOT Connects" initiates a greater focus on coordinating with municipalities earlier in the planning for roadway and bridge projects, allowing municipalities a greater opportunity to work with PennDOT to identify and prioritize multi-modal improvements.

Montgomery County also owns roads throughout the township. The Montgomery County Roads and Bridges Department maintains county-owned roads and reviews Highway-Occupancy Permit (HOP) applications. The county-owned sections of Sumneytown Pike were studied

Map 5.1: Road Ownership



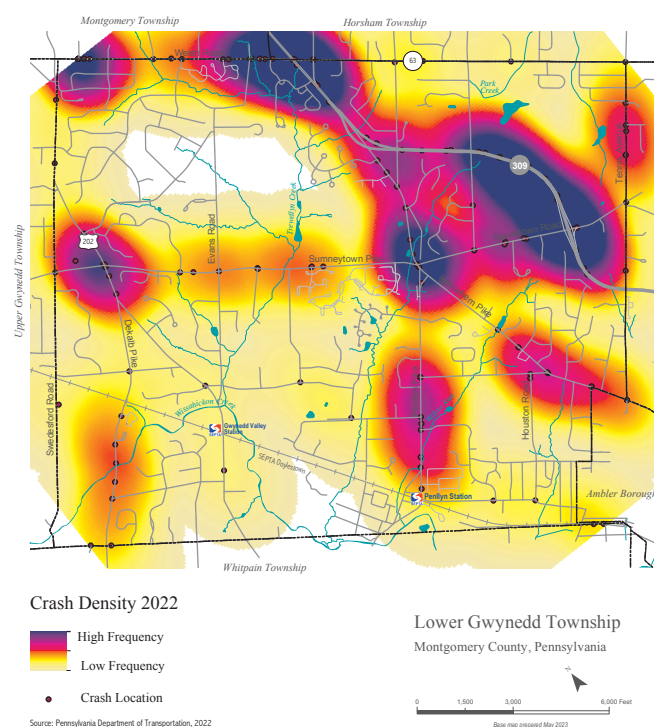
Map 5.2: Road Classification



as part of the Montco Pikes corridor study, completed in 2022. The study creates a long-term vision for the Sumner Pike corridor, in terms of both character and function. Recommended improvements could include additional travel lanes, sidewalks, and bike lanes.

Lower Gwynedd has pursued a number of transportation projects. The recently completed *Spring House Intersection Improvement Project* widened Norristown Road and Sumner Pike to add turn and through lanes, added sidewalk and trail connections, and upgraded the traffic signals. The *Bethlehem Pike Pedestrian Improvement Project* (funded by the Montco 2040 grant and completed in the fall of 2024) installed sidewalks and pedestrian bridges on both sides of Bethlehem Pike to cross the Penllyn Creek and filled an important pedestrian connectivity gap. The *Penllyn Train Station Connection* (funded by a Montco 2040 grant) will build a sidewalk connection and crosswalk between the train station and the Pen-Ambler Park and Ambler Yards.

Map 5.3: Crash Density



In addition, the PennDOT project to widen Route 202 in Lower Gwynedd Township is now complete. The project widened Route 202 from two lanes to five lanes over a 2.6-mile stretch of roadway, and added turn lanes and intersection improvements.

### **Road Classification**

Road classification, or functional classification, is a tool created from standards established by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and used by PennDOT. The classification system is based on how they function within the larger road network (*See: Map 5.2. Road Classification*).

**Local roads** primarily serve those who live in the immediate area, have lower speeds and more driveways, and are not used for long-distance travel except at one end of a trip. **Collectors** gather traffic from local roads and carry it to the arterials. **Minor arterials** serve more moderate trip lengths and distribute traffic to smaller activity centers. **Principal Arterials** typically serve major activity centers and interconnect communities. **Arterial** roads serve cars traveling longer distances, and typically have fewer driveways. **Expressways** are multi-lane highways with fully controlled access, serving regional travel demands and moving high volumes of traffic at high speeds.

The road network in Lower Gwynedd consists of private roads that connect to collectors, minor arterials, and principal arterials. Many local roads end in cul-de-sacs and have limited connectivity. Local roads can be designed to discourage through-traffic, but poor connectivity can also make travel on foot or bicycle challenging and dangerous, unless there are alternate off-road connections.

## **Transportation Safety**

### **CRASHES**

Based on the public outreach, residents are concerned with cut-through and speeding traffic on local roads. Map 5.3 shows where there had been a greater density of “reported crashes” in 2022. A reportable crash is one in which a vehicle was towed from the scene, a person sustained any type of injury, or a fatality occurred.

The highest concentration of crashes occurred along Welsh Road, Route 309, Bethlehem Pike, and Norristown Road. Sumneytown Pike, DeKalb Pike, and Penllyn Pike also have higher crash frequencies. The crash data is consistent with responses that we have received from the public survey. Nearly 40% of survey respondents want to prioritize pedestrian safety improvements along major roadways.

### **TRAFFIC CALMING**

Traffic calming is a term that encompasses various ways of slowing cars down and is typically a combination of physical measures that are meant to change driver behavior and to improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists. Slowing cars is one way to reduce crashes, and slower travel also reduces the severity of crashes when they do occur. There are a wide variety of measures that can slow traffic, including speed bumps (or speed cushions or tables), reducing lane width (or visually narrowing the lanes), using pavement markings or textures, or creating turns or curves such as chicanes or roundabouts. Different types of traffic calming devices are appropriate for different types of streets. Traffic calming can be implemented on local roads to slow traffic, as well as collector streets and arterials. A “road diet” is one of the most common traffic calming practices, which removes and/or narrows vehicular travel lanes and often adds room for non-motorized travel. Many roadway improvements and traffic calming strategies can be implemented as pilot projects. Temporary curb extensions, bike lanes, and other changes can be executed with paint, planters, and cones, and other barriers for a trial period, such as on weekends. Temporary installations should be in place for several months in order to evaluate their impact. If the pilot of the change is successful, efforts can be made to get funding for more permanent elements.





A painted curb extension shortens the street crossing.

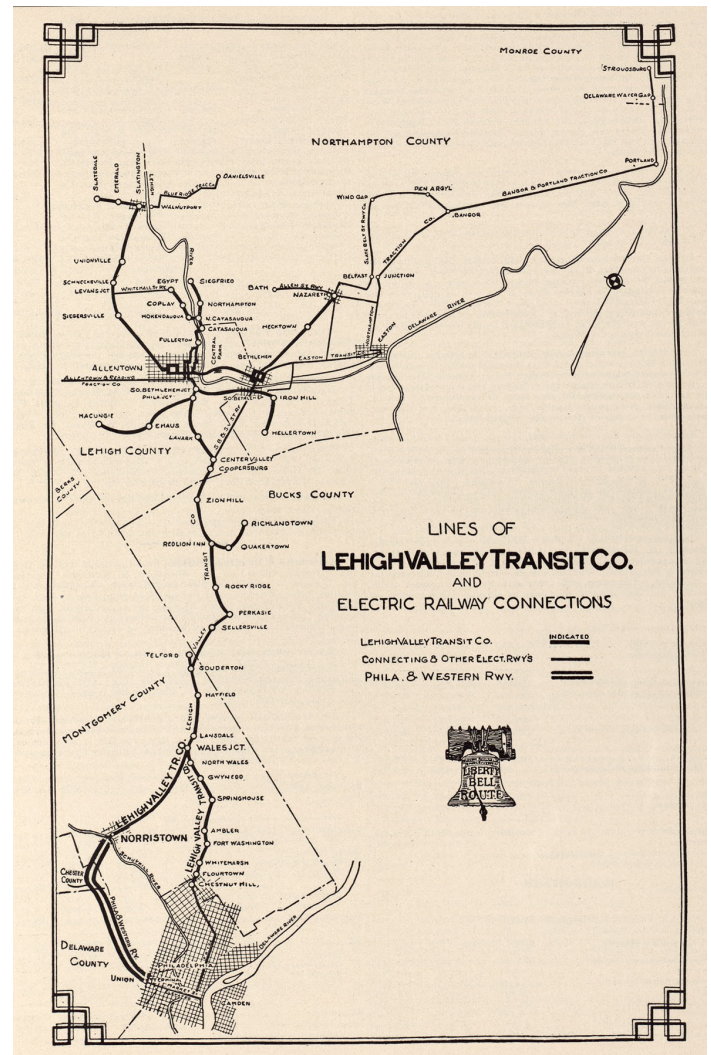
Slowing traffic in the business district also helps drivers to see their surroundings, and this added visibility can contribute to economic activity (see: *Bethlehem Pike Focus Area chapter for more information and recommendations related to commercial corridor design*). A full traffic study is recommended to fully understand the locations where traffic calming is most needed and to choose the best types of roadway improvements.

## COMPLETE STREETS

Complete streets are designed to consider the needs of all possible users of the “multi-modal” street – cars, bicycles, and pedestrians – including children, the elderly, and those with mobility challenges. Montgomery County has a Complete Streets policy that can be adopted by local municipalities. In 2019, Montgomery County adopted a complete streets policy for all county-owned roads. The county’s complete streets policy can be used as a model for municipalities considering adopting a policy for local roads. See: <https://www.montcopa.org/3277/Montgomery-County-CompleteStreets-Polic>

## Public Transportation

Lower Gwynedd is served by two SEPTA bus routes and by Regional Rail. SEPTA also provides a door-to-door on-call service for seniors and disabled passengers called CCT Connect. In addition to SEPTA service, the Partnership for Transportation (Transportation Management Association) serves a portion of Montgomery County, including Lower Gwynedd Township. While there is service, public transit is not frequently used by residents. Based on census data, fewer than five percent of residents take public transit to work. This is reflected in our public outreach, during which residents responded that they feel they do not need to take public transit, or public transit is not convenient or timely, for where they need to go.



1913 Lehigh Valley Transit Company map

## REGIONAL RAIL SERVICE

Lower Gwynedd has two Regional Rail stations, Penllyn and Gwynedd Valley, both located along the Lansdale/Doylestown Regional Rail Line, which connects Center City Philadelphia and Doylestown with additional stops in Ambler, Lansdale, and other locations. The current Regional Rail line was constructed by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (chartered in 1833, and in 1924 became the Reading Railroad). Gwynedd Valley Station was constructed in 1888, and Penllyn Station in 1930. In the early 20th century, the Lehigh Valley Transit Company (LVT), Chestnut Hill Division provided service along Bethlehem Pike and Sumneytown Pike, connecting surrounding areas to Philadelphia and Allentown, with stops in between, including stops in Gwynedd and Spring House. The LVT Co. was formed in 1905 and ceased operations in 1951.



*Penllyn Regional Rail station*

The 2024 DVRPC license plate study found that Penllyn Station had 43 commuters and Gwynedd Valley had 104 commuters. Based on the SEPTA [\*Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Service Plan\*](#), the Penllyn station served approximately 210 passengers per weekday and has a bus connection to Route 94. Gwynedd Valley Station served approximately 217 passengers per weekday. Neither station has an ADA-accessible high-level platform. Residents report that they want high-level, accessible platforms. DVRPC's Safe Routes to Transit (SRTT) program provides technical assistance to eligible municipalities to help navigate the process of designing and funding bicycle and pedestrian improvements around train stations.

## BUSES

There are currently two SEPTA Bus routes that run through Lower Gwynedd. The Route 96 connects Norristown, up DeKalb Pike (Route 202), to North Wales/Lansdale. The Route 94 connects Montgomery Mall, through Ambler, to Chestnut Hill. The bus lines through Lower Gwynedd are not heavily used. Based on 2024 ridership data, the Route 96 bus had fewer than 20 people and the Route 94 bus had fewer than 10 people use the stops in Lower Gwynedd. In 2021, SEPTA began a multi-year comprehensive redesign of their bus network, known as Bus Revolution, to review all bus routes and determine if particular routes should be changed, combined, or relocated. As of 2023, the two bus routes that serve Lower Gwynedd are proposed to remain. **When asked, residents reported that they typically do not use public transportation because of timing and scheduling of the hourly bus and train service. The township could work with employers to consider an employee shuttle to support Regional Rail users and encourage more people to use transit.**

*Transit-oriented development (TOD) is typically mixed-use development near a rail station that encourages increased use of public transportation by locating a mixture of land uses (i.e., office, commercial, and residential) within walking distance of a transit station. Enhanced landscape and building design, wide sidewalks, and public spaces are also key elements of a TOD. MCPC's Transit-Oriented Development Model Ordinance provides guidance for how municipalities can encourage context-sensitive development designed to take advantage of transit access and support increased transit ridership. Twins, duplex, and triplex residential buildings are a good way for municipalities to gently increase density near transit while maintaining the suburban character. Improved pedestrian connections would encourage people to walk to transit, as well as improve the connectivity for the surrounding neighborhoods.*





Bus stop and pedestrian crossing sign at Penllyn Station. Location of planned sidewalk and improved pedestrian crossing.



Office use in old house near Gwynedd Valley Station, lack of sidewalks.



Florence Drive to Gwynedd Valley Train Station connector path.

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

Pedestrian and bicycle circulation are an important part of a transportation network, and can be seen as an alternative to driving for short distance trips. Often referred to together as “Active Transportation,” components of the bicycle and pedestrian network include sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, paths, and crosswalks.

The distribution of land uses influences the way people move between places. If, for example, a person lives within a one-quarter mile of a grocery store, they may be more willing to walk or bike to the store, provided there are safe and convenient connections between the places. **Lower Gwynedd can encourage active transportation by creating safe and convenient access between commercial, residential, institutional, and recreational areas in the Township.**

## WALKABILITY

The walkability of a place is important for mental and physical health, safety, and wellbeing, as well as building a sense of community. Map 5.4 identifies roads that have sidewalks on both sides, are missing a sidewalk on one side, or are missing sidewalks on both sides. Improving sidewalk connectivity was identified as a priority issue for



the comprehensive plan to address, especially along major roads such as Sumneytown Pike, Bethlehem Pike, and Pen-Ambler Road that connect residential neighborhoods to destinations such as public schools, shopping centers, and train stations.

### ***Sidewalks and Trails***

Sidewalks increase safety for pedestrians, and connections to crosswalks are vital to ensure a continuation of the pedestrian network. Lower Gwynedd does not have a connected sidewalk network, and most streets do not have sidewalks at all. There are sidewalks around the Spring House Shopping Center, along portions of Bethlehem Pike, and within some private residential communities, but many lower-density neighborhoods do not have sidewalks. Where there are sidewalks missing, some trails can serve as pedestrian connections, such as along Penllyn Pike; however, these are not always accessible for all with mobility levels.

Township trails are often unpaved walking paths which are not considered to meet Circuit Trail standards (*see the Open Space, Parks chapter*). However, they are an important part of the pedestrian network and are highly valued by residents.

**The pedestrian network should be planned to integrate into the trail network.** Map 5.5. shows existing sidewalks and trails, including local trails, and identifies areas in need of improved pedestrian connections and traffic calming, based on their proximity to community destinations. Public feedback identified roads that are considered unsafe, and are highlighted on Map 5.5. **The township's Sidewalks and Trails Plan provides exact locations for the priority pedestrian connections that would help to close gaps in the pedestrian network.**

In places where there is potential for interaction between pedestrians and cars, such as intersections without crosswalks or streets without sidewalks, clearly defining the space for each mode can improve safety. Prioritizing where new sidewalks should be placed or where existing sidewalks should be improved is important in ensuring that resources are being allocated efficiently. This involves evaluating where people might be expected to walk. The Montgomery County walkability study, Walk Montco, has further suggestions for making places that are safe and comfortable for walking: <https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/2109/Walk-Montco>



*Paved path at Penllyn Park*



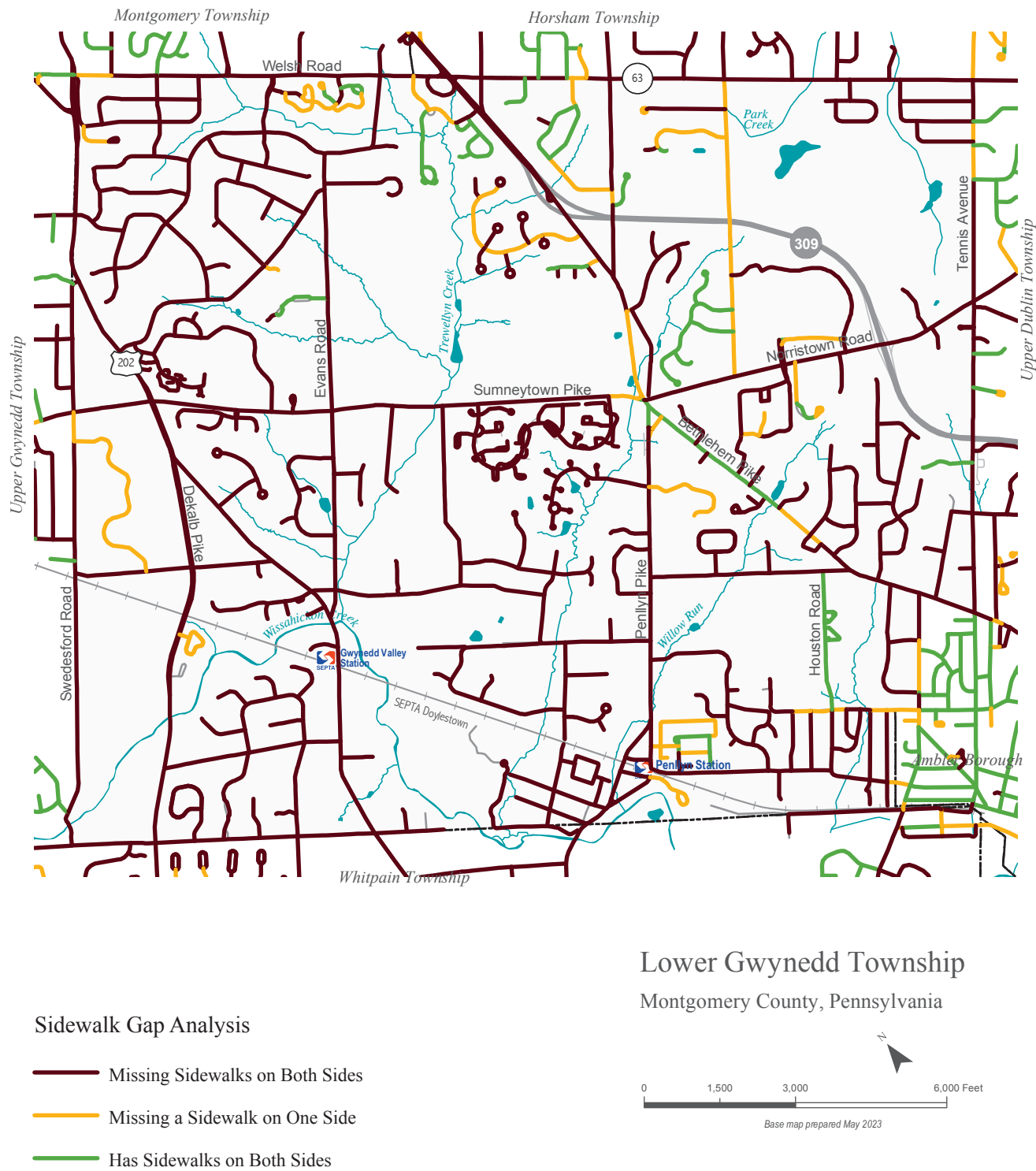
*Crosswalk on Sumneytown Pike to no sidewalk; a "no-crossing" sign for pedestrians*



*Residential street with no sidewalks.*

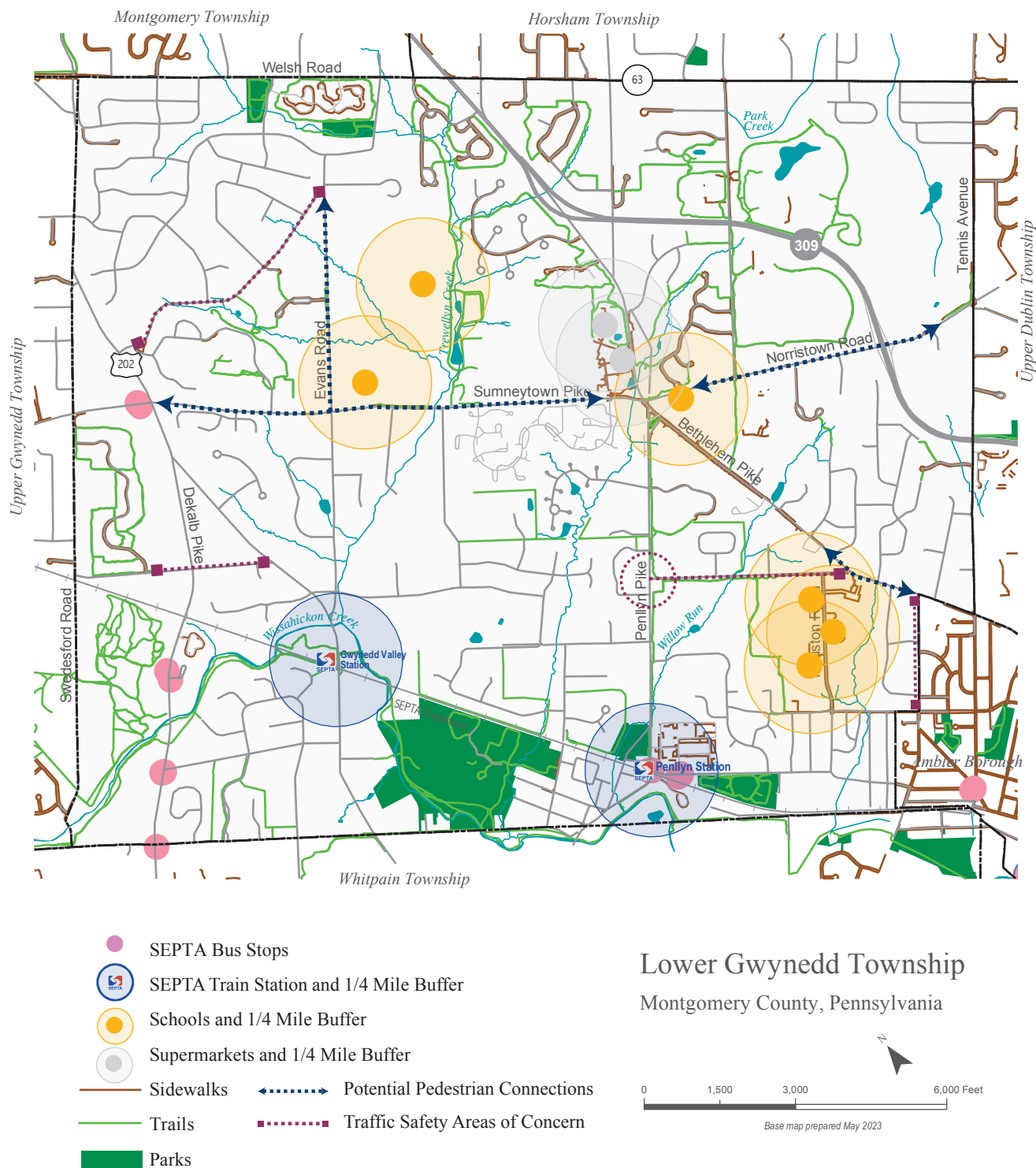


Map 5.4: Sidewalk Gaps



Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, 2022

Map 5.5: Walkability Analysis



Bus stops provided by SEPTA, 2023  
 Sidewalks provided by the Delaware Valley  
 Regional Planning Commission, 2023  
 Imagery provided by Nearmap, 2023

## BIKEABILITY

Bike safety was a concern identified through the public outreach process. Although the arterial and collector roads that run through the township provide the most direct access between destinations, these roads tend to have higher volumes and speeds of vehicular traffic, no bicycle infrastructure, and typically no shoulders, making bicycling unsafe.

Map 5.6. shows the road network of the township, categorized by the “level of stress (LTS),” based on the DVRPC analysis, and the BikeMontco proposed bicycle network, which highlights those roads where bicycle facilities should be installed. The level of stress of a roadway is determined by the number of lanes, traffic speeds, and the presence or absence of some type of bicycling facility, such as bike lanes, to calculate a number from 1-4, where 1 is a low-stress condition and 4 is a high-stress condition. There are many roads within neighborhoods that are low-stress for bicyclists. However, to get from one low-stress isolated area, or “island”, of Lower Gwynedd to another, bicyclists must travel on a higher LTS road. Connecting these low-stress islands to create a low-stress network requires improved on-road bike facilities or improved sidewalks and trails that bicyclists can use to cross the high-stress barriers. **Wayfinding signage can be used to direct bicyclists to the low-stress network.**

*Bike Montco: The Bicycle Plan for Montgomery County* includes recommended design improvements and key policies for bicycle safety. Bike Montco also establishes a county-wide network of strategically planned bicycle improvements for county- and state-owned roads. The county-wide planned bicycle network consists of 783 miles of roadway where on-road bicycle infrastructure is recommended to connect people to the county trail network and other destinations. On-road bike infrastructure includes bike lanes with varying levels of buffering and protection from cars and trucks, based on speed and volume of vehicular traffic. In order to shape BikeMontco to meet local needs, the county bike infrastructure could be complemented with additional bike facilities on local roads.



*New Bethlehem Pike sidewalks and pedestrian bridge, under construction, summer 2024*



*Wayfinding signage for neighborhood safe streets.*



*Walk & Bike Pottstown, a multimodal transportation planning and improvement project.*

*Photo: Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.*

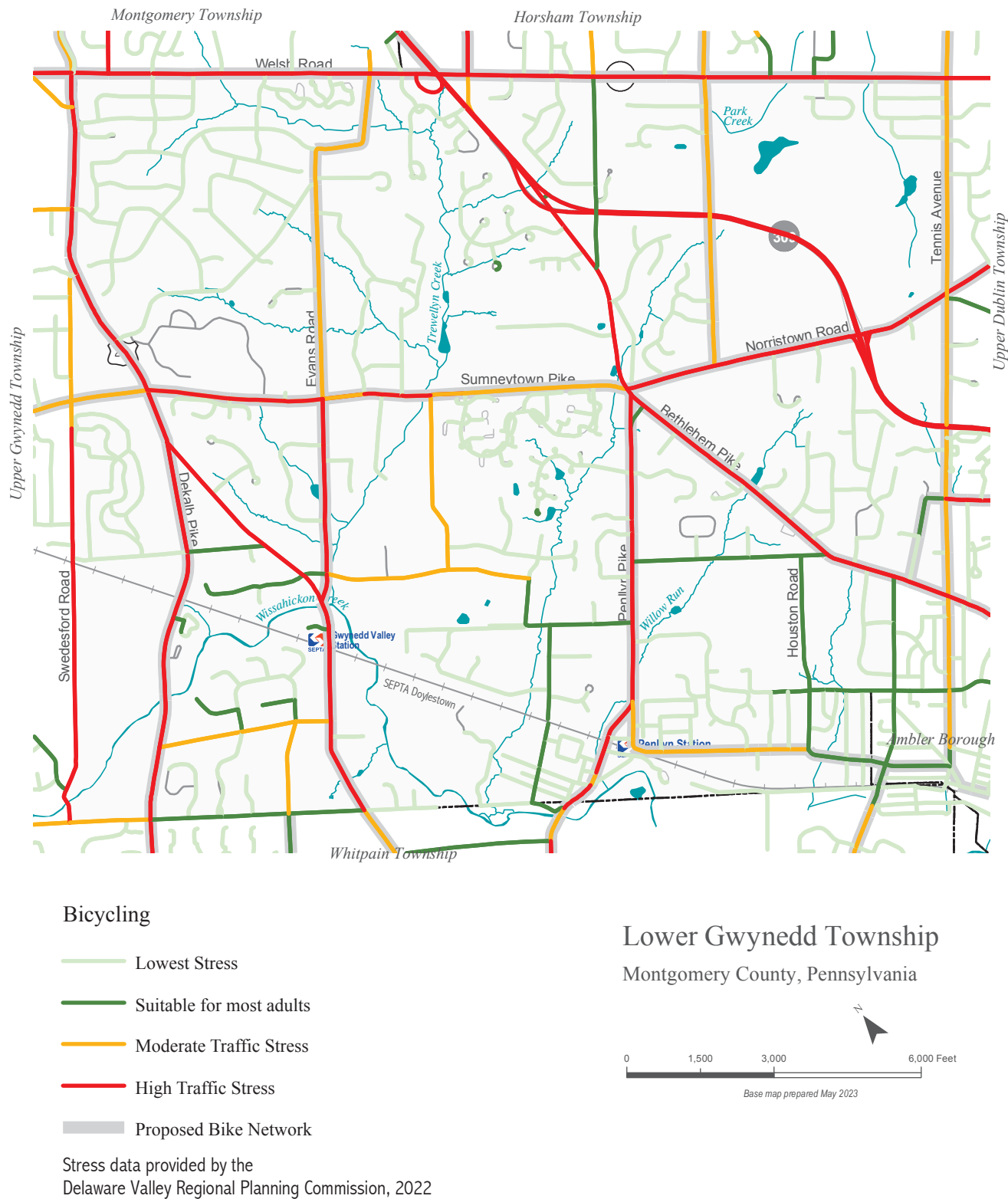
Average Daily Trips (ADT)	Roadway Type	SPEED LIMIT		
		25 MPH	35 MPH	40–55 MPH
Least  Most	<b>Local Rural/Scenic</b>	Marked shared lane Shared lane (no provisions)	Paved shoulder Marked shared lane Shared lane (no provisions)	
	<b>Local Urban</b>	Bicycle lane Bicycle boulevard Marked shared lane	Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Marked shared lane	
	<b>Collector Rural/Scenic</b>	Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Paved shoulder Wide outside lane	Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Paved shoulder Wide outside lane	
	<b>Collector Urban</b>	Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Paved shoulder Wide outside lane	Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Paved shoulder Wide outside lane	
	<b>Minor Arterial</b>	Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Paved shoulder* Wide outside lane	Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Bicycle lane Paved shoulder* Wide outside lane	Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Paved shoulder*
	<b>Principal Arterial</b>		Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Paved shoulder*	Protected bicycle lane Buffered bicycle lane Paved shoulder*
		<b>Shared-use Paths</b> are suitable for all roadway types and speeds but need to be considered carefully as they can create other potential conflicts when located adjacent to streets.		

\*Paved shoulders on arterial roads should be at least 6 feet wide.

*Recommended Facility Types for the Planned Bicycle Network,  
based on roadway type and speed limit.*



Map 5.6: Bicycle Level of Stress and Priority Routes



Number	Goals to address the issue/topic
	Recommendations to implement the goal
	Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Transportation Chapter Goals, Recommendations, and Steps towards Implementation</b>	
<b>Goal: Improve road safety and slow vehicle travel speeds through residential neighborhoods in the township.</b>	
T1	Identify common high-speed streets and install traffic calming strategies to reduce incidents of speeding and cut-through traffic.
T1a	Conduct a comprehensive traffic study to understand traffic patterns and problems, as well as to prioritize traffic calming locations and strategies.
T1b	Continue to target speed enforcement and traffic safety improvements around school and park properties.
T1c	Adopt zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance amendments with standards that encourage traffic calming.
T2	Work with PennDOT and the township's traffic engineer to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of traffic signal timing along major arterial roadways.
T2a	Continue use of real-time speed signs for traffic calming and data collection.
T2b	Perform road safety audits each year, prioritizing intersections for study based on crash data, community input, and guidance from the Lower Gwynedd Township Police Department.
T3	Reduce the number of curb cuts and conflict points on major roadways.
T3a	Conduct a comprehensive traffic study to identify areas where driveways could be consolidated and more cross-access easements could be required during land developments.
T3b	Conduct an audit of the township's zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to minimize the creation of new vehicular access points directly onto arterial roadways and to ensure that there are adequate standards for shared driveways.
<b>Goal: Ensure safe and accessible pedestrian and bicyclist connections between the township's residential areas and priority walkability areas: train stations, schools, parks, and shopping centers.</b>	
T4	Continue to pursue opportunities to expand and improve the sidewalk network.
T4a	Continue to evaluate the sidewalk gaps and prioritize gaps to fill based on proximity to community destinations, as well as on their ability to create connections and update the Sidewalk and Trail Priority Map as needed.
T4b	Continue to pursue grant funding to fill sidewalk and trail gaps that are identified in the Sidewalk and Trail Priority Map.
T4c	Encourage pedestrian pathways at cul-de-sacs and dead ends that allow for pedestrian and bicycle through-access.
T4d	Conduct an audit of the township's zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure that sidewalks with grass buffers and streetscape landscaping along arterial and collector roads are built as redevelopment occurs.
T5	Implement intersection crossing safety improvements, such as curb bump-outs at crosswalks, where traffic volumes and speeds are high.
T5a	Identify locations that are in high need of safety improvements, based on the walkability analysis, Sidewalk and Trail Priority Map, crash data, community input, among other factors.
T5b	Coordinate with PennDOT (through the PennDOT Connects program) and Montgomery County Roads and Bridges Department to install pedestrian infrastructure, including ADA curb ramps, on county- and state-owned roads as repaving projects occur.
T5c	Adopt zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance amendments with standards that encourage pedestrian-friendly design.
T5d	Work with the Wissahickon School District to pursue funding opportunities to install sidewalks, crosswalks, ADA ramps, and signage around schools through the Safe Routes to School program.
T6	Expand the trail network to connect to existing trails and continue to build connections to destinations.
T6a	Continue to work with property owners and developers to create pedestrian paths connecting neighborhoods to schools, parks, and trails.
T6b	Work with major employers to increase awareness and use of the trail connections within the township for their employees' commuting and recreation.
T6c	Consider creating an official map showing the township's planned locations of future trail connections so that future development and redevelopment projects along the trail routes can incorporate the trail right-of-way and interconnections, where applicable.

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
	<b>Transportation Chapter Goals, Recommendations, and Steps towards Implementation (Continued)</b>
T7	Ensure safe and convenient bicycling routes to destinations within Lower Gwynedd.
T7a	Conduct an audit of the zoning and/or subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure that bike parking and other amenities for all multi-family and commercial developments and redevelopments are required during land development.
T7b	Identify placement locations for new bike parking, and install bike racks on township properties (e.g. buildings, parks, and trailheads).
T7c	Continue to pursue opportunities to create pathways at cul-de-sacs and dead ends that allow for pedestrian and bicycle through-access.
T7d	Create and sign dedicated low-stress bicycle routes through the township and to important destinations, such as schools and train stations.
T7e	Coordinate with Montgomery County and adjacent municipalities to implement the general recommendations of the Bike Montco plan.
T8	Consider vulnerable road users and travel modes in any capital project, utility work, or other times at roadways are disturbed.
T8a	Use temporary installations of roadway changes to test the effectiveness of new ideas (such as for sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, curb extensions) and get feedback from road users.
<b>Goal: Encourage the use of public transportation.</b>	
T9	Improve convenience and accessibility to train stations.
T9a	Coordinate with SEPTA staff to periodically monitor the safety, usability, and comfort of existing bus stop locations and facilities, as well as to improve experiences for train riders, including the consideration of opening up the station building at Penlyn Station to transit riders and raising the platforms for easier train onboarding at both stations.
T9b	Partner with Partnership for Transportation to coordinate with employers in the township to provide shuttle service to Penlyn station.
T10	Encourage bus stop improvements during land development and explore installing bus shelters where ridership levels warrant.
T10a	Coordinate with SEPTA during the land development process for any proposal that is located near a bus route.
T11	Install pedestrian connections with pedestrian-oriented wayfinding signage to train stations.
T11a	Continue to pursue grant funding for sidewalk and trail gap connections and for expanded wayfinding near the train station.





CHAPTER 6:

# OPEN SPACE, TRAILS, AND PARKS

Protect community assets

Lower Gwynedd has a strong network of parks and open spaces that accommodate various needs and users. In addition to township-owned parks and open spaces, township residents also benefit from acres of private open space and permanently preserved conservation lands that contribute to the township’s verdant character. The township’s extensive trail resources are accessible in open space areas, parks, and residential neighborhoods and provide valuable active and passive recreation opportunities.

Conservation and preservation of open spaces and natural areas contribute to the township’s sense of identity and help to protect ecologically-sensitive areas. Through the survey and public outreach events, the community expressed the value of open space resources and the ability to connect to nature.

This chapter covers both the usable open space of the township, including parks and trails, as well as the land that is preserved as open space for environmental benefits. In 2022, the township completed the *Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan* for all township parks; therefore, the

emphasis of this plan is on the preservation of open spaces that provide ecological benefit and provide opportunities for more passive forms of recreation, such as walking trails and birding areas.

## Existing Parks and Preserved Open Spaces

A total of nearly 747 acres of land is protected open space. Of this area, public parkland makes up more than 120 acres. Map 6.1 shows the location of the open space lands within the township. The map also shows the variety of trail types within the township.

Table 6.1: Protected Open Spaces

TYPE	ACREAGE
Municipally-Owned Protected Open Space	343.3 acres
Land Trust-Owned Protected Open Space	250.9 acres
Conservation Easements on Private Land	152.7 acres
TOTAL	746.9 acres



Penllyn Woods Trail.



Community bulletin board at Penn-Ambler Park.

Map 6.1: Preserved Open Space, Parks, and Trails





Table 6.2: Preservation Status of the 1996 Open Space Plan

ID	NAME	ACRES	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
A	Byrne Farm	16	Combine with Oxford Park. Add playing fields, admin offices, maintenance, passive recreation, ice skating.	Owned by Wissahickon Trails.
B	Jackson Parcel	25	Preservation of the entire tract Preserve the western portion, with the mature trees	Developed as a cluster-style development in order to preserve some of the open space.
C	Clayton / Ingersoll	30	Fee simple purchase Preservation by conservation easement Cluster development to maintain the form of a manor house in a country setting	Much of the identified land has been developed, and some portions, including the manor house, have recently been sold by the Township to a private landowner..
D	Brown Nursery	20	Fee simple acquisition Cluster development	Fully developed into 14 homes.
E	Driscoll	75	Preserve through cooperation with Natural Lands Trust and Wissahickon Trails	45 acres owned by Natural Lands, approx 25 acres farmed, 2 acres owned by a Driscoll.
F	Kinsley / Bullock	4 / 10	Support Natural Lands and Wissahickon Trails in acquiring this land.	Parcels remain undeveloped; remain under private ownership.
G	Miscellaneous Trail Connections	Varies	Systematically acquire necessary easements or property to complete the trail network.	Many links have been made.

## OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION

Parcels listed in Table 6.2 were highlighted in the 1996 Open Space plan, which was referenced in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan as the guiding policy document for open space in Lower Gwynedd. The table lists the highest priority parcels for preservation, and highlights the preservation work that has been accomplished over the years.

In total, 175 acres of open space were identified for preservation in 1996. Twenty-four years later, 52% of those acres are protected open space owned by the Township, Natural Lands Trust, the Wissahickon Trails, or a local HOA. A total of 25% of the acreage has been developed, but only 11% was developed without cluster development patterns. Nearly 23% of the acreage remains undeveloped and unprotected in its current use as a farm or residence.

## Parks and Recreation

Lower Gwynedd's Public Works Department maintains the township's parks, trails, and recreation amenities for residents' use and enjoyment. The Parks and Recreation Board seeks to provide recreation, leisure, and cultural activities with many special events, festivals, concerts, movies, and programming. The signature annual event is

Fall Fest, and seasonal programs include: summer camp, family programs, trail clean-ups, and pickleball and tennis classes.

## PAST PARK PLANS

### *Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan, 2022*

Lower Gwynedd Township completed the Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan in 2022. The plan analyzes the existing conditions and facilities at each of the township parks and identifies potential improvements. Opportunities discussed in the plan include: replacing playground equipment, general upgrades, widening and maintaining existing trails, installing wayfinding to promote trails, planting landscaping, and addressing drainage issues. In 2023, the township completed master plans for Ingersoll Park, Pen Ambler Park, and Oxford Park.

## Township Parks and Open Spaces

The township also has approximately 343 acres of township-owned open space and parks, many areas of which have walking and horse trails. The township has a total of seven parks, covering more than 120 acres. Within the township parks, there are approximately 5 miles of trails, not including the other township and private connector trails. The parks range in scale from smaller neighborhood-based parks to large community parks, and vary in the activities offered, such as wooded walking paths, picnic areas, and sports fields. Characteristics of the township’s five parks with recreational amenities are summarized in the table below.



Basketball courts at Penllyn Park.

Table 6.3: Township Parks and Open Spaces

NAME	ACRES	AMENITIES, DESCRIPTION
<i>Penllyn Woods</i>	77	22 acres of active recreation space Trail: 0.5 mile loop, in addition to 0.1 mile behind the Community Building Trail surface: stone dust Amenities: little league fields, soccer and multi-purpose fields, 2 pavilions, Community Building
<i>Penllyn Park</i>	3.9	Trail: 0.2 mile Trail surface: paved, connects to Penllyn Woods Amenities: basketball courts, tennis court, playground area, pavilion, baseball field
<i>Ingersoll Park</i>	5.75	Community park Amenities: 2 little league baseball fields, baseball area
<i>Pen-Ambler Park</i>	18	Trail: 1 mile Trail surface: paved Amenities: basketball courts, playground, baseball field, amphitheater
<i>Veterans Memorial Park</i>	1.5	Located in Spring House, Bethlehem Pike
<i>Oxford Park</i>	8	Trail: 0.5 mile Site of Wednesday evening Summer Concert Series Amenities: softball field, playground, sand volleyball area
<i>John C. Parry Bird Sanctuary</i>	7.25	Trail: 0.9 mile Trail surface: natural surface



Playground at Penn-Ambler Park.

## Non-Township Parks and Open Space

Lower Gwynedd contains nearly 404 acres of protected land, meaning that the land is owned by an organization that protects the land from development. Together, the two organizations, Natural Lands and Wissahickon Trails (formerly the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association), own hundreds of acres in Lower Gwynedd, in particular lands around the Wissahickon Creek.



**Gwynedd Preserve:** The Gwynedd Preserve, which consists of 279 acres of open meadows and field habitats in the southwestern corner of the township, is owned and managed by Natural Lands, a non-profit conservation organization. There are several miles of natural surface trails ranging from easy to moderate difficulty that extend across Swedesford Road into Upper Gwynedd Township. The entrance is in Upper Gwynedd Township, off Swedesford Road, and there is a Preserve Center on the property with meeting space and restrooms.

#### WISSAHICKON SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPERTIES:

**The Wissahickon School District.** The Public School campus is located on Houston Road in Lower Gwynedd and is home to the Wissahickon High School, Middle School, and the Lower Gwynedd Elementary School. The property is centrally located within the township and provides recreational amenities convenient to residents. The Wissahickon High School has a number of soccer, lacrosse, baseball, and other multi-use fields that are available for public use with a permit.



Penllyn Pike Path



## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE LAND DEDICATION AND FEE-IN-LIEU

The township has a park and recreational land requirement for development. All applicants for a residential subdivision or land development of 10 or fewer units must submit a park and recreation fee of \$1,000 for each of the units. Applicants for subdivision or land development of more than 10 units must dedicate a portion of the land for public recreation area. A fee may be paid in lieu of land dedication for recreation.

## Existing Trail Network

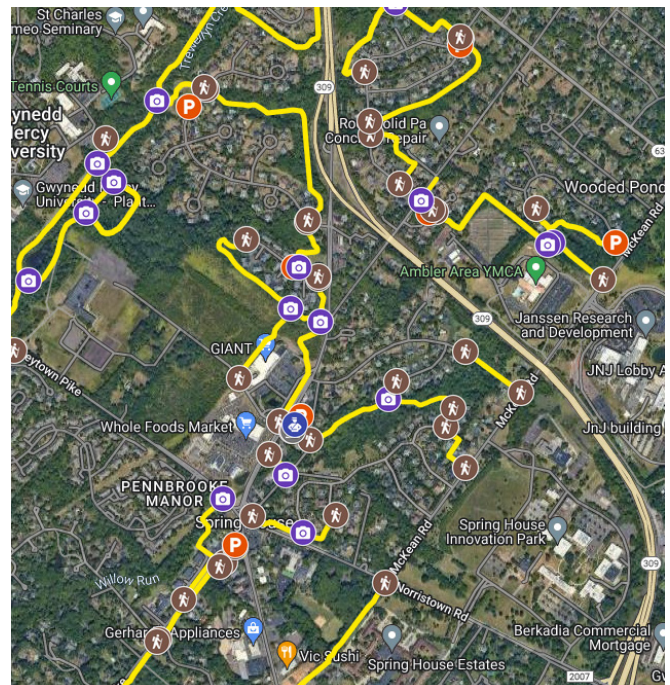
Lower Gwynedd maintains over 20 miles of walking trails. Improving walkability and trail access is one of the top priorities for township residents. Specifically, residents expressed a desire to see more and improved pedestrian connections to existing rails, parks, and open spaces, as well as to commercial areas. The walkability map in the Transportation chapter (See Map 5.5) illustrates where future pedestrian connections should be prioritized.

Lower Gwynedd benefits from having a trail network that crisscrosses the township. Many of the existing trails were constructed as residential neighborhoods were developed, slowly making links to the extended system. While these trails provide wonderful recreation opportunities and access to the natural green areas of the township, the trails also serve as connections for people who wish to walk to different destinations. Community feedback received through the survey and the first public open house highlighted strong support for the continued development of the planned trail network through the township to connect neighborhoods, open spaces, and destinations. **Construction of trails, especially those that bridge gaps in connectivity, should be prioritized, and efforts should be made to connect to existing trails during land developments.**

## TOWNSHIP TRAILS

The township has a number of named trail segments that link to form recreational trail loops, interconnect residential neighborhoods, trailheads with parking, and open space areas.

The township's Interactive Trails Map informs people of the trail location and length, surface material, park amenities, parking, and other service information: <https://lowergwynedd.org/departments/parks-recreation/park-list/park-interactive-trail-maps/>



*Township's Interactive Trails Map*

An official map is one of the implementation tools available to municipalities in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) to reserve a general area within a municipality for future public lands and facilities, such as a future right-of-way for a road or trail. The official map may be for all or a portion of the municipality. An official map is often created after a comprehensive plan is adopted, so that it is based on the planning work and public input that was done for the comprehensive plan. Once an official map is adopted, it reserves land for designated public facilities. When a land development is proposed for an area that is covered by the official map, the municipality has the right to purchase the land and build the facility, or work with the developer to ensure that the public facility is included in the development.





*Bethlehem Pike to Norristown Road Connector trail.*

### **Connector Trails**

Connector trails link residential development trails to other trails (e.g. Bethlehem Pike to Norristown Road Connector, Radcliff Lane to Roberts Road Connector Trail, Arbor Lane and Marie Road Connector Trail, Arlene Road to Arbor Lane) and are an important part of creating the linked system. Additional opportunities for connector trails ensure the development and maintenance of safe access points, such as crosswalks, and enhance connectivity to key destinations and the broader trail network.

### **Horseway Trails**

Horseways has been a part of the Lower Gwynedd community for more than 40 years. Equestrian trails are primarily clustered in an area comprising about one-third of the township, located in the Gwynedd Valley area of the township. Equestrian trails may also be used by pedestrians. For more information, visit: <https://www.horsewayspa.org/>

### **Circuit Trails Network**

The Circuit Trails network is an 850+ mile multi-purpose trail network connecting Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's 9-county region that includes Philadelphia, four southeast Pennsylvania counties, and four counties in New Jersey. Circuit Trails are typically off-road, paved multi-purpose trails (i.e., are open to both bicyclists and walkers) that are at least 10 feet wide and connected to



*Horseways trail.*

other trails in the network. There are no county-owned trail in the township, but there are county trails that are located just outside of the township. The 202 Parkway Trail in Montgomery Township and Power Line Trail in Upper Gwynedd and Horsham Townships are part of the countywide network, but neither of these trails is county-owned or maintained by county Parks staff. Route 202 is in PennDOT's right-of-way, but the municipalities are responsible for maintenance. The Power Line Trail is on PECO's land and is maintained by the municipality. Ensuring safe connections to those trailheads allows residents to access the larger regional trail network. For more information, visit: <https://circuittrails.org/>

### **Green Ribbon Trail**

A segment of the Green Ribbon Trail runs through Lower Gwynedd, through Penllyn Woods Park. The Penllyn Pike Trail provides local connections to the Green Ribbon Trail system. The Green Ribbon Trail, owned and maintained by Wissahickon Trails, currently connects Parkside Place Park in Upper Gwynedd to Stenton Avenue in Whitemarsh Township, generally along the path of the Wissahickon Creek. For more information, visit: <https://wissahickontrails.org/explore-the-watershed/find-your-trail/green-ribbon-trail-2>

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Open Space Parks and Trails Chapter Recommendations and Implementation Strategies</b>	
<b>Goal: Protect and preserve the township's remaining open space areas.</b>	
OS1	Pursue opportunities to preserve open space areas.
OS1a	Evaluate land acquisition opportunities for open space as they become available, including historic properties, greenway corridors, and potential trail rights-of-way. Gather input from the community to determine the best of use of any new open space.
OS1b	Continue to partner closely with the Wissahickon Trails on the Green Ribbon Trail and other conservation efforts related to the Wissahickon Creek.
<b>Goal: Expand and improve upon the township's trail network.</b>	
OS2	Enhance access to and awareness of current trails.
OS2a	Periodically update the Township Trail map.
OS2b	Install wayfinding signage to trails.
OS3	Study the connection to trails and prioritize gaps to fill to complete connections.
OS3a	Consider creating an official map showing the township's planned locations of future trail connections so that future development and redevelopment projects along the trail routes can incorporate the trail right-of-way and interconnections, where applicable.
<b>Goal: Enhance the township's parks, recreation opportunities, open space, and natural resources.</b>	
OS4	Continue efforts to implement the township-wide Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan and the park master plans.
OS4a	Periodically evaluate the residents' desires and needs for additional amenities within undeveloped township open spaces, such as walking trails to improve pedestrian access between the township's parks and residential neighborhoods.
OS5	Prioritize the installation of sidewalks, trails, and on-road bike facilities to improve access to parks and open spaces.
OS5a	Periodically evaluate the parks and open space land dedication and fee-in-lieu options in the township's subdivision and land development ordinance.

## CHAPTER 7:

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

## Promote ecological stewardship

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The topic of sustainability can cover many different issues. “Environmental sustainability” typically covers issues related to waste reduction, energy use, heat islands, tree canopy coverage, and watershed and floodplain protection. However, places are also recognizing the importance of thinking more broadly about sustainability in terms of creating healthy places that promote well-being. The term “social sustainability” addresses human health and equity, such as getting people out and moving to improve physical health, improving air quality, and creating opportunities for social interaction to promote mental health. This chapter covers the natural environment, the built environment, and how infrastructure plays a role in building a sustainable community into the future. *See Chapter 9: Institutions and Community Facilities for more information and recommendations related to social sustainability.*

## Topography

### GEOLOGY AND SOILS

A region’s geology influences characteristics of local natural resources, including topography, soils, hydrology, and vegetation of a community. Geology also influences site suitability for construction and the development potential in a region. A region’s bedrock can impact other factors such as infiltration rates, nutrient content, and agricultural capacity. Rock formation underlying the township informs our understanding of water supply sources and how suitable land is for development. The Stockton Formation, which makes up the southern portion of the township, contains aquifer systems and can support local water supply in wells, while the Lockatong Formation in the northern portion of the township has poor water storage capacity.

Soil is composed of weathered bedrock, organic matter, and soil organisms. Two important soil classifications are hydric soils and important agricultural soils. Hydric soils are soils that are periodically wet and are located in areas that often support the growth of wetland vegetation. Important Agricultural Soils are located throughout the township, but primarily in areas with less history of earth disturbance, such as preserved open space, and along streams. Soil types exhibit different properties (such as depth to bedrock, depth to water table, internal drainage, erosion hazard, bearing capacity, and slope), which help to determine the development suitability of an area.

### STEEP SLOPES

Areas with slopes in excess of 25% are considered not suitable for development because of the increased risk of erosion and runoff, and the amount of grading needed for site stabilization. The dominant natural feature of Lower Gwynedd is the Wissahickon Creek and its tributaries, which drain into the Schuylkill River. The highest elevation in the township is 470 feet above sea level, located on a ridge near Welsh Road and Swedesford Road. The lowest point is at 195 feet in the southwest boundary of the township where the Wissahickon flows out of the township. A major basin ridge, located in the northeastern corner of the township, separates the Wissahickon and Neshaminy watersheds.

Like geology and soil composition, slopes play a role in development potential. Flat ground has poor drainage, despite soil conditions, and construction on steep slopes of over 10% can cause erosion. Few areas of the township are entirely flat, and only occur within the floodplain. Almost all of the steep slopes in Lower Gwynedd occur around the Wissahickon Creek.

## Water Resources

Lower Gwynedd is characterized by its numerous streams and waterways, which flow across the township to the Wissahickon and Neshaminy Creeks.

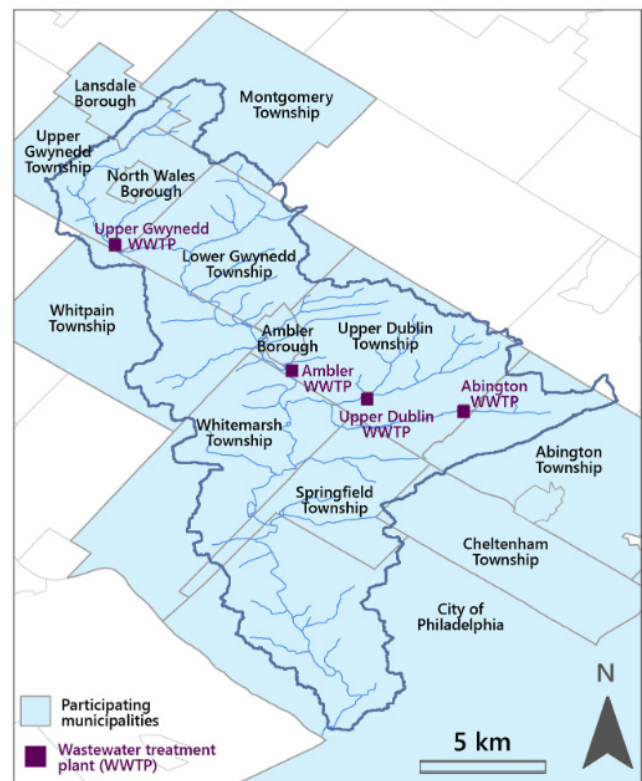
### WATERSHED PROTECTION

The land area in a region where water resources drain into a common water body, either overland or underground, is known as a “watershed.” Managing water resources within the Wissahickon watershed is a critical component of preserving the ecological health of an area, as well as ensuring that water supplies remain unpolluted. High percentages of impervious cover in urban areas increase water runoff volume and rate, especially during and after storm events, which can cause erosion and sedimentation problems for downstream waterways, leading to impaired streams that put water quality and wildlife at risk. Mitigation measures include ground water recharge areas and stormwater management to control the amount of contaminated runoff that is draining into waterways.

Lower Gwynedd is nearly entirely within the Wissahickon Watershed, a 64 square mile area that drains into the Wissahickon Creek or one of its tributaries. A portion of the northeast corner of the township is within the Neshaminy Watershed. Park Creek, a tributary of Little Neshaminy Creek, ultimately feeds into the Delaware River. The Wissahickon Creek is designated an “impaired” creek due to elevated sediment and nutrient loads, meaning that the creek is polluted to an extent that aquatic life is negatively impacted. The most common source of impairment was identified as urban runoff/storm sewers. Other municipalities that are within this watershed include: Montgomery Township, Lansdale Borough, Upper Gwynedd Township, North Wales Borough, Whitpain Township, Ambler Borough, Upper Dublin Township, Whitemarsh Township, Abington Township, Springfield Township, and the City of Philadelphia.

### Wissahickon Creek Water Quality Improvement Plan

In August 2016, thirteen municipalities signed an intergovernmental agreement to create the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership, which commits to working collaboratively to improve drinking water, mitigate flooding, reduce streambank erosion, protect fish and wildlife, and restore recreation area throughout the Wissahickon Creek corridor. A Wissahickon Creek Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) was submitted for final review to the regulatory agencies in October 2025 and is still under review. Key watershed-wide policies in the WQIP are related to decreasing impervious surfaces, increasing tree cover, protecting the riparian corridors, and ensuring consistency in stormwater management ordinances. Each of the municipalities involved in the water quality improvement plan will be responsible for the implementation of projects to reduce stormwater runoff, construct green stormwater infrastructure, and improve the ecological health of local habitats.







*Penllyn Creek*

### **RIPARIAN CORRIDOR PROTECTION**

The area of land adjacent to stream corridors is known as the “riparian corridor.” Maintaining and enhancing existing vegetation within the riparian corridor has many benefits, including stabilizing streambanks, filtering stormwater runoff, and protecting sensitive habitat. Lower Gwynedd received grant funding for a streambank stabilization project to repair eroded streambanks within the Willow Run tributary to the Wissahickon Creek, which will help control erosion and reduce sediment and other pollutants. Map 7.4 is based on a 2012 study by the Heritage Conservancy that evaluated the status of riparian corridors. The area within 50 feet on both sides of the stream was evaluated and categorized based on having 50% or greater tree canopy coverage: either no buffer, a half buffer, a full buffer, or a culverted area where the stream is not visible.

### ***Natural Resources Inventory***

The vegetation within the riparian corridor influences the stream’s health. The Montgomery County, Pennsylvania Natural Areas Inventory Update describes the natural resources along the Wissahickon Creek and provides recommendations specific to the Wissahickon Creek Conservation Landscape. **Evaluating and inventorying natural resources throughout the township, with a focus on township-owned and undeveloped lands, could help the township make natural resource management decisions.**





*Wetland area at Trewellyn Creek*



## WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAINS

### Wetlands

Wetlands are defined as areas of land that are either permanently or seasonally saturated with water and provide valuable ecological benefits, including riparian habitat, flood and erosion control, groundwater recharge, and pollutant filtration. The unique ecosystem of wetlands supports aquatic and amphibious animals, and different species of grasses, sedges, and wildflowers.

### Floodplain Protection

Floodways are defined by the percent chance of a flood occurrence within any given year; the two most common designations are the 1% annual chance flood (100 year flood) and the 0.2% annual chance flood (500 year flood). FEMA updated the floodplain insurance rate maps (FIRMs) for Montgomery County, effective March 2016, and all municipalities were required to update their floodplain ordinances to reflect these changes. Flood-prone soils are generally found near streams and water bodies where development is hazardous. Neighborhoods in the southern portion of Lower Gwynedd that are near the Wissahickon Creek are particularly flood-prone.

The township completed the Houston Creek Stormwater Flood Study to determine the flooding conditions of the neighborhood around the Wissahickon School District property and the conditions of the existing dam. The study will evaluate the conditions of the existing dam and examine improvement options. Any improvements to the dam could also assist the township in reaching their Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) goals.

## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCY

The protection of natural resources and climate resilience is an essential element for any long-range planning. Stormwater management is an especially critical consideration, as continuous development and large amounts of impervious cover reduce infiltration capacity and result in stormwater runoff that impairs local waterways and damages property. The majority of rainfall that lands on impervious surfaces becomes stormwater runoff that carries particulate matter such as motor oils, sediment, and litter, polluting the streams and rivers into which it discharges.

Proper stormwater management reduces this type of pollution and helps to maintain water quality.

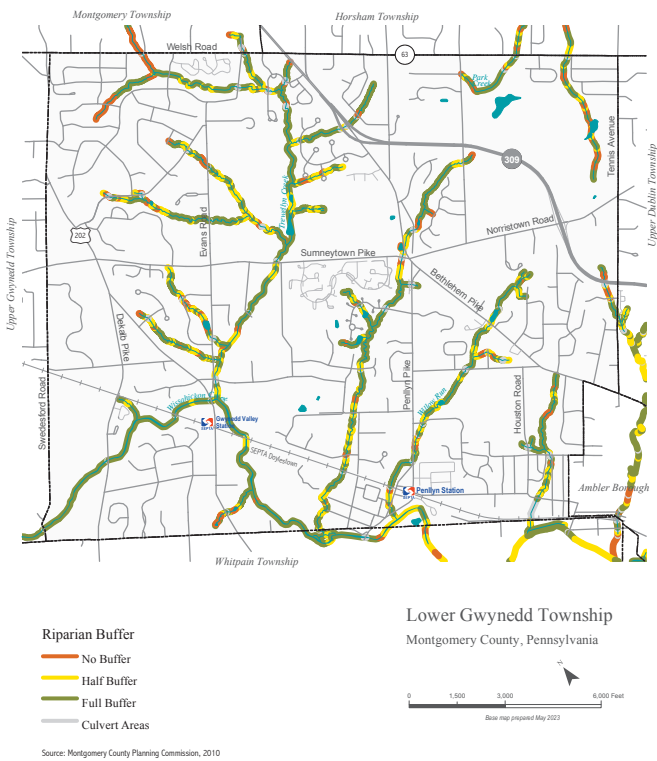
Improving stormwater management in Lower Gwynedd is a large and difficult project, but an important one for the health and safety of its residents and its infrastructure. To recover costs for stormwater management from private property owners, municipalities in Pennsylvania are authorized to charge a stormwater fee for impervious surface on private property to handle runoff. Lower Gwynedd currently has stormwater management regulations, which also establish a fee for stormwater management site plan review and inspection.

### GREEN STORMWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES.

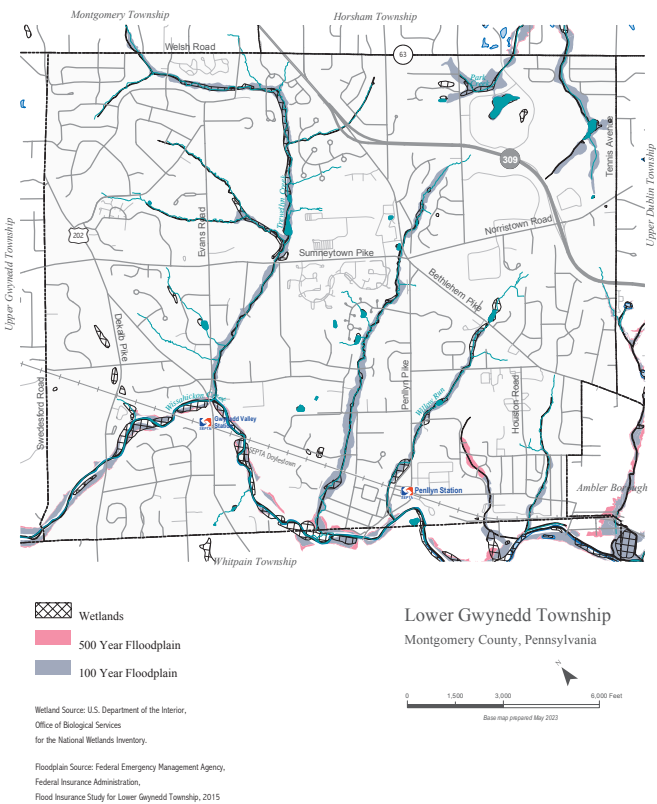
*Under the EPA's enforcement of the Clean Water Act, Lower Gwynedd is required to maintain a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). To reduce pollution and improve stream health, DEP requires a reduction in the amount of sediment that goes directly into streams over time to maintain the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). A TMDL refers to the amount of a certain pollutant that a water body can contain and still be a healthy stream.*

*One way to reduce the amount of pollution entering the waterways is to capture stormwater before it enters the system through green stormwater infrastructure. Green stormwater management techniques are attractive, good for the environment, and effective in managing stormwater. These techniques can be used on public and private property, and education about green stormwater infrastructure can help private property owners understand the benefits of installing these on their properties. Strategies for capturing stormwater include naturalized stormwater basins, bioswales, and rain gardens.*

Map 7.1: Riparian Buffer



Map 7.2: Wetlands and Floodplain



## Tree Cover

Shade trees provide many social and environmental benefits to a community, including improving air quality, providing shade cooling, infiltrating rainwater, reducing stormwater runoff, and serving as habitat for birds and other wildlife. Trees also have aesthetic benefits. Studies have shown that shopping districts lined with trees have better sales than those without street trees. Lower Gwynedd has a robust tree canopy cover, with trees over 40 feet tall are clustered in preserved open spaces areas and around waterways. Note that the tree data is from 2010. **To get a better understanding of the tree canopy coverage today, the township may want to coordinate with the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) to conduct a tree inventory.**

### STREET TREE PLANTING GUIDELINES

Street trees typically need 800-1,200 cubic feet of soil to grow in. Where tree planting areas are constrained, smaller trees could be planted, and structural soils should be used underneath the sidewalk to accommodate the necessary soil volume. In general, smaller trees can be planted underneath utility wires, and columnar trees are appropriate where there are shallow setbacks. Where the width of a landscape strip is too narrow to accommodate any tree planting, hardy, salt-resistant grasses and low-growing perennial ground covers are suitable alternatives.

### HEAT ISLANDS AND IMPERVIOUS SURFACE COVERAGE

Heat islands can affect communities by increasing summertime peak energy demand, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, heat-related illness and mortality, and water pollution. The heat island effect Map 7.4 shows the relative difference in the average surface temperature in different parts of the township, with orange and red representing areas with warmer temperatures and greens representing areas with cooler temperatures. Those areas of the township that are more heavily developed with greater concentrations of impervious coverage (such as roads, parking lots, and rooftops) are noticeably warmer than areas of the township where there is more tree canopy and less impervious coverage (See: Maps 7.3 and 7.5). Maintaining the established tree canopy and requiring new canopy trees



*Mature street trees.*



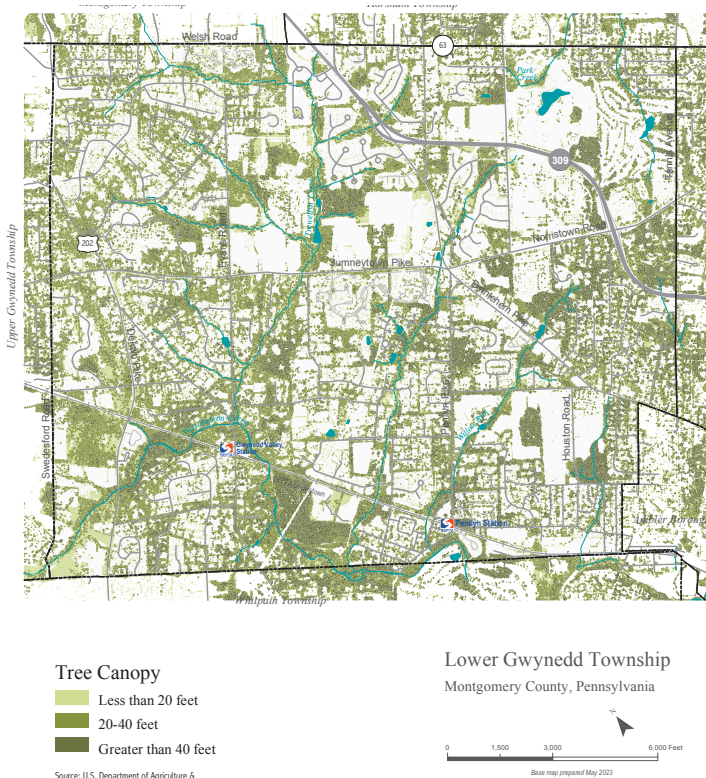
*Impervious surface/parking lot.*



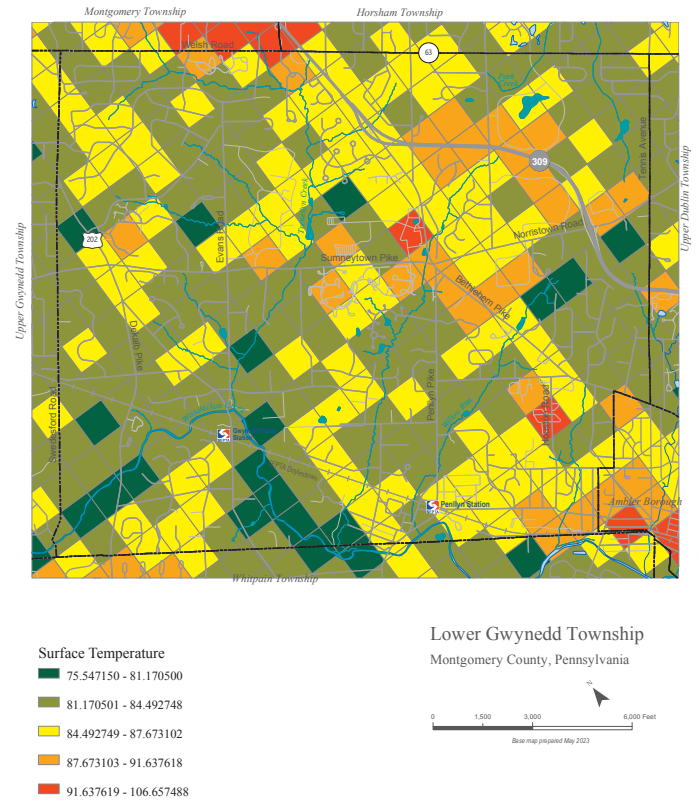
*Parking lot infiltration.*



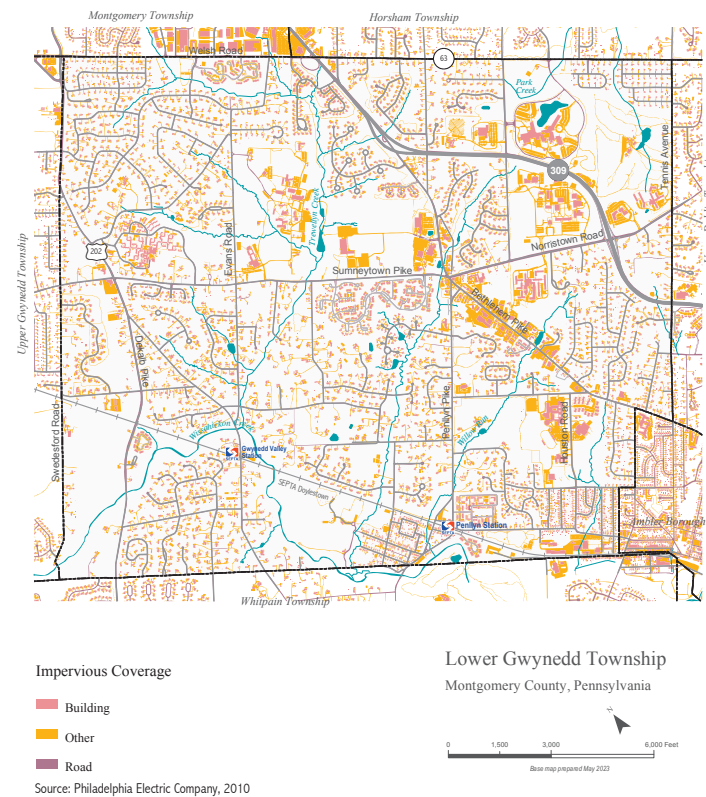
### Map 7.3: Tree Canopy Coverage



### Map 7.4: Surface Temperature



### Map 7.5: Impervious Coverage



These maps illustrate the impact of impervious surface coverage on surface temperatures.

to be planted along roads and in large surface parking lots, in addition to reducing impervious coverage, is important for maintaining healthy temperatures.

### **SUSTAINABLE GREEN PARKING LOTS**

*Parking lots can impact a community's appearance and the environment with increased stormwater runoff and the heat island effect, since they are large areas of paved surface, sometimes without any planting or infiltration available. Using site and landscaping design techniques, parking lots can be retrofitted or built new to be more sustainable and attractive. Encouraging owners of parking lots to find ways to infiltrate more stormwater on site can have a sizeable impact on the amount of runoff generated. The Montgomery County Planning Commission guidebook "Sustainable Green Parking Lots" provides design guidance to help communities create greener parking lots. For more information, visit: [https://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/9735/Green-Sustainable-Parking-Guide-2\\_10\\_2016](https://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/9735/Green-Sustainable-Parking-Guide-2_10_2016)*

## **Infrastructure & Energy**

The infrastructure systems that provide drinking water and convey and treat wastewater are essential to the safety and comfort of the township. Energy, typically in the form of electricity or natural gas, is another essential component of the township's infrastructure. How we use energy at home and in places of work, and to get around, has impacts on the environment.

### **WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

In 1951, North Wales Borough purchased the Water Company under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Authority Act of 1945 to form the North Wales Water Authority (NWWA), which operates as a nonprofit municipal authority. Throughout the second half of the 20th Century, the NWWA expanded into surrounding municipalities through acquisitions of other water companies. Today, the Authority serves 11 municipalities in Montgomery and Bucks Counties.

### **SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE**

Lower Gwynedd maintains approximately 100 miles of sewer lines, three pump stations, and four metering stations. The township handles the construction of sewer lines and contracts with Bucks County Water and Sewer for maintenance of the pump stations. The township's wastewater is treated at the Ambler Wastewater Treatment Plant. Lower Gwynedd supports the composting of biosolids as part of a sustainable wastewater treatment practice. Composting is a method of disposing of sludge that is created during the sewage treatment process. The decision to compost or not is largely a financial one, and Ambler Borough and Lower Gwynedd Township would have to coordinate to determine the feasibility.

### **ENERGY**

The electrical transmission system that carries electricity is owned and maintained by PECO. The Limerick Nuclear Power Station produces 40% of the electricity used in the region. Gas supplies are obtained from interstate gas transmission companies.

### **CREATING A SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Buildings are a major source of energy use for heating, cooling, lighting, water consumption, and ventilation. One way to reduce a building's energy use is to implement green building practices when designing and constructing a new building or during building renovations. The US Green Building Council for LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a set of criteria that can be applied to any building type that focuses on the reduction and efficiency of energy and water use within the building.

Reducing emissions can be accomplished through a combination of using less energy and choosing cleaner sources for the remaining energy use. Several strategies can be used to reduce energy use, including retrofitting old buildings to be more efficient (e.g., sealing windows, improving insulation, etc.), upgrading to more energy efficient appliances and lightbulbs, and changing behavior to use less energy. Finding ways to increase the use of renewable energy is one way to help reduce the

environmental impact of generating, transmitting, and using energy. In anticipation of increased interest in alternative fuels, municipalities can provide clear regulations to encourage and accommodate the appropriate and safe installation of renewable energy infrastructure. DVRPC has renewable energy ordinance frameworks that can be used as a resource for the township as it evaluates ordinance language relating to the construction and operation of renewable energy installations.

**Vehicle Emissions.** According to DVRPC, a quarter of the Greater Philadelphia region's greenhouse gas emissions come from on-road transportation. In addition to changes that reduce vehicle miles traveled and fuel efficiency changes, electric vehicles are another way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. **Promoting changes that encourage alternative modes of transport, such as active transportation and public transit, is the best way to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and emissions.** However, since driving is the main mode of transportation for most residents, looking to improve energy efficiency is another way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Although most individuals with electric vehicles install chargers at their homes, being able to charge a vehicle at a place of employment or while running errands is helpful. In response to this trend, many municipalities are encouraging the installation of charging stations with dedicated parking spaces for electric vehicle charging. *Montgomery County's Model Electric Vehicle (EV) Ordinance* provides guidance to municipalities to support electric vehicle adoption and infrastructure installation.

## Waste Reduction

### TRASH AND RECYCLING

Lower Gwynedd contracts with a company to pick-up trash and recycling and provides information on their website about the various disposal services, as well as information about the hazardous waste collection by Montgomery County.

### YARD DEBRIS AND COMPOSTING

The township offers seasonal collections of certain types of yard waste, including grass clippings and fall leaves.

Any yard waste collected is composted and diverted from the landfill, and is therefore considered recycling and contributes to the township's overall recycling rate.

Food waste generally accounts for up to 40% of solid waste by weight. By encouraging households and institutions to compost their kitchen scraps, the total weight of solid waste generated can be greatly reduced. Many of the township's residential lots are large enough to accommodate on-site composting of food waste and smaller yard debris, such as leaves. Offering educational programs and low-cost compost bins to residents could help increase the practice of residential composting. The EAC provides residents with resources and guidance on composting at home and could be a partner in working to increase the at-home composting rates.

### RECYCLING GRANT PROGRAMS.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) administers the Recycling Performance Grant Program, which provides grants to municipalities that offer recycling programs. Grant amounts are based on the weight of approved recyclable materials collected annually, as well as the municipality's population. Both residential and commercial recyclables can count towards the municipality's grant amount; therefore, detailed and accurate reporting of recyclables collected by all haulers that operate within the township is important. The PA DEP also offers Recycling Program Development and Implementation Grants that reimburse 90% of eligible expenses, such as educational programs, curbside recycling bins, and leaf waste processing programs.

*The Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) is a volunteer group that advises the Board of Supervisors on environmental and sustainability initiatives. The EAC is active in educating and promoting sustainable practices and hosts workshops and events to guide residents on sustainable practices at home.*



Number	Goals to address the issue/topic
	Recommendations to implement the goal
	Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure Chapter</b>	
<b>Goal: Protect and preserve the township's natural resources, including streams, wetlands, floodplains, riparian corridors, and woodlands.</b>	
ES1	Conduct an audit of the township's zoning, subdivision and land development, and stormwater management ordinances to identify ordinance amendments that could encourage more sustainable development practices.
ES2	Conduct an audit of the riparian and wetland conservation areas to ensure protection of sensitive areas along the township's streams and water bodies. The MCPC Riparian Corridor Conservation District Model Ordinance can be used to evaluate the ordinance language.
ES2a	Maintain an updated floodplain ordinance to comply with any changes in federal floodplain regulations and/or mapping.
<b>Goal: Preserve and enhance the tree canopy for improved air quality and ecological benefits.</b>	
ES3	Identify areas where trees are in poor health, need to be replaced, have been removed, or where there is a need for new trees.
ES3a	Consider a master tree plan to strategize how to maintain and expand the tree canopy.
ES3b	Partner with the EAC to conduct an inventory of street trees to identify streets and parking lots in the tree cover.
ES3c	Partner with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) Tree Tenders Program to plant trees along a street or at a park, yard, or other public space.
ES4	Conduct an audit of the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure adequate tree planting and tree replacement standards, as well as species requirements to ensure street tree health.
<b>Goal: Improve water quality of the local waterways that flow into the Wissahickon Creek.</b>	
ES5	Implement the "Wissahickon Creek Water Quality Improvement Plan", once completed, and support the municipal consortium.
ES5a	Continue to partner closely with the Wissahickon Trails on the Green Ribbon Trail and other conservation efforts related to the Wissahickon Creek.
ES6	Continue to pursue grant funding for streambank restoration projects to address identified areas that lack or have an inadequate riparian corridor buffer area.
ES6a	Partner with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) to plant trees along streams, transitional upland areas, and natural stormwater basins.
ES7	Encourage stormwater best management practices and water recycling as part of the township's MS4 permit requirements.
ES7a	Implement green stormwater management projects (e.g., rain gardens, riparian buffers) on township-owned properties.
ES7b	Continue to work with outside partners, such as the Wissahickon School District, to install green stormwater management projects on non-township-owned properties.
ES7c	Partner with EAC to educate homeowners on ways they can naturally control stormwater runoff on their individual properties (such as rain barrels, rain gardens).
ES8	Conduct an audit of the zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance to ensure green parking standards that encourage additional landscaping and naturalized stormwater management techniques within new parking lots and encourage green parking retrofits during land developments.
ES9	Conduct an audit of riparian corridor buffer regulations to ensure that they sufficiently enhance the greenways along the township's streams and water bodies.

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic
	Recommendations to implement the goal
	Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure Chapter (Continued)</b>	
<b>Goal: Reduce energy consumption.</b>	
ES10	Encourage sustainable building practices and the increased use of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies throughout the township code.
ES10a	Consider creating incentives in the zoning code for sustainable building and site design.
ES11	Support electric vehicle (EV) technology as it currently exists and evolves.
ES11a	Create standards for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. Consider requiring the installation of EV charging stations for certain types or scales of development. The MCPC model EV ordinance can be used to evaluate the ordinance language.
ES12	Adopt a renewable energy ordinance to ensure the proper installation and use of renewable energy facilities.
ES13	Provide information to residents and commercial property owners regarding renewable energy and energy reduction opportunities.
ES13a	Consider creating incentives in the zoning code for sustainable building and site design.
<b>Goal: Reduce the impacts of flooding in flood-prone areas.</b>	
ES14	Identify and provide information on flood-proofing to property owners in or near floodplains and flood-prone areas.
ES14a	Continue to pursue studies and projects to address flooding issues in the township and support property owners in those areas.
<b>Goal: Reduce the township's overall production of solid waste.</b>	
ES15	Increase the township's recycling rate.
ES15a	Pursue funding opportunities through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to advance the township's recycling and waste reduction efforts.
ES15b	Ensure recycling is available at locations where trash cans are provided.
ES15c	Continue to partner with Montgomery County to encourage residents to participate in household hazardous waste and other special collection events that are offered annually across the Southeastern Pennsylvania area.
ES16	Allow and encourage composting on private properties by ensuring ordinance support and education to residents.
ES16a	Partner with the EAC to provide educational resources to residents about composting at home and encourage the diversion of food waste from the trash stream.
ES16b	Participate in a free or discounted compost bin program, such as through an advance group sales program.
ES17	Support the evaluation of sewage sludge composting from the Ambler Waste Water Treatment Facility.
<b>Goal: Continue to provide for the long-term maintenance and planning of integral utilities and infrastructure systems.</b>	
ES18	Continue to maintain an up-to-date sewage facilities plan (Act 537 Plan) that reflects any zoning and/or land use changes that could impact the projected sewage treatment demand within the township.
ES19	Continue to work to implement the recommendations in the Hazard Mitigation Plan to help protect infrastructure, property, people, and natural resources.

## CHAPTER: 8

# HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

## Preserve significant places

Historic structures and landscapes help to tell the story of how people and events shaped the landscape and community.

Through the various public outreach efforts, residents expressed a desire to preserve the historic buildings in the township that they feel are significant to the character and identity of Lower Gwynedd. The goal for the comprehensive plan is to highlight the significant properties and importance of preservation and to discuss the types of preservation strategies that are available. This chapter provides information about historic preservation in Pennsylvania and work at the local to identify and document local historic resources at the local level.

## A Brief History of Lower Gwynedd

The area now called Lower Gwynedd was inhabited by the Lenni Lenape tribe before Quaker settlers arrived and began farming the land in the late 1600s.

Gwynedd Township, which at its founding included Upper and Lower Gwynedd, North Wales, and Parts of Ambler and Lansdale, was founded in 1698 by Welsh Quakers. Portions of Ambler and Lansdale withdrew, resulting in a smaller land area of Gwynedd, and in 1891, the governmental separation officially created Lower Gwynedd as a second class township.

In the early 18th century, Welsh farmers made up the majority of the population and relied on the Wissahickon Creek and its tributaries for water and power. Roads were developed early, in part to connect farmers to the mills. Industrial development brought trains to the area, resulting



*Historic photo of trolley tracks on Sumneytown Pike in front of the William Penn Inn.*



*The William Penn Inn has been preserved and is used as a restaurant, circa 1902.*

in development and population changes as immigrants from different European countries moved to the area. Railroad development in the 19th century brought more development and wealthy Philadelphia summer estate homes to the

township. Clusters of development occurred near important roads and near train stations, such as the Penllyn Village community.

Before 1950, the only significant clusters of development were residential neighborhoods around Penllyn Village, occurring adjacent to the Borough of Ambler. Major development occurred at different periods throughout the middle of the 20th century with suburban growth in the region. Today, the township has buildings that exemplify the different periods of Lower Gwynedd's history and people.

## What to Preserve And Why?

A historic resource can be a building, structure, site, object, or district that is of a certain age (usually 50 years or older) or is associated with a certain theme, and retains enough integrity to convey its significance. Historic preservation efforts can have many benefits for the local community and can foster community spirit. Historic areas that have been preserved help to maintain a community's visual character, restore the local tax base, create jobs, stimulate private investment, and promote growth in a way that uses existing resources and infrastructure efficiently. In addition, preserving historic buildings is an inherently sustainable practice; preserving and reusing an existing building uses much less energy and resources than tearing it down and building new.

## Historic Preservation Tools

There are several state and federal programs that provide for various levels of designation and protection of historic resources.

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES LISTINGS

The following locations in Lower Gwynedd have been designated historic by inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: 1) Gwynedd Hall, and 2) Jacob Kastner Log

House. These historic resources have been well-researched and are recognized as having national importance. All of the information on the National Register properties is from the National Register nomination forms available from the National Park Service.

Listing in the National Register is recognition of a place's historic importance; however, listing does not prevent alterations to the property or even demolition of the resource. Unless local ordinances codify some protections for recognizing historic resources, a listing in the National Register of Historic Places does not protect or preserve a historic place.

### PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION (PHMC)

*The State Historic Preservation Office, known in Pennsylvania as the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), has a program to support local governments in historic preservation efforts. This Certified Local Government (CLG) program opens up additional grant funding and technical assistance for governments that qualify.*



*Gwynedd Friends Meeting House, built in 1823.*



## ORDINANCE TOOLS

Identifying and documenting key historic resources is the first step to preservation. Separate from the National Register of Historic Places, many communities choose to create a local inventory of historic places. **The adoption of a local registry or inventory of historic places allows a municipality to enact protective zoning and other ordinances.**

The Municipalities Planning Code includes language that allows municipalities to protect and enhance historic properties through zoning. Zoning incentives could include new uses (e.g., bed and breakfast, accessory dwelling unit) and adaptive reuse options. The zoning approach is a good option if the historic resources are scattered rather than concentrated, where a district may be more appropriate. Design guidelines are another helpful tool to provide guidance and recommendations to owners of historic buildings.

Lower Gwynedd currently has a historic preservation ordinance in the zoning code in terms of development bonuses. As a special exception, the Zoning Hearing Board may allow a reduction to the applicable area and bulk regulations in some of the residential districts, provided that the historic resource meets or will be renovated to meet the standards.

Conservation easements are another strategy to preserve historic properties, which can be more restrictive on what can be done to the property, but is voluntary and

implemented by the owner of a property. This added flexibility is helpful to address specific characteristics of a property. A conservation easement is a legal agreement that permanently protects a significant historic property, under which the owner places restrictions on the development of or changes to the property. The easement restrictions are transferred to a managing organization and continue in perpetuity.

## Recognition and Education Programs

### HISTORICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Lower Gwynedd Historical Advisory Committee identifies historic resources, reviews and makes recommendations concerning existing and proposed historical preservation ordinances, and educates the public about historic neighborhoods. In addition, the Historical Advisory Committee recommends plans and programs for the preservation and possible reuse of historic resources. The committee is in the process of creating a database of historic resources in the township and identifying tools that support local historic places and landscapes.

### HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Lower Gwynedd, organized by the Historical Advisory Committee, recently began collecting ideas for sites to highlight with historic markers. The Historic Marker Program is meant to highlight places that have local, state, or national historical significance and which can bolster a sense of pride for the community and educate the public. In some cases, the structure may no longer be present, but the history of the place warrants recognition. The following resources are being considered by the initial phase of the Historical Advisory Committee for the Historical Marker Program:

1. Penllyn Village
2. Bethlehem Baptist Church
3. Penllyn School
4. Spring House Village
5. Gwynedd Corners
6. Gwynedd Friends Meeting



*Ingersoll House, sold by the township in 2024.*



Historic residence



This photograph (c. 1927) shows the Robert Evans house just after restoration (removal of more modern construction). Source: [https://www.friendsjournal.org/legacy/abington/gwynedd/images/housebeautiful\\_25.jpg](https://www.friendsjournal.org/legacy/abington/gwynedd/images/housebeautiful_25.jpg)

WISSAHICKON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society was founded in 1975 as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that strives to preserve buildings and artifacts of Whitpain Township, Lower Gwynedd Township, and Ambler Borough. The organization provides resources and information about the history and heritage of the Wissahickon Valley area and the institutions and events that have shaped the communities.

The Evans Property, located at the corner of Evans Road and Sumeytown Pike, was the home of Robert Evans, one of the four Evans brothers who emigrated from Wales and settled in the area that is today Lower Gwynedd in 1698. Thomas Evans and his cousin William Jonn purchased a tract of land that they named the township “Gwynedd”, which was later divided and settled. Restoration of the house was done in 1927 when the Shearer family owned the property and was documented in a publication of The House Beautiful (image to the left). The continued preservation of the house is important to the history of the township, and of the Welsh settlement history in the region

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
	Historic and Cultural Resources Chapter Recommendations and Implementation Strategies
Goal: Preserve locally significant cultural and historic resources, including structures and sites.	
CR1	Complete an inventory of locally significant historic resources.
CR1a	Explore potential properties that may be eligible for a historic resources inventory, per the Secretary of the Interior's standards.
CR2	Continue to promote the preservation of historic properties and landmarks.
CR2a	Encourage conservation easements for historic properties.
CR2b	Conduct outreach to property owners with historic properties to provide education on appropriate preservation and maintenance techniques.
CR2c	Implement a recognition program to provide formal acknowledgment of property owners who have taken steps to preserve the historic character of their properties.
CR2d	Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission on education and outreach, as well as technical assistance.
CR3	Conduct an audit of the township zoning ordinance for historic resource protection and update, as needed, to ensure that the zoning regulations sufficiently incentivizes preservation and the reuse of historic structures.
CR3a	Continue to incentivize adaptive reuse of existing buildings through bonuses, and evaluate if additional bonuses could further encourage the reuse of buildings.

## CHAPTER: 9

# COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Support community health and provide services

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## Community Health and Social Sustainability

Community facilities and institutions are essential resources that contribute to the quality of life and overall well-being for residents. Institutional uses provide supportive public services, such as health providers, places of worship, and schools. Community facilities are the organizations, social clubs, and other groups that collectively help to create and support the social fabric of a community. These types of uses are grouped together because they serve a lot of the same purposes, including creating social cohesion and a sense of belonging, which contribute to community health.

Survey responses and feedback at the open house tell us that the quality of the schools within the township is of great importance to the community and part of the identity of the township. In addition, there is a strong desire for more spaces for people to gather and socialize, and for places where kids can play and be creative. Institutions and facilities can serve as “third places” for residents to meet and build relationships. Third places, which can also be businesses such as a neighborhood café or hair salon, refer to those that are outside of the home and workplace where people go to spend time.

Community health is often measured by access to healthcare facilities and fresh food options. Lower Gwynedd is fortunate to have a number of healthcare facilities for different needs and various supermarkets, all of which contribute to improved health. The ability to live a healthy lifestyle is also greatly influenced by the built environment

and can be promoted by good planning practices and land use decisions.

### SCHOOLS

Lower Gwynedd has many large educational institutions that shape the physical and social landscape of the township in a number of ways. Institutions include open green sites that are essential parts of the township and are used for events such as Fall Fest and 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations. These large institutions add employment to the local economy and encourage personnel to be active in the community. The township benefits from having the institutions nearby to build stronger relationships and opportunities for residents to be involved.

#### *Wissahickon School District*

The administrative offices of the Wissahickon School District are located on the same campus as the Wissahickon High, Wissahickon Middle, and Lower Gwynedd Elementary Schools. Established in 1966, the Wissahickon School District has a staff of 690 and faculty of 360 and serves more than 5,000 students in four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school across Whitpain, Ambler, and Lower Gwynedd. As of June 2023, Lower Gwynedd Elementary School had 638 students.

#### *Mercy Education System*

*Gwynedd Mercy University* is located on a 160-acre property on Sumneytown Pike at Evans Road. Before the land was sold to the Sisters of Mercy, the grounds had been owned since the early 1900s by Frances Bond, an investment banker, and were known as Willowbrook





*Assumption Hall at Gwynedd Mercy University, designed by architect Horace Trumbauer.*

Farm. The farm was sold to Roland and Anita Taylor, who renamed the farm to Trewellyn, after the creek that flows through the property. The mansion and the land were sold to the Sisters of Mercy in 1948. Gwynedd Mercy University's campus is currently undergoing major upgrades, including a new healthcare innovation campus and renovations to residence halls and sports facilities.

*Gwynedd Mercy Academy* is a private Roman Catholic system established as the Academy of the Sisters of Mercy in 1861 by the Sisters of Mercy. The Academy was established in 1861 and moved to the former Taylor Estate in the mid-1900s. In 1955, construction of the building for the elementary and secondary schools was complete, and the Academy of Mercy became Gwynedd Mercy Academy.



*China Grace Christian Church (left), Church of the Messiah (right).*



*Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School* is an all-girls high school located on the campus of Gwynedd Mercy University. *Gwynedd Mercy Academy Elementary School*, a co-ed elementary school, is located on Norristown Road near the intersection with Bethlehem Pike.

***The Goddard School of Spring House*** is a branch of the Goddard School franchise, located on Bethlehem Pike.

## RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Religious institutional properties are often large, architecturally-distinct buildings with significant open space, and are commonly located in residential areas. Lower Gwynedd is home to several active church properties that provide a range of community services.

*Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary* moved to Lower Gwynedd Township in 2024. The Seminary purchased a portion of land from Gwynedd Mercy University to construct the new campus. The addition of the Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary strengthens the institutional landscape and resources in Lower Gwynedd.

## LIBRARIES

While there is no public library located within the township, residents of Lower Gwynedd can use the Wissahickon Public Library (the main branch is in Blue Bell, and another branch is in Ambler) or the [\*North Wales Area Library\*](#).

Map 9.1 shows the locations of community facilities, groups, and institutions in Lower Gwynedd. The map also shows the approximate location of libraries that are outside of the township, as well as supermarkets that are located just north of the township.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES & INSTITUTIONS

### ***Public and Private Schools***

- ▢ Lower Gwynedd Elementary School
- ▢ Gwynedd Mercy Academy Elementary School
- ▢ Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School
- ▢ Gwynedd Mercy University
- ▢ The Goddard School of Spring House
- ▢ Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary
- ▢ Wissahickon High School
- ▢ Wissahickon Middle School
- ▢ Wissahickon School District Administrative Offices

### ***Services***

- ▢ Fire Station
- ▢ Police Station
- ▢ Post offices

### ***Health Care***

- ▢ Jefferson Health – Lower Gwynedd

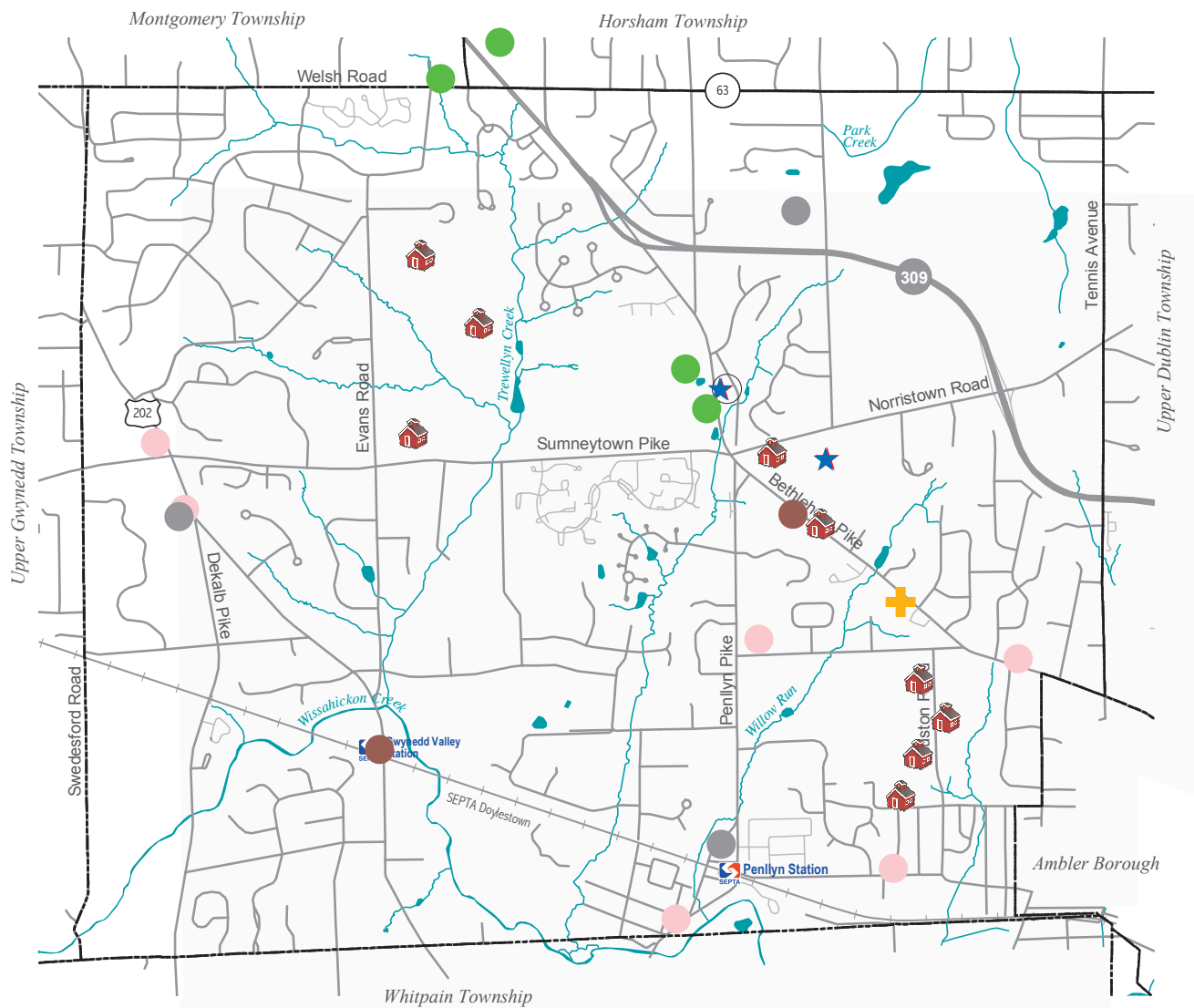
### ***Places of Worship***

- ▢ Bethlehem Baptist Church
- ▢ China Grace Christian Church
- ▢ Church of the Messiah
- ▢ First Korean Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia
- ▢ Gwynedd Friends Meeting
- ▢ New Beginnings Community Church










### ***Other Community Groups/Clubs***

- ▢ Harmony Theater
- ▢ Horseways
- ▢ Kiwanis Club of Ambler
- ▢ Lower Gwynedd Little League
- ▢ Rotary Club of Ambler
- ▢ YMCA

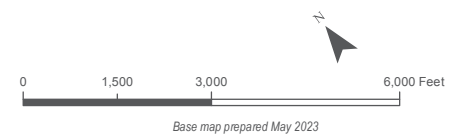
Map 9.1: Community Facilities, Institutions



### Community Facilities and Institutions

-  Community Group/Club
-  Fire Station
-  Health Care
-  Municipal Building
-  Place of Worship
-  Police Station
-  Post Office
-  School
-  Supermarket

### Lower Gwynedd Township Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



## Implications for Community Health

The physical environment can impact public health in many ways. The built environment can affect air and water quality, opportunities for physical activity and active transportation, social isolation and loneliness, and mental health.

In regard to increasing opportunities for healthy lifestyles for residents, physical activity can be done as part of daily activities. One of the ways Lower Gwynedd could increase the rates of social and physical activity is to increase the number of destinations for residents to walk to. **Building an accessible pedestrian network that connect neighborhoods, retail centers, schools, parks, and other destinations encourage more people to walk to destinations, increasing physical activity as well as opportunities for interacting with neighbors and other members of the community.** Walkable communities also help to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips, thereby reducing pollution and other negative environmental impacts.

### HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

Access to health care improves health outcomes for residents. Lower Gwynedd has many types of health care providers within the township, including primary care doctors for adults and children, dermatologists, various specialists, dental care providers, ophthalmologists, and physical therapists, among others.

Jefferson Health – Lower Gwynedd is an outpatient campus of Jefferson Health-Abington. This location offers laboratory services and primary care physician offices. Ambler Medical Associates and Springhouse Internal Medicine are the practices located at this site.

Emergency services – Community Ambulance Association (CAA) of Ambler is located in Upper Dublin Township and provides life support coverage, staffed by EMT, paramedics, and volunteers. CAA serves Ambler, Lower Gwynedd, and parts of Upper Dublin, and contracts with PA Turnpike to respond to all emergencies between Willow Grove and the mid-county tollbooth. Ready MontCo, a countywide notification system, is available to residents of Lower

Gwynedd for emergency notifications via text, email, and telephone. Lower Gwynedd emergency management can access Ready MontCo to send notifications to anyone who signed up for Lower Gwynedd notifications.

### HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

Residents of Lower Gwynedd are fortunate to have two full-scale grocery stores located in the township, as well as easy access to additional large grocery stores in nearby municipalities. While Lower Gwynedd is not considered a “food desert,” which is defined as a place with limited access to fresh, healthy food, pedestrian access to nearby grocery stores can be a challenge for people without access to a car or who do not have a driver’s license, such as younger people and older adults. The grocery stores are located near the intersection of Sumneytown Pike and Bethlehem Pike, which is more accessible by car but is somewhat more challenging to access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users. *See Chapter 5, Transportation, for more information and recommendations about pedestrian connectivity.*

### Aging in Community

The ability to walk to supermarkets, recreation, places to socialize, healthcare facilities, and other services benefits individuals’ health and the community overall. This applies to people of all ages and becomes even more critical as people age and mobility is more limited. *See Chapter 2, Place and People, for more demographic information about the township.*



Jefferson Health – Lower Gwynedd, located on Bethlehem Pike.

Access to greater housing choices, different modes of transportation, various community groups and institutions, and services can all contribute to ensuring Lower Gwynedd remains an attractive place to retire or “age-in-community” generally. The “aging-in-community” approach focuses on the design of the built environment, such as ensuring sidewalks and curb ramps are ADA-compliant. This approach also recommends offering a range of housing options and integrating land uses so that individuals can remain comfortable and independent. *See the Chapter 4 Housing and Neighborhoods chapter for more information and recommendations related to housing options for an aging community.*

## **TOWNSHIP SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT**

This section covers Lower Gwynedd's elected and appointed officials and staff. Other government services, such as waste collection and the provision of utilities, are covered in Chapter 7: Environmental Sustainability and Infrastructure. Township staff provides many administrative, maintenance, and public safety services to the township's residents and businesses. The township's administrative offices, police department, and public works department are located within an integrated township complex located in Spring House on Bethlehem Pike.

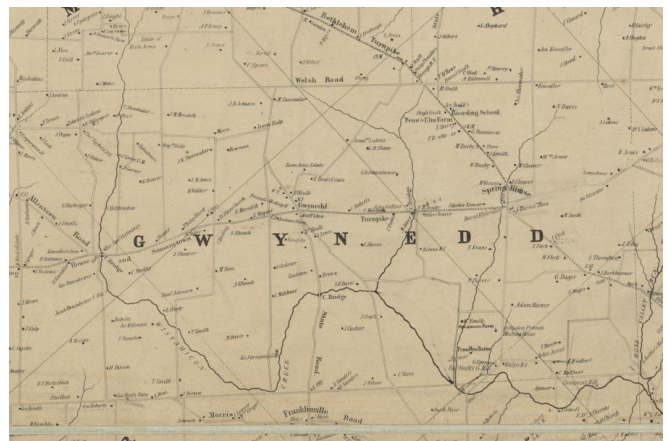
**Board of Supervisors and Manager.** Lower Gwynedd has a Council-Manager form of government, where the Board of Supervisors is responsible for policymaking and appointing the Township Manager. The Township Manager is the primary administrative officer of the township and is responsible for the activities of the municipal departments, except police law enforcement duties. The Board is the governing body for the township, and is comprised of five members elected to staggered six-year terms.

**Planning Commission.** The Planning Commission serves as an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors and makes recommendations relative to land development and subdivision applications, zoning and building code ordinances and matters of long range planning. The Commission is comprised of seven citizens appointed by the Board of Supervisors to four-year terms.

**Zoning Hearing Board.** The Zoning Hearing Board is a quasi-judicial body comprised of three members and one alternate appointed for three-year terms. The Zoning Hearing Board helps assure fair and equitable application of the zoning ordinances by granting relief from the literal enforcement of the ordinances in certain situations.

**Public Works.** Lower Gwynedd Township's Public Works Department is responsible for the maintenance of roads, sewer lines and park facilities in the Township. There are five existing public works facilities: 1) municipal building (vehicle storage and office space), 2) McCormick garage at Ingersoll Park (Plow and Trailer storage), 3) 917 Bethlehem Pike (Garage storage and salt shed), 4) Penllyn Woods (parks and trail maintenance storage), 5) pump station (sewer storage). Lower Gwynedd Township is exploring the option of constructing a new public works facility in order to consolidate the existing Department of Public Works operations from the multiple locations in which they are currently stored throughout the Township.

**Police and Fire.** The Police Department is located in the township building. Two volunteer fire companies serve Lower Gwynedd. The Wissahickon Fire Company, chartered on April 7, 1891, serves Ambler and the portion of Lower Gwynedd south and east of Evans Road. Station B shares the municipal building in Spring House on Bethlehem Pike. The North Penn Volunteer Fire Company, located in North Wales Borough, serves North Wales and the portions of Lower Gwynedd north and west of Evans Road.



*Gwynedd Township. Source: Library of Congress. Map of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania: from original survey [cropped]. Morris, William E., Smith & Wistar, circa 1849.*



**COMMUNITY COHESION.** *Respondents were asked about their feelings of connectedness to other residents in Lower Gwynedd and how, if at all, they engage with the broader community. People listed the places where they go to connect with others, including businesses (some of which are located in neighboring Ambler Borough), public libraries, churches, and social clubs. Some people connect with others during community-wide events like Fall Fest or at school-related activities and sports events, while others socialize during walks in their neighborhood or on township trails.*

*Organized events, such as clean-ups and beautification efforts, can bring different community members together for a common purpose. Walkable neighborhoods create opportunities for chance encounters with neighbors and help to build cohesive communities. In addition, some businesses can provide places for people to gather and socialize, even if informally, and help to build a sense of community. For more information about the survey results, see the Public Engagement Summary in the Appendix.*

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Community Facilities and Institutions Chapter Recommendations and Implementation Strategies</b>	
<b>Goal: Support the township's diverse cultural and institutional facilities as important community amenities that provide essential social, spiritual, and educational opportunities.</b>	
CF1	Coordinate with the township's other institutional landowners to understand and plan for their long-term facility needs.
<b>Goal: Improve health outcomes for the community as a whole.</b>	
CF2	Encourage overall healthy and active lifestyles.
CF2a	Support projects and plans that advance active transportation. See the Transportation and Parks & Open Space Chapters for relevant implementation strategies related to walkability improvements.
CF2b	Update zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances to ensure walking and biking improvements are required during land development.
CF3	Support land development that integrates design best practices for gathering spaces and streetscapes.
CF3a	Conduct an audit of the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances and consider design standards and density bonuses for the addition of public spaces during land development, in areas of the township that are identified in the future land use map as mixed use.
CF3b	Conduct an audit of the zoning ordinance to evaluate the uses in areas identified in the future land use map as mixed use and consider permitting a broader range of uses that would encourage more businesses.
<b>Goal: Continue to provide high-quality and efficient community services to township residents.</b>	
CF4	Continue to improve coordination and cooperation with neighboring municipalities for efficient services and inspiration for government management.
CF4a	Continue to partner with neighboring municipalities and pursue multi-municipal planning efforts, as applicable.
CF4b	Partner with established community groups to increase awareness of township events and actions.
CF4c	Continue to plan for necessary improvements and upgrades to township facilities, including an expansion of the public works facility.
CF5	Periodically assess township communication strategies to ensure that all residents are aware of essential community services and facilities.
CF5a	Consider surveys or focus groups to understand how residents perceive the communication strategies.



## CHAPTER: 10

# BETHLEHEM PIKE FOCUS AREA STUDY

Strategies to revive the commercial corridor

## Introduction to Focus Area Study

The following chapter provides an in-depth analysis of an important section of Bethlehem Pike and provides recommendations specific to the corridor. Bethlehem Pike runs north-south through Lower Gwynedd connecting with 309 in the north and into Ambler Borough and Upper Dublin Township in the south. The focus area encompasses the approximately one mile segment of Bethlehem Pike, extending from the Spring House Village Center II in the north to the intersection with Dager Road in the south..

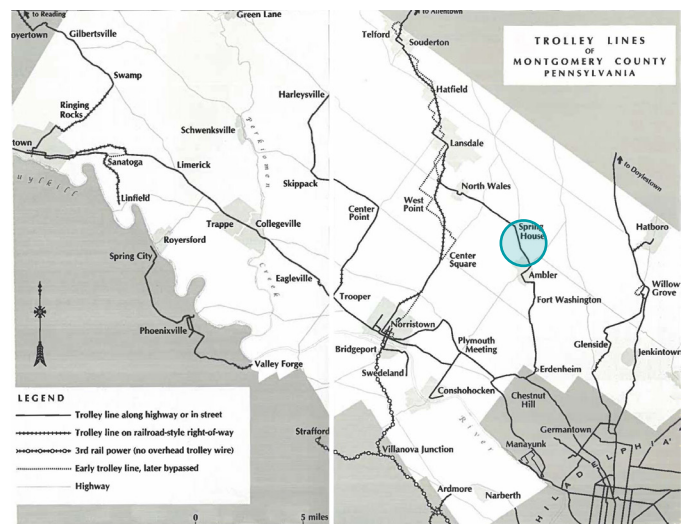
Consisting of a mix of commercial and office uses in strip-style development, Bethlehem Pike functions as the “main street” through Lower Gwynedd but lacks identity and character. The Steering Committee and community members identified this corridor as an important focus area of the comprehensive plan. The focus area includes two development scenarios to illustrate the type of design concepts that would be desirable for future development, as well as considerations for further road improvements. Recommendations are provided in the Implementation Table.

## History of Bethlehem Pike

Bethlehem Pike is a 42-mile-long road that connects Philadelphia and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It was built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and has always been a commercial corridor, historically used by farmers hauling their goods to Philadelphia. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a trolley route ran along Bethlehem Pike to Spring House, turning west on Sumneytown Pike towards North Wales.

Bethlehem Pike was built on what was the Native American path called the Minsi Trail (named after a subtribe of one of the three divisions of the Lenape). The road was a colonial highway in the 1760s, and was the main road carrying people and goods between Philadelphia and regions to the north. In 1804, Bethlehem Pike became a toll road – Bethlehem Turnpike.

In 1972, the 309 expressway exit at Spring House opened, spurring development of the Spring House Shopping Center at the intersection of Bethlehem Pike and Sumneytown Pike/Norristown Road (formerly the location of the Philip Bauer farm).



Map of the Trolley Lines of Montgomery County, from *Montgomery County Trolleys* by Mike Szilagyi.

Today, Bethlehem Pike consists primarily of strip-style development south of Spring House. North of the Spring House intersection, the land around Bethlehem Pike consists of large shopping centers, municipal buildings, and residential neighborhoods, before turning into PA 309 north of the interchange. **While the two segments of Bethlehem Pike have different characteristics, the goals of these areas are similar: to be a more walkable, attractive, and inviting corridor with an active streetscape that will serve the community.**

While the majority of Bethlehem Pike does have sidewalks south of the Spring House intersection, there are wide areas of uncontrolled vehicular access and limited connectivity between lots and uses, creating safety issues and many potential conflict points. Buildings tend to be set back from the street behind parking lots.

## Vision for Bethlehem Pike

The vision for Bethlehem Pike is consistent with that of the entire township, as articulated in the Introduction chapter. The focus area study provides additional place-specific goals for the corridor.

In 2050, Bethlehem Pike will be people-friendly, with wide and comfortable sidewalks and connections to neighborhoods. Vehicles will travel more slowly, making the street safer for all users. The streetscape will be more attractive, inviting, and engaging, consisting of buildings that create an active street, more trees and greenery, and places for people to gather. Bethlehem Pike will be a center for community life, with people visiting and shopping at the various businesses.

## Existing Conditions

### CURRENT LAND USES AND ZONING

There are many properties and varied uses along the approximately one-mile stretch, including schools, medical offices, car dealerships, banks, retail shops, restaurants, and convenience stores, among others.

The Bethlehem Pike focus area contains various zoning districts, but primarily consists of the D Business District south of Sumneytown Pike and the D-2 Planned Business



*Mile marker for trolley to Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia.*

District north of Sumneytown Pike. The Lower Pike Overlay (LPO) District, which covers much of the area south of the intersection, was adopted in 2013 in an effort to spur revitalization of the corridor. The LPO District permits townhouses and mixed use-developments, and has special design requirements for developments. The D-2 District does not permit residential uses and has minimal design standards. Since 2013, there have been few land developments along Bethlehem Pike, including the Jefferson Health (2013), Bergey's Ford (2014), Fairview Village (2017), and the Goddard School (2021). Overlay zoning allows a community to create a special district that is placed over and applies in addition to the underlying zoning district. An overlay district can address uses and design, among other regulations to enhance development.

This chapter provides conceptual plans and example pictures to illustrate some of the dimensional and design standards that could be considered as part of a general update of the LPO District. Amendments to and possible expansion of the LPO District could be considered to permit more uses and to strengthen the building and streetscape design standards.

A Business Improvement District (BID) or similar arrangement with local businesses may be a good way to gain support and organization around projects to improve the area.





Map of Bethlehem Pike Focus Area and the locations of potential development, conceptual designs, and pedestrian crossing improvements.



Existing conditions of various locations along Bethlehem Pike: Spring House Village Center II parking lot (top left), strip commercial (bottom left), and the crosswalk at the intersection with Dager Road (above).



## TRANSPORTATION

Generally, south of the Spring House intersection, Bethlehem Pike is about 45 feet wide, with one lane in each direction, a center turn lane, and 5-foot wide shoulders. North of the intersection, the road is more varied in width. Pedestrian connectivity and comfort were identified as significant issues to be addressed by the comprehensive plan. The intersection of Sumneytown Pike/Norristown Road with Bethlehem Pike was recently redesigned and widened to add turn lanes; more information about those changes is in the Transportation Chapter.

### ***Vehicular Traffic***

Bethlehem Pike is classified as a minor arterial roadway and is owned by PennDOT. There are higher concentrations of crashes at the intersections of Sumneytown Pike and Norristown Road in the north, and with Dager Road in the south, and to a lesser extent at some of the shopping center driveway entrances.

### ***Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure***

There is poor bike and pedestrian connectivity along the corridor and to the surrounding neighborhoods.

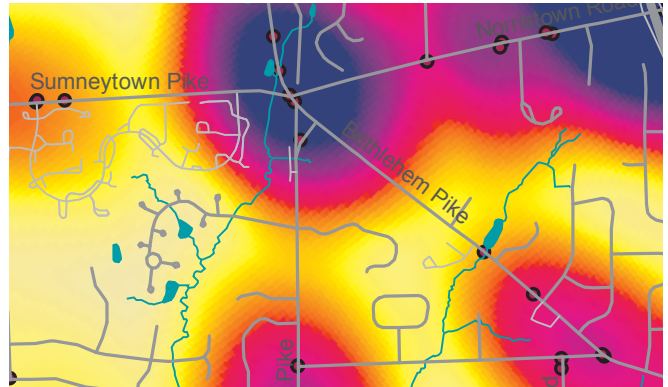
#### **Bikeability**

There are currently no on-road bicycle facilities on Bethlehem Pike. Bethlehem Pike south of Spring House is on the county's proposed bike network, but not a priority route. Because it is a minor arterial road with a 40 miles-per-hour speed limit, the BikeMontco recommended bike facilities are: a protected bicycle lane, buffered bicycle lane, paved shoulder.

Bike lanes may be feasible, but some sections of Bethlehem Pike would need to be widened to accommodate the extra width required for the bike lane. **Grant funding opportunities could be used to fund projects that advance pedestrian and bicycling safety goals.**

#### **Walkability**

There are sidewalks on both sides of the street for much of the Bethlehem Pike corridor. However, there are gaps in the southern part of Bethlehem Pike closer to Dager Road, and there are not always sidewalks on both sides of the street,



*Crash Heat Map of Bethlehem Pike and surrounding areas. See Map 5.3 in the Transportation chapter for more information.*



*Sidewalk gap on Bethlehem Pike.*

nor crosswalks to connect from one side of the street to the other. Construction of two pedestrian bridges across Penllyn Creek on both sides of Bethlehem Pike was completed in fall 2024, bridging a significant gap in the network. A dirt trail behind the Acts Retirement community and Gwynedd Mercy Elementary (indicated with a yellow line on the map, following page) connects Bethlehem Pike to Norristown Road.

### Pedestrian Connectivity Map

While building more sidewalks and trails is important to building a connected pedestrian network, ensuring the condition of the network and ensuring a safe and comfortable experience is important for walkability, too. Creating that experience can be achieved with lighting, physical separation from traffic, shade, and other variables.

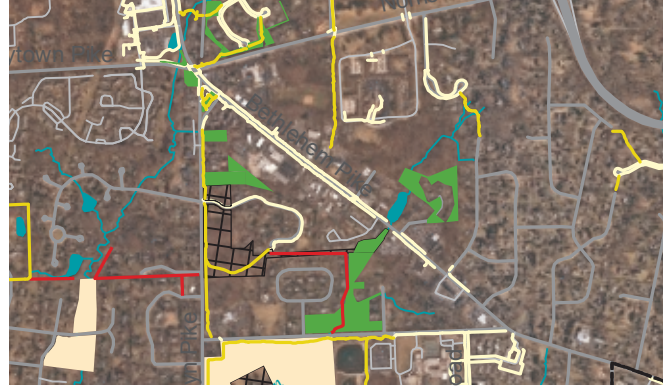
More visually interesting places can have a traffic calming effect. Place-making strategies and gateway treatments along Bethlehem Pike can create a more visually engaging place and help to slow traffic speeds. PennDOT has speed and design standards for different site contexts, based on the surrounding environment.

Traffic calming takes many forms, the main intent being: slow vehicular travel speeds and create a safer environment for all road users (see Chapter 5, Transportation, for further discussion). **Among other strategies, slowing traffic can be done by physically or visually narrowing the road width by locating buildings and street trees closer to the street and adding landscaped medians.** Curb extensions and bump-outs can be used to narrow the street crossing and increase visibility of pedestrians. Curb extensions can be designed to have the added benefit of capturing stormwater runoff. In addition, the surrounding built context, including the pedestrian activity and the design of buildings and streetscape, can impact travel speeds.

## Building and Roadway Design Concepts

### BUILDING DESIGN FOR AN ACTIVE AND ATTRACTIVE STREETSCAPE

The Bethlehem Pike corridor is lined with strip-style commercial and numerous vehicular access points, which are often wide and undefined, creating safety issues for people driving and walking along the sidewalk. The aesthetic impact of the driveways also detracts from the aural and visual experience, as the streetscape consists more of cars and pavement than pedestrian space and



*Cropped map of sidewalks and trails around Bethlehem Pike, illustrating the limited pedestrian connections to the corridor. See Map 6.1 in the Open Space Trails and Parks chapter for more background.*



*A narrow sidewalk and lack of buffer between the road and sidewalk create an unfriendly pedestrian environment.*

trees. The *MCPC General Commercial Model Ordinance* has language to address driveway consolidation and interconnected parking. However, without a bigger study, it is not clear exactly where road improvements, such as green medians, could be located. **The township could consider how and where driveways could be consolidated, as well as standards for required interconnected parking.**



## Potential Redevelopment Design Concepts

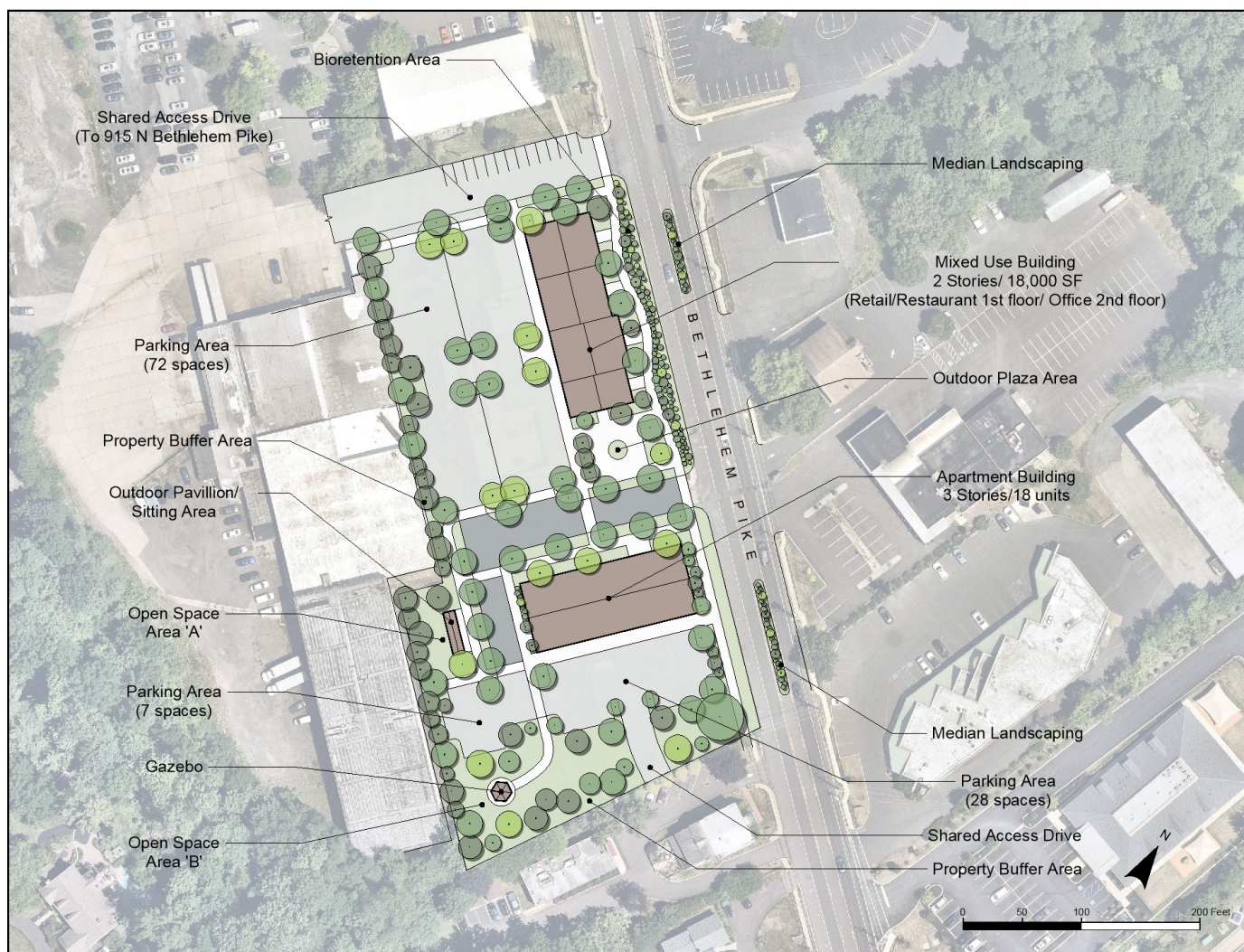
### Design Vision

For the Focus Area, two sites were selected to illustrate design concepts that could be integrated in a future redevelopment scenario. The sites were selected to help demonstrate different principles for active mixed-use developments that could be applied to various site contexts.

The concept plan meets the parking and impervious standards of the zoning, but also integrates other design concepts that would enhance the corridor and could be considered for future zoning amendments.

The mixed-used building is shown located closer to the street, well-connected with pedestrian pathways. Street trees and greenery are shown in the verge, separating the sidewalk from the street, and buildings and entrances are oriented to the sidewalk.

The existing Fairland Village (pictured on Page 107) offers an example of a scale and style of building that is desired for Bethlehem Pike. The mixed-use building has varied rooflines and facades that breakup the building mass and complement the surrounding neighborhoods.



Potential Redevelopment Design Concept Examples



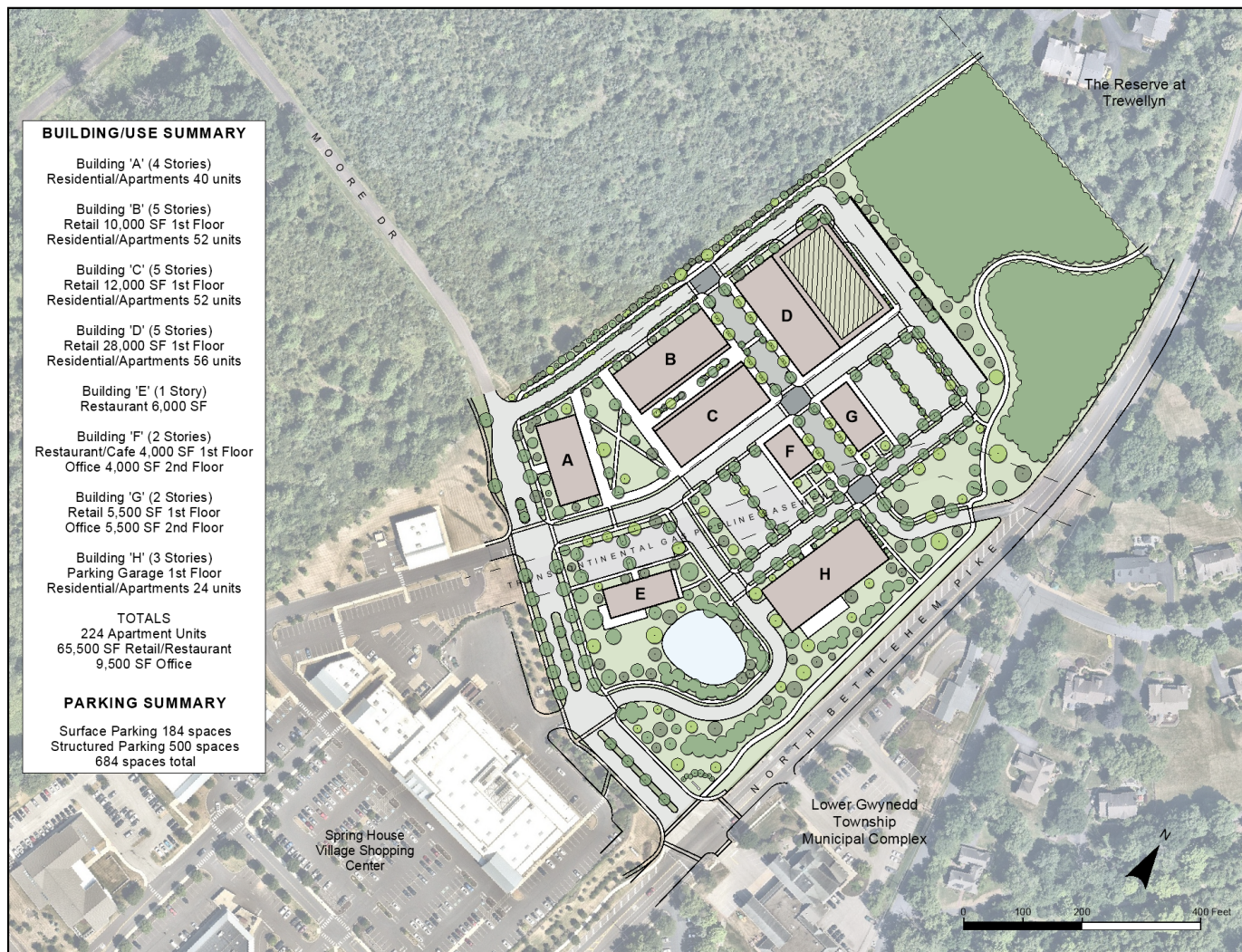
## DESIGN CONCEPTS

Fairland Village was developed under the Lower Pike Overlay (LPO) District. As properties along Bethlehem Pike are redeveloped, buildings reflecting similar design concepts would create continuity along the corridor. Additional design standards should be considered during any zoning amendment, as well as the potential to expand the LPO District.



The varied façade of this historic commercial building in Chestnut Hill creates visual interest and scales the four-story building appropriately for a neighborhood commercial street.





The design concept for the northern portion of Bethlehem Pike demonstrates how a mixed-use development could complement the character of Lower Gwynedd and illustrates how town-center planning concepts could be accommodated on a large property.

The Spring House Village Shopping Center II was developed in the 1970s and is currently occupied by an anchor grocery store and various businesses in a strip-style development with surface parking and a portion of undeveloped area. This design concept departs from the current D-2 Zoning District, which does not permit residential, includes buildings that are taller than what is currently allowed, among other differences. A development such as the one illustrated would require significant zoning amendments.

The concept design illustrates a mixed-use development focused around a tree-lined main street to encourage

people to stroll and socialize. The residential units will generate customers for the businesses and enliven the Spring House area. Buildings are oriented towards the internal street network and have active ground-floor uses that generate foot traffic. Greenery is incorporated throughout, with street trees, landscaped parking lots, and heavy buffering from neighboring properties. Various open spaces, including a large plaza and promenade, that could be used for events, like farmers' markets. Buildings are set back from Bethlehem Pike to reduce visibility from the street. Parking for residences is provided within structures (subsurface and at ground-level) and surface parking is provided for commercial uses. The design uses a reduced parking ratio for residential units (1.75 spaces/unit), based on the assumption that most dwellings would be studios or 1-and 2-bedroom units.



## DESIGN CONCEPTS

### *Building Height and Architectural Features*

These buildings exemplify the importance of façade design, particularly of stepbacks and breaks in the façade, for creating a more architecturally interesting streetscape and for minimizing the bulk of taller buildings. To achieve this type of design, additional design standards should be considered during any potential amendments to the D-2 District.



*5 stories, tiered stepbacks in façade. Ground-level commercial, Chestnut Hill*



*3 stories, mixed-use, Wyndmoor*

### *StreetscapePlazas, and Shared Streets*

The streetscapes, plazas, and shared street examples illustrate various forms that public spaces can take to accommodate outdoor seating, gathering spaces, and greenery.



*Centre Square Commons, Whippany Township.*



*Schellase Commons Ursinus College*



*Wellmont Arts Plaza, Montclair, NJ*



## ROADWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

### *Potential Pedestrian Crossing Locations*

Along Bethlehem Pike, there is a one-mile gap between the pedestrian crosswalks (one at Penllyn Pike on the northern end and one at Dager Road on the southern end). Part of the vision for Bethlehem Pike is to make the corridor more pedestrian-friendly. **The township could consider a study to determine the best locations for adding signalized pedestrian crossings, and later use those results to coordinate with PennDOT.**

- ▣ White Field Court at Fairland Village and Roberts Road. The intersection of Roberts Road/White Field Court with Bethlehem Pike could be studied as a potential location for a signalized intersection. A signalized crossing would create a safer pedestrian connection for people who want to cross between the residential neighborhoods and the retail at the Fairland Village development.
- ▣ Mid-block crossing on Bethlehem Pike. A mid-block crossing would provide a safer connection for people who want to cross the street to access the trail network or visit businesses on both sides of Bethlehem Pike. A crosswalk and HAWK (High Intensity Activated Crosswalk) beacon signal is recommended for the general vicinity of the connector trail located between the Goddard School and the office building at 812 Bethlehem Pike.





### Mid-Block Crossing Examples

Lower Gwynedd already has a mid-block crossing (a crossing in between intersections) that connects the Penllyn Trail across Dager Road. This crossing is for a smaller road with lighter traffic than Bethlehem Pike. However, it is possible to do mid-block crossing on busier roads. Bethlehem Pike is a state-owned road, so PennDOT would have to be a part of the process to determine the feasibility and exact location.

Elements that make a safe mid-block crossing include: narrowed crossing, highly-visible pavement markings, a signal to alert drivers, wide buffer from the roadway. Below is an example of a mid-block crossing at the First Avenue Linear Park in Upper Merion Township (the First Avenue Linear Park & Road Diet was a 2024 *Montgomery Award winner* for multimodal design and planning). As part of the roadway re-design, First Avenue was reduced from four lanes with no shoulder to one travel lane in each direction with a dedicated center turn lane. The project also added bicycle lanes, ADA curb ramps, and a mid-block signalized pedestrian crossing.



KOP First Ave Linear Park/Road Diet



### Intersection Safety Improvements

The intersection of Dager Road and Bethlehem Pike has few sidewalks to connect from Dager Road (along the east side of Bethlehem Pike) and no crosswalk on the south crossing of Bethlehem Pike. Where they exist, crosswalks are not highly visible. The crossing across Dager Road is very long and, as indicated in the crash heat map, offers opportunities for pedestrian-vehicle conflicts. This is an important crossing in particular because it is close to the Wissahickon Middle and High Schools and is a route commonly used by students to walk to places located on Bethlehem Pike. This intersection could be included as part of the study to assess which interventions would be most effective in improving this intersection.



Aerial of the intersection of Dager Road and Bethlehem Pike, where intersection safety improvements are recommended.





A landscaped bio-retention buffer can be included as part of the space between the sidewalk and the street, sometimes referred to as a verge. **As part of the access management study, there could be an analysis of the potential locations for additional greenery along the Bethlehem Pike corridor.**



The Spring House Village Shopping Center has a well-planted streetscape with native shrubs in a stormwater basin and lawn with trees separating the sidewalk from the street. This streetscape design could be continued further south along Bethlehem Pike.

Number	Goals to address the issue/topic Recommendations to implement the goal Action Steps towards the recommendations (when applicable)
<b>Bethlehem Pike Focus Area Chapter Recommendations and Implementation Strategies</b>	
<b>Goal: Encourage redevelopment of underutilized or vacant properties that creates an inviting and visually interesting streetscape.</b>	
B1	Create building and streetscape design guidelines for all new development and redevelopment.
B1a	Conduct an audit of the D Business Zoning District and the LPO Lower Pike Overlay District to evaluate the current design standards and create new building design standards (i.e. maximum height, build-to-lines or setbacks, setbacks in façade, sloped roofs, window coverage and transparency, etc.).
B1b	Conduct an audit of the D Zoning District and the LPO Lower Pike Overlay District to evaluate the current streetscape standards and create new streetscape design standards (ie. street trees, sidewalk widths, verge, etc.)
B1c	Consider forming a BID or similar arrangement to get money and organize around projects that improve the area.
<b>Goal: Create a safe and comfortable Bethlehem Pike for all people traveling along the corridor.</b>	
B2	Consider roadway improvements that would add greenery and calm traffic along Bethlehem Pike, and evaluate where access driveways could be consolidated.
B2a	Conduct a more detailed study of the area, including an access management study of where driveways can be consolidated and potential locations for interconnected parking with cross-access easements.
B3	Consider intersection safety improvements and potential locations for signalized and mid-block pedestrian crossings.
B3a	Conduct a study to evaluate potential locations for pedestrian crossings and to determine the types of intersection treatments.
B3b	Adopt zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance amendments with standards that encourage pedestrian-friendly design.
B4	Consider the feasibility of bike lanes along Bethlehem Pike and how they could connect with the existing pedestrian and bicycle network (e.g., sidewalks and trails).
B4a	Coordinate with PennDOT (through the PennDOT Connects program) and Montgomery County.





# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Public Engagement Summary**

**Appendix 2: Transportation Priority Projects**



# APPENDIX 1

## Public Engagement Summary

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Public input is an important component that is factored into the comprehensive planning process and helps to define the vision and goals for the community. For the Lower Gwynedd comprehensive plan, public outreach took the form of online surveys, open houses, public presentations, and involvement of the steering committee, which is comprised, in part, of township residents.

The following engagement events took place:

- ▣ MCPC staff attended Fall Fest 2023
- ▣ Community Survey – Summer-Fall 2023 (533 responses)
- ▣ 1<sup>st</sup> Open House – October 2023
- ▣ Draft Vision Statement Survey – Summer 2024 (87 responses)
- ▣ 2<sup>nd</sup> Open House – October 2024
- ▣ Draft goals and recommendations survey – October 2024 (24 responses)
- ▣ Community Engagement Survey – Spring 2025
- ▣ Ongoing social media and newsletter posts, a page on the township website for people to see updates

Over the course of two years, there were four surveys shared with residents. The first community survey had extensive questions on a range of topics and collected more than 500 responses. Concurrently, the township hosted the first of two open houses. The open house was more narrowly focused, while still giving opportunity for people to share open-ended responses about the future vision for Lower Gwynedd. The community survey and open house were designed to complement one another, and results are interpreted together.

## Open House #1

Open House #1 was meant to gather information about priority issues and learn more about the community vision. Poster stations had a list of questions as prompts for the open house attendees and the MCPC staff member at the poster, and consisted of the following topics: parks and open space, transportation, the Bethlehem Pike corridor, and what people would like to preserve, enhance, and transform about the township.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY AND OPEN HOUSE #1

#### *Issue identification*

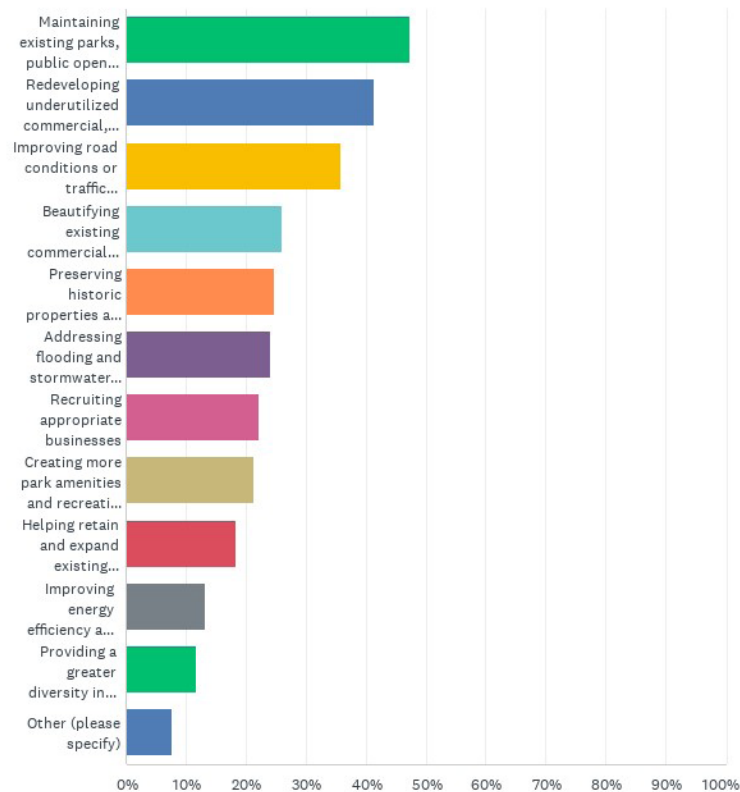
In general, preserving open space, improving walkability, and creating a more welcoming experience on Bethlehem Pike were identified as key topics for further exploration. The priority issues identified at the first open house were:

- ▣ Maintain parks and recreation, open space (49%)
- ▣ Redevelop underutilized commercial properties (41%)
- ▣ Improve road safety and traffic issues (33%)
- ▣ Preserve historic properties (26%)
- ▣ Beautify existing commercial areas (25%)

The open house had four stations: 1) transportation, 2) parks and open space, 3) Bethlehem Pike Focus Area, and 4) the Preserve, Enhance, Transform (PET) exercise. MCPC staff recorded notes during discussions with open house attendees. The findings from the open house are consistent with and supported by the survey results.



**Q32 Please select your top three priorities for the township to dedicate additional time and/or funding towards.**

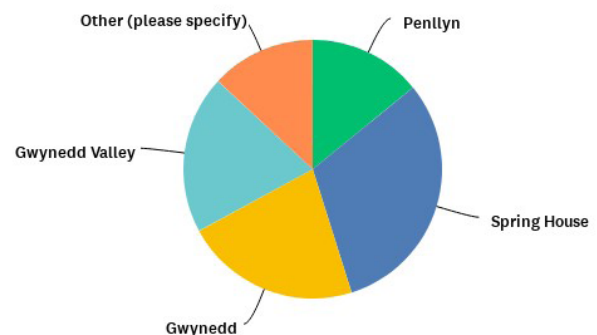


### **Community Survey**

The survey results are based on the 533 responses. Nearly all (94%) survey respondents are residents of Lower Gwynedd, 5% are business owners, and 4.5% are people who work in the township. Respondents are typically older, and the majority were long-term residents of the township. While the majority of respondents (35%) are 65 years or older (and 63% are over the age of 45), there is still a broad range of the population represented: 22% of respondents have teens, and 31% have children younger than 12 in the household. In addition, 8% have a person with long-term disabilities in the household.

A mix of new and long-term residents participated. Most respondents have lived in the township for 20 years or more (42%); 6% respondents have lived in the township for less than two years. The Lower Gwynedd neighborhoods represented are: Spring House (31.5%), Gwynedd (24%), Gwynedd Valley (19.5%), and Penllyn (13%).

**Q38 Which neighborhood do you live in?**



The handful of non-resident respondents come from a variety of places in the county, including Whitpain (29%), Abington, and Lansdale. People come to Lower Gwynedd for shopping and dining (58%), work (54%), parks and trail (46%), community events or family in the area, and schools.

*Note that some of the survey data will not equal 100% because respondents could select multiple.*

### **PRESERVE/ENHANCE/TRANSFORM (PET) AND VISION EXERCISES (OPEN HOUSE #1)**

The PET Exercise asks people what they like and want to preserve in the community, what they think could be improved, and what they would like to change completely. The questions are a way to begin the process of envisioning the future they want for Lower Gwynedd. Through the PET exercise, we found that people want to preserve open space, parks, and the existing trail system; to enhance walkability and connectivity in the township; and to transform the spring house area, including Bethlehem Pike.

Other ideas we heard at the open house are that there is no place that feels like a “downtown” or a place that captures the identity of Lower Gwynedd.

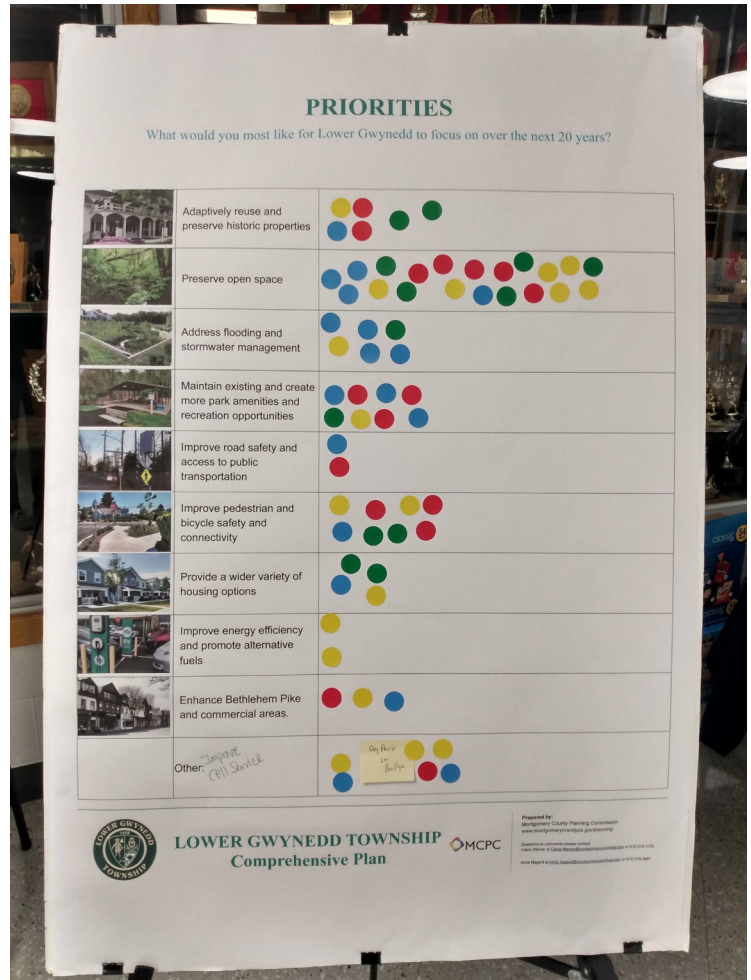
#### **Top Priorities from Survey Responses**

The priority issues listed in the survey results are consistent with what we heard at the open house. The survey asked respondents to rank issues based on highest to lowest priority to be addressed by the comprehensive plan. The top issues are to:

1. Maintain parks and recreation, open space (49%)
2. Redevelop underutilized commercial properties (41%)
3. Improve road safety and traffic issues (33%)
4. Preserve historic properties (26%)
5. Beautify existing commercial areas (25%)

### **TRANSPORTATION**

The Transportation poster at the open house asked attendees to identify areas where there are pinch points or safety concerns; where bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is needed; areas with traffic issues (i.e., congestion, speeding); and if they use public transportation.



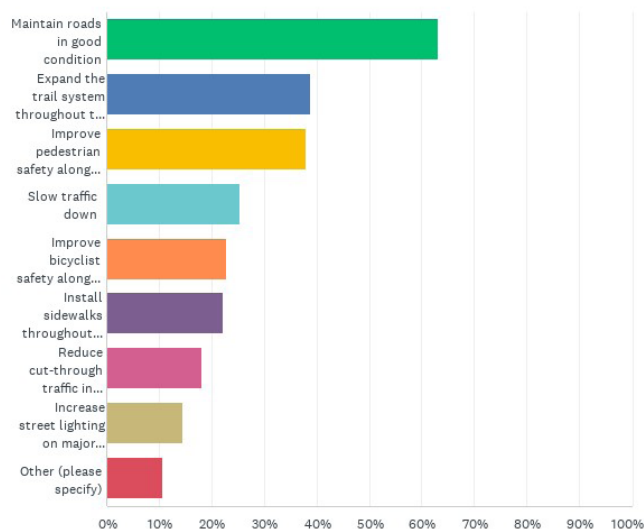
attendees expressed a need to fill the sidewalk gaps and improve the existing sidewalks (e.g. where there are utility poles obstructing pedestrian movement).

#### **Transportation Patterns of Survey Respondents**

Nearly all (95%) people who responded to the survey either drive alone (67%) or with others (27%), 1.5% take public transit, 1.7% bike, and .5% walk as their typical method of travel for daily travel (community and running errands).

These survey findings are consistent with the concerns expressed by open house attendees. Based on survey responses, the priority transportation improvements that people would like to see are to maintain good roads (61%), improve pedestrian safety (40%), expand the trail system (39%), and slow traffic (27%).

Q16 What do you see as a priority for transportation investments? Select your top three.



### Public Transportation

The survey results show that public transportation is not often utilized for a variety of reasons. Approximately half of the survey respondents occasionally, while 37% never, use public transit. Public transit is used monthly by about 7% of respondents, and weekly or every day by 6.5% respondents. The reasons why people do not use transit are related to location, frequency, safety, and general convenience compared to driving. The public transit improvements that respondents would like to see are:

- ▣ Bus connection to the train station
- ▣ Parking at the train station
- ▣ Bike parking, apartments near transit, amenities/services (i.e., a café)
- ▣ Pedestrian accessibility (raised platform), sidewalks, crosswalks

### PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Preserving parks and open space was a top issue from an environmental, recreation, as well as an active transportation perspective. Based on survey responses, nearly 40% of people use the parks and trails at least 2-3 times per week. Close to 70% of the township residents live

near a park. Open house attendees and survey respondents expressed a deep appreciation of the current trails, but felt that connections could be expanded to create a better-connected network. The specific locations mentioned are:

- ▣ From Evans Road to Trewellyn Trails (Seminary property)
- ▣ From Foulkeways to Spring House town center
- ▣ To Oxford Park
- ▣ To 63 and Bethlehem Pike
- ▣ North to Power Line Trail
- ▣ Better connections to the Green Ribbon Trail

### Summary on Transportation and Trails

Residents love trails and access to nature, but want better connectivity. Survey respondents and open house attendees both expressed a need for improved safety and connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists in the form of both sidewalks and trails. While transit is not heavily used, safe and walkable access to train stations was also mentioned in the survey and open house. People want to walk to destinations with a safe, accessible network of sidewalks and trails, and the plan should consider how sidewalks and trails can interact to fill trail gaps.



## BETHLEHEM PIKE FOCUS AREA

The Bethlehem Pike focus area had two posters at the open house: 1) at a map of the Bethlehem Pike corridor, on which people could indicate which businesses they use, discuss how they travel to and around the corridor, and generally comment on how they feel about the area; and 2) a glossary of design elements that people could reference and comment on regarding the type of development they would want to see along Bethlehem Pike.

Bethlehem Pike was described as a “hodge-podge” of uses and buildings with few trees, as well as being an inhospitable place to walk and spend time. With the wide road, poor pedestrian connections, and limited crossings, people feel unsafe walking along Bethlehem Pike. In addition, there are gaps in the sidewalk, which terminate in the southern portion near the intersection of Dager Road.

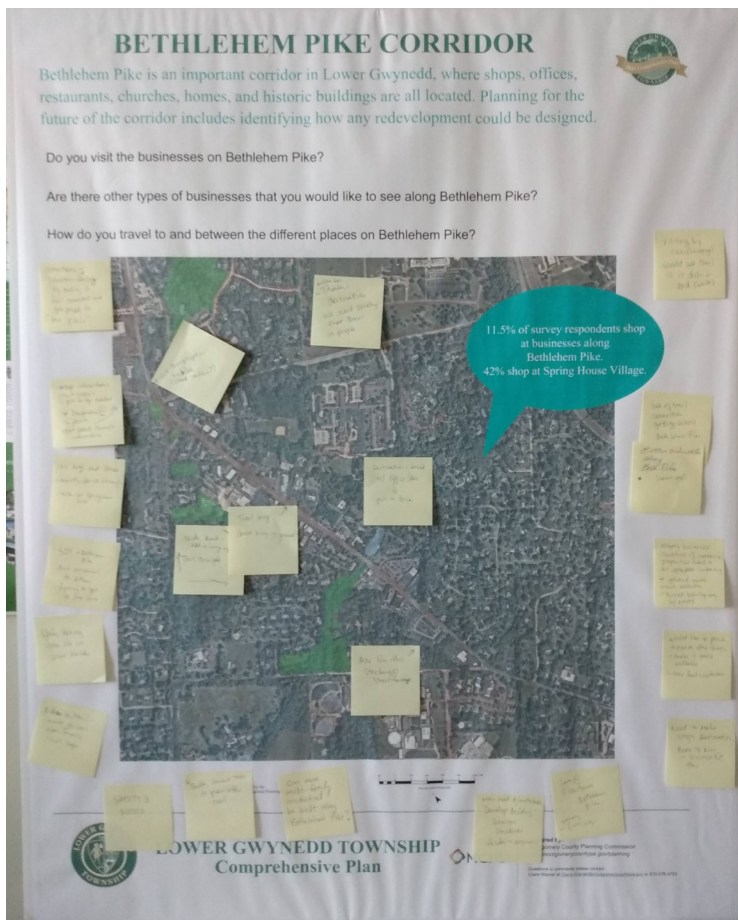
Some of the improvements that people would like to see are: more street trees, planters, improved sidewalks, and

green space. Based on the “glossary of design elements”, people would like to see more attractive building designs that are built close to the sidewalk with “window shopping” opportunities, and parking lots located behind the buildings. They would also like to be able to walk to more businesses, and therefore would want to see pedestrian improvements.

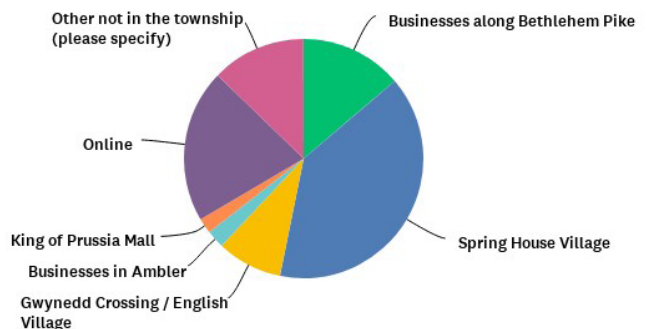
In addition to more attractive buildings and streetscape design, people stressed a desire to transform Bethlehem Pike into an area that feels more like a downtown destination with businesses to attract people. When asked about the type of development they would want along the corridor, people expressed that mid-rise buildings (4-6 stories) would be appropriate, but not high-rise buildings. There was also support for mixed-use developments with office and residential, including multifamily residential.

### *How do Survey Respondents Use Bethlehem Pike?*

Survey respondents expressed a preference for walking to shops and businesses. More than 70% of respondents support or strongly support “the development of more restaurants, retail shops, professional services, and other businesses” in the township. Some of the specific types of businesses they would like to see more of are: restaurants (e.g., breakfast places, cafes, fine dining), kid activities, and small shops (e.g., local bookstore). When asked where they do the majority of their shopping, survey respondents listed Spring House Village as top (40%); only 14% shop at the businesses along Bethlehem Pike. Other places listed include the Lansdale area and Montgomeryville.



### Q11 Where do you do most of your shopping?



## OTHER TAKEAWAYS:

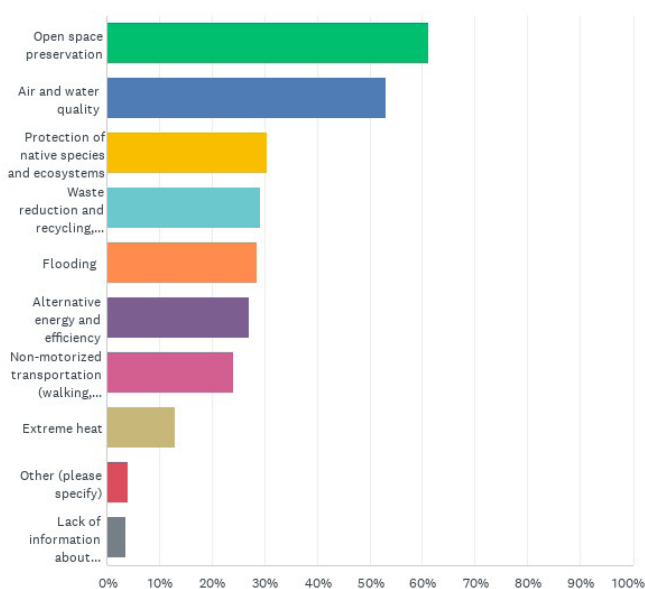
### Sustainability

Sustainability is a broad topic and did not have a specific station at the open house, but questions related to sustainability were included in the survey. Based on survey responses the top issues related to sustainability are (respondents were asked to select their top 3):

- ▢ Open space preservation – 60%
- ▢ Air and water quality – 52%
- ▢ Protection of native species and ecosystems – (32%)
- ▢ Waste reduction – 31%

*Waste Reduction and Composting.* Twenty-two percent of survey respondents already compost at home or another location, 21% do not compost but are interested (e.g. if the compost is picked-up or located not in a home). Some people may be interested but are unable to compost because their HOA does not permit composting.

Q25 Select your top three priorities relating to sustainability.



### Housing

Housing was not covered at the open house, but is an important issue for residential and potential residents in terms of affordability and types of housing. Affordability was mentioned as something people would like to “Transform” in the township, in order to expand other housing options for all income levels. Based on survey responses, more than half of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that “there [is] a good variety of housing options” in the township. For those who feel that there is a poor variety of housing, some of the comments are:

- ▢ “I do not see much medium priced housing or smaller housing that would fit when I retire”
- ▢ “Unaffordable place to retire”
- ▢ “Not enough housing available for underserved community”
- ▢ “Need more good quality homes for those downsizing/retired”
- ▢ “Few multi-unit buildings. Few options for singles and couples wishing to rent.”

### Historic preservation

Preserving historic properties was ranked as the fourth most important issue for the comprehensive plan to focus on. Comments at the open house and on the survey remark on the importance of preserving the remaining historic structures, especially those with the potential to be adaptively reused. At the same time, however, there is hesitancy about identifying Lower Gwynedd as a historic place. As one survey respondent commented: “This project is an opportunity to take a very hard look at what the township is now, what it wants to be, and what it could be. ‘Historic Lower Gwynedd’ is no longer a relevant concept. There needs to be a new community vision.”

## Vision Statement Results

Based on the results of the community survey and the first public open house, a long-term vision statement for the township was drafted. Feedback on the draft vision statement was collected from 133 persons through an online survey that was open from February 25 to May 18, 2020. Approximately 86% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the themes and goals of the draft vision statement.

## Open House #2 Results

The second open house was held in October of 2024 and provided residents with an opportunity to review the goals and priorities of the different topics covered in the comprehensive plan, as well as the focus area study. There were poster stations for the following topics:

- ▢ Vision statement and future land use
- ▢ Community institutions health
- ▢ Housing and neighborhoods
- ▢ Open space, environmental sustainability, and infrastructure
- ▢ Transportation and the walkability analysis
- ▢ Bethlehem Pike focus area

The key takeaways from the **Open House #2 and Draft Vision and Recommendation Survey** are as follows:

- ▢ **Future Land Use and Vision.** The majority of (85%) of responses agree/strongly agree with the draft vision statement. Important topics are walkability, environmental stewardship, opportunities for small-scale retail and commercial, and sustainable growth.
- ▢ **Community Institutions.** Institutions are valued, especially the school district. There is a desire for more community gathering spaces and businesses that could serve as “third places”.
- ▢ **Housing.** There should be a balance between creating opportunities for growth in specific areas, and the desire to maintain the scale and character of established neighborhoods.
- ▢ **Transportation.** Priority: build sidewalks and trails to improve pedestrian connections to destinations, as well as to create safer streets and slow vehicle speeds through neighborhoods.
- ▢ **Open Space and Environmental Sustainability.** Priority: improve and preserve the tree canopy. Also, preserve open spaces and natural resources, reduce waste, reduce flooding, and improve water quality.
- ▢ **Bethlehem Pike Focus Area.** There is support for improved streetscape in order to create a safer and more pleasant walking experience, through better building and pedestrian-oriented design.

## COMMUNITY COHESION SURVEY (APRIL 2025-MAY 2025)

The community cohesion survey was intended to collect residents’ feedback on their feelings and attitudes about their connectedness to other residents in Lower Gwynedd and how, if at all, they engage with the broader community. The survey asked participants open-ended and agree/disagree questions about their involvement with places and people in Lower Gwynedd.

People responded to the open-ended question “How do you connect with others in your community?” by listing the places where they go to socialize. These places included business (some of which are located in neighboring Ambler Borough), public libraries, churches, and social clubs. Some people connect with others in their community during community-wide events like Fall Fest or at school-related activities and sports events, while others connect during walks in their neighborhood and on township trails.

Survey participants were asked to agree or disagree with statements about their social engagement within the township. Based on the responses, many residents know their neighbors and feel that they have places to socialize in the township. However, fewer than half of respondents feel that they are active in their social club or attend community centers, and most people feel that there are limited options for high school students to socialize. The majority (94%) of respondents know their neighbors, and about three-quarters of people have a friend within five minutes of where they live. More than half (66%) of people have a park, place of worship, or other place to socialize in Lower Gwynedd, but 20% said they do not have a place to socialize in the township. Fewer than half (40%) of respondents are active in their social club (40%) or go to their local community center or library (42%). Nearly one-quarter of respondents feel that there is no place for high school students to socialize after school.

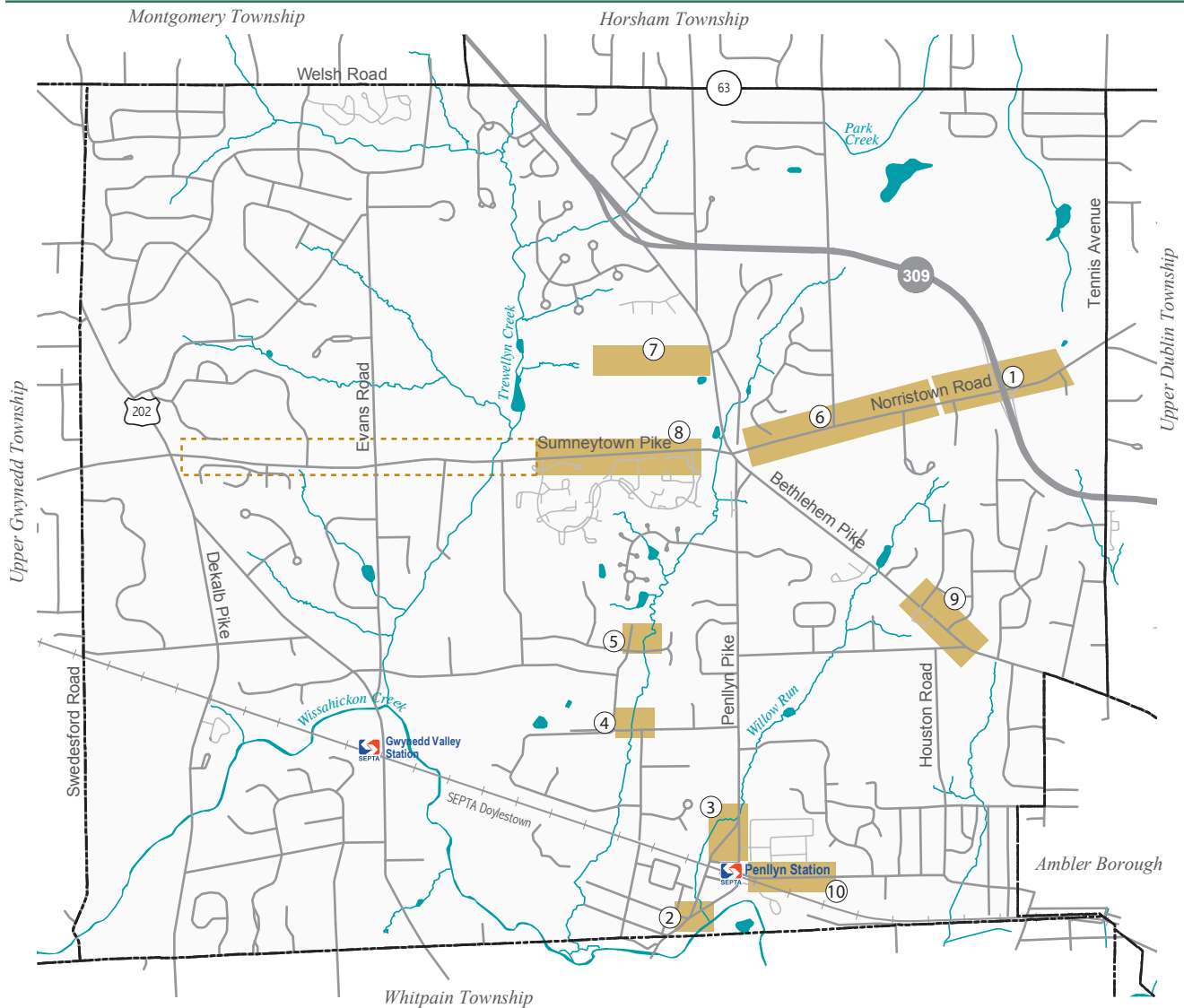
When asked what would enhance social opportunities, respondents said that they would, in general, like more community events and school events to participate in, both for teens and adults. Respondents also appreciate organized events, such as clean-ups and beautification efforts, that would bring different community members

together for a common purpose. Walkable neighborhoods create opportunities for chance encounters with neighbors and help to build cohesive communities. In addition, some businesses provide places for people to gather and socialize, even if informally, and help to build a sense of community.



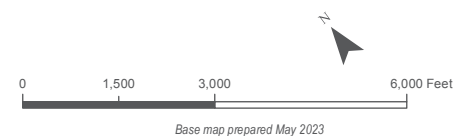
# APPENDIX 2

## Transportation Priority Projects



1. Norristown Road Pedestrian Facilities
2. Penllyn Pike and Trevellyn Avenue Intersection Improvements
3. Penllyn Pike and Old Penllyn Pike Intersection Improvement
4. Gypsy Hill Road over Willow Run – Bridge project
5. Forrest Hill Drive Over Willow Run – Bridge Project
6. Norristown Road Corridor Improvements
7. Moore Drive Extension
8. Sumneytown Pike Corridor Improvements
9. Bethlehem Pike Pedestrian Improvement Project
10. Penllyn Train Station Trail

Lower Gwynedd Township  
Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



This section describes specific projects that Lower Gwynedd Township would like to see in the future. In addition to the recommendations and strategies that are included for transportation, these are location-based projects that the township is prioritizing for their importance in reaching the township's transportation goals. Some of the projects have already received funding and will be completed in the near future. Others are projects that are longer term and would require further study. Most of the projects require further study, and many of which may not feasibly be completed

within the timespan of this plan. These have all been identified as desires of the township community in previous plans or through the other township outreach processes.

### **NORRISTOWN ROAD PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES**

Provide pedestrian facilities on Norristown Road through the PA 309 interchange area from Boveri Drive to west of the PA 309 southbound ramps, adjacent to Spring House Innovation Park. The pedestrian facilities would connect existing paths east and west of the interchange.





## PENLLYN PIKE AND TREWELLYN AVENUE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

Improve and modernize the intersection of Penllyn Pike, Trewellyn Avenue, and Old Penllyn Pike to provide ADA-compliant pedestrian facilities at the intersection. The project is listed in the 2021 Lower Gwynedd Township Traffic Signal Compliance Report. The project is fully funded with a DCED LSA grant award and the local match is included in the township's capital budget. The project is in design, and will be completed within the next two years.





### **PENLLYN PIKE AND OLD PENLLYN PIKE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT**

Realign the existing intersection of Penllyn Pike and Old Penllyn Pike, adjacent to Ingersoll Park, so that Old Penllyn Pike intersects with Penllyn Pike at an angle closer to 90 degrees. The project also includes restrictions on traffic at the Penllyn Pike and Wister Avenue intersection to direct more traffic to the realigned intersection. The intersection project is listed in the Ingersoll Park Master Plan (2023).



*Zoomed out picture of project area*



*Zoomed in picture of intersection*

### **GYPSY HILL ROAD OVER WILLOW RUN – BRIDGE PROJECT**

Replace the existing weight-restricted bridge on Gypsy Hill Road (SR 2005) between Hunt Seat Drive and Gwynedd Avenue.





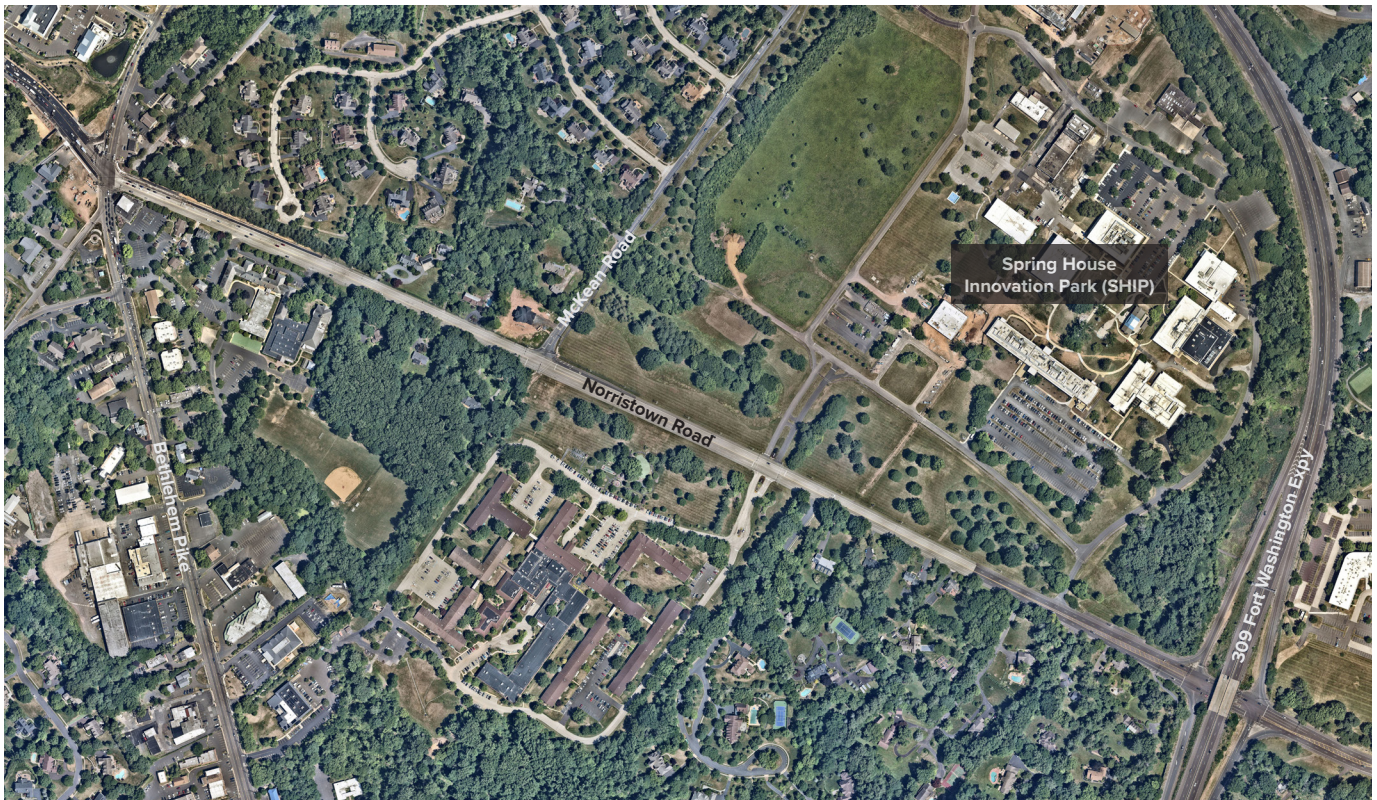
### FORREST HILL DRIVE OVER WILLOW RUN – BRIDGE PROJECT

Replace the existing weight-restricted bridge that is owned by Lower Gwynedd Township on Forrest Hill Drive between Willow Run Road and Sweet Briar Circle.



### NORRISTOWN ROAD CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

Provide a two-way center left-turn lane between Bethlehem Pike and the PA 309 interchange, a dedicated left-turn lane at McKean Road, and associated traffic signal modifications at McKean Road and Gwynedd Estates/Spring House Innovation Park (SHIP) intersections. The project would be located east of the end of the project limits for the recently completed Spring House Intersection Improvement Project. The corridor improvement project is listed in the Lower Gwynedd Transportation Impact Fee (Act 209) Study - dedicated left-turn lane at McKean Road only.





### MOORE DRIVE EXTENSION

Extend existing Moore Drive from the Spring House Village Shopping Center to intersect Sumneytown Pike at the existing intersection with Wellington Drive (West). The project would improve connectivity between Sumneytown Pike and Bethlehem Pike, and potentially reduce growth in traffic volumes at Spring House intersection.

### SUMNEYTOWN PIKE CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

Provide a two-way center left-turn lane, additional travel lanes, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities between Wellington Drive/Spring House Village Shopping Center and US 202. The corridor improvement project is listed in the Montco Pikes Plan and the Lower Gwynedd Township Transportation Impact Fee (Act 209) Study - Table 18.





## BETHLEHEM PIKE PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Provide sidewalk, curb, and drainage improvements along Bethlehem Pike between the area near Bergey's Ford Dealership and Dager Road, as well as pedestrian crossing improvements at the signalized intersection.





## PENLLYN TRAIN STATION TRAIL

Provide pedestrian facilities along Pen-Ambler Road between Pen-Ambler Park and the Penllyn Train Station and improved pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Pen-Ambler Road and Old Penllyn Pike at the Penllyn Train Station. The project is listed in the Penllyn Train Station Trail Master Plan (2023).

